

- **THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF HS2 IS ENORMOUS, UNACCEPTABLE AND HAS NOT BEEN PROPERLY EXPLAINED BY THE GOVERNMENT.**
- **HS2 ACTION ALLIANCE BELIEVES THE IRREVERSIBLE DAMAGE TO THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT CAUSED BY HS2 AND THE LACK OF SAVING IN CARBON EMISSIONS SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO CANCEL THE PROJECT ON SUSTAINABILITY GROUNDS ALONE.**
- **IF HS2 PROCEEDS, THE IMPACT ON WILDLIFE AND BIODIVERSITY WILL BE DEVASTATING.**



Sibleys Copse in the AONB – mentioned in the Domesday Book – to be destroyed by HS2.

THE CASE AGAINST HS2: A BAD DEAL FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

The route chosen for HS2 passes through some of the most densely populated areas in the country. The route also includes irreplaceable natural habitats, woodlands and wildlife. Should it proceed, HS2 will have a devastating effect on the natural environment in these areas – over 130 wildlife sites on the first stage alone will be directly affected, including 10 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, an AONB and 50 ancient woodlands.

HS2 estimates that for every 100 metres of track it needs around 2.5 acres - meaning over 5000 acres of land will be lost from London to Birmingham alone. HS2 estimates that the width of the line will be up to 75 metres, equivalent to a four-lane motorway.

HS2's environmental impacts are magnified by being designed to accommodate trains travelling up to 400km/h.

This inherent inflexibility makes it problematic to divert the route around sensitive areas, which may be natural environments that should be preserved, sites of cultural heritage or just places where people live. If the speed could be less than 400km/h, the track would not have to be as straight which would allow less environmentally damaging route options using less energy and creating fewer carbon emissions while still reducing journey times.

The visual impact of the proposed line is significant. It will:

- be very straight when viewed by anyone in the countryside and not fit easily with urban environments
- create an unnatural alignment, cutting through hills and rising and falling, rather than curving around higher ground as do normal roads and railways
- be dominated by overhead electrification, masts, wires, and supports, which when viewed along the line or at an angle would create a visual blot that could be as bad as the lighting columns along a lit motorway
- be accompanied by maintenance facilities, including roads alongside
- be studded with frequent cabins, electrical feed stations, and access tracks to these from local roads, more than on current electrified lines.

Constructing such lines will encourage the urbanisation of precious rural landscapes. Perhaps nowhere is this more of a concern than HS2's route straight through the heavily-protected Meriden Gap, the area of Green Belt which keeps Birmingham and Coventry separate and which at its narrowest is only six miles wide.

High speed rail is not a 'get out of jail' free card for carbon emissions and climate change. The proposed HS2 trains would burn 50% more energy mile-for-mile than the Eurostar and HS2 would produce more than twice the emissions of an intercity train.

Professor John Whitelegg
Green Party Spokesperson on Sustainable Development

The proposed line would run through the Gap and require a new railway station and a 7000 space car park within it. This station would not be at Birmingham International but a mile further east, on land where development has always been refused in the past.

HS2's impacts are not limited to rural areas. In London, the local wildlife trust estimates up to 18 wildlife sites are currently likely to suffer direct adverse impacts from the construction and operation of HS2. Up to 39 others may be indirectly affected.

WILDLIFE

HS2 will cause an unacceptable level of damage to European, national and county important species. A number of European Protected Species (EPS) are present within the proposed HS2 route corridor, including otter, great crested newt and several species of bats. In addition, nationally protected species such as freshwater crayfish, stag beetle, smooth newt, great crested newt, common frog, slow-worm, common lizard, European water vole, Eurasian badger, rare butterflies and breeding birds are known to be present in the impact zone.



BIODIVERSITY

HS2 Action Alliance believes insufficient regard has been paid to the impact of HS2 on biodiversity. Specific concerns at the risks facing wildlife include where the HS2 route is likely to cause direct loss or damage to the wildlife site through land take. This leads to the severance of habitats (causing fragmentation); reduction in size of habitat areas; direct impacts on vegetation and/or sedentary animal populations (for example woodland, and ponds); and/or creation of barriers that affect behaviour of species on a site (foraging, nesting).



Cubbington Wood in Warwickshire – to be destroyed by HS2.

ANCIENT WOODLANDS

A further major environmental concern is the impact of HS2 on ancient woodlands. These are defined as those areas which have been continuously wooded for over 400 years. The communities of species they support, together with archaeological and other historic features mean they are irreplaceable. Such sites have developed over hundreds of years. Their biodiversity value can't be recreated by replacement planting. Ancient woodland is the most important category for nature conservation, given that the UK has lost 50 per cent of its ancient woodland since the 1930s and it now accounts for just 2.4 per cent of total woodland.

We believe that these environmental issues highlight a broader failure by Government to comprehensively assess the environmental impact of HS2 and objectively determine whether the supposed economic benefits outweigh the environmental damage inherent in the scheme.

The Government was under a legal duty to assess the environmental impact of HS2, due to a European law known as the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. HS2 Action Alliance believe the Government failed to comply with this key requirement so HS2 Action Alliance are challenging this in the courts by way of Judicial Review.



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