



Department
for Transport

From the Minister of State
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Huw Merriman MP
Chair
Transport Select Committee
House of Commons
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Our Ref: xx

4th May 2020

Dear Chair

Follow-up to hearing of 24 April

Thank you for your time, as well as that of the Committee's, on 24 April. As promised, I am writing to you with further detail on two questions that were raised in the hearing on the High Speed 2 (HS2) project.

Barnett consequentials

HS2 is an engine for growth and will therefore bring benefits to the whole country.

The Barnett formula is applied at departmental level, rather than programme level, for funding allocated at Spending Reviews or Rounds. This is a matter for the Treasury.

As HS2 has received its funding through the Department for Transport's settlements at Spending Reviews, Barnett consequentials from spending on HS2 will therefore be included in the overall Barnett consequentials received on the changes in the Department's total budget at Spending Reviews.

The Scottish Government's Barnett consequentials resulting from changes in the Department for Transport's budget were £1.3 billion at Spending Review 2015 and £48 million at Spending Round 2019.

Clearance of forest areas in Spring

There are mitigations to clearing forest areas and woodland.

Firstly, HS2 Ltd is embarking on a major exercise in woodland and habitat creation. Seven million new trees and shrubs, including over 40 native species, will be planted as part of the HS2 programme. Over 550,000 have already been planted. New native woodlands will to cover over 9 square kilometres of land. At least 400km of hedgerows will be created, which includes the translocation of existing hedgerows at various locations.

HS2 Ltd will also replace lost wildlife habitats along the route. Over 50 such sites have already been created, allowing them to become established in advance of main works. Overall, HS2 is predicted to create a net increase in habitats for wildlife. Phase One expects to support 33 square kilometres of new and existing wildlife habitat - an increase of around 30% compared to what's there now.

This work includes, but is not limited to, putting tailored mitigation plans in place for protected species, including new wetland and ponds to encourage newts, new areas of planting to encourage rare butterflies and new native woodland planting to link up and enhance ancient woodland. Mitigation has been included where appropriate, including habitat creation and if needed, species translocation.

HS2 Ltd continues to undertake one of the largest biodiversity and habitat surveys in the UK. This approach allows it to be best informed about the impacts of the scheme and to understand the necessary mitigation needed to reduce the impacts and also to seek opportunities that will leave a bigger and better natural environment legacy.

In line with industry best practice, habitat clearance for HS2 works will be conducted outside of the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive) where practicable. Where habitat clearance needs to be carried out during the bird nesting season then an appropriate Working Method Statement shall be completed in advance of clearance works commencing, and appropriate supervision provided by a suitably experienced ecologist.

I hope that in providing these updates your questions on these topics have been answered. Since last week, I also want to draw your attention to an update that the number of projects benefitting from HS2 Community and Business Funds has risen to over 100. More details of those awarded can be found here: <https://hs2funds.org.uk/2020/04/27/hs2-100-projects-news/>

I will continue to keep you informed of any future developments. As mentioned at the hearing, the government will also report to Parliament every six months on costs and schedule together with updates about how HS2 Ltd is addressing stakeholder concerns on the line of route. I am grateful for the offer of support from the Committee on the scope of the report and we will indeed keep you updated on progress.

I am keen to engage closely with Parliamentarians and communities affected by HS2, and will arrange visits in person as soon as able to, when Covid-19 restrictions allow.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andrew', with a long horizontal stroke underneath.

ANDREW STEPHENSON MP

MINISTER OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT