



## **CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

### **HIGH SPEED RAIL: INVESTING IN BRITAIN'S FUTURE**

#### **DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT**

##### **Introduction**

Scottish Chambers of Commerce (SCC) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Department for Transport consultation on the UK's future High Speed Rail (HSR) network. SCC is the umbrella organisation for the 21 key Chambers of Commerce across Scotland. Our Chambers represent 10,000 member businesses of all sizes, from sole traders to large multinationals, and operate across all industry sectors. HSR has long been a priority for Chambers of Commerce and our members across Scotland and we believe that Scotland should be an integral part of the UK HSR network from an early stage.

**Do you agree that there is a strong case for enhancing the capacity and performance of Britain's inter-city rail network to support economic growth over the coming decades?**

Yes. A connected economy is a successful economy and Britain's railways are a vital part of our transport infrastructure. Businesses rely on our railways for getting employees to work, for business travel and for the movement of freight. Rail travel within Scotland has never been more popular, with around 78 million passenger journeys each year. However in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we are operating a rail network which was largely conceived and developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In many parts of the country, particularly between the Midlands and the South East of England, the rail network is working at or near capacity. Essential engineering works are causing significant disruption to services, particularly at weekends, and it is clear that our rail network would benefit from capacity enhancement. Conventional rail was the great transport legacy of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, our motorway network was the transport achievement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and High Speed Rail has the potential to be the legacy project of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

High Speed Rail offers a unique opportunity to create additional rail capacity between Britain's key population centres whilst at the same time freeing up capacity on conventional rail. This allows for faster connectivity between cities whilst facilitating regional connectivity and additional freight services. If current rising trends in rail usage are to be accommodated then improved capacity and performance of our rail network is

essential. Effective and efficient connectivity between our cities is a bare minimum in terms of our long term national transport strategy. Britain's cities are the key to national economic growth and their strength can be maximised by excellent communications and transport links. In turn, the connectivity of these cities with the wider economy can ensure that the benefits of wealth generation can be enjoyed by as wide a range of society as possible. Many of our competitor nations are already ahead of us in developing an HSR network. The UK needs to catch up with and overtake them.

**Do you agree that a national high speed rail network from London to Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester (the Y network) would provide the best value for money solution (best balance of costs and benefits) for enhancing rail capacity and performance?**

No. Although SCC supports the construction of the Y network, we do not believe it is ambitious enough for the United Kingdom's economic requirements. Studies carried out by Greengauge 21 have shown that the best benefit to cost ratio from High Speed Rail is achieved through the construction of a truly UK-wide network which includes Scotland. Greengauge 21 have estimated a benefit:cost ratio of 3.5:1 for HSR links to Scotland. All told the benefits to Scotland alone could be up to £19.8 billion. In addition, it is only by extending HSR to Scotland that significant environmental benefits in terms of modal shift from air transport will be achieved. International experience has shown that the tipping point in journey time at which significant modal shift is achieved is around 2.5 – 3 hours. Manchester and Leeds are already within this boundary in terms of travel time to London by conventional rail, whilst even with the Y network in place, Edinburgh and Glasgow travel times will still be well over 3 hours. This consultation's own figures show that with the completion of HS2 Phase II, the journey time from central Edinburgh to central London by HSR will still be longer (3 hr 42 min) than the same journey by air (3hr 40 min). This is far below the level of progress required in the UK transport network over the next 20 years and will actually make Scotland proportionally more remote from London in terms of travel time by rail than it already is. 7 million passenger journeys take place between central Scotland and London each year and, at present, 6 million of these journeys are undertaken by air. Extending HSR to Scotland could increase the proportion of journeys made by rail from 17% to 65%.

Scottish Chambers of Commerce support a phased construction of a UK wide HSR network but we do not subscribe to the view that this should be built from London northwards. A more sensible plan would be to begin construction of the HSR network at both ends, in Scotland and in London, with a view to meeting in the middle. The planned HS2 Phases I and II are a step in the right direction, but concerted and co-ordinated action by both the UK and Scottish Governments is needed if we are to have a truly UK wide HSR network. Consideration must be given now to how Scotland and its cities and regions are to be incorporated into a UK HSR network and work being undertaken by Transport Scotland must be supported by the UK Department for Transport. Neither the Scottish Government nor the UK Government can create a UK HSR network on its own. Both Governments need to work together towards this common purpose. So far this strategic co-operation has not been evident.

**Do you agree with the Government's proposals for the phased roll-out of a national high speed rail network, and for links to Heathrow Airport and to the High Speed 1 line to the Channel Tunnel?**

Partially, although we feel that the plans need to be much more ambitious. Scottish Chambers of Commerce believe that a phased and timetabled roll-out of HSR in the UK is essential to our country's future competitiveness. The planned Phases I and II are sensible steps towards the creation of a UK HSR network but must be accompanied by a Scotland – Northern England HSR link in order to complete the network. Ideally this work should be carried out simultaneously with Phases I and II with a view to linking up with Phase II upon its completion. At the very least, a Phase III with connections to Glasgow and Edinburgh should be planned now as the next stage in the roll-out of HSR.

SCC agrees that links to Heathrow Airport and High Speed 1 are essential parts of the network. Whilst the priority for Scottish businesses is an HSR link to central London, a spur linking the HSR line to Heathrow is desirable and fits with a vision of a connected Britain where our road, rail, air and sea infrastructure is connected into one cohesive and co-ordinated transport network. Through connection to High Speed 1 and the Channel Tunnel is also essential to ensure that the UK is truly a part of the European HSR network.

**Do you agree with the principles and specification used by HS2 Ltd to underpin its proposals for new high speed rail lines and the route selection process HS2 Ltd undertook?**

Scottish Chambers of Commerce do not have any major concerns regarding the route selection process, other than that we believe the overall route is not ambitious enough for the United Kingdom and must extend to Scotland if the maximum economic benefits are to be achieved.

**Do you agree that the Government's proposed route, including the approach proposed for mitigating its impacts, is the best option for a new high speed rail line between London and the West Midlands?**

We see no fundamental issues with the Government's proposed route. For Scottish business travellers, the priority is a direct route into central London and, from that standpoint, the decision to incorporate Heathrow Airport as a spur, rather than as a stop on the Birmingham-London line, is welcome. The UK's future HSR network should be about fast, efficient and sustainable transit between Britain's key cities and city regions, with appropriate connectivity to key transportation hubs. The Birmingham-London line is the first part of this much wider goal.

**Do you wish to comment on the Appraisal of Sustainability of the Government's proposed route between London and the West Midlands that has been published to inform this consultation?**

The construction of High Speed 2 is a nationally significant infrastructure project and this is reflected by the Appraisal of Sustainability published by the Government.

**Do you agree with the options set out to assist those whose properties lose a significant amount of value as a result of any new high speed line?**

Any large infrastructure project is likely to have an effect on neighbouring properties. Those who lose out must be dealt with appropriately, but this must always be weighed against the national economic benefit.

**Scottish Chambers of Commerce  
July 2011**