

<p>North Wessex Downs Forum 29th January 2021 Question & Answer Session Topic Headings Access Farming Mend the Gap National Park Nature Conservation Planning Sparkling Streams & river catchment Strategic Visual Impact Programme - National Grid</p>	
<p>Access</p>	
<p>Can I suggest that access to nature is not just by walking and that the word 'walking' should be replaced by a more general term such as 'access' in the promotional material / events etc. Cycling and horse riding and even carriage driving provide access often to those who can no longer walk any distance. ie Access for All.</p>	<p>Yes, we completely agree that there are many other ways of enjoying the landscape. We do indeed talk about cycling and riding (and on occasion carriage driving) too - there's a whole section on cycling and riding in our new leaflet. I think sometimes we use walking as a better shorthand than the rather official "access". We need to remember that walkers have the greatest access, through the footpath network, and walking has been more prominent in our recent work partly because of the focus on developing our first Walking Festival. Please keep in touch as we develop the access content for our new web site.</p>
<p>There are concerns about the use of the Ridgeway where it crosses the A4 at West Overton as a camping site especially popular at Solstice etc. I am aware that the local parish councils are working with Wiltshire Council and the National Trust to try to reduce this use as it is very damaging to the landscape and archaeology. Can you add your support to efforts to ensure a more balanced use of that area?</p>	<p>live answered</p>

Farming	
Are you getting ready to re-launch the Ridgeway Farmer Cluster when lockdown eases, and has anything come of the idea of extending it eastwards, possibly to the Pang valley as was being discussed last March?	live answered
Why is there not more no-till farming?	live answered
Mend the Gap	
What projects are planned for Mend the Gap?	<p>Mend the Gap has a total of £3.75million for projects and schemes within the programme area.</p> <p>Of this, £750k is for 'mitigation projects' which will help to reduce and soften the visual impact of the electrification. This will be through activities such as hedgerow restoration and tree planting.</p> <p>£3million is for projects and schemes that will enhance the AONBs within the programme area. The range of activities that could be supported through the Enhancement scheme is quite broad and includes projects that will enhance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landscape Nature & Biodiversity Heritage Access, Understanding & Recreation Sustainable Tourism & the Local Economy. <p>More information about the types of activities that could be considered as Enhancement Projects can be found in the 'Enhancement Project Criteria' which can be downloaded from the website www.mendthegap.uk.</p> <p>The Programme Manager, Jo Watson, would be happy to hear from those who have potential ideas for enhancement projects. Jo can be contacted at jwatson@chilternsaonb.org or 07388 998713.</p>

<p>Why was the OLE installed by Network Rail more obtrusive than the OLE on HS1? In particular, there was no need (except expediency) for the uprights to extend above any other part of the structure.</p>	<p>Response from Ian Haslam (Railway Action Group): The OLE infrastructure Network Rail installed on the Great Western Mainline is a Swiss design from Furrer and Frey that is constructed for its sturdiness and the very high reliability that the system gives, but not for its aesthetic qualities. It hasn't been used anywhere else in the UK as far as I'm aware. The Furrer & Frey system was a poor overall choice for the GWML we've been told by NR engineers as they are far too over-engineered for AONB (and many other) settings and that they use far too much steel in their construction. For HS1 ie London to the Channel Tunnel, the main difference is that HS1 is two track whereas this section of the GWML is four track. Two track doesn't need the 'boom' ie the horizontal part of the goalpost structure and can use a much simpler cantilever structure ie one mast and one arm. We argued for paired cantilevers for the GWML but the track separation distances make it difficult. As for the 'sticking up bit' on the masts this has been used to carry the high voltage lines, and provides the safest location, but you can place them lower on the mast - and Network Rail were planning to enact this when negotiations were halted by them</p>
<p>What projects are planned for Mend The Gap after GWR destruction in the Goring Gap area following electrification of the line?</p>	<p>Mend the Gap has a total of £3.75million for projects and schemes within the programme area.</p> <p>Of this, £750k is for 'mitigation projects' which will help to reduce and soften the visual impact of the electrification. This will be through activities such as hedgerow restoration and tree planting.</p> <p>£3million is for projects and schemes that will enhance the AONBs within the programme area. The range of activities that could be supported through the Enhancement scheme is quite broad and includes projects that will enhance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landscape Nature & Biodiversity Heritage Access, Understanding & Recreation Sustainable Tourism & the Local Economy.

	<p>More information about the types of activities that could be considered as Enhancement Projects can be found in the 'Enhancement Project Criteria' which can be downloaded from the website www.mendthegap.uk.</p> <p>The Programme Manager, Jo Watson, would be happy to hear from those who have potential ideas for enhancement projects. Jo can be contacted at jwatson@chilternsaonb.org or 07388 998713.</p>
<p>Mend The Gap - funding reconnection of rights of way severed by the electrification?</p>	<p>Because the electrification of the Great Western Railway was work to existing railway line, rather than creation of a new line, we are not aware of the works directly leading to the severing of Rights of Way (although we are very happy to be advised otherwise). However, that is not to say that the scheme is not interested in access, including Rights of Way. The Mend the Gap 'enhancement projects criteria' specifically refer to increasing and/or improving opportunities for access, understanding and engagement. This could include projects that are about enhancing, joining up or improving connectivity of and access to Rights of Way.</p>
<p>What approach do you envisage to screening the overhead railway structures?</p>	<p>We anticipate a mix of activities such as tree planting, hedgerow restoration or alteration to management of existing features, such as hedgerows, to soften the visual impact of the equipment, or distract the eye away from the gantries. The design of each scheme will need to take into consideration the context and landscape character of each location.</p>
<p>Previously there was a big problem with badgers rooting alongside the railway, and a lot of screening was cut back. Planting needs to be some way from the line ?</p>	<p>We are not allowed to plant on land owned by Network Rail which means that mitigation planting schemes will, by default, always be set back from the railway and its embankments. The scoping work to identify priority locations for mitigation planting found that in many instance, the greatest benefits for the largest number of people, would be achieved through hedgerow restoration alongside roads and other Rights of Way and so these will also be at a distance from the railway line itself.</p>
<p>Do you have contact details for Mend the Gap - as I am aware of at least one biodiversity project that might benefit?</p>	<p>The Programme Manager, Joanna Watson, can be contacted at jwatson@chilternsaonb.org or on 07388 998713</p>

<p>Does maintenance of views of the AONB FROM the railway feature in your plans? Many people's first contact with the magnificent landscape is through carriage windows...</p>	<p>A very good point. It would be inappropriate to plant a continuous line of tall trees along each side of the railway as this would not only block views of the two AONBs from trains but would also be visually intrusive in and of itself. We anticipate a mix of activities such as tree planting, hedgerow restoration or alteration to management of existing features, such as hedgerows. The design of each scheme will need to take into consideration the context and landscape character of each location and also the impact on views from a range of locations including from roads, paths, viewpoints, trains and the river.</p>
<p>Going underground is removing overhead cables. Electrification of railways is introducing overhead cables. Is there an option for underground cables for railways?</p>	<p>As far as I am aware, there isn't a system by which power for trains is carried underground. This is because power needs to be provided continuously to the train, meaning the conductor and train need to be in contact at all times.</p> <p>The other electrification system which has been used on railway lines in Britain since the 1920s is the 'third rail' in which an additional live rail provides electric power to the train through a conductor placed alongside the main rails. The third rail is a very inefficient conductor, meaning voltage drops quickly and most of the energy is lost as heat. Additionally, the third rail is prone to extremes of weather and considered to be very hazardous due to the risk of electrocution. For these reasons, the third rail is no longer considered suitable for new electrification projects and overhead lines are NR's preferred option for electrification.</p>
<p>Why are these projects always retrospective and come after campaigning? When are we going to see these mitigations put into the original strategy/plan?</p>	<p>It is both disappointing and extremely frustrating that Network Rail (NR) did not proactively take into consideration the visual impact of the Great Western Railway on the AONBs when they planned the work. This was despite the explicit duty placed upon them by Section 85 of the CROW Act for them to have due regard to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONBs.</p> <p>It is to be hoped that NR has learnt lessons from its experience within the Mend the Gap area. Subsequent discussion has suggested a willingness within NR to engage more proactively with Protected Landscapes in the planning of future electrification projects and to involve them in NR's planned design reviews for infrastructure, including overhead line equipment. If this does go ahead, it should</p>

