



## Minister hits back at HS2 'fretting bean counters'



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Nicholas Cecil



16 May 2013

Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin hit out at "fretting bean counters" today as he rejected spending watchdogs' criticism of plans for the new high-speed rail line.

The Cabinet minister also rounded on Margaret Hodge, Labour chairwoman of the Commons Public Accounts Committee, who had attacked the business case for the HS2 line as "clearly not up to scratch". His robust defence of the £33 billion project came after the National Audit Office found an estimated £3.3 billion funding gap that the Government had yet to decide how to fill.

Its report also questioned how the controversial line — which runs through Tory heartlands and aims to cut London to Birmingham travel to 49 minutes — would boost and rebalance economic growth — a key claim of ministers.

But Mr McLoughlin dismissed the findings as based on an out-of-date analysis. "It's right to think big, invest well and get on with the job of getting our country's transport up to scratch," he said. "Today no-one seriously suggests it was a mistake to build something like the M25. But at the time it was a different story. The bean counters fretted and the press complained."

He also said he was "shocked" by the criticism from Ms Hodge, who attacked some of the Department for Transport's assumptions as "ludicrous".

Mr McLoughlin stressed that Labour had backed the project.

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**Wispywonder** 20 hours ago

HS2 will make more of the country within commuting distance of London, possibly easing the pressure on housing. How can this not be a good thing? Ludites of the world revolt!!

Reply

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+1

**ASLEFshrugged** 20 hours ago

HS2 will reduce the journey time between Euston and Birmingham to from 1 hour 24 minutes to 49 minutes which is great if you live in Birmingham and want to commute to London but does little for anywhere in between.

Whether it will bring the economic benefits claimed is debatable, whether it can be built for the estimated £33bn is already being questioned, there are simply too many unanswered questions but rather than addressing the issues ministers and other supporters simply respond by insulting those who raise objections.

Reply

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-1

**Anonymous** 15 hours ago

It frees up capacity to allow more passenger and more importantly freight train ( something AntiHS2 lobby always ignore!) to run !

+1

**Nostradamus\_1** 18 hours ago

Move out of London, then spend all your money (assuming you have a job) paying for ri off train fares to get back! Perfect.

Reply

[1 reply](#)

-1

**Anonymous** 14 hours ago

Actually more and more people are choosing to live in London !

+1

**ASLEFshrugged** 21 hours ago

If the NAO's findings are based on out-of-date analysis then doesn't the Transport Secretary provide up-to-date information to counter their claims? More to the point why were the NAO not provided with up-to-date information in the first place?

Instead he derides them and makes personal attacks against the head of a committee made up of members of all three parties, most of them fellow Conservatives.

Obviously he has no actual answers.

Reply

0

**Anonymous** 21 hours ago

I searched Morse on Internet and found another example of where he produced a biased report re customs and excise!

So when Brunel built GWR what business case would it have had in a day when most people (Just like Anti HS2 Country bumpkins never left their village!) could not dream of travelling hundreds of miles in a day ?

And remember all those EMPTY Motorways Earnest Marples built !

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Fact is railways carried 1.5 billion passengers last year together with ever increasing freight (something Anti HS2 brigade choose to ignore!) and just go to Euston on a Friday night to see packed trains to see how MORE CAPACITY IS NEEDED to cope with a future where oil will become a luxury many people won't be able to afford !

[Reply](#) [2 replies](#) +1 ☐



**ASLEFshrugged** 21 hours ago

Ah insulting the objectors and deriding them as being like 19th century "country bumpkins", did you learn that from the Transport Secretary?

Brunel built the GWR at a time when there were no existing railways and he didn't do it with taxpayer's money so the comparison is irrelevant. We need more capacity on the railways but I fail to see how a non-stop service from London to Birmingham is going to help congestion at Euston on a Friday night where most people are heading towards points in between.

HS2's supporters need to prove that this will bring the economic benefits they claim it will and that it will be better than putting money into improving the current infrastructure, if they can't do that then this is a complete waste of time and money.

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**Anonymous** 15 hours ago

By diverting long distance trains off the WCML thus releasing paths for more local services Watford Junction long lost its inter city trains and soon cities like Coventry will be by passed !

In fact Network Rail have plans to link Euston DC line to WCML next year as tracks into Euston are too close together (because of lack of space) to allow single line closures.

+1 ☐



**Anonymous** 21 hours ago

bean counters indeed ! thats rich coming from this lot, may be we should look at what lobbying took place to go ahead with the stupid idea anyway !

[Reply](#) -1 ☐



**Anonymous** **NEW** 1 day ago

It's a vanity project, not a well-thought-out plan to improve our rail infrastructure. We should take a leaf out of the Swiss book. There, they haven't gone for hugely faster trains. They've done a lot of un-sexy work rebuilding bridges and reboring tunnels, and have introduced double-decker trains on all their busy routes. Result: an almost twofold increase in passenger capacity.

Frankly, what's the point in being able to get from Euston to the centre of Birmingham an hour quicker, if your connections remain crap? I'd far rather have a spacious double-decker train with a seat, and local services at both ends that are likewise improved.

[Reply](#) 0 ☐

**Anonymous** 1 day ago

All you plebs had better start saving now for your fares, if you want to enjoy this marvellous service!

[Reply](#) [1 reply](#) +1 ☐

**Anonymous** 21 hours ago

Many of today's trains will simply use HS2 freeing up space for more local service and freight trains !

[Reply](#) +1 ☐

**Anonymous** 1 day ago

Remember who pushed this through, come 2015, and then vote to kick them out!

[Reply](#) [1 reply](#) 0 ☐

**Anonymous** 21 hours ago

This has all main party support while UKIP also proposes HS railways until lines on map are drawn !

[Reply](#) +1 ☐

**Anonymous** **NEW** 1 day ago

I hope this massive ego trip comes home to bite the Tories hard on their cosseted behinds come the election! What a colossal waste of money (that we don't have) for so little return. You just couldn't make this up, yet the egotists already have...

[Reply](#) 0 ☐

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**Bruno** 1 day ago

Yet another lemon thought out by greedy people trying to figure out a way of making themselves wealthier.

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+1 ☐ ☐



**Anonymous** 21 hours ago

Bit like MWay network Marples built when roads were empty !

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+1 ☐ ☐



**Bruno** 12 hours ago

You mean built by Marple ridgway which just happened to have the name marples the Tory transport minister of the day

-1 ☐ ☐



**Anonymous** 11 hours ago

Bruno

No I meant Earnest Marple who was Transport Minister who also owned road building business .

The irony is HS Railways are built via a stage that makes it like a motorway and could have made him a fortune today !

+1 ☐ ☐



**bacardiman** 1 day ago

People should not forget that this is STAGE 1 of a larger project. more economic benefits will come when the line is extended further north. Also we waste 54billion on EUROPE each year! just think, in ONE year we could build two of these lines or fund this line and STILL have 20billion in the kitty for building social housing!! go figure.

[Reply](#)

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+3 ☐ ☐



**Valeria** 23 hours ago

I think you miss the point.

HS2 is meant to strengthen our ties to Europe. No EU membership = no need for HS2 anyway.

It isn't an either/or.

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[4 replies](#)

0 ☐ ☐



**bacardiman** 22 hours ago

How is it ment to strengthen our ties?????  
people will still want to travel from london to birmingham / manchester and beyoned, if we are in or out of europe.  
You dont think the French or Germans thought that building their high speed train networks was to strengthen ties to europe. They just wanted to enable their citizens faster connections between the principle business hubs in their own countries.

+1 ☐ ☐

**Anonymous** 21 hours ago

Hs2 is nothing to do with EU. It's our domestic railway that's full !

A side benefit will be faster links TO EUROPE but that has nothing to do with EU !

After all people went to Spain for holidays long before we joined EEC!

0 ☐ ☐

**Offa** 13 hours ago

There is a very clear link between HS2 and Europe. WCML has been downgraded in EU terms to the 'Comprehensive' network - to make room for HS2 to be classified as part of the EU 'Core' network - which will be run by stakeholder 'Platforms' (EU terminology) out of Brussels. The purpose of this is to bypass pesky national parliaments so that these long distance routes (Dublin to Belgrade+) can be contracted by the EU and run in according to EU trans national interests not according to national interests (whether UK, France etc). The UK will be unlikely to be controlling the fares nor schedules nor the contracting nor use of unionised labour etc - these will be controlled by the EU through the stakeholder Platforms. Get up to speed with the EU's TEN-T proposals. Read it yourself.

-1 ☐ ☐

**Anonymous** 11 hours ago

Offa

Where did you get this information ?

+1 ☐ ☐



**IanA,Stirling** 1 day ago

Build social housing rather than wasting money on a pointless journey saver.

[Reply](#)

[5 replies](#)

+2 ☐ ☐



**Anonymous** 1 day ago

Ian, that's too much like common sense, something that is WAY beyond the reach of millionaires on the front benches.

[Reply](#)

0 ☐ ☐



**Anonymous** 21 hours ago

And how would people in them house get to work ?

[Reply](#)

[3 replies](#)

0 ☐ ☐



**IanA,Stirling** 21 hours ago

Houses would be built throughout the country and people will get to work the same way they do now.

+1 ☐ ☐



**Anonymous** 15 hours ago

What standing all the way on packed trains !

0 ☐ ☐



**IanA,Stirling** 15 hours ago

You honestly think this line will improve overcrowding. Guarantee it will be mainly for first class exclusive use as it will be priced out of the reach of the plebs.

0 ☐ ☐



**Anonymous** 1 day ago

Traveling from Rainham Kent HS2 takes 49 Minutes. The standard train to Victoria or Cannon Street took 52 Minutes until they added Rochester where 2 or 3 people get on (by the way this non station is being knocked down and a 30m new station completely out of style with Historic Rochester is being built. What is the point?

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[1 reply](#)

+2 ☐ ☐



**Anonymous** 21 hours ago

To cope with the ever increasing numbers who want to use railways !

[Reply](#)

+1 ☐ ☐



**astr0** 1 day ago

Absolute waste of money just on getting somewhere half an hour quicker, ridiculous, another way to waste taxpayers money to funnel on to the elite and then let them extortion whats left in our pockets on ripping us off on ticket prices. And no im not a nimby!!!

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[1 reply](#)

+1 ☐ ☐

**Anonymous** 21 hours ago

Hs2 is about CAPACITY our railways are filling up with passenger numbers back to nearly a century ago on a much smaller network !

On your basis we would still be taking 5 days to travel from Bath to London by stagecoach !

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0 ☐ ☐

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