

2 January 2014

GMStopHS2 Newsletter

Environmental Statement(ES)

We are already half way through the consultation period for the 53,000 pages of the ES. HS2 maintained that anyone only needs to read a small section on their local area but this is a false position as items to respond to are likely to be all over the place and matters are continually being referred to appendices.

Responding to the ES

The local action groups in the Central Chilterns Community Forum area are drafting responses to the ES in stages, national issues, important local issues that affect the area, detailed responses that, inter alia, can be referred to in petitioning. The whole response will be on a without prejudice basis in view of the inadequate timescale to review approx 53,000 pages, errors on USB sticks sent out, errors and rectifications made by HS2 etc

We are planning to discuss our initial aspects of the area response 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 for making your own responses.

This will be an event in which you will be invited to participate. We want to ensure as much local evidence is covered as possible. We intend to start by outlining the major items in the ES describing how the area will be affected, then to divide up the meeting for discussion by local areas and issues. In this way we hope your issues are included in the response. It is important that as many of the likely petitioning issues to amend the detail of the proposed scheme are covered in the response.

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 to concentrate on local issues of detail 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.

Greater Damage than Anticipated

The major issues locally are increasing traffic problems both all along the A 413, from Wendover to beyond Amersham, and on local roads used as construction traffic routes, a construction site over the A413 at the end of the Wendover by pass and the overall destruction of the heart of the AONB.

The overall approach of the ES is that the proposed scheme just sacrifices the Misbourne Valley and the rest of the AONB is not affected. This is fundamentally wrong on two counts, the Misbourne Valley is the heart and a tourist centre of the AONB and damage to an AONB is a precedent for damaging all other National Parks and AONB's

It then concludes 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 (but fails to mention the A 355 Beaconsfield Road junction);
- b) land is to be acquired on both sides of the A413 dual carriageway, by the Shardeloes Walled Garden, adjacent to the entrance to Little Missenden;
- c) in Hyde Heath land is to be acquired across Hyde Heath Road opposite the new road from the Mantles Wood tunnel exit, that would be created parallel to Bullbaiters Lane,
- d) sets out the sheer size of major road rerouting **and** road diversion from South Heath and Kings Lane
- e) the size of the spoil dump of 1 million square metres alongside Kings lane at Hunts Green Farm.

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.

Hybrid Bill

The bill lodged with the ES includes numerous excessive powers that override many accepted existing laws, including planning laws, the protection of AONB's, access to private land etc

At the same time as the bill was lodged the secretary of state issued a decision document on properties above tunnels stating ,as these were not the subject of the revised consultation, it had decided to implement three policies for properties above tunnels involving before and after surveys, settlement deeds and purchase of subsoil rights.

Parliamentary Developments

Cheryl Gillan challenged the Transport Select Committee Report that came out in favour of HS2 by asking

- a) whether Louise Ellman, the chair, had read the Major Projects Authority report that gave HS2 a red/amber warning on deliverability? She had not. so why is the Government not being transparent!
- b) why the committee had only taken oral evidence from pro HS2 parties and paid consultants but only accepted written evidence from parties against HS2? No proper answer was forthcoming
- c) why, if the Committee was concerned about the costs of HS2, why was it advising the government about communicating to the country about the cost at greater length? Again no proper answer

Unfortunately there were only 12 speakers and very few MP's present to listen

The Government apparently has not appealed 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 but it has not released the report yet. It remains to be seen if the Prime Minister decides to agree to call on his veto to its release.

HS2 Ltd

The new chairman of HS2 has been keen to be raising the profile for HS2, warning HS2 needs all party support He plans to report by March on the status of the project, including its ability to relieve capacity across the network, how it could connect with other forms of transport, its cost and timetable for completion. This will make interesting reading how HS2 relieve capacity on the most overcrowded lines into Paddington, how it connects to any other form of transport etc. He goes on to say that the only two other countries which are as dominated by their capitals as Britain have built high speed lines, France and Japan. Citing two such capital centred economies is unlikely to help render London less dominant, as the Government claim. At least the Telegraph pointed out consensus may be a pipe dream.

Supreme Court Decision

Any decision has been delay has been delayed into the New Year

Please Remember the Open Meeting on 12 January at 5 pm in Great Missenden Memorial Hall. This is designed to inform and to make sure your major concerns are raised and included in our response, ready for the petitioning process to try to get changes agreed by Parliament.

Mark Ladd