

The IGC met in London on 17 October 2019, under the chairmanship of the Head of the French delegation, and dealt with the following points:

Brexit

Despite the announcement of the conclusion of an agreement between the United Kingdom and the European Union, the French and UK Delegations continued to expect the UK to leave the EU without a deal on 31 October 2019. In that scenario, the IGC would lose its current status of binational authority under the European rules. Apart from its devolved responsibilities under the Treaty of Canterbury and the Concession Agreement, its role would consist of co-ordinating between two separate national safety authorities, competent for the French part of the tunnel (EPSF) and for the UK part (ORR).

The two delegations represented on the IGC continue to share the objective of keeping a unified framework for the operation of the tunnel.

ElecLink

A letter had been sent to Eurotunnel on 11 October 2019 giving a very exact description of the expected structure of the safety case to be submitted to the IGC for consideration.

The examination of this important safety case required competence beyond that of the existing Safety Authority delegations, which was therefore going to engage external expert support.

A timetable for concluding the assessment of the safety case was to be discussed with Eurotunnel management.

Carriage of lithium batteries

Large numbers of lithium batteries were transiting the Channel Tunnel. Some were being carried on freight shuttles or within passenger shuttles, as component of hybrid or electric vehicles. The numbers of lithium batteries carried were likely to grow. The IGC discussed its requirement for Eurotunnel to assess the risks associated with the transport of these items and the need for interim mitigation measures to be implemented. Work was continuing between the CTSA and Eurotunnel to define suitable solutions to the carriage of these batteries with the highest possible safety level.

Transposition of Fourth Railway Package

Work was in progress between the French and UK authorities to complete the transposition of the Fourth Railway Package before the cut-off date set for 16 June 2020.

A Working Group had been established to prepare a binational regulation by the deadline. The IGC stressed that the French and UK rules would have to be technically similar and uniform for the whole tunnel. The CTSA would also be responsible for ensuring that the safety rules were implemented coherently in the tunnel.

Eurostar

Eurostar was celebrating its 25th anniversary on 15 November and was going to announce the future launch of direct journeys between the Netherlands (Amsterdam/Rotterdam) and London. The necessary agreements between the countries concerned were being finalised.

Eurostar and Thalys had announced their intention to merge to form the company GreenSpeed. The European Commission was currently examining the plan.