

Government provides construction sector certainty by confirming 'Notice to proceed' on High Speed 2

- High Speed 2 (HS2) project reaches its next stage as joint venture companies receive approval to begin detailed design and construction phase
- 'Notice to proceed' process marks formal approval for main construction works to begin, following decision earlier this year to proceed with the project
- construction to begin in line with Public Health England advice during the coronavirus outbreak

Following the decision to proceed with HS2 earlier this year, HS2 Ltd has today (15 April 2020) marked the next step for the project after issuing 'Notice to proceed' to the companies that will undertake construction on Britain's new railway.

After careful consideration of the independent [Oakervee review](#), the [Prime Minister confirmed to Parliament in February 2020](#) that the project should go ahead, to deliver vital improvements to capacity and connectivity across the Midlands and North, alongside a reform package to improve governance at HS2 to ensure the project is delivered better and more efficiently. 'Notice to proceed' marks the formal approval for the project to begin the construction phase and HS2 Ltd is now entering Stage 2 of the main works civils contracts, with each held by a specific joint-venture.

At a time when the construction sector faces uncertainties during the coronavirus outbreak, issuing 'Notice to proceed' provides a vote of confidence in construction companies and the wider supply chain supporting HS2.

HS2 Minister Andrew Stephenson said:

While the government's top priority is rightly to combat the spread of coronavirus, protect the NHS and save lives, we cannot delay work on our long-term plan to level up the country.

HS2 will be the spine of the country's transport network, boosting capacity and connectivity while also rebalancing opportunity fairly across our towns and cities.

Following the decision earlier this year to proceed with the project, this next step provides thousands of construction workers and businesses across the country with certainty at a time when they need it, and means that work can truly begin on delivering this transformational project.

The 4 work packages are for full detailed design and construction of Phase One of the HS2 railway. Through these contracts, small and medium businesses have the guarantee of a pipeline of activity for the future, helping to protect jobs and boost certainty for them in the current climate.

The joint-ventures that are responsible for each package of work will be able to commence work in line with Public Health England's [guidance around construction work continuing during the coronavirus outbreak](#), in a way both safe to their workers and the public.

The joint ventures, originally awarded contracts by HS2 Ltd in July 2017, are:

- SCS Railways (Skanska Construction UK Ltd, Costain Ltd, STRABAG AG)
- Align JV (Bouygues Travaux Publics SAS, a subsidiary of Bouygues Construction, Sir Robert McAlpine and VolkerFitzpatrick, a subsidiary of VolkerWessels UK)
- EKBF JV (Eiffage Genie Civil SA, Kier Infrastructure and Overseas Ltd, BAM Nuttall, Ferrovial Agroman)
- BBV JV (Balfour Beatty Group Ltd, VINCI Construction Grands Projets, VINCI Construction UK Ltd, VINCI Construction Terrassement)

As well as contracts being awarded today, the Department for Transport has today published the new Full business case High Speed 2 Phase One, setting out the strategic and economic case for the project and outlining how it will deliver a positive return on investment, alongside boosting capacity and connectivity needed in towns and cities across the country, delivering on the government's levelling up agenda.

[Time for Justice: Putting Survivors First conference update](#)

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

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Chancellor delivers daily Coronavirus update (14 April 2020)

Good evening from Downing Street, where I'm joined by Steve Powis, Medical Director of the NHS and Yvonne Doyle, Medical Director at Public Health England.

Earlier today, the government's independent fiscal watchdog...

...the Office for Budget Responsibility, the OBR...

...published a report into the impact of coronavirus on the economy and public finances.

It's important to be clear that the OBR's numbers are not a forecast or prediction.

They simply set out what one possible scenario might look like – and it may not even be the most likely scenario.

But it's important we are honest with people about what might be happening to our economy.

So before I turn to the health figures, I want to spend a few minutes explaining what the OBR have said – and let me thank them for their continued work.

There are three brief points I want to make.

First, the OBR's figures suggest the scale of what we are facing will have serious implications for our economy here at home...

...in common with other countries around the world.

These are tough times – and there will be more to come.

As I've said before, we can't protect every business and every household.

But we came into this crisis with a fundamentally sound economy, powered by the hard work and ingenuity of the British people and British business.

So while those economic impacts are significant – the OBR also expect them to be temporary...

...with a bounce back in growth.

The second point I want to make is that we're not just going to stand by and watch this happen.

Our planned economic response is protecting millions of jobs, businesses, self-employed people, charities and households.

Our response aims to directly support people and businesses while the restrictions are in place...

...and to make sure as restrictions are changed, we can, as quickly as possible, get people back to work; get businesses moving again; and recover our economy.

The OBR today have been clear that the policies we have set out will do that.

The OBR today have been clear that if we had not taken the actions we have, the situation would be much worse.

In other words, our plan is the right plan.

The third point I want to make is this: right now, the single most important thing we can do for the health of our economy is to protect the health of our people.

It's not a case of choosing between the economy and public health – common sense tells us that doing so would be self-defeating.

At a time when we are seeing hundreds of people dying every day from this terrible disease, the absolute priority must be to focus all of our resources...

...not just of the state, but of businesses, and of all of you at home as well, in a collective national effort to beat this virus.

The government's approach is to follow scientific and medical advice through our step-by-step action plan...

...aiming to slow the spread of the virus, so fewer people need hospital treatment at any one time, protecting the NHS's ability to cope.

I said in my Budget a month ago that whatever the NHS needs, it will get – and we have honoured that promise:

Yesterday we published an update showing that we've given our public services an extra £14.5 billion in recent weeks.

We are taking action to increase NHS capacity, with more beds, more key staff and more equipment on the front-line.

And the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care will be updating on our plans for social care tomorrow.

This is why we are instructing people to stay at home, so that we can protect our NHS and save lives.

I can report that through the government's ongoing monitoring and testing programme, as of today:

- 302,599 people in the UK have now been tested for coronavirus, with 93,873 people testing positive
- 19,706 people in the UK have been admitted to hospital with the virus, down from 20,184 people yesterday;
- Sadly, of those in hospital, 12,107 people have now died – an increase of 778 fatalities since yesterday.

Our thoughts are with the families and friends of all those who have lost their lives.

These figures are a powerful reminder to us all of the importance of following the government's guidance:

Stay at home. Protect our NHS. And save lives.

Thank you – I'll now hand over to Steve to take you through today's data in more detail, before we take questions from the media.

[Commission on Human Medicines advice on ibuprofen and coronavirus](#)

(COVID-19)

The [Commission of Human Medicines \(CHM\)](#) Expert Working Group on coronavirus (COVID-19) has concluded that there is currently insufficient evidence to establish a link between use of ibuprofen, or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), and susceptibility to contracting COVID-19 or the worsening of its symptoms.

Patients can take paracetamol or ibuprofen when self-medicating for symptoms of COVID-19, such as fever and headache, and should [follow NHS advice](#) if they have any questions or if symptoms get worse.

Taking ibuprofen

Patients should always read the patient information when taking over-the-counter medicines, such as ibuprofen and paracetamol, and follow the instructions on how to take the medicines.

Prescribing ibuprofen

Healthcare professionals should consider a patient's individual risk factors, including any history of cardiovascular and gastrointestinal illness, when prescribing ibuprofen. Additionally, ibuprofen should be used with caution in patients with known renal impairment.

The lowest effective dose of ibuprofen should be used for the shortest duration necessary to control symptoms.

Patients who have been prescribed NSAIDs as a treatment for a long-term condition, such as arthritis, should keep taking these medicines as normal. Adult patients who take low-dose 75 mg aspirin regularly for prevention of heart attacks or for vascular disease should continue to do so.

Healthcare professionals, patients and carers should report any suspected side effects from a medicine including those purchased over-the-counter to the [Yellow Card Scheme](#).