

HS2

I voted against the HS2 project when Parliament made the decision in principle to go ahead. I have always thought it a bad investment. I proposed alternative ways to increase rail capacity for a fraction of the cost with much speedier results.

I am told they are going ahead with one of those ideas. Improved digital on board signalling means a train can see what lies ahead and be warned of blocked lines in real time. Central controllers could slow or stop trains approaching danger if the driver has missed it. It would be safe to run at least 25% more trains on a given line with smaller gaps between trains. As they are all going in the same direction on most tracks and if they see what lies ahead and what speed it is doing we can run more trains. We run far more vehicles with very little separation on busy roads just based on driver eyesight and judgement.

They could also do more to provide many more short sections of bypass track. Non stop express trains need to be able to overtake slow frequent stopper services when timetables get stressed. Again digital signals and intelligence on track positions would facilitate this.

The collapse of five day a week commuting post covid has undermined whatever business case there was for HS 2 . Much rail travel going forwards is going to be leisure and pleasure travel where high speed is less necessary and high cost cannot be repaid by premium business tickets. The government should reconsider the very expensive much delayed Euston and inner London part of the project. Spending a fortune on rail in London was always bizarre for a levelling up project to help the north.

Perhaps given the huge delays in construction and planning this should no longer be called High Speed 2. It is taking years of delay for the first train. HC 2 , High Cost 2, would be a more accurate description.