



## Board Meeting

10.00 a.m. 24<sup>th</sup> January 2013  
Ballinger Memorial Hall, nr.Gt. Missenden, HP16 9LQ

### Agenda

- |     |   |               |
|-----|---|---------------|
| 1.  | Apologies   | 10.00         |
| 2.  | Declarations of Interest  | 10.00 – 10.01 |
| 3.  | Minutes of Previous Meeting                                     | 10.01 – 10.06 |
| 4.  | Matters Arising   | 10.06 – 10.10 |
| 5.  | Public Question Time  | 10.10 – 10.13 |
| 6.  | Report from the Executive Committee                             | 10.13 – 10.20 |
| 7.  | Proposed change of date of AGM                                  | 10.20 – 10.30 |
| 8.  | Proposed Review of Members' Allowances                          | 10.30 – 10.50 |
| 9.  | Report from the Planning Committee                              | 10.50 – 11.05 |
| 10. | Report on need for a Publicity and Promotion Strategy           | 11.05 – 11.30 |
| 11. | Presentation on Box Woodland Project                            | 11.30 – 11.50 |
| 12. | Report on Impacts of Wet Weather in 2012                        | 11.50 – 12.10 |
| 13. | Report on High Speed 2  | 12.10 – 12.30 |
| 14. | Progress Report on AONB Management Plan Review                  | 12.30 – 12.45 |
| 15. | Progress Report on Work Programme 2012-13 (Circulated by email) | 12.45 – 12.55 |
| 16. | Date of Future Meetings   | 12.55 – 1.00  |



**Draft MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILTERNNS CONSERVATION BOARD HELD**

**ON Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2012 at The Clare Foundation, Saunderton HP14 4BF AT 10.45 AM AND**

**CONCLUDING AT 13.00PM**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Appointing Body</b>
<b>Appointed by Local Authorities</b>	
Cllr Anna Badcock	South Oxfordshire District Council
Cllr David Barnard	North Herts District Council
Cllr Roger Emmett	Wycombe District Council
Cllr Marion Mustoe	Central Bedfordshire Council
Cllr David Nimmo Smith	Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr Brian Norman	Three Rivers District Council
Cllr Richard Pushman	Buckinghamshire County Council
Cllr Ian Reay	Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr Chris Richards	Aylesbury Vale District Council
Cllr Jeremy Ryman	Chiltern District Council
Cllr Bill Storey	Hertfordshire County Council
Cllr Alan Walters	South Buckinghamshire District Council

<b>Appointed by the Secretary of State</b>	
Mike Fox (Chairman)	Secretary of State
Bettina Kirkham	Secretary of State
Dr. Simon Mortimer	Secretary of State
Ray Payne	Secretary of State
Helen Tuffs	Secretary of State

<b>Elected by Parish Councils</b>	
Cllr John Griffin	Oxfordshire
Cllr Margaret Jarrett	Hertfordshire
Cllr Shirley Judges	Buckinghamshire
Cllr Barbara Wallis	Buckinghamshire

<b>Officers</b>	
Deirdre Hansen	Clerk to the Board
Steve Rodrick	CCB Chief Officer
Chris Smith	CCB Finance Officer
Colin White	CCB Planning Officer

**12/13.18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from David Barnard, Heather Barrett-Mold, Mary Goldsmith and Julia Wells.

**12/13.19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

**12/13.20. Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held 21<sup>st</sup> June 2012 were approved and signed by the Chairman after the Spelling mistake in the name Badcock on p 40 was amended.

**12/13.21. Matters Arising**

1. Re item 12/13.13 the Board has been invited to a meeting with the Management Committee for the Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails.
2. Re item 12/13.14 no monies have yet been released to Local Nature Partnerships.

**12/13.22. Public Question time**

No members of the public were present.

**12/13.23. Report from the Executive Committee**

Members received the report of the Chief Officer advising the Board members of the matters considered, and decisions taken, by the Executive Committee under delegated powers.

At its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2012 the Executive Committee:

1. Received and approved a finance report on the provisional outturn to the end of August 2012. .
2. Discussed and approved the draft medium term financial plan 2012-2015.
3. Approved a Treasury Management Report.
4. Approved a report on Insurance cover and had decided to reduce insurance cover. Which in turn will reduce the premium.
5. Reviewed and amended the Risk Management Register.
6. Noted a report on Secretary of State appointments to the Board. Members resolved to aid DEFRA to promote the current vacancy, which has been advertised.
7. Received and discussed a report on HS2
8. Approved a proposed Farm Advice Project.
9. Discussed and approved a report on the review of the AONB Management Plan and possible review of the AONB boundary.
10. Noted a report on changes to the Planning System.

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

**12/13.24. 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 5<sup>th</sup> September 2012 and the decisions taken under delegated powers. The following were noted:

1. The High Speed 2 update.
2. AONB Management Plan Review.
3. Feedback from events.
4. Planning Conference 2012.
5. Student research project
6. Luton development issues
7. Responses to development plans
8. Responses to planning applications.

**1. The Board NOTED the report from the Planning Committee and the decisions made under delegated authority.**

#### **12/13.25. Annual Audit Return 2011-12**

The Finance Officer presented the Audit Commission's completed audit report of the Board's account for 2011-12. They drew the Board's attention to four matters. The annual return had provided the information in accordance with proper practice and no matters had come to the audit commission's attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met. The issues arising and the responses were as follows:

1. Review of Financial Regulations and Standing Orders. This will be done at the next Executive Committee meeting.
2. Payment authorisation procedures are already in existence. They will be repeated in the new version of Financial Regulations.
3. Income/ Expenditure figures from the Countryside festival will need to be reported as a gross amount in the Annual Return. The accounts presented to the Executive Committee will reflect the net figure.
4. The minute reference was incorrect due to the timing of the meeting. Finance Officer and clerk to note for future reference.

**1. The Board APPROVED and ACCEPTED the audited Annual Return and the issues arising report for 2011-12 and agreed to the responses and action set out above.**

#### **12/13.26 Report on HS2**

The Chief Officer advised members of recent and planned HS2 activities. The continuing workload related to the HS2 activities is stifling other activities.

Most recent activity includes:

1. A meeting with the Secretary of State for Transport
2. Exchange of letters with Secretary of State.
3. Attendance at Community Forum meetings.
4. Receipt of Scoping Report for the Environmental Impact Assessment.
5. Meeting with HS2 Ltd on selection of viewpoints to be used for the visual assessment.
6. Development of Tunnelling Options.

Planned activity includes:

1. Assessment of final version of the scoping report for the EIA
2. Attendance at community Forum meetings

3. Participation in the Bucks mitigation panel
4. Liaison with HS2 Ltd on visual assessment.
5. Setting up of working parties with HS2 Ltd

1. **The Board REQUESTS that HS2Ltd/DfT undertake a full valuation study of the actual and notional costs and benefits of a full length bored tunnel under the Chilterns AONB.**
2. **The Board repeats it's REQUEST, that Government applies the National Ecosystem Assessment methodology to determine the potential and value of the impacts of HS2.**

#### **12/13.27 Review of AONB Boundary and Management Plan**

The Chief Officer outlined the programme for the AONB Management Plan review which includes a public consultation in late summer 2013. By that time the Board will have to have decided whether to include recommendations to review the AONB boundary. The matter was widely discussed by members. It was decided that Bettina Kirkham, a professional in the field, would lead a working party on the matter for the Board.

1. **The Board DECIDED that it will include in the AONB Management Plan review proposals for changing the boundaries of the AONB.**

#### **12/13.28. Report on the Impact of National Planning Policy changes.**

The Planning Officer advised the members about the likely implications arising from recent Government announcements about temporary (3 years) changes in the planning system to encourage growth in the construction sector. Nothing had been published at the time of the meeting, but there are likely to be implications for the AONB.

The Planning Officer reported to the Board the expected changes and their implications. There will be no public consultation. The Board has prepared a comprehensive response to the proposed changes, which the members discussed. It was decided that the Board should press that any changes do not apply to AONB's and National Park.

1. **The Board DECIDED that it would make representations to Government as outlined in the paragraphs 8-14 in the accompanying papers and seek support of local MP's.**

12.15 Roger Emmett left the meeting.

#### **12/13.29. Review of ancient Woodland Inventory**

12.20 John Morris joined the meeting.

The Chief Officer introduced John Morris, The Director, Chilterns Woodland Project to the meeting. The Director informed the members of the results of a recently published survey that the area of ancient woodland identified in the

Chilterns AONB had increased from 9,827 hectares to 11,058 hectares. Ancient woodland is defined as woodland which has survived continuously since 1600. As 60% of all woods in the AONB are ancient, the Chilterns is one of the most important areas in England for ancient Woodland. Most ancient woodland does not enjoy legal protection, but is given policy level protection, which has been upheld in a number of planning enquiries.

The Director of the Chiltern Woodland Project gave a presentation on the work he has undertaken for the new ancient woodland inventory. The Forestry Commission and Natural England have continued giving encouragement for the project. The information gathered is used by the Forestry Commission, Natural England, Planning Departments and the like. He advised the Board to continue taking a leading role to bring ancient woodland into management and create links between woods.

- 1. The Board NOTED the publication of the report and the increased area of ancient woodland identified.**
- 2. The Board supports the Forestry Commission and Natural England to ensure there is a high level of awareness of the revised inventory.**

#### **12/13.30. Report on the Works Programme 2012-13**

The Chief Officer provided the members with an update on the works programme 2012-13. All detail had been provided with the agenda.

#### **12/13.30. Arrangements for the Annual Chilterns Forum**

- 1. The Board NOTED that the Annual Chilterns Forum will take place November 16th 2012 at Hastoe Village Hall.**

#### **12/13.31. AOB:**

There was no other business.

**12/13.32. Date of next meeting:** Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2013, Location TBC.

**12/13.33. Future dates:** Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2013, Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2013 and Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2013.

The meeting closed 13.00

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

**Item 6**                      **Report from the Executive Committee**

**Author:**                      Steve Rodrick              Chief Officer

**Summary:**                      At its meeting on 12th December the Executive Committee:

1. Received and approved a finance report for the period April - Nov 2012.
2. Discussed and approved a proposed revision to the format of the annual budget.
3. Approved a review of the Board's Financial Regulations.
4. Considered and approved a report recommending a change in the date of the AGM from October to June.
5. Approved a proposal to undertake a review of members' allowances.
6. Received a report on the appointment of an officer to manage the Box Woodland project.
7. Amended and approved a Home Worker's policy and Home Worker's agreement
8. Approved a proposal for special project study leave.
9. Received and discussed a report on HS2 and approved a recommendation to consider, under specific circumstances, the option of a discontinuous tunnel.
10. Discussed a report on Ash Dieback.

**Purpose of Report:**              To advise Board members of the matters considered, and decisions taken, by the Executive Committee under delegated powers.

**Finance Report April - November 2012**

1. The Finance Officer presented a report on financial performance from April-November 2012. There were no exceptional items to report. Based on performance to date, with expenditure slightly below prediction and income slightly above, the end of year outturn would show a small surplus.

**Presentation of the Annual Budget**

2. The committee approved a proposed change to the format of the budget that will show more clearly what should be regarded as the core budget, which includes only the expenditure on the highest priority items. It would also help to identify how the Board can achieve a balanced core budget over the period of the Medium Term Financial Plan 2011-2015.
3. Core income has declined and is projected to decline further. If the core budget is pared back to include only essential and committed expenditure, the core income is more likely to be sufficient to allow a balanced core budget to be achieved for the remainder of the medium term plan (2011-15). Modest sums, if at all, would be required from the Budget Equalisation Reserve.
4. It was decided that the core budget should be restricted to:
  - Employment costs
  - Essential expenditure on offices and administration.
  - Members allowances
  - Essential services incl. Finance, personnel, legal and clerk to the Board.
  - A small working budget for each department.
5. The following criteria are to be used to allocate the Conservation Board's own funds:
  1. Fit with the AONB Management Plan
  2. Fit with the Business Plan priorities
  3. On-going commitments i.e. to match fund HLF grant
  4. Deemed to be a high short term priority e.g. HS2, Ash Dieback
  5. High likelihood of generating additional income
  6. Represents an unusual or rare opportunity.
6. The draft budget for 2013/14 using the new format is attached as Appendix 1.
7. The Executive Committee will be finalising the draft budget at its meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> March prior to presentation to the full Board on 27<sup>th</sup> March.



**Review of Financial Regulations**

8. The Committee consider and approved a review undertaken by the Finance Officer of the Board's Financial Regulations and Financial Instructions (September 2007).
9. Amendments to the Financial Regulations and Financial Instructions are required to reflect the new requirements contained in the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011.
10. The revised Regulations were largely unchanged with the exception of the addition of a new section 14, Payments and Authorisation Procedures. Standing Orders as to Contracts were also reviewed and no amendments were needed.

**Changing the Date of the AGM**

11. As instructed by the Board at its AGM on 17<sup>th</sup> October the Executive Committee considered the case for moving the AGM from October to June and concluded that there is a case for such a change.

This issue is covered more fully in Item 7.

**Review of Members' Allowances**

12. The review of member's allowances had been postponed earlier in the year. In the light of the possible change of AGM to June from October, the Executive Committee felt it was appropriate that such a review take place in early 2013 and a report presented to the Board in March 2013, so that it could be implemented, if so wished, in time for an AGM June 2013 – if approved by the Board

This item is covered more fully under Item 8

**Home Working**

13. As a consequence of changing business requirements a need had arisen to amend the Board's 'Home Working' Policy.
14. The Board's HR Advisor, Sally Charman guided the Committee through the Home Working guidelines and circumstances where it would be operationally beneficial and cost effective to employ staff to be based at home.
15. When the Board determines for business reasons, that a role is to be designated as home based, then the employee should be appointed on a home worker's agreement. The appropriate authorisation and relevant contractual documents must be in place before home-working arrangements commence.

### **Appointment of Box Woodland Project Officer**

16. The Chief Officer brought to the Committee's attention that Sarah Wright had been appointed to the post of Box Woodland Project Officer for a period of two and half years on a part time basis with effect from 7<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

### **Proposal for Special Project Study Leave**

17. The Committee approved a proposal to enable staff, with more than 5 years service, to undertake a project and take up to 10 days special study leave which could be taken over a 12 month period. A budget of £500 per approved project would also be available. The outcome, to be approved in advance, must be a piece of work of value to the Board and which also provides opportunities for personal and professional development.

### **Report on High Speed**

18. The Committee considered a report on the various HS2 related activity. In particular it considered the option of longer tunnel but with a gap. It was felt the Board should, under some circumstances, accept the option of a long tunnel but with a gap providing there was no longer any realistic possibility of a continuous tunnel and the location of a gap minimised the environmental impact. This option had to be considered as it is believed that HS2 might seriously consider a longer tunnel than currently proposed, but because of cost and time constraints is unlikely to consider a continuous full length tunnel without a gap. A cause of some local contention has been the possible location of the gap.
19. The Committee subsequently produced a statement which is attached as Appendix 1.

### **Ash Dieback**

20. The Chief Officer provided the Committee with the latest information on the outbreak of Ash dieback.
21. The most recent survey had shown Ash dieback had now been found at over 250 sites throughout the UK. To date there were no confirmed outbreaks in the Chilterns, but there was one near Marlow and could be expected to occur in the Chilterns in 2013. The challenge was to develop a strategy to;
1. Encourage monitoring and reporting of outbreaks.
  2. Record Ash as it is found now and identify important trees
  3. To record the heritage of ash
  4. Develop woodland regeneration initiatives

5. To, in the fullness of time, identify disease resistant stock to be used for future regeneration programmes.

**Recommendation**

1. **To note the matters discussed by the Executive Committee and the decision made under delegated authority.**

## Item 7 Proposed Change of Date of AGM

**Author** Steve Rodrick Chief Officer

**Summary:** The Executive Committee recommends the Board consider changing the date of the AGM from October to June with effect from June 2013.

**Purpose of Report:** To advise the Board of the recommendation of the Executive Committee

### Background

1. As instructed by the full Board at its AGM, the Executive Committee has considered the case for changing the date of the AGM from October to June. (Appendix1).
2. The Committee decided there was a case for making such a change with effect from June 2013. There were no significant long term disadvantages.
3. One issue which requires consideration is the term of appointment for 5 members appointed by the Secretary of State which ends in March 2014. Three of those (Mike Fox, Bettina Kirkham and John Willson) will stand down from the Board as they will have served three full terms and are not eligible to be re-appointed. It means they could not serve a full year as an office holder or member of a committee. Two others, Heather Barrett-Mold and Ray Payne could not be certain of remaining a member of the Board until June 2014, but it is highly likely they would be offered a further term.

Name	End of appointment	No. of terms (current)
John Willson	March 2014	3
Bettina Kirkham	March 2014	3
Heather Barrett-Mold	March 2014	2
Helen Tuffs	March 2013	1
Simon Mortimer	December 2014	3
Mike Fox	March 2014	3
Ray Payne	March 2014	1

4. The Board's Standing Orders do not prevent someone being appointed as chairman or vice chairman or to the Executive or Planning Committees in such circumstances if they cease to be a member of the Board during the year.(Appendix 2)

5. In practice this would mean if one of those members due to stand down, or who may be re-appointed in March 2014, who was appointed to be chairman or vice chairman would be replaced at the Board meeting in March 2014. Their replacement would serve in that capacity only until the AGM in June of that year. In practice, unless there is an EGM, there would only be one meeting of the Executive Committee, Planning Committee and no meetings of the full Board. The June meeting of the Board would be preceded by an AGM when a new chairman would be elected.

### **Recommendation**

1. **The Board changes the date of its next AGM from October to June 2013 and thereafter holds its AGM in June.**

**Appendix 1**

**Paper considered and approved by the Executive Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2012**

**Item 9**                      **Changing the Date of the AGM and Review of Members' Allowances**

**Author:**                      Steve Rodrick              Chief Officer

**Summary:**                      At its AGM in October 2012 the Board instructed that the Executive Committee to consider the case for moving the AGM from October to June. This report concludes there is a case for such a change.

Along with a possible shift of AGM to June it is suggested that the postponed review of members' allowance be commuted in time for an AGM in June

**Purpose of Report**              To assist members consider the case for changing the AGM to June and whether to instruct a review of members' allowances.

**Background**

1.     The Board's AGM is currently held in October as the Board was launched in December 2004 with the first full meeting in January 2005. It meant that by October, the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the year, the standing orders required the Board to appoint a chairman etc. for the year ahead. Until relatively recently all secretary of state appointed members' terms of appointment ran until December. However that has now been changed by Defra and their terms now begin on 1<sup>st</sup> April. With that change the sense in holding the AGM in October should be questioned.
2.     There is merit considering a change to June for the following reasons:
  - Members appointed by councils will join the Board in May/ June following election in May. By the end of June there should be no vacancies on the Board
  - Members appointed by the Secretary of State in April can seek election to committees without having to wait until October. The counter argument might be that it is better for new members to wait a few months before seeking election.
  - A problem with an AGM in October is that those members subject to appointment in April/May/June cannot, with

confidence seek election to a committee for a full year- they may only be able to serve until April - only 3 meetings into the annual cycle.

3. The Board's accounts need to approved by the full Board and submitted to the auditor by the end of June. An AGM is late June will still allow this to happen - but it would have to be the last week. Similarly it will be possible for the Board's annual review to be presented to the Board at its June meeting.
4. There are no obvious impediments to changing the AGM to June other than having a short year (Oct 2012- June 2013). The Board will need to appoint a chairman and members of committees at that meeting, but needs to be mindful that at least 3 secretary of state members will stand down on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 and thus could not serve for a full year to June 2014. The Board will need to decide if it is acceptable for a chairman or committee member to only serve for a maximum of 9 months. This is of particular relevance given the requirement that the composition of committees in terms of SoS/council/parish members reflects that of the full Board.

### **Members' Allowances**

5. The proposed review of allowances was postponed earlier this year. It is now proposed that such a review takes place in early 2013 and a report presented to the meetings in March 2013 of the Executive Committee and full Board, to take effect at the AGM if it is decided to hold it in June 2013.

### **Terms of Reference of the Review**

1. It is accepted that an allowance should continue to be paid for membership of the full Board, but at what rate?
2. Whether it is appropriate to pay allowances for membership of:
  - a) The Executive Committee
  - b) The Planning Committee
3. If so, at what rate?
4. To consider whether allowances should be dependent upon attendance or a performance measure.
6. The Review panel will consist of the Finance officer, HR advisor to the Board and an independent member. Suggestions will be submitted to the Executive Committee by mid January.
7. The cost is estimated to be approx. £2,000.

**Recommendations**

1. **The Executive Committee advises the Board to change the AGM from October to June with effect from June 2013.**
2. **Member's allowances are reviewed and a draft report to be submitted to the Executive Committee in March 2013.**
3. **The composition of the Review Panel is approved.**

**Appendix 2****Extract from Standing Orders Jan 2005****6. Appointment of Chairman and Deputy Chairman**

- 6.1 The Board shall, as its first item of business at its annual general meeting, elect one of its members to hold office as chairman of the Board. The chairman shall, unless he resigns his office or ceases to be a member of the Board, hold office until immediately after the election of the chairman at the next annual general meeting, such term not to exceed one year. A chairman shall, on ceasing to hold office, be eligible for re-election.
- 6.2 The Board at its annual general meeting shall elect one of its members to hold office as deputy chairman of the Board. The deputy chairman shall, unless he resigns his office or ceases to be a member of the Board, hold office until immediately after the election of the deputy chairman at the next annual general meeting, such term not to exceed one year. A deputy chairman shall, on ceasing to hold office, be eligible for re-election.



