

Richard Brown  
Chief Executive  
Eurostar UK Ltd  
Eurostar House  
Waterloo Station  
London SE1

6<sup>th</sup> October 2006

Dear Sir,

The recent announcements concerning proposed severe reductions in the number of Eurostar services calling at Ashford International are causing great concern to the Marshlink Community Rail Partnership.

In common with many other groups and organisations in the area we believe that your initial proposals are misguided. We echo the comments made by others that such a degradation will adversely affect local tourism and be a great disincentive for local people wishing to use international rail services.

The Marshlink Partnership has been putting a great deal of effort into promoting use of the Hastings to Ashford line and particularly as a way of accessing Eurostar services. This work has been boosted by the introduction of the direct Brighton to Ashford service in December 2005 and traffic figures have certainly increased significantly. We have also been working with domestic train operators on ticketing products that further encourage international travel via Ashford. This is now threatened.

We do recognise that the opening of Ebbsfleet International will lead to changes to services at Ashford, but we are also aware that Ebbsfleet will not have the facilities and space provided at Ashford. We believe that many Eurostar customers will still prefer to use Ashford International and that your proposals are made purely with the convenience of Eurostar in mind, not the wishes of passengers.

We know that car park revenues are an important income stream for Eurostar, but it does seem perverse to be actively discouraging passengers who wish to access your services by domestic train. The introduction of CTRL Domestic Services will no doubt help people in the Medway and North Kent areas access Eurostar services more conveniently, but for most residents of Kent and Sussex, your proposals will merely force them to drive to your stations or choose not to travel on Eurostar at all. Yet again this runs counter to national transport and environmental strategies.

At a time when carbon emissions are a major concern, your intentions will also strengthen the case for air traffic developments at Lydd and Manston airports in Kent

as well as Gatwick and Heathrow and this is counter to all British and European strategies for coping with climate change.

The Partnership is also conscious of the regional development strategies that include the major expansion of Ashford. Much of this development presumes the provision of a better level of Eurostar service at Ashford International than you have proposed.

In conclusion, we do not believe that your service proposals are sensible or sustainable and strongly urge you to reconsider them and to consult widely with all stakeholders in the region.

Yours sincerely,

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cc. Cllr. Peter Pragnell, Leader, Hastings Borough Council  
Mrs. Wendy Miers, Chairman of Council, Rother District Council  
Cllr. Paul Clokie, Leader, Ashford Borough Council  
Cllr. Robert Bliss, Leader, Shepway District Council  
Michael Foster MP, Hastings and Rye  
Damien Green MP, Ashford  
Michael Howard MP, Folkestone and Hythe  
Norman Baker MP, Lewes  
Paul Carter, Leader, Kent County Council  
Cllr. Matthew Locke, East Sussex County Council  
Nirj Deva DL MEP, South East  
Baroness Emma Nicholson MEP, South East  
Caroline Lucas MEP, South East  
Daniel Hannan MEP, South East  
James Elles MEP, South East  
Sharon Bowles MEP, South East  
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