



Economic Affairs Committee Report: *Rethinking High Speed 2*

Debate on 23 January 2020

On 23 January 2020, Lord Forsyth of Drumlean (Conservative) is due to move that “this House takes note of the Report from the Economic Affairs Committee *Rethinking High Speed 2* (6th Report, Session 2017–19, HL Paper 359)”.

Summary

In its report, the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee identified three main areas of concern for the High Speed 2 (HS2) rail programme: priorities for rail investment; the process used to evaluate the project; and cost reduction considerations. The committee argued that improvements to rail infrastructure in the north of England should have been prioritised over HS2. The report also questioned the accuracy of the appraisal method used to support the project and gave some recommendations for reducing costs. Specific recommendations in these areas included:

- combining the Northern Powerhouse Rail Programme with the second phase of HS2;
- undertaking a new analysis of the project; and
- reviewing the potential cost saving if the maximum speed of the railway was reduced and if the line terminated at Old Oak Common station instead of Euston in London.

In response, the Government stated that the Northern Powerhouse Rail Programme is being developed closely alongside the second phase of HS2 already, but that it would consider the committee’s recommendation to join the two schemes. It also stated that the Department for Transport has confidence in the methodology used in its initial analysis. The Government did not accept the committee’s recommendation that analysis of potential cost saving by reducing the maximum speed at which trains could operate on the line should be published. It also did not accept the recommendation that services should terminate at Old Oak Common in London.

On 21 August 2019, the Government announced that an independent review into HS2 would be conducted by Douglas Oakervee, a former HS2 chairman. The review’s final report has not yet been published, though Lord Berkeley (Labour), deputy chair of the review, has published a dissenting report. The Government has already accepted that the costs of the project have increased. It intends to make a decision on the future of HS2 in due course.

Sally Dray | 16 January 2020

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Further Information

- House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee, [Rethinking High Speed 2](#), 16 May 2019, HL Paper 359 of session 2017–19, pp 3–8; and [Government Response](#), 19 July 2019

Summary of the report's conclusions and recommendations and the response from the Government.

- Department for Transport, '[Government Announces Independent Review into HS2 Programme](#)', 21 August 2019; and '[Terms of Reference for the Independent Review of HS2](#)', 21 August 2019

Article from the Department of Transport detailing the terms of reference and timetable for an independent review into the HS2 project. The review was due to be submitted to the Government in autumn 2019.

- Department for Transport, '[HS2 Update: 3 September 2019](#)', 3 September 2019; and [HS2 Ltd Chairman's Stocktake](#), 3 September 2019, pp 1–2

Written statement by Grant Shapps, Secretary of State for Transport, on the HS2 review and the findings of a stocktake report into the viability of the HS2 project by Allan Cook, chairman of HS2 Ltd.

- Northern Powerhouse Partnership, [HS2 North: Redesigning Our Railways](#), October 2019, pp 3–4

Executive summary from the Northern Powerhouse Partnership's review into HS2.

- Lord Tony Berkeley, [A Review of High Speed 2](#), 5 January 2020, pp 5–7

Summary and conclusions from the report by Lord Berkeley, former deputy chair of the Oakervee review.

Parliamentary Questions

- House of Commons, '[Oral Question on HS2](#)', HC Hansard, 24 October 2019, cols 1107–8
- House of Commons, '[Oral Question on High Speed 2](#)', HC Hansard, 22 October 2019, cols 795–6
- A selection of written questions from the House of Commons: [487](#) (9 January 2020); [1372](#) (8 January 2020); [1358](#) (8 January 2020); and [742](#) (24 October 2019)

Press Articles and Comment

- Louisa Clarence-Smith and Graeme Paton, '[Full Speed Ahead for HS2 or Passengers Will Face Rising Fares](#)', *Times* (£), 12 November 2019
- Tom BurrIDGE, '[HS2 Should Happen Despite Rising Cost, Says Review](#)', BBC News, 12 November 2019

- Trevor Marshallsea, '[HS2: Parliament 'Seriously Misled' Over Costs For High-speed Rail Network, Report Finds](#)', *Independent*, 5 January 2020
- Editorial Board, '[It is Time to Get UK High-Speed Rail Back on Track](#)', *Financial Times* (£), 12 January 2020
- BBC News, '[HS2 Costs Out of Control, Says Review's Deputy Chair](#)', 5 January 2020
- *Railway Gazette*, '[Stakeholders Respond to Lord Berkeley's High Speed 2 Dissenting Report](#)', 6 January 2020