

From: Michael Payne Cabinet Member, Highways & Transport
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To: Cabinet 12 October 2020

Subject: **Emergency Active Travel Programme**

Non-Key decision

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of report: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 17 July 2020
and Scrutiny committee – 23 June 2020

Future Pathway of report: n/a

Electoral Division: **Countywide**

Summary: This paper provides an update on the Department for Transport's (DfT) Emergency Active Travel Fund.

Recommendation:
Cabinet is asked to note the contents of the report.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report provides detail of and progress on the Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) trials in Kent.

2. Emergency Active Travel Fund

2.1 To help local authorities to restart local transport as part of the Government's Covid-19 recovery roadmap, the Department for Transport (DfT) announced a £250 million Emergency Active Travel Fund.

2.2 On 23rd May 2020, the Secretary of State for Transport announced indicative funding allocations for local transport authorities to implement emergency active travel measures supporting cycling and walking facilities.

2.3 The funding was provided in 2 tranches, whereby tranche 1 supported the installation of temporary projects for the COVID-19 pandemic. Tranche 2 is for the creation of longer-term projects

2.4 The two key aims of the funding were to enable more people to walk and cycle, where possible, and support safe social distancing in areas where people congregate. The suggested measures included:

- implementing road closures

- widening footways
- installing pop up cycle lanes
- provision of temporary cycle parking
- addition of social distancing signage.

- 2.5 The requirements on how to submit a proposal were provided on 28th May, with the date for submission some 6 days later.
- 2.6 A compliant proposal was submitted on 5th June. This proposal recognised that the county was in full lockdown, schools remained closed and that people were working from home. The proposal sought to exploit the prevailing traffic conditions insofar as volumes were circa 25% normal levels and cycling use had increased by around 300%.
- 2.7 KCC commissioned a YouGov survey which also highlighted that around 75% of residents in Kent wanted to see active travel schemes to assist them with their travel choices.
- 2.8 Due to the urgency expressed by DfT it was expected that funding would be confirmed and released quickly. However, this did not happen until early July.
- 2.9 Kent was one of only a few authorities to receive 100% of the available allocated funding.
- 2.10 Despite this delay, and in order to meet DfT strict deadlines, officers dedicated significant time and effort, maximising all the time available, to ensure works started within the stipulated 4 weeks and completed within the mandated 8 weeks (25th September).
- 2.11 This unfortunately meant that it was not possible to undertake the extensive consultation and engagement that would normally accompany such schemes. Post project reviews have identified that this is the most significant criticism of the EATF tranche 1 programme nationally.
- 2.12 In the time available officers attempted to develop a variety of schemes and tried to discuss concepts and ideas with local stakeholders and elected members.
- 2.13 Whilst the trials were also shared with each District Leader and Chief Executive, our experience suggests that it would have been beneficial to have had more time to share the scheme information to a wider audience and for a longer period of time.

3. Tranche 1 Trials

- 3.1 Officers have delivered a broad and ambitious programme of EATF schemes. 24 schemes were implemented across the county, and 19 continue to perform well providing real benefit to Kent residents. We have sought to listen to residents and local representatives and it is clear that schemes cannot be sustained without the support or acceptance of the local community.

- 3.2 Five have been removed and whilst this is disappointing the information, knowledge and learning will be vital in considering how we can support those communities in the future.
- 3.3 A list of each scheme is provided below. Formal trial evaluations are planned for December.

Programme of PROW improvements Countywide
King Street cycle scheme
Milton Road, Gravesend – footway widening / pop up cycle lane
Safer Travel to School scheme: Drapers Mill
Safer Travel to School scheme: Reculver CofE, Herne Bay
Safer Travel to School scheme: Dover Christchurch Academy
Safer Travel to School scheme: St Mary's Chilham
Faversham town wide 20
Tonbridge town wide 20
Margate town centre 20mph
Tunbridge Wells town centre 20mph
Programme of improvements to footpaths and cycle routes Countywide
Phase 4B cinque ports cycle route scheme, F&H
Light segregation of the A26 in Tun Wells
St Dunstan's Street footway widening in Canterbury
Earl Street, Maidstone – extension of pedestrianisation
Reynolds Lane–access only to encourage use by foot/cycle
Tunbridge Wells High Street One way to provide wider footways
Commercial Road, Paddock Wood One way to provide wider footways
Harbour Street and Albion Street, Broadstairs – access only-Trial finished
A256 Maison Dieu Road – pop up cycle lane-Trial finished
A26 Pembury Road to Brook Street – pop up cycle facilities-Trial finished
Station Road, Westgate – One way to provide additional space-Trial finished
A2042 New Street, Somerset Road and Mace Lane – pop up cycle lane-Trial finished

- 3.4 A communication plan has been developed to inform and engage how the trials are progressing. This will help capture public opinion, evidence user experiences and to note road user impact. This data will also help inform any future active travel strategy or similar future intervention.
- 3.5 During these Tranche 1 trials, we have used various approaches in response to the Government's call for action. This has given us useful practical and operational learning that will assist in future scheme preparation.
- 3.6 Temporary/pop up cycle lanes using the 'traffic management' style plastic cones offer quick and inexpensive opportunities that can be removed very quickly.
- 3.7 Our experience in Dover, during times of congestion arising when Dover TAP and Operation Stack were implemented demonstrated the speed at which these installations could be removed. In this instance we were considering withdrawing the scheme due to local community feedback we were receiving.

- 3.8 Such installations remain unsightly and require continued attendance due to their temporary nature. Any further use needs to consider these implications.
- 3.9 The more semi-permanent scheme trials, such as in Broadstairs, caused some consternation within the local community, believing that the works may be permanent and not a trial. Had more time been available to engage, it might have been possible to introduce modification, adjustment and changes before installation which could have benefited the scheme and been more popular with the community. Such interventions need time to secure local consensus.
- 3.10 There are many useful lessons that have been learned most notably the frustrations caused by the timescales imposed on us by Government which led to an unsatisfactory level of community engagement. This must not be repeated in Tranche 2.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The authority was awarded £1.6million in Tranche 1 and this has been committed in line with the Grant award.
- 4.2 The Prime Minister issued a new document 'Gear Change- a bold vision for cycling & walking' which refers to an Ofsted style body that will 'assess' local authorities on mode shift targets, suggesting that local transport funding allocations will be linked to our ability to achieve modal shift. This will be subject to consultation and officers will work with members in the drafting of a response.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications to note at present.

6. Equalities implications

- 6.1 There are no equalities implications to note at present.

7. Other corporate implications

- 7.1 There are no other corporate implications to note at present.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The nature of exploratory trials such as those deployed during Tranche 1 will naturally attract different opinions, operational challenges, and community/user acceptance. This is to be expected, and as has been seen, some schemes will fail before a comprehensive trial can be completed.
- 8.2 Of those remaining schemes, these will enjoy enough time to be fully used and tested to see if the expected benefit can be realised. We will continue to monitor and report on not only their operational performance but also any behavioural changes seen to the surrounding network and/or by the various user groups.

- 8.3 Our work on Tranche 1, has been well received by DfT and we remain well placed to secure the Tranche 2 funding of a further £6.4m. **Based on understanding of current government guidance, the tranche 2 schemes will not replicate tranche 1 schemes but instead focus on strategic segregated cycle ways.**
- 8.4 Considering the obvious learning from Tranche 1, should such funding become available, we will seek reassurance from DfT that we will be afforded enough time to fully engage with local elected members and affected communities.

9. Recommendation(s):

- 9.1 Cabinet is asked to note the contents of the report, consider the approach to the issue of future Active Travel Funding and discuss how best to represent this matter to Government.

10. Background Documents

- 10.1 None

11. Contact details

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