



Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP
Secretary of State
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
76 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DR

16 May 2011

Dear Mr Hammond

Thank you so much for your time last month at the meeting with national environmental NGOs to discuss HS2 and the Right Lines Charter. In general we all found the meeting useful and constructive and were grateful to you and officials for extending it. I am writing on behalf of the various groups who came to the meeting to summarise the key points that came out of it and suggest some ways forward to ensure that High Speed Rail is done well.

Principle 1 - National Strategy

First, we agreed that it was important to provide a clearer strategic context for HS2, both to show how it fits into wider transport and other policies as well as to set out the objectives it aims to help meet. We highlighting the benefits from the use of rail capacity released by HS2, for freight as well as local and regional passenger trains, will be vital – the carbon benefits of mode shift of freight from road to rail will become even more important given the lack of any real low emission road freight technology on the horizon.

You said that the local and regional linkages to HS2, in particular interconnectivity with the existing rail network, will be critical, and accepted the need for modal shift. You repeated the Government's commitment to not building extra runways in the South East and using HS2 to make most domestic aviation redundant and eroding the near-Europe market too. You also mentioned focusing road strategy on making the better use of existing assets such as through improved management of motorways.

These points are generally very welcome and we discussed ways of setting them out as a coherent whole. We identified some opportunities to do this, including the Government ambitions (which we very much hope will involve accepting the Committee on Climate Change's evidence that a 60% cut by 2030 is appropriate and necessary) for the fourth carbon budget due by June, the draft National Policy Statement on National Networks and paper on delivering a sustainable railway both due in November and the High Level Output Specification for 2014-9 due in 2012. We explored our concerns about the lack of longer term strategy for transport infrastructure other than HS2 (including that linking into it) and pricing of different

modes, a gap that could be filled by a White Paper. Some of us are keen to work closely with your officials on these different workstreams and look forward to future meetings this year.

Principle 2 - Testing the Options

We would also like to look at ways in which the sensitivities in the economic case can be made more transparent, through the use of different scenarios for important variables such as future oil prices and policy choices. We recognise that the economic case has to be robust against testing in both public and in Parliament, but we are confident that use of scenarios will help rather than hinder this.

We note since the meeting that the Department has published *The Transport Business Case*, which sets out a refined approach to investment decisions and a response to the Transport Committee. We strongly welcome the acceptance that a Benefit Cost Ratio 'obscures the detailed trade-offs', ignores impacts that are not amenable to monetisation and is 'not a substitute for a more detailed consideration of the impacts'. We hope this will be reflected in future Departmental communications.

Principle 3 - Public Participation

We discussed the preferred route for phase 1 between London and Birmingham/Lichfield, including the process of the current consultation. We noted your view that there are limits to the changes that can be made now for this phase, given the need to avoid further blight and stay within the current timetable for delivery. We remain seriously concerned, however, about the limitations of the current approach to public consultation on the route. Many of us will continue to raise concerns about the preferred route, but we would also be keen to explore with Professor McNaughton and others what options are available in practice to changes in design and alignment on this section to avoid the valuable and sensitive sites and places that are currently likely to be affected.

We agreed that in looking north of Birmingham at phase 2, it would be worth considering ways of planning and public engagement that are different and more inclusive than the way in which phase 1 has been done. We noted and accept the tension you identified between being open and inclusive in planning the route and the need to avoid casting blight over a wide area. We think, however, that it would be worth exploring the options for early engagement, with reference to good practice in other countries and on other major infrastructure projects in this country including HS1. Tony Burton of Civic Voice has already organised a study tour of HS1, which officials from HS2 Ltd attended, to see what lessons can be learned from it.

We would like to take these points forward urgently with officials, because they could change the broader strategic objectives for phase 2. In our view, however, it should not lengthen the timetable overall, because as we have said we think that early public involvement can reduce opposition and concerns later on.

Principle 4 - Minimising Adverse Impacts

We should emphasise that despite the changes you have previously announced, the current plans will still have significant impacts on many places of importance for biodiversity, landscape and heritage, including those that are designated at a local as opposed to national level (such as local wildlife sites). We were pleased to hear your clear intent that the environmental legacy should be beneficial, with a positive net impact along the HS2 route. This will clearly be a substantial challenge, and we would like to discuss the principles and options to achieve beneficial environmental outcomes at an early opportunity. We also noted your comments about noise mitigation which is of course very important – however, we think there are possibilities for more holistic approaches to design that will look at noise, visual appearance and impacts on landscape as a whole rather than separately and seek to avoid rather than mitigate negative impacts. Again, we would welcome opportunities to discuss this.

Finally, where there are unavoidable impacts on the ground and mitigation or compensation elsewhere is required, we want to see this properly funded, including an endowment fund for long term management of mitigation measures. This has not been made clear yet, and clearly some of it is dependent on very local and site-specific factors, but it ought to be possible to have a statement of principle about compensation and long term funding.

I hope these points are helpful to moving the HSR debate on and we look forward to progressing them with officials.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Joseph". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephen Joseph
Chief Executive, Campaign for Better Transport