# East Sussex Rail Strategy
## 2025-2050
## December 2025

Version 2

# Contents

# 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**
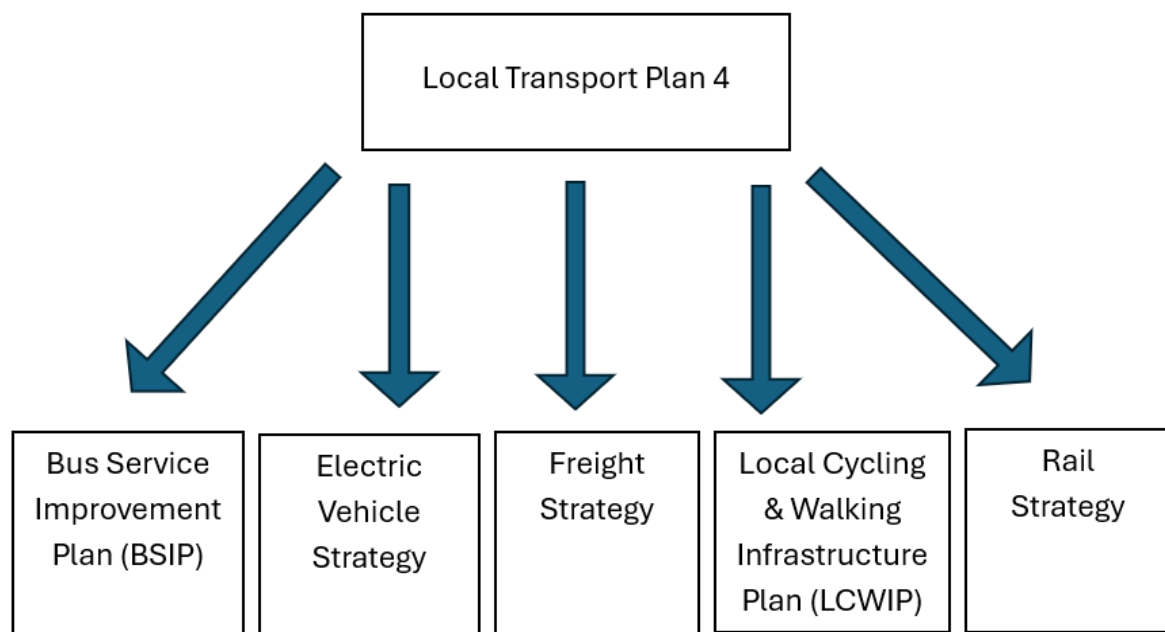


- **Bus Service Improvement Plan** – buses play an important role in allowing people to access rail stations and support journeys to work, education, training, healthcare and for social/leisure purposes.

- **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**
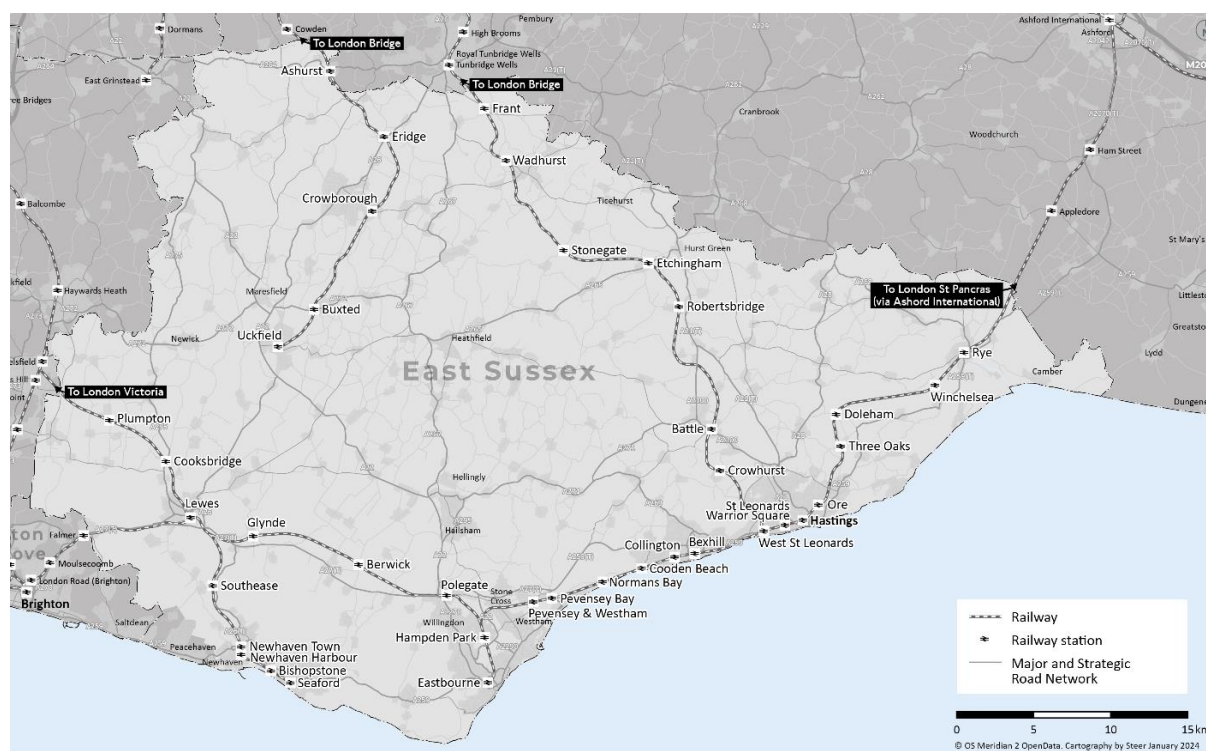


**East-west coastal county and regional connectivity**

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 Cooksbridge 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 |
| Southease | 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 though 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 UKs 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 anuum, 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) | 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."<br><br>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. |
| 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) | 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.<br><br>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. |

| Strategy | Importance |
|---|---|
| Local Plans (district and borough Local Plans are under development, South Downs National Park (2019) | 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.<br><br>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 |
| East Sussex Cultural Strategy 2013-2025 | 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.<br><br>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. |

**Regional**

| Strategy | Importance |
|---|---|
| Transport for the South East's Transport Strategy (2025) | 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.<br><br>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. |
| Visitor Economy Strategy for Growth 2024-2034 (2024) | 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'.<br><br>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. |
| 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) | interventions for the next thirty years (and is currently under review).<br><br>The East Sussex Rail Strategy supports the identified rail improvements across the county that will support rail connectivity across the wider south east region.<br><br>The SIP is currently being updating following the adoption of the updated TfSE Transport Strategy in October 2025. |
| Gatwick Surface Access Strategy (2022) | 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.<br><br>The East Sussex Rail Strategy will support people access Gatwick Airport, whether that be for employment or to catch a flight, sustainably. |

**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. 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.<br><br>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. |
| Carbon Budget and Growth Delivery Plan (2025) | 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.<br><br>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. |
| Network Rail Strategic Business Plan (2023) | 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 |

| 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) | Sets out path to achieving a net zero transportation system in the UK.

Decarbonising the remaining non-electrical rail networks in the county (Uckfield to Oxted and Ore to Ashford) will help contribute to net-zero. |
| 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) | 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.

The East Sussex Rail Strategy supports technological innovation particularly around ticketing and integration of ticket with other modes (such as bus through PlusBus). |
| Inclusive Transport Strategy (2018) | This Strategy sets out the Government's plans to make our transport system more inclusive, and to make travel easier for disabled people.

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. |
| Transport Investment Strategy (2017) | 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.

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. |

| 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) | 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.<br><br>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. |

# 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



© OS Meridian 2 OpenData. Cartography by Steer January 2024
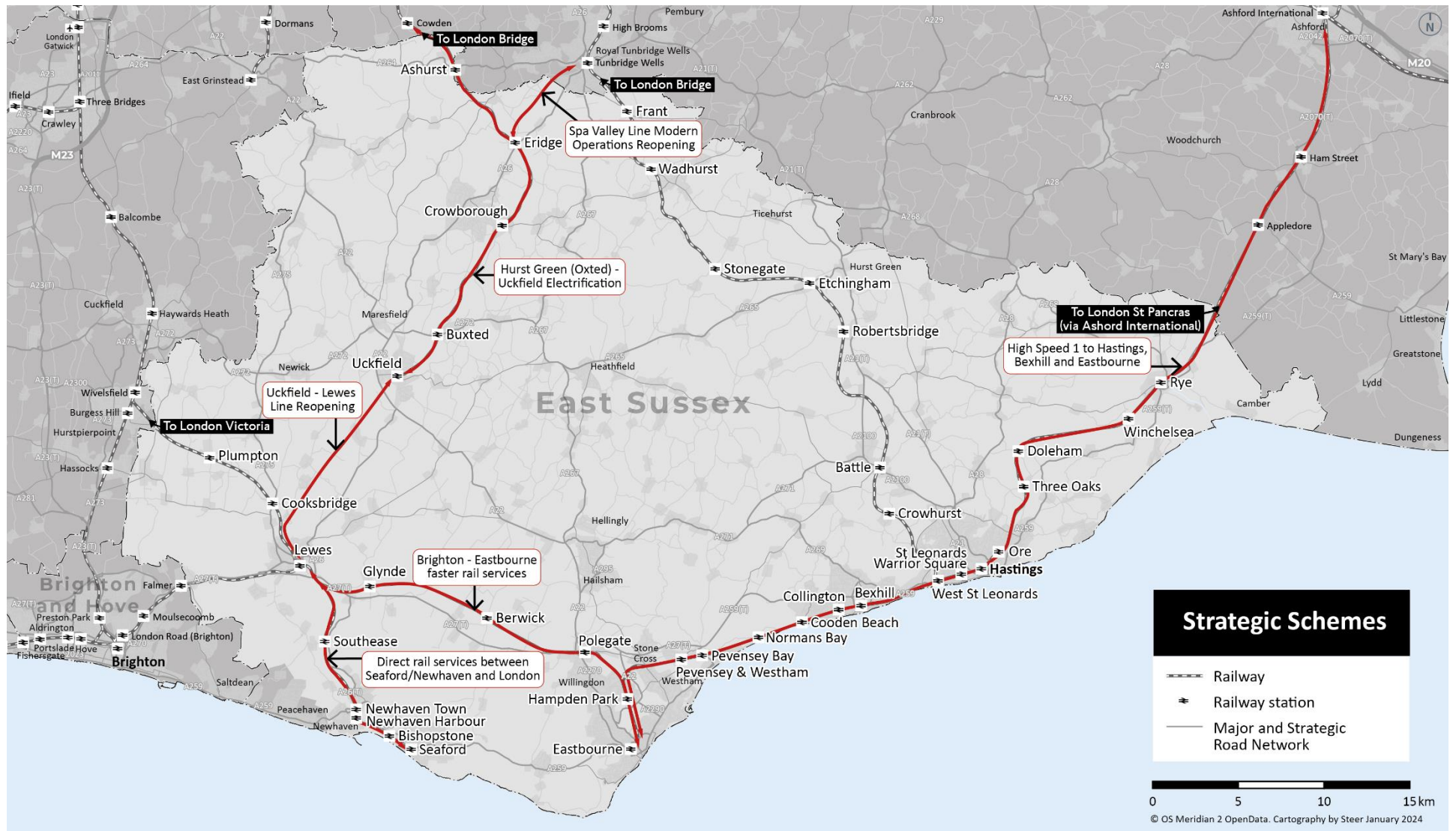
# Priority Area 1: Accessibility of the rail network

## 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 2023[2] - 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;

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[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 accessibly 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<br>Develop –Short- and medium-term<br>Deliver – Short- and medium-term |
| Key partners | • East Sussex County Council<br>• Transport for the South-East<br>• Local Authorities<br>• Local access, disability walking and cycling groups |
| LTP4 Investment Priorities | • LP01: Local priorities – walking, wheeling, cycling |

|  | • LP06: Integrated transport opportunities<br>• CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive |
|---|---|

| 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<br>Develop – To be confirmed<br>Deliver – Short-term |
| **Key partners** | • Bus operators,<br>• East Sussex County Council<br>• Transport for the South East<br>• Local Authorities |
| **LTP4 Investment Priorities** | • LP03: Local priorities – bus<br>• LP06: Integrated transport opportunities<br>• 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<br>Develop – Short-term<br>Deliver – To be confirmed |
| **Key partners** | • Network Rail<br>• Train operating companies / GBR<br>• East Sussex County Council<br>• Transport for the South East<br>• Access and disability groups |
| **LTP4 Investment Priorities** | • LP06: Integrated transport opportunities<br>• CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive |

| Name | RA04 - Step free access from street to platform at more 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** | Less than £10m |
| **Development timescales** | Study – To be confirmed<br>Develop – Short-term<br>Deliver – Short-term |
| **Key partners** | • Train operating companies / GBR<br>• East Sussex County Council<br>• Transport for the South East<br>• Department for Transport<br>• Network Rail<br>• Access and disability groups |
| **LTP4 Investment Priorities** | • LP06: Integrated transport opportunities<br>• 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<br>Develop – To be confirmed<br>Deliver – Short-term |
| **Key partners** | • Train operating companies / GBR<br>• East Sussex County Council<br>• Transport for the South East<br>• Department for Transport<br>• Network Rail |
| **LTP4 Investment Priorities** | • LP06: Integrated transport opportunities<br>• CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Name** | RA06 - Accessible Information on railway services and journeys |

| | |
|---|---|
| **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<br>Develop – To be confirmed<br>Deliver – Short-term |
| **Key partners** | • Train operators<br>• East Sussex County Council<br>• Transport for the South East<br>• Local Authorities<br>• Disability groups |
| **LTP4 Investment Priorities** | • CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive<br>• 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<br>Develop – Short-term<br>Deliver – Short-term |
| **Key partners** | • Train operating companies / GBR<br>• Bus operators<br>• East Sussex County Council<br>• Transport for the South East<br>• Private sector |
| **LTP4 Investment Priorities** | • LP06: Integrated transport opportunities<br>• CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive |

|  | • LP14: Digital |
| --- | --- |

| Name | RI02 - Enhancements to and better promotion of ways to ensure better bus and rail integration

(e.g. integrated bus and train ticketing, contactless ticketing, Real Time Passenger Information, branding of bus/rail connectivity, expand and promote PlusBus, Flexibus) |
| --- | --- |
| **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** | Study – To be confirmed
Develop – Short-term
Deliver – Short-term |
| **Key partners** | • Train operating companies / GBR/GBR
• Bus operators
• East Sussex County Council
• Transport for the South East
• Private sector |
| **LTP4 Investment Priorities** | • 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** | Study – To be confirmed
Develop – To be confirmed
Deliver – Short-term |
| **Key partners** | • Train operating companies / GBR
• Bus operators
• East Sussex County Council
• Transport for the South East
• Network Rail |
| **LTP4 Investment Priorities** | • 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<br>Develop – To be confirmed<br>Deliver – Short-term |
| Key partners | • Train operating companies / GBR<br>• East Sussex County Council<br>• Transport for the South East<br>• Network Rail<br>• Bus operators,<br>• Private sector<br>• Cycling groups |
| LTP4 Investment Priorities | • LP06: Integrated transport opportunities<br>• 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<br>Develop – To be confirmed<br>Deliver – Short-term |
| Key partners | • Train operating companies / GBR/GBR<br>• East Sussex County Council<br>• |
| LTP4 Investment Priority | • 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.

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[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<br>Develop – To be confirmed<br>Deliver - To be confirmed |
| **Key partners** | • Network Rail<br>• East Sussex County Council |
| **LTP4 Investment Priorities** | • LP10: Assets – planning maintenance and renewal<br>• 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<br>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<br>Develop – Short-term<br>Deliver – To be confirmed |
| **Key partners** | • Network Rail<br>• Train operating companies / GBR<br>• East Sussex County Council<br>• Other partners – Environment Agency |
| **LTP4 Investment Priority** | • 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<br>Develop – Short-term<br>Deliver - To be confirmed |
| **Key partners** | • Network Rail |
| **LTP4 Investment Priority** | • 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<br>Develop – Short-term<br>Deliver - To be confirmed |
| **Key partners** | • Network Rail |
| **LTP4 Investment Priority** | • 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<br>Develop – To be confirmed<br>Deliver – Short-term |

| Key partners | • Network Rail |
| --- | --- |
| LTP4 Investment Priority | • 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<br>Develop – To be confirmed<br>Deliver – To be confirmed |
| Key partners | • Network Rail<br>• Train operators |
| LTP4 Investment Priority | • 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 Plan[5] 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 train[6]. Furthermore, CO2 equivalent emissions are significantly lower for journeys made by electric train compared to diesel trains[7].

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

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[4] Transport and environment statistics: 2023 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[5] Transport decarbonisation plan - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[6] Greenhouse gas reporting: conversion factors 2023 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[7] Rail emissions: April 2022 to March 2023 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

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 and 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<br>Develop – Short-term<br>Deliver – Short-term |
| Key partners | • Network Rail<br>• Train operating companies / Great British Railways<br>• Electric vehicle charge-point providers<br>• East Sussex County Council |
| LTP4 Investment Priorities | • CP04: Fuels and air quality<br>• 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<br>Develop – To be confirmed<br>Deliver – To be confirmed |
| Key partners | • Network Rail/Great British Railways<br>• Transport for the South East<br>• East Sussex County Council<br>• Local Authorities<br>• Train operating companies / GBR<br>• Private sector |
| LTP4 Investment Priority | • 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<br>Opportunities for improved frequency increasing attractiveness of the rail offer |
| Indicative cost | Greater than £100m |
| Development timescales | Study – undertaken<br>Develop – Short-term<br>Deliver – long term |
| Key partners | <ul><li>HS1 Ltd</li><li>Transport for the South East</li><li>Network Rail/Great British Railways (emerging)</li><li>East Sussex County Council</li><li>Kent County Council</li><li>Local Authorities</li><li>Train operating companies / GBR</li><li>Private sector</li></ul> |
| LTP4 Investment Priorities | <ul><li>LP06: Integrated transport opportunities</li><li>CP03: Strategic and local journeys – rail</li><li>CP04: Fuels and air quality</li></ul> |

| 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)<br>Opportunities for improved frequency increasing attractiveness of the rail offer |
| Indicative cost | Greater than £100m |
| Development timescales | Study – medium-long term<br>Develop – medium – long term<br>Deliver – long term |
| Key partners | <ul><li>Network Rail/Great British Railways (emerging)</li><li>Transport for the South East</li><li>East Sussex County Council</li><li>Local Authorities</li><li>Train operating companies / GBR</li></ul> |
| LTP4 Investment Priority | <ul><li>CP04: Fuels and air quality</li></ul> |

| 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<br>Develop – To be confirmed<br>Deliver – To be confirmed |
| Key partners | • Network Rail/Great British Railways (emerging)<br>• Transport for the South East<br>• East Sussex County Council<br>• Kent County Council<br>• Local Authorities<br>• Train operating companies / GBR<br>• Private sector |
| LTP4 Investment Priority | • 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 below[8] 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 |

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[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 |

## 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

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[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<br>Develop – Short-term<br>Deliver – To be confirmed |
| Key partners | • Network Rail<br>• Transport for the South East<br>• London St Pancras Highspeed (previously HS1 Ltd)<br>• Kent County Council |
| LTP4 Investment Priority | • 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<br>Develop – Short-term<br>Deliver – Short-term |
| Key partners | • Train operating companies / GBR<br>• East Sussex County Council<br>• Transport for the South East<br>• Network Rail |
| LTP4 Investment Priority | • 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<br>Develop – Short-term<br>Deliver – Short-term |
| Key partners | • Train operating companies / GBR |

| | |
|---|---|
| | • East Sussex County Council<br>• Transport for the South East<br>• Network Rail<br>• Kent County Council |
| **LTP4 Investment Priority** | • 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<br>Develop – Short-term<br>Deliver – To be confirmed |
| **Key partners** | • Train operating companies / GBR<br>• East Sussex County Council<br>• Transport for the South East<br>• Network Rail |
| **LTP4 Investment Priority** | • 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<br>Develop – Short-term<br>Deliver – Short-term |
| **Key partners** | • Train operating companies / GBR<br>• East Sussex County Council<br>• Transport for the South East<br>• Network Rail |
| **LTP4 Investment Priority** | • 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<br>Develop – To be confirmed<br>Deliver – Short-term |

| Key partners | <ul><li>Train operating companies / GBR</li><li>Local authorities</li><li>Bus operators (where onward travel is required)</li></ul> |
|---|---|
| LTP4 Investment Priority | <ul><li>CP03: Strategic and local journeys -rail</li></ul> |

| 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<br>Develop – Short-term<br>Deliver – Short-term |
| Key partners | <ul><li>Train operating companies / GBR</li><li>East Sussex County Council</li><li>Transport for the South East</li><li>Network Rail</li></ul> |
| LTP4 Investment Priority | <ul><li>CP03: Strategic and local journeys -rail</li></ul> |

**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<br>Develop – Short-term<br>Deliver – To be confirmed |
| Key partners | <ul><li>Eurostar</li><li>other new potential international train operators,</li><li>London St Pancras Highspeed (previously HS1 Ltd)</li><li>Kent County Council</li></ul> |
| LTP4 Investment Priority | <ul><li>CP03: Strategic and local journeys -rail</li></ul> |

# 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 Focus[10], 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

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[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<br>Develop – Short-term<br>Deliver – Short-term |
| **Key partners** | • Train operating companies / GBR<br>• East Sussex County Council<br>• Transport for the South East<br>• Bus operators<br>• Private sector |
| **LTP4 Investment Priorities** | • LP06: Integrated transport opportunities<br>• 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<br>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<br>Develop – To be confirmed<br>Deliver – Short-term |
| **Key partners** | • East Sussex County Council<br>• Bus companies<br>• Train operating companies / GBR<br>• Network Rail |
| **LTP4 Investment Priorities** | • CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive<br>• CP02: Signage and wayfinding |

| Name | RC07 - Promote & develop further multi modal journey planners showing journey times and connections |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| **How scheme will support addressing customer experience** | Improve passenger confidence and experience |
| **Indicative cost** | Less than £10m |
| **Development timescales** | Study – Short-term<br>Develop – Short-term<br>Deliver – To be confirmed |
| **Key partners** | • Train operating companies / GBR,<br>• Bus operators,<br>• East Sussex County Council |
| **LTP4 Investment Priorities** | • LP06: Integrated transport opportunities<br>• 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<br>Develop – To be confirmed<br>Deliver – Short-term |
| **Key partners** | • Train operating companies / GBR<br>• Network Rail<br>• East Sussex County Council |
| **LTP4 Investment Priority** | • 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<br>Develop – Short-term<br>Deliver – To be confirmed |
| **Key partners** | • Train operating companies / GBR<br>• Energy providers |
| **LTP4 Investment Priorities** | • CP01: Making transport accessible and inclusive<br>• 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<br>Develop – To be confirmed<br>Deliver – Short-term |
| **Key partners** | • Train operating companies / GBR<br>• Network Rail |
| **LTP4 Investment Priority** | • 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<br>Develop – To be confirmed<br>Deliver – Short-term |
| **Key partners** | • Train operating companies / GBR<br>• Network Rail<br>• Bus operators |
| **LTP4 Investment Priorities** | • LP06: Integrated transport opportunities<br>• 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 |

| | |
|---|---|
| **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<br>Develop – To be confirmed<br>Deliver – Short-term |
| **Key partners** | • Train operating companies / GBR |
| **LTP4 Investment Priority** | • 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<br>Develop – To be confirmed<br>Deliver – Short-term |
| **Key partners** | • Train operating companies / GBR<br>• Network Rail<br>• Mobile operators |
| **LTP4 Investment Priorities** | • LP14: Digital<br>• 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<br>Develop – To be confirmed<br>Deliver – Short-term |
| **Key partners** | • Train operating companies / GBR |
| **LTP4 Investment Priority** | • 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<br>Develop – To be confirmed<br>Deliver – Short-term |
| Key partners | • Train operating companies / GBR<br>• Network Rail |
| LTP4 Investment Priority | • 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<br>Develop – Short-term<br>Deliver – Short-term |
| Key partners | • Train operating companies / GBR |
| LTP4 Investment Priority | • 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:
  - o 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,
  - o Identify rail demand from improved connectivity, and identify the travel demand from modal shift or induced travel demand from improved transport options, and
  - o 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:
  - o Understand the types of interventions that could be delivered, such as upgrades to track and signalling, and
  - o 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:
  - o Further assesses and quantifies the direct transport benefits and potential wider socio-economic benefits of the scheme,
  - o Assesses the cost of the scheme and develops a timeline for delivery, and
  - o 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 Bexhill[11]. 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 |

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[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 |

# 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** | Transport for the South East to lead development of Strategic Outline Business Case with input of Network Rail.<br><br>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 |

# 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<br>Network Rail and train operating companies to lead delivery with support from Transport from 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** | Transport for the South East to lead development of feasibility study with input from East Sussex County Council and Network Rail

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 |