North Yorkshire County Council

Business and Environmental Services

Executive Members

21 May 2021

Active Travel Fund Consultation – Recommendation and Next Steps

Report of the Assistant Director – Highways and Transportation

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To seek approval from the Corporate Director – Business and Environmental Services (BES) in consultation with the BES Executive Members to proceed with development of the recommended schemes for the Active Travel Fund following the outcome of a public consultation exercise.

2.0 Background

2.1 Following the Covid-19 lockdown in early 2020, the Department for Transport (DfT) made funding available through the Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) to provide temporary infrastructure to aid social distancing. As a result, schemes were rolled out across the country.

2.2 In tranche 1 the total indicative allocation from the DfT to North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) was £266,000 but only 50% funding was awarded following their assessment of our Tranche 1 bid. The County Council added match funding of £133,000 to complete all of the schemes set out in the tranche 1 bid given the importance of the proposed measures to the Covid-19 recovery strategy.

2.3 Further to this the DfT announced a second round of funding known as the Active Travel Fund (ATF). The fund was renamed with the removal of the word 'emergency' due to the longer timescales involved in approving the fund and for the subsequent delivery. Active Travel funding is being made available to spend in 2021/22, and is intended to enhance streets, while providing space to enable non-motorised users to observe social distancing.

2.4 Tranche 2 funding is to be used to support both temporary, low-cost schemes, and permanent schemes with a short lead-time, so long as they meet the criteria outlined below.

- Can it be delivered in 20/21? (this subsequently changed to 21/22 because of a delay in announcing the funding allocations)
- Does it replace a well-used bus route?
- Does it provide a segregated cycle /pedestrian route or close roads to traffic?
- Does it cater for BOTH cycling AND walking?
- Can it be delivered for less than our allocation of £1.065m?

2.5 This was a challenging set of criteria and a significant number of potential schemes had to be ruled out because of deliverability or cost. The schemes put forward to be funded are those that best fit the EATF criteria.

2.6 We made an ambitious bid for £1.465m of funding for five schemes, requesting more than our £1.065m indicative allocation, after assessing 300 schemes across the county, including some received from the public, interest groups and county councillors. The final amount awarded to NYCC was £1,011,750, which is £53k less than our indicative allocation or 95%. The letter from the DfT set out that the amount awarded will be split 80/20 between capital and revenue; £809,400 capital, £202,350 revenue.

2.7 The schemes in the Tranche 2 bid were:

- Oatlands Drive, Harrogate £215k
- A59 (Maple Close, Harrogate to Knaresborough) £250k
- Victoria Avenue, Harrogate £250k
- Guisborough Road. Whitby £250k
- Market Place, Helmsley to Kirkdale Lane £500k

2.8 Following a report to BES Executive Members on 8th December 2020 the route from Helmsley to Kirkdale lane was dropped as it was an additional scheme, which was over and above the allocation. This leaves four remaining schemes. The four remaining schemes total £965,000, which is leaving a balance of £155,600 of the capital element of the award unallocated.

3.0 Public Engagement

3.1 As part of developing our proposals, a programme of consultation is a condition of the DfT funding and is required be undertaken before any scheme can be built. We have engaged in two rounds of consultation with the local communities to get their thoughts about the proposed pedestrian and cycle improvements.

3.2 A period of initial engagement took place, in the form of a survey, from 9 to 23 February 2021, during which we asked for some details of people's travel patterns and for some initial thoughts on the potential active travel corridors in Whitby and Harrogate. The feedback provided was extremely helpful in allowing us to identify areas of interest within the community.

3.3 A total of 2,299 people responded to the survey with 226 people commenting on the Whitby scheme and 2,073 people commenting on the proposals for Harrogate.

3.4 The majority of respondents supported the proposal for the route corridor in Whitby (63% support/strongly support). The proportion of respondents supporting the proposals for the A59 Harrogate Road (44% support/strongly support) and Victoria Avenue (44% support/strongly support) schemes, at this stage, were greater than the proportion opposing – suggesting overall support for these. The Oatlands Drive scheme, however, had a majority of respondents opposing the proposal (57% oppose/strongly oppose). A full list of survey results can be found at Appendix A.

