

ECONOMY REGENERATION AND HOUSING COMMITTEE**19 OCTOBER 2022**

REPORT TITLE:	ACTIVE TRAVEL FUNDING – TRANCHE 3
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE

REPORT SUMMARY

This report seeks approval to accept grant funding of £2,225,000 from the Department for Transport's Active Travel Fund Tranche 3 (ATF T3) Programme, and to allocate the funds to the proposed Conway Street / Europa Boulevard Movement Scheme. The budget secured from the Tranche 3 Programme will enable the scope of the proposed Conway Street / Europa Boulevard Movement Scheme to be extended as set out in Appendix 1 of this report. The scheme is funded via the Future High Streets programme.

The acceptance of the Tranche 3 funding will support all five themes of the Wirral Plan 2021-26: Inclusive Economy, Safe & Pleasant Communities, Sustainable Environment, Brighter Futures and Active & Healthy Lives.

This matter affects the Birkenhead and Tranmere Ward.

This matter is a Key Decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee is recommended to:

- (1) Authorise the Director of Regeneration and Place to accept grant funding of £2,225,000 allocated to Wirral Council by Liverpool City Region Combined Authority from the Active Travel Fund Tranche 3; and
- (2) Recommend to Policy and Resources Committee that the Capital Programme be amended so that the £2,225,000 grant funding allocated to Wirral Council by Liverpool City Region Combined Authority from the Active Travel Fund Tranche 3 be allocated to the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard Movement Scheme.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 To enable the geographical scope of the proposed Conway Street/Europa Boulevard Scheme to be increased, which will support the wider town centre regeneration and facilitate the delivery of a significantly enhanced overall active travel scheme, enabling improved links to the wider existing or proposed active travel network.
- 1.2 To ensure that the Council achieves development and delivery of active travel schemes within the Borough as part of a Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) wide 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 actions 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’.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The Council could decide to not accept the funding. This is not considered to be an appropriate option given that supporting active travel is in line with the Council’s commitment to addressing the climate emergency, improving the health of Wirral’s residents and encouraging alternative modes of transport to the private car.
- 2.2 The funding could be used for other purposes. This is not considered an appropriate option as it would not meet the terms of the grant funding agreement, as the funding is specifically to support delivery of the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard Movement Scheme. Should the funding be used for other purposes the Council would be in breach of the condition of the grant funding agreement.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Future High Street Fund Programme

- 3.1 The Birkenhead FHSF Programme has been a number of years in development owing to the multi staged application process set out by the Government. This commenced in December 2018 when the then Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) launched the programme to provide capital infrastructure investment to help renew and reshape town centres. Following a number of delays owing to COVID-19 and other clarification exercises requested by MHCLG, the Secretary of State for Communities Housing and Local Government announced on 26 December 2020 that Birkenhead had been allocated £24,581,011 and was one of only 15 areas receiving confirmed funding for their full application value.

FHSF Movement Projects

- 3.2 The FHSF programme includes 2 movement schemes:
 - Charing Cross/Grange Road; and

- Conway Street/Europa Boulevard.

This report relates to Conway Street/Europa Boulevard only.

- 3.3 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 will be replaced by high quality footway paving, to improve the pedestrian environment and accessibility. This includes the implementation of a new pedestrian 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 existing southbound carriageway modified to run as two-way for general traffic.

Tranche 3 Active Travel Fund

- 3.4 On 9 May 2020 the Secretary of State for Transport announced a £2 billion funding package for active travel. This funding was to support the delivery of Gear Change, the Governments Cycling and Walking Strategy which set out the ambition that;

“England will be a great walking and cycling nation. Places will be truly walkable. A travel revolution in our streets, towns and communities will have made cycling a mass form of transit. Cycling and walking will be the natural first choice for many journeys with half of all journeys in towns and cities being cycled or walked by 2030.”

- 3.5 In line with Department for Transport guidance, the LCRCA identified the need to develop measures to reduce the dependency on car-based journeys and through segregation provide increased confidence to people wishing to cycle.
- 3.6 The mechanism for the distribution of the funding has been through tranches. Tranches 1 and 2 have been awarded in recent years, and the council has secured £323,380 and £830,000 respectively from these earlier tranches.
- 3.7 LCRCA has recently received further capital grant funding of £11,979,000 known as “Active Travel Fund Tranche 3” from Central Government to deliver schemes which support cycling and walking.
- 3.8 The new executive agency of the Department for Transport, Active Travel England has been established. The agency has conducted an exercise to scrutinise all scheme proposals for their compliance with the new standards provided in the technical design guide known as LTN1/20, for their usefulness to cyclists and pedestrians and for their ability to contribute to a wider network which can transform conditions for active travel.
- 3.9 From the LCRCA allocation, Wirral Council has been awarded £2,225,000 to enable the geographical scope of a proposed movement project on Conway Street/Europa Boulevard to be extended. This project is funded via the Future High Streets Fund programme, Appendix 1 shows the extents of the original scheme to be funded via FHSF and the additional area which the scheme can now extend to, as a result of the Tranche 3 funding.

