



What is HS2?

High Speed 2 (HS2) is the Government's proposed high speed rail line. The Government says it will cost £42.6 billion to build, but that trains are £7.5bn extra, and that's all in 2011 prices. The first trains would not run until at least 2026, with stations in just Birmingham and London. Phase 2 would have stations in Manchester, (near) Nottingham, Sheffield and Leeds and is currently due for completion in 2033.

What's wrong with HS2?

No business case:

BBC economics editor, Stephanie Flanders:

"I've found it quite hard to find an economist who thought it was a great idea."

With so much money being earmarked for HS2, the economic case needs to stand up to scrutiny - but it just doesn't hold water. The Public Accounts Committee have said that HS2 decisions were based on "fragile numbers, out-of-date data and assumptions which do not reflect real life". For example, the case for HS2 relies on the assumption that no-one ever works on a train.

No environmental case:

HS2 threatens 350 unique habitats, 50 irreplaceable ancient woods, 30 river corridors, 24 Sites of Special Scientific Interest and hundreds of other important areas, but HS2 Ltd's assessment of the environmental impact HS2 would cause has so far been laughable. Due to the high levels of energy required to get trains to the unsustainable speed of 225mph, HS2 would lead to an increase in carbon emissions, while the DfT admit the alternatives would be less polluting.

No money to pay for it:

The HS2 Paving Bill, currently going through Parliament, asks for an undated, blank cheque to allow HS2 Ltd to spend as much as the Treasury will let them get away with. At the same time as this was debated in Parliament, it was also announced that the budget had increased to £42.6bn (from £33bn). Trains will be another £7.5bn. This means HS2 is already 30% over-budget years before construction is due to start. With savage cuts in other areas, is it right to prioritise a project which will only benefit the richest in society?

What the proponents of HS2 say.

Ever since the route of HS2 was announced in March 2010, vested interests groups and politicians from all parties have come up with a series of rationales as to why they want taxpayers' money to build HS2. As there have been four Secretaries of State for Transport since the first announcement, proponents of high speed rail have been able to cycle through these, hoping no-one will notice that every argument for building HS2 has already been discredited.

Speed - "almost irrelevant" but dictates everything

Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin said recently that the speed of HS2 was “almost irrelevant” and shares the view of many proponents that if you’re building a railway it might as well be ultra high speed. This decision causes many of the problems with HS2, without any real justification.

But the design speed affects every decision about the railway. There are limited numbers of stations (and none between London and Birmingham), because they slow the railway down too much. HS2 blasts through sensitive wildlife sites, because the speed means the tracks need to be straight. Possible connections between HS2 and other railways, especially East West Railway, have been ignored. HS2 does not provide interconnectivity and is far from an integrated solution.

In addition, supporters of HS2 say that that a conventional speed railway will only cost 10% less, so we might as well spend the extra money to make it high speed. But with the current HS2 budget of £42bn, that means they want us to spend £4 billion on something that they claim is “almost irrelevant”. HS2 does not provide the multi-modal use, interconnectivity and intermediate stations which a conventional line would. HS2 would not be able to carry one single ton of freight.

Capacity

Supporters of HS2 now say that HS2 is the only solution to increasing railway capacity. However, the growth in rail journeys is in regional and commuter journeys: HS2 only adds long distance capacity, and will have no effect on capacity until 2026, when it opens. There are other ways of increasing long distance capacity, including a variety of targeted improvements, which can come into service long before HS2 is due to open.

Figures from the Office of Rail Regulation show long-distance passenger numbers have started to fall, with a 2.6% drop in the last quarter of 2012-13. In contrast, the HS2 business case expects long distance journeys to continue to increase, and then jump by 30% after HS2 opens. Meanwhile total long distance journeys across all modes of transport are falling. The bid document for the West Coast Main Line from First Group stated: ***“Inter City West Coast is unique because it has a considerable amount of unused capacity.”***

What isn’t mentioned by HS2 proponents is the £7.7bn worth of cuts to the existing network which the HS2 business case demands. For Coventry, Stoke, Aberdeen, Leicester and dozens other towns and cities, “freeing up capacity” really means “losing the trains you already have”. In total, 32 towns and cities will have fewer services to London, slower services, or to lose them completely.

Arguments that the West Coast Main Line will soon be full rely on a discredited, out of date forecasting model, which over estimates long distance passenger growth and isn’t used for anything anymore, except justifying HS2. Network Rail’s “New Lines Programme Capacity Analysis” shows that WCML capacity is kept artificially low by private operators wanting to maximise profits. A 2011 DfT analysis shows that in peak hours leaving Euston, WCML trains were loaded at just 52.2%, a drop of 2% from 2008.

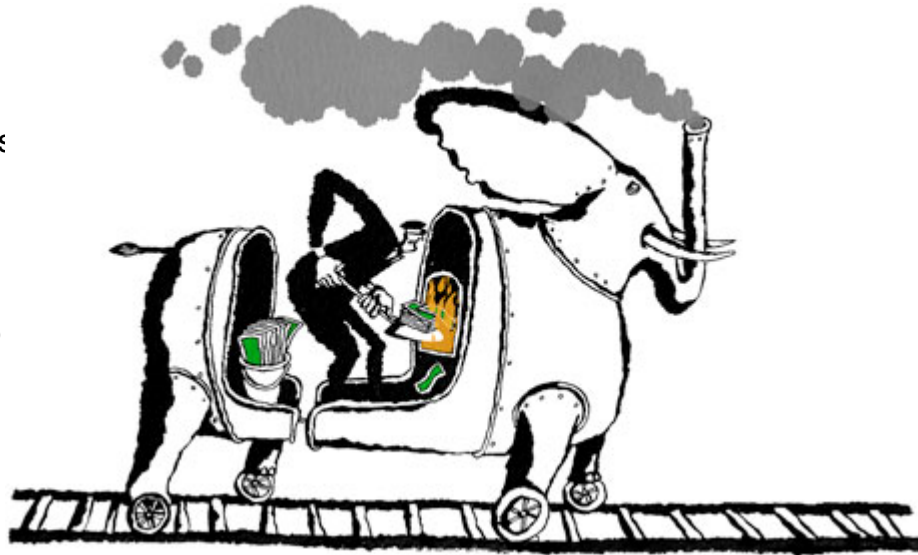


**If we all pull together,
we can still stop it.**

Please help. Donate to our fighting fund.
www.stophs2.org

STOP HS2
No business case. No environmental case. No money to pay for it.

Additionally, documents used to justify HS2 ignore work already planned for the network which will relieve the WCML, such as the new route from Milton Keynes to London via the the East-West Rail line along the Great Central into Marylebone. Electrification of sections of the Chiltern Line, which has much unused capacity, will make this a more viable alternative to get to the West Midlands: many London-Birmingham journeys have transferred to this service following Chiltern Railways spending £250m of their own money upgrading these services.



The reality is that the vast majority of rail users are short-distance travelers who will continue to suffer crush-hour conditions while HS2 sucks up all the rail investment cash for two decades, whilst a variety of targeted improvements, which could come into service long before HS2 is due to open and would deliver more benefits to more people for less money, are ignored.

Claimed Economic Benefits

With so many parts of the case for HS2 falling apart, the Government says it will publish a new economic case in the autumn. They are already suggesting that this new case will include a whole load of HS2 “benefits” that they have “overlooked” so far.

This has already been seen with a recent KPMG report, commissioned by HS2 Ltd which invented brand-new methodologies to claim HS2 would create £15bn of benefits per year (meaning HS2 would be worth more to the UK economy than BT is). This report has been widely criticised. It is based on the August ‘12 business case, even though the next business case is within a few weeks, and includes the now “paused” Heathrow Spur. One former advisor to HS2 Ltd called it *“technically wrong and possibly out by orders of magnitude”*, another described the numbers as *“fanciful”*.

Additionally, HS2 has put on hold, and will possibly cause the cancellation of other job creation plans such as those planned for the LDV Washwood Heath site in Birmingham. The latest HS2 Ltd data warns that they expect a loss of 20% of existing jobs in businesses directly impacted by HS2. A previous report from KPMG said HS2 will move jobs around, claiming Wales, the East Midlands, South East, East and the South West actually have thousands fewer jobs if HS2 goes ahead.

While HS2 is touted as a magic wand which will cure the North-South divide, in reality it will most likely make it worse, with most benefits sucked to London. In France, unemployment in Lille has increased relative to the rest of France, and in Lyon more businesses have moved to Paris, since they got TGV. The same thing happened in Spain.

A study by Imperial College commissioned by HS2 Ltd said that the order of magnitude of national economic ‘agglomeration’ benefits from high speed rail is likely to be very small. A cross-national review of the evidence by Professor John Tomaney of Newcastle University found that *“the impacts of high speed rail investments on local and regional development are ambiguous at best and negative at worst”*, while Professor Roger Vickerman, commenting on the much-hyped parallel case to HS2 of the supposed economic benefits of HS1 in Kent, says *‘they are not visible to the naked eye’*.

HS2 is Environmentally Damaging.

Because of the unsustainable speeds planned for HS2, ministers admit HS2 is likely to be carbon neutral. The power requirement of Phase 1 is 350MWatts for Phase 1, equivalent to the output of a small power station. HS2 Ltd do not know how much more power will be needed for Phase 2.

HS2 Ltd expect most passengers to have transferred from conventional speed trains, but trains travelling at the top speed of HS2 use at least twice as much energy as conventional speed trains. As it is, even HS2 Ltd acknowledge that there are lower carbon alternatives.

Who will use HS2?

Most high speed rail projects never get the numbers of passengers which forecasts used to justify their construction. HS1 has a third the number of passengers originally predicted for it. The Department for Transport say so few passengers will use HS2 instead of driving that it makes no difference to their road building plans.

For some time, proponents have claimed HS2 ticket prices will be the same as on the conventional network: HS2 Ltd uses this assumption in the business case. In reality, HS2 tickets will be expensive. Patrick McLoughlin said recently some passengers will have to pay *"a lot of money"* to use HS2 and refused to say prices would be the same as conventional trains: former transport secretary Philip Hammond said factory workers from Manchester *"would never use HS2"*.

What's happening in other countries?

Proponents of high speed rail like to claim that Britain is behind in the high speed rail race. In reality, we have four high speed rail lines, according to international definitions. As well as HS1 in Kent, the West Coast Main Line, the East Coast Mainline, and the Great Western Mainline all meet the international definition of high speed rail.

What's more, high speed rail projects are being scaled back across the world due to financial problems. Portugal, Poland and Belgium have all cancelled plans, with there being cuts in Spain and bankruptcy in The Netherlands. In June, France cancelled almost all planned new TGV railways, so they could improve their neglected conventional speed railways.

Digital Alternatives.

When coming up with the plans for HS2, the Department for Transport completely ignored the growth in videoconferencing and similar technologies. The DfT persistently dismissed the possibility that this will have any effect - even though total long distance travel is falling. Teenagers of today have grown up with these technologies: by the time the first high speed train leaves the station in 2026, they will be using these technologies just as today's workers use the mobile phone.

A Crumbling Consensus.

The last few months have seen increasing scrutiny of HS2, and a growing realisation that it is a bad project and should be cancelled. A number of politicians have changed from support for HS2 to opposition. HS2 skeptics now include Peter Mandelson, who said *"All the parties – especially Labour – should think twice before binding themselves irrevocably to HS2."* Alistair Darling said committing so much infrastructure spending to HS2 was *"foolish"* with potentially *"catastrophic"* effects on the rest of the network. The latest YouGov opinion poll (September 2013) showed that 55% of the public think HS2 should be scrapped, with only 29% supporting it.