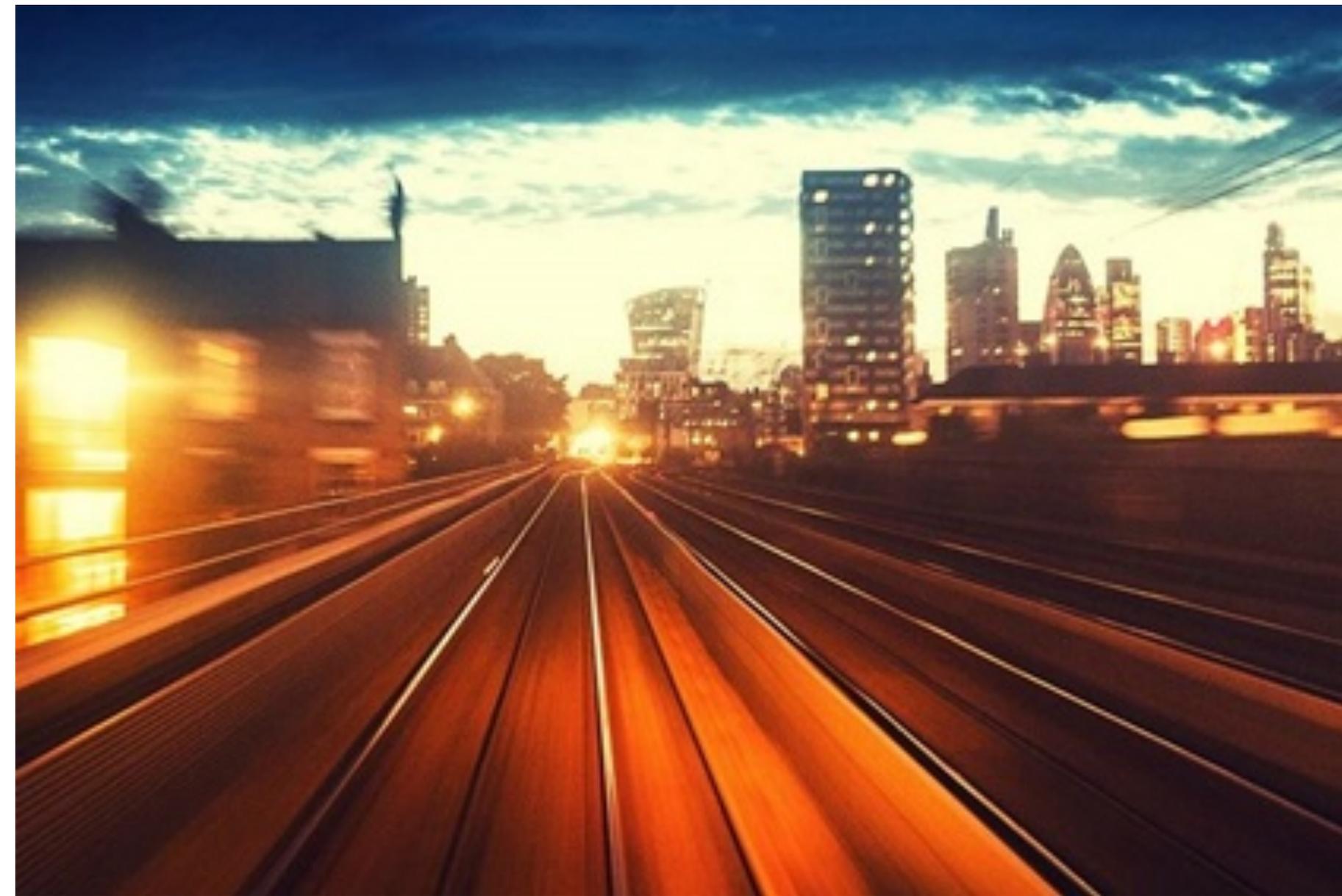


New Civil Engineer

DfT to publish Heathrow southern rail guidelines after months of silence

14 June, 2019 By [Katherine Smale](#)



The Department for Transport (DfT) is to publish guidelines for a southern rail connection into Heathrow next month, over a year after it first invited bids for the route.

Speaking at a Westminster Forum on rail services in the UK, DfT non-executive board member Tony Poulter said the government is due to publish “objectives and an approach to potential procurements or competitions” on the route next month.

It is understood that the statement will not include an announcement of a preferred bidder to build the new rail line, despite bids going in 11 months ago.

In March last year, the DfT launched an invitation for investors for those interested in putting forward proposals for the new rail link. However the DfT is yet to publish any further guidance on how the schemes could be taken forward despite bidders originally being told a decision would be made in the autumn of 2018.

The announcement of the guidelines publication will add to frustrations over the lack of clarity relating to the scheme, after being made to wait for months by the DfT.

In January HSR chief executive [Graham Cross expressed his dismay at the lack of a process to engage with](#) the DfT and Windsor Link Railway chief executive George Bathurst branded the [call for privately funded rail ideas as a “utopian dream”](#).

Heathrow Airport surface access director Tony Caccavone also waded in saying a [decision on a new route was not moving “as quickly as we would have hoped”](#).

Responding to the news of the publication of the new guidelines Cross told *New Civil Engineer* that he welcomed the announcement, but said it had to lead to the appointment of a preferred developer for the route.

“We are looking forward to the announcement by the DfT next month,” said Cross. “However, to really take the project to the next stage, we need the DfT to provide a proper process for the private sector to engage with which will result in the identification of a preferred developer.

“Becoming a preferred developer will unlock the next stage of the scheme and allow it to become a financeable proposition where investors can fund extensive developments and consenting processes with confidence.”

Cross estimated that it would take around three years to gain consent and a further three years to build the new line, therefore a preferred developer needed to be appointed by 2020 to allow the rail link to open in time for the completion of a third runway in 2026.

“There is an urgency there to select a preferred developer to enable the route to be open in time for the completion of the third runway,” he said. “Without this new rail link, the effects of the Heathrow expansion will become intolerable to many people surrounding the expansion.”

At the end of last year, it emerged that the government had rejected two of the Heathrow rail proposals, including a [link to Windsor](#) and the [HS4Air scheme](#) to connect Heathrow to Gatwick, High Speed 1 and High Speed 2.

Following this, in January, the government said that a scheme by Heathrow Southern Rail (HSR) – one of the major bidders to build and run the route – [“fell short” of the DfT’s conditions as it requires rail access guarantees](#) to be given by the government to go forward.

One other scheme put forward by [Spelthorne Council, a light rail link from Staines-Upon-Thames to the airport](#), with a new Staines station, is still in the running for the route.

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