



Speech notes for HS2 Rallies

Steve Rodrick, Chief Officer, Chilterns Conservation Board

An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty- “ but not Constable Country”

The Chilterns, one of England's finest landscapes. As designated by government as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1965. That means it is part of our natural heritage and we are all supposed to look after it - not just those who live here but everyone and especially those in government.

It seems that Phillip Hammond doesn't share that sense of pride - as he put it “the Chilterns is not Constable Country.”

A gigantic spoil heap

HS2 Ltd has made major mistake in calculating the volume of spoil generated in the Chilterns. It estimates that volume to be 680,000 cubic metres that HS2 quotes in its report. We believe the figure to be 12 million cubic metres.

If it was pile in one spoil heap it would be approx. 50 metres high, 200 metres wide and 2,000 metres long. Where are they going to dispose of such a large volume?

Why does that matter?

It means that HS2 Ltd is making basic errors in the calculations

HS2 Ltd has seriously underestimated the environmental impact.

It could mean over 1.7 million lorry journeys along local roads to dispose of that spoil.

That could mean a lorry using local roads every 26 seconds every working day for 5 years.

Not even HS2 Ltd make claims that HS2 is green.

It will almost certainly lead to:

- increased carbon emissions
- the destruction of ancient woodland
- valuable farmland being dug up, (HS2 actually refuse to give a figure for how much land will be used – it will be in the order of 5,000 acres)
- the loss of important wildlife sites, historic buildings and archaeology.
- increased noise levels
- reduced enjoyment we all get from walking, cycling and riding in the glorious countryside around here.

National Benefits

Despite all the damage that will be done we all know that sometimes projects have to go ahead which may benefit the nation but not those communities directly affected. Many of us initially thought that HS2 might come into that category. Perhaps we would have to bear the cost to help the disadvantaged communities in the north.

But, the Chilterns has more than its share of national infrastructure

The Chilterns is already affected by infrastructure which services the north –The Ridgway (Neolithic) and Watling Street (Roman); followed much later by the Grand Union (18th Century). Then came the railways - the West Coast mainline and the London Marylebone to Birmingham line (19th Centuries); no less than 8 'A' roads, 2 motorways (20th Century) and more masts (21st century) than any other part of the country.

On our doorstep we have Heathrow and Luton airports.

We want to see further improvements to the Chiltern Line and West Coast Main line.

Savings in journey times are modest

The journey time savings are less than many think:

- 7 minutes off the journey to Newcastle
- 38 minutes to Glasgow
- 43 minutes to Edinburgh
- 24 minutes to Liverpool
- 23 minutes to Birmingham.

(Best current times compared to HS2 claims)

Claims that HS2 will be transformational are not credible

Northern cities have never been better connected than they are now. Most northern city centres are being successfully re-generated. Whilst their wider and relative economic fortunes may have declined, road, rail, air and now IT connections have all improved greatly.

Perhaps the regeneration of depressed northern cities does not depend upon saving a few minutes on a railway journey in 20 years time - it is certainly not worth spending £33 billion to find out. They can be helped more effectively more quickly for much less.

It is ironic that even HS2 predicts that 70% of the economic benefits will be in London. If anything, it will widen the north south divide. As 70% of the fares will be paid by those who start their journey outside London it will mean that billions of pounds will leach out of the north via HS2 itself

Some more environmental facts

- HS2 Ltd estimates that as little as 1% of motorway traffic will shift to HS2.

- HS2 will generate millions of additional rail journeys and car journeys to catch those trains.
- A high speed train will use at least double the energy of a classic train and be responsible for at least double the carbon emissions
- HS2 hope to offset those emissions by persuading people to stop flying, especially between London, Glasgow and Edinburgh; but as HS2 doesn't shorten the journey time much to Scotland flying will remain a realistic option.
- Carbon emissions can only be saved if cancelled domestic flights are not replaced by other flights especially long haul. BAA has already confirmed that any vacated slot at Heathrow will be used for long haul flights. This will mean that carbon emissions are likely to actually increase. They will increase further if Birmingham Airport realises its ambition of using its own HS2 station to double the number of passengers using the airport.
- Damage over 50 ancient woodlands and 10 SSSI
- Damage a further 100 wildlife sites
- It will sever valued public rights of way, including The Ridgeway and The Chiltern Way, all for 10 years, many for ever.

Which ever scale you look at this – there are no environmental benefits

And yet, if the government is willing to spend so much money there are many better ways of improving our transport network and the environment.

Andrew Gilligan of The Daily Telegraph

“The burning need in public transport is not for sexy, pointy-nosed high speed trains whose economics simply don't stack up. It's for boring, unglamorous improvements to the services we actually use.”

Charles Clover of The Sunday Times

Until Hammond makes a better case, the councillors and worthies of the Chilterns will fight - and they will be right.

A Broad Alliance

Phillip Hammond thinks we are dishonest NIMBYS. And yet it is rare to find such a broad national coalition as that which opposes HS2. Everyone from The Green Party and The Daily Telegraph to the Friends of the Earth and the Taxpayers Alliance.

Prince Charles

“The countryside means different things to all of us. For some, it is a place of beauty and tranquillity. For many, it is a place to live and work. But we can all agree it is surely one of the greatest treasures of our nation.”

Thank you