

News story: First big HS2 contracts to build Britain's new railway will support 16,000 jobs

- government confirms plans to extend HS2 from Birmingham to north-west, East Midlands and Yorkshire
- decision announced on the first and second stages of the big construction contracts – valued at around £6.6 billion and supporting 16,000 jobs
- HS2 trains set to carry more than 300,000 people a day – freeing up thousands of seats and creating extra local services

The [winners of the major construction contracts for Britain's new railway were announced today](#) (17 July 2017), with the £6.6 billion contracts supporting 16,000 jobs across the country.

The huge infrastructure investment covers the main civil engineering work on the first phase of HS2 between London and Birmingham – including construction of tunnels, bridges, embankments and viaducts.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling announced the decision to award contracts today, which will mean the new high speed link reaching Birmingham by 2026.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

This is a hugely important step in the construction of Britain's new railway and underlines this government's determination to deliver an economy that works for all.

HS2 will deliver vital links between some of our country's biggest cities, helping to drive economic growth and productivity in the north and midlands.

As well as providing desperately needed new seats and better connecting our major cities, HS2 will help rebalance our economy.

We will now get on with building the railway, while continuing to ensure affected communities get appropriate support and are treated with fairness, compassion and respect.

David Higgins, Chairman of HS2 Ltd, said:

This is a huge day for the HS2 project and for the country. These contracts will support 16,000 jobs here in Britain and will create opportunities for thousands of SMEs.

HS2 was always designed to be much more than just a high speed railway and today we can see the opportunities it brings right around the country – spreading prosperity, acting as a catalyst for investment and rebalancing our economy 10 years before the railway even opens. Business now has the surety to invest with confidence to build a legacy for Britain.

HS2 could carry more than 300,000 people a day. And with fast trains using the new line, there will be extra space for more trains on the existing rail network.

Benefits will be felt across the network with trains running as far as Scotland and the number of seats available out of Euston in peak hours more than doubled.

In total, construction of the full HS2 route to the north-west and Yorkshire will create up to 25,000 jobs and 2,000 apprenticeships. Another 3,000 people will operate HS2 and it is estimated that growth around new HS2 stations will create another 100,000 jobs.

In February, Parliament granted powers to construct the Phase One route from London Euston to Birmingham, with the route opening in 2026.

The winning bidders to build the first phase of the route are:

Area South

- Euston Tunnels and Approaches – SCS JV (Skanska Construction UK Ltd, Costain Ltd, STRABAG AG)
- Northolt Tunnels – SCS JV (Skanska Construction UK Ltd, Costain Ltd, STRABAG AG)

Area Central

- Chiltern Tunnels and Colne Valley Viaduct – Align JV (Bouygues Travaux Publics, VolkerFitzpatrick, Sir Robert McAlpine)
- North Portal Chiltern Tunnels to Brackley – CEK JV (Carillion Construction Ltd, Eiffage Genie Civil SA, Kier Infrastructure and Overseas Ltd)
- Brackley to South Portal of Long Itchington Wood Green Tunnel – CEK JV (Carillion Construction Ltd, Eiffage Genie Civil SA, Kier Infrastructure and Overseas Ltd)

Area North

- Long Itchington Wood Green Tunnel to Delta Junction and Birmingham Spur – BBV JV (Balfour Beatty Group Ltd, VINCI Construction Grands Projets, VINCI Construction UK Ltd, VINCI Construction Terrassement)
- Delta Junction to WCML Tie-In – BBV JV (Balfour Beatty Group Ltd, VINCI Construction Grands Projets, VINCI Construction UK Ltd, VINCI

Construction Terrassement)

Preparatory works are already underway, with main construction work starting in 2018/19 following a period of detailed design work.

In addition, HS2 stations at Euston, Old Oak Common and in Birmingham will be central to HS2 and the work needed to develop designs is also well underway. Both the invitations to tender (ITTs) for the station design services contracts for all 4 Phase One stations and the invitation to participate in dialogue (ITPD) for the Euston Master Development Partner have been released to shortlisted bidders.

These are significant milestones which show how progress is continuing to deliver stations that will be embraced by the local communities, drive economic growth and provide seamless journeys for passengers.

A series of other HS2 announcements are taking place today.

The Transport Secretary will today publish a Bill to deliver the next phase of HS2, from the West Midlands to the West Coast Main Line south of Crewe.

This means – subject to Parliamentary approval – this part of the route can open in 2027, 6 years earlier than planned, to bring the benefits of HS2 to the north and Scotland sooner.

The Transport Secretary will also confirm the final Phase 2b route, from Crewe to Manchester and Birmingham to the East Midlands and Leeds. This phase will complete HS2 and unlock the transformative project's full benefits for the country.

[Press release: Home Secretary announces action plan to tackle acid attacks](#)

As part of the action plan, the Crown Prosecution Service's (CPS) guidance to prosecutors will be reviewed to ensure it makes clear that acid and other corrosive substances can be classed as dangerous weapons, and what is required to prove intent.

In addition, the Poisons Act 1972 will be reviewed to assess whether it should cover more acids and harmful substances, and the Home Office will work with police and the Ministry of Justice to assess whether the powers available to the courts, including sentencing, are sufficient to deal with these serious offences.

These measures will form part of a wide-ranging review of the law enforcement and criminal justice response, existing legislation, access to harmful products and the support offered to victims.

New guidance will also be provided to police officers on preventing attacks, searching potential perpetrators for harmful substances and responding to victims at the scene. And further work will also take place with retailers to agree measures to restrict sales of acids and other corrosive substances.

Home Secretary Amber Rudd said:

Acid attacks are horrific crimes which have a devastating effect on victims, both physically and emotionally.

It is vital that we do everything we can to prevent these sickening attacks happening in the first place.

We must also ensure that the police and other emergency services are able to respond as effectively as possible, that sentences reflect the seriousness of the offences and victims are given the immediate support they need.

The announcement comes as indicative figures from the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) suggest that more than 400 acid or corrosive substance attacks were carried out in the six months up to April 2017, based on returns from 39 forces in England and Wales. The returns also indicated that bleach, ammonia and acid were the most commonly used substances.

The action plan has been developed with the help of the police, health professionals and retailers and follows an event on Tuesday, 4 July, which was hosted by the Home Office and the NPCC.

Other measures in the action plan include:

- improving police recording and reporting of offences;
- commissioning research to better understand the motivations for carrying out these attacks;
- confirming appropriate support is provided to victims, from the initial medical response to giving evidence in court and the long-term recovery beyond; and
- ensuring that victim impact statements are completed in every case by the police so courts are made aware of the full impact of the attack. The police will also be encouraged to prepare Community Impact Statements to show how such attacks have affected communities.

NPCC lead for Corrosive Attacks, Assistant Chief Constable Rachel Kearton said:

Police have dealt with a number of high-profile cases in recent months and we continue to collect data from police forces across England and Wales to understand the scale and extent of these attacks and develop our ability to support and protect victims.

While it is virtually impossible to ban the sale of all corrosive substances, we are working closely with the Home Office and retailers to determine how we can keep these products from people who intend to cause harm.

I would urge anyone who is a victim of this type of attack to report it so that we can deal with the matter positively and sensitively.

The Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability, Sarah Newton, will outline the plans during a Parliamentary debate in the Commons tomorrow (Monday, 17 July).

Press release: Soft sentence' correction scheme extended to terror offences

People found guilty of encouraging terrorism, sharing terrorist propaganda and other terror related offences could see their sentences increased if victims or the public think the punishment is too soft.

Under plans confirmed by ministers today, the Unduly Lenient Sentence (ULS) scheme – which allows victims of crime and the public to query the sentences handed out by the courts – will now include an increased range of terror-related offences.

The scheme gives anyone the power to ask the Attorney General to review a sentence and, where appropriate, the Attorney General can refer it to the Court of Appeal for reconsideration.

The most serious terror offences, and crimes such as murder and rape, are already covered, but under these changes the sentences for 19 offences including supporting extremist organisations, encouraging acts of terror or failing to disclose information about a terrorist attack will also be eligible for review.

Justice Minister Dominic Raab said:

We want the most robust sentences for any terrorist crimes and for victims to have every opportunity to see justice delivered.

Our action will reinforce our focus on deterring people who help radicalise terrorists, and punishing those who wilfully turn a blind eye to terrorist activity.

As the Home Secretary announced last year, the government has been committed to extending the scope of the scheme so a broader range of terror sentences can be challenged – recognising the devastating impact terrorism has on victims and communities.

The move also fulfils a Manifesto pledge to act in this area, helping to protect the public and make sure victims see justice done.

In 2015, the Attorney General referred 136 cases to the Court of Appeal, with the Court increasing the sentences of 102 offenders. While it is right the public and victims have the right to request a review this represents a small proportion of the 80,000 Crown Court cases heard each year, and shows that the judiciary get the vast majority of decisions right.

Today's announcement builds on the tough action already taken by the government to confront extremism, promote integration and identify new policies to tackle extremism. Keeping families, communities and our country safe is this Government's priority, and as the Prime Minister said following the appalling terrorist attacks in Manchester and London we will review our counter-terrorism strategy to tackle the changing threat.

Attorney General Jeremy Wright QC MP said:

The ULS scheme allows victims of crime, their families and the public to request a sentence review if they feel it's too low.

Widening the scheme to include terrorism offences will allow us to challenge more sentences and is a welcome first step to extending it even further.

Crimes of this nature will not be tolerated in our society and those convicted of terrorism will receive the sentence they deserve.

Notes to editors

- The ULS allows the Attorney General's Office (AGO) to review sentences given by the Crown Court in England and Wales if they're asked to.
- A request must be sent to the AGO within 28 days of the sentencing. After which the AGO has 28 days to review a sentence and make a

decision. Once they've reviewed the case, they may send it to the Court of Appeal. The court then decides whether the sentence should stay the same or it is unreasonably low and increase it. The court can also refuse to hear a case.

- The scheme will be extended to a raft of offences in the Terror Act 2000, the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001, and the Terrorism Act 2006. These offences cover a wide range of behaviour including: membership of banned organisations, fundraising terror, weapons training and publishing or communicating information about our armed forces.

Table of new offences in scope:

Offence	Description	Max Penalty (yrs)
Terrorism Act 2000 s11	Membership of proscribed organisation	10
Terrorism Act 2000 s12	Support for a proscribed organisation	10
Terrorism Act 2000 s15	Fundraising	14
Terrorism Act 2000 s16	Use and possession of funds	14
Terrorism Act 2000 s17	Funding arrangements	14
Terrorism Act 2000 s18	Money laundering	14
Terrorism Act 2000 s38B	Failing to disclose information about an act of terrorism	5
Terrorism Act 2000 s54	Weapons training	Life
Terrorism Act 2000 s57	Possessing article for terrorist purpose	15
Terrorism Act 2000 s58	Collecting information	10
Terrorism Act 2000 s58A	Information about member of armed forces	10
Terrorism Act 2000 ss63B, 63C, 63D	This extends jurisdiction to certain offences committed outside the UK!!!The offences are inflicting bodily harm and criminal damage	5-10 years, depending on offence
Terrorism Act 2006 s1	Encouragement of terrorism	7
Terrorism Act 2006 s2	Dissemination of terrorist publications	7
Terrorism Act 2006 s6	Training for terrorism	Life
Terrorism Act 2006 s8	Attending terrorist training camp	10
Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 s113	Use of noxious substances or things	14

- A pooled-clip of Minister Raab is available through SKY News.

Press release: Five towns and cities shortlisted for UK City of Culture 2021

The announcement comes following a meeting of the independent advisory panel chaired by Phil Redmond. Of the eleven towns and cities that registered bids for UK City of Culture 2021, five have been shortlisted for the prestigious award.

In December 2017, either Coventry, Paisley, Stoke, Sunderland or Swansea will be named the third UK City of Culture, following in the footsteps of Derry-Londonderry and Hull.

Hull is the current City of Culture and its programme includes 365 days of cultural events. It is estimated that City of Culture has brought a boost of £60 million to the local economy in 2017. Nine out of 10 residents have attended, or taken part in, an event as part of Hull 2017 and the city has seen over £1 billion of investment since winning the title in 2013. The winner of UK City of Culture 2021 will also have access to a £3 million Heritage Lottery Fund grant.

John Glen, Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism said:

We have received strong bids from across the UK and now have a fantastic shortlist of five that reflect the diversity and cultural ambition of our towns and cities.

I want to congratulate all eleven bids which offered brilliant examples of how to celebrate their own unique culture and heritage, and showed just how prestigious and coveted the UK City of Culture is.

The strength of the competition showed us how valuable our cultural assets are to our towns, boosting tourism and jobs in local communities. I have seen first hand how Hull has embraced its status as City of Culture 2017, and how beneficial it has been for the area. I am looking forward to seeing what will come in 2021.

Phil Redmond, Chair of the UK City of Culture panel said:

The quality, commitment and enthusiasm that came across from the eleven bidders made deciding a shortlist to recommend to Ministers

as difficult as it was for the two previous UK City of Culture competitions. The appetite for using culture to bring about regeneration and to strengthen communities is clearly stronger than ever. Overall the panel thought that five cities' bids showed the potential to deliver a UK City of Culture 2021 programme. I want to thank all eleven bidders for all their work and look forward to final bids from Coventry, Paisley, Stoke-on-Trent, Sunderland and Swansea later this year.

Martin Green, Director of Hull 2017, said:

We're only halfway through the year and we're already seeing the huge benefits Hull is enjoying as UK City of Culture, not only in raising the profile of the city on a national and international scale but also increasing pride and participation among the people who live and work here.

At least 450 events, exhibitions and cultural activities took place during the first season, attracting over 1.4 million visits, which is boosting the economy. But what has impressed me the most is how the people of this city have taken ownership of their year with 90% trying at least one cultural event in the first three months.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the vision and leadership of Hull City Council, which successfully bid for Hull to become UK City of Culture, the support and collaboration of partners, as well as the strong community of artists that will continue to ensure it remains a vibrant cultural centre.

The shortlisted areas will now be invited to submit a final bid by the end of September. The panel will assess the final bids from the shortlisted cities before a winner is announced in December.

The unsuccessful areas will each receive detailed feedback on their bids. Ministers and officials will also engage with them on how best they could realise their ambitions for widespread recognition for their cultural offer.

ENDS

For further information and interview requests please contact Faye Jackson in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport press office on 020 7211 6263 or faye.jackson@culture.gov.uk

Notes to editors

- The eleven initial bids were made by Coventry, Hereford, Paisley, Perth,

Portsmouth, St David's and the Hundred of Dewisland, Stoke-on-Trent, Sunderland, Swansea, Warrington and Wells.

- To unlock the funds of the HLF Grant, the successful bidder will need to demonstrate that their programme is underpinned by heritage and builds on existing investment by the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- Follow us on Twitter ([@DCMS](#)) and Facebook ([dcmsgovuk](#)) to find out who's made the shortlist. Get involved in celebrating these great places by sharing photos using #CityofCulture2021
- Hull was named the second [UK City of Culture](#) in November 2013. While there is no monetary support or prize attached to the UK City of Culture title, Hull has successfully secured £15 million in government funding, as well as funding from Arts Council England (£3m) and Heritage Lottery Fund (£3m). The Heritage Lottery Fund has also recently awarded £15 million to the "Hull: Yorkshire Maritime City" project. Nine out of ten residents have attended or experienced a cultural event or activity as part of Hull 2017 and 70% say it is positively affecting their lives. In the first three month season there were around 1.4 million visits to more than 450 events and activities. The economic boost is substantial too. It amounts to 60 million pounds in 2017 alone. Hotel occupancy is up 14 per cent and train journeys by 17 per cent. Almost 90 new businesses and 550 new jobs have been created since 2013 and more than half of city centre businesses reported benefits in the first three months of 2017
- Full details of [Independent Panel](#) (PDF, 89.1KB, 3 pages)

[Press release: Swansea shortlisted for UK City of Culture 2021](#)

Coventry, Paisley, Stoke-on-Trent, Sunderland and Swansea have been shortlisted to host UK City of Culture 2021, the UK Government announced today.

The announcement comes following a meeting of the independent advisory panel chaired by Phil Redmond. Of the eleven towns and cities that registered bids for UK City of Culture 2021, five have been shortlisted for the prestigious award.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

Boasting the UK's first area of outstanding natural beauty, and the region that brought the first passenger railway to the world, Swansea's amazing achievements, past and present make it a true contender to be crowned UK City of Culture 2021. I know that they will put forward the strongest case possible in the race for the title and I hope that local people take every opportunity to get behind the bid.

Whilst there will be a some disappointment in St Davids today, it is important to remember that the bidding process has done so much to harness and highlight this beautiful area's traits to a wider audience. I hope this will provide a platform to fly the flag for Wales in a future UK City of Culture award.

In December 2017, either Coventry, Paisley, Stoke, Sunderland or Swansea will be named the third UK City of Culture, following in the footsteps of Derry-Londonderry and Hull.

Hull is the current City of Culture and its programme includes 365 days of cultural events. It is estimated that City of Culture has brought a boost of £60 million to the local economy in 2017. Nine out of 10 residents have attended, or taken part in, an event as part of Hull 2017 and the city has seen over £1 billion of investment since winning the title in 2013. The winner of UK City of Culture 2021 will also have access to a £3 million Heritage Lottery Fund grant.

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The strength of the competition showed us how valuable our cultural assets are to our towns, boosting tourism and jobs in local communities. I have seen first hand how Hull has embraced its status as City of Culture 2017, and how beneficial it has been for the area. I am looking forward to seeing what will come in 2021.

Phil Redmond, Chair of the UK City of Culture panel said:

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eleven bidders made deciding a shortlist to recommend to Ministers as difficult as it was for the two previous UK City of Culture competitions. The appetite for using culture to bring about regeneration and to strengthen communities is clearly stronger than ever. Overall the panel thought that five cities' bids showed the potential to deliver a UK City of Culture 2021 programme. I want to thank all eleven bidders for all their work and look forward to final bids from Coventry, Paisley, Stoke-on-Trent, Sunderland and Swansea later this year.

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