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for Transport

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From the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
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Dear John,

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. I therefore write to outline my response to your comments where I was unable to do so during the debate itself.

The Government is committed to delivering High Speed Two – a project that will bring our economic centres closer together allowing the whole country to benefit. We have brought forward Phase 2a of the scheme to now open in 2027 and bring the benefits to Crewe and the north west sooner, and we will continue to work towards delivering a full 'Y' network to spread the benefits further, including to our great northern cities and Scotland.

We want to correct historic underinvestment in the north and create a Northern Powerhouse. Connecting the north's towns and cities into a single economy is essential to creating a transformed northern economy greater than the sum of its parts. That is why, as well as devolving power to the north, we are investing £13 billion in northern transport, including investment schemes to improve road access to our ports in Liverpool and the Humber.

The Chancellor has given the greenlight to the first phase of the Northern Powerhouse ambition – the connection between Leeds and Manchester - with £60m to develop detailed plans to reduce journey times towards 30 minutes by 2017, as well as plans for improving links between the North's other major cities.

In addition, we have committed over £1bn for the TransPennine Upgrade and Northern Hub programmes. The new Northern and TransPennine Express franchises will see a £1.2bn boost to rail services and deliver 220 new carriages, equivalent to 44 trains. The new Northern Franchise will see the complete removal of the outdated 'Pacers' by the end of 2019, and investment of £400mm.

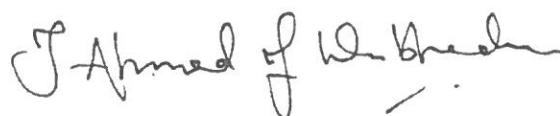
Through the Northern Powerhouse, and HS2 which will be a core building block of the northern network, we are committed to rebalancing our economy.

However, in terms of building HS2, with rail capacity in the south under the most pressure it is important that we construct HS2 to deliver capacity where it is needed most first.

I hope this answers the points mentioned sufficiently.

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

Yours sincerely,



LORD AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON

- Thank you for your note during the debate.