

TRUTH MATTERS

In 2011, the Green Party voted to oppose HS2. We knew High Speed Rail would be a great thing to have and a laudable ideal, but we assessed the HS2 proposal and saw that HS2 was an environmental and financial disaster waiting to happen.

The Green Party voted to oppose a public transport project.

That was a really big deal. So why does the GPEW oppose HS2?

We voted to oppose HS2 because we did what the Green Party does, we didn't fall for the spin. We assessed the proposal. We saw HS2 had been designed by construction industry lobbyists who simply wanted to build the most expensive railway in the history of the world. It was being mismanaged from the start and they had ignored the sustainable "Kent Principles" set down after HS1 was built, meaning HS2 would maximise the environmental damage, whilst handily maximising the money paid out to the construction industry. It's not just that we have been proven right, it's turned out to be worse than we thought.

So why after we have been proven right, after the costs have become uncontrollable and the environmental damage is far worse than anyone expected, would we change that policy?

"There is an argument that this is going to divert people away from aviation. If that were true, I'd be delighted, but the evidence suggests what happens is that the slots that are freed up in the airports simply then get used to do other journeys, it doesn't reduce net aviation, which is what we need to do for climate purposes. So, I fear that this is a bit of a white elephant, it's going to be hugely environmentally damaging, and there's a much better use of £32bn."*

*(We've used this quote to remind you just how much the cost has gone up!!)

- Former GPEW Leader and MP, Caroline Lucas.



"The world is currently in the midst of an Ecological Emergency. HS2 has already caused irreversible damage to irreplaceable habitats, and this damage stands to continue if the project continues. The Wildlife Trusts have recently pointed out that the methodology used by HS2 Ltd to evaluate ecological impact was deeply flawed and the presented conclusions were inaccurate and misleading. I'm very concerned that this motion might be passed by conference as it would project the message that Greens don't take the Ecological Emergency seriously - and so deeply damage our party's reputation and undermine its appeal to those who care about the planet."

- Jonathan Elmer, GPEW Natural World Spokesperson.

vote against E01



"I would ask anyone who tries to use environmental arguments for HS2 to look at our position and our statement very loud and very clear: That HS2 is no solution to the climate emergency or our nature crisis. The Green Party actually came out in opposition to HS2 in spring conference 2011. I remember that debate, and it was a long and heated debate, because understandably people thought "The Green Party opposing trains, how can that be?" What the Green Party has called HS2 is "an utter waste", because what we should be spending on transport on other rail routes, particularly rail routes that run east-west. There is huge damage to the environment from this plan for HS2 and the idea that you can plant some trees and that's and offset for an ancient woodland simply does not stack up. HS2 will not replace flights. Actually what we are hearing from regional airports along the route is how much of a boost to them - to increase their capacity, increase their flights - HS2 would be. Now the fact, that having declared a climate emergency, that we should be talking about airport expansion, simply doesn't add up, but HS2 adds to airport expansion, it assists it."

"When I started having arguments about HS2, people were saying "It's all about the speed, we've got to have the speed, it's designed for speed" Now "It's designed for capacity" we hear. If we were going simply for capacity, we wouldn't have the environmental destruction."

"Don't go for Greenwash, which the arguments being made for HS2 are."

- Baroness Natalie Bennett.



"This motion (to support HS2) makes a mockery of our policy work and the basic philosophical principles. It certainly goes against the spirit of Wildlife and Habitats policy that was passed at conference. It will undermine a lot of the work many policy groups are working towards too. It should have been ruled out of order and not in line with founding principles of Green Party."

-Georgina Wright, Stockport Green Party. Member of the Wildlife and Habitats PWG.

HS2 and WILDLIFE

In 2020, the Wildlife Trusts, in conjunction with the Woodland Trust, RSPB and National Trust produced a report on HS2. It concluded HS2 would risk the loss of, or significantly impact:

- 5 Wildlife refuges of international importance.
- 33 Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
- 693 Classified Local Wildlife Sites
- 21 Designated Local Nature Reserves
- 26 Large landscape-scale initiatives
- 18 Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves – many are also designated wildlife sites
- 108 Ancient woodlands, an irreplaceable habitat
- Other irreplaceable habitats such as veteran trees, wood pasture, old meadows
- Extensive further areas of wider natural habitat
- Several scarce and protected wildlife species are under threat such as barn owls and endangered wildlife such white-clawed crayfish, willow tit and lizard orchid. Rarities like dingy skipper may become locally extinct.



In February 2023, Wildlife Trusts produced another report, it slated HS2 Ltd for: inconsistent mapping and modelling; wild spaces and habitats being undervalued; the benefits of new habitat creation were valued higher than existing habitats; wildlife trapped between construction areas has been ignored; many ponds had been only partially counted; huge numbers of trees and hedgerows were not counted at all; and the nature loss would be 7.9 times more than HS2 Ltd had accounted for. The response from the 'High Speed Rail Industry Leaders Group', a vested interest lobbying group consisting of construction firms, was that the Wildlife Trust data was "Untested" and "Unsurveyed".

"The legacy of HS2 is far worse than I imagined, and we will be making an announcement on the specifics and wider treatment of HS2 shortly."

Newly-Appointed Labour Party Transport Secretary Louise Haigh MP.

It's incredibly expensive, really, really poor value for money and incredibly environmentally damaging as well.... It was designed to be super, super straight so that incredibly high-speed trains could go on it, up to 400kph, even those trains aren't going to be ones running on it. Effectively it's a vanity project, it was designed to too high a spec and that has meant it has been beset by problems all the way along.

- Ellie Chowns MP



“As a big opponent of HS2, HS2 has caused, and will cause, untold damage to our natural environment. It is being built for a market that will not exist in a future that will not happen. It is worth saying yet again that we are in a climate emergency. Gone is the time for mega projects like this.

HS2 makes lots of promises, but unfortunately, it often breaks its promises. Preventing this destruction is something that just a few of us cannot manage. Surely everybody cares about biodiversity; it is the basis of our health as humans. I pay a special tribute to all the campaigners against HS2, some of whom are exposing themselves to great physical, mental and financial risks. Their work, like that of activists on so many issues, is what inspires me and keeps me fighting.”

Baroness Jenny Jones.

HS2 and CARBON

While HS2 Ltd originally tried to market the project as ‘broadly carbon neutral’ and have since gone into spin overdrive labelling it as the “zero carbon railway”, the truth is very different. Every time HS2 Ltd submit a hybrid bill to parliament, they are legally required to make carbon assessments which follow a statutory framework. These all very clearly show HS2 as being a net contributor to carbon emissions, even 120 years after construction has been completed. The QR codes lead to these reports.



Above, with Juliet Carter and Baroness Jenny Jones is Mark Keir, who was involved in the longest ever underground environmental protection action ever seen in the UK – lasting 46 days - one of three HS2 actions that saw environmental protectors underground for over a month. This protest was against the destruction of Bluebell Wood (below) in Swynnerton, an area where HS2 Ltd were going to go ahead with removing ancient woodland despite that section of the line not having been approved. As that section of HS2 has now been cancelled, these precious habitats have been saved. Changing Green Party policy to support HS2 would not only mean turning our backs on all these environmental protectors who have now been singled-out by the largest anti-protest injunction in the UK, but it would mean we agree with a project which due to excessive speed, has been designed in a way which maximises environmental damage. Worse than that, the environmental damage we have seen on the ground has actually been worse than what HS2 Ltd and contractors had said there would be.



tCO2e from HS2	after 60 years	after 120 years
Phase 1	2,595,000 to 3,155,000	305,000 to 815,000
Phase 2a	1,433,000	1,433,000
Phase 2b	3,503,000	3,029,000

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"A [HS2] hub station at Manchester Airport will be vital, helping us expand further our network of international routes, which connect people and businesses to destinations all over the world, attracting inward investment to the northern and UK economy."

-Charlie Cornish, CEO of Manchester Airport.

In 2023, the IPA rated HS2 as **"RED"** meaning: *Successful delivery of the project appears to be unachievable. There are major issues with project definition, schedule, budget, quality and/or benefits delivery, which at this stage do not appear to be manageable or resolvable. The project may need re-scoping and/or its overall viability reassessed."*

HS2 has also received highly critical reports in the past from other independent scrutineers, like the Environmental Audit Committee and National Audit Office, which were completely dismissed by HS2 Ltd.

"This project has got out of hand, the excessive speed, the fact it can only go in more or less straight lines, the fact that it's bypassing city centres, All of that is leading to these problems attacking the ancient woodland, going through these very very sensitive landscapes that people are putting their lives on the line, that people are going out and living in trees for months on end to try and protect because these are irreplaceable habitats and they didn't need to be in the firing line of this project."

- Siân Berry MP



"I spent weeks putting together a report about HS2. I used to work as a corporate responsibility adviser, sometimes for industries much more dubious and unpopular than rail construction. Even I was shocked at not only all the transgressions, but at the outright contempt and highly unethical, at times criminal behaviour displayed repeatedly by HS2 and its henchmen, oops sorry... contractors. We cannot morally support it or we are lost."

- Deborah Smith , Chichester & Arun Green Party



These are 'before' and 'after' shots of habitats along the route of HS2 in an area where the Green Party has seen significant electoral success in recent years. When HS2 was proposed in 2010, Conservatives held all 17 seats on Kenilworth Town Council. They now have none. The Green Party have 10 and are also now the largest party on the District Council. Now we can see the reality of HS2 destruction, how would saying we're Ok with it and want more of it elsewhere reflect on the Green Party?



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