

GMStopHS2 Newsletter

Tunnel Extension Confirmation

Following the Select Committee recommendation on extending the tunnelling through the Chilterns AONB, the Government have just formally confirmed that the recommended extension of the tunnel just beyond South Heath will go ahead.

Amongst the usual Government PR spiel was that “we are committed to listening to communities that live along the route”....and “it is essential that we take their views into account so that we build this railway in the best possible way”

HS2 even state that they “are determined to keep the environmental impact of the project as small as possible and recognise the importance of listening to stakeholders and local communities ...” This is the most outrageous claim as HS2 have totally ignored what they were told by communities during the consultation period, especially at community forums culminating with the compromise solution that was of HS2’s own creation; all community proposals being ignored.

This is, of course, 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 in personal petitioning must be on extending it even further, to beyond Wendover, so as to keep the environmental impact as small as possible.

Therefore it is vital that as many people as possible petition with personal experiences of how they will be affected by HS2 if the tunnel is not extended through the whole of the AONB. Wendover’s voice is now key to this objective just as the effect on Great Missenden is now greater than before and has to be emphasised.

Effect of the Statement

The main effect is that the 200M tunnel portal emerges at Bury Farm at the west end of South Heath alongside Potter Row. 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. Thus this decision change will affect Great Missenden more than previously with more people affected than in Hyde Heath and South Heath.

This decision leaves the tunnel emerging at the top of the hills which is nonsense from an engineering and operating cost basis. Petitions must be to extend it further, deeper and on level so that it emerges into the Vale of Aylesbury 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 beyond Leather Lane where the contours meet those of the first of the dreadful viaducts to Wendover.

Additional Provisions (AP4)

Yet more additional provisions will be made to the Hybrid Bill, supported by yet another Environmental Statement. The timescale involved for this further public consultation will be considerably truncated, with an estimate of only 4 weeks being available for all to digest the ES and respond to the consultation.

Additional Select Committee Visit on August 10

Apparently this chaotic event was organised by the Select Committee and one of the reasons for the failure to keep to time was the coach was blocked in at one of the stops! How could any competent organisation allow its coach to be blocked and the driver not know his predetermined route.

The result was that the visit failed to stop at Bury Farm (where some 200 people were waiting to demonstrate on the problems envisaged) to inspect the greatest change to the route, the new construction site and the South Heath tunnel portal. Maybe the idea was that no MP’s on the Select Committee should have first hand knowledge of the issues that are likely to be raised in the petitions from that area; giving petitioners every opportunity to remind them that none of them know what is at stake (at least 4 of them had seen the effect at Mantles Wood. They also failed to stop to assess the problems at the two vent shafts in Little Missenden and Amersham.

Nevertheless Cheryl Gillan has reported that the MPs were left in no doubt about the local views and the need for greater tunnelling and better mitigation in the AONB.

Petitioning Now

All petitioners have been contacted by David Walker, of Winckworth Sherwood who is managing the petitioning agenda, with an updated schedule of September appearances. This list is an attempt by the Select Committee to pressurise individuals to group together. However it is important that all personal issues and consequences are properly raised so the Committee can realise the devastation to the area

HS2 have just issued the evidence that they intend to rely on in the petitions in the Chilterns AONB area..

Although it is already out of date in respect of the additional tunnelling on the route, petitioners should be forewarned of the contents, pointing out the misconceptions included and especially point out any errors that remain even though they have been pointed out in responses to the Environmental Statement.

The evidence is divided over 20 subjects, namely HS2 and the AONB; the Hybrid Bill scheme and alternatives; landscape design; ancient woodland and ecology; sustainable placement; heritage; agricultural land; noise; public rights of way; groundwater and hydrology; traffic and highways; balancing ponds; community fund; control of construction impacts; maintenance loop; railway possession; utility; vent shafts; visual impacts and correspondence.

At this stage in the petitioning, it is vital that as many personal issues as possible are brought to the Committee's attention to support the call for extra tunnelling. The Select Committee may try to limit petitioners general evidence on the grounds of having heard it before but they cannot do that for personal experiences. Realistic calls for the greatest level of reasonable mitigation to preserve the AONB should be proposed as the more mitigation required the greater the cost of HS2 and so the benefit of more tunnelling.

Petitioning on the Second Additional Provisions (AP2)

Petitioning on the published AP2 to the Hybrid bill, along with supplementary environmental statements, has been extended to September 18. This is due to information being omitted, notably a bat survey in Bernwood Forest. Locally the main amendment is a reassessment on the traffic effect on the A413 and the Amersham roundabout. HS2 now recognise the effects as major adverse but still fail to provide any mitigation.

The next Additional Provisions (AP3) are anticipated to be announced in the next two weeks or so. They are expected to cover changes to the station layout for Euston; the deletion of the HS1 to HS2 link from the original bill; a staged scheme; and minor changes in the Euston/Camden area.

Political Opinions

The labour leadership campaign has produced vassilation on HS2. Jeremy Corbyn was anti HS2 initially, being a threat to other projects but recently has changed his position, as on so much else. Andy Burnham has said he will relook at the case for HS2 as he is keen to invest in the existing network and the east-west links.

Timetable

The Constructors Products Association has forecasted a two year delay to the civil works of HS2 starting due to planning issues, so echoing the reservations of the Major Projects Authority. HS2's response is they do not foresee planning issues altering the timeframe for construction, with work on the ground starting on time in 2018. The current programme is about two years late and the consultation period should be over by now but has been extended for a multitude of errors and such minor problems as the design for Euston station.

Media Opinion

This continues to include critical reports on the nonsense that is HS2, the latest being the Chief Economist of the Institute of Directors who comments that, among the several problems with HS2, there is no private money involved so the numbers do not add up. In the current difficult financial situation for the country, he adds that there is only money for one big infrastructure project; so why is HS2 better than anything else such as national broadband or even a south east airport?

Conclusion

The next months provide individual petitioners to make their personal cases individual how HS2 will destroy, or greatly disrupt, their lives especially if there is no more tunnelling

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