

Working together to restore and enhance the Colne Valley Regional Park

Briefing note for Rt. Hon. Matthew Pennycook, Minister for Housing and Planning. In advance of meeting on 30/10/25 with MPs whose constituencies cover the Colne valley Regional Park

At the Adjournment debate on 11/07/25 the Minister for Housing and Planning said:

- government recognises the vital role of the Colne Valley Regional Park for people and wildlife
- he shares the desire to see it protected
- he offered to meet with local MPs to discuss how this can be achieved

Background

The Colne Valley Regional Park is nationally important for wildlife and provides access to a large area of green space, with all the health and wellbeing benefits this brings, to 10 million people who live within 15km.

National importance for wildlife: 13 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), 1 Special Protection Area, 1 National Nature Reserve, 7 Local Nature Reserves and over 30 irreplaceable ancient woodlands is an exceptional concentration of designated wildlife sites. In addition, the (currently unprotected) sites that connect these protected sites together are also important – as evidenced by the 2008 and 2023 wetland bird studies that show that the valley floor landscape of over 70 lakes and 200km of rivers is nationally important for several species of waterbirds.

This is important given the proximity to millions of people as the first large taste of countryside to the west of London. The Regional Park, across the edge of five counties, can provide access to nature, high quality walking and cycling routes through an attractive green & blue landscape right on the edge of our capital city. Something that London, Slough, Staines, Watford and the whole nation can be proud of. Given its location right next to our national gateway, Heathrow Airport, the CVRP could and should be a great first taste of ‘England’s green and pleasant land’ for our international visitors and for our citizens as they depart for business or pleasure.

Development that may be proposed in and around the Colne Valley can pay for restoration and enhancement of this important green corridor for people and wildlife, **at no additional cost to the public purse**. To create this ‘corridor for life’ we need a cross-boundary plan, adoption by local authorities and better mechanisms/hooks in national government policy to enable this vision to be realised.

We urge both national government and the nine local planning authorities to work actively together to realise the benefits of the Colne Valley Regional Park for current and future generations. We have previously sent a briefing note to local MPs outlining some suggestions for how this can be done. We also refer you to our responses to government consultations and calls for evidence

It is very positive that the Minister is meeting a cross-party group of MPs to discuss how to adapt the system to achieve the “win-wins for growth and nature” that government calls for.

On behalf of the 10 million people who live within 15km of the Colne Valley Regional Park, we thank you for your support.

