

Robert Herga

HS2 Residents' and Construction Commissioner

By email: hs2commissioner@dft.gov.uk

21 August 2026

Dear Robert,

Thank you for your second independent report.

I also wanted to thank you for attending our Board meeting in June to brief us on your valuable insights and assessment of HS2's tone in engagement, causes of log jams, approach to case management, and a reminder of the importance of local consultation.

As you note, your report comes at a significant point for the programme, as we near the end of the two-year reset of HS2, which will run until April 2027. Over the past year, we have established new cost and schedule ranges and reduced complexity in the scope of the railway. As you will know, we have also recently renegotiated contracts with two of our civil engineering joint-ventures, a significant step in delivering the remaining works at the lowest reasonable cost. There is still much to do, and in the coming year we will establish a new baseline to track delivery through to opening.

We continue to make strong progress on site. The year delivered record earthworks performance and strong progress on viaduct segments and foundation columns. Since year-end, our teams have also completed the Curzon 2 bridge, the tallest structure on the route, launched over the Cross City line into central Birmingham.

As your report rightly highlights, the new cost and schedule ranges mean that we will impact communities for a significantly longer time than we had originally communicated. I appreciate that this will be difficult news for residents who will have already endured significant disruption as a result of our construction works.

Working through community engagement and Land and Property issues remains a priority for me and especially so in the context of prolongation. When we met recently, our discussion included exploring the future of the Community and Environment Fund and the

Business and Local Economy Fund (CEF and BLEF), how we manage and maintain sites, and a number of complex individual cases. I know the engagement team continue to work with you on visits to some of the most impacted communities along the route, where you have met residents and stakeholders to discuss their concerns and feedback. I am assured that the teams remain committed to continuing this programme of engagement with you to help further reduce our impacts and meet residents and stakeholders' expectations. The team will also continue to keep me informed on the progress they are making within our most impacted communities, and on HS2's mitigation plans in light of prolongation.

I am pleased that you are continuing to receive the regular reporting for helpdesk enquiries, complaints and small claims and I agree that it is also important to share our qualitative measures with you. We, and our contractors, use data and information from our enquiries to inform how we deliver work and whether additional mitigation measures should be considered.

HS2 also carry out customer satisfaction surveys on the helpdesk along with regular independent mystery shopping of community engagement activities delivered by both HS2 Ltd and our contractors. We will share the insight we receive from these with you. We are looking to introduce more measures this year and will be asking for your feedback on the new measures as they are being developed.

I welcome your continued engagement with our Land and Property team and note the thematic issues you have raised, including the pace of settlement on compensation claims, the importance of proactive case management and local consultation. I know there is more to do here, and I am committed to working closely with our Land and Property team to resolve these outstanding issues. I am pleased that our data shows increased rates of claims close out, and I am assured that the team will continue building on this progress. On Alternative Dispute Resolution, it was encouraging to see the recent joint workshop with the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers so well attended, and we value your continued engagement in helping all parties work together to improve the process. We will consider further your suggestion regarding claimants' ADR costs and look forward to discussing this with you.

Thank you for your continued close working with our Land and Property colleagues, both through your involvement at the Policy Approvals Group and the Policy Engagement and Improvement Group, and through your regular engagement with our Land and Property Director. This ongoing dialogue is helping us to better understand and improve the experience of claimants throughout their journey with us.

Finally, thank you for sharing the publication of the Commissioner's Terms of Reference setting out how you engage with residents who are impacted by the building of the railway.

I look forward to continuing to work with you and discussing the issues you have raised within this report further. While this letter is a response to your recent report, I want to reiterate that you can raise any urgent or specific issues with me directly, outside of the usual reporting cycle, whenever you feel it necessary.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Brown CBE MVO

Chair, High Speed Two (HS2) Ltd