

West Sussex Cycle Forum

Coast 2 Capital Sustainability and Resilience schemes

Comments on the West Sussex Schemes

Background

The West Sussex Cycle Forum was created by WSCC in 2004 to assist with drawing up the County's Local Transport Plan (LTP2) and with revising the County's "Pedalling Ahead" cycling strategy document. The group combines the local knowledge and expertise of the various cycle forums in West Sussex. The Forum facilitates the sharing of information between the individual local forums and West Sussex County Council who are the highway authority for the majority of the County's roads.

Our comments relate to the benefits of the schemes to the mode of transport that is cycling. Cycling is one of the most sustainable and resilient modes of transport, second only to walking. Bicycles are highly efficient in both energy and space usage, so are ideal for urban transport.

Our comments are based on the benefits of the schemes for ordinary people using bicycles for everyday transport, rather than cycling undertaken as a sport by middle-aged men in Lycra.

Comments on the Schemes

Worthing Sustainable Transport Package

The Forum are unanimous in saying that this is not either a "sustainable transport" nor a "transport resilience" scheme, and thus should not be awarded any sustainable transport and transport resilience funding. There are many more potential schemes both in the LEP area, and in Worthing itself, that would be much more relevant candidates for such investment.

- *Would the proposed scheme effectively tackle existing or future transport problems?*

No, the scheme will make transport problems significantly worse.

- *Do you think that the scheme will contribute to economic growth, including providing new homes, jobs and employment floor space?*

No, it will not. The scheme provides no new homes or jobs or employment floor space. In fact the scheme aims to result in increased rents and business rates, making Montague Street more difficult to open a shop in, or live in. This may well contribute to the economic decline of Worthing's town centre and Worthing as a whole.

- *Is the scheme good value for money?*

No, the scheme is very poor value for money in general. It has zero or negative value for money in terms of value for sustainable transport and transport resilience money.

National Cycle Network Route 2 Section 5

The West Sussex Cycle forum support this scheme wholeheartedly, as providing an important “missing link” in National Cycle Network Route 2. Completion of this scheme will go some way towards completing NCN2 in West Sussex, and will also provide a very useful sustainable transport link between the large urban areas of Littlehampton and Bognor Regis.

The Forum hope that in the next few years the remaining sections of NCN2 in West Sussex will also be completed, creating a route that is useful for both longer-distance cycle-based tourism and for local journeys by bicycle between and within the coastal towns.

- *Would the proposed scheme effectively tackle existing or future transport problems?*

Yes, it will. The scheme directly tackles the problem of lack of safe and pleasant cycle routes in the area, allowing significant numbers of people to choose their bicycle instead of their car for local trips between Littlehampton and Bognor Regis and further afield.

- *Do you think that the scheme will contribute to economic growth, including providing new homes, jobs and employment floor space?*

Yes, it will. Investing in sustainable transport infrastructure, to encourage sustainable modes of transport over non-sustainable modes, will always contribute to economic growth. In addition such investment reduces the barrier to economic growth that motor traffic congestion creates. Employment opportunities are created by allowing the unemployed and low-paid access to low-cost and flexible transport to commute to and from work. In addition the National Cycle Network offers very large benefits from tourism income for the County, and for the south coast of England in general. The potential growth in cycle-based tourism is very large, and is likely to result in new jobs in cycle shops, cycle hire, overnight accommodation, and local cafés and shops.

- *Is the scheme good value for money?*

Yes, most certainly it is good value for money. The initial investment will provide sustainable transport for decades to come with almost zero ongoing maintenance or other revenue expenditure. DfT research shows that investing in cycling infrastructure has benefit/cost ratios that are ten times those typically seen in motor transport schemes.

West of Horsham Transport Package

Although this is a hybrid sustainability (£2m) and resilience (£1.1m) bid, the measures in the package are almost entirely for resilience: enlarging and reconfiguring four major roundabouts to increase capacity on the A264/A24 and traffic calming to prevent a consequent increase in use of the more direct routes through the village and lanes.

There are some improvements for cycling: toucan crossings, some footway improvements and lower speed limits within the village. However, these sustainability elements are very minor and almost entirely incidental to the resilience works. They will fail to significantly increase cycling and walking levels.

Wider opportunities to improve sustainable transport (for example by using existing paths and downgraded roads to create continuous cycle routes and incorporating grade-separated crossings)

have simply not been considered.

The business case is too narrow. For example, it does not take account of the financial benefits (health, congestion, accident reduction, economic growth) of including proper provision for cycling and it does not take account of the different causes and measures needed to reduce the high rate of RTAs involving cycles.

The cycling elements of the package need significant improvement.

- *Would the proposed scheme effectively tackle existing or future transport problems?*

No, it will make transport problems worse. The scheme will mainly encourage more use of motor vehicles for both local and longer-distance trips. The lack of cycleways between the large new housing developments and Horsham and Broadbridge Heath effectively force new households to own and use at least one car for each new home. The impact on surrounding roads and streets will therefore be significantly worse motor traffic congestion and pollution.

- *Do you think that the scheme will contribute to economic growth, including providing new homes, jobs and employment floor space?*

No, it will not. The scheme merely facilitates an increase in motor traffic caused by the very large numbers of new houses in the area. The scheme itself does not contribute to the building of any houses or employment floor space, these are being built whether or not this scheme is progressed.

- *Is the scheme good value for money?*

No, the scheme is poor value for money. The value is nearly zero in terms of the money having been allocated to sustainable transport and transport resilience schemes, as it has almost no sustainable transport content and will inevitably lead to increased congestion on surrounding roads and streets. The Cycle Forum questions why the scheme is not being funded by the developers of the new housing, as would normally be expected, via funding such as Section 106 planning agreements.

Beautiful Outdoors Capital Investment Programme

While the Forum are in general dismayed that the Beautiful Outdoors scheme involves a large proportion of “soft measures” such as advertising and leaflets, it is good to see that some money is being invested to repair and improve the surfaces of existing cycleways.

- *Would the proposed scheme effectively tackle existing or future transport problems?*

Yes, to a certain extent. The scheme only improves a handful of existing sustainable transport routes, rather than providing a consistent and complete network of cycleways in the County, but it's a good start.

- *Do you think that the scheme will contribute to economic growth, including providing new homes, jobs and employment floor space?*

Yes, it will. The tourism potential of the South Downs National Park, the South Downs Way, and the attractive country lanes of West Sussex is currently underused. Increased tourism will lead to economic growth, jobs and employment floor space, so long as investment in new safe cycleways from the major population centres and public transport hubs to the countryside are built.

- *Is the scheme good value for money?*

Yes, partly. The capital investment in improved surfaces for cycleways is very welcome, and will lead to much-increased use of these assets. The value for money will be significantly greater when new cycleways are built to link the existing ones and to provide safe routes for all the major desire lines in the County. The revenue investment in marketing and business support are very poor value for money: without safe cycleways few people will respond to marketing campaigns, and those that do are likely to find the experience of cycling in the county to be sometimes very unpleasant and dangerous.

Summary

The West Sussex Cycle Forum endorses the investment of sustainable transport and transport resilience funds in the “National Cycle Network Route 2 Section 5” scheme. We also endorse the capital investment part of the “Beautiful Outdoors Capital Investment Programme”, but feel that a more ambitious capital investment programme, and less emphasis on marketing, would bring much larger and longer-lasting economic benefits.

We do not support the investment of sustainable transport and transport resilience funds in the “West of Horsham Transport Package”, which is mostly concerned with facilitating a large growth in unsustainable motor traffic.

We are very strongly opposed to the spending of sustainable transport and transport resilience funds on the “Worthing Sustainable Transport Package” scheme which is nothing to do with sustainable transport or transport resilience at all.