

Gareth Epps

Independent HS2 Construction Commissioner

Sent by email:

gareth.epps@hs2-cc.org.uk

06 April 2018

Dear Gareth,

Thank you for your fourth report as the interim independent HS2 Construction Commissioner. We are continually seeking to improve the way we communicate and engage with our communities along the route. As we do this, I continue to value your observations, recommendations and work to monitor how we manage and respond to construction complaints.

I was pleased to read your observation that there has been progress on how HS2 Ltd is handling complaints. As you are aware, we have developed and are now implementing a new complaints process. Thank you for your independent advice and involvement with this review. As you note, under this new process, stage two construction complaints will be referred to the Construction Commissioner. HS2 Ltd will be communicating this complaints process over the next few months, including online and in a leaflet which will be available at Community Engagement events.

A small claims scheme has also been established, which will enable faster resolution of claims under £10,000 against damage to land or property. As you highlight, experience from other major projects suggests that this kind of scheme is an effective method of resolving such claims quickly.

As you will be aware, the first iteration of HS2's new dedicated website is now live and available to view at www.hs2.org.uk. Our new site offers much greater functionality and we have improved the user experience by making navigation easier and more intuitive, focusing on the key questions around when, where, why, how and who. The site is currently in 'beta', or testing stage, which means it is not the final production version but a work-in-progress, allowing us to make improvements based on feedback gathered in a live environment from a wider group of people. The HS2 website on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) is also still available.

Following the launch of HS2's national community engagement strategy in 2017, our focus this year will be to demonstrate what this means for communities at a local level, using

tailored local engagement plans. As part of this, and as you note in your report, we have introduced 10 Commonplace digital engagement platforms for local areas along the Phase One route. These online sites will provide information to local residents on HS2 and the work happening in their area, and local residents will be able to sign up to receive news alerts. The 10 sites are now live and are being actively promoted to communities, as well as being accessible via the new HS2 website.

Your report identifies a number of important challenges for HS2 Ltd. The face of Euston is now starting to change considerably with HS2's activities increasingly visible to the local community. We are actively looking at community interfaces in Camden and where there is scope for improved relationships. The work to deliver a local area community engagement plan for Camden, via independent facilitation, is progressing well and is looking to address some of the points identified in your report including fulfilling requests for information relating to construction impacts.

You also raise the provision of noise insulation in Euston. The installation of noise insulation has taken longer than anticipated, however, with additional suppliers now on board, a revised programme is being implemented to install insulation before any works begin that would trigger the requirement. HS2 Ltd has also established new route-wide processes to review and assess requests for special cases, including establishing a Vulnerable People's Panel. HS2 Ltd will continue to work with our contractors to progress the installation of noise insulation and ensure that residents are aware of how to request support.

I agree with you on the importance of ensuring that the needs of vulnerable people impacted by construction works are supported. A route-wide vulnerable people strategy is currently being finalised. This strategy will outline the support and interventions that are available, as well as the mechanisms for both identifying vulnerable people, understanding their needs and delivering support and adjustments that may be required for individuals.

Finally, HS2 Ltd expects its staff, and those of its contractors, to treat everyone with respect. As you rightly highlight, all those working on the project are acting as ambassadors for HS2 and must behave accordingly.

I would again like to thank you for your latest report and your continued contribution. I look forward to our next meeting to continue our discussions on taking these issues forward.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Crawford', written in a cursive style.

Jim Crawford

Managing Director, Phase One
HS2 Ltd