

# Railwatch

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The shape of things to come for Britain? A Japanese 500 series Bullet train at Shin-Osaka station in March 1997 en route to Hiroshima  
Picture: Dave Fossett ©

## Fast forward

Japan and France pioneered high-speed rail and both countries now have widespread networks with Germany, Spain and America trying to catch up.

Germany has just ordered another 28 high-speed trains from Bombardier and Spain is building a new line from Madrid to Barcelona which will link to the European high-speed network. Now at last there is a

prospect of Britain taking a fast leap forward.

A £1.3million report into a new line from London to the north will be published by the Strategic Rail Authority in the autumn. And chairman Richard Bowker has said that a new 225mph railway is a realistic option. The mistake is to wait too long before we do something. Even if the study finds

there is a "good economic and financial case" a new British line could probably not be operational until 2015.

It is a pity another study will be needed to show the obvious. Britain needs high-speed railways.

"The introduction of the TGV in France saved SNCF," said Eurostar chief David Azema.

"The TGV became the instrument of growth and new investment." But he pointed out that public spending on railways in France has outstripped Britain by £100billion.

Now people are asking: Can Britain afford to spend £3billion on the railways?

■ **Britain needs four new high-speed lines: Page 10 and 11**