



# Cabinet

## 6 October 2021

<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>Approval of Transport Grants</b>
<b>Cabinet Portfolio</b>	Environment and Transport
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Councillor Andrew Bowden
<b>Exempt Report</b>	No
<b>Reason for Exemption</b>	N/A
<b>Key Decision</b>	Yes
<b>Public Notice issued</b>	Yes (published 7 September 2021)
<b>Wards Affected</b>	All Wards
<b>Report of</b>	Lisa Harris Executive Director Place <a href="mailto:LisaHarris@sthelens.gov.uk">LisaHarris@sthelens.gov.uk</a>
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<b>Borough priorities</b>	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	x
	Promote good health, independence and care across our communities	x
	Create safe and strong communities for our residents	x
	Support a strong, diverse and well-connected local economy	x
	Create a green, thriving and vibrant place to be proud of	x
	Be a modern, efficient and effective Council	x

## 1. Summary

1.1 The Borough Strategy Priority 4 “Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy” sets out the Council’s commitment to ensure that the right green, transport or digital infrastructure is provided to support economic prosperity. Priority 5 “Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture” further commits to using funding opportunities to invest in projects that promote active travel, improve air quality and reduce our carbon footprint.

1.2 In recent months, St Helens Council officers have developed successful applications to a series of regional and national funding opportunities, targeted at delivering these priorities. This has culminated in a total award of £2.306m comprising:

- £0.821m to develop outline designs for measures to make it easier to travel by sustainable modes of travel along key highways corridors between St Helens Town Centre and the East Lancashire Road and progress the case a new rail station at Carr Mill (“St Helens North Housing Access”)
- £0.750m to develop detailed designs for a new state-of-the-art bus station as part of the Council’s transformational regeneration plans for St Helens Town Centre, along with developing outline design proposals for complementary walking and cycling infrastructure (“St Helens Town Centre Multimodal Interchange”)
- £0.500m to deliver cutting-edge signal improvements on A58 and A572, including installation of artificial intelligence technology which will help improve traffic flow, improve air quality and make junctions safer for sustainable modes of travel. St Helens Council was one of only 21 local authorities in the country who have received this level of funding, which represents a 127% increase on our overall 2021/22 signals enhancement program.
- £0.284m to develop designs and network plans for expansion of the St Helens Borough walking and cycling network, building on recent funding success with the Active Travel Fund and Southern Gateway project. These plans will progress schemes to help make active modes of travel viable, safe and attractive options for local journeys.

1.3 In addition, the report notes submission of a £2.3m bid to the DfT’s Active Travel Fund, plus expressions of interest for participation in two national pilot schemes.

## 2. Recommendations for Decision

Cabinet is recommended to:

- i) **Approve receipt of the “Pool 1” Transport Pipeline revenue pre-development funding from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, comprising:**
  - £821,000 for St Helens North Housing Access design; and
  - £701,000 for St Helens Multimodal Interchange designs.
- ii) **Approve receipt of the Capability Fund allocation from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority of £284,000 revenue grant, as set out in Section 6.**
- iii) **Approve receipt of the Traffic Signals Specific Maintenance Grant from the Department for Transport of £500,000 capital funding, as set out in Section 7.**
- iv) **Note submission of the Active Travel Fund Tranche 3 allocation from the Combined Authority, as set out in section 8.**
- v) **Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Executive Director of Corporate Services, to award contracts to the successful bidders for completion of the works associated with the above funding, following completion of statutory procurement processes.**
- vi) **Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport to commence public consultation on design proposals for the above projects.**

## 3. Purpose of this Report

- 3.1 This report seeks approval to accept the above funding awards from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Department for Transport to deliver on the priorities set out in the Borough Strategy. It also seeks delegated authority to award contracts for these measures (following completion of appropriate procurement processes), and to commence public consultation processes in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transportation and Environment.

## 4. Background

- 4.1 St Helens Council has developed a coordinated pipeline of priority transport interventions necessary to deliver on the priorities set out in the St Helens Borough Strategy, adopted Liverpool City Region policies and the emerging St Helens Local Plan 2020-2035. The Council works with local, regional, and national partners to identify funding opportunities and has a strong track record of securing investment in the Borough’s infrastructure. This paper documents the latest success in this programme.
- 4.2 Priority 4 of the Borough Strategy (“Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy”) sets out the Council’s commitment to ensure that the right green, transport or digital infrastructure is provided to support economic prosperity. Priority 5 (“Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture”) further commits to using funding opportunities to invest in projects that promote active travel, improve air quality and reduce our carbon footprint. The funding awards secured are targeted at delivering on these promises.

**5. “Pool 1” Transport Pipeline Fund – St Helens Multimodal Interchange and St Helens North Housing Access**

5.1 The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) has awarded pre-development funding to enable St Helens Council to progress two projects shortlisted for the Liverpool City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (LCRSTS). The LCRSTS will follow on from the Transforming Cities Fund and will fund the delivery of projects between 2023/24 and 2026/27. These schemes are detailed in Table 1 below.

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Funding</b>
St Helens North Housing Access	Feasibility, options appraisal and outline design for measures to improve sustainable travel between St Helens Town Centre and the A580 East Lancashire Road, including business case development for a new station at Carr Mill. The scheme will complement plans for 1,100 new dwellings on a strategic brownfield allocation at Cowley Hill and will include appraisal of the deliverability and potential benefits of a new strategic highway route through the site.	£0.821m
St Helens Town Centre Multimodal Interchange	Detailed technical designs for a new St Helens Bus Station and feasibility design for improvements for improved walking and cycling access into and around St Helens Town Centre. This scheme forms part of the Council’s ambitious regeneration plans for the town centre being developed in partnership with the English Cities Fund, which recently secured £25m Towns Funding.	£0.701m

Table 1: “Pool 1” Funding Allocations

5.2 Funding includes a £0.071m allowance for project management on each project which will be used to provide agency staffing to support delivery of these schemes. Funding will be committed, and deliverables produced before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. Following approval of the funding stream the Council will undertake tendering for these projects, with a view to appointments being made as soon as possible following a compliant procurement process.

**6. 2021/22 Capability Fund**

6.1. The Borough Strategy sets out the desire to encourage our residents to make healthy and sustainable transport choices, helping to combat climate change, improve air quality and address congestion. Most journeys taken are short; 66% of all trips in Merseyside are less than 5km, but half of these are undertaken by car. Bike Life 2019 found that 32% of St Helens respondents do not cycle but would like to. Road safety concerns were highlighted by respondents as being a principal barrier to cycling, with over two-thirds of people supporting building segregated tracks and reducing speed limits on local roads.

6.2. The Council has a significant programme of delivery of new walking and cycling infrastructure across the Borough. Initial routes installed on Chester Lane/Jubits Lane and Clock Face Road in 2020 have carried approximately 365,000 trips on foot and by bike between December 2020 and July 2021. Further routes are delivered in the coming months, as shown in Appendix A.

6.3. The DfT has provisionally awarded the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority £1.897m of revenue funding from the Capability Fund, including £284,000 for St Helens Council, to deliver the following measures:

- Outline design proposals for a new walking and cycling route between Lea Green and Whiston Hospital, connecting with the network being delivered as part of the St Helens Southern Gateway project.
- Outline design proposals for an extension of the cycling route on Jubits Lane (installed in 2020) up to the borough boundary, to connect with proposals from Halton Borough Council which will then extend the route into Widnes.
- Develop proposals for improved walking and cycling infrastructure on the East Lancashire Road corridor between Carr Mill and Haydock.
- Identify a feasible route for an all-year walking and cycling connection between Clock Face, Sutton and the Omega Business Park, helping to connect St Helens residents to nearby job opportunities at a major employment site.
- Expand the proposed strategic walking and cycling network plans to set out aspirational routes suitable for local journeys across all of the Borough's key settlements.
- Commission active travel promotion activities centred around the cycle hub in Sherdley Park, to complement infrastructure proposals in the local area.

- 6.4. Funding must be committed within 12 months of receipt of funding (anticipated September/October 2022). The Council is currently undertaking tender activity to select suitable consultancies for these projects. This will enable appointments to be made as soon as possible following completion of the statutory procurement process and receipt of delegated approvals from the Executive Director of Place Services.
- 6.5. Release of Capability Funding award is subject to further assurance discussions between LCRCA and the DfT.
- 6.6. Following development of outline designs, a consultation process will be conducted to gain input from key stakeholders (including ward councillors and MPs), local businesses and the general public. Consultation plans will be developed in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport and will also comply with consultation requirements for active travel schemes published by the Department for Transport.

## **7. Traffic Signal Specific Maintenance Award Programme**

- 7.1. In May 2021, St Helens Council prepared and submitted a bid to the DfT's Traffic Signals Maintenance Specific Grant Award seeking funding to upgrade two signal junctions at Boardmans Lane / Chancery Lane and Parr Street / Park Road / Ashcroft Street. Following a competitive process, the DfT has awarded St Helens Council £0.5m. St Helens is one of only 21 Local Authorities in the country who have received this maximum level of funding.
- 7.2. The junction upgrades will benefit from new cutting-edge technology using Siemens Plus+ system, the first traffic signal solution to fully use artificial intelligence infrastructure to significantly reduce cabling and cable connections, meaning less disruption to road users, reduced installation times and cable savings of up to 80%. This will contribute to the Council's carbon savings target. The upgrades will improve the management, flow and safety of traffic on these routes, whilst also supporting existing infrastructure for walking and cycling. Monitoring of air quality will be carried out by the installation of Siemens Stratos system signalling.
- 7.3. The grant provides the opportunity to update operation of the junctions for all road users and the environment for local residents by:
- Reducing queueing of motor vehicles, helping to improve air quality by reducing concentrated nitrous oxide emissions.
  - Install facilities with nearside pedestrian/cyclist signals to create consistency for users.

- Reducing wait times and crossing phases for pedestrians and cyclists and increase crossing times to accommodate people with mobility impairments.
- Review street furniture around junctions to reduce clutter and improve accessibility.
- Increasing efficiency of the highway network operation will improve bus journey times and provide more punctual and reliable bus services – an objective of the LCR Bus Strategy.

7.4. The works for this award must be completed by March 2023.

## 8. Active Travel Fund (Tranche 3)

8.1. The LCRCA has submitted a bid for the third tranche of Active Travel Funding, to deliver cycling and walking routes set out in the LCRCA Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. This includes a bid for up to £2.330m within St Helens Borough, as detailed in Table 2. The schemes have been chosen to compliment regeneration schemes, maximise deliverability within the funding deadlines and to address local need for sustainable travel. Priorities were developed in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment.

Parr Street improvements, between Peasley Cross Lane and Park Road	£1,176m
Cowley Hill Liveable Neighbourhood (“By Ours Cowley Hill”) – implementation of measures to be developed through community co-design	£0.500m
Detailed design for future LCWIP routes, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• East Lancashire Road (Windle Island to Haydock)</li> <li>• Lea Green to Whiston Hospital</li> <li>• Jubits Lane to Warrington Road</li> </ul>	£0.400m
Improvements to infrastructure implemented under Tranche 1 of the Active Travel Fund on Chester Lane / Jubits Lane and Clock Face Road	£0.253m

Table 2: Summary of Active Travel Funding (Tranche 3) Bid

8.2. If successful, capital funding would need to be committed by March 2023.

8.3. In addition, the Council via LCRCA, has submitted expressions of interest to participate in two pilot schemes:

- A social prescribing project (to be delivered by the Public Health team), building on existing activities delivered by the council and healthcare partners.
- A ‘mini-Hollands’ trial, expanding the liveable neighbourhood co-design process in Cowley Hill to a broader geography, including potential interventions along the Key Route Network.

If successful, the Council would be invited to develop business cases for the pilot schemes, with revenue funding provided to support this.

## 9. Community Impact Assessment

9.1. The Community Impact Assessment identified the following key implications:

- The proposals are to provide safer routes for the most vulnerable road users, pedestrians and cyclists, as well as children, older and disabled people. Opportunities will be taken to improve safety for all road users.

- Positive impacts to increase accessibility by sustainable transport to employment, schools, greenspace, retail and services should be provided by the proposed project. This will support the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration.
- Health and wellbeing will be positively supported by the project proposals, through the raising of physical activity levels and the corresponding improvements in physical and mental health. Transport related air pollution levels and highway hazards should be reduced.

## **10. Consideration of Alternatives**

- 10.1. To not accept the Transport Grant allocations. This could cause reputational damage to the Council and would hamper the ability to deliver on policy priorities, including increased walking and cycling rates, better physical activity levels, reduced transport poverty and transport related air pollution. Failure to develop the prioritised "Pool 1" schemes would be very likely to prevent the Council securing future capital funding from the LCRCA Sustainable Transport Settlement, including severely delaying delivery of the Town Investment Plan would be lost.
- 10.2. To accept the funding but deliver alternative projects. This would require approval from the Combined Authority and Department for Transport, which is unlikely to be granted. It would delay the scheme outputs, meaning the Council would be unable to fulfil the requirements of the grant conditions. Delivering isolated cycle routes elsewhere in the Borough will fail to maximise the cumulative benefits from delivering continuous cross-border routes to St Helens town centre. The Combined Authority has offered the pre-development funding on the condition that it is spent on the two Pipeline schemes that they have prioritised.

## **11. Conclusions**

- 11.1. These funding streams have been targeted in line with priorities set out in the St Helens Borough Strategy, and a total award of total award of £2.306m represents a significant opportunity to deliver on these promises. Cabinet is recommended to approve acceptance of the Transport Grants and support the project proposals to help realise these objectives.
- 11.2. In addition, the projects support the delivery of a range of local and regional policies and plans, including the Liverpool City Region Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and the Town Investment Plan, as well as helping to deliver positive outcomes for health, climate and road safety. All of these outcomes contribute to the wider vision of the Borough Strategy.

## **12. Implications**

- 12.1. Legal Implications  
The Combined Authority will issue grant funding agreements for each funding stream, which will set out the requirements for use of the grant monies, reporting and monitoring.
- 12.2. Community Impact Assessment (CIA) Implications
- 12.2.1. Social Value  
Consultants will be appointed using local procurement frameworks. Most consultancies on these frameworks these have local offices within the City Region and employ a local workforce. National research has demonstrated that improved connectivity, particularly by sustainable modes, can generate significant local economic benefits.
- 12.2.2. Sustainability and Environment

The project proposals all seek to support sustainable transport options, supporting residents and businesses to travel more sustainably, which will in turn support reductions in air pollution and carbon emissions.

#### 12.2.3 Health and Wellbeing

The project proposals all seek to support sustainable transport options, including new cycling and walking infrastructure, supporting residents and businesses to travel actively as part of everyday lifestyles. This will support increases in physical activity levels in line with the St Helens Healthy Weight Strategy.

#### 12.2.4 Equality and Human Rights

Designs for the physical environment will be delivered in line with current highway guidance to the benefit of all users, including crossing points, reduced street clutter and addressing barriers to cycling. Improved opportunities to walk and cycle will help to address transport poverty.

#### 12.2.5 Customers and Resident

Provision of an enhanced street environment will improve accessibility for communities by sustainable travel, improving connectivity for residents and businesses within the borough.

#### 12.2.6 Asset and Property

As the Highway Authority, the Council has a statutory duty to maintain the highway network in a safe condition. The project proposals may increase maintenance and cleansing costs. However, over time and pending achieving modal shift, measures to reduce the number of trips made by private car will reduce carriageway maintenance costs. Upgrades of existing traffic signal equipment will reduce maintenance and replacement costs for the Council.

#### 12.2.7 Staffing and Human Resource

Pre-development funding from the Combined Authority for “Pool 1” schemes includes a significant sum for project management support. This will be used to support the Transport Policy Team through the appointment of agency staff as approved in Administrative Decision ENVP002051. The Council’s appointed contractor Siemens will provide design and installation resource for the Traffic Signals Specific Maintenance Award.

### 12.3 Risks

- 12.3.1 Project designs will be subject to political, public and stakeholder consultation as required by the grant criteria. This will highlight any issues to delivery and help to identify any potential improvements to designs, prior to commencement detailed design processes.
- 12.3.2 The Combined Authority requires a project risk register to be completed and kept updated to ensure delivery risks are mitigated and minimised. A monthly dashboard will be submitted with project delivery issues highlighted, as well as progress against spend profiles.
- 12.3.3 For the Traffic Signals Specific Maintenance Award Programme, the DfT require a programme plan to be submitted prior to commencement. This will include standard reporting procedures in line with DfT guidance.
- 12.3.4 Officers will adhere to the Borough’s Code of Practice for Highway Safety Inspections and will collaborate with our insurance provider, Liverpool City Region and neighbouring Highway Authorities in determining levels of service.

## 12.4 Finance

Funder	Fund	Purpose	Value (£m)	Capital/ Revenue	Deadline
LCRCA	“Pool 1” Pre-Development Funding	Design works for St Helens Town Centre and key highway corridors	1.522m	Revenue	March 2022
LCRCA / DfT	2021/22 Capability Fund	Design works for active travel infrastructure	0.284m	Revenue	12 months from receipt (estimated October 2022)
DfT	Traffic Signals Specific Maintenance Grant	Traffic signal upgrades	0.500m	Capital	March 2023
Total			2.306m		

Table 3: Financial Award Summary

12.4.1 The Transport Grants are given solely for the purposes of delivering the specified projects within the stated timescales. No match funding is required. Consultants will be appointed using existing frameworks where possible to increase value for money efficiencies across the Council.

12.4.2 Grant funding agreements will be entered into in relation to each of these awards, and the relevant officers will be fully consulted in relation to any specific grant conditions or compliance processes prior to entering into any agreement. All grant conditions will be complied with. Funds managed by or via the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority will be incorporated within existing monthly reporting schedules and are expected to use standard terms and conditions.

### 12.5 Policy Framework Implications

12.5.1 The recommendations set out in this report are targeted at delivering the priorities and commitments set out in the St Helens Borough Strategy. Priority 4 sets out the Council’s commitment to ensure that the right green, transport or digital infrastructure is provided to support economic prosperity. Priority 5 further commits to using funding opportunities to invest in projects that promote active travel, improve air quality and reduce our carbon footprint.

12.5.2 In addition, the projects listed support the delivery of a range of local and regional policies and plans, including the Liverpool City Region Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, the Liverpool City Region Local Journeys Strategy and the St Helens Town Investment Plan, as well as helping to deliver positive outcomes for health, climate and road safety. All of these outcomes contribute to the wider vision of the Council’s Policy Framework.

## 13. **Background papers**

- [Liverpool City Region Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan](#).
- [Bike Life 2019 Liverpool City Region](#) and Bike Life 2019 Summary Report: St Helens
- [Liverpool City Region Local Journeys Strategy 2018](#)
- [Borough Strategy 2020-2035](#)
- [Town Investment Plan](#)

## 14. **Appendices**

Appendix A - St Helens Borough Cycling and Walking Network plans – as of Summer 2021.