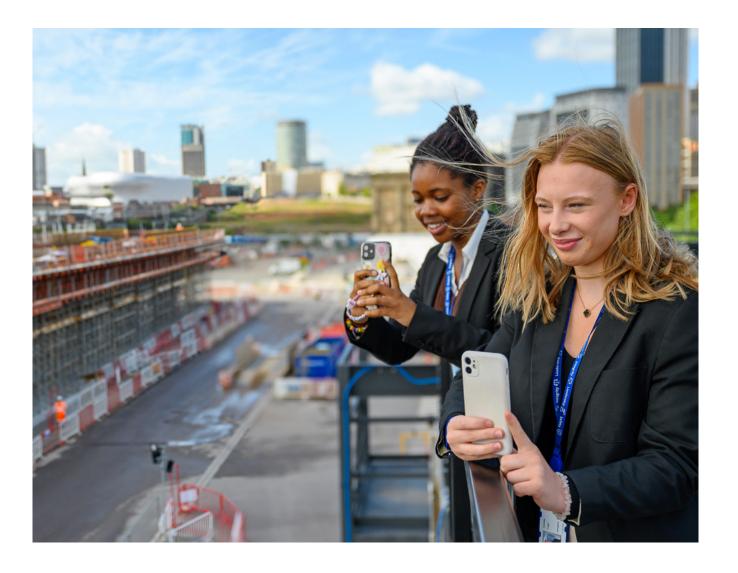
HS2





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Introduction

This update on HS2's community engagement work looks at the period April 2022 to March 2023. It covers the period before the Prime Minister announced his decision to change the scope of HS2. The decision is being assessed and implemented as construction of the 140-mile West Midlands - London route progresses.

We marked the third year of main works construction of the new railway in 2023. Key highlights included reaching the halfway point of building the UK's longest railway viaduct along the Colne Valley near London, and our tunnel boring machines completed about 21 miles, about a third of the total tunnelling for HS2.

Our diesel-free construction sites increased to 19, cutting carbon emissions and pioneering clean construction technology.

However, it's important to recognise the changes made to the project this year: the Government announcement which paused activities at Euston to concentrate on construction between Old Oak Common and the West Midlands, and the cancellation of Phase 2a, 2b and HS2 East.

The development at Euston will now be led by a development corporation, while the Old Oak Common and Curzon Street section of Phase One will be prioritised to deliver passenger benefits as soon as possible.

The scale and complexity of HS2 means construction is affecting millions of people. Building the new highspeed railway is disrupting those who live and work near our sites.

We recognise that no one chose to live next to the UK's largest construction project. We are committed to treating people and places with respect, listening, understanding and responding to questions and making sure we communicate our plans as they evolve. We have embedded these behaviours in our vast supply chain, which is on the ground, working on our behalf.

Our community engagement strategy, 'Respecting People, Respecting Places' continues to guide our engagement and communications through our commitment to involve, respond, inform and consult as we build the railway.

This means we will:

- tell you what we are going to do and when we're going to do it;
- · let you know if our plans change; and
- do our best to make things right if we get something wrong.

This report sets out our approach, our commitments and our progress.



Introduction

Informing

This is our commitment to keep you updated on issues that affect your local area. Whether it is through our community websites or newsletters, or local events held by our community teams, we will keep you informed about where our works are taking place, how long they will last and what alternative arrangements are in place to minimise the impact on your day-to-day activities.

Over the past year, we have held over 750 public events, engaging with more than 14,300 of you. Our website received over 1.5 million visitors, and we have sent over 1,200 separate local updates and newsletters to over 34,000 people who subscribed to our mailing lists. We appreciate that not everyone has access to the internet and to ensure we reached as many of you as possible, we also sent letters to local areas.

We continue to look for innovative ways to keep you informed about the progress we are making. We have started using aerial footage of our sites to demonstrate how the railway fits into the local area. In response to demand from local people, we have expanded our 'behind the hoardings' programme, which allows community groups to visit HS2 sites and talk directly to our engineers and project managers.

