



Department
for Transport

Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP
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From the Minister of State
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Dear Owen,

Thank you for your email of 24 April, enclosing correspondence from M E Cowey, Chairman of Woore Parish Council about the stopping of work on HS2 during the Covid-19 pandemic.

This Government will do whatever is necessary to deal with Covid-19 and we have been working hard across different industries to put in place appropriate guidance to ensure the safety of the general public.

For the construction industry, the current guidance is clear that works can only continue where it is safe to do so in a way that follows Public Health England and industry guidance. The industry guidance is currently prescribed by the Construction Leadership Council Safe Operating Procedures and this contains clear and detailed guidelines on the activities of employees permitted on and off-site. I am clear that these measures must be followed.

On your concern regarding HS2 workers being in close proximity to each other and the public, it is imperative that our construction partners adhere to the current guidance. I have therefore asked HS2 Ltd to work closely with them to ensure compliance. If at any time evidence is provided to HS2 Ltd which demonstrates that contracting partners are not following the relevant Public Health England and industry guidelines, I will request a review and take appropriate action to ensure the safety of the workforce and communities in which they are working.

Whilst the challenges of Covid-19 are well known, it is right that we continue to invest in the country's future infrastructure. That is why we are getting on with HS2, where it is safe to do so, which already employs 9,000 people and is crucial to levelling up our regions, providing vital rail capacity and meeting our 2050 obligations on carbon reduction.

However, I am clear that Government's recent decision to proceed with HS2 must receive proper Parliamentary scrutiny. That is why we will ensure that Parliament is informed of the project's progress and provided with sufficient information every 6 months. I have also put in place additional governance arrangements to monitor costs, schedule and our community engagement, with the first Ministerial Task Force having had its preliminary meeting last month.

On this last point, I am determined to improve HS2 Ltd's community engagement and I have made this point at the recent Ministerial Task Force and with a number of line of route MPs. HS2 Ltd has not always got this right in the past, but I expect HS2 Ltd to continue to listen and adapt the ways in which they work until they fulfil their strategic objective of being a good neighbour to all affected communities along the route of the railway.

Beob Uishas,



ANDREW STEPHENSON MP

MINISTER OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT