



Department
for Transport

Baroness Young of Old Scone
House of Lords
London
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From the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon

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Dear Baroness Young

Due to the limited time remaining at the end of the Second Reading of the High Speed Rail (London to West Midlands) Bill, I was unable to respond to many of the points raised during the debate. I therefore write to outline my response to your comments where I was unable to do so during the debate itself.

I agree with you that ancient woodlands are irreplaceable. In the design of HS2 we have sought to avoid ancient woodlands wherever possible. The Commons Select Committee process has further reduced impacts – changes in the Commons Select Committee reduced impacts on 10.7 hectares of ancient woodland in 8 separate woodlands.

You raised the issue of difficulty identifying ancient woodlands initially. This was primarily due to landowners refusing access to land. However, I hope you will be reassured that those access powers for future high speed rail are contained in this Bill.

In relation to the scheme's objective of seeking to achieve no net loss to biodiversity, as per the direction in the House of Commons HS2 Select Committee's Second Special report, we have appointed Natural England to undertake an independent review of the no net loss metric used by HS2 Ltd. Natural England will report in summer this year, after which HS2 Ltd will consider whether any changes are required to the calculations.

I hope this answers the points mentioned sufficiently.

A copy of this letter has been placed in the libraries of both Houses.

Yours Sincerely,

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon

LORD AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON