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From the Secretary of State
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Dear ,

HS2 Parliamentary Report

I have this afternoon published my latest parliamentary report and updated Parliament on the reset of HS2.

Last summer, I updated Parliament on the state of the programme we inherited. Today, I set out how after more than five years of construction, and over £40 billion spent, the country is no closer to having an operational HS2 railway than when construction first began. Instead of signalling this country's ambition, HS2 had become a symbol of decline.

When I last gave an oral statement to Parliament on this subject, I was clear, based on advice from the new HS2 Ltd CEO Mark Wild, that HS2 could not be delivered by 2033 as previously planned. A fundamental reset of HS2 was clearly needed. Following a year of work, the government has now accepted the advice of HS2 Ltd on updated cost and schedule estimates for the programme.

It gives me no pleasure to confirm the expected cost of completing HS2 is now between £87.7 billion and £102.7 billion. This is expressed in a mixed price base, including the cash outturn of works to date and the costs of future work excluding inflation. Regarding schedule, the delivery of HS2's opening stage is now expected between May 2036 and October 2039. This will see the first trains running between Old Oak Common in west London and Birmingham Curzon Street. We estimate that the full scheme, including both Euston to the south and Handsacre

Junction – the connection to the West Coast Main Line – to the north, will open between May 2040 and December 2043.

Past estimates of both cost and schedule have proven clearly inaccurate. Given the need to rebuild public trust, it was essential that lessons were learnt from the Stewart Review, and HS2 Ltd has now used the same experts and methods behind the successful Crossrail reset. This means HS2's cost and schedules are now built on more solid foundations, with credible estimates published as ranges to ensure they better stand the test of time.

It is also clear that passengers want reliable trains that turn up when they're supposed to, with more services and more seats – not a vanity project with trains so fast that proper testing couldn't be done until track and railway systems were complete. In March, I asked HS2 Ltd to present the government with options to reduce the complexity and over-specification of HS2, and they have now reported on the initial outcomes of this work. I have accepted the recommendation to bring HS2 into line with proven leading European high-speed operating standards, including operating HS2 at up to 320 kilometres per hour.

We will still run some of the fastest trains in Europe, but this change lowers the costs of testing and makes delivering the project less risky. It could potentially save between £1 billion and £2.5 billion and at least a year in delivery time over the life of the delivery programme. The main savings come from avoiding the risks associated with certifying a railway at a speed not operated anywhere else in the world.

It is now imperative that we proceed with the final stages of the HS2 reset so that the programme is brought under control and delivered sensibly going forward. The report can be read in full [here](#).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Heidi Alexander', written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT