



c/o Buckinghamshire County Council
County Hall
Walton Street
Aylesbury
Bucks
HP20 1UA

24 January 2012

All Town and Parish Councils

Dear Colleagues,

The announcement by Justine Greening of the Coalition Government's decision to go ahead with HS2 is clearly disappointing but not unexpected. Whilst we may have lost a battle, we are very far from losing the campaign. There is a long way to go from a Government policy decision to the passage of an Act in 2015, at the earliest, by Parliament and we are determined that common sense will prevail and that acting together as local authorities to stop this ill-conceived project.

Our opponents have deliberately tried to stereotype those of us who oppose HS2 as 'Chiltern NIMBYs'. We, by contrast, know that we are acting in the national interest and that we represent people right across this country who have analysed this proposal and seen it for what it actually is, a vast waste of hard-earned taxpayers' money combined with environmental vandalism on an almost unprecedented scale.

The pro HS2 'PR machine' has been in overdrive during the announcement with, no doubt coincidentally-leaked reports, and attempts to conceal the facts. A thorough analysis of the DfT's and HS2 Ltd's material has now shown some damning conclusions.

Firstly, the business case for HS2, already poor, has become far, far worse. The published 'Benefit Cost Ratio' for the London to Birmingham section has declined from a predicted 2.7 return for every pound spent in March 2010, to 1.7 in 2012. Far worse, when the figures are adjusted for known risks buried deep in the report, such as the latest economic forecasts, updated forecasting methods and a more realistic value of the time saved by passengers, the return drops as low as a dire 90p for every pound. In other words, **HS2 actually loses the hard-pressed taxpayer 10p for every one of the £17 billion spent on it.** This is well below the threshold that the Department for Transport would normally allow for any project. No wonder the DfT has tried to 'bury bad news'.

By contrast, the DfT's own consultants show that **the alternative put forward by our 51m Alliance (of 18 local authorities opposed to HS2) of improving our existing lines at far lower cost, has a 'Benefit Cost Ratio' of 5, delivering £5 for every taxpayers' pound invested.** No wonder the DfT tried so hard to discredit this far better option.

Secondly, despite the attempt to persuade MPs that it has 'tunnelling under the Chilterns and Ruislip' and mitigated other points along the route, in reality only an extra 8 miles of bored and green tunnelling has been added. The rest of the route, some 118 miles remains untunnelled. In addition, HS2 is now in many cases worse for many people living along the route. The DfT's so called extra 'mitigation' of short route changes and some extra tunnelling, has been counter-balanced by reducing the depth of the cutting along stretches of the route from 9 metres to only 2 metres. This saves the DfT many millions of pounds in cost. As a result people along this section are likely to now see and hear the trains even more than before. **Most of our residents did not expect the consultation exercise to be about saving further costs at the expense of poorer mitigation for many.**

Lastly, the DfT has ignored the vast response to its own Public Consultation. 55,000 organisations and people across the country responded to this. Compare that to the 7,000 who replied to the Public Consultation last year on the proposed sale of the National Forests which led to a rapid U-turn. Despite the previous Secretary of State's attempts to mobilise support, **the Government's case was decisively rejected in every one of the seven consultation questions**. These responses have been completely ignored despite a dire business case. This risks discrediting the entire consultation process.

So what do we do now? As 51m we are meeting this Friday to consider both the next campaigning steps and potential legal action against this scheme. We have both our 51m solicitor and Queen's Counsel attending and we should have a clearer way forward after this.

Whilst the case for this project is so weak the 'pro HS2' lobby is clearly trying to generate an impression of 'inevitability' and 'momentum' behind HS2. They are also trying to dishearten and divide opponents. It is very important that we do not let them. On the campaign front we have had significant support recently with articles in the Sunday Telegraph, Financial Times, City AM, Guardian, The Economist and Money week. We undoubtedly have won the argument amongst independent analysts. We now need to reach out to MPs across the country and explain that this project represents even more of a poor return for taxpayers' money than we had originally thought; that it will result in environmental damage along its entire route; that building it would cause enormous disruption to services into Euston station for eight years and finally, that a far, far better alternative exists which has been all but ignored.

Together we can win this. Together we will win this.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Martin Tett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping underline.

Martin Tett
Leader Buckinghamshire County Council
Chairman 51m Alliance

For further information see the 51m website:

<http://www.51m.co.uk/>