

Contact our HS2 Helpdesk team on **08081 434 434**

HS2 Phase 2a

Early Environmental Works Update

West Midlands to Crewe | January 2023

High Speed Two (HS2) is the new high speed railway for Britain. Phase 2a is the section of the new railway between the West Midlands and Crewe. As part of our Early Environmental Works, we will establish critical environmental and species relocation sites creating new habitats for local wildlife before any main work starts.

This newsletter provides you with an update on the Early Environmental Works that Balfour Beatty is carrying out on behalf of HS2 Ltd.

What are Early Environmental Works?

Balfour Beatty is creating new habitats across 81 environmental sites. These new habitats include ponds, grasslands, hedgerows, woodland, hibernacula - which are bunds created for reptiles to hibernate in, and bird and bat boxes.

We started this work in January 2022 and it will continue until December 2023. We will then maintain and monitor the newly created habitats until December 2025, when we will pass them on to future contractors to manage.

The new habitats we are creating, account for 20% of the green infrastructure being

created across Phase 2a of HS2. They are contributing to HS2's objective to create a resilient green corridor for both nature and people along the line of the new railway. The Green Corridor is the largest single environmental project in the UK and will conserve and enhance habitats, seek to achieve biodiversity gains through partnership working, and help integrate HS2 into the landscape.

These habitats are being established now to allow them to mature so they are ready for local wildlife to move into when we start our construction work from 2024 onwards.

Early Environmental Works

Building bridges!



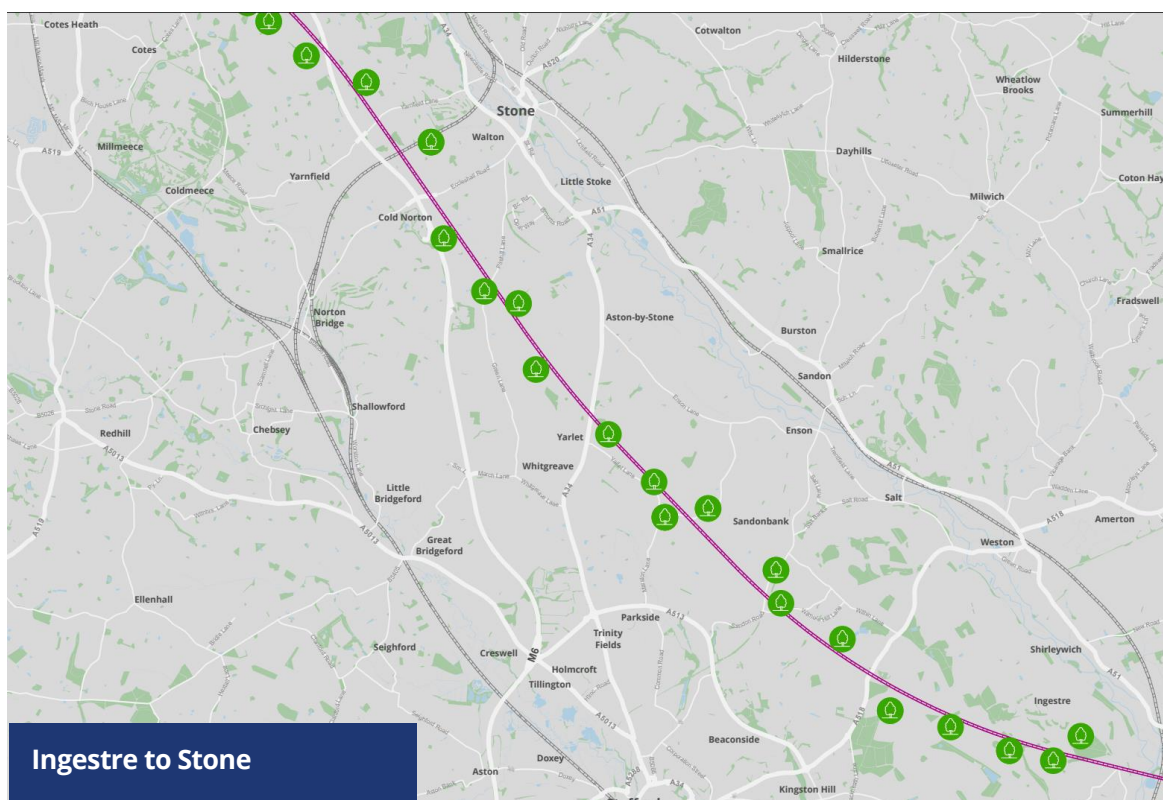
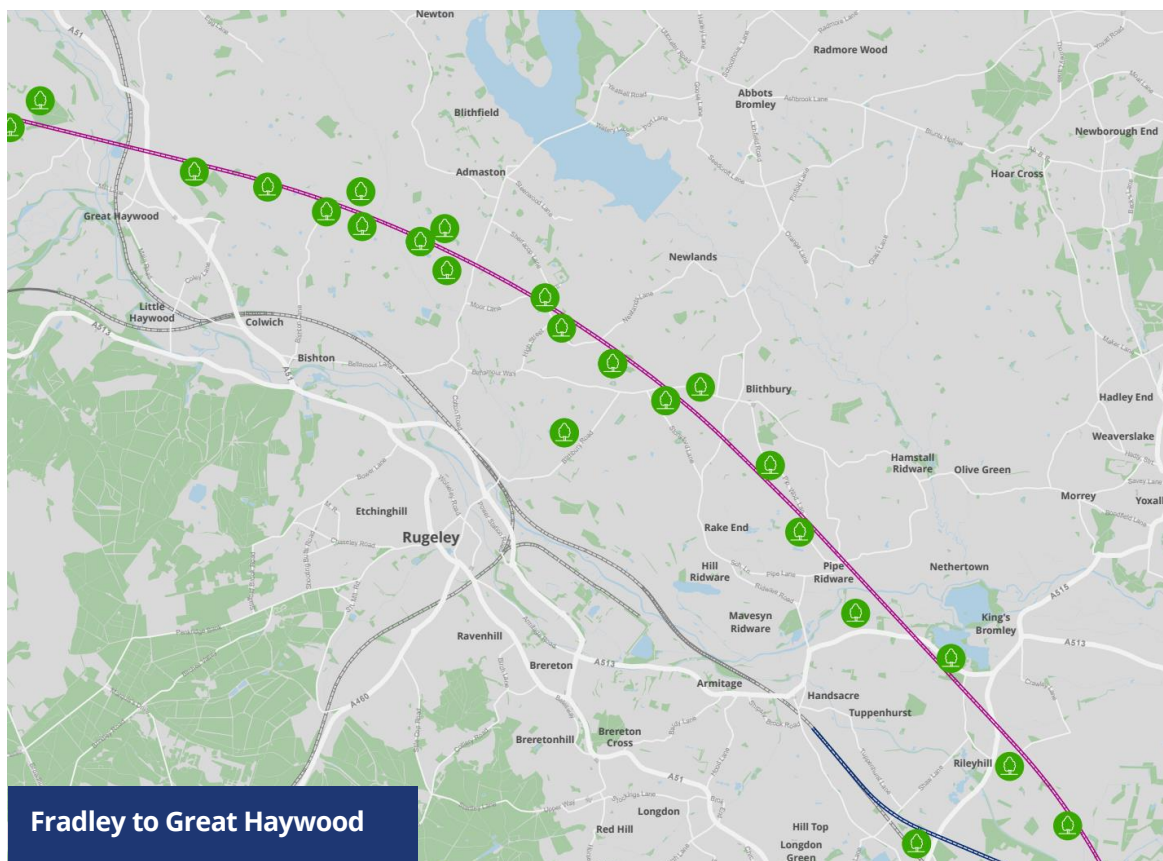
For the environment

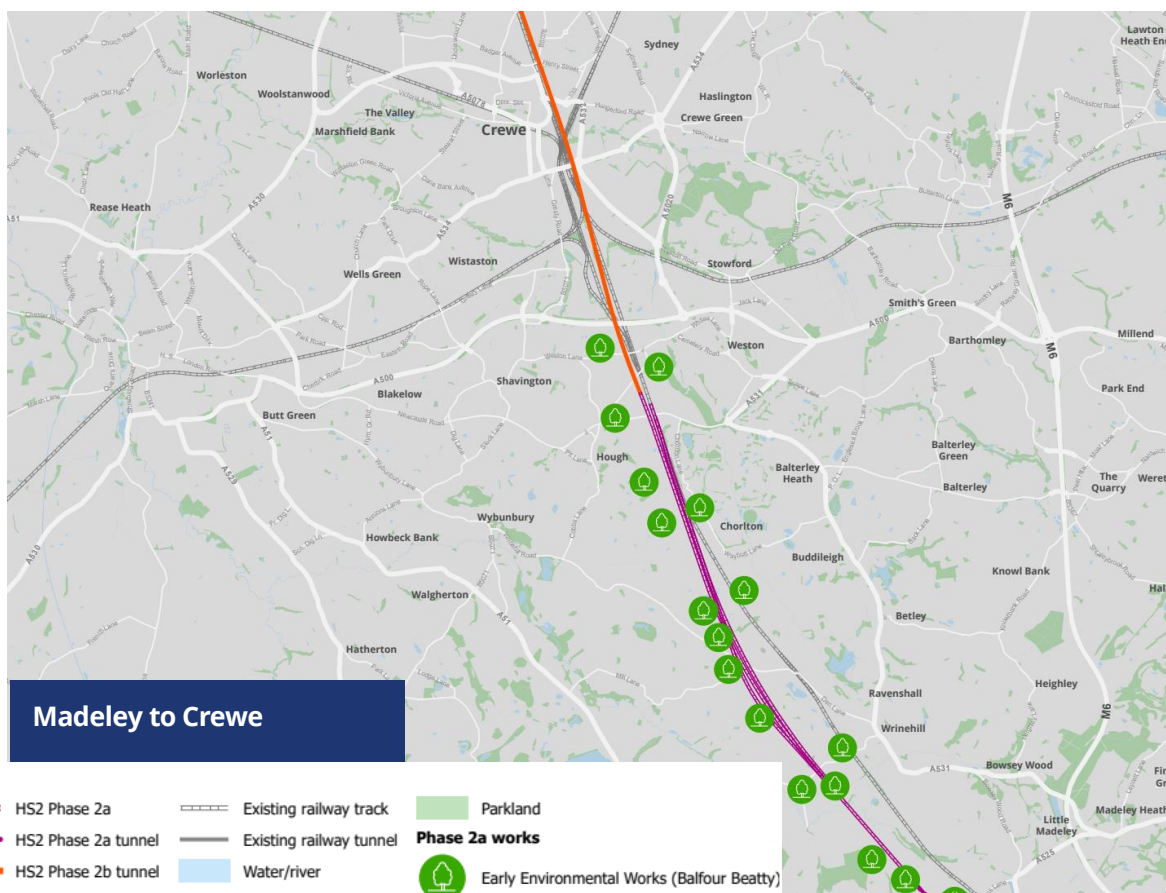
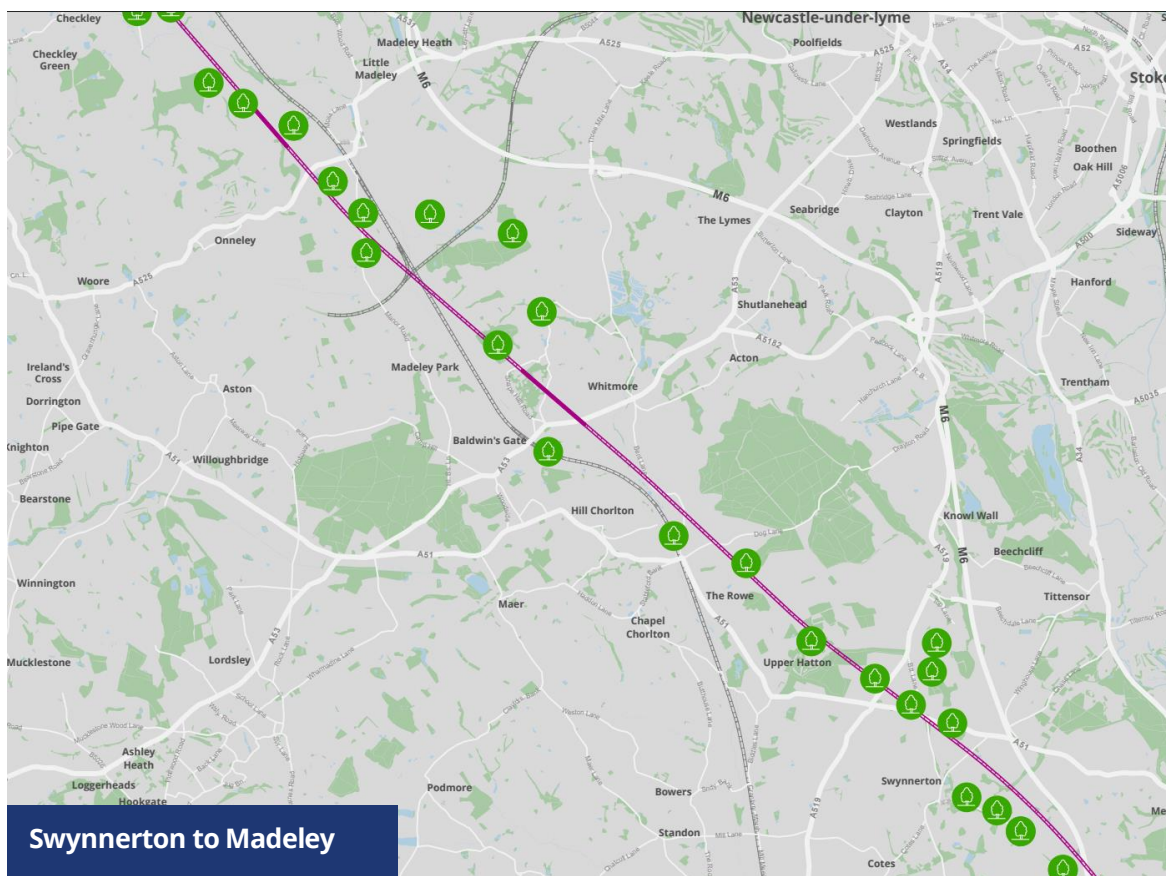
We will be creating:

- Enough grassland to cover 140 football pitches to encourage wildflowers and wildlife to flourish.
- More than 18 miles of new hedgerows.
- Thousands of trees covering the equivalent of 86 football pitches.
- 160 ecological mitigation ponds.



Locations of our early environmental sites





What work is taking place?

Design surveys

Throughout 2021, we have undertaken over 800 ecological surveys to determine the existing landscape to inform the designs of the new environmental sites.

In addition, we have asked key stakeholders such as Natural England, the Forestry Commission, The Woodland Trust and the Cheshire and Staffordshire Wildlife Trusts to comment on the designs. We also value any local insight that may help us best support and preserve the local wildlife.

For example, in Cheshire East the plight of a local colony of very rare butterflies was brought to our attention. We altered the designs of our sites across the area to incorporate disease resistant Wych Elms, which provide a supportive environment for these butterflies.

Archaeological trial trenching

Archaeological trial trenches help us understand if there are any archaeological features or natural geological deposits, that we need to be aware of before we start any other work.

We have completed over 300 of the trial trenches and while we didn't identify any significant archaeological finds we did discover some post medieval pottery, a horseshoe, and a post hole.

One of our sites is close to a medieval village but nothing was found in the trial trenches. However, finding nothing sometimes means a great deal to the archaeologists, as it narrows down the location of the village.

We have around 200 trial trenches still to complete, which we will carry out during spring and summer next year. There is still plenty of opportunity for us to find some interesting historic finds.



Ecological mitigation ponds

We are creating ecological mitigation ponds, which we will use to relocate any protected species, before we need to remove any other habitats as required.

We have constructed approximately 150 of the 160 ecological mitigation ponds. The majority will be used for the relocation of great crested newts. Before we start excavating the mitigation ponds, we dig infiltration test pits and monitor them for fourteen days. This is to check how porous the soil is to see if it can retain water or if we need to line it before we fill the pond with water.

We have been filling these ponds over the last few months, either naturally or by water tanker ready for the planting of the aquatic plants. We have put aquatic plant life in over 70 of these filled ponds with the remaining to be completed in 2023.

Next to the ponds, we are constructing hibernacula - piles of logs and stones overlaid with topsoil, which provide nooks and crannies for the reptiles. We are also creating basking banks. These are mounds of stone on the south facing sides to allow reptiles to bask on during sunny weather.



Grasslands, hedgerows and woodlands



The creation of grasslands, hedgerows and woodland has started to take place and will continue into 2023.

In autumn, we ploughed and seeded 50% of our worksites with a wildflower seed mix. We'll complete the rest in 2023.

We have also been planting some trees and will complete our tree planting programme for this set of work next year.

Birds and bats

On each site, we shall install bird and bat boxes to encourage bird nesting and bat roosting. In addition, we will construct approximately five bat barns along the route. These brick-built structures will provide sizable roosting sites for local bat populations.



Community engagement

We continue to share notifications of our work with local residents at least two weeks in advance of work taking place.

These notifications outline the work that we are carrying out and its purpose, any potential disruption that local communities may experience, and the steps we are taking to minimise any effects of the work.

In 2023, we will organise some information events along the route to share updates on progress about the early environmental works. These will provide you with the opportunity to find out more and ask questions. We will provide further details of these closer to the time.



Community investment

We recognise the potential disruption our work can have on local communities. We continue to look at ways that we can bring benefit or support to those living where we are working through our community investment projects.

We have created an outdoor environmental project at two schools, advising on and volunteering to help plant trees and hedges.

We have been delivering STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) activities and careers events in local schools to encourage skills and career development in construction.

We ran several school competitions, one of which was for school pupils to design our very own Project Safety Helmet Logo Sticker. The winning design was chosen and has since been attached to our Safety Helmets and can be seen at the start of this newsletter.



For further information on how we can help in the local community through community investment projects please contact

zoe.smith@balfourbeatty.com

Keeping you informed

We are committed to keeping you informed about work on HS2. This includes ensuring you know what to expect and when to expect it, as well as how we can help you.

The Residents' Commissioner

The independent Residents' Commissioner oversees and monitors our commitments to you.

The commissioner's reports and our responses can be found at www.gov.uk/government/collections/hs2-ltd-residents-commissioner

The Residents' Commissioner makes sure we fulfil the commitments in the HS2 Community Engagement Strategy (<https://bit.ly/3oOA25j>).

The Residents' Commissioner can be contacted on: residentscommissioner@hs2.org.uk

Construction Commissioner

The independent Construction Commissioner regularly meets our Chief Executive Officer to raise any concerns or emerging trends across HS2.

The Construction Commissioner's role has been developed to monitor the way we manage and respond to construction complaints.

The commissioner mediates on disputes about construction, involving individuals and organisations, that we can't resolve. The commissioner advises members of the public about how to make a complaint about construction.

The Construction Commissioner can be contacted on: complaints@hs2-cc.org.uk

Property and compensation

You can find out about HS2 and properties along the route by visiting:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/hs2-property

Find out if you can claim compensation at:

www.gov.uk/claim-compensation-if-affected-by-hs2

Holding us to account

If you are unhappy for any reason you can make a complaint by contacting the HS2 Helpdesk. For more details on our complaints process, please visit: www.hs2.org.uk/in-your-area/contact-us/how-to-complain/

Contact us

Contact our HS2 Helpdesk team all day, every day of the year on:

 Freephone **08081 434 434**

 Minicom **08081 456 472**

 Email **HS2enquiries@hs2.org.uk**

Write to:

FREEPOST

HS2 Community Engagement

Website **www.hs2.org.uk**

To keep up to date with what is happening in your local area, visit: **www.HS2inyourarea.co.uk**

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Reference number: HS2-MW-BBV-Ph1-Ar-Ce-C1-CR-16-22/12/2022

High Speed Two (HS2) Limited, registered in England and Wales.

Registered office: Two Snowhill, Snow Hill Queensway, Birmingham B4 6GA.

Company registration number: 06791686. VAT registration number: 888 8512 56

