

PUBLIC SESSION

MINUTES OF ORAL EVIDENCE

taken before

HIGH SPEED RAIL COMMITTEE

On the

HIGH SPEED RAIL (LONDON – WEST MIDLANDS) BILL

Wednesday 26 November 2014 (Morning)

In Committee Room 5

PRESENT:

Mr Robert Syms (Chair)
Sir Peter Bottomley
Mr Henry Bellingham
Ian Mearns
Mr Michael Thornton

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Timothy Mould QC, Lead Counsel, Department for Transport
Mr James Strachan QC, Counsel, Department for Transport

IN PUBLIC SESSION

(at 11.30)

1. CHAIR: Order, order. Welcome back. Thank you for that interlude. A few things which we've come to a conclusion on. On British Car Auctions, there remains some dispute about the potential cost of the tunnel versus the potential cost of the lost business. The overall difference is between a relatively minor £3 million potential claimed benefit to the public purse, if BCA figures are correct, versus a potential very large impact, if HS2 figures are correct: at least £20 million, possibly £33 million. We think it should be possible for BCA to move some or all of their business, and therefore we do not think that a tunnel extension is justified.

2. On compensation, we request that HS2 give us sight of the proposed Need to Sell scheme as soon as possible, so that we can review the guidance and criteria and make suggestions for improvement. These suggestions might include a change of name for the scheme and the scheme should include a way of obtaining advance clearance to deal with situations such as those of the Franklins, from whom we heard yesterday. We accept HS2's offer to prepare a paper on the property bond proposal and we await that with interest.

3. A number of petitioners, including the Country Landowners Association, the National Farmers Union and Joe Rukin have argued persuasively on farm land-take. We may come back to these broad issues, but we encourage HS2 to work up a licence model, whereby farmers can retain a right of access and inspection onto land being acquired temporarily. HS2 should collaborate with a cross-section of affected parties and stakeholders on suitable terms for that model licence, and clearly that would avoid some of the tax problems that we've heard earlier already. I think that is the direction that HS2, I think, want to go, but we've just given you a nudge in that direction as well.

4. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Thank you.

5. CHAIR: I think that's all we have to say for the time being, so order, order. Thank you very much.