

Note of meeting: High Speed 2 – Environment Round Table

Date: 28 June 2012 - 11:30 – 13:00

Location: Department for Transport

Attendees:

Name	Title	Organisation
Stephen Joseph	Chief Executive	Campaign for Better Transport
Ralph Smyth	Senior Transport Campaigner	CPRE
Howard Davies	CEO	National Association of AONBs
Peter Nixon	Director of Conservation	National Trust
Eugene Suggett	Senior Policy Officer	Ramblers Association
Henry Russell	Chair, Spatial Planning Advocacy	Heritage Alliance
Chris Crean	Campaigns Co-ordinator	Friends of the Earth
Dr Douglas Parr	Policy Director	Greenpeace
Stephen Trotter	CEO, Warks Wildlife Trust	The Wildlife Trusts
Dr Sue Armstrong – Brown	Head of Conservation Policy	RSPB
Christina Byrne	National Case Officer	Woodland Trust
Eamon Lally	Transport Team	LGA
Rt Hon Justine Greening MP	Secretary of State for Transport	DfT
Steve Gooding	Director-General, Domestic	DfT
Martin Capstick	Director, HS2	DfT
Peter Miller	Head of Environment	HS2 Ltd
Adam McIntee	Environment Policy Adviser	DfT
Steve Gooding	Director-General, Domestic	DfT
Lucy Fellowes	Head, Strategy Unit	DfT
Mark Norton	HS2 Environmental Policy Lead	DfT

Key Action Summary:

- HS2 Ltd will establish a regular meeting with environmental groups that will work in parallel with the environment forum for statutory bodies.
Action: Peter Miller
- HS2 Ltd will establish mechanisms for environmental groups to input into the detailed design later on in the project. **Action: Peter Miller**
- The Secretary of State will examine in more detail the scope for sharing information early on a confidential basis. This would need to balance the risk of undue blight with the desire to get the best possible information upon which to make decisions. **Action: Adam McIntee/SoS**
- HS2 Ltd to consider in more detail how HS2 might identify and act upon environmental opportunities. **Action: Peter Miller**
- Draft terms of reference for this forum in consultation with attendees.
Action: Adam McIntee

- To provide a high level timeline so that attendees can plan activities and have advance notice of when their input might be needed. **(Action: Adam McIntee)**
- To circulate draft minutes of this meeting for comment by attendees. **Action: Adam McIntee**
- To arrange the date for the next meeting. **Action: Adam McIntee**

Agenda Item 1 – HS2 and the wider Transport Strategy

- **Steve Gooding (SG)** opened the meeting and noted that some of the groups present wanted more visibility on how HS2 fitted into a broader transport strategy. **SG** said that **Laura Fellowes (LF)** will be writing such a strategy, and it will be helpful to hear the groups' views on what they think that document needs to cover.
- **LF** said that DfT is committed to producing a strategy document by the end of the year. This will build on work that has already been done internally. DfT want a document that sets a clear and coherent vision for the transport network that people understand. **LF** asked the group if they had any thoughts they wished to share on this.
- **Ralph Smyth (RS)** from the **CPRE** said the approach is perhaps more important than the individual issues. In line with the definition of Sustainable Development in the NPPF, DfT needs to seek solutions that further the three dimensions jointly and simultaneously. The proposed focus on 'transport users' risks leaving out natural environment issues. In terms of amount of detail, the strategy needs to be sufficient to enable conflicts and synergies to be identified between transport and other policy areas. There is also a need to ensure that, with regional strategies being abolished, there is enough detail for local authorities be able to assess the strategic case of their schemes..
- **Eamon Lally (EL)** from the **LGA** suggested that local authorities should be quite heavily involved at an early stage in the development of the strategy, given the move towards devolution in transport decision making.
- **Stephen Joseph (SJ)** from the **CBT** said that the environment and carbon should not be considered as the same issue. He said that importance must be placed on broader quality of life issues such as landscape and biodiversity. Strategies tend to think about trade offs between the environment and economic growth. Instead, we need to be thinking about smart growth, rather than just growth.
- **SJ** said that greater clarity is needed about when Government might intervene in issues, and offered to share the CPRE's work on the 'ladder of interventions.' He made the point that this should be a Government transport strategy and not just a DfT transport strategy. Other Departments often do not give enough thought to the impact of their policies on the

transport network. **Peter Nixon (PN)** of the NT supported this view, adding that the DfT strategy is an opportunity to demonstrate that early engagement with environment stakeholders improves design.

- **Dr Douglas Parr (DP), Greenpeace**, said that the idea of a transport strategy was perhaps not right. What is actually needed is a connectivity and access strategy. This must be cross-departmental and seeking to meet needs rather than just to move more people and goods around the country.
- **Stephen Trotter (ST) from the Wildlife Trusts** mentioned the “3 strands” of sustainable development and said that the strategy should embrace valuing the natural environment in the metrics for scheme evaluation. **Howard Davies (HD)** from the **AAONB** said the current system of valuation needs to be updated. **Henry Russell (HR)** from the **Heritage Alliance** said that there need not be a tension between environment and economic factors.
- **SG** said that the Department was very aware of the need to balance environmental and economic factors, especially when trying to attract international investment.

Agenda Item 3 – Approach to Future engagement on HS2 environmental issues

(The Secretary of State (Justine Greening) arrived and took over the Chair from SG)

- **Justine Greening (JG)** welcomed attendees to the first meeting of the round table. She reiterated her commitment to a sustainable design for HS2 and said that she saw regular contact with environmental organisations as important going forward. **JG** said she hopes to organise a number of these meetings with some regularity.
- **JG** said that this is the first time a new national railway line has been built in a long time. And when people look back at this one, she wants people to be proud of how we did it, not just what we did.
- **Stephen Joseph** asked **JG** about the overall strategy context for HS2. He said that were 4 key points. He thought a positive environmental case should be made for HS2, and that HS2 should seek social and economic gains jointly and simultaneously. He said we should not just look at mitigation but also at exploiting opportunities for positive environmental outcomes. He said the Right Lines Charter discussed this in more detail. Another issue is station location and how to make the most of urban regeneration opportunities.
- **Stephen Joseph** added that there is a need to be ambitious and make sure HS2 has a good design, and that the SofS’s recent comments in the Telegraph were welcome.

- **JG** said that one of the key challenges is ensuring that the transport network has enough capacity. This does not mean just building more infrastructure, but also making more efficient use of what we already have and encouraging “re-modding”. She said that freight is often underestimated, and that she was aware the freight industry were keen to move more from road to rail if the right opportunities were there.
- **JG** said that she had seen instances in the past where there was initial local opposition to transport schemes that eventually go on to become a key part of the area. She said she wants to deliver a project that people have a real sense of ownership over and feel proud of.
- **Stephen Joseph** said that the CBT, RSPB and CPRE are involved in some transport modelling work on HS2 and early results suggest that the numbers look quite positive and that it was possible that the potential for releasing more capacity on freight was underestimated. He said he would be happy to share this information with the Department in due course.
- **Ralph Smyth** said that attractive design should be valued and this could be challenging, particularly in relation to aesthetics of structures and the natural environment. It can be difficult over a 60 year appraisal period in working out the precise benefits as they may vary, for example in the 1960s there was a desire to demolish St Pancras as it was thought then to be ugly. **JG** said that she recognised that the Department has historically perhaps been too focused on transport and business. She said that quality of life is also an important factor.
- **Peter Miller** from HS2 Ltd (PM) said that HS2 Ltd would welcome more structured engagement with all present. One practical step would be to have a regular meeting with all of the groups present that could work in parallel with the current statutory environment forum. **ACTION: (Peter Miller)**
- **Peter Miller** said that he needed to be clear about where we are in the design process. At the moment we are at Environmental Impact Assessment phase. The detailed design will come later post Royal Assent and HS2 Ltd need to find mechanisms to see how the groups present could contribute to that detailed design process, which might be a Design Panel. **(Action: Peter Miller)** **JG** added that there is also the whole EIA process and hybrid Bill process which will all provide opportunities to influence the design.
- **Peter Miller** added that it is very much in HS2 Ltd’s interest to seek the advice and expertise of environmental groups who can help them to understand the effects and get the design right first time.
- **Eamonn Lally** said that it was very important that these discussions take place with reference to costs, as ultimately the level of mitigation will depend on this.

- **Peter Miller** said that HS2 Ltd have been quite plain about how much is set aside for mitigation. They have also been mindful, that costs are not just about construction, it is the on-going cost of running it as well.
- **Sue Armstrong** from the RSPB said that there could be an opportunity for HS2 to be seen as “green” infrastructure provided the design is right, and they are willing to help with this. **JG** welcomed this, and said that it was important that good intentions were implemented correctly. **Sue Armstrong** added that, following **Eamonn Lally**’s point, the starting point should not be about mitigation, it should be about avoiding impacts in the first place.
- **Peter Miller** added that HS2 Ltd are very much aware that there will be environmental effects as a result of HS2 and they are seeking to avoid and mitigate them as far as possible. He added that good design was not necessarily expensive, in fact, a smart design based on good information can be cheaper.
- **Howard Davies** from the NAAONB – said that natural resources in relation to sustainable development were very important. He said that we need to ensure that the landscape is valued appropriately as a resource.
- **Peter Nixon** said that everyone around the table welcomed structured and early engagement. However, where engagement is most fruitful is very early on, even when issues were still sensitive and confidential. He asked if it was possible to come to a position where such information can be shared early in confidence. **JG** said that the meeting today demonstrates that she is interested in how we can get the input of environmental groups and get the design right. However, she is particularly concerned about causing unnecessary blight. **Action: JG** agreed that this is something she will look at in more detail, balancing the need to prevent anyone from worrying unduly with the desire to get the best possible information upon which to make decisions. **JG** added that we are at the beginning of the process and there will be many opportunities for environmental groups to contribute, including for Phase 2, a period after Autumn before formal consultation.
- **Stephen Joseph** said that the people in this room have lots of detailed knowledge on eco-systems, bio-diversity etc and there is much to be gained from involving them early on. This involves a level of trust on both sides. He thought that most groups would be prepared to enter into an arrangement that recognises the issue of blight that **JG** raised, whilst retaining the right to talk about the broad strategy.
- **Ralph Smyth** said that there were many lessons to be learned from HS1 and Right Lines Charter groups had suggested that the DfT commission a report to do so. He said that in many areas, HS1 is embedded well into the landscape. He said that all of the EIA data would be a good opportunity for DfT/HS2 to take the lead on an open data initiative.

- **Martin Capstick** said that often when information goes out in such a way, it often has gaps. It is a concern for us that when this happens, people fill in the gaps themselves and draw conclusions which cause unnecessary alarm.
- There was a discussion about the opportunities that HS2 might create. **Peter Miller** said that this is the first time a transect of Britain has been done, and represents a big opportunity for a health check on many environmental issues. Offsetting was raised and Peter Miller said that there was precedent for this on HS1, for example the Cobham and Ashenbank Wood Scheme. **Action:** Peter Miller agreed to have a more detailed think about how HS2 might exploit opportunities and this could be something HS2 Ltd pick up once a regular meeting between themselves and environmental groups is arranged. Ralph Smyth welcomed this.
- **JG** asked for a view from the Ramblers Association. Eugene Suggett said that many of their general points have been well articulated by others, but their principle concern was obviously the protection of rights of way. He acknowledged that it would not be possible to provide total mitigation along every route, but said that he wants this issue to be taken seriously. He said that he hoped that the methodology for assessing the value of rights of way was appropriate. He said a simple head count was not enough, as often it is the fact that they are not frequently used that gives them value. **JG** agreed that these issues required careful thought and sensitive consideration.
- **Stephen Trotter** from the Wildlife Trusts said that it was important to consider issues such as rights of way in the round. He said that we need to think about how those rights of way allow access to places such as woodlands and see if there are any opportunities not just to mitigate loss but also exploit opportunities.
- **Stephen Joseph** said that station location was an important issue. He expressed a preference for city centre stations that did not require out of town park and ride facilities. **JG** said that often these decisions were finely balanced, but the business case generally improves the closer you place the station to large numbers of people.
- **Stephen Joseph** said that one of the criticisms the CBT have often levelled at the Department is about forecasting methodology. He said that often, predictions have been over certain. He suggested that the DfT should move towards scenarios with the proposed infrastructure testing well in a variety of situations.
- <At this point the Secretary of State had to move on to her next meeting, Martin Capstick took over the Chair.>

- There was a discussion about terms of reference for the group and its role and function. It was raised that it would be useful to have a high level timeline so that the groups could plan activities and have an idea of when decision points are and when their input might be needed. Martin Capstick said that it should be possible for us to give reasonable indications.
(**Action:** Adam McIntee)
- Dr Sue Armstrong said that she understood the Department's need to avoid hostages to fortune, but said that there was a lot of experience around the table that would be helpful, and that they are well used to working under confidentiality agreements. She added that often when infrastructure projects ran into the most trouble with environmental groups was when they did not engage properly and early enough in the process.
- Martin Capstick thanked the attendees for coming for what had been a very productive and useful discussion.
- <Meeting closed.>