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The recent easyJet response has distressed our members in the community on the basis, that this airline has taken its commercial interests first before some of the challenges of the South East, such as the substantial pockets of deprivation across the South Coast particularly Hastings, Croydon and Wandsworth that Gatwick helps to address.

We look forward to your decision and do hope that it is a positive response for Gatwick Airport,

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[REDACTED]



# Submission to the Airports Commission Consultation led by Sir Howard Davies



**East Sussex Rail Alliance**



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ESRAprom10f/03/February/2015



## **East Sussex Rail Alliance submission to the Airport Commission Consultation Sir Howard Davies**

# **RAIL DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS IN SUPPORT OF GATWICK AIRPORT EXPANSION**

This submission by East Sussex Rail Alliance is in support of the expansion plans submitted for Gatwick Airport and the proposed surface access strategy. It specifically relates to rail improvements to support efficient and reliable access to meet airport passenger and staff needs and support balanced regional growth. Gatwick Airport is a major contributor to South Coast regeneration and connectivity and continued improvement in rail access is critical for connecting communities and supporting the regional economy.

## **ESRA – Who we are**

The East Sussex Rail Alliance (ESRA) is a volunteer umbrella organisation, which together with its regional affiliates, represents some 167 million passenger journeys a year. A large proportion of these journeys use the Brighton Main Line, routed via Gatwick Airport railway station and onwards to London. Furthermore, Gatwick is a major regional employer and driver for the economy of East and West Sussex, Kent and Surrey.

ESRA leads the following South Coast Passenger Action Groups:

- Bexhill Rail Action Group
- East Coastway Commuter Group
- St Leonards and Hastings Rail Improvement Programme
- MarshLink Action Group– Rye
- Three Oaks and Winchelsea Action for Rail Transport

Its principal regional affiliates are:

- Brighton Line Commuters
- East Surrey Transport Committee
- Redhill, Reigate, and District Rail Users Association
- West London Line Group.



## ESRA – What we do

ESRA campaigns vigorously for better rail services throughout East and West Sussex and neighbouring counties, with a primary focus on coastal routes between Ashford and Brighton, and London-bound routes from all parts of East Sussex and Kent.

Some areas of East Sussex suffer high levels of deprivation, e.g. Hastings, and improved public transport is a key enabler to regeneration and access to employment. ESRA has played a critical role in gaining support for the major upgrade and electrification of the single track line between Hastings and Ashford to High Speed standard, which by 2022 will allow a Javelin service to run between Hastings/Bexhill and London, reducing journey times from Hastings to London to 68 minutes.

ESRA has proposals and lobbies for other important improvements to the rail services in its area and the justification for these is described in more detail in this paper.

## ESRA's interest in Gatwick Airport

ESRA recognises that expansion of Gatwick Airport, including a second runway and new passenger terminal, would lead to increased passenger and staff journeys, which will need to be accommodated on the road and rail networks. The delivery of improvements to rail infrastructure is already planned by Network Rail for CP6 through its Sussex Route Study and is necessary to balance the needs of commuters, leisure travellers and airport users in peak and off peak periods. ESRA supports Network Rail's view that investment on the Brighton Main Line and associated routes is essential even without expansion at Gatwick and that rail users to and from the airport are important to support cost effective off peak services. Network Rail's proposed enhancements, which would be completed before a second runway is operational, deliver sufficient capacity to accommodate forecast background commuter and airport-related passenger growth as well as improving connectivity. These are currently part of the Sussex Route Study work due for consultation by the end of 2014.

The economic benefits from Gatwick Airport expansion would improve the business case for major improvements to the rail infrastructure by generating more off peak demand and more out-of-London commuting. These would benefit not just users of Gatwick Airport but the entire coastal community, which has, in recent years, largely failed to see the benefits of the economic growth achieved in other parts of the South East. This is due, in part, to a lack of investment in transport networks.

ESRA has identified the following issues for rail through expansion at Gatwick Airport:

- A need to optimise the rail catchment area for **staff** (assumed within a one hour commute time) to extend the benefits of the proposed increase in airport-related employment to include South Coast communities
- A need to improve journey times and service quality for **airport passengers** to



make rail travel to Gatwick as attractive as possible and encourage mode shift

- A need to improve rail services across the whole coastal strip, in addition to investment on the Brighton Main Line, to take best advantage of the regional economic benefits of Gatwick expansion.

