

Press release: HS2 reveals Colne Valley viaduct concepts

The concept was developed by independent specialist architects Martin Knight in consultation with the [Colne Valley Regional Park Panel](#), and the [HS2 Independent Design Panel](#), consisting of architects, designers and experts in sustainability.

The viaduct concept document explores a range of options and ideas for how it can be sensitively and aesthetically sited within the Colne Valley, whilst addressing the technical demands of the project. It will help to inform further design work and technical development by Align, the main civil engineering contractor for HS2 between the Colne Valley viaduct and the northern portal of the Chilterns Tunnel. Align will engage the local community on these designs in spring 2018.

The concept has been developed around 14 key criteria, which were set by HS2 in consultation with the HS2 Independent Design Panel. These include whether the design fits the landscape, maintains views and landscape 'flow', is well proportioned and elegant.

The area of the Colne Valley through which HS2's route passes features a series of woods and lakes that developed when farming and quarrying ended, and sits alongside the Chiltern railway.

Chair of the Colne Valley Regional Park Panel, Jim Barclay, said:

The construction of the Colne Valley HS2 viaduct will have a significant impact on the Colne Valley area. The Colne Valley Panel which is drawn from local stakeholders, is very pleased to have been consulted and through a series of workshops, Panel Members have been able to understand the design principles for the viaduct. The Colne Valley Regional Park Panel looks forward to further engagement with HS2 and Align over the actual viaduct design.

As well as the viaduct itself, the concept document also explores innovative ideas for additional elements such as transparent noise-reduction barriers with vertical lines which are visible to bats and wildfowl to reduce possible impacts, whilst creating a slimmer side profile of the viaduct.

Sadie Morgan, chair of the Independent Design Panel, said:

We are delighted that this imaginative and carefully-considered concept has been published, and can form the basis for wider discussions with the communities around the Colne Valley and all those who value and use the spaces and amenities within it.

The Independent Design Panel will continue to work hard to ensure that the viaduct's final design respects its location and communities, whilst being a shining example of great design that Britain can be proud of.

Construction partner Align will be responsible for developing the final design and constructing the viaduct according to technical specifications and within an agreed cost envelope.

HS2 programme director, Mike Hickson, said:

The Colne Valley viaduct will be one of the longest viaducts in the UK, and one of HS2's best-known structures. We are pleased and grateful for the work done by Martin Knight Architects, the Colne Valley Regional Park Panel and the HS2 Independent Design Panel to produce this potential scheme design. We have every confidence that our contractor, Align, will continue this collaborative approach and engagement, as they now develop their own scheme and then detailed design of this significant structure.

News story: Drive to raise education standards in areas most in need

Raising education standards by supporting underperforming schools and offering young people more opportunities to make the best of their lives are at the heart of a package of measures announced today by Education Secretary Damian Hinds.

Aimed particularly at disadvantaged areas across the country, today's moves include:

- More than £45million awarded to successful multi-academy trusts to help tackle underperformance and improve schools in areas that lack capacity;
- 75 projects sharing £25million to provide more support for schools, many of which will increase pupils' literacy and numeracy skills; and
- The publication of the next six [Opportunity Area](#) plans in Bradford, Doncaster, Fenland and East Cambridgeshire, Hastings, Ipswich and Stoke-on-Trent.

The announcement builds on the government's record of 1.9million more children now in good or outstanding schools than in 2010, England's pupils now amongst the world's best readers and GCSE and A levels reformed to match the best education systems in the world.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

As Education Secretary, I want all children to get a truly world-class education that not only inspires them to make the most of their lives but also gives them the opportunity to fulfil their ambitions, no matter where they live.

Standards are rising in schools across the country but there is more to do to make sure that every child benefits from the progress we've already made thanks to an incredibly talented generation of teachers.

By supporting good and outstanding schools to help others improve, and focusing on disadvantaged areas where our young people need extra help, we can continue to make a difference to people's everyday lives and build a Britain that's fit for the future.

As part of the [Multi-Academy Trust Development and Improvement Fund](#) (MDIF), announced in October 2017, over £45million will support multi-academy trusts to drive improvement. More than £30million of this will be targeted to around 300 academy trusts in areas facing the greatest challenges across England. The attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers has narrowed in recent years – by 7% at GCSE and 10.5% at KS2 since 2011.

The money will go to more than 400 multi-academy trusts (MATs) with a proven record to help them build their capacity so they can help drive further improvements and raise standards. Ofsted data shows that 450,000 children are studying in sponsored academies rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' that were typically previously underperforming.

Under the latest round of the Strategic School Improvement Fund (SSIF), 75 largely school-led initiatives will share £25million to help more children from disadvantaged backgrounds, including many to support to help master the basics of reading and maths in primary school. Overall, the SSIF is worth up to £280million over two years. It targets resources at the schools most in need to improve school performance, support teacher development and drive up pupil attainment.

The next six Opportunity Area plans – for Bradford, Doncaster, Fenland and East Cambridgeshire, Hastings, Ipswich and Stoke-on-Trent – have been developed with local educators, employers and voluntary and community organisations and set out how they will improve the life chances of young people in these communities.

They follow the publication of the government's social mobility action plan [Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential](#) in December which focuses £800million of resources on those areas that can benefit the most. All 12 Opportunity Areas will benefit from a share of £22 million through a new Essential Life Skills programme, to help young people in these areas develop life skills in resilience, wellbeing and employability.

Among the initiatives confirmed today in the latest round of the Strategic School Improvement Fund is Cotgrave Candleby Lane School, a teaching school in Nottinghamshire. Funding will be used to improve reading outcomes across primary education by focusing on phonics and other reading practices in early years education, the teaching of comprehension at Key Stage 2, and measures to close or narrow the attainment gap between pupils.

Chris Wheatley, CEO of the Flying High Trust Partnership that runs the teaching school, said:

We are thrilled to be successful in securing our application. This project is testament to strong collaboration between Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottinghamshire Teaching Schools.

Drawing on the capacity of the school-led system; we aim to bring about sustainable improvement in reading across priority schools and a legacy of collaborative working to improve reading outcomes for all Nottinghamshire children.

Sir Kevan Collins, Chief Executive of the Education Endowment Foundation and Evidence Champion for the Opportunity Areas, said:

We know that your chance of getting on in life is strongly linked to where you grew up and that low levels of social mobility are becoming entrenched in some parts of the UK. Improving outcomes for young people in these 'coldspots' needs a concerted effort from local partners, schools and other organisations across every stage of a young person's life.

So it is welcome to see this evident in today's six plans. The need now is to move swiftly from planning to action so that children and young people experience the benefit of this investment.

To really have an impact, change has to be informed by evidence. Our Research Schools will be crucial in doing this in each of the Opportunity Areas. They will help to break down barriers so that research does not stay in the pages of academic journals but has a real impact on classroom practice. Allowing teachers to use lessons from what's worked to inform their practice can make all the difference to attainment.

Ahead of the announcement, the Secretary of State visited Curwen Primary School in London to meet with pupils and teachers. The school is part of The Tapscott Learning Trust, which has been awarded a share of the Multi-Academy Trust Development and Improvement Fund. Chief Executive Officer of The Tapscott Learning Trust and Executive Head of Curwen Primary School Paul Harris said:

It was a great honour and privilege to be able to show the new Secretary of State around our fantastic, outstanding school. As a school, and now as part of The Tapscott Learning Trust, it is our core mission to work in partnership with other providers to improve children's life chances. We welcome the opportunity to be able to demonstrate to the Secretary of State some of the amazing work that we are doing and to also discuss wider educational issues, particularly the way in which we train and support teachers through the continued development of our Training Hub and also to improve primary sports provision from our new Sports Hub.

We are delighted to have been awarded this grant by the MAT Development and Improvement Fund to help and support our work, not just within The Tapscott Learning Trust, but for other schools. We are confident that having secured this funding this will now be achievable and enable us to achieve our vision. We also look forward to working in partnership as an accredited provider of courses for the Autism Education Trust.

Simon Bramwell OBE, chief executive of the SS Simon and Jude Church of England multi-academy trust, a small trust with four primary academies, has been awarded a share of the Multi-Academy Trust Development and Improvement Fund to take on and improve schools that need support raising attainment for disadvantaged pupils in Knowsley and Salford. He said:

We are delighted to have been awarded MDIF funding to help support school improvement in these areas. The funding will go a long way in enabling us to provide greater capacity and sustainability for delivering the school improvement model across the Trust.

Press release: UK and France to strengthen links in tech sector and artificial intelligence

The UK tops the list in Europe for global tech investors, with its tech firms attracting more venture capital funding than any other European country in 2017. In December it was named by Oxford Insights as the best prepared country in the world for artificial intelligence (AI) implementation.

France has made big strides in creating new tech businesses and encouraging entrepreneurs, with Paris's newly built Station F, a former railway station hosting startups, multinationals and investors, symbolising the country's

ambition

Mr Hancock met his French counterpart, Françoise Nyssen, at the UK France Summit hosted by the Prime Minister and the French President, Emmanuel Macron, at Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst. He said the digital conference will take place this year and foster cross-Channel collaboration between academics, industry and government.

Its aim is to help both countries seize the economic and social benefits of fast-developing tech such as AI, and the conference will bring together experts on data, cyber security, digital government and digital skills to share their knowledge.

The countries also reaffirmed their commitment and support for the principle of net neutrality, which promotes a free and open internet. They agreed a joint statement to make sure users can access websites without internet service providers favouring or blocking particular sites.

This follows the launch this week of an Anglo-French alliance linking Imperial College London and the French National Centre for Scientific Research to strengthen relations in academic subjects underpinning AI, and the Franco-British AI Conference at the Alan Turing Institute on Tuesday.

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Secretary Matt Hancock said:

The UK and France are strengthening ties in technology and innovation. I'm looking forward to leading a cutting-edge digital conference this year which will see our world-leading experts in cyber security, digital skills, artificial intelligence, data and digital government share their talent and knowledge.

Both countries benefit when our digital economies are strong and the event will deepen our bonds and foster cross-Channel collaboration between those at the forefront of modern technology.

Julian David, CEO of techUK, said:

This event is a significant step towards greater collaboration between the British and French tech sectors. Both countries share similar opportunities and challenges as we build our leading digital economies through technologies like artificial intelligence, Internet of Things and cyber security.

International platforms for collaboration, such as the one announced by Matt Hancock today, provide valuable cross-border perspectives on many of the social, legal and ethical questions that will be raised as we continue to innovate.

Adrian Gregory, CEO of Atos UK&I said:

As a company that is proud of its European heritage, Atos welcomes the closer collaboration of British and French technologists.

And as a global digital leader with a long and rich association with the UK and with ten thousand UK-based people focused on transforming our customers' business through the best use of digital technology across the private and public sectors, we strongly believe in the mutual benefits that a closer working relationship will bring, particularly in the areas of AI, cyber security and data analytics, to forward-thinking organisations in both countries together with consumers. This will only serve to also strengthen the economies of both countries.

Stephen Kelly, CEO, Sage, said:

We welcome this deeper collaboration between two leading tech nations, France and the UK. For today's digital entrepreneurs the world has no borders, only opportunities to grow their business.

We have much to learn from each other as we bring advanced technologies like AI and collective intelligence into the everyday lives of small and growing businesses to improve productivity and growth.

[News story: Top apprentices and apprenticeship employers are recognised at National Apprenticeship Awards 2017 ceremony](#)

Held in London on 18 January 2018, the 'Bright Future' themed ceremony showcased individual and employer success stories, with businesses and apprentices beating off tough competition in regional heats to win in the national finale.

This year's national apprentice winners are:

- The Unilever Award for Intermediate Apprentice of the Year: Shannon Green, Althams Travel Services Ltd
- The PeoplePlus Award for Advanced Apprentice of the Year: Heeran Basi, Severn Trent Water
- The Nuclear Decommissioning Site Licence Companies Award for Higher or

Degree Apprentice of the Year: Charlotte Hughes, GlaxoSmithKline

And 2 highly commended in each category:

- The Unilever Award for Intermediate Apprentice of the Year: Ross Jasper, DCH and Matthew Gustard, Nottingham City Homes
- The PeoplePlus Award for Advanced Apprentice of the Year: Hannah Magowan, Dale Power Solutions and Megan Whitbread, Troup Bywaters + Anders
- The Nuclear Decommissioning Site Licence Companies Award for Higher or Degree Apprentice of the Year: Christopher Achiampong, IBM and Thomas Sherlock, IBM

Sarah Barley from South Hunsley School won the Santander Award for Apprenticeship Champion of the Year. She was recognised for the employer led programme she developed, recruiting 50 local employers to support and inspire young people about their next steps, whilst also planning open events to recruit employers interested in offering apprenticeships. Lois McLure from the Co-op and Julie Honour-Jones from Sir John Lawes School were both highly commended in this category.

This year's national employer winners are:

- The Troup Bywater + Anders Award for Small Employer of the Year: Beauty Oasis Spa
- The Royal Navy Award for Medium Employer of the Year: Superior Seals Limited
- The British Army Award for Large Employer of the Year: Dale Power Solutions
- The Open University Award for Macro Employer of the Year: Royal Air Force
- The BAE Systems Award for Newcomer SME of the Year: Lander Automotive Ltd
- The Rolls-Royce Award for Newcomer Large Employer of the Year: YBS Group (Yorkshire Building Society)

And 2 highly commended in each category:

- The Troup Bywater + Anders Award for Small Employer of the Year: Ginger Nut Media and McCarrick Contruction
- The Royal Navy Medium Employer of the Year: Invotra Limited and Maycast-Nokes Precision Engineering Ltd
- The British Army Award for Large Employer of the Year: Volvo Group UK and Eire and Home Group
- The Open University Award for Macro Employer of the Year: BBC and Lloyds Banking Group
- The BAE Systems Award for Newcomer SME of the Year: Blue Logic and Bury St Edmunds Canine Creche
- The Rolls-Royce Award for Newcomer Large Employer of the Year: Magnet and NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT)

Skills and Apprenticeships Minister Anne Milton said:

The National Apprenticeship Awards ceremony is a great opportunity to celebrate the work so many individuals and employers have done to champion apprenticeships.

I want to congratulate everyone that was a part of these awards for their contribution to apprenticeships in England. They are all fantastic advocates of hard work and ambition, and they highlight how apprenticeships are a great route into skilled employment for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Winner of the Rolls-Royce Award for Newcomer Large Employer of the Year was Yorkshire Building Society Group. Andy Tupman, Emerging Talent Manager at Yorkshire Building Society, said:

I'm delighted our apprenticeships programme has been recognised in the National Apprenticeship Awards 2017. Our apprentices are a credit not only to themselves but the whole organisation here at Yorkshire Building Society.

We're committed to providing great career pathways across a number of business areas whether in one of our head offices or throughout the UK in one of our branches. I'm proud of the culture that we have created and display on a daily basis.

For us, there's no such thing as a typical apprentice. You could be just out of school, looking to change your career, newly graduated and looking for something different or just out of retirement. There's no average age, no average background and no experience required – we are much more interested in finding applicants with the right values and passion for exceeding customer expectations.

Centrica Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers 2017

Also announced was the Centrica Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers list 2017, featuring the most exceptional apprenticeship employers from all of the National Apprenticeship Awards employer categories. The list includes Lloyds Banking Group, EDF Energy and IBM, and shows the breadth of employers offering fantastic apprenticeship opportunities.

PDF, 52.5KB, 4 pages

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Sue Husband, Director of the National Apprenticeship Service added:

The National Apprenticeship Awards showcase the breadth of apprenticeships on offer in a range of dynamic industries across the country. Apprenticeships are for everyone and I thank every employer and apprentice celebrated for their passion for, and commitment to, apprenticeships.

This year's winners are all shining examples of how apprenticeships develop outstanding talent whilst enhancing the incredible work of employers. I am certain all of our winners have a bright future thanks to the enriching benefits that apprenticeships bring.

Exciting changes to the future format of the National Apprenticeship Awards was also announced. More information about the awards will be released in March.

Speech: PM speech at V&A reception: 18 January 2018

I am delighted to welcome you to the world-famous V&A this evening – a jewel in the crown of Britain's culture. And now, like so much of Britain, further enriched by a French contribution – with Alice Dietsch as Project Director for the development of the stunning Exhibition Road Quarter which opened last Summer. And I am very pleased that Alice joins us here this evening, together with British architect Amanda Levete, whose practice delivered the whole project.

This evening marks the culmination of the 35th Franco-British Summit.

Traditionally this Summit has focused on our security and defence partnership. And it is right that today we have deepened that partnership further.

And of course we meet in the year that marks a century since the end of the First World War, when our troops fought side-by-side in defence of our shared belief in freedom and resistance against aggression.

And today we stand together against new threats to that same shared belief in freedom. And as I said in my very first speech as Prime Minister in the British Parliament – in the aftermath of the appalling terrorist attack in Nice – “the values of liberté, égalité and fraternité will prevail.”

But tonight is about even more than the defence of our shared values. It is about celebrating those values and the extraordinary depth of the people to people links between our countries.

Here in this Gallery tonight we have partners in business that make up just some of the £71 billion of trade between our countries every year.

Partners in science – from joint space programmes to joint working on genomics in the fight against cancer.

Partners in culture – for example, with your wonderful offer to bring the Bayeux Tapestry to our shores. The first time in almost a thousand years that people right here in Britain will have the opportunity to see a piece of French art that is so important to both our national stories.

Partners in sport – sharing ideas and expertise about major sporting events ahead of the 2023 Rugby World Cup and the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Innovative charity partners like Street League and Sport Dans La Ville – working together to use the power of sport to help young people into jobs and training.

Local partners – with mayors and school leaders who have built links across the Channel, like the new twinnings between Guildford and Versailles, and Tetbury and Chatillon.

And the leaders of the next generation – including representatives from the young leaders' programme of the Franco-British Council which launched last year and which I know is looking for new candidates for its second cohort – so please help them find the very best of British and French talent.

All of us are here because we believe in the profound importance of the historic friendship between our countries – and because we want to strengthen it further for the future.

Now as the United Kingdom leaves the European Union, I know there has been some uncertainty about that future and what it might mean for French people living here in Britain.

So let me say this:

En tant que Première Ministre du Royaume-Uni, je suis fière que plus de trois millions de citoyens européens y compris des centaines de milliers de nos amis français aient choisi de faire leur vie et de construire leur foyer ici, dans notre pays. J'attache une grande valeur à votre contribution à notre pays – vous enrichissez tous les secteurs de notre économie, de notre société, de notre culture, de nos vies. Je sais que notre pays serait plus pauvre si vous le quittiez, et je souhaite que vous restiez.

[Translation: As Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, I am proud that more than three million EU citizens [including hundreds of thousands of our French friends] have chosen to make your homes and livelihoods here in our country. I greatly value the depth of the contributions you make – enriching every part of our economy, our society, our culture and our national life. I know our country would be poorer if you left and I want you to stay.]

I know that Emmanuel feels the same about the British community in France.

And we are proud that the agreement we secured at last month's EU council means that French people living here and Brits living in France can carry on living their lives as before.

But the ambition that we share for the future relationship between the UK and France is so much greater.

So today, more than a century on from the "entente cordiale" let us celebrate our own "entente chaleureuse".

And let us show just how much this friendship matters to us all – today and for the generations to come.