



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILTERN CONSERVATION BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY 25<sup>th</sup>  
June 2015 at Hastoe Village Hall, Church Lane, Hastoe, Hertfordshire HP23 6LU**

**COMMENCING AT 10.50 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 13.00 PM**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Appointing Body</b>
<b>Appointed by Local Authorities</b>	
Cllr. David Collins	Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr. Lynn Lloyd	South Oxfordshire District Council
Cllr Ian Reay	Hertfordshire County Council
Cllr Nick Rose	Chiltern District Council

<b>Appointed by the Secretary of State</b>	
Dr Heather Barrett-Mold	Secretary of State
Alison Doggett	Secretary of State
Gill Gowing	Secretary of State
Ray Payne	Secretary of State
Helen Tuffs	Secretary of State
Elizabeth Wilson	Secretary of State

<b>Elected by Parish Councils</b>	
Cllr Simon Deacon	Hertfordshire
Cllr John Griffin	Oxfordshire
Cllr Barbara Wallis	Buckinghamshire

<b>Officers</b>	
Kath Daly	CCB Acting Chief Officer
Deirdre Hansen	Clerk to the Board
Lucy Murfett	CCB Planning Officer
Rachel Sanderson	CCB Common Project Officer
Chris Smith	CCB Finance Officer
Donna Webb	CCB Administration Officer

**15/16.1 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Cllr David Barnard North Herts District Council, Cllr Jackie Burnett, Mary Goldsmith, Bedfordshire Parish Councils, Sue Holden, Secretary of State, Cllr David Nimmo-Smith, Oxfordshire County Council, Tony Penn, Buckinghamshire Parish Councils, Cllr Andrew Southern, Ian Waller, Secretary of State, Cllr Alan Walters, South Buckinghamshire District Council and Julia Wells, Oxfordshire Parish Council.

**15/16.2 Introduction of new members.**

Cllr Nick Rose had introduced himself at the AGM preceding this meeting.

### **15/16.3 Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

### **15/16.4. Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held 26<sup>th</sup> March 2015 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

### **15/16.5. Matters Arising**

The Acting Chief Officer reported that:

- No progress had been made with the endorsement of the Management Plan (14/15.56.7) by Local Councils. Wycombe District Council have informed the Board that it wishes to acknowledge rather than endorse the Management Plan.
- Item 14/015.59.10: small-scale projects: the Strategic Access Officer has made an expression of interest to the Oxfordshire LEP. She is looking at joining forces with other AONB's to submit a bid.
- Members with an interest in Tourism were invited
- to become involved in this area of work.
- 14/15.62.13 the relationship with the Chiltern Society:
  - i. A joint workshop has taken place where areas of joint cooperation were identified.
  - ii. A joint accord is due to be signed in the autumn.
  - iii. Ways forward working together have been identified.
  - iv. The Chilterns Partners Working Group has met and have had a productive meeting. Joint events are planned and a work programme is being set up.

### **15/16.6. Public Question time**

No public questions.

### **15/16.7. 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 3rd June 2015 the Executive Committee:

1. Received a finance report for 2014-15.
2. Approved recommendations to amend the Financial Regulations.
3. Received the Internal Auditor's Report for 2014-15.
4. Received a report on the Management Review and approved draft recommendations to the Board.
5. Received a report regarding a bid to the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund. The Board's provisional bid, subject to Board approval, had not been accepted, but there are grounds for appeal. This bid is an application to the fund for a scheme in the Hambleden Valley. This would build on the work of the Chiltern Farm Advice Project.
6. Reviewed and approved the latest version of the Risk Register.

- 1. The Board NOTED the issues considered by the Executive Committee at its meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June and the decisions made under delegated authority.**

### **15/16.8. Report from the Planning Committee.**

The Chairman introduced Lucy Murfett, the new Planning Officer. She gave a brief overview of the work undertaken by the Planning Officer.

1. The Board receives more than 3000 planning applications p.a. to consider.
2. The previous Planning Officer had commented on about 20 p.a., currently there are 4 significant planning applications in house that are being reviewed.
3. The Planning Officer receives about 60 Development Plan Consultations. The number of Neighbourhood Plans for consideration is increasing.
4. HS2 Ltd
5. Undergrounding of electrical cables and network rail, rail over wires.
6. Position statements
7. The Building Design award
8. Planning forums
9. Meetings.

It is a busy time going forwards.

Members received a brief 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 11<sup>th</sup> February 2015 and the decisions taken under delegated powers. The following items were discussed:

- a. High Speed 2 update
- b. AONB Management Plan Review
- c. Events
- d. Development Plan Responses
- e. Planning applications update

The next Planning Committee meeting is likely to take place in July.

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

### **15/16.9.Statement of Accounts 2013-14**

The Finance Officer presented the Statement of Accounts and the Annual Audit Return for the Finance Year 2014-15. The yearend position showed an overall net deficit from all activity of £16,516

1. £16,516 has been applied from the Budget Equalisation.
2. The Reserves now stand as follows:

General	£100,000
Budget Equalisation	£121,256
Development	£293,744
Chalk Streams project	£ 24,693
Friends of Red Kites	£ 5,859
Total	£545,552
3. The Pensions Liability has increased by £ 402,000 to £975,000. This represents the liability to the Board if every employee had retired on 31 March 2015 and collected their pension entitlement.
4. The increase reflects the impact of the valuation methodology and the derivation of the main financial assumptions required by Financial Reporting Standard (FRS) 17.

The Chairman thanked the Finance Officer for his work and presentation of the financial results.

The Members took the opportunity to ask questions and make comments. The new lay-out of the financial reports was much appreciated by the Members.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the Statement of Accounts and Annual Audit Return 2014-15, including the Annual Governance Statement and they were signed by the Chairman.**

### **15/16.10 Report on the Chilterns Commons**

The Commons Project Officer had provided a report and gave a presentation on the achievements of the Commons Project and the project legacy; and to stimulate consideration of how the Board should continue its work on Commons.

The project was launched in September 2011 and is completing in July 2015. £403,000 came from HLF grants and £67,000 from other funding participants.

The main aims of the project were:

1. To enhance the understanding and awareness of commons.
2. Practical conservation of commons.
3. Increase local participation.
4. Ensure sustainable future management

There are 170 registered commons in the AONB. Only a handful is still grazed resulting in most formerly open commons becoming secondary woodland. The geographical spread of the project covered the whole stretch of the Chilterns.

1. The project has achieved practical work on 27 commons, which would not have happened without the project.
2. New research has been carried out.
3. Training has taken place.
4. Community engagement has been highly successful.
5. Many volunteers have become involved.
6. The message on the value and importance of commons has been spread widely including via national media coverage, at conferences and in publications.
7. A lasting legacy has been created.
  - The Commons Network has established a transitional steering group. It is currently discussing a number of options how best to take the work forward.
  - Various local groups are established
  - There is a growing and informal interest in commons
  - Partners have advised the Board to remain strongly committed to sustain and to develop the achievements of the project.
  - The coordination of the Commons Network programme for 2015/16 is being considered. The Board could remain involved providing advice and staff time with a £4,000 budget.
  - A web site
  - 2 new books

Members provide feedback on the achievements of the project, and confirmed that the Board would want to continue to support and lead the Commons Network.

Rachel Sanderson was thanked for her outstanding work on the project. Her delivery was highly praised; a lot has been achieved in the years of the project. She leaves the project in an excellent position to take the lead nationally on lowland commons.

- 1. The Board PROVIDED feedback on the achievements of the Chilterns Commons Project.**
- 2. The Board APPROVED the proposed approach to development of the Chilterns Commons Network.**
- 3. The Board AGREED to support in principle that the Board would provide advice and staff time to assist with the development of a Lowlands Commons initiative.**

## 15/16.11. Update on HS2 Developments

The Acting Chief Officer gave a brief overview of the current situation and the provisional dates for the appearance of the Board at the Select Committee hearings on the Chilterns Long Tunnel.

It is anticipated that the Board's non-tunnel petitioning points will be heard post the summer recess.

The developments of the Chilterns Long Tunnel are constantly changing, work is progressing.

The Select Committee had visited Buckinghamshire 11 and 22 June.

11.30 Heather Barrett-Mold left the meeting

Ray Payne guided the Board through the 4 alternative proposals for a fully bored tunnel under the Chilterns.

- a. T3i proposed by HS2 Ltd
- b. T2 proposed by CRAG
- c. CLTv2 proposed by the 4 statutory bodies including the Board. This is a variation on CLTv1 and includes an underground firefighting point, which has not been undertaken in Europe before and has considerable cost implications.
- d. CLTv1 proposed by the 4 statutory bodies including the Board.

Ray Payne will speak at the Select Committee on the Chiltern Long Tunnel on behalf on the 4 statutory bodies:

Aylesbury Vale District Council  
Buckinghamshire County Council  
Chiltern District Council  
The Chilterns Conservation Board.

The Board has previously confirmed its support for use of CLTv1. The Board was asked for its support in principle for versions T3i or CLTv2 should the Select Committee show a preference for either above the CLTv1.

The Chairman thanked Ray Payne for his presentation and work.

The Members discussed the tunnel options.

The Acting Chief Officer thanked Neil Jackson for his assistance during the Select Committee visits to the Chilterns.

- 1. The Board DECIDED to delegate to Ray Payne to make the most appropriate decision on the acceptance of either T3i or CLTv2 depending on the views at decision of the Select Committee**
- 2. The Board NOTED the current timetable and progress.**

## 15/16.12 Management Review

The Acting Chief Officer advised the Board on the conclusions, provided in the report, reached by the Review sub- group and sought approval of the recommendations following the 6 month review period. She did not present a detailed programme of activity, but rather a reflection of where the discussions have led the working group to. Once the new Chief Officer is in post the recommendations can become actions.

12.10 Helen Tuffs left the meeting.

It was agreed that future funding of the Board is a major issue. Training and induction of new members was highlighted as of vital importance. The involvement of Board Members needs to be brought forward.

The following recommendations were discussed:

#### **Process to identify and achieve the Board's priorities**

- 1. The Board's business plan must be revised to include clear medium and long term strategic priorities.**
- 2. Clear criteria must be developed for assessment of new projects.**

#### **Capacity, skills and resources for delivery of the Board's objectives**

- 3. Staff time is a limited and valuable resource and must be evaluated as part of business planning and the evaluation of new projects.**
- 4. Annual cycles of Board events, activities and operations were adequate when the Board was formed, but not necessarily now and this must be re-evaluated.**
- 5. Staff training and development must link clearly to Board priorities and be treated as an essential part of management of the organisation. Better use must be made of opportunities for staff development through the NAAONB.**
- 6. Having a constant supply of new project ideas and funding opportunities is essential given the need to broaden the Board's funding base and to demonstrate value for money to public and private funding organisations.**
- 7. Over the short-medium term, staff efforts to generate new income through events, sponsorship, consultancy and donations must be better coordinated and aligned with strategic priorities.**
- 8. Greater capacity must be developed in two areas:**
  - To lead income generation and the external face of the Board**
  - To ensure satisfactory project development and delivery.**
- 9. Staffing capacity, skills and roles must be matched to the Board's strategic priorities and delivery programme.**

#### **Communications**

- 10. The Board must develop and implement a focussed communications plan for application across the entire spectrum of its stakeholders from government to individuals.**

#### **Relationships**

- 11. Improving working relationships and collaboration with the Chilterns Society must be a high priority for the Board and current work on this must continue. The scope for joint 'Chilterns' branding and marketing must be pursued.**
- 12. Other relationships must be strengthened and developed including those with government, local authorities (particularly members), major landowners, business and LEP's, primary health and wellbeing boards, education and research institutions.**
- 13. The Board must work to strengthen its engagement with non-traditional audiences including young people and urban populations.**

### **Source of funds**

- 14. The Board must plan for a range of funding scenarios which anticipates a reduction in government and local authority funding from the current level. This work must begin now in order, for example, to be able to react to the Defra funding settlement from 2016 onwards.**
- 15. Alternative sources of income must be found and developed including, but not limited to:**
  - **Earned income from events and capital investments;**
  - **Giving from donations, sponsorship and corporate social responsibility funds; and**
  - **Contributions from natural capital schemes and developer contributions.**
- 16. The Board must use published information and experience of other AONBs as a supplementary source of information for identifying options for medium and long term funding using Board Member expertise together with external help if required.**

### **Reserves**

- 17. The Board must have a clear strategy for the management of its reserves and its reserve holding must be taken into account when considering alternative income streams.**

## **1. The Board AGREED the above recommendations.**

### **15/16.13 Chilterns Building Design Awards**

The Planning Officer gave a presentation informing the Board about the entries and winners of this year's Chilterns Building Design Award.

This is the 17<sup>th</sup> year of the awards and there were 12 entries submitted. The winners were announced at the awards ceremony on 17<sup>th</sup> June. Following the excellent quality of entries it was decided for the first time to award 3 overall winners in different categories. The overall winners were:

- The Greater barn at Micklefield Hall, near Rickmansworth. For restoration.
- Six flats, Warwick House, Hemel Hempstead. For new build
- Crendon Cottage, Speen. For renovation and extension of cottage.
  
- The remodelling and extension of School, Chiltern Hills Academy, Chesham was highly commended.

The Charman thanked Gill Gowing and the Planning Officer

## **1. The Board NOTED the winners of this year's Chilterns Building Design Awards**

### **15/16.14 Historic Environment-Achievements and challenges.**

Barbara Wallis, who has a long standing involvement with the Board and has a particular interest and expertise in the historic environment, gave a presentation on the Board's track record and future challenges in relation to the Historic Environment.

The Chief Officer emphasized that the Board needs to continue to ensure that the traditional forms of buildings enhance the natural beauty of the Chilterns AONB. There is a lack of knowledge and a survey

of historic farm building is required. The Board needs to continue working with other groups and keep in touch with County archaeologists and conservations.

The Chairman thanked Barbara for her many years of contributions to the Board and the previous Shadow Board. Now that she has stood down from her parish council position, she will no longer represent Buckinghamshire Parish Council on the Board. The Chairman presented Barbara with a farewell gift.

Barbara thanked the Board and remarked that she had enjoyed her time as a Board Member.

- 1. The Board NOTED the content and considered the challenges as outlined in the presentation.**
- 2. The Board THANKED Barbara for her outstanding contributions over many years to the work of the Board in this field.**

**15/16.15 Urgent Business;**

1. Chris Smith is selling photographs and donating the proceeds to the Chilterns Conservation Board
2. The Acting Chief Officer informed the Board that the date of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration is 25<sup>th</sup> November. Members will be notified.

**15/16.16. Date of next meeting:** Thursday 8th October 2015 location TBC.

The meeting closed 13.00

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