

Eurostar Urges UK to Act on Rail Strategy

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Eurostar has issued a direct call to the UK government, warning that failure to implement a long-term rail strategy could put Britain at a disadvantage compared to its European counterparts. The company argues that without decisive infrastructure planning, the country risks falling behind in the growing demand for sustainable international travel.

Eurostar is preparing for significant expansion, including the launch of direct services to Frankfurt and Geneva. It has also placed an order for 50 new high-speed trains, aligning with

Europe's wider investment in cross-border rail connectivity. However, the operator says its growth plans face a major challenge: limited maintenance capacity.

Currently, Temple Mills depot in East London is the only fully operational maintenance facility available. Eurostar has committed €80 million (£68 million) to upgrade this site, but it says this alone will not meet future demand. The company warns that sharing the already stretched depot with new competitors, such as the Evolyn joint venture, Gemini Trains, and FS Italiane, could disrupt services and affect passenger satisfaction.

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) has suggested there may still be available capacity at Temple Mills and is continuing to accept access applications. Eurostar, however, questions whether the site can handle multiple operators without significant upgrades. It insists that a clear government-led infrastructure plan is urgently needed to ensure operational reliability.

Last year, Eurostar saw passenger numbers rise by 5%, reaching 19.5 million. Gareth Williams, the company's general secretary, described this growth as an "incredible opportunity" for the UK to strengthen its international rail network. He stressed that Eurostar's investments are already underway, but government involvement is essential for long-term stability and competitiveness.

A decision from the ORR on depot access is expected in October. The outcome will have a direct impact on the future of rail competition through the Channel Tunnel and the UK's role in Europe's sustainable transport network.