

1. Petitioner information

In the box below, give the name and address of each individual, business or organisation submitting the petition. Please note that addresses here will be provided to the Bill's promoter, but will be redacted in the version of the petition published on the Parliamentary Website.

Cheshire Wildlife Trust,
Bickley Hall Farm,
Bickley,
Malpas SY14 8EF

Represented by:

Rachel Giles Ph.D.

Evidence and Planning Programme Manager

In the box below, give a description of the petitioners. For example, "We are the owners/tenants of the addresses above"; "My company has offices at the address above"; "Our organisation represents the interests of..."; "We are the parish council of...".

Cheshire Wildlife Trust is the leading local environmental NGO operating in the area impacted by HS2 Phase 2b.

The Trust represents the interests of 17,000 members, operating under a charitable objective to '...promote the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment...' (1962, last amended October 2016). It is within this charitable objective that we make this Petition in the interests of protecting and improving habitats, species and the landscape within the Cheshire region.

2. Objections to the Second Additional Provision to the Bill

In the box below, write your objections to the Second Additional Provision to the Bill and why your property or other interests are **directly and specially affected**. Please number each paragraph.

Only objections outlined in this petition can be presented when giving evidence to the Committee. You will not be entitled to be heard by the Committee on new matters not included in your written petition.

Deficiencies in compensatory habitat provision

1. CWT objects to a lack of compensatory habitat for AP2 losses of priority habitats comprising:
 - Semi-improved neutral grassland. This will result in an additional AP2 net loss of approximately 6.06 ha.
 - Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland (non-ancient). This will result in an additional AP2 net loss of 11.89 ha.
 - Native hedgerows. This will result in an additional AP2 net loss of 16.1 km (no additional planting is proposed).
2. These shortfalls compound a substantial deficiency of compensatory habitat for the original scheme (such as a net loss of 1.86 ha of semi-improved neutral grassland priority habitat at Birkin Brook LWS and Sugar Brook Farm grasslands LWS). The AP2 losses alone represent an estimated 1.2% of the total resource of good semi-improved neutral grassland in the Cheshire region, bringing the cumulative losses associated with HS2 to approximately 8.1 % of the total resource.
3. For native hedgerows the total net loss is particularly concerning as this now stands at approximately 168 km for Phase 2b. Native hedgerow creation is cited as mitigation for impacts to bat populations (in accordance with the Ecological Principles of Mitigation within the SMR) and crucial to ensure the effects on bat populations will be reduced to a level that is not significant.
4. One of the main aims of the EIA process is to develop mitigation measures to avoid, reduce or compensate for any significant adverse effects. The scale of the unmitigated losses would be unacceptable for developments under the Town and Country Planning Act (as detailed in NPPF policy), so it is unclear why HS2 are failing to adopt similar industry standards.

Direct impacts to non-statutory sites

5. The AP2 scheme directly impacts 9 non-statutory Local Wildlife Sites/Sites of Biological Importance, five of which support irreplaceable ancient woodland. These further losses are unacceptable, particularly when considered in combination with direct impacts to 33 non-statutory sites in the original scheme and the quantifiable shortages of compensation for these losses.

Indirect impacts to non-statutory sites

6. We object to the failure to evaluate or account for **indirect** impacts on ancient woodland and Local Wildlife Sites/Sites of Biological Importance due to the AP2 scheme in conjunction with the original scheme. The area of indirectly impacted non-statutory sites is likely to far exceed the area of sites directly impacted. Many of these sites also have direct losses of habitat and/or lie immediately adjacent to the construction site or construction routes.
7. These potential impacts include but are not limited to:
 - **Pollution.** Predicted NH₃, nitrogen deposition and acid deposition associated with the construction and/or operation phases in several areas will exceed the relevant air quality standards, above which significant impacts to habitats cannot be ruled out. Significant potential air quality impacts have been identified for statutory sites but HS2 Ltd has not evaluated potential impacts to adjacent ancient woodland and habitats outside statutory sites.
 - **Disturbance** to wildlife on sites adjacent to the construction footprint (including noise, lighting, dust).
 - **Connectivity** and habitat fragmentation caused by temporary or permanent barriers (e.g. construction/operational fencing, or culverting of watercourses, especially those greater than 30m long).
8. The resilience of ecosystems to recover following the major perturbation stemming from construction of the HS2 scheme depends on the success of mitigation and compensation measures. HS2 Ltd. has not evaluated **indirect** impacts to adjacent wildlife habitats (other than for statutory sites) nor accounted for impacts to habitat connectivity. This means that the scheme's impacts on ecosystem resilience and wider biodiversity will not be accounted for and simple measures to reduce impacts (such as buffering of sensitive habitats) will not be implemented.

Impacts to statutory sites

9. HS2 Ltd has now identified new potential construction or operational significant adverse effects at several national and internationally designated sites including Cotteril Clough SSSI which is owned by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust. These effects are associated with predicted NH₃, nitrogen deposition and acid deposition. In the absence of specific mitigation measures or modifications to the scheme to address the air quality issues we object to both the construction and operation of Phase 2b and the AP2 changes.

3. What do you want to be done in response?

In the box below, tell us what you think should be done in response to your objections to the Second Additional Provision to the Bill. You do not have to complete this box if you do not want to.

You can include this information in your response to section 3 'Objections to the Second Additional Provision to the Bill' if you prefer. Please number each paragraph.

Deficiencies in compensatory habitat provision

10. HS2 Ltd. need to ensure **no shortfalls** in the amount of compensatory habitat provided for Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland, semi-improved neutral grassland and native hedgerows. This will require them to:
 - Take into account changes in magnitude of the impacts to habitats caused by the AP2 scheme.
 - Avoid ambiguous use of evaluation criteria ensuring a consistent justifiable argument on how judgements of significance have been made.
 - Apply local criteria to determine sensitivity, as they committed to do so in Paragraph 2.3.3 of Annex E of the ES methodology.
 - Ensure the Ecological Impact Assessment methodology is aligned with 2022 EcIA guidance published by CIEEM (the HS2 EIA methodology was set out in 2013 when the first EIA for HS2 was published).
 - Justify how a shortfall of 168km of hedgerows will not impact the conservation status of bats.
11. Ecological Impact Assessment good practice sets out that impact significance is determined by several factors including magnitude of the impacts. HS2 appear to argue in most cases that because increasing the magnitude of impact does not change the **level of its significance** then additional habitat creation is not necessarily required. This is inconsistent with industry good practice principles.

Direct impacts to non-statutory sites

12. HS2 should avoid direct impacts to irreplaceable ancient woodland and Local wildlife sites/SBIs. Where impacts occur we ask that HS2 Ltd. undertake soil translocation from all non-statutory sites so that important flora and fauna is retained as far as practicable. HS2 will destroy an estimated 8.1% of the Cheshire region's neutral grassland priority habitat along with genetic diversity unique to the local area. It is important to salvage as much as possible of this irreplaceable genetic resource and the associated soils.

Indirect impacts to non-statutory sites

13. All non-statutory designated sites in the zone of influence of the scheme should be assessed in the same manner as protected sites to identify potential significant impacts, particularly in relation to pollution and disturbance. Where impacts are identified mitigation measures such as site buffering will be required.
14. An assessment of habitat connectivity pre- and post-development would highlight if there are likely to be any species bottlenecks and identify measures

that could address these. HS2 Ltd. should engage with the Local Nature Partnership and the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy to ensure the scheme does not undermine the strategy. Furthermore, HS2 Ltd. should ensure their net gain calculations recognise the strategic significance of land parcels so that biodiversity value is accurately attributed.

Impacts to statutory sites

15. We await publication of specific mitigation measures or modifications to the scheme to address the air quality issues so that the impacts to statutory sites can be reduced to a level that is not significant.