

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 13 February 2023

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Memorandum of Understanding between East Sussex County Council and South Downs National Park Authority – potential improvements to local transport infrastructure in and around the Seven Sisters Country Park and Exceat Bridge

Purpose: To seek approval for the County Council to agree a Memorandum of Understanding with the South Downs National Park Authority setting out how both authorities will work to develop and deliver potential local transport improvement projects in and around the Seven Sisters Country Park that complement the Exceat Bridge replacement scheme

RECOMMENDATION: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- 1) approve that the County Council enters a Memorandum of Understanding with the South Downs National Park Authority; and
 - 2) delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to negotiate and agree the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding.
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1. Background Information

1.1. The Exceat Bridge replacement scheme seeks to replace the current one-way bridge over the River Cuckmere east of Seaford with a new, two-lane bridge to improve traffic flow, reduce congestion and make it easier for people to cross the road.

1.2. The replacement bridge requires planning permission from the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) as it will be built partly outside of the existing highway boundary. The planning application was considered at the SDNPA planning committee on 8 December 2022 and the SDNPA resolved to grant planning permission subject to conditions and completion of a planning agreement under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

1.3. During discussions with the National Park Authority about the planning application they identified several additional improvements to the area adjacent to the bridge and causeway that were not within scope of the bridge replacement project but could be progressed by agreement. Therefore, both authorities agreed to work together on potential future projects to improve the local transport infrastructure in and around the new bridge to further support the planning application.

2. Supporting Information

2.1. To support this arrangement, a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two authorities has been developed. The MoU is not a legally binding document, but a way of recording the two authorities' intentions to work together on potential future projects.

2.2. The draft MoU sets out that, subject to the availability of the funding, both authorities will work together to deliver the following identified projects, if viable, within 7 years of the MoU being in place:

- Improvement of Non-motorised user (NMU) – walking and cycling - connections between the Seven Sisters Country Park Visitor Centre and the Country Park;
- Improvement of NMU connections between the Seven Sisters Country Park Visitor Centre and the eastern extent of the realigned Exceat Bridge at the Cuckmere Inn;

- Bus Stop Improvements on A259 at Seven Sisters Country Park;

2.3. The aim of these future improvement projects is to collectively improve NMU safety and user experience, through the exploration of potential options to improve NMU provisions on the A259 in the area between the access to the Cuckmere Inn and access to the Seven Sisters Country Park Visitor Centre.

2.4. In developing these projects, the first and highest priority will be highway safety and East Sussex County Council's obligations as the Highway Authority for East Sussex, but the design evolution of future projects will consider the following:

- National Park Purposes and Duty;
- South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan 2020-2025;
- Roads in the South Downs.

3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 During discussions on the Exceat Bridge replacement scheme the National Park Authority identified a number of additional local transport improvements around the Bridge and Seven Sisters Country Park area which were not included in the scope of the bridge replacement project.

3.2 Therefore both parties agreed in principle, subject to approval, they would enter into a Memorandum of Understanding setting out how they intend to work together to attempt to bring forward these additional transport improvements. These schemes will be subject to the availability of funding and developed within 7 years of entering into the MoU.

3.3 Lead Member is therefore recommended to approve that the County Council enter an MoU with the South Downs National Park Authority and that authority is delegated to the Director of Communities, Economy to agree the final terms.

RUPERT CLUBB

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LOCAL MEMBERS

Cllr Stephen Shing

Cllr Sam Adeniji

Cllr Carolyn Lambert

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None