

Report to: **Lead Cabinet Member for Economy**
 Date: **14 August 2013**
 Report By: **Director of Economy, Transport and Environment**
 Title of Report: **Draft Rail Strategy for East Sussex**
 Purpose of Report: **To consider the key priorities and a strategy for improving the rail infrastructure serving East Sussex and supporting the county's economic growth**

RECOMMENDATION: The Lead Cabinet Member is recommended to approve the attached draft Rail Strategy for consultation with stakeholders, including a stakeholder event, to inform the final Strategy which can be used to influence future rail investment decisions and prioritise study work.

1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 There are financial implications arising from the recommendations accompanying this Rail Report. The cost of hosting a stakeholder event will be funded from existing revenue budgets.

1.2 The costs associated with any project work / studies that may come forward from the Rail Action Plan, which will be developed in conjunction with the Rail Strategy, could run into tens of thousands of pounds per study; this will depend on the level of detail required and rail industry approval stage. The cost of funding these studies will be met from existing County Council revenue budgets; contributions to the cost of study work will also be sought from other interested stakeholders where appropriate.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 Although the County Council does not have a statutory responsibility for rail, we work with and lobby Government, the rail industry (Network Rail and train operating companies) and other relevant organisations for improvements to rail services and infrastructure serving the County which will support the county's key objective of delivering economic growth.

2.2 Network Rail's Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) programme has over the last five years delivered a suite of geographically disaggregated strategies (such as Sussex, Kent, London & South East) covering the rail network of the United Kingdom, along with a number of national strategies (such as the Electrification RUS) covering the network as a whole. These identified interventions are necessary to meet both current and projected future demand for rail services across the UK rail network and have been used to inform government spending decisions for enhancement of the rail network to meet the demands being placed upon it. Much of the Council's lobbying for rail infrastructure improvements has been through the RUS process.

2.3 Network Rail has recently started its Long Term Planning Process (LTPP). The LTPP will supersede the Route Utilisation Strategies and aims to develop the network to meet future demand through market studies, cross-boundary analysis and route studies, and to support economic growth.

3. Comments / Appraisal

3.1 The County Council's key priorities for rail improvements, both infrastructure and services, in the county are identified in the Council's approach to 'Strategic Rail Improvements' and 'Rail' within the Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2011-2026, which sets out the Council's overall transport strategy for delivering sustainable economic growth in the county.

3.2 The approach for strategic rail improvements identifies targeted interventions which will improve the county's connectivity to London, Ashford and Brighton. These include electrification/dual tracking of Ashford - Hastings and Hurst Green - Uckfield lines; increased capacity on the wider rail network serving the county and the London termini by tackling

bottlenecks such as Gatwick Airport and East Croydon; new stations; the reinstatement of Willingdon Chord - on the proviso it does not prejudice existing Eastbourne services, and the reinstatement of the Lewes - Uckfield line.

3.3 The approach to rail set out in the LTP identifies the Council's priorities for improving access to rail, station infrastructure, rail service improvements, rolling stock capacity, and promoting rail usage through the Sussex Community Rail Partnership.

3.4 Both these approaches have been used to inform the County Council's lobbying of the rail industry on rail improvements in the county through the Council's responses to Network Rail's Route Utilisation Strategies, the refranchising of the Thameslink (incorporating the Southern network) and Southeastern services, and Government consultations on rail issues. These approaches are also used on a regular basis in the Council's engagement with stakeholders and the rail industry regarding specific issues such as car parking, station infrastructure, timetabling and rail service improvements. However, there has been no formal process for identifying the Council's priorities, especially regarding strategic rail improvements.

3.5 In order to set out a comprehensive approach for rail in East Sussex a draft Rail Strategy has been developed. This sets the context for rail in East Sussex, and under the auspices of the approaches for strategic rail improvements and rail in the LTP, identifies infrastructure and service improvements on the rail network in and affecting East Sussex necessary to support economic growth in the county.

3.6 The development of a Rail Strategy and demonstration of how rail can support economic growth in the county, will strengthen the lobbying efforts and influence on rail industry investment decisions for rail in East Sussex. It is intended to do this through Network Rail's Long Term Planning Process which could potentially lead to improvements such as electrification, dual tracking, additional stations, extra carriages, and increased frequency of services.

3.7 In order to help inform the priorities for rail in the county and finalise the strategy which can be used to influence future rail investment decisions, prioritise the Council's lobbying to Government and future study work, it is proposed that a stakeholder event is held with key partners such as local Councils, business and commuter groups. This event will be held in the Autumn in order that the arising outcomes can be incorporated into the final Strategy and inform Network Rail's LTP.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

4.1 There are many opportunities to improve rail services in East Sussex, which would increase capacity, reduce journey times, improve reliability, and reduce reliance on the private car. All these benefits would contribute to the key Council objective of supporting economic growth.

4.2 To increase the likelihood of achieving investment in rail improvements in the county it is recommended that the attached draft Rail Strategy is circulated to local Councils, rail and commuter groups ahead of a stakeholder event in the Autumn. The outcomes of the stakeholder event will be used to help inform the final Rail Strategy, identify the overall rail priorities for the county that will deliver economic growth in the county and help influence future rail investment decisions made by the rail industry.

RUPERT CLUBB

Director of Economy, Transport and Environment

Contact Officer: Tessa Sweet-Escott

Tel. No. 01273 482281

Local Members: All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Shaping Rail in East Sussex (2013)

Network Rail's Long Term Planning Process London & South East Market Study

London & South East Route Utilisation Strategy (L&SE RUS)

East Sussex County Council's response to the L&SE RUS

Shaping Rail in East Sussex

July 2013

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Historically, East Sussex had a well connected rail network, linking most towns in the county. However, a number of these railway lines were removed in the 1960's, mainly because of the competing bus services which ran parallel to the railway, improvements to roads and the increased popularity of the car.
- 1.2 Nowadays, East Sussex has a restricted rail network, although it is reasonably well connected to destinations along the coast and to London. However, the lack of overall capacity on the rail network serving the county, the frequency of services and journey times, especially to London, inhibits economic growth in the county.
- 1.3 This Rail Strategy sets out our future vision for rail in East Sussex in terms of the infrastructure and service improvements to address these key issues – capacity, service frequency and journey times - and help deliver the county's key objective of delivering economic growth. It builds on the approach set out in our Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2026 and Economic Development Strategy for Strategic Rail Improvements as well as wider rail improvements which are discussed in more detail later in the Strategy.

2. EAST SUSSEX RAIL NETWORK

- 2.1 There are essentially three main rail routes in East Sussex, as shown on Figure 1, which are:

1. East Coastway Line (Brighton-Ashford) and mainline to London

The main coastal urban areas are linked east-west by the East Coastway rail link between Brighton and Ashford. Within East Sussex, Lewes is the most westerly station and Rye the most easterly.

The East Coastway links with the Brighton Main Line between Lewes and Haywards Heath providing key links to Gatwick Airport, East Croydon, Clapham Junction and the London termini at Victoria and London Bridge.

The Seaford branch line which serves Seaford and Newhaven links onto the East Coastway route at Lewes which has limited direct services to London.

The route provides links to HS1 and services to the continent and forms part of the Trans European (Transport) Network (TEN-T). The route is not electrified between Ore and Ashford. Those living to the west of the East Coastway utilise the Brighton Main Line to get to London, and those further to the east tend to travel on the HS1 service from Ashford.

2. Hastings-London Line (via Tonbridge)

The Hastings railway line to London via Tunbridge Wells links both urban and rural locations along the route, connecting directly to the city of London and the termini of Charing Cross, Waterloo and London Bridge as well as in the peak, Cannon Street. Frant is the most northerly East Sussex station.

The line is electrified but has a limited power supply. There are regular 12 car services on the Hastings line. However the line is at its effective capacity and it is challenging to add more 12 car trains without significant investment in the power supply.

3. Uckfield-London

The Uckfield line provides a direct rail service for urban and rural commuters from the centre of the County to London Bridge via East Croydon, and is a popular commuter route; Eridge is the most northerly East Sussex station. The route is not electrified between Uckfield and Hurst Green and runs one train per hour off peak with additional services in morning and evening peak.

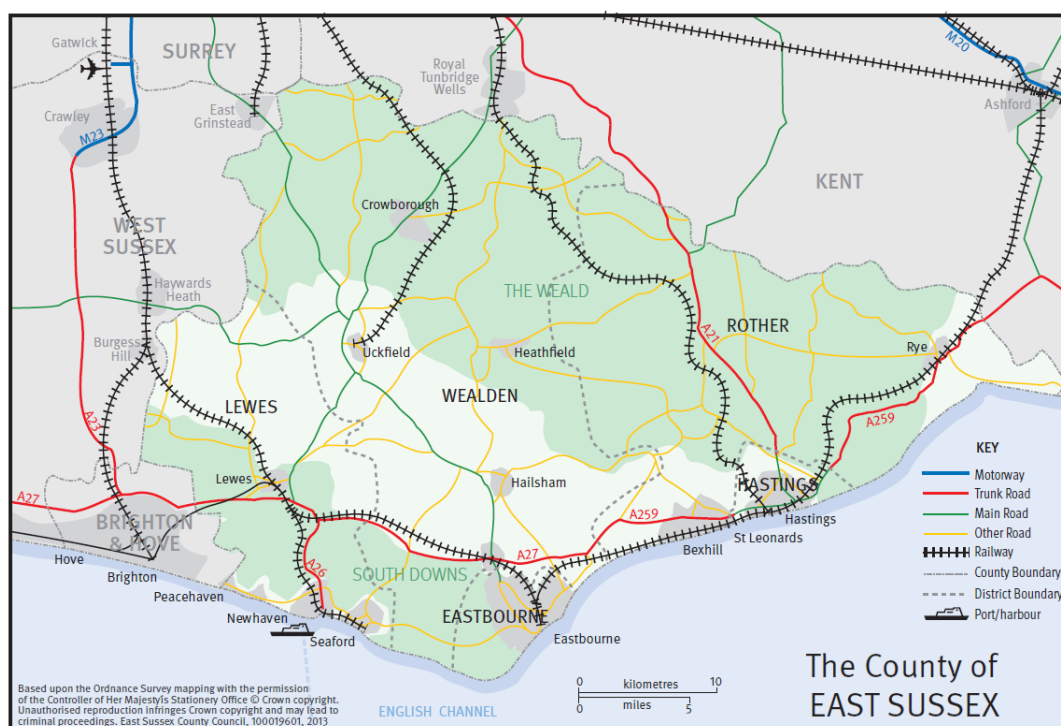


Figure 1: Map of East Sussex and rail routes in the county

- 2.2 The rail network itself is relatively poor, with little obvious significant investment having taken place for many years. Journey times on the East Sussex rail network are notoriously slow, and there is often overcrowding arising from insufficient rolling stock. There are limited freight movements by rail in East Sussex, but by upgrading the rail network, further opportunities could be achieved. However, this report will only be looking at improvements to passenger rail services.

- 2.3 There have been some positive changes to the rail network, which are highlighted later on in this document, but there are many opportunities for investment which will further improve connectivity, and encourage more people to travel by rail. This report identifies the key rail infrastructure improvements required in East Sussex to improve the rail passenger experience.

3. RAIL RESPONSIBILITIES

- 3.1 There are a range of different organisations and groups which have differing responsibilities within the rail industry.
- 3.2 Some of these responsibilities are statutory and others are more because the organisation or group has a keen interest in preserving and improving the rail network for the benefit of passengers (councils and local groups).
- 3.3 The main groups have been identified below, and are accompanied by a brief synopsis of what their role entails:

Department for Transport (DfT) (Rail)

- 3.3.1 The DfT is responsible for the overall strategic and financial responsibility for the railways. It procures rail services (rail franchising) and projects and produces the High Level Output Specification (HLOS) which specifies what the Government wants from the railway - capacity, performance, and safety - accompanied by Statement of Funds Available (SoFA) and a long term strategy.

Office of Rail Regulation (ORR)

- 3.3.2 The independent safety and economic regulator for Britain's railways. The ORR regulates how Network Rail manages and operates the rail network, and rewards Network Rail for doing a good job, or enforces compliance if it fails to fulfil its obligations.

Network Rail

- 3.3.3 Network Rail owns and operates Britain's rail network. It runs, maintains and develops Britain's rail tracks, signalling, bridges, tunnels, level crossings and viaducts.

Train Operating Companies (TOC)

- 3.3.4 The TOCs operates passenger trains on the rail network, and leases and manages stations from Network Rail, applies for franchises to run specific routes from the Department for Transport, and undertakes track and station access agreements which require ORR approval.

Passenger Focus

- 3.3.5 Passenger Focus undertakes research throughout the year, seeking the views of passengers across the country. It seeks to influence decisions on behalf of passengers and work with the industry, passenger groups and national and local government to secure journey improvements.

South East Local Enterprise Partnership and South East Local Transport Board

- 3.3.6 The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), which covers East Sussex, Essex, Kent, Medway, Southend and Thurrock, brings together key leaders from business, local government, further and higher education, exploring opportunities for enterprise whilst addressing barriers to growth.
- 3.3.7 The South East Local Transport Board (SELTB), which covers the same geographical area, will be responsible for how funding is prioritised and allocated to transport schemes via the South East Local Transport Body. Both the LEP and LTB have taken a keen interest in rail issues since their formation and have responded from a business/local authority perspective on a range of Government consultations on how improvements to rail could address barriers to growth in their area.

East Sussex County Council

- 3.3.8 Although the County Council has no statutory responsibility for rail and has limited ability to influence outcomes, it has significant interest in how it connects people to and from East Sussex and how rail can support economic growth in the county.
- 3.3.9 The County Council works with the rail industry and groups to address issues, and to identify and assess opportunities for improvement. It also contributes and responds to rail consultations and reports regarding rail infrastructure and services affecting the county.

District and Borough Councils

- 3.3.10 The district and borough councils have a keen interest in rail, but have limited ability to influence outcomes. They feed into and respond to key areas of work and rail consultations regarding services and infrastructure improvements affecting the district/borough.

Community Rail Partnership

- 3.3.11 Community Rail Partnerships work to reconnect the community with the railway. They draw together local authorities, railway companies, Network Rail, Passenger Focus and local communities to improve the facilities and usage of local railways.
- 3.3.12 In East Sussex, there are three community rail partnership line groups - the Uckfield line; Seaford to Brighton and Marshlink (Hastings to Ashford).

Commuter groups

- 3.3.13 Commuter groups work independently and with others to lobby for rail improvements which improve rail services in or affecting a particular area or part of the network. East Sussex benefits from having a passionate and knowledgeable populace, reflected in the range of groups lobbying for and seeking rail improvements to the rail network.

4. RAIL INDUSTRY PROCESSES AND TIMESCALES

- 4.1 There are some key rail industry processes and timescales which can provide suitable opportunities to lobby for rail service and infrastructure improvements which are outlined below:

High Level Output Specification (HLOS)

- 4.1.1 In 2012 Government published the HLOS which details what it wants the rail industry to deliver in Control Period 5, 2014-2019. Government gives the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) the HLOS and a statement of funds available (SoFA) to clarify what they want the railway to deliver for the public funds they are prepared to make available. The ORR determines the outputs that Network Rail must deliver to achieve the HLOS, the cost of delivering them, and the implications for the charges payable by train operators to Network Rail for using the railway network.

Long Term Planning Process (LTPP)¹

- 4.1.2 The LTPP supersedes Route Utilisation Strategies. It aims to develop the network to meet future demand through market studies, cross-boundary analysis and route studies, and looks at how this can support economic growth.

Strategic Business Plan (SBP)²

- 4.1.3 SBPs are Network Rail's formal response to Government on the HLOS and SoFA, They set out Network Rail's strategy and detail the schemes they think should be taken forward in that control period.

Control Period (CP)³

- 4.1.4 CPs are the 5-year period over which Network Rail decides priorities for rail investment based on the targets, income and costs set by the ORR. CPs start on 1 April and end on 31 March. We are currently in CP4 (2009-2014).

¹ <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/long-term-planning-process/>

² <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/publications/strategic-business-plan-for-cp5/>

³ <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/publications/delivery-plans/control-period-5/>

Franchises

4.1.5 The Department for Transport is responsible for the design and procurement of new and replacement rail franchise services on the national rail network. The new franchising programme will deliver no more than 3 to 4 competitions per year, which means some franchises have been extended to accommodate this.

4.1.6 There are currently two train operating companies (TOCs) in East Sussex:

1. Southern

- Operates the South Central Franchise on the East Coastway (Brighton to Ashford) including the Seaford branch line; East Coastway to Victoria (via the Brighton Mainline) and Uckfield line.
- The Southern franchise has been extended from September 2013 to July 2015. Thereafter it will be integrated into the new Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise.

2. Southeastern

- Operates the Integrated Kent Franchise on the Hastings line to London via Tonbridge.
- The Southeastern franchise has been extended by 50 months, and will finish in June 2018 as opposed to April 2014.

5. RAIL'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING ECONOMIC GROWTH IN EAST SUSSEX

5.1. Rail plays an important role in East Sussex in getting people to work and education, for business as well as for shopping and leisure purposes. East Sussex has seen an increase in rail travel to work between 2001 and 2011, rising from 5.4% of the East Sussex population in employment (aged 16-74) in 2001 to 7.1% in 2011. Lewes has the highest level of commuters at 8.1% (source: ESiF, Census data). This increase in rail use is reflected in trends in ticket sales with some stations, such as Uckfield, Seaford, Hastings and Bexhill experiencing notable growth in ticket sales in recent years.

5.2. The improvement of the rail network and services serving the county is a key element to improving connectivity of the county and delivering our key priority of supporting economic growth, as reflected in the East Sussex Local Transport Plan & Economic Development Strategy and employment space and housing development within the Borough and District Local Plans.

Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2011 – 2026 (2011)

5.3. The East Sussex Local Transport Plan sets out the overall approach for planning and providing transport infrastructure and services needed to deliver sustainable economic growth and support additional housing in the county over the period 2011 to 2026. The LTP identifies

two main priorities for the county, one of which is to improve economic competitiveness and growth.

- 5.4. The LTP highlights that, whilst the County Council does not have a statutory duty for rail, it has a significant interest in how it connects people to and from East Sussex and how rail can support economic growth in the county.
- 5.5. The LTP identifies that making passenger rail a more attractive option, by improving the connectivity of the county along and to the coast as well as to destinations such as London, will bring benefits to the local economy by:
- opening up opportunities for new business to locate in the area as well as existing businesses to grow;
 - improving connections to key centres of business in the south east, London and Europe; and
 - widening employment opportunities by reducing journey times and attract a more skilled labour, whether living in and commuting out, or commuting into the county.
- 5.6. The LTP identifies a package of interventions, both infrastructure and service improvements that would need to be delivered by or in partnership with the rail industry, that would deliver these benefits and support economic growth in the county. These are highlighted in more detail in section 6 of the document.

Economic Development Strategy (2012)

- 5.7. The Economic Development Strategy (EDS) sets out the issues and opportunities for East Sussex for the next 10 years (at least) and puts forward a strategy for economic growth.
- 5.8. Strategic Priority 3 of the Strategy (EDS) highlights that improved connectivity - rail, road and broadband - is critical for East Sussex to take advantage of its privileged location. The Strategy also identifies, in common with the LTP, that improvements to rail services and infrastructure is required to improve both passenger experience and freight opportunities and that partnership working with the rail industry would help to achieve this.

Future Employment and Housing Development – Borough and District Local Plans

- 5.9. Local Plans prepared by the district and borough councils in East Sussex identify the employment and housing allocation for their respective areas over the next 20 years.
- 5.10. One of the impacts the construction of additional employment space and housing will have on East Sussex is to increase rail demand for commuters, either travelling in, within or out of the county, as well as demand to travel for education and social purposes. With many of the existing services suffering from overcrowding, further investment is needed in East Sussex's rail infrastructure to accommodate this expected future demand, supporting the creation of jobs and delivery of housing as well as enabling people to access education and training and travel by rail for leisure journeys.

- 5.11. The following table identifies projected growth figures for the districts and boroughs in East Sussex as of May 2013:

Authority Local Plan	Status of Plan	Housing Allocation		Employment Allocation
		Total over Plan Period	Per Annum	
Wealden	Adopted	9,440 (2006 -2027)	450	128,695 sqm
Eastbourne	Adopted	5,022 (2006 -2027)	222	55,430 sqm
Lewes	Proposed Submission Draft	4,500 (2010 -2030)	225	74,000 sqm
Hastings	Examination	3,400 (2011 -2028)	200	70,000 sqm
Rother	Examination	3700 - 4100 (2011 - 2028)	218 - 241	100,000 sqm

Business Perspective

- 5.12. Businesses were asked by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) in late 2012 to identify the strategic transport priorities for the road and rail network. From a rail perspective, the businesses who responded identified the need for improving overall transport links between the South coast and London and increasing rail capacity as important to supporting their growth. In particular, businesses identified improving rail capacity between Hastings and Ashford as well as the reinstatement of the Lewes to Uckfield line as particularly important.

6. RAIL IMPROVEMENTS TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC GROWTH

- 6.1 The following sets out the rail improvements, both infrastructure and services, that we believe are required to support the economic growth in the county
- 6.2 These have been identified through the priorities identified in the Local Transport Plan and liaison with local rail interest and commuter groups.

East Coastway (Brighton to Ashford) including Seaford branch line	
Infrastructure Improvements	Electrification of the line between Ore and Ashford.
	Dual tracking of the line between Ore and Appledore.
	Reinstatement of the Willingdon Chord, or alternative (e.g. new station in the locality north of Hampden Park) - not affecting the additional service level to Eastbourne.
	New station at Glyne Gap
	New station in the Stone Cross / Polegate locality.
	Extend High Speed 1 service from Ashford International Station to Eastbourne.
	Newhaven <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improvements to interchange between rail and bus, cycle and taxi at Newhaven Town station • improved interchange between train and ferry services at Newhaven • investigation of the best way of providing improved passenger facilities at Newhaven
Service Improvements	Additional train per hour (at least) comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fast hourly service stopping at main stations. • An hourly service calling at all stations.
	Although preference is to retain the direct Brighton - Ashford service, consideration should be given to splitting / joining service at either Hastings or Eastbourne to address capacity issues in the short term.
	Extend the Lewes-Brighton shuttle to Eastbourne.
	Provision of additional carriages to relieve overcrowding.
	Trains should run an hour later on the Marshlink line in both directions.
	Maintain existing services to smaller stations.
	Introduction Saturday / Sunday services at rural stations where a need has been identified.

East Coastway to Victoria	
Infrastructure Improvements	Signalling improvements to enable faster line speeds, reducing journey times.
Service Improvements	Run Thameslink trains to Eastbourne as originally planned.
	End the splitting/joining of trains at Haywards Heath - reducing journey times for passengers, whilst retaining existing service levels.
	Reduce journey times on the East Coastway services to London.
	Continue to stop longer distance trains - from London (Victoria) that serve the Sussex coast (including Bexhill) at Gatwick Airport, Croydon and Clapham Junction.
	Maintain direct services to London (Victoria) from stations east of Eastbourne, e.g. Bexhill.
Brighton Main Line	
Infrastructure Improvements	Improvements at East Croydon and Windmill Hill to address capacity constraints.
	Implement any other identified infrastructure improvements from BML study currently being undertaken by Network Rail.
Service Improvements	Service access to Gatwick airport should be improved including services to coastal destinations.
	Reconsider how the train paths are allocated to the greatest benefit to passengers.
Uckfield Line	
Infrastructure Improvements	Dual tracking between Uckfield and Hurst Green.
	Electrification between Uckfield and Hurst Green.
	Increase overall rail capacity in the county by reinstating Lewes-Uckfield railway line <u>or</u> as part of providing a new route (BML2) between Brighton and London via Uckfield
	Reinstate Eridge - Hurst Green railway line to enable services to run to Tunbridge Wells
Service Improvements	Improve early morning commuter services into London to address overcrowding.
	Increase the number of late trains from London to Uckfield.
	Introduce earlier trains on a Sunday morning.
	Provision of additional carriages on the line to address overcrowding issues.

Uckfield Line	
Service Improvements	Additional train services per hour - would be feasible upon dual tracking of the line and addressing capacity constraints north of the line at East Croydon.
Hastings line (via Tonbridge)	
Infrastructure Improvements	Upgrade the power supply south of Tunbridge Wells to enable a regular 12-car service to run to Hastings.
Service Improvements	Continue to retain direct Cannon Street service - DfT has confirmed this will be retained for the foreseeable future.
Wider improvements	
Access to Stations	Work with Network Rail and the TOC's to improve car parking and address local issues on residential roads near stations
	Increase cycle parking at all stations
	Improve bus/rail interchange at key stations in the county - Bexhill, Hastings, Eastbourne, Lewes, Polegate, Rye, Uckfield, Crowborough
	Improve bus links from Hailsham to Polegate rail station to support housing and employment development
Community Rail Partnerships	Continue to work with Sussex CRP and existing line groups to promote rail usage on these lines (Uckfield, Seaford - Brighton, Marshlink)
	Investigate other opportunities for further line groups in the county.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

- 7.1 It is clear from the evidence that there is a need for significant investment in East Sussex rail services and infrastructure to support economic growth in the county.
- 7.2 There are a number of steps that can be taken to help facilitate these improvements and these include identifying and prioritising schemes for rail investment in East Sussex. This will ensure appropriate emphasis is placed on each particular improvement, especially when funding is limited and decisions on where investment is allocated need to be made.
- 7.3 These issues will be discussed at the stakeholder event being organised by the County Council in September 2013. This will involve representatives from the rail industry, local councils, business and commuter groups.

- 7.4 The outcomes of the stakeholder event and any emerging evidence to support endeavours to promote and lobby for rail improvements in East Sussex, will be used to inform the County Council's response to the next stage of Network Rail's Long Term Planning Process (Route Studies) which is anticipated to commence around November 2013.
- 7.5 This will also help to focus the approach of the County Council and its partners to shaping rail in East Sussex and how it can support economic growth in the county. This includes which projects should be prioritised for study work when funding becomes available, and where our energies should be applied in lobbying the rail industry for improvements to services and infrastructure in the county, i.e. through a Rail Action Plan.