

EAST SUSSEX DRAFT LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 2011 - 2026

Comments of the Friends of Lewes Society

The Society recognise that this document sets the strategic objectives that ESCC intend following on transport issues in the next 15 years and accepts the high level objectives that have been set. It notes that most of the general issues that it put forward on 30 November 2009 are mentioned in some way and is content with the specific transport objectives put forward although it would be helpful if the word transport were defined to include use of public rights of way and cycling.

It is concerned, however, that little emphasis is placed on the creation of the South Downs National Park, and indeed there are parts of the draft document such as para 4.1 that seem to ignore it. Other parts such as 3.30 do not recognise that the existing South Downs Management Plan will be overtaken in due course by the Management Plan on which the National Park Authority (NPA) have started a consultation process. The advent of the National Park in parts of the County and particularly the inclusion of the whole of the town of Lewes in it mean that ESCC should have regard to s.62 of the Environment Act 1995 and give greater attention to transport matters in that area. At present the plan places emphasis on those towns where ESCC perceives economic development should take place but this needs to be balanced by the need to consider the new obligation which the National Park places on ESCC. Specific proposals should therefore be included to meet this obligation in much the same way as specific proposals are put forward for the towns regarded as priority spatial areas.

ESCC need to recognise that Lewes will be a gateway town to the eastern part of the South Downs and encourage a better public transport interchange in the town than exists at present. In addition the quality of roads such as Station Street need to be enhanced to provide a better visitor experience whilst more generally other aspects of the public realm, such as pavements, need to be brought up to a better standard for a town where visitor numbers are likely to increase.

There does not appear to be any mention of ESCC bringing back in house on 1st April the rights of way functions currently carried out on their behalf by the South Downs Joint Committee (SDJC). Whilst the draft document refers to the existing Rights of Way Improvement Plan this change may affect the priorities in it. In particular ESCC should ensure that the maintenance standards achieved by SDJC are not allowed to decline. ESCC should also work closely with the NPA on access matters, since the NPA will be the access authority, and to improve the signposting of walking routes out of the town and into the rural part of the National Park

Other more general environmental matters that should be addressed in the plan are the need to reduce traffic noise by using appropriate road surfacing on busy roads and reducing light pollution from street lighting columns, particularly those in the countryside.

The Society agrees that improving safety should be one of the key objectives and that measures to reduce the speed of traffic should help in this regard. However this principle seems at odds with the procrastination that ESCC have shown over extending the current 20mph zones in Lewes.

The Society supports the potential reopening of the Lewes to Uckfield railway line and retaining the rail link from Lewes to Ashford preferably coupled with more Eurostar trains stopping there. As far as bus transport is concerned the Society considers that the County Council should insist on those providing supported services using low emission buses.

Robert Cheesman
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