

**railfuture**

# HIGH-SPEED RAIL CONFERENCE

*Held on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2011 at Bletchley Park, Bletchley, near Milton Keynes*



Conference Report scribed by H Trevor Jones and formatted by Jerry Alderson

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**Christian Wolmar**  
*Chairman*



**Prof. Andrew McNaughton**  
*Speaking personally*



**Lizzy Williams**  
*Leading Campaigner against HS2*



**Stephen Joseph OBE**  
*Campaign for Better Transport*



**Jonathan Tyler**  
*Passenger Transport Networks*



**Graham Nalty**  
*Railfuture - HS2 Study Team*



## Introduction

Railfuture national chairman **Mike Crowhurst** welcomed everyone to the prestigious and world-famous Bletchley Park (the National Codes Centre) and then handed over to **Christian Wolmar**, transport writer and broadcaster and a sceptic of high-speed rail, to say a few words as Conference Chairman. Christian, who became *Railfuture's* President in 2012, said he was expecting this to be a thoroughly good conference and hoped to learn a thing or two. He felt that HS2 was the main railway debate of the Parliamentary term, although there is also the McNulty report on cost-cutting.

It was explained that, owing to the controversial subject matter, there would be a strict format to the conference. It would consist of five presentations with a Q&A session following each; the speakers would then give comments on what they had heard from the other speakers. There would be plenty of time for a general discussion where the audience had a chance to express their views on HS2, with the speakers giving final comments before the conference closed.

### Professor Andrew McNaughton Chief Engineer of High-Speed Two

Andrew began by explaining that he was speaking in a personal capacity and described his presentation as "HS2 - Some Factors". The concept of HS Rail as a dedicated route is 47 years old in Japan, although it is still developing and going faster, so we should avoid getting locked into a time warp with how we design things.

England had a population of 52m in 2008 but will have 60m in 2033 and 70m in 2050, with people settling in cities, so we will need transport between cities. He said that we have low inward investment due to poor transport. NR has already put up a case for a new Brighton mainline, even though HS2 is the only current debate.

The West Coast Main Line (WCML) is the most intensively used trunk route in the world. It is still the fastest growing long-distance route. Three-quarters of passengers are not on business but are, he said, 'you and me'. The line also serves the population growth area of Milton-Keynes to Rugby. It is also the biggest trunk route for freight, with suppressed demand. We expect it to reach maximum capacity in the 2020s. Any future upgrading will be extremely disruptive.

## WCML - The most intensively used trunk route in the world



- Long distance
  - Traffic has doubled in 6 years
  - Still growing at twice the national average
  - 3/4 is not business travel
- Medium distance / Commuter
  - Very strong continuing growth to/from Milton Keynes / Northampton / Rugby (etc)
- Freight
  - 40% of GB rail freight
  - Predicted very large growth
- At maximum capacity by 2020s

**Further upgrading extremely disruptive and maximum 50% growth in peak**

**NR / Rail Industry RUS – conclusion: new line required**

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Andrew McNaughton

There are now 80k passengers per day, whereas it was 40k last time. The only debate is what new line to build, not whether we build one.

High-speed Rail is best for medium distance, such as Paris to Lyon or Brussels, Frankfurt to Cologne. HS goes with high capacity - not journeys of thousands of miles.

The car currently dominates inter-city travel, holding 96% of the market between the Midlands and the North.

The first stage of HS2 from London to Birmingham is to deal with WCML capacity. The second stage goes on from Birmingham to Manchester and Leeds.

One controversial part of HS2 is a Heathrow Link. You never make money by going to an airport and stopping, because there are not enough people, but if you keep going beyond the airport then maybe it becomes worthwhile.

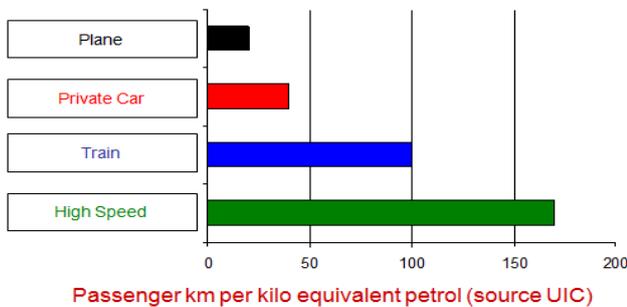


## 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage Network

- London to
  - West Midlands 1-24 to 0-49
  - Manchester 2-08 to 1-13
  - Leeds 2-15 to 1-20
  - Scotland 4-20 to 3-30
- Birmingham to
  - Manchester 1-34 to 0-40
  - Leeds 2-05 to 1-05
  - Paris 4-30 to 3-00
- Heathrow to
  - Manchester 1-10
  - Paris 2-40

Andrew McNaughton

## Energy Efficiency

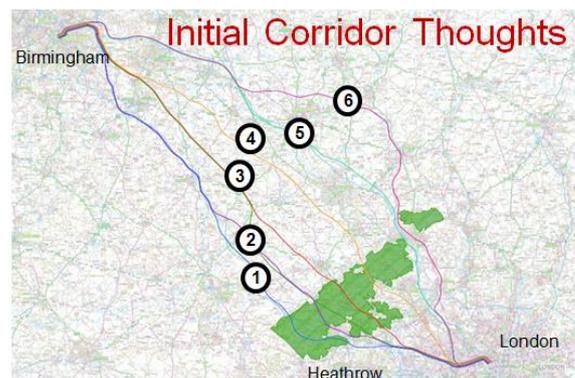


You need to minimise journey times for revenue, load, and modal shift. But this also lowers operating costs, with energy costs being relatively modest. High-speed rail is, according to research, more energy efficient than conventional rail if you go non-stop a long way (see UIC chart on left). But you need fringe stations as well as city centre stations in order to speed up local transport to the station.

The new station in Birmingham will have a common concourse with New Street and Moor Street stations. There will be two stations in London to enable passenger dispersal via Crossrail and via Old Oak Common.

There are six possible routes varying from a Chiltern route to a MML route, with varying lengths (see "Initial Corridor Thoughts" on right). In between there are various hamlets and other settlements.

During the Question and Answer session Professor McNaughton confirmed that HS2 as proposed would offer a 45min journey between London and Birmingham with two stops.



Responding to a questioner's surprise that no HS2 'parkway' station is proposed where it would cross the M25 he explained that HS2 is trying to serve cities, but M25 stops would attract cars to the M25 rather than public transport to Old Oak Common.

Another asked why no station was being proposed at Milton Keynes? He replied that although people would use it, that is not the purpose of HS2; you could instead have a more intensive service on the classic line.

What about congestion at Euston's Underground station – surely it could not cope with HS2 passengers as well? He said that London Underground is growing fast too, so HS2 is NOT the only show in town. HS2 will add 2% to the number of people using London Underground at Euston.

A representative from "Stop HS2" queried the "Rail Package Two" (RP2) with its initially costed £2bn (though since increased substantially) to upgrade the WCML signalling, asking why this is ignored. He said that RP2 was done by the DfT and is utterly flawed, being done as a counter-factor, a sort of "what if", rather than a specific proposition. People need to travel when they want to travel. The WCML is not particularly full at unpopular times. NR cannot see future upgrades beyond what is already planned, e.g. 11-coach trains. It only buys time and is not a solution to the future. Doing it now and then again 10 years later is senseless.

**HS2 Timescales**

- 2011 Public Consultation
- 2012 Decision to Develop
- 2013 Start Act of Parliament
- 2017 Start Physical Work
- 2026 Open to Birmingham
- 2033 The "Y" Complete
- If it all goes to plan!

Railfuture director Roger Blake asked about the HS network and the HS1-2 link with Stratford as the third London station. Professor McNaughton answered that the government sees the need to develop the west side of London to complement the current developments on the east side. The Old Oak Common area adjacent to Park Royal was once a thriving light industrial area, seen now by the Mayor's Office as a new Docklands. The demand for going straight through to Stratford was looked at as an alternative to the use of Crossrail. Crossrail is less loaded to the west, so there is scope for HS2 usage.

**Lizzy Williams**  
*Member of Stop HS2 Campaign*



Lizzy introduced herself by saying that unlike the other speakers doesn't know much about trains. However, she does care about the environment and sustainable transport. She was also a founder member of the AGHAST umbrella of various groups. She cannot be accused of being a NIMBY as is not directly affected by HS2 because she rents and lives in property away from the route. She has walked the route to see what is at stake, and this generated a lot of publicity. She believes that human rights are being taken away by government methods, with homes at risk from HS2 being found out only when media knock on the door.

Making the case against HS2, without the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, Lizzy said that that firstly there is no

*economic case* for spending £33bn to gain, it is claimed, 40k jobs, on over-optimistic forecasts, balanced against disruptive costs calculated as £nil. Road people have found you can't build your way out of capacity constraints. Railways should be the same.

Secondly there is no *environmental case*. It encourages new journeys and people to travel further and faster. China has reduced its planned high-speed rail lines to a maximum of 300 km/h as being more sustainable. A super-fast train is only of limited value and benefits have been costed against people some have described as "fat cats".

Lizzy said that there are many critical groups, including the Green Party, Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, RSPB, Greenpeace, CBT. HS2 is a white elephant *grand project* which Sir Rod Eddington warned us to avoid at our peril. The biggest CO2 problem is local traffic, which is a higher priority to be dealt with.

As an alternative we need, she believed, a fully integrated sustainable national strategy that benefits all. We have a 2m housing deficit in the country. HS2 is the only real growth plan that the Coalition government has, backed by £3m international lobbying.

Despite being opposed to HS2 – though by no means anti-rail – Lizzy was given a warm reception by the audience of, primarily but not exclusively, *Railfuture* members.

Asked for her view on high-speed generally, Lizzy said that she would be less opposed to a 300km/h route aligned on the WCML.

A questioner felt that we increase modal shift from air to rail such as encouraging rail travel to Rome, citing the phenomenal growth of East Midlands Airport. Lizzy suggested that would free up more space for planes and she feels that airports support HS2 in order to free up airport space. However, there is no air service to Birmingham to compete with HS2. Lizzy said the aim should be to provide local transport for local people. Lots of tenants of social housing are impacted and we need to educate children that travelling faster and further is bad for our carbon footprint.

Lizzy was challenged that despite wanting an integrated network at all levels from local to HS, doesn't taking a negative view give a danger of not getting anything done? Lizzy suggested that cars going at speed cause less pollution than congestion in cities, and she is not against trains but merely against waste.

A questioner was interested in the alignment that Lizzy walked, asking if it was farmland. She said that HS2 as proposed would mainly cut through virgin land. Farmland is important and landowners supported her walk. She started north of Lichfield. It was predominantly beautiful bio-diverse farmland. Loss of farmland reduces the ability to produce food in this country she claimed.

Did Lizzy (pictured later with Stephen Joseph) have any discussions with people along the route of HS1? She said that they were totally committed to support anti-HS2 groups because they were so angry about HS1. The sacrifice wasn't worthwhile. Noise is disturbing. There was concern about the use of a Hybrid Bill with the lack of a Public Enquiry. It is agreed that infrastructure is needed, but the environment should be balanced against the economics. There is fury as to how government has treated people, with false promises, such as the false promise about Bombardier work. Support High Speed Rail but not HS2!



**Stephen Joseph**  
*Executive Director of Campaign for Better Transport*



Stephen Joseph introduced himself as the Executive Director of the Campaign for Better Transport (CBT), which was formerly known as Transport 2000, since 1988.

He explained that CBT is an environmental campaigning charity, with campaigns such as "Fair Fares" and "Save Our Buses". It does research and promotes improvements in everyday transport, which is more important than longer distance trips.

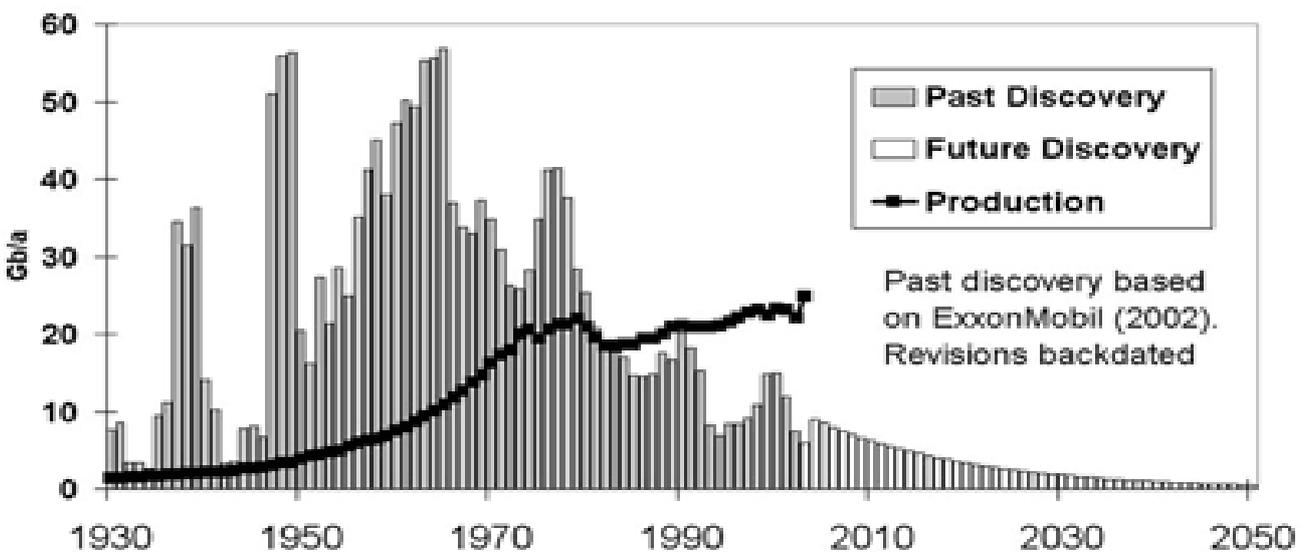
CBT firmly believes that we need to change how we travel, to take account of congestion, carbon and oil dependence, air quality and noise.

The key change is that we need to reduce car dependence and car-based development.

A first home truth, he said, is that it is not possible to build enough roads for everyone.

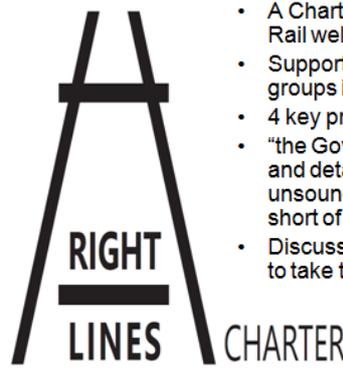
A second is that we are in a carbon-constrained world because of imported and peak oil and shocks and instability. Note that we were told to assume oil at \$75/barrel in 2020, so if oil costs go higher (see the graph below) then it makes a greater backing for rail.

**THE GROWING GAP**  
**Oil Discovery and Production**



Despite air quality improvements there are large scale health issues in cities. Everyone is obsessed with electric vehicles, but there are electricity supply problems. There are also greener cars, but still there are problems.

With a presentation entitled "Doing High-speed Rail well" he said that high-speed rail must be part of a strategy. Carbon emission problems come from medium to longer rather than shorter distances, and are due to freight. HS2 does not show this. The "Right Lines Charter" group, which is proposing an alternative route for HS2, will show this. The principle is that it must be part of a broad strategy also involving air and classic rail.



- A Charter for doing High Speed Rail well
- Supported by a number of groups including Railfuture
- 4 key principles
- "the Government's consultation and detailed proposals are unsound at present and fall well short of these principles"
- Discussions with Government to take these principles forward



A second principle is to test the options. The figures from both the pro- and anti-HS2 groups are probably wrong. Statistics quoted both in favour of and against High Speed Rail are exaggerated or incorrect. Thirdly there should have been earlier public participation, although there is an issue of consultation versus blight. But we must do better.

A fourth principle is to minimise adverse impacts by good design and look at the top speed and time savings against the local impact. There are also parkway station impacts.

HSR could be good, giving new capacity, and allowing extra freight and passengers on the classic rail system. HSR in France was poorly undertaken with many consequently neglected local lines being replaced by buses. There would be no new motorway or airport capacity and stations would be in city centres. But HSR could be bad if there is limited other rail and public transport investment, or lots of car parks at motorway and airport stations. In conclusion, we must change the way we travel.

## HSR could be good:

Package of:

- new capacity,
- extra freight and passenger services on existing lines,
- public transport-based development next to those lines
- No new motorway or airport capacity
- Stations in city centres or other public transport hubs, with complementary investment in local transport links
- Reducing rather than increasing rail fares
- All this could be genuinely low carbon
- Plus good design, avoiding sensitive sites or mitigating where necessary, with long term endowment

High Speed Rail



## Or it could be bad:

- Limited investment in other rail/public transport
- Stations on motorways/ at airports with lots of car parking
- Limited mitigation but lots of noise bunds and tree planting
- Limited reuse of existing rail lines
- Higher rail fares

High Speed Rail



Answering questions, Stephen Joseph said that rail fares are now too high, but if they were too low we might get overcrowding and encourage unnecessary long-distance travel. It's about rail versus motoring costs, and note that bus fares are up even more than rail, while air and car have had falling costs. If there were a fuel tax on aviation with the proceeds going to rail, then we could cut rail fares. The benefit of rail is the walk-on ability, whereas advance-purchase is the cheap way. The RPI+3% formula is opposed.

In the East Midlands the risk is that the price for HS2 is paid by not doing any MML or ECML work. We must keep investing in the existing railway, which the government has been doing, even with mainline electrification happening. Then Secretary of State

Philip Hammond has said that HS2 is not at the expense of other things. Likewise the McNulty report said that if the railway can price itself sensibly by efficiency then rail is OK for investment.

A questioner said that you can't get on a fast train at Watford due to lack of capacity to stop there and asked if that was an argument for HS2? Stephen agreed that HS2 allows more fast local trains to run, and also more freight on the classic railway. If you take the WCML as a place to build public transport based housing well connected to rail, then there is a really positive carbon story.

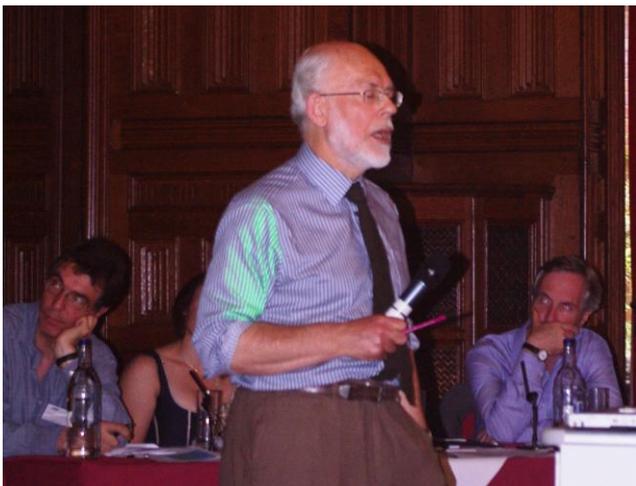
Comparing her views with Stephen's about short or long distance car journeys, Lizzy said she would ask for Stephen's document and we can pursue the question on Twitter. The DfT accepts Lizzy's argument on health. According to the national travel survey regarding length and purpose of journey, large chunks are medium to long car journeys, especially commuting and business. Maybe there is a difference between mileage and number of trips.

On the question of diesel trains running under the wires, it was suggested that an extra car with a pantograph could be inserted into diesel train-sets to enable electric use wherever possible. We should do this regardless of HSR, he said. It is already proposed for Meridian trains. But we should do more electrification. There should also be trains with batteries to go the last mile, especially in the case of freight into ports such as Felixstowe where overhead wires get in the way.

## Jonathan Tyler

### *Independent Consultant – Passenger Transport Networks*

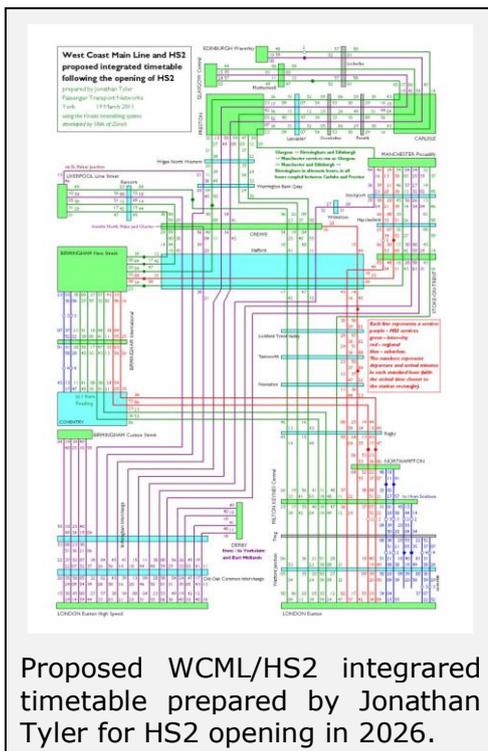
Jonathan commenced his presentation by saying that he sits on the fence. He is critical of too much travel, but supports rail where travel is needed. HSR could be part of the solution. He did some modelling for HST, seeing off vertical take-off air and Maglev.



Jonathan has been invited by Greengauge 21 (which promotes a high-speed rail network in the UK) to design a timetable with integration between HS2 and the WCML. For example Watford Junction gets a much better service as could Milton Keynes, yet we could have a better service in next few years anyway, as the capacity problem is partly caused by how Virgin operates. Rugby - Birmingham could have 4 local trains per hour (tph) and 3 intercity tph. Colwich Junction was looked at with parallel working through it, but that over-determines the whole WCML timetable.

The earliest delivery of a high-speed rail line (regardless of route) would be 2026. He was the first person asked to do a detailed timetable, based on the Swiss Taktfahrplan system. Running non-stop trains through Stoke-on-Trent with a 30km/h restriction was silly, so he put in a stop and then realised that Stoke was a big city needing regeneration so it needed a stop anyway. There was also the risk of just a residual service in Coventry.

He said that there would be a common high-speed/classic line concourse in Birmingham with Moor Street but New Street is still needed although it is not part of the plan.



He believes that field observations about overcrowding are inconsistent with the rhetoric. For example First Class accommodation is often empty at lunchtime; also peak period time restrictions on the use of Saver tickets causes overcrowding on the 19.00 departure from Euston as people avoid the immediately preceding trains because of cost. There has not been sufficient analysis of the pros and cons of 'portion working' (i.e. splitting trains en route). You would have two units together going just to Birmingham on HS2 but a single long unit going on to the classic line; why not have two units where one is dropped part-way when no longer required, to avoid wastage?

The eastern arm of the proposed "Y"-shape line has no connectivity strategy with classic rail. Non-urban railheads are unacceptable and too car-oriented. You need connections with intercity in city centre stations. Maximum HS2 capacity limits the benefits of relief for the Midland (MML) and East Coast (ECML) main lines. Between Wichnor Junction and Lichfield Trent Valley High Level, where the existing line crosses HS2, a connection is suggested to allow classic-compatible trains to reach existing East Midlands stations, but then there is a risk of never getting the eastern arm of HS2.

Jonathan originally accepted the proposed HS2 interchange at Old Oak Common (on the Great Western Main Line), but its connection with the GWR main (fast) line would require all fast trains to stop, which is questionable. He also queried the capacity issue of a single-track HS2 connection to HS1 going onto a busy junction where originally no connection was planned.

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Citing the absence of a national strategy for public transport amongst other criticisms, he questioned the superior but non-standard nature of HS2 saying that there has been no study of the cost-saving against the disbenefits of using a British rather than European loading gauge. The regulatory regime is queried. We urgently need a national strategy for public transport. Government has not looked at alternative scenarios, e.g. economic collapse.

**SO WHAT HAS GONE WRONG ?**

- 1) absence of a national strategy for public transport as context for planning
- 2) failure to consider alternative scenarios
- 3) predilection for *grand projets*
- 4) HS2 propensity toward 'perfect railway'
- 5) dispersal of responsibilities

[DfT / HS2 Ltd / Network Rail / TOCs]

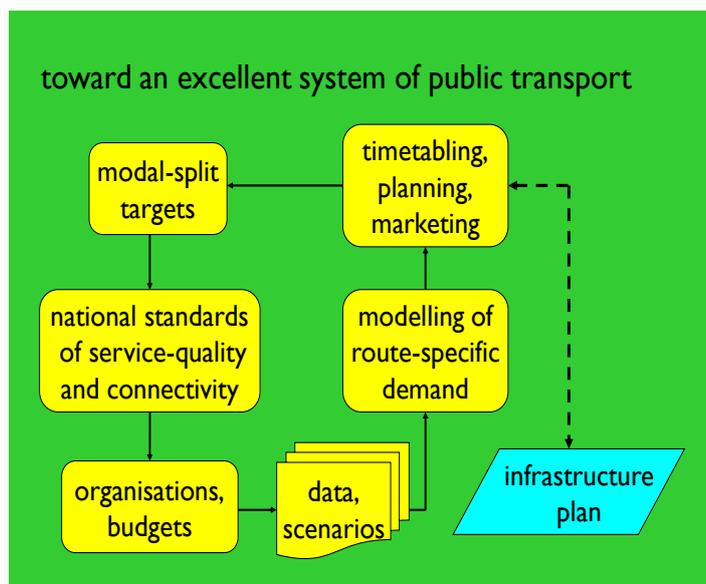
What about mobility reduction? Much rail freight currently moved could disappear if we remove the unsustainable loads carried as rail campaign groups demand. Is the perfect classic railway separation relevant to multi-centric Britain? Why not build across the Pennines to give a better service there, rather than London to Birmingham?

The dispersal of responsibilities hasn't helped. There is capacity confusion: 16tph is a realistic maximum (Andrew McNaughton says 18), but there are aspirations for 24 or

27. You can't run through to the continent if you have a decent London service. There is no technological fix. We need a national strategic plan including a timetable plan for routes with capacity constraints. We need step-wise solutions and more tuning of fares. There is a case for a few new alignments.

Beginning the question and answer session, a questioner picked up on Jonathan's remarks about the restrictive British loading gauge, citing the retrospective expansion for 9ft6in containers, suggesting we build for future gauge expansion even if not to be used now? Jonathan said that's a fair point, but we must balance the long-term vision against the costs. It's wrong that the choice of loading gauge was taken as given rather than passing a cost-benefit analysis. The change to support 9ft6in containers was driven by a change in the shipping industry, so why was public money spent on it? There is even an argument it should go by road and we should concentrate on the passenger railway. The long-term vision doesn't believe in a huge upturn in travel, so is sceptical about the direct HS1 to HS2 connection. We must balance costs between alternatives. We need a wider debate. A transfer between Euston and King's Cross isn't actually so bad, and it gives a much more flexible choice of service than having an occasional through service. It is far more important to get much better rail modal share on non-London routes whereas already there is greater than 50% on London routes.

A questioner pointed out that Bucks County Council is against HS2. Isn't it putting the cart before the horse and could money be better invested differently? Jonathan replied that there is no timetable plan as there was with developments in Switzerland. People want to build a HS line because it is a nice thing to do. It is not part of a coherent plan. The existing WCML is not using its capacity in the best way, e.g. having 3tph London to Birmingham and Manchester but only 1tph Milton Keynes to Birmingham. We could have a much more comprehensive timetable by 2015.



Jonathan was asked if there will be the same demand for business travel in 10-15yr time with people working from home using IT? Chairman Christian Wolmar chipped in that he had wrongly predicted that in the past. Jonathan said that clearly there hasn't yet been a falling away. Maybe we are now at a tipping point, combined with environmental pressures. Also we have a "dam good railway" in this country, with pretty impressive speeds on London mainlines. Most capacity issues are actually about leisure travel. What are the economics of that and not doing non-London lines?

Someone complained that new trains are in the sidings at weekends because they are not part of the business case on Saturdays, and the Treasury makes money from car petrol tax which the Treasury doesn't want to lose, so this prejudices distorted Treasury control of costs. Jonathan agrees universally.

A member of the audience replied that the railway pays a huge amount of tax too, thereby giving about £2bn - £2½bn back to government.

## Graham Nalty *Railfuture Network Development Committee*

Before introducing Graham Nalty as the presenter of Railfuture's considered view on HS2, Ian McDonald, chairman of its Network Development Committee, encouraged everyone present to read Railfuture's 28-page full response to the DfT (see [www.railfuture.org.uk](http://www.railfuture.org.uk)) in addition to the 8-page summary that had been provided to every attendee. Railfuture has signed up to the "Right Lines" Charter organisation, together with other environmental organisations.

