

As you will be aware road and rail connections between Manchester and Sheffield are poor, and the connections between the whole of the North West and East Midland regions are equally bad. Much of this is because of the desire to protect the Peak National Park, but also because of the closure of major railway routes, Woodhead in 1981 and the direct Manchester to Derby route in 1968. Both routes could and should reopen. Reopening could be achieved at very small cost (well under £1 b.) compared to the cost of HS2 and HS3. Both could be reopened in quite a short timescale, enhancing east-west capacity for passenger and freight to a very large extent.

In relation to the proposed HS2 the decision to integrate it with the existing station in Leeds is supported. In principle the same should happen in Sheffield. If the HS2 route remains via Meadowhall then this will fail to give the large economic boost to Sheffield that is needed. This can be mitigated, however, by bringing some HS2 services into Sheffield Midland station via a link off the proposed HS2 line at Beighton via the existing rail network. This would allow a dedicated Sheffield to London service as well as a Leeds to London service.

Equally a link should be established between the existing rail network and HS2 just to the north of Meadowhall and this would allow provision of a fast frequent dedicated Leeds to Sheffield service using shortened high speed trains.

The case for HS3 is strong but it needs to be routed via the existing Woodhead tunnel (or similar routing) to join HS2 in the vicinity of Barnsley with connections both north and southwards.

This then allows fast frequent services between Manchester and Leeds, Manchester and Sheffield Midland, and between Manchester and the East Midlands. As mentioned previously these are especially poor at present, the scope to upgrade services is substantial and the Peak Park remains largely unaffected environmentally.