

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 15 January 2024

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) - Bus Priority Measures Consultation Outcome

Purpose: To note the outcome of the bus priority public consultation and approve the final recommended package of bus priority scheme proposals to be taken forward to the next design stages and construction, subject to Department for Transport approval.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) Note the outcomes of the stakeholder and public consultation on the Bus Service Improvement Plan bus priority measures.
 - (2) Approve the recommended next steps for each proposed scheme within the Bus Service Improvement Plan bus priority programme as set out in Appendix 4.
 - (3) Delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to approve, in consultation with the Lead Member for Transport and Environment the final content of the bus priority package included in the Project Adjustment Request submitted to the Department for Transport and to take any actions necessary to give effect to recommendation 2.
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1. Background Information

1.1 Following the publication of the Government's Bus Back Better Strategy in March 2021, East Sussex County Council submitted its Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) to the Department for Transport (DfT) in October 2021. The East Sussex BSIP sets out ambitious and structured plans and supporting policies to improve and increase the use of bus services and bus related infrastructure in the county, working in close co-operation with neighbouring Local Transport Authorities and with stakeholders representing local bus operators, statutory consultees, community and business voices, bus passengers, and the voluntary and health transport sectors.

1.2 In July 2022, the County Council were notified that East Sussex had been indicatively allocated £41.4m towards the delivery of capital (£22.1m) and revenue (£19.3m) elements of its BSIP. Of the £22.1m capital, £18.5m was indicatively allocated towards the delivery of bus priority measures in the county. In September 2022, the DfT confirmed the County Council's BSIP funding with a spend and delivery deadline of 31 March 2025.

1.3 The introduction of bus priority measures (e.g. bus lanes, bus gates) is identified under the 'Integrated and accessible transport for all' Local Transport Plan (LTP4) theme as a key tool to delivering objectives by supporting bus operators to ensure their buses are punctual and that their customers are receiving a reliable service. This will contribute towards the delivery of the 'Deliver safer and accessible journeys' LTP4 objective by improving accessibility to services as well as making a significant positive contribution to better air quality, decarbonisation and the local economy.

2. Supporting Information

Identification of potential bus priority measures

2.1 In developing the BSIP, the County Council carried out a survey in summer 2021 to understand what improvements bus users would want to see introduced on the bus network. One of the highest priorities identified was improving the punctuality and reliability of bus services across the county.

2.2 An initial package of capital funded bus priority measures was identified and included in the East Sussex BSIP submitted to Government in October 2021. This package was subsequently reviewed and

refined following feedback from Government officials in spring 2022. The potential bus priority measures were identified from an assessment of bus service data provided by the bus operators to determine where the key punctuality and reliability hotspots were on the network, as well as a review of previous and current multi-modal corridor studies which had considered bus priority schemes within them. A subsequent high level desktop assessment of these potential locations was then undertaken to determine whether bus priority measures could reasonably and physically be introduced.

2.3 A feasibility study was commissioned in October 2022 to develop potential bus priority scheme options at 12 locations focussed on two broad areas – Eastbourne and Newhaven/Peacehaven. The objectives of the proposed bus priority measures were to:

- Improve bus reliability through the introduction of bus priority measures and signals to reduce delays, speed up journey times and improve reliability;
- Reduce congestion and improve traffic flow which in turn will support the county’s ambitious carbon reduction targets by reducing vehicle emissions;
- Encourage greater bus use; and
- Complement wider transport initiatives so collectively East Sussex County Council can transform the existing transport system to provide a safe, reliable, and accessible network for all users.

Feasibility study outcomes

2.4 Seven schemes from the feasibility study, spread across Eastbourne and Newhaven/Peacehaven, were prioritised for public and stakeholder consultation following engagement with the bus operators.

<p>Package 1: Eastbourne</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • King’s Drive • Seaside Corridor and Seaside Roundabout • Eastbourne Station Area • Sovereign Harbour 	<p>Package 2: Newhaven and Peacehaven</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newhaven Town Inner Ring Road: Virtual Bus Priority • Newhaven Drove Road and Denton Roundabout • A259 Peacehaven
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2.5 These schemes were prioritised on the basis they generated the highest benefits in terms of journey time savings for bus users and generating additional bus passengers, alongside their contribution towards the BSIP’s aims, the strategic needs and priorities of key stakeholders and deliverability within the March 2025 funding time limits. Further details of the scheme proposals can be found in the consultation brochure at Appendix 1. The feasibility study initial costing exercise highlighted that the cumulative value of the seven schemes put forward for consultation exceeded the £18.5m BSIP capital allocation available.

Consultation approach

2.6 The BSIP bus priority public consultation period ran for 8 weeks between 31 July and 25 September 2023. The consultation approach is outlined in detail in section 2 of the consultation report at Appendix 2. In summary this included:

- A consultation brochure available on the County Council’s consultation webpage – ([East Sussex BSIP Bus Priority Measures – East Sussex – Citizen Space](#)) – in both standard and easy-read formats with hard copies available at the public drop-in events, and across various venues;
- Online webinar available on the consultation webpage;
- Six in-person drop-in consultation events across Eastbourne, Newhaven, Peacehaven and Telscombe with exhibition boards showing the proposals with members of the project team available to answer questions. The events were well attended by residents, interest groups, bus operator staff, locally elected councillors and MPs;
- Distribution of 472 information postcards about the consultation to properties in the direct vicinity of the proposed schemes. Postcards were also delivered to local bus operators who distributed them to bus passengers;
- Social media coverage and press release.

2.7 Stakeholders were identified through a comprehensive mapping exercise to determine those who may have an interest or could be affected by the proposed schemes and emailed about the consultation. This included County, District, Borough and Town Councillors, local MPs, local bus

operators, local businesses and organisations representing the business community, active travel groups, accessibility action groups, transport users, education providers, emergency services, resident associations, as well as voluntary and community sector organisations.

2.8 Prior to the consultation, briefings were also held with elected Members from East Sussex County Council, Lewes District Council, Eastbourne Borough Council, Peacehaven Town Council and Newhaven Town Council. A focussed engagement was undertaken with active travel groups and the proposals were presented to the County Council’s Disability Reference Group and East Sussex Seniors Association.

2.9 An Equality Impact Assessment was produced prior to the public consultation (see Appendix 3) and will be updated to reflect the outcome of the public consultation and subsequent stages of design and delivery.

Consultation Outcomes and Analysis

2.10 A total of 1,854 consultation responses were received. This comprised 1,819 online survey responses and 35 returned paper copies. 1,152 free text survey responses were analysed. Additional documents were also submitted during the consultation period in various formats, including technical reports, photographs, drawings and sketches. A total of 1,113 respondents said that they use the bus with 565 (49.8%) of those respondents stating that they use the bus at least once a week. 163 (14.6%) respondents who used the bus reported that they did so five or more times a week. Any further enquiries received post-consultation have also been responded to.

2.11 In response to the closed survey questions, respondents responded as follows:

Scheme	Strongly support	Support	Neither support / oppose	Oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't know
King's Drive (n=1179)	13.9%	8.3%	8.7%	10.7%	52.5%	5.9%
Seaside Roundabout and Seaside Corridor (n=1505)	11.2%	6.3%	2.9%	7.6%	70.2%	1.7%
Eastbourne Station (n=1047)	18.7%	13.8%	10.8%	9.7%	43.5%	3.4%
Sovereign Harbour (n=949)	19.8%	14.0%	10.6%	8.6%	43.4%	3.5%
Newhaven Town Ring Road: Virtual Bus Priority (n=527)	21.6%	15.4%	12.0%	8.9%	32.8%	9.3%
Newhaven Drove Road and Denton Roundabout (n=502)	20.7%	14.1%	9.8%	7.8%	39.0%	8.6%
A259 Peacehaven (n=573)	23.2%	14.7%	9.9%	6.5%	40.5%	5.2%

