

Community Forums are intended to provide an opportunity for local representatives to raise issues of importance to them and to reach consensus on preferred mitigations for HS2 Ltd. Attendance at a Forum does not indicate support by these groups for the scheme.

HS2 Ltd hosts and attends Community Forums, and has undertaken to record and publish issues, actions and requests raised during these events on their website. The matters raised by forum members are their views, and publication by HS2 Ltd should not be construed as acceptance or agreement with the sentiments expressed.

The Central Chilterns Community Forum

5th July 2012, 7.00 – 9.00pm

Great Missenden Memorial Centre

Draft note

Forum attendees

Independent Chair

Representatives of:

- Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society
- Buckinghamshire County Council
- Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum
- Chesham Society
- Chesham Town Council
- Chiltern District Council
- Great Missenden PC
- Great Missenden Parish Revitalisation Group
- Great Missenden Stop HS2
- Little Missenden Action Group
- Little Missenden PC
- Little Kingshill Village Society
- Office of Cheryl Gillan
- Potter Row Action Group
- South Heath HS2 Action Group
- Speen Area Action Group
- Stop HS2
- The Chilterns Conservation Board
- The Chiltern Countryside Group
- The Chiltern Ridges HS2 Action Group (CRAG)
- The Chiltern Society
- The Lee Parish Council

- Residents x 4

Martin Wells, Country South Area Stakeholder Manager – HS2 Ltd.
Simon White, Country South Environment Manager – HS2 Ltd.
Simon Mace, Country South Area Engineer – HS2 Ltd.
Charlotte Brewster, Country South Community & Stakeholder Advisor – HS2 Ltd.

1. Welcome and Introductions

A round robin of introductions took place. Due to the unexpected presence of the Bucks Free Press, the Chair asked attendees if they were content for the reporter to remain. No objections were received. Attendees also requested that an audio recording be made of the meeting. HS2 Ltd clarified that it was against company policy to be recorded at meetings.

2. Meeting Note and Actions

A number of agendas had been received by HS2 Ltd as alternatives to the one circulated. A vote was taken to determine which agenda would be used for the rest of the meeting. The group voted to proceed with the agenda provided to HS2 Ltd via email on the 11th July.

Attendees decided that as this was the first meeting of this particular group, the review of minutes of a previous meeting would not be appropriate. The group therefore voted to disregard this section of the agenda.

3. Presentation of Statement from Community Forum

Steve Roderick gave a presentation about context of the Chilterns AONB . He outlined that the Chilterns were a special area, illustrated by its national designation of AONB and with an allocated conservation board. He requested that the Chilterns Landscape be viewed by HS2 Ltd as one entity and all issues explored collectively. He felt a premium should be placed on the land within this area.

HS2 Ltd clarified that they recognised AONB status of this area and were happy to host a meeting discussing pan-Chilterns issues.

Michael Jepson then provided a statement which the forum requested should be included in all sets of minutes. This included a statement about the impact of the post – consultation changes on the local community. HS2 Ltd clarified that they would be happy to include the opening statement provided and requested further information about the nature of the post-consultation impacts. This statement is included in Appendix B.

Actions

- HS2 Ltd to organise a pan-Chilterns meeting

4. Terms of Reference and Membership of Community Forum

Amendments to the original Terms of Reference suggested by HS2 Ltd were provided. HS2 Ltd confirmed that they were broadly content and expressed the view that it should be possible to reach a mutually acceptable conclusion. HS2 Ltd proposed that discussions about the terms of reference be explored outside of the meeting with a representative of the group. This was agreed.

It was agreed that all those present should be allowed to continue to attend meetings in future.

Action

- Revised terms of reference to be discussed and finalised by next meeting

5. Scheme Development & 6. Community Forum Influence

HS2 Ltd provided an overview of the bilateral meetings which had taken place between themselves and local stakeholders within the Country South area since the first round. HS2 Ltd reiterated their offer of bilateral meetings to all those who wished to discuss in further detail any issues relating to the scheme.

The forum requested that further information should be provided about the content of bilateral meetings in future forums. HS2 Ltd agreed to consider this for future meetings, and whether in future permission to share information could be sought from the third party at the time of the meeting. However, it was noted that some bilaterals could include confidential matters and therefore involve discussions that were not relevant to the Community Forums.

A question was asked about the prospect for significant changes to the alignment of the route. HS2 Ltd clarified that they had been asked to take forward the scheme as outlined by the Secretary of State in her announcement in January. HS2 Ltd stated that some changes may be made as a result of the scheme refinement, including the use of more accurate topographical data that had been collected. However, HS2 Ltd reiterated that they would **not** be anticipating large scale movements of the route.

In answer to a specific question about whether HS2 Ltd would consider a proposition that was being prepared by stakeholders for additional tunnelling in the area at no extra cost, HS2 Ltd confirmed that such a proposal submitted by the community would be considered.

HS2 Ltd were asked from where their information on land ownership would be obtained, HS2 Ltd confirmed that they had information from the Land Registry.

Actions

- HS2 Ltd to provide more information about bilateral meetings at each Community Forum.

Timeline

HS2 Ltd provided an overview of the engagement and design programme which outlined the current focus on the initial preliminary design of the project. This focused on the alignment and the main structures that need to be built in order to make the railway happen such as viaducts, tunnels, cuttings, embankments, stations, depots, bridges, roads and road realignments. HS2 Ltd also stated that details of the scheme design could change throughout the project lifespan; including during and after the hybrid bill phase.

HS2 Ltd also provided a suggested timetable for discussing various issues at Community Forums which would fit with the work being undertaken by HS2 Ltd and would give people the opportunity to feed into that as information became available. Specific engineering and environmental updates were then provided.

The engineering update focussed upon;

- The initial preliminary design phase

- Details of the consultants currently working for HS2 Ltd and work they are carrying out
- Review of baseline engineering information
- Land access negotiations
- A full aerial survey taking place in conjunction with the collection of data from organisations such as the Environment Agency and Highways Agency
- The work of the Professional Service Contractors (PSC's) who are currently looking at rights of way and road alignments

The environmental update focussed upon;

- an update on the draft EIA Scope and Methodology
- Baseline data collection; and,
- Site surveys

Marilyn Fletcher drew the forum's attention to emerging Government thinking around the natural environment. These feature within the Natural Environment and Tourism white papers. It was requested that HS2 Ltd not only explore the direct impact of the route on the countryside, but also the impact on tourism in the area.

A question was asked whether HS2 Ltd were adhering to the ecosystems services methodology. HS2 Ltd responded that they were in the process of collecting information to enable them to create an environmental statement consistent with Department for Transport requirements, but would confirm application of ecosystem services to Hs2.

A question was asked about the baseline data being collected before the appraisal scope and methodology had been finalised. HS2 Ltd explained that the baseline data would need to be collected as a starting point for the assessment and standard approaches to this are being used.

Questions were asked about the ability of forums to influence decision making. HS2 Ltd stated that they were keen that stakeholders used the opportunity to set out the issues in relation to the scheme in such a way that these could be used to inform considerations about the design – examples suggested for this round of forums were rights of way and road realignments. However, it was stressed that, as HS2 Ltd were developing the scheme announced in January, Forums shouldn't expect to be able to influence significant departures from that in terms of, for example, route alignment.

Attendees sought clarification on this point given the earlier statement that HS2 Ltd would be willing to consider a proposal for more tunnelling if it was at no extra cost. HS2 Ltd clarified that they were not looking to make any significant changes to the scheme in this way but would, of course, consider such a proposal should it be received.

Actions

- HS2 Ltd to confirm the position in relation to the application ecosystem services methodology.

7. Issues Identification

A presentation of overarching design issues was provided by Simon Hook which covered key elements the forum wanted included such as the use of fully bored tunnel, low alignment, reduced speed, reduced frequency of train etc. He also read a statement about Chilterns-wide mitigation measures, which he agreed to provide to HS2 Ltd for circulation with the agreed minutes.

Shirley Judges gave a presentation on rights of way across the Chilterns and presented HS2 Ltd with a draft dossier for consideration. A general discussion then ensued regarding practical matters associated with managing the forums such as the issues register and management of the website. Further questions were also posed about the Environmental Impact Assessment scoping and methodology consultation and when responses to the consultation would be available online. HS2 Ltd explained that a final version of the report that took account of the comments received would be available online in the summer. The forum felt it was unacceptable that a more definite date was not available.

It was suggested by the Chair that all presentations to be delivered during meetings should be circulated before the meeting.

It was agreed that the notes of the meeting would identify all those present, and that only the final agreed minutes would be published by HS2 Ltd.

The Forum asked for the name of the group to be changed to “Central Chilterns” and for this to be reflected on the HS2 Ltd website. HS2 Ltd was also asked to start to build a register of key concerns for the forum regarding the route.

Actions

- All anticipated presentations should be circulated to the forum as part of the agenda pack at least two weeks before the date of the meeting.
- Simon Hook to send Chilterns-wide mitigation measures to HS2 Ltd.
- HS2 Ltd to begin to build issues register of key forum concerns regarding the route
- HS2 Ltd to ensure the new forum name is included on HS2 Ltd website
- HS2 Ltd to only include final versions of documentation on HS2 website

8. Identification of Questions for HS2 Ltd

A presentation was given by Marilyn Fletcher which reiterated the importance of the Chilterns AONB to those who use the area recreationally and the impact of HS2 on people’s enjoyment of the area. She commented upon the significant number of viewpoints within the area and asked how HS2 Ltd intended to ameliorate the noise heard at those sites. HS2 Ltd outlined that they were in the process of identifying the location of significant vistas and noise mitigation measures would be explored and developed through the forum.

Attendee expressed concern that the post-consultation changes to the scheme had been detrimental to the Chilterns. Simon White asked for clarification of which particular changes people had in mind, which led to suggestions that he did not fully appreciate peoples’ concerns.

Cllr Seb Berry asked for further information about road closures, namely the B482 – as well as a comprehensive list of all the anticipated road closures as a result of the project. HS2 Ltd outlined that a finalised list would not be available in time for the next meeting, but that they would provide what they could in time for the next meeting.

Actions

- Simon Hook to provide consolidated list of questions to HS2 Ltd
- HS2 Ltd to provide further information about anticipated road closures

9. AOB

The forum requested more flexible meeting times – with the opportunity to run over should the need present itself. HS2 Ltd highlighted how there needed to be consistency along the route and the offer of two hours per meeting remained. Following discussion it was agreed that there should be flexibility should the meeting slightly run over that time, rather than an abrupt finish.

Next meetings – tbc, following identification of a more suitable venue to accommodate the increased numbers of participants.

Appendix A

Grid of over-arching issues and concerns discussed at forum meeting

Road realignments	Noise & Vibration	Rights of way	Infrastructure	Heritage / Cultural	Socioeconomic	Environment
Impact of construction	Impact of Post consultation changes	Impact on bridleways	Route alignment	Impact on Chilterns Gateway Project	Impact on Tourism	Impact on Vistas
Concerns of severance		Impact on Cycle paths	Optimal speed	Impact on Grim's ditch	Impact on Health & Wellbeing	Impact on Habitats
		Impact on Footpaths			Impact on local businesses	AONB status (and value)
		Re-routing of RoW			Compensation	Government commitment

Appendix B

Note for inclusion in all records of the Central Chilterns Community Forum meetings

1. Forum Members are resolutely opposed HS2
2. Consequently, participation in the Community Forum discussions regarding possible mitigation is not to be taken as any agreement to or acceptance by Forum Members of HS2 or of the current HS2 proposals.
3. If, notwithstanding discussions and objections, HS2 is to proceed along the existing proposed route or otherwise through the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, despite its statutory designation as a nationally protected landscape, then mitigation should be to the highest international standards. Mitigation should be particularly concentrated on and addressed to ensuring the greatest possible protection of the Chilterns AONB; and in particular its tranquillity and natural beauty,
4. The most effective and preferred form of mitigation for this section of the route is therefore considered to be a fully bored tunnel throughout the Chilterns AONB.
5. DfT/HS2 Ltd is reminded that in presenting the HS2 proposals for consultation, the budgeted cost for the section of HS2 between Mantles Wood and Wendover was £250-300 million more than that now budgeted cost for the revised, more damaging, proposals, which were announced only after the consultation; and despite this being a nationally protected area of countryside at the heart of the AONB. This expenditure should be reinstated in the budget and applied to further mitigation, including the full tunnelling option, for this area.
6. Presentations at Community Forums should not be taken as final statements on any topic.
7. Community Forum members will not be able to make decisions on any propositions put forward by HS2 Ltd. Proposals will be referred for discussion to the communities and organisations they represent.