

HS2 Update



30 January 2015

This update will focus on the first site visit to Buckinghamshire that took place on the 15 January in the Colne Valley, new information about the property compensation that has been announced and a general update on the Select Committee.

Colne Valley Site Visit

Four members of the HS2 Select Committee visited parts of the Colne Valley on 15 January 2015, including parts of South Buckinghamshire as well as Hillingdon. The Select Committee were accompanied by staff from HS2 Ltd, local MPs Dominic Grieve and Nick Hurd, community representatives, the Colne Valley Park Community Interest Company (CIC) and local Councillor Roger Reed and council officers.

The committee were taken to Denham Ski Club and Savay Farm and lake and were shown the location of the viaduct, main and satellite compounds, the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and many of the local country lanes that would be used for construction. Concerned activists were present at each location to voice their concerns and to protest against the scheme.

The Committee members, including the Chairman, were sympathetic, knowledgeable and very interested in what they were being told. Robert Syms MP Chairman of the Select Committee stated "It is incredibly helpful to come and look and hear from local people, to give them the opportunity to show us what impact the railway will have on their community. It is a beautiful area and actually coming here and seeing these sites gives us a huge insight so that when we meet petitioners at committee we know the places they are talking about instead of just looking at maps."

A hand-out produced by the local authorities for the Select Committee can be seen [here](#).

Regarding visiting the rest of the county, there is no date proposed at the time being. We are in contact with both HS2 and the Private Bills office regarding the itinerary. As this work progresses we will update you via the e-update and via members of the BCMP (see below). Thank you to all of those who have fed into the development of the draft itinerary. We continue to work closely with the district councils, the Buckinghamshire MP offices, National Trust, CCB and other stakeholders on this area of work.

New Compensation Arrangements

The government has announced further compensation measures for properties affected by Phase 1 of the proposed HS2 route. The Voluntary Purchase Scheme has been extended to all owner-occupiers of homes and small businesses between generally 60 metres and up to 120 metres from the line in rural areas. This means that they will receive the full un-blighted amount for their property. Previously this had only been available within the safeguarded area of the route. Alongside this scheme the Alternative Cash Offer will allow all people who qualify for the Voluntary Purchase Scheme, but who do not wish to sell, to receive a lump sum equal to 10% of the full, un-blighted value of their property (minimum £30,000/ maximum £100,000). Full details can be found [here](#).

The Need To Sell (NTS) scheme is eligible to owner-occupiers living any distance from the line of route, which also pays the un-blighted value to people with a compelling reason to sell their property, but who have been unable to do so – other than at a substantially reduced price – due to HS2. The criterion for the NTS scheme is appears more relaxed than the exceptional hardship scheme (EHS) it replaces and, unlike the EHS, will consider applications from those who may not need to move immediately. Full details can be found [here](#).

Alongside these schemes, a Residents Charter with a Residents' Commissioner (Deborah Fazan), has been launched in relation to property compensation. The Residents Charter can be found [here](#). The role of the Residents' Commissioner will be to ensure that HS2 meets its commitment to the communication standards and personal support set out in the new charter.

The HS2 Action Alliance (HS2AA) has continued to promote the idea of a property bond. The objective of this bond is that properties that might be adversely affected have their values guaranteed by government so that fear of potential losses plays no part in potential purchasers' decision making. HS2AA argue that this would act as an insurance policy against losses and gives assurance to the property market. A report by Price Waterhouse Cooper in 2014 analysed a property bond scheme but this was dismissed by the Department for Transport as it was seen that "the financial risks were too great" and it caused an "unnecessary burden". HS2AA has taken this in front of the Select Committee; the result of the first hearing on this was that the Committee wanted to see a further breakdown of cost estimates from HS2 Ltd.

House of Commons Public Accounts Committee Report

The House of Commons Public Accounts Committee has released a report on the 'lessons from major rail infrastructure programmes'. The report is critical of HS2 with concerns highlighted over a lack of a clear strategic approach to investment in the rail network, worries that the contingency budget would be used to mask rising costs and questions about the wider regeneration benefits. The full report can be found [here](#).

Select Committee update (correct at 30 Jan)

The timetable for the rest of January and February is now available [here](#). Local authorities to be heard in the next week include Northamptonshire County Council who will be heard on the 2 February and South Northamptonshire Council on the 3 February. South Northants Action Group are appearing on 4th Feb. Please note the Select Committee will not be sitting from 16th – 19th February.

In preparation for Select Committee appearances the Amersham Action Group have been preparing power point presentations. These can be found [here](#).

The Council has produced an updated version of the Select Committee Frequently Asked Questions that can be found [here](#).

MPs Debate a HS2 Referendum

On the 23 January MPs in the House of Commons debated a private members bill that put forward that a referendum on HS2 should take place. Christopher Chope MP for Christchurch in Dorset put forward the bill and stated that "when the people have spoken in a referendum it allows the front benches to let themselves off the hook without any humiliation." Buckinghamshire MPs including

Dominic Greive, Cheryl Gillan and David Liddington all supported the bill. However only a dozen or so MPs were present due to the debate taking place on a Friday when the majority of MPs visit their constituencies. Due to the fact there was not enough time left before the end of parliament the bill was withdrawn, however Mr Chope stated that he hoped a similar bill would be passed by Parliament after the general election.

Buckinghamshire Mitigation and Compensation Panel (BCMP)

We have sent an invite and agenda for the next BCMP meeting to the members of the panel. If you are unsure who your local representative is please contact us. Please also note that County Councillors will also be invited to these meetings.

Drop-in sessions

As previously advertised, we have been holding a number of drop-in sessions at County Hall, Aylesbury. Within reason, we will be able to help with any queries you have about the scheme and/or petitioning. However, following discussions over the last few months, we anticipate that the following may be useful:

- An opportunity for people to look at/use our hard copy maps
- ICT/PowerPoint tips
- Specific queries on Select Committee appearance or negotiations
- Co-ordination - an opportunity for a few petitioners to get together and discuss a point

The final date (for the time being) with availability is 17 Feb 15:00 – 18:00.

Please email Sarah at HS2Blueprint@buckscc.gov.uk if you would like to book some time. Please state what you would like to cover and how much time you think you would like. If these sessions are popular we will look into other dates too. **There has been some request for similar sessions closer to Select Committee appearance – this is certainly something we hope to arrange.**

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