

## Meeting notes Friday October 15<sup>th</sup> 2010.

### Bucks CC HS2 Environment Summit Meeting. - Aylesbury Vale District Council Offices

#### Background:

This summit is the second Bucks CC HS2 summit meeting – the first was held on June 18<sup>th</sup> focussed on the Business Case. Denise Bolland and I attended for the Action Group – Paul Rogerson could not attend.

#### Summary

This meeting focussed on local environmental issues – not the wider environmental issues surrounding the low-carbon claims for HS2, and included a range of speakers, including Sir Brian Briscoe, Chairman of HS2 Ltd.

I have included at the end of this document the agenda some statements from MPs who could not attend, and the invitee list (not everyone was there). I have not included the slides as these should be available on the Bucks CC website at some point, I believe and I do not have copies suitable for distribution.

([http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/sites/bcc/transport/high\\_speed\\_2.page](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/sites/bcc/transport/high_speed_2.page))

**John Bercow** once again demonstrated not only his eloquence but also his absolute rejection of HS2; **Dominic Grieve** was less convincing as his remarks were more constrained to purely local issues and the ‘route’ not affecting his constituents. This may show the difference between an independent MP and a Government Minister under the whip.

Although the meeting was about the environment, **Sir Brian Briscoe** for HS2 and **Philip Graham** for the DfT created a necessary discussion on the business case – and came out very badly. Their answers to questions were poor at best, dogmatic and unbelievable at worst. Their performance was so bad that Briscoe’s assistant was furious and a planned TV interview with Briscoe and Hilary Wharf from the HS2AA which was to follow the summit, was cancelled.

It is becoming increasingly clear that as the business case crumbles, the low carbon case is now hardly mentioned, the new strategy being deployed is to use the “National Interest” as a bulldozer to try to get this through.

This means that the destruction of the business and carbon cases – and exposing the lack of serious consideration for alternatives, must be continued to provide a sufficiently large and impenetrable barrier, so that the ‘National Interest’ simply cannot be seen to be served by this project.

#### Meeting points.

##### 1. MP statements

Neither David Lidington nor Cheryl Gillan attended, but they did provide written statements, which are shown later in this document. Steve Baker was not there – and no statement received.

In summary, Dominic Grieve cited his concern over the route – representing his constituents – the need to put forward rational arguments. He later said ‘a new line must go somewhere’ (but not

through his constituency) so I think he is allowing himself to be neatly painted as a parochial local MP – rather than challenging any of the big issues which exist.

John Bercow was much more effective; he said he had strong objections to HS2 on the grounds of principle – “we are bust – the cost is high – the benefit is speculative”. He also noted that costs always go up, reinforced the evidence-based argument and concluded by saying that Philip Hammond was “wrong”. Later in the meeting he noted the fact that the goalposts were continually moving – from business case to low carbon case to National Interest.

**On this point, questioning revealed that there is no ‘test’ for the National Interest – other than trying to prove there is none during the passage or otherwise of the Hybrid Bill.**

It is notable that both MPs referred to rational argument and the importance of being responsible in actions (my words for their sentiment). This clearly referenced the unpleasant - and in my view unnecessary and unhelpful - demonstrations which were organised by StopHS2 at the Bercow meeting. The point was strongly made that such performances were likely to be counterproductive.

There was interesting debate over whether Hammond had said there was no business case, or that the business case was irrelevant. It seems from statements here and at the HS2 seminars, that the position they are taking is that there is, and will continue to be a business case, but that this will not be the only, nor apparently the most important, element of the decisions to proceed and how.

## 2. Sir Brian Briscoe and Philip Graham

As mentioned in the Summary, both presenters gave very weak and unconvincing performances, leading to much derision, incredulity and laughter, which some people thought was impolite, but in my view, appropriate. It could have been much worse.

**Sir Brian Briscoe** presented a standard HS2 overview presentation, which for the first time the included the benefit ‘**Boosts economy across the regions**’ – at least the new attempt to justify the project is being consistently deployed. Briscoe’s claims that HS2 would be ‘properly debated’ and that the blight provisions (EHS for Route 3 only) were good did not win many people over. His answers to challenges on detailed issues with the business case were stonewalled.

**Philip Graham** talked at the audience from his seat and gave a singularly unimpressive performance. His faltering and utterly unconvincing answers to questions suggested that they do not yet know how to deal with the flaws and weaknesses – as other than admitting it doesn’t make sense, what else can they do?

Perhaps the most worrying assertion was that many of the factors which it was felt should be in the business case – i.e. many of the dis-benefits that they had chosen to ignore – ‘can’t be reduced to a simple monetarised value’. This clearly demonstrates the arbitrary and selective nature of the way they are looking at the HS2 business case. It also tries to explain why ‘National Interest’ Benefits are not fully included in the case – despite the fact that £11 billion of so called benefit to leisure travel time can be.

Valid points about the Eddington Report in relation to transport policy were simply dismissed, and another version of the new argument was that HS2 would “change the economic geography of the UK”.

It was conceded that a more rigorous examination of the low carbon justification will be included in the Consultation – so it will be interesting to see how that emerges.

### 3. Other speakers

**Steve Rodrick** gave an excellent updated version of the Chiltern Conservation Board presentation and **Peter Raine** gave a presentation showing how Kent dealt with some of the line of route issues. It was made clear that these considerations were of relevance when decisions had already been made to go ahead, so this was more guidance on mitigation, but very useful nonetheless.

It was also clarified that the situation in Kent was entirely different; despite many assurances to the contrary, the HS1 line was a “No-brainer” once the Channel Tunnel was completed, and Kent had the benefit of existing motorway transport corridors such as the M20 and M2, where the impact of HS1 was significantly reduced.

**George Lambrick** gave a useful perspective of how the historical environment had been affected in Kent, with several rather chilling examples of how the environment had been effected.

For Bucks CC, **Mark Bailey** presented a system called BLIS – Buckinghamshire Landscape Information System, which allows detailed impact assessments to be made based on several different environmental criteria. This is the system which was used to produce the blight impact report which was published by HS2AA a short while ago.

Although this system provides valuable data which can be quantified into monetary values, it seems that there is no consistent system available along the route – so a consolidated impact assessment will be difficult, although after the meeting, Bucks CC did agree to look at how they could try to hook up with both Northampton and Warwickshire to look into this. As noted before, HS2 were unwilling to include any of these quantified costs into the business case – as this would, of course, further weaken the business case.

**Martin Tett** gave a very powerful close to the meeting saying that this was not the end of the fight, it was the beginning, and that this was not a NIMBY reaction and should not be dismissed as such by HS2 (or the Government).



South Bucks  
District Council



Sir/Madam

**Buckinghamshire's HS2 Summit: The Environmental Impact – 9am on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> at Oculus, AVDC Offices, Aylesbury**

On behalf of Buckinghamshire County Council and the four District Councils we would like to invite you to the second HS2 Summit meeting focused on the Environmental Impact of the High Speed Two (HS2) Proposals.

The aim of the meeting is to bring together the key campaign leaders with a direct interest in the High Speed Rail proposals with a view to:

- Gaining an understanding about the impact of HS2 Ltd's proposals on the natural environment in Buckinghamshire and beyond; and
- Identify how this may affect the business case in terms of the cost of mitigation

A *draft* agenda is enclosed. The keynote speaker will be Brian Briscoe Chairman of HS2 Ltd. In addition, we will have Pete Raine and George Lambrick both of whom have first hand experiences of opposing High Speed 1 and the environmental impacts that High Speed Rail has had on Kent.

Please also note that to keep the Summit to manageable proportions there can only be a maximum of 2 representatives from each organisation. The event will be filmed and we aim to put the film on the Buckinghamshire County Council website to provide wider access to the presentations, questions and discussions. Lunch will not be served at this event.

Please could you respond to this invitation to Louise Whitney ([lwhitney@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:lwhitney@buckscc.gov.uk)) by **Friday 8<sup>th</sup> October**. Due to the predicted popularity of this event if you do not respond to this invitation by the 8<sup>th</sup> October we will assume that you are not able to attend and may allocate your place to another individual.

We look forward to your attendance at this important event.

Yours sincerely

Cllr. Valerie Letheren  
Cabinet Member for Transportation,  
Buckinghamshire County Council

Cllr Martin Tett  
Cabinet Member for Planning & Environment  
Buckinghamshire County Council

**HS2 Stakeholder Summit: The Environmental Impacts**  
**9am- 1pm, 15<sup>th</sup> October**  
**The Oculus, Aylesbury Vale, Gatehouse Rd, Aylesbury**

09.00	Registration	
09.15	<i>Welcome and introduction</i>	Sir Henry Aubrey-Fletcher
09.20	<i>Our work since the last Summit</i>	Cllr Valerie Letheren and Cllr Martin Tett
09.25	<i>MPs Statement on HS2</i>	Rt Hon John Bercow MP Rt Hon Dominic Grieve MP
09.30	<i>High Speed 2 – Progress Update</i>	Sir Brian Briscoe, Chairman of HS2 Ltd Peter Miller, HS2 Ltd Environment Lead
09.50	<i>DfT update</i>	Philip Graham, Deputy Director of High Speed Rail, Department for Transport
10.00	Questions	
<b>10.30</b>	<b>Coffee</b>	
10.50	<i>The Impact of HS2 on Natural Beauty</i>	Steve Rodrick, Chief Officer -Chilterns AONB Chiltern Conservation Board
11.10	<i>HS1 – Coalition working for the Natural Environment</i>	Pete Raine, previously Chief Executive - Kent Wildlife Trust
11.30	<i>HS1 to HS2: experiences and lessons from assessing effects on the historic environment</i>	George Lambrick, Historic Environment Consultant
11.50	<i>Buckinghamshire Landscape Information System (BLIS): a tool for predicting and assessing impacts on environment and landscape</i>	Mark Bailey, Natural Environment Team Manager, Buckinghamshire County Council
12.10	Questions	
12.40	Closing of Summit	Cllr Martin Tett
12.45	Networking and BLIS demonstration	

# Rt Hon Cheryl Gillan MP



House of Commons, LONDON, SW1A 0AA

## Message from Cheryl Gillan MP to the Buckinghamshire County Council HS2 Stakeholder Summit – 15<sup>th</sup> October 2010

I continue to be very concerned about the possible impact on Chesham and Amersham from the proposed route for HS2, published by the last Government and currently being evaluated by the Department of Transport.

The environment in the Chilterns is unique – hence our AONB status which should act as a protection against interventions which could damage our area.

I am making strong representations to the Secretary of State for Transport, ensuring that all the information and objections from my constituents are passed directly to his office. I have met with him and recently invited him to visit the route through Chesham and Amersham and to have a meeting with key local representatives.

I would ask all representative groups to keep me informed of information, questions and advice they would like to have answered by HS2 and the Department of Transport (DfT) so that I can ensure that they are taken into consideration.

My office is advising constituents on actions they can take and I am making my own enquiries in other areas. For example, I have recently asked the Environment Agency if they can carry out an environmental impact assessment and I am looking at gathering more information working with other parliamentary colleagues along the route. I will be having another meeting shortly with engineers who have produced an alternative route to receive an update of their progress in discussions with HS2 and DfT.

I am planning a submission to the Secretary of State for the Environment to commence a debate with that Department on the total environmental impact of a High Speed Rail network and would welcome any contributions that can be added to my own.

If the HS2 project is progressed, DfT is planning to announce a preferred route at the end of the year and they will be carrying out a lengthy consultation in the New Year. If the route chosen is the one through Chesham and Amersham this period will be very important in terms of ensuring a focussed and well argued case is marshalled against the route.

This is a long process and it will not be settled in the near future so it looks as though we will need a sustained campaign. I am sorry I cannot join you today because of other commitments but can assure you of my continuing interest and action against this route.

Handwritten signature of Cheryl Gillan in cursive script, underlined with a horizontal line.

## **Message from David Lidington MP to the HS2 Stakeholder Summit: The Environmental Impacts – 15<sup>th</sup> October 2010**

The new Transport Secretary, Philip Hammond, was in Aylesbury on Thursday 30 September as part of his programme of visits to the areas affected by the proposed High Speed Two line. Earlier in the day, he had travelled with officials to look at the stretch of proposed route that runs through the Aylesbury constituency and it was clear to me from what he said during the meeting that he had indeed been to Wendover, Stoke Mandeville, Walton Court and Hawkslade and Coldharbour/Fairford Leys. He had asked me to invite "a small number of constituents" to meet him. Aylesbury Vale DC agreed to host the meeting in their offices. Around the table we had councillors from all the directly affected areas, and the leadership of both District and County Councils. Some were Conservative, some Liberal Democrat and some (like the chairman of Stoke Mandeville Parish Council and the Chief Executive of AVDC) were non-party.

We had just over an hour for the meeting. Of course I and the other local representatives would have liked longer but I think that we were able to put to the Secretary of State all the main arguments expressed by local people against the route and to challenge the case for HS2 as envisaged in the report presented to the previous government.

Mr Hammond was at pains to make clear that no final decisions had yet been taken and that he was continuing to listen to the evidence and the arguments put forward by opponents. He added that he himself had challenged his officials and HS2 Ltd about other options such as an M1 or an M40 alignment. Having said that, my impression was that he is convinced of the need for a high speed rail route between London, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and Scotland and that at the moment Route 3 remains the preferred option of the Transport Department.

