

The HS2 Debate

High Speed Rail (HS2) is producing debate throughout the country. In 2014 the Government plan to announce the chosen route for Phase 2, the Y-shape network which will serve the Sheffield City Region.

This fact sheet looks at some of the questions raised about HS2 and the opinions which answer the questions.

Concerns on Cost:

£32bn for the network is excessive and will take funding away from other transport investments. It will cost each household £1,000 and will be a burden on taxpayers.

The Answer:

Annual expenditure on HSR will be in line with current transport spending just in the South East on Crossrail and Thameslink. This will only be about 10% of the DfT's annual budget.

Over its lifetime HS2 will pay for itself through fare revenues, private sector investment and significant development opportunities at new stations.

What about the Alternatives?

There are far cheaper and quicker alternatives to HS2, investment in the current lines will create a more accessible network.

The Answer:

Demand for rail travel is growing at an unprecedented amount. Trains, across the country and in South Yorkshire are increasingly overcrowded and journey times are slowing as the network struggles to accommodate demand.

A brand new rail network and investment in our current system is required, this is the only way to secure growth in rail patronage can remain sustainable.

We will continue to make the case for investment in the classic rail network. The Northern Hub, Midland Main Line Electrification and station improvements are just a few schemes we wish to promote.

Who are the Beneficiaries?

Only 1% of passengers will use HSR and it will only be available for the wealthy. The benefits will go to London.

The Answer

Only a completely new line will provide the long-term released capacity needed to relieve congestion on the UK's rail network.

The eastern arm of the Y-network will provide up to 6 trains per hour between Leeds, SCR, East Midlands and London.

The released capacity will allow the introduction of new services and the enhancement of existing services which will increase the overall accessibility in Sheffield City region.

A significant proportion (30%) of productivity benefits from the eastern route will also result from HS2 bringing city regions outside London closer together.

Benefits for the Eastern arm are particularly high with total wider economic impacts estimated to be £4.2bn over a 60-year appraisal period (at 2009 prices). Pure agglomeration benefits would be worth £13m annually to Sheffield City Region

It doesn't do enough for the Environment

HS2 will bring disruption to Area of Outstanding National Beauty and Phase 1 will only be carbon neutral.

The Answer:

The Rail Link Countryside Initiative (RLCI) provided opportunities during the construction of High Speed 1 (HS1) and it's worth learning from its experiences.

A good example of what can be done is Cobham Park in Kent, which is next to HS1. RLCI provided £750,000 for seed funding for a heritage project that subsequently secured just under £10 million to restore Cobham Park and associated buildings, create access and enhance the management of some very abused and neglected woodlands.

Refinements to the preferred HS2 route in response to the consultation have reduced its environmental impact and will ensure that fewer people will be adversely affected by the new route. And these changes have been made while at the same time reducing the overall construction cost.

New Technology:

New technology will reduce the demand for travel.

The Answer:

It does not automatically follow that the surge in mobile communications and IT will act as a substitute for business travel. The evidence actually suggests that the internet is increasing the demand for travel because businesses are now able to access a far broader geographical spread of clients, staff and business contacts.

The strongest growth in information technology currently is for mobile devices, which can be used while travelling and with expectations (not yet fully met) that trains will provide this capability.

It doesn't cut Journey Times by enough:

The journey time savings are minimal and do not justify the expenditure.

The Answer:

From Sheffield, current speeds are typically slower and journey times therefore longer. The journey between Sheffield and London in 2008 was recorded as the fourth slowest of those journeys analysed (out of a total number of 15).

HS2 along the whole of the Eastern arm would cut current rail journey times from Sheffield to London by 40% with an estimated journey time of 1hr 15 minutes. The journey currently takes 2hr 07 minutes or more on the Midland Mainline.