

Delivering **E**fficient  
**S**ustainable **T**ourism  
with low-carbon  
transport **I**nnovations:  
**S**ustainable **M**obility,  
**A**ccessibility and  
**R**esponsible **T**ravel

# DESTI-SMART

Interreg Europe



European Union  
European Regional  
Development Fund

## ***Action Plan for Hastings***



**January 2021**

## Map of Partner destination area / Partner information



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**January 2021**

## Interreg Europe Programme

Interreg Europe Programme of interregional cooperation helps regional and local governments across Europe to develop and deliver better policy. By creating an environment and opportunities for sharing solutions, the aim is to ensure that government investment, innovation and implementation efforts all lead to integrated and sustainable impact for people and place.

By building on its forerunner, INTERREG IVC\_(2007-2013), Interreg Europe aims to get maximum return from the EUR 359 million financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for 2014-2020.

Solutions exist that can help European regions become the best that they can be. Today, the EU's emphasis is very much on paving the way for regions to realise their full potential – by helping them to capitalise on their innate strengths while tapping into opportunities that offer possibilities for economic, social and environmental progress.

To achieve this goal, Interreg Europe offers opportunities for regional and local public authorities across Europe to share ideas and experience on public policy in practice, therefore improving strategies for their citizens and communities.

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## DESTI-SMART Project

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 (including in South Europe, coastal, maritime & insular, mass tourism destinations). Immediate action is needed through interregional cooperation to capitalise best practices, improve policy instruments & prepare action plans with implementation monitoring & evaluation.

The DESTI-SMART project, addresses the above towards 'Smart Destinations', for sustainable & responsible tourism development in Europe, with low-carbon, multimodal sustainable mobility & 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 & sustainable tourism development, for transition to a low-carbon economy, through efficiency, resilience, multimodality, novel low-carbon transport systems, cycling & walking, with implementation innovations, policy learning and capacity building.

The following pressing issues are addressed:

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

Main outputs:

- policy learning & capacity building for public authorities & their stakeholders
- improved policy instruments & action plans in 9 destinations, with close involvement of stakeholders
- advances in EU2020 objectives
- communication & dissemination learning materials.

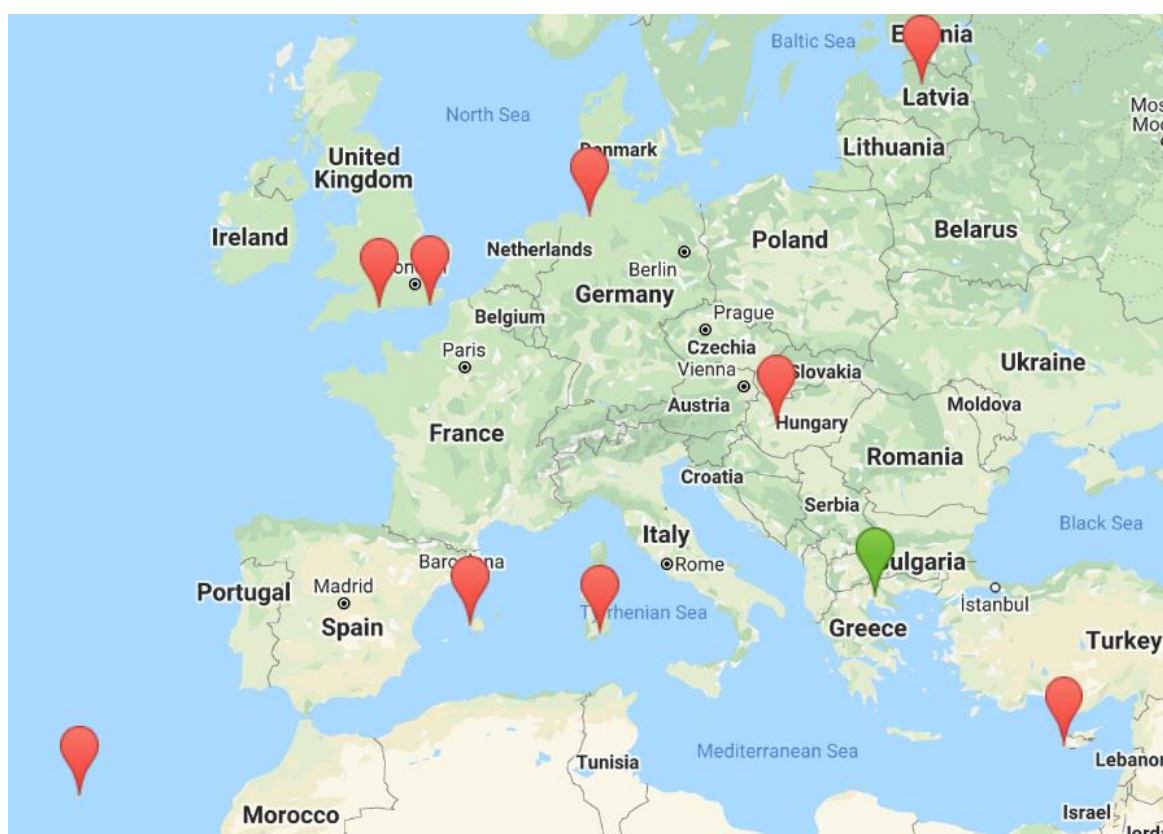


# DESTI-SMART Project Partnership



Delivering Efficient Sustainable Tourism with low-carbon transport Innovations:  
Sustainable Mobility, Accessibility and Responsible Travel

Lead Partner



**Thessaloniki - Sardinia - Bremerhaven - Madeira - Hastings - Mallorca - Vidzeme - Balaton - Pafos - BU**

*Improving transport and tourism policies at destinations by integrating strategies for smart and sustainable mobility, accessibility and responsible travel in sustainable tourism development, and through efficiency, resilience, intermodality, novel low-carbon transport systems, cycling and walking for visitors, towards smart destination*

**[www.interregeurope.eu/desti-smart](http://www.interregeurope.eu/desti-smart)**

## FOREWORD



Climate change and sustainability are at the very top of this council's priorities, and tourism remains a vital part of the local economy (despite the impact of Covid-19). Because the DESTI-SMART Interreg Europe project is all about sustainable tourism mobility, it has proven invaluable as we look at ways of improving the value of our visitor economy without further damaging the environment.

The key area identified in this action plan will be of very significant importance.

Our seafront is very congested at busy times, and we are looking to reduce the impact of the car because the effect it has on the environment. The DESTI-SMART co-funded study showed that the scheme we had been considering, a 'mini-tram' (actually a double-ended midibus that looks like a tram) was not the best solution, and instead recommended an alternative, requiring infrastructure changes to our highway and the procurement of a sustainable high capacity 'bus, which we are now looking to progress.

It is disappointing that Covid prevented some of the planned DESTI-SMART workshops and study tours from taking place physically, but I am pleased that colleagues were still able to meet with partners virtually, and that we could continue to develop this action plan.

Although we live in a time of great uncertainty and change, the environment will always be vitally important, so that our children and grandchildren can continue to enjoy the many things that we take for granted: including the opportunity to explore our own town, and other places. DESTI-SMART will help us to do that towards Hastings becoming a 'smart destination'.

I am pleased to commend Hastings Borough Council's DESTI-SMART action plan.

Cllr Kim Forward  
Leader, Hastings Borough Council

## Acknowledgements

This Action Plan forms a part of the DESTI-SMART interregional cooperation project. It is developed with co-funding support from European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and made possible by the Interreg Europe programme.

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We are also grateful to the following people for their assistance in the development of this publication:

- **Jon Wheeler** Team manager, strategic economic infrastructure, East Sussex County Council
- **Lisa Simmonds** Principal transport planner, strategic economic infrastructure, East Sussex County Council
- **Matthew Arnold** Business development director, Stagecoach South East

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

Awareness of the environment, and the impact of transport on it, has increased very considerably in recent times, and DESTI-SMART has allowed us to develop our thinking here in Hastings. The feasibility study funded by the programme proved invaluable, making us reconsider our original plans, and, although Covid prevented study tours, etc., in the later stages of the programme we were still able to learn a lot from partners. We have engaged with local stakeholder partners throughout the project.

## Tourism Mobility and Accessibility current status, general description and requirements

Hastings Borough Council, and East Sussex County Council, the transport authority, are keen to improve active travel in Hastings for residents and visitors, for environmental, economic and health and other social benefits.

In addition to the general wish to deliver sustainable tourism, there is a particular problem in Hastings that we wish to solve. A major road (A259) runs along Hastings seafront, which can get very congested at times, adding to pollution, making it uncomfortable and reducing access for pedestrians and cyclists. The seafront is also poorly served by public transport, with no regular 'bus service running/linking its whole length. An innovative approach to improving public transport in a sustainable way along the seafront is therefore a key aim.

## Vision and Goals

**Our vision is to make Hastings an even better place to visit by encouraging more visitors to explore more of the town in a sustainable way**

## Action Titles

- **Developing a sustainable seafront public transport service**

## Monitoring processes

- **Developing a sustainable seafront public transport service** Project plan developed and monitored against to ensure that infrastructure provided and service in operation by start of Summer 2023

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### Conclusion

Residents of and visitors to Hastings should benefit from investing in sustainable tourism. More visitors will be attracted to the town, they will see more, they will be more healthy, and the roads will be less congested. Local residents will benefit both from less pollution being created by visitors' cars, and through the economic benefits of increasing the volume, and particularly value, of tourism.

### Recommendations



- That a sustainable seafront public transport service for Hastings is introduced.

# Action Plan (main part)

## Part I – General information

Project: **DESTI-SMART Interreg Europe**

Partner organisation: **Hastings Borough Council**

Other partner organisations involved (if relevant): East Sussex County Council; Foreshore Trust;

Country: United Kingdom

NUTS2 region: Surrey, East and West Sussex

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## Part II – Policy context

- The Action Plan aims to impact:
- ☐ Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
  - ☐ European Territorial Cooperation programme
  - ☒ Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument addressed: **Hastings Local Plan 2011-2028 "Shaping Hastings"**

Further details on the policy context and the way the action plan should contribute to improving the policy instrument:

The Hastings Local Plan is the main policy document setting the framework for future development in the town. This policy instrument does not currently explicitly address the needs of visitors in respect of low carbon mobility and accessibility; it is currently being revised and this is an ideal opportunity to incorporate DESTI-SMART objectives :- delivering efficient sustainable tourism with low-carbon transport innovations – sustainable mobility, accessibility and responsible travel.

East Sussex County Council is the transport authority for Hastings, and a DESTI-SMART partner. It shares our ambitions to improve sustainable and active travel, and is currently consulting on its Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan ('LCWIP') 2020-2030, so there is an opportunity for DESTI-SMART to help shape that document.

Hastings Borough Council, and East Sussex County Council, the transport authority, are keen to improve active travel in Hastings for residents and visitors, for environmental, economic and health and other social benefits.

In addition to the general wish to deliver sustainable tourism, there is a particular problem in Hastings that we wish to solve. A major road (A259) runs along Hastings seafront, which can get very congested at times, adding to pollution, making it uncomfortable and reducing access for pedestrians and cyclists. The seafront is also poorly served by public transport, with no regular 'bus service running/linking its whole length. An innovative approach to improving public transport in a sustainable way along the seafront is therefore a key aim.

The successful implementation of integrated sustainable transport solutions -including walking, cycling and a sustainable public transport link will meet the local plan and LCWIP aspirations.

## Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

### ACTION

#### Title: Developing a sustainable seafront public transport service

##### 1. The background

As noted above, there is a particular problem in Hastings that we wish to solve. A major road (A259) runs along Hastings seafront, which can get very congested at times, adding to pollution, and making it uncomfortable and reducing access for pedestrians and cyclists. The seafront is also poorly served by public transport, with no regular 'bus service running/linking its whole length. An innovative approach to improving public transport in a sustainable way along the seafront is therefore a key aim.

Hastings Borough Council therefore commissioned, through a competitive tendering procedure, Steer, the renowned transport consultants, to look at ways of solving this problem. Working with stakeholders and transport providers they looked at a number of options, narrowing these down into three options and considered these at 'SOBC' (strategic outline business case) level.

The first option, the base option, was the existing seasonal open-topped tourist 'bus introduced by local 'bus operator Stagecoach in 2019 (Covid prevented its operation in 2020). Two other options were assessed against this, a bi-directional electric 'bus, and autonomous electric pods.

We had spent some time before joining DESTI-SMART investigating the bi-directional electric 'bus, including two visits to a manufacturer of the vehicles.

The report's conclusion was as follows :-

*There is significant uncertainty and risks for both options. Therefore, at present, it could be difficult to bring either option forward for a formal SOBC without a clear funding route identified for both options or a clear regulatory and legal framework and technological advancement for the autonomous pod option. **Despite this, the strategic case for an enhanced level of public transport service along the entire length of the promenaded seafront remains very strong. An incremental approach to enhancing the Route 66, working closely with Stagecoach, could deliver greater benefits and better value for money with a lower level of commercial and financial risk.** Complementary investment in improved public realm, signage and wayfinding, and hire schemes and infrastructure for bike, electric bike and micro-transit could support the integration of the railway stations, town centres, seafront and other visitor attractions; as well as enhance the visitor economy and improve the accessibility of the beautiful seafront and travel along its attractive and special promenade.*

This insight was invaluable, and has steered us away from the original bi-directional electric 'bus option. We will continue to work with our DESTI-SMART partners to share knowledge and learn from their good practice, for example :- from Mallorca, where shuttle 'buses aimed at the visitor market are used to transport visitors around the island in a sustainable manner; from Madeira, where new 'bus routes, and new vehicles, have been introduced to improve accessibility and intermodality; and Thessaloniki, where our study visit showed the effectiveness of multilingual tour bus around the city's cultural highlights, taking visitors to parts of the city that they would not otherwise have visited, and doing so in a sustainable way.

## 2. Action

- i) To work with Stagecoach to develop a business plan to enhance the Route 66 operation, including an understanding of the benefits to be achieved by highway infrastructure changes in Hastings Old Town to enable the 'bus to be turned, so eliminating significant down time in the operation and producing real efficiencies of operation, also to secure carbon-neutral vehicles. Stagecoach have previously indicated that, without the necessary infrastructure improvements in the Old Town, one vehicle will only be able to operate an hourly service. The lack of a turning facility means much wasted time and mileage. The infrastructure changes sought – effectively the creation of an elongated roundabout – will enable the vehicle to turn back much more quickly, eliminating empty mileage. This will allow a single vehicle to operate a half-hourly service, so making it significantly more cost-effective.
- ii) Subject to (i) work with our partner East Sussex County Council to cost and secure funding for the necessary highway infrastructure changes required, the creation of an elongated roundabout at the end of the 'bus route.
- iii) Continue to work with DESTI-SMART partners to gain from their knowledge and experience, and for them to 'peer review' our actions



## 3. Players involved

- i) Hastings Borough Council :- programme manager
- ii) East Sussex County Council :- the transport and highway authority in Hastings
- iii) Stagecoach :- the local 'bus operator in Hastings
- iv) DESTI-SMART partners.



#### 4. Timeframe

- i) Business plan developed by end March 2022 (Covid permitting), including cost of securing carbon-neutral vehicles
- ii) Indicative costs of highways infrastructure changes identified in (i) obtained by end June 2022, funding sources then sought
- iii) If possible funding secured by end December 2022, allowing highways work to be completed by end March 2023, and the enhanced operation to start then, and operate from the 2023 'season'.

#### 5. Costs (if relevant)

Business plan to be developed in-house by partners, capital costs to be identified as part of that process.

Provisional 'order of magnitude' capital costs are c£750 000 for the highways infrastructure improvements to allow the 'buses to turn in Hastings Old Town, and between £500 000 and £1m for a sustainable double-decker 'bus (depending on fuel type).

#### 6. Funding sources (if relevant):

To be identified as part of, or subsequent to, the business case development.

This could include grants, or public sector or private sector funding; if the business case is as positive as we hope, commercial funding may be appropriate

## ***Monitoring Procedures in Phase 2***

Still to be finalised but likely to be along the following lines :-

- **Developing a sustainable seafront public transport service** Project plan developed and monitored against to ensure that infrastructure provided and service in operation by start of Summer 2023

**Date:** 22nd January 2021

**Name of the organisation :** Hastings Borough Council

**Signatures of the relevant organisation**



Cllr Kim Forward  
Leader, Hastings Borough Council



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