

Leader Decision – Getting Building Fund: Cycling Network Expansion and Art Challenge projects

Portfolio Holder	Leader
Date of decision	15 January 2021
	Signed

Decision taken

That the Leader of the Council:

- Approves acceptance of the Getting Building Fund grants for the Warwickshire Cycling Network Expansion project (£1.9 million) and Arts Challenge Fund project (£0.194 million), and
- Delegates authority to the Strategic Director for Communities to enter into the grant agreement with Coventry and Warwickshire LEP for the Cycle Links and Art Challenge Projects and to enter any other necessary legal agreements to give effect to the projects on terms and conditions acceptable to the Strategic Director for Resources.
- Approves, the addition of the A452 Kenilworth Road to Leamington Spa town centre cycle route to the capital programme at a cost of £0.56 million funded by the GBF, the allocation of £0.482 million from the GBF to the existing A422 Stratford Gyratory capital scheme to deliver improved cycle infrastructure on the A422 Alcester Road Stratford-upon-Avon and the allocation of £0.858 million from the GBF to the existing A429 M40 J15 to A46/B4115 capital scheme to deliver a series of cycle infrastructure improvements within and connecting to this transport corridor.
- Approves the addition of the Arts Challenge Fund project to the capital programme at a maximum value of £0.279 million funded by the £0.194 million Getting Building Fund grant and £0.085 million allocation from the County Council's Place Shaping and Capital Feasibility Fund.

Reasons for decisions

In August 2020 the County Council secured funding, subject to agreeing grant conditions, from the Government's Getting Building Fund through Coventry and Warwickshire LEP for the Warwickshire Cycling Network Expansion and Arts Challenge Fund projects. Approval is now required from the Leader of the Council to enter into a Grant Agreement with Coventry and Warwickshire LEP in order to begin drawing down grant funding and progressing the projects. It is also requested that authority is delegated to the Strategic Director of Communities to enter into any necessary legal agreements on terms and conditions acceptable to the Strategic Director of Resources.

Background information

In August 2020 the Government confirmed the list of over 300 successful projects which will receive a share of £900 million from the Getting Building Fund (GBF). The GBF is investing in shovel-ready infrastructure projects to create jobs and support economic recovery across the country. The projects were selected by Local Enterprise Partnerships and Mayoral Combined Authorities in each area and endorsed by the Housing Secretary.

The Coventry and Warwickshire LEP was allocated £8.1m from the GBF for a wide-ranging package of projects covering transport, skills, town centre regeneration, enterprise support and housing. These projects support green growth by delivering new and improved cycleways, retrofitting, and improving green spaces and public realm.

This report relates to the following two projects being led by Warwickshire County Council:

1 - The Warwickshire Cycling Network Expansion Project

Funding of £1.9 million from the GBF supported with an additional £0.3 million from the County Council's Casualty Reduction capital fund will bring forward a total of 7km of new or enhanced priority cycle routes in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwick and Leamington Spa. This funding will build on existing investment in cycling infrastructure to advance cycling connectivity and help establish cycling as a viable and attractive choice of travel, particularly for short urban journeys.

2 - The Arts Challenge Fund Project

Investment of £0.194 million from the GBF supported by a further £0.15 million from the County Council's Place Shaping and Capital Feasibility Fund will be used to engage local artists alongside experienced place curators to create innovative experiences and installations. This will stimulate the economic and social wellbeing of the towns and wider rural hinterland which depend upon them. The GBF grant will be used to support projects in North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth. The overarching objective is to enhance Warwickshire's cultural and artistic appeal in the run up to, during, and beyond Coventry 2021, whilst supporting places to be safe and vibrant in the wake of the impact that the Covid 19 pandemic has had on local economies and communities.

Contractually, the Council will enter into individual contracts with each successful artist, which will include design, build, maintenance and (eventual) decommissioning. We will also be contracting with an expert Place Curator agency to run the competitive bidding process and support the bidding artists to develop their ideas through to a full proposal and design. The total funding available will therefore be used to pay both the Place Curators and the artists as well as other associated project costs.

The County Council has also secured the following GBF grants for which grant agreements have been finalised:

1. £0.5 million towards project costs of £1.012 million to create new office space at Holly Walk, Leamington Spa for the growing gaming and digital creative sector.
2. £0.35 million to fund delivery of electric vehicle charging points. This will build on the £0.412 million already secured from the Government's Office for Low Emission Vehicles with the combined funding helping to deliver approximately 200 Electric Vehicle charging points across Warwickshire.

Financial implications

Entering into grant agreements with Coventry and Warwickshire LEP will enable the County Council to utilise GBF grant funding of £1.9 million for the Warwickshire Cycle Links project and £0.194 million for the Arts Challenge Fund project. This funding would not otherwise be available.

The project funding must be spent and defrayed by 31 March 2022. Any delay to project delivery beyond this time presents a risk that grant funding cannot be drawn down and projects not completed. Project delay could also result in additional funding being required to complete projects. Robust project management and governance arrangements have been put in place to mitigate against this risk and ensure the projects are delivered to programme and within budget.

The grant agreements contain contracted project outputs which in relation to the cycle links project is 7km of new or improved cycle routes. The Arts Challenge Fund project is contracted to deliver five installations. Any variation to the contracted outputs would require the approval Coventry and Warwickshire LEP. Were projects to experience cost overruns and be unable to gain approval to vary the contracted outputs, any funding gap would need to be met. This is considered a low risk. The project costs for the Arts Challenge Fund have been developed with the input of an expert Place Curator agency and the design of installations can be adjusted to ensure costs remain within the available budget. The costs of the cycle links schemes have been established with the input of Design Services based on either applying standard rates from the Highways Maintenance Contract (Balfour Beatty Living Places) with 20% contingency included to concept designs or by using a cost per metre rate based on recent experience of cycle scheme delivery. There will also be an opportunity to descope schemes should this be necessary to ensure costs remain within the available budget.

Environmental implications

Transport is the single largest cause of carbon emissions in the UK. The cycle links project will provide cycling infrastructure which will enable more journeys to be made by cycling, thereby contributing to reduced carbon emissions as well as lower levels of congestion and improved air quality.

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Assistant Director	Assistant Director for Communities
Lead Director	Strategic Director for Communities
Lead Member	Portfolio Holder for Environment and Heritage & Culture, Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning

Urgent matter?	<i>No</i>
Confidential or exempt?	<i>No</i>
Is the decision contrary to the budget and policy framework?	<i>No</i>

List of background papers
None

Members and officers consulted and informed
Portfolio Holder – Councillor Jeff Clarke and Councillor Heather Timms
Corporate Board – Mark Ryder
Legal – Jane Pollard
Finance – Andrew Felton
Equality –
Democratic Services – Helen Barnsley
Councillors –
Local Member(s): n/a