

Emergency Active Travel Fund – Tranche 2 bid summary (2020)

About

Earlier this year government announced a strategy to make space for cyclists and pedestrians and support increasing capacity on public transport as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic and social distancing. A fast-tracked statutory guidance, published 10 May 2020 and effective immediately, asks councils to consider reallocating road space for significantly increased numbers of cyclists and pedestrians. Funding has been made available through the **Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF)**.

The EATF currently has two rounds or "tranches" of funding. Gloucestershire has provisionally been allocated £288,000 for Tranche 1 and £1,153,000 for Tranche 2. After successfully receiving more than expected in the first round, receiving £310,000, Gloucestershire County Council has submitted a £10million second round bid with ambitious plans which will transform active and green travel in Gloucestershire.

This document shares a summary of details submitted to the Department for Transport.

Background

At its peak, cycling in Gloucestershire increased by 190 per cent during the Coronavirus lockdown. Urgent investment in Gloucestershire's Cycle network is therefore needed to capitalise on and lock in these changes in travel behaviours and the resulting benefits.

Gloucestershire's EATF Tranche 2 bid includes a substantial, transformative scheme of exceptional strategic significance for Gloucestershire, linking its two central urban areas, as well as a number of smaller schemes that capitalise on local opportunities to benefit cyclists and pedestrians in order to make a considerable contribution to the economic recovery and post-lockdown reopening.

Covid-19 policies for social distancing on public transport have already led to increased single-occupancy car trips, congestion and carbon emissions. Encouraging people to switch to cycling will be vitally important to harness the benefits of improved air quality around the county, as well as helping people to stay apart and stay safe.

The bid has focused on schemes that support the re-opening of schools, or the local economy (e.g. for tourism) through improved environments for pedestrians and cyclists. In the short term, this will aid Gloucestershire's Covid-19 recovery. In the long term it will provide access to education and economic growth while delivering significant health, environmental and congestion benefits.

Key bid points

This bid will contribute towards a number of ambitions:

- Improved accessibility: cycling and walking provisions should be suitable for all ages and abilities, to encourage new riders and pedestrians to get out and about as well as cater for more experienced residents, commuters and visitors.

- Improved connectivity: these proposals build on the existing national cycle routes in Gloucestershire, and deliver our Local Cycling and Walking investment Plan (LCWIP) ambitions, helping to connect more residents, amenities and places of employment. It also links to key public transport access points, including Cheltenham and Gloucester stations.
- Greener Transport: significant carbon reduction benefits health and wellbeing as well as tackling climate change and poor air quality. In 2019 the county council announced a climate action plan for Gloucestershire to become a carbon neutral county by 2050.
- Boost the economy: allowing residents, commuters and visitors to safely social distance is vital to restarting our local economy as Gloucestershire recovers from the Coronavirus pandemic. We know that, globally, cycling delivers substantially more economic value to local retailers than driving. There are significant longer term benefits to green transport options and tourism. Improving air quality and reducing congestion will make popular tourist destinations in both urban and rural areas more attractive. Improving connectivity and accessibility will encourage active and climate conscious tourism.

Bid Proposal

The bid is split up into five schemes which echo our strategic network ambitions and are believed to have the greatest level of impact for Gloucestershire:

Gloucester to Cheltenham Cycle way (B4063)

It has long been considered a barrier to economic, environmental and wellbeing growth that there is no clear, fast and direct cycle way between Gloucester and Cheltenham. They are the two main economic hubs in Gloucestershire and therefore draw in substantial numbers of commuters generating significant congestion and pollution. This highlights a demand for sustainable transport infrastructure linking Gloucestershire's two largest urban centres.

The A40 corridor is so congested that even the express bus service is scheduled to take over 50 minutes between Cheltenham and Gloucester in the peak period. Currently there is no route for cyclists, as the A40 linking Cheltenham and Gloucester is unsafe for cyclists due to its segregated junctions, high traffic volumes and speed. Providing a high quality route for cyclists and walking along the existing B4063 which runs parallel to the A40 will for the first time provide a viable fast, convenient and safe route for cycling between Cheltenham and Gloucester.

The scheme will follow the path of the B4063 through the villages of Churchdown and Staverton. It will provide an attractive, flat route and acts as a core connection from which to develop a complete cycling network that joins the two primary economic centres in Gloucestershire.

Key points:

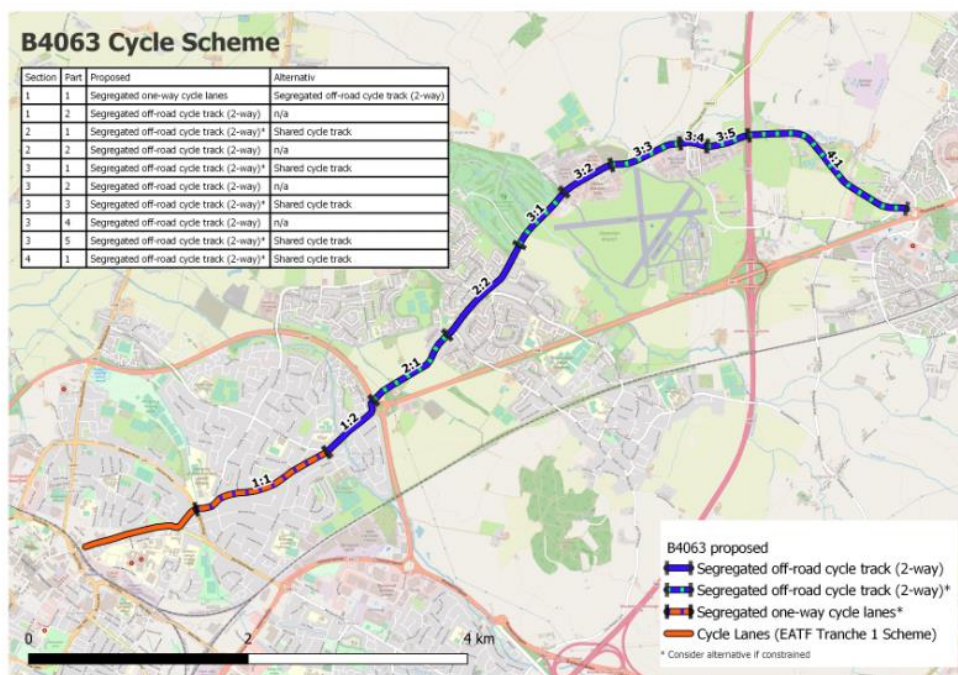
- A permanent continuous corridor of walking and cycling facilities for all abilities along the B4063 between Cheltenham and Gloucester will provide quicker journey times for cyclists than can be achieved by bus and at peak times by car.

- Creating a central spine of continuous active travel infrastructure between Cheltenham and Gloucester will be the backbone of Gloucestershire’s emerging walking and cycling network.
- Includes re-allocation of road space, improvements to existing facilities, signal improvements and other interventions.
- Reducing traffic congestion and overcrowding on Gloucestershire’s most popular bus routes.
- Potential threefold increase of cycling on B4063 proposed scheme (DfT Propensity to Cycle (PtC) tool).
- Continues the Tranche 1 London Road (B4063) work.

Highways England has developed the scheme up to the end of preliminary design stage, and funding has been secured for £1.165million of further detailed design costs. Highways England has allocated £5million of construction costs; however, there is currently a budget shortfall of circa £5.4m to deliver the scheme in its entirety. The revised design for this scheme will take account of latest guidance, specifically the cycle infrastructure design (LTN 1/20) published in July 2020.

While the B4063 scheme is a standalone scheme, the whole purpose of it is to provide the initial building block of a comprehensive cycling network across the county.

The proposed scheme will directly link to the £1.6m West Cheltenham Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Scheme (WCWCI) that was recently approved by the GFirst LEP Board and which benefits GCHQ and the proposed Cyber Central development, with its proposed 1,100 homes and 7,500 jobs. A further c. 575 homes are planned in other developments along the route. In total, the adopted Joint Core Strategy (JCS) identified c.9,000 homes and c. 100 hectares of employment land in the strategic allocations for the north-west and west of Cheltenham.



The Central Severn Vale (LCWIP)

The delivery of a central spine of cycle infrastructure (outlined above) which links Gloucestershire's two major centres, a distance of only six miles, will be a major catalyst to deliver change and pivotal to enabling a growing network of cycle routes as outlined in Gloucestershire's Local Cycling and Walking Plan (LCWIP). The Tranche 2 criteria specifically encouraged including LCWIPs in the proposals.

What is LCWIP?

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) set out the strategic approach to identifying long-term cycling and walking improvements, and make the case for future investment through funding bids and by informing discussions with developers. Our LCWIP has the ability to reduce congestion on one of the business urban corridors in Gloucestershire and will also reduce overcrowding on the county's most popular bus routes.

The Cheltenham and Gloucester LCWIP report and network maps identify primary corridors along which high levels of cycling are anticipated, linking residential areas with the town and city centres. These proposals performed very well when mapped on the DfT cycle way prioritisation tool.

Key points:

- This package of changes complements the B4063 scheme and will put in place walking and cycling improvements already identified in Gloucestershire.
- In Cheltenham the proposals will focus on Tewkesbury Road, High Street and Gloucester Road.
- In Gloucester the focus will be on linking the canal towpath to the city centre and London Road, with widened cycle lanes and footpaths on Southgate Street and other measures to remove barriers to cycling on Llanthony Road.
- Improving connectivity and residential access to cycle routes which already exist through the county will benefit user groups of all abilities in the centre of Cheltenham and Gloucester, reducing congestion and enabling environmental and health benefits.
- Further background and information to these proposals is available at <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/transport/gloucestershires-local-transport-plan-2015-2031/local-cycling-and-walking-infrastructure-plans/>

Tewkesbury connections

The Newtown Cycle Link Cycle Track is one of the most heavily used cycle links in Gloucestershire, providing vital links between the Ashchurch, Newtown and Mitton residential developments with wider access to Tewkesbury town centre. This includes amenities at the local supermarket (where the current off road facility ends) and Tewkesbury Primary School. Pedestrians and cyclists use the off road facility on a daily basis demonstrating a strong demand, however the western extent of the facility is poorly served with a lack of continuity into the town centre and the nearby primary school.

The Tewkesbury and Ashchurch areas will experience significant development over the next ten years in accordance with the Joint Core Strategy (JCS), which identifies the need for 8000 new homes. This route will serve the new residents accessing the town centre.

Key points:

- Extending the existing Newtown cycle link further towards Tewkesbury town centre
- Widening the pavement to create a segregated cycle way
- Connecting more of Newtown, Northway and Ashchurch with Tewkesbury C of E Primary School.
- Permanent changes will particularly support the re-opening of schools and trips to local businesses.
- Upgrading the facility to meet predicted local demand

Stroud town centre

The Stroud walking and cycling access improvements scheme is composed of two main elements;

- Golden Valley Route (A419) – a step change in walking and cycling access to Stroud Town Centre (and station) from the east; and
- Cainscross Road segregated cycle lanes - upgrades to existing cycle lanes to provide a segregated cycle route into Stroud from the west.

The route lies on the Gloucestershire Strategic cycle route as set out in the Local Transport Plan.

Key points:

- Improving connectivity east to west in Stroud by providing a missing walking and cycling link between existing traffic free route and town centre;
- Segregated cycle ways and improved pedestrian priority at crossing points
- Permanent re-allocation of road space to walking and cycling, and traffic calming design;
- New crossings/junctions with design priority to cycles and pedestrians;

Provision of segregated facilities on this route will make it safer and more comfortable to all cyclists and will permanently allocate the road space to the exclusive use of bikes.

Rural connections

As typical for a predominantly rural county¹, well over 50% of people in Gloucestershire commute by car though up to 60% of commuters (depending on the district) have less than 5km journey to work; a distance considered 'easy' by cycling advocacy groups.

Rural and small town areas have potential to be opened up as cycling areas, if the right infrastructure interventions are provided at the right time and place. In these locations, links between schools, residential areas, shopping and leisure facilities can create a sustainable local community. With the emergence of e-bikes, cycling will become an increasingly viable mode of transport for longer, rural trips – provided that adequate cycle infrastructure is in place. Two key places have been identified to deliver cycling infrastructure: Lydney to Parkend in the Forest of Dean, and Moreton-in-Marsh in Cotswolds.

Lydney to Parkend key points:

- This route provides connections for the populations of Lydney, Parkend, Whitecroft and Bream (population c15,000) with a 5.5km off road route.
- Strategically it connects with businesses centrally located with Lydney and the mainline rail station.
- Economically it connects with Whitemead Forest Park, Pedalabikeway, Dean Forest Heritage Railway, central forest tourism locations as well as a wealth of hospitality businesses.
- Provides safe accessible off road connections between Parkend, Whitecroft and Bream, also connecting with the catchment secondary school Dean Academy.

The PtC analysis suggests that high quality improvements to cycling infrastructure could increase cycling levels in Lydney from c.5% and less than 1% in Parkend to between 10-14% in Lydney and 7-9% in Parkend.

Moreton-in-Marsh key points:

- Scheme has been designed to support the high density of local businesses, retail outlets and listed buildings which draw tourists in the Cotswolds District and within the county.
- Supporting the high number of pedestrians near the A44 and helping local residents and visitors and improve access to schools, shops and the local railway station.
- Improving crossing facilities with dropped kerbs and tactile paving on the main routes through the town.
- New short footway section to connect St Davids C of E Primary School.
- Providing cycle parking shelters and stands at various locations around the town.

These changes will support local walking and cycling trips as well as tourism in the Cotswolds and Forest of Dean.

¹ https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/1521013/overview_-_environment_-_2017_v2-17.pdf

Funding Ask

Gloucestershire County Council has sought over £10m from the DfT's Emergency Active Travel Fund. These cost estimates are high level only and more work needs to be done to fully design the schemes and understand costs.

Estimated cost break down for this bid is as follows;

1. **B4063 Cycle Improvements scheme:**

£5,441,000 requested from the Emergency Active Travel Fund, Tranche 2
£6,165,000 other public sector funding (already identified, subject to leverage)

Total Scheme Cost - £11,606,000

*Note that funds from both EATF and the other committed sources (Highways England) are apportioned across all sections. We would seek to develop all sections in parallel to ensure that the whole project, and not discrete sections, can be delivered as quickly as possible to achieve economies of scale and efficiencies during construction. However, if funding only became available for a limited number of sections, these could be delivered while funding for subsequent phases is secured.

Cost breakdown by section:

Section 1: £ 2,558,340 TOTAL

- EATF ask: £ 1,033,340
- Other funding secured: £1,541,250

Section 2: £ 3,096,940 TOTAL

- EATF ask: £ 1,571,940
- Other funding secured: £1,541,250

Section 3: £ 2,814,300 TOTAL

- EATF ask: £ 1,289,300
- Other funding secured: £1,541,250

Section 4: £ 3,071,420 TOTAL

- EATF ask: £ 1,546,420
- Other funding secured: £1,541,250

2. **Implementing the Central Severn Vale LCWIP: £936,500 (TOTAL)**

- Cheltenham element: £248,500
- Gloucester element: £688,000

3. **Tewkesbury connections: £225,000 (TOTAL)**

4. **Stroud cycling improvements: £1,990,000 (TOTAL)**

- Golden Valley Route, segment 1 - including Dr Newton's Way link: £1,915,000
- Cainscross Road segregated cycle lanes: £75,000

5. **Rural connectivity: £1,692,000 (TOTAL)**

- Lydney to Parkend: £1,300,000
- Moreton-in-Marsh: £392,000

Total DfT funding sought: £10,284,500

Technical aspects of the bid

Gloucestershire County Council has submitted the Tranche 2 bid to the Department for Transport under the Emergency Active Travel Fund. This is a competitive funding pot open to all Local Authorities and is worth £250million. The DfT have not set a formal date for disclosure of successful bids. Tranche 2 is dependent on the successful delivery of the projects in the Tranche 1 bid.