

Recent Events

Too much has been happening even since the last newsletter I have had to revise this twice since the weekend for news) so do make sure you come to the **GMStopHS2 open meeting at Little Missenden Village Hall on Sunday 20 October at 5pm** when we will be giving a more detailed update of events, the compensation consultation, and Hilary Wharf will be speaking about the Supreme Court hearing on the HS2 AA appeal on the Strategic Environmental Assessment,.

Treasury Select Committee Suspend HS2 due to serious shortcomings in the Economic Case

This latest pronouncement was made as the DFT ministers reshuffle took place, the Chair stating “the economic case must be looked at again. The bill should not proceed until this work has been done... we need reassurance that it can deliver the benefits intended and that these benefits are greater than those of other transport schemes.” This is another serious blow to HS2.

Balls Continues to keep HS2 High Profile

AGAHST (Federation of Action Groups) attended all the party political conferences. They created great interest with numerous delegates approaching them for better information about HS2.

Ed Balls statements raised the profile even more. He is not against HS2 and is not committed to cancel it but he repeated his capping message of no blank cheque, and announced the Labour party will carry out a forensic audit of the costs and benefits straight away if they win the election

An analysis from the conference is that many labour councils in the north and midlands are rethinking their support or turning against (Coventry, Sheffield, Nottingham Derby etc) as their city have not got a station and are also likely to get worsening rail connections. However Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds councils remain very supportive and are powerful forces in the Labour party.

Amongst the media interest Any Questions has featured HS2 two week running and on Womens' Hour Margaret Hodge repeated her questioning of HS2, saying the Public Accounts Committee will be revisiting it annually and that she believes there are many better ways of spending £50 billion.

Government Attitude Unchanged

The Government's response has been to focus on it as a North South (not HS2) line, and the capacity problems for the network. This argument, like all the others they have used is wrong as

- the West Coast mainline (WCML) is not full and it passes 3 out of 4 tests for capacity;
- it is most unlikely to be full by 2026 or demand will double by 2037, as predicted by the DFT;
- HS2 is not the answer to overcrowding and capacity problems on WCML commuter trains;
- there is a valid alternative if these passenger demand predictions come true, the 51M alternative;
- HS2 will not even allow WCML to be used for freight.

The 51M alternative of resolving the three remaining pinch points to stop the existing WCML from providing an even faster service has been updated and has been reissued.

The Government have made changes at HS2 and at DFT. Douglas Ockervee the Chairman of HS2 is being replaced by David Higgins. No reason was given so did Ockervee, a proven experienced engineer, tell the government the truth and was he fired? Higgins “delivered the Olympics on time and on budget, (actually it was the third budget made!). The Minister of State for HS2 (Simon Burns) resigned and has been replaced by Robert Goodwill (who spent an hour at the AGAHST stall in the conservative party conference). The junior minister now is Baroness Kramer who was a vice president at Citicorp and is involved in infrastructure projects. The shadow transport Secretary of State has changed from Maria Eagle to Mary Creagh.

The KPMG report is quoted less, as two leading economists, members of the HS2 analytical challenge pane, have criticised HS2 stating the doubts over HS2 merit revised independent financial analysis, last done in March 2012, as no account has been taken of changes in estimated passenger forecasts, fare sensitivity, time savings and wider economic benefits to assess the size of the capital subsidy and the potential requirement for an ongoing annual operating subsidy for HS2.

A revised business cost ratio is expected this month; no doubt more fiction from DFT!

Compensation Consultation

This is currently taking place and closes on December 4. There are roadshows taking place on Tuesday 15 October (12-8pm) in Missenden Abbey; 29 October in Chalfont St Giles Memorial Hall (12-8pm); and on 2 November in Wendover Memorial Hall (10-5pm)

Look out for the information presence by GMStopHS2 on the way to the Great Missenden roadshow on 15 October by the police station.

Supreme Court Appeal by HS2AA

This next important event of the anti HS2 campaign is due for hearing on 15 and 16 October when 5 Judges will hear the case, with a majority decision going forward, on a lack of a Strategic Environmental Assessment. As I understand it if this is successful there is no appeal by the Government. The Supreme Court could refer the case to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) but there is no appeal to the ECJ.

Funds for this appeal are still urgently needed **so please donate either direct to HS2AA Ltd legal fund or via Chiltern Society with a gift aid form** to obtain tax benefit for the fund.

More Independent Criticism

A 26 September Taxpayers Alliance research paper has concluded that HS2 will not solve the capacity problems on Britain's railways, the west coast mainline is not the route under most pressure, worse services will apply for many cities (Wolverhampton, Coventry, Leicester and Nottingham), and if services are not cut, costs will go up by £5.4 billion.

Future Developments

The Government state that the Hybrid bill will be introduced with the Environmental Statement before the end of the year. There will be consultation on the latter before the second reading of the bill but this is likely to be for only 8 weeks possible over the Christmas period; an impossible challenge when the bill and statement is likely to be of 50,000 words, basically only available in electronic form. One reason given for this outrageous proposal is that there has been a draft environmental consultation already! The total inadequacy of that statement has been ignored.

Bucks County Council are holding an open day to brief on the petitioning process. More detail on this will follow as it is vital that all who can, and have the right to petition, do so.

Conclusion

Finally the chair of our local conservative party and GMStopHS2 member, reported in the papers that their funds have run out through drop in membership and support for fundraising events. The main reason cited Cameron and his party leaders were not listening to grass roots on matters like HS2, The constituency party used to be one of the biggest contributors to party funds!

Looking forward to seeing you at our **GMStopHS2 public meeting on Sunday 20 October in Little Missenden Village Hall** (Opposite the Crown pub) at 5pm for greater updates.

Mark Ladd