

Angela Moore  
External Affairs Manager, Communications Directorate  
Department for Transport

FAO Grant Shapps MP, Secretary of State for Transport

11<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Sirs,

**RE: High Speed 2**

I am writing today to urge a response to our letter of 3 March, itself a response to your email to us of 11<sup>th</sup> February confirming the Government's intention to proceed with HS2 and inviting feedback.

In that letter, we offered to work with HS2 Ltd, DfT and other stakeholders to help make HS2 fit for purpose in the context of a climate and ecological emergency, but asked for assurances on six key points to justify our continued engagement.

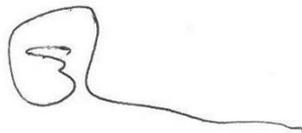
Of course, shortly after sending this letter the UK entered into a period of rapid response to the coronavirus pandemic, and we appreciate that this has caused understandable delays in any response. However, we also note that clearance work, including the removal of some ancient woodland along the HS2 line, has continued – despite the country being in lockdown, and despite it being the most damaging time of year to carry out such work. Continuing this work at this time seriously calls into question the Government's positive intent and the statement that "there is a plan to ensure that this is one of the most environmentally responsible infrastructure projects ever delivered in the UK".

The current pandemic crisis will change our shared future. Many commentators have suggested that work and travel norms may shift permanently as a result, and some early polls of businesses and employees support this.

The RSPB, along with other environmental NGOs, are calling for a green recovery, as we rebuild society and economy after this crisis. As part of that, we've recommended that every measure in the economic recovery package be put through a "net-zero test". The carbon balance of HS2 was quite finely balanced pre-coronavirus; this balance is likely to have tightened further as people and businesses make different choices about how and where they work and travel in future. In this moment of crisis, it seems sensible to pause irreversible woodland clearances until the future is clearer.

We look forward to hearing from you in response to this, and our letter of 3<sup>rd</sup> March, as soon as possible. Because this issue is of keen interest to our members and supporters, we will be making this request public if we receive no response by 25<sup>th</sup> May.

Yours Sincerely



Emma Marsh  
Director, RSPB England

**RSPB England Headquarters**

First Floor  
One Cornwall Street  
Birmingham  
B3 2JN

**Tel:** 01767 693777

**Facebook:** RSPBLoveNature

**Twitter:** @Natures\_Voice

**rspb.org.uk**



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