

# Enterprise and Learning Committee

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## Subject - High Speed Rail Link between London and South Wales

1. While not specifically related to the activities of the Severn Tunnel Action Group we offer some comments for consideration in relation to the provision of a High Speed Rail Link to London from South Wales.
2. For full effectiveness high speed trains should not be intermixed with ordinary or slower trains on the same line as capacity and reliability problems are likely to arise.
3. The line speed of the existing main line from Cardiff eastwards through South Wales is only 75 mph with a differential higher speed for High Speed Trains (HSTs). It also includes a 40 mph speed restriction through Newport.
4. Even with enhanced acceleration of the proposed electric trains under the South Wales Electrification, the relative low speeds of the Main Line in Wales will limit the potential for significantly reduced journey times.
5. To maximise the reduced journey times of High Speed Trains the number of any intermediate stops need to be strictly limited. Stations such as Newport are too close to Cardiff to enable the full potential for high speed running.

### Proposal for new High Speed Line

6. If the Cardiff to Weston-super-Mare Barrage is constructed we would suggest consideration of a complete new route for a High Speed Rail line.
7. In the same way as airports are not located in the centre of Cities we suggest a new Rail Terminus is situated outside the City between Junction 33 and 34 of the M4 Motorway.
8. This "Cardiff International Station" would be associated with the proposed International Business Park being promoted by Cardiff City.
9. The route of the new line would pass south parallel to the B4232 and across Cog Moors to Lavernock Point and then over the barrage to England.
10. Once across the barrage the line could head east with just one station at "Bristol International Airport" before striking east to Heathrow Hub and London.

### Connections with existing Rail Network

11. From Cardiff International there should be an additional set of tracks for the conventional rail services.
12. An eastward facing connection a mile or two south of Cardiff International into the South Wales Main Line giving access to Cardiff and the east.
13. Extend the existing Main Line services to Cardiff Central through to International, the hourly London to Cardiff, Portsmouth to Cardiff and Nottingham to Cardiff.
14. Between Dinas Powis and Barry a westwards facing junction giving access from West Wales and Rhose Cardiff Airport via the Vale of Glamorgan line.
15. Divert the main line hourly Carmarthen to Manchester service via the Vale line and reverse at Cardiff International.
15. At Yatton on the Bristol to Exeter route a line following basically the track beds of the old Cheddar Valley and Blagdon lines for the 8 - 10 miles to Bristol International Airport and Station.
16. Extend the Bristol electrification and extend the London and Cross Country Main Line services to Bristol Temple Meads through to Bristol International.

### Advantages

16. Provides Wales and Cardiff with a high speed rail link that is well connected to the rest of the rail network and the M4 motorway.
17. Connects the proposed new Cardiff International Business Park with both a high speed rail service and the existing rail network.
18. Extending the services identified above will provide an effective fifteen minute interval service into Cardiff Central and Newport and this is over and above any additional local services that could be provided to serve the Cardiff Valleys.
19. Provides an hourly main line through rail service from Cardiff International to Swansea, Llanelli, Carmarthen, Shrewsbury, Crewe, Manchester, Cheltenham, Birmingham, Derby, Nottingham, Bristol, Bath, Southampton, Portsmouth, Swindon and Reading.

20. Connects Cardiff International via the high speed service to both Bristol and Heathrow Airports as well as to London.
21. Has the strategic advantage of joining these two major airports by a high speed rail link allowing flight diversions etc. at times of disruptions.
22. Minimises the building disruption and land use of constructing a new high speed rail line into Wales.
23. Should in the future a High speed line be considered for Exeter and the West Country it provides an ideal site for a junction to the south west from Bristol International.
24. Reduces the existing congestion of turning round main line services at Cardiff Central station.
25. Allows the continued expansion of services on the existing Network, not constrained by having to try and fit around new high speed services.
26. Cardiff International could also serve as a strategic "Park and Ride" for Cardiff and Newport off the motorway from the west with a similar "turn up and go" service in the same way as Severn Tunnel Junction is proposed as a strategic "Park and Ride" off the motorway from the east.

### **Disadvantages**

27. This is an initial concept only and no further details have been thought through over and above what appears in this paper.
28. Assumes a Cardiff to Weston-Super-Mare Barrage is built and is of a design capable of carrying a high speed rail line that would not be disrupted in severe weather conditions.
29. Assumes a route between Bristol and Heathrow Hub can be found.
30. Assumes the high investment cost of a new high speed line can be justified.

### **Conclusion**

31. If significant reduction in journey times by rail between Wales and London is considered necessary then a dedicated new line as outlined above should be considered.