

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** 4<sup>th</sup> February 2019

**Report Title:** 'DESTI-SMART' :- Using European funding to improve public transport and reduce congestion in Hastings

**Report By:** Kevin Boorman, Marketing & Major Projects Manager

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### **Purpose of Report**

To update cabinet on progress on the 'DESTI-SMART' project and seek authority to proceed with it.

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### **Recommendation(s)**

**That Cabinet :-**

- i) agrees to support the DESTI-SMART project, including the in-kind officer support and enter into the appropriate legal agreements to do so**
  - ii) agree the €180 000 (£159 463) cost of the project be included in the Council's budgets over a five year period (starting 2018/19). (NB The project attracts an 85% EU grant; Hastings Borough Council's contribution is made up of 'in-kind' officer time, so no additional funding is required)**
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### **Reasons for Recommendations**

To demonstrate continued council support for the DESTI-SMART project, and its ambition to improve sustainable public transport along the seafront and reduce seafront congestion

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## Introduction

1. 'DESTI-SMART' stands for Delivering Efficient Sustainable Tourism with low-carbon transport Innovations: Sustainable Mobility, Accessibility and Responsible Travel. It is an Interreg Europe project led by Thessaloniki in Greece, with other partners in Italy, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Latvia, Hungary, Cyprus and the UK; as well as Hastings Borough Council, Bournemouth University is involved.
- 2 The stated objective of the programme is 'to improve the transport and tourism policies of EU destination regions, by integrating strategies for sustainable mobility, accessibility and responsible travel with sustainable tourism development, in support of the transition to a low-carbon economy through sustainable mobility, multimodality, novel low-carbon transport systems, accessibility, cycling and walking in tourism destinations, with implementation innovations, policy learning and capacity building.'
- 3 The project summary is included as appendix A. It should be noted that the main outputs for the programme are policy learning and capacity building for public authorities and their stakeholders, the communication and dissemination of learning materials, and the establishment of a network of public authorities promoting low carbon transport. It is therefore more about sharing learning and good practice than physical building projects per se.
- 4 So far as Hastings is concerned, we intend to use our participation in the programme to explore further possible options for low carbon and sustainable transport along the seafront, so as to more effectively link The Stade in the Old Town and West St Leonards. Currently this journey is impossible by 'bus without changing vehicles en route, which is a real barrier to visitors wanting to explore the whole seafront. This project will enable us to consider pilot schemes, which if successful could be used elsewhere.

## Progress to date

- 5 Two officers attended the launch event in Thessaloniki, where the marketing and major projects manager gave a presentation at the project's inauguration conference; our ideas were well received and supported, and featured on local television. It should be noted that all costs associated with attending events (transport, accommodation, subsistence) are fully met by the EU.
- 6 A stakeholder group has been set up locally, with representatives from SELEP (South East Local Enterprise Partnership) East Sussex County Council, the Foreshore Trust, Love Hastings Ltd, the Coastal Users' Group, Hastings Fishermen's Protection Society, the West of Haven Beach Users' Association, the Hastings and Rother Disability Forum, Hastings Urban Bikes and Stagecoach being invited. The first meeting took place on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2018, and these are being scheduled to take place quarterly.

- 7 The next full partners' meeting is scheduled to take place here in Hastings, on the 27<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> March, which representatives from all nine participating countries are expected to attend. All costs associated with this are met by the European Union's project funding.

## Future actions

- 8 As noted above, a key outcome of the project for Hastings is a greater understanding of the issues involved in improving sustainable public transport along the seafront.
- 9 We have been talking about a new seafront transport system for Hastings for some time, which would provide a regular service between the Old Town and West St Leonards. As noted earlier, it is currently impossible to travel from one end of the seafront to the other by 'bus, a change is required in the town centre, which is a barrier to use for both residents and visitors. Standard size 'buses cannot turn in the Old Town, so we are investigating as one possibility what is known as a 'mini-tram', itself slightly confusing as it is neither that small nor a tram. It is actually a double-ended 'bus, probably electric (but possibly powered by hydrogen or another sustainable fuel) :- more detail can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Hg-6PV0kfw> .
- 10 We believe a 'mini-tram' or similar concept will help open up the whole seafront, reduce congestion in the Old Town, and provide a quick, sustainable and fully accessible way of travelling between the Old Town, the town centre, the pier, Warrior Square and West St Leonards. However, more work is required, and we are looking to draw on the experience of the steering group, and our European partners, to help develop a brief for a proper feasibility study.
- 11 This would include an analysis of the market (alternative technologies such as battery development, hydrogen power, etc., are advancing rapidly); a technical feasibility study, which will consider the physical infrastructure requirements and current constraints on the seafront; and the development of a business case. We would also look at the impact on the scheme of extending the mini-tram's operation to include Hastings, St Leonards Warrior Square, and, possibly, West St Leonards stations.
- 12 If the feasibility study demonstrated that a project was worth developing, then the results would be used to pursue capital funding for the scheme.
- 13 All of the information would be shared with European partners, some of whom have indicated that they have similar issues. This may allow possible synergies, and economies of scale, if the project is developed further.

