

Press release: Ministerial fraud in misleading parliament on the £142bn HS2 project.

For over 5 years, ministers from the present Prime Minister downwards knew about the ballooning costs of HS2, but chose to keep the true costs from parliament in order to get the project approved. The BBC and other media were also well aware of these issues, but failed to challenge ministers in a manner that one would expect from a free press.

This is the conclusion contained in a detailed letter and attachment sent by Lord Berkeley to the Cabinet Secretary, Simon Case, on 9 July, that Boris Johnson and other ministers knew about the cost overruns in 2015/16 but failed to inform parliament on the true costs right up to Royal Assent of the Phase 1 Bill in February 2017, when Nus Ghani MP, then Transport Minister responsible for HS2, repeatedly told the Commons that there was no change to the budget when she and officials must have known of the £20bn increase in costs.

In his letter to Simon Case, Lord Berkeley said:

'The project has been promoted and procured by deception and possibly fraud from the start ten years ago, a process that has allowed the project to proceed in stages to ensure that the true costs only came out when it is too late to change or cancel.

'Parliament would expect that the true costs and time for project delivery should be placed before it for its scrutiny and debate in a timely manner during the Hybrid Bill process, so that it can have an opportunity to affirm its support for the project or otherwise.

'I therefore conclude that the HS2 Phase 1 Bill received Royal Assent only because Parliament was misled multiple times over the last five years either by omission or misinformation, and that this misleading has continued with Phase 2A - for a project now expected to cost £142 bn, ten times the original estimate.'

In his letter to Simon Case, Lord Berkeley has asked him investigate whether ministers have failed to comply with the Ministerial Code by failing to 'give accurate and truthful information to Parliament', 'knowingly misleading Parliament', and failing to be 'as open as possible with Parliament and the public'.