

Government's railway plans are not "levelling up", say Greens



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Greens say the Government's announcements on rail for the North and Midlands, expected tomorrow, demonstrate a lack of strategic planning on public transport.

In response to indications that the eastern leg of HS2 from Birmingham to Leeds will be scrapped in favour of upgrading existing lines, Green Party co-leader Carla Denyer said,

"The Green Party has opposed the expensive HS2 project, while calling for investment in local and regional transport infrastructure, particularly in the North, Midlands and South West of England.[1]

"It now looks like the UK is being left with the expensive and most ecologically damaging first phase of HS2, which risks turning Birmingham into part of the London commuter belt, without any of the originally touted benefits of providing better connections in the North of England. I am worried that this announcement is the worst of both worlds."

At the same time as announcing upgrades to existing lines, the Government is expected to scrap Northern Powerhouse Rail, backtracking on promises made for cities and towns in the North.

Bradford Green Party councillor Matt Edwards said, "The effective cancellation of Northern Powerhouse Rail means that our cities in the North, especially places like Bradford, Liverpool, and Hull are getting left behind again. This isn't leveling up, it is another betrayal of people in the North."

Greens are now calling for the improvements to existing local railway lines that will replace the eastern leg of HS2 to be integrated into a wider strategy for transport in this climate emergency.

Carla Denyer added,

"Greens have long called for improvements to journey times, frequencies and capacity of rail services in all regions of England and in Wales. [1] But a transport revolution to tackle the climate crisis and air pollution must also focus on less glamorous localised investments, particularly in infrastructure to make cycling and walking safer and more convenient, and in frequent and affordable local bus services."

ENDS

Notes

[1] The Green Party's 2019 manifesto states: 'Creating a new golden age of train by opening new rail connections that remove bottlenecks, increase rail freight capacity, improve journey times and frequencies, enhance capacity in the South West, Midlands and North, and connect currently unconnected urban areas.'

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