

It is well-recognised that we are experiencing a crisis for biodiversity as well as in climate change. There is strong evidence for the importance of a flourishing biodiversity for people's well-being, and this has been reinforced by many peoples experience during COVID lockdown. My concern with the scheme proposed by Sunnica is that, whilst some of the biodiversity value of the area has in part been recognised this is incomplete, and in particular the proposals for compensating for losses in biodiversity are seriously inadequate. If the scheme is carried forward as proposed I believe we will lose a precious part of our ability to experience biodiversity from our local environment. Sunnica has recognised the importance of certain key species, notably stone curlew - a bird who's evening calls can be heard from our village - where legislative requirements place specific obligations. Other groups have challenged the adequacy of compensatory arrangements for this species (see responses from Wildlife Trusts and Natural England). I would like to reinforce these concerns as a local resident who enjoys and takes others to enjoy the privilege of experiencing this rare species on our doorstep. I would also like to make the point that other declining farmland birds which will lose habitat due to the proposals will not benefit from the compensatory arrangements proposed for stone curlew. The data provided by Sunnica identifies (and I can confirm) yellow wagtails as a regular breeding species, this particularly favours crops such as potatoes for breeding, as well as corn buntings that breed in comparatively good numbers still in cereal crops within the Sunnica footprint area. The stone curlew compensatory areas will be welcome if they can be effectively designed so as to meet the concerns raised by NE, W Trusts and RSPB, but it does not seem possible that they can provide the different habitat requirements of these other species which are so much part of our landscape and which local people treasure. Some depend on taller vegetation, others on later developing more open swards, and this is currently achieved by the mosaic of habitats afforded by the current arable, horticultural cropping regimes and even to some extent outdoor pig units. None of the proposals by Sunnica will meet all these. Importantly, these species provide wildlife experiences that local people can all enjoy now. I have taken many small groups to enjoy and experience these birds on local farmland over the years. That experience will be denied to our children if the proposals go ahead as planned. As others have stated (eg Minutes of 4 May meeting of the Sunnica Ecology Working Group) this is a high opportunity scheme and given the scale of the project Sunnica should demonstrate best practice and leave the natural environment in a measurably better state. I would add that there is a duty on decision-makers to ensure that we leave a better environment for our children and enable them to enjoy the local experiences of wildlife that we have been privileged to enjoy ourselves.