



The Role of Transport Infrastructure in Enabling Economic Growth



Progress Report 1

Transport Infrastructure and Economic Growth: Articulating and Promoting the Relationship

June 2011

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At the beginning of 2011 the following organisations formed a steering group to launch a policy dialogue promoting the importance of transport infrastructure and investment to economic growth in this country: the Dods Transport and Infrastructure Dialogue.



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We are also grateful for assistance from the project's industry research partner, the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation.



The programme, hosted by Dods, encompasses ongoing research and communication to promote the importance of transport investment throughout the political community, raise its profile as a policy sector and ask what the government needs to do to help it flourish.

The process involves a collaborative and sustained discussion with government, MPs, industry experts and the wider public and is seeking to build an inclusive, national conversation which takes account of multiple viewpoints.



What Makes our Programme Different?

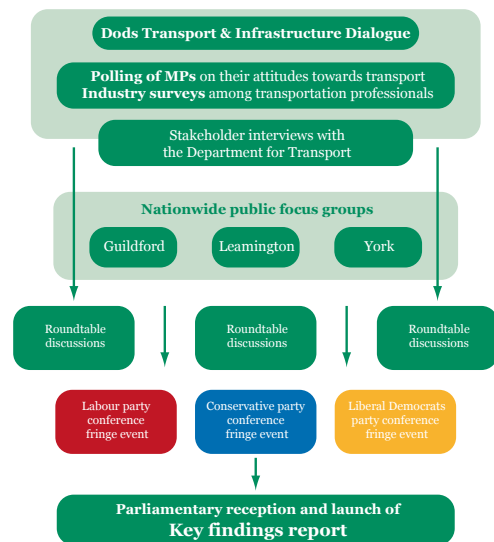
An inclusive, national discussion

Our dialogue is seeking to engage both the government and parliamentarians in Westminster, on views concerning our transport networks and what needs to be done to make them better. We are also speaking with members of the public and the transport planners and contractors who also have a stake in this country's infrastructure future. By engendering an inclusive, national discussion on transport infrastructure we can tap a cross-section of society and capture a full spectrum of views concerning transport infrastructure's standing as a general policy theme and gain an authentic appraisal of how people interpret its relationship to economic growth.

Our aim here is not to repeat the work of other studies, or to provide an economic analysis of the importance of good transport infrastructure. Rather, it is to address the political discourse around transport infrastructure investment in order to understand how we can better communicate its benefits and elevate it as an issue in the rank of priorities for this country's future competitiveness.

Evidence-based engagement

To that end, we have commissioned Dods, a fully open and non-partisan political communications company, to conduct research on our behalf which will provide a transparent breakdown of our cross-section's views and sentiments and provide a useful steer from which to conduct meaningful future investigations and engagement.



What is our dialogue doing next?

This is a year-long dialogue, an endogenous process in which findings unearthed throughout our programme are used to direct the subsequent course of discussion. Whilst this first phase is concerned with a general introduction to the relationship between transport infrastructure and economic growth, the dialogue will move on to broach other key themes and ask what the government can do to help make our transport networks as good as possible.

Our next two policy roundtables, and subsequent areas of discussion, will consider:

- The **Funding and Governance Framework** in place to deliver the design and implementation of our transport infrastructure: the government's new funding streams for transport investment and the role of Local Enterprise Partnerships in facilitating local and regional developments
- A **Smarter Transport Infrastructure**; harnessing technology to deliver more efficient transport networks



The first phase of our programme is designed to set the terms for subsequent engagement. It has been focused on obtaining a general understanding from a cross-section of the stakeholder community on the relationship between transport infrastructure and economic growth, perceptions on the state of our existing networks and where the government's strategic priorities should lie. See across some headline findings:

The need to explain the benefits of transport infrastructure & investment in more simple terms

- Our research suggests that transport infrastructure and investment sits relatively low as an issue in the political consciousness (and consequent order of priorities). This is because its value, in enabling economic growth, is not effectively articulated to or resonated throughout the public
- Major infrastructure projects often come up against and are thwarted by public opposition or resistance. Our dialogue suggests that if the public could be more enfranchised in the development of such projects, with the economic benefits of schemes articulated in a more accessible, simple and clearly distinguishable way, then changes to our networks would be an easier sell
- This is not for one moment to suggest that the public is incapable of understanding the arguments. It is to reveal, from our findings, that current narratives are either too vague or simply not energising their desired audiences enough
- Accepting that economic models for pieces of transport infrastructure are necessarily dry, and beyond the scope of this project, our focus is not chiefly on the cost-benefit rationale for better networks (much of this work having already been done), but primarily concerned with addressing the political discourse concerning transport investment and seeing where the sector can be “better PR’d” for the purposes of raising its profile



A mixed response towards High Speed Two (HS2) denotes the need to create more compelling stories for the way in which it will benefit regional economies

