

Forestry England, Birmingham Trees for Life, and the National Paralympic Heritage Trust all benefit from HS2 Community and Business Funds as number of projects supported reaches 100

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Following the Government's approval for HS2 Ltd to award Notice to Proceed to its Main Works Civils Contractors, HS2 Ltd can now announce that the number of community and business groups to receive awards from the HS2 community and business funds has topped over 100.

While the country's focus is rightly on defeating the COVID-19 pandemic, Government approval for the next stage of the HS2 project has meant HS2 contractors now have the go ahead to start building the new low carbon, high speed railway – provided they can maintain Public Health England (PHE) and industry guidelines. HS2 Ltd are also making sure they continue to give back to the communities affected by the construction of HS2, and the community and business funds are a key part of that commitment.

Two funds, with a combined total of £40million, are available to local communities and businesses that are demonstrably disrupted by the construction of Britain's new high speed railway between London and the West Midlands. The Community and Environment Fund (CEF), which is for projects that benefit the community and have a positive environmental outcome; the Business and Local Economy Fund (BLEF) is for projects that will have a positive outcome for local businesses and local economies. Community and Business groups along the HS2 route between London and the West Midlands have been able to apply for funds since March 2017.

HS2 Ltd has now announced that, this month, four more projects have received funding, taking the total number of project awards to 109. These projects share more than £5.8 million between them. Projects announced this month include improving tennis and netball courts in Lichfield, a new gymnasium and community space in Holborn, London, and enhancing a wildlife conservation area in Birmingham. These new projects join others such as a project to tackle health inequalities in Camden, the expansion of citizens advice outreach in the Chilterns, increased support for carers in Aylesbury and a project providing careers advice for people in the Alum Rock area of Birmingham.

Awards have gone to projects in urban and rural areas, and values have ranged from £1,000 to £450,000 with the average award just over £50,000. The largest award to date has gone to Forestry England towards their multi-million pound redevelopment of Wendover Woods. The £450,000 award contributed to the build of a new café and toilets, which has provided a valuable facility for visitors accessing nature from across the county and beyond.

Speaking about the milestone, Mark Thurston, HS2 CEO, said: "At HS2 we are keenly aware of the disruption that building the new railway can have on local communities, which is why these awards are so important as we support those affected, even before the main construction phase has begun. In these difficult times, HS2 will not only provide a boost to the UK economy, creating job and business opportunities across the country, but can also make an impact in giving back to the communities where we are working. These 100 projects are just the start of HS2 investing in the line of route communities and my hope is that they contribute to us creating a positive and lasting legacy."

Cathy Elliott, Independent Chair of the HS2 Funds, said: "I have seen first hand the high level of interest there is in the HS2 funds, and the positive impact the awards are already having across the HS2 route. The funds are available to support local communities and businesses that are impacted by the construction of HS2 and I encourage other organisations near to the London to West Midlands line of route to apply and benefit from funding."

As construction of HS2 gets underway, applications for the funds are still being welcomed. The Funds for Phase One, administered by community charity Groundwork UK, support urban and rural, community, environmental and business projects.

Photo credit: HS2 Ltd