

BY EMAIL ONLY

Ian Biggar
Access Policy Advisor
Office of Rail and Road
25 Cabot Square
London
E14 4QZ

15 October 2025

Dear Mr. Biggar,

In relation to the ongoing Depot Application Process under Section 17 of the Railways Act 1993, I am writing to re-confirm the position of VTE Holdings Limited ("**VTE**") on UK station stops as part of our proposed cross-Channel rail service.

As set out in its prior submissions, VTE is ready to deliver a world-class international rail service, offering passengers choice for the first time in more than 30 years – from a global brand with a proven track record in building award-winning rail and travel businesses.

Our initial network will connect London with Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam, with ambitions to expand further across France and into Germany and Switzerland. These destinations have been selected based on strong passenger demand and deliverability, alongside broader modal shift and connectivity ambitions.

With a rolling stock manufacturer of the highest calibre in Alstom and the required funding identified for both rolling stock and operations, VTE's project combines ambition with deliverability – notably its proposed service has been extensively modelled and funding providers have completed thorough due diligence of this.

VTE acknowledges the significant levels of public interest in recent weeks with respect to Ebbsfleet International and Ashford International stations (the "**Kent Stations**"). This follows the International Rail Event held on 26 September, at which VTE was in attendance. Since then, we note that fellow applicants have made additional 'commitments' in the media in relation to stopping at the Kent Stations. Some of these appear to go beyond the applicants' formal submissions to the ORR in July, and therefore presumably beyond the business cases provided as part of those submissions.

We consider it important to clarify VTE's own position on this topic. VTE has been clear from the beginning in its ambition to return services to Kent, as referenced by Sir Richard Branson in his Foreword to VTE's 18 July submission to the ORR. It has also noted the degree of commercial uncertainty and operational complexity that is involved in re-establishing these stations. In that context, VTE would like to make clear to the ORR that if either of the stations are re-opened, its services will stop in Kent. VTE is currently, and has been for more than two years, in conversation with Kent County Council and other key stakeholders about stopping at both of the Kent Stations but

is clear that reopening the stations to be able to accommodate international services requires commitment and resources.

All parties continue to agree that achieving this will require significant investment and collaboration. VTE is therefore encouraged by the Minister of State for Rail's suggestion that there may be appetite within government to provide financial support for the re-opening of the Kent Stations.

Virgin is also continuing to explore ways to enhance onward connectivity across the UK rail network. This reflects our commitment to ensuring that the benefits of competition – greater choice, lower fares and improved connectivity – are felt beyond London.

We look forward to working with stakeholders to progress our plans and deliver a high-quality, competitive cross-Channel rail service.

Yours sincerely,

