

# Party leaders urged to publicly commit to completion of HS2 Phase Two

January 24, 2019



West Midlands transport bosses are among more than 40 prominent figures to have signed an [open letter](#) calling on party leaders to publicly commit to completing HS2 Phase Two in its entirety.

Midlands Connect, Midlands Engine, Northern Powerhouse Partnership and Core Cities UK are urging Theresa May, Jeremy Corbyn, Vince Cable and Nicola Sturgeon to offer their unwavering support to the project, explaining it is the only way to ensure the country benefits fully from a once-in-a-generation opportunity to drive regional economic growth and rebalance the economy.

Delivering HS2 in full will connect eight of the UK's ten biggest cities, and once integrated with crucial upgrades to the existing rail network, including Northern Powerhouse Rail and the Midlands Rail Hub, all ten cities will benefit from a step-change in rail connectivity.

The open letter explains: "HS2 Phase Two will extend the benefits of this vital piece of infrastructure to more than 25 million people – over a third of the UK's population – across the East Midlands, the North and Scotland. These people and places should not be denied the job and growth opportunities that HS2 brings. It must continue beyond Birmingham.

"Our support must not flounder or stall. We must unite to deliver HS2 in full, and we urge you to join us by

offering your vocal and unwavering support. Help make HS2 happen for everyone, and help us all achieve our full potential.

“To our party leaders we say – back it, build it, benefit from it.”

The letter has been signed by more than 40 business and civic leaders, including: Sir John Peace, Chair of Midlands Engine & Midlands Connect; Steve Rotheram, Mayor of Liverpool City Region, Cllr Judith Blake, Chair of Core Cities & Leader of Leeds City Council; Charlie Cornish, Chief Executive of Manchester Airports Group, the Managing Directors of East Midlands Airport and Birmingham Airport, as well as top executives from Boots, HSBC, PwC and Mace.

Also signing are Cllr Bob Sleigh, leader of Solihull Borough Council and Deputy Mayor of the West Midlands, Cllr Roger Lawrence, leader of Wolverhampton City Council and portfolio holder for transport, West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and chair of West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE), Cllr Qadar Zada, leader of Dudley Borough Council and WMCA portfolio holder for environment, Cllr Ian Ward, leader of Birmingham City Council and WMCA portfolio holder for economic growth, Laura Shoaf, managing director of Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), Malcolm Holmes, executive director of WMRE, Tim Pile, Chair, Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP, Cllr Philip Atkins, leader of Staffordshire County Council and Steve Hollis, chair of West Midlands Combined Authority HS2 Growth Delivery Board.

HS2 Phase One, connecting London to the West Midlands, received Royal Assent in 2017 and construction is underway. It's led to record levels of Foreign Direct Investment in to the West Midlands, with more than 7,000 new jobs created in Birmingham as a direct result of HS2, and over 100,000 more expected around the new Curzon Street and Interchange stations.

Phases 2a and 2b, connecting the West Midlands to the East Midlands, Crewe, Manchester, South Yorkshire and Leeds, still require parliamentary backing to proceed. Phase 2a is scheduled to receive Royal Assent before the end of 2019, with Phase 2b following in early 2023.

The signatories assert that committing to HS2 in full, once and for all, will spread the flow of investment across the Midlands, the North of England and into Scotland. The eastern leg of Phase 2b alone supports plans that will double the size of Leeds city centre and deliver £4 billion a year to the East Midlands economy through the new hub station at Toton.

The open letter comes as MPs, business and civic leaders from across the country unite today (Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> January) for a parliamentary reception at Westminster to intensify their unequivocal support for HS2. They will be joined by Allan Cook in his first public engagement as Chairman of HS2.

Sir John Peace, Chairman of Midlands Connect and Midlands Engine, said: “The Midlands and the North are uniting behind HS2, promoting the short and long term benefits and answering the project's critics to make sure it goes ahead in full. Securing unequivocal, cross-party support to deliver HS2 in its entirety is essential to the economic futures of the Midlands and the North. The East Midlands alone stands to create 74,000 new jobs as a result of HS2; reaffirming the promise of this investment will catalyse growth and business confidence during a crucial transitional period for the country. We can't afford to let this opportunity slip through our fingers.”

Cllr Judith Blake, Chair of Core Cities UK and Leader of Leeds City Council, said: “The current political uncertainty at Westminster makes it all the more important that Government stays the course and continues to back Phase Two of HS2 which is vital for our Core Cities, including my own city of Leeds where its benefits are already being felt. HS2 is more than just a railway line, it will unlock future jobs, training and regeneration opportunities that will benefit all our citizens. Its construction is key to the success of future infrastructure projects like Northern Powerhouse Rail and Midlands Rail Hub that will boost productivity and help rebalance our nation.”

### **The full list of signatories to the Open Letter:**

Sir John Peace, Chair, Midlands Connect & Midlands Engine; Fiona Piercy, Programme Director, Midlands Engine; Maria Machancoses, Director, Midlands Connect; Cllr Judith Blake, Chair, Core Cities and Leader, Leeds City Council; Henri Murison, Director, Northern Powerhouse Partnership

#### **Co-signed by:**

Charlie Cornish, Group Chief Executive, Manchester Airports Group; Nick Barton, Chief Executive, Birmingham Airport; Karen Smart, Managing Director, East Midlands Airport; David Laws, Chief Executive, Leeds Bradford Airport; Steve Rotheram, Mayor of Liverpool City Region; Professor Dame Nancy Rothwell, President and Vice-Chancellor of The University of Manchester; Cllr Ian Ward, Leader, Birmingham City Council; Cllr Bob Sleigh, Leader, Solihull Borough Council and Deputy Mayor of the West Midlands; Cllr Jon Collins, Leader, Nottingham City Council; Cllr Chris Poulter, Leader, Derby City Council; Cllr Nick Rushton, Leader, Leicestershire County Council; Cllr Kay Cutts, Leader, Nottinghamshire County Council; Cllr Philip Atkins, Leader, Staffordshire County Council; Cllr Roger Lawrence, Leader, Wolverhampton City Council, Lead Member for Transport, West Midlands Combined Authority and Chair of West Midlands Rail Executive; Cllr Qadar Zada, Leader, Dudley Borough Council; Laura Shoaf, Managing Director, Transport for West Midlands; Malcolm Holmes, Executive Director, West Midlands Rail Executive & Director of Rail, Transport for West Midlands; Mike Ashworth, Strategic Director of Economy, Transport & Environment, Derbyshire County Council; Paul Faulkner, Chief Executive, Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce; Steve Hollis, Chair, West Midlands Combined Authority HS2 Growth Delivery Board; Nick Brown, Chair, Urban Growth Company; Matthew Hammond, Regional Chairman, PwC and Chairman, West Midlands Growth Company; Neil Rami, Chief Executive, West Midlands Growth Company; Elizabeth Fagan, non-executive director and former MD, Boots and Chair, D2N2 LEP; Ian Morgan, Director, Wellglade Group & Chair of East Midlands HS2 Business Advisory Group; Mark Cowlard, CEO, Arcadis UK; Jonathan Moore, City Executive for Greater Manchester and North, Arcadis UK; Mark Reynolds, Chief Executive, Mace; John Joyce, Managing Partner, Addleshaw Goddard; Ben Andrews, Managing Director North, HSBC; Miles Rothbury, Global Relationship Director – Large Corporates, North, HSBC; Andy Koss, Chief Executive, Drax Power Limited; Chris Fraser, Chief Executive, Sirius Minerals; Gareth Edmunds, External Director, Sirius Minerals; Tim Pile, Chair, Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP; Elizabeth Fagan, MD, Boots UK and Chair, D2N2 LEP; David Frost CBE, Chair Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Enterprise Partnership; Mandip Rai, Chief Executive, Leicester & Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership; Graham Wynn OBE, Chair, The Marches LEP; Mark Stansfeld, Chair, Worcestershire LEP; Ursula Lidbetter, Chair, Lincolnshire LEP; Scott Knowles, Chief Executive, East Midlands Chamber (Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire,

Leicestershire).