

affords the best mitigation for this nationally important landscape. Whilst the Trust is working with HS2 Limited to mitigate negative impacts on the following areas under the current scheme, it would reserve its right to make comment on the details of any such tunnel proposal should it come forward in order to safeguard its interests, particularly in these areas:

23. '(1) Negative visual impacts on Coombe Hill which enjoys views out from the AONB across the expanse of Aylesbury Vale, to be mitigated by tree planting and landscaped earthworks.

24. '(2) Visual and noise impacts of the tunnel portals and above-ground infrastructure affecting National Trust properties to be mitigated.

25. '(3) Spoil arising. Sustainable placement locations, ideally not to be within the AONB and not to negatively impact on National Trust properties.

26. '(4) Lastly, permanent impact and legacy of construction camp sites and the like to be carefully assessed and minimised.'

27. Sir, that concludes the statement.

28. CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr Lewis. Thank you to the Trust for the effective and short way that it has made its views clear to the Committee.

29. MR LEWIS: Thank you, sir.

30. CHAIR: Thank you very much indeed. We now move on to petition 1288: The Chiltern Countryside Group.

### **Chiltern Countryside Group**

31. MS YEOMANS: Thank you, Mr Syms and other Committee members. Good afternoon, gentlemen. On behalf of the Chiltern Countryside Group, I would like to thank you most sincerely for inviting us here before you today. On a personal level, it is a great privilege to be here in this historic and democratic building. Thank you for that.

32. My name is Sue Yeomans. I'm the Roll B agent for the

Chiltern Countryside Group. I have lived in the Chilterns all my life. My family, some of whom were farmers, has lived in and been part of the Chilterns for generations. I'm a founder member and chairman of the Chiltern Countryside Group. I'll explain a little more about who we are in a moment. I am mindful of your request, Mr Syms, to petitioners in the Committee's interim report to avoid undue repetition of other pleas, but we have been asked to bring all our petition points to the Committee today. I will try to move at speed.

33. I would like to thank for the Promoters for their exhibits, which are helpful and to which I will refer. Can I have slide 2, please? Slide 2 shows the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty at work and at play. This is how it is now and how we would like it to remain for future generations. In the photograph you can clearly see how land within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty fulfils its dual role of being a working landscape and a place of healthy and natural outdoor leisure for different generations.

34. Could I have slide 3 please? This is Durham Farm in the Misbourne Valley. High Speed 2 goes across the centre of that.

35. The Chiltern Countryside Group was founded in 2008. We are an environmental community group which has grown organically since our beginnings. Our supporters are all people who value the landscape and tranquillity of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and we seek to protect it for future generations. Our mission statement is to preserve the peace of the Chilterns. We are a voluntary organisation, which is reliant completely on funds donated by supporters and on their freely given time and expertise. Our day-to-day business is conducted by a steering group with a wide range of professional backgrounds. Since its inception, the group has worked closely with, and been supported by, the Chilterns Conservation Board. As you know, they are the statutory authority for the Chilterns AONB. We are recognised as relevant stakeholders by our MPs, local councillors and other environmental bodies.

36. Last week, the Committee heard pleas from the local statutory authorities, the conservation board and other petitioners for the Chilterns, and we have just heard from the National Trust. I know that there are other petitioners from the Chilterns being heard later. Our MPs, David Lidington and Cheryl Gillan, have also made

representations to the Committee.

37. At the beginning, I am going to say that our plea is for a fully bored tunnel throughout the whole of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Our considered view is that this is the only possible form of mitigation appropriate to fulfilling the obligations enshrined in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, section 85. I am not going to repeat what that is because I know the Committee is familiar with it. We believe very strongly that the people of our nation have the rightful expectation to rely upon these obligations being met by, as the Act states, the relevant authority. We do not find the present High Speed 2 surface route, with its design mixture of cut and cover tunnelling, embankments, cuttings and viaducts, fulfils these obligations, nor does it, we believe, the conservation board to fulfil theirs [sic].

38. We were reminded last week that the Government recognises the national significance of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty because there are only two such conservation boards – the other, as Mr Clifton-Brown knows, being the Cotswolds. The Chiltern Countryside Group supports and endorses the pleas and petitions already put before the Committee – and I include the National Trust, whom we last heard, in that – for a fully bored tunnel throughout the whole of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the group endorses the reasons given for that plea by those petitioners. During this week's sessions, I believe further tunnel options are to be presented to the Committee and our group has no issue with any of those. So that is just a little bit of background, which I hope is helpful.

39. Please may we see Promoter's exhibit P372, which is a map of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. I am also going to refer to the Promoter's response document to the Group, paragraph 45 of page 18. Thank you. This map, for which I thank the Promoter, clearly shows the whole of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in yellow and the transport corridors which already traverse it. I am conscious that the location of the Bill scheme is outside the remit of the Committee, but the decision to locate the route through the heart of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is why we are all here today. The map shows how the Bill scheme loosely follows the A413 along the Misbourne Valley. This is essentially a local transport route providing local connectivity. The Bill scheme would change this into a major national transport corridor, cutting through the widest part of the AONB

and artificially severing it at the Misbourne Valley. You can also see other routes, as I indicated earlier, and we would hope that today we are more enlightened than the planners were in the '70s, when the Stokenchurch Gap sliced through the AONB to build the M40 on surface. As you can also see from this map, there is a natural break in the Chiltern Hills just north-east of Dunstable, so at the top you can see Luton quite clearly, which the planners for the M1 in the late '50s wisely utilised. The M1 therefore goes through the natural break in the AONB, which then resumes. You can see that the yellow continues beyond Luton up to Hitchin. We believe that the Promoter may be unaware of the extent of the Chilterns AONB because in their response document, paragraph 45, they state that: 'Any direct route between London and the West Midlands must cross the Chilterns [Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty]'. As the map clearly shows, this is not so.

40. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: It depends what you mean by the word 'direct'.

41. MS YEOMANS: Well, the M1 is a direct route, Sir Peter, isn't it?

42. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: But the M1 is not a direct route. The details aren't important. We shall allow a little bit of wriggle room.

43. MS YEOMANS: Thank you. I think the point is there, isn't it? Thank you.

44. Can I have slide 5, please? You may recognise some of yourselves in this picture. This is King's Ash, looking towards the Misbourne Valley and the site of the Wendover Dean viaduct. We'd like to thank the Committee most sincerely – those of you who were able to come out to visit the Chilterns – and we hope you found these visits helpful in providing greater insight into the challenges of the Bill scheme for the Chilterns and the hugely damaging impact it will have on the sensitive and special landscape of this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

45. Please could we see Promoter's exhibit P7409, which is page 20 of the mitigation and design document. This is the montage of the viaduct from the footpath at King's Ash looking towards the Valley. We just heard a few minutes ago how it is being considered that a viaduct of much shorter length actually is going to be a significant visual intrusion on the landscape and clearly this viaduct will be even worse than that. There would no longer be the rural, unspoilt and tranquil landscape which the

Committee saw on its visit.

46. Can I have slide 6 please? There are three pictures here so it's taking a little while to load. Thank you. On the top left is the view between Mantles Wood and Farthings Wood, which is just north of the tunnel portal looking south-west. Instead of seeing the green landscape, we thought you might like to see some snow, which does happen in the Chilterns. The right one is the Ridgeway path through the ancient woodland and the bottom is the panorama from Coombe Hill, which was mentioned earlier and which the Committee has visited.

47. In most settlements in the Chilterns you will find people whose family connections with the area, like mine, go back generations. I believe it was Mr Hendrick who asked Mrs Murray last week about the appreciation of the landscape's history by local residents. I can assure Mr Hendrick and the Committee that it certainly is valued by residents and visitors alike. You have also heard the Chiltern Society and the conservation board describe the enormous contribution which volunteers in the Chilterns give to protecting and enhancing this outstanding area. Further, the something like 800 petitions waiting to be heard by the Committee on the Bill scheme are a good indication of how much the AONB is valued and the threat to it which people fear. I can remember my father telling me as a young woman – and I won't give a date, but it was when the AONB was designated – 'That will never be built on. That's our Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'. He had a sense of pride and collective belonging to it, but sadly it would now seem that his words may no longer be true.

48. As the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is only some 30 miles north of London, it is easily accessible for overseas visitors and for city dwellers to escape from the daily grind in urban environments. Just to give you a few examples of that, the Central London Cycle Touring Club regularly organises rides for its members in the area affected by the Bill scheme using local train services, such as the Chiltern line, to the start and end of their route. Of course there is no connectivity to the Chilterns with HS2. Particularly at weekends and in school holidays, the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is home to many seeking an escape from working life. As well as cyclists, you will find ramblers, from the serious walker to the gentle stroller, horse riders, artists and those who just want to be still, admire the view, breathe fresh air, listen to the birds and the wind rustling the trees. Those are such precious things.

Schools, the Scouts and other young people's organisations find the AONB an ideal place for the activities which are part of the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme and others and every weekend you will see groups of young people laden with heavy backpacks, in all weather conditions, walking through the AONB. It has a unique mix of varied and sometimes challenging terrain which very quickly gives a high sense of isolation, and thus independence, yet it is very easily accessible from London and other areas. We fear that these kinds of activities would be seriously compromised and people will be deterred from visiting the Misbourne Valley during both construction and operation of the Bill scheme.

49. Could we move on to slide 7 please? Thank you. I think it's important to state here that the Chiltern Countryside Group is not against the principle of new high speed rail routes, but what we would suggest is that good and future-proof planning of any new transport route would adopt the following principles. I'm not going to read those out, but in our considered view the Bill scheme fails on all of these counts.

50. Shall I move on? Yes. Thank you. Slide 8 please: 'Where we are now'. Poor initial planning on route location leads to those following points, amongst others. Even if the trains were silent, we are still left with point 3, which is a designed route through the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with two 500-metre long viaducts, a 900-metre long, up to 16-metre high, embankment and a tunnel portal emerging in ancient woodland. This design, we believe, is so insensitive to the particular character of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty that we suggest a certain Royal gentleman might describe these alien and permanent features as carbuncles on the face of the landscape. But this is where we are now. We believe we all now hold collective responsibility to conserve the unique and historic landscape of the Chiltern Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

51. Can I have slide 9 please?

52. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: Is that Jeremy Corbyn?

53. MS YEOMANS: Sorry?

54. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: I thought it was Jeremy Corbyn, but it can't be.

55. MS YEOMANS: I do know the person very well actually, if that gives you a clue. Sorry?

56. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: They are discussing the evening dress of Labour's potential future leaders.

57. MS YEOMANS: Right, okay. So our question is: 'Is the Environmental Statement credible'? We accept the response in the response document, paragraph 1, page 4, that the Environmental Statement is compliant with the requisite needs for Parliament. In that document the Promoter quotes from the Environmental Statement, volume 3, paragraph 2.6.33 that 'effects... on the special landscape qualities, natural beauty and landscape character... will reduce such that it is not considered to be significant'. Using the Environmental Statement as a reference, the Promoter asserts that in year one of operation there will be a moderate adverse effect which will further reduce by year 15 but not sufficiently to alter the overall assessment. By year 60, the Promoter asserts that the proposed scheme will be further integrated into the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and it is at this stage that the Promoter asserts that the effects will not be considered significant. So the young child in the left-hand photo will have lived through his childhood and the majority of his adult working life – and, like the man in the right-hand photo, is looking very happy to be at this stage to be approaching retirement – before even the Promoter assesses that the adverse effects will not be significant. A common sense view, we suggest, would come to a different conclusion. We are told that in 60 years from the start of operation there will be no significant effect on the landscape, which has taken centuries to become what it is for us today. I'm afraid we really do not find that credible. Neither do the statutory authorities of local councils, the conservation board or, importantly, Natural England, which is the Government's statutory advisor, as you know, on landscape and the designating authority for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

58. In its response to the High Speed 2 phase one Environmental Statement consultation of 2014, Natural England states:

59. 'Natural England considers that the significance of landscape effects associated with the Proposed Scheme on the Chilterns [Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty] is greater than that which is described in Volume 3 of the [Environmental Statement].

[They further] advise that further mitigation would be required to moderate these effects in order to satisfy the Government's policy...'

60. Can I have slide 10, please? Thank you. As Mrs Kirkham suggested last week, we accept that there is likely to be some softening and blending into the land by sensitive landscaping and well-planned planting as it matures. We are aware of – and welcome – the planting measures described in the Promoter's mitigation document P7409 which aims to filter views of the two viaducts straddling the Misbourne Valley. The Committee has seen photomontages of the Wendover Dean viaduct from the slopes of the Misbourne Valley. We saw that earlier. With all due respect, such planting and the viaducts will cumulatively be fundamental and permanent changes to the landscape, which has come through the years to us today, and we remain unconvinced therefore how these structures, which are completely alien to the natural landscape in which they sit, together with the siting of a tunnel portal in ancient woodland with an existing high tranquillity level, could ever be described as not being significant. We do accept that to some degree people may get used to the changes, although we do question why that is a valid reason and offered as mitigation for fundamentally altering a landscape which I think we all agree is pretty good as it is now.

61. The Promoter describes on pages 12 and 13 of the response document the loss of ancient woodlands and accepts that these are irreplaceable. The Chilterns are rightly famous for their beech woods and bluebells in the spring. If you've never been then please come because it is absolutely beautiful. Beech commonly lives for some 150 to 200 years. The Promoter attempts compensation for loss by planting elsewhere. If it intends to plant bluebells, we really hope that it's going to be the indigenous and not the Spanish variety because there is a difference. Whilst the net increase in woodland is commendable and to be desired, with all due respect it is poor compensation for destroying ancient woodland. You really can't replicate history.

