

# Speech: HS2 will be an integral part of our national rail network, and it will make the whole work better

## **Introduction**

It's an honour to open today's (22 June 2017) conference.

It's an honour; not least because of where we are this morning.

In Birmingham, the city where a thousand-strong HS2 team is getting the project off the drawing board and into reality.

On Curzon Street, just over the road from Birmingham's original station – opened in 1838, abandoned in the 1960s, and which we want to open again for HS2.

And in Birmingham Science Museum, whose halls show what this city has already achieved for science, technology and transport – and point to what it will achieve in future.

But if it's an honour to be here, today's conference is for me also a special occasion for one more reason.

## **New role and progress on HS2**

This is the first speech I've delivered in my new job – as Minister for HS2.

For most of the past year, I've been working as Minister for Rail.

Taking responsibility for everything to do with our railways.

Except for HS2.

A year ago, that division made sense.

Back then, the HS2 Bill for Phase One – the stretch from Birmingham to London – was a concept that had yet to be approved by parliament.

The route for much of the second phase of HS2 – from Crewe to Manchester and Birmingham to Leeds – had yet to be announced.

The procurement for the main engineering works, the rolling stock, and the franchise for operating the railway – all had yet to be triggered.

Back then, HS2 was still in the planning phase.

A distinct, stand-alone project.

But today, things have moved on.

Those plans are now starting to be implemented.

On sites up and down the route, the first enabling works are underway – we've begun the utility diversions, land clearance and environmental surveys.

We'll shortly award the multi-billion-pound contracts for the main engineering works.

In April, we began the hunt for designers for 3 brand new stations, at Curzon Street, Birmingham Interchange and London's Old Oak Common, as well as the expansion of London Euston.

We've launched the competition to design, build and maintain HS2's fleet of trains, and we expect to award the contract in 2019.

By the end of this year, we expect to deposit the bill for the stretch of track beyond Birmingham and on to Crewe.

And we have announced our preferred route for much of the sections from Crewe to Manchester and Birmingham to Leeds.

Yet today is the start of our integrating this part of the future rail network into the rest of the passenger network.

Because, most significantly of all, I am delighted that today we have announced the shortlist of bidders for the West Coast Partnership franchise – the franchise to operate services both on HS2 and the existing West Coast Line.

One of the 3 consortia in the final round, each with a vast range of skills and much experience, will deliver that integration with us.

One of these bidders will take on the role of running both the West Coast Main Line and HS2 simultaneously.

Their responsibility – for integrating HS2's services as part of the existing national rail network – mirrors my responsibility, in my new job, to oversee both our existing railways and HS2, and to ensure the successful integration of the two.

The uniting of the HS2 brief and the rail brief under one minister for the first time should be taken as a signal.

Of how far HS2 has come.

But also of the government's expectations for this project.

That HS2 should not be a railway apart, or a better, faster alternative to the classic rail network.

But rather for HS2 to join the existing network, to expand and enhance it.

## **The case for HS2**

That vision of HS2 as an enhancement of the existing network has always been integral to the case for the project.

And it's a case still worth making.

Take that old station over the road.

Twelve years after it was built, the West Coast Main Line was completed.

For the first time it became possible to take a direct train from London to Glasgow.

That year, the UK population was 15 million people.

That year, those 15 million people made 60 million rail journeys.

It's an impressive figure.

But it's small fry compared to the numbers our rail network caters for nowadays.

Today we have a population of 65 million people.

In 2015 we took 1.7 billion rail journeys.

And the numbers keep going up, year on year.

Already it can be a struggle to get a seat at peak times across much of the network.

If we do nothing, the situation will get worse.

## **Benefits of HS2**

But when we've built HS2, our railways will be able to carry an extra 300,000 people every day.

It will be a radical upgrade to Britain's rail capacity – and not just for the places that HS2 will directly serve.

Yes, there's the 8 out of 10 of Britain's biggest cities that will be directly connected by HS2.

And the many more places that will be served by HS2 trains running onto the existing network.

But it's because we're treating HS2 as an addition and enhancement to our existing network that the benefits of HS2 won't be restricted to its passengers – or even just those who live near a future HS2 station.

