

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 5 June 2023

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Notice of Motion: Bishopstone Junction, Seaford

Purpose: To consider a Notice of Motion requesting:

- temporary traffic lights at the Bishopstone junction to assess the effectiveness of this as a traffic management solution. The County Council is reminded that, despite initial resistance from the local authority, temporary traffic lights have worked well at Exceat and have been well received by residents;
- a safe route for pedestrians and cyclists over the A259 at Bishopstone by bidding for funding for a footbridge using the £750k still in the County Council's Active Travel Fund

RECOMMENDATION: The Lead Member is recommended to recommend that the County Council rejects the Notice of Motion, as set out in paragraph 1.1 for the reasons set out in Section 3 of the report.

1. Background Information

1.1 The following Notice of Motion has been submitted by Councillor Lambert and Councillor MacCleary:

On 15 February 2021, Cllr Darren Grover and Cllr Carolyn Lambert submitted a Notice of Motion (NOM) to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment. The NOM called attention to two accidents in two days that closed the A259 in Seaford, the biggest town in Lewes District.

The NOM requested the Cabinet to undertake a proper survey of the whole town, not just the Buckle by-pass, with particular focus on all the junctions with the A259, to identify the areas of greatest risk to both car users, cyclists and pedestrians, and to come up with some concrete proposals to enhance road safety. The NOM recognised that the County Council was already undertaking a review of the A259 from Seaford to Brighton in terms of congestion and argued that the safety of both car users, pedestrians and cyclists should form part of that study. The Cabinet was asked to:

- *impose lower speed limits on the approaches to Seaford and to work with partners to ensure these are enforced;*
- *provide safe pedestrian crossings at key points of the A259 including at the Bishopstone junctions.*

These requests were refused on the grounds that:

- *a study was already being carried out;*
- *reducing the speed limit would require a significant level of engineering work;*
- *the request for a pedestrian crossing at Bishopstone needed to be considered holistically as part of the study and in any event, funding was not available.*

At the County Council meeting of 7 February 2023, Cllr Carolyn Lambert submitted a further written question to the Lead Member, pointing out that the situation with the A259 was now critical and that Seaford, in particular, was suffering. The A259 continues to be regularly gridlocked and there have

been further serious accidents. The outcome of the study has been delayed and any practical proposals are still awaited leaving residents still regularly facing dangers and delays on this difficult road.

Given the further delay to the study, and the length of time residents have been waiting for improvements, this NOM calls on Cabinet to:

- *Provide temporary traffic lights at the Bishopstone junction to assess the effectiveness of this as a traffic management solution. The County Council is reminded that, despite initial resistance from the local authority, temporary traffic lights have worked well at Exceat and have been well received by residents;*
- *Seek to provide a safe route for pedestrians and cyclists over the A259 at Bishopstone by bidding for funding for a footbridge using the £750k still in the County Council's Active Travel Fund.*

1.2 In line with County Council practice, the matter has been referred by the Chairman to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment for consideration to provide information and inform debate on the Motion. The Lead Member's recommendation on this Notice of Motion will be reported to the Council at its meeting on 11 July 2023.

2 Supporting Information

Context

2.1 The A259 is a primary coastal route that runs between the County boundary at Telscombe Cliffs and Pevensey Roundabout where it becomes trunk road and part of the Strategic Road Network. The Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) flow on the section between Newhaven and Seaford is approximately 25,950 vehicles per day (2019 figures).

2.2 The road is multi-functional and accommodates local intra-urban journeys along the sections in Eastbourne and through the coastal towns of Seaford, Newhaven, Peacehaven and Telscombe Cliffs as well as longer distance inter urban journeys between these settlements. The inconsistent quality of the A27 corridor, particularly between Lewes and Polegate, means that traffic uses the A259 coastal corridor as an alternative route.

2.3 ESCC works closely with partners and stakeholders to improve road safety across East Sussex. In addition, each year the County Council develops and implements numerous local transport improvements funded through its capital programme of local transport improvements. In 2022/23 total funding of £11,776m was allocated (a combination of funding from the County Council, Local Growth Fund secured via the South East Enterprise Partnership and development contributions) which delivered over 50 schemes and studies across the county which include a number of road safety and active travel improvements.

Major Road Network

2.4 In December 2018, the A259 was identified as part of the Government's Major Road Network (MRN) of economically important local authority maintained A class roads. The MRN sits between the Strategic Road Network, managed by National Highways (formerly Highways England), and the local network managed by the County Council as highway authority.

2.5 In establishing the MRN, Government made funding of between £20m and £50m available for MRN schemes through the National Roads Fund, with an expectation of a minimum 15% local contribution. Department for Transport (DfT) guidance identifies the types of schemes that are eligible for MRN funding include packages of improvements which may include elements of reducing congestion, supporting economic growth and rebalancing, supporting housing delivery, supporting all road users and supporting the Strategic Road Network.

2.6 In 2019, Transport for the South East (TfSE) was asked to coordinate with its constituent local transport authorities on potential MRN schemes across their geography. TfSE assessed all the schemes

put forward against the MRN criteria as set out by DfT, as well as TfSE's strategic objectives for the region which focus on sustainable economic growth, improved quality of life and the environment. Following this assessment TfSE identified the A259 South Coast Road Corridor between Pevensey and Brighton & Hove as one of their ten priority MRN schemes for submission to Government.

Transport for the South East's Strategic Investment Plan and A259 MRN Corridor Study

2.7 Following the adoption of their Transport Strategy in July 2020, TfSE undertook their Outer Orbital Corridor Study which included the A259. The study considered strategic and regional significant interventions that could be delivered to support the delivery of the Transport Strategy vision and objectives by 2050. The outcomes of the Outer Orbital Study informed the content of TfSE's Strategic Investment Plan which was endorsed by the County Council at its Cabinet meeting on 7 March 2023.

2.8 In addition, the County Council commissioned an A259 MRN South Coast Road corridor study in 2021 focussed on the corridor between Eastbourne and Brighton. Complementing the work undertaken by TfSE, the A259 corridor study is multi-modal and uses an appropriate evidence base to seek to identify localised interventions for public transport, improvements to enable people to cycle or walk for all or part of their journeys, alongside localised road and junction capacity improvements and the potential use of smart technology along and around the hinterland of this corridor. The outcomes arising from the study have already been used to help inform and support the successful bid for Government funding through the County Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) to deliver bus priority measures on the A259 corridor.

2.9 The outcomes of the A259 corridor study and the TfSE SIP are informing the development of a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) to Government to make the case for MRN funding. Work on the study and the SOBC is expected to be completed in Summer 2023.

2.10 Subject to the approval of the SOBC by Government, further work will be required to progress to the Outline Business Case and then Final Business Case stages which can take up to a further two to three years to complete. Therefore, it is expected it will be 2025/26 at the earliest before any MRN funding would be available for delivering the preferred package of interventions. In addition, a local contribution of at least 15% would need to be provided as part of any funding submission to Government.

Road Safety

2.11 The County Council has a finite amount of funding to develop local transport improvements and needs to ensure that resources are targeted towards schemes which will be of greatest benefit to local communities. All requested road safety and local transport improvements, including requests to change the speed limits are assessed against the established Local Transport Plan (LTP). The content of the capital programme is considered by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment on an annual basis.

2.12 Local authorities have a statutory duty to assess and review crashes involving vehicles on the roads within their area and take such measures as appropriate to prevent such crashes. This informs an annual road safety assessment programme of identified areas of concern and where further investigation may be required. Sites are then treated on a priority basis within the funding available.

2.13 Each year the Road Safety Team identify sites that have the most crashes that result in injury and put in place a programme of works to reduce the number of casualties on these roads. East Sussex define a crash site as one where there have been four or more crashes in a three year period. In 2022 (looking at the period between 01/01/2020 and 31/12/2022) 49 sites were identified. The A259 at its junctions with Marine Parade and Bishopstone Road were not identified and are therefore not a priority for the Road Safety Team. The A259 junction with Hill Rise has been identified and is ranked as number 47 of the 49 sites. An assessment of this site and the identified crashes will be carried out in the 2023/24 financial year.

Introduction of traffic signals at the Bishopstone Junction

Assessment and impact of introducing permanent traffic signals

2.14 In response to previous concerns raised about road safety and community severance at the Bishopstone Road, Marine Parade and Hill Rise junctions with the A259, a feasibility study was commissioned in 2018/19 to consider potential improvements. These options included the introduction

of traffic signals and standard roundabouts at the Bishopstone Road, Marine Parade and Hill Rise junctions as well as a gyratory incorporating the Marine Parade and Hill Rise junctions.

2.15 The findings of the junction study showed that, apart from the introduction of a gyratory, it would not be possible to formalise the current situation without creating significant and potentially unacceptable delays on the A259. However, the introduction of a gyratory would potentially require land acquisition and be prohibitively expensive to implement. Consequently, the outcomes of the Bishopstone junction study have been fed into the wider A259 South Coast Road corridor study for further consideration.

2.16 As part of the current A259 MRN study, the A259/Hill Rise junction to A259/Bishopstone Road junction area have been considered as part of the potential package of schemes to be put forward for funding as part of the SOBC. To support this work, fixed signalisation of the A259/Hill Rise/Marine Parade junction was initially tested using local junction modelling software. The modelling demonstrated that the addition of traffic signals at the junction, whilst assisting the side road movements, resulted in significant and a likely unacceptable length of vehicle queues occurring along the A259. This reaffirms the modelling outcomes from the previous Bishopstone junction study.

2.17 The A259 MRN corridor study and the County Council's BSIP are looking at alternative options to encourage active travel and reduce congestion on the A259. As the A259 is a high priority bus corridor, the impact on bus operators and passenger journeys are being taken into account in relation to any transport interventions taking place on this corridor. Delays on the A259, as a result of introducing traffic signals at this junction, would have a detrimental impact on bus journey times where significant BSIP investment is planned on bus priority measures to improve overall reliability on journeys using the high frequency bus service serving Telscombe, Peacehaven, Newhaven, Seaford and Eastbourne.

Use of temporary traffic signals

2.18 As the Notice of Motion highlights, temporary traffic lights have been implemented at Exceat Bridge. However, the operation at this site is predominantly two way traffic but also allows for exit movements out of The Cuckmere Inn access/egress at the western end of Exceat Bridge.

2.19 The simple systems that temporary traffic signals run on with set run time for traffic movements on each arm mean that they are not able to operate in the same, more dynamic and complex way that permanent traffic signal systems can. As highlighted above, the modelling assessment undertaken both as part of the Bishopstone junction study and more recently as part of the A259 study has identified that the introduction of permanent traffic signals at this junction would create significant delay and likely unacceptable queues on the A259 corridor.

2.20 Given that temporary traffic signals would run more slowly and be less efficiently than permanent signal systems, their introduction at this location would result even greater delay and queuing on the A259 corridor. In addition, running temporary traffic signals at all three junctions (Bishopstone Road, Marine Parade and Hill Rise Junction) on the A259, would be difficult to implement, and add further to the inefficiency of movements on the network particularly on the A259 arms where the efficient and expedient movement of traffic is a priority.

Request to seek funding for a footbridge over A259

2.21 It is recognised that the A259 creates a barrier for pedestrian and cycle movements. However, the available data on pedestrian and cycle numbers and road safety data suggests that there is currently low demand and priority for pedestrian and cycle crossing in the area.

2.22 The Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan (LCWIP) incorporates the A259 as part of the East West corridor route between Seaford and Newhaven. The plan includes recommendations for crossing points along the route and improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure in the Bishopstone Area. However, the recommendations are not prioritised in the LCWIP, are at concept level and are unfunded.

2.23 When considering the practicalities of providing a footbridge as a safe route for pedestrians and cyclists, there are a number of factors to take into consideration. In order for the footbridge to be usable for both pedestrians and cyclists, it would need to be fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010. This would mean that ramps would need to be provided at the required gradients and, depending on the design, potential return areas at the end of each ramp in order to achieve appropriate height over the

road. Because of the potential scale of the structure over the A259, there may be a need to purchase third party land outside the highway boundary to accommodate a footbridge and its footings. In addition, any bridge would be on the edge of South Downs National Park, and the Park Authority would need to be consulted to ensure that any design and its visual impact was in keeping with the adjacent landscape and setting. Finally, the A259 is an abnormal load route given its proximity to Newhaven Port therefore any bridge would also need to be high enough to accommodate any abnormal vehicles.

2.24 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been conducted and is included as Appendix 1.

2.25 In relation to the costs of providing a footbridge, based on estimates taken from similar bridges, this would be between £3-6 million.

2.26 The Notice of Motion also asks that the £750,000 underspend from the Active Travel Fund be allocated to deliver the footbridge over the A259. The County Council submitted a project change request to Active Travel England, who are now administering active travel funding on behalf of the Department for Transport, in December 2021 requesting the reallocation of this funding to develop and deliver the three school streets schemes in Lewes, Sidley and Eastbourne. ESCC has received an in principle approval from Active Travel England to use this underspend on developing and delivery the school streets projects and therefore it is not available to be reallocated to fund a footbridge at Bishopstone.

3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1. The Notice of Motion requests that temporary traffic signals are introduced at the Bishopstone junction to assess their effectiveness as a traffic management solution, and that a bid be submitted for the introduction of a footbridge over the A259 for pedestrians and cyclists near the Bishopstone junction, which is part-funded using the £750,000 Active Travel Fund underspend. As set out in Section 2 of this report, previous traffic modelling to assess the benefits and impacts of introducing traffic signals at the junctions in Bishopstone demonstrates that whilst signalisation would benefit movements from side roads, it would generate extensive queuing and potentially unacceptable delays on the A259. Section 2 of this report also sets out that the introduction of a footbridge in this location is seen as not affordable or practicable, but that signalised surface crossing options, being considered as part of the A259 MRN study are more likely to demonstrate value for money. Moreover the £750,000 Active Travel Fund underspend as highlighted in section 2.23 of this report has subsequently been reallocated to develop and deliver three school street schemes in the county. It is therefore recommended that both elements of the Notice of Motion are not supported.

3.2 It is therefore recommended that the Lead Member recommends that the County Council rejects the Notice of Motion as set out in paragraph 1.1 for the reasons set out in Section 3 of the report.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillors Lambert and MacCleary

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None