**Ancient Woodland Soil Translocation, HS2 and Tree Health Authorisation**

HS2 Ltd met the Forestry Commission and Natural England on 12th July 2018 to discuss how the project will manage soil translocations and the risk of spreading ash-die back.

The approach is to authorise and control soil translocation activities through a route-wide Statutory Plant Health Notice (SPHN) and allow that activity to proceed under certain conditions.

The approach is being developed to meet the immediate needs of HS2 Phase 1 but the practice, subject to regular review, will be adopted for subsequent phases.

HS2 Ltd's approach to soils translocation is set out in its Ecology Technical Standard and will follow the Forestry Commission guidance on biosecurity in the HS2 Phase 1 Code of Construction Practice.

In the event that soils translocation cannot be achieved as a result of following these controls an alternative tree planting plan will necessarily have to be implemented. Alternative proposals will be discussed with the Forestry Commission and Natural England.

**Chalara Dieback of Ash**

Ash is a common component of woodland in lowland England. The disease known as Chalara dieback of ash (Chalara) is present in all counties in England, and experience in mainland Europe suggests that the majority of ash trees in woodlands infected with the disease will die over the next 10 – 15 years. The Plant Health (Forestry) Order 2005 No. 2517 prohibits all imports of ash seeds, plants and trees, and all internal movement of ash seeds, plants and trees to prevent the possibility of spreading the disease to regions where the disease is not present.

**Proposal for Regulating HS2 Ltd’s Proposed Translocation Activity**

The Forestry Commission will issue HS2 with a single Statutory Plant Health Notice (SPHN) that will authorise soil translocation activity under the HS2 ancient woodland compensation programme for Phase 1, subject to:

- detailed descriptions of donor and receptor sites, including distances that soil will be moved, with supporting maps showing the sites against chalara 10km squares
- timescales for soil removal and replacement at each site being specified and certain (i.e. known to be starting and completing within a specified season or calendar period)
- a clear commitment from HS2 that ash stools will not be moved from a donor site to a receptor sit, and that ash stools will be destroyed on the donor site
either by incineration or deep burial. If ash stools on a donor site are moved anywhere then a separate SPHN will be required specifying destruction of the stools at the destination

- a concise description of the containment measures HS2 will use to manage saplings on site and for the long term containment of ash material (saplings and seed) on the receptor site post-translocation

**How this Approach Minimises the Risk of Further Spread of Disease**

a) By not allowing movement of ash coppice in areas where Chalara has been found, as movement of diseased material is prohibited.

b) By confirming that Chalara is not present on the donor site.

c) By recognising that the distances that the soil is transported are generally low and are local to the donor site – less than a few hundred metres, so reducing risk of wider spread.

d) While at the same time as containing the movement of any ash trees from the receptor site.