## **Related South Coast rail development needs**

Alongside the potential expansion at Gatwick, demand for improved rail transport in the sub-region is increasing as a result of other factors, such as:

- East Sussex County Council's (ESCC) strategy for residential housing and industrial and commercial development, including 7000 new homes in Wealden District and 4000 homes in both Rother District and Eastbourne Borough. These would benefit from improved rail connections and station facilities with enhanced road access as well as the provision of fast and convenient rail services for employees to reach their places of work. ESCC, having established a strategic Rail Development Plan, is keen to exploit rail development as a proven economic regeneration mechanism.
- East Sussex County and other Councils that already support Gatwick Airport expansion, together with the Airport, are concerned to optimise employment and commercial benefits for the South Coastal economic areas as a supplement to those from Crawley, Croydon and northwards – especially where there are areas of low employment. In particular, growth at Gatwick supports the commercial enterprise being encouraged in the Eastbourne, Bexhill and Hastings regeneration plans and programmes, backed by the prime colleges offering apprentice and other service qualifications.

These local initiatives will be enhanced by focussed improvements to the South Coast rail transport system, which has been underinvested in for many decades.

Brighton has fast rail links to London and Gatwick but other significant population centres have much longer journey times to London, depriving them of the spending power brought by convenient commuting to the capital. Rail connections along the coast suffer from infrastructure gaps at Brighton and Eastbourne, and with the final eastern section relying on the non-electrified single-track from Hastings to Ashford.

All this is despite the continuing rise in passenger use which is the highest in half a century and is still growing. These factors will also need to be reflected in the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise awarded to Govia Thameslink until 2021, which will oversee the completion of the Thameslink Programme key outputs that increase the range of destinations directly connected to Gatwick Airport railway station and available to South Coast rail travellers.



## ESRA Proposals

A number of short term infrastructure upgrades and longer term enhancements to the South East rail network are already under way or planned by Network Rail. These include the London Bridge major rebuild, plans for reducing bottlenecks at East Croydon, Clapham Junction and Victoria, and an upgrade to the signalling of the Brighton Main Line and parts of the South Coast route. These will transform capacity and are accompanied by major rolling stock and station investment.

Most of these upgrades are focussed on north-south access between Brighton and London and ESRA believes that further investment to support economic growth along the South Coast would enhance a successful expansion of Gatwick Airport. This would respond to the issues described above and support planned improvements by Network Rail.

ESRA's proposals, listed below, fall into three broad categories:

- **Journey time reduction** This typically requires changes to the permanent way, e.g. to provide a through route bypassing a terminus or interchange station, and can make both commuter and visitor journeys substantially more attractive
- **Capacity improvement** Improved line intersections and relieving physical constraints can improve efficiency and mitigate pinch-points whilst longer platforms can allow more passengers on a specific path
- **Service Quality improvements** This category covers a variety of opportunities to improve the passenger experience such as improved resilience by provision of diverse routing, new and improved rolling stock and new Parkway stations which can make rail travel more attractive to car users, especially those outside town centres. ESRA supports the Network Rail operation to convert from DC to AC traction to increase capacity, improve efficiency and operation.

Project Improvement	Budget	Benefits
Willingdon Chord	£30 million	More capacity to areas of growth Eastbourne Hailsham Triangle – North East Rother
Parkway Station – Eastbourne	£50 million	Local transport interchanges to attract a modular shift from car to local transport. Eg UNO 1 Stagecoach bus connectivity
Parkway Station – Brighton (nr Patcham)	£50 million	Local Transport interchanges and park and rail into Central

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		Brighton.
Keymer Junction North and South Flyover or Dive Under spurs (nr Wivelsfield where line joins BML)	£50 million	Enable East Coastway services to join the BML without conflict towards Brighton and London. This will enable services rail and freight to travel East to West Coastway without going into Brighton

