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Office of Rail & Road
25 Cabot Square
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7 June 2023

Dear Emyl,

Network Rail representations update

Thank you for copying Grand Union into the recent letter from Network Rail regarding the ORR's upcoming WCML decisions.

While we are aware of the recent position surrounding the delayed development of Euston HS2 station, it is not reasonable to allow this position to further delay the decision making process.

Network Rail had already been minded to include a number of references to the delivery of HS2 in its representations of 6 January 2023, and those suggested timescales have themselves been deferred by the seemingly never ending delays to various aspects of HS2's delivery.

The situation surrounding what happens to Euston is just another disappointing milestone in HS2's chequered history with no clarity when, or even if, this station will be delivered.

In recent and ongoing industry meetings regarding Old Oak Common (which has the negative impact of increasing journey time for Intercity services on the Great Western Main Line), it is being heavily promoted as a new destination in its own right once the adjoining infrastructure starts to take advantage of its arrival.

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It would appear that the emerging argument from within HS2 is that OOC itself will be a major 'London' destination, with debate on whether Euston actually gets built still on-going.

In a recent appearance at the Transport Select Committee, the Secretary of State for Transport stated: *"We remain committed to continuing HS2 from Old Oak Common to Euston. But there have been some very significant challenges there about the design work that has been undertaken. The commitment to take HS2 to Euston remains in place. The timing of that means that that is delivered when we have the line open to Manchester. That's when the volume of passengers will require the service to go all the way to Euston. So that remains the government's commitment."* The current range of opening for the phase to Manchester has been pushed back to 2035-2040.

As there is also still no clarity on any of the issues surrounding the further delivery of HS2 beyond Birmingham, and in view of the Secretary of State's announcement, then it would be unreasonable to delay the pending ORR decision on the introduction of additional WCML services because of what has now become an even more uncertain HS2 build programme.

The importance of the proposed WCML services from both Avanti and Grand Union are key in delivering improvements in the current rail system that supports the levelling up agenda and important union connectivity, and Grand Union would urge the ORR to make its decisions as planned, not least as these services are likely to have been operational for a number of years before any future decision on Euston is made.

Yours sincerely



Ian Yeowart

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