

# Queen's Speech: "Proposals will be taken forward to transform connectivity by rail"

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The Queen has outlined the government's priorities saying the aim is to deliver a national recovery from the pandemic that makes the UK "stronger, healthier and more prosperous than before".

Her Majesty, speaking at the state opening of parliament, said to achieve this "my Government will level up opportunities across all parts of the UK, supporting jobs, businesses and economic growth and addressing the impact of the pandemic on public services."

In her speech, she also said: "My Government will strengthen the economic ties across the union, investing in and improving national infrastructure. Proposals will be taken forward to transform connectivity by rail and bus (High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Bill) and to extend 5G mobile coverage and gigabit capable broadband."

Reacting to the Queen's Speech, Darren Caplan, Chief Executive of the Railway Industry Association (RIA), said: "The Queen's Speech today confirmed the long-awaited Williams Review White Paper on rail reform will be published shortly and, encouragingly, that investing in and improving national infrastructure to transform connectivity – and creating new jobs and skills to drive growth in sectors such as rail – is seen by

the Government as key to strengthening economic ties across the UK.

“However, whilst HS2 is described today as being at the heart of the country’s plans to build back better from Coronavirus, the Queen’s Speech omits any reference to the Eastern Leg of the scheme, which takes the high speed network to Leeds. We therefore urge the Government to clarify whether the Eastern Leg will be included in forthcoming legislation, with the publication of the Integrated Rail Plan for the Midlands and North a priority.

“As a recent survey conducted by RIA and the High Speed Rail Group showed, not only do towns, cities and communities across the country depend on the full HS2 route to be delivered in full, but many businesses do too. To ‘build back better’ and level-up all parts of the UK, it is essential HS2 is delivered in its entirety alongside other key rail projects – otherwise we risk missing out on the jobs, investment and economic growth that rail can unleash in the post pandemic years ahead.”

Andy Bagnall, Director General of the Rail Delivery Group, representing the rail industry, said: “We welcome the government’s Queen’s Speech commitment to increase connectivity across the public transport network. We want to work with the government as part of the planned reform of the railway to further boost connectivity by making fares easier for passengers – allowing people to mix and match fares to get the best deal for their needs and introducing London style tap-in-tap-out capping for commuters in towns and cities across the country.”

Tim Wood, Acting Chief Executive at Transport for the North, said:

“Today’s Queen’s Speech opened with a statement on levelling up and the need to transform connectivity by rail and bus as part of the agenda. That this is high on the list of priorities is welcome news and must now be met with action as we focus on rebalancing our economy and improving transport links.

“We now need to see commitment to these aims in the upcoming Integrated Rail Plan, including backing the full HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail networks. Alongside a sustained pipeline of investment in our roads and active travel provision, this will support the cross-cutting themes of economic recovery and growth out of the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as increasing skills and opportunities for the North’s communities.

“Clear targets on climate change are also to be welcomed. Green growth is a big challenge, and one that is a key area of focus for Transport for the North. Our upcoming Decarbonisation Strategy provides a strong evidence base and clear plan for how cutting carbon emissions can be achieved, and offers a vision for future transport networks that will tackle the climate emergency.”

[Click here to read the Queen’s Speech.](#)

*Photo credit: Rail Delivery Group*