

Cancelling HS2 would be 'disaster' for North and Midlands, High Speed Rail Group says

Cancelling HS2 would be a 'disaster' for the Midlands and the North, industry leaders have declared amid reports that phase 2 of the project could be scrapped as costs soar.

National newspaper reports have suggested that the Prime Minister and Chancellor have discussed scrapping the proposed leg from Manchester to Birmingham, in a move that could save up to £34bn.

[The HS2 project](#) has already seen cutbacks, with the scrapping of the planned spur from the East Midlands to Leeds and the Euston station project paused.

Chancellor Jeremy Hunt is under pressure from MPs to deliver tax cuts, and [the Express suggests](#) cutting back on HS2 would give him some much-needed leeway ahead of his [Autumn Statement in November](#).

Rail leaders have urged the Chancellor and PM Rishi Sunak to commit to HS2.

A spokesperson for the High Speed Rail Group said: "Once again the 30,000 men and women who are working every day to deliver [HS2](#) will return home to find further speculation about whether they will be allowed to complete the job they have started.

"Were phase 2 to be cancelled it would be a disaster for the North and the Midlands. After 13 years during which the Government has promoted the project, it would also be the ultimate U-turn.

“The government needs to kill the speculation and make its intentions clear, and it ought to commit clearly and unambiguously to delivering the project as planned. The 30,000 people delivering HS2 deserve this. Our future generations deserve this. The North and Midlands deserve this.”

Documents caught on camera by photographers outside the Treasury suggested a meeting between Mr Sunak and Mr Hunt on HS2. In response a government spokesperson told The Independent: “You would expect No 10 and the Treasury to regularly discuss large infrastructure projects. Spades are already in the ground on the HS2 programme, and we remain focused on delivering that.”

Earlier this week unions and East Midlands politicians called for [moves to safeguard HS2 jobs](#) amid fears the delays could cost jobs.

Unite is urging the Government to bring forward work to ensure Alstom’s train building factory in Derby has sufficient work to guarantee its future, the PA news agency is reporting. Alstom won the contract to build the new trains for HS2.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: “The Government needs to get its head out of the sand and bring forward these contracts to improve existing rolling stock immediately. It is frankly unbelievable that they have not already agreed to this, in order to safeguard thousands of highly skilled jobs held by Unite members at Alstom.”

A spokesperson for HS2 said the Alstom deal was “a massive shot in the arm for the domestic rail industry” and that negotiations were ongoing.

A Department for Transport spokesperson said: “Rail manufacturing plays an important role in growing the UK economy and delivering better services for passengers. The Government remains committed to supporting the entire sector. We remain in contact with Alstom as it develops a sustainable

future for its Derby site.”