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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.

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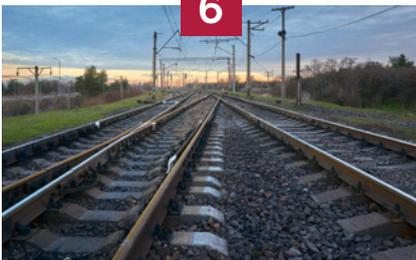
the UK that HS2 does. It's a hugely ambitious undertaking. So much so that it will likely be 2033 before rail-goers can journey from London to Edinburgh in three short hours. And yet, HS2 is about a lot more than mere logistics. It is a vision of a better connected future - one which unifies cities and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

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BRAVE NEW WORLD
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BUDGETARY CONCERNS.

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HS2

INNOVATIVE & COLLABORATIVE

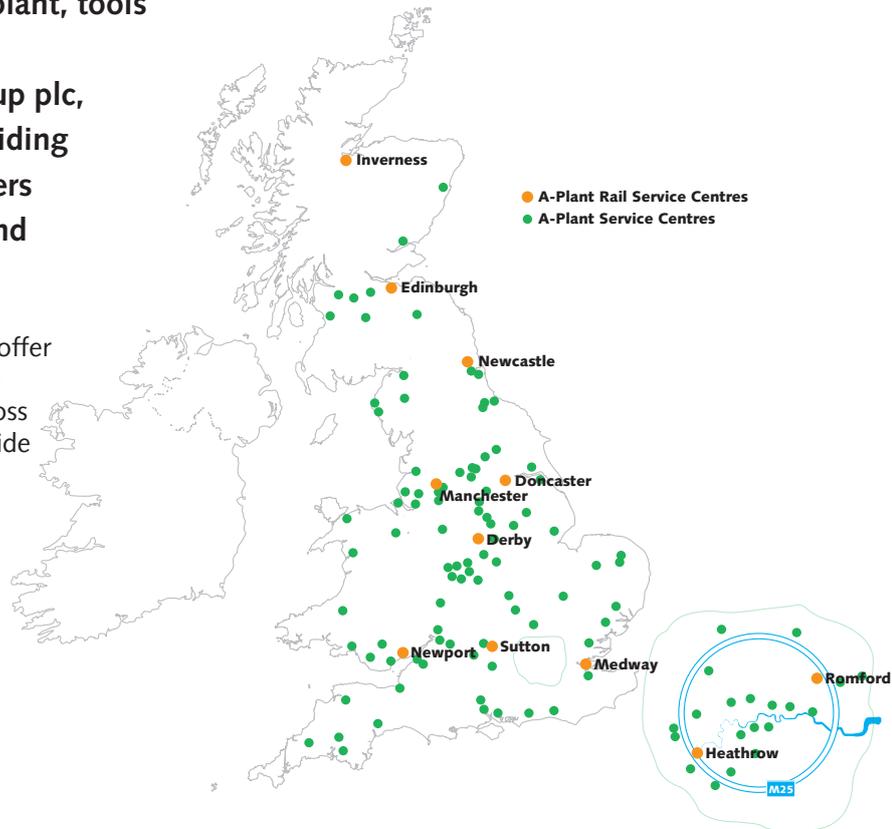
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A BRAVE NEW

LAST December, Transport Minister Chris Grayling – a figure who has featured prominently throughout our high speed coverage – took to the stage to reaffirm his commitment to HS2 once and for all.

In a lengthy and surprisingly frank keynote speech, the Minister outlined his ambitions for high speed rail provision – the how, the why, and the wherewithal – and addressed the debate that has been raging ever since HS2's announcement five years ago.

"It would be no exaggeration to say that the railways of this country are crucial to its economic future," Mr Grayling began. "Just look at the millions of people who travel into our cities each day by rail. Without trains our economy would grind to a halt. And without our railways, they could not get to work in today's congested world."

If we are to build something new, why wouldn't we build the best, the newest, the world's most advanced passenger railway



NEW ERA FOR RAIL IN BRITAIN

And yet, despite two decades of solid growth, the Transport Minister said that this was no time for the rail industry to rest on its laurels. Performance is in freefall, and it is the passenger who is being left out in the cold.

"The industry cannot simply take comfort in its success in attracting the growth of the past 20 years," urged Mr Grayling. "It already struggles to cope with demand – and the margin for error is so slight that a small problem can lead to long delays, cancellations and overcrowding. The level of demand and the number of trains mean that things wear out quicker, and that there is less and less free time to do the repair works that the network needs."

HS2 is, of course, the Government's response – a state-of-the-art high speed network which will weave its way through England and into Scotland. According to the Transport Minister: "Up to now our solution has been longer trains and longer platforms. It's about doing something bigger and bolder. Our railways are more diverse than almost anywhere in the world. Few countries try to run express trains, commuter trains, local trains and freight on the same tracks to such high intensity as the West Coast Main Line does.

"If we want the growth to continue in the future, we have to ease some of that pressure. That means building a new line to complement the old. And if we are to build something new,

why wouldn't we build the best, the newest, the world's most advanced passenger railway." Not everyone is as convinced, however. For many, HS2 remains a hot-button topic, eliciting enthusiasm and outrage in equal measure. As Mr Grayling conceded, it's a problem of education: "It's been controversial, often because people don't understand why it is needed. Some people see it as speed alone whilst they are cramped for space on their commuter service. But the way we deal with an over-congested railway is to build more capacity."

Thoughts now turn towards the delivery of HS2 and its subsequent management. Here, Mr Grayling has courted more controversy with his endorsement of a fully privatised railway network.

He said: "The other thing that I can do which I hope and believe will help the passenger experience is to change the way in which we let franchises to train companies. On a network which needs substantial public subsidy and which needs billions of pounds of investment, it is right that we seek to maximise the revenue which flows back to the public purse. But this cannot be done at the expense of the passenger experience.

Franchising is delivering some real improvements – like the complete replacement of all the trains operating in East Anglia. But we also need to

make sure that quality and train performance – and the passenger experience – are set at the heart of the franchise objectives and incentives that we set to a much greater degree than they are at the moment. I believe we can push for quality and still achieve the financial performance that the taxpayer needs."

What's more, HS2 has a role to play in bolstering the UK economy post-Brexit. Infrastructure investment is perhaps more important than ever before, and the hope is that HS2 will generate job opportunities down the line. Mr Grayling reiterated: "I want a world-class railway that offers world-class job opportunities. I have already set out my ambition for 30,000 apprenticeships across rail and road by 2020, and we are building dedicated high speed rail colleges in Birmingham and Doncaster."

Ultimately, the Transport Minister's message was one of optimism rather than anxiety. Though uncertainties persist over the actual cost and the entirety of the route has yet to be set in stone, HS2 represents lasting benefit and a brave new era of UK rail. "We can and we will make sure our rail network plays its part in making this a country that works for everyone," Mr Grayling concluded.

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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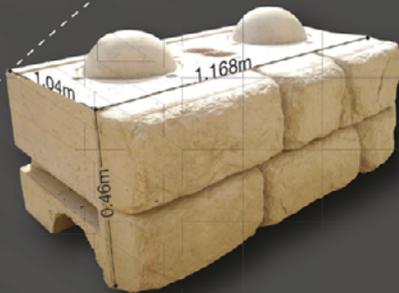
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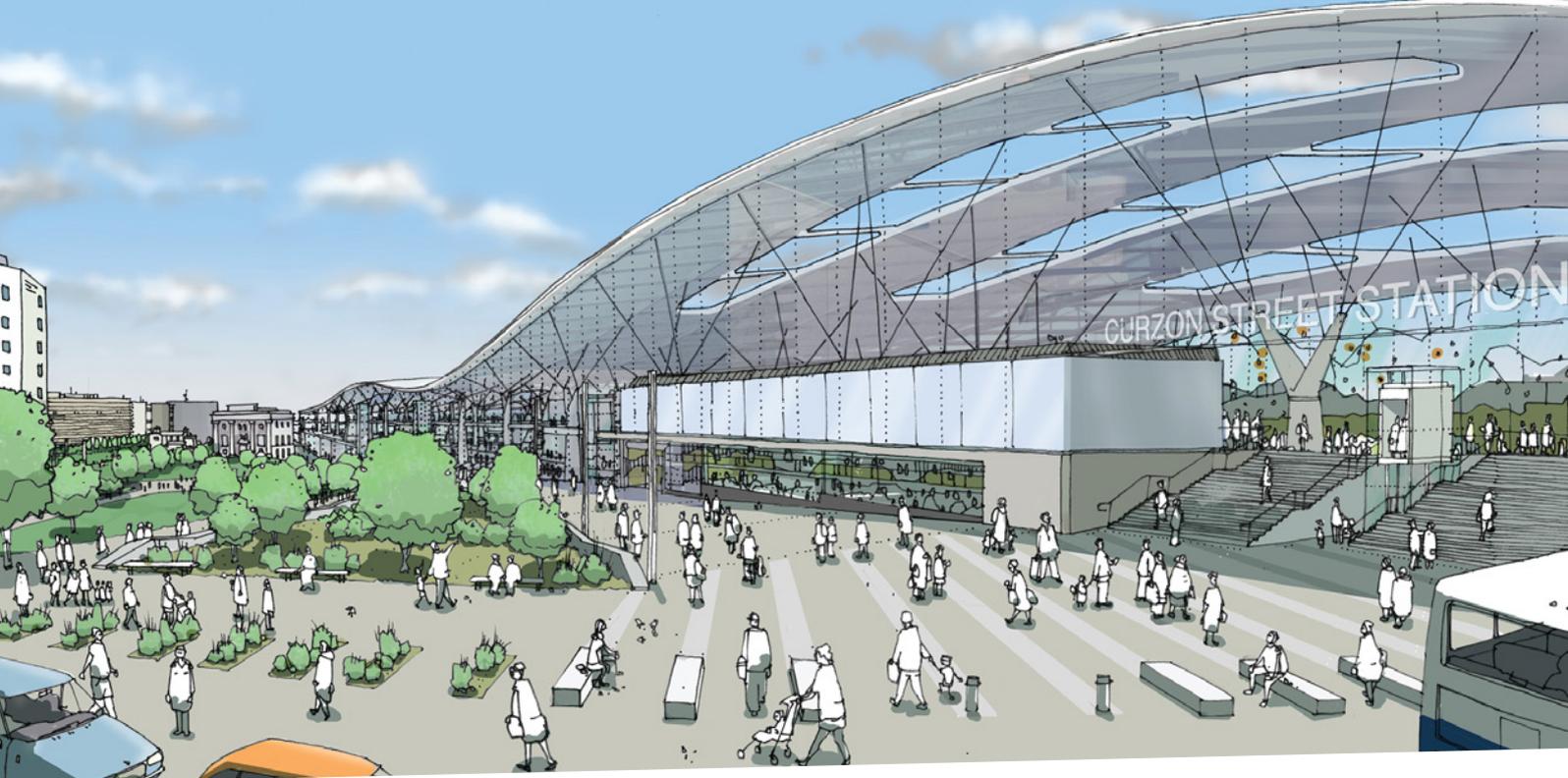
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GOVERNMENT UNVEILS PLANS FOR NEW WEST COAST PARTNERSHIP

IN recent weeks, the Department for Transport (DfT) has revealed more information about the much-anticipated West Coast Partnership – an ambitious new rail franchise which will integrate existing Inter City West Coast (ICWC) services with High Speed 2 (HS2).

It is thought that the proposed franchise, which was first announced in November 2016, will oversee services on the West Coast Main Line from 2019, in addition to the design and operation of high speed services from 2026. What's more, the successful bidder will be required to work in close collaboration with both HS2 Ltd and the DfT.

To better clarify its vision for the future of West Coast rail provision, the Government has since published a brand new 'prospectus' entitled 'The West Coast Partnership: The Route to High Speed Rail'. In it, the DfT describes the franchise as a

"once in a lifetime opportunity for bidders to shape Great Britain's most important railway route". So begins a lengthy and fairly involved selection process. Following a formal expression of interest last December, the Government has scheduled an invitation to tender for autumn of this year. In subsequent weeks and months, bidders will be whittled down as the DfT and HS2 Ltd scrutinise their suitability.

According to the prospectus, "bidders should show real ambition and not be afraid of challenging the current consensus, using lessons from the operation of the railway, and skill and expertise from outside of the rail industry."

Secretary of State, Chris Grayling had this to say: "HS2 will be the backbone of Britain's railways, creating more seats for passengers on the West Coast, and increasing capacity on the rest of the network.

"We need world-class expertise to deliver this new chapter in modernising the railways. We are calling for bidder groups with a blend of skills including operating conventional rail services, high speed rail services, technical innovation and great customer service. We expect to attract highly experienced companies, which ultimately means a better deal for passengers both now and in the future.

"HS2 will generate economic growth throughout the country and reduce crowding on the existing network. Phase 1, due to open in 2026, will see trains travel at high speed between London and Birmingham, and continue on to serve other destinations on the existing West Coast Main Line."

Chairman of HS2 Ltd Sir David Higgins added: "The partnership will be central to developing an integrated operating environment for future HS2 services - one that works with the existing

network. By bringing all our skills, experience and ideas together, we will create the best railway in the world."

Clearly, the DfT has high expectations for the new franchise. The would-be operator will have to hit the ground running and quickly build upon the foundation laid by the existing West Coast franchise. Commuters must come first. As such, driving consistency and punctuality, and enhancing connectivity between towns and cities, is a must.

West Coast passengers can expect to feel the benefit long before the introduction of HS2, thanks in part to the early implementation of innovative new technology developed specifically for high speed rail. Understandably, collaboration is

key. The successful bidder will be required to assist HS2 Ltd in the preliminary design, initial launch, and eventual operation of high speed services. They will also have responsibility for the transitional timetable to ensure the West Coast Main Line takes full advantage of the additional capacity afforded by HS2.

Likewise, it will be necessary for the operator to work alongside Transport Scotland and the Welsh Government to ensure a first-rate passenger experience.

According to the Government, completion of the first phase of HS2 is due to more than double the amount of available seats leaving Euston railway station during peak times - from 11,000 to around 23,000. Crucially, the majority of intercity trains will be compatible with the



high speed network, meaning more commuter services for the West Coast Main Line.

Delivery of the West Coast Partnership will require a newly-drafted short-term contract - to last an approximate 12 months - for the continued operation of services on the West Coast Mainline, following the end of the current franchise in 2018. It is thought that the new franchise will begin in earnest on 1 April 2019.

Words | Robert Atherton

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**CONNECT WITH MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE
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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



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





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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:

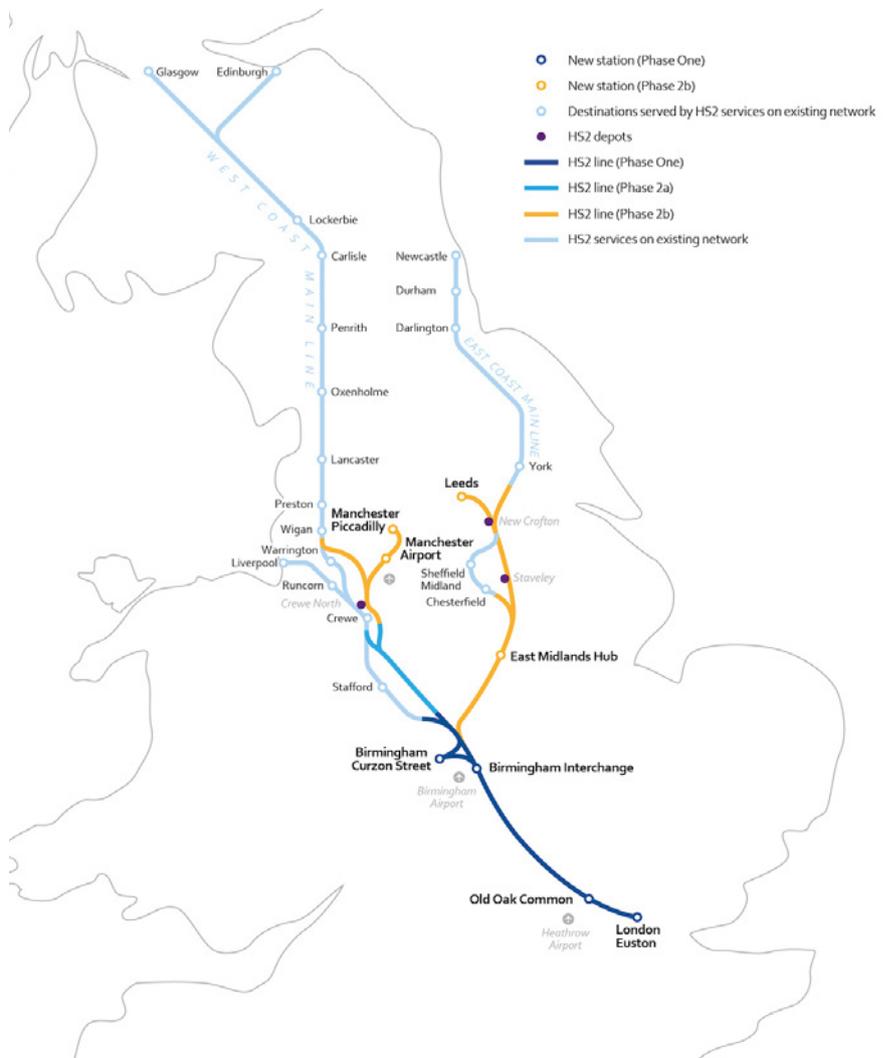
- Phase 2a – from the West Midlands to Crewe, announced last year.
- Phase 2b – from Crewe to

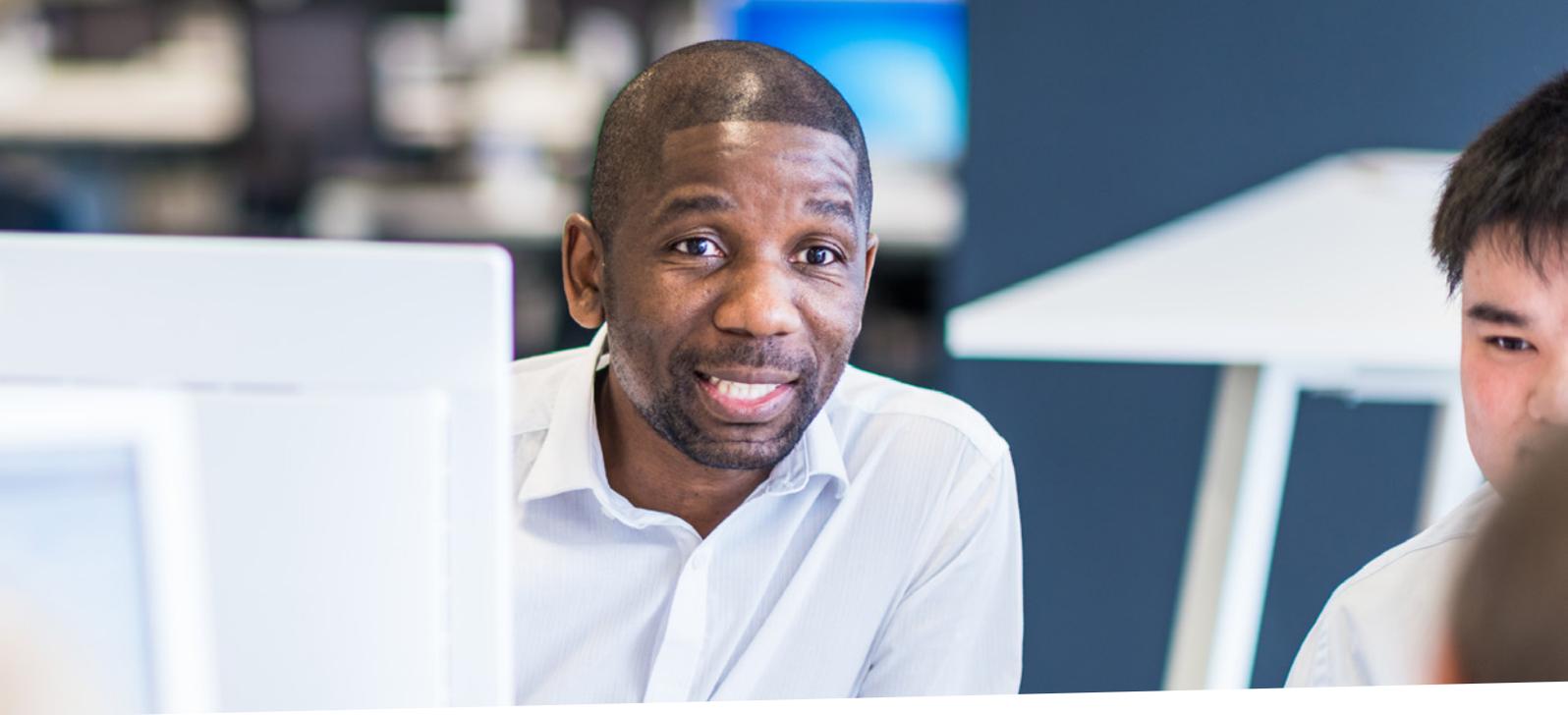
Manchester and from the West Midlands to Leeds, South Yorkshire and the East Midlands.

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*





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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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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