

Transport Secretary tasks HS2 with reducing construction time and cost to taxpayers

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The government is exploring options to cut HS2 costs, reduce delays and deliver the benefits of increased rail capacity and faster journeys earlier.

- government tells HS2 Ltd to consider options that could save billions and bring the railway into service sooner
- the ongoing review will consider how to get passengers on trains sooner and deliver some of the fastest high-speed trains in Europe
- scheme supports national renewal – with delivery focusing on increased capacity, reliable trains with increased frequency whilst supporting thousands of jobs and adding billions to the economy

The Transport Secretary has today (23 March 2026) tasked HS2 Ltd to explore options to remove complexity that could cut billions in costs and reduce delays for the project.

The move comes as part of the government's reset of the high-speed rail line to ensure more trains and faster journeys are delivered as quickly and efficiently as possible, following years of mismanagement.

As part of his comprehensive reset of the project, HS2 Ltd CEO, Mark Wild, will explore other high-speed options for the railway, which could save taxpayers billions and reduce construction time.

HS2 was originally commissioned to run at 360km/h, which would have made them the fastest conventional high-speed trains anywhere in the world. However, no railway in the UK, or globally, is currently engineered for 360km/h.

This means that HS2 would have to wait for HS2 tracks to be built before testing any trains – an approach which could increase costs and delay the completion of the project.

These options would have negligible impact on projected journey times and get passengers onto trains sooner. The move would bring HS2 in line with proven high-speed models such as HS1, Japan's bullet trains, and France's TGV network which all run at 300-320km/h.

Transport Secretary, Heidi Alexander, said:

This government is determined to deliver HS2 as effectively and efficiently as possible. In doing so, I will look at every opportunity to claw back construction time, save taxpayers money and ensure the project delivers for the country.

I share the public's anger about the waste and mess of the past which is why this government is pulling HS2 out of its sclerosis and setting it on a more sensible course. We're getting a grip, controlling costs, and getting on with delivering the transport infrastructure this country needs.

After investigating further opportunities to bring down costs and delivery timelines, Mark Wild will report back to the Transport Secretary in the summer, alongside a progress update. Together, this work will ensure that the updated costs and schedule estimates are robust.

Under Mark Wild's leadership, HS2 is working. Right now, around 30,000 workers and thousands of UK businesses are supporting HS2's delivery, and in West London and the West Midlands, HS2 is estimated to add £20 billion to the economy and unlock 63,000 new homes over the next 10 years.

Mark Wild has delivered six construction milestones ahead of schedule over the last year, including:

- completion of excavation of the 3.5-mile Bromford Tunnel in the West Midlands – marking the end of excavation for all 23 miles of deep tunnels on the opening stage of the railway
- sliding a 14,500-tonne box structure – the heaviest of its kind in Europe – under the A46
- completion of the assembly of the second of two tunnel boring machines at Old Oak Common, allowing the first machine to begin excavating the Euston Tunnel under London in January this year, with the second having started last week
- Northolt Tunnel – last of four tunnel boring machines lifted out of the ground at Green Park Way in West London after excavating an 8.4-mile long tunnel between West Ruislip and Old Oak Common, three months ahead of schedule
- Station Road – installation of beams to carry Station Road in central Buckinghamshire over HS2 and national rail overbridges (Calvert)
- Greatworth Tunnel – completion of fifth of nine 400-metre sections of what will become HS2's longest green tunnel at 2.7km

Mark Wild, Chief Executive of HS2 Ltd, said:

I made a commitment to the Transport Secretary that I would regain control of HS2 and bring an end to the project's cost increases and delays.

With performance moving in the right direction, driven by the hard work of 30,000 people on the ground, we are rightly exploring options to create further efficiencies.

Speed has never been the primary objective. This railway will deliver better journeys, more capacity on the network, and economic growth – all of which are vital to the country's future prosperity.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/transport-secretary-tasks-hs2-with-reducing-construction-time-and-cost-to-taxpayers>