



Department
for Transport

From the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
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Lord Berkeley
House of Lords
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21 APR 2016

Dear Tony

Due to the limited time remaining at the end of the Second Reading of the High Speed Rail (London to West Midlands) Bill, I was unable to respond to many of the points raised during the debate.

You raised a number of points about the Euston Express proposal. As you know the Government do not support this as the proposal does not deliver the necessary level of benefits, constrains capacity so that the 2016 WCML timetable could not be operated and would lead to significant disruption to the existing rail services. I understand that the Secretary of State wrote to you on 2 March setting out the Government's position which remains unchanged. I am aware that there are on-going discussions with HS2 Ltd about this issue and you are refining your proposal to attempt to address these issues and these will be considered in due course.

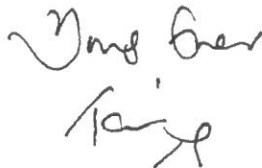
With regards to your motions on wanting to hear the London petitioners first, we need time to work through some residual – but quite important – issues at Euston. Indeed, as part of the agreement reached with the London Borough of Camden, we have undertaken to carry out a number of studies, for example on using rail rather than road to take spoil away from Euston and to make construction deliveries. This, as you can imagine, is a huge issue for the local community and would have a significant impact on the likely effects of the scheme. We are unlikely to have answers on this issue until June and, bearing in mind the 4 week requirement for issuing a Petition Response Document that would mean that July would be the earliest we could sensibly take Euston petitioners.

Any other approach would risk being an ineffective use of the Committee's time. There are other areas, too, where we genuinely need more time to be able to work through the issues, again on the basis that the work will potentially help us address local concerns, meaning that issues would hopefully not need to come to the Committee at all.

I have written separately to you and other Noble Lords in relation to the powers of the HS2 Select Committee, including the appropriateness of that Committee appointing an independent adviser on rail matters.

A copy of this letter has been placed in the libraries of both Houses.

I hope this is helpful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lord Ahmad'.

LORD AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON