

MINUTES OF ORAL EVIDENCE

taken before the

HIGH SPEED RAIL BILL COMMITTEE

on the

HIGH SPEED RAIL (WEST MIDLANDS – CREWE) BILL

Thursday, 10 September 2020 (Morning)

In Committee Room 4
(Hybrid Proceeding)

PRESENT:

Lord Hope of Craighead (Chair)
Lord Brabazon of Tara
Lord Goddard of Stockport
Lord Haselhurst
Lord Horam
Lord Liddle
Lord Snape

IN ATTENDANCE:

James Strachan QC, Counsel, Department for Transport
Jacqueline Lean, Counsel, Department for Transport

WITNESSES:

Theodora Clarke (Member of Parliament for Stafford)

IN PUBLIC SESSION

INDEX

Subject	Page
Theodora Clarke	4
Submissions by Ms Clarke	4
Response by Mr Strachan	8
Closing submissions by Ms Clarke	16

(At 10.30 a.m.)

1. THE CHAIR: Welcome to this hybrid meeting of the Select Committee on the High Speed Rail (West Midlands – Crewe) Bill. We are meeting today in hybrid fashion. Some of us are present in the committee room in the House of Lords observing social distancing while others will be dialling in. Today, besides myself, we have Lord Liddle, James Strachan QC and Jacqueline Lean, counsel for HS2 in the room.
2. It may be helpful if I were now to set out how this session will work. All of our remote participants are on the Zoom call and we can all see each other. You may need to switch to gallery view to do that. Remote participants will be muted at the start of the meeting. You may control your own muting but please remember to unmute before speaking. You may receive a prompt on your screen inviting you to do that.
3. As far as possible, we will follow a pre-determined order of speaking as set out in my brief, which has been shared with all participants. Unless anticipated in the brief, you should wait to be called before speaking. If you wish to intervene at any point, please physically raise your hand so that it can be seen on screen. I will then call you to speak at an appropriate point.
4. Participants should have the exhibit bundles open and available. For this session, that is bundle P36, R103, R108 and R86. We will navigate the documents using the numbers in the bottom left corner of each page.
5. We shall now begin and hear petition 37 in the name of Theodora Clarke MP. Now I should make it clear, in view of Ms Clarke's state of health, that I want to keep the proceedings today as brief as possible. To that end, Ms Clarke, I can assure you that the Committee have read the written material which you have put forward which sets out the various points which you wish to raise before us. We've also read the promoter's response. So what I propose is to take all that material as read and I hope that will shorten proceedings considerably.
6. I'm going to call upon Mr Strachan to open the proceedings but I think you can do so very briefly and then, I believe, Ms Clarke, you would want to make a short statement to us. So, Mr Strachan, if you would make your opening remarks, please.

Theodora Clarke

7. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Thank you very much, my Lord. I can be very brief. The petitioner is the Member of Parliament for Stafford and at P36(2), we've provided a plan simply showing the constituency area for the benefit of your Lordship's Committee shown in red to give you an idea of the area of potential concern although, of course, the petitioner raises some issues which are just beyond the constituency boundary, to the north, Stone, as your Lordship will have seen, because of the implications it may have for her constituency itself.

8. And one other matter: the petitioner's predecessor as Member of Parliament for Stafford was Mr Jeremy Lefroy and that's where you may have seen reference in the other place to issues being raised on behalf of the constituency; it was by Mr Lefroy. And with that, I would hand over to Ms Clarke.

9. THE CHAIR: Thank you very much indeed. Well, Ms Clarke, please.

Submissions by Ms Clarke

10. MS CLARKE: Thank you, Chair. I'm here today to represent my constituents in Stafford who have endured the spectre of HS2 for many years. My predecessor as the MP, Jeremy Lefroy, worked for many years on the impact that HS2 was having on the Stafford constituency and its residents and it's his petition today that I am presenting which the Committee have kindly allowed me to take on as I became the new Member for Stafford last December and I pay tribute to him for his hard work for the people of the Stafford constituency.

11. And with the understandable delays that we have endured over the past few months, this petition has taken some time to come to Committee and several of the specific topics have seen significant development over the past few months. So therefore I propose not to dwell too much on the specific points in the petition but instead to update the Committee on those matters which have moved on but which I still ask the Committee to take note of.

12. Let me start off by saying that I do accept that a good number of constituents who have been through the HS2 process have now had their land or homes purchased and are

happy with the price agreed. However, there are still a surprising amount of constituents who have been left distressed, angry and, in one or two cases, even suicidal by the way they have felt treated by HS2.

13. I have raised this matter repeatedly in the house and with HS2 directly and I make the point again today that no one I'm aware of, in Stafford or the surrounding area, asked or welcomed the announcement of a new railway line which would cut through or pass through very beautiful villages and our countryside. They have, in some cases, been left feeling for no reason at all like they are the inconvenience and that they are being difficult, when all they have asked for is a reasonable valuation of their family home which they have lived in for decades and raised their children in, but which now happens to stand in the way of a multi-million pound project for the government.

14. Disruption to the Stafford constituency during the construction of HS2 will be very significant. Stafford is quite unique as it finds itself on the M6 and A34, the A51 and the A518, so many residents pass through Stafford on the way to somewhere else and I would like to mention to the Committee that it is a lovely place to visit and you're all very welcome to come to Stafford.

15. However, any delay on these routes does bring the town of Stafford already to a standstill. The construction of HS2 will see work on all of these roads, including road closures on the M6, and this will impact not just my constituency but will affect the nation's transport infrastructure from north to south, east to west. My predecessor asked for assurances and a clear plan from HS2 as to how this would be managed and I'm afraid he received nothing substantial.

16. HS2 have responded to my petition, for which I am grateful. However, this response focuses on traffic on the M6 and the timing of the smart motorway works and ignores references to the A34, A518 and A51. However, it is these roads, and particularly the A roads within the Stafford constituency, which will be most impacted by HS2's HGV traffic. So, again, I ask for this Committee to ensure that there is a clear plan to keep my constituency and Britain moving during this construction and I don't just mean a plan for where HS2's traffic will go, which is clearly important, but a clear plan for how the existing traffic on our already clogged roads will go.

17. The message that I've heard time and time again from my constituents is that my

community is having to tolerate our countryside being destroyed, villages split and a construction phase that may go on for several years and they do not see it as any benefit to us and that's why it's so vital that the Handsacre link is kept. It is imperative that trains stop at Stafford and that our town does receive some social and economic benefit. There will also be knock-on benefits for neighbouring areas and so I was delighted that the Prime Minister has promised to preserve the Handsacre link in exchanges in the Commons and I will continue to make the case that this link must be preserved.

18. Along with my colleague in Stone, Bill Cash MP, and my predecessor, I also opposed the proposed railhead at Yarnfield. I understand that the Stone railhead action group will be presenting their petition to you so I won't pre-empt their presentation except to say that I wish to add my support to their petition submitted on behalf of Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish Council, Stone Town Council and Chebsey Parish Council.

19. However, I would like to highlight that, given all of the data and information that I have seen, I am very concerned that if the construction of the Stone railhead goes ahead as planned, it will at the very least be fraught with engineering problems that will cause the Phase 2A programme to be significantly delayed and cause costs to overrun. This will have major consequences for the entire Phase 2A project and, with the Stafford constituency located very close to the south of the proposed railhead, this will have considerable knock-on effects locally, one of which will be to have a considerable amount of construction traffic that will affect the need and ability to travel into my constituency.

20. Next I'd like to touch on Ingestre Golf Club, who I visited recently to meet with their members. The club have compromised with HS2 and have agreed with HS2's preferred solution to build 11 replacement holes on land across the road from the current golf course. However, time is of the essence and I'm concerned that nothing seems to be moving forward. I know that the club recently made a presentation to you and I fully support them. However, I would emphasise that this is a major and great community facility which employs 30 local people.

21. In my view, the golf course have already compromised and compromised to try and get at a solution that HS2 gives them, but I'm afraid they do feel frustrated and

upset at the way they have been treated and I would ask this Committee to ensure that all matters relating to Ingestre Park Golf Club are resolved and that the construction of the new holes commences without any further delays.

22. I understand that the Department for Transport is looking to place a cap on the spend relating to Ingestre Park and that the cap cannot be determined at this stage and I understand that the cap is to be made up of (1) golf course costs; (2) land acquisition costs; and (3) the costs of compensation, the major issue being that the level of compensation cannot be determined until after the impact of HS2 has been established. As such, I believe that HS2 should be directed to agree the budget for the costs of the reconfigured golf course now. I also believe that the costs of acquiring the land should not form part of the cap as this is a cost over which the golf club has no control or any input.

