

To:
Mark Thurston – Chief Executive,
HS2
Julie King - Community
Engagement Director, HS2

Copy:
HS2 Community Engagement
Team
HS2 Construction Commissioner
HS2 Residents Commissioner

The Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP -
Secretary of State for Transport
The Rt Hon Nick Hurd MP
The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
London Borough Of Hillingdon

From:
Hillingdon HS2 Residents Support Group
Ruislip Residents' Association
Harefield Tenants and Residents'
Association
Ickenham Residents' Association
Eastcote Residents' Association
South Ruislip Residents' Association
North Uxbridge Residents' Association
Ruislip Chamber of Commerce

24 May 2019

Ref: Complete loss of confidence in HS2 Community Engagement in Hillingdon

As representatives of eight different community organisations in the London Borough of Hillingdon, we have been stakeholders in the HS2 project for many years, even before the Parliamentary Select Committee petitioning. Whilst we object to the whole HS2 project in principle, we recognise that HS2 is an act of Parliament, and has the right to proceed.

We have engaged in every consultation, community forum and parliamentary process. In recent years we have been liaising with the HS2Ltd Community Engagement Team (CET) and various contractors. We have done so with the understanding that there is a joint commitment to mitigate the present, continuing and future impact of the project and the damage and disruption inflicted on our communities and the lives of individual people and their families.

We have committed many, many hours of hard work to this with a great deal of effort but feel our endeavours, and the concerns of the communities we represent, are being ignored. We have now completely lost confidence in the Community Engagement process in Hillingdon

In addition, we completely support the concerns recently raised by The London Borough of Hillingdon in relation to the closure of Breakspear Road South. And, in the light of the continued damage to our local environment, we also support their request that a new business case should be produced before December. HS2Ltd's contractors have openly admitted that any main works they wish to continue with before then will simply be relabelled as enabling works. We do not believe there is justification for any of this work to continue without the notice to proceed.

In recent months it has become more apparent that the community engagement process is fundamentally flawed. We have long since come to the conclusion that it is purely a "tick box" exercise that enables HS2Ltd to produce convenient reports to say they have 'engaged' and that community engagement is going well. The reality is very different.

There are a myriad of areas where we feel the process has failed, they are not limited to but include these most recent examples:

- The proposed 8 week closure of Breakspear Road South – one of our busiest major commuter arteries. Closing this road during school term time and key exam period will have such a wide impact on local residents and their children. Local schools have not been directly consulted with despite HS2Ltd's claims.

We could not have stressed any more to the CET that this would be the most disruptive time they could possibly implement this closure, but they have chosen this period to go ahead anyway without any reasonable explanation.

- The continued failure of HS2Ltd to communicate properly with eligible residents whose properties have been sub surface safeguarded, on the pressing issue of Settlement Deeds has become wholly unacceptable, causing hardship and anguish to those affected.
- The failure of the Help Desk and email complaints system has been a never ending issue with numerous unfulfilled promises for change. The Help Desk system has not improved; staff are still uninformed, unhelpful and unable to answer queries in a timely manner. Complaints go un-answered or inadequately dealt with. It is quite clearly still not fit for purpose and therefore local people do not wish to waste time using it, which surely skews the amount of queries and complaints being recorded.
- The rerouting of the electricity supply required for tunnel boring machines will have a huge impact on Hillingdon residents who have previously believed they were unaffected by HS2, given their distance from the route. Again we have given vast amounts of input to help find solutions to help mitigate an unnecessary problem, caused by an HS2Ltd error. Again we have been ignored.

All these failings and more have led us collectively to seriously question the validity of our involvement with the CET, and our future participation in meetings.

Decisions being made by HS2Ltd about works within Hillingdon are completely overriding any concerns we have raised, and indeed some of the assurances we were given in Parliament.

We have patiently explored every avenue open to us to try and improve relations and the success of community engagement with HS2Ltd. We have sought help from the Director of Community Engagement, The Construction Commissioner, The Residents' Commissioner and our local MPs.

None of these have provided a satisfactory solution and we are no longer prepared to be fobbed off with meaningless platitudes.

We do not wish to disengage from the CE meetings as we feel we have much to contribute and there are too many local concerns that need to be represented, but we feel that the process needs to change considerably in order for it to be a two way communication and for our concerns to be taken seriously. It is a process that clearly needs more scrutiny at a higher level.

We do not feel the CET has the resources, authority, commitment or even intention to be able to engage with us in a constructive way.

We now believe there needs to be a serious review of the Community Engagement process and would like this to be raised at the highest level as a matter of urgency.

Yours sincerely

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