

WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL ACTIVE TRAVEL FUND CONSULTATION PLAN



West Sussex Active Travel Fund Programme

The Department for Transport (DfT) announced on 13 November 2020 that West Sussex County Council has been awarded £2.35m through the national Active Travel Fund (ATF) to support the implementation of walking and cycling schemes in the county. This follows a successful application for funding prepared by the council earlier this year.

This grant money will be used to fund the design and implementation of schemes that reflect the latest design standards and support both national transport policy objectives and the county's current Walking and Cycling Strategy (2016-2026).

An essential part of this process will be ensuring local residents, businesses and wider stakeholders are identified and appropriately consulted on the council's plans for these schemes to be delivered in the 2021/22 financial year.

This document is a Summary Consultation Plan outlining the general process and stages of consultation the council will deliver to ensure this happens. A Detailed Consultation Plan for the council's ATF funded schemes will be published in early 2021.

Requirement for consultation

Prior to scheme construction, the DfT requires confirmation that the council has undertaken appropriate consultation, including:

- *Consulting with key local stakeholders.*
- *Obtaining broad support and making changes to account for feedback.*
- *Implementing a communications plan.*
- *Discussing plans with local MPs and provide a summary of responses.*

Appropriate Consultation

The council will ensure that our consultation with local communities and wider stakeholders is appropriate and advanced in an open, timely and consistent approach, embracing the followings 'Gunning principles' for consultation:

- *Initial consultation will be at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage;*
- *The council will give sufficient information on each scheme proposal to permit intelligent consideration and response;*
- *Adequate time will be given for consideration and response by stakeholders.*
- *Consultation responses will be conscientiously taken into account for scheme development*

Consultation Objectives

The council has determined the following objectives to guide appropriate consultation with local stakeholders regarding the proposed schemes. The consultation programme will:

1. **Raise awareness of the Active Travel Fund and its purpose.**
2. **Raise awareness of the proposed schemes among the local community and key stakeholders in the local area.**
3. **Engage with stakeholders to ensure they are well-informed about the proposed schemes and their objectives.**
4. **Involve stakeholders and encourage feedback on our emerging scheme proposals.**
5. **Provide stakeholders with a real opportunity to influence scheme designs.**

Our Approach

The council will adopt a two phase approach to consultation regarding the proposed ATF schemes, preceded by detailed consultation planning. This approach will ensure opportunities for early stage consultation prior to a period of more formal consultation. The phases will be as follows:

- Consultation Planning
- Phase 1 Consultation (Stakeholder Engagement)
- Phase 2 Consultation (Formal Consultation)

(1) Consultation Planning

Prior to commencing consultation, the council will need to identify the stakeholders to be communicated with regarding the scheme proposals.

The council will undertake a stakeholder mapping exercise to identify local stakeholders and the relevant statutory consultees relating to the proposed ATF schemes.

The council will ensure this process captures a wide range of consultees including, but not limited to, residents, local businesses, local voluntary and community groups, schools, local MPs, Council Members, representatives of District, Borough, Town and Parish Councils.

Engagement and consultation must be inclusive, and the council will identify groups that may be traditionally under-represented in scheme consultations. This will include identifying organisations and working with representatives of protected characteristics groups, such as Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, faith communities, disability groups, children and young people, and LGBTQ+ as appropriate.

The council will take all reasonable steps to provide materials in accessible formats. This includes providing a plain text version of the information materials, compatible with screen reader software.

The council will identify the most appropriate channels to communicate and consult with identified stakeholders to commence the consultation.

(2) Phase 1 Consultation

An initial stage of consultation will then commence to provide the opportunity to raise awareness of the scheme proposal, and to provide the earliest opportunity to provide feedback on schemes in principle.

This will help identify key constraints, issues and opportunities that may influence scheme design and implementation and help manage risks to successful scheme delivery.

Phase 1 Approach

The council will use a range of channels to engage with local stakeholders under the Phase 1 consultation and direct them towards information and materials on a dedicated project webpage. Channels will include:

- *A postcard produced and distributed to local communities and business stakeholders, providing a short written summary of the scheme proposal and a broad illustration of the scheme improvement.*
- *Posters in local community facilities/libraries (if these are open at the time).*
- *Council social media accounts to further raise awareness, which can be targeted using geo-locational parameters and tailored to specific audiences as required.*

The scale of consultation activity will be tailored and proportionate to the scale of each scheme proposal within the wider ATF programme.

To ensure inclusive access to the materials, hard copies will also be made available on request, subject to an appointment being made. The council will make clear that other formats are available on request to ensure access for all.

The information will be made available online for a four week period and will set out the location, timeframe, and type of scheme improvement being considered. Opportunities for initial feedback will be given via an online feedback form, allowing people to voice their opinion on the schemes in principle and to help inform the next, more detail stage of consultation.

Direct consultation will also be made with key stakeholders, with each receiving specific written correspondence via email for comments on the proposals, and an invitation to attend an online workshop event. Feedback received will inform the design being consulted on in Phase 2.

(3) Phase 2 Consultation

The second phase of consultation will follow analysis and feedback from Phase 1 and the specific approach will be outlined in a Detailed Consultation Plan. This will include presenting more detail on the specific design and traffic management aspects of the proposed schemes and offering greater clarity around the planned timeframe for scheme commencement and completion.

The council will host the scheme information materials online, with stakeholders notified via a combination of direct correspondence, posters, postcards and adverts in print and social media, being used to raise awareness.

In Phase 2, this will be supplemented by a survey with local residents. To widen the potential for access to all, and given uncertainty around in-person gatherings due to COVID restrictions, this survey will be hosted using the online Engagement HQ Platform.

Further workshops with key stakeholders will be held to consider the emerging scheme designs and provide opportunities for comment prior to moving into the detailed design stage.

The Phase 2 consultation period is anticipated to last for six weeks and feedback will be possible throughout via one of the aforementioned channels. Alternatively, should consultees wish to provide direct correspondence to the council - such as via direct email correspondence - this will be relayed to the project team.

Decision makers within the council will be informed of the consultation responses from both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the process. Feedback will be reviewed carefully and taken into consideration for scheme development and democratic processes.

Consultation Reporting

A concise consultation report will be prepared and published on the council website following the conclusion of Phase 2. This will summarise the key points raised through the consultation and how matters raised have been considered through the scheme development process.

Communications Plan

Linked to the consultation plan, a separate Communications Plan will be produced to provide on-going information and opportunities to consult throughout subsequent stages of the project lifecycle, such as prior to and during the implementation phase of schemes.

This will ensure the ATF programme maintains an on-going approach to engagement with stakeholders, with regular communications designed to explain how schemes are progressing and opportunities to monitor and respond to feedback as and when received.