

Introduction by Professor Sadie Morgan

In Autumn 2022, HS2 Ltd launched the inaugural HS2 Design, Engineering and Environment Awards – to recognise exemplary design delivery from across the HS2 Ltd supply chain.

I was delighted to be invited to chair an independent judging panel, and I was joined by Rachel Skinner CBE (Executive Director at WSP), Simon Allford (President of the Royal Institute of British Architects) and Sue Morgan (CEO for the Landscape Institute).

We were tasked with reviewing shortlisted entries which were divided into four categories centred on the HS2 Design Vision Principles – People, Place, Time. In December, we gathered in Birmingham to announce the winners.

Design for People Award

This award category aims to recognise projects which exemplify the Design Vision principle – People – designing for the needs of HS2's diverse audiences, engaging with communities over the life of the project, and inspiring excellence through creative talent.

Highly commended in this category was a family of footbridges developed for the central area on Phase One.

“An incredibly elegant solution that breaks new ground in bridle footbridge design.”
(Judging Panel, 2022)



Artist impression of one of the footbridges, HS2 Ltd

The winner in this category was the Delta Junction – a triangular section of line, where the HS2 route curves west towards Birmingham and runs north towards Crewe.

The vision for the area not only meets the aspirations of the Green Corridor alongside the route but also enhances the existing unique sense of place and local character of the current landscape.

“The submission demonstrates an exemplar approach to collaborative team working in a complex area.” (Judging Panel, 2022)



River Cole Viaducts, HS2 Ltd

Design for Place Award

This award category aims to recognise projects which inspire and exemplify the Design Vision principle – Place – designing places and spaces that lift the spirit, will enhance the quality of life, celebrate the local within a coherent national narrative, and demonstrate commitment to the natural world.

In this category, the panel decided to highly commend two projects. Firstly, the Streethay Cutting – a coordinated design engineering strategy which reduced the visual impact and the amount of material needed.

“An excellent strategy that shows rich contextual design thinking. Offering a legacy-worth methodology.” (Judging Panel, 2022)

The second highly commended entry was Meaford Viaduct - which will be prominent structure on Phase 2a.

“The creation of a sense of identity to be proud of. A good example of how design can guide and influence placemaking.” (Judging Panel, 2022)

The winner in this category was Wendover Dean Viaduct. In the heart of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Wendover Dean Viaduct is one of the highest-profile structures along the whole HS2 route.

“An extraordinary achievement of effortless elegance. The energy and passion of Wendover Dean Viaduct is clear.” (Judging Panel, 2022)



Design for Time Award

This award category recognises projects which exemplify the Design Vision principle – Time – designing to adapt for future generations, placing a premium on the personal time of customers and end-users, showcasing how well-designed spaces brings operational efficiencies and long-term value, and processes and approaches that make the most of the time to design.

Highly commended in this category was the use of HIPER® Piles at Maria Fidelis Welfare and Construction Skills Centre. This is a new approach to bored piling, saving concrete, carbon and contributing to energy generation through ground source heat pump technology.

“An exciting application and welcome use of natural resources, and with great potential for use in other places.” (Judging Panel, 2022)

The winner of the Design for Time Award was the Area North Context Urban Integration Studies.

This project is series of four integration studies, covering approximately 53 km of the HS2 corridor. They consider how HS2 integrates with the surrounding context, ensuring it contributes to the delivery of HS2's strategic goals.

“An excellent narrative that demonstrates HS2's long-term value and benefits.” (Judging Panel, 2022)

People, Place and Time Award

This award category aims to recognise projects which showcase excellence in all areas, and have consistently gone above and beyond to capture the ambition of the HS2 Design Vision, and to meet project environmental and engineering requirements.

Two projects were highly commended in this category. Firstly, Old Oak Common Station Public Realm – a new urban parkland above the largest station box in the UK.

The design is the culmination of extensive collaboration to champion ‘Place’ against the backdrop of a major new transport hub fit for the 21st Century.

The second highly commended project was Curzon Street Station – which will be the heart of a major new transport interchange, improving connectivity and responding to the ambitions of Birmingham and the West Midlands.

“A placemaking proposal that activates the east side of Birmingham through an ambition to create intrinsic cross-city links.” (Judging Panel, 2022)





Design, Engineering and Environment Inspiration Awards winners and highly commended, HS2 Ltd

The winner of the People, Place and Time Award was the Colne Valley Western Slopes.

This is one of the largest and most ambitious environmental projects on the whole of the HS2 Phase One route. Inspired by its setting within the Colne Valley and the neighbouring Chiltern Hills AONB, it represents a unique opportunity to deliver sustainable and transformational change at a significant scale.

HS2's Design Vision and its key tenets of People, Place and Time underpin a landscape-led narrative for the project, predicated on the promotion of natural recovery, addressing impacts of climate change, reducing carbon impact, and creating distinctive and accessible places.

“Beautifully addresses enhancements, creation and legacy in a sensitive location.”
(Judging Panel, 2022)

Looking ahead

At the ceremony, Mark Thurston, HS2 Ltd CEO, congratulated all the winners, saying, "what we have seen today is something that's quite transformational...The point made this evening about placing design at the heart of what we do at HS2 is absolutely essential."

The awards were a great success and a fantastic opportunity to recognise and reward examples of exceptional work and ways of working across HS2.

Hopefully, the awards will help to inspire other parts of the HS2 supply chain, during 2023 and beyond, to learn from best practice and focus minds on creating a positive and lasting legacy for HS2.



Frame Projects
Secretariat to the
HS2 Independent
Design Panel

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