

## Andrew

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**From:** picketp@aol.com  
**Sent:** 08 October 2021 14:23  
**To:** andrew.stephenson@dft.gov.uk  
**Cc:** 'BUTLER, Rob'; 'BANKS, Elliott K'; 'Murray Cooke'; 'Andrew'; 'Sheila Bulpett'; 'Paul O'halloran'; 'Joan Hancox'; 'Richard Hiscock'; 'Peter Martin'; 'Jo Durden-Moore'; 'Steve Bowles'; 'Richard Newcombe (Cllr)'; 'Peter Strachan'; 'Andrew Band'; richard.d.williams@outlook.com  
**Subject:** Noise mitigation for Wendover

Dear Minister,

Thank you for your letter dated 21<sup>st</sup> September to Rob Butler. Thank you also for your visit to Wendover, where you were able to see the community and how it would be affected by the noise from HS2 once the line is completed. You say in your letter that proposals will be put forward which will meet the Environmental Minimum Requirements.

The issue in Wendover relates not to the numbers in the Environmental Statement, but to the commitment to *“take all reasonable steps to design and construct altered roads, and to design, construct, operate and maintain the operational railway so that the combined airborne noise from these sources, predicted in all reasonably foreseeable circumstances, does not exceed the lowest observed adverse effect levels”*<sup>[1]</sup>

In other recent Schedule 17 proposals in this area, the numbers of households affected by noise have been small but, in Wendover, the situation is quite different, with nearly 500 homes predicted in the Environmental Statement to exceed the night-time LOAEL limits.

WHS2 (The Wendover HS2 Mitigation Action Group) believes the situation will be even worse than this. On the basis of our calculations, which correct for errors in the HS2 calculation method, the number of homes affected rises to well over 1000. Regardless of whose calculations you believe in, the number of affected homes is so large that it is essential to solve the problem if a reasonable solution can be found. The reason for the retained cutting proposal is to put forward a reasonable solution.

Since some two thirds of the affected homes are in north Wendover, where the train runs in a cutting, this is potentially an easier problem to solve than in south Wendover. WHS2 originally put forward a proposal for a fully retained tanked cutting and your comments on the feasibility of the solution no doubt relate to this. Recently, this proposal has been modified to include a retaining wall on the east side only, which would be a simpler and lower cost proposal than the original while still providing most of the benefits. This modified proposal was the one discussed on your visit.

You cite that the reason for rejection of this proposal is based on the need for a significant embedded retaining structure which itself has the potential to disrupt the groundwater of the aquifer. While this may have applied to the original proposal, this is not a credible technical assertion in relation to the single retaining wall as the excavation required for the base of a gabion based retaining structure will be no more than the depth of actual excavation needed for the sub-base of the track bed. It is this excavation that intercepts the aquifer- not the retaining wall.

It is clear from the plans that HS2 Ltd currently intend for the aquifer groundwater to discharge directly into the west side of cutting and drain directly to Stoke Brook, with what appears to be no form of mitigation.

The gabion-based retaining structure that WHS2 propose in order to mitigate the noise issue is commonly found as a retaining structure for railway embankments. It could easily and cheaply form the type of profile needed to ameliorate the impact of noise on the north of Wendover. Such structures are referenced in the HS2 AONB Detailed Design Principles<sup>[2]</sup>.

You refer to engagement with WHS2 throughout 2021. Indeed, WHS2 would very much have liked to have been able to discuss this issue with HS2 Ltd and/or the contractors, EKFB. However, although there have been limited discussions related to the consideration of tanking of the cutting to mitigate hydrogeological impact, neither HS2 Ltd nor EKFB have ever discussed the detail of the ongoing design for Wendover or the retained cutting proposal, insisting that WHS2 and others await the publication of the Schedule 17 proposal, by which time it will of course be more difficult for the design to be changed without impacting the construction timetable.

Recent attempts to set up a technical meeting have met with no response. However, I welcome your statement that "*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*". As there is a clear misunderstanding regarding the retained cutting proposal WHS2 are making, I am requesting your assistance in asking for an urgent meeting between WHS2 engineers and EKFB/ HS2 Ltd engineers as well as Buckinghamshire Council representatives to properly review the current retained cutting proposal.

In the meantime, I would be grateful if you could arrange that HS2 Ltd/ EKFB are instructed to clearly explain to WHS2, Buckinghamshire Council and the EA, precisely what mitigations they have considered and what reasonable steps they are taking for mitigating the aquifer impact, if they are not pursuing the tanking of the North cutting.

I trust we can look for a prompt response to this email, as time is running very short.

Sincerely,

R J Petersen

Chairman, WHS2 MAG

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<sup>[1]</sup> High Speed Two Phase One Information Paper E20: Control Of Airborne Noise From Altered Roads And The Operational Railway

<sup>[2]</sup> See <https://www.chilternsaonb.org/uploads/files/HS2%20DDP/HS2%20DDP%20Combined%20LR.pdf>