Dear Ms Gerhold

High Speed Rail (West Midlands – Crewe) Bill
Petitions of: Rail Freight Group (HS2-AP2-026 and HS2-P2A-116) and Freightliner (HS2-AP2-027 and HS2-P2A-139)

We act for the Rail Freight Group and Freightliner (the Petitioners) and request that this this letter be provided to the HS2 Select Committee, further to the evidence presented by the Promoter on Wednesday 15 May 2019.

During the hearing on 14 May 2019 the Petitioners understood that neither party would be heard on the additional written submissions that were submitted to the Committee by both the Promoter and the Petitioners on the morning of Wednesday 15 May. However we note from the transcript that there was a brief exchange in this respect between the Promoter and the Committee on 15 May.

Had the Petitioners been given the opportunity to be heard on the Promoter’s evidence then they would have raised the following concerns:

1. The new evidence presented by the Promoter focusses on the section of track between the Handsacre Junction and Colwich Junction only, and does not consider any other bottlenecks (as indicated for example in the Department for Transport letter to ORR of 8 September 2017 (https://orr.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/25599/letter-from-the-department-for-transport-on-hs2-track-access-issues-2017-09-08.pdf)).

2. The focus on a short section of line does not match the commitment sought by the Petitioners which was an assurance that that in the development of a series of timetable options by the West Coast Partnership, that no option should be worse for rail freight than the May 2018 timetable (such options would include the whole West Coast Main Line Route, not just a short section).
3. In particular it is noted that the detailed focus in the evidence (e.g. the timetable graphing) on the evidence was between Handsacre Junction and Colwich Junction excludes the 2 track section immediately north of Colwich Junction and at which there is a bottleneck and it is not clear that all the services noted in the Promoter’s evidence could be accommodated.

In addition, the Petitioners are unsure from reading of paragraph 11 to 15 of the transcript exactly what commitment Mr Mould was making to the Committee regarding the level of freight and request that a written binding assurance is provided by HS2 and included in the register of undertakings and assurances so that there is clarity for all parties. Clarity on the assurance provided will be crucial to understand whether it allays the concerns raised by the Petitioners to the Committee. The transcript suggests the assurance related to one year only and may have a very limited geographical scope. The Committee will understand from the evidence provided that the Petitioners concerns about the ability to run existing traffic are wider than Handsacre (i.e. interactions with HS2 trains elsewhere on West Coast Main Line) and beyond the single year to 2027.

Yours faithfully

[Signature]

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