

HOLD THE LINE

VOTE TO REAFFIRM OPPOSITION TO HS2

At Spring Conference 2011, the Green Party voted to continue to support the principle of High-Speed Rail, but to oppose the proposed HS2 project, as it had been designed in the most environmentally damaging and wasteful way possible. Since that decision, the Green Party of England and Wales has been totally vindicated in that stance, as the HS2 project has gone from one disaster to another, partly due to the fact cross-party support from the other parties at Westminster has meant every attempt to scrutinise the project has been ignored, all of the well-founded criticism has been dismissed, and there has been not a shred of integrity or transparency as HS2 has been run in the most unaccountable way possible.

This year the Infrastructure and Projects authority rated HS2 as **"RED"** – not for the first time. This meant *"Successful delivery of the project appears to be unachievable. There are major issues with project definition, schedule, budget, quality and/or benefits delivery, which at this stage do not appear to be manageable or resolvable. The project may need re-scoping and/or its overall viability reassessed."*

HS2 has also received highly critical reports in the past from other independent scrutineers, like the Environmental Audit Committee and National Audit Office, which were completely dismissed by HS2 Ltd.

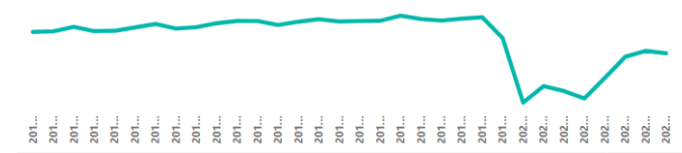
The simple fact is **WE WERE RIGHT TO OPPOSE HS2** all along, and the almighty mess which we have seen over the last few weeks proves that **WE WERE RIGHT TO OPPOSE HS2**.

So why on Earth would we change our minds now? HS2 is just another example of business-as-usual economics in which growth is the measure of economic success, which is completely at odds with party policy. This that is not the only policy which support for HS2 seems incompatible with. Supporting HS2 now would send out the wrong message, to the public, to Green voters and to many environmental NGOs. HS2 is not compatible with the core values of the Green Party.

What does 'freeing up capacity' mean?

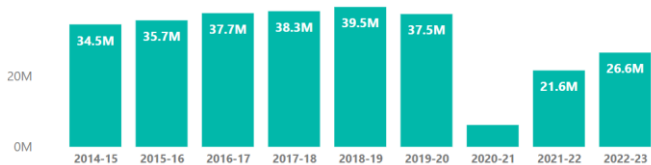
One of the key arguments for building HS2 is that it will 'free up capacity' on existing lines for local services and freight, by removing all the fast trains. The problem is this cannot be done, because those 'fast trains' are actually local services too. Trains running between London, Birmingham and Manchester call at places like: Stockport, Wilmslow, Macclesfield, Crewe, Stoke-on-Trent, Stafford, Wolverhampton, Sandwell & Dudley, Coventry, Lichfield, Tamworth, Nuneaton, Rugby, Milton Keynes & Watford. Those trains would still have to run. The argument that local trains travel at the same speed as freight trains and these similar speeds mean there would be more capacity is simply not true, as anyone who has ever been stuck behind a freight train will know.

The idea that HS2 could 'free up capacity' also ignores the fact it would need a massive ongoing subsidy which might even threaten the viability of existing services, let alone take away the money to run new ones.



Since the pandemic, rail usage has significantly changed. The latest official passenger statistics for passenger numbers on Avanti West Coast Trains from the Office of Road and Rail, show that post-covid passenger numbers on the railway HS2 seeks to replace seem to have levelled out at 60% of pre-pandemic levels. Source via QR code.

Train operating company ● Avanti West Coast



So how would you add more rail capacity?

If the true goal of HS2 was to add capacity to the rail network, there are ways to add more capacity to the railways without the environmental damage or expense of HS2, with network-wide electrification, simple timetabling changes (as has already been done on the West Coast Mainline), declassifying first class, longer trains and in-cab signalling (see box on right).

This QR code links to a Dutch video with English subtitles, explaining how the ERTMS in-cab signalling system adds more capacity to the rail network – as well as making it safer and more reliable – by upgrading the signalling network.



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This is what the Green Party has been saying about HS2 since 2011

I would ask anyone who tries to use environmental arguments for HS2 to look at our position and our statement very loud and very clear: That HS2 is no solution to the climate emergency or our nature crisis. The Green Party actually came out in opposition to HS2 in spring conference 2011. I remember that debate, and it was a long and heated debate, because understandably people thought "*The Green Party opposing trains, how can that be?*" What the Green Party has called HS2 is "an utter waste", because what we should be spending on transport on other rail routes, particularly rail routes that run east-west. There is huge damage to the environment from this plan for HS2 and the idea that you can plant some trees and that's and offset for an ancient woodland simply does not stack up. HS2 will not replace flights. Actually what we are hearing from regional airports along the route is how much of a boost to them - to increase their capacity, increase their flights - HS2 would be. Now the fact, that having declared a climate emergency, that we should be talking about airport expansion, simply doesn't add up, but HS2 adds to airport expansion, it assists it.

When I started having arguments about HS2, people were saying "It's all about the speed, we've got to have the speed, it's designed for speed" Now "It's designed for capacity" we hear. If we were going simply for capacity, we wouldn't have the environmental destruction.

Don't go for Greenwash, which the arguments being made for HS2 are.

- Baroness Natalie Bennett.



This project has got out of hand, the excessive speed, the fact it can only go in more or less straight lines, the fact that it's bypassing city centres, All of that is leading to these problems attacking the ancient woodland, going through these very very sensitive landscapes that people are putting their lives on the line, that people are going out and living in trees for months on end to try and protect because these are irreplaceable habitats and they didn't need to be in the firing line of this project.

- Sian Berry.AM



There is an argument that this is going to divert people away from aviation. If that were true, I'd be delighted, but the evidence suggests what happens is that the slots that are freed up in the airports simply then get used to do other journeys, it doesn't reduce net aviation, which is what we need to do for climate purposes. So, I fear that this is a bit of a white elephant, it's going to be hugely environmentally damaging, and there's a much better use of £32bn.

- Caroline Lucas MP



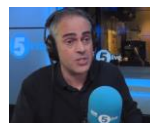
It's incredibly expensive, really, really poor value for money and incredibly environmentally damaging as well.... It was designed to be super, super straight so that incredibly high-speed trains could go on it, up to 400kph, even those trains aren't going to be ones running on it. Effectively it's a vanity project, it was designed to too high a spec and that has meant it has been beset by problems all the way along.



- Councillor Ellie Chowns.

HS2 won't be carbon neutral for over 120 years by HS2s own admission... You think about a small rail line going up the country, this is not what HS2 is. You're talking about massive areas of the countryside concreted over. This is biodiversity that has built up over a lot of years. We're facing an ecological crisis which can't just be solved by planting a few more trees.

-Jonathan Bartley.



These are 'before' and 'after' shots of habitats along the route of HS2 in Warwick District, where the Green Party has seen significant electoral success in recent years. When HS2 was proposed in 2010, Conservatives held all 17 seats on Kenilworth Town Council. They now have none. The Green Party have 10 and are also now the largest party on the District Council. How would the public who can see the HS2 devastation react to the Green Party choosing to support this?