

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

October 2020

Emergency Active Travel Fund Cycle Lane – A286 Chichester ring-road

Report by Director of Highways, Transport and Planning

Electoral divisions: Chichester East, Chichester North and Chichester South

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 crisis.

The County Council, in co-operation with 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.

The Chichester scheme has been operational since it opened on 24 August and sufficient data has been gathered to help assess its impact. A decision can now be made to determine if the scheme should be retained, removed or substantially revised.

Recommendation

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure approves the removal of the emergency active travel cycle scheme installed in Chichester.
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Proposal

1 Background and context

- 1.1 The government-led lockdown arising from the Covid 19 pandemic led to a dramatic reduction in vehicular traffic on the roads (measured at one point as a near 70% reduction in traffic 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 a new era for cycling

and walking. His vision was that alternative ways to travel, such as walking and cycling, could relieve the pressure on public transport. The SoS's ambition 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 Following unprecedented levels of walking and cycling across the UK during the pandemic, 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.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 [Fast tracked statutory guidance](#) clearly empowered 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.
- 1.6 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 advice 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 advice was received.
- 1.7 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 at this stage to help support future bids for more permanent active travel solutions.
- 1.8 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.
- 1.9 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. Unsolicited suggestions from others were also received. 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.

- 1.10 County Members were also asked to contribute to route suggestions and 11 Members responded.
- 1.11 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 at this stage.
- 1.12 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.
- 1.13 Whilst the schemes had been prioritised and approved from a technical perspective at this outline stage no specific criteria were set for determining the impact of the schemes. Targets were not set in terms of usage or impact on the road network or public transport.
- 1.14 The funding decision was received on 26th 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.
- 1.15 Scheme implementation started in Chichester on 27 July and the final scheme was opened on 24 August within the limits set as part of the award. These schemes were implemented as an emergency temporary measure – underlined by the speed at which they were 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 driven by the lockdown associated with Covid-19. 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 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.
- 1.20 The EATF schemes fulfilled the requirements of the government's call to action. It is anticipated that this will be taken into consideration when the County Council submits future funding bids for active travel measures.

- 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. They do provide safe routes for cycling and demonstrated the County Council's aspirations to promote sustainable travel – a key part of fulfilling its ambitions regarding climate change, air quality and promoting healthier lifestyles. Implementing the routes has provided invaluable data for future travel planning that will support implementation of permanent cycle routes in line with the national vision to make England a great walking and cycling nation. 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 Chichester scheme has fulfilled its primary objectives and the extraordinary circumstances that necessitated its installation no longer exist. It is therefore proposed to remove the scheme in its entirety. Removing the scheme will return the network to its pre-pandemic state.
- 2.2 The data collected whilst the scheme was operational can be seen in Appendix c and this will be used to inform future proposals.
- 2.3 Elements of the temporary scheme may form the basis of permanent solutions that will be developed with future tranches of funding.

3 Other options considered

The option of retaining the scheme in its current form has been discounted for the reasons set out in section 2. An option to modify the scheme would 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

The data collected has been shared with the executive task and finish group on cycling, local members, the relevant district or borough council and a sub set of cabinet. These groups have been asked to provide feedback that has been used to inform the decisions.

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)
Injury or death relating to cycling on live carriageway where temporary schemes are removed	Monitoring local road safety and action taken as appropriate
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

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Appendices

Appendix A – transport statistics

Appendix B – EATF pre award letter

Appendix C – data collected for scheme