**Item 8                      Proposed Review of Members' Allowances**

**Author:**                      Steve Rodrick                      Chief Officer

**Summary:**                      In October 2011 the Board instructed a review of members' allowances to be undertaken for 2013-14. The Executive Committee (12.12.2012) recommends to the Board that it commission such a review of the rates for members' allowances to come into effect at the AGM in June 2013, if it resolves to change the date of the AGM.

The terms of reference would remain the same as previously approved - it would not assess whether allowances should be paid, but the rates offered.

The report of the review would be submitted in draft to the Executive Committee on 5<sup>th</sup> March and the final report to the Board on 24<sup>th</sup> March.

**Purpose of Report:**                      To seek a decision on whether to commission a review of the rates paid for members' allowances.

**Background**

1.        The Board approved the terms of reference and composition of a review panel in October 2011 and instructed that review should be undertaken for the 2013-14 financial year.
2.        In view of the possible change of AGM from October to June 2013 the Executive Committee felt it would be an appropriate time to review the allowances and implement any change, if decided, at the AGM in June 2013.

**Terms of Reference**

3.        These have previously been approved and the Board is asked to confirm them.
  1.        The role of the Review Panel will be to undertake a review of the members' allowances schemes on a five yearly cycle.
  2.        The panel will review allowances to ensure the allowances scheme is :
    1.        Adequately rewarding members for their effort and contribution.

2. Comparable with similar organisations.
3. Affordable.
4. Capable of being monitored and administered according to best practice.
5. Reflect the balance between service which receives a monetary reward and that which is regarded as a voluntary public service.
4. The review would only cover allowances and not expenses which are the same as for staff. In general terms they only cover travel and related costs.
5. It is accepted that an allowance should continue to be paid for membership of the full Board but the rates should reviewed including the special responsibility allowances for both the chairman and vice chairman.
6. It is proposed the panel does review whether it is appropriate to pay allowances for membership of the Executive and Planning Committees and, if so, at what rate.
7. The Board has already stated that it does not want allowances to be based on attendance.
8. The Panel will also review the existing policy of linking changes to Members' Allowances with any cost of living award given to staff

### **The Panel Membership**

9. As previously decided the Panel will consist of three members; the Finance Officer (Chris Smith): HR Advisor to the Board (Sally Charman) and an independent member. Philippa Batting, Chief Executive of Buckinghamshire Business First, has been approached and has agreed to serve as the independent member. The Board is asked to endorse her appointment.
10. The cost is estimated to be approx. £2,000.

### **Recommendations**

1. **To commission a review of allowances and that a draft report should be submitted to the Executive Committee on 5<sup>th</sup> March and subsequently the full Board on 27th March 2013.**
2. **To confirm the terms of reference and proposed membership of the Review Panel.**

- 3. Any changes to the rates should be implemented from the AGM in June 2013, (depending upon whether the Board resolves to change the date of the AGM).**
- 4. To note the expenditure of up to £2,000.**

**Item 9**                      **Report from the Planning Committee**

**Author:**                      Colin White - Planning Officer

**Summary:**                      The Planning Committee met on 27<sup>th</sup> November.  
The following items were discussed:

1.        Election of Chairman
2.        High Speed 2 update
3.        AONB Management Plan Review

**Purpose of Report:**              To bring to the attention of the Board the items considered by the Planning Committee.

**Election of Chairman**

1.        Bettina Kirkham was nominated and duly elected as Chairman of the Committee for the following year.

**High Speed 2 update**

2.        The Committee was informed about recent activity in connection with HS2 and particularly: feedback from a number of events which have taken place recently including the third round of Community Forums, the first Buckinghamshire Planning Forum meeting, a noise forum organised by 51M, the Board's meeting with HS2 Ltd about mitigation and the Buckinghamshire Mitigation and Compensation Panel. The Community Forums continue to be problematic in connection with the lack of dissemination of information prior to meetings. The Board's response on the Code of Construction Practice and tunnel issues were also discussed in some detail.

**AONB Management Plan Review**

3.        The Committee had received copies of relevant extracts from the current AONB Management Plan to enable a discussion about a number of suggested revisions to the issues, policies and actions for the Development chapter of the emerging Management Plan. A slide show was presented to highlight some other key issues. The possible boundary review was also discussed. The Committee approved the: retention of the existing issues, policies and actions (suitably brought up to date and modified where detailed) and proposed additional issues, policies and actions as detailed in the report given, noted the timetable for production of the AONB Management Plan 2014-19 and agreed to send Officers any additional comments or suggestions.

**Recommendation**

1.        **The Board notes the report from the Planning Committee.**

**Item 10**                    **Report on the need for a Publicity and Promotion Strategy**

**Author:**                    Claire Forrest                    Information Officer

**Summary:**                    New technology, contracting budgets and changes in the activities of some key partners mean it is a particularly appropriate moment for the Board to consider how it should be promoting itself and the AONB.

**Purposes of Report:**                    To advise the Board that a new Publicity and Promotion Strategy is needed.

To seek the involvement of Board members in a working group to prepare a new strategy

**Background**

1.     The Board has promoted itself and the AONB for many years through well-established means such as press releases to local, regional and national media and a Chilterns AONB website.
2.     The Board's strategic approach to communications has evolved over time as the importance of the internet has grown and the amount and breadth of its work has increased.
3.     The development of mobile technology and the huge growth in use of social media like Facebook and Twitter means that there is now a much broader range of platforms from which to broadcast messages.
4.     Public expectations of information provision have also changed hugely, with many audiences now expecting to be able to access comprehensive, up-to-date information wherever they are, often designed for mobile devices. This particularly applies to tourists and younger age groups.
5.     The Board is involved in an increasingly wide range of work, all of which needs to be promoted to a large number of audiences.
6.     The constraints imposed by budget cuts, coupled with the need to have a higher profile to help secure income, mean that the Board needs to promote itself and the AONB in an effective way that makes full use of its assets, such as the new AONB website, and all other relevant, free online resources.

7. The decline of tourism, conservation and visitor access work carried out by local authorities and regional tourist boards places greater emphasis on the Board's capacity to provide visitor information.
8. This current situation has created the need for the Board to have a comprehensive Publicity and Promotion Strategy, to take account of all the new platforms for publicity, the changing economic climate and the new audiences to be reached.

### **Elements to consider**

9. What are the audiences that the Board is trying to reach? Are there new audiences that we should be targeting and others which need less focus?
10. What core messages should be at the heart of a new strategy? Do these need to be adapted for different audiences?
11. The new AONB website, launched last year, has a full content management system which means that the Board can update any part of it and add new pages. There is no cost apart from staff time. Is the Board making the best use of the website and does it reflect the core messages we want to put out?
12. The strategy needs to consider all aspects of communications technology being used, such as smartphones, tablets, apps, QR codes, e-readers plus the communication channels that are being accessed via them like social media and blogs. How much of this technology should the Board use, how much emphasis should be put on keeping up with the latest developments?
13. The more traditional forms of communication, such as printed materials, still have their place and need to be included in the strategy. What aspects of our communication should still be in print and what audiences are these best suited to? What materials can be produced only in electronic form and which need to be available both online and in print?
14. Events for the public and for partner organisations and other stakeholders have played an important role in the Board's promotion work to date. The Board also regularly attends public events, such as county shows, to promote itself and the AONB. What emphasis should be put on events in the future? How does the Board get best value out of them?
15. The strategy should include consideration of fixed features that raise awareness of the AONB. These could be road signs (to replace the old brown signs) and/or more substantial gateway features on selected main roads entering the AONB.

16. An important thread running throughout the strategy will be income-generation – how can our promotion and publicity activities bring in funds for the Board.

### **Next steps**

17. With many elements to consider in putting together a Publicity and Promotion Strategy, it is suggested that a Board members workshop is organised. This would be very useful in developing the objectives of the strategy, the core messages to be communicated and the best ways of communicating them to all our audiences.

### **Recommendations**

1. **The Board agrees that a Publicity and Promotion Strategy is drawn up.**
2. **A Board member workshop is organised to develop the strategy.**

**Item 11                      Presentation on Box Woodland Project**

**Author:**                      Sarah Wright                      Box Woodland Project Officer

**Summary:**                      Sarah Wright has been appointed to the post of Box Woodland Project Officer for a period of two and half years on a part time basis (18 hours per week) with effect from 7th January.

Sarah will give a presentation to the Board of what the project will be doing.

**Purpose of Report:**                      To inform the Board of the successful recruitment of an officer to manage the Box Woodland Project.

**Introduction**

1.     *Box (Buxus sempervirens)* is a native species but has become very rare following centuries of clearance largely to create grassland. There are now only three surviving native woodlands in the UK of any size, the most impressive of which is considered to be Ellesborough and Kimble Warrens which lie wholly on the Chequers Estate near Wendover. However, it is believed there are many surviving fragments scattered across the Chilterns. As it is a species which has not been subject to rigorous field survey, records are incomplete.
2.     A primary objective of the project will be to engage volunteers in locating, surveying and recording any remaining Box woodlands and to promote appropriate management.
3.     To boost Box populations in the Chilterns, the project will establish two propagation centres and plant a demonstration area at a publicly accessible site.
4.     Box is also a species with unusual historic uses including musical instruments, printing blocks and nit combs for the Navy. Today it is perhaps best known in horticulture, particularly in relation to knot gardens. The project will explore and celebrate the historical and cultural associations of Box through a number of events.

**Appointment of a Project Officer**

5.     In late September the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded a grant of £79,400 towards the Chilterns Box Woodland Project. The largest element of expenditure is for the appointment of a part time officer for a period of 2.5 years. Interviews were held on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2012 and Sarah Wright was offered the post. Sarah began work on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2013.



6. Sarah lives in Bourne End near Marlow and will be primarily home based. This is largely a practical response to the lack of available space in the office - but Sarah will be expected to visit the Board's offices at least once a week and attend monthly staff meetings.
7. Sarah has worked for Natural England since 2007, initially as a land management advisor and latterly as a landscape advisor working on the National Character Area project. Prior to that, she worked for Bucks CC in their country parks and right of ways teams following her graduation from University College London with a B.Sc in Human Sciences. She also has an M.Sc in Countryside Management from Birkbeck College, London.
8. A technical Steering Group has been set up under the chairmanship of Dr. Heather Barrett-Mold. The group will provide guidance to the project and also consider the regional and national benefits of the work as it is believed there are no other initiatives in the country targeting the conservation of Box.

### **Recommendation**

1. **To note that this project has now begun following the appointment of Sarah Wright as the project officer.**

## Appendix 1

# Chilterns Box Wood Project

## Introduction

Box (*Buxus sempervirens*) woodland was once widespread in southern England, but due to centuries of clearance for agriculture is now rare in the UK, surviving as stable native stands in only three locations in the UK.

The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty has one of these three surviving Box dominated woodlands at Ellesborough and Kimble Warrens on the Chequers Estate near Wendover, Buckinghamshire. The box woodland forms part of a wider designated Site of Special Scientific Interest, which totals 68.9ha, and includes many archaeological features as well as a mosaic of habitats.

Box has been recorded at this location as early as 1787 (*Woodward*) while an extract from *Lyson's Magna Brit* -1813- states that "a tract of land on the Chiltern Hills extending from the Beacon Hill in Ellesborough across the parish of Little Kimble into that of Great Kimble, and certainly more than 100 acres is covered with Box Wood, which appears to be the natural growth of the soil".

Further remnants of box woodland occur across the Chilterns counties of Buckinghamshire (over 80 notable specie records within the AONB), Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire, though details of their extent, condition and history are little known. Due to its rarity, knowledge of the ecology and management of box woodland is poor and inconsistent between different agencies and land managers.

## The Project

This project will enhance the management, understanding and enjoyment of rare box woodlands in the Chilterns through four main elements:

- by identifying, recording and publicising all significant surviving box woodland in the Chilterns
- by raising awareness of the ecology of box woodland and its importance as part of the habitat mosaic associated with thin chalk soils
- by improving the management of box woodlands in the Chilterns, clarifying the relationship with other important habitats (such as chalk grassland), training woodland owners and managers and, where possible and appropriate, seeking to involve volunteers in managing and restoring existing sites

- by raising awareness of the cultural history of box woodlands and their surroundings, and making links to the uses of box wood, especially for making woodwind instruments

### **Aims of the Project**

1. To identify and record all significant surviving box woodland in the Chilterns and publicise this information.
2. To improve the management and understanding of the ecology of box woodlands in the Chilterns, drawing together professionals, site owners and volunteers.
3. To conserve and restore areas of box woodland in the Chilterns while identifying habitat requirements for extending box woodland where appropriate.
4. To enhance public understanding and enjoyment of box woodlands within the wider historic setting of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
5. To raise awareness of the historical uses and cultural significance of box wood.

### **Resources**

The Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded a grant of £79,400 towards the total cost of £90,000; £6,000 will be provided by the Chilterns Conservation Board. A partner is being sought to contribute the balance over the period January 2013 – June 2015.

A project officer, Sarah Wright, has been employed on an 18 hours per week contract.

A primary role of the project officer is to recruit train and supervise a team of volunteers who will undertake most of the survey work.

## Item 12 Report on Impacts of Wet Weather in 2012

**Authors:**

Cathy Rose	Activities and Learning Officer
Annette Venters	Access Officer
Allen Beechey	Chalk Streams Officer
Neil Jackson	Conservation & Landscape Officer
Kath Daly	Countryside Officer

**Summary:** According to Met Office figures, despite the drought conditions early in the year, 2012 was the second wettest year on record in the UK, and the wettest ever in England.

The unpredictable, extreme weather has had impacts across the Chilterns in many areas including groundwater levels and flow of chalk streams, crop production (arable and fruit), wildlife, site maintenance, access and recreation.

**Purpose of Report:** To inform members of the impact of the unusual weather in 2012 on the AONB.

### Background

1. 2012 was a year of exceptional weather beginning with a severe drought followed by the wettest summer in the last 100 years. October, November and December also had well above average rainfall, so much so that flooding may be an ongoing issue for some months.
2. The Met Office reported that there has been a high frequency of wet years since 2000, with four of the top five wettest years occurring since then. During 2012 south east and central England experienced rainfall that was 127% of the 1981-2010 average.
3. Long-term averages show an increase in annual rainfall of about 5% from 1961-1990 to 1981-2010, although the Met Office notes that there is always a great deal of variability in UK rainfall because the country's position on the western edge of Europe means its weather patterns are constantly changing.

### Impacts on Groundwater

4. The 2011/12 winter was the second consecutive dry winter in the Chilterns and one of the driest ever recorded. So little rain fell (60% of the long term average) that just 12.5% of average effective rainfall (the proportion of rainfall that becomes groundwater) reached the aquifer. As a consequence, the winter period, important for recharging the aquifer and maintaining flows in chalk streams, brought no recovery in

groundwater levels. Throughout the winter of 2011/12 groundwater continued to decline and reached the lowest ever recorded levels by March 2012.

5. In February 2012, Defra declared an 'Ecological Drought' for South East England and in April, seven water companies including Thames Water and Veolia Water Central (now Affinity Water) enforced temporary water use restrictions. No sooner had these restrictions been put in place, the rain began to fall. April and June proved to be the wettest of the summer months (the meteorological summer is April to September inclusive) providing 253% and 227% of average rainfall, respectively.
6. The heavy rainfall brought about an unusual, but not unprecedented, summer groundwater recharge. By comparison, other chalk catchments such as the Kennet and Lambourn as well as those in Hampshire, Wiltshire and Dorset, experienced a much more dramatic recovery. The Kennet, recovered from exceptionally low groundwater in March to exceptionally high groundwater by October.
7. Although the last two months of the meteorological summer were relatively dry, heavy rainfall returned. The first three months of winter provided 329mm of rain across the area, this represents 88% of average total winter rainfall. Because soils were wetter than normal a large proportion of the rain that fell in October, November and December was able to reach the aquifer and kick start recharge early (flows began to respond in some rivers as early as the end of October). Groundwater levels rose sharply towards the end of the year and are currently still rising. In the north of the catchment, groundwater levels are now above normal for the time of the year whilst in the South they are in the normal range.

### **Impacts on Rivers and their Wildlife**

8. The impact of the drought on chalk streams began as far back as July 2011. By March 2012, 60% of the total length of chalk streams in the AONB was dry and the Hughenden Stream and Hamble Brook dried up completely.
9. Groundwater levels were at their lowest ever in March but with groundwater levels recovering throughout the summer damage to chalk river ecosystems was less than expected.
10. Drying of long sections of rivers usually leads to severe damage to their ecology. In particular low flows in the lower reaches of rivers are adversely affected by less dilution of pollutants including sewage effluent.
11. River fly monitoring groups on the Misbourne and the Chess reported declining invertebrate populations and fish populations also suffered.

Many were lost as headwaters dried up and fish became stranded. Lower water levels led to loss of fish through increased predation, pollution and stress.

12. Even after high rainfall led to river flows recovering, the impacts of the drought are still evident. For example sections which are now flowing again are still largely devoid of life. It will take five to ten years of continuous flow for aquatic ecosystems to recover.
13. Anecdotal evidence from fishery owners along the R. Chess indicate that despite good flows, trout spawning has been poor. Along a two mile section of the river between Sarratt and Latimer just seven 'redds' (depressions in the gravel bed made by spawning hen trout) were recorded in January 2013.
14. The two periods of heavy rain have brought some localised flooding, mainly in urban areas such as Chesham and High Wycombe. There has been some flooding along river valleys although the impacts have been restricted to the immediate riparian zone. Heavy rainfall in December led to sewage surcharge incidents on many rivers in the area, particularly the R. Chess.

### **Impacts on Other Wildlife**

15. Unsettled and unpredictable weather made 2012 hugely challenging for wildlife. In general, birds and insects struggled, slugs and some plants did well, though fruit harvests suffered.
16. The wet April hit fruit harvests in the autumn as the spring rains washed away the blossom resulting in a very bad year for English apples, and autumn fruits and berries such as sloes and holly berries. The wet spring and summer were bad for insect pollinators (especially bees, butterflies and hoverflies) and even those flowers that were pollinated have struggled to set fruit in the on-going wet weather with a knock on effect for birds and animals that depends on these crucial food sources.
17. Most butterfly species showed year-on-year decreases compared to 2011, including Common Blue (down 50%), Speckled Wood (65% down), Red Admiral (down by 72%), all of the white butterflies declined, as did Holly Blue and Brimstone. Prolonged cold, wet weather delays butterflies emerging, reduces their life-span and hampers mating and egg-laying leading to reduced numbers in current and future generations. There is concern that the wet summer, combined with a poor spring, seems to have triggered population crashes and could put some already threatened species at risk.
18. However, Chalkhill blue had a fantastic year in some places - thousands were recorded at one site in the Radnage Valley for example. Other species which had a particularly good year included

Ringlets, Marbled Whites and the Skippers. These are likely to have benefitted from the lush growth of the plants on which their caterpillars feed.

19. Bee populations were hit hard - prolonged periods of rain through spring and summer meant that honey bees across the country were unable to forage during the peak flowering season, with bees at risk of starving to death. Knock on effects on production of honey and crops reliant on bee-pollination such as apples.
20. It has been a patchy breeding year for birds with many nests abandoned due to bad weather or food shortage, even in gardens. It was a mixed year for mammals, bats having an especially difficult time, and a poor breeding season for dormice. The young of most species are particularly affected by wet and cold conditions.
21. In contrast, it has been a fantastic year for orchids almost everywhere and a good year for slugs and snails.

### **Impacts on Farming / Food Production**

22. 2012 proved a very challenging year for farmers with implications both for the 2012 harvest and for 2013 cropping.
23. On arable farms, the poor summer has depressed cereal yields across the country. Weather conditions have directly affected growth but also increased fungal leaf diseases which depress yield and quality.
24. Nationally, winter wheat yields have declined by 14% and poor quality has meant that some harvest has been diverted to animal feed. Harvests varied across the country; Bryan Edgley has reported that Kensham Farms (Cadmore End near High Wycombe) managed to maintain average yields by increasing fungicide applications to combat diseases. Other members of the Chiltern Arable Group reported feed wheat yields dropping from 3.5 tonnes/acre to 2 tonnes/acre – a decrease of 43%.
25. Yields are not down across the board – oil seed rape saw an increase in both yield and area planted leading to a national increase of 25.5% in productivity against a 5 year average.
26. On livestock farms, the wet weather meant that more grass grew in the Chilterns but it also meant that conserving grass for hay and silage for use as winter feed was difficult.
27. Animal feed prices are based on wheat crops and determined from global production. Droughts across the globe have led to animal feed prices increasing. The UK harvest has not helped. Feed prices will particularly affect pig and poultry farms but also dairy herds.

28. Looking ahead to 2013, autumn planting of winter cereals (those crops that grow through the winter) has been severely affected. Soil conditions and continued rain has hampered access for heavy machinery. Nationally, winter wheat planting has been reduced by 12%, Kensham Farm has only seeded 70% of the area they expected. More spring cereals will have to be planted and as these have a lower yield, the 2013 cereal harvest will be lower even if conditions are good.
29. Bryan Edgley also says that increased numbers of slugs have so affected some areas of crops sown this autumn that they may well have to be re-sown in the spring. Generally spring sown crops provide better conditions for ground nesting birds and there is less leachate of fertilisers and treatments which otherwise have to endure the winter rainfall.
30. It has been widely reported that without modern harvesters (allowing fast harvest) and grain drying facilities, this year's harvest may have been a complete washout with crops rotting in the field. Kensham Farm had to dry all their grain, some grain going through the dryer 3 times. This adds to production costs but otherwise grain would have been discarded.
31. Interestingly, it has been estimated that if we still used 1950's farming methods, to feed today's population the area under production would have to increase from 38% to 82% of all land.

### **Impacts on Access**

32. Rights of Way officers from local authorities and The Chiltern Society report numerous flooded and waterlogged footpaths with many problems at pinch points such as kissing gates. In general the poorly draining clay soils mean these wet areas only dry slowly. Many have been continuously wet for several months
33. It appears that many rights of way, especially bridleways and farm tracks appear to have suffered even more than normal throughout the Chilterns. Remedial work to rights of way as a direct result of poor weather is patchy, partly due to restricted budgets.
34. Sections of Thames Path became flooded and inaccessible. Works scheduled to take place on Thames Path have been postponed

### **Impacts on visitor attractions**

35. Of the visitor attractions surveyed, most reported a decline in visitor numbers in 2012 compared to 2011. Chiltern Open Air Museum (30%) Hughenden Manor (10%) and West Wycombe Park (14%). Wendover Woods reported an 8% decrease. Dunstable Downs (NT) saw an



increase in visitor numbers (based on car numbers), but at a slower rate than in previous years.

36. Jim Foy (National Trust) issued the following caveat before blaming everything on the weather:
- Last year, 2011/12, was the best year the National Trust ever had for visitor numbers
  - The external economy has been tough
  - There was competition with other national events (Jubilee / Olympics)
37. Many contacts reported impacts on grounds maintenance of countryside sites across the Chilterns, such as increased growth rates of vegetation requiring management. Waterlogged ground presented difficulties in accessing areas where maintenance was required, meaning that either work wasn't done or was rescheduled (e.g. at Wendover Woods and Dunstable Downs) or was done, but significant reinstatement was required (e.g. at Ashridge).
38. Heavy and sudden downpours have scoured away parts of tracks (e.g. at Wendover Woods) and unsurfaced car parks leaving potholes that have required remedial work. Also, water logging has prevented some sites from using unsurfaced overflow meadow car parks (e.g. at Hughenden Manor) leading to difficulties in managing the visitors which did come.
39. While some organisations managed to deliver their activities programme, some events were cancelled, especially in the late spring and early summer mainly due to waterlogged sites. These included:
- Chiltern Hills Vintage Vehicle Rally, Weston Turville 20<sup>th</sup> May (waterlogging)
  - Prestwood Steam Rally 7<sup>th</sup> / 8<sup>th</sup> July (rain)
  - Cliveden Rocks 14<sup>th</sup> / 15<sup>th</sup> July (rain)
  - West Wycombe Village Fete (rain)
  - Hughenden Manor Apple Fair (no apples)
40. However, in some cases, where events were run, and the weather was good (or even drizzly), attendances were good e.g. The Forest Discovery Day at Wendover Woods and the Chilterns Countryside and Food Festival at Ashridge.

### **Conclusions**

41. Whilst 2012 was exceptional for both the early drought and subsequent wetness, it has followed a period of several years of variable weather. It is perhaps the uncertainty which is hardest to manage rather than the weather itself.

## 42. Some conclusions:

1. Whilst there were many negative impacts of the high rainfall of 2012, not all impacts were negative and some were not as severe as might have been anticipated.
2. Memories for weather are short – it is important not to lose sight of the serious concerns about drought in the first part of 2012, and that the underlying issues around over-abstraction remain.
3. It is inevitable that some events organisers will become more conservative in future and more wet weather provision needs to be made.
4. Most forms of farming will become more difficult and potentially expensive with lower yields.

**Recommendation**

1. **To note the report and advise on any other impacts, especially those which should influence the review of the AONB Management Plan and the Board's own work programme.**

## Item 13 Report on High Speed 2

**Author:** Steve Rodrick Chief Officer

**Summary:** Recent activity includes a recent round of community forum meetings; special bilateral meetings; Government announcement on safeguarded land; consultation on compensation; and the Judicial Review hearings.

The Board needs to decide whether or not to support an option for a longer bored tunnel with a gap of 500 metres to satisfy EU safety guidance.

There are significant cost and environmental benefits of reducing the design speed which the Board should press for.

**Purposes of Report:**

1. To consider the tunnel with a gap statement
2. To advise the Board to consider pressing for a reduced design speed.

### Summary of Recent Activity

1. The proposal for High Speed 2 continues to provide a significant workload and diversion from other aspects of the Board's work. Despite the Government announcement in January 2012 of its intention to proceed to the Hybrid Bill stage (or perhaps because of it), local anger has not abated nor has the national campaign to stop the railway subsided.
2. The weakness of the case for the railway has meant there is considerable activity in challenging all aspects of the proposal. This includes the failure to take into account adequately all environmental impacts. As previously reported the methodology used to value this impact did not give any value to the AONB designation. Despite raising this issue directly with Justine Greening (then Secretary of State for Transport) and in writing to Caroline Spelman (the Secretary of State for DEFRA) and Richard Benyon (lead minister for AONBs, no consideration has been given to applying the National Ecosystem Assessment methodology.
3. This remains an issue the Board must raise with a number of Government departments and Natural England. It was discussed with Jim Smyllie, a director of Natural England on 4<sup>th</sup> December.
4. There has been a heavy schedule of meetings including a round of HS2 Community forums; a pan Chilterns forum organised by the Board; a meeting to discuss design and mitigation with HS2; a workshop on

the Code of Construction Practice led by Ray Payne; a workshop to consider noise. These are in addition to the county council organised Bucks Compensation and Mitigation Panel meetings, which bring together representatives from all the local community fora.

5. After a long stand off the Buckinghamshire local authorities have agreed to participate in a Planning Forum for the county co-organised with HS2 Ltd. The Board is a member of this forum together with all the local authorities in Bucks and those affected in Herts (Ian Reay represented Herts at the first meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> November). HS2 Ltd, despite stating from the outset that the Board would be involved attempted to sideline the Board prior to the meeting, but this was rejected by the local authorities which reiterated their desire for the Board to be involved. HS2 Ltd tried claiming the Board should not be a member as it did not have any relevant planning or highway powers.
6. A meeting was held with HS2 Ltd to specifically discuss design and mitigation options for the section from Mantles Wood near Hyde Heath to Wendover. The only two options to mitigate noise are fences and earth bunds. To be effective noise fences would have to be up to 8 metres high to screen both wheels and pantographs, which are the main sources of noise. They would be intrusive, ugly and largely ineffective for sections on embankments and viaducts. The alternative is use of spoil to create earth bunds alongside the track. In most, but not all, locations this would be an artificial and ugly feature which would require significant volumes of spoil and large areas of land to make it look anywhere natural. HS2 Ltd favour this approach because it is both low cost and will help them dispose of the spoil with minimum transport costs.
7. The meeting once again voiced its desire for a bored tunnel to avoid these problems. If that wasn't possible it wished the track to be lowered so that cuttings would be deeper.

### **Tunnel Options**

8. The Board has already issued a position statement on mitigation based on a preference for a full-length bored tunnel. A lower preference which may be acceptable if the full length tunnel was finally ruled out is a tunnel with a gap. Based on EU guidance it is likely a gap of 500 metres would be required no more than 20 kilometres from a tunnel portal. Currently no safety study has been commissioned so its requirement is not confirmed.
9. A local group, The Chiltern ridges Action Group (CRAG), aided by Ray Payne, have identified a design with gaps at Durham Farm in Wendover Dene or Mantles Wood (an ancient woodland) near Hyde Heath. HS2 Ltd commissioned Atkins to assess these options and it published its response at the end of 2012. It concluded that basic designs were viable but would cost more. A comparison of costs with

the existing design was rendered near impossible by a decision by HS2 Ltd to change the specification for all tunnels which has increased the basic costs. It calculated the difference in cost between the current proposal and a longer tunnel with a gap at approx. £400 million.

10. It is proposed that the Board adds to its earlier statement on mitigation by re-iterating that the best option is a full length bored tunnel without surface intervention (other than vents) but, if that is not deemed realistic for political, financial, technical or legal reasons, then a tunnel with a 500 metre gap with appropriate design and landscaping, would be acceptable.
11. As there is still the possibility of significant delay due to legal challenges and subsequent review of the design and precise alignment, the option of a full-length bored tunnel should not be discounted entirely, yet.
12. The Executive Committee issued a provisional statement (Appendix 1) which the full Board is asked to endorse.
13. The Chief Officer has prepared an estimate of the additional savings which might be secured if a longer tunnel was used instead. Coincidentally this suggested a saving to society (as opposed to the government) of approx. £400 million. This is considered to be a conservative figure.
14. A difficulty has been in persuading the government to consider the costs to society of its proposal rather than just the direct cost to the Government of HS2, despite partly basing its own business case on what it claims are wider economic benefits. It has not been prepared to incorporate balancing wider economic dis-benefits or the value of the negative impacts on the environment or affected communities. If it did so it is likely that the benefits to society of a tunnel would outweigh the costs.

### **Design Speed**

15. HS2 Ltd was initially instructed in 2009 by Lord Adonis, then Secretary of State for Transport, to design the railway to operate at speeds of up to 400 kph (250 mph), making it the fastest scheduled service in the world. Currently there is no proven technology for both trains and infrastructure to operate such a service at the speed and frequencies planned (18 per hour).
16. The HS2 Ltd business plan assumes an operating and design speed of up to 360 kph (225 mph), but with an aspiration to operate at up to 400 kph.
17. The EU definitions of high speed (which includes 225 kph/140 mph) include a provision for lower operating speeds due to topographical

reasons. However HS2 are trying to select a route alignment and design which does not require a lower speed for such reasons, even in tunnels. This has resulted in more expensive tunnels which are wide and take longer to construct.

18. Another consequence of such a high design speed is a lack of flexibility over alignment (fast speeds require straight lines). There would be a benefit in terms of alignment of the route and considerable cost saving if the design speed was reduced to 288 kph (180 mph). One advantage to the Chilterns would be that the relative cost of a longer, and narrower tunnel, would be reduced dramatically - possibly by hundreds of millions of pounds.
19. The Board has asked both HS2 Ltd and the Dept for Transport to consider adopting a lower design speed but it has been declined on the basis that it would undermine the business plan (slower speed means, in theory, less time will be saved by travellers, the total of value of which will diminish). So sensitive is the Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) to the value of time saved that this is significantly lower, according to HS2 Ltd itself, it would render the project uneconomic. However it seems, of late, that politicians in favour of HS2 realising the weakness of the business case, have argued that the project justification should not rest entirely on the BCR.
20. In view of the positive effect on the cost comparison between a longer tunnel and the current design the Board should argue once again that a lower design speed should be adopted for the entire length as it passes through the Chilterns.

### **Recommendations**

1. **The Board endorses the statement prepared on the possibility of a longer tunnel including the option of a tunnel with a gap.**
2. **The Board formally writes to the Department for Transport requesting that it instructs HS2 Ltd to adopt a lower design speed for the railway as it passes through the Chilterns.**

## **Item 14**                      **Progress Report on AONB Management Plan Review**

**Author:**                      Steve Rodrick                      Chief Officer  
    Colin White                      Planning Officer  
    Kath Daly                      Countryside officer

**Summary:**                      The review of the AONB Management Plan has started; various discussions have taken place and are planned; and the consultation programme is being developed.

**Purpose of Report:**                      To update Members on progress of reviewing the AONB Management Plan.

### **Background**

1.     Members will be aware that the review of the AONB Management Plan has commenced and since August 2012 broad ranging discussions have been taking place both within the Board and with external partners.
2.     The review has been discussed at the Board, Executive and Planning Committee meetings. In addition, most task and working groups (land management, recreation and access and historic environment), forums (chalk streams, commons, planning and the annual forum) and the state of the environment steering group have also recently focused on the review. A Members' workshop was held in early November. Discussions will continue to take place in the coming weeks with other groups, particularly those with farming and forestry interests.
3.     Natural England and the local planning authorities within the Chilterns have all been given notice of the Board's intention to review the Management Plan.
4.     The possible AONB boundary review has been raised at most of the meetings that have taken place thus far. It is considered that, due to lack of resources at Natural England and that body's lack of commitment to any other boundary work apart from two ongoing reviews, this will not have a major influence over the Management Plan review in the short term. However, work is being done on the essential merits of possible extension areas and this will feed into the Management Plan review at a later stage.
5.     One of the current key pieces of work is the preparation of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). An initial assessment suggests that this will be very similar in scope and nature to the SEA for the existing Plan. Once properly scoped this will be the subject of a 6 week public consultation period. It is likely that the consultation will be undertaken

primarily in an electronic format to reduce costs. Further consultation events will also be undertaken in a similar format with significant use of social media to promote consultation events. Officers are liaising with colleagues in other AONBs to keep up to date with similar processes being used elsewhere.

6. Between now and September 2013, when the full draft plan will be issued for public consultation, views will be sought on the broad issues and policies. It is hoped that most issues will be captured as part of these preliminary discussions rather than relying solely on the final stages of public consultation. Clearly, there is likely to be greater involvement from members of the general public at later stages.
7. The likely programme for production of the Management Plan is detailed in the table shown below.

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Timetable</b>
In-house review	June to December 2012
Liaison with partners	Ongoing
Preparation of a draft Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping Report	January to March 2013
Formal draft SEA Scoping Report issued for consultation	May to June 2013 for 6 weeks
Review of SEA consultation feedback	June to July 2013
Preparation of draft Management Plan and draft Environmental Statement and screen for likely effects of the Plan on Natura 2000 sites (Habitats Regulations Assessment)	By September 2013
Consultation on draft Management Plan and draft Environmental Statement	From 20 <sup>th</sup> September to 13 <sup>th</sup> December 2013 for 12 weeks
Review of consultation feedback and report to Board	By end February 2014
Final approval by the Board	March 2014
Publish the reviewed Management Plan	April 2014

8. Members are asked to maintain the dialogue that has commenced and to continue to keep officers informed about key issues and principles that ought to be considered as part of the Review.

### **Recommendations**

1. **The Board notes the current position in connection with the AONB Management Plan Review.**
2. **The Board continues to inform officers about key issues and principles to incorporate into the Review.**