

## HS2 CEO commits to reset relationship with Wendover

By Richard Byford

Mark Wild, chief executive of HS2, visited Wendover at the end of June to discuss improvements in his organisation's relationship with the community. He met with local representatives, including Wendover's HS2 Mitigation Action Group, MP Greg Smith, Wendover Parish and Buckinghamshire County Councils, and St Mary's vicar, Rev. Sally Moring.

Mark, pictured at right, became chief executive of HS2 in December last year. He is faced with the challenge of balancing the need for delivering HS2 as soon as possible, while minimising cost to the taxpayer. In the past it is fair to say that HS2 has been seen as indifferent at best to the communities along the track in Buckinghamshire. On this visit, as the new leader of the company, he had a very different message.

To understand the relationship between HS2 and the people of Wendover, we have to rewind a few years. As far back as 2010, Wendover was the focus of attention for many organisations protesting against the approval of HS2. Even after the project had been given the go-ahead by Boris Johnson in February 2020, there was still optimism that it could be cancelled.

Within HS2 and their main contractors, Wendover may well have been strongly associated with protest and opposition. This may explain why, until now, most 'engagement'



from HS2 and EKFB has generally been one-way, after-the-fact and mainly confined to notification of road closures, very vague engineering statements and PR events.

### Benefits of dialogue

Reports coming back from the recent meeting indicate that Wild was very happy to listen to the wide-ranging local representatives, and that he was willing to address some long-standing grievances. Getting into the detail of some of the historic friction points, there was a recognition that HS2 could sometimes have benefitted from the active involvement of the people of Wendover, but that they may have been seen as opponents, rather than the source of good ideas.

Being in easy reach of London (by existing trains), it may be obvious that the area around Wendover is home to a

fair proportion of the best engineers and construction experts in the South of England. Indeed, some of them are associated with the Wendover HS2 Mitigation Action Group.

During the meeting, *Wendover News* understands that a number of examples were briefly discussed which illustrate how two-way engagement with the local community could have saved in delay, cost and major disruption for HS2.

### Clean slate

Following the meeting, HS2 will now be engaging with the community of Wendover directly, via a 'single point of contact.' Interactions in future will be via two-way proactive conversations. Wild says he wants to stop problems happening, rather than sorting them out afterwards.

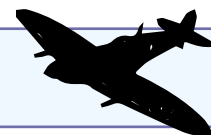
Mark Wild doesn't need to be humble. He just needs to get the job done, as quickly as possible and without wasting money. The people of Wendover don't want to create more difficulties, they just want HS2 finished, the area tidied up, reinstated and to be able to live with all the fast trains rushing past the town, as soon as possible. This 'new' CEO appears to have the right attitude. We can just hope that he is allowed to fulfil the high expectations that he has set.

For details of the work of Wendover HS2 Mitigation Action Group, see page 16.



## RAF Flypast

To celebrate the completion of training at RAF Halton, a flypast will take place, weather permitting, at 13:30 on  
**Wednesday 3rd and 17th September 2025**



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**Matilda Lloyd (trumpet)**  
**Richard Gowers (organ)**

Concert tickets £20 (Students in full time education £5)

There will also be a collection (cash or card) in aid of Help Musicians

Help Musicians is the working name of the Musicians Benevolent Fund. Registered Charity No. 228089

Detailed programme and tickets available online via [www.wendover-music.org](http://www.wendover-music.org)  
and from Just from early June. For further details please call 01296 623435

# HS2 update



By Murray Cooke

## HS2 CEO visits Wendover site

Mark Wild, the new CEO of HS2 Ltd, visited Wendover to get our feedback about the project. We discussed a range of avoidable issues that had come about due to lack of consideration of the community impact when HS2's contractor EKFB planned local works.



People l to r; Murray Cooke, Joel Skyes, Maddelyn Sutton, Greg Smith, Mark Wild, Andy Band, Henry Robinson, and Kim Birtwistle. Photo: Leigh Porter

Examples include the ongoing 'Spring Chamber' and 'Small Dean Bridleway' issues. We agreed an action plan, and for the first time in the history of the project, this is 'owned' by a nominated HS2 Ltd senior engagement manager, with regular reviews by Mark Wild's office.

This degree of focus probably stems from the Secretary of State's insistence that HS2 get a grip of the project costs and timescales. It appears that the delays associated with getting the cutting through Ellesborough Road mean that the Wendover Green Tunnel is now a critical bottleneck in the entire project. A follow-up meeting with Greg Smith MP is scheduled for late October, so it will be



Waterproofing the shell - 25th July. Photo: Steve Walker.



Wendover Green Tunnel Cutting at Ellesborough Road - 1st August. Photo: Steve Walker.

interesting to see what's happened by then.

## Wendover Green Tunnel progress (and dust)

One of the most obvious outcomes of HS2's concern is the rate of progress that has been made with the Green Tunnel cutting, with about 300,000 cubic metres of chalk being excavated between Bacombe Lane and Ellesborough Road in four months.

This required about 12,000 dump truck loads to move the material north, with some going to a 'mega-stockpile' near Aylesbury. This will be moved back to restore the landscape at Bacombe Lane once the tunnel is in place. At the same time convoys of dump trucks have moved clay from Great Missenden to form a massive stockpile just north of Ellesborough Road. This is expected to cover the north section of the tunnel, levelling out the slope of the fields.

The height of the stockpile (which is visible from Dobbins Lane) coupled with the recent dry weather and westerly winds resulted in dust clouds descending in the village, along with the noise of the bulldozers involved. We escalated the issues and steps have been taken to monitor and stop the dust.

During August a very large mobile crane was needed to replace one of the pre-cast segments of the tunnel shell. The three-day task involved lifting the 40 tonne concrete segments over the rest of the built tunnel, with a reach of about 30 metres.

Now completed, the walls are being secured into place with pouring of a concrete deck and waterproofing the exterior of the tunnel shell.

## The HS2 programme reset

To get control, Mark Wild has decided that the entire HS2 project plan needs to be revised based on

detailed understanding of all the elements (so that the costs can be accurately predicted) and that the existing 'effectively cost plus' construction contracts are to be renegotiated, so that there is some incentive for the contractors to finish the job. He's agreed a target date of April next year to start using the new plan. Meanwhile priorities have been set to progress critical items (like the Green Tunnel) along with the delays experienced on other tasks (such as the Nash Lee Road bridge and Wendover Dean Viaduct).

With the need to minimise the overall project timescale risks, Mark is also revising the scope of the initial railway to be the 'minimum viable solution' meaning the 'simplest version of the service that demonstrates the core functionality and value to the customer.'

This probably means initial services restricted to only run between Old Oak Common and Birmingham Curzon Street; and reduced train speeds due to the use of current-generation signalling technology.

At this time we don't know what this means for Wendover but should have better information to share later on this year. We're pretty certain that we will not experience 18 trains an hour in 2033, but that could still happen at some point in the future.

## Nash Lee Road closure

The most significant recent community impact has been the closure of the B4009 Nash Lee Road between the A413 bypass and the Chiltern Brewery near Terrick. This was done to allow excavation for the 'Low Permeability Wall' through the temporary road; at each side of the Bailey Bridge. 24-hour working was approved by Bucks Council to minimise the length of the closure, and HS2 loaned air conditioners and provided earplugs to local residents who might need to keep their bedroom windows closed at night.

This will be the last section of the wall to be built. It is designed to stop the Coombe Hill aquifer pouring onto the track north of the Green Tunnel. The next step will be the excavation of the North Cutting for the track bed, between the walls.





The crane, replacing the defective segment - 1st August.  
Photo: Murray Cooke

## September A413 closure

Over the weekend 19-21 September there will be night time closures of the A413 to allow the transfer of 3,700 tonnes of rock to rebuild the ground level under the Small Dean Viaduct, while the Chiltern Line is closed for maintenance. Further details will be available on the HS2 website ([www.bit.ly/41bV5S6](http://www.bit.ly/41bV5S6))

## Small Dean Embankment

The final major civil engineering task is to construct the Small Dean North Embankment, which will become clearly visible next to the Wendover Bypass between the South

Street roundabout and Bacombe Lane. Currently there is a very large hole in the ground near Grove Farm as they dig down to the solid rock strata.

## Issues with HS2?

If you're affected by the construction activity, please contact the HS2 Helpdesk team on 08081 434 434 (which is available 24 hours a day) or email [hs2enquiries@hs2.org.uk](mailto:hs2enquiries@hs2.org.uk) to get your issues resolved. It helps if you have photographic evidence and please get a complaint reference number so that we can follow up issues as needed.

## Need our help?

If you need further help, want to join us, or have ideas and suggestions that would mitigate the community impact, then get in touch at [enquiries@whs2.org](mailto:enquiries@whs2.org).

## We need your help!

We are always keen for new members. If any of you are interested in joining us, see [whs2.org](http://whs2.org). We are looking for volunteers to help us further with our public communications, challenging HS2 over noise issues and making sure we build up a decent case of returning land to its natural state and not being developed.



Information provided by EKFB, the prime contractor for HS2 in the Wendover and Stoke Mandeville area.

We're delighted to report that by the time you read this, Rocky Lane will have re-opened! The new, permanent alignment will allow for traffic to pass through the underbridge structure.

The team has worked hard to succeed in achieving the target reopening date. Following the reopening, a plant crossing with two-way traffic management will facilitate the movement of our plant vehicles.

Please note that our colleagues at Align will shortly be commencing work on the new Leather Lane overbridge, following several years of community engagement and re-design to significantly reduce the impact on mature trees and protect the bat flightpath.

This new structure will take more than 12 months to complete and it will be necessary to keep the road closed during this time.

## New works entrance via Wendover Bypass

During the autumn, we need to construct a new entrance to our Wendover green tunnel site directly from the Wendover bypass

(northbound) to facilitate our next phase of works. We will be undertaking overnight works on the bypass across several dates between September and October. We will publish an advanced works notice once the details have been confirmed and keep all highway disruption to overnights, to limit the traffic impacts.

## Community involvement

We are committed to supporting communities to make a positive impact.

In recent examples, the newly-built Wendover Skate Park was awarded £40,000 through the HS2 Community and Environment Fund (CEF).

Additionally, we contributed £1,000 to support YardFest, the festival held in Wendover on 19 July.

If you are in a local community group or business seeking support from HS2, the CEF and the Business and Local Economy



Rocky Road re-alignment before it re-opened in August. Photo: EKFB

Fund (BLEF) schemes offer up to £40m of funding throughout the construction of HS2, supporting community-led projects. To find out more, please visit: [www.hs2.org.uk/in-your-area/community-funding/](http://www.hs2.org.uk/in-your-area/community-funding/)

If you would like to read more about the works and view the advance works notices and maps, please go to HS2 website [www.hs2.org.uk](http://www.hs2.org.uk) and click the 'in your area section' to view the interactive map. (HS2 in your area – HS2)

Alternatively, if you have a question about HS2 please contact the HS2 Helpdesk team on 08081 434 434 or email [hs2enquiries@hs2.org.uk](mailto:hs2enquiries@hs2.org.uk).