



## **Eurotunnel submission to the National Infrastructure Commission consultation – London**

Eurotunnel welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation, having long been aware of the need to ensure that infrastructure projects in the UK are delivered rapidly in order to support economic growth.

### **Overview**

Groupe Eurotunnel (GET) manages and operates the Channel Tunnel Fixed Link between Britain and France, providing the infrastructure for Eurotunnel's own Shuttle services, international freight and high speed passenger trains. Completed in 1994, the Tunnel was financed entirely from private sources at no cost to the taxpayer.

GET also operates GB Railfreight, as the British arm of its Europorte rail freight brand. Acquired by Europorte in 2010, the business operates a variety of services including bulk traffic, biomass, coal steel, petrochemicals and metals transportation. GB Railfreight prides itself on its innovative approach to railfreight which has seen it win a number of rail industry awards and earn the standing as Britain's most reliable freight operator.

Maintaining effective transport links throughout the UK is crucial to ensuring economic prosperity. This allows businesses in London to transport their products throughout Britain and beyond, and also ensures that the Capital is supplied with the goods it requires.

### **Response**

As the operator of the Channel Tunnel, GET provides crucial infrastructure for the transport of goods to and from mainland Europe. The opening of the Channel Tunnel revolutionised the UK's accessibility to the European market, which can be reached faster and more reliably than at any time.

The UK economy directly benefits from the mature fixed link to mainland Europe. Key industry sectors have built import and export business models that are only viable because of the Tunnel. For example the automotive industry can transport time sensitive components; fish from Scotland and meat from Ireland can build key export markets across Europe. Prior to the Tunnel there was no economically sustainable business model to facilitate the UK's full participation in this trading revolution.

To support London's growth through more effective access to European markets, additional highways capacity crossing the Thames to the east of London is required. This can be delivered through the proposed Lower Thames Crossing which will support economic growth and release pressure on central London crossings such as the Blackwall Tunnel. In addition, new capacity for rail freight is required through Kent, to link businesses in London to the continental market, as set out below.

### ***South East road highways capacity and Operation Stack***

However, this summer saw access to the Tunnel limited by a combination of migrant incursions and striking ferry workers. Operation Stack was enforced for 28 days and during this time British manufacturers all over the country were placed under intense pressure. The goods transferred via the Tunnel tend to be high value components for the automotive, electronics, pharmaceutical industries, fresh produce and rapid courier services, and delays in their transportation result in large costs for business throughout the UK.



Although Operation Stack has not been in force since then, the events of the summer highlighted the need to increase the resilience of road networks in the South East. The road network in Kent is vital for connecting the south of England to the Capital. With a predicted increase in truck traffic of 30% in the next five years, there is a clear need for a solution to Operation Stack and additional capacity in Kent and the South East road network. In order to maximise economic growth across the country we must keep vehicles moving. This requires long term solutions such as: adding capacity to the M20; upgrading the A2 to motorway standard; providing additional capacity across the Thames through a new Lower Thames Crossing (as noted below); and consideration of modal shift to rail freight. These changes would ensure that products made throughout the UK are more likely to be successfully transported to Europe, than the current situation where Operation Stack is enforced.

This requires long term solutions such as adding capacity to the M20, upgrading the A2 to motorway standard and also consideration of modal shift to rail freight. These changes would ensure that products made in London can be successfully transported to Europe without costly delays, and businesses in London will receive the products they need to serve their customers.

### ***Rail freight capacity***

Another opportunity for addressing congestion on the roads in the South East and to ensure greater security for time sensitive deliveries would be for the Government to invest in the creation of greater rail freight capacity across the UK.

This will encourage a modal shift from road to rail, taking lorries off the road network, releasing capacity for other vehicles and increasing the reliability of those companies using rail freight for deliveries. There would also be well-documented environmental benefits delivered by this modal shift.

The Government has committed to deliver additional freight capacity, but action needs to be taken, in particular:

- Implementing and funding the proposed European Rail Freight Corridor from Europe to London to ensure swift rail access to foreign markets.
- Completing the Kent Gauge Study proposed by Network Rail and upgrading freight routes through the county which link the Channel Tunnel to London and the wider UK.
- Investigating and delivering improvements to the network beyond London, so that businesses in the Midlands and North of England benefit from rapid rail freight access to European markets and routes to the Capital. This includes identifying and delivering capacity improvements on key rail arteries such as the West Coast and East Coast Main Lines.

### ***Lower Thames Crossing***

Finally, addressing capacity on crossings across the Thames through the creation of a Lower Thames Crossing is also crucial for ensuring prosperity. A new crossing would relieve congestion on the routes from the South East into London, allowing businesses to transport their produce in good time and smoothing traffic flows into the Channel Tunnel.



Upgrading the local Kent road network, increasing rail freight capacity, and constructing a Lower Thames Crossing would benefit London businesses by improving their ability to connect to mainland Europe and reducing delays which cause their products to lose value. Additionally, an improved road network would reinvigorate local development in the South East by creating jobs in the area, and stimulating investment as businesses become more confident that there is a reliable transportation network.

**Contact:**

John Keefe, Groupe Eurotunnel  
[email and telephone number redacted]

Serena Balachandra, Lexington Communications  
[email and telephone number redacted]