

Central Chilterns HS2 Community Compensation Fund

If HS2 goes ahead it will have a damaging effect on local people and local communities. It is already blighting house prices and people are seeing a substantial drop in the value of their homes, if they are able to sell them at all. It will be damaging to the many local businesses that depend on visitors because the area will be less attractive. It will have an adverse effect on the quality of life because of the general degradation of the Misbourne Valley that will result from the construction of HS2 and the unsympathetic treatment of the landscape. Unlike other projects, where the damage caused is to some extent off-set by benefits accruing from the project, HS2 will bring no benefits to the local area.

It is established practice to provide compensation for areas and communities affected by projects. Places affected by 'fracking' have been promised £100,000 each, even though the impacts are supposedly small-scale and temporary. When HS1 was built in Kent there were numerous compensation projects along the route. These included establishing the Singleton Environment Centre and Shorne Wood Visitors Centre; moving and restoring a Victorian gothic water tower; the creation of a multi-user access trail, a Heritage Art Project, hedgerow creation and a Toad Conservancy programme.

HS2 should be accompanied by a Community Compensation Fund for the benefit of people and communities along the route which are affected, directly and indirectly by its construction and operation. Its purpose will be to fund projects aimed at off-setting the adverse impacts of HS2 on local communities. Examples of the sort of projects that could be funded are projects to offset the direct consequences of HS2's construction and operation on South Heath, Hyde Heath and The Lee – see the separate lists – There should also be projects aimed at maintaining Great Missenden's status as a 'gateway for visitors' which was recognised in the draft Environmental Statement. In particular the village and surrounding area attract families, who come to the Dahl Museum and stay to enjoy walks, bike rides and refreshments, and large numbers of cyclists, as individuals, in small groups and as participants in organised events. The Amersham Road Cycling Club is actually based in Great Missenden. Hence the sort of projects to be funded should include those aimed at families with children and cyclists. They should include a Visitors Centre; separate state of the art play areas for small children and older ones including fitness equipment (as in Amersham); off-road multi-access and cycle routes on both sides of the Misbourne Valley; a Misbourne River walk from Mobwell to Chalfont St Giles; and the restoration of the Court House at the George Inn Great Missenden with a view to its use as a community facility of some kind – possibly a museum. This is in addition to plans for wild-life areas. Further ideas will be developed in due course but it is essential that the damage that HS2 will do to the local area and communities is acknowledged and funds put in place for projects to off-set it.

Cllr Shirley Judges on behalf of the Central Chilterns Community Forum
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