

# “Constructive talks” over next steps after HS2’s northern leg was scrapped

January 31, 2024



Mayors Andy Street and Andy Burnham have said that constructive talks have been held with the Secretary of State for Transport, the Rail Minister, and senior officials from the Department for Transport regarding their work to look at how to improve connectivity between the West Midlands and Greater Manchester.

The Mayors of the West Midlands and Greater Manchester joined forces to explore how links could be improved following the Prime Minister’s decision to scrap the northern leg of HS2 from Birmingham to Manchester. In December they announced they had convened a private sector group chaired by infrastructure expert Sir David Higgins, to look at options to tackle one of the most congested and unreliable routes on the UK rail network.

A joint statement issued after the meeting on Wednesday said: “Our work is centred on the strategic economic case for connectivity between the two regions, and the potential private sector funding models and interventions needed to accelerate both connectivity and growth.

“Ultimately there are capacity challenges on the West Coast Main Line between Birmingham and

Manchester, and so we have decided to seek the help of the best private sector brains to look at how we might creatively resolve that without a significant bill on the public purse.”

The Mayors were joined at the meeting by Sir David Higgins, and representatives from Arup who are leading on the work.

“We are immensely thankful to both for stepping forward, as well as to the other companies who have got involved in the work – not least Mace, EY, and Arcadis,” continued the statement.

“Following today’s constructive meeting we will be reconvening as a wider group in Birmingham next week to flesh out our plans. After this we expect to be in a position to talk more about our work, and the options we are exploring to enhance connectivity between our two great regions.

“Finally we would like to make it clear that this work is not an attempt to revive HS2, it is about finding a different way of solving what is a national priority of better rail connectivity between our city-regions.”