



ECONOMY REGENERATION AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

16 OCTOBER 2023

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

REPORT SUMMARY

This report seeks approval to spend £1,625,000 of additional Active Travel Tranche 3 grant funding which has been made available to the Council from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) and to amend the 2023/2024 capital programme to allocate the funding to the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard Movement Scheme.

The Wirral Plan 2021-2026 sets out the Council’s vision to secure the best possible future for our residents, defined by the community prosperity we create and supported by our excellent people and services. This proposal directly supports the following key themes within that plan:

- A cleaner, greener borough which celebrates, protects and improves our environment and urgently tackles the environmental emergency;
- A prosperous inclusive economy where local people can get good jobs and achieve their aspirations; and
- Safe, vibrant communities where people want to live and raise their families.

This matter affects the Birkenhead and Tranmere Ward.

This is a Key Decision owing to the significance in terms of the effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the Borough, as well as being in excess of £500,000 in monetary value.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee is recommended to:

- (1) Authorise the Director of Regeneration and Place to utilise the £1,625,000 from Active Travel Fund Tranche 3 received by the Council from Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to support the delivery of the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard Movement Scheme; and
- (2) Recommend to Policy and Resources Committee that the Capital Programme for 2023/2024 be amended so that the additional £1,625,000 grant funding from the Active Travel Fund Tranche 3 allocated to the Council by Liverpool

City Region Combined Authority be allocated to the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard Movement Scheme.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 The funding outlined in this report has been allocated to the Council for the delivery of the specific project identified and cannot be used for any other purpose. If the funding was not accepted, it would have to be returned to the LCRCA.
- 1.2 To ensure that the Council achieves the delivery of regeneration and active travel projects within the Borough as identified in the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework and as part of a Liverpool City Region (LCR) wide programme of projects and interventions.
- 1.3 To ensure that the Council supports projects 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 have decided not to accept the funding. This is not considered to be an appropriate option given that the project is key to the regeneration of Birkenhead town centre and supporting active travel is in line with our commitment to addressing the climate emergency, improving the health of our residents and encouraging alternative modes of transport to the private car.
- 2.2 Use the funding to deliver an alternative scheme or programme is not an appropriate option. A condition of the grant funding agreement is that it cannot be used for other purposes so doing this would not meet the terms of the grant award which has been specifically provided to develop and deliver the projects that will enable active travel. The funding would then be subject to claw-back and breaking the terms of the grant funding agreement could risk future funding awards.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Council via the LCRCA had previously been awarded £2,225,000 from the Active Travel Fund Tranche 3 programme to support the delivery of the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard Movement Project. On 19th October 2022 the Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee approved (amongst other matters) that the Director of Regeneration and Place be authorised to accept and allocate the grant funding of £2,225,000. The Active Travel 3 ("ATF3") funding was provided to support the £3,904,059 of Future High Street Funding that had already been awarded to the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard scheme. In November 2022 Active Travel England invited authorities to review their Tranche 3 projects with a view to addressing the impact of inflation since the original bid was submitted.

- 3.2 On 15 December 2022 the LCRCA submitted a change control request to Active Travel England to seek additional funding to address the impact of inflation and also to increase the scope of the scheme to include additional public realm and active travel facilities to link the proposed Conway Street super crossing to Claughton Road.
- 3.3 On 14th March 2023 Active Travel England notified the LCRCA that the funding bid for ATF3 for Conway Street/Europa Boulevard had been successful and, subject to a design review and inspection to be undertaken with Active Travel England, an additional £1,625,000 had been awarded to the scheme.
- 3.4 Two phases of consultation have been undertaken on the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard scheme and on 24 June 2023 the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee delegated the power to make a decision regarding the outcome of the Phase 2 statutory consultation undertaken regarding the Birkenhead Town Centre Movement Schemes to the Director of Neighbourhoods, to be taken in consultation with the Chairs of both the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee and the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee. The feedback from the consultation is currently being considered by officers and responses are being prepared which will be reported to the Director of Neighbourhoods shortly.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The capital funding of £1,625,000 from the Active Travel Tranche 3 programme is required to be fully committed by no later than 31 March 2024.
- 4.2 The decision to accept the additional £1,625,000 Tranche 3 grant funding was taken by the Section 151 Officer in accordance with 2(d) of Part(C) of the Constitution 'Overview and Scheme of Delegations of Authority to Officers'. In respect to the receipt of grant funding, express delegation is given to the Section 151 Officer. Relevant Chief Officers are required to subsequently report the acceptance of the grant funding to the appropriate Committee.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council is required to enter into a grant funding agreement with the LCRCA. Advice will be required from Legal Services prior to entering into such an agreement. The Council will have to ensure that it is able to comply with all grant conditions, as a breach could result in clawback of the grant and would impact on the viability of the projects.
- 5.2 Following on from the acceptance of the grant funding allocation by the S151 officer the Director of Law and Governance will embody that acceptance by way of a formalised grant funding agreement.

- 5.3 Expenditure of the grant funding will be undertaken in line with Subsidy Control legislation, the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
- 5.4 Following scheme delivery of the projects the Section 151 Officer will be required to sign declaration confirming that the funding was defrayed in accordance with the grant conditions.
- 5.5 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.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

- 6.1 Existing staff resources will be used for the delivery of the project, supplemented by external support where required.
- 6.2 There are no ICT or asset implications.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 Failure to deliver the project would be viewed negatively by the LCRCA and may impact future funding allocations.
- 7.2 The capital funding for the Tranche 3 project must be committed by 31 March 2024. Failure to achieve this date would leave the Council open to the risk of claw back of funding. Subject to the consideration of the statutory consultation the project could commence on site in early 2024 therefore this risk is considered minimal.
- 7.3 The Active Travel Tranche 3 grant is awarded on the condition that authorities will deliver the funded projects in conjunction with ATE, that scheme designs are appropriately reviewed and inspected by ATE, and that officers will work with ATE to resolve to ATE's satisfaction any scheme design shortcomings that they identify. Failure to rectify identified design shortcomings with ATE could lead to a downgrade in the LCRCA's capability level which may therefore reduce future funding payments for Wirral and other LCR authorities. This risk is considered negligible as officers have continued to work with ATE throughout the design of the project.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 As per the condition of the funding awards officers will work with Active Travel England throughout the stages of design to seek appropriate approvals prior to delivery.
- 8.2 The Active Travel Members working group and the Wirral Active Travel Forum will continue to be engaged throughout the programme delivery and receive regular updates on progress.

8.3 Consultation for projects will be achieved through the use of the “Have Your Say” portal, letter drops for affected properties as well targeted stakeholder engagement. BirkenEds place has also be used to support consultation.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Whilst there are no equality implications arising from this report, the associated actions arising from the delivery of the individual programmes may result in a further need to assess any equality issues and mitigate any negative impact that may emerge.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Liverpool City Region Combined Authority have published their Five Year Climate Action Plan. It builds upon the Pathway to Net Zero document, which set out our ambition to achieve net zero by 2040 or sooner. 67% of the carbon emissions from transport in Liverpool City Region are from cars. To reduce the environmental impact, we need to encourage people out of cars to walk, wheel and use public transport.

10.2 Delivery of active travel projects will enable increased numbers of journeys to be undertaken by sustainable modes, especially for local journeys, therefore reducing residents’ 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 the Environment and Climate change Emergency.

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 This project helps deliver Wirral’s wider Community Wealth Building commitments to deliver a prosperous, inclusive economy that benefits local residents.

11.2 It supports several key Community Wealth Building aims, including: Maximising the Wirral Pound – buying locally wherever possible to support local businesses and employment. Evidence shows that making changes that are good for walking and cycling are also good for local businesses. Local people who walk and cycle spend more in local shops than those who drive as they visit more often and cumulatively spend more.

11.3 The project also supports community development – enabling resilient local communities that are more sustainable by protecting the environment, minimising waste and energy consumption and using other resources more efficiently.

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APPENDICES

None

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>

Gear Change Plan One Year One– Department for Transport July 2021
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1007815/gear-change-one-year-on.pdf

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee Active Travel Funding	08/06/2021
Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee Future High Streets Fund Movement Schemes	19/10/2022
Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee Active Travel Funding – Tranche 3	19/10/2022
Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee Birkenhead Road Active Travel Scheme	08/03/2023
Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee Birkenhead Town Centre Movement Schemes	24/06/2023