

CHILTERN COUNTRYSIDE GROUP

'Preserving the peace of the Chilterns'

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Miranda Carter, HS2 Ltd
Head of Consultation, Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Dear Ms Carter,

Thank you for replying to our letter of 26 March. We note the contents of your response (11 April).

1. In our 26 March letter we commented on a statement in a key document "HS2 Consultation and Engagement" which we believe is highly misleading:

"As a direct result of the consultation several important changes have been made to the London to West Midlands route, all designed to lessen its impacts on local communities and the environment."

The changes following the Consultation have not, we believe, all been designed to lessen impacts on communities.

In your response you have cited places in the Chilterns where you state improvements have been made by HS2 Ltd to the recommended route. However the route through the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is more than 20kms long. Although there are communities whose impacts have apparently been reduced, we do not believe the changes announced in January will reduce impacts on affected communities in the heart of the AONB. We believe for some communities they have been made worse. This was described in our 26 March letter and we will say more on this in due course.

2. No Reference to Visitors to the Chilterns AONB

To date – as far as we are aware - you have only referred in your plans to consideration of the scheme's impact on communities. You have made no reference to the importance of mitigating HS2's impact on visitors to the AONB.

There are 55 million leisure visits to the Chilterns every year making this one of the most popular protected landscapes in the world (Chilterns Conservation Board Management Plan). With respect, therefore, we would draw your attention to the following:

- Increasing the public's understanding and enjoyment of the AONB's special qualities is a fundamental role of the Conservation Board (Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 s87).

- The Government – and thus HS2 Ltd - has a duty towards the AONB (Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 s85).
- The AONB's role as land where visitors can enjoy the natural beauty of the landscape, including its peace and tranquillity, is described in the Chilterns Conservation Board's Management Plan. This document is embedded in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (s89).
- It is important to reflect in mitigation that the Chilterns AONB is a national - not a local - resource.

As you saw at the Great Missenden, South Heath and Wendover Community Forum, 100% of the community representatives present voted that the Chilterns Conservation Board sit on both the Planning and Environmental Forums in addition to the Community Forum. We understand the Board had not been formally invited to be members of either of these Forums. Surely the Board is the organisation best placed to assess the impact of the recommended route on the public to whom it has a duty in law (Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 s87)? Please can you give us your assurance that the Chilterns Conservation Board will sit on the Environment and Planning Forums?

In addition, local organisations and communities play a key role in working with the Conservation Board on matters which affect visitor enjoyment. Given this, we would expect HS2 Ltd to indicate to the Chiltern Countryside Group and other stakeholders that it recognises and is taking into full account the importance of visitors to the AONB when considering mitigating the scheme's impact.

Finally, how has HS2 Ltd considered by what means the route will be mitigated to enable visitors to continue to enjoy the parts of the affected AONB?

Yours sincerely,

Marilyn Fletcher B.Sc. Ph.D.

On behalf of the Steering Group, Chiltern Countryside Group

cc. David Lidington MP
 Cheryl Gillan MP
 Alison Munro HS2 Ltd
 Mark Bailey HS2 Ltd
 Martin Wells HS2 Ltd
 Neil Cowie HS2 Ltd
 Steve Rodrick Chilterns Conservation Board
 Cllr Martin Tett Buckinghamshire County Council
 Cllr Nick Rose Chiltern District Council
 Cllr Seb Berry Chiltern District Council
 Cllr Peter Jones Chiltern District Council
 Cllr John Cartwright Aylesbury Vale District Council
 Cllr Chris Richards Aylesbury Vale District Council
 Great Missenden Parish Council
 Representatives of Chilterns Action Groups