# HS2 Amersham Action Group

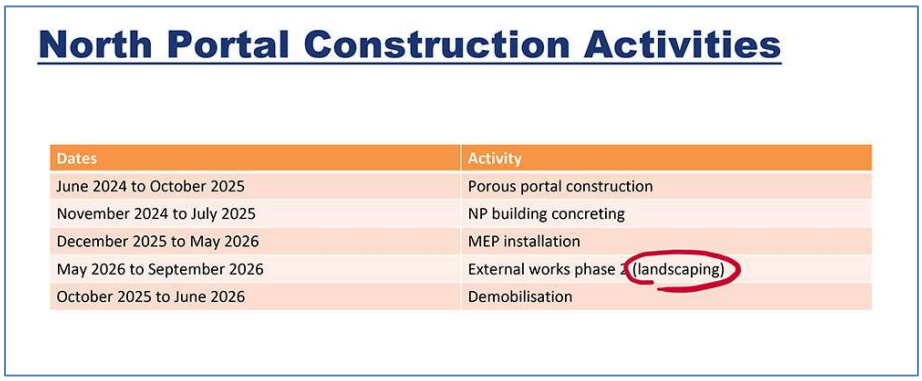
August 29, 2025

Various Interested Parties –
see covering Email

RESTORATION OF THE AONB

Dear Colleagues ,

My concerns regarding the restoration of the AoNB originated with the Wildlife Trust's critical report into the claims of Biodiversity net gain made by HS2, and subsequent examination of the detailed calculations for the AoNB. The question arose, how is the biodiversity to be increased, while respecting the existing Landscape Character area of the Chilterns ? I first raised these concerns in March 2024 (see attached), but they remain unanswered. In fact there has been no meaningful progress in extracting useful information regarding the restoration plans, let alone influencing them. Meanwhile, landscaping of the Chiltern Tunnel portal is scheduled to commence next spring, by which time the window for discussions will have closed.



**North Portal Construction Activities**

| Dates | Activity |
|---|---|
| June 2024 to October 2025 | Porous portal construction |
| November 2024 to July 2025 | NP building concreting |
| December 2025 to May 2026 | MEP installation |
| May 2026 to September 2026 | External works phase 2 (landscaping) |
| October 2025 to June 2026 | Demobilisation |

**HS2 Reset**

During a meeting with Mark Wild (in Wendover), it emerged that HS2 would like to know how much the restoration was likely to cost, and that EKFB have been asked to submit final landscaping plans to Bucks by November. Have we already missed the boat ? The 'reset' will likely result in lower quality and lower cost landscaping solutions.

## Next steps

The next meeting with HS2 should attempt to obtain the following information from HS2

1) **Planting Schedules**

Please supply the 'default' planting mix for the various proposed habitats in the AoNB – mixed woodland, woodland edge, scrub mix, mixed hedgerow – or else explain why different sites require different treatment. Explain how and why the planting mix differs from typical existing Chiltern woodlands, if this is the case.
(It would be easier to consider one default specification, with deviations at some sites, than around 20 separate applications, as currently submitted – so this might be favourably received)

**2) Planting maintenance**

Explain the duties of the maintenance contractors regarding new planting, and the duration of the contracts. Also explain how communities and local authorities can be engaged in monitoring new planting, and the procedures to be adopted if planting appears not to thrive.

**3) Unwanted land parcels**

Please identify any areas of land which now appear unsuitable for their original purpose, and so are unlikely to be returned to the original owners. Indicate how these are to be owned, managed and maintained after construction, and at whose expense.

2 and 3 may not require immediate S17 approval, and may not be considered as expenditure necessary to get the trains running – but should be considered now, to ensure that there is some money left, so they can be properly funded.

This represents the minimum information required to assess whether there is a coherent strategy behind the schedule 17 applications currently submitted, and whether the likely outcome will be acceptable. Other questions, such as biodiversity gain, can be addressed once this basic information is made available.

**How ?**

At the meeting in May this year, HS2 confirmed that 'detailed restoration plans will be submitted', and that they were 'working on a long term restoration strategy'. Neither has yet been shared with stakeholders – have they survived the latest HS2 reset ? Will they be released before the Main Works Contractors start landscaping ? It would be in the interests of HS2 to delay any release of information, to limit the time available for discussions.

A meeting between the main stakeholders –

- The Chesham Society
- Chiltern National Landscapes

- Bucks UA – councillors and officials

and HS2 should be arranged as soon as is practical. This might require some preparatory work by the stakeholder group, which should start immediately, if we are to initiate meaningful engagement with HS2. Possibly a meeting between the Society, CNL & Bucks should be the next step ?

Regards,

Dr J. E. Conboy

