



10<sup>th</sup> January 2012

## **Borough Council reaction to Government announcement on HS2**

North Warwickshire Borough Council has reacted with dismay at today's Government announcement to go ahead with the High Speed (HS2) rail line, initially between London and Birmingham and then onto Leeds and Manchester.

This follows a consultation last year, during which the Council submitted a strongly worded response to Government ministers, criticising the 'seriously flawed business case' for HS2.

The 10 page document emphasised that the West Coast Mainline could be improved at a fraction of the costs of HS2. It also stated that the proposed development of a 10,000 space car park near the NEC would also seriously impact on the already congested road network. There were also calls for mitigation measures such as bridges, viaducts and noise reduction measures to offset the potential damage caused by the HS2 rail link.

The Council is particularly concerned that the Secretary of State appears to have based her decision on a report from Network Rail that only she has seen and which no-one else has had the chance to comment on.

Councillor Mick Stanley, Leader of the Council said : " This is a devastating blow for residents and businesses as well as for our North Warwickshire countryside, which will all be severely affected by this development. We have estimated that 5,000 properties, particularly in Coleshill, Water Orton and Middleton, will feel the effect of HS2 whilst major businesses including agricultural and equestrian businesses will lose out. Our Borough will be one of the worst affected and the suggested benefits are small and unlikely to happen "

Councillor Dominic Ferro, Borough Councillor for Coleshill North and the Council's Spokesperson for HS2, added: " The business case for the scheme is flawed and it is amazing that this decision comes in the week that the Dutch Government was reported as having to provide a £250m bail out for their high speed rail, which is running up to 85% empty and losing £320,000 per day. "

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Councillor Ferro added: “ I am exasperated by the fact that this government has just not listened to the people of North Warwickshire. Local action groups have worked tirelessly to gather substantial evidence against the need for HS2 and along with the Borough Council, have highlighted why we don't need or want HS2. In the press last week, business leaders stated that the Government should not listen to ‘wealthy ideological opponents.’ I agree, but instead they should listen to the people who are going to lose their homes and to the people whose towns are going to be blighted. They should not be listening to business leaders who have given out large amounts of false information about its benefits. Poland and Portugal are amongst the European countries which have cancelled or scaled back high speed rail. I, for one, will continue to fight against this needless and overly expensive white elephant and I urge the residents of North Warwickshire to continue the fight against it. “

Councillor Tilly May, Opposition Lead for HS2 endorsed Councillor Stanley and Councillor Ferro's comments, adding:

“ The Council is united on this. Despite the thousands of objections from the worst affected areas and beyond, the Government is determined to plough ahead with this plan, which will leave large areas of Warwickshire with lasting environmental damage. The Government has conceded that there will be no benefit to North Warwickshire for which we will have to give up 23 miles of Green Belt, ancient woodland and listed buildings, not to mention people's homes and livelihoods. “

The Borough Council, along with other Councils in the Warwickshire area and nationally, vowed to continue to fight against the scheme.

**Ends**

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