

Portfolio Holder Decision

National Cycle Network Activation Programme

Grant Funding

Portfolio Holder	Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property
Date of decision	24 January 2023
	Signed

1. Decision taken

The Deputy Leader of the Council:

- 1.1 Approves the entering into a grant agreement with Sustrans for the National Cycle Network Activation Programme and delegates authority to the Strategic Director for Communities to enter into the grant agreement and any other necessary legal agreements to give effect to the project on terms and conditions acceptable to the Strategic Director for Resources.
- 1.2 Approves the allocation of £0.252 million grant funding from National Cycle Network Activation Programme to the existing A425 Radford Road Cycle Route capital scheme to deliver cycle infrastructure on the A425 Radford Road between Leamington Spa and Radford Semele.

2. Reasons for decisions

- 2.1 The County Council has been allocated £0.252 million from the Government's National Cycle Network Activation Programme administered by Sustrans, subject to agreeing the grant conditions. The grant has been awarded to provide an upgraded crossing on the A425 Radford Road on the National Cycle Network Route 41 between Newbold Comyn and Radford Semele.
- 2.2 Deputy Leader approval is required to enter into a grant agreement with Sustrans and to allocate the capital funding to the A425 Radford Road Cycle Route scheme.
- 2.3 It is also requested that authority is delegated to the Strategic Director for Communities to enter into the grant agreement and any other legal agreements necessary to give effect to the project on terms and conditions acceptable to the Strategic Director for Resources.

3. Background information

- 3.1 The A425 is a busy main road between Leamington and Southam, cutting through the middle of Radford Semele. It has a narrow footway and speed limits of 40mph and 30mph. The Grand Union Canal (part of National Cycle Network Route 41) connects Leamington town centre and railway station with the Offchurch Greenway and Lias Line disused railway (NCN41). However, the canal towpath is not directly accessible from the A425 at Radford Semele.
- 3.2 Sustrans, a national transport charity and custodian of the National Cycle Network, has recently upgraded a section of the Lias Line. This provides a high quality walking, wheeling, cycling and horse-riding route between the Fosse Way and Long Itchington. HS2 is due to provide a new bridge across the Fosse Way which will complete a missing link between the Offchurch Greenway and the upgraded section of the Lias Line. This will enable the rerouting of National Cycle Network Route 41, providing safer connections between Leamington Spa, the Offchurch Greenway and Long Itchington and linking to quiet roads and traffic-free routes towards Draycote Water and Rugby. Demand for recreational cycling is expected to increase significantly with these improvements and also with new cycle trails at Newbold Comyn Country Park (scheduled for completion in March 2023).
- 3.3 In 2015 the County Council secured £0.095 million from a housing developer towards extending the existing cycle route to the east of Sydenham Drive to provide a shared cycle and pedestrian route along the A425 Radford Road between Leamington Spa and Radford Semele. This funding was paid to the County Council in 2017. In 2019, preliminary designs were produced but these were put on hold as there was insufficient funding for delivery.
- 3.4 In 2019, the Canal and River Trust purchased land on the west side of Radford Road bridge for the purpose of constructing a new access ramp. The Canal and River Trust completed design work for the new access ramp but did not progress further due to lack of funding.
- 3.5 In August 2021, Warwickshire County Council submitted an Active Travel Fund application for £500,000 to the Department for Transport to create a cycle route along the A425 Radford Road. This was unsuccessful.
- 3.6 However, in March 2022, the Department for Transport informed Sustrans that they had been successful in a separate application for National Cycle Network Activation Fund Tranche 6 - to upgrade National Cycle Network Route 41 between Newbold Comyn and Radford Semele. This funding is for crossing improvements on the A425 Radford Road near Newbold Comyn, two new access ramps (to improve access to the canal including the west side of Radford Road bridge) and resurfacing of the Grand Union Canal towpath between the new access ramps.
- 3.7 Following discussions between Warwickshire County Council, Canal and River Trust and Sustrans, it was agreed that the Canal and River Trust will utilise part of the funding to deliver the two ramps and the towpath improvements and Warwickshire County Council will deliver the crossing and other improvements within the highway on the A425 Radford Road.

- 3.8 Sustrans has therefore prepared a sub-grant agreement for Warwickshire County Council for design and delivery of the crossing and other improvements on the A425 Radford Road near Newbold Comyn.
- 3.9 During 2023 the Council will invite input from stakeholders and the public on a detailed scheme design and consult on the required legal orders. Subject to the feedback received, scheme construction could take place in Summer 2023.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1 Entering into a grant agreement with Sustrans will enable the County Council to start delivering the first phase of the A425 Radford Road Cycle Route. The latest budget fee estimate of £252,172 (December 2022) includes construction works, signals design, site supervision of the highway elements of the project and for the County Council to undertake a Technical Review and supervision of Canal and River Trust's design, and works carried out by Canal and River Trust's contractor on areas adjacent to highway or on highway land.
- 4.2 The agreement with Sustrans requires the scheme to be substantially completed by September 2023. Should the project be delayed, for example due to receiving objections to legal orders or delays in construction, and the funding withdrawn, it will not be possible to deliver these improvements.
- 4.3 Any increase in costs above the current estimate would have to be met. However the cost estimate includes a suitable allowance for contingency given the stage of design as well as for inflation. Cost overruns could draw on funds remaining from the developer contribution, although this would reduce funding available for extension of the cycle route near Radford Semele.
- 4.4 Warwickshire County Council will continue to seek funding to supplement these crossing improvements with delivery of a continuous cycle route between Leamington Spa and Radford Semele. This route has been identified as a very high priority scheme within the draft Warwickshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

5. Environmental implications

- 5.1 Transport is the single largest cause of carbon emissions in the UK.
- 5.2 The grant funding will enhance the quality of the A425 Radford Road cycle route and National Cycle Network Route 41. It will contribute to reduced carbon emissions as well as lower levels of congestion and improved air quality by attracting a higher volume of users and encouraging more people to make everyday journeys and leisure trips by foot and by bicycle in preference to private cars.

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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
<p>Portfolio Holder – Councillor Peter Butlin</p> <p>Corporate Board – Mark Ryder</p> <p>Legal – Caroline Gutteridge/ Paul Fairweather</p> <p>Finance – Andrew Felton</p> <p>Equality – Joanna Kemp</p> <p>Democratic Services – Isabelle Moorhouse</p> <p>Councillors – Cllr Wallace Redford (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning), Jonathan Chilvers (Leader of the Green group), John Holland (Leader of the Labour group), Jerry Roodhouse (Leader of the Liberal Democrat group)</p> <p>Local Member(s): Cllr Wallace Redford (Cubbington and Leek Wootton), Will Roberts (Leamington Willes)</p>