



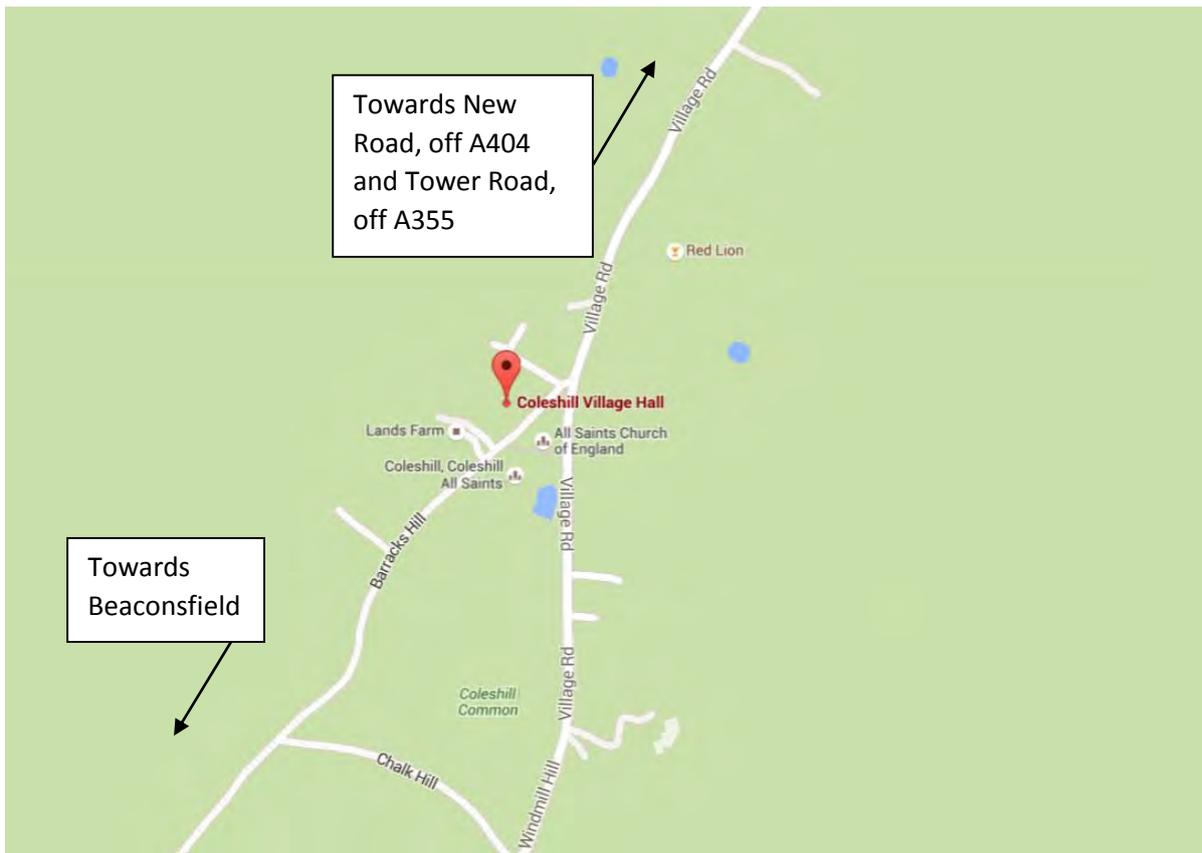
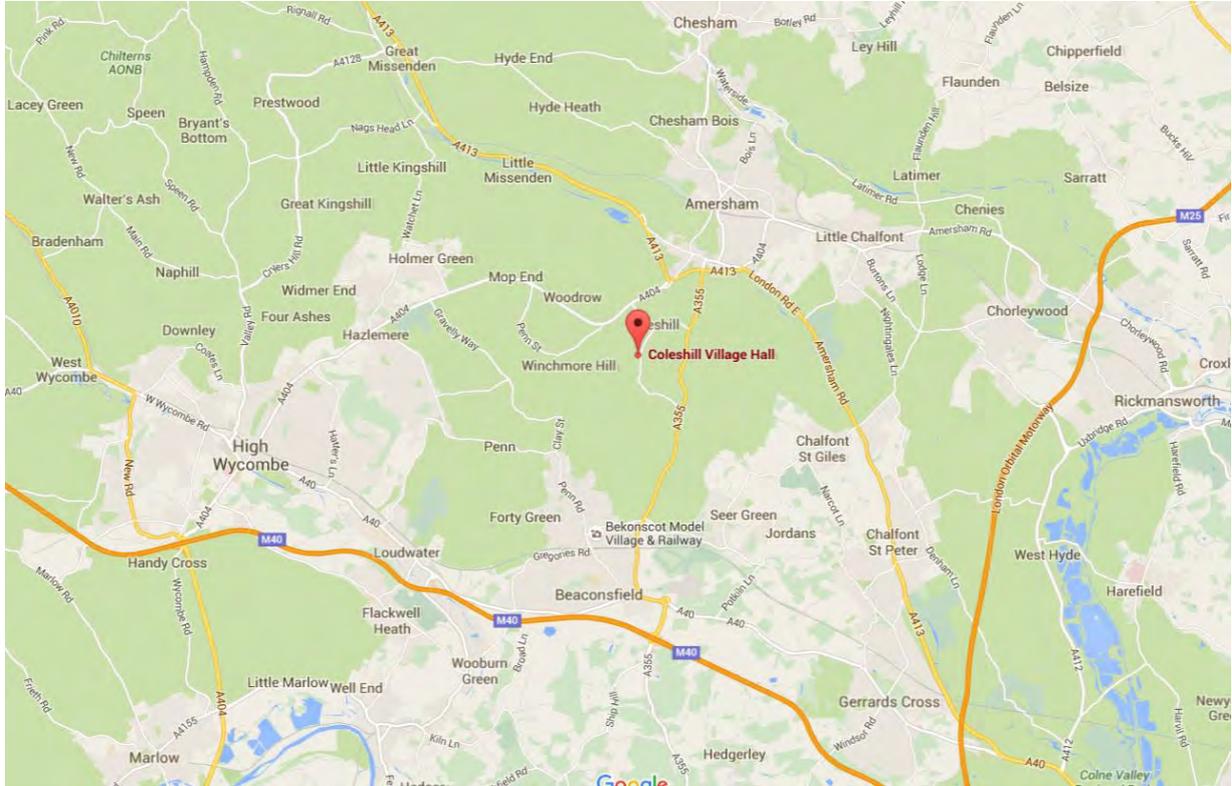
Board Meeting

**10.00am 24th March 2016
Coleshill Village Hall**

Agenda

1. Apologies
 2. Welcome and Introduction to new members
 3. Declarations of Interest
 4. Minutes of Previous Meeting
 5. Matters Arising
 6. Public Question Time
 7. Review Paper: Highlights, Report from Executive Committee, Report from Planning Committee, Communications & Engagement Report
 8. Budget 2016-17
 9. Appointment of External Auditors
 10. HS2 Update
 11. Board Allowances
 12. Any other business
- Lunch

Coleshill Village Hall
Barrack Hill
Amersham
Bucks HP7 0LN





MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILTERN CONSERVATION BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY 28th JANUARY 2016 AT RADNAGE VILLAGE HALL, RADNAGE COMMON ROAD, RADNAGE HP14 4DD COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.30 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

Member	Appointing Body
Appointed by Local Authorities	
Cllr David Barnard	North Herts District Council,
Cllr Jacqueline Burnett	Luton Borough Council
Cllr. David Collins	Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr Ken Janes,	Central Bedfordshire Council
Cllr Heather Kenison	Three Rivers District Council
Cllr Hugh McCarthy	Wycombe District Council
Cllr Ian Reay	Hertfordshire County Council- Chairman
Cllr Nick Rose	Chiltern District Council
Cllr Alan Walters M.B.E.	South Buckinghamshire District Council

Appointed by the Secretary of State	
Dr Heather Barrett-Mold	Secretary of State
Alison Doggett	Secretary of State
Gill Gowing	Secretary of State
Helen Tuffs	Secretary of State- Vice-Chair
Ian Waller	Secretary of State
Elizabeth Wilson	Secretary of State

Elected by Parish Councils	
Cllr Susan Biggs	Oxfordshire
Cllr Simon Deacon	Hertfordshire
Cllr John Griffin	Oxfordshire
Cllr Tony Penn	Buckinghamshire

Officers	
Kath Daly	CCB Countryside Officer
Deirdre Hansen	Clerk to the Board
Sue Holden	CCB Chief Officer
Chris Smith	CCB Finance Officer
Donna Webb	CCB Administration Officer

15/16.32. Item 1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Bill Bendyshe-Brown Buckinghamshire County Council, Cllr. Lynn Lloyd South Oxfordshire District Council, Cllr David Nimmo-Smith Oxfordshire County Council, Ray Payne Secretary of State, Cllr Michael Stonnell Bedfordshire Parish Councils

15/16.33. Item 2 Introduction of new members.

The Chairman welcomed the new members to the Board and asked them to introduce themselves.

15/16.34. Item 3 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

15/16.35. Item 4. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held 8th October 2015 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

15/16.36. Item 5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising not on the agenda.

15/16.37 Item 6. Public Question time

No public present.

15/16.38. Item 7. Review Paper Highlights:**Report from the Executive Committee, Report from the Planning Committee and Communications report.**

The Chief Officer brought a different approach in reporting to the Board and asked for feedback from the members. The new format gives a summary and will provide news. She had the following updates not included in the report presented with the agenda:

1. The Hillforts Project-the Beacons of the Past- had been successful in its Development Phase bid for Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF). Alison Doggett, Helen Tuffs and the Countryside Officer were thanked for their hard work in making this happen.
2. DEFRA Grant. The DEFRA grant for the next 4 years has been confirmed. It has not been reduced, but is dependent on contributions from the Local Authorities. Thanks were expressed to Rory Stewart MP, the National Association of AONB's and others, who have worked hard for this.
3. Gill Gowing reported that she is working with the Chiltern Society on the Design Awards, the papers are due to go out soon.

1. The Board NOTED the papers and the decisions made under delegated authority.**15/16.39. Item 8. Hillforts**

The Countryside Officer gave a verbal update on the 1st stage success of the HLF grant of up to £52,000. This is the application relating to the outline of the project and the anticipated needs. It will allow for the employment of a Development Officer and some consultancy work. There is a 2-year period to submit the stage 2 application. It is anticipated that this application will be in the region of £700,000. The project itself aims to engage and inspire a large range of people about Iron Age Hillforts in the Chilterns.

The Countryside Officer and the team were congratulated on their hard work and success. The Board was reminded that the late Shirley Judges, as Board Member, had been the initial driving force behind this project. The Countryside Officer also thanked the Activities and Learning Officer for her contributions to the project.

1.The Board NOTED the update**15/16.40. Item 9. Landscape Partnership Proposal**

The Countryside Officer gave a brief outline of the opportunities of the HLF- Landscape Partnership Programme. The CCB has not tapped into this funding before.

Each scheme is delivered by a partnership made of different partners with an interest in an area of countryside of distinctive landscape character that is recognised and valued by local people.

Community engagement would be essential. Officers from the Board had met with the HLF, who acknowledge that Conservation Boards are already a partnership in itself.

The Countryside Officer broadly described the type of projects the CCB could be looking at. The HLF would only provide 75% of the required funding, so partners would need to contribute match-funding. The work load and the core costs were discussed, acknowledging that this is an important opportunity for the AONB.

1. The Board AGREED to investigate this opportunity.

15/16.41 item 10. HS2 update

The Countryside Officer informed the Board of the recent HS2 activity and the next steps. The Select Committee had sent the parties away to reach agreement. A conference call with HS2 had been held 27/01/16. The CCB has given HS2 a list of wishes. It was noted that to date virtually none of the “asks” have been agreed.

Cllr Nick Rose gave a brief update on his attendance at the SC last week.

The Countryside Officer was thanked for her work.

1. The Board NOTED the current position on HS2.

15/16.42 item 11 Update on Electrification Great Western Main line

Gill Gowing reported that she and the Planning Officer had attended a recent meeting with Network Rail. Network Rail had apologised for their omissions, not having given due regard to the procedures and the landscape. Network Rail had also failed to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment on the route. They are now employing design consultants. The CCB is intending to give input to the brief to Network Rail on Landscape Design.

Even if retro-fit will not occur in this instance, the work has been worthwhile for future electrifications in the Chilterns.

Questions were raised about the lack of response from the minister. The CCB had sent correspondence to the minister and the rail regulator.

The Chairman commended the Planning Officer and Gill Gowing for their excellent work on this matter.

1.The Board NOTED the report from the Planning Officer.

15/16.43 item 12 Business Plan and Action Plan 2016-17

The Chief Officer shared feedback she had received from her meetings with Local Authorities and the AONB network and gave some background information to her presentation of the Business Plan 2016-17. The CCB has strategic, capacity, capability and financial challenges ahead.

She presented strategic priorities for 2016-17 and an action plan. The budget shows a deficit for 2016-17, to be funded from reserves, which cannot be sustained in the long term. It is vital to create a sustainable future. It was noted that the reserves need to create impact, sustainability and return.

Members discussed the presentation, provided suggestions, but queried the number of actions.

The Chief Officer recommended a “change of culture”.

The DEFRA grant still needs to be accepted, which the CCB will do, and the size of Local Authority grants for 2016-17 is not known yet.

The Chairman congratulated the Chief Officer on her excellent presentation.

1. The Board APPROVED the Draft Business Plan and budget for 2016-17.

15/16.44 item 13 Key Dates**Board and Committee meetings 2016:**

Date	Time	Meeting	Location
24 th February	10.30 am	Executive Committee	CCB office
9 th March	10.00 am	Planning Committee	CCB office
24 th March	10.00 am	Board Meeting	TBC
11 th May	9 am-3pm	Planning Committee	CCB office
25 th May	10.30 am	Executive Committee	CCB office
23 rd June	10.00 am	AGM and Board meeting	TBC
8 th September	10.30 am	Executive Committee	CCB office
14 th September	10.00 am	Planning Committee	CCB office
13 th October	10.00 am	Board meeting	TBC
30 th November	10.00 am	Executive Committee	CCB office
8 th December	10.30 am	Executive Committee	CCB office

Other meetings and events planned to date:

Date	Time	Meeting/Event	Location
30th January	10am-4pm	Orchard tree pruning	Bradenham
13th-14th February	9.30am – 4pm	Hedge-laying course	Britwell Hill
9 th March	10 am-1pm	Developing community partnerships on commons	Booker nr. High Wycombe
June		Design Awards ceremony	tbc
5 th -7 th July	All day	NAAONB Landscapes for Life conference	Welsh Marshes
6 th July	10am -4pm	Chalk Streams forum	

15/16.44 Item 14 Any other Business

1. The Chief Officer asked members for their thoughts at the next meeting on her consideration to review the Board allowances. She proposes to review the Board members' allowances due to:
 - a. The anticipated 2016-17 deficit
 - b. The opportunity to streamline meetings
 - c. The CCB paying considerably higher allowances than other AONBs
2. The Chairman mentioned that there will be a new vacancy to the Board at the end of March, Dr Heather Barrett-Mold's appointment comes to an end. There is currently a Secretary of State vacancy. Following a recruitment process, names have been put forward to the Secretary of State, who will make the final choice for filling the two vacancies.

The meeting closed 12.35

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

Item 7: BOARD REVIEW MARCH 2016

1. Highlights

As reported verbally at the last meeting, the Board has been awarded £50,200 by the Heritage Lottery Fund as initial support to develop the Beacons of the Past – Hillforts in the Chilterns Landscape Project. Recruitment for a Project Development Officer (12 month, full-time post) is underway.

The Board has submitted an Expression of Interest to the Chilterns Leader programme for a 'Chilterns walking festival and destination development' project. This is for a 3-year £35,000 programme, encompassing 6 walking festival events and accompanying destination development and PR/social media programme to raise the profile of the Chilterns.

We held our first workshop with partners on the proposed Landscape Partnership Project which was extremely positive and constructive. A huge number and wide range of project ideas emerged with strong support for the overall purpose and aims of the project. We are still planning to submit a Phase 1 application to the Heritage Lottery Fund in May.

Also reported verbally at the January meeting, AONBs have received confirmation of the four year grant settlement from DEFRA and we have completed the necessary paperwork to accept this offer. Board Members will be interested to see the following from our Minister, Rory Stewart, along with some very positive words about the value of protected landscapes:

“Our financial commitment to AONBs throughout the Spending Review period also provides the financial stability we believe AONBs need to allow you to investigate and capitalise on new opportunities for income generation. I know this is an area that AONBs have individually and collectively been investigating and welcome your continued efforts to find innovative new sources of commercial and philanthropic funding to supplement the grant you receive from Government, which will allow you to continue to improve delivery of your statutory purposes.”

2. REPORT FROM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, 24th February 2016

The Committee considered current financial performance in 2015-16 and considered and recommends to the Board a draft budget for 2016-17. The Committee also confirmed the existing Treasury Management Strategy and dealt with a technical issue associated with the staff medical insurance scheme.

The Committee considered a number of changes to HR Policies and it delegated decision-making authority to the HR Panel for such changes. It also agreed that the

pay scales would not be increased in 2016-17 but that the HR Panel, would as normal, review individual salaries in May.

3. REPORT FROM PLANNING COMMITTEE, 9th March 2016

The Planning Committee was updated on the Goring Gap gantries campaign, with an apology issued by Network Rail to the community, further information from Network Rail on planned re-design work and a public consultation, CCB/North Wessex Downs AONB correspondence with a minister, the issue raised in the House of Commons, and items in the national and local media.

An update on the chargeable pre-application advice service heard that five pieces of paid advice have been undertaken so far, and that the advice appears to be bearing fruit in the first scheme to reach planning application stage with some of CCB's key points addressed.

The Committee heard that the AONB is facing pressures to accommodate housing and infrastructure at a level unprecedented in recent times. The Board is engaging with planning authorities in Buckinghamshire to help shape Local Plan proposals for how to distribute the housing (up to 50,000 homes for 2013-2033 in the draft Bucks Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment), and on work to develop a possible model policy for the AONB that could be incorporated into all the new emerging local plans.

The Committee approved the 9 responses that had been sent on emerging local plans and 2 on Government consultations (fracking and changes to the National Planning Policy Framework) and 13 representations on planning applications, ranging from several major housing schemes, to golf course regrading and a large traveller site extension.

4. REPORT ON COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

The popularity of the Chiltern Double Fifty celebration beer meant the Chiltern Brewery made it available again during February and it was sold through their shop and to local pubs. In total 13,800 pints of the beer have been sold since it was launched, and the Board and the Chiltern Society will each be receiving a £350 donation from sales.

A BBC Inside Out programme on the plight of England's chalk rivers was broadcast on February 15th, featuring an interview with Allen Beechey on the impacts of abstraction on Chilterns' chalk streams. Lucy Murfett did interviews with BBC Radio Oxford and BBC Radio Berks in January about the Network Rail gantries near Goring. Cathy Rose did an interview with BBC Radio Oxford on 19th February about red kites.

The hedge-laying and orchard pruning courses in January and February were heavily promoted, resulting in sold-out courses and a second pruning course arranged for March.

7. Recommendations are being made to reduce board allowances.
8. A number of other expenditure lines have been reduced, including travel, office costs, IT, finance, personnel costs, the commons network, local nature partnerships, HS2 and special projects. Some other costs are no longer needed, such as contributions to completed projects.
9. Additional provision has been included of £18,000 for a development fund to cover potential consultancy support required for activities ranging from HR and IT to fundraising and project development.

Project Activity

10. Three projects are included in the budget at this stage – the continuing Chalk Streams Project, the development phase of the Hillforts Project and support for the Chilterns Woodlands Project.
11. Contributions have been reduced to the Chalk Streams Project and Chiltern Woodlands project given the reserves in both projects.

Overall Position

12. Overall the budget shows a deficit of £60,279 although it is planned to take steps to reduce this as the year progresses. Detailed figures are attached.
13. As things stand that deficit would be met from reserves, leaving a balance of £471,605.

Recommendation:

1. **To consider and adopt the budget for 2016-17 subject to final notification of local authority contributions and in year initiatives to reduce the deficit.**

Chilterns Conservation Board						
Budget 2016-17						
	2014-15		2015-16	2015-16		2016-17
	Actual		Budget	Projected		Budget
	£		£	£		£
Income						
Public Sector						
Defra	412,868		412,868	412,868		419,969 1.7% increase
Local Authorities	111,791		103,905	107,800		94,864 12% reduction
Town & Parish Councils	925		2,000	1,000		1,000
	525,584		518,773	521,668		515,833
External income						
Chalk Streams EA	5,000		10,000	10,000		- to major project
Chalk Streams Water Co's	6,600		6,600	6,600		- to major project
Chiltern Society	3,000					
	14,600		16,600	16,600		-
Earned income						
Investment income	5,425		5,250	5,250		5,250
Events net	13,397		10,000	8,284		5,000
Merchandise sales	3,446		4,000	2,500		2,000
Other income	8,407		9,565	10,964		9,470
	30,676		28,815	26,998		21,720
	570,860		564,188	565,266		537,553
Expenditure						
Employment	392,549		351,856	353,712		393,833 additional post
Planning Consultancy	-		12,000	12,000		9,000
Consultancy	5,486		12,600	12,600		-
Subscriptions	167		190	190		100
State of Environment Report	500		500	-		500
Contbn to Woodland Project	6,500		7,000	7,000		0
Planning Committee	458		520	520		500
Training	3,800		4,500	2,545		1,000 includes national conference
Premises	28,070		28,985	29,233		29,385
Office Costs	12,040		9,540	11,140		8,690
IT	9,262		15,125	15,715		12,725
Meetings / Events	3,161		1,935	1,935		1,935
Finance	20,574		23,705	23,509		19,705
Personnel	3,722		5,090	5,090		3,175
Development Fund			-	-		18,000
Members' Allowances	30,608		30,475	28,680		30,475
Chalk and Trees	10,033		11,950	6,965		7,000
HS2	9,990		20,000	17,000		5,000
Special Projects	9,889		12,000	10,000		10,000
Other expenditure	40,886		62,220	43,744		26,115
	587,695		610,191	581,578		577,138
Net income / (expenditure)	- 16,836		- 46,003	- 16,312		- 39,585
Major Projects						
Chalk Streams income	9,595		38,049	47,839		17,150
Chalk Streams staff costs	- 3,772		- 4,375	- 7,895		- 30,994
Chalk Streams other costs	- 5,823		- 44,030	- 37,300		- 1,850
Hillforts income						76,634
Hillforts staff costs						- 34,421
Hillforts other costs						- 42,213
Chiltern Woodlands income						-
Chiltern Woodlands expenditure						- 5,000
Net expenditure	-		- 10,356	2,644		- 20,694
Total Net Income (Expenditure)	- 16,836		- 56,359	- 13,668		- 60,279
Reserves at year end	545,552			531,884		471,605

Item 9 Appointment of External Auditors**Author:** Chris Smith Finance Officer**Summary:** A new company – Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd – has been created to take over the appointment of external auditors and the setting of audit fees for smaller authorities from 2017.**Purpose of the Report:** To confirm the new arrangements effective from 2017.**Background:**

- 1 The Audit Commission ceased to exist on 1 April 2015 and a new company has been created to take over the appointment of external auditors from 2017.
- 2 The new company will formally appoint external auditors on the Board's behalf, very much as the Audit Commission did previously, for a five year period from the financial year 2017-18.
- 3 This will happen automatically unless the Board decides to opt out and set up an independent Audit Panel to procure external audit itself.
- 4 The deadline for those wishing to opt out is 31 March 2016.

Conclusion:

- 5 It is felt that any possible advantage from a Board appointment would be outweighed by the administrative burden of creating a panel and it is recommended that the Board resolves not to opt out.

Recommendation:

1. **To agree not to opt out of the automatic arrangements established for the appointment of an external auditor from 2017.**

Item 10**Update on HS2****Author:** Kath Daly Countryside Officer**Purpose:** To update members on current activity and priorities in relation to HS2**House of Commons and House of Lords Select Committees**

1. On 20th January 2016 further evidence was presented to the House of Commons Select Committee on behalf of the Board and local authorities. One of the main points raised with the committee was our dissatisfaction with the proposals for an AONB Review Group, and disparity between what was proposed in the AONB compared to the Colne Valley
2. The Select Committee advised the Promoter to go back and discuss the AONB Review Group proposals further with the Board and Local Authorities.
3. As the a result of further negotiations, a further assurance was issued which addresses some but not all of the points raised, including that a budget of up to £3 million will now be made available to support identification and delivery of local measures over and above that proposed in the Environmental Statement or related detailed design. This could include works outside the limits of the Bill. It is anticipated that the initial meeting of the group will take place in the second half of March. The Board's Countryside Officer (KD) will attend the initial meeting and make recommendations regarding future Board representation.
4. The House of Commons HS2 Select Committee sat for the last time on 22nd February 2016 and published its final report.
5. It is anticipated that the Third Reading of the Hybrid Bill in the House of Commons will be on 23rd March – the day before the Easter recess. This would be followed by the First reading in the House of Lords and the announcement of the House of Lords petitioning period.
6. The Board will have an opportunity to further petition the House of Lords at this point. It is likely that the petitioning period would be short, potentially only 2 – 3 weeks.
7. Site visits by the House of Lords Select committee are anticipated in April/ May.
8. It is still not known what the scope of the House of Lords Select Committee will be and whether or not they will be able to make recommendations which

could for example re-open the case for a long bored tunnel through the AONB.

9. Should the House of Lords Select Committee be in a position to consider such a recommendation, it is crucial that just one tunnel proposal is presented, rather than a series of different tunnel proposals as was the case in the House of Commons. This has been discussed at previous Board Meetings and was further discussed and agreed at the February Executive Committee meeting.
10. If the House of Lords Select Committee does not have the jurisdiction to consider again the evidence for a long tunnel again, or if it is felt that a sufficiently strong case cannot be made, then the option remains for presenting a case for more or improved mitigation measures.
11. Discussions are ongoing with the main groups / organisations who previously promoted different tunnel options to seek a joint position and joint presentation of evidence at the House of Lords. KD is leading on this on behalf of the Board, working closely with Ray Payne who has been asked to advise CDC on this matter.

Recommendations:

1. That the Board notes the update

Item 11 Board Allowances

Author: Ian Reay, Chair
 Sue Holden, Chief Officer

Summary: It was proposed at the January board meeting that Board Allowances be reviewed and that feedback be sought from Board Members on this. This paper summarises the feedback received and makes recommendation for a reduction to the Board allowances.

1. The Case

The reasons for proposing the review include:

1. The size of the CCB, measured in terms of income, staff numbers and outputs, has decreased in the last few years and therefore the quantity of governance and oversight required by Board Members has reduced.
2. The current cost model and level of overheads are unsustainable and no new income, to cover core costs and overheads, has been found in the last few years.
3. The budget for 2016-17 currently shows a deficit and many budgets have been reduced including those directly affecting staff.
4. The Cotswold Conservation Board basic allowance is much smaller than ours (£240)

2. The Feedback

Feedback was received from 19 Board Members. Of these 3 are disagree with changing the allowances and 16 support reduction.

In addition, multiple board members expressed the following:

- Surprise to find out when they joined that any allowances are paid
- Support for cutting the number of board meetings
- Confirmation a number do not claim the allowance (and not claiming is a donation for the cause)
- Confirmation that a number take the allowance but do not additionally claim travel expenses

And the following individual views were offered:

- County, District and Parish Councillors are already paid allowances, is it right CCB should pay in addition to these?
- For Sec of State appointees, it's the only allowance they receive
- It's a public service and a privilege to be asked/selected to serve on the Board and therefore allowances should not be needed
- Board membership is a statutory role as well as a voluntary one and much of the activity necessarily takes place during the working week, so people are giving up other activities or interests (whether or not they are in paid work)

and it is different from a club or society that meets in the evening. There is significant travel time too

- Concern whether people who are self-employed/paid by the hour would join the board if they are losing income
- Declining revenue and increasing deficit with what would be regarded by many inside and outside the organisation as profligate allowances cannot be right
- The allowance system is very generous. In other public bodies and charities, office holder posts of this sort are often unremunerated or certainly paid at a much lower level these days.
- The allowances are small and should be left as they are
- Freeze the allowances until other AONBs have caught up
- Research has shown that money is a barrier to increasing diversity in public life

3. Proposed Way Forward

The following proposal is put to the Board for discussion.

An allowance will be offered to ensure board members are not out of pocket with expenses and that membership is as inclusive as possible and affordable. But this is not replacement income and board members are not being paid to attend.

The time commitment of the majority of board members (who do not sit on committees) is relatively small, perhaps four half days a year with very short packs of papers. There are additionally a handful of events each year to which Board Members are invited but attendance is optional.

CCB functions are relatively straightforward (excluding HS2 and Planning) and the oversight/governance it requires is not onerous (though hopefully we will grow!)

The CCB is very small (9 staff and £600k turnover) but there are 27 Board Members so the cost of the board of the CCB is disproportionately high (and there are also concerns about the staff time required to service the board and committees)

Given the above, the number of Board meetings should be reduced to 3 annually (with a number of optional activities to engage).

Building up from the meetings, it is proposed that an allowance is available, if Board Members choose to claim it of £300 per year (equivalent to £100 for each meeting of around 2-3 hours each).

The committee allowances should not change as committee members tend to give significant time but it is proposed that we add a rule, common with Local Authority practice and the Cotswolds CB, that we pay only one special responsibility allowance (the largest).

In summary, we are extremely grateful that a number of board members do not claim the allowances and that many do not claim expenses, thank you very much. This has been a significant contribution to the cause and somewhat hidden in the budgets.

Our allowances appear generous which, given our current size and financial situation, creates a reputational risk. Given the increasing scrutiny of how our central government and local authority grants are being spent, it is appropriate to reduce allowances and align with the other Conservation Board.

Recommendation:

- 1. The Board are asked to discuss and agree the proposal that the basic allowance is reduced to £300 per annum, that the number of board meetings is reduced to 3 and that we introduce a policy of Board Members claiming one additional Committee allowance.**