



Department for Transport

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House of Commons
SW1A 0AA

From the Secretary of State
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Dear Andy

I wrote to you last week about the importance of the HS2 project to our future economic competitiveness. I have today published the Government's plans for the second phase of the national high speed rail network (known as Phase Two of HS2) and part of the route runs through your constituency. Therefore I wanted to write to you again to explain the process and how you and your constituents can engage with the Government on this important project.

HS2: The next steps

Let me explain exactly what I have announced today. This is my initial preferred route, designed by engineers to minimise its impact on property and communities while providing the best possible service. I understand, of course, that there will be many objections and suggestions for improvement. The process of considering these begins now and will proceed as follows

- Starting immediately, a programme of informal engagement to make sure that we understand the views of all affected groups.
- Later this year, a public consultation exercise will begin. We will use this to work closely with communities and interested parties to find the right balance between delivering essential infrastructure and respecting the rights and justifiable concerns of those who will be most affected.
- Then, in the next Parliament, the route will be subject to Parliamentary scrutiny through the hybrid bill process.

I should stress that although I have published an initial preferred route, this will be a genuine consultation process. Changes are always possible as the outcome of the consultation on Phase One of HS2 has shown. My office will be arranging meetings with you, myself and HS2 Ltd in due course to discuss the route and its impact on your constituency in more detail and listen to the concerns of those immediately affected by the proposals.

Help and compensation for those adversely affected

The second thing I want to set out in this letter is the process of assistance and compensation for those affected by the route. Alongside our initial preferred route announcement today we have begun a consultation on an Exceptional Hardship Scheme (EHS). This is designed to assist property owners that may be affected by the proposals and who have an urgent need to sell their property. As soon as the scheme is up and running, owner-occupiers of residential and agricultural properties will be able to apply to the Government to have us buy their property from them at its full un-blighted market value. Though not on the initial preferred route, properties along the Heathrow spur will be eligible, in addition to properties along the routes to Manchester and Leeds.

My colleague Simon Burns has written to people whose property would be required for the construction of the route announced today. He has also written to those whose property is located above tunnelled sections of the route. These letters include information about the Exceptional Hardship Scheme. Consultation on the EHS will run from today until 29th April 2013 and I hope that you and your constituents will be able to participate. Full details can be found at <http://www.hs2.org.uk/>.

Following confirmation of the final route most owner-occupiers of residential and agricultural properties or small-businesses identified for future compulsory purchase would be able to apply to the Government to buy their property at a point that suits them. They will be able to do this by issuing a Statutory Blight Notice. For further details, please see https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/11487/147639.pdf.

The route

I would also like to outline briefly the route that we have chosen. The Phase Two route published today runs between the West Midlands and Manchester

via a station at Manchester Airport and between the West Midlands and Leeds via stations in the East Midlands and South Yorkshire.

In addition, Crewe will be connected directly with the high speed line via a dedicated link. HS2 will be integrated with the existing national railway network allowing cities and towns in England and Scotland beyond the high speed tracks – including Liverpool, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Newcastle, York, Preston, Warrington, Lancaster, Carlisle, Durham and Darlington – to benefit also from new connections and dramatic time savings thanks to trains able to use both conventional and high speed railway lines.

The Government believes that Heathrow Airport should also be linked to the High Speed Rail network and I have today published the route designed for a spur to Heathrow based on work undertaken to date. However, we have paused any work on this route until after the Airports Commission has made its recommendations in 2015.

Further information and assistance

There is a wealth of information about today's announcement and the HS2 project in general on both the Department and HS2 Ltd's websites. These can be found - <http://www.gov.uk/government/policies/developing-a-new-high-speed-rail-network> and <http://hs2.org.uk> respectively.

However, I am conscious of the fact that there is a great deal of detail in the documents I have published and I have therefore asked HS2 Ltd to be available to answer any questions you may have.

I hope that you will find the information I have provided useful, and look forward to engaging the views of you and your constituents as the high speed rail project develops.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick".

THE RT. HON. PATRICK McLOUGHLIN