

➤ Much is made by government of the claim that HS2 will free up capacity for improved local rail services. In reality, given constraints on public spending, HS2 is likely to be at the expense of other transport investment and will do nothing to deal with existing capacity problems as it would not operate for another 14 years at the earliest. If the intention is to provide affordable transport and meet the needs of the socially least advantaged, HS2 makes no sense. In contrast local transport can directly benefit the least privileged and improve access to work, training and education.

The Sustainable Development Commission, in its report, Fairness in a Car Dependent Society, says that 'high speed rail could divert funds away from investment in local rail services', repeats concerns that HS2 could further imbalance the economy towards London, and criticises the fact that it will primarily be used by those on high incomes.

Environmental sustainability

The government claims that HS2 is 'broadly carbon neutral', but this case has not been substantiated. And there has been no assessment yet of the environmental damage of a new line in both urban and rural areas.

HSR 'is not a particularly useful tool for fighting CO2 emissions, being less environmentally efficient than conventional modern trains'.

Albalade and Bel, University of Barcelona.

'The DfT's cost-benefit analysis (of HS2) excludes all environmental and social outcomes.....the carbon case for HS2remains unconvincing.'

New Economics Foundation.

HS2: a deeply unprogressive project

HS2 is a 'prestige' project in search of a rationale. If the objectives of policy are economic prosperity, jobs, a balanced regional geography, social justice and environmental sustainability, HS2 is part of the problem not part of the answer.

'If we really want to create jobs in local economies rather than drain them away along a very fast railway line we could insulate 20m homes, make every house a mini-power station to generate and export its own electricity, sort out extremely poor quality commuter railway lines around all our cities, sort out inter-regional rail links and build 10,000 km of segregated bike paths to connect every school, hospital, employment site and public building to every residential area. These projects would deliver real jobs on a large scale in every city region and local authority area but do not have the sexiness of high speed railway lines.'

Professor John Whitelegg

'Britain still has time to ditch this grand infrastructure project – and should...A good infrastructure scheme has a long life. But a bad one can derail both the public finances and a country's development ambitions.'

The Economist

HS2 and the progressive agenda: Economic prosperity and jobs, social justice, environmental sustainability

Is HS2 part of a progressive agenda? Will it:

- Create economic prosperity and jobs?
 - Rebalance the economy, linking up our major cities and reducing the north-south divide?
 - Free up capacity to improve local services and access to jobs?
 - Contribute to a low carbon economy?
- The government and its supporters say 'Yes', but the reality is very different.

Economic prosperity and jobs

Transport investment is important in underpinning prosperity and creating jobs. But big prestige projects like HS2 offer poor value for money compared to other forms of transport.

'Claims about the "transformational" nature of transport investments should be generally discounted because they have no convincing evidence base to support them'.

Professor Henry Overman to Transport Select Committee

'There are strategic arguments that major transport investments to cater for growth should be made in rail rather than road or air, but there are also arguments that major investments tend to offer lower returns than smaller ones. Eddington noted a general tendency for what he termed 'grand projects' to deliver disappointingly low BCRs, and doubted the value of new High Speed Rail lines'.

Commission for Integrated Transport

Even the government only claims HS2 will create 40,000 jobs, and of these many will be relocations from elsewhere not 'new' jobs. Even taking the government's figures at face value, the cost of each of these jobs works out at an eye-watering £400,000 plus. Spending the £17bn cost of HS2 (£33bn if the 'Y' to Leeds and Manchester is included) on education, training and targeted regeneration would be far more cost effective in creating jobs.

Other supporters of HS2 make much bigger claims for economic growth and jobs, but these are implausible. Volterra and Arup, in a recent report for the Core Cities Group, claim high speed rail could 'underpin' £44bn of GVA and 1m additional jobs in our major urban areas. But these figures turn out to be no more than a hypothetical and highly unlikely 'best case' economic scenario for the period up to 2020 – well before HS2 could be operating and so in no way a result of it!

There are cheaper and quicker ways of improving our high speed rail network across the whole country in the interests of economic prosperity. Our 'Better Railway for Britain' manifesto - download it from www.betterthanhs2.org - makes an important contribution to demonstrating this.

'It is an unnecessary route and will be very expensive, and that money would be better spent elsewhere on modernisation, electrification and re-signalling'

Kelvin Hopkins MP (Lab Luton North)

Rebalancing the economy and the north-south divide

There is a serious need to rebalance the economy – the north-south divide in England is getting worse. An authoritative estimate (by Cambridge Econometrics) suggests that it is widening in employment terms by nearly 60,000 jobs a year.

The government has produced no evidence at all to justify claims that HS2 would tackle this growing divide. In fact the reverse is true - it would create most jobs in London, and so widen the divide.

Jobs attributed to HS2 (Phase 1)

Type	Employment (nos.)	Comment
Operational	1,500	No account taken of losses from existing franchises
Construction	9,000	Temporary jobs
Regeneration	2,000 (Euston)	Total 30,300 jobs are not a net increase: •mainly the result of relocation from hinterland •London will be the main beneficiary with 73% of the jobs
	20,000 (Old Oak Common)	
	3,800 (Birmingham interchange)	
	4,500 (Birmingham station)	
Total	40,800	

This is not surprising as the expert view is that new transport links between cities strengthen the position of the largest and strongest - in this case London.

'In most developed economies high-speed railways fail to bridge regional divides and sometimes exacerbate them. Better connections strengthen the advantages of a rich city at the network's hub: firms in wealthy regions can reach a bigger area, harming the prospects of poorer places.'

The Economist

'Cities which are the location of HSR stations may gain some benefits, but distribution of net benefits needs careful analysis. Some the benefits accruing to regional cities may be at the expense of neighbouring cities.'

Professor John Tomaney, Newcastle University

'Parts of Britain fear that a new zippy railway will create a second tier of cities supplied by fewer and slower trains.' *The Economist*

Claims by HS2 supporters such as Greengauge 21 that HSR will narrow the north-south divide do not stand up to scrutiny.

The Northern Way commissioned the Institute for Transport Studies at Leeds University to examine the methodology of Greengauge and similar studies. The review found they suffered from a number of serious defects, causing them to give unrealistically high employment estimates.

Improving inter-regional transport links will do more for the North than HS2. If the aim is to boost the North, the answer is to invest in the North.

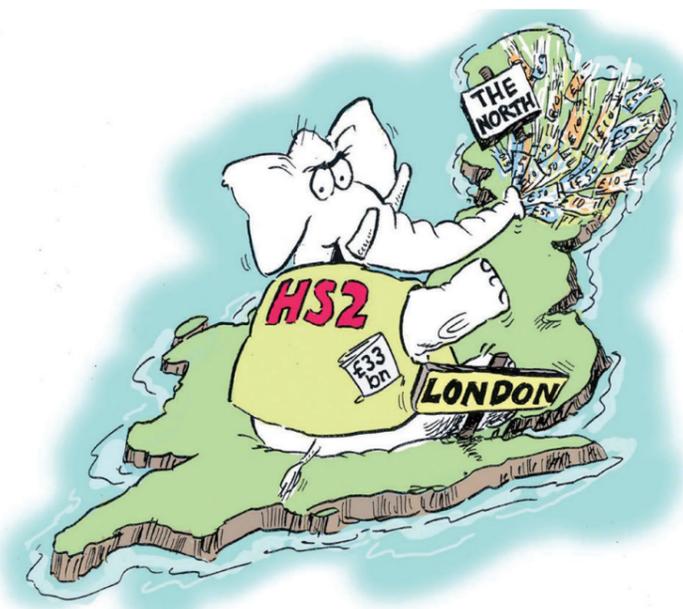
'It is a white elephant that will do nothing for the North East. What we need is the same amount invested in existing rail infrastructure, including the East Coast Main Line'

Kevan Jones MP (Lab North Durham)

Network Rail's chief executive has been explicit about what the top rail investment priority is for the North. It isn't HS2, but rather the 'Northern Hub' proposals to improve connections between Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and Bradford.

Local services, access to jobs and social justice

HS2 fails the social justice test. It would exacerbate social as well as regional inequalities. Compared to other possible transport investments, it would be used largely by the rich. 47% of all long distance rail journeys are by the most affluent 20% of the population. ➤

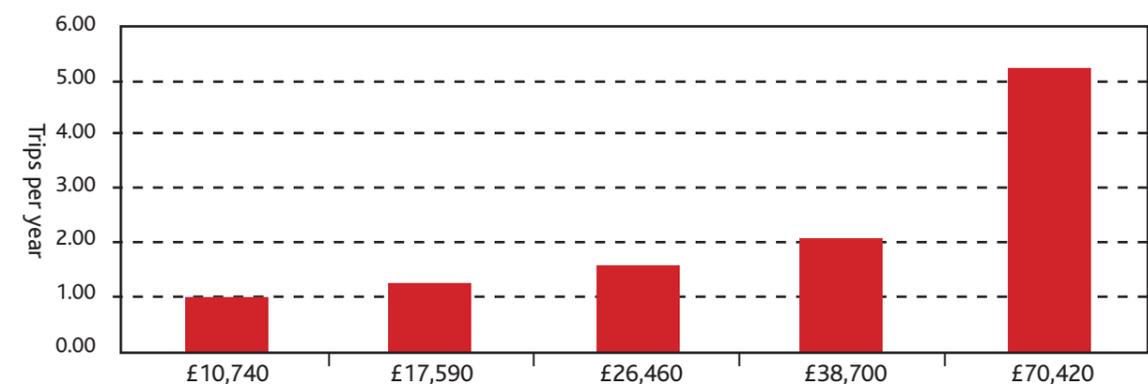


'Taking the evidence in the round it is very difficult to substantiate the argument that high speed rail is likely to have a positive impact on regional inequalities.'

Professor John Tomaney, Newcastle University

While the primary beneficiary of HS2 would be London, some limited development may be anticipated around stations close to the major regional cities. But any such growth is likely to be at the expense of many other places in the regions without connections to HSR. HS2 will increase disparities both between and within regions. It's a big city stitch-up!

Long distance rail trips by household income



Source: 'Modelling Long-Distance Travel in the UK', Charlene Rohr, James Fox, Andrew Daly, Bhanu Patrni,