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Dear Sirs,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the future of European transport policy. As home to much trans-European transport infrastructure - such as the Port of Dover, the Channel Tunnel and the UK's first high-speed rail link – Kent is pleased to be able to make an initial technical submission on some of our emerging thinking on key issues for Europe over the coming decade. We would be pleased to follow some of these points up further in due course.

Our vision for transport policy and the impact of Europe

Kent's forthcoming Integrated Transport Strategy for 2020 has a vision of an integrated transport network which supports regeneration by ensuring good accessibility to jobs and services, reducing the environmental impact of transport by reducing congestion, increasing citizens' independence and widening their choice of public transport modes other than the private car.

However, Kent's role as the UK's front door to and from continental Europe has a major impact on our local transport system. Securing local benefits from the freight and passenger transit traffic while minimising negative, local environmental and quality of life impacts are key priorities for Kent. Similar issues are also felt by many other transit regions in Europe.

Delivering benefits while minimising negative impacts will be a significant challenge in the years ahead. The most recent transport modelling suggests that international transport demand through Kent will grow significantly over the next 20 years. Substantial population growth is also planned for Kent (national housing targets will see Kent's population of 1.3 million increase by some 15%). When set against the background of climate change and a strain on public finances, the challenges of managing this growth are acute.

While we agree with much of the analysis in *A Sustainable Future for Transport*, and the need for working towards ambitious long-term goals, given the time lag to achieve such goals, a central part of the journey will require that **making best use of existing infrastructure and resources** is placed at the heart of the new policy. We believe that much remains to be done before we are making best use of limited resources and will cite some of our recent experience of high-speed passenger rail and cross-border freight as areas where improvements should be made.



Making the best use of international high-speed rail networks

Since the 2001 White Paper for Transport was published, Kent is now linked to London, France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands by the same high-speed rail line. The European Union's contribution to international high-speed rail has been substantial both in terms of finance through the Trans-European Transport Fund and in terms of policies such as market liberalisation.

Now that this network has been built, full use should be made of the potential to improve connectivity, reduce travel times and support job creation while reducing emissions from more polluting sources of transport. The realization of such wider benefits is vital because, on passenger revenues alone, the investment in these lines cannot be paid back. Our experience of cross-border international services, however, is that widely-held beliefs about service models – such as high-speed rail can only truly perform over long distances on non-stop services – are undermining the ability to make best use of the infrastructure.

Given the billions of Euros of public money invested in these networks, Kent believes a new vision is needed of how to make best use of these assets. Recognising the need to deliver wider benefits, this vision should work towards cross-cutting benefits such as balanced economic development for regions, social benefits from accessibility, reduced environmental impact, territorial cohesion and cost savings due to the optimisation of capacity on existing infrastructure.

To deliver this vision, action will be required in a number of areas to tackle administrative, conceptual and other barriers. This would include promoting ideas such as “smart” infrastructure charging that incentivizes operators to use intermediate stations to ensure much wider regional connectivity to international services. The vision will also require co-operation between all relevant stakeholders and Kent is now developing proposals with other European regions in this domain. We will share more details in the months ahead.

Making best use of infrastructure for International freight management

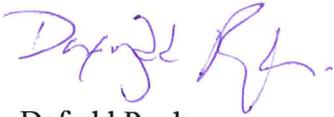
During the last 10 years, while EU transport policy has invested considerable time and resources in encouraging modal shift in freight from road to rail, Kent's on-the-ground experience has been that cross-Channel rail freight volumes remain disappointingly low while road traffic has continued to grow. With an average of over 10,000 lorries a day travelling to and from mainland Europe, the environmental consequences, the increased need for road maintenance as well as the lack of sufficient overnight lorry parking and the lack of facilities for preventing extensive disruption to local traffic when cross-Channel services are disrupted, are of primary concern.

A Sustainable Future for Transport highlights a number of actions to make best use of capacity and encourage modal shift, such as the need for new rail freight terminals and developing green corridors. Kent believes that if Europe is to maximise best use of its existing infrastructure, the priority over the next 10 years should be to ensure that EU investment in transport is mode neutral but highly targeted towards improvements along strategic transport corridors where investments would help make best use of capacity. This might mean targeted investment in road infrastructure to alleviate stubborn points of congestion or, for rail, might mean providing investment to support new terminals when such new facilities can be demonstrated to be in the best location for promoting modal shift.

Kent intends to look at the challenges and opportunities for better freight management in the cross-channel area as part of its 2009-2010 Brussels seminar programme and we would be pleased to provide further details of our work and findings as they become available.

We do hope some of these initial thoughts are useful and look forward to following the debate in the coming months.

Yours sincerely.



Dafydd Pugh
Head of the Kent County Council Brussels Office