

KMEP 11th July
International Rail Campaign
Context

Introduction

The briefing at KMEP provides an update on the efforts and approach for the campaign to secure a resumption of international rail services at Kent station stops of Ebbsfleet and Ashford International. Services have not stopped at the stations since March 2020 since commencing in 2007 and 1996 respectively. For Eurostar, their position is that no services will stop in Kent through 2025, with no guarantee beyond that date.

Background

The campaign group entails Kent, Dartford and Ashford Council authorities, VisitKent, Locate in Kent, and the Kent and Invicta Chamber of Commerce. Since forming, members of the group have maintained regular dialogue with Eurostar, have approached prospective new operators, and also with the infrastructure owners HS1 Ltd and Getlink Ltd. Engagement with government and the Department for Transport has also previously taken place, aided in part by the efforts of Damian Green MP (former Ashford MP).

The issue has been debated in Parliament and addressed by the then Minister for Rail Huw Merriman. KCC, Ashford and VisitKent raised concerns at the Commons European Scrutiny Committee in early 2024. VisitKent also brought attention to the issue at a May 2024 parliamentary reception and with its associated press coverage. The campaign undertook a survey of businesses in early 2024 and has built a case designed to make the public interest argument for securing a return of services.