

Sir John Armitt
Chair
National Infrastructure Commission
5th Floor
11 Philpot Lane
London EC3M 8UD

Thursday 17 May 2018

Submission to the National Infrastructure Assessment consultation

Dear Sir John,

1. Whilst we are aware that your consultation period ended some time ago, High Speed Rail Industry Leaders (HSRIL) request that this submission be considered in developing the National Infrastructure Assessment.
2. HSRIL (High Speed Rail Industry Leaders) is a coalition of expert companies committed to supporting the successful delivery of a world-class high-speed rail network in Britain. A full list of our members can be found at <http://www.rail-leaders.com/about-us/>.
3. Our members have helped deliver major infrastructure projects in the UK and around the world, ranging from creating entirely new high-speed networks through to maintaining and improving existing rail networks. This gives us a unique insight into both the shortcomings in the current network, and the transformative capacity and connectivity benefits that rail investment, and in particular high-speed rail, can bring.

Developing a vision for a connected Britain

4. Greater connectivity will position Britain to capitalise fully on the opportunities to compete on the global stage; sustaining existing industry, stimulating growth and new investment and improving productivity and outputs.
5. Rail infrastructure is delivered by an increasingly diverse range of organisations: through multiple Network Rail route-based businesses, rail franchises, devolved administrations, organisations such as HS2 Ltd, Crossrail Ltd and East West Rail as well as privately promoted projects.
6. Unprecedented change in the economic landscape and increasingly diverse mechanisms for the planning and delivery of new transport infrastructure means there has never been a greater need for Government to hold a vision for the long term development of an integrated transport network.

7. This vision needs to address capacity needs in already thriving parts of the economy and critically also to define how transport can unlock the currently untapped potential of areas where demand has been held back because of poor transport systems. The absence of rail connections has inhibited the growth of many local economies since the Beeching cuts. There is a very clear correlation between areas which under-perform in terms of GDP per capita and areas with poor transport links.
8. Improved regional transport networks will only provide the stimulus we need when economic centres are linked by a national transport network between urban centres, regions and transport hubs. This is where a network of high speed rail links plays a vital role.

High Speed Rail in the UK today

9. Our only existing high speed rail line (HS1) has out-performed expectations in both ridership and economic stimulus since opening. Completion of phase 1, 2a and 2b of HS2 will increase national high speed rail provision from today's 67 route miles to 412 miles.
10. But even after completion of HS2 our high speed rail provision will compare poorly with international competitors. Looking first at France and Germany, these countries have more extensive networks, which crucially provide a truly national network linking all regions, support connections to virtually all major towns and cities, and link directly into the national hub airports (at Frankfurt and Paris) and provide a more effective and more resilient system. Schematics of the German and French networks are attached by way of illustration.
11. Looking at other international comparators, high-speed rail in Italy consists of two lines connecting most of the country's major cities whilst Spain has also built an extensive high-speed rail network, with a length of 3,100 km (1,926 miles) as of 2013.
12. In Asia, expansion has been even greater. Japan's high speed network, the Shinkansen, opened in 1964 and in 2017 carried 159 million passengers. While high-speed rail was introduced to China only in the last 20 years, it has rapidly developed into the world's most extensive network. By the end of 2016, China had 22,000 kilometres (14,000 miles) of high-speed rail lines, accounting for 60% of the world's total. The improved mobility and connectivity created by these new high speed rail lines has generated a new high speed commuter market around some urban areas. For example, commutes via high speed rail to and from areas surrounding Beijing have become increasingly common, likewise between the cities surrounding Shanghai, Shenzhen and Guangzhou.
13. These national networks have had transformative economic regeneration effects. A great example of rail-initiated urban regeneration is the city of Lille where high speed rail has transformed the local economy; Lille currently has the most modern public transport system in the whole of France.

14. We believe that the UK's extremely limited high speed rail connectivity will have serious implications for our international competitiveness. The disparity impacts skills development, economic development and regional inequality.
15. There is a clear link between parts of the UK with lower GDP per capita and those with poor connections into the national transport system and these regional inequalities represent untapped economic potential. Prioritising potentially transformational transport investments by looking only at existing demand would perpetuate and deepen existing inequalities. In other areas of modern life, such as access to broadband, the Government has successfully set out guidelines for minimum levels of provision to guide investment choices. We believe the NIC could help to develop similar standards for transport connectivity to guide future investment choices.

High Speed Rail by 2050

16. To unlock our full economic potential, HSRIL believes that it is imperative that the UK develops a truly national high speed rail network with a footprint equivalent to the German network by 2050.
17. We feel the NIC is well placed to co-ordinate the development of both minimum standards of connectivity and to define the future network map. We propose that the objectives of this future network plan should include:
 - Defining minimum criteria for connections to a national high speed rail network
 - Effective links for Scotland and Wales
 - Effective links for poorly served areas of England, such as the South West
 - Improved East / West connectivity and linking major cities such as York, Liverpool, Newcastle
 - Improved connections to and between UK ports and airports.
18. Work is needed to establish the future route map and we believe the NIC has a vital role to play in commissioning that work and in building public support for a properly connected Britain. The NIC may wish to consider appropriate criteria to determine which regions, towns and cities should be connected into the network, for example, determining that each city above a certain population size should be included the plans for such a network.

The benefits of developing a national High Speed Rail network

19. An industrial strategy which unlocks the full economic potential of the UK, requires that people and goods can move freely. Effective strategic transport connections, including high speed rail linking regional and local networks and transport hubs will create the capacity, reliability needed and provide an escape from endemic highway congestion.

20. This would allow under-performing parts of the UK to realise their potential and sustain and support growth in existing economic centres. Changes to trade relationships and patterns of movement post-Brexit are difficult to predict and we need a transport system which provides connectivity and resilience to ensure that we can respond with agility to changing circumstances.
21. Improving connectivity across the UK is critical. It underpins the mobility of labour, as well as goods and services, to align the supply and demand for skills and talent between and within regions.
22. The economic structure of the UK exhibits a wide dispersion in regional productivity levels. Connectivity is widely recognised as a driver for economic growth. So adequate infrastructure provision, including high speed rail, would be instrumental in ensuring all regions of the UK can secure economic growth. High speed rail will help by spreading the benefits of better connectivity across the country throughout the UK and also beyond those places with dedicated HS2 stations, whether London/South East, Midlands Engine or the Northern Powerhouse; and it will ensure there are integrated services with regional and local transport connections.
23. A national high speed rail network will support a healthier environment, reducing the demand for domestic air travel and releasing capacity on existing road and rail networks.
24. As HS2 is already demonstrating, high speed rail investment supports job creation and skills development building a stronger and more productive UK construction industry equipped to compete internationally. Investment is the key to improving the productivity of the construction sector and a long term rolling programme of investment to develop a national network would ensure that investment in capability is made within the UK by locally based and international organisations.

Delivering a network the UK can afford

25. Development of a national high speed rail network must be affordable to the country, as well as commanding public support. We believe that public support will follow the commitment to make this a national programme reaching all parts of Britain. To do this, we should embrace the concept of high speed rail services using a mix of new high speed lines and conventional existing railways. This way, high speed rail can reach far more of the UK in much more affordable ways.
26. As representatives of industry, HSRIIL recognises that we must bring the costs of building high speed rail in the UK down to the levels in other European countries. Intelligent planning and scoping is critical to ensure that new infrastructure makes the best possible use of connections to existing and planned regional transport networks.

27. Should the Government commit to a long-term programme as set out in this submission, the industry will be able to invest in the skills and technology to drive productivity and reduce costs. Quite simply, effective planning and long-term pipeline certainty are the key to lower costs. The greatest opportunity to reduce unit costs comes from providing a sustained and planned programme of work, providing suppliers with the confidence to invest in ever greater high speed rail capabilities in the UK leading to more efficient delivery.

Conclusion

28. Whilst the UK is now investing in high speed rail, the reality is that we remain many decades behind competitors like France and Germany, and the consequences in terms of regional disparities and productivity performance are plain for all to see.

29. The UK should commit to close that gap by 2050, committing to the creation of a proper national high speed rail network by that date. The NIC has a vital role to play in helping to define the criteria for investment and supporting the development of a network plan.

30. The creation of this network needs to be at a cost the country can afford, and it needs to command public support. The industry and Government needs to work together to bring the costs of high speed rail to comparable levels to other countries, and the key lies in creating pipeline certainty.

31. Our Membership includes strong representation across the rail industry and construction sector. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss any of these matters further with you. To arrange our attendance or for enquiries please contact Chris Rumfitt at chris.rumfitt@wearefield.co.uk or 020 7097 7726.

Yours sincerely,

The Board of High Speed Rail Industry Leaders:

Iain Anderson, Colas Rail

David Brewer, Murphy Group

Nisrine Chartouny, Bechtel

John Downer, Jacobs

Mike Napier, Costain

Will Roberts, Alstom UK

Jim Steer, Greengauge 21

Cc: Chris Grayling, Secretary of State for Transport



HIGH SPEED RAIL INDUSTRY LEADERS

Appendix:

Illustration of German high speed rail network integrating with mainline rail, providing full national coverage



Illustration of French high speed rail network integrating with mainline rail, providing full national coverage:

