

**Report to:** Lead Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment

**Date of meeting:** 18 July 2016

**By:** Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

**Title:** Petition calling for the introduction of traffic signals on the A259 at Exceat Bridge

**Purpose:** To consider the request for the introduction of traffic signals at Exceat Bridge and advise the lead petitioner accordingly.

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**RECOMMENDATION:** The Lead Member is recommended to advise the lead petitioners that the request to introduce traffic signals at the Exceat Bridge will not be progressed on the basis that it will not improve traffic conditions however that the County Council is exploring options and the associated funding to deliver an offline two way bridge.

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## **1 Background Information**

1.1 At the County Council meeting on 22 March 2016, Councillor Carstairs presented a petition to the Chairman asking East Sussex County Council to install traffic signals at Exceat Bridge on the A259 east of Seaford. The petitioners highlight there is traffic congestion and associated frustrations when crossing at the bridge because of the one way operation and in the past when work has been carried out on the bridge, and temporary lights installed, the traffic flow had improved. The full text of the petition can be found in Appendix 1.

1.2 A copy of the petition is available in the Members Room. Standing Orders provide that where the Chairman considers it appropriate, petitions are considered by the relevant Committee or Lead Member. A spokesperson for the petitioners is invited to address the Committee or Lead Member. The Chairman has referred this petition to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment.

## **2 Supporting Information**

2.1 Exceat Bridge, situated east of Seaford on the A259, has one way working with priority given to traffic travelling eastbound. The eastbound approach to the bridge from Seaford is via a series of bends with the access/egress to the Cuckmere Inn almost directly onto the western end of the bridge. The westbound approach from Eastbourne is prominently downhill with the access/egress to the Seven Sisters Country Park car park and Visitor Centre in close proximity to the bridge. As a result there are numerous pedestrian movements across the A259 at this point between the car park and the Visitor Centre.

### Context

2.2 Any improvement to the A259 corridor at the Exceat Bridge needs to be considered in relation to the wider strategic context for the road. Our hierarchy of roads for the County broadly defines the role that each road is intended to play. Within this hierarchy, the A27 Trunk Road is the main east-west corridor for long distance traffic, whilst this section of A259 is not considered to be part of the strategic network.

2.3 From our analysis, the majority of traffic using this section of the A259 has local origins and destinations. Whilst the A259 remains important, both as a tourist route and to carry local traffic, our policy has been not to encourage any more strategic traffic onto that route which should, as far as possible, be channelled onto the A27.

2.4 Any scheme that might encourage strategic traffic to divert from the A27 could have a potential detrimental impact on the towns and villages along the A259. Having said that, any concerns in relation to the transfer of strategic traffic onto the A259 corridor would be eased if significant improvements were made to the A27. The A27 Reference Group, which brings together the MPs, local authority leaders and the Local Enterprise Partnerships, are lobbying Government and seeking to make the economic case for

the additional funding required to deliver an offline scheme between Lewes and Polegate which they believe is the best option for addressing a range of issues on the A27 corridor, in particular being able to accommodate planned and significant future housing and employment growth in the Hailsham/Polegate area.

#### Options for Exceat Bridge

2.5 We have considered in detail the option to introduce traffic signals at the bridge on a permanent basis, which has been requested in the petition. Temporary traffic signals have been introduced at the bridge for maintenance works and will be used for event management purposes this year on the Friday and Saturday of Eastbourne Airborne. There are various difficulties which make their introduction on a permanent basis impracticable.

2.6 From our assessment, such a scheme would actually result in further queuing traffic on the eastbound approach from Seaford to the bridge. The bends on this approach would obscure any queues here and it is likely that this would lead to “shunt” type crashes on this approach.

2.7 In addition, to meet current design best practice, we would be required to signalise the access to the car park for the Cuckmere Inn as well as the bridge. Signal heads would need to be placed so that they are clearly visible to drivers approaching on the A259, but this would mean that they could not be seen by drivers leaving the car park. As a consequence this would, therefore, need the car park access to be separately controlled. The type of traffic signals that would be required have a maximum capacity of some 750 to 800 vehicles per hour and our surveys on the A259 have shown flows in the order of 1,000 vehicles in the peak hours. Therefore the permanent traffic signals would compound the issue of queueing rather than resolve it.

2.8 Therefore in parallel, we have been investigating various other options including the introduction of a new offline bridge at Exceat north of the existing, which would provide two way traffic flow on this section of the A259 and also improve facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. Any such scheme will need to take into account its surroundings within the South Downs National Park.

2.9 The estimated cost for a new offline bridge is £2m. At present, there is £0.5m allocated in the council's Capital Programme towards the structural maintenance of the existing bridge; however we are exploring potential funding sources that may be available to enable the implementation of a more comprehensive improvement at this location. This includes bidding through the South East and Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnerships into the Government's current round of Local Growth Fund. The submissions for the next Local Growth Fund will be submitted at the end of July with a decision from Government expected in the Autumn.

### **3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

3.1 The Lead Member is therefore recommended to advise the petitioners that for the reasons set out in paragraphs 2.5 to 2.7, the introduction of traffic signals on a permanent basis on the Exceat Bridge, would not address the issues that have been raised.

3.2 Options seeking funding will be explored through the Government's Local Growth Fund to deliver a more comprehensive solution which could provide a new offline two way bridge north of the existing, with improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, and which would address the congestion issues raised by the petitioners.

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#### LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillors Carstairs, D Shing and S Shing

#### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

## **Appendix 1**

### **Traffic Lights at Exceat Bridge**

#### **Petition**

To install traffic light at Exceat bridge

#### **Background Information**

Anyone who travels to or from Eastbourne and crosses the bridge at Exceat will have experienced the traffic holdups and the associated frustration because of the one way nature of the bridge. If traffic lights were installed, it would help to alleviate the problems. In the past when work has been carried out on the bridge and temporary traffic lights were installed, the traffic flow improved considerably. Traffic lights would be a cost effective solution compared to widening the existing bridge or building a second bridge.