

How could we have a smarter railway?

There was a lot of interest yesterday in the history and performance of the railway. I was asked what would I recommend.

I voted against HS2 and would complete as elegant an exit as possible whilst of course completing the section to Birmingham currently under contract. I would accelerate the introduction of digital signals which increase capacity substantially and improve safety.

I would break up Network Rail , re uniting track and trains around mainlines into London terminuses as franchises fall in. The regional or line companies created could be opened up to private capital progressively on new and different franchise terms. All these companies would be subject to open access challenge. Freight companies and challenger passenger companies could compete for the increased number of track slots available. If any regional/line co sought to exclude from reasonable access there would be an appeal to the Regulator who would be under a duty to allow fair competition.