2.12 Analysis of the quantitative responses received during the consultation shows that all the schemes received more opposition than support. The Seaside Roundabout and Seaside Corridor scheme specifically, had the largest proportion of opposing responses, with 70% strongly opposing this scheme. Meanwhile, the Newhaven Town Centre scheme focussing on the Ring Road had the largest proportion of supportive respondents (37% support overall), alongside the extension of the bus lanes on the A259 Corridor in Peacehaven and Telscombe Cliffs (38% support overall).

2.13 A summary of scheme specific responses and consultation feedback is set out in section 1 and sections 4-8 of the consultation report at Appendix 2. The free text responses highlighted concerns about the loss of or changes to on-street parking provision especially as part of the Seaside Corridor proposals, perceived negative impact on general traffic flow as a result of redesigning road space to introduce bus lanes, as well as the introduction and use of shared footway/cycleways. Proposals which looked to improve crossings for pedestrians often had more supportive reactions from respondents.

Next steps

2.14 The County Council has received significant capital funding to deliver bus priority measures which support the East Sussex BSIP objectives and is identified as a key tool to delivering safer and accessible journeys objective in the draft LTP4.

2.15 Taking into consideration the outcomes of the public consultation, and feedback, indicative costs, indicative delivery timescales and the expected benefits for bus users, Appendix 4 sets out the recommendations for each scheme and whether they should proceed, not proceed or be subject to further review pending discussion and approval from the DfT.

Project Adjustment Request

2.16 The DfT has a spend and delivery deadline of March 2025 for all capital funded bus priority measures. Any changes to the bus priority proposals being delivered are subject to the Department's approval, via the submission of a formal Project Adjustment Request (PAR). The PAR must outline the final schemes chosen to progress to detailed design and construction, any changes to scope, updated costs, budget transfers from schemes not being progressed, and evidence of benefits to bus passengers (i.e. journey saving time). The submitted PAR will be considered via DfT's panel process, and the County Council will be notified if the recommended schemes can progress through to construction.

3. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 Following receipt of Government funding to deliver the County Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan, the initial package of bus priority measures was identified and developed focussed on two areas – Eastbourne and Newhaven/Peacehaven. A final package of seven bus priority schemes across these two areas were prioritised and put forward for public consultation between July and September 2023 on the basis that they generated the highest benefits for bus users and could generate additional bus passengers and meet the DfT's delivery timescales. An initial costing exercise highlighted that the cumulative value of the schemes put forward for consultation exceeded the £18.5m BSIP capital allocation available.

3.2 The delivery of the bus priority measures (bus lanes, bus gates) will contribute towards achieving the objectives of East Sussex's draft LTP4 and BSIP. Various factors have been considered in determining which schemes should proceed to the next design stages and construction, including the consultation feedback, bus user benefits, the delivery timescale of 31 March 2025 and costs of each scheme, and that not all schemes can be afforded within the funding envelope.

3.3 The Lead Member for Transport and Environment is therefore recommended to note the BSIP bus priority consultation outcomes and approve the recommended next steps for each scheme as set out in Appendix 4. The final recommendation is to delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport in consultation with the Lead Member for Transport and Environment to approve the final content of the BSIP bus priority package included in the Project Adjustment Request (PAR) submitted to DfT, and to take any actions necessary to progress those schemes recommended to proceed to the next design stages and construction.

RUPERT CLUBB

Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Contact Officer: Indi Hicks

Tel. No: 07514721385

Email: indi.hicks@eastsussex.gov.uk

LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillors Belsey, Collier, di Cara, Holt, MacCleary, Osborne, Rodohan, Tutt

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Bus Service Improvement Plan 2021 - eastsussex.gov.uk/media/znybvybw/east-sussex-county-council-bus-service-improvement-plan-2021.pdf