

## **HS2 Ancient Woodland Programme**

Works during the Oakervee Review

Decision - October 2019

### **Background**

In August 2019, the Government launched an independent review, chaired by Douglas Oakervee, into whether and how to proceed with the High Speed 2 project.

In September 2019, the Secretary of State for Transport instructed HS2 Ltd “to consider what works affecting ancient woodland clearances can be delayed for the duration of the review. This ensures we avoid irreversible decisions without major impacts on cost and schedule”.

As highlighted by the Secretary of State, we must strike a sensible balance between keeping the programme on track and recognising that some works are irreversible. We therefore have been working with the Department for Transport and our contractors to assess our planned ancient woodland works. The decision making process has also involved discussions with relevant, specialist stakeholders, including Natural England.

### **Decision – ancient woodland programme**

Eleven ancient woodlands were due to be partially affected by preparations to build HS2 this Autumn. We have assessed these planned works, considering what the financial and programme related impacts would be if they were delayed, while consulting key stakeholders, including Natural England. The best practice approach for this type of work is to carry out tree felling in the Autumn, prior to bats roosting in the Winter and birds nesting in the Spring.

Taking the above factors into account, the decision has been taken to defer work at five ancient woodland sites until Autumn / Winter 2020, as this is possible without a major impact on schedule or cost.

The remaining six sites will be deferred to early 2020, with a view to minimising the impact on HS2's programme. To protect bats ahead of the work in early 2020, HS2 will need to implement some measures to avoid bats taking roost within the trees. This work will take place this autumn and will include blocking up holes in trees to stop bats from roosting, as well as potentially removing some selected branches, for the same purpose. We will not remove branches from any ‘ancient’ or ‘veteran’ trees within a woodland as this would be considered irreversible.

This work is required to meet legal requirements and will be undertaken with the necessary bat licences from Natural England. It will not alter the integrity of the woodland. Full details of the revised ancient woodland programme are below.

- **Five sites to be deferred to Autumn / Winter 2020**
  - Roughknowles Wood
  - North Wood
  - Un-named copse off Drayton Lane
  - Rookery Wood
  - Burnt Firs
  
- **Six sites to be deferred to early 2020**
  - Fulfen Wood
  - Broadwells Wood
  - Birches Wood
  - Crackley Wood
  - Unnamed Woodland south of Ashow Road
  - South Cubbington Wood

Other essential preparatory works will continue during this period including general vegetation clearance, fencing, preparation of site compounds, and ground investigations. We are continuing to assess and monitor this programme of work and any related impacts on ancient woodlands. Should that ongoing assessment result in any changes to our position, we will inform you as soon as possible. We are delivering an extensive community engagement programme to ensure that local people are kept up-to-date with any works in their area.