

Single Member Cabinet Decision

Executive
Forward Plan
Reference

E 3355

**Bath River Line- WECA investment funding to deliver
Phase I interventions**

Decision maker/s	Cllr Richard Samuel, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Resources
The Issue	<p>A £1,048.5k grant for Phase I of the Bath River Line has been secured from the West of England Combined Authority's Investment Fund.</p> <p>A proposal put forward by B&NES Council through a Full Business Case for Phase I focused on the delivery of an initial suite of key strategic interventions along the River Avon in the west of Bath, between Newbridge and Bath Quays. The project will support the B&NES Green Infrastructure Strategy and help to address the Climate and Ecological emergencies by enhancing and expanding existing green spaces, enabling active travel, and connecting communities to their natural environment.</p> <p>We are requesting agreement to accept the £1,048.5k grant funding award from WECA in line with the Bath River Line Phase I Full Business Case approved at WECA Committee on 8th April 2022.</p>
Decision Date	27 May 2022
The decision	The Cabinet Member agrees to delegate approval to the Director of Sustainable Communities, in consultation with the s151 officer, to accept the £1.048m grant from WECA. This will allow full approval of the confirmed £1,612k in capital funds for Bath River Line Phase 1.
Rationale for decision	<p>Many sections of the river corridor are in decline and there is a decrease in the quality of the natural environment. Urgent mitigation is required to halt the decline of this important natural asset and take advantage of the extraordinary opportunity the River Avon presents to create a flagship green infrastructure project for B&NES and the West of England which directly addresses the climate and ecological emergency.</p> <p>As well as addressing ecological decline, the Bath River Line (BRL) also meets a community need for improved walking and cycling infrastructure, which is not addressed by the private sector. Forming a strategic spine through the city centre, the BRL has been designed to help catalyse and leverage funding from future private sector investments along the river corridor. The BRL will also connect to, and help enable, the active travel measures being pursued by B&NES via the City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) programme. The schemes will be mutually supportive, helping to achieve a step change in sustainable mobility.</p>

<p>Financial and budget implications</p>	<p>A provisional capital budget already exists for Bath River Line Phase 1. This comprises:</p> <p>A Provisional Capital Budget of £1,612k funded by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - £1,048k WECA Investment Fund grant; - £435k from developer S106 contributions; - £59k from strategic Community Infrastructure Levy; and - £70k from supported borrowing. <p>For this first phase of the project, the operation and management of the interventions will fall with the existing management and maintenance regimes. In addition, as part of the construction contracts, B&NES will look to include a 24-month defect period for all landscape works.</p> <p>At present the condition of the towpath/ paths is poor and often requires reactive maintenance. Additionally, the layout is poor and does not allow for easy access for maintenance vehicles and more efficient technologies such as mechanical sweepers. Whilst the ongoing operation and maintenance of the scheme might incur small additional costs, this increase is overdue and will significantly reduce the need for reactive maintenance whilst bringing much needed safety and public realm improvements to the area whilst significantly enhancing biodiversity.</p>
<p>Issues considered</p>	<p>Sustainability; Equality (age, race, disability, religion/belief, gender, sexual orientation); Health & Safety</p>
<p>Consultation undertaken</p>	<p>Ward Councillor; Cabinet colleagues; Staff; Other B&NES Services; Service Users; Local Residents; Community Interest Groups; Stakeholders/Partners; Other Public Sector Bodies; Section 151 Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer</p>
<p>How consultation was carried out</p>	<p>The development of the project scope has been informed by consistent consultation and engagement with local residents, businesses, community groups and stakeholders. The scheme proposals were themselves developed by a partnership of stakeholders including B&NES Council, the Environment Agency, Wessex Water, Canal & Rivers Trust, Bath Spa University and the National Trust.</p> <p>Further engagement with key stakeholders will be undertaken as part of the technical design development.</p> <p>The undertaking of the original Bath River Line Phase I WECA grant funding application was agreed by the s151 officer, Chief Executive, Cabinet and Senior Management and carried out in line with Council strategies and priorities.</p> <p>The Single Member Decision report has been agreed by the s151 Officer and Monitoring Officer.</p>
<p>Other options considered</p>	<p>There is an option to decline the grant from WECA and not progress the Bath River Line or to re-scope parts of the projects. However, the river corridor is in urgent need of support and investment. Without the project, the existing towpath/ path as well as the natural habitats along the River Avon will continue to degrade and the council will miss the</p>

	<p>opportunity to significantly improve walking and cycling rates across the city, directly addressing the climate and ecological emergency. The funding now will allow benefits for the community to be realised as soon as possible.</p> <p>Work to demonstrate the economic, social, and environmental value benefits of the Bath River Line Phase I interventions was prepared by WSP as part of the Full Business Case. The initial Benefit Cost Ratio for Phase I of the Bath River Line is 2.3:1, suggesting it has the potential to deliver high value for money. This calculation is based on monetised benefits alone. There is also the potential for other impacts not currently captured or monetised in the appraisal to positively impact on the scheme benefits, and further boost the value for money. There are wider impacts associated with the Gross Value Added generated from increased construction and tourism jobs and also increased visitor spend. The scheme offers benefits in terms of severance, affordability, and access to services. From an environmental perspective, the scheme will have a beneficial impact on landscape, townscape and biodiversity.</p>
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Declaration of interest by Cabinet Member(s) for decision:	None
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Any conflict of interest declared by anyone who is consulted by a Member taking the decision:	None
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Name and Signature of Decision Maker/s	Cllr Richard Samuel
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Date of Signature	27 th May 2022
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Subject to Call-in until 5 Working days have elapsed following publication of the decision