

THE HS2 MONEY PIT

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So, how much more are we in Britain going to have to pay for this grandiose scheme thought up by the European Union?

HS2 — High Speed Rail 2 — was designed to be the British part of a Trans-European Railway (TEN-T) which was to run in stages from London to the north east of England and then eventually on to Glasgow and Edinburgh. In 2013 HS2 it was first estimated that the total cost would be £33 billion. **[See: HS2 and a further Loss of Sovereignty — 27 January 2015]** Even then there was a good deal of opposition to the idea and it was hoped that following the Brexit result of the Referendum in 2016, Britain would ditch this over-priced idea and that we would just carry out the rail and transport improvements which the country badly needs. But no, our Government, which still tries to pretend that it is all their own idea and not that of our current EU bosses, continues, in the hope that it will be Brexit and not the HS2 which will fail!

But Brexit or not, HS2 might well fail because of its runaway cost.

Over the past week, several articles have appeared in the media showing just how far the budget has risen in the past five years. Currently it is said to be £56 billion and by the time the current plan is completed it could well be £99 billion, three times the original estimate. It seems that transport officials have been aware of the scheme's fundamental flaws for some time — over £4 billion already spent but little yet achieved, and now there has been the disclosure that a quarter of the HS2 officials are thought to be on salaries over £100K.

In addition to that, Sir John Armitt, Chairman of the National Infrastructure Commission, is now calling for an even larger budget. Writing in the Sunday Telegraph of 5 August 2018, he pointed out that schemes often fail by not investing enough and insisted that we should 'get the biggest bang for our buck' by connecting all modes of travel throughout the country. This sounds sensible until the cost is considered since the scheme, Sir John Armitt said, should be funded by Government grants to cities outside of London. But can the country afford that?

For instance, even without this extended vision of HS2, the Health Service is cruelly underfunded, as is the Police Service, and the need for new school places rises by thousands every year. Currently more than 300,000 houses need to be built throughout the UK — plus compensation given to those owners of homes which will be destroyed by the HS2 line.

Asked for his thoughts on the HS2 rail scheme, Tim Congdon, the British economist who stood in the UKIP leadership election in 2010, stated that

'HS2 is an abomination. We shall soon be out of the EU and we should not squander money on its wasteful and disruptive *grands projects*. Nor should we be governed by the fantasies of EU bureaucrats and their quisling allies in British politics. Public money should be spent carefully, with a proper weighing of costs and benefits and people must always come first.'

So, after paying to have this rail scheme built, and for inevitably higher ticket prices, what benefit will the HS2 bring to the tax payers of Britain?

The stated purpose of HS2 was to significantly reduce rail travel times, but according to the latest Government report, the journey between London and Edinburgh (when built) will only save some 45 minutes. Hardly worth bothering about.

Already, a Chinese-built, but British-assembled train, the Hitachi Inter City Express, will come into service later this year on the East Coast Main Line and this will be able to run at 140 mph, certainly slower than the 220 mph expected on the HS2 rail, but still a reasonable speed.

Nor does it seem that even the building of this High Speed line will benefit the workers of a British company since the two local firms who it was thought might tender for the contract may not now do so. They are apparently reluctant to burden themselves with the financial risk which would come with winning, especially as the scheme is not universally popular.

According to The Times, the contract will therefore probably be won yet again by one of two Chinese firms, MTR of Hong Kong or Guangshen Railway Co. of the Chinese state rail company. And this could raise security problems for the Government.

But should it be thought that the HS2 scheme is just too big to fail, as were some banks in the 2008 crash, it should be remembered that it is not the end of the EU's infrastructure ambition. That is intended to be much, much bigger. Nor would this British section of the Trans-European Railway (TEN-T) be the last part of the scheme that Britain would be expected to contribute to financially. Brussels wants the Continent trussed up like a turkey with interconnecting rail, road, inland waterway, seaport and airport networks. Bearing in mind the earlier HS1, the line which runs from London down to the Channel Tunnel, this would mean that tourists and troops could travel swiftly and directly to anywhere between the Black Sea and Scotland.

At the moment the cost for this whole scheme is expected to be £1.3 trillion. But if that amount trebles, as the current HS2 one has, then unless this extended plan fails or Britain does get out of the European Dictatorship next March as hoped for, our taxpayers are going to have to pay far more than they can possibly afford.

For more information, see this Guardian article: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/aug/09/hs2-out-of-control-care-homes-childrens-centres>