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Draft

HS2 concedes more mitigation measures to Buckinghamshire

A raft of additional mitigation measures and funding to reduce the impacts of High Speed 2 has been secured for Buckinghamshire.

The hard-won concessions came on Wednesday (20 January) in an eleventh hour offer from HS2 Ltd, when Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) was back in front of the Commons HS2 Select Committee.

The County Council, working with district and parish councils, had made submissions to the Select Committee in October, which won mitigation measures for damage and disruption the high-speed rail line is expected to cause.

These included flood alleviation and monitoring measures, rights-of-way changes, school and public transport concessions, a pledge to recycle 95% of construction, demolition and excavation waste, and the removal of two controversial spoil dump sites from the plan.

Since then, said Leader Martin Tett, the County Council had been in tough negotiations with HS2 Ltd to secure measures required to further mitigate the damage and disruption that will be caused by the HS2 project.

Martin said many millions of pounds would have to be earmarked by HS2 to pay for 19 additional assurances to problems the County Council and community partners had raised with the HS2 scheme.

The County Council's complete list of proposed mitigation measures for negotiation was based on the 'Buckinghamshire Blueprint', drawn up with the community and presented to the Government, including personal copies to Prime Minister David Cameron and Chancellor George Osborne.

Martin said October's offer of assurances came after many months of hard-fought negotiations by the County Council.

Now, in addition, it has secured the major financial package, including £1 million for additional local mitigation and community use in the Steeple Claydon and Calvert areas.

The concessions also allow the County Council to put forward an alternative to a controversial 'haul' road for HS2 construction traffic at Great Missenden. At Iver HS2 has agreed to work with other major rail and road schemes to minimise damage and disruption.

One key area could not be agreed, said Martin: the County Council remains convinced that a fully bored tunnel through the Chilterns remains the best solution for Wendover and the AONB, a measure for which the Select Committee is not yet convinced by the evidence.

The Select Committee has asked HS2 to look at extending a 'green tunnel' near Wendover, but Martin said the County Council believed HS2 had not yet adequately met the Select Committee's request.

In particular, he said, the Council did not believe a convincing package of mitigation measures had been proposed to deal with anticipated noise problems for St Mary's Church, The Chiltern Way Federation Wendover Campus School and residents to the north of Wendover.

Martin said: 'While we are obviously disappointed at not yet convincing the Select Committee of the need for a fully bored tunnel through the Chilterns, I do think we have secured some real wins for Bucks.

'There is good news for Great Missenden with the prospect of the haul road being moved and for Steeple Claydon with the removal of the spoil tip and moving of rail sidings, and an extra £1m for the community to spend in the local area. For Iver, the Transport Appraisal begins the job of hopefully bringing some relief from excess traffic.

'Along the route we have made significant gains and I am proud of the way that parish, town, district and county councils have worked together to win these hard-fought concessions.'

Background notes

Details of the final mitigation offer from HS2:

- HS2 has agreed to assess 71 listed road junctions and construction routes up and down the county where the council has either capacity or safety concerns. Where HS2 construction traffic is assessed to have an impact on those junctions then HS2 Ltd will pay for appropriate mitigation, such as temporary junction widening and improvements to junctions with signals, ahead of the main civil engineering works.
- A further contribution of £480,000 has been secured for safety measures along the A4010 (Risborough-Aylesbury road) and A4129 (Risborough-Thame road) where these are to be used as a HS2 construction route.
- The council also expressed concern that the Stoke Mandeville Bypass between the B4443 Lower Road and the A4010 Risborough Road will worsen traffic along the B4443 Lower Road and the Aylesbury Gyratory. HS2 Ltd has now agreed to fund BCC £150,000 toward the cost of the council undertaking transport modelling to establish the design of an extension to the Bypass.
- HS2 Ltd will contribute the full cost of bridging the Aylesbury to Marylebone railway line.
- HS2 Ltd has also agreed to fund £470,000 for a walking and cycling route along the realigned A4010 Stoke Mandeville Bypass.
- The council also asked HS2 Ltd to provide an underpass on the Risborough to Aylesbury line and to secure the Network Rail approvals, which would then allow the council to construct a road, as part of an around Aylesbury network, in the future.
- BCC also asked for funding towards additional CCTV cameras to link to its Automated Traffic Information System (ATIS) to help monitor and manage congestion in urban areas. HS2 Ltd has agreed to make available funding of £300,000.

- The council also requested public access to land in south west Aylesbury in order to meet its aspiration of an Aylesbury Linear Park. A financial contribution of £500,000 has been offered by HS2 Ltd.
- The proposed major Infrastructure Maintenance Depot (IMD) at Steeple Claydon and Calvert is a particular concern for the council. HS2 Ltd recognises that the construction and operation needs to be managed carefully in close consultation with the local councils and the local community. HS2 Ltd has agreed to provide a £1m fund, in addition to agreed mitigation measures for the area.
- The council also raised the proposed increased car parking provision at the IMD and HS2 Ltd has said it will aim to reduce the size of this at the detailed design stage.
- The council also asked for the provision of a surfaced cycle-way at Calvert, which has been agreed.

Two major issues dominated the eleventh-hour negotiations and were particularly tough to reach agreement on:

- The council expressed concern regarding the impacts on Iver village, not only from HS2 but also from other major transport schemes in the area, making even worse the existing Heavy Goods Vehicle congestion. HS2 eventually agreed it would work with the other transport projects and each would make a 'proportionate contribution' towards mitigation measures. These would be based on a 'Transport Appraisal' to be funded by HS2. The County Council believes that an Iver Relief Road may provide the solution and HS2 Ltd has offered to meet up to £1,420,000 of future potential costs.
- Local communities in Great Missenden and Prestwood expressed their concerns to the council about the proposal to provide a haul road for construction traffic from the Link Road roundabout on the A413. The council asked that an alternative haul road be provided further north. HS2 Ltd has agreed to this, subject to the council securing the necessary consents and that any alternative proposal doesn't increase the cost.