



Department  
for Transport

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Our Ref: 244698  
Your Ref:

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Mr Paul Barker

Dear Mr Barker

## **Connect HS1 to Hastings**

Thank you for your e-mail of 8 November 2018 in which you contacted the Department for Transport's (DfT), Freedom of information (FOI) Team asking for detailed costings and time scales for the above project and any costs and timescales for the upgrades needed between Ashford to Hastings.

Although you approached this as an FOI, I am handling this request as "business as usual" as the answer is straightforward. Consideration of this proposal is at an early stage and it will not be possible to provide further information to that provided below until the completion of a Network Rail (NR) report expected in February 2019.

Let me assure you that the Government is keen to improve journey times for all passengers across the national rail network, including journeys between the Hastings area and London. DfT is aware of the long-standing local aspiration and the support of local people and MPs to achieve shorter journey times in the region. It is also accepted that improved transport links support local economic regeneration and housing growth to Hastings and the wider region.

Moving onto the specifics of the connection of HS1 to Hastings, a previous NR study looked at an infrastructure solution via HS1 – improving line speeds on, and electrifying, the Marshlink, and providing a direct link to HS1 via a flyover at Ashford International. Even without accounting for additional high speed rolling stock to operate on HS1, this scheme was costed at up to £500m and had a poor business case.

However, you may be interested to learn that the Southeastern re-franchising competition is currently underway, and is asking bidders to propose improved journey times via the Hastings Line / South Eastern Main Line. This is

expected to bring journey times via this route down to a consistent 1 hour 17 minutes in the off-peak and 1 hour 22 minutes in the peak.

Through the Kent Route Study, Network Rail revisited its original infrastructure solution via the Marshlink and HS1. It then considered 'piggybacking' a more modest enhancement on a planned CP6 (Control Period 6 covers the years 2019 -2024), track layout renewal at Ashford International station to further improve journey times.

The enhancement would potentially see a series of crossovers installed from the HS1 side of Ashford International to the Marshlink side, allowing for either a cross-platform interchange, or a direct St Pancras-Hastings service in future (with further infrastructure works).

Network Rail gained the support of local authorities, led by East Sussex County Council, to develop this proposal further. The DfT and authorities in Kent and East Sussex provided funding to Network Rail for development of the Ashford West Track Layout Enhancement Project.

Given the emerging technical issues with this option, design will now be complete in January 2019 and will be followed by estimating activity and completion of the business case in February 2019, as noted above.

I am sorry that I cannot be more helpful at this stage. However, I would be happy to update you next year when we know more if you can provide relevant contact details.

Yours sincerely

Graham Buckley

**Graham Buckley**  
**Briefing and Correspondence Manager**

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