

## Introduction by Professor Sadie Morgan

Throughout 2024 considerable effort focused on understanding the implications of the previous government's announcement in Autumn 2023 (cancelling Phase 2a) and making necessary changes to respond to the clear brief to control cost across HS2.

HS2 Ltd has undergone a significant organisational restructure and Mark Wild has recently joined HS2 Ltd as CEO to lead construction of the railway and into operation.

The Elizabeth Line winning the Stirling Prize in 2024 is a timely reminder that the design quality of infrastructure is critical to public perceptions of its success. While it is important that costs are controlled, investment in public infrastructure delivers significant social, economic and environmental benefits, with long term value.

The panel is well placed to support HS2 Ltd to ensure it delivers the best possible design that is cost-effective and sustainable. I have reflected on three key areas of design work over the year ahead that will be important to achieve this aim.

## Maintaining quality during detailed design and construction

As the project progresses through detailed design and construction it is important to ensure commitments made at Schedule 17 (Plans and Specifications) stage are delivered. This includes aspects such as landscape, which will be essential to the success of HS2. Public realm outside stations will be key to their urban integration, maximising regeneration benefits, and providing convenient access to onward travel. Along the line of route landscapes will support active travel and recreational use by local communities, as well as nature restoration and biodiversity.

During 2025, railway systems contractors will begin work. It is important that elements they deliver, such as depots, overhead masts and electric substations are sensitively integrated. This should be led by the extensive design work done to date to deliver both function and delight.

Maintaining a clear focus on time, cost and quality is critical. The panel will play a vital role in supporting HS2 Ltd to ensure it meets the Sponsor's requirements and the delivers on the HS2 Design Vision.

## Maximising value through partnership working

From creating new walking and cycling routes, to unlocking cultural and regeneration opportunities, partnership working is necessary to realise many of the public benefits of HS2.

As an example, additional funding from Birmingham City Council has made it possible for a larger public park to be delivered at Curzon Street Station. This will help the city to deliver its wider regeneration and transport ambitions. The design of this public space has been jointly developed by HS2 and the city council. The HS2 Design Panel supported this process through its independent advisory role.



Curzon Street Station, HS2 Ltd



## Customer experience

The quality of the HS2 customer experience will be a significant factor in meeting the government's ambition for a 'people-first' approach to transport. HS2 Ltd is responsible for aspects of customer experience including procurement of rolling stock, and the design of station. The West Coast Partnership Development (WCPD) is responsible for many other operational aspects, including ticketing and on board services.

The Department for Transport (DfT) has overall responsibility for the HS2 customer experience, and will need to actively hold HS2 Ltd and WCPD accountable for delivering it.

The Design Panel is well placed to support integration of work between different partners - supporting design decision making and minimising risks - with a renewed focus on cost, time and programme.

## Advocating for the benefits of HS2

At a stage when HS2 is under significant public scrutiny, a continued focus is needed on its benefits, so that these can be safeguarded. Design is a tool which can help to control cost and schedule, while continuing to ensure the benefits the public expects are delivered.

The Colne Valley Viaduct has recently won a Royal Fine Art Commission Trust's Building Beauty Award in the engineering category. However, it is not only successful for its aesthetic quality. It also demonstrates innovative re-use of waste materials from tunnelling to create a new calcareous grassland.

Examples such as the Colne Valley Viaduct, help to demonstrate how design can balance challenging technical demands in a locally responsive way. Its quality, sustainability and innovation will deliver long-term benefits, and set a benchmark for future infrastructure projects.

## Looking ahead

Since the Secretary of State established the Independent Design Panel in 2015, it has been understood that the panel's role should change from parliamentary stage through to completion.

The panel has kept its membership and programme under review through regular communication with HS2 Ltd and DfT, as well as developing new types of meeting to maximise the value of its advice.

The panel will once again adapt to the change in scope and current stage of HS2. However, it will continue to provide assurance to the DfT, local planning authorities and the public, that HS2 Ltd will deliver the best possible design that is also cost-effective and sustainable.



Frame Projects  
Secretariat to the  
HS2 Independent  
Design Panel

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