

## Media release

### National charities challenge Government to get High Speed Rail on the right lines

A powerful alliance of respected organisations has agreed a Charter<sup>[1]</sup> that will hold the Government to account on its approach to High Speed Rail<sup>[2]</sup>. The Right Lines Charter, published today (Thurs 08 Apr), sets out four core principles *‘for doing High Speed Rail well’*.

The Charter calls for a national transport strategy, better future-proofing of big transport proposals, effective public participation and a more strategic approach to minimising adverse impacts. Its supporters seek to engage positively with the Government, as they believe the approach to High Speed Rail currently falls well short of the Charter's principles.

Many groups commenting publicly on High Speed Rail (HS2) to date have represented either people living along the proposed route or businesses and cities that could profit from it. Today's Charter draws together for the first time many well known national charities, covering environmental, heritage, countryside, legal and wildlife issues, in addition to other organisations. It seeks to achieve the best long-term outcome from high speed rail for the country, the climate, communities and the countryside.

Leading representatives of each organisation<sup>[3]</sup> have made the following comments as to how the Government should react to the Charter's principles:

#### Campaign to Protect Rural England

**Shaun Spiers**, Chief Executive, said: *“It's understandable that those who would benefit or lose from the proposals want to be cheerleaders or gravediggers for High Speed Rail. The Government needs to be listening rather than just shouting encouragement at one side, in what so far has looked more like a tug of war than a fair consultation.”*

#### Campaign for Better Transport



#### The Wildlife Trusts

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Printed on environmentally-friendly  
paper

**Stephen Joseph**, Chief Executive, said: *“High speed rail needs to be part of a broader policy to reduce road and air traffic, with extra rail capacity to improve people’s travel choices and to get freight off the roads. Only if there is this broader policy can the full impacts of high speed rail be assessed properly.”*

#### **Civic Voice**

**Tony Burton**, Director, said: *“Major development projects like High Speed Rail can be intimidating for local communities and need to demonstrate a real sensitivity to the people and places they affect. People should have meaningful influence over key decisions – such as the design speed of the line – if we are to avoid unnecessary damage to intimate townscapes and landscapes and reap the benefits of investment in rail.”*

#### **Environmental Law Foundation**

**Debbie Tripley**, Chief Executive, said: *“There is always a tipping point when major projects like HS2 become controversial and that is when people see that there is a lack of fairness in the decision making process. The Aarhus Convention requires the public to be consulted when all options are open and effective participation can take place. The public should be given the opportunity to participate on all aspects of the HS2 project and to have a real say on all the issues, both environmental and strategic. ”*

#### **Friends of the Earth**

**Andy Atkins**, Executive Director, said: *“Carbon emissions from UK transport must be urgently cut – but the current High Speed Rail proposals will do little, if anything, to help. The majority of journeys are relatively short, so the Government’s top priority should be to cut emissions from these trips. This means action to encourage greener travel and measures to reduce the need to travel for work or essential services.”*

#### **Greenpeace UK**

**Doug Parr**, Policy Director, said: *“Tackling transport emissions means an increase in rail capacity. High speed rail can only help if it’s in a proper policy framework which ensures people move from car and plane onto the train.”*

#### **RSPB**

**Mark Avery**, Director of Conservation, said: *“A switch to rail is critical if our future transport system is going to be green and clean. But the environmental benefits won't materialise on their own. Government must demonstrate how High Speed 2 plans will*

*respect nature, minimise damage to important wildlife sites, and help us in the fight against climate change.”*

### **The Wildlife Trusts**

**Paul Wilkinson**, Head of Living Landscape, said: *“As it stands, HS2 is on track to deliver a damaged natural environment. We need efficient and sustainable transport systems but they must not be achieved at the expense of the environment. The proposed HS2 route will have a detrimental impact by dissecting and fragmenting the landscape and threatening important wildlife sites and undermining action to support nature’s recovery.”*

### **Woodland Trust**

**Nikki Williams**, Head of Campaigning, said: *“Although we support moves towards green transport, the proposed route would destroy or irrevocably damage ancient woodland, the UK’s richest wildlife habitat that is literally irreplaceable. Government plans to compensate by planting two million trees will not recompense this loss of our rarest habitats. Environmental impact should be valued equally with journey times and costs when assessing new transport options.”*

### **Chiltern Society**

**Mike Overall**, Vice-Chairman, said: *“The current HS2 proposals stem from a badly conceived and highly constrained remit, resulting in little regard being given to options that would avoid harming some of England’s finest landscapes. A wholly objective balancing between the wider economic benefits claimed for High Speed Rail and the impact of specific proposals on the environment can not be achieved in the absence of a comprehensive framework of national transportation strategies that address broader future sustainability issues.”*

### **Notes to Editors:**

[1] Copies of the High Speed Rail Charter can be downloaded [here](#)

[2] The Government launched its High Speed Rail consultation on 28 February and it runs to 29 July. Full details are available at <http://highspeedrail.dft.gov.uk/>

[3] The following organisations support the Charter: Campaign for Better Transport, Campaign to Protect Rural England, Chiltern Society, Civic Voice, Environmental Law Foundation, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace UK, RSPB, The Wildlife Trusts, Woodland Trust. These organisations are

individually bound by their specific charitable and constitutional objectives and will want separately to emphasise their own particular priorities through the consultation process. There is, however, sufficient common ground between them to create a powerful joint approach on a range of fundamental issues.