Responding

This is our commitment to listen to you, answer your questions and help with your concerns, particularly as the impact of our construction work becomes more visible to local communities. Our Helpdesk is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Last year, we received over 40,000 enquiries to our Helpdesk, responding to 60% of these at the first point of contact. We have a complaints process and a dedicated complaints team who investigate your concerns to published targets.

To understand what more we can do, we constantly measure our performance, listen to your feedback, learn lessons and seek to improve the way we do things. This is reflected in how we respond to urgent construction-related enquiries and complaints.

We know these enquiries need to be resolved swiftly, so we have introduced a new corporate commitment to do this in a maximum of two working days. Between April 2022 and March 2023, we responded to 100% of urgent enquiries and complaints in two working days.

We are grateful for the work of our independent Residents' Commissioner and Construction Commissioner, who hold us to account and continually challenge us to go further.



Introduction

Involving

This is our commitment to involve you in opportunities as we plan and build HS2. So far, almost £14 million of funding for local community projects and businesses has been awarded through our community and business funds, helping to create a positive legacy for those affected by construction. We have delivered over 13,000 days of education programmes for schools and young people affected by HS2 and supported local jobs and skills initiatives.

We want communities to benefit in practical ways as we build the railway. We have been working with schools along the route and supporting community projects by recycling materials from our sites to enhance the local environment. It is important local people tell us how they feel about the structures we're building for Britain's new railway. HS2's bridges, tunnels and cuttings will be a permanent part of the rural and urban landscape. In the past year, we've run events to ask communities about the design of key features including six viaducts, two tunnels and an infrastructure maintenance depot.

Consulting

This is our commitment to deliver the formal process of consultation for HS2. We worked with communities along the Phase 2b route between Crewe and Manchester as the legislation progressed through Parliament. We issued around 161,000 leaflets to publicise the formal consultation of the proposed changes to the Bill and received almost 20.000 website views.

We wanted to make sure local communities had sufficient time to consider the proposed changes before we started the formal consultation process. In June and July 2022, we held eight public information events to provide the community with information to help them understand the proposed changes in their area. These were attended by 373 people.

The past year has seen a continuous progress in our engagement approach, as demonstrated throughout this report. We have listened to your feedback and the insights you have provided through the HS2 Helpdesk. We have been working hard to improve and share best practice across all parts of the route and all parts of HS2. We know there is always more to do.

As the project progresses, we remain committed to building the railway responsibly and respectfully and helping local people to the best of our ability.

Julie King

Community Engagement Director High Speed Two Ltd December 2023



At a glance

Performance highlights for 2022 – 2023



of 1,147 complaints were





in 20 working days



14,300

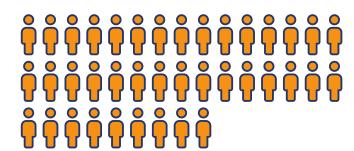
people attended 750 events and drop-ins

£2,031,171



awarded to

39 community projects





100%

of urgent construction enquiries and complaints dealt with in two-day target



42,338

enquiries to the HS2 Helpdesk



1,200

local updates and newsletters

1.5 million

visitors to our website



Involving

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At a glance

Performance highlights to date



13,000

days of school engagement

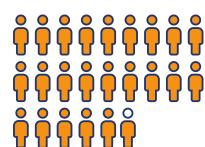


25,000 work placement days

£13.5 million

awarded to

237 local community projects since 2017





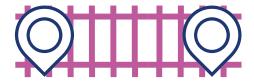
enquiries and 5,575 complaints handled by the HS2 Helpdesk

9,751

engagement activities

130,116

people engaged with at these activities



4,455

local businesses engaged

1,633

businesses registered an interest in getting involved with the railway



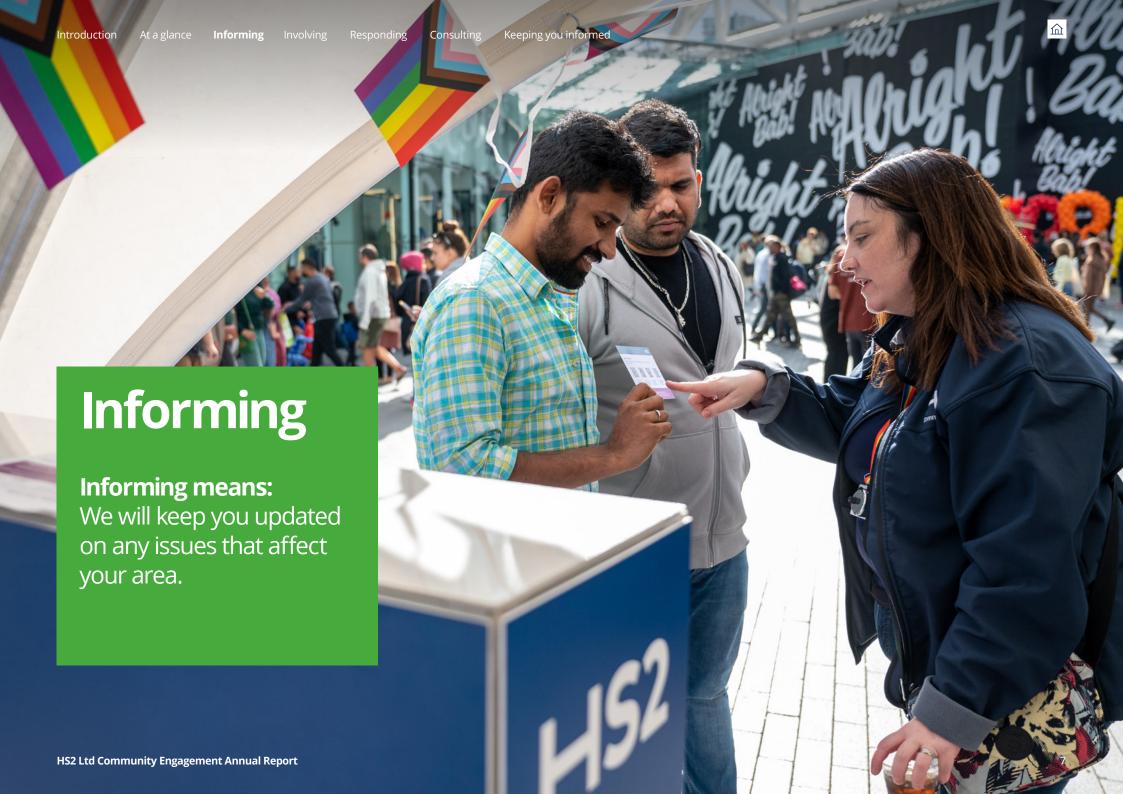
1,030,767

visits to HS2's community websites

32,814

subscribers to our community websites





Our progress

Local people need to know when HS2 construction will take place, what they can expect, how long the work will last and what we'll do to reduce any disruption as much as we can.

We held regular meetings along the route to tell people what was happening and listened to their concerns. Our local community teams held more than 3,500 meetings and events between April 2022 and March 2023. They included almost 600 public events and 'drop-in' sessions involving more than 25,000 people. We gathered feedback on our events and used it to improve how we communicate with people affected by construction.

In the wake of Covid-19, we continued to offer both face-to-face and online meetings. We ran online presentations and looked at new ways to keep people up to date with HS2.

HS2 affects rural communities along the line of the new railway. Our mobile visitors' centre allowed rural communities across Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, West Northamptonshire and South Warwickshire to get easier access to information. The vehicle was available at towns and villages across a 50-mile area of the route, with dates, times and locations publicised in advance.

We had HS2 stands at community events, ran drop-ins at community venues such as village halls and libraries, held online sessions and answered frequently asked questions. This information can be found in the 'HS2 in your area' section of the website on popular topics like water quality, tunnelling and piling works.









25,000 people attended events and drop-in sessions.

Involving

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Our progress

We ensured that people disrupted by construction were aware of the full range of support we offer, sending letters and visiting affected communities to tell people about their options. This became particularly important as construction intensified. For example, there can be times when we need to work outside normal hours on time-sensitive activities like pouring concrete and tunnelling.

During 2022 – 2023, we sent over 1,200 local updates and newsletters to tens of thousands of residents. Our communications regularly featured QR codes that link to interactive content on our local website pages, for example, videos of road closures and diversions. Our communications were available in accessible formats and different languages – we provided 48 translations last year.

We saw increased use of our website and its local pages. The site had more than 1.5 million visitors in 2022 – 2023 and our mailing lists have over 34,000 subscribers. Our 'In your area' interactive maps allowed people to discover more about the work taking place in their neighbourhood and catch up with the progress of the tunnelling machines at work between Birmingham and London.

We supported people in safeguarding – where their land or property was in areas originally earmarked for HS2 which is no longer being developed. Safeguarding allowed the Government to ensure land needed for the railway was not built on without it being consulted.







Our progress

Case study

Keeping people up to date during motorway closure

We launched a wide-ranging communications plan to reduce disruption for local people and road users when we needed to build a huge rail bridge over a busy motorway.

The 12,600-tonne Marston 'box' bridge will take HS2 over the M42 near junction 9 in north Warwickshire. Traditional building methods would have caused three months of overnight closures and two years of lane restrictions with 50mph speed limits.

To reduce this long period of disruption, we built the bridge on land next to the M42. There was then a week-long closure of the motorway for preparatory work in 2021 before a 10-day closure over Christmas 2022 when we 'slid' the 82-metre (263ft) long box into position using a high-tech 'raft'.

We wanted to make sure everybody affected by the work knew about it in advance and had time to plan their journeys or make alternative arrangements. Working with the bridge contractor, Balfour Beatty VINCI (BBV), and partners including



National Highways and Transport for West Midlands, we informed and updated residents, businesses, schools, emergency services, logistics operators and other organisations.

Road users were diverted during the M42 closure. The northbound diversion between J9 and J10 directed road users along the A446, A453 and A5 roads, while the southbound diversion between J10 and J9 took road users along the A5, A453 and A446 roads. Flyers about the closure were produced and distributed to local venues to share with customers.



Local people and motorists were updated using press releases, media briefings, traffic bulletins and social media posts. The HS2 Helpdesk was briefed to answer enquiries. Through site visits and online sessions, we used this major bridge-building feat, the first of its type over a UK motorway, to raise awareness about HS2's benefits and showcase how we're using innovative construction.

The final box slide was completed 36 hours ahead of schedule and we received three complaints, one relating to the road closure.



Our progress

We want to give communities the opportunity to benefit in practical ways from the construction of the railway including jobs, training and education. During 2022 – 2023, we worked with schools along the route and supported community projects to enhance the environment and promote wellbeing.



Education, jobs and skills

We have completed almost 13,000 days of working with schools, providing careers advice, activities and site visits to promote science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects and jobs in construction. We've provided over 25,000 work placement days and created nearly 1,300 apprenticeships across the project as we progress to our target of 2,000. Additionally, more than 3,500 people who were out of work have secured new careers with long-term prospects on HS2.

Keeping you informed

We regularly share information on jobs and employment linked to HS2. We tell local businesses about contract opportunities in their area and provide opportunities for them to improve skills in their workforce. As an example, working with a local partner in Manchester, we ran a three-week programme to help small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) learn more about public sector procurement. We've also developed a toolkit to help SMEs get involved in the project.





We have completed almost

13,000

days of working with schools.



More than

3,500

people who were out of work have secured new careers with long-term prospects on HS2.

Our progress

Involving local people

It is important local people tell us how they feel about the structures we're building for Britain's new railway. HS2's bridges, tunnels and cuttings will be a permanent part of the rural and urban landscape. In the past year, we ran events to ask communities about the design of key features including six viaducts, two tunnels and an infrastructure maintenance depot.



On the West Midlands – London route, more than 1,700 people attended our events and we received over 600 pieces of feedback. This information was reviewed by our design teams and shared with the public at follow-up events. As an example, following feedback, we will now cover the piers of the Oxford Canal viaduct with local Warwickshire ironstone to celebrate the waterway's architectural heritage.

We like to get out into the many communities that are being affected by HS2, speak directly to people and discuss their concerns. Our main works contractor EKFB, which is building the railway between Warwickshire and Buckinghamshire, has a mobile visitor centre that attends rural locations and events. Last year, it visited more than 40 locations and teams spoke to over 900 members of the public.

