



Department
for Transport

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From the Minister of State
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Dear Rob,

Thank you for providing me with an opportunity to visit your constituency in July. I was pleased to be able to meet with you and to hear directly from local residents about their experiences of HS2 and the challenges that they are facing. I promised to provide a written response to some of the detailed issues raised by representatives from the Wendover community. I am sorry for the delay in writing. I will write to you separately dealing with the concerns raised during the meeting I had with your constituents in Stoke Mandeville.

Proposal for a retaining wall in the cutting to the north of the green tunnel

I have asked HS2 Ltd to look at this proposal and I have been informed that the company and its contractors have engaged extensively with the Wendover HS2 Action Group through a series of seven detailed technical meetings on noise and hydrology issues between November 2020 and July 2021.

I understand the proposal for a retained cutting at the northern end of the Wendover Green Tunnel has been discussed in depth with HS2 Ltd and its designers, ASC, with presentations on design proposals to the Group on 29th January 2021. The designer set out their approach to managing the Hydrology in the area by developing a groundwater model and verifying the model through a series of on-going testing through the detailed design period.

Further presentations on the drainage design were provided on 11th March 2021 and the development of modelling on 13th July 2021. These presentations have outlined that the retained solution would not be suitable at this location as it would need to be a significant embedded retaining structure that itself has the potential to disrupt and divert groundwater flows. Based on ground investigation information, groundwater flows from HS2 Ltd.'s proposed earthwork cutting would be relatively small in comparison to stormwater flows and effects would be mitigated through planned attenuation ponds.

Mitigation of operational noise, in particular the noise modelling methodology and assumptions, has also been discussed with the Group on a number of occasions to demonstrate that the methodology used is robust. Modelling has demonstrated that a combination of barriers and earthworks to the north and south of Wendover Green Tunnel will provide mitigation to meet the conditions of the Environmental Minimum Requirements. A Noise Demonstration Report will be submitted to Buckinghamshire Council with the Schedule 17 application to confirm that operational noise has been mitigated as far as reasonably practicable.

HS2 Ltd is committed to continuing engagement with the Wendover HS2 Action Group and will continue to meet with them to provide detail of the ongoing design and further information on work to mitigate construction impacts.

Mined Tunnel Proposal

Many of your constituents raised the Wendover mined tunnel proposal as the potential solution to the other issues raised on my visit, reasoning such issues would not exist if the route were underground. As you know, I have reviewed previous correspondence on this issue, as well as the independent report from KPMG and the findings of the IPA review of how this issue was handled. I am sorry to say that I remain unconvinced that the mined tunnel proposal will work out easier or cheaper to construct. This is particularly so now that Notice to Proceed took place over a year ago and detailed design of the EKFB surface route is now well advanced. My assessment remains that it is harder and more expensive to construct, and that Michael Byng has again underestimated the difficulty and complexity of the construction conditions of the proposal.

St Marys Church, Wendover

I am informed that the original assurance provided to St Mary's outlined that HS2 Ltd would pay the church up to £250,000 to soundproof the building. The agreement to make payment relied on the church being able to produce some funds in addition to the HS2 funds for the project, for the church to obtain all necessary consents, and for the works to actually have been commenced.

I understand that the church are not currently in a position to produce the capital to obtain the consents required to commence the works, so the conditions for payment have not been met. I am aware that HS2 Ltd have been working with the church to see if it is possible to provide a portion of the £250,000 as a contribution towards obtaining the necessary consents, with the remaining funding to be paid in full and final settlement upon commencement of the main works. HS2 Ltd have worked to gain approval to vary the Assurance given so they can provide some of the funding to go towards the cost of obtaining consents.

This will be a draw down from the £250,000 and not amount to any further additional funding. I understand that HS2 Ltd are in the process of arranging a meeting with the Church to update them on this development.

Wendover Cricket Club

I am aware that HS2 Ltd are working closely with Wendover Cricket Club and their professional advisors to facilitate a relocation from their previous site at the Ellesborough Road Ground to a relocation site at Tring Road. The Secretary of State has already acquired the land from Wendover Cricket Club and at the Tring Road Relocation site. HS2 Ltd have carried out a detailed study with the Club to identify temporary facilities and there are a number of options which the club are actively pursuing.

Whilst the ultimate responsibility for planning consent and delivery of the relocation sits with the Club, they have been able to progress their design for their permanent relocation facilities and HS2 Ltd acquisitions suppliers are currently in detailed discussions with the club on their proposals. HS2 Ltd has proposed terms for a compensation agreement that would provide funding to the club as a part of their compensation entitlement to deliver this relocation scheme. I understand that discussions on this funding agreement are progressing. I am also aware that HS2 Ltd have already made a number of payments to the club for their costs in developing the relocation design and there are no outstanding claims from the Club.

I trust this covers the key issues that I said I would provide a response to. I am grateful for the time your constituents took to meet with me in Wendover and I hope that they find this reply helpful.

Best Wishes,



ANDREW STEPHENSON MP

MINISTER OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT