



campaigning  
by the  
**Railway Development  
Society Limited**

**Networks Group**

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15<sup>th</sup> April 2013

Dear Paul,

#### **2014 HIGH SPEED 1 PERIODIC REVIEW: FIRST CONSULTATION**

Railfuture is a national voluntary organisation structured in England as twelve regional branches and two national branches for Scotland and Wales. We are Britain's leading independent rail lobby organisation with a large number of affiliated Rail User Groups. Being funded entirely from membership subscriptions and donations, Railfuture enjoys non-partisan status and has no connections with political parties, trade unions or commercial interests.

We have studied the review and offer the following comments.

The document is essentially devoted to the contractual, organisational, and technical structure of the relationship between the parties involved with the operation of HS1, issues normally beyond the direct involvement or consequent interests of either rail campaigners or rail users, such as those we represent. However we have noted the questions listed in section 4.1 and we respond to those points where we believe we can make a useful contribution.

2.21: While it may be unavoidable, with the present agreements, to avoid a wholesale review of the contractual mechanisms, the fact that such profound consultations take place at all, and the time and consultations expended on these review efforts, indicate to us that the original multi-layered levels of organisational involvement designated for HS1 were cumbersome and flawed in the first place. We would favour a reform of these original agreements, if legally possible, to simplify the structures, and to ensure that the consequent outcome is much more favourable to the conveyance of traffic on HS1, which we believe currently, that such agreements and charges do not.

2.23: Concerning the "out-performance mechanism", we believe that the options for diversion of Eurostar trains in particular, when obstructions, major incidents or failures, etc., occur, are limited and on some sections non-existent. The removal of 750v DC traction collector shoes from all the Eurostar sets, and closure of Waterloo International platforms, means these trains can no longer be diverted to alternative South Eastern routes. We recognise that retention of these options "just in case" would have involved expense in maintenance of infrastructure for such events, which fortunately are infrequent.

2.42: The issue that is of most importance and relevance to Railfuture is the excessive infrastructure user charges being made for operators using HS1. While it is true that these costs are inevitably going to be greater per kilometre than those applicable on classic main lines, nevertheless there is strong anecdotal evidence based on reports in industry journals, that these charges are very greatly in excess of what would be considered normal elsewhere. We recommend a study and comparison of infrastructure user charges imposed between classic main lines and high speed lines in France, Germany, and Italy, (whether actual or notional only for accountancy

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purposes), and thereby identify whether the high speed line charges imposed on HS1 are reasonable, or as we believe, disproportionately high.

It is this aspect which clearly determines the extent to which these charges are passed on to the passengers and freight users, with the evidence of the much higher fares charged to passengers from East Kent to London on HS1 than on the classic lines, and also the extreme reluctance of freight carriers to buy the capacity available to them at off-peak times.

Similarly if the charges made to Eurostar were comparable to those made on HS lines in mainland Europe, then many Eurostar fares could be made somewhat cheaper and more attractive to those still reluctant to abandon the airlines on short-haul flights from London airports to the nearest mainland European cities, even where city centre to city centre journey times on Eurostar services are similar or even faster in some cases. This aspect is also quite evidential for us in explaining the often-quoted claim that the predicted user numbers prior to construction of HS1 have not been delivered in reality, and that as little as half the expected demand has been generated.

3.12: We are also unclear after reading the very technical and contractual language in the consultation paper whether there is possibly some hidden evidence for the reluctance of Eurostar Ltd to serve Ashford International station as extensively as it serves the much less popular (per train call) Ebbsfleet International station, such as charges for leaving HS1 and re-joining it, reflected in the stated belief within the document that there "...are too many signallers at Ashford"! Is there an additional financial penalty for Eurostar trains making the required manoeuvres, which might be deemed excessive?

We trust that our comments are helpful to you in your review of the contractual requirements, posited in the desire to ensure much greater use of HS1 in future, and relief to the stricture of the contracts that limit potential demand.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'I McDonald'.

Ian McDonald  
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Head of Networks Group