

EXECUTIVE DECISION

made by a Cabinet Member

Briefing Note Part I



1.0 Executive summary

This paper sets out the recommendation to accept the Department for Transport's Active Travel Fund grant (formerly referred to as the Emergency Active Travel Fund Tranche 2 grant) of £945,250, following the Council's successful bid to the Fund.

Active travel has a critical role to play in Plymouth's transport network both now, due to walking and cycling enabling socially distanced mobility and supporting health enabling habitual behaviours during the pandemic, and in the future, through the incorporation of active travel in the cities daily commute delivering air quality improvements and supporting the decarbonisation of our transport network.

The Active Travel Fund (ATF) programme therefore seeks to encourage and enable more trips by foot and by bike, building on the behavioural change which was being seen in Plymouth pre-Covid and enable and encourage new and returning cyclists (adults and children) to make walking and cycling the natural choice for the journeys they make. This is important in the short term, as capacity on public transport remains constrained, but also in the long term, recognising the inter-relationships of walking, cycling and public transport in a fully accessible, low carbon, sustainable transport network.

The outcomes and benefits of this proposal are an additional investment of £945,250 in walking and cycling in Plymouth directly supporting the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan through enabling more journeys to be made on foot and by bike.

2.0 Purpose of the report

This report seeks approval to accept the Department for Transport grant for the Active Travel Fund programme and add £756,200 to the Council's capital programme.

- The key objectives of the Active Travel Fund programme are to help to create an environment that is safer, and more conducive, for cycling and walking. This in turn will support the short term Fund objective of replacing journeys previously made by public transport, which currently can't be accommodated, as well as the long term objectives of delivering significant health, environmental and congestion benefits.

This paper provides information on the grant funding and the programme which will be delivered using the Grant.

The decisions required are to:-

- Approves the Business Case for the Active Travel Fund programme (formerly known as the Emergency Active Travel Fund – Tranche 2 programme, due to a change in the title of the Fund by the Department for Transport)
- Approves the addition of £756,200 to the capital programme funded by the Department for Transport Active Travel Fund grant.
- Delegates the decision to allow movements across the categories within the fund to the Service Director for SP&I.

3.0 Background to the funding

On 9 May the Transport Secretary announced £2 billion to support walking and cycling. Of the £2 billion, the Government advised £250 million would be made available to support a ‘series of swift, emergency interventions to make cycling and walking safer,’ of which £25 million has been set aside for a bicycle maintenance voucher (£50 voucher for up to 500,000 people).

Plymouth City Council has secured £1,194,250 from the Fund; £249,000 from phase one and £945,250 from phase two.

The Council’s phase one, Emergency Active Travel Fund programme, was designed to promote cycling as a replacement for journeys previously made by public transport, and as a practical alternative to the private car. The funding has delivered a number of measures to encourage walking and cycling, as well as support social distancing, during the COVID-19 pandemic including 35 new cycle lockers, ‘20 mph when lights show’ outside 14 schools and road safety signage at key city roundabouts.

The emphasis for the phase two, Active Travel Fund programme, is on schemes which support more cycling and walking in the longer term. The programme needs to be substantially completed by April 2022.

4.0 Active Travel Fund – Tranche 2

Plymouth City Council has secured £945,250 for local walking and cycling improvements, through the second phase of the Government’s Active Travel Fund. Of the total funding £945,250 grant £756,200 is capital funding and £189,050 is revenue funding.

The Active Travel Fund programme to be delivered using the Fund is designed to help Plymouth’s walking and cycling network be more connected, direct, safe, comfortable and attractive. It is framed around the core themes set out in the Government’s ‘Gear Change: A bold vision for cycling and walking’ specifically the themes ‘Better streets for cycling and people’ and ‘We will enable people to cycle and protect them when they cycle.’

The Council, as part of the Plymouth Plan, have made a commitment to deliver a safe, accessible, sustainable and health enabling transport system¹ that delivers a step change in walking, cycling and

¹ Plymouth Plan Policy HEA6

public transport as the travel modes of choice for those living in and visiting the city.² We have said that we will make sure that transport is delivered in the most health promoting and environmentally responsible manner,³ where the impact of severance caused by transport networks is reduced, enabling more journeys by walking, cycling and public transport and providing genuine alternative ways to travel⁴. To do this we have adopted a hierarchy of modes and routes based upon different spatial settings,⁵ with walking and cycling being the best option for local trips.

The schemes set out within the ATF programme accord with these commitments and build on work done to date where the Council have a strong track of delivering effective, impactful, active travel interventions; both infrastructure and complementary behavioural change programmes. The monitoring undertaken as part of the Council's DfT Access Fund programme for the period April 2017 – March 2020 shows that, amongst communities where the Plymotion Personalised Travel Planning project has been delivered:-

- **Bike ownership has increased** in the engaged community by 4% compared to the pre survey residents.
- There was a **6% increase in cycle awareness** (unprompted) as a travel option compared to pre survey levels.
- There was a **5% increase in those cycling** in the engaged communities (comp v engaged)
- There was a **3% increase in those who cycled much more frequently** in the engaged community (comp v engaged)
- There was also a **1% increase in those cycling to work** (pre v post) and a 1% increase in those going to College or University (comp v engaged).
- There were also significant increases in the **level of sentiment towards the benefits of cycling** – particularly towards improving health with +18% strongly agreeing in the engaged community in the Derriford and Northern Corridor survey area.
- There were also more **positive views about cycling being an easy way to get around / practical choice** in the engaged community with up to circa +7% strongly agreeing.
- When comparing what they did six months ago there was an increase of 9% in those who **walked much more frequently** in the engaged community (comp v engaged)
- There was a +3% gain in those in the engaged community **walking to work** (comp v engaged). **Dropping children at school / childcare** also saw +4% (pre v engaged) and going to college / university +1% (comp v engaged)
- **Positive sentiment regarding walking increased in all the areas measured, with clear recognition that it was a good way to improve your health +26%** (comp v engaged “strongly agreeing”)
- Being a **practical choice for getting around also increased** by circa 13% over the comparison community levels with up to 17% of the engaged community strongly agreeing.

These results are why we are confident that the investment from the Active Travel Fund will further support a growth in the positive perception of walking and cycling as practical, advantageous modes of travel and increase the number of trips being made on foot and by bike.

² Plymouth Plan – Theme 2: A Green City

³ Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan policy SPT9.1

⁴ Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan Policy SPT9.4

⁵ Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan Policy SPT9.8

5.0 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Leader of the Council:

- Approves the Business Case for the Active Travel Fund programme (formerly known as the Emergency Active Travel Fund – Tranche 2 programme, due to a change in the title of the Fund by the Department for Transport)
- Approves the addition of £756,200 to the capital programme funded by the Department for Transport Active Travel Fund grant.
- Delegates the decision to allow movements across the categories within the fund to the Service Director for SP&I.