

HS2 looks back on successes of 2021 and ahead to 2022

December 28, 2021



HS2 Ltd has unveiled new images and a video celebrating progress made on the project during 2021.

Mark Thurston, CEO of HS2 Ltd, said: “It has been a year of major moments for HS2 – from the start of tunnelling, to hitting 20,000 jobs, to awarding the contract to build our trains – 2021 really showed the incredible momentum on Britain’s biggest infrastructure project.

“HS2 is moving forward, creating jobs, enhancing skills, benefiting UK businesses and building a low carbon, high capacity railway that will change the way we travel in Britain.”

2021 began with a milestone as Phase 2a of HS2 — extending the line from the West Midlands to Crewe — was given Royal Assent. HS2 said construction of Phase 2a is expected to support around 6,500 jobs, with many more in the supply chain. In addition, the railway will support 140 permanent jobs at its maintenance base near Stone in Staffordshire.



In the Spring, HS2 revealed plans for its Colne Valley Western Slopes project, which will provide 127 hectares of wood pasture, restored wetlands and native grassland by re-using chalk taken from tunnelling under the Chilterns, including almost 65,000 trees and shrubs of 32 species and nearly 3.5km of new hedgerows.



In May, Mace Dragados were awarded the contract to build HS2's Curzon Street Station in Birmingham. The contract, worth up to £570million, will see the city become home to one of the world's most sustainable stations. Designed to 'BREEAM excellent' standard, the station will use the latest eco-friendly design and sustainable technologies, including capturing rainwater and utilising sustainable power generation, with over 2,800m² of solar panels located on platform canopies.



Also in May, HS2 launched 'Florence' – the first of 10 HS2 Tunnel Boring Machines (TBMs) that will dig 64 miles of tunnel on Phase One of the UK's new high speed railway. Digging alongside Florence, the second TBM 'Cecilia' started in July. The 2,000-tonne machines have now created up to 3 miles of tunnel under the Chiltern Hills.



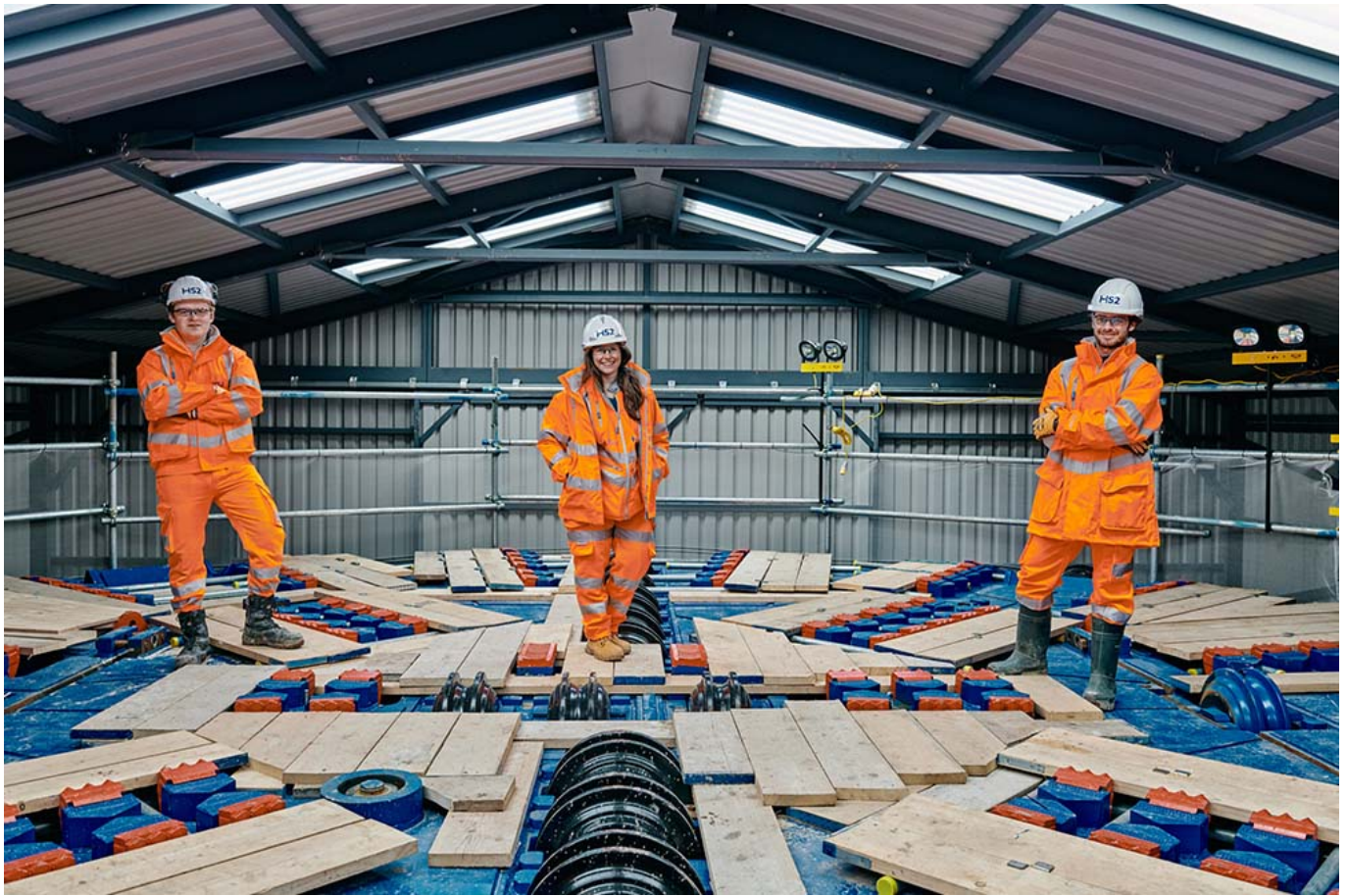
In the summer, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps MP gave the thumbs up for work to start on Old Oak Common station in West London, which will be the UK's best-connected railway 'super-hub', and the biggest station ever constructed in a single-stage build in the UK. Over 2,300 jobs will be supported on the site at peak construction, and over 250 apprenticeships will be created.



Also in the summer, HS2 announced that over 700,000 trees have been planted and 100 new habitats created on Phase One of the project. The wildlife sites represent a mix of different habitat types, including grassland, woodland, scrub and ponds, and are already havens for wildlife including birds, bats, barn owls, badgers, great crested newts and butterflies.



In September, one year on from the start of construction, HS2 celebrated hitting the landmark of 20,000 jobs supported by the project. Companies right across the country are now forming part of HS2's ever growing supply chain, with contracts awarded to over 2,200 businesses, 97% of which are UK-based. HS2 has also now welcomed over 650 new apprentice starts.



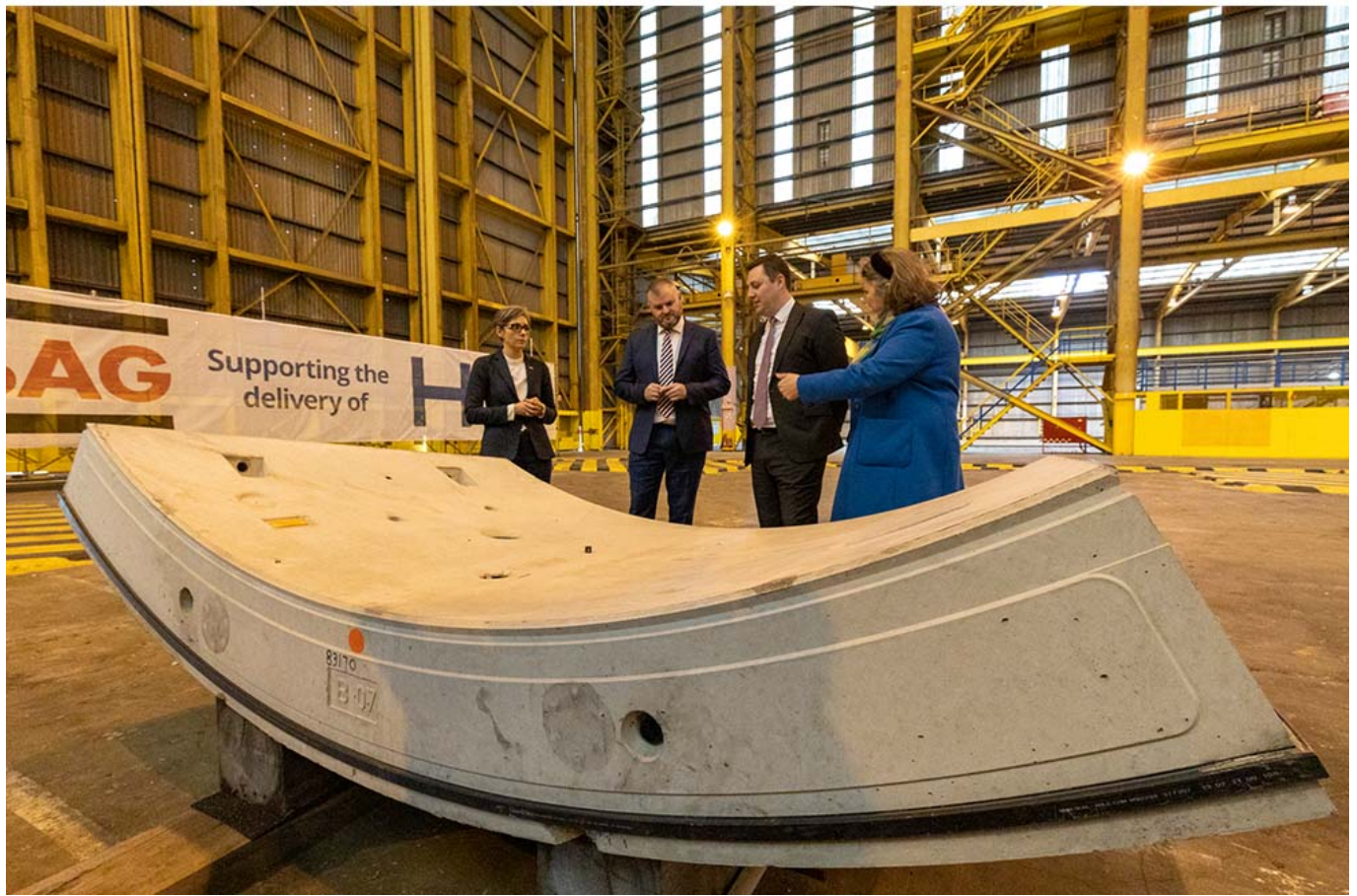
In Autumn, HS2 revealed the colossal operation that is taking place at its logistics hub near Willesden Junction. The 30-acre site will be the beating heart of the logistics operation for HS2 in London, where earth from 26 miles of bored tunnel will be processed and critical construction materials, such as pre-cast tunnel segment rings will be delivered.



October saw archaeologists in Buckinghamshire uncover a set of incredibly rare Roman statues whilst excavating a Norman Church in Stoke Mandeville. Dr Rachel Wood, Lead Archaeologist for Fusion JV, said the find was “utterly astounding” and that finds like this were truly “once in a lifetime”. Other finds along HS2’s route include a ‘Hillingdon Hoard’ of 300 iron age coins, the remains of an Anglo-Saxon church and Warwickshire’s answer to Hampton Court with the discovery of Coleshill Manor.



Also in October, it was confirmed that a new STRABAG factory will be constructed on an old oil-rig fabrication site at Hartlepool Dock. The factory will produce 36,000 precast tunnel segments for HS2's London tunnels and is expected to support over 100 new jobs in Hartlepool.



