

The Rt Hon the Lord Hope of Craighead KT
Chair
High Speed Rail (West Midlands - Crewe) Bill Select Committee
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

9 October 2020

Dear Lord Hope

**HIGH SPEED RAIL (WEST MIDLANDS – CREWE) BILL – HOUSE OF LORDS SELECT COMMITTEE:
PETITION HS2-HOL-023 - YARNFIELD AND COLD MEECE PARISH COUNCIL, STONE TOWN COUNCIL
& CHEBSEY PARISH COUNCIL**

I am writing in my capacity as the Director of Hybrid Bill Delivery at HS2 Ltd in response to a letter to you of 24 September from Mr Trevor Parkin of the Stone Railhead Crisis Group. Mr Parkin states that the purpose of his letter is to address examples of what he considers to be factually incorrect evidence given by our engineering witness, Mr Tim Smart, during the hearing on 15 September, which I will seek to clarify in this letter.

I will set out my responses under the respective headings used in Mr Parkin's letter.

1. Use of Mercia Mudstone

Mr Smart's evidence is correct. The HS2 Earthworks Technical Standard permits cohesive material (such as Mercia Mudstone) to be used in the lower parts of the HS2 high speed railway embankments. The standard notes that cohesive material is likely to require stabilisation in order to satisfy both the stiffness and compaction requirements.

There are many embankments built from Mercia Mudstone, including those for the M5, M6 and M42 motorways and for many of the approach embankments where local roads cross these motorways.

Mr Parkin is not correct in his assertion that the M6 motorway adjacent to the site is constructed entirely in cutting, because it is in fact on embankment where it crosses the Filly Brook valley between the existing Norton Bridge to Stone railway and Yarnfield Lane.

2. Excavation quantities at the Stone Railhead/IMB-R site

Mr Smart's evidence in paragraphs 451 to 459 is correct and he has not misunderstood HS2's earthwork quantities. Mr Smart commented on the petitioner's exhibit A20 (26) under the heading "Additional demand for fill". The key points being made here were that:

- most of the volume for the “five sites” comprises the volume for the Yarnfield Lane/M6 northbound access and so is a double count of material already allowed for in HS2’s earthworks quantities;
- the volume for the “Yarnfield North & South Embankment Extensions at AP1” (highlighted yellow on A20 (26)) was already included in the AP2 bulk earthwork figures and so is also a double count; and
- not all granular material will be imported to the site via road haul on HGVs. A quantity of such material will be moved to site via site haul within the construction boundary and will not be transported on the public highway.

I will respond to the point highlighted in amber in A20 (26) under item 3 below.

In our previous written correspondence with the petitioner we have answered in detail the petitioner’s queries in respect of the excavation quantities.

3. Ground treatment/ground investigations

Ground treatment

In paragraph 459 of the transcript, Mr Smart addressed the row highlighted in amber in A20 (26) “Untreated Stone Railhead/IMB-R areas requiring 2 metres”. It is necessary to do ground treatment only where it is required and not everywhere under the IMB-R embankment. The cross section at Ch 221+100 at A20 (24) is at a location where the embankment is proposed to be built on top of soft ground in the Filly Brook valley and so where ground treatment is needed. Therefore, the additional volume of 160,000 m3 in A20 (26) is not required.

Ground investigations

In paragraph 465 of the transcript, Mr Smart gave evidence that the process of ground investigation has not yet been completed. A further programme of ground investigations is to be undertaken in order to provide the necessary detailed information about the ground conditions at the Stone Railhead and Headshunt, for the purpose of taking forward the detailed design of the railway. Mr Smart also gave evidence that we had not been able to complete preliminary ground investigations due to being unable to obtain access to some of the relevant land. In particular, Mr Smart had in mind that it had not been possible to enter onto Micklow House Farm for that purpose. Mr Smart’s key point was that those lands that required further preliminary ground investigations were now included in our forthcoming programme of boreholes.

Mr Smart’s evidence in paragraph 466 of the transcript is correct.

4. Yarnfield North Embankment Transfer Node

Mr Smart stands by his evidence in paragraphs 470-472 of the transcript. Mr Smart’s point was that Articulated Dump Trucks (ADTs) would typically be on the main earthwork footprints of the HS2 Phase 2a railway alignment and within the Stone Railhead construction area. ADTs may have to cross public roads but this would be under traffic management controls. ADTs may also have to share sections of the route-wide haul road in locations where there are spatial or programme constraints, such as viaducts, tunnels and transfer nodes. Mr Smart’s evidence was that the proposed arrangements will be

feasible. That is his professional judgement based on his very considerable experience of rail construction.

We have answered the questions Mr Parkin has raised in respect of the Yarnfield North Embankment Transfer Node in our correspondence of March 2020 at P38 (99-158).

5. Response to Mr Gould's railway evidence regarding the Stone IMB-R

Mr Smart's evidence in paragraphs 485-486 of the transcript in relation to our intended operational use of the Stone IMB-R is correct.

In his letter Mr Parkin refers to the track form for the Phase 2b scheme. The Phase 2b scheme will be considered as part of a separate hybrid Bill process.

We do not recognise the '£500 million' saving figure Mr Parkin refers to in his letter nor has Mr Parkin provided a breakdown of the figure. This figure was not included in the report produced by Mr Michael Byng that was included in the petitioners exhibits, nor was it mentioned in the evidence presented during the hearing. Mr Byng did not produce a cost breakdown for the '£92.9 million of savings' cited in Mr Parkin's letter.

The matters Mr Parkin refers to in his letter relating to evidence given before the House of Commons Select Committee on 25 April 2018 have been addressed in our correspondence with the petitioners in February 2020 at P39 (92-98).

Mr Smart gave concise evidence to the Select Committee which understandably, in the short time available to him on 15 September, did not descend to the level of detail that Mr Parkin sets out in his letter. Nevertheless, Mr Smart is satisfied that he provided the Committee with the necessary key points in response to the petitioner's case.

We would be happy to provide any further clarifications or information you or the Committee may require.

Yours sincerely



Simon Knight
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High Speed Two (HS2) Limited