

News story: Transport Minister recognises Midlands as 'heart of HS2'

The HS2 minister, Nusrat Ghani, met with apprentices and businesses across the Midlands today (26 February 2018) to see first-hand how they are already benefitting from the jobs, skills and opportunities being delivered by HS2.

In discussions with businesses at the Birmingham Chambers of Commerce, the minister talked about the vital role HS2 will play in achieving the potential of the Midlands Engine, supporting 100,000 new jobs, bringing major cities, skilled workers and businesses closer together and increasing productivity.

The minister then visited the National College for High Speed Rail. With 2,000 apprenticeships being created by HS2, she met with students to learn about how they are gaining the specialist qualifications required to build HS2 and lead the way on future rail infrastructure projects.

She also met young engineers at Rolls Royce's Apprentice Academy in Derby, discussing how HS2 will bring businesses, skilled workers and major cities closer together, and the vital role they can play in the government's [Year of Engineering campaign](#).

With an additional 186,000 engineers needed every year until 2024 to fill all the engineering roles required by the UK, the minister encouraged the apprentices to be role models and help provide one million schoolchildren with an inspiring experience of engineering.

HS2 Minister Nusrat Ghani said:

HS2 is not only the future of our rail network, delivering faster journeys for more passengers and improving connections between some of our country's biggest cities, but is essential for driving forward economic growth and developing the next generation of engineers.

Birmingham is at the heart of HS2 and already seizing the opportunities that it has to offer. Through the National College for High Speed Rail we are training the engineers of tomorrow, empowering students with the skills and experience needed to gain brilliant careers and drive forward future innovation.

I also enjoyed meeting with a diverse range of businesses to discuss their vision and how HS2 can help unlock the extraordinary economic potential of the Midlands engine, driving forward jobs, productivity and growth.

Ms Ghani also visited Curzon Street station, where she was joined by West Midland Mayor Andy Street to discuss the regeneration of the area, with the potential to create around 14,000 new jobs and unlock 600,000 square metres

of new development space across Eastside and Digbeth.

Closed in 1966, Curzon Street will reopen as a new iconic station and Birmingham's largest building, with 7 platforms providing HS2 services initially to London in 2026 and then to the north west, north east and Scotland as the full HS2 network is delivered. HS2 will unlock capacity for new and additional freight services on the existing rail network, as well as faster and more frequent trains and thousands more seats for passengers.

Patrick Twist, Chair of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Business Transport Group said:

The roundtable was the perfect opportunity for the minister to hear the thoughts of local businesses on how the HS2 project will raise productivity levels across the region, improve connectivity with other parts of the country and play a huge role in rebalancing the economy – a key tenet of the [government's Industrial Strategy](#).

As someone who grew up in Birmingham, I'm sure the minister was delighted to witness first-hand the renaissance the city has undergone over the last decade and how key infrastructure projects such as HS2 will continue to shape this narrative for years to come.