



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HELD ON Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> February at the offices of the Board , The Lodge, 90 Station Road, Chinnor OX39 4HA commencing at 10.30AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.30PM**

Present:

Cllr. John Griffin	Board member
Cllr Marion Mustoe	Board Member
Ray Payne	Board Member
Cllr. Ian Reay	Board Member, Chairman of the meeting
Cllr Jeremy Ryman	Board Member
Helen Tuffs	Board Member
Cllr Alan Walters	Board Member
Cllr Julia Wells	Board Member

Kath Daly	CCB Acting Chief Officer
Chris Smith	CCB Finance Officer

In attendance	
Deirdre Hansen	Clerk to the Board

**14/15-31 Item 1- Apologies for absence.**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. David Nimmo-Smith and Dr Heather Barrett-Mold.

**14/15-32. Item 2- Declarations of interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

**14/15-33. Item 3- Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> December 2014 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman after the following amendment was made:

- P91 14/15-26 item10: point 11, harm was amended to farm.

#### **14/15-34. Item 4- Matters Arising from the minutes 10<sup>th</sup> December 2014**

1. The Acting Chief Officer informed the meeting that the Information Officer had not presented a more detailed proposal for the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the AONB to the January Board meeting due to the length of the meeting. She will be presenting a more detailed proposal of events at the next Board meeting in March.

#### **14/15-35. Item 5- Public Question time**

No members of the public were present.

#### **14/15-36. Item 6- Finance Report (April 2014 to January 2015)**

The Finance Officer advised the Committee of the Board's financial position to the end of the January 2015 and the likely position by the end of the year. Members discussed the detailed presented position and the current position of the reserves. Merchandising was also discussed. It was noted that financing is part of the review currently being undertaken.

The current financial position is generally satisfactory with the exception of the underspend on special projects, with the result that reserves will not be drawn down as planned.

1. The figures presented had been reworked to reflect the changes agreed at the December meeting of the Committee. Activities are now recorded against three categories: Operating Activity, the Work Programme and Major Projects.
2. Operating costs are £2,219 below profile.
3. Savings resulting from staffing changes have also reduced the call on reserves.
4. The Work programme is £13,372 below profile reflecting the underspend on special projects.
5. All income is generally in line with expectation and the Defra re-instatement of the original grant allocation is included.
6. Income and expenditure on events show a net income of £13,782 to date compared to a budget of £11,520
7. Details on the special projects funded to date was provided and it is anticipated that by the end of the year £7,500 will have been committed; an underspend against the original budget of £12,500.
8. It was noted that merchandising sales are falling below target.

#### **1. The Committee NOTED the current financial position.**

#### **14/15-37. Item 7- Budget 2015-2016**

The Finance Officer presented a detailed budget for 2015-16 in the new format for the Committee to consider, reflecting the decisions the Executive Committee had made regarding structure and the Board had made regarding strategy.

1. The financial year 2015-16 is the last year of a Defra four year funding plan and brings to an end the Board's current medium term financial plan.

2. Following the General Election, once the Government's spending plans are known and following the Board's internal review a new medium term plan will be developed.
3. The departure of the Planning Officer is likely to create a saving and an provisional figure of £12,000 has been included.
4. As the year progresses and events and projects are identified, detailed sheets of performance will be presented to the Committee.
5. The following draft changes to the budget compared to last year have been included:

• 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 <sup>th</sup> 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

6. Savings compared to the 2014-15 budget include staff changes and a reduced special projects budget
7. The net effect of this budget will be to draw down £16,867 from reserves.
8. Still to be included is a cost of living award for staff, which is based on the Consumer Prices index in March.

The budget and the implications of the forthcoming General Election were discussed and the budget was considered for recommendation to the Board.

- 1. The Committee considered the budget for 2015-16 and AGREED to recommend its adoption to the Board, whilst noting that the figures would inevitably change during the year as the implications of the election result and the Board's review were known.**

#### **14/15-38. Item 8. Business Plan and work programme 2015-16**

The Acting Chief Officer presented the main elements of the proposed work programme that will be presented to the Board at the meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> March. She sought the Committees views on the main areas of work proposed for the coming year.

1. The annual business plan has been a constantly evolving document updated as opportunities arose. It has been viewed as an internal working document and a source of information for those wishing to know more about the Board.
2. The current review includes considerations for setting and achieving the Board's priorities. As a result of the review there will be changes proposed to the way the business plan and work programme are developed. It is expected that that post the review refinements will be made to the 2015/16 business plan.
3. The 25 proposed key elements of the 2015-16 work plan were discussed.
  1. Management review
  2. 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary AONB
  3. Develop an accord with the Chiltern Society
  4. Events programme
  5. HS2
  6. Strengthen links with education and research establishments
  7. Review communications, marketing and merchandising strategies
  8. Hillforts project
  9. Rural skills programme
  10. Farm advice project
  11. Chalk streams project
  12. Box woodland project
  13. Commons HLF project
  14. Promoting sustainable tourism
  15. Landscape scale conservation
  16. Woodland management
  17. Promote good land management practice
  18. Respond to planning applications and strategies; publish relevant position statements
  19. Building design award
  20. Development and management of National Trails
  21. Development and management of Walks and Rides section of the web site and other on-line information.
  22. Chiltern cycleway
  23. Cycle Chilterns project
  24. Enjoying the historic environment
  25. State of the Environment monitoring.
4. It was acknowledged that the timing of the discussion on the business plan/ work programme in the middle of the review was unfortunate.
5. It was suggested that the Acting Chief Officer splits the programme into various headings, names the lead officers and the expected time it will take an officer to complete the task. Suggested heading could be; 1. Committed to; 2. Items emerging from the review; 3. Additional items.

The business plan and the work programme were discussed and members contributed their views.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the content of the report and provided feedback on the main areas of work proposed.**

#### **14/15-39 item 9. Treasury Management**

The Finance Officer presented a draft Treasury Management Strategy for the Conservation Board for the approval of members. Whilst there is no legal requirement for the Board to adopt such a Strategy, it is considered to be good practice for the Board to adopt a Treasury Management Strategy. The Board adopted a Treasury Management Strategy for the first time in February 2008. The first report for 2014-15 covering policy and Strategy was presented.

- 1. The Committee ADOPTED the Treasury Management Strategy outlined in the report and the Treasury Management Policy Statement detailed in Appendix 'A' of the agenda, and emphasised that the current low risk strategy would continue**

#### **14/15-40. Item 10- Review of the Risk Register.**

The Acting Chief Officer and Finance Officer had reviewed the risk register and sought guidance on what changes should be made to ensure that the risk process remained fit for purpose. The highest risks remain those associated with funding and staff changes.

The Committee reviewed in detail the latest version of the Risk Register. The Committee was reminded that the Board's strategic risks are incorporated in the governance part of the Management Review process and will be examined later.

- 1. The Committee CONFIRMED this version of the Risk Register as controlling risks currently faced by the Board.**
- 2. The Committee AGREED the risk process currently in use is fit for purpose and that any changes should be made as part of the Board review procedure.**
- 3. The Committee NOTED that the Register will be thoroughly reviewed again at the next meeting of the Committee.**

#### **14/15-41. Item 11 Management Review**

The Acting Chief Officer provided an update of progress and a report of the key themes emerging from the work carried out to date.

1. The Review working group has met on three occasions to date.
2. Two workshops have been held; a Board member one on 29th January and a staff team one on 12th February.
3. Both workshops were led by Nicola Thomas, a consultant. She will provide a brief report to the working group on each of the workshops.

4. Common key issues were identified at both workshops:
  - a. The need for the Board to be more strategic and prioritise work more
  - b. Concerns over future financial resources
  - c. The need to work more closely with under-represented sectors of the community.
  - d. The need to increase visibility of the Board and its work
  - e. The need to strengthen links with key stakeholders.
5. Many other issues were raised including: making better use of the skills and networks of Board members, paying more regard to long term outcomes and measures of success, strengthen links with various sectors, the skills, capabilities, flexibility and stability of the staff team was recognised by all as a strength of the Board.
6. A 'fact finding' visit has been undertaken to the Cotswolds Conservation Board on 10<sup>th</sup> February.
7. The visit had been insightful and the discussions useful. There would be potential benefits in closer joint working on a number of issues.
8. Further work is planned and a review group meeting in March will consider emerging issues from the work to date. Interim recommendations will be prepared for the Board and the approach of the next phase will start to take shape.

The Committee provided comment and views on the progress and the emerging issues. The Acting Chief Officer was commended on the progress and the work done to date.

1. **The Committee NOTED the progress of the Review to date and provided feedback on the emerging themes.**

#### **14/15-42. Item 12 HS2 – update on Chilterns Long Tunnel proposal.**

The Acting Chief Officer introduced the final draft report on the Chilterns Long tunnel (CLT) proposal. The report concludes that the CLT would have far less impact on the Government's proposed scheme for the Chilterns or the previous 'Green route' proposal.

Ray Payne gave a presentation of the key points of the proposed approach including background information on the proposal and he provided recent drawings. The work packages which the statutory partners have commissioned are:

- a. Chilterns Long Tunnel
- b. Analysis of Risk
- c. Environmental Assessment
- d. Proofs of evidence
- e. Economic Evaluation for CDC
- f. Second edition of the Non-Market Effect Report.

The meeting was asked to consider:

1. The principle of a continuous Chilterns Tunnel between the A4009 north of Wendover and the M25.
2. 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 various distances.

3. That the CLT would be a continuous tunnel to conserve the AONB 'edge to edge'. A tunnel of that length will require 6 surface ventilation shafts with associated head houses that will have to be accommodated in the AONB.
4. The required hosting of an underground firefighting point in the AONB, ( this became legislation 01/01/15).
5. The north portal of the tunnel will be in the AONB south of the A4009.

The Committee discussed in depth the north portal, the surface ventilation shafts and the associated head houses acknowledging that they would be subject to planning matters. Location and design of the various elements of the proposal were discussed. An international design competition was mentioned as a consideration. The meeting considered recommending the CLT, the north portal, the 6 surface ventilation shafts and the firefighting point located in the AONB subject to location, design and using the geology to its most appropriate effect.

Ray Payne was thanked by the Committee for his informative presentation and for the enormous effort he has contributed to this project on behalf of the Board.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the proposals for the Chilterns Long Tunnel and associated issues and provided feedback to the proposal.**
- 2. The Committee APPROVED the proposed approach.**
- 3. The Committee unanimously RESOLVED to APPROVE the Chilterns Long Tunnel proposal in principle including the hosting of the north portal, the 6 ventilation shafts and the underground firefighting point subject to location, design and the most appropriate use of AONB geological features.**
- 4. The Committee AGREED to recommend the Chilterns Long Tunnel proposal to the Board as outlined in the presentation.**

**14/15-43. Next meeting:**

**Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2015 at 10.30 am at the offices in Chinnor**

**Future meeting dates:** Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2015 and Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015

The meeting closed at 12.30

The Chairman.....

Date.....