hs2@jimconboy.com

From: HS2 <HS2@chilternsociety.org.uk>
Sent: 07 April 2025 17:35
To: HS2@JimConboy.com
Subject: Fw: [EXTERNAL] Restoration of the AONB

Dr James Conboy

From: Maddelyn Sutton <Maddelyn.Sutton@hs2.org.uk>
Sent: 07 April 2025 15:29
To: HS2 <HS2@chilternsociety.org.uk>
Cc: Greg Smith <greg.smith.mp@parliament.uk>; Martin.Tett@buckinghamshire.gov.uk <Martin.Tett@buckinghamshire.gov.uk>; Peter Martin (Cllr) <Peter.Martin@buckinghamshire.gov.uk>; Freda Jesudason <Freda.Jesudason@hs2.org.uk>; Joel Sykes <joel.sykes@hs2.org.uk>
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] Restoration of the AONB

Dear Dr Conboy and Mr Phippen,

Thank you for your letter dated 4 March expressing your concerns regarding the restoration of the Chilterns AONB on completion of HS2 construction works and I'm sorry it has taken some time to come back to you. Please see our responses below under the subject headings you have provided. After a brief exchange of correspondence with Tom Beeston we're arranging for a group of us to get together to discuss further.

Aims of the project

The "HS2 Landscape Design Approach" document (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7f32feed915d74e33f4f12/HS2_Landscape_Design_Approach_July_2016.pdf) demonstrates HS2 Ltd's approach to the development of the landscape design along the line of route.

This document is quite expansive and goes into detail around how the aims of the HS2 Design Vision will be applied to our landscape designs. A couple of key extracts below set out that it is not a case of either/or when it comes to working with the local landscape character and setting new standards for landscape design, but a balance of both delivered holistically.

The landscape design will create a positive lasting legacy, responding to the scale and extent of HS2 infrastructure and its components with the local landscape context along the line of route. It is also intended that the landscape design delivers a strong identity to the scheme, including the creation of bold new landscapes and transformational public spaces and places that will help generate and support economic growth.

The scope of landscape design is wide and all embracing. Along with new landscapes and public places, it will deliver environmental requirements such as visual screening, and appropriate settings for a host of engineering design and architectural elements, including structures and buildings.

The landscape design will also provide the means to restore agricultural land, build-in noise mitigation, create new ecological habitats and features, provide recreational spaces,
opportunities for land art and settings for heritage features and historic landscapes, and promote the integration of footpath, bridleways and cycle routes.

Biodiversity

With regard to our No Net Loss (NNL) ambition, HS2 employs a DEFRA based metric approach to calculate our progress (seeking to achieve biodiversity gains where possible). We publish progress annually within the Environmental Sustainability Progress Report, and share all data/GIS data with the HS2 Ecology Review Group - an independent group comprised of local planning authorities, statutory bodies, conservation groups and environmental NGOs.

The metric used by HS2 has been developed through engagement with DEFRA and Natural England. These organisations set the ongoing policy for the approaches to be applied for biodiversity accounting. In addition, the process used to undertake biodiversity metric calculations has been peer reviewed by an independent specialist review team (established by Natural England). The HS2 Biodiversity Accounting Process has also been subjected to Lloyd's Register Independent Assurance.

The figures and impacts outlined within the Wildlife Trusts Report (as referenced) are not recognised by HS2 Ltd as they have been derived using a differing methodology and datasets to those used for HS2. The Wildlife Trust's report is based on limited desk-based study. This is in contrast to the surveys completed by the professional ecologists who compile HS2's data by physically accessing huge areas of land.

Strategy

The creation of a restoration or landscaping masterplan is not something that the project is required to produce, nor required under the relevant legislation. The legislative framework that HS2 uses to deliver the scheme is Schedule 17 of the HS2 Act, this is the planning regime that HS2 Ltd and its contractors have a statutory requirement to follow. Schedule 17 sets out a number of required subsequent approvals covering different matters, with a number of works or matters not requiring any further planning approvals under Schedule 17. Planting proposals may be provided for information (and in some cases requesting feedback) alongside some of the design related applications for specific works (plans and specs). There may be other consenting requirements regarding specific mitigation (bringing into use) and site restoration, but there are clearly defined criteria on when these approvals are required, which may not cover all landscape proposals.

In respect of the vegetation outside operational limits, this is the purpose of the Chilterns Enhancement and Integration Plan (CEIP), Part 2: Additional Projects.

Community Engagement

I was sorry to hear your comments about the engagement on our landscape plans. Throughout the Chilterns AONB there are nine key design elements of the HS2 project. For each of these structures and surrounding area we have engaged extensively and sought views and ideas from the local community, receiving hundreds of responses in feedback. One of the key topics of this engagement was landscape design and ecology. In addition to this we undertake regular engagement events and drop ins for local residents to update them on construction progress and give residents the opportunity to ask us questions.

With specific regard to the Chiltern Society, we hold a regular 6-weekly meeting with your members, which is often on site to show how the construction of the railway is progressing. At the Chilterns AONB review group meeting in April 2024, where Jim Conboy from the Chiltern Society was invited as a guest, Simon Matthews the EKFB Interface & Stakeholder Director, gave a briefing on the evolution of the detailed landscape design in the EKFB area and how this relates to the stages of Schedule 17. The minutes of which can be here Chiltern_AONB_Review_Group_Minutes_-_16-04-2024__32.pdf and the presentation is attached.

We have not yet been back to the LPA on the resubmission of these applications in the AONB (National Landscape), this is expected later on this year and into 2026. Please be assured that each of the Schedule 17 within the AONB has been presented to AONB review group in advance of submission to the LPA, giving the group the opportunity to provide feedback on our designs at the time.

Over the coming months and years as the landscape designs are further developed, additional Schedule 17 consents submitted and the schemes begin to be planted, our contractors will engage more on what the landscape will look like with the local community.

I hope this information goes some way to addressing your questions and reassuring you of HS2's efforts to ensure that our restoration plans are delivered sensitively and in coordination with the local stakeholders.

Many thanks
Maddelyn

Maddelyn Sutton | Head of Engagement, Phase One - South | HS2 Ltd

Tel: 07815 490 339

Contact our HS2 Helpdesk team all day, every day of the year by:
Freephone **08081 434 434** | Minicom**: 08081 456 472** |Email: **HS2enquiries@hs2.org.uk**

To keep up to date with what is happening in your local area, visit: www.hs2inyourarea.co.uk

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From: HS2 <HS2@chilternsociety.org.uk>
Sent: 05 March 2025 10:02
To: Maddelyn Sutton <Maddelyn.Sutton@hs2.org.uk>
Cc: Greg Smith <greg.smith.mp@parliament.uk>; Martin.Tett@buckinghamshire.gov.uk; Peter Martin (Cllr) <Peter.Martin@buckinghamshire.gov.uk>; Freda Jesudason <Freda.Jesudason@hs2.org.uk>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Restoration of the AONB

Dear Maddelyn,

Please find attached a letter from our chairman regarding the restoration of the AONB, and lack of community engagement with this process thus far.

Regards,

Dr James Conboy

Chiltern Society