

Edinburgh MP supports High Speed Rail

✘ Edinburgh East MP Sheila Gilmore has made her submission to the Government's consultation on [High Speed Rail](#) and argued in favour of building dedicated high speed lines to Scotland. She expressed disappointment that the current plans do not involve dedicated high speed lines to Scotland and was concerned that the economic and environmental benefits of high speed rail will not be realised.

The Government's current plans involve building an initial line from London to the West Midlands by 2024, and then extending this to a Y-shaped network to Leeds and Manchester by 2033/34. There are currently no plans to investigate extending these lines to Scotland.

Although trains could run on existing conventional speed lines up to Edinburgh and Glasgow from the construction of the first phase, without dedicated high speed rail Scotland is set to miss out on additional economic and environmental benefits.

In her response to the consultation, Sheila Gilmore argued that plans for the second phase should pass through Leeds and Manchester and on to Edinburgh and Glasgow respectively. It is broadly accepted that this could bring Scotland [within 3 hours](#) of London, which would allow the country to benefit from the economic strength of the South-East and greater economic-interaction with cities in the Midlands and the North of England.

Improved journey times would also encourage people to switch from using planes to trains, which could significantly reduce levels of carbon emissions.

She said: "While I welcome the Government's support for a high speed rail network to the West Midlands and then to Leeds and Manchester, I am disappointed that the current plans don't involve dedicated high speed lines to Scotland.

"Although trains could run on existing conventional speed lines up to Edinburgh and Glasgow from the construction of the first phase, without dedicated high speed rail Scotland will miss out on additional economic and environmental benefits".

Commenting on the economic benefits of building high speed rail lines to Scotland, [Gilmore continued](#): “In my response to the consultation I argued that plans for the second phase should be extended to Edinburgh and Glasgow so that Scotland could be brought within 3 hours of London. This would allow the country to benefit from the economic strength of the South-East. It would also bring greater economic-interaction with cities in the Midlands and the North of England.

“Climate Change is one of the biggest challenges we currently face. Aviation produces lots of carbon dioxide emissions per passenger mile travelled. We need to encourage more people to switch from using planes to trains.

“If you take into account travelling to and from airports and checking in, flying between Scotland and London generally takes around 3 hours and 40 minutes. By building high speed rail lines to Edinburgh and Glasgow, the equivalent journey would only take 3 hours. This would encourage people to switch from using planes to trains”.

[Last month we reported](#) on the ‘undeniable business case for the extension of the link to Scotland’, when Council Leader, Jenny Dawe, said:- “Decisions regarding high speed rail will have serious long-term implications not just for the economies of Glasgow and Edinburgh but for Scotland as a whole”.