

## HS2 update for the Chesham & Rural Villages Community Board: February 2022

Buckinghamshire Council's February update on HS2 can be found here: [Update on HS2 from Buckinghamshire Council](#) It includes information on:

- The High Court decision to allow a Judicial Review on lorry routes
- The proposed temporary conveyor belt over the A413 and the Chiltern railway at Small Dean
- HS2 Road Safety Fund
- Expected Works Packages submissions to the Council.

### 1. Programme of local construction works

2022 will see significantly more HS2 construction activity in the local area than we saw in 2021. Not so much tree-felling, but a great deal more civil engineering works, including ground excavation, bridge-building and concrete laying – with all the associated lorry movements.

#### a) Align – Main Works C1 (Hillingdon to South Heath)

The two **tunnel boring machines** are due to arrive at the North Portal at South Heath in early 2024, having linked-up with the ventilation shafts in the Chalfonts and at Amersham.

- At **Little Missenden**, a signalised junction has been installed on the A413 and work is progressing on the ventilation shaft.
- At **Chesham Road (B485)**, the works entrance is also now complete, and excavation of this access shaft has started.
- At **South Heath**, near the former Weights & Measures building, the construction of 'barrettes' (deep concrete piles) has begun to support the Chiltern tunnel as it comes to the surface through the friable chalk.



*Excavation at South Heath, showing the area in the foreground in which 'barrettes' will be sunk and the start of the cuttings heading north*

## c) EKFB – Main Works C2 (South Heath to Brackley)

- Excavation work will continue at the North Portal of the Chiltern tunnel at **South Heath**, and in the cuttings nearby, throughout 2022.
- **Internal access roads** from South Heath through to Rocky Lane are being constructed to facilitate this and keep some construction traffic off the A413.
- Some of the local excavated material will eventually be used to build **embankments and bunds** between South Heath and the Small Dean viaduct.



*Excavations at the South Heath cutting – 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 2022*

- **Leather Lane** A local campaign group is trying to improve the ecological mitigation in this area (mainly trees and bats) by having the re-aligned lane moved to the north rather than the south of the existing lane. They are continuing in discussions with EKFB. There are three linked issues on which agreement is being sought:
  1. Legally, what does the project need to do to mitigate the environmental impact in this area?
  2. Is there a reasonable, feasible way of building the re-alignment on the north side?
  3. What planning / legislative process would need to be followed to bring about such a change?

At the time of writing these issues have not been resolved. Meanwhile, the actions of this group have already resulted in some re-thinking of the alignment of the over bridge and a significant number of trees will be 'saved'.

- **Archaeology digs at Grims Ditch**, have come to an end. We await a report of finds.
- **Bowood Lane** will be closed to all vehicles from 1st March 2022 for approximately two years. The footpath carrying the Chiltern Way through this area will remain open (albeit diverted).
- Preparatory earth works and piling for the **Wendover Dean viaduct** near Durham Farm and **the Small Dean viaduct**, on the A413 near Rocky Lane, have begun.
- The original plan was for all the **excess material excavated** in the south to move along the trace as far as Rocky Lane and then over the Small Dean viaduct, when

built, thereby avoiding putting any additional HGVs onto the A413. However, delays in finalising the design of this viaduct mean that it will now not be ready in time to do this. HS2 now proposes putting a temporary conveyor in place (for two years) to carry this material from the area near Rocky Lane, over the A413 and the Chiltern Line railway. The construction of this conveyor overbridge is being planned for the first half of 2022, with some Easter closures of the Chiltern Line and one or more A413 weekend closures.

Construction work will continue at all these sites until at least 2025, when the handover of sections is due to begin to the (yet-to-be-appointed) rail-systems contractors, who will install the track, signals, catenaries and lineside equipment.

*[A more detailed recent presentation of HS2 construction in the Chilterns, made by Keith Hoffmeister of the Chiltern Society, can be found at: [22 01 HS2 Update for the Chiltern Society - Bing video.](#)]*

## 2. Construction impacts and mitigation

The major concerns in the local area during construction remain:

- The volume of **HS2 traffic on the A413** (the official construction route for all sites between Amersham and Stoke Mandeville). The High Court has allowed Bucks Council's appeals over the Planning Inspector's decisions with respect to six local traffic applications, and the hearings are expected in April/May. Meanwhile HS2 traffic on this construction route has now significantly increased to/from all the local sites. The latest HS2 traffic guide suggests that the HGV movements in this area will probably peak sometime in 2022/23.
- The impact of **HS2 traffic using other roads** in the area. We continue to see and hear reports of HS2 construction traffic using non-approved routes and further enforcement and signage has been requested of the contractors.
- Partial and inconclusive information on **Non-HS2 traffic 'rat-running'** on hill-top lanes, to avoid HS2 congestion, was provided at a November 2021 meeting. Further and more regular updates have been requested.
- The impacts of construction in the AONB on **ecology, hydrogeology and the environment** remain of concern. (See for example, Leather Lane, above).
- As the programme of works accelerates, there are also increasing concerns about **hours of working, noise and night-time lighting**. These topics have become regular points of discussion at local liaison meetings.

## 3. Local engagement

The framework for regular engagement by BC Officers and Cllrs, and Town and Parish Cllrs with HS2 Ltd and their contractors, to run alongside the statutory engagement processes, continues to evolve.

- Local County Cllrs are now meeting on HS2 as a 'Members Interest Group'.
- Parish Councils and local County Cllrs have regular engagement with the contractors' Community Engagement Managers.
- Align are planning to hold a 'Key Design Element' community event on the design of the North Portal in Great Missenden in mid-March.
- Further open events are also now being planned as we come out of Covid restrictions, including possible visits to the area by an EKFB mobile exhibition vehicle.