



LEAD MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

DECISIONS to be made by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment,
Councillor Claire Dowling

MONDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2025 AT 11.00 AM

COMMITTEE ROOM, COUNTY HALL, LEWES

AGENDA

1. Decisions made by the Lead Cabinet Member on 10 November 2025 (*Pages 3 - 8*)
2. Disclosure of Interests
Disclosure by all Members present of personal interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the Members regard the interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct.
3. Urgent items
Notification of any items which the Lead Member considers urgent and proposes to take at the appropriate part of the agenda.
4. East Sussex Freight Strategy 2025 - 2050 (*Pages 9 - 76*)
Report by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport
5. East Sussex Rail Strategy 2025 - 2050 (*Pages 77 - 172*)
Report by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport
6. Eastbourne Town Centre Phase 2B Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (*Pages 173 - 176*)
Report by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport
7. Any urgent items previously notified under agenda item 3

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28 November 2025

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LEAD MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

DECISIONS made by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment, Councillor Claire Dowling, on 10 November 2025 at Committee Room, County Hall, Lewes

Councillors Cross, Daniel and Hilton spoke on item 4 (see minute 26)

Councillors Daniel and Hilton spoke on item 5 (see minute 27)

Councillors Daniel, Galley, Maples and Murphy spoke on item 6 (see minute 28)

22. DECISIONS MADE BY THE LEAD MEMBER ON 20 OCTOBER 2025

22.1 The Lead Member approved as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2025.

23. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

23.1 Councillor Daniel declared an interest in items 4, 5 and 6 as a member of the County Council's Planning Committee and noted that his views on these items demonstrate a predisposition but not a predetermination having regard to the possibility that the proposals under each of these items may be considered by the Planning Committee at a future date.

23.2 Councillor Hilton declared a personal interest in item 4 as the Shaping Places and Local Government Reorganisation cabinet portfolio holder at Hastings Borough Council which includes assets within the portfolio. She did not consider this to be prejudicial.

23.3 Councillor Maples declared a personal interest in item 5 as the Neighbourhood Wellbeing cabinet portfolio holder at Lewes District Council which includes recycling and waste within the portfolio. She did not consider this to be prejudicial.

23.4 Councillor Maples declared a personal interest in item 5 as the deputy chair of the LGA Fire and Rescue Authority Committee. She did not consider this to be prejudicial.

24. URGENT ITEMS

24.1 There were none.

25. REPORTS

25.1 Reports referred to in the minutes below are contained in the minute book.

26. PROPOSED RELOCATION OF HASTINGS REGISTER OFFICE

26.1 The Lead Member considered a report by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport.

DECISIONS

26.2 The Lead Member RESOLVED to:

(1) approve the proposal to move Hastings Register Office ("the Service") to Hastings Library, subject to planning permission, to facilitate service delivery improvements and deliver revenue savings of £100K. The savings that would be delivered through the relocation of the Service would contribute to the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) savings in 2026/2027 and 2027/2028;

(2) note that the Service would refocus the current Council ceremony venues offer to meet customer demands and continue to provide a ceremony room at Hastings Library. In addition, the Register Office would continue to support the local economy through the licensing of approved marriage premises in Hastings; and

(3) delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to approve the detailed scheme of works for the proposal.

REASONS

26.3 This proposal offers value for money and will deliver an improved and enhanced library and Registration Office. The proposal can be delivered within the existing budget, due to forecast additional ceremony and citizenship income for this financial year and will achieve on-going revenue saving. The proposals will make the best use of library buildings.

26.4 The proposal allows the Service to refocus the current Council ceremony venues offer to meet customer demands and establish a ceremony room at Hastings Library. In addition, the Service will continue to support the local economy through the current 34 approved marriage premises in Hastings.

27. HASTINGS GREEN CONNECTIONS EXPERIMENTAL TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS

27.1 The Lead Member considered a report by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport.

DECISIONS

27.2 The Lead Member RESOLVED to:

(1) note the previous development work that has been undertaken in relation to Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections project;

(2) note that Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) will be advertised prior to construction in relation to cycle access to Hastings Town Centre and speed limitation on Havelock Road and Harold Place;

(3) note that Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETROs) will be advertised post construction in relation to vehicular access and timings on Havelock Road, Harold Place and Wellington Place, Hastings; and

(4) delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport, to take any actions necessary to progress the scheme to the construction phase including but not limited to the award of any construction contract required.

REASONS

27.3 Since November 2023, the County Council, as the project deliverer for the Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections project, has been moving forward with the development and detailed design phases of the delivery programme.

27.4 Based on continued stakeholder engagement and feedback received and to ensure the County Council meet its statutory duties for consultation on Traffic Orders, Traffic Regulation Orders will be advertised for the project from November 2025 in relation to cycle access to Hastings Town Centre and speed limitation on Havelock Road and Harold Place, along with Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders being advertised on completion of construction in relation to vehicular access on Havelock Road, Harold Place and Wellington Place, Hastings to seek a view on the proposed timings and access restrictions.

27.5 Delegation of authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport, to take any actions necessary to progress the scheme to the construction phase including but not limited to the award of any construction contract required will allow for delivery timescales for the project to be met.

28. INSTALLATION OF FIRE SUPPRESSION SYSTEMS AT WASTE TRANSFER STATIONS

28.1 The Lead Member considered a report by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport together with exempt information in a later agenda item.

DECISIONS

28.2 The Lead Member RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the heightened increasing risk of fires at the Council's household waste transfer stations and the proposal to install fire suppression systems;
- (2) subject to approval by Council to the variation of the Capital Programme to include this proposal, agree a 50% contribution towards the installation of fire suppression systems at Maresfield and Pebsham waste transfer stations; and
- (3) delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to finalise the written agreement relating to fire suppression systems between the Councils and Veolia.

REASONS

28.3 The proposal to install fire suppression systems is supported by the East Sussex Fire Service, the Environment Agency and insurers, and is considered industry good practice. It will help mitigate the risk of a major business continuity event impacting waste collection services across the county and increase the resilience of East Sussex County Council (ESCC) waste management facilities through the current waste PFI contract and beyond.

28.4 There is an ongoing risk of a qualifying change in the law and tipping away claims against the County Council, should there be a major fire at one of the transfer stations. This proactive approach will align mitigations consistently across sites and stabilise the ongoing risk.

28.5 Veolia has agreed to a contribution towards infrastructure which could otherwise be an ESCC cost. This provides ESCC with reduced financial liability and supports wider commercial contract arrangements.

28.6 The Council's waste team will continue efforts to support residents in safe recycling; however, the increasing risk of fires is likely to remain as demand for electronic products grows. The Council must therefore protect its assets and service operations effectively to mitigate both service and financial risks.

29. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

29.1 It was RESOLVED to exclude the public and press from the meeting for the remaining agenda items on the grounds that if the public and press were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as specified in paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

30. INSTALLATION OF FIRE SUPPRESSION SYSTEMS AT WASTE TRANSFER STATIONS - EXEMPT INFORMATION

30.1 The Lead Member considered a report by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport which provided exempt information in support of an earlier item on the agenda.

DECISIONS

30.2 The Lead Member RESOLVED to note the exempt information which supports an earlier agenda item.

REASONS

30.3 The report contained exempt information in relation to an earlier item on the agenda.

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Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 8 December 2025

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: East Sussex Freight Strategy 2025 – 2050

Purpose: To seek approval of the East Sussex Freight Strategy 2025 – 2050.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) note the outcomes of the stakeholder and public consultation undertaken in May/June 2025 on the draft East Sussex Freight Strategy;**
 - (2) acknowledge the importance of the strategy in setting out the County Council’s key priorities for freight in East Sussex, which will place the Council in a stronger position to lobby for future funding and support the development and delivery of future investment to support the movement of freight in East Sussex;**
 - (3) approve the Freight Strategy, at Appendix 1, which is a modal strategy supporting the East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4, 2024 – 2050; and**
 - (4) delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to make future minor amendments to the strategy.**
-

1 Background Information

1.1 The fourth East Sussex Local Transport Plan 2024 – 2050 (LTP4) was adopted by the Council at its Full Council meeting on 8 October 2024. It sets out how East Sussex County Council and partners will plan and provide transport for residents, businesses and visitors in East Sussex, now and for future generations. It plans for people and places by focussing on enabling and encouraging greater integrated journeys and reducing the need to travel through land use and planning policies that support sustainable travel.

1.2 In relation to freight, the ‘Keeping East Sussex Connected’ chapter within the LTP4 focuses on supporting people and businesses in getting where they need to go, quickly and reliably - specifically, longer distance highway, railway and bus schemes. LTP4 includes a specific policy on freight, which focusses on safeguarding the region’s prosperity through holistic freight and logistics planning, incorporating innovative rail and last mile solutions to ensure freight movements to and from East Sussex are optimised and decarbonised.

1.3 The draft East Sussex Freight Strategy, as outlined in Appendix 1, emphasises the opportunities to support the efficient movement of goods across the county. It recognises that freight is critical to the productivity of the county’s businesses and people’s everyday lives through the movement of goods to shops and between business to business, homes and local collection points, and in supporting the growing expectation of on-demand deliveries.

1.4 The draft Strategy focusses specifically on the opportunities to support improvements, through partnership working, to infrastructure, services and initiatives that relate to 4 priority investment areas, including:

- 1) Strategic freight movements (includes mapping of freight and logistics infrastructure, freight activity hotspots, signage and wayfinding, increase capacity of Newhaven Port for rail freight),
- 2) Decarbonisation (includes zero-emission vehicles in council fleets, charging infrastructure),
- 3) Last mile logistics (includes air quality and noise mapping and last mile strategic hubs),
- 4) Planning and policy (includes construction logistics and delivery and servicing plans and freight awareness workshops)

1.5 Once adopted the East Sussex Freight Strategy 2025 – 2050, will be a modal strategy supporting the East Sussex LTP4 2024 - 2050.

2 Supporting Information

Roles and responsibilities for freight

2.1 The draft strategy highlights that the county's ambitions for freight will require partnership working to achieve its vision and objectives. Accordingly, the strategy recognises the different role and responsibilities across the industry between the local planning authorities, the County Council, Network Rail (NR)/Great British Railways (GBR), freight operating companies (FOCs), Transport for the South East (TfSE), other freight organisations such as Logistics UK and the Road Hauliers Association, operators and users.

2.2 As a result of the development of the strategy, the County Council was invited to join the '[Wider South East Freight Forum](#)'. This was established by Transport for the South East (TfSE), England's Economic Heartland (EEH) and Transport East (TE) sub-national transport bodies and enables collaboration between the freight and logistics industry representatives such as Logistics UK, the Road Haulage Association, local authorities, business representatives, and ports and airports, with recognition that the movement of goods does not stop at borders. This forum will enable the Council, now and in the future, to more effectively understand and engage with the industry on the constraints and opportunities relating to freight and work with the key stakeholders to either influence or support the delivery of improvements and support innovation.

Devolution, Local Government Reorganisation and other key strategies

2.3 The draft Freight Strategy embraces the establishment of the Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) for Sussex and Brighton from May 2026, and recognition of local government reorganisation which will result in new unitary authorities across the West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Sussex geography from April 2028.

2.4 The establishment of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton will result in devolved powers and funding for strategic planning, transport and economic growth from central government, resulting in the transport priorities for the wider Sussex geography being eventually set by the new Mayor through the development of a joint Local Transport Plan, but also the development of a Spatial Development Strategy, to guide sustainable growth and development. This draft Freight Strategy focuses on the types of measures that key strategic and local partners, alongside working with the County Council, can develop and deliver. This will ensure that the Council is in a stronger position to respond to any changes in local powers and enable the Council to confidently set out priorities for freight to the Mayor and to lobby and apply for future funding from the Sussex and Brighton MCCA and central government.

2.5 The Freight Strategy also supports other strategies covering local, regional and national geographies. A non-exhaustive summary of these strategies is presented in section 4 of the Freight Strategy with a succinct overview of each strategy and how this links to the Freight strategy. These linkages show that this strategy has strong connections to the economy, environment, visitor sector and spatial planning. There will also be benefits to other important sectors such as public health, which will become clearer as interventions are developed in more detail and ultimately delivered.

Engagement and Consultation on draft strategy

2.6 Significant engagement has taken place with stakeholders as part of the development of the strategy, including a desk-based policy review, focused stakeholder engagement meetings, and a stakeholder and public consultation.

2.7 A stakeholder and public consultation was held between 6 May and 30 June 2025. As a result, 31 responses were received via the online portal, and 7 responses via e-mail. The Council also engaged with young people in a bespoke event. Whilst this may be considered a low response rate, responses were received, particularly from key strategic and local stakeholders, that will be critical in supporting the delivery of the strategy. A consultation summary report is set out at Appendix 2.

2.8 The analysis of responses demonstrated that two thirds of the online respondents agreed that they supported the draft strategy. Most respondents showed broad agreement with the proposed freight roles, priorities, and schemes. High levels of support were noted for Freight

Strategy elements across themes, especially decarbonisation, last-mile solutions, and planning integration.

2.9 Strategic freight movements and planning policies were also well supported. There was a clear call for rail freight expansion and modal shift to reduce emissions and congestion.

2.10 Concerns remain about whether schemes can be delivered, their local impacts, and a lack of consideration for how schemes could be funded. Stakeholders seek stronger planning clarity and inclusive governance.

Freight routing network

2.11 In September 2023, the Lead Member for Transport and Environment considered a petition relating to the approach to freight movements in East Sussex, as set out in the County's third Local Transport Plan (LTP3) which needed updating, and called on the County Council to introduce a lorry route network similar to the one in West Sussex, so that Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) are redirected away from narrow local roads in villages to reduce impacts of noise, vibration, safety and air quality. The Lead Member resolved that the existing freight routing network would be reviewed as part of the development of a new East Sussex Freight Strategy, which will form part of the County's LTP4.

2.12 The approach and policy to (road) freight in East Sussex set out in LTP3 and 'Control of HGVs' policy PS4/5 advises that as so few roads in the County are really suitable for HGVs, it was expected that the "A" and "B" roads in the county should be available to carry heavy lorries thereby allowing them to disperse over the available road network rather than to concentrate them on selected roads.

2.13 In response to the petition and Lead Member's resolution, consideration was given to the freight routing network as part of the development of this draft Freight Strategy. It is acknowledged that HGVs using routes through villages and towns can have actual and perceived negative impacts on local communities. However, it is important to note that East Sussex has no motorway provision, the quality of the strategic and major road (A class) network serving the county is inconsistent with only 30 miles of dual (2 lane) carriageway.

2.14 Whilst consideration has been given to introduce a freight routing network so that HGVs be redirected away from B class roads through villages, this would place additional pressures on the limited A roads in the county, impacting on overall journey times for all road users, increasing journey times for HGV drivers and costs for operators (which in turn may be passed onto customers) due to vehicles having to take a longer distance and timed route.

2.15 Therefore, it is recommended that the existing freight routing network policy for HGVs to use A and B roads wherever possible remains. However, the draft Freight Strategy includes several policies related to improving relationships between partners, local planning authorities and communities to gather evidence and a greater understanding of freight-related issues, in particularly affected villages, and identifying whether any alternative measures could be introduced which could potentially reduce or mitigate the negative experiences of HGVs for residents through villages. It should be noted that this will be subject to available resource and funding and importantly whether this is a priority for the emerging Sussex and Brighton MCCA, which will be established by May 2026, as they will set the priorities for transport and strategic planning across the wider Sussex geography.

Updates to the draft strategy following consultation

2.16 In consideration of some of the points raised as part of the consultation the key changes to the strategy include the following:

- 1) strengthening of the evidence base – specifically the strategic case for the investment priority areas referring to international gateways, changing freight fleet, constraints on the road network for freight movements, devolution, freight logistics in town centres and local, regional and national strategies.
- 2) clear demonstration of the role of the County Council in bringing measures forward within the priority investment areas (i.e. where possible - lead, advocate (project partner) and support (stakeholder))
- 3) confirmation that the County Council's policy 'Control of HGVs (PS4/5)', which highlights the need for the continued use of both A and B class roads being available to carry HGVs will remain unchanged.

- 4) clear demonstration of freight priorities for East Sussex within the strategy and how the Council will seek to achieve them, in a manner that can be easily transitioned to wherever the decision-making, planning and policy sits within the forthcoming establishment of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton and local government reorganisation.

2.17 There were a small number of responses to the question regarding the Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA), and these will be incorporated into the significant update to the LTP4 EqIA that will be published in Spring 2026.

3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The ambition for freight in East Sussex is to support the efficient movement of goods as it is critical to both the productivity of the county's businesses and people's everyday lives through the movement of goods to shops and between business to business, homes and local collection points, and in supporting the growing expectation of on-demand deliveries. This aligns with the East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) adopted by the County Council in October 2024 and will also align with the other modal strategies being developed or updated post publication of the LTP4.

3.2 Significant evidence gathering, stakeholder engagement and consultation have been undertaken which has constructively shaped the draft East Sussex Freight Strategy. As set out in paragraph 2.16, the strategy has been updated to reflect some of the key consultation comments received. Consequently, the 4 priority areas for investment set out in paragraph 1.4 have been identified as part of this process.

3.3 The strategy has been developed for the County Council to demonstrate its priorities for freight, how the Council can achieve them and how progress can be made on these in the short term, subject to available resource and funding, whilst also taking full account of the forthcoming changes arising from devolution and local government reorganisation. The Strategy will be a live document, and therefore adaptable to reflect the impending changes.

3.4 Following the Lead Member's consideration of a petition on freight routeing in the county in September 2023, a review of the existing freight routeing network - that allows the distribution of HGVs across the A and B class road network in the county - has been undertaken as part of the development of the draft Freight Strategy. Whilst consideration has been given to introduce a freight routeing network so that HGVs be redirected away from B class roads through villages, this would place additional pressures on the limited and inconsistent quality A class road network in the county. Therefore, the draft Freight Strategy sets out that the existing freight routeing network policy for HGVs using A and B class roads wherever possible should remain. Given the impact of freight movements on local communities, the draft Freight Strategy identifies a policy and workstream related to better understanding localised impacts with communities and opportunities for mitigating these impacts.

3.5 It is recommended that the Lead Member for Transport and Environment note the responses from the stakeholder and public consultation undertaken on the draft East Sussex Freight Strategy earlier this year, as set out in the consultation summary report at Appendix 2, and approve the Freight Strategy, as set out in Appendix 1, as a modal strategy supporting the East Sussex Local Transport Plan. The Lead Member is also recommended to acknowledge the Strategy's importance in setting out the County Council's key priorities for freight in East Sussex given the forthcoming devolution of powers to the Sussex and Brighton MCCA as well as changes arising from local government reorganisation.

RUPERT CLUBB

Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Consultation responses

[Equalities Impact Assessment for the draft Freight Strategy](#)

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Appendix 1

East Sussex Freight Strategy 2025 - 2050 December 2025

Version 2

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1 Foreword

We are pleased to introduce East Sussex's Freight Strategy, which looks to connect people to places, providing freight connectivity for all.

This strategy is underpinned by a robust evidence base and has been developed with the public and stakeholders across the county, including representatives from the freight industry, Transport for the South East (TfSE), council officers and local planning authorities, and young people. This engagement has resulted in a strategy that reflects the freight aspirations of a wide range of stakeholders and will foster further partnership working with key stakeholders to help promote and progress freight initiatives and opportunities in the county.

The strategy is coming forward at a time of great change, with the establishment of the Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) for Sussex and Brighton anticipated to be in place from May 2026. This is running in parallel with local government reorganisation, which is expected to see the county, district and borough councils replaced with a new unitary authority from April 2028.

The strategy and its investment priorities have been developed to consider the varying characteristics of the county, including densely populated urban centres and large rural areas, and the differing needs of the users from these significantly different local contexts, and those affected by freight movements.

We are mindful of actual and perceived impacts of freight on local communities, and this has been incorporated into the strategy in respect of better understanding these impacts and the potential for addressing and alleviating these where possible. It is also important to engage and provide information to those affected by freight movements to better understand why particular routes are used, share knowledge on the variety of ways freight can be transported and delivered, and identify opportunities for more sustainable freight transportation.

Implementing the strategy will have its challenges, and we have a responsibility to future generations to help deliver interventions which align with our fourth Local Transport Plan (LTP4), to help improve the transportation of freight into, out of, and around East Sussex for all.

Councillor Dowling - Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Rupert Clubb - Director of Communities, Economy and Transport



2 Executive Summary

The ambition for freight in East Sussex is to support the efficient movement of goods as it is critical to both the productivity of our businesses and people's everyday lives through the movement of goods to shops and between business to business, to our homes and local collection points, and in supporting the growing expectation of on-demand deliveries. This aligns with the Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) and will also align with the other modal strategies being developed or updated.

Significant stakeholder engagement, consultations and evidence gathering has been undertaken which has constructively shaped the East Sussex Freight Strategy, which has been updated to reflect some of the key comments made in response to the public consultation. Four priority areas for investment have been identified as part of this process.

The strategy has been developed to be able to demonstrate our priorities for freight and how we can achieve them, and how progress can be made on these in the short term, and as part of the forthcoming changes to local government reorganisation and thereafter.

Consideration has been given within the strategy to introducing a freight routing network so that Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) be redirected away from villages. However, on balance, this would place additional pressures on the limited A roads in the county, impacting on overall journey times for all road users, increasing journey times for HGV drivers and costs for operators (which in turn may be passed onto customers) due to vehicles having to take a longer distance and timed route. Therefore, the existing freight routing network policy for HGVs to use A and B roads wherever possible remains. However, the draft Freight Strategy includes several policies related to improving relationships with district and borough councils, the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) and communities to gather evidence and a greater understanding of freight-related issues, in particularly affected villages, and identifying whether any alternative measures could be introduced which could potentially reduce or mitigate the negative experiences of HGVs through villages.

The strategy will be a live document, and therefore adaptable to reflect the impending local government changes.

3 Introduction

Our ambition for freight in East Sussex is to support the efficient movement of goods. Freight is critical to people's everyday lives through the movement of goods to shops and businesses, our homes and local collection points, and in supporting the growing expectation of on-demand deliveries.

The East Sussex Freight Strategy 2025 – 2050 builds on the vision outlined in the fourth East Sussex Local Transport Plan (LTP4), which embraces a 'planning for people and places' approach. For freight, this means:

- Improving the operational efficiency and capacity of the freight and logistics sector;
- Reducing the wider environmental impacts of the freight sector, including impacts on people and communities, noise levels, and, informal lorry parking occurring within industrial estates and/or residential areas;
- Reducing safety risks to other road users produced by freight transport, by reducing the likelihood of conflict between strategic freight movements and local, active travel movements;
- Integrating logistics into the development of local plan process by utilising reliable data from the freight sector;
- Growing the size of, and employment within, the freight and logistics sector;
- Improving connectivity to/from the south east's international gateways, including Newhaven Port; and
- Reducing the environmental impact of the freight sector by achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050 at the latest, as well as reducing air pollution associated with freight transport.

This strategy and action plan specifically focuses on:

- The management of the distribution of goods and services across the county and beyond, and
- The differing roles that East Sussex County Council and key partners have in either influencing or delivering improvements or supporting innovation.

Key partners include freight industry suppliers and customers, private sector freight and logistics operators, local businesses and end-users, National Highways (NH), Network Rail (NR), (and the emerging Great British Railways - GBR), Transport for the South East (TfSE), and other national, local, public and private sector entities.

The strategy recognises the emerging changes in local government, with the establishment of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton, with elections for a Mayor in May 2026. This is alongside the creation of new unitary authorities across the West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Sussex geography. In East Sussex, this would mean moving away from the current two-tier model of county council (East Sussex County Council) and borough or district councils (Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes, Rother and Wealden) to a single-tier authority, with the district and boroughs becoming the responsibility of the unitary authority moving forward. The changes to, and reorganisation of, local government, are likely to take place up to 2028.

Purpose of this strategy

The East Sussex Freight Strategy sets out our vision for the delivery of improvements to the movement of freight in East Sussex, and focuses on four priority investment areas:

- Priority Investment Area 1- Strategic freight movements
- Priority Investment Area 2 – Decarbonisation
- Priority Investment Area 3 – Last mile logistics
- Priority Investment Area 4 – Planning & policy

East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4

Local Transport Plans (LTPs) are a requirement of the Transport Act 2000. As part of the fourth East Sussex LTP (LTP4), this (supporting) Freight Strategy for the county has been developed.

As set out in LTP4, the vision for transport in East Sussex is:

“An inclusive transport system that connects people and places, is decarbonised, safer, resilient, and supports our natural environment, communities, and businesses to be healthy, thrive and prosper.”

[Six objectives](#) have been identified in LTP4, each with their own outcomes. These also underpin the Freight Strategy, and are:

- Objective 1: Deliver safer and accessible journeys
- Objective 2: Support healthier lifestyles and communities
- Objective 3: Decarbonise transport and travel
- Objective 4: Conserve and enhance our local environment
- Objective 5: Support sustainable economic growth
- Objective 6: Strengthen the resilience of our transport networks

LTP4 identifies the ambitions for East Sussex and recommends the key policies to achieve these. Each policy is underpinned by one of the above objectives and these are themed in the [LTP4 Investment Plan](#).

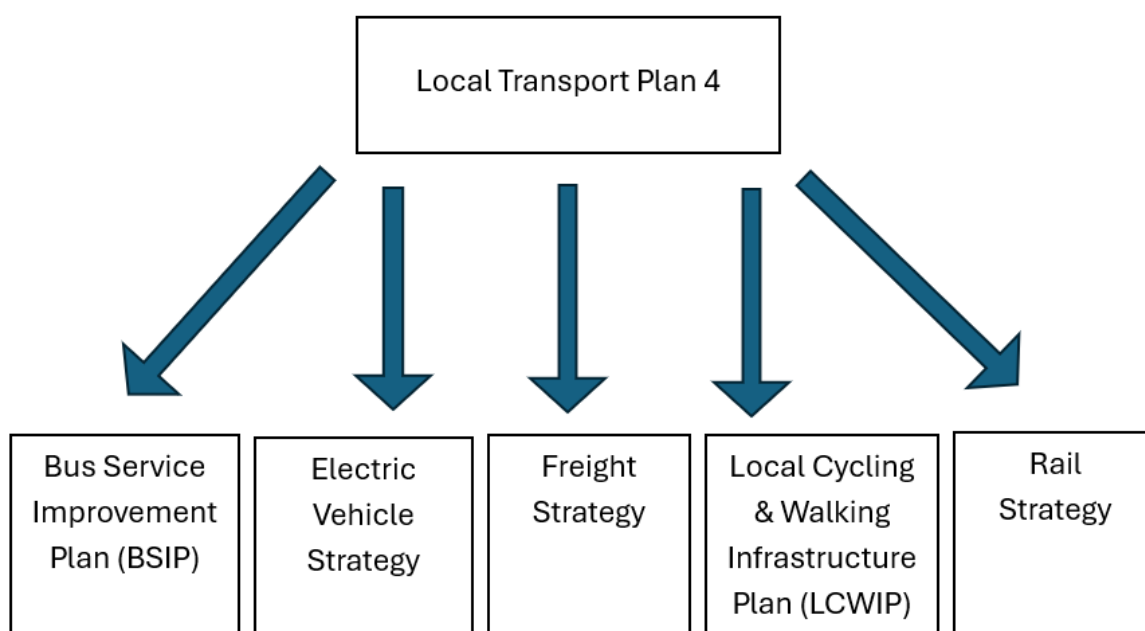
The '[Keeping East Sussex connected](#)' chapter of LTP4 outlines policy ambitions applicable to freight, alongside available evidence. This ambitions include supporting the movement of people and goods, ensuring they get where they need to go, quickly and reliably. The policies included in this section which support objectives 3, 5 and 6, are:

- [Policy D1 – Strategic Connectivity](#)
- [Policy D2 – Freight and International Gateways](#)
- [Policy D3 – The needs of businesses and visitor economy](#)
- [Policy D4 – Supporting sustainable development](#)
- [Policy D5 – Parking](#)
- [Policy D6 – Highways maintenance and asset management](#)

Freight Strategy: Relationship with LTP4 and modal strategies

This Freight Strategy is a supporting document to the overarching East Sussex LTP4 county-wide transport strategy, and complements the other modal strategies which sit alongside it.

Figure 1: Relationship of LTP4 with modal strategies:



3.1 The relationship of, and between, modal strategies are set out below:

- [Bus Service Improvement Plan](#) – buses play an important role in allowing people to access jobs, including those in the freight and logistics industry. They allow people to access drop-off and pick-up locations of goods, including via shops/businesses.
- **Electric Vehicle Strategy** (under development)– focuses on rolling out electric vehicle charging in public locations for smaller vehicles (e.g. cars and LGVs).
- [Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan](#) – concerns active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling) aspect of journeys, whether that be the sole mode of transport (i.e. walking to the shops) or as part of an integrated multi-modal journey (i.e. between home and the bus stop, or the railway station and town centre shops). There is an opportunity for cargo bikes and the delivery of goods to be made using active travel modes.
- Rail Strategy – concerns the movement of people and goods via the rail network). Interfaces at freight terminals and the transfer of goods between rail and other modes is also considered.

4 The importance of freight in East Sussex

This chapter sets out the evidence base that supports the aims and aspirations of the Freight Strategy, and should be read in conjunction with the Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) [Evidence](#) Base. Where appropriate, later chapters may also introduce evidence in relation to specific investment priorities.

Freight in East Sussex

Freight within, to and from East Sussex is the movement of physical goods using transport networks such as roads, railways, inland waterways and the sea, and for short last-mile journeys by bicycle. Goods can be transported by a range of different vehicles including heavy goods vehicles (HGVs), ordinary goods vehicles (OGVs), light goods vehicles (LGVs), freight trains, shipping, air, cargo bikes and by foot.

International freight gateways

The south coast of England is home to major international freight gateways of national significance. East Sussex (specifically) is home to the port of Newhaven, with ferry passenger and road freight carried to/from Dieppe (France), alongside short sea and coastal shipping. To the east of the county in Kent are the international gateways of Dover (which has a ferry to Calais) and Folkestone (home to the Channel Tunnel to Calais). In the west there are the seaports of Portsmouth (for passenger and road freight) and Southampton (for container shipping).

Newhaven Port has a smaller role in the hierarchy of freight gateways along the south coast, but offers a popular and vital alternative. Shipping freight from Newhaven is moved by both the strategic rail network and the strategic road network. Via the A259 (east-west) and the A26 (to the north). Road freight from Dover and the Channel Tunnel that is destined for elsewhere in the country moves predominantly through Kent via the M20, M26 and M25, bypassing East Sussex. The county's location places us within reach of the European continent by road via the Eurotunnel and/or Dover, and major freight shipping via the container terminal at Southampton.

Rye Harbour, in Rother District, is a small-scale commercial wharf facilitating the imports of aggregates and the exports of grain to mainland Europe. Additionally, Rye Harbour is home to a considerable industrial area with storage and heavy industry (e.g. refining oil).

Further cross-boundary movements are central to the movement of freight in East Sussex. Located north-west of East Sussex is London Gatwick Airport, a significant hub with a dedicated cargo centre and various freight handling services. The expansion and growth of London Gatwick Airport (the Northern Runway Project which will double the volume of cargo handled) provides opportunities for economic and employment growth for East Sussex and the region. East Sussex County Council were involved in the public inquiry to seek assurances and secure

remediation that expansion of the airport be balanced against the impacts that such growth will have on the environment and local communities (e.g. noise, air quality) in the county.

Changing freight vehicle fleet on the East Sussex road network

Similar to other parts of the country, there has been an increase in the number of light and HGV's on some roads on the network. The reasons for these include:

- Many rural farms/premises now being used for commercial and leisure purposes as part of the diversification of the local economy, which results in increased HGV movements at these sites,
- The use of in-vehicle Satellite Navigation (satnav) systems or mobile phone mapping often misdirecting HGV drivers down unsuitable routes,
- Centralised deliveries by many businesses, resulting in one large HGV making many deliveries across a wide area instead of smaller commercial vehicles delivering from local depots, and
- A significant movement to e-commerce, increasing the level of online orders and parcel deliveries.

