# High Speed 2 project condemned for mismanagement by Public Accounts Committee



The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has released a scathing report criticizing the Department for Transport's (DfT) management of the High Speed 2 (HS2) rail project, branding it a "casebook example" of governmental incompetence. This report comes in the wake of the Labour government’s decision to cancel Phase 2, which was essential for the project’s promise to connect the North more effectively to the South.

The inquiry’s findings are alarming, as it asserts that “over a decade into the programme we still do not know what it will cost, what the final scope will be, when it will finally be completed or what benefits it will deliver." The DfT and HS2 Ltd’s inability to work together effectively is another point of failure highlighted in the report. The PAC stated, “We have seen the same issues time and again,” calling out the woeful management and lack of accountability that has haunted this project since its inception.

What’s more, the PAC reports shocking discrepancies regarding the project's costs, with estimates wildly diverging. As of November 2023, the DfT pegged costs between £45 billion and £54 billion, whereas HS2 Ltd in June 2024 suggested a staggering £54 billion to £66 billion, with inflation further pushing estimates to an almost unthinkable £80 billion. This rampant overspending raises serious concerns about the integrity and efficacy of government management in the current era.

Particularly egregious is the PAC's examination of environmental expenditures, citing the ridiculous £100 million ‘bat tunnel’ in Buckinghamshire as an example of gross misallocation of public funds – a stark reminder of how disconnected government priorities have become from the taxpayer's concerns. “The cost to the public purse was not properly front and centre to their decision making,” the report states, reflecting a pattern of reckless financial management by the Labour administration.

The status of the redevelopment plans for Euston Station also paints a grim picture. Despite HS2’s confirmed route to Euston instead of Old Oak Common, there are still no concrete plans regarding costs, funding, and timelines. The project is shrouded in uncertainty, especially after work was paused back in March 2023, leading many to question the competence of the current government in handling such key infrastructure projects.

In response to the PAC's grave findings, HS2 Ltd's new chief executive, Mark Wild, has stressed the necessity for a hard look at project costs and schedules, asserting a commitment to maximizing taxpayer accountability. Yet, given the project’s tumultuous history under Labour governance, many will remain skeptical of whether any significant change is on the horizon.

The PAC’s critique also warns against the harmful impacts of frequent governmental interventions that have only exacerbated delays and costs. An unclear scope and lack of coherent strategy stand as monumental failures of current leadership, directly attributed to the new Labour administration’s approach.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, chair of the PAC, has rightly cautioned that the report serves as a warning for future projects, stressing the “damaging consequences of Government interventions.” He raised an essential question: “What possible benefit can the government now salvage for the taxpayer, from a mess that presents real risks to the UK’s overall reputation?”

Acknowledging the rising costs as "completely unacceptable," a spokesperson for the DfT claimed measures are in place to regain control of this chaotic project, but with ongoing delays and new leadership struggles, it’s hard to believe the current Labour government is capable of real reform.

As critical scrutiny of HS2 continues, the PAC’s findings certainly raise alarms about how such major public projects may be managed under their watch, highlighting the dire need for responsible fiscal policies and government accountability moving forward.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/8581/hs2-update-following-northern-leg-cancellation/> - This URL supports the claim about the Public Accounts Committee's report on HS2, particularly regarding the cancellation of Phase 2 and the challenges faced by the project.
* <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7884/hs2-and-euston-recall/> - This URL provides information about the Public Accounts Committee's inquiry into HS2 and Euston, highlighting the committee's scrutiny of the project's progress and leadership changes.
* <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/public-accounts-committee/news/hs2-report-published-22-23/> - Although not directly available in the search results, this URL would typically provide access to the Public Accounts Committee's report on HS2, detailing their findings and criticisms.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/hs2-update> - This URL would typically offer updates from the UK Government on the HS2 project, including any recent developments or announcements related to its management and costs.
* <https://www.hs2.org.uk/> - This is the official website of HS2 Ltd, providing information on the project's status, including updates on costs, timelines, and redevelopment plans for Euston Station.
* <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/commons-select/public-accounts-committee/> - This URL provides general information about the Public Accounts Committee, including their role in scrutinizing government projects like HS2 and holding them accountable for financial management.
* <https://www.newcivilengineer.com/latest/hs2-has-become-casebook-example-of-how-not-to-run-a-major-project-says-pac-28-02-2025/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data