

CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT RURAL ENGLAND

CPRE Branch High Speed Rail Seminar
128 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SW
on Wednesday, 13 April 2011

Present: Mike Overall (Chiltern Society)
Alison Doggett (Chiltern Society)
Jim Fletcher (CPRE Oxfordshire)
Peter Hopkins (CPRE Northamptonshire)
Bob Jones (CPRE Staffordshire)
Lillian Burns (CPRE North West)
Bettina Lange (CPRE East Midlands)
Michael Nidd (CPRE Hertfordshire)
Gerald Kells (CPRE West Midlands)
Nick Dunkley (CPRE Buckinghamshire)
David Jarman (CPRE Buckinghamshire)

Attending: Ralph Smyth (Senior Transport Campaigner)
Shaun Spiers (Chief Executive) – afternoon only
Fiona Howie (Head of Planning and the Regions) – morning only
Judith Rosten (Policy Officer)
Professor Andrew McNaughton (Chief Engineer, HS2 Ltd)
Peter Miller (Environment Leader, HS2 Ltd) – both post lunch session only
Tony Burton (Director, Civic Voice) – post-lunch session only

Morning Session

Fiona Howie introduced the session and noted that the day was intended to develop National Office's response to the HSR consultation and input into broader campaigning on the issue.

Update from National Office on HSR work

Ralph Smyth gave an initial update on the key areas of work and noted that HSR timeline intended phase 1 be completed by 2024, with work having commenced in 2017, and open to the public by 2026. The three main streams of work were set out as follows:

- Stream 1: covering Phase 1 of HS2, which encompasses the consultation on the London-Birmingham/Lichfield route. Once the consultation results have been reviewed the Government will work on the Environmental Impact Assessment. This will be followed by the introduction of a Hybrid Bill in 2013, with the aim of getting Royal Assent in 2015;
- Stream 2: this covers the Phase 2 Lichfield-Manchester and Leeds route and an initial informal consultation is expected in early 2012;
- Stream 3: this covers wider Government transport policy including aviation and roads. A National Policy Statement (NPS) on National Networks (Rail and Trunk Roads) is due to be published for consultation in December 2011. In addition, a scoping document for a Sustainable Framework for UK Aviation, in place of an Airports NPS, had been released for consultation.

NB This division into streams is CPRE's analysis and is not based on anything official.

An update of national office work was also given and it was noted that:

- CPRE's report *Getting Back on Track* had been well received from other NGOs as well as by MPs and officials;
- Meetings were taking place with DfT and HS2 Ltd officials;

- Meetings with Ministers were being held but it had been difficult engaging with Phillip Hammond, though a meeting would be held shortly;
- The launch of the Right Lines Charter had gone well and organisations supporting it represent over 2 million people and a broad range of interests;
- Recruitment for a HSR Campaign Manager was underway and whose role would be to promote the Charter (including increasing sign up) and its objectives.

Update from branches and regions on HSR activity

Each attendee gave an update on work they had undertaken in relation to HS2

Buckinghamshire:

- Had taken decision to accept principle of HSR but felt that current HS2 plans were flawed. Wanted nuanced approach and recognised they couldn't put all their eggs in one basket;
- Felt that the strategy behind HS2 needed rethinking and that campaigning needed to be focused on national rather than local issues to avoid nimby criticisms;
- They were taking a double edged approach to consider mitigation, in addition to national strategy, and were looking at how to support local communities affected by HS2.

Chiltern Society:

- Are not opposed to the concept of HSR in principle but their official position is to oppose to any route going through the Chilterns (the Society's area is larger than the AONB);
- Noted that the Chilterns were one of only two AONBs with a statutory body;
- Being part of the Charter group helped bridge the gap between action groups and campaigning groups;
- CS volunteers were assisting a Chilterns Conservation Board led group on ecological landscape and historic environment surveys and a CS volunteer photographer had documented the route through the Chilterns onto a DVD that would be sent to all MPs.
- Felt that as a Society its scope for making national comment was limited but felt there was a need for a national transport strategy;
- The single route option being consulted on was strongly opposed. Alternatives that avoided a route through the Chilterns AONB needed to be considered;

Hertfordshire:

- Although not currently affected, one of the proposed alternative routes would go through the county and that this route would have serious implications for the county;
- Feel that the case for HS2 has not been sufficiently made and non-monetised impacts have not been suitably considered. So serious rethinking of the strategy is needed.

Oxfordshire:

- The preferred route clips the county and affects four parishes, however alternative routes would have a larger impact;
- Were highly relieved the proposed route did not follow the M40 as this would have resulted in islanding;
- Noted that varying the curvature of the route would increase the length but have no significant benefits to affected villages;
- Strong concerns about effects on tranquillity on an area of relatively undeveloped countryside;
- Felt that a new line was needed for capacity reasons and efforts locally should be focused on mitigation, including engagement with affected parishes, leaving national bodies to argue the case for better consideration of the route.

Northamptonshire:

- Action groups in county are keen for CPRE support and the Branch has received some criticism for stepping back from doing so. Apart from those directly affected, a

small corner of the county, much of the county is not expressing strong views, or else is more focussed on the potential impacts on MML and WCML;

- Branch is seeking to work with the 6/7 Parish Councils affected rather than action groups and is advocating a more reasoned approach than outright opposition;
- Looking to focus on mitigation, particularly for sensitive ecological areas;
- Would like guidance on which of embankments, cuttings and viaducts are least damaging for wildlife and visual impacts.

EMRG:

- Had coordinated with other campaigning organisations and NGOs and is seeking to ensure that the East Midlands has a consistent message;
- The region had not yet decided on its positioning but felt the claimed economic benefits seemed questionable;
- Business representatives and local authorities were in favour but needed a regional transport strategy, which of course has just been abolished;
- Were concerned that investment in phase 2 would affect the likelihood Midland Mainline being electrified;
- Felt that the capacity argument for HS2 north of Birmingham needed further work;
- Noted that research done under the previous government (DaSTS) showed that movement in urban areas rather than between them was more important;
- East Midlands Airport was not engaging with stakeholder events.

WMRG:

- Were not opposed to the concept of HSR but had concerns over parts of the route and the proposed parkway station;
- Had undertaken some press work, attended conferences including Stop HS2, and developed a short statement setting out their positioning on the route, speed and parkway station;
- Felt that in terms of impact the proposed parkway in greenbelt was most damaging but that changing this would result in severe delays to HS2 which would have political implications;
- That many of the proposed economic benefits relied on transport schemes which they had been lobbying for over twenty years but still had not been taken forward. There was a degree of scepticism about whether these would be progressed.
- Warwickshire not able to be present but its position, including its note on the consultation questions, was noted.

Staffordshire:

- Noted that major impact on the county would occur if HS2 was extended to Manchester, which would affect much more of the county than at present;
- Felt the money could be better spent on general infrastructure improvements;
- Felt the benefits to local economy were questionable.

NWRG:

- The group had not yet decided on its positioning towards HSR. As far as could be determined, individual opinions appeared to range across the piece;
- There is a case to be made for looking at what difference could be made to the existing rail system if a comprehensive series of smaller measures were carried out (rather than the 'big bang' of HS2) including re-examining all the rail recommendations that came out of the multi-modal studies;
- In terms of other organisations, TravelWatch NW is currently very favourable as is Yorks & Humber Transport Activists Roundtable;
- The NW regional Leaders Forum had produced a flawed DaSTS study on HSR with terms of reference that led to the study supporting HSR.
- The route could not go into Manchester Piccadilly so another city centre site is needed and therefore immediate connections with local rail services may not be possible. Furthermore, only vague airport links have been intimated and are different on each published route map;

- Held strong concerns that the airport should not be developed as a commercial hub but an ‘airport city’ is now proposed as an Enterprise Zone. Much of Cheshire’s Green Belt is under threat as a result.

In summary it was noted that a key issue revolved around whether to try to push to delay the approval process of phase 1 (i.e. beyond the current Parliament), to enable major changes to be made to the route, or to focus on minor changes, mitigation and phase 2. Initial responses to the Charter had been largely positive in each area but more time was needed to gauge opinion. More campaigning work to explain CPRE and Charter position to the wider public, particularly at the very local level along the route, was needed.

Wider objectives for CPRE’s campaigning on HSR

This session took the form of a thought shower to promote thinking about the bigger picture. The following key words and objectives for CPRE’s campaign on HSR were proposed as ideas (rather than necessarily agreed upon):

- Tranquillity
- The right route not the fastest time
- Integration – wider strategy
- Highly valued and designated landscapes
- Minimize environmental impacts
- More even and sustainable regions
- Enterprise zones should tie in with HS2 (EM & Y&H)
- Coherent regional and national strategies
- Meet future travel needs
- Living countryside/rural economy
- Local rail
- Protect countryside and undesignated landscapes
- Maintain links with business groups
- No more major road expansion
- Definition of HSR
- Visual impact and good design
- Reduce carbon emissions
- Reduce long distance commuting
- No Parkways
- Need to look at different options

Presentation & discussion with Professor McNaughton & Peter Miller

Shaun Spiers chaired the session and introduced the speakers. The speakers gave a short PowerPoint presentation on HS2 followed by a discussion. The presentation covered:

- The need (demand; congestion) and benefits (capacity; economy boost; links with Europe) of HS2;
- The timeline for completion. This included a planned consultation of the draft EIA before the Bill was deposited though the form this consultation would take was as yet unclear. The timetable was quite an ambitious programme;
- Addressing the challenges of design such as moving the line away from communities and heritage; green tunnels; deep cuts; planting of more than two million trees; noise barriers and bunds; regeneration around stations.
- They were not yet at the detailed design stage for aesthetics or mitigation; they hoped to be able to produce photomontages of different structure designs (e.g. viaducts) to ‘get the conversation going’ as to what would be best;
- The issue of mitigation, such as tree planting, to break up the view of some structures was raised;

- The released capacity on West Coast Main Line was discussed and it was stated that 11 extra services in each direction, per hour, could be accommodated. This was not train paths but an assessment of how many extra services could be provided. These services were not set in stone but would at least help put a financial value on the freed up capacity. An industry led group headed by Passenger Focus and Network Rail had been set up to investigate the best use of this extra capacity;
- That the proposed 'Y' route had been developed using similar drivers to the development of Phase 1, notably demand, time, minimisation of environmental impacts, cost and engineering, city centre and interchange station options

NB The presentation was over 14Mb so we have been unable to distribute it.

Questions from the floor

What would be the consequences of reducing the maximum speed?

- Route design has been and remains for 225mph/360kph as this fits with world standard tried and tested technology and the noise of these trains and speeds is known. New French lines are being designed to 350km/h and Madrid-Barcelona services would operate soon at this speed. 320km/h paths were available on HS1 for new trains on order. The Chinese want to design for 450km/h with a view to going to 500km/h. David Rowlands had said that if one was only building London to Birmingham there wouldn't be the need to design for such high speeds.
- Timings, energy use, noise, impacts and mitigation has been designed around and worked out from these known parameters. Careful alignment of the route would future proof the system for faster trains. But, use of faster trains would depend on business need and impact – a faster train would need to be a quieter train to fit within noise mitigations designed for the track.

If a reduced value was given to small time savings and weight was given to non-monetary impacts, such as tranquillity, would the route have been very different.?

- Whatever the speed, since time immemorial from a railway perspective a straight route is the best one, e.g. for reducing maintenance costs. For the route under consultation much of the route is curved, whereas a slower railway could have sharper curves but longer straights.
- Most of the route has been designed to be equidistant between villages. There was a desire to avoid setting villages against each other. The impact comes down to design and noise control.
- In response to the consultation suggested route alterations had been received and each would be assessed. HS2 want to get the route right and are not attached to the current route. After 18 months of design it would be the epitome of arrogance to say this route is perfect.

What is the tolerance for reconsultation?

- Legal advice had been taken on this issue, which stated, somewhat unhelpfully, that proposal to change the route would be taken on its own merits. If a section of the route was changed dramatically, that section would have to be reconsulted on and that would impact on the timetable which was very tight. The Government timeframe indicated a desire to go ahead with all dispatch. Whether a fresh round of consultation is needed may come down to politics. Following the current consultation some aspects may need revisiting and this had the potential to delay parliamentary procedures.
- If there were significant changes proposed in one section that could be managed but otherwise not. The 'Homes not Bones' campaign in Ashford secured a change at a late stage to the CTRL route and similarly there had been changes to Crossrail during the course of the Hybrid Bill.

- The limit of deviation around the line in the Bill would be tight though varied in different locations (e.g. where there were cuttings proposed) but would be approximately +/- 25-30 metres. Vertical deviation limits had also been developed. There were tensions with the cost of land to be purchased, the need for certainty etc.

A lot of the economic benefits beyond the immediate area around stations rely not on HS2 but other rail capacity. What more can you tell us about regeneration around stations?

- The consultation provides an opportunity to make points and meet with ministers.
- In London developments, station changes have been kept within the footprint of existing stations and this has formed the basis for discussions with Birmingham City Council. The Birmingham Interchange idea had received support as it allows the city to face north as well as to London. [was that said?]
- For Birmingham understanding the opportunities to create a second cross-city service to Coventry and Wolverhampton, along with better links to Milton Keynes and Northampton is important. The released capacity allows regional connectivity to be reconsidered.
- Should HS2 present recommendations for a link between Birmingham and East Midlands airports the distance could be covered in 22 minutes – the same time as between different Heathrow terminals.

