

Comments from Campaign to Protect Rural England

Dear Airports Commission

I am responding to the request for comments in response to the Emerging Thinking speech on behalf of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE). In light of the limited time available, we are only able to respond on one issue though are aware and generally supportive of the letter written by other environmental NGOs in relation to climate change.

Following Sir Howard's speech, I asked him whether the potential for modal shift from air to high speed rail (HSR) had been considered, in line with the 2011 EU Transport White Paper target for the majority of flights under 1000km to shift to rail by 2050. He responded by saying that the Channel Tunnel was a pinch point and that the travel demand outside London and the south east was difficult to serve by HSR. CPRE does not believe these to be persuasive arguments against a policy in favour of modal shift to HSR for these flights for the following reasons.

Channel Tunnel as pinch point

According to the European Union, '43% of tunnel capacity is currently unused':

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-557_en.htm

Of the capacity that is used, much is Le Shuttle, rather than Eurostar. HS1 is similarly lightly used with up to 7 trains compared to the 18 an hour planned for HS2.

In addition the trains used do not make efficient use of the paths. The Eurostar Class 373 has capacity for 750, new Class 374 (E320) proposed for introduction in the middle of the decade has 900 while TGV duplex trains and those proposed to HS2 have 1110. These trains can also be split so as to cater for a greater range of trip patterns and demand at different times of day.

So there is the potential to quadruple passenger capacity through the Channel Tunnel and still have very significant capacity left over to cater for perturbations.

HSR cannot serve markets beyond London and South East well

With HS2, access to the European HSR network will be convenient for much of the country. The attached isochrones figure from the revised strategic case for HS2 that the DfT published this week shows just how much of the country will be within one hour of London by rail. For most of the area south of a line between the Severn and much of East Anglia, access to an HS2 station (including Old Oak Common and Stratford International) will be closer and more seamless than to a major airport.

In any event most of the demand for flying is currently in London and the South East, the same area which has the shortest rail journeys to frequently flown destinations on the continent.

I hope this is information helpful but if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards

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