

# New board members to strengthen oversight of HS2 as it enters next phase of delivery

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Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has announced the appointment of three Non-Executive Directors to the HS2 Board to strengthen oversight and scrutiny of the UK's largest infrastructure project.

Elaine Holt, Ian King and Tom Harris will respectively take up the roles of infrastructure specialist, government representative and community engagement leader, to improve the way that HS2 Ltd is managed and instil greater discipline of the project.

These appointments are the latest step in the government's commitment to reset the HS2 programme, strengthen the leadership team and instil greater accountability to ensure decisions made by the Company deliver on the government's priorities.

Non-executive board members are senior figures from outside government, appointed to provide challenge to government organisations. They are appointed directly by the Secretary of State and are not civil servants. Ian King and Elaine Holt have been appointed for three-year terms. Tom Harris has been appointed for an initial one-year term.

- Tom Harris was a Labour MP for two Glasgow constituencies from 2001-2015 and a Transport Minister from 2006-2008. Tom is currently a columnist for The Daily Telegraph, a director of the public affairs company Third Avenue Public Affairs and a senior counsel of Message Matters, a media and political relations consultancy. He is also an associate director with Cogitamus Public Affairs.
- Elaine Holt has held many executive and non-executive roles in the transport sector and has practical experience of project delivery and railway operations, including non-executive director at Highway England. Ms Holt was previously the CEO of Directly Operated Railways, Chairwoman of East Coast and Managing Director of First Capital Connect, as well as Executive Vice President Guest Experience at Carnival UK.
- Ian King is currently the lead non-executive director for the Department for Transport. He was Chief Executive of Alenia Marconi when Marconi and British Aerospace merged in 1999 to form BAE Systems. After the merger, he became Group Strategy and Planning Director for BAE Systems. In 2008 he became the Chief Executive of BAE Systems and held this position until his retirement in June 2017.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said: “When we gave HS2 the go-ahead, we made a clear commitment to draw a line under past problems and to move forward with a strong grip of the project and a laser-like focus on cost control and transparency.

“The appointments of Elaine Holt, Tom Harris and Ian King to the Board of HS2 Ltd will deliver on this promise and ensure this vital project has the robust leadership it requires as it drives our country’s economic recovery from Covid-19 and delivers better connectivity to level up communities across the North and Midlands.”

Ian King will represent the government’s interests on the HS2 Ltd board, bringing with him more than two decades of senior leadership and project delivery experience. He will provide advice to the HS2 Ltd Board on the Government’s approach to issues and will report to the Transport Secretary and HS2 Minister Andrew Stephenson.

Elaine Holt joins as a railway and infrastructure specialist, having had experience in executive and non-executive roles in the transport sector, project delivery and railway operations.

Tom Harris, a former parliamentarian, will strengthen the company’s focus on community engagement, further ensuring that those impacted by the project continue to be listened to and treated with the respect they deserve.

Allan Cook CBE, Chair of HS2 Ltd said: “I am looking forward to working with Elaine, Tom and Ian as they join the board of HS2 Ltd. The scale and complexity of the next phase of the project – which is already making a vital contribution by supporting thousands of jobs all over the country – requires increased levels the expertise and oversight to further strengthen the excellent experience we have on the Board.

“Elaine, Tom and Ian have a huge wealth of experience in each of their specialist areas. I am certain they will make a valuable contribution to the success of the HS2 project as we progress through the construction phase and ensure that, with the other members of the Board, we meet our commitments to Government and UK taxpayers.”

The appointment comes as the project enters its construction phase and increases its activity and scale along the route and across the business.

HS2 Ltd has recently awarded £14bn of contracts and is hiring close to 500 new employees in a range of skills.

The supply chain's presence on site is also set to rise from 10,000 to 16,000 workers in the next eighteen months, providing a boost to the construction sector and wider UK economy.

*Photo credit: HS2 Ltd*