



Phase 2b Western Leg Information Paper

H4: Mental Health & Wellbeing

This paper outlines HS2 Ltd's commitments with regards to better understanding the relationship between mental health and wellbeing and major infrastructure projects, the way in which these commitments are currently being met and how HS2 Ltd supports those who are potentially affected by the Government's proposals for high speed rail.

This paper was prepared in relation to the promotion of the High Speed Rail (Crewe - Manchester) Bill. Content will be maintained and updated as considered appropriate during the passage of the Bill.

If you have any queries about this paper or about how it might apply to you, please contact the HS2 Helpdesk in the first instance.

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 High Speed Two (HS2) is the Government's scheme for a new, high speed north-south railway, which is being taken forward in a number of phases. Phase One will connect London with Birmingham and the West Midlands. Phase 2a will extend the route from the West Midlands to Crewe. The Phase 2b Western Leg will connect Crewe to Manchester. As set out in the Integrated Rail Plan, published in November 2021, HS2 East is proposed to deliver a new high speed line from the West Midlands to East Midlands Parkway.
- 1.2 HS2 Ltd is the non-departmental public body responsible for developing and promoting these proposals. The company works under the terms of a Development Agreement entered into with the Secretary of State for Transport.
- 1.3 The construction and operation of Phase One of HS2 is authorised by the High Speed Rail (London – West Midlands) Act 2017 and Phase 2a by the High Speed Rail (West Midlands – Crewe) Act 2021.
- 1.4 In January 2022, the Government introduced a hybrid Bill to Parliament (hereafter referred to as 'the Bill'), to seek powers for the construction and operation of the Phase 2b Western Leg (the Proposed Scheme), which is called the High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Bill. The Proposed Scheme comprises the Phase 2b Western Leg from Crewe to Manchester and several off-route works. It also facilitates the delivery of Northern Powerhouse Rail by providing the Crewe Northern Connection and junctions and other infrastructure to be used in future schemes.
- 1.5 The work to produce the Bill includes an Equalities Impact Assessment and an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), the results of which are reported in an Environmental Statement (ES) submitted alongside the Bill. The Secretary of State has also published draft Environmental Minimum Requirements (EMRs), which set out the environmental and sustainability

commitments that will be observed in the construction of the Proposed Scheme. For more information on the EMRs please see Information Paper E1: Control of environmental impacts.

- 1.6 The Secretary of State for Transport is the Promoter of the Bill through Parliament. The Promoter will also appoint a body responsible for delivering the Proposed Scheme under the powers granted by the Bill. This body is known as the 'nominated undertaker'. There may be more than one nominated undertaker. However, any and all nominated undertakers will be bound by the obligations contained in the Bill, the policies established in the EMRs and any commitments provided in the information papers.
- 1.7 These information papers have been produced to explain the commitments made in the Bill and the EMRs and how they will be applied to the design and construction of the Proposed Scheme. They also provide information about the Proposed Scheme itself, the powers contained in the Bill and how particular decisions about the Proposed Scheme have been reached.

2 Overview

- 2.1 This information paper sets out what HS2 Ltd is doing in order to extend and improve understanding of the relationship between mental health and wellbeing and major infrastructure projects, and how HS2 Ltd supports those who are potentially affected by the Government's proposals for high speed rail.
- 2.2 In their second Special Report (July 2019,) the Phase 2a Select Committee directed HS2 to gather more data, including by commissioning an ongoing epidemiological report to address community health and wellbeing.
- 2.3 For the detailed background to this information paper, please read in conjunction with [HS2 Mental Health and Wellbeing Progress Report](#).

3 Data Gathering

Qualitative Assessment of Consultation Responses

- 3.1 As covered in more detail in Volume 3 of the ES (Route-wide effects), HS2 Ltd examined the responses collected during the 2017 route and property, the 2018 working draft ES and the 2020 Design Refinement consultations.
- 3.2 The issue of mental health was raised in the consultation responses both in terms of effects on others in the community and people reporting adverse effects on their own mental wellbeing which they attribute to the Proposed Scheme. Mental wellbeing was mentioned in association with the perceived environmental, social and economic impacts of the Proposed Scheme. Some respondents had existing mental or physical health conditions, or cared for those with these conditions, and some said they were concerned that vulnerable people could be disproportionately affected.
- 3.3 HS2 Ltd has worked to reduce uncertainty by engaging directly with local communities along the route of the Proposed Scheme, and consulting through the working draft ES and Design Refinement Consultations. Consultation responses have continued to be taken into account in the process of environmental assessment and design refinement.

Large scale epidemiological health study

- 3.4 Following a collaborative, open and independent tendering process, working with the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), HS2 Ltd started a contract with RAND Europe in June 2021 in order to deliver a £2m long-term epidemiological health study, as requested by the Phase 2a Commons Select Committee. The study will continue for 10 years. The aim of the study is to better understand the potential mental health and wellbeing effects associated with the planning and construction of HS2, to inform future infrastructure projects. Although the main geographical scope for the study will be the routes from West Midlands to Crewe and

Crewe to Manchester, the study will look at community areas along all phases of the project in order to collect data from areas where development is at different stages. Research findings and updates will be shared on the project's website: <https://wish2.org/>.

- 3.5 The scope of the study was reviewed following the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) changes to the Eastern Leg of Phase 2b. The Ministerial Direction since then has been to retain the original geographical scope of the study, which includes the original Y network to Manchester and Leeds. If the IRP changes are implemented, this means that two different groups will be present – those impacted by planning and construction of HS2 (i.e. those on the Western Leg and the proposed reduced extent of the Eastern Leg), and those impacted only by the planning of the HS2 programme (i.e. those taken out of the scope of the Eastern Leg). RAND Europe and NIHR have reviewed the full research scope to determine how best to implement this decision.
- 3.6 Over time the intervention experienced by people living along the 'cancelled' part of the route will diverge substantially from those living along the parts of the route that are going ahead. The 'cancelled' part of the route includes the elements of the original Y network not included in the current HS2 Phase 2b Bill scheme, between the West Midlands and Leeds, and the spurs joining HS2 to the West Coast Main Line (WCML) and East Coast Main Line (ECML). Thus, to capture this RAND Europe will need to develop another logic model and separate data collection instruments for the survey, the focus groups, and interviews.

Euston SCS Study

- 3.7 In addition, HS2 Ltd and Skanska, Costain and STRABAG (SCS) are funding Imperial College to undertake the Euston area mental health impact evaluation. In order to establish a baseline, in 2019, an initial survey was posted to just over 15,000 addresses, of which just over 500 responded. Due to COVID-19, the second survey was only sent out in mid July 2022. Questions include ones on health perception and emotions, sleep

patterns, and relationships and personal connections. Surveys are approved by stakeholders such as Camden Council and Public Health England. HS2 Ltd will receive anonymised data only, which will be used to review impact mitigation policies.

CPA Study

3.8 In addition to the data gathering exercises above committed to, HS2 Ltd colleagues are part of the Compulsory Purchase Association Working Group. The CPA Working Group was established to consider the impact of compulsory purchase on those affected and to consider suitable recommendations for reforms and best practice for CPO practitioners.

3.9 Some of the recommended changes to the process have already been put in place by HS2 Ltd, such as making clear, public information available to the claimant. In addition, over the last few years, HS2 Ltd has undertaken lessons learned exercises, refined and improved a range of Land and Property policies. HS2 Ltd colleagues form part of the CPA Working Group and will collaborate on next steps and outcomes as they develop.

4 Support for people with additional needs

4.1 HS2 Ltd commissioned an independent advocacy and support service to help people who may be disproportionately affected by HS2's work due to a long-term medical condition or disability which could worsen during construction. The service, currently provided by POHWER, provides independent, free, and targeted support to people whose personal circumstances, disability, or long-term medical condition impact their ability to self-advocate. It provides advice to help people understand HS2 documents and complete paperwork. So far, over 60 people have been supported, many with complex issues. The majority live on the Phase One route, with the highest concentration in Camden. The service has continued to operate throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. This means that those already referred to the service have still been supported, and new referrals are still being made.

- 4.2 HS2's Community Engagement and Land and Property teams have all been trained in the purpose of the service, how to access it and how to refer vulnerable members of the public to the service for direct support. Support to the public can be provided over the telephone, or face-to-face, whatever is most appropriate for the individual.
- 4.3 In addition, HS2 Ltd now offers translation and interpreter services through the HS2 Helpdesk. There is a statement on HS2 documentation which encourages people to make contact if they would like to receive a free copy of the document in large print, Braille, audio or 'easy read' format as well as in different languages.

5 Additional measures

- 5.1 HS2 Ltd is determined to pursue continuous learning and look for improvements in the way that we engage with our stakeholders. With that in mind, in October 2021 a refreshed version of the September 2017 Community Engagement Strategy was published with a particular focus on respecting people and respecting places. HS2 Ltd listened to concerns and feedback and introduced several developments during 2021 – 2022 including faster response times for urgent queries. They have published improvements to HS2 Ltd's complaint's procedure and the accompanying Plain English Campaign accredited booklet. They have also introduced a single management system for community engagement and complaints handling across both HS2 Ltd and their supply chain. This means there is a consistent record for all organisations working in a location, which allows them to respond more effectively. In the last year, they carried out over 2,670 engagement activities, reaching more than 19,500 people. Since 2018, they have engaged with more than 92,000 people at 8,390 engagement activities and there have been over 703,000 visits to 18 local community websites across the route.
- 5.2 HS2 Ltd have streamlined their complaints procedures. They are receiving more calls about construction related issues that are having an immediate effect on people. These concerns need to be resolved quicker

than their standard target of 20 working days. They are now committed to resolving all urgent construction enquiries and complaints in two working days. HS2 Ltd received 324 urgent construction enquiries and complaints last year and responded in two working days in 94% of cases. They received 1,637 total complaints in 2021 – 2022. This compares with 1,877 for the same period the previous year, a decrease of 13%. They resolved 97% of complaints in 20 working days or fewer – and 99% were concluded at the first stage of the complaints process. No complaints were escalated to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman. The independent Residents' Commissioner and Construction Commissioner challenge HS2 Ltd in positive ways and have continued to hold them to account.

5.3 Further to this, changes within the Stakeholder Engagement Directorate have taken place to ensure that HS2 are offering the very best support possible to affected communities. The Public Response Team now lead on the provision of the HS2 advocacy and support service (offered by POhWER,) the translation and interpretation service and the Special Cases Panel. This team now work more closely with the HS2 Complaints and Help Desk teams ensuring a more joined up approach in how HS2 Ltd respond to stakeholders and offer support where it is required. The team are currently working on the development of internal guidance accessible to HS2 and the wider supply chain which provides guidance on how to access these services and will soon develop improved public information on the HS2 website to share more information on the support services offered by HS2.

5.4 Additionally, HS2 Ltd has for several years provided training for HS2 and contracting staff who engage with external stakeholders, enabling them to recognise when they may be in contact with someone who has additional needs, including in relation to their mental health and well-being. The training also helps staff to understand the support that can be offered to individuals and where to signpost them. An exercise within the Specialist Support Team is currently being undertaken to review the current training offer to build on the information previously shared and

the existing skills of the engagement teams to ensure that it is still fit for purpose and provides all the information staff need and that HS2 are responding to issues raised in the internal staff surveys and stakeholders. Targeted engagement has been, and will continue to be, undertaken with community stakeholders, particularly those close to the Proposed Scheme. These stakeholders include educational establishments, organisations with specialist interests or those catering to the needs of vulnerable people within the community. This has informed the assessment of community and health impacts in the ES and has also informed this Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA.)

5.5 Furthermore, the Special Cases Panel (the Panel) was set up in response to commitments made in the Phase One E23 (control of construction noise and vibration) information paper. The same commitments have been extended to cover Phase 2b in information paper E13. The Panel regularly reflect on the cases presented and the solutions reached which has led to quicker responses over time and in some instances, the ability to be more proactive and therefore, provide mitigation before the reported effects are felt by the individuals concerned.

5.6 Examples of the types of special cases considered include:

- people with a medical condition who are seriously affected by our construction activity;
- those living in homes where noise insulation does not work, for example, houseboats and mobile homes; and
- night workers and those who need to rest during the day.

5.7 The Panel also review cases where individuals may require a reasonable adjustment or additional support due to the individuals' protected characteristics (as defined by the Equality Act 2010) and this could be in relation to their mental health or wellbeing.

5.8 Furthermore, following the 2020 Ministerial Review, HS2 Ltd's Land and Property team are implementing a step change in how compensation

policies and communication with stakeholders are managed, driving greater transparency. This new approach puts people at the heart of everything they do. The Land and Property (L&P) Review was launched in 2020, bringing together the HS2 Minister, Residents Commissioner, property professionals and L&P team to explore how HS2 Ltd could improve the experience for affected landowners and occupiers. It identified 36 key recommendations. Working closely with DfT, HS2 Ltd has responded to each of those recommendations. The result has been a series of measures that are designed to ensure a much more positive experience for those affected by compulsory purchase, land acquisition and temporary possession under the HS2 Acts. The Land and Property Review key changes are categorised under four headlines:

- Putting people at the centre of HS2 Ltd's approach to acquiring land. The lessons learned from Phase One around delays and frustrations experienced by affected landowners and occupiers, were key to developing HS2 Ltd's new approach for Phase 2a. Now, a programme approach is used which means that land is acquired in one single step, offering everyone greater certainty and mitigating against land being taken in a piecemeal way. It also creates greater visibility of any planned surveying activities and a much clearer process for handing back land, following temporary possession.
- Improving communications. In 2021, HS2 became the first acquiring authority to introduce an online portal, giving claimants instant access to information about their cases. Continuous improvements have been made which means today claimants can now communicate directly with their case manager and submit, as well as view documents. HS2 Ltd's range of 'easy read' information has been expanded, enabling 220 HS2 claimant facing colleagues to be trained. Digital media is also being used to ensure key information is reaching diverse audiences, while MPs along the line of route have been provided with tailored briefings.

- Providing flexible compensation policies. In March 2020 the Streamlined Residential Blight Scheme was launched, offering a simpler route for selling eligible property to the Secretary of State by providing a standardised valuation and offer process. In April 2021, HS2 launched the Crop Loss Expedited Payment (CLEP) scheme. This allows farmers to receive compensation as soon as land is possessed - instead of waiting until losses are incurred. Both initiatives have helped simplified negotiations and reduce the need to engage agents.
- Processing cases more efficiently. Considerable improvements have been made to strengthen how HS2 Ltd integrate property schemes and management functions into one single platform (known as Firrin). This enhances HS2 Ltd's ability to monitor performance indicators and create greater transparency, where cases get stuck.

5.9 In addition to system improvements, HS2 website information has been enhanced to include guidance on which elements of claim are eligible for compensation, advice on what to expect from the process, greater clarity on timescales and triggers for alternative dispute resolution.

6 More information

6.1 More detail on the Bill and related documents can be found at www.gov.uk/hs2-phase2b-crewe-manchester.

References

High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Environmental Statement, Volume 3: Route-wide effects

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/volume-3-route-wide-effects--2>

Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) for the North and Midlands

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-rail-plan-for-the-north-and-the-midlands>

HS2 Helpdesk

<https://www.hs2.org.uk/contact-us/>

HS2 Community Engagement Strategy

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hs2-ltds-community-engagement-strategy>

Phase 2b Western Leg Information Paper E13: Control of construction noise and vibration

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1088298/E13_Control_of_construction_noise_and_vibration_v2.pdf