



**NOTES OF THE BRIEFING FOR THE CONSERVATION BOARD FOR THE
CHILTERN'S AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY**

Held by remote video conferencing on Tuesday 7th December 2021 at 10.00am.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Appointed by Local Authorities

Cllr David Bartholomew
Cllr Robert Carington
Cllr Paul Duckett
Cllr Carl Jackson
Cllr Steve Jarvis
Cllr Lynn Lloyd
Cllr Peter Martin
Cllr Richard Newcombe
Cllr Reena Ranger
Cllr Robert Roche
Cllr Philip Williams

Appointing Body

Oxfordshire County Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Central Bedfordshire Council
Buckinghamshire Council
North Hertfordshire District Council
South Oxfordshire District Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Hertfordshire County Council
Luton Borough Council
Three Rivers District Council

Appointed by the Secretary of State

Colin Courtney
Alison Doggett
Geeta Ludhra
Paul Mainds
John Nicholls
John Shaw
Ian Waller
Elizabeth Wilson

Secretary of State
Secretary of State
Secretary of State
Secretary of State- Chairman
Secretary of State- Deputy-Chairman
Secretary of State
Secretary of State
Secretary of State

Elected by Parish Councils

Cllr John Griffin
Cllr John Harfield
Cllr Charles Hussey
Cllr Sue Rowland
Cllr Sir Hector Sants
Cllr Adrian Watney

Oxfordshire
Bedfordshire
Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire
Buckinghamshire
Hertfordshire

CCB Officers

Allen Beechey
Kath Daly

Chalk Streams Project Officer
Countryside Officer

Elaine King
Graham Hurst
Claire Readey
Matt Thomson
Donna Webb

Chief Executive Officer
Finance Officer (S151 Officer)
Development and Funding Manager
Planner
Administration Officer

Other

Deirdre Hansen
Amber Inman

Clerk to the Board
Coordination and Engagement Lead,
Natural Environment, Trees and
Landscape Directorate, Defra
Chairman Chiltern Society
The Lee Parish Councillor

Simon Kearney
Cllr Colin Sully- in part

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and made note of the two latest members to join the Board, Sir Hector Sants, elected by Buckinghamshire Parish Councils and John Harfield elected by Bedfordshire Parish Councils.

He asked all attendees to introduce themselves.

21/22.20 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Andrea Baughan, Buckinghamshire Council, Cllr Carl Jackson, Buckinghamshire Council and Cllr Phil McDowell, Dacorum Borough Council.

21/22.21 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Robert Carington made a personal declaration of interest as a partner of Carington Estates, who have made a bid under the Farming in Protected Landscapes Scheme administered by the CCB.

21/22.22 Notice of Urgent Business

The Chairman will comment on committee membership

21/22.23 Minutes of the previous Board Meeting 7th September 2021.

The minutes were reviewed, and in item 21/22.12 fourth paragraph 'includes' was amended to read 'include' and 'protective' was amended to read 'protected'.

21/22.24 Chairman's Update

The Chairman reported on his activities since the September meeting and highlighted the following:

1. The Government's response to the Glover Review is expected soon.
2. Board Engagement: all Board vacancies have been filled. Today's briefing should have been face to face, but current Covid conditions have made a virtual briefing the most sensible option for Board members to meet.
3. He would like to take hybrid meetings forward and the technology is being reviewed. Legislation at present does not allow for hybrid formal meetings, but he is progressing this with Defra.
4. SharePoint for board members is being worked on.

5. In September he had to deal with the request from Defra of the appraisal system for the Secretary of State appointees to the CCB. None of the other Board members fall under this system. It turned out to be an onerous task. We are awaiting confirmation of Secretary of State re-appointments and one new appointment in June 2022.
6. With more than a third of the membership leaving the Board at the May elections Committee membership has had to be reviewed for the two standing committees appointed at the AGM. Cllr Sir Hector Sants and Cllr Richard Newcombe have agreed to join the Executive Committee. It is noted that committee membership is concentrated in the south and centre of the Chilterns. He asked members to consider joining committees in the future.
7. He acknowledged the Deputy Chairman's work on the Governance Review and thanked all engaged in the review to date.
8. He had met with Professor Simon Mortimer, Head of the School of Agriculture, Policy and Development at Reading University. A previous CCB Board member, who would like to re-engage.
9. Co-option to the Board is to be considered to expand expertise and to increase the links with our stakeholders.
10. He attended the Chilterns Building Design Awards ceremony.
11. He had attended a Cotswolds AONB Board meeting and together with the CEO will be meeting their CEO and Chairman in the new year.
12. He had attended one of the Chiltern Rangers workdays.
13. He had attended the National AONBs conference, it had been a useful day and he had made many useful contacts. An emphasis from Lord Deben on the day had been on health and wellbeing, including doing more to celebrate the aesthetics of the landscapes.
14. He had a meeting with the Museum of Rural Life in Reading, who are interested in closer working with the Board.
15. He had attended a Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) 'online 'meeting, thanks to Ian Waller, the FiPL Officer and the Countryside Officer for their work and involvement in this important work.
16. He introduced an important on item "Equality, Diversity and Inclusion". He expressed thanks to Geeta Ludhra, who agreed to chair this and to both John Shaw and Reena Ranger. This is an important step forward and members were invited to join a working party being set up. Cllr Robert Roche offered to join the working party.

All in all, it had been a busy time.

21/22.25 Board Review

The Chief Executive Officer had provided a comprehensive overview of the team's activities and achievement since the last Board meeting in September. Highlighting the following items:

1. Glover Review: The Government will be publishing a consultation early in the new year. The CEO and other AONBs are meeting to consider the AONBs responses. The CCB will respond, and the CEO will work with the NAAONBs on their response. We have a lot of expertise to offer.
2. Natural England: Boundary extension and exploring improved management and governance arrangements - our governance review will be helpful to increase efficiency.

3. A working group being set up including Geeta Ludhra and Cllr Robert Roche on inclusion and diversity will be a great help in this work. They were both thanked.
4. Defra has been impressed with the diversity of candidates who have applied for the Secretary of State vacancy. The CEO and Geeta Ludhra are working with Defra, who are keen to learn from the CCB on this success.
5. The CEO thank the staff team for their hard work, she noted that everyone is continuing to work hard and achieve a great deal in unusual circumstances.

The Board thanked the team.

1. The Board NOTED the report.

21/22.26 Business Plan Update

The CEO updated the Board on the progress and the timetable for developing the CCB 2022-23 Business Plan.

This year the CCB is taking a longer-term approach rather than focussing on a one-year period as in previous years. A workshop will be held online 11/01/22 for Board members and staff.

1. The Committee NOTED the Business Plan process and timetable.

21/22.27 Finance and Budget Planning

The Finance Officer had provided a comprehensive finance report on activities up to the end of October 2021.

1. Core income received (including a legacy from a former volunteer) was £380,962.
2. The twice half yearly grant from Defra has been received in full £ 448,203. Local authorities have been slow at paying with only half their contributions received to date.
3. Core expenditure for the period was £321,361 in line with expectations.
4. Project income received for the period was £911,349 in line with expectations.
5. Project expenditure was £441,231. There are shortfalls relating to expenditure not yet claimed back and surpluses relating to expenditure yet to be incurred but grants received in advance.

Budget and 5-year plan:

A draft budget and 5-year plan was presented, which had already been discussed at the Executive Committee meeting in November. The draft budget has been approached in such a way that staff can facilitate what the Board wants it to achieve. It was noted that current core funding does not allow the CCB to deliver all the work it wants and needs to do.

The Board discussed the draft budget and the 5-year plan.

The Chairman complimented the Finance Officer on presenting the figures in a comprehensive, but simple way.

Audit Report:

The external audit report was issued 23 September 2021. No matters had come to their attention giving cause for concern that the relevant legislation and regulatory requirements had not been met. There are no matters which they wish to draw to the attention of the Board.

- 1. The Board NOTED the financial position 31 October 2021.**
- 2. The Board NOTED the CCB budget discussion paper.**
- 3. The Board considered the Audit report 2020-21.**

21/22.28 Income Generation

The Funding and Development Manager had provided a comprehensive report. She explained a new funding opportunity through the Buckinghamshire Council's Community Boards, and work on a collaborative funding application with Buckinghamshire Council.

The Board discussed continued funding with a multistranded approach.

The Chairman thanked the Funding and Development Manager for all her work and the report produced.

- 1. The Board NOTED the report.**

11.10 Geeta Ludhra left the briefing.

21/22.29 Governance Review

The Deputy Chairman as Chairman of the Governance Review Task and Finish Group presented a report on Part 3 of the Governance Review.

The Task and Finish Group (T&FG) had looked at the structure and workings of the Board and Committees.

It considered short term changes that can be made without changes to statute and longer-term changes to advocate to Defra and Natural England (NE). It recommends that amendments to our Code of Governance (standing orders) need to be considered. It is acknowledged that further work will include researching relevant experiences elsewhere.

The report recommends a 'direction of travel' towards a two-tier structure for the Board, as well as a name change for the Executive Committee to avoid confusion with the executive staff team, as well as some structural changes to the way the Planning Committee operates.

There is an opportunity to influence and take account of the national picture for AONBs, through Defra considering its response to the Glover Review and the CCB working with NE on its designations programme, which includes exploring management and governance arrangements.

The Board discussed the recommendations at length and supported the recommendations.

Amber Inman, Defra, commented that Defra encourages the kind of thinking that the CCB is engaged in at present. She explained that legislative and governance circumstances for different protected landscapes varies. Defra is encouraging flexibility and will be keen to hear the CCB's views.

The Chairman and Deputy Chairman will get together to highlight the next actions and the Deputy Chairman will set out a scoping paper for the T&FG.

- 1. The Board ENDORSED areas where immediate change can be made, instructing the T&F group to draft changes to the Code of Governance.**
- 2. The Board ENDORSED areas where more work is needed and the basic principles to be pursued. Instructing the T&F group to report in more detail to a future Board meeting.**
- 3. The Board ENDORSED the principles to be pursued by the staff team in their discussions with Defra and NE in the longer term.**

12.00 Cllr Colin Scully joined the meeting

21/22.30 HS2 Engagement and update.

CCB staff had presented a full report on engagement of the CCB with the HS2 project and the current focus of staff involvement.

The Board is asked to consider the CCB's ongoing opposition in principle to the scheme and to set out the mitigation process.

The Countryside Officer gave a short slide presentation introducing the current position on HS2. She gave a brief insight into the history and background of the CCB's work and involvement with HS2. The CCB has sought to influence Parliament and the HS2 Select Committee through opposing the scheme and advocating a hierarchy of mitigation for the scheme routed in its statutory duty. Suggestions for alternative tunnels had also been made.

From 2010 there has been a lot of direct involvement by CCB staff and Board members.

The Chalk Streams Project Officer showed the damage caused by the HS2 project to the River Misbourne and highlighted concerns over the aquifer. The tunnelling is having a far-reaching impact both in physical damage and pollution incidents.

The Conservation and Landscape Officer showed examples from the Chiltern Society's picture diary, highlighting concerns over designs. With the help from local parish councils and Cllr Peter Martin the CCB can hold HS2 to their own design standards.

The CCB along with others have questioned HS2 about design that required extensive tree felling and the parties have been successful in having design changed in some circumstances thereby saving trees (e.g., Leather Lane). Tree felling not only impacts

the landscape features but wildlife too. Permanent structures can be sympathetically designed to minimise their impact on the environment.

Ian Waller gave a slide presentation showing farmland affected, woodland being taken out and fields lost. He noted that the CCB had done very well saving trees along Leather Lane. Mitigation has been good, but more land has been taken from farmers and more fields lost than envisaged, with no compensation having been paid to those farmers affected.

The Chairman thanked all contributors. He commented that the paper and the presentations made clear the huge impact of the HS2 work in the Chilterns and confirmed the CCB's opposition to HS2.

Board members asked how they could help and engage with this work.

It was noted that the cancellation of the northern route weakens the business case for HS2.

The Lee Parish Councillor Colin Scully showed photographs of the impact of construction activities, both visually and environmentally. He informed the Board that local parish councils are holding HS2 to account. Working together is key. Some designs are not yet complete, and it is important to try to mitigate the impacts of designs on the landscape.

Parish Councils, the CCB and Buckinghamshire Council are working together to hold the contractors to account.

It was noted that the CCB has great strength in pointing out environmental disasters that are on the way.

The paper and the presentations were discussed at length. It was noted that the CCB is not campaigning but driving conversations to ask questions. The CCB has a responsibility to protect and enhance.

12.47 the Planner left the meeting.

- 1. The Board NOTED the paper and CONFIRMED the CCB's ongoing opposition in principle to the scheme and the current focus of the CCB's activities.**

21/22.31 Urgent business

The Chairman informed members that Cllr Richard Newcombe and Sir Hector Sants had come forward to join the Executive Committee. A future Board meeting will endorse these appointments.

The Chairman thanked all for attending and thanked the staff for all their work.

Future meetings

<u>Full Board</u>	1 March 2022 14 June 2022 plus AGM 6 September 2022 6 December 2022
<u>Executive Committee</u>	1 February 2022 3 May 2022 2 August 2022 1 November 2022
<u>Planning Committee</u>	12 January 2022 13 April 2022 12 July 2022 11 October 2022

The Chairman.....

Date.....