



Department
for Transport

From the Minister of State
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Iain Stewart MP
Chair of the Transport Select Committee
House of Commons
London
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15 June 2023

Dear Iain,

I was pleased to provide evidence to the Committee on 18 May as part of your regular sessions on High Speed Two (HS2) progress updates. I am writing to you with further detail on questions that were raised by the Committee.

HS2 Services and Capacity north of Birmingham

The Committee asked about additional capacity north of Birmingham. In its business case updates, the Department has previously published an indicative Train Service Specification for the purpose of the analysis. However, no decisions have yet been taken on the train services that will operate when HS2 opens, including for services north of Birmingham. These decisions will be taken nearer the time, drawing on advice from the West Coast Partnership and Network Rail, and will be subject to public consultation. This will include the services running on HS2 infrastructure and released capacity on the West Coast Mainline.

Old Oak Common

The Committee asked about passenger modelling at Old Oak Common while it operates as HS2's temporary London terminus. The decision to make Old Oak Common the temporary London terminus of HS2 was confirmed following the Oakervee Review in February 2020, when it became clear that the design of Euston would need more time, which

meant the delivery of Euston was moved to a later date than the rest of Phase One.

Once complete, Old Oak Common station will be the largest sub-surface station in the UK, as well as the largest station ever built in the UK as a single project. During its period acting as HS2's temporary terminus, we have assessed that Old Oak Common will have the capacity to accommodate up to 6 HS2 trains per hour. Old Oak Common station will consist of six subterranean HS2 platforms and eight platforms for the conventional rail network. Ultimately, the station is expected to be used by up to 250,000 passengers each day making it one of the busiest stations in the country.

However, at the point Old Oak Common station is expected to enter service, analysis completed by Transport for London indicates that the Elizabeth Line's current 12-train-per-hour peak service will safely accommodate the anticipated passenger demand from HS2. The Transport for London analysis is based on peak passenger demand levels and demonstrates that there is no requirement for additional capacity on the Elizabeth line in the years immediately following the opening of the station due to HS2. The delay to Euston will not affect this. In parallel, Old Oak Common will provide connections to London Paddington and Heathrow Airport, as well as to Wales and the West of England via Great Western Main Line services.

Services to Scotland and Interface with Northern Powerhouse Rail

The Committee asked about the status of the work on alternatives to the Golborne Link. The Government is committed to looking at alternatives which deliver similar benefits to Scotland as the Golborne link, so long as these deliver for the taxpayer within the £96 billion (2019 prices) envelope allocated for the Integrated Rail Plan. Any decision to pursue an alternative will be announced in Parliament at the appropriate time.

With regards to HS2 trains serving Scotland, as noted above no formal decisions have been taken on the train services that will operate on the opening of HS2.

However, based on indicative timetable assumptions that informed the business cases for HS2, services between London and Glasgow are set to be available once HS2 trains start running onto the conventional rail network via Crewe once Phase 2a is completed.

The Committee also asked about how the enabling works proposed at the Hoo Green Junction, which is included in the High Speed Rail (Crewe-Manchester) Bill, facilitate Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR). The HS2 Phase 2b Western Leg scheme is fundamental to the delivery of NPR, and provides infrastructure at six key points. This includes the passive provision at Hoo Green Junction for the London to Liverpool junction, enabling a future NPR link serving London, Warrington, and Liverpool to be built. The junction would enable high-speed services to connect directly to the future NPR line to Warrington, after running on the HS2 main line north of Crewe, by-passing the West Coast Main Line and improving journey times between London, Crewe, and Liverpool.

Updates to the Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) and the Business Case

The Committee asked about updating the business case and associated Benefit Cost Ratios (BCR) for Phase 2.

As the Secretary of State made clear in his letter of 17 May following his and the Permanent Secretary's appearance before the Committee in April, we remain committed to transparency and will continue to publish updated project information as part of the 6-monthly Parliamentary Reports.

The changes announced by the Secretary of State in his written statement to Parliament of 9 March clearly require the Department to work through both the impacts of rephrasing and adjustments for certain elements of the programme in collaboration with HS2 Ltd. As he also noted, given the complexity of the task of updating the BCRs, it will not be possible to publish these in the forthcoming autumn 2023 parliamentary report. It should also be noted that BCRs alone do not reflect the overall likely value for money of a case, with this determined through the economic and strategic dimensions of the business case taking into account wider indicative and non-monetised analysis.

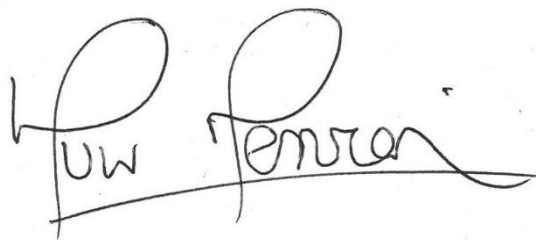
The Department continues to work on the development of the Full Business Case for Phase 2a, and a further update to the Phase 2b Western Leg Business Case, last updated 12 months ago. Each will be published at the appropriate time.

Crewe Southern Connection Land Take

The Committee asked about additional land required beyond the Phase 2a Act powers to construct the revised layout of the Crewe Southern Connection and Neutral Core within the station. Following correspondence from the member for Stone and questions during the appearance of the Secretary of State before the Committee in April, Department officials have received repeated assurances from HS2 Ltd that this is not the case; Mark Thurston also committed to writing to you about this point.

If the Committee has questions about a specific property, I would be grateful if it could provide details so that my officials can investigate further. Our current understanding from HS2 Ltd is that all required land is within the Act, and required powers are part of the Act or Network Rail's permitted development rights. Some of the proposed wider enhancement works to Crewe station, such as a new entrance on Western Road, may require the local planning authority to approve. This would not require amending the Phase 2a Act and is the responsibility of Network Rail which is the asset owner.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Huw Merriman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

HUW MERRIMAN MP

MINISTER OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT