

Contact our HS2 Helpdesk team on **08081 434 434**

HS2 Update

Greatworth to Southam | Winter 2025

EKFB
Working in
partnership with **HS2**

High Speed Two (HS2) is the new high-speed railway for Britain.

If you have any questions or enquiries about our work, please contact our Helpdesk to find out more.

You can sign up for regular updates in your local area at www.hs2inyourarea.co.uk.

Inside our winter newsletter...

Updates on:

- From construction to a working railway
- Lookahead to winter 2025/2026
- Progress in 2025
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- Archaeology & palaeontology in HS2
- Our community activities



At the Oxford Canal viaduct, the deck has been completed and over the winter we will be installing the parapets on the side of the viaduct.



Drop-in event

Do you want to find out more about the HS2 works near you?

If you would like us to visit your area, please get in touch via the HS2 helpdesk.

Details of all upcoming events for 2026 will be listed here:

www.hs2.org.uk/events

From construction to a working railway: how HS2 will take shape

A driving force behind HS2's revised scheduling plan is the completion of an initial section of the HS2 route where high-speed trains will be tested - the **'test area'**

A review as part of the reset has concluded that insufficient time had been allocated to safely complete the railway's multiple testing stages. The test area will now be delivered in phases, allowing testing to start earlier and ensuring the programme remains on schedule.

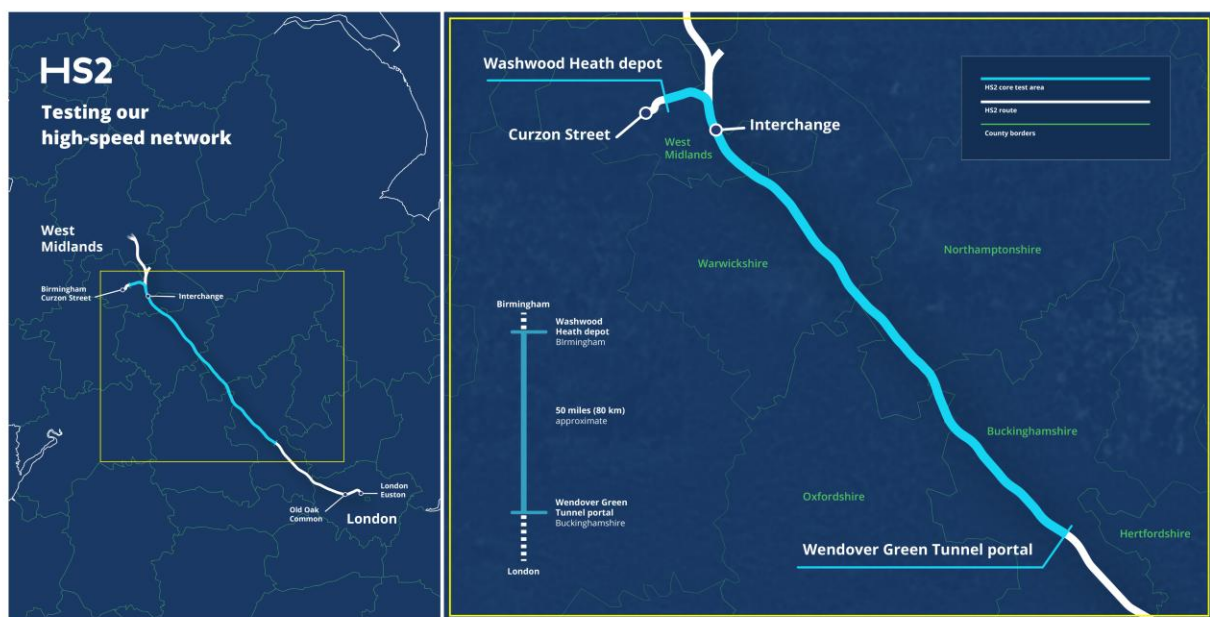
The first section is approximately 50 miles long and runs from Washwood Heath in Birmingham to the north portal of the Wendover green tunnel in Buckinghamshire. This section of the trace will be overlaid with track, power, signalling and communications systems ready for testing to begin.

The completion of civil engineering works on this section of the route is now the overriding priority, ready for Rail Systems. Alongside the need to operate within the annual funding envelope from government, it is why decisions have been made to defer works elsewhere on the route.

This means that we will continue to keep building and progressing with the programme to ensure that we are able to fully deliver the critical pathway for the HS2 test area.

For more information on the transition to Rail Systems click [here](#), or visit:

<https://mediacentre.hs2.org.uk/blogs/from-civils-to-systems>



Test area map above; Washwood Heath to Wendover.

A look ahead to winter 2025/2026

Our earthworks programme has made significant progress over the year and as we enter the winter our work will focus on the structures and highways connection in the local area, including the following activities:

- Continued installation of pre-cast segments for the Chipping Warden and Greatworth green tunnel, including the section near Helmdon Road at Greatworth and construction of the portal buildings at Chipping Warden.
- Deck construction for the Lower Thorpe viaduct, near Thorpe Mandeville which requires some short duration closures of Banbury Lane.
- Building the deck of the Edgcote viaduct, over Wardington Road.
- Foundation piling for the Stoneton Lane green overbridge, requiring a two-year closure of Stoneton Lane to Priors Hardwick.
- Preparation for highway connections at the Kinton Road bridge, Southam in spring 2026
- Operation of the A423 temporary bypass, near Southam, enabling the embankment earthworks and bridge deck construction.
- Opening of phase 2 of the Greatworth Temporary Road to enable continues excavation of the green tunnel.
- Please look out for details and sign up for email notifications for road closures in the area at www.hs2inyourarea.co.uk.



This photograph was taken inside the Greatworth green tunnel looking north towards Thorpe Mandeville. Construction continues throughout winter to both green tunnels, with occasional overnight working as

Progress in 2025

Opening of the Claydon Road bridge, Lower Boddington

Claydon Road overbridge was the first HS2 structure in Northamptonshire to open to the public. This bridge retains local connectivity for the villages of Boddington and Claydon, over the line of the new HS2 railway. Claydon Road is also a popular walking and cycling route for the local communities and the opening of this bridge restores local connectivity and marks a significant step for the local area. While access along the Millennium Way national footpath remained open across the construction area, it has now been permanently rerouted over the bridge.



Claydon Road bridge opened to the public in the summer.

Opening of the A361 on its permanent realignment



The realigned A361 opened to the public in September, taking traffic over the Chipping Warden green tunnel.

The construction of one of the longest 'cut and cover' tunnels along the HS2 route has progressed well, with the realignment of the A361 at Chipping Warden in September 2025, a milestone has been reached. The A361 was closed for 11 days, to allow the road to be safely realigned over the Chipping Warden green tunnel and connect to the Chipping Warden bypass completed by HS2 in 2022. The construction teams are now able to proceed with the construction of the remainder of the final section of the 2.5km tunnel.

New road layout at Boddington

We have completed the new highways realignment in the Boddington area, to maintain local connectivity. We are operating a link road to manage traffic around the construction area, which will be in place until the Banbury Road overbridge is completed.

A423 temporary bypass for bridge construction

In order to reduce the need for several months of ongoing road closures, EKFB opened a bypass on the A423 at Southam in September 2025. This allows the construction teams to continue their work on the new A423 bridge over the HS2 railway line. We expect the bridge to be completed later in 2026 at which point, there will be a closure to join the new bridge to the current road network.

Ecology matters

We have a devoted team of ecologists responsible for considering nature's seasonal constraints and the schedule of ecological works.

Habitat mitigation

As part of our work we build special habitat sites, creating havens for wildlife away from the construction area. Once the HS2 railway is complete, the barriers will be removed and recolonisation from the surrounding habitats will occur naturally.

Throughout the Greatworth to Southam area, we have created 13 habitat sites. One of these is the Radbourne Fishponds, where ponds and areas of tree and hedgerow planting have occurred. This site has been colonised by great crested newts that have moved into the new ponds from the wider countryside. There are also areas of deadwood to support insects and grassland areas which support a diverse selection of mammals and reptiles, such as harvest mice and grass snakes.



A pond on an EKFB environmental mitigation site

Winter hibernation

As time marches on and the weather grows colder, hibernation season commences. Across all our worksites, we will be adopting winter working measures, such as planning the timing of works to avoid disturbance to any habitats that could be used by wildlife during their hibernation.



A Barn Owl

Barn Owls

To support the Barn Owl population, 75 new nesting boxes were installed between 750m and 1.5km from the edge of HS2 construction, to encourage natural dispersal away from the works. Through our ongoing monitoring, we have confirmed a third of our nesting boxes are now in regular use by the local Barn Owl population.

We are planning to add more nesting boxes and are investigating potential sites between 1.5 to 3 km away. If you are local resident and would like to have a Barn Owl nesting box installed on your land, please get in touch via the HS2 Helpdesk at **HS2enquiries@hs2.org.uk** or call 08081 434 434.

Species management

As well as legally protected species such as great crested newts and bats, our mitigation sites are home to a range of different wildlife, from small mammals like harvest mice and voles, to birds, hoverflies, beetles, moths and butterflies; recently a scarce Small Blue Butterfly was spotted on one of our habitat sites.

Looking after wildlife and ecology are part of our everyday work. On the ground, our construction teams are vigilant and use a bespoke app to report potential wildlife evidence directly to our ecology specialists. They can swiftly respond to alerts and take action to protect the wildlife across the construction sites.

Archaeology & palaeontology in HS2

Along the line of the HS2 railway, there are over 60 archaeological and palaeontological sites. This ranges from the Prehistoric period, through Roman Britain, the Anglo-Saxon and Medieval ages, the Industrial Revolution, to World War 2, revealing over 10,000 years of British history. The discoveries will be carefully catalogued, before being shared with the communities.

This autumn Oxford University Museum of Natural History showcased a selection of fossils discovered during HS2 construction works in Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and West Northamptonshire. The geology in this area is part of a 200-million-year cross-section of Jurassic geology.

The fossils were uncovered by EKFB teams and included partial remains of marine reptiles such as ichthyosaurs, along with smaller sea creatures, providing an insight into the life of the warm seas of the Jurassic Period. Linking the past to the future, our discoveries were displayed alongside archived material from Professor John Phillips, who embraced geological study opportunities during construction of the British railway network in the 19th century.

One of the oldest finds along the EKFB section was an ichthyosaur, from around 183 million years ago, discovered at Greatworth by our palaeontology and geology teams (left), at the Greatworth green tunnel.



We were delighted that our lead geologist Giles Hemming (right) was able to assist Dr Emily Swaby of Earth Collections (centre) and HS2 senior engineer Simon Butler (left) with curating this display and hope to continue working with local museums to display more artifacts in the future.

To find out more about the HS2 archaeological work, please visit **Archaeology - HS2**, or scan the QR code to the right.



Our community activities

Northamptonshire Food Larder

We are proud to continue our support the food larder at Woodford Halse. The team there work to reduce food waste and help residents struggling with the cost of living, by offering a weekly shop at a subsidised price, supported by donations and volunteers.

This year we provided funds for transporting food donations and materials to update the building, as well as garden planters and benches. Our teams spent several days volunteering though the year, helping to run the larder sessions and painting the outside of the food larder buildings.



EKFB volunteers worked alongside local community volunteers to complete painting to woodwork at the Woodford Halse Food Larder.

Supporting local schools

We have been delighted to support several local schools over the last year. Our Education and skills team have worked extensively with secondary schools, running learning sessions, mock interviews, CV writing workshops and mentoring programmes, as well as specialist SEND activities.

Local primary schools have benefited from donations of play materials, and mud kitchens built by our staff, as well as support for their events and trips.

Community events

This year we have continued our support for local community events, from contributing to community hall improvements to seasonal events like bonfire events and summer fetes. We have used our resources to deliver first aid training to community groups and support through donations of materials.

Our staff have enjoyed volunteering their time cleaning and painting in Southam, tree planting in Greatworth and making improvements to the local Guides campsite.

If you would like our to talk to us about support for your community project, please contact us via the HS2 Helpdesk at HS2enquiries@hs2.org.uk or call 08081 434 434.

Community funding grants from HS2

The Community and Environment (CEF) and the Business and Local Economy Fund (BLEF) schemes will provide up to £40m of funding throughout the construction of HS2, supporting community-led projects. The Funds also support initiatives that bring benefits to local communities, such as the provision of new community facilities or support for local heritage and culture. You can find more information about eligibility and how to apply on the HS2 website.

www.hs2.org.uk/in-your-area/community-funding/



Keeping you informed

We are committed to keeping you informed about work on HS2. This includes making sure you know what to expect and when to expect it, as well as how we can help.

Residents' and Construction Commissioner

The independent Residents' and Construction Commissioner oversees and monitors our **community engagement strategy**, making sure we fulfil our commitments to you.

The commissioner monitors the way we manage and respond to complaints about construction and advises members of the public how to make complaints.

The commissioner helps settle disputes involving individuals and organisations that we can't resolve.

You can find the commissioner's report and our responses at:
www.gov.uk/government/collections/independent-hs2-commissioner

The commissioner can be contacted on:
hs2commissioner@dft.gov.uk

Property and compensation

You can find out all about HS2 and properties along the route by visiting:
www.gov.uk/government/collections/hs2-property

Find out if you're eligible for compensation at:
www.gov.uk/claim-compensation-if-affected-by-hs2

Holding us to account


If you are unhappy for any reason, you can make a complaint by contacting our HS2 Helpdesk team.

For more details on our complaints process, please visit our website:
www.hs2.org.uk/contact-us/how-to-complain

Contact us

Our HS2 Helpdesk team are available all day, every day. You can contact them by:

 Freephone **08081 434 434**

 Minicom **08081 456 472**

 Email **hs2enquiries@hs2.org.uk**

Write to:

FREEPOST
HS2 Community Engagement

Website **www.hs2.org.uk**

To keep up to date with what is happening in your area, visit:

www.hs2inyourarea.co.uk

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