



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
OXFORDSHIRE

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CPRE Oxfordshire News Release

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CPRE Oxfordshire hits out at High Speed 2 plans

On 20 December 2010 the Secretary of State announced the proposed line of the High Speed 2 route between London and the West Midlands for consultation. [1] This consultation, which is expected to commence in late February 2011, will also cover the Government's broader strategy for high speed rail.

CPRE Oxfordshire [2] has therefore been re-assessing its position on HS2 and its impact on both the County and the wider South-East. [3]

HS2 have recently made a number of alterations to the route, including adjusting the route and engineering in the section through Oxfordshire to reduce its impact slightly on local villages. But there are still many fundamental issues with the HS2 plans which CPRE cannot support.

Dr Helena Whall, Campaign Manager for CPRE Oxfordshire, said:

“We remain highly critical of many aspects of the HS2 proposals. It will be damaging to tranquil, rural parts of the South East, it is not the “green” solution to rail capacity it claims to be and 250 mph trains are not environmentally friendly.

It is very disappointing that the Coalition government has not taken the opportunity to re-assess high speed trains and investigate less damaging ways to improve rail capacity and journey times to the North and Scotland. Instead the government is now pushing ahead with plans that are only slightly different from the HS2 proposals published a year ago.”

Helena Whall continued:

“Given the HS2 plans as they stand and the lack of clear plans for the rest of the rail system – which desperately needs investment - CPRE Oxfordshire shall be voicing its opposition and working with colleagues in adjacent Counties to urge the Coalition government to re-think its policy.

However, at the same time, we must recognise that there is widespread political support for HS2 and its claimed benefits, and that despite the protests, the plans could eventually be approved and implemented. It would therefore be prudent to offer CPRE's assistance to the four parishes affected in Oxfordshire to achieve the best possible mitigation measures along the current route.”

"We are also aware of an alternative route recently outlined by Arups in the *Sunday Times* which on the face of it would be far more disruptive and damaging to Oxfordshire. This underlines the importance of having a fundamental re-assessment of how best to deliver higher speed rail services in environmental terms, in line with our four key tests."

Helena Whall concluded:

"We will continue to campaign for additional rail capacity to be created in the most sustainable way, and for the countryside and rural communities to be properly safeguarded."

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. For more information see the HS2 website: <http://www.hs2.org.uk>
2. CPRE Oxfordshire promotes the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural Oxfordshire by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country. We are part of the national CPRE charity. For more information see: www.cpreoxon.org.uk
3. In March 2010 CPRE Oxfordshire issued a News Release which set out four key tests which we considered HS2 must meet:
 1. *As far as possible local environments should be protected and sensitive landscapes avoided.*
 2. *There should be investment in the existing rail network capacity to complement investment in HS2.*
 3. *HS2 should genuinely tackle climate change and contribute to a sustainable, low carbon future.*
 4. *HS2 should materially assist in achieving regional planning and regeneration aims.*

For a copy of the CPRE Oxfordshire News Release, March 2010, see:
http://www.cpreoxon.org.uk/campaigns/transport/high_speed_2.htm

For Further Information

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