	<p>mean that options for minimising visual impact will be fully incorporated in the planning stage.</p>
<p>National Grid scheme brilliant. On Mend the Gap, Network Rail has given a significant sum. Have they also committed to halting their savage tree clearance scheme elsewhere along the line?</p>	<p>Unfortunately, we have no control over Network Rail's programme of maintenance activities along the line and they would no doubt make an argument for tree works being necessary to reduce the risk of damage or closure of the line.</p> <p>In relation to future large scale projects it is to be hoped that NR has learnt lessons from its experience within the Mend the Gap area. Subsequent discussion has suggested a willingness within NR to engage more proactively with Protected Landscapes in the planning of future electrification projects. If this does go ahead, it should mean that options for reducing the visual impact of the equipment and also the impact of the installation works are fully considered at the planning stage.</p>
<p>Can future gantries be a natural green. They are blight on the landscape and like pylons a security risk.</p>	<p>The landscape consultants appointed by NR's contractor to consider options for reducing visual impact did explore the possibility of painting the gantries and other equipment. Interestingly, although green or blue would instinctively seem to be the most suitable colours, the study found that the dominant landscape hues through the Mend the Gap area are those in the red and yellow palettes. Counterintuitively, the 'moss green' colour that is quite often used for fencing etc is, in reality, not a colour reflected in the natural landscape of the area. The study recommended trial-painting some gantry uprights in colours from the red/yellow spectrum. This recommendation was not taken forward by NR and, ultimately, it became evident that NR would not be undertaking any retrospective works to the gantries or other electrification equipment. This means the ones in the Mend the Gap area will remain as they are.</p> <p>Mend the Gap has £750,000 to put towards projects that will help to soften the impact of the gantries through mitigation planting in priority locations within the two AONBs.</p> <p>It is to be hoped that NR has learnt lessons from its experience within the Mend the Gap area. Subsequent discussion has suggested a willingness within NR to</p>

	engage more proactively with Protected Landscapes in the planning of future electrification projects and to involve them in NR's planned design reviews for infrastructure, including overhead line equipment. If this does go ahead, it should mean that options for reducing visual impact, such as painting the electrification equipment, will be fully incorporated in the planning stage.
I should like to draw attention to a leaflet published by MIGGS, the Goring and Streatley mobility issues group, called "Accessible by Train". Henry and the NWD AONB cooperated in the production of this. We now have funding from GWR to produce an updated version of this and will be in touch about this shortly.	Thank you for drawing our attention to the MIGGS leaflet. The Programme Manager will contact you direct.
Presumably the gantries that are in place will stay as they are? Is the corridor area (the gap area) directly linked to the immediate area of the railway or within a wider corridor within the landscape? Thank you.	The Mend the Gap area follows the railway line between Didcot and Purley on Thames and 3km either side of the line, where the line passes through the AONBs. This means the area is a 6km band with the railway line in the centre. A map of the programme area is available at www.mendthegap.uk
As a land owner with land adjoining GWR ,I have not been made aware of Mend the Gap, how will you be opening up bids and projects within the area?	We would be delighted to speak with you. We are very keen to get in touch with landowners throughout the Mend the Gap area, particularly those in locations that have been identified as priorities for mitigation planting. We have recently been given access to contact details for landowners in receipt of payments from the Rural Payment Agency, which will help us to identify landowners.
Would a 'paint job' reduce the detrimental visual impact of the hideous grey gantries?	Not a straightforward one I'm afraid. It was looked into and would be acceptable on one small section of the route but not the others. This is due to the steep valley location which means the gantries can be seen and different levels whereby colour is seen and perceived differently dependent on backdrop. Therefore a greener colour might have been acceptable from higher ground but not from the Thames path where the sky is the main backdrop. The cost and safety issues of painting and maintaining meant it was dismissed in the final report by Network Rail.

<p>Can the greening of gantries in full view within AONB be considered as priority?</p>	<p>The landscape consultants appointed by NR's contractor to consider options for reducing visual impact did explore the possibility of painting the gantries and other equipment. Interestingly, although green or blue would instinctively seem to be the most suitable colours, the study found that the dominant landscape hues through the Mend the Gap area are those in the red and yellow palettes. Counterintuitively, the 'moss green' colour that is quite often used for fencing etc is, in reality, not a colour reflected in the natural landscape of the area. The study recommended trial-painting some gantry uprights in colours from the red/yellow spectrum. This recommendation was not taken forward by NR and, ultimately, it became evident that NR would not be undertaking any retrospective works to the gantries or other electrification equipment. This means the ones in the Mend the Gap area will remain as they are.</p> <p>Mend the Gap has £750,000 to put towards projects that will help to soften the impact of the gantries through mitigation planting in priority locations within the two AONBs.</p> <p>It is to be hoped that NR has learnt lessons from its experience within the Mend the Gap area. Subsequent discussion has suggested a willingness within NR to engage more proactively with Protected Landscapes in the planning of future electrification projects and to involve them in NR's planned design reviews for infrastructure, including overhead line equipment. If this does go ahead, it should mean that options for reducing visual impact, such as painting the electrification equipment, will be fully incorporated in the planning stage.</p>
<p>Comment for Ian Haslam: I understand your response in relation to the line between Reading and Oxford. However, the same obtrusive OLE was installed in the line through Newbury, which has only two tracks.</p>	<p>Response from Ian Haslam (Railway Action Group): For the GWML two track section through the Cotswolds, Network Rail used a different design ie a simpler, cantilever design and then modified this design using lessons learned from the AONB section. We were not aware that they planned to use the bulkier OLE system anywhere else, never mind on double track sections. We did give advice for other areas that were about to be electrified, including the best way to engage with Network Rail. Unless there are special circumstances on the Newbury section, the use of the bulkier system is completely unnecessary and as you say</p>

	very obtrusive in the visual landscape. I'm sorry we couldn't have helped at the time.
Please do chat to the National Farmers Union also, we can help you spread the message with farmers in the area too.	Thank you for the offer of help, which is much appreciated. The Programme Manager will contact you direct.
National Park	
The Hampshire Downs NCA spans the NWAONB and the SDNP. Given Govt support for enhancing and connecting landscapes as well as nature recovery networks is any work taking place to link the NWAONB and the SDNP?	live answered
Farmer, Overton, Hampshire. BBC Countryfile mentioned that the East Suffolk AONB had recently been extended. There is an area between the NWD AONB and the South Downs NP that is increasingly under threat from various types of development. The landscape in this 'gap' is chalk upland with several chalk streams - the upper Test and the Candover being two - and I wonder if the NWD AONB have considered extending their own boundary to include this wonderful area of chalk countryside to tackle the threat form Winchester City Council and Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council sleep walking into the urban coalescing of the largest countryside area between London and Southampton?	live answered
Nature Conservation	

Is ash die back an issue in NWDAONB? If so what actions are being taken?	Yes. Ash die back is increasingly becoming an issue in the AONB. As a Partnership our activity specifically on Ash die back has so far been limited, but we are developing guidance on tree-planting (Right Tree in the Right Place).
What is the best thing an individual could do to contribute to the Nature Recovery initiative?	live answered
The 'Big Chalk' project sounds a good one to also involve both local and national geodiversity groups eg English Geodiversity Forum and GeoConservationUK. Great stuff.	
It would be great to see a project developed that looked at how the nature 'network' is somewhat limited by e.g M4, A34 and A343 and ways in which either existing crossings can be enhanced or new 'wildlife bridges' could be formed?	Thank you for raising this. It's an interesting dimension to nature recovery networks that we have yet to consider properly. There might be opportunities to address it through the Big Chalk, learning from the Hindhead tunnel in the Surrey Hills AONB and the 'land bridges' that are being proposed as part of the A303 Stonehenge project. The biggest obstacle to progress will presumably be the very high cost of the capital works.
With the arrival of Ash-die-back "Chalara" in Ash Trees -- I'm sure we've all noticed "Very Enthusiastic " culling of thousands of Ash trees along roadsides and particularly in the bigger privately owned woodlands. Along roads there's a legal requirement to make trees safe --- Although the massive destruction, detriment to wildlife and habitat seems terrible.... in many cases it does seem to be business interests riding above the interests of wildlife and ecology.	As you may know, part of the issue is that Ash Die-back makes the timber more brittle and prone to splinter, which poses challenges for foresters' safety as well as public liability where trees are beside roads, footpaths, towpaths or Access Land. Where landowners run commercial forestry operations they are, understandably, extracting their Ash before it becomes dangerous and the probable Ash firewood glut appears. One issue that we have not got to grips with yet is what species to encourage to succeed Ash where that proves necessary. The answer will depend on what was most valuable about the woodland before the disease arrived. For example, if it is an SSSI designated for its woodland flora, you might need to select species that will as closely as possible replicate the seasonal canopy/shading and leaf letter that Ash provided.
Planning	
As Parish Councillors or members of NDP committees, it is sometimes difficult to frame responses to development in the AONB. For example, what evidence is required to show	The developer has to demonstrate exceptional circumstances that justify the landscape impact when major development is involved. In other cases, for example if a change of use is involved that would result in a loss of industrial/business use in a rural area, the developer would have an economic

<p>"economic need" outweighs the impact of development (housing or industrial) on the landscape?</p>	<p>statement carried out to demonstrate a need. The council would then use someone in-house or an external consultant to assess these assessments and determine if there is a need. It is then down to the LPA to assess if the benefits outweigh the harm.</p>
<p>Are there any penalties that Planning Authorities can impose on developers that ignore planning conditions?</p>	<p>Local Authorities can issue enforcement action to force developers to comply with conditions, however developers can appeal this and it is left to an inspector to decide. Alternatively, and most commonly, the LA will request the developer to submit a new application to regularise the works or to amend the scheme.</p>
<p>Will the AONB's voice be influential ref the current consultation process (eg Wiltshire Council's Local Plans) in particular ref proposed planning / housing developments which may increase surface water run off in river catchment areas and thereby increase flooding risk?</p>	<p>We hope it's influential, Wiltshire Council have met with all 3 AONBs within its area to discuss our thoughts and I hope they take them on board. We realise some development may be desirable but believe it needs to be the right development to meet identified need, not merely demand, in the right location that is consistent with purposes of AONB designation, and often this isn't the case. We do consider surface run-off, especially when in close proximity to a river, canal or stream, and this is particularly relevant in Marlborough and some of the smaller settlements including Great Bedwyn and Aldbourne. Luckily we have the benefit of groups such as ARK that are able to assist and support us when commenting on Local Plans and applications.</p>
<p>Marian (Natural England) highlighted the importance of peoples' connection with nature and needing to have nature closer to home. In West Berks, 74% of land is AONB, plus another 12% has AWE and flood constraints. This leaves 14% of land to take the development (dwellings, etc), set by central government. That land is having much of its green space and nature impacted by proposed development, thus moving the majority of people further away from nature. How do we square this circle?</p>	<p>By ensuring that any developments approved are of a high standard and ensure appropriate levels of space and green space are provided this can be by promoting green infrastructure within and around sites to improve accessibility in addition to ensuring drainage areas as much an opportunity for ecology and biodiversity net gain as much as for sustainable urban drainage.</p>
<p>Wiltshire council will welcome input from all residents and organisations to take part in</p>	

the initial stage of the consultation process which closes on the 9th March	
Are you contributing to the Wiltshire Local Plan consultation? Could you suggest that housing developers be encouraged or obliged to include rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling in new homes?	We will be commenting on the plan.
Will you suggest that housing developers be encouraged or obliged to include rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling in new homes?	live answered
Sparkling Streams & River Catchment	
How can Parish councils encourage (make?) riparian owners improve the river course on their land?	live answered
Are there plans as to what happens to the sediment once it is flushed out of the Shalbourne? And with the sediment ponds at Wilton, will this be returned to the land from whence it has come?	live answered
Please could you provide web link/contact details for the Sparkling Streams initiative. Thank you.	live answered
How much of the work done is supported by the Sparkling Stream project and how much (%) is done and supported by the farmers themselves?	Currently the Sparkling Streams Project only includes the works and staff time paid for by the Green Recovery Challenge Fund. The funding rules of this fund are such that farmers cannot receive direct payments, however charities are eligible and, in this instance, ARK and Hungerford Town and Manor, are funded to carry out works on their own or private land for nature conservation benefit. Thus, 100% of the work being carried out on the Shalbourne and the Dun is enabled by individuals from the Southern Streams farmer group, but they are not directly delivering any of the works funded through this fund. This is being coordinated by ARK and delivered by staff, volunteers and contractors. The

	<p>Southern Streams Farmer Group however in parallel is carrying out a range of activities individually and as a group, proactively managing this catchment and the Sparkling Streams Project is delivering capital works which work hand in hand to improve, enhance and restore the Rivers Shalbourne, Dun and Kennet. The Southern Streams Farmer Group website can be accessed here: http://www.southernstreams.co.uk/</p>
Have you got any input to Sparkling Streams (not just financial but in terms of abstraction management) from the water companies?	live answered
What can be done to stop the encroachment of industry on the AONBs, particularly when it threatens the rural character of an area and could have a negative impact on local chalk streams?	<p>It's key to get involved in local plans at an early stage to ensure allocations for industry/employment are located on appropriate sites. We do have some industrial sites in the AONB and we try to work with the LAs to ensure that strict conditions are placed on these to best protect the AONB landscape, for example, operational hours or lighting. If applications come in for new industrial sites not within local plans, we will consider each application and if inappropriate we would oppose the development and this includes those in the setting of the AONB. We were successful in opposing a large industrial development outside Swindon which gives us confidence.</p>
Are you planning to export your findings and experience from the Sparkling Streams project to other landscapes with chalk stream interest?	live answered
Is the plan for the Shal to introduce species after you have taken steps to increase flow or for them to populate the stream naturally as conditions improve?	live answered
Why do you not encourage Water Companies to separate the rainwater from sewage?	live answered
Do we have any update on the Nitrate contamination issue in the Kennet and the	Not to hand I'm afraid. Please can you email us and we will ask ARK and NE outside the Forum.

<p>current advice from Natural England with regards to implications to planning applications?</p>	
<p>For NWD communities living on greensand land with chalk streams, this is a very inspirational project. Any advice on how communities work with landowners and farmers to open up a dialogue would be appreciated. Thank you.</p>	<p>ARK obviously have lots of experience in this. Do get in touch if you want to find out how things go with Sparkling Streams.</p>
<p>Is there any intention to widen Sparkling Streams to include the River Lambourn?</p>	<p>At the moment there are no specific plans, but we hope to establish the Wessex Farmer Group around the Lambourn and there could definitely be a potential for a similar project</p>
<p>Comment - Great to see the 'Sparkling Streams' initiative - what a marvellous story. It just shows what can be achieved when Landowners/Farmers work collectively together and for the greater good of the wider community.....bring it on!</p>	<p>Thank you for your kind comments - it truly is a Partnership and couldn't be done without the farmers and landowners. Yes we hope we can definitely do more of this!</p>
<p>Untreated sewage was discharged into England's rivers 200,000 times in 2019; that equates to 1.5million hours of raw sewage flowing into our rivers. The scale shows that rather being only in 'exceptional circumstances', this is routine and frequent. What is being done to tackle water companies which are paying dividends whilst allowing this untreated effluent to go in? Now with Covid-19 around, it is even more important that effluent is properly treated and not allowed to be discharged. This is now a public health issue as well as an environmental issue.</p>	<p>Since this question was asked more data has been submitted to the EA from water companies. This is a relatively new requirement and has for the first time enabled us to see the scale of the problem. You can see the latest data, compiled by the Rivers Trust here: https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/e834e261b53740eba2fe6736e37bbc7b/ The headline figures for the Kennet are quite shocking and Action for the River Kennet have produced the following graph of Fyfield STW (<i>* graph at the end of this table of questions</i>) to show how frequently untreated sewage is being dumped in the upper catchment due to groundwater ingress into sewers. As the question states, storm discharges are supposed to be in response to storm events or snowmelt. This is not covered by the Water Company licence and the Environment Agency (EA) agree with ARK that it is illegal.</p>

	<p>To address the problem the EA have required Thames Water to produce infiltration reduction plans for all groundwater impacted catchments. Over the last five years there has been some investment by Thames Water to resolve the problem, but it's been piecemeal and ineffective. ARK have encouraged their members to lobby local MPs to support Phillip Dunne's private members bill, some elements of which have now been included in the Water Bill, which is a good step forward. Thames Water has not paid dividends for the last few years in recognition of the scale of investment required on all sides of its operation. Their new CEO is on record as saying that any discharge of untreated sewage to rivers is unacceptable. To resolve the problem we need huge investment in sewer infrastructure, which will require political will and a recognition by the regulator (OFWAT) that this is something that water customers want to see. Ultimately it will be paid for by all of us through our water bills. ARK have some further information on their website here: http://www.riverkennet.org/about-the-river/kennet-sewage-pollution</p> <p>In respect of COVID, it is correct that COVID can be traced through sewage, and monitoring of the network is an emerging way to track the disease.</p>
<p>Do you liaise with the Canal & River Trust (CRT) looking after the Kennet & Avon Canal with the obvious link via the Crofton Pump Station and Wilton Reservoir?</p>	<p>The AONB has limited contact with the CRT - less than we should if we're honest - although we do liaise with the K&A Canal Trust and direct with Crofton from time to time. I believe ARK have closer connections with the canal because of the link to water quality in the Kennet.</p>
<p>Is there any intention to widen Sparkling Streams to include the River Enborne?</p>	<p>At the moment we don't have any specific proposals, but it's potentially something that could be more widely applied in the future.</p>
<p>It is good to hear the references to Chalk streams and landscape etc but remember diversity is both biotic and abiotic and the term natural diversity encompasses both bio and geo. A strength of the NWD AONB is the</p>	

obvious geodiversity and links with biodiversity plus social and cultural aspects.	
The use of our waterways as a drain for their excess sewerage is very detrimental to biodiversity and flora and fauna and if you view where this is happening in the River Trust's interactive map, it is very depressing. What is NWD AONB doing to promote a cleaner attitude by Water companies and did we support Philip Dunne's private member's Bill last week?	live answered
I have had to join late and missed the Sparkling Streams film. Is it available to watch on YouTube or anywhere else as I would love to see it? Congratulations on the project.	live answered
The event is extremely interesting; the Sparkling Streams was very informative and well presented; the discussions are well structured. Overall: excellent	live answered
Message, your Parish Council will sit on your local Wiltshire Council Flood Group. They can provide advice.	Thankyou
Strategic & Other	
Wonderful action for landscape and nature. Are you doing anything with or for the people who live in the AONB ?	live answered
What changes in terms of travel, work patterns and community life in the AONB are anticipated as a result of the acceleration of changes due to technology and climate change that Covid pandemic has resulted in?	live answered

<p>How will the new Agriculture Act and Environment Bill, and the regulations made under them, change your work and what you can achieve?</p>	<p>live answered</p>
<p>It's a while since I was on both the HLF and NE Boards and I am not fully up to date. I am however acutely aware of the scale of the cuts over the last decade. How hopeful are our panellists about the adequacy of funding to slow or stop the decline of our landscapes and wildlife?</p>	<p>Great to hear from you. We are awaiting the Govt's response(s) to the Glover Review - keeps getting delayed. We hope that there will be new resources to help us deliver all these ambitions. Fingers crossed.</p>
<p>Hear hear Marian! Residents really don't know what it means to live in the AONB, and how it benefits, rather than disadvantages, them.</p>	
<p>Visual Impact Programme National Grid</p>	
<p>Stuart-really appreciate the innovative opportunity to view the route and see what the impact will be of the removal of the pylons.</p>	<p>Thank you. We're glad you enjoyed the virtual tour</p>
<p>If planting trees to screen the power lines will there be a clear strip for when they mature between the lines and planting?</p>	
<p>What's the timescale for the Roundway Hill project?</p>	<p>We are aiming to submit a planning application for the scheme to Wiltshire Council later in 2021. Before this, we'll carry out more formal public consultation and gather more feedback. Subject to planning consent and approval of the budgets by the regulator Ofgem, construction will take approximately two years to complete with the pylons coming down in 2024.</p>
<p>A question for the National Grid - Do you know if there will be future rounds of the VIP programme and, if so, will previous applicant areas be able to reapply?</p>	<p>The second round of VIP provision starts in April of this year and runs until 2026. Stakeholders originally asked for the project and we know that they have lobbied Ofgem extensively for the project to continue. They may choose to do so again for the period after 2026. Rather than by application, the major undergrounding</p>

	<p>projects are selected by an independent panel of landscape experts chaired by naturalist Chris Baines. Their selections are based primarily on a major landscape survey carried out in 2014 by landscape consultants under the supervision of eminent landscape architect Professor Carys Swanwick. Other sections scored highly in this survey and it is likely therefore that should the project continue other sections will be considered by the panel to take forward to development.</p>
<p>Farmer, Overton, Hants. Are there any plans to underground the pylons from NE of Hannington to west of the A34 south of Beacon Hill which are placed on the highest stretch of downland south of the TV mast south of Kingsclere?</p>	<p>There are no current plans, however, the section remains under consideration for future VIP projects.</p>
<p>Can you say more about the new structures needed before the National Grid line goes underground please?</p>	<p>The structure you mention is called a sealing end compound (SEC). It is needed to facilitate the transition between underground cable and pylons. Two SECs (one at each 'end' are therefore required to connect the proposed new underground cables at either end of the line being removed near Devizes. SECs are generally around 50m x 50m in area for a 400kV circuit and house the support structures for the cable sealing ends, post insulators, earth switches, gantries (these can vary up to 16m in height) and potentially a terminal pylon. Where we can, we try to make use of an existing pylon instead of building a terminating pylon. We are currently looking at locations for these structures in a field near the Bridge Inn in the East and close to wooded areas which will provide existing screening in the west. Siting these compounds is crucially important on a landscape enhancement project such as this as we need to ensure that they are (or can be) very well screened from public views.</p>
<p>How is the VIP operation to bury pylons in Dorset going? Is there public information on the website including Virtual Tour?</p>	<p>The project in Dorset is progressing well despite the challenging terrain, significant amounts of rainfall and extensive archaeological excavations. The archaeological work in Dorset have been extensive too. When we undertook the project, we knew that the area would be rich in archaeology and have worked closely with Historic England and the Dorset County Archaeologist throughout. To date, we have spent over 5,500 archaeologist days in excavations and</p>

	<p>uncovered artefacts from 4000BC as well as Bronze Age, Roman and Mediaeval remains. We are on track to remove the 22 pylons in 2022 and plan to produce a virtual tour during the coming months - when the weather improves and non-essential travel returns so that we can get to site and film it. There is more information on the website dorset.nationalgrid.co.uk</p>
<p>Roundway Project - Out of interest how much more does it cost to put a powerline underground than overground?</p>	<p>Burying the circuit underground is significantly more expensive than installing overhead line and pylons. Dependant on the length of the project and the terrain, underground cable typically costs around 10 times more than an overhead line. As we work with cable manufacturers and place more underground cable onto the network we hope to bring the costs down over time.</p>
<p>Re: VIP undergrounding project how confident are you that funding will be approved by the regulator?</p>	<p>Both our Dorset and Peak District projects have been approved by the regulator and we will be submitting costs on Snowdonia soon. For this latest round of visual improvement projects, Ofgem has made a provision of £456m which would easily accommodate the project in the North Wessex Downs several times over. We are confident therefore that we will be able to secure the necessary funding for the project.</p>
<p>Roundway Project - When all the overhead power lines are removed, does this equipment get reused elsewhere in the network, or does it all just have to be scrapped?</p>	<p>All the metal is largely recycled and the cables are sometimes re-used depending on their age. The concrete bases are usually dug out to about 1m – 1.5m in depth and covered over with an appropriate material (usually a soil typical of the area) which is agreed with the landowner and ecologists.</p>

- *Refers to the Question regarding “Untreated sewage was discharged into England’s rivers 200,000 in 2019.....”

FYFIELD STW Storm Overflow Hours per day in 2020

