**Annex 1**

From: The Rt. Hon. Sir John Stanley, M.P.

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

**PRESS NOTICE** 9 June 2011

**Government's response on Maidstone East line City services is "completely useless, but my fight to restore them will go on" says John Stanley**

John Stanley said today:

"I am bitterly disappointed by the response to our campaign for the restoration of the rail services into Cannon Street, Charing Cross and London Bridge on the Maidstone East line that I have received from the Rail Minister Theresa Villiers today.

The Government's rejection of the restoration of services to and from Cannon Street (Option 1) and of improving services to and from Blackfriars (Option 2) means that the outcome of the review is completely useless for the large number of my constituents living along the line through East Malling, West Malling and Borough Green and who work in the City and the Canary Wharf areas of London.

I find it frankly ludicrous that the Government is unable to find £250,000 a year to enable at least the improved Blackfriars service to start in May 2012 when it can find vast sums for example to bale out the Irish banks at the drop of a hat.

Cont …

I also consider it equally ridiculous to have one of the most important business and residential growth points in Kent at Kings Hill without a remotely decent train service to and from London.

However, I direct my main criticism at the previous Government for their disastrous decision to enter into the Integrated Kent Franchise contract with South Eastern which allowed the company to axe the services into Cannon Street, Charing Cross and London Bridge with hardly any notice less than half-way through their franchise.

Nonetheless, as far as I am concerned the fight will go on. I am determined that when South Eastern's franchise finally comes to an end, their successor will be contractually obliged to provide services into the City stations on the Maidstone East line."

Editor: A copy of the letter of June 8 that John Stanley received from the Rail Minister, Theresa Villiers, is attached.

From the Minister of State
The Rt. Hon. Theresa Villiers MP

Department for
**Transport**

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~~Our Ref: TV/11~~

The Rt Hon Sir John Stanley MP
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London
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08 JUN 2011

Dear Sir John

I am writing to confirm my decision on the review of Maidstone service provisions that I set out in my letter of 17 November 2010.

You will recall that I wrote to you on 18 March 2011 to inform you that Southeastern will be introducing a new domestic high speed service from Maidstone West to St Pancras from May 2011. The introduction of this service was championed by Kent County Council, Passenger Focus and others and formed one of the options that Southeastern put forward as part of the Maidstone service review. I hope the new journey opportunities this opens up for the area will be welcomed.

As you are aware my officials have been working jointly with Southeastern on reviewing the service provision to Maidstone and looking to identify incremental performance improvements.

The options that have been considered are:

1. Re-instatement of the busiest of the original Maidstone East – Cannon Street services that operated prior to the December 2009 timetable change;

2. Maidstone East – London Blackfriars - as an alternative destination for passengers travelling to the City; and

3. Maidstone West – London St Pancras peak hour direct service.

**Option 1 – Re-instate some Maidstone East – Cannon Street direct services**

To re-instate these few direct shoulder peak services, the train service pattern introduced on other routes in December 2009 (and welcomed by many passengers) would have to be significantly revised.

Moreover, such a reinstatement could only be a short term step as there is no guarantee that this capacity will continue to be available during the build phase of the Thameslink Programme at London Bridge. In reality there will need to be significant adjustments to the underlying timetable through London Bridge to facilitate that project.

Network Rail are leading in the development of the work needed and expect to launch a public consultation in the near future, as part of their efforts to obtain planning approval for the changes proposed at London Bridge station.

As you requested, DfT officials looked again at the financial viability of reinstatement of these services. They concluded that there was no prospect of their being deliverable without substantial additional subsidy. For these two reasons my officials did not evaluate this option further.

**Option 2 – Maidstone East – London Blackfriars**

Under this option, the operation of a direct service from Maidstone East – London Blackfriars from the May 2012 timetable change was considered. This would take advantage of the new infrastructure at London Blackfriars following completion of Key Output 1 phase of the Thameslink programme. This proposal included one additional am peak service from Maidstone East – London Blackfriars and two additional pm peak services from London Blackfriars – Maidstone East. These additional services would create 3 am peak services from Maidstone East – London Blackfriars and 3 pm peak services from London Blackfriars – Maidstone East.

The operational review of this proposal indicated that the additional trains might increase the performance risk of other services. This has not been explored further, given the financial position with these services.

The business case submitted by Southeastern, and reviewed by my officials, indicates that an additional subsidy of around £250,000 would be required each year.

**Option 3 – Maidstone West – London St Pancras**

The third option considered was diverting 3 am peak existing services from Rochester – London St Pancras and 3 pm existing services from London St Pancras – Rochester/Faversham to start/terminate at Maidstone West.

The operational review of this proposal indicated that there would be performance benefits from implementing this timetable change.

The business case submitted by Southeastern and reviewed by my officials concluded that these services can be implemented without the need for any additional subsidy from Government.

**Conclusion**

I agreed to the implementation of Option 3. This will deliver a journey time saving for passengers travelling from Maidstone to London and offer an alternative destination in the capital. Given the need to address performance issues on the Southeastern network I agreed with the operator that they should implement this service change in May 2011.

I will require them to monitor the usage of this new service and during the spring/summer carry out a consultation as to whether a permanent change should be made to the Service Level Commitment in the Southeastern Franchise Agreement.

As I have repeatedly stated, both in correspondence and in the House, given the significant financial crisis we inherited from the last government I cannot agree to implement services change that require additional subsidy from the public purse (although it remains open to local authorities to use their available budgets for such changes so long as they can be accommodated into the timetable).

On that basis I have decided that Options 1 and 2 will not be taken forward. I fully recognise that will be a disappointment to you and your constituents but the pressing need to address the deficit means that additional calls on the departmental budget are very hard to accommodate.

I am copying this letter to the MPs on the attached list, whose constituencies cover the proposed timetable change, Passenger Focus, London TravelWatch, Kent County Council, Medway Borough Council and publishing it on the Department for Transport's website.

Regards

Theresa

THE RT. HON. THERESA VILLIERS