

CHILTERN COUNTRYSIDE GROUP

'Preserving the peace of the Chilterns'

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Miranda Carter, HS2 Ltd
Head of Consultation and Stakeholder Liaison

Dear Ms Carter,

I attended the Community Forum for Great Missenden, South Heath and Wendover at Wendover Library on 20 March on behalf of the Chiltern Countryside Group.

At the meeting we were provided with a key document entitled "HS2 Consultation and Engagement Programme". I assume - as HS2 Ltd's Head of Consultation and Stakeholder Liaison - you are responsible for its publication? I am writing to you, on behalf of the CCG, with some of our concerns.

I have now had the opportunity to read the document. It is clearly aimed at communities with whom you wish to engage that are affected by the proposed high speed line.

It was pointed out at the meeting that there are two very misleading statements in the Introduction to the document. The CCG would like to place on record the concerns raised by the forum so that our elected representatives and the other Community Fora between London and Birmingham are kept informed.

The Introduction to the HS2 document says:

"Nearly 55,000 responses were submitted to the consultation, which were essential in helping the Transport Secretary arrive at her decision. 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."

1. Lack of Transparency

As you know, the vast majority of respondents to the Consultation were both against the HS2 scheme and against the route. There are no statements to this effect to caveat the first sentence cited above.

Given this, the Introduction to the key document is not transparent.

The first sentence cited above actually gives the impression that the majority of the Consultation responses were supportive of the proposals.

Can you please explain why you have done this?

2. Misleading

The cutting between South Heath and Hunt's Green has been made shallower by 7-8 metres than in the February 2011 Consultation design. In places the cutting is now planned to be only 2-3 metres deep.

HS2 Ltd plans to construct false cuttings where the total depth of the 'Deep Cutting' will be 8 metres (FOI11-375). Although the Government has said the bunds would be constructed so as they would be blended into the landscape, we believe that - in practice - this may be very difficult to achieve without marked deterioration of the landscape. If this is so, this is a serious consideration in an area which has been designated in law as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

In addition, the shallower cutting has resulted in Leather Lane – a historic landscape feature of the Chilterns AONB – being diverted from its ancient pathway. Instead of being sunken it will be raised on embankment. In addition, the grubbing up of hedgerows along the lane will result in a severe local loss in biodiversity afforded by the hedgerows.

Given this, the changes that have been made to the London to West Midlands route have not all been designed to lessen impacts on local communities and the environment. In the heart of the AONB the impacts are actually worse as a result of the Consultation. Thus the second sentence cited above is - at best – highly misleading.

Do you not agree that it makes a poor beginning to engagement at Community Fora through HS2 Ltd issuing a key document in which the information provided cannot be substantiated?

We look forward to your early reply.

Yours sincerely,

Marilyn Fletcher B.Sc. Ph.D.

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, Colin White Chilterns Conservation Board, Cllr Martin Tett Bucks BCC, Cllr Nick Rose Chiltern DC, Cllr John Cartwright AVDC, Cllr Seb Berry CDC, Cllr Peter Jones CDC, Cllr Chris Richards AVDC; Sarah Rafferty, Alison Doggett Chiltern Society, John Gladwin Chiltern Society, Simon Morris CRAG, Michael Jepson CRAG, Brenda Gover Great Missenden Parish Council, Shirley Judges Great Missenden Parish Council, Marion Clayton Wendover Action Group, Mark Ladd Great Missenden Stop HS2, Mike Beard Wendover Society, John Skrimshire Great Missenden Parish Revitalisation Group, Simon Hook South Heath Action Group, Jim Conboy Chesham Society.