



Public Information Meeting regarding Network Rail's vegetation & fencing work at Hadley Wood

Thursday 7 June 2018 at the HWA Centre

For Network Rail (NR):

Phil Maggs (PM), Programme Manager (Infrastructure Maintenance, Network Operations)
Jonathan Calvert (JC), Programme Manager (Infrastructure Project Delivery)
Faisal Farooq (FF), Project Manager, Thameslink Resilience Project TRP
Nick Sandham (NS), Head of Communications (London North Eastern & East Midlands)

For The Tree Council (TTC):

Sara Lom (SL), CEO
Jon Stokes (JS), Programme Director
Margaret Lipscombe (ML), Programme Director

For Hadley Wood (HDW):

Robert Wilson (RGW), Trustee, Hadley Wood Association (HWA)
Francesca Caine (FMC), Chair, Hadley Wood Rail User Group (HWRUG)

Invited Guests:

Andy Higham, LBE Head of Development
Bambos Charalambous MP (Enfield Southgate)
Colin Stuart, GTR Station Facilities Manager
David Burrowes, former MP and co-lead Grange Park Campaign
Doug Wilkinson, LBE Operations Director
Helen Osman, Chair, Grange Park Campaign
Jason Brooker, GTR Head of Environment
Keith Dyall, Divisional Convenor and Branch Chairman, Railfuture London & South East
Mary Lowe, Chair, Hatfield Association of Rail Travellers (HART)
Michael Solomon-Williams, Chair, Friends of Ally Pally Station
Penny Burton, Oakleigh Park

Summary

NR apologised profusely for the impact of their actions on HDW in the Thameslink Resilience Programme and stated their determination to learn from their errors. They have revised their overall vegetation management standard with guidance from TTC and confirmed that all work here would be paused until a plan has been agreed with residents and TTC.

NR agreed to fund all HDW's replanting from the Programme budget and to commit a multi-year budget to support the full length of TTC's "Hadley Wood Trial".

Introduction

RGW welcomed everyone to the HWA Centre, introduced the NR and TTC representatives and set the scene for the meeting, presenting photographs of the devastation inflicted this Spring on a large area of the trackside throughout HDW. **FMC** introduced the railway stakeholders present and outlined HWRUG's award-winning campaigning credentials that had been activated to establish the Treegate Campaign.

1 Network Rail – Thameslink Resilience Programme (TRP)

- **PM** explained the background to the £300m taxpayer-funded fencing and devegetation project on behalf of the DfT to mitigate asset and infrastructure failure affecting 60 miles (120 linear miles) of the trackside. He commented that it should have been relatively straightforward but went badly wrong when work started at HDW, as NR discovered through intervention by HWRUG and HWA. He assured the meeting that NR were committed to learning from their errors and sharing that learning throughout their organisation nationwide to ensure that the mistakes were not repeated in future. Most importantly, they had learned that not all trees need to be felled to protect the track. PM made an unreserved apology for the mistakes made at HDW and confirmed that they had already revised their overall approach and vegetation management “standard” (NR term for the applicable policy and procedure). He assured the meeting that they also want to make amends at HDW for what should not have happened.
- Issues to be resolved for future NR work include:
 - Improving instructions given to contractors, including clear vegetation management diagrams to ensure accuracy and consistency
 - Better NR oversight and control of their contractors
 - Improved communications with lineside neighbours, including both letters and diagrams to explain the impact of intended works
 - Enhanced vegetation control/management model developed in conjunction with TTC, to include re-planting plans, where appropriate (PM noted that they were already on v5 of the enhanced and expanded diagrams, known as the “Hadley Wood Model”)
 - Due consideration of ecological and geological aspects while ensuring clear sight-lines, minimal risk to track and overhead wires, ease of maintenance etc
- **JC** spoke to NR's presentation (since published on the HWA website) and advised that the intention is that the improved planning, communication and working methods will become the new national NR standard, for which they are seeking approval from NR Heads of Engineering. He thanked TTC for their input to the Hadley Wood Model.
- Locally NR have worked with the 3 different contractors (each doing a section of the track) to ensure they have a common understanding of the specifications, now made pictorial to assist the workers. NR have also appointed 2 full time site managers who are travelling around on a regular basis.
- NR also plan to hold public events like this elsewhere prior to commencement of works.
- **FF** explained the latest set of Vegetation Management Profiles (v5) showing what would be felled or managed under the revised specifications. He advised that the specification had also been revised to minimise work at the fence line to retain screening, where possible. Also beyond the 6.5m immediate trackside area, hawthorn and blackthorn are now being treated as having a maximum potential height of <6m so are not automatically being felled.
- **JC** also described some issues related to the presence of trees on clay embankments and cuttings.
- **JC** advised that the NR interpretation of the Rail Minister's recent announcement on felling would classify the TRP as “safety critical” work and therefore able to continue during the bird-nesting season (ie to end August). However, everything here will be paused and they are still discussing internally what further felling work will be done during that period.

- **NS** advised that future lineside neighbour notification letters will also give details of a new helpline that people with concerns and queries can ring. They will ensure that the people answering those calls are properly briefed.

2 The Tree Council – role and plans

- **JS** spoke to a presentation also now published on the HWA website and explained that TTC act as a “critical friend” to a wide range of official bodies, including NR, who manage the 4th largest estate in the country.
- They want to see the NR approach switched from “devegetation” on a periodic basis to a sustainable “management” approach – e.g. proper coppicing/pollarding every 30 years with regrowth in between.
- **JS** explained how in the early days of railways a “railway hedge” had been devised, that has become the general UK standard for hedges ever since. TTC propose to run trials at HDW in the area to the north west of the station to test three approaches to growing a new wildlife-friendly, stock-proof hedge, in the hope of devising a new hedge standard for the future.
 - They intend to work with relevant experts to draw up specifications for a substantial “wild woolly mix” including blackthorn, hawthorn and hazel so a plan can be agreed with NR and finalised by end Sept. **(Action – plans to be discussed and agreed among TTC/NR/HDW)**
 - The planting season is November-December and this would be carried out by NR contractors and paid for from the TRP budget.
 - TTC would then monitor over the following 2-3 years and use these pilots to draw up the future hedge specification for national best practice. In response to a question from **Alan Smith, ML** clarified that the “hedge” would effectively be a linear forest that could be up to 30 feet wide.
- Around the tunnel portals, the situation will be reviewed. 3-4 trees will need to come out but the intention is that scrub will stay. **(Action - NR with TTC/HDW)**
- To questions from **Pete and Laura Gassner**, whose outlook from Parkgate Avenue has been severely affected, **JC** explained that not all stumps in the cleared areas were poisoned effectively and some are growing back already.
 - 0-6.5m – will need to be properly poisoned
 - 6.5-13m – still under discussion
 - >13m – NR had agreed will not be poisoned
 - NR also promised that a letter setting this out clearly will be sent asap to all lineside neighbours **(Action NS)**
- **JC** assured the meeting that they would also return to the other areas of concern at HDW to devise a replanting mix to be shared with residents and confirmed that NR have committed to funding this replanting. To **Michael Singer’s** concern that the Trial might delay remedial work in these other areas, he remarked that no replanting can begin until the autumn in any case.
- **SL** commented that TTC see good practice in some areas of NR but it is currently inconsistent. TTC would like to see enhanced training rolled out to NR field staff.

3 Discussion points

- **David Sumners** thanked NR for their repentance but asked whether there was a structural way within NR to prevent recurrence elsewhere, particularly in view of similar assurances given after the Grange Park experience. **JC** agreed that this is complex as NR comprises 8 devolved routes with separate teams and repeated that new national standards will need to be approved by Head of Engineering and Route Asset Managers, but he noted that recent events in various places have put this issue on the agenda of the Minister and senior NR management. Prior to the HDW experience, he said that the NR standard had been unclear and singular, but now the developing "Hadley Wood Model" aimed to overcome both defects. **PM** added that this time change would be effected bottom-up.
- The campaign lead for Grange Park, **Helen Osman**, warned the meeting that similar assurances had been given by NR to them some 8 years ago. She went on to thank TTC for their intervention and support then that had resulted in the growth of a new linear forest providing a proper thicket for wildlife. **David Burrowes**, our former MP who had been closely involved with the Grange Park campaign, added that the lessons learned this time must include communications where he considered that another systemic change was required. **John Bolton** strongly agreed on behalf of the community and **NS** agreed that change was required both in NR's letters and in the way the public on all NR's routes is informed through this sort of event.
- **Cllr Alex Georgiou** pressed NR for an answer on the fate of the 6.5-13m corridor. **JC** assured him that nothing further would happen until the approach is agreed. Cllr Georgiou then asked TTC whether they were convinced that the budget would be forthcoming. NR confirmed that funding is in place for the TRP for this financial year ending March 2019. SL noted that TTC are meeting with senior NR officials later this month and the agenda will include the future funding for trials over the next few years, including HDW. The meeting was adamant that a budget commitment is needed for the full length of the Hadley Wood Trial (**Action NR/TTC to discuss and confirm**)
- **SL** emphasised that more training is required for lineside workers, not just in vegetation but also in ecology, and hoped that the Trial would provide scientific data.
- **Pete Gassner** expressed support for the trial but complained about the increase in noise and lack of privacy to his property and asked if large trees could be planted in the >13m zone. **JC** said that in stretches where noise shielding and privacy have been impacted by over-zealous felling, there will be a walkthrough with TTC to determine best options for allowing regrowth and/or replanting to achieve new screening as quickly as possible for individual properties. It was agreed that this walkthrough would encompass the whole HDW trackside (**Action NR/TTC/HDW**)
 - **Post-meeting note: walkthrough arranged for 13Jul18.**
- **Alan Smith** asked for NR's confirmation that they would fund all the replanting, which PM gave (**Action NR**). **Cllr Edward Smith** remarked that many things still had to be settled to achieve a satisfactory outcome here, especially as the £300m TRP funding runs out on 31Mar19. **Cllr Georgiou** asked for assurance that the longer term resources would be forthcoming. **SL** stated her belief that NR have the will to fund TTC's multi-year proposals and noted that she will be meeting NR's Group Safety, Technical and Engineering Director (in effect NR's Deputy CEO) later in June to discuss budget in the context that it must be a three year programme. **David Burrowes** noted that Grange Park had achieved a three year programme with NR's assurance that resource would not be a barrier. He advised HDW to obtain NR's firm commitment within this financial year. (**Action HDW/NR**)
- **Bambos Charalambous** commented that this meeting had been very constructive, although he wished it had not been necessary, and the tree management visuals would be very helpful. **NS** noted that these are now provided to both NR's contractors and affected lineside neighbours and that the NR Helpline had also been briefed.
- **RGW** concluded by thanking the meeting for testing NR's commitment. He reconfirmed that he and FMC have confidence in PM, JC and NS, to which **PM** repeated that NR intend to make amends.