

ASYLUM SPECIAL ● ASYLUM SPECIAL

FH Cabinet pressure

EWS says that the European Commission has made its complaint "top priority".

EWS has strongly urged the new French Cabinet to resolve the crisis of asylum seekers boarding Channel Tunnel rail freight services, at a meeting on Friday.

The complaint is centred on The Treaty of Rome, the document that brought the European Union into existence.

EWS claim that the French are not providing sufficient security which disrupts free trade across European borders and therefore breaks the treaty.

Euro MP Daniel Hannan, who has raised this issue in the European Parliament, urged his fellow MEPs in the strongest possible language to act swiftly in resolving this matter.

In a letter, EWS has set out to the new French transport minister, Gilles de Robien, the damaging and crippling effects of asylum seekers boarding and stowing away on their freight trains, as well as seeking urgent action to resolve this ongoing issue.

FOLLOWING the French Presidential elections there is a new cabinet in Paris, and already British ministers are trying to get them to improve security at Channel Tunnel gateways.

The British are demanding that the French prevent illegal immigrants stowing away on trains in order to hitch a lift to the UK.

It is reported the French SNCF railway company has accepted an offer from the UK to help finance the cost of better fencing at the terminal near Calais and around goods



ON THE RUN: Illegal immigrants run alongside trains in Fréthun in an attempt to get on board

Services halt again

French fail to find 45 illegals hiding on train

CROSS-Channel freight trains were once again halted this week due to security problems with illegal immigrants in France.

Services were stopped on Tuesday when 45 illegals were found at Dollands Moor, Cheriton, on trains which had supposedly been checked in France.

A furious row erupted between the French and British companies. EWS claimed police had been pulled out of Fréthun leaving security seriously compromised. SNCF

publicly denied the allegations. Now SNCF has said they will not accept British-bound trains due to a backlog in services across Europe caused by the problems with stowaways using the Channel Tunnel.

Only the 28 trains currently in planned transit to Britain from Europe will be permitted to travel.

Once these trains have been cleared, new services will be accepted again. EWS does not know when, and if this will occur.

The move is the latest blow in a six-month period of restrictions on Channel Tunnel rail freight operations. Services have been running

at 60 per cent since November 2001, which is threatening the viability of EWS's future operation of international rail freight services.

An EWS spokesman said it was time the French were held to account for their inaction in the last six months.

The failure to provide sufficient security has already led to job losses and there may be to follow unless trains start moving again.

At Dollands Moor alone, 17 jobs have been lost since November 2001 and with the rail freight services not set to run in the near future, more job losses are anticipated.

any one night British Transport Police have only two officers on duty, and they have to cover an area from Margate to Newcastle down to Hastings - a total of 200 stations.

Security at Dollands Moor use CCTV equipment to locate and detect stowaways on board any train. Their French counterparts have two CCTV detectors linked to them by EWS in July 2001.

There are well over 200 cameras at Dollands Moor, but in France at Fréthun marshalling yard, only two cameras from the Red Cross refugee centre at Calais, they have no cameras and there is no intention at present to install them.

With the latest revelations that French police numbers have been dropped to almost non-existent levels at Fréthun, the job is then placed in the hands of the French security. These security men have no powers of arrest and can only chase refugees away from the train.

SNCF, the owners of the Fréthun

yard have promised to increase the presence of the French police at the site and have announced that their position on this matter has not changed.

So it was that on two trains, supposedly clear of stowaways, there were 11 desperate men and women.

On Sunday night the fears received from French security based at Fréthun said that all trains had been duly inspected and were clear.

On arrival 28 males and one female stowed from a train that had supposedly been checked. On Monday there was a new twist in this ongoing saga: security at Dollands Moor received no news from Fréthun at all, leaving the staff on this side of the Channel completely in the dark.

Forty-five stowaways, stowed from two trains, and there were only six men to deal with them. They brought the total to one week in 28.

The yard at Dollands Moor is now half filled long by 200 square miles covering the area of approx-

imately 600,000 square metres, a rather large area for six men to cover, even if they do have CCTV cameras.

This ongoing situation for the security staff at Dollands Moor who are acting as an unofficial border control, place themselves night after night, day after day in an untenable position of risk.

These security staff who all have families continue to risk, induction, threatening behaviour and doing a job they are not trained for to secure the property of British companies, importing and exporting.

The French, and that means SNCF, The French Government and all other related agencies, must realise there exists a time when they must take responsibility and resolve the situation.

EWS, the local Fréthunshire police, British Transport Police and the Immigration Service all want the same thing and that is, for the incoming trains to be refilled from

the tunnel, who have to be kept at a distance from the tunnel.

It says the British Government will make a quality check to be provided to make the Tunnel's perimeter more secure and making better policing possible.

Meanwhile, Channel Tunnel France experts are working on a deal to cut the tunnel's long term debt.

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