

Newsletter

Compensation and Safeguarding of the Route

Eventually on 23 October the Government announced 2 consultations running until 31 January 2013, one on Property and Compensation Proposals and one on Safeguarding the route.

They claim that, as HS2 has a long construction period, it will have an adverse affect on the property market so the compensation proposals “are intended to be more generous than the statutory code.” They are not, being basically a rehash of the statutory rules and ignore past failures.

The proposals ignore the Government’s promise to compensate everyone suffering a significant loss, fail to apply the principle that the polluter, HS2, not the individual should pay. Also the proposals mean those affected will not have freedom to move or remortgage for up to 20 years

The scheme is complicated. It includes 5 key areas, advance purchase within the safeguarded area, a voluntary purchase zone for those outside the safeguarded area but near the line, a sale and rent back scheme, a long term hardship scheme and a survey scheme for properties above the tunnels.

GMStop HS2 are organising an **open public meeting on the Compensation Scheme in Hyde Heath Village Hall on Sunday January 6, 2013 at 5pm.** At it the main speaker will be Hilary Wharf of HS2 Action Alliance who has been campaigning on this issue, as well as fronting one of the judicial reviews scheme. Do make a note of the date and come to learn more about the proposals and be able to respond to the consultation.

HS2 local roadshows on the consultation are being held as follows

26 November Chalfont Community Centre, Gravel Hill, Chalfont St Peter from 12 noon to 8 pm

15 December Stoke Mandeville Stadium and Olympic Lodge Hotel from 9-5

12 January Wendover Memorial Hall from 9-5 (the only one after the Hyde Heath Meeting)

A result of holding these shows means the next community forums are being put back a month.

Community Forums

The next forums are taking place. HS2 have announced the safeguard areas for the route in connection with the compensation proposals and are providing some detailed proposals of estimates on construction compounds, road crossings and realignments, and impacts on public rights of way. Key local compounds are for 2 compounds for at least 5.5 years for 50 workers for the South Heath green tunnel, with access from B485 Chesham Road and Frith Hill. Other compounds estimated for a year are for 100 workers at the exit of the tunnel in Mantles Wood, and for 50 workers for a year at each of the 4 ventilation shafts for the tunnel referred to in my last newsletter. 10 rights of way in the central Chilterns area will be diverted or closed during construction.

Two new permanent access roads are proposed locally. The most significant being a new road from the tunnel exit in Mantles Wood, first in a new cutting, up to the straight mile at the edge of Hyde Heath for access on to the B485. The other is to replace Bottom House farm lane for a new access road to the ventilation shaft. There is also proposed a drainage pond at Mantles Wood.

Another proposed change to the route is to lower the tunnel by 8/10 meters under the river Misbourne and Shardloes lake, making the unnecessary climb up to Mantles Wood even steeper.

Department of Transport and the West Coast Mainline Franchise Fiasco

Since last month, Sam Laidlaw, the “non exec business adviser to DFT” has issued his preliminary findings on this. This included 5 main points

- a) DFT, aware of lack of transparency, decided to continue with the bidding process and accept the risk of a legal challenge;
- b) Bidders were not provided with adequate information for the secured loan facility (SLF);
- c) This SLF was not determined in compliance with the DFT published guidance;
- d) The ultimate SLF level was affected by extraneous factors and so was treated differently;
- e) The model that DFT would use to determine it was changed.

These problems arose, inter alia, from inadequate planning of financial risk, inadequacy of quality control procedures, the matrix organisational structure at the DFT, lack of clarity and continuity of roles and the novelty of the risk transfer arrangements! Another department not fit for purpose.

Judicial Reviews

As reported these start on December 3 for 7 days in the Royal Courts of Justice, with the result likely in mid January. Progress is being made and the skeleton arguments are being exchanged. One interesting point is that the DFT claim the consultations were well organised and full of experts!! Much evidence and many witness statements have been produced to reject this claim. Compliance with the Aarhus convention is being progressed as well for the environmental case.

Another Court Challenge

The DTF have been taken to Court to disclose their passenger loadings evidence. It was ruled that this evidence was relevant to the Judicial Reviews, which was good, but that this evidence need not be disclosed now for commercial reasons, which was less helpful.

Other News

Bucks County Council have reached agreement and are now engaging with HS2 to obtain the best outcome for local residents. Getting to this stage has been a long process as we the ratepayers will have to bear substantial costs for no benefit.

Proposals for tunnelling through the rest of the Chilterns AONB at materially no extra cost have been put to HS2 by independent consultants on behalf of local residents. These are reported as being taken seriously by HS2's their engineering consultants, as indeed they should be.

On the compensation consultation, a simple postcard response is being circulated to maximise the numbers of responses. This provides 7 questions for agreement, following the principle that polluter (ie HS2) not the sufferer should pay for the losses incurred. A target response of 100,000 is looked for. These will be in circulation soon so do encourage all your friends, families and neighbours to complete one. Or even better **visit our StopHS2 stall at Great Missenden Christmas shopping evening, from 3.30 to 7 this Saturday, 24 November**, when postcards to sign or take to distribute will be available.

Conclusion

Thanks to local support the AGAHST raffle raised £7000, after paying out winners, one was local!

Patrick McLoughlin speaking to the Council for the Preservation of Rural England inter alia asked on transport projects how do you make sure the beauty of Britain does not suffer. Either you can freeze progress.... “Or you can be confident, see transport as a good thing and do what it takes to make sure transport helps the countryside not harms it.” For the Chilterns AONB this can only mean a tunnel right through the Chilterns. We must all remind him of this.

Mark Ladd