

# The Woodland Trust

**Evidence on Nature Conservation and Ecology pertaining to Ancient Woodland and Ancient Trees affected by HS2 Phase 1**

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**WOODLAND TRUST**  
HOL/01508/0002

# The Woodland Trust

- Richard Barnes, ecologist with over 25 years' experience
- Woodland Trust is the UK's woodland conservation charity
- Significant estate
- 500,000 members and supporters
- National authority on ancient woods and trees



South Cubbington Wood, Frances Willmot

# Ancient Woodland

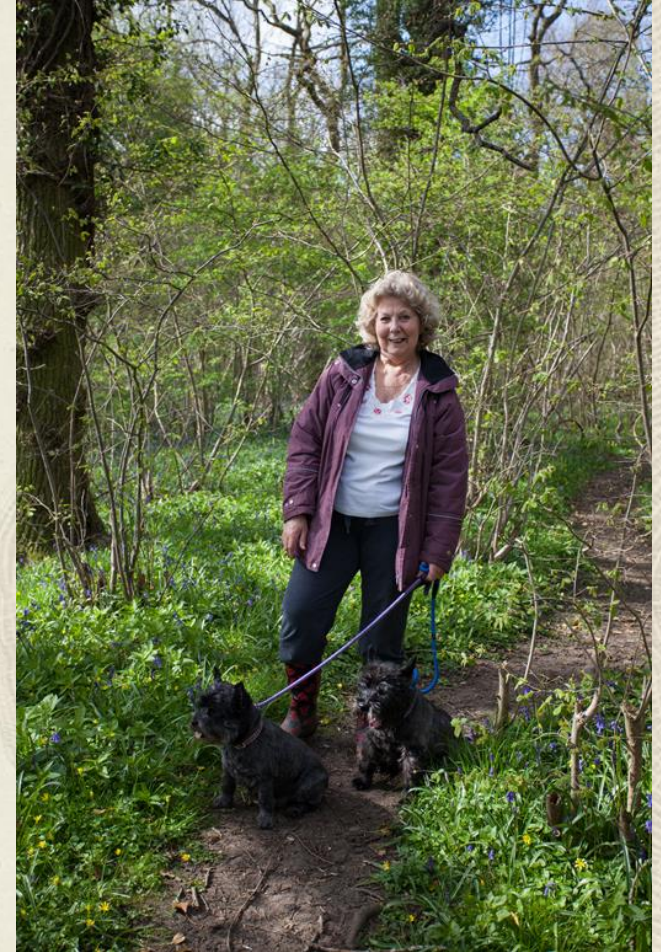
- Existed since at least 1600 AD
- Most date back as far as 10,000 years
- The country's richest terrestrial habitat with 256 species of conservation concern
- Covers less than 3% of England
- Irreplaceable habitat, so impossible to recreate with newly planted trees
- Huge contribution to historic and natural landscape of our nation



Sheephouse Wood, Paul Glendell

# Objectives for HS2

- HS2 said it is committed to being an exemplar project
- A major infrastructure project of large scale
- Promoted by government
- HS2 adopted a no net loss to biodiversity approach
- HS2 should have demonstrated best practice
- Ancient Woodland is irreplaceable, thus best practice is to assess options and ensure no net loss or impact through avoidance of harm



Long Itchington Wood, Dan Lee

# Impact of HS2

- Loss of over 30ha of ancient woodland
- Directly affects 34 ancient woodlands
- Woods severed, creating smaller disconnected woods
- Indirectly affects a further 29 ancient woodlands
- Noise, dust, construction traffic, artificial lighting causing disturbance and collateral damage
- Proposed loss of ancient woodland for temporary works



# HS2 outcomes

- These impacts have come about because the scheme has failed to identify ancient woodland
- 14 “additional” ancient woodlands on the route
- Thus HS2 did not avoid ancient woodland when assessing routes
- Many ancient woodlands were un-surveyed
- This is far from best practice
- A loss of irreplaceable habitat means, by definition, a net loss to biodiversity
- Much of this could have been avoided through early collaboration with the Ecology Technical Group



Weedon Hill Wood , Paul Glendell

# Buffers

- Planted buffers must be required to protect ancient woodland
- The Woodland Trust seeks the commitment that the Code of Construction Practice must contain a presumption that planted buffers should be provided for all ancient woodlands along the route



Broadwells Wood, Dan Lee

# Loss cannot be mitigated, only compensated

- Since ancient woodland is irreplaceable, any loss or impact on this habitat means a net loss to biodiversity, as the habitat cannot be recreated
- Natural England says “Compensation measures are always a last resort because ancient woodland and veteran trees are irreplaceable. These measures can only partially compensate for damage.”
- Cannot *offset* loss, compensation needs to be at a “large scale”
- Translocation does not reproduce a 400 year old habitat



North Wood, Sally King



# HS2 – No net loss calculation

- The current metric used by HS2 Ltd assumes that loss of irreplaceable ancient woodland can be offset, which does not reflect Government policy
- Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) are given a lower evaluation, which contradicts national planning guidance
- The figure for loss of ancient woodland is wrong
- This represents a fundamentally flawed approach
- The impacts on irreplaceable habitats should be considered separately, and the scale of compensation proposed should use a bespoke metric that reflects the likelihood of success.



South Cubbington Pear Tree, Tree of the Year, Frances Wilmot

# HS2 – Additional woodland planting

- Basis of deriving HS2 planting proposals is unclear
- Planting appears to be constrained by Bill Limits
- No additional powers were sought for more planting once the additional ancient woodland loss was identified
- Since planting is intended to compensate for loss of something irreplaceable, it should be at a high ratio, namely 30:1
- Commitment should be given to pursue options outside the Bill Limits that will provide better connectivity and landscape resilience



Newly planted woodland, Heartwood Forest, Hertfordshire, Woodland Trust

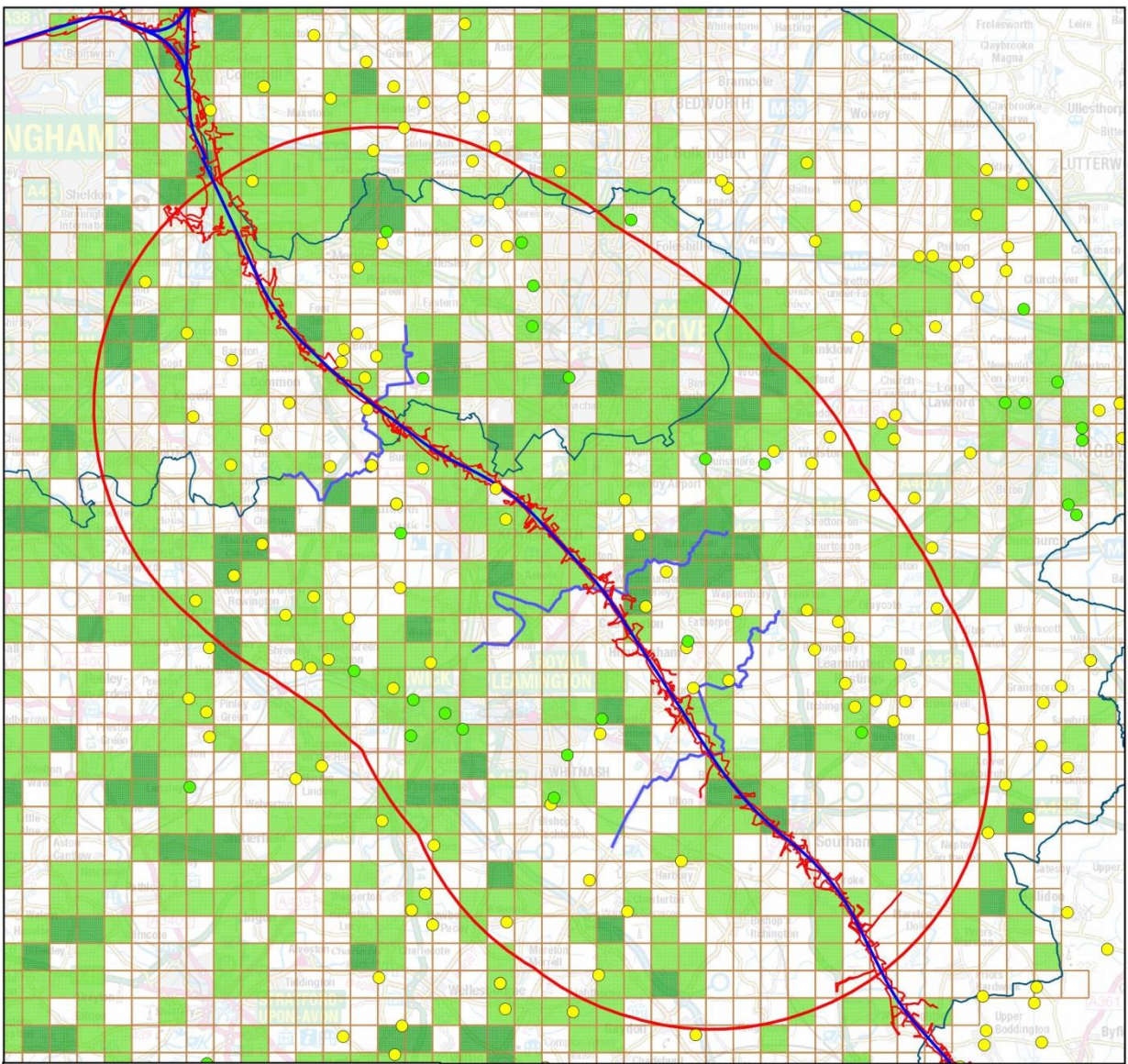
# Landscape scale compensation outside the Bill Limits, through voluntary agreements



HS2 route and construction zone  
 CFA 17 and CFA 18 Warwickshire  
 Strategic enhancement areas

### Legend

- Offset providers
- EB registered offset locations
  - ABS potential offset locations
- Warwickshire woodland strategy
- Semi-strategic
  - Strategic
  - Non-strategic
- HS2
- HS2 linear route
  - HS2 construction zone
  - CFA17+18 boundary
  - CFA17+18 10km buffer
  - England Counties



2.5 0 2.5 5 7.5 10 km

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# HS2 - Translocation

- Translocation cannot recreate ancient woodland
- For ancient woodland, the term 'habitat translocation' is inaccurate, as it does not reflect the partial nature of what is being moved
- The term more accurately covers removal of soil, and possibly some small vegetation, from one site to another
- Translocation is not a proven technique
- Commitment is required from the nominated undertaker to manage and monitor new woodland created with translocated soil in perpetuity



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NB The evidence on this slide is the view of the Woodland Trust

# Translocation timing

- The programme for translocation *should* dictate the engineering programme
- Narrow window of opportunity, and different for soil and coppice stools



Alaska Environmental @Alaska\_Env · 2 hrs

Ancient woodland translocation to allow A21 dual carriageway project to begin  
[#AlaskaEnvironmental](#) [#translocation](#)

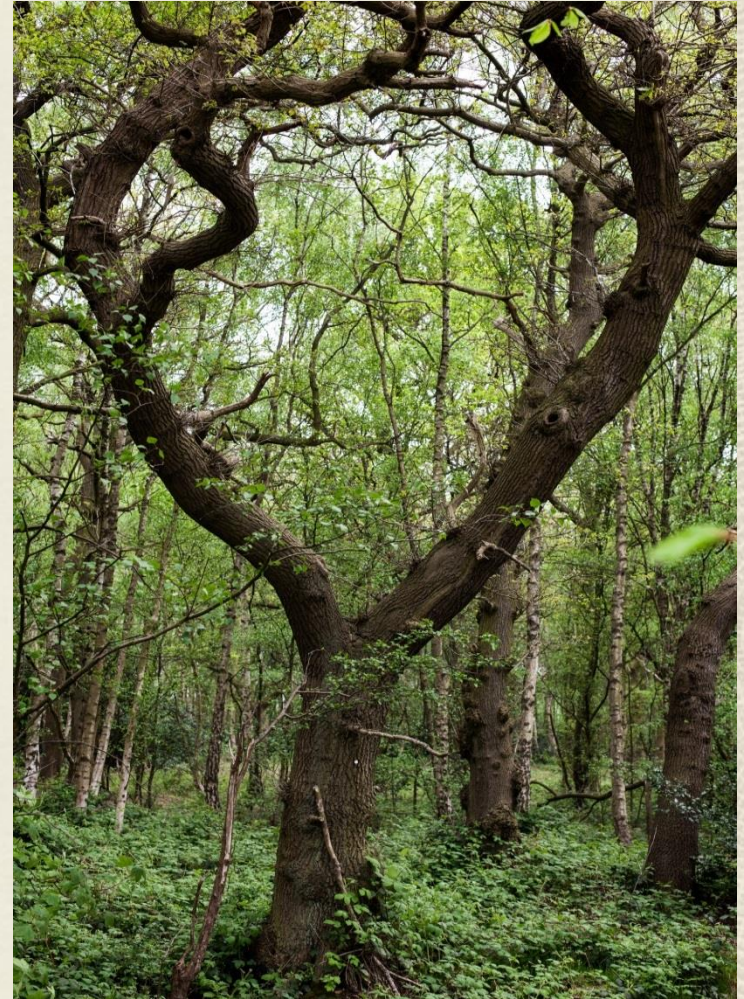


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# HS2 must not create a precedent

- HS2 has fallen woefully short of adopting best practice towards ancient woodland
- The Committee should state that it accepts that this is the case
- It is vital to ensure that HS2 does not set a precedent and is not held up as example of best practice, especially for next phases
- This is important because major projects are often held up by developers as examples of best practice
- For example, how many times has the Committee been told that Crossrail did something a particular way?



Slaish Wood, Dan Lee

# Undertakings – We ask the Committee to:

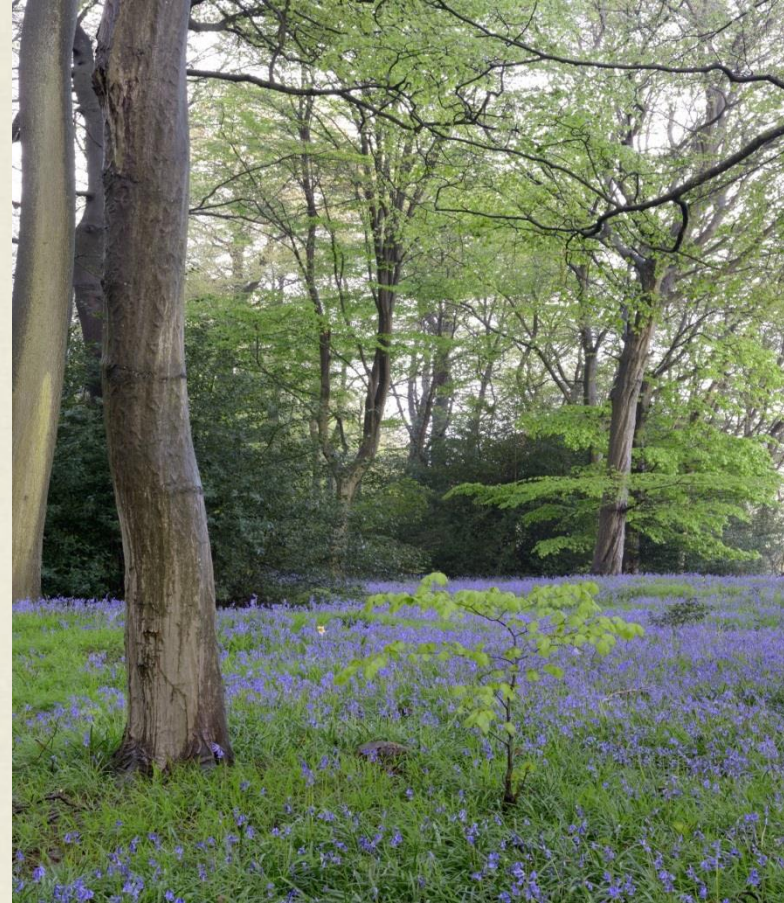
- Direct HS2 Ltd to avoid destroying ancient woodland where possible, such as by tunnelling at the locations noted in our full evidence, and by moving haul routes
- Direct HS2 Ltd to compensate for remaining destruction at an appropriate scale (30:1 in the case of tree planting) in the wider landscape of the route, using conservation covenants or equivalent as appropriate
- State in your final report that the approach taken by HS2 Ltd to identifying and assessing ancient woodland, and hence determining the route, was seriously flawed, and that best practice should be adopted for subsequent phases of HS2
- Direct HS2 Ltd to set up the Ecological Review Group at the earliest opportunity.



Long Itchington Wood, Dan Lee

# Conclusions

- Ancient woodland is a precious heritage, of irreplaceable environmental worth, and is a fundamental part of our national culture
- We have a responsibility to be its guardian for future generations to enjoy
- The HS2 approach to the protection of this irreplaceable habit has been woeful
- The Committee is asked to record this, so as to ensure that best practice is adopted for other developments and projects
- Asked to require the undertakings and assurances sought to better protect ancient woodland going forward.



Weedon Hill Wood, Paul Glendell