

Bath & North East Somerset Council

DECISION MAKER:	Cllr Sarah Warren, Cabinet Member for Climate and Sustainable Travel	
DECISION DATE:	On or after 7th December 2024	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 3561
TITLE:	Bath Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Links: Handover of project responsibility and associated grant funding from the West of England Combined Authority to the council	
WARD:	Weston, Newbridge, Kingsmead, Bathwick	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: N/A		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 The City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) is a package of funding provided by the Department for Transport and administered in the south west by the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (the MCA). Bath & North East Somerset Council (the council) has identified a number of active travel improvement projects eligible for this funding, including the Bath Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Links (BWWCL) project.
- 1.2 The BWWCL scheme aims to provide continuous cycle routes, as well as walking and wheeling improvements designed to connect key areas within Bath through a network of dedicated cycle lanes, advisory routes, and improved pedestrian paths.
- 1.3 The four routes will create more than 6km of cycling routes across Bath through advisory lanes, dedicated spaces, and quiet routes. It will also provide significant walking and wheeling improvements such as crossings and more convenient and safer options. This will enable more travel choices, healthier places and people, and greater connectivity in and out of the city centre.
- 1.4 To date, this has been managed by the Combined Authority as the responsible body, with the council involved as a key stakeholder and Highway Authority.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Member is asked to;

- 2.1 Note the council is to assume the position of responsible body for the BWWCL scheme to be delivered according to milestones agreed with the MCA in accordance with the CRSTS programme.

- 2.2 Delegate approval to the Executive Director - Sustainable Communities, in consultation with the S151 Officer, to accept the Grant Offer Letter (GOL) from the MCA when it is provided.
- 2.3 Approve capital budget of £900k to develop the Full Business Case (FBC), including final Preliminary and Detailed Designs for the scheme. This is entirely funded by CRSTS grant.
- 2.4 Delegate further approval of grant funding acceptance, to the Executive Director - Sustainable Communities, in consultation with the S151 Officer, at the time of MCA approval of the FBC, for delivery of the works, scheduled for 2026.

3 THE REPORT

- 3.1 The Bath Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Links project is categorised as an Active Travel scheme within the CRSTS programme. The scheme has been managed to date by the MCA, which has engaged consultants for design and business case work themselves, acting as commercial client.
- 3.2 This has been in collaboration with B&NES as the key stakeholder, which has involved input as the Highway Authority as well as engagement with key teams across the council, including regeneration, planning, heritage, parks, equalities and community engagement, as well as interfaces with other council CRSTS projects such as Liveable Neighbourhoods, Bath City Centre and A4 Bath to Bristol.
- 3.3 A public consultation on the 4 proposed routes is currently in progress, from mid-October and closing on 29 November, accessed via this link:
<https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/bath-walking-wheeling-and-cycling-links-scheme>.

The objectives of the scheme include more travel choices for everyone. As part of [our Corporate Strategy](#), we want to make walking, wheeling, and cycling safer, more convenient and accessible, while helping to reduce congestion and improve air quality.
- 3.4 The scheme is part of our emerging Active Travel Masterplan (ATM), a comprehensive plan that sets out the existing and future network of active travel infrastructure. Feedback on the consultation during the summer is currently being considered and an update is expected by the end of 2024. The ATM consultation page can be viewed here: <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/active-travel-masterplan>
- 3.5 The handover sees the council become the responsible body for the project and contract management, including the establishment of new contracts with consultants and other suppliers, as well as directly managing budget, programme and risk, and retaining responsibility for reporting to the MCA.
- 3.6 Funding required for the council to complete the FBC, including preliminary and detailed design, cost summaries and risk assessment, has been allocated by the MCA as part of its governance of the handover, via a change request (see background papers at the end of this report). The scheme will be proposed for consideration by the MCA as a Low-Risk Traffic Scheme (LRTS).

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The delivery and construction element of the scheme – subject to FBC approval and receipt of further grant funding – will be subject to the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process, where applicable.
- 4.2 The public sector equality duty (as per the Equalities Act 2010) requires equality considerations to be reflected in the design of policies and the delivery of services. For further information, please see Section 7 of this report.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 5.1 The £900k grant funding identified for the FBC stage has been estimated with input from officers at the MCA and the council. This figure is proposed to cover the consultancy support required in terms of design and business case development, as well as internal staff costs across technical assurance, highways, project and programme management, and other council teams.
- 5.2 The Full Business Case work will include full cost summaries and contractor advice which will inform a detailed cost estimate for the delivery and construction of the scheme. This will then form the basis for further grant funding for a delivery stage, scheduled to be confirmed in autumn 2025.
- 5.3 Currently the delivery/construction allocation within the CRSTS programme by the MCA has been recognised as having a shortfall to deliver the 4 proposed routes in full within the CRSTS1 programme window of March 2027.
- 5.4 The MCA's decision to approve the handover, included authorising the phasing of the project with Phase 1 fast tracking those elements which can be delivered on time and within the remaining balance of delivery allocation (estimated at £2.9m).
- 5.5 It is proposed that the Phase 1 option is to be defined following the current public consultation, whereas Phase 2 (likely to include more complex and higher cost elements) may be paused subject to funding availability.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance.
- 6.2 A full risk register is to be agreed with the MCA as part of the handover documentation and will be managed by the council going forward. Key risks identified include ensuring the designs are safe and traffic impact is limited, utilities, and ensuring works are completed within the funding window.
- 6.3 Risk will be managed according to the council's risk management processes and procedures and will include a Quantitative Risk Assessment as part of support from consultants; this has recently been updated by the MCA. This will ensure that any contingency allowed for during delivery is calculated as accurately as reasonably practicable.

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion impacts are assessed both at a programme level and from the preliminary design stage, as part of the individual scheme design process.
- 7.2 Ahead of inheritance of project responsibility, a full and specific Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been drafted and will be managed by the council, with input from relevant colleagues across the organisation. This will be published online at the following location once adopted
<https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/equality-impact-assessments>

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

- 8.1 A Climate Emergency was declared in March 2019 along with an Ecological Emergency in July 2019. In response to this, the council has pledged to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. Active Travel (walking, wheeling and cycling) routes and enabling better travel choices for residents, are part of a package of measures to mitigate the climate crisis through the adoption of more sustainable and healthy transport options.
- 8.2 This project will provide people with greater transport choice, providing those able to use alternative modes to the car with genuine choice in how they travel, making it easier to use low carbon modes. This will help the council to decarbonise its transport system, promoting the move away from using cars to improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions along the corridor.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The Combined Authority could continue to lead the project, with council time limited to an advisory role and Highway approval only. However, the council is the Highway Authority so the delivery of highway interventions would be more complex in this delivery model. Local community engagement will be enhanced through increased cross-service liaison and interfaces with other council projects.
- 9.2 To not proceed with the project beyond its current phase and return CRSTS grant funds to the Combined Authority for distribution across other projects within the sub-region, or to be returned to central government. However, this is a transformational opportunity for the routes in question and not proceeding would prevent this scale of investment and improvement from taking place.

10 CONSULTATION

- 10.1 As referred to in 3.3, public consultation is being carried out at the moment, closing after a 6-week period at the beginning of December. The feedback will be analysed and considered as part of considering the phasing of the project as outlined in 5.3 to 5.5 above.
- 10.2 Consultation has been undertaken with both ward members and cabinet members, via Transport Members Board and other briefings.
- 10.3 Senior officers have been engaged throughout the process, via BWWCL Project Board and Transport Steering Group. This has included specific engagement with the S151 officer and the Executive Director - Sustainable Communities with

regards to the recommendations in this report and the delegated authority sought within.

10.4 Further consultation with statutory stakeholders is expected prior to delivery as part of any TRO applications.

Contact person	Kate Hobson, Capital Programme and Project Management team Kate_Hobson@bathnes.gov.uk Pam Turton, Head of Transport Strategy Pam_Turton@bathnes.gov.uk
Background papers	The MCA's decision notice:- Decision - Bath Sustainable Walking & Cycling Links - Modern Council West of England Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	