



13 September 2022

Update on Save Leather Lane Oaks Campaign progress/wins to date:

We have:

1. Stopped HS2 felling the entire line of Oaks - 87 remain;
2. Presented strong ecological and legal arguments to preserve the remaining 87 Oaks of Leather Lane and held HS2/EKFB to account;
3. Provided a workable engineering design for the North side at huge cost to the Campaign and Campaigners;
4. Ensured EKFB review their design for the South side in light of our Ecology case and as a result they have reduced the number of remaining trees they would fell;
5. Held HS2 to their Design Principles submitted at committee stage to preserve the Holloway and intervened with BCC to ensure the lane remains a single track lane with passing places not a 60mph two lane road;
6. Engaged with EKFB and their engineers who agree that the Campaign's design IS a workable solution.
7. Our civil engineer presented our design (known as Option 7) and there was detailed discussion of engineering points, comparing Option 7 with EKFB's option, which concluded that our Option 7:
 - Saves more trees (in fact it saves all the remaining 87 veteran oak trees);
 - Crosses the line at right angles, so is cheaper to execute;
 - Will require adjustments to a transformer location and landscaping; and
 - Meets all the required engineering parameters.
 - Both designs are outside of LoD, so the same issue applies to both designs;
 - MPATS accessibility consideration applies to both designs;

- Out Option (Option 7) appears to be cheaper and would save more trees and protect the remaining wildlife and bat corridor.

This last point is most important: it allows Bucks Council to refuse an application to build the bridge currently proposed by EKFB as the development “could reasonably be carried out elsewhere”. Therefore BCC have a legal basis upon which they should reject any Sch 17 application for a North side design which fells any more trees.

8. Ensured that EKFB adhere to the Construction Exclusion Zone in order to protect the remaining trees on Leather Lane. Action has been taken and needs monitoring.
9. We have consulted with the UK’s top bat experts who provided reports that were submitted to EKFB when they were due to fell trees for the Track Trace last summer. As a result, we managed to pause felling at the Track Trace to ensure that Mitigation for the fragmentation of the wildlife corridor was considered and put in place. This was carried out in consultation with Bucks County Council and requires ongoing monitoring and pressure on EKFB to fulfil their commitments made at the meeting on 18th May 2022.
10. We continue to await the outcome of EKFB’s bat surveys and in the meantime continue to undertake our own.
11. We continue to engage and defend Ilona the Lone Oak and question flimsy claims from EKFB/HS2 re bunds and the need to fell her [see our previously circulated letter and we will shortly be issuing a second letter with support].
12. We have now led 3 successful bat walks allowing local people young and old to come and see and hear for themselves the bats of Leather Lane, including the endangered Barbastelle bat, which we have recorded on the Lane using bat detectors.
13. We are applying for charitable status as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

Current Situation:

1. Leather Lane

We have continued to carry out Anabat surveys for the bats of Leather Lane throughout summer 2022.

We are awaiting confirmation that EKFB are, in fact, carrying out bat surveys as they committed to on 28 June 2022 and would like more information and input from GMPC on this matter.

We refer in particular to the assertions made in the minutes of the GMPC meetings on 13 June and 11 July which state that GMPC is facilitating the

Schedule 17 Ecology discussion with Bucks County Council. We would be grateful for inclusion in that discussion given the weight of ecological surveys and reports undertaken and commissioned by the Campaign.

2. Ilona

Maddelyn Sutton from HS2 wrote to us via Sarah Green on 10 August as you have seen, in response to a letter sent in May.

We sought clarification for HS2's conclusion that Ilona the 200 plus year old oak must be felled for Landscaping purposes.

We wrote on 25 August and received a response yesterday (12th September once Catherine Bunting made enquiries). Ms Sutton gave visual and sound screening as reasons for felling Ilona which we do not agree with.[Copy attached for information].

We are preparing a letter in response to HS2 setting out all the potential alternatives HS2 could take which would avoid her felling. Mike Johnstone has been very helpful in this regard. We have support from the Woodland Trust and other groups including the Chiltern Conservation Board.

We would be grateful for the support of GMPC in this regard and would like to arrange a separate meeting with GMPC to explain our position fully, explain our letter of response and ask for their support of our letter.

What we need:

1. Funds to continue this vital work
2. Response from HS2 re Ilona (30.09)
3. Pressure from Public re Ilona
4. An update regarding the status of bat surveys
5. Follow Up meeting with all parties
6. Support in monitoring the Root Protection Area of the remaining trees vis a vis Bucks County Council and EKFB;
7. Press Bucks County Council and EKFB to implement more adequate and longer term mitigation at the Track Trace for the trees felled there and their impact on the wildlife corridor and continue to monitor this mitigation;
8. Support a dialogue between the Campaign, EKFB and Bucks County Council regarding the preservation of Leather Lane as a heritage asset to the Community;

