

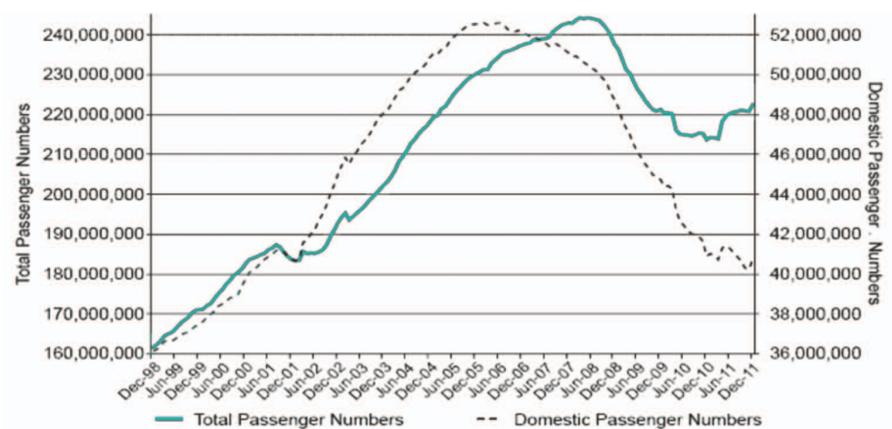
- THE UK DOMESTIC AVIATION MARKET HAS BEEN STEADILY SHRINKING SINCE 2005, MEANING OPPORTUNITIES FOR HS2 TO DISPLACE AIR TRAVEL ARE REDUCING, NOT INCREASING.
- HS2 WILL NOT OFFER MUCH REPLACEMENT FOR DOMESTIC FLIGHTS SERVING LONDON, LARGELY BECAUSE THE TRAIN IS ALREADY WINNING ON THE ROUTES IT SERVES.
- HS2 IS NOT THE ALTERNATIVE TO EXPANSION AT HEATHROW.

THE CASE AGAINST HS2: DOMESTIC AVIATION

A core justification for HS2 is its potential to reduce demand for flights, particularly on internal UK routes. HS2's original backers promoted the idea that building a high-speed rail line from London to Manchester and Leeds would significantly reduce the UK's carbon emissions and be a viable alternative to construction of a third runway at Heathrow airport.

However these claims do not stand up to scrutiny.

First, the number of passengers on domestic flights has been steadily shrinking, as shown on the graph, meaning the potential for HS2 to influence this market is steadily reducing. Many of the routes that are prospering cover journeys impractical by surface transport, serving places such as Aberdeen, Inverness, Belfast, Exeter, Plymouth or the Channel Islands - locations where HS2 is simply not relevant. Domestic flights also account for a small proportion of the UK's total emissions. Figures published by The Department for Transport indicate total domestic aviation contributes only 1.6 per cent of the UK's annual carbon emissions.



Source: Unite the Union, submission to the House of Commons Transport Select Committee

HS2's impact on aviation is limited solely to replacing those domestic air journeys which are served by its route. There are no scheduled flights between London and Birmingham. The train has already won the battle for point to point travel between London and northern cities, with flights no longer being available between London City and Liverpool, or between London Heathrow or Gatwick and Leeds/Bradford airports.

The only flight routes which would run directly in competition with the new rail line are those which operate from London Heathrow to Manchester. The current total market for flights between Manchester and all London airports is around 1 million passengers per year.

"No sensible, well-informed person still seriously pretends HS2 is a green alternative to a third runway."

Nigel Milton
Director of Policy and Political Relations, BAA

A significant proportion (Virgin recently estimated around 65 per cent of these journeys) are travellers making connections for international flights departing from London. While Virgin are considering introducing more flights on the Manchester to London route, its target is attracting passengers for its long haul services. A further substantial number of travellers are travelling to get to the airport's own catchment area rather than central London (e.g. Sussex for Gatwick). It is hard to see how either category would prefer HS2 over flying.

Despite these factors, HS2's business case includes forecasts that 4.5 million people per year who would have flown will take the new rail service. The Government reaches this figure by making heroic assumptions about the behaviour of passengers flying to/from Scotland, predicting over 80 per cent of this group will transfer to HS2.

These claims are unsustainable. There will be some time-saving on train journeys between London and Scotland with HS2, but these will not be that significant. HS2 Ltd itself states the journey time to Edinburgh and Glasgow will be around three and a half hours – while the fastest Edinburgh London train is currently 4 hours and the journey is already planned to be shortened by 13 minutes in the latest announced investments. Overall, the number of passengers transferring to HS2 from aviation appears highly exaggerated. Even though HS2 Ltd plan to run a train every hour to Heathrow

their own demand estimates indicate they would fill just one train load a day each way for the West Midlands, North and Scotland combined.

The Government has kept quiet about the implications for emissions of any domestic flights which are cancelled. BAA's Chief Executive Colin Matthews said: "BAA would like more passengers to arrive [at Heathrow] by train. High-speed rail would attract people who currently arrive by short-haul flights, freeing slots for more long-haul flights." This would result in a large net increase in carbon emissions from aviation.

Indeed the impact of HS2 on Heathrow has been largely misrepresented to date. Original claims that HS2 would remove pressure to build a third runway do not stack up. A new runway at Heathrow, were it to be built, would be expected to add capacity for around 20-30 million passengers per year. Yet it is unlikely that HS2 would actually result in any more than a million passengers at best transferring away from Heathrow domestic flights. Furthermore, even if the figure of 4.5 million passengers transferring from air to high speed rail was accurate, and were all of those passengers to be using Heathrow instead of any other London airport, it would still result in a reduction in demand at Heathrow of less than 10 per cent.

Even the most passionate supporters of HS2 do not see HS2 as an alternative to a third runway at Heathrow. Air capacity is a problem today. HS2 would not provide a spur to Heathrow for 20 years, or even an interchange at Old Oak Common for 13 years.

Far from HS2 solving air capacity problems it is being pursued without regard to how high speed rail might integrate with the air solution finally chosen. The Government seems to have given no consideration to how HS2 would help with an expansion at Gatwick or Stansted or building a new Thames Hub airport. If any of these options are chosen – particularly the last – the basis for HS2's configuration and route becomes highly questionable. This fact alone puts the Government pressing ahead with HS2 at odds with any notion of an integrated transport policy.



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