

**HIGH SPEED RAIL (London - West Midlands) BILL 2013-14**

PETITION

Against the Bill

TO THE HONOURABLE THE COMMONS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN  
AND NORTHERN IRELAND IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED.

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF DEL BRENNER OF THE REGENTS NETWORK

SHEWETH as follows:-

1. A Bill (hereinafter called "the Bill") has been introduced into and is now pending in your honourable House intituled "A Bill to make provision for a railway between Euston in London and a junction with the West Coast Main Line at Handsacre in Staffordshire, with a spur from Old Oak Common in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham to a junction with the Channel Tunnel Rail Link at York Way in London Borough of Islington and a spur from Water Orton in Warwickshire to Curzon Street in Birmingham; and for connected purposes".

2. The Bill is presented by Mr Patrick McLoughlin, supported by the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretary Theresa May, Secretary Vince Cable, Secretary Iain Duncan Smith, Secretary Eric Pickles, Secretary Owen Paterson, Secretary Edward Davey, Mr Robert Goodwill.

3. Your petitioner runs a network organisation, engaging with waterway matters in London and its environs, with the key objective of bringing London's waterways back to life, by promoting and developing its use and economic importance for navigation. This encompasses the greater involvement in navigation of a wide range of boats for recreational or commercial uses on the Thames, the city's navigable rivers and its canals, although for the purposes of this petition the focus is the use of water freight on the canal network in West London in the Old Oak vicinity.

*Use of the canal in construction phase*

4. The purpose of this petition is not to object to the Bill as a whole nor the construction of the HS2 rail link, but to question the lack of provision in the Bill for securing the use of the Grand Union Canal in the vicinity of Old Oak Common in the construction phase of the rail link, the works on the interchange buildings at Old Oak Common and the construction of the tunnel to Euston.

### *Assumption of road use*

5. Clauses 14 to 18 of the Bill setting out temporary possession and use of land seems to deal exclusively with the use of roads in the construction phase (Clause 15), with the widespread disruption and environmental disadvantages associated with road transport. If alternative means of transport such as rail and water are to be considered, then the Bill should specifically state that this should be so.

6. In Clause 34 it is said that ‘Schedule 24 contains provision about the use of heavy commercial vehicles’ although there is no substantial provision for use of alternative means of construction transport such as water transport which has the capacity for moving huge loads with far less disruption and environmental harm.

7. The following Clause 35 contains consideration of construction site noise, which could constitute a statutory nuisance. However, where is the consideration of noise of heavy lorries which could cause a statutory nuisance for mile after mile through London’s streets. One of the environmental advantages of water transport is that it is relatively quiet, and your petitioner considers that prominence should be given to this mode of transport where available, in order to reduce the dreadful impact and imposition on the citizens of West London.

### *Environmental issues*

8. The Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations referred to in Clause 59 underline the importance and requirements of the environmental legislation, although your petitioner thinks that there should be specific reference to the use of water transport. The HS2 Environmental Statement contains much detail of the construction logistics including the use of conveyors raised 3m above the canal, however no mention is made of the potential use of the canal itself. With the construction site being located beside the canal, advantage could readily be taken to engage in water transport. This potential is particularly evident at the Atlas Road site where conveyors from various sections of the construction site could be located.

### *NPPF guidance applicable*

9. There is a very direct and positive guidance in the government’s NPPF legislation which gives a good pointer to careful consideration of the environmental benefits of water transport at Old Oak. The NPPF Clause 29 states that “the transport system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes” which is quite clear. It is also states that “plans should protect and exploit opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes for movement of goods or people (Clause 35).

### *Large capacity of canals*

10. The stretch of canal at Old Oak and leading westwards towards the M4 and M25 has the capability of accommodating 90ft barges carrying loads of 100 tonnes each, which could take 5 lorries off the roads each journey, assuming that the payload of a large construction lorry is about 20 tonnes. A brief study by the London Assembly considered that there would be an opportunity of 25 barges or so a day at Old Oak during the HS2 construction phase, which equates to a total of 504,000 tonnes per annum (assuming 252 working days a year). This could result in a very significant reduction of road transport, amounting to at least 125 fewer lorries a day (which is 15 lorries per hour), or approximately 25,200 lorries each year.

11. The Grand Union Canal has been neglected for too long, and the lack of maintenance and the aggregation of silt has led to shallowness in some areas, which can be rectified with a certain amount of ‘spot’ dredging, that is the dredging short sections rather than having to dredge the whole channel. This could lead to barges being able to carry increased loads, giving further advantages of the use of water transport.

*Detailed expert assessment*

12. Canal transport deserves a fair assessment of its potential, which could go a long way towards alleviating the concerns of the local residents about the very substantial and extended construction period for the HS2 project.

13. It should be stipulated in the Bill that a detailed appraisal should be carried out of the use of water freight, and no effort should be spared in devising ways of doing so. The assumption should be that water freight is to be used unless good reasons can be verified that it would not be suitable or practical. The appraisal should be carried out by waterway specialists if possible, or an independent logistics professional with water freight backup, rather than the contractors.

14. Expert advice and assistance can be provided to ensure no contractors is left feeling that they may be disadvantaged if they are dealing with an unfamiliar operation. They may soon discover that the techniques and procedures are very little different from road transport, as after all there is no mystique in water transport.

*Lost opportunities*

15. Your petitioner asks that the shortcomings in the Crossrail legislation regarding water freight are not repeated in the HS2 Bill. The opportunity for using canal transport for delivery of Crossrail tunnel linings to the Paddington tunnel portal beside the Grand Union Canal was thrown away, leading to many hundreds of very large lorries causing severe problems on the heavily congested Harrow Road, for instance. There was no independent scrutiny of the transport methods.

16. Also the canal was not considered as a backup for disposal of Crossrail tunnel excavation material. This would have covered the difficulties encountered with the rail transport, as well as the logistical issues that arose at the Paddington portal.

*No doubts of environmental advantages*

17. The Mode Shift Benefit (MSB) values defined by the Department of Transport should leave no doubts about a serious and positive consideration of water freight in the Bill, rather than relegating it as an afterthought.

18. There is an opportunity to decrease emissions (London's disgrace), noise, road deaths and the dreaded congestion caused by HGVs, especially in the Old Oak area where this is already problematic. Water transport is the opportunity, and the HS2 Bill is the means.

19. For the foregoing and connected reasons your Petitioner respectfully submits that, unless the Bill is amended as proposed above, the Bill should not be allowed to pass into law.

YOUR PETITIONERS therefore humbly pray your Honourable House that the Bill may not be allowed to pass into law as it now stands and that they may be heard by their Counsel, Agents and witnesses in support of the allegations of this Petition against so much of the Bill as affects the property, rights and interests of your Petitioners and in support of such other clauses and provisions as may be necessary or expedient for their protection, or that such other relief may be given to your Petitioner in the premises as your Honourable House shall deem meet.

Signature of Petitioner in person . . . . .