- As a test case for the way in which major new pieces of transport infrastructure are sold to the public, and so affect the political discourse, our dialogue has captured and collated the views of key stakeholder sets concerning the roll-out of High Speed Two
- Our research confirms mixed views towards HS2 and varying degrees of scepticism and lack of knowledge concerning its economic case
- Some sections of our sample audience say they are in support of the concept of the new system (including MPs, 49 % of whom said it was important and 29 % of whom felt it was essential). However, other analysis shows that HS2 is considered less of a transport imperative than investment in roads, conventional railway lines or even light rail
- Clearly more needs to be done to articulate and promote the value of HS2, concerning its projected benefits to regional economies and in order to counter the NIMBY arguments which obfuscate the national case and prioritise the inconvenience of local disruption

The need for business and political communities to collaborate in selling the value of transport infrastructure improvements to the public at large

- Our first Parliamentary roundtable discussion, one in a series aimed at better promoting the role of transport infrastructure improvements, set in stone the need for the business and political communities to collaborate more in devising sophisticated and tailored messages on the benefits of upcoming projects
- This includes working together to smooth the public narrative, by communicating infrastructure projects more in terms of ‘tangibles’ such as the number of jobs they create
- It also means addressing weaknesses in government’s capacity to deliver a strategic transport vision: from the work that needs to be done on Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), to provide a more coherent regional framework on transport issues, to potentially giving an organisation like Infrastructure UK more teeth (in order to insulate strategic decisions from the excesses of party politics)

Articulating and Promoting the Role of Transport Infrastructure in Economic Growth: Simplifying the Narrative

Britain is living in straightened financial times, the Coalition Government's Comprehensive Spending Review last year cutting an additional £40bn per annum from public spending in order to reduce our structural deficit and tackle the country's national debt. Yet Britain also needs to make its way in an increasingly competitive global economy and government has a role to play in facilitating conditions for private sector growth and inward international investment.

A good transport infrastructure and network is one such area for strategic assistance. It can serve as an enabler of economic growth; facilitating business transactions, the movement of goods and expanding labour markets to ensure an increasingly competitive workforce which differentiates Britain from our competitors. Moreover, the Coalition Government is keen to increase the size of the country's manufacturing base, as part of a rebalancing of the economy. Mobile international companies are increasingly likely to install operations here if they're assured of the country's infrastructural ability to accommodate the efficient production and exportation of their goods.

But infrastructure is a neglected area of the economy in the UK. A recent study from the World Economic Forum ranked us at 33rd for the quality of ours, internationally, whilst the British Chambers of Commerce reports that our public investment in this area, as a proportion of GDP, is half that of competitors like France and the US.

Concerning transport, the pledge by David Cameron to deliver on HS2 is an important step in the direction towards a modern, low-carbon rail network which will help grow our regional centres and make us less dependent on the City and South East. Yet we should not become complacent. A report from Policy Exchange comments that 'few would choose to locate in Britain because of its infrastructure', suggesting a minimum level of required investment of £434bn by 2020 which, however unrealistic, still shows the scale of the challenge we face (Delivering a 21st Century Infrastructure for

Britain, Policy Exchange). These comments were founded on industry surveying which has shown that as many as 70% of senior business figures believe the UK to have an inadequate transport infrastructure.

In 2006, Professor Sir Rod Eddington led the last major report into the relationship between economic growth and good transport networks, providing a compelling argument for strategic investment by the government into our urban corridors and international gateways. Yet the lexicon used, in promoting the economic case and cost-benefit rationale for action, still evaded one crucial point which this dialogue is seeking to pick up. That is the need for a simpler and more emotive discourse around the importance of good transport networks which will help galvanise voters, make its arguments more accessible and concurrently raise the sector's profile in the political consciousness relative to areas like healthcare and education.

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Having cold hard facts is important but what is also needed, and has so far not been achieved, is an inclusive, evidence-based and national discussion with all the stakeholders (the politicians, the public, the industry experts) who have a view on the importance of transport infrastructure. Collating these views and sentiments can provide us with useful insight in terms of establishing how to best sell and promote the stereotypically dry area of transport infrastructure as part of a compelling national story. To that end our dialogue is different. It seeks not to provide an economic appraisal of the importance of transport infrastructure to our nation's future and competitiveness, but to test, compare and collate the perceptions and attitudes of a cross-section of society. We hope this will generate the terms for a discourse which is more evocative, which resonates and is promoted better throughout the entire body politic.

Our first job has been to conduct an initial round of research which has asked a range of stakeholder sets to clarify the relationship between transport investment and economic growth as they see it, capturing attitudes on the government's role in this area and the state of the transport networks generally in order to provide a solid base from which to conduct further conversations.

Employing a range of quantitative and qualitative research techniques, with regional public focus groups, MP polling, in-depth stakeholder policy discussions and surveying of industry experts, our dialogue has embraced the views of politicians, voters, business

community representatives and transportation professionals. Key findings from the programme so far can be seen below:

Transport infrastructure sits low in the political consciousness

We asked the Dods MP Panel to comment on whether or not transport infrastructure is a comparatively low issue in the political consciousness and an overwhelming 61% of MPs felt it was. Findings from our survey of transportation professionals (engineers, local government transport planners and contractors) were stronger, with 58% agreeing and 25% strongly agreeing that transport infrastructure sits low in the political consciousness (see figure 1 overleaf). We also held focus groups throughout the country with members of the public, consulting them on if and why they felt transport policy might be lower down the list of priorities in Westminster than other policy areas. A consensus emerged not only in terms of transport policy's comparative unpopularity, as an electoral issue, but in terms of governments' historic inability to describe the economic case for new transport projects in clear and simple terms.

For example, at focus groups Dods held in Leamington, York and Guildford, as part of this project, a consensus was apparent across attendees that a clearer, simpler narrative needs to be delivered on HS2 in order to enfranchise the public, avert the threat of NIMBYISM and describe in uncomplicated terms the way in which individual people will benefit from such a new piece of infrastructure.

Articulating and Promoting the Role of Transport Infrastructure in Economic Growth: Simplifying the Narrative

Widely sceptical of the project, one participant said that the government needed to be able to “quantify to the person in the town what the benefits will be.... people here don’t see the benefits of High Speed Rail and think money should be spent elsewhere coming out of the recession”. Another member commented that transport policy, as a general sector, needs “a good PR company” to promote its return on investment in terms of economic growth.

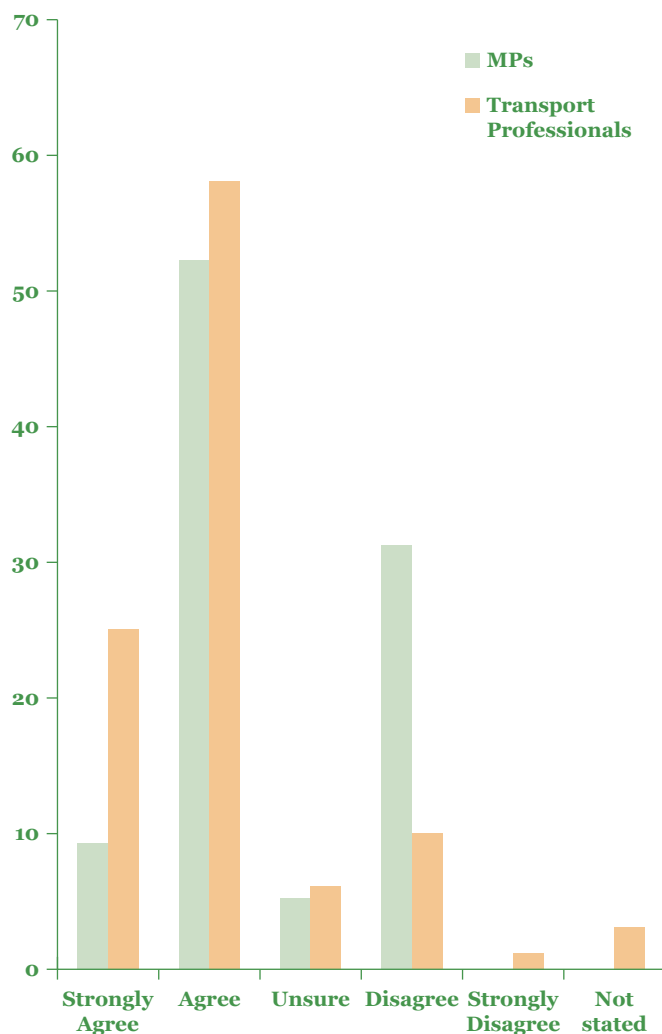


Figure 1: UK transport infrastructure is a comparatively low issue in the political consciousness. To what extent do you agree?

Balancing the local, regional and national implications of transport infrastructure and creating narratives to suit

It seems fairly obvious to say that significant pieces of national infrastructure should be supplemented by smaller, more local transport enhancements to ensure compatibility across the network and that the benefits (and economic effects) of inter-city transport improvements can spill over into suburban areas: creating, in essence, the truly agglomerative effect of good transport infrastructure which Eddington’s study called for.

A more complicated issue is how you negotiate the different local, regional and national implications of a new piece of infrastructure and weave together a persuasive narrative which is malleable to your audience.

Our research so far has found the current story around HS2 to be a little cumbersome, creating a one-size fits all solution which is indifferent to the way different stakeholders will be affected. For example, attendees at our Leamington focus group appeared broadly to decouple the national benefits of HS2 from its local and regional effect on them. The same argument was repeated that whilst HS2 may impart benefits nationally, the fact that the Leamington station is not going to be on the central line itself means that the time it takes for local residents to travel to London will not be shrunk. The vast majority of participants were resultantly sceptical.

Of course, there are instances in which promoting the national economic case for a new transport development is not easily reconciled to locally disrupted people. “The economic case for building a motorway in my back garden is never going to persuade me that a motorway should be built in my backyard”, said director-general at the Department for Transport, Steve Gooding, in an interview which was conducted as part of this dialogue.



To this end, as our dialogue moves on to discuss, better compensation by the state becomes a key issue. Nonetheless we are resolved, from our research, that there are still better ways of engaging with the public on projected transport developments; layering the local, regional and national impacts of a project so that people don't interpret it in zero-sum terms ('it may be good for the country but not for me'). There are, for example, positive agglomerative effects to be felt by Leamington residents as a result of HS2, with spill-over effects from the way in which Birmingham will grow as a centre and Leamington will become better connected to regional cities like Coventry. These points just need to be better articulated and we discuss them in more detail later in the document (see High Speed Two section).

What the government can do to help

What the government can do to help provide a coherent framework of governance and funding, to assist in the roll-out of good transport infrastructure, is an issue which will be repeatedly addressed by this dialogue. Nonetheless, the first stage of our research has already unearthed the concern among stakeholders of the vacuum left by the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) as well as the efficacy of transport planning at a more localised level.

Participants at our York focus group asserted not knowing where the national authorities finish and the local authorities start on matters of strategic transport planning, for example. And, at our first roundtable in



Stephen Burgin, UK President of Alstom, speaking at our May roundtable in Westminster

Westminster, politicians and industry personnel alike expressed some concern that the newly devised Local Enterprise Partnerships be brought up to speed as soon as possible in order to provide an effective interface with industry on delivering strategic enhancements to the transport network.

Indeed, it was our own Stephen Burgin, UK President of dialogue partner organisation Alstom and a member of a LEP himself (the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire partnership), who raised this issue at our first roundtable in May.

LEPs could be in and of themselves very useful bodies in the publicising of new transport schemes to local residents, as well as vehicles for pushing out sound arguments on their value and an avenue to consult on and allay local concerns, Burgin suggested.

However, he said, "there is still a piece of work to be done on them" and we as a group agree that further clarification is needed concerning precisely what role the LEPs will play and how they will interact with the Department for Transport.

Articulating and Promoting the Role of Transport Infrastructure in Economic Growth: Simplifying the Narrative

As part of our dialogue, Dods hosted a parliamentary roundtable discussion on May 11th 2011. The discussion focused on the importance of good transport infrastructure to the UK economy and the need to promote and articulate this relationship more clearly.

Speaking for the NEC, managing director Kathryn James ((pictured bottom far right) said that the business community needs to create “more humanity in the way it presents itself”, depicting transport infrastructure improvements more in terms of tangible benefits such as jobs.

“We are contributing £2.1bn in terms of economic value to the region and supporting 29 000 jobs”, she said, discussing one way in which the economic case for transport extensions can be made and an effective way she has found by which to enfranchise her constituency to the NEC’s infrastructural designs.

“Our community love us and they support extensions. People understand why we are there and what we do for them”, James added.

Bridget Rosewell, chief economic adviser to the Greater London Authority (pictured bottom inset right) agreed on the need to express the economic benefits of transport infrastructure in a simpler way.

“We don’t think hard enough about what the payback is on the money we are going to spend...That is where the political disconnect comes in”, she said.

Referring to Crossrail, and the way in which the scheme could be better promoted by focusing on the jobs it will create, she noted that “Crossrail will pay back...We will end up with an asset which will continue to pay money back...People will earn money [from being employed to build the scheme] and they will pay taxes on that money...Anything the public puts in will pay back with interest”, she said.

Speaking for the government, Aidan Burley MP (pictured top far right) said that more needs to be done to counter the NIMBY argument towards High Speed Rail.

“The NIMBYs are winning the day”, suggested Burley, Phillip Hammond’s PPS, saying that the UK needs the business communities of the North and Midlands to advertise the benefits of the scheme and challenge the counter argument that all HS2 will do is cause disruption.

In other comment, Andrew Gwynne MP, shadow transport minister (pictured top inset left) highlighted on the need to make better use of existing infrastructure, rather than focus purely on new build. He discussed the benefits which could be brought to regional economies from new light rail installations and said that tram-train developments could be built on existing lines. He questioned why areas like Rotherham need a tram-train pilot or trial when examples for their implementation already exist in Europe.



Attendees at our first roundtable

Peter Aldous MP: Vice-Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Low Carbon Transport Group

Carl Beet: Principle Transport Planner, Centro

Stephen Burgin: UK President, Alstom

Aidan Burley MP: PPS to Philip Hammond as Secretary of State for Transport

Michéle Dix: Managing Director of Planning, Transport for London

Gareth Elliott: Senior Policy Adviser, British Chambers of Commerce

Andrew Gwynne MP: Shadow Minister for Transport

Kelvin Hopkins MP: Vice-Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Rail Group

Kathryn James: Managing Director, The NEC Group

John Morris: Head of Government and Industry Affairs, Birmingham Airport

Bridget Rosewell: Chief Economic Adviser to the Greater London Authority (GLA)

John Shield: Director of Corporate Affairs, Go-Ahead

Ian Swales MP: Member, Public Accounts Select Committee

Stephen Tetlow MBE: Chief Executive, Institution of Mechanical Engineers

Michele Wilby: Business District Manager, Colmore Business District

The Case of High Speed Two

As the set piece infrastructural project of this government, HS2 merits its own conversation. A £32bn piece of infrastructure, the network will link London with Birmingham and then split off in two directions towards Manchester and Leeds. By recent Department for Transport projections, the project, when taking into consideration its reduction in journey times, reliability improvements and reductions in overcrowding, is likely to have a cost-benefit ratio of 2.6 and is expected to generate, over a 60-year period, net benefits worth £43.7bn.*

HS2 has become an even more interesting subject off the back of Britain's recession and the Coalition Government's pledge to help rebalance the nation's economic geography away from an over-dependence on the City and South East regions and towards sustainable growth in other parts of the country. A high speed line which improves the connectivity of the Midlands and the North is being promoted by the government as an important component in that vision.

Our research resultantly takes on an interesting dynamic. Seeking to discuss the relationship between economic growth and transport infrastructure in layman's terms, in order to help promote a more accessible conversation on the importance of transport investment, we are provided with a current and contentious example of a piece of transport infrastructure. We thus have the means at our disposal to test key stakeholder sets on their attitudes and perceptions towards HS2 and whether or not its projected economic impacts are gaining sufficient traction.

At first glance, HS2 seems to have garnered support across our various stakeholder sets. We asked the Dods MP Panel to rate HS2 by its level of importance/unimportance and discovered that an overwhelming 78% believe it to be either essential or important. A majority of our transportation professionals agreed, though to a lesser extent, with 15% saying that it is essential and 58% that it is important. (See figure 2, right).

Figure 2: "A High Speed Rail Network throughout the UK is..."
Which of the following most accurately reflects your opinion?

	MPs	Transportation Professional
Essential	29%	15%
Important	49%	58%
Unsure	9%	13%
Unimportant	10%	12%
Undesirable	1%	2%

Yet, further analysis of our research shows that HS2's level of support is far less emphatic than these initial figures might suggest. This is revealing in so far as it underlines clear areas in which its case is not being made convincingly and might require further promotion.

In another question, asking our panels to rank, in order of importance, the singular infrastructure developments they would most like to see nationally rolled out, HS2 came behind the electrification and modernisation of existing rail lines (at the expense of High Speed), improving our national roads network and, in the case of transportation professionals, was even ranked as being less important than both an integrated freight network and the proliferation of light rail. (See figure 3, right).

* 'Economic Case for HS2: The Y Network and London – West Midlands', Department for Transport, February 2011



Improved Roads Network	4.40 (mean score)
Electrification and Modernisation of Existing Rail lines	4.30
Integrated Freight Network	3.95
Proliferation of Light Rail	3.31
High Speed Rail Network	3.28
Enhanced Airport Capacity	2.0

Figure 3 :What is the single most important transport infrastructure development you would like to see nationally? (Responses from transportation professionals. Ranking, in order of importance, on a sliding scale, from six to one)

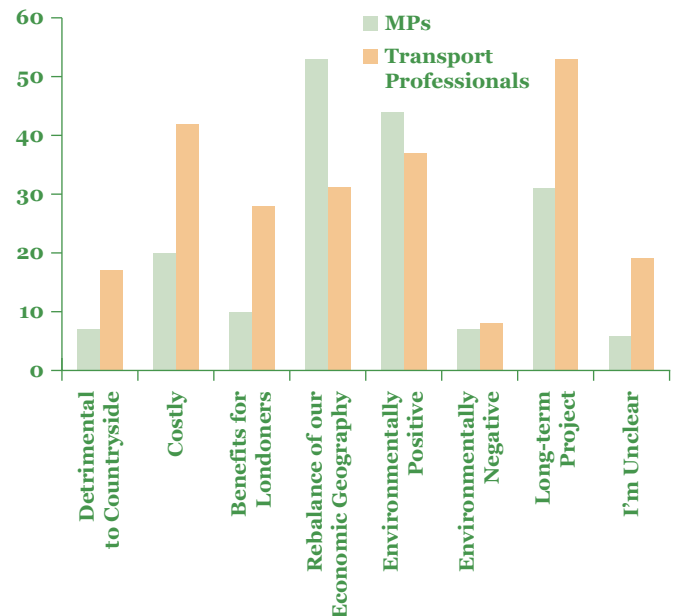


Figure 4

Public behind politicians in level of support for High Speed Rail

High Speed Rail then, when seen in this context, becomes much less of a priority for our panel of transportation professionals. Further polling responses provide an interesting insight as to why this might be the case. We asked stakeholders ‘Which of the following most accurately reflects your opinion concerning a high speed rail network? (Please tick as many answers as you think apply)’. (See figure 4, right).

The Case of High Speed Two

[The range of options presented were: ‘detrimental to our countryside’, ‘costly and the economic case is not compelling’, ‘the benefits will be felt mostly by Londoners’, ‘it will help rebalance our economy and should be treated as a number one strategic transport priority’, ‘environmentally positive – lowering carbon footprint’, ‘environmentally negative – increasing carbon footprint’, ‘long-term project which should be invested in but not at the expense of short-term, incremental projects’ and ‘I’m unclear as to its benefits’].

The government will be solaced in the fact that, again, MPs appear broadly in support of HS2 with amongst the most positive responses being that **it will help rebalance the country’s economic geography** and that **it will be environmentally positive, encouraging more carbon-friendly travel**. Similarly, it may find comfort in the fact that 53% of our transport experts subscribe to the point that it is a **long-term project which should be invested in but not if it means sacrificing the short-term economic gains from more incremental local transport investments**. This calls for a balance between national, long-term and local, short-term projects which the Coalition says it is committed to and which the new Local Sustainable Transport Fund is designed to address.

