Process Evaluation Stage 2

Report on the second stage of the process evaluation of the Active Travel Fund Tranche 2

On behalf of the Department for Transport

transport for quality of life

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER⌗

sustrans

UWE Bristol | University of the West of England

Version number

Citation

Disclaimer

Acknowledgements

Contents

Tables

Glossary of specialist terms and acronyms

Term	Definition
Active Travel Fund or ATF	A funding stream through which local authorities in England have bid to develop or construct active travel infrastructure during 2020 onwards
Bus Service Improvement Plan or BSIP	A vision set out by local transport authorities, working with local bus operators and local communities, to deliver the step-change in bus services required by the Bus Strategy
Capability Fund	Supports English local authorities outside London to boost technical capability, develop infrastructure plans and to carry out activities to enable higher levels of walking, wheeling and cycling, such as training and promotion
Capital Funding	Funding to create or purchase an asset, in this context referring to funding to build active travel infrastructure
City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements, or CRSTS	Five-year funding settlements available to Mayoral authorities
Emergency Active Travel Fund or EATF	The first tranche of the Active Travel Fund, also referred to as ATF Tranche 1
EIR, Environmental Information Request	A request for information made under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004
ETRO or Experimental Traffic Regulation Order	A type of TRO used to trial new infrastructure, through a monitoring period of up to 18 months
FOI or Freedom of Information request	A request for information made under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000
Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan or LCWIP	A document produced by an English local authority incorporating a plan of the desired walking and cycling network and a programme of future improvements, over around a 10-year period
Local Transport Note 1/20 or LTN 1/20	England's national cycle infrastructure design guidance, used by local authorities to develop high quality schemes and used by government to assess funding bids
Local Implementation Plan or LIP	Transport for London uses LIPs to allocate money to the London boroughs to spend on projects that support the Mayor's Transport Strategy, reviewed both three-yearly (in outline, on an annual rolling basis) and one-yearly (in detail)
Local Transport Plan or LTP	A forward-looking statutory plan usually produced every five years by English transport authorities for the Department for Transport
Low Traffic Neighbourhood or LTN*	A type of transport scheme seeking to remove or substantially reduce through motor traffic from an area or neighbourhood

Protected characteristics	Nine characteristics (e.g. race) for which the Equality Act makes it illegal to discriminate, with further duties on public bodies to advance equality relating to these
Protected cycle track	A cycle track physically separated from motor traffic and from pedestrians, e.g. by a kerb
Revenue funding	Funding provided for costs that cannot be capitalised, for example employing public engagement officers, developing network plans, evidence collection.
School Street	A scheme restricting most motor traffic movements in the area immediately surrounding a school, at school opening and closing times during term time, often accompanied by infrastructure changes to support walking and cycling, e.g. safer road crossings
TRO or Traffic Regulation Order	A legal mechanism by which local authorities can make changes to how roads are designed and operated

*A note on terminology: In EATF and ATF Tranche 2, traffic reduction schemes were often referred to as LTNs by Local Authorities and this terminology continues to be used in some contexts, e.g. some London boroughs. They are a type of 'area-wide traffic management scheme'.

1. Executive summary

1.1. Introduction

This report constitutes the second part of the Department for Transport's (DfT) Active Travel Fund (ATF) process evaluation, conducted as part of a wider evaluation of the ATF Tranche 1 (Emergency Active Travel Fund, or EATF) and Tranche 2 schemes (later rounds of funding are being evaluated separately). The ATF has provided grant funding to local authorities in England for active travel infrastructure schemes during 2020 onwards. Tranche 1 supported the installation of temporary projects for the Covid-19 pandemic. Tranche 2 supported schemes to be installed on a more permanent basis, subject to appropriate consultation and monitoring. The EATF in total provided £42,102,451 and ATF2 £175,360,750.

The process evaluation forms part of a wider evaluation incorporating research into impacts of cycle tracks, area wide traffic reduction measures, and School Streets schemes. This piece of work studies the delivery of ATF schemes, incorporating the mechanisms through which they are perceived to work (or not), and the impact of contextual factors. Stage One particularly explored the role of consultation and engagement, both because these are widely considered to be important and because many schemes had either not yet been implemented or were still relatively new. Stage Two has focused on monitoring and evaluation, taking place later in the life of schemes. It also explored other processes and issues that were relevant after scheme implementation. DfT and Active Travel England (ATE) will use the findings to evaluate and improve the delivery of interventions and funding, and the provision of support to authorities.

1.2. Methods

Four focus groups were conducted with 31 participants, who were officers representing 28 authorities across England. Participants represented a variety of roles and seniorities involved in delivering active travel schemes and were delivering a range of intervention and scheme types. All English regions, tiers, and sizes of authority were represented, including both urban and rural geographies. Participants thus held expert knowledge of success factors and challenges in a variety of governance and geographical contexts. They were generally supportive of the policy goals and principles of the ATF.

The focus groups had dedicated time set aside to explore the processes of monitoring and evaluation, and how these had worked as part of the ATF Tranches 1 and 2. They covered a range of other topics across scheme life cycles, from strategic network planning (e.g. how Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans related to shorter-term ATF schemes) to monitoring and evaluation, alongside participant views on the ATF more widely.

1.3. Findings

Headline findings here are grouped under key issues identified by participants and the key enablers that participants felt in their view, had contributed most to success in terms of scheme implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

Key issues

- **As during Stage One, participants reported challenges related to bidding process, funding levels, and timeframes.** Most, if not all, participants saw funding and capacity constraints and time pressures as crucial for local authorities in trying to manage ATF projects. They felt that they did not have enough money or time to build the high quality, connected schemes that they aspired to create. Participants spoke of experiencing post-bidding pressures on costs and timing due to design reviews that had recommended improvements in scheme quality, unexpected public or political pressures related to specific schemes, high inflation, and procurement delays.

- **Most authorities involved had been affected by scheme delays and/or cancellations.** This stage of the process evaluation had already been delayed to better capture post-implementation experiences, but many participants said that some or all of their schemes had only recently been installed or had not yet been completed. Many authorities were in April-May 2023 still implementing ATF2 schemes. The original intention had been for ATF2 funds to be spent or fully committed by March 2021, but this was generally extended following the announcement of funding awards in November 2020 and local authorities were expected to commit all funding by March 2022. This followed direction from DfT Ministers (letter of 16 October 2020 from Grant Shapps) to ensure that appropriate consultation activities were taking place before construction commenced. This inevitably affected data collected, because few participants could speak about schemes in place for years rather than weeks or months.

- **Participants said that national-level changes in organisational structure and priorities had caused problems in the short term.** At Stage One many participants welcomed the setting up of ATE (in August 2022), but some now reported teething problems. Specifically, some participants said their schemes had been criticised by ATE, and felt they needed additional support to implement improvements. As in the Stage One process evaluation, participants from some more rural authorities said that LTN 1/20 in its current form did not well suit their contexts. Participants spoke of feeling confused by changing priorities in government, perceiving that buses had become more important relative to active travel, and that walking schemes were now being prioritised over cycling schemes. While some participants were supportive of the increased priority given to walking, they said such changes made it harder develop a coherent narrative about changes and hence to communicate with residents about schemes.

- **Interfaces with public transport could be challenging**. Examples were given from diverse authorities where bus and active travel schemes or requirements conflicted; for instance, in one example where a target of speeding up bus journeys threatened 20mph speed limits and the introduction of pedestrian crossings, or others where participants said it was difficult to find space for separated cycle and bus lanes. Conversely, examples were given where the introduction of active travel schemes on local streets had

encouraged an authority to improve bus priority measures on busier roads. It continues to be difficult to re-allocate roadspace from private motor vehicles.

- **Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) approaches varied substantially, but many participants described challenges.** DfT guidance only required schemes of £2m+ to be formally evaluated, including designing and implementing M&E processes to measure outputs, outcomes, and impacts, in line with DfT guidance and with M&E plans being submitted to DfT before construction. By contrast, authorities implementing many smaller but potentially impactful/controversial schemes often found themselves unprepared and without resource to evaluate these. Participants also spoke of struggling with the required output monitoring, particularly given frequent scheme changes and delays and where they had many small schemes rather than a few larger ones. As at Stage One, some participants noted a lack of clarity and consensus about how to gauge success.
- There were **differences in M&E capacity and data availability between and within authorities**. London participants could describe multiple outcomes measured, whereas outside London and especially in rural authorities or more rural areas within mixed authorities, data were often more limited. Shared challenges related to data collection included the costs of using all-mode, 24/7 sensors compared to traditional traffic counters, a lack of baseline data, challenges interpreting baseline data collected during Covid-19, and uncertainty surrounding schemes causing problems in knowing where and when to collect data.
- **Communication of M&E data was limited**. Many participants felt authorities generally continued to struggle with scheme communication. M&E data, they said, can be additionally tricky to communicate because there are inevitable data gaps and limitations leaving the results open to challenge. Some participants spoke of limiting communication of such data for this reason, while in other cases lack of communication of M&E data was more related to capacity and lack of experience of communicating results of schemes within the organisation, or the need to align communication with organisational schedules. The main examples given of communicating M&E data related to ongoing interactions with groups such as disabled people and businesses, where the M&E data in question tended to refer to experiences and views of group members.

Key enablers

- **High-level leadership.** As at Stage One, local political leadership was described as crucial, as was support from senior officers. Given the controversy that some schemes attracted (particularly those perceived as restricting car use, or as primarily benefiting cyclists, for instance), having someone willing to 'put their head above the parapet' was valued by participants. This gave them confidence that schemes would be at least trialled, given many participants also had experience of schemes being delayed, watered down or cancelled when political leaders changed their minds.
- **Expert staff.** A participant from a smaller authority spoke of challenges managing contractors, given limited client expertise in the authority and limited active travel scheme expertise among some contractors. Conversely,

the importance of skilled engineers and other staff or contractors who were committed to active travel schemes was widely highlighted as important in supporting scheme development.

- **Additional external advice and moral support.** Participants said that they would value more vocal commitment from central government to active travel schemes and in particular their more controversial elements. Many said that they and/or councillors had experienced hostility, criticism, and even abuse from members of the public, and would appreciate feeling that they were more supported in delivering national priorities. They also hoped for additional technical support from ATE, describing how helpful similar assistance had been in scaling-up ambition. Note that the focus groups were conducted at a time of considerable strain for many participants and authorities, and when ATE was still getting set up and its activities – while welcomed by many participants – in practice represented challenges that had not been planned for due to the newness of the organisation. Many participants were keen to get additional guidance on applying LTN 1/20 in rural areas, and some also suggested a need for advice on integrating active travel schemes with other modes (e.g. interfacing with buses).

- **Improved routine data collection can help with M&E.** Examples were given where routine data collection provided resources that could be adapted or used for M&E purposes. For instance, regional transport authorities such as Transport for London (TfL) often collect traffic data which may be used as background comparators to assess scheme impacts. Another example was a London borough that already conducts periodic surveys of residents, which can then be adapted at low cost to add in several questions about active travel views. Strengthening local, regional, and/or national data collection processes, while bearing an up-front cost, could be especially useful given the uncertainty surrounding many specific local schemes and the stop-start nature of funding. This could be done through dedicated funding to avoid best practice M&E being seen as optional and hence being at risk when funding is tight.

- **Sharing of M&E practice, results, and data could assist authorities.** Many participants reported uncertainties where practice, results, or data from other areas could help. Potentially relevant analysis is regularly conducted but is not published, or if it is published, is likely to be found in an appendix to a report on a local authority website. Some participants spoke of innovative, low-cost approaches such as using live traffic data to study changes in journey times, or of conducting more in-depth research on representative samples and/or of specific groups typically under-represented in consultation responses. Much work is likely happening in silos with other authorities unaware of practices or findings that may prove useful elsewhere. This is particularly problematic when many consultancies are also relatively unfamiliar with novel M&E approaches that may be more appropriate to ambitious active travel schemes. Support from national and regional level government could help here.

2. Introduction

The University of Westminster's Active Travel Academy was commissioned by the DfT to lead the first of two linked process evaluations of the ATF. This forms part of a wider evaluation of the ATF Tranches 1 (Emergency Active Travel Fund, or EATF) and 2, complementing the outcomes measured there. In a process evaluation, the focus is on implementation processes, mechanisms, and outcomes. Here the report explores local authority officers' views, perceptions, and experiences of how ATF funded schemes have worked in their area.

The ATF has provided grant funding to local authorities in England for active travel schemes from May 2020 onwards. This amounted to £42,102,451 under EATF and £175,360,750 under ATF2. Tranche 1 (EATF) supported temporary projects during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic, while ATF Tranche 2 supports the creation of longer-term projects. Tranche 1 planning and implementation was atypical due to the Covid-19 context (e.g., necessitating/permitting change in consultation processes). Although ATF2 schemes might therefore be more typical of active travel schemes generally, the report covers both these and EATF schemes. This is partly because many Authorities had not yet progressed far with ATF2 schemes and hence could only talk about full pathways to implementation for their EATF projects; and because important lessons from the Covid-19 era had begun with EATF schemes (for instance, around the use of online tools for engagement).

The report is structured as follows. Firstly, it outlines the methods used, including the sample and the analytical approach. It then explores the various themes identified within the focus groups in relation to the research questions guiding the work. These Chapters cover: key issues in pathways to scheme development; experiences of engagement; how scheme characteristics affect success; variation by authority; and issues related to ATF processes and more widely processes of funding active travel in England. Finally, it provides some key lessons based on what the participants said.

The research team would like to thank all the participants for giving up their time to participate in our groups. We would also like to thank the Department for Transport for providing funding, input, and advice on this research and the report. The findings represent a summary of the breadth of views from the focus groups. The lessons learned are suggestions from the research team based on the insights gathered.

3. Methods

With the aim of examining local authority experiences of developing and implementing ATF schemes, four focus groups were conducted during April and May 2023, following up on four previously conducted in October and November 2021. Ethical approval was granted by the University of Westminster's University Research Ethics Committee on 7th September 2021 (ETH2122-0037).

3.1. Research questions guiding the focus groups

Research questions were developed to steer the focus groups. The findings have been organised thematically rather than question-by-question, starting with A1-2 alongside D1 and to a lesser extent D2 (scheme implementation processes, often closely related to ATF processes), followed by A3 (interfaces with other modes), then B1-6 (scheme impacts, monitoring and engagement), and finally a short chapter reflecting on future monitoring and evaluation (including monitoring returns requested by DfT, on which some participants commented, alongside relevant comments related to D2). Contextual factors are dealt with throughout in relation to experiences of, and approaches to, M&E.

A: Scheme Implementation

1. What aspects of scheme implementation (and post-implementation) have proved particularly important or problematic? Why?

2. Have there been problems delivering schemes as per time/cost outlined in bids, and why? Were these challenges overcome, and how, if so?

3. How have interfaces between different sustainable modes worked? (mainly bus, walking, cycling)

B: Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

1. How have schemes been monitored post-implementation?

2. What monitoring strategies have been most successful/useful? What strategies have been less successful/useful? Why?

3. How have scheme impacts been communicated to stakeholders and the public? How successful were these methods, and why?

4. Has post-implementation M&E or other engagement led to changes in schemes? If so, what changes in particular?

5. What lessons have been learnt about post-implementation M&E communication?

6. How have monitoring and experiences of schemes post-implementation shaped changes to existing schemes and designs for future schemes?

C: Contextual factors shaping participant experiences

1. What contextual factors have made M&E and its communication more successful or challenging? Does this vary by type of authority, size, type and scope of scheme, urban/rural nature or other factors?

D: Active Travel Fund processes

1. What has been their experience of the process of making use of ATF funding, especially around scheme implementation and post-implementation?

2. What changes if any would they like to see to active travel funding and policy in future?

3.2. Focus group recruitment and sampling

Four focus groups were conducted during April and May 2023. Each contained 7-8 participants, all local authority officers closely involved in ATF schemes. These officers were in some cases employed as walking and cycling specialists but in other cases had wider remits, such as transport planning manager roles, but all had hands-on experience with ATF schemes. The 31 participants represented 28 different authorities. Initially, Stage Two recruitment targeted the individuals and organisations that had participated at Stage One. Of 31 people who participated in Stage One, 17 again took part in Stage One, while of 28 participating organisations at Stage One, 20 were involved in Stage One. Then, other authorities were invited to participate, again seeking to represent a diversity of organisations and contexts.

The aim was a minimum of 8 participants from predominantly or partially rural authorities, which was met with 9 participants in these groups. English regions were also well represented as before, with the exception of the North East where only one individual participated. All other English regions provided at least two participants. For types of authority (Combined Authority, County Council, London Borough, Metropolitan District, Unitary Authority), there were at least 2 participants per type, with most from County Councils (10) or Unitary Authorities (11). Least well represented were London (2) and Combined Authorities (2), with the remaining 6 participants from Metropolitan Districts.

Much of England has two tiers of local government – county councils and district councils – with responsibility for services split between the two. Other areas have a single unitary authority responsible for all local services. ATE has assessed the capability of Combined, County and Unitary authorities in England outside London and provided a capability rating between 0 and 3, with most at 1 or 2. The District-tier authorities included here (London Boroughs and Metropolitan Districts) had not been given an assessment. While County-tier authorities with ratings of 1, 2 and 3 were included in the sample, none had a capability rating of zero, perhaps unsurprisingly. (One such authority participated in the Stage One process evaluation, but not in Stage Two).

Detailed information on the sampling procedure can be found in the Appendix (9.1 Sample details and sampling processes.)

Participants had experience of a wide range of schemes, including those that are the focus of the wider ATF evaluation being led by the same research team (LTNs, new cycle tracks, and School Streets), but also other interventions funded under the ATF

(such as footway widening, infrastructure improvements and upgrades, town centre schemes, etc.).

3.3. Focus group structure and reporting

Focus groups were 90 minutes long, semi-structured and run online via Microsoft Teams (see Appendix for the focus group topic guide developed based on the research questions). They followed the Chatham House Rule (participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed) and, as such, all reporting has been pseudonymised. The focus groups explored experiences of (and definitions of) more and less successful schemes and set time aside specifically to discuss monitoring and evaluation. In reporting quotes, participants are here referred to by 'P' plus a number (e.g. P13).

3.4. Coding and analysis

A thematic approach was followed, and the write-up indicates the extent to which views were shared where possible (bearing in mind that this was a qualitative process and participants' views cannot be assumed to be statistically representative of a wider sample). The focus group transcripts were initially corrected and anonymised by one researcher who was present in the focus groups. These transcripts were then coded in NVivo software by this researcher, using Stage One coding as a starting point. Regular meetings were held with a second researcher who was present in the focus groups to discuss codes, who also checked through a sample of the transcripts. The structure of the report follows the model used in Stage One of the process evaluation.

3.5. Strengths and limitations

This research gathered data on perceptions of 31 English local authority transport officers working in a diverse set of organisations and local areas. This provided insight into the extent to which experiences were shared or not across a wider set of authorities (for instance, urban versus rural experiences). A major limitation is the inverse: these views only relate to the perceptions and experiences of local authority officers, and not, for instance, those of groups of residents, business representatives, or local authority councillors. Further, when considering the comments regarding interactions of schemes with other modes, these views represent the views of officers specialising in active travel, rather than those who plan or manage public transport services.

4. Pathways to scheme implementation

This Chapter focuses on two research questions related to scheme implementation, as follows:

1. What aspects of scheme implementation (and post-implementation) have proved particularly important or problematic? Why?

2. Have there been problems delivering schemes as per time/cost outlined in bids, and why? Were these challenges overcome, and how, if so?

It also incorporates thoughts by participants on ATF processes, related to the following two questions, particularly the first:

1. What has been their experience of the process of making use of ATF funding, especially around scheme implementation and post-implementation?

2. What changes if any would they like to see to active travel funding and policy in future?

Focus group participants reported that they felt that the amounts and timeframes for funding limited their ability to deliver transformational projects. Many schemes had been repeatedly delayed, even taking into account initially agreed extensions to timelines. Some had been cancelled. This was a continuation of patterns identified in the Stage One report, where many authorities reported capacity constraints and time pressures. These constraints were still existent or in some cases appeared to have been aggravated, with some participants reporting ongoing strain and an inability to continue working as exceptionally hard as they had during periods under emergency Covid-19 restrictions.

The groups provided a deeper understanding of fairly widepread reported problems adhering to initial costs outlined in bids. Bids had often been written relatively quickly, at a high level, and scheme delay had tended to happen during a time of high inflation, which added further to cost overruns. The setting-up of ATE and increased involvement of that body had led to scheme changes in some cases, which due to higher standards had the potential to increase costs. One participant spoke of being awarded around 5% less money than they had bid for, putting a further squeeze on finances and likely to be more of a problem in subsequent ATF rounds, where allocations have been less likely to be paid in full.

Some described in detail how difficult they were finding planning for active travel more broadly, in conditions of ongoing budgetary constraints, short-term funding alongside uncertainty about new funding streams, wider perceived uncertainty about national and local priorities (and how far active travel would continue to be a priority), and ongoing or even intensified workloads relating to the high levels of controversy some schemes were experiencing. These contributed to delays in implementation.

All the above factors contributed to participants experiencing multiple levels of uncertainty affecting scheme development and planning. Some uncertainties were expected to reduce, such as inflationary pressures, particularly high when the focus groups were conducted. Other issues, however, were expected to continue, such as the pressure to produce outline designs quickly (which might be more subject to unanticipated cost increases), unpredictability and funding, and schemes becoming

delayed or cancelled due to controversy or changing local, regional, and/or national leadership priorities.

4.1. Key findings

- Participants reported that the ATF **funding amounts** and **timeframes** were insufficient to deliver the step changes needed to create transformative change. Some compared the ATF unfavourably to other, longer-term funding streams as a comparison (e.g. the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements, CRSTS). They referred to a perception of **changing priorities** making planning and justifying schemes more difficult.
- Many authorities had experienced **substantial delays**, **changes**, and/or **cancellations** to ATF2 schemes. Even those who had been most successful at scheme delivery had not delivered all schemes to the original timetable.
- Most if not all participants said that **ongoing capacity constraints and time pressures** had continued to severely affect their ability to successfully deliver schemes, and many said the situation had worsened since Stage One.
- Many participants said that they had experienced **time and cost over-runs during scheme delivery,** due to factors including costings done before detailed plans had been produced, controversy (especially affecting area wide traffic reduction and some cycle track schemes) and high inflation pushing up the cost of materials if there was any delay.
- Overall, the picture is one where **some schemes were proving very difficult to deliver**, and many participants were struggling to maintain optimism. In some cases **reducing intervention scope and ambition** had been necessary to ensure delivery, for instance, changing traffic management interventions to a 20mph zone (restricting speeds but not traffic volumes).

4.2. Funding levels and expectations

Participants highlighted the limited levels of funding available through ATF2, and their view that there was a disconnect between the ambition and the extent to which they were able to fulfil this given the funding envelope and timeframe. This was widely expressed in the groups.

> "It's frustrating with ATF in particular that it's such short-term windows for designing and building these types of schemes. We want them to build them to a good standard and the government wants us to build them to a good standard. But these schemes are inevitably quite controversial, they're tricky, and the times allowed to do it, it's just not enough to produce something that's really good." (P17)

> "We weren't given all of the money [that we bid for] but the DfT left it to us to manage the programme ourselves and prioritise. Obviously matching up with what other people have said, the limited time scales for bidding meant that we hadn't undertaken detailed scheme design, just general arrangements so then there were cost increases. And when we've bid for sort of change request funding it hasn't been straightforward for us either." (P43)

"I'm probably going to repeat everything that's just been said the short time scale in the bidding and delivery process combined with, frankly, woefully insufficient sums of money means that we are effectively being set up to fail." (P3)

"It's really not a lot of money if it's a genuine ambition to be building active travel schemes." (P38)

"We got £1,000,000 which does nothing […] we've got 28 market towns and hundreds of villages. £1,000,000, is almost not even worth spending really." (P37)

"The ambition is stifled by short termism of the funding, and that was exemplified to me when I went to our Commissioner [and their] response was 'where are the big schemes, where are the big corridor schemes?' And I said 'you can't build the corridor scheme in a year.' [It's] very difficult to build a long term vision on very hand to mouth short term funding." (P44)

"Sometimes, my personal preference would be to just not apply for this money and not have the hassle of doing it. But we obviously can't do that because the only way the authority can get its hands on the additional funding for this kind of thing is to engage with this process, for better or for worse, and make the best of it. But you do sometimes wonder if it's worth it." (P32)

"I'd like to have got more [funding for schemes] but if we go above [our allocation] then I'm competing against everyone in this room here. You're stealing money off other people who need the money to be spending in other areas, so I think that 200 million that's going to be hacked to 100 million, it's just not enough. And I realise ATE are battling with the DfT and the government on this. But given other budgets that are across the board, it's really not a lot of money if it's a genuine ambition to be building active travel schemes." (P38)

P3 talked about the gap between ATF funding (measured in the low millions at most at authority level) and the £750 million that they estimated was needed in their district to deliver transformational walking and cycling infrastructure.

"We have an estimate in our district, to deliver the entire district to the standard required to actualise the benefits you're looking at 3/4 of a billion with a b pounds. And that was before inflation post Covid and [the war in] Ukraine and some of the measures we're finding are more expensive than that price. Now that theoretically generates quite a large BCR [benefit cost ratio] so I wouldn't want to say it's a massive expense, it's a good investment, but it shows the gap that even at the level of small districts, we need several times more than is being offered in the year nationally. It shows the scale of gap and it's a bit of a challenge where we're expected to meet markedly higher standards for LTN 1/20 and so on, quite rightly, I think. But we're not getting the funding and the commitment to be able to do that." (P3)

The short-term nature (perhaps even more than the size) of the ATF funding streams was contrasted to alternatives available to some areas – for P3, longer-term sustainable transport funds available to Mayoral authorities, and for P33, longer-term funding available in London via TfL.

"If I'm brutally honest, CRSTS [City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements] have much better hope for delivering for active travel, much more so than Active Travel Funds because the chunks of money are over decent time periods, which allows us for time to do the engagement, do the work, and build decent sized projects which can make a real difference." (P3)

"I think the bid very, very quickly for us evolved into a wider programme with a political commitment to allocate capital funding for this programme and really seeing it as a 5 to 10 year programme to roll out Low Traffic Neighbourhoods […] We had an acceleration programme of School Streets, where we rolled out batches of 15 to 20 School Streets in one go, so it was quite a lot of fairly quick implementation. And yeah, I just realised that I'm in a slightly different situation where we have very strong political leadership and capital funding committed to the programme." (P33)

"We set up an active travel team on the back of this being the new agenda […] we believe that active travel's here to stay and even if the government changed their view that it should be here to stay. But actually having everything set up, whether it's the counting, the staff. The whole approach does need a much longer term financial commitment I think for all authorities." (P34)

4.3. Delays, cancellations, and changes

Across the board, there was a general experience of being behind with even revised timeframes for ATF2 schemes, with delays, cancellations, and changes to schemes. Most participants said that at least some of their ATF2 schemes had not (yet) been delivered, while several had not delivered any ATF2 schemes at the time of the focus groups (April/May 2023).

While these were broadly shared experiences, in general rural and smaller authorities were struggling more, as found in the Stage One process evaluation. These authorities continued to find it more challenging to deliver schemes to LTN 1/20 specifications, to question its application to their settings, and to request rural guidance that they were expecting to be produced:

"We got some very vague feedback [on one scheme] from Active Travel England in respect of its noncompliance and its unfitness for purpose, whereas in actual fact we think that LTN 1/20 is overengineering the facility that we have identified as being needed and we're being dictated to by Active Travel England, who are basically arguing the toss about whether the shared footway cycleway should be another 300mm wider than we've got the room to make it. And so maybe this issue will come up again later, but I've always had reservations about whether this process and whether LTN 1/20 as a document is applicable to areas like ours, we're a rural District Council with a market town in the middle of it and there just isn't the highway space to put in the type of thing that you can get in a city centre." (P32)

"In the future, we'd like to feel that all the guidance and the bidding opportunities and the support from Active Travel England is tailored to rural communities as well as the large cities." (P43)

"We're awaiting new guidance from ATE that allows us to refocus our schemes and respond better to the needs of a rural county with lower concentration of walking and cycling on individual routes." (P31, focus group Teams chat)

Reasons for the delays experienced by participants included: original timeframes being reportedly over-ambitious, additional consultation requirements (compared to EATF), scheme controversy and challenges, cost escalation (for instance, due to inflationary pressures, and/or over-optimistic costing before detailed designs were produced) prompting re-planning.

"We found the challenge being actually the time frame that we've got to put it in. I'm sure like everybody else, we're still implementing ATF2 schemes." (P44)

"We've really struggled to spend the money. We still haven't delivered most of the schemes. […] It's been a bit of a nightmare, to be honest. Considering that we were supposed to be delivering these at pace and we're now on ATF4 and we haven't delivered most of the ATF2 stuff. […] In the meantime, people are asking us, when are these schemes going to be delivered? It's been a bit of a trial." (P31)

"We've been developing them, but we haven't delivered any of our ATF2 schemes as yet. We were encouraged to continue building them up and put them forward for future rounds. [We] started off with a mismatch of funding and we never recovered it from that point onwards I think." (P37)

In contrast, an officer (P22) from an authority where substantial changes had been made highlighted the importance of (political and technical) leadership there. However, even in this case, the authority had only implemented around two-thirds of their original plans, due to running out of 'money and probably steam'.

