

London Assembly Environment Committee

Railway Embankments

Combined Evidence Received

Investigation: Railway Embankments/Lineside Vegetation

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Sent: 08 August 2011 15:54

To: Alexandra Beer

Subject: FW: Response: Investigation into the Management of Vegetation on Railway embankments

Dear Alexandra,

I have put below our response to the letter dated 2nd Aug 2011 re investigation into management of vegetation on railway embankments.

We currently have no internal guidelines or strategies for lineside vegetation management.

As we do not deal with vegetation management on railways we do not follow any guidelines external, or national. We would inform Network rail if we saw, or it was reported to us, any dead, dying, or dangerous trees.

Network rail inform us when they are to be working in our Borough, this is usually communicated by phone call which is backed up by an email, generally with the letter sent out to the public attached.

We have had very little in the way of issues regarding work on railway land, apart from an incident approximately 3 years ago. That was when the rail teams were working on a Sunday behind properties in St Mary's Road Wallington. The Arboricultural team received an emergency call regarding damage to trees and wildlife habitat in the Butter Hill area. We attended site, but found it closed off and could not get close enough talk to the contractors at the time. My colleague phoned network rail the next day.

Up until now we have not interfered with tree work on railway sites, I have always assumed that Network rail carries out their own monitoring and quality control, and that the work carried out by them was necessary to fulfil their duties as the statutory undertaker.

We respond to resident's complaints by informing them of Network Rail's contact numbers.

I hope that this has satisfactorily answered the questions and if you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Head of Parks and Highways

LV002 City of London

Sent: 05 August 2011 09:44

To: Alexandra Beer

Cc:

Subject: Investigation onto the Management of Vegetation on Railway Embankments

Thank you for your letter of 2 August. I regret I don't think we have any in the City.

Director of Environmental Services

LV003 London Tree Officers' Association (LTOA)

Sent: 17 August 2011 11:53

To: Alexandra Beer

Subject: London Assembly Letter, Investigation into the Management of Vegetation on Railway Embankments

Alexandra

Thank you for the letter dated 2 August 2011 from Daren Johnson.

A quick initial response is that Railtrack are responsible for what they do on operational land and are exempt from the controls available to protect trees, which LPAs operate (the answer to Q4 is generally 'we do not have a role').

Nevertheless we will ask our members for comment as it is something we are sometimes asked for comment upon and we are concerned with how such an important element of the Urban Forest is managed.

As the chair of the LTOA changes every two years in future please address letters to the Executive Officer, Becky Hesch for a quicker response.

Kind regards

Website: www.ltoa.org.uk

LV004 Place Design and Planning

Sent: 22 August 2011 10:09

To: Alexandra Beer

Cc:

Subject: FW: London Assembly investigation into the management of London's railway embankments

Dear Alex,

We are interested in this topic as landscape architects , and I am also a London Wildlife Trust member.

Here in Raynes Park, the Raynes Park Association in which we are a member, have worked with Merton Council to remove unsightly hoardings which were causing trees to be pruned just to maintain visibility of hoardings . This was as part of the Raynes Park Enhancement Plan in which the RPA have taken and continue to take an active part. A copy of our initial report is attached showing the adverse impact on what should and could be a green corridor as part of the rail infrastructure. Using powers under the 2007 Advertising Regulations notice was served on the companies owning the hoardings, which went to appeal, and which resulted in approx 11 hoardings removed and 4 reduced in scale. This was a milestone decision for none of the hoardings was illegal.

In some cases , despite meetings with Network Rail, South West trains etc we are still left with dead elms which should have been cleared at the same time as the hoardings, but nothing is happening. Other debris from the hoarding installation or track works are just left disfiguring embankments. The RPA is a very active association (the RPA meets every month) and we could potentially marshal help to deal with some problems but we hit the catch 22 problem.

As a community we are not authorised contractors to enter on the embankment land to do work ourselves. At the same time Network rail uses the argument of costs, other priorities, and other reasons to do nothing themselves. We have stalemate. We have another rail coordination meeting on 23rd Sept here at our office under the chairmanship of Stephen Hammond MP to try to move things forward but unlike the new national planning policy framework (NPPF) published on 25th July review which states that the default position to development should be "yes", it is regrettable when dealing with rail issues the default position is too often "no" or "too difficult ".

The rail corridors in London are a very valuable resource and we understand the problems that inappropriate vegetation and landscape management causes rail companies. There are, however, areas of green space within the Rail network not immediately at the trackside but down at the foot of embankments and elsewhere. These areas directly impact the local environment and habitats where more positive action could be taken to improve and maintain local areas, potentially using local help. As a LWT member I have participated with BTCV members as well to clear reserves and it is clear the good will in the community is there to be harnessed. With Localism now part of the planning agenda , rail companies should be pressed to change their standard "no " response to "how can we work with the community to meet all our aspirations".

Regards

Director

LV005 [Member of the Public]

Sent: 19 August 2011 13:27
To: Environment Committee
Subject: Management of Railway wildlife in London

Follow Up Flag: LV005 -Suggestions on
Investigation
Flag Status: Green

Hello. I was so pleased to get your e mail and to hear that you are interested in trying to get the right balance in managing habitats.

With more and more gardens being concreted over (as highlighted in London:Garden City?) these wildlife corridors are absolutely essential.

I think the best way would be to commission The London Wildlife Trust to report to you on what they think would be best - for wildlife, pollution, screening and the environment generally. If the public knew that this had happened - they would be reassured and this could cut down on the amount of public consultation - or at least make the process quicker. I know for example that if I was sent an e mail questionnaire asking for my views and I knew TLWT had made recommendations - I would be guided by them.

Councils are meant to keep a register of local amenity groups and so the consultation process here should be straightforward - and they would bring another view. Often local amenity groups have substantial local knowledge which could prove helpful to you. Civic Voice would have a list of signed up members as a starting point too.

This would mean that you had TLWT input and a quicker public and local input - but thereafter you would have to speak to the network providers etc and I am afraid I have no suggestions to make here because I am sure this is very complex given the need to run services at the same time as cutting back vegetation etc.

Keeping these habitats in good order may be something local volunteer groups and schools could do under the guidance of the TLWT?

Thank you for e mailing. Not sure how helpful this has been....

LV006 [Member of the Public]

Sent: 20 August 2011 22:20

To: Environment Committee

Follow Up Flag: LV006_Email

Re railway embankments. Our Residents Association adjoins the Liverpool Street to Cheshunt line going north (which also leads to other lines) and we often cross the bridge along Clyde Road. We have had various issues with the embankment over the past 30 years of which the following spring to mind.

- It has never been easy to contact Network Rail about any embankment problem and the Council seems to have almost equal difficulty in dealing with them.
- a major cutback of trees happened a few years ago which prompted residents to ask the Council to plant trees alongside the line. Some of the embankment trees have now regrown but the exercise was fairly drastic.
- A great deal of rubbish has been thrown on the embankment over the years, so much so that one resident told me Network Rail had said a special train would be needed to move the excess rubbish away. I am not aware of this happening.
- There are a number of birds using the embankment which can be heard singing in springtime including blackcaps, robins and others.

No doubt other residents will have comments on the situation.

LV007 London Forum

Sent: 21 August 2011 11:59

To: Environment Committee

Subject: Railway embankments

Follow Up Flag: LV007_London Forum Response

The Underground embankment through Chiswick in West London had all trees removed, due to leaves on the lines, and then had to be re-built because the tree roots were holding it stable!

We were promised evergreen bushes to hide the ugly embankment and to grow up to reduce the clackety-clack noise from the railway reaching houses. Only a few shrubs were planted.

LB Ealing seemed not to be able to make TfL finish the job as proposed even though it is in a conservation area.

The result can be seen along the northern side of the embankment through Acton Green Common opposite Turnham Green station.

Chairman,
London Forum of Amenity & Civic Societies

LV008 London Borough of Croydon

Sent: 23 August 2011 08:09

To: 'Executive Officer'

Cc:

Subject: RE: London Assembly Letter, Investigation into the Management of Vegetation on Railway Embankments

In response to your e mail

1. We have regular monthly meeting with Tram link part of TFL regarding line side vegetation on the tram lines, The rail companies will write to us regarding line side management that they are undertaking.

We are currently working in partnership with network rail to allow access to an embankment for them ant to allow the council to undertake works while the line is closed.

2 We occasionally have residents ask the council to cut back trees over hanging their properties from the railway line, we inform them to contact Network rail.

3 if we receive complaints regarding works or line side vegetation we would direct them to contact Network rail.

4 we have no involvement in ensuring that network rail / Transport for London consult with stakeholders but we are aware they have written to stakeholders in the past.

Trees and Woodlands Officer

Darren Johnson
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London
SE1 2AA

Dear Mr Johnson,

Re: investigation into the management of vegetation on railway embankments

The London Borough of Islington does not own or manage any lineside land; therefore we do not have a lineside vegetation management strategy. All lineside land within the Borough is owned and managed by an alternative landowner, such as Network Rail or Transport for London.

1. How do you liaise with NR/TfL about the management of lineside vegetation in the borough?

We have contacts within NR who are responsible for the operation of lineside vegetation management within the Borough. We focus our efforts around this subject on those sites which are also a Site of Importance to Nature Conservation (SINC). However failings with this liaison have been highlighted recently, with NR managing an area of vegetation within a SINC without prior notification or discussion with us. Our stance is one of protection and enhancement of the Borough's SINC's through good management by the landowner.

2. Are you aware of any issues raised, eg by neighbouring residents, regarding the management of vegetation on railway embankments in London and could you provide details.

We have recently been in complex discussions with both NR and local residents, regarding vegetation management at the Drayton Park sidings, N5. NR contractors cut back to ground level a large section of sidings, which falls within a SINC, including the removal of immature trees. There was no notification to local residents or Council officers. There were concerns raised by local residents that the works were in contravention of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, however this has not been substantiated. The reasons cited for clearance were health and safety and the safe operation of the emergency evacuation route at the site, however residents dispute this. The site was cleared in 2004, to similar outcry amongst residents however the situation has arisen once more.

3. How do you respond to residents' complaints about works affecting lineside vegetation?

When told of a concern, we liaise with our contacts within NR regarding the works, and the reason for it. We hope in the future there can be direct dialogue between NR and ourselves and local residents, rather than reactive discussions as a result of prior works that the council and residents were not notified about.

4. How do you ensure Network Rail/TfL and their subcontractors, when carrying out works affecting lineside vegetation, follow the right guidelines and consult with local stakeholders sufficiently?

In short we don't ensure they do. We have, on previous occasions, requested a more proactive approach from NR, especially regarding the site mentioned in Q2. We have a target to get all of our SINCS under positive conservation management, and encourage NR to adopt management strategies that allow for the safe working of the railway whilst also benefitting the wildlife value of the site. We hope that through the recent negative experience, we can urge NR to take this more proactive response, and be a good and informative landowner to their neighbours.

The above outlines a situation that is changing considerably at the moment, given the recent incident (16th July 2011). We would welcome guidelines for landowners that outline the importance of railside land to the

green infrastructure of heavily urbanised boroughs such as ours, and positive management techniques that would benefit wildlife.

Yours

Principal Parks Manager
Islington Council

Darren Johnson AM
Deputy Chair, Environment Committee
London Assembly
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

1st September 2011

Dear Darren,

INVESTIGATION INTO THE MANAGEMENT OF VEGETATION ON RAILWAY EMBANKMENTS

Thank you for inviting London Wildlife Trust to comment on and provide input into the above investigation. As you are aware we have previously made you aware of our involvement with some of the issues arising from some aspects of management, and our response to these, as set out in our position statement.

Introduction; London Wildlife Trust's involvement

The Trust has had a largely *ad hoc* relationship with the railway companies in London. In the late 1980s we worked with British Rail on some lineside management issues, and through that took on the licence in 1989 to manage New Cross Gate Cutting as a nature reserve in Brockley, which we manage to this day. In 1996-7 we developed an initial partnership with Railtrack that saw the publication of *Wild Linesides*¹ – promoting the nature that can be seen from London's railways, and the investigation of two more lineside nature reserves – Sydenham Hill station (near our Sydenham Hill Wood reserve) and Selhurst Triangle. However, staff changes within Railtrack and with us, led to this initiative running out of steam.

In 1999, with the development of the London Biodiversity Action Plan, the Trust drew up the audit of railway linesides, based on the survey data gathered since the London Wildlife Habitat Survey of 1984/5, and subsequent work by the then London Ecology Unit.² This revealed that there were then over 790 kilometres of operational surface railways in London, owned predominantly then by Railtrack and London Underground Ltd, together with the Docklands Light Railway and Tramlink.

Since then in terms of lineside management ownership has since changed to Network Rail and Transport for London. The latter has been engaged with the London Biodiversity Partnership and a number of initiatives in partnership with a number of local authorities and nature conservation organisations.

The Trust is regularly receives calls from concerned members of the public about the impacts of lineside management, often at the time when contractors are on site. Their concerns are largely about the adverse impacts upon wildlife, loss of trees, impacts on visual amenity and from the screening that tree belts afford. We have provided advice to community groups when we can, and developed a position statement which was ratified by our Board in 2010. This statement acknowledges the operational constraints of the railway owners, the impacts of some vegetation on safe and punctual operations, and the impacts – both positive and negative – to biodiversity (both in the short-term and longer-term).

Value for biodiversity

It has long been recognised that the collective network of London's railway linesides is important for wildlife both in providing a range of habitats and acting as conduits and corridors linking the network of green spaces within the Capital.

¹ Launched by Jenny Agutter at Euston Station.

² London Biodiversity Partnership, 2000. *The London Biodiversity Audit: Volume 1 of the London Biodiversity Action Plan*, LBP.

Diversity of habitats

The predominant habitats found along London's railway linesides are grassland, scrub and woodland, together with ruderal and wasteland communities. These are legacies of the original landscaping carved out and created as the railways were laid out after the late 1830s, and in many cases either reflect the underlying geology or the substrates brought into to support embankments and cuttings (for example brickearths, clays and, more recently, concrete), as well as the surface ballast. For much of the railways history under steam traction, linesides were managed intensively to prevent fires, and were maintained as grasslands.

The succession to woodland along many tracts is largely a result of the 1955 Modernisation Plan and the transition to electric and diesel traction, also involving a loss of permanent lineside management labour. Consequently large tracts of grassland developed into scrub and woodland; some of these are now extensive and relatively mature, merging with adjacent woodlands.

Wasteland communities are predominantly found around sidings and marshalling areas, especially where these have become redundant, and can thrive on the well-drained substrates. Over time these may develop into pioneer woodland (consisting of birch and willow) and scrub, however, these are now considerably rarer following the loss of redundant marshalling yards such as at Temple Mills and Alexandra Park to development. Examples are found at Feltham, Selhurst, and Old Oak Common.

Important stretches

Over 1000 hectares of lineside have been identified as Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SINCs) in London – over 40 in total. The longest and most important is that running between New Cross Gate and Forest Hill in Lewisham, a Site of Metropolitan Importance (M122) which incorporates a number of nature reserves en route (including New Cross Gate Cutting, Garthorne Road NR and Devonshire Road NR).³ Others include, for example, Brackenbury Cutting (Hillingdon), East Sutton railway land (Sutton), High Barnet embankment (Barnet), Stanmore embankment (Harrow), Sydenham Hill Station (Southwark), and various stretches in Islington (collectively identified as of Borough Importance). In addition a number of local authorities have awarded a level of protection to some tracts of railway linesides as green corridors within their planning documents, for example Lewisham and Ealing and/or as Biodiversity Action Plan targets, for example in Lambeth.

In addition, railways are adjacent to a large number of SINCs, and provide extensions and connections across these which can benefit the ecology and movement of a wide range of species. The management of railway linesides can influence adjacent sites (and vice versa), for example, in the movement of highly mobile plant species e.g. rosebay willowherb.

Conduits and corridors

Linesides can also act as corridors for certain species, especially mammals, reptiles and some plants, enabling them to move across parts of London. In some cases these stretch almost interrupted from the centre of London out through the suburbs and into the surrounding counties, and can provide opportunities for the movement of animals and plants. The dispersal of Oxford ragwort (*Senecio squalidus*) from the Oxford Botanical Garden from 1794 and eventually onto the city's railway tracks is a classic example. The clinker and ballast mimicked the volcanic substrates of its original Sicilian habitat, and the movement of trains have subsequently helped to distribute it across much of the UK. Other examples include rosebay willowherb, Italian toadflax, and common evening-primrose.

Key species

A number of key species are commonly associated with lineside habitats:

- grasslands: include slow-worm, common lizard, kestrel, orange-tip butterfly and various grasshoppers
- woodlands: great tit, great spotted woodpecker, sparrowhawk, chiffchaff, and various bat species
- scrub: blackbird, lesser whitethroat, speckled wood butterfly
- wastelands: common evening-primrose, rosebay willowherb, various bees and hoverflies

A number of invasive species also thrive in lineside habitats, and a few of these can potentially damage existing habitats (such as Japanese knotweed), or cause damage to built infrastructure (for example,

³ Described in some detail in: Archer, J. and Yarham, I., 2000. *Nature Conservation in Lewisham*, Ecology Handbook 30, London Ecology Unit.

buddleia). In addition, lack of management has tended to lead to large patches of bramble scrub developing which can also have adverse impacts on grassland habitats.

The London Invasive Species Initiative (LISI) was established in 2010 as part of Defra's framework to control the adverse impacts of a wide variety of introduced plants and animals. LISI shares best practice, and will help co-ordinate and map interventions across London. Currently chaired by the Environment Agency, and with a strong focus on aquatic species, there is nevertheless concern that railway linesides often support significant populations of species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), as well as others which have been listed as potentially causing concern.⁴ Their presence on railways is often difficult to contain, compounded by the movement of trains that can facilitate dispersal both within and without the railway corridor

Threats to habitats

Ordinary railway operations aim to keep a clear passage of tracks, through chemical weed controls and vegetation management to remove sight and physical obstructions – these can have an impact on some habitats. There is also the need to reduce the impact of 'leaves on the line' (the decomposition of some leaves, especially sycamore and lime, leaving a mucilaginous surface on the rails and conductors, effecting traction and electrical pick-up). This has led to a programme to reduce the numbers of soft-leaved deciduous trees within a several metres of the operational permanent way.

Inappropriate management can often have significant short-term impacts, whilst under-management can lead to a loss of species-rich habitats over time.

In addition the following issues can also adversely impact on railway lineside biodiversity:

- loss of or damage to habitats through lineside or neighbouring development
- garden encroachment
- flytipping and rubbish (domestic (including garden disposals) and commercial)

Surveys and data management

Critical to our understanding of the ecology of London's railways (and how this can be best conserved) is through regular surveys of habitats and – where possible – species, and ensuring that this data is maintained, easy to access, and kept up to date. In respect of London's SINC's and green spaces this is through Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL), which is hosted by London Wildlife Trust. GiGL has a long-standing relationship with a number of key organisations in London, including most London boroughs, the GLA, Natural England, Royal Parks, and Transport for London.

Surveys of London's railways is difficult due to access restrictions, and has mostly been carried out via off-site, on-train observations and aerial imagery. More detailed on-site surveys have been carried out on some sites, especially those owned by Transport for London.

Both Transport for London (London Underground) and Network Rail have published Biodiversity Action Plans.

Investigations questions

1. *How do you liaise with Network Rail/Transport for London about the management of lineside management vegetation?*

Not formally. Our engagement recently has largely been through various site-based projects, e/g/ at King's Cross and in respect of our nature reserve at New Cross Gate Cutting. We would like to be able to formalise the relationship further, and pursue some of the site management aspirations we explored with Railtrack.

2. *Are you aware of any issues that have been raised e.g. by neighbouring residents, regarding the management of vegetation on railway embankments?*

Yes. We are often contacted by concerned members of the public about the felling of trees, usually when works have started.

⁴ See: <http://www.fera.defra.gov.uk/wildlife/ecologyManagement/documents/schedule9Dec10.pdf>

3. *How do you respond to residents' complaints about works affecting lineside vegetation?*

We either provide a succinct response by e-mail or 'phone, and if possible pass on our position statement. We are not usually in any position to alter any decisions made, but suggest that the local councillor is made aware (if not already), and the local authority tree officer (in planning). We will comment on the likely biodiversity impacts of the works, if we have enough information to do so, otherwise our comments will be generic.

4. *What is your role in ensuring Network rail/TfL and their subcontractors, when carrying out works affecting lineside vegetation, follow the right guidelines and consult with local stakeholders sufficiently?*

No formal role. We are aware of TfL's engagement with the London Biodiversity Partnership and the work it has carried out in meeting the various objectives of the London BAP, and their own BAP. We are also aware that the LBP co-ordinator did make attempts to invite Network Rail to the LBP, but prior to his role being made redundant earlier this year this was not successful. Nevertheless, Network Rail operate nationally, and from what we understand are structured similarly to Railtrack on a regional basis adopted from the old networks operating radiating outwards from London, rather than a pan-London basis. This will constrain effective communication from an organisation like ourselves organised to operate across and within London.

Conclusions and recommendations

1. We recognise and understand the needs of the Transport for London and Network Rail to operate a safe and efficient railway network for the benefit of the TOCs, the travelling public and businesses. We believe that this can be balanced with a sensitive approach to lineside management that can help meet the needs of wildlife, and help the railways meet their responsibilities to protecting the ecological assets they own and manage.
2. We believe that over time – since the 1980s - the management of lineside vegetation management has become more sensitive to biodiversity in London. In part this is due to legislation, and in part due to a mixture of greater awareness of the issues and the sensitivities surrounding them raised by people living nearby. Local and vocal campaigns have affected change in certain areas, although there are questions whether this has been as effective as across the system as a whole.
3. The adoption of biodiversity action plans and good practice on lineside vegetation management is a positive move; the question is whether this is being effectively adopted across the network to an agreed standard. There are certainly examples of good practice but these are often local.
4. The key issues that cause concern to local communities that we are aware of are:
 - timing (e.g. breeding bird season)
 - impact on protected species (e.g. bats, breeding birds, reptiles)
 - lack of effective prior notice
 - scale of the works (e.g. whole embankments at a time)
 - approaches and methodologies occasionally exhibited (aka 'slash and burn')
 - inability to amend or halt works once started

We would benefit from having a clear statement of how both Transport for London and Network Rail are addressing such concerns, and how best practice is being implemented across the network, to allay fears of ecological damage.

A compact of operational best practice between key stakeholders (e.g. London Tree Officers Association, London Forum (of civic amenity societies)) that sets out what should be undertaken, and how this can have biodiversity benefits as well as meeting operational requirements, could serve to develop a stronger relationship between organisations that are affected by the impacts of such management.

5. The felling of trees on railway linesides can have an immediate and drastic effect, but does not necessarily cause adverse long-term impacts to biodiversity, although this will be dependent on the timing, scale, specification, and adjacent habitats, etc. The management and restoration of

grasslands should be seen as a key objective for many railway linesides, for which tree removal is a requisite.

6. We recognise that there will be times when and where drastic management interventions need to be made for safety or other reasons. Nevertheless, all due regard to the ecological impacts need to be considered and mitigation effectively put in place if these are significantly adverse – these may be outside the immediate railway corridor.
7. The replacement of removed tree species with those species with leaves that do not cause a mucilaginous film on the rails and wheels is appropriate, along the lines of the *Right Place Right Tree* approach.⁵ The conservation of other habitats, such as scrub and grassland should be seen as of equal value, especially in context of the SINCs identified on the network.
8. Transport for London and Network Rail should commit to manage appropriately – and where possible protect from significant loss or damage – the Sites of Nature Conservation Importance identified on their respective networks, and work with partners to identify new SINCs where appropriate.
9. Transport for London and Network Rail are responsible for a strategically important ecological resource across London, and as such they can contribute to a number of strategic frameworks and programmes – such as the London (and local) Biodiversity Action Plans, London Climate Change Partnership, LISI, the emerging All London Green Grid, and potentially the future Local Nature Partnerships and relevant Nature Improvement Areas. We would support active engagement with these where possible.
10. We recommend that Network Rail seeks an arrangement with Greenspace Information for Greater London (as has Transport for London) to supply and manage ecological data that can help serve the strategic needs of both the railways and the conservation sector.
11. We believe there are opportunities to develop more nature reserves along a number of linesides, along the lines of New Cross Gate Cutting or East & West Bank NR⁶, and would be keen to discuss this further.
12. Publication of an update of *Wild Linesides* – or similar -for dissemination across the network, could serve to show the positive benefits of well-managed linesides for biodiversity.
13. The division between Transport for London and Network Rail does not make for effective co-operation or communication of lineside management issues, even along corridors where both companies are involved. A clearer communication chain for organisations such as London Wildlife Trust would be useful – we would want to work in partnership, rather than act as a conduit of complaint.

We presume both companies have a forward plan of management which they work to – not just BAPs, but operational plans of lineside management, which set out where, when and what. We believe it would be beneficial for both TfL and Network Rail to convene – or be formal members of – a group to oversee the management of vegetation that could meet regularly to review forthcoming management activities, in order to help plan any likely issues that may arise from these, as well as discuss further some of the issues raised in the above.

I hope you find these points of use; please don't hesitate to contact me if you want any further details.

Regards,

Deputy CEO

⁵ As set out in the *London Tree and Woodland Framework*, 2005.

⁶ See: <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/east-and-west-bank-nature-reserve.htm>

LV011 Cllr Catherine West (London Borough of Islington)

Sent: 01 September 2011 13:56

To: Darren Johnson

Subject: Fwd: BIODIVERSITY MASSACRE - PLEASE TAKE ACTION!!

Darren,

You sent put an email recently asking for examples of poor management of railway sidings. This email string tells it's own story. Hope it's useful.

Caroline

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "West, Catherine"

Date: 1 September 2011 13:45:03 GMT+01:00

Subject: FW: BIODIVERSITY MASSACRE - PLEASE TAKE ACTION!!

Dear All

Please find enclosed copies of correspondence I have had with Network Rail on this matter.

Since then, Council officers have had a positive site meeting with a Network Rail representative in order to fully explain the concerns raised ahead of a wider discusson.

The Council is to provide Network Rail with GIS copies of all maps of the SINC sites they are responsible for in Islington so that they could check their records and produce a management statement for each site.

Network Rail have also agreed to stop any further chipping. Andrew Bedford assures me that whilst the site looks quite bleak following this work, he is confident that it will recover well - apparently a number of birch on the site are already showing a good amount of re-growth.

A further meeting is now planned for the end of September and residents will be invited to attend once a date has been finalised.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention and I will continue to liaise with officers and colleagues to ensure a positive outcome.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Catherine West

Leader

London Borough of Islington

(Labour Councillor for Tollington Ward)

-----Original Message-----

Sent: 25 July 2011 13:45

To: West, Catherine

Subject: Re: BIODIVERSITY MASSACRE - PLEASE TAKE ACTION!!

Hi Catherine - that is a most welcome initiative - I can't thank you enough for giving it your attention! I think the problem is mainly one of awareness - I don't think they realise just how important these habitats are to Islington.

Once again, many, many thanks...

Best regards

----- Original Message -----

Sent: Monday, July 25, 2011 1:20 PM

Subject: RE: BIODIVERSITY MASSACRE - PLEASE TAKE ACTION!!

I am very happy to raise this issue with Network Rail as I have quite a bit to do with them through my role as Chair of the Transport Committee at London Councils.

Catherine West

Cllr Catherine West

Leader

London Borough of Islington

(Labour Councillor for Tollington Ward)

-----Original Message-----

Sent: 24 July 2011 23:53

Subject: Re: BIODIVERSITY MASSACRE - PLEASE TAKE ACTION!!

Hi ___ - I'm afraid that if the Council doesn't take strong action over this, then it is just going to go on happening. As you say, this is the second time for the Drayton Park site (NC 10 in the UDP - Borough grade 1), but about ten years ago Railtrack, as then was, completely trashed the island site adjacent to the East Coast mainline (NC 9 - also Borough grade 1), and then a few years later cleared sites closer to Kings Cross, including a stand of silver birch. The trouble is that these sites have strong development control policies protecting them, but little else. We can try and shame them through publicity, but ultimately it is essential for the politicians to engage. So much of the nature conservation land we have in Islington is rail-side or canal-side - if we lose it there is precious little left. Keep up the good work!

----- Original Message -----

Sent: Sunday, July 24, 2011 12:44 PM

Subject: Re: BIODIVERSITY MASSACRE - PLEASE TAKE ACTION!!

Thank you for bringing up this matter with Network Rail and informing us of their response.

We have already dealt with the question of safety on the sidings, used

as an excuse for the destruction of a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation, in our email to ___ to which you were copied

into. The responses to this letter from local people using the station

completely endorsed our position.

We note that you are questioning the frequency with which the site is cleared and quite rightly so. Their statement to you that the sidings are 'cleared regularly, more than once a year some times' is clearly not true.

We can assure you that no major works have taken place since 2004 when

we met you on site to discuss a similar incident. It is possible that the odd tree has been cut back in the intervening seven year but nothing that you would notice. Some of the trees cut down last Saturday were 20 plus feet high and even Silver Birch doesn't grow that fast in a year.

We are therefore pleased that you are asking for their schedule of works to the site and we will be interested to hear what your views are after seeing it. We would also like to see a copy please.

We have asked ___ for a copy of the result of Railscape's survey done before the destruction of the site. We suggest that Islington Council does the same. As a local authority you have more chance of gaining access to it than local residents.

We are also pleased to hear that you have asked them to notify you of their intention to carry out any future work on the site. This same request was made seven years ago and the assurances given to you then have come to naught. If I remember correctly they were also informed at this time of the sidings being a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation, something they now deny any knowledge of.

It's all very well having discussions with Network Rail but, frankly, it's difficult to envisage a future management of the site that benefits wildlife if it is cleared once or more times a year, as the ecological value of the site will be virtually nil, apart from a few

mosses surviving on felled vegetation. Notwithstanding the above, if such discussions do take place we would like to be involved.

We do not want Islington Council to be fobbed off with more excuses and more promises of consultation in the future. We want Network Rail or their contractors to be brought to account for their latest actions. If the local authority, who designated the site in the first place won't take strong action when that same site is seriously damaged, then who will look after our environment? Only if pressure is

put upon Network Rail will they take the protection of the environment

seriously as set out in their website.

We

therefore ask you to reconsider your decision not to pursue the idea of prosecuting Network Rail. Otherwise we will be having this email conversation again in five or ten years time.

Best wishes,

----- Original Message -----

Sent: Tuesday, July 19, 2011 3:19 PM

Subject: RE: BIODIVERSITY MASSACRE - PLEASE TAKE ACTION!!

Dear All,

We have now had a response from Network Rail and had a positive, constructive conversation with them.

The reason cited for the works is that the site is an evacuation route.

Network Rail clear it for First Capital Connect, who are their clients.

The reason for the works is that it is a Health and Safety issue, the site must be kept managed in case of the need to evacuate the trains on that line. In terms of the frequency, they have stated that the site is cleared regularly, more than once a year some times. We are asking for a schedule of this as that does not match with our knowledge of the site.

They carry out a full visual inspection before any works, and have a check sheet that they use for noting any breeding birds etc. They do this visual check if they have to carry out any works between March and September. They were fully aware of the legislation around Wildlife and Countryside Act and their responsibilities.

They were very apologetic regarding the public's reaction to the work and we have requested that in future they notify us of their intention

to carry out any works. Of concern to us was the fact that they were unaware that the site was a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation.

We will address this by supplying them with all of the data from the recent ecological survey of the borough and maps of all of the SINC sites that are owned by Network Rail. They would like to put all this information onto their central database, as they have a variety of teams who carry out work throughout the year and this would help to avoid a repeat of this situation.

They were very keen to enter into a dialogue to see if there are alterations to the management regime to improve the site for biodiversity and try to balance the health and safety requirements for

the site with the need to manage it positively for nature conservation.

We do not consider it necessary to take any other action at this stage

and will look to use the opportunity created to establish a constructive dialogue with them regarding the future management of the site.

Principal Parks Manager
Environment & Regeneration Department
Public Realm Division
Islington Council

-----Original Message-----

Sent: 18 July 2011 22:29

To

Subject: Re: BIODIVERSITY MASSACRE - PLEASE TAKE ACTION!!

Dear __,

Thanks for getting back to us.

We are surprised to hear that the reason given for the complete destruction of the wildlife habitat on the Drayton Park Station Sidings, a designated site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation

in Islington, took place so that Network Rail could check their inspection pits!

This was not the excuse we were given when the site was devastated in 2004.

As you can see from the attached photographs the inspection pits are now filled to the brim with vegetation, in fact you can hardly make out where they are which could be quite dangerous for any workers visiting the site.

It will be interesting to note if anybody goes there to inspect them and how they will do it!

I cannot imagine, anyhow, why anybody would want to inspect the pits, the last time they were used in my memory was when they brought the train back home from Moorgate in February 1975. The engineering sheds which were there at the time were demolished two years later. Nowadays

there aren't even any lines to the pits!

It should be noted that when Dr ___ of the disbanded GLC's London Ecology Unit looked at the site (sometime in the 1980's) he pointed out that the inspection pits are themselves a separate and valuable eco system.

Sadly, to our knowledge, over the years Network Rail have never managed the site in the way suggested in your email below.

Whilst we are keen to remind Network Rail of their responsibility for managing the site in the future, the purpose of our alert is to ensure

that the council or somebody brings them to account for their actions.

Thanks and best wishes,

----- Original Message -----

Sent: Monday, July 18, 2011 8:56 AM

Subject: RE: BIODIVERSITY MASSACRE - PLEASE TAKE ACTION!!

Dear All,

I will send the below email to my contacts at Network Rail to see if they can answer your concerns. From asking in the office, the reason this area was cut 10 years ago was to clear some inspection pits, and these need to be checked every decade or so, so I assume this cutting related to this.

Cutting of scrub is a seasonal activity, and if the site is not being browsed or grazed cutting is a common method of managing an area such as this. However, this would ideally be done in late summer/autumn, when there is less likelihood of breeding birds having 2nd or 3rd roosts, and when the majority of the plants have set seed. Also the airisings should be removed, which doesn't appear to have happened judging by the pictures. A discussion with them on how they manage this area may be the best way forward.

Thanks

Nature Conservation Manager

-----Original Message-----

Subject: BIODIVERSITY MASSACRE - PLEASE TAKE ACTION!!

Importance: High

BIODIVERSITY MASSACRE - PLEASE TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION!!

We're not sure who to send this Email to so, with the holiday season now upon us, we're sending it to a wide number of people in an attempt

to get attention and some urgent action taken on this important issue.

This morning a neighbour rushed round to tell us that the Drayton Park

Station Sidings, a designated site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation in Islington, was being raised to the ground by Network Rail workers, despite there being no vegetation obstructing the tracks

or electrical circuits. He managed to stop the contractors by telling them that the area was protected, but by then 80% of the eco-rich scrubland had gone. We understand that they later returned to the site

and completed the job.

We tried desperately to contact Islington Council, not just the Greenspace team but anybody, only to find that the Council had closed down for the weekend.

This is a wanton and reckless destruction of an important and "protected" nature conservation area in Islington taking place during the bird breeding season.

As you'll be aware, it is an offence against The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (amended 2000) to take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built.

We strongly suggest therefore that the council look into the legal position with a view to the possibility of prosecuting Network Rail.

We will be contacting the RSPB's legal department on Monday to see what action can be taken.

The following bird species either nest in, or depend upon the sidings,

and some species will have had their nests destroyed in the devastation and it's quite likely their second and third brood nestlings will have been killed :

house sparrow (A Red Data Book species which nests locally and uses

the sidings for feeding) blue tit great tit greenfinch goldfinch
blackbird wren robin great spotted woodpecker sparrowhawk kestrel jay
Carron crow magpies woodpigeon feral pigeon

The site also benefits numerous insect and mammal species and is a feeding area for bats.

Although the damage has been done to this site, it's vitally important

that Islington Council acts now to ensure that there is no possibility

of any future vandalism at this site, or at any other Network Rail site in the borough.

It should be noted that much the same thing happened here around 10 years ago and a Greenspace manager informed us that he'd obtained an undertaking at the time that the railway authority would not do this sort of thing again without first notifying Islington Council of their

reasons.

We ask you to please take immediate action over this matter!

Yours sincerely ,

LV012 London Borough of Lewisham

Sent: 06 September 2011 08:43

To: Alexandra Beer

Subject: Re: Vegetation on railway embankments -Daren Johnson AM

Hi Alexandra,

I have composed a response to this investigation on behalf of Nigel Tyrell [London Borough of Lewisham]. Please find attached my letter and a copy of Network Rails' Community Relations consultation letter.

Please can you drop me a line to acknowledge receipt and also let me know if you require hard copies through the post.

Please don't hesitate to drop me a line if you have any comments or queries, Kind regards

ecological regeneration manager

LV012 Attachment:

Date :- 01 .09.2011

Dear Mr Johnson

Re: Investigation into the management of vegetation on railway embankments

I am writing in response and to answer the questions you raise in your letter dated 2nd August 2011, on behalf of [the] [Head of Environment, for the London Borough of Lewisham).

Request:

- To provide details of LBL internal guidelines or strategy for lineside vegetation management

Comment:

~ No formal internal guidance or strategy for lineside vegetation management has been produced. Linesides are considered to be Network Rail operational land, they are not owned by the Borough and as such are considered to be beyond the scope of internal guidance or unilateral Council strategies.

Request:

- Any external/national guidelines you follow regarding lineside vegetation management

Comment:

~ 'A natural renaissance for Lewisham 2006-2011,' is the Lewisham Biodiversity Partnership document and the Biodiversity Action Plan for the Borough has the objective to, 'Protect and manage appropriately the railway corridors for biodiversity.'

Actions include:

- ~ Establish positive working links with the Council, Network Rail, Transport for London -in respect of the protection and management of Lewisham's rail network.
- ~ Work with Lewisham Council and Network Rail to establish Local Nature Reserve status for Devonshire Road Nature Reserve.
- ~ Further the development of 'special management status' for the corridor between New Cross Gate Cutting and Forest Hill.

~ Promote the value of the Borough's linesides through the publication of information and public events.

~ Work in partnership with the Strategic Rail Authority on the proposed East London Line development to mitigate any environmental effects on the rail corridor and to mitigate and make wildlife enhancements wherever possible.

~ Removal of invasive species along the railway corridor.

Lewisham's current Biodiversity Action Plan in relation to railway linesides can be viewed at:

http://ukbars.defra.gov.uk/plans/lbap_complete_plan.asp?X=%7BAA443A94%2D5370%2D433E%2D8A00%2D769892B94377%7D&LBAP=%7B1571OA14%2DDBB2E%2D48EF%2DACCD%2D4DDD814EA229%7D&CO=

=

Although the Borough Council is a principle partner and facilitator of the Lewisham Biodiversity Partnership, the partnership was established to consolidate the interests and expertise of a range of organisations and individuals with a duty to, or interest in, conserving the Borough's wildlife and natural environment.

It is there to ensure that the diverse range of views on Lewisham's biodiversity is effectively represented. It will promote innovation and best practice and, although the Partnership is not a campaigning organisation, it will challenge partners and others where necessary.

Although Network Rail representatives have not attended these meetings in the past various NR officers have been on the distribution list and have been sent minutes.

Request:

- How do you liaise with Network Rail/Transport for London about the management of lineside vegetation in the borough?

Comment:

~ There are many types of consultations and liaison that occurs between the Local Authority and NR that have an bearing on lineside vegetation. These may involve various Council Departments and different Officers. These consultations tend to be part of ongoing rail upgrades or the establishment of new track, lines and/or facilities. This response has not sought to detail or comment on this type of formal discussions but on the communications and interactions that occur as a result of the day to day management of lineside vegetation that I am aware of.

As a general rule liaison has been on a ad-hoc, as and when basis. Historically this approach has relied on either responding to a particular enquiry from NR and/or knowing the contact in NR who can deal with a request or by following the same procedure that is available for a member of the public via a 0845 number or via the NR website.

A recent Local Government Regulation E bulletin included the following guidance for Local Authorities.

Local Authorities and the Network Rail Helpline

Network Rail provides a distinct option for Local Authorities who need to record their enquiries or complaints via their National Helpline. Would ALL Local Authorities use the following procedure:

When dialling the helpline no 08457 11 41 41 , Local Authorities are able to identify themselves by selecting Option 1 using the interactive Voice Response system.

Local Authorities will then be put through to an Adviser at the Network Rail helpline, who will take note of their complaint, provide them with a unique service request number for future reference, and then forward their complaint to the relevant community Relations Team for resolution.

Community Relations will investigate the case and task out to the relevant infrastructure Maintenance Protection Coordinator (IMPC)

Network Rail will aim to acknowledge the Local Authority's complaint or enquiry within 10 working days, via the provision of a unique service request number and will then provide regular feedback at 20 day intervals as it works to resolve the issue. For areas that are publicly accessible Network Rail will aim to provide a resolution within 20 days or provide a scheduled workday for resolution.

Request:

- Are you aware of any issues that have been raised, e.g. by neighbouring residents, regarding the management of vegetation on railway embankments in London and could you provide details?

Comment:

~ The Local Authority is aware of numerous occurrences/instances where issues have been raised by neighbouring residents regarding the management of vegetation on railway embankments. In the recently past there has been issues along the Nunhead/Brockley Green Corridor, New Cross to St John's Corridor adjacent to Cold Blow Lane [East London Line Extension]; and just south of Hither Green Station. This is not an exhaustive list but does represent instances where residents have complained to the LA about excessive vegetation clearance or excessive vegetative clearance going beyond what was stated and/or poor replanting and/or inadequate reinstatement works post completion.

Request:

- How do you respond to residents' complaints about work affecting lineside vegetation?

Comment:

~ Initially we would collect information about the enquiry/complaint, for instance, the 'what, where, & when'. We would ask residents' if they have received a notification letter from NR Community Relations. We inform residents' that linesides are NR operational land, and they should contact NR via their helpline and/or website so that they can make their enquiry/complaint.

We then contact NR independently to inform them of the enquiry/complaint. There have been instances where lineside vegetation management by NR in Lewisham has caused a significant public backlash. As such Council Officers have attended meetings involving residents, NR Officers and Joan Ruddock [MoP-Lewisham Deptford constituency] to discuss specific issues of concern.

Request:

- How do you ensure NRITfL and their subcontractors, when carrying out work affecting lineside vegetation, follow the right guidelines and consult with local stakeholders sufficiently?

Comment:

~ Council Officers have attended meetings with NR Officers and their Community Relations Team and have discussed their vegetation management operations and have agreed to their consultation protocol [Please see the attached Community Relations letter]. The Local Authority does not have the resources to directly monitor this process but may become aware of problems as and when they arise.

Request:

- Is there any other information you think is relevant to the review?

Comment:

~ There are many potential issues that the Local Authority is aware of for residents who neighbour railway linesides. These can be about the lack of management, as well as, the perception of excessive vegetative management. Issues include: subsidence claims, shading complaints, excessive leaf fall into neighbouring gardens, also, complaints following works such as, loss of privacy, increased noise levels, increased exposure to rubbish/refuse/litter, lack of consultation or going beyond what was stated, lack of replanting and perceptions of ecological vandalism.

Much of the vegetation management of linesides that is conducted for operational reasons is broadly speaking good ecological management. The periodic clearance of small trees and scrub is akin to woodland glade management. This periodic removal of woody species allows light levels to penetrate to the ground and for herbaceous flora to flourish. This benefits various invertebrates like butterflies, bees and foraging mammals, reptiles and birds. Although trees and scrub will regenerate quickly this management creates a graded profile of dense vegetation and mixed habitats that is ecologically beneficial. In order to maximise the effectiveness of this type of management care has to be taken not to remove too big a linear stretch of woody vegetation. From an ecological perspective the current lineside management could be improved by employing traditional woodland management practices where a rotational strategy [e.g. 7 to 10 year cycle] of vegetation removal is used so that smaller linear sections are managed rather than very long linear tracts.

I hope that this response is helpful. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you should have any comments or queries

Yours sincerely

Green Scene- Environment Division

LV012 Attachment: Community Relations Consultation Template Letter from Network Rail

Railway Neighbour

(Input address)

Monday, 05 September 2011

Ref No:

Dear Neighbour,

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT WORKS - (Input specific work location)

I am writing to inform you that Network Rail needs to remove vegetation [and trees] affecting railway operations near to your property. The aim of this letter is to explain where, when and why these works will occur.

Works will be undertaken from (Input works date and times in 24-Hour format). The works will require the removal and/or cutting back of general vegetation and/or trees (Delete where appropriate).

Lineside vegetation can obscure signals, get blown onto the tracks, or grow to an extent where our staff do not have a safe place to wait whilst trains pass. Vegetation management can also help prevent leaves falling on the line which hampers train acceleration and braking.

Before works start Network Rail or its representatives carry out an ecological survey. Any protected species or nesting birds are identified and appropriate methods of working are put into place. Although the works do not require the submission of a planning application, where appropriate we will notify your local authority and any relevant statutory bodies.

To undertake these works, we will use a variety of equipment that can include chainsaws, flail machines, chipping machines or handsaws. Where suitable, logs and branches will either be left to create a safe habitat for wildlife; chipped and spread evenly; or will be completely removed from site.

Works will often be required to take place when trains are not running, but every effort is made to keep controllable noise to a minimum and our staff are briefed on working responsibly in the local community.

I hope this information is helpful and we apologise for any inconvenience these essential works may cause. However, if you have any additional questions or concerns, please visit www.networkrail.co.uk or telephone our 24-Hour National Helpline on 08457 11 41 41.

Yours sincerely

Community Relations Manager

-----Original Message-----

Sent: Friday, August 26, 2011 10:51 AM

Subject: FW: London Assembly Letter, Investigation into the Management of Vegetation on Railway Embankments

Dear _____,

I have some dealings with Network Rail on two separate occasions.

On the first occasion there was a dangerous tree that was endangering the railway lines that I had just happened to spot when I was going to work. I reported them and on this occasion Network Rail was very prompt in responding to me. They informed me that they were growing on private land and was not their responsibility. I did not get a response when I asked if they could invoke the Miscellaneous provisions act and I have not heard from them since in spite of the fact that they said they would get back to me.

The second occasion, I found deeply concerning. There was a tree that was imminently dangerous in one of our parks, as the tree overhangs railway lines. Our contractors were not qualified to do the work so we contacted Network Rail and asked that either I could have a contact details for one of their sub contractors, or if someone from Network Rail could supervise the work. I found the call centre very helpful but none returned my call and it took months before I got the contact details in spite of me telling them that the tree was imminently dangerous.

1) To answer the points succinctly, with Network Rail I responded to them on an ADHOC basis using their call centre if I have concerns about trees that are a hazard.

2/3) Residents have contacted us about trees on railway land but we ask them to contact Network Rail directly.

4) Our powers are so limited we have very little dealings with Network Rail apart from when they inform us of upcoming works.

I hope this is useful

Arboricultural Inspections Officer
London Borough of Bromley

Mr Darren Johnson AM
Deputy Chairman, Environment Committee
London Assembly
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London
SE1 2AA

12 September 2011

Dear Mr Johnson

Re: Investigation into the management of vegetation on railway embankments

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your investigation into how vegetation is managed along the railway.

Nationally, there are over 30,000 hectares of lineside vegetation along the 20,000 miles of the track owned and maintained by Network Rail, including the extensive network of lines within the capital. We recognise that the railway is a major natural resource, but one which needs to be carefully managed at all times of year to keep the railway safe. Network Rail has environment, community relations and operations teams that work together to look after this important part of our asset.

Before we clear vegetation, we carry out a risk assessment of the area to see if any nesting birds or protected species may be present and check again each day of the project to look for any new arrivals. For example, if a nest is found, we identify and mark an exclusion zone of at least two metres around the nest. We also encourage native species of trees and shrubs as they provide the best habitat for native animals and protected species.

Guidelines and standards

As requested, I have attached a copy of our Company Standards setting out the company's requirements whenever vegetation removal is required. This document should provide the information you request in relation to the approach we take.

This document is currently under review and we would be happy to undertake a discussion with Committee members as part of this process.

1. What kind of complaints and information do you receive from Londoners relating to the management of railway embankments? How do you respond to those?

Nationally we receive approximately 8,000 vegetation related enquiries per year (of which approximately 20% emanate from within the London Boroughs). Together with other lineside issues – from graffiti to littering, from rat infestations to boundary issues - we respond to tens of thousands of individual enquiries each year.

Most of the contact we receive from the public specifically regarding vegetation are requests for trees to be either to be cut back or removed.

We have approximately six million lineside neighbours and a great number of requests and questions relate to the day-to-day impact of living near an operational railway.

Being a good neighbour is important to us. If a concern is raised by a member of the public regarding a specific piece of vegetation management work this is investigated by our community relations team, a set advisors, dedicated to dealing with questions or concerns raised by members of the public. Where practicable we will try to accommodate individual requests. As a minimum, we will provide further insight into the need to undertake the works to the specification that has been outlined.

2. How do you consult local people regarding works affecting lineside vegetation?

We take responsibility to communicate with our neighbours very seriously and we continually work to improve processes. Clearly there are always lessons that can be learnt in how we can improve engagement with communities when we need to undertake clearance of vegetation or trees.

However, consultation in formal terms is not practicable. There is usually little room to digress from the engineering solution being proposed. To consult would create a false expectation that we don't have to remove trees when we know this is unavoidable. Network Rail does not have a statutory duty to formally consult neighbours about the removal of trees.

In our experience, many misunderstandings and concerns can be obviated through good communication. In light of this, we provide advanced warning of planned vegetation clearance work to neighbours and stakeholders.

At a minimum we provide notice two weeks before works are due to start. However, in most instances we will provide advanced warning a month in advance.

3. How do you ensure subcontractors carrying out works affecting lineside vegetation follow your own (and other relevant) management guidelines and consult with the right stakeholders sufficiently?

As the majority of our larger-scale works are undertaken by subcontractors, we expect our suppliers to carry out vegetation management to the requirements set out in our Company Standard.

To qualify for tender alone, it is a prerequisite that a supplier can demonstrate their environmental management capabilities and an understanding of our Company Standards.

Similarly, we reinforce this expectation contractually when awarding contracts. Additionally, Network Rail directly employs two arboricultural specialists to audit worksites if there is suspicion that our Standards have not been met.

4. How do you liaise with boroughs and/or organisations such as the London Wildlife Trust on issues relating to the management of railway embankments?

Network Rail works with The Tree Council to provide alternative replanting when trees have been removed but where we have no option for any re-planting lineside. This involves the planting of trees away from the operational railway – putting back what we have taken out – albeit in a different, more suitable location. The Tree Council assists community groups proposing to undertake well-planned environmental planting projects for trees, wildlife areas and community gardens.

We also have a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with London Councils that focuses on improving the appearance of the local environment in areas around the railway. Although primarily centred on tackling litter and graffiti, it improves lines of communication when reporting overgrown vegetation from our embankments that affects highways and bridges. The MoU also provides a dedicated contact channel for local authorities through our National Helpline and a direct e-mail address to our regional community relations team.

We provide information on our website regarding the approach we take to vegetation management here: <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/aspx/1034.aspx>

I hope that this response and the attached document provide the information that you need. We would be happy to discuss the issues raised in more detail.

Yours sincerely

Head of Community Relations

(Attached: Network Rail Standards and Policies Documents [Not included here])

LV015 Wandsworth Society

Sent: 09 September 2011 15:17

To: Environment Committee

Subject: Railway Embankment Maintenance

Follow Up Flag: LV015_Wandsworth Society

TO: Alexander Beer
Chief Scrutiny Officer
London Assembly

Reply to Consultation Email. Railway Embankments from **Wandsworth Society**

Dear Sir

The Wandsworth Society recognizes the importance of the extensive railway embankment area in Wandsworth borough, especially those south of Clapham Junction - Earlsfield and Wandsworth Common and west towards Putney as they form important wildlife habitats.

We therefore are concerned that line side management protocols to take into account potential habitat areas and timing to protect life cycles of specific species.

Whilst I am not personally competent to define the needs or scarcity of specific species of insect, animal, bird or plant I assume that you have in-house biodiversity specialists and if not that you would consult with such specialists who understand ecological life cycles before scheduling a regular annual pattern of maintenance and foliage clearing. I believe that many local authorities including Wandsworth have biodiversity officers who are likely to be very willing to advise.

We are also concerned with the control of invasive species in particular but not exclusively, Japanese Knotweed which has made substantial inroads into some areas of Wandsworth including railway embankments and needs to be eradicated or at least 'quarantined' from train air streams when cutting back foliage.

I hope this response is useful to you and also that you might be able to provide some feed back on how the points raised have been dealt with.

Thank you for providing the opportunity for us to participate in your consultation which is much appreciated. It demonstrates a rare enlightenment by a major utility operator.

Regards

Wandsworth Society, Open spaces observer.

LV016 Hatch End Association

Sent: 08 September 2011 19:05

To: Environment Committee

Subject: Railway bank management.

Follow Up Flag: LV016

Dear sirs,

I am responding to your enquiry on behalf of the Hatch End Association in Harrow

The west coast main line passes through the Hatch End Ward of Harrow and my property 'backs onto' this line of 6 tracks.

We are told when bank trimming is to be done with reasonable notice but not consulted it is really to warn of noise pollution

The latest trimming was carried out by a saw, mounted on railway wagon on the nearest track, which mowed down all within reach, estimated at about twenty feet to a low height. No regard was made of life on the embankment. It should be noted that the area of a couple of meters out with the machine reach was not touched .

The Association feel that while the green corridor provided by the embankments is advantageous to London the safe economical operations of the railway is of paramount importance.

Regards

Dear Mr Johnson

**RE: INVESTIGATION INTO THE MANAGEMENT
OF VEGETATION ON RAILWAY EMBANKMENTS**

I refer to your letter dated 2 August 2011 requesting information on the management of vegetation on railway embankments in London Borough of Newham. Comments hereafter have been composed by Council officers on behalf of the Council. This submission has not been presented to Members or the Mayor for scrutiny or endorsement.

Railway embankments in Newham

Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to your investigation given the presence of several rail corridors in the borough, which carry London Underground, London Overground, Docklands Light Rail and National Rail services. Some of these corridors include habitats and species recognised in Council's emerging Biodiversity Action Plan and in evidence prepared to support its Core Strategy.

Council does not have formal internal guidelines or strategies for lineside vegetation management and is not aware of external/national guidelines specifically regarding this matter. Decisions regarding lineside vegetation management would have regard to national and regional planning policy and emerging local planning policy.

We respond to your questions as follows:

How do you liaise with Network Rail/Transport for London about management of lineside vegetation in the borough?

Council's Structures Group in the Transport and Parking Division liaise with both Network Rail and Transport for London in respect of Highway Works on structures such as bridges, etc. This can include issues regarding management of lineside vegetation where appropriate.

Are you aware of any issues that have been raised, eg by neighbouring residents, regarding the management of vegetation on railway embankments in London and could you provide details?

We are not aware of any issues raised regarding the management of vegetation on railway embankments.

How do you respond to residents' complaints about works affecting lineside vegetation?

Complaints made to the Council are allocated to the responsible service. Should there be any matters regarding lineside vegetation, then Council's Transport and Parking service would make contact with the relevant Outside Party Engineer from National Rail or Transport for London to discuss the complaint and any actions required to remedy problems. Similarly, should the Council be contacted regarding private property being affected by trackside vegetation or works, they would put them in contact with the relevant Outside Party Engineer.

In a situation where Highways were generally affected by lineside vegetation, then the

complaint would be handled by Council's Streetscene Enforcement service; or if a specific location, by the Council's Project Engineer whose scheme is affected. Railway schemes that affect the Highway will be processed by the Highway Network Manager in the normal manner.

How do you ensure Network Rail/Transport for London and their subcontractors, when carrying out works affecting lineside vegetation, follow the right guidelines and consult with local stakeholder specifically.

Council is not aware of any situation whereby Network Rail/Transport for London and their subcontractors have not followed the right guidelines or consult local stakeholders inadequately. However, Council's Transportation Planning and Transport and Parking services are in regular communication with Network Rail and Transport for London, and as such, it is considered that any issues could be flagged.

Other matters

Council would also wish to draw the Committee's attention to the associated problems of lineside litter on railway embankments which are an issue in the Borough. We consider that Network Rail should devote more resources to this problem to comply with their duty under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

In addition, you may wish to view the Council's emerging Core Strategy and its accompanying evidence base, which provide information on sites of biodiversity importance in Newham, including railway embankments, which are recognised as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in some instances. The Core Strategy was submitted to the Secretary of State on 31 March 2011 and will shortly be subject to examination, with public hearings commencing 13 September. The Core Strategy and the Local Development Framework evidence base can be found at:

<http://www.newham.gov.uk/planning/planningpolicy>.

Should you have any further queries regarding our response to your enquiry please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Head of Spatial Planning and Regeneration Policy
London Borough of Newham

Dear Mr Johnson

Investigation into the management of vegetation on railway embankments

I refer to your letter of 2 August 2011 concerning your request for information about how local authorities deal with issues surrounding the above matter.

Your letter seeks information on:

- Internal guidelines or strategy for lineside vegetation management.
- Any external guidelines or strategy for lineside vegetation management which we follow.

We consulted TfL and Network Rail's predecessor Railtrack, about lineside management in conjunction with the preparation of our Borough Tree Strategy and they provided information at that time, which was in 1996.

We do manage land which is adjacent to linesides and are aware of the need to limit adverse leaf fall onto lines. Where possible we limit planting close to any fence line to avoid the need for subsequent maintenance. Where vegetation does overhang a lineside fence we endeavour to cut it back from our side of any fence as best as possible. This is done in accordance with the management needs of our land. So for example where a lineside passes through a Site of Metropolitan Importance for nature conservation (as declared by the Mayor of London) vegetation may be coppiced on a rotation cycle in order to maintain the biodiversity value. This therefore is in accordance with general good practice for habitat management.

The letter then goes on to seek answers to specific questions:

1) How do you liaise with Network Rail / TfL about the management of lineside vegetation in Wandsworth?

The Council has a Safer Stations Working Group and representatives of TfL and Network Rail attend quarterly meetings. There is the opportunity for these railway organisations to give the Council advance warning of any lineside management and maintenance issues. The Northern Line is entirely below ground and any TfL lineside issues will relate only to the District Line.

As regards Network Rail we consult with relevant area managers, which usually include site meetings to discuss the issues. These issues may include (but are not limited to) persuading them to do 'less' in the way of clearance by focussing on the more problematic species (removing larger leaved types such as Sycamores and London Planes, whilst retaining if possible, leave smaller leaved trees such as Birch, and Hazel.) Reasonable relationships have been built up over the years resulting in some positive progress.

2) Are you aware of any issues that have been raised e.g. by neighbouring residents regarding the management of vegetation on railway embankments in London and could you provide details?

In May 2006 the Metropolitan Police intervened in Network Rail works to lineside vegetation in advance of fence replacement through Tooting Common as they felt it contravened the Wildlife and Countryside Act; works to remove vegetation being carried out during the nesting season when we and local visitors to the site had clear information that birds were nesting in the vicinity. Works were halted until late September by which time both the local authority and the Police we were satisfied that all nesting had ceased.

We had not been notified of these works in advance of activity beginning on site. We increasingly get calls from residents asking for advice on how to treat invasive species, in particular Japanese knotweed, on their property. Upon further discussion, it often transpires that their property is immediately adjacent/adjoining Network Rail land which itself had dense patches of the invasive species which are seemingly untreated. In addition to spreading to immediate neighbouring land, these species could easily be inadvertently spread when fragments are snapped off and are carried along by the airflow caused by trains. I believe this would be contrary to Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act which states that an offence can be caused if a person plants or otherwise causes to grow in the wild any plant included in Part II of Schedule 9. With regard to the future management of invasive species within lineside vegetation, the GB Non-native species secretariat offers generic best practice guidance on its website at <https://secure.jera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/home/index.cfm> Alternatively there is a London Invasive Species Initiative currently chaired by the Environment Agency which would enable Network Rail and TfL to participate in direct liaison with the key organisations and individuals trying to tackle these issues at the London level.

3) How do you respond to resident's complaints about works affecting lineside vegetation?

We contact the relevant area manager to discuss the issues, arrange a visit to agree a way forward, and inform residents of the outcome where we have been directly involved in receiving their complaint. We also suspect that many people who complain to us also complain direct to Network Rail.

4) How do you ensure Network Rail/TfL and their subcontractors, when carrying out works affecting lineside vegetation, follow the right guidelines and consult with local stakeholders sufficiently?

Our role is limited here and usually confined to enabling works once they have been decided upon by Network Rail. Where Network Rail or their subcontractors require access across our land we would usually be made aware of their intentions and can advise them of necessary precautions in advance of works starting on site. We have identified an improvement in their commitment to informing and consulting local residents and local authorities and where asked to do so, we can also advise on local interest groups to contact. In most cases Network Rail and their subcontractors have learnt that it is in their best interest to do so, but this is still not always the case. Overall we have had a good working relationship with Network Rail subcontractors - the responsibility remains with them to keep us informed of progress of any current jobs.

Other Information:-

We feel that there is a process before physical works begin, to determine what lineside management is necessary and where, which we are not involved in. It often seems that Network Rail do not recognise that many railway linesides in the borough are designated as being of importance for wildlife (Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, as identified in the Mayor's London Plan) therefore not only would general management protocols be necessary, but there may be specific requirements on these designated sites to manage for key species or features. This in turn may influence management works and critically, their timing. They would be able to unpick where these areas are and what is important in 2 ways. Firstly by dealing directly with the relevant biodiversity officer in each borough (which can be done via the **London Boroughs Biodiversity Forum**) or they could take out an annual SLA with GIGL, the capital's environmental records centre www.gigl.org.uk

6 September 2011

Dear Mr Johnson

Thank you for your letter to ___ Senior Media Officer, dated 2 August 2011, in relation to the Environment Committee's investigation into the management of vegetation on railway embankments.

Network Rail, as the infrastructure owner, is responsible for lineside vegetation management, and this is not an area for which ATOC has any formal responsibility. Network Rail has a sustainability policy which emphasises the importance of managing lineside vegetation in a sustainable way, while protecting and promoting biodiversity.

In addition, train companies and Network Rail work together on the Adhesion Working Group (AWG) which considers solutions to tackle low wheel/rail adhesion during the autumn leaf fall period to minimise disruption and ensure safe operation. This group does look at lineside vegetation where this could pose a leaf fall risk.

We would therefore encourage you to contact Network Rail for more information in the first instance. If you wish to speak with train companies directly on this issue we will be happy to provide you with contact details as necessary.

Director of Corporate Affairs

12 September 2011

Dear Darren

Transport for London Response to London Assembly Environment Committee Investigation into the Management of Vegetation on Railway Embankments

I am replying on behalf of TfL to your letter ___on 2 August. Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the Environment Committee's investigation into the Management of Vegetation, principally large trees, on railway embankments across London.

Transport for London (TfL) aims to be a world class transport authority, delivering safe, reliable and integrated transport to all those who live in or visit London. A key aspiration underpinning TfL's vision is to take account of environmental impacts and opportunities in managing the transport network. The TfL Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) Policy commits each business area within TfL to set targets for improvement of HSE management and performance, and to measure and appraise, and report performance against these targets. TfL's environmental objectives were developed following a review of the Mayor's environmental strategies, whilst also taking into consideration TfL's potential influence and actual impact on the environment. One of these objectives is to maintain and, where possible, enhance the quality of London's natural environment, which includes trees, vegetation and the species living in line-side habitats.

This response reviews how each of TfL's business areas deliver and manage line-side trees and vegetation, through techniques including management systems and vegetation strategies. Appendix 1 covers the practices in London Underground, London Overground and London Tramlink. Appendix 2 provides more detailed examples of embankment work and Appendix 3 is the London Tramlink Vegetation Management Strategy. I also attach electronic copies of, or links to, all the documents referred to in this review. Please note that the scope of the review does not cover London Underground's Circle, Victoria or Waterloo and City lines as they do not have any above ground elements. In addition, trackside vegetation isn't an issue on the Docklands Light Railway network. We are proud of our achievements in delivering improvements to biodiversity on our networks and look forward to welcoming Environment Committee members to see some of the work being undertaken.

Yours sincerely

TfL Environment and Climate Change Coordinator

Links to Documents Referred to in the Report

ISO 14001 Standard for environmental management systems

http://www.iso.org/iso/iso_catalogue/catalogue_ics/catalogue_detail_ics.htm?csnumber=31807

TfL's Health, Safety and Environment Policy (attached as pdf document)

LU's Environment Strategy 2008-2013

<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/lu-environment-strategy.pdf>

LU's Biodiversity Action Plan

<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/corporate/LU-biodiversity-action-plan.pdf>

LU's Landscaping and Vegetation Standard (attached as pdf document)

National Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents>

NERC Act Guidelines

http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/dutyguidancepublic_tcm6-9233.pdf

Natural England guidelines on wildlife management

www.naturalengland.org.uk

Environment Agency guidance and Codes of Practice on managing invasive species

<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/wildlife/31350.aspx>

British Standards for the management of trees

Eg <http://shop.bsigroup.com/ProductDetail/?pid=000000000030089960>

GiGL's Habitat Suitability Maps

<http://www.gigl.org.uk/>

CIRIA guidance on "Biodiversity through Green Infrastructure" www.ciria.org.uk

Appendix 1

London Underground

Vegetation Management Practices and Outcomes

Approximately half of the London Underground (LU) network is situated above the ground, with eight of the eleven lines having significant over-ground sections. The Metropolitan, Central and Piccadilly line make up almost 70 per cent of the total trackside vegetation and wildlife area.

Most of LU's line-side habitats are of a „semi-natural“ or brownfield type; other habitats on the LU network include ancient woodlands, acid grassland and wetlands. The most mature woodlands with the highest diversity of species are present at the ends of the lines. Younger and less diverse woodlands (dominated by sycamore, ash and silver birch as colonising species) tend to occur closer to London, while much of the habitat in central London is wasteland habitat of variable quality. There are extensive areas of grassland and tall herb dominated vegetation in certain areas.

While most of the habitats are not categorised as being of national or regional importance for nature conservation, the semi natural line-side habitats are considered as important for their local value. These habitats are particularly important when they are found close to central London.

Safety is London Underground's top priority and so access to operational railway land is restricted, leaving wildlife relatively undisturbed, apart from maintenance activities and the passage of trains. This lack of disturbance and often limited management activity can contribute to biodiversity enhancement at these types of sites. However, as long as the safe performance of the railway is not affected in any way, line-side land can provide important secluded refuges for wildlife, especially species that may be vulnerable to human disturbance elsewhere.

It is also for safety reasons that trees, vegetation and planting are not permitted to be planted close to the track and only grasses and herbs are allowed to be planted within a specified distance. The minimum planting distance of any tree from the nearest running rail is related to the tree's height at maturity.

Exact requirements are set in LU's Landscaping and Vegetation Standard. These requirements are considered an operational minimum and certain lines require a higher level of tree and vegetation control depending on the assets in use on that line. These requirements have been established to ensure the integrity of the track and the supporting civil infrastructure, e.g. cuttings and embankments.

The regular control of existing vegetation is essential to protect fence lines, embankments, cutting slopes and the track infrastructure from the effects of encroachment by vegetation as well as to control the spread of invasive and injurious plant species. Vegetation maintenance is necessary to prevent future problems associated with the growth of vegetation that can negatively affect the safe and efficient operation of the railway. For example, problems can arise from leaf fall on rails (especially on the Central, Jubilee and Northern lines which have automated train operation), trees falling onto the track or leaves and branches obscuring signals, whilst vegetation can affect the stability of slopes in cuttings and embankments.

Project works, such as embankment and cutting stabilisation schemes, track renewals, drainage works, and occasionally station works, also have the potential to impact upon the wildlife and vegetation along the track. Depending on the type, size and location of the works being undertaken, specialist external ecological consultants are engaged to advise on wildlife restrictions and arboriculturalists to provide arboricultural advice.

Following project works that require the removal of significant amounts of vegetation, landscaping is undertaken within engineering restrictions. Landscaping can play an essential part in maintaining slope stability once root structures have been established and can benefit local residents who live adjacent to the track, as well as improving biodiversity.

Internal Guidelines and Strategy for Line-side Vegetation Management

LU's Company Management System (CMS) sets out its policy, standards and processes for managing the business, including vegetation management. The CMS follows the principles of the ISO 14001 Standard for environmental management systems. The documents below, which are part of the CMS, set relevant goals and requirements:

1. LU's Health, Safety and Environment Policy commits to improving environmental performance, realising environmental benefits and to actively support Mayoral strategies. The policy specifically mentions biodiversity.
2. [LU's Environment Strategy 2008-2013](#) has objectives to conserve, and where reasonably practicable, to enhance the biodiversity value of LU property and to increase awareness amongst staff and the travelling public of biodiversity in London.
3. [LU's Biodiversity Action Plan](#) translates the policy and strategy commitments into actions which will deliver improved biodiversity value across London.

4. LU's Landscaping and Vegetation Standard sets requirements for management and control of line-side vegetation by LU and its contractors.
5. LU's Project Management Framework gives Project managers the context and tools to manage and deliver projects more efficiently. This includes how and when to manage ecological issues in the project life cycle
6. Managers are required to consult the LU Geographical Information System (GIS) in advance of works to identify how the works may impact on the wildlife and habitats in the area.
7. Ecology guidance sets requirements for management of various habitat types and protected species on LU property.

LU, through these mechanisms, aims to deliver compliance with legal requirements, support for the Mayoral biodiversity strategy, TfL objectives, and to manage, and where possible, improve the wildlife and habitat diversity of its property and within London. LU has moved in recent years from considering specific focus areas, e.g. defined species, and is now working towards wider habitat management approaches where the needs of a variety of species are considered. We also work to consider London's needs from a biodiversity point of view, e.g. the need to improve good quality grasslands and meadow. These can often be more valuable from a biodiversity point of view than just trees, and are much rarer across London.

Relevant External/national Guidelines for Line-side Vegetation Management

LU follows relevant legislation and guidance in relation to vegetation management, including the following:

- National Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 which sets a requirement on all public bodies to consider biodiversity in carrying out its duties. The Defra NERC Act guidance document contains a case study on LU's approach to delivering this duty (page 176 of guidance http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/dutyguidancepublic_tcm6-9233.pdf)
- Natural England guidelines on wildlife management. We also work with Natural England on specific issues, e.g. licensing.
- Environment Agency guidance and Codes of Practice on managing invasive species
- British Standards for the management of trees

Subcontractor Management and Stakeholder Communication

All contracts let by LU go through a rigorous tender appraisal that takes account of many health, safety and environmental requirements, including how the contractor will provide best practice environmental management.

LU's Landscaping and Vegetation Standard, which sets out vegetation management controls, is mandated on all LU, its contractors and sub-contractors. This is shared with them early in the contractual process and they are required to follow the Standard. LU also requires contractors to work to national legislation and to follow best practice. LU has designated managers who oversee contractors and sub-contractors to ensure that they are delivering to the standards set in contracts and relevant LU standards. Contractors and suppliers and suppliers are also encouraged to go beyond these requirements. LU undertakes a risk-based audit programme of its assets and contractors which monitors compliance with all standards.

LU retains responsibility for communication with residents and stakeholders through letters, site meetings and attendance at public forums in relation to maintenance and project works.

Projects adhere to the Project Management Framework Manager's Handbooks that gives Project Managers the context and tools to manage and deliver projects more efficiently. Maintenance works, including vegetation management, are managed through Ellipse, LU's asset management database and by following the requirements within the Safety, Security and Environment Manager's Handbook.

All staff and contractors working on the vegetation maintenance contracts for LU are trained to a nationally recognised standard (from the National Proficiency Tests Council).

Contractors carrying out the work complete a daily works return sheet. This includes a site assessment form where any signs of wildlife or changes to habitats in the area can be noted. Ecology survey information is available for all maintenance teams through the Geographical Information System (GIS). The Environmental Contracts Manager carries out a Planned General Inspection each four week period. These review that operator is trained to carry out the work, and that environmental good practises are adhered to.

Tube Lines (TL) which is now a TfL subsidiary company and manages LU's infrastructure on the Jubilee, Northern and Piccadilly lines, has a number of internal processes similar to LU's, some are in excess of and not instead of LU's processes. TL:

- Holds an independently audited ISO 14001 Environmental Management System with specific policies, procedures and work instructions relating to Nature Conservation/Biodiversity activities.
- Operates a „2 for 1“ tree policy, whereby two trees are planted within Greater London for every tree that is cut down. (These are not always planted on the operational railway for reasons mentioned above but are located in nearby nature reserves as applicable.
- Operates a “natives first” policy for planting whereby those trees/shrubs replanted are native or indigenous and wherever possible have local progeny
- Does not normally plant “standard” trees but employs a variety of differing planting techniques dependent on the site.
- Has a complete trackside survey of its trees, trackside vegetation and invasive weeds and uses this as part of its planning tools.
- Has eradicated Japanese Knotweed Giant Hogweed on its infrastructure.
- Operates a policy of creating “habitat piles” of logs and branches where site conditions permit. If not, on site chipping is preferred and as a last resort, transfer for recycling.
- Has investigated and found no economic market for the disposal of wood waste to biomass generators etc
- Manages its Carbon Footprint against a base line. Tree planting/felling and associated works are included within the carbon footprint.

Liaison with Boroughs and Other Relevant Organisations

LU works with a variety of organisations across London on wildlife and habitat issues. It is an active member of the London Biodiversity Partnership (LBP), whose members include many London Boroughs, and it contributes regularly to LBP workshops (<http://www.lbp.org.uk/takeactionevents.html>). LU consulted with other LBP partners in its recent review of its Biodiversity Action Plan, including Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RPSB) and Natural England. LU also works with other organisations, such as the Bat Conservation Trust.

LU has a very good working relationship with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Over the past two years we have a joint LU-RSPB photograph competition to raise awareness amongst our staff and the general public about wildlife in London and the access we provide to it.

(www.tfl.gov.uk/wildlifecompetition).

Over the past year LU, as part of TfL, has been working with Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL), the database for biodiversity and ecological information in London, and are now a member of their steering group. LU plans to use GiGL's Habitat Suitability Maps to target its biodiversity improvement activities, particularly on embankments and trackside environments.

LU sits on the Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA) Steering Group which is working to produce industry guidance on “Biodiversity through Green Infrastructure”.

LU's Environment Team and Environmental Contracts Managers also communicate with Network Rail as appropriate. This has recently included discussion about improving invasive weed management.

London Underground and Tube Lines actively cultivate relationships with the London Boroughs affected by their work, including Planning Officers, Environmental Health Officers (often concerns are raised with them at a first stage by residents) but also in relation to the noise and disruption of these works. LU liaises with Local Authority Arboriculture and Landscape officers as required, and good cooperation exists about trees close to neighbouring properties.

LU liaises with local authorities and makes applications to work on trees that are in conservation areas, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation or those that have Tree Preservation Orders if required. LU informally maintains a network of key contacts from organisations, residents and residents groups. They act as local “eyes and ears”, informing LU very quickly of local community concerns. A recent example of this is an illegal tree felling being stopped on the Piccadilly Line near Southgate tube station, leading to a Police intervention and proposed prosecution of members of the public for Aggravated Trespass and Criminal Damage.

Tube Lines has worked with both London Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust on specific projects. They have a project pending at Kings Cross for planting an orchard and nuttree at Camley Street Nature

Park as partial mitigation for tree felling required on the Northern Line as a result of the installation of a new signalling system.

Tube Lines sits on the Amenity Forum of the British Agricultural Standards in Industry Scheme representing the rail industry in the EU based voluntary initiative of agrochemicals control.

Complaints, Information Process and Response Relating to the Management of Railway Embankments

LU's Community Relations team is responsible for handling complaints and enquiries relating to the maintenance of LU's assets and properties. LU provides a 24 hour maintenance helpline that residents can call with concerns about works or issues relating to LU assets and property. Residents can also e-mail or write, whilst relevant calls received by other departments are forwarded to LU's Community Relations team to resolve.

A third of the calls handled by the team relate to vegetation and wildlife on LU property (chiefly, embankments and cuttings but also within station and depot premises). Since 2005, LU has handled approximately 1,000 complaints and enquiries of this kind. Tube Lines also expect a third of calls they receive to relate to vegetation.

The majority of the vegetation complaints received relate to the day-to-day maintenance of vegetation on LU land. Some sixty per cent of calls since 2005 are from local residents, requesting LU to maintain or sometimes remove vegetation on its land that is considered overgrown or felt to present a risk to people or property.

A smaller proportion (15 per cent) of complaints are objections to and/or concerns about proposed project works or works that have already taken place and have impacted on neighbouring residents. LU anticipates enquiries following its notification to residents and stakeholders of significant engineering works being planned, such as embankment stabilisations or planned maintenance works such as fence replacement work and will seek to clarify and answer specific questions.

All contact is recorded along with any actions and subsequent correspondence. The resident is contacted to acknowledge receipt, discuss specific details and advised how we propose to deal with the problem. The complaint is then forwarded to the relevant personnel, namely:

- For planned preventative maintenance of embankments and cuttings one of three teams responsible for line-side environment;
- Stations and premises team;
- Project Managers responsible for a specific programme

In most cases the appropriate team will arrange a site visit to assess the problem and any resulting work will be prioritised accordingly with a view to resolving the complaint. The majority of complaints are received from May to July and are „seasonal“ in nature, relating to trees which are in full leaf and therefore more likely to be relating to shading of gardens or interfering with television reception.

Consultation with Local People Regarding Works Affecting Line-side Vegetation Management

The impact of line-side vegetation management varies according to what is being done and therefore LU's communication with residents and stakeholders is done on a case-by-case basis. As a minimum, LU aims to notify residents of any works that have the potential for disturbance or intrusion. LU will notify local authority tree officers and key stakeholders of its intentions and respond to any reasonable request to meet on site or retain trees of specific importance.

Clearly, some works are on parts of the network that are not overlooked and therefore fewer concerns are received from residents about privacy or noise levels. Where LU's works are in close proximity to line-side neighbours, meetings are arranged with them to discuss the works and listen to their concerns. LU aims to mitigate the worst impacts and allay fears. LU continues to communicate with residents throughout the work programme and deal with any problems or concerns that arise during it. Where there is scope, LU invites input into plans for replanting, although any design will need to adhere to LU's Landscaping and Vegetation Standard and Biodiversity Action Plan.

Residents are notified by letter of any minor maintenance works such as a fence renewal. This work may require removal of vegetation on the fenceline and can impact on neighbouring fencing and buildings and we will liaise with residents in those instances.

There are occasions when LU's regular inspections will highlight concerns with trees located on land owned by third parties. LU writes to these third parties, notifying them of its concerns and reminding them of their responsibilities. Where any remedial work is likely to impact on the safe operation of the railway, LU liaises more closely with residents and those undertaking the works to ensure that its assets are protected during the works.

Further examples of line-side vegetation management are provided at Appendix 2.

London Overground

Network Rail is responsible for vegetation management on most of the London Overground (LO) network because Network Rail owns and maintains the infrastructure. Where TfL does manage the London Overground infrastructure on the East London Line, TfL's Infrastructure Maintainer controls line-side vegetation in accordance with Network Rail's Standard for Maintenance of Line-side Vegetation (NR/SP/TRK/05201).

This Standard requires that vegetation is managed as follows:

The ballasted area and cess are to be maintained clear of all woody vegetation and 95% of other vegetation, and the area vertically above these zones need to be kept clear of all vegetation. This needs to be done on an annual basis.

The cess strip (which is between the track and embankment and aids drainage) needs to be maintained clear of woody vegetation while the area above this zone needs to be kept clear of all vegetation. In the Overground railway, the cess strip needs to be kept clear of vegetation within a zone 5m from the running line.

A survey should be undertaken to confirm whether the requirements for the cess strip are being met. If they are, routine inspections should be undertaken "no less frequently than every 3 years". If the requirements are not being met, any necessary works should be undertaken and then routine inspections undertaken annually. Routine inspections should be carried out between 1 March and 31 October.

In addition to the above, the Standard requires that the following are undertaken:

A risk assessment, after each survey, and following any clearance or follow-up operations, to determine the risk posed by the vegetation.

A leaf fall assessment, and

A large or dangerous tree hazards assessment.

In most areas along the LO maintained sections of the railway there are few trees and other line-side vegetation does not cause an issue (e.g. between Dalston and Shoreditch there are few, if any, overhanging trees).

London Tramlink

London Tramlink (LT) has an extensive vegetation management programme for trees, low level shrubbery, pathway vegetation clearance and pruning along its routes, particularly in areas around Lloyd Park in Croydon where the tram runs through woody rural habitat.

London Tramlink took over the operation and maintenance of the Tramlink system in April 2008. It immediately became clear that there had been no clear vegetation management process whilst Tramlink was in private ownership. Trees and vegetation had been left to grow with little or no planning for the safe operation of the trams. A side effect of this neglect was the failure to keep the general maintenance of vegetation on a manageable level.

Background

In 2008 LT embarked on a large vegetation clearance programme. Once this was complete a vegetation contractor was employed to manage the day to day vegetation clearance on the network. A small team carries out a 3 week rolling programme of vegetation maintenance.

In addition, in 2009 LT surveyed all the trees on the network and prioritised works to them in order of risk to the network and adjacent properties. The most at risk trees were identified according to the Tramlink Vegetation and Tree Management Policy and a plan for managing them is being delivered.

General Strategy

LT have put in place a five year plan for the management of trees on the network. The aim of the plan is to ensure the safe operation of trams by reducing the number and size of the trees on the network and improving the quality of trees on the system.

To manage trees and reduce levels of ongoing maintenance LT will:

remove trees from structures i.e. self seeding trees in bridge abutments

reduce poor specimens and self seeding trees to reduce levels of ongoing maintenance required

improve the quality of trees on the network by thinning out and preserving good native specimens in a much more proactive manner

where appropriate replace all native trees removed with a similar specimen on a 1 for 2 basis*

carry out proactive and ongoing tree and vegetation maintenance on a regular basis

**these works will be carried out in line with the LT environmental plan ensuring biodiversity as far as reasonable practicable. LT will maintain a register for the removal and re-planting of trees.*

Appendix 3 shows the London Tramlink Vegetation and Tree Management Policy

Appendix 2

Examples of Line-side Vegetation Management on London Underground Embankments

1 (GRAPHIC OBJECT)

Wembley Park and Kingsbury

(Jubilee line)

A nature area was developed between Wembley Park and Kingsbury on the Jubilee line. This work was carried out by Tube Lines as part of an embankment stabilisation project.

The site was seeded with a variety of native wildflower seeds and limited replanting with shrubs and trees, selected to maximise their wildlife potential whilst screening properties.

A number of different habitat areas have been installed, including woodpecker boxes, barn owl boxes, solitary bee boxes, field mouse and dormouse habitats, solitary bee boxes and hedgehog habitat. A reptile watering area, which includes an innovative reptile basking area, has also been installed. Logs from the site which have been felled have been stacked on-site to provide a habitat for fungi and beetles, a vital food source for birds.

Prior to works commencing, a large number of Slow Worms were relocated off site. On completion special areas were constructed and the site is now used for “re-homing” locally displaced Slow Worms from adjacent projects sites as applicable.

2 (GRAPHIC OBJECT)

Hillingdon and Uxbridge

(Metropolitan and Piccadilly lines)

In an extensive £7.5 million scheme to stabilise

embankments and cutting slopes on the section

of track between Hillingdon and Uxbridge stations,

shared by the Metropolitan and Piccadilly lines,

a number of simple but effective biodiversity

enhancement measures were implemented.

Stag beetle „loggeries“ were installed in an

adjacent grassland meadow which had already

been colonised by stag beetles. Great

crested
newt hibernacula were also created in areas adjacent to the track.
A continuous line of mature trees were maintained throughout the works at the base of embankment slopes, and once the stabilisation works were completed, native wildflower seed mix and native shrubs were used to re-establish the vegetation, creating a woodland edge effect. This has provided an excellent habitat for invertebrates such as butterflies.

Appendix 3

Day to Day Strategy (Tramlink Vegetation and Tree Management Policy)

In the short term the day to day management of trees will be based on the principle of „dead, dying and dangerous“ this will be assessed by the current vegetation contractor based on the criteria below:

Remove if they are a danger to the tramway

Remove if they are a danger to 3rd parties

Cut Back/Coppice if they are blocking sight lines on the tramway and are causing a safety issue

Cut Back/Coppice if they are blocking sight lines on the highway and are causing a safety issue

Remove/cut back or coppice if causing damage to TfL property

Remove/cut back or coppice if causing damage to 3rd party property

Any other works to trees on our land would be by exception only.

The decision to remove, cut back or coppice a tree is based on a number of factors including the type and condition of the specimen; the location of the specimen; and, the risk associated with it. This decision will be made by the Infrastructure Manager based on advice from the Vegetation contractor.

Medium to Long Term Strategy (2 to 5 years)

The day to day management will continue as outlined above whilst LT develop a more proactive asset management regime for the trees on and adjacent to the network. This will include, inter alia, the development of the Tree Register that has been produced to identify and log all trees on or adjacent to the network;

developing further packages of work to reduce longer term tree management requirements;

development and implementation of a strategy to protect the overhead electrification (OLE) by clearing vegetation strategically i.e. work towards 1.5m clearance of all vegetation around OLE poles;

development and implementation of a strategy to protect signal sight lines by clearing vegetation strategically i.e. work towards 1.5m clearance of all vegetation around signal poles; and,

entering all trees into the LT asset management database.

Third Party Issues

Where appropriate, LT will recover costs for the removal of trees on 3rd party land from the land owner.

Date: 9th September 2011

Alex Beer
Asst Scrutiny Manager
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

Dear Alex,

Investigation into the management of vegetation on railway embankments

We have been asked by Darren Johnson AM to contribute the Assembly's investigation into the management of vegetation on railway embankments. Our response to the specific questions, plus some context regarding relevant Mayoral policy and programmes is set out overleaf.

Please note these are comments and information from GLA officers. They are not submitted on behalf of the Mayor's office.

Yours sincerely,

Team Leader
Urban Greening & Biodiversity

Investigation into the management of vegetation on railway embankments Response from Urban greening Team – Greater London Authority

Context

Through his Biodiversity Strategy⁷, the London Tree & Woodland Framework⁸, and policies in the London Plan (policy 2.18 Green infrastructure: the network of open and green space; policy 7.19 Biodiversity and access to nature; and policy 7.21 Trees and Woodland) the Mayor has a comprehensive framework for supporting the protection and management of London's green space network. In Leading to a Greener London⁹, his environmental programme, the Mayor set out his ambition to, *inter alia*, increase tree cover across London from 20 per cent today to 25 per cent by 2025.

To deliver the objectives and commitments the Mayor has initiated and delivered a number of campaigns and programmes including the Mayor's Street Tree programme¹⁰, RE:LEAF¹¹, and Help a London Park¹².

In general, the Mayor does not have any direct responsibility for the management of London's green spaces or green infrastructure. However, as Chair of the Transport for London he does have ultimate responsibility for the management of London Underground's line sides.

The policies and proposals set out in the documents highlighted above provide the advocacy, influence and guidance to ensure the Mayor's commitments regarding London's natural environment are met. In particular the policy and procedures for identify Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), set out in the Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy, and provides the framework that has resulted in 75 railway lineside sites being SINC or component parts of SINC.

Response to specific questions

1. How do you liaise with network rail/Transport for London about the management of lineside vegetation?

You will have received responses from both TfL and Network Rail that demonstrate the line side management policy and practice is influenced by Mayoral policies and in particular the objectives of the Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy. London Underground, for example, has a Biodiversity Action Plan as a direct response to the Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy. Consequently, we are content that the management of railway linesides by both Network Rail and TfL is broadly consistent with Mayoral policy and objectives.

2. Are you aware of any issues that have been raised, e.g. by neighbouring residents, regarding the management of vegetation on railway embankments in London and can you provide details?

The Mayor regularly receives enquiries from members of the public regarding various aspects of policy and practice relating to the natural environment in London. The issue of tree removal along railway linesides used to be raised relatively frequently, but this is no longer the case. We suspect that this is because:

- a) much of the most significant remedial tree-felling required to address embankment stability has already been undertaken
- b) Network Rail and their contractors have improved their communication with neighbouring residents

⁷ http://legacy.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/biodiversity/biodiversity_strategy.jsp

⁸ <http://legacy.london.gov.uk/mayor/environment/forest/index.jsp>

⁹ <http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/environment/vision-strategy/leading-greener-london>

¹⁰ <http://www.london.gov.uk/streettrees/>

¹¹ <http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/environment/urban-space/releaf-london>

¹² <http://www.london.gov.uk/help-london-park>

- c) contentious issues are increasingly addressed through local community forums supported by local authorities and local councillors

3. How do you respond to resident's complaints about works affecting lineside vegetation

If the matter relates to a Network Rail lineside we briefly set out the reasons why the vegetation may have been carried out, indicate that the site might have extant nature conservation interest which should be a consideration for Network Rail, and refer the correspondent to the relevant officer in their local authority who will be best placed to provide advice on site specific issues.

If the site relates to a London Underground site we would provide the same contextual information, but also notify our colleagues in TfL to provide comment on the specific matters. However, we have received no such complaints recently. Residents may of course be submitting complaints direct to London Underground or TfL.

4. What is your role in ensuring Network Rail/TfL and their subcontractors, when carrying out works affecting lineside vegetation, follow the right guidelines and consult with local stakeholders sufficiently?

See our answers above. We are content that both Network Rail and TfL have an appropriate policy framework and management procedures to ensure that they undertake line side management in an environmentally sensitive and socially responsible way - bearing in mind the operational constraints of managing railway line sides. The Mayor and the GLA do not have oversight of the detailed operations undertaken on specific sites. We would expect local authorities to support local residents in this respect; for Natural England to ensure that Network Rail are fulfilling legislative requirements relating to the natural environment [NB we are content that Transport for London and London Underground are meeting these obligations]; and that NGOs such as the London Wildlife Trust are encouraging both organisations to go 'beyond compliance' where possible.

Other information

In addition to the need to ensure the safety of the railway there are two other key considerations for railway lineside management - nature conservation, and the amenity value for neighbouring properties and those who overlook the railway.

The primary concern regarding nature conservation is the protection and management of those parts of the railway corridor that are identified as SINC. Some SINC (such as Devonshire Road Nature Reserve and New Cross Gate Cutting) are managed in conjunction with organisations such as London Wildlife Trust. Where these SINC constitute extant mature native woodland, the management should ensure this habitat should be maintained, and extensive felling of trees and woodland should be avoided except where safety of the railway is compromised. However, often the most valuable habitats associated with railway lineside SINC are grassland habitats (chalk grassland, acid grassland and neutral grassland), which are rare habitats in London. At these sites the removal of trees and/or preventing the establishment of woodland is a beneficial management operation. Outside of the areas identified as SINC these grassland habitats are often the most valuable nature conservation feature of railway corridors and management to maintain grassland is beneficial. Indeed the habitat creation delivered through London Underground's Biodiversity Action Plan tends to favour grassland habitat because of its inherent nature conservation value and compatibility with line side management.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that tree cover on railway linesides is much valued by local residents, both for the seclusion and security a wooded fringe can provide and because scrub and woodlands harbour common wildlife which can readily be attracted into neighbouring gardens. Therefore, loss of trees and woodland can have a significant impact on the amenity of railside properties. Amenity value is only a supplementary consideration in Mayoral policies relating to nature conservation and the designation of SINC; consequently the protection afforded by SINC designation cannot be applied solely for amenity reasons. However, because of the importance the Mayor attaches to the preservation and conservation of trees in London (and his commitment to increase tree cover by 5% by 2025) Mayoral policies encourage the retention and conservation of trees wherever possible, and the planting of new trees where appropriate.

We note that London Underground's contractor Tubelines operates a '2 for 1' tree policy, whereby two trees are planted within Greater London for every tree that is cut down; and that Network Rail is working with the Tree Council to support an environmental enhancement fund for communities¹³ to help compensate for tree loss. Through the RE:LEAF initiative we will explore with London Underground and Network Rail the scope for enhancing these compensation schemes for the benefit of Londoners.

LV021 Further included with investigation response (Not included in current document):

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
LU Biodiversity Action Plan
LU Environment Strategy

¹³ www.networkrail.co.uk/Ourneighbours/8657_Branching_Out.pdf

Dear Mr Johnson

Investigation into the management of vegetation on railway embankments

Natural England is the Government's advisor on the natural environment. We provide practical advice, grounded in science, on how best to safeguard England's natural wealth for the benefit of everyone. Our remit is to ensure sustainable stewardship of the land and sea so that people and nature can thrive. It is our responsibility to see that England's rich natural environment can adapt and survive intact for future generations to enjoy.

Natural England is a statutory consultee for major transport schemes; Environmental Impact Assessments of transport schemes; and Strategic Environmental Assessment/Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessments of Local Transport Plans and Regional Transport Strategies. Natural England works with Network Rail specifically on the management of the 146 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) within their estate.

Whilst we do not have the direct experience to answer the questions specified in your letter, I thought it might be useful to your investigation to outline Natural England's position on line-side vegetation management, wider Government policy in this area, and some activities of interest relating to London.

Natural England believes that better management of transport corridors can connect and enhance fragmented landscapes and that the appropriate management of railway embankments can realise opportunities for biodiversity and geodiversity. We encourage transport organisations to develop and implement Biodiversity Action Plans for the land that they own and manage. This position is supported by Government in the recently published [Natural Environment White Paper](#) with a commitment to working with transport agencies and key delivery partners to contribute to the creation of coherent and resilient ecological networks. The Government also commits to holding a forum with environmental stakeholders to inform future priorities for the ecological enhancement of transport corridors.

In London, Natural England support's the [London Wildlife Trust's position statement](#) on railway line-side management. We would encourage land managers to use the [London Habitat Suitability Maps](#) developed by the London Biodiversity Partnership and Greenspace Information for Greater London, to maximise opportunities for habitat restoration or creation where possible on railway embankments.

I would also like to bring to your attention potential sources of information and best practice:

- London Underground recently revised the LU Biodiversity Action Plan using the London Habitat Suitability Maps to identify and prioritise opportunities for biodiversity enhancements.
- Natural England currently sits on an advisory group to inform the development of a new resource for woodland owners, managers and workers to help communicate the wider benefits of active woodland management to the general public. This work is coordinated by BioRegional and funded by the Forestry Commission. This resource may support more effective community engagement regarding the removal of large mature trees from railway embankment, although this would need to be explored further with the advisory group and the Forestry Commission.

I hope that this information helps your investigation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any further assistance.

Yours sincerely

LV023 Team London Bridge

Sent: 13 September 2011 17:15

To: Environment Committee

Subject: Railway Embankments Lewisham / Southwark border

Follow Up Flag: LV023

Hello

Just a small note for your review. There's a continuing problem with Japanese Knotweed along many London railway embankments. Some embankments are not being directly managed by Network Rail anymore and have been handed over to the Local Authority to operate as nature reserves – the one I'm thinking of in particular is managed by Lewisham. This is a good thing but it means that responsibility for expensive Japanese Knotweed eradication is sometimes not grasped as fully or quickly as it might be. While preserving nature is a good thing, not killing of the knotweed can be disastrous for adjacent home owners. A major issue is that it is unwise for any property owner to make a big deal of Japanese Knotweed nearby as it can devalue property and even lead to people not getting mortgages – so therefore there are no strong community lobbies for anyone to do anything about it.

Otherwise the local authority run nature reserves are an extremely welcome local resource.

Best regards

Place Marketing Manager

LV024 [Member of the Public]

–Please note this response has been reproduced from a handwritten original –any mistakes are not intentional]

Dear Mr Johnson,

Thank you for the opportunity to communicate on the important issue of ‘local railway embankments’ (Wood Green and Hornsey Journal 8\2011 printed letter).

As a member of railway staff employed by Tube Lines formerly London Underground (Transport for London) half my thirty-odd year service was spent maintaining vegetation on the ‘open’ sections of the High Barnet section of London Underground’s Northern Line.

This involved clearing grass/ivy/bramble and overhead tree branches from cable runs and fence lines. Every spring commencing grass cutting by hand with scythes (strimmers tried). We avoided in our four-person teams all nesting birds, returning when fledglings had ‘fledged’.

There are at least four foxes ‘earths’ between High Barnet and East Finchley; the adults and cubs active during daylight hours too.

I can assure you the wealth of wildlife well documented by the London Wildlife Trust (and other organisations) is truly stunning.

As introduced following earthworks and retaining walls of concrete for much-needed embankment stabilisation all over ‘the Combine’¹, eg see Central line embankments, especially at eastern ‘open’ section. Wild flowers and more lime friendly trees and shrubs reinstatement carried out.

Although ‘out-sourced’ maintenance since 1992 when the company plan evolved, all 76 staff under the Permanent Way Vegetation Section rolled into the Permanent Way proper – personally, although called out to the odd emergency (with relevant equipment maintained) I now patrol the railway track.

On the Northern Line a/the number of trees (perfectly healthy) in my opinion have been felled. Rightly or wrongly, after the March 1984 King’s Cross fire² no embankment fires are allowed. All these are cut up and left to rot, which in turn allows wildlife to frequent and enhances relevant habitats.

The complaints we used to verbally suffer from homeowners from the bottom of their gardens, sometimes conciliatory, other times vitriolic (mainly used to think it was ‘council owned’). Effectively, of course, the newest higher wire-meshed fencing is a ‘free’ boundary fence for properties backing onto the railway.

The bird life is amazing – larks, robins, thrushes, magpies, owls, kestrels (I could go on). On parts of the outer reaches of the Metropolitan line, regular sightings of deer too.

The major faults are increasing levels of leaf fall onto the tracks of the Metropolitan and District lines and even the [High] Barnet branch of the Northern line prompting a disastrous policy of clearance ‘scalping’ completely all vegetation and result: slippage after heavy rain etc. This was tried early in 1990 between Kingsbury and Queensbury stations on the Jubilee line. As you might be aware, MPs were vehemently complained to by local residents, ie “We don’t wish to see, or hear your railway,” I quote.

Another policy by contractors is to trim cable runs (fire risks) – which must be kept clear of course, then spraying topical translocated herbicide afterwards. Many wild flowers and local gardens’ vegetation affected by ‘drift’ from this too.

Yes, vegetation needs ‘proper’ management.

Yours sincerely,

¹ London Underground staff slang for the whole LU network

² Probably reference to the November 1987 King’s Cross fire

(Further Press Clippings included with evidence submission –not reproduced here)

LV025 [Member of the Public]

Sent: 15 September 2011 15:40
To: Environment Committee
Cc:
Subject: Railway embankments

Follow Up Flag: LV025

Sir / Madam – Some thought re your railway embankments study.

http://www.london.gov.uk/who-runs-london/the-london-assembly/assembly_investigation/railway-embankments

- I live at ... SE15 and my back garden backs onto the railway embankment that lies between Queens Road Peckham and Peckham Rye.

- I am 100% supportive of greening these embankments to the maximum level possible given:

- the resultant reduction in noise from the trains
- the resultant privacy from the passengers in the trains themselves
- that it presents a rather beautiful green backdrop to my garden
- that is great for wildlife
- the security protection it affords from burglars which in the absence of dense greenery would be a real

weakness

- The removal of this greenery would therefore be a great loss. I also think this would diminish the value of my property.

- Across the entire network of embankments there seems to be to be a fantastic opportunity to plant such as to increase beauty and biodiversity.

- I am VERY concerned that Japanese Knotweed is taking hold at the rear of my property. NR needs to prioritise irradiation.

- Suggest that you submit your call for information to local community web-sites such as:

- <http://www.eastdulwichforum.co.uk/>
- <http://www.southeastcentral.co.uk/forums/nunhead-news.142/>
- <http://www.london-se1.co.uk/>

Happy to discuss or even facilitate a weekend visit from the committee.

LV026 [Member of the Public]

Sent: 16 September 2011 16:39
To: Environment Committee
Subject: Review of Railway Embankments

Follow Up Flag: LV026

Dear Darren Johnson,

I read your letter on the management of railway corridors in the East London Advertiser. I would like to suggest that you include the Dockland Light Railway in your review as in east London this is the largest area of railway embankment -and largest area of 'wild space' - that we have. I have never seen evidence of any consultation on the management of this land so if it is taking place it is not well advertised. The stretches I am most familiar with -from Poplar up to

Stratford- are a rich wildlife resource and contain, among other things, wild flower 'meadows', scrub and even a small area of reed bed. This part of London is subject to very intense development pressures and most of its once extensive 'brownfield' areas have been lost. This increases very significantly the importance of these embankments for wildlife. Part of our local stretch was subject this year to some pretty severe management. I would like to know whether the DLR follow any guidelines on when and how they conduct this work.

I would also want to know whether they ever use chemical sprays.

Though I cannot be sure, several areas, particularly adjacent to Langdon Park Station, seem to have been subject to blanket spraying, an approach which is ugly, which raises health questions and which reduces both invertebrate and bird populations.

In answer to the questions posed in your letter, I would certainly want to see thers areas managed with regard to their nature conservation value and would be happy to take part in any consultation.

Good luck with your review.

LV027 **[Member of the Public]**

Sent: 19 September 2011 21:51

To: Environment Committee

Subject: Forest Hill Society - Railway Embankments

Follow Up Flag: LV027_ [Public]

Flag Status: Green

A recent e-mail from the Forest Hill Society said that you were collecting views on the management of railway embankments. Our garden backs onto the line between Forest Hill and Sydenham and so we have some views on this matter.

We enjoy wildlife and provide food for birds in our garden. The green corridor provided by the railway seems to help give a good number and variety of birds in our garden. Whilst we appreciate the need for the embankments not to impede the trains (e.g. by having too many leaves fall on the line) we think they should also be managed for wildlife where possible as they are an excellent green space, undisturbed by people. We were therefore somewhat distressed a few years ago when the embankments on our line were vigorously managed. This seemed to involve cutting off any branches overhanging fences onto the embankments and totally cutting down trees and bushes actually on the embankments. It seemed to be carried out with no thought other than to cut everything down.

We hope these views are helpful.

LV028 [Member of the Public]

Sent: 28 September 2011 10:19
To: Environment Committee
Subject: Railway linesides:confidential

Follow Up Flag: LV028 [Public]
Flag Status: Green

I didn't realise there was an environment committee!

Current management practices are totally and utterly lawless and I have accompanied the police after the replacement of lineside fencing during the bird breeding season on a London Common when vegetation was destroyed in the bird breeding season. This was facilitated by the council who allowed the felling of mature oaks on the common in order to gain access to erect fencing. The police spent 4 hours taking video of birds but there was not sufficient evidence to take the matter further and there never will be as that is the nature of our wildlife law.

I hope colleagues will inform you regarding the decimation of Twickenham Roughs but there should be newspaper archive material about the felling of trees there. I am informed by operatives that badgers burrowing into the embankment at OTHER sites are not dealt with humanely. In addition, some railway tunnels are known bat hibernacula but this doesn't prevent works at inappropriate times of year (usually comms work-not operational works).

Light pollution from linesides especially depots is beyond belief which can effect the green spaces in an **entire district** such as the London canals, Wormwood Scrubs and Kensal Rise Cemetery. This in turn has an adverse effect on bat populations, making some of these areas totally devoid of bat interest. But who seems to care about light pollution anymore, it is seen as an inevitable right for landowners to light their property with not rights for adjoining land suffering the spillage.

It is not just management of their own land, but adjoining land that can be adversely affected: In Surbiton we are informed that Railtrack insisted that Thames Water clear 80 poplar pollards from their property as they were having an effect at Berrylands station. This was probably stretching the truth to justify their outrageous decimation of wet woodland and habitat for grass snakes and Natterers Bat. It was carried out after ecological surveys to attest to this (when 1,000 student hostels were in the pipeline). Secondary vegetation has grown back over the last 8 years and is far denser and higher than the previous poplar pollards so 'go figure'.

What happens when the linesides are cleared using the slash and Monsanto burn method? we get invasions of Japanese knotweed and other fast growing non-native or invasive species such as buddleia, sycamore losing much of the sensitive nature conservation interest. As the public and their animals (dogs and cats) have no access to these areas they really are/were the last bastions for much of our declining species such as hedgehog and viviparous lizard.

Sent: 28 September 2011 13:59
To: Environment Committee
Subject: Railway linesides

Follow Up Flag: LV028 Contd
Flag Status: Green

ps since sending my email this morning I have thought of many more examples including the destruction of a bat roost in the Cavalry tunnel at Feltham Marshalling Yards what a total fiasco that has been all these years!!!!

LV029 [Member of the Public]

Sent: 28 September 2011 16:49

To: Environment Committee

Subject: Lineside wildlife management

Follow Up Flag: LV029_ [Public]

In common with many Londoners I am often concerned about the sudden loss of trees and plants beside tube and rail lines.

Recently, the planting beside the Northern line in Barnet was razed to the ground for many kilometres. At the same time, the spokesperson responsible for looking after wildlife, etc., for the Underground, gave a talk to the LNHS at Camley Street on how much had been done to improve the situation! Frequently a large organisation appoints a 'front man' to pull the wool over the public's eyes. The biodiversity post for Camden Council is a case in point - Richard works hard but the wildlife suffers.

I suggest that any work carried out on the vegetation beside a line has to have planning permission and signs have to be displayed on highways in the vicinity. "Does this affect you?"

As a beekeeper of longstanding I am appalled at the loss of foraging in London this year. So many trees are being lopped just before they flower, or before the greenfly have a chance to settle the trees and produce honeydew. My bees used to gather this exudant and the honeydew honey produced was by far the most popular flavour. Not any more as the tree was removed because a developer wanted it felled.

Much was heard about wildlife corridors a few years ago - why are they now being removed?

Sent: 03 October 2011 12:33

To: Environment Committee

Subject: Railway embankment management

Follow Up Flag: LV030

Dear Environment Committee,

I make the following points arising out of my experience with railside management over the last 30 years.

1. There are significant populations of Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), for example in the length of the District line running between Southfields and Wimbledon Stations. I pointed this out to the management agency some ten years ago, and the most conspicuous patches were treated, but many more infestations remain, and the plant is recovering in places where the treatment was not fully effective. Modern methods of control are very effective, so there is no reason why this situation should remain.

2. Proposals to "enhance" railside vegetation often fail properly to consider natural biodiversity. Two examples illustrate this:

- Tree planting was carried out on the railsides of the main lines running beside Earlsfield, Windmill and Spencer Park Roads on land that carried remnant populations of heathland and acid grassland species. This has led to the nearly complete loss of these remnants as the trees have matured and shaded out the valuable species. Representations were made at the time, but the idea that trees and woodland are everywhere welcome prevailed. The lesson from this is that proposals for tree and shrub planting should adhere to the "right place right tree" principle of the London Tree Framework.
- Following engineering works to the embankments of the District Line running past Wimbledon Park expert advice on how to replace the trees and shrubs that were lost with appropriate landscaping was ignored. Instead, London Transport's horticultural expert prescribed species quite inappropriate to the location, including a "wildflower mix" with species and varieties not native to the UK, let alone this location. The correct approach, that was dismissed, is to apply seeds of short-lived grasses to bind the bare surfaces and act as a nurse cover for natural regeneration. The lost birch-oak woodland was replaced with species of tree and shrub that did not grow in the area before the works, ostensibly because of the risk to engineering integrity of replanting with birch and oak. The engineering advice seems to have been ill-informed, as the replacement trees and shrubs were fast growing and have already exceeded the stature of the lost birch. The lesson here is that real experts on the engineering implications of lineside woody species should be employed.

I hope that these observations will assist with your Review.

LV033 Wandle Forum

Sent: 19 September 2011 15:52

To: Environment Committee

Subject: Railway Embankment Management Consultation

Follow Up Flag: LV033_Wandle Forum

Flag Status: Completed

TO: Alexander Beer

Chief Scrutiny Officer

London Assembly

Wandle Forum - Reply to Consultation Email. Railway Embankments

Dear Sir

The Wandle Forum is the stakeholder consultative body for the soon to be inaugurated Wandle Valley Regional Park (WVRP). The WVRP includes the chain of parks and MOL bordering the River Wandle from the Thames at Wandsworth to Carshalton and Sutton the main body of the park will include Mitcham Common and Beddington Park and the Beddington Farmlands gravel pit lakes inbetween.

There is substantial interface between the park and the rail network including: near Haydons Road Station and between Mitcham Junction, Hackbridge and Carshalton. A map of the proposed regional park can be provided should you need it.

The WVRP is an ecologically sensitive area providing many important habitats for many species of plant, insect and animal. Parts of the park have been extensively studied with 150 species of bird sighted annually in places close to Mitcham Junction and Hackbridge. The Wandle itself is home to Kingfishers and many other species rare in the urban environment even up to its confluence with the Thames close to Wandsworth Town . Near Haydon's Road Station there is even a specially built eco-viewing platform a few yards from the railway bridge over the river.

We are therefore concerned that although the embankment area is relatively narrow in the areas concerned it is exceptionally sensitive to line side maintenance work so potential damage to habitat areas needs to be gauged and minimized and the timing of foliage clearance needs to be scheduled to protect life cycles of specific species.

Whilst I am not personally a specialist in ecological management and protection clearly this is an issue that requires professional biodiversity input from specialists including council officers to advise on scheduling of regular annual patterns of maintenance and clearing. I believe that many local authorities including Wandsworth have biodiversity officers who are likely to be very willing to advise.

We are particularly concerned with the control of invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed and other invaders which have made substantial inroads into some areas of Wandsworth including railway embankments and needs to be eradicated or at least 'quarantined' from train air streams when cutting back foliage.

I hope this response is useful and also that feed back on how the points raised have been dealt with might be forthcoming.

Thank you undertaking this review and the consultation.

LV034 **[Member of the Public]**

Sent: 28 November 2011 09:40

To: Alexandra Beer

Subject: Is anything being done about the rampaging spread of Japanese Knotweed through Network Rail negligence?

Community & Environmental campaigner

31 October 2011

Dear Alex

London Assembly - Environment committee rapporteurship: railway embankments

London TravelWatch is the statutory watchdog representing transport users in London. Thank you for inviting us to comment on the scope of the rapporteurship and latterly the investigation itself.

You will know we proposed that the scope of the investigation looked more widely than the management of vegetation. The general management of railway land is a concern for passengers.

I have set out some general issues about the management of railway land in London, our views on the management of vegetation and below that, some of the other wider issues.

General comments

The Assembly should note that Network Rail is set objectives by Government, the so called High Level Output Specification (HLOS). All that Network Rail does flows from this. Budgets are set to achieve these objectives. The HLOS objectives are i) reliability, ii) safety and iii) capacity. There is not an objective for local environmental quality and thus Network Rail does not set itself sufficient priority, nor budget to achieve all we and, we know, its passengers would want in terms local environmental quality. London TravelWatch continues to promote the issue of local environmental quality when it discusses the issue of HLOS with the Department for Transport as passengers want to see a well managed railway. This includes the management of its land and structures.

For information on HLOS see:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/rail/strategyfinance/strategy/hlos/briefingnoteonthedevelopment3511>

Transport for London (TfL), on the other hand, has a more rounded approach to the management of its assets and so will take account of some of the issues your rapporteurship is discussing. This is reinforced in the Public Private Partnership (PPP) contract which had specific contractual obligations regarding both sustainable development and environmental stewardship:

http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/corporate/modesoftransport/tube/pppcontracts/5_3_3917_1.asp

The management of vegetation on railway land

Vegetation on railway land gives rise to issues of performance and safety – leaves on the line, fallen trees on track and overhead power supplies. From a narrow transport perspective the management of vegetation on railway land is simple and this may lead one to conclude all vegetation should be eradicated. However, London TravelWatch would not advocate a regime whereby all vegetation is taken out (as it is on some European railway networks) as we recognise the value of the railways contribution to wider public policy considerations of biodiversity. We would, however, urge that the issues of performance and safety are considered as part of a balanced approach.

Other railway land management issues

You will know that we had hoped that the wider issues of the management of railway land would be investigated by the Assembly. I set these out briefly below hoping that the Assembly may consider them either as part of this investigation or in the future.

i) Litter and refuse on railway land

London TravelWatch has worked for nearly a decade to improve the local environmental quality of London's railways with respect to litter and refuse.

Although there is a statutory obligation (Environmental Protection Act 1990) on the owners of railway land to keep their land clear of litter and refuse (a similar statutory obligation to that which local authorities have on their highways) Network Rail avoids this duty by responding to complaints and keeping out of court on a case by case basis. That said our monitoring of the track bed around stations has demonstrated a marked improvement over the last few years.

Local authorities, as litter authorities have enforcement powers to ensure that railway operators keep their land clean. However, few of them use these powers effectively.

London TravelWatch has worked with London Councils, Network Rail and the Tidy Britain Group to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the local authorities and Network Rail that covers the management of railway land. This MOU has been signed, but neither party has yet enacted it. We would urge the London Assembly to press both parties to do so.

Network Rail has, historically, not been able to manage its contractors with respect to ensuring that engineering supplies are removed from sites following works. The recent rise in metal prices has meant some clearing up of scrap has occurred.

Litter on the railways is not, however, just about aesthetics. For example a recent major incident on the East Coast Main Line was caused by a plastic bag being caught up in the pantograph of an electric train. On the third rail network, arcing after long dry periods resulting in fires is a cause of disruption. Rubbish also attracts rats and other vermin to the railway, these then often make their nests in cabling troughs and other equipment – but when their food supplies run low they then start eating things they should not – rats regularly gnaw through signalling cables, causing massive disruption until the cable can be replaced.

This issue is much less of a problem on the land LUL manages.

ii) Graffiti on railway buildings and structures

Again this is an issue that affects passengers' enjoyment of the railway, but also their feeling of safety. London TravelWatch has previously provided evidence to the court via the British Transport Police of the effect of graffiti on passengers. There is legislation to address this issue. Again the MOU described above could be a vehicle to tackle this issue on Network Rail land.

This is significantly less of a problem on London Underground Limited (LUL) land.

iii) Trespass on railway land

Very little railway land is publicly accessible. The management of access is important in order to limit the issues of litter and waste, graffiti, cable theft and general vandalism.

Trespass can also impact on performance. As an example, a graffiti attack at Bellingham carriage sidings in Lewisham, reportedly cost First Capital Connect around £250,000 last year to repair, but also resulted in major disruption to passengers over a wide area, as trains have had to be either cancelled or short formed resulting in overcrowding.

We would welcome more active management of access onto the railways.

If you have any questions please contact me.

Yours sincerely

Streets and Surface Transport Policy Officer.

DJ3274, DJ3281 Correspondence provided by Darren Johnson's office around Lineside Vegetation

DJ3274

From:

Sent: 19 March 2009

I am writing to you because you have an interest in London, local government, the environment or transport and your remit covers my local area of Finchley Central, in the London borough of Barnet N3. This is not just about my locality, it concerns anyone who lives near an over ground part of the tube system. We may already have spoken about this yesterday, when I moved from being flabbergasted into taking action.

A few weeks ago the residents in my community received a letter from Steven Judd, head of Environment, Tube Lines, entitled 'Northern Line - Tree felling in preparation for new signalling system'. For us this relates to the one station branch line that runs out from Mill Hill East to Finchley Central, it is at the end of our gardens more than 75 feet from our building.

In essence, they are killing almost every tree bordering the tube line. This covers the railway's property and any overhanging branches, over two or possibly three winter felling seasons. Why? To reduce leaves on the line and make way for faster trains, in time for the Olympics in 2012.

This pogrom began for my residents early this month. The plan is to slaughter approximately half the trees and all overhanging branches this season. The stark reality however is more like the wholesale destruction of the local environment and the creation of a polluting 'arid polluted' wasteland. And that's just for this season!

As Secretary to a block of 12 flats bordering the railway, I responded to this letter by contacting the Helpline. The courteous young man from an office outside London could tell me very little about the Whats, hows and whens. In response to my further call yesterday, last evening I had a 40 minute conversation with Steven Judd from Tube lines, who rang me. He very nicely told me to get used to the 150 metre swathe of devastation I can see from my home (150 metres is the length of a train - on this part of the track and I can now see a whole train).

People living along the Jubilee Line have suffered from this already I understand and it will happen -! - along other tube lines in the future. So this is not just about a traditionally leafy corner of the Capital! - but about everyone living within 100 feet of an above-ground tube line section.

This is what may be coming to you and is affecting us already:

1.. A huge increase in noise pollution from the trains. Historically in winter months when trees are bare and undergrowth dies back there is an increase in noise but our double glazed windows are mostly closed. The new level of noise is louder already but the noise baffle of greenery will no longer grow to shield us during seasons when we open our windows and doors. And this is just the first killing season. The noise has grown so much in the last week alone we can hear the passing of every single train over our TV., We thought we had the right to live in peace - at least our leases say so!

2. . Increased pollution from the trains, e.g. exhaust fumes degrading our air quality

3. Our garden will no longer be a place to enjoy, relax and distress during the summer months but may instead be one where stress levels are raised by noise and dust and dirt

4. Our loss of privacy and the loss of privacy for our neighbours and anyone else living within 100 feet of the over ground. Northern Line tube sections. (Is the Piccadilly line next perhaps?)

5. The impact on our skyline

6. The tragic loss of a haven of green space that will instead be a view of brick and roof and scoured ground cover

7. Increased impact of wind/weather without the tree screen (which will allow for the free movement of more leaves, which is what they are supposed to be reducing by the felling
- 8'. Yet another strike to add to global warming and our pressing necessity to retain trees' .. , " wherever possible. We're talking about hundreds of mature trees that have been here for up to a hundred years. And of course a reduction of shade with the trees and shrubs removed. - 1
9. The impact on wildlife living along the railway line and along the embankments, from foxes to 'birds (yes, felling work stop's for this season at the end of the month 'to limit the affect on nesting love birds)
10. The wanton destruction of our (once. delightful) view. We were screened from people travelling on the tube until last week. This is exacerbated by the train halting position directly behind our building where trains wait for Barnet branch trains to clear the station at Finchley Central. '
11. And, of course, the negative financial impact on the value of our homes,

I and my neighbours have watched with much interest as the work progressed on the other side of the railway track. We now have a view of brick walls and the fences of the back gardens on the other side of the track. Formerly we only had a view of the tops of their roofs and the windows let into them. We are, frankly, horrified by what is being done to our environment. The trees being removed are 4 stories high or more and are mature, majestic living things that eat carbon, not produce it.

Mr Judd tells me, which is most interesting, that evergreen trees will not be removed as their leaf fall is not a problem. But "the list of approved trees for replanting does not include evergreens". When questioned further about this, he said that "the approved trees list was meant to have been reviewed recently. This hasn't taken place but it is expected, that the list will be more draconian than now, not less". So not much chance of an evergreen replacement or ten. Oh, and "We would not benefit from replanting as none is planned for this area". When I asked what we (the public) could do to help get evergreen trees on the list the answer was, of course, "0". We can however plant our own trees in our single metre wide strip between the edge of our property and the tube line fence. Whoopee ... the roots and branches of anything we plant will be on the tube line side of the fence in a year, give or take. So yes, the Tube people will take.

Mr Judd also tells me his letter is undated and not issued far in advance because other Londoners (the Jubilee line residents?) said they didn't get their letter. But then he would say that. If we had been advised of the real scale of the work and with a decent amount of warning we would have had the chance to act before our environment was butchered. Of course if the tube lines had maintained their own embankments and trees properly during the 12 years I've lived in this building we would have seen the need to plant some trees ourselves, assuming we had any ground to plant them in.' So because of Tube Lines years of negligence we, and all the creatures living here, now face this mass destruction of habitat, beauty, privacy and peace.

This morning I rang Barnet Council's Planning Office, tree preservation section. I was told that Tube Lines are outside the statute law on tree preservation so can chop down what they like legally. Mr Judd assured me that the beautiful Poplar tree that rises some 2.5 - 30 metres will not be destroyed. At ground level it is unclear if this is inside the railway property because the trunk is so huge but at least part of its roots live in next door's garden. To see this go would be criminal. If this is to be saved (time will tell) why must so much else that is beautiful go?

To illustrate the full horror of our changing landscape I attach four images for you now:

1. View south from my home on 3 March when the far bank had been partly cleared
2. View south of the *devastation* from ground level taken yesterday
3. The Google satellite picture showing the, .. tree canopy last year
4. The Tube Lines letter signed by Mr Judd

I'm only sorry I didn't take pictures before the butchery commenced. I will be sending you more images. I am currently working through the images I've taken to date with my digital SLR to give

you a handful of compelling comparative shots. Copies can be made available to you.

Mr Judd is due to come to review his pogrom on Friday and has promised to speak with me then.

On a personal note, I was born in Finchley and have *lived* here for 50 of my 52 years. It is both a

blessing and a cause of pain that I am home for the next year - therefore I can stir up support and challenge the Tube Lines mass destruction. I am person disabled by osteoarthritis and on March 2nd I commenced a year's leave of absence from my work with The Open University; I have no background in campaigning but wonder whether starting a petition would be of value? Whilst we cannot put back what has been wilfully slaughtered I trust we can limit or stop the next and the following winter's planned destruction here - and waiting in the wings near your home sometime soon.

Thank you in advance for your help and support

DJ3281

From:

Sent: 06 May 2009

To: Darren Johnson

Subject: District Line Trees

Dear Mr Johnson

I do hope that you can help us, we live alongside the Wimbeldon Distict Line Tube in. Southfields. We have a rich wild life habitat and gorgious well established trees along the line. Now with no consultation at all we were informed that TFL were cutting down the trees. They have started further down the line and devastated the area. My neighbour further down Sutherland Grove said that the birds just sat on the fence and looked on as their homes were destroyed 18;te March early.April. They seemed to have stopped coming nearer (I live at 62 Sutherland Grove) but think that it will not be long before the huge trees behind the fence, are knocked down.

I have approached the local Conservative councillors at a public meeting (The letters sent said th.at . Wandsworth had been consulted) but this.is not a particular concern to them, parking is more . important, also now that Boris is running london transport they will support him, and his denial of anything that may stop his narrow outlook. on life.

The Wandsworth Environmental Officer fobbed me off by saying they would monitor it, but they wont! low rates don't include this.

As you can see this action is a great environmental threat in many ways, trees going will affect the carbon monoxide levels,the animals and flora and' fauna are being destroyed, also the water levels 'will be affected.. there is'an underground stream that runs along that area and the big trees keep the Waterlevels down: Then of course there is the aesthetic perspective- green spaces in the city help our wellbeing.

I do hope that you can look into this issue /policy for 'us, and be a voice in the wilderness., The last time work was done along the line replacing fences, and making a paths, there was a. Promise. to replant trees this never happened; There are similar promises now. I can understand if quickly . growing trees are cut back, butll1Y real fear is the very old established willows, beech, poplars etc. I look forward to hearing from you ~

Best Wishes

REF Correspondence between Darren Johnson and Teresa Villiers MP around Lineside Vegetation (DJ3505)

30 Sep 2010

Dear Darren,

Thank you for your letter of 16 August to Philip Hammond expressing concern on behalf of several of your constituents over the environmental impact of Network Rail's vegetation management policy, I am replying as the Minister responsible for Rail.

I was sorry to learn of your local constituents' concerns over Network Rail's apparent lack of effective notification of intended vegetation works.

Network Rail is technically a private sector company. I am afraid that its tree and vegetation management programme is an operational matter in which Ministers have no power to intervene.

However, I am happy to provide some general comments by way of background. I am well aware that the approach taken on our railways to trees can often provoke controversy,

Network Rail's first priority is to operate a safe and reliable railway and tree clearance plays a part in achieving this. Leaf fall, particularly from broad leaved trees, can result in adhesion problems for trains and cause the signalling system to malfunction. Train accidents due to falling trees are a major risk in certain areas due to factors such as the steepness of cutting, slopes, soil conditions and the nature of the vegetation.

That said, there are important ecological issues to be considered and care needs to be taken to, avoid unnecessary tree-felling.

I would encourage you to make your constituents' continued concerns over the lack of notification known to Network Rail. To do so, you may wish to contact the company's Chief Executive at the following address:

Iain Coucher
Chief Executive
Network Rail
Kings Place
90 York Way
LONDON
N19AG.

You advocate that Network Rail should be covered by the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). The Government is currently considering a range of

options for delivering its commitment to increase the accountability of Network Rail. The option of including the company within the scope of the FOJA is under consideration. . '

Regards,

Teresa

(END)

Date: 16 August 2010

Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Great Minster House
76 Marsham Street
London
SW1P4DR
United Kingdom

Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP
Future of Network Rail - Tree and habitat removal

I have been contacted on numerous occasions by concerned constituents living along Network Rail Lines within the London Area who have expressed dismay at the often sudden and wholesale or excessive removal of trees that are often mature and broadleaf reporting that these occurrences had taken place with little or no apparent local consultation or . accountability.

In any review of the structure, governance and future of Network Rail I urge to consider:

- A requirement for public consultation, and better communication with local authorities, both councillors and officers prior to any decisions for habitat and tree removal
- Withdrawal of. Network Rails immunity from Freedom of Information Act to make them more accountable.

Residents have reported that this type of tree and habitat removal has resulted 'in the loss of shade' and cooling In the summer, loss of privacy, protection from train noise, loss of habitat for local wildlife and cited issues relating to climate change adaptation and mitigating water from rainfall and flash floods.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Darren Johnson AM

[END]