

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILTERN CONSERVATION BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY 26th March 2015 at Coleshill Village Hall, Barracks Hill, Coleshill, Amersham HP7 0LN COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 13.00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

| Member | Appointing Body |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Appointed by Local Authorities | |
| Cllr David Barnard | North Herts District Council |
| Cllr Bill Bendyshe-Brown | Buckinghamshire County Council |
| Cllr Wendy Jordan | Three Rivers District Council |
| Cllr. Lynn Lloyd | South Oxfordshire District Council |
| Cllr. Roger Metcalfe | Wycombe District Council |
| Cllr Marion Mustoe | Central Bedfordshire Council |
| Cllr David Nimmo Smith | Oxfordshire County Council |
| Cllr Ian Reay (Chairman) | Hertfordshire County Council |
| Cllr Chris Richards | Aylesbury Vale District Council |
| Cllr Jeremy Ryman | Chiltern District Council |
| Cllr Alan Walters | South Buckinghamshire District Council |

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| Appointed by the Secretary of State | |
| | Secretary of State |
| Alison Doggett | Secretary of State |
| Gill Gowing | Secretary of State |
| Sue Holden | Secretary of State |
| Ray Payne | Secretary of State |
| Helen Tuffs | Secretary of State |
| Ian Waller | Secretary of State |
| Elizabeth Wilson | Secretary of State |

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| Elected by Parish Councils | |
| Cllr Simon Deacon | Hertfordshire |
| Cllr Mary Goldsmith | Bedfordshire |
| Cllr John Griffin | Oxfordshire |
| Cllr Anthony Penn | Buckinghamshire |
| Cllr Barbara Wallis | Buckinghamshire |
| Cllr Julia Wells | Oxfordshire |

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| Officers | |
| Kath Daly | CCB Acting Chief Officer |
| Claire Forrest | CCB Information and Interpretation Officer |
| Deirdre Hansen | Clerk to the Board |
| Neil Jackson | CCB Acting Countryside Officer |
| Cathy Rose | CCB Activities and Learning Officer |
| Chris Smith | CCB Finance Officer |
| Annette Venters | CCB Strategic Access Officer |
| Colin White | CCB Planning Officer |

14/15.50-1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Dr Heather Barrett-Mold.

The apologies for absence from the following was noted, but had not been received Cllr David Collins, Dacorum Borough Council and Cllr Davis Taylor, Luton Borough Council.

14/15.51-2 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

14/15.52-3. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held 29th January 2015 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman after 'by' was added to 14/15.46.4

14/15.53-4. Matters Arising

The Acting Chief Officer informed the Board that:

1. 14/15.40.3- the Ridgeway Trail partnership is recruiting a Project Officer.
2. 14/15.40.2- Chilterns LEADER programme 2015-2020. An appeal to DEFRA to reverse the decision on the unsuccessful LEADER bid had been successful.

14/15.54-5. Public Question time

No public questions.

14/15.55-6. Report from the Executive Committee

The Acting Chief Officer reported the matters considered and decisions taken, by the Executive Committee under delegated powers at its meeting on 26th February 2015.

The Executive Committee had:

1. Received a Finance Report April 2014 to January 2015. There were no exceptional items to report. Income was 0.3% above profile and expenditure against the operating budget was 0.5% below profile.
2. Considered the budget for 2015-16 and recommended its adoption to the Board.
3. Received a report on the 2015-16 Business Plan and Work Programme and had provided feedback.
4. Approved the Treasury Management Strategy for 2015-16.
5. Reviewed and approved the latest version of the Risk Register and agreed that any amendments will be forthcoming from the Review.
6. Noted the progress in the Management Review.
7. Received a report on the Chiltern Long tunnel Proposal.

10.05 Cllr Mary Goldsmith arrived.

The Board discussed the proposals and contributed suggestions.

1. **The Board NOTED the issues considered by the Executive Committee at its meeting on the 26th February 2015 and the decisions made under delegated authority.**

14/15.56-7. 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 11th February 2015 and the decisions taken under delegated powers. The following items were discussed:

1. Arrangements for minute taking of the Committee.
2. High Speed 2 update
3. AONB Management Plan Review
4. Events
5. Development Plans responses.
6. Planning applications update

The members discussed the concerns about the limited endorsements of the Management Plan as a material planning consideration by Local Authorities. The Planning Officer will chase up those authorities that had not yet endorsed the plan and members were asked to ensure their own Councils endorsed the Management Plan. The Management plan is a statutory document as directed in S85 of the CROW Act 2000

The Planning Officer gave further guidance on the matters discussed and members provided comment.

The Planning Officer was thanked for his assistance on the Central Bedfordshire Council North of Luton Framework Plan.

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

14/15.57-8. Budget 2015-16

The Finance Officer provided the Board with the detailed budget for 2015-16 as recommended by the Executive Committee at its last meeting. The Budget is subject to potential ongoing changes following the General Election and the Board's Review. The budget remains a provisional budget for the next few months.

1. The budget comprises three parts: Operating budget, Work programme and Major Projects.
2. As the year progresses detailed performance information will be provided to the Executive Committee.
3. The following draft changes to the budget compared to last year have been included:

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| Provision for IT and telephone upgrades | £6,500 |
| Increased IT support | £2,500 |
| Increased HR support | £1,800 |
| Marketing and Communications Review | £1,500 |
| Increased contribution to Hillforts project | £5,000 |
| Provision for staff increments | £4,430 |
| Management review consultancy/support | £4,000 |
| Box project additional contributions | £5,000 |
| 50 th Anniversary celebrations | £3,000 |
| Board members Fellowship | £1,000 |
| Provision for Commons Network | £4,000 |
| National Trails marketing | £1,000 |
| Additional HS2 budget | £10,000 |
| Reductions in merchandise sales | £2,000 |

4. Saving compared to last year include staff changes
5. Following staff consultation minor changes have been made to expenditure and income.
6. The net effect of this budget is a drawdown of £16,867 from Reserves
7. The cost of living index award based on the March 2015 CPI is still to be added to the final budget

10.35 Cllr Bill Bendyshe-Brown arrived.

1. The Board CONSIDERED and ADOPTED the provisional budget for 2015-16.

14/15.58-9. Draft Business Plan 2015-16.

The Acting Chief Officer reminded the members that the Board is in an unusual period of flux. The Plan has been produced within the context of a forthcoming General Election and the Board's Management Review as well as further changes to the staff team and Board Membership. In that light refinements to this transitional Business Plan and Budget can be expected in the autumn of 2015.

Brief presentations of their work programmes were given by the following members of staff:

- The Activities and Learning Officer
- The Strategic Access Officer
- The Information and Interpretation Officer
- The Landscape and Conservation Officer, who also covered the work of the Chalk Stream Projects Officer, the Commons Project Officer and the Box Project Officer.
- The Planning Officer

The Board Members took the opportunity to ask questions and comment.
The Acting Chief Officer thanked all for their presentations and contributions.

11.30 Elizabeth Wilson left the meeting.

1. The Board APPROVED the draft Business Plan 2015-16.

14/15.59-10 Chilterns Tourism Network

The Strategic Access Officer gave a report on the development of the CTN and sought approval in principle for supporting further activity.

1. The Chilterns Tourism Network (CTN) was set up in 2011 as the only Chilterns-wide tourism business network and is now firmly established. It has achieved great success and is now looking to develop future activities.
2. A LEADER grant in 2012 enabled the establishment of some key tourist resources for the Chilterns.
3. A Visit the Chilterns tourism web site was established www.visitchilterns.co.uk which now receives over 8000 visits a month and has 3300 twitter followers.
4. Well attended workshops and meetings have been held.
5. The CTN has become formally constituted as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. The CTN is self-financing mainly through web site advertising. To undertake more ambitious projects additional funding is required.
6. The CTN has no formal membership and there is no joining fee.

7. The CTN has no paid staff, but is managed by four directors and a steering group, one of which is Annette Venters, Strategic Access Officer.
8. The CTN's mission is to increase awareness of the Chilterns as a desirable destination to visit and stay all year round. It aims to be a voice for Chilterns Tourism.
9. Future CTN projects include a project to develop and promote the Chilterns Food and Drink offer. An expression of interest to the LEADER fund of £22,000 is being developed with the Board's input. It is hoped the Board will be able to contribute match funding in the region of £3,000 in 2015/16 towards this project which aligns closely with its own objectives.
10. There are other small-scale projects the CTN would like to develop.
11. The Board's support of the CTN has been through staff time of the Strategic Access Officer, on average 2-3 hours per week.
12. An on-going involvement is desirable as it supports the Board's core aims of 'fostering economic and social well-being' and 'increasing understanding and enjoyment'
13. The CTN supports visitor economy, enabling the Board to build up relationships with businesses outside its usual sphere of activity and is evidence of the value of tourism to the Chilterns. Data which is proving useful to the Board and others in countering HS2 and other potential developments.

The Board members discussed the report and provided suggestions.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the continuation of the Strategic Access Officer's time input to the CTN and role as director.**
- 2. The Board AGREED to support the Strategic Access Officer taking the lead on the CTN Food and Drink LEADER bid.**
- 3. Any Board members with an interest in tourism were invited to become involved in this area of work.**

14/15.60.11 HS2 Report.

The Acting Chief Officer reported that the HS2 Working Group had reconvened to provide guidance in preparation for the Hybrid Bill Select Committee hearings, visits and other matters. The Working Group had met on 6th March 2015, where matters discussed were:

1. The meeting with HS2 Ltd on 24th February.
2. Progression on the discussions with Local Authorities about co-ordinating evidence to the Select Committee
3. The latest information on timings of the Buckinghamshire visits and Select Committee hearings following the General Election 7th May.
4. The Chilterns Long Tunnel proposal. The February meeting of the Executive Committee had been supportive of the proposal in principle, as outlined to them by Ray Payne, and had recommended that a full report be presented for endorsement to the Board at its March meeting.
5. Bucks Landscape Principles report.
6. Tourism Study. The Board on behalf of a number of Parish Councils and local action groups has commissioned a study to determine the economic contribution of visitors to the economy of the AONB, which will be affected during construction and operation of HS2.
7. The Board's petition was reviewed and the points which should be given priority by the Board in preparation for the Select Committee hearing and which are being represented by other petitioners were considered. It is anticipated that the Acting Chief Officer will

represent the Board on some aspects of the petition. The use of expert witnesses and collaboration with others needs to be finalised.

Ray Payne gave a presentation on the Chilterns Long Tunnel (see report at appendix 1) drawing the Board's attention to its comparative characteristics with the Government's proposed scheme. The meeting was asked to consider:

- a) The principle of a continuous Chilterns Tunnel between the A4009 north of Wendover and the M25.
- b) If there was agreement in principle to a continuous tunnel between the A4009 and the M25, then agreement was sought for the alignment of the route. Ray Payne provided the details of the route and the consequences of accommodating it within the AONB which would include hosting the following within the AONB:
 - i. 6 surface ventilation shafts with associated head houses.
 - ii. An underground fire-fighting point.
 - iii. The north portal of the tunnel in the AONB south of the A4009.

The Chairman thanked Ray Payne for his continued enormous contribution to the work on the HS2 project.

- 1. The Board CONFIRMED its support for the Chilterns Long Tunnel.**
- 2. The Board AGREED that Ray Payne will represent the Board on the matter of the Chilterns Long Tunnel at the Select Committee hearing.**
- 3. The Board AGREED that the HS2 working group will continue to provide advice and support to the Acting Chief Officer on preparation for the Select Committee hearing and the Select Committee visits.**
- 4. THE Board AGREED to delegate to the Executive Committee the power to sign off the relevant documents required for the Select Committee hearing.**

14/15.61.12 Management Review.

The Acting Chief Officer gave a report on the progress in carrying out the Management Review, the emerging themes and future work.

The objective of the review is to ensure effective management and organisational structures are in place to enable the Board in achieving its statutory purpose over the next 5 years and beyond.

The aim is to complete the significant elements of the review by June 2015, with the interim report to the Board in March 2015 and a final report with conclusions and recommendations to the Board in June 2015.

The Acting Chief Officer gave a summary update on progress and the emerging messages coming out of the review:

1. The four main objectives were set out:
 - a. To identify the necessary capacity, skills, resources and processes needed to identify and achieve the Board's priorities over the next 5 years, and consider how these might be addressed if there is a short fall or mismatch.
 - b. To map and review the Board's relationships with key partners in order to enhance the strength and vitality of those partnerships where they exist at present and to

forge new alliances with those who can help to deliver the aims and objectives of the AONB Management Plan.

- c. The review the source and application of funds, and consider options for maintaining and broadening the Board's funding base.
- d. To ensure that the Board complies with the principles of good governance and to consider how any shortfalls might be addressed.

It had previously been agreed that priority would be given to the first two objectives over the period January to April and to focus on the remaining two objectives April to June.

2. To date the review sub-group has met on three occasions.
3. Two workshops have been held one for Board Members on 29th January 2015 and a staff one on 12th February.
4. Reports of both workshops have been produced.
5. A visit to the Cotswolds Conservation Board was held 10th February.
6. Board staff hosted a meeting with staff from the Surrey Hills AONB partnership and Friends of Surrey Hills on 2nd March.
7. The Sub Group met with the National Policy and Development Manager for the National Association of AONB's, Richard Clarke on 9th March.

The Acting Chief Officer drew attention to the key messages, which have come out of the process to date, as listed in the report, including the following:

- The skills, capabilities, flexibility and stability of the staff team are recognised as an important strength of the Board.
- A need to be more strategic in order to fulfil the Board's statutory purposes.
- A need to work more closely with a broader sector of the community for example young people and urban populations.
- Concern around the profile and visibility of the Board and its work and a question about the balance between focussing on the organisation and /or the area.
- The need to strengthen the relationship with the Chiltern Society and other key stakeholders.
- The need to strengthen links with other sectors including education, health and business.
- Making better use of Board Member contacts, networks and expertise.
- The AONB's proximity to London as an opportunity and a threat.

Members discussed the review update.

- 1. The Board NOTED the progress of the Review to date.**
- 2. The Board CONFIRMED its support for the proposed approach to completion of the review.**

14/15.62.13 Relationship with the Chiltern Society.

The Acting Chief Officer set out a proposed approach to developing a more effective working partnership with the Chiltern Society. She gave a brief background to the establishment of the Chiltern Society and the Board.

1. The Chiltern Society is a voluntary organisation with charitable status founded in 1965; the Board is an independent statutory body, established through an Act of Parliament in 2004.

2. Both organisations share a common purpose of conserving and enhancing the Chiltern Hills and have a long history of collaboration.
3. 2015 is the 50th anniversary of both the founding of the Chiltern Society and the designation of the AONB. Both organisations have identified the anniversary as an excellent opportunity to work together to promote the Chilterns. Work is in hand to achieve this.
4. It is proposed that the two organisations explore the options for more effective collaboration, with an initial report back to the respective Committee/Board meetings by mid-2015.
5. Broad ranging discussions covering a number of possible approaches from relatively straight forward ones to more challenging ones are being considered.
6. The following steps in the process are proposed:
 - a. A team building event in spring/early summer 2015
 - b. A joint accord to be developed and signed as part of the 50th anniversary celebration in summer 2015.
 - c. The establishment of a Chilterns Partners Working Group whose aim would be to oversee and review efforts to ensure effective collaboration towards shared objectives and to review joint initiatives

The Board members provided feedback to the report.

1. **The Board PROVIDED feedback and APPROVED the proposed approach, including the establishment of a Chilterns Partners Working Group.**

14/15.63.114 Urgent Business.

1. Ian Waller reported that the computerised Basic Payment Scheme has failed to deliver, causing delayed payment of Government grants to farmers and other land managers.
2. The Chairman informed the Board that as a consequence of the review the post of Chief Officer will be advertised from the 30th March for 1 month. The selection group has been reassembled.
3. The Chairman advised the meeting that this would be the last meeting a number of members would be attending as they would not be standing for election at the May 7th elections.
 - a. He thanked Cllr Chris Richards for his work over many years with the Board and presented him with a small gift. Chris thanked the Board and said he had enjoyed his time on the Board.
 - b. Cllr Marion Mustoe was thanked for her efforts on behalf of the Board and was presented with a small gift. She thanked the Board and said she would miss her work with the Board.
 - c. Cllr Jeremy Ryman was also thanked for his time and work for the Board and was presented with a small gift. He also thanked the Board and said he would miss his work with the Board.
 - d. Cllr Roger Metcalfe was also thanked and presented with a small gift. He had found his short time on the Board a privileged and it had been a pleasure to serve.
4. This would be the last Board meeting Colin White, the Planning Officer would be attending he is leaving the Conservation Board on 2nd April after 13 ½ years serving as the Planning Officer. He was presented with a gift and thanked for his long and outstanding service to the Board. The Chairman wished him well in his future ventures. Colin thanked the Board for his gifts and said he had enjoyed his time with the Board.

14/15.64.15. Date of next meeting: Thursday 25th June 2015 at 10.00am location TBC.

Dates of future meetings: Thursday 8th October 2015

The meeting closed 13.00

The Chairman

Date