

Active Travel

Executive summary

This report is to inform members of the Environment Select Committee of the work being undertaken to develop and deliver a programme of walking and cycling improvements (Active Travel) in Wiltshire.

The Council's Business Plan recognises that keeping socially, physically and mentally active has direct and positive impacts on brain function, weight management, reducing disease and the ability to enjoy life.

The Government is keen to promote Active Travel because of the health benefits and the contribution it makes to improving air quality and reducing carbon emissions. In recent years additional funding has been made available for Active Travel initiatives.

Wiltshire Council was awarded £147,692 Capability Funding in October 2021 based on a proposed programme of projects.

The Council subsequently submitted three bids to the DfT's Active Travel Fund totalling £705,000, which unfortunately were not successful.

The Council has established an Active Travel Steering Group (ATSG) which is chaired by the Director of Highways and Transport and attended by the Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste, Street Scene and Flooding. This is attended by senior officers from all directorates in order to share intelligence on the best ways of boosting active travel in Wiltshire and ensure that active travel is embedded within other projects and programmes across the council.

The Group is overseeing the development of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) and developing schemes and initiatives for future bids should funding become available.

Proposal

That the committee:

- a) Welcomes the work being undertaken on active travel and the development of LCWIPs.
- b) Notes the establishment of the Active Travel Steering Group.
- c) Recognises the potential for increased active travel through the development of a strategy in connection with the development of LTP4.

Reason for proposal

To ensure the members of the Committee are kept informed regarding the work being undertaken in connection with active travel in the county.

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Active Travel

Purpose of report

1. To inform the members of the Environment Select Committee of the work being undertaken to develop and deliver a programme of active travel in Wiltshire.

Background

2. The Council's Business Plan recognises that keeping socially, physically and mentally active has direct and positive impacts on brain function, weight management, reducing disease and the ability to enjoy life. Improving all these for residents will lead to greater happiness and improved independence. Walking and cycling provide good opportunities for exercise.
3. The Government is keen to promote active travel because of the health benefits and the contribution it makes to improving air quality and reducing carbon emissions. In recent years additional funding has been made available for Active Travel initiatives.
4. In October 2020 the Government announced a £2 billion cycling funding package and released its cycling and walking strategy *Gear Change; a bold vision for cycling and walking*. This was followed by the publication of the Department for Transport (DfT) *Cycle Infrastructure Design guide, Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20*.
5. LTN1/20 states that high quality infrastructure is required to promote the further take up of cycling, and that space for cycling should be provided within the highway with cyclists separated from vehicles where there is a high traffic volume. Furthermore, LTN 1/20 makes it clear that cycle schemes that do not comply with the design guide will not be funded by DfT.
6. In the summer of 2020, in the midst of the pandemic, the government created an Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) to enable local authorities to bid for funding to deliver temporary schemes that would enable people to exercise safely by walking and cycling on traffic free routes.
7. The Council submitted 5 scheme bids to Tranche 1 of the EATF and a further 6 scheme bids to Tranche 2 of the EATF (see Appendix 1 – Table 1).
8. In April 2021 the Government launched its Capability Fund which provided revenue funding for local authorities to deliver active travel schemes and behavioural change initiatives. Wiltshire Council was awarded £147,692 in October 2021 based on a proposed programme of projects (see Appendix 1 – Table 2).

9. The EATF gave rise to the DfT's Active Travel Fund (ATF) which was launched in the summer of 2021 whereby local authorities bid for capital funding to deliver *Gear Change* and LTN1/20 compliant walking and cycling schemes. Three schemes went forward for consideration from Wiltshire amounting to a total of £705,000 (See Appendix 1 - Table 3). Unfortunately, Wiltshire's bids were not successful, and the council was not awarded any funding.
10. In February 2022, the Council's Climate Strategy was adopted which highlights the need to promote walking, cycling and other forms of active travel in order to be carbon neutral by 2030.
11. During 2022 a draft LCWIP¹ has been prepared for Salisbury alongside a draft Wiltshire LCWIP which provides a framework plan and highlights interurban cycle routes.
12. The Council will shortly be preparing its fourth Local Transport Plan (LTP4). As part of the preparation of LTP4, an active travel strategy will be developed that will include walking, cycling and other forms of active travel. This will replace the current Cycling Strategy that was produced for LTP3, which contained the cycle networks that have been developed for each town.

Main considerations for the committee

Governance

13. The planning, promotion and monitoring of active travel initiatives in Wiltshire Council is being overseen by the Active Travel Steering Group (ATSG) which is chaired by the Director of Highways and Transport and attended by the Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste, Street Scene and Flooding. This is attended by senior officers from all directorates in order to share intelligence on the best ways of boosting active travel in Wiltshire and ensure that active travel is embedded within other projects and programmes across the council.
14. The Active Travel Delivery Group sits underneath the ATSG and consists of officers whose role is to deliver the programme of schemes and initiatives that are identified by the ATSG. The Group reports regularly to the ATSG on progress.

Capability Fund

15. One of the tasks of the ATSG is to oversee the delivery of the council's Capability Fund programme. A key objective is to develop LCWIPs for other Wiltshire towns as this is one of DfT's funding criteria. As such, LCWIPs are currently being prepared for the towns of Chippenham, Trowbridge and Devizes. It is anticipated that LCWIPs in the other market towns will be produced over the next 2 to 3 years depending on funding availability.
16. In order to deliver a programme of active travel promotions and initiatives, some of the Capability Funding has been used to commission Sustrans to provide an

¹ Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan [Planning local cycling and walking networks - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-local-cycling-and-walking-networks)

Active Travel Officer to work in Wiltshire over the summer and autumn 2022. The postholder will work with schools and businesses to promote walking and cycling and arrange bike repair workshops and other events.

Cycle schemes

17. Town cycle networks have been developed in the 15 towns in Wiltshire. The networks set out a series of cycle routes which link origins and key trip destinations. Work is ongoing to deliver the infrastructure that is needed to implement the networks on the ground. The networks will form a basis for the additional work that is needed to develop LCWIPs for these towns.
18. While the focus for cycle infrastructure has been on the town cycle networks, inter-urban routes, such as the Bradford-on-Avon to Winsley shared use path will be delivered shortly.
19. The Easton Lane link between Chippenham and Corsham has recently been completed and the Trowbridge to Melksham scheme is under construction.
20. Work is also underway to develop a River Park cycle route in Salisbury as part of the Salisbury River Park masterplan.
21. A current priority for development is the Royal Wootton Bassett to Swindon cycleway where it is planned to deliver a shared-use path that would partly be on the highway but primarily across open country. This is being developed with National Highways (NH) and the intention is that the estimated cost of £4.7m will be funded by NH's Cycling Designated Funding with a local contribution from Wiltshire Council. A preferred route has been agreed and NH are currently negotiating with landowners.
22. The Trowbridge Future High Street Fund project aims to increase footfall in the town centre and includes connectivity improvements to five key pedestrian 'gateway' routes into the town with the delivery of environmental enhancements, infrastructure improvements and better wayfinding.

Education

23. The Road Safety team provide education and training to children in schools. This includes Bikeability, scooter training and walking buses. In 2022 the offering will expand to include adult cycle training funded by the council's Capability Fund grant.

Other funding sources

24. Other potential sources of funding for Active Travel schemes are the Local Highway and Footway Improvement Groups (LHFIGs) and in some cases funding from developers through s106 agreements or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) may be possible depending on circumstances. These possibilities will be explored as opportunities arise and needs are identified.

Environmental impact of the proposal

25. A potential benefit of promoting and enabling people to walk and cycle more is that some car journeys may be replaced by active travel modes. This will result in reduced carbon emissions and will contribute to achieving the council's climate change targets.

Equality and diversity impact of the proposal

26. The provision of walking and cycling infrastructure will improve access and accessibility in the county for all people. The infrastructure can cater for micro scooters, mobility scooters and wheelchairs, and can be accessed and used by children, disabled people and those with mobility impairments.

Risk assessment

27. There are no risks identified as being associated with this report.

Financial implications

28. Government funding is available for Active Travel, but the Council will only be able to secure this funding if the active travel bids that are submitted are based on the systematic gathering of evidence (e.g. by developing LCWIPs) and are in compliance with *gear change* and LTN1/20 requirements.
29. It should be noted that if the council does not prepare and design a pipeline of active travel schemes it will not be in a position to submit successful funding bids.

Legal implications

30. None identified at this stage.

Options considered

31. The development of Active Travel schemes is important in order to deliver potential health and other benefits. Not developing a pipeline of schemes and initiatives will mean that the Council is unlikely to take full advantage of DfT funding as it becomes available. It is anticipated that an Active Travel Strategy will be expected to form a key element of LTP4.
32. This report aims to inform members of the work being undertaken on active travel in the County.

Background papers

None.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Emergency Active Travel Fund Bids and Capability Fund