

HS2

Community Engagement: Our Progress

July 2020 to March 2021





Department for Transport

High Speed Two (HS2) Limited has been tasked by the Department for Transport (DfT) with managing the delivery of a new national high speed rail network. It is a non-departmental public body wholly owned by the DfT.

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Foreword

The last 18 months has seen the country come to terms with the Covid-19 pandemic, and as a result we have all had to adjust our lives in many ways. For HS2, it has meant finding new ways of working and adapting our approach to the way we engage with communities impacted by the Project.

Momentum is building on our construction activity along the Phase One route, with now over 300 active sites between the West Midlands and London. Tunnelling has commenced under the Chilterns, over 700,000 trees and shrubs have been planted as part of our 'Green Corridor' environmental programme, and work has begun at our stations in the West Midlands and London.

This year will also see the start of early environmental works on the route between the West Midlands and Crewe, following the approval of the Phase 2a hybrid Bill by Parliament in February 2021.

We appreciate, now more than ever, the impact that building HS2 has on people's lives, businesses and local communities and we realise that noise and disruption from construction is now a daily reality for many. We must deliver the railway safely and respectfully and work closely with communities to build responsibly. The standards we and our delivery partners hold ourselves to need to continue to be the very highest. There will always be areas where we could do more to support people and communities. Our performance has not always met our own expectations and we must continue to improve – whether it be the support we offer to families and businesses, the time it takes to settle compensation claims, or keeping people informed about the work in their area and responding rapidly when problems occur.

Over the next year we will be strengthening our approach. We look forward to more face to face engagement as Covid-19 restrictions lift, and we will continue to listen and respond to make sure people get the right information about our work. Our new area-based community engagement delivery units will help better connect communities with the contractors working in their area.

We will continue to be constructively challenged and held to account by the Independent Commissioners, Deborah Fazan and Sir Mark Worthington, as we embed this way of working. Deborah's work on the Land and Property Review, commissioned by the HS2 Minister, has been exceptional and we are now implementing its recommendations. Sir Mark has helped us to ensure that, as we have adapted to the requirements of Covid-19, we have continued to involve communities in local construction activities.

The HS2 Minister, Andrew Stephenson MP, has also been directly involved in our Community Engagement Strategy. He continues to support and challenge our efforts to consistently deliver against our Community Commitments.

Over the next year we will refresh our Community Engagement Strategy, as we address the realities of construction gathering more pace along the route. The lessons being learned from our approach to Phase One are shaping how we engage with route-side communities, as enabling and environmental works begin on Phase 2a. The hybrid Bill for the Phase 2b western leg into Manchester is now being prepared to take HS2 to the North West, and we await the outcome of the Integrated Rail Plan.

Foreword continued

HS2 remains at the forefront of the Government's plans to 'build back better' from the pandemic. We have the opportunity to demonstrate how large, complex infrastructure projects can be delivered safely, respectfully, and sensitively – particularly to the environment and to impacted communities. Having the phases of HS2 at different stages presents a range of challenges and requires tailored engagement, but the standards we set now will change the way the construction industry works in the future. We are determined that our community engagement activities are at the centre of that improvement.

Mark Thurston

Chief Executive Officer,
HS2 Ltd



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The journey so far

Natalie Penrose, Director of Community and Stakeholder Engagement, describes the journey so far and what's coming next.

It is now almost four years since we published our Community Engagement Strategy in Autumn 2017. Since that time, the project has changed significantly. On Phase One, between the West Midlands and London, main works have started and the project continues to gain pace. Royal Assent has now been granted for Phase 2a and consultation continues on Phase 2b.

This sixth progress report describes how we have engaged communities along the whole line of route. This includes how we have adapted our approach during the national lockdowns in 2020 and 2021, so that we could continue to reach local communities even when we couldn't meet them face to face.

In this report, we share information on how we have kept communities informed, including through our HS2 community websites, regular alerts to our 11,000+ subscribers, newsletters, maildrops, and new and improved virtual formats. In this period we have delivered nearly 1,700 engagement activities, reaching almost 10,000 people.

Our enhanced digital channels helped us continue conversations with communities and stakeholders as well as extend our reach. We extended our webinar programmes to share our archaeology findings, and to speak to local businesses about getting involved in the opportunities the project will bring.

This report also shares information on the HS2 Helpdesk and complaints services, describing how members of the public can get in touch and how many have contacted us about the Project. We have also shared information about why people contact us.

We also present some lessons we have learned with case studies that describe some of the improvements we have put into practice.

The next steps

We recognise that the start of main works construction on Phase One has been a difficult time for many of the communities who live along this part of the route. They are experiencing local traffic disruption as well as impact from noise and dust.

We also recognise that communities along Phase 2a have concerns about the start of construction work, and that communities along Phase 2b are still uncertain how and when the project will impact them.

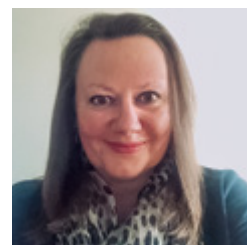
We have listened to concerns and feedback and introduced a number of developments over the past nine months, including:

- a unified single management system for community engagement and complaints handling across HS2 Ltd and the supply chain, so there is a single consistent record for all organisations;
- additional proactive local communications to provide notice and raise awareness of HS2 activity;
- shorter HS2 Helpdesk response times from April 2021, so that construction issues can be picked up, assessed and mitigated quickly; and
- new briefing materials to alert MPs and councillors to the agreed points of contact along Phase One and Phase 2a, so issues that aren't immediately resolved can be escalated.

This year we are also refreshing our Community Engagement Strategy. The refresh reflects the start of main works construction and the very real impact this Project is now having on people's lives as construction increases along Phase One. The refresh will include updates to our Community Commitments to reflect the issues most important to communities. The refreshed strategy will launch in Autumn 2021.

Natalie Penrose

Director of Community and Stakeholder Engagement (interim), HS2 Ltd



Community engagement at a glance

Cumulative figures from January 2018 to March 2021

The figures below represent the cumulative totals for the three years of our community engagement reporting (January 2018 to March 2021). Throughout this report, the case studies include a detailed breakdown of figures for the reporting period.

120,541

HS2 Helpdesk enquiries.

95%

complaints resolved within
20 working days or less.

99%

of the **1,455** complaints received from July 2020 to March 2021 were concluded at the first stage of the review process.

£9.41m+

of funding awarded to **157*** Community and Environment Fund and Business and Local Economy Fund projects along the line of the new railway between the West Midlands and London.

* The community and business funds for Phase One have been open since March 2017 and these figures represent the total awarded to the end of March 2021.

Our plan is to build and deliver the new railway in two phases. Phase One will link the West Midlands with London. Phase Two is being planned and will link the West Midlands with Manchester, the East Midlands, South Yorkshire, Leeds and beyond.

75,366

people attended over **5,958** engagement activities, including meetings, drop-ins and events along the whole line of the new railway.

6,700+

pupils attended **126** construction safety workshops at **81** schools along the line of the new railway between the West Midlands and London.

445,000+

people visited the **14** local community websites for Phase One and Phase Two, and over **11,115** subscribed to the sites since their launch.



Not to scale. Based on indicative train service specification as at April 2018. Final HS2 timetable subject to consultation. You can check maps to see the planned routes for HS2 rail network at: hs2.org.uk/where/route-map

Progress reports on Community Commitments

1

We will continue to build respectful, long-term relationships with communities, and actively encourage our workforce to listen to local concerns and be considerate and accountable for our actions at all times.

This commitment looks at how well our staff and contractors understand – and are behaving consistently with – our Community Engagement Strategy, as the HS2 Project gains pace and the supply chain grows.

Indicator: evidence that our staff and contractor partners understand and are behaving consistently in line with our strategy.

Facts and figures

79%

of event and engagement attendees say the quality of information we provided at our engagement activities is good, which is the same as our last report*.

15%

of event and engagement attendees still say HS2 is making a positive difference to their area, with no change since the last report.

We know we still have a long way to go for communities to see the benefits of the Project. As the Project has gained pace in 2020 and 2021, we know people are now experiencing more disruption, and we will do all we can to minimise and mitigate this.



Engagement event in Birmingham, before Covid-19 restrictions.

* Feedback forms are available at all our public events, including those held virtually.

Community Commitments continued

Listening and responding

You have told us that you want to be able to talk to us regularly through a range of channels, and that you would like to have local and visible engagement managers in your area.

In our last report we said we would...	Since then we have...
Keep improving our digital and virtual channels, so we can regularly reach as wide an audience as possible.	Expanded our online, digital engagement (since July 2020) by hosting webinars to seek views on key design elements and sharing information on areas of interest such as ecology and local business. We have also brought back our one-to-one local drop-ins in a virtual setting so that community members have time and space to discuss their individual questions and concerns about the Project. We ran a digital Design Refinement Consultation in Phase 2b.
Deliver a programme of Heritage Open Days webinars.	Delivered 10 online events, as part of the National Heritage Open Day week, presenting our archaeology findings to a wide audience.
Develop 'Being a good neighbour' toolkits, so all our staff and supply chain understand our commitments to communities and are supported to live up to them.	Launched our 'Being a good neighbour' toolkit on our internal website in December 2020, and we have regularly shared new tools and guidance with our contractors and supply chain as they have become available.
Continue with our programme of digital archaeology events, using webinars to make sure we can keep sharing findings safely during Covid-19. Deliver our community histories project, using digital and virtual channels to make sure a wide audience has access.	Participated in a number of Festival of Archaeology events with our contractors to share the history of the areas we are working in. Completed the communities histories project, which is due to be published on an accessible online platform in summer 2021.

Here are just some of the things we have done in the last nine months to build respectful, long-term relationships with communities.

Case study

Provide additional support and advice to those who need it

We are aware that building a new railway can affect the communities who live and work near the route. We are serious about our responsibilities and we'll do our best to design and build HS2 in ways that reduce the impact of our construction works.

We recognise that some residents require additional support to understand what can sometimes be complex issues, or to articulate the impact the project is having on them and their health. Some people also need support to raise concerns with us and our construction partners.

This is why we have commissioned POhWER to set up an independent advocacy service to support and act on behalf of those who need it. POhWER has a great deal of experience providing advocacy, information and advice services on behalf of the health service and local authorities. Our service is available to residents along the whole line of route, Phase One, Phase 2a and Phase 2b.

From July 2020 to March 2021, POhWER provided support to 36 people along the line of route, helping them communicate their needs. This has allowed us and our construction partners to take the most effective extra steps to minimise the impact that the new railway has on these people and their families.



HS2 Roadshow event, before Covid-19 restrictions.

Case study

Do things the right way: 'Being a good neighbour' toolkit launches within HS2

Our goal is to build the railway the right way, and that is why it is our responsibility to minimise the impact we have on the communities in which we operate, and every person helping to deliver the new railway has a part to play in this.

This is why, in December 2020, we rolled out our new 'Being a good neighbour' toolkit to everyone who works across HS2 Ltd. This toolkit is aimed at driving a more consistent approach to how we engage and support local residents and businesses along the line of route.

This toolkit includes guidance, advice and training on a wide range of subjects including: information on our community and business funds, advice on supporting local businesses and sharing supply chain opportunities with local firms, as well as updated guidance on the range of tools and channels that can be used to keep communities informed about what is happening in their area.

Community Commitments continued

Case study

Fusion JV supports access to an equestrian site in Northamptonshire

Delivering the railway in a respectful way means going the extra mile whenever the opportunity arises. In Aston le Walls, Northamptonshire, our construction partner Fusion JV did just this by enabling more than 1,000 participants in the four day British Eventing Horse Trials to more easily access the equestrian centre.

Fusion JV temporarily opened the A361 Welsh Road West which had been closed for onsite works for the duration of the four day event. The highway diversion that was in place would have caused congestion and delays for those attending the event, and the temporary re-opening of the road helped keep the event running smoothly.

Throughout these works, Fusion JV has continued to consider the needs of those living and working along the line of route and supporting access to the equestrian centre by temporarily reopening the A361, when needed.



Owl sculpture donated to Birmingham Children's Hospital.

Case study

LM JV gives back to communities and leaves a legacy

In order to build the railway we have to clear a number of woodland sites along the line of route, and alongside planting more than two million new trees, our construction partner LM JV and its supply chain have ensured that wood from our clearance activities is channelled back into local communities wherever possible.

One of the ways LM JV has achieved this is by working with local woodworkers to create 10 sculptures out of oak felled along the line of route. These sculptures were then donated to Birmingham Children's Hospital and local schools and charities along the northern part of the Phase One route. Although we know that communities will miss the presence of the trees felled during construction, we hope that these sculptures demonstrate our commitment to building long-lasting relationships in the communities in which we operate.

Birmingham Children's Hospital recently awarded LM JV a 'hero award' for the donation that they had made, and a spokesperson said:

“

Despite the challenges of Covid-19 last year, LM JV continued to support us in a number of ways to ensure we could still bring joy to our patients, families and staff members. They donated a beautiful woodcarving of an owl, which sits proudly in our Matron's Garden.”

🔍 Case study

Align JV listens to the community in Chalfont St Peter

As a respectful constructor, our commitment is to listen to the concerns of local communities and, wherever possible, work to address those concerns. In Chalfont St Peter, our construction partner Align JV listened to the concerns of local residents about construction traffic passing through the centre of the village.

As a result, a new 400 metre access road was created to provide heavy goods access to our worksites from the A413 to the site of the Chalfont St Peter Vent Shaft, avoiding the village centre, Robertswood School and the Epilepsy Society.

One of the governors of the Robertswood School is to feature in Align JV's staff induction video to help showcase the importance of working with the community when responding to people's concerns.



New access road at Chalfont St Peter nearing completion.

✓ Lessons learned

Understanding sensitive issues and tailoring our engagement

It was necessary to clear a section of privately owned woodland in Wendover. This land included a memorial woodland planted 10 years ago by a local hospice, in agreement with the landowner. We engaged on the clearance of the woodland with the landowner, the hospice and also with the families who had planted trees.

However, unfortunately on this occasion the engagement was not extensive enough to reach every family impacted, which in this case caused considerable distress.

A review of this incident resulted in a series of recommendations and changes to the way we work, including new governance processes to better identify local sensitivities at the very earliest opportunity. This early and joined up identification process helps us put in place bespoke engagement plans, collaboratively developed across HS2 and with our contractors, and tailored to local needs and issues.

Community Commitments continued

2

We will work with communities to develop local two-way engagement and communication programmes and ensure these are accessible and tailored to local needs.

While working with communities and our construction partners, we are actively developing tools and platforms that are tailored to local communities. We are ensuring that these are in line with the engagement approach defined in our Community Engagement Strategy.

Indicator: our progress against our strategy and our local area engagement plans.

Facts and figures

80%

of our event and engagement attendees say we listened and responded well, which is the same as our last report*.



HS2 Roadshow, returning in 2021.
Image taken before Covid-19 restrictions.



* Feedback forms are available at all our public events, including virtual ones.

Listening and responding

You told us that you want to be kept up to date with local and tailored information that is relevant to your area. You have also told us that you want to see a range of different communication methods used.

In our last report we said we would...	Since then we have...
<p>Expand our range of virtual channels even more. We will use the demographic information we collect to make sure we carry on engaging with diverse audiences.</p>	<p>Continued to expand the range of ways in which we engage digitally. In this period (20 July 2020 to 21 March 2021) we have delivered 1,683 engagement activities, reaching 9,809 people. Almost all of these activities have been delivered digitally and online, in line with government guidance.</p> <p>Our demographic insight has told us different groups want to see and access different communication methods. New methods of engagement over this period include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a new interactive map which shows the public in detail what is happening in their area including works, road closures and upcoming events. Over the duration of this report the map accounted for 20% of all traffic to the HS2 website; • hosting a number of online key design engagement events that were supported by virtual exhibition rooms and a range of webinars; and • local campaigns focused on the benefits of the project, including communication through a range of social media platforms, as well as traditional local media and radio.
<p>Continue with our community engagement insight programme so that we can improve the quality and reach of our engagement.</p>	<p>Continued and expanded our insight programme to offer improvements in our delivery. In December 2020, we delivered a bespoke HS2 Helpdesk training programme based on mystery shopper feedback.</p> <p>Had our independent mystery shoppers, from Insight6, assess our virtual webinars and events to ensure they were accessible, clear and tailored. These researchers make approximately 200 independent assessments of our engagement every year, with 100% of them saying they would attend and watch future webinars.</p> <p>Sought structured feedback from MPs throughout Phase One to understand what is working well, and what this group of stakeholders feels we could still do better. This valuable feedback is informing our engagement plans and activities for 2021/22 with this group of key stakeholders.</p>

Community Commitments continued

Here are just some of the things we have done in the past six months to provide accessible and tailored local two-way engagement.

🔍 Case study

Given local communities the opportunity to influence key designs along the line of route

In January 2021, we published the new designs of the Water Orton viaducts following community feedback. Suggestions from residents focused on improving the local landscape, with a new green space for the village and a pathway for walking and cycling. As a result, our architects and engineers developed plans for a more connected and accessible area around the viaducts. These new designs appear in a dedicated virtual exhibition which went live in February 2021 and includes a fly-through of the viaducts and detailed site designs.

As part of our key design engagement on the Saltley viaduct and the Aston Church Road overbridge (both in Birmingham), we developed alternatives to public meetings, including sharing the designs by direct mailouts, an online booklet and a webinar. We gave residents a digital questionnaire to share their thoughts, with all of the materials available in three different languages to make them accessible to the community.



Images of the Water Orton Viaduct designs.

🔍 Case study

Shifted the Phase 2b design refinement consultation online

In October 2020, the design refinement consultation (DRC) launched for Phase 2b, setting out the latest plans for the western leg route from Crewe to Manchester, and introducing HS2 to new communities in the North of England. Due to social distancing restrictions as a result of Covid-19, the DRC had to be run entirely virtually, and as a consequence, we introduced new technology and communication channels to help keep residents, businesses and stakeholders informed and involved in this consultation.

Our interactive map was updated with information relating to the DRC, and a new virtual exhibition space was developed that recreated the set up that we would have deployed if there were no social distancing restrictions in place. To ensure two-way engagement, we ran 13 community area webinars attended by 680 people, each of which focused on what the DRC meant for that area. We also invited people to book a virtual one-to-one appointment with a member of the Phase 2b team to talk in more depth about individual questions and concerns, and 334 of these appointments took place.

While a large proportion of our activity has been delivered virtually, we recognise that this is not an option for everyone, so those who required printed materials were able to request them by contacting the HS2 Helpdesk. Our vulnerable persons service provider, POhWer, was also available to help ensure that the consultation was accessible and understood by all.

This consultation helped us test and develop new digital tools and channels, and we have since used this learning to help keep communities informed and involved in other parts of our engagement activity.

✓ Lessons learned

Keeping communities fully informed to ensure no surprises

LM JV, our construction partner, was carrying out enabling works in Burton Green in Warwickshire in 2020. This required the closure of a road junction within the village and the rerouting of public walking routes on the Kenilworth Greenway. Although LM JV undertook extensive engagement in the area, some of the community and stakeholders did not fully understand the impacts of the closure and rerouting. Additionally, adverse weather meant that alternative walking routes were less than ideal for users.

Following strong negative feedback from the local community, LM JV acted swiftly to provide more detail on the works themselves, with additional events and communications to help ensure that more people understood the impact of construction on the local area. They also reassessed the works themselves and, with support from HS2, introduced improvements to the construction schedule and new temporary walking facilities that further mitigated the impact of these works.

A review was conducted and the lessons learned include ensuring contractors make delivery impacts explicit in all published communications. Where possible, this needs to include community impact reviews at early stages of scheme development to ensure that impacts are minimised and that full details can be communicated at the earliest stage. Particular focus should be given to impacts on road users and local facilities such as public rights of way. These lessons have been shared with other contractors to mitigate impacts across the line or route.



Improved signage on the Kenilworth Greenway.



New walking route with signage.

Community Commitments continued



We will make sure communities are made aware in advance of any activities taking place in their area.

Our success depends on how well communities and stakeholders are informed about what’s happening in their area. We are committed to delivering relevant and timely information about what we are doing, using a variety of digital and traditional methods that allow us to communicate with you in the easiest and best way for you.

Indicator: how well we are informing you about the programme.

Listening and responding

You continue to tell us that traffic disruption and noise impacts that may occur during the construction phase of the Project are the biggest community concerns. You therefore want to be kept up to date and informed about works and traffic impacts in your area.

Facts and figures

445,000

visitors to our community websites, compared to 293,100 visitors in our last report in Autumn 2020, an increase of more than 150,000.

11,115

subscribers to our community websites, compared to 7,800 in our last report.

In our last report we said we would...	Since then we have...
Introduce a new letter referencing system to make it quicker and easier for people who receive letters from HS2 Ltd to discuss any questions and concerns with the HS2 Helpdesk.	Ensured all correspondence from HS2 Ltd includes a single reference number.
Keep expanding the range of channels we use to keep communities updated about local works.	Introduced our interactive map (which can be found here: hs2.org.uk/where/route-map/) in March, which shows people in detail what is happening in their area, including works, road closures and upcoming events. Since our last report in Autumn 2020 we have received an increase of more than 150,000 visits to our community websites, with over 3,000 new subscribers.

Here are just some of the things we have done in the last nine months to make sure communities are made aware of activities taking place in their area.

Case study

Worked in partnership to keep communities informed about major road closures

Throughout the lifecycle of the HS2 Project, hundreds of roads – from small country lanes to major motorways – will need to be closed to enable us to deliver the railway. Our commitment is to communicate any disruption to local communities early and clearly, and we now use a number of different channels to do just this.

In August 2020, our construction partner LM JV completed the installation of a 65 metre bridge over the M42 in just two days. To achieve this, the motorway had to be closed and this had to be communicated to as many people as possible. We developed and implemented an engagement and communications campaign with LM JV, Highways England and Transport for West Midlands. The campaign was designed to raise awareness of the closure and encourage alternative routes. As part of this campaign, we published an information video on our YouTube channel, which attracted over 6,300 views leading up to the closure.

The bridge installation went smoothly and we received only 12 enquiries to the HS2 Helpdesk in relation to the closure of the M42. We have now developed a toolkit to help us and our partners plan and deliver collaborative communication campaigns to better inform communities on upcoming road closures and disruption. This toolkit launched in early 2021 and it will help us create consistent, clear and meaningful messages to ensure we continue to meet our commitment to communities along the line of route.

Case study

Kept communities informed about permanent road closures

Collaboration with other organisations is crucial to keeping communities informed. In July 2020, we worked closely with our partners Birmingham City Council and Transport for West Midlands to inform local residents about the permanent closure of Park Street, near the Curzon Street Station site in Birmingham.

We developed consistent messaging that could be shared by all of our partners, and we agreed to share these messages on social media, our websites, electronic screens in the area and local newsletters. These messages helped increase the likelihood that residents and commuters would see the changes to bus services and understand how the road closure might impact how they travel around Park Street. We also appeared on the local radio to help raise awareness of the road closure, and briefed local businesses well in advance of the closure so it was not a surprise for their employees or their customers.

As a result of this collaborative campaign, we received very few complaints once the road closure took effect, and our partners were pleased with how the campaign was delivered. This format has since been used for further closures across the line of route.



Old Curzon Street Station Terminus.

Community Commitments continued



Interactive map on the HS2 website.

Case study

Published a new interactive map on the HS2 website

In March 2021, a new interactive map went live on the HS2 website, making it easier for people to navigate and stay up to date on local works. This map was developed in response to stakeholder requests for more interactive, map-based works information showing all local areas along the line of route.

The information on the map includes the location and planned duration of the works, the contractor delivering them, and the kind of activity we are doing, such as establishing a new compound or starting an archaeological dig. The map will be further improved based on ongoing feedback from users. We hope to expand what is available to view within this map to ensure it remains a useful tool for local communities to see what is happening in their area.

✓ Lessons learned

Keeping to local commitments

In December 2020, an abnormal load carrying tunnel boring machine parts through Warwickshire, became stuck during its journey. This prevented access to the road for five hours during the middle of the day stopping local people from making essential journeys.

The abnormal road journey was originally planned for out of hours, which would have minimised the impact on local travel and people, and we had communicated to local communities that this abnormal load would be transported out of hours. By undertaking this journey during the day, we did not keep to the local commitments that we had made and communicated.

A lessons learned review was conducted and all future abnormal loads will be conducted out of hours. We have reiterated to our delivery teams that local commitments of this type must be treated as seriously as formal consents and undertakings and assurances. These messages have been reinforced through our construction teams and supply chain, and the lessons learned have been shared.



One of the HS2 tunnel boring machines.

Community Commitments continued

4

HS2 Helpdesk 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Operating our freephone community HS2 Helpdesk is the foundation of our approach to reliable, responsive customer service for everyone who contacts us. We want to be open and accessible and make it as easy as possible for you to contact us.

Indicator: how well we handle your enquiries.

Facts and figures

How many people contacted us?

40,163

enquiries received between July 2020 and March 2021.

This compares to

28,426

for the same period July 2019 and March 2020.

Overall there is a

41%

increase in enquiries received between July 2019 – March 2020 and July 2020 – March 2021.

As the Project gains pace and the impacts become more visible to communities, we are seeing a steady increase in the volume of enquiries received by the HS2 Helpdesk. This increase is as we'd expect as construction ramps up on Phase One, Phase 2a prepares to enter the delivery stage, and legislation for Phase 2b is discussed.

The HS2 Helpdesk continues to be the first point of contact for members of the public and stakeholders who need advice or information from HS2, and during Covid-19 the HS2 Helpdesk has remained fully operational all day, every day. There was no break or reduction in service at any point; the team has remained available to take calls from people who have concerns and questions.

Our Helpdesk team

Freephone

08081 434 434

Minicom

08081 456 472

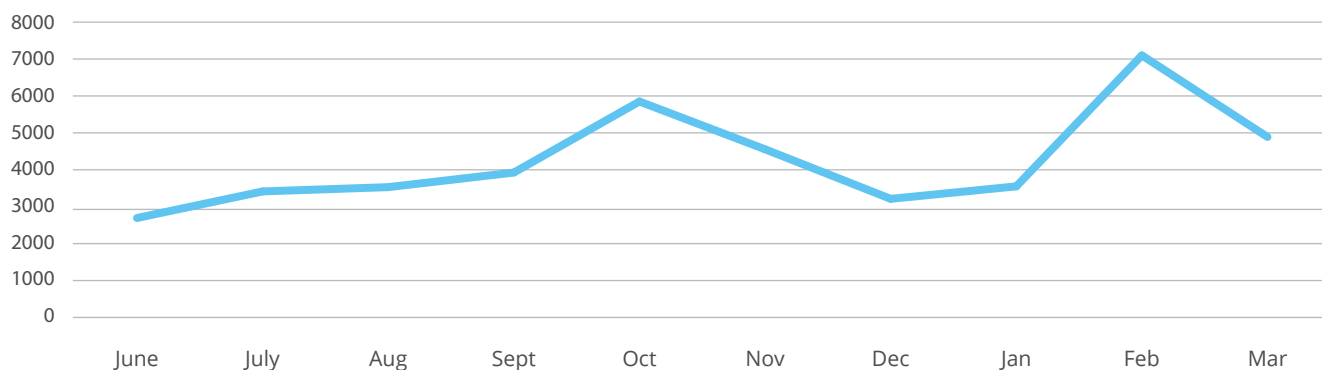
email

hs2enquiries@hs2.org.uk



Community Commitments continued

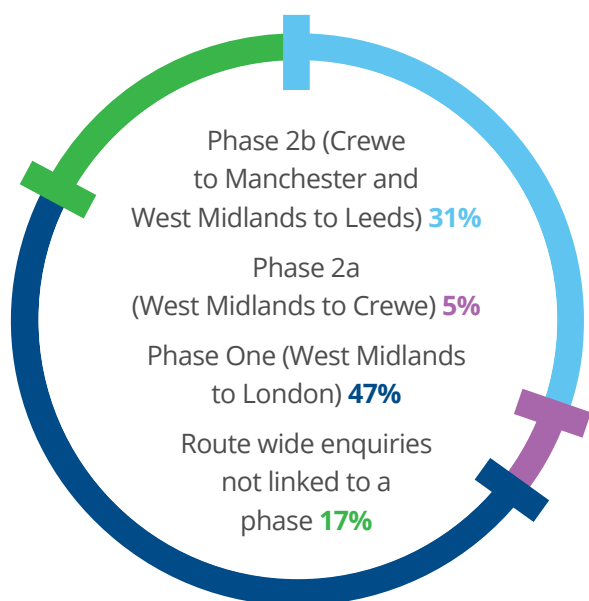
Total HS2 Helpdesk contacts (by phone and email) per month



Why are people contacting us?

Between July 2020 and March 2021, Phase One was the part of the Project that generated the most enquiries.

Queries about land and property made up the majority of reasons for a HS2 Helpdesk contact, with 49% of all enquiries falling into this category.



How did people choose to contact us?

You can contact our HS2 Helpdesk team by Freephone, Minicom, email, web form or Freepost.

Between July 2020 and March 2021 all of our contacts have either been by Freephone, email or web form.

33.1%

of people called us on our Freephone number.

66.8%

of people opted for email.

0.1%

of people opted for web form.

What sort of service can you expect?

Between July 2020 and March 2021:

58%

of enquiries resolved at the first point of contact.

42%

of enquiries needed a follow up.

Here are just some of the things we have done in the last nine months to provide a 24/7 Helpdesk for everyone.

Case study

Continued to improve the HS2 Helpdesk customer experience

The HS2 Helpdesk receives thousands of items of correspondence each year, whether from concerned residents wishing to find out more about construction works in their area, or local businesses seeking to understand the opportunities for working with us.

To help improve the customer experience we introduced a new referencing system in August 2020. This system allows us to more easily identify the issues the call relates to, and find the answers people need quickly and effectively. The system attaches a new HS2 Helpdesk reference number to works notifications so the team can help find answers while on the phone with the caller.

We have also launched a new HS2 Helpdesk enquiry form on our website. This means that enquiries can now be made in five ways: Freephone, Minicom, Freepost, email, and now the contact form on the website.

This new digital contact form is the latest step in our wider programme of work to integrate our community channels with the main HS2 website – meaning that local communities can more easily find out what is going on in their area. The form also encourages residents to submit information on the reason for their enquiry and to share their full contact details, making it easier for us to answer residents' enquiries.



HS2 Helpdesk staff, based in Birmingham.

Case study

Built an expert, responsive Helpdesk team

One of the ways we ensure that our HS2 Helpdesk team is able to listen and respond to queries effectively is to organise route tours for them so they understand the geography and local issues along the whole line of route.

To ensure the HS2 Helpdesk remained aware of route issues during lockdown, we took the route tours online. These virtual tours were led by our local contractor partners so that the current local issues could be shared and described, and our HS2 Helpdesk team members could ask questions of the experts on the ground.



This virtual session with maps, pictures and video footage brought things to life and it really helped move our understanding forward on this key part of the route from some of the monitoring activity right through to lorry routes. Thanks to colleagues from SCS for all their hard work preparing and supporting the session."

Tom Walker

Senior Public Response Manager – Helpdesk,
HS2 Ltd

Community Commitments continued



I am proud of the work the HS2 Helpdesk has done in providing a service for stakeholders as the Programme gathers momentum. It is right we look to continue to iterate and improve our customer experience, and having an independent market leader supporting that work was enormously helpful and got excellent feedback from the front line teams. We shared hints and tips on best ways to provide the service and made clear individual commitments to carry this forward. It was a great opportunity to reflect and build on our already strong standard of service."

Tom Walker

Senior Public Response Manager – Helpdesk,
HS2 Ltd

✓ Lessons learned

Using insight to train and improve

We use an experienced mystery shopping organisation to provide us with feedback on the ways we engage communities, including the HS2 Helpdesk. The researchers have no affiliation to, or expert knowledge of, HS2 and so they approach interactions with an independent mindset. We look at two elements for each interaction:

1. Did it meet the expectations in our Community Engagement Strategy?
2. How did it feel?

This feedback has helped us to identify areas for improvement. The independent feedback about the HS2 Helpdesk told us that we needed to focus on consistency, empathy and making it easy for the caller to resolve issues. To address the findings, we have delivered a bespoke training package for the HS2 Helpdesk. The training is focused on the caller experience, ensuring we not only answer questions correctly, but do it in the right way.

Listening and responding

You have told us you want to improve the customer service from our HS2 Helpdesk.

You also told us we need to promote awareness of the HS2 Helpdesk more widely.

In our last report we said we would...

Keep using anonymous shopping research and other insights to understand where we can still improve the quality of our HS2 Helpdesk service.

Since then we have...

Continued to expand our insight programme to offer improvements in our delivery.

Acted on feedback from our independent mystery shoppers that there was scope to improve our HS2 Helpdesk service in some areas by delivering a bespoke HS2 Helpdesk training programme in December. Following the training, we will be tracking and monitoring to ensure that the improvements are delivered.

Community Commitments continued

5

We will make health and safety a priority for communities and our workforce.

HS2 is an exciting Project, but one which will impact on lots of communities. We don't underestimate that impact, nor our responsibility to minimise disruption and keep everyone who lives and works in those communities safe and secure.

Indicator: how well we demonstrate that health and safety is a priority for staff and communities.

The health, safety and wellbeing of the communities along the route of the new railway, and of our staff, remains our absolute priority.

The impact of Covid-19 dominated this six month period, and our first priority has been to ensure we kept communication and engagement channels open to our communities throughout these challenging times.

The HS2 Helpdesk continues to be the first point of contact for members of the public and stakeholders who need advice or information from HS2. Even with all members of the team now working from home, our HS2 Helpdesk has remained operational all day, every day, and with no break in service at any point.

From the start of lockdown, we postponed all face to face engagement events and meetings, and explored new ways of keeping communities informed and involved. We kept residents up to date on the engagement activity that had been postponed, as well as on the latest status of construction work in local areas, through letters and phone calls, and alerts from each of the local community websites.

We have introduced new types of digital engagement through webinars and virtual meetings, while also maintaining more traditional methods of engagement, such as newsletters and mailouts.

Listening and responding

In our last report we said we would...	Since then we have...
Work to make 'Playing it Safe' (details overleaf) available in alternative ways and in accordance with Covid-19 guidelines within a school environment.	Made plans to bring a refreshed version of 'Playing it Safe' this autumn, with an additional focus on road traffic safety. (Due to the Covid-19 guidelines it was unsafe to reintroduce this activity in its original form).
Develop and pilot new community projects that are appropriate for Covid-19 secure guidance and are relevant to local communities.	Encouraged our contractors to lead on delivering online and virtual projects within communities, with a focus on schools, jobs and skills in many areas.

Community Commitments continued

Here are just some of the things we have done in the past six months to make health and safety a priority for our neighbours.

Case study

Align JV was recognised for placing health and safety at the heart of their programme

Our construction partner, Align JV, was one of the first to be assessed and, in February 2021, it was awarded an 'excellent' rating on the Considerate Constructors Scheme (CCS) for its main site at the Chiltern Tunnel South Portal. The site, which has been covered in the national media, acts as the launch point for two of our tunnel boring machines, as well as for the Colne Valley Viaduct.

The CCS scored Align JV full marks across its five main assessment categories, including 'respect the community' and 'care about safety'. In practice, this means that Align JV has demonstrated to CCS that they are proactive in ensuring the safety of their workforce, site visitors and the wider public, and that they minimise the risks of construction activity in the local community.

This accreditation highlights how HS2 and our partners are working together to deliver respectfully, and we are continuing to work with the CCS to ensure that all of our construction activity is delivered in a way that is respectful, considerate and safe.



The Chiltern Tunnel South Portal site is the home of two tunnel boring machines and the main site for the construction of the Colne Valley viaduct.

Case study

New site signage guidance was rolled out to worksites

As part of our commitment to keeping our staff, visitors and communities safe we developed new guidance for our construction partners across all of our worksites to ensure that our site signage is consistently branded and displays important information in a way that is clear and accessible. This new guidance also responded to the HS2 Residents' Commissioner recommendation that all of our worksites should be clearly identifiable and numbered to help people contact our HS2 Helpdesk with their queries and concerns.

Accompanying the guidance is a number of templates that can be used by individual worksites to reflect the unique heritage and context of each community.

One of the first worksites to adopt this new signage approach is the Amersham Vent Shaft, where our construction partner Align JV engaged local residents to design the 200m of hoarding that runs the perimeter of the worksite. Amersham Museum provided us with a number of images that are of local historic interest, and this was fed into the design process.

Case study – Before Covid-19 restrictions

Award winning schools programme – ‘Playing it Safe’

In November 2020, the HS2 community engagement team celebrated winning a Corporate Engagement Award (run by Communicate Magazine). The projects and events team won bronze for ‘Playing it Safe’, and our partners Arc Theatre took bronze in the Best Educational Programme category.

‘Playing it Safe’ launched in February 2018 in recognition of the importance of building relationships with schools close to the route and keeping children safe around construction sites. To help deliver on our ‘Being a good neighbour’ commitment, this innovative, educational workshop uses drama to explain the importance of staying safe when living and playing near construction sites. Having run for over two years, more than 6,700 pupils have now attended 126 separate workshops held at 81 schools across Phase One.

One judge said it was:

“

Great to see the programme addressing a clear local concern and providing a creative solution to help tackle what might have been a difficult issue with which to engage young audiences.”



School children learning about safety at the ‘Playing it Safe’ workshop, before Covid-19 restrictions.



School children learning about safety at the ‘Playing it Safe’ workshop, before Covid-19 restrictions.



Community Commitments continued

6

We will respect the wellbeing of communities, minimising disruption to their lives with local mitigation plans and activities, ensuring we meet the standards set out in the Code of Construction Practice.

We recognise that construction will have an impact and cause disruption to communities.

Listening and responding

You have told us that you want us to minimise disruption as far as reasonably possible when we are working close to residential areas.

This commitment considers how community and stakeholder input is influencing the way in which we build the railway. How we and our contractors behave is as important to the railway's success as delivering the Project on time and ensuring value for money for the taxpayer.

Indicator: how well we demonstrate that we are continually looking to minimise the impacts of the Programme.

In our last report we said we would...

Launch a pilot with the Considerate Contractors Scheme (CCS) to independently assess how safely and respectfully our contractors are operating.
Number all of our construction sites so you can reference issues more easily when you contact us with questions or concerns.
Analyse construction complaints to understand why people are contacting us, so that we can prevent similar complaints in the future.

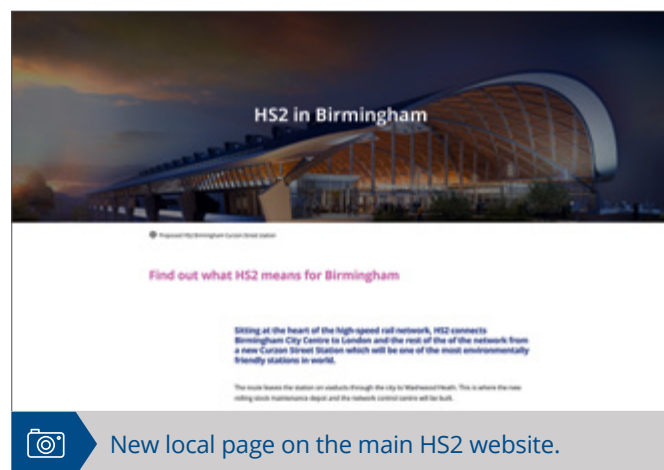
Since then we have...

Numbered all construction sites so identification is easy when contacting us.
Invited the CCS to visit and assess our Phase One construction sites and, in February 2021, an Align JV site received the first excellent rating. The CCS programme will continue throughout 2021, providing valuable independent feedback on the quality of our sites.

Start construction sites visits for local stakeholders where we can do this safely.

We have continued to share information regularly with local stakeholders and, due to Covid-19, we have also held virtual site tours, which have taken place with MPs and local stakeholders. Face to face site visits will resume in line with government guidance later in 2021.

Here are just some of the things we have done in the last nine months to minimise disruption and ensure our sites operate safely for our neighbours.



Case study

More than 10,000 people have now subscribed to our local community websites

Across the line of route, we operate 14 community websites that provide information tailored to a specific local area. This information ranges from notices about construction works, new public events and major milestones in the area, such as the launch of our first tunnel boring machines.

In January 2021, we passed a major milestone when 10,000 people from communities across Phase One, Phase 2a and Phase 2b subscribed to receive news and updates from us. This is a 66% increase on the previous year.

We have further improvements planned for these local websites in spring/summer 2021, including a new interactive mapping tool that went live in March 2021, as well as greater integration and alignment between the main HS2 website and our local websites, which can be accessed at hs2.org.uk/in-your-area/

Case study

Helped the country respond to the Covid-19 pandemic

As Britain's largest infrastructure Project we have a responsibility to help the country respond to, and recover from, the Covid-19 pandemic. This is why we temporarily suspended construction at Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire, to allow a mass vaccination centre to open in January 2021, with the capacity to vaccinate 2,500 people a day.

Stoneleigh Park is directly impacted by the construction of the new railway, with the route running through the park and construction already underway. As most visitors travel to the park by car, concerns were raised by the local authorities and the NHS about the impact that construction activity and surrounding road closures may have on people being able to access the site.

Through a series of discussions we developed a number of pragmatic solutions that have allowed us to continue construction without impacting the successful operation of the vaccination centre. This included the careful scheduling and sequencing of works, a comprehensive approach to local engagement, a bespoke design to road signage and regular meetings with local partners.

Community Commitments continued



Florence and Cecilia, the two Chiltern tunnel boring machines.



Heavy plant in Birmingham.

Case study

Minimised the impacts of noise and vibration

We're committed to being a good neighbour in the communities where we're working. Although we do all we can to reduce noise and vibration at source, we recognise that in some instances residents may not be adequately protected by our policies, and these special cases need to be considered individually.

Examples of special cases that we have considered over the last six months include:

- people with a medical condition who will be seriously aggravated by our construction noise;
- those living in homes where noise insulation won't work, such as houseboats or mobile homes; and
- night workers and those who need to rest during the day.

We set up a panel to oversee and manage the way special cases are assessed. If anyone believes that they have been negatively affected by our activities they can contact our HS2 Helpdesk or community engagement teams. The panel considers individual circumstances to decide if we should offer any alternative measures or reasonable adjustments.

Community Commitments continued



We will leave a positive and sustainable legacy for the communities in which we operate.

We know building the railway will cause disruption to communities. However, it's important that we also focus on leaving a positive legacy for communities by setting a new standard for major infrastructure projects. This commitment considers how benefits are being delivered through our investment programmes.

Indicator: what long-term benefits our investment programme is delivering.

Facts and figures

£9.41m

Since the Community and Environment Fund (CEF) and Business and Local Economy Fund (BLEF) opened in March 2017, £9.41 million has been awarded to 157 projects up to the end of March 2021.

Through outreach, we have continued to target areas where we haven't received many applications or made many awards, to connect organisations to Groundwork UK, which delivers the grants programme for HS2.

Listening and responding

You have told us that you are not always aware of how HS2 is making a positive difference to local areas, or how it is delivering positive benefits more widely. Leaving a positive legacy is critical to the success of the Project.

In our last report we said we would...	Since then we have...
Host a webinar about the community and business funds and continue to advise people on how they can get involved.	<p>Launched our successful 'Work with us Wednesdays' business campaign (read more on page 28). Over a series of webinars, we introduced 500 local businesses to the opportunities of working as part of the HS2 supply chain and what this means in practice.</p> <p>This series was received positively by attendees, with 89% rating the information shared as good and 100% said they were likely to attend a business event in the future. More importantly, following this series, we had a 25% increase in the number of businesses registering their interest in working with HS2, meaning that the economic benefits of HS2 can be felt by even more local businesses across the country.</p>
Keep raising awareness of the funds in communities where take up is lower, and raise awareness of the benefits of the funds among communities in the Phase 2a area.	<p>Raised awareness in underrepresented areas, through Groundwork UK, including a first award in Ealing in late 2020, with further areas due to receive their first awards in 2021.</p> <p>Phase 2a CEF and BLEF has launched and applications are open. We have conducted webinars with parish councils and engaged local MPs.</p>

Community Commitments continued

Here are just some of the things we have done in the last nine months to leave a positive and sustainable legacy for our neighbours.

£9.41m

of funding has been awarded for local projects.

The funding, through our CEF and the BLEF, will go towards 157 local projects along the line of the new railway between the West Midlands and London.

£2m+

of this has been allocated since our last report.

Case study

Supported local businesses to understand the benefits of working with HS2

Over the summer of 2020 we hosted six webinars to help local businesses navigate the HS2 supply chain and better understand some of the things that we are looking for from suppliers. This series was known as 'Work with us Wednesdays' and was attended by more than 500 businesses across 49 different communities and remains available online for anyone to view.

This programme helps ensure that local businesses along the line of route can make the most of the opportunities that the new railway brings. We also recognise that procurement processes can be difficult to navigate, but as part of our commitment to transparency, these webinars walked businesses through the process, and we encourage businesses of all different types and sizes to get involved where possible.

Each webinar focused on a different aspect of our procurement process, including sessions on helping applicants stand out, the importance of diversity in our supply chain, how to demonstrate social value, and a focus on innovation.

This series was received positively by attendees, with 89% rating the information shared as good and 100% said they were likely to attend a business event in the future. More importantly, following this series, we had a 25% increase in the number of businesses who had registered their interest in working with HS2, meaning that the economic benefits of HS2 can be felt by even more local businesses across the country.

Here are a few examples of projects completed in 2020:

West Midland Bird Club

£10,000 for the installation of a new Sand Martin nesting bank at Ladywalk Nature Reserve.

Water Orton & District Tennis Club

£43,000 for court resurfacing and the installation of floodlighting.

Amersham Museum

£16,080 to establish a mobile museum.

Claydon Community Café CIC

£75,000 to set up Molly's Community Café.

Charndon Parish Council

£9,933 for the installation of inclusive play equipment for disabled children at the local play area.

Marston St Lawrence Village Hall

£74,999 towards a refurbishment programme that includes thermal insulation, a new heating system, lighting, and new decor throughout.



An NHS healing and peace garden is among the projects to benefit from our community and environment funds.



Woodhouse Farm and Garden also benefitted from our community and environment funds.

Community Commitments continued

🔍 Case study

Helped support local businesses along Phase One

While the economic legacy of HS2 will be felt for decades to come, we are working with local businesses now to help them feel the benefits of Europe's largest infrastructure project. This year we developed an online guide for local businesses. The resource, which is hosted on our website, showcases the different ways that local businesses can get involved in the Project. It also gives businesses the opportunity to tell us what they do, so we can share their offer with our contractors. As of March 2021, there were around 900 registered local businesses from communities across the route.

This work is already having an impact. In August 2020, Titan Installations, a small firm in Southam was contracted by EKFB to install commercial audio and video systems, digital signage and room booking systems to help get EKFB's new offices in Brackley ready for its staff. In March 2021 we heard from Coventry Accommodation Ltd, providers of short-term rental properties. The company is now renting over half of their properties to staff working on the new railway, providing them with much-needed business security during the pandemic.

We are also working with business stakeholders to share the benefits. One example came in September 2020, where we partnered with the Hertfordshire Growth Hub to provide information directly to businesses via their website to help make local businesses aware of the opportunities to work with HS2 and our construction partners in the delivery of the railway.

🔍 Case study

Built an economic legacy across the HS2 route

Alongside direct investment in community projects across Phase One and Phase 2a, we are committed to ensuring that any impact on local economies is mitigated during construction and that we leave a positive economic legacy across the line of route.

Early in 2021, we hosted a virtual roundtable event with the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation to discuss its new Employment and Skills Hub, which received £255,200 of funding from our BLEF in August 2020. This hub will help support local businesses to grow, and help local people gain new skills and access new employment opportunities, including jobs created by HS2. We are also continuing to work closely with Ealing and Brent Councils, local MPs and businesses to secure a legacy for West London that delivers real benefits to local people.

In March 2021, the Curzon Street Station team hosted a jobs and skills webinar to share information on the employment opportunities that the construction of the station will create in the area. The webinar attracted 47 people from the local community. Speakers included Suited for Success, a local charity that offers interview advice for those return to the workforce, and our construction partner BBV's Skills and Education team who shared jobs that will be available with them.



HS2 staff engaging with businesses, before Covid-19 restrictions.

Community Commitments continued

8

We will respond to questions and complaints quickly and efficiently, with an acknowledgement within two working days, and a response within a maximum of 20 working days if we cannot answer the query straight away.

How well we handle community and stakeholder enquires and complaints is a key element of how we aspire to be a good neighbour.

Indicator: how well we handle your complaint.

Facts and figures

How many people complained?

We received 1,455 complaints between July 2020 and March 2021, compared with 729 between July 2019 and March 2020. The increased volumes have been seen across the Phase One part of the route where construction of the railway becomes increasingly real for those living along the line of the route between the West Midlands and London.

Why did people complain?

Over 94% of all complaints from July 2020 to March 2021 are related to the Phase One line of route between the West Midlands and London.

The main reason people in Phase One complained was because of traffic and transport (30%), site activity (19%) and protest activity issues (17%).

If you have concerns about these issues you can contact our HS2 Helpdesk team all day, every day, on 08081 434 434.

Complaints totals

Complaints July 2020 to March 2021

	Phase One	Phase 2a	Phase 2b	Route-wide	Total
Programme delivery	1,308	8	2	42	1,360
Land and property	18	0	4	2	24
Community engagement	49	3	3	5	60
Corporate services	2	0	1	8	11
Health, safety and security	0	0	0	0	0
Total July 2020 – March 2021	1,377	11	10	57	1,455
Annual total 2020	1,538	9	9	138	1,694
Annual total 2019	575	21	24	7	627
Annual total 2018	387	9	51	–	447

Community Commitments continued

How quickly did we resolve complaints?

Between July 2020 and March 2021:

91%

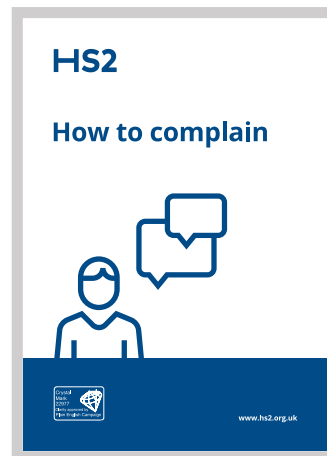
of 1,455 HS2 complaints were resolved within 20 working days.

99%

of HS2 complaints were concluded at the first stage of the complaints process.

Our complaints process in more detail

Our complaints procedure is available at:
[hs2.org.uk/in-your-area/how-to-complain](https://www.hs2.org.uk/in-your-area/how-to-complain)



How do we compare to previous years?

- In 2020, 92% of 1,694 complaints were resolved within 20 working days, compared to 627 complaints received in 2019 of which 95% were resolved within 20 working days. In 2018, 90% of 447 complaints were resolved in 20 working days.
- More than 99% of HS2 complaints were concluded at the first stage of the complaints process in 2019 and 2020.



Listening and responding

We will do all we can to ensure that communities do not need to use the complaints process. But when you do need to complain, you want us to follow a clear, fair, accessible and efficient process.

In our last report we said we would...	Since then we have...
<p>Analyse our growing complaints data in depth to learn from complaints and continuously improve how we work.</p>	<p>Started to record whether or not a complaint has been upheld or partially upheld. This enables us to analyse those cases where we have not got things right, and share and embed learning across the organisation.</p> <p>Developed a 'respect toolkit' for use by HS2 staff working in local communities to help improve the quality of our engagement with residents, and support our staff. You can read more about respect at HS2 here: hs2.org.uk/respectful-conversations/</p> <p>We have also published an Unreasonable, Disproportionate and Persistent Complaints Policy which is available at: hs2.org.uk/documents/unreasonable-disproportionate-and-persistent-complaints-policy/</p>

Community Commitments continued

Independence and complaints handling at HS2

Independence is built into the HS2 complaints process. If you are not happy with the response received from the first step in the complaints process, you can request that your complaint is escalated and independently reviewed. In this instance there are two options:

- For complaints about construction, the complainant will be referred to the Independent Construction Commissioner (ICC), who reviews, mediates and monitors the way in which HS2 manages and responds to construction complaints. The ICC will carry out an independent review of the complaint and provide both the complainant and HS2 with a single or series of recommendations. gov.uk/government/collections/hs2-independent-construction-commissioner

Following a review by the ICC, the complainant may seek advice from any member of parliament (MP) about referring the complaint to the Parliamentary Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) for a final independent review. Once the PHSO has considered the case, both parties will be advised on the outcome of the review. ombudsman.org.uk

- For all other complaints, a member of the HS2 senior leadership team who has not previously been involved with the complaint will carry out an independent review. The findings of the review will be presented to the chief executive for consideration and approval of a full and final response. To ensure transparency, a copy of the review findings will also be made available to the complainant.

Following this step, complainants can ask for their complaint to be reviewed by the Department for Transport's Independent Complaints Assessors (ICAs) who will carry out an independent review of the complaint and provide both the complainant and HS2 with a single or series of recommendations. gov.uk/government/collections/independent-complaints-assessors-for-the-department-for-transport

Following review by the ICAs, the complainant may seek advice from any member of parliament (MP) about referring the complaint to the PHSO for a final independent review. Once the PHSO has considered the case, both parties will be advised on the outcome of the review. ombudsman.org.uk

Community Commitments continued

9

We will promote awareness of all our property schemes so that anyone who may be eligible has all the information they need and is aware of the support available to them.

Indicator: we will provide clear and up to date information about our property schemes.

Finding out about our property schemes

Communities and businesses located near the approved or proposed line of the new railway have access to the range of statutory and discretionary property schemes.

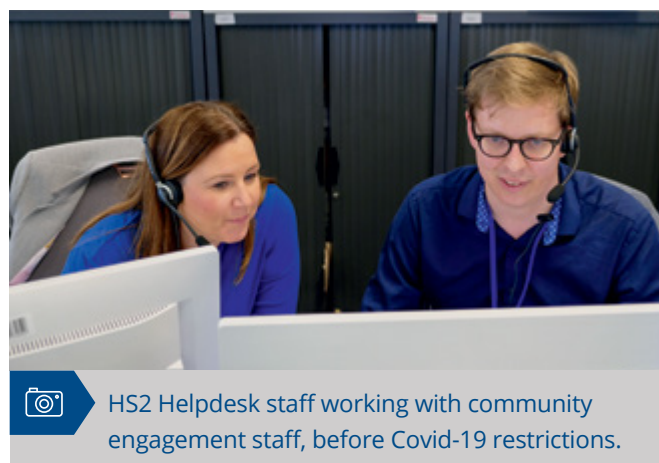
Information about the property schemes, frequently asked questions and the application process have been made widely available to the public at events, meetings, in our literature and online at hs2.org.uk

Our HS2 Helpdesk team can answer any of your questions about our property schemes and is available all day, every day on 08081 434 434.

Facts and figures

Since the launch of the discretionary property schemes, we have received and accepted the following numbers of applications:

Discretionary property schemes from inception to 31 March 2021	Number of applications	Number accepted
Rural Support Zone	801	668
Homeowner Payment scheme	980	819
Need to Sell scheme*	942	333



HS2 Helpdesk staff working with community engagement staff, before Covid-19 restrictions.

* The Need to Sell scheme is available for people who need to sell their property within the next three years. The time requirement means there are more reapplied applications than the other schemes, such as for properties where the project isn't going to impact them within the next three years.

Community Commitments continued

Listening and responding

You have told us that we still have more to do to promote awareness of the property schemes. We have listened to your feedback and updated our property scheme booklets to reflect what you have told us.

In our last report we said we would...	Since then we have...
Improve the accessibility of our web content even more by adding videos explaining our property schemes.	Published a video in March 2021 to explain the HS2 homeowner payment scheme.

Case study

Promoting awareness of our property scheme with MPs

We have a number of property schemes available to residents who are impacted by construction activity along the line of route. As part of our commitment to raise awareness of these schemes, we have met with several MPs and their offices to enable them to help share the schemes with local communities.

As many MP offices along the route are contacted by constituents about land and property matters, or to raise their individual cases relating to HS2, it is important for us to keep MPs engaged so they are able to share the latest information on our behalf. Alongside this, we will continue to promote all of our property schemes on our main website, and on our local community websites.

Case study

Progress made against the HS2 Minister review of land and property schemes

In 2020, the HS2 Minister published his review of our land and property schemes, and gave us a target to meet 25% of his recommendations by March 2021. This target has been met, with nine of the 36 recommendations now delivered. By implementing these recommendations we are making it easier for households and landowners along the line of route to understand, access and engage with us on all of our land and property schemes.

The recommendations implemented so far include the introduction of a virtual community forum to better plan engagement activity with residents, and additional training for all customer-facing HS2 and supplier staff.

Community Commitments continued

10

We will display the Residents' Commissioner's and Construction Commissioner's contact details on all relevant materials, along with the HS2 Helpdesk information and complaints procedure.

This commitment is about how we make information about the role and contact details of the commissioners accessible. We ensure that the commissioners' contact details are available at all public events and are also advertised on our website, local community websites and in all public materials.

Indicator: we will learn from the independent reports provided by both the Residents' and Construction Commissioners.

Listening and responding

We recognise that communities need clear information about how to get in contact with us, and how to access the range of information they will need throughout the course of the project.

In our last report we said we would...

Continue to review the commissioners' reports and recommendations, consider how we can learn from them, and include this in our progress reports.

Inform and involve both commissioners in virtual engagement activities, and in site visits where possible, so they can hear views on the ground. Keep publicising the commissioners' contact details widely.

Since then we have...

Monitored and tracked all recommendations by the CSE (Community & Stakeholder Engagement) recommendations working group. In addition, trend analysis is conducted to ensure we capture wider lessons learned.

Ensured the commissioners are actively involved in virtual updates about local community issues from the area teams, site visits, resident groups and other local stakeholders.

Community Commitments continued

More about the Residents' Commissioner – Deborah Fazan



The Residents' Commissioner oversees and monitors our commitments to you. The commissioner published 12 reports up to the end of December 2019. Her reports and our responses can be found at: gov.uk/government/collections/hs2-ltd-residents-commissioner

The independent Residents' Commissioner holds us accountable to the commitments made in our Residents' Charter. Deborah regularly meets with our Chairman about emerging trends and concerns.

The Residents' Commissioner can be contacted on: residentscommissioner@hs2.org.uk

The Residents' Charter can be found at: hs2.org.uk/documents/hs2-residents-charter

More about the Construction Commissioner – Sir Mark Worthington



The Construction Commissioner regularly meets with our Chief Executive Officer to raise any concerns or emerging trends across the project and has published 10 reports to date.

The independent Construction Commissioner's role has been developed to monitor the way in which we manage and respond to construction complaints.

The Construction Commissioner will mediate any unresolved construction related disputes between us and individuals or bodies and provide advice to members of the public about how to make a complaint about construction.

The Construction Commissioner can be contacted on: complaints@hs2-cc.org.uk

Learning from the independent reports of the Residents' and Construction Commissioners

Residents' Commissioner

The Residents' Commissioner conducted a land and property survey in early 2021 to better understand residents' experience with our property schemes. More than 20 individuals responded to the commissioner's survey, with most residents having had a positive experience when accessing the Need to Sell scheme or the Rural Support Zone scheme, and with construction feedback relating to the Statutory Blight and Express Purchase scheme. This survey will take place annually from now on, with these insights feeding into the commissioner's review.

We have started to enact the recommendations set out in the Residents' Commissioner's April 2020 report. We have published guidance on atypical properties when accessing our schemes, as well as compensation guidance and new documentation for crop losses. A new disbursement template has also been published to help those who are faced with selling their property to HS2. The property pages on the main HS2 website have been restructured to make them easier to navigate and for property owners to find out more about our schemes.

Construction Commissioner

Since the last Construction Commissioner report in June 2020, we have worked hard to ensure that each of our worksites have remained compliant with Covid-19 restrictions. In February 2021 the Construction Commissioner, along with the Residents' Commissioner, attended the HS2 community engagement contractor forum to remind our construction partners of the importance of good quality communication and engagement with local communities.



Covid-19 Safe worksite signage.

We are committed to keeping you informed about work on HS2. This includes ensuring you know what to expect and when to expect it, as well as how we can help.

Residents' Charter and Commissioner

The Residents' Charter is our promise to communicate as clearly as we possibly can with people who live along or near the HS2 route. www.gov.uk/government/publications/hs2-residents-charter

We also have an independent Residents' Commissioner whose job is to make sure we keep to the promises we make in the Charter and to keep it under constant review. Find reports at: www.gov.uk/government/collections/hs2-ltd-residents-commissioner

You can contact the Commissioner at: residentscommissioner@hs2.org.uk

Construction Commissioner

The Construction Commissioner's role is to mediate and monitor the way in which HS2 Ltd manages and responds to construction complaints. You can contact the Construction Commissioner at: complaints@hs2-cc.org.uk

Property and compensation

You can find out all about HS2 and properties along the line of route by visiting: www.gov.uk/government/collections/hs2-property

Find out if you're eligible for compensation at: www.gov.uk/claim-compensation-if-affected-by-hs2

Holding us to account

If you are unhappy for any reason, you can make a complaint by contacting our HS2 Helpdesk team. For more details on our complaints process, please visit our website: hs2.org.uk/in-your-area/how-to-complain

CS1605

High Speed Two (HS2) Limited, registered in England and Wales.

Registered office: Two Snowhill, Snow Hill Queensway, Birmingham B4 6GA. Company registration number: 06791686. VAT registration number: 181 4312 30.

Contact us

Our HS2 Helpdesk team are available all day, every day. You can contact them via:

 Freephone **08081 434 434**

 Minicom **08081 456 472**

@ Email **hs2enquiries@hs2.org.uk**

Write to

FREEPOST
HS2 Community Engagement

Website **www.hs2.org.uk**

To keep up-to-date with what is happening in your area, visit:

www.hs2inyourarea.co.uk

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