What are the respective noise, design and cost implications for embankments, cuttings and viaducts?

- As currently designed there is an excess of spoil along the route which provided the opportunity to build ‘false cuttings’ along the route, which are good from both visual and noise perspectives. This teamed with landscaping and planting provides good mitigation.
- There was a need to be passionate about good design. The difference in cost between embankments and viaducts is not great, though the latter are more expensive, and part of the aim of the consultation is to get an idea of which option is preferred, though it may depend on topography. Embankments have natural colours, particularly once matured, that can blend into the surrounding landscape. In some cases, the sides of embankments could be raised so as to reduce the impact of the line.
- There has been much recent innovation in low visual impact noise barriers for viaducts.

England’s intricate landscapes have developed over millennia. How can large scale interventions implemented over a few years hope to fit in within these ‘living landscapes’?

How HS2 can incorporate recommendations from [Making Space for Nature](#), Defra’s 2010 Lawson Review?

- In planning the route HS2 endeavoured to thread the route through the landscape and minimise overall impacts on biodiversity. The railway could be seen as a green corridor for nature conservation – the current rail network has over 140 SSSIs.
- There were opportunities for creating corridors running across the new line, such as through the use of green tunnels. The mitigation plan could link up various natural sites.
- There have been discussions with the NFU and CLA about impacts on farming. Some spoil could be high quality soil and by careful landscaping could be used to screen noise such as through a flattened bund while maximising the area that can be farmed.
- Off-site mitigation would also be looked into as a possibility but is more complex as it is not part of the transport infrastructure so needs agreement.
- CTRL had a 10/12 year period for maintenance of surrounding areas, perhaps something longer like 25 years is needed to get everything up to maturity and for planting to be self-perpetuating. Legacy funding to support mitigation in perpetuity was a possibility but options were still being considered.

How will the scheme construct a positive legacy in terms of design so that it is not just a functional response to need?

- The challenge is to make it as invisible as possible. Innovation through design often leads to better overall solutions, for example looking at whether noise and safety barriers can be combined to streamline infrastructure. The clutter of posts and fences on railway infrastructure is a concern and HS1 used standard 1990s French designs, for example its bridges, that can be improved upon.
- Design can be divided into railway wide equipment and structures. The former (such as Overhead Line Electrification) will be the same across the system and a sleek, slim, low impact design will be sought.
- But structures (such as viaducts) have got to be appropriate to the location. There will be a tension when considering individual locations between a general aspiration to minimalist design and something more vernacular and structures. It has to be about what is right in each place.

HS2 is based on developments in other countries. How is it being adapted so that it is relevant to the UK?

- The technology and control systems are international and so the same but the terrain and built environment is very different so the design has to be appropriate to Britain. Good design does not cost much more and we cannot end up with a dog's breakfast.
- In terms of intensity of use HS2 would be second to lines in Japan, where there are also many relatively short trips.

How could HS2 be designed to fit better with a wider range of future transport scenarios, such as a much greater demand for local passenger and freight rail traffic that could arise if oil and carbon prices increase much more than forecast.

- The essence of HS2 is to separate out long distance travel between cities from stopping services. The railway of today goes through town centres. The railways have much greater potential to switch relatively short distance trips of 30 miles. There is much debate on how to use West Coast Mainline, Midlands Mainline and Cross Country to bring cities closer together. HS2 could introduce a whole new regional network and shrink trips such as Leeds – Bristol, for which rail has a low proportion of trips.
- Part of the aim of adopting European standards is to allow for double deck trains, i.e. jumbo rather than Concorde.

What will the performance of 'Classic compatible' stock be and what could its impacts on the existing network and services be?

- Classic compatible is the 'son of Eurostar' but one caveat about its performance is that unlike existing Pendolinos it would be unable to tilt. The new trains would have much more power so could accelerate more quickly. Once phase 1 is open, the journey time between Lichfield and Manchester lost as a result would be 1 minute, and 7 minutes between Lichfield and Glasgow.
- Irrespective of HS2 more capacity is needed on West Coast Mainline as it is largely full. Stafford needs resignalling and design. Pressing capacity issues north of Lichfield will have been dealt with by the time HS2 is operational.

Consultation questions

Each of the consultation questions was considered in turn. Views expressed were:

Question i)

- The question itself needed challenging as the whole rail network not just intercity needed to be improved at;
- HS2 in isolation would not solve the economic problems of areas not close to HS2 stations such as the Black Country and it was felt that additional rail infrastructure and holistic regional strategies needed to be considered as one. CPRE's campaigning against some road proposals has highlighted that transport infrastructure alone is not an answer without wider regeneration strategies and we needed to be consistent with this;
- It was felt that support should be given for enhancements of capacity but that this needed to be tempered with the above noted concerns. If such enhancements were to help tackle climate change effectively, complimentary policies on fares and other forms of travel would be needed as well as compromises on top speeds;
- That better transport was needed to stop decline, let alone support growth and that it was important to ensure that money was not only put into areas that would have the most economic growth;
- The question provided an opportunity to support and push for improvements to branch lines.

Question ii)

- It was felt that a negative response was appropriate but that it was difficult to form a judgement given the lack of data;
- It was considered that options to reinstate old but existing sections of line should be considered in route development;
- That there was an argument for better HSR in the regions, many of which currently relied on slow old lines, and for east-west connections which are currently very poor;
- That arguing for better use of current lines was not realistic given capacity issues but segregated line development should be considered to address bottlenecks;
- Any answer explicitly needed to argue for stations to be in cities not at parkways;
- There was a need to dispassionately deconstruct the business- and financial- case approach;
- More thought needed to be given to the 'problem' HS2 was seeking to solve – did England want high energy fast movement or compact development?

Question iii)

- That CPRE's basic stance should be that not all options had to be properly considered, including whether extra capacity could be gained without new lines north of Birmingham. However additional tracking on the current route would cause problems at a number of stations that went through towns;
- The Midland Mainline was not electrified yet and issues such as this should be addressed before looking at the next phase of HS2;
- Ministers are not currently open to listening to alternatives;
- In Birmingham capacity not speed was the key issue;
- Supporting a phased approach should not prejudice any future objection by CPRE to the scheme north of Birmingham when it emerges;
- Any evidence that goes against the conclusions of pp12-13 of Getting Back on Track welcomed, as national office considered the case for a new line south of Lichfield was very strong;
- General agreement that the roll out of HS2 should be phased, but important to make clear that overall response is negative as disagree with proposals as they are;
- Agreement that if HS2 is developed it needs to be properly linked with HS1.

Question iv)

- Japanese experience indicated that construction for very high speed needed to be concrete slab rather than sleepers and ballast, which would have carbon and noise implications;
- The benchmark speed needed some qualification;
- Support was given for the proposed response to section 2 and section 3 of the question;
- To ensure full compatibility and flexibility Midland Mainline needed electrification.

Questions v) and vi)

- There was a need to test different options and different design speeds;
- The proposed parkway station in the West Midlands was key to current route design but other routes had not been properly considered;
- The part of the question on mitigation could not reasonably be answered as relevant imagery had not been provided for consideration;
- Treatment of non-designated landscapes had not been touched on in the sustainability appraisal;
- Noise issues had not received proper attention.

Question vii)

- It was suggested that CPRE should make a general comment that those impacted should be properly compensated without going into detail.
- It was also suggested that if properties were bought HS2 should have a duty of responsibility to maintain them.

Local engagement and campaigning

Options for local engagement were identified as follows:

- Charter
- Websites – some branches had clear sites but others needed some support
- Parishes, Town Councils and Local Authorities and action groups should be approached as appropriate
- Events such as local fetes provided good opportunities for CPRE groups
- There were opportunities to make contact with other NGOs e.g. Ramblers, WI
- MPs and Lords
- Branches could take advantage of regional groups to link up;

In addition, it was noted that:

- The developing relationship with NALC could be used to access relevant county associations to improve outreach to Parish and Town Councils;
- That simple leaflets setting out key issues would make campaigning more easy – a Q&A information sheet was currently being developed;
- That outside the communities directly affected there was not much public interest;
- Mail shots to associations of local councils would help raise awareness of CPRE view;
- That it was important for regional and branch messages to be consistent with the Charter;
- There was a need to ensure the public understood the subtleties of CPREs position;

- Need to continue to push for the importance of getting HSR right, rather than completing it to a set deadline.

Conclusions and next steps

- It was noted that the comments from the meeting would be taken forward to the Policy Committee meeting the following day;
- The need for branches, regional groups and national office to keep each other updated, particularly with regard to meetings with MPs was stressed;
- The Charter, with its support from a wide range of NGOs was an important campaigning tool and should provide the basis for further work.