June 2020

Thank you for contacting me about the environmental impact of HS2.

On the recommendation of the independent Oakervee review commissioned last year, the Prime Minister has given the go ahead to HS2, alongside major improvements to local transport networks up and down the country. Now that HS2 is going forward, ensuring it takes into account the concerns of affected communities and the environment is essential.

HS2 will play an important role in the UK’s transition to a net-zero carbon economy by 2050. HS2 will offer some of the lowest carbon emissions per passenger km, seven times less than passenger cars and 17 times less than domestic air travel in 2030 and is expected to help reduce the number of cars and lorries on the road and cut demand for domestic flights.

As matters stand, HS2 Ltd.’s Sustainability Policy commits to the protection of the environment through seeking to avoid significant adverse effects on communities, businesses, and the environment, including the prevention of pollution.

The policy also commits to minimising impacts where they occur and delivering enhancements as far as reasonably practicable to attain no net loss to the natural environment. Indeed, there will be a green corridor created, including the planting of seven million new trees and shrubs, along the Phase One route from London to the West Midlands. (Over 550,000 have already been planted.)

It is estimated the total carbon emissions produced by both constructing and operating Phase One for 120 years would be the same as just one month of the UK’s road network.

HS2 was also the first major transport infrastructure project in the UK to commit to the achieving ‘no net loss’ in biodiversity.

Construction of HS2 will have an ecological impact. However, HS2 inform me that figures referred to in a report by the Wildlife Trust about the impact on wildlife sites and ancient woodlands are not correct. That report claimed that 693 Classified Local Wildlife Sites and 108 ancient woodland sites were affected (not ‘destroyed’) by HS2. In fact, 204 wildlife sites and 62 ancient woodlands are affected.

Furthermore, over 85% of the area within those 62 ancient woodlands would remain intact and untouched by HS2. And not all trees within an ancient woodland are themselves ancient. HS2 Ltd has identified that only 35 trees exhibiting veteran or ancient tree features need to be removed for Phase One. The Phase 2a Environmental Statement reports the possible loss of 38 known ancient or veteran trees.

In line with industry best practice, habitat clearance for HS2 works is conducted outside of the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive) where possible. Where habitat clearance needs to be carried out during the bird nesting season, an appropriate Working Method Statement is completed (by experienced ecologists) in advance of commencing clearance works, and those works are then supervised by an Ecological Clerk of Works. If an active bird nest were to be found, vegetation clearance would cease in that area and a suitably-sized zone would be set up around the specific location to avoid disturbance that could cause the adults to abandon the nest.

A £5m Woodland Fund will offset negative impacts further. So far, £1.6m of this has been allocated to projects which will provide around 115 hectares of new native woodland creation and around 160 hectares of ancient woodland restoration. HS2 anticipate similar pro-rata performance for the remaining £3.4m and, in due course, the £2m Phase 2a Fund. A similar fund alongside the Phase 2b scheme is also likely.

HS2 Ltd will also replace lost wildlife habitats along the route. Over 60 such sites have already been created, allowing them to become established in advance of main works.

The Government is providing support for local communities if HS2 is constructed, first along the Phase One route.  An overall £70 million funding package has been made available which would help enhance community facilities, improve access to the countryside, and help improve road and cycle safety in towns and villages along the HS2 Phase One route. It will support local economies where businesses may experience disruption from the construction of the line.



Thank you again for taking time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP**

**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**