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**National Park Society’s mixed reaction to A27 schemes**

The South Downs Society's planning expert Steve Ankers has given a lukewarm response to new plans to reduce congestion on the A27 through Worthing and Lancing.

Writing on behalf of the Society Steve, former Head of Environment for East Sussex County Council, observed that “Most of us travel by car at some stage and are well aware of the problems on this road. The Society broadly supports measures to reduce journey times for local and through traffic. Reductions in accidents, air pollution and the severance experienced by communities along the road also make it easier for people to enjoy the national park. We welcome the safeguarding of the national park highlighted in these new proposals and will hold Highways England to its word on ensuring that detailed design of any improvements will protect views from high ground in the park.”

Highways England is the company set up by government to manage the nation’s trunk road network. They are consulting through the summer on £50 million to £100 million of junction improvements to relieve congestion at this bottleneck. The company’s own costings and its legal duty to protect the national park mean that the largest scale solutions such as a northern bypass through the park or major flyovers and underpasses are not being considered. The plans now available online and at exhibitions in the area cover more modest schemes to improve traffic flow through the existing junctions.

But the Society has stopped short of fully endorsing the plans. Says Steve, “There is no integrated transport planning here. Highways England has no responsibility for railways so we’re seeing multi-million pound investment in highway schemes which will encourage more traffic to use the A27. Passengers will shift from rail to road as journey times improve in the short term and increase congestion further along the A27 at places like Arundel and Chichester.”

The plans will be shown on various dates in Worthing, Sompting and Lancing and the consultation will run until 12 September. Full documentation is on the Highways England website at:

<https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/he/a27-worthing-and-lancing-improvement/>

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For further information, please contact Steve Anker, Policy Officer on 01798 875073 in office hours

Notes for editors:

* The South Downs Society is a registered charity set up to conserve and enhance the beauty and amenities of the South Downs for the benefit of the public. It was established in 1923 and successfully defeated proposals for unsuitable coastal development overlooking the famous Seven Sisters area. The Society organises, both for the public and its members, a varied programme of strolls and walks as well as events and talks, all aimed at increasing both the enjoyment and awareness of the South Downs.
* The South Downs National Park, created in 2010, stretches for 100 miles between Eastbourne in East Sussex and Winchester in Hampshire.