

13 March 2012

## **All-Party Parliamentary Group for High Speed Rail - Rail Capacity Inquiry**

### **Evidence from the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce**

The Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce (DNCC) represents the views of over 10,000 affiliate and Member companies in the two counties and is the third largest Chamber in the country.

Transport infrastructure is crucial to the economy with 61% of the region's businesses stressing the importance of rail services according to a British Chambers of Commerce survey. The Chamber recognises the importance of ensuring that rail capacity is enhanced to meet the rising demands for rail travel which are already putting strain on current rail lines. Currently over 22 million people use the East Midlands rail network and demand is projected to grow by 69% and 84% on the East Coast Main Line and Midland Mainline respectively. The reality of the situation is that without new capacity, our railways will be full by 2024.

With significant housing and employment growth planned for the East Midlands, a dedicated high speed rail line is considered to be the only sensible way to respond to predicted rises in demand. Continued upgrades to existing infrastructure, to enable the use of longer and better trains, while offering slight increases in capacity and service levels, will not offer the step changes that high speed rail could offer and would result in further delays to existing services such as those experienced during the upgrade of the West Coast Main Line.

DNCC's members are overwhelmingly in favour of the development of a High Speed Rail (HSR) Network with a station in the East Midlands. There is strong support for the Y shape HSR solution as the first step in a high speed network covering the whole country. This, however, must be delivered alongside a strategy for the existing rail network including line speed improvements and the electrification of the Midland Mainline. The Midland Mainline has the slowest average speed of all the main lines which puts the East Midlands at an economic disadvantage compared to other areas.

A high speed line running through the East Midlands would provide total regional economic benefits of £1.5 billion. According to Atkins a full network with both an East and West Coast option could deliver up to £3.8 billion in economic benefits to the East Midlands. Four-fifths of this benefit is attributed to business travel time savings.

The Chamber believes that, to remain competitive, the UK needs to keep pace with its competitors that are already reaping the benefits of investment in High Speed Rail networks. It also recognises the need to enhance connectivity between major conurbations in the UK and Europe and to provide alternatives to road and air travel for moving people and freight.

The East Midlands is an important location for rail freight, with two hubs accounting for between 10-15% of all UK freight movements. There is potential to move more freight onto rail and a high-speed passenger line could liberate sufficient capacity on existing rail lines to facilitate such modal shift.

Capacity enhancements and better rail connectivity are both essential for business productivity and growth and DNCC supports the development of High Speed Rail as the best solution as it:

- Is the most cost effective and least disruptive way of providing the capacity improvements required to meet increasing demands for rail travel.
- Frees up capacity on existing lines to provide additional passenger and freight services.
- Transforms rail connections between major cities in the Midlands and the North and also their connections to London and to a European high speed rail network. This opens up significant opportunities for inward investment; new business opportunities; efficiency savings and economic growth in the North and Midlands

The Chamber urges the government to continue to progress the construction of a High Speed Rail network to boost the UK economy in a sustainable manner for future generations. This would support long term growth and the regeneration of northern and midlands city regions and help to develop the East Midlands' international trading links.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Dowson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

John Dowson  
Head of Policy and Representation