



WEST COAST RAIL 250 POSITION STATEMENT ON HIGH SPEED 2

The following text sets out West Coast Rail 250's position on High Speed 2. The statement was last updated at its General Council meeting in October 2019.

Overall Support for High Speed 2

West Coast Rail 250 supports the concept of new high speed rail services which provide benefits to the West Coast corridor.

In particular, West Coast Rail 250 supports the High Speed 2 scheme as it will support economic activity and connectivity on the West Coast Main Line by providing additional capacity and reducing journey times between key settlements.

Whilst additional investment will still be required on the current West Coast Main Line to ensure reliability and enhance local connectivity, High Speed 2 is the only intervention that will provide a step change in service provision on the corridor.

West Coast Rail 250 will campaign to ensure that High Speed 2 Phase 1 and 2a are delivered as soon as possible.

The group also supports in principle the Phase 2b sections north of Crewe, including the links to Manchester. The group is currently neutral on the Phase 2b sections linking to Leeds and the East Coast Main Line, pending further information on the impact on West Coast Main Line capacity.

Aspirations

In providing support for High Speed 2, West Coast Rail 250 will also work with the rail industry to ensure that the scheme can provide benefits to all sections of the West Coast Main Line. The group's aspiration is that all stations on the West Coast Main Line (including the main lines connecting to it) should at least retain the level and quality (including frequency and seating capacity) of intercity or local services than they currently enjoy. This includes links to London from city-centre stations. All opportunities should be sought to provide improvements to these service patterns.

Intercity services on the current West Coast Main Line infrastructure should retain the current maximum speeds and standards of rolling stock. All existing point-to-point intercity links should be maintained, either via High Speed 2 or via the current West Coast Main Line.

The full range of destinations via High Speed 2 should be available from the opening of Phase 1 / 2a. This should include services to London from Glasgow, Liverpool and Manchester, as well as from Birmingham.

Additional capacity should be provided for commuter services on shared routes into the major cities, and where possible new connections should be established.

Sufficient 'clean' path capacity should be provided for fast intermodal freight traffic, allowing for expected growth.

In particular, West Coast Rail 250 will work to ensure that:

- Current intercity and local service patterns are protected (and where possible enhanced) for stations on the West Coast Main Line between Euston and Birmingham New Street which will be bypassed by High Speed 2 Phase 1;
- Carlisle, Penrith and Oxenholme should retain regular fast direct services to Euston;
- The existing service pattern from North Wales and Chester to London should be retained;
- The full specification for the Crewe Hub station should be delivered;
- An hourly service should be provided on HS2 routed via Stafford, Stoke-on-Trent, Macclesfield and Stockport linking Manchester and London;

- The key Trent Valley stations (Lichfield, Tamworth and Nuneaton) should be provided with an hourly fast (125 mph) intercity service to London;
- Fast WCML intercity services should be provided routinely with station stops at Milton Keynes and with at least twice hourly station calls at Watford Junction from 2026
- High quality interchange between WCML and HS2 services is available at Birmingham Interchange / Birmingham International. This includes the quality of the physical transfer and the timetable pattern to minimise connection times;
- Phase 2b services north of Crewe should be routed via the existing West Coast Main Line (suitably upgraded) through Warrington, thus enabling Warrington Bank Quay to operate as a major hub station.

Caveats

Whilst West Coast Rail 250 supports High Speed 2, investment in the scheme should not be at the expense of maintenance and enhancements to the West Coast Main Line, in order that there is no deterioration to existing intercity and local services.

West Coast Rail 250 wishes to see greater coordination between the development of High Speed 2 and existing rail services, and with other rail infrastructure proposals, to ensure that there is full integration and that there are no negative impacts for particular communities.

West Coast Rail 250 welcomes the considerable development planned around the new High Speed 2 stations. However, the group also wishes to see a similar emphasis on development opportunities for those communities on the West Coast Main Line but not directly served by High Speed 2 in order that economic growth is spread across the whole of the West Coast route. A clear Government direction on economic development is required as soon as possible if inward investment is not to be lost.

Appropriate mitigating measures should be put in place for any existing West Coast Main Line community that will be adversely affected by the delivery of High Speed 2.

The construction phase of High Speed 2 will necessarily lead to disruption to communities and to rail passengers. However, this disruption should be kept to a minimum, and effective communication on the impacts and mitigating measures needs to be in place throughout the entire construction phase.

West Coast Rail 250 seeks full involvement in the development of the High Speed 2 West Coast timetable.

Whilst supporting High Speed 2 Phase 2b in principle, West Coast Rail 250 would wish to see further evidence of the impact that platform reduction of Euston will have on the capacity of intercity and local services on the West Coast Main Line.

October 2019

West Coast Rail 250 (WCR250) campaigns for improved rail services along the West Coast Main Line to support economic growth and employment.

The group is a non-political group of local authorities, private sector companies, consumer transport organisations, and individuals. WCR250 has strong relationships with the train companies on the route, Network Rail and the Department for Transport, enabling its members to have a greater collective influence.