

## **Notes on meeting of Community Forum at Wendover Library on 20th March 2012**

Some representatives had agreed to meet beforehand and decide where feasible on a common approach. The main point was concern that this meeting was premature and that certain representatives would not be present as HS2 Ltd had declined to postpone the meeting until after the 19<sup>th</sup> April Summit meeting

After we had arrived 'signed in' and sat in a circle, it was not clear who headed the meeting. Then Michael Beard from Wendover Society announced that he had been asked to chair the meeting. On being questioned about this, he confirmed that this had been at request of HS2Ltd. Many people objected and as a result he was largely unable to chair the meeting effectively, as many members did not accept his authority as such. In consequence the agenda set down by HS2 never really proceeded and the rest of the meeting tended to have to be 'ad hoc' based on the next remark.

The following emerged however at some point in the evening

1. The question of the chairman, including the possibility we or HS2 finding an acceptable completely independent chairman, was left open. It was noted that we require full minutes to be prepared and circulated within a week, or 14 days at the latest. HS2 agreed to provide a suitable minute taker for the next meetings preferably with some understanding of the AONB. The HS2 rep, Martin Wells, said he would take notes of this meeting which he kept writing on a board so he was unable also to take proper minutes. We agreed that others, including Colin White of CCB, would make their own notes to ensure that the important decisions were recorded. Minutes are to be subject to approval at the next meeting
2. HS2 Team present
  - a. Miranda Carter, Head of Consultation and Stakeholder and Community Engagement
  - b. Martin Wells, Community Stakeholder Manager
  - c. Mark Bailey, Environmental Manager for the Section (One of 3 including Simon White, for the section)
  - d. Neil Cowie, HS2 Area manager (will attend all our CF meetings for continuity purposes)
  - e. Chris Lees, from Arup (one meeting only and then an Engineering member of HS2-Simon Mace?)
3. Miranda Carter indicated that her role is Consultations – property blight and environmental issues , Community Forums, HS2 Stakeholder Manager and liaison and Stakeholder engagement including the 'Y' stakeholders
4. It was emphasised that we needed continuity of representation from HS2 and not different people each time (except when specific subjects needed to be covered by an additional representative e.g Engineering) We asked for an organisational chart to be sent out showing the whole of HS2 and respective responsibilities and authorities, so we could see where everyone fitted in and their respective status.
5. It was clear that there was a large degree of resentment and scepticism from many present, largely as a result of the failure to take into account the consultation responses, particularly in the AONB. HS2 had handed out a document on the Consultation and Engagement programme and reference was made to the Introduction section stating that '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*' ( italics added). it was pointed out that, in relation to the AONB a protected area, the exact reverse was the case and that '£200mill' (in fact to be corrected to up to £300mill) had been taken out of and away from the AONB cost and the change had all worsened the impact in this area, despite its special protection \*\*.

6. HS2 indicated that £500mill was available along the line for mitigation ( clarified also that bunds are part of engineering design and not mitigation costs) but we added that so far as the AONB area was concerned, the figure on which they had consulted, but then removed from the cost, post consultation, for cost saving, not mitigation purposes, should be restored and made available for mitigation in the AONB \*\*
7. It was emphasised that, in addition to the Community Forums\*, there would be Planning Forums, with LA officers etc and Environmental Forums, with specific stakeholder members In both respects, it was emphasised that Chiltern Conservation Board should be included as one of the bodies on those forums and this was accepted. BBOWT also asked for representation but HS2 indicated that the WLTs had been invited and would be involved in direct bilateral meetings to discuss their specific issues. We asked that the minutes of the forums and meetings should be made available and circulated and HS2 agreed to do this provided that, in each case, the other parties involved did not object
8. There was discussion on the range and boundaries of the Forums and on membership. Many considered that it should embrace the AONB as a whole but with Wendover included, even though part of Wendover was not in the AONB, so best to indicate all this as the Chilterns Area forum. This had general support because the special position of AONB was important and had been ignored. However it also meant that the size of the forum could be somewhat unwieldy and, judging by the problems, issues and arguments at this meeting, it might be unable to deal properly with the issues within the larger area. Either way, the members or areas covered need to be reviewed e g Little Missenden, within this forum. A suggestion that in future only one rep should attend from each group was turned down on the basis that this was too simplistic and would exclude the input of experts from the groups contributing Also other bodies needed to be included, including business association representation and schools and educational establishments, particularly those whose catchment areas would be affected. This is an east /west problem particularly where the line cuts across communities and not just north/ south It was proposed however that the next meeting be a joint meeting with the Amersham forum to discuss this and how local issues could still be dealt with and that perhaps this could be at the Chiltern DC offices and this had general approval. The forum could in any event liaise with adjoining forums and joint attendance should be permitted. The question of inviting the public and press was not raised but noted that other forums had decided to include both
9. Miranda Carter indicated that purposes of forum was to discuss and advise on community issues affected by HS2 including mitigation and not individual personal property etc issues. However compensation principles and issues generally were within its scope The question of the HS2 project itself and challenging that project (which she classed as Plan A) were not matters for the Forum These are to be taken up elsewhere as appropriate but community and mitigation issues were what she indicated as Plan B and these were all within its scope and that it would be up to the forum to decide what issues were important and which need to be identified and examined. We raised the question of discussion and investigation of a

- tunnel under the whole of AONB and Wendover and it was confirmed that this was a proper Forum subject and was what she described as Plan C and as within Plan B issues. We could therefore discuss and put forward views and suggestions and these would be taken up
10. She emphasised that any decision was a matter for the S of S for Transport but, on being pressed, she confirmed that HS2 Ltd could and would make recommendations to S of S where appropriate. It was suggested that the AONB and Wendover tunnel should be the first issue to be examined since, if that was agreed then many of the other mitigation issues e.g. diversions, footpaths, new roads, etc. would fall away. Clearly however we would also need consider these other mitigation measures separately even if pressing for the tunnel option. She also confirmed that, if there were legal proceedings, whilst the legal issues involved would not be discussed, any community issues affected or covered within the range of any matter the subject of legal proceedings were nevertheless not excluded from forum discussion. In response to a question of whether we were just going through the motions again, she said that the Forums had been set up in good faith to get feedback for the local communities to input solutions which would be 'filtered' through the system for action. However scepticism remained paramount – and accounted largely for the strained atmosphere of the meeting and high feelings expressed- especially in relation to the significantly worsened effects of the post consultation changes, and the substantially reduced budget, in relation to what is supposed to be a specially protected area and hopefully this message and the shoddy treatment of the AONB got through to HS2 Ltd
11. Members present (two had left by then and would have to agree separately for their details) all agreed to give their contact details and that these should be circulated to all attending so that we could arrange informal meetings, as appropriate, between the forum meetings and mutually circulate information. HS2 Ltd is to circulate those details

Note\*\* HS2 actually say " this section would cost £1.86 bn to construct, around £250m to £300m less than the consultation route, largely due to eliminating the section of deep retained cutting ..... and avoiding unnecessarily deep cuttings north of South Heath green tunnel." So very clearly, on their own admission, they have taken away £250-300mill from the protected AONB post consultation and these changes are very clearly a major exception to the statement that the changes were 'all' designed to 'lessen the impact' of the route in this area

\* I have used forums as plural since I dislike the word fora

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