



MINUTES OF THE CHILTERN CONSERVATION BOARD
HELD ON MONDAY 24th June 2013 at The Kempster Hall, the Christ Church Centre, Reading Road, Henley on Thames RG9 1AG

COMMENCING AT 10.40 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 13.00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

Member	Appointing Body
Appointed by Local Authorities	
Cllr Lynn Lloyd	South Oxfordshire District Council
Cllr David Nimmo Smith	Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr Brian Norman	Three Rivers District Council
Cllr Ian Reay	Hertfordshire County Council
Cllr Chris Richards	Aylesbury Vale District Council
Cllr Jeremy Ryman	Chiltern District Council
Cllr Alan Walters	South Buckinghamshire District Council

Appointed by the Secretary of State	
Dr Heather Barrett-Mold	Secretary of State
Alison Doggett	Secretary of State
Mike Fox (Chairman)	Secretary of State
Bettina Kirkham	Secretary of State
Ray Payne	Secretary of State
Helen Tuffs	Secretary of State
John Willson	Secretary of State

Elected by Parish Councils	
Cllr John Griffin	Oxfordshire
Cllr Margaret Jarrett	Hertfordshire
Cllr Barbara Wallis	Buckinghamshire

Officers	
Deirdre Hansen	Clerk to the Board
Neill Jackson	CCB Conservation and Landscape Officer
Steve Rodrick	CCB Chief Officer
Chris Smith	CCB Finance Officer
Annette Venters	CCB Access Officer
Colin White	CCB Planning Officer

Also present: Cllr. David Collins, Dacorum Borough Council observing.

1. 13/14 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Mary Goldsmith, Cllr Julia Wells, Cllr David Barnard, Cllr Marion Mustoe and Dr. Simon Mortimer

13/14.2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

13/14.3. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held 27th March 2013 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

13/14.4. Matters Arising

Item 12/13.60-8 the possibility of capping the total costs of the Board members allowances as a maximum percentage of the Board's budget is still under review.

13/14.5. Public Question time

No public questions.

13/14.6. Changes to Board Membership

The Chief Officer reported changes to membership of the Board since the last meeting March 23rd. They are as follows:

1. Alison Doggett, Secretary of State Appointment, to fill vacancy created by the resignation of Kevin Mayne in February 2012.

Cllr Bill Storey, Hertfordshire County Council. Bill did not seek re-election at the May elections. Herts CC have appointed Cllr Ian Reay to the Board.

Cllr Richard Pushman, County Council. Richard did not see re-election at the May elections. Bucks CC have yet to make their appointment.

Cllr Anna Babcock, South Oxfordshire CC. Anna has been replaced by Cllr Lynn Lloyd (Chinnor)

2. For information, three members of the Board appointed by the Secretary of State will complete their term of office on 31st March 2014. DEFRA will begin the recruitment process for their replacements in September 2013. The retiring members are :

Mike Fox
Bettina Kirkham
John Willson.

- 1. The Board NOTED the recent and the programmed changes to Board Membership.**

13/14.7. Statement of Accounts 2012-13

The Finance Officer presented the Statement of Accounts and the Annual Audit Return for the Finance Year 2012-13. The yearend position showed an overall net deficit from all activity of £57,046.

1. At its May meeting the Executive Committee considered and approved a proposal to consolidate a number of separate reserves and transfer them to the Development Reserve.
2. The Pensions Liability has reduced by £59,000 to £577,000. This represents the liability to the Board if every employee had retired on 31 March 2013 and collected their pension entitlement.
3. The reduction reflects the impact of the valuation methodology and the derivation of the main financial assumptions required by Financial Reporting Standard (FRS) 17.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the Statement of Accounts and Annual Audit Return 2012-13.**

13/14.8. Report from the Executive Committee

The Chief Officer reported the matters discussed and decisions taken, by the Executive Committee under delegated powers.

At its meeting on 23rd May 2013 the Executive Committee:

1. Received and approved a report on the provisional financial outturn for 2012-13.
2. Agreed a re-categorisation of the Board's reserves.
3. Received a report on the Internal Auditor's Report.
4. Approved a Cycle to Work Scheme.
5. Approved a request for continuing recognition of the AONB by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.
6. Discussed the report on High Speed 2.

- 1. The Board NOTED the matters discussed by the Executive Committee and the decisions made under delegated authority.**

13/14.9 Report from the Planning Committee.

Members received the report from the Planning Officer, the purpose of which was to bring to the attention of the Board the items considered by the Planning Committee on 9th May 2013 and the decisions taken under delegated powers. The following were noted:

1. High Speed 2 update
2. AONB Management Plan Review
3. Forthcoming events
4. Planning Policy Guidance
5. Planning applications update.
6. Natural England Protocol.
7. Development Plan Responses

The Planning Officer gave some guidance on the matters discussed and members commented.

- 1. The Board NOTED the report from the Planning Committee.**

13/14.10 Report on the AONB Management Plan Review.

The Chief Officer updated the Members on the progress of reviewing the AONB Management Plan.

1. The Draft Work Plan and the SEA Scoping report have been consulted on (consultation ended 19/06/13). Twenty five responses had been received, comments were generally supportive. DEFRA and Natural England had not responded.
2. Work to review the policies is ongoing. The public consultation will take place between September-December 2013.
3. A small Members sub-group has been set up. A workshop to be held 23 July 2013 at the Boards offices. Members are asked to maintain dialogue about key issues and principles that ought to be considered as part of the Review.

- 1. The Board NOTED the current position in connection with the AONB Management Plan Review.**
- 2. The Board will continue to keep Officers informed about key issues for consideration as part of the Review.**

13/14.11. Small Grants Fund

The Chief Officer informed the Board that a Small Grants Fund has now been set up and is open for new applications. This scheme replaces the Sustainable Development Fund as agreed at the March 2013

Board meeting. An initial sum of £20,000 from the Development Reserve has been allocated for this purpose. The funds will be drawn from the Boards own reserves.

1. Six board members had expressed an interest in being involved in the small grants panel- Mike Fox, Mary Goldsmith, Helen Tuffs, Alan Walters, Julia Wells and John Willson.
2. The following project themes will be particularly encouraged in the current year:
 - Local food and drink
 - Children and young people
 - First World War commemorative projects.
3. The panel will meet only twice per year, in October and January, to provide oversight and a tour of selected projects will be held in September.

1. The Board NOTED that the new Small Grants Scheme is now operational and will help to promote it.

13/14.12 Report on HS2

The Chief Officer advised members that following a relatively quiet period in the wake of HS2 Ltd.'s unilateral suspension of community forum meetings in February, there is now a period of intense activity during the consultation on the Draft Environment Statement published 16th May 2013. The meeting discussed the potential impacts.

The Conservation and Landscape Officer gave a detailed slide show presentation on the Draft Environment Statement including maps.

1. The consultation period on the ES will run for 8 weeks. The Board felt this was too short.
2. A number of one day road shows are being held.
3. This draft ES is a "light version" with much missing and little detail that such a document should include.
4. A Board member sub-group scrutinised the document on 20th May. In general there were no surprises other than 29 reservoirs and balancing ponds not mentioned before. They would be an alien feature in the chalk landscape. No assessment of their environmental impact was included.
5. HS2 Ltd intends to minimise the amount of spoil by making shallower cuttings. It is the intention to dispose of spoil along the route, where possible, for use as noise bunds or "landscaping". The volume of spoil is so great that spreading it across fields will significantly reduce their agricultural and bio-diversity value. These impacts have not been assessed. The spoil from the tunnel will be removed from the southern portal near the M25, but no mention is made of what will happen to it then.
6. The assessment of vehicle movements shows there will be considerable numbers using local roads during construction. Again the impact has not been assessed.
7. The assessment of noise is minimal and misleading; they only refer to average noise levels.
8. There was concern that the length of the working day would be too long and the impact on affected communities should be reduced.
9. Working hours during construction are longer Monday to Friday with considerable workings on Saturday; major works are also likely to take place on Sundays. And tunnelling will be 24/7.
10. Much of the detail had been withheld from local communities, inflaming local opinion further. The general consensus is that the road shows are not helpful or illuminating.

11. Board staff have provided briefings to David Lidington MP and Ceryl Gillan MP.
 12. The Judicial Review challenging the legality of the compensation arrangements was successful and the Government will not appeal. Most of the consultation on compensation will now need to be rerun.
 13. The judge gave leave to appeal the ruling on the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment. HS2AA managed to raise £100,000 to meet the legal costs and the hearing began on 10th June.
 14. In January 2012 the Secretary of State announced the current route proclaiming that the Chilterns would be protected by having a longer tunnel leaving only 1.4 miles of route visible in the Chilterns. The longer tunnel now emerges at Mantles Wood at an elevation of 500feet in the centre of the AONB, in the middle of an ancient woodland. According to the Board's own calculations the length of the visible route remains nearly 4 miles.
 15. A Freedom of Information request and an appeal for confirmation of the length of the visible route were refused. It is proposed to make a formal complaint.
 16. It is the Board's and others view that the environmental and social impacts of the length of railway not in a tunnel is considerable, including the effects of constructing a so called green tunnel. Therefore, a full length tunnel is the best solution.
 17. Campaign groups had paid for consultants to prepare a technical feasibility report and cost estimate of a longer tunnel. This showed that the cost of a longer tunnel would not be significantly more than the current proposal. HS2 Ltd rejected the report and claimed that the cost would be £400 million more. This is strongly disputed and HS2 Ltd refuses to disclose their calculations.
 18. Another sub group led by Ray Payne is now preparing the case for a full length bored tunnel based on calculating the cost to society and not just the construction costs to the Department of Transport.
 19. An initial and very rough estimate suggest that the benefits to society of a full length bored tunnel are substantial, in the order of £400m, sufficient to make the full length bored tunnel the best option for minimising the cost to society.
 20. This approach has been taken on by other groups too and the work done by the Board will be incorporated in their work.
 21. The Queen's speech to Parliament included provision for a High Speed Rail (preparation or paving) Bill. This would enable the Treasury to release funds that the Department of Transport needs to develop the railway. It is believed this was done for two reasons: firstly the expenditure is already over budget. Secondly, it will require parliament to vote for this Bill, thus securing a form of endorsement for HS2 earlier than the Hybrid Bill, which may well not, now secure Royal Assent during this Parliament. The Board has to bear in mind that HS2 still has cross party support even if that is expressed more softly now than it once was.
 22. The Board has been asked to provide observations on the Draft 'Paving Bill' on matters of Governance, timing and amount. Ray Payne will provide governance on this. This "Paving Bill" will enable unlimited expenditure to develop HS2 Ltd using public funds with little monitoring or accountability.
- 1. The Board NOTED the feedback on the main impacts identified in the draft Environmental Statement.**

13/14.13 Report on Management of Ridgeway National Trail.

The Access Officer gave a presentation informing the Board on the current situation regarding the Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails Unit. Following a review by Natural England, major reorganisation will create the need for new management partnerships, which will formally involve the Board for the first time. It is likely that there will be limited marketing by the local Trails unit for at least 18 months.

Members views were sought on whether the Board should carry out a programme of local marketing of the Ridgeway National Trail (that part in the Chilterns) in the next two years and prepare a development plan for the Chilterns Section of the Ridgeway.

The members discussed the proposal.

- 1. The Board DECIDED to seek better promotion of the Chilterns part of the Ridgeway National Trail.**
- 2. The Board DECIDED to form a working group to develop a Chilterns Ridgeway Plan.**

13/14.14. Report on Cycle Chilterns Project

The Access Officer updated the members on the Cycle Chilterns Project (formally called Chilterns Sustainable Gateways Project).

In July 2012 the Department for Transport (DfT) awarded a grant of £868,000 from its Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) to promote tourism in the Chilterns based on cycling. The CTC (formally known as the Cycle Touring Club) is the lead partner for the project. The CCB is a key partner, and a member of the steering group. A Cycling Development Officer (Sara Randle) was appointed in January 2013 to deliver the work programme which runs to March 2015.

The project encourages more visitors to travel to the Chilterns by rail and bike, and cycling in general through the Chilterns as an alternative to the car. Five packages are being use to promote the activities.

1. Integrated rail and bike packages
2. Tourism and leisure
3. Encouraging new users
4. Providing information to commuters
5. General awareness campaign

The Cycle Chilterns project has been very positive for the Chilterns AONB, doing much to promote cycling, attracting new audiences and raising awareness. Progress is being made and tangible results are expected in the next few months.

- 1. The Board NOTED progress on the Cycle Chiltern Project.**

13/14.15. Hillforts of the Chilterns

Shirley Judges and Alison Doggett gave a presentation on Hillforts in the Chilterns and their importance in the historical development and settlement of the Chilterns. The Chiltern is important regionally and nationally for the number of hillforts and other defensive structures. Relatively little is known about them and a project is proposed that both raises awareness and initiates a more active programme of site conservation. Both elements of the programme would provide many opportunities for the involvement of volunteers.

The opportunity now exists to explore the importance of these hillforts and to raise the importance in the next Chilterns AONB Management Plan and the Board's own Work Programme.

A project plan was outlined as well as suggested steps to follow. Funding could be sought from HLF as the project would increase the understanding and the enjoyment of the Chilterns AONB.

Shirley Judges and Alison Doggett were congratulated on their work and presentation.

- 1. The Board AGREED to set up a sub group to develop a strategy and work programme to enhance awareness, increase knowledge and management of hillforts.**
- 2. The Board AGREED that the importance of hillforts and similar structures is given a higher profile in the next Management Plan for the AONB.**

13/14.16. Re-introduction of the Pine Marten

The Chief Officer informed the meeting that a national plan is being developed to re-introduce the pine marten to parts of England from which it has been absent for hundreds of years. A lowland trial area is being considered and the Chilterns could be a suitable candidate.

Research in Ireland has shown that the presence of the pine marten significantly reduces the presence of the grey squirrel. A recent survey of foresters for the AONB Management Plan review showed that control of the grey squirrel was a top priority for foresters. The pine marten has a natural predator, the fox, which would overcome potential problems with a re-introduction programme.

The main purpose of a trial area is to study likely effects before a full scale re-introduction programme can take place. The Chilterns may provide ideal conditions. The potential impact on game birds would need careful monitoring before widespread acceptance in the Chilterns amongst landowners could be assured.

The resource requirements are not known at this stage, but other than a modest amount of staff time there is unlikely to be a financial implication.

- 1. The Board SUPPORTED a proposal to put forward the Chiltern as a trial area for the re-introduction of the pine marten.**

13/14.17. Date of next meeting: Tuesday 17th October 2013 location TBC.

The meeting closed 13.00

The Chairman..... Date.....