



May 2020 - A1 in Northumberland: Morpeth to Ellingham Dualling

Northumberland Wildlife Trust (NWT) was invited to comment on the proposals for dualling of the A1 from Morpeth to Ellingham as part of the public consultation period. As there are significant wildlife and landscape interests along the proposed route, we have taken the opportunity to respond.

The Trust recognises the need to improve road safety, traffic flow and access to Northumberland on the A1, and our staff, volunteers and visitors all stand to benefit from improvements in these areas. However, there are a number of concerns to address.

Drainage

NWT are concerned about the potential for run-off of chemical pollutants (e.g. fuel) into waterways, particularly at the proposed crossing over the River Coquet. This river is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) along its extent for its good water quality and biodiversity. The stretch of river that the new bridge will cross is also a Drinking Water Protected Area. Therefore, there could be quite significant potential impacts to biodiversity and human health if chemical pollutants were to enter the water via drainage.

Ecology

A small section (<1 ha) of SSSI-designated ancient woodland is to be removed where the scheme crosses the River Coquet. Ancient woodland is an irreplaceable habitat, and new planting will never recover the lost ecological value.

A number of new habitat features are to be created as part of the plans, and we encourage the developers to plant sensitively to wildlife in the surrounding area, using only native species and with consideration for how they can contribute to wildlife corridors. We have also asked that Highways England commit to management of these new habitats in perpetuity, rather than for only 15 years, as their value for biodiversity will quickly be lost otherwise..

Protected Species

There are some good proposals in the plan for how to limit collision risk to wildlife. Overall, however, the plan does not go nearly far enough in considering and mitigating impacts to protected species, with some notable species not considered at all.

Restoration Strategy

Given all of the above concerns, and until we can be confident that all protected species have been considered adequately and that appropriate mitigation will be implemented, NWT has **objected** to the proposals as they stand.

