

HS2 Consultation Summary

Do you agree that there is a strong case for enhancing the capacity and performance of Britain's inter-city rail network to support economic growth over the coming decades?

Whilst I acknowledge that capacity is an issue on our rail lines, I do believe the business case for HS2 is heavily flawed. Forward demand projections presented by HS2 rely on an out of date passenger demand forecasting handbook (4.1) rather than the more accurate 5.0. What is more, the demand projections have been stretched by a further ten years to reach the targets HS2 wants. This seems to me to indicate the Business Case is being changed to meet the Department for Transport requirements rather than the Department being led by the Business Case.

In our dire economic climate I do not think it is right to be spending over £34 billion of taxpayers' money – over £1,000 per income-tax payer - on HS2 when it is clear that it will not benefit most and when the level of financial risk is huge.

As the Institute for Economic Affairs put it: *There is a significant risk that High Speed 2 (HS2) will become the latest in a long series of government big-project disasters with higher-than-forecast costs and lower-than-forecast benefits. HS2 is not commercially viable and will require substantial and increasing levels of subsidy. Taxpayers will therefore bear a very high proportion of the financial risks, which are wholly under-represented in the Economic Case presented by the Department for Transport.*

I believe that the Department for Transport's economic case depends on flawed estimates of growth. The Government's estimates for growth do not correlate with previous forecasts as their figures are much higher. It is worth noting that a similar formula was used in predicting passenger numbers for HS1 – which were incorrect – and this was reported by the Public Accounts Committee. HS2 is not learning from the challenges discovered during HS1.

Furthermore, I am not convinced HS2 will solve the "North-South divide"; many experts say that any economic benefits – including jobs - are likely to go to London, not to the North.

The geography of Great Britain is vastly different to our European neighbours; e.g., in Germany the distance from Munich and Hamburg is approximately 500 miles, whereas in Britain, the distance between Manchester to London is 200 miles. It takes very little time already to commute between the major economic centres of the United Kingdom.

The case for the ultra-high-speed (250mph) line that is proposed is not proven. This will have huge environmental impacts and bring financial and technical risks. Increasing speed also increases fuel usage.

There are other alternatives that could be used; e.g. limiting the number of 1st class carriages and increasing the total number of carriages on the West Coast Main Line. Rail Package 2 should also be strongly considered. These alternatives have the advantage that they bring benefits much more quickly and at lower cost.

Do you agree that a national high speed rail network from London to Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester (the Y network) would provide the best value for money solution (best balance of costs and benefits) for enhancing rail capacity and performance?

I am very concerned that the entire route has not been published simultaneously. If the entire route was published then all people affected by the route would be able to closely examine the end to end business case. It appears that the High Speed Rail projects are using the 'divide and conquer' strategy.

I believe if the whole route were published I would be in a more informed situation to answer this question.

HS2 believes that travel time is 'dead-time' to which I disagree. Furthermore, this reduced 'dead-time' is converted into 'cash benefits' which I do not believe should happen. If I am on a train journey I will take out my laptop and do work; however, if the journey time is so short I will not bother removing the laptop from its case. Shorter travel times can lead to less, or no, work being done en route.

Do you agree with the Government's proposals for the phased roll-out of a national high speed rail network, and for links to Heathrow Airport and the High Speed 1 line to the Channel Tunnel?

Firstly, linking HS2 to HS1 is erroneous as each have terminus at different train stations so more infrastructure will be needed.

Secondly, Heathrow airport already has good links to the centre of London with the underground, and more quickly, with the Heathrow Express.

Finally, Curzon Street Station in Birmingham is not near the main rail hubs of Birmingham including Birmingham New Street. There is limited transport between Curzon and New Street stations.

Do you agree with the principles and specification used by HS2 Ltd to underpin its proposals for new high speed rail lines and the route selection process HS2 Ltd undertook?

Unfortunately, there has been a great emphasis on speed at the expense of the environment. The carbon neutral claim must be challenged because:

- i) The route does not follow significant air travel routes so there can be no significant switch from air to rail.
- ii) These domestic air slots freed up will be filled by international flights with a larger carbon footprint.
- ii) More passengers, who would not otherwise travel, means only greater carbon footprint activity.

The criterion of 250mph trains means that the route has to have very limited curvature; i.e., be almost straight. This, unfortunately, means that the track is unable to curve around various important ecological, economical and culturally important landscapes – as well as homes and villages.

