

HS2 accelerates north as first works contract signed on route from West Midlands to Crewe

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HS2 has announced the signing of a new contract to create new woods and wetlands as part of early environmental works on the route between the West Midlands and Crewe – also known as Phase 2a – of Europe’s largest infrastructure project.

The £52 million early environmental works contract HS2 Ltd has signed with British engineering giant Balfour Beatty marks the first stage in extending the high speed rail line from Birmingham to Crewe and follows Royal Assent for this stage of the line in February 2021.

The 36-mile stretch of Phase 2a from Birmingham to Crewe is projected to open alongside the first section of the railway from Birmingham to London, and will provide seamless high speed services between Crewe, the West Midlands and London, with a link to the mainline for direct services northwards.

Supporting 200 jobs, the environmental works will take place at 82 sites running north from Fradley in Staffordshire and will include tree planting at over 40 sites, covering the area of 86 football pitches; more than 18 miles of new hedgerows; and enough new grassland meadows to cover 140 football pitches to encourage wildflowers and insects to flourish.

HS2 Ltd's Phase 2a delivery director Colette Carroll said: "We said that we wanted to bring the benefits of HS2 to the north earlier than originally planned, and this early environmental works contract with Balfour Beatty on the new route to Crewe will put that promise into action."

Mark Bullock, Chief Executive Officer of Balfour Beatty's UK Construction Services business, said: "Balfour Beatty's contract with HS2 builds on our 'Building New Futures' strategy through which we're committed to leaving a lasting positive legacy for the communities in which we operate. Our work on the route between Crewe and the West Midlands will build a better, greener future for everyone – through our ongoing and essential work to protect the environment, and our continued focus on providing employment opportunities for local businesses and people."

Photo credit: HS2 Ltd