

Integrated Rail Plan for the North and the Midlands

Mr Speaker, with permission, I would like to make a statement about the future of the railway.

Today I am proud to announce our [Integrated Rail Plan](#). A £96 billion programme which will transform rail services in the North and the Midlands, the largest single rail investment ever made by a UK government. An investment that rather being felt decades into the future, but much, much sooner.

Mr Speaker, this unprecedented commitment to build a world-class railway that delivers for passengers and freight, for towns and cities, for communities and businesses, will benefit 8 out of the top 10 busiest rail corridors across the North and Midlands, providing faster journeys, increased capacity and more frequent services, up to 10 years sooner than previously planned.

Mr Speaker, when I became Transport Secretary in 2019, the HS2 project was already about 10 years old. I was concerned that costs were rising and that newer projects like Midlands Rail Hub and Northern Powerhouse Rail hadn't been fully factored into the plans.

Under the original scheme, the HS2 track would not have reached the East Midlands or the North until the early 2040s.

Clearly, a rethink was needed to make sure the project would deliver for the regions that it served as soon as possible.

This is how the Integrated Rail Plan was born – a desire to deliver sooner – and so the Prime Minister and I asked Douglas Oakervee to lead the work and make recommendations on the best way forward.

One of his key criticisms was that HS2 was designed in isolation from the rest of the transport network.

The original plans gave us high-speed lines to the East Midlands, but it didn't serve any of the East Midlands' 3 main cities, for example. If you wanted to get to Nottingham or Derby, you would have had to go to a parkway station and change on to a local tram or train.

Oakervee made a clear and very convincing case for considering HS2 as part of an integrated rail plan should work alongside local, regional and national services, not just those travelling between our biggest cities.

We accepted those recommendations and asked the National Infrastructure Commission to develop options.

The Commission reported back with 2 key suggestions. First, that we adopt a flexible approach, initially setting out a core integrated rail network. But

that we remain open to future additions as long as expectations on costs and timing were met.

Second, that strengthening regional rail links would be most economically beneficial for the North and the Midlands. Connecting towns with the main rail network, bringing hope and opportunity to communities who for too long have felt left behind. And we should seek to bring those benefits to passengers and local economies as soon as possible.

These, then, were the guiding principles behind the Integrated Rail Plan I'm announcing today. An ambitious and unparalleled programme that not only overhauls the inter-city links across the North and Midlands.

But that also speeds up the benefits for local areas and serves the destinations people most want to reach.

Mr Speaker, this new blueprint delivers 3 high-speed lines. First, Crewe to Manchester. Second, Birmingham to the East Midlands, with HS2 trains continuing to central Nottingham and central Derby, Chesterfield and Sheffield on an upgraded main line. And third, a brand new high-speed line from Warrington to Manchester and to the western border of Yorkshire, slashing journey times across the North of England.

Mr Speaker, I've heard some people say we are just electrifying the Transpennine Route. This is wrong. What we're actually doing is investing £23 billion to deliver Northern Powerhouse Rail and the Transpennine Route Upgrade, unlocking east to west travel across the north of England.

So in total, this package is 110 miles of new high-speed line. All of it in the Midlands and the North. It is 180 miles of newly-electrified line. All of it in the Midlands and North.

We will upgrade the East Coast Main Line, with a package of investment on track improvements and digital signalling, bringing down journey times between London, Leeds, Darlington, Newcastle and Edinburgh, bringing benefits to the North East much much sooner than under previous plans. And adds capacity and speeds up services over more than 400 miles of line, the vast majority of it in the Midlands and North.

We will study how best to take HS2 trains into Leeds as well. And we will start work on a new West Yorkshire mass transit system – righting the wrong of this major city – probably the largest in Europe – which doesn't have a mass transit system. We commit today to supporting West Yorkshire Combined Authority over the long term to ensure that this time, it actually gets done.

In short, Mr Speaker, we are about to embark on the biggest single acts of levelling up of any government in history. It is 5 times than what was spent on Crossrail, 10 times than what was spent on the Olympics.

It will achieve the same, similar or faster journey times to London and on the core Northern Powerhouse Rail network than the original proposals and will bring the benefits years earlier, as well as doubling, or in some cases tripling, capacity.

Let me set out a few of these investments:

- rail journeys between Birmingham and Nottingham cut from an hour and a quarter to 26 minutes. City centre to city centre
- journeys between York and Manchester down to 55 minutes, from 83 minutes today
- commuters will be able to get from Bradford to Leeds in just 12 minutes – almost half the time it takes today
- there will be earlier benefits for places like Sheffield and Chesterfield
- trips from Newcastle to Birmingham will be slashed by almost 30 minutes and passengers in Durham and Darlington will benefit from smoother, more reliable trains

As the IRP delivers not just for our largest cities, but also for smaller places and towns. Places such as Kettering, Market Harborough, Leicester, Loughborough, Grantham, Newark, Retford, Doncaster, Wakefield, Dewsbury, Huddersfield and Stalybridge could all see improvements, electrification or faster services, benefitting in ways that they would not have done under the previous HS2 programme.

Mr Speaker, we're not stopping there. Today's plan is about those places which connect and interact with HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail. The scale of ambition with many of these projects lies outside the scope of this plan.

Just yesterday I opened the first Beeching reversal. Reversing the Beeching acts. And we are going to be doing the same in Northumberland – the Ashington, Blyth, Newcastle line.

We're investing £2 billion in cycling and walking, £3 billion in turn-up-and-go bus services. And 10s of billions to upgrade our country's roads.

Mr Speaker, after so many decades of decline, constrained capacity and poor reliability, finally, this plan will give passengers in the North and Midlands the services they need and deserve.

It's not just about infrastructure, we're going to make train travel much easier as well. Today, I can confirm £360 million to reform fares and ticketing with the rollout of contactless, pay-as-you-go ticketing at 700 urban stations, including around 400 in the North.

Mr Speaker, this is a landmark plan, by far the biggest of any network improvement and focused on the North and Midlands, with more seats, more frequent services, and shorter journeys that meets the needs of both today's

passengers and future generations.

And we're getting started immediately today with another £625 million for the electrification between Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds, bringing the total on the Transpennine Route Upgrade to £2 billion and counting. And £249 million to further electrify the Midland Main Line between Kettering and Market Harborough with work starting on the Integrated Rail Plan by Christmas, Mr Speaker.

Communities of every size will benefit, right across the North and the Benefit, in many cases years earlier than planned by taking a fresh look at HS2 and how it fits with the rest of the rail system.

We'll be able to build a much-improved railway that will provide similar or better services to almost every destination than the outdated vision drawn up for HS2 over a decade ago.

This plan will bring the North and Midlands closer together and fire up their economies to rival London and the South East. It will rebalance our economic geography. It will spread opportunity. It will level up our country. And it will bring benefits at least a decade or more earlier.

I commend this statement to the House.