

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 27th January 2015 at 7.30 pm when it is proposed to transact the following business:-

Town Clerk
21st January 2015

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 – 25th November 2014

3.2. Matters Outstanding (including reports on updates)

3.2.1 Lighting improvements at Jarvis Brook pedestrian crossing (7073)

The improvement scheme is to be scheduled for implementation before the end of the financial year.

3.2.2 Trees at Clokes Corner (7235, 7236)

Replacement trees will be planted in the spring. Enquiries are being made into the options for Christmas lighting.

3.2.3 Widening of footpath by new pedestrian crossing at Beacon Academy

Following the removal of the equipment cabinet, East Sussex County Council is to adjust the width of the footpath.

3.2.4 Crowborough Cross Traffic Signals Improvement Scheme

The junction is to be reviewed by the Road Safety Team, East Sussex County Council.

4. PROPOSED REDUCTION IN SPEED LIMIT ON BEACON ROAD AND ENFORCEMENT OF SPEED LIMITS

Brian Banks, Team Manager – Road Safety, East Sussex County Council and Mark Dunn, Road Policing Unit, Sussex Police, will be attending the meeting

5. **RAILWAY REPORT**
Report from John Coleman.
6. **HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT**
 - 6.1 **Replacement grit bins**
 - 6.2 **Bench at the junction of Ghyll Road and London Road**
 - 6.3 **Replacement fingerpost at junction of Western Road and Rotherfield Road**
 - 6.4 **Consultation to change speed limit on A26 near Crowborough Common**
 - 6.5 **Consultation on enforcement of School Keep Clear Markings**
7. **STRENGTHENING LOCAL RELATIONSHIPS MEETING 2ND MARCH**
8. **RIGHTS OF WAY**
 - 8.1 **East Sussex County Council survey *Shaping the future of our countryside access***
9. **CROWBOROUGH'S NATURAL HABITATS**
 - 9.1 **To review report of tasks completed against Management Plans and other work + update on Five Year Management Plan**
 - 9.2 **Crowborough Ghyll Nature Reserve - update**
10. **FINANCE**
 - 10.1 **Management Account Reports to 30th November and 31st December 2014**
11. **URGENT MATTERS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN FOR NOTING and/or INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA**

**RAIL REPORT for the ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
27th JANUARY 2015**

MEETINGS ATTENDED

**Sussex Community Rail Partnership - Uckfield and East Grinstead Lines Steering
Group Meeting 2nd December 2014**

The subject of Neighbourhood Plans was raised and it was felt that the CRP could be helpful in their preparation and co-ordination of transport proposals and might be added to the mailing lists for Crowborough, Edenbridge and Uckfield. The Wealden Bus Alliance would like to be involved in these plans.

It was noted that there was to be an extraordinary increase in the cost of London Travel cards purchased at railway stations as a result of Transport for London's fares policy. The Go-Ahead representative advised that Brighton and Hove Buses would run the services on routes 28 and 29, currently subsidised by East Sussex County Council, as commercial journeys. (It is to be hoped these journeys will be reasonably well patronised for obvious reasons – JNC).

The meeting welcomed Paul Wybourn who has been appointed Southern's Area Manager for High Weald and Iain Wagg as their Station Group Manager.

It was noted that Southern have extended the 9.14 Oxted departure to London Bridge but at present this isn't widely known or announced that it leaves from what is normally the down platform. Southern will ensure more information is put out. This (electric) train is useful because it runs ahead of the Up Uckfield 2 car train which is normally already full and standing before arriving at Oxted.

The admirable Art Group's posters that are displayed on the wall of the canopy at Crowborough station were much appreciated.

Uckfield Railway Line Parishes Committee 14th January 2015

Network Rail and Southern were both represented.

The Committee was advised that the train service had been very poor since the latest changes at London Bridge had been brought into use.

Trains have been cancelled, short formed, late running and turned back at Crowborough on a frequent basis. The supply of information and the provision of replacement buses had also been quite poor.

Some of these problems have been due to the lack of serviceable trains (unusually 2 engine failures, damage to one train caused by a fatality (needing 11 days out of traffic to repair), whilst another was undergoing a mandatory exam).

There have also been signalling problems all over the network, not necessarily on the East Grinstead and Uckfield lines, that have delayed our trains.

Southern and Network Rail have been very apologetic and are trying hard to improve matters.

A change to the operation of the signalling system is to be introduced that will improve the system's reliability in poor weather and leaf-fall conditions.

It was confirmed again that the promised four extra train units will be taken over by Southern at the end of March and after overhaul will be put into traffic in July 2015. This should enable a more reliable service, and more 8 car trains in the peaks to be provided.

However, there is a general problem with the new arrangements at London Bridge and its approaches: both are now more constrained and it has been found that, particularly in the evening peak, small delays occur, which affect following services. The delays gradually lengthen until they become unrecoverable leading to cancellations and turn backs.

Southern have decided to remove, at least temporarily, a small number of evening Metro services from Wednesday 14th January. No Uckfield line trains are involved and it is hoped that the overall timetable will become achievable. If necessary, more changes will be considered to enable a satisfactory service to be provided.

Network Rail was able to provide some more details of the upcoming improvements and renewals for the Uckfield line.

The new station car park at Uckfield is now projected to be complete by the end of April 2015, assuming reasonable weather conditions.

The lengthening of the station platforms will start as soon as possible but some, including Crowborough, cannot commence until November due to the local newts' breeding requirements. There is also a need for piling at some locations because of the local ground conditions. The platform work is planned to be completed by June 2016, and this will allow the operation of 10 car trains on the line.

Subject to ORR approval, Crowborough Tunnel repairs, Forge Farm (at Eridge) level crossing improvement, bridge works (including the replacement of the footbridge at Eridge), points and crossing renewals, earthworks stabilisation, and other similar smaller jobs along the line are all to be progressed so that for the last four years of the new franchise a much improved service can be provided.

However, this does mean that there will be an increased amount of engineering work being carried out over the next couple of years and some off-peak and 4 or 5 weekend line closures will be necessary to achieve these improvements. The peak hour services will run as normal.

All these works are to be compatible with the requirements of electrification and re-doubling projects that might be required in the future.

The UKIP PCC, Peter Griffiths, attended the meeting by invitation and expressed his concern that the line would not be receiving **new** trains. He also felt that HS2 which had been promoted for its high speed was now being pushed for capacity reasons. It was his view that it would be preferable to proceed with smaller and more localised projects such as those the Committee supported for our line.

[Other PCC's have been invited and it is hoped that they will attend the next meeting].

It was confirmed that the Committee's critical response to the Draft Sussex Route Study consultation had been submitted to Network Rail. A copy is attached to this report.

OTHER

Unfortunately, since the latter meeting a fallen tree has caused another train to be damaged. This Monday both the 5.18 and the 8.04 trains from Uckfield were cancelled.

At the same time the Marshlink services are also suffering similar problems with stock shortages.

Southern's maintenance staff have been judged by industry to be about the most effective that there are working with diesel stock and therefore it is fairly obvious that the required level of service is no longer sustainable day in day out. It may be that even with the four additional units, shortages will still occur and that the additional capacity will not be provided. It may be remembered that an industry solution to the problem, other than that of electrification and redoubling as refused by the DfT, is to withdraw the grossly overcrowded through diesel service from Brighton to Ashford and to run a proper replacement electric service from Brighton to Eastbourne or Hastings and a connecting (preferably cross platform) diesel service onwards to Ashford. This proposal has always been resisted by at least one local authority and presumably some other local interests but would enable the restricted number of diesel trains to be used for better overall services for **the majority of passengers** on both the Uckfield and Marshlink lines as well as an improved service

between Brighton, Eastbourne and Hastings. It might not be welcomed in some quarters but should probably be looked at again and implemented at the next practicable timetable change.

J N Coleman 19th January 2015

NETWORK RAIL SUSSEX ROUTE STUDY AND THE UCKFIELD LINE

Consultation submission by Uckfield Railway Line Parishes Committee

Despite the amount of effort obviously put into its production, this Study is considered to be a most disappointing 202 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

By 2043 the Study concludes, that the reconnection of the Uckfield line to the South Coast is likely to be useful to help fulfil the need for much more capacity that is forecast. It does not say how this will be achieved either at the southern end of the line or at the London end, but merely supports the safeguarding of the old track formations from alternative development. Despite this understood need for the future, the Study makes no attempt to increase the capacity of the line beyond the long delayed, but now imminent, provision of additional diesel carriages to satisfy the demand of the present and immediate future. The Study takes little or no account of the fact that the Uckfield line as it exists, already provides rail heading facilities for passengers who might otherwise use stations along the Brighton Main Line or the Tunbridge Wells Line.

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.

[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].

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: 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. It might be considered that this would 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 the new Electrification RUS to be published next year will deal with possible in-fill electrification schemes in the South East, but that it is likely that Hurst Green – Uckfield is considered a low priority. This appears to be a questionable decision bearing in mind the foregoing and that the emissions savings to be achieved would be very considerable.

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 been made, and it is certainly very disappointing that no progressive plan for its improvement and increased contribution to public transport has been produced in this Study.

This document submitted on 12 January 2015.

Jacky Downing, Committee Secretary, "Dinsdale", Church Road, Buxted, TN22 4LP

Report for Environment Committee meeting 27th January

4. PROPOSED REDUCTION IN SPEED LIMIT ON BEACON ROAD AND ENFORCEMENT OF SPEED LIMITS

As reported at the Committee meeting 25th November, a further meeting was held at East Sussex County Council to discuss the proposal to reduce the speed limit on Beacon Road. The Police continue to raise objections to the proposal.

Brian Banks, Team Manager-Road Safety, ESCC and Mark Dunn, Road Policing Unit, Sussex Police will be attending the meeting 27th January to report on their position regarding the proposal.

6. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

6.1 Replacement grit bins

An audit of grit bins was undertaken in the autumn to check the contents before winter. There are 33 grit bins supplied and filled by ESCC; damaged bins will no longer be replaced. New bins cost £275, which includes installation and the initial fill; refills are charged at £75 per fill.

The bins at Saxonbury Close and Herne Down are broken – please see attached photographs. Members are asked to consider a policy for replacing any existing County Council grit bins.

Some community groups have paid for grit bins in their areas and are responsible for the cost of filling the bins.

6.2 Bench at the junction of Ghyll Road and London Road

The bench at the junction of Ghyll Road and London Road was demolished in a traffic related incident. The Police have been consulted and the matter cannot be progressed any further. There is evidence to suggest that a plaque had been fixed to the bench in the past but it was not present when the remains were removed from site.

The cost of a new bench is approximately £1000. As the location is on a busy road, and there is another bench in the close proximity, it is recommended that the bench is not replaced.

6.3 Replacement fingerpost at junction of Western Road and Rotherfield Road

This fingerpost needs to be replaced as the wood is rotten. The cost of supplying and installing a new post is £1197.

Recommendation

To authorise expenditure of up to £1200 for a replacement fingerpost at Western Road and Rotherfield Road.

Cost centre 4654/801 (Environmental Improvements)

6.4 Consultation to change speed limit on A26 near Crowborough Common

ESCC Road Safety Team is proposing a change to the speed limit on the A26 as follows:

It is proposed to reduce part of the existing 50mph speed limit in Heron's Ghyll to 40mph.

We are also proposing to reduce the existing 60mph national speed limit between Hendall and Five Ash Down to 50mph and reduce the existing 60mph national speed limit between Barnsgate and the existing 50mph speed limit near Crowborough to 50mph as part of the work. As part of the lower 50mph speed limit is in Crowborough, I am advising the Town Council of the proposed change.

Please see attached map detailing the proposal.

6.5 Consultation on enforcement of School Keep Clear Markings

ESCC is consulting on the following proposal:

Restriction:

All school keep clear markings will be enforceable between the hours of 8am-5pm, Monday to Friday, except for August.

Site list:

- Site 1: School Lane, St Johns**
- Site 2: Green Lane, Beacon School**
- Site 3: Queens Road, St Marys RC school**
- Site 4: Sir Henry Fermor, B2100**
- Site 5: North Beeches, Beacon School**
- Site 6: Luxford Road**
- Site 7: Herne Road, Herne Juniors**
- Site 8: Hadlow Down Road, Jarvis Brook**
- Site 9: North Street, Rotherfield**

Plans showing the markings on the sites will be on display at the meeting.

The closing date for comments is 6th February.

7. STRENGTHENING LOCAL RELATIONSHIPS MEETING 2ND MARCH

Members are asked to put forward items for discussion at the SLR meeting to be held 2nd March. Attached are the Minutes from the last meeting held 1st September 2014.

8. RIGHTS OF WAY

8.1 East Sussex County Council survey Shaping the future of our countryside access

In East Sussex there are 2000 miles of rights of way (RoW). ESCC is looking at the future management of RoW and countryside management and is conducting a consultation until 20th February – www.eastsussex.gov.uk/haveyoursay

Stakeholder engagement sessions are to be held in February and March.

Initial dates are:

- Tues 24th Feb at 2pm in Heathfield
- Thurs 26th Feb at 6pm in Lewes
- Wed 4th Mar 6pm in Heathfield
- Fri 6th Mar at 10am in Lewes.

The sessions will be for 2 hours and include:

- Summary of the project and broad information on strategic commissioning
- Three short sessions on: involvement and priorities, future objectives and change, working together

Please let the Town Hall know if you would like to attend a session.

9. CROWBOROUGH'S NATURAL HABITATS

9.1 To review report of tasks completed against Management Plans and other work

Country Park

Footpath clearance

Post and rail fencing repairs along Tollwood Road

Litter picking

Ghyll

Car park surface repair has been completed

Litter picking

Clearance of fly tipping

Wood chip has been laid by the pedestrian entrance from the car park to improve the stability of the surface

Work is progressing on the new five year plan

Bluebell Wood

Remove overhanging branches by main car park

Litter picking

Footpath clearance

Pruning dead wood

9.2 Crowborough Ghyll Nature Reserve – update

The site plan has been drawn up and the Agreement is being prepared.