

# HS2 given the go-ahead

February 11, 2020



The Prime Minister has given HS2 the green light.

Boris Johnson has backed the plans, which will see the city centres of London, Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds connected by 345 miles of new high-speed railway track.

Once complete and operational, the £100 billion project is expected to carry over 300,000 passengers – around 100 million a year.

Among the announcements included:

- HS2 will go ahead to deliver essential North-South connectivity, greater capacity and shorter journey times, with construction for Phase 1 from London to the West Midlands set to begin in April
- Decision comes alongside new investment for vital local transport links as PM sets out his vision to overhaul the UK's transport network, including £5 billion to improve bus and cycle links outside London, as well as vital upgrades to local roads
- PM commits to accelerating progress on Northern Powerhouse Rail with an integrated plan to maximise benefits of rail investments across the North, informed by an assessment from the National Infrastructure Commission
- Reform package will improve governance at HS2 Ltd to ensure project is delivered better and more efficiently

The Prime Minister said we have to fix the spine of our railways and he will 'restore discipline to the programme'.

He said: "We have to make places more attractive to live in and invest in. We cannot make improvements in isolation to one another.

"We have to fix the spine. We can try and get by with the existing routes, or we can have the guts to make the decision. High Speed rail will make it much easier to travel down our narrow country. There will be faster journey times and increased capacity.

"We will restore discipline to the programme and there will be a minister who will oversee the programme full time. We are going to get this done."

Supporters of the plans say it will improve journey times between London and the north of England, create jobs and rebalance the UK's economy.

However, the project has been beset by delays and faced mounting concerns over the exact route of the line and the impact. The cost of the full project has almost doubled in price from the original estimated cost of £56 billion five years ago.

The PM outlined a number of measures to instil discipline and financial order to the project, including:

- Appointing a dedicated minister with specific oversight and accountability for HS2
- Redefining HS2 Ltd's role so that they can give maximum focus to successfully delivering Phase 1 and 2a, and making new delivery arrangements for Euston station and the design and construction of Phase 2b, to ensure better value for money and on time delivery
- Improved transparency through regular reports to Parliament from the responsible minister

The Prime Minister said: "Delivering better, faster and more reliable transport connections is the way to close the opportunity gap across this country.

“But it is not and never will be an ‘either/or’ between big projects and local services.

“Dramatic improvements to local transport and the decision to proceed with HS2 will shift this country’s centre of gravity away from the capital and transform connectivity between our towns and cities.

“I am drawing a clear line under the mismanagement of the past – HS2 must be delivered more efficiently and cost-effectively so that communities feel its benefits more quickly, particularly those in the North.”

Andy McDonald MP, Labour’s Shadow Transport Secretary, said: “HS2 has been appallingly mismanaged by the Conservative party, which has failed to deliver a single major infrastructure project on time or within budget.

“If HS2 is going to get back on track, the project has to be integrated with Crossrail for the North, it needs to be managed as part of an advanced rail network, and it must eventually extend into Scotland so that we remove the need for domestic flights.

“The government must also commit to running HS2 services under public ownership. That way it is the UK public – not private or overseas state-owned companies – who will see a return on this investment.”

Acting leader of the Liberal Democrats, Ed Davey, said: “There are huge questions about how the Conservatives have mis-managed HS2 so badly, but the climate case for expanding Britain’s railways remains a strong one.

“Yet HS2 alone won’t unite the country, bring economic benefits to the Midlands and North or cut the demand for domestic flights to help our climate unless it’s part of a bolder rail revolution.

“Above all, we must improve railway links east to west, with train lines that don’t always have London as their destination.”

Meanwhile leader of the Greens’ Jonathan Bartley claims the Government has chosen vanity projects over common sense.

He said: “The economic and environmental case for HS2 has slowly crumbled since it was announced a decade ago. From whatever angle you look at it HS2 is a colossal white elephant.

“It is time to put this project out of its misery and instead allocate these funds to facilitating a local and green transport revolution.

“We need projects that favour regional connectivity and help local people in their daily lives. We need to invest in new rail connections that remove bottlenecks, increase rail freight capacity, improve journey times and frequencies, enhance capacity in the South West, Midlands and North and join up currently unconnected urban areas.

“If the government is serious about its so-called ‘levelling up’ of the economy, these are the kind of projects it needs to prioritise. That’s the only way to create a fairer and greener UK economy that truly

works for everyone.”

[You can download the report here.](#)