



Craig Whittaker MP

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Response to HS2 (general) – February 2017

Thank you for contacting me about HS2.

I am pleased that the Transport Secretary recently reaffirmed the Government's commitment to HS2, in order to tackle the looming capacity crisis the rail network faces.

This is a vital project for the UK, which will not only promote economic growth, but also drive regional regeneration and support job creation. HS2 is supported by all the major conurbations that it will serve, as they recognise the key benefits that it will bring to their areas. It will provide the capacity we need by trebling the number of seats into Euston in the peak, and almost doubling the number of trains on the West Coast mainline corridor. Estimates suggest it could also boost the British economy by up to £15 billion every year, and the construction alone will create around 25,000 jobs and 2,000 apprenticeships.

Following over two years of sittings, the Committee scrutinising the Bill for Phase One of HS2 published its final report in February 2016, having heard nearly 1,600 petitions against the Bill. The Bill was then examined line-by-line by another Committee. It has since completed its final stage in the House of Commons. A House of Lords Committee is now reviewing petitions to the Bill from individuals and bodies directly and specially affected by it.

You may be interested to know that the Transport Secretary recently announced £70 million of funding to support local communities and road safety along the Phase One route, between London and the West Midlands. Among other things, this money will help enhance community facilities, improve access to the countryside, and support local economies where businesses may experience disruption from the construction of HS2.

I would also emphasise that this is only one part of the Government's ambitious programme for improving the UK's infrastructure, and will not come at the cost of other transport investments. The 2015 Spending Review provided a total HS2 budget of around £15 billion over the next five years. This equates to less than 20 per cent of the Department for Transport budgets including Network Rail expenditure over the same period.

Thank you again for contacting me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP