

RAIL ACTION PLAN FOR KENT

**Final for Cabinet
4 April 2011**



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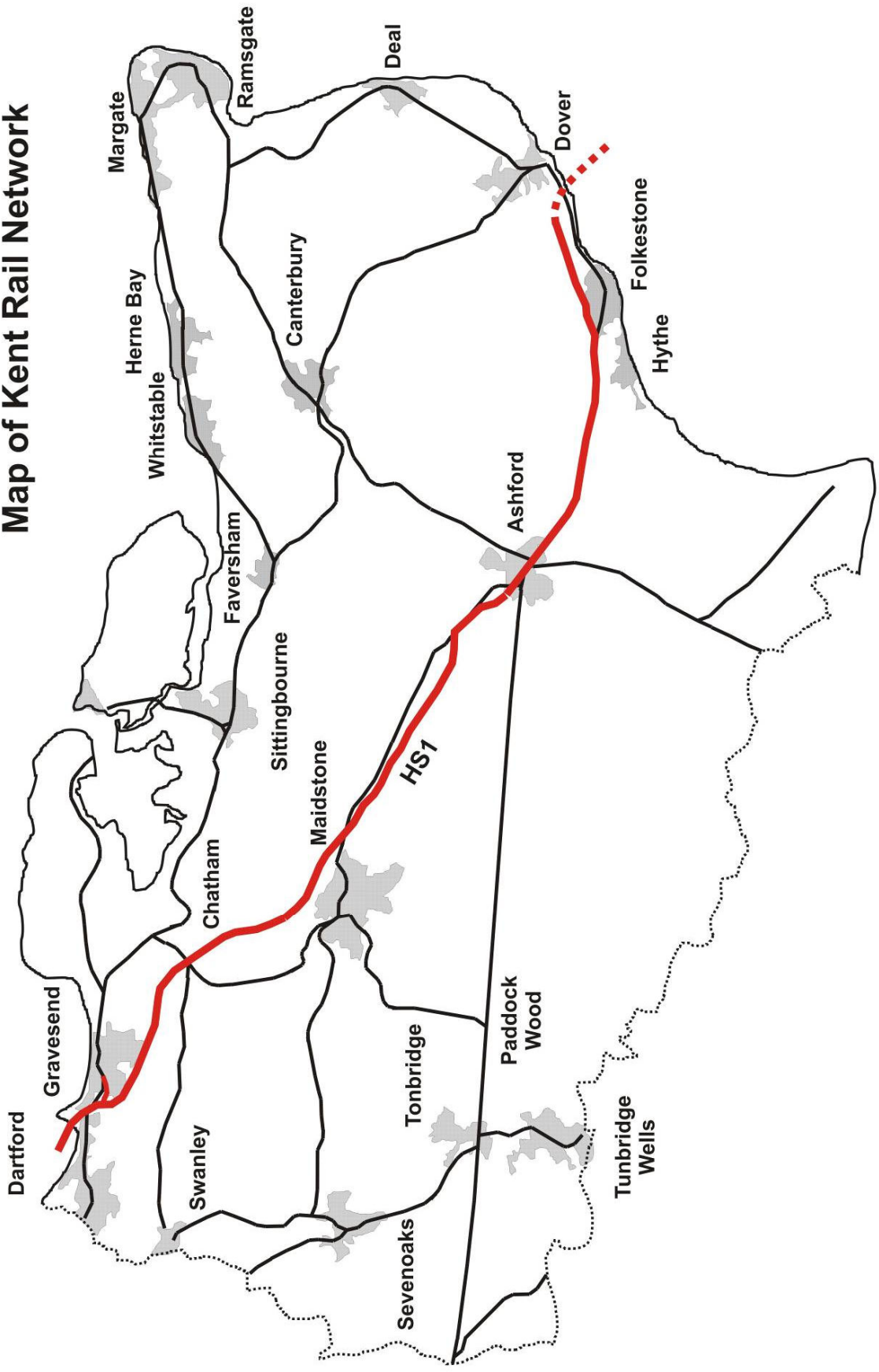
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FOREWORD

**By Bryan Sweetland
KCC Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways & Waste**

We live in exciting and challenging times. We need to ensure that the right conditions are in place for the economic regeneration and growth that we all want to see in Kent. Only from economic growth can we provide for our children's future and create the opportunities for business, education, employment and leisure that are so crucial to the life of the County of Kent and its people.

The rail service in Kent is a key driver of these noble objectives. A modern, efficient, safe, punctual and reliable rail service that takes people where they need to go at a time of day that meets their needs is central to the transport objectives of Kent County Council. Only by ensuring the provision of good rail links to the right London termini, and between stations within Kent, can we enjoy a rail service that not only meets the needs of today's travellers, but that is able to respond to the ever increasing pressures of tomorrow's passengers too.

The location of Kent between London and continental Europe offers great potential for our county. We intend to continue to ensure that both Ebbsfleet and Ashford international stations are well served by through rail services to European capitals, by Eurostar and - in the future - by the proposed Deutsche Bahn services.

So Kent County Council will work hard to stand up for Kent's residents and commuters, acting as a community leader, influencing the decision-making process which will result in the award of a new Integrated Kent Franchise in 2014. We must all ensure that, whoever is the provider, Kent will enjoy the very best rail service which will meet the needs of all its residents and visitors.

Bryan Sweetland



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- i Kent's Transport Strategy is encapsulated in two key documents: 'Growth without Gridlock' (December 2010); and 'Local Transport Plan for Kent 2011-2016' (draft, September 2010). These policies summarise Kent County Council's (KCC) transport policy and inform this Rail Action Plan for Kent.
- ii This Rail Action Plan for Kent sets out the principal objectives of KCC to ensure that the new franchise - which is due to commence in April 2014 - delivers a rail service for Kent that meets the needs of the county's residents and visitors. It is not concerned with changing the existing franchise operated by Southeastern Railway, although KCC will continue to press for improvements in its current operation. The Plan lists in detail the rail routes which need addressing in today's network, and recommends improvements to be incorporated in the new franchise specification. It also recognises the need for the level of rail fares charged in Kent to offer better value for money, so as to encourage economic growth throughout the county.
- iii This Plan therefore sets out the legislative and regulatory framework which determines the structure of the rail industry and the way it affects Kent; the operation of the existing Southeastern franchise and its successes and failures; the need for a new rail service post-2014 which will meet the future needs of economic growth in the county; and the plans of Network Rail to enhance some of the principal routes in Kent and thus improve journey times. The scope of this Plan encompasses all the national passenger rail services in Kent, including those operated by Southern and First Capital Connect (Thameslink), but excludes heritage and preserved railways. It also excludes rail freight, an essential part of the wider transport infrastructure in the county which will be incorporated in KCC's emerging 'Freight Action Plan'.
- iv KCC will also continue to engage with international rail operators and with its partners in Europe to ensure the retention of Kent stops on the existing Eurostar services, the provision of Kent stops on the proposed Deutsche Bahn services, and the possible delivery over time of a new Trans-Manche Metro service linking Kent with Nord-Pas de Calais in partnership with Conseil Regional Nord-Pas de Calais.
- v Following extensive public engagement and consultation, the final version of this Rail Action Plan for Kent will inform KCC's submission to the Department for Transport (DfT) for the awarding of the contract for the delivery of the Integrated Kent Franchise (IKF) from 2014 onwards.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Kent County Council (KCC) is the largest local authority in the operating area currently managed by Southeastern Railway. As such KCC is a principal stakeholder in the re-franchising process which will be undertaken by the DfT in the period leading up to the award of the new franchise in April 2014.
- 1.2 The County Council is already engaged with both Southeastern Railway and Network Rail, through stakeholder briefings, Rail Summits, consideration of route and service enhancements, and in many other ways involving regular contact. Other stakeholders such as Medway Council and East Sussex County Council are similarly engaged, and KCC welcomes the opportunity to work collaboratively with others in this way. This Rail Action Plan for Kent (RAPK) is concerned with the administrative county of Kent, but there are seven stations in the Medway Council area to which reference is made: Halling, Cuxton, Strood, Rochester, Chatham, Gillingham and Rainham.
- 1.3 The railway industry is highly regulated and controlled. The following chapters explain both the transport policy context within which KCC operates – and in which this Plan is rooted – and also the legislative and regulatory framework which determines the structures of today’s railway. Our role is to listen, to judge, and to inform: to listen to the many Rail User Groups (RUGs) which represent many of Kent’s rail passengers; to make a judgement about the most effective use of the resources which will be available to serve the rail network in our county; and to inform the franchise-making process of Kent’s collective view.
- 1.4 Kent’s rail network is the result of historic competition between rival railway companies in the 19th century; consolidation under the Southern Railway and then British Railways in the 20th century; and dramatic change delivered by the present franchise operator with the arrival of High Speed services which have transformed journey times between East Kent and London in the 21st century.
- 1.5 KCC does not pretend to know all the answers, but the County Council does value highly its dual role: to develop a strategic rail network which will help to deliver the economic growth we need during the next 30 years; and to represent the genuine aspirations of Kent’s travelling public, standing up for the people of Kent. It is these twin goals that this Rail Action Plan for Kent seeks to deliver.

2. KENT'S TRANSPORT POLICY CONTEXT

- 2.1 Kent County Council's (KCC) current transport strategy is encapsulated in two principal documents: Growth without Gridlock (December 2010); and Local Transport Plan for Kent 2011-2016 (LTP3) (draft for consultation, September 2010).

Growth without Gridlock

- 2.2 KCC's framework for regeneration titled 'Unlocking Kent's Potential: opportunities and challenges' identified the need for an Integrated Transport Strategy as one of the key drivers to deliver long lasting regeneration and economic growth in Kent. 'Growth without Gridlock' addresses the key transport solutions that need to be implemented over the next 20 years, and fully complements the framework for economic growth.
- 2.3 'Growth without Gridlock' recognises the potential of Kent's rail network to meet these challenges. The delivery of High Speed domestic rail services in December 2009 has transformed journey times for many passengers, but the new timetable introduced by Southeastern has also caused serious problems for others. This Rail Action Plan for Kent addresses all these issues, and using 'Growth without Gridlock' as a starting point seeks to develop a strategy for an improved rail network that will better serve the people in Kent from 2014 onwards.

Local Transport Plan for Kent 2011-2016

- 2.4 The preparation and adoption of an LTP is a statutory requirement under the Transport Act 2000, as amended by the Local Transport Act 2008.
- 2.5 LTP3 has incorporated the strategy of 'Growth without Gridlock' which identifies the need for major transport improvements for which KCC will lobby, such as enhancements to the classic rail network. The County Council also seeks to maximise the potential of High Speed 1, by ensuring that the new franchise from 2014 onwards makes the most effective use of this rail infrastructure and the Class 395 High Speed trains.

Kent's Rail Network

- 2.6 The county's rail network (including the Medway Council area) comprises five principal routes: High Speed 1 (HS1) from the Thames Tunnel via Ebbsfleet and Ashford to the Channel Tunnel portal; Mainline from Knockholt via Tonbridge, Ashford and then via both Canterbury West and Dover & Deal to Ramsgate; Mainline from Tonbridge via Tunbridge Wells to Hastings; Mainline from Swanley via the Medway Towns and Faversham to Ramsgate via Herne Bay and to Dover via Canterbury East; and Mainline from Swanley via Otford and Maidstone East to Ashford.

- 2.7 There are also five secondary routes: from Dartford via Gravesend and Strood to Paddock Wood via Maidstone West; from Sittingbourne to Sheerness; from Ashford to Hastings via Appledore and Rye; from Tonbridge to Redhill; and between Oxted and Uckfield via Edenbridge Town.
- 2.8 Appendix 2 sets out in detail the proposed service specification for each of these routes, recommending changes where necessary to the existing franchise specification in order to deliver a rail service that is better suited to the needs of Kent.
- 2.9 KCC has developed close working relationships with Southeastern and Network Rail in recent years, and will continue to work closely with the current rail service franchisee through their stakeholder briefings and KCC's Rail Summits. The County Council has already influenced the development of Network Rail's Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) for Kent, covering infrastructure development between 2010 and 2020.

International Rail Services

- 2.10 LTP3 also recognises the important role that international rail services will continue to play in the economic regeneration of Kent. The EU's liberalisation of laws restricting the operation of international rail services in 2010 seeks to break existing monopolies in order to stimulate competition for rail services between EU Member States. Deutsche Bahn (DB) has formally proposed and received permission from the EU to operate through rail services from Germany and Holland to the UK, and a DB trial journey with an ICE test train has been viewed favourably by the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority. KCC will lobby for a Kent station stop to be eventually included in this service, which is expected to commence in 2013.

