



ECONOMY REGENERATION AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

19 OCTOBER 2022

REPORT TITLE:	FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND MOVEMENT SCHEMES
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides Members with an update regarding the work undertaken to progress the Future High Streets Fund (FHSF) Movement Schemes in Birkenhead. The schemes are:

- Charing Cross / Grange Road, Birkenhead; and
- Conway Street / Europa Boulevard, Birkenhead

The report requests that Members note the progress made in the development and design of the schemes and seeks approval to undertake public and stakeholder consultation and engagement in relation to both schemes.

The FHSF Movement Schemes will support all five themes of the Wirral Plan 2021-26: Inclusive Economy, Safe & Pleasant Communities, Sustainable Environment, Brighter Futures and Active & Healthy Lives.

Appendix 1 of this report contains information which is exempt from publication in accordance with paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

This matter affects the wards of Birkenhead and Tranmere.

This matter is not a Key Decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee is requested to authorise the Director of Regeneration and Place to:

- (1) Agree, in consultation with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and the Chair and Spokespersons of the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee and the Chair and Spokesperson of the Environment, Transport and Climate Change Committee, the extent, alignment and design of the Future High Street Movement Schemes at Charing Cross / Grange Road, Birkenhead and Conway Street / Europa Boulevard, Birkenhead which will be the subject of the stakeholder and public consultation and engagement;
- (2) Approve and implement the approach to consultation as set out in paragraph 3.8 of this report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 To enable the development of the transport projects which will support the delivery of several key catalyst projects and neighbourhoods identified in Birkenhead 2040, and the wider regeneration of Birkenhead town centre.
- 1.2 To ensure that the Council achieves successful development and delivery of movement projects within the Future High Street Fund programme. FHSF is a wider programme of schemes and interventions.
- 1.3 To ensure that the Council supports schemes which will deliver increased levels of sustainable travel as set out in the emerging Local Plan and to support action required to address the Climate Emergency and the target in the Cool2 Strategy to ‘a complete transition to fossil fuel free local travel by around 2030’.
- 1.4 The FHSF Movement Schemes will deliver high quality active travel infrastructure and support the Council and the LCR to address climate change and work towards net zero. Improvements to active travel infrastructure will support the sustainable regeneration of the Borough as identified in the emerging Local Plan and the Birkenhead 2040 Framework. The proposed schemes will increase the use of active sustainable travel modes, therefore reducing the reliance on the private car.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The Council could decide not to progress with the development and consultation of the FHSF Movement Schemes. This is not considered to be appropriate as delivery of active travel projects is part of the wider transport strategy to support sustainable regeneration and successful delivery of the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and the emerging Local Plan.
- 2.2 The Council could decide not to progress with the development of the FHSF Movement Schemes. This is not considered an appropriate option as failure to deliver improved walking and cycling infrastructure could result in reputational issues for the Council in terms of its commitment to active travel and achieving net zero which could result in future funding allocations being reduced against wider transport, regeneration, and environment programmes. This could also result in the reputational damage with the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities which administers the FHSF programme as well as financial implications regarding the loss of FHSF grant associated to Movements Schemes as well as impact on the wider FHSF programme.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

FHSF Movement Schemes

- 3.1 On 27 May 2022 the Director of Regeneration and Place agreed to approve the appointment of Mott MacDonald Group Limited to carry out outline and detailed design (RIBA stages 3 and 4):

(a) for the Future High Street Fund (“FHSF”) Conway Street / Europa Boulevard movement project via the Fusion 21 Procurement Framework, and

(b) for the FHSF Grange Road / Charing Cross movement project via the Council’s Strategic Transport Contract.

3.2 The direct award of the commissions to Mott MacDonald to undertake the design enabled the work to be undertaken in line with the required delivery timescales. The FHSF grant funding agreement set a programme end date of 31 March 2024.

3.3 The FHSF Movement Schemes Programme includes 2 schemes in Birkenhead;

- Conway Street / Europa Boulevard; and
- Grange Road / Charing Cross

Both schemes are key to the regeneration of Birkenhead town centre, aiming to make the town centre more attractive and support increasing active and sustainable travel movements. Design work for both schemes is underway with a summary of both schemes set out below;

Conway Street / Europa Boulevard

3.4 The proposed concept design introduces a two-way segregated cycleway between Argyle St junction and Conway Place junction. The current pavement on the north side of Conway Street is proposed to be replaced by high quality footway paving, to improve the pedestrian environment and accessibility. This includes the implementation of a new pedestrian/cycle super-crossing between the Bus Station and Europa Boulevard (West). The proposals also incorporate modifications to Europa Boulevard (between Conway Street and Price Street) converting the existing northbound carriageway to pedestrian and cycleway use with the southbound carriageway modified to run as two-way for general traffic. The project is also looking at options to reduce the dominance and speed of vehicles in Claughton Road between the bus station and Hemingford Street to make this a safer and more pleasant environment for pedestrians. This project is funded through the FHSF programme, the LCRCA Active Travel Tranche 3 Programme.

Design of the scheme to RIBA Stage 2 has been completed and a concept plan of the scheme is included within the RIBA 1 / 2 report at Appendix 2 of this report.

Grange Road / Charing Cross

3.5 The proposed concept design includes upgrades to the pedestrianised area of Grange Road plus Charing Cross junction modifications to improve crossing facilities for pedestrians and potential closure of Grange Road West (between Clayton Street and Charing Cross). This project is entirely funded through the FHSF programme.

3.6 Design of the scheme to RIBA Stage 2 has been completed and a concept plan of the scheme is included within the RIBA Stage 1 / 2 report at Appendix 3 of this report.

Ward members and initial local business stakeholder engagement

- 3.7 A number of Birkenhead Ward Member engagement sessions have taken place to provide an update regarding the progress of the schemes and also to inform an initial local business stakeholder consultation on the Charing Cross / Grange Road scheme concepts. The results of the initial business engagement for the Charing Cross / Grange Road scheme are also included within section 6 of the RIBA 1 / 2 report at Appendix 3 of this report.

Proposed Consultation Approach for FHSF Movement Projects

- 3.8 The following summarises the methodology for consultation for the FHSF Movement Schemes.
- Ongoing engagement with Ward Members and Chairs and Spokespersons of the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee and Environment, Transport and Climate Change Committee to discuss progress of the schemes and to seek members input into the methodology and design of the detailed public engagement and consultation material;
 - Further meetings of the Members Active Travel Working Group to provide updates regarding the emerging designs and to input into the approach to consultation;
 - The Wirral Active Travel Forum will be engaged and provided with an update of the work undertaken to date and views of the forum members will be sought on the proposals;
 - The Council's 'Behaviour Change' campaign will support the 'Active Travel' awareness 'lead in' to the consultation for the FHSF schemes;
 - Use of the Council's 'Have Your Say' consultation portal to seek public and stakeholder feedback on the specific FHSF scheme consultation;
 - Ensure the emerging FHSF Movement Scheme proposals are aligned in other Policy, Active Travel project or Masterplan consultations being prepared within the town centre;
 - Preparing consultation material on the FHSF Movement proposals that allows hard copy and online access to 'easy to use' information and graphic material;
 - Utilising video or virtual presentation material to demonstrate how the schemes will look and operate;
 - In person events will be held in an appropriate location; and
 - Consultation with statutory agencies including Merseyside Police and Emergency Services.
- 3.9 It is currently anticipated that consultation for both schemes will commence in November/December 2022. Public or stakeholder consultation will take place after consultation with Ward Members and Chairs and Spokespersons of Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee and Environment, Transport and Climate Change Committee.
- 3.10 Further reports regarding the outcome of consultation will be brought to a future meeting of the Active Travel Members Working Group for consideration. Subject to outcomes of the consultations, construction of FHSF Movement Projects is expected to commence late summer 2023 with completion in early 2024.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. A previous report considered by the Director of Regeneration and Place in June 2022 approved the award of the design funding for the design work to Mott MacDonald which included the production of materials suitable for consultation.
- 4.2 A separate report seeking approval for the acceptable of £2,225,000 of Active Travel Tranche 3 grant funding that the Council has received from Tranche 3 of the Department for Transport Active Travel Programme which will form part of the budget for the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard Movement project will be considered in a separate report to this Committee on 19 October 2022.
- 4.3 The available budget for this scheme is set out in Appendix 1 of this report. Appendix 1 of this report is exempt from publication in accordance with paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council has statutory duties as defined by the Highways Act 1980, Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984, Road Traffic Act 1988, Local Government Act 1972 and the Traffic Management Act 2004.
- 5.2 Should the scheme be implemented, the schemes may require new or amended Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) to secure the objectives of the scheme. Consultation in respect of the TROs is required. Any objections received will be dealt with in line with the Councils Constitution.
- 5.3 The report is being brought to this Committee as it is charged with responsibility for (amongst other matters) formulation and delivery of the Council's strategic development objectives for planning, sustainability and transportation.
- 5.4 A report on this subject matter will be considered by the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee at its meeting of 20 October 2022 and its views will be made known to the Director prior to implementing the recommendations of this committee.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 Existing staff resources in the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Directorates, the Intelligence Team and Communication and Marketing Team will support the development and consultation of the FHSF schemes, supplemented by external specialist support secured via Mott MacDonald where required. Progress of the schemes will also be monitored through the Regeneration and Place Directorate Programme Management Office.
- 6.2 There are no ICT implications.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The Council recognises that risk management is essential in good decision making and is a critical element of good governance. The Council continually develops its risk management processes to manage risk proactively and effectively. The Council has recently established a dedicated Project Management Office (PMO) to support the Regeneration and Place Directorate. The PMO will have oversight of the FHSF Movement Schemes programme and will ensure that it is aligned with the Council's corporate policy to managing risk. A programme Risk Register has been developed. This will be updated throughout the programme lifecycle to assist the Council in identifying, controlling and managing risk.
- 7.2 The project risk register at this preliminary design stage has identified the following key risks with appropriate mitigation measures in place for this stage of the project.
- Project does not deliver required outputs to meet funders requirement
 - Project cannot be delivered to budget due to increasing costs in construction industry
 - Project cannot be delivered within timescales
 - Objections are received to the scheme proposals during consultation phases which cannot be overcome and/or following consultation a decision is taken not to progress the scheme
 - Scheme design fail to align with masterplans and neighbouring schemes
- 7.3 It is recognised that the timescales required by the funders are challenging and therefore to mitigate delivery risk, tasks have been overlapped within the work programme for both schemes to meet delivery / spend deadlines. Market analysis and soft market testing with contractors is also proposed to be undertaken in parallel with the design stages to support the procurement stages of the programme.
- 7.4 Other risks may be identified as the project proceeds through consultation towards implementation. The project risk register set outs actions to mitigate the key risks, and the risks and proposed mitigation measures will be actively monitored by the Regeneration and Place Programme Management Office and reported as appropriate.
- 7.5 Active Travel England will be reviewing the scheme designs and as part funders of the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard scheme will be required to approve any final designs prior to delivery. Failure to design the scheme in accordance with the technical guidance LTN1/20 could result in clawback of funding.
- 7.6 Due to the current macro-economic situation, there is a significant national increase in costs. If this impacts on the projects included within this report, the projects will be scaled down to ensure the total cost does not exceed the grant available.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Wirral Council has a statutory consultation process that is required for the undertaking of work on the adopted highway which will require public consultation.
- 8.2 Consultations will be undertaken in accordance with the following guiding principles:

- It should be at a time when proposals are at a formative stage;
- Must include sufficient reasons for particular proposals to allow those consulted to give intelligent consideration and an intelligent response;
- Those consulted should be made aware of the factors that are of decisive relevance to the decision;
- Adequate time should be given for consideration and response; and
- The product of the consultation should be conscientiously considered by the decision makers in finalising their statutory proposals/ when the ultimate decision is taken.

8.3 Consultation has been undertaken in March 2022 with businesses for the Charing Cross / Grange Road scheme (see Appendix 3 of this report). This feedback is being considered as part of the current design work.

8.4 Paragraph 3.7 of this report contain the details of the proposed Consultation and Engagement Strategy. Ward Members and Chairs and Spokespersons of both Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee and Environment, Climate Change and Transport Committee will be consulted regarding the detailed content of materials.

8.5 The FHSF Movement Schemes consultation will be supported by the Behaviour Change campaign and will also make use of the 'Have Your Say?' online resource as well as providing specific plan or visualisation material to directly affected properties and stakeholders. In person events will be held in an appropriate location.

8.6 The Wirral Active Travel Forum is a formally constituted group which meets quarterly with interested public and private organisations and individuals, to support active travel as a simple, low cost and effective way for people to access life opportunities whilst increasing levels of physical activity in their day-to-day life. Membership of this group is open to all and the forum will continue to be engaged.

8.7 On 4th March 2021, the Economy Regeneration and Development Committee resolved to establish a Members Active Travel Working Group to support the work of Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee. Members of that group will be engaged as the FHSF Movement Scheme proposals develop and a meeting of that group will take place prior to the consultation taking place on the concept plans.

8.8 The Government has recently established Active Travel England (ATE) who are the overseeing executive agency for active travel and will be responsible for funding and providing advice and guidance regarding walking and cycling schemes. ATE will be reviewing the scheme designs and as part funders of the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard scheme will be required to approve any final designs prior to delivery.

8.9. Further consultation will also be required with regard to any changes to TRO's that may be required as part of the final scheme design.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Council has an obligation under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality duty (Sect 149 2011) to show due regard to the duty and show due regard

to mitigate any negative impacts that may affect people with protected characteristics under the Act.

- 9.2 An Equality Impact Assessment for both schemes have been completed. These are published on the Council's website <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Delivery of the FHSF Movement Schemes will enable increased numbers of journeys to be undertaken by sustainable modes, especially for local journeys, therefore reducing resident's reliance on the private car and reducing carbon emissions. Increasing cycling and walking will help combat climate change. By encouraging and enabling people to travel more on foot and by cycle instead of private car harmful emissions will be reduced. Promoting active travel can result in reduced emissions of Nitrogen Dioxide, particulate matter and Carbon Dioxide helping to tackle climate change and improve air quality. Other local benefits include reduction of particulates associated with motor vehicle tyre and brake wear.
- 10.2 Gear Change Cycling Strategy produced by Government in Summer 2020 identifies that mode shift to active transport is one of the most cost-effective ways of reducing transport emissions and that meeting the targets to double cycling and increasing walking would lead to savings of £567million annually from air quality alone and prevent 8,300 premature deaths each year in England and provide opportunity to improve green spaces and biodiversity.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The FHSF Movement Schemes will help promote more active travel and less use of the private car so will help provide equality of accessibility for local residents and businesses, help reduce local congestion and improve safety for vulnerable roads users as well health and air quality.
- 11.2 Sustainable travel is at the heart of the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and emerging Local Plan. In this context that the FHSF Movement Schemes form part of a wider regeneration programme to deliver a prosperous, inclusive economy to benefit local residents.
- 11.3 The project supports the reduction in energy consumption as it will support the Cool 2 target of 'a complete transition to fossil fuel free local travel by around 2030' and helps fulfil the actions within the Climate and Emergency Action Plan.
- 11.4 The schemes will contribute to the Liverpool City Region Pathway to Net Zero Carbon. Building 600km of new and upgraded cycling and walking routes across the LCR over the next few years to support modal shift is identified as part of the Pathway the LCR needs to follow to achieve net zero. Two-thirds of LCR journeys are less than 3 miles, currently half of those are undertaken by car.
- 11.5 Through any future procurement exercises the Council will be looking to maximise further social value activity through creation of local employment and training.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Scheme budgets (exempt from publication in accordance with paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972).

Appendix 2 Conway Street / Europa Boulevard RIBA 1 / 2 Report

Appendix 3 Charing Cross / Grange Road RIBA 1 / 2 Report

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wirral Plan 2026

[Wirral Plan 2025 - Wirral Intelligence Service](#)

Gear Change Plan for Cycling and Walking – Department for Transport July 2020

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycling-and-walking-plan-for-england>

Local Transport Note 1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design - Department for Transport July 2021

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-120>

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
TOWN / HIGH STREET FUNDS: FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND Policy & Resources Committee	17 March 2021
TOWN / HIGH STREET FUNDS: FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND Economy Regeneration & Development Committee	4 March 2021