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11 April 2012

Dear Dr Fletcher,

Thank you for your letter of 26 March about the "HS2 Consultation and Engagement Programme" document which was distributed at the Community Forum on 20 March. I'm sorry that you are unhappy with this document, and that you believe that it is misleading. That was certainly not the intention.

You mention two particular statements: one in relation to the number of responses to the consultation exercise and their role in informing the Secretary of State's decision, and another referring to changes designed to lessen the impact on local communities.

As part of her announcement in January the Secretary of State made clear that the responses to the consultation included strongly held views both in favour and against the scheme. She also said that she viewed those responses as essential in helping her reach a decision. It is this to which the consultation document refers. Given this, and the vocal opposition by those most affected by the proposal, I do not believe that the statement could be misleading. However, I am sorry that you viewed it that way.

On the question of the changes to the scheme in the Chilterns lessening the impact on local communities, again I believe this is a fair statement. Some of the biggest changes made subsequent to the consultation in 2011 have been those in the Chilterns AONB and these now ensure that less than 1.8 miles of route remains visible (at grade, on viaduct or on embankment) at surface level within this landscape. Changes to the alignment have nearly halved the number of dwellings within the AONB originally predicted as being subject to a noticeable noise increase.

In direct response to consultation and local discussions:

- We have altered the alignment of the proposed bored tunnel in relation to local concerns over direct impacts to aquifers. The tunnel has been greatly extended to avoid direct impacts at Amersham, Little Missenden and Hyde Heath and also the park and garden of Shardeloes.



- We have increased the length of the green tunnel at South Heath and also changed its position to avoid the direct impact to the listed building at Hyde Farm.
- We have listened to people at Wendover and have moved and lengthened the proposed green tunnel to reduce impacts further. In addition we have lowered the alignment past Wendover so that the railway sits lower in the landscape in cutting. We have acted in relation to local concerns about the previously indicative Ellesborough Road diversion linking to the A413 and the related stopping-up of Ellesborough Road directly in to Wendover.
- We have also taken onboard very strong concerns relating to the amount of spoil and visual impact that would have resulted as a consequence of the very large and deep cuttings proposed for the consulted route. We have addressed these concerns by making cutting shallower, thereby reducing spoil production. With the surface width of these cuttings also less, we have reduced visual impacts and unnecessary land take and associated surface impacts in terms of landscape and features.

In the specific example you quote, there will be a substantial reduction in the amount of spoil that will need to be removed and disposed as a result of the shallower cutting. This in itself will reduce the impact of the scheme on the local community during construction.

Of course there is also the opportunity to further mitigate the effects through landscaping and detailed design work and the Community Forums will play an important role in informing this process. As such I hope you'll continue to actively participate in these events.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Miranda Carter', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Miranda Carter

Head of Consultation, Community & Stakeholder Engagement