

15 May 2015

Dear Sir

Jeremy Paxman, in his familiar style, dismisses HS2 as a folly. Perhaps he would like to consider a few facts. Rail travel in this country has doubled in the past twenty years and is forecast to keep growing at five percent minimum per year. The result is a rail network that is so full that incremental improvements, whilst very welcome, will not deliver the step change in capacity that is needed. He might also want to consider why productivity in countries such as France, Germany and the Netherlands, which have invested in high speed rail, is higher than in this country. HS2 will help relieve the housing, commercial property and transport pressure on London whilst improving connectivity, and therefore productivity, in the Midlands and the North. That is why HSBC is moving its UK headquarters to Birmingham by 2018 and why, elected, local authority leaders across the Midlands and the North, as well as an overwhelming majority of MPs support the scheme. Passengers who queue on a daily basis at Paddington and London Bridge, or those who have to stand on the West Coast Mainline are paying the price of dithering and delay by previous generations. Imagine what it will be like in twenty years' time if we fail once again to seize the chance for change.

Yours faithfully

Sir David Higgins
Chair, HS2 Ltd