

APSCo responds to HS2 and skills announcement

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Responding to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's speech today, Tania Bowers, Global Public Policy Director at the Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo) commented:

"Given the investment that has already gone into the project, it is disappointing that the Manchester leg of the HS2 has been scrapped completely, without concrete timings for further investment in rail across the North. We know from the profile of our members and their clients that the North West is the powerhouse of the country after London and the South East, but the infrastructure doesn't support the needs of the region. The limited West-East connectivity and the fact that the whole North is so dependent on commuting by car, leading to significant loss of time due to congestion in major cities, and made HS2 a potential game changer for many firms. HS2 lines were also to provide more capacity in the system, allowing more frequent and reliable suburban trains going into Manchester.

"While Sunak intends to still invest in improving the infrastructure in the North, the devil will be in the detail, particularly in regards to time frames. Given the election next year, a lot is left in the air, which is not great for inward investment.

"The Prime Minister's plans to shake up education with a new Advance British Standard reflects the general sentiment by our members and business leaders that the current curriculum needs to be overhauled to better equip emerging generations with the skills needed. T levels have not delivered the desired impact, partly due to a lack of publicity, but also because there is no incentivisation for businesses to commit limited time and energy to train youngsters on work schemes.

"However, what is perhaps more pertinent is the fact that such a huge "once in a lifetime" change will be intrusive for a labour force that is already in crisis. The skills deficit in education and the dissatisfaction of the current workforce will not serve to deliver this change. There are simply not enough STEM teachers available so it is difficult to see how schools could actually teach more children science subjects. Such plans require more clarity around how the teaching profession will be supported including additional training and the creation of a fulfilling, but also manageable lifetime career, which we haven't yet seen."

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About APSCo

The Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo) is the trade association for the professional recruitment market. APSCo Global comprises APSCo Asia, APSCo Australia, APSCo Deutschland and APSCo United Kingdom as well as APSCo OutSource, the trade body for the RPO and MSP sectors.

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