



From Lord Berkeley
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Rt Hon Boris Johnston MP
Prime Minister

Dear Boris,

HS2 – a Shovel ready project?

Network Rail has £500m worth of 'shovel ready' projects ready and needs staff for railway work. HS2, as I have written before, does not!

On Monday 30 March, CN reported that Network Rail was seeking expression of interest from companies to supply £500m worth of staff to complete 'civils, electrification, signalling and track work across Britain.

This demonstrates a shortage of skilled railway construction staff to complete existing or newly approved rail projects, and sits oddly beside the statement in Conclusion 62 of the Oakervee Report:

'Conclusion 62: There are no-shovel ready alternative investments in the existing network that are available.'

So was Oakervee ignorant of this massive investment plan by Network Rail, even though Network Rail's Chair was a member of the Oakervee Review Panel?

More likely, I suggest that DfT may have put pressure on Oakervee to make such a statement to support the continuation of this £106bn vanity project, even though Network Rail was **already** short of resources to get rail improvements, and even though I and others had submitted an alternative plans to ministers to enable Network Rail to make similar improvements more quickly and more cheaply than HS2.

With the Corona Virus causing massive disruption to construction plans and likely to significantly reduce demand for intercity business travel for years to come as people have appreciated the benefits of working remotely, Government should cancel HS2 and save £106bn and use it instead to reboot the economy, whilst encouraging HS2 and contractors' staff to join Network Rail's need for construction workers to complete its many 'shovel ready' projects, including the urgent capacity works at Manchester Piccadilly.

I look forward to your comments. Yours Tony

Tony Berkeley

Cc Grant Shapps MP, S of S for Transport
Rishi Sunak MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer