



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

14 May 2019

The Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Dear Chris,

The Thameslink programme has been long-promised but yet to be fully implemented, following the decision 18 months ago to delay the introduction of the service between Maidstone East and Cambridge, as part of the final tranche of new services.

This service will fundamentally change the lives of people living in Borough Green, West Malling, Bearsted, Maidstone, Aylesford, Otford and Swanley for the better. Since the original Cannon Street service was removed in 2009 the Maidstone East line has suffered through long journey times, poor reliability and overcrowding, with most trains serving only London Victoria, far away from where many commuters wish to go. The introduction of a direct link with London Bridge, Blackfriars, St Pancras and beyond will fundamentally improve connectivity to our communities.

Since the proposals for this route were announced many years ago families and businesses have been preparing for its introduction. Housing developments have been built near almost every local station, with road and parking improvements turned down because of promised greater connections by rail. Businesses have also invested in our towns and villages expecting greater connectivity imminently. This service has the backing of every council, business forum and community group in the area, irrespective of its makeup.

Consequently, it is absolutely essential that the service is delivered in December 2019 as promised by both Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) and your department for coming up to two years now. We understand that GTR has had difficulty with the introduction of other parts of the Thameslink programme, and recognise that the department has twice delayed announcing the successful bidder for the Southeastern franchise. This has added uncertainty for commuters in Kent, so we expect the one thing that is certain, the introduction of this service in December, to be delivered.

We would welcome an urgent meeting with you to discuss your progress in making this happen. In the event that the existing issues with the Thameslink programme are causing GTR difficulty in introducing the service, then we would welcome information about the providers which the Department has asked to deliver this service instead.

Finally, we know residents who have moved near a station along the Maidstone East line

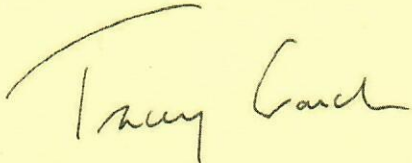
Member of Parliament for Tonbridge and Malling

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with the specific intention of using this service to get to work, or help avoid the chronic traffic congestion on the M20 and A20 which run parallel. The service will open up economic opportunities to the whole of mid and west Kent which we want to help deliver. We look forward to meeting and hearing about the Departments work to deliver this service in December 2019.

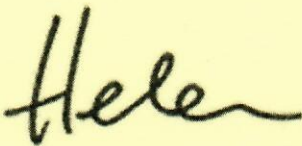
Best wishes,



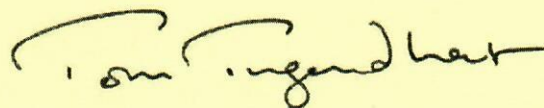
TRACEY CROUCH MP
Member of Parliament for
Chatham and Aylesford



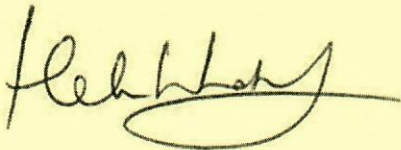
THE RT HON SIR MICHAEL FALLON MP
Member of Parliament for Sevenoaks



HELEN GRANT MP
Member of Parliament for
Maidstone and the Weald



TOM TUGENDHAT MP
Member of Parliament for
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