Domestic Rail Services

- 2.11 The domestic rail network is recognised by LTP3 as playing a strategic role in the provision of rail transport to every part of the county. Kent is fortunate to have such an extensive electrified network covering almost the whole county, and the Rail Action Plan for Kent will reflect the priorities of LTP3 in ensuring that access to education, employment, health, retail and leisure facilities will be available wherever possible by rail. However, LTP3 also recognises the serious problems which have arisen on some Mainline routes following the December 2009 timetable change, and these concerns will be included in the Rail Acton Plan for Kent as part of KCC's submission to the DfT for the post-2014 franchise.
- 2.12 The development of Manston Airport and the economic regeneration of Thanet are twin objectives supported by LTP3. The provision of a Parkway station near to Manston, along with the delivery by Network Rail of proposed line speed improvements between Ashford and Ramsgate, would meet both these objectives. These improvement works could reduce running times by up to ten minutes between London and Thanet Parkway,

and a full business case for the scheme is currently being developed with an expected completion date for delivery of the scheme in 2014. The creation of a Parkway station here would be a key driver for the economic regeneration of deprived wards throughout Thanet, and should help to reduce the district's welfare bill of £180 million per annum.

- 2.13 KCC's commitment to integrated transport is recognised with the inclusion in LTP3 of a pledge to work closely with partners to deliver improvements to aid interchange at rail stations for people travelling by sustainable modes. This would include improvements to bus access, cycle parking and walking and cycling routes.
- 2.14 LTP3 supports the continuation of KCC's bi-annual Kent Rail Summits which bring together representatives of Southeastern, Network Rail, Passenger Focus and local Rail User Groups (RUGs). These summits address the problems that Kent's rail passengers are experiencing, as well as the benefits of the High Speed services and future aspirations. The views expressed at these events will be used to inform KCC's response to the draft specification for the next Integrated Kent Franchise, which is due to commence in April 2014.

Freight Rail Services

- 2.15 The scope of this Action Plan excludes rail freight, which is an essential part of the wider transport infrastructure in the county. Issues concerning rail freight will be incorporated in KCC's emerging 'Freight Action Plan', which will address all freight transport issues.

3. LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

- 3.1 The Railways Act 1993 privatised British Rail and divided the ownership and maintenance of the infrastructure from the operation of the trains. Ownership of the track, signalling and power systems passed to a new company, Railtrack, and passenger train operations were initially split into 26 separate franchises which were the subject of competitive tendering. Following serious problems in the industry, Railtrack was abolished and replaced by a new public company, Network Rail (NR). Meanwhile the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA), which had been created in 2001 with a remit to improve the overall planning and direction of the railways, was abolished by the Railways Act 2005 which passed most of its functions to the DfT.
- 3.2 The DfT now has overall strategic and financial responsibility for the railways, and is the national authority which procures rail services and projects. A five-year High Level Output Statement specifies what the Government wants to buy from the railway in terms of capacity, performance and safety, and this is accompanied by a Statement of Funds Available and a long-term rail strategy.
- 3.3 NR owns, operates, maintains and develops the main rail network in Great Britain, including tracks, signalling, structures and level crossings. It also owns and operates 18 of the larger stations such as the London termini – others are owned by NR but operated by franchised passenger train operators such as Southeastern.
- 3.4 The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) is responsible for regulating the national rail network operator NR. Since 2006 it has also become a combined safety and economic regulator, responsible for rail safety. The ORR also grants licences to the Train Operating Companies (TOCs) to operate passenger trains.
- 3.5 Passenger TOCs are granted franchises by the DfT, which specifies and lets contracts to TOCs such as Southeastern to run franchised passenger services for a specified period of time. The TOCs and NR also have to undertake track and station access agreements which require ORR approval.
- 3.6 The TOCs do not own any rolling stock – they lease it from Rolling-Stock Companies (ROSCOS) which generally own these assets for a period of about 30 years. Typically a given asset will therefore be leased by its ROSCO to a number of TOCs during the asset's lifetime. This arrangement safeguards the use of new rolling-stock by ensuring that its ownership is retained by its ROSCO, and it also enables TOCs to operate newer rolling stock than would otherwise be the case if the TOC had to own the asset for the limited period of its franchise.

- 3.7 The Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) is a membership based organisation consisting of the TOCs which operate passenger rail services in Great Britain, as well as Eurostar which is not a DfT-regulated operator. ATOC oversees National Rail Enquiries and acts as a trade association for its members. It also facilitates various national concessionary fare schemes and ensures allocation and settlement of ticket revenue between TOCs.
- 3.8 Passenger Focus is the statutory body which represents the concerns of rail passengers. It aims to influence decisions that affect passengers, and to work closely with the rail industry, other passenger groups and the Government to secure improvements to passenger rail services.
- 3.9 Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK) promotes economic activity and improved public transport links in the rural communities of Kent. This body also supports the Kent Community Rail Partnership (CRP) which promotes use of the Sittingbourne-Sheerness and Medway Valley lines in the county. KCC welcomes the support of ACRK and the Kent CRP in our endeavours to improve the quality of rail passenger transport in Kent, which is an essential public service on which so many rural communities depend.
- 3.10 KCC also works closely with the Sussex CRP which supports two of the rural lines operated by Southern which serve Kent: Marshlink between Ashford and Hastings (and beyond) via Ham Street and Appledore; and Oxted to Uckfield via Edenbridge Town, Cowden and Hever.
- 3.11 KCC also calls on the DfT to require the new franchisees for the Southeastern and Southern operating areas to be required as part of the new franchise agreements to work with their respective CRPs, in order to ensure the development of these rural lines in Kent and their continued increase in patronage.
- 3.12 The new IKF should also include a requirement on the new franchise operator to keep open all existing passenger stations in Kent, and not to withdraw regular services from any of them as had originally been proposed by the SRA in January 2005.
- 3.13 To support the CRPs there is an organisation called the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACORP). This body provides many services which support the Community Rail Development Strategy and provides a framework for CRPs to improve the effectiveness of local railways in meeting social, environmental and economic objectives. ACORP is sponsored by the DfT, ATOC, NR, several TOCs, Angel Trains ROSCO and Passenger Focus, and provides expert advice and help towards increasing passenger journeys and reducing costs on rural rail routes.

4. EXISTING SOUTHEASTERN FRANCHISE: 2006-2014

- 4.1 The former Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) published the Integrated Kent Franchise (IKF) Stakeholder Briefing Document (SBD) in January 2005. This set out the requirements of the new franchise for passenger rail services in Kent, which was to run from 1 April 2006 – initially for a period of six years with a possible two-year extension. Southeastern has now met the delivery targets set by the DfT and has been offered, and has accepted, the two-year extension to its initial franchise period from 2012 to 2014.
- 4.2 Prior to the publication of IKF SBD, and following the earlier termination of the Connex South Eastern franchise in November 2003 following that operator's poor record of customer service, punctuality and reliability, the SRA's publicly-owned subsidiary South Eastern Trains (SET) had operated services across south-east London, Kent and East Sussex.
- 4.3 The SRA was very prescriptive. Its IKF SBD set out detailed requirements of level of service, frequency and route pattern. Each station in Kent had the frequency of its service to its specified London termini determined for each peak and off-peak period on Monday to Friday, and while a successful TOC bidding for the franchise could increase this level of service it would do so at its own commercial risk. Some existing services were also excluded from the new IKF – e.g. Maidstone East via West Malling to Cannon Street.
- 4.4 Southeastern Railway was the successful bidder for the IKF, and commenced its delivery of the new franchise on 1 April 2006. At the award stage the DfT was committed to a total revenue subsidy of £585 million over the full period of eight years, with fares to increase at RPI +3% until 2012. Since then, the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) has determined that rail fares throughout England will increase by RPI +3% (instead of RPI +1%) from 2012, so the higher than average fare increases experienced in Kent will in future be matched by those elsewhere in England. The original revenue surplus forecast for the final two years of the franchise between 2012 and 2014 has now been replaced with additional revenue subsidy from the DfT to reflect the economic downturn, and so there is no expectation of any financial surplus from the present operator of the IKF.
- 4.5 Southeastern has made significant investment in the rail network in Kent in recent years. Commitments have included a £17.6 million programme to install high quality CCTV on all trains, passenger-load weighing equipment on trains to tackle overcrowding, and improved passenger information systems and station security. The TOC also plans to raise the benchmark for the number of trains arriving within 5 minutes of scheduled time from 89.2% in 2008 to 93.74% in 2014.



- 4.6 In 2006 Southeastern introduced new early morning and late evening services to target increased demand in the shoulder-peaks, and further improvements were made in 2007 to improve capacity and punctuality. The greatest change was the introduction of a completely new timetable in December 2009 which included the delivery of the full Class 395 High Speed service using HS1 to London St Pancras from a range of stations in Kent, and the consequential recasting of Mainline services to the other London termini. It is this last element of the timetable change which has caused serious concerns among RUGs and Passenger Focus, and it is these concerns – amongst others – that KCC wishes to address in this Rail Action Plan for Kent.
- 4.7 There is one further change to the existing service level agreement which has been proposed by the Mayor of London and Transport for London (TfL) for introduction in December 2012. The Mayor and TfL have requested that additional stops at Denmark Hill and Peckham Rye in south London be included on Maidstone East line trains to Victoria. These proposed stops are intended to replace in part the withdrawal of the south London line service between Victoria and London Bridge from this date, when the London Overground service will be extended from Surrey Quays to Clapham Junction.
- 4.8 KCC has already objected to this proposal in the strongest possible terms, as it would have an extremely detrimental effect on rail passengers using the Maidstone East line. This route has already become the cinderella of the Southeastern rail network; to impoverish it still further with these additional stops and longer journey times would cause serious further hardship for the many Kent residents whose daily journeys to and from London on this line are already far longer than appropriate for the county town of Kent.
- 4.9 There is one further aspect of the current Southeastern franchise which has caused extreme concern throughout Kent. The performance of the franchise operator's services during the recent Winter period has been abysmal, with extended delays, cancellations and even overnight journeys, despite the introduction of conductor rail heating at key locations. But it is not primarily these failures which have caused the anger and frustration of Southeastern's commuters: it is overwhelmingly the almost complete lack of accurate and up-to-date information about the delays and cancellations which has caused the greatest complaints.
- 4.10 Responsibility for the provision of passenger information rests with both Southeastern and Network Rail. The poor performance of both organisations in respect of the provision of accurate passenger information during the Winter of 2010/11 clearly needs to be improved in the future. Both Southeastern and Network Rail must radically improve their provision of information, ensuring that it is relevant, accurate and up-to-date when inclement Winter weather strikes again. Anything less will be regarded, not just by KCC, but by stakeholders across the county, as totally unacceptable.

- 4.11 There is also a need for Southeastern's website to be radically improved. While neighbouring suburban and home county rail operators such as South West Trains and Southern displayed accurate information on their websites and at stations about the operation of services, Southeastern initially provided totally inadequate information on its own website which often contradicted that which it had provided for National Rail enquiries on theirs. Specifically, even the 'improved' website - which was introduced after the onset of bad weather in early December 2010 - provides tabs for each rail route, but these do not lead the customer to information about their chosen rail route. Elsewhere the website has a single sheet of information listing delays and cancellations of trains for the whole Southeastern network, and this generic list is in neither route nor time order. The website format used by other rail operators needs to be adopted by Southeastern so that customers can chose a rail route tab and be led to an ordered list for that route alone.
- 4.12 The issue of passenger compensation following disruption to rail services has been the subject of heated debate. The current franchise specification requires Southeastern to reimburse season ticket holders with a 5% refund if the TOC fails to operate at least 82% of its services within +5 minutes or -1 minute of scheduled time. During 2010 Southeastern's punctuality record, calculated on this basis, was 82.04%, and so the TOC was not obliged to make compensation payments for the disruption during the adverse Winter weather. Independent auditing of these figures has confirmed that they are accurate. Since then Southeastern has agreed to introduce a new 'Delay Repay' compensation scheme from Summer 2011. This will enable any passenger whose complete rail journey is delayed by more than 30 minutes to receive compensation, and KCC welcomes this initiative which will clearly benefit passengers.
- 4.13 KCC now strongly recommends that the DfT changes both the present franchise service specification and the new IKF specification to require the TOC to report all performance indicators separately for High Speed and Mainline, just as is done now for Mainline and Metro services. This would present a much more balanced performance report, and demonstrate the relative reliability of High Speed services in adverse weather conditions compared with the relative unreliability of Mainline services. It is right that commuters who purchase tickets for peak period travel should receive reasonable compensation when the service for which they have paid in advance does not operate within the agreed measurements of punctuality.
- 4.14 Finally, KCC warmly welcomes the latest initiative by Southeastern to introduce a peak period High Speed service between Maidstone West and St Pancras calling at Strood, Gravesend and Stratford. The DfT has given approval for this new service which will commence on 23 May 2011. There will be three morning peak departures from Maidstone West at 0656, 0726 and 0756, and three evening peak departures from St Pancras at 1714, 1744 and 1814. This High Speed service will provide a welcome relief for Maidstone commuters, offering for the first time a direct link to St Pancras and a faster journey time to London than the existing Victoria service.

5. ECONOMIC GROWTH AND A NEW RAIL SERVICE FOR KENT

5.1 The SRA had recognised the importance of the influence of local authorities in determining the pattern of rail services that were included in the original IKF SBD when bids were invited for the existing franchise:

“The SRA is aware of the aspirations of regional and local authorities in relation to redevelopment and inward investment. It is essential, therefore, that in the design of new railway services such as that arising from the completion of the CTRL [now HS1], full account is taken of plans for future land use and economic activity. The development of a new franchise that can not only provide services on the existing network, but also offer new domestic links between Kent and London on the CTRL, can only be viewed as a major advance in service provision for the whole of the region.”

5.2 ‘21st Century Kent’ identifies the main development areas in Kent and the major infrastructure and other measures needed to support future growth. At the district level, Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) provide a long-term vision and objectives for an area, ensuring that new development is in the right place to meet people’s needs whilst minimising the impact on existing communities, transport and the environment.

5.3 KCC’s principal framework for economic growth is titled ‘Unlocking Kent’s Potential: Opportunities and Challenges (2009-2020)’. This framework identifies the key issues that must be addressed to deliver long-lasting economic growth in the county, and establishes a series of priority areas for action by KCC and its partners for the next 20-25 years.

5.4 ‘Unlocking Kent’s Potential’ redefines regeneration to include not only economic growth but also transformation in education and skills, culture, civic spirit, tackling climate change and improving housing conditions. It sets a clear direction for achieving economic growth and diversifying employment in Kent, and it recognises the key role of transport in the successful delivery of all these objectives.

5.5 The provision of a new rail service for Kent is therefore critical to the county’s regeneration objectives, especially in East Kent where the county’s areas of greatest deprivation are located, as it will provide the primary mode of public passenger transport which should be a driver for new employment, education and business opportunities. This is especially critical in Thanet, where the proposed Thanet Parkway should provide the incentive required for the expansion of Manston Airport and for new economic growth in this district; in Dover, where the aspiration of Dover District Council to have an under the hour service between Dover and London on High Speed, together with enhanced parking at Dover Priory, will be a significant benefit to Dover Pride and to the regeneration of the town; and in Deal and Sandwich, where an improved rail service to these coastal towns should stimulate the local economy in this part of the county.

KCC's aspirations for the new Kent franchise are therefore rooted in the opportunities and challenges set out in 'Unlocking Kent's Potential'.



6. TOWARDS THE NEW FRANCHISE: 2014+

- 6.1 The award of the new franchise agreement for the passenger rail network in south-east London and Kent will be made by the Secretary of State for Transport following a recommendation from the DfT. Between now and April 2014 the DfT will engage in extensive stakeholder consultation, and KCC will have a key role to play in this process as the principal transport authority in the franchise area. To this end we shall also engage with our neighbouring transport authorities within the new Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), and also with those in Greater London, so as to ensure the delivery of the most effective rail service for the new franchise within the budgetary constraints that will be determined by the DfT.

Rail Action Plan for Kent

- 6.2 This Rail Action Plan for Kent (RAPK) therefore sets out the objectives that KCC wishes to see incorporated in the new franchise. In doing so KCC does not profess to be expert in the operation of the rail network, nor proficient in the most economic allocation of rolling-stock and crew resources. Rather we seek to represent the aspirations of the people of Kent for a new rail service which reflects the needs of our county, drives economic growth, meets the targets of our Growth Areas at Ashford and Thames Gateway (Kent) and of our Growth Points at Dover and Maidstone, and ensures the provision of a reliable, useful, safe, clean and punctual railway which meets the current and future business, education, employment and leisure needs of the people of Kent.
- 6.3 KCC's aspirations for the new franchise therefore seek to realise these objectives. As always, a balance must be struck between that which is desired and that which is deliverable, and this balance will inevitably be determined by the level of revenue subsidy provided by the DfT for the period of the new franchise. The current economic climate will clearly have a significant impact on this, but KCC supports the DfT announcement in January 2011 that longer period rail franchises will now be awarded, generally for up to 15 years. The aspirations contained within the RAPK should not therefore be entirely circumscribed by the DfT's current financial constraints.



KCC's Key Requirements

6.4 KCC's key requirements for each route of the new franchises serving Kent are listed below. They do not refer to every section of route within Kent, but reflect the principal causes of concern raised by MPs, KCC Members, Rail User Groups and individuals before, during and after our Rail Summits held in March and October 2010:

- (i) There should be a regular peak-period Mainline service to designated West End and City stations on each principal rail route in Kent. By West End is meant Charing Cross or Victoria; by City is meant Blackfriars or Cannon Street. There should also be a regular off-peak period service to a designated West End station from each major town in Kent. In addition there should be a regular peak and off-peak service to Stratford and St Pancras from stations served by High Speed;
- (ii) Connectivity at Dover Priory between Mainline from Sandwich / Deal and High Speed to St Pancras must be improved from the present 49 minute wait during off-peak periods. The extension of High Speed from Dover Priory to Ramsgate via Deal / Sandwich should also be included in the new franchise specification as this can be delivered within existing rolling-stock resources;
- (iii) Connectivity at Ashford between Mainline from Dover / Folkestone and Mainline via Maidstone East has already have been improved off-peak towards London from the December 2010 timetable change – this principle should now be applied to peak periods in both directions; also need for improved connections between Marshlink service (operated by Southern) and Southeastern services;
- (iv) Connectivity at Sittingbourne between the Sheerness branch and High Speed / Mainline services needs to be improved, removing the existing long connection periods;
- (v) Journey times on Mainline between stations on the North Kent line and Victoria / Cannon Street have been greatly increased with the new timetable – there needs to be a realignment of the station stopping pattern to reduce these journey times; the peak period High Speed service east of Faversham should however be retained, as these journeys would still need to operate as empty coaching stock if they were withdrawn from the public timetable;
- (vi) Network Rail has engaged with KCC in funding GRIP (Governance of Rail Investment Process) 1-2 studies into route enhancement schemes for Ashford-Thamet with the potential of saving up to eight minutes journey time between Ashford and the proposed Thanet Parkway, which would support opportunities for growth following the planned closure of Pfizer's by reducing journey times on High Speed and Mainline between London and Thanet; and Ashford-Hastings

(Marshlink) where KCC will continue to press for electrification of Ashford-Ore as a longer-term objective for improving services on Marshlink, although this project is not included in Kent Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS);

- (vii) Parkway Stations – ‘Growth without Gridlock’ proposed development of parkway stations at Thanet for Manston Airport and Isle of Thanet – Network Rail has already produced GRIP stage 1-2 report with KCC support for the parkway station, and funding is being pursued by KCC through the Regional Growth Fund (RGF), local businesses and developers including a contribution towards the upgrading of the route between Ashford and Thanet; Maidstone – for park & rail to/from Maidstone East and London on Mainline service; and Westenhanger - off M20 junction 11;
- (viii) The present level of service provided on the Maidstone East line is completely unacceptable, and the new franchise must address this omission above all else – initially there should be an hourly service all day between Maidstone East and Blackfriars (using paths currently allocated to half of the First Capital Connect service from Sevenoaks via Otford) so as to provide a direct service all day to the City; this should be replaced by an all day half-hourly Thameslink (Key Output 2) service to Blackfriars, Farringdon, St Pancras and north from 2018, with the Maidstone East line becoming the principal Kent route for the full Thameslink service south of the Thames;
- (ix) Southeastern is due to commence operation of High Speed peak period services along the Medway Valley line from St Pancras via Stratford, Gravesend and Strood to Maidstone West from May 2011 – the new franchise should include this service all day, with additional stops at Maidstone Barracks and Snodland to fill the serious gap that exists in rail provision for the county town of Kent; KCC also supports the aspiration of Medway Council for a new station at a new location in Rochester, provided that this can be funded externally as its redevelopment is not included in the Kent RUS;
- (x) The Cannon Street service from Hastings via Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Sevenoaks should be retained and not replaced by new Thameslink (Key Output 2) service in 2018 which would anyway only operate as far south as Tunbridge Wells – principal Kent termini for Thameslink (Key Output 2) service should be Maidstone East (via Otford and West Malling) and Sevenoaks (via Otford and Bat & Ball); the planned reduction in paths to Cannon Street post-2018 from 25 trains per hour (tph) to 22tph should be met by an equitable reduction in Cannon Street services between Metro and all Mainline Kent / Hastings services;

- (xi) Through Gatwick – Tonbridge – Ashford hourly all day service in partnership with Gatwick Airport Ltd and operator of new franchise for Southern operating area could commence in 2015 – not part of IKF but would affect route between Tonbridge and Ashford; KCC will continue to work with Gatwick Airport Ltd, Network Rail and existing franchisee to deliver this objective;
- (xii) KCC intends to lobby Government to ensure that a requirement to introduce Smartcard ticketing is included in the new IKF. This would provide the potential for integrated bus/rail ticketing;
- (xiii) The County Council would also expect to see ongoing improvements to the station environment (cleanliness, comfort, security, information, customer service etc) and to integration with other modes of transport (i.e. the whole journey experience); there is also a pressing need for increased parking capacity at many stations, coupled with on-street parking controls by local authorities on roads in immediate vicinity of stations;
- (xiv) The planned growth in Thames Gateway (Kent) and Ashford will require a significant increase in capacity on High Speed services to Stratford (for City Docklands via Docklands Light Railway) and St Pancras. This Action Plan includes in its proposed service specification an increase in the peak High Speed service from 2 trains per hour (tph) to 4tph between Ashford, Ebbsfleet, Stratford and St Pancras to meet this increased demand beyond 2014. As this increase would require additional class 395 rolling stock it is an aspiration for future delivery, but is included now to meet the demand for growth in High Speed rail passenger journeys which will result from the planned housing development in Kent's two Growth Areas between now and 2026; also proposed for delivery during the course of the new franchise is an increase in off-peak High Speed service from 1tph to 2tph (divide/join at Ashford) to Canterbury West, Folkestone West, Folkestone Central and Dover Priory;
- (xv) KCC also intends to seek assurances from the DfT and the rail industry that all available options to acquire modern rolling stock, both electric and diesel, are explored, so as to provide the new Integrated Kent Franchise, and other franchises serving the county, with sufficient resources which will enable it to deliver the enhanced rail service for Kent set out in this Action Plan.

6.5 Appendix 2 lists the recommended service levels for each route, and incorporates these key requirements for peak and off-peak periods on Monday to Friday. While the recommended service levels are not listed for Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays, the intention would be for these to be broadly the same as today.

- 6.6 KCC also recognises the need for the level of rail fares charged in Kent to offer better value for money, so as to encourage economic growth throughout the county. While KCC recognises that regulated rail fares policy is determined by Government, the County Council will continue to press for a reduction in the annual level of increase in regulated fares charged across Kent, which is currently set by the DfT at RPI +3%.
- 6.7 The County Council will also seek a change in the current regulated fares policy which permits the franchisee to raise fares above this level by a further 5%, provided that an equal number of fares are lowered by an equivalent percentage. It is this combination of formulae which has resulted in the excessive fare increases in Kent of up to 13.8% (see below); this element of fares policy must be reversed from January 2012 so that the maximum increase in the county is the same as elsewhere in England at RPI +3%.
- 6.8 Political pressure must also be used to change the fares policy in Greater London, whereby the Mayor for London and Transport for London are able to require a cap of RPI +2% in the capital. The effect of this in counties such as Kent is an actual increase of RPI +4% (before the further 5% on many fares referred to above). It is inappropriate for Greater London to be given such special treatment, and a level fares increase of RPI +3% should apply throughout the Southeastern franchise.
- 6.9 It is also imperative that the franchise operator ensures that all passengers pay the appropriate fare, whether on High Speed, Mainline or rural CRP supported lines. Those who seek to evade paying fares should be subject to the most severe penalties, as they directly contribute to the cost of the fares paid by the honest majority of passengers who have to make up the lost revenue.

7. NETWORK RAIL AND THE KENT RUS: PRINCIPAL PROPOSED ROUTE ENHANCEMENTS IN CP4 (2009-2014) & CP5 (2014-2019)

- 7.1 The Kent Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) was published by NR in January 2010. It considers how best to meet capacity challenges on the railway network in Kent between now and 2020. It also covers other passenger services in Kent currently operated by Southern between Ashford and Hastings. The period planned by the Kent RUS covers NR's Control Period 4 (CP4) between 2009 and 2014, and Control Period 5 (CP5) between 2014 and 2019. The first part of the plans in the Kent RUS is therefore planned for delivery within the period of the current franchise operated by Southeastern.
- 7.2 Schemes planned for delivery in CP4 include increasing capacity by means of platform lengthening, with all high peak trains via Tonbridge likely to be 12-car formations within the next few years; some further 8-car operations on the Maidstone East line; and further 12-car formations via Rochester, Gravesend and Dartford are anticipated. Due to platform length constraints at critical sites such as Charing Cross and Tunbridge Wells, all Mainline lengthening requires use of class 375 rolling stock with selective door opening.
- 7.3 Also in CP4, the major East Kent resignalling scheme will commence in December 2011, initially involving the remodelling of the track layout in the Faversham, Margate and Ramsgate areas. The next stage will cover the constrained section of railway through the Medway towns, where it is anticipated that there will be an increase in frequency of trains in the Rochester to Gillingham corridor together with increased turnback capacity.
- 7.4 In the latter half of CP4 a period of significant and extended changes to services across a wide area will commence, linked to the Thameslink Programme remodelling works at London Bridge. Current expectations are that the remodelling will be delivered in two phases. The first of these is envisaged to involve Charing Cross trains being unable to call at London Bridge, while the second is expected to involve Cannon Street trains unable to call. The completion of the Thameslink Programme works at London Bridge, currently scheduled for 2018, will involve an extensive recast of services across Kent and other counties.
- 7.5 There is also a pressing need for a coherent strategy for Ashford International station that satisfies all capacity and performance requirements for High Speed, Mainline, Gatwick, Marshlink and International rail services beyond 2014. NR has already proposed the future conversion of one of the international platforms for High Speed and Mainline domestic use, together all the associated infrastructure changes to the station that would be required, and this option needs to be assessed if Ashford International is to be fit for purpose to meet the increasing demands made upon it by all these passenger rail services.

7.6 The high level of passenger numbers using the busiest stations in Kent should also be a key factor in the determination of future plans for station and route enhancement. The table below demonstrates the very high levels of use at the busiest West Kent stations served by Mainline and Metro, and at the most popular East Kent stations served by High Speed:

Kent Stations With footfall > 1.5M	Footfall 2009-10
Tonbridge	3,983,778
Sevenoaks	3,758,990
Tunbridge Wells	3,414,482
Dartford	3,033,670
Ashford International	2,756,090
Gravesend	2,502,232
Sittingbourne	2,034,546
Maidstone East	1,889,886

(Source: Office of the Rail Regulator)

7.7 In summary, the Kent RUS proposes the following principal interventions between now and 2020, although it should be noted that most of these would be dependent on funding and rolling stock procurement by the existing and new TOCs of the IKF:

- (i) implement CP4 committed schemes as planned, including Thameslink and train lengthening;
- (ii) commence detailed development of post-Thameslink timetable, with peak services generally modified to run at 15 or 30 minute intervals;
- (iii) further train lengthening in CP5 with approx. 100 extra coaches to ensure all high peak trains and the busiest shoulder peak trains run with maximum capacity;
- (iv) improve access to stations and integration with other transport modes
- (v) prioritise incremental journey time improvements.

8. PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- 8.1 KCC has invited extensive public and stakeholder engagement in the delivery of its rail Action Plan for Kent (RAPK).
- 8.2 The first stage has been the circulation of the draft RAPK to MPs, KCC Members, District Councils, neighbouring councils, Southeastern, Southern, Network Rail (NR), RUGs and interested individuals in December 2010. Over 60 responses were received by the end of February 2011, and most of the issues raised have been incorporated in the final version. The Rail Action Plan will be presented to Cabinet for approval, and then to the third KCC Rail summit in April 2011.
- 8.3 Once approved by KCC, the RAPK will form the basis of the County Council's formal submission to the DfT for the renewal of the franchise for the south-east London and Kent passenger rail service from April 2014.
- 8.4 KCC welcomes the interest and participation of the RUGs and interested individuals, and a summary of their contributions to date is at Appendix 3. While the majority of the recommendations from the RUGs and individuals have been incorporated in the proposals contained in the RAPK, it has not been possible to incorporate all of them. KCC is concerned to ensure that our proposals for the new franchise are deliverable and achievable, and inevitably some aspirations cannot be included.
- 8.5 The DfT's consultation process is expected to begin in 2011 or 2012, and so KCC's RAPK is appropriately timed to ensure our participation in that process. There will be much further stakeholder and public engagement by the DfT between then and the announcement of the new franchisee, which can be expected at some time in the latter half of 2013.
- 8.6 Whichever company or consortium is successful in their bid for the new IKF, KCC will work closely with them in the period between the announcement of their bid and the commencement of their new franchise operation on 1 April 2014.
- 8.7 KCC also intends to continue close collaboration with NR, who have already engaged positively with plans for investment and route enhancements and whose CP5 also commences in 2014. The desire of KCC to work closely with both NR and Southeastern Railway is being reciprocated and we welcome this ongoing stakeholder engagement.



9. INTERNATIONAL RAIL SERVICES

- 9.1 KCC intends to continue to work with other stakeholders to ensure that Kent remains well connected by rail with Europe. There are four principal ways in which Kent has the potential to be connected by rail with mainland Europe, and KCC will continue to be committed to their development for the benefit of all the residents of Kent.

Eurostar

- 9.2 First, Eurostar commenced services between London, Paris and Brussels in November 1994, and these trains started to serve Ashford International when it opened in 1996. The service from Ashford was initially excellent, with several trains each day to both Paris and Brussels. However, when Ebbsfleet International opened in 2006 the service was drastically reduced, to just three trains each day to and from Paris and none at all to and from Brussels. Following a campaign involving KCC, Ashford BC, Shepway DC and local MPs, and also due to an increase in passenger numbers between London and Brussels, Eurostar reintroduced one daily through service between London, Ashford and Brussels in 2009. The timetable change in 2010 provided a marginally better service between Ashford, Lille and Brussels on Saturdays and Sundays, offering the possibility of day return journeys to both European cities, but diminished the travel options at Ebbsfleet where the last departure to any continental destination is now 1315 every day. KCC will continue to lobby for the retention and expansion of Eurostar services from both Ashford International and Ebbsfleet International, including the now planned through services to Amsterdam in 2014 with the possibility of Geneva in future years.

Deutsche Bahn

- 9.3 Second, following the introduction of competition on High Speed 1 by the EU in 2010, Deutsche Bahn (DB) has indicated its willingness to operate a through service between Frankfurt, Cologne, Brussels and London, with a portion from Rotterdam and Amsterdam joining at Brussels. A test train was operated through to London St Pancras in October 2010 and the Channel Tunnel Inter-Governmental Commission appears to have viewed the test favourably. The issues are safety regulations which restrict the use of trains with distributed power as trains need to be able to be split in two in the event of an emergency, and evacuation procedures which currently require whole trains to be at least 375m long so as to enable passengers to move through the length of the train in order to access the emergency exits to the service tunnel in the event of such an evacuation. If authority is given for DB to operate a through service from Germany it could commence in 2013. KCC will lobby for this service to stop at one of the county's international stations, preferably Ashford International as it is the only one fully connected to the domestic rail network in the county.

Trans-Manche Metro

- 9.4 Third, KCC will continue to participate in the project known as Trans-Manche Metro (TMM) in partnership with Conseil Regional Nord-Pas de Calais. This project is part of the wider EU funded Interreg IV North West Europe – Regions of Connected Knowledge (ROCK) project, in which KCC has replaced the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) in the work formally undertaken by that body. KCC is committed to part fund the development of the business case for TMM, together with partners in Nord-Pas de Calais and with EU Interreg IV funding. The concept of TMM is to link together the regions of Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais by providing a regular through rail service that would start at London St Pancras and serve Ebbsfleet, Ashford, Calais Frethun, Lille and Brussels. This would facilitate regular movement of passengers for business, education, employment and leisure purposes, and would offer new opportunities to a wide range of Kent business and educational institutes which would be able to develop EU connections served by a frequent international rail service.

Eurotunnel

- 9.5 Fourth, Eurotunnel plc will continue to provide their very successful cross-Channel car, coach and freight carrying shuttle train service between Folkestone and Calais. The company has recently broken its own records of the number of passengers and vehicles carried, and provides an essential part of the total rail service between Kent and the European mainland.
- 9.6 The international dimension of Kent's rail services is paramount to the future economic and demographic development of the county. Reliable rail links to and from our European mainland neighbours will provide the necessary increase in business, education, employment and leisure opportunities that KCC wants to see for the people of Kent, and we intend to ensure that KCC is at the forefront of all these international rail developments by securing the best deal for Kent.

10. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 The renewal of the Integrated Kent Franchise (IKF) in 2014 will be a pivotal moment in the provision of rail services in Kent. KCC intends to be at the forefront of the DfT's stakeholder engagement process to ensure that Kent is offered the best possible rail service beyond 2014 within the budgetary and physical constraints available.

10.2 This Rail Action Plan for Kent (RAPK) will form the basis of KCC's response to the DfT's consultation on the new IKF, and we shall continue to consult with our own stakeholders and RUGs to ensure that as wide a range of opinion as possible will contribute to the final presentation of Kent's case for the future of rail in the county.

10.3 **The following recommendations are therefore made to the KCC Cabinet:**

- (i) To approve the Rail Action Plan for Kent (RAPK) as the basis for KCC's participation in the DfT's consultation process for the new IKF;**
 - (ii) To present the approved version of RAPK to the third KCC Rail Summit in April 2011;**
 - (iii) To present the approved RAPK to the DfT as the basis of KCC's contribution to the consultation process for the new IKF;**
 - (iv) To recommend that the DfT changes both the present franchise service specification and the new IKF specification to require the franchisee to report all performance indicators separately for High Speed, Mainline and Metro services;**
 - (v) To recommend that the DfT, with effect from January 2012, changes the current regulated fares policy which permits the franchisee to raise fares above the base level by a further 5%, so that the maximum increase in Kent equals that elsewhere in England at RPI +3%;**
 - (vi) To ensure that KCC's interests are fully represented in the final franchise service level specification for the new IKF;**
 - (vii) To continue to consult widely with MPs, KCC Members, district councils, town and parish councils, neighbouring authorities, RUGs and interested individuals so as to ensure as wide a range as possible of stakeholder engagement within Kent;**
 - (viii) To engage with the chosen operator of the IKF well before commencement of the new franchise on 1 April 2014.**
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SOURCES - in chronological order

Integrated Kent Franchise – Stakeholder Briefing Document (Strategic Rail Authority, London, January 2005)

Memorandum of Understanding regarding the setting up of a European Network of High Speed Regions (Kent County Council, Region Nord-Pas de Calais, Gemeente Breda, BrabantStad - Brussels, February 2009)

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Kent Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) (Network Rail, London, January 2010)

21st Century Kent – A Blueprint for the County's Future (Sir Terry Farrell, London, January 2010)

Ashford to Ramsgate journey time enhancements – GRIP 1 stage (Network Rail, London, May 2010)

Local Transport Plan for Kent 2011-2016 – Draft for Consultation (Kent County Council, September 2010)

Kent Rail Summits – Representations received before, during and after (KCC, Maidstone, March 2010 and October 2010)

Growth Without Gridlock – A Transport Delivery Plan for Kent (Kent County Council, Maidstone, December 2010)

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