

[Removing the Golborne Link from the HS2 Bill](#)

The 'Golborne Link', part of the HS2 Crewe – Manchester scheme, is a proposed circa 13 mile connection that would branch off the main HS2 line towards Manchester near Knutsford, in Cheshire, to rejoin the West Coast Main Line (WCML) near Golborne, just south of Wigan. Construction was due to start in the early 2030s and it was due to open in the late 2030s or early 2040s as part of the second stage of HS2 services to Scotland.

In October 2020, the government established the independent [Union Connectivity Review](#), led by the chairman of Network Rail, Sir Peter Hendy, to consider how best to improve transport connectivity between the nations of the UK.

Sir Peter's final report, in November 2021, set out that the Golborne Link would not resolve all the rail capacity constraints on the WCML between Crewe and Preston. He recommended that the government should reduce journey times and increase rail capacity between England and Scotland by upgrading the WCML north of Crewe and by doing more work on options for alternative northerly connections between HS2 and the WCML.

Ahead of the government's response to the Union Connectivity Review, we can confirm the government will look again at alternatives which deliver similar benefits to Scotland as the Golborne link, so long as these deliver for the taxpayer within the £96 billion envelope allocated for the [Integrated Rail Plan](#). We will look at the potential for these alternatives to bring benefits to passengers sooner, allowing improved Scotland services from Manchester and Manchester Airport, as well as from Birmingham and London. HS2 trains will continue to serve Wigan and Preston, as well as Lancaster, Cumbria and Scotland.

Government, therefore, intends to remove the Golborne link from the [High-Speed Rail \(Crewe – Manchester\) Bill](#) after second reading. That means that we will no longer be seeking the powers to construct the link as part of this scheme. The Crewe-Manchester HS2 mainline will remain in the Bill as before. Plans for Northern Powerhouse Rail will also be unaffected.

Our plans for the first-stage HS2 services to Scotland in Phases 1 and 2a of the scheme (between London and the West Midlands, and the West Midlands and Crewe) will also be unaffected, with HS2 trains operating from London to Scotland when services begin running, in the late 2020s or early 2030s.

We will publish a Supplement to the January 2022 HS2 Crewe – Manchester scheme strategic outline business case, setting out the implications of removing the Golborne Link, prior to second reading.

I am also publishing revised safeguarding directions for the Crewe – Manchester scheme to reflect the Bill's limits and protect the land that may

be required for the construction and operation of the high speed railway.

I am maintaining safeguarding along the Golborne Link while alternatives are considered. This means we plan to keep existing compensation programmes in place for affected homeowners so that they can still access support as needed. The government periodically reviews land requirements needed for the project and updates the extent of safeguarding accordingly.

A copy of the safeguarding directions will be placed in the libraries of both houses and made publicly accessible online.