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WELCOME

IT has been a long time coming. Construction of HS2 - the hotly-anticipated high speed rail network linking north and south - is due to begin in earnest later this year, bringing with it a host of job opportunities and economic benefits post-Brexit.

Arguably, no infrastructure scheme in recent memory has had the potential to transform

the UK that HS2 does. It's a hugely ambitious undertaking. So much so that it will likely be 2033 before rail-goers can journey from London to Edinburgh in three short hours. And yet, HS2 is about a lot more than mere logistics. It is a vision of a better connected future - one which unifies cities and regions across the country and readies the UK economy for life

outside the European Union.

Across three exclusive eBooks, UK Construction Online explores the implications for the southern, central and northern regions, and reflects on the latest HS2 news and opinions from within the industry.

Robert Atherton
Publications Editor



**FULL STEAM AHEAD?
ROUTE CONFIRMED
FOR PHASE 2B**



**HIGH SPEED NORTH
THE CASE OF HS3
UNVEILED.**



**TOPPING OUT NATIONAL
COLLEGE FOR HIGH SPEED
RAIL ON TRACK FOR 2017.**

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HS2

INNOVATIVE & COLLABORATIVE

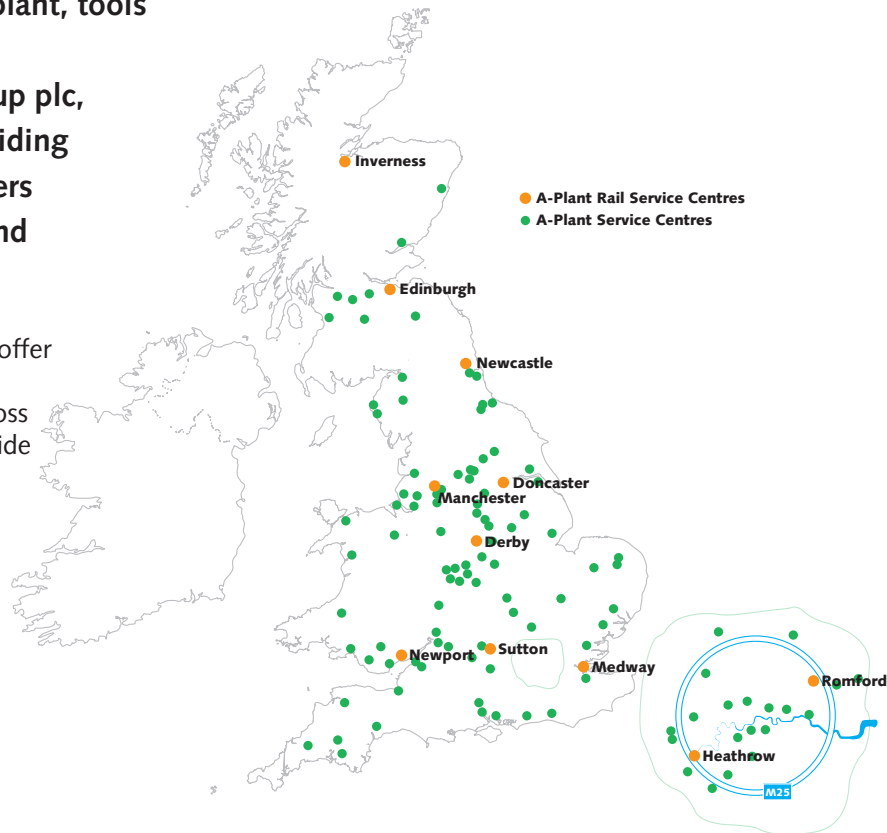
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'GIVEN'

A-Plant occupies a unique space in the market, combining expertise and support from 16 specialist businesses working collaboratively together. Close relationships with a world-class supply chain means a constant focus on delivering value-adding solutions for £20m of complex projects per annum. This is evidenced by early stage works on HS2, a variety of projects on Crossrail and for leading contractors on Network Rail.



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TRANSPORT SECRETARY CONFIRMS HS2 PHASE

LAST November, Transport Secretary Chris Grayling gave official confirmation of the majority of the preferred HS2 route from Crewe to Manchester and the West Midlands to Leeds. In what amounts to a major boost for the UK economy and a clear indication that the country remains open for business despite the spectre of Brexit, the announcement signifies a major step towards:

- Increasing capacity for both passengers and freight.
- Improving connectivity between the UK's biggest cities.
- Generating jobs, skills and lasting economic growth.

A fleet of state-of-the-art high speed trains will ferry more than 300,000 commuters across the country each day, freeing up space on the existing network for extra passenger and freight services.

Approximately 25,000 jobs will be created during HS2's construction, in addition to 2,000 apprenticeship placements. It will also support wider economic growth, thought to be worth a further 100,000 jobs.

For the North, the benefit of HS2 reaches far beyond the towns and cities directly served. Once the new network is complete, high speed trains will run the length of the East and West Coast Main Lines, serving such cities as Liverpool, Carlisle and Glasgow. Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said: "Our railways owe much to the Victorian engineers

who pioneered them, but we cannot rest on their legacy when we face overcrowding and capacity problems.

"HS2 is an ambitious and exciting project and the government is seizing the opportunity it offers to build a transport network fit for the 21st century; one that works for all and makes clear to the world that Britain remains open for business.

"The full HS2 route will be a game-changer for the country that will slash journey times and perhaps most importantly give rail passengers on the existing network thousands of extra seats every day. They represent the greatest upgrade to our railway in living memory.

"But while it will bring significant benefits, I recognise the difficulties faced by communities along the route. They will be treated with fairness, compassion and respect and, as with Phase One, we intend to introduce further compensation which goes over and above what is required by law."

The Transport Secretary later published a command paper

We are determined to get both the Midlands Engine and Northern Powerhouse firing on all cylinders

RY 2B ROUTE

entitled 'High Speed Two: From Crewe to Manchester, the West Midlands to Leeds and beyond', in which he outlined his intentions in full.

On the western front, HS2 will:

- Continue North from Crewe to Manchester Airport.
- Proceed from Manchester Airport towards the city centre, where a new HS2 station is to be built next to Manchester Piccadilly.

Connections to Liverpool and the existing West Coast Main Line will enable high speed services to link up with Glasgow and Edinburgh.

On the eastern front, HS2 will:

- Continue from the West Midlands to Toton, where another new HS2 station is to be built to serve Nottingham and Derby.
- Proceed North from the East Midlands to South Yorkshire.
- In line with a recommendation from Sir David Higgins, HS2 should serve Sheffield with a direct connection to an existing station.
- From South Yorkshire, HS2 will progress to Leeds where a third HS2 station is to be built in the city centre.
- HS2 will also connect to the East Coast Main Line, allowing high speed trains to serve York, Newcastle and the North East.

The Department for Transport has proposed seven further refinements to the Phase 2b route, having launched a period of public consultation

late last year. More information about the amendments themselves can be found here. Likewise, the Department is consulting on discretionary property schemes to compensate those people affected by the proposed Phase 2b route. These draft schemes are identical to those currently in operation on the Phase 1 route.

The Government put in place provisional plans for Phase 2 in 2013. It has since been decided to develop this second phase over two separate stages:

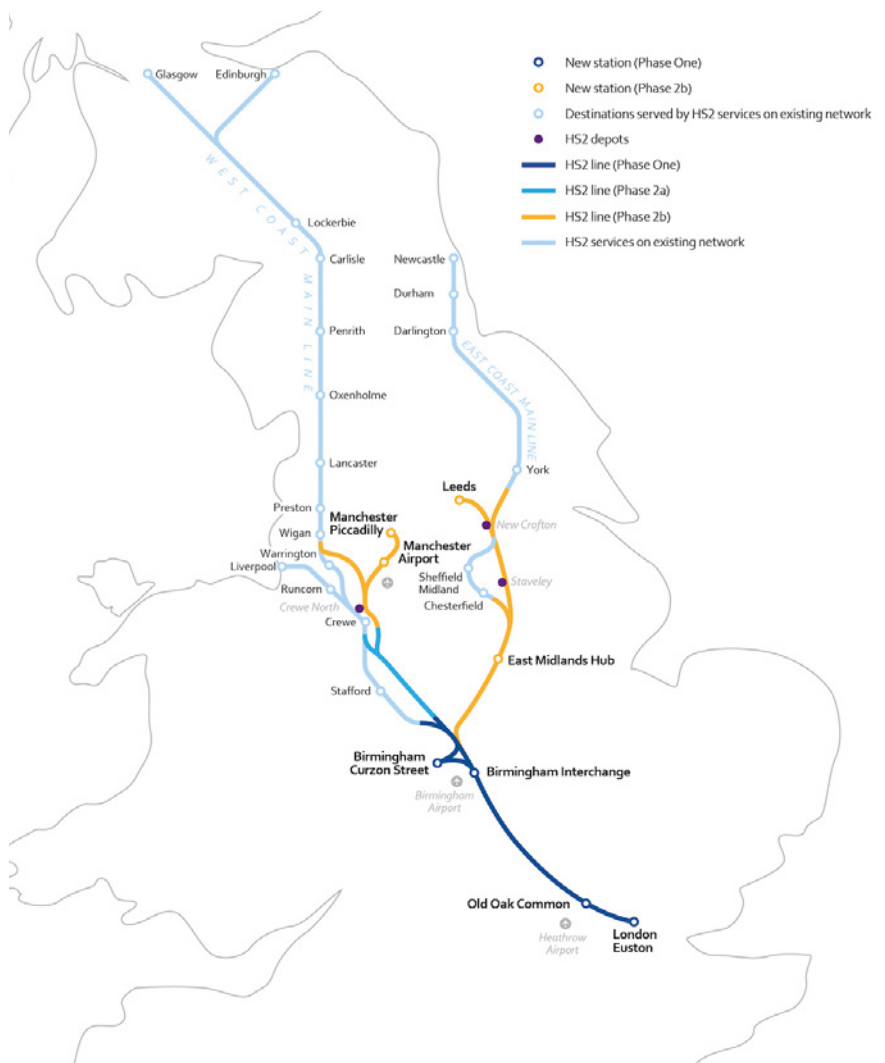
- Phase 2a – from the West Midlands to Crewe, announced last year.
- Phase 2b – from Crewe to

Manchester and from the West Midlands to Leeds, South Yorkshire and the East Midlands.

Phase 2a will open in 2027, with Phase 2b to follow in 2033.

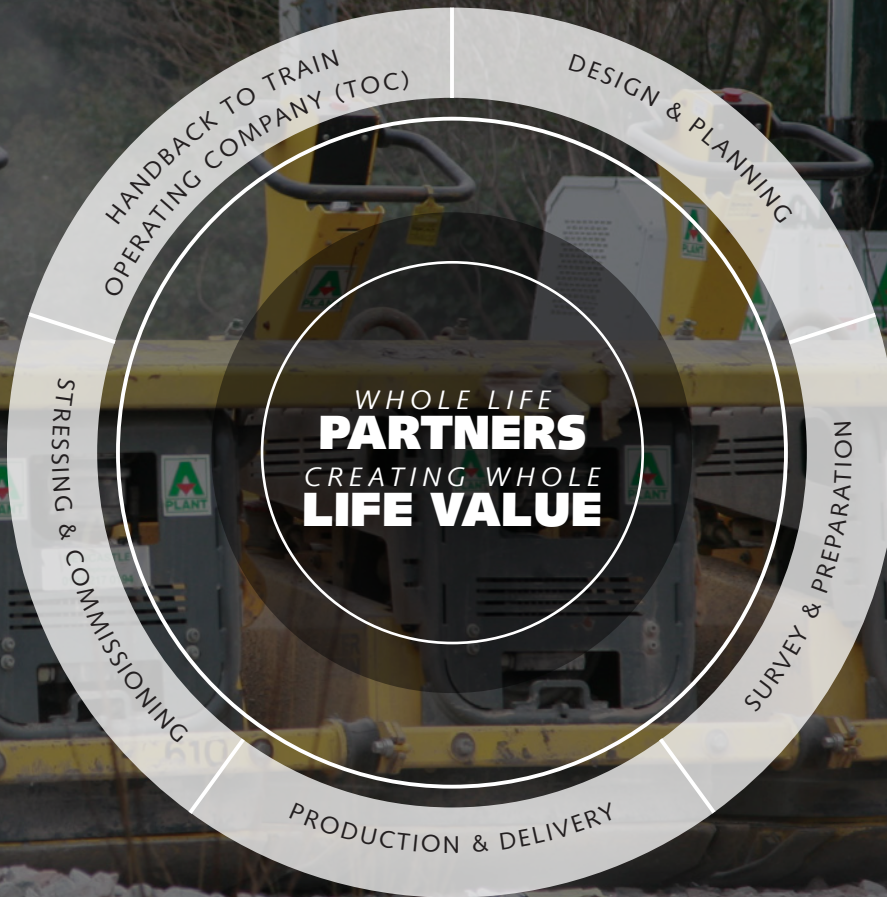
Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said: "The new HS2 routes laid out today will make sure our plans to create an economy that works for everyone remain right on track. "We are determined to get both the Midlands Engine and Northern Powerhouse firing on all cylinders and HS2 will help create new growth, jobs and homes right across the line."

Words | *Robert Atherton*



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NEW HS2 CHIEF EXECUTIVE APPOINTED



HS2 has appointed Mark Thurston as its new Chief Executive following a five month global search to fill the role.

The hunt was led by Heidrick & Struggles who considered 20 potential candidates working across the globe on projects in America, Australia and Asia, as well as in the UK.

With over 30 years of experience in the rail industry, Mr Thurston began his career as an apprentice with Transport for London (TfL), before taking on a number of roles with The Nichols Group, Metronet, and working for CH2M since 2008 - on the London 2012 Olympics and Crossrail - where he was lead for the Programme Partner joint venture for three years.

He is currently the Regional Managing Director overseeing CH2M's European operations,

which includes those in the UK. The Chairman of HS2, David Higgins, said that Mr Thurston's vast experience within the rail industry made him the ideal candidate.

He said: "Mark not only knows the UK rail industry from the bottom up, but has worked for organisations operating at the highest level globally. His grasp of how to manage the transition from page to reality makes him not only the right person to take over at HS2 as we are on the verge of Royal Assent, but also to see it through the years leading up to the first train being commissioned.

"The challenge is huge in terms of the task and timescale, but the Board believes Mark has the knowledge, experience and leadership qualities to deliver the project within the budget we have been given and to do

so in a way that recognises our responsibility both to Parliament and the communities in which we will be operating."

Commenting on his appointment, Mr Thurston said: "HS2 is arguably the most important investment in infrastructure in the UK for a generation, which will serve businesses and communities across much of the country.

"I am looking forward to leading the HS2 team and its partners to deliver a railway that will transform connectivity between our major cities and regions."



JOINT VENTURES CONFIRMED FOR HS2 ENABLING WORKS

HS2 has confirmed the three joint ventures that will deliver essential early works before the start of the main civil engineering work. These early works will include archaeology, site clearance and setting up construction compounds plus a host of other roles such as utility diversions, ecology surveys, demolition, ground remediation, watercourse activities, highways realignments, monitoring and instrumentation, structural reinforcements and drainage work.

The three joint ventures appointed are:

- Area South – CS JV (Costain Group Plc, Skanska Construction UK Limited)
- Area Central – Fusion JV (Morgan Sindall plc, BAM Nuttall Limited, Ferrovial

- Agroman (UK) Limited
- Area North – LM JV (Laing O'Rourke Construction Limited, J. Murphy & Sons Limited)

Jim Crawford, HS2 Ltd Managing Director for Construction, said that the announcement was an important milestone as the project moves towards the start of construction and the next "challenging" phase.

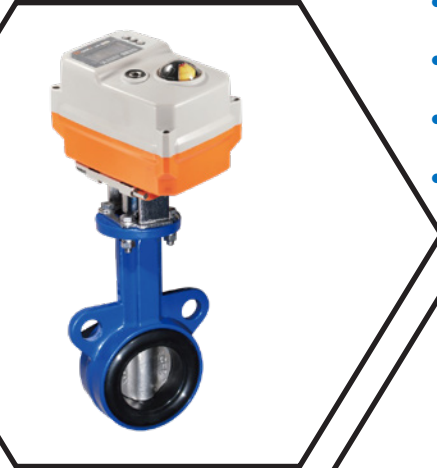
He said: "Over the coming years, our new partners will deliver the essential preparatory work we need to deliver the main construction programme on time and on budget, as well as creating jobs and training opportunities for thousands of people all along the route from London to the West Midlands and across our UK-wide supply chain."



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SEARCH BEGINS FOR HS2 TRAIN BUILDER

THE search for a company to build trains capable of travelling 225mph on Britain's HS2 network is now underway.

Transport Secretary, Chris Grayling, has launched the hunt for a company to design, build and maintain 60 trains in contract worth £2.75Bn.

Hundreds of skilled jobs will be created at the planned rolling stock depot in Washwood Heath, Birmingham to maintain the fleet, with the HS2 Network Control Centre also sharing the same site.

In total, 25,000 jobs and 2,000 apprentices will be created throughout the HS2 project. The Department of Transport say that the chief requirement for companies vying for the contract is to provide "a world-class passenger experience" that will carry more than 300,000 people every day.

The new trains will need to meet HS2's design and performance standards to provide a world-class service for passengers that includes noise reduction and

environmental sustainability.

An industry event will be held on 27 March where interested companies can get more information about the bidding requirements and process. Following this will be the launch of the pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) pack which will provide further details of the specifications for the trains.

Mr Grayling said: "Launching the hunt for a manufacturer of these trains is a major step towards Britain getting a new railway which will carry over 300,000 people a day, improve connections between our great cities, generate jobs, and helping us build an economy that works for all.

"Hundreds of jobs will be created in building and maintaining these trains, representing a great opportunity for British based businesses and suppliers.

"In total 25,000 jobs and 2,000 apprenticeships will be created during HS2 construction and we have held discussions with UK suppliers to make sure

they are in the best possible position to win contracts."

Phase 1 of the project is due to open in 2026 and run between London and Birmingham, with construction due to commence later this year.

A second Y-shaped phase will be launched in two stages. HS2 Ltd's Managing Director of Railway Operations, Chris Rayner, added: "We are looking for a supplier who is capable of delivering and maintaining some of the world's most advanced rolling stock, with designs putting the passenger at their heart to ensure seamless, accessible, fast and reliable journeys.

"Starting from 2026, our trains will be used by tens of thousands of people every day, bringing the benefits of high speed rail not only to the core network, but also onward to places like Manchester, Glasgow, Liverpool, Preston and Wigan."

Formal invitations to tender will be issued in 2018, with the contract will be awarded in late 2019.

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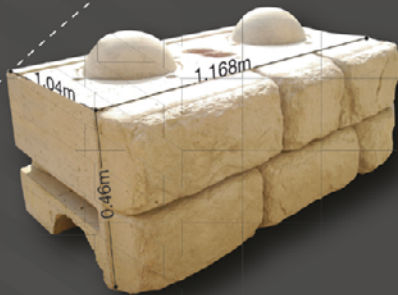
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THE SUPPLY ENABLING W BENEFIT FO

ANTICIPATION is building. After almost a decade of intense preparation, the first phase of High Speed 2 will soon begin. It's a monumental milestone for the construction industry – the supply chain in particular – and while it hardly needs to be said, the potential HS2 affords contractors and subcontractors throughout the UK and Ireland is immeasurable.

According to HS2 Chairman Sir David Higgins: "HS2 presents a great opportunity for businesses, big and small, to compete for HS2-related contracts. By contributing their innovation, experience and delivery capability, they will help make this an exemplary project – one which maximises the value of HS2 to local and national economies, and allows the UK to compete internationally in state-of-the-art engineering."

Of course, HS2 Ltd – the business responsible for developing and promoting the UK's new high speed rail network – will procure and manage only a handful of high-value major works contracts. Each of these will be delivered by a Tier 1 contractor, and it is these organisations that will procure and manage their respective supply chains.

As has been widely reported, three joint ventures have now been appointed to oversee essential preparatory works up and down the country. These

CHAIN OPPORTUNITY: HS2 WORKS TO OFFER FIRST TANGIBLE FOR UK CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

are CS JV, Fusion JV and LM JV for the South, Central and North respectively. The onus is now on the individual contractor to ensure that they remain flexible and responsive to any HS2 supply chain opportunities as and when they occur.

To this end, HS2 Ltd has made available a number of options and is keen to publicise their ease of use. "We want to ensure that the best companies can identify and compete for contract opportunities," said Sir David.

"To facilitate this, we require our main contractors to use opportunity brokerage tools, such as CompeteFor, and to simplify the procurement process as much as possible in order to reduce barriers for SMEs."

The SME perspective is an obvious concern, and it's heartening to hear that HS2 Ltd is taking an inclusive, one-size-fits-all approach. Whether Tier 2 or

Tier 5, the indirect opportunities of HS2 number in the tens of thousands and it's vital that these be accessible to as many organisations as possible.

For those unaware, CompeteFor is a free-of-charge service that enables businesses to bid for contract opportunities linked to major public and private sector buying organisations. Crucially, all Tier 1 contractors and sub-contractors are contractually obliged to advertise their HS2-specific opportunities here. As such, registration is a necessity for any organisation looking to get involved.

The Contract Opportunities Table is another invaluable tool. With it, businesses are better able to clarify the status of any HS2-related contract – which Tier 1 contractor has been appointed, for instance – giving them a fuller picture of what's going on in their region. HS2 Ltd also recommend registration to its newsletter,

which often acts as a jumping-off point for potential supply chain engagement and opportunity. "Companies should start preparing now," Sir David concluded. "We want you to get on board and play a part in delivering this nationally important project."

There's no denying, high speed rail is here for the long-term. It is set to play a pivotal role over two decades or more, via HS2 and HS3 – the conceptual high speed railway linking North East and West. The only question that remains is, can contractors and sub-contractors afford not to get involved? Previously, the Government identified infrastructure investment as an ingredient vital to the UK economy, particularly in a post-Brexit Britain. There's money to be made, and the hope now is that innovative new projects like HS2 can help redefine the UK as a more self-sufficient country.



We want you to get on board and play a part in delivering this nationally important project





**CONNECT WITH MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE
PROJECTS AT THE UK INFRASTRUCTURE SHOW 2017**

hs2
OFFICIAL
EVENT
PARTNER

The UK Infrastructure Show – *Constructing the Future*, taking place at Olympia London on Thursday 20 April, is a must-attend event for those working in all areas of infrastructure, from construction to technology, as UK infrastructure investment is set to reach a record high of over £500bn and a building boom is under way in the UK's large regional cities, with construction finally returning to levels last seen before the 2008 financial crisis.

Key findings from the latest Crane Survey report that the volume of office construction in London has increased by 4% over the past six months to an eight-year high of 14.8 million sq ft. Birmingham and Leeds are also building offices

at the highest rate in a decade.

Officially supported by CompeteFor – the leading infrastructure supply chain service – and many major ongoing and future infrastructure projects including HS2, Thames Tideway Tunnel and Transport for London, the inaugural UK Infrastructure Show 2017 will provide exhibitors, sponsors and delegates with a unique opportunity to engage, connect and collaborate with a vast array of key projects, a captive audience of 800 decision makers and influencers representing all areas of the supply chain.

Make your business known, build valuable relationships and develop market insight that create lasting competitive advantage by exhibiting or sponsoring at this event. All on one day, in one place at the UK Infrastructure Show 2017.

Contact our team today to discuss how your organisation can book one of our six remaining exhibition stands. Call 0845 270 7066 or email exhibitions@ukinfrastructureshow.co.uk.

The UK Infrastructure Show 2017 is **FREE** to attend for anyone working in the infrastructure sector – SMEs, Prime Contractors and representatives from major projects across the UK. To register for your complimentary place, simply [click here](#).

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT AT THE UK INFRASTRUCTURE SHOW 2017?

KEYNOTE ARENA

The Keynote Arena at the UK Infrastructure Show 2017 will showcase presentations from some of the organisations charged with setting the strategy of future infrastructure plans as well as some of the major projects currently under way across the UK.

Do not miss out on this unique opportunity to hear from a range of the most important speakers in the infrastructure industry.

OPPORTUNITY AND TRAINING ZONES

Designed to educate delegates on the key issues common to large-scale infrastructure projects,

these zones will take you through all you need to know in order to make the most of the supply chain opportunities available in this sector. You will also hear from representatives from some of the UK's leading projects, both those under way and those planned, with details of supply chain opportunities available to organisations like yours. Delegates can attend sessions in the following zones at UK Infrastructure 2017:

- Zone 1: Supply Chain Opportunities – Transport and Rail
- Zone 2: Supply Chain Opportunities – Energy and Nuclear
- Zone 3: Skills and Capabilities Training Zone

COMPETEFOR SUPPLY CHAIN ADVICE HUB

CompeteFor is a free service that

enables businesses to compete for contract opportunities linked to major public and private sector buying organisations.

The CompeteFor Supply Chain Advice Hub is the go-to place for any organisation looking to improve their procurement capability, get a complimentary profile check-up or have your questions answered.

PROJECT PARTNER PAVILIONS

We are delighted to be working with some of the largest infrastructure projects currently under way across the UK.

Our project partners, HS2, Thames Tideway Tunnel and Transport for London, will each have a dedicated Pavilion within the Product Showcase Exhibition. Come along and meet with representatives from these projects to learn more about the supply chain opportunities open to organisations like yours.

PRIME CONTRACTOR ENGAGEMENT VILLAGE

The UK Infrastructure Show Prime Contractor Engagement Village will allow visitors the opportunity to meet directly with many of the key Prime Contractors currently engaged in the delivery of live projects, providing an insight into possible opportunities for developing ongoing working relationships.

If you wish to book an appointment for this area, visit the Engagement Village at 11am on the day of the event; bookings will be taken from 11am to 2.30pm on a first come, first served basis.

Sample of sectors represented at the UK Infrastructure Show 2017 from registered attendees



Sample job titles of registered attendees

CEO	Head of Strategic Development
Managing Director	Head of Research and Development
Associate Director	Waste Consultant
Sales Director	Business Consultant
Security Director	Contracts Manager
Programme Director	Operations Manager
Director of Infrastructure	Commercial Manager
VP Utilities and Infrastructure	Technical Manager
Head of Civil Engineering and Infrastructure	Sales, Marketing & Business Development Manager
Head of Client Solutions	Senior Quantity Surveyor



CONTROLLING THE COST: DFT ALLAY FEARS AMID HS2 COST CONCERNS

THE Department for Transport (DfT) has described controlling the cost of the HS2 project as “challenging”, and says that the cost estimates of delivering Phase 2b may not be certain until 2019.

In written evidence to support an ongoing Public Accounts Committee (PAC) inquiry on the Great Western Railway, the Department’s Secretary - Philip Rutnam - said that the cost estimates of Phase 2b will become more apparent as HS2 Ltd awards contracts later this year to progress its design.

In the evidence reported, Mr Rutnam said: “On the timing to secure assurance on the delivery of the identified potential efficiencies, the 2015 Spending Review set a budget for HS2 of £55.7Bn.

“HS2 is an ambitious engineering project which will take many years to complete, and like any programme of this scale, controlling costs will be

challenging, yet the Government is committed to delivering HS2 within this budget.

“We continue to scrutinise HS2 Ltd’s cost estimates closely and will report revised estimates in the Outline Business Case when it is published in 2019 to support the Phase 2b Hybrid Bill that we plan to deposit in Parliament at the same time.”

Phase 2b route - which will travel from Crewe to Manchester and from the West Midlands to Leeds - is currently undergoing a review by the DfT, who are consulting on several changes to the route, including a new connection to Sheffield’s existing train station.

The consultations close in March, with the Government set to publish its formal response later in the year. It is expected that Phase 2 will begin operating trains around 2033, with part of the route (between West Midlands and Crewe) set to open in 2027.

At the PAC hearing, which took place on 14 December, Philip Boswell MP also asked Mr Rutnam about the Government’s strategy and plans for the necessary skills to deliver rail enhancements.

Mr Rutnam highlighted the Government’s announcement of its Transport Infrastructure Skills Strategy (TISS) in January 2016, which aims to create 30,000 apprenticeships within the rail and road sectors by 2020. The strategy will be directed by the industry-led Strategic Apprenticeship Taskforce, which was announced last April and is chaired by Mike Brown - Commissioner of Transport for London.

The Permanent Secretary explained that TISS would be supported by the Rail Sector Skills Delivery Plan announced by the rail industry in December, which will look to develop training standards and encourage recruitment and retention in the sector.



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HIGH SPEED THE CASE FOR

DID you know, it takes longer to travel from Liverpool to Hull by train than to journey twice the distance from London to Paris?

It's an astonishing admission, one which paints a beleaguered picture of northern rail provision and forms the basis of the National Infrastructure Commission's recent endorsement of HS3.

According to the Commission, the North is in dire need of investment – both in the immediate and long-term future – to reduce journey times, increase capacity and improve reliability. Kick-starting HS3 – the conceptual high speed railway linking North East and West – and integrating it with HS2 is therefore a priority.

Historically, the North has often lagged behind the South in terms of productivity. In 2014 the North East, West, and Yorkshire and Humber regions all had productivity levels less than 90% of the UK average, and 30% below that of London. Poor transport links have a role to play in this, hampering the North's ability to operate effectively as a single integrated economy.

The North makes a sizable contribution to the UK economy however, adding £209Bn of gross value annually – 13% of the UK total. As such, the Government cannot afford to let the region fall further behind.

NORTH: FOR HS3

For two decades, northern rail has experienced relatively high levels of growth – a result of its renewed importance to the UK economy. Today, that trend looks to have plateaued. Growth has stagnated, and there is now a disconcerting lack of commuters in comparison to alternative methods of transport.

Why is this? Performance is certainly a contributing factor. The Commission has identified several causes for commuter drop-off including overcrowding, inconsistent journey times, infrequent services, and poor quality rolling stock.

According to the Commission, these are issues that desperately need to be addressed and HS3 could well be a way of doing so: "If the North is to realise its ambitions for resurgent city centres with high concentrations of skilled workers, then better connected cities with broad access to markets and large labour pools will be necessary. Improved rail connectivity between the northern cities will play an important part in delivering this."

Of course, the arrival of HS2 – the high speed railway linking North and South – is already set to bring about a host of benefits. Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield will each be directly served, while Liverpool and Newcastle will both receive HS2 compatible 'through services'.

Transport is but one avenue of the Northern Powerhouse however, as the National Infrastructure Commission was quick to point out. For the North to realise its true potential, the region must first join up with Central Government to lay the foundations for future economic growth and prosperity.

It is not enough to improve connectivity between the cities of the North, the Commission has said. This transformation should form part of a broader strategy – one which incorporates education, workforce training, research and innovation.

Lord Adonis, Chairman of the National Infrastructure Commission, explained: "If the North is to become a powerhouse it has to be better connected.

"Leeds and Manchester are just forty miles apart but there is no quick and easy way to travel between the two. In rush hour it can take more than two hours by car, by train it can be almost an hour.

"So we should kick start HS3 across the Pennines and slash journey times to just 30 minutes.

But we must not wait decades for change – journey times should be cut to 40 minutes by 2022."

Outlining his vision for a more economically robust North, Lord Adonis continued: "A transformed northern rail network should include high speed connections to HS2 and the dramatic redevelopment of Manchester Piccadilly to deliver jobs and investment across the centre of the city.

"A better connected North will be better for jobs, better for families and better for Britain. The work should begin as quickly as possible."

Whether the Government acts on this recommendation remains to be seen. After all, High Speed North was initially commissioned by George Osborne, the now defrocked Chancellor of the Exchequer. Much has changed in the intervening months, and uncertainty persists over the spiralling cost of HS2. Even if the Government were to factor HS3 into its future plans, it certainly wouldn't be this Parliament.

One thing is certain – infrastructure investment will be crucial if the North is to remain in-step with the rest of the UK.

High Speed North, the National Infrastructure Commission's in-depth findings, can be found **here**.

Words | Robert Atherton



A better connected North will be better for jobs, better for families and better for Britain.



NATIONAL COLLEGE FOR HIGH SPEED RAIL ON TRACK FOR 2017

BIRMINGHAM'S National College for High Speed Rail has this month taken a considerable step forward, following the near-completion of the building's all-important roof structure.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling took time out of his busy schedule to tour the grounds of the high-tech training facility and witness it's topping-out first-hand. With this crucial phase of construction now complete, the College remains on track to open to prospective students in September 2017.

For many, the National College for High Speed Rail is an absolute imperative. If the Government is to make good on its aspirations for HS2 and railway infrastructure in general, specialist experience and training will be essential.

The College will share responsibility for this with its sister site in Doncaster's Lakeside. Both facilities are set to play a pivotal role in readdressing the much-discussed skills shortage and upskilling an industries

worth of workers. According to conservative estimates, British businesses will require around 87,000 graduate level engineers each year over the coming decade. Furthermore, 30% of the current workforce will need supplementary training to meet the needs of the booming high speed rail industry.

Transport Secretary, Chris Grayling, said: "HS2 will be the backbone of our national rail network and help us build an economy that works for all. The significant benefits of the scheme will not just be felt from when the trains start running. Work on the new College sites shows the transformational effect that HS2 is already having, creating jobs and supporting economic growth. Around 25,000 jobs and 2,000 apprenticeships will be generated during construction of HS2, which is due to begin next year.

"The UK is highly regarded for its engineering capabilities but we need to do more to attract new talent to the sector as well as improving the skills of the current workforce. That is why the Government launched a transport skills strategy earlier this year committing us to create 30,000 apprenticeships across roads and rail by 2020. The National College for High Speed Rail is a vital part of these plans as it will provide the cutting-edge skills we need to deliver HS2 and other world-beating infrastructure."

Birmingham City Council, Doncaster Council, and Local Enterprise Partnerships in both regions are collaborating with HS2 Ltd to help establish the structure of the College and develop fully its curriculum.

Any businesses interested in



upskilling their employees, or those considering a career in high speed rail can register their interest at the College's newly launched website: www.nchsr.ac.uk

Beth West, Commercial Director for HS2 Ltd, said: "HS2 provides the opportunity to drive productivity and growth and increase the UK's international competitiveness in high-tech engineering and construction. It demands new higher-level technical skills for jobs not yet in

existence in the UK. The College is vital to the delivery of High Speed Rail across Britain and so it's extremely pleasing to see the great progress being made.

"As the College puts the finishing touches to its curricular programme and steps closer to welcoming its first intake of students, it has also confirmed the appointment of Clair

Mowbray as its new CEO to take the project forward." Terry Morgan, Chair of the National College for High Speed Rail, said: "I'm extremely pleased to appoint Clair as the new Chief Executive of the National College for High Speed Rail. Her commitment and passion for education and strategic development will be vital as we move closer to opening the College in September 2017.

"We are passionate about creating a state-of-the-art, employer-led college which will provide students with the skills they need to enjoy an exciting and well-paid career while providing employers with the highly-skilled workforce they need to deliver High Speed Rail in the UK and other major infrastructure projects."



HS2 LTD MAKE GOOD ON ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE INFRASTRUCTURE

ACCORDING to the Government, more than 650 hectares of woodland is to be planted between London and Birmingham as part of the first phase of HS2. Together, these saplings will form a network of green corridors linking once isolated woodland regions.

The hope is that this planting will lessen the visual impact of the landmark railway and bolster lineside biodiversity throughout the proposed route. In total, seven million trees and shrubs of varying species are to be grown by the Lincolnshire-based Crowders Nurseries. Each of these will be tailored to a specific region, with a commitment to reintroducing such species as the Midlands Hawthorn and the Black Poplar - widely considered to be the UK's most endangered native tree.

HS2 Minister, Andrew Jones, said: "HS2 is doing more than any other major project to protect the environment and leave as little trace as possible. The new woodland will be managed for up to 50 years so that the trees are protected and communities will be able to enjoy the new woodlands for hundreds of years to come.

"HS2 is not only cutting journey times and providing rail passengers with thousands of extra seats every day it is also delivering wider economic benefits for the whole country.

"I am delighted that Crowders nurseries and the people of Lincolnshire are benefitting from HS2 and the contract to plant

seven million trees along the route and I look forward to seeing the first saplings being planted."

Ecological concerns have long been a key consideration for HS2 Ltd, and this announcement has only reinforced its role as a benchmark for environmentally responsible infrastructure.

Indeed, the Government has described the planting effort as one of the most ambitious environmental initiatives in the UK today.

For the uninitiated, the Government has pledged to plant 11 million trees over the course of the current Parliament, with the intention of reaching 12% woodland coverage by 2060. As such, HS2 is set to make a significant contribution.

HS2 Ltd Environment Director, Peter Miller, said: "Our woodlands are some of Britain's most important natural habitats. That's why it is vital that we leave behind a positive legacy of high quality green spaces all along the route.

"Today's announcement takes us a step closer to that goal and I look forward to working with Crowders in the years ahead to deliver what will be one of the UK's most ambitious new forestry and ecology projects."

The first batch - roughly a million or more trees and shrubs - will be delivered to sites earmarked for advance planting from autumn 2017 to spring the following year. It is also hoped that further planting will take place during Phase 2a and 2b in the North.



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