

## Submission to the Comprehensive Spending Review 2020 from High Speed Rail Group

1. The letter is a submission to the Comprehensive Spending Review from High Speed Rail Group (HSRG) which proposes that HM Government funds a Deliverability Study to explore the options and proposals to connect Scotland to HS2. This would reduce journey times from London to Scotland to close to three hours, decarbonise the journey, shifting travel from air to rail.

### About High Speed Rail Group (HSRG)

2. HSRG is committed to supporting the successful delivery of a world-class high speed rail network in Britain. Our members help deliver major infrastructure projects in the UK and globally, including creating entirely new high speed networks and improving the UK's existing rail network. This gives us a unique insight into both the shortcomings of the current network and the transformative capacity, connectivity, economic, resilience and environmental benefits that high speed rail brings.
3. HSRG supports a national high speed rail network including the delivery of HS2, high speed rail's integration with the existing rail network, investment to maximise the released capacity benefits HS2 brings on and off route, and other rail schemes such as Midlands Engine Rail and Northern Powerhouse Rail. Our membership can be found on [www.rail-leaders.com](http://www.rail-leaders.com).

### Context and summary

4. HSRG very much welcomes the Government's commitment to HS2 which was confirmed by HMG's decision in February 2020 to continue with the project, followed by issuing of the Notice to Proceed in April. This set in train the main construction works on Phase 1 of the scheme, launched by the Prime Minister at the start of September. Giving the green light for main construction to begin is an acknowledgement of the many benefits that the scheme will bring. We look forward to the completion of Parliamentary scrutiny of the powers to build the Phase 2a project, taking the initial project on northwards to Crewe later this year. We share the Government's view that the programme is both essential and nationally transformative, including in meeting net zero goals and 'levelling-up' the country.
5. The funding for HS2 has been agreed through the process above and gives the certainty needed to deliver a world class railway. While the works are underway for Phase 1, we also recognise that the Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands process is being undertaken by the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) working with the Infrastructure Projects Authority. We look forward to the recommendations of this work and the outcomes for the programme for Phase 2b and the integration with Midlands Engine Rail (MER) and Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) services.
6. Our submission is focused on a specific area that develops the high speed rail network further, namely better connecting Scotland to the high speed rail network being developed for England, with a goal of reducing London-Scotland journey times to as near to three hours as possible and bringing the country together.
7. HSRG published a report earlier this year, [High-Speed Rail and Scotland](#) showing that through a series of investments and interventions in Scotland and the north of England, it is possible to enhance connectivity between the two nations by cutting travel time between London and Scotland to just over three hours. This does not require the huge cost of building high speed

rail infrastructure all the way from Scotland to Crewe. Rather, our recommendation was for a smarter, more targeted, and more affordable approach which can be delivered more quickly.

8. Improved Anglo-Scottish connectivity is essential. Pursuing the connection between HS2 and Scotland not only makes economic sense, giving an economic boost to the north of England and Scotland and linking economies and geographies further, but will help achieve carbon reduction targets, paving the way for the Scottish Government's 2045 net zero target and UK Government's 2050 target.
9. HSRG recommends that the Government commits to funding development work to take forward the programme to the next stage through an appraisal of the deliverability of the options developed by DfT, Network Rail, HS2 Ltd and Transport Scotland, identifying any impediments to progressing investment as a matter of high national priority, and setting out an appropriate vehicle and governance structure for taking the programme forward on an accelerated timescale.

### **Benefits of high speed rail services to Scotland**

10. The proposal put forward by HSRG in the report referred to above included a programme of upgrades to existing lines, combined with new dedicated sections of high speed line, joining HS2 to Scotland will boost capacity and meet the projected demand for both freight and passenger travel, whilst cutting journey times to 3h10. It will make a major contribution to decarbonising travel, saving 45,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year from taking heavy goods vehicles (HGV) freight off the road, and driving the modal shift needed to move passengers from aviation to green and electric rail. In terms of demand, between 2006 and 2016 Office of Rail and Road figures show all cross border passengers increasing by 61% and Glasgow-London rail flows increasing by 120%. Since 2007, rail passenger travel levels between Manchester and Scotland were up 191% and between Birmingham and Scotland 261%. High speed links cater for this increasing demand and will reduce the demand for long distance cross-border car travel, which accounts for a substantial quantity of further avoidable carbon emissions.
11. With London to Scotland being among the busiest aviation routes in Europe, reducing the journey time of rail routes will cut demand for carbon-heavy short haul flights, as has been achieved between London and Paris since the introduction of HS1, which has reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by the equivalent of 60,000 short-haul flights every year. There is evidence of a sound economic case for pursuing high speed rail for Anglo-Scottish travel. It is the one travel market where (pre-COVID-19) there was a high density of short-haul air travel. The Anglo-Scottish travel market represents a very significant opportunity to provide capacity where it is evident that market demand will continue on an upward trend post-virus and in turn achieve much more ambitious early carbon reduction targets that are needed for the transport sector.
12. Trends show the relentless increase in passenger transport usage in the UK with rail travel demand more than doubling since 1994. History demonstrates how transport demand 'bounces back' following crises as we saw in SARS in 2003 and the Spanish flu over 1918-20. Rising travel demand therefore seems likely ahead despite the COVID-19 impacts we have seen in the short term. This expansion seems particularly true for leisure travel, which makes up the majority of distance travelled across the transport sector and could increase as working from home becomes more permanent. Longer journeys are responsible for the majority of carbon emissions. Providing low carbon high speed rail for these trips through HS2 will be essential to reaching net zero. High speed rail is of course one of the safest ways to travel and will be ahead. The task is therefore to press on with high speed rail and enable it to be the most cost-effective,

mode of choice. Germany and France are countries that have both taken this approach for their recovery plans in response to COVID-19 and are investing in high speed networks. High speed rail has shown its role in a national crisis and relevance now and for the future. The UK Government should similarly give further support for high speed rail and there is an excellent opportunity in relation to Anglo-Scottish rail services.

13. Achieving an interim target of a London-Glasgow/Edinburgh rail journey time of 3h10 (as outlined in our High-Speed Rail and Scotland report) and an improvement over today's 4h20 rail timings will be derived from HS2 (Phases 1 and 2a, London-Crewe) and partly through additional interventions. Based on the emerging views of Transport Scotland and Network Rail (NR), it is clear that a programme of line of route upgrades combined with new sections of high speed line to bypass slow and congested sections of route are needed. These are highlighted in the report.
14. Particularly noting the environmental need to grow rail's modal share for Anglo-Scottish travel, we believe an ambitious and challenging timescale should be in place to deliver these Anglo-Scottish investments. With a Project Speed approach and with Acceleration Unit support, we should be targeting the delivery to broadly match the Phase 1/2a delivery timescale. Later delivery would reduce its contribution towards meeting the forward transport sector carbon reduction trajectory.
15. As an electrified railway HS2 is a core part of decarbonisation transport and achieving the Government's goal of modal shift. We outline the role of HS2 in meeting this goal in our [submission](#) to the Transport Decarbonisation Plan consultation. Providing Anglo-Scottish high speed rail will enable the high speed network to play an even greater role in decarbonisation.
16. As the Transport Decarbonisation (TDP) Plan consultation outlines, in 2018 UK greenhouse gas emissions from surface transport were 28% and are now greater than any other sector, and action is needed to decarbonise the sector. There is a significant gap between the trajectory proposed in the TDP consultation and where the UK is required by law and science to be, including meeting its Paris Agreement commitments and what the Government's independent advisory body, the Committee on Climate Change recommends. In addition, if aviation and shipping are included in transport emissions, as they should be, then transport contributes to 34% of emissions.
17. Until now HS2's decarbonisation potential has been seriously underplayed by national forecasts founded on a decrease in rail growth, with forecast demand on HS2 capped shortly after it opens - an assumption that denies the opportunity to recognise the contribution HS2 will make to achieving net zero and which ignores directly relevant experience of uplifts in passenger growth from new/enhanced railway services. In addition, the benefits of freed up capacity on the existing network for freight and local passenger services have still not been fully modelled. We are urging this to be addressed in the forthcoming TDP.
18. HS2, as a new transport spine for Britain able to operate on zero carbon electricity, will be transformative both for these longer journeys as well as unlocking capacity on the existing network. High capacity fully electrified railway such as HS2, and future railways like NPR, will be vital to making this happen. Only HS2 can deliver the capacity and journey times savings to shift many more people and freight out of cars, HGVs and planes by the 2030s, without causing a decade of disruption to our existing train services. Extending high speed rail to Scotland can be a further part of this.

19. In time, a new high speed rail network, fully integrated into an enhanced national rail network, should connect all the regions, major cities, and nations of the UK to help bring the country back together. HS2 is a key part of the economic green recovery. High speed rail has an essential role to play in kickstarting the economy and enabling post pandemic growth. In particular, HS2 and associated high speed rail schemes will be key to rebalancing the economic geography of the UK, supporting the UK's net zero targets and protecting and future proofing jobs. Extending to Scotland will make a significant contribution to joining economies in the North with Scotland.
20. Improved connectivity between the great cities of Scotland and England can have a key role in enhancing the social and economic ties that underpin the United Kingdom. It will encourage and grow economic links between Scotland and the northern cities and where the Government's levelling up ambitions are particularly directed. It will help change economic geographies, creating much stronger links between Scotland and England, shrinking distances, and this includes connecting northern towns to Scotland.

### **Submission request**

21. The work to date on Anglo-Scottish high speed rail needs to be harnessed and move to the next stage. An assessment needs to be made of the work that has taken place across DfT, Transport Scotland, NIC and NR, including the recent study by Transport for Scotland and also the work the NIC is undertaking as part of the Integrated Rail Plan. We need to see now how the identified improvements can be delivered. This needs to embrace a private sector 'can-do' outlook with appropriate oversight from governance arrangements in Westminster and Edinburgh. The approach would have working level links to NR and HS2 Ltd, as well as the ability to engage with other interested parties such as local authorities.
22. An industry benchmark for the cost for this type of development work would be £4.5 million to £6 million and we request that the Government commit to this sum.
23. The Deliverability Study will focus on how to make this work happen without ongoing confusion and delay. It would help underpin the Government's 'Project Speed' approach - the push to accelerate key infrastructure. It would also help improve delivery structures, one of the goals of the Comprehensive Spending Review, and provide a pathway ahead for this critical infrastructure to improve Scottish and city economies in the north and make good on progress regarding decarbonising transport, particularly the more difficult area of long-distance travel and freight.