

News story: Current unrest in Sudan: Troika statement, April 2019

The protests in Sudan that began in December 2018 reached a new level of intensity and popular support on 6 April. They continue to grow and the demand for political change from the courageous and resilient people of Sudan is becoming ever clearer and more powerful.

The time has come for the Sudanese authorities to respond to these popular demands in a serious and credible way. The Sudanese people are demanding a transition to a political system that is inclusive and has greater legitimacy. The Sudanese authorities must now respond and deliver a credible plan for political transition. Failing to do so risks causing greater instability. The Sudanese leadership has a grave responsibility to avoid such an outcome.

We call on the Sudanese authorities to release all political detainees, stop the use of violence against peaceful protesters, remove all restrictions to freedoms, lift the state of emergency and allow for a credible political dialogue in a conducive environment with all key Sudanese actors that has as its basis the goal of a political and economic transition to a new type of Sudan. One where human rights, the rule of law, democracy and equal citizenship are all respected and which can bring an end to the conflicts and corruption that have plagued the country.

If the Sudanese authorities take these steps, the Troika (the United States, The United Kingdom and Norway) will support such a political process and in time could work to help resolve some of the long term economic challenges that Sudan faces.

This is a pivotal moment for the future of Sudan. The decisions the Sudanese authorities take now, in an inclusive dialogue, will have a dramatic impact on the lives of 40 million Sudanese people and the stability of the region. We urge the Sudanese authorities, as well as the opposition, to embrace their responsibilities.

Statement to parliament: East Midlands, South Eastern and West Coast Partnership franchise updates

I am updating the House on the East Midlands, South Eastern and West Coast Partnership franchise competitions.

I am pleased to inform the House that, following rigorous competition, I intend to award the next East Midlands Railway franchise to Abellio East Midlands pending successful completion of a standstill period of at least 10 days.

The franchise is due to start on 18 August 2019 and will run for 8 years, until 21 August 2027, with an extension of 2 years callable at my discretion.

Passengers, local authorities, businesses and other stakeholders across the country contributed to a highly demanding and challenging specification for this new franchise. Bidders were invited to demonstrate how they would meet this specification, and I am very pleased that we have agreed a plan with Abellio East Midlands for them to exceed these expectations.

Abellio East Midlands will oversee the introduction of brand-new trains, entirely replacing the existing intercity fleet with more reliable and comfortable trains. Passengers will benefit from an 80% increase in the number of morning peak seats into Nottingham, Lincoln and St Pancras. Passengers will also see faster journey times over long-distances, with a new express service from Corby through Luton into London.

The East Midlands Railway will be at the forefront of the government's commitment to deliver a cleaner, greener rail network. Abellio East Midlands will trial hydrogen fuel cell trains on the Midland Main Line and will run zero-carbon pilots at six stations along the route.

The new franchise will also deliver a fairer deal for passengers. Over £17 million will be invested in improving station facilities across the route, including to deliver accessibility improvements. Abellio East Midlands will also deliver an additional 916 extra car park spaces and 1,050 cycle spaces.

Passengers will benefit from the provision of free wifi throughout the franchise, both on-trains and at stations, and a significant uplift to the current ticketing system, with the introduction of smart, flexible ticketing options, including to provide better value for those who travel regularly but less than 5 days a week, as well as improved ticket-buying facilities and nine newly staffed stations.

The new East Midlands Railway franchise will also introduce enhanced delay repay compensation, with passengers able to claim compensation if their train is more than 15 minutes late.

We look forward to working closely with Abellio East Midlands to ensure they deliver the high-quality services that passengers expect and deserve from the railway and the East Midlands Railway franchise.

With regards to the South Eastern franchise competition, I am also today updating the House that my department is negotiating a short-term extension to the current franchise agreement with Govia while we make a decision on the competition. This will ensure continuity of services for passengers until 10 November 2019, with an option to extend the agreement further to April 2020.

We are due to award the West Coast Partnership in June.

Alongside this, there is a [root-and-branch review of the railway underway, independently chaired by Keith Williams](#). This will make ambitious recommendations before the end of the year to reform the structure of the whole rail industry to prioritise passengers' and taxpayers' interests.

The next East Midlands Railway franchise and the ongoing competitions include significant improvements for passengers and steps to bring track and train closer together. From 2020, we will begin to roll-out further reforms, advised by the Rail Review, across the country. We will be guided by the approaches that deliver benefits to passengers and other rail users soonest. Awarding the new East Midlands Railway franchise is part of that strategy.

[News story: More seats, services and state-of-the-art trains for passengers on new East Midlands railway](#)

- Abellio has been announced as the successful bidder to run services on the East Midlands Railway from August 2019 until 2027
- passengers to benefit from new trains with more peak-time seats, reduced journey times, and over £17 million of station improvements
- action on delivering more environmentally-friendly services, with a commitment to trials of hydrogen fuel cell trains and zero-carbon station pilots

Abellio has today (10 April 2019) [been announced as the successful bidder](#) to operate the East Midlands Railway franchise, responsible for delivering new trains, smart ticketing and more frequent services for passengers.

Abellio will oversee the introduction of brand-new trains, entirely replacing the existing intercity fleet with more reliable and comfortable trains. Passengers will benefit from an 80% increase in the number of morning peak seats into Nottingham, Lincoln and St Pancras.

Passengers will also see faster journey times over long-distances, a new express service from Corby through Luton into London, the introduction of improved delay repay compensation and flexipass tickets to provide better value fares.

The East Midlands Railway will also be at the forefront of the government's commitment to deliver a cleaner, greener rail network. Abellio will trial hydrogen fuel cell trains on the Midland Main Line and will run zero-carbon pilots at 6 stations along the route.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

Improving the experience for passengers is at the heart of this new franchise. Abellio will deliver state-of-the-art new trains, upgraded ticketing systems and improvements to stations.

Through zero-carbon pilot schemes, trialling hydrogen fuel cell trains and delivering more seats on modern, spacious trains, the new franchise will also play a major role in building a railway fit for the future.

Dominic Booth, Managing Director of Abellio UK, said:

Abellio is proud to have been selected as the Winning Bidder for the East Midlands franchise. We look forward to this franchise driving economic growth and delivering significant benefits for passengers.

Abellio will invest £600 million in improvements to trains and stations, maximising the effect of the government's £1.5 billion upgrade of the Midland Main Line, to make journeys easier, more reliable and comfortable for our passengers.

Closer collaboration between East Midlands Railway and Network Rail will ensure that track and train are aligned to deliver vital enhancements to infrastructure and to put the interests of passengers first.

Abellio will also oversee the introduction of:

- more flexible and convenient smart ticketing options
- free wifi and high quality mobile connectivity on board services
- improved delay repay compensation for all passengers
- a stations improvement fund of £16.8 million, including £6.9 million for accessibility improvements
- £9.4 million of investment to deliver commercial and customer service improvements at stations
- 916 extra car park spaces and 1,050 cycle spaces
- ticket buying facilities in place at all stations

The government is investing nearly £48 billion over the next 5 years to modernise the railway, including more than £1.5 billion to upgrade the Midland Main Line, the biggest upgrade of the line since it was completed in 1870.

Alongside this, there is a root-and-branch [review of the railway underway, independently chaired by Keith Williams](#). This will make ambitious recommendations before the end of the year to reform the structure of the whole rail industry to prioritise passengers' and taxpayers' interests.

The next East Midlands Railway franchise and the ongoing competitions include significant improvements for passengers and steps to bring track and train

closer together. From 2020 further reforms, advised by the Rail Review, will be rolled out across the country. These will be guided by the approaches that deliver benefits to passengers soonest. Awarding the new East Midlands franchise is part of that strategy.

Press release: Progress at Euston as HS2 completes key demolitions on site of London's new high speed station

The clearance of the buildings to the west of the station reveal, for the first time, the full scale of the new platforms and concourse that will be built as part of Britain's new high speed rail project.

Once complete, HS2 will more than double the number of seats out of Euston during peak hours, with the first 6 new 400 metre platforms built adjacent to the existing station to reduce disruption to passengers during construction.

The 6 month demolition of the former Ibis hotel on Cardington Street, was completed this week. The painstaking demolition of the 5 storey, 380 room building, involved the removal of almost 9,000 tonnes of material with 95% set to be recycled or reused on site.

The clearance of the nearby disused National Temperance Hospital buildings was delivered in 2 stages, with the second half, the Insull wing, now also complete. More than 6,000 tonnes of material were removed during the project with 95% set to be recycled or reused.

Two time capsules, discovered during the work, are being conserved by HS2's archaeological sub-contractors and will be kept for future study and display in the community. The hospital, which closed in 1990, was the first institution to end the routine use of alcohol in medicine.

Both projects were delivered by HS2's enabling works contractor, a Costain and Skanska joint venture (CSjv), working with subcontractors Keltbray. A top-down demolition technique was used, with machines lifted onto the top of the buildings and protective screening around the outside to limit noise and dust.

HS2 Ltd's Euston Programme Director, Rob Carr, said:

HS2 will transform Euston, delivering much-needed extra capacity, improving journeys and unlocking the opportunity for thousands of new jobs and homes.

Across the capital we are making strong progress, with our pioneering archaeological programme in full swing and more than two thirds of demolitions now complete. I'd like to thank all those involved in helping us hit this latest milestone and I look forward to the next steps in delivering HS2's new gateway to the capital.

CSjv Programme Director, Peter Jones, said:

Costain and Skanska's HS2 teams are making significant progress across London and we are pleased to confirm the successful completion of these 2 key building demolitions. We currently have more than a thousand people on site in the Euston area, working on a further 25 projects, most of which will be completed this year.

The work is part of HS2's enabling works contracts, which involve archaeology, demolitions and clearance, utilities and work to deliver new tree planting and wildlife habitats as part of HS2's 'green corridor' project.

Across the capital, more than two thirds of demolitions have now been completed, with more than a thousand people at work on the project. Nationwide, more than 7,000 jobs are supported by HS2, both directly and across the UK-wide supply chain.

Last month, [HS2 appointed Mace/Dragados as Euston's Construction Partner](#). They will work with HS2 Ltd and designers Arup/Grimshaw to complete the design and build the new station.

A masterplan for the wider development of public land around the station is being developed by Lendlease and could deliver 2,000 new homes and 15,000 jobs unlocked by the arrival of HS2.

[News story: The First Twelve Institutes of Technology Announced](#)

[Twelve Institutes of Technology will be set up across the country](#) to boost young people's skills and set them on a clear path to a high skilled, high wage career, Education Secretary Damian Hinds has announced today (10 April 2019).

The Institutes will be unique collaborations between universities, Further Education colleges, and leading employers including top firms Nissan, Siemens and Microsoft. They will specialise in delivering quality higher level technical training (at Level 4 and 5) in STEM subjects, such as digital,

advanced manufacturing and engineering that will provide employers with the skilled workforce they need.

Institutes of Technology form a key part of the Government's biggest shake up to technical education in a generation. This includes introducing new T Levels from 2020 – the technical equivalent to A Levels – and more high-quality apprenticeship opportunities.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

I firmly believe that education is key to opening up opportunity for everyone – but to give our young people the skills they need to succeed, we need an education and training system which is more flexible and diverse than it is currently.

New technologies are transforming the world of work, and to harness the opportunities on offer we must equip our future workforce with the technical skills they need to thrive, and that the economy needs to grow.

These new Institutes will help end outdated perceptions that going to university is the only desirable route and build a system which harnesses the talents of our young people.

In December 2018 the Education Secretary set out his [10 year ambition](#) to upgrade the nation's skills so more young people have the same high-quality training opportunities with clear pathways to skilled jobs as those in top performing technical education countries like Germany.

[Research shows](#) that only around 7 per cent of people in England aged between 18 and 65 are undertaking training at Level 4 or 5 – one of the lowest rates in the OECD. Only around 190,000 people are currently studying for qualifications at this level compared with around 2 million studying across Level 3 (A Level or equivalent) and Level 6 (Degree level).

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

These new Institutes of Technology will be the pinnacle of technical training – new collaborations between universities, colleges and business to make sure young people have the skills they need to build a well-paid rewarding, career, while the economy gains the skilled workers it needs to be more productive.

I'm determined to properly establish higher technical training in this country – so that it's recognised and sought after by employers and young people alike. These Institutes are a key part of delivering this. We are transforming technical education including introducing new T Levels from 2020 and more high-quality apprenticeship opportunities. But we want more young people to progress and get the higher level qualifications that lead to high

skilled, more rewarding jobs.