Graham Nalty began by explaining that Railfuture had been discussing HS2 at enormous length, re-examining many aspects after internal consultation and at times it felt as if we were going round in circles, but agreeing on many things. Passenger numbers are up, trains are overcrowded, track capacity is reaching its limit. High-speed rail will remove faster services from existing mainlines, so increasing the number of trains per hour on classic lines due to the nearer equal speeds of all remaining trains.



As shown by the decade-long WCML renewal project, upgrading lines causes disruption, and will be worse in future as the number of travellers increases. A new route avoids this, and a new HS route would give better connections to Europe and hub airports, with less pollution and a potential reduction in the north-south divide, although the present HS2 proposals taken on their own seem to increase that divide.

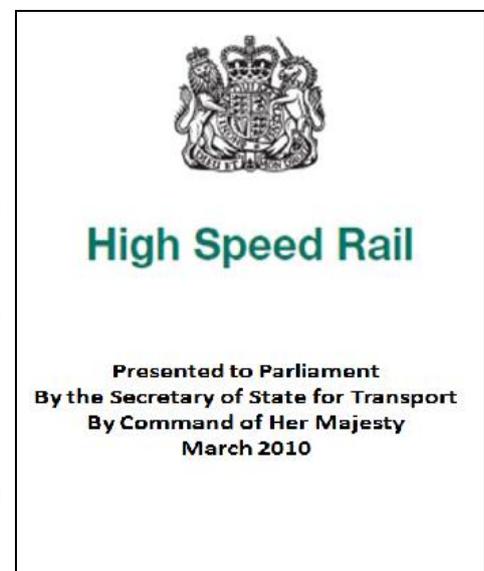
### Potential benefits from high speed lines

- Large increase in overall capacity
- Better rail connections to Europe and to hub airports
- Less pollution from air/car journeys changed to rail
- Economic growth as a result of shorter travel times
- Reduction in North – South economic divide
- Increased capacity in other lines beyond the HS line

Graham said that we need plenty of trains calling at Birmingham to provide a good Birmingham to Manchester service. We need a through train to the continent. HS implies faster journey times but for door-to-door speed we also need shorter interchanges, e.g. two or three over-bridges at main stations (to reduce walking time) and more frequent and faster journeys to suburban destinations.

The proposal for a Birmingham to Leeds link is partly political, rather than just going to Manchester. There should be a later extension to Scotland and also routes South Wales and Bristol to London and Birmingham. Railfuture's suggested route network is London to Glasgow, London to Edinburgh, various cross spurs, and London-Bristol/Cardiff and Bristol/Cardiff-Birmingham. Taking a Chiltern route to Birmingham and then going on to Leeds is rather roundabout. We need more common agreement on HS, especially regarding going or not going via the Chilterns.

There are 9 to 10 million people in the Cologne - Düsseldorf area but fewer than 2.5m in the Birmingham New Street catchment. There are more rail-friendly policies in Germany.



Railfuture's concerns on the HS2 Ltd proposals include their poor connectivity with our current rail network, and the environmentally unsound route owing to the preference for speed over sustainability, and the excess bias to London flows. According to Railfuture principles, network connectivity should override maximum speed, with HS trains making stops at existing city centre stations, but no parkway stations unless they are also very good rail interchanges, as otherwise they would merely encourage car rail-heading.

It is essential that high-speed trains should go beyond the HS line. We don't want London to Wolverhampton to take longer than it does now. We want faster journeys between cities other than London. HS should use existing transport corridors to reduce blight and because you won't be able to hear the HS train noises against motorway noise in the background. Crucially, the full HS network should be planned before the HS2 route is finalised.

Railfuture believes that Euston is the best choice of London terminal, with some commuter trains diverted onto Crossrail via Willesden. It should follow the M1 with four tracks to a point near Rugby / Coventry / Nuneaton, where there should be a 3-route split. We should use a four-track route via Birmingham International with trains going through to Wolverhampton and Walsall. There should be international trains from Birmingham New Street without having to change at St. Pancras. Making 4-track Coventry to Birmingham is required although it won't be easy. There should be a maximum length of 12 coaches at continental (UIC) gauge. Nuneaton to Leamington Spa services will require grade separation from the mainline through Coventry.



There can be a new HS line to Birmingham alongside the M6 motorway when Birmingham New Street (Network Rail computer image of re-built station - left) is replaced by a bigger station at Fazeley Street [near Moor Street] with platforms for all Birmingham services. Manchester and the North-West should join up at the 4-track HS section. Leeds should be reached via Leicester.

Graham summed up by saying that the benefits of all this compared with the current proposals are that it should be less controversial, more sustainable, giving superior network connectivity, with less tunnelling. In simple terms Railfuture wants a North-South High-speed Rail line with better integration, and more environmental protection, for the benefit of passengers.

### Railfuture views on HS2 Ltd proposals

- Poor connectivity with the current rail network
- Environmentally unsound route due to a preference for maximum speed over sustainability
- Excess bias towards London flows
- Inadequate connections to HS1 and Heathrow
- Politically divisive

### Railfuture principles for high speed rail

- Network connectivity overrides maximum speed
- HS train stops at existing city centre stations
- No parkway stations
- HS trains to serve stations beyond the HS line
- Reduce CO2 emissions
- Faster journeys between cities other than London
- Use existing transport corridors
- Full HS network planned before HS2 route finalised

### The Railfuture proposals

- Euston is the best choice of London station
- Slower trains diverted on to Crossrail via Willesden
- Route to follow close to M1 to near Rugby
- 4 tracks optimum for full traffic potential
- 3 route split near Rugby to Coventry, Nuneaton (replaced by new construction in the Manchester HS2 route) and Leicester

- Birmingham services via Coventry and International
- Through services to Wolverhampton & Walsall
- International trains from New Street
- Requires 4 tracks Coventry - Birmingham
- Max train length 12 coaches UK gauge
- Requires Nuneaton – Leamington grade separated at Coventry

The question and answer session began with Graham being asked what speed HS2 should be built to. He replied that *Railfuture* says 320km/h is adequate because interconnectivity is more important than speed.

Ian Stewart is the local MP on a committee that is performing an inquiry into HS2. He stated his preference is for no parkway stations. On the general question of possible intermediate stops, whether or not parkways, the two stops between Frankfurt-am-Main and Cologne do get good revenue. In France, Valence and Lille work well, but some intermediate stops are white elephants. Responding for *Railfuture*, Ian McDonald said that Birmingham International and Bristol Parkway are the only successful parkway stations, but both of these have extra uses, with Bristol being a junction for interchange also usefully situated on the outskirts of town and Birmingham having an airport. Warwick Parkway has low passenger numbers compared with Leamington Spa. Bristol Parkway was in a green field but is now a suburb of Bristol. An Aylesbury stop would be outweighed by the dis-benefits to through passengers.

Ian Stewart also said Euston is the preferred terminus, but he asked what extra London Underground capacity is needed there? Graham Nalty replied that *Railfuture's* proposal would see local services removed at Euston rather than make the station bigger.

An audience member said that Euston might one day be served by Docklands Light Railway (DLR) and Crossrail2 (the former Chelsea-Hackney line proposal). Christian Wolmar expressed surprise at the DLR proposal, being unaware of it.

A questioner expressed disappointment that only phase 1 of HS2 was being discussed – it's the only phase that is open to consultation - saying that Scotland was disappointed not to come in until later. He also asked why *Railfuture* suggested a single 4-track into London rather than two separate 2-track routes. It was explained that *Railfuture* is putting one option on the table, rather than multiple options. It was agreed that both Edinburgh and Glasgow should be main HS centres in Britain.

Another suggested that the Cross-City line should have been located deep underground at Birmingham New Street station. The answer was that people were not listening to such ideas at the time the New Street rebuild was being planned. The then current scheme was the only one on the table. Birmingham City Council didn't want to know.

## Speakers' Reactions to Other Presentations

The speakers had been asked to give their presentations and not comment on what prior speakers had said. They were then given the chance to comment on each other's presentations.

**Stephen** said CBT was concerned about the "parkway" station concept. The debate just now was rail-centric, but actually there isn't the road capacity needed around the new East Midlands Parkway or planned Birmingham Parkway stations. It isn't good enough and won't be able to serve an HS2 station in the East Midlands. Every station, whether city or parkway, must be part of a good local transport network.

**Andrew**, speaking personally as he had done during his own presentation, said he believes transport is essential to the country's health, but must be part of an overall transport plan.

Taking trains into existing principal stations may not be best, he said, as these stations are already absolutely full. Despite the rebuilding of Leeds station a decade ago, it

needs more capacity for local services, so there is a challenge of the connectivity between HS and local trains. Birmingham New Street is full and Moor Street is being expanded, but when you think strategically, at which the government is not good, you should like in Lille create an opportunity for a new quarter. Leicester has considered a new station by its existing one, but it would wipe out most of Leicester.

Regarding the suggestion of routeing HS2 alongside the M1, he said that the lower maximum speed that it would allow is not an issue but the M1 wasn't proposed because of so many communities around the huge number of road junctions. It is expensive to tunnel underneath, and you hit green fields if you go around. Motorways have bends so that people don't fall asleep. Tightly following a motorway alignment is not acceptable as 240km/h is not good enough.

Considering modal shift he noted that a relatively small shift from roads overwhelms railways. Traffic forecasts for investment are according to DfT principles discounting a lot of common sense things. HS2 did originally put forward a network but the government decided not to consult on a network.

**Christian Wolmar** queried the number of pathways, asking if even 16tph wasn't over-optimistic. **Andrew** said the assumption was based on technology available today which gives 16tph, but it has been reduced to 14tph because of the high proportion of HS2 trains coming off the existing network, which then allows a rise to a higher number when that is not the case. Andrew's work showed that 18tph was reasonable with a high level of operations, thinking along Japanese operating lines rather than France after the lunch break.

Christian also noted that the huge cost of the project demands that the number of trains per hour be maximised. Andrew agreed we must use well what we build at so great expense, using it sensibly to the optimum, which is 18tph. The problems in the public consultation were firstly a lack of detail and secondly why were we so long without this detail being provided.

**Jonathan** agreed with wanting a sustainable transport network, but disagreed in the detail. It's true that the main stations are getting pretty full. But he didn't think we had looked at a wide enough range of options. In cities there are other solutions and we've not seen sufficient discussion, e.g. about putting Birmingham Cross-City in a tunnel. Compare Zürich where there is already one tunnel and they are now busy digging another primarily to avoid reversals. Antwerp's design of a deep tunnel to achieve this was a masterpiece.

We should also consider longer trains. NR is building in too many allowances to ensure minimal penalties for late arrivals. On capacity Andrew says going to 18tph eventually is possible, but Jonathan can't find people seeing that as a certainty, and it would require separation of HS from the rest of the network. It might be feasible on a self-contained HS network, but is questionable with links to the classic network.

If we are talking of large London traffic growth, there isn't room for Heathrow connections. There is no way in which all the government loose talk about aspirations can be satisfied. Jonathan can't see all the connections. We should all concentrate on London.

Lizzy said we need to work together to come up with a solution, which isn't happening in this country. Consultants don't work together now. We need to bring environmentalists too into the discussion. She doesn't believe that economic health is the key, as the government says. We have to allow for costs of social and

environmental impacts, such as health care costs. She doesn't believe in predictions as there isn't an over-arching strategy.

Houses can be replaced but not our heritage or environment. People care about their home rather than compensation. But we can work with these people to convince them of benefits for the good of all. People are angered about being left in the dark. On the continent people know they will be compensated.

She claimed that only 3% of people place transport as the top priority for investment. The benefit of HS won't be realised for 10 to 15 years, but what about people needing jobs now? You need to keep people in work. The current cuts are having a massive impact. HS is a very expensive project at a time we can't afford it. So go away and agree on something better!

## Open Discussion

The last session of the conference saw a chance for the audience to freely express their opinions on the HS2 proposals, with other attendees able to comment, rather than the speakers who would have a final chance at the end.

**Ian McDonald (Railfuture)**, referring to his colleague Graham Nalty's earlier suggestion in his contribution for a possible new station at Leicester, pointed out that this was not proposed in *Railfuture's* formal submission to the DfT. Leicester city centre was merely referred to as an essential destination which should be served by HS2: a new station was only Graham's suggestion. *Railfuture* also sees the need for more investigation about the Birmingham stations. It advocates a network for the whole country, but not so precisely that everywhere gets blighted, so it is sufficiently vague about possible future network route extensions. In France, parkway stations are generally poorly used, except Valence, for example, built as an interchange with an existing line to the city. The genuine parkways in France for cars are little used.

Furthermore, building a 4-track railway rather than 2-track does not cost a great deal more, and certainly not twice as much as building two 2-track railways. The French Railways are now building a second 2-track HS route to Lyon, but a spokesperson admitted they would have originally built a 4-track route had they foreseen the traffic growth.

**Alan Francis, (Milton Keynes Green Party)** confirmed that the Green Party was opposed to the currently conceived HS2 project but are in favour of a north-south High Speed Line. He does not believe the M1 route alternative is practical because it has too many bends, is too hilly, and passes through built-up areas.

**Marcus Rogers from Aylesbury** referred to the NIMBY Bucks 'squirearchy'. He had done some homework and examined the business case in detail. Even Leicestershire is on board, so they are not all NIMBYs. He didn't think councils will sign up to alternatives. Stoke-on-Trent sits on the fence because of the possibility of a station there. He agreed with the previous comments about the M1 route being unsuitable. HS2 will go to a tranquil part of the country rather than the noise around the M1. Is it true there is not even a sketch beyond Lichfield? If so how could the "Y" and "S" routes be compared?

Another person said everything seems to rest on economic growth. How can we do transport under mad rules? The continentals invest to add value; we do so to save costs.

**Chris Stokes** was a critic of HS2 on its business case. Any upgrade of an existing rail route is said to make enormous disruption. However, disruption is inevitable - there will be big disruption at Euston to build HS2. It is said that off-peak frequency will be maintained, but there is a 40% cut implied to peak services during work.

He also queried 18tph on HS2. Senior SNCF (French railways) people have said 16tph is absolutely the top. They don't run anything like 18tph to Lyon, yet are thinking of a new line, especially when the 18tph would include 6tph coming off the classic network.

**Nigel Rose (Railfuture Thames Valley)** said economic growth is the only way we can become green without going backwards. We need a good transport network for growth. We need to settle the core route quickly. We need to get on with it. We must take the next few years to refine the details at the end of the route.

**Hugh Jaeger (Railfuture Thames Valley)** said we've had a good spectrum of views on the panel - thanks for that. The BBC once called him (as branch media spokesman) expecting a black or white view on HS2 from *Railfuture*, but the producer was not interested in a moderated view between full support and outright opposition. Hugh wants to save the planet from three things this decade: too much CO<sub>2</sub> causing climate change; peak oil causing a spiralling of fuel costs; and over-consumption. So he fears that HS2 offers too little too late. He wanted some benefits in the next few years of this decade. Shouldn't we also de-carbonise public transport with electric trains and modern buses?

A **Chilterns resident**, living three kilometres off the route with a hill in between, said he is yet to find any merit in the HS2 scheme. He has analysed the case. He recommended that people visit the HS2AA website.

**Chris Fribbins (Railfuture London & South East)** said lessons should be learnt from HS1, where several routes were proposed causing lots of blight with lots of consultation; then the route was completely changed without discussion. Local authorities wanted to look at the infrequent noise generated by a train, which, being wheel-on-rail, is simple to mitigate, much easier than for a road with a constant 'thump thump'. The massive bridge over the Medway was done quietly, quite well managed. HS1 got 30-minute quicker journeys from London to Ashford.

**John Davis** said that getting rid of air travel for short hauls gets rid of a lot of CO<sub>2</sub>. Intermediate stations are a waste of time. Heathrow is full so no connection is needed to it. But we do, however, need a link from HS2 to HS1, which could however be a travelator between Euston and St. Pancras, rather than using the North London Line.

One contributor said that national HS should also include faster running on existing lines. Britain did have an idea for IC250 (250km/h) train, but now we are likely to get new Intercity Express Project trains. For example for York to Darlington infrastructure owner Network Rail is against exceeding 200km/h, whereas British Rail was in favour of faster speeds 20 years ago.

**Chris Dale of Travelwatch North West**, representing passengers who do want some congestion relief, said we need extra capacity now and need to get HS2 built now.

The panel of speakers were given a final chance to express their views, based on what the audience had said, with chairman Christian Wolmar offering observations.

**Lizzy Williams** said there were problems with the connection from HS2 to HS1. HS2 is part of the EU Interoperability Directive, so it should connect in the most sustainable way. Calling objectors NIMBYs is insulting, pitching north against south. We mustn't get bogged down with noise. Two million trees being planted won't mitigate the noise (with which **Christian Wolmar** agreed). Decarbonisation is vital now, whereas HS2 is merely carbon-neutral. We need genuine green technology. We have a culture of opposition in the country. There are benefits in going through major housing areas. Don't go out and build something just because a problem needs a viable solution.

**Jonathan Tyler** said there were all sorts of HS-to-classic railway interfaces that had not been studied, let alone costed, e.g. some non-trivial works at Colwich which may have to be done anyway. The proposed link from HS1 to HS2 does not have sufficient paths for significant numbers of through trains to Kent or the continent. It would need huge amounts of money if we did it properly. It will cost £1½bn for a single-track tunnel to a congested junction. Either we need even more tunnel or we need different solutions, e.g. use of a travelator or Crossrail between Euston and St. Pancras.

It was also said in 2010 in connection with HS2 that there was not much traffic from Birmingham to the continent. Jonathan said that we should follow Switzerland which over 30 years has a clear timetable plan of what is wanted by 2030, based on the network as a whole, with its social implications. If the current HS2 plans fall apart, then the government should examine the geography of Britain and focus on the 20 largest cities, then 50, then 100, to put them into a coherent network with the best possible connections where there are no through trains, avoiding slow cross-country speeds. Where there are exceptionally slow routes, such as Sheffield to Leeds, look at making new alignments to allow speeds exceeding 200km/h where appropriate. If the WCML is re-signalled before building HS2, the aim should be to make 225km/h possible.

**Andrew McNaughton** claimed that regional services between Ashford and Milton Keynes, for example, could be achieved now if there was a will to provide them. The proposed single-track link from HS1 to HS2 does have passing places and is designed for low-volume traffic.

On the question of de-carbonisation, he said that one in seven of city transport vehicles are "white van" which could be recharged overnight, if battery-powered. There are no credible plans to de-carbonise long-distance transport. Tesco claims it would send many of its goods by railfreight if reliable paths could be found for on-time deliveries. The Great Western Mainline has the technical possibility for 250km/h, but it is better to connect places 25 kilometres apart. Arguably it would be better to have mixed traffic at 160km/h. It is recognised that Euston must be kept open with no fewer than 14 of its 17 platforms in use at any one time.

**Christian Wolmar** was worried about released capacity. Most train services are subsidised, and probably all would be if you knocked out the direct grant to Network Rail. Would HS2 need subsidy? He was confident it could run at a high operating profit, but possibly not when the capital cost is included. If the anticipated Milton Keynes growth comes about (as our population must live somewhere) then Christian would be surprised if classic services didn't make a profit too. The UK's population density is more like Japan than France or Spain or Italy. The government would consult councils etc. on actual timetables, but Jonathan's ideas have a lot of merit.

**Stephen Joseph** said climate change is our most serious problem, so we need de-carbonisation as quickly as possible now and not merely by 2050 or when HS2 comes, so it is imperative to have better rail services in the next few years. But now looking further, he is sceptical about electric vehicles, so he does see the need for some more rail capacity. Lots will be needed to take the committed amount of air traffic. HSR needs to be part of a low-carbon future package. He thought there would be a package there because of released capacity. He was in agreement in principle with Lizzy about the world we should live in, but not the world where we are. The government decision not to build a third runway at Heathrow and not to widen motorways is controversial, even among their own supporters, so the political reality is people not wanting HS2 so as to have money for air expansion and roads.

The problem with localism is the "Let's build anything we like where we like" attitude. Stephen queried the implication that if something is good for Tesco then it's good for the UK. Maybe we keep Areas of National Beauty and greenbelt but not much more. We should test against lots of different criteria in order to be robust against different possible futures. He wasn't sure that French style compensation would help in the UK, owing to people's attachment to their homes, but it would help a bit. We need to get away from lawyers causing blight. We might then get earlier public involvement in the whole way we plan anything in this country.

Local connectivity is very important Stephen said. Work has been done comparing Germany with UK. We can't divorce HS from other investment, as it's all about door-to-door times. The UK city connectivity is worse than German or French cities. Air has low passenger numbers but many flights in small planes. The HS1 to HS2 link does need looking at to see if it is a means to avoid short-distance cross-channel aviation.

## Closing Comments



*Railfuture* national Chairman Mike Crowhurst (who retired in May 2012) made several observations on the day's proceedings, which had completely filled the 100-seat conference room at Bletchley Park.

He was agreeably surprised about how much agreement there was today. He thanked the speakers for a splendid day and also thanked *Railfuture* director David Berman and the other colleagues who organised the conference.

Mike (photo left) said that *Railfuture* members are firstly users but also environmentalists. *Railfuture* would go along with lots that Stephen Joseph says. We should try to reduce travel. But privatisation gives each sector an incentive to increase only its own business, including supermarkets out of town.

On investment, yes, we do want more capacity, but very high speed is not necessary. The time saving is offset by the longer walking distances.

Parkway stations are a variable bunch, but two on the agenda (Birmingham and East Midlands) appear to be bad. Ebbsfleet brings people round the M25 instead of by train

to Waterloo. A rolling programme of electrification would make it more efficient. For serving Heathrow the French "InterConnection" route [via Charles de Gaulle Airport] is a good model, served by trains going elsewhere. But to get international through services from HS1 to HS2 will be tricky while we are not in the Schengen agreement.

The government should, he said, have looked at an M1 corridor route in detail. But it's always the way of "the only offer on the table". The key issue is connectivity. Why don't we do the same consultation for motorways? We should centralise to larger places, so we don't see the panacea for the north.

Mike still had a nagging feeling that the whole thing was set up to be shot down. It might go away and people say we need a third runway instead. We must get the high-speed line right, but we can still argue about the route. There is not even unanimity within *Railfuture* committees. Finally he thanked Ian McDonald for having done an excellent job in providing the final version of *Railfuture's* HS2 submission to the DfT.

Christian Wolmar has spoken at *Railfuture* conferences on several occasions but this was the first time that he had chaired one. Christian has since agreed to have his name put forward to become *Railfuture's* President.

He thanked everyone for their contributions and attendances, hoping that they had benefited as much as he had from a 'well-nuanced conference'.

*Railfuture's* extensive survey of its members in December 2011 generated almost 1,100 responses. Asked their views on HS2, **25%** supported the HS2 Ltd proposals, **29%** were against HS2 (perhaps because of concerns about other rail investment being cut back) and **44%** took the middle ground, along with *Railfuture's* official policy, of supporting a north south high-speed line with significant changes. 2% had no view.

## Video Interviews

After the conference the five speakers gave two-minute interviews – link on *Railfuture's* web-site – <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/tiki-index.php?page=High+speed+rail>.

### **Professor Andrew McNaughton of HS2 Ltd., speaking at the conference in a personal capacity**

"I think this has been a fascinating *Railfuture* conference. I enjoyed being on the panel sitting with people with different views.

"Actually what it boiled down to was a couple of things. Firstly there is no such thing as black and white. There are a range of views that people have. But actually we have more in common than we have separating us. One of the problems in the past has been the polarisation of views which reduces things to being too simplistic.

"The future of this country, its economic wealth, and the part that transport plays is absolutely vital and is not something that can be reduced to people just making silly claims one way or the other.

"I am completely convinced that the government's plans are the best plans and I only became involved in high-speed rail because I said 'we're only going to do it once if we do it at all. So if we do it once we need to do it as best as we can both for the people who use it and for the people it will pass by.' I am absolutely determined that we will achieve this."

**Stephen Joseph, campaign for Better Transport**

"This *Railfuture* conference has been really interesting, allowing a reasoned debate between a lot of different points of view about high-speed rail.

"I think it's clear that a lot of the people involved have more common ground than has sometimes been presented. But I think it is also clear that everybody is agreeing that high-speed rail needs to be part of a much broader package involving the rest of rail and transport and also with land-use planning and economic development we've got to have that kind of broad strategy otherwise high-speed rail will be a rich man's railway."

**Jonathan Tyler, Passenger Transport Networks, timetable researcher for high-speed rail**

It's been an extremely interesting day. I think it is right that we've had a much more carefully nuanced discussion of all the issues than has been happening at some of the events. I stick to my position that the present proposal coming for HS2 Limited is a blockbusting one-off proposal altogether too separated from the railway and public transport network as a whole.

"What I am essentially campaigning on is for us to be thinking about all-Britain national networks and developing a much more even quality of service across the whole country. There may or may not be a role for new railway alignments in that, but the crucial thing is to improve the quality of inter-city links, which are currently pretty awful in some cases away from the London man lines. My model is the Swiss model and I am doing everything I can to demonstrate how that can be applied in this country to our great benefit."

**Lizzy Williams, founding member of StopHS2, the national organisation against HS2**

"I am categorically opposed to HS2 on environmental grounds, economic grounds and priority grounds actually. I come from a construction background and in the proposal, which I looked at when it first came out, I found the paperwork extremely lacking, based on flawed data. It is not environmentally sound whatsoever. It is carbon neutral at best. I have come along today to talk to the *Railfuture* delegates at the conference in Bletchley Park about my concerns about HS2 and to try to encourage them to examine the detail and ensure that this level of investment in our country is spent prudently."

**Graham Nalty, who presented Railfuture's suggested changes to the HS2 proposals**

"I really enjoyed the conference because there were so many different viewpoints from so many different angles. There is a lot more discussion that we do need to have about high-speed rail and about the routes and stations in particular.

"I think high-speed rail is necessary for the country. We need a lot more capacity but we do need better connectivity and we need to look at ways of achieving that. I do use rail for business and I find high-speed rail much better than travelling by air, so that I have some time to do work without the interruptions you get in the office. My vote goes definitely for high-speed rail but with good connectivity and good interchanges."

In 2010 *Railfuture* published a book detailing the new stations and lines added to the railway network in the last forty or so years.

**BRITAIN'S GROWING RAILWAY** consists of two volumes. The first is the **A-Z of Reopenings** (right). An invaluable resource, it is still available and can be ordered from the *Railfuture* web-site – [www.railfuture.org.uk/books](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/books) - for £9.95 including P&P.

Volume II, subtitled *Vision and Reality*, is in production and will explain how to campaign for new stations and lines.





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**Summer 2006 – Stoke-on-Trent - Campaigners conference** – Revised report

- \* Ian Yeowart, Grand Central
- \* George Watson, MyTestTrack.com (Wyvern Rail)
- \* Ruth Annison, Wensleydale Railway
- \* Caspar Lucas (Parry People Movers), Carl Henderson (BladeRunner)

**Autumn 2008 – London – The Future of Railways**

- \* Caroline Lucas (Green), Norman Baker (Lib Dems), Kelvin Hopkins (Labour)
- \* Chris Green (Railway Forum), Chris Austin (ATOC)
- \* Simon Montague (Eurostar), Julie Mills (Greengauge 21)
- \* Tony Berkeley (Rail Freight Group), Prof. Lewis Lesley (Tram Power)

**Summer 2009 – Northallerton – Role of the Independent Railway**

- \* Tom Clift, Grand Central
- \* Speakers from various heritage railways in the Northern England

**Autumn 2009 – Corby – Reopenings conference**

- \* Tim Shoveller, East Midlands Trains, Mark Pengelly, Corby Borough Council
- \* Brian Barnsley (ACoRP), Steve Abbott, (TravelWatch East Midlands)
- \* Jim Bamford (Nottingham CC Rail Officer)

**Summer 2010 – Taunton – Rail Development conference**

- \* John Bird, First Great Western on Major Projects
- \* Charles Varey, Network Rail on Southampton Gauge Enhancement
- \* Nick Gallop, Intermodality on Opportunities for rail freight in south west
- \* George Boyle, Railfuture on Rail Freight campaigning
- \* Keith Walton, Severnside Community Rail Partnership
- \* Richard Burningham, Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership

**Autumn 2010 – Shoreditch – Reopenings conference**

- \* Ian Brown (TfL), David Smith (Atoc)
- \* Darren Hockaday (LOROL), Jonathan Roberts (East London Line Group)
- \* Patrick O’Sullivan (East West Rail Link)
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