

16 June 2015

GMStopHS2 Newsletter

Developments post Election

The return of a Conservative majority was disappointing for anti HS2 campaigners as the new Government has included continuing with the HS2 folly in the Queens speech.

By doing so the Government has to face a number of issues in continuing its proposals, including how

- a) it complies with its election pledges to preserve the environment, including one specifically related to the AONB; (surely this can only be done by tunnelling through the Chilterns AONB);
- b) responds to the House of Lords economic committee's very critical report on so many aspects of HS2, that concluded it was seeking responses from the new Government to issues raised in their report; and
- c) how it justifies the legal requirement to AONB's set in stone in the 1949 legislation and the new duties in the Countryside rights of Way Act 2000.

Local focus now has to be to campaign for tunnelling right through to Wendover as the only real mitigation that would preserve the AONB. There are 4 options being proposed, namely

- 1. a 3 bore tunnel along the existing route but at a constant level by the Chiltern society;
- 2. the Chiltern Long tunnel that takes a shorter route than HS2 and is at a constant level proposed by the Chiltern district Council;
- 3. the full tunnel along the HS2 proposed route by CRAG; and
- 4. the REPA 2 shorter tunnel ending by Leather Lane.

As parliament has determined the route for HS2 at the second reading, the 3 bore tunnel or the CRAG tunnel would appear to cause less delay as they would not require further consultation .

The Select Committee has been reformed without the Liberal Democrat who lost his seat. A revised schedule of visits to Bucks has been issued with the first visit to the Aylesbury Constituency having taken place on 11 June, the visit to Chesham and Amersham constituency on 22 June and to Buckingham constituency provisionally on 26 June.

Dates have are being arranged for hearings of evidence on tunnel issues at the beginning of July. Evidence will be given by many including Bucks CC, the Chiltern Society, Chiltern and Aylesbury District Councils.

I understand that evidence has been submitted under the Aarhus convention on 22 May.

Work on HS2 has been promised to start in 2 years by McLoughlin, Secretary of State for Transport, even though Euston plans are still up in the air and reported to be well behind schedule.

Select Committee visits to the Chilterns

(no longer relevant – jec)

Cost of HS2 and the Political assessment

As the Government would probably require Labour party support to obtain a majority for HS2 in the light of the rebels, there are a couple of conceivable opportunities over this. I understand all the candidates are reported to be more sceptical about HS2 than Ed Milliband. As the party needs to try to gain some fiscal credibility, stopping HS2 could be one possibility as cost remains a major problem

It is interesting, in view of the third party being the Scottish Nationalists, HS2 have announced that there is no business case for extending HS2 to Scotland. So will they vote on HS2?

In response to a Freedom of Information Request by Seb Berry, of GMStopHS2, on the cost of HS2 in current terms, the response given by the Department of Transport was that they did not know what this was.

They did not account in current costs, as they maintained all costs in 2011 terms **for accountability reasons!** In fact the cost will have gone up, estimated to be £55 billion now in current costs already, despite dropping the links to Heathrow and HS1.

HS2 Activity

We still wait to hear from HS2 what will be additional landtake provisions required in respect of 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. Even more could be required.

However HS2 are writing to a number of landowners further up the line requesting permission, for a small payment, to carry out drilling and other surveys. There has been a refusal to grant access from most involved further up the line in Northamptonshire.

Other Political Developments

Cheryl Gillan has been elected vice Chair of the 1922 committee so let us hope she uses this position to save the country money by calling for more backbenchers to call for the cancellation of HS2 and the Government's refusal to release the Major Projects Authority critical report on HS2.

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".

Bucks CC Petitioning workshops

These are being held from 6-8 on 30 June at Chiltern District offices in Amersham. 2 July in Chalfont St Peter Parish Council offices by the community centre Gravel Hill and 7 July, in the Memorial Hall at Great Missenden. To attend contact rprance@chiltern.gov.uk or call her on 0771-1040-758

Conclusion

In an article in the Financial times Jeremy Paxman described HS2 as a "Gross waste of taxpayers money"
So say all of us

Mark