

Meeting minutes

Chiltern AONB Review Group Meeting 32

Meeting date Tuesday 16th April 2024
Meeting location Teams Meeting
Meeting time 10:30 – 12:00

Attendees:

Members (Those who make the quorum of the forum)	Attendees (presenters/additional attendees)	Apologies
(TH) – DfT Chair	SM – EKFB	
(NJ) – Chilterns National Landscapes (CNL)	MM, DF and DP – Align	
(GP) – HS2	JC – Amersham HS2 Group	
(MT) - Natural England (NE)		
(LB, AM) - Natural England (NE)		
(AB) – Buckinghamshire Council		

Signed
Chair
Date

Tom Hinds

1 Introductions

1.1 All those present introduced themselves.

2 Review of Minutes and Actions

2.1 GP confirmed all previous minutes have now been published.

2.2 Previous minutes approved by group.

GP to send out Tracker for group to be updated on

3 New Project Proposals

3.1 NJ presented two proposals, stressing that they were at the very early stages of development and were simply wanting to know if the Review Group thought they merited further consideration.

3.2 He introduced the following proposal for a landscape-scale approach to achieving nature recovery in the HS2 Additional Project corridor’: **“HS2 Area Project (2025-6).docx”**

3.3 Floor was opened for questions

3.4 TH raised questions around the sources of funding, noting that the total costs are higher than the available funds left in the additional projects budget

3.5 TH commented that a key point was how the proposal distinguishes itself from work that is already happening through the biodiversity and connectivity project.

3.6 NJ acknowledged these points and explained, amongst other things, that it would likely require match funding from other sources. He added that the new proposal took a different approach, was broader and much less focussed on farm clusters than the existing project.

3.7 NJ continued the presentation with a second proposal: **“Mending the Misbourne”**

3.8 Floor was open to questions/comments. It was noted that water-course projects were one of the areas that had been specifically identified as a priority for funding

3.9 AB raised that EKFB have a licence to pump into the Misbourne and wondered if they might wish to contribute to such a project. JC stated that Siltbusters are discharging into a ditch beside the A413, which is then connected by a conduit under the road and into the Misbourne.

3.10 NJ encouraged the group to look at the proposals further and to get in touch directly and or within the group. TH confirmed the Review Group’s broad in principle interest in the projects and that they welcomed further development of the proposals.

3.11 AB gave an update on the wildflower proposals for the A413 central reservation. Essential work was still ongoing.

- 3.12 JC raised concerns about the safety of wildlife.
- 3.13 AB said he will take it away to the ecology team and receive feedback to give to the panel
- 3.14 Discussions moved on DF clarified that it was not the case that there was lots of surplus chalk that could be used in such a scheme, but did say that Align would be happy to help out wherever they can
- 3.15 Discussion went on further with this point with the outcome that Align would be happy to have a call

4 Contractor updates:

- 4.1 DP presented a construction progress update for **ALIGN** – see slides: **“April 2024” slideshow (attached separately)**
- 4.2 JC expressed concern around the presentation which he characterised as presenting the Chilterns like a municipal park
- 4.3 NJ on the back of the concern commented that some stakeholders were apprehensive about the details of the landscape mitigation restoration type works. They are looking for understanding the details of what's committed to and because currently the plans have been in outline or for information only when Schedule 17 have been submitted
- 4.4 DP acknowledged the comments and has kept other stakeholders (Cllr from Bucks) up to date on this
- 4.5 SM presented a construction progress update for **EKFB** – see slides: **(1MC12-EKF-SE-PRE-CS03-000025 attached separately)**
- 4.6 LB asked for clarification on the mention that there will be some subsequent applications where there's been revisions to plans and specs as Natural England have commented at the Schedule 17 stage
- 4.7 SM answered that ultimately they have to build the railway in accordance with the plans and specs that were approved at the time
- 4.8 Further conversation went on regarding bat mitigation which is been dealt with by HS2

5 Landscape Restoration

- 5.1 JC raised the points set out in the following document: **“Landscape Mitigation” (Attached separately)**

- 5.2 SM replied that the approach of keeping the schedule 17 packages as big as they were was partly to try and provide a more holistic view of things. The conversations they had with the Council in the early stages were about looking at the big picture before diving into detail within the plans and specs.
- 5.3 SM thinks the overall integration - how it all links together - is within the mindset of the team; they haven't just looked at parts in isolation.
- 5.4 Engagement with the Council's team, including ecology and landscape support formed the basis of the detailed design.
- 5.5 SM explained that they are at the point now where design has been completed based on the feedback they have had and whether there's an opportunity now for involvement with others – he would need to take advice on.
- 5.6 Regarding a specific request for information, SM responded that at the time when JC made that request, the information was still in draft so was not able to be shared. Unfortunately, the scope transfer between ALIGN and EKFB meant that work has been stopped by EKFB and it was not possible to share that because it had not been finalized by ALIGN yet
- 5.7 DF stated that they will be coming out to do further engagement, as and when the instruction is received

6 AOB

- 6.1 No other business – next meeting date and time to be discussed.