

Warwickshire residents and schools asked to name HS2's Long Itchington Wood Tunnel Boring Machine

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HS2 Ltd has launched a competition for local residents and schools to help find a name for the tunnel boring machine that will start excavating under Long Itchington Wood in Warwickshire this summer.

North Leamington School, Warwickshire College Group, The Coleshill School and Long Itchington Scout Group have already signed up to take part, and will also benefit from a new skills programme aimed at introducing young people to careers in engineering, through virtual education sessions run by HS2 Ltd and HS2's contractor BBV Joint Venture (Balfour Beatty Group and VINCI Construction).

Following tradition, tunnel boring machines are always named after women, and HS2 is asking people in the county to help choose a name based on their female role models - whether famous people or unsung heroines. Suggestions will be shortlisted in May and three finalists put to a national public vote, before a winner is announced in the summer.

The 2,000 tonne tunnel boring machine will be operated by BBV and will create a one-mile twin bore

tunnel under Long Itchington Wood. It will take five months to dig the first bore of the tunnel, and then it will be extracted at the south portal before being transported by road back to the north portal to commence the second bore.

The tunnel will preserve the ancient woodland in this location, and the final section will form a 'green tunnel' – also known as a cut and cover tunnel – where a roof above will return the land to the natural landscape. Around 170 engineers are working on the TBM during its construction and assembly, and a team will then work around the clock excavating the one-mile tunnel. This TBM, along with those soon to start digging under the Chilterns and, a little later in the year, underneath London, is a key element of HS2's role in the Government's commitment to Build Back Better.

HS2's Construction Director David Bennett said: "We're excited to be launching the hunt for a name for the Long Itchington Wood tunnel boring machine and encourage local people to get involved in this impressive feat of engineering, which represents a key milestone for the project in the Midlands. It's great that local schools will be taking part, and through our skills programme young people will also have the opportunity to learn more about careers in engineering.

"They will also learn about our environmental programme which forms a key part of our work in Warwickshire, with the tunnel designed to preserve the ancient woodland, and material from the tunnel being recycled and re-used. We've already planted 80,000 trees in the Midlands, with an additional 47,000 planted this winter in Warwickshire as part of our green corridor programme that will deliver new woodlands, wildlife habitats and green spaces for people to enjoy."

Cllr Jeff Clarke, Warwickshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Transport and Planning, said: "This initiative from HS2 is a great way to engage and involve the engineers of the future in this landmark project. It is fitting that Warwickshire has been given the opportunity to help name the machine and honour someone past or present on behalf of the county.

"One of our suggestions for the shortlist is the novelist George Eliot, a famous daughter of the county whose life and works have inspired so many people. George is from Nuneaton and we believe this helps to symbolise that all of Warwickshire – not just the places directly impacted by HS2 – can get some benefit from the construction of the railway, whether that is through employment or as part of the supply chain.

"We hope this competition will encourage young people across the county to take a greater interest in the project."

Scott Jordan, Assistant Headteacher at The Coleshill School, said: "The Coleshill school students in Year 7 were excited to have an insight into the HS2 project and an opportunity to see how the Tunnel Boring Machines work including naming one. This project also supports our work to promote STEM career pathways for our young people and lets them see the value of a career in the Construction and Engineering sector and the impact in their local area."

Colin Meikle, Head of Engineering for Warwickshire College Group said: "Our students are the heartbeat of Warwickshire College Group and through teamwork we strive to help each learner reach their highest potential. We'd like to thank Balfour Beatty Vinci for offering the opportunity to our students to learn about

the dynamics of tunnel boring machines as well as be part of the naming competition.”

Liz Ritchie, 1st Long Itchington Scout Leader said: “We at Long Itchington Scout Group have worked hard through the lockdown to keep some of the brightest minds of tomorrow engaged with the big wide world beyond lockdown. We are very grateful to Balfour Beatty Vinci for inviting us to experience the engineering initiatives that power their work. The scouts will have a unique opportunity to learn how they too, in the future, can contribute to our national infrastructure.”

Paige Murphy, Year 7 & Transition Lead, North Leamington School, said: “At North Leamington School, we strive to inspire and empower our students to pursue their individual passions to help them reach their full potential. We are very excited that our students have been provided with the chance to understand more about tunnel boring machines, to explore the range of careers in Construction and Engineering and to be able to take part in the naming competition. We would like to extend our thanks to Balfour Beatty Vinci for providing our school with this opportunity.”

Shilpi Akbar, Head of Stakeholders and Communities with lead responsibility for Skills, Employment and Education at Balfour Beatty VINCI, said: “At Balfour Beatty VINCI, we are committed to leaving a positive, lasting impact on the communities in which we operate whether we’re contributing to the regional economy through the creation of 7,000 jobs, or inspiring young people to consider a career in the construction and infrastructure industry. We’re pleased that through our community engagement and skills programme, local residents, young people and community groups will have the opportunity to take part in naming the 2,000 tonne tunnel boring machine that will dig under Long Itchington Wood and play an essential role in the delivery of Britain’s first low carbon, high speed railway.”

This is the third HS2 tunnel boring machine to be named by public vote. The first two machines, which are due to start creating the tunnel under the Chilterns, were named after famous local Buckinghamshire women: Florence Nightingale – the founder of modern nursing who spent many years living in Buckinghamshire; and pioneering astronomer and astrophysicist, Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin, who was born in Buckinghamshire.

HS2 has launched an online portal for Warwickshire residents to submit their chosen names. They are encouraged to choose people who have an association with Warwickshire and may include, for example, actresses, artists, scientists, engineers, authors, athletes and musicians. Names may also include the unsung heroines of Warwickshire, including individuals who deserve recognition for their contributions to the local community.

The competition portal will remain open until the end of April, and a final shortlist of nominations will be selected and put to a public vote in May. The winner will be revealed during the launch of the Long Itchington Wood tunnel boring machine this summer.

People can submit names on the online competition portal here:

<https://www.hs2.org.uk/long-itchington-tunnel/>

Photo credit: HS2 Ltd