

From: David Brazier, Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport
Simon Jones, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment & Transport

To: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee - 8 November 2022

Subject: Active Travel and Cycling Networks

Classification: Unrestricted

Past pathway of paper: N/A

Future pathway of paper: N/A

Summary: This paper provides an update on the work being carried out in the Active Travel arena.

Recommendation(s):

The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to note the content of the report.

1 Context

- 1.1 In the summer of 2020 the Government released its new policy for Active Travel and set out the national vision. 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 also 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. Local authority future funding (including maintenance grants) are likely to be affected by our approach to active travel and our capacity for delivery.

2 Background

- 2.1 Tranche 1 (£1.6m) was colloquially known as the Emergency Active Travel fund. The Government made some substantial changes to allow us to ensure Tranche 2 schemes (5 No.) could be delivered with proper consultation with our communities, which resulted in some delays as we establish detailed designs. Extensive consultation with affected communities is taking place to ensure support and adequacy of the schemes whilst still working within the confines of the Grant funding (£6.098m).
- 2.2 Tranche 2, Phase 5 of the Hythe to Dymchurch cycle improvements is nearing completion. The Canterbury scheme, Burgate to Longport, is at the final detailed design stage and has recently been reconsulted. A report recommending progression to construction is planned for the Joint Transportation Board (JTB) in November. Gravesham, Folkestone, and Thanet schemes were brought to the 17 March 2022 ETCC following two rounds of consultations and are being further investigated to see whether there is a route or elements of a route that can be supported by local members, councillors, residents, and businesses.
- 2.3 The Tranche 3 submission for funding had a very short application window during August 2021 but Kent was awarded a further £1.3m for two named 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 and a report is planned to go to the local JTB during November. 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 Following request from ATE we have undertaken a self-assessment of our capability and ambition. The purpose was to assist ATE in ensuring local authorities were best prepared to respond future funding tranches, recognise the scale and ambition of ATE, and are able to deliver multiyear capital and revenue projects.
- 3.2 There were 5 levels of assessment from 0 to 4:
 - 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.

- 3.3 Using results received from a Member survey, input from the Cross-Party working group and officers professional judgement, we self-assessed as a Level 1 authority.
- 3.4 ATE has confirmed they agree with our submission and noted that this was in line with how most other Local Authorities assessed themselves.
- 3.5 ATE focus at this time is around building capability and ambition as well as behaviour change schemes .
- 3.6 Building capability and ambition will require the development of Local Walking & Cycling Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs), enhancing the design of operational networks, taking consistent approaches to scheme planning and delivery alongside comprehensive public engagement/consultation and the collection of comprehensive data and evidence. They are also intending to provide specialised training for officers and Members.
- 3.7 Behaviour change schemes will include cycle training, travel planning, cycle loan/hire schemes, active travel marketing and street audits.
- 3.8 Whilst we are awaiting for formal Tranche 4 guidance to be published and/or for a further funding announcement to be made, we have submitted a bid for circa £500,000 of revenue funding which is targeted at capability and ambition building activities as follows:
 - 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
- 3.9. Noting that Kent has a diverse geography and we are keen to ensure future plans and schemes are able to extend across all communities we have been pursuing ATE guidance for rural areas.

Kent Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (KCWIP)

- 3.10 To ensure Kent County Council has an overarching strategic plan with clear priorities regarding active travel infrastructure we are developing a county wide Kent Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (KCWIP). This will also form part of our Local Transport Plan 5.
- 3.11 The objectives of a county wide KCWIP are to:
 - Build a complete picture of the walking and cycling infrastructure required for Kent. Identify active travel network gaps and propose interventions to close.
 - Improve urban and inter-urban strategic connections across Kent.
 - Develop 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 aim to fit criteria around (a) attractive, (b) comfortable, (c) direct, (d) coherent and (e) accessible.
- Align walking and cycling interventions with local, regional, and national policies.

3.12 This work is being funded by the Department for Transport.

4 Tranche 4 funding and Next Steps

- 4.1 As highlighted previously, we are yet to receive formal guidance about Tranche 4 funding. Despite this, officers have been working with elected Members, Districts and Boroughs to ensure we are best prepared and hold a shared understanding of the various Local Walking & Cycling Plans priorities.
- 4.2 Any future funding bid will be done so in partnership with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport and the Cross-Party working group. The timescales for progressing any scheme with ATE remains very tight – 12 weeks from the guidance being published.
- 4.3 We were anticipating receipt of the guidance on 30 September, but we understand that this has been delayed whilst ATE/DfT/Treasury review available budgets. No revised date for publication has been provided.
- 4.4 We have contacted all the Districts and Boroughs requesting their top 3 schemes in priority order. These will be added to our existing list of schemes (circa 100) which also includes opportunities highlighted by the Public Rights of Way and other KCC departments.
- 4.5 It is important to note that the active travel agenda is closely linked to the development of our Local Transport Plan 5 and our obligations to Net Zero carbon.
- 4.6 This work also aligns with the priorities set out in Framing Kent's Future: Our Council Strategy 2022-25, whereby we support residents in being able to walk or wheel safely for short trips.

5 Finance and Risk

- 5.1 The Tranche 2 funding is external grant funding with and all design and delivery plans undertaken alongside regular reviews of costs to ensure that the projects will be deliverable within the original funding envelope.
- 5.2 Hyperinflation presents an ongoing financial risk. ATE have advised that a change control mechanism is available if minor adjustments within the programmes are required; i.e., if the budget for one scheme increases and the other reduces, this will potentially mitigate the cost risk to the authority.

5.3 Regular scheme monitoring will be undertaken throughout the programme to mitigate and manage these risks. Should market costs continue to rise beyond the programme forecasted budget these schemes will be value engineered back into budget.

6 Recommendation(s)

The Environment and Transport Committee is asked to note the content of the report.

Contact details

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