

World's Most Expensive UK Railway Project at £100 Billion, Derailed Before Any Track Actually Laid

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Global Research, September 16, 2019

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Britain's proposed HS2 high-speed rail link that would cost more than £400m per mile to complete would make it the most expensive railway on Earth, according to new estimates commissioned by the UK Department for Transport.

According to these calculations, the initial phase from London to Birmingham would cost about £48bn, double the original estimates and about 15 times the cost per mile in France of the latest TGV route. The estimates cost the complete project, including links to Leeds and Manchester, at more than £100bn. (US\$125bn).

There is now a groundswell of opinion that whatever the next government, Labour, Conservative or coalition, Britain's railway system in its entirety should be brought back into public ownership as soon as is practically possible.

On this week's BBC4's *Question Time*, political commentator, **Peter Hitchens**, called HS2 a 'stupid, faulty project' and endorsed the growing opinion for re-nationalisation of the entire network and that HS2 should be scrapped on grounds of cost, engineering, governance and environmental impact.

The point was made that the real requirement is for improved cross-country, northern rail services connecting Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Newcastle and Glasgow – not another North-South link.

There is now a growing consensus that HS2 is not the right railway scheme for 21st century Britain and that the Transport Minister, **Grant Shapps**, newly-appointed by current **Prime Minister Boris Johnson** is not the person to be given this most critically important responsibility for a new rail transport scheme for 21st century Britain. This vital infrastructure project should be re-evaluated under the control of a minister qualified to oversee a national program for railway re-nationalisation, as a matter of critical importance.

In the meantime, there should be constituted a public enquiry and consultation group incorporating, *inter alia*, the mayors of all northern cities in Britain in order to arrive at a consensus for a new state-run, national rail service that would serve the entire country with modern rolling stock, comprehensive new routes, a nationally agreed timetable and revised fare schedules – as a matter of urgency.

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