

Community Relations  
Basingstoke Campus  
Gresley Road  
Basingstoke  
Hampshire  
RG21 4FS  
T: 03457 11 41 41

22 August 2019

Dear neighbour

### **Vegetation management on the railway between Wokingham and Reading Station**

We are writing to let you know that Network Rail will be carrying out work to manage the vegetation growing on the side of the railway between Wokingham and Reading. The work will start in October 2019 and will be completed by 31 March 2020. Most of the work will take place during daylight hours on weekdays, Monday to Friday.

#### **Why are we doing this work?**

Large trees growing near the railway can cause issues with the stability of embankments and cuttings. Some trees, particularly Ash, are prone to fungal disease causing them to fail. This poses a risk to our passengers, staff and lineside neighbours. The appropriate management of the lineside means we can also address safety concerns such as ensuring our drivers can see pedestrian crossing users, and safer access for staff carrying out maintenance work.

#### **What have we done so far?**

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been carried out to identify any existing protected or valuable habitats and protected species. Findings show that the area provides value for badgers, birds, amphibians and reptiles and has potential for some bat activity. Recommendations have been provided and will be implemented. Following the appraisal, our ecologist has concluded that our planned vegetation management work will have no significant impact on protected species.

#### **What happens next?**

We will be holding a **community drop-in session on Monday 16 September** between **15:00hrs and 17:30hrs at Winnersh Parish Council, Winnersh Community Centre, New Road, Sindlesham, Wokingham RG41 5DU. The car park and entrance are on Mole Road.** We hope you will have the opportunity to meet the project team and learn more about our planned vegetation management work in your area. We will also share the results of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and listen to any concerns you may have about the work.

Although most of the work will be carried out during the day, some of it will be carried out during the night when trains are not running to allow us to get full access to the track. Some of the work will be noisy and where possible, we will do as much work as we can using chainsaws and wood chippers during the day. We will keep all noise to minimum. We are sorry in advance for the inconvenience this work may cause you.

Once again, we look forward to welcoming you to our drop-in session at 15:00hrs on **Monday 16 September 2019 at Winnersh Community Centre.** If you have any questions, please telephone our helpline on 03457 11 41 41 quoting “information request – Wokingham and Reading vegetation management”.

Yours sincerely  
**Community relations team, Wessex route**

**More information about the work we are doing**

Vegetation management involves removing vegetation up to a distance of at least 6 metres from the outer railway track. In some locations the area of vegetation management will be wider; the specification for each area has been determined based on the topography of the land and the species of vegetation present.

Additionally:

- Ash trees will be removed or reduced due to their risk of Chalara (Ash die back fungal disease)
- Areas of Hazel will be managed by coppicing and allowing to regrow – this will retain habitat potential and protect the biodiversity of the site
- Trees with significant amenity value will be retained where they pose no significant safety risk.

**Examples of what our work will look like – before, immediately after the work and two years after the work**

 <p><i>Abbey line before</i></p>  <p><i>Abbey line just after</i></p>  <p><i>Abbey line two years after</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These photos show previous vegetation management work undertaken by Network Rail on the Abbey line.</li>   <li>• Abbey line immediately after vegetation management work.</li>   <li>• Abbey line two years after vegetation management work. This illustrates what the Wokingham to Reading corridor could look like once grasses and shrubs have become re-established.</li> </ul>
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**More reasons we are doing this work**

- Better and longer sighting distances for pedestrian crossing users
- Better sighting for train drivers to react to distant signals
- Safer access for staff carrying out work on the track or track side
- Reduction in tree incidents such as branches on the track and tree fall
- Reduction in leaf fall which causes reduced train braking efficiency and signalling problems

**Future dates when we will be working during the weekend (further letters will be sent in advance for this work)**

- 26-27 October 2019
- 04-05 January 2020
- 11-12 January 2020
- 1-2 March 2020