

HS2 update for the Chesham & Rural Villages Community Board: January 2023

This update focusses on the impact of HS2 construction work on the Chesham and Villages Community Board area. Buckinghamshire Council's November 2022 HS2 update on 'What is Buckinghamshire Council doing on behalf of residents?' can be found at: [Update on HS2 from Buckinghamshire Council.](#)

1. Progress with the project in and around the Community Board area

The tunnel boring machines (TBMs) heading towards South Heath from Maple Cross have passed halfway and have crossed under the A413 at Gore Hill. ALIGN has finished the extensive concrete piling ('barrettes') in the South Heath area to stabilise the ground, and the construction of the north portal of the tunnel will now begin in earnest, anticipating the arrival of the TBMs at the portal in early 2024, having linked-up with the ventilation shafts in the Chalfonts, Amersham and Little Missenden, and the intervention shaft at Chesham Road, South Heath.

Construction of the section of the line northwards from South Heath by EKFB appears to be experiencing delays. In particular, there has been a lengthy delay in bringing the conveyor to move spoil over the A413/Chiltern Line into use, and a number of other significant construction-related delays. Having said that, excavation work and ground preparation has continued at the North Portal of the tunnel at South Heath with a hand-over of part of the site to Align, and there has been extensive preparation work in the cuttings heading north through The Lee.

Viaduct works at Wendover Dean and at Small Dean (over the A413 and the Chiltern railway line) are expected to be ramped up in 2023, as will be works in the Wendover and Stoke Mandeville areas. Also, significantly for the Community Board area, the six (yes, six) bridges to be built over or under the line between South Heath and Wendover will all be progressed in 2023. The movement of spoil northwards along the trace will be accelerated and large amounts of steel and concrete will arrive in the area, all using the A413.

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. Unresolved local design issues

Most Schedule 17 applications under the Act for the design and construction of the railway in the area have been approved by Buckinghamshire Council (BC) or are due to be submitted soon, however some significant local elements of design are outstanding:

- the north portal buildings at South Heath (due to be submitted to BC this spring)
- the Leather Lane overbridge and the lone oak (still awaiting the results of ecological and environmental review)
- the Bowood Lane overbridge (awaiting the outcome of an appeal to a Planning Inspector by HS2 Ltd after rejection by BC).

3. Summary of construction impacts and mitigation

Locally, 2023 started with more of the same – more road and lane closures, more flooding on the A413, more delayed construction works and a feeling that the project is not really demonstrating that it is “Respecting people; respecting places”.

Some of the works described above fall within the neighbouring Missendens and Wendover Community Board areas, but the impacts - particularly on the roads - are felt keenly by residents within the Chesham and Rural Villages Community Board area. These impacts continue to cause many concerns, in particular:

- **Frequent road closures**, on the A413, on Rocky Lane, on Frith Hill and in due course on Leather Lane, are all being planned by the project and will continue to have a major impact on the area. Local parish and county councillors are fighting hard to ensure that greater notice is taken of the impact this is all having and will continue to have on local communities and businesses. 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.
- Information on **Non-HS2 traffic ‘rat-running’** on hill-top lanes because of the frequent closures, is now being collated and discussed on a regular basis.
- The project is planning **extensive concrete piling through the Misbourne valley in 2023** and there have already been some complaints about the impact of noise and vibration. Again, local councillors have asked for a more detailed review of the likely impacts.
- Through the early part of this winter, **flooding on the A413 and other local roads**, caused at least in part by water discharged by the project, has been a major issue. BC is in discussion with HS2 Ltd as to where responsibility lies for preventing such incidents.
- At the top of Bowood Lane, in The Lee, the project has supposedly completed its first major piece of **tree planting in the AONB**. Local parish and county councillors have raised concerns with HS2 Ltd about the poor implementation of this ecological mitigation.

It is not at all clear that with the pressures of cost and time, the project has much real appetite to mitigate these impacts, but the local councils will continue to monitor and police as best they can the continuing construction operations. All these topics have become regular points of discussion at local liaison meetings with parish and county councillors.

4. To note in February / March 2023

- one-week total closure of Rocky Lane for water utility works (possible w/c 13th February)
- full weekend closure of the A413, London Road for utility diversion works (tbc in March)
- six-week closure of Frith Hill (South Heath Leg) for electricity supply works (dates tbc)
- abnormal steel loads begin to arrive at Great Missenden via A413 (March onwards)
- concrete piling works at Wendover Dean, Cottage Farm, Rocky Lane, and near Potter Row (various dates).

For the latest updates on HS2 works visit <http://www.hs2.org.uk/in-your-area/map/>