

**Consultation on Network Rail's strategic business plan
21 December 2007**

East Sussex County Council's consultation response:

Please note that this consultation response reflects officer comments only, and does not constitute the formal view of the County Council.

Strategic Route - Kent

- Very little reference has been made to Hastings in this document, which is surprising seeing as Hastings is a regional transport hub and secondary town centre, with regional spokes linking it to Brighton, Eastbourne and Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells (all of which are primary town centres) and Ashford (which is a Gateway);
- more investment seems to be focused on the Southeastern run lines in Kent and not the Southern Railway run line which is in the Strategic Route for Kent;
- significant development is taking place near Hastings and Ore stations which will place increased pressure in terms of capacity on the line ie. construction is either underway, or soon to be, for the provision of hundreds of new houses, colleges/universities and shops near the aforementioned stations;
- there is very little mention of the Ashford-Hastings rail capacity improvements – the only reference is in 'figure 18 proposed enhancements in CP4'. East Sussex County Council along with Seaspace, other local authorities and Network Rail (contact: Murray Motley) have been working together to identify feasible rail capacity improvements on the Ashford-Hastings railway line in both the short and long term. Network Rail has undertaken a GRIP Stage 2 study and is looking to progress to GRIP Stage 3 on potential improvements. The improvements that are being looked at are (at minimum level) line speed increases to (at the most) dual tracking on parts of the line and electrification. Given this, the lack of reference in the Business Plan is somewhat surprising;
- Hastings-Ashford and East Kent routes in 'figure 21 Strategic routes section' are indicated as not having Community Rail. However, there are the Marshlink and the Kent Community Rail Partnerships in these areas. The Business Plan, therefore, should reflect their existence.

Strategic Route - Brighton Main Line and Sussex

- We are pleased to note the on-train capacity constraints on the Uckfield Line are acknowledged. Although it is noted that the capacity constraints are likely to grow increase due to the lack of availability diesel rolling stock;
- support the proposed addition of 8 vehicles to strengthen peak and some shoulder peak services on the Uckfield route;

- pleased to note that the Sussex RUS will consider further the case for train lengthening and /or capacity enhancements on the east coastway services;
- **Are concerned and raise objections to there being no mention of the Lewes-Uckfield railway line reinstatement. A study is about to commence which has been commissioned by the Central Rail Corridor Board (comprising Southern Railway, SEERA, SEEDA, County, District and Town Councils) and will be undertaken by Network Rail to identify if there is a business case for reinstating the disused Lewes-Uckfield railway line. If reinstated, the line could have significant benefits, including relieving capacity on the Brighton Main Line, and it is therefore strongly recommended this is included in the SBP Route Plan for the Brighton Main Line and Sussex. It is important to note that 'the potential extension to Lewes and beyond of the Uckfield line' is included in the Network Rail Business Plan 2007 as 'infrastructure investment under consideration';**
- In the SBP Route Plan for the Brighton Main Line and Sussex, Uckfield and East Grinstead are indicated as not having Community Rail. I can however confirm that there is a Community Rail Partnership for the Uckfield and East Grinstead lines and the plan must acknowledge their existence;
- Pleased to note that Uckfield station is a candidate for the National Stations Improvement Programme.