

<b>Report on</b>	DfC Letter of Variance - Active Travel & Covid Small Settlements
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> February 2024
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Kieran Gordon, Assistant Director Health, Leisure & Wellbeing
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Martin Conlan, Recreation & Countryside Officer

<b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>  If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	x

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To provide Members with an update on Covid19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme – Active Travel, and to seek approval to accept Letter of Variance.
1.2	To provide Members with an update on Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme, and to seek approval to accept Letter of Variance.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	<b><u>Covid19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme:</u></b> Council previously received a letter of offer from the Department for Communities for £1,452,000 to deliver Tranche 1 & Tranche 2 Business Support Grants and an Active Travel Scheme for designated areas. The Business Support Grant element was completed within the stipulated timeframe and all Active Travel Scheme elements have been completed with the exception of a scheme in Clogher. Previously, in July 2023, Members at the Development committee considered and approved acceptance of a Letter of Variance with the intention that the Clogher scheme would complete by March 2024.
2.2	<b><u>Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme:</u></b> In January 2022, Council previously received a letter of offer from the Department for Communities (on behalf of DFC, DFI & DEARA) for £2,781,000 under the COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme with Council agreeing to match fund with £309,000. Furthermore, in January 2023, DFC provided Council with a letter of variance for an additional allocation of £371,000 under the Scheme.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<b><u>Covid19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme:</u></b> Within the Covid19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme there is one remaining Active Travel scheme to be completed, which is the Clogher footpath scheme.
3.2	This Clogher project is the development of a new footpath to complete a full loop from Station Road to Ballymagowan Road / McCreagh Park (approximately 400 metres). This section of road has remained incomplete and is unsafe for walkers in the area. DfI will adopt this path on completion.
3.3	There has been a delay in gaining the necessary consent to progress with the scheme. Council were required to have additional vehicular access points included and therefore had to formally submit a planning application with approval received in August 2023.

	<p>No formal objections have been raised against this application, this project is now widely supported by the local residents and the officer team have been building momentum recently in the landowner discussions. As the officer team navigate the final stages of the governance process regarding landowner negotiations, an assessment has been made that this scheme will not be deliverable by March 2024.</p> <p>3.4 Therefore, a request was made by Council to DfC seeking an extension of time until 31 March 2025. DfC has agreed to Council's request and furnished Council with a letter of variance granting an extension to the period of funding to 31 March 2025 as detailed within the appendix.</p> <p>3.5 <b><u>Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme:</u></b> The programme funding was awarded to support pre-agreed projects at; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Castlecaulfield</li> <li>• Castledawson</li> <li>• Coalisland Canal</li> <li>• Bellaghy</li> <li>• Clady</li> <li>• Moneymore</li> <li>• Moy</li> </ul> </p> <p>3.6 Officers have been progressing the implementation of these projects and recently an update was provided to January 2024 Environment Committee via Council's Technical team.</p> <p>3.7 A request was made by Council to DfC seeking an extension of time until 31 March 2025. DfC has agreed to Council's request and furnished Council with a letter of variance granting an extension to the period of funding to 31 March 2025 as detailed within the appendix.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<p><b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b></p> <p>Financial: <b><u>Covid19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme:</u></b> Funding has been previously received from DfC for £1,452,000 to be spent by March 2023. Previous letter of variance to March 2024 issued by DfC and approved by Development Committee in July 2023. Updated letter of variance enclosed within the appendix whereby DfC have agreed to provide an extension to allow the Clogher footpath scheme to be completed by 31 March 2025.</p> <p><b><u>Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme:</u></b> Funding has been previously received from DfC for £3,152,000 with Council agreeing match funding of £309,000. Letter of variance enclosed within the appendix whereby DfC have agreed to provide an extension to allow the projects to be completed by 31 March 2025.</p> <p>Human: Officers time managing project delivery.</p> <p>Risk Management: Considered in line with relevant Council Policies and Procedures.</p>

	<p>The Active Travel scheme (Clogher footpath) requires an extension of time until 31 March 2025 to allow for landowner issues to be finalised, appointment of contractor and delivery of construction element of the scheme. DfC has issued Council with a letter of variance to accommodate this request.</p> <p>The Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme requires an extension of time until 31 March 2025 to allow for various scheme elements to be delivered. DfC has issued Council with a letter of variance to accommodate this request.</p>
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b>
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: Considered in line with Council Policies and Procedures.
	Rural Needs Implications: Considered in line with Council Policies and Procedures.
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	<p>To note the contents of the reports and due to the deadline for return, give retrospective approval for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signing of the Covid-19 Recovery programme and Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme Letters of Variance as enclosed within the appendix which grants an extension to the period of funding to 31 March 2025</li> </ul>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
6.1	<p>Appendix A: Letter of Variance - Covid Revitalisation scheme  Appendix B: Letter of Variance - Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme</p>