

New report calls for the return of international rail services to Kent

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National transport research organisation Enroute and grassroots campaign group Bring Back Euro Trains (BBET) have launched a joint report making the case for reinstating international rail services at Ashford International and Ebbsfleet International. The report highlights the critical role these stations play in connecting Kent with Europe, and outlines the significant economic, social and environmental benefits of restoring services.

The report, titled “Returning International Rail Services to Kent: The Challenge and the Need for Change”, examines the widespread impacts caused by the suspension of Eurostar services since March 2020. Despite the reopening of borders and increasing demand for travel, direct rail links remain unavailable, forcing Kent travellers to endure longer and more expensive journeys via London.

The report finds that the suspension has significantly affected Kent’s economy, with businesses, tourism and local retail sectors bearing the brunt. According to the report, the local hospitality industry have seen reduced footfall due to the loss of European visitors, while travel times from Ashford to Brussels have more than tripled, and costs for many journeys have nearly doubled.

Public demand for reinstating services is undeniable, with a petition calling for action garnering over 60,000 signatures, with over 32,000 from the South East.

Harry Burr, Joint Chief Executive of Enroute, said: “Our report demonstrates a clear and compelling demand for international rail services. With High Speed 1 and the Channel Tunnel running far below capacity, reinstating these connections is not only feasible but critical for regional economic recovery, international business ties, and achieving sustainable transport objectives. There’s a strong case for new thinking and innovative solutions to overcome current barriers.”

Alexander Bienfait, Interim Chair of Bring Back Euro Trains, added: “These stations were purpose-built to be international gateways, representing over £180 million in infrastructure investment. Their underutilisation is a glaring waste of resources. Restoring services would boost Kent’s connectivity, support local businesses, and contribute to achieving carbon reduction goals. People should not have to endure expensive, inefficient journeys through London when faster, direct links to Europe are already within reach.”

The report outlines pathways for action, including regulatory reforms, partnerships with emerging operators, and public-private initiatives to overcome barriers posed by Brexit and Eurostar’s current monopoly. It urges local councils, national policymakers, and the private sector to collaborate in reinstating these vital services and calls for a comprehensive approach to advocacy, government engagement, and regulatory change.

For a copy of the full report and further details, [visit Enroute’s website](#).