

Rail Delivery Group

Response to:

**Public Bill Committees – Scrutiny Unit
Call for written evidence: Infrastructure Bill [HL]**

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Business representative organisation/trade body

1 The Rail Delivery Group (RDG) was established in May 2011 to lead the industry in delivering a higher performing, more cost effective and sustainable rail network for Britain's rail users and taxpayers. The RDG brings together the chief executives of passenger and freight operator owning groups with Network Rail (NR). RDG develops policies, strategies and plans for the coherent management of the rail industry and advances the provision of a safe, efficient, high quality rail service for users and taxpayers.

2 Long-term planning for the expansion and improvement of the rail network underpins the future growth of both passenger and freight rail sectors. The rail sector seeks a clear planning framework that will facilitate progress of projects on a timely and predictable basis.

3 RDG is committed to working with Government to find ways to further improve the planning system and optimise efficiency. Whilst the majority of rail schemes promoted by NR will fall below the minimum thresholds in the Planning Act, a number of the larger railway schemes will definitely fall within the scope of the Planning Act.

4 Network Rail has already received decisions on four Development Consent Orders (DCOs) under the Planning Act, and will be applying for a fifth later in the year. An acceleration of that process would assist in avoiding project delays that are often inherent in lengthy planning inquiries.

5 RDG welcomes the Government's vision and strategic objectives for the national network. We agree that national networks have a significant role to play in supporting a prosperous and competitive economy and improving the overall quality of life as part of a wider transport system.

6 We assume that any further large scale rail projects comparable to HS2 are likely to use a Hybrid Bill approach, however, even in such cases, having early visibility and full consultation is still useful.

7 The freight sector requires new Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges (SRFIs) to achieve its potential and to make best use of existing and proposed investments in the network. Experience has shown that the greatest single barrier to SRFI developments is their failure to progress through the planning system, especially in London and the South East. Again, a process that mitigates this risk will enable better exploitation and more efficient use of the freight sector.

8 RDG would welcome ongoing engagement on the above, and related issues including the potential impact of expanding the role of the Office of Rail Regulation into roads; potential inclusion in the Bill of the proposed National Infrastructure Commission and the impact of extending the powers of the Chief Officer of the British Transport Police on road traffic.

9 RDG are having ongoing conversations with John Armitt on his proposed National Infrastructure Commission and how existing strategic rail planning is taken into account.

For enquiries regarding this consultation response, please contact:

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