

Speech of Nicola Sturgeon MSP, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure Investment and Cities at the *Faster and Further Conference*, 12 November 2012, Grand Central Hotel Glasgow

Good afternoon.

I'm glad to have the opportunity, on behalf of the Scottish Government, to welcome you today to this conference, to Glasgow, and to Scotland.

It is heartening that so many people have travelled from across Britain, and indeed Europe, to be here today.

This conference brings together the world's leading authorities on high speed rail.

It will explore a new approach to thinking about high speed rail in Britain – an approach which recognises the strength of Britain's core cities, and their ability to support economic recovery.

And which recognises that that not all roads – or railways – lead to London.

I will argue for the role of cities and city regions in making the case for high speed rail, and I will argue for the need for a British economy which doesn't only prioritise investment in the South East of England.

No one will deny that connectivity to London is critically important for all of Britain's cities. Of course it is; the South East returns over one-fifth of Britain's GDP.

And I fully agree with Greg Clark's [Financial Secretary to the Treasury] statement in support of Citydeals only two weeks ago: "Every British city is unique and so why make them conform to a Whitehall template."

As Cabinet Secretary with responsibility for Scotland's Cities strategy I argue the case for the city regions, and the need to bring their economies closer to the levels of London's economic performance and productivity.

And – that we must avoid future reliance on a London economy which is overheating, and which itself relies on a financial sector which has proven its instability.

The impact of the financial collapse reached across the UK.

As we move forward the cities and regions must have less direct reliance on London, and provide a more balanced and resilient economy.

Scotland's cities are its economic powerhouse; they stand together as an economic force equal to any city region in Britain.

And my Government has ensured that these cities are supported by excellent internal connectivity.

We know that investment in digital connectivity is important both to our economic success, and to ensure social inclusion.

But, we know it will never fully replace the need to travel for business, for education, for leisure, and to meet with family and friends.

We only need to look outside this venue for evidence of that.

Glasgow Central Station. The busiest Main Line station in the UK, outside of London. Busier in passenger terms than Manchester Piccadilly, or Birmingham New Street.

And beyond the station itself, the busiest and best-used rail network outside of London.

For people arriving here from the south - or arriving into Edinburgh – there is, as I said, excellent internal connectivity by rail.

My colleague Keith Brown will address conference tomorrow. He will talk in more detail about Rail in Scotland, but I can offer this as an example: There are more than twice the number of trains between Edinburgh and Glasgow each day as operate between Manchester and Leeds.

We have cities acting as one.

We have invested in infrastructure to support this, despite the economic climate.

As a Government, we disagree with the Chancellor's programme of austerity, of cuts, and of backtracking.

We step forward proudly with a programme of capital investment which has already delivered the Airdrie –Bathgate line, creating new services between Edinburgh and Glasgow, and for communities along the route .

We have delivered the M74 motorway extension across the South of this city.

We are delivering a new Forth crossing.

We will deliver the dualling of the A9 to Inverness, the Aberdeen peripheral road, rail improvements between Aberdeen and Inverness and on the Highland Main Line, as well as electrification and upgrade of railway lines between Edinburgh and Glasgow.

All bringing our cities closer together, and serving all of Scotland.

As well as this we have committed a £5 billion programme of investment in Scotland's railways between 2014 and 2019 - £3 billion of that in capital investment.

Keith Brown will share more of the detail of that package with you tomorrow,

This is a proud record of investment in the future of transport in Scotland, but I make the fundamental point that we don't invest in road, rail, ferries and aviation as ends in themselves; transport is an enabler.

An efficient, well-connected and sustainable transport system is a key enabler of delivery on the Government's overarching Purpose of increasing sustainable economic growth for the whole of Scotland.

Efficient and effective transport connections are vital in ensuring we allow our businesses to compete and grow in the Scottish, UK and international markets.

We know this, and this is why we invest heavily in our networks:

- We invest to create employment and stimulate growth;
- We invest to create conditions of advantage and opportunity;
- We invest to allow business access to a skilled workforce, and to deliver goods and services to markets;
- And, we invest so that our people are able to move freely for work, education and leisure.

Our transport objectives are analogous with my Government's aim: to create conditions for our families to flourish, to improve our social cohesiveness, and to allow our businesses to prosper.

We all recognise that competitiveness of places – be it here in Scotland, in the North West of England, or in the North East – depends on investment in infrastructure, and investment in connectivity.

A well developed, efficient and resilient rail network provides our businesses with the certainty they need to invest, and supports the strong social bonds which we all have across the British Isles.

Our investments will ensure that our communities are connected and competitive. They are being delivered as fast as we can.

High Speed Rail

I make no apology for describing the scale of the investments we are making in Scotland; by any measure, this is good news.

But so are the investments planned across the UK railway network – the 'Northern Hub', the electrification of the Midland Mainline, strategic freight

network projects and electrification across the South of England and into Wales.

It is clear to me that we must maintain and develop further rail links between our areas – to gain the greatest value from all of our investments.

This is why I believe high speed rail offers the opportunity for transformational change in the way our cities and our regional economies engage with each other – for mutual benefit.

And it is why I believe that current plans for the development of HS2 should be reviewed, and that high speed rail should be delivered both faster and further.

Be in no doubt. I support the development of high speed rail in Britain.

But I hardly need remind anyone here that this great city of Glasgow does not feature in the Department for Transport's proposals for high speed rail.

But neither does Newcastle, or Edinburgh or Liverpool, or Cardiff.

We have colleagues here today from across Britain, from cities and regions with strong economies which could be stronger with better links to each other.

At the very end of last year we were proud to publish 'Fast Track Scotland', a document which set out Scotland's case for inclusion in a UK-wide high speed rail network.

Its principal conclusion was that **“the case for high speed rail in the UK is strong, but is stronger when Scotland is included”**.

And those are not just my words; that statement is the considered conclusion of a partnership group which included Scotland's local authorities, its regional transport partnerships, CBI Scotland, the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, our Trades Unions, the Scottish Council for Development and Industry, and Network Rail in Scotland – amongst others.

That partnership remains and I want it to be the basis of a partnership which reaches further across Britain.

Of course, the current proposals for high speed rail are promoted as being for a 'UK network'. But it's not: it only stretches less than a third of the way up the British mainland.

Should not our ambition be to have a firm strategy established now to link Britain's great cities - creating the greatest connectivity, and conditions of opportunity and advantage for all?

Our Fast Track Scotland document drew support from business leaders from London, from Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle and Leeds. These are colleagues who want better connectivity, better trading and cultural links with Scotland, and with each other.

We need to develop those links further.

I want to establish a social union with others ambitious for high speed rail.

I want to encourage a concerted joint effort to realise the benefits of a high speed network for all at the earliest opportunity.

Ladies and gentlemen, we must work together to ensure that the case for the transformational economic, environmental and social benefits of the high speed rail project is well made.

We must press the case for high speed rail for the whole of this island, to create conditions of advantage and opportunity which benefit us all.

Because without new significant new rail capacity between our regions - and the opportunities of faster journey times - the rail investments we are making in Scotland (and across Merseyside, Manchester and Yorkshire, in the East Midlands, across the Great Western Route, and into Wales) - as important as those are, will not deliver to their fullest potential.

So, I am happy to work with the rail industry, and business and social leaders from across England and Wales to ensure the return on our investment is maximised.

When we look to other developing economies across the world we must wonder why high speed rail is already not a reality across Britain.

We missed the opportunity in the 1990s to operate Eurostar beyond London, after completion of the Channel Tunnel, and the costs incurred.

The Transport Select Committee's conclusion on that outcome? They reported that "The regions have been cheated".

High speed rail presents a once in a lifetime opportunity; we can't cheat ourselves again.

But if we fail to realise that opportunity, that's exactly what we *will* do. We will be in danger of falling behind our competitors, and of losing our attractiveness to inward investment.

Since the first construction of high speed rail in Japan – nearly 50 years ago – some 17,000 kilometres of high speed rail have been built globally, with another 9,000 under construction.

And, indeed, Japan continues to build; its experience of high speed rail is that further expansion of Shinkansen is economically sound.

Even the USA, the most advanced economy in the world, and one we might think of as wedded to 'automobiles and aviation', has acknowledged the benefits of high speed rail. The Chair of the American Association of Public Transport recently stated that the USA "must remain economically competitive, and high speed rail is an economically viable way to achieve [that]".

Across the world countries are investing in high speed rail, not just the economic leaders, but the economic challengers too: Russia, Brazil, Turkey, China, South Korea, Morocco.

Are we up to the challenge?

I think so.

Later in the year the Secretary of State will announce phase 2 of plans for HS2 – to Manchester and Leeds.

We will assist in the presentation of this.

We reached agreement with the previous Secretary of State that we would work in partnership with DfT and HS2 Ltd to present detailed route assessment for high speed rail between the north of England and Scotland by 2015. We will work in partnership with UK Government on this crucial work.

And – only a month ago - Patrick McLoughlin reaffirmed his enthusiasm for this work, stating that this could be accelerated with the objective of 3 hour journey times between Scotland and London.

That is a prize to work towards. But that must be part of a package which sees high speed connections between all areas of Britain.

That is why I call on all of you to support the development of a high speed rail network for Britain which is delivered faster, and reaches further, so that all can share its benefits and all can contribute to its success.