

HS2 WENDOVER PARISH COUNCIL PUBLIC MEETING



28 JUNE 2024

On 28 June Wendover Parish Council held its second public meeting to discuss the current status of HS2 construction near Wendover, and what's likely to happen next. It was attended by about 70 residents. As with the first meeting last November, WPC partnered with the Wendover HS2 Mitigation group (WHS2).

The HS2 local contractor EKFB was also invited, but declined, partly because the General Election the following week meant that it was not allowed to make public comments.

Council chair Julie Williams started by saying "the working assumption is that HS2 will go ahead." The purpose of the meeting was to assess progress, what happens next, and to take feedback from residents present at the meeting.

The WHS2 members gave presentations on how they and WPC have been working to monitor, and in some cases successfully pressurise, HS2 and its contractors to reduce the impact on Wendover residents and the environment.

Murray Cooke said that construction near Wendover is likely to continue until 2028 at the earliest, although further delays are possible, with 2030 a possibility.

He gave brief updates on progress on the Small Dean Viaduct, where five of six piers were completed by late June, with the six due to go in while the A413 was due to be closed while a dogleg between the

piers is built. The final "push" of the lengthy steel viaduct is currently scheduled for 25 March 2025.

A "mass haul" by trucks along the HS2 trench is planned for stone excavated from the southern tunnel, north past Aylesbury to build up a viaduct at Stoke Mandeville. At the time of writing progress is still halted by problems in getting past Ellesborough Road – the latest delay was due to the discovery of a high voltage electricity cable buried across the planned route.

Other aspects that WHS2 is engaging with HS2 include the Small Dean bridleway, which EKFB wants to close; ongoing problems with providing a safe cycle way along the A413 past the viaduct works; the new Tring Road cricket ground being paid for by HS2 where the archaeological survey has been completed; plans to use Dobbins Lane as an access road for trucks for construction of a water balancing tank in the fields beyond; and the burial of the water pipe running beyond the gardens on Lionel Avenue so unsightly security fences can be removed.

Andrew Burnett gave an update on likely noise levels affecting residents, some of which remain unresolved. WHS2 was hoping to approach the Government's Transport Select Committee to further query HS2's noise calculations, but this was brought to a halt by the election.

WHS2 has also done research that suggests that planting vegetation

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on the areas surrounding the north end cutting will reduce noise levels by a significant 5dB. In 2016 HS2 agreed to pay St Mary's Church £250,000 to help with soundproofing. So far nothing has been received.

Ron Peterson talked about the traffic impact of HS2's current and planned construction works. "We are seeking a solution to congestion on South Street," he said. "Bucks Council traffic strategists are reviewing the restoration of Hale Lane down to the A413 roundabout. There is also a proposal for a feeder lane from the Wendover direction onto the A413."

Andrew Burnett talked about local water issues. The walls along the HS2 north cutting will divert groundwater north with the potential of flooding farm fields. For this reason, HS2 is building a holding tank in the fields near Kings Farm Shop, which will then feed into the existing Stoke Brook.

Dobbins Lane will be used to access these fields during construction, although there seems to be some chance that EKFB will rethink this and use the much lower populated Nash Lee End for access.

A £1.5m pipe has been built to take water into Weston Turvill reservoir. One or two artesian boreholes will be sunk to maintain the flow to Hampden Pond.

Murray Cooke talked about environmental impacts, including visual appearances. Details of the pylons that will carry the catenary wires for the trains have emerged. There will be single support poles for much of the length. However, sidings near Nash Lee may need twin-pole bridge type supports.

An FOI request finally revealed that green belt land will be kept

and the land restored after use, not re-developed. There will be no rebuild of the Ellesborough Road cottages – the gap will be landscaped. The old cricket pavilion will be demolished, and the land will become agricultural.

Councillor Leigh Porter talked about her projects with community engagement, including the distribution of 4,000 packets of sunflower seeds and her idea of a sunflower walk through the Wendover streets. She has also organised a second "pub crawl" for the August

bank holiday, where residents take in a score card to each of the Wendover pubs for the chance to win a free pint every month.

"We must start to do things and help us remember that we are a proper community," she said.

"Wendover News is a big part of that, keeping us all updated on HS2, so we are not just dependent on EKFB information." Cllr Porter has also led the campaign for spending locally in Wendover, at least £5 per week.

In the public Q&A afterwards, residents raised points about HGVs on South Street

(residents are urged to record the reg number and time and report this to Bucks Council); concerns about lorries along Dobbins Lane, particularly because of parked cars and the hazards to cyclists; the "temporary" traffic lights for the Ellesborough Road diversion (a power line has to be moved before they can go); and questions about water monitoring on the Wendover Brook.

Words and pictures: *Simon Eccles*



Wendover Parish Councillors and HS2 members take questions at the meeting.

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