



Department
for Transport

From the Secretary of State
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To Local Transport Authority Leaders

16th October 2020

Dear Councillors,

Emergency Active Travel Funding Update

I'm writing to you today about the Emergency Active Travel Fund, ahead of any formal allocations from the second round of funding.

Before turning our attention to the second round of funding, I want to look at what has worked well so far, and what has worked less well. While I recognise that all Local Authorities put in a huge amount of effort, at a very challenging time for our nation, to deliver on Government plans for active travel to help maintain social distancing, there are some important lessons to be learned.

A great number of schemes have represented smart and considered use of the funding, which has genuinely improved the local transport networks in areas, and helped improve the lives of local residents and all road users. We know that the majority of people support reallocation of road space for cycling and walking in their local area, and quality schemes such as these will only serve to further enhance this support.

However, there were a significant minority of instances where schemes were, frankly, nowhere near good enough. A notable number of councils used their funding poorly and were simply out of step with the needs of their local communities.

I saw or heard from the public and parliamentary colleagues about far too many instances where temporary cycle lanes were unused due to their location and design, while their creation left motor traffic backed up alongside them; of wide pavements causing unnecessary congestion in town centres; and other issues that many have, rightly, reacted angrily too.

Some weeks ago I asked my officials to engage with local authorities where I had concerns. Since then, numerous schemes have been scaled back and revised. I am pleased with this but the work will continue where local residents continue to have concerns.

The objectives of the fund are important ones, and schemes supported by the fund have an essential part to play in delivering the aims set out in our “Gear Change” plan. We all want to see the benefits that active travel brings to be realised, but poorly implemented schemes will make no friends for the policy or more broadly for active travel. If we want people to see this funding – a substantial amount designed to redesign transport space to benefit all road users – in a positive light, then we have to ensure it is used well.

That is why in the second tranche of funding, those authorities which have demonstrated genuine plans to consult their local communities and embrace good design principles will receive all of or, in some cases, more funding than their indicative allocations. Those authorities that have not been able to demonstrate this to the same extent will receive less, and in some cases considerably less, funding than their indicative allocations.

There is no ‘one size fits all’ approach here. Different types of schemes will be appropriate in different areas of the country. For example, what is appropriate in a major urban area may not be what is suitable in rural towns, where people are more likely to be reliant on private vehicles. The crucial test is, does it deliver for the community it serves, and has it been done with their consultation.

Schemes must balance the needs of cyclists and pedestrians with the needs of other road-users, including motorists and local businesses. Only authorities which have passed these key tests will receive the funding they have asked for.

I want to be absolutely clear: we are not prepared to tolerate hastily introduced schemes which will create sweeping changes to communities without consultation, and ones where the benefits to cycling and walking do not outweigh the dis-benefits for other road users.

I look forward to seeing the funding go toward genuinely positive changes to our roads, to make sure that everyone has the space and ability to move easily and without delay, no matter their transport type. I would like to thank you for all of your efforts in delivering such schemes in what are very testing times.

No one should be in doubt about our support for motorists. This Government is investing £27 billion to upgrade our roads and more to tackle potholes. We’re also investing in charging infrastructure to speed the transition to the electric vehicles, which will allow motorists the same freedom while meeting our commitments to tackle climate change.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grant Shapps', written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT