

To: Ashford Joint Transportation Board
By: KCC Highways and Transportation
Date: 7 March 2023
Subject: Active Travel update
Classification: Information Only

Summary: This report updates Members on KCC's Active Travel Agenda

1 Context

- 1.1 In the summer of 2020 the Government released its new Policy for Active Travel and set out the national vision (Gear Change). It set out the actions required at all levels of Government to make this a reality, grouped under four themes:
- better streets for cycling and people
 - cycling and walking at the heart of decision-making
 - empowering and encouraging local authorities
 - enabling people to cycle and protecting them when they do
- 1.2 Kent County Council has been working alongside the Department for Transport and subsequently Active Travel England (ATE), who have been created as an Executive Body to oversee walking and cycling activity.
- 1.3 ATE are responsible for apportioning funding to, and overseeing the delivery of, active travel investment. This includes determining funding allocations and also carrying out an assurance function of the detailed design and delivery of active travel schemes. ATE have been established to ensure the highest possible standard is applied in the delivery of walking & cycling schemes with a view to reaching their overall aim; that 50% of all trips in urban centres and cities will be undertaken by foot or wheel.

2 Active Travel Fund - Background

- 2.1 Tranche 1 (£1.6m awarded) was colloquially known as the Emergency Active Travel fund and was introduced to implement measures to aid all forms of travel at the start of the covid pandemic. Schemes were introduced county wide within a very tight timescale (12 weeks) and with no time to consult to any degree.
- 2.2 Tranche 2 (£6.098m award following a bid process). KCC produce a list of schemes that were believed to be supported and deliverable. The Government made some substantial changes to allow proper consultation with our communities, which has resulted in delays to delivery as we establish detailed designs. Extensive consultation with affected communities has and continues to take place to ensure support and adequacy of the schemes whilst still working within the confines of the Grant funding. 5 schemes were successful in attracting funding. There were no schemes in Ashford Borough that received funding.

- 2.3 The Tranche 3 submission for funding had a very short application window during August 2021. KCC put in for a total of £7.25m (9 schemes) but Kent was awarded £1.3m for two schemes, one in Sevenoaks and the other in Herne Bay. We submitted bids for many more schemes but these were not taken forward at this time by ATE. Both schemes are now being developed with Herne Bay plans recently being consulted on and detailed designs progressing. Sevenoaks is a much larger scheme (£1.2m) and KCC is working in conjunction with Sevenoaks DC to further develop plans prior to consultation.

3 The Current Position

- 3.1 All Highway Authorities were asked by ATE to undertake a self-assessment of our capability and ambition following some prescribed guidance. The aims are to support local authorities to prepare forthcoming multiyear capital and revenue funding directing the vast majority of funding to capability building activities. Any behaviour change activities need to focus on how it supports infrastructure. Examples of capability building activities include development of Local Walking & Cycling Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs), network design, scheme planning & delivery, public engagement/consultation, data and evidence collection and bespoke training for officers & members. Behaviour change activities include cycle training, travel planning, cycle loan schemes, active travel marketing and street audits.
- 3.2 With the insight of a KCC Member survey, input from a Cross Party working group and officers' professional judgement, we self-assessed as a Level 1, which is where most Local Authorities placed themselves. ATE confirmed they corroborated this rating based on the information they hold about us as an Authority and we have been able to demonstrate to ATE that we have some ambition and we have some emerging network plans and commitments to active travel. Notwithstanding this, we recognise the need for their support in working to deliver on this agenda, which is essential for our Carbon pathway and for our wider Transport linked future funding. The five levels are as follows:
- Level 0: No local leadership or support for active travel, no plans in place, delivered lower complexity schemes only
- Level 1: Some local leadership and support with basic plans and isolated interventions
- Level 2: Strong local leadership and support, with strong plans and emerging network
- Level 3: Very strong local leadership and support, comprehensive plans, and majority of network in place with increasing modal share
- Level 4: Established culture of active travel with successive increases in cycling and walking, underpinned by dense integrated network and highly supportive policies to reduce the need for car trips

Capability & Ambition Fund

- 3.3 KCC have successfully secured £565,000 of revenue funding from Active Travel England. It should be noted that this is not a brand-new fund but it has been rebadged from what was our 'Capability Funding' and was previously used to support behaviour change initiatives with partnering organisations. At the request of ATE it is now refocussed to support the County's capability & ambition building activities as set out by ATE such as:
- Development of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs)
 - Network design
 - Scheme planning and design

- Public engagement/ consultation
- Data & evidence collection
- Bespoke training for LA officers and members

3.4 The activities as set out above will enable us to continue to make progress, working closely with our elected members to enable us to take a lead role in setting the scene of what Active Travel could look like in Kent. We are continuing to push ATE for the long-awaited rural guidance as so many of our residents in Kent live in rural communities. We acknowledge that Kent is a diverse County with both rural and urban constituencies, and we want to ensure any plans that are developed benefit in an appropriate way.

3.5 We have been working closely with all Districts & Boroughs to understand what support is required and to provide funds to enable the development of LCWIPS, network designs and scheme planning & design. Ashford Borough Council has been allocated £20,000 for scheme planning & design with agreements to be completed shortly. This funding is for a 12-month period commencing on 13 January 2023.

Kent Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (KCWIP)

3.6 To ensure Kent County Council have a strategic plan and clear priorities with regards to infrastructure requirements we are embarking on a Kent Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (KCWIP) as part of our Local Transport Plan 5 development. The objectives of this are:

- Streamlining existing and new knowledge into one document to build a complete picture of the walking and cycling infrastructure, identifying active travel network gaps and propose interventions to fill these gaps.
- Improve urban and inter-urban strategic connections across Kent.
- Developing cycling routes which support current demand and encourage future growth for predominantly commuting, but also non-commuting trips.
- Improve walking accessibility within urban centres.
- Propose long and short-term high-level interventions to meet current walking and cycling demand and serve future demand. These improvements will be attractive, comfortable, direct, coherent and accessible.
- Align walking and cycling interventions with local, regional and national policies.

3.7 KCC is working with all Districts & Boroughs and other stakeholders to produce a document that links together all of Kent's tier 2 local authority LCWIPS and active travel ambitions. AECOM have been commissioned to assist in this process. Work has already started with workshops and a formal consultation planned for the first half of 23/24.

3.8 This is being funded by a separate Transport Planning budget from Central Government.

Tranche 4 funding and Next Steps

- 3.9 We have very recently received formal guidance for the Tranche 4 funding round (10 January 2023). Prior to this, officers have been proceeding with caution and using the last few months to ensure a shared consensus around the agenda with Elected Members and seeking to build our relationships with our Districts & Boroughs who are lead authors and strategists with regard to individual Local Walking & Cycling Plans (LCWIPs).
- 3.10 The funding bid that is being pulled together is being done in partnership with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation and the Cross-Party working group that we have established (KCC Members and lead Officers). KCC has been in contact with all Districts & Boroughs to ask for their input. The timescales for progressing any schemes to be put forward to ATE are very tight. Following receiving the guidance, we have until 24 February 2023 to produce and submit a quality bid. An indicative funding allocation of £2.769m has been suggested and to be mainly made up of shovel ready construction schemes but with the ability to request funding to develop schemes.
- 3.11 In preparation we have already contacted all the Districts and Boroughs asking for their top 3 schemes in priority order and have added those that made returns to an already long list of scheme ideas provided from previous work. This includes PROW and other KCC departments ideas.
- 3.12 KCC will not be submitting all priority schemes and has therefore looked at criteria for sifting schemes with the task to produce a final number of schemes we feel stand the best chance of delivery within a 12 month period (ATE originally suggested a 2-3 year funding period) and in line with ATE's guidance. The main criteria and scoring being based on the following:
- Districts with completed LCWIP's or working towards LCWIP's
 - Design quality and safety (defined by various ATE design tools and Local Transport Note 1/20 compliant)
 - Deliverability based on evidence of robust consultation and construction scheduling
 - Value for Money based on ATE's Value for Money guidance
 - Local Transport Note 1/20 compliant (ATE have stated funding will only go to schemes with high quality, ideally segregated cycle and walking facilities that encourage active travel)
 - Propensity to convert short journeys to walking, wheeling and cycling based on analysis of available data
 - Targeting areas of poor health outcomes and with high levels of deprivation as defined by the Index of Multiple Deprivation and Healthy Life Expectancy
 - Land within highway or local authority ownership and available for active travel facilities
 - Reallocation of road space in favour of cycling and walking facilities
 - On street parking affected
 - The level of information provided by the promoter for each scheme such as lengths of routes, segregation ability, new footways/cycleways, widening of existing facilities, low traffic neighbourhoods to be created, school streets, modal filters, new road crossings.
- 3.13 An initial sift of the schemes promoted has been undertaken with Ashford Borough Council providing their top 3 priority schemes. All 3 schemes listed below progressed through to the 2nd sifting round. The detail of the schemes can be seen within Ashford

Borough Council's LCWIP: [Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan 2019-2029 \(ashford.gov.uk\)](http://ashford.gov.uk)

1. LCWIP Route 5 – various phase from Mock Lane, Bucksford Lane, Singleton Hill, Tithe Barn Lane, Singleton Lane and Victoria Park Path
2. LCWIP Route 6
3. LCWIP Route 7

3.14 The next stage (sift 2) will require KCC with their consultant WSP to work through all the guidance and investigate/analyse further the remaining schemes to produce a submission based on the criteria stated above. The number of schemes submitted will be based on the indicative value indicated by ATE (TBC) and to a maximum 300% of the initial allocation along with identifying a pipeline of schemes that can be taken into account and inform future funding rounds.

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