

395. CHAIR: Okay. Brief, final comments, Mr Griffiths? Or Mrs Wharf?

396. MS WHARF: Yes. Thank you.

397. CHAIR: Sorry.

398. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Could I just do two things? First of all, can I just answer the question Mr Bellingham raised this morning about the number of properties acquired?

399. CHAIR: Okay.

400. MR MOULD QC (DfT): And then I've got a short, closing submission on the Chilterns issues, which I'd like to deliver to you. Can I hand that around? Whilst I'm doing that, the position on property acquisitions is this. In Hyde Lane, we have acquired two properties and we are buying four properties. In South Heath, we have acquired 11 properties. We've agreed to acquire a further four. We have another property where we, and then we have three properties that we are considering applications under NTS and the rural support zone. And then in relation to Potter Row, we've acquired four and we have three further properties that are in the process of being acquired.

401. Sorry, there was one point, which I think was the question raised by the petitioners this morning on HGV traffic on the B485 Chesham Road, to access the vent shaft under the C5 option. The HGV numbers are quite high as this is for the removal of the vent shaft excavated material over a short three month period. The numbers would reduce if a longer excavation period was adopted.

402. And so finally my, just very brief, overall closing submissions. The question for the committee is essentially whether the landscape of the Chilterns is such that even with the best design and mitigation that can reasonably be achieved the surface section of the railway which Mr Miller has described lying primarily in cutting with two relatively short sections of viaduct would cause an unacceptable impact which would mean that the scheme can only proceed with the addition of the very considerable expense of tunnelling. The starting point for that analysis is this. We are promoting a railway which includes substantial mitigation through its design. The detail of that mitigation so far as it relates to landscape effects is still being worked up, because this is

a matter of detailed design. It is for that reason that we have shown the committee our latest thinking in the landscape design document and will continue to work with the Conservation Board and others to get it right. The cost of such mitigation is already accounted for in the scheme budget.

403. Very little has been said in the last 10 days on the basis of the avoidance of operational effects on substantial communities that goes, but because those have been mitigated through the provision of green tunnels where the railway passes substantial settlements, that is to say South Heath and Wendover. The residual effects of the railway on people's homes, local facilities and so forth, in this section of the route are very limited. That is not to ignore the effects that remain, but to weigh those effects against the cost of avoiding them.

404. The plea to save the Chilterns largely misses the true point. They fail to grapple with the actual effects on the landscape and the nature of the landscaping in the surface section. The promoter has studied those effects by reference to that which makes the Chilterns an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. See the assessment in volume three of the environmental statement. Rather than simply relying on the fact of designation, as many petitioners seem to, the promoter has interrogated the way in which the railway can sit in this sensitive landscape. The committee will wish to do the same. That is to focus on the actual effects on the actual features of interest, rather than to protect the designation for the sake of it.

405. The committee will then wish to take account of the actual impacts of the long tunnel proposals, in particular the need for a substantial construction site between Wendover and Stoke Mandeville and the permanent presence of an intervention gap in place of the Wendover Dean viaduct. It is by doing that, that you will have regard to the desirability of preserving the natural beauty of the area. Broadly speaking, your duty under Section 85, or rather, the promoter's duty, which you are reviewing, under Section 85 of the 2000 Act, and also fulfil the policy of paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

406. And I know that the committee was keen that I should just confirm the position with regard to Section 85 of the 2000 Act. The Act requires 'that a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the

area of outstanding natural beauty'. The minister, the Secretary of State, is clearly such a person, that is to say, a relevant authority. He has plainly had regard to that purpose in the development of the railway in assessing its impacts on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and putting forward his case, which seeks to explain why, in having such regard, he has drawn the balance in the way that he has through the promotion of the scheme. It is for the committee to say whether or not that balance needs to be drawn in a different way.

407. The promoter's case remains that the alleged direct economic impacts of the railway in the Chilterns are overstated by petitioners. There will be a measure of disruption in construction, but, there will be a measure of disruption, including, traffic, tourism and property blight for any scheme, including the long tunnels. People will not be dissuaded from living in or visiting the Chilterns because there is a railway running through it.

408. The cost benefit analysis put to you is primarily driven by an attempt to quantify landscape effects. What will you be willing to pay to avoid the effects? We say the committee should make its own judgment on that, rather than being told by economists how much it should require the promoter to pay. The committee is perfectly capable of answering the question, with respect. Does the cost of a long tunnel at £350 to £485 million represent value for money in avoiding environmental effects? Our position is clear, having looked at this issue carefully over the course of many years, that the residual effects of the proposed route are not so significant as to justify this very substantial additional burden of a long tunnel on the public purse.

409. But, in respect of the shorter tunnel proposals, which have been the focus of today, the real question is, what do you actually gain for the additional cost? Clearly, there are incremental environmental gains, with incremental tunnel extensions. But, there are incremental costs. The cost differential between an extension under C6 and an extension under C5 is clear. It is of the order of £50 million. The question therefore is to consider very carefully, firstly, the environmental benefits under C6, and then to ask, what further benefits flow from C5 and whether those benefits can justify the additional cost?

410. I make it clear, we remain of the view that the bill scheme is the right balance.

But, I suggest that if the committee is of a mind to depart from that view, then the approach that is set out in paragraph 10 of our note is the way in which one should approach it.

411. CHAIR: Okay. Mrs Wharf?

412. MS WHARF: Thank you. Well, we're here for a 4.1 kilometre extension. I'd say, not a 2.6 kilometre one. We would like to go as far as Leather Lane, where it seems a natural point that the land falls away. And a point that we hadn't discussed much, which is, we are not robbing Peter to pay Paul. Because there are not big implications of going to the full 4.1 kilometres, because we bore from one end. It is a very simple solution, if the boring machine just keeps going.

413. But, we're here really for the 1200 people which live in this community. A community that is Hyde End and Hyde Heath, South Heath and Potter Row. And it is in the heart of the AONB.

414. We believe, and we hope we have showed you, that the current mitigation is inadequate. It isn't just the landscape impacts and the horrendous construction works that there is with something like a green tunnel. But, then, when actually it's in operation, and, in particular, I bring you back to the blight and the noise and the impacts that there are for those in Potter Row and those within one kilometre of that portal. And we believe, we hope we've shown, that we actually get home on HS2's own costs, even if one was to say the figures were 75, because one can take account of the non-promoter's costs, and, actually, you're in pocket at the end.

415. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: Just for those who are coming in late, the non-promoter's costs?

416. MS WHARF: Oh, sorry, the figures like SQW did, on tourism. The £150 million, where they actually wrapped it in and they showed a net present value of £85 million.

417. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: The things you don't write cheques for, but, have been monetised by the system here? Okay. Thank you.

418. MS WHARF: Yes. But, then, of course, we actually say that we dispute the £75 million. And we are more than happy to provide any further information, if we can have

a proper dialogue in order to be able to understand in detail how the costings are done.

419. I hope it's become clear that actually really timescale isn't an issue. We wouldn't want to have fitting out from both ends. But, if fitting out from both ends were the way to do it, then, I'm sure that a solution could be found. And, we, strongly, argue against ending, if you're minded to consider an extension of the tunnel, we strongly argue against it being at the point of where the green tunnel is. It is three communities. And there is an enormous impact, in South Heath, it isn't just Potter Row, because of where that portal is sited. And, I think I'd really just last say, we hope, you know, we're very pleased to have come and had the opportunity to do this. And have a good summer, everybody. But, I think you know how you could make a better summer for us.

420. CHAIR: Thank you very much. It's been a hard old day. I think you've got a lot of points across and done very well. Not everybody turns up with a barrister, but, I think without a barrister, you've done very well. And, as I said, we wouldn't get one of these with a barrister. We're going to have a break now, just to see if we can clear our thoughts. And we may or may not have something to say at 5.00 p.m. when we resume. Order, order.

*Sitting suspended*

*On resuming—*

421. CHAIR: Order, order. So, welcome back to the HS2 Select Committee. I have a short statement. We have heard submissions and arguments this week and last week in relation to options for further Chiltern tunnelling. Our views are as follows.

422. First, on the long tunnel options, we have kept in mind the potential non-quantifiable effects of the project on the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. On the evidence heard we are strongly of the view that the case for a long tunnel has not been made. Without prejudicing the arguments, we may hear from future petitioners, but we believe it's unlikely that an overwhelming case will be made out for a long tunnel option.

423. Secondly, we believe that the case has been made for an extension of the bore tunnel to the northern end of the South Heath green tunnel. This would not cause an overall delay to the scheme. We want reassurance on how far that option would result in

the deepening cutting laterally to the west of the portal. And we want HS2 to evaluate the effects of a deepening in the cutting on the local area. Provided that review is satisfactory, we will direct the promoter to work up that proposal as an additional provision.

424. Thirdly, on Wendover, we are minded to recommend a southward extension of the currently proposed green tunnel, unless HS2 report back with a very convincing scheme of further mitigation, on which we expect a report back in September. Thank you. Order, order. Have a good summer.