

Surprise boost for HS2 to be unveiled

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PLANS to build HS2 have been given a boost by a Government announcement that it intends to promote a Paving Bill in the next session of Parliament. The transport secretary has reaffirmed his own commitment to the scheme by hailing it as 'an engine for growth'.

The new law is intended to give the transport secretary powers to raise some early funding for the project, and Whitehall insiders say the measure is set to be included in the Queen's Speech in May, when she will reveal the Government's forthcoming legislative programme.

It had been thought that the HS2 project would have to wait for a major Hybrid Bill, but this interim measure will allow the transport secretary to make progress ahead of the main Bill. Assuming that it is passed, a Paving Bill also allows Parliament to signal its approval.

Most significantly of all, a successful Bill would convert HS2 from the status of 'if' to 'when', providing for the construction of Phases 1 and 2 and also accelerating the plans for Phase 3, which is to close the gap between the north of England and Scotland.

The Government has announced its intentions before the result of December's judicial review into the scheme is revealed, but sources say even an adverse judgement about some of the details of the consultation, in which several hundred responses were overlooked, is not expected to derail the project.

The spending powers which the Government is seeking would finance detailed design work and the letting of contracts for designing the construction of the line, planning the realignment of existing railways and rerouting utilities, and also carrying out ground investigation and ecological surveys.

Transport secretary Patrick McLoughlin said "High Speed rail is an engine for growth that will help drive regional regeneration, secure economic prosperity across Britain and support tens of thousands of jobs. It is vital we press ahead with delivering this crucial project as quickly as possible.

"Introducing a Paving Bill will allow Parliament to make a clear commitment to High Speed rail. Crucially, it will also give us the spending powers much sooner that will enable us to get moving on the detailed design work for the scheme.

"This is an opportunity for all three main political parties to reaffirm their support for High Speed rail and maintain the ambitious programme we have set for HS2."

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jbzoom, Guildford

When the high-speed network reaches the North-East and Scotland, it will dramatically reduce internal air travel, provided it travels at 300 km/h or more. Trains running at that speed can't follow existing corridors to the Midlands, there are too many sharp curves. That's what determines the HS2 Phase 1 route. 33 billion for Phases 1 and 2 seems like a big number but is actually less than 1.5% of national income (or eighteen months housing benefit), spread over twenty years. Investment in Railways in the Victorian era ran at much higher percentages of national income. Let's get on with it.

Chris Neville-Smith, Durham, England

"The UK alas has the problems of both Spain and the Netherlands combined."

Really?

There are indeed legitimate questions to ask about whether the extent of the HSR network in Spain is necessary. Barcelona-Madrid-Saville/Malaga is one thing, high-speed lines to less populous parts of the country are another. When the UK proposes something similar - say, high-speed lines to Aberdeen, Plymouth, Fishguard, Southampton, Glasgow and Anglesey - you are welcome to question the benefits. The UK is not. It is directly linking four of the UK's biggest cities, or nine if you count the onward journeys on classic compatible services.

In the Netherlands, the high-speed line is doing fine. The problem is with the Netherlands' high-speed rail service. Which is losing to, not non-HS services as StopHS2 would have us believe, but Thalys which offers - guess what - faster services between Amsterdam and Brussels.

There is absolutely no comparison between either of these cases and what is planned in the UK. Nice attempt at revisionism. Try again.

2BTW to all the people accusing the anti-HS2 people of only arguing with insults, stop insulting them!"

When you write a post effectively accusing everyone with an opposing view of being stupid, you have no grounds to complain when you get a strongly-worded reply.

bathugeo, Windsor

Chris Neville Smith

"In years to come they will look back at the utter stupidity of what has been done."

Your selective examples do your argument no favours. HS rail has indeed been a success in Japan and Germany. France initially but less so today where the service is run down and unreliable.

Spain and the Netherlands truly are looking back at the utter stupidity of what they have done. Both ignored the geographical constraints. Spain has difficult terrain and solved this simply by throwing money at HS imagining that because infrastructure spending is good and therefore more spending is even better. The Netherlands ignored the fact that their cities are too close and that existing road and rail links are good enough not to justify the additional cost of HS rail.

The UK alas has the problems of both Spain and the Netherlands combined. I am not sure why we should expect different results.

BTW to all the people accusing the anti-HS2 people of only arguing with insults, stop insulting them!

Chris Neville-Smith, Durham, England

"if this hs2 proposal is anything like the fiasco of the west coast"

Ah yes, this is the old argument of "HS2 must be wrong because the Government supports it and you can't trust the government".

I presume it follows that therefore the 51m "alternative" is the ideal "solution" on the grounds that it's not backed by the government (just people and councils along the route, which is apparently not any kind of vested interest and therefore cannot possible be subject to any kind of bias whatsoever).

nigel cook, coventry

if this hs2 proposal is anything like the fiasco of the west coast as the department of transport made of it it will be a complete and utter big mistake or is there anybody capable in the dft, overseeing this multi billion project.

Melvyn Windebank, Canvey Island, Essex

You seem to have got the Stop HS2 group citing that this is a pro HS2 website! They seem to think this move is a sign of desperation by the government when it simply allows upgrades to infrastructure to be made earlier thus benefitting existing rail users.

Rich, Stratford on Avon

"beleben, GB

As Simon Jenkins said, HS2 is Concorde for slow learners."

In other words, in common with all anti-HS2 people, he has nothing to contribute but insults.

Pathetic.

Melvyn Windebank, Canvey Island, Essex

This is EXCELLENT NEWS in fact the government should allocate funds to allow Network Rail and TFL to get on with plans and even construction of a new Euston Station.

In fact plans seem to have been made to link the Euston DC lines to the main lines at Watford Junction so Network Rail can start an upgrade to the London end of the line something that is difficult due to the close spacing of tracks along what is a bottle neck into Euston !

In fact if one searches for Crossrail 3! One can find an article by former Mayor Ken Livingstone for Metro newspaper in the 2008 election where he was already looking at capacity at Euston and was looking at either extension of Overground to Waterloo or even HS2 which would allow through running via old CTRL he lost election and NOTHING HAS BEEN DONE SINCE!

As for Anti HS brigade complaints well the sound the same as those opposed to Western extension of C-Charge who thought their complaints over rided the majority Mayor Ken got for this manifesto commitment!

TFL could be begin by combining Euston Square and Warren Street Stations into a single station which would allow closure of Tube Station at Euston at times thus speeding up the work in a similar way as was done at Blackfriars Station. Consideration of a new circle line station nearer Euston should also be considered given the long distance to Euston Square?

Tony Pearce, Reading

Apparently no turning back for the Government. No-one really objected to HS1 joining Europe to London. If the Government spends £33 billion of borrowed money, it will create loads of jobs whatever the scheme. Although I expect it to be built, probably only as far as Birmingham and/or Manchester, I think that in the future it will be an economic basket-case. So what will the Government do then ? I guess it will join it to HS1 with a branch at Stratford, reduce the speed and build Parkway Stations at Kenilworth and Amersham amongst others.

Miina, Birmingham

To me it's sounds and looks like SOVIET UNION type of act, where home, land, farm etc. owners do not have any rights and where government is doing whatever they want...

Chris Neville-Smith, Durham, England

"Of course since the consultation was just an irritating legal necessity to the government where they can chose to ignore over 90% of respondents, that hardly comes as a surprise."

1) It's going through as an Act of Parliament. Parliament is under no obligation to even perform a consultation; it is just an optional courtesy. The correct procedure is to lobby your MP to vote against.

2) An alternative way of looking at the consultation is that 99.9% of the country were not sufficiently bothered one way or the other to respond to the consultation at all. That doesn't sound quite so arrogant.

3) If StopHS2 thinks the whole consultation process is worthless, why are they pushing for more consultation?

You seem to be confusing the (moral) duty to consult those affected with the right for you personally to get your own way.

