

# Community Forum: Terms of Reference March 2012

## 1. Background

Following a national consultation in 2011, Justine Greening, the Transport Secretary has confirmed that the Government is going ahead with plans for a high speed rail network (High Speed 2).

Community forums have been initiated along the London to the West Midlands to work with HS2 Ltd to develop the route design in a way which will minimise potential impacts and identify opportunities for local communities to benefit from the project.

It is intended that each forum is a community led forum, supported and resourced by HS2 Ltd in an advisory, information giving role. Participation in the forum will not be taken to mean that community members agree with the principle that HS2 should be built.

## 2. Objectives/ Function

- **Identifying local priorities** - This community forum provides an opportunity to identify and discuss local preferences for avoiding or managing the impacts of the route during construction and operation.
- **Identifying local benefits** - This community forum is an opportunity to help HS2 Ltd identify local benefits and activities that could be linked to HS2 Ltd work.
- **Two Way Dialogue** - HS2 Ltd updates the forum with information about aspects of the project. Community forum representatives pass on this information to those they represent and reflect the views of the wider community in the forum meetings.

## 3. Scope

The forums provide an arena for the local community to identify issues and concerns arising from the proposed high speed route from London to the West Midlands and aid HS2 Ltd to create community solutions to mitigate the impacts where possible. For example: reducing visual and noise impacts, managing construction and traffic issues or agreeing the best road diversions and access ways.

### 3.1 Out of Scope

Community forums are focused on community solutions. Therefore certain important sensitive individual issues such as impacts to individual properties, land and businesses will need to be discussed between HS2 and the relevant person in private meetings.

As well as local solutions, HS2 Ltd will develop route wide policies and commitments about the detailed design of HS2 on issues such as: vibration over tunnels, restoring rights of way, use of HS2 for freight, and safety and security.

There are some concerns that are not in the remit of the forum meetings. Examples include HS2 strategy and the case for it, alternatives to HS2 and whether HS2 should follow different route corridor.

Any ongoing legal challenge is out of scope of these forums.

## 4. Mechanics of the forums

### 4.1 How recommendations from the forum will be dealt with

Having been given the relevant information by HS2 Ltd, the forum attempts to come to a consensus on their preferred solution for mitigation. Where the forum disagrees on a particular recommendation the community forum can agree a voting procedure or agree that both options are presented as the communities views.

HS2 Ltd will consider these recommendations alongside other considerations such as impacts on neighbouring communities, sustainability features, railway and environmental standards, impacts to private land, property or access, cost parameters and design needs. HS2 Ltd will keep the community forum informed as to whether they will endorse a community recommendation or not and the reasons for this decision.

## **4.2 Membership**

Members are recognised as representative, community leaders who are informed and constructive. Members have an open mind to take an objective view of issues, even if they take a particular position on the proposals. Members respect each other's views and those they represent and work towards community consensus.

The forum will be flexible where they can. If an applicant strongly represents an area of the community that is not represented on the forum, the forum will consider their application.

The forum can have 'guests': members of the community or representatives of other forums who are invited to a particular community forum meeting because it addresses a concern that they are involved in.

## **4.3 Structure and Roles**

### Chair

The remit of the chair is to be impartial and ensure that there is constructive dialogue in the forum; this involves encouraging a balance of views, ensuring all points of views are heard and where there are differences working towards a resolution. The chair will also have responsibility for agreeing the minutes and actions taken by HS2 Ltd. The application to chair will be decided by a vote in the forum.

### Secretariat

HS2 Ltd Stakeholder Liaison Managers act as a secretariat and facilitator working with the chair, managing logistics for the groups, managing the minutes, organising meetings, handling information distribution to and from the groups and liaising between the community forum, the planning forum and sharing comments from the wider community and HS2 Ltd.

HS2 Ltd and the community forum members will set the agenda collaboratively. The community forum minutes and actions will be published on HS2 Ltd website. Any names can be redacted on request.

## **4.5 Wider Public Involvement in Community Forums**

It is important that the community forums do not operate in a vacuum and that their members liaise and represent the wider community. The mechanisms for the wider public to feed into the community forums are as follows:-

- **Members as Representatives**
- **Website** - The HS2 Ltd website www. will have an 'In your Area' section that enables anyone to find information about their area and their community forum.
- **Public feedback** - The public will be able to feedback their views to community forums through a comment function on the HS2 website, through community forum email address or to the freepost address. The HS2 Area Stakeholder manager will feedback these comments to the forum.