



Allan Cook
Chair, High Speed Two (HS2) Ltd
Snowhill
Snow Hill Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6GA
Via email

Monday 10th May 2021

Dear Allan,

Re: Meeting with The Wildlife Trusts on 12th April 2021 - follow up

Thank you for meeting with us on 12th April to discuss our significant, ongoing, concerns with HS2 and its impact on the natural environment.

The Wildlife Trusts believe it is now clear that in proceeding with the current plans and implementation of HS2, the Government will be unable to meet its commitment to leave the environment in a better state for the next generation.

As discussed with you, and highlighted to the Minister of State at the Department for Transport, and Minister with responsibility for HS2, Andrew Stephenson MP, during a meeting in January, our experience of Phase 1 provides no reassurance that the Government has the ambition or ability to deliver major infrastructure projects in a way that does not cause large scale damage and loss to the natural environment.

We welcome your reassurance that HS2 Ltd remains 'committed' to achieving No Net Loss of biodiversity along the route, and ultimately the higher aim of Net Gain for biodiversity. But we continue to be shocked by the lack of detail, at this stage in the project, around how either of these will be achieved.

If there is to be any improvement in the current situation, it is essential that HS2 Ltd publishes in detail its strategy, calculations and plans as to how it intends to achieve:

1. No Net Loss for biodiversity, and
2. a Net Gain for biodiversity.

These are distinct concepts, and the detail of how to achieve each should not be blurred or confused.

The Government has stated it wants to see a minimum of 30 per cent of land managed for nature's recovery by 2030, an ambition which The Wildlife Trusts support. It is imperative that HS2 Ltd demonstrates how the scheme will contribute to this target. It is, at present, a very long way off.

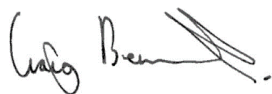
We also spoke about how trust and relationships have been damaged, largely due to poor communication and a lack of transparency as to how the scheme will limit its impact on the environment; compounded by our first-hand experience of the devastation construction work is causing. You agreed with us on the importance of rebuilding both, and the urgent need to improve the communications and engagement structures, which have proven to be inadequate. Much could be gained with more transparent and timely communications, and with early and more meaningful engagement, at all levels.

Therefore, as well as publishing the methodology you are using to achieve No Net Loss and a Net Gain, we look forward to hearing your plans for a new and positive approach to both engagement and communications. In addition, we are keen to see you lead a shift in the behaviour and attitude that contractors working on your behalf have shown to date.

We discussed the role of The Wildlife Trusts in achieving these ambitions. The work of Wildlife Trusts is not limited to the management of our own nature reserves but is at a landscape-scale across England and on a wide variety of multi-million pound nature restoration projects, with a huge number of partners. As the leading conservation charity in most English counties, Wildlife Trusts have a unique track record of delivering nature restoration at a local level. We could offer both expertise and guidance in support of the necessary drive towards a Net Gain for biodiversity along the route, but this will only be possible if HS2 Ltd is prepared to deliver the changes in approach set out at our meeting and summarised again in this letter.

Finally, we noted your concern around whether HM Treasury will remain committed to financing the long-term environmental remediation and restoration required for this project, and the need to widen the focus beyond return on investment. Please do let us know if we can assist in any conversations with HM Treasury around this.

Yours sincerely,



Craig Bennett, CEO - The Wildlife Trusts



Estelle Bailey, CEO - Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust



Julian Woolford, CEO - Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

Co-signed:



Brian Eversham, CEO - Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust



Delia Garratt, CEO - Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust



Charlotte Harris, CEO - Cheshire Wildlife Trust



Jo Smith, CEO - Derbyshire Wildlife Trust



Lesley Davies, CEO - Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust



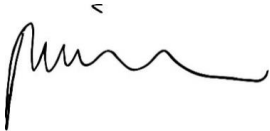
Tom Burditt, CEO - The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside



Tim Graham, CEO - Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust



Gordon Scorer, CEO - London Wildlife Trust



Paul Wilkinson, CEO - Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust



Liz Ballard, CEO - Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust



Ed Green, CEO - Warwickshire Wildlife Trust



Rachael Bice, CEO - Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

Cc:

Peter Miller (HS2 Ltd);

Rt Hon George Eustice, Secretary of State;

Andrew Stephenson MP, HS2 Minister;

Marian Spain, Chief Executive, Natural England;

Tony Juniper, Chair, Natural England.