

Lewes-Uckfield Railway Line Reinstatement Study Information Pack



December 2007

Foreword

Councillor Rupert Simmons
Central Rail Corridor Board Chairman

East Sussex County Council has been working hard with its partners to try and establish a case for the reinstatement of the Lewes-Uckfield rail link.

A number of studies have been undertaken in the past to look at the potential for reinstating the line although none of these have proven a conclusive case for reinstatement. Neither indeed have they been decisive in concluding the opposite – that there is no viable case.

The rail industry is more supportive of the work than ever before, so much so that the potential extension to Lewes and beyond of the Uckfield line is included in Network Rail's 'Business Plan 2007' as an 'infrastructure investment under consideration'. Additionally, Network Rail will be project managing and undertaking parts of the study.

We have been able to establish a Central Rail Corridor Board to oversee a comprehensive assessment of the feasibility and business case for reinstating the link. This will inform a once and for all decision sought by all interested parties. There is a keen political and regional interest in the study and this is reflected in the membership of the Board.

This information pack has been produced in order to inform the public, media and other interested organisations of this important partnership work. I am pleased to announce that Network Rail will project manage and undertake the study. This is really positive and will help ensure the validity of the key findings. I hope to share a conclusive recommendation with you in Spring/Summer 2008.



This study is a thoroughly exciting prospect, as not only is there a high level of involvement from the rail industry, but the joint working between key players at regional and local level emphasises the importance of the project and the desire for a definitive outcome.

The Tonbridge to Brighton train leaves Buxted on 24 June 1961



Section of the disused Lewes-Uckfield track 10 December 2007

The Central Rail Corridor Board comprises local MPs and representatives from regional, county and district levels, to provide a planning and policy perspective for reinstatement of the Central Rail Corridor, and much work has taken place to get to the stage we are at today.

Considerable effort has been made by both public and private sectors focusing on the potential for reinstating the Central Rail Corridor, which comprises both the reinstatement of the Lewes-Uckfield railway line and the disused Eridge-Tunbridge Wells railway line.

A step-change in the way the Board works was made on 24 March 2006, when Members decided to move the Board from being an observer to commissioning status and being publicly accountable. It is for this reason that we are providing an information pack that outlines key Councillors and officers involved in the study, and furthermore progress on the study can be accessed electronically.



We made a conscious decision to focus initially on the disused Lewes-Uckfield railway line only. The potential reinstatement of the Eridge-Tunbridge Wells section is largely dependent upon the reinstatement of the Lewes-Uckfield section and will therefore be investigated subsequently, subject to the outcome of this study. A phased approach is preferable because if a business case for reinstating the Lewes-Uckfield line is identified it would strengthen the case for reinstating the Eridge-Tunbridge Wells line. This approach also recognises the need to make best use of available funding. It will allow a more detailed and conclusive study of the Lewes-Uckfield line to establish a once and for all answer to the question of reinstatement.

It is important to acknowledge all those who are jointly contributing towards the study: Southern Railway; South East England Development Agency; South East England Regional Assembly; East Sussex, Wealden and Lewes Councils; and, Uckfield, Lewes and Crowborough Town Councils. This joint partnership working reflects the strength of collaboration on which this study is based.

This project has now captured significant national interest, and the national political parties are considering their policies regarding the reinstatement of railway lines throughout the country. Tom Harris MP, the Secretary of State for Transport, has indicated that he will be interested in viewing the outcome of the study, and the Department for Transport has also expressed an interest in the study.



Central Rail Corridor Board Members

The local authorities and partners formed a Central Rail Corridor Board in 2004, comprising local MPs and representatives from regional, county and district levels, to provide a planning and policy perspective for reinstatement of the Central Rail Corridor.

Members of the Central Rail Corridor Board are:

Councillor Rupert Simmons
Chairman of Central Rail Corridor Board



Councillor Simmons was elected to the County Council in 2001. He was appointed to the Cabinet with the Education portfolio. This has evolved into the portfolio for Learning and School Effectiveness and to that are added the responsibilities for representation in Europe and a supporting role within the Cabinet Economic Regeneration Team led by the Leader of the Council. It is within this context that he has chaired the Board since its inception in 2004.

Charles Hendry MP (Conservative)
Member of Parliament for Wealden
Shadow Minister for Energy, Science & Technology



Mr Hendry considers it of great importance to ensure the voices of his constituents are heard at Board level when decisions are made on their behalf.

He says: "The rail link could bring great local benefits, but I am also aware that some are concerned about the impact it would have. I am determined that this should be the most definitive look at the feasibility, viability and desirability of the link, so after forty years of discussion, a decision can finally be made."



Norman Baker MP (Liberal Democrat)
Member of Parliament for Lewes



Mr Baker has been campaigning for the reopening of the Lewes-Uckfield line for 20 years. He is in no doubt the reopened line would be a big boost to the network locally, providing extra capacity to London, including direct trains from Newhaven and Seaford, give people an alternative to the car for many journeys, and boost business in the area.

He says: “It is one of my political ambitions to help cut the ribbon if the line is reopened.”

Councillor Ann de Vecchi
Leader of Lewes District Council



Councillor De Vecchi is the Leader of Lewes District Council. She also leads the Liberal Democrat group on the Council. Her Council Leader portfolio covers regeneration and economic development.

She says: “The feasibility study will be very helpful to Lewes District Council as we work up plans for the future development of Lewes District.”

Councillor Pam Doodles
Leader of Wealden District Council



Councillor Doodles was elected to Wealden District Council in 1999. She joined the Cabinet in 2003 and was elected Leader of the Council in May 2007. Wealden has recognised the importance of the Central Rail Corridor Board from the start, and anxious to be actively engaged, decided to appoint the Leader as its representative on the Board.

She says: “I am delighted to take on this role.”

Martin Tugwell
Director of Development
South East England Regional Assembly



Martin leads the South East England Regional Assembly's work on delivery, including the development of the region's single delivery plan that will bring together the implementation plans for the South East Plan and Regional Economic Strategy.

He says: "The Lewes-Uckfield route has the potential to improve links between the South Coast and London, therefore the Assembly is looking at the route as part of the wider rail network and how it can support growth."

John Parsonage
Executive Director, South East England Development Agency



John is Executive Director of Smart Growth for the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA). His main responsibility is to work with key partners on the Smart Growth targets of the Regional Economic Strategy.

He also has an executive responsibility for Surrey and Sussex, and is line manager for the Director of Seaspaces with responsibility for the regeneration of Hastings and Chairman of the Regional Skills for Productivity Alliance.



Observers on the Central Rail Corridor Board

The following Councillors and officers sit on the Central Rail Corridor Board in an observational capacity. Although they have no voting rights, they are able to contribute fully to the debate at Board meetings:

Carolyn Dwyer

Assistant Director (Transport and Waste), East Sussex County Council



Carolyn provides strategic leadership for the management and development of transport and waste services. Carolyn is also a board member of the Commission for Integrated Transport, a government advisory body, and chairs a national panel on behalf of the Institution of Highways and Transportation.

She says: “this will be a very interesting study, with Network Rail applying a rigorous approach, informed by partner organisations from local to regional levels. I very much hope the study will give us conclusive recommendations on which to base decisions.”

Mike Fleming

Director of Environmental Services, Wealden District Council



Mike is Director of Environmental Services for Wealden District Council, where he has been a chief officer for over 15 years. He is a chartered surveyor by profession. His responsibilities include managing the production of the Local Development Framework, development control and regeneration, all of which should interact fundamentally with the potential reintroduction of the Uckfield-Lewes rail line.

Lindsay Frost
Director of Planning & Environmental Services, Lewes District Council



Lindsay is Director of Planning and Environmental Services at Lewes District Council, where he is responsible for planning, economic development and a range of environmental matters.

He says: “I hope that the feasibility study will finally nail down whether there is a viable case for reopening the line.”

Councillor Duncan Bennett
Uckfield Town Council



Councillor Bennett, an Uckfield Town Councillor since 2000 and a representative for the town on various outside rail bodies, is keen to represent the community’s views in reinstating the Uckfield-Lewes line. In a recent Town Council survey, 84% of residents expressed a wish for the line to be reinstated and 79% said they would use the line.

Councillor Merlin Milner
Lewes Town Council



Councillor Milner, a past Mayor, is Lewes Town Council’s lead Member for Environment and Tourism and advocates the Council’s conviction that a reinstated rail link will bring benefits to a huge area of Sussex, not least the ancient County Town itself. The Council lobbied government in 2004 when, in regional transport strategy plans, it proposed to defer any investigation of the feasibility of a reinstated link for 15 years.

Linda Butcher
Crowborough Town Council Clerk



The reopening of the Uckfield-Lewes link has been top of the agenda for this area since Linda became Clerk to Uckfield Town Council in 1990 and continues now she is Clerk to Crowborough Town Council.

She says: “The project is especially important for the economic growth of the towns and villages surrounding the railway line and it can provide a vital alternative transport link for the whole south east region.”

Councillor Alex MacGillivray
Chairman of Barcombe Parish Council



Councillor MacGillivray is Chairman of Barcombe Parish Council, representing the local councils in Lewes District with direct interests in a reinstated rail link between Lewes and Uckfield.

He says: “Whilst the global benefits of the rail link are well documented, gains for these rural parishes are at present unknown. For example, will there be local stations? Would these lead to development in rural areas?”

Councillor Colin Webb
Chairman of Isfield Parish Council



Councillor Webb is Chairman of Isfield Parish Council, representing the local councils in the Wealden District. He has been on the Parish Council for some 11 years and Chairman for 10 years. Colin now lives in Chalvington and is retired after 40 years in the financial services industry, latterly with a company in the GE Capital Group.

Tessa McGilvary
Principal Transport Planner, East Sussex County Council
Client Project Manager



Tessa works in the Transport Policy and Monitoring Team and deals with long term strategic policy with regard to rail issues in and affecting the county amongst other transport related issues.

She says: “The project brief requires that a comprehensive and conclusive study is undertaken so that we can find out whether there is truly a business case for reinstating the line.”



Consultants undertaking the Study

Network Rail has been appointed to project manage and undertake the Lewes-Uckfield railway line reinstatement study and Mott MacDonald will be undertaking the assessment of non-heavy rail alternative options, including complementary measures such as links with other travel modes; work that Network Rail is unable to undertake in-house.

Network Rail

Network Rail owns and operates Britain's rail infrastructure and runs, maintains and develops Britain's tracks, signalling system, rail bridges, tunnels, level crossings, viaducts and key stations. Its Mission is to provide a safe, reliable and efficient railway fit for the 21st century with aims to transport more passengers, move more freight, improve safety and reduce delays.

In Network Rail's Business Plan 2007 under the 'Route Plans 2007' 'infrastructure and investment under consideration' the potential for extension to Lewes and beyond on the Uckfield line is included, making the company an essential partner in bringing forward any subsequent proposal to go through parliamentary procedures.

Chris Curtis

Route Enhancement Manager, Network Rail
Project Sponsor – Network Rail



Chris' role as Route Enhancement Manager is to progress projects that improve the rail network to the benefit of users, funders and stakeholders. The study into reopening the Uckfield-Lewes line is important to Network Rail as we are eager to work in partnership with local authorities to improve the rail network; this project achieves just that.



Mott MacDonald

Mott MacDonald is an employee-owned management, engineering and development consultancy serving the public and private sector around the world. Mott MacDonald celebrated 100 years in transport in 2002, after it began with the world's first underground railway in London at the start of the 1900s.

Mott MacDonald was identified by Network Rail as its preferred external consultant to undertake the work they were unable to in-house as part of the Lewes-Uckfield railway line reinstatement study. The Central Rail Corridor Board Members approved Network Rail's recommendation at a Board meeting on 9 November 2007.

Frank Shorter

Associate – Mott MacDonald



Frank leads Mott MacDonald's rail planning team and is responsible for evaluating the viability of reinstating the Lewes-Uckfield line by forecasting potential passenger demand and assessing the benefits to the wider community of any reinstatement. Mott MacDonald's and Frank's interest in the project and in the East Sussex area is longstanding and the opportunity to continue to develop this project is greatly appreciated.



The Study

Background

The eight mile railway line linking Lewes and Uckfield was closed in 1969 due to a damaged viaduct, caused by flooding. This closure was meant to be temporary, but repair of the viaduct was not instigated at that time and the line fell into disrepair. This, along with the disused Eridge-Tunbridge Wells line, forms what is referred to as the Central Rail Corridor.

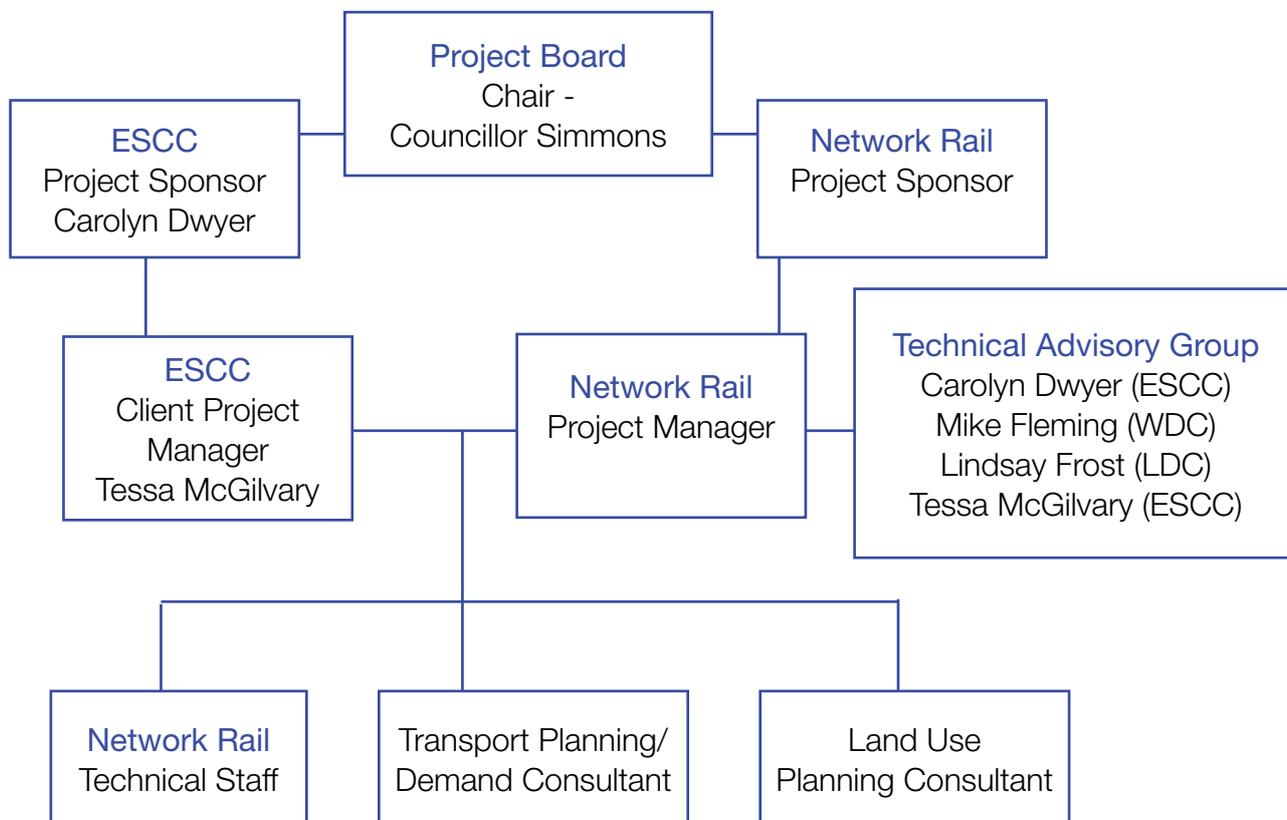
The Board made a decision in 2006 to look into producing a study on the potential reinstatement of the Lewes-Uckfield railway line, which would examine both the benefits that a reopened line could bring alongside the delivery mechanisms and financial/business appraisal essential to attract the level of support in investment a reinstatement would require. This would be the biggest study undertaken so far, with a view to identifying, once and for all, if reinstatement of the line is feasible.

The Lewes-Uckfield railway line route has a potential strategic significance. By linking the current London/East Croydon/Oxted/Uckfield branch line to Lewes and the coastal towns beyond, it could provide a new rail corridor through East Sussex and Surrey, relieve congestion on the Brighton Main line, and assist in accommodating sustainable growth.

Much of the track-bed remains in place since the closure of the line, although some parts of the track have been removed, whilst other parts have been restored and certain industrial and residential units encroach onto the track-bed.



Responsibility hierarchy



Purpose of Study

To produce a detailed and definitive study identifying whether or not there is a business case for reinstating the Lewes-Uckfield line.

Project Objectives

In the context of projected population growth and projected demand for rail and road use in both the directly and indirectly affected areas, to:

- Produce a detailed and definitive study identifying whether or not the reinstatement of the Lewes-Uckfield line is genuinely:
 - ◆ technically feasible
 - ◆ commercially viable
- Assess and advise on requirements for possible minimum, intermediate and full scale schemes, including relative levels of service provision costs
- Examine and report on potential future passenger and freight demand the reinstated line would satisfy, including induced demand that would result from construction of the reinstated line
- Recommend a preferred scheme for reinstatement
- Identify investment options and likely operating costs for all options, including any likely funding gaps
- Identify a strategy with an action plan to secure the necessary funding
- Quantify user/non-user benefits of reinstatement
- Quantify and appraise the environmental and economic benefits of the line
- Measure and assess the sensitivity of the study conclusions to changes in the main factors influencing feasibility, and assess the risks involved in these factors
- Consider and assess equivalent investment on alternative transport scheme(s) within the context of value for money and impact on modal shift
- Respond to questions that have been raised in previous reports and place in the context of the present appraisal of the project
- Consultant to report and make presentations to Board members and others as appropriate



Planning Policy

Major changes to the planning system were introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Within the context of the South East Plan the reinstatement of the Lewes-Uckfield railway line would be supported by the policies and principles contained within this document, and the Sussex Coast Sub Regional Investment Framework specifically includes the Central Rail Corridor. Under the new system, local plans are being replaced by Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). There are currently changeover arrangements in place where Structure Plans, Local Plans and specific policies in them can be 'saved'. This means they continue to be part of the development plan for the saved period or until they are replaced by a new type of plan. The policies seeking to protect the disused line from the Structure Plan and Wealden and Lewes District Councils' Local Plans have all been saved:

East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan 1991-2011

TR14: *Development will not be permitted which would significantly prejudice the possible future reinstatement of:-*

- (a) *the former Lewes to Uckfield railway north of the junction of Hamsey Loop at Hamsey. Possible routes to connect Lewes to Haywards Heath would need to be investigated;*

and investigations will continue into the possible reinstatement of railways, including as part of the strategic transport network.

Wealden District Local Plan Adopted December 1998

TR17: *Development which would significantly prejudice the reinstatement of the former Uckfield to Lewes railway line shown on the proposals map will not be permitted*

Non-Statutory Wealden Local Plan Interim Guide for Development Control (December 2005)

TR6: *Development which would prejudice the reinstatement of the following railway lines, as shown on the Proposals Map, will not be permitted:*

- (1) *The former Uckfield to Lewes line*

Lewes District Local Plan Adopted March 2003

T4: *Planning permission will not be granted for any permanent development which would prejudice the long-term use of any land within the former operational limits of the Lewes-Uckfield railway line (north of the junction of the Hamsey loop) as a public transport corridor. Possible routes to connect with the Lewes to Haywards Heath Line would need to be investigated. In the meantime planning permission will be granted for recreational purposes such as cycling, horse riding and walking.*

Expected Project Deliverables and Outputs

The following bullet points broadly identify the expected project deliverables and outputs of the study:

- Describe the Regional and Sub Regional Context
- Demonstrate the feasibility of reinstating the Lewes-Uckfield railway line
- Assessment of the options for the Lewes-Uckfield railway line reinstatement
- Consider and assess equivalent investment on alternative transport scheme(s) within the context of value for money and impact on modal shift
- Identify potential funding sources for the reinstated route and any ancillary works with an appraisal on the likelihood of success
- Identify key project risks

Projected timescales for the Project

From inception to completion, the study is anticipated to take 18 weeks:

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|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Detailed study work to options stage | 8 weeks |
| Production of draft report | 4 weeks |
| Production of final report | 4 weeks |
| Contingency | 2 weeks |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>18 weeks</i> |

