



## CONSERVATION BOARD

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILTERN CONSERVATION BOARD  
HELD ON THURSDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> October 2013 at The London Gliding Club, Tring  
Road, Dunstable LU6 2JP**

**COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.40 PM**

### MEMBERS PRESENT

Member	Appointing Body
<b>Appointed by Local Authorities</b>	
Cllr David Barnard	North Herts District Council
Cllr David Collins	Daecorum Borough Council
Cllr Lynn Lloyd	South Oxfordshire District Council
Cllr Marion Mustoe	Central Bedfordshire Council
Cllr David Nimmo Smith	Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr Brian Norman	Three Rivers District Council
Cllr Ian Reay	Hertfordshire County Council
Cllr Chris Richards	Aylesbury Vale District Council
Cllr Jeremy Ryman	Chiltern District Council
Cllr David Taylor	Luton Borough Council
Cllr Alan Walters	South Buckinghamshire District Council

<b>Appointed by the Secretary of State</b>	
Alison Doggett	Secretary of State
Mike Fox (Chairman)	Secretary of State
Bettina Kirkham	Secretary of State
Dr Simon Mortimer	Secretary of State
Helen Tuffs	Secretary of State
John Willson	Secretary of State

<b>Elected by Parish Councils</b>	
Cllr Mary Goldsmith	Bedfordshire
Cllr John Griffin	Oxfordshire
Cllr Margaret Jarrett	Hertfordshire
Cllr Shirley Judge	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

### **13/14.18. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Dr. Heather Barrett-Mold, Cllr Julia Wells and Ray Payne.

### **13/14.19. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

### **13/14.20. Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held 24<sup>th</sup> June 2013 were approved and signed by the Chairman after the following amendments:

- Shirley Judges to be added to the attendance list
- 13/14.6.2 an 'l' was added to recruitment
- 13/14.12.1 consolation changed to consultation.
- 13/14.12.10 an 'h' was added to Ceryl
- 13/14.14 "Cycle Touring Club" was changed to Cyclist Touring Club.
- 13/14.15 the heading Chilterns changed to Chiltern's

10.10 David Barnard arrived.

### **13/14.21. Matters Arising**

- a. Item 13/14.15. Shirley Judges thank the members for their support. A working group has been set up and there is much support. Academic staff at Oxford University have offered their support. A conference on Chiltern Hills forts will take place 29<sup>th</sup> November 2013.
- b. Item 13/14.11. There is money available in the small grants scheme. Members were encouraged to promote the scheme and invite applications.
- c. Item 13/14.13. The report on the management of the Ridgeway is progressing slowly.
- d. Item 13/14.16. The reintroduction of the pine marten. The Vincent Wildlife Trust is aware of the Board's interest in this project and is arranging the criteria of interest.

### **13/14.22. Public Question time**

No public questions.

### **13/14.23. Changes to Board Membership**

The Chief Officer reported changes to membership of the Board since the last meeting 24<sup>th</sup> June. They are as follows:

1. Cllr David Collins has been appointed by Daecorum Bough Council to replace Ian Ray. The Chairman welcomed him to the meeting.
2. Cllr Bill Bendyshe-Brown has been appointed by Buckinghamshire County Council to replace Richard Pushman.
3. Roger Metcalfe has been appointed by Wycombe District Council to replace Roger Emmett.
4. For information, three Secretary of State appointments which fall vacant on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 will be advertised by DEFRA on 4<sup>th</sup> November.

1. **The Board NOTED and welcomed the appointment by Bucks CC, Wycombe DC and Daecorum BC of new members to the Board.**
2. **The Board NOTED and would HELP promote the forthcoming Secretary of State vacancies.**

#### **13/14.24. Report from the Executive Committee**

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

At its meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2013 the Executive Committee:

1. Received and approved the finance report for the period April-June 2013
2. Discussed a report on the medium financial forecast for 2014-16. A special finance sub-group was created to consider options to tackle the forecast operating deficit.
3. Received and approved a report on the Treasury Management.
4. Reviewed and approved the Risk Register.
5. Received an update on the progress on reviewing the AONB Management Plan.
6. Received and discussed a report on High Speed 2.
7. Discussed a proposal to brand and promote a Skills, Learning and Fun programme.

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

#### **13/14.25. 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 2013 and the decisions taken under delegated powers. The following were noted:

1. Bettina Kirkham was elected Chairman of the Committee.
2. High Speed 2 update
3. AONB Management Plan Review
4. Events
5. Planning Policy Guidance
6. Solar Farms
7. Development Plan Responses
8. Planning applications update.

The Planning Officer gave some guidance on the matters discussed and members commented. Bettina Kirkham thanked the Planning Officer for organising an excellent Planning Conference.

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

#### **13/14.26. Annual Audit Return**

The Finance Officer reported that the Audit Commission had completed their audit of the Board's accounts for 2012-13. The opinion of the auditors based on the information provided is that the annual return is in accordance with proper practices and no matters have come to their attention that give cause for concern that the relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

The auditor has brought the following matters to the attention of the Board:

- a. A lighter touch audit was introduced, but it may be more prudent to introduce a more robust audit at regular intervals. The Finance Officer will discuss this with the internal auditor prior to next year's audit.
- b. A change to the Board's insurers has resulted in a reduced amount of cover for fidelity insurance. This needs to be reviewed. The Finance Officer will put the matter to the Executive Committee.

**1. The Board APPROVED and ACCEPTED the audited annual return and the issues arising report for 2012-13 and AGREED to the responses and action set out above.**

### **13/14.27. Report on the AONB Management Plan Review.**

The Chief Officer updated the Members on the progress of reviewing the AONB Management Plan and sought approval for the proposed responses to the comments on the draft Scoping report for the Strategic Environmental Assessment.

1. The review has been drafted and was issued for a 12 week public consultation on 27<sup>th</sup> September, closing date 20<sup>th</sup> December.
2. The consultation places considerable reliance on the website.
3. Promotion of the consultation phase will also be mainly via the internet. The consultation will also be featured in the autumn edition of Chalk and Trees and posters will be circulated for placing on notice Boards.
4. A simple survey was set up online, to elicit feedback on the issues considered important in the AONB.
  - 91% of respondents live in or near the AONB.
  - Respondents were asked to rate the importance of 15 different areas of work corresponding to the main themes of the management plan from 1 (very important) to 5 (unimportant)
  - 'Protect and enhance wildlife' received the strongest support with 77% giving no.1 rating. The next most supported areas were "maintain tranquillity of the countryside" (74%) and 'make sure new building is in the right place and well designed' (70%)
  - Few respondents were prepared to rate any areas as unimportant.
5. The cost of publishing and consulting on the draft plan is estimated to be £3,000.
6. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

The Scoping Report has already been published. 30 responses were received with approx. 100 comments, none of which required a significant amendment. The comments and the proposed responses were circulated to the Board.

- 1. The Board NOTED that the review of the AONB Management Plan was proceeding according to the programme.**
- 2. The Board APPROVED the proposed responses to the comments submitted on the scoping report for the Strategic Environmental Assessment.**

### **13/14.28. Draft Position Statement on Renewable Energy Policy**

The Planning Officer presented the Board with the first of a number planning position statements, the first one covering Renewable Energy. A position statement is now timely as increasing numbers of planning applications are appearing dealing with alternative energy developments.

The paper was discussed and amendments suggested.

- 1. The Board CONSIDERED and APPROVED the draft Renewable Energy position statement.**
- 2. The Board AGREED that the Position Statement subject to any suggested changes is published and circulated directly to local planning authorities.**

### **13/14.29. Report on Defra Green Paper on Biodiversity Offsetting**

The Chief Officer informed the Board that Defra has published a Green Paper on Biodiversity offsetting in England and is consulting on options, including whether or not a scheme should be mandatory. Biodiversity offsetting would require developers to invest in a biodiversity project (the offset) to compensate for any environmental damage caused.

The meeting discussed the key issues for the consultation response.

The Green paper states that the Government will only introduce an offsetting system if it is satisfied that it will:

- Enable the planning system to be quicker, cheaper and more certain for developers in relation to biodiversity requirements.
- Achieve a net gain for biodiversity
- Avoid additional costs to business

The Board was concerned that the current proposals concentrated only on habitat, with a limited view of 'ecosystem services' and did not take account of landscape or public enjoyment and health benefits of existing countryside or green spaces.

The Board concluded that, whilst it was able to support the broad principle, the current Defra proposal could not be supported without greater commitment to necessary safeguards.

- 1. The Board NOTED and COMMENTED on the content of the report.**
- 2. The Board DECIDED that it was unable to support the current proposal.**
- 3. The Board DECIDED to set up a sub-group to prepare a draft position statement.**

### **13/14.30. Report on HS2**

The Chief Officer advised members of the main areas of activity during the period May-September 2013. Guidance was sought on the next steps.

1. A response running to over 100 pages on the Draft Environmental Statement has been submitted.
2. A report on the benefits of a tunnel has been prepared.
3. High level criticism of all aspects of the proposal has continued.
4. Government ministers have continued to defend HS2 in the media.
5. The legal challenge in the Appeal Court on whether an SEA should have been carried out was unsuccessful, but leave to appeal to the Supreme Court was granted, with a hearing taking place on 15<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> October 2013. Judgement expected January 2014.
6. It is still the Government's intention to lodge the Hybrid Bill before Parliament by the end of 2013.
7. Costs are still rising.
8. A second report has been commissioned by the Conserve the Chilterns and Countryside Group from Peter Brett Associates on the case for a full length bored tunnel on calculating the cost to society, valuing the non-market benefits. A copy was circulated to members. It is intended to be presented to the Parliamentary select committee (petitioning stage) seeking their support.
9. It has come to light that HS2 Ltd's preferred haulage routes would affect Princes Risborough, West Wycombe and Stokenchurch, but that HS2 Ltd had not alerted those communities to the likely impacts.
10. The proposed dumping of spoil in the AONB.

The meeting discussed the activities and the case for re-alignment of the longer tunnel to the west of Wendover. The Secretary of State had recently said "it is not about speed". Lowering the line speed would give further flexibility over tunnel alignment. If the longer tunnel is supported there is an argument that the current alignment should be adjusted avoiding the need to go up and down the Misbourne Valley. This would provide the opportunity to move the tunnel further to the west of Wendover.

The Board discussed the next steps forward and the challenges ahead.

- 1. The Board ENDORSED the report prepared by Peter Brett Associates on the non-market benefits of a longer tunnel.**
- 2. The Board DECIDED to make a case for a re-alignment of a tunnel further to the west of Wendover and for a lower line speed to facilitate such a change.**
- 3. The Board AGREED to take a leading role (in association with others) to petition for a longer bored tunnel.**
- 4. The Board AGREED to petition against the plan to dump 800,000 cubic metres of spoil in the AONB.**

#### **13/14.31. Future of the Chilterns LEADER Programme.**

The Chief Officer gave a presentation prepared by Nick Phillips, the manager for the Chilterns LEADER programme. The presentation gave an overview of the current LEADER programme, which ends December 2013. A new programme is due to commence January 2015. Defra will fund the transition year 2014. The LEADER programme has delivered

nearly £1.5m of grant to rural businesses in the Chilterns in the last 4 years. The programme has been a great success.

The Chief Officer thanked Nick Phillips for providing a useful presentation. Members discussed the presentation.

- 1. The Board NOTED the success of the current LEADER programme.**
- 2. The Board DECIDED to offer officer and member time during the transition period to support the development of the LEADER programme for 2015 onwards.**

### **13/14.32. The Landscape Declaration.**

The Chief Officer informed the Board that a declaration had been prepared at the recent National Park conference urging the Government to give a higher priority to the importance of landscape in general, including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The declaration addresses the importance of landscape in general, with a specific recognition of the role of protected landscapes and no distinction between National Parks and AONB's.

The content of the declaration was discussed. The document urged the Government to help promote a renewed awareness of the value of landscape in policy and decision making which affects places.

- 1. The Board DECIDED endorse the Landscape Declaration..**

### **13/14.33. Report of attendance at events.**

The Chief Officer reported that the Board has attended annually, the major county shows. The net cost for the three county shows was £1,000 and 15 days of officer and members' time. There is a need to review the effectiveness of this expenditure both in time and money terms and decide whether or not to attend these events in 2014.

The Board discussed various proposals. It concluded that the attendance at the three county shows in 2014 should be suspended and consideration given to attending alternative events.

- 1. The Board DECIDED that it should suspend its attendance at county shows for 2014 and reconsider whether to resume its attendance in 12 months' time.**

### **13/14.34. Date of next meeting: Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2014 location TBC.**

Dates of future meetings:

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2014

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2014(the AGM will precede the Board meeting)

Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2014

The meeting closed 12.40

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