

Amersham and Chalfont Community Forum
Minutes of Meeting 19 March

Circulation limited only to those attending as delegates

Attendees Present

Alison Doggett, John Gladwin, Steve Roderick, Les Coles, Alison Darby, Stan Mason, Tony Williams, Les Bray, Deanne DuKhan, Roger Waller, Les Giles, Janet Wheeler(to take minutes), Mark Ladd
5 representatives from HS2 and Suzanne Kinsella, an independent facilitator.
The meeting commenced by a security guard checking on attendees entering!

Introductions

Suzanne Kinsella explained she was an independent facilitator who had been asked by HS2 to chair the meeting.. HS2 team introduced themselves as follows:

- a) Dan Barrett (DB) had worked for HS2 for a year and his role was secretarial, he confirmed that personnel will change as recruitment of HS2 is ongoing!;
- b) Stephen McFarlane (SM) (2 years at HS2) his role is technical reports and why HS2 was here, he worked on the HS2 consultation;
- c) Martin Wells (MW) (first day at HS2) was the community stakeholder manager of the team for HS2 countryside south to work with communities on mitigation. Was a DFT franchise manager for South East Trains dealing with HS1, he would be at the next meeting and so provide a common thread;
- d) Simon White (SW) (6months at HS2) is environment manager for countryside south which covers the route up to the Northants/Warwickshire borders. (4 regions for this, London and Birmingham Metropolitan, South, and North);
- e) Mark Gaby (MG) (leaving soon) is an engineer from Arup who had worked on HS2 for 2.5 years, Arup are not bidding for this section of the route so he would not be at future meetings; ^ engineering firm are currently bidding on the route..

It was pointed out that we expected continuity among HS2 representatives and could not be expected to make contact through community forum phone number as HS2 proposed. Chair agreed that CV's and job descriptions should be provided by HS2 together with an organisation chart.

Community attendees then introduced themselves during which the following points were made

- a) Many community representatives who should be present were not, especially county and district councillors, and many relevant resident and community groups;
- b) We questioned several times whether HS2, who had not listened during the consultation process and to the opinions responded (where the great majority of the responses were wholly against HS2), would listen to the forums. In particular what reassurance could we have that HS2 would listen and give weight to these discussions now?
- c) We were unclear as to the basis of the meeting as HS2 route was not yet established in law, the business and the capacity cases were flawed, the environmental assessment has not been carried out and the consultation has been ignored by HS2 and DFT;
- d) Any responses given by delegates would be on the basis that we did not accept the business case, the environmental case, the capacity arguments and the "solving of the north /south divide" predicated in HS2' s proposal and
- e) Inconsistency of selection of organisations invited (Chesham well off route, Lt Missenden PCC to two meetings etc).

Purposes of the Forum

SM explained CF's were an important process to deal with issues raised at the consultation, more detailed design issues for the railway and for environmental issues emerging from the EIA. CF's were to have dialogue with communities on the issues, reassure them and to come back with mitigation solutions.

SM fully accepted and respected our position on HS2 but they were contractually bound to proceed with HS2.

The reason given for rushing ahead with CF's were that the consultation was now a year ago(!) and local elections prevent meetings in the close period (but no elections in Bucks!)

SW explained that the design process and the environmental impact have to proceed hand in hand to get the project to the hybrid bill stage. In explaining the impact of EIA, he said when problems arose HS2 would explain what was done, how they looked at alternatives and decided if changes to the route could be made. SR asked whether they would listen and if the EIA said something would it happen? TW pointed out the Environmental considerations through the assessment of sustainability was woefully inadequate and the public perceptions of that work was it was rubbish. Why was the route not motorway based and why was the route not tunnelled right through the Chilterns?

It was emphasised that the group needed reassurance that HS2 would be open to the thoughts of the community. If the forum operated in the same fashion as the consultation our views would be ignored once again and so the forum would be a pointless waste of time.

Composition and Timing of the Forum

MW agreed there was a need for continuity in the HS2 team; he will be the lead officer. He accepted the security guard was inappropriate. As for timing he also accepted that the next meeting should be after the BCC summit on 19 April, so in mid May. Bimonthly meetings were broadly proposed and accepted and it was pointed out that much greater notice was needed and so more than one be fixed at a time.

SR pointed out that many on their invitation list were not here and many others should have been invited. It was up to HS2 to make sure the representation was reflective of the community, not just those who had engaged to express their views to HS2.

SM confirmed the forum meeting would be on public record and that the membership should be locally lead. HS2 want the forum to be effective so they would add others so as to be more representative. SK asked HS2 to look at the membership and provide feedback.

As for attendance at the meetings it was agreed the public and the press should be able to attend, but not participate, so the meetings are more accessible.

MW emphasised that continuity was the key for the forum and that the HS2 team should settle down and be stuck with. The Chair should be someone who is local, independent, experienced knows the area well and is professional. It could be shared or rotated.

It was agreed later that an independent facilitator was essential for the next meeting, inter alia to consider and agree terms of reference for the forum.

SM concluded they had received strong feedback from the representatives and made it clear they want to listen to our views and demonstrate they have listened to this first of many meetings.

Communicating with Communities

SM asked how to put out the work of HS2 out to the communities. Initially they should open up to the communities on a wider basis. SM mentioned forum for specific issues, such as carbon footprint and vibration as another suitable subjects. SM and SW repeatedly referred to one on one meetings for affected parties on the determined route (if it goes ahead); these would not be to discuss the EIA.

SR also emphasised that HS2 must provide more printed documentation for the public generally; it was not acceptable to rely on their website

EIA

SR repeated asked whether yes or no we would be able to comment on the scoping report of the EIA. SW replied at length but, after prompting by MW, failed to answer yes or no. They concluded they would need to refer back on this before giving a yes/no answer.

The Consultation on the EIA will be on a draft EIA statement. SW explained that the EIA would be carried out in conjunction with the design work. ML could not understand how this could be if the EIA was to be in any regard an independent assessment of the effect of the determined HS2 route on the environment.

Finally

HS2 said that notes of the meeting should be available at the end of the week.

Proper minutes were not being taken. DB was just listing action points and issues (as he saw them or as prompted or identified by the chair). He had recorded around 8 key points and listed 17 issues. These were photographed by AD on her iphone (but some can hardly be read though there did seem to be some repeated)