

## Conservationists warn against HS2 Ltd on forest move

27 March 2020



HS2 Ltd is "translocating" soil from ancient woodlands on the new rail route in Warwickshire.

Conservationists have criticised plans to move soil from ancient woodlands in a bid to create new habitat as part of work on the new high speed rail line.

HS2 Ltd is planning on "translocating" soil from ancient woodlands on the new rail route in Warwickshire during April, in an attempt to establish new habitat from the seeds, insects, larvae and fungi in the earth and tree stumps.

The Woodland Trust has criticised the "flawed" attempt to transfer ancient woodland habitat to new areas, and is particularly critical of it taking place in spring as the woods are about to burst into life.

### Translocated

- The trust said five sites, Broadwells Wood, Birches Wood, Crackley Wood, Fulfen Wood and Ashow Road, would be affected.
- HS2 Ltd said it was creating bigger, better and more joined up habitat in the area of South Cubbington Wood in Warwickshire, including using two hectares (five acres) of translocated soils from ancient woodlands.
- Woodland Trust ecologist Luci Ryan said: "Instead of bursting into life, these irreplaceable ancient woodlands now face imminent death."

- "Attempting to move ancient woodland soils from one site to another is flawed. Attempting it in April doubly so."
- She also raised concerns that the contractor undertaking the work had never translocated ancient woodland before.

### **Fiddle**

- The Woodland Trust said translocation - the physical removal of a habitat from one location to another to offset development - was not feasible for ancient woodland as it is "irreplaceable".
- Guidance from government conservation body Natural England says an "ancient woodland ecosystem cannot be moved" and there is little evidence of the success of moving ancient woods, the Trust said.
- And if it is attempted, it must be carried out in late autumn or early winter when plants are dormant, the charity said, accusing HS2 Ltd of acting against industry standards by planning to do the work now.
- Mrs Ryan said: "We are shocked at their approach. Protection of the environment continues to play second fiddle to costs and timetables."

### **Operations**

- A spokeswoman for HS2 Ltd said the rail line would help in the fight against climate change, which threatens nature, and urged green groups to help them get people out of cars and planes and onto low carbon high speed rail.
- And she said: "In Warwickshire, we are creating a bigger and more joined up habitat, with 6.7 hectares of new broadleaved woodland habitat being planted to link the habitats of Cubbington Wood and the River Leam Corridor, and we plan to preserve and translocate two hectares of ancient woodland soils to join up Cubbington Wood and Weston Wood.
- "Some of the UK's most experienced and leading ecological consultants have worked on the route's development.
- "We have professionally qualified environmental staff on site during the works operations, and have consent from the authorised bodies, including Natural England, for all planned work."

SOURCE:- <https://theecologist.org/2020/mar/27/conservationists-warn-against-hs2-forest-move>