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Mail Online

Tory anger over HS2, the £42bn 'boys' toy': MPs vow to continue fight against new rail line, 'the biggest white elephant in history'

- Many Conservatives voted against the controversial railway
- A former cabinet member dismissed it as a 'boys toy'
- Costs have soared to £42billion without 'a shovel in the ground'

By [Gerri Peev](#)

PUBLISHED: 00:31, 28 June 2013 | **UPDATED:** 13:41, 28 June 2013



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MPs yesterday vowed to continue to oppose the costly High Speed Rail 2 line, as a former Cabinet minister branded it a 'boys' toy'.

Ministers were dealt a blow when 37 MPs – including many Conservatives – voted against the proposed railway. And there was fury when Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin revealed the costs had already soared by £10billion to reach £42.6billion.

When ministers brought their High Speed Rail (Preparation) Bill to the Commons for a second reading yesterday, Tory backbencher Cheryl Gillan tabled an amendment to the Bill, calling for the legislation to be scrapped.

Scroll down for video of the proposed route



Protest: Work on the High Speed Rail 2 line is expected to start in 2017

Her amendment was defeated by 325 votes to 37, but many of the MPs who voted against the Government are thought to be Tory rebels.

Mrs Gillan, the former Welsh Secretary, said: 'They have decided they want it and I can't get them off it. HS2 is a boys' toy. I want to get the Government to look carefully at the other options to increase capacity.'

Mrs Gillan said the new budget quoted was at '2011 prices', so the true cost is even higher. 'It is going up by the day and we are four years away from having a shovel in the ground,' she said.



Ministers hope the first stage of the project, between London and Birmingham, will finish in 2026. But the second stage, to Manchester and Leeds, wouldn't be completed until 2033

Critics of the scheme say that it does not connect to any major airport and will not reach the North of England for another two decades.

Ministers hope the first stage of the project, between London and Birmingham, will start in 2017 and finish in 2026. The second stage, to Manchester and Leeds, would be completed by 2033.

Rebel MPs – including many whose constituencies are not anywhere near the proposed line – will now attempt to vote down or at least amend the legislation.

A paving Bill, which will give the green light for spending on the project, will go through Parliament first.

Opponents hope to have more chance of influencing a subsequent hybrid Bill, which ministers have promised to bring before Parliament by the end of the year.

That legislation will contain a 50,000-page environmental statement and critics fear that there will be scope for errors.

They want the Government to give home owners on the route a property bond – guaranteeing their property prices at current values.

During a fiery debate yesterday, Tory MP Bill Cash branded HS2 'the biggest white elephant in history'.

The MP for Stone in Staffordshire said: 'My constituents gain no benefit from this whatsoever – it's pain and no gain. We must have a proper compensation arrangement if this Bill is to go through.'

But ministers say the project is the first major railway to be built since Victorian times and will boost the economy of the North.

Lord Deighton, the infrastructure minister, said the increase in the HS2 budget was 'inevitable' for a project 'at such an early stage'.

[Graphics showing the route of the proposed HS2 route past...](#)





Bill Cash, the MP for Stone in Staffordshire, said: 'My constituents gain no benefit from this whatsoever'. It's pain and no gain'

He added: 'Anybody who's been involved in these kinds of big projects would absolutely understand that having real definition to a final budget this early in the design is a very, very hard thing to do, so it's not surprising that it moves about a little in these early days.'

Mr McLoughlin, the Transport Secretary, said it would be the 'easiest thing in the world' for the Government to scrap HS2.

'But the cost of doing that would be huge. It would be a cost in jobs – our modest estimates are HS2 will create and support 100,000 jobs.'

A spokesman for the CBI said: 'The HS2 project is important but it needs to wash its face. Industry, investors and taxpayers need confidence that the business case and programme management is watertight.'

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I am a rail enthusiast and EuroTunnel shareholder. This line is not connecting to HS1 although the platforms are there for it at Ebfleet Station. It is out-of-date - the Japanese are building a magnetic levitation system travelling at over 300 mph. There is no possible way it can make a profit and will need subsidies not only in the construction but also yearly running costs. The Government must have a hidden agenda. Is it to make Birmingham the UK's number 1 airport which will then be at the hub of this new line ?

- [Brother Anthony](#) , Reading UK, 28/6/2013 13:37

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46 billion and rising .imagine if that was spent on existing public transport .so much for the benefit of so few.

- [pommy](#) , perth, Australia, 28/6/2013 13:33

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You can't cure STUPID, but you can VOTE IT OUT of office UKIP!

- [david](#) , St helier, 28/6/2013 13:26

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@exPat , Almeria, Spain, 28/6/2013 12:54 ===== More to the point is the question "Why is the Japanese economy so much more busted than ours is?". HS2 needs to be canned. It is going to cause businesses to go bust and people to lose jobs. AND YOU CAN'T SPEND YOURSELF INTO PROSPERITY.

- [flatdog](#) , Stockton-on-Tees, 28/6/2013 13:26

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Half the aid sent abroad then we will not notice the cost ,So go ahead. Build it. (Simples)

- [scruff](#) , Ashford Kent, United Kingdom, 28/6/2013 13:20

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Any Tory MP who is concerned about his future employment prospects will be voting against this white white elephant In

the three years since the election, Cameron has blown over a quarter of a billion pounds on HS2 Ltd, its London consultants and PR operation. In all that time, just five jobs have been created outside London. HS2 is the most expensive job creation scheme in history. " The Government needs to get the message that people have had enough of being treated with contempt by Conservative Ministers on this issue. Instead of throwing good money after bad, Cameron should be scrapping this white elephant that is destroying so very many lives and businesses." Council elections in May showed clearly the UKIP won directly down the HS2 line starting with Great Missenden. Tory vote share fell from 65% 4 years ago to 37% !

- [prohyp](#) , Ramsgate, 28/6/2013 13:20

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we'll all be a suburb of London in ten years anyway so no need to build this folly. better spend the money on decent housing and better healthcare.

- [Admiral Benbow](#) , Birmingham, United Kingdom, 28/6/2013 13:19

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Half the aid sent abroad ,And it will not matter what it costs as we will not notice it. (Simples)

- [scruff](#) , Ashford Kent, United Kingdom, 28/6/2013 13:17

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Our potholes have roads, can we turn it the other way around please before we spend this exorbitant amount of money on something the majority of us wont even use.

- [Michael](#) , London, 28/6/2013 12:58

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If more and more people what this to go underground the cost WILL increase. The argument, that the time frame to complete, will render this, 'Out of Date' will only apply to the rolling stock. The tracks should be designed to take trains upto 300 mph, similar to what they are doing in Japan. Remember, they were one of the Countries that LOST the War, so why are they so more advanced, techno wise then we are.

- [exPat](#) , Almeria, Spain, 28/6/2013 12:54

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Published by Associated Newspapers Ltd

Part of the Daily Mail, The Mail on Sunday & Metro Media Group

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