

Title of report: Traffic Signal Obsolescence Grant and Green Light Fund

Decision maker: Cabinet member roads and regulatory services

Decision date: 25/04/2024

Report by: Corporate Director – Economy & Environment

Classification

Open

Decision type

Key

This is a key decision because it is likely to result in the council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the council's budget for the service or function concerned. A threshold of £500,000 is regarded as significant.

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To accept and approve spend of £41,427.53 of Department for Transport grant funding relating to the Traffic Signal Obsolescence Grant (TSOG), a fund to upgrade traffic signal systems, replacing unreliable and obsolete equipment to improve reliability.

To accept and approve spend of £500,000.00 of Department for Transport grant funding relating to the Green Light Fund (GLF), a fund to improve the operation of traffic signals to better reflect current traffic conditions and get traffic flowing.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) Grant funding of £41,427.53 and £500,000.00 associated with the Traffic Signal Obsolescence Grant and the Green Light Fund be accepted from the Department for Transport and that authorisation is given for its spend as detailed in this report; and**
- b) Delegated authority is given to the Corporate Director of Economy and Environment to take all operational decisions over the lifetime of the project, to deliver the investment set out in recommendation (a).**

Alternative options

1. That this grant funding is not accepted and additional investment is not made and the council continues to maintain Herefordshire's highways in accordance with sound asset management practices but wholly within the annual maintenance allocations made available by Central Government.

Key considerations

2. In October 2023, the government's Plan for Drivers announced measures to fund traffic management systems maintenance and upgrading by local authorities, including the:
 - a. Traffic Signal Obsolescence Grant – a £30 million fund to provide better traffic lights
 - b. Green Light Fund – a £20 million fund to provide smarter traffic lights
3. Funding for these measured £50 million, of which £10 million was to be distributed automatically to all eligible English local highway authorities using the Integrated Transport Block allocation grant formula. The remaining £20 million of TSOG and the £20 million GLF was to be awarded following a competition process held in autumn 2023.
4. The challenge application process for bids was open between October and December 2023 and attracted 103 bids, covering 118 of the 121 eligible English authority areas, including a bid from Herefordshire.
5. Herefordshire bid against the Green Light Fund with the following areas of focus:
 - a. the removal of in-road detection in favour of above ground options, which was identified to both improve the reliability of the components, which are damaged by surface deterioration and other factors, and to take advantage of new technology in this area.
 - b. the replacement of poles with the introduction of sockets to make future works easier, safer and faster to complete, ultimately improving the safety of the workforce and disruption to road users as a result of reduced downtime of signals.
 - c. The replacement and reconfiguring of controllers to encourage more efficient operation of junctions. When combined with improved detection it is intended that these upgrades will also deliver improved journey experience for active travel users, particularly pedestrians and cyclists accessing the train station

6. Whilst the bid acknowledged that our current requirements across the network exceed that of the fund, the bid proposed to target any funding in the key city corridors of:
 - a. A465 Aylestone Hill to A4193 Commercial Road,
 - b. Widemarsh Street, Commercial Road and St Owen's Street
 - c. Whitecross Road/Eign Street on the A438 to the west of the city (junction without a pedestrian phase)
7. It was considered that this approach would result in routes being improved which interact with those controlled by National Highways, with further opportunities for co-ordination of the networks.
8. On 20 March 2024, government announced that Herefordshire had been successful with its bid and that it would receive £500,000.00 associated with the Green Light Fund, in addition to an automatic allocation of £41,427.53 associated with the Traffic Signal Obsolescence Grant.
9. It is proposed to accept the £500,000.00 associated with the Green Light Fund, in addition to the automatic allocation of £41,427.53 associated with the Traffic Signal Obsolescence Grant and that the funding be spent as set out in the bid.

Community impact

10. The Traffic Signal Obsolescence Grant and the Green Light Fund funding contributes to the County Plan ambitions, providing a safe usable network for the localities and for the economy of Herefordshire.

Environmental Impact

11. This investment seeks to deliver the council's environmental policy commitments and aligns to the following success measures in the County Plan.
 - a. Reduce the council's carbon emissions in reducing the need for reactive works, minimising disruption on the network and choosing appropriate materials for their whole life benefits in reducing the impact on the carbon footprint.
 - b. Work in partnership with others to reduce county carbon emissions delivering an efficient network.
 - c. Increase the number of short distance trips being completed by sustainable modes of travel by ensuring that the highway network is safe.
12. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.
13. The environmental impact of this proposal has been considered through the service specification and includes appropriate requirements on the contractor/delivery partner to minimise waste, reduce energy and carbon emissions. This will be managed and reported through the ongoing contract management.

Equality duty

14. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
15. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Our providers will be made aware of their contractual requirements in regards to equality legislation.
16. As a result of this investment, traffic signals will be upgraded with enhancements proposed for pedestrians and cyclists at some locations. As a result, this decision is considered to have a positive impact on the protected characteristics of Age and Disability. The investment set out in this report is considered to have a neutral impact on the other protected characteristics.

Resource implications

17. In order to deliver the investment the Council will need to use the services of a traffic signals contractor.
18. A compliant route to market already exists through the Council's partner contractor, Balfour Beatty Living Places. Given the specialist nature of traffic signals, it is the recommendation of Officers that the project be delivered through this route, with value for money being evidenced through Balfour Beatty's procurement processes.
19. The project will be managed by the Council's Highways and Traffic team with the Service Director for Environment and Highways being responsible for delivery.
20. A unique project code will be allocated so that the project manager assigned can monitor and review progress to enable reporting to relevant programme boards.
21. There are no implications to revenue funding as any future maintenance is managed within the existing programme and budget, however, capital investment should ease the revenue budget reducing the need to undertake additional repairs over the whole life of the asset.

Capital Project	2024/25	2025/26	Future Years	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Traffic Signal Works	487	0	0	487
Internal Staff costs including Project Management	54	0	0	54
TOTAL	541	0	0	541

Funding streams (indicate whether base budget / external / grant / capital borrowing)	2024/25	2025/26	Future Years	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Department for Transport (external) Grants	541	0	0	541
TOTAL	541	0	0	541

Legal implications

22. The legal implications are set out in the relevant part of the report.

Risk management

23. The investment will reduce the overall risk in traffic signals and improve customer satisfaction, investing in a key asset group.

24. Any risks will be managed at service level and escalated in accordance with the Risk Management Plan.

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Budget not sufficient.	Review within the overall annual and forward programme and deliver in line with the council's priorities.
Environmental issues / constraints restrict project delivery in year.	Review and reprofile as required.
Projects conflict with programmed and other funded works such as Levelling Up funding or s106 works	Opportunity to incorporate into the project, potential for savings and minimising impact on communities and economy of Herefordshire.
Deliverability due to rising costs and available resources.	Effective contract management processes will provide early warnings of such implications.
Reduction in personal injury and vehicle damage claims	Opportunity to potentially reduce claims and therefore costs to the Council.

Consultees

25. As part of the revised consultation process for key decisions, a Political Group Consultation was undertaken on 10th April 2024 and the following matters were discussed:
- a. Positive feedback was received on recent changes to traffic signals in Ledbury, which saw similar changes to that proposed in this report. Clarification was sought and given that the Council's SCOOT traffic signal control system was not being removed.
 - b. The A465 Aylestone Hill to A4193 Commercial Road corridor was discussed relating to how work associated with the grant could help resolve traffic congestion in the surrounding area and how it would integrate with other proposed works in the area, with observations raised about the safety of pedestrian and cycle movements across the junction with South Bank Road.
 - c. Whether there were any plans to spend the grant money at locations outside of Hereford. It was explained that whilst this is not possible, our normal spend can now be spread further over assets outside of the bid works as a result of the grant funding received.
 - d. Although not under the control of the Council, signals on the A49 National Highways network were discussed and how their timings can lead to rat-running. It was considered that this grant funding and work undertaken as a result would lead to routes being improved which interact with those controlled by National Highways, with further opportunities for co-ordination of both networks.

Appendices

None.

Background papers

None.