

please reply to:

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For the attention of The Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP, Secretary of State for Transport

18th July 2016

Dear Transport Secretary,

Open Letter: Top ten recommendations for rail

Railfuture is a voluntary, independent group representing thousands of rail users across the UK. Our senior management team includes former executives and staff from the rail industry as well as many frequent rail travellers. We use their knowledge to provide informed responses to consultations by DfT and other government agencies, and to give evidence to the Transport Select Committee.

Railfuture would like to welcome you to your new role with the attached top ten recommendations for the future of rail, within the context of the need for the government to show confidence by continuing to make the big rail investment decisions which promote economic growth.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations further.

Yours sincerely

Chris Page

Chris Page
Chair
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www.railfuture.org.uk www.railfuturescotland.org.uk www.railfuturewales.org.uk
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Top 10 recommendations for rail within the context of making rail investment decisions urgently to promote economic growth

1. A growing railway meeting social, economic and regeneration objectives and passenger aspirations.

Priorities:

- *Fairer, simpler, easy to purchase, flexible, more integrated fares with good information. Passengers expect fares to be value for money*
- *Passenger growth to be encouraged not priced off the system, by the provision of adequate train and system capacity to give a reasonable expectation of having a seat*
- *Investment in the 'digital railway' to increase capacity and resilience, to provide high quality passenger information and to improve staff and passenger communication during disruption both on train and at stations. This includes retrofitting older and current rolling stock deliveries with wifi and power sockets as mandated for new franchise funded equipment*
- *Better facilities on stations including adequate shelter and seating, more comprehensive information, together with a serious rethink in the area of increasing provision for and sensible pricing of car and bike parking at station, rather than surrounding streets. The principal benefit of increased parking availability is increased off peak ridership. Airport users should be encouraged to park at stations rather than drive to major airports, which requires careful attention to overnight parking pricing*
- *A more pragmatic, sensible and cost effective approach to allowing mobility impaired people and people with prams and luggage to use the public transport network*
- *Far better rail access for areas of social deprivation and where unemployment is high. (including Wearside, Teeside, Skelmersdale, Wisbech, and parts of Lincolnshire)*
- *Far better rail access to Britain's National Parks and declining British seaside resorts for sustainable recreation and tourism*

2. Increasingly integrate HS2 into the regional transport system.

Priorities:

- *A relook at the Euston HS2 station development with its huge footprint and poor interchange, with a view to better connectivity in London and the South East via West London, Euston and East London (Stratford)*

- *A reappraisal of regional connectivity at non city centre stations with a view to better city centre access and regional connectivity including Birmingham International, Toton, South Yorkshire options and links to the West and East Coast Main lines*
- *HS3 – properly linked into the north’s regional rail system and HS2*

3. Electrification: complete the Great Western and Midland Main line schemes but increase focus on value for money regional incremental schemes with a view to reducing unit costs and increasing capacity.

Priorities:

- *Incremental electrification in North West and North East England including Trans-Pennine*
- *Implementation of a proper ‘cascade’ of electric rolling stock to maximise the benefits of the huge investment in the London area to the regions*

4. Invest in new linkages to provide new journey opportunities and reduce the dependence on London’s existing overcrowded rail and tube network for passenger and freight.

Priorities:

- *Full realisation of the potential of Crossrail 1 by attention to provision of a linkage to the West Coast route in West London.*
- *Transferring skills and resources to construct further cross-London rail routes, eg Crossrail 2.*
- *Full realisation of the potential for Thameslink and the London Overground by implementation of strategic transport interchanges permitting far more orbital journeys (a principal cause of congestion)*
- *Creation of a London passenger and freight bypass through key economic growth areas Oxford/Aylesbury – Milton Keynes/Bedford/Cambridge*

5. Invest in freight on rail in the form of improved capacity from British ports for efficient and competitive freight train operation.

Priorities:

- *Felixstowe – Peterborough track capacity*
- *Freight spine – Oxford – Bletchley (West Coast Route), Bedford (Midland Main Line Route)*
- *Liverpool across the Pennines - Hull*
- *Buxton Quarries – Midlands/London capacity upgrade*

6. Devolve City Transport networks with a view to a cost efficient approach to integrated heavy and light rail transport.

Priorities:

- *London – further development of the London Overground system*
- *Cardiff – an integrated Welsh Valley transport system*
- *Bristol – formation of an Integrated Transport Authority*
- *Northern cities – further powers to invest in and integrate the North's rail system to be devolved*
- *Cost effective solutions including light rail for smaller but economic growth areas such as Oxford and Cambridge.*

7. Scotland. Organise for continued investment in Scotland's railways and Scotland's economy including far better links with England.

Priorities:

- *Formation of an equivalent Network Rail (Scotland) including transfer to Scotland of Network Rail's Scottish electrification and upgrade projects to Scotland from their current base in York*
- *Complete the Edinburgh – Glasgow Improvement upgrade including properly integrating the Central Belt with Glasgow and Edinburgh*
- *Improve regional linkages between Scotland and England (Borders Line extension to Carlisle, Edinburgh – Newcastle regional service)*
- *Improve linkage between Scotland and HS2 (particularly facilitating economic ties between Scotland, Northern England and the West Midlands).*

8. London Airport Development. Provide upgraded rail capacity to serve the additional London Airport runway location chosen by government and to enable growth at other airports serving London.

Priorities:

- *Provision of rail linkages from Heathrow to the West of England, Wales, Southampton, Surrey, South West London and HS2*
- *Provision of increased capacity to serve expansion at Gatwick and increase resilience by the creation of an additional peak and diversionary route for South Coast services*
- *Capacity and speed upgrade of the rail link to Stansted Airport to realise latent runway capacity at Stansted*

- *Capacity works at Stansted Airport station itself to permit improved service to Cambridge, Norwich, Peterborough and the Midlands*
- *Provision of a fixed track linkage from Luton Airport to the Thameslink network at Luton Airport Parkway.*

9. Regional Airport Development

Priorities:

- *Creation of a regional network based on Manchester International Airport (the Ordsall chord scheme improving linkages with north Manchester and Yorkshire.)*
- *Provision of a rail link into Glasgow Airport, matching improvements made at Edinburgh*
- *Provision of a rail connection from North Wales and Chester into Liverpool John Lennon Airport*
- *Provision of a local link from Leeds into Leeds/Bradford Airport.*

10. Organisation of the Railway. There remains considerable opportunity to improve the cost and the efficiency of Britain's railways, so facilitating continuing capital investment in growth.

Priorities:

- ***Implementation of the Nicola Shaw report findings, without further fragmenting the cost of the railway into 'regions'***
- *Devolution of the sponsorship of rail services and projects*
- ***Efficiency of the railway and customer service: Passengers have every right to see costs minimised and efficient, safe service. The current disputes in Southern England and in Scotland are not in the interests of passengers nor in pursuit of safety. The industry and government seem to have lost the moral high ground on this important issue; the benefits need to be explained to passengers. A key priority is to make these changes and implement more Driver Controlled Operation (DCO) services as soon as possible, including in other areas of the country where this issue has not been tackled.***