That certainly does not mean that we should give up on our arguments. It does mean that we need to engage with the Department of Transport's arguments in order to challenge their conclusions and change their minds.

There were two arguments in particular which Mr Hammond emphasised. First, he saw High Speed Rail as a transformative project for the competitiveness and prosperity of Northern and Midlands cities. He drew an explicit comparison between the economic impact of the railway revolution in Victorian Britain and the prospects offered by High Speed Rail and pointed out that all the United Kingdom's major economic competitors were planning or developing high speed rail projects. What we did not get to the bottom of at the meeting was how that ambitious vision for HS2 fitted with the language in the HS2 Ltd report (March 2010) suggesting that the impact in growth terms of HS2 on Northern cities would be relatively modest. I shall be writing to Mr Hammond to follow up this point.

Second, Mr Hammond said that capacity on the West Coast Main Line would soon be exhausted and that something (whether additional rail links, motorways or domestic flights) would be needed to meet growing demand. He was challenged at the meeting both on the reliability of his Department's estimate of future demand and on whether, if the underlying problem was capacity on the West Coast Main Line, it would not be both cheaper and less environmentally destructive to upgrade that route rather than build a completely new high speed link. His response was on the latter was that while that alternative might seem attractive, it would of necessity require the shutdown or massive dislocation of the West Coast Main Line over a long period. As for the estimates of demand, he said that the demand modelling done for HS2 was carried out on the same bases as all other transport demand modelling. We did have a brief exchange about whether better broadband would

make HS2 unnecessary. Mr Hammond said that the country would need both. We didn't have time to go into this debate in any depth. Nor did we explore in enough detail the issue of the working assumptions that the Department is making about fare levels on HS2 and how that might affect the demand for travel. This is another issue that I shall be following up by letter.

Obviously, we did raise with the Secretary of State the question of why, if a High Speed Rail link was indeed a national priority, it should go through the Chilterns AONB which has been designated as landscape of national importance. He said that he had asked those questions himself but that the alternatives threw up either technical or environmental or human problems. In an hour, there was not time to debate particular alternatives, such as the M1 or WCML corridors, in any detail (though I did infer from one comment Mr Hammond made that he considered a southern alignment along either route 2 or route 2.5 as being even more environmentally damaging than route 3) and this may be another line of argument for the HS2 Action Alliance to research and develop.

Both councillors and officers from AVDC expressed fears about the impact of the HS2 plan on their hopes of attracting more employers to locate in and around Aylesbury.

Local councillors also raised a number of specific points about the noise and visual impact of HS2, if it were to go ahead, on their communities. Mr Hammond said that he and his civil servants were keen to discuss how to mitigate the impact of a rail link on local residents, suggesting, for example, that the use of embankments in the stretch proposed around the West of Aylesbury would significantly reduce the amount of extra noise heard by residents there. The Transport Department and HS2 Ltd are due to hold meetings with local authorities about noise. I was more than a little perturbed to find that this news had not previously been communicated to either AVDC or Bucks CC but the officials travelling with Mr Hammond said that they would ensure that the Bucks authorities were included.

Mr Hammond explained the Department's planned timetable as follows. Later this year, he will announce whether the Government plans to go ahead with HS2 and will at that time announce a definite preferred route. If the Government decides to go ahead with HS2, then there will be a formal public consultation starting early in 2011 and lasting about six months. The Government would then take until about the end of 2011 to decide whether to proceed with, amend or abandon its plans. If it decided to proceed, with or without changes, a hybrid bill would be drafted in 2012. (Alongside these events, detailed work would be done on a route North from Birmingham). A bill would be introduced to Parliament in 2013. If there is an announcement later this year that Mr Hammond wants to proceed with HS2, then the public consultation would provide the next opportunity seriously to challenge the Department's thinking. Remember too that it is in the nature of how governments operate that they stick to their established policy in public even if they are contemplating changes behind the scenes.

My conclusion overall is that the meeting was certainly worth having but that there is a tough battle ahead to persuade the Department of Transport that this route is wrong. As I have said all along, it's not enough just to say that we don't want this rail link in our area. We have to engage seriously with and challenge the assumptions, evidence and arguments used by the Department. Detailed evidence, based on thorough and accurate research, is our best weapon.

David Lidington  
**Member of Parliament for Aylesbury**



## HS2 Stakeholder Summit: The Environmental Impacts

Title	First Name	Surname	Organisation
	Kate	Ahern	Land Use Consultants
	Tracey	Aldworth	Aylesbury District Council
Cllr	Bruce	Allen	Colne Valley Park
	David	Allen	South Northamptonshire Council
Sir	Henry	Aubrey-Fletcher	Chair of Summit
Mr	Mark	Bailey	Buckinghamshire County Council
Cllr	Mary	Baldwin	Liberal Democrat group
	Deller	Barry	Independent Consultant
	Peter	Beckford	South Bucks District Council
Mr	Tim	Bellamy	Buckinghamshire County Council
The Right	John	Bercow	MP for Buckingham
Cllr	Patricia	Birchley	Buckinghamshire County Council
	Denise	Bollard	Speen Action Group
Sir	Brian	Briscoe	HS2 Ltd
	Philip	Bull	Stonleigh AG
	John	Callaghan	Wycombe District Council
Cllr	John	Cartwright	Aylesbury District Council
	Ray	Challinor	Community Impact Bucks
Cllr	Lesley	Clarke	Wycombe District Council
	Marion	Clayton	Wendover HS2
	Adrian	Cowell	South Northamptonshire Council
	Renee	Dillon	Aylesbury Conservatives
	Alison	Doggett	Chiltern Society
	Nick	Dunkley	Bucks CPRE
	Elliot	Fidler	Department for Transport
	Marilyn	Fletcher	Chiltern Countryside Group
	Tony	Fooks	Civic Voice
	Mel	Foster	Speen Action Group
	Paul	Francis	Chiltern Countryside Group
	Tessa	Fry-Smith	Warwickshire County Council
Dr	Andrew	Gibbs	Burton Green AG
Mr	Neil	Gibson	Buckinghamshire County Council
	John	Gladwin	Beaconsfield Conservatives
	Alan	Goodrum	Chiltern District Council
	Phil	Graham	Department for Transport
	Andrew	Grant	Aylesbury District Council
Mr	David	Green	Buckinghamshire County Council

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	Alison	Doggett	Chiltern Society
	Nick	Dunkley	Bucks CPRE
	Elliot	Fidler	Department for Transport
	Marilyn	Fletcher	Chiltern Countryside Group
	Tony	Fooks	Civic Voice
	Mel	Foster	Speen Action Group
	Paul	Francis	Chiltern Countryside Group
	Tessa	Fry-Smith	Warwickshire County Council
Dr	Andrew	Gibbs	Burton Green AG
Mr	Neil	Gibson	Buckinghamshire County Council
	John	Gladwin	Beaconsfield Conservatives
	Alan	Goodrum	Chiltern District Council
	Phil	Graham	Department for Transport
	Andrew	Grant	Aylesbury District Council
Mr	David	Green	Buckinghamshire County Council

## HS2 Stakeholder Summit: The Environmental Impacts

Title	First Name	Surname	Organisation
	Jeremy	Quinn	Quanton Action Group
	Pete	Raine	Swale Borough Council
	Chris	Rawson	BELP
	Chris	Richards	Chilterns Conservation Board
Cllr	Brian	Roberts	Buckinghamshire County Council
	Steve	Rodrick	Chilterns Conservation Board
Mr	Marcus	Rogers	Buckinghamshire County Council
Cllr	Nick	Rose	Chiltern District Council
	Clare	Rowntree	National Farmers Union
	Joe	Rukin	Stop HS2 Action Group
Cllr	Jeremy	Ryman	Chiltern District Council
	Karen	Satterford	Wycombe District Council
	Adrian	Saunders	Oxfordshire County Council
	Andrew	Severs	Weston under Wetherly AG
	Nigel	Shepherd	HS2 Amersham Action Group
Cllr	Alan	Sherwell	Aylesbury District Council
	Rae	Sloan	HS2 Twyford Action
Cllr	Linda	Smith	Chiltern District Council
	Michael	Stubbs	National Trust
	Judith	Swadling	Turweston Parish Council
Cllr	Jean	Teesdale	Wycombe District Council
Cllr	Martin	Tett	Buckinghamshire County Council
	Windsor	Thomas	Cholesbury AG
	Wendy	Tobitt	Berks Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust
	Brian	True-May	Conserve the Chilterns and Countryside
	Marc	Tuner	Natural England
Cllr	Ruth	Vigor-Hedderly	Buckinghamshire County Council
	Diggory	Waite	Chiltern Railways
Cllr	Alan	Walters	South Bucks District Council
Cllr	John	Warder	Chiltern District Council
Prof.	Colin	Waters	
	John	Watson	Aston Clinton Parish Council
Cllr	Rachel	Webb	BALC
	Bruce	Weston	HS2 Action Alliance
	Hilary	Wharf	HS2 Action Alliance
	Andrew	Wild	Aylesbury Vale CPRE