

## All-Party Parliamentary Group for High Speed Rail Rail Capacity Inquiry



### Federation of Small Businesses Kent and Medway Region

The Government has decided to proceed with the development of a 'Y-shaped' high speed rail network that would reduce journey times from London to Birmingham to 49 minutes; and from London to Manchester and Leeds to around 80 minutes.

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) has taken a neutral approach nationally to the development of high speed rail. Small businesses recognise that the UK rail network needs to be upgraded and brought in line with European standards to ensure connectivity with the continent.

Kent has the first international high speed line (HS1) from St Pancras to Europe through the Channel Tunnel at Cheriton. Since December 2009 domestic train services were introduced using the HS1 track from Ashford and Ebbsfleet to St Pancras.

The introduction of high speed international rail services through Kent brought benefits to the local business community by enabling easy and fast transport links to mainland Europe. However this benefit was undermined by a reduction of services through Ashford International station. Passengers in East and South Kent have to travel back to Ebbsfleet or St Pancras to join the international services.

#### **1. Proposals to provide a service to stations served by HS2 must be maintained and not eroded over time.**

The introduction of high speed domestic services has opened faster public transport opportunities for small businesses in Kent. Access to the City of London plus the easy connection to Kings Cross and Euston has made onward journeys to the north much simpler and quicker. Unfortunately the improved service offered by HS1 was offset by a reduction in other rail services in Kent. Services to Cannon Street were reduced or eliminated and journey times to Victoria and Charing Cross increased.

#### **2. Proposals to provide additional rail services on HS2 must not be detrimental to existing rail services; they should remain in addition to the current provision of rail services.**

Less than one in ten FSB members consider establishing high speed rail network as a priority while more than seven in ten say their car is crucial to their business.

#### **3. The FSB calls on the government to ensure that investment in HS2 does not prevent additional investment in roads or other viable public transport schemes**