

Barnsley Biodiversity Trust
Response to consultation on proposed route of HS2
through the Barnsley area (Eastern leg)



This response is on behalf of the Barnsley Biodiversity Trust and as such makes no comments about the economic case for HS2, the geological, land contamination and previous mining issues in Barnsley, and the impact of HS2 other than on biodiversity and ecology.

Barnsley Biodiversity Trust (BBT) is made up of individual members and representatives of organisations with an interest in biodiversity in Barnsley. It is a forum for different groups and individuals to discuss local biodiversity issues, and to work together to raise public awareness of biodiversity and promote the conservation of local wildlife and habitats.

Our response has been discussed at meetings of our trustees and a meeting of our members.

The BBT is also a partner in the South Yorkshire Nature Partnership. In the SYNP response to the consultation SYNP stresses the importance of understanding the range of impacts of HS2 and the risks they would pose to the environment of South Yorkshire as well as the use of the best evidence and data in assessing the risks. SYNP also promotes the idea of identifying and promoting opportunities for environmental enhancement as well as direct mitigation and compensation for environmental damage and habitat loss where these cannot be avoided. The Barnsley Biodiversity Trust supports this approach of the SYNP and looks to make a further contribution at the time of the full environmental impact assessment for HS2.

The proposed HS2 phase 2 route takes land from and goes through Wombwell wood, Sunny Bank wood, Carlton Marsh nature reserve and Rabbit Ings country park as well as affecting the ancient hedgerow of Black Lane.

It cuts through the Dearne Valley Nature Improvement Area and Living Landscape Area. It will create a barrier to ecological networks including some being developed.

Black Lane is a local wildlife site, designated for its ancient and species rich hedgerow. It is the only hedgerow designated as a local wildlife site in Barnsley. The proposed route cuts across Black Lane on a viaduct. We are concerned about the impact that the construction phase will cause especially if Black Lane were to be used for access.

Mitigation would be essential both in avoiding damage in the first place and by repair and compensation for loss.

Wombwell wood is ancient woodland and priority habitat, with abundant cultural significance, with ecological links to the Dove Valley. It is designated as a local wildlife site. The proposed route goes through the edge of Wombwell wood. There is also a proposed alignment of highways in the area.

We are concerned about any loss of ancient woodland which is impossible to replicate.

Mitigation to help compensate for the loss of ancient woodland and its ecological connectivity would be necessary by creating new woodland and scrub planting and/or species-rich grassland or heath (local priority habitats) adjacent to the local wildlife site.

Sunny Bank wood is another, smaller, ancient woodland which is part of a series of four small ancient woodlands that are designated as a Local Wildlife Site. The proposed route goes through the middle of Sunny Bank wood.

We are concerned about any loss of ancient woodland which is impossible to replicate. Mitigation to help compensate for the loss of ancient woodland and its ecological connectivity would be necessary.

Carlton marsh nature reserve provides a very diverse range of habitats within an urban fringe setting, with a mosaic of wetland sites, grasslands and scrub/woodland habitats. It is designated as a local wildlife site. The site is important for birds, invertebrates, plants, and water vole. We are concerned about the loss of and damage to the locally important habitats and loss of species.

Avoidance of the site should be considered by slight route realignment. Other forms of mitigation would be necessary including reducing and abating the impact and compensation for the loss of habitat.

Rabbit Ings is a country park and nature reserve owned by the Land Trust, recently restored from colliery spoil and land filled coking waste and including a mosaic of habitats including wetland, marsh, grassland, heath and scrub. It is being considered as a Local Wildlife Site.

The site is important for birds, mammals including water vole, water shrew and harvest mouse, amphibians including great crested newts, reptiles (grass-snake) and Red Data Book schedule 1 (RDB1) invertebrates. Long and short eared owls have over wintered there.

The proposed HS2 route bisects the site clearly removing its ecological connectivity. Reed bed habitat and recently created species rich grassland will be lost.

Avoidance of the site should be considered by slight route realignment. Other forms of mitigation would be necessary including reducing and abating the impact and compensation for the loss of habitat.

Potential issues with contaminated material from the tip (coking work waste) and instabilities due to former settling lagoons may require a wider corridor than indicated to create stable slopes and this would require further mitigation.

We also note that the route leaves Barnsley over Cold Hiendley reservoir which is in Wakefield but with the other nearby reservoirs is notable for wintering wildfowl and a major gull roost.

The above comments reflect the main existing sites designated as Local Wildlife Sites. There are other sites of biodiversity value also affected by the proposed route as well as the disruption to ecological connectivity. These can be addressed as part of the full environmental assessment. A full range of mitigation measures from avoidance and reduction to repair and compensation will be required.

Monica Ward
Secretary, Barnsley Biodiversity Trust