



The Rt. Hon. Patrick McLoughlin MP  
Secretary of State for Transport  
Department for Transport  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 4DR

30 January 2013

Dear Rt Hon Patrick McLoughlin

**Property and Compensation consultation (London to the West Midlands)**

Thank you for giving the HomeOwners Alliance the opportunity to respond to the government's consultation on compensation for households affected by the HS2 project. We strongly believe that the Government's offer is insufficient to compensate for the impact the project will cause to the homeowners who will be affected. It noticeably falls short of many other international precedents.

We consider the offer of 10% compensation as an insult. It comes with numerous restrictions on who can claim it, and there is an upper limit of just £47,000. It is also only triggered once Parliament approves HS2. The thousands of people whose houses have been made unsaleable just by the announcement of the government's plans currently get nothing (unless they can prove exceptional hardship). Most people would agree that 10% of your home's value doesn't remotely compensate for the trauma of having it forcibly taken from you against your will, and being demolished.

Homeowners have major emotional attachments to their home, and all the improvements they have made. In our latest report, *Death of a Dream* we documented how homeownership is more likely to make people happier than any other form of tenure, and that this is mainly down to laying down roots in a community. Children especially benefit from the security and stability of long term homeownership. The compensation package being made available does not make up for the impact on families HS2 will have.

Buying a new home comes with major costs, and risks – it is very likely that those having to move will not be able to afford a comparable home taking into account the transaction costs and the fluctuations in house prices. Moving home is also one of the most time-consuming and stressful things people go through. There is a reason why people who have established family homes move so rarely. For those who have been in their homes for two decades or more, and are settling in for retirement, having it forcibly taken from them causes trauma beyond counting in mere pounds and pence.

In the US, the government forcibly taking someone's home is seen as the most fundamental violation by the state of an individual's rights, and the non-stop subject of emotional national debate (they call it "eminent domain"). In France, the government takes a practical view and offers such generous compensation that people are glad to move.

The UK government's meanness on compulsory purchase compensation is not just an insult to thousands of homeowners, but it is also ultimately self-defeating. By failing to recognise the real cost of being forced to move home, it ensures that homeowners along the HS2 route will feel they have no option but to do everything they can to block the new train line. The government is more likely to realise its plans if it does what the French do, and just buy off the opposition of those most directly affected. And that means compensation of at least 25%.

HomeOwners Alliance Ltd

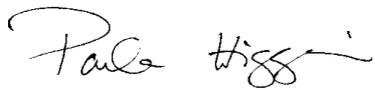
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Continuation – 2

The HomeOwners Alliance ([www.hoa.org.uk](http://www.hoa.org.uk)) is the first group in Britain dedicated to serving and championing Britain's 17 million homeowners and 5 million aspiring homeowners. Our aim is restore trust in homeownership, by providing independent advice and information, and lobbying for policies and industry practices to get a better deal for homeowners. The industry has many dozens of groups representing their interests, from the Council of Mortgage Lenders to the Federation of Master Builders, but up to now the homeowner has not had a voice. I look forward to working with you and DFT officials to help ensure that the voice of the consumer and homeowner is adequately represented in the development of policies.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paula Higgins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paula Higgins

Chief Executive, HomeOwners Alliance