

## **Appendix A: Transport Select Committee (November 2011)**

### **A1 Transport Committee – Introduction**

The Transport Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Department for Transport and its Associate Public Bodies.

The Committee was chaired by Louise Ellman MP and fifteen other cross-party members considered the evidence for and against HS2 during August and September 2011.

The work of this committee is important as it is the first public consideration of the proposal. The recommendations made will contribute to the government decision on HS2 and a response to it will be made by DfT.

### **A2 Transport Committee – Report**

The Committee has concluded that:

“The UK is sometimes accused of failing to invest sufficiently in its transport infrastructure and of not planning for the long term. Whether or not this is accurate, the Government is now proposing what is probably the largest single investment in UK transport infrastructure in modern times—HS2.

Unlike policies for major roads and airports, this proposal has all-party support. It is not, however, universally supported by Members of Parliament or the public. We acknowledge the deeply held and often well-informed views on both sides of the debate. Through our inquiry we have sought to examine the strategic issues and to put information into the public domain. We have reached conclusions and recommendations on what we believe are key issues.

We support a high-speed rail network for Britain, developed as part of a comprehensive transport strategy also including the classic rail network, road, aviation and shipping. We believe that the Government’s HS2 proposal could form part of this network and provide substantial improvements in capacity and connectivity for inter-urban travel between our major cities. Furthermore, the released capacity on the classic rail network would also enable widespread improvements on local and regional rail services. Alternative proposals to upgrade the existing West Coast Main Line would provide additional capacity but, given the substantial recent growth in rail passenger numbers, it seems that the alternatives might prove inadequate. They do not offer the step-change or the wider benefits to passenger and freight that HS2 would do. Whether these alternative proposals would be adequate turns on the accuracy of demand forecasts, which are a substantial part of the case for HS2.

Although the impact of high-speed rail on regional economies is harder to predict, we note the substantial support for high-speed rail from businesses and local authorities in the regions. We note too that, once implemented, some major transport schemes have proved to have had greater economic impacts than their pre-implementation appraisals predicted. We believe that high-speed rail could have strategic economic benefits and should be planned on a strategic basis. It should be integrated with economic development planning.

Many issues about the Government’s proposal for HS2 and about high-speed rail in

general have been raised in the course of our inquiry. We have pointed to a number of areas that we believe need to be addressed in the course of progressing HS2. These include the provision of greater clarity on the policy context, the assessment of alternatives, the financial and economic case, the environmental impacts, connections to Heathrow and the justification for the particular route being proposed.

We call on the Government to consider and to clarify these matters before it reaches its decision on HS2. Our inquiry has dealt with the strategic case for high-speed rail. If the Government decides to proceed with HS2, a hybrid bill will provide the opportunity for detailed matters, including those of environmental impact and mitigation, to be addressed”

The full report can be accessed by the following the link below:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/transport-committee/publications/>

#### **A.4 CDC specific comments on the Transport Select Committee Report**

Whilst the report clearly questions a number of issues within the proposal prepared by the HS2 on behalf of the government, there is evidence that positive spin has been added to their cautionary note to proceed.

- The report opens with a quotation from the previous labour government: “My Government will enable the construction of a high-speed railway network”. This sets the tone for the report and there is a feeling that the report is supporting this statement
- The report continues by outlining the remit of HS2, rather than considering the future rail needs of the UK. Hence impartiality is questionable
- Public opinion has been summarised as generally in favour, although there is overwhelming evidence that there is very strong opposition, particularly along the only section of the route that has been provided any detail (London to the West Midlands)
- The report also states that the “rail industry has increasingly backed HS2”. This is another statement to which there is clear evidence to the contrary
- The report states that “local authorities and business organisations... on the whole have enthusiastically backed the scheme”. Again this is a questionable statement with strong evidence to the contrary
- Whilst opposition groups such as 51M have been mentioned, there is an implication that they lack organisation and professionalism by use of the phrase that implies that they suddenly appeared rather than formed “many local ‘stop HS2’ groups have sprung up along the line”. Again, this is clearly not true as the resource, expertise and professionalism is clearly very high in the vast majority of cases
- Finally, the two specialist advisors to the Transport Select Committee previously worked within the DfT and the Office of Rail Regulation. It could be suggested that specialist advisors should be independent

These extracts collectively suggest that the report is not truly independent and impartial and will be used to support a government decision to proceed.

#### **A.5. 51M response to the Transport Committee (November 2011)**

The long-awaited Transport Select Committee report into HS2, released today (Tuesday 8 November) says the project should go back to the drawing board for a major rethink. The findings strongly validate the concerns raised by Buckinghamshire County Council, and by 51m, the BCC-led alliance of 18 local authorities which have come together to challenge the HS2 project.

In essence, the TSC's report recommends that no decision on HS2 should be made until there has been a comprehensive appraisal on the full 'Y' network. It concludes that the project needs more planning and more consultation. It raises fundamental issues on the environmental case and calls into question the scheme's deeply flawed business case, which claims HS2 would regenerate the economy and bridge the north/south divide. The Committee's findings emphasise that any high speed rail scheme should form part of an integrated national transport infrastructure and calls for the Government to make a clear statement about the status of complementary schemes, such as those linking Heathrow Airport to the Great Western Main Line from the west or to Gatwick, stating 'it is unacceptable for a debate on such major decisions to be conducted through a series of nods and winks in the press'.