



NPF3, Question 16: How can NPF3 improve our connections with the rest of the world?

Should the proposed High Speed Rail connection to London be retained as a National Development? Should it be expanded to include a high-speed rail line between Edinburgh and Glasgow?

Alternatively, should High Speed Rail be removed as a national development and instead supported as a part of the longer-term spatial strategy?

The Campaign for Borders Rail does not oppose retaining the proposed high-speed connection to London as a potential long-term national planning objective for the time being. However, we have a number of serious reservations, which would need to be addressed before we could actively support any such scheme.

Firstly, we are concerned that the high-speed rail project could divert resources away from other much-needed projects to increase the size, capacity and resilience of the conventional rail network. There are many schemes that would deliver the same sorts of benefits as a high-speed line in a much shorter timeframe, at lower environmental impact. Overall these alternatives may offer better value for money. We believe that the reinstatement of the Borders to Carlisle railway, which is our organisation's primary objective, is one such proposal, the prospects of which could be harmed if a large proportion of capital spending on infrastructure is allocated to a single mega-project. The 'Scottish Intercity Network' scheme being proposed by the public transport campaign organisation, Transform Scotland, is another.

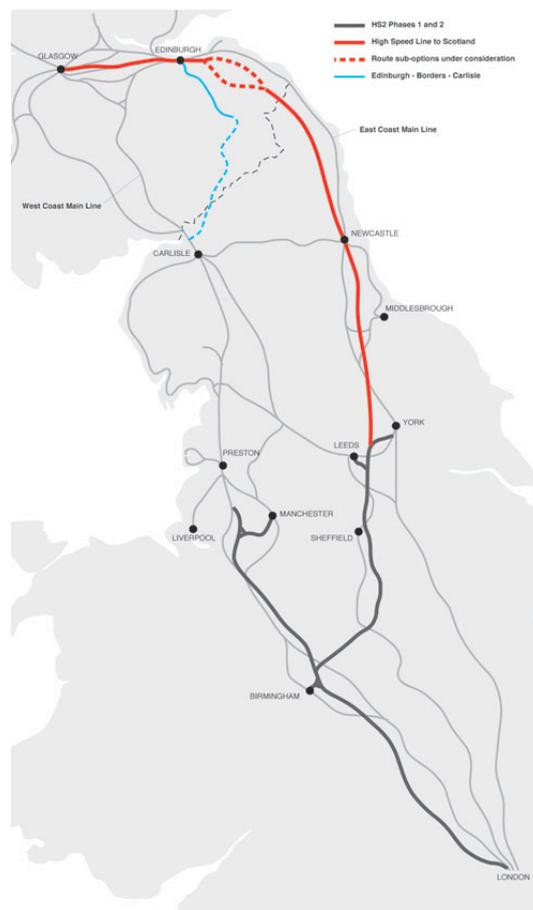
Secondly, lack of capacity on the West Coast Main Line is cited as a key driver for building a high-speed line. Network Rail's Route Utilisation Strategy reports that the line will be nearly full by 2024 and it is already very congested, with insufficient freight capacity north of Preston. However, it will take many years for the high-speed line to London to be completed. Phase 1 (London to Birmingham) is due to be opened in 2026 and the onward lines to Leeds and Manchester in 2033, assuming of course that there are no delays. The current discussions about the onward link to Scotland do not envisage it opening before 2040. This will be far too late to address the problems, which are already becoming apparent. We believe an interim plan is needed to tackle these problems and that the Borders to Carlisle link should form a key part of it. Based on the Airdrie to Bathgate scheme, which took 7 years from inception to delivery, a timescale of 10 years would seem reasonable, meaning trains running between Edinburgh and Carlisle by 2024.

Thirdly, we are concerned that a high speed line routed to the west of the Pennines, the route seemingly foreshadowed in most pronouncements on the subject, could result in a less balanced rail network than one to the east of the Pennines. The former option, as illustrated below, would result in three alternative routes down the West Coast and just one down the East Coast. This would result in a duplication of routes, which could weaken the case for reinstating the Borders – Carlisle link and permanently consign the Borders to a future isolated from the rest of the country, save for the Borders Railway link to Edinburgh. We therefore believe that, whichever route is chosen for the high-speed line, that the Borders – Carlisle reinstatement needs to be completed first.

We also have reservations about the merits of proceeding with a high-speed line between Edinburgh and Glasgow as an isolated project in advance of any link to England. The suggested timescale for this scheme means that it would be likely to compete directly with the Borders – Carlisle link for funds, yet do nothing to address capacity problems on the existing cross-border routes. We

recognise the need for further capacity between Edinburgh to Glasgow, but we believe that there is much that can be done to address this through less costly measures. Indeed, the Borders scheme could assist in this regard by diverting traffic away from the Carlisle – Carstairs – Edinburgh route. This would in turn create more capacity from Edinburgh to Glasgow via Carstairs or Shotts.

Principal route options under consideration for high speed line, based on written descriptions contained in *High Speed Rail – Scottish Partnership Group Pre-Appraisal Advice to Ministers* 25th January 2012. A third option for a cross-Southern Uplands route is also being studied but is not illustrated here as, in our view, it presents considerable difficulties and is unlikely to be a serious contender.



(L) West of Pennines Route Option

Pros:

- Largely follows existing transport corridors.
- Gives equal priority to Edinburgh and Glasgow.
- Can tie into proposed Edinburgh to Glasgow high-speed link.
- Seemingly favoured by previous studies and emerging policies.

Cons:

- Greater duplication of routes, resulting in a less balanced overall rail network.
- Very difficult terrain north and south of border. Expensive to construct and difficult to operate.
- Forces Edinburgh to Glasgow link further south resulting in a less direct route between the cities.

(R) East of Pennines Route Options

Pros:

- Slightly shorter overall route mileage.
- Avoids difficult terrain along M6/A74 corridor.
- Potential for more direct Edinburgh to Glasgow high-speed link.
- Serves large North East of England conurbation.
- Less duplication of existing lines resulting in a more balanced overall rail network.

Cons:

- Potentially greater environmental harm in Northumberland and South East Scotland.
- Difficulty of creating route around or through Edinburgh.
- Longer London to Glasgow journey time compared to West of Pennines option.