

HS2 Regional Enterprise Board

Tuesday 11 January 2022 at 10.00am

Minutes

Present

Councillor Ian Courts (Chair)	Portfolio Lead for Environment, Energy & HS2
Councillor Ian Ward	Birmingham City Council
Ian MacLeod	Birmingham City Council
Alan Over	Department for Transport
Lynda Rawsthorne	Department for Transport
Paul Mountford	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Ed Watson	Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP
Donovan Bailey	HS2 Ltd
Matthew Botelle	HS2 Ltd
Tremaine Herbert	HS2 Ltd
Alan Payne	HS2 Ltd
Councillor Ken Hawkins	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Mary Morrissey	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Rachael Phillips	Transport for West Midlands
Anne Shaw	Transport for West Midlands
Craig Wakeman	Transport for West Midlands
Michael Anderson	Transport for West Midlands
Jonathan Bretherton	Urban Growth Company
Nick Brown	Urban Growth Company
Chris Egan	Warwickshire County Council
Councillor Martin Watson	Warwickshire County Council
Claire Hatton	West Midlands Combined Authority

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mark Thurston, Peter Thomason and Dr Julie Nugent.

2. Introductions

The Chair welcomed those participating in the meeting and introductions were not considered to be necessary. The Chair recapped the intention of the HS2 Regional Enterprise Board, which was to examine any issues relating to construction, community engagement etc. but also to engage more actively in terms of the benefits the region was getting and would get from HS2.

3. Actions from the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 21 October 2021 were agreed as a correct record, except for the meeting date needing to be changed from Friday to Thursday.

4. **Jobs & Skills Update**

Clare Hatton provided a verbal update on jobs and skills, advising that 500 residents had been trained and placed into jobs across the spectrum of contractors within the supply chain system, plus a dedicated training facility had been established at Sandwell City College in partnership with Balfour Beatty Vinci (BBV).

Discussions were taking place to extend the offer in the training facility, taking it beyond some of the entry level construction jobs into making sure facilities were available for higher level jobs within some professions including procurement and project management. Additionally, colleagues were looking at an offer for upskilling those in the workforce to help retain their jobs and it was hoped that by the end of the month, an offer across all disciplines from career entry to early careers through to professions, could be extended out across the supply chain.

Councillor Watson raised the lack of statistical data showing how many people from a specific area had been employed, understanding GDPR restrictions he requested if there was top level data that could be provided to show how many had been employed within a Coventry or Warwick post code for example.

Clare Hatton confirmed that her team only had data for residents they had provided training for in order to progress into jobs, advising that data showing the number of residents employed from specific post codes would need to be provided by HS2. Work to provide this was now on-going and further updates would be provided in due course.

ACTION HS2-009: Clare Hatton to provide data showing the number of residents from specific post code areas who had received training provided by WMCA.

The board were informed that WMCA and HS2 Ltd had signed a joint statement of intent with the first quarterly meeting taking place in two weeks' time, where data would be shared each quarter moving forward.

The Chair reiterated the need to demonstrate the benefits gained from the HS2 project to local people as well as expressing an interest in seeing the pipeline of training opportunities to upskill people across the region.

Alan Payne mentioned the point raised by Councillor Watson and suggested a meeting be held internally within HS2 with a view to releasing the data requested.

ACTION HS2-010: HS2 colleagues to hold a meeting internally with a view to releasing data showing the number of residents from specific post code areas who had been employed by/through HS2.

The Chair requested a report be tabled at the next meeting, showing a road map of what has been achieved and future initiatives.

ACTION HS2-011: Clare Hatton to provide a report at the next meeting showing a road map of what has been achieved and future initiatives.

5. Tree Planting and Vegetation Clearance

The board received a presentation from Alan Payne on Vegetation Clearance and Landscaping.

The presentation covered the principles of vegetation clearance, areas of vegetation retained through design development and the landscaping design process with various images provided to show proposals.

Councillor Watson expressed his thanks for the presentation and asked how much clearance remained, Alan Payne felt over 95% of clearance had been completed with small localised areas remaining in terms of landscaping.

Councillor Watson raised the term “no net loss” being used throughout the presentation and informed he would like to see more of a net gain from vegetation, especially in terms of the Queens Wedding Canopy and considering the environmental agenda. He suggested the use of green/living walls in place of concrete facades wherever possible. Alan Payne felt that by working together, ideas could be put forward for consideration which could be discussed at workshops being planned.

Alan Over advised from the Department’s perspective, they were limited by funding on no net loss and if a net gain could be achieved within the no net loss funding level it would be welcomed. He felt the right mindset was needed to see if a gain could be achieved from the existing funding without limiting results.

The Chair mentioned the 95% completion rate within Warwickshire and asked if it was the same for Solihull, Alan Payne confirmed it was.

Nick Brown raised comments he had received whereby trees that had been removed within Warwickshire and Solihull had caused local disappointment because they had been disposed of. He questioned if the trees could have been redistributed with local communities for businesses or residents to use for woodworking hobbies for example.

Alan Payne confirmed that a lot of the trees that had been removed had been destroyed however, there were some areas where the wood had been provided to a theatre and some had been sent to Portsmouth for use in ship rebuilding and in local museums. He added that there were localised stories that probably had not been raised enough to show how some of the trees had been made into good quality materials and given back to communities.

Craig Wakeman highlighted that all regional stakeholders had been brought together to look at the environmental potential and opportunities of working in partnerships to maximise the benefits of HS2 with projects already being developed on the ground. He added work was being done with colleagues within HS2 around urban integration studies and how that work could be spread out and suggested bringing a report to the next meeting which outlined the work being done.

ACTION HS2-012: Craig Wakeman to provide a report outlining work being done by regional stakeholders around environmental opportunities.

Matthew Botelle supported the comments raised by Craig Wakeman and advised that good news stories had been published by HS2 which could be shared wider within this group.

ACTION HS2-013: Matthew Botelle to share the good news stories published within HS2, especially around tree clearances being turned into quality materials and returned to communities.

Councillor Ward asked how “no net loss” was being measured and mentioned the images being shown suggested that some of the trees being taken away were mature trees which added more value than plants. Alan Payne advised the images were used as an example, adding he would need to seek advice from colleagues on how the no net loss was calculated. He also referred to a methodology which had been set up as part of the act, which was being followed and suggested bringing an update to a future meeting.

ACTION HS2-014: Alan Payne to seek advice from environmental colleagues to determine how no net loss will be calculated and provide an update at a future meeting.

6. Viaduct Construction

The board received a presentation from Tremaine Herbert on Viaduct Construction.

The presentation covered viaduct locations, common design elements, construction and engagement with a variety of images to show proposals.

Councillor Watson requested specific images around a certain area relating to one of his wards, as he was keen to see what HS2 thought the viaducts would look like post construction. Tremaine Herbert advised she would request a colleague from the Engagement Team to contact Councillor Watson directly to provide the images.

ACTION HS2-015: Tremaine Herbert to request a colleague from the Engagement Team contact Councillor Watson to provide images relating to his ward.

Nick Brown asked what the proposed treatment would be to avoid graffiti on weathered steel given it would be used in areas that would be within close proximity to the urban realm. Tremaine Herbert advised she would ask the question and revert back.

ACTION HS2-016: Tremaine Herbert to find out the treatment to avoid graffiti on weathered steel and report back.

The Chair asked what the plan was to look at longer term issues of weathering and graffiti on the viaducts.

Councillor Ward questioned if further work was being done regarding the design for the viaducts, he felt the images provided to date were underwhelming and that more effort was needed around the designs, especially as the structures would be in place for the foreseeable future. Tremaine Herbert advised that cost was one of the issues when looking into the designs for the viaducts.

The Chair echoed the comments made by Councillor Ward around the designs of the viaducts and urged HS2 colleagues to consider investment into looking at design principles for the viaducts, to avoid potential complaints from communities and residents. Tremaine Herbert advised that engagement events had been scheduled to give residents the opportunity to comment on the proposed designs.

Alan Payne informed that HS2 were going through an ongoing process on the designs and had been heavily challenged through ongoing workshops, to refine the design and consider the areas discussed including weathering and the user experience.

Matthew Botelle added that some of the images may not be demonstrative of what could come out of the schedule 17, advising there were other forums where the detail of design was discussed and shared.

The Chair suggested this be reviewed at a future meeting.

ACTION HS2-017: HS2 Ltd to provide an update on the viaduct construction designs at a future meeting.

7. Metro Stop Update

Anne Shaw provided a verbal update on the metro stop since the last meeting, advising TfWM had been in discussions with HS2 and DfT regarding the co-construction of the metro route through the Curzon Street Station alongside Curzon construction to ensure both programmes were suitable in terms of risks and delivery plus the management of costs around the delay experienced.

Anne Shaw concluded that a further report would be provided at a future meeting to confirm what agreements had been made, adding there was still an amount of work to be done alongside HS2 and DfT colleagues.

The Chair asked if there was anything more the board could do on this issue. Anne Shaw confirmed this was a work in progress, highlighting the need to reach an agreement in terms of the construction programme for both projects and that detailed discussions with Councillor Ward and Andy Street were to be scheduled.

Councillor Ward highlighted the disruption to local businesses in the Digbeth area caused by the construction work from both projects and expressed the importance to conclude the work as soon as possible.

ACTION HS2-018: Anne Shaw to provide an update on the Metro Stop at a future meeting.

8. Early Land Release Update

Nick Brown provided a verbal update on the early land release advising a plan had been produced from collaboration between UGC, Arden Cross and HS2 which identified sites that could be made available, along with a plan submitted by HS2 on 17 December 2021, along with an update on the Hollywell Brook land.

Jonathan Bretherton gave an update on work being done with DfT on the early land release plan, with Alan Over highlighting opportunities to remediate some of the impact and to concentrate on the land where an early release is required.

Councillor Watson asked what the plans were for land that HS2 required for construction but not for the line going forward and when would the land be released back to the previous landowner or for the landowner to be paid for the compulsory purchase. Matthew Botelle suggested he could get more information to answer the questions in detail.

ACTION HS2-019: Matthew Botelle to provide a detailed answer to Councillor Watson's question regarding land disposal and to be presented at a future meeting.

9. HS2 Construction Forward Plan

The board received a presentation from Tremaine Herbert on the HS2 Construction Forward Plan which outlined several key project milestones for 2022.

10. HS2 Communication Forward Plan

The board received a presentation from Pippa Whittaker on the HS2 Communications Forward Plan which outlined several key media relations milestones for 2022.

The Chair asked what was being done to reduce carbon in the construction process and expressed his interest in having more information on this. He also asked about school engagement and getting young children interested.

Pippa Whittaker highlighted plans for school visits, including visits from colleges and community groups amongst other opportunities and confirmed that information could be provided for carbon question raised.

ACTION HS2-020: HS2 Ltd to provide further information on the reduction of carbon in the construction process including school engagement.

Ed Watson suggested bringing an update to a future meeting regarding opportunities in the supply chain and for SMEs.

ACTION HS2-021: Craig Wakeman/HS2 Ltd to bring an update regarding opportunities in the supply chain and for SMEs linked to the HS2 construction programme.

Craig Wakeman advised of discussions being held with Chambers of Commerce and various other organisations with a view to reforming a strategic business growth and supply chain group that had previously been in operation and hoped to provide an update at the next board meeting.

ACTION HS2-022: Craig Wakeman to provide an update on the business growth and supply chain group.

11. Any Other Business

Craig Wakeman highlighted the Chief Executive of the National College of Advanced Technology and Infrastructure (formally the National College of High-Speed Rail) would be invited to attend the next meeting with the potential, subject to restrictions, to hold the meeting at his premises in Birmingham. He also advised suitable sites were being reviewed for future meetings throughout 2022.

12. Date of Next Meeting
Tuesday 12 April 2022

[The meeting ended at 11.49am]