

# HS2 funds Staffordshire environmental projects

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A HS2 funding package of £1.5 million will help deliver environmental projects in Staffordshire.

The money was allocated to enhance the landscape, preserve the historic environment, improve access and create new habitats for wildlife.

HS2 says it has been working closely with the National Trust, the Cannock Chase AONB Partnership and other local partners through the Trent Sow Group to identify schemes in an area around the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Staffordshire, on the Phase 2a route (West Midlands to Crewe).

Overall, six environmental projects have been slated to go ahead across 3,500 hectares, reaching 3km north and south from the HS2 line in order to integrate it with the environment.

The areas earmarked for the projects include the washlands of the Trent and Sow rivers, the historic designed landscapes of Shugborough, Ingestre and Tixall, along with canals, listed buildings and environmental designations. The work aims to restore historic landscapes and create new habitats in the

area, benefiting a range of species such as birds, bats, aquatic flora and fauna, and pollinators.

HS2 minister, Andrew Stephenson, said: “We understand that if we’re to turn the tide and fight climate change, it’s not enough to simply return the landscape to the way we found it, we must go further, which is why we’ve committed to a 10% net gain in biodiversity for replaceable habitats on the next leg of HS2.

“These projects are an example of how we’re working to ensure we create an environmental legacy underpinned by our promises to deliver HS2’s green corridor benefits, enhance the landscape and create new habitats for wildlife.”

Peter Miller, HS2 environment director, said: “Over the last three years, we’ve worked with partners including the National Trust to develop a package of projects that will enhance and preserve this important and treasured landscape. Our aim is to make HS2 the most sustainable railway in the world through initiatives like this, and we’re delighted that the projects are now getting started.”

Ingrid Samuel, National Trust’s placemaking and heritage director, said: “With HS2 passing through this area of national importance, where historic designed landscapes merge into beautiful countryside enjoyed by so many people, the National Trust and others petitioned HS2 to go the extra mile to deliver a high-speed railway that leaves a positive legacy. We are pleased that partnership and planning over several years have led to a great set of projects to enhance the area benefitting local people, places, and wildlife. We hope that productive discussions can continue over the design of the railway in order to ensure it integrates into this special landscape.”

The Trent Sow Parklands and Cannock Chase AONB HS2 Group comprises Canal and River Trust (CRT), Cannock Chase AONB Partnership, Historic England (HE), HS2, Inland Waterways Association (IWA), National Trust (NT), Natural England (NE), Sandwell Borough Council (SBC), Staffordshire County Council (SCC), and Staffordshire Wildlife Trust.

The group was established in 2018 during the passage of the HS2 Phase 2a Bill through Parliament in response to concerns raised regarding the sensitivity of the Trent Sow Area and resulted in funding provided by HS2. The group has identified the projects which make up this package of environmental enhancements which go beyond the mitigation measures provided as part of the HS2 project. It also provides design advice and response to help integrate the railway into this sensitive area.

Nick Hilton, HS2’s head of early works on Phase 2a, said: “As we develop the detailed design for the HS2 Phase 2a route through Staffordshire, it’s vitally important for us to ensure the railway integrates with the landscape.

“It’s great to see these projects starting so early in the Phase 2a delivery programme. This forms an important part of our green corridor programme, providing better connected green spaces for people to enjoy and enhanced habitat and biodiversity to sustain and protect precious local wildlife.”

## The six projects in detail

**Shugborough Woodpasturescape**, will be led by the National Trust, supported by Natural England and Cannock Chase AONB Partnership. It will create 40 hectares of new/restored habitat and a block of 220 hectares of contiguous priority habitat that links Shugborough to Brocton Coppice. A Veteran Tree Management plan will be developed to support the long-term legacy for the area.

**The Trent Sow Washlands Project** will be led by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust supported by Trent Rivers Trust, Environment Agency, National Trust, and Stafford Borough Council. The project will work with local landowners to restore wet grassland and wetland habitats along the Trent Sow river corridor. It will restore 50 hectares of grasslands and wetland habitats, including wildlife ditches and clean water ponds, to deliver more, bigger and better-connected sites, establishing a strong and connected natural environment network of grassland and wetland habitats along the river corridor.

**Connecting Towpaths** will be led by the Canal and River Trust supported by Ingestre with Tixall Parish Council. An improved towpath on the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal will provide a safe and accessible off-road route between Great Haywood, Tixall and Milford, with this forming a significant proportion of a larger towpath project into Stafford.

**Ingestre Orangery Garden** will be led by Friends of Ingestre Orangery supported by Ingestre Hall, and local residents. The project will restore key historical features of the garden, including the Long Walk and yew arches, with a programme of maintenance in place. It will also enhance connectivity with the historic garden and landscape through a number of features, including a new seating and viewing area, tree planting, art installation and outdoor learning space, leading to increased access, enjoyment and use of the gardens.

**The Shugborough Estate Gardens Project** will be delivered by The National Trust with support from local volunteers. It will improve the quality of the garden and the landscape views, resulting in better access and enjoyment for visitors to the gardens. The historic landscape setting of Shugborough's Grade I Listed landscape, the Cats Monument and the Chinese House will be improved, and the historic shelter belt and shrubbery walk will be re-established.

**Revealing Tixall's Halls** will be led by Cannock Chase AONB and Chase Through Time Volunteers supported by Staffordshire County Council's Historic Environment Team. The project will improve understanding of the below ground archaeology and heritage around Tixall Gatehouse to inform appropriate management in the future. It will engage the local and wider community, including the local Young Archaeologists' Club, in the heritage on their doorstep.