



CYCLE EAST SUSSEX



Bexhill Wheelers



25/6/2022

East Sussex must build better walking and cycling schemes_

This report is written for councillors and officers who wish to support active travel across the county

East Sussex County Council (ESCC) are at a crossroads in terms of supporting walking and cycling. Their main source of funding is through the Department for Transport (DfT) and Active Travel England. (ATE). Unfortunately many of ESCC's recent bids have been rejected. This hinders future bids as councils will increasingly be funded on design quality and past performance. To ensure this funding gap does not happen ESCC are currently getting advice from the DfT

The choice is stark - **Build fewer poor quality schemes from their own budgets or build what is required but to the agreed standards**

This is the current situation

1. **Not able to spend the budget** - ESCC bid and received £2.5M for temporary 'pop-up' walking and cycle lanes during Covid. However ESCC abandoned nearly all these plans as being too contentious. A recent Freedom of Information request showed 50% of these ESCC monies were still unspent.
2. **New bids are failing** "ESCC submitted a bid for £1.8m of capital funding to the above DfT fund to support the delivery of cycling ... and pedestrian access [have] recently been informed that this has been unsuccessful and the specific reasons outlined in correspondence from the DfT include:-..Do not comply with Cycle Infrastructure design guidance (LTN 1/20)."
3. **Why has this been happening ?**- Only councils who have a history of delivery will be funded in the future "Active Travel England is going to make sure high-quality spaces for cycling, wheeling & walking are delivered"
4. **Why is this problematic locally ?** - There is a bias towards 'business as usual' and this is shown in the attitude to many schemes " *Should we[ESCC] get significant objections at the local consultation ... then we may decide not to proceed*". Even when schemes do proceed they are often a compromise and hence fail to meet national standards

This is at odds with Transport for South East (TfSE) claim that "All three Local Transport Authorities [on South Coast including East Sussex] have ambitious plans to improve cycling and walking in their areas". Looking at the graphic below it is clear East Sussex is performing poorly.

Cycle provision in East Sussex has the second lowest cycling numbers in the South East. Trends over the last 10 years have shown no improvement.



Likewise the TfSE 'Future-mobility-strategy'- has a section on • Active travel – *supporting first mile/last mile journeys, encouraging behaviour change, developing a range of shared micromobility models and developing networks of mobility hubs will help to ensure that active travel is supported in providing an even greater proportion of journeys across the South East.* This would depend on much more safer infrastructure.

Some councillors are fully behind change. Councillor Murray, Chairman of Eastbourne BC Planning Committee, stated "I have, for many years known that we should be doing more to encourage cycling .. we are always being told that we cannot get a connected route across the town... I am even more convinced that we should stop prevaricating, stop making up excuses as to why we can't do it and look for the solutions on how we make this work. During Lockdown we all saw the benefits of fresh air and exercise, cycling gives us all that and it is free. "

Conclusion

Like minded councillors and officers now need to make themselves heard. There has to be commitment to decarbonise and shift away from 70% of trips being by car and to do this buses, walking and cycling will have to better supported.

Background - Cycle East Sussex is an umbrella group for the county's cycle groups. Bespoke, 1066 Cycle Club, Hastings Urban Bikes, Hastings & St Leonards CC, Cycle Lewes, Cycle Seahaven, Bexhill Wheelers Sussex Greenways and Cycling UK's Cycle Advocacy Network

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