

The UK government has given the “green light” to the High Speed Two (HS2) rail project in its entirety, following the outcome of the Oakervee Review, ending months of speculation over the future of the scheme. Phase 2b of the project, linking Crewe to Manchester and Birmingham to Leeds via Sheffield, is subject to further review. It now forms part of an ambitious “High Speed North” integrated masterplan, including Northern Powerhouse Rail and other local rail improvements.

What will this mean for landowners, occupiers and others who are directly affected by the HS2 scheme? Time will tell. However, the announcement is likely to be welcomed, as it provides certainty that the project will now proceed, although concerns over the long-term plans for delivery of Phase 2b will persist.

On all fronts, the government’s announcement gives grounds for optimism. The government has pledged to learn lessons from Phase 1 and improve how the project is being delivered, highlighting the need for better communication and engagement with local communities impacted by the scheme.

Major concerns will also remain over the delivery of the scheme, including timescales for completion of each phase, the design of the route and, perhaps above all, the timescales and process for acquiring land, assessing and paying compensation

In his statement to Parliament, Prime Minister Boris Johnson stated, “When it comes to advocating HS2 it must be said that the task is not made easier by HS2 Ltd – the company concerned... I cannot say that HS2 Ltd has distinguished itself in the handling of local communities. As everybody knows, the cost forecasts have exploded... ” Going further, in responding to a question from Jonathan Wright MP, he described communication and engagement with affected parties on Phase 1 to date as “woeful”

Harsh words indeed as, whether such criticism is wholly warranted or not, our clients’ experiences have varied. In any case, the Prime Minister emphasised that, going forward, there will be changes to how HS2 is managed. These changes will come from the top, with the appointment of a new dedicated minister “...whose full-time job will be to oversee the project... ” together with a ministerial oversight group, tasked with interrogating the costs of Phase 1 to identify where savings can be made without a detailed redesign.



HS2 Limited’s remit will be to “...focus solely on getting phases 1 and 2A built on something approaching on time and on budget” and, in respect of Phase 2b, new “delivery arrangements” will be put in place, but not before “...an integrated plan for rail in the north” has been introduced. Grand plans no doubt, but close attention will be paid to the detail, including the enabling legislation required to deliver Phase 2a of the project and future plans for the design and delivery arrangements for Phase 2b.

For those affected up and down the route, the immediate hope will be to see swift progress in the delivery of Phases 1 and 2a of the scheme, including improvements in communication, engagement and overall delivery of the land acquisition and compensation process. In this regard at least, it will be hoped that the Prime Minister’s commitment “...to get this done” can be delivered.

Our dedicated Compulsory Purchase and Compensation team exclusively acts for parties affected by the High Speed 2 rail project and is currently advising clients across all phases of the scheme throughout the process. For more information, please contact David Holland or another member of [our team](#).

## Contact

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