

The HS2 Hybrid Bill House of Commons Select Committee & Petitioning Process.

I do not have any issue with the current work and activity that local authorities, individuals and other interested groups are engaged in through the formal route of consultation and representation with Parliament via the Petitioning process & House of Commons Select Committee overseeing the HS2 Hybrid Bill. This is the formal method for anyone wishing to make representations related to the details, not principle, of the High Speed Rail scheme.

I support, and have always done so, the need for those materially affected by the HS2 route to be sympathetically and generously compensated. I view with sadness and disdain the criticisms by some local councillors who are dismissing sums of money and offers by HS2 to provide local amenities/facilities as being too little.

The Costs to Council Taxpayers of Non Formal Opposition to HS2

A number of local authorities along the route of Phase One of HS2 (London to Birmingham/West Midlands) chose to oppose HS2 in response to noisy opposition when it was first announced just before the last General Election. In the case of Warwickshire, without consideration, knowledge or enquiry by elected Councillors to discover the fact that less than 8,175 (1.5%) of people in the County formally objected/responded to the HS2 consultation, four local authorities took policy positions to oppose the HS2 scheme. Consequently, these local authorities campaigned alongside a single issue group STOPHS2, and used Council Taxpayers money to do so. These authorities being; Warwickshire County Council, Stratford upon Avon District Council, Warwick District Council and North Warwickshire Borough Council.

The combined amount of Council Tax spent between January 2010 and July 2014 by these Warwickshire local authorities on political (non formal) opposition to HS2 is £264,636.

Warwickshire County Council	£150,972
North Warwickshire Borough Council	£ 29,350
Stratford upon Avon District Council	£ 27,995
Warwick District Council	£ 56,319
TOTAL	£264,636

(Warwickshire County Council confirmed it has spent a further £142,570 on matters related to HS2 other than non-formal opposition

Donations to 51M Consortium

51M describe themselves as a group of 18 local authorities that has joined together in a national campaign to actively challenge the HS2 rail project. 6 of the member authorities have made no financial contributions. 51M is operated by Buckinghamshire County Council.

Despite requests for details of the governance of 51M as it is using public

money nothing tangible has been forthcoming. Consequently, the District Auditor was requested to look into matters but to date has failed to outline the details of their findings leading to a referral of the issue to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government which is ongoing.

The combined amount of Council Tax given between January 2010 and July 2014 by the Warwickshire local authorities to the 51M consortium (a group formed to pool resources and oppose HS2) is £143,576.

Warwickshire County Council	£ 75,878
North Warwickshire Borough Council	£ 29,350
Stratford upon Avon District Council	£ 25,000
Warwick District Council	£ 13,348
TOTAL	£143,576

Failed Legal Actions

One of the ways that the local authorities, 51M and STOPHS2 have tried to oppose HS2 is to challenge it and its process using issues of law. This has led to 21 actions being pursued in the courts, including the Court of Appeal, High Court and Supreme Court. Of the 21 actions 20 were dismissed and failed. This represents a failure rate of 95.2%. A considerable amount of the funds mentioned that have been spent in non-formal opposition have gone towards the legal fees associated with these failed actions.

Whilst not every one of the 21 actions has been financially supported by the local authorities, it is true that several have. In the case of the Warwickshire local authorities no evidence has been provided to date that shows that the policy to oppose HS2 through non formal means, that has largely meant the use of Council Taxpayers money to fund failed legal actions, has been reviewed regularly or more importantly as a result of the growing legal failures and relate waste of Council Tax.

Top 6 District/Borough Authorities (excluding London) by spend opposing HS2

Authority	Total £*	Spend Per C/Tax Per Property
Chiltern District Council	£609,493	£15.69
Aylesbury Vale District Council	£265,399	£3.51
Warwick District Council	£120,139	£1.97
Stratford on Avon District Council	£95,000	£1.72
North Warwickshire Borough Council	£79,350	£2.92
South Buckinghamshire District Council	£40,000	£1.42

Overall Picture

As Warwickshire does not have a unitary local authority it still operates with separate District/Borough Councils that operate alongside Warwickshire County Council. Consequently, with the exception of Rugby Borough Council and Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council who have not spent money on or non-formally opposed HS2, the overall expenditure for the three remaining areas is;

North Warwickshire Borough Council	
+ Warwickshire County Council cost per Council Tax Property	£ 4.13
Stratford upon Avon District Council	
+ Warwickshire County Council cost per Council Tax Property	£ 2.93
Warwick District Council	
+ Warwickshire County Council cost per Council Tax Property	£ 3.18

Whilst the overall spend divided by the number of properties paying Council Tax seems low and almost negligible this changes if the 1.5% of people objecting to HS2 is factored in. Working on an occupancy rate per house of 2.5 people some 3270 properties paying Council Tax can be considered as opposed to HS2 because they bothered to register such views/feelings. This leaves 219,491 properties crucially not bothering to register opposition to HS2 either.

Effectively this means a Council Tax spend of £80.92 per property opposed to HS2. A sum provided from 98.5% of Council Taxpayers who have not objected to HS2. So, it is relevant to say the noise and publicity made by the 1.5% of Warwickshire's population and associated single issue STOP HS2 groups has attracted Council Tax £'s from the many (98.5%) to fund a string of failed legal actions and associated opposition activities for a few.