In Staffordshire, we attended events over the summer including in Alrewas, Armitage with Handsacre and Stone, and were given the views of over 550 people about HS2.

As part of our regular work, we met MPs, local councillors and council officers to update them on project progress and discuss any concerns about design, construction and permissions for our work.



More than

1,700

people attended our events.





Our progress

Working in communities

All our main works contractors have local community investment plans that set out how they will support local areas through special projects. Staff are encouraged to take up volunteering opportunities and work with charities, schools, residents' groups and local businesses.

For example, one of our main works contractors, EKFB, created 'forest schools' for young people across Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire to inspire interest in the natural world and help students with special educational needs and disabilities. EKFB also joined forces with another main works contractor, Align, and were joint sponsors for, and exhibited at, the Bucks Skills Show, attended by 4,700 schoolchildren.







Our progress



Helping community projects flourish

Two independently administered HS2 funds were set up to provide a total of £45 million to community-led projects over the lifetime of our construction programme. The Community and Environment Fund (CEF) and Business and Local Economy Fund (BLEF) will leave a legacy that goes beyond the railway to help the areas that are being directly affected by our work. Projects are already helping to improve the local environment, provide new neighbourhood facilities like community centres and village halls, and support initiatives promoting heritage, culture and wellbeing.

We awarded £2,031,171 to 39 projects last year through the funds and we've awarded a total of £13.5 million since the schemes were launched in 2017. Of this, awards totalling £422,811 were awarded to 10 projects along the West Midlands – Crewe route, which received Royal Assent in 2021.

Examples include Radford Semele Parish Council in Warwickshire, which was awarded £30,000 to provide an outdoor gym for adults, with a range of exercise machines for the community to use and enjoy.





We awarded

£2 million

to projects last year.



We've awarded a total of

£13.5 million

since the schemes were launched.

Our progress Case study

Recycling clay for art

Station construction partner BBVS developed a project with HS2's Arts and Culture team, working with local artists to reuse the London Clay excavated at HS2's Old Oak Common site in west London.

Our contractors continually look at innovative ways to reuse materials and produce benefits for the communities where they work. In Old Oak Common, BBVS's community investment team and sub-contractor Expanded have worked with local creative organisations Absolute Beginners, Re-Made in Park Royal and the Park Royal Design District to reuse clay in creative ways.

Absolute Beginners teaches young people how to make and market goods created from industrial waste found in the Park Royal area. Participants learn how to make useful products and explore new economic possibilities in the face of the climate emergency.







Using the clay from the HS2 site, young people were tasked with designing and producing a souvenir that could be distributed or displayed for guests and visitors to site. The group presented their concepts to a panel comprising HS2, BBVS and Expanded





staff in a Dragons Den-style event. They talked through the process of working with the raw clay and presented their proposed product, a plate made using 100% 'off-grid' power.



Our progress

The HS2 Helpdesk is available 24 hours a day, every day of the year, to help with any questions or concerns about our construction work. Our team is based at our Birmingham headquarters and works closely with colleagues across the route.

We expect the Helpdesk to continue to receive a high level of enquiries as the building of major structures like viaducts, tunnels and embankments intensifies and our work becomes more visible in local communities.

Between April 2022 and March 2023, the Helpdesk received 42,338 enquiries. This was a drop of 8% on the same period the previous year when we received 45,835 enquiries.



Between April 2022 and March 2023, the Helpdesk received

42,338 enquiries.

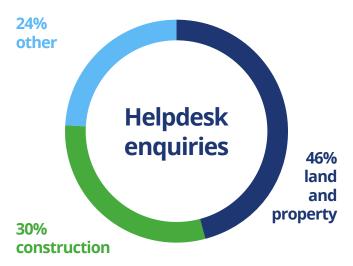
Of the enquiries last year, 60% were resolved at the first point of contact and 40% were referred to technical specialists or our supply chain for further information. Of these referrals, 70% were resolved in two working days. In total, we've dealt with 208,714 enquiries since 2018.

Keeping you informed

Why people contacted the Helpdesk

The route between the West Midlands and London produced the most enquiries last year, mainly about land and property matters. The breakdown was:

- 46% land and property
- · 30% construction, and
- 24% other.



How people contacted the Helpdesk

People contacted the Helpdesk by email, freephone, minicom, web form or Freepost. The breakdown was:

15,282 calls.

25,711 emails.

1,345 web forms.



Our progress

Resolving complaints

Like all major construction projects, building HS2 is disrupting the lives of local people. We're doing our best to minimise this but we can't avoid disruption in some of the complex urban and rural settings where we're working.

We continued to see an increase in calls about construction-related issues that have an immediate effect on people's lives. People's concerns need to be resolved quickly and we're committed to resolving urgent construction enquiries and complaints in two working days. We received 308 urgent construction enquiries and complaints between April 2022 and March 2023 and responded to all of them within the two working days target. In fact, we responded to most of these enquiries (89%) in one day. Since October 2021, we've responded to 631 urgent enquiries and complaints.

We published improvements we've made to our complaints procedure and the accompanying HS2 Community Engagement feedback booklet. The booklet has been accredited with the Plain English Campaign's Crystal Mark to ensure the information is provided clearly.

We received 1,147 complaints compared with 1,637 the previous year, a decrease of 30%. We resolved 99% of complaints in 20 working days or fewer, and 99% were concluded at the first stage of the complaints process. Two construction complaints were escalated to the Independent Construction Commissioner; no service complaints were escalated to the Department for Transport's Independent Complaints Assessors; and no complaints were escalated to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman for a formal investigation.

Most of the complaints were about how we're building the railway, focusing on:

- traffic and transport (39%)
- noise and vibration (27%), and
- general complaints about our sites (22%).

We discuss the lessons we learn from complaints with our supply chain partners to improve our performance. We review any evidence and check we've followed our policies and procedures.

Complaints can be upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld. Last year, 23% of complaints investigated were upheld, 14% were partially upheld and 63% were not upheld.

We received

30% less

complaints in 2022-2023.

99%

of complaints were resolved in 20 working days or fewer.

99%

of complaints were concluded at the first stage.



Our progress

Resolving complaints independently

If anyone is unhappy with our response during the first step of the complaints process, they can ask for their complaint to be independently reviewed. Construction complaints can be referred to the Independent Construction Commissioner (ICC), who reviews, mediates and monitors how we manage and respond to complaints.

Following a review by the ICC, a complainant can ask an MP about referring their complaint to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) for a final independent review.

For other complaints, a member of our senior leadership team who hasn't been involved with the complaint carries out an independent review. The findings of the review are presented to HS2 Ltd's Chief Executive to consider and approve a final response. The complainant also gets a copy of the review findings.

Following this review, complainants can ask for their complaint to be reviewed by the Department for Transport's Independent Complaints Assessors (ICAs). The complainant can then seek advice from an MP about referring the complaint to the PHSO for a final independent review.

"Few organisations can have worked so hard to win the trust of the public. HS2 Ltd's community engagement process is a model of good practice. And when disputes escalate into the formal complaints procedure, I know of no other body that involves senior staff so integrally in the process, thus ensuring oversight of decision making at the very highest level."

Stephen ShawIndependent Complaints Assessor

Specialist support

Our advocacy support service helps people who are affected by construction and may need help in communicating with us. To date, we've supported 84 people.

We continue to consider and provide tailored help to people with specific needs when our thresholds for support don't provide enough protection from HS2 construction works. To date, we've supported 264 households. We also translate documents, and provide interpreters and language services for affected communities.

"The past year has been a challenging one for the Helpdesk and complaints team as main works have expanded greatly and their impact on the public and communities has increased accordingly. However, in spite of this, overall complaints figures have remained remarkably stable; and, largely, that has been due to the professionalism and efficiency of the teams. While large-scale construction continues, there will remain considerable challenges but I hope that the standard of response will be just as high in the future."

Sir Mark WorthingtonIndependent Construction Commissioner HS2

Our progress

Case study

Insights on work sites

The HS2 Helpdesk was launched four years ago and has dealt with more than 208,714 enquiries to date. It is often the first point of contact for people affected by the railway.

Our team handles a range of enquiries including residents asking about HS2's distance from their homes, questions about job opportunities and calls from students seeking help with academic work. However, most of the calls to the Helpdesk are about construction.

It's important our team understands the daily experiences of local people in order to provide the best service. One way to do this is by visiting the route to see the effects of construction first hand.

One of our Helpdesk team, Fiona, who visited Euston, said: "I always remember one resident asking me about the demolition works. She said, 'I bet you don't even know what is going on here. You're probably in a call centre somewhere miles away'."





"I was able to tell them that I had visited the site recently and understood the reason for their concerns. This helped me to manage the conversation in a more positive and helpful way and I was able to tell them about the support that was available to them."

Fiona

Helpdesk team member



Our progress

We formally consulted for the Government while we sought permission to build HS2 between Crewe and Manchester, known as Phase 2b, during 2022 -2023. The High Speed Rail (Crewe - Manchester) Bill was introduced to Parliament in January 2022. As the Bill made its way through Parliament, we made plans to formally consult on any proposed changes in the form of Additional Provisions (APs).

We committed to supporting formal consultation in the following ways.

- Publish the consultations and make it clear what was being consulted on.
- Let people know when a consultation was launched.
- Explain what it meant to people and provide ways they could respond.
- · Collate the responses and share them with the independent assessor.
- Publish a summary of the responses with the report on the outcome of the consultation.

The Bill process was set to take several years to complete due to the complex nature of the scheme.



Our progress Case study

Keeping people up to date on proposed changes

Planned changes to the Crewe – Manchester Bill, known as AP1, were introduced to Parliament in July 2022. AP1 was accompanied by an Environmental Statement (AP1 ES) and a Supplementary Environmental Statement (SES1), which set out the environmental impacts of the proposals.

We wanted to make sure local people had time to consider the changes before we started to formally consult. As part of our campaign, we held eight public information events, attended by 373 people, in June and July 2022, before AP1 was introduced.

We publicised the formal consultation – which ran to 1 September – by sending around 161,000 leaflets to anyone within a kilometre of the proposed route and advertising in newspapers and on social media. We also held a series of online question and answer sessions to explain AP1 and the implication of the proposed changes. The sessions attracted 87 people. All the AP1 documents and consultation information were collated for the public at hs2.org.uk/the-route/crewe-to-manchester



Ipsos MORI gathered the consultation responses and shared them with the independent assessor. We received 40 responses from the public and stakeholders.

In November 2022, Parliament published a report summarising the issues raised in the consultation. Alongside this report, we published the responses to the consultation that were received from organisations, elected representatives and individuals that did not request confidentiality.



Keeping you informed

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

Residents' Commissioner

The independent Residents' Commissioner oversees and monitors our commitments to you.

The commissioner's reports and our responses can be found at gov.uk/government/collections/hs2-ltd-residents-commissioner

The Residents' Commissioner makes sure we fulfil the commitments in the HS2 Community Engagement Strategy.

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

Construction Commissioner

The independent Construction Commissioner regularly meets our Chief Executive Officer to raise any concerns or emerging trends across HS2.

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

The commissioner mediates on disputes about construction, involving individuals and organisations, that we can't resolve. The commissioner advises members of the public about how to make a complaint about construction.

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

Property and compensation

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

Find out if you can claim compensation at: 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 the HS2 Helpdesk. For more details on our complaints process, please visit: hs2.org.uk/in-your-area/contact-us/how-to-complain

Contact us

Contact our HS2 Helpdesk team all day, every day of the year on:

Freephone **08081 434 434**Minicom **08081 456 472**Email **HS2enquiries@hs2.org.uk**

Write to:

FREEPOST HS2 Community Engagement

Website hs2.org.uk

To keep up to date with what is happening in your local area, visit: **HS2inyourarea.co.uk**

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HS2

High Speed Two (HS2) Limited

Two Snowhill Snow Hill Queensway Birmingham B4 6GA HS2 Helpdesk: 08081 434 434 Email: **HS2enquiries@hs2.org.uk**

www.hs2.org.uk CS1812