



Phase 2b Western Leg Information Paper

E28: The Green Corridor

This paper outlines the concepts of the Green Corridor that inform development of the Proposed Scheme.

It will be of particular interest to those potentially affected by the Government's proposals for high speed rail.

This paper was prepared in relation to the promotion of the High Speed Rail (Crewe - Manchester) Bill. Content will be maintained and updated as considered appropriate during the passage of the Bill.

If you have any queries about this paper or about how it might apply to you, please contact the HS2 Helpdesk in the first instance.

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 High Speed Two (HS2) is the Government's scheme for a new, high speed north-south railway, which is being taken forward in a number of phases. Phase One will connect London with Birmingham and the West Midlands. Phase 2a will extend the route from the West Midlands to Crewe. The Phase 2b Western Leg will connect Crewe to Manchester. As set out in the Integrated Rail Plan, published in November 2021, HS2 East is proposed to deliver a new high speed line from the West Midlands to East Midlands Parkway.
- 1.2 HS2 Ltd is the non-departmental public body responsible for developing and promoting these proposals. The company works under the terms of a Development Agreement entered into with the Secretary of State for Transport.
- 1.3 The construction and operation of Phase One of HS2 is authorised by the High Speed Rail (London – West Midlands) Act 2017 and Phase 2a by the High Speed Rail (West Midlands – Crewe) Act 2021.
- 1.4 In January 2022, the Government introduced a hybrid Bill to Parliament (hereafter referred to as 'the Bill'), to seek powers for the construction and operation of the Phase 2b Western Leg (the Proposed Scheme), which is called the High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Bill. The Proposed Scheme comprises the Phase 2b Western Leg from Crewe to Manchester and several off-route works. It also facilitates the delivery of Northern Powerhouse Rail by providing the Crewe Northern Connection and junctions and other infrastructure to be used in future schemes.
- 1.5 The work to produce the Bill includes an Equalities Impact Assessment and an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), the results of which are reported in an Environmental Statement (ES) submitted alongside the Bill. The Secretary of State has also published draft Environmental Minimum Requirements (EMRs), which set out the environmental and sustainability commitments that will be observed in the construction of the Proposed

Scheme. For more information on the EMRs please see Information Paper E1: Control of environmental impacts.

1.6 The Secretary of State for Transport is the Promoter of the Bill through Parliament. The Promoter will also appoint a body responsible for delivering the Proposed Scheme under the powers granted by the Bill. This body is known as the 'nominated undertaker'. There may be more than one nominated undertaker. However, any and all nominated undertakers will be bound by the obligations contained in the Bill, the policies established in the EMRs and any commitments provided in the information papers.

1.7 These information papers have been produced to explain the commitments made in the Bill and the EMRs and how they will be applied to the design and construction of the Proposed Scheme. They also provide information about the Proposed Scheme itself, the powers contained in the Bill and how particular decisions about the Proposed Scheme have been reached.

2 Overview

2.1 This information paper outlines the concepts of the Green Corridor that inform development of the Proposed Scheme.

3 What is the Green Corridor?

3.1 The Green Corridor is a term used by HS2 to describe the environmental mitigation, compensation and enhancement projects that will run alongside the railway; to create a network of bigger, better-connected, climate-resilient habitats and new green spaces for nature and people. It will be a home for wildlife and while integrating the scheme into the landscape.

3.2 The Green Corridor informs HS2 Ltd's design considerations regarding the railway corridor itself, but also the land directly around the Proposed Scheme and any wider opportunities for mitigation and enhancement beyond the railway.

3.3 The Green Corridor also aims to offer opportunities for stakeholders and communities along the Proposed Scheme to connect with the natural world, by delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities in both urban and rural contexts.

3.4 In December 2020, HS2 Ltd published a 'Green Corridor Prospectus', which set out the principles of the Green Corridor. The Prospectus outlines the benefits and the legacy it will deliver and ways for the public to get involved.

3.5 The Green Corridor has two parallel goals:

- To minimise and compensate for the environmental impact of HS2; and
- To support neighbours to improve their local environment through several funding schemes, each of which supports different kinds of projects. This includes:
 - Community and Environment Fund (CEF) and Business and Local Economy Fund (BLEF) are provided to benefit communities and local economies disrupted by the construction of HS2. Currently £40 million allocated for Phase One and £5 million for Phase 2a. These funds are able to support environmental based Green Corridor projects.
 - A Woodland Fund supports the creation of native woodland and the restoration of ancient woodland sites within a 25-mile zone surrounding the railway. £5 million has been allocated for Phase One and a further £2 million of funding for the Phase 2a route.

3.6 The first goal relates to HS2 Ltd's mitigation works, including designing habitats to create bigger, better, more joined up ecological networks, and the implementation of landscape mitigation which is sensitively designed to integrate into the surrounding landscape character.

- 3.7 The second goal is about HS2 seeking to do more for communities and nature networks affected by the construction and operation of the scheme by working in partnership with communities and stakeholders to fund a range of projects. These can vary in scope and scale. Phase One examples include:
- volunteering opportunities for local people to improve the watercourse and ecology of the river Pinn, in Greater London; and
 - contributing towards the construction of a new visitor centre at Wendover Woods, Buckinghamshire.
- 3.8 By joining up many projects through collaborative working, the Green Corridor has the potential to deliver greater environmental benefits than a series of separate initiatives could.
- 3.9 The principles of the Green Corridor accord with the national planning policy definition of what is referred to as green infrastructure. Green infrastructure is a network of high quality, multifunctional, green (land) and blue (water) spaces, comprising natural and semi natural features, ranging in scale from: individual street trees, allotments, verges, green roofs and private gardens, through to parks, playing fields. At a landscape scale it can include woodlands, wetlands and historic parks and gardens. It can also include streams, canals and other water bodies and connections via public rights of way, bridleways and cycle ways. This network should function sustainably and meet various needs from a national to a local level.
- 3.10 Green infrastructure can be applied to new projects and to the regeneration of urban areas. It is a broad idea: it can relate to the built or natural environment. It informs various aspects of project development, including design, engineering and environmental management. Considerations such as landscape, biodiversity, cultural heritage, socio economics and public access are all relevant.

3.11 Green infrastructure is most successful when it is designed and managed as a multi-functional resource, providing a range of different benefits at the same time.

4 The Green Corridor and HS2 policy

4.1 The Green Corridor is one of the key objectives of HS2 Ltd's Environmental Policy: 'Create a resilient Green Corridor for both nature and people, that will conserve and enhance habitats, seek to achieve biodiversity gains through partnership working while designing mitigation to integrate into the character of the landscape.'

4.2 HS2 Ltd's Environmental Policy provides a framework for environmental protection and management for HS2 Ltd and its operations. It acts to elaborate on the Sustainability Policy theme "respecting our surroundings: environmental protection and management" and HS2 Ltd's strategic goal of "creating an environmentally sustainable solution and being a good neighbour to local communities".

4.3 These policies identify that HS2 constitutes a major opportunity to help make the UK transport system more sustainable. A number of the aims of these policies relate to green infrastructure concepts included in the Green Corridor Prospectus are:

- growth and regeneration - support sustainable economic development and the localism agenda for regeneration;
- environmental change - seek to avoid significant adverse effects on communities, businesses, and the natural, historic and built environment. Minimise impacts where they occur, and enhance the environment where appropriate by aiming to deliver a net gain in biodiversity for replaceable habitats;
- resilience - build a well-connected green infrastructure network that is adaptive, resilient for the long term, and seek to minimise the combined effect of the Proposed Scheme and climate change;

- contribute to good design - well-designed green infrastructure helps create a sense of place by responding to, and where appropriate enhancing local landscape character; and
- promoting healthy communities – green infrastructure can help improve public health and community wellbeing by creating environmental quality and maintaining opportunities for recreation and exercise. Green infrastructure also helps reduce air pollution, noise and the impacts of extreme heat and extreme rainfall events.

4.4 The components of green infrastructure exist within the wider landscape context and can enhance local landscape character and contribute to place-making. High quality networks of multifunctional green space can make a contribution to creating habitats and to halting the decline in biodiversity.

5 The Green Corridor and the Environmental Statement

5.1 The ES refers to environmental measures that will be developed as part of the Proposed Scheme and will contribute towards the first goal of the Green Corridor - to minimise and compensate for the environmental impact of HS2, the environmental measures comprise:

- ecological mitigation and compensation - in the form of new or enhanced grassland and wetland habitats, woodland and hedgerows;
- landscape and visual mitigation - in the form of locally designed earthworks to reflect local landform, to help integrate the Proposed Scheme into the local landscape character and to provide additional visual screening with the use of tree planting and hedgerows;
- heritage mitigation - responding to the context of heritage assets and their setting;
- access and community space - including public rights of way, cycleways, bridleways, open spaces, access tracks and bridges across the railway; and

- drainage and flood amelioration - including balancing ponds, sustainable drainage systems (SuDs) including drainage ditches and flood risk compensation land.

5.2 The tenets of the Green Corridor are also outlined in HS2's Landscape Design Approach document.

5.3 An Independent Design Panel has been established to secure that HS2 acts as an exemplar of scheme design for others across the world. The Independent Design Panel will have an important role in taking forward the Green Corridor concept through detailed design of the Proposed Scheme.

5.4 The Green Corridor is integral to HS2's aim of leaving a positive route legacy. It is linked to the Promoter's aim for the Proposed Scheme to deliver a net gain in biodiversity for replaceable habitats, and also the Government's commitment to planting at least seven million trees as part of the HS2 Ltd's scheme-wide mitigation proposals.

6 Policy and legislative context

6.1 The principles and approach of the Green Corridor is reflected in the Government's 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' (2018). This document sets out the ambition to improve the environment over a generation by creating richer habitats for wildlife, improving air and water quality, and mitigating and adapting to climate change. The plan outlines how Government will work with communities and businesses to achieve this ambition and sets goals and targets for each of the environmental benefit and pressures identified. '

6.2 The Green Corridor will seek to contribute towards the key targets and actions set out in the Government's 25 Year environmental plan such as:

- the development and implementation of a national Nature Recovery Network and Local Nature Recovery Strategies to protect and restore wildlife;
- creating or restoring wildlife-rich habitats;

- increasing woodland cover
- planting more trees in towns and cities; and
- providing high quality, accessible natural spaces and access routes for commuting and recreation.

6.3 The National Planning Policy Framework supports the objectives of the 25 year environment plan, stressing a proactive and strategic approach to planning for the natural environment, green infrastructure and nature recovery.

7 More information

7.1 More detail on the Bill and related documents can be found at www.gov.uk/hs2-phase2b-crewe-manchester.

References

Green Corridor Prospectus:

<https://www.hs2.org.uk/documents/green-corridor-prospectus/>

National Planning Policy Framework:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005759/NPPF_July_2021.pdf

A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf

HS2 Sustainability Policy:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hs2-sustainability-policy>

HS2 Environmental Policy:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hs2-environmental-policy>

HS2 Landscape Design Approach:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550791/HS2_Landscape_Design_Approach_July_2016.pdf