

ANDREA LEADSOM MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Ms Deborah Fazan
Residents' Commissioner
High Speed Two (HS2) Ltd
One Canada Square
London
E14 5AB

9th February 2016

Ref: AL/TG/1602

Dear Ms Fazan


Further to the release of your Third Report into progress by HS2 Ltd on the property schemes and the Residents' Charter, I am writing if you could clarify a couple of points for me.

It may be useful if you had sight of my general remarks on both the DfT's response to the Select Committee report and your third report: andrealeadsom.com/working-for-you/andrea's-blog/hs2-promoters-response-to-select-committee-report/824

Specifically:

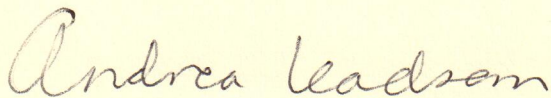
- You note that HS2 Ltd intend to undertake a broader communication and awareness campaign for the property schemes during 2016. HS2 Ltd's engagement with local residents has been widely accepted as inadequate with the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman recently concluding that HS2 Ltd's actions fell below the reasonable standards that the Ombudsman would expect to the point that they constituted maladministration.
 - You have recommended that HS2 Ltd should undertake a widespread general information communication of all property schemes as early as possible in 2016 to ensure that all those affected are aware of the availability of the schemes.
 - This is sensible but it is vital that this is further afield than the current communication threshold of 1km of the line of route in rural areas as there are examples of properties whose values are blighted at much greater distances.
 - I should be grateful for further details on what would constitute such widespread engagement.
- I am surprised at the low number of applications to the NTS scheme with only 139 received along the entire line of route. Colleagues have made the point to the Select Committee that this evidently suggests that many people are unaware of the compensation schemes available to them, or are put off because of the complexity and length of the process.
 - You state that the average time taken to reach a decision is nearly 8 weeks on average; the DfT response document states that the average time is currently 6.7 weeks.
 - Please could you clarify where the discrepancy arises from?

Member of Parliament for South Northamptonshire

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- You commented that communities have received HS2 Ltd information events in their area positively. I am sure that those who attended the Brackley information event on the 3rd November would disagree as the feedback that I have received from local residents is that technical experts were not on hand to satisfactorily respond to questions nor had the event been properly advertised outside of the local area.
 - Whilst you have accepted that the events are very localised and that those outside the immediate area do not currently have recourse to similar information or engagement, please could I ask that future events be much more widely advertised and that HS2 Ltd ensure that appropriate specialists attend the meetings.
 - I understand that a detailed community engagement plan has recently been presented to HS2 Ltd's Board and I would have thought it appropriate for you to have formally had some input into that process. I look forward to seeing more detail of the proposals and I should be grateful if you could send me a copy of the plan once it has been approved by the Board.

I look forward to your response and please do not hesitate to get in touch if I can provide further detail on any of the above points.

With best wishes,



Andrea Leadsom MP
Member of Parliament for South Northamptonshire