

HS2 minister starts roundtables on integrated rail plan

- minister kicks off series of virtual meetings with key leaders from across the north and Midlands
- representatives to discuss HS2, Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) and Midlands Engine Rail
- roundtables to focus on ensuring priorities of the whole country are central to the integrated rail plan, set to be published at the end of the year

HS2 Minister Andrew Stephenson is hosting a series of virtual meetings with leaders from across the north and Midlands, ensuring regional representatives can voice their priorities for the integrated rail plan (IRP) and the current plans for HS2, Northern Powerhouse rail (NPR) and Midlands Engine Rail.

As part of the [decision to proceed with HS2 announced in February \(2020\)](#), the government has committed to drawing up an integrated rail plan, informed by an assessment from the [National Infrastructure Commission](#), in order to look at how to deliver transformational rail improvements to the north and Midlands as quickly as possible, whilst driving down unnecessary costs and over-specification.

The roundtables, which form one part of the engagement process, will seek the views of local authorities, metro mayors, local enterprise partnerships and chambers of commerce.

Over the next 2 weeks, the minister, along with HS2 Ltd and Network Rail officials, will meet with 70 representatives from The North West, North East, Yorkshire, East and West Midlands, with further roundtable events set to take place later in the year.

HS2 minister Andrew Stephenson said:

Our plan for a better connected country and for stronger regional economies is best realised with the voices of all of our towns and cities at the table.

Even as we work to tackle COVID-19, these meetings will ensure we do not lose momentum on developing the vital infrastructure needed for the future as quickly as possible.

I am determined to ensure each region's voice is heard as we develop our integrated rail plan, to help deliver a coordinated, pragmatic strategy best suited to the needs of communities across the north and Midlands.

The integrated rail plan will set out how to efficiently deliver rail investments to best suit the needs of those in the Midlands and north in an integrated way, and will be published at the end of the year. It will also have a focus on ensuring that lessons are learned from phase 1 of HS2 to drive down costs.