Institutes of Technology will help employers to get the skilled workforce they need, especially in much sought-after STEM skills and will offer young people a clear path to a great, well paid career.

The twelve Institutes will be backed by £170 million of Government investment so they have access to state-of-the-art equipment and facilities and will tap into the latest research from their university partners to anticipate the skills needs of the future workplace. They will also benefit from additional support from local employers and partners, who will contribute valuable resources such as further investment, seconded teaching staff and equipment.

Institutes will build on and complement the further and higher education on offer in the areas where they are located but will have their own distinct identity and physical presence. Some will be located in refurbished buildings, others will build new facilities on new or current sites.

They will provide a natural progression route for young people taking T Levels or A Levels (Level 3) enabling them to take the next step up to higher level technical education and training (Level 4 or 5) – like Foundation Degrees and higher level apprenticeships in STEM subjects – helping to upskill the next generation and ensure employers can access a high-quality pipeline of talent.

According to the CBI, the biggest growth in jobs in the years ahead is expected to be in management and professional and technical roles. These roles will require the specialist skills which a higher technical training course could provide.

The Institutes include innovative collaborations such as: Milton Keynes College, Cranfield University and Microsoft Ltd; and New College Durham, Newcastle University and Siemens.

Matthew Fell, CBI Chief UK Policy Director, said:

Expanding high-quality technical education and training is a top priority for employers who will welcome this extra investment.

Institutes of Technology help bridge the gap between A-Levels or T-Levels, and a bachelors or degree apprenticeship – providing higher-level skills, especially in STEM, that businesses tell us time and again they need to succeed. These new Institutes must also help ensure T-Levels are a long-lasting part of our education system and open the door to great careers or further training.

David Hughes, Chief Executive of the Association of Colleges, said:

It is pleasing to see this new investment in technical education and skills going to colleges and universities working together to meet local and regional skills needs. Our prosperity and success as a nation requires greater focus on boosting productivity and providing more opportunities for people to have skills which support them in the labour market. Colleges will play a significant part in every Institute by building on their track record of delivering higher technical education, ensuring the pipeline of people able to progress to higher level skills and through their strong relationships with employers.

Ian Green, Senior Controller/Section Manager at Nissan said:

This is great news for the region. Nissan Motor Manufacturing UK is pleased to be a leading partner in an initiative which will not only help to provide higher level skills for manufacturing companies, but also to inspire people of all ages to invest in their own skills and knowledge. Working with our partners in industry, business and education, our aim is to increase productivity, improve competitiveness and future proof the skills offering in our region. The Institute of Technology will be at the heart of a new skills revolution on the North East.

Derrick McCourt, General Manager, Customer Success Unit at Microsoft said:

In a world being transformed by technology, today's students have a wealth of opportunity to create and solve problems through learning and applying computer science. The new Institute of Technology we are announcing today will help to provide a much-needed pathway for students to develop their digital skills and practical expertise, which are vital in bridging the shortage in digital skills across the nation.

Microsoft's collaborations with Milton Keynes College and Cranfield University are helping to develop the next generation of digital experts. This announcement is a hugely positive step forward in ensuring that students and employers are armed with the digital skills they want and need – both now and in the future

The Government is carrying [out a review of qualifications at Level 4 and 5](#) so that more people have access to a wider choice of high quality options as an alternative to a university degree. [Initial findings from the review](#) have revealed that these qualifications could be the key to unlocking the skills demanded by employers and lead to rewarding, well-paid jobs. The benefits of studying a qualification at Level 4 or 5, include increased earning potential and employability and a growing demand for qualifications at this level from employers in key sectors such as Engineering.

The Level 4 and 5 review will complement the Government's review of post-18 education and funding to ensure the system is joined up, accessible to all and encourages the development of the skills the country needs. This is central to the Government's modern Industrial Strategy, which aims to make sure everyone is equipped for the jobs of the future.

[Today's announcement signals the end of a rigorous two stage competition.](#) The pre-award stage will now commence where the detail of each Institute's licence agreement and capital funding will be agreed. Following this, Institutes of Technology will receive their licence to operate and start to access their capital funding so that they can develop the buildings and facilities needed. The first Institutes are expected to open from September 2019.