

HS2 PLANS CHANGE

What it will mean for the West Midlands

The publication of the Integrated Rail Plan for the North and the Midlands [IRP] shows some of the long term vision [or its scarcity].

- Most of HS2 East is not going ahead so Birmingham to York will take 110 minutes instead of 57 minutes if all of HS2 East were built. Similarly to Newcastle will be 167 minutes instead of 117. This is 26 minutes faster, says the IRP, than now as the East Coast Main Line north of York will gain some sections passed for 140 mph. 26 minutes, like all the journey time savings in IRP however looks to be pure fantasy!
- Part of HS2 East from Coleshill to Ratcliffe on Soar goes ahead, but completion is not until the 2040s. Instead of paralleling the Midland Main Line [MML] to a hub station at Toton, midway between Derby and Nottingham, HS2 East will join MML just south of East Midlands Parkway, making possible a Curzon Street to Nottingham non stop service of just 26 minutes it is claimed, a vast improvement on today's service taking 74. This was advocated by Campaign for Rail in 2016!
- The western leg of HS2 goes ahead from Crewe to Manchester Piccadilly, with a spur to rejoin the West Coast Main Line south of Wigan. This may yet go further north. There should be a new station at Manchester Airport, which does not at present have an attractive service from the West Midlands. From Birmingham to Manchester will be 41 minutes and with one change, Leeds will be reached in 74 minutes plus connection time. That will be less than by direct train via HS2 East [89 minutes]. The new line north from Crewe won't open until the late 2030s.
- Trains from Birmingham to Scotland will be 400m. long double sets, splitting at Carlisle with one set for Glasgow and the other for Edinburgh. These will be hourly. Our pre Covid service was alternating to each of the Scottish cities so in effect, two hourly.
- Within our region, there was no announcement about the Camp Hill chords plus extra platforms at Birmingham Moor Street which is still 'being considered', nor the chord at Nuneaton for a Coventry to Leicester and Nottingham service, but reports from within the industry suggest only the south chord at Bordesley will be built, for Worcester / Kings Norton locals.

On a positive note, the rest of HS2 East is not dead. Where land has already been bought, it is not to be sold off and the route is being safeguarded from development [aka blighted]. The IRP claims that enhancements rather than new build will bring the benefits ten years sooner. However that will be years of bus replacements at weekends - we remember the West Coast Upgrade - and seldom do upgrades deliver the extra capacity needed. Even so, the IRP has completion dates in the mid 2030s and 2040s.

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