

Report To: Ashford Joint Transportation Board

Date: 11th June 2019

Report Title: Ashford International Station and Eurostar services

Report Author: Andrew Osborne, Economic Development Manager,
Ashford Borough Council

Summary: Report to update members on the project to enable new Eurostar trains to access Ashford International Station.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Following the completion of the KVB signalling in March 2018 and launch of the new trains at Ashford International Station, 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. Since its implementation, the KVB signalling system has operated without fault, being used daily by the Class 373 Eurostar trains and the Southeastern Javelin trains.

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, Network Rail High Speed, Kent County Council and Ashford Borough Council have undertaken a number of tests and work to identify the issues. A project team has been working to reduce the options down to a preferred scheme for this unique technical solution. 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 has commissioned Atkins to undertake the feasibility report completed in March 2019, and undertake the detailed design work to provide a safe and sustainable solution for all trains running through Ashford International Station.
- 2.2 The technical issue is happening when the new Class 374 Eurostar trains cross the AC/DC power interface coming off HS1 into Ashford International Station on the Ashford Spur / Chord. A power spike at this point is currently damaging equipment on the Eurostar Class 374 trains and therefore needs to be resolved in order for these trains to be able to access Ashford. A contactor and train detection system has been identified that will resolve the power issue following options appraisal. Further testing and site visits are being undertaken at Ashford International Station and a detailed design and programme is due to be in place for the end of June 2019.

- 2.3 Delivery of the solution is due to take place at the end of the year, with the commissioning of works by the end of December 2019. Current budget estimates are within the remaining funding for the Ashford International Rail Connectivity Project. The project continues to be closely monitored with monthly meetings of the Project Board, alongside the working groups to take forward the project deliverables.

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.
- 3.2 Continual discussions are being undertaken with Eurostar to ensure the current level of services are operated through to the commissioning of the new infrastructure in December 2019, which will then enable the introduction of Class 374 trains and the reintroduction of the third daily Paris service.

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 September 2019 at which stage a detailed programme for the implementation will be available.

Contacts:

Andrew Osborne, Economic Development Manager, Ashford Borough Council

Email: andrew.osborne@ashford.gov.uk