

Notes of HS2 Ltd Community Forum meeting at The Library Room, Wendover Library, Tuesday 20th March 2012

HS2 representatives – Mark Bailey (Environment Manager), Miranda Carter (Head of Consultation, Stakeholder and Community Engagement), Neil Cowie (Area Manager), Chris Lees (Arup) and Martin Wells (Community Stakeholder Manager).

Community representatives (about 30) including – Brenda Gover, Michael Jepson, Simon Morris, John Skrimshire, John Gladwin, Chris Richards, Marion Clayton, Windsor Thomas, Tom Harlow (for David Lidington MP), Mike Barton, Barnaby Osborne, Margaret Cole, Jim Conboy, Nick Phillips, Tony Bobroff, Gordon Findlay, Andrew Bard, Alison Doggett, Denise Bolland, Oliver Statham, Colin White, Shirley Judges, Simon Hook, Ruth Mallison, Marilyn Fletcher, Heather Lewis and Sarah Raffety (this may not be a complete list).

Groups known to be present – Great Missenden PC, Little Missenden PC, CRAG, Wendover PC, Wendover Society, Chesham Society, CCB, Wendover HS2 Action Group, HP22 6PN Wendover Action Group, Potter Row Action Group, The Dunsmore Society, Speen Area Action Group, BBOWT, The Chiltern Society and The Lee PC (this may not be a complete list).

1. Mike Beard (Chairman of The Wendover Society) had been approached by HS2 to chair the initial meeting. A number of representatives questioned why and how Mike Beard had been approached. Miranda Carter gave some background – Mike Beard was independent from HS2, he is locally known and respected. Each of these was then subject to question and some discussion and the Forum generally did not accept the reasons given.
2. HS2 confirmed that they would be convening the meetings and will continue to do so. The Forum did not agree a chairman for future meetings and if there was no agreement the Forum may end up with someone from outside the area taking on the role. The Forum felt that throughout the forums the same principles should be applied consistently.
3. HS2 staff introduced themselves and gave job titles (many of which were regarded as confusing) though did not agree to the provision of job descriptions when asked to do so. The Forum was concerned that proper minutes should be produced within a set timescale. The Forum agreed that draft minutes would be produced within two weeks of a meeting and circulated. HS2 (Martin Wells) agreed to this. However, there was concern that proper contact details were not available for either attendees or HS2 staff.
4. A question was asked about the circulation of minutes – this should be done electronically and in paper form for those without access to the internet. HS2 agreed to circulate electronically, though it seems there was no agreement on hard copies of minutes.
5. The Forum was concerned about continuity of HS2 staff attending future meetings. Mark Bailey, Martin Wells and Neil Cowie confirmed that they would attend all meetings. The Forum asked for an organisational chart with proper contact details.
6. HS2 were asked what powers they have to report the outcomes of the Forum to DfT and Secretary of State and what would the reporting lines be? No clear answer was given to this.

7. There was concern from some that members of the Forum were fighting amongst themselves. Though we may not all agree with the way things are done we have to work together.
8. The Forum agreed that the meeting would close at 9.15 (despite this it did not finish until after 9.30 without concluding the business on the agenda).
9. The Forum proposed, and it was agreed, that there should be a single Forum for the Chilterns because it was ludicrous that the AONB had been split into two sections. HS2 agreed to look into this and would approach the Chalfonts, Amersham and Little Missenden Community Forum. It was suggested that although meetings would be large it is quite easy to split into smaller groups for more detailed discussions which can then be reported back via plenary sessions.
10. The Forum proposed, and it was agreed, that someone independent (with environmental knowledge) should be appointed to take full and proper minutes. HS2 agreed to look into this for the next meeting.
11. There followed another discussion about who should be chairman, some felt that it should be someone independent and that it should be voted on. This was countered by a number who said that they were unhappy about making decisions without their elected representatives being present (County and District Councillors). The issue was then parked.
12. Mike Beard commented that we had all made representations to HS2 and that he had known a number of the HS2 staff present for some while and didn't think that there were any hidden agendas within HS2, it was more likely that such agendas were within DfT.
13. Miranda Carter gave some context to the way HS2 Ltd would be taking forward the project. They are working on the details of route and its design. The route would be split into 5 areas, each of which would have: an area manager; an environmental manager; an engineer and a stakeholder manager (who it was claimed would work on behalf of the Forums).
14. The Forum agreed that the delineation of boundaries was important and that representatives from adjoining areas should be invited to each meeting.
15. Miranda Carter then started to repeat some of the information from the 'HS2 Consultation and Engagement Programme' document. Concerns were raised about the fact that 91% of responses to the consultation had been ignored and that changes had been made in the area which were more environmentally damaging not less. Miranda Carter agreed to circulate a note of what she was saying, but stated that the language would not necessarily be the same.
16. Apparently a budget of £500m exists for mitigation for the whole route. Bunds and barriers are part of design so don't eat into this pot. There was some confusion over whether the Forum would be able to influence the design because HS2 stated that the Forum would be looking at the community issues.
17. Compensation would be within the scope of the Forum.
18. A question was asked about the funding for the forums – no clear answer was given though most costs would be staff time. Apparently not all stakeholder managers are in post yet.
19. Any comments made will be 'filtered' by HS2.

20. There were some discussions about specific issues related to mitigation (land management, land acquisition, offsetting, woodland management and hedgerow restoration for example) though these would be re-visited at later meetings.
21. Mark Bailey stated that it would be difficult to offset the loss of ancient woodland. He had raised some of the issues that would be open for discussion at later meetings and felt that these were the things that he wanted to get out of the meetings.
22. A number of people felt that the Forum was getting into elements of detail when it was not appropriate to do so. However, HS2 said that issues raised would be talked about by HS2 who would be careful to be consistent throughout the route.
23. There was a discussion about the CCB's involvement in the other forums. A question was asked about whether the CCB had been invited to attend the Environment and Planning Forums. CW stated that he was not aware of any invite, dates of meetings or agendas. Mark Bailey said that Alison Monroe had written to Steve Rodrick on the issue of the Planning Forum. The Forum proposed, and it was agreed, that the CCB should be invited to both the Environment and Planning Forums.
24. BBOWT raised a similar issue about engagement with the Environment Forum as they had particular expertise. HS2 (Mark Bailey) said that they would look for bi-lateral meetings with interested parties when issues of specific detail would be discussed. This immediately raised concerns about how such meetings would be recorded and reported back. HS2 (Mark Bailey) said that letters of invitation had been sent to BBOWT (which had not been seen by Heather Lewis) and it was agreed that the letters would be sent again. HS2 stated that bi-lateral meetings are recorded and it would be up to the third party to circulate notes.
25. The scope of the Forum was discussed in connection with bunds and the possibility of a tunnel under the whole of the Chilterns. HS2 (Miranda Carter) confirmed that both issues would be within the scope of the Forum. It was noted that the Forum could put the view that a complete tunnel should be put forward and this would then be taken away and fed through to the Secretary of State.
26. A brief discussion took place about how the £500m mitigation fund would be allocated as there would be so many calls on the pot. It seems that all bids would go to the Secretary of State. There was more confusion over the reporting lines and who would be recommending what to whom.
27. The £200m cost savings arising from changes to the route in the Chilterns were the subject of some discussion and HS2 was asked to apologise for the incorrect statement about changes being made 'all designed to lessen its impacts on local communities and the environment'. No commitment was given on this issue.
28. Membership of the Forum was discussed. The Forum felt it would be appropriate to bring other people in if needed and was concerned about bi-lateral meetings as these would not be transparent.
29. Councils have yet to decide how to service the Forum. AVDC have decided that Councillors should attend. It may be that a senior officer would also attend to represent a number of Councils and then report back. Some felt that it would be better to have a single representative from each organisation who could then feed back.
30. The Forum suggested that video recording should take place to allow video conferencing for those not able to attend.
31. The Forum considered that the Forum should include a number of schools as school catchment areas would be cut. It was also suggested that District Councillors along the route should be invited as they are elected representatives. Mike Beard felt that

this would mean that there would be too many people at the Forum. This was not well received and it was said that it was for HS2 to manage the meetings and to get it right.

32. Businesses also ought to be represented.
33. HS2 recognise that there may be a large group and that it won't be possible to address all issues at each meeting. They are still working on the details of the route and structures (Neil Cowie said this). It would be necessary to agree issues for meetings in advance and that some may have to be visited at a later date. In such cases voting may have to take place.
34. The Forum agreed that all should be able to feed into what issues should be discussed and such information should be available in advance.
35. A question was asked about what influence the Forum would have, it all appeared to be a box ticking exercise (to conform to Aarhus convention). Mike Beard said that the Forum should have some faith. Miranda Carter responded that the Forums are being held so that HS2 can work with those that have an interest and so that feedback can be given.
36. Meetings will take place about every 2 months and will, according to HS2 affect the design and influence the outcome.