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Infrastructure Intelligence is a new independent information resource produced by the Association for Consultancy & Engineering for the whole infrastructure community. It sits at the heart of knowledge management in the growing infrastructure design, delivery and operation sector of the built environment.

We provide quality information to unite the multiple and often diverse professions involved in the infrastructure supply chain, creating a communication and knowledge transfer tool to help the whole community to take advantage of the growing business opportunities in the sector.

With decent modern infrastructure now accepted as key to economic development and success in the UK and around the world, Infrastructure Intelligence provides the expertise that will be increasingly critical to businesses and individual professionals in staying ahead of their rivals.

Our editorial ethos is unashamedly forward looking. Infrastructure Intelligence exists to provide the analysis, comment and insight that business leaders need to compete in the exciting and expanding world of infrastructure planning, design, management and maintenance.



**Antony Oliver,**  
Editor, Infrastructure Intelligence

## INFRASTRUCTURE Intelligence

Produced for the industry by the Association for Consultancy and Engineering

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## News roundup

### HIGH SPEED RAIL GETS BOOST

**HS2 chairman Sir David Higgins** HS2 chairman Sir David Higgins threw the ball firmly into the court of politicians when he published his HS2 Plus report on 17 March. His review of the project concluded that the £50.1bn budget was "enough" but obvious major savings that could be made from the £16bn contingency pot in large part relied on a swift and efficient progress of HS2 legislation through Parliament (see analysis page 12).

**Lord Deighton's HS2 Taskforce report** on the benefits to Britain's cities from construction of the new railway has backed the creation of new local development bodies as one of 19 recommendations (see analysis page 14).

**No HS2 means no money for anything else, warns new report.** The rail industry has come out with a report to answer the HS2 nay sayers or at least those that claim the project's £50.1bn budget would be better spent on other investments around the UK including upgrading existing lines. Only £0.67bn would accrue to new infrastructure over 20 years. The report "Great Britain: connected or not" was launched by the High Speed Rail Industry Leaders Group

**The HS2 masterplan to transform Birmingham** at the new railway's Curzon Street Station has been unveiled. Included will be a metro extension and a park on top of a viaduct. It will be one of the biggest regeneration schemes in Britain and will transform 141 hectares of the city.

**Commuter services on HS1 in Kent are to be extended** due to passenger demand. Train company Southeastern is to add a "coastal loop" service following significant growth



Sir David Higgins: Delivering HS2 "sooner and better"

in passenger numbers on the high speed service from Dover, Canterbury, Ashford and Ebbsfleet. If approved by Department for Transport the services will start in December.

**Japanese electronics firm Hitachi** says it will move its global rail business from Japan to the UK. The manufacturer of the first bullet trains says it hopes the move will help it to expand the rail business to 4,000 workers from the current 2,500.

### HOUSING IN THE NEWS

**Chancellor George Osborne** has announced £200M investment and a garden city development corporation to create 15,000 homes beside the Ebbsfleet HS1 station. He also extended the Help to Buy scheme for new homes to 2020 as part of his 2014 Budget statement (see analysis page 26)

**The Secretary of State for the Communities and Local Government** has thrown out an appeal by developers after their planning application for a wind turbine near Cockerthorpe in the Lake District National Park was turned down on the grounds that the scheme would affect the character and quality of the local landscape.

**The University of Southern California** is testing a giant 3D printer that could be used

to build a whole house in under 24 hours. Professor Behrokh Khoshnevis has designed the giant robot that replaces construction workers with a nozzle on a gantry which sprays concrete and can build a home according to a computer pattern.

**A major shake-up in the financing of house building** has been proposed by Treasury to encourage City investors, insurers and pension funds to invest in affordable homes. But according to City investor Andrew Allen of Aberdeen Asset Management UK private sector residential will be the big winner in terms of investments in the current housing shortage.

**Two new cities will be needed to provide homes for new migrants to the UK,** according to research by the House of Commons Library. Estimates are that new migrants will form 629,000 new households based on net immigration running at 144,000 a year up to 2021.

**Government is to rationalise housing standards,** reducing numbers from 100 to 10. Those to be abolished include the need for rainwater harvesting in places without water shortages and measures to prevent the same work being checked by different organisations. There will be optional building regulations to apply "only when it is right to" such as for water efficiency. Energy efficiency

standards will also be set through national regulations rather than locally set targets.

**Housing minister Kris Hopkins has published a shortlist of 36 developments** in areas including London, Manchester, Liverpool and Kirklees which could benefit from a share of a £1bn Build to Rent fund to deliver homes for private rent. Up to 6,500 homes will be built using the additional funding. This is round two of the scheme. Eighteen projects are on the books in round one.

### SAFETY ALERT

**Safety watchdog SCOSS has published a new alert** following the recent collapse of tension structures in buildings and tunnels resulting in fatalities and serious injuries. Recent structural disasters such as the lining failures in the Boston Big Dig tunnel (2006), Japan's Sasago tunnel (2012), and the Balcombe rail tunnel in the UK (2011) which was a near miss have highlighted fixing system failures as the common problem.

### ROADS REVIEW

**The Commons Transport Committee** has warned that it is not convinced the case has been made to turn the Highways Agency into an arms length government company. In a letter to roads minister Robert Goodwill, committee chair Louise Ellman said: "Overall we are not convinced by the case for establishing a government-owned company. The proposed benefits seem achievable through better management of the existing Highways Agency." A full report is due from the committee in April.

**Highways Agency plans not a "Trojan horse for road privatisation"** Transport Minister Robert Goodwill told the Transport Select