



The Department for Transport is 'Hiding its Head in the Sand' say Opponents of HS2 as Appeal is Heard

On Monday 10 June, local authorities along the proposed HS2 line, from Camden to Warwickshire, will be appealing against the go-ahead for HS2.

Councillor Martin Tett, Leader of Buckinghamshire County Council and Chairman of the 51 alliance of local authorities opposed to HS2 said: "All we want is a full and fair assessment of the HS2 proposal and we hope the Appeal Court will ensure this happens so that the Government looks at it again. All along we have been saying that the business case is flawed, the environmental impact is damaging, the effect on Euston and Camden would be devastating and there has been no fair and proper consultation on, or consideration of, the alternatives.

"Recent developments show we are right. When the case for HS2 is properly examined, it is shown to be lacking. The damning report by the Government's own National Audit Office confirmed what we have been saying – it questions the business case and shows that the supposed regeneration benefits are unproven. The BBC's 'Newsnight' investigation has raised serious doubts about the assumptions used in the Department for Transport's case and even the Major Projects Authority has found the programme 'Amber/Red' - unlikely to deliver on time or budget.

"The DfT cannot keep in denial-'hiding its head in the sand' and saying that opponents are a small minority of 'NIMBYS'. This is a seriously flawed project with an overrunning budget that is likely to top £58 billion (including trains and operating costs). At a time of national austerity it is very poor value for hard pressed taxpayers'. Our Appeal, if successful, will provide the opportunity for a serious rethink of transport priorities and investment in road

and rail schemes across the whole country, bringing jobs and growth now when we need them.”

On the same day the NAO report was published the Government published its draft Environmental Statement consultation. Councillor Martin Tett added:

“This environmental statement is wholly inadequate and gives people just eight weeks for a highly complicated consultation. The whole thing is a catalogue of mistakes, ranging from poor advertising and timing of events, omissions, errors and wrong information sent out weeks after the consultation has started. HS2 Limited keep telling us that ‘they don’t have to do this consultation’ but this does not excuse an unfair consultation process. When a public body consult then they must do it fairly. Their lack of attention to even the simplest part of the consultation process is reminiscent of the West Coast Mainline fiasco. The DfT and HS2 Ltd seem to be confirming that they are still dysfunctional.”

In the last few weeks, three more councils north of Birmingham have failed to support HS2 – Stafford Borough Council, Wakefield Council and Bradford Council. Councillor Martin Tett added: “These towns and cities realise that far from helping the Midlands and the north, HS2 is most likely going to increase the power of London . Now is the time to stop this project and put serious investment into local and transport schemes designed to give their economies real competitive advantage.”

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Notes for Editor

Schedule for the Court appearances starting 10 June 10.30am in the Master of the Rolls Court 71 before the Master of the Rolls Lord Justice Sullivan and Lord Justice Richards

The applications will be heard in the following order:

- HS2 Action Alliance Limited -v- The Secretary of State for Transport
- Buckinghamshire County Council & Others -v- The Secretary of State for Transport
- Heathrow Hub Limited and Another -v- The Secretary of State for Transport

For further information or media interviews please contact:

- Rachel Prance(51m Alliance , Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils) on 0771 1040 758 Email: rprance@chiltern.gov.uk(until Tuesday 11 June pm)
- Aidan Shutter (Buckinghamshire County Council) on 01296 382126 or 07917 090440 (Wednesday 12 June, Thursday 13 June)
- Charlotte Stamper (London Borough of Hillingdon) on 01895 556903 or 07930320460 (Wednesday 12 June, Thursday 13 June)