

[Wasteful competition](#) [1]

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London to Birmingham: who can get there the fastest? Both the Conservative Party and the Labour Party are racing to see who can build a high speed railway between these two cities before the other; on paper. The Labour party are pulling out of the station with the [announcement](#) [3] that it is to be a key manifesto pledge. The Conservative party have made [promises](#) [4] that they will also look to build a high speed rail link in the UK, connecting London to Birmingham and on to Manchester and Leeds. Not since the mid 19th Century has this country seen such competition between two 'rail companies'.

This government has just spent £8.8bn upgrading a railway line between London and Glasgow. Upgrading it so it can run at the same speeds as before, but with better signalling. Then there is the Channel Tunnel rail link that took over 11 years to build. From its Parliamentary act in 1996, to fully opening in 2007. It cost £5.2bn and covers 68 miles or £85.138m per mile. Labour claim that to get to Birmingham it will take them 8 years, but work wouldn't start until 2017. Birmingham is about 112 miles and if similar costs occurred then the total cost to us to build the railway would be £9.5bn. But of course as with everything a politician touches, the cost to us keeps on rising.

Political parties should not be promising to build railways; high speed or otherwise. Any party that promises to spend other people's money will do so without due care. What they should be promising in their manifestos is that if a private party (or parties) wish to build a high speed rail line then they would ensure it gained royal assent. The cost to us all is negligible, even more so if it fails.

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