3.5 Although, at this stage, NYCC was consulting on the broad route corridors for each scheme, the detail in the original bid, which included proposals for a one-way system on Oatlands Drive, Harrogate, was investigated by the local community and published in local media. Subsequently, the proposal received strong opposition with more than 100 objections sent to the County Council via email. The guidance from the DfT suggests that schemes that have strong opposition are unlikely to be acceptable for delivery. Taking into consideration the advice from the DfT and the limited timescales to investigate the full implications of this proposal on the wider area the one way element of the proposal for Oatlands Drive was removed in discussion with the Corporate Director, Business and Environmental Services and Executive Member for Access.

3.6 A further round of engagement took place from 22 March to 12 April 2021 to present the detail of each scheme in the form of draft designs, which included changes from the original design based on the feedback received, and to ask for feedback on the opportunities or challenges they may present.

3.7 841 responses were received for this consultation, 741 relating to Harrogate and 100 for Whitby. The full survey results can be found in Appendix B and C.

3.8 During the second round of engagement, we organised two public meetings, one for Harrogate and one for Whitby. People were invited to listen to the proposals and ask questions. The meetings were held on Microsoft Teams and people were able to ask their questions via a chat box. Approximately 101 viewers attended the Harrogate public meeting and 5 viewers attended the Whitby public meeting. We used the meeting to;

- Explain what the Active Travel Fund is
- To outline the transport appraisal process
- To present the scheme details
- To answer questions from the public
- To highlight next steps

The list of questions asked at the meetings and their responses can be found at Appendix D.

3.9 The majority of respondents to the phase 2 survey supported the proposal for the overall route in Whitby (27% majority support). There was a greater proportion of supportive responses, than negative, for the scheme details including introduction of a crossing of the B1460 (47% majority support), a new crossing on the A171 (46% support/strongly support) and a shared use path on the northern extent of the A171 (47% support/strongly support).

3.10 A number of respondents said that they were concerned that the scheme does not provide a cohesive link to the other cycle routes such as the Cinder Track and key employment or education sites. NYCC has committed to deliver additional connections to the proposed route that are possible within the allocation of funding; there is a desire to enhance the scheme should more funding become available.

3.11 The proportion of respondents supporting the proposals for the overall route on the A59 Harrogate Road (46% majority support) and Victoria Road (42% majority support) schemes were greater than the proportion opposing – suggesting, again, overall approval for these routes.

3.12 On the A59 the highest proportion of support for the scheme detail was to reduce the speed limit from 50mph to 40mph with (64% majority support) and improvements to the crossing facility close to Bilton Drive (60% majority support). Respondents expressed concern that as the route is up hill, it is likely to be unattractive to less confident cyclists.

3.13 On Victoria Avenue the proposal to introduce cycle lanes with a buffer zone received the greatest amount of support (45% support/strongly support) closely followed by improvements at the junction of Station Parade (42% support/strongly support). Concerns were raised about the safety of the proposed ‘floating’ bus stops. A safety audit will be carried out on all schemes and the latest guidance for providing facilities for pedestrians and cyclists will be followed.

3.14 The Oatlands Drive scheme had 50% of people oppose or strongly oppose the overall route. The scheme details that received overwhelming objection (59% oppose and strongly oppose) were the proposals to implement one-way filters at two junctions on the route. Other items within the package received overall support including a reduction of speed from 30mph to 20mph from Hookstone Road to York Place (64% support/strongly support), parking restrictions from Slingsby Walk to York Place (62% support/strongly support) and a pedestrian crossing at Slingsby Walk (65% support/strongly support).

3.15 In addition to the survey responses there were approximately 70 notes of objection sent to NYCC about the one-way filters included in the Oatlands Drive design. In summary, the main issues raised were that people felt that the filters would cause:

1. Increased congestion and in turn poor air quality through increased vehicle emissions
2. An increase in through traffic on the Saints estate
3. Safety issues, particularly outside St Aidan's school, but also for residents

4.0 Consideration of the Consultation Responses

4.1 With overall support for the Whitby proposals, it is recommended that this scheme be taken forward to Stage 2 of the Transport Appraisal Process – Further Appraisal which looks at a small number of better performing options in order to obtain sufficient information to enable decision-makers to make a rational and auditable decision about whether or not to proceed with the intervention. The focus of analysis is on estimating the likely performance and impact of intervention(s) in sufficient detail.

4.2 The Victoria Avenue and A59 schemes have overall support; therefore, it is recommended that these schemes are taken forward to stage 2 of the Transport Appraisal Process – Further Appraisal. It is suggested that the Victoria Avenue scheme is delivered as a permanent scheme and the A59 is delivered with semi-permanent infrastructure and the changes to the speed limit are trialled as part of an Experimental Order. Permanent schemes are not intended to be removed or changed within a specific time; permanent schemes include prior consultation on the proposed scheme design, a 21-day notice period for statutory consultees and others who can lodge objections. Experimental Orders are used to trial schemes that may then be made permanent.

4.3 50% of people oppose or strongly oppose the overall route for the Oatlands Drive. The one-way filters proposed at St Hilda's and St Winifred's Road junctions on the route received a significant number of objections (59% majority oppose). Officers have reviewed the filters to identify if we could remove this detail from the package and still deliver a scheme that meets the overall criteria for the funding. Removing the filters from the design means that overall safety on the route would not be improved and use of the streets as a through route is likely to continue.

4.4 The intention for the filters, in the design, were:

1. To simplify movements and improve safety outside of the school
    a. NYCC receives regular complaints about school parking, congestion and manoeuvres around the area in question; by introducing the filter we would reduce the number of potential conflicts with vehicles and improve the safety for all users.
2. To prevent 'rat running' through the estate
    a. For vehicles that typically use the streets as a through route installation of the filters, complemented by the traffic calming measures, may mean the

route is deemed too onerous

It is clear from the responses that further work is required to understand the impact of the one-way filters and other scheme details on the local area.

4.5 Officers also considered the option of delivering some of the scheme elements that had overwhelming support namely; a reduction of speed from 30mph to 20mph from Hookstone Road to York Place (64% support/strongly support) and parking restrictions from Slingsby Walk to York Place (62% support/strongly support). Officers concluded that delivering these items in isolation would displace existing problems and also limit opportunities to deliver a wider package of improvements in the future. The parking restrictions at Slingsby Walk-York Place, for example, could displace parking into the Saints residential estate, which would exacerbate existing parking issues. It is felt that parking, in the whole area, needs to be reviewed as a package. Additionally the 20mph zone comes with a requirement to install traffic calming measures (speed tables) which may not be the most appropriate measure or be in the most desirable location if the wider package of improvements is delivered in the future.

4.6 There are additional concerns that a departure from standard (LTN 1/20 Cycling Design Guidance), specifically in relation to the cycle lanes between Slingsby Walk and York Place, would not be acceptable to the DfT. The original design, making Oatlands Drive one way from Hookstone Drive to York Place, enabled cycle lanes to be included that meet the required standard, however, removing this element of the package means the lanes are outside of the acceptable minimum width. DfT invite discussions about a departure from standard where it is not possible to meet the requirements and they assess each one on a case by case basis. However, in the case of Oatlands Drive, as there is a potential solution that would enable delivery of cycle lanes that meet the standard, which did not proceed based on public opinion rather than a physical constraint, it is expected that departure from standard would be unacceptable to the DfT which would mean the scheme does not meet the funding criteria.

4.7 It is recommended, therefore, that the Oatlands Drive scheme be removed from the Active Travel Fund proposals. The work to date on this scheme is not abortive and has highlighted opportunities to deliver wider improvements but more time is needed to ensure it is the right solution for the wider area. It is recommended that the County Council look to commission a separate Oatlands Constituency Feasibility Study, to enable reassessment of the options and completing traffic modelling for a scheme that could be applied across a wider area than the current extents of the ATF scheme. There are opportunities that we do not have the time or funding to consider within the ATF funding window (2021/22) which could have a bigger impact on the area overall. NYCC will seek confirmation from the DfT that we can use some of the ATF revenue funding for this. This work would seek to link up with other local work streams such as the Harrogate Transport Improvements Package.

4.8 Removal of the Oatlands Drive scheme means the three remaining schemes, which total £750,000, fall under the capital element of the funding award (£809,400) by £59,400.

It is proposed that some of this funding be reallocated to deliver an extended scheme along Guisborough Road, Whitby, which includes improvements to cycling and walking infrastructure along Mayfield Road to provide a better link to the town centre, the cinder track and key employment/education sites such as Caedmon College. More work needs to be done to investigate the options but indicatively this could include lining, signing and

improvements to the kerb and footway at a cost of approximately £40,000. If this proposal is agreeable we will feedback our intentions to the DfT.

5.0 Next Steps

5.1 The feedback from the public engagement will be used to further influence the designs and once agreement has been reached on the schemes that are approved for progression they will proceed to Stage 2 of the Transport Appraisal Process – Further Appraisal.

5.2 The following is an indicative timeframe for schemes which are approved to progress through the Active Travel Fund:

1.	Approval to proceed with recommendation	May 21
2.	Design, Costings, Tender Evaluation, Advertising TRO's	May 21 – Jul 21
3.	Approval from Executive	23 July 21
4.	Tender Process/Award	Aug 21 – Oct 21
5.	Construction	Nov 21 – Mar 22

The schemes must be delivered by 31 March 2022.

5.3 For the Oatlands Drive scheme, which we have recommended does not progress through ATF, and instead is progressed as a separate feasibility study it is recommended that a detailed brief be drawn up with work to commence in Summer 21.

6.0 Finance

6.1 The final amount awarded to NYCC was £1,011,750, which is £53k less than our indicative allocation (£1.065m) or 95%. The letter from the DfT set out that the amount awarded will be split 80/20 between capital and revenue; £809,400 capital, £202,350 revenue. The three schemes proposed for delivery total £750,000, as set out below, which falls under the capital element of the award (£809,400) by £59,400. It is proposed that some of this funding be reallocated to deliver an extended scheme along Guisborough Road, Whitby at a cost of approximately £40k as this is in line with the funding criteria. This makes the total cost of the Guisborough Road, Whitby scheme £290k.

6.2 In summary the schemes recommended to go ahead are:

• A59 (Maple Close, Harrogate to Knaresborough)	£250k
• Victoria Avenue, Harrogate	£250k
• Guisborough Road. Whitby	£290k
Total:	£790k

Revenue funding of £202,350 is expected to be spent as follows:

- £34,000 already spent on consultation
- £48,350 on additional design costs
- £20,000 on Monitoring and Evaluation of all schemes
- £100,000 on behaviour change measures

6.3 Contingency funding has been built into the programme and any spend over and above this will be covered by the Highways & Transport capital programme. If, as recommended, only three schemes are taken forward there will be a larger contingency fund. The amount of contingency also depends upon whether any revenue funding can be capitalised and the cost of engagement and consultation. Officers are in discussions with DfT officials about the possibility of capitalising some

of the revenue funding.

7.0 Legal

7.1 There are no legal issues arising from this report.

8.0 Equalities

8.1 Consideration has been given to the potential for any equality impacts arising from the recommendations. It is the view of officers that at this stage the recommendations do not have an adverse impact on any of the protected characteristics identified in the Equalities Act 2010. A copy of the Equality Impact Assessment screening form is attached as Appendix E.

9.0 Climate Change

9.1 There are no climate change issues arising from this report. A copy of the Climate Change Impact Assessment screening form is attached as Appendix F.

10.0 Recommendations

10.1 To seek approval from the Corporate Director – Business and Environmental Services and in consultation with the BES Executive Members to proceed with the following schemes through the Active Travel Fund as a result of the public consultation exercise:

- Guisborough Road. Whitby
- A59 (Maple Close, Harrogate to Knaresborough)
- Victoria Avenue, Harrogate

10.2 Reallocate the remaining £59,400 of capital funding to investigate and deliver an extended Whitby scheme along Mayfield Road any monies remaining after this expenditure should cover any overspend.

10.3 Draft a brief for an Oatlands Constituency feasibility study funded from remaining ATF budgets as set out earlier in this report subject to agreement with the DfT.

BARRIE MASON
Assistant Director - Highways and Transportation

Author of Report: Keisha Moore

Background Documents: None