

14 Councils send a clear message to Transport Secretary –
the proposed HS2 Community and Environment Fund
to help the communities affected is inadequate

51m, the alliance of local authorities who oppose HS2, has written to Robert Goodwill MP, Under Secretary of State for Transport, to express its extreme disappointment over the inadequacy of the Community and Environment Fund (CEF) announced last month. It is essential that those facing the devastating impact of the project are given substantial help by the Government.

In August, member authorities had written to the Prime Minister, requesting the establishment of such a fund. A subsequent Ministerial Announcement confirmed the creation of funds for community, environment and business, up to a total of £30m. Whilst welcoming the announcement in principle, 51m was extremely disappointed by the amount.

The burden of hosting a national infrastructure project falls directly on those areas and communities through which the line passes with absolutely no benefit. These communities will be negatively affected in many ways - much of which will not be covered by formal compensation schemes or mitigation.

Information on the basis on which the £30m figure was derived has not been provided. In addition, no details are available on how the sum would be split between the communities and businesses affected. HS2 Phase 1 passes through 230km and 25 local authorities' boundaries. This means there are hundreds of organisations who could expect to receive a share of this fund. The possibility that communities would have to bid against one another is of enormous concern. Communities and businesses facing significant negative impacts, disturbance and inconvenience have a justifiable expectation they will receive help. At present they face an uncertain and potentially devastating future due to HS2 - construction alone will be up to 10 years in some places.

51m has pointed out that in sharp contrast to the CEF fund, those communities affected by new renewables plants will benefit from retaining the increase in business rates. For example, in 2013 the Government committed to an output-based community benefits package of up to £1k/MW generated over 40 years for new nuclear power station sites. This is worth around £128m to Hinkley Point C – a sum that is separate from formal mitigation packages.

The Chairman of 51m, Councillor Martin Tett, commented: "The councils consider an adequate amount for a community and environment fund alone is around £230m. Such a figure is broadly equivalent to £1m per km of Phase 1 of HS2, representing around 1% of its construction costs."

He continued: "If the Government believes the regenerative benefits claims of HS2 then those communities suffering the greatest harm should be able to share in the benefits of the scheme and the fund should be increased to reflect this. A locally influenced CEF would assist in rebuilding some of the community capital that will inevitably be lost as a direct result of HS2."

“51m local authorities would like to have worked with the Government prior to their announcement of the fund. It is understood that the New Philanthropy Capital and HS2 Ltd will engage with local authorities and local enterprise partnerships to get their feedback on the proposals. It is vital that these bodies are given the opportunity to shape the proposals.”

MP for Chesham and Amersham, Cheryl Gillan, said, “Local communities must have the final say and control over any fund, so that they can decide on the most beneficial projects and the timing of any spend on those projects. However, the funds need to be generous, particularly for the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which will be disproportionately adversely affected by HS2.”

20 November, 2014

Contacts:

Media Enquiries –

51m Councils -

Cllr Martin Tett, Leader, Buckinghamshire County Council

Cllr Neil Blake, Leader, Aylesbury Vale District Council

Cllr Sarah Hayward, Leader London Borough of Camden

Cllr Mary Clarke, Leader Cherwell District Council

Cllr Isobel Darby, Leader Chiltern District Council

Councillor Ray Puddifoot Leader, London Borough of Hillingdon

Cllr Ian Pritchard, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Development, Lichfield District Council

Cllr Mick Stanley, Leader North Warks District Council

Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Leader Oxfordshire County Council

Cllr Roger Reed, Deputy Leader, South Bucks District Council

Cllr Mike Heenan, Leader Stafford Borough Council

Cllr Chris Saint, Leader, Stratford-On-Avon District Council

Councillor Andrew Mobbs, Leader Warwick District Council

Cllr Richard Scott, Leader Wycombe District Council

Notes to the Editor:

1. 51m is a group of local authorities that joined together in 2010 in a national campaign to actively challenge the HS2 rail project. The group is known as "51m" because that represents how much HS2 will cost each and every Parliamentary Constituency...£51million. This figure was based on a project cost of £33 billion; in June, 2013 this was increased by the Government to £42.6 billion .The group wants to emphasise the impact this proposed scheme will have on every taxpayer in the country for years to come. In the event of HS2 proceeding, the local authorities will seek to ensure adequate mitigation and compensation is achieved in view of the project's devastating impact.

2. Workshops which have been arranged for 10 and 15 December to consider the CEF and BLEF.