


STOKE MANDEVILLE PARISH COUNCIL		
MEETING DATE	16 th February 2021	
PRESENTER	Graham Stewart	
SUBJECT	Burial ground	
PURPOSE	For discussion and agreement	

On 28th January, Tony, Ann-Marie, and I met with Andrew Harris, who is the ‘Historic Environment Manager, Built Heritage’ for Fusion, the lead contractor for HS2.

We (and Jenny) have met him several times to talk about St Mary’s Church and the reburial of the remains being exhumed from there.

Now that we have planning permission for a burial ground in Marsh Lane, in Andrew’s words, ‘*HS2 have now authorised me to talk on their behalf and have asked that I work with the parish to present a costed proposal to HS2 for their consideration*’.

If, for whatever reason, the burial ground does not happen, the remains would go to Aylesbury’s Tring Road cemetery. But HS2 must work within the guidelines of the Archbishops’ Council and Stoke Mandeville is by far the preferred option and would not be discounted on cost grounds. That said, best value constraints are still in play – this isn’t a blank cheque being offered.

HS2 would make a ‘one and done’ payment to cover the costs of excavation, landscaping, tarmacking and future maintenance. As we would be developing a whole site, not just the part HS2 would use, they would pay a proportion of the costs. We think their needs can be met with an area 15m x 15m, so if the site was (say) 30m x 30m in total, they would be looking to pay in the region of a quarter of the costs. We can’t go back in a few years’ time and ask for more because we didn’t get the initial estimate right. There is a possibility (but certainly not HS2’s preferred option) that HS2’s contractors could undertake the construction themselves.

HS2 will pick up two additional costs. They are obliged to put in a memorial – the phrase used was ‘appropriate / dignified / not vulgar’ – which should match cemetery regulations and not in itself ‘be an attraction’, so no ground-breaking designs here. The old railings will be incorporated in the design of the area. They will also erect information boards at St Mary’s, indicating where the remains have been removed to.

In terms of timeframe, their licence to exhume remains requires those to be reburied within 5 years. Andrew thought that would be from March 2021, but he is going to confirm that, given that some work has already happened.

As regards the design, that is effectively decided by the Archbishops’ Council, based on the proposals we come up with over the next few months. Andrew would like to meet with us no later than early March (which is why I’ve brought this paper to PC rather than wait until Communities next meets).

Next steps

I think we need to:

- Find out the updated cost of creating a burial ground and (over a shortish period) turn that into something detailed enough to be part of a proposal.
- Decide if we want to go ahead with it, considering the contribution HS2 would make.
- Regardless of those two points, set up a working group now to work with Andrew on design. Anyone with cemetery design experience please make themselves known!
- Involve other relevant stakeholders (the vicar / the diocese etc) as appropriate.

Graham Stewart

02/02/2021