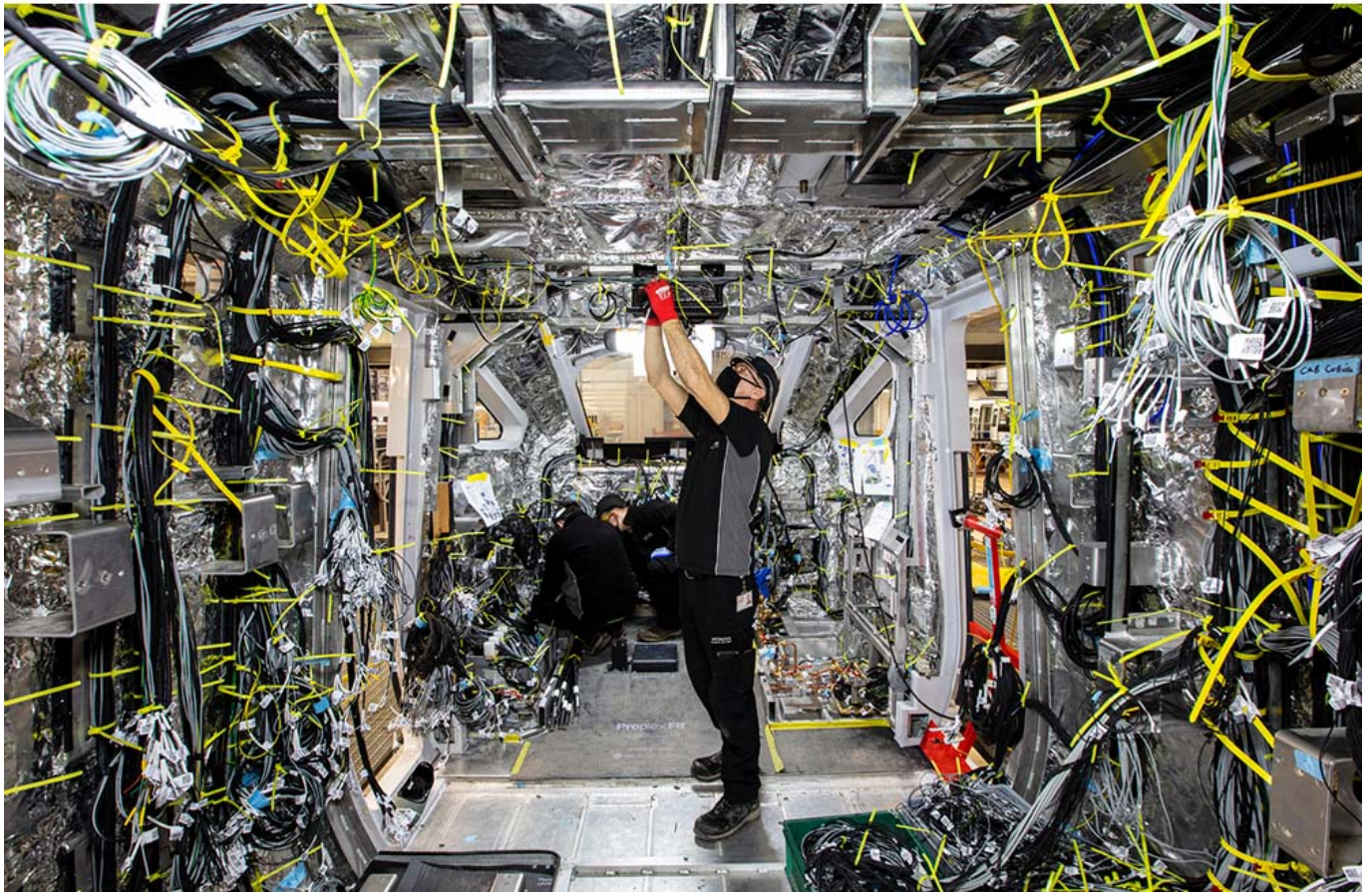
In November, with construction of the UK's longest railway bridge in the Chilterns well underway, HS2 confirmed that it is on track to cut the amount of embedded carbon in the Colne Valley Viaduct by almost 30%. The viaduct will carry the new high-speed rail line for 3.4km across a series of lakes and waterways on the north west outskirts of London and will be almost a kilometre longer than the Forth Rail Bridge.



December saw the launch of 'Dorothy' – HS2's first giant tunnelling machine in the Midlands, which will preserve the Long Itchington Wood in Warwickshire. The tunnelling team will operate the machine for around five months as it excavates the first bore of the one-mile tunnel. This will be the first HS2 tunnel to be completed on the project, with the machine set to break through its first bore at the south portal in Spring 2022.



The year ended with HS2 Ltd confirming that Hitachi/Alstom had been awarded the contracts to build Britain's next generation of high speed trains at their factories in Derby, Crewe and County Durham. In a deal set to create and support 2,500 jobs across the UK, the contracts – worth around £2bn – will see Hitachi/Alstom design, build, and maintain a fleet of 54 state-of-the-art high speed trains.



The momentum will continue throughout 2022, with milestones including the deposit of the Parliamentary Bill to build the Western leg of HS2 Phase 2b extending the route to Manchester; the breakthrough of the Long Itchington Wood TBM 'Dorothy' in Warwickshire; the unveiling of the completed renovation of the historic Old Curzon Street Station building in Birmingham; the launch of the London Tunnel Boring Machines; and start of early environmental works on Phase 2a of the project.