Initially, the response came back from HS2 ‘we have not bought it’. My response to them was, ‘Oh, yes, you have. It’s number 151 on your list of properties bought.’ I then asked them if they could send me the valuation on that property. I was told it was not in the public’s interest for me to have that because of some confidentiality. So I went back and asked, ‘Well, could I just have the overall square footage and the particulars?’ They said, ‘Yes, I’ll send you the valuation summary but we don’t have the particulars.’ Interestingly enough, when they sent the valuation summary it said ‘the property is described in full in the full sales particulars attached herewith’.

298. MR RAFFETY: Which they didn’t attach.

299. MRS RAFFETY: Now, they had said, a) they hadn’t sold it, b) I couldn’t have the information. Then they said they didn’t have the sales particulars. And yet they send me the summary which it says ‘sales particulars attached hereto’. They are being obstructive. They are acting as judge, jury and executioner.

300. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Sir, you did say that you didn’t want to hear any more about the details of this just now. I have more I could say. I’m not going to.

301. MR HENDRICK: He asked her to sum up and she’s summing up.

302. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Yeah, well this isn’t summing up, is it?

303. CHAIR: I think we’ve had a good airing of the topic. Thank you very much to you both for coming.

304. MRS RAFFETY: Thank you.

305. CHAIR: And clearly these are matters we’re going to have to reflect on later, but also in our final report it’s important that NTS works well. Thank you very much to you both.

The Woodland Trust

306. CHAIR: We now move on to 1508, AP2:66, AP4:182, the Woodland Trust represented by Berwin Leighton Paisner.

307. MR TAYLOR QC: Good morning. I’m Reuben Taylor QC. I’m instructed on

behalf of the Woodland Trust to assist in presenting their petition. And to my right I have Mr Richard Barnes, who's an ecologist who's here to give evidence.

308. The Trust is a woodland conservation charity with some 500,000 members and supporters. And it's here today to voice concerns relating to the loss of ancient woodland as a result of HS2. Ancient woodland is accepted in national UK government policy as an irreplaceable habitat. In other words, ancient woodland, when it is lost to development, cannot be the subject of successful mitigation or compensation. The result is that it's policy that developers must therefore avoid primarily the loss of ancient woodland. HS2, however, causes the loss of over 30 hectares of ancient woodland.

309. With that in mind, the Trust is here asking the Committee to note the extent of the loss of the woodland; the way in which that loss came about; to acknowledge that HS2 will therefore not result in a position of no net biodiversity loss, which is the stated aim of the scheme. We are asking the Committee to acknowledge that best practice has not been followed in respect of the loss of the ancient woodland, and there are a number of other matters which Mr Barnes will come to relating to the use of buffer strips to protect woodland during the course of construction and through operation. Matters relating to translocation proposals and compensatory planting.

310. So with that brief introduction I would like to introduce Mr Barnes to the Committee. If we can turn to slide 2, please, of the presentation.

311. MR BARNES: Thank you. Yes, my name's Richard Barnes. I'm an ecologist with over 25 years' experience, and the full details are in the full evidence should you wish to review that. Mr Taylor has already introduced The Woodland Trust as the UK's woodland conservation charity and the membership. We do have a significant estate as well. We've got about 25,000 hectares and nearly 1,300 sites. So we're very much a practitioner as well.

312. We are a national authority on ancient woods and trees, consulted by Defra, Natural England, etc. And we do run major projects on woodland protection, woodland restoration and woodland creation.

313. If we can move to the next slide, please. Just a quick reminder of what ancient woodland is. The definition for England is that it's existed since at least 1600 and has

had largely uninterrupted tree cover. Many of them date back as far as 1,000 years. It's the 'wild wood' in many cases it's sometimes called. And it's about the continuity of tree cover and the undisturbed soil that's particularly important in that.

314. SIR HENRY BELLINGHAM: Can I just ask a question?

315. MR BARNES: Of course.

316. SIR HENRY BELLINGHAM: It's possible to have ancient woodland without any ancient trees basically?

317. MR BARNES: Yes.

318. SIR HENRY BELLINGHAM: It's possible to have woodland that could be made up of either regenerated trees or newly planted species but it's still categorised as ancient? Although if you were looking at it you'd say 'that's a very young plantation'.

319. MR BARNES: Yes, as you point out, there are categories within that. In that case, it's quite often managed woodland. And, yes, you often find that, through the process of coppicing or pollarding, those individual trees might be old. But if you've actually felled them for wood purposes for timber production then, yes, that will mean you won't have any old trees. But it's about the continuity of tree cover and the undisturbed soil. Those are two of the more important points about what makes it. It's the fact that the soil has had time to build up and the inter-relationships with microorganisms in the soil is particularly important in ancient woodland.

320. SIR HENRY BELLINGHAM: Right. And what happens, for example, if historically going back maybe hundreds or thousands of years where it's been established that there obviously was woodland on an area maybe like common ground or even margin agricultural ground or semi-natural ground but was wooded and forested in the past? If the landowner or an organisation like yourselves wants to replant that, would that then be categorised as ancient woodland or has there got to be continuity of trees and woodland on the site in question?

321. MR BARNES: There has to be continuity and no evidence of a particular land use change such as to arable or farming. It is about the continuity of the soils. There's generations of trees will go on through so, yes, as you mentioned, you won't necessarily

get ancient or veteran trees on the site, particularly if it's been managed positively for wood or coppice products.

322. SIR HENRY BELLINGHAM: And what would happen for example if you take an area near my constituency, the famous Brecks in Norfolk, that are going to be part of The Brecks but are mainly heathland now, but which in the past would have had woodland on them? They couldn't be categorised as ancient because there's been a break in the actual existence of trees on that ground.

323. MR BARNES: That's right. Those wouldn't be ancient woodland. I mean, most of England was at some stage ancient woodland and it's been cleared and there have been other habitats that have been produced as a result of that which are valuable for different types of wildlife. But what we're talking about is the residual… as in one of the bullet points here, it covers less than 3% of England now is ancient woodland when in fact it was probably in the 80% to 90%.

324. SIR HENRY BELLINGHAM: Thank you. And, just for the benefit of the Committee, how old is the oldest tree in Britain?

325. MR BARNES: I believe the oldest one is the Fortingall Yew in Scotland and the estimates are around 5,000 years old. But there are a number of contenders for that crown in terms of age. The yew is known to be one of the longest lived. There's others that tend to be long-lived through coppicing or pollarding and there are some famous oak trees that are 600 to 800 years old.

326. SIR HENRY BELLINGHAM: Thank you. Sorry to digress, Chairman.

327. CHAIR: That's alright.

328. MR BARNES: As Mr Taylor has already mentioned, ancient woodland is an irreplaceable habitat so it's impossible to recreate with newly planted trees, which perhaps reiterates Sir Henry's queries. They've made a huge contribution to the historic and natural landscape of our nation and they're often described as our natural castles and cathedrals. And a lot of them are under threat.

329. Moving on to the next slide, please. Under the objectives for HS2, they have said they're committed to being an exemplar project, and that's appropriate for a major

infrastructure project of large scale that's promoted by the government. HS2 adopted a no net loss to biodiversity approach and HS2 should have demonstrated best practice. Because ancient woodland is irreplaceable, best practice is to assess the options and ensure no net loss or impact through avoidance of harm.

330. If we can move on to the next slide, please. And this summarises some of the impact of HS2. We know there's a loss of over 30 hectares of ancient woodland which is comprised of direct effects on 34 ancient woodland. And some of these woodlands are actually severed to create small disconnected woods. So the actual impact on the biodiversity is greater. The scheme also indirectly affects a further 29 ancient woodlands, and the indirect effects are things like noise, dust, construction traffic, artificial lighting causing disturbance and collateral damage. In the original scheme there was a lot of proposed loss of ancient woodland for temporary works but as a result of our meetings and discussions with HS2, a lot of those have been addressed. But, again, that was a flaw in the original scheme.

331. Next slide, please. And we feel, talking about HS2 outcomes, that these impacts have come about because the scheme has failed to identify ancient woodland. The wrong approach means the wrong answers. 14 additional ancient woodlands have been discovered on the route. We know through our evidence with Natural England that they told HS2 to survey for ancient woodland less than two hectares which wouldn't otherwise be on the ancient woodland inventory. HS2 told Natural England that there wasn't any, and that's something that Natural England believed unlikely. We submitted evidence to Natural England on a range of woodlands and 13 of those were adopted and put on the ancient woodland inventory; and another one through another process themselves was put on the inventory.

332. The result of this was that HS2 didn't avoid ancient woodland when assessing their route. And, subsequent to that, many ancient woodlands were unsurveyed. Now, this is far from best practice. And, going back to evidence you heard earlier this week from Jo Treweek, a loss of irreplaceable habitat means, by definition, a net loss to biodiversity. Now, much of this loss and harm could have been avoided through early collaboration with the Ecology Technical Group. This was a working group established in 2013 by Warwickshire County Council. You've heard from their witness, Mr David Lowe, who's the Chair of that Group and some of the other petitioners here today are

also part of that group.

333. Next slide, please. One indication of indirect effects and how you could mitigate them is through buffers. We believe planted buffers must be required to protect ancient woodland, and we seek commitment that the Code of Construction Practice must contain a presumption that planted buffers should be provided for all ancient woodlands along the route unless there's compelling evidence for that not to be needed. And this is particularly pertinent in the case of Long Itchington Woods where the tunnel portal is right on the boundary of the wood. And therefore we've actually added that to our list of woodlands directly affected because we find it difficult to believe that there won't be any impact on that woodland.

334. Next slide, please. In terms of mitigation and compensation, again just to reiterate the point that a loss of ancient woodland will be a net loss to biodiversity. And Natural England say that compensation measures are always a last resort because ancient woodland veteran trees are irreplaceable and these measures can only partially compensate for damage. And so it's true that you cannot offset loss and therefore that compensation needs to be at a large scale. And that by definition there will be a residual loss to biodiversity, and that's what this compensation has to address. And it's also true that translocation does not produce a 400 year old habitat, but I'll be dealing with that in a little bit more detail in a second.

335. Next slide, please. In terms of the no net loss calculation, we got a full report about how this came about or how this is being used by HS2 a few weeks ago, on 11 January, I believe. But the current metric used by HS2 Limited assumes that the loss of irreplaceable habitat and ancient woodland can be offset; and that doesn't reflect government policy nor what Defra or Natural England have suggested. Also, plantations of ancient woodland sites, which is the type of habitat where some of the trees have been cleared but the soils have not been disturbed and then other trees have been planted on that site, these are given a lower evaluation which contradicts the national planning policy guidance. And, furthermore, in the report of 11 January the figure for loss of ancient woodland is actually wrong. Even if you take a maximum six-and-a-half hectares that should leave 24 hectares of ancient semi-natural woodland in their assessment. But they've got 14 hectares in their report. So it just goes to show this represents a fundamentally flawed approach and we know that Natural England

weren't happy with the methodology. The impacts on the irreplaceable habitat should be considered separately and the scale of compensation proposed should use a bespoke metric that reflects the likelihood of success. And, again, you heard from Jo Treweek on Monday that that was the case that it should be treated separately. So basically, for no net loss, you'd look for them having a caveat that what they're doing for no net loss doesn't take into account the actual residual loss of ancient woodland.

336. Next slide, please. In regard to HS2's additional woodland planting, one of the things to bear in mind is that the no net loss calculation hasn't been used to influence or to come up with the woodland planting suggested by HS2. And, in fact, the basis of deriving the planting proposals is unclear. They stated continually that it's professional judgement. The planting does appear to be constrained by the Bill limits and no additional powers are sought for more planting once the additional woodland I mentioned earlier was identified. So we don't know where the compensation for this will go. And since planting is intended to compensate for loss of something irreplaceable, it should be at a high ratio – namely 30:1 – and the rationale for this figure is in the full evidence, and it's based on the uncertainty of time to establish the woodland that's going to come up as a result. A kind of precautionary principle.

337. MR HENDRICK: Sorry, just in a nutshell, how do you get such a large figure as 30?

338. MR BARNES: The metrics and the Defra guidance would have come up with a figure of 24:1, and indeed that's a figure that Natural England suggested to HS2. We've had a precautionary principle because there's a lot of uncertainty in assuming you'll have a high quality woodland in 32 years, which is the figure they have as the maximum figure in the Defra metric. Because ancient woodland is such a long… it would take such a long time to create or… Well, you can't create it. It would take such a long time for the woodland to establish and to begin to provide homes for birds such as nuthatches and treecreepers that would be looking for niches in that habitat. 32 years is just insufficient to produce a reasonable habitat so we added this precautionary principle that we thought 30:1 would be a reasonable one. That's building on the Natural England suggestion of 24:1.

339. MR CLIFTON-BROWN: But there's a balance to be struck here, isn't there?

Because the higher your ratio, the more valuable agricultural land is being taken to compensate. So there has to be a balance in a country with relatively limited agricultural land as to how much we plant woodland and how much we use for agriculture.

340. MR BARNES: I will be addressing that in my next slide, if I may. If I can defer that a little bit and then I'll come back and answer you on that one because I'll be showing in the next slide some information about that. Because, indeed, that's one of the things we're saying: that the commitment should be given to pursue options outside the Bill limits that would provide better connectivity and landscape resilience. And I'll just say that our comments about woodland planting taking time, that's coming from an organisation that does an awful lot of woodland planting. We've got some big sites where we are doing that, including a 350 hectare site in Hertfordshire called Heartwood where we're establishing woodland there. But we recognise – and there's a picture on that slide of that site – that it takes a long time for those sticks in the ground to even begin to provide those niches and habitats for the birds and insects that have had their ancient woodland taken away.

341. MR HENDRICK: In practice, this figure of 30, does it mean for every tree that was lost you plant 30?

342. MR BARNES: It's an area basis so that for every hectare of ancient woodland lost you'd have a hectare of planting, or 30 hectares of new planting. Sticks in the ground, as in the picture.

343. MR HENDRICK: So it's the area rather than the number of trees?

344. MR BARNES: It's an area rather than a number, yes. And the next slide, please. What we and many other people are proposing is landscape scales compensation outside the Bill limits. And this is through voluntary agreements. Now, this is a slide that you may have originally seen in Mr Lowe's evidence for Warwickshire County Council about ecological connectivity within Warwickshire and letters for that woodland with the best areas for promoting woodland connectivity. And basically they've got real landowners who have either registered as an offset provider with the Environment Bank or AB Agri. And these are voluntary agreements. And this is about using conservation covenants or other such voluntary, but legally and financially binding, agreements that

are entered into by landowners. And this is just an example that illustrates the potential. There's other interests such as Country Land and Business Association. But it's just showing that compensation at landscape scale is possible and that it's going to maximise the benefits of where that woodland is created. Does that answer your question, sir? It's the voluntary nature where landowners sign up to the scheme.

345. MR CLIFTON-BROWN: I understand that but, as a country where land resource is a very precious asset, I think we have to be careful how we mix that resource. And if your figures are 30:1, which seems to be a very high figure, and I've got form in this: I've planted 250,000 trees on my farm and taken out quite a lot of agricultural land so I know what it's like to plant woodland and I've now got some woodland that's nearly 40 years old that I've planted. But there does have to be a balance. I'm sure you would admit that and I just wonder. Mr Hendrick's queried the figure of 30:1. 30:1 does seem to me to be a very high figure.

346. MR BARNES: Well, in terms of ancient woodland loss, that would come up with a figure of 900 hectares of tree planting, of new planting. The government's ambition for England alone is 3,500 hectares per year of new woodland planting to get up to the tree canopy cover that we're hoping for. And, as I say, we've had experience of Heartwood as a 350 hectare site. Langley Vale in Surrey is 270 hectares.

347. MR CLIFTON-BROWN: I must say I do like your voluntary approach much better than HS2's compulsory approach in some areas.

348. MR BARNES: Well, we feel that they're constraining within the Bill limits both in terms of the quality and, as you say, we agree that you shouldn't be taking up prime agricultural land for the compensation for HS2. We feel it's better done and you'll get better results for biodiversity, and better results for farming, if you are to do it through voluntary schemes such as this. And this map just illustrates there are a number of already registered voluntary offset providers that have registered either with the Environment Bank or AB Agri to that very effect. So we're not going to do HS2's work for them but we would like to show that this is one example of a scheme that could provide that without taking up prime agricultural land, and yet deliver at the scale that we're suggesting. It's not unrealistic for 900 hectares along this stretch of the route within the counties affected to be delivered. And, as I say, the government is looking at

3,500 hectares per year.

349. On to the next slide, please, about translocation. I'd just like to reiterate that translocation cannot recreate ancient woodland, which is a 400-year-plus-old habitat. For ancient woodland, the term 'habitat translocation' is inaccurate really; it doesn't reflect the partial nature of what is being moved. It's been described as a salvage operation by Natural England. And I'd also like to say that it's not done like an archaeological dig with a trowel and a brush. It's very much an engineering operation, as the image shows. So really the term more accurately covers removal of soil and possibly some small vegetation from one site to another. And I believe, although Sir Peter Bottomley's not here at the moment, there was an exchange between him and Mr Miller over a year ago – January 2015 – and I would refute the words used by Mr Miller there where he was saying that they'll be taking the biodiversity with them and 'we've been moving these soils carefully to a receptor site'. Even with the best care, it's done with a digger and dumper trucks and then spread again with diggers. So I think that translocation being done is a very cosy operation; it's an engineering operation.

350. MR HENDRICK: What's the significance in an engineering operation? Is it any less effective in transferring that biodiversity from one site to another? Could you tell me what gets damaged in that process and how would you rather have it done and what would be the benefits of that?

351. MR BARNES: It's the amount of effort put into doing translocation rather than doing large scale compensation that is part of the issue. When you dig up the soil, the main thing is the complex biodiversity within the soil, as I mentioned earlier, that has been established over hundreds of years. So it's particularly some of the moulds and bacteria and microorganisms in the soil.

352. MR HENDRICK: But they're still going to be there when it's transferred so what's the benefit?

353. MR BARNES: Well, it is largely disturbed, especially if it has to be piled, if it's done at the wrong time of year. And the main things you do get across are the bulbs, you know, the wood anemones, bluebells, etc. Those are the ones that, on the schemes that we've looked into, seem to fare best through translocation. But I would just say, I

mean, the research report that the Woodland Trust produced – and the colleague who wrote it is in the room at the moment – that was a review of all the research and evidence on translocation. And although it concluded that translocation as a process wasn't proven, bizarrely that's actually been quoted in the ancient woodland strategies and methodology when in fact it's not at all; it's a critique of the research available.

354. MR CLIFTON-BROWN: Can I just ask you? I accept that the perfect solution is not to disturb the soil at all. But, given that we've got the scheme and we're going to have to disturb the soil in certain areas, isn't the important thing to keep the topsoil separate from the subsoil?

355. MR BARNES: Yes, and if the full method statement would detail that sort of activity and show how it's done with each individual site… and that's one of the things that we've been asking for, to see what the detail is of the translocation. Because, you're right, if you're doing it and you decided that the conditions are right at both the donor site and the receptor site to do that then, yes, it's about stripping the appropriate layer off and not mixing the subsoil with the topsoil and transferring that. But, again, it's quite an involved process and it's just that the total merits for the amount of investment in doing that isn't necessarily proven. And it's also not always possible to salvage the proportional material from the donor site. I know other schemes have shown that they get that but really we can only use about 20% in an area of soil actually to translocate. It's not a hectare per hectare that you'll take a hectare of soil off and create a hectare of new woodland site and plant within that.

356. MR HENDRICK: Are you saying though that certain species don't transfer very well and others do?

357. MR BARNES: It tends to be the bulb plants that do best under the translocation. Mr Miller mentioned the Cossington Woods example in his evidence where the bulbs took up quite well after 10 years of establishment. That's on the A2/M2.

358. MR HENDRICK: Yeah.

359. MR BARNES: But the trouble is there have been no more surveys done of that site in the last 10 years. We just don't know if it's been a success. There was early indications that those species have taken quite well but there's no proof. And we've

gone through with the Channel Tunnel rail link –

360. MR HENDRICK: Yeah. What you're saying is that there's no guarantee that that translocation will recreate the exact conditions that were there before it was moved.

361. MR BARNES: Yeah.

362. MR HENDRICK: But as my colleague, Mr Clifton-Brown, has just said, given the fact that you've got to move it anyway, isn't this making the best of a bad deal?

363. MR BARNES: It is. What you'll be getting is the bulbs and you'll get what I call an inoculum of some of the microorganisms. But I think the trouble is it's being sold –

364. MR HENDRICK: It's being sold as if it's like for like.

365. MR BARNES: As if it's like for like, plopping it somewhere else in the same state. And it's just the amount of effort put into that with no proof that it does actually produce the benefits that are indicated or suggested.

366. MR HENDRICK: Yeah.

367. MR BARNES: Thank you.

368. MR TAYLOR QC: Before you move on, can I just ask you one question? How many woodlands have been created by translocation that have the characteristics of ancient woodland such that they should be included on the ancient woodland inventory?

369. MR BARNES: None. You cannot create ancient woodland from translocation.

370. MR HENDRICK: It wouldn't be ancient woodland by definition. This can't be ancient woodland. All it is is a facsimile.

371. MR BARNES: Yeah. And none of the sites where translocation has occurred have been suggested that they are ancient woodland.

372. MR CLIFTON-BROWN: Isn't the real point here that extra care should be taken with the translocation of soil from ancient woodland sites? Because the soil at ancient woodland sites, as you've pointed out, has characteristics that maybe ordinary mono-cultural woodland doesn't have: this inoculum in the soil, bulbs, the seeds from

mature trees. So isn't the real answer that extra care ought to be taken with the translocation of soil from ancient woodlands?

373. MR BARNES: It certainly should but that has to be done very carefully and you have to stick to the process prescribed in the best practice if you are going to do that. And perhaps if I could turn to the next slide. One of the issues we've raised is about the timing of translocation and that if you are going to do it, as well as having this process, that the translocation timing should dictate the engineering programme. Because there's a narrow window of opportunity and in fact it's different for the ancient woodland soil than it is coppice stools, if you're doing coppice stools. Coppice stools are best done between December and February. The soil should be done in the autumn period – by 31 October is typically in most method statements. Unfortunately, our experience is that that doesn't happen: the engineering operation happens and the translocation is done at the time that is convenient for the engineering operation, not vice-a-versa. And there's plenty of examples of that, unfortunately.

374. But, yes, you're right: it's a salvage operation but the timing is critical and the method statement is very crucial that it's actually followed if you're going to do that. But, again, the difficulty is that even with all that there's no guarantee that you're going to get anything like the ancient woodland that was lost.

375. Okay, thank you. If I can move to the next slide, please. The Woodland Trust are particularly concerned that HS2 mustn't create a precedent. We believe that HS2 has fallen woefully short of adopting best practice towards ancient woodland by poor assessment, little avoidance, continued indirect effects and poor compensation with no transparent rationale; and that this leads to a net loss of biodiversity by definition. We would like the Committee to state that it accepts that this is the case because it's vital to ensure that HS2 does not set a precedent and is not held up as an example of best practice, especially for the next phases of HS2. And this is also important because major projects are often held up by developers as examples of best practice. And inappropriate application of this already flawed approach will put many more woodlands at risk where The Woodland Trust is already dealing with over 500 cases of ancient woodland under threat at the moment in the UK. For example, you've probably been told quite a few times about how Crossrail did something in a particular way or HS1; and I just refer back even with that, that for the Channel Tunnel rail link, of the 15

woodlands translocated, none of those have been surveyed and all of them have been presumed as failures. They haven't been surveyed and the results published. Since then we've done a Freedom of Information request on that.

376. MR HENDRICK: I mean, you say they haven't been surveyed or there's not been research done or there's not the evidence. I mean, have you got the personnel to be able to do that type of thing? Or would you leave it to universities or academic institutions to get somebody working on a PhD project doing that sort of stuff?

377. MR BARNES: Well, it's one of the issues, going back to slide 82103(12), the last point, which I think I might have overlooked. My apologies. That commitments required from the nominated undertaker to manage and monitor new woodland created with translocated soil in perpetuity. That's one of the issues. So often you hear about a project and then –

378. MR HENDRICK: So who would do it? Somebody like Natural England?

379. MR BARNES: Well, we don't know but we think it should be done for 50 years. We believe it should be the nominated undertaker that does that. They've suggested 50 years. The EAC Committee suggested 60. Because one of the issues is, yes, the monitoring tends to get dropped, the management gets dropped, especially if it's –

380. MR HENDRICK: But if it's a private company it might be taken over or it might go bust.

381. MR BARNES: Well, that's why the other system I mentioned in the slide about the Environment Bank, that has offset providers and they enter legally and financial agreements – the conservation covenants suggested by The Law Society.

382. MR HENDRICK: Over 50 or 60 years they could get pretty much watered down. But if you've got a government agency that is willing to take some responsibility for monitoring, like Natural England, then is that not a better solution?

383. MR BARNES: That would be another solution, yes.

384. MR HENDRICK: Yeah.

385. MR BARNES: So back to… I think we'll skip to A2103(15) now. And those are

the undertakers we'd like to ask the Committee to look into. Firstly, to direct HS2 to avoid destroying ancient woodland where possible, such as by tunnelling at the locations noted in our full evidence, and by moving haul routes. And the tunnels suggested are extending the Chilterns tunnel, tunnelling under South Covington Woods, Sheephouse Wood and, in particular, Broadwell Woods. We'd also like to ask you to direct HS2 Limited to compensate for the remaining destruction on an appropriate; and we've suggested 30:1 in the case of tree planting in hectarage for compensation of ancient woodland. And to do this in the wider landscape of the route using conservation covenants or equivalent and including the monitoring as appropriate. We'd also like you to state in your final report that the approach taken by HS2 Limited to identifying and assessing ancient woodland and hence determining the route was seriously flawed, and that the best practice should be adopted for subsequent phases of HS2. We'd also like you to direct HS2 Limited to set up the Ecological Review Group at the earliest opportunity; and I think you've heard from Warwickshire about that suggestion as well.

386. So the next slide. Just to go through the conclusions or the summary. Ancient woodland is a precious heritage of irreplaceable, environmental worth and is a fundamental part of our national culture. And we all have a responsibility to be its guardian for future generations to enjoy. The HS2 approach to the protection of this irreplaceable habitat has been woeful. And the Committee is asked to record this so as to ensure best practice is adopted for other developments and projects. We can't risk this being repeated for subsequent phases and other developments. And we also ask the Committee to require the undertakings and assurances sought to better protect ancient woodland going forward. Basically, we want HS2 to be an exemplar of sustainable development, taking the country forward with the countryside we value, including the ancient woodland at its heart. Thank you.

387. CHAIR: Do you have any questions?

388. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): No, I think it's easier if I just deal with this by way of telling you what we are doing.

389. CHAIR: Okay. Have you finished?

390. MR TAYLOR QC: Indeed. That's the end of the presentation.