

## **RMT Submission to the All Party Parliamentary Group on High Speed Rail**

Secretary of State for Transport, Justin Greening confirmed in January 2012 the go-ahead for the London-Birmingham stretch of a domestic high-speed rail line (HS2). Other than the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, the new line will be the first major railway line built in Britain since the end of the nineteenth century. Indeed, Britain lags a long way behind other rail networks in high speed rail lines (see table).

Commenting in August 2009 when the then Labour Secretary of State for Transport, Lord Adonis, announced plans speed up the drive for a high speed network, RMT General Secretary, Bob Crow said; "We welcome this important announcement on the development of high-speed rail which clearly demolishes the case for the environmental disaster which is the planned third runway at Heathrow. If high-speed rail is the future we should stop throwing time, money and energy at the planned expansion of Heathrow and concentrate on pushing forward this progressive plan for green transport.

"This plan would give a massive boost to manufacturing and green jobs on the railways and should be moved forward without delay. We would argue strongly for public ownership and a fares policy which actively encourages rail travel."

A national high-speed rail network will deliver passengers from city-centre to city-centre, support economic regeneration, create tens of thousands of jobs and tackle environmentally damaging carbon emissions from domestic and short-haul flights.

Our view is that the high-speed network should extend into Scotland, connecting both Glasgow and Edinburgh, at the earliest possible time and Government should also develop plans for high-speed routes to the south west of England and into Wales.

In order to ensure that unnecessary operational interfaces and fragmentation, which have had such a damaging effect on the railways since privatisation, do not hamper the development of a safe and efficient high speed rail network, HS2 should be integrated into a publicly owned, national network. That means there should be one infrastructure owner/controller across the whole network for both the new high-speed network and the 'classic' routes.

As the June 2008 RMT commissioned "*Who says there is no alternative*" report on high speed rail and Heathrow Airport expansion explains; "A high-speed rail network has most to offer as part of an integrated transport system, not replacing local and regional rail services, but linked to them. Integration offers the prospect of both train stations and airports becoming coordinated transport hubs. But integration will remain an unattainable goal under the UK current transport set-up: uncoordinated; deregulated; privatised. Government, in conjunction with local and regional authorities, needs to set out a long-term transport strategy, framed by what it wants transport to achieve for the country's citizens, its environment and its economy".

The economic benefits of a high-speed network are well documented. WS Atkins published research in 2006 which found that high-speed links from London, via Heathrow, to Birmingham and Leeds would cost £31bn to build and deliver benefits £63bn over a sixty year period.

In August 2007, The Northern Way explained that the economic benefits of a high-speed link are substantial; they noted; "Research for the SRA in 2002/03 for example identified total benefits of a new high speed network linking London to the North West and North East and Scotland of £89.9billion giving a benefit ratio of over 2:1. The benefits comprised £20.6 billion in additional revenue, £64.4billion in non-financial benefits (welfare gains by users and non-users) and £4.8billion in benefits from freeing up capacity on the existing network".

In terms of creating jobs, the DfT's HS2 London to West Midlands Appraisal of Sustainability documents forecasts that HS2 could attract 30,000 jobs in London and the West Midlands. Furthermore 1,500 operational posts will be created and 9,000 jobs constructing the line.

Research published by KPMG in February 2010 suggests that a national high speed rail network could, as businesses become more productive and offer higher wages due to productivity improvements deliver up to 42,000 additional jobs.

However, important as a high speed network is in the fight against climate change and the renaissance of the rail industry, RMT's view is that to simply invest on 'grand projects', to the detriment of the existing network, runs the risk of repeating some of the mistakes made on the French railway network in recent decades.

The TGV network is rightly lauded across the world. However, investment in regional networks has often suffered, the result being inadequate local service provision and old rolling stock. Additionally, the track on the traditional routes has often been subjected to 'maintenance holidays' leading to widespread temporary speed restrictions; a further disincentive for people to make use of the local and regional services.

Finally, manufacturing and maintaining the high speed stock represents an opportunity to create high skilled employment in the domestic train manufacturing sector, still reeling from losing out on the Thameslink rolling stock contract. The train building contracts for the high speed fleet have include the kind of social impact clauses that are routinely used in France and Germany as a mechanism to supporting domestic train manufacturing capacity and the impact of the contract award on the wider engineering supply chain.