More concerning is that 42% of our transport professionals believe the envisaged project to be costly with a non-compelling economic case. This is an interesting point as it slightly contradicts responses from another polling question which was put to our audience but nevertheless provides useful overall analysis.

In another question, asking stakeholders to **name the areas where you are lacking education concerning the case for/against High Speed Rail**, an overwhelming 61% of transportation professionals stipulated the ‘economic case’ and not having enough information about it (see figure 5, right).

Let us for a moment treat the precise discrepancy here (concerning whether transport professionals feel as though they have been educated on the economic case for High Speed Rail and still don’t find it compelling, or whether they feel as though they need more information on it altogether), as a moot point. Let us situate the findings rather in light of an independently commissioned Department for Transport report, which does set out the economic case (as having a cost-benefit ratio of 2.6) and in light of the broader public research we have been conducting, in focus groups, which does show an appetite for more information and education on the economic case. We can at least accept that there is a need for HS2’s economic impacts to be set out in a clearer, more accessible narrative and that the economic permeations of the High Speed Rail discussion are those that are featuring highest on stakeholders’ radar.

[The list of options presented were as follows: ‘the environmental case – how it will impact carbon emissions’; ‘the economic case – how it will grow the economy’, ‘its impact on the countryside’; ‘the capacity issue – helping to alleviate congestion’; and ‘the nuisance factor’]

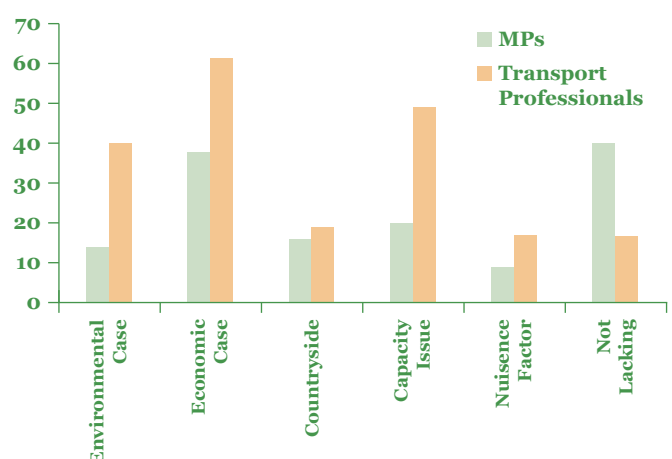


Figure 5: Name the areas where you are lacking education concerning the case for/against High Speed Rail

Working Together: Business and Political Communities

Promoting the Value of Transport Investment

The point of this first progress report has been to get a steer on the way in which transport infrastructure is received as a general policy issue, to gauge perceptions concerning its relationship with economic growth and the way in which it might be 'better PR'd' to ramp up its profile throughout the entire body politic.

The purpose here is not to devise a cost-benefit model in favour of a specific piece of transport investment, or to create an economic précis of the way in which transport networks and new projects directly impact our opportunities and growth. Rather, it is to conduct a political discourse around how we can improve the profile of an underrepresented sector, making its economic arguments more palatable in the eyes of the public and in so doing enfranchising stakeholders by emotive means to strategic ends, which we are clear must be achieved for Britain to make its way in the twenty first century.

HS2 bears this line of argument out. Its clear strategic merits, its ability to improve the connectivity of the regions and in so doing rebalance our economic geography towards a more sustainable model, run the risk of being scuppered by a lack of positive information among sections of the public and an inability to weave a narrative which effectively resonates with all those that will be affected by it.

Take for example a focus group Dods ran for us in Leamington, concerning this dialogue. Repeatedly, attendees questioned the genuine economic value of "shaving off twenty minutes" in the journey time from Birmingham to London, citing various arguments against the development. These ranged from local considerations, and the fact that the lack of a Leamington station on the route will result in a conventional connection time which counteracts the time saved by Leamington residents from transiting between the two city centres, to the fact that house prices will drop in the area, to a broader perspective concerning the priority which should be given to speeding up cross-country journeys rather than those from North to South, which are already considered good.

Our purpose is to conduct a political discourse around how we can improve the profile of an underrepresented sector, making its economic arguments more palatable in the eyes of the public and in so doing enfranchising stakeholders by emotive means to strategic ends we are clear must be achieved for Britain to make its way in the twenty first century.

The High Speed debate is shrouded in so much misinformation and it must be the job of the business and political communities to better collaborate in debunking myths. But we need to articulate a story which layers the local, regional and national benefits to such a piece of infrastructure. We need a narrative which combines the value to the individual of being a resident proximate to this project with a wider story on the evolution of Britain's economy and his or her place as a citizen within it.

In the case of the individual resident in Leamington, this might be as follows:

- By describing the additional 10,000 construction jobs followed by 8,000 permanent jobs which will be created in the region to build the line from London to Birmingham, and directly bolster the local economy
- Addressing the benefits to capacity on other lines such as the West Coast Mainline – anticipated to increase the number of trains per hour from Coventry to Leamington by four and
- Considering the broader national piece: the benefit to the national economy of bringing more closely together the markets of Birmingham and the North West and making the economy as a whole less dependent on the City of London.

Working Together: Business and Political Communities

Promoting the Value of Transport Investment

The government's economic case for High Speed Two trumpets the wider economic impacts of the proposed route, describing the increase of economic agglomerations, the way in which likeminded companies – perhaps in places like Leamington and its environs – could be brought closer together, into clusters, and increase their productivity through the practice of knowledge-share. This is a valid point. But our programme, designed to research and engage the attitudes of a cross-section of society, suggests that a more compelling option might be to bring together the business and political communities and build a narrative which is tailored, concise and more easy to assimilate.

This does not for one minute dim the argument on compensation for individual households affected by HS2. As the vice-chair of the APPG on low carbon transport said during our first roundtable, the peculiar geography of this country, and our density, mean that a like for like comparison with the transport infrastructures of France and the US is not entirely appropriate whilst conferring its own distinct challenges.

“When you come up with an ambitious scheme [such as HS2] you come up against the NIMBY agenda”, said Peter Aldous MP, the APPG's vice chair. This means that in order to get better at designing and then delivering on a strategic transport vision for the future, the UK must confront associated political problems more effectively and more quickly dispense compensation to people affected by new pieces of infrastructure which otherwise delay progress.

Early recommendations from the programme

We must use the space provided by this dialogue to air the legitimate ideas of stakeholders we embrace throughout our programme. Making this a hub for productive, inclusive and informed discussion will only aid our future engagement. Ideas and statements already expressed by participants of the programme, on how to improve our transport infrastructure and create a more strategic plan for Britain's future, have been captured below. We expect more to follow.

- Empower Infrastructure UK more, insulating it from party politics and refashioning it in the mould of the Committee on Climate Change – in order for it to provide a more accountable and strategic overview of national transport plans (Gareth Elliott, Senior Policy Adviser, British Chamber of Commerce)
- A long-term, joined up vision linking transport and carbon is needed which puts the UK at the top of a European league on these criteria, rather than the bottom where it currently resides (Stephen Tetlow MBE, Chief Executive, Institution of Mechanical Engineers)
- The government must get better (and quicker) at compensating people affected by major transport plans, so as to alleviate the delay caused to strategic developments and confront the political problems of NIMBYISM (Peter Aldous MP)
- Implement new light rail networks on existing rail infrastructure as a cost-effective way of spurring regional economies (Andrew Gwynne MP, Shadow Transport Secretary)

Other Key Points

Raised by the Programme

The purpose of our dialogue is to build an inclusive national discussion on the importance of transport infrastructure, gain attitudes on the existing provision of transport networks and ask what government and industry can do to achieve improvements.

Aviation Policy

Another policy area for the dialogue to address concerns aviation. In a question to Dods' MP Panel and transportation professionals, we asked them to rank, in order of importance, the pieces of transport infrastructure they would most like to see rolled out nationally. Enhancing our aviation capacity was seen as the least important option by both sets of audiences, achieving a mean score of 2.6 and 2.0 from MPs and transportation professionals respectively, on a sliding scale from 6 to 1.

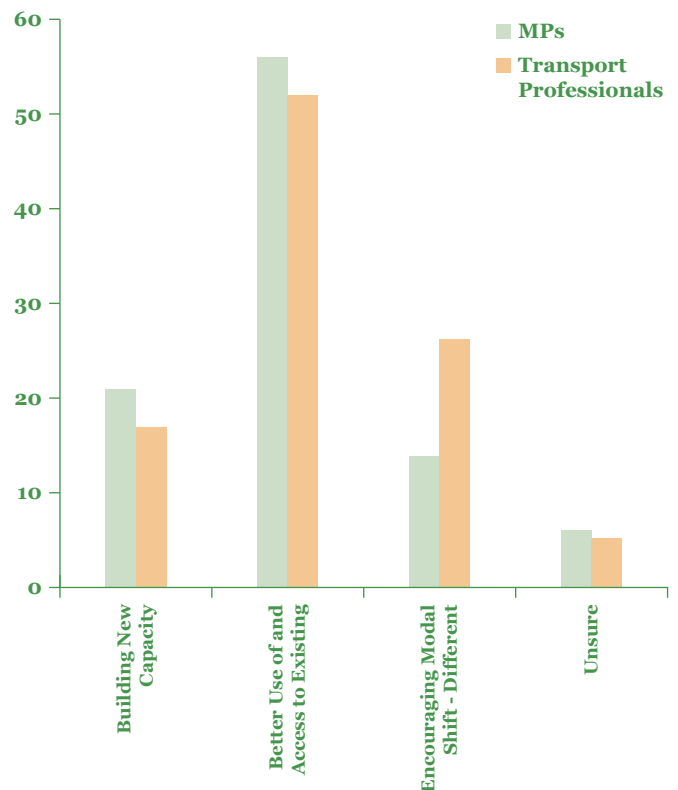
On this basis, we were keen to probe deeper into stakeholders' views concerning aviation policy, asking 'In response to rising demand, what should be the government's policy on aviation?'

As can be seen, **better use of and access to existing aviation infrastructure** was cited as the most appropriate option, with 56% of MPs and 52% of transportation professionals voting accordingly.

This is a line of opinion with which we, as a group, broadly agree. Speaking at one of our roundtable discussions in Westminster, our own John Morris, head of external affairs at Birmingham Airport, said that the UK does not need any additional airports, and actually has spare capacity, but needs to be able to make better use of its existing ones to create better international gateways for economic growth.

Birmingham Airport is, in this regard, a case in point. Aidan Burley MP, the Transport Secretary's PPS, said as much during our roundtable exercise in London. By extending a High Speed Rail line to the airport, from the capital, it will in fact make it, at 32 minutes commuting time, closer to Heathrow than Stanstead. This will offer the potential for Birmingham Airport to become a London regional airport which will help service escalating demand whilst dimming the argument for additional runways in the South East.

This is but another important point in the need for a coordinated, strategic transport vision.



Other Key Points

Raised by the Programme

Freight Transport

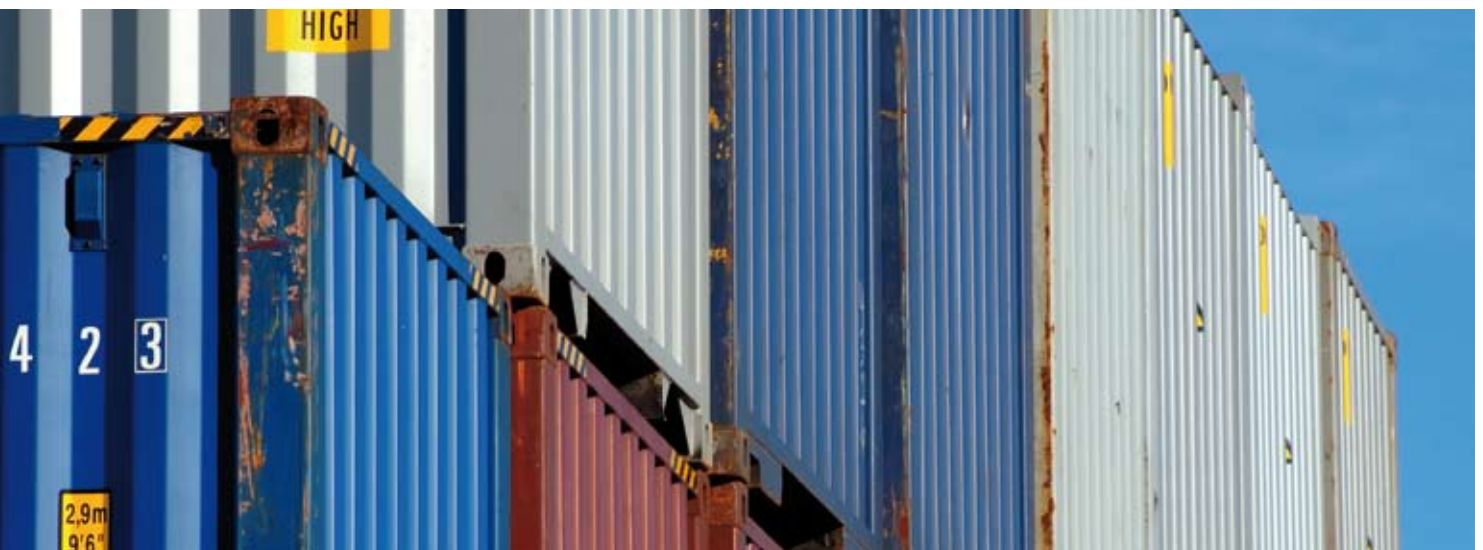
Public transport networks understandably consume much of the attention that transport as a sector receives. However, this does not mean that we should forget about the importance of good delivery channels for freight and the part that effective freight transportation plays in our economy's competitiveness.

Review of our first tranche of research however, presents us with an interesting discrepancy on freight transport. Asked to rank, in order of importance, how they perceived transport infrastructure to enable economic growth, our sample audiences situated the importance of freight transport relatively high. Both our MPs and transportation professionals agreed that **'transport infrastructure stimulates economic growth by....moving freight more quickly'** merited second place in a list of five options. But our first roundtable discussion between parliamentarians and industry personnel intimated that whilst there may be a higher groundswell awareness of the importance of good freight networks, government is by comparison disinterested.

Speaking at our first roundtable, Kelvin Hopkins MP, a well known advocate for better freight networks in this country, put his case that "nobody seems to take rail freight seriously". Hopkins put forward a proposal he is working on as part of an industry group exploring the viability of a dedicated rail freight network from the Channel Tunnel to Glasgow, linking each of the UK's major conurbations.

He insists the plan, which has been industry appraised, can be implemented at low cost – £4-6bn- and within four years. He suggests that the benefits to existing railway lines, of freeing up capacity for more passenger journeys on the West Coast Main Line, and avoiding billions of pounds worth of motorway maintenance caused by road freight, provide a compelling economic argument. However, the plan is yet to gain traction with government, Hopkins having been told by former Transport Secretary Geoff Hoon that it would interfere with high speed track being laid down. He rebuts that the problem could be easily rectified by laying down parallel tracks for two to three miles.

Rail freight is an issue which requires further analysis by our dialogue. Nonetheless, it is an important component which we have now raised, our programme serving as a channel through which ideas such as Hopkins' deserve to be aired.





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