
Report to Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee

18th November 2020

Update on Walking and Cycling in West Sussex

Report by Director of Highways, Transport and Planning

Electoral division(s): All

Summary

During the summer 2020 the government announced two opportunities to bid into the emergency active travel fund (EATF) for funding to provide temporary schemes (Tranche 1) and permanent schemes (Tranche 2) that facilitate active travel. In addition, the Government also announced Gear Change: A bold vision for cycling and walking together with a new national design guidance note for walking or cycling known as LTN 1/20.

The County Council put forward bids for funding under Tranche 1 and 2 of the EATF. The Tranche 1 bid was successful while the outcome for Tranche 2 remains unknown. Seven Tranche 1 schemes were implemented around the County over a period of 8 weeks between July and September 2020. The Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure has since made a decision to remove these schemes.

An Executive Task and Finish Group (TFG) was established to help advise the Cabinet Member on the EATF schemes and also how best to incorporate LTN 1/20 into the West Sussex Walking and Cycling Strategy.

This report covers:

- Lessons learnt from Tranche 1
- How those lessons can be applied to Tranche 2 schemes, and
- The mechanism for reviewing Gear Change, LTN 1/20 and updating the West Sussex Walking and Cycling Strategy.

1 Background and context

- 1.1 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 which was standing at about 10% of pre Covid19 capacity in West Sussex. At that time the SoS made the £250 million (tranche 1) Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) - the first stage of a £2 billion investment, as part of the [£5 billion in new funding announced for cycling and buses in February](#).

- 1.2 The stated objectives of the SoS for the EATF are 'to help local authorities implement measures to create an environment that is safer for both walking and cycling (both, not one or the other). This will allow cycling in particular to replace journeys previously made by public transport and will have an essential role to play in the short term in helping avoid overcrowding on public transport systems. Longer term, it will also help deliver significant health, environmental and congestion benefits.'
- 1.3 During summer 2020, the Department for Transport wrote to all local transport authorities inviting them to bid for two separate tranches of funding. Tranche 1 focused largely on creating temporary or pop-up cycle and walking schemes while Tranche 2 was focused on creating permanent schemes. For both bids the government gave very little time in which to submit a bid. For Tranche 1 this amounted to 8 working days after the letter was received whereas 20 working days were allowed for Tranche 2.
- 1.4 The Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure instigated an Executive Task and Finish Group (TFG) to help him consider the Council's response to the EATF and also to advise on a forthcoming review of the Walking and Cycling Strategy. The TFG met first on 24th July and on 3 subsequent occasions.
- 1.5 In developing the schemes that made up the Tranche 1 and 2 bids, 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 letters, 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.
- 1.6 The Tranche 1 bid was successful, and the following schemes implemented during August and September 2020:
 - Chichester – A286 St Richard's Hospital to rail station
 - 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 Chichester to Bognor Regis (permanent improvements)
- 1.7 Tranche 2 was submitted on 7th August and the SoS is yet to announce the outcome. The schemes / programmes included in tranche 2 are:
 - Tranche 1 scheme enhancement / make permanent where appropriate

- A programme of Active Travel infrastructure improvements
- A programme of school gate infrastructure improvements and investment in Bikeability Training.
- A programme of protecting and enhancing existing cycle lanes
- The A24 shared cycle / footway enhancement at Findon Valley to Findon Village
- The A259 shared cycle / footway enhancement at Rustington

1.8 The Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure published a decision on 3rd November to remove the temporary Tranche 1 schemes.

2 Tranche 1 Lessons Learnt

2.1 The attached combined Tranche 1 scheme monitoring report (APPENDIX A) concludes the following key issues:

- There are no noted increases in air pollution in monitored areas.
- Despite many concerns about congestion, and there were certainly occasions when congestion did occur, generally the schemes performed adequately in respect of journey times and vehicle speeds. It should be noted that congestion occurred on occasions prior to C19 and installing the cycle schemes.
- Whilst initial cycling figures were initially reasonable, numbers fell potentially due to weather and seasonal changes.
- Whilst temporary cycle facilities work well on road links, for the most part it is not possible to install successful temporary facilities at roundabouts or signals. Those works that were installed tended to delay traffic and not serve cyclists well.
- Emergency service vehicle access was often cited as a cause of concern. The emergency services themselves did not report serious issues however did express concerns about the potential for delay during periods of heavy traffic particularly as a result of the roundabouts in the Worthing scheme.
- Obstructive and unsafe parking in the 'pop-up' cycle lanes.
- Residents' concerns about delivery and access to their property.
- There were initial issues with the installation of the cycle counter loops which required further calibration to ensure they were operating properly.
- Current street cleansing and sweeping vehicles had trouble accessing the cycle paths. The County Council worked with colleagues at the district and borough authorities to seek pragmatic solutions.
- Some issues were identified by waste collection services in terms of accessibility.
- Some interference with highway signage was noted that required repeat site visits to rectify.
- The schemes required regular inspection to ensure site safety and consequently, it was necessary to carry out bespoke design modifications and replace damaged infrastructure;
- Multiple complaints, queries and comments were received from motorists and residents that absorbed a significant amount of officer time to manage relating

to perceived blue light vehicle accessibility; air pollution; residential deliveries; reduced access to retail areas; congestion and delays.

- Letters etc of support were also received albeit small in number.
- It was necessary to respond to, and manage, social media communications.

2.2 The TFG together with officers have completed a lessons learnt exercise to understand how best to address Tranche 2 and further walking and cycling development in the future. The lessons learnt can be grouped into 7 broad categories which are as follows:

- **WSSC vision and objectives** – the EATF schemes were not set against a local context of need in the minds of the majority of road users. The case was not made that these schemes were necessary and therefore were not understandable or acceptable for many road users. If schemes are to succeed, we need to develop clearly articulated objectives and priorities so that we can engage locally in developing consensus.
- **Timescales and expectations** – the Government announcements led to considerable interest from residents which the County was compelled to respond to. In addition, the government made it clear that our response to Tranche 1 would inform our success or otherwise for subsequent tranches. These issues combined with the requirements of Government timescales and criteria meant that we had to reduce our normal working practices in respect of scheme identification, design, consultation and engagement. The schemes therefore appeared on the road without consultation. The implementation also caused congestion which led to a lack of acceptance from the start. This compounded the issue mentioned in the first bullet point.
- **Project team and impact on other programmes** – responding to the EATF meant re-prioritising the work of Local Transport Improvements Team together with colleagues from an extended team from Highways Planned Services and Communications supported by our consultants WSP. Whilst the delivery of the 2020/21 highways capital improvements are unaffected by this, some schemes and policy development for future years has been impacted. In practice this means that there will be approximately 5 fewer Local Transport Infrastructure Programme (LTIP) schemes ready for implementation from the LTIP during 2021/22. Typically, the LTIP programme might comprise approx. 15 schemes each year. In addition, reviews of the Road Safety Framework and the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans have not made progress. Having 7 schemes in Tranche 1 was perhaps ambitious. Future tranches of EATF are expected and it is therefore necessary to determine how the resource requirements for both programmes of work may be met.
- **Scheme selection** – as discussed above, schemes were derived from existing plans. However, there is a need to ensure that clear evidence of need/demand for each proposed scheme is established and schemes should only be advanced where there is a demonstrable evidence base and supporting rationale. A key issue is how we reach people living locally to see whether a potential route we think suitable may be well used.
- **Monitoring and evaluation** – given the timescales involved there was no opportunity to develop a data baseline. 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. For future schemes we must ensure we have a scheme monitoring and evaluation plan and agreed measures of success that are applicable over an agreed and suitable timescale, noting that modal shift occurs gradually and is conditional on a meaningful and joined-up network.

- **Consultation and engagement** – the need to engage early and meaningfully with all stakeholders so that schemes meet the needs of all road users is central to Gear Change and LTN 1/20. The timescales and resources available meant that we could not engage or consult as we would have wished. Schemes that seek to reallocate road space are controversial in nature and therefore should only be progressed where there has been clear consultation with all key stakeholders. It is also key to ensure that cycle facilities are fit for purpose and here our engagement with the cycle fora is key.
- **Communications plan** – as with consultation and engagement, there was no opportunity to create and implement a communications plan. The most successful schemes around the country were part of an existing, well communicated plan to improve cycling and walking facilities rather than just appearing on street without context. These were parts of the country where cycling plans were well advanced. West Sussex position in tranche 3 of the LCWIP programme means that various LCWIPs, apart from Adur & Worthing, are still in draft form. Future schemes need a clearly funded, resourced and agreed communications plan.
- **Share learning with other authorities** – many authorities have taken part in the EATF and experienced similar difficulties.

3 Applying Lessons Learnt to Tranche 2

3.1 The Tranche 2 bid contained programmes of work which remain to be specified. If the County is successful in its bid to government, the following lessons will be applied:

- Whilst the use of trial / temporary schemes can help inform design decisions this should not generally be the case at junctions, without more time to establish successful designs.
- Schemes will only be progressed where there is a clear need, and local support has been established.
- The County will not reduce its normal operating procedures for scheme development, and schemes will only be implemented following full consultation and engagement. This may mean that schemes are not progressed, and successful bids not accepted if the government criteria hold the County to specific timetables.
- Each scheme will have a clear communications plan that is funded and resourced and is agreed with local members and key stakeholders. This may mean that we need to engage external consultants.
- Each scheme will have clear monitoring and evaluation criteria set out in advance which will be agreed with local members and key stakeholders.
- Should the Tranche 2 bid be successful we will need to determine appropriate resources and timescales for implementation.

4 Gear Change and LTN 1/20 and the review of the Walking and Cycling Strategy.

- 4.1 Gear Change: A bold Vision for Walking and Cycling and LTN 1/20 set out a significant change in the way in which local authorities should approach active travel. Gear Change makes the case for a significant move towards making walking and cycling the mode of choice for shorter journeys. In doing so it highlights the positive impacts this can have on the environment and air quality, safer streets, wellbeing, health, congestion, local businesses and the economy.
- 4.2 The Government also announced the formation of Active Travel England who will be akin to an Ofsted for highway authorities in respect of its approach to cycling and walking. Active Travel England will also administer the remainder of the £2 billion investment announced by the SoS.
- 4.3 LTN 1/20 is the cycling and walking design guide which must be considered when designing such schemes. For the first time this document places segregated cycling and walking facilities as the de facto expectation for the majority of schemes. Whilst it does allow for lower standards, this document in effect sets a high bar from which changes can be made in exceptional circumstances.
- 4.4 The TFG have considered how best to review the County's Walking and Cycling Strategy (WCS) in the light of Gear Change and LTN 1/20. Over the next 6 months the following actions are to be undertaken:
- Officers to review the WCS in relation to the expectations of Gear Change and LTN 1/20 and present findings to the TFG.
 - To work with district and borough colleagues to ensure their work on Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans is reflected in the review of the WCS.
 - To work via the Walking and Cycling steering group to ensure key stakeholders' views are reflected in the review of the WCS.
 - To ensure that the review of the WCS is consistent with ongoing work to update the Local Transport Plan (also assisted by an Executive Task and Finish Group).
 - Officers to prepare an update to the WCS for presentation to the TFG.
 - A draft revised WCS to be issued for consultation following agreement with the Cabinet Member. This will be an opportunity for all to have their say.
 - Any revisions updated accordingly and the revised WCS presented for approval and adoption.
- 4.5 Carrying out the following steps will ensure that the County has an up-to-date document with a prioritised and agreed list of schemes for promotion. This will enable us to do three key things:
- Create a revised and agreed plan that we can communicate (see first bullet of lessons learnt, para 2.2).
 - Begin advanced feasibility and engagement work for priority schemes.

- Take advantage of future bidding opportunities from Active Travel England.

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Appendix A: EATF T1 Combined Report