



Department for Transport

Antony Chapman

By email:

[request-221280-
f6a56fae@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:request-221280-f6a56fae@whatdotheyknow.com)

High Speed Rail Business Case & Analysis
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
Horseferry Road
SW1P 4DR

Web Site: www.dft.gov.uk

Our Ref: F0011573

19 August 2014

Dear Mr Chapman,

RE: FOI Request – F0011573 – WCML forecasts

We received your information request on 23rd July 2014 and are dealing with it under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Your request for information was as follows:

Please send me full details of the forecasts referred to by the Secretary of State when he said "The West Coast mainline... even on moderate forecasts...will be full by the mid-2020s."

I am writing to confirm that the Department has now completed its search for the information requested and details are provided below.

Network Rail in their 2011 West Coast Mainline Route Utilisation Strategy¹, forecast expected demand on the West Coast Mainline (WCML) until 2024. These forecasts indicated that during this period significant growth is expected on both long distance and commuting services. They show that the London to Manchester market is forecast to be the fastest growing long distance London market with passenger demand predicted to increase by between 54% and 61% between 2009/10 and 2024.

On the basis of these forecasts Network Rail concluded that:

'..... by 2024 the West Coast Main Line will effectively be full, particularly at the southern end of the route.'

More recently the Strategic Case for HS2 published in October 2013², considers the likely levels of overcrowding on key inter-city routes from Manchester, London and Birmingham

¹ Network Rail 2011, West Coast Mainline Route Utilisation Strategy,
<http://www.networkrail.co.uk/browseDirectory.aspx?dir=%5CRUS%20Documents%5CRoute%20Utilisation%20Strategies%5CWest%20Coast%20Main%20Line>

² DfT (2013), The Strategic Case for HS2, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hs2-strategic-case>

for a range of given demand growth scenarios based on growth rates consistent with modelled forecasts and recent historic trends in demand for long distance rail travel.³ This analysis identifies a risk of serious overcrowding on both commuter and intercity routes serving London, Birmingham and Manchester.

Furthermore, the Strategic Case assesses the intensity of services operating on the West Coast Mainline, and expert judgement suggests that the West Coast Mainline is operating at a level of intensity that is making it extremely difficult to achieve target levels of performance reliability. At the approaches to the main cities, the WCML is in effect full. It would not be possible to add a further train path in peak travel periods unless something else changes, such as:

- A deterioration in train service punctuality;
- The need to make some changes in the timetables of existing services (e.g. changing stopping patterns, or extending some journey times);
- The introduction of a different type of train;
- Route re-signalling
- The need for a complete re-cast of the train plan; and/or
- Significant infrastructure investment.

If you are unhappy with the way the Department has handled your request or with the decisions made in relation to your request you may complain within two calendar months of the date of this letter by writing to the Department's Information Rights Unit at:

Zone D/04
Ashdown House
Sedlescombe Road North
Hastings
East Sussex TN37 7GA
E-mail: FOI-Advice-Team-DFT@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Please see below details of DfT's complaints procedure and your right to complain to the Information Commissioner. If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Thomas
High Speed Rail Business Case and Analysis Team

³ See page 62 of 'The Strategic Case for HS2', <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hs2-strategic-case>

Annex A

Your right to complain to DfT and the Information Commissioner

You have the right to complain within two calendar months of the date of this letter about the way in which your request for information was handled and/or about the decision not to disclose all or part of the information requested. In addition a complaint can be made that DfT has not complied with its FOI publication scheme.

Your complaint will be acknowledged and you will be advised of a target date by which to expect a response. Initially your complaint will be re-considered by the official who dealt with your request for information. If, after careful consideration, that official decides that his/her decision was correct, your complaint will automatically be referred to a senior independent official who will conduct a further review. You will be advised of the outcome of your complaint and if a decision is taken to disclose information originally withheld this will be done as soon as possible.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF