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Dear Sir/Madam

HIGH SPEED TWO – PROPOSED EXCEPTIONAL HARDSHIP SCHEME

In January 2009 the Government set up a company - High Speed Two (HS2 Ltd) - to develop proposals for a new high speed rail line between London and the West Midlands and to consider the case for high speed rail services linking London, northern England and Scotland.

HS2 Ltd submitted its report to me at the end of December 2009, and on Thursday 11 March I published the Government's response in a Command Paper - *High Speed Rail*. This document sets out the Government's assessment of the case for a high speed rail network, and contains the Government's preferred route option for any high speed line between London and the West Midlands. All of this will be the subject of further review and full formal public consultation before any final decisions can be taken on either the strategic case for high speed rail or the specific routes that any line may follow.

On 11 March I also launched a consultation on an Exceptional Hardship Scheme (EHS) to protect the interests of residential owner-occupiers of properties which may be affected by the preferred route option for a new high speed rail line between London and the West Midlands, and who can demonstrate that they have an urgent need to sell their property. The proposed scheme is not a statutory requirement, but signals the Government's intentions wherever possible to assist those who may be affected by any proposed line.

The consultation will run until 20 May 2010, after which we will consider the responses and, if a decision is taken to go ahead with a scheme, launch the EHS shortly thereafter. This is shorter than the standard 12 week period for Government consultations in order that, if it is decided to implement it, the EHS can be brought in quickly so as to provide support for affected residential owner-occupiers.

If you would like to respond to the consultation, please send your response by the above deadline to:

High Speed Two Ltd – Exceptional Hardship Scheme Consultation
55 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

Or by e-mail to: EHSconsultation@hs2.gsi.gov.uk

Advertisements publicising this consultation are being placed in a wide range of local newspapers whose circulation areas cover or adjoin the territory potentially affected by the preferred route option. I am also arranging for copies of the consultation paper to be sent to central libraries in the local authority areas affected.

A list of the bodies being consulted can be found at Annex B of the consultation paper. If you would like further copies of this consultation document it, and the associated impact assessment for the consultation, can be found both at the Department for Transport and HS2 Ltd websites at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/open> or <http://www.hs2.org.uk>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Adonis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

ANDREW ADONIS