



Department
for Transport

The Lord Birt
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0AA

From the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon

Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0300 330 3000
E-Mail: Lord.Ahmad_PUSS@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Web site: www.gov.uk/dft

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Dear Lord Birt

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 recognises that Liverpool is a major city and a significant market. That's why we are rolling out HS2 and developing plans for Northern Powerhouse Rail. From 2026 when HS2 first opens, Liverpool will benefit from HS2 Services and a 28 minute reduction in journey times to London. In 2027, this saving increases to over 30 minutes. We understand Liverpool's aspiration for a direct connection to HS2, which could also provide a fast link to Manchester. This will be considered as part of the National Infrastructure Commission and Transport for the North's work.

In addition, HS2 will free up space on the existing network. This will release capacity, which could be used for more commuter and inter-regional services, and for freight where demand is growing - including from the Port of Liverpool.

Connectivity between HS2 and Heathrow is important. When HS2 opens in 2026, the interchange at Old Oak Common will provide HS2 passengers with a connection to frequent, direct rail services to Heathrow airport. As proposed, HS2 will reduce the journey time from central Birmingham to Heathrow from approximately 2 hours now, to around 1 hour.

In relation to proposals for a direct HS2 link to Heathrow, in March 2015 the Secretary of State announced that no spur to Heathrow would be built as part of Phase One or Two of the HS2 railway. More recently, the Select Committee in the other place highlighted that there remains a risk of blight on properties on the trajectory of the previously envisaged spur, and directed that the Promoter should not use the Bill powers to implement passive provision for a Heathrow spur. In response, the Government has confirmed that no passive provision will be implemented for such a link.

In terms of the level of invest in public transport going forward, HS2 will not come at the expense of the existing transport network. The Government is investing unprecedented amounts of money to deliver infrastructure fit for the 21st century. In addition to HS2, we are investing over £38 billion in the existing rail network between 2014 and 2019, including delivering Crossrail, Thameslink, new Intercity Express Trains and the electrification of the TransPennine, Great Western and Midland Main lines. In addition, we are trebling the budget for major road schemes to £15 billion between 2015 and 2021 and we are investing £12 billion in local transport between 2015 and 2020. As I said in the debate "the cost of HS2 equates to around 0.14% of UK GDP in the spending review period". Total Department for Transport spend between 2015-2020 totals approximately £81 billion which equates to roughly 0.8% UK GDP. Unfortunately with regards to your question on comparisons on transport spending across Europe we have been unable to find this information.

I hope this answers the points mentioned sufficiently.

A copy of this letter will be placed in the libraries of both Houses.

Yours sincerely,

J Ahmad of Wimbledon

LORD AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON