



Members of the Chilterns Conservation Board for the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are hereby summoned to a meeting of the full Chilterns Conservation Board on

7 September 2021 at 10.00 am
Bledlow Ridge Village Hall, Chinnor Road, Bledlow Ridge, HP14 4AJ

Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Notice of AOB
4. Notes of Previous Board Briefing 23 June 2021
5. Minutes of Previous Meetings (Annual General Meeting 21 April 2021 and Extraordinary Meeting 24 June 2021)
6. Chairman's update
7. Code of Conduct
8. Board member engagement
9. Matters Arising
10. Public Question Time
11. Finance
12. Income generation
13. Board Review
14. Landscapes Review
15. Presentation by Tom Beeston, CEO at the Chiltern Society
16. Any other business

Future Meetings:

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| <u>Full Board</u> | 7 September 2021 7 December 2021 1 March 2022 14 June 2022 |
| <u>Executive Committee</u> | 10 August 2021 2 November 2021 1 February 2022 |

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|---------------------------|---|
| | 3 May 2022 |
| <u>Planning Committee</u> | 14 July 2021 13 October 2021 12 January 2022 13 April 2022 |



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

Held by remote video conferencing on Wednesday 23rd June 2021 at 10.00am

MEMBERS PRESENT

Appointed by Local Authorities

Cllr Andrea Baughan
Cllr Robert Carington
Cllr Paul Duckett
Cllr Carl Jackson
Cllr Steve Jarvis
Cllr. Lynn Lloyd
Cllr Richard Newcombe
Cllr Phillip Williams

Appointing Body

Buckinghamshire Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Central Bedfordshire Council,
Buckinghamshire Council
North Hertfordshire District Council
South Oxfordshire District Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Three Rivers District Council

Appointed by Secretary of State

Colin Courtney
Alison Doggett
Paul Mains
John Nicholls
John Shaw
Elizabeth Wilson

Secretary of State
Secretary of State
Secretary of State
Secretary of State
Secretary of State
Secretary of State

Elected by Parish Councils

Cllr John Griffin
Cllr Charles Hussey
Cllr Sue Rowland

Oxfordshire
Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire

CCB Officers

Lynne Cordice
Elaine King
Graham Hurst
Claire Readey

Administration Officer
Chief Executive Officer
Finance Officer
Development and Funding Manager

Other:

Deirdre Hansen

Clerk to the Board

The Chairman opened the briefing and welcomed all present.
All members were invited to introduce themselves.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Alison Balfour-Lynn, Hertfordshire Parish Councils and Ian Waller, Secretary of State Appointee.

Absent without notice: Cllr Peter Martin, Buckinghamshire Council and Cllr Phil McDowell, Dacorum Borough Council

2. Notice of AOB

The Chairman notified everyone present that the Finance Officer would go through the Annual Governance Statement and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2020-21 to be approve at the EOM on Thursday 24th June.

3. Chairman's Update

The Chairman took up the post at the AGM 21 April. In recent weeks he has been talking to Staff and Board members, visiting farmers and farm clusters, visiting the "Mend the Gap" programme manager.

He also attended a Defra meeting for Arms Length Bodies chaired by Tamara Finkelstein, Permanent Secretary at Defra. Items covered at this meeting included "online meetings" which have ceased from 7th May, the CCB has now submitted a response to the "Call for Evidence"- a government survey on public bodies' views on the use of online meetings. Conflicts of interest in government bodies' such as ours was also discussed. In this regard, the CCB is updating its declaration of acceptance of office and the members register of interest.

All members have been sent the new documents and have been asked to complete them. It is a legal obligation to do so and for the CCB to publish the members register of interest on its website. This will be done as soon as possible, and the Chairman is due to report on progress at the next Defra meeting in September.

The Chairman is anxious to make sure that the board members are given more opportunity to make a greater contribution to the board's work and in general to improve the links between board members and staff.

He has used the following acronym as a way of simply summarising the roles of a board member:

S- support
C-connect
O-oversight
R-react (help)
E-enjoy (all members are volunteers)

He talked about his "project reset", which he has developed with board members and the senior team:

1. Linking with the team. 30 September 2021 an away day for the Board to see some projects and interests on the ground. *(Subsequently this date to be reviewed)*
2. Induction for new members. A new clear process in three stages is being developed: 1. Welcome from the Chairman, 2. Introduction and detail from the CEO, 3. Introduction to official documents, website etc.

3. Increased frequency of meetings, 4 Board meetings p.a. and 4 meetings p.a. for the Executive and Planning Committees. All fitted into a cycle.
4. Clearer budgeting and business- planning. This is all about running the organisation as opposed to the management plan: with its five-year timescale.
5. Money: We should have a more visible project funding pipeline. The CCB is good at raising money, but we also have a responsibility to look forward and board members need to be both aware and more involved. The Development and Funding manager has produced a draft report, which will be circulated to board members in due course. The Chairman will meet with her to discuss an income generation strategy.
6. Draft minutes will be circulated more promptly.
7. Meetings to include staff presentations and stake holder presentations.
8. The Chairman is discussing with the Administration Officer ways of electronic sharing of documents for Board member to make life more efficient.
9. It is intended to set up a structure to make the best use of Board member skills, interest and time. This will allow people to play a bigger part. The Vice-Chairman is working on and will distribute a skills audit for members to complete.
10. The terms of reference and membership for both Human Resources and the Governance Review Group are under discussion.
11. The wider Committee structure needs review
12. Finally, time should be allocated at a future meeting to discuss how a longer-term vision document might be developed articulating what we think the future of the Chilterns should be with perhaps a twenty-five- or thirty-year horizon. This will enable us to look beyond the management plan and not simply be reacting.

He wanted to bring all members up to date.

The CCB is fortunate to have the team of staff that it does. They are very competent, hardworking with an enormous amount of patience. We need to help them to get back to a normal way of life.

There were no questions.

4. Chief Executive's Review- including Reports from the Executive and Planning Committees and an update on the Landscapes Review.

The CEO remarked that she was looking forward to working with the Chairman in the future.

She had presented a full report with the agenda.

Highlights were mentioned:

1. The team is still working from home.
2. The office is being redecorated
3. The team have worked brilliantly over the past year or so. They have done an enormous amount of work during lockdown and have been very productive.
4. The Development and Funding Manager gave an update on funding streams and partnership working.
5. The CEO mentioned the soft influencing work that takes place at a local and national level, which gives the CCB greater visibility and influence, for example through her role on the Defra Contact Group looking at implementing the Glover

- Review proposals and is working strategically with other national organisations and the AONB family.
6. Bucks is one of the five Government Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilots, working with Buckinghamshire Council and other partners.
 7. A Government announcement will be made tomorrow, and the CEO has arranged a Members Q&A session (Thursday 24th 3-4pm). Following the Written Ministerial Statement, the CCB will issue a press release and write to local authorities, MPs and key partners and stakeholders. The Government statement will require Board discussion.
 8. The Government is launching its Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, which will support our work with farmers to deliver environmental outcomes.
 9. The CCB is recruiting a Business Support Officer and a Farming Engagement Officer. Members were asked to share the job adverts and support the recruitment.

The Chairman asked that the board's thanks be sent to the whole team; the work they have done is impressive and their hard work is much appreciated.

5. Finance Officer- Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2020-21

The Finance Officer explained that the AGAR is required by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and subject to audit once it has been approved by the Board and subsequently published on the CCB's website.

The AGAR has to be approved at a face-to-face meeting, hence the EOM 24th June to approve the AGAR.

The additional papers showing detailed accounts are commercial- in confidence and not for public display as they would allow access to individual salaries.

The Finance officer gave explanations of the results and brought the following to members attention:

1. The Annual Governance statement is about the internal controls the CCB has in place to function correctly. He is meeting with the internal auditors later this week.
2. The Accounting statement of the AGAR is prepared under local government accounting principles which do not recognise deferred income and therefore income is recognised when funds are received rather than earned.
3. The yearend position shows an overall excess of expenditure totalling £13,339. This has been taken from reserves.
4. The £49K surplus from Core business is due to Buckinghamshire Council making an advance payment, this distorts the figures as the AGAR does not recognise advance payment.
5. Most of the reserves are restricted reserves. As an organisation we cannot make a "surplus". The majority of our reserves is the Mend the Gap money.
6. All money received is spent, but the timing may not always align.
7. Core business is funded by Defra and Local Authorities. All projects are self-funded.
8. Budgeting has been difficult as this year we did not know what the Defra settlement would be until the financial year had started.
9. Our main costs are staff costs.
10. The internal auditors have 100% visibility of all our accounts.

Members had the opportunity for questions.

CCB Board Briefing Notes

Wednesday 23rd June 2021

The only question was on the interest rate received. The majority of the interest is credited to the Mend the Gap project.

The Chairman thanked the Finance Officer for all the work that he does and the successful change of accounting system from Sage to Xero.

The Chairman.....

Date.....



**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE CONSERVATION BOARD
FOR THE CHILTERN'S AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY**

Held by remote video conferencing on Wednesday 21st April 2021 at 10.00am

MEMBERS PRESENT

Appointed by Local Authorities

Cllr Andrea Baughan
Cllr Paul Duckett
Cllr. Lynn Lloyd
Cllr Charles Mathew
Cllr Hugh McCarthy
Cllr Phil McDowell
Cllr Richard Newcombe
Cllr Ian Reay
Cllr Nick Rose
Cllr Phillip Williams

Appointing Body

Buckinghamshire Council
Central Bedfordshire Council,
South Oxfordshire District Council
Oxfordshire County Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Dacorum Borough Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Hertfordshire County Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Three Rivers District Council

Appointed by the Secretary of State

Colin Courtney
Alison Doggett
Paul Mains
John Nicholls
John Shaw
Ian Waller
Elizabeth Wilson

Secretary of State
Secretary of State
Secretary of State
Secretary of State
Secretary of State
Secretary of State
Secretary of State

Elected by Parish Councils

Cllr John Griffin
Cllr Charles Hussey

Oxfordshire
Buckinghamshire

CCB Officers

Elaine King
Graham Hurst

Chief Executive Officer
Finance Officer

Other:

Deirdre Hansen
Dan Turner
Ray Payne

Clerk to the Board
Trustee Chiltern Society
Member of the public

The Chief Executive Officer opened the meeting and welcomed all present.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Steve Jarvis, North Hertfordshire District Council, Cllr Peter Martin, Buckinghamshire Council.

Absent without notice: Cllr Alison Balfour-Lynn, Hertfordshire Parish Councils.

2. Election of Chairman

There had been one nomination for the post.

The Board RESOLVED that PAUL MAINDS be elected Chairman of the Board for the ensuing year.

PAUL MAINDS took the CHAIR.

The Board congratulated him on his election, and he thanked the members for electing him.

3. Election of Deputy Chairman

There had been one nomination for the post.

The Board RESOLVED that John Nicholls be elected Deputy Chairman of the Board for the ensuing year.

He thanked the members for electing him.

The Chairman noted that this meeting is Ian Reay's, outgoing Chairman, last Board meeting he is standing down as councillor. The Chairman thanked Ian for his long years of contributions to the Board, his wise council and his years as Chairman of the Board. He will be missed.

Ian replied that his 18 years with the Board had been his most enjoyable of his 30 years of public service. He has seen the CCB grow, and the profile being raised in particular under the recent CEO. He thanked the CEO and the staff for their hard work. The CEO and staff had adapted very well to the conditions brought about by the Covid pandemic and have been very successful managing the increased workload.

He commented that the CCB had been the most effective organisation he has been involved in.

The CEO thanked Ian Reay and Ray Payne for their support and assistance first as a new Board member and then as the CEO. Both have been very generous with their knowledge and time, and it is due to their support that the bid for National Park status is still alive. She thanked them both from the staff and her personal perspective.

The CEO noted that the late Cheryl Gillan MP's support for the CCB has been vital and invaluable, she will be missed. The support that the late Cllr Bill Bendyshe-Brown gave the CCB was also given credit.

Cllrs Charles Mathew, Hugh McCarthy and Nick Rose, who are all standing down from their councils were thanked for their work for the CCB.

The CEO is looking forward to working with the new Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

When meeting in the same room, leaving gifts would normally be presented to members at their last meeting, but now under Covid conditions Chilterns hampers will be delivered by the CEO to the departing members. They thanked the Board and said they had all had enjoyed their time with the CCB.

The Chairman added his thanks to Ian and Ray, saying that it is a great opportunity to be taking over after all their hard work.

4. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

5. Minutes of the meeting 26th June 2019.

The Chairman explained the notation of the CEO under 'others present' in the minutes. She had stood down as a Secretary of State member of the CCB but had not yet commenced her appointment as CEO of the CCB. The minutes of the meeting of 26 June 2019 were recorded as a true record.

6. Election of Members to the Executive Committee

Due to the imminent large changes to Board membership the Chairman suggested that the remaining existing members of the Executive Committee be reappointed and once the new members have joined the Board more members will be appointed or elected as appropriate.

The Board RESOLVED that the following members were appointed to the Executive Committee:

Secretary of State Representatives

Alison Doggett

Paul Mainds

John Nicholls

John Shaw

Local Authority Representatives

Cllr Lynn Lloyd

Parish Council Representatives

Cllr John Griffin

Cllr Charles Hussey

7. Election of members to the Planning Committee

Due to the imminent large changes to Board membership the Chairman suggested that the remaining existing members of the Planning Committee be reappointed and once the new members have joined the Board more members will be appointed or elected as appropriate

The Board RESOLVED that the following members were appointed to the Planning Committee:

Secretary of State Representatives
Colin Courtney
John Nicholls
Elizabeth Wilson

Local Authority Representatives
Cllr Lynn Lloyd
Cllr Richard Newcombe

Parish Council Representatives
Cllr Alison Balfour-Lynn
Cllr Charles Hussey (interim)

8. Code of Governance

Ray Payne, Acting Deputy Chairman, had presented a revised Code of Governance which can only be approved by the Board's AGM. The revised third edition is a copy free of grammatical, formatting, style, clarity and ambiguity error. Some numerical errors have been found post publication of the agenda. These will be put right. The Code of Governance distils the significant elements of legislation and is written in a way to use for the purpose of the Board. Members asked for some clarification, which will be checked.

The Board APPROVED the third edition of the Code of Governance, subject to the final alterations.

9. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was agreed as 22 June 2022

The Chairman.....

Date.....



**MINUTES OF THE EXTRA ORDINARY MEETING OF THE CONSERVATION BOARD
FOR THE CHILTERN'S AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY**

Held on Thursday 24th June 2021 at Woodend, Marlow at 6.00pm

MEMBERS PRESENT

Appointed by Local Authorities

Cllr Lynn Lloyd
Cllr Phillip Williams

Appointing Body

South Oxfordshire District Council
Three Rivers District Council

Appointed by the Secretary of State

Paul Mains
John Nicholls

Secretary of State
Secretary of State

Elected by Parish Councils

Cllr John Griffin
Cllr Charles Hussey
Cllr Sue Rowland

Oxfordshire
Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire

CCB Officers

Graham Hurst

Finance Officer (S151 Officer)

Other:

Deirdre Hansen

Clerk to the Board

21/22.1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Alison Balfour-Lynn, Hertfordshire Parish Councils, Cllr Andrea Baughan, Buckinghamshire Council, Cllr Robert Carington, Buckinghamshire Council, Colin Courtney, Secretary of State appointee, Alison Doggett, Secretary of State appointee, Cllr Paul Duckett, Central Bedfordshire Council, Cllr Carl Jackson, Buckinghamshire Council, Cllr Steve Jarvis, North Hertfordshire District Council, Cllr Peter Martin, Buckinghamshire Council, Cllr Phil McDowell, Dacorum Borough Council, Cllr Richard Newcombe, Buckinghamshire Council, John Shaw, Secretary of State appointee, Ian Waller, Secretary of State appointee and Elizabeth Wilson, Secretary of State appointee.

21/22.2 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

21/22.3 The Annual Governance Statement 2020-21 as part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2020-21

The Finance Officer had presented the Annual Governance Statements 2020-21. It was approved by the Board and signed in the appropriate places by the Chairman and the Clerk.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the Annual Governance Statement included in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2020/21**

21/22.4 The Accounting Statement 2020-21 as part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR- 2020-21).

The Finance Officer had presented the Accounting Statement 2020-21. It was approved by the Board and signed in the appropriate places by the Chairman and the S151 Officer.

- 2. The Board APPROVED the Accounting Statement included in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2020/21.**

The Chairman.....

Date.....



Item 7

CHILTERN'S CONSERVATION BOARD CODE OF CONDUCT

Explanatory Note for Authority Members

By law, all Members and co-opted Members are required to follow the Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) Code of Conduct when acting in their capacity as a Member. The Code set out below has been adopted by the CCB to fulfil its obligations under section 27(2) of the Localism Act 2011 and is consistent with the following principles of public life as set out in the Act:

SELFLESSNESS

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits.

INTEGRITY

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

OBJECTIVITY

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

OPENNESS

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

HONESTY

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

LEADERSHIP

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

If a Member has any doubt about whether any action he or she proposes to take may be in breach of the Code, he or she should seek advice beforehand from the Monitoring Officer or

Deputy Monitoring Officer. However, please remember that responsibility for a Member's actions remains at all times with that Member.

Anyone who considers a Member has failed to comply with this Code may make a formal complaint about that Member. The CCB has procedures for dealing with complaints. If a complaint is upheld, this may lead to formal censure, adverse publicity ("naming and shaming"), or the CCB removing the Member concerned from a Committee or other position.

This explanatory note does not form part of the Code.

CHILTERNNS CONSERVATION BOARD

CODE OF CONDUCT

PART 1: GENERAL OBLIGATIONS

Whenever a Member is acting in his or her capacity as a Member or co-opted Member they:

1. must treat others with respect.
2. must not use, or try to use, their position improperly to obtain an advantage or disadvantage for themselves or any other person or body.
3. must not use the CCB's resources improperly for political purposes or any other purposes forbidden by the CCB.
4. must not do anything that compromises, or is likely to compromise, the impartiality of those who work for the CCB and recognise that officers are employed by and serve the whole authority.
5. must not bully anyone.

(Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting or humiliating behaviour that is directed at someone over whom they have some actual or potential influence).

6. must not intimidate, or try to intimidate, anyone who has complained about them or who may be involved with a complaint about them.
7. must not disclose information that they know, or ought to know, is confidential, without authority or a legitimate reason.
8. must not prevent, or try to prevent, anyone from obtaining information to which they are entitled by law.
9. must not do anything that may cause the CCB to breach any of the Equality laws that prohibit discrimination on grounds such as age, sex, race, disability, religion/belief, sexual orientation or pregnancy.
10. when making decisions on behalf of or part of the CCB, must have regard to any relevant advice provided to them by the CCB's Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer, where such advice is offered pursuant to his or her statutory duties.

PART 2: REGISTRATION AND DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

A. Disclosable Pecuniary and other Interests

1. Every Member must, within 28 days of becoming a Member or co-opted Member, or of the Code being adopted, notify the CCB's Deputy Monitoring Officer of any disclosable pecuniary and other interest as set out in Part 2A, paragraph 6 of the Code below, where the pecuniary interest is the Member's, the spouse or civil partner of the Member, or is the pecuniary interest of somebody with whom the Member is living as a husband or wife, or as if he or she were civil partners, and where the Member is aware that that other person has that interest.

2. All disclosable pecuniary interests, whether already entered into the Register of Interests or not, in any matter being considered at a meeting of the CCB, committee, sub-committee, panel or other group at which the Member is present, must be disclosed to the meeting, except where the matter is a 'sensitive interest'.¹ Where the interest is a 'sensitive interest', the Member must disclose merely *the fact that* he or she has a disclosable pecuniary interest in the matter concerned.

¹ A 'sensitive interest' is described in the Localism Act 2011 as a member or co-opted member of an authority having an interest, and the nature of the interest being such that the member or co-opted member, and the authority's Monitoring Officer, consider that disclosure of the details of the interest could lead to the member or co-opted member, or a person connected with the member or co-opted member, being subject to violence or intimidation.

3. Where a Member has a disclosable pecuniary interest in any matter being considered at a meeting of the CCB, or one of its committees, sub-committees or panels he or she must not participate in discussion of, or vote on, that matter, and must withdraw from the room where the meeting is being held, unless dispensation has been obtained from the CCB's Monitoring Officer. However, this does not prevent a Member from making representations on the matter to the meeting in accordance, where appropriate, with the CCB's public speaking procedures, provided that he or she withdraws from the room when those representations are concluded and before any discussion or vote takes place.

4. Following any disclosure of an interest not on the CCB's register of interests maintained by the Deputy Monitoring Officer, or the subject of pending notification, you must notify the Deputy Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days beginning with the date of disclosure.

5. The following sub-paragraphs (i) to (vii) provide a summary of disclosable pecuniary interests that must be disclosed in accordance with Part 2A paragraph 1 above:

(i) Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation - Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.

(ii) Sponsorship - Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the CCB), including payments from a trade union, in respect of any expenses incurred in carrying out duties as a Member or towards election expenses. Sponsorship payments are disclosable where they were made within the twelfth months prior to the time that you make a notification of the interest.

(iii) Contracts - Any contract that has not yet been discharged for the provision of goods or services or the execution of works that is made between the CCB and a Member (or a relevant person or a body in which that Member or a relevant person has a beneficial interest)

(iv) Land - Any beneficial interest in land within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

(v) Licences - Any licence to occupy land in the Chilterns AONB for a month or longer.

(vi) Corporate tenancies - Any tenancy where the tenant is a body in which a Member or a relevant person has a beneficial interest.

(vii) Securities - Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where:

(a) a Member is aware that that body has a place of business or land in the Chilterns AONB; and

(b) either:

- (i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or
- (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

Fuller details of disclosable pecuniary interests can be found in The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 (2012 No. 1464), and any amendments to those Regulations.

6. Members shall notify any changes to the interests referred to in this Part A to the Deputy Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the change occurring, and the Deputy Monitoring Officer will amend the Register accordingly.

B. Other Personal interests- Members only

1. All Members shall disclose to the Deputy Monitoring Officer their membership, or position of general control or management, of:

- (a) any body to which the CCB has appointed or nominated them; or
- (b) any body exercising functions of a public nature; or
- (c) any body directed to charitable purposes; or
- (d) any body, one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy;
- (e) Professional Associations
- (f) Freemasonry group or similar

2. Members shall disclose to the Deputy Monitoring Officer a gift and hospitality worth more than an estimated value of £50 which has been received by virtue of their office including brief details of gift/hospitality received.

3. And Members shall also disclose to the Deputy Monitoring Officer any other interest that they consider may be perceived to influence their decision making on a particular item of business.

4. The Deputy Monitoring Officer shall record all such disclosures in a Register of Interests. The Register shall be open to public inspection and will be published on our website. Members shall notify any changes to the interests referred to in this paragraph to the Deputy Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the change occurring, and the Deputy Monitoring Officer will amend the Register accordingly.

5. Any Member who has a non-pecuniary interest within the meaning of this Code of Conduct, in any matter being considered at a meeting of the CCB, or of one of its committees or panels, shall disclose the existence and nature of that interest to the meeting. The disclosure shall be at the beginning of the consideration of the matter, or as soon as the interest becomes apparent.

6. A Member may speak and vote unless their interest in a particular item of business is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgment of the public interest. In these circumstances, the Member may make representations on the matter to the meeting, in accordance, where appropriate, with the CCB's public speaking procedures, provided that they withdraw from the room when those representations are concluded and before any discussion or vote takes place.

Proposed steps

Several initial steps are proposed below.

- i) **Induction.** A revised induction process has been developed over the summer. On appointment, Paul will welcome Board members by email and arrange a 1 to 1 introductory meeting, in addition to providing an induction pack. Members will also be invited to complete a Skills and Interests audit form to help explore the Member's potential role and involvement. The CEO will also arrange an induction for new Board members. In that regard, a doodle poll will shortly be circulated to identify a date towards the end of September/early October. The Skills follow up meeting to be confirmed
- ii) **The skills audit** created by John Nicholls has been completed by most Board Members. This is summarised separately. The findings will be reviewed at the Senior Team meeting on 16 September, to identify opportunities to connect interested board members into relevant areas of the team's work. Board Members who have not yet completed the audit are asked to do so **by Friday 10 September**.
- iii) **The Board Away Day** on 30 September will provide an opportunity for team members to update Board Members on key areas of work, to provide context, and to build an awareness of key issues and challenges as we head into the business planning cycle.
- iv) **Business Plan** development. This is a key opportunity for Board Members to input to the organisational objectives and priorities for the period ahead. As part of this process, we will reflect on specific ways in which Board Members can support delivery of the Business Plan. The process is starting, with a view to presenting a completed draft Business Plan to the Board in March 2022.
- v) **Terms of reference** for Board Member engagement to be drafted to help guide and set the parameters of Board Member roles, involvement, and lines of communication. As part of this exercise we will aim to develop a clear framework of where and how Board Member input would have most impact.

Recommendation

1. For Board Members to reflect on their experience to date and provide feedback on proposals for increasing board member engagement and input.

Item 13**Board Review (September 2021)****1.0 Summary**

The CCB team has continued to work effectively at home since mid-March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As lockdown measures ease, we are exploring a phased return to the office once various renovation works have been completed by the landlord.

During this period of reporting, we have continued to issue guidance and engage the media in urging people to behave responsibly in the countryside, while at the same time supporting our local businesses in their activities to open again and attract visitors and business during the summer season.

A key part of the team's focus is to work with a wide range of partners and stakeholders, including NGOs, businesses, MPs and government agencies – both locally and nationally. We are collaborating with other AONBs and National Parks on a range of subjects - including implementing the Glover Review, sustainable tourism, land management and planning reform - in large part through the National Association of AONBs.

We are also contributing our time and expertise to a number of government-led initiatives and consultations – not least being a key element of Natural England's new designations programme and providing insight for the forthcoming government consultation on the Landscapes Review. All these activities will, hopefully, lead to benefits for both the Chilterns and protected landscapes overall.

As ever, the team consistently achieves a great deal in continuing uncertain and changing circumstances. Many in the team are enjoying delivering and planning outdoor activities, including surveys and monitoring, practical habitat restoration work, festivals and community engagement. Small numbers of staff and project teams are also starting to meet outdoors to share ideas and catch up with colleagues away from online platforms.

2.0 Over-arching and core work**Administration and IT**

- The admin team continues to be extremely busy in providing a diverse range of services to support the staff team.
- Due to staff numbers steadily increasing, we are currently recruiting to increase our admin and support capacity. The Business Support Officer vacancy did not attract candidates with the necessary experience and skills. We are revisiting the job description and title and hope to go back out to advert shortly.
- The work carried out last year on requirements for staff training for Hubspot is being reviewed and staff have attended a refresher/training course on GDPR.
- Other work includes exploring the best file sharing method for key documents for Board members; supporting projects with information on financial transactions for end of year reporting; and helping to set up a tracking system for Farming in Protected Landscapes inquiries.
- Our Employee and Board Induction process is currently being reviewed and updated, which will include Hubspot training (a contacts management system) for all staff.
- Building improvements, including repairs and redecoration, are being carried out by the landlord to the office in Chinnor. Frustratingly, the work has been delayed. It is now due to start at the beginning of September and take four weeks to complete, after which we anticipate some of the team starting to use the office on a regular basis on a 'hybrid' basis – working part of the week at home and part in the office.

- Covid Risk Assessments continue to be reviewed and an update issued to staff recently in line with Government guidance, with a view to a phased return to the office once renovation work is complete.

2.1 Planning

- The Planning Team is moving towards a more structured quarterly reporting process, and we're currently in a transitional phase. In future, a quarterly report will be made to Planning Committee, with a separately circulated monthly bulletin of updates. Reviews for the Board and Executive Committee will contain highlights of the latest issues.
- Activity for the Q1 2021/22 (Apr-Jun) is mostly covered in our [reports](#) to PC on 14 July, but not explicitly in the quarterly format.
 - Strategic planning highlights included our strong [submissions](#) to the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan main modifications consultation, with regard to the 'North of Luton' expansion and M1-A6 link road, both of which have direct impacts on the AONB and its setting. The plan was adopted on 22 July without the changes we had sought.
 - On development management, from April to June CCB responded to 40 planning applications. Most responses were comments (25 cases), where CCB made recommendations and proposed conditions, including design amendments consistent with the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide and recommendations on the weight and thus importance given to AONB legislation, policy and the AONB Management Plan. 10 objections were also lodged and the remaining cases were responses expressing support or appeal representations. Most decisions are aligned with our recommendations, but it is sometimes difficult to gauge that relationship. Our greatest sway appears to be in design matters and where the planning principle is or is not acceptable.
- A significant appeal decision was received at the end of June, granting permission at Little Sparrows, Sonning Common for a 133-unit assisted-living development. This is a significant disappointment and a decision that is troubling in its logic, applying AONB legislation and planning policy tests in a very partial, even illogical manner, in our view. For example, while recognising that legislation and policy "give equal protection to all parts of the AONB" (para 53), the Inspector's reasoning very much develops a position that some parts of the AONB are more equal than others.
- Further, he described the appeal site and its setting as not "representative of the special qualities as set out in the Chilterns AONB Management Plan", but that where it "does exhibit some such qualities, they are generic" (para 52). We deem this incoherent and, together with other points, CCB has written a [letter of complaint](#) to the Planning Inspectorate and a news item [here](#). We are in liaison with South Oxfordshire DC, discussing what options remain open, including that of a legal challenge (known as statutory review).
- We responded to the [draft Three Rivers Local Plan and site allocations](#) consultation. We are generally supportive of the plan and our comments focus on enhancing the approach taken in the Plan to the conservation and enhancement of the Chilterns AONB, its setting, and the globally significant chalk streams that give the District its name. [CCB's response](#).
- MHCLG has started its engagement process on [creating a vision for the Ox Cam Arc](#), which runs to October. Bizarrely, and with no explanation, the plan area does not include Hertfordshire, despite that county being a part of the England's Economic Heartland transport planning region, the proximity of parts of the county to two of the Arc's principal urban areas (Cambridge and Milton Keynes) and the many transport connections for the Arc that necessitate travelling through Hertfordshire.