Thanks to the way that HS2 will free space on our existing network, over 100

towns and cities across the country could benefit from new services on that existing rail network.

We know that transport has a unique power to transform places.

And I'd like us to start thinking about how HS2 will help places along the length and breadth of the country.

I am grateful that, thanks to the hard work of many people in this room today, we are already making good progress: looking at how HS2 can have the same positive effects that high speed rail has had in cities such as Bordeaux and Utrecht.

And how we can bring those effects to places such as Euston, Old Oak Common, Curzon Street, Crewe, Toton, Sheffield, Manchester and Leeds.

It's great to see, for instance, the plans already being made by the councils and local enterprise partnerships of Staffordshire and Cheshire.

Plans for how HS2 could help support 100,000 new homes and 120,000 new jobs in the area.

Then there's Leeds City Council's plans for how HS2 could help reshape the South Bank area of the city.

And Greater Manchester Combined Authority estimates that, by 2040, HS2 will help create 180,000 new local jobs and add £1.3 billion to the region's economy.

These are some of the big cities and regions directly served by HS2.

Their plans are well advanced, and I am grateful to everyone here who has contributed to these plans and many others.

But I also want to maintain a focus on the smaller places along the route who will receive better rail services as a result of HS2.

Even if, in many cases, it might still be too early for us to make concrete plans in every place.

It's not too early for us to start to shift expectations.

To think what it might mean, for example, if HS2 can create more seats for passengers travelling between places such as Milton Keynes and Leicester.

Or better intercity services to London from Shrewsbury and Telford, Tamworth and Nuneaton.

Or more intercity services to London, perhaps from Middlesbrough, Hull and Lincoln.

Along with many other places along the line of route.

We know that HS2 will transform Euston and parts of Birmingham, Leeds,

Manchester and Crewe.

But we also need to start planning for the way that HS2 will bring improvements across much of the existing network.

## **Skills**

Of course, I also want to be clear that the opportunity of HS2 is by no means restricted to the rail network.

It's an opportunity for our economy as a whole.

Even someone who never travels by train stands to benefit from the thousands of jobs and apprenticeships created on the project.

As well as thousands more created by the better connections HS2 will bring.

During peak construction, we expect HS2 to employ 25,000 people.

And when HS2 is complete, it will support many, many times that number of jobs in the wider economy.

Then there's the thousands of skilled engineers who will be trained at our High Speed Rail Colleges in this city and in Doncaster.

Each of whom will gain the skills to work on HS2, but also the skills needed to maintain and enhance our existing infrastructure and to work on new projects.

Then there's all those who will be employed at the HS2 regeneration sites across the country.

Where, in the Leeds South Bank project, 35,000 jobs are expected to be created.

And in this region, the Greater Birmingham and Solihull growth strategy for the areas around the HS2 stations is planning for 36,000 new jobs – and 4,000 new homes.

I could go on – but I know that later today you'll hear much more about these plans and others.

## **Conclusion**

I'd like to conclude by saying thank you.

Thank you to everyone here who has already done so much to prepare the way for HS2.

Whether you're planning for regeneration, preparing to bid for contracts on the project or already involved in any way.

The political case for this project has already largely been won.

But to win the public case we need people to see what this project will do for our country.

How it will transform places.

Raise skill levels.

And spread new opportunity.

That's exactly what – in one way or another – everyone gathered here is helping to do.

So, thank you – and I look forward to working closely with you in the months and years ahead.

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## **Press release: Government and utility companies announce package of support for Grenfell victims**

- suppliers agree to write off outstanding utility bills for victims of the fire
- support comes on top of £5 million fund to pay for emergency supplies, food, clothes and other costs

The government today (Thursday 22 June) welcomed utility companies' announcement of a package of support for victims of the Grenfell Tower fire.

The announcement includes commitments agreed with businesses in the energy and water sectors and comes on top of the £5 million fund previously announced by the Prime Minister to pay for emergency supplies, food, clothes and other costs.

Power companies supplying energy to Grenfell Tower residents have agreed to provide all those affected by the tragedy with reassurance and support. This includes agreeing to:

- write off any outstanding debts for energy bills for people who lived in Grenfell Tower, while preserving prepayment and credit balances
- not charging people for energy for the period after the fire
- not put former residents who have been resettled on a more expensive tariff; and
- put on hold any direct debit payments for Grenfell Tower residents

Business and Energy Secretary Greg Clark said:

Businesses should play an active role in society and I am pleased that all the energy companies supplying Grenfell Tower have come together and agreed to a set of principles in support of families who have already lost so much.

Thames Water has confirmed that all accounts held by residents of Grenfell Tower have been frozen. For people who lived in Grenfell Tower, Thames Water:

- has already written off any outstanding debts; and
- will refund accounts where charges have been paid in advance once details of account holders are known

For those who have been evacuated from neighbouring properties, Thames Water will waive charges so those people will not be charged for a service they have not received.

Recognising the importance of making sure those affected are able to remain in contact with family and friends, telecommunications companies have been providing assistance to those affected in a number of ways including:

- providing free chargers, handsets and pre-loaded SIM cards (main operators have provided the contact centre with advice on how to access these or have made specific alternative arrangements which the contact centre is aware of)
  - allowing those affected to use in-store web browsing and mobile charging facilities in the immediate area
  - working to identify customers (including those without ID) and to assist with accounts (freezing charges, providing credit etc) for those affected; and
  - working to reconnect broadband customers quickly as they are rehoused.
- Utilita
  - E.ON
  - SSE
  - Ovo
  - Utility Warehouse
  - Flow Energy
  - Ecotricity
  - Npower
  - British Gas
  - Robin Hood
  - Edf Energy

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**[News story: Get inspired by UK female](#)**

# **innovators**

Innovate UK's infocus women in innovation exhibition will be at the [Getty Gallery](#), London, from 18 to 28 July. Featuring profiles of female entrepreneurs, the exhibit will redefine what we see, feel and believe about innovation. Admission is free.

## **Inspiring the next generation**

The exhibition aims to break down the barriers to women in innovation and present the next generation of female entrepreneurs with inspiring, relevant role models.

This follows research that:

- one in 3 female innovators believe their gender has negatively impacted their career
- the proportion of UK women engaged in entrepreneurial activity is around half the level of men
- if we can increase participation to the same level, women-led SMEs could contribute a £180 billion boost to the UK economy by 2025

During the exhibition there will be a workshop for 14 to 18-year-olds to meet and learn from female business leaders who are changing the world with their innovations. This is designed to get young women excited about innovation and empower them to come up with their own solutions.

## **Profiling the winners and finalists of women in innovation**

Photos on display include winners and finalists of the women in innovation funding competition, who continue to receive support from Innovate UK, as well as ambassadors of the awards. Acclaimed photographer [Amelia Troubridge](#) took the images.

The women are drawn from a diverse background. They are pioneering new technologies and solutions across a wide range of industries, from the optimisation of cancer treatment, to the creation of sustainable alternatives to animal products, air-pollution and waste. The exhibition celebrates their differences and successes.

This activity is part of our infocus initiative to encourage diversity and challenge the disproportionately low numbers of women entrepreneurs in the UK.

## **Showcase leading and growing businesses**

Dr. Ruth McKernan CBE, Chief Executive of Innovate UK, said:



Half of the world's population are female. To consider how many of these talented women are held back from participating in entrepreneurial activity is deeply frustrating, particularly as research shows that harnessing the skills of women entrepreneurs could significantly enhance UK economic growth. More so, the participation of women in the innovation ecosystem is crucial to the development of work that will truly change the world.

We know that a key barrier to engaging women in this is the lack of female role models. So what better way to address this balance than to partner with Getty, and the amazing Amelia Troubridge, in order to showcase the women who are already leading and growing incredible businesses across the UK.

It's an exciting opportunity to change what it looks like to be a female innovator in 2017, with the aim to inspire even more brilliant women to come forward with game-changing ideas.

The exhibition will run between 18 and 28 July. Opening hours are Monday to Friday, 10am to 5:30pm, and Saturday, midday to 5:30pm. [Plan your visit](#).

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## **Press release: 8,000 young fish released into the River Rother**

The Environment Agency has today released 8,000 young grayling into the River Rother at Chesterfield to help fish populations recover from historical pollution.

This release is part of a five-year restocking programme that is helping to restore the river's ecology to how it was before the industrial revolution.

The baby fish were reared at the Environment Agency's fish farm near Calverton using funding from rod licence sales.

Dr Jerome Masters, fisheries officer at the Environment Agency, said:

The River Rother was once one of the most polluted rivers in Europe. Grayling were wiped out as a result, and weirs in the river makes their natural recolonisation highly unlikely.

But life is returning to the River Rother. Water quality has improved, and the re-stocking programme will see grayling returning

to live alongside species such as brown trout, chub and roach which are already resident in Chesterfield's rivers.

Anyone who wants to help improve Chesterfield's rivers and the health of fish stocks could contribute by getting involved with the Wild Trout Trust's 'Trout in the Town' scheme.

Paul Gaskell, at the Wild Trout Trust, said:

We have a programme to help urban communities engage with and care for their local streams and rivers, called 'Trout in the Town'. In addition to caring generally for the river, groups often carry out invertebrate monitoring, and habitat improvement work. We can help out with training for that habitat improvement work and provide support with fundraising.

Anyone who is interested in becoming a founder member of a Chesterfield Trout in the Town group are invited to contact Dr Jerome Masters at [jerome.masters@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:jerome.masters@environment-agency.gov.uk).

More information on Trout in the Town projects can be found at [www.wildtrout.org/content/trout-town](http://www.wildtrout.org/content/trout-town) and [www.wildtrout.org/tint](http://www.wildtrout.org/tint).

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## **Press release: Fish kill costs Frome farmer Michael Aylesbury more than £22,000**

A farmer was told to pay more than £22,000 for polluting a river in Frome, Somerset, killing nearly 2,000 fish.

Dairy farmer Michael Aylesbury, a director in Cross Keys Farm Ltd, pleaded guilty to causing an unpermitted water discharge which turned the river in Frome brown and smelly in May 2016, killing 1,700 fish, probably many more.

The pollution came from a slurry lagoon at Bollow Farm, Silver Lane, East Woodlands where it was overflowing into a ditch from an underground chamber that had not been fully sealed off. Making matters worse, a spillage from a slurry pumping operation days before also entered the same ditch, meant only to carry rainwater.

The reduced water quality and the river's polluted appearance hit local groups, like anglers, kayakers and swimmers, who had to suspend activities. Residents were also upset by the sight of distressed and dying fish.

The Environment Agency was alerted to the incident on 12 May 2016 and attempted to save the fish population by spraying hydrogen peroxide to restore dissolved oxygen levels in the water. The pollution was traced back to Bollow Farm the next day.

To save the fish, hydrogen peroxide was sprayed to restore the dissolved oxygen levels

Tasked with protecting water, land and biodiversity, the Environment Agency classified the incident as category one – the worst kind – which affected the watercourse for more than 6km and was obvious to the naked eye. The defendant told investigating officers “he had nothing to hide and held his hands up to the pollution incident” and that he was sorry it had happened.

Bath Magistrates’ Court found Aylesbury to be negligent for not informing the Environment Agency about the initial spillage and fined him £3,000, a victim surcharge of £170 and ordered him to pay costs of £19,306.69 on 5 June 2017.

Environment officer Andy Grant said:

Our role as a regulator is to protect people and the environment and support sustainable growth. We work with business owners to create better places but when avoidable incidents like this happen, we take action.

Informing us of the initial spillage and keeping an eye on nearby watercourses are two simple actions the farmer could have taken which would have sped up our investigation and stopped the cause of the pollution sooner.

Last November we restocked 5,500 fish including chub, roach and bream at two locations in Frome and we continue working with our partners including the Bristol Avon Rivers Trust, Frome Town Council, farmers and landowners to identify opportunities to enhance and protect the River Frome.