



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

31<sup>st</sup> August 2021

*Jean Contrevent*

**RE: HS2 & THE ENVIRONMENT**

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of HS2 and the environment; your comments upon which I have read with interest.

Following the recommendations of the independent *Oakervee Review* on the benefits and impact of HS2, the Prime Minister gave the go ahead to HS2 alongside major improvements to local transport networks across the country. Construction work on the first phase of HS2 has now commenced, while Phase 2a has also achieved Royal Assent.

Ministers believe HS2 will form the backbone of the UK's transport network, delivering a significant increase in rail capacity, with hundreds of thousands of extra seats. It will cut journey times, bring our biggest towns and cities closer together, enhance North-South connectivity, boost productivity in the Midlands and the North, and crucially it will help to spread prosperity more evenly across the country. HS2 will also play an important role in delivering the Government's net-zero carbon objectives.

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

It is estimated that 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.

I am also pleased that a green corridor will be created alongside the railway. This will involve the planting of seven million new trees and shrubs, including over forty native species, along the Phase One route from London to the West Midlands.

It is welcome too that an overall £70 million funding package has also been made available to 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.

There are approximately 52,000 ancient woodland sites across England, and of these, 43 will be affected by Phases One and 2a of HS2. It is worth noting that more than 80 percent of the total area of these 43 sites will be untouched by HS2 and remain intact.






I want to reassure you that HS2 is using a combination of approaches to compensate for the ancient woodlands lost during construction. This includes translocation of soil to other woodlands to improve their biodiversity, planting new woodland and restoring existing ancient woodland. Indeed, the 'HS2 Woodland Fund' – overseen by the Forestry Commission – funds projects to support the creation, restoration and enhancement of woodland on private land, or in partnership with multiple landowners. I understand that the Government has committed £7 million to establishing this fund, and that the first £1.6 million for Phase One has already been allocated to supporting approximately 115 hectares of new native woodland creation, and the restoration of around 160 hectares of plantations within ancient woodland sites.

I appreciate your concerns about habitat clearances, and I can reassure you that HS2 Ltd and its contractors are obliged to comply with all relevant legislation on nesting birds. Indeed, all birds, as well as their nests and eggs, are protected under the *Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) and all HS2 vegetation clearance is accompanied by measures to prevent any breach of the law. When habitat clearances need to be undertaken during bird nesting season, these clearances are carried out in accordance with guidance from trained ecologists, in line with Natural England guidance.

A 'Working Method Statement' is completed before clearance work starts and appropriate ecological supervision is also provided. Work can also only commence when an ecologist has finished a pre-commencement site survey and given a 'Permit to Clear'. All work needs to be monitored by the on-site ecologist, and the ecologist can halt works if necessary. 'Buffer Zones' are also implemented if breeding birds are present during works, to allow work to continue in the surrounding area.

Finally, thank you for inviting me to the Westminster Hall debate on HS2 on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> September, which, although as a Government Minister I am unable to participate in, I appreciated the invitation nonetheless. Please rest assured, however, that I shall, of course, follow this debate, as well as the whole project, closely.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you, then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,  


**TOM PURSGLOVE MP**  
**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT**  
**CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**