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**HS2 Liaison Group**  
**Venue: Microsoft Teams**  
**Minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2024 at 10.30 am**

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<b>Representatives from the following organisations were present:</b>	
<p>Cllr Anthony Bagot-Webb WNC (Chair; Brackley &amp; Cabinet Assistant HS2)</p> <p>Cllr Phil Larratt WNC (Cabinet Member Highways &amp; Transport)</p> <p>Cllr Alison Eastwood WNC (Silverstone)</p> <p>Cllr Charles Manners WNC (Silversone)</p> <p>Cllr Rosie Herring WNC (Middleton Cheney)</p> <p>Cllr Sue Sharps WNC (Brackley)</p>	<p>Clive Hockley (Hinton-in-the-Hedges PC)</p> <p>John Marchant (Helmdon PC)</p> <p>Maurice Cole (Thorpe Mandeville PC)</p> <p>Andy Smith (Radstone)</p> <p>Gary Lowther (Syresham)</p> <p>Hilary Walton (Whitfield PC)</p> <p>Nigel Galletly (Chipping Warden PC)</p>
<b>In Attendance:</b>	<b>Apologies:</b>
<p>Simon Levell (Kier Northants)</p> <p>Gary Pettit (WNC)</p> <p>Nathan Lowde (WNC)</p> <p>Robert James (WNC)</p>	<p>Chris James (EKFB)</p> <p>Dave Butcher (EKFB)</p> <p>Simon Davis (EKFB)</p> <p>Haidee Williams (EKFB)</p> <p>Richard Nuttall (HS2)</p> <p>Filippa St Alban D’Ancy &amp; colleagues (National Highways)</p> <p>Andrea Leadsom (Parliament)</p> <p>Jack Edwards (Parliamentary assistant)</p> <p>Stuart Rolt (Thorpe Mandeville PC)</p> <p>Chris Weller</p> <p>Mick Morris (Farthinghoe PC)</p> <p>Cathy Ellis (Evenley PC)</p> <p>Cllr Dermot Bambridge WNC (Silverstone)</p>

**MINUTES**

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**1. Welcome, Introductions, Minutes of last meeting and Matters arising**

Cllr Bagot-Webb welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained this would be essentially a ‘listening’ meeting owing to pre-general election restrictions preventing usual attendance by EKFB, HS2 Ltd and National Highways. He had challenged this as in WNC view it was not a ‘political’ forum, however in lieu of attendance Chris James of EKFB had sent a slide presentation on progress, planned closures etc to be used at this HS2 Liaison Group and would accept questions sent to EKFB afterwards.

Cllr Bagot-Webb introduced Simon Levell (Kier Northants) to the Group who was now undertaking a number of HS2 functions for WNC that Esme Cushing previously did.

The Minutes from the previous meeting (16<sup>th</sup> February 2024) were agreed, there were no outstanding actions, and matters arising / updates were given as below:

Andy Smith: Asked that given the pre-election protocol preventing attendance by EKFB / HS2 / NH, could a Liaison Group be held as soon as possible after 4<sup>th</sup> July? Cllr Bagot-Webb agreed that it should so that effective dialogue could take place.

John Marchant: Asked why EKFB / HS2 / NH would not attend. Cllr Bagot-Webb reiterated what had been said at the start i.e. government advice they had received.

## **2a. Greatworth Tee**

Cllr Bagot-Webb outlined that although phase 1 of Greatworth Tee (B4525 Welsh Lane north of Greatworth to Sulgrave Road) had finally opened on 29<sup>th</sup> February after protracted delays, there was little sign that phase 2 (connection from phase 1 to B4525 west) would be progressing imminently despite numerous promises given by EKFB / HS2; evidence 'on the ground' that this was the case being no sign of any backfilling over the Greatworth green tunnel sections taking place, a pre-requisite (not to mention all the necessary approvals) of physically building phase 2 on top.

Alison Eastwood: Suggested that re: Greatworth Tee progress, it would assist the Liaison Group if direct questions were asked of Chris James and Simon Davis (*latter to be replaced by Haidee Williams*) at EKFB, and offered to make contact with them.

**Action – AE to contact Chris James and Simon Davis / Haidee Williams at EKFB with respect to phase 2 of Greatworth Tee**

## **2b. Banbury/Warwick Road (Boddington)**

Cllr Bagot-Webb outlined how there were now also protracted delays in opening the Banbury/Warwick Road (Boddington) new bridge to public traffic, and local diversions are devastating the carriageway integrity to an unacceptable level.

Alison Eastwood: Added that delays to opening the Wormleighton Road across the county boundary into Warwickshire meant unacceptable detours for road users. A new temporary link to maintain connectivity in the interim was mentioned, although timescales for its implementation were not clear.

## **3. B4525 – issues re: use by HS2 traffic**

Cllr Bagot-Webb introduced this item, which was becoming a rapidly increasing problem area: Incidents on the B4525 along its length from the A43 junction south of Syresham to the EKFB Greatworth compound are too frequent, culminating in the recent overturning of a loaded cement mixer vehicle bound for EKFB Greatworth and spilling part of its load on the 'dumbbell' roundabout leading from A43 to start of

B4525. It was believed to be the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> incident of overturning vehicles on the B4525 in recent months.

Gary Lowther: Highlighted poor camber on the A43/B4525 roundabout as a possible contributing factor, and asked the meeting to consider was speed a factor when there were pressures on HGV drivers to deliver to site on time, and to what extent damaged edges of the B4525 carriageway were also a factor (in case of other overturning incidents), the road structure not being strong enough or the route wide enough when two HGVs meet, and the urgency in getting repairs done. Cllr Bagot Webb responded that these were all potential factors, although noted that there were limitations as to what could be done to address the actual roundabout.

Gary Pettit: Mentioned there had been calls from the local community for a 40mph limit on the B4525; discussions had taken place with Northants Police who didn't support a lower limit (currently 50mph) owing to difficulties in enforcing it effectively, also the Police and Kier Northants had carried out surveys which demonstrated generally good adherence to the 50mph limit. Meanwhile HS2 / EKFB had agreed to limit their supply chain delivery vehicles to 45mph whilst using the B4525, and drivers were briefed / trained regularly, so little appetite to support a 40mph limit.

John Marchant: Stated that WNC had promised to implement a 40mph restriction at the B4525/Helmdon/Radstone crossroads. Cllr Bagot-Webb asked for clarification that this was only limited to that locality? Gary Pettit confirmed that this was to deal with a localised safety issue and was not about the B4525 'globally' as a whole, over which there was no justification for a lower limit throughout the corridor.

Andy Smith: Asked whether Gary Pettit's conclusion was based on observations of driver behaviour. Gary Pettit replied that it was difficult to draw conclusions based on that one factor alone. Andy Smith further re-iterated that the road was too narrow for intensive two-way HGV traffic. He felt that EKFB sub-contractors and supply chain should 'sign-up' to the Fleet Operators Recognition Scheme (FORS) regulating standards of driver behaviour and vehicle operations, adding that they should achieve 100% FORS membership, furthermore WNC should monitor adherence.

**Action – AS to contact Chris James and Dave Butcher at EKFB with respect to systems in place for monitoring driver behaviour and vehicles, and extent of FORS membership**

Gary Lowther: Reminded all present that vehicle tachographs should hold a lot of the information sought, and that HGV / delivery vehicle operators should adhere to this even if they were not accredited under the FORS scheme. He further added that quite apart from this, the road itself needed to have regular maintenance, as its history as a former C-class road meant it 'wasn't up to the job' being asked of it, and that its width also presented serious problems for pedestrians using it.

Alison Eastwood: Concerned from the outset at questionable decision by EKFB to use the B4525 as a supply route, need to negotiate improvements with them/HS2.

Sue Sharps: In relation to question of safety of pedestrians along the B4525, needed to be mindful of the environment and planning ramifications if surfaced footpaths were introduced. Cllr Bagot-Webb noted this comment but was of the view the Crowfield area (between A43 and Helmdon) of the B4525 was where pedestrian movement and safety needed most attention if footpath improvements were done.

Nigel Galletly: *(item raised at this point but not related to B4525)* Has questioned EKFB about the placing of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras to allegedly "record lorry movements" within Chipping Warden, and wondered about the implications for privacy / General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) etc. It was suggested it would be for EKFB to demonstrate and justify re: appropriate use.

#### **4. National Highways presentation**

NH were not present owing to pre-election directive they were bound by. However EKFB slide presentation (see item 5. below) includes update on A43 works.

#### **5. EKFB update including future road closure plans and phasing**

EKFB (and HS2 Ltd) were likewise not present owing to pre-election directive, although Chris James (EKFB) had provided a slide presentation and narrative on progress of the main West Northants highway interface areas with HS2, including details of current and planned closures of local roads. The following areas of work were covered in the slide presentation; comments made by Liaison Group attendees are listed under relevant items where these were raised:

##### ***A422***

Update on works to A422 overbridge near Westbury including current activity and planned closures *(just into Buckinghamshire, but used by traffic in Brackley area)*.

##### ***A43 Works Update***

This included NH programme of phasing / lane closures / full closures to effect A43 overbridge construction, including the construction methodology and a video update.

##### ***Radstone / Radstone Road Overbridge***

Update on planned closures for the Brackley to Radstone/Helmdon road, and progress with works on new Radstone Road overbridge.

Rosie Herring: Mentioned the misfortune delivered on local residents by more long-term closures of this important local link between Brackley, B4525 and Helmdon. Also commented on the perception of the new overbridge being at such an angle that the realigned Radstone Road would have "some tight turns" to negotiate.