"In my perspective ATF tranche 2 is our high point really because we had a dream team. We had a cabinet member who was really willing to do things. I had an engineer who could put my ideas into practice and we had a Director of Environment, he was also willing to back us all up. We ambitiously did [bid for] I think 7 [cycle] routes and 9 LTNs. We basically ran out of money […] we managed to get away doing 4 of the main roads and 6 LTNs before we both ran out of money and probably steam." (P22)

Some challenges related to levels of governance, which varied across the different participants' authorities. These largely related to authorities outside London with dual structures, County/District or Combined Authority/District. While the latter could often call on additional funding pots (via Mayoral mandates), in both cases the additional levels of governance might prove problematic for timeframes and scheme implementation, especially given the challenges already discussed above.

"I'm from a County Council and we've got districts and boroughs. We've got 12 districts and boroughs and the bidding process, the comms, all of it, doesn't necessarily work the same when you've got that two tier authority. I don't think the districts and boroughs think it works for them and I don't necessarily think it is easy for us." (P34, combined Authority)

> "Thankfully for our council, it's not a multi-organisation sort of thing because we're a unitary authority. So we don't have a combined authority or an upper tier account or anything like that to deal with." (P32, unitary Authority)

While authorities with regional governance often had access to additional funding streams (e.g. Mayoral 'pots'), levels of governance could pose a risk to schemes, due to approvals processes that had to run alongside consultation. P3 described how a scheme with public support did not proceed as it lacked business case approval, while P31 spoke of 'circular arguments' with the regional authority about whether schemes were compliant with LTN 1/20.

> "Originally in our Active Travel Fund 2 proposal there was a small, straightforward LTN type activity. We consulted on options in advance and used that to refine what we looked to do. Unfortunately, we ran into an issue with part of the budgetary constraints, and partly because of the assurance processes. We got knocked back by [authority] because we were doing the consultation in parallel without business case approvals." (P3)

> "We're working through [regional authority] who are the budget holders and we're going in circular arguments around LTN 1/20 and some of the cycling schemes are not LTN 1/20 compliant. And we're having an argument over the nature of guidance, is it guidance? Is it standards? And then they won't release the funding because we're basically not compliant. So we're stuck in our governance processes because I can't get my full business case approved." (P31)

4.4. Impacts on engagement

As P31 indicates above, delays in delivering schemes could have knock-on effects in terms of local support. Where schemes were controversial, delays and uncertainty could disarm those who might support those schemes, while emboldening opponents who suspected that there was an increasing chance to stop a scheme. More generally, such ongoing uncertainty could make it appear to people on all sides of debates over schemes that an authority was not being honest with the public, making effective engagement even more difficult:

> "We're having [to] make compromises [due to insufficient funding] leaving us in a position where we're less able to try and deal with the various concerns that might be raised [by] the community. […] The scheme has a small number of people who are opposed to it or are relatively vocal about it but I don't want to overplay that, it's not over and above what you generally expect for a scheme of this size, even if it was something that wasn't related to cycling, which can be sometimes more contentious. But one of the difficulties we did have is the question was raised: you're only building this much cycle routes, but what happens next? That's not going to encourage a lot of people to cycle. And in truth, they're kind of right, and because we haven't got the longer-term funding, it does leave us in a bit of a difficult position to defend the scheme from those questions, although we do have CRSTS (City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement] allocations which partly answer about going forward." (P3)

This was compounded by increasing polarisation and the rise of conspiracy theories related to schemes. Such experiences could have substantial mental health impacts on participants:

> "I've not had the roughest ride on this call, I'm sure. But we are starting to get a situation where even the facts and the evidence that we've got doesn't really count and it's the perception that people have of what these schemes are for. I've already had emails about am I trying to imprison people in [town] as part of a 15 minute city agenda. Others would have had far, far worse on this call." (P35)

> "Listening to others speak today, I think we've all had very similar experiences of being in the room of 400 people shouting at me. It made me ill. I had to have time off work. It was really bad." (P31)

Some participants referred to the 'watering down' of schemes following negative responses to consultation and engagement. Specifically, schemes restricting motor traffic movements (such as Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) type projects) had been changed to schemes restricting motor traffic speeds (such as 20mph zones), perceived to be less controversial.

> "There were a lot of difficulties from the very start trying to get some of these schemes through and they either got watered down or moved or changed or cancelled." (P7)

> "We felt very unprepared when we went out for, we called it our engagement rather than our consultation and it came back was very, very close. It was something like 48 versus 46 [percent] or something like that. Really, really close. The senior management kind of got cold feet and we watered it [previously a LTN type scheme] down to a 20 mile per hour zone." (P18)

P34 spoke of having only implemented half their ATF2 schemes, due to 'what seemed minor details' (such as the need to relocate main road car parking) becoming controversial and difficult.

> "We were quite confident about our Tranche 2 schemes. But then what actually happened is we were awarded the funding, but then we found out very quickly that there were some quite, what seemed minor details with our Tranche 2 schemes that meant they were going to be very difficult to deliver as set out in our bid. So then we had to go and do a second round of public consultations. And we've actually got a position now where we've got two [of four or five] schemes from that tranche that we still haven't completed, we still haven't constructed. […] certainly, for us it was a case of it wasn't well baked enough when we put the bid in and we were therefore not always able to deliver what we'd put in our bid." (P34)

P17 also referred to feedback related to car parking, and challenges fitting in sufficiently wide cycle tracks where car parking was retained. The following quote explores the difficulty in attempting to retain car parking while meeting the required standards for cycle infrastructure.

> "On one of our 2 ATF schemes, we made an awful lot of changes as a result of the consultation and the feedback we got. Particularly because one of the schemes removed an awful lot of on street residential parking […]. So the

scheme went through quite a few iterations, which is why it's taken us so long to actually get it built. That was the most controversial issue, really, the loss of parking and then trying to keep some parking in it has made the scheme even trickier to build […] If you've got to try and fit parking and cycle lanes in and try and keep to the LTN 1/20 standards, it's difficult thing to do. So it's taken a while to get where we are, but we think we think we listened to feedback." (P17)

P39 spoke of how they felt that the ATF2 had similar timeframes to EATF, and that this had led to problems engaging with residents.

"When ATF2 came out, it seemed similar timeframes [compared to EATF] for us to pass our bid submissions onto [regional authority] and to secure the funding. But then that led on to some schemes not having the initial consultation completed and then tackling that with members of public, the emergency services and the other criteria that we have to meet. Those weren't that much of an issue. It is members of public and also the ward members, the political landscape is trying to get them to see what we are trying to achieve and then you get conflicting advice and input from them. Just to put it mildly. A couple of our schemes we had to actually abort because there was such strong opposition against them. But we were fortunate enough to find alternatives to retain to similar value as well." (P39)

P39 also said that for small schemes, they felt that a consultation area with a buffer of 5km from the scheme was 'a bit disproportionate' and had not helped. Another participant, P27, talked about having ultimately achieved meaningful engagement, but this having added to delays in implementing schemes.

"There was an optimism bias about what we could do and what the public would accept. And we weren't necessarily aware at that time that that we needed to take people on a much more in-depth journey to get to the point where you can build the consensus. And I think that was a real challenge. And we went through a real challenge around the optioneering phase where we took the guidance very literally and we really did have that sort of deep engagement, but that delayed everything." (P27)

P39 highlighted that unexpected costs to engage with stakeholders (particularly perhaps for ATF2 when the high level of engagement resource needed may not have been expected to have been known in advance) could then threaten the implementation of a scheme.

"It can be quite a substantial commitment in terms of engagement, with the various stakeholders. So, unless you've already accounted for it in your initial cost estimate for the scheme itself, it's quite difficult to actually get something substantial out there." (P39)

P22 estimated that their authority had experienced slow-down (potentially making it difficult to engage elsewhere) due to large numbers of Freedom of Information requests and Environmental Information Requests, which they estimated had used thousands of hours of officer time.

"The one thing we didn't factor in is sometimes called the weaponisation of FOIs [Freedom of Information requests] and EIRs [Environmental Information

Requests]. They are so time consuming and they can be used quite effectively to really slow down the Council doing things because you're legally obliged to respond to them. We have a particularly clever person who manages never to get, what's the word called, vexatious. It's always asking the right degree of detail, and something a bit different. I suspect we've probably spent thousands of hours responding to EIRs and FOIs and I actually think it's not what it was intended for, the way it's been used, but we're legally bound. So be warned that's something to bear in mind, because it is really time consuming." (P22)

P33, from a London borough, described the extent of engagement that they believed was needed for their upcoming programme of LTNs – one which required both time and resources. This highlighted the high level of investment in ongoing engagement that had been required to continue with scheme delivery, even in a relatively favourable context.

"[Our future Low Traffic Neighbourhood schemes have] three rounds of engagement, early engagement, which is very like a blank canvas discovery exercise with the community and then which lead to some high-level proposal which we take to a second stage as this kind of co-design phase which then help us refine concept design, which we consult on. And so, it's a year-long engagement before doing anything." (P33)

4.5. Priorities, politics, and polarisation

Given the increasing polarisation surrounded debates around active travel infrastructure, some participants said they were finding it difficult to deal with misinformation and confusion about scheme goals and intentions. For instance, the town planning concept of the '15-minute neighbourhood (or variants thereof) traditionally refers to providing a high density of essential local services but has been presented as referring to banning residents from travelling beyond this distance. Participants suggested that in London there was consistent high-level messaging about the importance of sustainable transport, changing the allocation of street space, and investing in public and active transport; but that in other areas, the lack of a strong regional voice and the lack of a 'national campaign' (P27) led to a constant and frequently losing battle of ideas.

"I think it's so difficult for us all to be trying to reframe and correct misinformation out there, particularly about 15 minutes cities and wider active travel issues. If there was a national campaign to really land that message - and to an extent that's existed in London because they've had that. But outside of London, I think that that will make a huge difference." (P27)

"I think if there was anything Active Travel England could do from a political point of view with as much of a three line whip to get members sat down at some of the meetings that we've gone to so that they can be told that directly from them and some of the consequences of not playing ball on some of this stuff that would really, really help." (P35)

Some participants felt that nationally, priorities had changed, for instance from cycling to walking, and that they were struggling to keep up and to develop and

sustain a consistent narrative about the need for interventions (which was cited as a potential success factor in the Stage One process evaluation).

> "Like the fact it's got to be about walking now. I personally support walking, but it's like they [national policy] don't know where they're heading. It's like they're floundering 'We'll do walking this time, we'll do cycling that time'." (P22)

> "In the ATF4, we were literally like, are we going to bid for anything, because we had two weeks to submit something. And the goalposts seemed to have changed with nobody telling us. So we felt it was all gearing up to high ambitious cycle schemes being the priority. And then all of a sudden, they're saying "oh you can do some small pedestrian only schemes". Which would have been a great opportunity, but we had no time to respond." (P26)

> "There's been a very different shift with the later tranches of the Active Travel Fund where we're much more talking about walking as opposed to cycling. So that's taken us all on a bit of another journey again, which has undermined delivery of tranche two because we're getting a lot of feedback of why couldn't we do that there then, why can we do walking now?" (P34)

Given the multiple challenges that participants were facing, they highlighted the importance of having local political leaders willing to speak up on behalf of controversial schemes, such as mayors or cabinet members.

> "It was Sir Peter Soulsby in Leicester who saw a lot of stuff through such as these, such as the Belgrave Road fly over being pulled down, car parks turned into public space. But you had somebody there prepared to stand at the front and sort of allow the brickbats to be thrown at them." (P35)

The Stage One process evaluation highlighted the importance of leadership and political will to deliver potentially challenging or controversial changes. Below, P35 described how even with executive level ambition, their authority had been unable to make substantial changes, with one scheme originally proposed in early 2021 still not having progressed. They highlighted locally unprecedented 'major issues […] where someone took a circular saw to a parklet that we put in' alongside the realisation among elected members that schemes would change 'the status quo of the highway', and a lack of officer capacity. Such descriptions suggested that at least in those areas, we might not expect much positive change in the near future in terms of ambitious active travel schemes.

> "There was that flurry of excitement that this could be a real change in the way that we moved. But then, once the reality of what this meant, in terms of the change of the status quo of the highway began to impact, suddenly then our elected members would change their minds a bit on things. So I think our failing there is that there was a lot of ambition at executive level that didn't filter down to the general elected member, and I think from an officer point of view and a capacity point of view, we simply weren't there to deal with it at that time. And we really aren't now either I think." (P35)

Political and funding timeframes might be at odds, with challenges aggravated where local elections led to a change in ward member, and thus the need to explain a

scheme again a local politician whose support might prove crucial to scheme implementation.

> "And it's the changing political landscape as well. That's an issue for us. You may be consulting with one ward in particular, with ward members, but that could potentially change and you're going through that process all over again." (P39)

Even where new leaders or ward members decided to support the planned schemes, a change of leadership was likely to impact timeframes, with potential knock-on impacts on scheme costs, support, and so on.

> "We had a complete change of leadership, so we had a change of council CEO, change of council leader, we had a change of portfolio holders and all that whilst the scheme was in progress. So, we did have to pause and then start again from a political point of view, if you like. So, I think that that had an impact on our time scales, I would agree that the time scale has been bit of a challenge." (P36)

4.6. Cost escalation and timeframe pressures

One focus in these groups was to explore further why so many authorities had been unable to deliver schemes to the originally agreed timeframes and costs. Many of these issues have been discussed above in terms of wider problems implementing the transformational schemes that many participants were hoping for. However, the section below discusses more specifically cost escalation/timeframe issues, exploring further the concerns that participants had around the delayed implementation of often piecemeal and/or compromised schemes, and the likely impact this might have in the longer term.

> "We can't deliver in time scales that were expected because schemes of quality required take longer than that. And moreover, because the implementation, while we're trying to keep the quality up, it means the implementation is quite piecemeal." (P3)

Inflation was rising during the relevant period, referred to by a number of participants. P39 described how this led to their schemes being re-evaluated to cost 12% more than the original estimate, leading to the scheme scope being reduced.

> "[Inflation] is something that we got to contend with, I'm sure pretty much everyone's probably come across that in the last year or so. […] For example, say £100,000 at 10%, 12%, 13%, actually it was up about 12%, I think it was that we had our contract re-evaluated at for the last year. So, it was trying to add de-scope or change the scheme and still deliver what the initial intention was." (P39)

Some participants had struggled to incorporate feedback from ATE, relatively newly established and hence potentially representing both an important new mechanism to review and improve schemes, and (for at least some authorities) an additional hurdle to jump to implement schemes already at risk due to cost pressures and/or other processual barriers.

"[Active Travel England are] asking far too much with these really detailed things they want, feedback on too short times." (P22)

"Maybe some of it is teething with the establishment of Active Travel England, but it is becoming quite onerous. I've spent 12 months on my ATF3 scheme from getting the grant award to going through two design reviews. There's Active Travel England increasing the design spec to a point where it's blown the original grant, we've submitted a request for more funding and it was rejected. So […] 12 months is gone and we're no further on." (P26)

Other participants cited the publication of LTN 1/20 relatively soon before the deadline for bidding for ATF2 as meaning that they needed then to improve the quality of their schemes; but this implied a trade-off with scope.

"We quickly realised that the funding that we've been allocated under ATF2 wasn't going to be enough to get it to that standard so we've had to significantly up the budget from other sources to put in our ATF2 scheme to make it... I try to avoid using the word 'comply' with LTN 1/20 because it's very difficult to comply with. But to try and meet it as much as possible. The funding available wasn't really enough at that time." (P17)

Often inflation, limited funding (perhaps less than the authority had originally bid for) and the need to improve the quality of schemes came together to increase the cost of their schemes; alongside, potentially the baseline estimates of scheme costs being out of date.

"We've been unsuccessful, unfortunately in bidding for all of the money we'd asked for, we were only awarded parts of the money which pose some challenges and it wasn't very much money to start with it, just a million pounds, which unfortunately doesn't buy very much cycle route. We did find some challenges in the design process around getting designers around the table and trying to deliver what we're looking to try and achieve. LTN 1/20 being published put a few curveballs in that in some respects it was unhelpful, we had to retread old ground on discussions we already had about the difficulties with the sites. We did get there and what we found in the end was that the scheme that we've got to build is coming out quite a bit more expensive than the initial estimates. In truth, we're not quite sure why that is yet, some of it I think undoubtedly will be inflationary pressures. But I think there's a big chunk of the baseline figures we use which I think was the old Cycle City Ambition figures, they feel a bit light in hindsight." (P3)

One participant, P25, reflected on a scheme they had previously discussed in a Stage One focus group. This related to a cycle track scheme that DfT and ATE had previously insisted on being improved in alignment with LTN 1/20. The authority had employed an advisor to help with this, which had taken time but which the participant felt had been worthwhile and appreciated by stakeholders and potential users, and 'set us in good stead for further bidding rounds'. They now reflected on their 'fortunate position' in having a more straightforward scheme than the 'smaller scale interventions' such as LTNs now proving more difficult. They had also been helped by having secured additional funding "from ATF2", which some other participants had spoken of not having.

"I think despite the difficulties we've been in a very fortunate position that our projects tend to be corridor related as opposed to some of the others on the call who've had maybe smaller scale interventions. It's been a lot more straightforward in terms of the setting up the through the design and the delivery process. We've been able to be more agile with the delivery, but we've needed to secure additional funding from ATF2 to reflect that the cost of inflation and scope has radically increased with that wider LTN 1/20 compliance." (P25)

Participants spoke of how their authorities had struggled to deal with cost escalation, as temporary and low-cost schemes gave way to an expectation of higher quality designs, but still to tight timeframes (P44 spoke of the bids for ATF2 going in during ongoing Covid-19 restrictions, when trials, cheaper materials, and curtailed consultations had become the norm). Schemes that had been planned during 2020 potentially became longer-term, with additional consultation required and potentially shifting priorities.

Given that schemes submitted to ATF2 were often at relatively early design stages, some authorities had experienced delays when unforeseen problems led to the need to do further engagement and consultation.

"We did end up doing a lot of scheme development type work subsequent to the bid and the funding being provided. Rather than doing that work up front and confirming the scope of schemes and what schemes would be more likely to be successful, given that the time scales of the original bid we had to put in a programme that wasn't filled necessarily with schemes that weren't necessarily kind of ready to go. So, in terms of the process from getting the funding, it was similar to others [who had already spoken]." (P30)

P30 went on to describe in more detail their having followed a 'twin track approach' where (having obtained the ATF2 funding) feasibility work for each scheme went alongside consultation, leading to constant change and adaptation in the programme. While this could be seen as desirable flexibility in response to emerging constraints and opportunities, allowing residents to feed into planning, it could also potentially aggravate cost over-runs at a time of high inflation.

P37 described how a funding mismatch caused initial budgetary problems, then aggravated by other issues.

"One of the main issues with ATF2 in particular was that we bid for our funding with a split [of] 90% capital and 10% revenue. So when we got our bid approved, we were actually given an 80% capital and a 20% revenue split. And we got £50,000 less than what we bid for. So we were already mismatched, before we'd even done anything our funding didn't line up anymore with what we wanted to do, but there still an expectation it felt to deliver everything that we'd said we wanted to deliver, but the funding just didn't line up anymore." (P37)

For P30, a combination of original high-level costs, consultation, and escalation of various fees (related to change in scope and amendments to the scheme) led to substantially increased scheme costs.

> "With ATF2 at the bid stage, they were very high-level feasibility costs, some of them not based on specific designs for example. So, there was a lot of - not quite finger in the air, but it was very high level. So, as the designs progressed, certain things resulted in the schemes being more expensive when we expected, material costs, utilities, that sort of thing, that weren't sort of fully incorporated into the bid amounts. And then also the other sort of main area of the cost is probably to do with fees. So where we were after the consultation work and things like that where we were rescoping schemes and revising them, we ended up probably proportionally spending a lot more on fees for these schemes than we would do for other schemes. So, there was a lot scope change that resulted in quite a lot of design fees and client fees and that sort of thing." (P30)

P42 said that their issue had more been around procurement, because their ambitious schemes had innovative elements that their usual contractors found challenging.

> "We didn't really have an issue with revenue and capital split. We did have more of an issue with underestimating the engagement side of things, the time it would take and again the political side of things. But I think the biggest thing for us has been a procurement that's really held us back as we're using a lot of innovation and it's things that you don't normally get from your term contractors. So I've had to go out and do various pieces of governance and that has slowed us down delivery. What we deliver, we've got support for politically and from the public. So that's not been an issue. But I think the time frame we were initially given, not taking account of corporate governance, engagements, experimental traffic orders, permanent traffic regulation orders and procurement, it was a really tight time frame. But I'm really happy that we've got most things ready to go in now, although it's been quite a long time to get that, to get that done, but we are there now thankfully." (P42)

Finally, P38 spoke of having been able to access revenue funding to help with pre-planning, and to mitigate receiving scheme funding for only a year at a time.

> "We have got some revenue funding that enabled us to do some design. So hopefully going forwards we might be in a position where we aren't constantly chasing our tail trying to design a scheme and get it built all in a year, which is where we have been." (P38)

5. Relationships with other modes

This Chapter focuses on interfaces primarily between other sustainable modes, among which buses figure strongly (but not exclusively). Conflicts primarily related to cycle track 'corridor' schemes, which might often involve road space reallocation on corridors with existing or proposed bus priority measures. A smaller number of comments related to other schemes – such as 20mph limits on main roads, or LTNs – which might potentially have impacts on measures such as bus journey times.

Active travel priority and bus priority are not necessarily at odds, and participants described examples of their working together well, with for instance main road bus schemes being introduced alongside LTNs to create walkable localities with improved bus services. However, examples were given of problems reconciling the two. One example was where the roll-out of 20mph speed limits were opposed by bus companies because they would threaten bus speed improvement targets. Another was where an authority wanted to implement shared bus/cycle lanes with low bus frequencies, but felt there was a lack of guidance on what an acceptable level of mixing might be.

5.1. Key findings

- Many authorities had experienced **challenges in planning for active travel alongside other sustainable modes**, particularly buses which are both most prevalent in English towns and cities, and which compete for road space more than do for instance tram and metro systems.
- This should be seen against a background where **taking space from private motorised modes**, while widely agreed to be preferable to taking space from public modes, continues to be **politically difficult.**
- Authorities spoke of **particularly sharp conflicts in Inner and Central Metropolitan areas**, where there was substantial political will to support both buses and active modes, yet challenges in terms of street design, conflicting targets or goals, timeframes, and organisational structures, for example.
- In some cases, **active travel schemes were removed or compromised** in order to maintain bus journey times or other public transport priorities; while in other cases, participants spoke of **compromises being made on both sides**, or **active modes being prioritised** (at least temporarily).
- Some participants felt **additional advice or support** on resolving typical and/or tricky issues would be helpful (for instance, a set level of bus service frequency below which shared bus-cycle lanes could be judged acceptable).

5.2. Challenges in planning for active and public transport

The quotes below give a flavour of the widespread experiences of challenges that participants experienced in planning for active and public transport. Various tensions were at work. As also found in the Stage One process evaluation, where schemes were perceived to re-allocate space away from cars, this could be problematic, especially in more car-dependent contexts. However, in less car-dependent contexts (such as Central or Inner metropolitan areas), conflicts between public (generally

buses) and active modes became sharper as authorities sought to support both, with fewer opportunities to reduce car space without radical decisions about space reallocation. Participants spoke of issues over clashing timeframes for scheme planning and attempts to resolve conflicts by compromising.

> "Certainly that the two things [buses and active travel] are seen as high priority, but […] there's a real challenge as to who really should have priority in certain areas, and that's the position we're in at present. We're just trying to work through what's the most sensible approach and actually what's the greatest need: this consistent active travel corridor or certain bus priority measures, not an easy challenge." (P24)

Bus services (as opposed to trams or metro systems, which only existed in some authorities) were something that had to be considered in all areas. Moreover, corridor schemes (thus, typically cycle track routes rather than LTN or School Streets schemes) often tended to target major roads which were also often sites for current or planned bus priority measures.

> "Our ATF2 bid was on the County Council's most frequent bus service routes. So immediately that was a problem with the competing demands of LTN 1/20. And I think it's we have, we've been having really detailed discussions with our major bus provider and at times that has been a little strained, but we've been trying. Some of it has had to include compromises around what we've been providing and that has been quite a challenging process." (P25)

While participants needed to liaise with external organisations (such as private bus companies), there were also important internal stakeholders ("bus colleagues" in most authorities) who also needed to be involved in planning.

> "Some problems we've had is, is a bit of left hand and right hand from [higher tier authority], so exactly the same with buses. We're trying to promote ATF routes, they haven't told their bus teams. Trying to get consultation responses from the people who are nominally funding us has proved difficult just because different teams have different views. One of the schemes that we had on [A road] is now out. That was [because of] bus operators complaining about journey time disbenefits." (P1)

5.3. Challenges and compromises

Below, further examples are given of specific challenges and compromises of which participants had experienced. These are, of course, from the view of the active travel planners rather than the bus (or tram) planners. However, they do provide a sense of both the goodwill from each side alongside the frustration (most likely on both sides) that factors such as resources, timelines, targets, and design assumptions can make collaborative planning more difficult.

Participants raised specific design issues, such as tram crossings which typically involve tight chicanes. These sharp bends seek to slow pedestrians and cyclists down on the approach to tram tracks and hence reduce the likelihood of them colliding with trams, but are inaccessible for many disabled cyclists, those carrying children or using other non-standard cycles.

"Also, some issues with tram crossings - around tram colleagues requiring non-accessible chicanes etc on approach to tram crossings of off-road active travel routes." (P44, typed response in focus group chat)

P27 spoke in more detail about changes that had been made to designs, such as making raised tables (a raised section of highway spanning a road, aiming to reduce driver speed) shallower to accommodate bus service concerns. More generally, they and others talked about the pressure that bus colleagues were under, attempting to maintain services while commercial operators were cutting services that had become less profitable in a post Covid-19 context of ongoing pressure on passenger numbers.

"Lots of challenges from our passenger transport colleagues, particularly around traffic calming […] and then compromises on some of those traffic calming for example, shallower raised tables, et cetera and infrastructure that can accommodate bus and bike. And I think what's compounded the situation is that the bus network is have been under so much pressure to try to save services and there's been a kind of curtailment already. And so, I suppose some of these conversations around prioritising cycle infrastructure, for example, have been really challenging to try and understand the trade-offs. Sometimes it you know we've won the argument and we've managed to get certain bits of cycle infrastructure and other times we've conceded. And then in the end the buses couldn't meet their ambition because it's declined. So, it is one of those more contentious areas". (P27)

"The County Council isn't pursuing really any physical bus priority measures because it doesn't feel appropriate for a rural county. We don't have the frequency of bus services and there would be a risk that if we put in bus lanes or the equivalent or advanced stop lines, that would be areas of tarmac that residents would see vacant more time than it was used. But in practicalities, delivering ATF2 schemes in a location that is also served by bus services, when we've consulted with the bus operators, they have been very concerned about the width restrictions and to the point that one operator threatened to pull out to ensure that we had to amend the design, so the design is a sort of compromise solution. So, I'm not sure how Active Travel England would feel about that if and when they come to inspect that." (P43)

P22 felt that targets for bus speeds set in their BSIP (Bus Service Improvement Plan) counteracted aspirations to improve pedestrian environments and safety, for instance through 20mph schemes or even pedestrian crossings, as well as causing trouble for cycling schemes.

"[BSIP] stymied all cycling schemes because basically they have agreed to reduce the total time it takes for buses to get there, 10% time efficiency, which means that our plans for 20 hour speed limits have been, well, I've got lots in, but they want to undo them. I'm fighting a rearguard action, not to undo them, but an extension. So they're in the balance and then even crossings, they will not put crossings in across these main roads anymore because they say it's going to slow buses. So, to my mind, it is just a completely foolish target to have an overall 10% reduction because in my expert knowledge of buses, it's actually reliability, not the total time." (P22)

P31 agreed, saying that mode-based funding and differing timelines made integrated planning difficult:

> "We're also creating a bit of a rearguard action because [regional body] promote the bus priority stuff, so it's not even the same organisation, and they've had stuff that's been in development for a long time, like three or four years and by the time they're sharing it with us, we're going "well if you do that, we can't do what we want to do in our LCWIP, for example, because you're taking all the space for the buses". So, it is like a huge conflict and it feels like it's a bit of a rearguard action where the best that we're managing to achieve with some of these schemes in our comments back to [regional body] is like trying not to preclude other things happening in future, it's just not great really. We're trying to move away from like the mode-based funding within [district]. We're trying to pool our money so we can go for a corridor approach and we ourselves decide what is the best sustainable transport mode in a particular corridor. But the way the funding is set up, it's really difficult." (P31)

Examples were given where participants felt there could be increased flexibility on either side, for instance here where P3 describes how compromises to standard practice for bus lanes, cycleways, and footways were made to fit in a cycleway alongside a bus lane.

> "Building strictly to LTN 1/20 compliant cycleways would have not left enough room for the bus lane. So instead, we're back to first principles. We came to the arrangement of a slightly narrower cycleway, slightly narrower footway, but getting the edge detailing right to try and minimise the impact on the effective width. We've admitted goods vehicles into the bus lane, which is what the DfT signs authorisation has done, and we've got quite a narrow general traffic lane. Which is a possibility opened up by admitting goods vehicles into the bus lane. And interestingly that was one of the departures from LTN 1/20, was making that traffic lane narrower than recommended from LTN 1/20. So, we did have some tensions, but we were able to work through them and resolve them, but it was very much by going back to first principles and not particularly through blind adherence to standard." (P3)

Some participants spoke of a perceived recent shift away from active modes towards greater priority for buses, with an implication that this was often something of a zero-sum game, despite the potentially synergistic effects of multi-modality.

> "You want people out of their cars, but I think, my sense is I think government [were] really, really keen on active travel and Gear Change but my sense is they've gone a bit cooler on this and therefore buses are probably a bit noisier now." (P19)

P38 spoke of how they 'avoided some of the harder challenges' and bus priority/bus lanes being 'sacrosanct'. They added:

> "In terms of buses, there's a good relationship. We work well with them and we will combine schemes, talk about budgets and look where we can work together to deliver schemes because it also reduces that pressure on the network where we're not all digging up the city at the same place or different places around the city. We're working in the same place together." (P38)

P45 explained how differing timeframes aggravated problems building for public and active transport. Some of this was likely inevitable but perhaps not all of it, for instance, very short timelines of competitive active travel funding. This was despite a broader picture of general goodwill between different teams and senior level support for collaboration.

> "Our metro extensions that are being built right now, they've been in planning for years, decades. And where we've tried to improve things for active travel, you know, alongside metro, particularly within the city centre, that's been quite a challenge. And I think it's not for a lack of support from our seniors within the transport authority, it's just the timings are so way off. And you do think to yourself, we should be thinking now ahead, you know, so many years in the future to work together. Whereas ATF has felt very quick and one year at a time, so it's almost like the two things are on a different timeline." (P45)

These timeframe issues caused uncertainty for P17, who described how they 'hadn't quite got to the bottom' of whether an ATF2 scheme might later be removed to make way for a public transport scheme.

> "We have a conflict as well, which I haven't quite got to the bottom of. One of our ATF2 schemes was on the [A road name] and on that same corridor, and there's a City Region Sustainable Transport scheme to significantly improve the bus network. And as that corridor comes into [authority name] it could take one of two possible routes. One might be where we've put our ATF scheme and the other might not be. And if it does come along the road where we've put the ATF scheme in, there isn't enough room for bus lanes and segregated cycle lanes. So, the whole risk of, well, will the ATF scheme had to be ripped out to put the bus scheme in?" (P17)

P34 described the negotiation needed to put in one planned ATF2 cycle corridor scheme, which was then in competition with bus priority along that route (as per the National Bus Strategy, released at a similar time) and said that compromises had been made on both sides.

> "We've got one scheme in [city] that was in direct kind of competition, if you like, with the National Bus Strategy and it was quite difficult really because both strategies or both, the timings of both announcements of the scheme and the Bus Strategy were together. So, at a time where the government is saying about bus priority, we needed to actually take out a section of bus lane to facilitate our cycling scheme in [city]. It has actually ended OK, because we've been out to speak with the bus operator, makes some changes to both elements of those different travel functions, but they were in direct competition with one another." (P34)

5.4. Enablers and possible changes

P44 suggested that ATE could provide some supplementary guidance to complement LTN 1/20, focusing on whether and when it would be acceptable to mix buses and bikes:

> "One thing that I felt it would be quite helpful, if ATE was able to offer some national guidance over and above what LTN 1/20 does on shared bus bike

lanes because it's a problem we are always coming up against. I'm sure all of us are very familiar with in that, yes, we got a bus and we want to provide a bus lane. And the question is that does not provide the required level of service to provide an attractive route for bikes. My personal feeling is that it depends on the amount of buses that are using the bus lane […] and I think LTN 1/20 slightly skirts around that issue and says it might work, but you need to be very careful. […] I do think that's one area where which would be quite helpful to have some greater guidance on." (P44)

P19 suggested that LTN 1/20 did not take sufficient account of existing space constraints and commitments to other sustainable modes. This relates to an ongoing tension about whether guidance should treat one mode in isolation (and set minimum standards for that mode, such as width of bus or active travel infrastructure) or should be more integrated, attempting to deal with co-provision and its inevitable compromises:

"The thing about LTN 1/20, there you assume it's a greenfield site, or ATE seem to believe that, and therefore it's really challenging and we've got huge conflicts on some of our proposed schemes where our bus colleagues are saying we need to put a scheme in here and we're saying well, actually we've got funding to put something else in and you simply haven't got the space to do both. But ultimately our Cabinet will decide what is their priority and when you got funding for both things, it's really challenging." (P19)

P7 suggested that funding streams that could combine active and public transport might help to overcome this tension. This might also assist with the timeframe issues referred to above.

"It feels at times that public transport is at odds with active travel, even though they are very, very much connected, people have to walk to get to their bus stops. But it just felt having an active travel fund - and I don't know if anybody else actually had bus priority measures as part of their active travel fund, I don't know if that was allowed as such or if anyone did that, but I don't think we did. They always seem to be at odds, public transport and active travel. And I don't know if there's a way of almost combining them in future just so that you can try and accommodate all types of users that we want to promote". (P7)

Another participant spoke of how having to think about LTN 'boundary roads' brought into view insufficient bus priority on main roads, which could potentially be addressed enabling both active modes and buses to benefit from combined interventions. However, among other enablers this relied on having funding to install bus lanes on main roads that did not yet have these.

"It's like OK, what is the impact [of LTNs] on boundary roads? Is the impact limited because there's already existing bus lanes on there so that the buses can, can still go, were not impacted by any changes in congestion or traffic flows. But it also has led us to ask like, OK, so which A roads, which B roads are missing bus lanes? [But] providing bus lanes on other main roads, there's not that much funding for it." (P2)

Similarly P33, also in a London borough, spoke of working with TfL to try to harmonise LTN implementation and bus priority.

"TfL Buses have taken quite a cautious approach to some of our Low Traffic Neighbourhoods in terms of potential traffic displacement, impacts on boundary roads and especially impacting journey times for buses. So we have had some conversations with TfL to prioritise certain roads which are surrounded by Low Traffic Neighbourhood for bus lanes, for instance, bus prioritisation measures. So it's trying to line up some of the funding made available by TfL where, with where we have our Low Traffic Neighbourhood. We have monitored our Low Traffic Neighbourhoods. We don't think they displace traffic on main roads, but on certain corridors there have been some increases in bus journey time. So, we're trying to work hand in hand like this with TfL and shape our LIP [Local Implementation Plan] for bus prioritisation where we have our Low Traffic Neighbourhoods." (P33)

6. Monitoring and evaluation

This section covers a major intended focus of the groups, monitoring and evaluation. Due to the universal experience of scheme delays, however, some participants could comment relatively little about M&E of ATF2 schemes, as in some cases few or no schemes had yet been installed. In these cases, the moderators invited participants to speak about ATF2 M&E plans and/or M&E related to other active travel schemes.

Broad conclusions about M&E experiences can be drawn. Firstly, M&E capacity varied substantially across authorities. Participants from London authorities reported carrying out much more M&E than was typical outside London. This may be linked to factors such as London's large investment in recent decades in high-quality cycling infrastructure having triggered related investment in monitoring active travel outcomes, alongside regional body Transport for London's substantial powers across transport in the capital, including managing the Strategic Road Network. However, note that these authorities likely represent a high point within London rather than being typical of all boroughs. However, their inclusion of a range of outcomes, their collection of active travel data, and their incorporation of in-depth qualitative research highlighted what some local authorities were able to achieve in a relatively supportive context. Rural and smaller authorities, and rural areas within mixed authorities, tended to have much more limited M&E planned and in place.

All authorities did, however, face similar challenges. The Covid-19 pandemic had disrupted datasets, with what might otherwise be more stable trends showing substantial fluctuation. Authorities generally lack a tradition of monitoring active travel, especially walking, and were unprepared for intense interest in the outcomes of some schemes. M&E resource is limited and often ends soon after a scheme has been installed. As with other aspects of scheme implementation, participants often felt that they were reinventing the wheel, and some used the focus groups and Teams chat function to ask for help from peers, for instance about machine learning sensors (which can count all modes) to replace tubes that only count vehicles.

If authorities struggled both with engagement/communication and with M&E, it was perhaps not surprising that few examples of communicating M&E results were found, or of these results feeding into existing scheme redesign or new scheme design. One example of wider learnings is discussed above in Chapter 5, where participants from two authorities spoke of how on some corridors, bus delays had increased after LTN scheme implementation, and this monitoring data was used to make the case to implement bus priority on these corridors. These were London examples: few LTN schemes had been implemented outside London, and the lower availability of bus data to authorities elsewhere might impact the ability to use such data in scheme planning.

M&E matters for various reasons. It is important for authorities to be able to adjust schemes if problems arise, even if those problems are not largely caused by schemes (for instance, if there is an unforeseen incident necessitating a medium-term closure to a neighbouring road). A wider importance of M&E relates to strategy goals, including at national level. Are certain types of scheme more successful at achieving key outcomes than others, for instance? M&E data can be drawn on by government or independent researchers to understand such wider questions, which require inferences about causality. Such locally collected data becomes increasingly

important as in England and Wales the 2021 Census took place during Covid-19 restrictions and is unlikely to be useful to draw conclusions about uptake of active commuting, unlike the 2011 Census.

Given the obstacles and problems that continue to be experienced regarding M&E both as a local source of information and as feeding through into wider knowledge, some participants suggested a need for greater resource to be allocated to M&E data collection, management and sharing. Even in London, where (in the national context) M&E capacity is high and data abundant, it took a large amount of work and time for one of the report authors to conduct a review of LTN M&E across the city's 33 districts, because there is no centralised data repository and no standardised reporting system.

6.1. Key findings

- There were **common challenges and shared pressures** regarding M&E, such as a lack of pedestrian data historically collected, or the time pressures to implement schemes and the frequent changes made to them.
- Alongside such common challenges, participants had varying experiences, with **London-based authorities** benefiting from **greater resources and historically longer-term funding** settlements, and a **regional transport body** (TfL) with traditionally good data analysis capacity.
- Some **larger urban authorities** had greater M&E capacity, although with variation, and some participants spoke of **variation within their authority**, for instance with cities better covered than other areas.
- Many authorities, particularly larger and more urban authorities, were moving or had moved to **more sophisticated data collection methods**, although with **uncertainty** about 'how much was enough'.
- Some participants said they would welcome **learning from peers**, given the variation in practice, expertise, and experience in M&E across authorities.
- There was **relatively little communication of M&E findings**, with experience of scheme pushback leading to authorities not wishing to put their heads 'above the parapet' even to share 'good news'.
- Most problematic in M&E terms were **relatively small-scale and low-budget but potentially high-impact schemes** (such as LTNs) where if M&E requirements were based only on scheme costs, little could be afforded, and even this was potentially at risk with budgets being squeezed.

6.2. Shared pressures on M&E

Participants spoke of their concern that the relatively small-scale schemes funded through the ATF were not going to lead to measurable step changes in routes. High quality cycle routes including junction redesign typically exceeded the budgets and short planning cycle of ATF funding streams, thus authorities were instead incrementally improving routes or building short sections. However, P3 expressed concern that such interventions would ultimately make it harder to implement schemes, because network effects would not yet be in operation.

> "There is not going to be a scheme funded through ATF in this manner where people could see a big improvement and a decent uplift in cycling because we've incrementally improved bits of routes, we're not doing enough to get a step change and I can see in three years down the line it will become harder to justify active travel schemes." (P3)

For smaller-budget schemes, P39 said that high-quality M&E was not seen as appropriate. (Like engagement, traditionally appropriate investment in monitoring has been seen as related to the scheme budget rather than impact or public interest). They said that their schemes funded under the Future High Street Fund or their Mayoral Funding Streams had had more extensive M&E elements.

> "[M&E] boils down to the scope and the scale of the scheme. Your M& E element has to be proportionate to what the value of the actual scheme is as well. So it can't be all singing, all dancing M&E just for a £50,000 scheme or £100,000 scheme. But if you're talking millions then it's a different story altogether." (P39)

Many participants referred to challenges interpreting baseline data in the context of Covid-19 (generally, control sites are not used, and authorities frequently struggle to use comparator data). Even participants using relatively sophisticated M&E strategies said that the disruption to baseline data had caused problems.

> "We were fortunate because we had already got lots of Vivacity [machine learning] sensors […] So we had reasonably good baseline data, but it's all at a weird time." (P22)

> "We've not yet done much monitoring and evaluation because we're still in construction at the minute. [We] can foresee we're going to have some difficulty with monitoring and evaluation because our before data is basically what we had on file before the pandemic, so it's very old and perhaps that's quite a different time. So, we for some of that before and after type monitoring and evaluation, we may actually struggle to get anything meaningful from it." (P3)

> "We've had similar issues around collecting baseline data obviously during Covid. We did manage to get around that with the breaks in lockdown and things like that. But we've got fairly simple plans for monitoring and evaluation. I think the schemes certainly for ATF2 schemes of our size were the expectations for monitoring and evaluation weren't as high, as they certainly are now for ATF4." (P14)

P36 spoke of having to extrapolate 'pre' data from network counters, due to not having any pre-monitoring on their ATF routes (prior to EATF).

> "We have no monitoring [on those routes] pre-Emergency Active Travel Fund. There was no counters on there. So, we're relying on our surrounding network counters were in as a result of various other schemes to inform what might have been there before because we didn't have that in place. But now that we've got our [machine learning] cameras fitted for ATF2, we're replicating that for all other ATF schemes going forward. So, we should have consistent and comparable monitoring data." (P36)

P26 summarised a range of pressures experienced by many; where a relatively small level of funding for schemes overall made it difficult to allocate resources needed for a step-change in M&E, there was a lack of 'pre' data especially for pedestrians and cyclists, and having to move quickly once a scheme could be installed caused problems for getting M&E in place.

> "In ATF2 for us, we had a very small level of funding. I think it was 600K total. So as others have said during a pandemic, we were trying to work quite quickly to submit the bids and work out what we're going to do. So, in terms of pre-scheme monitoring, that was a real challenge. With our money we introduced two town centre pedestrian priority zones, so time limited restrictions and for both of those we did put Vivacity [machine learning] monitors in. For one of them in particular, we did have pre scheme data, in terms of traffic counts, but we certainly didn't have the ped and cycle aspects, which Vivacity does obviously give us now." (P26)

P43 spoke of problems in procuring what was a relatively large contract alongside timeframes for scheme implementation, even though (as they also pointed out) the cost of 'a few one-day video classified counts' (which they said had been judged not to be suitable) would easily equate to a year's running of a machine learning sensor. Partly this is about procuring new types of data, and partly it is about real-time data collection potentially requiring more up-front investment than periodically commissioned ad hoc counts.

> "When we put together our requirements across the ATF 2-3 and then other requirements […] we have to do a slightly larger procurement exercise because the total value was fairly significant. So we found it quite challenging to get appropriate 'before' data collection out before the engineers placed any sort of traffic management in the area." (P43)

Similarly, P18 spoke of the difficulty for a small authority unused to procuring more complex data, in terms of cost and organisation.

> "[Machine learning sensors] are quite expensive for a for a small authority like ours, and I guess we we're still getting our heads around whether it's worth the investment […] We've spoken to our principal contractor about the possibility of them buying cameras or teaming up with a group of local authorities and passing the cameras around as needed." (P18)

6.3.   Varying experiences

Authorities had taken varying approaches to M&E. Specifically, those in London and in a few other (often larger/metropolitan) authorities had developed more sophisticated approaches, including for instance seeking to measure changes in walking as well as in motorised vehicle usage.

> "We can measure changes in active travel users as well as the associated changing traffic flow along the road." (P43)

P38 said that smaller schemes were more challenging in terms of M&E, and that they were finding ATF3 and ATF4 much easier to monitor with just one large scheme rather than a set of smaller cost (but potentially high impact) schemes in ATF2.

> "For ATF3 and ATF4 I've just done one big corridor scheme because it's so much easier in terms of the delivery and also the monitoring side of things is also an awful lot easier, whereas I've got about 20 schemes through ATF2 where you're filling in all of the intricacies of all those schemes." (P38)

Many participants expressed concern that their authorities lacked the capacity for M&E, especially given cost and time constraints meaning that they were strugglingz to implement schemes in the first place.

> "With quite a small team, we are finding the monitoring and evaluation requirements quite demanding. We don't really have enough time to sit looking at numbers. I also wonder how much time DfT/ATE are going to spend looking at our monitoring data and whether we are creating data for the sake of it." (P32)

> "For some of us, we're not really at that point yet where we've been able to gather the data that we need and because we've come from a baseline of, for our county especially, of so little and our monitoring and data gathering is so poor at how we compare and contrast, it's actually really, really hard. On the Emergency Active Travel Tranche One, we did close somewhere […] in the middle of the city, and the University is around it. So you've got halls, university buildings, it would make a great kind of campus space. And we closed that [road] as part of EATF but of course nobody was about. I mean, everybody was locked in their houses. So, for us to be able to monitor changes, we could obviously see that car use had gone down, but there was no footfall. So, any data we took - and we did gather footfall and counts on that - it was just completely useless for us." (P35)

P22 said that within their County Council, the main city was well monitored but elsewhere in the County, M&E was scarce. They said that their preferred way forward was to separate monitoring from specific schemes and have it as an ongoing data collection exercise, but that this was not currently funded.

> "[City] is very well monitored, but if you go outside into the towns, there was a just complete dearth of data. And I think one of the issues I think is, it shouldn't just be scheme focused. I mean in the LCWIPs I've been trying to set the fact that they've also got targets to increase cycling for each town, that we create our baseline monitoring in each town, which even if it's not on the scheme thing, it can register on the wider picture whether cycling or walking is

actually increasing. So, my feeling is that it you need to have that baseline monitoring, even if you don't have money to measure an individual scheme, so that's the better way forward I think because then you can actually see is it really increasing. Because there's lots of data if you build a nice route, people will transfer to it. But they're transferring from other routes, not actually increasing cycling. So, I'm trying to get this into LCWIPs, but we actually don't really still have the funding. We need more funding for that." (P22)

P41 said that often monitoring stopped when funding disappeared, which becomes particularly problematic when funding streams are short-term and schemes run late, and when behaviour change might not be immediate or might be more evident at specific times of year (active travel being more seasonal than other modes).

"We're looking at putting in some automatic counters on the Greenway we have. One of the things I've noticed a lot since I've been in the Council for nine years now is we get these blocks of funding and we can do stuff, but then the minute the funding is not there, that all ends and the thing with automatic counters and that is they have year on year contracts to be maintained." (P41)

Getting more sophisticated monitoring equipment in place might take time, and not be feasible without substantial pre-planning. P20 spoke of how a trial started during the EATF meant that they had already been able to obtain permission to install machine learning sensors, which involved legal paperwork taking months.

"One of the things that as a bonus for us that we've already got about 25 [machine learning sensors] installed as part of the trial scheme. So we've gone through all the process bits and certainly the data protection stuff, which would be an absolute killer if you were starting afresh and they'll certainly with our legal team take months and months to get that through. So we're in a fortunate position that we've got all the legal paperwork in place and the experience of doing the process." (P20)

There was often a disconnect between how at least some members of the public expected schemes to be monitored and how authorities were monitoring schemes. This was particularly the case for relatively 'cheap' schemes, where traditionally little monitoring would be done as it would not be seen as value for money given the cost of the intervention. However, where schemes might have relatively high impacts for relatively low cost, such as LTNs, public expectations of monitoring were often much higher.

"Members of the public's expectations of the amount of data that we would have, the amount of modelling that we would have done etcetera, etcetera, is enormously high. And I think we made the mistake looking back on it because some of the schemes were quite low value, we didn't really have a very robust monitoring or evaluation plan in place. But although they are low value, they had a high impact on a lot of people. And then it was the expectations that those people had, so they were coming in going "why haven't you done this? Why haven't you done that?" We're like, well, we wouldn't normally do that for a scheme of this size, a scheme of this value. And we were looking at it in terms of the monetary value and failed to recognise the impact it was having on so many people." (P31)

P31 went on to express shock that people expected traffic modelling to cover non-compliance with traffic filters.

> "I had people asking me if I have modelled the number of people that would ignore the signs saying the road ahead had closed and would drive up to the modal filter and then do a 3-point turn and come back down. And I was absolutely flabbergasted that people thought I would have those kinds of figures, but they genuinely in public meetings are asking that level of question." (P31)

By contrast, P33 spoke not of modelling compliance, but of having data from comparable schemes that can be shown to residents about changes in compliance and levels of 3-point turns, highlighting the potential – with sufficient data collection and analysis – to answer these kinds of questions. (Indeed, with more sharing of data and results, information about such compliance from one area might be helpful to another area that did not have such data.)

> "Our camera filters allow us to see compliance over time and indeed, we see that compliance is way worse at the beginning at least than it is 6 month in, 12 month in. So, we monitor this continuously and we have these monthly figures and that really helps if this case around like when we engage residents again about will people just enter the LTN and then have a road rage episode and make a 3-point turn and actually you're making things more unsafe. It helps I think demonstrating that and doing monitoring." (P33)

P26 spoke of not knowing how to effectively monitor and evaluate a rural quiet lanes trial, as they perceived that only limited funding should be spent on M&E due to the low cost of the scheme, yet a number of roads were included. Thus, they did not seek to monitor active travel but did ad hoc traffic counts. The scheme ultimately did not go ahead, and it is not known whether having an M&E plan with clear success outcomes would have made a difference to the level of public support.

> "The other scheme [was a] quiet lanes network trial and obviously that is a bit of a challenge to monitor and let's just say because of whilst it's a relatively low trafficked network, it's quite a big network. So, in terms of capturing your data and at what locations you're capturing that data for what is a very small scheme, it doesn't have a lot of money behind, it is a challenge. So, there were traffic counts done as part of that. There was no more permanent monitoring. We didn't put Vivacity [machine learning sensors] in there for the reason that the cost didn't justify it. And also where would be the prime place to put it? We can't have 10 sensors on a tiny rural quiet lane network. Incidentally, that scheme was pulled because there was a lack of support." (P26)

By contrast, the below quote from P33 gives a sense of what was happening in a leading London borough, which was able to use regional data to normalise baseline counts during periods affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Even in this case, however, pedestrian counts were not usually being collected, instead the borough focused on looking at possible disbenefits of LTN introduction, such as congestion.

> "We started developing and monitoring strategy for all our street space emergency schemes back in around April 2020. And this question of the baseline obviously came up […] Because obviously we wanted to be putting

in baseline counts before we roll out our schemes. For instance, in June 2020, under lockdown, what kind of baseline is this going to really give us? So, we were lucky to have multiple long-term counts on the TfL network, so we were able to access that data and from that what we did is that we normalised the data. So, at various locations we compared June 2020 to, for instance a year earlier, so June 2019, and that gave us a coefficient and we used this to normalise the data. [We] really looked at traffic volumes, traffic speeds, cycle volumes. We did not monitor pedestrian counts except in one scheme. We also luckily had long term air quality monitoring points monitoring nitrogen dioxide, for some of those data points we had them since 2017. They were quite good to give us an idea of how air quality has evolved. We also used journey times using a software called INRIX, which allows you to calculate segments of the roads and information about journey times. So, this was particularly interesting for the main roads surrounding our Low Traffic Neighbourhoods to give us an estimate of additional congestion journey time along around the Low Traffic Neighbourhood. Our monitoring has various objectives and it was not just about sustainability and reducing greenhouse gases and emissions. It was also about transforming our streets as places for people. And the way you can monitor that is obviously through active travel increase, but also looking at road danger reduction. So, we looked at collisions for instance, before and after implementing our schemes." (P33)

6.4. Monitoring schemes

Following on from the discussion of shared challenges and differing resources, contexts, and experiences, this section covers in more detail the types of monitoring approaches typically employed. P7 (who had a particular interest and expertise in M&E – not expertise possessed in all authorities) spoke of having already created internal documents around M&E. They stressed the importance of having clear measurable objectives up front to define the success of a scheme. (Of course, 'doing things well in advance of time' had proved challenging for many participants, for reasons discussed above).

"I started creating some internal strategy documents and policy documents before the DfT released their guidance because it was partly due to some learnings from LSTF [Local Sustainable Transport Fund] all those years ago. So, when the DfT guidance arrived, fortunately, it was very similar, the same sorts of things. It's all quite common sense and basic really. You just need to do things well in advance in time and plan and prepare for it. But the key thing was I created a template form where the first thing would be to identify the problem, the challenge of an area, and then almost have a vision of what you would like, what success would look like, and then drill that down into identifying some objectives or some objectives and then some measurable KPIs [key performance indicators] that have to be like, I don't know, 10% shift in this or a 10% increase in public opinion. So, we used that as the basis to define what how we should measure the success of the scheme and then we worked out what we needed to measure that, what data was needed, what cameras, equipment, or techniques we needed." (P7)

Many participants spoke of being in a process of moving from fairly basic monitoring to more sophisticated approaches, necessitated by the high level of scrutiny of many schemes, a perception of increased M&E expectations (especially for ATF3 onwards), and the recognition that traditional approaches were insufficient to capture key outcomes such as changes in walking (which is highly seasonal and can also fluctuate substantially day-to-day, making ad hoc counts potentially problematic).

"We recognise that we had significant gaps and we didn't have active travel data. And we're using the Vivacity [machine learning sensors] to fill those gaps, but also to take the data and to do some interesting stuff with it as well." (P27)

"We've just done quantitative in a lot of them [schemes] with camera counts. You know two-day camera counts to capture ped [pedestrian] and cycle movements and ATCs [automatic traffic counters] for a week." (P18)

"We've similarly to P38 and others on the call, initially we started out with just basic count information but we've secured funding for Vivacity [machine learning] sensors to be installed all the way along our routes, and […] it's just been very protracted in terms of having all parties lined up for the installation process. But we've got two of those currently in, being delivered and another four sites lined up for, for those to be installed and as reflected by others, I think that provides the best all round information in terms of cycle counts as well as wider impacts on other traffic patterns and speeds and all other data." (P25)

"The broad bones of what we're doing is mainly these days based on permanent counters rather than investing staff time in one off counts, because we want to grow our database and network of permanent counters and then increasingly those are machine learning video surveys so they can do they can do all modes and most importantly can do pedestrians which have been previously quite difficult to count." (P44)

"We were lucky enough to have quite a lot of automated counts previous to Covid and we've also done some afterwards. We've done a lot of surveys and a lot of manual counts and we're in the process of commissioning Vivacity to monitor our modal shift change from our new School Streets. So that will be really interesting. So we'll actually be able to see if we are getting a modal shift and we're not just displacing cars onto another street. I'm having a lot more sensors put in as well for a Greenway improvement scheme, so again we've got baseline data from that and we'll get some up-to-date data before the new LED solar lights go in. A bit of a mixed bag and not the usual standard of baseline I would like to have, but obviously with Covid and the money just suddenly appearing, we've had a bit of difficulty getting in excellent datasets to start with". (P42)

Some authorities were still focused on traffic-related outcomes and disbenefits, in response to queries which mainly related to these:

"The next round that we introduce of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, it's very traffic based because most of the queries are around the boundary roads issue and the displace traffic issues. But we've put in the air quality sensors, we've got traffic counts every couple of months going on a rolling programme

now. So primarily so we can answer some of the questions and face off some of the criticism." (P31)

Others were worried that count data alone would not provide the information about changes to journeys that would ideally be needed to calculate carbon and other impacts of schemes. P43 expressed concern about whether intercept surveys would be practical to complete and a view that sharing best practice from authorities that were further on with schemes would be helpful to them.

> "We've become aware that obviously just counts in individual locations don't give any indications of origins and destinations and therefore journey length and therefore don't allow us to provide carbon decarbonisation quantification estimates. So, we have also considered undertaking surveys, but there's practical issues with that because pedestrians and cyclists on where we've put the infrastructure in, that's very much on their journey, not by a destination and by minor roads. So it's going to be less palatable to try and survey people in those locations. And I think it would be really useful if maybe some of the people that have delivered their ATF2 schemes earlier on that didn't experience the same complications as us could show us the way and we could learn from things that went well and things that didn't go well from them." (P43)

P2 discussed the limitations of count data but was uncertain how much data to collect and whether there would ever be sufficient data. They asked, 'Can we ever get it right? Maybe. Maybe not.'

> "One of the contentions or criticisms we got from locals was that counting traffic is not enough. And there's two parts to that. Part one was people were saying like, yeah, you've counted 6 streets internally and 2 streets on the outside but a car that needs to snake its way through a neighbourhood is obviously going to pass four of those six counters. And on the outside, it's only going to pass on two sides or two roads. So, you might have displaced a car from the neighbourhood to the main roads, but in the neighbourhood, you've counted that car five times whilst on the main road you've only comes to that car twice. So, the decrease that you see in traffic is artificial. That was one of their contentions and the other contention was OK, you've measured traffic numbers. But have you measured distance travelled, have you measured like literally kilos of CO_2 that people have emitted. Because obviously what anti Low Traffic Neighbourhood people are saying is like well if you're stuck in traffic, if you're stuck in congestion, you're going to emit more than when you can just cut through a neighbourhood. It's not necessarily true but we have received a lot of criticism on the measuring of traffic that we've employed. It doesn't matter if it was a camera or an ATC. It's not enough and it's not good enough, and it's very nuanced and then there's also the question of can we ever get it right? Maybe. Maybe not. Is it worth investing so much in getting it right because that would involve a whole host of different surveys, probably. And our locals that are against are never going to be satisfied in the first place." (P2)

Similarly, P34 spoke of trying to do more but an uncertainty about how much was enough and trying to balance between doing too much and too little, given fluctuating and variable resources.

"With our more recent projects we've managed to tap into this analytical part of the county council's business function so that we can also do some route intercept attitudinal surveys so we can actually ask people their views, not just looking at whole number of cyclists before and after but also about perhaps feelings of safety, propensity to cycle, some of their reasons why they make choices. But for us, I feel as if it very much depends on the teams working on the projects, it depends on resources at the time, we know it's a requirement of the fund but it seems to be a bit like how long is a piece of string? You can do the very, very basic or you can do the really, really top-notch monitoring. We don't necessarily see the value of doing that, we don't necessarily get huge value of doing the real A* job and it does cost a lot and it's very time consuming so it is a bit of a mixed bag for us." (P34)

P26 spoke of using new types of data for ATF3 schemes, involving journey time data, to overcome some of the limitations of count data.

"Our ATF3 scheme is significantly larger and we have a draft monitoring plan in place where we'll be able to capture pre scheme and post scheme data. There will be roadspace reallocation as part of that and so we will be looking at different things like existing permanent count data, maybe doing some more temporary counts, installing Vivacity [machine learning sensor] at one or 2 key locations. But also, in anticipation of there being a bit of a backlash because it involves roadspace reallocation and the impact that might have on journey times, we are looking at using floating point data, Clearview. It's Google data, isn't it? Which I think is relatively cost effective and whilst it's not a perfect dataset, it can give you some information around the journey times and you can quite easily define what routes you would you want to monitor as part of that. It's not too onerous." (P26)

P17 spoke of specifically monitoring air quality and pedestrian-cycle conflict as a response to concerns expressed by residents:

"We're not doing anything particularly special or innovative. We have traffic and cycle counts. We're doing some key surveys before and after where we've removed some ghost island right turn lanes and done air quality monitoring. Just because that was a concern. Something we're trying to arrange, but we haven't put in place yet is just looking at pedestrian cycle conflicts at some of these lovely floating bus stops and shared use bus borders that we put in. Because they're generating quite a bit of interest. So, we just want to get some real data as to whether the near misses on these really are happening or is it just a perception." (P17)

P39 had conducted before-and-after perception surveys (similar to how TfLhas used its on-street Healthy Streets Survey) for the Authority's Mayoral schemes (with longer-term funding and higher budgets).

"One element of that [for Mayoral schemes] is a perception survey just undertaking the before and after to see the perceived change, how people perceive the changes in terms of safety and the uptake of what the objectives are." (P39)

Some participants spoke of using qualitative data, balancing different types of qualitative and quantitative, or collecting (qualitative and/or quantitative) attitudinal

data to complement traditional codes (whether or traditionally counted, or all modes). In some cases, consultation data was used as part of M&E, although the Stage One process evaluation revealed widely held concerns about the representativeness of this data (in terms of demographics, but also likely views on schemes).

> "A lot of the normal stuff we would do, which would have been the sort of local consultation meetings and intercept surveys, dropped off because of Covid. And so we did a citywide post Covid online survey and asked people whether they've changed their travel habits, whether more active travel was involved now or public transport or less public transport. So that survey was quite useful to give an overall picture. And then in lieu of doing the detailed consultation on schemes we got Commonplace [map-based engagement software tool]. […] A combination of quant and qual, definitely." (P20)

P14 spoke of using questions focused on the usage of space and having a collaboration with a PhD student who might be involved in data analysis.

> "And we did include in our consultations some questions around how people use the space because they're quite placemaking focused and trying to understand dwell time. We're looking to help the local economy through our schemes as well as improving walking and cycling. And so, we're going to follow that up. We've got a bit of approach by a PhD student who's interested in doing some work for us so we're going to do that as an after. So hopefully get some qualitative data to compare to our consultation results." (P14)

P33 referred to the limits of consultations viewed as data about how people see a scheme, and of using street intercept surveys and door knocking to capture the views of those in the 'missing middle', alongside focus groups with marginalised groups recruited through existing activities and meeting places. This in-depth collection of attitudinal and qualitative data represented a substantial input of resources into a programme that while relatively low cost (compared to major highway schemes) had potentially high impact and high levels of controversy.

> "What we learned through the trials and the public consultation of our Covid schemes is that consultations are definitely very self-selective and you only really get the two ends of the spectrum that have very high interest in the scheme. So, what we tried to do was more kind of informal street intercepts to random people walking down the street, also door knocking exercises. In our surveys we would ask people for their postcodes so it would be very easy to map out which areas have very low response rates and then we would just knock on doors and talk to people. But what we were actually realising is that a lot of people either didn't even know they lived within a Low Traffic Neighbourhood, or they are self-deselected from the engagement process saying you know, "I don't own a car, I don't drive. So, it doesn't really impact me. Therefore, why would I, am I even allowed really to participate?" We realised that there a wide majority of people in the middle who just didn't feel very strongly or who had actually more balanced views. So, the survey design responds to that, it's actually about capturing this wide range of views of our Low Traffic Neighbourhood, asking people a series of questions around perception. For instance, you know, is the street easier to cross? Are you socialising more with neighbours on the streets? Are the streets feeling more comfortable? How are the noise levels? So, a series of questions to kind of

capture a range of views and just kind of appreciating that a typical classic consultation exercise is really not the way that you can capture the majority of views. We then conducted a mix of focus groups. Mainly trying to instead of inviting people to meet us, going to meet groups for instance, trying to shape a programme around existing activities. So, either taking place in community centres or activities, for instance, with youth centres, with people who are socially excluded." (P33)

Similarly, P38 spoke of specifically targeting communities that might typically have lower response rates in traditional consultations. Again, this would mean that views could be gathered that would be more representative of wider populations, but also entailed putting in additional resources rather than just sending out consultations as was typically done.

"It's ATF3 as opposed to ATF2, but we have been challenged by our portfolio holder for transport to get so our consultation, so we don't just get the normal same people telling us the same answers from the same groups around the city. So, our cycle corridor that we're building is actually in quite a diverse area and we've employed one of these companies to specifically target the Black community within there, to go door-knocking to make sure we get a higher proportion, which will be more reflective of the actual population demographics in that area, actually get them to fill in some surveys. So that's ongoing as we speak. So, I'll be interested in what we see, what we get back from that and we can then compare that to some of the other surveys we've done in the past." (P38)

P19 similarly spoke of using a social research company to pay residents and business owners near to planned schemes, and of how this had secured high quality data, and potentially helped with scheme implementation (although they did say that one scheme had still proved problematic).

"We chose to go down a different consultation route. We use social research, so we would pay residents who live and businesses who live within 2 kilometres of each of the schemes and asked them a series of questions using an external supplier to do that and we got really robust, statistically strong views from all demographics, all ages, hard to reach. And generally we've been able to implement our schemes relatively quickly, fairly straightforward." (P19)

They said that this had come from an experience of 'public meetings with 400 people wanting your blood' which had entailed them needing to engage experts who could help provide higher quality data from more representative samples.

"We've changed primarily because there's a huge demand and a forensic level of inspection about what we do and our credibility. Our professional credibility is being brought into doubt by a very small group of very loud people. But that's what's pushed us to do something different. […] We specifically went to the community and asked demographically representative people, we have changed the way we're engaging and we're using some experts who have come in and are helping us." (P19)

P26 spoke of challenges monitoring business experiences, because they had experience of businesses not wanting positive views on schemes to be known, being

concerned that this might be viewed negatively by neighbouring businesses who were less positive about the interventions.

> "The issue for us is that we did want to do a business survey of our town centre restriction. You know, what are the benefits. So we interviewed people out on the street and there was really positive support and actually people saying we need to make sure there's better compliance, which is great, but the businesses whilst some of them welcomed it, not all of them, they really did not want to put their head above the parapet to say that and to have that recorded, and that's quite an issue, I think, for us and possibly others. It can get quite vociferous, the business community. And so, if there are some that are really supporting it in principle, they don't want to speak up because they are worried about the impact they'll have on the their neighbouring businesses. So that that is a challenge for us in terms of capturing that data." (P26)

One point that many participants asked to be highlighted related to resourcing M&E. Several cited the DfT guidance but said that it was still difficult to improve M&E, due to a perception that lower cost schemes did not justify higher quality M&E, or that rising costs meant that M&E was seen as less essential than other elements when savings were made.

> "The quite detailed guidance the DfT put together on monitoring and monitoring evaluation did recommend getting some opinion surveys using proper polling companies. We have decided against that just because of the cost of doing so. We have actually taken the decision not to do opinion type surveys for that reason really. It seemed disproportionate because of the funding we have for the schemes." (P17)

> "With the funding you're not necessarily given a particular pot of funding for monitoring and evaluation. So quite easily that gets absorbed with the rising scheme costs, which is always been quite a difficult and challenging thing to do and other people will have different kind of expectations and areas that they will like to progress. Monitoring and data doesn't always get the look in that it deserves. So although there was some DfT guidance this time up front which was helpful, I still feel that it was quite difficult to try and apply that from the onset." (P7)

P2 talked about the extent of cost, officer time and effort required to do in-depth engagement and reach groups that would not typically respond to traditional consultations. They referred to a trade-off whereby more in-depth engagement could make it even harder to operate with short term delivery timelines.

> "We tried to do a lot of engagement, a lot of talking to people, consultation surveys, trying to reach out to many different groups that typically don't respond that much to surveys. So going into local estates and hosting pop-up events there to just literally be with a few officers and a stall, talk about a scheme or trying to get a user group of disabled users or disabled residents of an area together, but that obviously is quite challenging. It takes up a lot of time and energy and it also can be quite costly. Also, in terms of time, because the longer you do engagement, the longer you have to plan for it and that can impact on delivery time." (P2)

6.5. Communicating scheme impacts

Participants were asked about how M&E findings were communicated. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the delays with schemes and the resource, time, and capacity problems experienced, even those who were at a stage to think about communicating the results of M&E had sometimes not done this. (In some cases, participants initially assumed we were talking about communication more broadly, rather than specifically communicating M&E findings.)

P30, P34 and P40 all spoke of not communicating findings, whether because this was not something the authority traditionally did or whether because of nervousness at the likelihood of negative response.

> "In terms of actually communicating monitoring results, we haven't really done that. I mean that's partly because of I suppose the age of the data, the schemes are new. So 'after' surveys are still something that we are doing, progressing. But it's an interesting question because it's not something that I've necessarily considered too much before in terms of, obviously we do communicate with local residents in terms of what we have delivered and the reasons for doing schemes. But in terms of the longer-term impact of those schemes, I don't think we necessarily had a plan for demonstrating that impact." (P30)

> "From tranche two there's only one [scheme] that's fully complete at the moment. I think in all honesty, everyone was just so pleased it finally got completed without too much upset that nobody wanted to go back and communicate what we've done in case that then pulled other people out. Because what it tends to do is you try and do a good news story and all you tend to get is […] "well that was a waste of money". And I think that's a real shame, but we don't do that a lot. And one thing we are going to do this summer is we're going to take our members on a training workshop walk through and we're going to cycle this route. I think for the sake of this exercise, the feedback from us probably is that we don't do a lot to publicise it because I'm almost a bit concerned that it will get tainted with negativity, which I think is a real shame, but I think that's the facts. That's the truth of the matter at the moment for us." (P34)

> "We publish, we use the Active Lives Survey as a sort of key monitoring tool for us in terms of performance and that's what we choose to publish on our public dashboard. And it's almost like there's a general public support, very broad support for overall increased rates of walking and cycling but prodding the bear a little bit with individual schemes we would be very nervous about. Like others have said." (P40)

P45 said that they would have liked to communicate M&E results more with residents, but they lacked the resource to fund ongoing engagement in this way.

> "We are quite limited in the resource we've got. We only have one engagement officer and she does a fabulous job. But ultimately once we get to the point of launch, we do try and do a launch event and we do that with the community. You know she's then off onto the next one and the next one. So, I

think if we had more resources, what we would love to do is continuous engagement and revisiting communities." (P45)

P7 said that they were still in a delivery phase on their ATF schemes, but that they did aspire to communicating M&E results when they got to this point.

> "We're still in a delivery phase on many of the schemes. So yes, we'll probably communicate the delivery aspects of the scheme as and when they're getting built via our usual methods of our websites and our Twitter account. […] I don't think we've ever really properly monitored, evaluated and publicised the results, the successfulness of a scheme before. And so we're still in that sort of phase at the moment and ideally how I would like to do it is we would like to re-engage with some of the same people or the same people that we engage with initially and new parties as well afterwards to say what we felt was a success or was a failure, because that may not necessarily align with what the residents feel is a success." (P7)

P2 spoke about how communication was tied into other organisational processes and timelines, rather than being its own 'continuous feedback loop'.

> "There's two or three different ways that we tried to communicate. Like obviously, we collected a lot of data, a lot of qualitative, quantitative data, but we mainly really use that for getting a project over the line. So, making sure that we tick all the boxes in terms of our governance and approvals processes. We did do things like press releases to announce the results of the monitoring and we've got online reports as well, but those were in association with our approval points, as it were. It's not like we have a tweet or something every single week that says look at how great how many cyclists are right now on the street or something like that. So yeah, a lot of the communication is tied in with the approvals processes and the governance points in time like the decision reports rather than like a continuous feedback loop." (P2)

6.6. M&E and scheme changes

Participants were asked about examples of M&E leading to scheme changes. Some such examples have already been given, for instance in London, of authorities using TfL bus journey time data to identify bus corridors where slower speeds following an intervention implied a need for increased bus priority. Indeed, in London bus journey time data is constantly being used to mitigate impacts of a range of schemes and disruptions, where potentially a time increase in one part of a route can be traded off against a reduction elsewhere. Other examples given related to detailed feedback from disabled groups and residents, which might relate to Blue Badge exemptions from traffic restrictions or might relate to design elements of new cycle routes, as described by P44.

> "We changed our approach to some of the detail of the designs of our Cyclops junctions as a result of some specific evaluations that we've done with our Disability Design Reference Group so things like placement of poles for pedestrian demand units, details of curbing, those kinds of things, also we've switched to using zebras rather than controlled crossings of the cycle tracks on those junctions as well. That's all as a result of monitoring and evaluation

done. But quite in person monitoring, evaluation with focus groups with disabled groups." (P44)

Conversely, examples were given of where scheme changes affected the ability to conduct M&E. Many more sophisticated monitoring approaches require more or at least different preparation up-front, meaning that when a scheme changed or was cancelled monitoring equipment was not in the right place, as described by P7.

"To do good monitoring and evaluation, you need to really get everything in place well beforehand. So that requires a lot of time and effort and Vivacity [machine learning] cameras which have been a real difficult process. So, what we end up doing was trying to plan for it, put some cameras out, go through all the process and then all of a sudden, the scheme changes and we've got equipment in the wrong place." (P7)

7. Future M&E

This final Chapter discusses some suggestions from participants related to future M&E. One section covers comments related to DfT monitoring (and to some extent appraisal) of schemes, with suggestions for simplifying future 'Pulse' or other governmental monitoring surveys. Participants felt these surveys added to the already high resource 'overheads' required to manage schemes which were individually apparently low cost, but which were high impact, of high interest and/or controversial, such as LTNs. An authority implementing a series of such smaller scale schemes and reporting on each individually would face much higher output reporting requirements than an authority spending the same amount of money on a 'big ticket' cycle route or town centre pedestrianisation schemes. Conversely, outcome monitoring plans were often underdeveloped as Authorities were not required to provide detailed M&E for lower cost schemes below £2m capital cost, yet these might often attract intense scrutiny where roadspace reallocation was involved.

