

MINUTES OF ORAL EVIDENCE

taken before the

HIGH SPEED RAIL (CREWE - MANCHESTER) BILL SELECT COMMITTEE

PETITIONS AGAINST THE BILL

Monday, 22 May 2023 (Afternoon)

In Committee Room 8

A video of the proceedings can be found [here](#).

PRESENT:

Andrew Percy (Chair)
Antony Higginbotham
Grahame Morris
Martin Vickers

FOR THE PROMOTER:

Robert Williams, Counsel, Department for Transport

FOR THE PETITIONER:

1. Jeremy and Elizabeth Platt
 - Tony Rimmer
 - Jeremy Platt
 - Elizabeth Platt
-

IN PUBLIC SESSION

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(At 4.15 p.m.)

1. THE CHAIR: Good afternoon and welcome to this afternoon's meeting of the High Speed Rail Hybrid Bill Committee. We're just going to be dealing this afternoon, I believe, with one petitioner, so normal rules will apply. Mr Williams, this is your first outing before the Committee.
2. MR WILLIAMS (DfT): It is my first outing, I think, yes. Kept me in the background until now.
3. THE CHAIR: Well, Mr Mould is there, behind.
4. MR WILLIAMS (DfT): Over my shoulder, checking what I say.
5. THE CHAIR: If anything does go wrong and we don't see you again, we'll know why. Anyway, what I'll do is, usual par for these sessions is, I ask the promoter, HS2, actually Mr Williams today, to briefly outline the location and the site we are referring to and then I will pass over to the petitioners. Mr Rimmer is speaking on behalf of Mr and Mrs Platt, I believe. Is that correct? Okay. So we'll commence with Mr Williams and then, if the Committee has any questions, they'll jump in as and when.

Jeremy and Elizabeth Platt

6. MR WILLIAMS (DfT): Thank you, sir. I know it's quite unusual but you may have seen from the papers that the issue between the parties is a very narrow one involving the potential provision of a slurry duct.
7. THE CHAIR: Yes.
8. MR WILLIAMS (DfT): And the parties have been working hard together. They have overcome a number of issues, you'll have seen from assurances that have been issued, and we are quite close, I'm confident we're quite close, that we would be able to overcome this matter if the Committee were able to give us an hour in order to do so.
9. THE CHAIR: Today?
10. MR WILLIAMS (DfT): Today.
11. THE CHAIR: Right.

12. MR WILLIAMS (DfT): And we should be able to understand whether we can get over this issue. There's an agreement between the parties in principle, subject to the wording and governance.

13. THE CHAIR: So what you're asking, Mr Williams, is for the Committee to adjourn for an hour and return.

14. MR WILLIAMS (DfT): Absolutely, sir.

15. THE CHAIR: Right, okay. I mean, I'm happy to do that if it means the parties come to agreement, but with the proviso that it is irritating to Members when we have our diaries and parliamentary business elsewhere on the estate for these issues not to have been resolved beforehand and to be done at the last minute. It is irritating for us but we would rather the parties found an accommodation, if you are close. Is that your understanding, Mr Rimmer? You're in agreement and happy to adjourn for an hour.

16. MR RIMMER: We are in agreement and happy to give the hour to hopefully achieve something. We, like you, are rather disappointed that it's been rather 11th hour because certainly Mr Platt would far rather be concentrating on his business of milking cows and farming than coming down to London.

17. THE CHAIR: Indeed, and I've put a tie on special as well. So I could have avoided that. You could have avoided having to come down to this here London and everything would be resolved. So what I'll do is, I will adjourn the Committee. We'll return at 5.15, if you think that's sufficient time. Are Committee members happy with that? So we'll return at 5.15 and hopefully agreement will have been. So I'll adjourn the Committee now.

Sitting suspended.

On resuming –

18. THE CHAIR: I understand the parties have reached agreement; is that correct?

19. MR WILLIAMS (DfT): We have, sir, yes. We're grateful to you for your time. Can I just briefly explain this?

20. THE CHAIR: Yes, please do.

21. MR WILLIAMS (DfT): Sir, as you'll know, the issue between us was a narrow one to do with this slurry duct provision and the parties have reached an agreement. An assurance will be issued on the basis of drafts, which have been shared with the petitioner and their agent and which have got the necessary governance from the promoter.

22. The petitioners have raised the issue of the potential enforcement of that assurance and as the Committee will know, the issue of enforcement of assurances is an issue that's been raised by the National Farmers' Union and is a matter upon which the promoter and the NFU are and will continue to negotiate. So in the absence of any agreed position on that issue, the NFU will no doubt appear in front of you, or indeed will appear in front of you, to seek a remedy when they appear later in July. I can confirm on behalf of the promoter that the promoter will apply the outcome of that issue, including any dispute resolution procedure, to Mr and Mrs Platt's assurance. They will be treated the same way as the NFU and those farmers on which they petition.

23. THE CHAIR: Right, okay. Thank you. Members, any questions? No? Mr Rimmer, is there anything you'd like to add?

24. MR RIMMER: No. Thank you for your time. Sorry we had to be in this position because it's far from ideal for us as well as you.

25. THE CHAIR: No, well, as I said at the beginning of this meeting this afternoon, it is frustrating for us because our parliamentary diaries are incredibly busy. There are things we would have liked to attended today if this Committee wasn't taking place, which we sacrifice to attend the Committee, and if we're going to attend the Committee, we want it to be because there is business of work to be done.

26. So, whilst we're very supportive of parties coming to an agreement beforehand, it is important that that is done, not at the 11th hour, or even whilst the Committee's due to be sitting. There's no reason these conversations can't take place beforehand. They should be taking place beforehand and if it continues to happen, we'll have more to say on it, and it will affect where the Committee finds itself on a number of issues.

27. So, on that basis –

28. MR WILLIAMS (DfT): Sir, can I just say, on that, the promoter and – we hear you entirely. Just in relation to the context for that, there were 14 petitioners listed over the last two days. We've managed to resolve nine of them and several of them before the exhibits were exchanged, so we have been working hard. We hear very much what you say and we'll endeavour to ensure that we don't –

29. THE CHAIR: Well, if you hear it, then there's no need to say anything further.

30. MR WILLIAMS (DfT): Okay.

31. THE CHAIR: So, on that basis, we'll end the Committee here.