

Young HS2 fan names new carbon-friendly freight train

September 15, 2021



A teenage rail fan has been given the honour of naming a Class 66 locomotive that will transport HS2 construction materials by rail to help reduce carbon emissions.

Jermaine Allen from Leeds unveiled the nameplate for GB Railfreight engine 66796, which he has named 'The Green Progressor', at the official opening of HS2's new 30-acre logistics hub near Willesden Junction in London.

The locomotive features a brand-new livery, promoting the environmental benefits of delivering construction materials by rail instead of road, which inspired the name that Jermaine has chosen.

For every locomotive that HS2 uses to transport aggregates and construction materials, up to 76 lorries are removed from the UK's roads and motorway network.

On average, around 100 freight trains per week are moving HS2 construction materials across the rail network, which not only makes our roads safer, but also supports HS2's commitment to reduce the carbon impact of construction by at least 50%, as each tonne of freight transported by rail reduces CO2 emissions

by 76% compared to road.

A self-confessed train fanatic, Jermaine has closely followed the story of HS2's development and construction since he was five-years-old. Accompanied by his parents, Jermaine has visited several construction sites along the 140-mile route that HS2 will follow between the West Midlands and London Euston, learning about the construction methods that HS2 is adopting in readiness for the arrival of Britain's high speed railway providing low carbon transport.

Today's invitation to visit HS2's new Logistics Hub, which has been constructed and will be operated by HS2's construction partner, Skanska Costain STRABAG joint venture (SCS JV), was a dream come true for the 15-year-old. But a special surprise on the day, organised by GB Railfreight and SCS JV, also saw Jermaine unveil a name plate for an engine named after him – a Class 08 shunting locomotive.

Speaking about his experience, Jermaine said: "It's great to have this fantastic once in a lifetime opportunity. I feel very privileged to name this locomotive and to be playing a part in the delivery of Europe's biggest infrastructure project."

The Green Progressor will transport construction materials, spoil and aggregates to depots right across HS2's Phase One route between the West Midlands and London. 66796 is one of five Class 66 locomotives imported from Germany by GB Railfreight to provide more capacity for Britain's growing rail freight sector. It is scheduled to make its maiden journey by the end of the year, once refurbishment works – that will see the locomotive fitted with the latest communications systems – are carried out.

The locomotive's new livery and the opportunity to extend an invitation to Jermaine to name it was facilitated by HS2's Conventional Rail Interface Manager, Andrew Graham and GB Railfreight's CEO, John Smith. Both organisations were keen to highlight the crucial role that transporting materials by freight plays in reducing carbon impacts, while providing the opportunity for a budding rail enthusiast to make his mark in the construction of this once in a lifetime project.

Andrew Graham, Conventional Rail Interface Manager at HS2 Ltd said: "Jermaine's passion, enthusiasm and knowledge is simply outstanding and we are delighted to have created this opportunity for him."

Class 08 shunter 'Jermaine' will occupy a permanent base at HS2's new logistics hub in Willesden where it will move wagons into position ready to transport and receive materials.

John Smith, CEO of GB Railfreight said: "It's wonderful to provide a young rail enthusiast like Jermaine the opportunity to name one of our Class 66 locomotives. By choosing the name, 'The Green Progressor', he has truly captured the role rail freight can play in delivering a more sustainable logistics solution for the construction of HS2.

"Working with SCS JV, we were also honoured to celebrate Jermaine's special connection to our railways by naming a Class 08 shunter after him."

Over the next decade, up to 15,000 freight trains will haul 10 million tonnes of aggregate to HS2 construction sites, marking a significant investment for Britain's rail freight sector.

Furthermore, once HS2 opens and moves long-distance, inter-city passenger services on to dedicated high-speed lines, the new railway will free up space for more freight services across the country, as well as additional local and regional passenger trains.

Photo credit: HS2 Ltd