

PRESENT: Councillor Jeff Warburton - Chairman
Councillor John Atherden - Vice Chairman
Councillor John Erlam
Councillor Chris Frankland
Councillor Lucy Gianferrari
Councillor Richard Jackson
Councillor Amy Unwin

IN ATTENDANCE: Mike Slater, Mid Cheshire Against HS2 (MCAHS2)
Nigel Hennerley, MCAHS2
Police Representative
Clerk Sue McDonald

1 APOLOGIES: Councillor J Sherratt

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS: None

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th September 2021 were unanimously accepted as a true record.
Proposed by Councillor Atherden, seconded by Councillor Frankland

4 POLICE REPORT

A PCSO from Knutsford Police Station reported that there has been a theft of tools worth £3,000 from an outbuilding and the advice is to ensure that anything stored in outbuildings is adequately protected.

Councillor Warburton stated that some equipment had been dumped in Ashley and it that appeared to be connected to the production of cannabis. The PCSO stated that it was not a rare occurrence but it was not easy to identify the culprits or where it originated from.

Councillor Unwin wanted to know if Cheshire Police were aware of the attempted abduction of a primary schoolchild and the suspicious following of a child just over the border in Hale and Altrincham. The PCSO was not aware of the incidents but would check back at base and would alert colleagues if necessary.

5 TATTON ESTATE

No representative from Tatton Estate was able to attend.

6 HS2

It was agreed the that Council would hear the Mid Cheshire Against HS2 talk immediately and the order of the Agenda was changed accordingly.

6.1 Mid Cheshire Against HS2 (MCAHS2)

The Chairman welcomed Mike Slater and Nigel Hennerley, both of MCAHS2, to the meeting and invited them to give their talk.

Nigel stated that Mike would give most of presentation which would be short and swift and a talk in more detail would be given when they met with the Council's HS2 subgroup.

- The group is waiting for the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) to be delivered to give an idea of what their thoughts are.
- Some big news items today question if it will it go from Crewe to Manchester. If it does it will go through Ashley and High Legh.
- High Legh will end up in a triangle with a line going through it. This is totally unacceptable for High Legh. The impact in Ashley is also massive and unacceptable.
- These local impacts are joined up and it is the same throughout the whole of the country. We argue that this is not the right way to go about it .
- MCAHS2 has looked at the HS2 line overall and there is just no business case for it. Looking at the return on the investment apart from it being diabolical and getting worse
- Looking at the environmental aspect's wide range of issues include the amount of carbon that going to be released.
- Another dangerous thing is that, especially over the salt fields and the salt mine, HS2 really don't know how to build the line. The NW main line is sitting on a 'proper' chink of salt all the way through. However The HS2 line would run across the mine and with the brine streams that are running it will be impossible to keep water out of the mine. These things have not been taken into account.

- The HS2 line was going to cross the section where they store the gas but it was moved a little bit to the right. So, instead of going across the gas storage (although it is very close), vibrations from the line there are likely to upset the gas storage. People at the gas storage have made this issue very, very clear.
- The line will now go across one of the flashes which is moving. (*Explanatory note not part of minutes - the flashes are sites which have a legacy of unique site conditions that allow many unusual species to thrive; the presence of salt has allowed seaside plants to establish, whilst the area's recent industrial use of lime beds allow other species such as the rare Dingy Skipper butterfly to survive*)
- Around High Legh there are sink holes which are evidenced by their presences on a number of local land owners' fields. Some of this land was filmed in the 60s and again in the 80s, and the sink holes are going down again. How HS2 can be built on such unstable, moving ground is illogical..
- There is the issue of a massive CO2 emission which will probably take of the order of 120 years plus to recoup. A number of MPs believe that HS2 has a positive intention by planting lots of trees. Factually, small trees do not consume much CO2. Felling and weighing an old oak tree would illustrate how a significant amount of carbon had been collected over the years. Felling a little tree would not show much pf a collection of CO2 even in 2040. So HS2's assertion that tree planting will solve the CO2 problem is green wash and it is one of the most upsetting things about their lack of honesty.
- So our argument is not just the lack of a business case but the fact the HS2 do not know how much the Western section of the line will cost. They have produced a design but they have not yet finished ground investigations. One of the items we are pressing MPs for is sight of the eventual ground investigation report. What we see will probably be highly edited but MPs ought to know what the ground investigation report says before they sign anything.
- A decision to create an embankment would, according to an HS2 engineer, need to get to a bulk density of soil and hydrated lime of 2 tons per cubic metre. In context, solid rock is 2.69 tons. For crops HS2 is trying to use 1.3 to 1.6 tons which is not solid enough. A solid base for crops needs to be nearer 2 tons per cubic metre.
- HS2 are aiming to get to a solid state and the way they are doing it is to use vast amounts of unsaturated lime which will come from Buxton and nearby areas. It would have to come by lorry and, if our calculations are correct then something of the order of 459,000 thousand lorry loads of stone etc will have to be hauled in to do this part of the job.
- Looking at the other environmental impacts we talked about CO2 loss but there is a massive loss of farmland we talk about the loss of farm land and HS2 will take even more land to plant trees. So what land is available to grow crops? The amount of trees is enormous because they are trying to hid the enormous structures such as rolling stock depots which is probably 65 hectares of the equivalent of 100 - 125 football fields. his is excluding all the connecting facilities.
- One thing seen on the maps is that they are putting in ponds where water will flow in, evaporate and go away. Once you have a hole in the ground with water it stays like that forever. The designers have a major misunderstanding about water. In terms of potential flooding this is a ticking time bomb.
- We have been lobbying MPs and Cheshire East Council whose members do not appear to be conversant with HS2 issues or are totally ignorant. However, in general, once people understand the problems they become much less positive towards HS2. Looking at the other environmental impacts we talked about CO2 loss we talk about the loss of farm land and HS2 will take even more land to plant trees.
- High Legh got enough money together to get a geo investigation of the area. HS2 have now started to look at the report 5 years later when much of the design has been finished.
- HS2 are now conducting geo investigations and we are spending as much time as possible trying to influence MPs at the moment purely because they are the ones who will nod this thing through or abstain. We are lucky in that Esther McVey is openly against HS2.
- Unfortunately, until we can show them the issues and get them to walk round to see the issues for themselves I don't think we will get very far.
- It is so very important for residents to ask the question about what damage HS2 is going to do to me and my property. It is equally important to ensure that HS2 acknowledges these questions and residents receive a reply or at least confirmation of the question being asked
- One problem that affects many organisations is that they are bound by non-disclosure agreements (NDA)which, in some cases, they were almost forced to sign. Anyone refusing to sign is penalised as a consequence.

Councillor Warburton remarked that the recent by-election in Chesham and Amersham where the Conservatives lost by an historic margin could well have been because of the constituents' opposition to HS2. He didn't know how many Tory seats there were but if those seats also suffered from HS2 then it could be favourable to us. Mike remarked how there was a change of attitude and stance when HS2 actually goes through a constituency.

Councillor Erlam explained that most of Altrincham and Knutsford were blissfully unaware of the impact that HS2 will have on their areas. Factually materials coming by rail will either have to come via Altrincham or Knutsford. Unfortunately, local MPs are only concerned with their own constituency and don't seem to see (or want to see) the bigger picture. Graham Brady for example, wants part of the spur to the airport moving so that it is not in his constituency but has not appreciated the issues that will inevitably arise for his constituents. Councillor Atherden remarked that the A556 will also be used to transport materials and all the construction compounds will have access on to the A556.

Councillor Unwin considered the figure of 120 year for carbon was interesting in that, by this time the train will be obsolete and out of use. It is old technology and the carbon situation will never be solved.

Mike added that HS2 talk about planting trees but cannot predict how many will survive, nor has the maintenance of the trees been factored in. If land is sold for trees to sequester carbon then it has to be done forever. It may provide income but what it will do for land values in the future is questionable.

Asked what he considered was the future for food and farmland, Mike replied he didn't think the government saw food production as a high priority for the UK and it is a very cavalier attitude. Farmers can apply to belong to an environmental scheme which is all very well but the UK is exporting its carbon footprint. Consider the Brazilian rainforest. Two or three of the UK's food producers are owned by Brazilians so we are not moving forward. Good land has to be farm land, growing good crops.

Considering Ashley, the lines and associated constructions, destroy or disturb every single wildlife site in the area not just the acreage that the HS2 sits on. As has been previously stated issues such as drainage and wildlife corridors have been given no consideration at all.

Jeff: If possible we would like you to do a walk round the site of HS2 to see what they are proposing and what we are trying to make them do. Mike replied that they had done this in High Legh on two days and a total of 90 people attended. We illustrated there will be a big triangle of lines with one right through the middle of it so all these pockets of land in between are cut off from nature which affects the whole vast area from Millington all the way across.

Nigel added that another issue is that to power the lines they are going to need power plants. These will be about the size of the Amazon hub at the airport - i.e. 200 m in length, 100 metres wide and 35 metres high.

Councillor Erlam stated that he thought HS2 had gone behind everyone's back anyway because the committee appears ready to agree but there is a battle going on between HS2 and the treasury.

In conclusion:

- there are so few stations on the HS2 route that people will have to drive to a station to get on the HS2 so how is that saving time and carbon emissions?
- If the railway itself is 20 metres wide, some of the embankments will be around 60 metres wide when they are finished.
- It is said that the train will take cars of the road but, in villages like Ashley, there are no buses so people will have to use their cars to get to an HS2 station.
- It is galling that the only places to benefit from the HS2 railway are those at either end of the line
- No account has been taken of the change in working habits since the advent of Covid. These changes are likely to remain.
- So many people are set to be affected by HS2 but they are completely unaware of the fact

6.2 General Report and HS2 Bill Deposit

The General Report was covered above.

It has been announced that the HS2 Bill will be deposited in parliament at the end of January

7 M56 SMART MOTORWAY

A few people were upset about the tree cutting. Councillor Sherratt stated that this was what they had planned.

Councillor Jackson reported that they went to a meeting at the compound and the tree felling should now be finished. They have plans to plant more trees and hedges and a mix with evergreen trees which is moderately encouraging.

He added that they would have to see the detailed plans but additional evergreens would help.

Councillor Warburton reported that he had walked over the Ashley Hall motorway bridge and they were digging out for a bay but it did not seem long enough - it seemed to be about 40 metres.

8 PLANNING MATTERS

8.1 Planning Applications for Consideration

None

8.2 Planning Enforcement

There has been no progress on any enforcement matters

8.3 Other Planning Matters

Councillor Gianferrari reported that Ashley House is no longer being demolished but is going up for sale. The owner has moved to Portugal.

9 VILLAGE MATTERS**9.1 Ashley Station****9.1.1 The Manchester Bound Station Approach Road**

The Clerk not get a response from Northern Rail so a helpful lady, who is part of the mid-Cheshire line users group, was contacted without success so far. Unfortunately, this leaves the approach road in a bad state of repair.

9.1.2 Manchester University Student Research

This is a student who wanted to use Ashley Station for her next project. All she wants to know is about the community and how the station is used. Councillor Warburton suggested that perhaps Pat Gregory or Ralph Warrington (the new volunteer at the station) might help.

Pat had to decline because she had too much on her plate at the moment. Ralph felt that he didn't want his brains to be picked. Councillor Warburton then suggested that she attend a Council meeting.

The Clerk sent the invitation to the student but had not heard back

9.2 Playground Matters

Councillor Frankland's task force has been to the playground and completely tidied it up. It looks really good.

Ian Warburton has donated new gates for the playground

The Clerk has ordered the replacement equipment for the playground equipment

9.3 Village Planters

It had previously been agreed that a planter would look good if placed near the bench in the village.

Councillor Warburton had spoken with Jamie Shepherd regarding the planters but he had no spare ones. The ones in Hale are about a metre square plastic box with wood round them.

Councillor Warburton added that he had some plastic boxes that could be smartened up but maybe something like an old water trough might be more suitable.

9.4 Light in the Hough Green Passage to the Station

The light has been mended but it has illuminated a neighbour's garden and now needs a low energy bulb plus a cowl.

9.5 Signs in the Village

A resident had complained about the number of signs in the village and if they were all necessary.

Councillor Frankland considered it a form of littering and cited the I want Trees sign as being over large and out of keeping with the rural area.

It is a difficult area because there is a danger of alienating business owners, plus whether a sign is appropriate or not can be a matter of opinion.

A Council policy on advertising signs could be created though it would not really be enforceable.

The Clerk will try to find out if there is a law associated with installing advertising signs

9.6 Other Village Matters

None

10 FINANCIAL MATTERS**10.1 Authorisation of Payments**

Proposed by Councillor Erlam, seconded by Councillor Atherden

£230.00 Richard Winward Installing new Gate and Gate Stump

£304.00 Andy Blackburn Final Mowing at Playground for Year

10.2 Other Financial Matters

None

11 HIGHWAYS MATTERS**11.1 Overgrown Pavements, Gulleys, Drains and Potholes**

Generally no progress, one or two potholes had been mended (including the one at Back Lane) but nothing much else to report.

11.1.1 Hedge At Swallows Barn

No progress had been made on sorting out the hedge

11.1.2 Road to the Car Park on Hough Green

There is a dip in the road at the entrance to the car park. Also a kerb has been smashed. In addition the hedge at number 19 is very overgrown.

The Clerk had contacted Peaks and Plains but had not had an answer as yet.

11.1.3 Hough Green Passage to the Station

The foliage on the passage had been cleared.

11.2 Other Highways Matters

In spite of complaining about the removal of gritting from Castle Mill Lane and Mill Lane due to the narrowness and many bends on these roads, it appears we were ignored.

12 NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH AND SPEED WATCH

These are difficult initiatives to organise because it is very difficult to get a volunteer who is happy to take the lead and organise other volunteers.

13 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Cheshire East are wanting to reduce the number of Councillors from 8 to 7. However, the Clerk has responded to the consultation stating that Ashley PC has major issues such as HS2 and a Smart Motorway in its midst and need 8 Councillors to deal with these issues.

14 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (10 MINUTES)

Nothing

15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

• **Christmas Do**

It was agreed that the do would be at the Greyhound and Councillor Gianferrari would arrange a date and time around the 14th of December

• **Christmas Competition**

It was agreed that competition would take place again this year although it was felt it should be later in December than last year.

• **Dog Training**

Is dog training allowed on the playground? Councillor Warburton said Tatton Estate had agreed but people had to clear up any dog mess.

• **Brereton Trust**

It was agreed that the hamper would go to Pat and Kevin Gregory

• **Neighbourhood Plan**

Councillor Unwin stated that she was far too busy to take the lead role any more although she would happily assist where required.

The Clerk is happy to carry on but the project needs people

This project is very important, especially since HS2 is on the move again.

16 CORRESPONDENCE

All email correspondence forwarded to Councillors

Post:

Police Commissioner
Commercial

Latest Bulletin
Mail Shots

17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

21st March 2022

18 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting

Signed: _____ Chairman 17/01/2022