

Greater Damage than Anticipated

The Environmental Statement (ES), lodged with the Hybrid Bill, has been published disclosing even more damage and potential destruction than had been anticipated. Described as a “Blueprint for Futile Destruction”, a well informed analysis in the Sunday Telegraph highlights aspects of the Hybrid Bill that provides dictatorial powers to the government on

- a) purchasing whatever land is required if HS2 provides an opportunity for regeneration or development, ignoring green belt controls;
- b) significant and adverse public water supply problems to this area and North West London;
- c) carbon emissions of construction will create 6.4 million tons of carbon footprint (equal to 6 months generation by Birmingham,) and 2.8 million tons annually from operation;
- d) ignoring restrictions on heavy lorries, including London night time ban, tree preservation orders etc;

Seven major rivers will have to be diverted and 19 ancient woodlands will be cut down and in our area of the Chilterns AONB will still experience moderate adverse effects in 2086, 60 years after the line opens!

In this locality for example it admits that

- a) significant traffic delays on the A413 are anticipated at the B 485 Chesham road link road roundabout and the A 404 Wycombe road junction on the Amersham bypass for up to 7 years;
- b) land is to be acquired on both sides of the A413 dual carriageway, by the Shardeloes Walled Garden,
- c) in Hyde Heath on both sides of Hyde Heath Road from the new road from the Mantles Wood tunnel exit, parallel to Bullbaiters Lane, and
- d) sets out the sheer size of major and road rerouting road diversion from South Heath and Kings Lane.

Copies of the ES key introductory and local Community Forum areas reports are available in Amersham, Chesham, Great Missenden; Chalfont St Giles, Great Missenden; Little Chalfont and Wendover libraries.

Responding to the ES

GMStopHS2 have already agreed how the local action groups in the Central Chilterns Community Forum area will be responding to the ES. We are planning to discuss our conclusions at an open area meeting **at Great Missenden Memorial Hall at 5pm on Sunday 12 January** so that you all can add comments and be briefed so as to making your own responses.

All responses should be “without prejudice” in view of the timescale for responding to such a lengthy and complicated statement of 56 days over the bank holidays. The more responses submitted, the stronger the message will be on the unsuitability of HS2 and the need for a tunnel as the only acceptable mitigation here.

We are adopting a top down approach with the Bucks County Council and the Chiltern Conservation Board covering major issues affecting the area. We will focus on Community forum areas, leaving very local issues to be picked up by individual and small group responses.

An overriding aim of our response is to provide support to all local petitioning to be made during the second reading. So if you, or community groups you are associated with, are likely to be significantly affected by the plans for HS2, intend to petition, do make sure that the basic issues are referred to in responses to the ES.

Extended Chilterns Tunnel

As the proposed options for further tunnelling through the Chilterns are included in the ES, demand for this must be included as the one common item in all local responses. The ES recognises that the proposals for extensions of the bored tunnel through the AONB are feasible in engineering terms and would have environmental benefits. However HS2 dismiss the proposal on grounds of cost and longer construction time.

In dismissing the proposal on grounds of cost, HS2 have not provided detailed information to check the claim of greater costs and have not taken any account of the non market effects of further tunnelling. These non market effects include the impact on the quality of the landscape, archaeology and cultural assets,

biodiversity, health and well being that should be taken into account in comparing proposals. An independent report just prepared that echoes Government thinking on the value of environmental concluded that the non market effects of extended tunnelling would be 10 times greater than the HS2 proposals. The impact of HS2 proposals compared to tunnelling further are summarised as being:

	HS2 Proposal	Further Tunnelling
Area of AONB affected	55 sq. Km	6 sq.km
Historic sites lost	13	1
Ancient woodland lost	9.2 hectares	Nil
Agricultural land lost, approx	250 hectares	20
Walking routes disrupted over	18	2
Dwellings demolished or significantly affected	143	1

Stop HS2 Lobby Day in Parliament on Monday 25 November

5 MP's addressed the protestors in the House. All confirmed their opinions that, regrettably, the bill is more than likely to go ahead regardless of the opposition in the media and around the country. Therefore focus needs be on greatest mitigation and petitioning before the select committee. They act in a semi legal status and for HS1 the route was changed dramatically. The labour MP for Huddersfield stated initially he was in favour of pro HS2 but more he looked the more against he became. The Taxpayers alliance media rep said the overfunded HS2 PR machine is generally regarded as non cooperative when seeking information.

Parliamentary Developments

This morning the Transport Select Committee produced a report that flies in the face of previous reports it has issued and ignores its previous concerns on HS2 as well as those of the National Audit Office, the House of Commons Treasury Select Committee, and Public Accounts Committee on HS2.

It concludes that the problems with HS2 are largely down to presentation and states the public should be told that HS2 will "only" cost £28 billion even though it had stated the cost, in 2011, was £34 billion, and the official cost is £50 billion. It goes on to urge billions extra to be spent developing better links to HS2 and existing transport infrastructure and on regional development around HS2. It also praises the KPMG report, even though that report lacks firm statistical foundation for its conclusions, a procedure described as essentially made up by a former economic adviser to HS2.

A report in the Daily Mail covers attempts by the Government to veto the decision of the Information Commissioner to publish the Project Assessment report of November 2011 on the grounds that it would "create political and presentational difficulties at a crucial point in the HS 2project's development." This report concluded that HS2 was red/amber and in danger of failing! The Prime Minister has been called on to veto its release, using a veto used to prevent the publication of the cabinet discussions on the Iran War

Lobbying by AGAHST has been successful in certain areas including the Centre Forum, a Lib Dem think tank that is now critical about HS2, which "made Danny Alexander furious."

The Announcement that China is interested in HS2 has gone quieter when their safety record and financial requirements were revealed. Indeed the FT states "China investment in HS2 is so far off"

Supreme Court Decision

No decision has been forthcoming from the Supreme Court, although one was anticipated for the end of November. This delay is unexpected and might mean that there is not unanimity between the judges.

Compensation Consultation

This has now closed with an interesting legal letter of challenge to the DfT, so far unanswered, pointing out the ways in which lawyers consider that the second consultation was also flawed

Finally a Happy HS2 free Xmas.

Remember the open meeting in the Great Missenden Memorial Hall at 5pm on Jan 12

Mark Ladd

