

Sustainable Transport & Active Travel Summit-

Transcript from final panel

November 17, 2023, 3:34PM

Panel discussion: How do we connect people and places with an integrated , low carbon transport system?

Jim Murray:

Just rearranging the deck chairs up here. So we are now moving onto a panel discussion, "how do we connect people and places with an integrated low carbon transport system?"

The chair is going to be Lord Lucas.

We have Joel Mitchell from Stagecoach, Leigh Palmer, who's head of planning give us a wave Leigh

Yeah.

Roddy Crockett from Sustrans, Andy Murdoch from Buro.

Christina, Ewbank from the Eastbourne Chamber of Commerce and Gonzalez Alvarez from the United Nations Association.

And I'll hand over to you - and leave you to it.

Ralph Lucas

Thank you very much, Jim.

What I'm going to do is give the panel 3 minutes each, speaking in the order that you are on the script here. Particularly, I hope you will, as well as addressing the question you've got in front of you, reflect on anything you've heard today that has particularly struck you and also focus on us, on what we should be doing next.

What should we be doing in this time?

What should we be planning to do?

What are the opportunities that are actually within our grasp that we can do and we have a hope of East Sussex, to help us do so?

Perhaps let's start with Joel Mitchell.

Joel Mitchell:

Right.

Thank you very much.

I thought long and hard about how best to take this on because there are millions of things in the bus industry that is frankly a very complex problem now.

But I've sort of broken it down to four key areas.

So, the first thing I think will help answer that question is a shift in investment priorities, particularly around the world of economics of the bus industry. Now, because post COVID it was, it was on a very much declining trend pre COVID and COVID has accelerated a need to reinvent how we do the economics of bus, fundamentally.

We're about 20% down on patronage.

Costs are up about 20% because of the economic downturn, cost of wages, cost of tyres, cost of glass, cost of fuel and you can't cut yourself out of that in terms of reducing routes because that's not what we're here to do.

I talked to in the group earlier.

One of the things for example, is three months of subsidy for the two pound fare cap for the entire bus industry right across England and Wales is the same as less than two days of rail subsidy.

Yet somewhere between three and four times the number of people catch the bus every day as they do the trains.

And I'm a big fan of rail after 20 years in rail.

So that's not a criticism of the railway, because it needs the investment, but we need to work out how best to prioritize the investment in that way.

Second thing is if you ask customers what stops them from getting the bus in the Southeast, it's punctuality and reliability and it doesn't matter if you never travel, travel sometimes travel often you can increase the use of all of those customer bases if you are more punctual and more reliable, and so we need to shift policy and we need to change the prioritisation - particularly now things like utility companies can come and just dig up the road.

So for example, in Kent Rd, closures are up 225% in 2021/22 when compared to 2017/18 makes it incredibly hard to run a bath during that, let alone a bus company.

So we have our challenges cut out for all of us in this room, if we want people to be attracted to bus and congestion is a huge issue for us, so I don't want to labour the points somebody earlier, but we need to work together collaboratively as a group of

people to reduce car use and promote bus, rail, walking and cycling as a collective so that we're working collaboratively as a four rather than one individual in that respect. I never thought I'd say I miss Network Rail, but I really Miss Network Rail because they used to ring me up and tell me when they were gonna come and dig up the railway and nobody tells me that they're gonna dig up the road and then we're just stuck there in a massive traffic congestion.

So that's very painful.

So collaboration is the Third Point all of us in it together.

I think I've drawn that out and then the final thing is asking your customers what they need and your community groups, what they need and doing everything you can to work together to deliver that.

And in doing that, making sure that you're not forgetting your vulnerable customer groups.

So from our perspective, vulnerable customers cover all kinds of different people, but some shocking stats I've picked up the other day that has made me rethink some of our strategic planning.

For example, 22% of people are now in low-income families, which means they're almost certainly not getting access to bank accounts to cars and to mobile phones, to the Internet.

And so they will be using our buses.

And so if we decide from a cost effective efficiency perspective to reduce the amount of printed timetable information, we have to try and push people into a cashless world, everybody use an app.

You kind of intuitively think that's where everybody wants to go.

Absolutely isn't.

If you have to understand what your customer base wants and look after them, and yeah, that's it for me.

Thank you.

Thank s for that.

Leigh Palmer:

I'm Head of Planning for Eastbourne and Lewes councils, so I'm gonna give you a bit of perspective around Eastbourne, if I may.

It's been very interesting to sit through the discussions this morning and this afternoon there's a lot of passion in the room and the takeaway for me is that I want

to move that passion from a campaigning position into one where we don't need to fight the fight.

We're pushing on an open door.

This issue shouldn't be an issue.

It should be taken as read.

I don't want to cycle my cycle into Eastbourne town centre and worry about it being stolen.

That's a big barrier for me cycling into Eastbourne town centre

I'm surprised that the police are in the room today talking around ASP and the threat of bike safety.

In terms of the range of transport available to Eastbourne residents, there needs to be a decent choice.

Clearly there needs to be a decent choice.

Is there at the moment?

Probably probably not.

Why do we have to hide Eastbourne cycle ways?

Yes, we haven't got them across the town, but they're stuck behind people's houses.

I would much prefer them to be front and centre so that we can see them, Use them safely.

Car dependency.

As a community, Eastbourne residents are very car dependent.

We travel to the town centre to do our comparison shopping, perversely supported by a motor vehicle.

To me, that seems odd in a town that is essentially flat in topography.

So there's no reason that we need to be so dependent on a car for our Eastbourne internal trips. Car parking, we make it really, really easy to drive to the town centre and park.

That needs to change . Anywhere else in Western Europe, Hyde Gardens would not be a car park.

It would be an asset to the town centre.

The last thing I was just gonna mention around the - I don't think we need bus timetables.

I think we need to get to a position where the next bus is only 10 minutes away.

If we can do that with the support of our colleagues and reducing the capacity of the highway. congestion on the highway ensures the arrival of that bus vehicle from an

Eastbourne perspective Eastbourne centre perspective, I don't think timetables are a requirement simply because I think we can get to a position when you're only 10 minutes away from the bus.

Thank you.

Thank you very much.

Roddy Crockett

Thank you.

I'd just like to start with thinking about definitions and one of the things I always start with is the word transport.

When you look up the word transport, it has a tendency to leave out walking, because it literally means carrying or ferrying goods and services from place to place. So, so much of our transport policies tend to forget about the most resilient and fundamental form of transport, or travel mobility, which is walking, and I think quite often when we're looking at different modes, we're forgetting about walking from those journeys.

The National Travel Survey makes an attempt at trying to split down many of those journeys into stages, but it underrepresents how much we do in terms of a journey, even if it's a journey to London on the train.

How much of that is walking?

And I think that we've forgotten the value of the spaces between the buildings in our towns and cities and villages.

And one of the problems we've got is a distinction between transport planning and spatial planning.

The County Council looks after the curtilage to curtilage the roads, the highway, the carriageway, but the rest of the estate is looked after by the borough councils and I think that's a fundamental problem that we need to address in terms of our responses to the local transport plan.

So my plea is around integration, integration where we're not just talking about modes, we're talking about journeys that individuals and households make.

I'd like it to be the case that if anyone moves to Eastbourne they think great if I am moving to Eastbourne, I won't need to own a car because not just my journey will be enabled through different modes, but my children, or people who come to visit me, they won't need to have a car either.

I just think that we can create that utopia if we really value it and have the vision to try and achieve that.

I'd also like to talk about carbon, because I just don't think we're doing a good enough job on really being quantifiable in terms of our assessment.

It really, really frustrates me that the government has not produced the quantifiable carbon reduction methodology that is required for us to do a proper local transport plan.

We're a bit stuck, because at the moment we got a bit of a bun fight between local authorities about whose scope 3 emissions belong to who. Even Transport for the North, which are a statutory transport body, they're still palming off some of their scope threes to Network Rail to National highways to other organisations and really by now we should be better at measuring and deciding who's responsible for different aspects of carbon.

Finally, I'd like to think about how we apply pressure at different levels.

We need to work at the government level.

We need to work at the regional level with transport for the SE and the regional active travel and strategy and action plan.

We need to work at the Parish Council level.

We need to work at district and Borough and County Council and we also need to work with our neighbourhoods and communities, and that is really complex, really complex, but there are certain themes that I think collectively in this room and after today that we need to come together on and say this is the kind of vision that we want to see for our children and for our towns and cities.

I really believe that we should be thinking not in terms of modes, but in terms of people, and I really welcome the idea of using personas and the Department for Transport in July produced some personas which are slowly getting out to officers and other organisations to use.

Well I think we should be talking about real people and making real journeys and then we'll provide real choice for people. Thank you.

Ralph Lucas: Thank you Roddy.

Andy Murdoch:

Thank you.

Firstly, it's great to see the number of people, the enthusiasm and the depth of knowledge and experience and thinking that that we've seen today.

There have been some tremendous presentations and I think the ones that stood up to me are with the healthcare ones, the importance of health and active lifestyles, the school run and that experience that people have to go through in the town and the 20 mile per hour session we had.

Speed isn't important in urban areas.

I think what's much more important is that is really the having a pleasurable, safe experience that that gives people a choice in how they move and that they're not relying on a vehicle to transport them.

They should be able to move around freely, happily, safely and I think that type of environment contributes to the health as well as the happiness of people being able to move through it. So there are really quick wins to be added in that space.

Changing the town centre speed limit to 20 mph.

You know, it's probably the easiest thing that can be done to change the quality of life in in the Eastbourne and move towards a more sustainable future that gives people those choices.

I think there are opportunities for big projects in the transport space that are necessary in the long term, but one has to harness this energy and enthusiasm in the room now to get that change underway without relying on massive budgets to do so.

And it's a way of engaging all the people in the community in behaviour change, moving them in the right direction.

And you know, you've got enough people yet to engage that energy in the community.

And I think budgets do need to reflect the, the importance of getting something underway now and getting changed.

Now I think in this and they just it's not good to hear talks like the one we heard about the school run, things like that shouldn't be acceptable.

Thank you.

Christina Ewbank:

Thank you.

And yeah, I'm sorry that I didn't get the chance to ask Rupert Clubb some questions, so I'm going to ask them now and hopefully someone will take these to him and

perhaps what I should say is I represent the alliance of Chambers across East Sussex as well as Eastbourne Chamber and Chief Exec and EDL enterprise agency.

And I'm also a councillor for the local council, the Borough Council.

So my 2 main questions to Rupert would be first of all, why is Eastbourne in the lowest 5% of safe local authorities for cycling in the country?

That's the lowest 5% and I wanted to ask him why he thought that was.

I've got some strong ideas as to why I think it is, but I really wanted to know what he thought.

The other thing I wanted to ask him was why, when all the alliance of Chambers across East Sussex have each come out and said that they would support 20 miles an hour in their own urban area, whether it's Uckfield or Hastings or Bexhill or Eastbourne, and why is it not on the East Sussex agenda and we need to get it on the agenda.

Thank you.

And then the other thing I thought about is that a lot of our policymakers put into policy what they know and understand. Most of the MPs drive or take the train.

Most of the officers in the County Council drive. The county hall is nowhere near the station.

It's quite high up the hill to get there and they have a huge car park, so they're thinking 'my experience is I go everywhere by car or by train' and they're not thinking about buses.

And whereas the vast majority of the country needs buses, and so it was very encouraging when Boris Johnson introduced a bus strategy and set aside significant funding.

I think East Sussex got the most funding.

Correct me if I'm wrong and for the bus service, which is great.

So, we need to use it to do everything that we've all talked about today.

And I think that's probably enough for me at this stage.

Gonzalo Alvarez:

At the United Nations Association, we tried to address these issues from the global perspective and apply them to the local.

The local needs, should we put it that way?

And I would like to give the example of the city of Adelaide in SA, which has some parallels here, and they've actually achieved this integrated system of public

transport using trains, local transport, bicycles and so on, and they very soon, as they started measuring up and managing carbon emissions since 1995. That's when they started.

In 2008 they decided as a city that they wanted to become carbon neutral by 2030 . And they've been achieving that gradually.

How. During that journey they learned that with three things that were crucial in order to achieve everything that we've been talking about, these fantastic ideas.

Transport first of all needs to be powered.

Obviously, energy, in other words, and they put money into where it needed to be. Renewable energy.

New sources of renewable energy. Finance, in other words, that was second point that they discovered that was absolutely - so where are we going to get the money to materialize all this? And thirdly, how are we going to develop the future sustainable technology to achieve this new transport system for – suitable for the 21st century, which is sustainable, which is lovely to see, to use for the people, and they're going to invite more.

So the result of that, actually the local economy of Adelaide was completely transformed and grew a lot more than before.

And I would like to suggest a couple of things that perhaps could be feasible here in in Eastbourne. For example, I very much like the idea of the 20 miles, that's absolutely fantastic.

I think something could be done fairly soon.

Another crucial thing is that let's remember that we are a parliamentary democracy, so our local MP is crucial to get, you know, to, to get finance for the city to get the right policies passed in Parliament.

And that's where we need to also connect.

And I'm very glad that Caroline is part of this summit, because at that she is very important as a key person in Parliament representing the city, all the citizens, all the residents of the city.

That's very important to achieve this and one last thing, I didn't speak as a submarine biologist and oceanographer in terms of energy. One source of energy perhaps has not been mentioned here and every time you go. next time .to the beach, think about those waves there.

Every single wave carries energy from the wind it's transformed. It's transformed into what is called the orbitals.

That is what it what every, the wave inside carries energy.

Every time that wave hits the shore it's energy that is wasted.

Time after time, after time. That is, renewable energy. It is at our hand, you know, and . There is actually a small village, or town, as I believe in Scotland that is completely powered by a local electricity power station, powered by waves and for that of course you need finance and develop the technology that I mentioned that Adelaide put into practice.

But I suspect that when we hear the next, for example, hurricane or, you know, storms, think about the bigger the wave, the bigger the energy that it carries and perhaps put something on the table, Eastbourne here in the South of England could become a pilot city.

You could establish a pilot scheme to start catching that energy coming from the waves is wasted.

It's at hand, it's there.

Ralph Lucas:

So we've got about 20 minutes left and if any of you would like to ask questions of the panel, that's how I would like to spend that 20 minutes.

Who's going to stand up and ask the first one and shout, please?

So we can hear you.

Yes, yes.

Speaker from floor All right.

Hello.

Oh, yeah, yeah.

Wealden and Eastbourne indistinguishable when it comes to solving transport problems and being the scenario of those problems.

The developments outside of town contribute to the traffic problems in Eastbourne, and whereas we need to, we need to integrate transport and land use planning, every developer out of town has to submit a travel plan to the transport authority and I've seen one very recently that simply would not deliver any of the policies that the county expresses in its documents to reduce dependence on the private car and

Out in rattle Rd., I looked at that one the other day and there are three bus routes quoted as coping with and giving a viable alternatives to the car.

But one of them runs on Saturdays only.

There's only two services, the other one on school days only, and the other one is OK for six days of the week but on Sundays there's nothing at all.

And on any day, there's nothing after 6:00 PM.

So, I don't know who signed off the travel plan at County Hall to get the thing through the planning process, but it's a complete and utter disaster.

It's not a travel plan that does anything much for anybody.

What can we do to up the standard up a bit?

The bit of monitoring of travel plans before they get okayed, and obviously the monitoring in that case was ineffective because the planning application was granted.

So I just wonder what we might do about that to up the quality of the decision making, OK.

Ralph Lucas:

Well, we'll Rupert Clubb to answer that one, but perhaps Leigh you would like to kick off.

Leigh Palmer:

OK.

Thanks.

I I think it is a Rupert answer if I'm honest,. But the simple thing that we can do is to begin to be more transparent and honest with the data that we do hold corporately, professionally, organizationally. We see lots of graphs, lots of information on the screen about data.

That data is powerful, and that data is powerful.

If we do mirror it back to people like Rupert through his consultation, that's coming up, because without that data, without that empirical evidence, our arguments are weaker without it.

So my shout out to you as we've heard from the lectern earlier, is that the consultation on the LTP is coming up, let's mirror back to them that data.

Thank you.

Ralph Lucas:

Joel, did you want to say anything about how bus routes evolved to accommodate new new building?

Joel Mitchell:

Umm, I yeah.

I mean, it's quite complicated and a number of startup routes with new developments will come from developer contributions through section 106.

You then - that funding is finite, and then you hope that the growth and the strategic narrative and the way the development is designed encourages that ongoing, sustainable bus use. From a network perspective, what we commit to doing from Stagecoach is, we will run our network from a network perspective.

So we have - I was just reflecting on what Tom said that about the Big Lemon earlier when he talked about kind of the way the market works and the fact that we need to generate profits. Now I can tell you that my owning group is not interested in me returning a profit to them at the minute.

They just do not want me to run at a loss and they'll take break even.

For example, in Eastbourne, quite happy to share this with you because amongst friends here, but the three the Meads for every pound I invested in the three, the Mead I get 30P back.

So we run about 70 pence loss on every pound, but the 99 is more profitable.

And so therefore we allow the 99 to support the three, albeit that was definitely our strategy pre COVID and then we come out of COVID, everything's- all the margins have disappeared.

And so if it wasn't for and central government funding through Caroline and the government, and it wasn't from the basic funding through Craig and the bus team here, we wouldn't be in operation.

You know I'm not lying or being controversial.

We wouldn't be able to be running a bus company at all.

Last month, we had to close Folkestone depot, which was heartbreaking.

And it had been there for 100 years and I had to put 180 people up at risk of redundancy.

And it was incredibly painful for everybody affected and we've come out the other side of that and we're on our way up.

Each route -It's a long answer to what could have been a short one -

Each route is viewed on a route costings basis and we have to try and make sure that every single route we operate at the very least washes its face.

If it doesn't, if one of its friends or colleagues does on a different route, and then we'll look at that in that perspective and In the answer to that particular route, which is a fair challenge by my colleague and one of the things you can do if you are not covering your costs, is reduce your frequency.

So an hourly becomes too hourly.

You might cut some in the evening because nobody's using it, so fundamentally the way to make bus work is to get people using the bus.

It's no more complicated than that.

People catch the bus.

We can grow it and we can market it and we can increase frequency in the absence of people doing that, it goes the other way and you can only do that once and we can't allow that to happen again because bus matters for the Community.

I hope that answers that to a point

.

Roddy Crockett:

I could I just say a few things about that particular question?

Ralph Lucas:

Oh yes, but we'll say it until after the next question.

Question from the floor:

Much of the resistance to active travel and public transport in Eastbourne has come from the commercial sector.

An example of this was objections made to the bus lanes along Seaside.

Another example of this has been tourism objecting to proposals for cycling along the seafront in Eastbourne and

I also believe that the Chamber of Commerce spoke in favour of the expansion of Gatwick Airport.

All of which are not conducive to having good climate outcomes.

Is there anything we can do about changing the commercial in understanding of active travel and public transport so that they can understand that actually it's in their commercial interests to have more active travel and public transport?

Thank you.

Ralph Lucas:

So Roddy would you like to kick off that?

Roddy Crockett

Yeah.

I just like to reply to the travel planning - yes travel planning is broken in this country.

There's a few people who are working to try and encourage ATE, Active Travel England to look at this seriously.

It's a real hit or miss.

There's many, many consultants who just copy and paste things into different travel plans into their responses.

Monitoring is really important.

The way that we can increase it is to learn the best case - best examples from around the country and to apply those, but it takes political effort to do that.

One of the things which is missing is health impact assessment.

So again, hit and miss around the country.

I understand that East Sussex is developing the protocol for help using health impact assessments, which is great news.

We also need to make sure that all site allocations are linked to LC whips, local cycling and walking infrastructure plans.

I don't understand why we're not putting large scale housing developments which aren't linked to cycling and walking routes in and also we got to make as much use as possible of the new coming infrastructure levy as well to make sure that those used but monitoring is really crucial.

And if I can just follow on with an answer to the next question, I think that the, the, the, the most, the most successful places that in in the world are the ones which get active travel right.

Would you want to send a postcard of these plate of places where you are home?

You know it's it's whether they've got and one of the reasons is that we don't have enough people locally learning about ambition and about examples from elsewhere, not just internationally, but also from around the country.

It's something that Active Travel England are trying to do is to raise the ambition of officers and politicians locally so they know What is possible?

We kind of get stuck in terms of repeating the same things that we've always done - that quote from Einstein.

The only way that we can learn what's possible is by looking at good examples elsewhere and where it's worked.

Gonzalo Alvarez:

Umm, but referring to that last question, there's also, umm, a town like Eastbourne here.