- 3.10 The detail of the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard Movement Scheme will be the subject of a separate report to this committee.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Active Travel Fund Tranche 3 grant award is a capital sum of £2,225,000. The grant is required to be committed by March 2023 and spent as soon as possible after that date. The LCRCA have agreed that scheme delivery by March 2024 is acceptable.
- 4.2 The additional funding allocated from the Active Travel Tranche 3 Funding to the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard Movement Scheme will be added to the Council's Capital Programme.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council is required to enter into a grant funding agreement with the LCRCA the precise form of which will be settled by the Director of Law and Governance.
- 5.3 Following scheme delivery the Section 151 Officer will be required to sign a declaration confirming that the funding was defrayed in accordance with the grant conditions.
- 5.4 In accordance with the Council's Constitution any amendment to the Capital Programme requested by a committee or officer in excess of £500,000 is reserved to Policy & Resources Committee.
- 5.5 On 30 June 2021 Policy and Resources Committee resolved in the context of a report in relation to Active Travel Funding - Tranche 1, Tranche 2 and Local Authority Capability Funding amongst other matters, that it noted "the significant overlap between the terms of reference of the Economy Regeneration and Development Committee and the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee and requests that these committees work jointly with Economy Regeneration and Development Committee leading on active travel issues which affect major regeneration master plan projects and the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee to lead on all other transport, active travel and road safety strategy and schemes. Officers are asked to liaise with the Chairs of both committees on all transport planning to ensure that the work programmes are always agreed...".
- 5.6 A report on this subject matter was considered by the Active Travel Members Working Group at its meeting of 6 October 2022 and its views have been taken into account in preparing this report.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 Existing staff resources in Legal Services will be used to finalise the grant funding agreement.
- 6.2 Existing staff resources will be used for the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard Scheme, supplemented by external support where required. Future maintenance

costs will be met from the Highway Maintenance Revenue Budget however the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard Movement Scheme will be the subject of a separate report to this committee.

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 programme and will ensure that it is aligned with the Council's corporate policy to managing risk. A programme Risk Register has been developed for the project and this will be updated throughout the programme lifecycle in order to assist the Council in identifying, controlling and managing risk. 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.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 Failure to deliver the elements of the Conway Street /Europa Boulevard Movement Scheme which are funded by the Tranche 3 funding would result in a failure to support the delivery of the priorities of the LCRCA and have reputational impact on Wirral and the LCR. Consequently, this could result in the loss or clawback of funding or impact on future funding decisions and awards.
- 7.4 The scheme has been prepared at concept level and further work is ongoing to progress the detail of the design to be the subject of consultation. There is a risk that the scheme will not be supported. Aspects of the scheme may also be subject to the requirement of a Traffic Regulation Order, and delivery may be dependent on resolving objections to proposals during consultation.
- 7.5 Failure to adhere to the Gear Change strategy and associated technical guidance LTN1/20 may result in the Council failing to meet the standards set by the new Active Travel England body. The scheme design is required to be shared with the Active Travel England Body at an appropriate stage to ensure compliance. Active Travel England will assess Wirral's performance with respect to scheme delivery and this will be taken into account when considering future funding allocations.
- 7.6 The current macro-economic picture is dictating significant increases in inflation and cost of materials which may impact the total cost of works. If cost increases do materialise, the scope of the projects will decrease to ensure that the total cost does not exceed the value of the grant received.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The relevant ward members have been engaged regarding the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard Movement Scheme and the proposed joint funding package comprising of FHSF and Active Travel Tranche 3 that is required to deliver the scheme. Ward Members will continue to be engaged as the scheme progresses.
- 8.2 Feedback has been received from the Members Active Travel Working Group regarding the Tranche 3 funding award and the proposed intended use of the funding to extend the geographical scope of the proposed Conway Street/Europa Boulevard Movement Scheme. The Working Group will continue to be engaged as the scheme progresses,
- 8.3 Wirral Council has a statutory consultation process that is required for the undertaking of work on the adopted highway which will require public consultation, objections to which would be considered under the Scheme of Delegation in the Council's Constitution.
- 8.4 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;
 - The product of the consultation should be conscientiously taken into account by the decision makers in finalising their statutory proposals/ when the ultimate decision is taken.
- 8.5 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 as these programmes develop.
- 8.6 The LCRCA is also required to evidence to the DfT that appropriate consultation has been undertaken with local stakeholders. It is noted that unilateral support is not needed, but instead a requirement to demonstrate that reasonable consultation has taken place and reasonable adjustments made to schemes in response to concerns.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2. Whilst there are no equality implications arising from this report, the associated actions arising from the delivery may need to assess any equality issues and

mitigate any negative impact that may emerge.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 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. Providing infrastructure and promoting active travel can result in reduced local emissions of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), particulate matter (PM) and CO₂ helping to tackle climate change and improve air quality.
- 10.2 Gear Change 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 Active Travel Fund Tranche 3 scheme 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 the Active Travel Tranche 3 scheme is 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 project will contribute to the LCR 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 – Conway Street/Europa Boulevard Movement Scheme Funding Allocations

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

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

Cycling Infrastructure Design Local Transport Note 1/20

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

Department for Transport Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy 2017

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/918442/cycling-walking-investment-strategy.pdf

Sustrans Bike Life Report Liverpool City Region

<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/bike-life/bike-life-liverpool-city-region/>

Wirral Liveable Streets Consultation Summer 2020

<https://wirralliveablestreets.commonplace.is/comments/5ee10851c9dc0f515e52f007>

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
OFFICER DECISION NOTICE BIRKENHEAD FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND: CONWAY STREET/EUROPA BOULEVARD AND CHARING CROSS/GRANGE ROAD MOVEMENT PROJECT	7 June 2022
ECONOMY REGENERATION & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE ACTIVE TRAVEL FUNDING – TRANCHE 1, TRANCHE 2 AND LOCAL AUTHORITY CAPABILITY FUNDING	8 June 2021
ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE 'GEAR CHANGE' DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT PLAN FOR CYCLING AND WALKING	16 March 2021
POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE: TOWN/HIGH STREET FUNDS: FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND	17 March 2021
ECONOMY REGENERATION & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH AN ACTIVE TRAVEL MEMBER WORKING GROUP	4 March 2021

ECONOMY REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE: TOWN/HIGH STREET FUNDS: FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND	4 March 2021
CABINET REPORT: NEW FERRY AND BIRKENHEAD FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND	23 March 2020