

Update on HS2a remediation and closing down of proposed works.

Safeguarding

On 18 January, the Government announced that safeguarding of land and property across the majority of Phase 2a had been removed. In areas where safeguarding has been removed, property owners will no longer be eligible to apply for HS2 property schemes, unless they can demonstrate a compelling reason to sell through the NTS (Need to Sell) scheme.

In my email to you on 19 January, I explained that safeguarding will remain on land south of King's Bromley and Handsacre to allow Phase One of HS2 to connect to the West Coast Main Line. The latest position is that we are now working with the Department for Transport (DfT) and Government to agree what the design at Handsacre needs to be and this will determine what land is needed; until that is done, we need to continue to safeguard all land required for the current design. At this stage, we don't have any indication as to when Government will make a decision about this.

Acquired land and property

Prior to the Government announcement in October 2023, HS2 Ltd had possessed around 60% of the land that would have been needed for the construction of Phase 2a of HS2.

We are currently working with DfT to develop a programme for handing back temporarily possessed land and for selling land acquired for HS2 that is no longer needed. This will take time because we need to make sure the programme provides value for money for taxpayers and does not disrupt local property markets. No land or property has been or will be sold on Phase 2a until the programme has been fully developed.

Where any land has been acquired compulsorily for HS2, and is no longer required for the railway, it will be sold subject to what are known as the Crichel Down Rules. Where the Crichel Down Rules apply, former owners will, in most cases, be given first opportunity to repurchase the land at the current market value. Further details on Crichel Down Rules can be found here: <http://www.gov.uk/guidance/crichel-down-rules-on-land-ownership>

We will provide an update on this once the process and the programme has been confirmed.

Construction sites

There are a number of factors we need to consider when it comes to closing down Phase 2a in a safe, respectful, orderly and efficient manner. The sites this affects includes:

Ground investigation sites – boreholes

To inform the railway design, HS2 Ltd undertook over 1,000 investigatory boreholes along the Phase 2a route. The 2a project team is now developing a programme to restore the land at these locations so it is safe for the landowner to use. The work on site is expected to start towards the end of the year, with completion in summer 2026.



Environmental mitigation sites

As part of our early works programme, preparing the route for main civils construction, we started to create environmental mitigation sites along the Phase 2a route. Of the proposed 70 sites along the route, at the time of the cancellation of Phase Two, we had completed 46 of these sites. At the remaining 24 locations, the sites had either not been completed or were yet to be started.

Whilst we intend reinstating all the none completed sites back to their former state, we are still working through the most appropriate approach with the 46 completed mitigation sites.



Utilities sites

We are in the process of revisiting sites where gas pipelines have been diverted for building the railway. This is to allow our utility contractors future access to the pipeline for testing, maintenance and monitoring purposes. Over the coming months you may therefore see the contractors at these sites digging trenches, laying cables and relocating test posts. The work they will be undertaking will be low level and none of the activity will affect gas supplies. Further activity at these sites include the removal of compounds, haul roads, fencing and reinstatement of features. We expect this work to be completed in early 2026.

Cash's Pit

In 2022, we successfully removed trespassers from tunnels and camps in woodland at Cash's Pit, near Swynnerton. Cash's Pit woodland will require careful restoration to ensure it is in a safe condition, suitable to be handed back to the landowner. The design for this work is complex, but we expect the work to start in May 2025, with completion around the end of the year.

Undertakings and Assurances (U&As)

In addition to planning for the remediation of numerous sites across the Phase 2a route, we are also reviewing all 1,854 U&As secured through the Phase 2a Parliamentary process to assess which are still applicable and which are not, following the Government announcement last year. While some of these are relatively straightforward, there are many with complex aspects that require more detailed scrutiny.

Contractors in the area – maintenance and security

Across the Phase 2a route, you will continue to see our contractors carrying out work. This includes work on existing sites, for the ongoing maintenance of a site, or for health, safety and security reasons.

For the security of our worksites and managed property portfolio, HS2 Ltd uses a security contractor to provide a range of measures to keep both residential and commercial property safe and secure. This includes a 24-hour response service, fortnightly inspections and the provision, where required, of advanced security installations. We put these measures in place to help prevent unauthorised occupation and help local residents to feel safe. The Phase 2a Route-wide injunction is also likely to stay in place as an ongoing security measure to protect land in our possession from unauthorised activity.

Future engagement with communities

The Community Engagement team will remain your point of contact. We will keep you informed in various ways, such as through local authority and parish council briefings, newsletters, email updates and webinars.

We will continue to let those who may be affected by our work know through Advanced Works Notifications and through updates to our dedicated local community webpages at www.hs2.org.uk/in-your-area.

As always, you can also contact the HS2 Helpdesk, available all day, every day. The Helpline is available at HS2enquiries@hs2.org.uk and telephone 08081 434 434. A Freephone Minicom service is operated on 08081 456 472 for those with hearing difficulties.

I hope this update helps. If you have any queries or issues, do not hesitate to contact me.