

HS2 Compensation and Mitigation Forum

My Notes of Meeting on 13 September 2012 at Portcullis house

Present :

Andrea Leadsom MP Chair; Christopher Pincher MP; Cheryl Gillan MP; Mark Pausey MP;

Miranda Carter HS2;

Deanne DuKhan; Peter Jones; Shirley Judges; Dr.Dan Mitchell; Stan Mason; Mark Ladd; Peter Cuming

Sundry Parliamentary PA's and others

Andrea Leadsom (AL) introduced the meeting as being the Forum's opportunity to hear how the community Forums (CFs) are progressing

Deanne Dukhan (DD) opened by stating it is increasingly clear that problems were occurring in the CFs and there was a pattern of problems arising throughout the CFs on the route such that HS2 are failing to fulfil their own terms of reference. The pattern was similar to the consultation in that there was little or no dialogue

Peter Jones said at the outset that his CF considered that there was a basic and possibly fatal contradiction that without a full Environmental Impact Assessment which has not been done, mitigation measures were difficult to consider meaningfully.

Peter Jones went on to list problems experienced by Euston CFs including security on the door (preventing a lady who was to lose her home attending, Frank Dobson MP and others had to intervene to allow access); minutes were not taken; the chair supposedly independent disclosed that she had worked for HS2 and used the terms we (HS2)and you (CF's); the mitigation budget was not known (even by Alison Munro who was present); the terms of reference produced by HS2 were unanimously rejected and revised ones were prepared by the CF to enable an adequate and timely flow of information to operate (the work involved required a technical independent secretariat, minutes were late, inadequate and self serving). HS2 rejected these terms of reference so Euston CF considered they were constructively dismissed.

Miranda Carter asked to speak. She stated that access to CFs was limited to manage the meetings better. Peter Jones replied that according to HS2's own literature the CFs were described as "community led" whereas this was exclusive and imposed by HS2 not sought by the community.

Shirley Judges opened by questioning whether HS2 had done as well as possible on mitigation; a long list of concerns were put forward by the CF for response; the CF opinion was that HS2 had shifted away from their own terms of reference for CF putting forward suggestions for mitigation as HS2 had spent ¾ of time allotted for the CF speaking and presenting, so limiting any chance of creating a dialogue on mitigation issues; HS2 also gave the impression they were just going through the motions; it had been agreed by the CF that CF would produce the agenda for future meetings but HS2 have just issued their agenda as a "standard" for all CF's (a standard agenda was wholly inappropriate for differing local issues that would be raised); HS2 were unwilling to circulate papers in advance so sensible dialogue could take place; her minute experience was the same a Euston; there was a lack of responsiveness and not answering questions by HS2 or, if there were any, they would be "cannot do it" or "because it has been decided", so closing down discussion.

Dr Dan Mitchell stated he represented some 30 groups and so had attended many CFs and his experience was the same. These included problems over minutes (at one meeting he had to take over the chair and he insisted that the minutes were read over every 20 minutes to ensure

agreement); being lectured to by HS2 (at the first CF where 20 people with over 500 years of professional experience attended was way over the experience of HS2); inexperience of engineers who did not know how to calculate the land use required for the railway and for its construction; locations of sidings and construction sites, announced to Warwickshire CC without consultation, were wholly inappropriate and better sites were advised to HS by the CF; complaints over lack of knowledge and rudeness of HS2 staff to be removed from job; land access letters wholly inappropriate and heavy handed with no reference to opportunity for landowners to refuse; compensation should be agreed as a principle before any engineering project is planned; lack of knowledge over substations for electricity supply and boom tubes for tunnels (size changed in CF). He also pointed out that HS2 must always refer to "if HS2 is built" not "when" as contracts have not been signed. This was agreed by all.

Cheryl Gillan then stated that properly recorded minutes have to be taken and made available.

Andrea Leadsom then summarised that there had been a clear explanation of the problems of the CF's, this had been a pretty poor feedback so far and there were clear points for HS2 to take away. She said that the minutes of the CFs would be taken into account in the hybrid bill process.

Miranda Carter for HS2 recognised there were issues about the attendance and minutes of the CF's were an important part of the process "which is why HS2 had used the flip charts to list action points." She then said that some CF's welcomed the presentations by HS2 and that similar information should be provided to all CF's. After the November series HS2 were going to consider whether the CFs dialogue was working and whether they should rethink how to go forward.

When Andrea Leadsom asked if there was a budget for mitigation and compensation, Miranda Carter said there was some mitigation built in to the costs. There was also £250 million set aside for mitigation.

When asked how HS2 received positive feedback from the CFs, Miranda Carter said it was from some participants talking to after the CFs were over.

Cheryl Gillan stated that informal discussions were unsatisfactory and this was not proper feedback. Minutes are essential. If HS2 was to go ahead it was essential that HS2 gain and command the confidence of communities on the route and there is the Y to come. The level of concern is obviously high and the intellect of the communities involved is high. She also asked if the mitigation budget, limited to £250 million, prevented HS2 from considering mitigation proposals.

Miranda Carter stated there were only 3 representatives from CF's present but Dan Mitchell pointed out that he represented 30 action groups in the northern area, Shirley Judges represented the whole of the Chilterns area (4 CFs) Peter Jones said that over the three Camden CF's hundreds of thousands of people were affected and Deanne Dukhan said she as AGAHST represented over 70 action groups.

Christopher Pincher raised the problem that if the route was not shifted, small communities would be isolated and relocation of such as hamlets that had to be rehoused should be relocated in total .

Andrea Leadsom then summed up that the views of a number of groups and CF's had been heard, so it was essential that HS2 made the CFs more viable to make the process as painless as possible. HS2 have to think how to make CFs more effective. Also there were major problems of the compensation schemes that must be heard and there is the Y to come.