

## **GMStopHS2    Newsletter**

### **Developments prior to Parliament being Dissolved**

Three days before Parliament dissolved and on the same day as a debate in Parliament on HS2, the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee delivered their report on HS2 with damning conclusions. In short they concluded that “the Government has not made a case for proceeding with HS2” and “the analysis to justify the project is seriously deficient.”

It went on saying “The project has to be developed against a background of financial restraint and it is not at all clear that HS2 represents the best, most cost-effective solution to the problems it is intended to solve” and “the Government claims that the biggest beneficiaries of the project will be business travellers, yet the evidence used to calculate the magnitude of this benefit is out-of-date and unconvincing. Neither are we convinced why, if business travellers were the biggest beneficiaries from the project, they should not contribute more to the cost by paying higher fares.”

Two key vital conclusions are that:

1. On Capacity they conclude after receiving evidence from HS2, the DfT and Network Rail, greater transparency is required as the alleged problem is unclear as the published statistics do not suggest there is a problem of overcrowding on long distance trains.
2. On Balancing the economy is not proven as evidence and experience is that London will be the biggest beneficiary and transport projects in the north are more likely to create economic benefits there. No doubt this is why more focus and Government spin is being made on the decision to build HS3, the faster route from Liverpool to Hull via Manchester and Leeds.

As these factors of capacity and balancing the economy are the main current, of so many differing, arguments for building HS2, this is independent proof of the Government’s blunder that is HS2

The report does address a number of key other questions including the absence of a national transport plan, the cost of HS2 and who will pay for it, the lack of consideration of alternative rail solutions, the effect on the UK economy, prioritisation, the lack of evidence and concludes that the Next Government should consider their report and review their conclusions.

HS2 has written to Bucks CC notifying them there will be additional landtake provisions required in the next parliament including additional land at the tunnel infrastructure in Little Missenden, more land in Great Missenden, the Lee and Wendover parishes and for the realignment of PROW’s LMI/21 and GMI/23.

### **Chilterns Long Tunnel**

A second development, also announced from Westminster, was the long awaited publication of the amended mitigation proposal by Chiltern District Council, supported by Bucks CC, Aylesbury Vale District Council and the Chilterns Conservation Board of the Chiltern Long Tunnel (CLT) throughout the whole of the AONB from the M 25 to the north of Wendover. It has been prepared by Peter Brett and Associates and is an amendment from their original proposal (the Green route) as it takes into account the change in EU Tunnel Safety regulations that no longer would require an open air intervention gap.

The route proposed would follow the existing route proposed by HS2 for 16 kilometres but have a small deviation nearer Wendover to reduce the impact there for the last 8 kilometres. The northern portal would be some 200 metres inside the AONB near Nashleigh Road (B4009). Tunnelling could start from each end.

The CLT would greatly reduce the damage to the AONB, the gradients of the tunnel are much reduced (a ratio of 1:100 compared to the proposed 1:33) so that operating costs would be reduced, less compensation would be needed, the land to be acquired would be less, the impacts on communities during the construction would be much less, no houses would need to be demolished, there would be no requirement for landfilling of surplus soil and there would be minimal disturbance to the AONB.

The CLT may require an underground safety location, possibly to be situated either at Wendover Dene or Little Missenden. It would also solve the recent local scare of a second spoil dump in the AONB. New figures from HS2 and an artificial hill appearing at South Heath have raised the prospect of a new dump being required.

## **Select Committee Proceedings**

The Select Committee plan 3 days of visits to Bucks in May (*now postponed to late June*) and restart hearing petitions in June.

The Committee has produced its interim report that includes a number of detailed suggestions on areas affected; makes recommendations on noise and tunnelling evidence; expresses concern over the Need to Sell scheme functioning properly; and requires HS2 to report back on certain issues.

Barry Sheerman, MP for Huddersfield, raised a question of the Transport Minister "Are the Government misleading this country about just how much this folly of HS2 is going to cost?" based on evidence given to the Select Committee that suggested hidden costs will raise the overall cost of the HS2 project from £50 billion to £138 billion. These extra costs were mainly due to

- a) phase 1 costs were £108 million per mile whereas phase 2 were £59 million per mile;
- b) only 2 high speed trains in the world are profitable so a subsidy of £30 billion would be incurred;
- c) there is no R&D budget yet much of the technology still has to be proved;
- d) an additional power station would be required to supply HS2 from the National Grid; and.
- e) there are concerns that some of the contingency amounts may be insufficient bearing in mind the recent cost increases which have occurred on the Great Western and other electrification programmes. The cost of the Great Western Electrification programme has gone up by 70% in the latter half of 2014 alone and 180% since first conceived, while the cost of each connection to the National Grid has increased by 150%.

## **Petitioning Evidence on Tourism**

The Chilterns Conservation Board, parish councils and local action groups commissioned a baseline of the volume and value of tourism in the HS2 corridor of the AONB in memory of Shirley Judges. The main conclusions are that just over 2.3 million tourists visited the HS2 corridor area of the Chilterns AONB in 2013; tourism activity generated £79.76 million through direct and multiplier impacts; and tourism supported an estimated 2,768 jobs in the area.

## **Political Developments**

Cheryl Gillan led a debate on HS2 just after the House of Lords report was released in which, *inter alia*, she stated she could not believe the justifications claimed by the Government for HS2 especially as there is now no confirmed connection to London and with the plans for Euston Station back on the drawing board.

She raised again the Government's refusal to release the Major Projects Authority critical report on HS2. The Supreme Court decision to order the release of Prince Charles's letters to Ministers a decade ago is expected to lead to similar challenge for the release of the HS2 assessment report.

## **Media Reports**

In an economic article in the Daily Telegraph entitled "In stead of paying down its debts the world has gone on another credit binge" it concluded that on balance economic activity generated by private debt tends to be better than that generated by Government debt and "HS2 will add to the national debt; it is a low-productivity prestige project and a gross misallocation of resources".

## **Conclusion ( taken from Private Eye)**

The KPMG director for major projects activities since 2011 and who was probably responsible for the KPMG report quantifying the benefits of HS2 to the country and especially the north has joined HS2 as development director, no doubt to try to develop benefit from HS2

Mark