

**TRANSPORT BOARD**

**25<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

**LOCAL HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE CHALLENGE FUND**

**Purpose of Report**

The report concerns the submission of bids and Expressions of Interest from the Sheffield City Region to the Department for Transport's Local Highways Challenge Maintenance Fund for 19/20 and 20/21.

**Freedom of Information**

Freedom of Information and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

'The paper will be available under the Combined Authority Publication Scheme'

**Recommendations**

Board members are asked to:

- Endorse the submission of bids and Expressions of Interest to the Department for Transport's Local Highways Maintenance Challenge Fund.

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1** In July 2019 the Department for Transport (DfT) launched the Local Highways Challenge Maintenance Fund. The Fund is open to local highways authorities in England to bid for major maintenance projects that it would otherwise be difficult to fund through the usual allocations received from government.
- 1.2** Local highways authorities are eligible to submit one bid for up to £5m of DfT funding for 2019 to 2020. The DfT is also seeking Expressions of Interest for larger projects for 2020 to 2021 with a minimum DfT contribution of £5m each. The Fund guidance indicates that where an authority falls within a Combined Authority (CA) bids will be submitted via the CA and that the CA should rank these bids to indicate their relative priority.

**2. Proposal and justification**

- 2.1** The Department for Transport's Local Highways Challenge Maintenance Fund is intended to support maintenance activities that are otherwise difficult to fund through the usual allocations highways authorities receive from government. Previous rounds of funding have been awarded in 2015 and 2017. This challenge fund totals £198m and is available in 19/20 and 20/21. The deadline for bids and Expressions of Interest is 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019.

**2.2** Local highways authorities are invited to submit bids of up to £5m for 2019/2020 and Expressions of Interest for projects over £5m for 2020/21. Projects should improve the quality of roads and surrounding infrastructure, including bridges and viaducts, to benefit the local economy and make driving safer. The eligible types of project are:

- Structural maintenance, strengthening or renewal of bridges, viaducts, retaining walls or other key structures, footbridge or cycle bridge renewal
- Major maintenance, full depth reconstruction of carriageways, and structural maintenance of tunnels
- Resurfacing of carriageways including improvements to footways or cycleways that are within the highway boundary
- Renewal of gullies and replacement of drainage assets

The Department for Transport has confirmed that for 2019/2020 schemes the funding is unlikely to be provided to the MCA as grant until February 2020. Therefore, there is no expectation that schemes would spend in 2019/2020 but that schemes should commence in Spring with completion by March 2021. For Expressions of Interest these schemes do not need to complete in one year so could be a longer programme.

**2.3** For bids to the 19/20 funding Local Authorities are invited to prepare a Short Strategic Case and a data proforma to allow for an appraisal of costs and benefits. The DfT is requesting that these submissions are ranked by the Combined Authority to indicate the relative priority attached to each one. Successful bids will be notified by the end of 2019.

**2.4** Local Authorities have proposed the following bids for 19/20:

Barnsley - Barnsley propose to submit a bid for the A635 Goldthorpe Bypass Structures Refurbishment at an estimated cost of £1.2m. this includes the refurbishment of the bridges at Highgate Railway Bridge and Nicholas Lane Road Bridge, together with associated carriageway resurfacing. The proposals include resurfacing 1.3km of the bypass.

Rotherham - Repairs to A6178 Sheffield Road, Templeborough. The scheme includes the renewal of a damaged highway drain and the resurfacing of the whole road from the boundary with Sheffield to the roundabout at Bessemer Way including the repair of the traffic calming features. Total estimated cost £920k, DfT ask £800k.

Doncaster -- a programme of structural renewal / replacement of flagged footways that are in poor condition with bituminous surfacing. The backlog of renewal requirements across the district is significant so the submission could be up to around £4m.

**2.5** The assessment undertaken by the CA to determine prioritisation will be light touch and is not intended to be an appraisal, which will be undertaken by the Department. The SCR assessment will include:

- Checking eligibility e.g. activity supported by the Fund, contribution to the scheme costs
- A score for the Strategic Case in line with criteria set by the Department
- A ranking based on Benefit Cost Ratios for each project.

**2.6** Local Authorities have proposed the following Expressions of Interest for 20/21:

Sheffield City Council is considering a bid for strengthening the railway bridge at Rock Street. This is a major bus route and within the Transforming Cities Fund bid but is currently restricted to one-way working due to the strength issues. Strengthening of this bridge would enable two-way operation and facilitate improved movement through this corridor.

Barnsley Council is Proposing to submit an expression of interest for the major reconstruction scheme on the A628 Hoylandswaine Bypass. The bypass was originally constructed using expansive fill, now resulting in constantly varying road levels, which requires an ongoing maintenance strategy to smooth the uneven surface.

Doncaster Council is developing options for a package of drainage-based interventions targeting flood risk areas including lifting a road out of a flood wash land area to sustain connectivity between east and west of borough just north of town. DMBC have proposed expanding this to a regional drainage bid and are working with the other local authorities to develop this as a potential alternative to separate expressions.

Rotherham Council is currently evaluating options for the Expression of Interest with additional interventions for the regional drainage bid being the primary option.

- 2.7** Each local authority will secure the requisite internal approvals as defined by their respective governance procedures prior to submission of funding bids and expressions of interest.
- 2.8** Successful schemes identified from the Expressions of Interest will be invited to complete a DfT Business Case assessment to provide confidence about value for money.

### **3. Consideration of alternative approaches**

- 3.1** Local Authorities could choose not to apply to the Fund given the opportunity cost of completing applications for competitive processes. However Local Authorities have identified this is an opportunity to fund projects that might struggle to attract investment from other sources. Additionally, the Department's process for this Fund is designed not to be onerous.
- 3.2** The SCR could choose not to prioritise projects given the short time frames involved, limited information available and lack of role in the Fund design. SCR will conduct a short assessment proportionate to the project size and complexity in order to ensure that we are compliant with DfT processes and able to maximise the opportunity to secure resources.

### **4. Implications**

#### **4.1 Financial**

There are no financial implications arising from submissions of bids and Expressions of Interest. It has been confirmed by the Department that funding for any successful bids would be managed by the Combined Authority.

#### **4.2 Legal**

There are no legal implications arising from submissions of bids and Expressions of Interest. Any award granted to Sheffield City Region will require Funding Agreements completing with the recipient local authorities.

#### **4.3 Risk Management**

There are no risk implications arising from submissions of bids and Expressions of Interest.

#### **4.4 Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion**

Equality, diversity and social inclusion will be considered in the design and delivery of projects as relevant should bids and Expressions of Interest be successful.

## 5. Communications

5.1 It is not anticipated that there will be any communications related to the submission of bids and Expressions of Interest to this Fund.

## 6. Appendices/Annexes

6.1 Nil

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Background papers used in the preparation of this report are available for inspection at: 11 Broad Street West, Sheffield S1 2BQ

Other sources and references: