

Note of meeting: High Speed 2 – Environment Round Table

Date: 23 January 2014 - 13:30 – 15:00

Location: Department for Transport

Attendees:

Name	Organisation
Stephen Joseph	Campaign for Better Transport (CBT)
Ralph Smyth	Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)
Melanie Coath	RSPB
Victoria Bankes Price	The Woodland Trust
Eugene Suggett	Ramblers Organisation
George Ballinger	Canal & River Trust (CRT)
Philip Metcalfe	The National Forest Company
Malcolm Hackett	Greenwood Partnership
Henry Russell	The Heritage Alliance
Ian Hepburn	Wildlife Trusts in the SouthEast
Cllr James Lewis	Local Gov (Leeds City Council)
Cllr Martin Tett	Local Gov (Bucks County Council)
Claire Graves	National Trust
Rt Hon Robert Goodwill MP	DfT
David Prout	DfT
Mark Norton	DfT
Amanda John	DfT
Lee Bowerman	DfT
Jill Caughey	DfT
Peter Miller	HS2 Ltd
Louise Portelly	HS2 Ltd
Mark Bailey	HS2 Ltd
Stephen McFarlane	HS2 Ltd
Attiya Biviji	HS2 Ltd
Chris Stapleton	HS2 Ltd
Tony Burton	HS2 Ltd

Key Action summary:

- National Trust to put landowner in touch with HS2 Ltd to discuss concerns over planting agreements with the Forestry Commission. **Action: Claire Graves**
- HS2 Ltd to give consideration to the setting up of a “tree working group”. **Action: Peter Miller**

- Meeting to be arranged by Buckinghamshire CC for HS2 Ltd to go out and look at the Mitigation Blueprint. **Action: Martin Tett**
- Proposal for how organisations can negotiate with HS2 Ltd to iron out issues before there is a need to petition. **Action: Mark Bailey**
- Petition Management teach-in to be arranged. **Action: Peter Miller**
- Ensure consistent messaging regarding the design panel from the different groups representing HS2 Ltd. **Action: Peter Miller**
- To circulate draft minutes of this meeting for comment by attendees. **Action: DfT.**
- To arrange the date for the next meeting. **Action: DfT – Done.**

Meeting minutes

- **David Prout** chaired the meeting. He welcomed attendees, and introductions were forthcoming.

Review of actions from last meeting

- As time was pressing, these were put to one side. If anyone has concerns a previous action has not been completed, they can contact the forum secretariat (Fran Queen or Amanda John) for clarification on its status.

Community Forests presentation

- Philip Metcalfe and Malcolm Hackett gave a presentation on Community Forests. They outlined how Community Forests were a group of different organisations under one banner, who had similar aims. The presentation explained the different forests that Phase Two would touch on and how there were opportunities to work with HS2 in respect of this. It was explained that to date, none of the groups had condemned or praised HS2, but they will want to work with HS2 Ltd to ensure that regeneration can take place in affected areas, such as at the Colliers Wood site.
- There was a belief that in Phase Two, the line section between Measham and Ashby can be improved and benefited, such as adding landscaping to the proposed corridor.
- It was also explained that they have mapping expertise and resources that could help when planning the route.
- Questions were asked about the long-term funding for the plantings that were outlined, as there was concern from the councils present that they often ended up footing the bill. CBT thought that the principles of the proposed endowment fund could help and considered this a very important part of the HS2 scheme. The RSPB raised a concern with the current tree

planting regime and the potential planting by communities, and thought there could be a danger of double counting if not careful.

- CPRE noted with concern that the proposal for the Endowment Fund had first been made by NGOs in 2011 and that the minutes of the previous meeting had said it would be taken forward before the first reading of the hybrid Bill. Despite this, matters still did not seem to be moving forward.
- Peter Miller explained that the Endowment Fund would be a key part of any tree planting policy. However there were other important factors, such as locational planting for potential biomass. Peter said the policy on this would be seen later in the year.
- The National Trust raised concerns that people wanting to plant trees with funding from the Forestry Commission were being denied this as their land was in safeguarding zones. **Action:** National Trust to send details of landowners to HS2 Ltd.
- The Woodland Trust asked if HS2 Ltd had started discussions with nurseries along the line of route to ensure a supply of trees. Peter Miller explained that it was important to get the procurement right and that this was being looked at.
- There was general agreement that tree planting needed to be done in a sensible way, with the use of a strategic plan.
- **Action:** David Prout asked Peter to look at the viability of a 'tree working group'.

The slides for this presentation would be circulated with the draft minutes.

At this point, Robert Goodwill MP, the Minister responsible for rail entered and spoke to the group. He was clear that he didn't want a "greenwash" of the scheme. He was clear that there would be impacts, but wants these to be mitigated. He outlined that he has experience of mitigation and knows that everything is a trade-off, and that this forum can help resolve and direct those trade-offs.

Phase Two consultation

There was an update on Phase Two from Stephen McFarlane, who noted that around 8,000 people had attended local information events along the line of route and, while responses appeared to be lower than for some previous consultations, the engagement was very valuable. Following the close of the consultation, HS2 Ltd would be undertaking an analysis of responses and review of proposals, reporting back to Government with a view to a decision being taken by the end of the year. Stephen stressed, however, that although the consultation was closed, they were keen to continue engaging with stakeholders.

CPRE raised concerns that the options being studied to extend HS2 to Scotland could be foreclosed by decisions taken on Phase Two and asked that there could be a further opportunity to comment on Phase Two once the results of the study were made public.

Environmental Statement consultation

Peter Miller gave an update on the ES, explaining that the consultation had now been extended until 27 February. CPRE asked if it was possible, now that the consultation had been extended, to get further information – specifically the GIS data and bio-diversity offsetting report.

Peter Miller explained that everything that was needed to respond fully and in an informed way had already been made available. However, it was noted that the GIS data was being released today. There was concern that the biodiversity offsetting report was referred to in the ES, but was not published.

Robert Goodwill MP asked how soil placement was going to work as the last time he had met Local Authorities, he was unsure of the process. Peter Miller explained that the nature of each placement site would change according to the area.

Buckinghamshire CC explained that they were going to have a lot to say about the placement site in their area. They were concerned about the Calvert area as it had an infrastructure depot, a waste incinerator and now this.

Peter said that this could be looked at.

CPRE outlined how the ES showed photomontages of ugly standardised viaducts, on the basis it had to show the worst possible impacts. While it was understood why this had to be the approach in the ES, there were concerns that with cost reductions being sought, that the opportunity might be taken for the worst case design to be used for the scheme.

The Canal and Rivers Trust seconded this view. They extended the offer to work with HS2 Ltd to ensure the structures can look beautiful.

Robert Goodwill MP agreed with this. He explained that he couldn't promise the Ribble Viaduct though and David Prout iterated that it was still very early in the scheme and had to be within tolerances.

The RSPB wants to see the scheme produce a 'net gain' to biodiversity and wanted to see this as a long-term aim, beyond the construction of the project.

CBT made a broader policy point that it supports HS2, but carbon now seems to be a net increase. CBT says that more needs to be joined up across the Department as it thinks in silos and there needs to be a fit with HS2 and the broader transport picture. The main concern, therefore, is that there is not enough detail on the carbon case.

The CRT had concerns that the noise mitigation proposed in the ES did not consider the canals as homes, even though people moored there. They consider this a big enough issue to potentially petition on.

There was concern that the ES did not comply with EIA as surveys are not complete, and as a result there is not enough information. It is possible that MPs along the line of route will be approached and urged to oppose the scheme at second reading.

There was also concern regarding the new chair of HS2 Ltd talking about lowering costs and there was a fear that this could mean mitigation is the first cut.

CPRE raised concerns about Clause 47 in the Bill as it created a very broad power to enable compulsory purchase of land for other development off the route. David Prout explained that this power is usually held by SoS for Communities and Local Government, but it was decided that for this Bill it would be easier if DfT SoS also had the power.

There was also agreement about CPRE's suggestion that Schedule 16 of the Bill should reference the design panel.

National Trust raised concerns that there did not seem to be enough joint working between the Highways Agency and HS2 Ltd.

The Ramblers outlined their concern regarding the treatment of rights of way and wanted any issues to be ironed out before the petitioning process begins.

David Prout reiterated that it was very important that people's rights of way were not blocked up.

CPRE also wanted to know how to discuss issues bilaterally between NGOs and HS2 Ltd before there was a need to petition. **Action:** Mark Bailey to come back to the group with a proposal.

The Woodland Trust wanted to know how the pre-petitioning negotiation would work. **Action:** Teach-in to be organised by HS2 Ltd.

NGOs' positions on the hybrid Bill

This agenda item was discussed in part, with the previous agenda item.

Draft national networks national policy statement

There was agreement to discuss this agenda item off-line.

Design Panel

Tony Burton gave an update on the Design Panel. In the first half of this year, the full details will be published. He explained that the designs are to be exciting and uplifting and secure a place in the nation's heart. The panel is going to be independent, will challenge the designers and deliver value for money.

Cllr Martin Tett asked if the panel had met with local authorities. This happened in February.

There were also questions about the philosophy of the panel. Would it be one size fits all, or will it be tailored? Tony explained that this was for the project to work up.

The Ramblers said it was important that ecology was a factor and needed to be built in and designed for its area.

CPRE flagged that the limits of deviation set by the Bill could dictate the final design and means of construction before the design panel could make proposals. It was noted that moving the worksite for the expansion of Bank Underground station had reduced costs and increased the speed of construction, while improving design outcomes, but such a win-win approach might not now be possible for HS2. Tony was aware of this, but was clear that there is always something that could be done.

The National Trust raised concerns that they had heard different messages from different teams within HS2 Ltd. **Action:** Peter Miller to ensure one message on the design panel.

Next meeting

TBA