

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 15 January 2024

By: Director of Communities, Economy, and Transport

Title: Hastings and Bexhill Movement and Access Package

Purpose: To note and approve the revised Hastings and Bexhill Movement and Access Package in line with the South East Local Enterprise Partnership Accountability Board decisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) Note the South East Local Enterprise Partnership Accountability Board decision to proceed with a revised delivery package for the Hastings and Bexhill Movement and Access Package;**
 - (2) Approve the revised package moving forward to construction in 2024/25 to be included in the forthcoming Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements 2024/25; and**
 - (3) Delegate authority to the Chief Finance Officer and Assistant Chief Executive, to negotiate and agree the financial package development costs with the South East Local Enterprise Partnership as covered in paragraphs 2.15 to 2.18 of this report.**
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1 Background

1.1 In 2018, the County Council secured £9m of Local Growth Fund (LGF) monies from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) towards the development and delivery of the Hastings and Bexhill Movement and Access Package (HBMAP). The integrated package of schemes was developed to deliver cycling, walking and bus infrastructure, traffic management and public realm improvements, aimed at supporting economic growth across Hastings and Bexhill.

1.2 In 2022, following discussions with the County Council's Highways Contractor, it became evident that the total amount of funding required to complete the design and delivery of all schemes within the package would be significantly higher than the remaining LGF monies available. This has primarily been driven by delays due to the Covid-19 pandemic, in addition to high inflationary cost increases across the construction sectors, including on elements such as materials and labour costs.

1.3 Programme delivery has therefore needed to be split into two phases with the first phase of schemes having already been delivered between 2018/19 and 2023/24. The 2023/24 Capital Programme of Local Transport Improvements, of which the HBMAP forms an element, was approved by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment at a decision-making meeting on 13 March 2023. The Lead Member was advised that the work on the HBMAP package would be paused while a full scheme review and programme assessment was undertaken to determine which of the remaining schemes within the HBMAP could be taken forward for final development and/or delivery.

1.4 The County Council has since undertaken a comprehensive review of the package in line with the amount of funding available, ensuring that remaining schemes are deliverable, still meet the original aims, value for money and benefits of the business case, and can be delivered within the remaining LGF funding allocation.

1.5 The necessary approvals were sought from the SELEP Accountability Board in September 2023 to reallocate project funding to three prioritised remaining schemes and extend construction delivery timescales to March 2026.

2 Supporting information

Progress to date

2.1 Since 2018, significant progress has been made in progressing each of the schemes within the HBMAP.

2.2 The package primarily focuses on: improving traffic congestion and road safety; supporting accessibility to public transport; improving active travel connectivity; and enhancing the physical environment. To date, the HBMAP has successfully delivered the following schemes across Bexhill and Hastings:

- Four new pedestrian crossings;
- Two T-junction conversions to mini roundabouts;
- Vehicle Activated Signs at a crossroads to improve road safety;
- Real Time Passenger Information infrastructure to support the bus service network in both Bexhill and Hastings;
- Accessibility improvements to 40 bus stops across Bexhill and Hastings;
- Upgrade of ten bus stops along The Ridge corridor including kerbing and shelters; and
- Wayfinding improvements in Hastings.

2.3 As of March 2023 there were six remaining schemes within the package due to be delivered (see Appendix 1):

- Hastings Western Cycle Route
- Bexhill Cycle Route A
- Bexhill Cycle Route B
- A259/Albert Road, Hastings
- Station Approach, Hastings
- Bexhill London Road Corridor Phase 2

2.4 Long term maintenance of these schemes is expected to be incorporated into the East Sussex Highways asset management programme.

2.5 Owing to significant increases in construction costs as outlined in paragraph 1.2 of this report the County Council commissioned transport consultants to undertake a cost review estimate exercise to determine the total cost of constructing the remaining six schemes. The outcome of the exercise demonstrated that a total funding amount of £11,320,000 would be required to deliver the remainder of the HBMAP.

2.6 The costs shown at Appendix 1 for each scheme are estimated costs based on current prices including design costs, preliminary traffic management costs, contingency or risk and inflationary cost allowance as well as construction costs.

2.7 Consideration has been given as to whether there are options for descoping and/or value engineering the schemes as well as exploring other available funding sources.

2.8 An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken as part of the original business case. This will be updated during the design and construction phases of the remaining schemes.

Consultation and Engagement

2.9 A thorough consultation and engagement programme was undertaken prior to submission to the SELEP Accountability Board meeting in September 2023 to inform the business case review. Prior to the submission of the revised business case to SELEP, officers from Hastings Borough and Rother District Councils were briefed on 6 June 2023, with a subsequent meeting on 18 July 2023. A County Council Transport Member panel was also

convened on 29 June 2023 to seek feedback from all County Members on the proposed package.

2.10 Team East Sussex (TES) in its role as the East Sussex federated local growth board for SELEP, endorsed the revised package and business case being submitted to SELEP at its meeting held on the 3 July 2023.

Updated business case

2.11 As part of the scheme package review, a prioritisation approach that aligns with previous SELEP LGF business case assessment criteria has been developed focusing on:

- deliverability;
- affordability;
- value for money; and
- strategic fit.

2.12 From the prioritisation process and value for money assessment to support the updated business case review, and engagements listed in paragraph 2.9 of this report, the following schemes can deliver the benefits required to fulfil the objectives of the original business case:

- Albert Road, Hastings
- Station Approach, Hastings and
- Bexhill Cycle Route A.

2.13 The package demonstrates that it still delivers high value for money and that the schemes being delivered across all 4 areas of the package, will provide improvement towards:

- Increased levels of walking and cycling
- Increased levels of bus patronage
- Improved bus punctuality
- Improvements to road safety
- Improvements to congestion at key junctions

2.14 The total budget for these three schemes is £4.1m and will be funded from the remaining available LGF monies, local development contributions and East Sussex's Capital Transport Programme. The revised business case includes an indicative remaining balance of £3.3m of LGF and £541k of S106 funds, with the additional £260k overspend to be met from match funding from the Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements. As set out in paragraphs 2.16 and 2.17, the exact amount of LGF budget remaining is currently under review with SELEP and a decision is expected in January 2024.

Package Development Costs

2.15 As set out in paragraph 1.5, the proposed change of scope in the revised business case, and extension of funding to March 2026 was approved by SELEP's Accountability Board in September 2023.

2.16 The Board recommended that a review needed to be undertaken to determine if there was a compelling case for the County Council to retain LGF of up to £630,488 against the project for schemes not proceeding to construction. The County Council have worked with SELEP to review what can and cannot be funded within the package.

2.17 The County Council has recommended a portion of the costs of schemes that have not proceeded can continue to be funded through this LGF budget, and a portion will be covered by the Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements. A final decision on the amounts to be covered is expected at the 12 January 2024 SELEP Accountability Board meeting.

2.18 The remaining £3.84m budget assumes that £630,488 is covered by the LGF. Any changes to this may impact the amount of match funding required from the Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 Since the County Council secured £9m of LGF monies from the SELEP towards the development and delivery of the HBMAP in 2018, significant progress has been made in progressing each of the schemes towards delivering cycling, walking, bus infrastructure, traffic management and public realm improvements, aimed at supporting economic growth across Hastings and Bexhill.

3.2 Due to sharp increases in costs across the construction sector because of high inflation, the war in Ukraine and delays due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the cost to deliver the remaining schemes now exceeds the £3.84m remaining funding.

3.3 Following a comprehensive cost estimate and business case review exercise undertaken by transport consultants, and in consultation with key stakeholders as set out in paragraphs 2.9 of this report, a revised scheme package was approved by the SELEP Accountability Board in September 2023 to deliver the following remaining schemes by March 2026:

- Albert Road, Hastings
- Station Approach, Hastings and
- Bexhill Cycle Route A.

3.4 The Lead Member is therefore recommended to:

- Note and approve the revised HBMAP in line with the SELEP Accountability Board decisions;
- Approve the revised package moving forward to construction in 2024/25 to be included in the forthcoming Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements 2024/25; and
- Delegate authority to the Chief Finance Officer and Assistant Chief Executive, to negotiate and agree the financial package development costs with the SELEP as covered in paragraphs 2.15 to 2.18 of this report.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillor Abul Azad (Bexhill North)

Councillor Charles Clark (Bexhill East)

Councillor Godfrey Daniel (Hastings Braybrooke and Castle)

Councillor Nuala Geary (Bexhill West)

Councillor Ian Hollidge (Bexhill South)

Councillor Phil Scott (Hastings - Hollington and Wishing Tree)

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

[Capital Programme for Transport Improvements 2023/24](#)