

RESPONSE TO RESIDENTS' COMMISSIONER'S REPORT JUNE 2015

I would like to thank Deborah Fazan for her first report as independent Residents' Commissioner for HS2 Ltd. I am pleased that she has been able to get to know so much about the organisation, both in terms of how it works and the people who work for us.

I look forward to hearing her views on how the property schemes are running in her next report and I take on board her comments about wider promotion of the current schemes, which I will address later in this report.

Community engagement

Over the past 18 months, HS2 has focused its community engagement on working with petitioners through the hybrid Bill process. As we move forward in the coming months to the design of the project in more detail, we need to ensure that we begin to rebuild relationships on a broader basis among affected communities, and we have plans to start this in the autumn.

Our first step to address this will be a series of pilot events in eight locations along the Phase One line of route. These will be designed to help affected residents and communities to learn more about the project. These pilots will also help us understand what communities want from HS2 in terms of communication and engagement, so that – as a company – we can put the right people in the right places to meet these needs. This will be especially important in Phase One delivery, so I have asked Jim Crawford, our Managing Director, Phase One Infrastructure, to consider this and work with our Community Relations team to deliver.

Demographics and communication needs

I completely agree with Deborah that HS2 needs to deepen its understanding of affected communities' needs, especially in hard-to-reach communities and among people for whom English is not the first language.

We have commissioned a piece of market research to address this. It will be particularly useful for our Land and Property teams, whose role it is to talk to affected residents about the detail of the schemes.

It is very important that HS2 listens to affected individuals and communities in determining how we can provide the right information for them. I would like HS2 to understand this very clearly before agreeing to a newsletter for the project. I look to the feedback from our engagement events and demographic research to tell us what people want before we make a commitment. I would also like us to take these findings into account in how we can continue to improve publicity for the HS2 property schemes.

HS2 wants to be an open, listening organisation: this is a vital step in demonstrating that we are listening.

I look forward to receiving Deborah's next report to see the further progress that she is making.



David Higgins, Chairman
24th June 2015