

CROWBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL

To all Members of the **ENVIRONMENT** Committee (with copies to all other Members for information).

You are summoned to attend a meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT** Committee to be held at the Town Hall, The Broadway, Crowborough on Tuesday 25th November 2014 at 7.30 pm when it is proposed to transact the following business:-

Town Clerk
18th November 2014

ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Questions from members of the public (15 minutes maximum)

1. APOLOGIES

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3. MINUTES

3.1. Minutes – 30th September 2014

3.2. Matters Outstanding (including reports on updates)

3.2.1 Lighting improvements at Jarvis Brook pedestrian crossing (7073)

The application for match funding was approved by the Lead Member 10th November.

3.2.2 Trees at Clokes Corner (7235, 7236)

Replacement trees will be planted in the spring

3.2.3 Additional planting of shrubs at Clokes Corner (7281)

The shrubs have been planted.

3.2.4 Widening of footpath by new pedestrian crossing at Beacon Academy

Following the removal of the equipment cabinet, East Sussex County Council has been asked to adjust the footpath.

3.2.5 Crowborough Cross Traffic Signals improvement scheme

The scheme has been installed. Some monitoring has been undertaken and an improvement to the clearance at the junction reported.

4. RAILWAY REPORT

Report from John Coleman.

- 5. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT**
 - 5.1 Request for a reduction in speed limit on Beacon Road**
 - 5.2 Cleaning of road signs**
 - 5.3 Wealdlink Report August – October 2014**
 - 5.4 Disabled parking bays – Croft Road**
- 6. LIGHTING**
 - 6.1 To consider request for street lighting at new housing development – School Lane**
- 7. CROWBOROUGH'S NATURAL HABITATS**
 - 7.1 To review report of tasks completed against Management Plans and other work**
 - 7.2 Five Year Management Plan for Crowborough Ghyll**
- 8. FINANCE**
 - 8.1 Management Account Reports to 30th September and 31st October 2014**
 - 8.2 Draft committee budget 2015/16**
- 9. RANGER**
 - 9.1 To consider the role of the Ranger**
- 10. URGENT MATTERS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN FOR NOTING and/or INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA**

**RAIL REPORT for the ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING 25th NOVEMBER 2014
MEETINGS ATTENDED
Uckfield Railway Line Parishes Committee 12th November 2014**

Southern did not attend.

It was reported by members that recently the services had become worse in regard to time-keeping, reliability and the provision of useful information when delays occurred.

The problems and inconvenience for passengers, caused by the termination of late running trains at Crowborough was again discussed. For other Southern passengers this method of recovering the timetabled schedule may be acceptable. Unfortunately, for many of our line's passengers it is extremely unsatisfactory: those at Crowborough, Buxted and Uckfield may, unexpectedly, have to wait for up to an hour for the next train.

The "signalling failure" causes of delay seem to indicate either a serious lack of weather resistance by Network Rail's equipment on the line, or that it is no longer fit for purpose and needs replacement.

It is understood that Southern have recently been trying to recruit or replace staff, presumably to prepare for the merger into GTR. It is to be hoped that difficulties with this will be overcome in double quick time so that all trains can run as timetabled.

Representatives of the Committee will be making these points to Southern at the next Stakeholders' Meeting.

However, the Committee was very pleased with the recent announcement that Southern will be getting an extra 12 carriages for the Uckfield line next spring. After overhaul, these will enable the main peak hour trains to be lengthened to 8 carriages. This is ahead of what is required by the DfT franchise awarded to GTR.

The peak trains will be lengthened to 10 carriages when the line's station platforms have all been lengthened. Network Rail is bringing its programme forward and a completion date will be requested.

There will be major engineering works at London Bridge over the Christmas to New Year period and all users should check before travelling.

It was noted that the most recent draft timetable fails to provide an earlier Sunday train to London than the present 10.43 from Crowborough. This understood to be due to Network Rail's maintenance regime only having access to the line from the North.

The Committee then went on to discuss the recently published Network Rail Sussex Route Study. This has been put forward for public consultation and comments are required by 13th January 2015.

NETWORK RAIL SUSSEX ROUTE STUDY

Despite the amount of effort obviously put into its production, this Study was considered to be a most disappointing 205 page document, even though the earlier indicative report should have perhaps prepared everybody for its likely content.

The Study, which replaces the earlier Rail Utilisation Study (RUS) looks ahead as far as 2043, and in more detail at Control Period 6 (2019-24). To estimate the future traffic over these periods it utilises figures from the earlier Network Rail Market Study.

The new Route Study quite rightly sets out to look at the future of the Brighton Main Line as the principal part of the work, unfortunately the other parts of the extensive network are treated as considerably less important and problematic in assisting the assumed main task of getting people from the South into London (via Gatwick Airport). The logic being that, accomplishing this in the morning peak, all else will be well.

The result of the Study is that it recommends that up to £2bn be spent in CP6, or shortly afterwards, on removing the many, presently flat, junctions and replacing them with new flyover junctions and in addition increasing platform availability at some key stations along the Brighton Main Line itself. Various combinations of interventions (enhancements) and implementation dates, for overcoming these problems are provided, together with the respective funding requirements and benefits (additional trains) for each combination. Although no additional trains from Brighton itself are to be provided. The engineering works required for the interventions are very considerable and can hardly be undertaken without causing disruption to the train service over a period of several further years.

There would, however, be no additional running lines and so the tracks will remain similar to those put down in 1901. Increasing the tracks was delayed by the Great War and has not been initiated since.

[Of the existing problems, those that are north of the junction with the Oxted Lines at South Croydon are the stated reason for the opposition by the DfT (as advised by Network Rail's interim report) to discount the BML2 project].

Of course, since WW2, the Brighton Main Line has had to provide for the requirements of Gatwick Airport (including Gatwick Express trains), the Canary Wharf Development, served by new Overground metro trains, a huge rise in London (and Southbound) traffic and the Thameslink project (now revised as a metro scheme to take the pressure off the Underground). None of these have resulted in extra running lines being provided on the Main Line itself. Soon there is to be a new vast retail development adjacent to the west side of East Croydon station. Gradually the once efficient and comfortable main line is being effectively down-graded to become the main constituent of a Greater London metro system on which are to run the new DfT specified standee friendly trains.

So far as the Committee's main interest is concerned, the Study is disappointing in the extreme. Apart from the continuation of the protection of the track-bed, there is no suggestion of any further enhancements or extensions of the Uckfield line before 2043. The possible use of the re-instated Lewes - Uckfield link is not seen as being capable of providing a worthwhile Diversionary Route for the Brighton Main Line. Because the 2 train paths per hour currently provided by the existing Hurst Green to Uckfield section of line are insufficient, and the trains would be too slow. To overcome this, the Study points out that the existing line would require to be re-doubled, where single line, and re-signalled and electrified. Another perceived problem is that for trains to run between Uckfield and Brighton itself they would have to reverse at or near Lewes (although the Sussex Stage of BML2 would of course enable direct running).

For similar reasons, the Study concludes that the re-instatement is not capable of providing worthwhile additional Capacity for Brighton Main Line passengers.

The new Study reminds us that the re-instatement does not have a strong enough Business Case (as concluded by the Network Rail Report of 2008 which considered a minimal specification project, had questionable criteria, and is now quite out-dated in terms of local developments, traffic growth and Government stated policy.)

However, it is noticeable that none of the interventions proposed by the Study appear to have strong business cases, but that Network Rail will continue to work developing these. The new Study, surprisingly perhaps, has not even suggested the significant annual cost savings that should be made possible and the operational and maintenance advantages that would also accrue to Network Rail and the Train Operator by being able to start and finish a major proportion of the daily Uckfield line workings at the South Coast, as required by the main traffic direction, rather than at the London end of the line.

In addition to this, it is clear to most that the timetable that is to be worked from 2018 is, to say the least, extremely challenging and that almost any delay anywhere will have the

potential to cause widespread disruption. This challenge will hardly reduce whilst the interventions of CP6 mentioned above are implemented. On the other hand, it seems that no consideration has been given to the improvement in performance and reliability that electrification, double tracking and re-signalling of the Uckfield line would provide that might prove to be quite desirable when the Thameslink project is completed, from the points of view of overall timetable resilience and possible enhancement.

[It is noted that the Study does mention that a new Electrification RUS will be published next year and may deal with possible in-fill electrification schemes in the South East. However, it appears that Reigate - Reading is considered a higher priority than Hurst Green - Uckfield.]

The Study does not appear to take account of the untapped southbound traffic being available in the area between the Brighton Main Line and the London - Tunbridge Wells - Hastings Line, or of the economic growth that is being sought and anticipated in the area, and is supposedly being encouraged by the Government: this encouragement is supposed to include improving rail transport links.

It certainly appears that no proper aggregation of all the advantages of enhancements and extensions to the Uckfield line has taken place in preparing this Study for consultation and the Committee has agreed to put together a response to include the points made here.

J N Coleman 17th November 2014