

Report To: Ashford Joint Transportation Board

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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.

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, with Southeastern and Eurostar TMST and e300 trains using the system. Eurostar had received agreement for their new trains to access the Station in March 2018.
- 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, Network Rail, and Network Rail High Speed 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, principally funded through the South East Local Enterprise Partnership Local Growth Fund. 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.

- 2.2 Atkins have been commissioned by Network Rail High Speed to provide specialist consultancy support. They have completed their initial feasibility study and narrowed down the options to the preferred solution. This solution will be designed up between now and the end of April 2019, at which point greater detail about the scheme and costs will be known.

3. Eurostar Services

- 3.1 In light of the limited number of Ashford-compatible rolling stock, Eurostar are continuing 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 provides 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

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.
- 4.3 Officers will bring a further update report to the Joint Transportation Board in June 2019 at which stage a detailed programme for the implementation will be available.

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