

HS1's plan for supporting high-speed rail in the UK

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The rail sector is integral to the UK's economy and will be central to achieving net-zero transport objectives. Within that, high-speed rail in the UK is key to improving connectivity to economic hubs, further delivering economic growth, and boosting more environmentally-friendly forms of transport. Yet the sector faces its most serious challenge in decades due to financial pressures and changes in consumer travel habits. Change is needed to create a rail system fit for the future.

HS1 Ltd - who have the concession to own and operate High Speed 1, the UK's first section of high-speed railway as well as the stations along the route - has set out the three main areas we believe the next government should focus on delivering to ensure high-speed rail supports growth in the UK.

SUPPORTING PASSENGERS

- **Capitalise on the growing shift in public attitudes towards environmentally-friendly travel:** The Government should financially support the trialling of sustainability-focused schemes - such as 'green miles' rewards for frequent travellers - that provide incentives to choose rail travel because of its sustainability credentials, using the HS1 as a test bed.
- **Improve connectivity between different transport modes:** The Government should set out requirements for local authorities to work closely with rail station owners to create better access to train stations, ensuring local decision-making reflects challenges faced by commuters and visitors. More funding should also be provided for additional bike spaces and EV charging points at stations.
- **Incentivise rail use through better ticketing:** The Government should work with industry to develop new, innovative ticketing options for people to reflect new travel habits, such as accelerating pay-as-you-go, providing assurances around maximum fares, and incentivising season ticket purchases. HS1 would be happy to act as a trial route for this.

SUPPORTING GROWTH

- **Enable frictionless travel to and from Europe:** Government to continue engagement with the French Government to alleviate risks associated with the introduction of the Entry/Exit Scheme to avoid significant disruption at St. Pancras International.
- **Support new international routes and operators:** We would ask Government to continue working with EU partners to remove potential barriers to the introduction of new routes, and ensure any prospective new international operators are not stymied by slow regulatory processes or a lack of infrastructure when looking to deliver international services.
- **Reintroduce the VAT Retail Export Scheme:** Government to support measures to introduce tax-free shopping for foreign travellers, helping to boost the number of international tourists choosing the UK as a holiday destination and support the recovery of the retail sector.

SUPPORTING THE NETWORK

- **Increase passenger numbers:** Government to commit to working with operators to ensure that they are being held accountable for increasing passenger numbers on their services, rather than focussing purely on an operator's level of costs.
- **Support the recovery of domestic services:** Government to ensure the long-term viability of key rail operators, such as Southeastern, is maintained through continued investment and support.
- **Provide the HS1 line with greater regulatory innovation:** Government to enable the rail network to help itself through more freedom to innovate, helping, in turn, to reduce the cost per train through growth and efficiency. This includes allowing HS1 Ltd greater opportunity for regulatory innovation on the use of land in and around the route itself.