

is scope for one. I would also say, you can't just think of the Select Committee as the place where people come and make their voices heard, the engagement should have been done a long time ago, and HS2 do need to wake up to that, in any other place the communication engagement with the residents has to start early on. Again, I still haven't heard about a rebuttal to whether the engagement process really did take three hours before this was published, and three hours after; I still haven't had an answer to that, which I assume means it did happen.

84. So, look, I'm the local MP for this area, my only interest is to represent the concerns of local constituents. There is great grievance in this area about the vent shaft, and I think, if you want the local community to come on side, there has to be some direct communication and some evidence given to them, in an independent forum, that this is not going to harm the lives of their children, which is what they're worried about. In this area.

85. CHAIR: Okay. That's a good place to end, thank you very much for your contribution this afternoon. We now move onto the Right Honourable David Lidington. Who is – welcome, David.

Rt Hon David Lidington MP

86. MR LIDINGTON: Thank you. Thank you again for your time, chairman. I want to focus in more detail today, upon the issues other than the tunnelling question, that which I spoke at length in my previous appearance, although I shall may allusion to that, I'm not going to go in through all those arguments again. I want to structure my comments in terms of three themes.

87. First of all, I want to talk about the way in which public engagement has been handled by HS2 Limited, both to reflect the incredible depth of anger and frustration of my constituents, at how this has been done, but I hope constructively as well, to suggest ways in which lessons can be learned, both for the subsequent stages of this project, and for phase 2, but then also by ministers for the future public engagement of other large national infrastructure projects.

88. Secondly, I would like to take you through the route, through my constituency, from north to south, highlighting those problems that still remain unresolved, and third, I

want to address some cross-constituency issues, especially the impact of construction traffic and the question of noise.

89. So, if I can start with the question of public engagement. I completely accept that it was inevitable that there was going to be a clash of interest between HS2 Limited promoting this project and those residents who were going to be directly affected either by planning blight, or in future, by the noise and the visual impact of the railway's operation. But I do believe, on the basis of my experience over the past nearly five years, that public engagement could and should have been handled much better than was the case. And my sadness about what has happened, since 2010, is that what is, in my view, has been, the mishandling of public engagement, has allowed a store of mistrust to build up, which has made it actually more difficult for HS2 to have the confidence of the people to whom it has been talking, when it's come to talking to them about the substance of their concerns and when they're wanting local people to believe in the credibility of the assurances which the company is giving.

90. And if I can suggest, you know, the problems and the remedies, I do hope that the company will focus on really how to improve the quality of its work. There have been too many cases of downright incompetence and a refusal to acknowledge mistakes. The Committee will be aware of the occasion when the Environmental Statement was published with 800 pages of data missing, the findings of the Ombudsman that HS2 Limited's actions fell below the reasonable standards we would expect. HS2's handling of the AP2 Environmental Statement was an absolute shambles.

91. And my constituency case that really sticks in my mind was a circular letter which the promoter sent out in late 2013, to about 300 households, along the western edge of Aylesbury. Now, the letter was well intended, it was supposed to warn residents that HS2 might need temporary access to their properties, in effect their gardens, to carry out work restringing pylon lines. Now much of the letter was couched in pretty unpalatable bureaucrat-ease, so that didn't help, but the key sentence was clear, and unfortunately so. HS2 had intended to say that they might need temporary access to these 300 properties for two to three weeks. The letter that was sent out and received by my constituents actually stated that the promoter might need the access, 'temporarily or permanently, for 203 weeks'.

92. Unsurprisingly, the phone lines to my office were red hot with constituents alternately enraged and in tears, at what they believed was the imminent prospect of the seizure of their homes.

93. Now, it was sorted out, after frantic phone calls and exchanges of letters, with the then chief executive, I had very clear assurances that this was a typographical error and a failure of proof reading. I sent a circular round to my constituents, with the Bucks Herald, the Aylesbury newspaper, published the truth. What I have to say, chairman, still galls me two years on, is that, to my knowledge, there has never been a follow-up letter by the promoter to those 300 households, apologising for the distress and the mistake, and actually setting the matter straight, and that direction I got from the previous senior management of HS2 was that since they told me and the Bucks Herald, we could communicate that satisfactorily to the constituents concerned, and I simply do not believe that that is a high enough standard, I really do hope that that kind of lesson had been absorbed and will be applied in terms of better standards in the future.

94. Secondly, I do think the promoters could improve the level of access by affected members of the public to technical and engineering staff. Many constituents have complained to me that they have had stock PR answers to quite detailed enquiries, and answers that did not even address the specific questions that they had raised.

95. I most recently, at the last HS2 road show in Wendover; HS2 Limited took a deliberate decision not to field anyone who knew about, or could answer questions about tunnelling. Now, from the Committee's hearing of evidence, from Wendover, it will not surprise members to realise there are a lot of Wendover residents who wanted to ask about tunnelling; they wanted to ask quite legitimate questions about HS2's case that the cost of tunnelling would be prohibitive and that their alternative scheme was delivery equally good results, but understandably, those residents felt angry at the absence of anyone able to answer those questions, and the results of that was actually against HS2's own interests, because what it did was damage the promoter's reputation and eroded still any public confidence in what they were saying.

96. Now, I would make it clear, I'm not blaming individuals on the HS2 helpdesk who often bear the brunt of these detailed enquiries. The impression my staff and I have got is that for an infrastructure project of this scale, the helpdesk team does not appear to be

particularly well staffed. I think one solution that would help in the future would be an expansion of that team, and providing those who field the enquiries with more immediate access to technical and engineering experts who could respond to the concerns raised, and I think a relatively small investment in this area, if you re-prioritise the personnel resources of HS2 would do a good deal to improve public perception of their engagement.

97. And to avoid any misunderstanding, chairman, I want to make it clear that those constituents who dealt directly with HS2's technical and engineering experts, had generally expressed a good opinion of them, finding them straight forward and easy to deal with. What frustrates people is when technical enquiries are not directed to people with technical knowledge and the response comes more in the form of spin, than in a proper detailed answer.

