

HS2 - High Speed Rail.

Dc Tue 22 Oct 2013 at The Blue Mugge

1. A good **balanced outline** of issues is available on the web > 'HS2' then select BBC: **Arguments for and Against**. Those who've read through this - agreed that this web summary is well balanced? Any additional key issues to be added to those below?

2. **Costs:** a big issue (largest infrastructure project ever...). Already risen considerably from earlier projections. Currently, at least **£42.6 billion**, with rolling stock costing another **£7.5 billion**. The Free Market Think Tank, IEA states that the costs could rise to **£80 billion...** (Boris Johnson agrees...). Costs for large infrastructure projects have always risen in the past: remember the Olympics, starting at £2.4 billion and ending up costing £8.77 billion.

3. **The increased costs projections strengthen the opposition to HS2?**
For example: The BBC, as above: "Labour has cast doubts on the future of HS2... Ed Balls warned that there 'should be no blank cheque'.. And Alistair Darling, former Chancellor and supporter, now believes the costs are too high: 'There are better ways to spend £50 billion than on one line' (Sept 2013)".

4. **The North-South divide:** George Osborne sees HS2 as 'the engine for growth in the North and the Midlands'. But evidence from Spain, France and elsewhere that with HS rail 'capitals benefit by sucking more wealth to the centre' So, London likely to gain most from HS2? **Up-date** on these arguments: **Sat 20 October** - The KPMG study commissioned by the govt. predicted that more than 50 areas would be worse off as a result of HS2 - these findings only released after a freedom of information request by BBC Newsnight.

5. **HS2 Benefits ?** A Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) according to the the Govt. rising to 1.9 (for every pound spent, £1.90 generated). But, according to the engineering firm Atkins Report for the Govt. an alternative, patching up line/s offers a return of £6.06 for every pound... Also, DfT modelling for HS2 has been recently roundly criticised (by the Commons' *Public Accounts Cttee.* for example) for assuming business people do little or no work on long train journeys. NB: HS1, from Channel Tunnel to London, passenger forecasts proved to be 'hopelessly optimistic'. Environment issues - conflicting expert views on this.

6. **So, what's likely to happen?** Strong support within the three main political parties for going ahead with HS2, but strong and growing opposition within these parties too. Everyone can agree that improvements need to be made to transport infrastructure. Consider the case for plans to spend, over the same time-frame, £50 billion, following the *New Economics Foundation's* recommendations:

£10 billion, each for up-grading the East and West Coast main lines (also with longer trains and changing First and Standard Class ratios);

£6 billion improving bus and tram networks

£2 billion on walking and cycling schemes.

The remainder: a possible £10 billion on new HS line following former Grand Central route, as recommended July 2013 by railway expert/s; and substantial monies allocated locally - with each Constituency, for example, presenting plans for up-grading transport....

DT 20th October 2013

