

GMStopHS2 Newsletter

Select Committee Announcement

As promised on 22 July the Select Committee made their promised announcement on Tunnelling through the Chilterns AONB after hearing the key evidence from the stakeholders comprising Chiltern DC, Bucks CC, Aylesbury Vale DC, Chiltern Conservation Board, the Chiltern Society, Chiltern Ridges Action Group, Conserve the Chilterns and Countryside and the Residents Environmental Protection Association..

The carefully worded announcement made 3 points, summarised as

1. the case for a long tunnel has not been made;
2. the case has been made for an extension of the bored tunnel to the end of the green tunnel at South Heath as HS2 proposed; and
3. they recommend a south extended Wendover green tunnel, after a report back from HS2 in September.

The speed with which this decision was reached, quite possibly before all the evidence had been heard, was remarkable. The 2.6 KM extension of the bored tunnel to South Heath seems to be a compromise that HS2 had put forward in their response to the REPA petition. HS2 had commented on the proposals and had listed this as option 6 and named it “our proposal”

This is the second extension of the bored tunnel. The original proposal was for it to emerge just west of Amersham by the Shardeloes roundabout. Local focus will now be focussing on extending it even further, at least to Leather Lane where it would not emerge at the top of the Chilterns, if not to beyond Wendover.

HS2 have to publish details of the main changes as additional provision to the Hybrid bill by 14 August.

Effect of the Statement

The main effect is that the proposed 200M tunnel portal would now emerge at Bury Farm at the west end of South Heath alongside Potter Row, and not in Mantles Wood. To facilitate this major construction a new road is proposed to be built from that exit down to Great Missenden at the Link Road roundabout on the A 413. The line is also proposed to be in a deeper cutting along Potter Row.

Another vent shaft for the extended tunnel will be needed and that is proposed to be at Annie Bailey’s on the B 485. There will be a smaller construction site for it there as well, similar to that at Little Missenden.

These proposals save Hyde Heath and Hyde End communities, along with 13 properties, 3 ancient woodlands, many footpaths, views and tranquillity of the Mantles Wood area, and some agricultural land. In addition road closures, realignments and the roundabout at Kings Lane on B485 will not be necessary. The main construction compound at Annie Bailey’s on the B 485 and the proposed creation of spoil heaps will not be needed, there should not be much construction traffic on the unsuitable roads in the area around South and Hyde Heath, and Frith Hill will not be closed.

However it is also proposed there be an additional haul road between the HS2 line and Potter Row itself.

Overall the decision is a helpful one for much of the area but there is still a long way to go to achieve adequate mitigation for the AONB. The requirement now is for as many petitions as possible to seek the mitigation that we all require, an extended tunnel through the AONB or at least a further 1.5 km. to Leather Lane where the contours meet those of the first of the dreadful viaducts to Wendover.

Additional Provisions (AP4)

The detailed way forward now is not totally clear. HS2 now have to finalise their proposals and present them to the Select Committee and REPA will be allowed to comment on them before the Select Committee sanction that additional provisions to the Hybrid Bill (AP4) be placed before Parliament. This will then need an accompanying Environmental Statement (ES) and a further public consultation. The timescale involved will be considerably truncated, with an estimate of only 4 weeks being likely for all to digest the ES and respond to the consultation.

Additional Select Committee Visit on August 10

To give the new members of the committee, Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, David Crausby and Mark Hendrick, an understanding of the area and the problems, an additional whistle stop visit to Bucks is being planned for August 10, starting at Twyford, near Steeple Claydon at 12.45 and finishing at Amersham vent shaft at 18.09!

During this visit there are a series of short 5 minute stops, 10 minutes at Wendover Church and Bury Farm, Potter Row. In this locality there is an official 15 minute “meet the community stop” at Mulberry Park, on Potter Row, to view the proposed new portal. Other important stops include Little Missenden and Amersham vent shafts, Annie Bailey’s, Mantles Wood and Chapel Farm. Plans are already being in place to draw attention to the damage HS2 will do and to provide community thanks at Chapel Farm and Mantles Wood.

Do please try to attend one of the stops to emphasise the need for still more tunnelling, the damage to the AONB such as to the river Misbourne, and for the drastic traffic consequences of the construction.

Petitioning Now

All petitioners have been contacted by David Walker, of Winckworth Sherwood, the senior legal and parliamentary clerk managing the petitioning agenda. His email requests petitioners to reply saying whether they still intend to appear in person or whether include their petition with another group. He has provided an updated schedule of September appearances that groups petitioners in a basic sequence by address.

To provide advice about what to do about petitions, locally main groups and sub groups are being set up (The Lee and Ballinger, South Heath, the Missendens, Hyde Heath and Hyde End, Chesham and Amersham) with sub groups of stakeholders who have petitioned, such as the Parish Councils, Action Groups, village societies etc. These groups have a number of individual contacts identified to coordinate petitions - see

<http://www.hs2amersham.org.uk/Resources/Petitions/Grouping/GroupList.html>

Already concern has been expressed that there has been an abuse of the Select Committee process as, under the Hybrid Bill procedures, all those affected have the right to petition.

Please re-examine your petition in the light of the recommendations, identify those aspects of your petition that remain and think how best your petition can be mitigated. In most cases the best mitigation remains tunnelling through the AONB and the more petitioners appear to request this mitigation, the more likely there could be a third extension of the bored tunnel.

ALSO - REMEMBER to reply to David Walker by 21 AUGUST or you may lose your right to petition

Additional Provisions (AP2)

On 14 July HS2 published AP2 to the Hybrid bill, along with supplementary environmental statements. The main items, in this area, are a reassessment on the traffic effect on the Amersham roundabout. HS2 now recognise the effects as major adverse ones. HS2 gave the reason as the abandonment of the spoil placement at Hunts Green, not that their original calculations were totally flawed!

Response to House of Lords Damning Economic Committee Report on HS2

The House of Lords have called for another debate on HS2, primarily to debate the Government’s response to their economic report, no doubt because the DfT’s response is similar to that to three previous independent reports, (the Public Accounts Committee, the National Audit Office and the Environmental Audit Committee), basically ignoring all the questions raised or, where they provide answers, repeat arguments that have been demolished long ago.

Conclusion

Firstly try to be present at the various stops for the Select Committee visit on August 10 as there is much still to play for to save the AONB. Secondly remember to reply to David Walker by 21 August.

Lastly the appointment of Lord Adonis (of Camden Town which he is now proposing to destroy) to be a non exec director of HS2 was described by Boris Johnson’s father as the same as describing Bomber Harris as Lord Harris of Berlin!