

Minutes of a meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT** Committee held at the Town Hall,
The Broadway, Crowborough on Tuesday 27th January 2015 at 7.30 pm

Present	Councillors	Quentin Burch Michael Cooke Elizabeth Fermor Philip Fermor Beverley Johnstone * Kay Moss Ronald Reed Wendy Scrace Andrew Steen * Sandra Timms	Vice Chairman Chairman
Also present		John Coleman Cllr Richard Stogdon Cllr Sylvia Tidy Brian Banks Mark Dunn PCSO Tamara Bennett Cllr Peter Cowie Cllr George Moss Philippa Hewes David Foot Susan Barnard 6 members of the public 2 members of the press	Uckfield Railway Line Parishes Comm. East Sussex County Council East Sussex County Council Team Mgr, Road Safety Team, ESCC Road Policing Unit, Sussex Police Sussex Police Crowborough Town Council Crowborough Town Council Town Clerk Operations Manager Operations Administrator

* *Denotes non attendance*

APOLOGIES

None

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

MINUTES

Minutes – 25th November 2014

7371 **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 25th November 2014 as confirmed be signed by the Chairman.

Matters Outstanding (including reports on updates)

Lighting improvements at Jarvis Brook pedestrian crossing (7073)

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

Trees at Clokes Corner (7235, 7236)

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

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. NOTED

Crowborough Cross Traffic Signals Improvement Scheme

Further to problems resulting from timing adjustments to the traffic lights at the Crowborough Cross junction, including two recent crashes, the issues are being reviewed by East Sussex County Council's Road Safety Team. A report has been commissioned and site visits undertaken. The Town Council will be informed of the outcome.

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

Brian Banks, Team Manager, gave an overview of the Road Safety Team's position on this issue. Traffic speed data for Beacon Road demonstrates that speeding is not an issue. Lowering the speed limit by signing and lining alone is likely to result in an overall speed reduction of 1-2mph. In order to bring average speeds down to 30mph i.e. a reduction of 8-10mph, an engineered scheme is required and this would cost £100,000. Due to the environment of the road, the type and number of crashes, and the volume and speed of traffic, the cost of an engineered scheme cannot be justified. The Road Safety Team currently has 800 requests for speed reduction to consider, of which only those of the highest priority can be progressed due to limited resources.

Mark Dunn explained that the Road Policing Unit has not been formally consulted on the Beacon Road scheme but that the police agree with the recommendations of the Road Safety team.

In response to questions from Councillors and members of the public, Mr Banks explained that the 85th percentile figure is considered in addition to average speeds; this shows that 85% do not exceed 44mph and that the remaining 15% are likely to be persistent speed limit breakers who will be resistant to any road changes. Beacon Road is too busy for monitoring under the Community Watch scheme.

Speed cameras are considered a last resort by DfT and are only installed where engineered schemes have failed. Enquiries are to be made regarding the use of a mobile camera van to measure traffic speed.

Brian Banks and Mark Dunn were thanked for attending.

8.18pm – Cllr Peter Cowie left the meeting.

Consultation to change speed limit on A26 near Crowborough Common

East Sussex County Council is proposing the following speed limit reductions on the A26. Part of the existing 50mph speed limit in Heron's Ghyll to be reduced to 40mph, and the existing 60mph limits between Hendall and Five Ash Down, and between Barnsgate and the existing 50mph zone near Crowborough, reduced to 50mph. Part of this latter change falls within the Crowborough boundary. It was AGREED to support the proposed changes.

8.22pm – Brian Banks, Mark Dunn, PCSO Tamara Bennett and Cllr Sylvia Tidy left the meeting.

RAILWAY REPORT

In addition to his written report, John Coleman stated that the Parishes Committee had written to outline its objections to the local Route Study. It has also become evident that Southern cannot adhere to its latest timetable, particularly with the current disruption at London Bridge, leading to delays and train cancellations on most days. John Coleman was thanked for his report.

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

Replacement grit bins

The annual autumn audit of grit bins revealed two out of 33 bins supplied by East Sussex County Council to be badly damaged. The County Council do not install bins in new locations and will no longer replace damaged bins. New bins cost £275, which includes installation and the initial fill, and refills are charged at £75. Current Town Council policy is not to pay for bins in new locations but to encourage groups of residents to share the cost.

7372 **RESOLVED** that the Town Council will not replace damaged East Sussex County Council grit bins.

8.30pm – 1 member of the public left the meeting.

Bench at the junction of Ghyll Road and London Road

7373 **RESOLVED** that the Town Council should not replace the bench at the junction of Ghyll Road and London Road which was destroyed in a traffic accident.

Replacement fingerpost at junction of Western Road and Rotherfield Road

RESOLVED to authorise expenditure of up to £1,200 for a replacement fingerpost at the junction of Western Road and Rotherfield Road.

Consultation on enforcement of School Keep Clear Markings

East Sussex County Council is consulting on a proposal for school keep clear markings in Crowborough to be enforceable between the hours of 8am – 5pm , Monday to Friday, except August. It was AGREED to support the proposal.

STRENGTHENING LOCAL RELATIONSHIPS MEETING 2nd MARCH

It was AGREED that Claire Warwick, from East Sussex County Council Highways, should be requested to attend the meeting to discuss the Western Road Residents' Association modified proposals for Western Road. Cllr Richard Stogdon reported that he will be taking up Highways' lack of engagement on this issue with the Assistant Director.

Councillors were invited to suggest other items for the next agenda.

RIGHTS OF WAY

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

It was AGREED that Councillors would take part, as individuals, in the consultation into future management of rights of way and countryside management.

9pm – John Coleman left the meeting.

CROWBOROUGH'S NATURAL HABITATS

To review report of tasks completed against Management Plans and other work + update on Five Year Management Plan

A list of tasks completed in December 2014 and January 2015, as part of the Management Plans for the Country Park, the Ghyll and the Bluebell Wood was reviewed. Work is progressing on the new five year plan. The Town Council is about to advertise for a new Ranger.

Crowborough Ghyll Nature Reserve – update

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

FINANCE

Management Account Reports to 30th November and 31st December 2014

7374 **RESOLVED** to adopt the Management Account Reports for the two periods ending 30th November and 31st December 2014.

URGENT MATTERS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN FOR NOTING AND/OR INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA

Reports have been received of rubbish dumped in Tollwood Road but it is not yet known to what extent or whether it is on Town Council land.

A request has been received for a bus shelter to be installed at the bus stop near the Bricklayers' Arms in Whitehill Road.

At the recent Local Action Team meeting, a suggestion was made that the Town Council considers organising a 'Clean up Crowborough' day along the lines of the previous 'quality street' initiatives.

There was a report of traffic movements and activities in the car park at Owlsbury allotments; this will be reviewed by the Sport, Recreation and Cemetery Committee.

The meeting closed at 9.12pm.

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