

GB Railfreight calls on Government to follow through with 'levelling up' commitment and deliver HS2

January 27, 2020



With the future of HS2 to be decided next month, GB Railfreight Managing Director John Smith is urging both Government and industry to focus on the long-term benefits the project will deliver to not just the North, but for a cross section of UK businesses.

It has taken ten years of expert design and development, Parliamentary scrutiny, and public consultation to get to this point. Delivering such a large and crucial infrastructure scheme is no easy feat.

Commenting on the National Audit Office's progress update, published today (Friday 24 January), John Smith said: "Cancelling HS2 would result in the loss of jobs, investment and faith in the deliverability of large-scale infrastructure projects.

"Regional connectivity needs to be fully supported and it is especially important for the rail freight sector, as it helps unlock routes and opportunities for businesses to choose rail over road freight."

HS2 will be the first new railway constructed north of London for over a century, creating much needed capacity and connections across the North and Midlands. For GBRf there is no other viable alternative to the project.

Smith said: “If the Government takes the decision to pull the plug on HS2 now it will have a considerable negative impact on UK construction firms; the construction industry; young people starting their careers in construction and on the railways; and for rail freight which provides sustainable transport logistics.”

Businesses across the UK have delivered significant investment in preparation for work on the HS2 to start. Nearly 2,000 business have worked on the project and 9,000 people are already employed directly or indirectly by the scheme.

GB Railfreight employs over 900 people across the UK with a major centre of operations in Doncaster, and has been preparing to support construction logistics, including removing spoil and waste, and delivering inbound materials

John Smith added: “Many young people have made education and career choices around work starting on the scheme soon, opting to studying at the National College for Advanced Transport & Infrastructure in Doncaster and Birmingham in the expectation of doing their bit to deliver the UK’s most ambitious infrastructure project for a generation.

“While some critics are pushing for investment to be diverted to local commuter routes, without HS2 there won’t be the additional employment opportunities and business investment.

“Delivering HS2 will, in the long term, support the UK’s regional cities and towns to prosper and connect to other surrounding areas. The Government should move quickly to green light the project rather than delay even further.”

Photo credit: Kev Gregory / Shutterstock.com