## Financial implications

- 14 The funding for the Interreg programme across all 10 partners amounts to €1.84m of which 85% is funded by European Union. The lead partner is the Metropolitan Development Agency of Thessaloniki (Greece).
- 15 The cost of all of the 'Hastings elements' of the programme will amount to €180,000 (£159,463 at an exchange rate of £0.88591 on 22.1.2019). This includes funding for 'external expertise and services' (€74,210) - which would include the feasibility

study for potential solutions to improving sustainable public transport along the seafront. It also includes all staff costs (€74 600), office and administration expenses (€11 190), and staff travel and accommodation costs (€20 000).

- 16 The Interreg programme contributes €153 000 (85%), with the council contributing €27 000 (15%) over the programme life (54 months). Hastings Borough Council's contribution is made up of 'in-kind' officer time, so overall no additional cash funding from HBC will be required. Grant claims for the €180,000 of expenditure incurred are made retrospectively by the Council.
- 17 The project formally started on the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2018 and ends on the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022 and so spans five financial years. The timing of the expenditure is as yet unclear, albeit expenditure will start in 2018/19.
- 18 It should be noted that the grant is awarded in Euros, and hence there is exchange rate risk to manage when incurring expenditure in sterling in order to stay within the respective grant amounts.

### Timetable

- 19 The inauguration conference and first project meeting have already taken place, as noted above, and the next partner meeting is due to be held in Hastings on 27<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> March, also as noted above.
- 20 The project is broken down into two elements; phase 1 (30 months) is exchange of experience, phase 2 (24 months) is project management. A communications and dissemination element runs throughout the programme. Because we appear to be far further advanced with our project than other partners, who are still at the data gathering and project identification stage, it has been agreed that we can develop our feasibility study immediately. Subject to cabinet approval, we will therefore develop our feasibility study brief through the Spring, and award the contract before the start of the peak summer season. This will allow us to gather seafront footfall and other data, and undertake market research on the possible usage of the new system (and its variations e.g. the serving of the railway stations) during the Summer.

### Recommendations

#### That Cabinet :-

- i) **agrees to support the DESTI-SMART project, including the in-kind officer support and enter into the appropriate legal agreements to do so**
- ii) **agree the €180 000 (£159 463) cost of the project be included in the Council's budgets over a five year period (starting 2018/19).** (NB The project attracts an 85% EU grant; Hastings Borough Council's contribution is made up of 'in-kind' officer time, so no additional funding is required)

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**Wards Affected**

All

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**Implications**

|                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Equalities and Community Cohesiveness | X |
| Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)  |   |
| Risk Management                       | X |
| Environmental Issues                  | X |
| Economic/Financial Implications       | X |
| Human Rights Act                      |   |
| Organisational Consequences           | X |
| Local People's Views                  | X |
| Anti-Poverty                          |   |

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**Additional Information**

Appendix 1 Project abstract

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## Appendix 1

### Project Abstract

Integration of regional/local policies for Sustainable Mobility, Accessibility & low-carbon Responsible Travel, with policies for efficient sustainable tourism towards a low-carbon economy, requires particular attention in the EU. This is a common challenge that public regional/local and transport authorities increasingly face, particularly at busy destinations with high tourism travel flows (inc. in South Europe, coastal, maritime and insular, mass tourism destinations). Immediate action is needed through interregional cooperation to capitalise best practices, improve policy instruments & prepare action plans with implementation monitoring and evaluation.

The DESTI-SMART project, addresses the above towards 'Smart Destinations', for sustainable and responsible tourism development in Europe, with low-carbon, multimodal sustainable mobility and accessibility. The overall objective is to improve the transport and tourism policies of EU destinations, by integrating strategies for sustainable mobility, accessibility and responsible travel with efficient and sustainable tourism development, for transition to a low-carbon economy, through efficiency, resilience, multimodality, novel low-carbon transport systems, cycling and walking, with implementation innovations, policy learning and capacity building.

The following pressing issues are addressed:

- Investments in low-carbon transport systems for modal shift to sustainable tourism mobility, including Electro-Mobility
- Intermodality facilities for visitors, including ICT, Mobile Apps
- Accessible tourism for all
- Cycling & Walking facilities & promotion for visitors

Main outputs:

- policy learning and capacity building for public authorities & their stakeholders
- improved policy instruments and action plans in nine destinations, with close involvement of stakeholders
- advances in EU2020 objectives
- communication & dissemination learning materials.