



Department
for Transport

Andrea Leadsom MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

From the Minister of State
Robert Goodwill MP

Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0300 330 3000
E-Mail: robert.goodwill@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Web site: www.gov.uk/dft

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Dear Andrea,

Thank you for your letter of 9 February regarding the response to the HS2 Phase One hybrid Bill Select Committee report on the Need to Sell (NTS) scheme. I will deal with each of your questions in turn.

With respect to the commitment to contact people whose applications may take longer than 8 weeks to process, we are proposing that the secretariat team in HS2 Ltd, who manage the NTS applications, will review the full caseload of applications currently being handled on a very regular basis. That regular review should provide a good sense of the likely time it will take for the application to be fully processed. If at any point an application is identified as one which will likely take the team longer than 8 weeks to provide a decision on, they will send the applicant a letter ahead of that deadline being reached to explain why that is the case.

If at any point an application is identified as one which will likely take the team longer than 8 weeks to provide a decision on, for example, because there are too many cases to be considered at the next panel and an additional panel is being arranged, they will contact the applicant ahead of that deadline being reached to explain why that is the case.

It is therefore at various points in the processing of an application that the secretariat might contact applicants in order to carry out this request of the select committee. I believe that this pro-active approach is much more helpful than waiting until the end of the 8th week of HS2 Ltd's 'time taken' period to alert applicants that their application is not yet decided on. Finally, on the issue of the role of the Parliamentary and Health Ombudsman, this includes the investigation of any complaints that individuals have been treated unfairly or have received poor service from government departments and other public organisations. Against that broad function, it is entirely reasonable for the Ombudsman to investigate any complaint regarding the

application of the Department's policies and the text in the response simply reflected that. However, ultimately, it is for the Ombudsman to interpret its role and areas of activity and any concerns you have regarding this will need to be taken up with the Ombudsman directly.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and lines, positioned above the printed name.

ROBERT GOODWILL