Chris Neville-Smith, Durham

"In years to come they will look back at the utter stupidity of what has been done."

Indeed. The French, Germans, and Japanese are all cursing the day they chose to build high-speed rail, which has been proven 10,000% to cause Wembly-wide scars all over the beautiful countryside, evil fat cat bankers banking in luxury on £2,500 tickets, all the other poor commuters packed 500 to a carriage, social decay and crime all along the route, economic decline plunging the countries back into dark ages, and rioting in the street.

Oh, wait, hang on ...

Les Fawcett, Coventry

Yes, excellent news that the gov't is flying the kite for HS2 to Scotland but when will the truth dawn that they are pursuing the WRONG ROUTE. It could be so much better, come into use earlier, cost less and make a substantial contribution to CO2 reduction if it follows the sensible M1 route north from London where the opposition will be much reduced due to the noise of the m'way being there already.

As for Scotland, Philip Hammond said there may never be an economic case for HS2 to Scotland, and Andrew McNaughton said it isn't worth building a HS line for 2 trains/hour - but that's what you'll get if they copy the split at Carstairs and try to serve Glasgow and Edinburgh separately and inefficiently. There are no cities between Manchester and Glasgow whilst the east-of-Pennines route joins more cities and has easier terrain.

jbzoom, Guildford

Good to see the Government cracking on with something that will create and support employment rather than cuts, cuts, cuts.

Tim, Devon

In years to come they will look back and think "What was all the fuss about, I can't believe it took them so long to catch up with the rest of europe"

Peter Davidson, Alderley Edge, NW.England

Hopefully this development will finally convince the anti-HS2 naysayer community of the determination within this administration to see High Speed Rail come to fruition.

The real slow learners here are those who fail to comprehend this changed reality. High Speed Rail enjoys an almost unique consensus across the political spectrum so the usual vote 'em out strategy employed to derail large infrastructure projects becomes redundant.

It seems Mr. McGloughlin's statement about "fast tracking" HS2 the usual empty rhetoric designed for media consumption - he really did mean it maaaaan.....

Peter Davies, Cardiff

The fact that "several hundred responses were overlooked" in the first consultation appears to be irrelevant to this arrogant government. Of course since the consultation was just an irritating legal necessity to the government where they can chose to ignore over 90% of respondents, that hardly comes as a surprise. Yet again we see another attempt to move the goalposts just so they can push through the politicians' vanity project. And how absurd to spend this type of money on such a ridiculously expensive and highly dubious project without even a public inquiry.

Chris, Southampton

Interesting input there, Andrew from KENILWORTH....

Leslie burge, leicester

Excellent news and if it gets things moving quicker that will be great too.
The sooner we get on with this project right through to Scotland the better.
HS1 has done a good job in Kent and you would hardly know it was there.
I suspect once HS2 is built it will be just the same.

Michael, London

BLA BLA BLA...
SO ing What...

This line all the way to Inverness, Landsend, and to Dublin should have been built by now with out "MYOPIC" political input.- the Lines from Mid-England to London should be no less than 4 sets of tracks - IF NOT SIX.

with a tunnel under London onto the rest of EU.

The Scope of this project should be to make any two points in ENTIRE UK/EIRE no Greater than 2 hours apart = thus ending ALL internal 'Air' Flights. (how many landing slots would that free up?? eh...)

Oh wait that would require REAL forethought, not just building another VICTORIAN RAILWAY.

Paul Scott, Ryde

This is excellent news. This investment will create many jobs, benefit the regions and will be the answer to the West Coast Mainline which is reaching saturation point in terms of passenger and freight traffic. Its a bold move and the right one.

beleben, GB

As Simon Jenkins said, HS2 is Concorde for slow learners.

ANDREW JONES, Kenilworth

Do they not have a brain cell to share. In years to come they will look back at the utter stupidity of what has been done.

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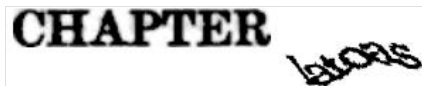
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