98. You've heard from others that the community forums were not a success and I think, too often, there is an absence of necessarily expertise and it led to too many meetings descending into shouting.

99. I would also hope that HS2 Limited can improve the way in which it communicates information, and especially news about changes to the project. A consistent concern over the last year has been how effectively changes, including those in Additional Provisions, have been disseminated to local people. A number of constituents contacted me after the petition deadlines for APs had passed, saying they'd not heard about them. Most people don't buy a local newspaper any more, let alone read through the public information notices that are published with the small ads at the back of the paper.

100. Other constituents said they'd only heard about these changes through my website or word of mouth and local activists. And it's true that there's a very large network of local people who've put a lot of time and energy into getting information about the Bill out, but it shouldn't be their job to do this, it should be the job of the promoters to inform local people.

101. Now, I have raised these points with the resident's commissioner when she visited Parliament last year, and I was glad she took those points on board, and I hope again, we will now, in the future, see an improvement in this area.

102. Individual meetings with HS2 officials and with transport ministers, have proved to be more productive, but mostly on wider points of concern, although getting specific details after meetings was, and still remains, a time and energy consuming process. To use the example of the proposed extension to the green tunnel south of Wendover, this was in my initial petition two years ago, and a topic raised repeatedly by actions groups in Wendover. Despite this, when the Committee recommended last July, that this should be the default option of this area, HS2 Limited was unable to come up with even basic comparative noise maps until September, directly before the Wendover petitioners were due to appear.

103. So, the groups who should have had the period over the summer to examine the numbers in detail, were given only days, or at best, weeks, before they were due to give evidence, and I thought it was, to put it mildly, cheeky of HS2, to suggest that potential delay to the project was a good argument then against this particular form of additional litigation.

104. And those problems with engagement have continued throughout the petitioning process. There's been a poor record of making progress towards talking to people and achieving settlements prior to the petitions, and we've continued to see deals being negotiated in the corridor outside the Committee room, up to, and certainly including last week. This exerts unfair pressure, particularly on individual constituents, who've already experienced a large amount of stress and pressure since the announcement of the project in 2010.

105. Constituents have told me that they have appreciated the Committee's attempt to make this process as painless as possible, particularly to those people of whom you will have seen many, who have never had to speak in this somewhat daunting environment before. But I think at times, it's been a very uneven playing field between constituents, and the legal representatives of the promoter. I don't blame Mr Mould and his colleagues for doing their job, but a large number of constituents who have petitioned, feel it is fundamentally unfair for the promoter to have professional legal representatives, bank rolled by the tax payer to cross-examine them, in some cases, quite aggressively, when those individuals do not have any legal training themselves.

106. It's also true that the weight of policy experts behind HS2 Limited makes it hard

for constituents to fairly contest their points without going to personal expense, in paying for second opinions. And this is made more concerning when the promoters have either been slow in providing information, if they provide it at all, while their legal representatives then appear to have had easy access to that, during the presentations. It's not seen by constituents, as a level playing field. We appreciate it, HS2 Limited following the Committee's recommendation to release a guide to tunnel costs, but it was a rather threadbare pamphlet. And you will also have heard criticism from Hilary Wharf and others, of the assumptions upon which those costs were made.

107. Let me now move onto key local areas of concern, and I want to...

108. CHAIR: Can I – are we able to do the flyover from – past Aylesbury and beyond, at an appropriate point? If we can.

109. MR LIDINGTON: Yes. No, that was – I was told about that by the county council last week, when I think that is definitely a – you know, there's one thing that we do...

110. CHAIR: Let's have a look at this. Well, we'll let you catch your breath, have a glass of water, you can watch them flying through your constituency.

111. MR LIDINGTON: I'm very well aware of that, chairman. Let me start in the north of my constituency.

112. SIR HENRY BELLINGHAM: We need to go back a bit, don't we? That's Aylesbury, so we're out. We need to go back up the vale, heading north, don't we?

113. CHAIR: A little bit, although Aylesbury's in the northern part of your seat, isn't it?

114. MR LIDINGTON: You're seeing the northern part, so approaching it from the right direction there.

115. CHAIR: Okay. I can't see many of your posters there, David.

116. MR LIDINGTON: Well, we obey the law and take them down. Right. So we're now approaching the northern end and we're coming up where it cuts through the golf course and you'll have Hartwell House coming up on the right, and then the Oxford

Road junction. So, let me talk about the area around Hartwell House and the Fairford Leys estate which is over here, to the left of the picture.

117. Now, Hartwell House itself is in John Bercow's constituency, but the mitigation package proposed for Hartwell does have a significant impact to the route as it passes by Aylesbury and Stoke Mandeville. I want to express appreciation that the National Trust has told me that in their view, the promoter has now offered sufficient undertakings such that the Trust could be choosing not to appear before the Committee about this particular aspect.

118. My understanding is that the promoter has now agreed to the Trust's green banks proposal and further landscape screening and planting is also to be brought forward for the Stoke Mandeville maintenance loop.

119. Fairford Leys, on the left of the picture, is a recent urban extension of Aylesbury, it has a population of more than 5,000 people. It's a good example of the kind of area where the residents are very concerned about HS2 traffic, forcing a rat run to avoid queues on the main Oxford Road, or Bicester Road, during construction, and this in turn, leads to safety concerns for pupils and parents of St Mary's school, which is adjacent to the road running through the estate. Many families walk or cycle to school and there's an obvious risk, not just of congestion, but of road accidents.

120. I hope that the promoter, you know will, as part of its transport planning, be talking to Buckinghamshire County Council and to local people in Fairford Leys about how to mitigate that risk of their residential roads being used as a rat run and to avoid the kinds of risks to pedestrian, and cyclists, which concern them at the moment.

121. I'm pleased also to have had the assurance that the Fairford Leys football pitches, an important hub for both adult and junior teams, are not going to be required for construction, and that teams will be able to continue using those pitches throughout construction and subsequently.

122. Where there are main concerns in Fairford Leys are over what residents see as little provision for either visual or noise mitigation, for residents living on the north western edge of the estate. Now, at that point, the line of route is likely to be clearly visible to residents, as it emerges from the embankments, and heads towards the Thames

valley viaduct, and that viaduct appears to benefit from very little, if any visual or noise mitigation. And I think this does need to be remedied. I'm told that John Bercow's constituents in Lower Hartwell have already discussed the possibility of extending the National Trust green banks scheme on the west side. I would certainly welcome some equivalent protection for constituents in Fairford Leys, up to the Thame valley viaduct on the east side as well, and if that's not possible, I would welcome the planting of mature saplings to provide at least some visual screening for the noise barriers.

123. Now, if we can move on down the west side of Aylesbury; as the Committee knows, the line passes within 200 metres of residential properties, as it goes past the town. The Committee will be very familiar with the noise problems, because this is one of the areas modelled in depth by Arup in their sound lab, and I'll make further reference to that later. I think the Committee will also remember from their visit that traffic, through Aylesbury, can be pretty horrendous, particularly during peak hours.

124. CHAIR: You might want to come onto it, but you're very keen for passive provision for the road to go all the way around Aylesbury.

125. MR LIDINGTON: Yes, that is – passive provision for the road to go all the way around is very important in terms of trying to future proof the impact of this scheme on Aylesbury's future development. One concern specific to Aylesbury is recent flooding, that areas of the town, and particularly the Willows area, which is just south of the A418 Oxford Road, will be worsened by the construction of HS2. As the Committee saw when they visited the area, the line runs very close to homes on the Willows and the residents are concerned that the risk to them of regular flooding will increase. Early in 2014, more than 80 homes in the area were flooded because of overflows.

126. HS2 construction will take up a large amount of land which otherwise soaks up water and acts as natural flood protection, and I think the area will need very careful monitoring, particularly in view about uncertainties about climate and weather patterns. And I would want a commitment from the promoter to discuss their plans and mitigation options with the Environment Agency, Thames Water, Bucks County Council, Aylesbury Vale District Council and other local representatives.

127. If we can move on down to Stoke Mandeville, please. Which is coming down, yes, a little bit further, coming down to Stoke Mandeville, now it's at the middle of the

picture now. My office has been in touch frequently, with the Stoke Mandeville action group and Stoke Mandeville parish council and I put on record my appreciation of their efforts in working to reduce the impact of the line, of the local people. The A4010 Stoke Mandeville bypass will be a huge improvement, on the potential visual and noise impact, compared with previous proposals for multiple flyovers of Risborough Road and Marsh Lane, and it's good to see that that is in the Bill, but there's still more than can be done.

128. Stoke Mandeville's been told that it's in the unfortunate position of being the only feasible location for a maintenance loop between London and Calvert. And the key concern here that the parish, and the action group have raised, is for adequate noise mitigation, to protect homes from the potential around the clock noise impact that maintenance operations will have. I understated that they are currently asking for a consistent height noise barrier of four metres, rather than the variable height barrier that is currently being proposed and I think that both Mr Clifton-Brown and the promoter mentioned this positively during previous hearings, and I hope that we can have a firm commitment to this before long.

129. I also believe that, with regard to the maintenance loop, local people would benefit from the promoter bringing forward a binding code of practice, and some system of redress to govern the operation of the maintenance loop in the future, so that residents can actually have an assurance that there is some declared limit to the amount of disturbance which they should reasonably be expected to suffer. Stoke Mandeville residents are also looking for reassurance that noise barriers be adequately shielded with trees, and for the earthworks that are currently planned to end north of the A4010 Risborough Road, to extend south, past the A4010 for additional noise and visual mitigation. And I think especially given the serious impact that the maintenance loop is likely to have, these are reasonable requests.

130. The parish council has asked me to report to the Committee that they've had no further correspondence from the promoter to discuss resolutions to these issues, since the parish council's Committee appearances in mid-November 2015, and I am concerned that the promoter continues to be slow to follow up on issues like this, without concerted pressure, and I would ask the Committee to insist on action from the promoters on this point.

131. Just south of Stoke Mandeville, so if we can move the flyover on a little bit, we will get to the Bucks Goat Centre, that's just around here, where we cross Lower Road, the Bucks Goat Centre where the arrow is; the Committee heard their petition last year, and again, this is a case where the promoters have not been quick to follow up the concerns expressed during that hearing.

132. The Committee asked the promoter to further investigate the noise, vibration, dust and other effects of construction of operation, on both the HS2 and the Stoke Mandeville bypass on the animals and people at the Bucks Goat Centre. As far as I know, having been in touch with the owners within the last week, the promoter has not yet followed this up. The owners, by contrast, have contacted the RSPCA, Oxford University Department of Zoology, and a group of American scientists, who made a study of the noise effects on livestock of a high speed rail project in California. I say that just to indicate how seriously my constituents are taking the potentially life changing impact of HS2.

133. They recently had a visit from the RSPCA, whose officer expressed concern about possible animal and human inhalation, and contamination to pastures and paddocks, of toxic dust and fumes during the construction phases of HS2 and the bypass. Again, this is an area which does need to be followed up with greater energy, following the concerns expressed in the evidence sessions last year, and I hope the Committee will press the promoter to address these issues without further delay.

134. Beside the Goat Centre are a number of other businesses in the lay by farm business park; they too petitioned last year, and they too have not yet received a substantive response from the promoter, to issues raised in their petition. These businesses asked me briefly to re-state the key points they raised in the hope it might elicit a response from the promoter the second time around. There's no compensation or specific support available in current arrangements for tenant businesses, the scale and length of the construction close to the business park will have a hugely detrimental impact on the businesses, both in terms of decreased footfall, visitors deterred by road closures and temporary traffic lights, plus the loss of access and direct visibility from the A-road, once the rerouting through the bypass has taken place. Plus again, the problems of noise and dust during construction.

135. Now, these businesses are going to be seriously harmed by construction and operation of the line, and even if they chose to move or lose money from their relocation, it doesn't seem just they should have no access to compensation whatsoever, so I would suggest at minimum, their moving costs should be underwritten by the promoter, should those business owners decided that that is what would best serve their interests, rather than being in the middle of a construction site for many years.

136. We now move from Stoke Mandeville to Wendover and I have to say, chairman, that I've been able to describe a number of improvements in parts of the scheme by Aylesbury and Stoke Mandeville, but it is at Wendover where I think there remains now the greatest need for attention to try and address some of the problems residents have identified. And on the south side of Wendover, if you can stop, you can probably wheel back a little bit. If we can. Because I want to look at – it's where I was – it's coming up here, it's just the – it's Nash Lee Lane, you've got these houses over on the right of the road and by where the access road comes to.

137. The Committee members paused at Nash Lee Lane during their visit to my constituency. Residents in this area face serious impacts in terms of construction traffic, noise and visual impact. Many of the houses are going to be almost surrounded by construction with the auxiliary substation, balancing pond, maintenance loop, access roadway, and temporary sidings for the Aylesbury Marylebone line, all in close proximity.

138. And Nash Lee Lane, like London Road and Wendover Dean to the south of Wendover, because it is a small settlement, faces the impact being serious, but at the same time, it's quite difficult to devise a cost effective solution, we're talking about a relatively small number of residents, but who face a very serious impact. And I know, on 7 September, you heard from some of these residents who said they thought they fell into what they described a land of no hope.

139. The noise during operation will be 50-65dB LAeq, even with a substantial package of noise mitigation. I understand that some of the barriers could be increased in height from three to six metres to obviate pantograph noise, but this would also bring with it, the visual plight of the barriers and the Committee will be well aware that tree coverage for barriers for that height could take up to 20 years.

140. The construction traffic in an area already relatively isolated will mean that families will have to drive children, who have to deal with this on several journeys a day. The Wendover bypass does not have pedestrian footpaths or crossings, and it is dangerous to cross, especially for children. What I would like HS2 to do is engage promptly with local residents and the local authorities to draw up a detailed plan for additional noise and visual mitigation and to ensure, in their plans for construction, that residents are able to have access to shops and public services, easily and, critically, safely during construction.

141. Quite a number of constituent in this vicinity have had their properties purchased through the need to sell scheme, and it may be the case that the best and fairest solution for the problems faced here would be for the terms of voluntary purchase, possibly with the addition of moving costs and stamp duty to be offered to local residents, so that they can move on with their lives, in effect, a tweaking of the discretionary compensation scheme.

142. Now, let me move on to Wendover itself, and the Committee will be very familiar with Wendover, both from visits to the town and from the many constituents of mine who have come to petition the Committee on the town's behalf and then again, in respect of tunnelling. I won't go over all the points that they have made again, and I have talked to the Committee previously about the need for tunnelling, whether bored, mined or green tunnel. Residents have all been clear that all other mitigation and compensation for Wendover is a definite second best to increased tunnelling.

143. In order of preference, the bored consensus remains, that a fully bored Chilterns tunnel is the best solution. After this a bored or mined tunnel past Wendover, and after either of these, extensions to the green tunnel to the north and south of Wendover and a cover to the South Dean viaduct. And I would simply, very briefly, remind the Committee that choosing the proposals for 100 metres of tunnel extension and noise barriers rather than a 700 metres option, would mean that LAeq would be 50% louder for Wendover school, 49dB up from 43, and almost double the noise for the church, 47 up from 38 – these are HS2 Limited's own figures. I just wanted to say this to make it clear that even the smallest of the improvements to the tunnelling proposals from the status quo would have significant improved noise reduction impacts on the ground.

144. The package of measures in AP5 and in supplementary environmental statement 4

are a welcome improvement to the original Bill, but I won't hide the fact that a number of constituents have once again mentioned they consider six metre noise barriers a bigger visual intrusion than the extended green tunnel option. I look forward also to confirmation of the other measures discussed by HS2 in their package of mitigation for Wendover in September last year. If we could have slide 7 up please. I will obviously make sure the Committee has a copy of this, but rather than read it out – no, 7 please. That's not my slide.

145. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: 2054.

146. MR LIDINGTON: Sorry, 2054, 7.

147. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: The one about avoiding tunnelling means...

148. MR LIDINGTON: Yes. Frankly, my view is that these measures are all small change so far as the promoter is concerned, and whatever the outcome for Wendover, tunnelling or barriers or a green tunnel, this should be part of it, and I'm very disappointed that this has still not been nailed down, despite the appearances by my constituents before the Committee. The Committee's also heard from local residents about their worries of potentially serious hydrogeological impacts on Wendover and surrounding waterways. The promoter has of course assured you that measures will be put in place to pre-emptively monitor the hydrogeological issues. If the Committee does not go for the bored tunnel then I hope that we will have a clear plan to monitor these hydrogeological impacts at very early stages of the construction process. I have taken this issue up with the Environment Agency and they've told me they share these concerns. And I'd also welcome a clear undertaking to make that information public to local stakeholders, given the degree of public interest and concern about this matter.

149. Wendover Chamber of Trade and Commerce have asked me to say that they fear their businesses will be negatively affected by construction traffic, and that it would be reasonable that their businesses should be compensated for losses of revenue as a result of the construction or operation of HS2.

150. Now, moving to the south of Wendover, the Committee will remember St Mary's Church and the presentation and sound demonstration there from William Avery. It now seems highly likely, unless a tunnel option of some kind is preferred, that there will

be significant impact of noise on the use of the outside of the church. Until recently my understanding was that there was good progress being made towards sound attenuation for concert performances in the church and for services, for reroofing, internal glazing and noise insulation to the bell tower and porch. Indeed, it seemed that with the addition of the extended green tunnel and noise barriers in supplementary environmental statement 4 that these measures together might provide a workable solution for the church interior.

151. I was therefore dismayed to be told by St Mary's that the plans for insulation for the church have apparently been abandoned in the light of the higher noise barriers now proposed, and the users of the church have been clear that this is not enough and I fully support them. HS2 has said that six metre sound barriers will put the peak noise by the church at 63 decibels for TSI compliant trains, a reduction of seven decibels from the environmental statement, provided sound absorbent barriers are used. Now, this detail is not stated in AP5 SES4, so that needs to be clarified. The key –

152. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Can I just –

153. MR LIDINGTON: Yes.

154. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Sorry, because I wouldn't want you to proceed on a false basis. Far from the assurance relating to internal noise insulation measures to the church being abandoned, a letter has been sent this week confirming the project's commitment to provide funding up to a sum of £250,000 towards such works.

155. MR LIDINGTON: I'm grateful to Mr Mould. I was indeed intending to refer to this later. The letter arrived this morning by coincidence.

156. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Right. So in fact the position is that there is –

157. MR LIDINGTON: Well, it is, but it is not sufficient. The key point of contention is how much sound attenuation is provided by the existing fabric of the building. I understand from Mr Avery that a comprehensive test of the current sound attenuation shows around a 20 decibel reduction for a TSI compliant train, taking the noise down from a peak of 70 to a peak of around 50. Currently, with the ambient level outside of around 50 decibels, they experience about 30 decibels inside, and, in testing, only about

eight times an hour is there something noisier from the outside that penetrates into the church, and only occasionally does that get close to 40 decibels.

158. Committee members will recall from the demonstration last year that with the church full of people sitting still the noise level is almost down to 30. Now, once HS2 is – I think is a surprise to many people. That was the measure. I think, Sir Peter, you'll recall we sat in the church there and they gave the simulation.

159. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: I'm not tarnishing. I'm just making an observation. I've never been in a room where I've managed to get – with other people where I've managed to get the reading down to zero.

160. MR LIDINGTON: But because of course, as the Committee well knows, decibels, noise impact is measured on a logarithmic rather than a linear scale, a relatively small arithmetic change in decibel levels amounts to a very big difference in terms of noise perceived. It's all on the AP.

161. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: This is you?

162. MR LIDINGTON: Absolutely. I hesitate to think what I'm speaking at.

163. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: How many more pages have you got, David?

164. MR LIDINGTON: I hope not too – oh no, we've got a few more. We're well on the way. We're well on the way.

165. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: But how many?

166. MR LIDINGTON: I've got about – I can cut some of this, Peter. I've got about 10 here but some of it I can put in writing to you if that helps. The key point of contention is, as I've said, the fabric here. Once HS2 is running there'll be 36 occurrences all above 40, with some at 43, that the church believes will render it unusable for concerts. Now, it is true the promoters have offered up to a maximum of £250,000 in noise attenuation, but the costs, as estimated by the Diocese of Oxford and the parish, are of the order of 2-2.5 million, so we're looking now at an offer for noise attenuation from HS2 that amounts to perhaps an eight or a tenth of what the church itself calculates it needs to be able to function to the existing concert standard at the

moment.

167. The Wendover Campus of Chiltern Way Federation has also received a communication from the promoters today. The Committee will be very familiar with the school's concerns. I would simply say that the initial contact I've had today from the school is that they believe the assurances they have been offered are very vague, are couched in terms of 'best endeavours' and the like, and, like the church, they remain dissatisfied with the length of time it's taken to get any response and the response they've had hitherto.

168. Wendover Cricket Club is the third local facility. I think what might be helpful, because there is a lot of detail here, is if I could put this element in writing so the Committee can see this. But, again, this is getting quite urgent because if a new site is not acquired in 2016 it will almost certainly result in a gap between losing the existing ground and being able to use any new ground. And, since the hearing on 28 October, when Mr Mould suggested a bus service was used, the club has checked the bus timetable, and they find that buses do not run at a time that would enable people, particularly children in the youth teams, to be able to travel both to and from the proposed new site.

169. Finally for Wendover, in the south we get to the communities around London Road and Wendover Dean, and the Committee will recall these are badly affected, construction potentially for up to seven years close to a residential road, the subsequent blight of embankments and of viaducts. I know that when you had a presentation from Mrs Dixon, you know, she made the point that this is an area that too often seemed to fall through the cracks in terms of engagement. They don't feel covered by the conversations about Wendover village centre, so I hope once the tendering process is complete the promoter will work closely with London Road residents on the design and construction of the viaduct and embankment.

170. As you'll remember, the visual impact of the line is impossible to miss from London Road. The residents are also worried that, in effect, they'll be turned into a severed community, cut off by the different construction works, temporary traffic lights and so on, and I think, again, they would welcome the reassurance that there was a detailed plan to cover construction that made it clear that that would not be happening. I

continue to believe that these properties represent a special case for compensation. There are special rules for households on the line that are close to tunnels, and I believe there should be special compensation rules for those more affected because HS2 passes by on a viaduct or high embankment.

171. Let me now conclude by talking briefly about some of the wider issues affecting the whole of the constituency, and let me deal first with construction traffic. Now, we have moved on. Last week there was a corridor conversation between the promoters and Buckinghamshire County Council, whereby the promoters agreed to give financial assistance to the County Council, as highways authority, to improve a number of key roads and junctions that would be used by construction traffic. The immediate response I've had from the County Council leadership is that they believe that those financial assurances address most of the concerns they have, but clearly the proof of the pudding is going to be in the eating, and it's going to be important that there is a system in place to monitor what happens with traffic.

172. I would ask the promoters to give us greater clarity on their most recent estimates for traffic flows and numbers. There was a recent revision which showed a significant increase on the forecast traffic congestion in the central Chilterns compared with the forecast made in the environmental statement, and that's clearly got people elsewhere along the construction routes, in the south as well as the north of my constituency worried, so an up to date assessment and a clear statement as to the methodology, I think, is needed there. I also hope particular attention will be given to the impact of HS2 construction upon health services. I recently discussed this with both the South Central Ambulance Service and the Buckinghamshire Hospitals Trust. People in the south of my constituency and High Wycombe have to travel to Stoke Mandeville for A&E and maternity services. People in the north of my constituency and Mr Bercow's have to go to High Wycombe for the specialist cardiac and stroke units there, and the existing levels of traffic mean there's already pressure on the A4010 and the roundabout – the Pedestal roundabout where the A4010 and the M40 join in particular.

173. I think slide 2054(3) has – slide, yes, 2054(3) shows why I am particularly worried about construction impact. These figures represent housing, new housing development over the next few years. It's mostly already committed. The 3,000 in the centre is one where it's not yet approved. The developer is putting – about to put in for a second time

for an application of that number on that site, and this is before we get to what is likely to be in Aylesbury Vale Council's local plan for another 30,000-35,000 houses for the district over forthcoming years. So there's a worry that the HS2 construction and a lot of this residential construction will be taking place at the same time, with a consequent impact upon the local road systems.

174. SIR HENRY BELLINGHAM: The 20,000 that is planned for the local plan up to 2026, that's in addition to –

175. MR LIDINGTON: There'll be some overlap in that it'll be – the 3,000, for example, since that's not yet been approved, may fall into that, but we're looking at big numbers for the district and so on. It may not all be this part of the district. Some could be further north, but I wanted the Committee to be alive to the scale of this. This area of Buckinghamshire is one of the fastest growing areas in the country. Aylesbury Vale last year had more new houses built than Birmingham and Nottingham put together. These are very big, big numbers.

176. SIR HENRY BELLINGHAM: And is Wendover included in those plans?

177. MR LIDINGTON: Wendover will probably be subject to some development pressure but it – part of it lies in the AONB and part of the old historic centre has conservation status, so it's unlikely to be a major, sort of, centre for new building in its own right, but it will be affected by the traffic impact flowing from the growth of Aylesbury, and indeed further north the growth of Milton Keynes and of Leighton Buzzard and Luton, as the traffic funnels south towards to M4 and M40 corridors.

178. SIR HENRY BELLINGHAM: And is the council planning a new ring road round –?

179. MR LIDINGTON: Well, the petitions you've been hearing from the local authorities are about making provision for – to safeguard the route of a ring road round Aylesbury. That's different from having the money to pay for it. And in the absence of central government funding that's going to have to be developed by contributions, which of course means more building probably than is indicated here in order to fund that road development.

180. The promoter has committed to regular traffic liaison meetings once contractors have been appointed. I would hope that they will include, as well as the principal authorities, local public representatives like parish council members, and also local employers. I know there's worry in Aylesbury that the impact of construction could be a deterrent to new businesses from locating in the town. And if you want to have an idea of existing traffic in and out of the town if we have 24(6) up, which shows average – annual average daily traffic. You've got very big numbers of vehicles coming in and out every day, and in some areas, particularly on the right – the left picture here, you're talking about 700 two way HGV trips every day as a result of HS2 construction so, I mean, there are some real pressure points on the traffic system in the town. Yes, opening up parts of that ring road will help, but that had been designed with new building in mind and, you know, HS2 is an additional burden. So monitoring that, having a proper plan in place is going to be absolutely vital.

181. I would like to – the promoter to commit itself to work on the real top standards of construction practice, i.e. I know that Ms Gillan is going to talk more extensively about the independent complaints commissioner when she gives her presentation. I will certainly support the case that she makes. What I'm asking from the Committee is set out in slide 2054(1). Do we have 2054(1)? And I think these are all ideas with which I hope the Committee will be fairly familiar, but, again, they've been waiting a long time to see a commitment for this and it really would help – I think help HS2 to win back some trust if they made this commitment – this kind of commitment at the earliest possible date.

182. CHAIR: Are we nearly getting there, David?

183. MR LIDINGTON: Yes, we're getting – we are nearly at the end now. The National Trust has asked me to raise that they want clarification on the plan for engagement during design and delivery. I know you heard evidence on this from the Chilterns Conservation Board last week. I would like to see a design competition, in particular for the viaduct, if that goes ahead, which is proposed for the Wendover Dean area, with the criteria being above all for both noise mitigation and aesthetic appearance, and limiting adverse visual impact. And I would like to see a wide ranging remit for a design and mitigation body which looked not just at design, but on broader issues like traffic and spoil management in the Chilterns area of outstanding natural beauty.

184. Finally, let me move to compensation. I won't repeat the arguments that you have heard before. I remain though very concerned about the way in which the need to sell scheme operates. I welcome the Committee's report on this, and I welcome too the fact that the success rate for NTS applications reached 67% towards the end of last year, or 72% if we disregard cases solely declined on effort to sell. It normally means they just need a little while longer on the market. But there have been other cases that caused me real anxiety.

185. Mr Riddell has given me permission to raise his case. He came to you to say that the promoter had refused his application on the grounds that choice of school did not make for a compelling reason, and you noted in your report in December that accessibility of preferred schools might well be other valid reasons for wanting to sell. In the most recent letter refusal to Mr Riddell the promoter stated that they did not regard – that they regarded that the son did not have a confirmed place at the school as a key reason for not approving criterion 5 of the application, and this does seem to me that, despite what the Committee said about parental school choice, that the promoter has not responded at least in this case to that particular issue, and I think that case needs to be addressed.

186. I'm going to leave with the Committee also a list of constituency cases where the valuations given by the two valuers picked from the HS2 panel have come in with valuations significantly below those reached by independent valuers, particularly those with local knowledge. Now, I read some of the evidence sessions on this. I know that there are, you know, legitimate questions of course being asked about the vigour with which a valuation has been carried out, but there – I've had enough cases in my constituency alone, and I will give the Committee full details, including the names and addresses, for me to think that this is not just individual people who are discontented but there is something that is systemically wrong with the way in which these valuations have been carried out. And until we get, you know, more local valuers involved, a solution might be to allow individuals to choose one of the valuers independently rather than just from the list provided by the promoters.

187. I still also have cases, and I'm happy to give the Committee details, where people say that it is just taking too long between the promoters accepting that they – their case for compensation and the details being worked out.

188. On noise, I've said, I think, in going through here what I really wanted to say about noise in the various locations, but I was struck when I went to Arup and listened to the simulation of the Oat Close, Aylesbury noise levels by how loud the trains were in an outdoor area. Indoors, yes, on the assumption that these were HS2 compliant trains and, you know, most up to date double glazing and so on, the noise impact was much, much reduced, and I was quite impressed by that. But if you stepped outside the front door or you wanted your windows open in the summer the impact was much more damaging, and I just hope that the Committee agrees that houses in places like Oat Close and other places that are close to the line should have the very minimum that – free high quality double glazing as a standard part of their compensation package.

189. I'm on the last page now. The Chiltern Railway has asked me to raise one additional issue, which is that of the High Wycombe single line. They say that the Bill as currently drafted would close and extinguish that line and remove a key route for passengers from Buckinghamshire to reach the proposed station at Old Oak Common. Chiltern Rail want to have the option available to use this particular route to link up with Old Oak Common, and therefore provide a link from Buckinghamshire, the Chiltern Line, into Heathrow, which is not available at the moment. My understanding is the proposed closure is due to the realignment of the Great Western Main Line to make room for the construction of the Old Oak Common station, and that would sever the High Wycombe single line. Chiltern Rail argues it is both physically possible and cost effective to maintain the High Wycombe single line within the Old Oak Common layout. I'm no engineering expert, but I urge the Committee to ask the promoter fully to investigate this possibility and reach a solution if they can.

190. In conclusion, Chairman, it is still almost universally the opinion of my constituents that a long Chilterns tunnel and protection for the AONB are the single biggest ask they have, and this has not been changed by any of the alternatives so far offered. And it goes without saying this would remove the need for large amounts of the additional mitigation and compensation I've mentioned today. And, for Wendover in particular, if not a long tunnel then the extended green tunnel, as presented to the Committee last summer, is something that local people would support. If the Committee does not support a long tunnel then my constituents, not just in Wendover but along the rest of the route through my constituency, will need to have the concerns

that I have described dealt with both quickly and effectively, and I hope that this will now be done.

191. CHAIR: Thank you very much, David. Quite a lot was raised, Mr Mould. You might have to pick up some of the issues in written form, but would you like to touch on the key issues?

192. MR MOULD QC (DfT): What I was going to do, because I'm conscious of the fact you've got other petitioners waiting who haven't been heard, is to say that I think without – with one exception, every single one of the points that have been raised by Mr Lidington are points that have been heard by the Committee from individual petitioners and from local authorities, to which we have responded in the sittings, and where, in many cases, we have reached agreement with petitioners as to assurances and so forth, or we have set out our position in response, and you will no doubt be reporting on your judgment in the – in your report. On that basis, if you're content to leave it in that way I would leave it in that way, and if Mr Lidington would like behind the scenes, through his researcher, for example, to engage with us to get the relevant references on the transcript, I'm sure that we can provide those to him.

193. CHAIR: Yes. The Goat Centre we're expecting a report back on.

194. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Yes.

195. CHAIR: The last point he made about the railway –

196. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Well, that's the one exception, because you – we have the great advantage now of being forewarned as to the case that we can expect to hear on Thursday, because that is when Chiltern Railways are actually coming before you. That's their scheduled – so we now know that they are going to be suggesting that the Wycombe single line will be retained, and we will obviously respond on that when we've heard their petition on Thursday morning.

197. CHAIR: And you mentioned, actually I don't think in public session, the other day about the potential for maintaining a road around Aylesbury. Was that right?

198. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Yes. Amongst the assurances we've given to the County Council is an assurance in relation to that – do you remember there were two

areas where that was – on which that focused. The first was –

199. MR CLIFTON-BROWN: Could we just have that plan back up of Aylesbury, and you can just show –

200. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Yes. That was one of Mr Lidington's slides I think.

201. MR CLIFTON-BROWN: Sorry to stop you.

202. MR MOULD QC (DfT): No, no, not at all.

203. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: A map of Aylesbury. It may not be the best map of Aylesbury.

204. MR MOULD QC (DfT): It'll certainly help the – yes. Yes, so if you remember – just orientate ourselves. We've got the railway line coming in – the Princes Risborough line. I think I've got that – I've got the right one, and do you remember there was a point at which we had to do some work to the Princes Risborough line to enable the HS2 railway to go past it effectively, across it, and there was a point made by the local authorities, with support from the local landowners and community, that the HS2 scheme should future proof so as to provide an underpass that would accommodate a dual track – a dual carriageway road if there – to allow for future promotion of such a scheme. And amongst the assurances that we've given most recently to Buckinghamshire, and which were the subject of detailed discussions, culminating in their appearance before you, is our assurances in relation to that matter. So if you'd like –

205. CHAIR: But that is for a future study?

206. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: It's quite obvious that Aylesbury at some stage is going to have a western bypass, and it'll be – that'll probably be associated with various other developments is my guess, but – so having the structure there means you wouldn't have to interfere with the running of the railway.

207. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Yes, and, as you say, there's a commitment to a study to examine the need – the case – the need for that, and to provision for that future proofing as part of the works. Obviously the construction of the road itself is a matter for the

local authorities to promote, and one would expect, under the current planning regime, that that would be largely funded by those who would benefit from its provision. That is to say developers who provide – who take a profit from housebuilding in the area.

208. The other point, the specific point, was the – was whether the Stoke Mandeville bypass that is within the Bill and which, as Mr Lidington said, is a good thing and of course responsive, one of those examples which is responsive to local community pressure through the community forum areas, the community forums, whether that should be a more ambitious scheme. And what we have agreed with the County Council is that we would fund traffic modelling and further studies in relation to the case for that additional link, and that again is set out in detail in the assurance letter that was provided to Buckinghamshire County Council following the negotiations we've continued to have over the course of the last few months.

209. So that would be - that would then - again, the provision of that link as part of a larger scheme, or indeed in isolation, would be something that would be resolved in the light of that work.

210. CHAIR: Okay. If you could therefore write to Mr Lidington, referencing the answers you've given on the range of points. Mr Lidington will write to me about the cricket club and pick up - once we've looked at the official answer you've given, pick up further points that he thinks need to be raised before we finish the process. Are you happy with that?

211. MR LIDINGTON: No, I think that's fine. I have always welcomed the move to, in effect, safeguard a route. I mean, the point I was making about traffic was more that it is almost certain that that western link would not be ready when construction of HS2 is planned, so the need to plan for and manage in that construction traffic remains. And that was my point today.

212. MR MOULD QC (DfT): And if I could just make one further point without testing your patience more, I hope, than I need to. It goes back to the very beginning, where Mr Lidington made some - gave some evidence about the consultation and engagement process. What I would say is it is very helpful indeed I'm sure, to the promoter and to the Secretary of State, if people provide constructive ideas as to how engagement and consultation could be improved. And that I took to be the purpose of

Mr Lidington's presentation to you.

213. Because it's - whilst obviously people - one can understand why people may, from time to time, feel that they should make the point that they don't feel that the process is being effective - and one could argue about that, and it's not worth it, frankly, in this process. What is much more useful for the future is to have constructive ideas as to how it might be made better. And that is - for that reason, I will - those points which were made, which were with a view to that purpose.

214. CHAIR: I think what is true is that throughout the process there are sometimes letters that need to be delivered to meet the legal processes -

215. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Yes.

216. CHAIR: - which sometimes don't get things right, and there aren't necessarily follow-up letters as a result. And that's come up a number of times, and clearly the next phase is that needed to be got right. Anyway, thank you very much, David, for your time. Sorry?

217. MR CLIFTON-BROWN: Sorry, can I go first, Sir Henry?

218. SIR HENRY BELLINGHAM: You go first.

219. MR CLIFTON-BROWN: I'm a little bit concerned, Mr Mould, to hear from Mr Lidington that there are systemic problems with valuations and the need to sell in the scheme. If he provides evidence of that, I mean, what further can be done? Systemic as opposed to individual.

220. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Yeah. First of all I should make it clear I certainly don't accept, on behalf of the Secretary of State, that that is correct. But I haven't seen the evidence that he has said supports it, and clearly, like any advocate, I hold final judgment until I've seen what is produced.

221. If - I think the answer to 'what can be done' must surely also rest until we have seen what the evidence is, because a sensible judgment as to A) whether there is a systemic problem, and if so how it can be remedied, must surely depend upon consideration of the evidence.

222. CHAIR: We're still waiting for the Secretary of State to come back to us on the interim report -

223. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Yes.

224. CHAIR: - we brought in, and there may be parts of that that may solve some of the issues which Mr Lidington is concerned with.

225. MR CLIFTON-BROWN: Mr Lidington did ask about the construction process and issues like dust and the cleaning of exterior of houses, medical costs of residents who suffer from respiratory problems, et cetera. There was that list of construction process asks.

226. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Yes.

227. MR CLIFTON-BROWN: Now, where are we with that and what can you say about that?

228. MR MOULD QC (DfT): We will certainly remind Mr Lidington again - I hope you will forgive me for putting it that way - of the very extensive arrangements that are set out in the Code of Construction Practice, and that is really the answer. The Code of Construction Practice - that slide that Mr Lidington put up showing suggestions, helpful suggestions as to how the process of locating work sites and so forth might be governed, that is all foreshadowed in the Code of Construction Practice.

229. I recall this morning a petitioner came to you and said that they were - and referred to the fact that this was a project which was following the lead, for example, of the Olympics construction, which I think is now generally accepted as having been a successful, well-run construction process. You had another letter this morning from - another observation this morning that people - somebody who preferred the notion that these works were being done by a public body rather than a private developer because they could rely upon the public body, putting it colloquially, taking a more responsible approach to construction, perhaps, than some other private developers.

230. So that's the basis upon which the construction - code of construction practice is drawn. And Sir Henry, if you'll forgive me, insofar as there are more detailed points raised in the presentation, perhaps they can be left over to be dealt with in the way that

makes sense.

231. SIR HENRY BELLINGHAM: Yes. Fair enough.

232. CHAIR: Thank you very much. You've got it on the record. You've got it off your chest, anyway. That's the main thing.

233. MR LIDINGTON: Well, it's not me that's important.

234. CHAIR: Yeah. I know.

235. MR LIDINGTON: It's the, you know, 2000 constituents who have written to me about this, and the others who are also affected.

236. CHAIR: And member staff.

237. MR LIDINGTON: And indeed members of staff.

Rt Hon Dominic Grieve MP

238. CHAIR: Right. We now move on to the Right Honourable Dominic Grieve, who has been sitting patiently listening to his Buckinghamshire colleague. Welcome, Dominic. We did, when we heard from some of your constituents on Thursday, point out that you had important works taking the safety of our nation.

239. MR GRIEVE: Well, I'm very grateful, Chairman, for having a brief opportunity - and I think it really will be brief - to pick up a few points specifically. I've given evidence before about HS2 going through Denham in my constituency, and the consequences of that. But specifically about the - that Heathrow Express terminal at Iver.

240. Some of you have had the opportunity of visiting and have seen for yourself the area, and can I just highlight what are my continuing concerns? Firstly I should make clear that I have seen - it's only in draft form - a letter coming from the promoter to Buckinghamshire County Council giving a number of undertakings about how the Heathrow Express project would be managed.

241. That includes an undertaking that prior to the construction and during the construction of the Heathrow Express depot, with a view to further mitigating the