

## **Written evidence submitted by Gareth Dennis (IRP0067)**

### **The contribution that the IRP will make to rail capacity and connectivity for (a) passengers and (b) freight in (i) the Midlands and the North and (ii) the UK**

Even though overall travel needs to reduce for the UK to hit its greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, analysis by bodies such as the Climate Change Committee and the Centre for Alternative Technology have shown that rail still needs to double its capacity before the middle of the century in order to absorb modal shift from highly-polluting road transport (and to a lesser but still important extent, air).

To achieve this, the rail network needs more segregation of different types of services onto their own lines to maximise throughput, as well as the unlocking of key bottlenecks around the network. Given that high speed services have the greatest impact on line capacity by pushing slower or stopping services out of the way, high speed rail has the greatest beneficial impact.

Despite this, the IRP has cancelled the eastern leg of HS2 (HS2E) through the East Midlands and Yorkshire. It has also cancelled the new trans-Pennine high speed line between Liverpool and Leeds via Manchester and Bradford (“NPR”). Desperately needed high speed segregation to unlock local and regional capacity for passenger and freight services through two of Britain’s most densely populated urban corridors have been cancelled based on flawed analysis and a lack of understanding of how railway capacity works (see responses in later sections).

A critical need for transport in the UK right now is for increased urban transport provision, particularly suburban rail which can move large numbers of people efficiently and quickly over longer distances than either bus or tram. Suburban rail provision outside of the M25 is severely lacking in both frequency and capacity, and enabling more of these services to operate is by far the biggest benefit of new high speed infrastructure like HS2 or NPR. It should be noted that this is unacknowledged by the DfT’s transport appraisal guidelines, despite being well understood by analysts and operators.

Access to services is a key issue for Britain’s railways: intermediate suburban stations with too infrequent a service mean that rail is not a viable option for

most travellers outside of the M25. Far from improving this situation, the IRP will in fact result in fewer services making intermediate calls, and may result in the closure of local stations as has been seen with successive upgrades of the West Coast Main Line in favour of high-speed, long-distance services since the middle of the last century.

### **Whether and how the IRP will “level up” communities in the Midlands and the North**

Most fundamentally, by its omissions and cancellations, the IRP will have a greatly reduced beneficial impact on levelling up in the Midlands and the North, and in many cases will in fact reduce rail capacity and accessibility from its current levels. This can be explained with a few key examples.

Firstly, let's take Shenfield in Essex. It is 20 miles from the centre of London and has a population of 10500. Thanks to high-speed segregation, its current peak time service into London provides 10 trains per hour (tph), giving a system capacity of 15000 passengers per hour (pph).

Compare that with three towns with stations that would previously have seen capacity release benefits (and thus more services) from NPR and HS2E: Marsden, Outwood and Belper.

Marsden in West Yorkshire is 18 miles from Manchester city centre and has a population of 3500. Its current peak time service into Manchester is only 2tph, giving 546 pph. That's less than 4% of the suburban capacity that Shenfield gets. NPR as originally proposed would have allowed a frequent, metro-style service along the current Huddersfield line, enabling a leap upwards in service for people in Marsden and other intermediate stations along the line, unlocking housing and employment opportunities as well as increased footfall from visitors for local businesses.

Outwood in West Yorkshire is a similar story. Close to Wakefield on the line between Leeds and Doncaster, HS2E would have released capacity for a leap upwards in service. It is only 8 miles from Leeds city centre, has a population of 7600 and only has a peak time service into Leeds of 2tph, giving 568 pph. Again, a tiny fraction of potential service capacity if high speed services were moved onto their own tracks.

Lastly, Belper in Derbyshire. It is only 8 miles from Derby city centre and has a population 20500. Despite this, it has a current peak time service into Derby of only 2tph, giving a measly 296 pph thanks to the short trains that run the route. That's only 2% of the Shenfield service, for a town twice the size and half the distance from its nearest major centre. By cutting the HS2 East Midlands Hub station, stopping long distance trains at Derby instead then running them northwards along the Midland Main Line, the chance for improving services through Belper have evaporated.

As laid out here, by aiming for higher speeds for long distance trains on the same tracks as local and regional services, the IRP plans will prevent these numbers from increasing, and in many cases will reduce them further by resulting in the need to provide fewer local services to facilitate the faster non-stop services. It is likely that many intermediate stations will only see a skeleton service to enable the faster journey times claimed by the IRP.

If "levelling up" is about the north-south divide, then how can limiting or even reducing services that are only 2-4% of their London equivalent fit that definition?

### **How the IRP will affect rail infrastructure and services outside the Midlands and the North**

By not unlocking bottlenecks in, for example, Manchester and Leeds, and in fact exacerbating the conflicts between fast, non-stop trains and slower, stopping trains, the IRP will also limit rail capacity growth in North and mid-Wales, in the Southwest of England, across Eastern England and even in Scotland.

This subject has been explored in more detail by others, but the impacts of cancelling two key sections of high-speed segregation are far-reaching and extend well beyond the understanding of current DfT analysis.

## **The challenges to central Government, Great British Railways, regional and local authorities, transport bodies and other stakeholders in delivering the IRP**

Submissions by other individuals and parties have explored the viability of the IRP in great detail, and their analysis shows that the outputs of the IRP are simply not achievable.

There is no better recent example of the challenges in delivering the IRP than the West Coast route modernisation, which delivered significantly fewer of the promised outcomes at far greater cost. In fact, its failure as a project is what led to the specification of HS2. Clearly, these lessons have been forgotten by those in power.

### **How the rail schemes in the IRP will integrate and interact with HS2**

HS2's eastern leg from Birmingham to Leeds via the East Midlands is by far its most critical and transformative section, as without it what is left of the new railway just becomes a bypass for the West Coast Mainline, providing no capacity release on the Midland and East Coast Mainlines and essentially disintegrating its primary purpose.

As a bypass for the WCML alone, that means no benefits of increased local and suburban trains at any of the stations: on the Midland Main Line between St Pancras, Leicester, Nottingham, Derby and Sheffield; on the East Coast Main Line between Kings Cross and Peterborough, Grantham, Newark, Doncaster, Leeds and York; on the Cross Country route between Birmingham, Derby, Sheffield, Leeds and York; and on all connecting secondary lines that link to and run on these lines and thus rely on capacity on them.

That means hundreds of railway stations across the country will see no improvement, and in all likelihood a reduction, in their services. Here are some examples of what is lost by the cancellation of HS2E:

In Leeds, the removal of long-distance services from the E-W axis platforms onto new N-S terminal platforms would free up both terminal and through platforms for more services into the Wharfe and Aire valleys and towards Bradford as well as more space for services linking across the city towards Huddersfield in one direction and Hull in the other.

In Sheffield, already compromised by previous cutbacks, HS2E would still provide capacity uplift through segregated infrastructure, enabling more local services.

In the East Midlands, both Derby and Nottingham would gain from the additional station capacity from no longer needing to serve regular direct London trains.

Conversely, by having to carry passengers between Leeds and Birmingham thanks to the loss of HS2E, Manchester will see a greatly increased demand on services, and this will diminish the benefits gained by having HS2's western leg arriving at Piccadilly.

Birmingham, too, loses out, as no HS2E means that New Street will continue to have to service long distance trains instead of Curzon Street absorbing them all.

Whilst less wide-ranging (no released capacity where new infrastructure isn't being built), the loss of HS2E would also reduce the more well-known benefits of speed, frequency, reliability and capacity on high-speed services to the north east of England - Teesside, Wearside and Tyneside would lose out big time from the new infrastructure, even though it joins the existing network south of York.

Perhaps the area that would be particularly hard hit by this decision would be the East Midlands, for almost a decade now the part of the UK with the lowest transport investment per capita. This isn't just because not building the East Midlands Hub would result in millions of pounds of wasted effort in planning a series of high capacity suburban and regional rail links between Derby, Nottingham, Leicester and the wider region (not to mention preventing many of these developments from taking place at all), but it would also result in no benefits in stations along the ECML where capacity is limited such as Peterborough, Newark, Grantham and connecting local stations.

HS2E will be by far the more rapid way to deliver all of these benefits - upgrades to the existing network are far slower, more people intensive and more disruptive to deliver.

Thinking that it is okay to de-scope or drop HS2E is likely based on the same misapprehension that on-line upgrades can do the same job as high-speed segregation as has blighted this country for over half a century. Government appears to have forgotten the chaos of the West Coast route modernisation, which delivered marginal gains for a tremendous amount of disruption.

No new infrastructure: no released capacity benefits. And those are what HS2 is all about.

### **How the rail improvement schemes in the IRP were selected, and whether those selections represent equity between and within regions**

It is worth pointing out that the National Infrastructure Commission's *Rail Needs Assessment*, which itself feeds the majority of the conclusions in the IRP, is based on flawed analysis. In their analysis of released capacity on the line, the NIC have assumed that one high speed seat only releases space for one local/commuting seat. This hopelessly underestimates the value of the high-speed segregation that HS2 (and NPR) will provide. Even HS2 Ltd's conservative estimates of capacity release put the number at around double (and in some cases triple) that figure.

### **Whether the IRP represents value for money for UK taxpayers**

When building a bridge over a river, you don't count the pennies and see how far across the river you can get. Unless it reaches the other side, the bridge is incomplete and useless. This is the case for the IRP, and its lack of vision for a railway fit for the future.

The New Economics Foundation estimates that government needs to invest an additional £12bn per year to meet its own net zero targets. Such an investment represents new opportunities, jobs, skills and a chance for communities to flourish, freed from car dependence and impacts from HGVs, able to rely on safe, frequent public transport. Denying this investment wipes away these opportunities.

By cancelling long-fought for strategic infrastructure investments forged through cross-party collaboration at national, regional and local levels, the IRP feeds the ever-decreasing democratic involvement of the British people in

transport policy. In doing so, it greatly reduces our ability to tackle climate change and social inequality in the immediate and long-term future.

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