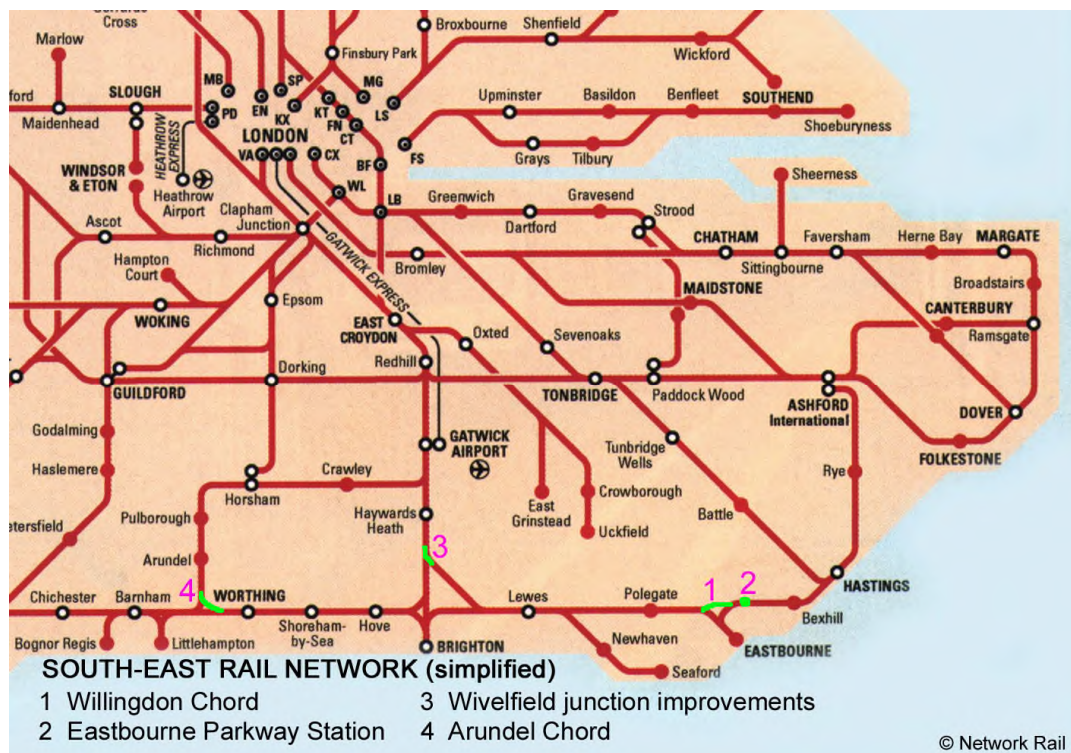


**Artist's impression of Eastbourne Parkway Station**





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## Network Rail Context

The South Coast east of Southampton has largely failed to match the levels of prosperity achieved elsewhere in the London commuter belt lying to the north, with Brighton the sole significant exception. Some areas, notably around Hastings, are among the most deprived in the South East Region, putting an ongoing burden on public finances and is now recognized by an EU deprived area status. This economic pattern reflects the inherited rail network along the coast.

Network Rail's Sussex Route Study will form the basis of their bid for CP6 funding covering most of this part of the national network and ESRA believes this is essential investment for the sub-region. The proposed schemes amount to around £1billion of infrastructure enhancement, targeted on capacity constraints such as Windmill Bridge Junction, East Croydon, Clapham Junction and flat junctions along the Brighton Main Line. These focus on the most congested parts of the network, where peak hour flows are highest and where more capacity or removal of constraints is urgently needed. These improvements are supported by ESRA but do not address connectivity and access issues for the South Coast to the same extent as commuter routes to London. Better access from the South Coast to alternative employment centres and interchanges, such as Brighton and Gatwick Airport, is an important consideration and will help support a balanced regional economy.



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Current plans for improvement of infrastructure (such as the London Bridge rebuild, plans for reducing bottlenecks at East Croydon, Clapham Junction and Victoria) coincide with a 40 year upgrade of the signalling of Brighton Main Line and parts of the South Coast route. This will achieve a transformational upgrade of capacity and reliability in the most efficient way possible. Also the proposed expansion of Gatwick Airport station capacity, currently being developed, shows a commitment from Network Rail to improving quality at one of the busiest stations on the network. All this is being brought together in the Sussex Route Study and subsequent Route Utilisation Strategy.

Against this background the proposed expansion of Gatwick Airport provides an opportunity to stimulate investment that would benefit the economies of both East and West Sussex and ensuring the benefits of airport growth is spread throughout the region. Furthermore, the increased trip making and access to jobs at an expanded Gatwick would support the business case for infrastructure improvements that address many of the limitations in the South Coast rail network. This contribution to the wider regional economy in support of the regeneration of deprived areas is in contrast to the proposals for Heathrow, which concentrate development on an already over-developed corridor and limits the wider economic benefit, focussing only on airport trips.

## ESRA RECOMMENDATION

**ESRA supports the transformation in air travel proposed by Gatwick Airport, supported by enhanced rail access as proposed by Network Rail, and recommends an early commencement to the rail improvement plans as outlined above as well as further development of proposals that link the South Coast communities to employment opportunities at the airport.**



## **APPENDIX**

### **Factors behind the ESRA submission**

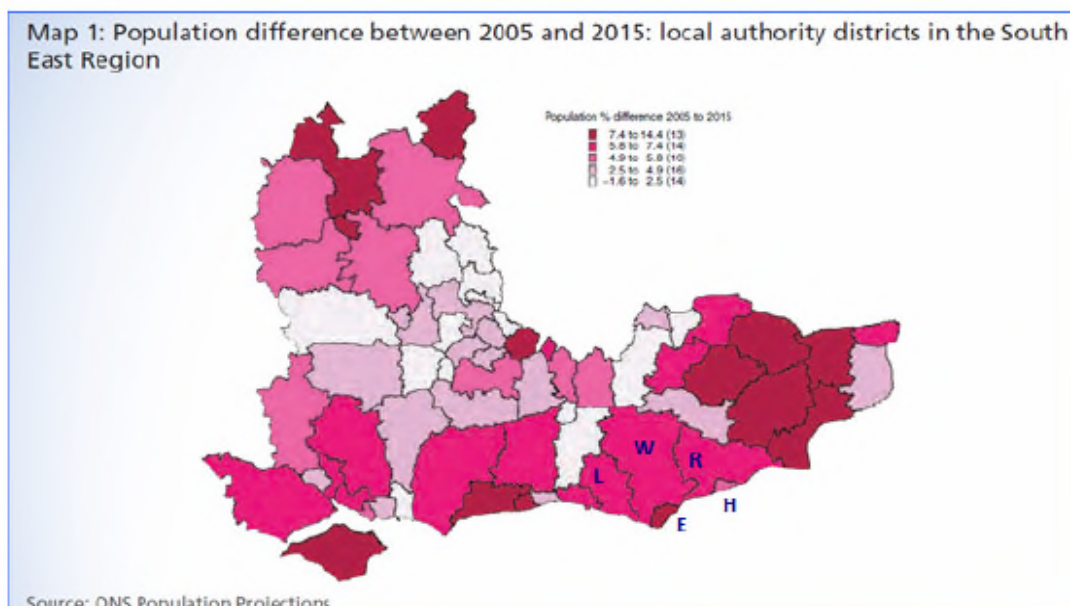
#### **Population and Employment Growth – South Coast**

Forward projections of Growth in Population and the need for economic regeneration along the South Coast are the key drivers for proving the case for transport infrastructure investment and resulting cost benefits to be achieved. Accessibility to an enlarged Gatwick Airport (which could add 22,000 more jobs locally in airport-related businesses) and other new employment prospects throughout the region would benefit from rail investment to reduce journey times (by raising line speeds and creating through routes) and more direct connections, while encouraging greater demand for living in a Coastal environment.

Rail already plays an important role for mobility to and from education at all levels, including the University of Sussex centred in Brighton and Hastings. Train services are well used by some of the 58,000 student population throughout the County, with the largest percentage concentrated on the Coastal belt. Improved reliability, faster, more frequent services between Coastal towns and employment opportunities will bring them closer to available employers. New investments, such as expansion of Gatwick Airport, will ensure better local employment opportunities as new investors and employers are drawn to the Region.

Of the total population for East Sussex of 527,200 some 183,400 are in employment – with only 9 per cent in tourism. Improved rail services to a larger travelling public through an enlarged Gatwick Airport will increase the number of visitors to the region and draw corresponding commercial developments in service industries and new employment prospects. As Gatwick Airport development anticipates a near doubling of present direct and indirect employment to some 53,000 by 2040, the South Coast will become a critical supplier.

While the most recent statistics have shown some reduction in the numbers of unemployed in the most deprived areas, there is still a massive shortfall in employment in specifically the 18 – 25 years population which stands at some (21) per cent. Hastings, Bexhill, Eastbourne and Brighton are particular hotspots.



From the 2011 Census, ESRA has determined that there has been a 40 per cent increase in the numbers working at home since 2010, but more significantly there has been a 40 per cent growth in those going to work by rail. Of the overall total of 48,659 working out of the County, on a 3 to 1 ratio, for every 16,380 commute inwards. Rail travellers account for 160 million rail journeys into and out of the County each year.

## ***Strategic Rail planning***

ESRA has identified South East regional rail investment plans in the current Network Rail funding round as £3.5 billion to 2017, of which in the rail improvement funding plan (CP5) to 2019 is £2.3 billion. While this is a considerable investment, it is heavily biased towards projects for London commuting, leaving a substantial shortfall in development schemes South of Gatwick and along the southern Coast routes. Opportunities exist to enhance the efficient and convenient access to the Airport and this is part of the justification for ESRA support of the expansion proposals.

So far ESRA has estimated independently that a comprehensive upgrade to the South Coast Main Line (Exeter-Ashford Kent) requires in the region of £3 billion investment. However, this could be spread by undertaking more modest, modular upgrades, such as track doubling and electrifying the Ashford-Ore line, and reinstating the Willingdon Chord, at approx £150million .



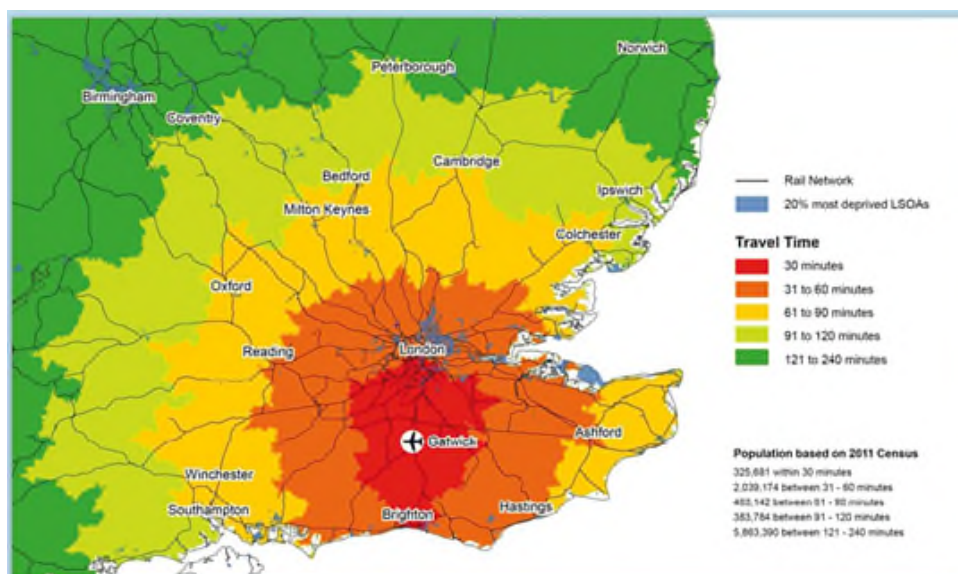


### **Gatwick's balanced surface access strategy**

Unlike other airports Gatwick's location, connected directly to a main railway line, creates the environment for a balanced surface access strategy between road and rail, and the real possibility of a 50% passenger mode share by rail. Gatwick is already the UK's best connected airport by rail, an accolade that will improve following completion of the Thameslink Programme and the choice of more direct station connections. Journey times to many areas are shorter by rail than by car and it is essential that this competitive advantage is maintained through further investment. To give an indication of the importance of improving rail connections beyond the Brighton main Line ESRA has analysed some typical route times in the Gatwick area to reveal the lower average journey times in the current timetable for routes other than London – Brighton. This, alongside a comparison of estimated road travel times, provides an indication of the potential to increase rail mode share:

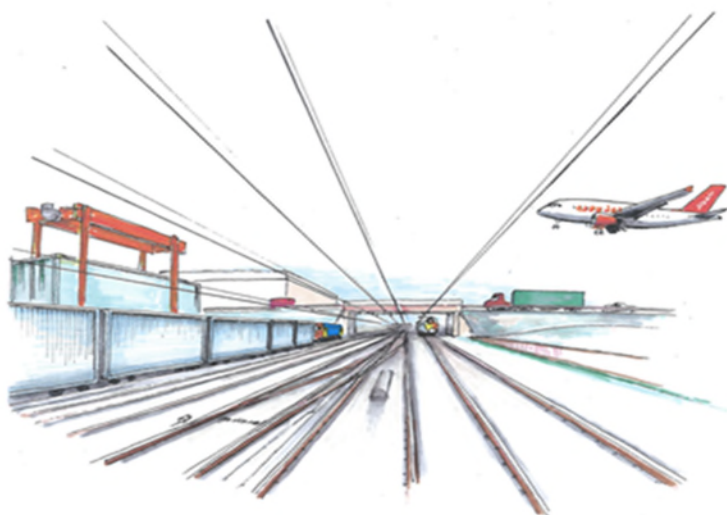
<b>Rail route</b>	<b>Distance (miles)</b>	<b>Rail travel (minutes)</b>	<b>Av speed (miles/hour)Av</b>	<b>Road travel (Minutes)</b>
London – Gatwick Airport	26	31	50.3	52@30(mph)
London – Brighton	51	52	58.8	77@40
Gatwick – Brighton	25	28	47.8	38@40
Gatwick – Eastbourne	39	55	42.5	59@40
Gatwick – Bexhill	52	72	43.3	79@40
Gatwick – Hastings	59	82	43.2	118@30
Gatwick – Ashford (via Marshlink)	90	133	40.6	108@50 via M-ways

Gatwick's own catchment area analysis shows the potential to extend the population within one hour's travel time to the airport further along the South Coast through investment in east-west rail links. From this analysis it can be seen that upgrades of rail infrastructure can effect substantial mode change.



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Gatwick Airport is already well served by rail and has been from inception of the present terminal development in the 1950s. Road access via the M23 will remain important but rail is increasingly the mode of choice for airport access. The improvements projected for and included in proposals for rail enhancement schemes will add connectivity advantages over other national airport facilities such as at Heathrow, Stansted, Southend or Luton.



## **East Sussex Rail Alliance supports Gatwick expansion**

East Sussex Rail Alliance (ESRA) has come out in support for the expansion of Gatwick Airport today and is calling for better direct rail connections to the South Coast towns so residents can benefit from new employment opportunities at the airport.

Specifically the ESRA – a volunteer organisation that, together with affiliate passenger groups, campaigns on behalf of 167 million passenger journeys per year – is recommending that the short length of track, locally known as the Willingdon Chord, be reinstated so that fast rail services can travel the coast line from Ashford (Kent and HS1) to Rye, Hastings and Bexhill.

ESRA made the recommendations to the Airports Commission, Government and Network Rail in a determined argument for upgrading the London-Brighton railway south of the Airport. Their submission states that while Eastbourne and other South Coast communities are served directly to and from Gatwick, faster journeys and more capacity is required to improve existing services along the South Coast line.

The submission says a review of the strategic needs of the South Coast railway network is required, as it has been lagging badly in investment terms for decades. With the campaign to electrify the Hastings-Ashford rail line, now being progressed energetically by the Department of Transport, Network Rail is working up development schemes which complement the Willingdon Chord through-route concept.

As ESRA's Co-Chairman Ray Chapman explains:

“Expansion at Gatwick and continued investment in its excellent rail links would be very positive for East Sussex.

Comparatively small rail improvements at Willingdon would help unlock a tide of redevelopment opportunities across the South Coast, with updated signalling and new track leading to much faster journeys. In turn this would enable residents of East Sussex to benefit more from employment markets across the wider southeast, something that is particularly important for deprived communities on the South Coast.

“At present all coastal trains have no choice but to run via the Eastbourne terminus and reverse out (as at Brighton), adding another 15 to 20 minutes to the journey – causing local traffic disruption at Hampden Park where there is one of the UK's busiest road level crossings. These rail proposals would increase service efficiency and allow improved services for the whole South Coast and services into Eastbourne Town will also be improved from the project.

"We are pleased that Gatwick Airport's owners endorse our proposals to improve the regional rail network serving Surrey, Sussex and Kent which will directly benefit both the local communities and travellers to and from the Airport."

Julia Gregory, Head of Airport Development, Gatwick Airport, added:

"We are pleased to have the support of such crucial rail supporters groups as ESRA. Our rail strategy is a central element of Gatwick Airport's case to the Airports Commission and is essential to the South East's regional economy. Integrating rail and air travel, which has always been a feature at Gatwick can increase the Nation's competitiveness and connects a wide population to the benefits from growth. Investment is important to secure lasting economic benefits and Gatwick Airport is pleased to play an active role alongside rail industry partners and stakeholders to realise these improvements."

[REDACTED]

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