

HS2 gives saplings to children and community groups in Warwickshire

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HS2 has given 400 English Oak saplings to schools and community groups based in Coleshill, Warwickshire.

LMJV (Laing O'Rourke and J. Murphy & Sons), HS2's enabling works contractor in the Midlands, working with environmental contractor Three Shires Ltd, collected acorns from a tree on HS2's Coleshill Manor site in Warwickshire in 2020 which had to be removed during archaeology work before the land is prepared for the new railway line.

Since then, the acorns turned into saplings, grown in a nursery over the last year. They have been passed around as a legacy to the tree which brought them into being.

This project was in addition to LMJV's extensive environmental mitigation programme across the whole region to ensure the biodiversity of local areas is preserved and enhanced, with many new wildlife habitats already flourishing and over 223,000 trees now planted.

Stuart Gibbs, Environmental Manager at LMJV said: "A key part of HS2's environment programme is to

work with local communities to find opportunities to preserve nature and leave behind a lasting legacy as we build Britain's new zero carbon railway.

"We're very pleased that we have gone over and above our planned green corridor programme and were able to harvest and grow these saplings from native trees. Donating them to so many local groups means that people in the Coleshill area will be able to enjoy them for years to come."

James Lloyd, managing director at Three Shires Ltd, said: "The saplings we have grown will ensure that native tree stock can continue to serve local communities as cornerstones of vital green spaces, habitats encouraging increased biodiversity, or tools in educational planting programmes.

"Following tree surveys of the native oak trees within the HS2 working corridor acorns were collected in 2020. These were propagated in nursery conditions and are now ready for planting. This method means the DNA of the trees will be identical and also reduces the risk of disease from invasive species, preserving the next generation of tree stock for the local area."

Mr Chris Plow, deputy headteacher at Water Orton School, said: "We have a project to develop our outdoor learning areas, including improving the landscape, creating an outdoor gym and planting trees. We have recently received a grant from The National Lottery's 'Together for Our Planet' programme where our aim is to promote climate change and help our community take practical climate action.

"Planting new trees around our school grounds is a huge step in the right direction and it doesn't stop there. We are hoping to transform our grounds into outstanding learning areas that will provide all of our children, their families and the community of Water Orton with a range of different opportunities for learning, playing, exercising and exploring."

Headteacher, Mrs Debby Huges from High Meadow Community School, said: "We are already an Eco Awarded school and our children enjoy a well-established Forest School area on our school grounds, however, we acknowledge that we can always do more to help our planet. In July 2021 we were handed the keys of our new Key Stage 2 building called The Burrow. We will be planting the donated oak saplings on the meadow at the back of The Burrow to encourage more birds and wildlife to the site.

"The children are looking forward to planting the saplings, watching them grow whilst they are at High Meadow and then in the future, bring their own children to the school meadow to picnic beneath the trees they planted many years previously."

As part of its green corridor programme, HS2 has already planted over 700,000 trees, including silver birch, hazel, hawthorne and holly, and created over 100 wildlife sites along the Phase One route between London and the West Midlands.

HS2 is planting up to 7 million trees on Phase One alone, leaving behind more than 33 square kilometres of new woodland, wildlife and river habitats – the equivalent of 23 new Hyde Parks lining the spine of the country.

The groups which have received donations include:

- Coleshill C of E Primary School
- Coleshill Gardening Club
- Coleshill Town Council
- High Meadow Community School
- Ladywalk Nature Reserve
- Middleton Parish Council
- Oaklands Park
- Saltley Stallions
- The Coleshill Community Hub
- Water Orton Parish Council
- Water Orton School
- Woodlands School