

TITLE OF REPORT: **Active Travel Fund Tranche 4**

REPORT OF: **Peter Udall, Strategic Director, Economy, Innovation
and Growth**

Purpose of the Report

1. To report on the Active Travel Fund Tranche 4 and the involvement of Gateshead Council in the development and submission of the regional funding bid.

Background

2. The Active Travel Fund began as an emergency fund from the Department for Transport, for active travel interventions during the Covid-19 pandemic, with subsequent rounds of funding being announced in 2021 and 2022. Previous rounds of the Active Travel Fund (Tranches 1 and 2) enabled the delivery of cycling and bus improvements along Askew Road in Gateshead town centre.
3. Tranche 4 of the Active Travel Fund was announced in February 2023 as a one-year capital fund for active travel schemes. An indicative allocation for the North East region was announced as £6,982,713.
4. A regional bid was required to be submitted by 24th February and included a number of Gateshead schemes. An announcement of funding allocations from Active Travel England is expected shortly.

Proposal

5. Subject to approval from Cabinet to accept the funding, the Council will begin the design and construction work necessary to deliver the Gateshead schemes that were included in the funding bid to Active Travel England.

Recommendations

6. It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (i) Authorises the Strategic Director, Economy, Innovation and Growth to agree to enter into a Grant Agreement with Transport North East for the funding, following consultation with the Strategic Director, Resources and Digital and Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance, in line with the Constitution.
- (ii) Authorises the expenditure of any grant funding that is received from Active Travel England in line with the schemes set out in paragraph 8 of appendix 1.

For the following reason:

To enable the design and implementation of the Gateshead schemes, which may receive a funding allocation from the Active Travel Fund.

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Policy Context

1. Gateshead's Active Travel Fund schemes support the pledges within Gateshead Council's Thrive agenda particularly around supporting communities and tackling inequality. There are particular links to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy in the alignment of Gateshead's East Gateshead Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) scheme to the Social Prescribing Pilot taking place in the same area, both promoting active travel as a way to improve public health. The schemes are also clearly aligned with the Council's initiatives to tackle the climate emergency due to the focus on sustainable movement.
2. The bid as a whole is aligned with the North East Transport Plan. Furthermore, the proposed programme utilises funding received through a specific government grant without the need to use Council resources.

Background

3. The Active Travel Fund began as an emergency fund from the Department for Transport for active travel interventions during the Covid-19 pandemic, with subsequent rounds of funding being announced in 2021 and 2022. Funding from Active Travel Fund Tranches 1 and 2 was used to deliver cycling and bus improvements along Askew Road in Gateshead town centre.

Active Travel Fund Tranche 4 Bid

4. Tranche 4 of the Active Travel Fund was announced in February 2023 as a one-year capital fund for schemes that would have the potential to increase walking, wheeling and cycling trips. An indicative allocation for the North East region of £6,982,713 was announced.
5. Schemes were required to meet the Active Travel Fund Tranche 4 funding principles:
 - Schemes have potential to increase walking, cycling and wheeling trips, compliant with Manual for Streets, LTN 1/20 and DfT Inclusive Mobility Guidance.
 - Schemes are aligned with the authority's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.
 - Schemes are developed in consultation with local communities.
 - Schemes are supported by local authority leaders.

- Scheme design reviews and assurance to be managed by Active Travel England.
 - Authorities must commit to the change control process to enable Active Travel England to track the progress of schemes.
6. Schemes were able to bid for either construction funding, for schemes where works could be committed by the end of March 2024, or development funding, for schemes which required further design work or consultation to prepare them for delivery.
 7. A regional bid was drawn up by Transport North East with input from local authorities, including a prioritisation process to ensure the final bid fell within or close to the indicative allocation figures. This was submitted to Active Travel England on 24th February 2023.
 8. Schemes proposed by Gateshead Council as part of the bid included:

Scheme	Description	ATF Ask	Funding type
East Gateshead LCWIP (West package) – Phase 2	A series of cycling improvements in the Felling and Deckham areas first highlighted in the draft Gateshead LCWIP, aligning with the Social Prescribing Pilot	£865,796	Construction
School Streets	Regionwide package of minor interventions in the vicinity of schools to encourage active travel	£162,415	Development
Tyne Bridge Maintenance Sustainable Mitigation	Improvements to active travel facilities intended to mitigate disruption caused by the Tyne Bridge major maintenance (joint scheme with Newcastle City Council and Nexus)	£125,000	Development

Consultation

9. The extremely short timescales of bid production did not allow for Cabinet approval to be sought prior to the deadline of 24th February, although discussions did take place at the Environment and Transport Portfolio.
10. Subject to funding being received, further consultation will need to be carried out prior to implementation for each scheme in the normal manner for transport infrastructure schemes (generally online and by letter). School Streets will be developed through a process of consultation with the local community, schools

and ward members to ensure local support for the interventions.

Alternative Options

11. No alternative has been considered as, due to the limitations of the transport capital programme budget, it is unlikely that the Council would be able to proceed with these schemes in their full extent without receipt of funding from the Active Travel Fund Tranche 4.

Implications of Recommended Option

12. Resources:

- a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms no match funding contribution is required. Any future maintenance costs relating to the schemes are expected to be financed within existing general maintenance budgets.
- b) **Legal implications** – The final terms and conditions of the grant funding will be reviewed by Legal Services once a Grant Funding Agreement is received.
- c) **Human Resources Implications** – There are no human resources implications.
- d) **Property Implications** - No property implications have been identified.

13. Risk Management Implication - The main risk associated with the programme is that failure to deliver the schemes set out in the expected Grant Funding Agreement may result in clawback of any funding received from Active Travel England. This has been mitigated by a strong focus on ensuring the deliverability of schemes throughout the development process of the regional bid.

14. Equality and Diversity Implications - Implementation of the schemes may have a minor beneficial impact in reducing social exclusion by improving access to jobs and economic opportunities, particularly for people who do not have access to a car.

15. Crime and Disorder Implications – No implications have been identified.

16. Health Implications – The schemes will have a minor beneficial impact on increasing active travel, making walking and cycling in the area more attractive. This will also benefit health by improving air quality.

17. Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications - The schemes will be developed with sustainability in mind and will support Gateshead's environmental, social and economic objectives.

18. Human Rights Implications - No implications have been identified.

19. Ward Implications - Subject to funding being received, the cycling improvements would be implemented within the Felling and Deckham wards. Locations are yet to be determined for School Streets or Tyne Bridge mitigation work, however the funding ask for these schemes is for development only at this stage.