

# Government provides construction sector certainty by confirming 'Notice to proceed' on High Speed 2

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- High Speed 2 (HS2) project reaches its next stage as joint venture companies receive approval to begin detailed design and construction phase
- 'Notice to proceed' process marks formal approval for main construction works to begin, following decision earlier this year to proceed with the project
- construction to begin in line with Public Health England advice during the coronavirus outbreak

Following the decision to proceed with HS2 earlier this year, HS2 Ltd has today (15 April 2020) marked the next step for the project after issuing 'Notice to proceed' to the companies that will undertake construction on Britain's new railway.

After careful consideration of the independent Oakervee review, the Prime Minister confirmed to Parliament in February 2020 that the project should go ahead, to deliver vital improvements to capacity and connectivity across the Midlands and North, alongside a reform package to improve governance at HS2 to ensure the project is delivered better and more efficiently. 'Notice to proceed' marks the formal approval for the project to begin the construction phase and HS2 Ltd is now entering Stage 2 of the main works civils contracts, with each held by a specific joint-venture.

At a time when the construction sector faces uncertainties during the coronavirus outbreak, issuing 'Notice to proceed' provides a vote of confidence in construction companies and the wider supply chain supporting HS2.

HS2 Minister Andrew Stephenson said: "While the government's top priority is rightly to combat the spread of coronavirus, protect the NHS and save lives, we cannot delay work on our long-term plan to level up the country.

"HS2 will be the spine of the country's transport network, boosting capacity and connectivity while also rebalancing opportunity fairly across our towns and cities.

"Following the decision earlier this year to proceed with the project, this next step provides thousands of construction workers and businesses across the country with certainty at a time when they need it, and means that work can truly begin on delivering this transformational project."

The 4 work packages are for full detailed design and construction of Phase One of the HS2 railway. Through these contracts, small and medium businesses have the guarantee of a pipeline of activity for the future, helping to protect jobs and boost certainty for them in the current climate.

The joint-ventures that are responsible for each package of work will be able to commence work in line with Public Health England's guidance around construction work continuing during the coronavirus outbreak, in a way both safe to their workers and the public.

The joint ventures, originally awarded contracts by HS2 Ltd in July 2017, are:

- SCS Railways (Skanska Construction UK Ltd, Costain Ltd, STRABAG AG)
- Align JV (Bouygues Travaux Publics SAS, a subsidiary of Bouygues Construction, Sir Robert McAlpine and VolkerFitzpatrick, a subsidiary of VolkerWessels UK)
- EKBF JV (Eiffage Genie Civil SA, Kier Infrastructure and Overseas Ltd, BAM Nuttall, Ferrovial Agroman)
- BBV JV (Balfour Beatty Group Ltd, VINCI Construction Grands Projets, VINCI Construction UK Ltd, VINCI Construction Terrassement)

As well as contracts being awarded today, the Department for Transport has today published the new Full business case High Speed 2 Phase One, setting out the strategic and economic case for the project and outlining how it will deliver a positive return on investment, alongside boosting capacity and connectivity needed in towns and cities across the country, delivering on the government's levelling up agenda.

Mark Thurston CEO of HS2 Ltd, said: "In these difficult times, today's announcement represents both an immediate boost to the construction industry - and the many millions of UK jobs that the industry supports - and an important investment in Britain's future.

"While the country's focus is rightly on defeating COVID-19, this ensures that our contractors and their supply chains have the confidence that they can commit to building HS2, generating thousands of skilled jobs across the country as we recover from the pandemic."

*Photo credit: HS2*