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From: Tom Beeston <tombeeston@chilternsociety.org.uk>
Sent: 27 May 2025 15:07
To: keithhoff@hotmail.com; jandcgladwin@tiscali.co.uk; Haydon Bailey; Jim Conboy; 'Murray Cooke'
Cc: James Wheatcroft
Subject: Fw: DRAFT: Notes Following HS2 Chilterns Nature Recovery Meeting

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From: Tom Beeston
Sent: 27 May 2025 2:58 PM
To: Maddelyn Sutton <maddelyn.sutton@hs2.org.uk>; joel.sykes@hs2.org.uk <joel.sykes@hs2.org.uk>
Cc: d.proctor@alignjv.com <d.proctor@alignjv.com>; Simon.Matthews@ekfb.com <Simon.Matthews@ekfb.com>; njackson@chilterns.org.uk <njackson@chilterns.org.uk>; Matt Thomson <mthomson@chilterns.org.uk>
Subject: DRAFT: Notes Following HS2 Chilterns Nature Recovery Meeting

Dear Maddelyn and Joel,

First, thank you both for making time to meet last week - hopefully next time we'll be able to do so in person.

Here's my summary and key takeaways from our session:

Geographic Focus and Stakeholder Engagement

The **Chiltern Society** clarified that their primary interest lies in the stretch from the **M25 to the eastern side of Aylesbury**.
They will be reporting back to and engaging with key partners, including:

- Buckinghamshire Council Cabinet Members
- Local MPs
- BBOWT (Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust)
- HMWT (Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust)
- Groundwork

This engagement will cover not only the Chilterns area but also **northern Buckinghamshire and the Colne Valley**.

Concerns Raised by the Chiltern Society

- They expressed **surprise** that there is currently **no readily available 25-year costed land management plan** for areas impacted by construction.
- They emphasised the need for a **biodiversity gain and nature recovery plan**, without which any claims of BNG (Biodiversity Net Gain) cannot be substantiated.

- They also asked that the **Wildlife Trust's benchmark** be afforded appropriate respect. While it differs from government metrics, it remains **credible and well-evidenced**, and should **not be dismissed as readily** as has occurred to date.

HS2 Updates and Commitments

- HS2 confirmed that **detailed landscape restoration plans** will be **submitted to Buckinghamshire Council for reapproval within the next 6–8 months**, with a commitment to **share these more widely with stakeholders**.
- These plans will also be shared with the **Review Group**, whose role in the restoration process will be clarified following this meeting.
- Maddelyn and Joel confirmed that HS2 is working on a **long-term restoration strategy**. This will incorporate responsibilities for the **main works contractors**, **rail operation contractors**, and any future bodies managing **landscape restoration**.

Timeline and Expectations

- Our shared hope is to see a **clear, costed, and accessible restoration plan** in place by the **end of 2025**, or at the latest, **March 2026**.
- This plan should be developed **in partnership** and be **publicly available**, to allow meaningful community engagement.

Model for Collaboration

Both the **Chiltern National Landscape team** and the **Chiltern Society** emphasized that best value for the Government would come from developing a **collaborative, partnership-based approach**—taking inspiration from the **Chess Smarter Water Catchment Project**.

- Funded by **Thames Water** and delivered through cooperation with **local eNGOs and councils**, the Chess project has proven both **economically and environmentally successful**.
- A similar framework could deliver significant benefits in the Chilterns area.

Public Access and Rights of Way

Although not discussed at length, there was **broad agreement** that **access to the countryside is vital**. We should be **improving**, not **reducing**, footpath and rights of way access as part of the restoration process.

Our Ask

- **Work transparently**, **collaboratively**, and **communicatively**—in a way that's accessible to all stakeholders.

- Deliver a **readily available, costed, long-term nature recovery plan** for the **HS2 route through the Chilterns** by the **end of 2025** or, at the latest, **March 2026**.

It's not rocket science—it's nature. And without it, there is no economy…

Best regards, Tom

Tom Beeston

Chief Officer at the Chiltern Society

Campaigning for, Conserving and Promoting the Chilterns: see what we do here!

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