

## **A NEW WELCOME TO FOLKESTONE**

Creating a sustainable, attractive and welcoming gateway to Folkestone town centre by moving the bus station and replacing it with a green park is at the heart of a £19.8 million funding bid to be made to central government.

Better signage and obvious walking links bringing visitors from the town's central railway station via a new park in Bouverie Square and into a greener, vibrant Sandgate Road and Guildhall Street shopping area will also form part of the submission.

The bid for Levelling Up funding was agreed by Folkestone & Hythe District Council Cabinet on Thursday (16 June 2022). Councillors also confirmed the allocation by the council of 10% of the overall cost in match-funding, as encouraged by government.

Bringing forward the first phase of refurbishment of Folca also features in the bid. Funding would enable the part of the building not needed for the new health centre to be separated off and progress made establishing new uses for the site, with an intended focus on retail, leisure and business uses for the rejuvenated building. Levelling up bids have to be submitted by 6 July and successful projects will be required to be completed without delay as funding has to be spent by the end of March 2025.

Leader, Cllr David Monk said: "Our aim is to level up the town centre and build on the success of the Harbour Arm and Creative Quarter. We want to encourage higher footfall in our core retail area of Sandgate Road and Guildhall Street and support businesses and attract inward investment.

"As a council we have already demonstrated what we can deliver in the district to make people proud of the place they live in and at the same time meet the government's green agenda.

"We are now working with partners, particularly Kent County Council and Stagecoach, to turn a confusing, traffic-focused approach to the town centre into an area where people want to spend time with their families."

Public consultation on six projects to deliver the priorities set out in the Folkestone Place Plan took place earlier this year. Although three projects have been chosen for the Levelling Up Fund bid, the council will continue to work with partners on the other projects and seek further funding opportunities.

Find out more about the Place Plan on the council website [folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/folkestoneplaceplan](https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/folkestoneplaceplan)

**Ends**