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Douglas Oakervee CBE  
Chair  
Independent Review of HS2  
Department for Transport  
33 Horseferry Road  
London SW1P 4DR

16 September 2019

Dear Douglas

I am writing to you on behalf of the Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation (CIHT) in relation to the review into the HS2 programme that you are conducting.

CIHT is a charity, learned society and membership body with over 14,000 members spread across 12 UK regions and four international groups and over 100 infrastructure supply chain partners. We represent and qualify professionals who plan, design, build, manage and operate transport and infrastructure networks. Our vision is for world-class transportation infrastructure and services. Our values are to be Professional, Inclusive, Collaborative and Progressive.

Our understanding is that the review will consider whether and how HS2 should proceed in reference to its benefits and impacts, affordability and efficiency, deliverability and scope and its phasing, including its relationship with Northern Powerhouse Rail.

As a professional institution with a focus on transport infrastructure, we have continued to monitor the progress of HS2. We have consulted widely amongst our membership and have made various responses to consultations and issued statements on HS2.

We have maintained a consistent position in support of the HS2 project as we believe it has clear benefits for capacity, connectivity and the economy if delivered in an appropriate manner. It however is clear that HS2 can prove a divisive issue and more needs to be done to demonstrate the benefits that the project could deliver.

CIHT supports the rapid delivery of the enhanced capacity and connectivity that high-speed rail will bring to the United Kingdom's north-south rail network.

That capacity, with benefits for users of both the rail and road networks, including freight movements, together with the broader economic benefits anticipated in terms of connectivity and job creation needs to be delivered to a robust timetable, supported by clear justification.

It is evident that the justification for HS2 has been called into question particularly in relation to the increasing costs and the debate around the benefits of improving the links between the north and the south of England.

CIHT had previously outlined a series of benefits in relation to HS2 that could form the basis of rebalancing the current argument. Whilst we consider these points still relevant, the review

team might be interested in confirming the estimates and taking account of updated information. These benefits included:

- Key rail routes connecting London, the Midlands and the North will be overwhelmed without HS2. The existing West Coast Main Line will be full by the mid-2020s. Action is required to increase capacity on these routes<sup>1</sup>.
- HS2 will link eight out of Britain's ten largest cities, serving one in five of the UK population.<sup>2</sup>
- The project will rebalance (i.e. close) the north-south divide, generating economic growth outside London and the South-East. The Core Cities predicted that HS2 will underpin the delivery of 400,000 jobs<sup>3</sup>.
- During the morning peak, there are on average 4,000 people standing<sup>4</sup> on arrival into London Euston; and 5,000 people standing on arrival into Birmingham. Additional capacity is needed to address this.
- The HS2 network will free up capacity on the existing rail lines, allowing more local rail services to serve towns and cities on the routes, particularly for commuters.
- Additional capacity on existing lines will also be available for additional freight services.
- Reductions in journey times between Britain's major cities will improve business productivity.
- The construction industry needs major infrastructure projects like HS2. Project construction will support economic growth in Britain.
- OECD rank the UK lower than Mexico, Chile and Hungary in terms of public investment in infrastructure between 2006 and 2011<sup>5</sup>.
- If the money is not spent on HS2 then it won't necessarily be available for alternative transport projects.

In discussions, CIHT identified a series of questions that if responded to could help to change the narrative in relation to HS2:

1. Are the strategic economic benefits proven?
2. Are the assumptions in the business case robust?
3. Will HS2 help address the north-south divide, or will it exacerbate it?
4. Are the assumptions about modal shift from road and air realistic?
5. Is HS2 a low carbon solution, or will it increase carbon emissions?

Certainty of timing and clear information about the benefits of the project will help to ensure the support of more stakeholders and that the right resources can be put in place to ensure delivery. Uncertainty, either in terms of the project's aims or timetable, will lead to benefits

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<sup>1</sup> According to a report in 2019 by Network Rail this case still exists: <https://cdn.networkrail.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Route-Strategic-Plan-London-North-Western.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> See HS2 <https://www.hs2.org.uk/where/>

<sup>3</sup> Based on a study carried out by Arup and Volterra in 2011 for the Core Cities Group <https://volterra.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Volterra-Core-Cities-Report-Understanding-the-transport-infrastructure-requirements.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> These estimates were from 2011 but according to recent data the number of people standing at stations has not improved [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/590675/rail-passengers-crowding-2015-revised.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/590675/rail-passengers-crowding-2015-revised.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> This position does not appear to have changed. According to a House of Commons Parliamentary briefing from 2016 Rhodes, C (2016) 'Infrastructure policies and investment' House of Commons Library where it was noted: 'The OECD believes the UK has under-invested in its infrastructure'

not being realised, costs increasing, and difficulties in addressing objections. CIHT will support work to remove that uncertainty.

CIHT look forward to continuing to be involved in these discussions and are happy to discuss any of the associated points raised here in more detail.

Yours sincerely

Sue Percy CBE  
Chief Executive, CIHT