

Sir Mark Worthington

Independent HS2 Construction Commissioner

Sent by email:

complaints@hs2-cc.org.uk

1 April 2020

Dear Sir Mark,

Thank you for the eleventh report from the HS2 Independent Construction Commissioner, covering the third quarter of 2019. We appreciate your ongoing work, advice and guidance on how we manage and respond to construction complaints.

Thank you also for continuing to meet with both colleagues at HS2 Ltd and our contractors, and with local residents and stakeholders in the communities along the route of the new railway.

As you know, one of our guiding principles is to be a good neighbour to those communities impacted by the construction of the railway. We continue to listen to feedback and identify ways to further improve how we involve, communicate and respond to those residents living alongside the new railway. I am pleased to note your observations about the lessons we have been able to implement in relation to carrying out a significant road closure with less disruption, with fewer complaints resulting from the local community having been more closely involved.

I know you have worked with our team to look at the lessons we can learn from the roll out and installation of noise insulation. We remain fully committed to installing noise insulation prior to the commencement of those HS2 works that trigger the required noise levels. In early March, we led a workshop with contractors to share lessons learned from delivering noise insulation in the Camden area, and how these should be applied to the wider rollout in Euston and Old Oak Common. Some key themes that were identified include better joint-working between HS2 Community Engagement and Delivery teams and contractors, streamlining processes around noise insulation, and ensuring continued communication and knowledge sharing. We have now shared our key themes and conclusions with you, and we welcome your ongoing input.

As you note in your report, we continue to face a number of challenges including protestor activity in certain areas along the route. We also recognise the concerns people have about works requiring vegetation clearance or in areas of ancient woodland. We take the

environmental cost of construction very seriously; through our planning we have sought to reduce adverse environmental effects as far as possible and HS2 will also see one of the most significant tree-planting and habitat creation projects ever undertaken in this country.


You also note local concerns about road works in the Great Missenden area. As you are aware, last year we received negative feedback on the design of these road improvements from local residents. Responding to this feedback we have worked with relevant partners to redesign these works. Last month we went back to those local residents, holding two local events with over 130 residents to seek their views. We will now also be sharing their feedback with the local authority and taking this scheme forward later this year.

As you will know, the Prime Minister announced the government's decision to proceed with HS2 in February. He also published the full report of the independent review into the HS2 project chaired by Douglas Oakervee. The report recommended that the government should proceed with HS2 which has brought certainty to the scheme. We do however recognise that concerns will remain among local communities impacted by the construction of the new railway and we will continue to work with you to ensure we are delivering on our commitment to be a good neighbour.

Finally, I know you are receiving updates on the HS2's latest position regarding Covid-19. These are unprecedented times, but I want to take this opportunity to assure you that the health, safety and wellbeing of the communities along the route of the new railway remains our absolute priority alongside that of our staff. We are also continuing to work closely with our construction partners to review the works on our construction sites in line with Government and Public Health England (PHE) advice on dealing with COVID-19.

Thank you again for your report and we will continue to keep you updated on our progress.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Bennett', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Bennett

Delivery Director