

A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme

Tree Survey 2023

Improved success rate for planting on the project

Thank you for your interest in the Replanting Strategy for the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme.

Following the publication of our Replanting Strategy in March 2023, I would like to provide an update on the project's latest tree survey, which has now been completed.

Survey results

This is the most thorough review of the planting on the A14 project to date and was carried out over a three-month period by Chevron Green Services, National Highways' landscaping contractor for the East Region. The survey included the physical visual inspection of plants on the project.

As a result, we have now identified 165,000 plants that need replacing.

This represents a far better survival rate compared to previous surveys.

Areas surveyed.

The survey covered the planting from Alconbury through to Milton, which includes both land owned by National Highways and Cambridgeshire County Council. The project's borrow pits, aquatic species and bulbs planted were not included in this survey.

During the survey, we identified a small number of areas where it would not be possible to replant or undertake further maintenance due to road user and roadworker safety concerns. An allocation of approximately 1200 plants in these areas will be re-distributed to areas where it is safe to do so and further maintenance can be undertaken.

Lessons learnt.

We have identified a number of reasons for the improved survival rate of the plants on the project, these include:

- The use of more accurate data, with saplings being individually inspected.
- A thorough survey being undertaken instead of the previous sample inspection.
- A longer than expected root establishment (not visible in above-ground inspections), which can be a factor in bare-root planting.
- To ensure more robust outcomes, we will be planting a higher percentage of cell grown plants. Bare root plants will only be used where the species are suitably resilient.

The picture below provides a brief explanation of the difference between cell grown and bare root plants.

Cell Grown v Bareroot Plants

The roots of cell grown stock are intact, and a full fibrous root system is planted, allowing successful establishment and good survival

The root system of bareroot stock can be damaged during lifting and handling. They can dry out leading to reduced survival when planted.



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- We are working with the holding nursery to coordinate and improve the delivery time to site for immediate planting. This will reduce the time the roots are exposed to sunlight and are without moisture from the soil.
- A mix of tree specific fertilisers will be use during the replanting. These fertilisers are made up of specialist polymers, growth precursors and volcanic rock, it will enhance water retention to help plant establishment for the vital first 12 months after planting.
- In continuing to move towards a more sustainable future, we will now no longer use plastic tree-guard tubes for the re-planting exercise and these will be replaced with new 100% non-plastic biodegradable tree guards. These tree guards are made from UK wood and a plant-based biodegradable resin.
- We will share lessons learnt with other National Highways projects, including the nearby A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Improvement scheme.

Next steps.

Preparation work is already underway, with planting of the pre-ordered 162,000 stock commencing in November, subject to weather conditions. Further plants will be ordered from the nurseries and we will continue replanting through to March 2024. We will continue to work collaboratively with county, district and parish councils, together with councillors and their communities, including a local charity as the replanting progresses.

For more information, please contact Martin Edwards (A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme - Project Manager) on 07713 46390 or email martin.edwards@nationalhighways.co.uk.