62. Can I have slide 11 please? The medical profession agrees that spending time in green and tranquil landscapes is good for us mentally and physically. We've all had times, I'm sure, when a walk in the countryside has helped us deal with problems and anxiety. By visiting that restful, peaceful and open space of green relaxation, our minds can put these things into a wider and more balanced perspective. I don't believe this should be considered as a luxury but as essential for our health and wellbeing.



63. One of the things which I know is worrying society nowadays is the increasing number of young children and teenagers who are suffering from mental health issues and this is causing great concern for the medical and teaching professions. I believe the Committee heard from the head teacher of a school in Wendover for children with behavioural difficulties and how he described the vital contribution which the school's extensive grounds make to the educational and social provision which that school offers to those young people.

64. The village church at Little Missenden and the parish church of St Mary in Wendover are beautiful and peaceful buildings, daytime and evening, not just for concerts but for their primary function of offering worship and faith to the community and to provide a place where the important rites of passage in people's lives take place. Their atmosphere of history, sanctuary and an oasis from the clamour of the world play a key role in that provision for the community. These amenities will suffer from the Bill scheme.

65. Can I have slide 12 please? If you were asking me 'Are we nearly there yet?', yes, we are.

66. CHAIR: Was that a photograph of you before?

67. MS YEOMANS: I'm sorry? Which one?

68. CHAIR: The previous one.

69. MS YEOMANS: With the green spaces?

70. CHAIR: The one with the hat. Was it you?

71. MS YEOMANS: No. No, it isn't me, but a very good friend. It's not me in disguise! Slide 12: 'The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in part or wholly valuable?' You'll probably recognise this view. The group welcomes the efforts which have been made so far in mitigating impact in the Chilterns by the Promoter, but we strongly believe that these are insufficient for a landscape which by law has the right to the highest environmental protection in our nation. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are justly recognised as being of immense value to the nation, not just local communities. They should be valued as irreplaceable natural environmental capital.

I'm going to refer back to Natural England, which states on page 5 of its consultation document: 'Natural England considers that the significance of the effects on the AONB is understated [and] does not agree that it is appropriate to conclude that the major adverse effects on the AONB only occur 'locally'. The Scheme, as currently proposed, would have a long term major adverse effect on natural beauty and the landscape and scenic beauty of the nationally important Chilterns AONB...' Further, they say: 'It does not necessarily require a high proportion of an [Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty]... to be affected before a major significant effect can occur... National policy is to protect the landscape and scenic beauty of the whole of the [Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty]...'

72. We totally concur. It is the whole of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which is valuable and its designation as such does not say that one part of it is less valuable than the rest. It's as if we might be saying: 'Don't worry. I need to cut your hand off, but the rest of you is okay'. Nobody would say that that was fair. Despoiling one part despoils the whole.

73. Slide 13 please: 'Grim's Ditch'. I'm going to move quickly over this. You've already heard from Catherine Murray on this irreplaceable scheduled monument so we've just shown key points, but we're very grateful to Dr Marilyn Fletcher of the Countryside Group for her research on this monument. She is willing to share further research findings with the Committee if it would find this helpful, so if you just let me know, please.

74. Slide 14, 'Noise and tranquillity in the Chilterns AONB – a special case for a special place', but we believe so far a failure to address this. We do not find the response document adequate in addressing concerns because we do not find that route-wide control measures and the Code of Construction Practice are appropriate mitigation measures for any Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Point 2: noise assessments are conventionally worked out on an averaging basis, but this frequently doesn't give a true picture of an individual noise event as experienced by the person. Route-wide noise assessments have been carried out, but these do not apply any special benefits to the existing tranquillity of the protected landscape of the AONB and without these we can't accurately determine the noise impact of the Bill scheme upon it.

75. The Promoter describes how outdoor leisure spaces may benefit from mitigation measures to reduce impact on dwellings. That's in paragraph 1, page 24 of our response document. The whole point of visiting the AONB is to be outdoors in green landscapes and away from dwellings so we find this very difficult to understand. On the same page, we do not accept the Promoter's view that a principal mitigation measure is that use of the AONB is transitory. Because it is transitory it is even more important to the person that that experience is not spoilt by constant and intrusive noise. I've already mentioned the importance of tranquillity for mental health. We have trains every minute and a half, so there's very little time for peace in between. There is no evidence to support their view on that same page that trains would be quieter as far as we're aware.

76. Slide 15 please. On the top left, we have children playing in woodland near the route. You've seen the other views before: Coombe Hill at the bottom and Hale Lane, juts outside Wendover. The landscape design paper for the Chilterns AONB, which is P7408 – which, incidentally, we only just received with the exchange of exhibits – sets out the Promoter's design standards. We welcome their ambitions to achieve the highest possible standards and to set high aspirations. However, unless such aspirations are turned into reality, they are meaningless. It's good to read that the Promoter seeks to leave a positive, lasting legacy, although we do question what he sees as wrong with the positive landscape legacy which we now enjoy. It's also difficult to see how a transport project with a design life of 120 years, as it says on page 16 of that document, can possibly attain the quality of the centuries old landscape which we have today.

77. Can I have slide 16 please? For the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a landscape recognised as having the highest natural quality, only mitigation of the highest order will give it the protection which it merits. Natural England seeks mitigation for the Chilterns AONB which should be to a level appropriate to this nationally important landscape. The Promoter has set aspirations for high standards of design in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A little extra time may be needed to achieve this, but we believe that this should be set within the context of the project's life. To build world class viaducts of exemplary design quality will cost – add to that the cost of the cuttings, embankments, road realignments, bridges, other landscaping, compensation and further noise mitigation measures. To construct a fully bored tunnel

throughout the whole of the Chilterns AONB will cost, but from that cost much of those additional costs, such as compensation, can be taken away and the quality and characteristics of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will be preserved for the nation now and for generations to come.

78. The last slide, please. We believe that every penny of the cost of tunnelling in the whole of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will be worth it. Only then will the voices of future generations come down through the years to say: 'We're so glad you decided to build a tunnel for High Speed 2, otherwise we wouldn't have this beautiful and tranquil countryside to enjoy today. It was the right decision and we thank you for it'. Thank you for listening to me, gentlemen.

79. CHAIR: Thank you very much indeed. Thank you for your slides and pictures. You've already replied to most of the tunnel argument. Is there anything that you want to pick up from this, Mr Mould?

80. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Perhaps in deference to the petitioner I should just say a few words in response just as a 'place check' of where we are before moving on to the next. All I wanted to say was this. We accept that it is possible to construct this railway line in tunnel through the Chilterns AONB. We accept that taking the railway in tunnel through the AONB would secure a relatively greater reduction in the overall environmental impacts of the railway than with the Bill scheme. Were it the case that the analysis ended there then the case for a tunnel would be made out, but of course it doesn't end there. We saw last week that under National Planning Policy, and indeed under the 2000 statute, there is a requirement to balance off the costs incurred in creating a tunnel with the degree of environmental gain that one secures through that expenditure. That was the common position of ourselves and those who represented the councils in evidence before you last week. As you know, our position is that when one engages in that more careful analysis of the position – the more granular analysis of the position – one gets, we say, to the conclusion that the Bill has struck the right balance between cost and environmental protection.

81. I finally remind you that you heard from Mr Miller that the Environmental Statement and the Environmental Impact Assessment, of which you heard a couple of extracts on the slides this afternoon, are designed to indicate not only

that which has been achieved already through the careful assessment of the environmental impact of the Bill proposal and those residual effects that remain in the Chilterns, both as a whole and also on a more local assessment in the community forum area reports, but also provide a valuable – and intended – indicator of where the project going forward needs to seek to build upon and to improve upon the environmental performance of the railway through the detailed design stage that will be undertaken under the auspices of the local authorities and Schedule 16 of the Bill, of which Mr Miller gave you some illustrative examples from the documentation when he gave evidence. We believe that that is a better way of spending public money on the production of a scheme that draws the right balance between costs incurred and environmental protection gained than the very substantially greater cost that would necessarily have to be incurred through tunnelling this railway entirely underneath the Chilterns AONB. This is our response to this and other petitions. Thank you.

82. CHAIR: Thank you. Brief final comments, please?

83. MS YEOMANS: I will leave it there because I think there are other people who are coming after me who probably would quite like to respond to Mr Mould in more detail. Thank you.

84. CHAIR: Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you for your contribution. We now move on to petitions 1285 and 1310: Chiltern Ridges HS2 Action Group and Conserve the Chilterns and Countryside. Mr Kingston?

**Chiltern Ridges HS2 Action Group and Conserve the Chilterns and Countryside**

85. MR KINGSTON QC: Good afternoon, sir. Thank you. I think I can say that it is nice to be back.

86. MR MOULD QC (DfT): You are that same Martin Kingston who appeared before, notwithstanding the way in which your Christian name has been changed.

87. MR KINGSTON QC: Yes, I see that I am now Michael. I have not suffered any name change and I am the same Martin Kingston who appeared earlier in the proceedings, indeed I think at the beginning of the proceedings. Can I explain what I would like to do, sir, with your leave?