Andy Smith: Re-iterated Rosie Herring's comment on the apparent tight bends the new bridge would introduce on the diverted highway, but on plus side the road would end up further away from Radstone village. Main point raised was the unacceptability of yet another closure on this road, the reason he understood being

that EKFB had to alter the temporary Radstone Road diversion to accommodate a revised haul road crossing and adjust vehicle restraint system (VRS) barriers. The multiple road closures were, he felt, down to poor planning on part of EKFB / HS2, the latest was six weeks already leading to major inconvenience and cost for local residents, work and school journeys, delivery difficulties etc. The view (shared by the meeting in general) was that the proliferation of road closures, and the phasing of them / knock-on effects need to be much more robustly challenged by WNC acting on behalf of local communities. What powers do WNC have and what legal advice have they sought / been given about challenging HS2 activities more effectively?

Nathan Lowde: At this point in discussion, mentioned that in neighbouring Buckinghamshire HS2 Ltd were "reviewing the status of Buckinghamshire Council as a consultee" given that they (HS2) were also considering "breaking off the relationship" in terms of liaison with Bucks. Needless to say, this caused concern.

Gary Pettit reminded those present that HS2 Ltd have powers under the HS2 Act which means they only have to notify the WNC Regulations Team (Gary Thorp) of planned closures, and aside from genuine clashes with other Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTROs) local authorities have very little veto over such actions. Overall view of those present was that HS2's programme of closures is dragging-on and changing to an utterly unacceptable level.

### ***Greatworth Area***

A brief update on progress with the Greatworth green tunnel and anticipation of future road closures for both B4525 Welsh Lane and Banbury Road (Thorpe Mandeville), but no hint of timescales or extent.

Cllr Bagot-Webb repeated that the progress on waterproofing and backfilling the green tunnel sections appears to be protracted, and the knock-on effect of delivering phase 2 of Greatworth Tee.

**Action – AB-W to press Chris James at EKFB for a clearer idea of timescales and process for delivering phase 2 of Greatworth Tee, and implications**

### ***Edgcote Area***

Brief update on works to the Edgcote viaduct, and approximate planned period for closure of Wardington Road for works to same and beams for the viaduct.

Nathan Lowde: Mentioned under Schedule 17 of the HS2 Act (relating to planning) that there had been an application to amend the viaduct, however despite WNC concerns, the HS2 design review panel had favoured the HS2-promoted amendment.

Nigel Galletly: Asked why use could not be made of a section of the HS2 internal site road (which is surfaced) as a replacement in part for having to close the Culworth Road out of Chipping Warden permanently. It was noted the decision to close Culworth Road (*albeit it will be kept open as a through route for non-motorised users on a diverted route over the green tunnel portal*) was authorised under the

HS2 Act, and re-use of the internal site road has other restrictions on its permissibility, notwithstanding that it does not properly 'replace' Culworth Road as it heads for A361 north of Chipping Warden, not the village. It was agreed the history and implications of this were best referred to Esme Cushing at WNC for context.

### ***Chipping Warden***

An update on backfilling works to the green tunnel sections (which will enable Chipping Warden Relief Road phase 2 / A361 to be diverted over the top) plus programme for planned weekend closures of A361 to enable utility diversions.

Nigel Galletly: Noted that recent planning and communication of A361 closures "has been chaotic", in part it was conceded to accommodate a nearby equestrian event at Washbrook Farm, Aston-le-Walls. There had been four separate closures that appeared to lead to only one day of works happening: A local landowner in Chipping Warden had offered to clear their adjacent ditches at the time, if works to highway ditches were carried out at same time, but this had not happened. Gary Pettit noted however that WNC ditches could only be cleared outside of bird nesting season.

Cllr Bagot-Webb commented that the A361 permanent diversion works (Chipping Warden Relief Road phase 2) would have to await completion of tunnel section waterproofing and backfilling.

### ***Boddington Area***

Update on works to the Banbury/Warwick Road overbridge, now seriously delayed, and the positive indication that EKFB will be providing a temporary link road to maintain local connectivity, although timescales were vague and unspecified.

Alison Eastwood: Described the "nightmare situation because of overbridge opening delay" to local movements: Simon Levell did remind all present, as did Gary Pettit, that the temporary link which EKFB have offered to provide is a concession in this respect given the unacceptably long diversions that would continue in its absence; nevertheless, it is still far from clear when this will be delivered.

## **6. AOB**

John Marchant: Asked if Gary Pettit liaised with Sam Simons at WNC on relevant HS2 matters, which he confirmed that he did.

Rosie Herring: Noted the vegetation clearance that had been carried out at the B4525/Helmdon/Radstone crossroads, and thanked Gary Pettit/Kier for getting this done. She did however have future safety concerns over the Radstone village junction with the Brackley to Helmdon road, post-realignment. Simon Levell explained that this would have to go through a safety and technical audit process, as do all HS2-altered highway assets, and that there had already been safety improvements secured from EKFB/HS2 as part of design development.

**Date of next meeting: provisionally Friday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2024 10.30-12.00 via MS Teams**