



Paul Powlesland
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Freedom of Information
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8th October 2018

Dear Mr Powlesland,

Information request

Reference number: FOI2018/01205

Thank you for your email of 10th September 2018. You requested the following information:

'Please supply the following information you hold about any felling of trees to be carried out by Network Rail- and/or contractors acting on its behalf- in the next 12 months on Network Rail land in the Network Rail South East Region:

- *The number of trees to be felled.*
- *The location of any trees to be felled.*
- *The reason for any trees to be felled.*
- *Any Environmental impact assessments or other studies or reports produced in relation to such tree felling.'*

We have processed your request under the terms of the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) as the information requested is environmental according to the definition in Regulation 2 of the EIR. Section 39 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) exempts environmental information from the FOIA, but requires us to consider it under the EIR. I consider your request falls within the definition outlined in Regulation 2(a) of the EIRs.

We confirm that we hold the information you have requested, and we are providing this information in the response below.

Our approach to vegetation management

At Network Rail, we take our responsibility to keep the railway and the natural environment around it safe very seriously.

In recent media reports, there has been a lot of inaccurate coverage of how Network Rail manages trees and other vegetation that grows alongside the railway. To be clear, we do not have a national tree-felling programme and we certainly do not have any plans to cut down all of the trees on our estate.

There are approximately six million trees on the Network Rail estate. Proactively managing these trees and other lineside vegetation along the railway is essential to keep trains running safely and reliably for passengers. By proactively managing vegetation we aim to get the balance right between doing everything we can to ensure the safety of passengers and our staff on the railway, and meeting our responsibility to look after the habitats and wildlife living along the railway.

Further information about our approach and policies is available on our transparency pages under vegetation management on our website (link below):

[Network Rail Transparency Page](https://www.networkrail.co.uk/who-we-are/transparency-and-ethics/transparency/datasets/)¹

The standard way we measure our work is by land area rather than by the number of trees. We do count tree numbers on some individual projects that we work on and from this we can extrapolate out to calculate an approximate number of trees cut down across the country each year. Although it must be stressed that this is only an approximation, we estimate that we cut down roughly 50,000 trees a year nationally. Put into context this is around two trees per mile of track that we operate or 0.8% of the overall number of trees on our land.

Managing the impacts of the driest summer on record

The South East of England experienced the driest summer on record in 2018, with only half the average rainfall. This has had some significant impacts on the railway, which our engineers are working hard to mitigate.

Many railway embankments in the region are made of clay and almost all of them are populated by trees and other vegetation. During long periods of hot weather, without rain, deciduous trees can suck moisture from the ground faster than it is replenished.

¹ <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/who-we-are/transparency-and-ethics/transparency/datasets/>

This causes the ground under the track to shrink and, much like potholes on the roads, trains can't drive at full speed over these defects.

Network Rail engineers and staff from train operators are monitoring the bumpiness of train rides across the region on a daily basis to identify areas in need of maintenance. This involves adding more stone to support the tracks, before Network Rail's special fleet of [tamping machines \(video here\)](#)² realign the rails. This work is completed at night so services are not disrupted.

In some areas, and only where it is absolutely necessary, Network Rail will need to clear what are considered the 'thirstiest' trees and vegetation to remove the risk of further damage to the tracks.

For further information please see the link below:

<https://www.networkrail.co.uk/feeds/rail-workers-fight-back-against-track-defects-caused-by-the-hottest-summer-on-record/>

Requested Information: number of trees planned for removal, location and reason for removal

Please find below a list of the number of trees planned for removal in the South East Route in the next 12 months including location and reason for removal.

Number of Trees	Local Name	Reason for Felling
38	Kidbrooke to Eltham	High water demand trees affecting stability of earthworks in over-consolidated clay areas
14	Ripe	High water demand trees affecting stability of earthworks in over-consolidated clay areas
4	Plumpton	High water demand trees affecting stability of earthworks in over-consolidated clay areas
5	Cooksbridge	High water demand trees affecting stability of earthworks in over-consolidated clay areas
3	Snarkhurst Wood Hollingbourne	High water demand trees affecting stability of earthworks in over-consolidated clay areas
4	Bearstead	High water demand trees affecting stability of earthworks in over-consolidated clay areas
1	Greenway court bridge (isolated trees)	High water demand trees affecting stability of earthworks in over-consolidated clay areas
27	Intersection bridge total mil 30m	High water demand trees affecting stability of

² <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/running-the-railway/looking-after-the-railway/fleet-machines-vehicles/track-treatment/>

	352y to 30m 990y Up and down	earthworks in over-consolidated clay areas
12	Edenbridge	High water demand trees affecting stability of earthworks in over-consolidated clay areas
28	Park Farm	High water demand trees affecting stability of earthworks in over-consolidated clay areas
21	Holmwood/Ockley	High water demand trees affecting stability of earthworks in over-consolidated clay areas
8	Kemsing full length 27 440 to 27 770 Up	High water demand trees affecting stability of earthworks in over-consolidated clay areas
1	Cockneys Wood Kemsing	High water demand trees affecting stability of earthworks in over-consolidated clay areas
14	Southborough Embankment	High water demand trees affecting stability of earthworks in over-consolidated clay areas
65	Sevenoaks Weald	High water demand trees affecting stability of earthworks in over-consolidated clay areas
1494	Elmstead Woods to Sevenoaks	0-7m corridor. Clearance for compliance to standard
1	Beckenham	Hazardous tree on Outside Party land
2	Maidstone	Accommodate fencing renewal
200	Little Browns	Earthwork remediation enabling works
14	Franklands	Earthwork remediation enabling works
12	Haywards Heath	Drainage renewal enabling works
40	Ockley	Earthwork remediation enabling works
80	Pilgrims Way Bridge 271	Fencing enabling works
20	Bekesbourne Station	Fencing enabling works
20	Shakespeare Tunnel	Fencing enabling works
40	Leigh Village Station	Fencing enabling works
120	Eynsford - Crockenhill Lane	Fencing enabling works
400	Preston Farm	Fencing enabling works
410	Otford Junction - Childsbridge	Fencing enabling works
60	Kemsing	Fencing enabling works
10	Platt Industrial Estate Bridge 573	Fencing enabling works
30	Barming Silver Leaves, Kilbarn Road, East Malling	Fencing enabling works
140	Etchingham	Fencing enabling works
30	BP Garage Viaduct	Fencing enabling works
5	Chestfield	Fencing enabling works
150	Sevenoaks	Fencing enabling works
50	Broadfield Road	Fencing enabling works
50	Barnhurst	Fencing enabling works
20	Ilderton Road	Fencing enabling works

10	Vale Road Ind. Estate	Fencing enabling works
100	Sidcup	Fencing enabling works
200	Dudley Road / Detling Road Access	Fencing enabling works
120	Plumstead	Fencing enabling works
20	Parkside Cross	Fencing enabling works
500	Yalding	Fencing enabling works
20	Bromley South	Fencing enabling works
80	Boxhill	Fencing enabling works
60	Kingsfold	Fencing enabling works
320	Crowborough	Fencing enabling works
60	West Norwood to Gipsy Hill	Fencing enabling works
60	Dormans to East Grinstead	Fencing enabling works
100	Dormans Park	Fencing enabling works
10	Whyteleafe	Fencing enabling works
40	Tadworth to Tattenham Corner	Fencing enabling works
40	West Croydon to Waddon	Fencing enabling works
350	Carshalton Beeches to Sutton Site 1	Fencing enabling works
400	Sutton to Belmont	Fencing enabling works
120	Banstead to Epsom Downs	Fencing enabling works

Please note these numbers are the current planned figures but will be subject to change depending on requirements when the projects are undertaken. Vegetation inspections by the maintenance delivery units may identify additional trees. Conversely, the number of trees actually felled may be reduced where related to enabling works.

Elmstead Woods to Sevenoaks works

The work between Elmstead Woods and Sevenoaks forms part of a safety critical vegetation removal project covering nearly 20 miles of track. Across the network, we must keep the area immediately around the trains and the railway infrastructure clear of all vegetation for the safety of passengers and staff. If not managed well, lineside vegetation can affect passenger services by obscuring train signals, falling on the track or onto overhead lines. It can also put staff at risk by growing to an extent where our track workers don't have a safe place to wait while trains pass at speeds of up to 125mph.

The enclosed fact sheet sets out more information about our work to manage our lineside vegetation.

Fencing enabling works

In order to have access to safely and securely install fencing, we will be undertaking some vegetation clearance work. This forms part of a large project of fencing renewals across the South East Route's 1624 miles of boundary line. This new lineside fencing is an essential part of our work to reduce the growing number of trespass incidents on the railway, protecting public safety and the safety of our railway network. Trespassing is not only illegal, it can result in serious life-changing injuries or death. When someone trespasses on the railway, we have to stop all trains in the vicinity to make sure everyone is kept safe. This not only delays nearby trains, but also has a knock-on effect on trains across the network.

Requested Information: environmental impact assessments, studies and reports

Please find attached a desk study completed as part of the works between New Cross Gate and Sevenoaks. We do not hold any other impact assessments, studies or reports for the remainder of the vegetation removal outlined above. All of these vegetation removal works will be carried out in line with Network Rail's Vegetation Management Standard, details of which can be found on our Transparency pages under 'Vegetation Management' (link above).

Please note that I have removed the names of individuals from the desk study under Regulation 13(1) of the EIR. This exception allows us to withhold information in circumstances where its disclosure would breach the data protection principles set out at s.35 of the Data Protection Act 2018 and Article 5 of the General Data Protection Regulations. In this instance, disclosure would breach the first principle which mandates that data must be processed fairly and lawfully. The individuals in question would have had no reasonable expectation that their personal information would be disseminated to the world at large through the EIR process. It would not be fair processing of their data to disregard these legitimate expectations.

If you have any enquiries about this response, please contact me in the first instance at FOI@networkrail.co.uk or on 01908 782405. Details of your appeal rights are below.

Please remember to quote the reference number at the top of this letter in all future communications.

Yours sincerely

Danielle Stratton
Information Officer

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Appeal Rights

If you are unhappy with the way your request has been handled and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, please write to the FOI Compliance and Appeals Manager at Network Rail, Freedom of Information, The Quadrant, Elder Gate, Milton Keynes, MK9 1EN, or by email at foi@networkrail.co.uk. Your request must be submitted within 40 working days of receipt of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF