



Managing Agent Report and campaign update May 2025

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Colne Valley Managing Agent
Groundwork South



KEY STATS:

Set up in 1965

110km² & 10m+ people in 15km

Nationally important for wildlife.

Regionally important for recreation.

100's of green spaces, 5 country parks, 20 Nature Reserves, 13 SSSI's, 270 km paths, ~40 irreplaceable ancient woodlands

70 lakes, 200km rivers.

Key to wellbeing, biodiversity, climate change adaptation & food production



Landscape
Recreation

Countryside
6 OBJECTIVES
Rural Economy

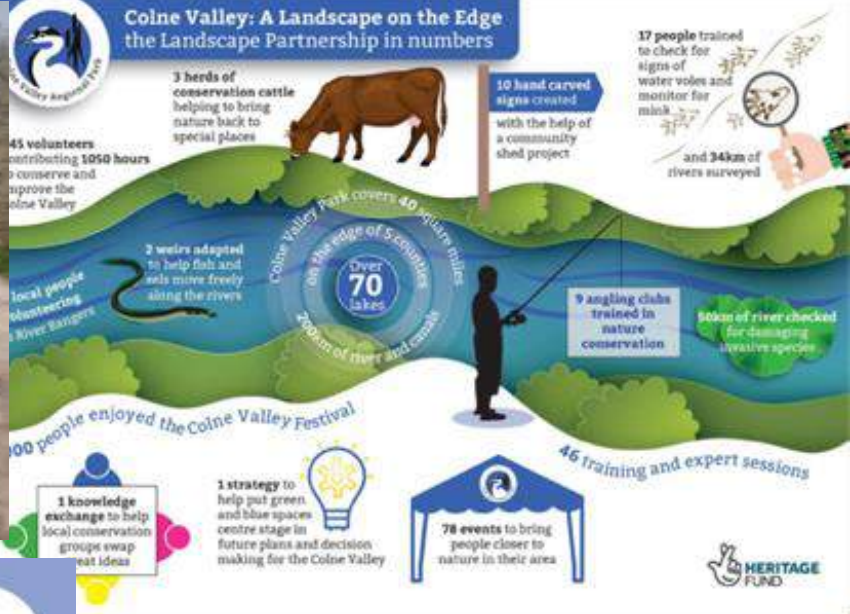
Biodiversity
Community



STRUCTURE

- CVRP Trust
- Board
- 6 objectives
- Groundwork
- 94 members
- Friends

£10 of projects for every £1 invested. The Multiplier Effect



Floating Pennywort Removal at Uxbridge Moor

We need your help to remove Floating Pennywort which is suffocating the River Colne in Uxbridge.

Friday 11th October (10:30-15:30)
Everyone welcome. No experience needed.

Meeting Point: 11 Arundel Rd, Uxbridge, UB8 2BP

Confirm your place with Chloë at: chloe.crompton@groundwork.org.uk or 07736 133052.

All you need: outdoor clothes and sturdy shoes/boots. We will provide equipment, refreshment and binoculars.

  Please let us know if you are coming by email or phone call contact details are below.

07736 133052 chloe.crompton@groundwork.org.uk www.colnevalleypark.org.uk



50 years of achievements

- 50km of new paths.
- 20 circular walks and 17mile Colne Valley Trail
- 6 country parks, 16 nature reserves, many green spaces & CVRP Visitor Ctr
- Gravel pit restoration schemes
- £Tens of Millions of external funding
- Green Infrastructure Strategy and local plan policies
- Planning Applications rejected because of impact on the Park.

Long-standing use of the area: **“The Colne Valley in summer-time is by many simply worshipped....the jaded chap of London looks weekly to this Colne Valley as the reviver of his hopes and healthfulness”**

From: ‘Country Rambles Round Uxbridge’, Stephen Springall, 1907

Our Key Message:

Countryside in the 'inner' Green Belt on the edge of large cities has a critical role to play in improving health and well-being of millions of people who live in urban areas.



But:

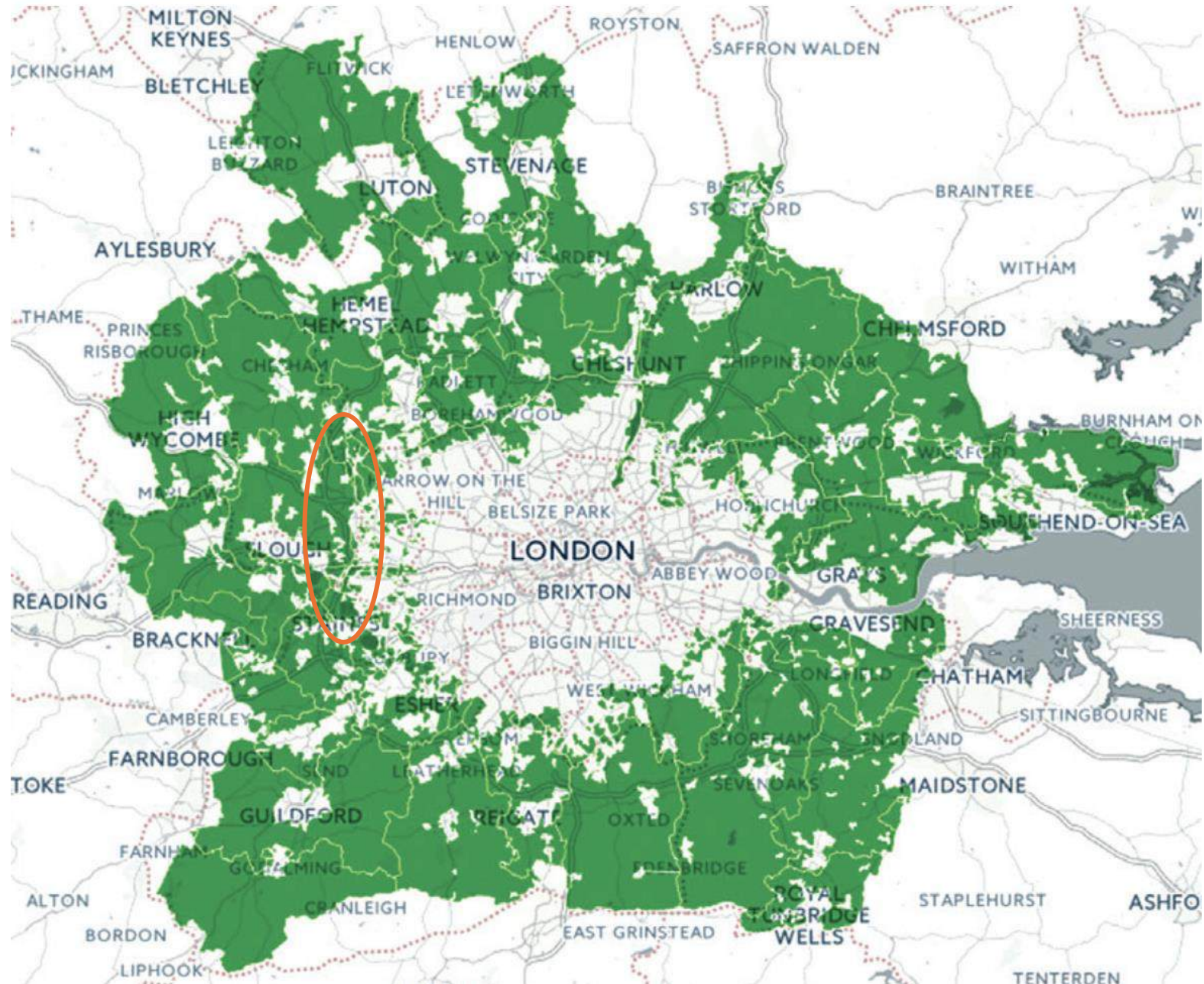
- opportunity to embed this in national policy has been repeatedly missed.
- Multiple huge developments, all considered in isolation with no masterplan, no coordinated mitigation.

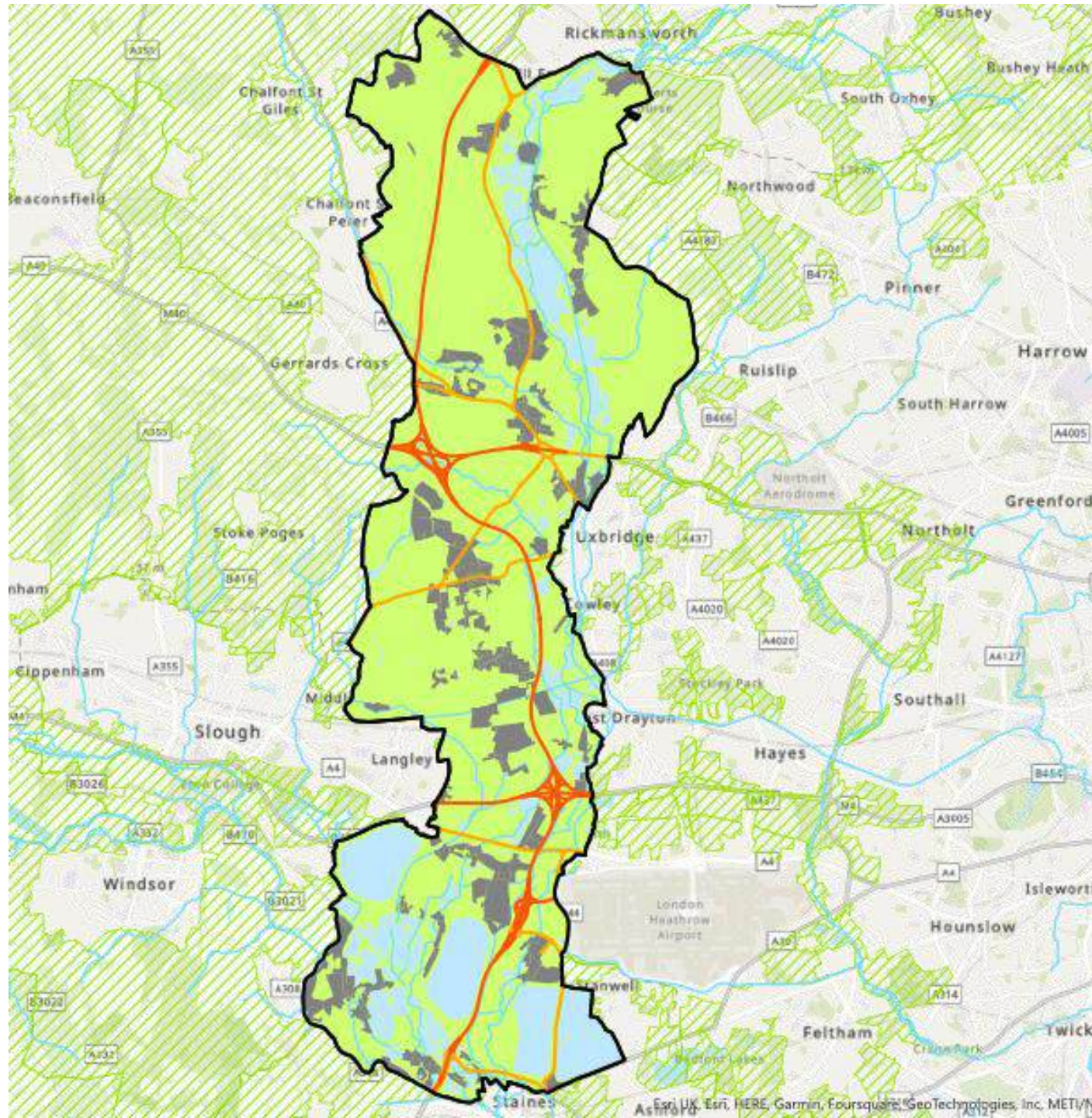
<https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/what-we-need-is-joined-up-thinking/>

The Colne Valley Regional Park is an ideal place to trial solutions:

- nationally important for wildlife,
- 10 million people living within 15 km
- Structures in place for delivery: CVRP Trust and long-standing partnerships

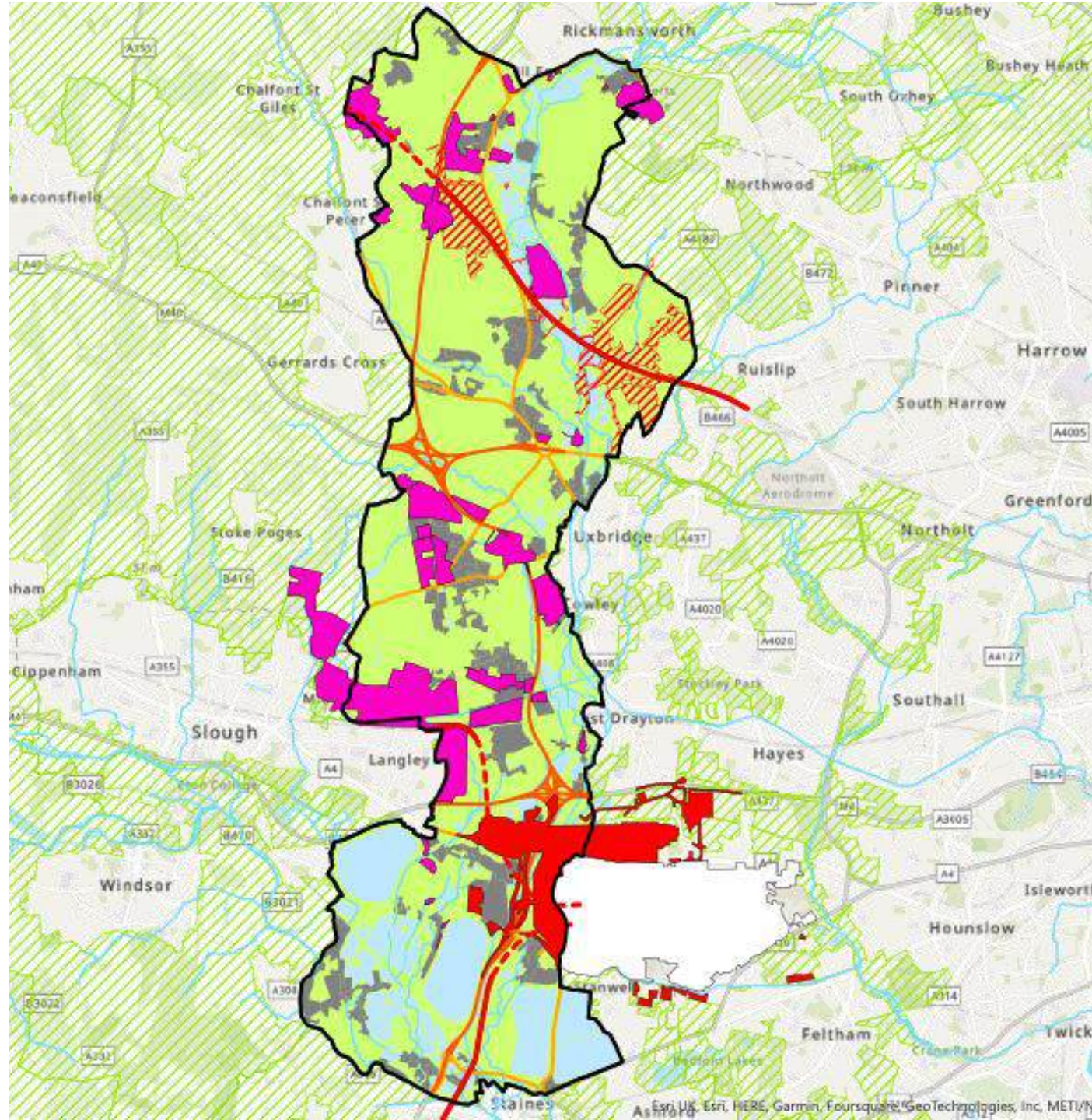
London Metropolitan Green Belt





Colne Valley Regional Park

A 2018
baseline



Colne Valley Regional Park (The Future?)

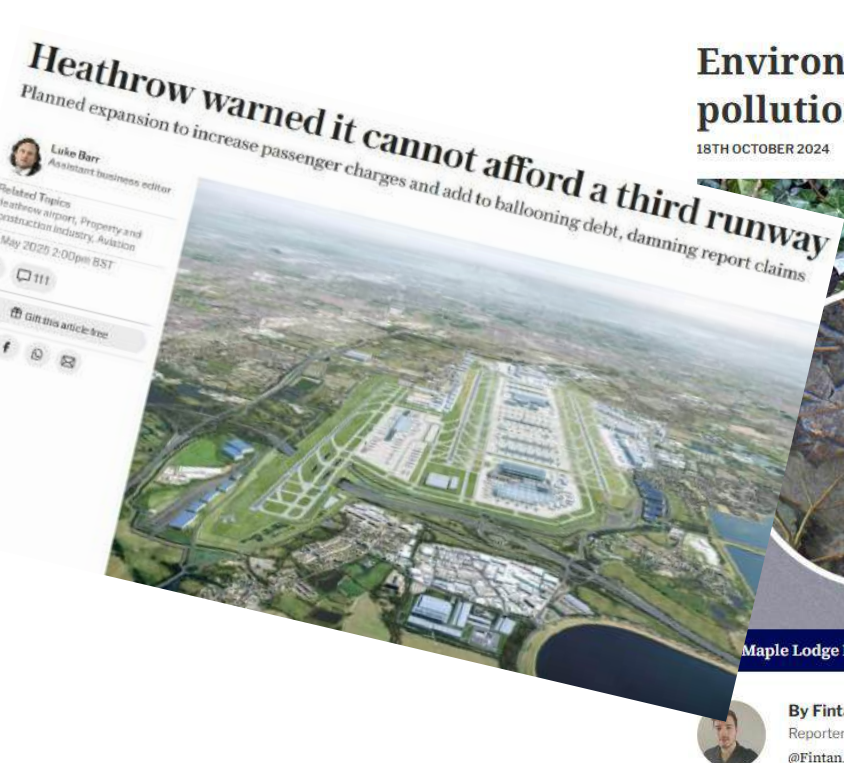
Showing infrastructure
schemes

and

Agreed development
e.g. Pinewood

and

If planned proposals
(from LAs and others)
are followed through



Environment Agency probe Maple Cross 'potential pollution'

18TH OCTOBER 2024 ENVIRONMENT HERTFORDSHIRE



Maple Lodge Ditch. (Image: Maple Cross and West Hyde Residents Association)



Colne Valley Regional Park

★ Favorites · May 8 at 9:36 AM · 🌐

The government says they want to create 'win wins' for growth and for nature. But their planning bill does not have the right policies in place to enable them to achieve that admirable ambition. We have responded to many consultations and have explained to MPs and civil servants how government can improve wildlife and the [#greenbelt](#) in areas like the Colne Valley Regional Park. It is not yet too late for them to act..



London mayor to 'explore' building on green belt



Council cites economic benefits in allowing 'world's biggest studio complex' on green belt land

23 February 2023 by Toby Parker

A film studio has been granted outline planning consent for a 131,170 square metre expansion on green belt land to make it the "biggest studio complex in the world", after planning officers found that the project's economic benefits contributed to providing the "very special circumstances" required to justify approval.

CVRP submitted response to ~25 planning applications.

<https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/library/>

But this is just responding to the symptoms...

Countryside on the edge of cities has a critical role to play in improving well-being of millions of people.

THEGUARDIAN.COM

Labour's great nature sellout is the worst attack on England's ecosystems I've seen in my lifetime | George Monbiot

What conclusions has the CVRP reached?



1. The **‘inner’ Green Belt** on the edge of large cities **has a critical role** to play in improving health and well-being of millions of people.
2. Opportunity to embed this in national planning policy has been repeatedly missed
3. Not about whether there should be building in the Green Belt. It is **about properly valuing what the countryside on the edge of cities can offer**
4. This **should not be a political issue**, it’s about ensuring a real win-win if and when development does happen.



Campaign :

Countryside in Crisis - A Call for Action

Five-point plan:

1. Influence Local Planning
2. Restore the Landscape
3. Reform National Planning
4. Establish Status
5. Protect Nature

This is a pro-countryside campaign, not anti-development



<https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/project/campaign/>

1. INFLUENCE local planning

- Informed by Colne & Crane Valley's GI Strategy
- Spelthorne Local Plan. Strong CVRP & rivers policies.
- Hillingdon (Local plan consultation & Uxbridge Town Ctr)
- Discussions with Slough, RBW&M, Surrey, Three Rivers, Bucks
- CVRP policies in Neighbourhood Plans
- Reached out to Mayor of London, HSPG

2. RESTORE the landscape

- Landscape Recovery initiative and projects
- Outreach & site visits: Inc. Civil Servants. Spelthorne.
- Case to developers for on-site and off-site mitigation. Inc. Colnbrook (with active support from Slough BC), Iver.



Slough & South Bucks
OBSERVER
Jack Rankin: 'I will be champion of Windsor green spaces'



Slough Observer, 31/08/24

JACK RANKIN MP
WORKING FOR WINDSOR

Presented by Jack Rankin of Windsor Conservations, Suite 130, 24-26 St Leonards Road,



4. ESTABLISH status and 5. PROTECT nature

- Discussions with Natural England. Discussions with National Trust inc. their proposed 'Eight Hills Regional Park'
- Civil servants site visit. With support from CVRP Trustees, Iver Environment Centre & Bucks Country Parks
- Outline of tasks and costs to help engage with local people who share our passion for the CVRP

Next steps:

- Gather more evidence on national importance for wildlife:
- Continue discussion with Natural England.
- Reach out to other similar areas around major cities.

What is government saying?

Documents with a more positive approach:

- “We need to rebuild nature at the same time as building the sustainable homes...and other infrastructure we need” Planning Reform Working Paper: Development & Nature Recovery, Jan 2025
- “we need better spatial planning. For too long, a haphazard approach has been taken to the way infrastructure is sited” DEFRA Land Use Consultation. April 2025

But:

- This needs to be followed up with actions and national policies to achieve a genuine ‘win win’ for growth and nature
- NPPF update Dec 2024 has taken green belt protection backwards *without* creating the means for the ‘win wins’
- Rhetoric about nature as blocker to growth

Changes needed to NPPF

Current Five Green Belt Purposes

- a) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
- b) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another
- c) To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
- d) To preserve the setting & special character of historic towns
- e) To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

Note: The purposes highlighted red have been bypassed

Let's create the best green corridor around any city in Europe

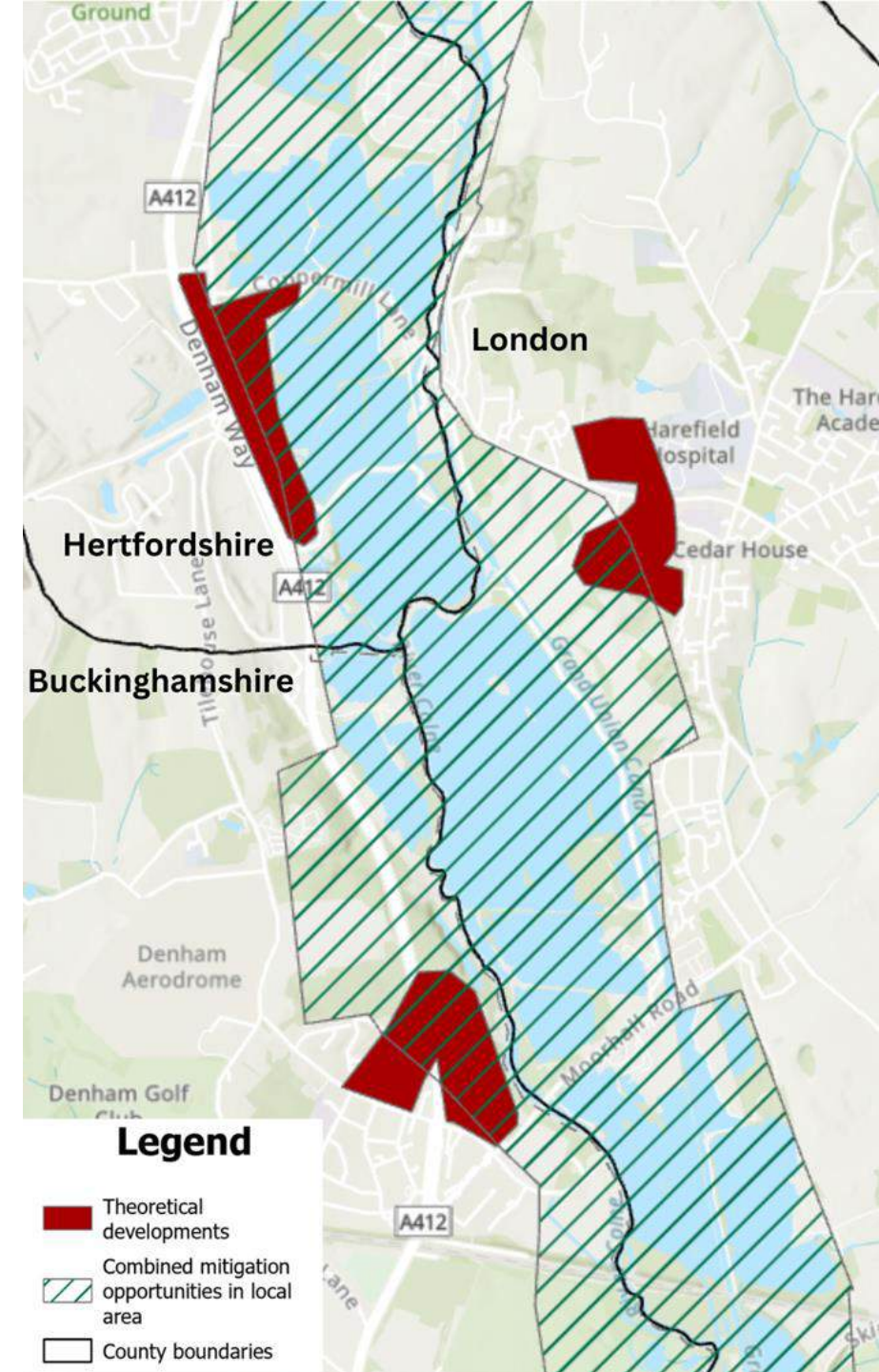
If communities are being asked to host so much development then why can't 'planning gain' be pooled to create one of the best green corridors around any city in Europe?

<https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/lets-create-the-best-green-corridor/>



Best green corridor around any city in Europe

- cross-border working to improve landscape
- in line with Defra's Catchment-based approach (CaBA)
- wildlife and people need corridors planned at a strategic scale and funded
- The map shows three theoretical developments in Bucks, Herts & London and an improved Colne Valley.
- Given the huge number of developments – with some joined up thinking from LA's and government we can create lasting benefit



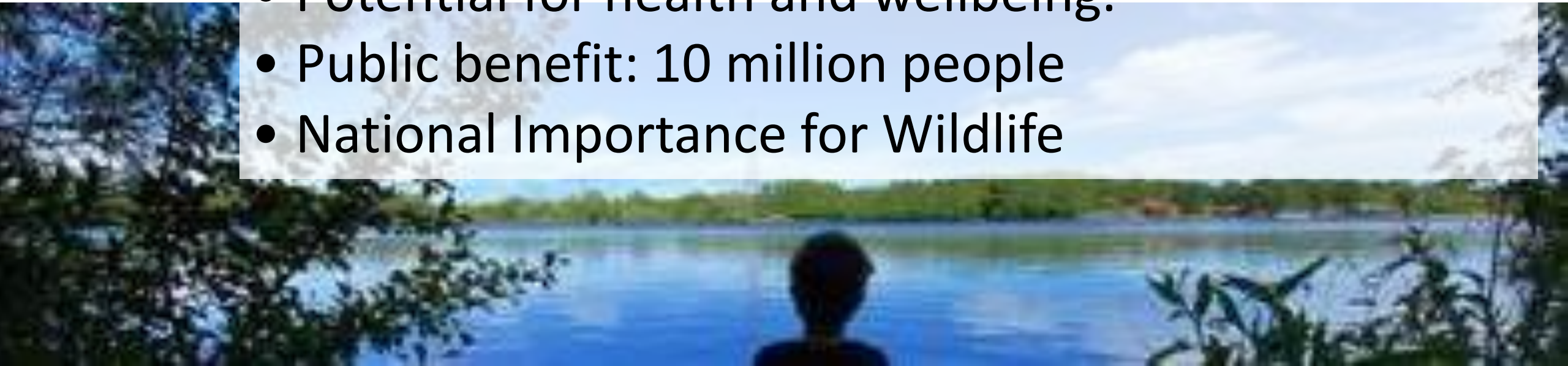


The Colne Valley is at
a crossroads



National solutions. Why trial here?

- Location: edge of London. 5 Counties united by river valley landscape
- Organisational Structure
- Intense Pressure
- Vision
- Potential for health and wellbeing.
- Public benefit: 10 million people
- National Importance for Wildlife





A shared approach that can be cross- party & endure?

- this 'win-win' agenda can appeal to all political parties
- The benefits of access to nature for the mind and body are widely understood and evidence based
- Spatial planning to address this at a strategic level
- lessons learnt, especially about 'VSC' – fragmented development, no vision, opportunities lost, LA land ownership ...

This has happened before

150+ years ago commons on the edge of expanding London were of declining landscape quality and unattractive for recreational use with illegal activity, rubbish dumping and quarries.

The same 'planning by dereliction' arguments were being used as are being used now in the Green Belt.

The future for land in the urban fringe was either building or recreation.

Some key areas were preserved. Including:

- Hampstead Heath 1869. Octavia Hill. She believed in **"the life-enhancing virtues of pure earth, clean air and blue sky."**^[1]
- Epping Forest. Queen Victoria 1882 **"it gives me the greatest satisfaction to dedicate this beautiful Forest to the use and enjoyment of people for all time"**

