

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

*This update focusses on the **impact of HS2 construction work on the Chesham and Villages Community Board area**. A more detailed presentation of **HS2 construction activities in the whole of the Chilterns**, made by Keith Hoffmeister of the Chiltern Society in July 2022, can be found at [22 07 HS2 Update for the Chiltern Society - YouTube](#)*

*Buckinghamshire Council's July HS2 update on '**What is Buckinghamshire Council doing on behalf of residents?**' can also be found here: [Update on HS2 from Buckinghamshire Council](#).*

1. Summary of current local construction work affecting the Community Board area
2022 has seen significantly more HS2 construction activity in the local area than we saw in 2021, 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, at Amersham and Little Missenden, and the intervention shaft at Chesham Road.
- **At South Heath**, the construction of 'barrettes' (deep concrete piles) has begun to support the Chiltern tunnel as it comes to the surface through the friable chalk.

b) EKFB – Main Works C2 (South Heath to Brackley)

- Excavation work continues at the North Portal of the Chiltern tunnel **at South Heath**, and in the cuttings heading north through **The Lee**.
- **Internal access roads** from South Heath through to Rocky Lane have been completed to facilitate this excavation and keep some construction traffic off the A413.
- Work has started on the foundations for the **Wendover Dean and Small Dean viaducts** and **Rocky Lane under bridge**.
- **A temporary conveyor** is being built over the A413 at London Road, near the bottom of Rocky Lane to carry some of the spoil from the cuttings over the A413 and the Chiltern Railway. This is expected to start operation in September 2022.
- **Leather Lane** A local campaign group is trying to improve the ecological mitigation in this area by challenging the design of the overbridge and the re-aligned lane. At the time of writing these issues have not been resolved. Meanwhile, the actions of this group have already resulted in some re-thinking by EKFB of the alignment of the lane and over bridge and a significant number of trees will be 'saved'.

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.

2. Summary of construction impacts and mitigation

Most of the above works fall within the neighbouring Missendens and Wendover Community Board areas, but the impacts - particularly on the roads - are felt keenly by residents of The Lee and others

within the Chesham and Rural Villages Community Board area. These impacts continue to cause many concerns, including:

- The volume of **HS2 traffic on the A413** (the official construction route for all sites between Amersham and Stoke Mandeville) continues to increase. We await an announcement of the result of Bucks Council's appeals over decisions regarding HS2's local construction routes.
- 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.
- **Bowood Lane** has been closed to all vehicles from 1st March 2022 for at least 18 months.
- **Rocky Lane** and **Leather Lane** have also been the subject of frequent closures over the past six months, and complaints have been made to EKFB and HS2 Ltd about their lack of concern about the impact of the cumulative effect of road and lane closures in the area on local communities.

As a result, the period of the lane closures on Rocky Lane in July was reduced by reopening when the work moved further away from the road, and the July/August full closure has been deferred by EKFB so that they can "review the method of working". There is a possibility that the full closure (previously planned for five weeks) may be reduced in impact by the replanning. This is a small sign that the project managers are finally starting to think, albeit in an extremely limited way, about the impact on residents and not just on the project's needs

- Information on **Non-HS2 traffic 'rat-running'** on rural lanes because of the frequent closures in the area, is now being collated and discussed on a regular basis.
- As the programme of works accelerates, there are also increasing concerns about the extent that the project is relying on **extended hours of working**. It appears that Main Works Contractors are using the extended hours provisions of Sch 61 to 'catch-up' on delays to the project, which is not what local communities believe was envisaged in the Act. Further discussion with Bucks officers has been requested on this issue.
- At the top of Bowood Lane, the project has supposedly completed its first piece of major **tree planting in the AONB**. Local parish and county cllrs have raised concerns with HS2 Ltd about the poor management of this ecological mitigation.
- The closure of many **footpaths in the area** continues to give rise to confusion for walkers and a further review of signposting has been requested. The footpath carrying the **Chiltern Way** through this area is supposed to remain open (albeit diverted). There has recently been some confusion over this with security contractors apparently failing to abide by this decision.

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, and others as necessary.
- Face-to-face open events are now taking place again and we are seeing regular visits to the area by the EKFB mobile visitors' centre (MVC). *[The next scheduled visits by the MVC are at Butler Cross (27th July) and the Bucks Show (1st September).]*