

Mr Huw Merriman MP
Chair, Transport Select Committee
House of Commons
Westminster
London
SW1A 0AA

29 March 2021

Dear Mr Merriman,

RE: Transport Select Committee Hearing – 6 January 2021

At the Transport Select Committee on 6 January, I undertook to write to the Committee with the outcome of our work to strengthen HS2's approach to community engagement. As I explained during the session, our intention is to act as a good neighbour to our communities every day and continue to learn and improve where we get things wrong.

On 23 March 2021, HS2 Minister Andrew Stephenson MP published more details of this work in his second six-monthly report to Parliament on progress with delivering HS2. That report can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/hs2-6-monthly-report-to-parliament-march-2021>. It confirms a number of measures we are deploying that have been discussed and agreed with Minister Stephenson, Department for Transport officials and HS2's independent Residents' and Construction Commissioners. These measures include:

- 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 operating in a single location.
- Additional proactive local communications to provide notice and raise awareness of HS2 activity in impacted communities.
- Shortened HS2 Ltd helpdesk response times so that construction issues can be picked up, assessed and mitigated quickly.
- New area-based delivery unit managers with geographical responsibility for joining up construction contractors and communities to prevent and tackle local issues.
- New briefing materials to alert MPs and councillors of the agreed single points of contact along the Phase One and 2a routes so issues can be escalated if they are not resolved in the first instance.
- Enhanced engagement and assurance from the Construction Commissioner (Sir Mark Worthington) and the Residents' Commissioner (Deborah Fazan) to provide independent advice on potential improvements to HS2 Ltd complaint-handling and community engagement operations.

You will be aware that, as main construction work has gathered momentum over the last few months, we have organised the Phase One route into geographical areas, in which the work of HS2's specialist teams and contractors is being coordinated and assured by local integrated delivery units.

The delivery of HS2 involves a number of different contractors, supported by several different teams and specialists, ranging from community engagement to land and property. These delivery units are mostly led by senior project managers who co-ordinate work in their areas and act as an internal escalation point for major issues of conflict or prioritisation. This way of working is designed to ensure our delivery activities happen in a coordinated way, ensuring that the delivery of the project is as effective and integrated as possible, while minimising our impact on local communities. Importantly, it does not affect local residents established day-to-day contact points for local issues, enquiries and complaints.

Alongside his bi-annual update, Minister Stephenson wrote to MPs on the Phase One and Phase 2a line of route to provide personalised contact cards. These cards set out how MPs and their staff can contact HS2 and receive a timely response, alongside some useful information including those established day-to-day named points of contact.

In delivering a project with the scale and complexity of HS2 it is clear that we will not always be able to satisfy the wishes of communities and interest groups, but we are committed to continued dialogue and building open and constructive working relationships.

I trust this letter has been useful in setting out HS2's commitment to openly and constructively engaging with communities along the route and dealing with concerns in a timely manner. I would be happy to discuss any questions you may have and look forward to hosting the Committee on a visit to one of our construction sites when circumstances allow.

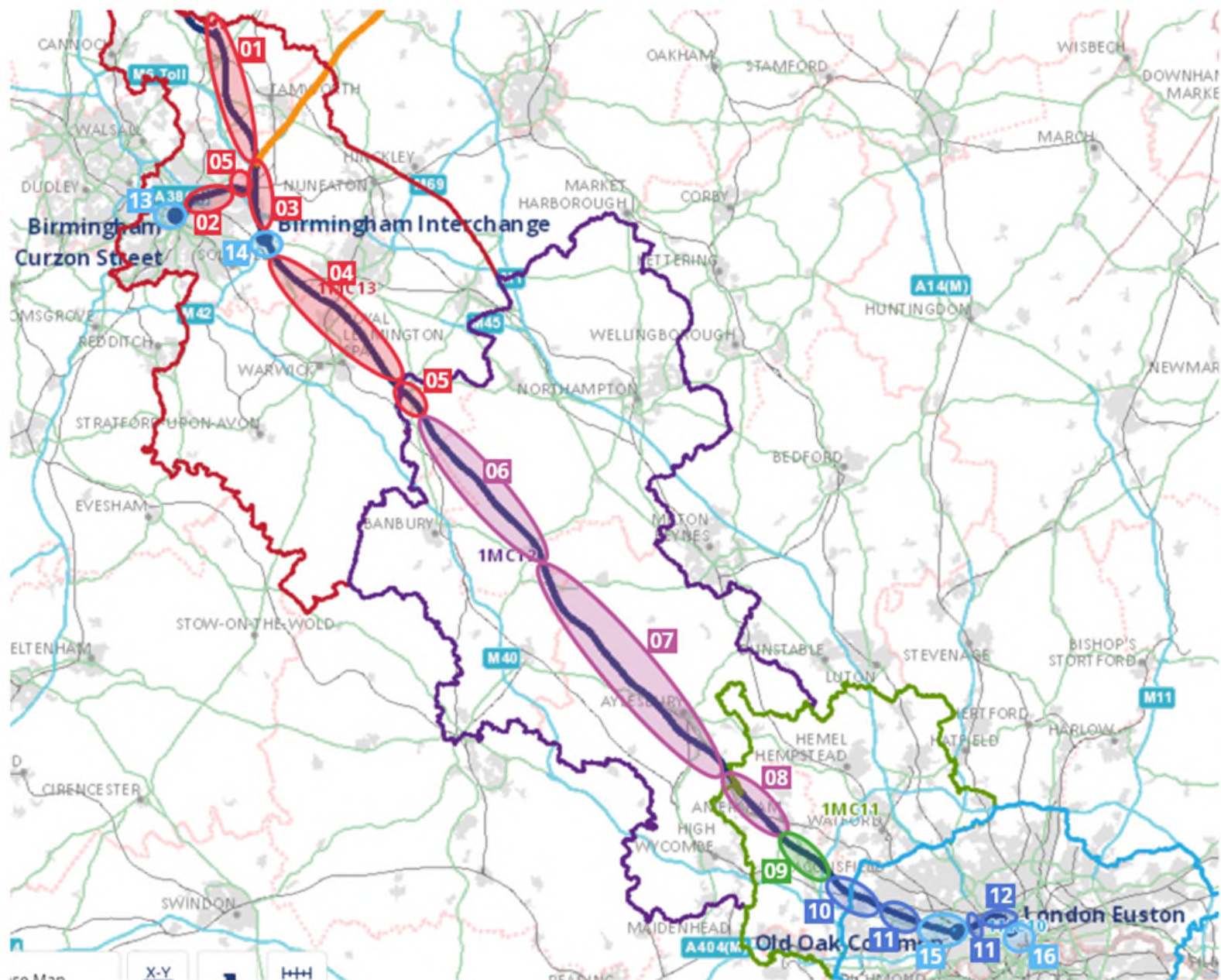
Yours sincerely



Mark Thurston

Chief Executive Officer
High Speed Two (HS2) Ltd

Enc. HS2 Delivery Unit diagram



Delivery Units

Delivery Unit

01 - BBV Trace North

02 - BBV Structures

03 - BBV

04 - BBV Trace South

05 - BBV Tunnels

06 - EKFB

07 - EKFB

08 - EKFB

09 - Align C1

10 - SCS Area West

11 - SCS Area Central

12 - SCS Area East

13 - Curzon Street

14 - Interchange

15 - Old Oak Common

16 - Euston