

Hybrid Bill Petition

House of Commons

Session 2017-19

Second Additional Provision (AP2) to the High Speed Rail (West Midlands to Crewe) Bill February 2019

Do not include any images or graphics in your petition. There will be an opportunity to present these later if you give evidence to the committee.

Your petition does not need to be signed.

Expand the size of the text boxes as you need.

1. Petitioner information

In the box below, give the name and address of each individual, business or organisation(s) submitting the petition.

Rachel Giles Ph.D.

Evidence and Planning Manager

On behalf of:

Cheshire Wildlife Trust,

Bickley Hall Farm,

Bickley,

Malpas SY14 8EF

In the box below, give a description of the petitioners. For example, “we are the owners/tenants of the addresses above”; “my company has offices at the address above”; “our organisation represents the interests of...”; “we are the parish council of...”.

Cheshire Wildlife Trust is the leading local environmental NGO operating in the area impacted by HS2 Phase 2a within Cheshire East.

The Trust represents the interests of 13,000 members, operating under a charitable objective to ‘..promote the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment....’(1962, last amended October 2016). It is within this charitable objective that we make this Petition in the interests of protecting and improving habitats, species and the landscape within Cheshire.

2. Objections to the Second Additional Provision (AP2) to the Bill

In the box below, write your objections to the Second Additional Provision (AP2) to the Bill and why your property or other interests are specially and directly affected. Please number each paragraph.

Only objections outlined in this petition can be presented when giving evidence to the committee. You will not be entitled to be heard on new matters.

Shortfalls of compensatory habitat

1. The AP2 (CA5) has no additional provision of compensatory habitat for land-take. Land-take includes a further 0.8 ha semi-natural broadleaved woodland and 1.7ha plantation broadleaved woodland as well as other notable habitats. Our view is that the existing mitigation was designed to compensate for the losses at the ES (as amended by AP1) stage, so these new losses are unmitigated.
2. The AP2 (Community Area Report CA5 paragraph 3.3.26) reports that 4.4 ha of grassland will be created to the south-east of Heath Farm. This is compensation for the losses of marshy grassland at Heath Farm (1.4 hectares) as well as the losses of 3.6 ha of newly identified lowland meadow to the west of Chorlton lane; however a further 5.7 ha of semi-improved neutral grassland is not accounted for (as identified in table 5 BID EC-019-000 SES2 and AP2 ES).
3. The losses set out above mean there is an actual shortfall in the provision of compensatory grassland habitat of 6 hectares. This will result in a substantial net loss of biodiversity in relation to grassland for area CA5 (the shortfall is even greater when habitat quality/risk/time metrics are factored in).
4. The shortfall in compensatory habitat is contrary to the methodology set out in the Scope and Methodology report (paragraph 11.6.1) which refers to the following guidance:
'replacement ratios greater than one to one may be appropriate for delivery of compensatory habitats or ecosystems'. 'Increased replacement ratios can also help take account of the time lag in delivering compensation and regaining the same maturity, complexity and diversity of habitats and the full complement of associated species'

Further unmitigated losses of Randilow and Bunker Hill Local Wildlife Site

5. 2.7 hectares of Randilow and Bunker Hill Local Wildlife Site (LWS) will be lost under AP2. This is in addition to the 58.3 hectares of the site lost under the main ES (as amended). The losses include arable land designated for the suite of breeding birds it supports. This assemblage, which includes BoCC red listed species such as yellow wagtail, is important at a county level and is the main feature of the LWS. Randilow and Bunker Hill LWS represents one of just 12 known breeding sites for yellow wagtail in the county and possibly the only population in SE Cheshire.

6. No mitigation has been proposed for the loss of conservation-managed arable land within the Local Wildlife Site and furthermore the SES2 still does not recognise that the impacts on the population of breeding birds of the LWS will be significant at a county level. This is unacceptable.

7. The technical note – Ecology and Biodiversity – Ecological Principles of Mitigation, sets out the circumstances whereby additional mitigation/compensation will be provided in the bill and states that (for birds) '*mitigation and/or compensation will be provided where in the absence of this provision, there is the potential that a significant adverse effect may arise*'. Clearly the extensive losses of habitat at this important farmland bird site are likely to result in a significant impact at the county level; therefore we ask that measures should be taken to reduce the impacts to a level that is not considered significant.

Impact on water voles

8. The water vole mitigation included in SES2 is inappropriate as it will not address the impacts unless water voles are trapped and re-located to mitigation habitat. The reason for this is that downstream habitat on Swill brook is of poor suitability for water voles (confirmed by Cheshire Wildlife Trust visit in 2018). This means that the species will have nowhere to disperse when approximately 300m of their habitat is removed or directly impacted during the construction process, and when Swill brook itself is permanently blocked by an inverted siphon.

9. The post-construction mitigation habitat will be physically isolated from extant water vole populations by poor habitat (downstream) and inhospitable land-use (upstream). This means it is highly unlikely that repopulation of the mitigation habitat on the upper reaches of Swill Brook will occur. This will probably result in a permanent loss of water voles from this locality.

10. This prediction is backed by a 2018 study by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust which concluded since 2008 there has been a rapid decline in Cheshire water vole population sizes as well as a contraction in range, with absence recorded at 62% of their previously occupied sites. There are now thought to be just four meta-populations remaining in the Cheshire region (Meredith *et al* 2013) and sections of Swill Brook are likely to be key for the long-term survival of the species in south Cheshire.

3. What do you want to be done in response?

In the box below, tell us what you think should be done in response to your objections. You do not have to complete this box if you do not want to.

The committee cannot reject the Bill outright or propose amendments which conflict with the principle of the Bill. But it can require changes to the Government's plans in response to petitioners' concerns, which can take the form of amendments to the Bill or commitments by HS2 Ltd.

You can include this information in your response to section two 'Objections to the Second Additional Provision (AP2) to the Bill' if you prefer. Please number each paragraph.

1. Additional compensatory habitat should be included in the scheme to compensate for losses of habitat confirmed or identified by the AP2. Some of this could be secured within the bill area by substituting landscape planting with either woodland or grassland mitigation habitat. As the main ES (amended by AP1) resulted in a large local net loss of habitat in terms of its quality (i.e. a net loss of biodiversity), it is essential that this is not exacerbated by further losses under AP2.
2. It is particularly important that arable land/rough grassland is secured for conservation purposes to compensate for the losses to the Local Wildlife Site and the impacts this will have on breeding farmland birds, particularly ground nesting species or those that forage in open habitats. We understand that this will need to be outside the hybrid bill area and should be secured long term through a management agreement with a local landowner/manager.
3. The county level significant impacts on farmland birds must be recorded in the revised Environmental Statement.
4. Additional mitigation habitat for water voles should be created on Swill Brook, downstream from the site of impact. This will provide habitat for water voles to disperse to when their habitat is destroyed or disturbed/impacted. It will also connect populations downstream with new mitigation habitat, bolstering the existing population and helping with their recovery in south Cheshire. Additional mitigation habitat will need to be located outside of the confines of the existing hybrid bill area.

If you have already petitioned against the High Speed Rail (West Midlands to Crewe) Bill, please give your petition number.

P2A-000136 & HS2-AP1-000032

Next steps

Once you have completed your petition template please save it and [continue on our website](#).

If clicking 'continue on our website' doesn't work, copy this link and paste it into your browser: <https://beta.parliament.uk/petition-a-hybrid-bill/3?step=writing-your-petition-online#complete-petition>