

Office of Rail Regulation's Periodic Review (PR) 2013: Draft Determination of Network Rail's Outputs and Funding for 2014-19 (June 2013)

August 2013

This is an East Sussex County Council officer response to the ORR's consultation on Network Rail's outputs and funding for Control Period 5 (2014-19). Should you have any queries on the response please do not hesitate to contact Tessa Sweet-Escott: tessa.sweet-escott@eastsussex.gov.uk

1. Key messages

- 1.1 This consultation set the outputs, incentives and financial framework for Network Rail for the five years from 1 April 2014 until 31 March 2019. It identifies the scope for Network Rail to increase efficiency further, and to improve performance.
- 1.2 The review reflects the need for investment both in growing capacity on the network and addressing historical under investment in network assets.
- 1.3 Key outputs include:
 - Improving safety -which will be a priority. Extra funding is being made available to reduce risk at level crossings (£67m of ring fenced funding).
 - Improved journey time reliability – aim of 92.5% by 2019.
- 1.4 The PR objective is '*to protect the interests of customers and tax payers*'. Some of the anticipated outcomes of achieving this objective are for a railway in CP5 that:
 - Is safer and provides consistently good levels of service reliability,
 - Has a more efficient use of capacity (including crowding),
 - Provides value for money,
 - Supports the development of a more dynamic economy, and
 - Reduces carbon emissions.

2. Proposed improvements for Sussex

- 2.1 Maintenance - route specific issues for Sussex (page 197, para 8.132):
 - Depot rationalisation,
 - Track efficiencies, and
 - Signalling efficiencies.

2.2 Renewals – route specific issues for Sussex (page 219, para 8.208) include:

- Thameslink enhancement,
- Condition of track, signalling and electrification assets has worsened so performance is below PPM targets and reliability is insufficient to meet the existing timetable.

The recognition of the poor track, signalling and lack of electrification assets in East Sussex is welcomed. Although there have been efforts to improve the track and signalling on parts of the Sussex route network, there has very limited activity in promoting and bringing forward the electrification of sections of the network serving East Sussex which currently operate diesel units (Uckfield to Hurst Green and Hastings to Ashford).

A lack of available diesel units means insufficient carriages operating on the line, resulting in frequent overcrowding on these unelectrified routes. This impacts significantly on the passenger experience, and affects journey times and frequency of service which could easily be remedied by infill electrification. Even by electrifying just one of these sections of line will have significant benefits to both – the diesel units arising from the newly electrified route could be deployed on the other route until funding becomes available to also electrify that route.

Although East Sussex County Council are strong advocates of electrifying both of the non-electrified lines in the county, if the opportunity arose for the early implementation and electrification of the Uckfield to Hurst Green line, with the rolling stock cascaded onto the Hastings to Ashford line, then this would be strongly supported. However, it would by no means diminish the need and political will for the electrification of the Hastings to Ashford section of railway line along the East Coastway.

We therefore support Railfuture's proposal for the electrification of Uckfield to Hurst Green with the proviso that the rolling stock released be cascaded on to the Hastings to Ashford line, which suffers from severe overcrowding – especially on the 2-car service which operates on this route. Attached to this response is Railfuture's recommendation.

- The route proposes to: increase refurbishment of track assets; accelerate some signalling work from CP6 to CP5; replace metal structures in need of replacement.

We welcome the acceleration of some of the signalling work from CP6 to CP5.

3. Enhancements expenditure

- 3.1 It is regrettable that infill electrification schemes for the Uckfield to Hurst Green line and the Hastings to Ashford have not been considered. See commentary under section 2.2 for further details.
- 3.2 Page 335, para 9.95 – Platform extensions at 8 stations on the Uckfield line to allow 10-car operation are supported.
- 3.3 Page 343, para 9.130 – Interoperability: we would support endeavours to make it easier for trains to travel across different networks.
- 3.4 Page 346, para 9.141 – During and beyond CP5 there will be significant opportunities to raise line speeds and increase capacity (including electrification). We would wish to see electrification of the line between Uckfield and Hurst Green, as well as Hastings to Ashford as priorities.
- 3.5 Page 365, para 11.47 – We support investment in reducing risks at level crossings, and we would be happy to work with Network Rail in identifying and enabling closure of level crossings in East Sussex where joint working opportunities exist. For example, East Guldeford, Rye, has already been identified by Network Rail as a possibility for two level crossing closures. From previous discussions with Network Rail other potential locations also include the Mountfield crossing on the Hastings to Tonbridge line (which intersecting the A2100) and the level crossing at Winchelsea.

4. Annex E: funding of enhancement projects

- 4.1 It is disappointing that there are few rail projects included in Control Period 5 for East Sussex. However, we will work independently and with stakeholders as appropriate to strengthen cases for investment when opportunities arise, and liaise with the rail industry as necessary to ensure any such work is undertaken in the most effective and efficient manner to meet rail industry standards.

4.2 The tables below identify the rail improvements required on rail routes in and affecting East Sussex rail services - taken from our response to the Long Term Planning Process London & South East Market Study consultation, a copy of which has been appended to this response. It illustrates the need for significant rail investment in East Sussex which has been notably lacking in the past:

East Coastway (Brighton to Ashford) including Seaford branch line	
Infrastructure	Electrification of the line between Ore and Ashford.
Improvements	Dual tracking of the line between Ore and Appledore.
	Reinstatement of the Willingdon Chord, or alternative (e.g. new station in the locality north of Hampden Park) - not affecting the additional service level to Eastbourne.
	New station at Glyne Gap
	New station in the Stone Cross / Polegate locality.
	Extend High Speed 1 service from Ashford International Station to Eastbourne.
	Newhaven <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improvements to interchange between rail and bus, cycle and taxi at Newhaven Town station • improved interchange between train and ferry services at Newhaven • investigation of the best way of providing improved passenger facilities at Newhaven
Service Improvements	Additional train per hour (at least) comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fast hourly service stopping at main stations. • An hourly service calling at all stations.
	Although preference is to retain the direct Brighton - Ashford service, consideration should be given to splitting / joining service at either Hastings or Eastbourne to address capacity issues in the short term.
	Extend the Lewes-Brighton shuttle to Eastbourne.
	Provision of additional carriages to relieve overcrowding.
	Trains should run an hour later on the Marshlink line in both directions.
	Maintain existing services to smaller stations.

East Coastway (Brighton to Ashford) including Seaford branch line	
	Introduction Saturday / Sunday services at rural stations where a need has been identified.

East Coastway to Victoria	
Infrastructure Improvements	Signalling improvements to enable faster line speeds, reducing journey times.
Service Improvements	Run Thameslink trains to Eastbourne as originally planned.
	End the splitting/joining of trains at Haywards Heath - reducing journey times for passengers, whilst retaining existing service levels.
	Reduce journey times on the East Coastway services to London.
	Continue to stop longer distance trains - from London (Victoria) that serve the Sussex coast (including Bexhill) at Gatwick Airport, Croydon and Clapham Junction.
	Maintain direct services to London (Victoria) from stations east of Eastbourne, e.g. Bexhill.

Brighton Main Line	
Infrastructure Improvements	Improvements at East Croydon and Windmill Hill to address capacity constraints.
	Implement any other identified infrastructure improvements from BML study currently being undertaken by Network Rail.
Service Improvements	Service access to Gatwick airport should be improved including services to coastal destinations.
	Reconsider how the train paths are allocated to the greatest benefit to passengers.

Uckfield Line	
Infrastructure Improvements	Dual tracking between Uckfield and Hurst Green.
	Electrification between Uckfield and Hurst Green.
	Increase overall rail capacity in the county by reinstating Lewes-Uckfield railway line <u>or</u> as part of providing a new route (BML2) between Brighton and London via Uckfield

Uckfield Line	
	Reinstate Eridge - Hurst Green railway line to enable services to run to Tunbridge Wells
Service Improvements	Improve early morning commuter services into London to address overcrowding.
	Increase the number of late trains from London to Uckfield.
	Introduce earlier trains on a Sunday morning.
	Provision of additional carriages on the line to address overcrowding issues.
Service Improvements	Additional train services per hour - would be feasible upon dual tracking of the line and addressing capacity constraints north of the line at East Croydon.

Hastings line (via Tonbridge)	
Infrastructure Improvements	Upgrade the power supply south of Tunbridge Wells to enable a regular 12-car service to run to Hastings.
Service Improvements	Continue to retain direct Cannon Street service - DfT has confirmed this will be retained for the foreseeable future.

Wider improvements	
Access to Stations	Work with Network Rail and the TOC's to improve car parking and address local issues on residential roads near stations
	Increase cycle parking at all stations
	Improve bus/rail interchange at key stations in the county - Bexhill, Hastings, Eastbourne, Lewes, Polegate, Rye, Uckfield, Crowborough
	Improve bus links from Hailsham to Polegate rail station to support housing and employment development
Community Rail Partnerships	Continue to work with Sussex CRP and existing line groups to promote rail usage on these lines (Uckfield, Seaford - Brighton, Marshlink)
	Investigate other opportunities for further line groups in the county.