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A14: Half a million trees die alongside road project

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Stock image of dead trees for illustrative purposes only (*Image: Stock*)

HALF a million trees have died next to one 21-mile stretch of road – with the cost of replacing them set to hit seven figures.

National Highways, the government agency responsible for England's roads, has admitted an unusually "high fatality rate" led to three quarters of recently planted saplings along the A14 between Cambridge and Huntingdon being lost.

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According to Sky News, it could cost as much as £2.9 million to replant the trees. More than 860,000 trees were originally planted for the project.

The mass loss of trees has been blamed by one industry figure on a failure to prioritise tree care once planting has taken place.

Speaking of the A14 situation, Sir William Worsley, chair of the Forestry Commission, told Sky News: "I would like to see much more money put into management as well as planting.



"If we don't get survival, it's nothing. If we get surviving trees, planting trees is the most cost-effective way to manage carbon.

"If you look at all the other forms of land use, that's nothing compared to the benefit of trees. Therefore it's absolutely essential."

Replanting is expected to begin in October with the first batch of 162,000 trees already on order from a local nursery. In addition, all replanting work will be subject to a five-year period.

The upgrade of the A14 cost £1.5 billion and was opened in 2020.

A number of mature trees were destroyed during construction and planting new ones was part of the development consent order, the permission to build.

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Martin Edwards, National Highways project manager, said: "We take our responsibility to the local environment seriously and with that in mind we're pleased to be in a position where we have a clear route ahead for the replanting of trees on the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon improvement scheme.

"This approach will result in planting the optimum species of tree, in the right areas, with tree planting set to begin in October."