

## APPENDIX 2

### **Summary of the Informal Meeting of the HS2 Working Group with the Community Stakeholder Manager for HS2**

**31 October 2013, 6pm - 7.10pm  
Civic Offices, Newcastle-under-Lyme**

#### **Present**

Cllr David Becket  
Cllr George Cairns  
Cllr David Stringer (Chairman)  
Cllr Robin Studd  
Mr Terry Stafford (Community Stakeholder Manager – HS2)  
Ms Siobhan Edmund (Stakeholder Advisor – HS2)  
Mr Guy Benson (Head of Planning)  
Mr Martin Stevens (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies – Cllr David Loades & Cllr Tracey Peers

#### **Summary of Meeting**

After the initial introductions and summary by the Chairman as to the current views of the Working Group, Terry Stafford, Community Stakeholder Manager – HS2 was invited to comment. He complimented the Working Group on their open minded approach to their work. He believed the report to be a reasonable response to the information the group had ascertained to date. His role was to encourage constructive relationships with stakeholders and to promote understanding. He had access to specialists in a wide range of areas such as economics and engineering. HS2 was currently in its first public stage of consultation, which had commenced in July 2013. There were a number of other stages to go through such as the Property Consultation stage, before it reached the Hybrid Bill stage. HS2 was not expected to be completed until the year 2033. There had been several public information events held in the County of Staffordshire. There were two more to be held. There had quite often been negative feedback at these events. The matter of property compensation was a particularly sensitive area and one which caused people anxiety.

Mr Stafford stated that there was a lack of understanding in the general public regarding how connected the proposed route was to the existing network. There were dozens of journey time savings to be made. The benefits were not solely about train travel, people who never used a train could feel a benefit to their area of living. The released capacity created by HS2 could have significant benefits. He was aware of the information circulating regarding a reduced service from Stoke to London. He believed the future of this to be still undetermined. There were a number of potential options including the potential for more freight to be delivered to the area. The Service could potentially stay the same or evolve. Potentially there were hosts of benefits.

The confirmed route of HS2 was not due to be finalised until October, 2014 at this time there would be a clearer idea about the released capacity created.

Mr Stafford urged the Council to use the consultation to its advantage. He emphasised that it should give consideration to the potential of released capacity, the route and potential stations. He stressed the need for the Council to think about how best they could use these three consideration points for the benefit of the Borough. When considering the final location of stations, there were a number of factors which would be taken into account. There had to be a balance of these connecting factors. The three main factors were cost, environmental impact and the likely demand. The decisions on the locations of stations to date had been made pre-consultation. One of the primary aims of the consultation was to obtain more information which could potentially change the current proposals. If the Council believed there was a better performing route and if a station could be justified then it should use the consultation to submit supporting evidence. He stated that North Staffordshire was not too far from the proposed station at Crewe, which could potentially bring benefits to the area.

Mr Stafford stated that the initial preferred route was the result of two and a half years work. It did however have no legal status and was subject to change. It was a genuine public consultation and so if there was a compelling case for a change in the route, then the Secretary of State would consider the change. The Chairman stated that he believed Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council would join with the other local Council's in the North Staffordshire area to give a joint response to the Consultation. He asked at what point the Council would know about the extent of the released capacity. In response Mr Stafford stated that HS2 had always been about capacity with the extra speed an added benefit. It was a national, long-term scheme with 20 years of cost but 120 years of benefit. It was a response to the growing capacity need within the nation. He would however not know the extent of the released capacity on the standard lines until at least the route had been finalised. The Chairman stated that it was important to have a definitive timescale in order for the Council to plan for the future and to be able to inform the public about any potential benefit.

A Member stated that the people of North Staffordshire did not believe that a station at Crewe would benefit them. The accessibility to Crewe was not good. The journey time from Stoke to Crewe by train was slow at 30 minutes on a single track line. The recent KPMG economic report on HS2 stated that the Staffordshire region would benefit from £420 million in productivity. A Freedom of Information Request had recently revealed that Stoke would suffer a deficit of £78 million. He believed that HS2 had been economic with the truth, as this figure had not been revealed to him when he submitted some questions to HS2 regarding the economic benefit. He stressed the need for transparency. He believed the best option for the area would be a direct train from Stoke to London every hour using classic compatibility. He thought that the speed of 250 miles an hour was too fast and was merely appealing to the ego of the engineer. A slower train would allow for more options. The

disruption in building HS2 could not be underestimated and they needed to be transparent about the true extent of the works required.

Mr Stafford stated that in the current proposals there was a twice hourly train going from Crewe to London. He did not deny the extent of the disruption that would be caused during the construction phase but he also emphasised that the alternatives to HS2 were not free of cost and disruption. It was his understanding that the economic figures were best understood as a region rather than as individual areas. They became less reliable once there was a focus on a particular area. This was probably why the figure regarding Stoke was not revealed in the Member's original questions to HS2. The speed of HS2 had a huge economic benefit due to the reduced journey time. Analysis had shown that people were more likely to day trip on HS2 rather than staying overnight. He advised that if the Council believed a case could be made for a spur to Stoke then it could form part of the Council's consultation response. In doing so he believed the following areas to be important when making a case, cost, technical difficulty, demand and environmental impact.

The Chairman stated that in the future there could potentially be three different ways to travel to London by train, London Midland, Virgin Trains and HS2. He asked Mr Stafford what train services would run from Stoke Station. In response Mr Stafford stated that no one presently knew the answer to the question as it would depend on a number of factors and future negotiation with interested parties. The Chairman stated that a spur to Stoke would seem a favorable option for the area.

A Member stated that if HS2 did go ahead, several villages within the Borough would be affected during the construction of the tracks. There was currently no construction plan. In response Mr Stafford stated that they would be looking at how best to minimize disruption and the best road routes to use. Much of this work would be carried out during the environmental impact assessment.

The Chairman stated that people were concerned about the compensation arrangement and people were already experiencing a fall in the value of their land and property. Mr Stafford described some of the work taking place on the compensation arrangements for phase 1. He hoped that these arrangements would help reassure people. The compensation arrangements for HS2 had not yet been fully finalised and he was aware of the public confusion.

The Chairman asked if it was true that local planning authorities could have a minor input into some of the development arrangements for HS2. Mr Stafford stated that he believed this was the case but he would come back to the group with more detailed information.

A Member commented that he was concerned that HS2 would cause a north / south shift. He believed London would benefit more than the north causing a shift in the country's economic profile. Another Member added that people would be less inclined to visit Stoke which was already suffering from a

decline in business and industry. There was a belief that some businesses would re-locate to Crewe from Stoke. The fact that Stoke was not well connected to Crewe meant long travel times. Only significant investment in the transport infrastructure would make the journey from Stoke to Crewe more appealing.

Mr Stafford concluded by stating that HS2 was able to mitigate against certain factors in a way that traditional train travel could not. He suggested that the Council should talk to Kent County Council about their experience of High Speed Railway. He believed that the noise had not affected livestock in the area in any significant negative way. He encouraged people to listen to the demonstration sound of the High Speed Trains in the booths at the public events. He encouraged the Council to talk to other Local Authorities, including Cheshire East who were particularly positive about achieving the most from HS2 in their area. HS2 offered an innovative way of increasing capacity and reliability for train travel in the future. He hoped that people would attend the public consultation events. There was one being held in Madeley on the 6 November from 12pm – 8pm and one at the Staffordshire Showground on the 10 December, 12pm -8pm.

Mr Stafford suggested two minor corrections to the draft report on HS2 from the Working Group. The report referenced 18 trains an hour, this was the capacity, but in the identified area it was proposed for there to be 11 trains an hour, 6am to Midnight. The report also referred to a journey penalty time of ten minutes, but it was only five minutes.

The Working Group thanked Mr Stafford and Siobhan Edmund for their attendance and they in turn thanked the Working Group for the opportunity of talking to the Group.