We'll need a change of mindset, a change in the terms of the culture.

Let's think about, for example, an example of Cambridge, where there's a culture, there's a mindset of cycling and it's not ruling out completely the public transport, but everyone seems to instantly go there.

And yes, it's all about cycling and and here the town centre for us.

I can see it's it's an ideal place to encourage that type of changing culture, perhaps through the educational system and nd the local schools and say, look, these are the benefits, this what we would like to achieve in the future.

On the one hand, but the other one is political, because we also have to understand that the fossil fuel industries receive subsidies and that incentivizes, obviously, the use of private cars.

If we've tried, if we start putting pressure on the politicians to move away from subsidizing, which come from the taxes, we all pay, you know, then we could start sort of also creating that culture of cycling more outdoors and ultimately happiness for the town, you know.

Thank you.

Andy Murdoch

I think one of the other points to make is often active travel or cycle schemes get sold as transport solutions and they aren't really just transport solutions and to pick up on a point Roddy made earlier.

It's about connecting people and opportunities rather than shuttling them from place to place.

But I think most of these schemes should rather be developed as under the banner of improving the public realm and making a better place that's going to attract more people for those businesses.

It's not about having a cycle lane replace car parking, it's about making the place better and attracting more people.

Thank you.

Ralph Lucas:

Can we have one last question?

I've got another question over here.

OK.

From the floor:

Mike Regard, Bespoke.

I came here today on my bike.

Now it's not a great deal because I only live half a mile away and it's pretty convenient to come by bike, but my question is this one, which I would address to all of you.

Would you care to reflect on the way you have come here today and ask yourselves if you've used the very best possible way?

All factors taken into account, I'm not expecting you to vocalise your answers, but you might find it amusing to ask yourselves this.

Thank you.

Ralph Lucas:

We will do that, but I think that leaves us time for another question.

Who?

Right in the front here and then Brett, Wright, just speak,

From the floor:

can you hear me?

Sorry, yes you can.

In which way do you think, panel ,that providing electric power points for cars all over town will help get us all out of the situation Eastbourne finds itself in?

Christina Ewbank:

Yeah, I have an electric PowerPoint for my car in the office, which is really handy and it would have been very helpful for Joel coming here today with his electric car if he could have charged up his car.

So given that we have a car culture in Eastbourne and then possibly electric vehicles are our least worst option, but what I would say I'd like to give you a quote that I learned today.

UM from a gentleman called Enrique Penalosa, who said that "an advanced city is not one where even the poor used cars, but rather where even the rich use public transport"

and I think in this room today there's a real will to improve public transport into our town so that people choose to come into the town by public transport rather than get in their cars and use the buses and make them more commercially viable and more attractive.

And then make the town centre more attractive because there's less of a car park and the sea front.

And how many people are aware that in summer there are 30,000 vehicle movements on the sea front, 30,000 and the sea front is our crown jewels and it's basically just a slow moving car park. In winter it's 20,000 vehicle movements a day. I mean, that's just crazy.

And we've got to do something about that, whether it's electric or petrol or diesel is irrelevant and we do have to reduce the number of cars coming into our town centre.

Joel Mitchell:

Well, one of the things that's been quite controversial just recently.

So in Stagecoach there's 18 versions of me.

There are 18 versions of Matthew here in Paul and Ali right across England, Wales and Scotland.

It's a big operator.

Similar big groups Go Ahead, Christian is here for for Brighton and Hove. Arriva, they've just been sold.

First group, you know the big ones.

We are just starting our five-year plan and we've done a lot of work on what we've called the customer proposition and one of the things we looked at was buses for

everyone and we did a lot of research around that becoming our central mandat :
'buses for everyone.'

And what we discovered working with the company called the Foundation, who's a customer consultation.

Customer led organization all about customer centricity in London.

- was that the drive to become more environmentally friendly was not strong enough to shift a big swathe of society into leaving their car behind and get the bus.

And that's been really difficult for me to get my head around, but there are pockets in the country where it is, and this is one of them.

And This is why I want to work with the good people of Eastbourne.

Because, the people in this room are special batch of people because you see the need to -Caroline talks about staff and at the start and I drew it out my presentation - we have to make a bit of a personal sacrifice and the point about electric charging points and the running joke that Christina and I have about my electric car.

I don't wanna drive an electric car.

I don't wanna drive a car.

I wanna be able to get here nice and easily by walking.

By cycling, I'm an avid cyclist.

It's a nightmare taking your bike on a bus.

It's a nightmare taking your bike on the train during peak times.

I should know.

I wrote the cycle policy for Southern Railway, so I'm sorry about that.

So, if you want to hate me for buses, hate me even more for the cycle policy on the railway.

So, we need to make it more attractive offering and we can be the Trail Blazers in this part of the world and in this town because we can show people what happens when people really do take on that sustainable transport mode.

And in answer to your question about how you make three of the Meads more.

Well, it comes back to this investment point we're making. My owning group will invest in a network that is high performing and is profitable because then the cost of capital is removed.

So, if we go to the bank now to borrow £700 million, it's a seven and a half, 8%.

So the cost of capital is huge, so the ROI on the things you're investing your capital in needs to immediately be about 8% just to break even.

That's very difficult 10 years ago it was at 4%, so it was much easier to make your business cases stuck up, and that's not because we're a commercial operator. If this was franchised, if it was a tender, any of that, the problem is still the same. The money has to come from somewhere whether it's a private company, whether it's taxpayer funded, so it comes back to your question, how do we make 3 the Meads more attractive?

People need to use it and then it gets into this debate about chicken and egg, which is why we need communities like this to encourage people to get out of their car and through any way we can do that's reasonable to help people be motivated to see the good of the future.

From the floor:

So I was brought up in Eastbourne.

I don't live here any longer, but I work for East, Sussex County Council.

My name is Elena Togu and Christina you mentioned about Eastbourne having a car culture and I just think that that feels particularly in the room today.

That feels quite defeatist to say that that's where we are and I would rather be thinking about where it is that we could go to.

And I wonder, having been to another conference in Eastbourne a couple of years ago that I think Lord Lucas and his wife managed about transport with young people, I think it would be really good to create from today

Umm, a Centre for transport excellence in Eastbourne and Roddy and I recently went to Hampshire County Council where they had this.

So they had this Centre for transport excellence and it wasn't that they had become excellent at transport, but that they wanted to get to that centre of excellence.

And I what I'm asking today is, can people in this room come together with all their differences to create a vision for Eastbourne and bring an integrated transport system together by something by having something that they can aim for.

So that is my question to you.

Leigh Palmer:

Just in response to that that clearly I think everybody in the room would echo that, that, that sentiment. I'm personally pleased and encouraged to hear Stagecoach and other companies wishing to explore the art of the possible for Eastbourne in terms of

the question about Umm, will the seaside bus priority lane help commercial businesses?

Well, we, we don't know. Will it reduce the Umm, congestion on the big Tesco's roundabout?

Probably not.

We don't know. Are county right to explore that option.

The brush priority lane?

Well, yes, they are.

Alongside other initiatives. The bus priority lane is not the only answer.

It can only work in collaboration with the bus companies themselves and integration with other solutions.

Thank you.

Jim Murray:

And I know that this is going to make us overrun little bit, right?

But can I just get two more questions in please?

Thank you.

From the floor:

Yes, I I wanted to speak to Joel's point about the number 3 bus in Meads and it not being used enough by residents.

So I really wondered how buses like the number three are currently publicized and how we can actually improve the publicizing of those services so that people do use those buses so that in a couple of years' time when the money runs out we can continue with that service rather than Meads and other residents being really disappointed.

Joel Mitchell:

A number of ways.

So firstly, I learned the other day that 47% of people over the age of 75 don't use the Internet.

So, Stagecoach SE pushing everybody on to the app is a terrible move.

Removing roadside information, which we did after COVID because we didn't have any money and it saved us some money was a terrible move and we've now got to try and find a way, Matthews frantically trying to find a way for us to get some form

of printed information back in and you've heard from Craig about the BSIP and the local team increasing their marketing spend, their marketing competency.

We've just fundamentally changed the structure of our marketing because it's very 1970s and the way that we go at it.

And so you will see over the next 6 to 18 months a fundamental shift in the way that we market.

But critically, it's got to come from within.

It's got to be part of localism.

You know any big owning group like mine recognizes the value of localism in driving anybody into transport.

I mean, devolution, whatever you wanna call it, the richness of what product you get is about the people that you're serving.

So it's our job as a bus company working with Stephen and his team, Craig and his team and you in this room to raise the profile.

We just started to do it at Hythe and Folkestone.

We've had a really painful time with them, but it's built us some friendships there, their leader there, Jim Martin, has really been pushing something called use it or lose it, which sounds a bit brutal, but we had lost the bus service there.

We were able to reinstate it through some clever financing that Matthew did, but it's only there until the basic funding runs out and the same will apply.

I'm not saying that about three of the Meads because it's been here.

For what was it said 103 years and that was the first bus service, Eastbourne Buses, but there you go locally, regionally, nationally and we market at those 3 levels and we have to do that better and we will do.

From the floor:

Hello.

Yeah, I'm Terry, says Cooper councillor for Eastbourne Borough Council.

And I'm also the champion for disability.

I'm just aware that it's something that hasn't been mentioned very much today and I just wanted to say Roddy brought up the fact that transport includes walking, but there are people who aren't able to walk and I think it's really, really important that we remember that there's only one vowel difference between the word spatial, which is the word we've used a lot today and special.

And I really, genuinely believe that anything to do with disability cannot be special. It has to be integrated into any of this planning that we're talking about. So that's the one thing that I wanted to say.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Jim Murray:

I thought one more question and then we're gonna to go to summing up.

Thanks a lot.

From the floor:

Yes, put might be more of a statement as you run out of time.

But I was just wondering how you feel we're going to be able to engage to the people who are outside of this room because you're sort of predict preaching to the converted in here.

Everybody sort of agrees, largely what's been said. 20s.

Plenty is a, in my opinion, the evidence suggests that it's clearly obvious and it should be going ahead.

Why isn't it going ahead and people see them?

It's not going ahead in East Sussex County Council

You've got disjointed schemes like the bus lanes doing a bit in Seaside, a bit in King's Drive. We've got cycle paths that don't link up.

We've got pedestrianization of Terminus Rd that is intersected by two roads.

We've got the beginning of the bus service at Terminus Rd, which is shared with Pedestrianisation and I'm just wondering how you engage with those people to get them here to realise that being part of a move, a modal shift, actually ends in results.

From the floor:

Well, I if I attempt to go first on that one, I I think this is for the MP to take back to Parliament.

I've been in many meetings with the DoT where they outlined that 10 to 15% modal shift is the maximum you are ever going to achieve.

But that doesn't seem very aspirational to me, but if the head honchos at the DoT are having that as their benchmark is a very low bar, in my opinion, I think the invitation for this group is through the MP.

Take it back to Parliament.

Thank you.

Christina:

The question Jonathan was how do we get to the people outside this room?

And I think the woman from Oxford outlined it on her last slide when she said, first of all, you have to explain to people what you're doing and make it clear and make it easy and accessible for them.

And then you have

Then you have to co-produce and give voice to the people.

Then you have to treat people well throughout the process.

You have to treat people with respect and I think there are people in the room who have got concerns about the Seaside bus lane because that process doesn't seem to have happened.

And if it did happen, it didn't touch them because there's lots of businesses and lots of residents who don't think that they've been consulted.

So, we need to find a way to improve that and as a Chamber of Commerce, we're here to do that.

We have 675 live email members.

They have 10,000 members of staff.

Between them, we coordinate with the alliance of Chambers, that which is 4000 members and 18,000 members of staff.

So we're happy to communicate to them whatever you want us to communicate.

And if there's a consultation, we'll we'll help put it out.

We'll help put it in the local papers so it doesn't even cost East Sussex County Council to do it.

But if they don't tell us and make it clear what the plan is, because it's, it's quite difficult to find online, to find the latest plan and to understand what the direction of travel is.

And that's something we've really got to work on together.

Everyone in this room and all the local authorities, the MP's office.

Office, the Chambers of Commerce, the hospitality association, the Friends of .

If we all work together, we'll get what we need.

We'll get that message out, but we have all got to work together and this is a great start.

Ralph Lucas:

Well, thank you very much to my panel.

That's been a very fine ending to a very fine day, and if we want a centre of excellence for transport in Eastbourne, I can't think of a better foundation than what has been achieved by the Eco Action group today.

So thank you.

