



HS2 workshop

Aylesbury, 25 June 10

This note summarises the key issues raised during a workshop of civic societies and other local groups and volunteers held in June 2010. This was preceded by a presentation and discussion with Alison Munro, Chief Executive of HS2:

- ☛ The assumptions about the total number of trips between London and Birmingham (80,000 per day) need to be questioned and would fundamentally alter to business case
- ☛ There is a need to look at the pros and cons of the whole route to Scotland and not just the stretch between London and Birmingham
- ☛ The proposals appear to be being developed in isolation from wider transport and rail policy and there is a need for an integrated strategy
- ☛ The proposals need to be considered as part of a wider package of measures which will transfer trips from road and air to rail and not remove investment from elsewhere on the rail network
- ☛ The proposals need to aid the country's moves towards an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050
- ☛ There is a mismatch between those who benefit and the negative impacts of the proposals which needs to be addressed
- ☛ The cumulative impact of the route on locally important but undesignated townscape, landscape, buildings, rights of way and heritage is very significant and not yet factored into the proposals, in addition to the impact on national designations
- ☛ The location of stations is key – they need to drive urban regeneration and not greenfield development. Consideration should also be given to a station at an intermediate urban location to bring benefits along the route
- ☛ The regional regeneration benefits indicated need to be demonstrated but could be significant
- ☛ The assumption that international standards and expected speeds should be applied is questionable, especially given the different nature of the English landscape and the opportunities that lower speeds (e.g. 200mph) would bring to introduce curves and a more sensitive route and design
- ☛ The case for freight use should be further explored
- ☛ The strategic options for mitigation should be addressed early on in the development of the proposals in conjunction with the communities most affected.

The civic movement's approach

The workshop identified the following:

- ☛ Civic societies and other local groups will have more influence by working together than apart and by adopting a constructive approach to the debate
- ☛ It is important to focus on the areas where civic societies and other local groups can most add value – while working with others on the different issues
- ☛ Support for a strategic approach which tests any proposals against the priority to:
 - ☛ Protect the local environment and heritage from direct and indirect impacts
 - ☛ Support urban regeneration over greenfield development
 - ☛ Integrate with transport policy to support investment in other rail services and shift trips from air and road to rail
 - ☛ Support moves to a low carbon economy.
- ☛ A key issue for the civic movement is the impact of the proposals on locally important but undesignated townscape, landscape, buildings, rights of way and heritage
- ☛ An audit of the local impacts by civic societies and others along the route would make a major contribution, especially when combined with an assessment of their transport priorities
- ☛ The scope to make the proposals more bespoke for the sensitive landscape through which it passes should be emphasised – operating at lower speeds, with different assumptions on the negative environmental, heritage and community impacts and with more importance attached to securing local benefits
- ☛ Civic societies should seek to maximise the scope for mitigation
- ☛ Civic Voice should play at least three roles:
 - ☛ Sharing information and bringing groups together
 - ☛ Providing advice and support on local action, such as an audit of local impacts
 - ☛ National advocacy and campaigning
- ☛ Civic Voice should also press for resources to be provided by the Government to support an informed contribution to the process by the community sector
- ☛ Civic Voice needs volunteers to come forward to work on the issue at a national level if it is to provide the full support being requested.

There is further information, including copies of Alison Munro's presentation, available on Civic Voice's website here [<http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/campaigns/high-speed-rail>]