

<b>Environment Committee</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	3rd November 2022
<b>Report Title</b>	Active Travel Fund 4
<b>EMT Lead</b>	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
<b>Head of Service</b>	Joanne Johnson, Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Adrian Oliver, Active Travel Coordinator
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Open</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To agree the outlined three priority schemes for Faversham, Sheerness and Sittingbourne.</li> <li>2. To delegate the submission of the final Active Travel Fund 4 priorities to the Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property, in consultation with the Chair of the Environment Committee</li> </ol>

## **1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report sets out what we know about Active Travel Fund Tranche 4 (ATF4) as at 17<sup>th</sup> October 2022.
- 1.2 By the time of the Environment Committee on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2022, we will possibly be in the process of developing schemes to deliver to Kent County Council. KCC's deadline to submit bids to Active Travel England has been advised as 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2022.
- 1.3 However, the funding announcement has now been significantly delayed (was due in September), with no official confirmation as and when, or even if, the funding programme will go live.
- 1.4 This report makes recommendations as to the basis on which the priorities have been identified and seeks delegated authority for the final submission to KCC.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 Active Travel Fund 4 is part of a £2bn, five-year investment programme (2020-2025). As well as the previous three rounds of Transport Authority funding, the programme has also created a new statutory body, Active Travel England and a new Active Travel Commissioner.

- 2.2 The investment vision is “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.”
- 2.3 In the last round, Kent won funding for two projects. £1.2m for enhanced walking & cycling facilities between east and west Sevenoaks and £100k for a walking & cycling link from Herne Bay Station to the seafront.
- 2.4 The Herne Bay Scheme is in consultation at the moment. There are 12 intervention locations. Works include: pavement widening & build outs; greenspaces cycle tracks; on street segregated cycle tracks; protected junctions; cycle contraflows; traffic management; pedestrian & cycle only area; & parking spaces removal.
- 2.5 It is clear from the Herne Bay Scheme, details of which have been released for the consultation, that this intervention won Active Travel England funding because it was aligned to the Gear Change ambitions, followed LTN1/20 and reallocated road space. So the key to successful bidding is to design ambitious high-quality schemes that are safe for everyone to use, have a high propensity to activate change, create connected, viable networks and reallocate road space in favour of walking and cycling.
- 2.6 Over the summer, all transport authorities went through an Active Travel Self-Assessment. The aim of this exercise was to help Active Travel England to start to focus their money on areas where there was both political will and technical capability. KCC completed the assessment in August, requiring very little input from Districts. Unfortunately, as was the case with many non-metropolitan authorities, Kent is a lower level assessed Local Authority – Level 1. This is down to only a few active travel schemes being implemented across the County and limited political support.

Level	Definition
<b>Level 0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No local leadership or support for active travel, no plans in place, delivered lower complexity schemes only.</li> </ul>
<b>Level 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some local leadership and support with basic plans and isolated interventions</li> </ul>
<b>Level 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong local leadership and support, with strong plans and emerging network</li> </ul>
<b>Level 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very strong local leadership and support, comprehensive plans, and majority of network in place with increasing modal share</li> </ul>
<b>Level 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established culture of active travel with successive increases in cycling and walking, underpinned by dense integrated network and highly supportive policies to reduce the need for car trips</li> </ul>

- 2.7 ATF4 is expected to be a £460m capital and £250m revenue fund for English Transport Authorities. The fund is over a three-year period starting April 2023.
- 2.8 It is likely that there will be a staged approach to funding, with funds given initially for scheme development, then detailed design and then construction. This means that there is no guarantee that a scheme approved initially will make it to construction.
- 2.9 The fund investment objectives are aligned with the Government's priorities: carbon reduction; levelling up; and addressing the cost of living crisis.
- 2.10 Swale Borough Council will be asked to submit three priorities to KCC.
- 2.11 We have been asked for an early indication as to what these priorities might be. Learning from the success of the scheme in Herne Bay (2.4 & 2.5) and the Government's priorities (2.9) the Officers recommend:
- 2.11.1 Priority 1 – Faversham - Faversham has ambitions to be a Walking, Wheeling & Cycling Town and an exemplar for market towns across England. Building on the town wide 20mph limit, officers recommend starting to create the walking & cycling networks articulated in the LCWIP, particularly focusing on connecting the areas of social deprivation and isolation (North Preston, West Faversham, Love Lane, Millfield & Lower Road), with key destinations across Faversham (schools, work, shops, station, surgeries, social). These interventions could include increased pavement space, level pavements, raised crossings, pedestrianisation, ANPR enforcement, Dutch kerbs, narrow roads, safer crossing points, home zones, cycle tracks, secure alleyways, cycle parking, wayfinding and station accessibility. The severance caused by the railway and the A2 currently prevent coherent North/South active travel movement and there are a number of interventions from the LCWIP to address this problem.
- 2.11.2 Priority 2 – Sheerness - Sheerness, Queenborough, Rushenden and parts of Minster are among the highest areas of deprivation on the Index of Multiple Deprivation. Addressing access to active travel is fundamental to improving residents' health, well-being and opportunities. Utilising the well-established traffic free active travel corridor along the Napoleonic Lines, officers recommend building a connected walking, wheeling & cycling network into the dense mixed-use area of Sheerness Town and south-west to Queenborough, south to Halfway, east to Minster and North to the seafront. The interventions could include town wide 20mph, road closures, bus gates, Dutch roundabout, improved surfacing, increased pavement space, level pavements, Dutch kerbs, raised crossings, safer crossing points, home zones, cycle tracks, secure alleyways, wayfinding, cycle parking and station accessibility. The severance caused by the railway and Brielle Way needs addressing to ensure easy, accessible movement between the town, port, industrial & retail estates, and new developments.

- 2.11.3 Priority 3 – Sittingbourne - Start the development of a walking, wheeling & cycling network from the town centre moving out into the residential and industrial areas. Interventions could include cycle tracks, removal of parking spaces, secure alleyways, pedestrianisation (plan submitted for ATF3), cycle contra-flow, Dutch roundabout, Dutch kerbs, pathway & pavement improvements, underpass lighting, tactile drop kerbs, removal of steps, cycle parking and residential area wide 20mph.
- 2.12 As can be seen from these three priorities, officers recommend that the funds are focussed on our major conurbations, as that is where significant change can be achieved, representing the best value for money. Faversham is currently listed as Priority 1 as it has an adopted LCWIP and the town-wide 20mph limit. But each scheme has its advantage, the Sheerness plans seek to ease social deprivation, whilst the Sittingbourne scheme may have the most positive impact on traffic congestion.
- 2.13 Officer discussions within communities and with KCC have been part of the development of the priority interventions and the focus remains on investment in our town centres, support for business, including the visitor economy and support for residents addressing isolation and opening up employment and education opportunities.
- 2.14 The focus of interventions on our most deprived communities are centred around supporting the economically inactive. This aligns closely with a number of projects operating in Swale, funded through UK Community Renewal Fund and the emerging UKSPF work.
- 2.15 As soon as the details of Active Travel Fund 4 are released by KCC to us, we will work on the agreed priorities developing them into compelling bids that can be submitted to KCC during December. Delegated authority for the sign off and submission of the final Active Travel Schemes is therefore sought for the Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property, in consultation with the Chair of the Environment Committee.
- 2.16 Whilst we will bid for funding for comprehensive network construction, with a limited funding pot, it is quite likely that submitted plans will be cut back. Other funding sources will be sought out to help deliver the plans.
- 2.17 It must be emphasised that this is a double bidding process. First at County level and then if successful, national. All three schemes outlined above are aligned with both Active Travel England's and the Government's objectives.
- 2.18 Given the challenging timescales, it is likely that the detail of the final three priorities to be submitted to KCC will remain in development, until the end of November. Delegated authority for the sign off and submission of the final Priorities is therefore sought for the Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property, in consultation with the Chair of the Environment Committee.

### 3 Proposals

- 3.1 To agree the outlined three priority schemes for Faversham, Sheerness and Sittingbourne.
- 3.2 To delegate the submission of the final Active Travel Fund 4 priorities to the Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property, in consultation with the Chair of the Environment Committee

### 4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 Do nothing. This is not recommended as this is a three-year funding programme which would be invested directly into Swale’s infrastructure and communities.
- 4.2 The geographical distribution of funding could be changed to focus on just one urban area. This would seem inappropriate as active travel investment would benefit all our conurbations in a number of ways.

### 5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 The Council has been actively consulting over the summer and will continue to do so during this process as it is an Active Travel England expectation that all interventions have the support of the local community.

### 6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	An Active Travel Fund 4 bid will contribute towards priority 2.2 “Encourage active travel and reduced car use”
Financial, Resource and Property	As far as we know, Active Travel Fund 4 does not require any match funding, but development and subsequent implementation and monitoring of the plan will require significant officer time at both Borough and County level. Potentially, this could be funded from the revenue stream.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	Works will take place on Highways or Borough land plus a small amount of some Network Rail land. Procurement will mainly be handled by KCC.
Crime and Disorder	ATF4 investments will have positive implications utilising the latest urban designs to design out crime.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	Successful active travel fund investment results in modal shift away from private car use with the co-benefit of contributing to net zero. “Improve facilities and incentives for walking and cycling” is a Top 10 Priority Action

Health and Wellbeing	Successful active travel fund investment results in modal shift away from private car use with the co-benefit of improving residents' health and wellbeing.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this stage
Risk Management and Health and Safety	The primary risks are associated with securing the funding via KCC and the subsequent management of budgets, outputs and outcomes over three financial years.
Equality & Diversity	None identified at this stage.
Privacy & Data Protection	None identified at this stage.