

## **England's Tree of the Year 2015\*:**

**Press release by Cubbington Action Group Against HS2, 8th November 2015.**

**The Cubbington Wild Pear becomes a symbol for HS2 environmental destruction.**

A Warwickshire tree has been confirmed as the winner of the 2015 "England's Tree of the Year" competition.

The result of a public on-line ballot organised by the Woodland Trust was announced on the BBC 1 TV *Countryfile* programme on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November; the veteran wild pear tree growing in an old hedgerow near South Cubbington Wood beat nine other noteworthy trees to claim the title.

If the planned High Speed Two (HS2) railway is built, however, the Cubbington tree will be destroyed to make way for a wide and deep cutting.

Peter Delow, Chairman of the Cubbington Action Group against HS2, which nominated the pear tree, said:

"We asked people to vote for the Cubbington tree as a protest against its planned destruction, and clearly they did so in some numbers – I understand that our tree polled twice as many votes as our nearest rival. It is most heartening that so many people care about the protection of our natural environment and agree with me that the loss of this tree is just not acceptable, particularly as it could be avoided by changing the design of HS2. A feasible proposal has been made to tunnel under the tree, which would also protect the ancient woodland of South Cubbington Wood – an irreplaceable habitat that will also be destroyed, in part, by HS2.

"More than thirty ancient woodlands are directly at risk from the first phase of HS2 (London-West Midlands), yet it is stated government policy to avoid losses of ancient woodland and veteran trees. Our tree serves as a symbol for all that environmental destruction. I hope that the crowning of the Cubbington tree will allow us to remind the Government of the obligation that it owes to our natural environment, and am very grateful to those who have given us this opportunity by voting for the Cubbington tree. "

The award of the title carries with it automatic entry for the "European Tree of the Year 2016" competition.

END

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\* The winners of all four Tree of the Year competitions were announced on Countryfile on BBC1 from 6.15pm on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

