

**Report To:** Ashford Joint Transportation Board

**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> September 2018

**Report Title:** Ashford International Station and Eurostar services

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**Summary: Report to update members on the project to enable new Eurostar trains to access Ashford International Station, and the current disruptions to International services at Ashford.**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Ashford Borough Council and Kent County Council have been working with Network Rail, High Speed 1, Eurostar, the Department for Transport, and the Office of Rail and Road to introduce new signalling and the introduction of the new Eurostar Class 374 trains into Ashford International Station. The project's aim is to make Ashford International an interoperable Station for Eurostar and any future International operators
- 1.2 A new signalling system called KVB was installed at Ashford International Station alongside improvements to the platforms to allow new Eurostar trains to operate from April 2018. These works were completed on time and on budget by the end of March 2018, and launched in April 2018. The signalling has been operating successfully since that date, and Eurostar had received agreement for their new trains to access the Station.
- 1.3 Following the launch of the new trains at Ashford International, complex technical issues have been identified which have meant that Eurostar have had to suspend the operation of their new Eurostar trains (Class 374) through Ashford until the cause of the technical issue could be identified and a solution is implemented.

## **2. Technical Issues at Ashford International Station**

- 2.1 Following the identification of complex technical issues operating the Class 374 Eurostar trains through Ashford, Eurostar, HS1 and Network Rail have undertaken a number of tests to identify the issues. A project team has been put in place to design a solution, and budget is in place from the underspend on the original Ashford International Rail Connectivity project. The project team is working to deliver a solution as soon as possible, ensuring any works provide a safe and sustainable solution for all trains running through Ashford International Station.

### **3. Disruption to Eurostar Services**

- 3.1 In light of the limited number of Ashford-compatible rolling stock, Kent County Council and Ashford Borough Council have been meeting with Eurostar on a regular basis to try to ensure the best service is maintained at Ashford International Station until the works are completed and the new Eurostar trains are able to access the Station. In May 2018, Eurostar agreed to operate the same services timetable that was being operated prior to April 2018 using the original TMST and e300 trains (refurbished original Eurostar rolling stock), both of which can stop at Ashford. This provided two inbound and outbound Paris services per day, one inbound and one outbound Brussels service a day, the Disneyland Paris services, and the South of France services
- 3.2 Following this agreement Eurostar have had to introduce new timetables as a temporary measure to alleviate the knock-on effect of the strike action that took place over the spring and summer in the French maintenance depot where the e300 and TMST trains are serviced. The revised timetable allows Eurostar teams to operate reliably and carry out the routine maintenance work on these trains which would normally have been performed in Paris.
- 3.3 Eurostar have amended the timetable in place throughout September. Services to Brussels, Disneyland Paris and the South of France will run as normal, and passengers for Paris will be transferred to Ebbsfleet station, with free travel provided on Southeastern services between Ashford International and Ebbsfleet. Eurostar are planning to resume the same level of service as operated before June 2018 from Ashford International Station from 1st October.

### **4.0 Next steps**

- 4.1 The project team will continue to progress a solution to the technical issues, working in partnership to maximise the resources available and to deliver the solution as quickly as possible.
- 4.2 Eurostar will look to resolve its current issues with servicing its TMST and e300 trains and resume this interim level of services from Ashford International from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018.
- 4.3 Officers will bring a further update report to the Joint Transportation Board in December 2018.

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