

Blight of High Speed 2

Marilyn Fletcher poses very interesting questions regarding High Speed 2 (*NCE* 2 September).

She may not be a civil engineer but I am and I, too, have asked the same questions.

It is a fundamental requirement of all highway authorities to keep roads safe and open and yet *NCE* has published an article describing one authority's failure to do so on financial grounds.

NCE also highlights the challenge facing the UK's rail network in the light of funding shortfalls both in the past and definitely in the future.

How much longer are we going to continue to consider new inappropriate infrastructure when we can't even maintain what we've got now?

The published route of HS2 and the alternative are so inappropriate that it is obvious that nobody has actually visited the area or cares about the local environment or the people that live there.

It looks like someone has just drawn a line from London in a northerly direction and said "that will do".

The sooner this blight can be consigned to the scrapheap of other ill-conceived major projects that we can well do without the better.

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TRANSPORT

Rail should hug motorways

Marilyn Fletcher's letter expressing concern about the impact of the HS2 route through the Chilterns caught my attention (*NCE* 2 September). Much as I support the HS2 scheme concept in principle, I am concerned that the high costs and risks of pursuing wholly new routes could bring the project to a halt. Fletcher is absolutely right to contrast the "combined

corridor" approach adopted in Kent where the HS1 runs parallel with the M2 and the M20.

I have long advocated this approach because most of our strategic national networks actually lend themselves to it. I have drawn maps to prove this! My solution would be to adopt fresh intercity rail alignments that run alongside the motorway network.

In doing this we would virtually halve the local environmental impacts and use "marginal" land already blighted.

This land will almost certainly

be needed in the longer term for motorway widening or service road provision after the capacity released by hard shoulder running runs out.

The high speed rail enthusiasts will of course argue that the curvatures will not work in that HS2 would need to divert substantially from the M40 to provide the desired speeds safely. They have a point but I would prefer a new and reliable medium-high speed rail system and can think of plenty of uses for spare land trapped between the road and the railway.

The combined corridor

approach may well be much cheaper and offer other efficiencies to the road and the rail providers. New opportunities for private finance also come to mind.

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