East Sussex highway network constraints on freight movements

The strategic and major road network around East Sussex falls short of the standard needed to fulfil the role of carrying long distance and strategic traffic. Therefore, the major roads in East Sussex carry both strategic (longer distance) and local traffic. This combination can cause considerable delays in and around urban areas where speeds and/or volumes of traffic are constrained. The A21 and A27, which form part of the strategic road network managed by National Highways, and the A22, A259 and A26 sections of the Major Road Network (the most economically important A class roads managed by the county council as the local highway authority), all pass through several villages or large towns (e.g. the A259 through Bexhill and A259 through Newhaven). This causes severance, noise, vibration, and air quality issues for local residents, as well as to visitors travelling to/from the south coast and across the wider county.

In consideration of the constraints of the existing road network in the county, our policy for the control and routing of freight vehicles (East Sussex County Council - Control of HGV's policy [PS4/5](#)) highlights the need for the use of both A & B roads in the county being available to carry heavy lorries, with some exceptions based on environmental grounds. Therefore, this approach allows freight movements to disperse over the available road network rather than to concentrate them on selected roads.

Whilst environmental and weight restrictions are and can be put in place on some roads across the network, freight vehicles will be able to use these roads for 'access' purposes. For example, deliveries to/from businesses or to residential properties.

Road freight links between East Sussex and the rest of the country can be impacted by disruption caused by congestion on strategic road corridors, notably the M25. Such disruption can increase journey times of freight vehicles (often HGVs). There is also a lack of resilience for regional freight routes when disruption does occur. In particular, there is a lack of alternative or diversionary road routes for HGVs and rail infrastructure constraints for rail freight services. This is alongside limited freight services and lorry parking in the county.

Devolution

The establishment of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton and reorganisation of local government across West Sussex, Brighton and Hove and East Sussex resulting in the creation of unitary authorities across the geography will result in changes in strategic planning with Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) being prepared by Strategic Planning Authorities (SPA). SDS's will provide a framework for how land will be used for housing, employment, infrastructure, and other purposes, ensuring that development occurs in a way that supports economic, social, and environmental goals. Development of the SDS will include the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton working with the County Council, and, following local government re-organisation, the unitary authorities across Sussex and Brighton. The reorganisation of local government will enhance opportunities to work collaboratively over a wider geographical area and to integrate the needs of freight and logistics within the policies and delivery of an SDS. The MCCA for Sussex and Brighton will be responsible for Local Transport Plans.

Freight logistics in town centres

East Sussex County Council is currently undertaking several projects to re-design town centres that prioritise people using active travel and public transport, for example in Eastbourne and Hastings. These provide opportunities to integrate improved last mile logistics, such as through the development of micro-consolidation centres which support the uptake of smaller zero-emission vehicles such as e-cargo bicycles.

Further evidence that supports this document can be found in the East Sussex LTP4, Section 8 - [‘Keeping East Sussex connected’](#).

Other policies and strategies

There are a number of other strategies and policies that will support the successful delivery of the freight strategy, and vice versa. Some of the strategies and policies are identified within this sub-section, grouped by geographical coverage, this list is not exhaustive.

Local

Strategy	Importance
Local Plans (district and borough Local Plans are under development, South Downs National Park (2019)	<p>Local planning authorities (district and borough councils and the South Downs National Park Authority have recently or are reviewing their local plans. These involve planning for and identifying sites for housing and employment.</p> <p>The Freight Strategy will consider employment sites development by connecting business to business and business to customer. It will also support the growth of business across all sectors in the UK, through effective spatial planning.</p>
East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4 (2024-2050)	<p>The creation of “an inclusive transport system that connects people and places, is decarbonised, safer, resilient, and supports our natural environment, communities, and businesses to be healthy, thrive and prosper.”</p> <p>This freight strategy provides an opportunity to improve the movement of freight around the county supporting people (deliveries and access to a workforce) and businesses (business to business and business to customer), alongside the objectives and outcomes of LTP4.</p>
East Sussex Prosperity (2024)	<p>The strategy seeks to secure inclusive and sustainable economic growth, setting out how over the next generation, East Sussex can secure better opportunities and living standards for people who live in the county, and how businesses can develop new routes to value creation.</p> <p>The freight strategy will be vital in connecting business to business and business to customers to support a thriving economy and meeting the needs of our residents and visitors..</p>

Regional

Strategy	Importance
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Transport for the South East's Transport Strategy (2025)	<p>It sets out the vision for region and the strategic economic, social, and environmental goals and priorities that underpin it. These include net-zero, improved productivity, health and wellbeing, quality of life, accessibility, and protection of the south-east unique natural and historic environment.</p> <p>The East Sussex Freight Strategy supports the wider ambition for freight across the south east region, given Newhaven Port in the county and the unique road network challenges faced.</p>
Transport for the South East's Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) (2023)	<p>The Strategic Investment Plan, adopted in March 2023, provides a framework for investment in strategic transport infrastructure, services, and regulatory interventions for the next thirty years. This document is in the process of being reviewed.</p> <p>The freight strategy supports the identified freight improvements across the county supporting business to business and business to customer movements</p>
Transport for the South East's Intermodal Freight Study	<p>The study sought to identify the potential for intermodal freight and identify potential rail freight interchange locations in the south east.</p> <p>The Freight Strategy considers rail freight and supporting existing opportunities in the county.</p>

National

Strategy	Importance
Industrial Strategy (2025)	A strategy to support eight sectors of the UK industry, that will support the growth of existing companies and for new ones to successful emerge in the UK. Despite not naming it as one of the eight sectors if the UK industry, the strategy acknowledges the freight and logistics sector's vital contribution to the economy and includes

	<p>specific links and supporting strategies for its development.</p> <p>The Freight Strategy will support the industrial strategy by connecting people (business to customers and access to a workforce) and business (business to business) together, thereby, enabling the ambitions of the industrial strategy to be realised through connected businesses and freight and logistics networks.</p>
Carbon Budget and Growth Delivery Plan (2025)	<p>A target pathway to reducing carbon emissions and reach net zero by 2050 and looking at how we can met our carbon budgets to met the net zero ambition.</p> <p>Transport has an important role to play, and the strategy includes a priority area on decarbonisation across both business to business and business to customer operations.</p>
Decarbonising Transport: A Green Britain (2021)	<p>Sets out path to achieving a net zero transportation system in the UK.</p> <p>The decarbonisation of freight is an investment priority area for the East Sussex Freight Strategy, thereby assisting the journey towards achieving net-zero across all freight operations.</p>
Inclusive Transport Strategy (2018)	<p>This Strategy sets out the Government's plans to make our transport system more inclusive, and to make travel easier for disabled people.</p> <p>The freight strategy acknowledges the role that home (business to customer) deliveries have in helping people who are less able to leave their homes have access to shopping and retail offers. It also explores opportunities to reduce the number of vehicles on the highway, helping promote safer walking, wheeling and cycling.</p>
Clean Growth Strategy (2017)	<p>The Clean Growth Strategy aims to balance the UK's economic growth with reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Accelerating the shift to low carbon transport is identified as one of the key policy priority areas, with fixed targets and</p>

	<p>funding set out to carry out decarbonisation across a range of transport modes.</p> <p>The freight strategy sets decarbonisation opportunities and aspirations for the freight industry. Thereby supporting the clean growth strategy.</p>
Climate Change Act (2008)	<p>Sets targets for UK greenhouse gas emission reductions of at least 100% by 2050, against a 1990 baseline (this was previously 80% but was updated to a net zero target in June 2019). The Act also provides a system of carbon budgeting and the development of a National Adaptation Programme.</p> <p>Supporting the Climate Change Act is demonstrated by the investment priority on decarbonisation within this freight strategy.</p>

5 Roles and responsibilities

No single organisation will be solely responsible for delivering the East Sussex Freight Strategy. Across the county, multiple organisations have different responsibilities for the provision of transport infrastructure and services and spatial planning and economic development, all of which shape the county's communities, and influence how goods are moved to, from, within, and through the county. Successful implementation of the Freight Strategy will depend on collaboration among key stakeholders, who must work transparently, cooperatively, and proactively to evaluate and execute identified options.

Key organisations

East Sussex County Council

Where East Sussex County Council does not take a lead role, we will play an advocacy role on all schemes, supporting pre-feasibility work, identifying funding and likely appropriate delivery partners and other key stakeholders. We will work with partners for onward business case and scheme development, and support applications and bids to secure funding. With the creation of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton and the proposed local government reorganisation across the Sussex and Brighton to create new unitary authorities across the geography, the roles in relation to freight currently undertaken by the County Council will move across to these new organisations.

The County Council are also members of the Wider South East Freight Forum. This forum was developed by Transport for the South East (TfSE), England's Economic Heartland (EEH) and Transport East (TE) and brings together freight and logistics industry representatives such as Logistics UK, the Road Haulage Association, local authorities, business representatives, and ports and airports, with recognition that the movement of goods does not stop at borders. The County Council was invited to present at the June 2025 meeting to share their learning on the development of the East Sussex Freight strategy.

With proposed local government reorganisation across Sussex and Brighton, the local planning functions will revert to the newly created unitary authorities (see paragraph 5.7 below).

Any updates or changes that arise in relation to the MCCA or local government reorganisation that take place after the Freight Strategy is adopted will be updated as appropriate.

Local planning authorities

At present, the district and borough councils of Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes, Rother, Wealden, and the South Downs National Park Authority, as local planning authorities (LPAs), have a role to play in delivering the Freight Strategy. Their role is around securing and safeguarding sites for freight related activity including, but not limited to, rest stops and lorry parking (including vehicle charging), consolidation

centres, depots, and intermodal goods terminals. They will also help identify any required infrastructure associated with these sites. As set out in paragraph 5.7 below, with proposed local government reorganisation across Sussex and Brighton, the local planning functions will revert to the newly created unitary authorities.

Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) for Sussex and Brighton and new unitary authorities - emerging

The establishment of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton with an elected Mayor from May 2026, and local government reorganisation across West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Sussex will change the powers and funding for strategic planning, transport and economic growth from central government. Focusing this strategy on the types of freight related measures that the County Council, and in the near future the Mayor and new unitary authorities (alongside partners), can develop and deliver, will ensure that we are in a stronger position to either respond to any changes to local powers. It will also enable us to confidently lobby or apply for future funding from the MCCA and government.

Central Government

Central government will play a significant role in delivering many of the packages of interventions and investment priorities in this plan. This includes the Department for Transport (DfT), but also other government departments and their agencies (e.g. HM Treasury, National Highways, Network Rail and the emerging Great British Railways, and Active Travel England). Central Government's role will include:

- Setting national policy for wide-ranging topics including climate change and new technology regulation,
- Setting investment and business case development frameworks to guide the planning and delivery of interventions (e.g. Green Book appraisal),
- Guiding the development and delivery of nationally significant infrastructure and networks (e.g. through setting National Policy Statements),
- Regulating the transport system (including economic and safety regulation), and
- In some cases, funding interventions.

The DfT, in their 2022 [‘Future of Freight: A Long Term Plan’](#), highlight that the most pressing national priorities - from building back after the pandemic and levelling up, to reducing our greenhouse emissions - all rely on the freight sector. Freight contributes £127 billion to the UK economy each year and supports £400 billion in manufacturing sales (National Infrastructure Commission, Better Delivery the Challenge for Freight, P5 and P10). With growth in the number of freight and logistics jobs and the significance of freight in its impact on the UK's overall carbon emissions, it is imperative that new technology is adopted to help reduce carbon emissions.

Network Rail, Great British Railways and freight operators

The British rail industry is currently undergoing one of the most significant periods of structural reform of the last three decades. The Secretary of State (SoS) for Transport will set the rail strategy, and it will be delivered through Great British Railways (GBR).

It is planned that GBR will lead the future development of the rail network in Great Britain and specify future infrastructure and service needs. It will lead delivery of the strategic rail schemes identified to deliver service enhancements which will improve connectivity within, to and from East Sussex and to other regions. However, this is all still subject to the publication of the consultation response and passing of the Parliamentary Bill for Rail Reform.

Freight operating companies operate the freight train services on the rail network. Government is backing the shift of freight from road to rail – with a 75% growth target carried by rail by 2050 (DfT, [Rail Freight Growth Target Policy Paper](#)). Each freight train removes 76 lorries from our roads, which could result in around 1 billion fewer HGV miles every year.

National Highways

National Highways (NH) lead the development and delivery of highway interventions on the strategic road network (SRN), which in East Sussex includes:

- A21 north of Hastings to the border with Kent (A21 in Hastings Borough is the responsibility of East Sussex County Council).
- A26 between Lewes and Newhaven.
- A27 between Falmer and Pevensey (Pevensey Bay roundabout).
- A259 from Pevensey (Pevensey Bay roundabout) to the east of Rye (except through Hastings Borough which is the responsibility of East Sussex County Council).

NH's will support interventions where the SRN interfaces with local transport authority highways. They will utilise their internal project control framework to develop the business cases for highways interventions.

For National Highways, the Road Investment Strategy (RIS) forms the basis of their funding and work programmes in five-year periods, the next starting in April 2026 and running to March 2031. Most monies are pre-committed, and for a project to secure funding, inclusion within a RIS is strongly desirable.

Transport for the South East

Transport for the South East (TfSE) are the sub-national transport body for the South East of England. Their purpose is to determine what investment is needed to transform our region's transport system and drive economic growth. In respect of freight, TfSE has published a [Freight Logistics and International Gateways Strategy](#) (2022) which identifies where and what level of investment is needed to better connect the region's cities, towns, villages, ports, airports and international rail links,

supporting sustainable economic growth in the South East and across the UK, which is supported by their recently adopted 2025 Transport Strategy. It also provides an action plan to deliver the strategy.

The [TfSE Intermodal Freight Strategy](#) aims to improve the sustainability, efficiency, and capacity of freight movement in the region, with a key focus on increasing rail-based intermodal transport. Recent studies highlight the region's lack of suitable sites for intermodal rail interchanges, which could constrain efforts to meet rail freight growth targets. The strategy's overall goals include decarbonisation, reducing road congestion, and improving connectivity at/to international gateways, notably ports and airports.

TfSE has also produced a [lorry parking study](#) (2024) which identifies the need for more lorry parking across their geography. TfSE are also developing an Intermodal Rail Freight Strategy, the aim of which is to support the Government's 75% rail freight growth target by identifying potential opportunities for increasing the volume of intermodal freight that can be transferred from road to rail networks across the TfSE area.

Other local authorities

It is important to work closely with those authorities who adjoin East Sussex, since freight movements are not contained within the county. Strategic consideration of freight for longer journeys most likely to be made by road and rail are therefore of importance. Whilst much of this will be covered by TfSE, separate discussions with the counties, unitary authorities and potentially the district and borough councils adjoining East Sussex will need to be undertaken. The other authorities that the County Council liaise with will change over time with the wider local government reorganisation proposals in these adjacent areas.

Business partnerships

Many businesses are responsible for the transportation of goods into, out of, around and through the county for deliveries to both the business(es) itself, and the customers they serve. It is important for businesses to consider how they contribute to the volume of freight movements on the transport network, and how this can be minimised, or made more sustainable – including by reducing the number and frequency of movements, and the mode of transportation utilised, i.e. how many emissions are generated.

Industry bodies

Logistics UK represent their Members from the UK's road, rail, air and sea industry, as well as buyers and manufacturers of the freight service. They lobby Government, representing the business needs of logistics, with a unified voice.

The Road Haulage Association (RHA) represent road haulage businesses to manage their operations and protect their commercial interests. They work with Government and local authorities on national and local policy.

The United Road Transport Union (URTU) represents drivers and other distribution and logistics workers in the UK. They represent the workforce by campaigning, negotiating and lobbying for fair pay and improved working conditions including safety, and the conditions to support equal opportunities in the industry.

Freight operators

These companies transport goods from one location to another by road, rail, sea or air. They can be represented and advised by Logistics UK or (in respect of roads specifically) the Road Haulage Association. The operators are responsible for the transport and logistic activities relating to the movement of goods, as well as fleet management and route optimisation. Examples of freight hauliers include supermarkets, removal firms, logistics firms (e.g. Stobart) and smaller independent hauliers. There are also goods delivery firms such as Amazon, DPD, DHL etc. who transport goods over long distances to regional centres for delivery in the county.

Freight decarbonisation

Decarbonisation of the region's freight networks will require the involvement of a range of specialist organisations. Examples include

- National Energy System Operator (NESO) and UK Power Networks as the areas Distribution Network Operator (DNO),
- the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ),
- the National Highways Climate and Carbon Team,
- Zero Emission Heavy Goods Vehicles and Infrastructure (ZEHID), and
- the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV).

Governance

East Sussex County Council will establish appropriate governance to oversee the development, delivery and benefits realisation arising from schemes and policies included in this strategy.

This approach will utilise the stakeholder groups established as part of the development of LTP4 and this Freight Strategy, which will support the monitoring of the strategy.

The County Council is a member of TfSE's Partnership Board, and has the ability to guide the development and approval of regional strategies and policies. East Sussex County Council will also continue to engage with central government departments associated with the delivery of transport policy, such as the Department for Transport (DfT), and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Other national agencies such as NH and NR (alongside the emerging GBR) have responsibilities for freight and logistics within East Sussex. As such, the County Council will advocate for policy and investment that delivers on the objectives of this strategy.

LTP4 sets a range of [objectives](#) guiding the management and continued development to local transport across the county. This freight strategy will constitute a vital element of LTP4. The County Council will work collaboratively with its Local Planning Authorities to integrate the needs of freight and logistics within the delivery of their statutory Local Plans and ensure they prioritise the infrastructure required.

The nature of freight and logistics means industry and business, alongside members of the public, influence freight demand and movements. The County Council and partners will engage effectively with these stakeholders to facilitate behavioural change and mitigate impacts. It is important that the vision of the County Council and the stakeholders align to strengthen the future of the freight routeing network in, out of, through and around East Sussex.

This strategy, much like LTP4, will not be 'owned' or be the sole responsibility of the County Council, but by all those who are affected by freight operations in the county. Therefore, it is important to understand what our stakeholders can bring to the table which supports their and our aspirations for freight. We recognise that this will not, and cannot be, a one size fits all approach, and must therefore be adaptable to different scenarios and localities.

6 Investment priority areas

This section firstly sets out the policy context, evidence and opportunities under each of the identified investment priority areas that partners will seek funding for to enable these to be studied, developed and delivered over the life of the strategy.

Secondly, a list of priorities is presented under each of the priority area showing those that the County Council and their partners seek to study, develop and/or deliver in the short-term (over the next five years to 2030).

The areas and details of investment priorities outlined in this plan are not exhaustive. As the East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) and this freight strategy are live documents, other investment priorities will and are likely to emerge. These will be supported through the development and delivery process as appropriate.

Investment priorities detailed within this section are intentionally presented at a high-level. It is important to note that as these investment priority areas progress through the study, develop and deliver stages the level of available detail will increase, priorities will become more defined through the consideration of options, and a preferred and deliverable option confirmed.

Where appropriate, priorities signpost to modal strategies and other locations where further information on scheme types are outlined. These signposted locations include, and are not limited to, the following:

- [Transport for the South East](#) Strategic Investment Plan, Transport Strategy, and modal strategies,
- [East Sussex Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan](#),
- Rail Strategy,
- Electric Vehicle Strategy (under development),
- Current local planning authority Local Plans and Infrastructure Delivery Plans ([Eastbourne](#), [Hastings](#), [Lewes](#), [Rother](#), [South Downs National Park](#) and [Wealden](#)), and
- [Newhaven Port Masterplan](#).

In their co-ordination role for the delivery of LTP4, the County Council will maintain a schedule of identified investment priorities, as well as a schedule of the options that are being progressed through the study, develop and deliver stages. These schedules will be updated in collaboration with key development and delivery partners for both the East Sussex LTP4 and freight strategy, as well as the other modal strategies. These will be summarised within future LTP4 monitoring reports as appropriate.

Investment Priority Area 1: Strategic freight movements

Freight and logistics activities rely on efficient and integrated road, railway, and short-sea and coastal networks to support the reliable movement of goods between

international gateways, manufacturing centres, distribution centres and end-users (businesses, shops or individual residential properties).

Policy Context

The [National Highways Long-term Strategic Plan to 2050](#) (published 2023), recognises how England's motorways and major A-roads support freight and logistics activities. Vehicle charging and fuelling infrastructure, HGV parking and overnight rest areas are required to support these activities. These need to be accessible from motorways and A roads.

The Department for Transport (DfT) supports modal shift to rail and inland water by its [Mode Shift Revenue Support scheme](#), which assists operators with the additional operating costs associated with using these modes instead of road.

The DfT [Future for Freight: a Long Term Plan](#) (2022) sets out government and the freight sector's joint response to the challenges of planning and land allocation, securing the future of the sector, and harnessing technology and data to meet future rising demand.

To achieve this, it will look at a National Freight Network, future energy and fuel needs for the sector, alongside exploring planning reform opportunities, increasing awareness of career opportunities in the freight sector, and, with a £7m Freight Innovation Fund, maximise the use of technology and data across freight and logistics. All this will be overseen by the Freight Council which will hold government and the freight sector to account. The DfT is in the process of developing a new freight plan, and once this is available further detail can be provided in future iterations of this strategy.

The [Government's National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) – paragraph 114 (published 2024) - states that Planning policies and decisions should recognise the importance of providing adequate overnight lorry parking facilities, taking into account any local shortages, to reduce the risk of parking in locations that lack proper facilities or could cause a nuisance. Proposals for new or expanded distribution centres should make provision for sufficient lorry parking to cater for their anticipated use.

Regionally, the [Transport for the South East's Freight, Logistics and Gateways Strategy](#) (FLAGS) (2022) presents the importance of the South East's infrastructure in national supply chains. This infrastructure includes busy motorways, major A-road, and rail networks, alongside a variety of rail and port-based international gateways.

TfSE has also recently published a [Lorry Parking Study](#), and a [Warehousing Provision Study](#). TfSE's FLAGS identifies a number of issues in relation to the freight infrastructure in the TfSE area and presents a variety of strategic actions to address them by TfSE and their constituent local authorities and national delivery partners'. TfSE have also recently published their [Intermodal Freight Strategy](#).

Rail freight currently accounts for around [10% of surface freight moved across Britain](#), providing extensive environmental, economic, and social benefits in comparison to using the road network. In 2023, the DfT announced a [target to grow rail freight \(tonne kilometres\) by 75% by 2050](#).

Transport for the South East are also studying opportunities for intermodal freight. In East Sussex existing rail freight movements are limited due in part to relatively few sites where freight rail can access (e.g. Mountfield Freight Depot for gypsum, Newhaven Energy Recovery Facility for the removal of bottom ash and Newhaven Port), largely due to gauging and pathing challenges. Additionally, there are limited fewer rail paths available to freight due to passenger train demand on the rail network in the south east including in East Sussex.

Evidence

While data is not available at an East Sussex level, due to the limited availability of rail freight in the county it is likely that the road freight share is similar to if not higher than the UK road freight share. Consequently, future freight and logistics activities are likely to continue to rely heavily on the strategic road network, including motorways and major A-roads.

A range of major A-roads cross East Sussex, including:

- The **A259** (Havant/Emsworth (Hampshire) to Folkestone (Kent) via Chichester, Bognor Regis, Worthing, Brighton, Eastbourne, Hastings & Rye). Connections are available to the A27/M27 in the west and M20 in the east, along with north-south corridors of the A21 (Hastings), A26 (Newhaven) and A23 (Brighton) (in addition to other key north-south corridors in West Sussex and Hampshire).
- The A27 (Polegate/Pevensey (East Sussex) to Whiteparish (Wiltshire) via Lewes, Brighton, Worthing, Chichester, Portsmouth and Southampton). Connections are available to the A259 at Pevensey in the east and the M27 in the west at Havant/Emsworth along with north-south corridors of the A26 (Beddingham/Lewes) and A23 (Brighton) (in addition to other key north-south corridors in West Sussex and Hampshire),
- The A21 connecting Hastings to Lewisham (London) via the M25 junction 5 (M25/M26 interchange near Sevenoaks).
- The A22 connecting Eastbourne/Polegate to Purley (London) via Hailsham & Uckfield and the M25 at junction 6 (Godstone).
- The A26 connecting Newhaven to the A27 at Beddingham near Lewes, and continuing north-east towards Maidstone in Kent via Uckfield and Tunbridge Wells

Within East Sussex, these strategic and major A-roads are mostly single carriageway exhibiting low levels of resilience towards congestion, with consequential impacts on strategic freight movement. The lack of dedicated HGV

parking along these roads, such as the A27/A259, mean lorries are often parked in lay-bys or industrial estates with limited or no welfare facilities, or within residential urban areas where they may cause disruption or safety issues to the public.

Several key freight routes within, into and out of East Sussex run through town and local centres and residential streets, such as the A26 through Crowborough, and the A259 through Bexhill and Hastings. These routes get congested at peak times as strategic and local highway movements conflict, and present severance and road safety risks within these communities.

Newhaven Port rail terminal was reactivated in 2020 and has seen growth in supporting the movement of aggregates and other bulk materials, with freight movements extending nationally and replacing a large number of HGV trips which may have happened otherwise. The Port handled 1,011 thousand tonnes of freight in 2024, up from 689 tonnes in 2018 ([DfT Port annual freight statistics](#)- table port0101).

[Transport for the South East's Lorry Parking Study](#) concludes that there is currently a shortage of an estimated 1,528 HGV parking spaces on the SRN and non-SRN across the TfSE area. This shortage in provision is forecast to increase to 4,019 HGV parking spaces by 2040.

Opportunities

LTP4 identifies targeted improvements to road, rail, and port infrastructure to optimise the efficient flow of strategic freight movements.

These improvements will help maximise the economic benefits of strategic freight movement, boosting local economies through job creation, business attraction, and supporting supply chain efficiency, which reduces freight costs for businesses. whilst minimising congestion and emissions and also improve road safety and driver welfare. Local planning authorities and other partners can lead in delivering appropriate infrastructure, such as vehicle charging and fuelling infrastructure, alongside HGV rest stops and parking areas on the strategic road network.

The County Council can work alongside local planning authorities to identify and protect rail heads and other infrastructure required to support mode shift from road to rail or water.

The freight and logistics industry can work with partners to support the delivery of infrastructure such as consolidation hubs or rail freight interchanges to optimise the efficiency of movements.

East Sussex Routing Network

East Sussex County Council recognises the constraints of the strategic and major road network in the county, meaning that they have to carry both strategic (longer distance) and local traffic.

We also recognise that some of the routes, specifically the A21 and A27 on the SRN (managed by NH's) and sections of the A22, A259 and A26 as part of the MRN (which are the most economically important A class roads managed by the County

Council as the local highway authority) pass through several villages and/or larger towns (for example, the A259 through Newhaven and the A259 through Bexhill and Hastings). This can have impacts on people living within these areas in terms of severance, increased noise, and air quality issues.

East Sussex County Council has introduced restrictions on a small number of especially unsuitable roads for the movement of freight within the County, in accordance with the East Sussex County Council policy - Control of Heavy Goods Vehicles' policy PS4/5. These restrictions prohibit HGV's using certain routes and have been applied using a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO).

In considering a potential prohibition for HGV movements, the following issues are considered:

- Is there a more suitable alternative route available?
- Can this route be adequately signed?
- What level of enforcement is available by the Police who have to follow the offending vehicle through the entry and terminal point of the restriction in order to enforce?
- What is the real extent of the problem – where is the evidence to support the claims of increased HGV use?
- How many of these HGVs would be impacted by a prohibition (origin/destination or number plate surveys would be required for each road under consideration)?
- What are the economic impacts – how would any prohibition affect local businesses which form part of our rural economy?
- What is the environmental impact of additional signage, the cost of implementing the necessary TRO and the whole life cost of maintaining the signs both at the restriction as well as the alternative route signing?

However, it is important to note that HGVs are still able to use these roads where HGV restrictions are in place for legitimate access reasons, for example deliveries to residential properties as well as access to local businesses.

As part of the development of the freight strategy we have reviewed whether we are able to amend our policy 'Control of HGV's policy PS4/5' which highlights the need for the use of both A & B roads in the county being available to carry heavy lorries.

Whilst consideration has been given to introduce a freight routing network so that HGVs be redirected away from B class roads through villages, this would place additional pressures on the limited A roads in the county, impacting on overall journey times for all road users, increasing journey times for HGV drivers and costs for operators (which in turn may be passed onto customers) due to vehicles having to take a longer distance and timed route.

Given these impacts, and the current limited and inconsistent quality of the A road network in the county, on balance that the County Council propose that the

approach to the routing of freight vehicles in the county remains unchanged. Therefore heavy goods vehicles will continue to be allowed to use and disperse over the available A and B class road network, rather than to concentrate HGVs on selected roads. The County Council appreciate the impacts that this may have on some communities in the county. Accordingly, we recognise that further work needs to be undertaken to get a deeper understanding of the impacts on local communities, as these will vary depending on location and characteristics of the locality.

The strategy therefore highlights opportunities – in the short-term - that could begin to alleviate some of the issues that this policy has on affected communities. By working with local communities and partners, the County Council will explore:

More strategic measures - such as improving the consideration of freight and logistics through the development of spatial development strategies and local plans, and

At a more localised level - opportunities for the development of small freight consolidation centres, combined with, or through, standalone sustainable last mile freight movement(s) (i.e. cargo bikes) within town and village centres.

Further measures to support this are highlighted in investment priority areas 3 & 4.

We propose that as the delivery of this strategy evolves, this policy will be reviewed periodically.

Investment priorities

Ongoing initiatives

The following activities to improve the efficiency of strategic freight movements are being undertaken:

- Inputting into national and regional consultations pertinent to facilitating efficient strategic freight movements, and
- Working with local planning authorities (district, boroughs and South Downs National Park Authority) to ensure the needs of the freight and logistics industry are integrated within their local plans.

New initiatives

A key outcome of investment is to effectively manage the routing of HGV traffic to ensure that such movements remain on the SRN network for as much of its journey as possible, such that they are fast, reliable, safe, and minimise their impact and disruption to our communities and our natural and historic environments. East Sussex has existing policies in place to support management of HGV routing. The current policy is for A and B roads to be used as the preferred freight routing network. The agreed recommendation in the 25 September 2023 Lead Member for Transport and Environment report was for the freight routing network to be reviewed as part of LTP4 development.

This Freight Strategy has been developed subsequent to the adoption of LTP4, and the preferred freight routing network has been considered as part of this process. As highlighted above, it is proposed as part of this consultation on the draft strategy to continue with the policy of allowing freight to use to disperse over the available A and B class road network across the county, unless there are environment or weight restrictions in place, rather than to concentrate HGVs on selected roads. Even with any such environment or weight restrictions in place, freight vehicles will be able to use these roads for access purposes (e.g. to businesses or residential properties for deliveries).

Despite ongoing initiatives, there are several capability and knowledge gaps preventing the identification, business case development and delivery of strategic freight schemes in East Sussex. Gaps include knowledge between freight, the freight sector, local planning authorities, and local transport authorities.

To help address these gaps, the tables below present an action plan that highlights the short-term initiatives that could be progressed to help identify and facilitate the delivery of longer-term schemes which facilitate strategic multi-modal freight movements. These are presented by the level of influence East Sussex County Council has.

(Please note that this section is likely to require further updates following the emergence of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton and creation of new unitary authorities across the West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Sussex geography through local government reorganisation)

Led by East Sussex County Council

These are schemes where East Sussex County Council has greater influence and can help directly develop and/or deliver the intervention, subject to securing funding.

Name	FS02 - Mapping of strategic freight and logistics infrastructure in East Sussex
Initiative	Identify opportunities for optimising movements, through targeted delivery of infrastructure, such as rail freight interchanges, or highway enhancements, and identification of land for potential use.
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study – Short-term (up to 2030) • Develop – Short-term (up to 2030) • Deliver– Short-term (up to 2030)
Key partners	Lead <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Sussex County Council • Transport for the South East • Local Authorities • Freight and logistics industry • Businesses

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freight industry suppliers and customers
LTP4 Investment Priority(ies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LP15: Logistics

Name	FS03 - Mapping and impact analysis of freight activity hotspots and safety issues.
Initiative	Identify opportunities for improving safety, such as through reconfiguration of highways (which could segregate freight and local traffic), modal shift and retiming to smooth flows.
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study – Short-term (up to 2030) Develop – Short-term (up to 2030) Deliver– Short-term (up to 2030)
Key partners	<p>Lead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> East Sussex County Council Transport for the South East Freight and logistics industry Local Authorities <p>Supporting partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Businesses Parish/ town councils Road safety groups Sussex Police Freight industry suppliers and customers
LTP4 Investment Priority(ies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LP15: Logistics

Name	FS04 -Route signage and wayfinding strategy
Initiative	Review existing movements, signage, identify optimal routing and deliver changes to ensure appropriate freight routes are adhered to by operators
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study – short-term (up to 2030) Develop – To be confirmed Deliver - To be confirmed
Key partners	<p>Lead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> East Sussex County Council Transport for the South East Freight and logistics industry Local Authorities <p>Supporting partners</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses • Freight industry suppliers and customers
LTP4 Investment Priority(ies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP15: Logistics • CP02: Signage and wayfinding

Advocated by East Sussex County Council

These are schemes where East Sussex County Council does not lead on development and/or delivery but is a key partner to successful delivery.

Name	FS01 - Enhanced freight connectivity to Gatwick
Initiative	Work with partners to promote and, as appropriate, implement freight network improvements to/from Gatwick Airport.
Indicative cost	£10m to £100m
Development timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study – Short-term (up to 2030) • Develop – To be confirmed • Deliver - To be confirmed
Key partners	<p>Lead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gatwick Airport • Transport for the South East • Network Rail <p>Supporting partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Sussex County Council • West Sussex County Council • Freight industry suppliers and customers
LTP4 Investment Priority(ies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP15: Logistics

Name	FS05 - Work with partners to determine and safeguard potential location of lorry parking facilities (including alternative fuelling)
Initiative	<p>Identify need for lorry parking to understand need to control the flow of goods in and out of nearby centres, ensuring that local businesses receive timely deliveries based on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) surveys identifying where parking is already taking place, 2) surveys capturing driver's needs and welfare facilities, and 3) surveys from Local Authorities and businesses 4) potential sites for lorry parking to be included in Local Plans
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study – short -term (up to 2030)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop – To be confirmed • Deliver - To be confirmed
Key partners	Lead <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Highways • Freight and logistics industry • Local planning authorities • Transport for the South East Supporting partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Sussex County Council • Freight industry suppliers and customers • Businesses • Landowners
LTP4 Investment Priority(ies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP13: Local planning • LP15: Logistics

Name	FS07 - Assess rail routes and infrastructure for freight capacity
Potential investment	Ensure that existing and potential rail routes and supporting infrastructure can enable growing freight operations (bulk and intermodal rail freight)
Indicative cost	£10 to £100m
Development timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study – short -term (up to 2030) • Develop – To be confirmed • Deliver - To be confirmed
Key partners	Lead <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Rail • Rail freight operators Supporting partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Sussex County Council • Train operating companies
LTP4 Investment Priority(ies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP06: Multimodal opportunities (freight)

Supported by East Sussex County Council

These are schemes where East Sussex County Council is not leading or a partner on the development and/or delivery. We will remain supportive of the lead and key partners in the delivery of the intervention. Whilst we may have a limited role in delivery, these interventions are part of the wider picture to improve travelling by for all users.

Name	FS06 - Increase the capability and capacity of rail freight terminal at Newhaven Port
Potential investment	Ensure rail freight is the primary mode of onward travel for freight to/from the port to minimise adverse impacts on local environment

Indicative cost	£10 to £100m
Development timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study – short -term (up to 2030) • Develop – To be confirmed • Deliver - To be confirmed
Key partners	<p>Lead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Port of Newhaven • Network Rail <p>Supporting partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Sussex County Council • Rail Freight Operators • Transport for the South East • Freight and logistics industry
LTP4 Investment Priority(ies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP06: Multimodal opportunities (freight)

Investment Priority area 2: Decarbonisation

The decarbonisation of the region's freight networks is vital for East Sussex in meeting its carbon emissions commitments. The release and uptake of low and zero-emission Large Goods Vehicle's (LGV's) and HGVs is slow in comparison to smaller vehicles. East Sussex County Council and other partners with the responsibility of managing highway infrastructure or operating fleet vehicles regularly on the network (NH, Newhaven Port, Borough and Districts) have the opportunity to enable the delivery of low and zero-emission vehicle charging and fuelling infrastructure, enabling operators and other partners to decarbonise.

Policy Context

The Government has an obligation to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050 through the Climate Change Act 2008, updated in 2019. The County Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, with a commitment to reach net zero emissions from their own operations as soon as possible, and in any event by 2050. East Sussex borough and district councils have made commitments to become net zero by 2030 (Hastings, Eastbourne, Rother and Lewes) or 2050 (Wealden). Transport remains the largest contributor to carbon emissions, with HGVs comprising a growing proportion of emissions as smaller, lighter on-road vehicles decarbonise at a faster rate.

The Government's [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) (published 2024) states that planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations that allow for the efficient and reliable handling of goods, especially where this is needed to support the supply chain, transport innovation and decarbonisation.

The DfT's [Decarbonising Transport Plan](#) (published 2021) sets out the broad strategy for transport nationally. The [Future of Freight Plan](#) (published 2022) sets out a strategy for decarbonising freight which includes an emphasis on the uptake of battery electric vehicles, as well as the use of low carbon fuels and hydrogen. New HGVs under 26 tonnes bought from 2035 must be zero-emission, and new HGVs over 26 tonnes bought from 2040 must be zero-emission.

TfSE has committed to reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, with its [Freight, Logistics and Gateways Strategy](#) (published 2022) considering freight-specific regional opportunities and challenges for decarbonisation. TfSE will be developing the Alternative Fuels for Freight Infrastructure (ALFFI) tool to support with the identification of potential areas to place publicly accessible goods vehicle charging and refuelling hubs, including alternatives like hydrogen and biomethane.

Further to a UK-France summit held 9-10 July 2025, the United Kingdom and France agreed to deepen their collaboration on transport. A [declaration](#) was agreed between the two countries which includes co-operation on transport decarbonisation, including maritime decarbonisation and zero emission vehicles. Shared goals include

reducing maritime emissions to zero by 2050, as well as reducing the impacts of shipping on the wider environment.

Developing a strong framework for maritime decarbonisation on both sides of the Channel will enable the industry to introduce projects, such as green corridors, to demonstrate how new fuels, technologies and approaches will define the industry in the future. Both countries will share best practice on port and maritime decarbonisation policy as it develops, as well as the impacts of shipping on the wider environment.

Evidence

Freight vehicles make up a disproportionately high share of overall transport emissions relative to other vehicles moving on East Sussex's Road networks. In 2022, HGVs and LGVs accounted for [7% and 16% of vehicle miles travelled](#), but [26% and 16% of emissions](#) respectively.

In 2023, only around [0.5% of new UK HGV registrations, or 234 vehicles, were zero-emission](#). Almost all of these were battery electric, given hydrogen fuel cell HGVs remain in their infancy and have currently only seen extremely limited use globally within highly specific operating models. Low carbon fuels, such as biofuels, are only seen as a stopgap for operators to make use of existing vehicle fleets. Although other fuel types will be effective in delivering decarbonisation, there is a developing consensus that the main policy focus will be on the uptake of battery-electric vehicles.

Opportunities

The approach to decarbonising freight movements will look very different depending on the length of the haul (trip), i.e. whether it is a longer haul, strategic goods movement, or if it is a shorter haul, urban last-mile goods movement.

For longer trips, the accelerated uptake of electric, hydrogen and low-carbon fuelled freight vehicles is necessary. However, technological innovation and adoption is slower and is likely to take several years before electric HGVs are the norm. This is unlike cars and LGVs where the technology is maturing faster and there is a clearer trajectory for decarbonisation.

[The Seventh Carbon Budget - Climate Change Committee](#) Section 7.1 - Surface Transport states that the Government should work with major van fleet operators to better understand the barriers to electric van take-up, which is lagging, and quickly implement policies to overcome this. The Green Finance Institute, [Delivering Net Zero: Unlocking Public and Private Capital for Zero Emission Trucks](#), 2023 focuses on unlocking the barriers to financing decarbonisation of the HGV sector.

Shifting to rail freight is an opportunity which may only be applicable for a select proportion of freight flows where rail can also be commercially competitive, and the existing network can facilitate the flow (i.e. available rail gauge and train paths).

Where appropriate, rail can be a more efficient way of moving a large quantity of goods over longer distances, with a [freight train being able to carry up to the same load as 129 HGVs](#), with one tonne of freight by rail producing a quarter of emissions than via road. This can reduce carbon footprint for environmentally conscious consumers and remove HGV movements off our roads potentially creating faster and reliable journeys for road users.

Rail freight is commonly used for the transport of bulk materials or containerised goods – and often for less time sensitive deliveries, although emerging operators have been re-purposing passenger trains for courier-type purposes. Where suitable port infrastructure and waterways exist, large amounts of freight could be transported by short-sea shipping and can be much more carbon efficient than by road. However, financial support is often needed for operators to shift to rail or water in the form of the DfT's Mode Shift Revenue Support scheme.

In urban areas, the [development of consolidation centres](#) and [uptake of e-cargo bikes](#) and similar electric vehicles shifting from fossil fuel powered cars and vans has the potential to be particularly impactful. However, [regional electricity grid capacity](#) remains a considerable constraint for charging infrastructure, particularly when considering other electricity requirements, such as charging for electric vehicles, heating via domestic heat pumps, and servicing intermittent generation.

Investment priorities

Ongoing initiatives

The following activities to accelerate the transition to net-zero freight are:

- East Sussex County Council's engagement with TfSE and their Wider South East Freight Forum,
- Inputting into the TfSE's Inland Waterway and Coastal Shipping Freight studies, and
- Inputting into national and regional consultations pertinent to facilitating the roll-out of zero emission freight vehicles.

New initiatives

Whilst appreciating much of the national policy and technology evolution governing the decarbonisation of freight is outside the direct control of the County Council, there are several scenarios where they can play a pivotal role in the development and delivery.

For decarbonising strategic freight trips, suggestions include the promotion of innovative new ideas through identifying opportunities for pilot projects within the region, such as those that increase the use of rail and waterborne freight. Also, the County Council can support partners in the delivery of freight-specific alternative fuelling and EV charging infrastructure.

For decarbonising local freight trips, the County Council can also support the decarbonisation of last mile journeys. This can be done through the development of

logistics hubs and micro-consolidation centres, utilising low or zero-emission vehicles for last-mile delivery into urban centres, the actions for which are captured under the urban logistics action plan. Such actions will also require the support of local planning authorities in allocating locations for such hubs or consolidation centres in their Local Plans.

The County Council can directly support the decarbonisation of freight through its procurement function, encouraging the uptake of zero-emission freight vehicles used in contracts such as for waste and street-cleansing, servicing and delivery. For example, the East Sussex highways contractor – Balfour Beatty Living Places – has a bank of electric charge points at its main depot at Ringmer, and a fleet of electric vehicles available for its day to day operations.

The County Council can work with borough and district councils in making the case for strategic charging and fuelling infrastructure, alongside working with Transport for the South East, national forums and the private sector, to support the accelerated rollout of zero-emission vehicles and supporting infrastructure. By providing reliable infrastructure, partners can play a pivotal role in influencing freight and logistics businesses to transition their fleets faster.

The tables below present an action plan which highlights the short-term initiatives that could support the development and delivery of freight decarbonisation. These are presented by the level of influence East Sussex County Council has.

(Please note that this section is likely to require further updates following the emergence of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton and creation of new unitary authorities across the West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Sussex geography through local government reorganisation)

Led by East Sussex County Council

These are schemes where East Sussex County Council has greater influence and can help directly develop and/or deliver the intervention.

Name	FD03 - Zero-emission freight vehicles used for council operations
Initiative	Develop and stipulate a set of zero-emission targets for vehicles within direct control of, or can be influenced by East Sussex County Council, and identify a roadmap for delivery
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study – Short-term (up to 2030) • Develop – Short-term (up to 2030) • Deliver - To be confirmed
Key partners	Lead <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Sussex County Council • Local Authorities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balfour Beattie and other companies contracted to deliver council services
LTP4 Investment Priority(ies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LP15: Logistics CP04: Fuels and air quality

Advocated by East Sussex County Council

These are schemes where East Sussex County Council does not lead on development and/or delivery but is a key partner to successful delivery.

Name	FD02 - Zero-emission freight pilot projects
Initiative	Research and identify opportunities to deliver decarbonisation-specific freight and logistics pilot projects across East Sussex. Examples include Green Freight Corridor, zero emissions last mile zone, and supporting smaller local / industry operations
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study – Short-term Develop – Short-term Deliver– Short-term
Key partners	<p>Lead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport for the South East Freight and logistics industry <p>Supporting partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> East Sussex County Council Local Authorities Private sector electric charge point operators Strategic transport hubs – e.g. Gatwick Airport Vehicle providers Local businesses
LTP4 Investment Priority(ies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LP15: Logistics CP04: Fuels and air quality

Supported by East Sussex County Council

These are schemes where East Sussex County Council is not leading or a partner on the development and/or delivery. We will remain supportive of the lead and key partners in the delivery of the intervention. Whilst we may have a limited role in delivery, these interventions are part of the wider picture to improve travelling for all users.

Name	FD01 - Roll-out of freight electric vehicle charging infrastructure (Commercial van and HGV charging)
Initiative	Undertake a gap analysis of charging and fuelling infrastructure to support the uptake of zero-emission

	freight vehicles. These could co-locate with existing and new consolidation centres. This can include the site, planning and energy requirements.
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study – Short-term (up to 2030) • Develop – Short-term (up to 2030) • Deliver - To be confirmed
Key partners	<p>Lead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local businesses • Private sector EV charging providers • Freight and logistics industry • Transport for the South East <p>Supporting partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local planning authorities • East Sussex County Council
LTP4 Investment Priority(ies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP15: Logistics • CP05: Electric vehicle charging infrastructure

Investment Priority Area 3: Last mile logistics

Traditionally ‘last-mile’ logistics are characterised by the use of diesel fuelled LGVs and vans which impact on air quality and carbon emissions, alongside road safety and quality of the public realm. Modal shift, typically to smaller decarbonised modes, can be facilitated through the use of consolidation centres and e-cargo bikes or other sustainable last mile option.

Policy Context

Policy points towards both the impact of freight and logistics on urban and rural environments, and potential methods to alleviate its impact. This is presented within [the Department for Transport’s Future of Freight Plan](#) (published 2022) which particularly identifies the direct impacts of larger freight vehicles, ranging from increased carbon emissions and congestion, alongside poorer road safety and air quality.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) - Air quality strategy: framework for local authority delivery (2023) sets out how county councils are expected to contribute to district council air quality plans and strategies. In particular, where local authorities are preparing Air Quality Action Plans, and to deliver for communities and contribute to long-term air quality goals.

The primary solutions to the challenges faced by last-mile logistics largely comes down to increasing its efficiency. Through reducing the number of larger vehicles and shifting to smaller, low and zero-emission vehicles, this will help increase safety and health, as well as positive impacts on climate change and air quality, in both rural and urban environments.

The DfT’s [Decarbonising Transport Plan](#) (published 2021) identifies solutions for decarbonisation resulting from improved last-mile logistics efficiencies. For example, through micro-consolidation centres which support the uptake of smaller zero-emission vehicles, such as e-cargo bicycles, or even no vehicle at all with pedestrian couriers making deliveries on foot.

The [Transport for the South East’s Freight, Logistics and Gateways Strategy](#) (published 2022) identifies regional solutions towards improving the efficiency of last mile logistics, such as better local freight and logistics planning, development of micro-consolidation centres, and uptake of e-cargo bicycles.

Evidence

Last mile logistics activities have seen considerable increases in recent years, resulting largely from changes to retail logistics approaches and “just-in-time” deliveries, to increased immediacy for the goods that residents and businesses order. [New van registrations in 2023 saw a 21% year-on-year change compared to 2022](#), whilst other vehicle types generally saw smaller growth, reflecting the multi-purpose nature of vans, but importantly also growing last mile logistics demands.

Historic towns such as Lewes, Battle and Rye are at particular risk from freight traffic due to their unique built environments, narrow carriageways and footways. Freight vehicles can impact vulnerable historic assets directly through vibration, collisions and worsened air quality. The re-timing of delivery activities across the day and week could be effective in improving the efficiency of urban logistics whilst reducing conflicts with others using urban centres.

Lewes District Council has an [Air Quality Action Plan](#) which looks at identifying ways to reduce air pollution, including in Newhaven which has an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). Reducing vehicular emissions by introducing last-mile deliveries would contribute towards achieving this and is reflected in Measure 3 of Table 5.1 (page 45) which is to 'Target long-distance freight management & heavy traffic through town'.

Opportunities

There are a range of challenges regarding HGV and LGV operations, including congestion and slow traffic speeds, challenging driving conditions, road safety and collision concerns, and the increased costs associated with road user charging.

Market led micro-consolidation centres can be effective in reducing HGV and LGV trips in urban centres, with research indicating that their use [reduces trips. For example, this approach in Bristol City Centre suggests that over 75% of](#) HGV movements were avoided .

Micro consolidation centres support the movement of everyday deliveries by smaller zero-emission modes such as cargo bicycles, e-cargo bicycles, and on-foot. E-cargo bicycles are particularly effective in large urban centres, with evidence suggesting that they [can drop ten parcels an hour, in comparison to six by vans](#), whilst cutting carbon emissions by 90%. This is primarily due both to their ability in circumnavigating congestion, and ease in finding suitable parking/stopping places.

Micro-consolidation centres can also be set up in car parks, and by repurposing underutilised public and private-operated car parking spaces. Companies such as Ikea have already established such arrangements with supermarkets to use their car parks for the local collection of larger bulkier goods (furniture), rather than individual deliveries to households or people travelling to the store for collection. Consolidation centres located outside of urban areas can improve construction logistics efficiencies in urban environments through either combining deliveries into larger vehicles or decanting deliveries into smaller vehicles, when appropriate.

There are opportunities for people to pick-up their ordered goods from lockers and collection points (e.g. from local shops, supermarkets, train station), rather than having a delivery to their door.

Investment priorities

Ongoing initiatives

There is current engagement in the following activities to optimise last mile logistics whilst minimising the impact it is having on the local environment:

- Engaging with the TfSE, and
- Inputting into and facilitating the communication of TfSE's guidance on re-timing of deliveries once developed.

New initiatives

Support proposals for new logistics hubs (a central location where goods are collected, sorted, stored, and redistributed to their final destinations) at strategic locations defined and allocated by borough and district councils through their local plans. These new logistics hubs could optimise longer-distance freight movements to and from East Sussex by consolidating strategic freight volumes on a fewer number of vehicles and facilitating the use of alternative modes such as rail and water, the latter for example on HGVs coming to Newhaven Port for the Newhaven-Dieppe ferry service.

Logistics hubs could also create the opportunity to consolidate and re-mode last-mile movements to homes and businesses such that they require fewer trips, can be optimised for distance, and use zero emission vehicles. The logistics hub could also include driver welfare facilities and electric charging points.

Support the business case development for specific market led micro-consolidation hubs to more effectively serve denser urban areas such as Lewes, which attracts high footfall in the summer months making it difficult to service shops and businesses with larger freight vehicles during the day.

These micro-consolidation hubs could be designed in under-utilised car parks on the outskirts of the town. In combination, the County Council and other partners should seek to identify opportunities to undertake pilot projects, such as e-cargo bike 'lending' schemes or similar for town centres and high-streets, in collaboration with businesses. Partners can also support boroughs and districts in retiming their deliveries to quieter times of the day.

East Sussex County Council can also directly reduce the impact of its supply chain activity on its local urban environment through the uptake of smaller zero-emission transport modes for council operations. It can also support borough & district councils to uptake these vehicles for their responsibilities, such as street cleaning, servicing, and delivery contracts.

The tables below present an action plan which highlights the short and longer-term initiatives that could develop, deliver and optimise freight movements in urban areas. These are presented by the level of influence East Sussex County Council has.

(Please note that this section is likely to require further updates following the emergence of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton and creation of new unitary authorities across the West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Sussex geography through local government reorganisation)

Advocated by East Sussex County Council

These are schemes where East Sussex County Council does not lead on development and/or delivery but is a key partner to successful delivery.

Name	FL02 - Air quality and noise mapping
Initiative	Identify areas where air and noise pollution are worst and identify actions to improve, in alignment with existing Air Quality Management Plans (AQMAs)
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study – Short-term (up to 2030) • Develop – Short-term (up to 2030) • Deliver– Short-term (up to 2030)
Key partners	Lead <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Sussex County Council, • Local Authorities
LTP4 Investment Priority(ies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP04: Fuels and air quality

Name	FL01 - Development of strategic last mile logistics hubs
Initiative	Identify suitable locations for strategic last mile logistics hubs to support market led micro consolidation and modal shift to zero emission vehicles, identify requirements from the site, infrastructure required and private sector partners to support delivery and operation Consider the site, planning and energy requirements as part of suitable locations
Indicative cost	£10m to £100m
Development timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study – Short-term (up to 2030) • Develop – To be confirmed • Deliver – To be confirmed
Key partners	Leads <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport for the South East • Local planning authorities • Freight and logistics industry Supporting partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Sussex County Council • Freight industry suppliers and customers • Private sector electric vehicle charging providers • Local businesses
LTP4 Investment Priority(ies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP13: Local planning • LP15: Logistics

Investment Priority Area 4: Planning and policy

The inter-relationship between land-use and transport planning has a direct impact on freight and servicing activities. Consequently, partners involved in spatial planning need to consider the needs of freight and servicing when developing local plans and planning new developments.

Policy Context

The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (updated 2024) requires planning authorities to plan for the specific locational requirements of different sectors through Local Plans, which includes the freight and logistics. Recognising their role in facilitating the needs of a modern economy, means local authorities allocating suitable and sufficient land for warehousing and storage facilities, as well as the safeguarding of freight-specific infrastructure such as wharves and rail heads. Conversely the NPPF stipulates the integral need to forecast and consider the role of delivery & servicing vehicles when designing and operating new developments, through construction logistics, and delivery and servicing plans, mitigating the impact of freight and logistics activity.

The [Department for Transport's National Networks National Policy Statement](#) (2024) recognises the need for long-term strategic action through government and industry collaboration to bolster the operation of the freight network as a whole, through improvements to infrastructure with multi-modal impacts.

NH's also use [DfT Circular 1/2022](#), the government's policy for the SRN as the basis of their engagement and assessment of Local Plans and applications.

[The Transport for the South East's Freight, Logistics and Gateway Strategy](#) (published 2022) identifies the challenge of acquiring relevant data to support more efficient freight movements, drive innovation and deliver the right infrastructure. It identifies a primary solution to this challenge through improving relationships and knowledge sharing between stakeholders in the public and private sectors.

Evidence

East Sussex has relatively few large warehousing or distribution sites in comparison to the South East, and other UK regions. The ability of new sites and infrastructure to be developed is challenging given both high land values and other spatial planning priorities of stakeholders. Through the development of local plans, local authority transport planners and planning officers alongside councillors/decision makers will be able to identify and allocate sites for freight warehousing and distribution, as well as lorry parking.

Opportunities

Borough and district councils - as the local planning authorities - have a responsibility to plan and manage construction, freight and servicing traffic for development through local plans, planning policy and the planning system. The County Council and other partners will work collaboratively with boroughs and

districts to ensure freight and servicing plays a greater role within local plans, specifically through the inclusion of policies which support this within local plans and the proposed Spatial Development Strategy for the Sussex and Brighton area. Similarly, the County Council also has a similar role to play in relation to waste and minerals planning, and the associated efficient movement of freight related movements.

There is a need and an opportunity to raise the profile of freight, and to increase awareness around the role and importance of planning effectively for freight. It is important that this takes place within local authorities, for officers and councillors, as well as for decision-makers and the general public.

Through the Wider South East Freight Forum, the County Council will seek to better understand the position and challenges of the freight sector in East Sussex, working collaboratively to acquire data and insight from industry stakeholders and sub-national transport bodies.

Investment priorities

Ongoing initiatives

Engagement in the following activities is currently ongoing:

- Engaging with regional freight user forums, the Wider South East Freight Forum, and TfSE's proposed rail freight working group,
- Stipulate the use of freight and logistics contractors which are part of best-practice schemes such as the Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme (FORS) or similar, and
- Advocate for stakeholders to develop national freight data standards.

New initiatives

Work with TfSE, neighbouring Local Transport Authorities and district and borough councils, via a Wider South East Freight Forum which shares best practice and investigates what support the freight and logistics sector needs to optimise strategic movements. Freight forums will help to raise the profile and awareness of freight for all types of stakeholders and help facilitate innovative trial data collection at strategic freight interchanges (such as Newhaven Port), using this to guide and inform future investment in infrastructure.

Work with district and borough stakeholders to safeguard against the loss of viable freight and logistics infrastructure, and also to identify and protect sites within local plans for rail freight infrastructure and network capacity, lorry parking, freight warehouses and distribution centres, HGV recharging, and alternative fuel refuelling sites.

The development of a strategic assessment tool which provides a transparent process of equitably assessing HGV issues from the public and other stakeholders can support the prioritisation of actions with clear communication of process and

change, and develop processes to deliver local enhancements easily which will ensure schemes and interventions are timely delivered and benefits realised.

The tables below present an action plan which highlights the planning, policy, and data initiatives that could develop and deliver optimal freight movements across the area, and deliver other ambitions such as improving safety and minimising adverse impacts on the local historic and natural environment.

(Please note that this section is likely to require further updates following the emergence of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton and creation of new unitary authorities across the West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Sussex geography through local government reorganisation)

Led by East Sussex County Council

These are schemes where East Sussex County Council has greater influence and can help directly develop and/or deliver the intervention.

Name	FP01 - Develop a strategic assessment and priority framework
Initiative	Provides a transparent process of equitably assessing HGV issues from the public and other stakeholders. Prioritising actions could be used to ensure clear communication of process and change
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study – Short-term (up to 2030) • Develop – Short-term (up to 2030) • Deliver– Short-term (up to 2030)
Key partners	<p>Lead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Sussex County Council • Transport for the South East • Local Authorities <p>Supporting partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freight and logistics industry • Private sector electric vehicle charging providers • Freight industry suppliers and customers • Local businesses
LTP4 Investment Priority(ies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP13: Local planning • LP15: Logistics
How East Sussex County Council can help deliver	Lead on developing the strategic and assessment framework, providing an opportunity for freight related concerns and problems to be raised and assessed. Work with the freight industry and partners in completing any emerging actions.

Name	FP03 - Mandate the use of construction logistics and delivery and servicing plans
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Initiative	Mandate within the planning process where developments are of a certain size to reduce construction disruption and improve sustainability of new developments
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study – Short-term (up to 2030) • Develop – To be confirmed • Deliver – To be confirmed
Key partners	Leads <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Sussex County Council • Local planning authorities Supporting partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freight industry suppliers and customers • Developers and businesses
LTP4 Investment Priority(ies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP15: Logistics

Name	FP04 -Private business freight delivery plans
Initiative	Encourage sustainable development practices in businesses through the development of travel plans and delivery plans.
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study – Short-term (up to 2030) • Develop – To be confirmed • Deliver – To be confirmed
Key partners	Leads <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Sussex County Council • Local planning authorities Supporting partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freight industry suppliers and customers • Developers and businesses
LTP4 Investment Priority(ies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP15: Logistics

Advocated by East Sussex County Council

These are schemes where East Sussex County Council does not lead on development and/or delivery but is a key partner to successful delivery.

Name	FP02 - Freight awareness workshops
Initiative	Plan and deliver freight knowledge and understanding workshops with different stakeholders to overcome 'freight blindness' and improve knowledge and importance of implementing initiatives
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study – Short-term (up to 2030) • Develop – Short-term (up to 2030)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver– Short-term (up to 2030)
Key partners	<p>Lead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freight and logistics industry <p>Supporting partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Sussex County Council • Range of public and private stakeholders • Freight industry suppliers and customers
LTP4 Investment Priority(ies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP15: Logistics
How East Sussex County Council can help deliver	Support the freight industry improve freight awareness through workshops and other initiatives with local and other user groups to improve the knowledge about and the needs of the freight industry.

7 Delivering the strategy

Investment priorities - development stages

Under the stages of development of the investment priority areas, the following three stages have been identified. It is important to note that these stages and their timing will be dependent on East Sussex County Council and their partners securing funding to bring investment and/or intervention priorities forward.

1. Study

- Where there is no, or limited, existing evidence which explores the potential feasibility of the intervention, including the benefits.
- Key stakeholder engagement can play a key role in advancing the strategic case for investment, identifying objectives, desired outputs and outcomes, and working with key delivery partners to explore the idea further to advance the scheme to development stage. This stage is similar to the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for larger scale schemes. SOBC is the first stage in developing a comprehensive business case, outlining the "case for change" and identifying potential options before moving to more detailed planning.

2. Develop

- Feasibility studies have been undertaken into the potential benefits of the scheme.
- There is a need for greater development of the business case of the scheme or intervention.
- Developing a scheme may include further stages of design (preliminary, detailed design) supported by appropriate engagement and consultation, analytical work to strengthen the strategic case, economic case, identifying funding opportunities and conducting greater technical assessment of the scheme (assessing deliverability risks and environmental impacts), such that the scheme is ready for delivery.
- This stage is like the contents of an Outline Business Case (OBC) for larger scale schemes. An OBC outlines a proposed project, justifies its need, and explores potential options. It helps to assess the project's viability, value for money, and strategic alignment before a detailed stage.

3. Deliver

- Business case evidence has already been developed with strong stakeholder support.
- Setting up of a delivery group with key stakeholders to increase opportunities for delivery.
- There is an identified funding route for delivery.
- A few risks have been identified which have yet to be mitigated.

- This stage is like the contents of a Full Business Case (FBC) for larger scale schemes. A FBC details the benefits, costs, risks, and management plans, and is used to secure final approval and funding. It provides the detailed information needed to proceed with a project, including final design, procurement, and implementation plans.

Scheme/policy progression through development stages

There will be investment priorities which can be studied, developed and/or delivered within the short term (up to 2030).

Likewise, there are priorities where partners can only study and/or sufficiently develop a pipeline of schemes that are ready for delivery. Given timescales and other deliverability constraints, some schemes or initiatives are unlikely to commence or be fully delivered in the short-term. For example, schemes could include railway schemes where the nature of industry funding cycles mean enhancements presented in the strategy are unlikely to be considered for delivery in the next Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline Period (or equivalent) and, therefore, at earliest, are likely to be delivered in Control Period 8 (2029-2034) or later.

Also, some schemes are unlikely to involve any short-term actions (e.g. by 2030). This could be for any one of several reasons, including: because they will rely on other schemes to be delivered; they are reliant on national policy or technological advances; or, significant funding is required to be made available before a scheme can be studied or developed.

Section 4 of this strategy sets out the action plans for the respective investment priority areas.

Engagement - next steps

The establishment of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton in May 2026 and local re-organisation resulting in the creation of the new unitary authorities across the West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Sussex geography by April 2028, will change the powers and funding for strategic planning, transport and economic growth from central government. This section will be updated as further information and detail on devolution and local government reorganisation proposals become available.

In order to progress the schemes contained within the strategy, it is important for the County Council and partners to engage with the freight industry and other partners to:

- Identify whether their aspirations align with our own,
- Establish where partnership and collaborative working is achievable,
- Assess which of the schemes within the strategy are freight industry priorities,
- Identify where funding opportunities are available,
- Come up with a plan of action for progressing the schemes,

- Implement regular meetings with key stakeholders to review and progress the aspirations contained within the strategy, and
- Review whether schemes are relevant and if priorities have changed.

Freight partners include, but are not limited to:

- Logistics UK
- Road Haulage Association
- Network Rail
- Freight industry suppliers and customers
- East Sussex County Council
- Local planning authorities
- Other public and private stakeholders – including those related to electric vehicle charging, freight distribution, e-cargo bikes etc

8 Funding and financing

It is important to note that the East Sussex Freight Strategy and its investment and intervention priorities are not currently funded. This section sets out the potential funding and financing opportunities for the proposed interventions identified in the strategy.

The availability of funding, with consideration to the costs of development, construction, maintenance and renewals, alongside operational costs, will be a key challenge in delivering the strategy. Additionally, routes for financing, as well as how and from whom the funding is secured to meet the costs of delivery as they arise, may change over the life of this strategy, Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4), and its Investment Plan.

As the Strategy is made up of several diverse schemes or initiatives, there is not going to be a 'one size fits all' funding and financing solution that applies across the programme. Over the life of the plan, this strategy will provide East Sussex County Council (and in the near future, the Sussex & Brighton Mayor and newly created unitary authorities across the Sussex & Brighton geography), their partners and communities, the opportunities to explore and innovate how funding can be secured and combined to study, develop and deliver transport infrastructure interventions and initiatives.

Types of funding

Both the delivery of this strategy and constituent interventions require financial support, whether as part of capital investment, or through continued operation. Consequently, partners with responsibilities in the delivery of this strategy will also have a responsibility to help identify and respond to funding and financial opportunities.

Financing mechanisms can be used to fund both the capital and operating requirements of transport networks, and are particularly useful for interventions which provide repayment, or are assets that are likely to increase in value. However, there are considerable risks regarding investment undertaken in this manner, most notably due to fluctuations in loan interest rates, and the appetite for financial institutions and private sector to invest in transport infrastructure.

Funding sources

Central government bodies such as the DfT, Office for Zero Emission Vehicles, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, both provide capital funding for freight and logistics interventions and schemes. This funding varies due to a range of factors, such as uncertainty in the national economy, alongside other political priorities.

The establishment of the **MCCA for Sussex and Brighton, and local government reorganisation** - resulting in the creation of new unitary authorities across the West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Sussex geography - will change the powers and funding for strategic planning, transport, and economic growth from central government. As part of this it is expected that local authorities will be allocated longer term transport settlements for funding local transport infrastructure for delivery and studying of schemes that can lead to economic growth. This section will be updated as further information and detail becomes available.

The existing two-tier model for **local authorities** has resulted in significant limitations to generate revenue outside of what is required for general operations.

Consequently, local authorities are often limited to funding small-scale freight and logistics interventions funded by mechanisms such as scheme specific council allocated funding, government grant funding, and (S106) development contributions/Community Infrastructure Levy charges.

Match funding can be provided by public or private sector organisations to deliver specific interventions, such as the [Charging Infrastructure Investment Fund](#) (2018) which is used to accelerate electric vehicle charging infrastructure to support the electrification of vehicles.

Private sector organisations invest in their own operations and supply chains to maintain their competitiveness within the sector they operate in. Private investment can be seen at SRN electric vehicle charging points which are operated by private operators. There is a need for private sector organisations to collaborate and help support and contribute towards growth in East Sussex.

9 Measuring success

This strategy requires continuous monitoring to secure its effectiveness. Measuring success can be achieved through the implementation of a monitoring framework which identifies the indicators, direction of travel, data source, frequency of collection and owner of data, ensuring accountability is met across all levels.

Evaluation commonly involves a deeper dive into the outcomes of a strategy, and helps provide insight and lessons learnt to help guide continued freight, logistics and gateways, planning and operations, across the county.

So far as possible, the monitoring and evaluation aspect of the Freight Strategy will utilise the approaches and methodologies implemented for LTP4, which will include monitoring metrics aligned with the LTP4 vision, objectives, and outcomes.

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East Sussex Freight Strategy

Consultation summary report

December 2025

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Engagement approach

Early and preliminary engagement was undertaken with strategic freight partners and key local stakeholder groups during the development of the draft strategy. This helped ensure that proposals reflected both operational realities and local priorities before being shared more widely.

The Draft East Sussex Freight Strategy was consulted on as a modal strategy of Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4). It aimed to collect feedback on the vision, priorities, and proposals for freight in East Sussex, helping to shape a more sustainable, efficient, and inclusive freight system through to 2050.

The feedback from the formal public consultation ran from 6 May to 30 June 2025 and comprised both structured survey tools and open feedback mechanisms. A bespoke workshop was held with young people to discuss lived experiences of young people and freight and to provide input into the strategy.

Key outcomes

Responses were collected via an online questionnaire (paper copies were available on request), which included a mix of closed and open-ended questions, and via email submissions. In total, 38 responses were received — 31 through the online portal and 7 via email, with responses received from key stakeholders within the freight industry.

For those who provided responses to the ‘about you’ questions on the online survey, there is a good representation of responses across all ages (in 10-year bands) from 40-49 through to 60-69, with 4 or 6 responses per 10-year age band. There were fewer younger people (aged 39 or younger) and older people (aged 70 or over). In terms of gender, more females than males responded.

Closed question feedback

Most respondents showed broad agreement with the proposed freight roles, priorities, and schemes, particularly around decarbonisation and last-mile logistics, which received the highest levels of support. Strategic freight movements and planning policies were also well supported. A number of respondents provided feedback on the Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA), while others indicated they had no further comments. Comments suggested certain areas needing further clarification and improvement.

Open question feedback

- **Positive Feedback:** Strong support was noted for strategic hubs, rail investment, and modal shift. Respondents also welcomed collaboration, decarbonisation, and alignment with planning policy.
- **Concerns:** These focused on delivery risks, limited ambition, planning gaps, and lack of local impact consideration.
- **Suggestions for Improvement:** Feedback centred on stronger policy alignment, more detail on hubs and infrastructure, and inclusion of local priorities.

- **Environmental Concerns:** Respondents called for reducing emissions, promoting rail and maritime freight, and avoiding sensitive or rural areas for infrastructure.
- **Equity & Access Concerns:** There were calls for more inclusive planning, better local engagement, and accessible materials.
- **General Comments:** Some feedback called for clearer communication and plain language, while a few responses were general in nature.

Reflections

- High levels of support were noted for freight strategy elements across themes, especially decarbonisation, last-mile solutions, and planning integration.
- There was a clear call for rail freight expansion and modal shift to reduce emissions and congestion.
- Concerns remain about whether schemes can be delivered, their local impacts, and lack of consideration for how schemes could be funded.
- Stakeholders seek stronger planning clarity, inclusive governance, and visible follow-through.

Actions following feedback

The strategy was updated following feedback received during the consultation period. This section provides a summary of the feedback and actions undertaken, reported by coding category and sub-category.

Category: Positive feedback

You Said (sub category)	We did
Strategy and governance, infrastructure and modal shift, planning and land use, local and community engagement and specific scheme or operational support	Positive feedback is welcomed and noted. Positive feedback was received for a range of areas including stakeholder collaboration and governance, clear role definitions, multi-agency and cross-sector engagement, support for specific interventions and connections to spatial planning. This will be applied to future responses to draft district and borough local plan policies.

Category: Concerns

You Said (sub category)	We did
Strategy, delivery and Governance	Upcoming devolution and local government reorganisation is not fully known, and whilst we have updated these sections to reflect the current position, they will continue to evolve,

	<p>and the freight strategy will be reviewed to reflect the outcomes and the potential priorities for the County.</p> <p>As this is a new strategy, we have reviewed the framing, scope and ambition of the strategy following the consultation. As with LTP4 the strategy will remain live and will be regularly reviewed and updated as appropriate.</p>
Infrastructure and planning gaps	<p>Comments around infrastructure and planning gaps have been reviewed and the strategy amended as appropriate.</p> <p>The freight routing aspect of the strategy was again reviewed following the consultation, and due to the nature of the road network in the county, there will be no further amendments to that policy at this time.</p>
Equity and local representation	<p>This public consultation provided the opportunity for local communities to have their say on the strategy. All town, parish, district and borough councils were advised of the consultation.</p> <p>Local communities will also be able to have their say on many interventions as they are developed and consulted upon as part of the scheme development process, subject to the availability of funding.</p>
Role of ESCC	<p>We have reviewed and make it clear the role of East Sussex County Council by identifying whether we will lead, advocate or support various measures and interventions. This acknowledges that there will be partnership working with the freight industry and local planning authorities, amongst others, to successfully delivery the strategy.</p>
Equalities Impact Assessment	<p>Feedback on the Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been reviewed and will be included within a significant update to the LTP4 EqIA, which will be updated to incorporate other modal strategy EqIAs too. This includes looking at social-economic</p>

	disadvantage as a result of the feedback received.
Engagement town, parish, district and borough councils	This public consultation provided the opportunity for local communities to have their say on the strategy. All town, parish, district and borough councils were advised of the consultation.

Category: Suggestions for improvement

You Said (sub category)	We did
Policy and governance	<p>We have included more LTP4 content within the strategy, particularly focussed on the evidence base (key strategic data) that support the strategy.</p> <p>We have also reviewed the strategy in relation to other key policy and governance suggestions. This strategy already showed how it fits with other key local strategies but now also includes other local, regional and national strategies and policies to show how this freight strategy fits into wider policy contexts.</p>
Infrastructure and land use	<p>We will need to work with the freight industry, landowners and local planning authorities in relation to the hub suggestions to ensure those which are delivered are viable and have minimal impact on the customer (either in delivery time or cost).</p> <p>For rail-based suggestions we will need to work with Network Rail / Great British Railways and freight operating companies to enable more freight to be carried by rail, particularly where there is high demand.</p>
Operational improvements	We have identified an initiative to improve the awareness of freight, the different types of freight distribution, and will work with partners to explore last mile-solutions that support freight operations and cause no or minimal impacts for the customer (e.g. still delivered the same day).

Environmental concerns	We will continue to support the freight industry to decarbonise and minimise their impact on the environment. This is shown through the decarbonisation priority area.

Category: Equity and access concerns

You Said	We did
Equity and access concerns	We have listened to the feedback about the consultation and will learn from this experience to inform future consultations and engagement events, either through the County Council or by partner organisations.

Category: General comments

You Said	We did
General comments	We have reviewed the consultation comments and have sought to manage delivery expectations and make the document more understandable, notably to people not in the freight industry. We will also include an executive summary in the East Sussex Freight Strategy.

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Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 8 December 2025

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: East Sussex Rail Strategy 2025 – 2050

Purpose: To seek approval of the East Sussex Rail Strategy 2025 – 2050.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) note the outcomes of the stakeholder and public consultation undertaken in May and June 2025 on the draft East Sussex Rail Strategy;**
 - (2) acknowledge the importance of the strategy in setting out the County Council’s key priorities for rail in East Sussex, which will place the Council in a stronger position to lobby for future funding and support the development and delivery of future investment in rail in East Sussex;**
 - (3) approve the Rail Strategy, at Appendix 1, which is a modal strategy supporting the East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4, 2024 – 2050; and**
 - (4) delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to make future minor amendments to the strategy.**
-

1 Background Information

1.1. The fourth East Sussex Local Transport Plan 2024 – 2050 (LTP4) was adopted by the Council at its Full Council meeting on 8 October 2024. It sets out how East Sussex County Council and partners will plan and provide transport for residents, businesses and visitors in East Sussex, now and for future generations. It plans for people and places by focussing on enabling and encouraging greater integrated journeys and reducing the need to travel through land use and planning policies that support sustainable travel.

1.2. A policy on Rail is included within the ‘Integrated and Accessible Transport for All’ chapter in the LTP4 and focusses on the opportunities for integrating infrastructure and services to improve all aspects of the public transport passenger experience to enable seamless and accessible journeys. The ‘Keeping East Sussex Connected’ chapter of the LTP4 also outlines the strategic connectivity rail priorities for the county that would deliver a more reliable, integrated, passenger-friendly rail network.

1.3 The draft East Sussex Rail Strategy, as outlined in Appendix 1, expands on the LTP4 policy and focusses specifically on the opportunities to support improvements to rail passenger transport. It is underpinned by an evidence base which considers recent data concerning:

- rail passenger service use and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic
- population and demographics;
- employment;
- the visitor economy;
- planned housing and employment growth;
- the planned expansion at Gatwick;
- devolution; and
- local, regional and national strategies.

1.4 It identifies the investment in infrastructure that the railway serving the county requires to meet the needs of East Sussex, setting out 6 major strategic priority rail schemes (in no particular order) for the area, all of which contribute to addressing the objectives in the East Sussex LTP4 and the evidence outlined in section 2 of the draft East Sussex Rail strategy at Appendix 1. These are:

- High Speed 1 to Hastings, Bexhill and Eastbourne – which includes Marshlink electrification and dual tracking or passing loops, (for more and improved connections to Europe via international rail services (once reinstated at Ashford International)
- Hurst Green (Oxted) - Uckfield electrification and dual tracking or passing loops,
- Uckfield - Lewes - Line reopening,
- Eridge - Tunbridge Wells railway line reinstatement (Spa Valley Line modern operations reopening),
- Direct rail services between Seaford, Newhaven and London. strengthening direct rail links to Gatwick Airport and for passengers connecting to and from the Newhaven Dieppe Ferry service, and
- Brighton - Eastbourne – Hastings: faster services.

1.5 The East Sussex Rail Strategy 2025-2050 (Appendix 1) sets out the future vision for the delivery of improvements to rail travel in East Sussex, specifically for passenger journeys, and focuses on 6 priority investment areas, which are:

- Accessibility of the rail network;
- Integration with other modes;
- Reliability and resilience;
- Decarbonisation;
- Journey time; and
- Customer experience.

1.6 Once adopted the East Sussex Rail Strategy 2025 – 2050, will replace the existing East Sussex Rail Development Strategy which was adopted in November 2013.

2 Supporting Information

Roles and responsibilities for rail

2.1 Whilst the County Council does not have a statutory responsibility for rail, the strategy highlights that the county's ambitions for rail will require partnership working to achieve its vision and objectives. Accordingly, the strategy recognises the different role and responsibilities across the industry between Department for Transport, Network Rail (NR) and transport operating companies (TOCs) who collectively are responsible for the funding, development and delivery of improvements. The strategy also acknowledges the planned establishment of Great British Railways (GBR), which will bring rail infrastructure and services together into one organisation.

2.2 The role of the County Council and Transport for the South East (TfSE), at a regional level, is largely focussed on lobbying for infrastructure and service improvements and providing support to the development and delivery of these with important input and insight from other local rail organisations, and commuter groups.

Devolution, Local Government Reorganisation and other key strategies

2.3 The strategy embraces the establishment of the Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) for Sussex and Brighton from May 2026, and recognition of local government reorganisation which will result in new unitary authorities across the West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Sussex geography from 2028.

2.4 The establishment of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton will result in devolved powers and funding for strategic planning, transport and economic growth from central government, resulting in the transport priorities for the wider Sussex geography being eventually set by the new Mayor through the development of a joint Local Transport Plan. This draft Rail Strategy focuses on the types of measures that key strategic and local partners, alongside working with the County Council can develop and deliver. This will ensure that the Council is in a stronger position to respond to any changes in local powers and enable the Council to confidently set out priorities for rail to the Mayor and lobby and apply for future funding from the Sussex and Brighton MCCA and central government.

2.5 The Rail Strategy also supports other strategies covering local, regional and national geographies. A non-exhaustive summary of these strategies is presented section 3 of the Rail Strategy with a succinct overview of how each strategy links to the Rail Strategy. These linkages show that the strategy has strong connections to the economy, environment, visitor sector and

spatial planning. There will also be benefits to other important sectors such as public health, which will become clearer as interventions are developed in more detail and ultimately delivered.

Engagement and Consultation

2.6 Significant engagement took place with stakeholders in the development of the draft rail strategy with focused stakeholder engagement meetings with key strategic partners, such as NR and the TOCs, other rail organisations, and commuter groups.

2.7 A stakeholder and public consultation was held between 6 May and 30 June 2025. As a result, 70 responses were received via the East Sussex consultation online portal, and 8 responses via e-mail. The responses received were from across the rail industry, including key strategic partners as well as local rail groups. The Council also engaged with young people in a bespoke event. A consultation summary report set out at Appendix 2.

2.8 Arising from the consultation, the key outcomes were:

- Strong support for the strategy, particularly around accessibility, decarbonisation, and infrastructure upgrades;
- Agreement with the defined rail roles, but clarity required of the role of the County Council in bringing measures forward within the priority investment areas;
- Broad support for the proposed schemes and associated policy references across all 6 priority investment areas, but with suggestions for other strategic schemes;
- Need for being clearer about the evidence that is driving the inclusion of the strategic schemes and priority investment areas; and
- Re-balancing the strategy for both commuters and leisure travel.

Updates to the strategy following consultation

2.9 In consideration of the points raised as outlined in paragraph 2.8, the key changes to the strategy include the following: -

- strengthening of the evidence base – specifically the strategic case for the investment priority areas referring to key data sets and a new section on local, regional and national strategies;
- clear demonstration of the role of the County Council in bringing measures forward within the priority investment areas (i.e. where the Council can - lead, advocate (project partner) and support (as a stakeholder));
- clear demonstration of rail priorities for East Sussex within the strategy and how the Council will seek to achieve them, in a manner that can be easily transitioned to wherever the decision making, planning and policy sits within the forthcoming establishment of the Sussex and Brighton MCCA and local government reorganisation;
- a new policy on reinstatement of the Eridge-Tunbridge Wells line;
- reference to the opportunities for the Willingdon Chord scheme north of Eastbourne;
- more emphasis on the need for value for money and affordability regarding fares, and
- a new policy on the need for additional nighttime rail services to cater for evening leisure and entertainment.

Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)

2.10 There were a small number of responses to the EqIA for the draft Rail Strategy. These comments contained the inclusion of socio-economic disadvantage following feedback in the survey. These amendments will be incorporated into the significant update to the East Sussex LTP4 EqIA that will be published in Spring 2026.

3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The ambition for rail in East Sussex is focussed on the opportunities for integrating infrastructure and services to improve all aspects of the public transport passenger experience to enable seamless and accessible journeys. This aligns with the East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) adopted by the County Council in October 2024 and will also align with the other modal strategies being developed or updated post publication of the LTP4.

3.2 Significant evidence gathering, stakeholder engagement and consultation has been undertaken which has constructively shaped the draft East Sussex Rail Strategy. As outlined in paragraph 2.8, the outcomes of this engagement and the public consultation identified that there was strong support for the strategy. As set out in paragraph 2.9, the draft final strategy has been updated to reflect some of the key consultation comments received. Consequently, the 6 priority areas for investment set out in paragraph 1.4 have been identified as part of this process.

3.3 The strategy has been developed for the County Council to demonstrate its priorities for rail, how the Council can achieve them and how progress can be made on these in the short term, whilst also taking full account of the forthcoming changes arising from devolution and local government reorganisation.

3.4 The Strategy will be a live document, and therefore adaptable to reflect the impending changes.

3.5 It is recommended that the Lead Member for Transport and Environment note the responses from the stakeholder and public consultation undertaken on the draft East Sussex Rail Strategy earlier this year, as set out in the consultation summary report at Appendix 2, and approve the Rail Strategy, as set out in Appendix 1, as a modal strategy supporting the East Sussex Local Transport Plan. The Lead Member is also recommended to acknowledge the Strategy's importance in setting out the County Council's key priorities for rail in East Sussex given the forthcoming devolution of powers to the Sussex and Brighton MCCA as well as changes arising from local government reorganisation.

RUPERT CLUBB

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All Councillors

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Consultation Responses

[Equalities Impact Assessment for the draft Rail Strategy](#)

East Sussex Rail Strategy 2025-2050 December 2025

Version 2

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1.Foreword

We are pleased to introduce East Sussex's Rail Strategy, which looks to connect people to places, providing rail connectivity for all.

This strategy is underpinned by robust evidence base and has been developed with the public and stakeholders across the county, including representatives from the rail industry, rail groups, council officers and local planning authorities, and young people. This engagement has resulted in a strategy that reflects the rail aspirations of a wide range of stakeholders and will foster further partnership working with key stakeholders to help promote and progress future rail service and infrastructure improvements.

The strategy is coming forward at a time of great change, with the establishment of the Mayoral Combined County Authority for Sussex and Brighton anticipated to be in place from May 2026. This is running parallel with local government reorganisation, which is expected to see the county, district and borough councils replaced with a new unitary authority from April 2028.

The strategy and its investment priorities have been developed to consider the varying characteristics of the county, including densely populated urban centres and large rural areas, and the differing needs of the users from these significantly different local contexts. We also have an ageing population and people with physical and hidden disabilities, and the strategy considers accessibility as one of its key priority investment areas.

Implementing the strategy will have its challenges, especially since we do not have a statutory function for rail. However, we have a responsibility to future generations to help deliver interventions which align with our fourth local transport plan, and to help improve rail connectivity for all.



Councillor Dowling - Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Rupert Clubb - Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

1 Executive Summary

The East Sussex Rail Strategy replaces the existing East Sussex Rail Development Strategy which was adopted in November 2013. The ambition for rail in East Sussex is focused on the opportunities for integrating infrastructure and services to improve all aspects of the public transport passenger experience to enable seamless and accessible journeys.

The county's ambitions for rail will require partnership working to achieve its vision and objectives. Accordingly, the strategy recognises the different role and responsibilities across the industry who are collectively responsible for the funding, development and delivery of improvements, and acknowledges the planned establishment of Great British Railways which will bring rail infrastructure and services together into one organisation.

Significant evidence gathering, stakeholder engagement and consultation was undertaken to shape the East Sussex Rail Strategy. Six priority areas for investment were identified as part of this process, which are accessibility, integration, reliability and resilience, decarbonisation, journey time, and customer experience.

Additionally, six major strategic priority rail schemes have been identified which contribute to addressing our objectives in the East Sussex LTP4 and the evidence outlined in section 2 of the East Sussex Rail strategy. These are, in no particular order:

- High Speed 1 to Hastings, Bexhill and Eastbourne – which includes Marshlink electrification and dual tracking or passing loops, (for more and improved connections to Europe via international rail services (once reinstated at Ashford International)
- Hurst Green (Oxted) - Uckfield electrification and dual tracking or passing loops
- Uckfield - Lewes - Line reopening,
- Eridge - Tunbridge Wells railway line reinstatement
- Direct rail services between Seaford/Newhaven and London - strengthening direct rail links to Gatwick Airport and for passengers connecting to/from the Newhaven- Dieppe Ferry service.
- Brighton - Eastbourne – Hastings: faster services.

The strategy has been developed to enable the County Council to demonstrate their priorities for rail, how they can achieve them and how progress can be made on these in the short term, whilst also taking full account of the forthcoming changes arising from devolution and local government reorganisation. The Strategy will be a live document, and therefore adaptable to reflect the impending changes.

2 Introduction

Our ambition for rail in East Sussex is to ensure that the network and services work for everyone by providing ‘transport connectivity for all’. This is a key principle in the East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4), which recognises that the rail network plays an important part in the lives of our residents, businesses and visitors.

Passenger rail services transport people to work, education and training, to the shops and social events, and supports access to tourist and cultural destinations in the county. Rail connects our towns and villages together, linking our county to London, other parts of the south east, the rest of the UK, and onward to Europe.

We want to improve our existing rail infrastructure within, and that serves East Sussex, as this will encourage and enable more people to access key education, employment, services and facilities in the county. Any worsening or reduction of services and/or infrastructure will be met with opposition.

Services that provide freight on rail in East Sussex are restricted due to limitations on the rail network, arising from infrastructure (such as single track). There are opportunities to enable rail services to take goods to destinations across the country (and to/from Europe), contributing to the economic prosperity of the region, and residents and businesses deserve an integrated system fit for the 21st century that is greener, simpler to use, and lower cost. The constraints, issues and opportunities relating to freight on rail have been considered in more detail in the Freight Strategy.

The East Sussex Rail Strategy will focus specifically on passenger transport, and:

- Identifies the investment in infrastructure that our railways require to meet the needs of residents of and visitors to East Sussex
- Sets out how enhancements can reduce the carbon impact of rail to help us meet our net zero commitment
- Sets out the opportunities to increase inclusive integration and connectivity of the transport network, bringing together rail, bus, walking, wheeling and cycling that provides people with attractive transport choices that are viable alternatives to private car use
- Addresses issues impacting service provision on our railways, including the need for better service frequency, journey times and reliability to improve passenger experience
- Has a focus on the opportunities to deliver the measures included in the strategy, subject to available funding

Delivering on these ambitions will require partnership working, with consideration of the different roles and responsibilities across the industry and government, Great British Railways (GBR), Network Rail (NR), transport operating companies (TOCs/GBR), Transport for the South East (TfSE), other rail organisations, and commuter groups.

The strategy also embraces the establishment of the Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) for Sussex and Brighton, with elections for a Mayor in May 2026. The establishment of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton will devolve the powers and funding for strategic planning, transport and economic growth from central government. Therefore, the transport priorities for the wider Sussex geography will be set by the new Mayor eventually through the development of a joint Local Transport Plan.

This is happening alongside local government re-organisation which will result in new unitary authorities across the West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Sussex geography. This will mean moving away from the current two-tier model of county council (East Sussex County Council) and borough or district councils (Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes, Rother and Wealden). The changes and reorganisation of local government are likely to come forward from April 2028.

This strategy focuses on the types of measures that key partners and East Sussex County Council can develop and deliver to ensure that we are in a stronger position to respond to any changes to local powers, and enable us to confidently lobby and apply for future funding from the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton and government.

This East Sussex Rail Strategy will replace the existing East Sussex Rail Development Strategy that was adopted in November 2013. Prior to this being prepared, significant engagement with key stakeholders was undertaken. This included a rail focused stakeholder event included representatives from Network Rail, National Highways, train operating companies, Transport for the South East, local rail groups and organisations. Further focused meetings took place with some of the key stakeholders, and this input alongside written responses we received were considered and incorporated where possible into this strategy.

Purpose of this strategy

The Rail Strategy sets out our future vision for the delivery of improvements to rail travel in East Sussex, and focuses on strategic priority schemes and the following priority investment areas (which are not ranked in order of importance):

- Priority Investment Area 1 - Accessibility of the rail network
- Priority Investment Area 2 - Integration with other modes
- Priority Investment Area 3 - Reliability and resilience
- Priority Investment Area 4 - Decarbonisation
- Priority Investment Area 5 - Journey time competitiveness
- Priority Investment Area 6 - Customer experience

East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4

The development of Local Transport Plans by transport authorities are a requirement of the Transport Act 2000. This strategy has been developed as a supporting document to the East Sussex fourth East Sussex Local Transport Plan 2024-2050 (LTP4) that was adopted by East Sussex County Council in October 2024.

As set out in the LTP4, the vision for transport in East Sussex is:

“An inclusive transport system that connects people and places, is decarbonised, safer, resilient, and supports our natural environment, communities, and businesses to be healthy, thrive and prosper”

[Six objectives](#) have been identified in LTP4, each with their own outcomes, and all of which underpin the East Sussex Rail Strategy. These are:

- Objective 1: Deliver safer and accessible journeys
- Objective 2: Support healthier lifestyles and communities
- Objective 3: Decarbonise transport and travel
- Objective 4: Conserve and enhance our local environment
- Objective 5: Support sustainable economic growth
- Objective 6: Strengthen the resilience of our transport networks

LTP4 identifies the ambitions for East Sussex and recommends the key policies to achieve these. Each policy is underpinned by one of the above objectives and themed in the LTP4 Investment Plan.

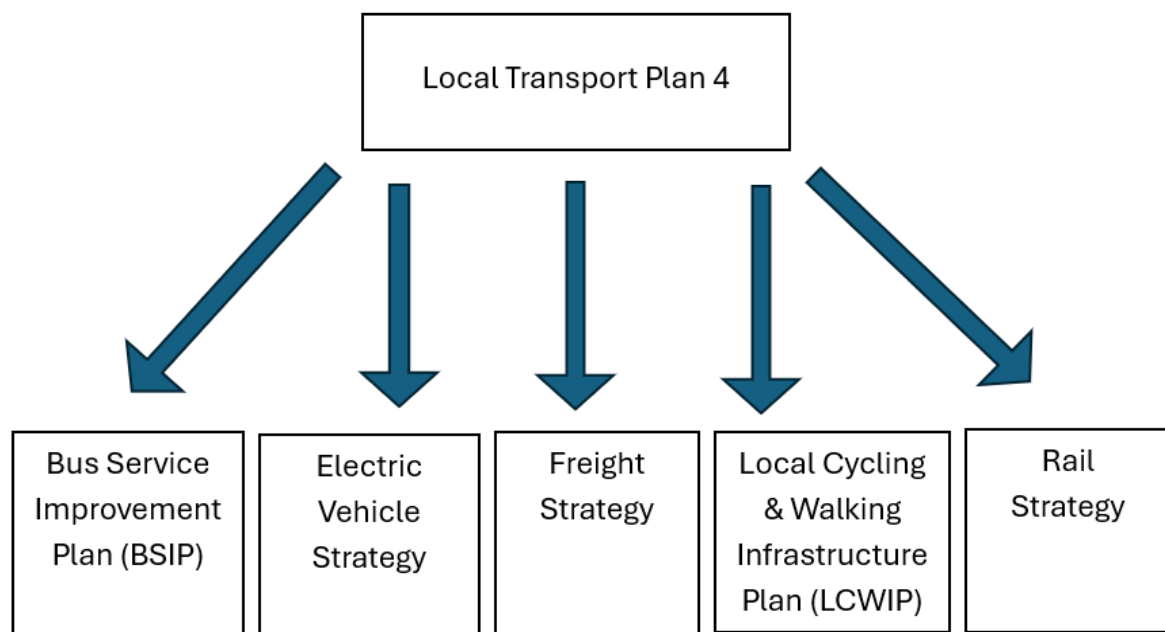
The ‘[Keeping East Sussex connected](#)’ chapter of LTP4 outlines policy ambitions applicable to rail infrastructure whilst the [Integrated and accessible transport for all](#) chapter includes a specific policy on rail to deliver a more reliable, integrated, passenger friendly rail network.

Relationship with LTP4 and modal strategies

The East Sussex Rail Strategy is a supporting document to the overarching East Sussex LTP4 county wide transport strategy.

The relationship of, and between, modal strategies is set out below:

Figure 1: Relationship of LTP4 with modal strategies



- [Bus Service Improvement Plan](#) – buses play an important role in allowing people to access rail stations and support journeys to work, education, training, healthcare and for social/leisure purposes.
- **Electric vehicle strategy** (under development)– focuses on rolling out electric vehicle charging in public locations, including at rail stations.
- **Freight Strategy** – consideration is given to the movement and collection of goods to, from and around the country. The Freight Strategy has links to the Rail Strategy as some goods/materials are or can be transported by the rail network from freight terminals. Please see the Freight Strategy for freight on rail.
- [Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan](#) - strategic plans developed by local authorities to improve walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure over a 5-10-year period. LCWIP's provide the opportunity to integrate with other modes for longer journeys, especially with access to rail stations.

East Sussex Rail Strategy Vision

The vision for the East Sussex Rail Strategy is:

‘An inclusive rail network that provides attractive, affordable, reliable and time competitive connections for communities (including residents, businesses and visitors).

3 The importance of rail in East Sussex

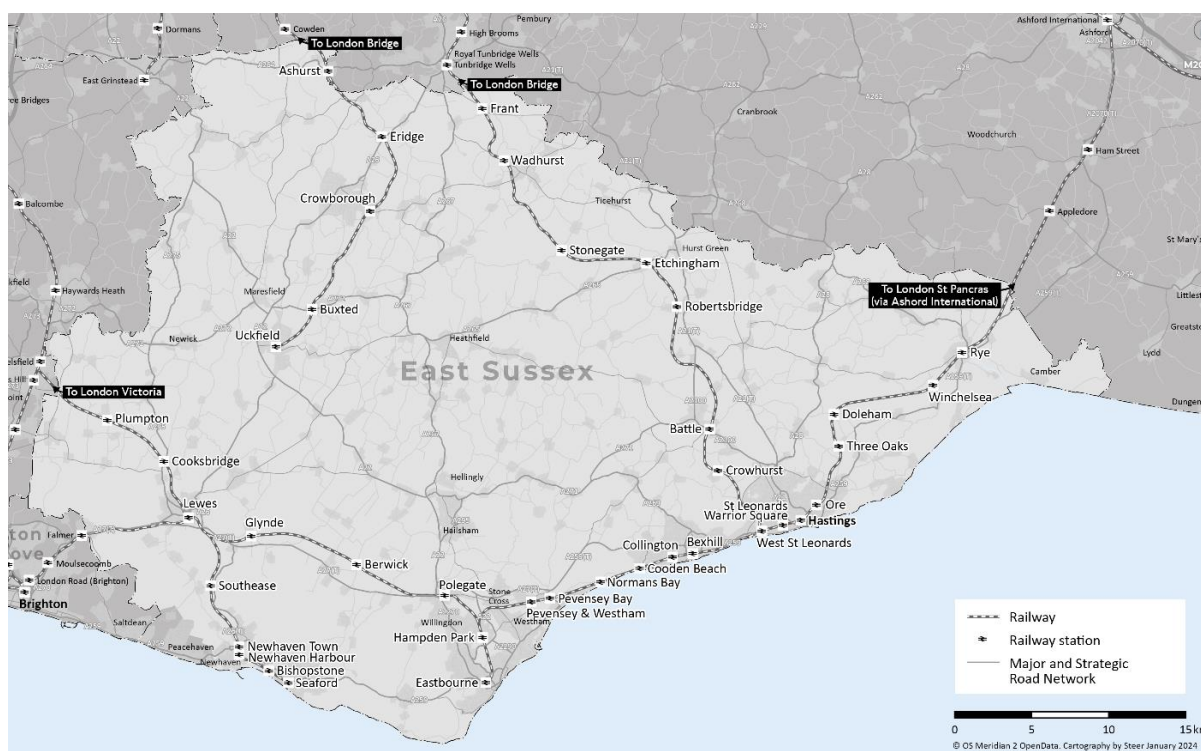
This chapter sets out the current network and provides an overview of the evidence that drives the aims and aspirations of this strategy. This section should also be read in conjunction with the Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) Evidence Base ([Evidence base report | East Sussex County Council](#)) Section 4, which outlines the investment priorities, also introduces appropriate evidence in relation to these.

Current network (modern and heritage)

Rail forms an essential part of the transport network in the county, particularly for cross county connectivity and to destinations outside the county such as Gatwick Airport and London. Heritage lines and routes also act as visitor attractions and contribute to supporting the county's economy.

Within the county rail services operate in an east-west or north-south direction, serving thirty-eight stations across the county and are as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Map of East Sussex and rail routes in the county



East-west coastal county and regional connectivity

The main coastal urban areas are linked east-west by the East Coastway rail route between Brighton and Ashford. This line runs through East Sussex, with Lewes and Cocksbridge the most westerly stations and Rye the most easterly.

There are no longer through services between Brighton and Ashford, with passengers required to change trains between Eastbourne and Hastings. Direct services between Lewes and Hastings must reverse at Eastbourne.

The 'Marshlink' section of the route is not electrified between Ore (east of Hastings) and Ashford. There are sections of the line which are single track and there are opportunities for dual tracking or additional passing loops. This will increase service frequencies and improve reliability on the rail network, and encourage more people to travel by rail.

The Seaford branch line, which serves Southease, Newhaven (Town and Harbour stations), Bishopstone and Seaford, connects onto the East Coastway route south east of Lewes, with services continuing onto/from Brighton.

North-south regional and capital connectivity

Brighton Mainline (east) are services that operate from London Victoria/London Bridge and leave the Brighton Mainline at Wivelsfield to provide direct services from the capital to Lewes, Eastbourne and Hastings. This route provides key links from the county to Gatwick Airport, East Croydon, and Clapham Junction.

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, serving London Bridge and Waterloo East (with connections to Waterloo by foot), and the termini of Charing Cross, as well as Cannon Street in the peak. The route south of Tunbridge Wells towards Hastings requires an uplift to the power supply on this section so that 10 or 12-car trains can be pathed in succession. At present the restricted power supply limits such pathing and thus diminishes the capacity on this busy section of route in the peak periods ([Kent Rail Strategy](#), para 7.10).

The Uckfield line is a popular commuter route, providing a direct rail service for urban and rural commuters from the centre of the county to London Bridge, and connections to London Victoria via East Croydon. Eridge is the most northerly East Sussex station on this line. The route is not electrified south of Hurst Green (Surrey) to Uckfield, and there are sections of the line which are single track and for which there are opportunities for dual tracking or additional passing loops. Historically this line continued to Lewes, with the Uckfield – Lewes section of the line closed in the late 1960s, and a short section of route at Isfield operating a heritage railway (Lavender Line). A connection also existed on this route between Eridge and Tunbridge Wells. This ceased in 1985 and is now operated as part of the heritage line known as Spa Valley Railway.

The county also has a few heritage railways that operate across routes that once formed part of the national rail network. Some of these heritage routes form the route of proposed new rail services within this strategy:

- Bluebell Railway (Sheffield Park to East Grinstead)
- Spa Valley Railway (Tunbridge Wells to Eridge)
- The Lavendar Line (Isfield)
- Rother Valley Railway (under development to link the Kent and East Sussex Railway to Robertsbridge from Bodium)

Two previous rail routes no longer operate. The Wealden Line is a preserved alignment with aspirations of re-opening the Lewes-Uckfield railway line (includes the Lavender Line heritage railway). Part of the Cuckoo Line (Eridge to Polegate) is now an active travel and equestrian trail between Heathfield and Polegate via Hailsham. Some historical links in the rail network has also been removed in the past; for example, the Willingdon Chord provided an opportunity to travel between Lewes and Bexhill without travelling into and out of Eastbourne. Today the absence of this chord extends journey times for passengers travelling and between stations that are not Eastbourne or Hampden Park.

Passenger service use and recovery from Covid-19

Provisional data from the [Office for Road and Rail shows](#) that national rail journeys in the UK (table 1220) between April 2024 to March 2025 have almost recovered to pre-covid levels (98.6% of passengers compared to April 2018 to March 2019), though this data does not explore days, time and purpose of travel.

In terms of passenger numbers across the county, there are about 1.5 million less entries and exits from stations in the county compared to 2018-19 and 2019-20. However, some stations have recovered and now see more entries and exits (for example Hampden Park and Newhaven Town), whereas others are seeing considerably fewer entries and exits compared to 2018-19 (for example Battle and Eridge). The numbers of entries and exits for each station in East Sussex from April 2018 to March 2024 are presented in the below table.

Table 1: East Sussex Railway Stations entries and exits

Station name	Apr 2018 to Mar 2019	Apr 2019 to Mar 2020	Apr 2020 to Mar 2021	Apr 2021 to Mar 2022	Apr 2022 to Mar 2023 *	Apr 2023 to Mar 2024
Battle	559,164	527,210	102,550	340,786	400,814	447,796
Berwick (Sussex)	78,310	79,442	24,508	67,324	71,168	73,830
Bexhill	1,448,466	1,502,382	581,730	1,297,516	1,399,580	1,383,558
Bishopstone (Sussex)	39,422	41,660	15,878	36,450	43,104	47,000
Buxted	125,672	158,546	21,704	68,978	92,856	95,564
Collington	191,418	208,058	47,356	114,882	132,200	156,654
Cooden Beach	108,300	109,526	30,732	85,266	97,424	110,230
Cooksbridge	40,912	42,858	21,152	47,552	62,220	80,692
Crowborough	358,082	376,424	56,362	165,884	227,138	234,072
Crowhurst	47,864	46,586	12,112	30,520	36,444	38,576
Doleham	2,842	3,074	120	848	550	1,038

Station name	Apr 2018 to Mar 2019	Apr 2019 to Mar 2020	Apr 2020 to Mar 2021	Apr 2021 to Mar 2022	Apr 2022 to Mar 2023 *	Apr 2023 to Mar 2024
Eastbourne	3,580,630	3,604,628	1,187,660	2,696,318	3,201,528	3,481,472
Eridge	117,648	129,726	15,882	50,544	70,820	73,124
Etchingham	255,324	244,416	43,894	136,854	167,360	187,418
Frant	147,050	137,888	25,556	71,466	90,644	102,600
Glynde	68,436	72,958	20,492	51,232	60,526	62,362
Hampden Park (Sussex)	633,538	671,586	306,050	625,862	694,700	766,702
Hastings	2,382,998	2,413,544	724,888	1,690,878	1,902,720	2,001,976
Lewes	2,579,928	2,606,920	766,902	1,875,724	2,174,438	2,365,628
Newhaven Harbour	53,266	49,450	14,020	18,298	23,176	24,584
Newhaven Town	307,638	342,606	123,406	283,664	319,038	363,816
Normans Bay	13,512	15,236	7,032	17,126	17,854	20,558
Ore	240,652	277,174	78,634	208,038	228,562	255,436
Pevensey and Westham	163,808	172,144	55,748	142,574	152,934	153,290
Pevensey Bay	9,270	9,132	4,430	6,700	5,192	5,828
Plumpton	113,150	115,690	26,358	76,140	91,996	101,160
Polegate	972,908	1,020,262	333,680	785,094	929,468	979,052
Robertsbridge	320,640	301,514	75,452	214,300	225,780	238,956
Rye (Sussex)	480,322	474,036	152,844	399,364	431,092	459,082
Seaford (Sussex)	676,442	673,764	205,142	474,382	552,902	613,980
Southeast	22,008	22,052	10,302	23,564	23,206	25,064
St Leonards Warrior Square	820,252	823,284	285,146	710,690	803,504	879,970
Stonegate	186,888	175,838	29,224	93,064	118,254	117,954
Three Oaks	11,534	12,672	3,914	8,952	12,196	14,938
Uckfield	471,646	387,252	48,824	158,916	200,272	213,160
Wadhurst	414,994	395,342	71,958	241,596	287,016	321,978
West St Leonards	123,528	117,002	34,536	102,130	113,324	128,056
Winchelsea	9,048	9,688	3,448	9,322	12,004	14,196
Total	18,177,510	18,371,570	5,569,626	13,428,798	15,474,004	16,641,350

* There is a time break in this year's data

Source: Office of Rail and Road (table 1410a)

Some stations with smaller numbers of entries and exits serve rural communities, thereby providing an important function in helping passengers access goods and services, via rail, that they may not otherwise be able to.

In terms of interchanges (where passengers change between trains), ORR data (table 1410b) shows there are five stations in the county where this occurs in the most recent year. These are Eastbourne, Hampden Park, Hastings, Lewes, and St Leonards Warrior Square. Of these stations, almost half a million interchanges occurred at Lewes in April 2023-March 2024. Similar to individual station entry and exit data, the number of interchanges is lower than pre-covid, with only Hampden Park showing a small (1,000-2,000) increase compared to pre-covid number of interchanges.

Population

The most densely populated towns in the county are located on the coast in Peacehaven, Seaford, Eastbourne, Bexhill-on-Sea and Hastings. However, there are also several other densely populated market towns within more rural locations, including Lewes, Hailsham, Uckfield and Crowborough. Many of the most populated settlements have their own railway station(s) or are just a relatively short distance from their nearest station.

Between 2020 and 2035 East Sussex's population is expected to grow by around 68,500, with much of this growth in Rother and Wealden. Rail provides an opportunity to help move people across the county and to neighbouring locations quick and efficiently.

Employment and skills

Within East Sussex there are 184,000 jobs across both the private and public sector in full and part time positions. Job density is focused on Eastbourne borough and Lewes district, with both areas having a higher proportion of jobs for each working age resident. Rail provides an option to connect people from other communities into jobs in these areas.

The county has low levels of employment (72%), high levels of 'NEET' (young people who are not in education, employment or training - 6.5%), and 35% of the workforce are qualified below Level 3 (A' Level). The County Council facilitates the Skills and Employment East Sussex Board (SEES) which brings together multi-agency partners including businesses and training providers to address the skills development needs of our young people and of our workforce as well as tackling economic inactivity in the county.

By reducing travel barriers and creating pathways into work, the transport sector can play a vital role in boosting participation in the labour market and supporting a more inclusive local economy. The transport sector (specifically rail), in East Sussex has significant potential to support education, training/skills development and employment in several ways. Firstly, by improving connectivity to enable people to

access education, training/skills development and work through investment in reliable public transport links. And secondly, by generating or offering jobs to local residents in the rail sector.

The visitor economy

East Sussex has a range of locally and international significant tourism and cultural destinations and attractions - such as the Seven Sisters Country Park, beaches, heritage sites and coastal towns. Tourism and cultural industries are an important consideration in planning the future transport provision in East Sussex, particularly as many are possible as day trips by rail for those staying within and near the county and also to support longer staying visitors move around the county and beyond.

Many destinations are next to or very close to rail stations and there is onward bus (either fixed route services or Flexibus), or active travel connections to these destinations. Collaborative work, for example, has occurred between the Sussex Downs Line Community Rail Partnership, the train operating company Southern, and bus operator Brighton & Hove buses, to provide an integrated travel map for visitors arriving at Seaford to enable exploration of the town and the South Downs National Park (particularly the popular Seven Sisters Country Park, which is on the eastern edge of Seaford).

Planned housing and employment growth

Local planning authorities (LPA) are responsible for developing local plans for their geographies. In East Sussex the six LPAs are the district (Lewes, Rother and Wealden) and Borough (Eastbourne and Hastings) and the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA). Their plans set out the overall vision and objectives for development, including detailed planning policies, specific proposals for development and use of land (including housing and employment) and the numbers and therefore guide planning decisions. All the district and borough councils and the SDNPA are in the process of reviewing their local plans.

The County Council will work with the LPAs to ensure consideration of this strategy alongside their proposed plans for the growth of housing and employment to support the case for strategic rail improvements in the County and other key investment priorities outlined in section 4.

Gatwick

Gatwick airport is the UK's second busiest airport. In September 2025 the UK Government approved the use of the reserve (northern) runway for departures which will increase passenger numbers up to 80 million per annum, bringing additional jobs and visitors into the region, from which the East Sussex economy will benefit.

In 2015, over 1,000 East Sussex residents worked at Gatwick airport, with many of those coming from directly linked districts or boroughs by rail, notably Lewes and Eastbourne, but also from Wealden. The number of jobs for East Sussex residents with the second runway are anticipated to triple to around 3,300.

Devolution

The establishment of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton and reorganisation of local government across West Sussex, Brighton and Hove and East Sussex, resulting in the creation of unitary authorities across the geography, will result in changes. This includes strategic planning, with Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) being prepared by Strategic Planning Authorities (SPA). SDS's will provide a framework for how land will be used for housing, employment, infrastructure, and other purposes, ensuring that development occurs in a way that supports economic, social, and environmental goals. Development of the SDS will include the MCCA working with the County Council, and, following local government re-organisation, the unitary authorities across Sussex and Brighton. The reorganisation of local government will enhance opportunities to work collaboratively over a wider geographical area, with the MCCA being responsible for Local Transport Plans.

Other policies and strategies

There are a number of other strategies and policies that will support the successful delivery of the rail strategy. Some of the strategies and policies are identified within this sub-section, grouped by geographical coverage, this list is not exhaustive

Local

Strategy	Importance
Bus Service Improvement Plan (2025)	The plan aims to improve quality of bus provision across the County, increase the number of bus priority schemes, simplify fares and ticketing, and capitalise on technical and operational innovation in bus service provision.
East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4 (2024-2050)	<p>LTP4 aspires to create “an inclusive transport system that connects people and places, is decarbonised, safer, resilient, and supports our natural environment, communities, and businesses to be healthy, thrive and prosper.”</p> <p>The East Sussex Rail Strategy provides an opportunity to improve the rail experience for passengers to help achieve the vision, objectives and outcomes of LTP4.</p>
East Sussex Prosperity Strategy (2024-2050)	The strategy seeks to secure inclusive and sustainable economic growth, setting out how over the next generation, East Sussex can secure better opportunities and living standards for people who live in the county, and how businesses can develop new routes to value creation.
East Sussex Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan 2 (under development)	<p>This document sets out a proposed network of cycling and walking routes across the county, complemented by specific measures and actions. The LCWIP is being reviewed and the updated version will be available for public consultation in January 2026.</p> <p>The rail network will need to have good connections into local communities and the LCWIP will support good quality walking, wheeling and cycling routes that connect with local railway stations.</p>

Strategy	Importance
Local Plans (district and borough Local Plans are under development, South Downs National Park (2019)	<p>Local planning authorities (district and borough councils and the South Downs National Park Authority have recently or are reviewing their local plans. These involve planning for and identifying sites for housing and employment.</p> <p>The Rail Strategy will support housing and employment development by connecting people and jobs, whether this be directly or by through a multi-modal trip</p>
East Sussex Cultural Strategy 2013-2025	<p>This strategy sets out how the cultural attractors in the county can be supported to help everyone support the culture of East Sussex. A new and updated strategy is being renewed and in development with access to cultural assets being a key element.</p> <p>The East Sussex Rail Strategy will play an important role in bringing visitors into the county to experience the culture the county has to offer.</p>

Regional

Strategy	Importance
Transport for the South East's Transport Strategy (2025)	<p>Sets out the vision for region and the strategic economic, social, and environmental goals and priorities that underpin it. These include net-zero, improved productivity, health and wellbeing, quality of life, accessibility, and protection of the south-east unique natural and historic environment.</p> <p>The East Sussex Rail Strategy supports the vision across wider south east region, with rail being a sustainable and generally quick way of connecting communities across the south east.</p>
Visitor Economy Strategy for Growth 2024-2034 (2024)	<p>A strategy to support the visitor economy across the Sussex and Brighton and Hove geography. The strategy has several key principles including 'sustainable', 'market driven' and 'accessible and inclusive'.</p> <p>The Rail Strategy will support sustainable tourism by enabling people to access attractions by rail (and onward connecting modes of walking, wheeling, cycling or bus). Rail will also connect people to jobs in the visitor economy, along with any training and education opportunities.</p>
Transport for the South East's Strategic	The Strategic Investment Plan, adopted in March 2023, provides a framework for investment in strategic transport infrastructure, services, and regulatory

Strategy	Importance
Investment Plan (SIP) (2023)	<p>interventions for the next thirty years (and is currently under review).</p> <p>The East Sussex Rail Strategy supports the identified rail improvements across the county that will support rail connectivity across the wider south east region.</p> <p>The SIP is currently being updating following the adoption of the updated TfSE Transport Strategy in October 2025.</p>
Gatwick Surface Access Strategy (2022)	<p>This strategy sets out an eight-year sustainable surface access vision for Gatwick Airport Limited (GAL), setting new targets for sustainable travel mode share to the airport. These include an aim to achieve 52% public transport mode share for passenger coming to the airport by 2030, and 48% sustainable travel mode share for staff journeys.</p> <p>The East Sussex Rail Strategy will support people access Gatwick Airport, whether that be for employment or to catch a flight, sustainably.</p>

National

Strategy	Importance
Industrial Strategy (2025)	<p>A strategy to support eight sectors of the UK industry, that will support the growth of existing companies and for new ones to successfully emerge in the UK. The strategy includes significant links to the rail sector, primarily through its emphasis on in relation to rail the strategy focuses on infrastructure development, technology adoption (specifically digital railway), procurement reform, skills development, and regional connectivity.</p> <p>The Rail Strategy will support the industrial strategy by connecting people and business together, thereby, enabling the ambitions of the industrial strategy to be realised.</p>
Carbon Budget and Growth Delivery Plan (2025)	<p>A target pathway to reducing carbon emissions and reach net zero by 2050 and looking at how we can meet our carbon budgets and the net zero ambition.</p> <p>Transport has an important role to play, and in the county, this includes the electrification of the lines between Ore and Ashford and Uckfield and Oxted to enable electric trains to run across our rail network.</p>
Network Rail Strategic Business Plan (2023)	<p>This update outlines rail schemes funded by the Control Period 7 enhancements budget, covering the period between 2024 and 2029. Schemes announced for the Southern Network Rail Region are likely to have some</p>

Strategy	Importance
	positive impacts to rail services across East Sussex, even if they are not delivered directly in the county.
Levelling Up the United Kingdom (2022)	The Levelling Up White Paper sets out the Government's strategy for addressing inequality in the UK through a range of interventions that target various indicators of inequality. One of its twelve focus areas or 'missions' is transport infrastructure.
Decarbonising Transport: A Green Britain (2021)	<p>Sets out path to achieving a net zero transportation system in the UK.</p> <p>Decarbonising the remaining non-electrical rail networks in the county (Uckfield to Oxted and Ore to Ashford) will help contribute to net-zero.</p>
Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline Autumn 2019 Scheme Update (2019)	A strategic plan which sets out medium term priorities and targets for improving how railways around the UK are operated, with a focus on reliable passenger services, potential to fuel growth and better integration between Network Rail and train operating companies.
Future of Mobility: Urban Strategy (2019)	<p>This strategy heralds a moment of opportunity in the technological innovation of transport that the UK needs to embrace. The Government sets out its approach to facilitating innovation in urban mobility for passengers, services, and freight, with a focus on specific areas of innovation with significant future prospects.</p> <p>The East Sussex Rail Strategy supports technological innovation particularly around ticketing and integration of ticket with other modes (such as bus through PlusBus).</p>
Inclusive Transport Strategy (2018)	<p>This Strategy sets out the Government's plans to make our transport system more inclusive, and to make travel easier for disabled people.</p> <p>The East Sussex Rail Strategy identifies what needs to be done to make the rail network more inclusive, through interventions to make stations fully accessible.</p>
Transport Investment Strategy (2017)	<p>A broad strategy for investing into the UK's transport system to create better connected, reliable networks, enhance economic productivity and local growth, support the creation of new housing, and enhance Britain's global competitiveness.</p> <p>The East Sussex Rail Strategy seeks to support this strategy in supporting the economy through a better connected and reliable rail network in East Sussex.</p>

Strategy	Importance
Equalities Act (2010)	This Act includes a public-sector equality duty which requires public organisations and those delivering public functions to show due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation; to advance equality of opportunity; and to foster good relations between communities.
Climate Change Act (2008)	<p>Sets targets for UK greenhouse gas emission reductions of at least 100% by 2050, against a 1990 baseline (this was previously 80% but was updated to a net zero target in June 2019). The Act also provides a system of carbon budgeting and the development of a National Adaptation Programme.</p> <p>The East Sussex Rail Strategy identifies how the decarbonisation of the remaining diesel routes (Oxted- Uckfield and Ore-Ashford) would help meet the net zero ambitions by making all passenger trains in the county zero-emission at the tail pipe. A fully electrified network across the county will also provide for electric freight services where they are appropriate for the journey being undertaken.</p>

2. Roles and responsibilities

Although East Sussex County Council does not have a statutory responsibility for rail, travelling by train is an important part of how people travel into, out of, and around East Sussex. Therefore, it is important that we work in partnership with the Department for Transport (DfT), Network Rail and Great British Railways (GBR) (once established), the Train Operating Companies (TOCs) and other rail bodies and organisations - including the South East Community Rail Partnership, and other local rail groups - to improve rail services and infrastructure, and the integration of other modes to support access to rail stations.

Rail travel meets many of our Council priorities, including delivering sustainable economic growth and achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) places greater emphasis on public transport, including opportunities for rail, than previous LTPs.

Key organisations

Department for Transport (DfT)

The DfT provides rail policy, outlines the strategy, and provides funding for the rail network in England (and Wales). This is overseen by the Secretary of State for Transport, the ministerial team, and DfT officials.

Great British Railways (GBR) – awaiting legislation to be established

Network Rail's strategic and planning functions (along with functions within the DfT and Rail Delivery Group) are planned to be merged into a new organisation, GBR. This was a key recommendation as part of the [Williams Shapps Rail Review](#) in 2011, and the Kings Speech in 2023 announced the progression of a draft Rail Reform Bill which would enable the establishment of GBR. The Labour government in July 2024 highlighted this as one of their key priorities for transport, including a wider commitment to gradually re-nationalising rail passenger services over the course of the parliament by 'Creating a simpler, better railway for everyone in Britain'.

GBR will be a public body responsible for the future planning, delivery and operation of the rail network in Great Britain and specify future infrastructure and service needs. It will also manage most passenger rail services in the south east through new Passenger Service Contracts with TOCs/GBR, which will replace the existing franchise arrangements. Once established GBR will take over NR in its role as infrastructure manager.

GBR are currently working in shadow format. East Sussex County Council and their partners look forward to working with GBR to improve rail in, out of, and around the County.

Network Rail (NR)

NR currently own and manage most of the railway infrastructure in Great Britain. This includes 20,000 miles of track, 30,000 bridges, tunnels and viaducts, and thousands of signals and level crossings. The purpose of Network Rail is to connect people and goods to where they need to be. As outlined under GBR it is expected that the role and functions of Network Rail will be taken over by GBR.

Train and Freight Operating Companies (TOCs/FOCs/GBR)

TOCs/GBR deliver passenger services, and FOCs operate freight services, with both operating over infrastructure provided by NR. They set and deliver rail timetables and provide ancillary facilities and amenities such as cycle and car parking, manage ticket offices, waiting rooms and shelters, and customer service. Through the Rail Delivery Group (RDG), TOCs/GBR also develop strategies and plans to improve the railway. The TOCs are in the process of being under public ownership, with Southeastern already having transitioned, and GTR to take place 31 May 2026.

Office of Road and Rail (ORR)

In respect of rail, the ORR are the independent economic and safety regulator for Britain's railways. They hold NR (and High Speed 1) to account and seek to make sure that the rail industry is competitive and fair. They ensure that the railway is safe, and is kept safe, at a reasonably practicable cost.

Rail Delivery Group

The Rail Delivery Group (RDG) was established in June 2011 (and formalised in 2013) by the major passenger and freight train operator groups and NR to take responsibility for co-ordinating and leading on cross-industry initiatives.

A recommendation of the [Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail](#) in 2021 was that elements of RDG's activity should sit within the remit of an arm's length body. In May 2022, Rail Partners was formed to continue advocacy and policy activities previously undertaken by RDG on behalf of members, in advance of RDG's transfer to GBR.

Transport for the South East

Transport for the South East (TfSE) is a sub-national transport body for the South East of England. It is a partnership, including with 16 local authorities, with a purpose to determine what investment is needed to transform our region's transport system and drive economic growth. TfSE produce a number of complementary strategies to our own, including those relating to rail and freight.

Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) for Sussex and Brighton - emerging

The strategy embraces the establishment of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton with elections for a Mayor in May 2026. The establishment of the MCCA will devolve the powers and funding for strategic planning, transport and economic growth from central government. Therefore, the transport priorities for the wider Sussex

geography will be set by the new Mayor, eventually through the development of a joint Local Transport Plan across the Sussex geography.

Governance

East Sussex County Council will establish appropriate governance to oversee the development, delivery and benefits arising from schemes and policies included in this strategy.

This approach will utilise the stakeholder groups established as part of the development of LTP4 and the East Sussex Rail Strategy, which in turn will support the monitoring of the strategy.

The County Council is a member of Transport for the South East's (TfSE's) Partnership Board and has the ability to guide the development and approval of regional strategies and policies. The County Council is also a member of TfSE's Transport Forum and will use this opportunity to present and advocate for rail-specific issues within and affecting the county.

East Sussex County Council will also continue to engage with central government departments associated with the delivery of transport policy, such as the DfT and the rail industry. The County Council will advocate for policy and investment which deliver on the objectives of this strategy. However, East Sussex County Council recognises that engagement in the future is likely to be through the emerging MCCA for Sussex and Brighton.

Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) sets a range of objectives guiding the management and continued development to local transport across the county. This strategy will constitute a vital element of LTP4. The County Council will work collaboratively with its local planning authorities to integrate within their statutory Local Plans rail service and infrastructure improvements, and ensure they prioritise the infrastructure required, as well as protect sites for future rail infrastructure projects where possible.

The rail industry and businesses, alongside the general public, can help to influence rail demand and movements. The County Council and partners will engage effectively with stakeholders to facilitate behavioural change towards public transport including to rail from the private car and improve rail services and infrastructure which would further encourage more people to travel by rail. Encouraging and enabling more people to travel by active modes - walking, wheeling and cycling - to/from train stations will be covered in the East Sussex Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

4. Investment priority areas

This section sets out the policy context, evidence and opportunities under each of the identified investment priority areas that the County and Council and their partners will seek funding for to enable these to be studied, developed and delivered over the life of the strategy. These priority areas are designed to enable rail to connect people and places in an accessible and affordable way. The priority areas are, in no particular order:

- Accessibility of the rail network
- Integration with other modes
- Reliability and resilience
- Decarbonisation
- Journey time competitiveness
- Customer experience

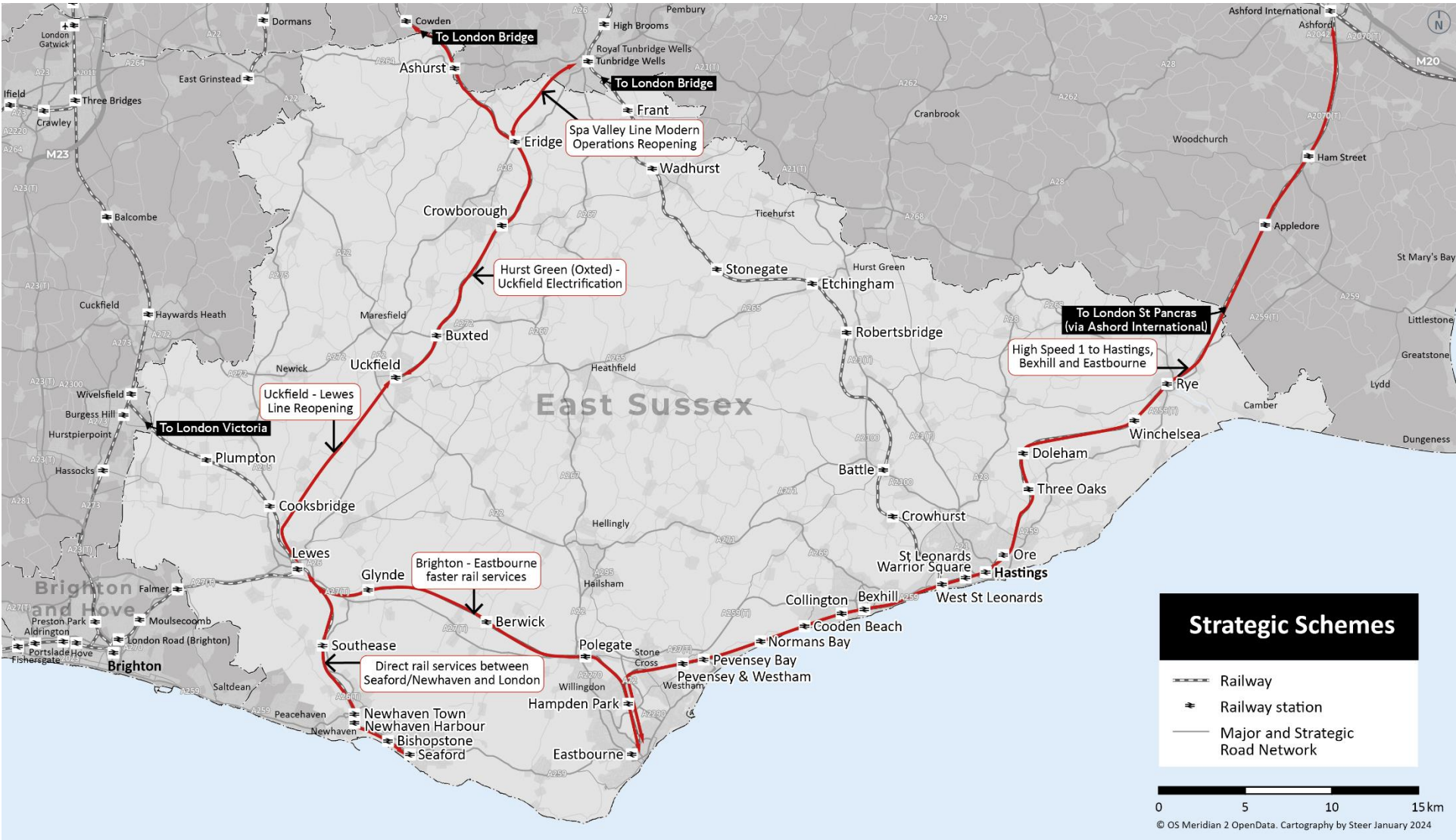
Strategic Priority Schemes

We have identified six major strategic priority rail schemes for the area, all of which contribute to addressing our objectives in Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) and the evidence outlined in each Priority Area below. The priority rail schemes indicated in Figure 3, with further detail provided in Appendix A, are:

- Brighton - Eastbourne – Hastings: Faster Services,
- High Speed 1 to Hastings, Bexhill and Eastbourne – which includes Marshlink electrification,
- Hurst Green (Oxted) - Uckfield Electrification,
- Uckfield - Lewes - Line Reopening,
- Eridge - Tunbridge Wells railway line reinstatement (Spa Valley Line Modern Operations Reopening), and
- Direct rail services between Seaford/Newhaven and London.

These six schemes are also prioritised within the East Sussex LTP4 Investment Plan and the TfSE Strategic Investment Plan, but have long-term delivery timescales, and will require the input of a range of delivery partners - including NR/GBR, TfSE, local transport authorities, private sector funders, and the DfT to come to fruition.

Figure 3: Strategic rail schemes



Priority Area 1: Accessibility of the rail network

Policy Context

Accessibility is making the railway:

- Physically accessible to all
- Technically accessible, which includes:
 - Supporting people who do not have internet access
 - Providing support to those that find ticket machines challenging or daunting to use
 - Providing everyone with easy-to-access and understandable information on their services and journeys

In 2020 the DfT published its [Inclusive Transport Strategy](#) for achieving equal access for all users. The East Sussex LTP4 sets out a vision for an inclusive transport system which seeks to maximise the number of trips residents make by public transport. To achieve this, services will need to be more affordable and remove barriers which hinder accessibility.

Evidence

The [National Rail Enquiries Station Facilities Dataset](#) shows that only 5 of the 38 stations in East Sussex (13%) have step-free access from street level to all platforms, meaning that many passengers require staff assistance to use the railway. This is challenging where stations are unstaffed. Only 12 of the 38 stations in East Sussex (32%) are unstaffed. However, of those that are staffed, this may only be for a few hours a day.

GTR's Customer Report - covering services operated by Thameslink and Southern in East Sussex and other areas between April to Sept 2023² - states that there was an average of 13,600 Passenger Assistance journeys per month, of which an average of 8,500 were pre-booked.

The Covid 19 pandemic and reduced passenger numbers have increased financial challenges for the industry and led to discussions around the closure of ticket offices and reduced staffing levels at used stations. In 2023, the industry consulted on plans to close ticket offices at stations, which would not only impact passengers purchasing tickets, and being able to get advice on the best value ticket for their journey, but also those requiring general passenger assistance, information and feeling safe within the rail station. Following the response to this consultation, [Govia Thameslink](#) (GTR) have started trialling mobile assistance teams to provide users with assistance at some accessible stations when they are unstaffed and there are train services scheduled to call there. However, this assistance requires pre-booking or waiting for a staff member which may take time and is not a consistent and reliable experience across the network.

East Sussex County Council does not support the closure of ticket offices. Ticket offices are an important part of connecting the local community to the railway;

² [Customer Report, Govia Thameslink Railway \(2023\)](#)

enabling everyone to access rail services, including those that are not confident in using technological alternatives for purchasing tickets, and navigating the range of ticket/travel options. It is therefore important that ticket offices and their staff are retained.

It is important for passengers to feel that they are getting value for money when travelling by train. The rail industry needs to deliver a fair and affordable ticketing system for passengers, which encourages people to travel by train rather than the private car. This is being done by incentivising passengers to travel off peak in quieter periods through reduced fares, and tickets purchased in advance that can be heavily discounted. Also, a new pay-as-you-go rail ticketing system that tracks passengers' locations as they travel is to be trialled in the East Midlands as part of the government's plan to reform the railway network's complex fare system. This pilot system tracks the passenger's journey on their mobile phone using satellite location technology. The app will automatically charge them the best fare at the end of the day's travel and provide a barcode when needed for ticket inspections or to pass through ticket barriers. If successful, this would replace the need for paper tickets and mobile tickets, and passengers could travel without planning or buying tickets before travel.

The [Williams Shapps Plan for Rail](#) (2021) identifies that making the railway accessible for all is a key challenge, including for people with disabilities, those with additional needs, long-term health conditions, the elderly, and those travelling with luggage or buggies.

Opportunities

Step free access - Various studies and engagements conducted by the rail industry and other stakeholder groups have highlighted the need to increase the number of stations with step-free access from the street to the platform and train, including the provision of lifts at stations. The [DfT's Access for All programme](#) continues to commit to improving accessibility at all stations.

In recent years, East Sussex has benefited from the Access for All programme at the following stations:

- Crowborough – new footbridge and lifts, an accessible ticket machines, toilets, and wheelchair assistance
- Eridge –new lift on to the national rail platform at Eridge, footbridge renewed, canopies renovated, historic waiting room restored, and a wheelchair ramp installed between the car park and the Spa Valley Railway platform
- Battle – new footbridge and lifts

We have long advocated for accessibility improvements at Hampden Park as passengers cross over platforms to avoid travelling in and out of Eastbourne but are aware that this is not a priority for NR as it has step free access between the platforms by crossing the road over the level crossing. However, this is a convoluted route, and passengers must wait until the barriers are raised until they can cross over, which can take around 2-3 minutes per train, and sometimes longer if trains are

passing or closer together. We will continue to press for accessibility improvements at this and other stations in East Sussex in the future in order to provide an accessible rail network for our communities.

Since there is a significant difference between the number of actual and pre-booked Passenger Assistance journeys on the railway, it is clear that lines of communication could be improved by the TOCs/GBR to ensure passengers are aware this service is available.

Investment priorities

Creating accessible railway stations is essential for ensuring everyone is able to make short and longer-distance journeys by public transport safely. This encompasses not just improving the customer experience for those with limited or restricted mobility, but also those with hidden disabilities, those with luggage and buggies, and people who face other barriers, such as accessing technology to buy tickets.

The tables below set out how rail and supporting schemes will help address known challenges and support the ambition for delivering a more accessible, inclusive and safer transport network that meets the needs of everyone. These are presented by the level of influence East Sussex County Council has.

(Please note that this section is likely to require further updates following the emergence of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton and creation of new unitary authorities across the West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Sussex geography through local government reorganisation).

Led by East Sussex County Council

These are schemes where East Sussex County Council has greater influence and can help directly develop and/or deliver the intervention subject to securing funding.

Name	RA01 - Improving active travel network integration with railway stations
How scheme will support addressing accessibility	Improve accessibility of rail network for all users
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	Study –Short-term Develop –Short- and medium-term Deliver – Short- and medium-term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Sussex County Council • Transport for the South-East • Local Authorities • Local access, disability walking and cycling groups
LTP4 Investment Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP01: Local priorities – walking, wheeling, cycling

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP06: Integrated transport opportunities • CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive
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Name	RA02 - Improve bus service integration with stations
How scheme will support addressing accessibility	Improve accessibility of rail and bus network for all users – for example people using wheelchairs or mobility scooters, those with limited mobility, and parents and carers with prams and buggies
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	Study – To be confirmed Develop – To be confirmed Deliver – Short-term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus operators, • East Sussex County Council • Transport for the South East • Local Authorities
LTP4 Investment Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP03: Local priorities – bus • LP06: Integrated transport opportunities • CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive

Advocated by East Sussex County Council

These are schemes where East Sussex County Council does not lead on development and/or delivery but is a key partner to successful delivery.

Name	RA03 - Provision of lifts at stations
How scheme will support addressing accessibility	Improve accessibility of rail network for all users – for example people using wheelchairs or mobility scooters, those with limited mobility, and parents and carers with prams and buggies
Indicative cost	£10m to £100m
Development timescales	Study – Short-term Develop – Short-term Deliver – To be confirmed
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Rail • Train operating companies / GBR • East Sussex County Council • Transport for the South East • Access and disability groups
LTP4 Investment Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP06: Integrated transport opportunities • CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive

Name	RA04 - Step free access from street to platform at more stations
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How scheme will support addressing accessibility	Improve accessibility of rail network for all users – for example people using wheelchairs or mobility scooters, those with limited mobility and parents and carers with prams and buggies
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	Study – To be confirmed Develop – Short-term Deliver – Short-term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operating companies / GBR • East Sussex County Council • Transport for the South East • Department for Transport • Network Rail • Access and disability groups
LTP4 Investment Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP06: Integrated transport opportunities • CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive

Supported by East Sussex County Council

These are schemes where East Sussex County Council is not leading or a partner on the development and/or delivery. We will remain supportive of the lead and key partners in the delivery of the intervention. Whilst we may have a limited role in delivery, these interventions are part of the wider picture to improve travelling by for all users.

Name	RA05 - Station ticket offices to remain open within East Sussex
How scheme will support addressing accessibility	Support customers who are not able buy tickets on-line / at ticket machines, can advise passengers of the cheapest ticket option, and support staff presence to reduce anti-social behaviour
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	Study – To be confirmed Develop – To be confirmed Deliver – Short-term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operating companies / GBR • East Sussex County Council • Transport for the South East • Department for Transport • Network Rail
LTP4 Investment Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP06: Integrated transport opportunities • CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive

Name	RA06 - Accessible Information on railway services and journeys
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How scheme will support addressing accessibility	Provide accessible information remotely (e.g. website via computers and phones) and at stations, for journeys to/from the rail station on railway services and journeys for all users, including those who use wheelchairs or have visual and audio impairments
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	Study – To be confirmed Develop – To be confirmed Deliver – Short-term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operators • East Sussex County Council • Transport for the South East • Local Authorities • Disability groups
LTP4 Investment Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive • LP14: Digital

Priority Area 2: Integration with other modes

Policy Context

Rail requires other modes to facilitate the first and last mile of a user's journey. An integrated transport network encourages people to use rail by providing seamless multi-modal journey opportunities through co-ordinated timetables and passenger information, attractive and affordable ticketing, and accessible and safe interchange locations. This is a priority area for the government which is reflected in the DfT's Integrated Transport Strategy (proposed for publication in December 2025).

The East Sussex LTP4 policies on integrating transport include measures focusing on encouraging the rollout of smart ticketing and value for money fare options across all modes of transport, delivering improvements to major transport interchanges to help deliver a seamless transport network, and delivering intermediate-scale (market towns) and smaller-scale (villages) mobility hubs.

TfSE are developing plans to improve rail integration throughout the region, and lessons can be learnt from [Transport for the North](#) and other regions who have achieved notable successes in this area. TfSE's vision is underpinned by creating and enhancing an inclusive transport network for all users, improving interchange between travel modes, and improving access to key local services by all modes.

TfSE's proposals include the roll-out of smart-ticketing, value for money fare options across all modes of transport, and strategic urban and rural mobility hubs providing bus-rail interchange opportunities - including at Uckfield and Polegate stations. These proposals also include improving integration through timed bus connections with strategic mobility hubs at locations such as Hailsham, which does not have direct rail access, to provide sustainable public transport access to the rail network.

The emergence of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton will result in changes to powers and funding from central government in relation to strategic planning, transport and economic growth. This is likely to strengthen opportunities to deliver greater integration between rail and other modes of transport for local short journeys and as part of longer journeys.

Evidence

The [Plus Bus offer](#) which already operates in Brighton (to Seaford along the coastal strip), Lewes, Eastbourne (including buses to Polegate and Hailsham), Hastings (covering the area west to Little Common/Cooden Beach) and Rye (including Camber, Tenterden and New Romney) provides integrated (e-)ticketing between bus and rail. Discounted bus "add on" to a day ticket fare encourages first and last mile travel by public transport, making the whole journey more affordable. Southern also works with local bus companies by providing onward travel to visitor attractions such as Sheffield Park, which makes the journey to these destinations feasible by public transport.

The provision of cycle parking at stations which is safe, secure and covered by CCTV is important to encourage and enable more people to travel to the station by bike. At larger stations, cycle hubs - such as those already at Lewes, Eastbourne, Bexhill and Hastings - which provide more secure facilities are supported, but sufficient space and funding would be required to enable this happen at other stations on our network.

[11 of the 38 stations \(29%\)](#) across East Sussex have secure, covered cycle storage facilities. Over the last few years Southern, in partnership with East Sussex County Council, has invested in secure, covered cycle storage facilities, and reported an associated increase in cycling to stations. The County Council have supported with identifying specific locations for cycle parking improvements and with partnership funding.

In terms of bikes on trains, whilst there is a desire for sufficient space on trains to accommodate bikes. It is acknowledged that this desire needs to be carefully balanced with the need to provide seating for passengers.

The East Sussex LTP4 highlights the opportunities for the delivery of travel interchanges / mobility hubs across the county. Travel interchanges /mobility hubs in other regions, as evidenced by studies by Como UK and [International Association of Public Transport](#) (UITP), are proven to be successful in integrating modes and increasing the demand for bus and rail travel. These improvements may include bus stop enhancements (e.g. adding shelters, real time passenger information and seats) or the addition of cycle stands or car club parking. The improvements to interchange will be designed to suit the different place and movement characteristics, the local environment and reflect the needs of local users (including demand).

The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) seeks to ensure there is adequate connections and infrastructure by walking, wheeling and cycling to (bus and) rail services. Where feasible, in accordance with LTN1/20 walking and cycling should be kept separate to reduce conflict between pedestrians and cyclists. Suitable active travel routes should connect people to stations to enable passengers to travel sustainably for their entire journey.

Opportunities

Enhanced multi-modal passenger information - both for passengers planning their journey but also during their journeys - will improve passenger confidence in travelling by multiple public transport modes and thus make these journeys more attractive and viable.

Flexibility in how multi-modal tickets could be purchased would ensure passengers can buy an end-to-end ticket at a time and location that is convenient for them. Smart ticketing is important, however for public transport to be accessible for all, other tickets which are equally affordable and flexible need to be available at stations. Integrated ticketing needs to be transparent, intuitive, affordable and flexible for all potential users, and we welcome the availability of PlusBus tickets.

Better integration between bus and rail services where feasible and improving the frequency of services along bus routes that serve stations, would provide more competitive end-to-end journey times and reliability. For example, Newhaven Town station is served by a range of bus routes that provide good integration between rail and bus. In comparison, Uckfield has a lower frequency of bus services, and consequently, integration with rail is more challenging, particularly given it is a rail terminus.

Through the delivery of improvements to bus service and frequency via the East Sussex BSIP there is an opportunity to upgrade bus provision, and in-turn, improve integration with rail. Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT) – branded as Flexibus in East Sussex – enables sustainable connections to rail stations by matching passengers with available vehicles in real-time, rather than operating on fixed routes and schedules. Opportunities for improved bus and rail service integration include extending existing 7am to 7pm services to later in the evening, and on Sunday.

Providing amenable access routes between rail stations and bus stops, using high-quality signage would also improve integration.

Investment priorities

Users will only opt for rail if they can easily access the station from their origin to their ultimate destination. Integrating rail with other modes of transport is crucial for creating a seamless, multi-modal transit network that offers passengers greater confidence, convenience, flexibility, and accessibility.

By better connecting rail with local bus and active-travel networks, we can improve urban mobility, reduce congestion near stations, and enhance the overall efficiency and sustainability of our transport network. These can be incrementally rolled out across the region in the shorter-term such that benefits are realised immediately, starting with developed plans such as a strategic mobility hub at Lewes and Polegate.

Ideally bus and train times would be better coordinated, but a number of challenges make this difficult to achieve. Train times are based on regional demand requirements and rail line capacity constraints. Bus times are designed within the constraints of the bus resources available to meet specific needs along the bus route and the greatest demands. The types of constraints and challenges encountered when trying to match train times are as follows:

- A need for more buses to run to meet all train arrival and departure times and to provide suitable connections - for example, where the railway station is part way through a bus route, there may be demand from public transport users to connect with trains from both parts of the route. This would be costly (vehicular running costs and driver time) as the bus would need to stay at the station for longer (around 20 minutes) to accommodate those passengers wanting to access the train for both departure and arrival at the station.

- Where the rail station has train departures in two directions, such as in one direction towards London and in the other direction towards the coast, bus timetabling to meet school start and finish times and commuters work patterns - education session times and working day times may not be compatible with train arrival/departure times, particularly where the rail station is not in a town.
- Connection reliability - trains and buses do not always run to time which can mean connections are missed. It is impractical to delay bus departures due to late train arrivals, as this would have a detrimental effect on other users of the bus service. Whilst this could be overcome by running a bus service dedicated solely for the needs of train users, this would require additional ongoing funding.

Despite the challenges the County Council and their partners have we will review the opportunities to support integration where practicable, subject to the availability of funding.

The tables below sets out how rail and supporting schemes foster a more interconnected and inclusive transport system, empowering passengers to easily navigate between different modes of transport to reach their destinations efficiently and sustainably. These are presented by the level of influence East Sussex County Council has.

(Please note that this section is likely to require further updates following the emergence of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton) and creation of new unitary authorities across the West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Sussex geography through local government reorganisation).

Led by East Sussex County Council

These are schemes where East Sussex County Council has greater influence and can help directly develop and/or deliver the intervention.

Name	RI01 - Better promotion of multi-modal journey planners to support passengers plan their journeys
How scheme will support addressing modal integration	Improve customer confidence of using rail showing journey times and connections
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	Study – To be confirmed Develop – Short-term Deliver – Short-term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operating companies / GBR • Bus operators • East Sussex County Council • Transport for the South East • Private sector
LTP4 Investment Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP06: Integrated transport opportunities • CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LP14: Digital
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Name	<p>RI02 - Enhancements to and better promotion of ways to ensure better bus and rail integration</p> <p>(e.g. integrated bus and train ticketing, contactless ticketing, Real Time Passenger Information, branding of bus/rail connectivity, expand and promote PlusBus, Flexibus)</p>
How scheme will support addressing modal integration	Improve customer confidence of using rail and ensure users get better value for money
Indicative cost	£10m to £100m
Development timescales	<p>Study – To be confirmed</p> <p>Develop – Short-term</p> <p>Deliver – Short-term</p>
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train operating companies / GBR/GBR Bus operators East Sussex County Council Transport for the South East Private sector
LTP4 Investment Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LP06: Integrated transport opportunities CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive

Name	RI03 - Improve alignment of rail and bus timetables, where feasible
How scheme will support addressing modal integration	Improve customer confidence of using rail, reduce end-to-end journey times. Recognise this may be difficult to achieve but where opportunities present themselves, consider improved integration of timetables of bus and rail services
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	<p>Study – To be confirmed</p> <p>Develop – To be confirmed</p> <p>Deliver – Short-term</p>
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train operating companies / GBR Bus operators East Sussex County Council Transport for the South East Network Rail
LTP4 Investment Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LP06: Integrated transport opportunities CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive

Name	RI04 - Provision of new Travel Interchanges / Mobility Hubs (including cycle access) to enable seamless integration with other modes for their onward journey
How scheme will support addressing modal integration	Improve access to rail and reduce end-to-end journey times
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	Study – To be confirmed Develop – To be confirmed Deliver – Short-term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operating companies / GBR • East Sussex County Council • Transport for the South East • Network Rail • Bus operators, • Private sector • Cycling groups
LTP4 Investment Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP06: Integrated transport opportunities • CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive

Name	RI05 - Provision of safe, secure and covered cycle storage at stations
How scheme will support addressing modal integration	Improve access to rail and reduce end-to-end journey times, improve customer confidence of cycling to and from the station
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	Study – To be confirmed Develop – To be confirmed Deliver – Short-term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operating companies / GBR/GBR • East Sussex County Council •
LTP4 Investment Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP01: Local priorities – walking, wheeling, cycling

Priority Area 3: Reliability and resilience

Policy Context

The provision of punctual and reliable train services is essential if people are going to consider rail as a mode of transport being a dependable choice. It is also important for on-time delivery of freight being transported by rail. However, this will be covered in the Freight Strategy, as the Rail Strategy focuses on passengers.

A key outcome (6.2) of East Sussex's LTP4 is to:

“Strengthen the resilience of transport networks, with the outcome that transport journeys are “resilient, flexible, and adaptable and recover quickly from emergencies and events”.”

NR also identify the need for the network and its services to be resilient to both operational and physical challenges, especially given the increasing impact of climate change as a key priority governing their [enhancements and renewal expenditure](#).

Delay Repay is the national compensation scheme used by TOC's if passengers arrive 15 minutes or more late at their destination because of a delay or cancellation they can claim Delay Repay compensation, with claims able to be made up to 28 days after affected journeys.

Evidence

Rail passengers in East Sussex are experiencing more disruption due to the impact of extreme weather on the network, including landslips on the Hastings – London line, flooding on the Brighton Main Line near Balcombe Tunnel, and potential tidal flooding on the East Coastway line ([Network Rail media](#)).

Some TOCs/GBR are responding to the impacts of climate change on the network through emerging plans which look at weather risk and climate change adaptation. Some trains have AI-enabled CCTV and thermal imaging cameras which are able to monitor the condition of infrastructure so that issues can be responded to more efficiently, and prior to them affecting customers. TOCs/GBR can also use timetabling to improve reliability and resilience, such as reducing the need for trains to cross paths and changing timetables - when weather is regularly disruptive and seasonal implications, such as leaves on the line in Autumn - to provide earlier start times for some services.

Train service performance is also being affected by capacity bottlenecks and other operational challenges elsewhere on the wider network, such as north of East Croydon, which has a knock-on impact on rail services in East Sussex, when disruption occurs.

Passenger confidence in the rail system has been eroded by the impact of industrial relations issues and the threat of closure of ticket offices. There is also the threat of disruption due to cyber hacking and will be a consideration for the rail industry.

Opportunities

Maintenance and repairs to the rail network, whilst required, can result in significant disruption to passengers. Providing alternative rail links to East Sussex and the south coast during periods of disruption could be delivered through the reinstatement of the railway between Uckfield and Lewes, and the extension of High-Speed 1 (HS1) services to Rye, Hastings, Bexhill, and Eastbourne from Ashford (via the Marshlink line).

Improving rail infrastructure resilience to extreme weather is becoming increasingly important. NR are required to focus climate resilience work in particularly vulnerable areas. Routes between Wivelsfield and Lewes as well as Tonbridge and Hastings have been identified as being at risk of railway embankment landslips due to excess rainfall. NR have highlighted the importance of investing in schemes which would not only reduce the risk of significant infrastructure failures, but those which would enable rail services to recover following disruption; such as the removal of (long term) temporary speed restrictions and delivering increases in line speeds (e.g. to 90mph on East Coastway between Hampden Park and Bexhill). This extends to more resilient level crossings – that reduces severance, congestion and journey times – and the modernisation of old signal boxes.

Ageing rolling stock can result in poor performance relating to the need to more regularly repair and maintain carriages. It is recognised that no more diesel rolling stock is being produced, which means the existing diesel rolling stock will cause reliability and resilience issues in future related to wear and tear. Consideration should also be given to the existing electric rolling stock and potential future replacement of these carriages, the options available, and the impact of these on the environment.

Addressing known capacity and performance bottlenecks at East Croydon would enable a faster, more frequent and reliable service between London from East Sussex. NR's Enhancement Pipeline captures the Croydon Area Remodelling Scheme (CARS)³ as a priority. However, further development of the scheme has been affected by uncertainty about future passenger behaviour and demand following the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the significant investment required to deliver this scheme, NR are now taking time to consider how the pandemic may affect passenger behaviour and travel patterns in the future, and how any such changes should be reflected in infrastructure investments. No further work has been undertaken on CARS at this time.

There is a need to ensure TOCs/GBR employ sufficient traincrew with route and traction knowledge to overcome poor performance due to lack of traincrew. Rostering should be flexible so as not to be dependent on overtime or rest day working.

³ [Unblocking the Croydon bottleneck – The Croydon Area Remodelling Scheme - Network Rail](#)

Improved access to rail replacement bus services at rural stations during disruption is an issue that also needs consideration.

Investment priorities

Rail is often seen as being unreliable, particularly during disruption, which can prevent users from choosing rail.

The tables below set out how rail and supporting schemes can contribute to the reliability and resilience of rail services, and ensure users are confident that, in the overwhelming majority of cases, they will be able to reach their intended destination at the time they expected to be there. These are presented by the level of influence East Sussex County Council has.

(Please note that this section is likely to require further updates following the emergence of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton and creation of new unitary authorities across the West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Sussex geography through local government reorganisation).

Advocated by East Sussex County Council

These are schemes where the County Council does not lead on development and/or delivery but is a key partner to successful delivery.

Name	RR01 - Review of all level-crossings and identification of options for changes or closure
How scheme will support addressing reliability and resilience	Reduce journey times, improve journey time reliability, reduce disruption, improve safety
Indicative cost	£10m to £100m
Development timescales	Study – Short-term Develop – To be confirmed Deliver - To be confirmed
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Rail • East Sussex County Council
LTP4 Investment Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP10: Assets – planning maintenance and renewal • SP02: Strategic priorities - highway

Supported by East Sussex County Council

These are schemes where East Sussex County Council is not leading or a partner on the development and/or delivery. We will remain supportive to the lead and key partners in the delivery of the intervention. Whilst we may have a limited role in delivery, these interventions are part of the wider picture to improve travelling by for all users.

Name	RR02 - Resilience of the railway
How scheme will support addressing reliability and resilience	Resilience relating to climate and cyber hacking Reduces the current and future risk of service disruption due to infrastructure failure/loss

	Encourage data sharing between train operators to maximise reliability and resilience of the rail network. Note: this may be easier under GBR.
Indicative cost	Greater than £100m
Development timescales	Study – Short-term Develop – Short-term Deliver – To be confirmed
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Rail • Train operating companies / GBR • East Sussex County Council • Other partners – Environment Agency
LTP4 Investment Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP10: Assets – planning maintenance and renewal

Name	RR03 - Brighton Mainline (BML) Capacity enhancements and Croydon Area Re-modelling (CARS)
How scheme will support addressing reliability and resilience	Reduces the risk of service disruption and facilitates service recovery following disruption
Indicative cost	Greater than £100m
Development timescales	Study – Short-term Develop – Short-term Deliver - To be confirmed
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Rail
LTP4 Investment Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP03: Strategic and local priorities - rail

Name	RR04 - Increase speed limit to 90mph on East Coastway line between Hampden Park and Bexhill
How scheme will support addressing reliability and resilience	Facilitates service recovery following disruption (especially between Eastbourne and Hastings)
Indicative cost	£10m to £100m
Development timescales	Study – Short-term Develop – Short-term Deliver - To be confirmed
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Rail
LTP4 Investment Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP03: Strategic and local priorities - rail

Name	RR05 - Improve level crossing maintenance
How scheme will support addressing reliability and resilience	Reduces likelihood of disruption
Indicative cost	£10m to £100m
Development timescales	Study – To be confirmed Develop – To be confirmed Deliver – Short-term

Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Rail
LTP4 Investment Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP10: Assets – planning maintenance and renewal

Name	RR06 – Rolling stock upgrades
How scheme will support addressing reliability and resilience	Replacing ageing carriages which require regular repair and maintenance
Indicative cost	£10m to £100m (??)
Development timescales	Study – To be confirmed Develop – To be confirmed Deliver – To be confirmed
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Rail • Train operators
LTP4 Investment Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP10: Assets – planning maintenance and renewal

Priority Area 4: Decarbonisation

Policy context

In 2019, the County Council declared a climate emergency in response to the need to address human-induced climate change and to achieve the goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement; a legally binding international treaty ratified by the UK in 2016, with the overarching goal to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by 2050.

Transport is the largest emitting sector of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, producing 26% of the UK's total emissions in 2021 (427 MtCO₂e)⁴. The government's Transport Decarbonisation Plan⁵ outlines a strategy to achieve net zero carbon emissions from all forms of transport by 2050, with an aim of removing all diesel trains from the rail network by 2040. The East Sussex Environment Strategy (2020) sets out a county-wide aim of reducing emissions by 13% each year, which can, in part, be achieved through a reduction in transport carbon emissions through supporting a shift from private vehicles to rail, emphasis on electric vehicles, lower-emission public transport operations, and increased active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling).

Evidence

Rail is widely recognised as a more carbon efficient mode for moving large volumes of passengers and freight than road vehicles. For a 14-mile journey between Eastbourne and Hastings, GHG emissions per passenger are 3.5 kg carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions (e) if travelling by petrol car compared to 0.7 kgCO₂e if the journey is made by train⁶. Furthermore, CO₂ equivalent emissions are significantly lower for journeys made by electric train compared to diesel trains⁷.

The rail network in East Sussex is almost entirely electrified, the exceptions being Hurst Green to Uckfield (London – Uckfield line) and Ore to Ashford (the Marshlink line), which are served by diesel trains. For operational reasons, diesel services operate beyond these route sections, e.g. to/from Eastbourne (Marshlink), or London (Uckfield line). For example, for heavy maintenance, trains operated on the Marshlink line may travel to the main Southern depot in Selhurst, London.

Opportunities

The **electrification of two routes - Hurst Green to Uckfield and Ore to Ashford** – as well as dual tracking or passing loops (as appropriate) are key priorities within this strategy (see Strategic Priority Schemes sub-section and Appendix A for more detail on these schemes). The electrification of these routes would make a significant contribution to decarbonisation and reduce rail emissions to net zero in the future as grid electricity progressively decarbonises. The current need to service the fleet at

⁴ [Transport and environment statistics: 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-and-environment-statistics-2023)

⁵ [Transport decarbonisation plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/transport-decarbonisation-plan)

⁶ [Greenhouse gas reporting: conversion factors 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/greenhouse-gas-reporting-conversion-factors-2023)

⁷ [Rail emissions: April 2022 to March 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rail-emissions-april-2022-to-march-2023)

Selhurst would be removed and contribute to reducing carbon emissions. It would also improve the cost and operational efficiency of the railway by avoiding small fleets of diesel trains, and facilitate more direct journey opportunities; for example, operating a through services from Brighton to Ashford, and supporting the case for HS1 services operating from St Pancras to Hastings, Bexhill and Eastbourne via Ashford. It is important that direct journey opportunities are not made at the expense of services stopping at smaller stations in the county. Having such a small fleet with no more being manufactured means insufficient rolling stock availability to cover breakdowns.

Transport operators can **increase people's awareness of the impact of their travel choices on the environment and wider climate** by providing greater information on the impact of travel choices, alongside a wider programme of interventions facilitating direct decarbonisation and wider behavioural change, such as decarbonising rail fleets, improving customer experience, and increasing integration with other modes of transport (notably walking, wheeling and cycling), and facilities for electric vehicle charging. For example, on their website, Southeastern provide a "[Carbon Footprint Calculator](#)" which shows passengers the relative impact of their selected journey by rail or by car.

Investment priorities

The railway network in East Sussex (and the wider London and South East region) is predominantly electrified. The remaining small sections of the network operates with diesel-powered trains. These are more energy efficient than road-based transport in moving people and goods over longer-distances. However, the lack of diesel rolling stock means that in the event of fleet failure there could be a higher cost associated with source replacement stock as this may have to come from further afield.

In the shorter term, working towards providing reliable, frequent, and convenient rail services, as well as enabling schemes to improve first and last mile access, can support a shift of longer-distance journeys made by road to rail. This modal shift not only reduces carbon emissions but also alleviates congestion and improves localised air quality.

To achieve a net-zero transport network by 2050, there is a need to decarbonise the rail network in the longer-term, either through delivering electrification, or accelerating the deployment of battery rolling stock. Also, to support the rail industry in the provision of electric vehicle charging spaces and facilities at railway stations in the county.

The tables below set out how rail and ancillary schemes can help address known challenges and support a transition to a net-zero rail network. There is a focus on developing the case for schemes in the shorter-term, subject to funding, such that they are ready in the longer-term as technology is advanced and funding becomes available. It should be noted that the schemes below are not set out in no particular

order. These are presented by the level of influence East Sussex County Council has.

(Please note that this section is likely to require further updates following the emergence of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton and creation of new unitary authorities across the West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Sussex geography through local government reorganisation).

Led by East Sussex County Council

These are schemes where East Sussex County Council has greater influence and can help directly develop and/or deliver the intervention.

Name	RD01 - Increase Electric Vehicle Charging facilities at rail stations
How scheme will support addressing decarbonisation	Provide appropriate charging facilities at stations for expected increase in take up of electric vehicles
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	Study – Short-term Develop – Short-term Deliver – Short-term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Rail • Train operating companies / Great British Railways • Electric vehicle charge-point providers • East Sussex County Council
LTP4 Investment Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP04: Fuels and air quality • CP05: Electric vehicle charging infrastructure

Advocated by East Sussex County Council

These are schemes where East Sussex County Council does not lead on development and/or delivery but is a key partner to successful delivery.

Name	RD02 - Uckfield – Lewes line reinstatement
How scheme will support addressing decarbonisation	Encourage mode shift from car to rail
Indicative cost	Greater than £100m
Development timescales	Study – Short-Medium term Develop – To be confirmed Deliver – To be confirmed
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Rail/Great British Railways • Transport for the South East • East Sussex County Council • Local Authorities • Train operating companies / GBR • Private sector
LTP4 Investment Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP06: Integrated transport opportunities

Name	RD03 - Ore - Ashford electrification and dual tracking or passing loops
How scheme will support addressing decarbonisation	Conversion from diesel to electric services and provide a new connection via HS1 Opportunities for improved frequency increasing attractiveness of the rail offer
Indicative cost	Greater than £100m
Development timescales	Study – undertaken Develop – Short-term Deliver – long term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HS1 Ltd • Transport for the South East • Network Rail/Great British Railways (emerging) • East Sussex County Council • Kent County Council • Local Authorities • Train operating companies / GBR • Private sector
LTP4 Investment Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP06: Integrated transport opportunities • CP03: Strategic and local journeys – rail • CP04: Fuels and air quality

Name	RD04 - Hurst Green (Oxted) - Uckfield Electrification and dual tracking or passing loops
How scheme will support addressing decarbonisation	Conversion from diesel to electric services (or other alternative such as battery) Opportunities for improved frequency increasing attractiveness of the rail offer
Indicative cost	Greater than £100m
Development timescales	Study – medium-long term Develop – medium – long term Deliver – long term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Rail/Great British Railways (emerging) • Transport for the South East • East Sussex County Council • Local Authorities • Train operating companies / GBR
LTP4 Investment Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP04: Fuels and air quality

Name	RD05 – Eridge - Tunbridge Wells line reinstatement
How scheme will support addressing decarbonisation	Encourage mode shift from car to rail
Indicative cost	Greater than £100m
Development timescales	Study – To be confirmed Develop – To be confirmed Deliver – To be confirmed
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Rail/Great British Railways (emerging) • Transport for the South East • East Sussex County Council • Kent County Council • Local Authorities • Train operating companies / GBR • Private sector
LTP4 Investment Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP06: Integrated transport opportunities

Priority Area 5: Journey time competitiveness

Policy context

Rail must be frequent, offer competitive journey times, and operate at the times of day when passengers want to travel. Changes in travel patterns means that people expect weekend train services to be as convenient as weekday services. LTP4 focusses on how rail can better facilitate two key strategic, longer-distance movements, which are:

- **East-west along the south coast**, using the East Coastway and Marshlink lines, connecting Brighton, Newhaven, Seaford, Lewes, Polegate (a rail hub for Hailsham and other nearby villages), Eastbourne, Bexhill, Hastings and Rye, including to Ashford, where users can connect to high-speed rail services for London.
- **Between East Sussex and London**, with an ambition of closing the gap between service provision and journey times, such that Eastbourne and Hastings to London are as comparably competitive to Brighton to London.

Evidence

The table below⁸ shows the extent to which rail provides an attractive offer compared to car, and how the service provision compares to services on the nearby Brighton Main line, where rail ridership is amongst the highest in the wider South East. This demonstrates the level of change that is required and the potential for mode shift that could be possible.

	Trains per hour (weekday / Sunday)	Rail journey time (mins) / Road journey time (mins)
Brighton – Lewes	4 / 3	14-17 / 25-35
Lewes – Eastbourne	3 / 2	26 / 30-40
Eastbourne - Hastings	3 / 2	25-37 / 35-50
Hastings – Rye	1 / 1	19 / 25-35
Brighton – Rye*	1 / 1	111 / 80-100
Eastbourne – Gatwick	2 / 1	55 / 55-65
Eastbourne – London	2 / 1	85-95 / 120-180
Hastings – London	2 / 1	85-95 / 120-180
Brighton – Gatwick (comparison)	8 / 6	30 / 35-40

⁸ Frequency and journey time data accessed via Trainline and Google Maps for a Tuesday at 10am, and a Sunday at 10am in April 2024.

Brighton – London Bridge (comparison)	8 / 6	60-75 / 120- 180
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Opportunities

The reintroduction of a direct, fast service between Brighton and Ashford service is a key ambition to transforming east-west connectivity and bringing towns along the south coast closer together. However, it is important that this is not at the expense of stopping services at the smaller stations. Station to station journey times along the East Coastway line are relatively slow, especially compared to radial journey times. The need for interchange between services on the south coast^{Error! Bookmark not defined.} also reduces the attractiveness of rail. The need to interchange results from either services terminating or originating at Eastbourne, or it often being faster to change at Hampden Park rather than stay on the train through to Eastbourne and turning around.

Our ambition for fast direct services from Eastbourne, Hastings, Rye and Ashford to St Pancras, via High Speed 1 (HS1), would deliver significant reductions in journey time for rail passengers travelling between East Sussex and London (27-minute saving from Hastings and 45-minute saving from Bexhill)⁹.

The viability of the Willingdon Chord north of Eastbourne, which would provide a short rail link between the lines to/from Polegate and Bexhill, has been regularly considered by the rail industry over a number of years. Should a case for reinstatement become viable in the future, alongside the support of the rail industry, then we would be supportive of the scheme being included in future iterations of the East Sussex Rail Strategy.

Reinstating international services into Europe (France, Belgium, Netherlands) from Ashford International is important for connectivity purposes, and for the local, regional, national and European economy. In 2023 over 82,000 signatures were received to a petition to bring international services back to Kent, promoting the need and potential benefits from improved rail connectivity to the continent. More recently, in October 2025, Virgin announced that if Ashford International station (or Ebbsfleet) are reopened, then Virgin would stop there, and they have been engaging with local stakeholders to explore this. This is further to the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) approving Virgin's application to share Temple Mills railway storehouse in east London with Eurostar.

Should Eurostar, Virgin or other international rail services be reinstated from Ashford, it will be important to ensure that the timetables from the East Coastway are synchronised to enable passengers to alight services without having to rush to the platform for the international rail service departure. Other potential operations

⁹ Kent & East Sussex Coastal Connectivity Programme Strategic Outline Business Case, Network Rail, 2021 [Link accessed 17th May 2024](#)

through the Channel Tunnel will also need to be considered as and when appropriate.

A potential shorter-term quick win, subject to a feasibility assessment by train operators, includes increasing the frequency of rail services on the Marshlink line, particularly at weekends and when special events are held. Delivering more early morning and late evening services, particularly to Gatwick Airport, is also an aspiration, as is reinstating direct services between Seaford and Newhaven with London, all of which could be delivered with minimal implications on the existing timetable, traincrew and rolling stock available to train operators.

Investment priorities

Rail is competitive over longer-distances, as journey times and comfort are far more appealing compared to driving private vehicles into congested urban centres coupled with the cost of parking. Rail travel can be expensive, and it is important that cost is affordable to all, with no financial barrier to optimised journey times.

Rail loses its competitive advantage where services are infrequent, cannot provide a direct route, or performs a dual role of serving strategic longer-distance trips between major centres, and serving local communities i.e. increased stopping services. For example, one of the two hourly services on the East Coastway line between Brighton and Eastbourne calls at eight intermediate stops, increasing the end-to-end journey time between the two centres. Furthermore, line speed restrictions due to ageing infrastructure, such as outdated signalling, may also constrain journey times.

Rail also loses its advantage where users cannot easily access the station from their ultimate origin or destination. Whilst adding a 15-minute walk to/from the station for residents supports sustainable travel for short local journeys, it may not be convenient or feasible for all. A rail service may also be less frequent and reliable on weekends, which makes it less appealing compared to other modes.

The tables below set out how rail and supporting schemes can improve the journey time competitiveness of rail relative to other modes. These include initiatives that can be developed and rolled out in the shorter-term, such as enhanced services on weekends and in the summer season to coastal towns, or schemes that may require infrastructure which can be developed in the shorter-term such that they are ready for delivery in the longer-term as funding becomes available.

The tables below set out how rail schemes can help improve journey time competitiveness for rail. These are presented by the level of influence East Sussex County Council has.

(Please note that this section is likely to require further updates following the emergence of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton and creation of new unitary authorities across the West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Sussex geography through local government reorganisation).

Advocated by East Sussex County Council

These are schemes where East Sussex County Council does not lead on development and/or delivery but is a key partner to successful delivery.

Name	RJ01 - Provide direct high-speed services between St Pancras – Ashford – Rye / Hastings / Bexhill / Eastbourne
How scheme will support addressing journey time competitiveness	Direct, high-speed services would reduce rail passenger journey times to Hastings & Bexhill which have slow journey times to London in comparison to all major settlements on the south coast
Indicative cost	Greater than £100m
Development timescales	Study – Short-term Develop – Short-term Deliver – To be confirmed
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Rail • Transport for the South East • London St Pancras Highspeed (previously HS1 Ltd) • Kent County Council
LTP4 Investment Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP03: Strategic and local journeys -rail

Name	RJ02 - Increase service frequency on Saturdays and Sundays
How scheme will support addressing journey time competitiveness	Greater choice of departure times, with customers needing to allow less time for their journey
Indicative cost	£10m to £100m
Development timescales	Study – Short-term Develop – Short-term Deliver – Short-term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operating companies / GBR • East Sussex County Council • Transport for the South East • Network Rail
LTP4 Investment Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP03: Strategic and local journeys -rail

Name	RJ03 - Re-introduce Rye – Ashford peak shuttle on weekdays
How scheme will support addressing journey time competitiveness	Greater choice of departure times, with customers needing to allow less time for their journey
Indicative cost	£10m to £100m
Development timescales	Study – Short-term Develop – Short-term Deliver – Short-term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operating companies / GBR

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Sussex County Council • Transport for the South East • Network Rail • Kent County Council
LTP4 Investment Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP03: Strategic and local journeys -rail

Name	RJ04 - Double-track the route section between Rye and Winchelsea, sections of the Uckfield line, and / or sections of the Marshlink line, and operate additional train services which the doubling facilitates
How scheme will support addressing journey time competitiveness	Greater choice of departure times, with customers needing to allow less time for their journey, reduce delays as no crossover between Ore and Rye
Indicative cost	£10m to £100m
Development timescales	Study – Short-term Develop – Short-term Deliver – To be confirmed
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operating companies / GBR • East Sussex County Council • Transport for the South East • Network Rail
LTP4 Investment Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP03: Strategic and local journeys -rail

Name	RJ05 - Improved rail access to Gatwick Airport including more early morning and late-night services
How scheme will support addressing journey time competitiveness	Enables rail as an option for travellers with early departing or late arriving flights where rail is currently not an option, supporting mode shift
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	Study – Short-term Develop – Short-term Deliver – Short-term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operating companies / GBR • East Sussex County Council • Transport for the South East • Network Rail
LTP4 Investment Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP03: Strategic and local journeys -rail

Name	RJ07 - Enhance service frequency for special events e.g. Eastbourne Airshow
How scheme will support addressing journey time competitiveness	Improved comfort of travel and provide an alternative to travelling by car
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	Study – To be confirmed Develop – To be confirmed Deliver – Short-term

Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operating companies / GBR • Local authorities • Bus operators (where onward travel is required)
LTP4 Investment Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP03: Strategic and local journeys -rail

Name	RJ08 – Provision of additional nighttime services to cater for evening leisure and entertainment
How scheme will support addressing journey time competitiveness	Improved comfort of travel and provide an alternative to travelling by car
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	Study – Short-term Develop – Short-term Deliver – Short-term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operating companies / GBR • East Sussex County Council • Transport for the South East • Network Rail
LTP4 Investment Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP03: Strategic and local journeys -rail

Supported by East Sussex County Council

These are schemes where East Sussex County Council is not leading or a partner on the development and/or delivery. We will remain support the lead and key partners in the delivery of the intervention. Whilst we may have a limited role in delivery, these interventions are part of the wider picture to improve travelling by for all users.

Name	RJ06 - Re-introduce Ashford International stop on international rail journeys
How scheme will support addressing journey time competitiveness	Removing the need for passengers to travel via London would make rail more competitive for journeys to northern France and Belgium, open up Kent and East Sussex to customers from Paris and Northern France
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	Study – Short-term Develop – Short-term Deliver – To be confirmed
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eurostar • other new potential international train operators, • London St Pancras Highspeed (previously HS1 Ltd) • Kent County Council
LTP4 Investment Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP03: Strategic and local journeys -rail

Priority Area 6: Customer experience

Policy Context

Meeting customers' expectations is essential if the railway is to compete with other modes of travel. If these expectations, such as being easily accessible and having sufficient luggage space, are not met, passengers will be less inclined to choose rail.

Research from the [Williams Shapps Plan for Rail \(2021\)](#) identified that in addition to frequent and punctual train services, customers need to be able to access the network easily, to feel safe and be safe, have easy access to relevant, accurate and personalised information, and for tickets to represent good value for money. Whilst there is uncertainty of how ongoing rail reform may incentivise operators to deliver a better service for its passengers, the industry acknowledges the need for collaboration if it is to grow ridership and maximise its contribution to wider socio-economic outcomes.

New evidence from the [Department of Transport \(April 2025\)](#) shows that the majority of rail passengers commute for leisure purposes (54%). Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays are the most popular commuting days for work.

The [East Sussex Economic Prosperity Strategy \(September 2024\)](#) looks ahead to 2050, and seeks to secure sustainable economic growth, setting out how, over the next generation, East Sussex can secure better opportunities and living standards for the people who live in the county, and how businesses can be supported to thrive and grow.

Evidence

Until the Covid-19 pandemic, Transport Focus¹⁰, the independent watchdog for transport users, surveyed over 50,000 passengers a year to produce the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) – which provided evidence for customer satisfaction using a wide range of criteria. The autumn 2019 NRPS survey, whilst nearly 5 years old, is still likely to be representative of passenger satisfaction for some categories. The results for services operated by Southern and Southeastern show that 82% and 80% of passengers respectively were satisfied with their rail journey. However, aspects of the rail journey where passengers were notably dissatisfied include the provision of toilets on trains and at stations, how operators deal with delays, and the availability of Wi-Fi. The industry understands the need to introduce a simpler, clearer fares system, which offers value for money for customers.

TOCs/GBR each have a Passenger's Charter which includes details of their commitments to passengers; providing information on services, how to buy tickets, compensation, performance, and feedback. These documents are reviewed annually and agreed with the DfT. Processes such as these continue to evolve, with a new 'Customer Promise' being developed, and a procurement process which will replace

¹⁰ [National Rail Passenger Survey - Transport Focus](#)

outdated ticket vending machines, ensuring customers can buy the best value fare more easily.

Opportunities

Some initiatives have already been delivered, such as the extension of Pay As You Go (PAYG) tickets. Opportunities for more smart, contactless and multi-modal ticketing are anticipated to become available in the future.

Research into how to reform the fares system is being undertaken at industry level and includes pilot studies of flexi-season tickets. Staffed ticket offices have a significant positive impact on passenger satisfaction, and we support keeping them open.

Improving passenger information on-train and at stations, especially when services are disrupted, is important for passengers, as is focusing on delivering real-time, accurate and multi-modal information, including providing details of journey times and connections (bus/rail).

Delivering customer and staff improvements initiatives at stations, such as improving lighting (and thus the feeling of safety), signage, and wayfinding, as well as providing more comfortable waiting facilities for passengers, especially at key interchange stations, and increasing the opening hours of waiting rooms and station toilets are also important.

Other important aspects include improving the on-board experience of services, such as providing better luggage space, improving the comfort of seating and standard of cleanliness, and improving Wi-Fi. Also, the need to lengthen trains, whether this be through upgrading the power supply of lines to enable more carriages to operate i.e. on the Hastings to London line, or additional carriages being provided on services. The latter may require lengthening of platforms at particular stations.

Historically, there were more rail connections to, from and within the county. Those routes which no longer operate are:

- The Wealden Line

This line operated between Lewes, Uckfield and Kent. Two sections of this route were closed, these being the section between Uckfield – Lewes in 1969, and that between Eridge – Tunbridge Wells in 1985. The section of the line from Uckfield to Eridge remains open as part of the Oxted Line.

- The Cuckoo Line

This rail route operated between Eridge and Polegate, The Hailsham-Eridge section of the route closed in 1965, and the Polegate-Hailsham branch was operational until 1968. The rail route now serves as the Cuckoo Trail walking and cycle route linking Heathfield to Polegate.

Some of these once commercial passenger routes have since been transformed into heritage railway lines and are an important part of the tourist industry in the county, and include:

- The Spa Valley Railway

The Eridge – Tunbridge Wells section of the route became an operational heritage railway in 1997. It crosses the Kent and East Sussex border, covering a distance of 5 miles (8 km) and runs from Tunbridge Wells West railway station in Royal Tunbridge Wells to High Rocks, Groombridge, and Eridge, where it links with the Oxted Line.

- The Lavender Line

The Lavender Line is a heritage railway based at Isfield Station, near Uckfield. This 1-mile (1.6km) heritage railway line, which operates to the first of two bridges over the River Uck.

- The Bluebell Railway

The Bluebell Railway is an 11- mile (17.7 km) heritage line, with steam trains operating between Sheffield Park and East Grinstead. In 2013 the Bluebell Railway connected to East Grinstead station where there is a connection to the national rail network.

- The Rother Valley Railway

The Rother Valley Railway (RVR) is a heritage railway based in Robertsbridge and operates to Headcorn in Kent, via Tenterden. Transport and Works Act consent was granted in 2021 for a 3.5 mile section between Bodiam and Robertsbridge to be reinstated which will connect the heritage line to the Hastings mainline at Robertsbridge.

Investment priorities

Users will only opt for rail if they are attracted to the offer provided relative to other transport options. Rail users need to be assured that they are getting a regular, comfortable, reliable, value for money experience. It is also important for commuters to be reassured that replacement transport options are available for when rail services are compromised; including disabled passengers, as well as commuters with pushchairs and luggage.

The tables below sets out how rail and supporting schemes will help improve the customer experience and ensure that rail is an attractive option for those wishing to travel longer-distances and support mode shift. These are presented by the level of influence East Sussex County Council has.

(Please note that this section is likely to require further updates following the emergence of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton and creation of new unitary authorities across the West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Sussex geography through local government reorganisation).

Led by East Sussex County Council

These are schemes where East Sussex County Council has greater influence and can help directly develop and/or deliver the intervention.

Name	RC02 –Better value for money tickets and enhancements to and better promotion of integrated bus and train ticketing and contactless ticketing
How scheme will support addressing customer experience	Improve customer confidence of using rail and ensure users get better value for money
Indicative cost	£10m to £100m
Development timescales	Study – To be confirmed Develop – Short-term Deliver – Short-term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operating companies / GBR • East Sussex County Council • Transport for the South East • Bus operators • Private sector
LTP4 Investment Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP06: Integrated transport opportunities • CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive

Name	RC03 - Improved signage and wayfinding at stations
How scheme will support addressing customer experience	Increase customer confidence and facilitates customers making full use of station facilities Consider needs of all users including those who feel less safe – but not limited to - sex/sexual orientation/race
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	Study – To be confirmed Develop – To be confirmed Deliver – Short-term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Sussex County Council • Bus companies • Train operating companies / GBR • Network Rail
LTP4 Investment Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive • CP02: Signage and wayfinding

Name	RC07 - Promote & develop further multi modal journey planners showing journey times and connections
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How scheme will support addressing customer experience	Improve passenger confidence and experience
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	Study – Short-term Develop – Short-term Deliver – To be confirmed
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operating companies / GBR, • Bus operators, • East Sussex County Council
LTP4 Investment Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP06: Integrated transport opportunities • LP14: Digital

Advocated by East Sussex County Council

These are schemes where East Sussex County Council does not lead on development and/or delivery but is a key partner to successful delivery.

Name	RC05 - Provision of more and better lighting in and around stations
How scheme will support addressing customer experience	Improve customer safety (especially for some groups with protected characteristics) (perceived and actual) and discourages anti-social behaviour at stations
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	Study – To be confirmed Develop – To be confirmed Deliver – Short-term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operating companies / GBR • Network Rail • East Sussex County Council
LTP4 Investment Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive

Supported by East Sussex County Council

These are schemes where East Sussex County Council is not leading or a partner on the development and/or delivery. We will remain supportive of the lead and key partners in the delivery of the intervention. Whilst we may have a limited role in delivery, these interventions are part of the wider picture to improve travelling by for all users.

Name	RC01 - Additional passenger carrying capacity (by upgrading power supply and lengthening trains)
How scheme will support addressing customer experience	Improved comfort of travel through less congested services
Indicative cost	£10 to £100m

Development timescales	Study – Short-term Develop – Short-term Deliver – To be confirmed
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operating companies / GBR • Energy providers
LTP4 Investment Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive • CP03: Strategic and local journeys - rail

Name	RC04 - Improve passenger facilities at key stations
How scheme will support addressing customer experience	Improved user experience, e.g. through longer waiting room opening hours, toilet facilities, shops, cafes
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	Study – To be confirmed Develop – To be confirmed Deliver – Short-term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operating companies / GBR • Network Rail
LTP4 Investment Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive

Name	RC06 - Improve access to rail replacement bus services at some stations, which cater for disabled passengers, and those who have pushchairs / luggage
How scheme will support addressing customer experience	Improve passenger confidence during disruption that a suitable transport alternative will be available to get them to their destination
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	Study – To be confirmed Develop – To be confirmed Deliver – Short-term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operating companies / GBR • Network Rail • Bus operators
LTP4 Investment Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP06: Integrated transport opportunities • CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive

Name	RC08 - Improved customer information and communications at stations and on-board trains, both in general and during service disruption
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How scheme will support addressing customer experience	Passengers are able to make informed decisions and increases passenger confidence
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	Study – To be confirmed Develop – To be confirmed Deliver – Short-term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operating companies / GBR
LTP4 Investment Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive

Name	RC09 - Improve availability of on-board Wi-Fi
How scheme will support addressing customer experience	Improved amenities for passengers, enabling them to be productive or access entertainment
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	Study – To be confirmed Develop – To be confirmed Deliver – Short-term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operating companies / GBR • Network Rail • Mobile operators
LTP4 Investment Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LP14: Digital • CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive

Name	RC10 – Improving the quality and ambience of on-board train facilities, such as quiet carriages, dedicated quiet space, seating quality
How scheme will support addressing customer experience	Reduces travel stress for sensory impaired passengers and improve travel comfort
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	Study – To be confirmed Develop – To be confirmed Deliver – Short-term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operating companies / GBR
LTP4 Investment Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive

Name	RC11 - Improve on-board and station cleanliness
How scheme will support addressing customer experience	Improved travel experience and health and wellbeing of passengers

Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	Study – To be confirmed Develop – To be confirmed Deliver – Short-term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operating companies / GBR • Network Rail
LTP4 Investment Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive

Name	RC12 - Improve the efficiency of on-board space for wheelchairs, pushchairs, luggage and non-folding bikes
How scheme will support addressing customer experience	Makes rail a more attractive option for leisure
Indicative cost	Less than £10m
Development timescales	Study – Short-term Develop – Short-term Deliver – Short-term
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operating companies / GBR
LTP4 Investment Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive

5. Delivering the strategy

Delivering strategic rail schemes:

Several of the larger-scale strategic rail led schemes presented in this strategy are likely involve the following next steps:

- East Sussex County Council with support from Transport for the South East (TfSE) and Network Rail in undertaking a **strategic feasibility study** to:
 - Understand the scale of potential benefits and contribution to transport and wider outcomes that could be achieved from speeding up journey times, such as supporting new housing development, or improving the access of residents to key skills and services,
 - Identify rail demand from improved connectivity, and identify the travel demand from modal shift or induced travel demand from improved transport options, and
 - Identify the key service options for where speed improvements should be focused (through delivery of infrastructure and or changing timetables and calling patterns) to maximise the benefits delivered to users and the contribution to wider outcomes.
- Network Rail, with support from East Sussex County Council, TfSE and train operators, in undertaking a **technical feasibility study** (subject to funding), to:
 - Understand the types of interventions that could be delivered, such as upgrades to track and signalling, and
 - Identify where these can be delivered and their contribution to supporting transport and wider socio-economic outcomes, such as focused upgrades to track and signalling on the East Coastway line between Eastbourne and Lewes, resulting in journey time benefits of x minutes for x many users, resulting in £x of economic benefits.

Network Rail to lead the **development of an outline and full business case** to Government (or GBR) with East Sussex County Council, TfSE, train operators and other partners, which:

- Further assesses and quantifies the direct transport benefits and potential wider socio-economic benefits of the scheme,
- Assesses the cost of the scheme and develops a timeline for delivery, and
- Captures the funding and deliverability considerations which may identify further risks, opportunities and interdependencies, such as the need to upgrade rolling stock, alter more level crossings to comply with an increased service, or working with local authorities to deliver complementary initiatives to maximise outcomes.

(This section will be updated once the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton is in place from 2026 to highlight their role in influencing and seeking future funding for strategic rail improvements in their area.)

Delivering complementary transport schemes:

Major organisations with responsibility of connecting rail to the rest of the transport network includes:

- The Department for Transport
- Network Rail,
- Train Operating Companies,
- Bus Operators,
- Private developers, and
- East Sussex County Council (and other local planning and transport authorities)
- *MCCA for Sussex and Brighton* – from establishment in May 2026

Whilst East Sussex County Council has no statutory function in relation to rail, we have a role in both in seeking/securing the funding and direct delivery of some of the interventions as set out in the strategy, alongside a role to promoting rail service and infrastructure improvements, and supporting the organisations above.

Whilst East Sussex County Council has no statutory function in relation to rail, we have a role in both in seeking/securing the funding and direct delivery of some of the interventions set out in the strategy, alongside a role to promote rail service and infrastructure improvements and support the organisations above. However, with the emergence of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton from 2026, this will change how funding for transport is allocated to local authorities and how this is prioritised. Therefore, in the short term, this places some uncertainty on when complementary schemes can come forward, until greater clarity on the funding arrangements is available.

Currently local planning authorities (district and boroughs) and the County Council have a very significant role to play in delivering first and last mile connectivity and influence improvements at stations. This will ensure development is joined up and efficient, which supports the development of healthy places. The district and borough councils, through the development management process, are also able to secure transport infrastructure improvements as part of development. They are also responsible for securing development contributions (s106 and Community Infrastructure Levy) which can be utilised to deliver improvements at stations, and active travel corridors to improve access to stations from existing communities and new developments.

Local government reorganisation and the creation of unitary authorities across the West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Sussex geography will result in changes in transport, planning policy, development management, and development contributions functions currently undertaken at the two-tier level, bringing them under a single authority.

The private sector may be involved in the delivery of interventions, including renewal and maintenance, where they, or non-governmental organisations (e.g. Sustrans),

have the expertise in innovating and delivering specific outputs which cannot exist in the public sector alone. Such examples include zero-emission rolling stock, roll-out of EV charging at stations, and delivering digital customer experience improvements for ticketing and wayfinding.

Land and other asset owners and developers may deliver infrastructure and services identified, and/or provide funding contributions towards their delivery where there is a benefit to them.

(This section will be updated once the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton is in place from 2026 and more detail is known on the local government reorganisation proposals across West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Sussex to highlight their respective roles in delivering rail related complementary measures.)

Investment priorities - development stages

Three stages of development have been identified. It is important to note that these stages and their timing will be dependent on funding to bring investment and/or intervention priorities forward:

1. Study – at this stage there would be no, or limited, existing evidence which explores the potential feasibility (including benefits) of the intervention. Key stakeholder engagement can play a key role in advancing the strategic case for investment. Identifying objectives, desired outputs and outcomes, and working with key delivery partners, will help to advance the scheme to development stage. This stage is similar to a Strategic Outline Business Case for larger scale schemes.

2. Develop – at this stage, feasibility studies have been undertaken into the potential benefits of the scheme.

However, there is a need for greater development of the business case of the scheme or intervention. To get the scheme ready for delivery, further stages of design (preliminary, detailed design) may be required, supported by:

- Appropriate engagement and consultation,
- Analytical work to strengthen the strategic case,
- Economic case; identifying funding opportunities, and
- Conducting greater technical assessment of the scheme (assessing deliverability risks and environmental impacts).

This stage is similar to an Outline Business Case for larger scale schemes.

3. Deliver – at this stage, strong business case evidence would have already been developed with strong stakeholder support and an identified funding route for delivery. There would be few risks identified that would need mitigating. This stage is similar to a Full Business Case for larger scale schemes.

Scheme/policy progression through development stages

There will be investment priorities which can be studied, developed and/or delivered within the short term i.e. the next five years (up to 2030).

Likewise, there are priorities where partners can only study and/or sufficiently develop a pipeline of schemes that are ready for delivery, and given timescales for other deliverability constraints, are unlikely to commence or be fully delivered in the short-term. For example, railway schemes where the nature of industry funding cycles mean enhancements presented in the strategy are unlikely to be considered for delivery in the next Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline Period and, therefore, at the earliest, will be delivered in Control Period 8 (2029-2034) or later.

Also, some schemes are unlikely to involve any short-term actions (e.g. by 2030). This is because they will be subject to the establishment of GBR, rely on other schemes to be delivered, be reliant on national policy or technological advances, or require significant funding to be made available before a scheme can be studied or developed.

Engagement – next steps

The establishment of the *MCCA for Sussex and Brighton* in May 2026 and local re-organisation resulting in the creation of the new unitary authorities across the West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Sussex geography by 2028, will change the powers and funding for strategic planning, transport and economic growth from central government. This section will be updated as further information and detail on devolution and local government reorganisation proposals become available.

In order to progress the schemes contained within the strategy, it is important for the County Council to engage with the rail industry and other partners to:

- Identify whether their aspirations align with our own,
- Establish where partnership working is achievable,
- Assess which of the schemes within the strategy are rail industry priorities,
- Identify where funding opportunities are available,
- Come up with a plan of action for progressing the schemes,
- Implement regular meetings with key stakeholders to progress the rail service and infrastructure aspirations contained within the strategy, and
- Review whether schemes are relevant and whether priorities have changed.

Rail partners include, but are not limited to:

- Great British Railways
- Network Rail
- Train operating companies
- Office of Road and Rail
- Transport for the South East
- East Sussex County Council
- Adjoining County Councils
- Local planning authorities

- Southeast Community Rail Partnership
- Rail groups

6. Funding and financing

It is also important to note that the East Sussex Rail Strategy and its investment and intervention priorities are not funded. This section sets out the potential funding and financing opportunities for the proposed interventions identified in the strategy.

The availability of funding, with consideration to the costs of development, construction, maintenance and renewals, alongside operational costs, will be a key challenge in delivering the strategy. Additionally, routes for financing, as well as how and from whom the funding is secured to meet the costs of construction as they arise, may change over the life of the Plan and Investment Plan.

As the Strategy is made up of several diverse schemes or initiatives, there is not going to be a 'one size fits all' funding and financing solution that applies across the programme. Over the life of the plan this strategy will provide East Sussex County Council, their partners and communities, opportunities to explore and innovate how funding can be secured and combined to study, develop, and deliver transport infrastructure interventions and initiatives.

Types of funding

Both the delivery of this strategy and constituent interventions require financial support, whether as part of capital investment or through continued operation. Consequentially, partners with responsibilities in the delivery of this strategy have a responsibility to identify and respond to funding and financial opportunities.

Funding sources

Central government bodies such as the DfT, provide capital funding for rail schemes directly. This funding varies due to a range of factors, which includes levels of uncertainty in the national economy, alongside competing political priorities.

The establishment of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton in May 2026, and reorganisation of local government to create new unitary authorities across the West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Sussex geography by 2028, will change the powers and funding for strategic planning, transport and economic growth from central government. This section will be updated as further information and detail becomes available on both devolution and local government reorganisation.

Match funding can also be provided by public or private sector organisations to deliver specific interventions. These bodies also provide revenue funding, albeit at smaller volumes. Funding is generally towards resourcing, operations, research and innovation within local authorities, but also can include direct funding to private sector organisations.

Local authorities have significant limitations to generate revenue outside of what they require for general operations. Consequentially they are often limited to funding rail interventions funded through allocations from Government for specific schemes

relating to active travel (e.g. cycle parking facilities at rail stations), or development contributions / Community Infrastructure Levy charges.

Private sector organisations invest in their own operations and supply chains to maintain their competitiveness within the sector they operate in. There is a need for private sector organisations to collaborate and see the opportunity for growth in an area such as East Sussex.

Private sector financing mechanisms can also be used to fund both the capital and operating requirements of transport networks, and of particular use for interventions which provide repayment or are assets likely to increase in value. However, there remains considerable risks in regard to investment undertaken in this manner, most notably due to fluctuations in loan interest rates and the appetite for financial institutions to invest in transport infrastructure.

7. Measuring success

This Rail Strategy requires continuous monitoring to secure its effectiveness.

Measuring success can be achieved through the implementation of a monitoring framework which identifies the indicators, direction of travel, data source, frequency of collection and owner, ensuring accountability is met across all levels.

Evaluation commonly involves a deeper dive into the outcomes of a strategy and helps provide insight and lessons learnt to help guide continued improvements to rail passenger services in, out of and across the county. So far as possible, the monitoring and evaluation strategy will utilise the approaches and methodologies implemented for LTP4, which will include monitoring metrics aligned with its vision, objectives and outcomes.

Appendix A. Strategic Priority Schemes

From the Plan to Delivery

In addition to our strategic schemes, we have developed packages of interventions to address each of our key challenges. These comprise infrastructure, service enhancements and complementary measures (including policy and technology) for larger, more strategic longer-term schemes, and smaller shorter-term measures.

The delivery partners who will be largely responsible for the funding and delivery of these rail interventions include the DfT, NR and TOCs/GBR. East Sussex County Council will have an important delivery partner role, providing necessary support to the main partners to deliver interventions which work, and are appropriate, for the county.

High Speed 1 to Hastings, Bexhill and Eastbourne

LTP objective alignment

LTP Objective	Alignment
Transport decarbonisation	Very strong alignment
Local environment conservation	Strong Alignment
Healthier lifestyles and communities	Moderate alignment
Safer and accessibility	Moderate alignment
Sustainable economic growth	Very strong alignment
Network resilience	Very strong alignment

Priority Area alignment

Challenge statements	Alignment
Decarbonisation	Very strong alignment
Accessibility	Moderate alignment
Customer experience	Strong Alignment
Integration	Strong Alignment
Reliability and resilience	Very strong alignment
Journey times	Very strong alignment

Scheme description

A package of infrastructure interventions to enable high speed services from London (HS1) to continue from Ashford to Rye, Hastings, Bexhill and Eastbourne via the Marshlink Line. These may include:

- Electrification,
- Re-doubling of track in some sections,
- Further upgrades to track and signalling,
- Introduction of full barrier crossings to replace existing half-barriers and/or a closure of level crossings, and

- Subsequent timetabling changes which enable services to run at faster speeds.

Scheme rationale

Journey times between Hastings and London are amongst the slowest from all major coastal towns on the South Coast, with the fastest journey times ranging between 1 hour 30 mins – 2 hours. By comparison, journeys times on HS1 between Dover and Folkestone range between 55 mins – 1hr 15 mins, with both towns located further from London. Extending HS1 into East Sussex has the potential to reduce journey times between these locations and London by 27 minutes from Hastings and 45 minutes from Bexhill¹¹. The scheme will also improve connectivity with Kent and provide an alternative through rail route to the county, enabling better reliability and resilience against disruption. Improved connectivity would provide local and regional economic benefits.

Scheme enablers and interdependencies

Other rail services to Eastbourne and Hastings – this may complement existing East Coastway line services and planned enhancements; or enable more stopping services on the existing Hastings to London service with the route via HS1 providing a faster alternative for passengers travelling to London.

Local bus and active travel initiatives along the route - to enable more seamless and accessible first and last-mile integration and provide more competitive origin to destination journey times compared to private vehicles.

Innovation in alternative rail decarbonisation technology, such as new battery trains, may provide a sensible alternative to electrification at a lower capital cost.

The importance of the private sector in financially contributing towards the delivery of rail infrastructure improvements should not be under-estimated. With funding restraints and competing demands, where private developers would reap benefits from improved accessibility and reduced journey times arising from infrastructure improvements, there should be an expectation that such new development should allocate a proportion of funding towards the rail infrastructure projects. This should be factored into and reflected in national, regional and local policy.

From plan to delivery

Current status	Strategic Outline Business Case - submitted December 2021, awaiting decision
Five-year plan	Outline Business Case
Indicative Cost band (Revenue/Capital)	£800m - £1bn capital cost, with service enhancements likely to be revenue positive or neutral

¹¹ Kent & East Sussex Coastal Connectivity Programme Strategic Outline Business Case, Network Rail, 2021 [Link accessed 17th May 2024](#)

Delivery partners	Network Rail to lead development of Outline Business Case, Full Business Case and delivery with support from HS1 Ltd, Transport for the South East, East Sussex County Council, Department for Transport, Local Authorities, Train operators and private sector
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Hurst Green (Oxted) - Uckfield electrification and dual tracking or passing loops

LTP objective alignment

LTP Objective	Alignment
Transport decarbonisation	Very strong alignment
Local environment conservation	Strong alignment
Healthier lifestyles and communities	Moderate alignment
Safer and accessibility	Moderate alignment
Sustainable economic growth	Strong alignment
Network resilience	Strong alignment

Priority Area alignment

Challenge statements	Alignment
Decarbonisation	Very strong alignment
Accessibility	Moderate alignment
Customer experience	Strong alignment
Integration	Strong alignment
Reliability and resilience	Strong alignment
Journey times	Moderate alignment

Scheme description

Electrification of the existing railway from Uckfield to Hurst Green via Edenbridge.

Scheme rationale

This section is the only radial railway route from London that is unelectrified. Electrification will support decarbonisation of the rail network and improve its cohesion with other services in the region which may also bring about operational efficiencies and reliability and resilience outcomes. Dual tracking or passing loops will increase service frequency and increase the number of people wanting to travel by rail.

Scheme interdependencies

Reopening of Lewes-Uckfield and Spa Valley railway lines - would expand the opportunity for direct connectivity to more destinations in Kent and on the south coast and provide an alternative route between London and the south coast.

Bus and active travel initiatives along the route - would enable more seamless first and last-mile integration and provide more competitive ultimate origin to destination journey times compared to private vehicles.

Third rail electrification of the Uckfield line - as it would allow the route to use the pool of third-rail Electric Multiple Units (EMU) in the area - is one of Network Rail's top priorities south of the river Thames, but would require financial commitment from the rail industry. Innovation in alternative rail decarbonisation technology, such as

new battery trains, may provide a sensible alternative to electrification at a lower capital cost.

From plan to delivery

Current status	Strategic Outline Business Case - submitted December 2021, awaiting decision
Five-year plan	Outline Business Case
Indicative Cost band (Revenue/Capital)	£130m - £150m capital cost with operational savings
Delivery partners	Network Rail to lead development of Outline Business Case, Full Business Case and delivery with support from Transport for the South East, East Sussex County Council, Department for Transport, Local Authorities, train operating companies and private sector, Heritage Railway (for Spa Valley)

Uckfield - Lewes Line reopening

LTP objective alignment

LTP Objective	Alignment
Transport decarbonisation	Very strong alignment
Local environment conservation	Strong alignment
Healthier lifestyles and communities	Moderate alignment
Safer and accessibility	Moderate alignment
Sustainable economic growth	Very strong alignment
Network resilience	Very strong alignment

Priority Area alignment

Challenge statements	Alignment
Decarbonisation	Very strong alignment
Accessibility	Moderate alignment
Customer experience	Strong alignment
Integration	Very strong alignment
Reliability and resilience	Very strong alignment
Journey times	Very strong alignment

Scheme description

Providing a railway connection between Uckfield and Lewes - with reconfiguration of Lewes station to allow services on the Wealden Line to continue on the East Coastway Line to/from Brighton - would provide a rail connection from Uckfield and the surrounding area to the south coast, as well as an alternative route between Brighton and London should there be disruption on the Brighton Main Line. This scheme has the potential delivery of an intermediate station to unlock new sustainable housing development which could in turn help to fund the scheme costs.

Scheme rationale

Delivering a direct option by rail between Uckfield and Lewes with Brighton and the south coast will transform rail connectivity for residents living along the route and reduce local car-based emissions by introducing a sustainable transport alternative. It will also provide a new link from London to the south coast thus encouraging more people to travel south. Connecting these communities will reduce local car-based emissions by introducing a sustainable alternative. It will also support wider socio-economic outcomes through improved access to jobs and services for residents, and improved access to labour markets and agglomeration benefits for businesses, making these conurbations more attractive places to live and work.

The reinstatement of the Eridge to Tunbridge Wells rail route has been safeguarded in Wealden District Council's emerging Local Plan (Regulation 18) under Draft Policy INF5 (Safeguarding Infrastructure).

Scheme enablers and interdependencies

Reopening of Spa Valley railway line between Eridge and Tunbridge Wells - expands the opportunity for direct connectivity to more destinations in Kent and on the South Coast.

Electrification of Hurst-Green to Uckfield - to enable decarbonised rail services.

Bus and active travel initiatives along the route - to enable more seamless first and last- mile integration and provide more competitive ultimate origin to destination journey times compared to private vehicles.

From plan to delivery

Current status	Feasibility Study
Five-year plan	Strategic Outline Business Case
Indicative Cost band (Revenue/Capital)	£120m - £140m capital cost with new services expected to be revenue positive or neutral in longer-term
Delivery partners	<p>Transport for the South East to lead development of Strategic Outline Business Case with input of Network Rail.</p> <p>Network Rail to lead delivery with support from Transport for the South East, East Sussex County Council, Kent County Council, Department for Transport, Local Authorities, train operating companies and private sector, e.g. housing developers</p>

Eridge - Tunbridge Wells railway line reinstatement (Spa Valley Line Modern Operations Reopening)

LTP objective alignment

LTP Objective	Alignment
Transport decarbonisation	Very strong alignment
Local environment conservation	Strong alignment
Healthier lifestyles and communities	Moderate alignment
Safer and accessibility	Moderate alignment
Sustainable economic growth	Very strong alignment
Network resilience	Very strong alignment

Priority Area alignment

Challenge statements	Alignment
Decarbonisation	Very strong alignment
Accessibility	Moderate alignment
Customer experience	Strong alignment
Integration	Very strong alignment
Reliability and resilience	Very strong alignment
Journey times	Very strong alignment

Scheme description

Conversion of the Spa Valley Line between Eridge and Tunbridge Wells to enable modern train operations.

Scheme rationale

Delivering this scheme in conjunction with the reinstatement of the rail line between Lewes and Uckfield will deliver a new rail connectivity option between Kent, East Sussex and the south coast, and an alternative rail route between London and the south coast (with combined delivery of the Tunbridge Wells - Tunbridge Wells West route). This will transform rail connectivity for residents living in East Sussex and Kent, reducing local car-based emissions by introducing a sustainable transport alternative. Bringing these places closer together by rail will also support wider socio-economic outcomes through improved access to jobs and services for residents, and improved access to labour markets and agglomeration benefits for businesses, making these conurbations more attractive places to live, work and visit.

Reinstating this rail link would form part of long-term mitigation measures to reduce traffic across Wealden District and potentially through the Ashdown Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The reinstatement of the Eridge to Tunbridge Wells rail route has been safeguarded in Wealden District Council's emerging Local Plan (Regulation 18) under Draft Policy INF5 (Safeguarding Infrastructure).

Scheme enablers and interdependencies

Reopening of the railway line between Uckfield and Lewes - would provide improved connectivity between the South Coast and Kent.

Electrification of Hurst-Green to Uckfield - to enable decarbonised rail services

Bus and active travel initiatives along the route - to enable more seamless first and last-mile integration and provide more competitive ultimate origin to destination journey times compared to private vehicles

From plan to delivery

Current status	Feasibility Study
Five-year plan	Strategic Outline Business Case
Indicative Cost band (Revenue/Capital)	£60m - £70m capital cost with new services expected to be revenue positive or neutral in longer-term
Delivery partners	Transport for the South East to lead development of Strategic Outline Business Case with input of Network Rail to lead delivery with support from Transport from the South East, East Sussex County Council, Kent County Council, Department for Transport, Local Authorities, train operating companies and private sector, e.g. housing developers

Direct rail services between Seaford/Newhaven and London

LTP objective alignment

LTP Objective	Alignment
Transport decarbonisation	Moderate alignment
Local environment conservation	Moderate alignment
Healthier lifestyles and communities	Moderate alignment
Safer and accessibility	Moderate alignment
Sustainable economic growth	Strong alignment
Network resilience	Very strong alignment

Priority Area alignment

Challenge statements	Alignment
Decarbonisation	Moderate alignment
Accessibility	Moderate alignment
Customer experience	Strong alignment
Integration	Very strong alignment
Reliability and resilience	Very strong alignment
Journey times	Very strong alignment

Scheme description

Strategic review of rail connectivity across East Sussex to identify potential quick wins. Could be delivered through timetable service enhancements which are not reliant on the delivery of infrastructure, and have minimal impacts and trade-offs with other services, such as delivering direct rail services between Seaford and Newhaven and London.

Scheme rationale

Delivering incremental enhancements may significantly improve rail connectivity for certain residents living in East Sussex. For example, providing a direct service between London, Newhaven, and Seaford could reduce journey times by removing the need to transfer at Lewes or Brighton. This would also provide sustainable connections to the ferry service from Newhaven to Dieppe which provides a connection to France for foot and vehicular passengers. This will provide a more compelling offer compared to private vehicles, supporting mode shift to rail, whilst improving accessibility for those for whom a transfer is more challenging.

Furthermore, delivering targeted service enhancements, such as direct and more frequent seasonal summer services where there is higher demand to coastal towns, will also support wider socio-economic outcomes; including for staycations, and to local leisure and tourist attractions to support the local leisure and tourism economy in these locations.

Scheme enablers and interdependencies

Delivering service enhancements on one route may impact on other routes which may need assessment as to which enhancements deliver greatest benefits.

Complementary local bus and active travel initiatives along the route - to enable more seamless first and last-mile integration and provide more competitive origin to destination journey times compared to private vehicles

From plan to delivery

Current status	Feasibility Study
Five-year plan	Strategic Outline Business Case
Indicative Cost band (Revenue/Capital)	Service changes and new services are expected to be revenue positive or neutral in longer-term
Delivery partners	Transport for the South East and East Sussex County Council to lead development of feasibility study with input of Network Rail and local stakeholders Network Rail and train operating companies to lead delivery with support from Transport for the South East, East Sussex County Council, Department for transport and Local Authorities

Brighton - Eastbourne - Hastings - Faster services

LTP objective alignment

LTP Objective	Alignment
Transport decarbonisation	Moderate alignment
Local environment conservation	Moderate alignment
Healthier lifestyles and communities	Moderate alignment
Safer and accessibility	Moderate alignment
Sustainable economic growth	Very strong alignment
Network resilience	Very strong alignment

Priority Area alignment

Challenge statements	Alignment
Decarbonisation	Moderate alignment
Accessibility	Moderate alignment
Customer experience	Moderate alignment
Integration	Moderate alignment
Reliability and resilience	Very strong alignment
Journey times	Very strong alignment

Scheme description

A package of infrastructure interventions which increase line speeds on the East Coastway Line to enable faster services between Brighton, Lewes, Eastbourne and Hastings. These may include upgrades to track and signalling, as well as full barrier (to replace existing half-barrier) crossings, and the closure of level crossings to enable services to run at faster speeds. These may also include speeding up services through timetabling changes, such as configuring more express services to complement local stopping services.

Scheme rationale

This will reduce journey times between Brighton, Lewes, Eastbourne and Hastings. This improved connectivity between major centres along the south coast will support socio-economic outcomes through improved access to jobs and services for residents and visitors, and improved access to labour markets and agglomeration benefits for businesses, making these conurbations more attractive places to live and work. This will also support mode shift.

Scheme enablers and interdependencies

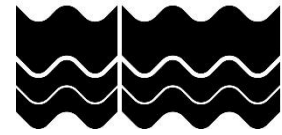
Other rail services to Brighton, Lewes, Eastbourne, Rye and Hastings – delivering faster and more frequent services on the East Coastway line - may add to the already existing platform capacity constraints at Brighton Station and require station enhancements.

Local mass transit and active travel initiatives along the route - to enable more seamless first and last-mile integration and provide more competitive ultimate origin to destination journey times compared to private vehicles.

From plan to delivery

Current status	Ambition (Pre-feasibility)
Five-year plan	Feasibility Study
Indicative Cost band (Revenue/Capital)	£40m - £50m capital cost, service enhancements likely to be revenue positive or neutral
Delivery partners	<p>Transport for the South East to lead development of feasibility study with input from East Sussex County Council and Network Rail</p> <p>Network Rail to lead development towards a full business case and delivery with support from HS1 Ltd, Transport for the South East, East Sussex County Council, Department for Transport, Local Authorities and train operators</p>

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Rail Strategy

Consultation summary report

December 2025

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Engagement approach

Early and preliminary engagement was undertaken with key strategic rail partners and key local stakeholder groups during the development of the draft strategy. This helped ensure that proposals reflected both operational realities and local priorities before being shared more widely.

The Draft East Sussex Rail Strategy was consulted on as a modal strategy of Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4). The consultation aimed to gather feedback on proposed roles, schemes, and investment priorities across the rail network. The strategy focuses on passenger rail only. Freight on rail is considered in the East Sussex Freight Strategy which has been developed in parallel to the East Sussex Rail Strategy.

The feedback from the formal public consultation ran from 6 May to 30 June 2025 and comprised both structured survey tools and open feedback mechanisms.

A bespoke workshop was held with young people to discuss lived experiences of young people and rail travel and to provide input into the strategy.

Key outcomes

Responses were collected via an online questionnaire (paper copies were available on request), which included a mix of closed and open-ended questions, and email submissions. In total, 78 responses were received — 70 through the online portal and 8 via email. Responses were received from key strategic rail partners.

For those who provided responses to the 'about you' questions on the online survey, there is a good representation of responses across all ages (in 10-year bands), from 20-29 through to 70-79, with 7 to 12 responses per 10 year age band. In terms of gender, more males than females responded.

Closed question feedback

Respondents showed strong agreement with the Rail Strategy's defined roles and policy linkages, with particularly high support for schemes related to decarbonisation, accessibility, and modal integration. Most respondents endorsed all six priority investment areas, which are:

- Accessibility
- Modal integration
- Reliability and resilience
- Decarbonisation
- Journey time competitiveness
- Customer experience

Most respondents did not provide any feedback on the Rail Strategy Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA), while a smaller number of shared comments highlighting areas needing further clarification and improvement.

Open question feedback

- **Positive Feedback:** Strong support was noted for the strategy's direction, particularly around accessibility, governance, and better integration with buses, cycling, and walking. Electrification and reopening of lines (e.g. Lewes–Uckfield) were frequently supported.
- **Concerns:** Key concerns included:
 - Unclear delivery roles
 - Lack of clarity on funding and timelines
 - Accessibility and service reliability
 - Ticket affordability, service frequency, and rural connectivity

- **Negative Feedback:**
A minority disagreed with the strategy's overall scope or raised concerns about feasibility, especially in rural or non-commuter areas.
- **Environmental Concerns:**
Respondents called for stronger links between climate priorities and rail infrastructure design, including decarbonisation and climate resilience.
- **Suggestions:**
Respondents recommended improvements in station access, intermodal links, governance, and data transparency. Multiple comments were made for re-opening disused lines, new rail infrastructure (e.g. Willingdon Chord), real-time information systems, and more affordable fares.
- **General Comments:**
Some responses were broad or generic, while others emphasised the need for clearer communication and local engagement.

Reflections

- There is **strong public support** for the strategy's ambitions, especially around accessibility and decarbonisation.
- The breadth of the strategy is a strength but risks **overstretching resources**.
- Many of the suggested schemes are **complex and high-value**, requiring coordination with external delivery bodies.
- **"Quick wins"** should be prioritised alongside longer-term flagship projects.
- Future progress depends heavily on **East Sussex County Council's available capacity** and its role within any potential new governance structures.
- There is an expectation that the strategy will **translate ambition into locally grounded outcomes**.

Actions following feedback

The strategy was updated following feedback received during the consultation period. This section provides a summary of the feedback and actions undertaken, reported by coding category and sub-category.

Category: Positive feedback

You Said (sub categories)	We did
Strategy and governance, accessibility and inclusion, integration and mobility and infrastructure and reliability	Positive feedback on the clear roles, collaborative approaches, and the content of the strategy are welcomed and noted.

Category: Concerns

You Said (sub category)	We did
Governance and delivery	We have updated the roles and responsibilities, particularly in relation to the emerging Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) for Sussex and Brighton and in relation to local government reorganisation.

	<p>We welcome the involvement of towns, parishes and local groups. They are important in expressing their views and partners welcome their feedback in improving rail services and shaping the strategy and they should continue to engage with local government and rail operators to ensure their views continue to be heard.</p> <p>Communities without railway stations can engage with local authorities, particularly around accessing stations via active travel or bus, to provide them with the opportunity to use the rail network.</p> <p>As local planning authorities finalise their local plans there is an opportunity to ensure that they integrate with the rail and other modal strategies for the county.</p>
Evidence and policy gaps	<p>GTR (Southern) is the main operator within the county. We also have Southeastern who operate from Hastings to London via Tunbridge Wells. Unless specified, all schemes and interventions apply across both operators.</p> <p>Data is provided where readily available and sources provided.</p>
Infrastructure and service limitations	<p>Staffing levels and the impact on giving passengers the confidence to travel is appreciated. We will continue to lobby for ticket offices to remain open and ensure that there is relevant support for passengers to travel (e.g. through passenger assist or other means).</p> <p>Service patterns and times remain a matter for train operating companies. We will lobby for services to meet the needs of residents and visitors to East Sussex. This is across all days of the week and all time periods.</p>
Equity, inclusion and experience	<p>We have ensured there is a balance between the needs of local travel and commuters and those that support the visitor economy. Any benefits to</p>

	<p>commuters should also benefit local travellers too.</p> <p>Station design is matter for the rail operator, and they lead on these. Network Rail and train operating companies are working together to make stations fully accessible, where they are not already so.</p>
Fare and capacity	<p>Rail fares are currently set by government and train operating companies. The County Council will continue to lobby for affordable fares and encourage travellers to apply for relevant rail cards (e.g. senior or young person) or alternative discount card they may be entitled to.</p>
Disagreement with strategic direction, criticism of scope and framing	<p>We have tried to strengthen the strategic direction, making it clear what the priorities are for the County Council.</p> <p>With regards to actions, the strategy is dependent on partners leading on the development and delivery of schemes, and the County Council will strongly advocate and support partners, as required, to ensure they are successfully delivered.</p> <p>We have reviewed the strategy to ensure there is a balance between (longer) commuter, visitor and local travel, as both are important to the county and its economy.</p> <p>We acknowledge that re-opening historic rail links will not be agreeable to everyone. The proposals for each reopening and any new line or infrastructure will need to go through a full development process to mitigate any impacts and ensure that the scheme's benefits are greater than any disbenefits. We encourage everyone to have their say in official engagement events for proposals as they are brought forward.</p>
Dissatisfaction with stakeholder engagement	<p>All feedback received has been reviewed and read, and where appropriate has resulted in amendments to the strategy.</p> <p>The strategy reflects / balances the needs</p>

	of communities, visitors and local priorities whilst looking at the wider picture for the county.
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Category: Environmental concerns

You Said (sub category)	We did
Decarbonisation and mode shift	<p>Mode-shift also relies on how people access railway stations, and the East Sussex Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and the East Sussex Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plan (LCWIP) are important strategies to ensure that people can travel using low-carbon modes.</p> <p>Two of the priority schemes are to electrify the remaining parts of the rail network in the county to enable electric trains to run across full network in the county and reduce the need to have diesel trains.</p>
Environmental planning and resilience	The East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) has an Environmental Impact Assessment which incorporates the rail strategy.
Sustainability integration	Station design is matter for station operators, particularly in relation to environmental priorities.

Category: Suggestions

You Said (sub category)	We did
Policy, evidence and monitoring	<p>There is now a stronger evidence base chapter within the strategy highlighting the key evidence from LTP4's evidence base, with all sources identified and links where publicly available. There is also now a section (which is not exhaustive) linking through to local, national and regional policies.</p> <p>Feedback on the EqIA will be incorporated into a significant update of LTP4's EqIA. Modal strategies will better connect the 'what does this mean' and 'what can you do' questions within the EqIA, which could</p>

	<p>include mention of specific schemes, if appropriate.</p> <p>Due to uncertainties of when schemes and priorities can be brought forward, there are no targets. This is consistent with the East Sussex LTP4.</p>
Infrastructure and accessibility improvements	There are schemes within the strategy that help support and improve accessibility, sharing of travel information and journey planning. Many of these areas are outside the control of the County Council and we will lobby for these measures and improvements.
Strategic integration and governance	<p>There are priorities and schemes included within the strategy that seek to improve the passenger experience and multi-modal ticketing and, where possible, timetable integration.</p> <p>The roles and responsibilities sections reflect the emerging MCCA for Sussex and Brighton and local government reorganisation.</p>

Category: General comments

You Said (sub category)	We did
Generic or non-specific feedback	These responses are noted, as there is no actionable content.
Strategic and engagement commentary	<p>As devolution, local government reorganisation and the emergence of Great British Railways becomes clearer, we will ensure that the roles and responsibilities sections are updated to provide complete clarity.</p> <p>We will continue to work with stakeholders over the life of the strategy and will encourage partners to continue to do so too.</p> <p>Feedback on the survey and consultation have been noted and will be reviewed and used to improve future consultations.</p>

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 8 December 2025

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Eastbourne Town Centre Phase 2B Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders

Purpose: To consider the use of Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders for Eastbourne Town Centre Movement and Access Package Phase 2b and Victoria Place.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- 1) note the previous development work that has been undertaken in relation to the Eastbourne Town Centre Movement and Access Package 2b, 'Victoria Place' project; and
 - 2) agree that Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders are advertised post construction in relation to vehicular access and timings within the Eastbourne Town Centre Movement and Access Package Phase 2b 'Victoria Place' project.
-

1 Background

1.1 East Sussex County Council received £8m from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) Local Growth Fund towards the Eastbourne Town Centre Movement and Access Package. £5m funded Phase 1 (Terminus Road, Cornfield Road, Gildredge Road, to support the Beacon shopping centre extension), completed in 2020/21. After SELEP approved a further business case in February 2019, £3m was allocated to Phase 2a (Terminus Road: Bankers Corner, Bolton Road, Langney Road); revised Phase 2a plans were then approved in November and December 2024.

1.2 The Phase 2b 'Victoria Place' element of the Eastbourne Town Centre Movement and Access Package, which focuses on pedestrianisation improvements along Terminus Road between Seaside and Grand Parade, secured £4.74m funding from Eastbourne's Round 1 Levelling Up Fund (LUF) submission to Government in autumn 2021. On 14 March 2022, the Lead Member for Transport and Environment approved the County Council's entry into a grant funding agreement with Eastbourne Borough Council for LUF funds, which must be used by March 2026.

1.3 The Phase 2b scheme seeks to:

- Build on Phase 1 and Phase 2a, by completing the pedestrian spinal route on Terminus Road through the primary retail area of Eastbourne town centre to the seafront.
- Improve pedestrian safety and accessibility (ease of movement for vulnerable users, parents or carers with pushchairs etc.) by reallocating road space in the Victoria Place section of Terminus Road to pedestrians.
- Complete the pedestrian spinal route on Terminus Road through the primary retail area of Eastbourne town centre to the seafront.
- Improve the public realm within the town centre by upgrading street furniture and signage.

1.4 A public consultation was undertaken between October and November 2022 on the principal design of the overall Phase 2b scheme. This involved consultation with local residents, businesses, taxi operators and bus operators. The outcomes of the public consultation and next steps were reported to the [Lead Member for Transport and Environment in September 2023](#) where it was resolved to proceed to detailed design and construction stages.

2. Supporting information

Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders

2.1 To ensure that the scheme can function as designed once construction is complete, it is necessary to implement the associated Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) and Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETRO).

Under the ETRO proposals, officers would advertise hours in connection to the loading and unloading on Terminus Road, between Seaside and Burlington Road once further stakeholder engagement has been undertaken.

2.2 Part of the regulatory process would include providing notice of the proposed changes to be implemented under the ETRO, testing the proposals, a review period and updates or amendments made to the order if necessary. There will be a 6-month period, beginning when the restrictions are put in place, where representations will be reviewed and any objections would then be considered by the County Council's Planning Committee. The ETRO could be in place for up to 18 months.

2.3 This process would allow for more flexibility to review and adapt the timings and restrictions based on qualitative feedback from the public and key stakeholders. As part of the ETRO, officers would monitor and evaluate how the proposed changes under the ETRO are received and this would be documented through the formation of an evaluation plan.

2.4 This approach is recommended as part of the ETRO process, as it will enable a trial period to be used to collate feedback to inform the ETRO restrictions and timings before they may be implemented permanently.

Traffic Regulation Orders

2.5 An initial informal consultation on the proposed TRO associated with the Phase 2b scheme was carried out between 4 and 25 September 2024 with Eastbourne Borough Council,

County Councillors, and statutory consultees, including the emergency services and local bus operators.

2.6 On 8 November 2024, the County Council gave notice under the relevant sections of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (as amended), that it was proposing to make a TRO. A copy of the advertised Notice was placed at 10 locations in the vicinity of Terminus Road, copies of the proposals were also placed on the County Council's Consultation website. In addition, the Public Notice was advertised in the local newspaper (The Eastbourne Herald) on 14 November 2024. Statutory Consultees were also contacted again to make them aware of the formal consultation. The formal period for representations ended on 29 November 2024.

2.7 The Phase 2b TRO proposals are as follows:

- Reverse the existing one way on Terminus Road. Vehicles would enter from Seaside Road and exit via Burlington Road.
- Create a public space by closing the section of Terminus Road between Burlington Road and Grand Parade.
- Remove all on street parking bays on Terminus Road between Grand Parade and Trinity Trees/Seaside Road.
- Remove existing westbound bus stop on Trinity Trees/Seaside Road outside British Heart Foundation.
- Remove the existing northbound bus stop on Terminus Road.
- Relocate 2 disabled parking spaces on Seaside Road (east of the Terminus Road junction) from the southern side to northern side of the road.

2.8 A report on the outcome of the TRO advertisement was presented to the County Council's [Planning Committee on 19 February 2025](#). The committee resolved to support the officer's recommendations and not uphold objections to the draft order (not including the loading and unloading hours) and recommend to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport that the TRO be made in part.

Delivery Programme and Construction

2.9 All necessary preliminary and detailed designs, (RIBA stages 3 and 4) have been completed. Construction of the scheme commenced in February 2025, and the majority of main works are due to be complete by December 2025, with final and post-construction works due to complete by March 2026.

2.10 To support these timescales officers are seeking approval to trial the hours of access, to identify the most suitable timings for the local traders and residents under an ETRO ahead of construction completing.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The Eastbourne Town Centre Movement and Access Package: Phase 2b and 'Victoria Place' scheme, has received substantial Levelling Up Fund investment via Eastbourne Borough Council, to enhance pedestrian safety and accessibility in Eastbourne's town centre. The County Council is acting as the project deliverer for the scheme, which must be delivered by March 2026.

3.2 Based on continued stakeholder engagement and feedback received and to ensure the County Council meets its statutory duties for consultation on Traffic Regulation Orders, the Lead Member is recommended to agree that the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order is advertised on completion of construction in relation to vehicular access and timings on the scheme.

3.3 Following the outcomes of the ETRO a further report detailing any objections made, will be presented to the County Council's Planning Committee for their consideration.

RUPERT CLUBB

Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Contact Officer: Emma Burt

Email: majorprojectsandgrowth@eastsussex.gov.uk

LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillors Stephen Holt and Brett Wright

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None