Draft Railfuture national policy for high speed rail in UK

1. Railfuture supports the creation of a strategic network of new intercity rail lines as the best means of achieving the step-change in total network capacity required to support increasing demand, and allowing for major modal shift from higher-emitting, higher energy modes.
2. Increased demand from modal shift, and the consequent savings in energy use and CO_2 emissions, must be the primary justification for high speed rail. (Conventional assessment of economic benefits would still apply.)
3. New lines should be designed for higher speed (with inherent greater energy use and emissions justified through modal shift) and larger structure gauge (to permit duplex European services to access UK regions to maximise economic benefits).
4. The fundamental aim is an enhanced UK intercity network, with new lines extending to all principal regional cities, and services extending onto existing routes to at least replicate existing service levels to all communities.
5. To optimise capacity to enable further modal shift, the high speed network should be integrated with the existing network. Existing intercity traffic where practicable should progressively migrate onto the new lines, with existing lines devoted to slower-speed passenger and freight traffic
6. Integration of high speed rail with the existing railway and wider public transport is best achieved by focussing the new network on existing city-centre rail hubs.
7. Where practicable, principal airports should be included in the network. In the case of Heathrow, comprehensive links should be established, to high speed and classic networks.
8. The new high speed network should largely follow existing transport corridors. This should minimise environmental damage and construction cost, and enable completion in the shortest timescale.
9. Prior to any new line construction (or detailed design), a national strategy for high speed rail must be established to deliver enhanced service levels and interregional connectivity to all principal regional centres. Recognising issues of cost, timescale and regional politics, the strategy must deliver in an inclusive, comprehensive and cost-effective manner.
10. The national strategy should recognise the need (economic and environmental) for Continental Gauge freight traffic to access the same key regional centres. The new high speed network should be aligned to facilitate this development..
11. Terminal strategies must be developed for all principal cities, with high speed services departing from the same stations as existing services to the same destination. This will drive local projects to create integrated hubs eg New Street / Moor Street in Birmingham, Euston / St Pancras / Kings Cross in London.
12. The cost of new lines should not delay the development of the existing network. Funding of new lines should be based on the true monetised value of savings in emissions and energy use (and consequently diverted from airport expansion and road construction etc). Funding should be supplemented by appropriate road user charging and workplace parking charges.

Railfuture recommends that a single northward high speed spine should extend progressively from London/HS1 to serve principal Midlands, Northern and Scottish cities. The spine would be aligned to the east of the Pennines with spurs to serve west-sided communities and enable interregional links. Complementary development of the existing network will be required to spread the benefits to as many communities as possible, and ensure comprehensive rail access to Heathrow. A later development of a separate westward route will be required, to serve South Wales and Western communities.

05.03.2010