

# ICE's Jonathan Spruce gives us his thoughts ahead of Thursday's financial statement

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The upcoming financial statement is a hot topic for everyone. Whatever the result on Thursday, one thing is for certain – there is going to be plenty of change.

The [Institution of Civil Engineers \(ICE\)](#) trustee for policy and external affairs and director at Fore Consulting, Jonathan Spruce has spoken exclusively to RBD, giving us his thoughts on what he expects to emerge from Jeremy Hunt's very secretive red box on Thursday...



*Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) trustee for policy and external affairs and director at Fore Consulting, Jonathan Spruce*

“Although it is virtually certain that Jeremy Hunt will announce spending cuts later this week, it’s impossible to predict which projects they will impact. What we can be fairly sure about is that the money that’s been already allocated to projects will have to go further.”

It’s likely that Jonathan is definitely on the right tracks with this one, **it has been hinted at by senior politicians that large scale projects are certainly going to have to look at curbing their costs**, so it’s certainly wise to anticipate some belt tightening.

He continued: “In such circumstances, it is more essential than ever that as an industry we make clear, evidence-based decisions and prioritise projects that will help us reach our long-term goals of improving connectivity for passengers and reaching our net zero targets.”

“We’ve seen the negative impact that stop-start decision making has on the rail industry – it delays electrification and major upgrade projects and the lack of certainty means supply chains are disrupted and skills are lost, which leads to further delays and cost increases.

“The Integrated Rail Plan was meant to provide the industry with a long-term programme against which to plan effectively, but the lack of delivery programme and the uncertainty about capital spending levels after the previous Autumn Statement only adds to the risk of re-running what we have seen before. If cuts are inevitable, focusing on high-quality projects that will deliver key objectives will result in better

outcomes for the country and the industry in the long term.”

Recently, everything certainly has been hugely stop-start, but whatever happens on Thursday, **if rail minister Huw Merriman gets his way**, we can cross our fingers that this at least may change.

We'll revisit Jonathan's predictions once all is revealed on Thursday, in the meantime, the nation waits!