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## French businessman Thaddée Segard says commuting from Calais could solve Canterbury district's housing problem

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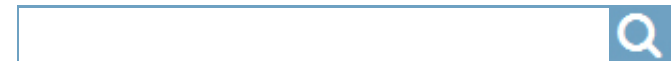
by **Chris Pragnell** [cpragnell@thekmgroup.co.uk](mailto:cpragnell@thekmgroup.co.uk)

23 March 2015

Cross-Channel commuting could hold the key to solving some of Kent's housing problems, a French businessman claims.

Thaddée Segard says increasing pressure to build thousands of homes in the Canterbury district in particular would be eased if Brits moved to Calais.

Eurotunnel bosses have endorsed the idea and urged politicians to back the scheme.



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Businessman Thaddée Segard in Calais

Property can be snapped up on the French side of the channel for a third of the price and the local population has actually reduced in recent years.

Yet Canterbury council has a target to build an extra 15,500 homes in Canterbury, Whitstable and Herne Bay over the next 15 years.

And London Mayor Boris Johnson has suggested Canterbury, Dover and Thanet could house 115,000 extra homes to cope with the capital's overspill.

Mr Segard, a business owner and commerce ambassador for his region, says the answer lies 30 miles away on the Continent. He suggests development of a 'Transmanche Metro' which could whisk commuters through the Channel Tunnel, to and from Kent.



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- Getaway driver jailed for his part in £40k robbery 25
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What £150,000 could buy you in Canterbury

Mr Segard, who lives near Calais, said: "On one side of the Channel Kentish towns are struggling with a lack of space and on the other side the population is at a low ebb, with a median real estate value about one third of the Kentish equivalent."

A quick property search reveals that in France's Pas de Calais region £150,000 can buy a detached five-bedroom farmhouse set within spacious gardens. In Canterbury it will buy you a one or two-bedroom flat.

With Folkestone just 35 minutes from Calais, commuters could reach Canterbury 38 minutes after arriving in Britain – a possible overall journey of little more than an hour.

Ashford is just 15 minutes from Folkestone on the high-speed service, while London is reachable in just under an hour.



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### What £150,000 could buy you near Calais

Mr Segard represents the Opale Link, a group promoting business in the region from Calais to Boulogne on the French coast.

He said: "Would it not make sense to help create a commuter line allowing people to choose to live on one side and work on the other?"

"Let's be practical and innovative, there is plenty of space for running a commuter train through the tunnel and solve each other's problems."

Two weeks ago we revealed how Mr Johnson's advisers were suggesting London's population overspill could be absorbed by 115,000 new homes in Canterbury, Dover and Thanet.

That staggering figure, revealed in a report for the Mayor of London, would be on top of the new homes targets already set out in Canterbury's Local Plan.

Today representatives from local authorities across the county were due to meet Mr Johnson and his advisers to discuss the region's future housing needs.

The idea of running cross- Channel commuter trains is not a new one.

In 2008 plans for a new rail service linking Kent and the Pas de Calais were submitted to the European Commission but failed to take off.

Three years later Eurotunnel bosses said they were keen to encourage a commuter route through the

"Would it not make sense to help create a commuter line allowing people to choose to live on one side and work on the other?" - Thaddée Segard



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tunnel, which operated at around 55% capacity.

John Keefe, director of public affairs for Eurotunnel, said: “We think the idea is a very good one. There’s plenty of space. At the moment we’re running at around 53 % capacity, allowing for peaks and troughs.

“So there’s room. What it needs is the political will on both sides. The two local governments need to get together to make it work.



Could the Eurotunnel help solve Kent's housing crisis? Picture: Chris Denham.

"It needs a rail operator to come in and run the service. Eurotunnel owns the infrastructure.

“We’ve been approached by lots of different people about the idea, but we’ve not seen a concrete plan. It probably needs a few more parties around the table.

"But the attraction is certain. There are even trains which will become available because Eurostar has ordered 17 new trains.

“They will be retiring their existing fleet. There’s an opportunity then, because we have a tunnel with spare capacity and we have trains with the right safety features, plus the market pulling on both sides. It’s certainly a good idea.”

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 **demus** wrote: 26/03/2015 11:23:24

The very same idea was proposed in the late 1960s when hovercraft services began at Pegwell Bay near Ramsgate and from Dover. The hovercraft were at least as fast as the Eurotunnel option too. It didn't happen though.



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 **BannedandBlue** wrote: 23/03/2015 15:36:41

Problems at the tunnel again as we speak.



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 **Donal** wrote: 23/03/2015 14:20:15

Boris will be happy. He can ship even more undesirables from London to Calais.



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 **LuciaB** wrote: 23/03/2015 11:45:06

It would only be workable if they added ore stops in Kent.

  +10

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 **Aitchaitch** wrote: 23/03/2015 09:42:49

'What £150,000 could buy you in Calais' until everyone starts moving there...

  +27

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 **dumdum** wrote: 23/03/2015 08:32:24

Not remotely workable with the way Eurotunnel or whoever chose to downgrade the Ashford connection.

  +19

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 **MattM** wrote: 23/03/2015 08:16:24

Yeah they have a lovely little place just outside the town where you can live under a plastic sheet.

  +37

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 **Tomcat** wrote: 23/03/2015 07:19:22

There is a reason nobody wants to live in Calais.

  +51

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 **Twinkle toes** wrote: 23/03/2015 01:00:12

If Eurotunnel has anything to do with the 'commute', then nobody will get to work on time!!!!

  +59 [1 Reply](#)

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