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High Speed Two (HS2) Limited
Two Snowhill, Snow Hill Queensway
Birmingham B4 6GA

Lord Jackson of Peterborough
HS2 Residents' Commissioner

Telephone: 08081 434 434
Minicom: 08081 456 472
Email: hs2enquiries@hs2.org.uk
[hs2.org.uk](https://www.hs2.org.uk)

Sent by email:
residentscommissioner@hs2.org.uk

10 July 2023

Dear Lord Jackson,

Thank you for your second report as the Independent HS2 Residents' Commissioner and for all your work following your appointment to the role last year. Since your first report in January, I know you have continued to meet with colleagues at both HS2 Ltd and the Department for Transport (DfT), as well as visiting communities along the route.

Over those six months, we have seen significant progress across the programme. Major civil engineering works are well underway and Phase One is now around 40% complete, with tunnelling underway in London, Buckinghamshire and the West Midlands, and our first twin-bore tunnel in Warwickshire already constructed. There are over 28,500 people working on the project and over 1,200 apprenticeships have already been created to date.

In your report you share a number of observations covering our engagement with communities, the HS2 land and property schemes and recent Government announcements.

As you reference, the Secretary of State for Transport made a statement to Parliament on the Government's transport capital investment programme in early March. This statement reaffirmed the Government's commitment to deliver HS2 from Euston to Manchester. In recognition of significant inflationary pressures facing all parts of the UK economy, it also updated how HS2 will be delivered.

Over the last few months, we have been working closely with the Government and our construction partners to agree changes to when we will be delivering some HS2 works. I recognise that, as you highlight, this will have caused uncertainty for some communities along the route. We are continuing to keep communities and local stakeholders informed about any changes to HS2 works taking place in their local area. We regularly share details of our future programmes of works.

At Euston, we are identifying areas of the HS2 site that could be made available for meanwhile and community use during the pause in the construction programme. We are engaging with the local community, as well as voluntary and third sector organisations, to develop ideas and identify 'meanwhile use' projects, including through community meetings and site walkabouts. We are also holding a workshop for residents, community groups and local businesses to help shape the proposals for these projects.

On Phase One, our priority is to maintain our construction momentum to ensure that initial high-speed services, connecting Old Oak Common and Birmingham Curzon Street, are operational by the early 2030s. As we do so, we will continue to engage closely with communities along the route.

One of the areas I know you have visited recently is the Mandeville Road headhouse and vent shaft site in Ealing. As noted in your report, we have been working to minimise the disruption resulting from 24-hour working at this site by implementing measures to decrease the levels of noise caused by the works. We have also developed a community support package for affected residents including hotel respite stays. We are undertaking a detailed review, including an independent assessment, of the proposed secondary access route through Badminton Close to determine if other means of access are possible. We will continue to keep residents informed about this review and have made them aware that no works will take place on the secondary access route before March 2024.

Thank you for your work with our teams, alongside the Independent Construction Commissioner, on the oversight of Undertakings and Assurances (U&As). As you know, U&As are commitments given by Government during the Parliamentary passage of an HS2 hybrid Bill and are included on a Register of U&As held and published by DfT. We recognise the importance of the commitments contained in U&As and take compliance with them seriously. There were 4,768 U&As agreed at Royal Assent for HS2 Phase One. Some U&As will be current for the life of the project, including during operation of the new railway, while others will be discharged as works are completed and the requirements of the Undertaking or Assurance are satisfied.

Your report highlights the progress of the HS2 Community and Business Funds. At the end of June 2023, we were able to confirm funding for a further eight new community projects, including: £210,000 business funding for lighting and wayfinding in Digbeth; £23,000 environmental funding to restore the Hampden Pond in Wendover and £74,000 community funding to transform a disused building into a local hub for community groups in West London. This takes the total funding awarded to projects along the Phase One and 2a routes to over £14 million.

We are conscious of the concerns held by many property owners on the Eastern leg of Phase 2b between the West Midlands and Leeds regarding the continuation of Safeguarding along this part of the route. Any changes to safeguarding will be a decision for Government, which HS2 Ltd would then be instructed to enact by DfT.

We are working hard to ensure that communities are informed and respected at all times. We confirm that property schemes remain in place along the route. This means that any eligible property owners can request that Government purchases their property, which we believe provides some reassurance while Government considers next steps.

In your report you highlight the current uptake of the new property compensation schemes. We, along with our suppliers, are actively seeking ways to further promote these schemes to encourage take-up. We will continue to regularly review progress to ensure any opportunities for improvement are realised.

We are in the final stages of a review, alongside DfT, into the working of the Prolonged Disruption Compensation Scheme. We will continue to engage with you and the Independent Construction Commissioner on the recommendations arising from the review and any agreed changes to the scheme that may be taken forward.

Thank you again for your report and your ongoing feedback to help ensure that we deliver on our commitments to respect the people and places impacted by the construction of the new railway.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Thurston', written in a cursive style.

Mark Thurston
Chief Executive Officer
High Speed Two (HS2) Ltd