

Note of meeting: High Speed 2 – Ministerial Environment Round Table

Date: Wednesday 29th November 2017 - 10.30am

Location: Department for Transport, Great Minster House, London

Attendees:

Name		Organisation
Paul Maynard MP		Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rail, Accessibility and HS2
Katherine Hawkins	KH	Wildlife Trusts
Victoria Bankes Price	VBP	Woodland Trust
Daniel Carey-Dawes	DCD	Campaign to Protect Rural England
Mark Robinson	MR	Campaign to Protect Rural England
Kate Russell	KR	Central Association of Agricultural Valuers
Richard Bennett	RB	Canal and River Trust
Andrew Shirley	AS	Country Land Association
Louise Staples	LS	National Farmers Union
Hannah Stennings	HSt	National Trust
Mark Weston	MW	British Horse Association
Jon Griffiths (Chair)	JG	DfT
Tom Hinds	TH	DfT
Lee Bowerman	LB	DfT
Helen Smart	HSm	DfT
Peter Miller	PM	HS2 Ltd
Christian Bonard	CB	HS2 Ltd
Davinder Hothi	DH	HS2 Ltd
Caroline Richards	CR	HS2 Ltd
James Gosling		DfT Observer
Atsushi Okamoto		DfT Observer
Apologies		
Cllr Martin Tett		Local Government Association
Cllr Stewart Stacey		Local Government Association
Stephen Joseph		Campaign for Better Transport
Eugene Suggett		Ramblers
Kath Daly		National Association of AONBs

Jon Griffiths (JG) opened the meeting, introducing himself.

1 – Minutes and actions from previous meeting

- 1) HS2 Ltd committed to taking an item to the Planning Forum to talk about getting consistency in engaging with interested bodies.

HS2 Ltd has put an item on the Planning Forum agenda in May 2018 on its engagement with stakeholders in accordance with the provisions of the Act. PM acknowledged that this was some time away, but agendas are very full and planned in advance. He will see if he could bring the issue forward.

VBP asked for the group to see the agenda and the minutes of the Planning Forum meetings.

JG mentioned the Phase 2a Planning Forum has just been created. The first meeting was at Stafford Town Hall where they discussed process and lessons learned from Phase One.

- 2) HS2 Ltd committed to checking that use of borrow pits is not needed for Phase One.

HS2 Ltd confirmed that there is currently no requirement for borrow pits for Phase One. It is possible that contractors may decide to bring forward their own plans for borrow pits but these would need approval/legal powers as there is no provision in the Act.

- 3) HS2 Ltd to confirm whether land taken for borrow pits was required on a permanent basis.

HS2 Ltd confirmed that land will go back to agricultural use, subject to agreement on a case-by-case.

LS asked for more details of the borrow pits for Phase 2a: extent, mineral take, depth, etc. PM explained that the assumptions on borrow pit size was based on the geological work done by HS2 Ltd and further detailed work would be needed to confirm the scale of what would be taken.

- 4) HS2 Ltd will set up a three-way engagement meeting with NFU, CLA and CAAV.

KR confirmed they had a useful meeting with HS2 Ltd since the last meeting. Regular sessions would start in the new year.

- 5) Members will be asked for suggestions for themes on which to

See action at 6, below

<p>focus future meetings. This is on the agenda.</p>	
<p>6) HS2 Ltd will arrange for an update from the Planning Forum. HS2 Ltd committed to provide an abridged version of their Planning Forum presentation to be circulated to members. Minutes of these meetings are published online and the link will be circulated to members.</p>	<p>ACTION</p>
<p>7) Future meetings agendas will include a focus on one Phase and have shorter updates from the other two at the end of the meetings. This is how this and future agendas will be designed.</p>	<p>ACTION</p>
<p>8) Future agendas will include an AOB asking for a question for debate for the following meeting. This is on the agenda.</p>	
<p>9) The British Horse Society will be invited to join the Roundtable and be invited to the next meeting. The BHS has been invited and MW attends this meeting.</p>	
<p>10) Non-attending invitees to the Roundtable will be asked if they wish to remain on the mailing list. Completed.</p>	
<p>11) Dates of meetings for the coming 12 months will be circulated. Dates have been suggested to the Minister's private office and provisional dates will be circulated to members.</p>	<p>ACTION</p>
<p>12) HS2 Ltd will provide a list of other stakeholder engagement panels and their attendees. A list of Phase 1 route-wide stakeholder engagement panels has been drawn up. Phase 2 panels will be added to it and circulated with the minutes of this meeting.</p>	<p>ACTION</p>
<p>13) A design workshop with the design panel and the main works civils contractors will be arranged. A design workshop is being planned for 14th February 2018. It</p>	

will be interactive and quite high level. More detail will be given in the invitation to the meeting, to be sent out in December.

ACTION

2 – Phase 2a Environment Statement consultation and responses

JG explained that the formal report by Golder Associates is now available, numbered: HC575.

<https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-private-bill-office/2017-19/HS2-Phase-2a-Independent-Assessor-Report-171120.pdf>

PM briefly explained the Bill process, highlighting that the ES consultation is the precursor to 2nd Reading and then petitioning, so there are more opportunities to contribute.

CR gave a brief outline of the numbers of consultation responses, noting that the bulk of them were as part of a Woodland Trust campaign. The slide will be circulated.

The Minister arrived at this point.

3 – Key topic discussion: Woodlands and tree planting

The Minister welcomed members to this Environmental Roundtable. He was pleased that this meeting would be about hearing from the members and keen that meetings focus on the members' issues. He congratulated the Woodland Trust on their campaign.

VBP noted publication of the Phase One Ancient Woodland Strategy and asked when the Phase 2a Strategy would be published.

PM confirmed that HS2 Ltd is currently looking at the Phase 2a strategy and would consider the timing of its publication.

VBP set out the Woodland Trust's (WT's) views: On the Woodland Fund the WT will not be bidding for money from the fund; this could be seen as compromising their position. They are disappointed that it is discretionary, as this sets a precedent for future infrastructure projects, and the project has not accepted the 30-1ha ratio for planting to mitigate for ancient woodland suggested by Natural England (NE). However, they will be happy to direct others to the fund and will sit on the Ecological Review Group.

KH noted that the Wildlife Trusts also support the 30-1 ratio.

PM explained that the 30-1 ratio was considered and rejected through the Parliamentary process. The mitigation planting has to take people's land, and so there must be balance. HS2 Ltd took the WT's advice that ancient woodland was irreplaceable and so did not include it in the metric. HS2 Ltd wants to keep discussions on-going with them on this topic.

VBP said WT would like to see the fund applied to a wider

geographical area, not just along the line of route.

KH asked about the Ancient Woodland Strategy.

PM explained it set out what HS2 Ltd would be doing on each area affected. The response is tailored and differs depending on the sensitivity of each area of woodland taken.

VBP commented that she was hoping to see a more holistic strategy.

LS set out the NFU's view: Concerned about the amount of farmland being taken; would like to see a like-for-like ratio. She agreed with having the fund, but it should apply to a wider area. Also noted she would like to see the land take for Phase 2a published, broken down and in total.

AS commented that the CLA's concern was for the amount of land that would be taken. Welcomed the fund but felt it was not attractive enough to create a significant change in decision-making. Perhaps Phases 2a and 2b would benefit from looking at a tender scheme for all habitat over a wider area, so that all the additional burden was not on landowners already affected along the line of route.

LS flagged feedback suggested landowners were not always clear why one piece of land over another was being taken by HS2 Ltd.

PM acknowledged that HS2 Ltd was learning lessons on this and improving, with Phases 2a and 2b learning from Phase 1.

KR suggested a metric for take of 'best and most productive land'. LS agreed with this, noting the drive to improve productivity to support the economy.

Roundtable members generally agreed that a more strategic approach to the Ancient Woodland Strategy, the Woodland Fund and to land-take was desirable.

RB asked about how tree growing was being planned, noting that the scale of demand would be huge.

PM explained that there had been a procurement process and Crowders in Lincolnshire work the contract. They are growing 7m trees. 100,000 are being planted this winter. He confirmed that FC guidance on the provenance of seed was followed: only coming from certain latitudes, within Europe and using a passport scheme.

4 – Minister's reflections

Thanked the members for their open and full discussion. On many of the issues discussed they are pushing at an open door regarding his views.

He reminded members that in addition to the Woodland Fund there is also the Community Environment Fund.

He asked HS2 Ltd to look at the calls for a higher level strategy, with more of an over-arching philosophy and consider what might be the

ACTION

<p>best way forward on this.</p>	
<p>He also asked HS2 Ltd to look into options for allowing the fund to consider applications for beyond the 25 mile limit.</p>	ACTION
<p>The Minister left the meeting at this point and encouraged members to contact him directly with their views if they wished.</p>	
<p>VBP raised the issue of the work being undertaken at Newyears Green Covert and that 3 assurances given to the Woodland Trust had been breached. She accepted that this is a challenging area but wanted to know how HS2 Ltd is learning from this to make sure it doesn't happen again.</p>	
<p>PM apologised that the oversight had happened. The contractor needed to act quickly in response to a safety and security issue, but the Woodland Trust should have been informed in line with the assurances given and this was not done. HS2 Ltd has a code of practice, should errors occur, to review what happened and report to DfT and the Secretary of State. In this case the investigation is at an early stage. HS2 Ltd is treating it very seriously and has called the contractor in to the Undertakings and Assurances Compliance Committee. HS2 Ltd is committed to working with the Woodland Trust on this and will also bring an update to the next Roundtable.</p>	ACTION
<p>DH mentioned that the Phase 2b team are also involved in this investigation to ensure they learn lessons.</p>	
<p>The meeting discussed that people were raising many issues with Roundtable members now that work is starting to take place and is visible to local people.</p>	
<p>KH commented that they felt they were 'doing HS2 Ltd's job for them' in responding to queries and they needed easy access to appropriate information.</p>	
<p>PM committed to looking into ways of ensuring people are getting the information in advance that the CoCP commits to. Perhaps more local notices are needed in some areas and agreed that HS2 Ltd could produce some standard information for members to use including the right contact details for people to get more details.</p>	ACTION
<p>KR commented that it is vital that HS2 Ltd get this communications issue right. Getting it wrong would lead to very bad press coverage, additional costs and potential reparations.</p>	
<p>PM assured the members that HS2 Ltd understood and agreed.</p>	
<p>VBP commented that she liked the idea of on-site notices and that they should have the contact number(s) as well.</p>	
<p>LS asked for HS2 Ltd to explain how breaches of assurances and undertakings are dealt with and whether there is a reporting process, at a future meeting.</p>	
<p>JG agreed that DfT and HS2 Ltd would take this away and come back with clear, simple information on how this worked.</p>	ACTION

<https://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/highspeedrailwestmidlandscrawe.html> for information about the passage of the Bill. This is also where the updated guidance will be published and members can subscribe on this page to receive updates from this site as soon as new guidance and other relevant documents are published.

Key Action Summary:

- 1) HS2 Ltd committed to provide an abridged version of their Planning Forum presentation to be circulated to members. **Action: HS2 Ltd**
- 2) Minutes of these meetings are published online and the link will be circulated to members. **Action: HS2 Ltd**
- 3) Dates of meetings for the coming 12 months will be circulated. **Action: DfT (completed)**
- 4) A list of Phase 1 route-wide stakeholder engagement panels has been drawn up. Phase 2 panels will be added to it and circulated with the minutes of this meeting. **Action: HS2 Ltd**
- 5) Details of the design workshop planned for 14th February 2018 will be given in the invitation to the meeting, to be sent out in December. **Action: HS2 Ltd**
- 6) Consider options for a higher level Ancient Woodland Strategy, with a more over-arching philosophy. **Action: HS2 Ltd**
- 7) Investigate options for allowing the Woodland Fund to consider applications for schemes beyond the 25 mile limit. **Action: HS2 Ltd and DfT**
- 8) An update on the investigation into breaches of assurances to the Woodland Trust will be brought to the next Roundtable. **Action: HS2 Ltd**
- 9) HS2 Ltd will look into ways to ensure information on works is available to and reaches local people, for example producing some standard information with contacts for the Roundtable members. **Action: HS2 Ltd**
- 10) DfT and HS2 Ltd will produce clear, simple information on how how breaches of assurances and undertakings are dealt with and the reporting process. **Action: HS2 Ltd and DfT**
- 11) Logistics on the Phase 2b engagement events will be shared as

**Completed,
see covering
email**

**Completed,
see below**

soon as they are available, including whether landowners should go to these **Action: HS2 Ltd**

12) HS2 Ltd will engage with CRT on the work commissioned to look at the design of noise barriers **Action: HS2 Ltd**

Date of next meeting

28th February 2018 10.30am