23. I would also urge discussions to progress on compensation and for HS2 to agree to pay the fees for the golf club's compensation specialist. I was also very concerned to learn that the Department for Transport have told the club that the terms of spending and the cap are non-negotiable. So I'd like to re-emphasise again my earlier point that Ingestre Park Golf Club did not, after all the years of work they have put into building an excellent community asset, ask to be cut in half and split by a railway. They should be treated with respect and certainly not be told that elements are non-negotiable, whether it be something such as replacement land costs more than expected, that the extra should come out of the community club's compensation rather than HS2's budget.

24. Finally, the village of Hopton was originally told that they would have a cut and cover tunnel constructed next to the village in order that most of the village would be spared the worst of the impact of HS2. After these assurances were given, the plans for Hopton were amended, removing the tunnel and replacing it with a sound barrier and planting. This sound barrier in no way replaces the tunnel and has again left my constituents feeling short-changed and let down. So I would ask this Committee again to look at the tunnel and, at the very least, reinstate the originally proposed cut and cover tunnel at Hopton but also to consider a longer bored tunnel as set out in my petition.

25. Finally, I would like to say that I understand that HS2 is a major infrastructure

project that already finds itself vastly over budget but I'm afraid I take great exception for my constituents when they are being constantly told that HS2 have to be careful with public money when they have to consider compensation and statutory reinstatement. I absolutely agree; we must be careful with public funds but please don't do it on the back of my constituents who never asked for this railway in the first place and just happen to live in the wrong place at the wrong time.

26. But I do hope that one good thing will come out of this learning experience and it's that the government takes note, as I've already asked them to, and to fully revise our laws clearly to compensate the public for any infrastructure projects as the current system, in my view, clearly doesn't work. Thank you, Chair.

27. THE CHAIR: Thank you very much indeed for that presentation which is extremely helpful to us in bringing your points together so succinctly. Yes, Mr Strachan, your reply please.

Response by Mr Strachan

28. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Thank you, my Lord. In light of the way the petition has been articulated today and the focus of it, I apprehend that I can probably deal with the points myself although I emphasise that we have our witnesses available if the Committee has any particular questions on any of the aspects that have been raised but there is an awful lot in writing in the petition response document that responds in more detail and points the Committee to the relevant information. But bearing in mind the nature of today, I'm just going to summarise a brief response to some of the points articulated.

29. The first concerns constituents who have expressed distress or anger about current circumstances. I can't comment upon those sorts of cases in the absence of any details of any particular individual but I would simply make the point that we have made in the past that if there are particular individuals with particular issues then it's always open for the Member of Parliament to draw those to our attention and we will look into those but there are well established processes of looking into any such cases.

30. So far as roads and construction traffic are concerned, the petitioner has raised the – or suggested that the response from HS2 only deals with the M6 and doesn't deal with

other roads of concern to the petitioner. I would simply draw the Committee's attention to the petition response document R103(18) which in fact sets out the promoter's response to concerns about construction traffic on other roads and identifies the processes that will be followed in relation to dealing with construction traffic, the schedule 17 provisions about routing of construction traffic in conjunction with the highway authority and, indeed, also the highways sub-group that's been established to facilitate discussions about construction traffic and, of course, the local traffic management plans that will be prepared in consultation with the local highway authority.

31. And the Committee should be aware that there has, of course, been very detailed engagement with Staffordshire County Council who are the local highway authority responsible for those roads in addition to the M6 being the responsibility of the national body. But the local highway authority has been subject to extensive consultation and, indeed, assurances given, which I won't go through all of those details now, but a considerable amount of work has been done to try and mitigate the impact and agree appropriate approaches on local roads within the petitioner's constituency.

32. So far as the Handsacre link is concerned, there are some slides in the pack and the petition response document deals with that. As I understood, the petitioner is now satisfied as to the nature of the commitment to the Handsacre link that's been expressed and is articulated in the material before the Select Committee.

33. The petitioner then moved on to the question of the Stone IMB-R. As indicated, your Committee is due to hear a petition specific to that next week and, in the same vein, I don't intend to trespass now on matters of detail that you'll hear in response to that petition because it would be repetitious and I would leave that until your Committee's consideration next week. You will hear a lot more about that in due course so unless you want me to explore that now, I'll leave it for next week.

34. The Ingestre Park Golf Club, of course, is a petition that your Lordship's Committee have already heard and, indeed, heard the promoter's response to it and I don't repeat anything by way of evidence you've heard about that, of course, other than to respond that we, for the reasons we've already given, are treating the golf course fairly and seeking to come to a constructive positive solution for the golf course to

continue in the reconfigured manner that was discussed, I think, last week.

35. So far as Hopton village is concerned, your Lordship will see that there's a detailed response in the petition response document to the effect of the proposal on Hopton and the reasons why a tunnel has been carefully considered in detail. Indeed, there are various reports which looked into that and a decision ultimately made, bearing in mind all of the considerations as to the current alignment no longer justifying a tunnel in that location but detailed mitigation measures in place. My Lord, in my submission, that is an issue which is not properly a matter to bring before your Lordship's Committee because the introduction of a tunnel at this stage would have very significant additional impacts and, indeed, would require an additional provision and it has been explored both in the other place and in the past in detail as to why the decision was taken.

36. Finally, a concern about compensation generally for constituents and the adequacy of compensation. Your Lordships have available to the Committee, the information about both the statutory compensation code that's applicable in relation to infrastructure projects of this kind but, moreover, the non-statutory compensation package measures that have been applied by the promoter for a scheme of this kind. I won't go through them because your Lordships have heard about them but they include, of course, the need-to-sell scheme. They also include in that information, a process for valuation of property where there's a dispute, as frequently there can be, between someone affected by acquisition. There may not always be agreement on the price but there is a mechanism for dealing with that in a fair and, we would say, independent way to resolve matters of that kind.

37. So unless the Committee would like me to explore any of those matters in any greater depth, that is a brief response summarising the more detailed response to the petitioner on all of those issues.

38. THE CHAIR: Do any members of the Committee have any questions they would like to put to Mr Strachan? Yes, Lord Horam?

39. LORD HORAM: Could I just ask Mr Strachan about the Hopton tunnel? The Member of Parliament made the point that the original proposal was for a cut and cover tunnel which was then changed and now the train will pass in a cutting. Why was that

change made? Was it because the route was changed?

40. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): My Lord, the route was not changed. As I've understood it, and if I get this wrong I'm sure I'll be corrected, the change that was identified by the petitioner in fact occurred before the Bill was submitted to Parliament. There was initially a proposal for a tunnel in that location. It was decided as a result of detailed consideration of whether a tunnel was justified in that location as compared with the cutting plus all of the other measures and the impact on Hopton, that the latter was the more appropriate option to proceed with as part of the Bill and, as I understand it, that is the proposal that was then submitted into the Bill.

41. The change occurred as a result of that detailed work and I can, I hope, give your Lordship the reference in the petition response document and, if there is further interest, I think we can also provide the report about the Hopton alternatives as to why those decisions were made but, in a nutshell, involves a balance between the environmental impacts of having the line not in a tunnel in that location on the community and the wider area as compared with the benefits and costs of constructing a tunnel with the various construction impacts that that brings and the balance was very much in favour of not having a tunnel in that location.

42. There, of course, consequently are some different environmental impacts on the community but there also have been acquisitions in that area in consequence of the effects of the tunnel. So I hope that provides you with a little bit more detail. I'm just looking for the reference in the petition response document that your Lordships have. Yes, it begins on page 33 in R103 where the effects on Hopton were considered and the *Hopton Tunnel Alternative Summary Report* is dated 24 April 2018 and was provided as an annexe to the petition response document that was sent to the petitioner. Where this issue was raised in the other place, there was consideration of the question of a tunnel and whether it was an appropriate response or not and, of course, there was no direction in the other place for a tunnel in that location, bearing in mind the evidence that was brought.

43. So I should also say, in the supporting environmental statement for the Bill, there is a summary of the consideration given to that as an alternative at paragraphs 2.5.26 to 2.5.40 of the CA2, that's community area 2, part of the environmental statement. I'm

sorry for all those references but what I'm simply illustrating is that there is a substantial body of information that supports the decision not to pursue a tunnel in that location. I hope that helps with your question, my Lord.

44. LORD HORAM: Yes, thank you.

45. THE CHAIR: Yes, Lord Liddle?

46. LORD LIDDLE: We are told in the document that a package of assurances was given to the parish council and that the parish council has accepted this. This is the case, is it, and this is the reason that we are not faced with a petition ourselves from the local residents or the local parish council?

47. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): My Lord, as I understand it, yes. There is no petition that is being pursued before your Lordships' Committee now by the parish council in light of the package of measures to mitigate the effects. But I obviously can't speak internally as to what was going through their minds but certainly that's the inference we've drawn.

48. LORD LIDDLE: That's a factual statement, yes.

49. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Indeed, yes.

50. THE CHAIR: Lord Snape has a question.

51. LORD SNAPE: Well, Chairman, the petitioner quite properly raised the issue of the number of outstanding compensation claims on behalf of individuals in her constituency. Could we know how many outstanding claims there actually are and what steps are being taken to resolve them?

52. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): My Lord, in principle, I should be able to obtain that information for the Committee. It's not something that I have at my fingertips and no doubt it will require a little bit of work just to get the latest figures of active cases where there may be an active dispute but, if it would assist, certainly we can provide, or I anticipate we should be able to provide, that data for your Lordship.

53. THE CHAIR: Could you provide it by next week? We're sitting on Monday. Is it possible to provide that information on Monday?

54. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): I'm going to find out for your Lordship but I'm going to hazard a guess, if it's put on that basis, that it should be possible to do that. It shouldn't be too difficult an exercise to draw that data together but if I've spoken out of turn in terms of the art of the possible, I'll see if I can be corrected.

55. THE CHAIR: Well, I think we would certainly want to see it by the end of next week.

56. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): My Lord, I understand that.

Mr Strachan takes instructions

57. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Yes, we think it's going to be possible.

58. THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Strachan, a great deal of emphasis was placed on the need for a traffic plan. I think Ms Clarke used the word 'plan' in the singular. My impression was, from what you were saying in reply, that you were endeavouring to make a series of 'plans' in the plural with the local highways authority and so on. Could you explain, please, what you are doing in a little more detail?

59. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Yes.

60. THE CHAIR: Because a great deal of emphasis was placed on the confusion and the effects of delays and traffic jams and so on in the constituency during the construction phase and it's obviously very important that steps are taken to minimise that as far as possible. Can you explain, please?

61. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): My Lord, yes. I think there is a distinction between what the petitioner was referring to and what I'm referring to. It may lie in the difference between the work that's been done to date which supports the environmental statement for the Bill and then the ongoing work that will follow, assuming Royal Assent, to draw up the more detailed construction traffic plans in conjunction with the highway authority.

62. As to the former, the Bill is supported by the environmental statement which includes the transport assessment of the impacts of the scheme and, as you've heard, a lot of those assessments involve what's called a realistic worst-case scenario, as required

by the environmental statement. There are traffic predictions of construction traffic numbers on a realistic worst-case basis and the impacts on the roads in the area, which you Lordships will have seen from other maps as part of the overall assessment of the Bill and that provides a good picture of the realistic worst case of the construction in this area and the impact on the local roads. That's been the subject of detailed discussion with Staffordshire County Council and, indeed, agreement in principle reached to the degree that there's no longer an active petition before your Committee.

63. What then follows, and what I was referring to in terms of plans, is the subsequent process that the Bill itself provides for and there are a number of elements to that. Under the Bill, I think it's schedule 17, there will be the requirement to agree or have construction traffic routes approved by the local highway authority for large goods vehicles where they exceed a minimum number in a particular time period and that is to ensure that those routes are agreed with the local highway authority with the benefit of the detailed construction knowledge when the scheme has progressed to that stage, the detailed construction design, to ensure the best routes are used to minimise the effects.

64. I was referring to, your Lordship, the local traffic management plan process which is also provided for and, my Lord, that is explained or summarised on R103(18) and those are local traffic management plans that are agreed or prepared in consultation, I should say, with the local highway authority and other relevant parties prior to the start of construction and those seek to address local issues and provide for the local highway authority to be involved with those sorts of decisions. And, of course, at that point, there's more clarity about the detailed design process but an opportunity to consider, in a more detailed way, local issues where local roads are used with the benefit of that detailed knowledge of how the construction design is going to take place and that is an important part of mitigating the actual construction impacts at a later stage to address sensitively, or as sensitively as possible, the local issues on local roads which will vary very much from location to location. So that is what I was referring to.

65. There had previously been a request from a petitioner for a more integrated overall plan and that we do not see as necessary because that information already exists through the environmental statement where there's a considerable amount of information already supporting the Bill as to what the effects of construction would be, down to, of course, the level of anticipated construction traffic on particular roads.

66. THE CHAIR: Can you give an assurance that the local plans, the local traffic plans, will be in place before any movements take place?

67. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): My Lord, I'll check that. I'm pretty sure that that is the case. It depends, of course, exactly when particular types of construction activity take place. There may be, for example, preliminary or start-up works in relation to particular activities which don't require those local transport management plans to be in place and so I don't want to again speak out of turn where, for example, one's doing survey works or things of that kind or start-up preliminary works but what I'll do, my Lord, if it's acceptable, is just as part of the additional information we're going to provide you, I will check the timing or the sequence of when those traffic management plans are due to be agreed so your Lordship can see how they interact with actual construction start of works.

68. THE CHAIR: Yes, we would like to see that so please provide that information.

69. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): I will do that.

70. THE CHAIR: Any other questions from anybody?

71. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): My Lord, I should just point out, there is a route-wide traffic management plan.

Mr Strachan takes instructions

72. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): I was just going to refer the Committee to a route-wide traffic management plan but I'm just getting some further details about that.

73. THE CHAIR: Yes, Lord Liddle I think has another point.

74. LORD LIDDLE: Yes, it's just to clarify whether the – clearly you've got to do the initial work on each particular impact, case by case, but I suppose when the petitioner refers to an overall plan, the question is, what are the knock on effects of one bit of traffic delay on other bits of the system in the area? And I suppose the question that one might reasonably ask is whether that's been looked at carefully by the county council and HS2 together.

75. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): My Lord, the answer to the question is, it has and

indeed it may be that the document I'm just referring to will assist you in that respect. But can I just give, if it helps, my Lord, an example that illustrates the point in this particular location, namely the effect of traffic on the M6. Where it's intended for use for construction traffic, your Lordship will have seen there is a detailed response note to the petitioner, which is available to the Committee, of the impacts of construction traffic on the M6. Where that was undertaken prior to events that may have changed, such as the grant of permission for a rail freight terminal or indeed other road proposals, that position has since been updated in that traffic note.

76. But the wider question your Lordship's, I think, putting to me as to considering the wider implications of traffic, how it interrelates, that is something that HS2 has looked at and, indeed, the consultation with the highway authorities, not just simply Staffordshire but highway authorities, ensures there's a better understanding of the overall impact of traffic on an area.

77. THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. Well, Ms Clarke, I think there's an opportunity for you to make any comments by way of reply before we complete the hearing.

Closing submissions by Ms Clarke

78. MS CLARKE: Thank you, Chair. And as the MP for Stafford, today I wanted to represent the views, concerns and fears of my constituents about HS2 and ask this Committee to take their views into account because I do feel that far too often they have been ignored. And I'd like to make the point that no-one asked for their home to be bulldozed or their golf club to be split in two but they are doing their best to make the best of the situation.

79. So I do welcome today HS2's commitment for further reassurances on their traffic management plan and their objective to present the Committee next week with all outstanding compensation claims to ensure a swift resolution for my constituents. But I'd just like to point out again that, when HS2 was first announced, it did send shockwaves through our local communities and I know that your Committee has been looking at very detailed reports and budgets and people have been speaking to you while this Bill passes but I'm afraid Westminster will soon move on to other pressing matters and Phase 2A of the HS2 Bill, I'm afraid, will not be every day in the news as it is now.

80. But on a human level, on the ground, in my constituency in Stafford, the construction of this railway is going to go on for years and the very beautiful, silent countryside will now have the noise of a train for decades to come. So for me, this issue isn't just about budgets and reports but it's also about fairness: fairness for residents, golf clubs, schools and whole communities who never asked for a railway to be built and they were just very unfortunate to be a line when the map was drawn. And I do believe they need to be treated fairly; they need to be given compensation and the respect that they deserve. I'm afraid they should not be treated by HS2 as an inconvenience in the planning process.

81. So thank you for listening to my petition and I hope that the Committee will take my views today and those of my constituents into their consideration. Thank you very much.

82. THE CHAIR: Thank you very much indeed. Well, I think we must now adjourn the proceedings. I do emphasise, Ms Clarke, that we will be looking again at the written material. These proceedings have been rather short for obvious reasons but that doesn't mean to say we won't be studying what you've said and what the replies were together so that we have a full picture of the issues you've been touching on today.

83. We're now going to adjourn. The next public meeting will be at 2.00 p.m. on Monday 14 September. With that, I now close today's proceedings.