

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

# HS2 Update

West Midlands to Crewe | May 2024

High Speed Two (HS2) is the new high speed railway for Britain. The railway line is being built from London to the West Midlands, with HS2 trains continuing to Manchester, the North West and Scotland on the conventional railway.



## Project update

On 4 October 2023, the Prime Minister announced that the Government proposes to deliver a broad range of transport initiatives in place of investing in Phase Two of HS2. This means that HS2 Ltd is not undertaking any 'new' work to progress plans for Phase 2a of the project and is working with Government to agree the next steps on this phase of the project.

The Phase One leg of HS2 between the West Midlands and London will continue to be delivered, with a significant proportion of construction underway and a scheduled opening between 2029 and 2033.

## Lifting of safeguarding

In line with the commitments set out in the Network North Paper on 4 October 2023, safeguarding (the protection of the land needed to build and operate the railway) across most of Phase 2a was lifted on 18 January 2024.

Safeguarding remains in place within Phase 2a in a small area near Handsacre in Staffordshire where the new railway will join the West Coast Main Line. All impacted land and property owners have been informed directly about how changes to safeguarding will affect them. You can find further information about safeguarding on our website: [www.hs2.org.uk/in-your-area/assistance-for-property-owners/safeguarding/](http://www.hs2.org.uk/in-your-area/assistance-for-property-owners/safeguarding/)

This newsletter provides you with an update on our activity since the Government made their announcement. We will explain what we need to do to close down our Phase 2a sites and how we will continue to engage with you.

It also provides an update on the Community and Environment Funds we have awarded along Phase 2a and the other community projects our contractors have supported.



## Access to HS2 property schemes

As the Government has announced that Phase 2a will not go ahead, we are not accepting any new applications for most of our property assistance schemes in those areas where safeguarding directions have been removed. No new applications will be accepted for Rural Support Zone, Homeowner Payment, Extended Homeowner Protection Zones or Express Purchase schemes.

### Statutory Blight

We still have a statutory obligation to consider a request to purchase land in some circumstances. Where an owner wishes to ask the Secretary of State for Transport to do this, and they are eligible, they can submit a 'Blight Notice'. The Secretary of State for Transport does however have the right to oppose any Blight Notices where the land is no longer required by HS2 Ltd.



### Need to Sell

The Need to Sell Scheme remains available to owner-occupiers who can show they have a 'compelling' reason to sell their property, but have been unable to do so, other than at a greatly reduced price, as a direct result of HS2. It will remain open until the blighting effect of HS2 has been removed.

More details can be found on the HS2 website:

**[www.hs2.org.uk/documents/collections/need-to-sell/](http://www.hs2.org.uk/documents/collections/need-to-sell/)**

We will continue to assess applications that are already underway. If you have a live application under an HS2 property scheme, please speak to your case officer.

All property schemes remain open for applications in areas where safeguarding remains in place.

### Land and property disposal

The Government has announced that it is committed to a programme for selling land that was acquired for Phase Two that is no longer needed.

This process does take time and we need to ensure we make good areas where we have started construction activities, as well as ensuring the programme provides value for money for taxpayers and does not disrupt local property markets.

We will continue to work with Government to agree the next steps and will engage with the communities who are affected throughout this process.

## Phase 2a close down

There are a number of factors we need to consider when it comes to closing down Phase 2a in a safe, respectful, orderly, and efficient manner.

### Ground investigation sites – boreholes

To inform the railway design, HS2 Ltd undertook over 1,000 investigatory boreholes along the Phase 2a route. The 2a project team is now developing a programme to restore the land at these locations so it is safe for the landowner to use. The work on site is expected to start towards the end of the year, with completion in summer 2026.



### Environmental mitigation sites

As part of our early works programme, preparing the route for main civils construction, we started to create environmental mitigation sites along the Phase 2a route. Of the proposed 70 sites along the route, at the time of the cancellation of Phase Two, we had completed 46 of these sites. At the remaining 24 locations, the sites had either not been completed or were yet to be started.

Whilst we intend ensuring all the none completed sites are either reinstated to their former state, or work is carried out to ensure they are in a good environmental condition, we are still working with Government to agree the most appropriate approach with the 46 completed mitigation sites.

To enable us to agree the future of these environmental mitigation sites, we need to gain a greater understanding of the health of ponds and their wildlife. We have therefore been undertaking visual surveys of the ponds we have created. These ‘non-intrusive’ surveys are carried out on foot and consist of taking photographs and recording any relevant information.



# Community and Environment Fund

In April 2021, a fund of £5 million was made available for local communities affected by the construction of HS2 via the Community and Environment Fund (CEF). This funding was designed to give communities the opportunity to share in the benefits of HS2, through the funding of local projects that aimed to improve the local area. This could be from improving or replacing community, sports, or recreational facilities to nature conservation enhancement projects. Following the Government's announcement to cancel Phase Two, the funds were withdrawn, and no new applications have been accepted.

We are pleased to report that a total of eleven CEF projects have been delivered on Phase 2a totalling over £332,000. The projects supported range from the creation of a bespoke community and sports hub at Madeley White Star Football Centenary Ltd to the installation of a disabled toilet facility at Stafford North End Community Association (SNECA) making the centre more widely accessible for the community.

## Projects funded

### Wybunbury Anglers Association

Wybunbury Anglers Association is a community group located in Cheshire. Following significant flooding in 2020 the bankside areas of the three fishing pools, platforms and walkways became unsafe.

The association secured a £25,000 CEF award, enabling them to work with a local contractor to build an overflow soakaway. The damaged banking and platforms were then restored using spent railway ballast and sleepers. The project also included the provision of disability access enabling junior coaching to be offered and for local schools and community groups to use.





## Stone SP Cricket Club

Stone SP Cricket Club is a community amateur sports club located in Stone, Staffordshire. The club serves the communities of Stone and Swynnerton, having long established venues in both areas.

With a £73,920 CEF award, the project developed an all-weather surface at the Stone Clubhouse. A hard-standing free community car park was completed with disabled, parent and child and bicycle parking provision. Further enhancements included the provision of paths, ramps and rails, all the measures enabling disabled and wider community access to the pavilion.



## Stone Rural Parish Council

Situated in Aston-By-Stone, Staffordshire, Stone Rural PC were awarded £9,800 to create a community garden and green space in the heart of the village known as 'The Green'.

A memorial tree was planted and a plaque installed to commemorate the coronation of King George VI in 1937. The tree was previously a feature and had been protected with posts and chains, but these had been broken and removed. The CEF project has transformed this village area into an attractive community space, with renewed protection for the memorial tree. Its central, accessible location means it can be enjoyed by those living in and visiting the area.



## Phase 2a funded CEF projects

The map below identifies all eleven projects that have been awarded on the Phase 2a route.



All projects including those in Phase One, off-route, and Phase 2a that have been supported through the HS2 Community and Environment Fund and the Business and Local Economy Fund can be viewed on the interactive map:

<https://hs2funds.org.uk/home/projects-funded-by-hs2-funds/>

## Phase 2a funded CEF projects

No.	Beneficiary	Amount	Description
1	Shavington-cum-Gresty PC	£9,780	Installation of planters and flowerbeds, beekeeper and conservation workshops
2	Wybunbury Anglers Association	£25,000	Restoration of banking and platforms
3	Betley and District Village Hall	£14,000	Installation of automatic water irrigation system for bowling green
4	Madeley White Star Football Centenary Ltd	£75,000	Installation of bespoke community and sports hub
5	The Crown Wharf Theatre	£74,999	Enhancements to the auditorium
6	Stone SP Cricket Club	£73,920	New all-weather surface and enhanced community car park
7	Stone Rural Parish Council	£9,800	Community garden and green space
8	Stafford North End Community Association	£24,789	Installation of accessible toilet facilities
9	Lee Hall Bowls Club	£4,795	Purchase of specialist lawn mower equipment
10	Manor Park Sailing Club	£10,000	Installation of new roof
11	Hagley Bowls Club	£10,000	Refurbishment of clubhouse



The Crown Wharf Theatre, Stone



## Contractor Community Projects

Our contractors have a responsibility to provide a service that benefits and improves the local areas they work in, going beyond their immediate construction role. These services can be giving back to communities by volunteering, fundraising, or providing materials, labour, or investment to support a community project.

Over the last three years, our early works contractors, Balfour Beatty have worked closely with several high schools along the Phase 2a route. These include Chase Terrace Academy in Burntwood, Friary High School Lichfield, Weston Road, and Blessed William Howard Schools in Stafford. They provided careers and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) activities, hosting four site visits to their compound at Swynnerton.

Summer placements were provided for three Keele University students, along with work experience for 20 high school students, one of which Balfour Beatty offered an apprenticeship.

The Balfour Beatty team also supported a series of community activities ranging from charity fundraising initiatives to renovating outdoor spaces, including environmental projects at Elworth Hall and Wychwood Park in Cheshire East. The team has sponsored several community events, such as donating prizes to The Wybunbury Fig Pie Wakes and Hill Ridware Village Fete. They also donated five oak trees to Yarnfield Parish Council and a defibrillator to Colton Parish Council, near Rugeley.



Manor Park Sailing Club, Kings Bromley



## Contractors in the area

### Maintenance and security

Across the Phase 2a route, you will continue to see our contractors carrying out work. This includes work on existing sites, for the ongoing maintenance of a site, or for health, safety, and security reasons.

For the security of our worksites and managed property portfolio, HS2 Ltd uses a number of different security contractors to provide a range of measures to keep both residential and commercial property safe and secure. This includes a 24-hour response service, fortnightly inspections, and the provision, where required, of advanced security installations.

We put these measures in place to help prevent unauthorised occupation and help residents to feel safe.

### Cash's Pit

In 2022, we successfully removed trespassers from tunnels and camps in woodland at Cash's Pit, near Swynnerton. Cash's Pit woodland will require careful restoration to ensure it is in a safe condition, suitable to be handed back to the landowner.

The design for this work is complex, but we expect the work to start in May 2025, with completion around the end of the year.

### Utility Sites

We are in the process of revisiting sites where gas pipelines have been diverted for building the railway. This is to allow our utility contractors future access to the pipeline for testing, maintenance, and monitoring purposes. More recently, you may therefore have seen the contractors at these sites digging trenches, laying cables, and relocating test posts. The work they will be undertaking will be low level and none of the activity will affect gas supplies.

Further activity at these sites includes the removal of compounds, haul road, fencing and reinstatement of features. We expect this work to be completed in early 2026.



## Undertakings and Assurances

Since Phase 2a Royal Assent in February 2021 we have successfully delivered many of the U&As, which include provision of funds to support local projects. These projects had been funded to mitigate the impacts of construction of the railway and leave a positive legacy for the communities affected.

Some examples of the benefits the U&A funding is providing to communities along the Phase 2a route are outlined below.

### **Ingestre and Tixall Canal Towpath**

A commitment was given to Ingestre with Tixall Parish Council to support the delivery of the Staffordshire and Worcester Canal Towpath Improvement Scheme. The scheme was led by the Canal and River Trust (known as the Connecting Towpaths project).

HS2 Ltd contributed £106,000 for towpath improvement works between Haywood Junction and Milford Bridge in Staffordshire. These U&A funded works were completed in autumn 2023, helping to enhance canal side habitats, resurface worn paths and upgrade signage. The project aim is to raise awareness of the canal and increase recreational use of it in the future.

### **Upper Moreton Rural Activities**

Upper Moreton Rural Activities is a community interest company (CIC) based in Wolseley Bridge, Staffordshire. It provides care farming facilities and therapy through agricultural activity for vulnerable individuals with learning difficulties, disabilities and special needs. An essential element of the service they provide is the peaceful rural setting where their activity and classrooms are situated. This provides a tranquil and reassuring environment for their clients to build trust and confidence, and ultimately flourish. This setting was to be disrupted by HS2 during both its construction and operation, meaning that the quality of their clients' care could have been adversely affected.

So that the CIC could continue to operate effectively for their vulnerable users, HS2 Ltd is funding the relocation of the classrooms and associated infrastructure on their existing site away from where the HS2 disruption would be. The project is due to be completed in summer 2024, providing a safe and stable environment for its clients for years to come.



## Trent Sow Group

The Trent-Sow Group is made up of various partners including the Canal and River Trust, Cannock Chase AONB Partnership, Historic England, HS2 Ltd, Inland Waterways Association, National Trust, Natural England, Sandwell Borough Council, and Staffordshire County Council. The group covers the area where the HS2 railway would have crossed the Trent Valley, north of Great Haywood. Their role is to collaborate with HS2 Ltd to ensure the railway design is compatible with the natural environment for the benefit of the local communities and visitors.

HS2 Ltd recently provided the Group with the final instalment of its £1.5m award to deliver six environmental enhancement projects. The projects cover just over 3,500 hectares in the Trent Sow Parklands and Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This includes the washlands of the Trent and Sow rivers, the historic designed landscapes of Shugborough, Ingestre and Tixall, along with canals, listed buildings and environmental designations. The projects will restore historic landscapes and create new habitats benefiting a range of species, including birds, bats, aquatic flora and fauna, and pollinators.

The Trent Sow Group's works are set to complete in 2025.

Details of each project can be found at: <https://mediacentre.hs2.org.uk/news/hs2-funds-major-new-environmental-project-in-staffordshire>

## Future engagement with communities

The community engagement team will remain your point of contact. We will keep you informed in various ways, such as through local authority and parish council briefings, newsletters, email updates and webinars.



HS2 Ltd Community Engagement Manager speaks with a member of the public at Crewe Heritage Centre

We will continue to let those who may be affected by our work know through Advanced Works Notifications and through updates to our dedicated local community webpages at [www.hs2.org.uk/in-your-area](http://www.hs2.org.uk/in-your-area).



# 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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hs2-property)

Find out if you can claim compensation at:

[www.gov.uk/claim-compensation-if-affected-by-hs2](http://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/](http://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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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