

Report to: Leader and Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development

Date of meeting: 17 September 2024

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Local Growth Fund - Eastbourne and South Wealden Walking and Cycling Package

Purpose: To consider the revised Eastbourne and South Wealden Walking and Cycling Package.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Leader and Lead Member is recommended to approve the revised Local Growth funded Eastbourne and South Wealden Walking and Cycling Package comprising Eastbourne Cycle Parking Phase 2; Eastbourne town centre to seafront cycle route and Horsey cycle route phase 1b for progression to detailed design and construction in 2024/25 and 2025/26 through the County Council's Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements.

1 Background

1.1 In 2015, the County Council secured £6.6m of Local Growth Fund (LGF) monies from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) towards the development and delivery of the Eastbourne and South Wealden Walking and Cycling Package (ESWWCP). The integrated package of schemes was developed to deliver walking and cycling improvements aimed at supporting economic growth across Eastbourne and South Wealden.

1.2 In 2023, 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 The County Council has since undertaken a comprehensive review of the package in line with the amount of funding available, ensuring that the remaining schemes are deliverable, still meet the original aims, value for money and benefits of the business case previously approved by the SELEP Accountability Board, and can be delivered within the remaining LGF funding allocation.

1.4 In January 2024, the Leader considered a report relating to the future of SELEP and the proposal for Local Enterprise Partnership functions to be transferred from Essex County Council (as the accountable body) to East Sussex County Council with effect from 1 April 2024. SELEP was not in a position to approve the revised Business Case and Economic Appraisal prior to this transfer of responsibilities and took the decision at the February 2024 SELEP Accountability Board:

"To note the intention for East Sussex County Council to bring forward a change of scope for the Eastbourne and South Wealden Walking and Cycling Package and note that, following the dissolution of SELEP, this change will be managed through East Sussex County Council governance processes".

1.5 As part of the transfer of functions SELEP and Essex County Council are preparing a Transition Agreement for each of the upper tier local authorities (UTLA) of SELEP (which includes ESCC) to sign along with Central Government. This agreement has been delayed but will be back dated to commence from 1 April 2024. In the meantime, Government have indicated that UTLA's

are to follow their own established governance and approval processes to ensure project decisions continue to be taken and that Government are informed of the outcome of those decisions.

2 Supporting information

Eastbourne and South Wealden Walking and Cycling Package (ESWWCP) - progress to date

2.1 Over the last three to four years, significant progress has been made on progressing each of the schemes within the ESWWCP, identified in two tranches for a total of £6.6m approved by SELEP in 2015/16.

2.2 The package primarily focuses on improving traffic congestion to support sustainable economic growth; supporting the growing demand for improved walking and cycling infrastructure in this area; increasing levels of cycling; and tackling health and wellbeing issues resulting from physical inactivity. To date this package has successfully delivered the following five schemes across Eastbourne and South Wealden:

- Eastbourne Meads Area Vulnerable Road User Improvement Scheme: providing enhanced connectivity between the town centre, Devonshire Quarter and the former University of Brighton campus by making key junctions safer for pedestrians to navigate and slowing traffic speeds.
- Friday Street Pedestrian Crossing: replacing the existing crossing island with a signalized pedestrian crossing at the junction of Friday Street and Oak Tree Lane in Langney in response to a local fatality.
- Eastbourne Town Centre Wayfinding Improvements: including the installation of finger posts and monoliths around Eastbourne town centre.
- Horsey Way Cycle Route Phase 3: providing a predominantly off-road cycle route between Lottbridge Drove and Langney roundabout, including an upgraded crossing over Lottbridge Drove to connect into the eastern end of Horsey Way Cycle Route Phase 2.
- Installation of Eastbourne Cycle Parking Stage 1.

2.3 The two schemes set out in the Business Case for the South Wealden area were Hailsham cycle route (A271 Upper Horsebridge Road) and Hailsham cycle parking. The cycle route was unable to progress due to topography and access difficulties associated with the proposal which would exceed the available funding, whilst the cycle facilities have been introduced as part of DfT's Emergency Active Travel funding, and therefore no longer form part of this package.

2.4 The following 5 schemes from the initial approved package that remain outstanding for delivery are:

- Langney Rise Cycle Route;
- Eastbourne Town Centre to Seafront Cycle Route;
- Willingdon Drove Cycle Route;
- Horsey Cycle Route Phase 1B; and
- Eastbourne Cycle Parking Stage 2.

Eastbourne and South Wealden Walking and Cycling Package review

2.5 With LGF spend of £4,670,519 to date from the £6.6m allocation available, there is £1,929,481 remaining from LGF to cover the 5 outstanding schemes, with no additional Section 106 or Community Infrastructure Levy funding left to be assigned.

2.6 With the significant increases in construction costs as outlined in paragraph 1.2, the ESWWCP package has been paused whilst a full scheme review and programme assessment is undertaken to determine which of the remaining schemes could be taken forward for final development and/or delivery.

2.7 A cost review estimate exercise has been undertaken by transport consultants, WSP, to determine the total cost of constructing the remaining five schemes. A similar approach was undertaken to successfully review and revise the Local Growth funded Hastings and Bexhill Movement & Access Package in 2023/24.

2.8 The cost review identified that the cost to construct all five remaining schemes is £4,011,000 as shown in the table below. These are estimated costs based on the information available at this

juncture including design costs, traffic management costs, static diversions, contingency or risk and inflationary cost allowance as well as construction costs.

Scheme name	Original budget	Spend to date	Remaining spend required to complete design and delivery	External funding
Eastbourne Cycle Parking Stage 2	£175,586	£23,757	£112,000	£0
Langney Rise Cycle Route	No budget as own scheme. Part of wider Langney to Sovereign Harbour proposal.	£285,313	£1,601,000	£0
Eastbourne Town Centre to Seafront Cycle Route	£1,007,000	£427,742	£464,000	£0
Willingdon Drove Cycle Route	£282,112	£157,502	£481,000	£0
Horseway Cycle Route Phase 1b	0	£1,130,914	£1,353,000	£0
TOTAL			£4,011,000	

Scheme Prioritisation and revised Business Case

2.9 As part of the scheme package review a prioritisation approach that aligns with the previously approved SELEP LGF business case assessment criteria was developed focusing on:

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

2.10 Consideration was also given as to whether there were options for descoping and/or value engineering the schemes as well as exploring other available funding sources.

2.11 From the prioritisation process and value for money assessment, the following schemes are recommended to be taken forward for detailed design and construction, and can be afforded within the remaining LGF envelope of £1,929,481:

- Eastbourne Cycle Parking Stage 2;
- Eastbourne Town Centre to Seafront Cycle Route; and
- Horseway Cycle Route Phase 1b.

2.12 The total cost of these three schemes is £1.929m and will be funded from the remaining available LGF monies. If there are any cost over-runs, these will be met through the integrated transport element of the capital programme of local transport improvements. Long term maintenance of these schemes is expected to be incorporated into the East Sussex Highways asset management programme.

2.13 A revised business case has been developed in relation to the 3 recommended schemes identified in paragraph 2.11 above. This includes an updated economic appraisal for the revised package which identifies that each of the recommended schemes represent high value for money (a benefit: cost ratio – (BCR) - over 2) with BCRs of 2.01; 4.84 and 4.08 for Eastbourne Cycle Parking Stage 2; Eastbourne Town Centre and Seafront cycle route and Horseway cycle route Phase 1 b respectively. A copy of the revised business case and economic appraisal are available in the Members' Room.

2.14 The abortive design costs associated with the 2 schemes not recommended to proceed further to construction (Langney Rise cycle route and Willingdon Drove cycle route, equating to £442,815) are eligible for LGF claimable spend. However, the County Council will actively seek future alternative sources of funding to progress the schemes to enable the finalisation of design and construction costs.

2.15 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 on revised package

2.16 The revised Business Case and Economic Appraisal was endorsed by Team East Sussex, the local Growth Board made up of business, local authority, social enterprise and education representatives from across the county, following its meeting on 29 January 2024. Eastbourne Borough Council has also confirmed its approval of the revised package of schemes.

2.17 In addition, the Lead Member for Transport and Environment at her decision-making meeting on 11 March 2024 approved the recommended revised ESWWCP package for further development and construction, subject to the determination of the approved package, and revised business case assessment will be undertaken by the County Council following the LEP transition process, as part of the 2024/25 Capital Programme of Local Transport Improvements.

2.18 SELEP were not able to review the revised business case and economic appraisal prior to the transfer of LEP responsibilities to upper tier authorities in April 2024. Officers from both SELEP and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have confirmed that ESCC can manage the determination of the approved package and revised business case assessment via its own local decision-making process.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 Since the County Council secured £6.6m of LGF monies from the SELEP towards the development and delivery of the ESWWCP in 2015/16, significant progress has been made in progressing each of the schemes towards delivering walking and cycling improvements, aimed at supporting economic growth across Eastbourne and South Wealden.

3.2 Due to significant increases in costs across the construction sector because of high inflation, the cost to deliver the remaining schemes in the initial LEP approved package exceeded the £1.929m remaining funding.

3.3 A comprehensive cost estimate, prioritisation and business case review exercises as well as engagement with key stakeholders, as set out in paragraphs 2.5 to 2.17, have been undertaken to identify a revised package which is affordable within the remaining LGF monies and deliverable by the current LGF spend deadline of March 2026. It is recommended that the revised ESWWCP package of Eastbourne Cycle Parking Phase 2; Eastbourne Town Centre to Seafront Cycle Route and Horsey Way Cycle Route Phase 1b are progressed to detailed design and construction in 2024/25 and 2025/26 through the Council's Capital Programme of Local Transport Improvements.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillors Holt, Rodohan, Tutt, Wright

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

[Capital Programme for Transport Improvements 2024/25](#)