

Our ref: CEO-24-1337

**Lord Jackson of Peterborough**  
HS2 Resident's Commissioner

*By email*

24<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Dear Lord Jackson,

Thank you for your recent report as the independent HS2 Residents' Commissioner and for taking the time to discuss it with me on the 10<sup>th</sup> January.

I would like to thank you again for your continued work as the Residents' Commissioner and your engagement with our land and property and community activities. I am sure this is also appreciated by the residents you engage with along the route. From your report, I can see you have recently visited communities in Camden and Birmingham. Your observations from these visits and your wider work provide a valuable challenge to the Project to ensure that we deliver on our commitments to those impacted by the new railway.

Your report highlights the Prime Minister's announcement on HS2 on 4 October 2023. As you are aware, in this speech and the accompanying 'Network North' Command Paper, the Government announced that they will not proceed with Phase 2a and Phase 2b of HS2 or HS2 East. The Government reaffirmed its commitment to delivering the first phase of HS2, between Birmingham and London, including construction of the Handsacre Link to the West Coast Main Line. We are working closely with Government to understand the further implications of the announcement to the Project in more detail. Your report highlights the level of public interest in this announcement, and we recognise the uncertainty that decisions like these create for those living and working along the line of route. We recognise that residents will have questions about what this means for them and their communities, and we will continue to keep them updated as information becomes available.

Our focus remains on delivering the first operational phase of HS2, connecting Birmingham and Old Oak Common. This construction activity continues to support thousands of jobs and benefit UK businesses of all sizes in every region of the country. Over 30,000 people are now helping to build the new high speed railway, including over 4,000 people who were formerly unemployed and more than 1,400 apprentices have started their career on the project.

As construction continues on Phase One, respecting the people and places we are working in will continue to be a priority for the Project. We will continue to engage closely with all stakeholders and communities affected by our works. Thank you for sharing your observations on activities at and around Euston in your report. We are continuing to work with the Government to carry out aspects of Euston station development. As we do so, we will continue to engage and maintain a dialogue with communities and stakeholders on the works in the Euston Approaches and the enabling works for Euston station. We will do this through different channels including regular newsletters and engagement events. We will also work to mitigate the impact of the works as much as possible and open further meanwhile use sites in Euston, including on Euston Square Gardens West and a larger area on the National Temperance Hospital site.

Thank you for the time you have spent with colleagues discussing how we manage Undertakings and Assurances (U&As). We will continue to engage you and the independent Construction Commissioner on U&As and we would welcome your ongoing input.

In your report, you highlight the funding provided to community and business groups along the route through the HS2 Community & Environment Fund (CEF) and Business & Local Economy Fund (BLEF). As of the end of December 2023, we have now awarded £15.8 million of funding to 280 local projects along the Phase One and 2a route, helping to leave a positive legacy for those communities impacted by the construction of the new railway. Following the Government announcement in October, we have confirmed that where funding for projects along the Phase 2a route had already been approved and agreements signed, these projects will still be funded. As instructed by Government, we have taken steps to close these funding streams to new applicants. Those who had yet to receive an outcome have been contacted by Groundwork, the charity who independently administer the funds, to update them on this decision.

We are aware that one of the key areas on which residents have questions is land and property. We have, therefore, published guidance to help with questions about land and property for those living along the Phase Two route.<sup>1</sup> Our HS2 Helpdesk team continue to be available 24 hours a day, every day of the year, for any queries residents may wish to raise.

I am pleased to see your positive comments on the Property Approvals Group. Ensuring that cases are treated with empathy is important, especially in the period of increased uncertainty for those impacted by the Government's October announcement. My team will continue to work quickly with our colleagues at the Department for Transport (DfT) to support claimants.

Our Land and Property team is also working with claimants to close out compensation claims as quickly as possible, resolve utilities' land rights, and to hand back land at the right time. We are working with Government to establish a process to dispose of land and property acquired on Phase Two and HS2 East routes no longer needed to construct or operate the railway.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.hs2.org.uk/in-your-area/assistance-for-property-owners/project-rescoping-phase-two-cancellation/](http://www.hs2.org.uk/in-your-area/assistance-for-property-owners/project-rescoping-phase-two-cancellation/)

I thank you for your assessment of our handling of the uplifting of rents across the managed rental portfolio. We recognise the concerns of tenants facing rent uplifts as part of the rising cost of living. We are committed to supporting tenants as much as we can, whilst meeting the requirement placed on us to deliver best value for the taxpayer.

I welcome your support and engagement on the improvement of the claimant experience, working with us and the DfT. Your input into the Policy Engagement and Improvement Group has been invaluable and we look forward to driving further improvements over the coming years.

We remain committed to protecting Green Assets and I am confident that the agreement with the National Farmers Union will support efficient and timely land management going forward.

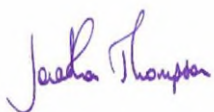
Thank you for your input and feedback into the Prolonged Disruption Compensation Scheme (PDCS) review report. This report is now with the DfT for approval, and we will work with them over the coming months to consider any changes to the PDCS to reflect its findings and recommendations. Once the changes are agreed, it is our intention to publish both the findings and recommendations of the report as well as the revised policy.

The improved clarity over our Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) process following the publication of further guidance has seen an increase in the number of cases progressing to ADR over the course of the last 12 months. In total, five claims have been resolved during the last 12 months, bringing the total number to 13. An increase in the uptake of ADR is likely to reduce the number of cases escalating to the Upper Tribunal, potentially saving time and money (both to the Claimant and HS2 Ltd). Uptake of ADR may also reduce the stresses on claimants by enabling them to seek earlier recourse, whether that is via mediation, independent expert determination or early neutral evaluation.

Finally, we look forward to presenting the findings of our recent reviews of the Crop Loss Expedited Payment and Streamlined Residential Blight Schemes to you. We will continue to work with you and the DfT to make these schemes as accessible as possible to claimants, whilst also recognising their more limited scope following the 4 October announcement.

Thank you once again for your ongoing guidance and I look forward to working with you closely in 2024.

Yours sincerely,



**Sir Jon Thompson**

Executive Chair

High Speed Two (HS2) Ltd