

Samuel Knight International urges government to persevere with HS2 plans

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In light of the news that the government will be launching a review of high-speed rail link HS2 - with a "go or no-go" decision by the end of the year - rail and energy recruitment specialist, Samuel Knight International has urged the government to persevere with plans.

The original cost of HS2 was expected to be £57bn, however in July the current chairman of the project reportedly warned (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-49048823>) that total expenditure could rise by £30bn. The review, which will be chaired by Douglas Oakervee, a civil engineer and former chair of HS2 Ltd, will analyse: the cost estimates so far, opportunities for efficiency savings, the environmental impact focusing specifically on net zero carbon commitment and whether the economic and business case made for HS2 is accurate.

Billions of pounds have already been spent on the project, and Phase 1 of the development between London and Birmingham was due to open at the end of 2026, with the second phase to Leeds and Manchester scheduled for completion by 2032-33. If HS2 fails to go ahead, millions of people in the North will be affected, with thousands of potential job opportunities scrapped.

Commenting on the recent news, Dave Allen, Associate Director for Rail at Samuel Knight International, said:

“As both a Newcastle-headquartered business and an expert rail recruitment firm, we know that the benefits of HS2 are numerous. This development has the potential to really balance out the North / South divide that’s still prominent in the country by improving connectivity for businesses based in the northern part of the UK. It will also increase the scope for employers to access more potential recruits as commuting further becomes easier. This is of particular benefit for the numerous skills short industries we work with such as energy and rail.

“And, of course, there’s also the fact that this is a great project for rail itself that – if it unfortunately does get scrapped – could weaken the UK’s position as a destination that’s powering ahead with innovation in rail and infrastructure. I certainly hope that the decision is made to continue with HS2.”

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