

## EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL (ESCC)

### HASTINGS & ROTHER ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY LOCAL ASSESSMENT

JUNE 2007

In 2006, ESCC carried out a study in Hastings and Rother (excluding Rye) into accessibility issues. The study looked at access to the Conquest Hospital and other hospitals, access to education at Bexhill College, Hastings College, West Kent College, access to employment in Hastings centre, Castleham and Ponswood Industrial Estates, access to supermarkets for food shopping.

The following summarises the key findings of ESCC (copied from ESCC accessibility document):

- Generally speaking, hospitals (particularly Conquest Hospital) are the most difficult facilities to access for the majority of people. The peripheral location of Conquest Hospital means access is made more difficult with many bus services considered to be indirect. In rural northern Rother distance also becomes a significant factor, with the only alternative hospital being in Tunbridge Wells.
- The relocation of Hastings College presents an opportunity to ensure that accessibility issues are taken into consideration and improve accessibility to this facility.
- While the Accession analysis shows relatively good supermarket accessibility, the survey revealed that many people find them difficult to access without a car. This may suggest that awareness of services serving supermarkets is poor, or that with shopping the trip by public transport becomes difficult.
- Interchange is a particular issue, both for its effect on the perceived inconvenience of bus travel (from the survey) and its effect on journey times, as seen in the Accession runs. Interchange is a key barrier to use of public transport in the Hastings and Rother area. Improving interchange and the perception of the ease of use of public transport could lead to a significant number of people making trips they would otherwise feel not possible to make.
- The Accession work also revealed that rail can open up more areas to give access to some facilities within more reasonable journey times. Integrated ticketing and interchange between modes can make these journeys easier and more attractive.
- The Accession runs indicate that although a lot of the population of the study area has some level of access to most of the facilities, for much of the population, (rural Rother in particular), journey times can be long and services infrequent, thus making the perception of travelling by public transport to be difficult. Lack of direct services is a barrier to public transport use for many people.
- There appears to be a poor perception of public transport in Hastings and Rother; a car is seen as a “necessity” for the majority of people. Initiatives are required to alter this perception and reduce barriers to public transport

ESCC has summarised the following draft action plan detailing the next steps which need to happen to take the plan forward (copied from ESCC accessibility document):

- Improve public transport information on College websites. CC to research travel options in more detail; meet with college administrator's web designers to discuss options for expanded information provision.
- Improve transport information provision at Public Information Points across the study area. CC to review PIPs and agree suitable level of information provision to upgrade to.
- Distribute bespoke bus information around individual stops. CC to research stops to target and type of literature.
- Regular "Local Travel" feature in local publication. CC to investigate cost advertising rates, identify staffing needed to write feature.
- Ensure Jobcentre staff have access to journey planning information. CC to liaise with Jobcentre.
- Encourage ride sharing amongst student population, especially through use of internet . CC to liaise with colleges and CC staff who developed travelchoice.org website to see how it could be extended.
- Ensure that Bexhill College produces annual review reports of its travel plan. CC to liaise with Bexhill College.
- Personalised journey planning for College students. CC to meet with college administrators to discuss feasibility of journey planning development.
- Promote online shopping and encourage full delivery coverage from supermarkets. CC to meet with supermarket representatives and look into promotional methods.
- Create an "order point" for shopping. CC to investigate potential, and possibly recruit volunteer.
- Use accessibility analysis work to inform transport provision for the new locations of Hastings College. CC to meet with Hastings College administrators to discuss. Enhance rail services to Ore station in light of the new college campus. CC to meet with representatives from Southern to discuss.
- Partner with supermarkets to provide shuttle bus service for customers. CC to meet with supermarket managers to determine existing provision and explore possibilities for providing such a service.
- Extend the Wealden pilot "wheels to learning" and "wheels to work" initiatives into Hastings and Rother. CC to investigate further and liaise with Wealden District Council. Promote the new Hastings and Bexhill PlusBus scheme. CC to meet with operators to discuss.
- Improve interchange facilities at key hubs. Identify key hubs and level of improvement.

COMMENTS ON THIS DRAFT REPORT ARE REQUESTED BY 11/07/07. The full document can be seen at <http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/355E3A86-BA56-49C3-8AFC-F7DFD003505E/0/HastingsRotherASLA2ndDraft.pdf>.