

Report to Cllr Roger Elkins, Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure

November 2020

Emergency Active Travel Fund Cycle Lanes

Report by Director of Highways, Transport and Planning

Electoral divisions: Many

Summary

In May 2020, the government announced an opportunity to bid into the emergency active travel fund (EATF) for funding to provide temporary schemes that would facilitate walking or cycling in place of mass public transport in response to the Covid-19 public health crisis.

The County Council, in co-operation with all of the District and Borough councils, identified 7 schemes that would fulfil the government's criteria and was successful in securing funding for all of these.

The schemes were implemented over a period of 8 weeks between July and September 2020.

A decision can now be made to determine the future of each of the schemes, the decision in relation to the Chichester scheme having been taken.

Recommendations

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure approves the removal of the two emergency active travel cycle schemes installed in Crawley.
 - (2) That the Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure approves the removal of the emergency active travel cycle scheme installed in Horsham.
 - (3) That the Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure approves the removal of the emergency active travel cycle scheme installed in Worthing.
 - (4) That the Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure approves the removal of the emergency active travel cycle scheme installed in Shoreham.
 - (5) That the Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure approves the removal of the emergency active travel cycle scheme installed in East Grinstead.
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Proposal

1 Background and context

- 1.1 The national lockdown in March 2020 arising from the Covid 19 pandemic led to a dramatic reduction in vehicular traffic on the roads (up to 70% reduction on West Sussex roads) and an even greater reduction (up to 90%) in bus and train patronage (Appendix A). Alongside this there was a noticeable increase in cycling and walking on the network.
- 1.2 In response to a similar national picture, on 9 May 2020 the Secretary of State (SoS) for Transport announced a £2bn package to create new opportunities for cycling and walking. His aim was that alternative ways to travel, such as walking and cycling, could relieve the pressure on public transport. The SoS's proposal was that 'pop-up' bike lanes with protected space for cycling, wider pavements, safer junctions, and cycle and bus-only corridors would be created in England within weeks as part of a £250 million emergency active travel fund - the first stage of a £2 billion investment, as part of the £5 billion in new funding announced for cycling and buses in February.
- 1.3 The government hoped these plans would help encourage more people to choose alternatives to public transport when they need to travel, making healthier habits easier and helping make sure the road, bus and rail networks were ready to respond to future increases in demand. The government intended to provide funding and to work with local authorities across the country to help make it easier for people to use bikes to get around.
- 1.4 [Fast tracked statutory guidance](#) set out the mechanisms for councils to reallocate road space for cyclists and pedestrians. The SoS suggested some streets become bike and bus only while others remained available for motorists. He further suggested side streets could be closed to through traffic, to create low-traffic neighbourhoods and reduce rat-running while maintaining access for vehicles.
- 1.5 On 27th May 2020, the Department for Transport wrote to all local transport authorities setting out the criteria for funding to be allocated from the emergency active travel fund (Appendix B). This letter turned out to be the only information the government gave in relation to tranche 1 of the funding. West Sussex County Council was given an indicative allocation of £784k. Bids were required to be submitted by 5th June - 8 working days after the letter was received.
- 1.6 It was clearly stated within the letter that failing to respond positively to the tranche 1 offer (a total of £45m) would impact upon the likelihood of receiving money in future tranches (totalling £2bn). As such it was seen to be important that the County Council responded positively to tranche one to help support future bids for more permanent and planned active travel solutions.
- 1.7 The guidance was very clear that schemes should provide "meaningful reallocation of road space" i.e. taking space from motorised vehicles and allocating this to cycling and walking.
- 1.8 In developing the schemes that made up the tranche 1 bid, County Council officers worked closely with District and Borough council officers. Work that had already been undertaken in Districts and Boroughs on local cycling and walking

infrastructure plans was used to inform the most appropriate routes to be included. Outline work was undertaken to determine the likely cost of these schemes. All the scheme proposals were subject to a technical assessment and prioritisation. Prioritisation was based upon the schemes fulfilling the criteria set out in the DfT letter, buildability within the very tight time scales, support from the District and Borough Councils and the results from the cycling infrastructure prioritisation toolkit (CyIPT) – as recommended by the Department for Transport.

- 1.9 County Members were also asked to contribute to route suggestions and 11 Members responded. It is acknowledged that the time available to Members for considering and responding to proposals or to make suggestions was short.
- 1.10 It should be noted that, due to the government's very tight timescales for the bidding process, factors such as public consultation, impact on traffic congestion and air quality could not be considered as part of the tranche 1 schemes prior to their submission.
- 1.11 The final list of schemes to be included in the bid was supported by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure. In total, 7 schemes were identified (one in each district / borough) with nearly all of the schemes having been drawn from suggestions made by Districts and Boroughs.
- 1.12 The list of schemes (excepting Chichester, subject to a separate decision)
 - Upper Shoreham Road, Shoreham
 - A281/B2237 Horsham Ring Road
 - A22 East Grinstead
 - Three Bridges to Manor Royal, Crawley (1) and Pound Hill to Crawley town centre (2)
 - A24 Worthing
 - A259 Bognor Regis to Chichester (the scheme amounted to clearance along the route and there are no physical measures to remove)
- 1.13 Whilst the schemes had been prioritised and approved from a technical perspective at this outline stage no specific criteria were set for assessing the impact of the schemes. Targets were not set in terms of usage or impact on the road network or public transport. This was not viable in the short time available for planning, approval and implementation. Nor would it have been reasonable to devise success criteria or impact factors after the design and implementation phase as those would have not been built into the design. Rather the general feedback and data on use would be gathered to provide a more general data base to inform future scheme planning and design.
- 1.14 The funding decision was received on 26 June and the County Council was successful in securing the full amount of its bid. The criteria for securing the money included that the programme of schemes be started within 4 weeks of the money being received and completed within 8 weeks of starting the installations. This again did not allow for scheme designs to be meaningfully, formally consulted on and only local county Members and District and Borough

officers were given the opportunity to comment on schemes once the designs had been completed. Again it is acknowledged that the timescale was short and the opportunity for considered engagement by Members was limited.

- 1.15 Scheme implementation started on 27 July and the final scheme was opened in early September within the limits set as part of the award. These schemes were implemented as a temporary measure responding to a significant but likely short term change in travel requirements and road use activity – underlined by the speed at which they were required to be delivered and the materials used.
- 1.16 A [page was created](#) on the County Council web site for each scheme giving anyone an opportunity to provide feedback on the individual schemes.
- 1.17 Data was collected during the operation of the schemes to monitor traffic congestion, cycle lane use, safety and (where possible) air quality. This data is presented in Appendix C
- 1.18 The EATF schemes were implemented in response to a specific set of conditions and timetable driven by the lockdown associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. At the time of the funding announcement traffic conditions were very different and the government was actively discouraging use of public transport. The volume of traffic on the county's roads has now largely returned to that seen pre-pandemic whilst public transport usage remains greatly reduced.
- 1.19 Whilst a key driver to implementing the schemes was to relieve pressure on public transport routes, local public transport has continued to operate. Passenger numbers are now beginning to recover and the government continues to provide funding to support local public transport. Operators have learnt how to manage this capacity safely and so there is less need to find an alternative to public transport to deal with what was a real need when the proposal was first developed.
- 1.20 The emergency routes did fulfil the requirements of the government's call to action and, on that basis, it is anticipated that the response by the Council will be a consideration when the County Council bids for money in future rounds of funding.
- 1.21 The schemes were an opportunity to understand how effectively the County Council could respond quickly to demands for change. They provided data on the propensity for people to use these types of facility and the knock-on effect of some of the interventions in terms of design and materials. They do provide dedicated routes for cycling and demonstrated the County Council's commitment to promote sustainable travel – a key part of fulfilling its ambitions regarding climate change, improving air quality and promoting healthier lifestyles. Implementing the routes has provided data for future travel planning that will support implementation of permanent cycle routes in a planned way in line with the Council's approach to sustainable transport solutions. This aligns with the County Council's continued ambition to support investment in sustainable travel. The data gathered and the experience of providing these facilities will help the County Council deliver schemes in future tranches of the funding.
- 1.22 The County Council's ability to deliver all of the schemes originally envisaged within the budget allocated underlines strength in terms of delivery capability and resolve to provide better facilities for safe, sustainable travel.

2 Proposal details

- 2.1 The schemes fulfilled their primary objectives in response to a unique set of circumstances offering dedicated facilities for people to use to cycle in place of driving. The extraordinary environment that triggered their installation no longer exists. Public transport usage is now considered safe and vehicular traffic on the network has returned to pre-pandemic levels. This may indicate a lower level of interest in travellers wishing to move to walking and cycling for their main journeys (work, education, shopping) but it has also altered the overall road usage and experience for walkers and cyclists compared with that in place at the time the proposals were being considered.
- 2.2 The schemes constituted significant changes to the network in the specific locations but there was no time to undertake meaningful engagement with local stakeholders – leading to compromises in terms of the design, assessment and impact criteria and an absence of public engagement and feedback.
- 2.3 It is therefore proposed that each of the schemes is removed. The schemes and all data gathered during their operation will be used to support plans for future schemes and the approach to their design and implementation. It is hoped that this can be undertaken in a more considered approach with wider and more meaningful public and stakeholder engagement and by reference to impact and success criteria built into their identification and design.
- 2.4 The data collected whilst each scheme was operational can be seen in Appendix C and this will be used to inform future proposals.
- 2.5 Elements of the temporary schemes may form the basis of permanent solutions. These will be developed subject to DfT funding being made available through future tranches and will give an opportunity for local members and for local stakeholders to voice their opinions about any proposals.

3 Other options considered

- 3.1 The option of retaining the schemes has been discounted for the reasons set out in section 2 and by reference to the factors and rationale for their original selection and implementation set out in section 1. They were not designed or implemented for permanent use and, whilst some data and public and member feedback has been collated, this only provides information on these particular schemes rather than providing constructive and valuable information by reference to other scheme options or designs based on informed aims and objectives for the medium and longer term and in the context of broader transport planning. It would also need to be clear what traffic and travel needs context the schemes are being designed for.
- 3.2 An option to modify the scheme would also be compromised by the temporary nature of the original design and implementation, including the materials used. Modifications would also be something of a compromise of the principles of design planning and consultation which should drive sound and sustainable solutions for healthier and safer travel in our towns. Such modifications to the schemes would therefore best be considered as part of the future design of any permanent scheme and as such subject to full consultation.

4 Consultation, engagement and advice

- 4.1 The data collected so far has been shared with the executive task and finish group (TFG) on cycling and walking. Local Members have also been able to comment on the schemes as they have been operating as have the relevant district or borough council and members of cabinet. It is acknowledged that there are mixed views held by local Members in relation to the schemes in their divisions. It is of course unfortunate that one of the consequences of the original time constraints set for tranche 1 was the lack of time for meaningful involvement by local Members in scheme ideas and designs for residents and road users within their divisions.
- 4.2 The executive TFG had previously been established to support the cabinet member in planning and strategy in relation to cycling and walking. Its remit was extended to cover the approach taken to the EATF approach and its implementation. On reflection, and in light of the context described in section 1 of this report, the TFG is asked to focus its reflections and advice on future scheme planning and the approach to design and implementation rather than to comment on the effectiveness of the tranche 1 schemes, which should be treated as temporary rather than for review as to whether they should be made permanent.

5 Finance

The full costs associated with this project, including the costs associated with removal, have been grant funded by government. The costs of officer time relating to this project has not been covered and this has led to other projects being delayed.

6 Risk implications and mitigations

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
Increase in traffic incidents where temporary schemes are removed	Monitoring local road safety and action taken as appropriate Publicity and communication to advise of scheme removal. Adequate notice in advance of changes to road lay out.
Reputation damage – perception that schemes were to be more permanent in nature	Publicity to explain the rationale for the decision and promotion of other cycle projects across the county

7 Policy alignment and compliance

The proposal complies with current Council policy and has no implications in terms of equality duty, human rights or crime and disorder

Matt Davey

Director of Highways, Transport and Planning

Contact Officer: Matt Davey, Director of Highways, Transport and Planning,
matt.davey@westsussex.gov.uk

Appendices

Appendix A – transport statistics

Appendix B – EATF pre-award letter

Appendix C – data collected for each of the schemes