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4 December 2011

Alison Munro  
Chief Executive  
High Speed 2 Ltd  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5DU

Dear Ms Munro,

**FOI request FOI11-186: 18 trains/hr**

I have now had several batches of information from HS2 Ltd concerning my request for information on your assessment of the practicability of 18 trains/hr on the stem section of the Y. The latest was dated 30 November 2011. Consequently I think it would be worthwhile to clarify the position we have reached.

In regard to the original process by which HS2 Ltd reach the conclusion that 18 trains/hr would be practicable, HS2 Ltd have provided no relevant documentation on:

- the advice received from signalling equipment and train manufactures of operators of high speed railways (although some notes of meetings were provided there is no record of discussions on the relevant point)
- analysis done in advance of the 2010 Command Paper (Cm 7827)
- analysis done in advance of the publication of the 2011 consultation materials, when the economic case for the Y became the justification for HS2 – which needed to include consideration of the effect of a spur to Heathrow.

You have provided only two pieces of documentation related to this matter for the period up to the publication of the consultation materials:

- the discussion at the Technical Challenge Group meeting (2009), for which no discussion paper or record of analysis was given
- the publication of the conclusions of the workshops that reviewed HS2's potential capacity as recorded in Greengauge 21's 'High Speed 2 Interfaces' (July 2010)

The latter, at which there were representatives from both HS2 Ltd and DfT, concluded that 18 trains/hr should not be assumed to be practicable, and that 15 should be assumed instead. Indeed, as I have previously mentioned, HS2 Ltd are recorded as supporting this position and believing that a second railway to the East Midlands and Leeds was needed instead of the

impractical Y configuration. While you have said that HS2 Ltd did not endorse the write-up of the workshops, you have not actually claimed that the workshops reached a different conclusion on the practicable capacity of the Y configuration.

In this position, there seem to be two possibilities:

- HS2 Ltd have documentation of the basis for the assumed 18 trains/hr used in the consultation – but they are refusing to release it. This implies that at the summer 2010 workshops either they did not yet have it, or they chose not to share it (or its conclusions) with the workshop, or they did share it but it was not accepted by the attendees
- There is no such documentation and HS2 Ltd had no documented evidence whatsoever to support their contention in the consultation that 18 trains/hr would be practicable.

In the context of the viability of 18 trains/hr being contentious, it seems to me extraordinary for HS2 Ltd to proceed to consultation on the basis of Professor Andrew McNaughton's undocumented professional judgement – unsupported by any formal analysis or documented review of the issues – as seems to be the implication of the FOI11-186C letter to me of 30 November. Such a reliance may be reasonable while the Y was merely a possible development from the London to West Midlands phase of HS2 – with this first phase supposedly fully justified in its own right. However, when the 'Y' capacity became central to the case for a £30bn investment in HS2, a proper evidential basis became essential.

It might be natural to conclude that either the analysis done does not support that 18 trains/hr is practicable (and you will not release the documentation for that reason), or no documented analysis was done and the key assumption about the capacity of HS2 actually lacked support. I am reluctant to accept either interpretation, as both imply very serious issues with how HS2 Ltd have conducted themselves.

The second alternative implies a lack of reasonable care in preparing a case for a massive public expenditure, which is, I like to think, inherently implausible. However, it seems that there is no proper case for the claimed benefits from journey time savings equated to productivity (as that time on trains would be wasted is unsustainable, and no robust alternative justification has been developed). So I cannot entirely dismiss the second alternative.

Notwithstanding, I find it difficult to believe that you have no documentation concerning the practicability of 18 trains/hr prior to the publication of the consultation materials – beyond the two documents mentioned above. I therefore am not satisfied that you have discharged your obligations under FOI, and consequently, for the avoidance of doubt, I am not withdrawing my complaint.

On a related matter, could you confirm whether the measures identified as necessary to maximise the use of capacity in the work that Andrew McNaughton commissioned in summer 2011) are included in the consultation assessment? These involve additional journey time, eg to address unreliability in arrivals at the north end of the stem).

Yours sincerely,



Bruce Weston  
Director HS2 Action Alliance

cc

Louise Ellman, MP (Chair, TSC)

David Davies (Clerk to TSC)

Philip Graham (Deputy Director HSR, DfT)

Professor Andrew McNaughton (HS2 Ltd)

Martin Tett (Chair 51M)

Calum Liddle (ICO)