

Dear Resident,

Please see below a letter which I have written to HS2 following the meeting in Hopton last night. May I thank all who came and who have written to me. May I also urge you to respond to the consultation on compensation which may be found at <http://www.hs2.org.uk/have-your-say/consultations/phase-two/exceptional-hardship-scheme>. You can order a hard copy of the consultation by calling 0300 123 1102. I will shortly be circulating with the Parish Council some suggested points to make in response to the consultation.

Yours sincerely,

Jeremy Lefroy, MP for Stafford constituency

The Chief Executive.
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2nd Floor, Eland House,
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9th February 2013

HS2 THROUGH STAFFORD CONSTITUENCY

Since the announcement of the proposed route of HS2 through my constituency on Monday 28th January, I have attended a number of meetings with my constituents and spoken to many more personally.

I will be presenting the Secretary of State with a detailed file of objections and concerns when I meet him on 27th February. However, in the meantime, I would like to know the answers to the following questions which my constituents have raised.

A) Specific to the announcement route of HS2 through Stafford constituency

- i) The route does not follow the path of any of the three options indicated by HS2 earlier. What are the full reasons for not selecting any of options 1, 2 or 3?
- ii) My constituents, including those who will see their properties demolished or severely affected, were advised out of the blue. There is no hardship scheme in place to compensate those who have an urgent need to move and whose properties have suffered a severe loss in value overnight or, indeed, become impossible to sell as mortgage companies will not advance money on them. Why was a scheme not in place immediately so that my constituents would at least have some certainty? What can I advise my constituents who need to sell their homes and are now in limbo?
- iii) Construction on the route, if it is approved by Parliament and goes ahead, will not happen until 2026. Why was it necessary to determine a route so far in advance of construction, giving many more years of uncertainty to my constituents even than to those affected by the potential construction of phase one to Birmingham?
- iv) What was the date on which the proposed route was decided by HS2?

- v) Several of my constituents who are affected by the route have substantial planning applications – including for much-needed business investment - pending, either on or close to the route. What should they do?

B) Compensation schemes

My constituents and I will be responding in detail to the consultation on the hardship scheme.

However many have expressed the strong view that the fairest form of compensation would be through a bond attached to properties whose value is affected by the scheme. This would ensure that any owner of the property throughout the (at least) 25 year period during which it may be affected by planning and construction would be compensated for the loss in value from the scheme.

At a time of intense pressure on housing in my constituency, the last thing we need is scores of empty blighted properties. We already have several in Stafford from a road scheme which has been in abeyance for more than a decade. They are standing empty and deteriorating despite the needs of people in overcrowded accommodation.

What is essential is an immediate, swiftly executed and fair system of compensation.

C) The Case for HS2

My constituents have raised many questions about both the need for HS2 and the strength of the business case.

I would like specific answers to the following questions which they and I have.

- i) The main argument for HS2 to Manchester/Liverpool and beyond is that the country will have insufficient rail capacity on the West Coast Mainline. Please provide current figures for utilisation of WCML services and those projected to 2035 and the bases for those projections.
- ii) My experience and that of my constituents is that far too much carriage space is assigned to first class, which is often largely empty (4 out of 9 or 4 out of 11 carriages). Has HS2 based its projections on the current poor utilisation of carriage space or a more efficient configuration of 1 or 2 first class carriages per train?
- iii) Has HS2 looked at the opportunity to increase the length of WCML trains to up to 18 carriages, as is the case with Eurostar? I appreciate that this may not be technically possible with Pendolinos. However they are due to be replaced within 15 years and the replacement could be longer.
- iv) What assumptions has HS2 made for the increase in teleworking (and hence reduced need to travel) with the roll-out of superfast broadband across the United Kingdom?
- v) In its passenger traffic projections, what assumptions has HS2 made for the changing demographic profile of the UK? With an ageing population, there is the opportunity to spread travel throughout the day (rather than concentrate it in peak times).
- vi) HS2 has produced calculations on the number of jobs created. What projections has HS2 produced on the number of jobs lost as a result of businesses (including in my constituency) having to cease trading as a result of the line affecting their premises?

Jeremy Lefroy
Member of Parliament for Stafford constituency