The second section relates to participants' hopes about how M&E might improve in future and what might be needed to help make this happen. Participants had different levels of experience, expertise and interest in M&E, given the different roles and the different stages that authorities had reached in terms of scheme implementation. One suggestion from the research team is for national and/or regional bodies to play a greater role in helping to standardise and collate monitoring data, which would help support evaluation on a wider scale than is possible just within a single authority. Currently, M&E data is dispersed, variable, and held separately by hundreds of different organisations in different formats, making the re-use of such data for academic and other research challenging.

7.1. Key findings

- Some authorities **struggled to complete DfT monitoring returns**, particularly where there were **multiple small schemes**.
- Participants asked for more **clarity** about monitoring requirements to DfT, and for these to remain **consistent**.
- Participants said that **short-term funding timeframes** made it difficult for them to **plan and successfully implement** M&E.
- If funding timeframes remain short-term, one option to improve the M&E situation would be for government to support authorities to put in place **continuous, longitudinal monitoring of transport behaviour, experiences, and attitudes** that is not tied to specific individual schemes.
- **Greater involvement of regional or national government** in helping to standardise and share data and results could prove helpful.

7.2. DfT monitoring of schemes

Participants commented on the DfT 'Pulse' surveys through which they are asked to update government on scheme progress, and on other ways in which government monitors and assesses schemes. P40 said that they felt as if they were providing large volumes of information on schemes which ultimately was not used. (Perhaps

this was not the case, but participants did not seem to know what use was made of monitoring information they provided.)

> "It feels like it's a surprise each time what we're going to be asked for and that's where we are. That's okay. But it needs to come down, needs to narrow down, particularly when actually at the end of the day, what is this monitoring used for? It's used for a one line tweet and 2 sentences in a PowerPoint to a government minister. They don't need that much information. We need to work out what's being used, what's useful and kind of cut the rest." (P40)

P41 said they were struggling to continue reporting on projects that had happened 5-6 years ago, referring to a revenue funded project which had ended and the staff involved had left. They felt that their authority had not collected the information that was asked for, and that they had not known what they would be asked at the end of the interventions.

> "Sometimes it might be nice to - especially with long schemes, we get lots of staff turnover - to have some kind of indication of what we're going to be asked at the end of these schemes in terms of monitoring. I'm reporting at the moment for stuff that's done in 2017, which is a revenue project. Those staff members have gone and I'm just looking for spreadsheets and all sorts of stuff to pull it together. So even if it's not at the beginning, sometime near the beginning of schemes to say this is going to be the monitoring response, you need to fill out at the end of year 1, 2, 3, whatever it will be. So we could start collecting, because we collect loads of data. We collected a lot of data and it just doesn't answer a lot of the questions. So, to have a steer on what we're going be asked." (P41)

Two participants said that they felt regular monitoring requirements tended to change slightly each time over the life of schemes, and that they found it difficult to keep up and provide the requested information in the required format.

> "I wasn't around right at the very start, but I would say this applies equally to the funding authority and DfT or whoever, can they set out exactly what they want to collect in terms of financial monitoring and amount of things built and stuff built, sort that out and tell us before or at bid stage because it's been a devil's own job trying to catch up with some of the subtle changes in the reporting forms, other bits and pieces. Tell us what you want and don't change it in the life of a project." (P1)

> "Each Pulse survey seems to be subtly different to the previous one, doesn't it? And I'm quite lucky in that I've not been actually that closely involved in the full surveys, it's been handled by colleagues." (P44)

P18 felt that for their smaller authority, six-month monitoring was challenging, and they said annual returns would be easier for them to manage.

> "I think they're requesting six-month monitoring returns at the moment, it's a little bit too onerous especially for a smaller team. So I don't know if they can change that to annual." (P18)

Finally, P43 said that uncertainty about future funding opportunities, their parameters and the kind of data that would be needed meant that they were wary of collecting data that might ultimately not be what government required from them.

"In terms of future data collection, the volume of local data collection that's feasible when we don't know what the parameters of the next funding opportunities are is a bit limited and Active Travel England appears to be moving towards local data collection to support BCR calculations, and if the funding opportunities are available at non neutral times of the year then that affects our ability to respond. I suppose in summary, if we could foresee the future, we'd know what next data collection would be best suited to our needs." (P43)

7.3. Future M&E

While levels of interest in M&E varied, some participants enthusiastically looked forward to the possibility of improving it and developing new methods. For instance, P2 had welcomed the request from DfT to use polling, but said it was their perception that that was no longer expected; however, they would like to include questions on local transport schemes and environments within regular surveying that they do on a borough level. This kind of pro-active, longitudinal approach represents disentangling M&E from specific individual schemes, a potential way forward given the uncertainty about many schemes and indeed about future scheme funding.

"At a certain moment, the DfT changed the statutory guidance to say that schemes should include polling. They didn't just say engagement or consultation, they used the word polling. We responded to that by doing a phone survey of the entire borough to measure attitudes towards Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and active travel. But I have a feeling like that was kind of like an experimental ask from the DfT that then kind of fizzled away. I don't know if anything has done has been done specifically with that. But this more continuous, broader assessment and monitoring of attitudes towards things like Low Traffic Neighbourhoods or active travel or public transport, I do think is like interesting. And I wonder if, like the DfT would take a look at that or not. Like one of the things is we for example are now considering - and I think as a London borough we have this capability, I'm not sure if local authorities in the countryside have this, but we have every two years a residential survey that measures plenty of different things on attitudes, on council services and we use that as a Council to check how we're doing now. We want to change some of those questions to measure things in relation to the climate emergency, from active travel to tree planting, but also liveability, for lack of a better word, pride in your local neighbourhood. So, we want to take something that's existing and it's more continuous and more longitudinal and change that to fit the active travel needs that we have, but that's quite new for us." (P2)

P33 said that monitoring had been important for their authority and asked about building a 'growing library of benefits' to share results from across the country, and specifically creating a body of evidence around local economic impacts of active travel schemes, which they felt was lacking in the UK compared to other European countries.

"For us monitoring has been so important at engaging people and demonstrating the benefits of this scheme. […] I think the more we can share positive experiences and the results of our own monitoring with other

authorities, I think we could build a growing library of benefits and someone mentioned for instance supporting businesses in the local economy through active travel schemes. I think any data we can share with in terms of football for when we pedestrianise a High Street or Town Centre, would be really helpful to share and to also obviously share with the DfT as well. I just feel like there's such a strong body of evidence in Europe about the economic benefits of active travel schemes. Maybe not so much in the UK and I am myself really looking into this at the moment. So for this kind of wider engagement piece, I think monitoring is really key." (P33)

P30 linked M&E capacity to scheme timelines and said that more lead-in time was needed to be able to get baseline data collection in place and do sufficient communication to ensure that schemes could go ahead successfully. They felt that short-term funding streams militated against these goals.

"The one thing is probably to give us the time to do some of this communication and this pre-monitoring […] the ideal thing would be more time to be able to get the monitoring in place, before monitoring to assess which schemes are likely to be more successful, which schemes are priority and the consultation, communication with residents as well. So, more lead-in time to be able to assess whether they're likely to be supported and the level of political and local support and things like that. I think the ATF processes meant we had to rush a lot of that stuff." (P30)

Finally, P7, who had a strong interest and expertise in M&E, said that they thought it was very important to ring fence money for M&E, as well as engagement.

"I still think that there needs to be central government money, ring-fenced for monitoring and evaluation and engagement based on comments and experiences here. Separate that money, that you must spend that money on this and then we can spend the money on the scheme as well and that needs to be acknowledged by central government, that's my key thing that I'll just keep saying." (P7)

8. Key lessons

In response to the themes raised by participants, the research team has drawn out ten proposed lessons for national and local policymakers, presented below. Some of these are similar to those proposed from the Stage One process evaluation, as the same points came up repeatedly in those cases, while some are new and related to specific insights from the Stage Two focus groups.

For national policymakers

- Provide greater certainty over a longer period in funding timeframes and amounts, incorporating separate, staggered funding for i) scheme development and engagement, and ii) scheme delivery (Stage One and Two).
- Increase efforts to make the case nationally for the need and the benefits of networks of high-quality active travel infrastructure, including educating elected representatives at all levels across England (Stage One and Two).
- Support a consistent narrative about active travel and the need for change that can help authorities at a local level to explain, justify, and communicate schemes (Stage Two).
- Do more to support M&E, including potentially ring-fenced funding to permit ongoing M&E that is not tied to short-term funding budgets or individual schemes (Stage Two).
- Support officers in M&E through facilitating sharing of knowledge and data, which would also mean academics and others could more easily analyse data from across many schemes at national level (Stage Two).

For local policymakers

- Produce LCWIPs to plan data-informed future walking and cycling networks, which should be live documents, with a process for updating them as needed (Stage One and Two).
- Consider representative polling or use of panels to help gather views on active travel policies and schemes from more diverse groups of respondents than those who typically respond to consultations (Stage One and Two). This could also provide an ongoing dataset to monitor changes.
- Develop M&E plans that identify key desired outcomes for different scheme types and measures to judge these across appropriate timeframes (Stage One and Two).
- Consider how to use M&E qualitative and quantitative data in communications, as part of a continuous feedback loop that goes beyond individual schemes (Stage Two).
- Consider M&E resources needed to support schemes as being related to likely impact and interest, rather than to a scheme's costs (Stage Two).

9. Appendix

9.1. Sample details and sampling processes

Participants were recruited via email sent to DfT's ATF contacts in a sampling frame of 42 Authorities (hence, a quite high participation rate of 67%, which had been anticipated in creating a sampling frame rather than contacting every possible Authority). The sampling frame was created from Authorities allocated ATF funding in Tranche 2, either directly or as part of a combined Authority/regional bid. It sought to represent a balanced mix of different regions, size, tier of Authority (metropolitan, county, unitary, combined) and scheme type. Indeed, while the sampling frame sought to ensure a good amount of experience in scheme types covered in the main ATF evaluation, participants had expertise covering a variety of scheme types, including LTNs, cycle tracks, other types of cycling and walking infrastructure, school streets, pedestrianisation and footway widening schemes.

Table 1 illustrates the regional breakdown both within the sampling frame and within the final sample. There was some variation in response rate, with organisations from the South East (as in Stage One) most likely to participate.

Table 1: Regional representation, sampling frame and final participants

	Organisations in sampling frame	Number of officers participating (organisations where different in brackets)
East Midlands	3	3 (2)
London	3	2
North East	4	1
North West	8	3
South West	5	4
East	4	4 (3)
West Midlands	4	5 (4)
South East	5	7
Yorkshire & Humber	6	2
Total	42	31 (28)

Table 2 below shows the mix of Authority types. Most participants came from County Councils, Metropolitan Districts, or Unitary Authorities, as might be expected. There were 2 Combined Authorities in the sample, and 2 London Boroughs. Note that as this is qualitative research, statistical generalisability is not sought. For instance, London is under-represented compared to other Metropolitan Districts, which may be seen as more 'typical' in English governance terms.

Table 2: Types of authority represented

	Number of participants (organisations)	**Number of organisations in England**
Combined Authority	2	10
County Council	10	24
London Borough	2	32 (33 with City)
Metropolitan District	6 (5)	36
Unitary Authority	11 (9)	58 (59 including Isles of Scilly)
Total	**31**	**162**

Table 3 shows the mix of Authorities by rural-urban status. In terms of participants, 2/3 came from urban Authorities and 1/3 were from areas that were either predominantly rural or had significant rural areas. Note that county councils (for instance) are not routinely classified in this way because they tend to contain a variety of types of area. However, England is heavily urban in population terms, with 83% living within a Lower Layer Super-Output Area classed as urban in 2020[1]. Hence, rural organisations were over-represented in the sample. This was a decision made in order to be able to explore those organisations' experiences more fully and have more confidence that the research could report views that were more widely shared than among only 1 or 2 rural Authorities.

---

[1]
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1028819/Rural_population__Oct_2021.pdf

Table 3: Mix of authorities by rural-urban status

	Number of participants (organisations)
Predominantly Rural	6 (6)
Predominantly Urban	19 (16)
Urban with Significant Rural	6 (6)
Total	**31 (28)**

With such a range of characteristics and only 4 groups, participants were not grouped according to the criteria above. Rather, diversity of representation in each focus group was sought to draw out differences and commonalities in experiences of which participants might not always have previously been aware. The following rules were used:

(i)   in the 3 cases where there were more than 1 participant per organisation, these were placed in different focus groups where possible (in 2 of 3 cases), to avoid over-balancing the session and gather separate insights, and

(ii)   where there was representation from both an Authority and the combined Authority for their area, these were allocated to separate sessions, again to avoid over-balancing but perhaps to a greater extent to ensure that participants felt they could speak openly about any conflicts or problems they had experienced with their regional Authority or vice versa, if needed.

The original research questions were followed to code the themes covered. This enabled the identification of shared views and experiences (for example, representation in consultation participation, mentioned by many participants) and who they were shared by (for example, that participants from rural Authorities perceived the ATF as more problematic for them and easier for urban Authorities). During this process codes and sub-codes were reviewed, re-categorised or combined, as necessary. In the writing of the report, the data was revisited to ensure no points had been missed by coding too rigidly. There was substantial material about the wider process of applying for and using ATF funding, beyond processes specific to individual schemes. Thus, a research question specifically related to this was added.

Sessions ran for 90 minutes on Microsoft Teams and were recorded. Soon afterwards, the recordings and chat function were transcribed and anonymised, with names both of participants and their organisations replaced with pseudonyms. Details about specific schemes or events that might reveal a participant's identity have been redacted from quotes used here. Because sessions were video recorded, participant reactions were noted down where these seemed important: for instance, widespread nodding indicating that a view or experience was common, even where all participants did not independently verbalise this.

9.2. Focus Group Questions

Active Travel Fund: Process Evaluation

Timing and list of questions for focus groups (90 minutes)

00:00

Introduction to the group + introductions

00:10

Q1. To begin, can you tell us about the process of making use of ATF funding once it was awarded, particularly thinking about ATF2 if possible?

00:20

Q2. How have ATF schemes fitted alongside other sustainable transport schemes and objectives, like bus priority?

00:30

Q3. I would like you to think about how you have been monitoring the ATF schemes that have been implemented in your area. Can you tell us a little bit about what you are monitoring/measuring and the methods you have used?

00:50

Short comfort break.

00:55

Q4. Thinking about the ATF schemes you've been involved in, we'd like to ask about how the impacts of the schemes have been communicated locally, after implementation. This could be to members of the public or groups like businesses, for instance.

1:15

Q5: We're coming to the end of the group, so we'd like to ask each of you for one thing you would like us and DfT to know about your experiences with ATF schemes, particularly focusing on the monitoring and communication aspects which we haven't already covered or which you would particularly like to highlight.

01:30

Thank everyone and close group, next steps.

9.3. Contributors to the Report

The report was drafted by Professor Rachel Aldred with Dr. Emma Lawlor, based on analysis of transcripts from online focus group discussions led by Rachel Aldred and Emma Lawlor, both present at all 4 focus groups. Transcript correction and coding were done by Emma Lawlor.