



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

The Rt Hon the Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park
Minister of State

Sarah Green MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Your ref: SG1747
Our ref: MC2022/04434/JM

28 March 2022

Dear Sarah,

Thank you for your letter of 24 February to the Rt Hon Lord Benyon, on behalf of your constituents, about the environmental impacts of HS2 in Great Missenden. I am replying as the Minister responsible for forestry policy.

As I understand from the Campaign to Save Leather Lane's letter, there are concerns regarding tree felling. The Government remains committed to ensuring the appropriate protection and management of ancient woodlands. In 2018, the protection of ancient woodlands, ancient trees and veteran trees was strengthened through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), recognising them as irreplaceable habitats. The NPPF outlines that any development resulting in the loss or deterioration of such irreplaceable habitats should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and only if a suitable compensation strategy exists. HS2 is considered a wholly exceptional reason. In designing the scheme, HS2 Ltd has sought to avoid impacts on ancient woodlands wherever possible. Defra, the Forestry Commission and Natural England have worked with the Department for Transport and HS2 Ltd to ensure that route design and delivery plans minimise any loss of trees as far as possible, and in particular minimise any loss of ancient woodlands and veteran trees.

Measures to compensate for ancient woodland affected by HS2 include creating new woodland; sensitively moving, or translocating, ancient woodland soils to new sites; and enhancing adjacent parts of ancient woodlands that are not affected by construction. The Government has also committed £7 million to establish the HS2 Woodland Fund, helping landowners within 25 miles of the railway to plant new native woodlands and restore Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites. The £5 million Phase One fund is grant-administered and managed by the Forestry Commission. The £2 million Phase 2a fund is due to open in 2022. As part of plans to create a 'Green Corridor' of richer, more diverse and better-connected landscapes along the railway, Government and HS2 Ltd are also planting more than 7 million new trees and shrubs, including over 40 native species, as part of Phase One (London - West Midlands) of the HS2 programme.

Regarding concerns for local bat populations, all native bat species are protected under the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017. As such, a licence from Natural England is needed to disturb bats and their roosts and any development which is likely to impact on the conservation status of bat species must demonstrate that it can implement suitable mitigation and compensation measures to ensure that the 'Favourable Conservation Status' of those populations is maintained.

Thank you once again for your letter.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Paul', written in a cursive style.

THE RT HON THE LORD GOLDSMITH OF RICHMOND PARK