

Mr Chris Garnett  
Eurostar Inquiry

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Dear Chris

### **Eurostar Inquiry**

This submission is designed to develop and reinforce some of the issues covered at our meeting earlier this month. As we discussed at the time we believe that the incident raises a number of issues around the safety and reliability of services in the tunnel but feel that, at this stage, these ought to be first addressed by the relevant safety authorities.

Our focus in this additional submission is therefore on the quality of service experienced by passengers and there are three areas in particular that we wish to highlight:

- Management of the delay
- Contingency planning
- Redress

### **Management of the delay**

We know from our research that the way a railway company handles delay is an important factor in determining passenger attitudes and experiences. Multivariate analysis of our National Passenger Survey (NPS) shows that the single biggest driver of overall dissatisfaction is the way in which the industry manages delays – see Annex A. While this relates to domestic travel there is no reason to doubt that the broad analysis is any less relevant for international travel [NB we have been in discussion with Eurostar about extending NPS to cover Eurostar services but to no avail – if it had ‘come on board’ then we would have had some valuable input to your inquiry]

Further analysis of NPS reveals that two factors dominate satisfaction with delays:

- The time taken to solve the problem
- The amount of information provided about the delay

Both are particularly relevant to your inquiry. While the former might be dependent on external factors (e.g. finding a technical reason for the breakdowns) there is much less excuse for the latter – after all this isn’t the first time that Eurostar has experienced a major incident that closed



the tunnel. Our response to ORR's investigation into Network Rail's new year engineering overruns in 2008 (see Annex B) emphasised the importance of information being timely, consistent and easily available: as did some joint work with National Rail Enquiries (Passenger Information: a vision 2008) [Annex C]. Reports from passengers in the queues at St Pancras would indicate that this was not the case – something tacitly acknowledged in Richard Brown's open letter to passengers in which he talks about providing better real-time information via a number of sources (website, email and twitter).

Our own research into service disruption highlights the importance of text messaging at such times. Emerging results from our ongoing research (Passenger Priorities for Improvement 2009) show a clear preference for receiving updates via text message - something that could also be factored into Eurostar's remedial plan.

### **Contingency Planning**

While true that you can't plan for all eventualities it is nevertheless realistic to expect Eurostar (and its partners) to have plans in place to cope with a 'shut-down' of the tunnel for a period of several days. Reports received ask questions about the effectiveness of the multi-agency arrangements (not least by the public 'buck-passing' in the immediate aftermath) and about the way that Eurostar handled passengers. This isn't the first time that Eurostar services have been suspended and yet it did not appear that contingency plans were in place to cover such things as helping passengers find accommodation, planning alternative travel arrangements or managing the subsequent queues at St Pancras. The overriding image from the media was of a company not really caring about its passengers and while this is probably a gross oversimplification it should be remembered that such perceptions are damaging and need to be addressed by Eurostar in its contingency planning.

### **Redress**

This is an area in which Eurostar has been proactive. We welcome the early statement about covering hotel costs and alternative travel arrangements – being stranded in a foreign country can be an expensive business and such reassurance is important when incurring additional expenses.

We would be happy to discuss these points (and the attachments) further should you so wish.

Yours sincerely

**Anthony Smith**  
**Chief Executive**

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