

HS2 Liaison Group
Venue: The Forum, Towcester
Draft notes of the meeting held on 17 January 2020 at 1.30pm

<p>Representatives from the following organisations were present:</p> <p>Cllr Ian Morris – NCC (Chair) Aston le Walls PC Boddington PC Byfield PC Charlwelton PC Chipping Warden and Edgcote PC CPRE Culworth PC Evenley PC Farthinghoe PC Friends of Boddington</p>	<p>Greatworth PC Hinton-in-the-Hedges Moreton Pinkney PC Andrea Leadsom MP Tommy Gilchrist – MP for South Northants Office Laura Dunn – MP for South Northants Office Whitfield PC Thorpe Mandeville PC SNAG Sulgrave PC Cllr Rosie Herring – SNC Cllr Mary-Anne Sergison-Brooke – SNC</p>
<p>Apologies:</p> <p>Chris Wragg (NCC) Andrea Leadsom MP Olaf Ernstsons (Highways England) Santon Crowshaw (Byfield PC) Cathy Ellis (Evenley PC) Spencer Burnham (Evenley PC) Cllr Fiona Baker (NCC) Anna Faure (Sulgrave PC) Maurice Cole (Thorpe Mandeville) Hilary Walton (Whitfield PC)</p>	<p>In Attendance:</p> <p>Esme Cushing (EC) – NCC (notes) Denis Winterbottom (DW) – SNC Zach Stamps – Highways England Jeremy Dixon – Highways England Nisha Mejer – HS2 Ltd Tim Noble – HS2 Ltd Christina Wallace – HS2 Ltd Luke Nipon – HS2 Ltd Richard Aylmer – Fusion Chris James – Eiffage Kier JV Colin Walker – British Cycling Catherine Ruffley – British Cycling</p>

1. Chairman’s Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The notes of the last meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

TG is leaving Andrea’s office for another MP’s office. The meeting and Andrea extended their thanks for the brilliant contribution that he has made in recent years and commitment to dealing with HS2 and other issues in South Northamptonshire. Laura Dunn will be taking over Tommy’s role.

2. Matters Arising

Andrea gave a brief update on where the Government is with the Oakervee Review. No decision has been made yet. Andrea was unable to give any timescales on when the document may be published, but was able to say that it is being carefully considered and recognised that there are differing views across the country. The HS2 Mitigation and Compensation Forum that Andrea set up has been reformed as a Review Group of MPs.

FoB gave an update on prolonged disturbance. Meetings are ongoing between HS2 and the FoB regarding a Blueprint for land compensation issues. There are still significant problems with land owners.

HS2 said that the landowner in Boddington did accept the responses given by HS2 to their queries, although they may not have addressed all the concerns. The invite for further meetings still stands.

HS2 Ltd outlined that prolonged disturbance is being rolled out which has a noise-focus. Reducing impacts will be about developing designs and engaging with local communities.

FoB accepted that in a rural setting it was more about prolonged disruption (PRoW, noise, traffic etc) rather than disturbance.

Action – FoB to give an update at the next meeting on progress regarding prolonged disruption

A question was raised regarding the pause on Ancient Woodlands during the Oakervee Review. TG had been told that there was no ancient woodland along the line of route in Northamptonshire, however DW pointed out that Halse Copse and other woodland around Radstone was Ancient Woodland.

HS2 Ltd confirmed that work on Ancient Woodland had been paused apart from programme critical work.

EK confirmed that they have been appointed for clearance of hedgerows close to the compound at Chipping Warden and Greatworth, but that ancient woodlands are not affected.

Action – TG to write to Grant Shapps for further clarity regarding the pause on Ancient Woodland in Northamptonshire and to raise concerns

3. HS2 Ltd updates

Community Engagement

HS2 Ltd gave an update on community engagement activity [slides circulated with meeting notes] which have included drop-ins, business engagement, community events and attendance at Parish meetings.

CEF has been awarded to Thorpe Mandeville village hall and Chipping Warden for an outdoor gym. TG asked whether CEF funding could be used to mitigate the impact on Stagecoach as a result of the full road closures of the A361.

Action – HS2 Ltd to investigate whether CEF funding can be used in this way (mini-buses for diversions for example)

Enabling works

FoB outlined that the impact of traffic management/ road closures were already being felt in the Boddington area and in combination with other impacts such as flooding and high winds, has resulted in two collisions on Claydon Road (due to speeding traffic unfamiliar with the roads using it as a cut-through).

Action – EC to speak to Road Safety colleagues about a temporary VAS on Claydon Road

Fusion gave a quick update on Enabling Works [slides circulated with notes].

The Chipping Warden Relief Road works are progressing well, although the programme has suffered with wet weather. Construction access onto A361 was improved. Works due to finish on side in July 2020. Welsh Road is due to be completed in late June 2020. M40 J11 due to start May 2020 (being discussed with HE and OCC).

A361 full road closures are required for tie-ins. Fusion have been engaging with local residents, Stagecoach and NCC to reduce impact. Have managed to reduce the number of road closures and limit to weekend closures and night works. Still working with Stagecoach to reduce impact.

Chipping Warden PC raised concerns about the lack of communication on the road closures and out-of-date information on commonplace and requested improvement. Fusion/HS2 Ltd explained that some of the dates had been agreed but that others were subject to change.

Byfield PC highlighted that any communication on the A361 road closures should be communicated to all communities along the A361 rather than just Chipping Warden.

There was a short discussion regarding the impact of the A361 road closures on public transport and emergency services. Stagecoach are concerned regarding the impact of the road closures on their Saturday bus service and the impact on patronage. Fusion are still in discussions with Stagecoach.

Action – Fusion to send an update in writing to Stagecoach confirming dates of road closures

Action – Fusion/HS2 Ltd to check that Commonplace is kept up to date and to provide further clarification of road closures

Land possessions are ongoing: 80 of 99 land parcels have been possessed. 80km of fencing will be needed. Archaeological trenching is ongoing.

There was significant strong concern from the group that land is being taken but not being paid for, and that there are issues over access for farmers to reach part of fields that have been affected by land possessions.

HS2 Ltd explained that they have a land possession programme to acquire land, managed by their Land and Property team. There was an open offer from LN and NM to investigate any issues.

TG said that a number of the issues stemmed from HS2 Land and Property not making decisions.

FoB echoed the concerns and said that in some cases the issue is how well land agents are working together and suggested that a dispute resolution procedure was needed.

Action – HS2 Ltd to confirm the number of land possessions taken and how many have been paid for

Action – HS2 Ltd to organise a presentation on land compensation at a future HS2 Liaison Group meeting to outline the process

The group asked for an update on the badger fencing that was promised early in the process to stop the spread of TB.

Action – HS2 Ltd to provide an update on badger fencing

EK gave an update on the M40 Junction 10 works. The latest traffic modelling has been produced and Highways England are looking over the results. The modelling is not showing a significant scheme is required.

EK gave their update on Main Works. They are building capacity within the organisation ready for Notice to Proceed. They now have a base at MoD in Bicester.

Work is still progressing on the noise model to determine the noise barriers required. A landscape design approach is being followed, with architects designing up what it will look like.

EK talked through the main compound locations and showed a photo of the modular accommodation (which will be mixed)/office approach, the borrow pits and the concrete batching plants (these will be temporary works then the land will be reinstated). The concrete batching plants will reduce the amount of trucks on the road. Dust will be tightly controlled and the sites will be slightly set into the landscape, but will not be completely hidden. The group expressed their shock at the concrete batching plants.

DW confirmed that planning permission essentially was given through the HS2 Act, but that SNC will have to give consent for accommodation and some elements will come under class approvals (SNC have limited control over these).

NCC have given feedback on the draft Local Traffic Management Plans and further discussions are taking place. Traffic newsletters with details of routes, volumes and how planning to access the works will be distributed to local residents.

Evenley PC re-iterated their concerns around the construction traffic causing diversions onto other routes, especially around the A43. They outlined that HE had been to see them but were not able to offer much in the way of mitigate the issues raised. Whitfield PC echoed the same concerns as Evenley.

4. Common Design Elements

AB outlined that according to Information Paper D1, design has to be sympathetic and reflect the local context and only 1/3 of the viaduct structure such as Edgecote would be made up of the texture or pattern applied.

HS2 Ltd gave a presentation on Common Design Elements [circulated with notes] and explained that Key Design Elements (such as the viaducts at Edgecote and Lower Thorpe) would be subject to specific engagement. These events will be well communicated in advance and a brochure with further information will be produced to accompany the engagement.

The CDEs have been designed as a result of discussions between contractors and have been consulted on with the Independent Design Panel. Over 200 responses have already been received and the deadline is 30th January 2020.

The group reiterated concerns regarding how these structures would be sympathetic to the local area – especially in relation to the Overhead Centenary System. Concerns were also raised about graffiti once the works have been completed and ensuring that there is adequate budget to clear graffiti in the future.

CPRE asked whether the bridges/viaducts across the route will look the same. HS2 outlined that every element of every asset will be designed for each location. The common design elements allow for viaducts of differing heights to ensure that they sit sympathetically within the local setting.

5. Road Safety Fund

NCC gave an update on the Road Safety Fund [slides circulated with notes]. All the applications submitted to HS2 Ltd were successful, these now have to go through a further stage of internal NCC approval. Works will commence in April 2020.

6. Cycling and HS2

Two representatives of British Cycling attended the meeting. British Cycling has a role to encourage more active travel and were disappointed that the HS2 Cycle route that was proposed was never taken forward.

British Cycling are currently looking at other opportunities such as the internal access road being left as active travel routes. FoB support this initiative to complement schemes that they are taking forward themselves.

All agreed that there was a potential opportunity to use the land underneath the parapets and piers for walking and cycling routes.

Action – British Cycling to report back on progress at a future meeting

Date of next meeting: 20th March 2020 – 1.30pm The Forum, Towcester