

WEST MIDLANDS HS2 SERVICES

Along with publication of the HS2 route north of Birmingham were details of the possible service pattern. From Birmingham's city centre station, 2 per hour [2ph] to Manchester Piccadilly in 41 minutes and 2ph to Leeds [57 mins], plus 1ph to Newcastle [127 mins], and 1ph to Scotland are suggested. This latter train, as all trains which go beyond the HS2 new line, would use stock built for the British loading gauge. Captive HS2 trains would be Berne Gauge and be 18 coaches long, but platform lengths on the classic network suggest 9 coach sets for other services. Two sets coupled together may split at a suitable classic station, then serve different stations. So the Birmingham to Scotland service would split at Preston, with the Glasgow half calling at Lancaster and Penrith, and the Edinburgh half serving Oxenholme. Both call at Carlisle and, surprisingly, Lockerbie. At present, it only has 11 trains each way a day!

Curiously, our London service would be 3ph but with one of the three being a nine car coupling to a train from Liverpool at Birmingham Interchange. This train also provides Stafford with an hourly HS2 service to London and it would be the only one to use the connection north of Lichfield.

So nine trains an hour would leave the six platform station in the city centre. At the station near Birmingham Airport, there would be 7ph. Going south, there would be 5ph to London Euston, all calling at Old Oak Common for transfer to Crossrail, and 2ph to Heathrow Airport, if that branch is ever built. Northbound would see 2ph to Manchester, 2ph to Leeds and 1ph each to Liverpool and Scotland. The Scottish train goes to Glasgow or Edinburgh in alternate hours.

In total, that means 18ph on HS2 south of the junction near Coleshill. The signalling capacity is 18ph, so the route is full – and there is no contingency for late running, something that is inevitable with nine of those trains coming off the classic network. Importantly, where are the paths for through services to HS1, the Channel Tunnel and Europe?

Is the Heathrow branch needed? Transfer to Crossrail at Old Oak need not be difficult for an 18 minutes journey into the airport. Then the two HS2 paths, one from Manchester, the other from Leeds reserved for the Heathrow spur, could be used for Paris, Amsterdam and further afield.

The timetable for the 2030s is not written. This service pattern is simply the early thinking of the HS2 team in 2013. Much will change. There will, for example, be pressure to add in trains from North Wales to London. Trains going north from Bristol and the South West could be added.