

General Questions asked at the Colne Valley Regional Park Forum on 15th May 25

After the presentations questions were asked of the speakers: Hugh Stokes, Stewart Pomeroy, Michelle Jones and Richard Barnes.

Q1: Malcolm Beecher, Spelthorne Borough Council: Do you have an attitude towards the proposed Heathrow Southern Rail link?

A1: Stewart Pomeroy: our fundamental concern is regarding the rivers.

If it goes ahead we need a more creative approach to how it's done. Eg Why not put the railway closer to the M25 and also re-naturalise the river and move it out of the current artificially straight channel right next to the motorway.

Q2: Mike Gordon, Rickmansworth Waterways Trust and Harefield resident: I live beside the Colne Valley Trail which is suffering from ash die back. Many of these trees are on private land. Is there an approach from Hillingdon council? Who have not responded to Mike. And if it is private land, is it the land owner's responsibility?

A2: Michelle Jones, Landscape Recovery Manager CVRP : Unfortunately there is no one from Hillingdon council here today, we will introduce you and enquire about a plan.

Q3: Fiona Friends of the Slough Arm Canal: there is a lack of public transport, should it be a plan to provide, even in the instance of the forum? She suggests this should be one of the objectives of the CVRP.

A3: Stewart Pomeroy: Most local public transport is aimed at getting people in to London. The current 6 objectives are tightly focussed on the positive things Green Belt can deliver. However, we could look at better promoting routes from stations and bus stops.

Q4: Tim Hill, HMRT – There are Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs) being developed for many areas. It would be good to have a nature recovery plan for the CVRP itself to underline the importance of the regional park, the Lea Valley have one.

A4: Hugh Stokes, CVRP Chair: We envy the Lee valley and its funding. SP: We agree with this idea. What we need is joined up thinking. There are five LNRSs that over the CVRP. We have more than 10 percent of all the LNRS s in the country, within the Colne catchment. How do we find funding to do this, we don't have the £12million of the Lea Valley.

Richard Barnes, LWT : The London LNRS consultation is coming out imminently. The cross-border definition of the CVRP creates a problem.

Q5: Graeme Shaw, Ruislip Residents Association and Ruislip Woods Management Advisory Group: What percentage of the CVRP falls into which Local Authority?. Hillingdon council has not opted into GiGL.

A5: Stewart Pomeroy: We do have the stats for the breakdown of Local Authorities on the CVRP*. Bucks has the biggest area geographically and Hillingdon the biggest number of beneficiaries. The green belt works well with Hillingdon green spaces.

Q6: Tina Wane, Harefield Tenants and Residents Association: If an area of land is aimed at by property developers, do you have an influence on the amount of destruction so it can be developed as grey belt?

A6: Stewart Pomeroy: Planning by dereliction happens all the time. There are many examples of horrendous illegal activity by people. The solution is to fund local authorities better, as they have enforcement powers which are sometimes used effectively.

Richard Barnes: Biodiversity Net Gain can be taken into account as there should be a 10% uplift, this has worked in stopping development/illegal activity. Google earth images can be used to show what was there. It depends on local authorities to a) have an ecologist and b) to enforce.

Q7: Chris Mountain, Ickenham Residents Association: Public access – might there be a right to roam? Is that part of the long term vision?

A7: Stewart Pomeroy: We want to improve the connectivity of green space, but it depends on designation. Right to roam is more likely to be national, the landscape between nature reserves is deteriorating.

Q8: Mark Gardner, Chiltern Society: One of the successes in the Chilterns is the farmers clusters concept. Could this be worth looking into including advisors?

A8: Stewart Pomeroy: He would be happy to look at this but referred to audience member John Whitby, local farmer. John said that the Chiltern landscape has funding and status which has enabled this work, he has been envious of opportunities available to farmers in the Chilterns. We need a designation of our own and we would love some funding.

Q9: Dexter Smith, Slough Borough Council: a) what is the emerging definition of grey belt and can we influence this? B) Heathrow's decision to push parking off the airport has caused off street parking and green belt to be used for parking.

A9: Richard Barnes: Yes there is an opportunity to be involved, but Grey Belt is grey in its definition. They used to talk about brown field, which was ironically great for wildlife especially invertebrates. The wildlife trust are pushing for 'wild belt'.

A9b) Stewart Pomeroy: there has been a vast decline of green belt around Heathrow which is a consequence of the expansion plans. We need the support of national government to address this.

Q10: Veronica Rumsey, Friends of Harmondsworth Moor: We suffer from anti social behaviour

A10: Michelle Jones: Keep talking to John McDonnell and ask for his help. She offered to support this in writing.

Q11 Ben Feeney North, Buckinghamshire North, made a point about public transport funding. Sustainable transport widens access to the park. Active travel fits all objectives.

A11: Michelle Jones: Sustrans are a member of CVRP but not here today. There is a sustainable transport project in our next lottery bid, we are also looking to work with Chiltern Railways to improve and promote routes from stations.