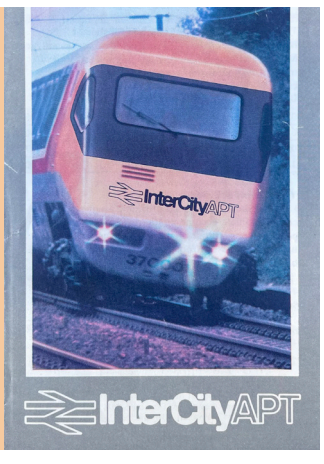
Faster in the 1970s

Britain's newest trains set to take longer than those designed half a century ago.



Curves ahead... problem!

Straight-line speed machine struggles on Britain's bendiest main line.



INSIDE: What is the current train speed record for Scotland?*

"50 years learning how to corner quickly. Then we forgot." - Railway expert

"Slower on the WCML, and 37% fewer seats, really, why?" - Angry commuter

Daily Rail

BEND IT LIKE PENDOLINO

WHY BRITAIN'S FAMOUS TILTING TRAIN COULD STILL TEACH THE NEW FLEET A LESSON

THE GREAT ANGLO-SCOT SLOW DOWN

Trains between England and Scotland to run slower under GBR!

Exclusive report by Chris Gibb



After years of research by BR tilting trains have been a feature of the West Coast Main Line since the 1970s, setting new standards for speed, journey times, passenger comfort and safety.

These train run at 125mph (limited by the lack of cab signalling), were commissioned for 140mph and on test set a record of 162mph, all on conventional railway tracks. Their single counter tilting pantograph draws a maximum 308 amps and is kind to the 1970s design overhead wires north of Warrington at speed.

Today's UK Pendolinos have a life expectancy to 2043. Nevertheless HS2, DfT and GBR want to retire them early to provide work for the Class 895s now being built, which will not tilt, and will later operate all GBR services using HS2. These trains will reach 125mph, 162mph and more, but only on HS2. On the curvaceous West Coast Main Line they will be slower than Pendolinos and the APT of half a century ago.

They may have ten coaches (if HS2 vary the contracted order for eight-coach 504 seat Class 895s and the depot in Birmingham), but two extra trailer carriages will slow them down, adding up to 8 minutes more to their best Glasgow - London journey times, and they will take 4h10m (2 stops). This journey time is optimistic and dependent on hundreds of desktop modelled infrastructure interventions costing more than £200m, which are not necessary for tilting trains to go even faster than now.

It is slower than Virgin's 1630 London Euston - Glasgow which ran from 2009 to 2016 and was scheduled to take 4h8m (1 stop) using just the West Coast Main Line.

When HS2 connects to the West Coast Main Line from 2040-2043 there will be an opportunity to cut journey times and run faster throughout, with modern ETCS cab signalling on more than 70% of the Glasgow - London route, like many high-speed routes across Europe.

NATION'S BENDS REFUSE TO CO-OPERATE

The West Coast Main Line's notorious bends are once again under fire after refusing to straighten themselves for Britain's newest train fleet.

Engineers confirmed the route remains "surprisingly wiggly" despite decades of complaints. One frustrated commuter said: "We were promised the future. Instead, we've discovered geography."

THE SCENIC ROUTE TO PROGRESS



Government insists passengers will enjoy up to 32 extra minutes of scenery.

Transport insiders claim passengers should focus less on arriving quickly and more on appreciating Britain's rolling fields, distant hills and occasional industrial estate. One spokesman said: "Journey time isn't everything. Some of these views have been overlooked for years."

PENDOLINO REFUSES TO GO QUIETLY



"Have you checked the journey times?" The Pendolino fleet has hit back at plans for early retirement, insisting it is still capable of showing younger trains a clean pair of tail lights.

The tilting trains, which have spent two decades hurtling passengers between London and Scotland are said to be "deeply confused" by proposals to replace them with trains that may take longer on the route they were designed to conquer. Representatives for the fleet, speaking from somewhere north of Preston at 125mph, said: "We've spent 20 years proving that tilt works. We assumed everyone had noticed."

GIBB IT SOME THOUGHT!

RAIL EXPERT HAS A PLAN TO BRING WCML HS2 TRAINS BACK UP TO SPEED

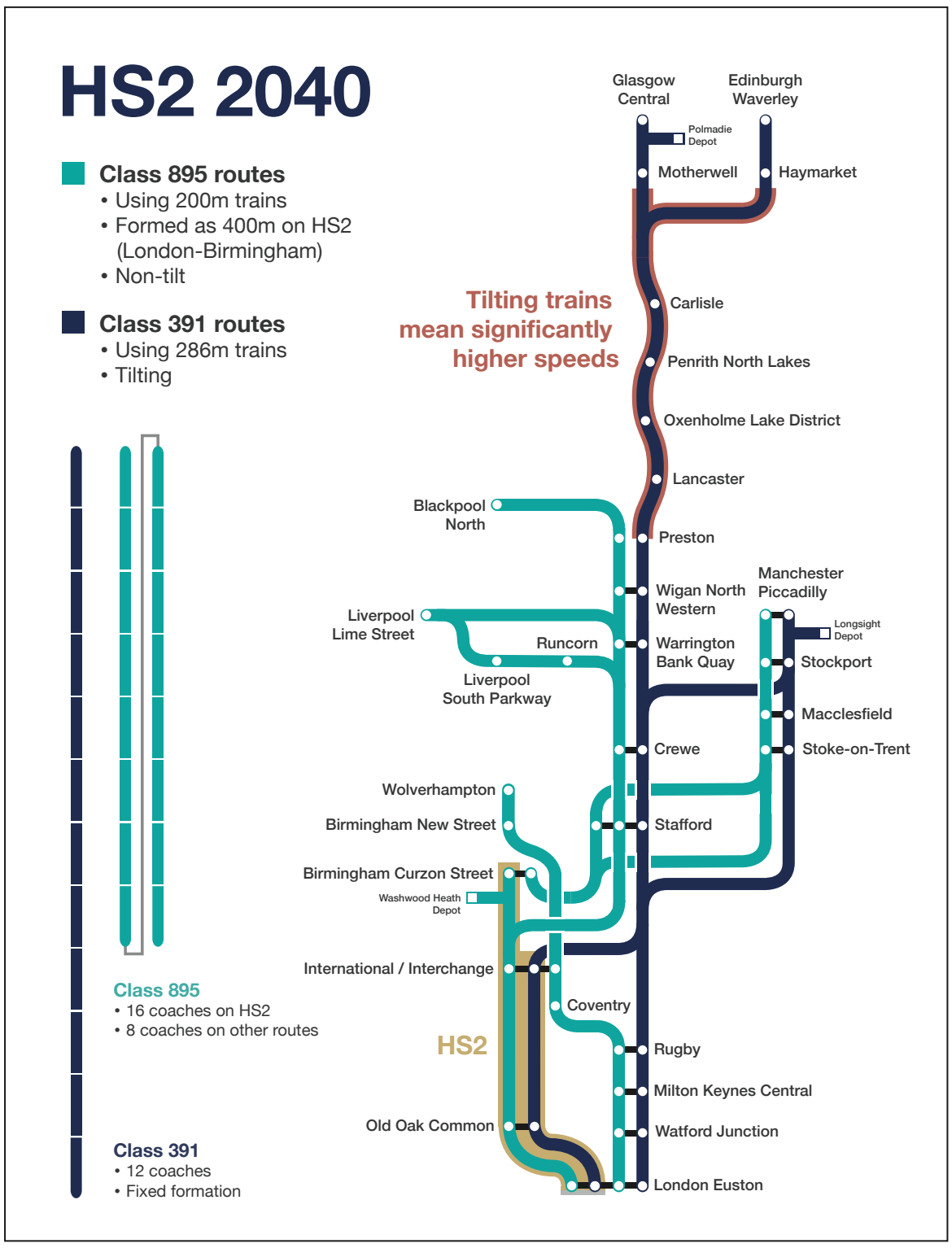
A next generation tilting train, with 12 coaches, 700-750 seats and ETCS can make full use of HS2 and do Glasgow to London in 3h38m (one stop, with speeds up to 140mph on the WCML and 200mph on HS2): a journey time promised by the UK government in 2016.

Such trains can be the first of a next generation across Europe, where hundreds of tilting trains will retire in the 2040s. Tilting trains run in many countries such as Italy, Switzerland, Japan, Germany and Spain and the Swiss trains already run using ETCS. Given decades of experience and technological advances it is reasonable to expect competing builders to offer the next generation as lighter, with faster acceleration and with the regenerative braking to be even more efficient.

Two Anglo - Scottish high-speed trains per hour are possible (as now), one fast and one serving intermediate stations such as Old Oak Common, Birmingham Interchange, Crewe, Warrington, Oxenholme, Lockerbie, Motherwell, Edinburgh and Glasgow. However, HS2 currently plan just one GBR high-speed London service per hour north of Lancaster, which will only serve Preston, Carlisle and Glasgow.

38% more seats than now and faster trains on all routes from 2031 onwards are possible with my proposal. Options should be fully evaluated with an open mind, decisions taken to maximise benefits and subject to public and parliamentary scrutiny in both Scotland and England.

This will maximise HS2's economic, environmental, tourism, revenue and housing opportunities in Scotland, North West England, the Midlands and the Home Counties.
I, Chris Gibb, commend the proposal to the United Kingdom.



"When HS2 connects to the WCML from 2040-2043 there will be an opportunity to cut journey times and run faster throughout, with modern ETCS cab signalling on more than 70% of the Glasgow - London route, like many high-speed routes in Europe."

- Chris Gibb



*Answer: the train speed record for Scotland is 162.2mph set by a tilting APT train on 20th December, 1979, driven by Driver Ernest Rae of Polmadie