

HS2 bill for Crewe to Manchester phase being introduced today

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Today, the UK Government will introduce the bill for the next phase of HS2.

Once approved, the 'High Speed Rail (Crewe-Manchester) Bill' will allow HS2 to run from Crewe up to Manchester.

It is estimated it will cut travel time from London to Manchester by around 55 minutes and Birmingham to Manchester by up to 45 minutes.

It is also thought the project will bring 17,500 direct jobs to Northern communities supporting the construction of the Crewe-Manchester leg and thousands of further jobs in the supply chain expected to follow. These include hundreds of highly skilled permanent jobs. Some will be in rolling stock depots to be established north of Crewe as well as in Dumfries and Galloway.

The introduction of this bill marks the latest part of a project connecting London, Birmingham and Manchester. The UK Government said the next phase will give the North West the tools it needs to further generate economic growth and level up across the region, with new stations supporting one of the UK's

fastest-growing cities at Manchester Piccadilly and Manchester Airport.

It added part of the new high-speed line will also be used for Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) services between Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool, helping cut the Manchester Piccadilly – Liverpool journey to 35 minutes and Leeds-Liverpool to around an hour and a quarter.

The government projection is that the construction of HS2 to Manchester will allow capacity to double, or more, on the routes between Manchester and London/Birmingham. When NPR is completed, it says similar capacity increases to Leeds and Liverpool will follow, with trains using the High Speed Line and stations at Manchester.

The developments are part of the £96 billion Integrated Rail Plan (IRP).

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said: “We are determined to improve transport connections and level up communities across the country and this Bill marks a landmark moment as we bring HS2 to Manchester and lay the foundations for Northern Powerhouse Rail.

“Our £96bn investment in rail in the North and Midlands and in connecting them to London will bring communities together, create thousands of jobs and make towns and cities in these key areas more attractive to business up to 10 years quicker than under any previous plans.”

“The IRP is the blueprint for the government’s commitment to building better transport links, generating prosperity and opportunity across the North and Midlands bringing benefits up to 10 years sooner than previously planned, all while delivering on levelling up the country.”

HS2 Minister, Andrew Stephenson said: “We have time and time again proven our commitment to improving transport connections throughout the North and levelling up communities in the process.

“Today marks the next chapter in achieving this; fulfilling the promises in our £96bn Integrated Rail Plan to shorten journey times, provide reliable and sustainable services, while supporting local services and delivering a modern, fully connected transport network fit for the future even sooner.”

The Bill will also allow for a new high speed stations and junctions to be built at Manchester Piccadilly and Manchester Airport futureproofing services along the Western Leg and facilitating Northern Powerhouse Rail to be built at a later date – which could include lines from Manchester to Liverpool and Leeds.

In addition to this, a new junction near Crewe will be developed not only improving future services on the route but giving Crewe the potential to be a Hub station in mid-Cheshire able to accommodate more trains.

At the same time, HS2 Ltd also announced that it would aim to deliver a 10% net gain in biodiversity for replaceable habitats on the Crewe to Manchester route. This means going beyond existing mitigation and compensation schemes, delivering more biodiversity than existed before construction, and ensuring a bigger and better environmental legacy.

This comes less than two weeks after the HS2 Minister announced that HS2 trains will run on zero-carbon

energy from day one, aligning the country's biggest infrastructure project with the Government's ambitions for a greener transport and construction future.

Clare Hayward MBE, DL, chair of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership said: "Ensuring all of Cheshire and Warrington is properly connected to the rest of the North West and the country as a whole, and delivering an integrated sustainable transport solution, is vital in ensuring our continued economic growth and delivering on our net zero ambitions.

"High speed links to the airport, and Manchester beyond are a key part of this, providing easy access to good employment opportunities as well as ensuring our vital industries, including net zero, are easily accessible and properly joined up to important infrastructure.

"Crewe has a proud rail heritage and has long been seen as the gateway to the north and today's announcement is an important step in it continuing to be so. I look forward to seeing the project progress and come to fruition, providing economic benefits to all our area and the people that live here."

Chris Fletcher, marketing & campaigns director, Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce said: "Phase 2b of HS2 will be transformative for Greater Manchester and the wider North West. The benefits of delivering HS2 in full are many: it will promote economic growth, trigger business investment, unlock labour markets and enable regeneration of areas that desperately need 'levelling up'.

"The additional rail capacity HS2 will deliver could allow more rail freight and contribute to the attainment of net-zero goals by reducing congestion on the roads. HS2, therefore, is not merely about reducing travel times. It is an essential part of 'levelling up', and Greater Manchester Chamber welcomes further progress on HS2."

Reacting to the news, Maria Machancoses CEO of Midlands Connect said: "This is another watershed moment in the future of our high speed railway. This extension of HS2 from London and Birmingham to Manchester will give the West Midlands and North West the fast, reliable rail connectivity these regions so desperately need. What's important now is that we seize upon this momentum to accelerate the job creation, investment and regeneration that makes this investment so transformative.

"While it's great news that the Western Leg of HS2 is moving forward with pace, the Eastern Leg of HS2 from the Midlands to Yorkshire and the North East is still vitally important. We're working with Government to feed into its study into how to best connect these areas and in the meantime are keen that a Bill is introduced to speed the delivery of the network between Birmingham and the East Midlands, as outlined in Government's Integrated Rail Plan."