- On 20 July, MHCLG issued a revised [National Planning Policy Framework](#), plus lots of changes to the online planning practice guidance including the national design guide and national model design code. All of this followed the consultation earlier in the year. The NPPF changes include a reworking of the key policy relating to development in AONBs (former para 172, now 176 and 177), including a vital new policy applying to the setting of protected landscapes. An analysis of the changes will be brought to the next Planning Committee.
- You can keep up to date with responses on strategic planning matters on our [website](#).

2.2 Nature and Landscape

Farming in Protected Landscapes

- This three-year Defra funded programme was launched at the start of July. Information from Defra is [here](#) and our own webpage [here](#).
- The independent panel has been established and is meeting for an initial briefing and to review applications on 25 August. In the absence of a dedicated officer, enquiries to date have been dealt with by team members, in particular Neil Jackson, Nick Marriner, Luke Burgess, Harriet Bennett and Annette Venters, with overall coordination by Kath Daly and admin support from Lynne Cordice.
- Our full-time farming Engagement Officer has now been appointed (subject to contract) to coordinate the programme and respond to initial enquiries. Their provisional start date is 5 October.
- The scheme will support our work with farmers and other land managers across four themes:
 - **Climate** – supporting delivery of nature-based solutions.
 - **Nature** – supporting delivery of the Nature Recovery Network
 - **People** – improving health and wellbeing through increased access to nature.
 - **Place** – supporting protected landscapes as flourishing places to live and work, with strong identity, cultural heritage, and high recognition as visitor destinations.
- We have received four applications to date, with over 25 enquiries and pipeline applications. So far enquiries have been very varied – including big ticket machinery items, such as direct drills as part of farming systems to improve soil carbon, proposals to enhance wildflower diversity in field margins and pasture, wildlife ponds, improvements to access, a forest school initiative and farm tourism/ diversification projects.
- It remains difficult to forecast likely year one spend, as this will be critically dependent on when enquiries translate into approved applications, in addition to the practicalities of delivery within the current window (work needs to be completed by end of Feb 2022 to be included in year one allocation).

Chilterns Partnership and Nature Recovery Plan

- Work continues on the partnership delivery plan however progress has been delayed due to other operational pressures/ priorities and lack of capacity. We are planning to accelerate both areas of work through the autumn.

Buckinghamshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilot (LNRS)

- Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a key measure in the Environment Bill and intended to drive more coordinated, focussed action and green investment to help nature and people flourish together, whilst delivering wider nature-based environmental benefits. They will consist of:
 - A Statement of Biodiversity Priorities, reflecting stakeholder priorities for environmental outcomes and actions.
 - A Local Habitat Map, identifying the existing distribution of habitats and target locations for delivering the outcomes identified.

- The strategies will be a statutory requirement of the upcoming Environment Bill, to be developed by local councils when the Bill becomes law.
- The Bucks pilot LNRS process has now been completed. Kath was a key member of the core delivery group and fed in reflections on process and outputs to the Pilot Area Team evaluation session. The Government published [Lessons Learned](#) from the five pilots, including in Buckinghamshire, in July 2021.
- The Government is now [consulting](#) on LNRSs to gather views on key questions that will help it produce both the regulations and the guidance swiftly after the Environment Bill becomes law. The consultation closes on 2 November 2021 and the CCB will be responding along with its partners on the Bucks LNRS Pilot.
- **Ash Die-back**
Over the last few months we have seen an increasing number of felling licence notifications from our colleagues at the forestry commission, associated with Ash Die Back. Undoubtedly, the disease has taken hold of our ash dominated woodland (many of the woodlands impacted by the Great Storm of 1987 were naturally recolonised by ash) and is being increasingly seen affecting hedgerow ash trees.
- John Morris published an article on ash die back in our last edition of [The Chilterns AONB - Outstanding Chilterns Magazine](#) and we will continue to raise awareness of management and safety requirements with woodland owners and the wider public.
- **Dunstable Downs Undergrounding**
Work to remove the two parallel lines of electricity cable, supported on steel pylons, that cross the Dunstable Downs is now underway with most of the new underground cable route beneath local roads and across the downs now in place. The existing overhead cables and pylons are due for removal in September and October.

HS2

Parliamentary debate

The Parliamentary Petitions Committee has scheduled a debate on HS2, which was triggered after over 100,000 people signed a petition calling on the Government to repeal the HS2 legislation. More detail on the petition and debate [here](#). The CCB and Bucks Council are developing a briefing for MPs which will be published in advance of the debate.

Tunnel Boring Machines, Chalk Streams and the Aquifer

The first of the two giant tunnel boring machines ('Florence') has now passed beneath the M25 and is boring beneath the Chiltern Hills. The second machine, 'Cecilia', has now also started its journey and, using information fed back from Florence, will travel faster and soon catch the first machine up.

- Along with Buckinghamshire Council, we have continued to press for answers to our concerns over risks to the aquifer and chalk streams, including a [joint statement](#) with Bucks Council in May.
- To date, we feel that the response from HS2 Ltd is wholly inadequate with no plans to mitigate for potential loss of flow to the River Misbourne or damage to the Wendover springs that feed the Weston Turville Reservoir SSSI and the Wendover Arm of the Grand Union Canal. We will shortly be issuing a follow-up statement reiterating our concerns.
- HS2 Ltd and its contractors remain very bullish, but we will continue to press for better protection of the aquifer, chalk streams and springs, alongside improved engagement and communication with the local community.

Schedule 17 planning approvals

Although the CCB is not a statutory consultee for the HS2 planning process, we are

grateful that Natural England continue to seek our expert advice and local knowledge when they respond to pre-application detailed information.

- Buckinghamshire Council also invites us to comment on the Schedule 17 applications when they are submitted. Very often the 'devil is in the detail' and we continue to offer our advice on protection of existing features, landscape design and planting of appropriate species for the Chilterns, as well design of the permanent structures including bridges, viaducts and vent shafts.

HS2 Additional Project Fund

- As the Hybrid Bill progressed through parliament, we were unsuccessful in persuading the government to not take the high-speed line through the centre of our nationally protected landscape. However, the CCB and local stakeholders were granted funding to set up a [Chilterns Review Group](#).

The group is chaired and run by DfT and the CCB is a member. The group has two main purposes:

- To oversee the development of and agree [Detailed Design Principles](#)
 - To administer an **Additional Project fund of £3m**, made available to support work to identify local environmental integration and enhancement measures.
- The **Landscape and Wildlife Connectivity Project** was one of the first projects to receive approval from the Review Group with an allocation of £500,000. The project was set up at the same time as the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs Landscape Partnership project and designed to work very closely with the CCC team. The CCC project area covers most of the HS2 AP area (3km buffer either side of the route within the AONB). With Nick and Harriet's work with farmers (cluster members and others) they can identify works that can be funded by the AP budget and their time is seen as a contribution to the AP scheme. This means that both projects should get more for their money.
 - Not all the works funded through the AP project are directly attributable to the CCC project. For example, the Landscape and Wildlife connectivity project has funded a willow pollarding project for a landowner on the River Misbourne, with whom the Chilterns Chalk Stream Project have been working.
 - Other projects funded through the HS2 AP fund include a **Ridgeway Project** using funds to enhance the Ridgeway around Wendover, particularly for horse riders.
 - We have also been pleased to support a new application to the fund for a radical upgrade of the **towpath for the Wendover Arm** of the Grand Union Canal. The towpath is well used by many Wendover residents, both young and old, and has fallen into a dangerous state of disrepair. The upgrade will mean that the path will be fit for purpose for many years to come, linking into a wider access network. Plans are still being finalised, but we expect work to start within the next 12 months and hopefully before the end of 2021.

The CCB's webpages on HS2 are [here](#).

2.3 People and Society

- Plans for a **Chilterns autumn celebration** are underway. This will incorporate the 9th Chilterns Walking Festival 16-31 October, with a celebration of Chilterns Food & Drink 24-31 October. The programme will include several community events delivered by the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs project linking food, farming and the Chilterns landscape. There will also be a series of local produce walks. The festivals aim to raise awareness of the Chilterns, reach new audiences and benefit local businesses. We are currently using the [CWF web page](#) to promote the many on-going walking opportunities in the Chilterns to encourage greater participation.
- The new Farming in Protected Landscape programme enables grants for farm diversification, rural tourism and access related projects. I have contributed to the CCB

guidance and applicant information and have been responding to enquiries and Expressions of Interest relating to People and Place.

- The new Green Recovery Challenge Funded chalk streams project includes a substantial investment in revitalising the Chess Valley Walk, our most popular promoted route, as well as an education and interpretation programme. This is an exciting opportunity for engaging new audiences, raising awareness of chalk streams and improving the visitor experience. I am assisting the Chiltern Society with recruitment of the Education & Engagement officer post.

Sustainable Tourism and promoting the rural economy

- We have been scoping opportunities to market and promote **Chilterns Countryside Experiences**. This fits with our aspirations to develop sustainable tourism and promote new experiential tourism products which help to communicate the special qualities of the Chilterns. We are planning a workshop in the autumn to help businesses develop and market countryside Experiences, and we are preparing a dedicated page on the new Chilterns AONB website which will give businesses a route to market. We are currently exploring options for an online booking system.
- We held two Chilterns **Food & Drink workshops** in July, aimed at walk leaders, local businesses and those interested in or involved with promoting the Chilterns. The workshops explored opportunities for developing the food and drink offer in the Chilterns, and ideas for promoting this as part of the destination offer. There were presentations from food producers, farm enterprises and tourism businesses. The workshops attracted 40 participants.

Communications

- Prepared a blog looking at our favourite outdoor café walks, featuring several new businesses [here](#) and a blog on enjoying the Chilterns safely this summer [here](#), with suggestions for family-friendly activities and places to visit.
- We continue to promote the new Countryside Code and 'respect the countryside' messages via the website and social media.
- Defra's newly formed 'Access and Engagement with Nature' team is visiting the Chilterns for an awayday on 15 September. The new team will bring together all Defra's work on access, health and well-being and people engagement. Annette has been liaising with the Defra leads in planning the away-day and will be joining them to talk about the CCB's work on access and engagement.

3.0 Development & Funding

- Interviews are about to be held for the two part-time posts created to deliver our Green Recovery Challenge Fund project: Chalk Streams and Wetland Meadows. This is a 12-month project with both staff being hosted by the Chiltern Society. Chiltern Rangers are also project partners. The project will be concluded by October 2022.
- The Development and Funding Manager continues to ensure the CCB is represented at a national level with the development of collaborative projects with other AONBs and National Parks through the National Association of AONBs, along with taking a strategic overview, and providing support and advice to other members of the team, on internally generated initiatives to secure funding for projects and other activities.
- We are currently working collaboratively with The Conservation Volunteers, Surrey Hills AONB, Kent Downs AONB and High Weald AONB on the development of a '**Rail to Trail**' project proposal to be submitted to the second tranche of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund (GRCF). The outcome of this application should be known by the summer.
- We are supporting the development of the **Big Chalk Initiative** alongside eight other AONBs, and the South Downs National Park. The aims are to work with landowners,

farmers, and local communities to build resilience in calcareous landscapes (chalk and limestone) on an unprecedented scale. The current focus is on preparatory work for an EOI for a funding bid to the National Heritage Lottery Fund. We have made specific contributions around landowner / farmer engagement and support, environmental monitoring, liaison with NHLF and advisor networks.

4.0 Communications

- The Communications Teams welcomed a new member on 19th July. Kim-lin Hooper is an experienced communicator with a strong background in arts and culture and a masters degree in creative writing. She joins Vicki and Helen three days a week.
- It has been an extremely busy couple of months. On 24 June Natural England announced, in conjunction with a [written ministerial statement](#) (WMS) from the government, that the Chilterns AONB would be considered for an extension to its boundary. The communications team worked hard with Natural England to support communication of the announcement, publishing a local press release, [news article](#) and social media posts. We achieved a lot of interest from local media including articles in the [Bucks Free Press](#), [Hemel Today](#) and [Watford Observer](#).
- The government also launched, on the same day as the WMS, its Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (FiPL). The Communications Officer liaised very closely with the Defra press team, while also supporting the CCB's countryside team to create assets to [help promote the programme](#) and inform and encourage farmers to apply.
- The communications team has also been working closely with Annette (People and Society Officer) with promotion and awareness of [staying safe in the Chilterns over summer](#), published in line with the government's final step in the relaxation of lockdown rules on 19 July. We have also published blogs promoting [local cafes with walks nearby](#), which have proved extremely popular.
- Outstanding Chilterns 2020/21 magazine is underway and is due for publication w/c 13 September. We have a wide range of contributors and articles including themes such as: a celebration of Chilterns Food and Drinks producers, an interview with our Planner, Matt Thompson, about planning reforms and the boundary review, the benefits of cow grazing, a focus on Marlow, water saving, the impact of HS2 on the aquifer, an introduction to fungus, and more.
- On 7 June Boris Johnson visited Chesham to campaign with Peter Fleet, the Conservative candidate in the upcoming Chesham and Amersham by-election. Whilst he was there, he gave an interview to the Bucks Free Press, where he spoke about his support for a Chilterns National Park. We issued the [following statement](#) in response to his comments and published our statement via our social channels. You can read more on the [interview with the Prime Minister](#) in the Bucks Free Press.
- The subject of the Chilterns being designated a National Park came up again on 21 August, following a news [item](#) in the Telegraph. The report was inaccurate in its claim that the Government is poised to designate the Cotswolds and Chilterns AONBs as National Parks. However, it did generate some positive coverage eg in The [Guardian](#) and the [Daily Mail](#) about the role of protected landscapes in nature recovery and connecting people to nature. Our colleagues Matt Thomson and Lachlan Stuart did an interview with Neil Oliver on GB News and we posted a [Tweet](#) to clarify the situation.
- The communications team supported the People and Society Officer with promotion and awareness of the May Walking Festival, which received a lot of positive interest from local media including [The Countryman Magazine](#), [Henley Standard](#), [Bucks Free Press](#) and radio interviews with Wycombe Sound and Marlow FM among others.
- In May we published a case study sharing the achievements of the Central Chilterns Farmer Cluster, we shared a [news item](#) on our website and also via our social channels, which has achieved a lot of positive feedback and support for its work.

- In May we supported Affinity Water with the launch of their SOS (Save Our Streams) campaign and will also feature a single page spread on the campaign in Outstanding Chilterns magazine.
- The new website development project continues and will showcase both the Chilterns AONB and the work of the CCB. Helen (Communications Assistant) has been busy creating the pages on the new site and flowing content on to the pages. The copy writer continues to work with the project leads and we are progressing well. As part of the website project, the Comms Officer has commissioned a professional photographer, [Dave Olinski](#), to create a portfolio of new imagery including landscape, flora, fauna, and lifestyle images including people enjoying the countryside. We also commissioned an aerial photographer, [Hedley Thorne](#), who has taken drone footage of the Chilterns for us to use on our website and in social posts.
- The communications team continues to work closely with colleagues internally and at Buckinghamshire Council to provide regularly updates about the work the CCB is doing to hold HS2 Ltd to account. Our latest update can be found [here](#).
- Our comms volunteers have been going above and beyond to help recently. Matt Writtle, professional photographer and writer for the Guardian, has agreed to write a monthly blog series for our website as he walks parts of the Chiltern Way. He also interviews people he meets along the way and photographs what he sees. His latest instalment is [here](#).
- Similarly, nature enthusiast and Duke of Edinburgh award participant Amy Shayler has been sharing her own experiences of the Chilterns with [her own blog contributions](#) too.
- Finally, we have also taken on a new regular volunteer, Robert Hunter, who has been supporting the comms team by writing [blog content](#), updating webpages, researching and checking information for quality on our interactive map and more! Robert is supporting the team for six hours per week.
- The communications team continues to work hard to raise the profile of the AONB, CCB and its work, and regularly posts content on its social channels to support this. We have been recently supporting more national awareness days and making relevant connections to the Chilterns to help. We are seeing a steady increase in followers with 7,460 Twitter followers and over 3,000 Facebook followers (see [@ChilternsAONB](#)). We have also started publishing more on LinkedIn and Instagram.

5.0 Projects

Chilterns Chalk Streams Project

Chess Smarter Water Catchment Plan

- The CCSP is a co-host of the R. Chess Smarter Water Catchment initiative, working alongside the River Chess Association and Thames Water. Thames Water's [Smarter Water Catchment initiative](#) aims to deliver improvements at a catchment scale, aimed at restoring the Chess over the next ten years. As part of the initiative, Thames Water is investing £3m into the delivery of a plan for the Chess catchment over the next five years.
- The CCSP worked with stakeholders to develop a [catchment plan](#) which was launched in April. A steering group has been set up to drive forward delivery of the plan and set priorities for action in the years ahead. Allen Beechey, CCSP Project Officer, is chairing the steering group for the next year.
- Discussions are ongoing with Thames regarding the Project's role in acting in a coordination role for delivery of the plan. A programme coordinator role has been drawn up to support this work, with funding from the Smarter Water Catchment budget.
- A Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer role is also being proposed, to lead delivery of some of the actions within the catchment plan. This role will be hosted by CCB, line managed by Kath Daly and will complement and provide an opportunity to roll out our wider work with farmers and landowners.

- **Dr Kate Heppell Secondment**

The CCSP has been fortunate in being able to secure Dr Kate Heppell, from Queen Mary University of London, on secondment for a year from September. The Project has worked with Dr Heppell over the last decade, helping to teach MSc. Students about hydrogeomorphology of chalk streams and, more recently, the ChessWatch Project. Kate will be working with the Chilterns Conservation Board and the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project to understand the state of, and threats to, globally rare chalk streams in the Chilterns AONB.

- An important component of Kate's work will focus on developing and implementing an integrated catchment management plan for the River Chess as part of Thames Water's Smarter Water Catchments Initiative. This work will build on the ChessWatch project which is embedded into the plan. The Storymap resource that was developed for ChessWatch can be viewed [here](#).

GRCF success

- The Chiltern Society and Chilterns Conservation Board was successful in an application to the government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund for a grant of £294,000 to enable delivery of the Chalk Streams and Wetland Meadows Project (CWMP).
- The grant will fund a suite of schemes developed by the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project (CCSP) focussing on chalk streams and wetland habitats across the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The work will combine practical restoration and enhancement with education and engagement projects. The Chilterns Conservation Board and the Chiltern Society, two key partners of the CCSP, will be working together to deliver this exciting project.
- The CCB team provided staff resources to fulfil an important convening and facilitation role in helping develop the application. The grant will now enable the creation of two jobs with the Chiltern Society, while also increasing the capacity and resilience of other NGOs and voluntary organisations including Revive the Wye, Benson Environment Group and Chiltern Rangers CIC.
- The project involves the recruitment of two new officer posts to lead on delivery. The CCSP has worked with the Society on the staff recruitment process. Shortlisting of candidates for both the Rivers Officer and Education and Engagement Officer posts has been completed and interviews will be held on the 11th and 12th August. The twelve-month Project will start in October.
- By connecting nature and people, the project aims to secure a healthy future for chalk streams and for the people, communities and businesses of both the Chilterns AONB, and nearby urban areas.

HS2 – Bottom House Lane

- The CCSP has continued to provide expert advice in pressing HS2 and its contractors Fusion and Align to recognise and implement appropriate mitigation for the damage that they have caused to the banks of the Misbourne at Bottom House Lane, near Chalfont St. Giles. The damage (see CCB [news article](#) for photos) caused extensive flooding of neighbouring farmland with river water contaminated with raw sewage.
- Several landowners have been unable to use their land as a result. A site meeting was held with Fusion, Align and representatives from the Environment Agency team, that consented the Bridge works, in June. Although agreement over appropriate mitigation was reached during the meeting, Fusion and Align have subsequently backtracked on elements of the mitigation. Negotiations are continuing.

Save Our Streams

- The CCSP has been working with Affinity Water to support the development of its [Save Our Streams](#) campaign, which was launched in May. The Project has been helping to

raise awareness of the campaign which is the biggest ever water saving campaign by a UK water company. The aim of the campaign is to drive down water demand to support the company's ambitious plans to reduce abstraction across the Chilterns and Hertfordshire to restore chalk stream flows. As part of the campaign the Project featured in an [article](#) in the Observer on chalk streams in June.

Riverfly training courses

- The CCSP has delivered three Anglers Riverfly Monitoring Initiative Training courses so far this year. Training 27 volunteers to monitor rivers across the Chilterns and Lea catchment areas. In addition, the Project trained a new tutor for the Chilterns, Hertfordshire & Middlesex Riverfly Hub to support delivery of further training across the Hub area in future. Riverfly monitoring groups are now active on all but one stream in the Chilterns (Hughenden Stream).

Landowner advice

- In July, The CCSP provided advice to the Ver Valley Society regarding suitable techniques to repair a section bank along the R. Ver at Gorhambury. The location of the work is particularly sensitive as it is a perched former mill leat which is vulnerable to bank collapse. It also lies immediately downstream of the site that will be the focus of the re-introduction of water voles to Ver. The re-introduction is being carried out by Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust and will be completed in August.

Advice and support to Water Companies

- The CCSP has provided advice and technical input to Affinity Water to support the development of its river restoration plans at Redbournbury Meadows. The scheme aims to restore approximately 2km of the R. Ver between Redbourn and the Gorhambury Estate near St Albans. The Scheme is one of a number of projects being delivered by Affinity Water on chalk streams across the Chilterns and Hertfordshire, funded through the Water Industry National Environment Programme, in support of its abstraction reduction programme.
- The CCSP is in discussions with Affinity Water with regard to leading the delivery of elements of the Redbournbury Meadows Scheme.

Trout in the Classroom

- Despite the impacts of the pandemic, working with the River Chess Association, the CCSP was able to run Trout in the Classroom units in five schools in the Chess and Wye Valleys this spring. The schools were all given copies of the CCSP's new book on the life cycle of Brown Trout. At Millbrook School alone, over 700 pupils interacted with the project.

Education and Engagement Officer

- Ceri, the CCSP's Education and Engagement Officer, returned from maternity leave at the beginning of July and has already visited three schools to deliver education sessions and release trout from this year's Trout in the Classroom units, into the Chess and the Wye. She has also begun to upload content to the CCSP's new Chalk Streams microsite and has written two articles that will appear in the CCB's forthcoming Outstanding Chilterns magazine.

Chalk, Cherries & Chairs

- The CCC landscape partnership scheme is now nearing the end of its post-Covid19 review period and faces the challenge of securing agreements from all partners and principal funders for the necessary scheme adaptations, as previously reported.
- Our overall scheme adaptations will also take account of the necessary staffing adjustments arising from the sad departure of Sam Johannsen, our Landscape Heritage

Officer, and the much happier news of impending maternity leave later this year of Landscape Communities and Communications Officer, Lizzie Krupa. We have agreed with Dr. Helena Chance of Bucks New University to her team of volunteers on the scheme's social history and heritage elements, including the Woodlanders, Cherry Talk and Crafts projects, in order to ensure that the refreshed start to this work is not lost while we put Sam's replacement arrangements in place.

- Over the early summer, the team has successfully navigated the government's roadmap towards eased restrictions and reconnected with all but one of the previously engaged schools and community groups across our 18 projects.
- Our summer celebratory festival was a big success, with guided walks, a Bodgers pub tour and more than 500 people joining our teams of volunteers for an activity day on Wycombe Rye where there were participatory sessions celebrating the traditional Chilterns crafts of chair making, paper making and willow weaving, as well as other events and entertainments.
- The summer festival has been promoted using our own original song, commissioned from a local artist as part of Echoed Locations, our Chilterns soundscape project. We are also busy planning events for our food-themed autumn festival in October, in a joint venture with the CCB's own Chilterns Food Festival, and a Spring Festival next April in conjunction with Wycombe Museum, in which we hope to successfully engage schools of the central Chilterns in a celebration of the landscape through visual arts.
- Despite recent restrictions, we are ahead of schedule in securing all the volunteer time contributions to scheme match funding requirements and will move further ahead when the current busy season of wildlife surveying is fully accounted:
 - Young volunteer wildlife survey training sessions continue under Chilterns New Shoots, with Buckinghamshire Bird Club membership secured for all participants
 - Farmland Amphibian & Reptile surveys are set up with trained volunteers under the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust's National Reptile Survey
 - 6 online species ID training sessions delivered to volunteers, with 2 more scheduled
 - 18 in field species ID training sessions delivered to volunteers, with 6 more scheduled
 - Data from 47 surveys covering 25x1km squares entered Breeding Bird Survey
 - Data from 52 surveys covering 17x1km squares entered into the Countryside Butterfly Survey

The landscape scale nature and wildlife strands of our partnership also continues to exceed expectations:

- 18 Whole Farm Plans across the Central Chilterns farming cluster are complete
- 400+ hectares of farm grassland surveys are commissioned and underway
- 18 Carbon Self Assessments are underway with soil samples taken from 36 fields across all 18 farms, as part of Rothschild Foundation funded Farm Carbon project
- Regenerative farming study visit to FarmED demo farm near Chipping Norton
- New mid-tier Countryside Stewardship application submitted for one farm
- Three farms supported in applications for ELM Sustainable Farming Initiative
- Eight farms actively working on tailored projects for delivery this Autumn/Winter
- Expression of Interest to DEFRA for Landscape Recovery Test & Trial
- Two Rapid Habitat Assessments at Butlers Hangings SSSI and Sands Bank LNR
- Advice on 8 ha grasslands at North Dean
- Volunteer work parties managing habitats across cluster farms
- 1 ha stock fencing on important butterfly conservation site at Wardrobes Lane
- Corn Bunting nest conservation work before hay cutting

[Beacons of the Past](#)

- Registered Portal users are now over 8700, with steady daily work carried out both in initial recording and reviewer portal quality checking. 6000+ verified records, 15000+ features identified.
- Erosion mitigation and path re-siting are taking place on Ivinghoe Beacon.
- Our new Landscape Heritage Officer Giles Carey has – alongside volunteers – completed the database of 500+ high-priority feature records. These records will be transferred to the county HERs and form an important legacy of the project as well as the foundation for future protection and planning.
- Sadly, Giles Carey will be leaving his post on 30 July and will be replaced by Dr Ed Peveler on an ad hoc day rate basis.
- Wendy continues to respond to requests to offer consultations to farmers, forestry, and local authorities on the archaeological resources and implications of activities in the AONB, as well as consulting on potential FiPL applications.
- Wendy led a successful and well attended guided walk on the archaeology of the Ver Valley for the Ver Valley Society on 18 July and addressed almost 100 attendees at the Ashmolean Museum's online Festival of Archaeology event on 28 July.
- BotP will be teaming up with CCSP to deliver two chalk stream archaeology walks for the Chiltern Society in Sep/Oct for their Heritage Festival.
- Capital works planned at the Tier One hillfort sites are now in line with projected Covid restriction changes. However, we are also planning contingencies in case of third waves and will not be conducting any large public events until Oct at the earliest, when an outdoor event is planned in Letchworth/Hitchin (23 Oct).
- An Expression of Interest was submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund in May, and we have been invited to submit a Development Phase application for a new chalk streams/archaeology collaborative project scheme (*Not Bourne Yesterday*).
- Wendy has been a member of a steering group, led by Jessica Turner at the Northumberland Coast AONB, which has led to the creation of a new joint statement between Historic England, the 34 AONBs, and the NAAONB. This document more clearly outlines the relationship going forward to protect heritage.
- Wendy has also been providing archaeological and heritage advice to *Chalkscapes* and *Chalk Cherries and Chairs*, two other NLHF funded CCB led projects, adding to institutional resilience.

Mend the Gap – joint venture between the CCB and North Wessex Downs AONB Enhancement Projects

- Mend the Gap has confirmed support for additional projects, including in principle support to the partnership seeking to secure a future for the Youth Hostel in Streatley. MtG funding is specifically towards costs associated with undertaking a formal feasibility study.
- Relationships with local landowners continue to develop, including being boosted by the promotion of FiPL across the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs. There is some crossover between the two schemes' areas of interest, with some proposals potentially suitable for either scheme.
- Liaison between the MtG programme manager and other members of the CCB team has enabled a proposal from a landowner, which originally came in via FiPL, to be switched across to MtG. This will facilitate a decision early enough to meet the landowner's requirements in relation to timescales, which would not have been possible whilst the FiPL panel and internal processes are being established.
- A positive discussion with BBOWT's Chief Executive has moved discussions regarding potential BBOWT-led/facilitated enhancement project(s) forward. Follow-up discussions with members of the BBOWT team are scheduled

Mitigation Project

- Discussions with FWAG South East are progressing, focussed on bringing FWAG on board as a delivery partner for the Mend the Gap Mitigation Project. FWAG SE's skill set, and organisational priorities are a good fit with the Mitigation Project. This approach will bring on board the additional resource required to implement mitigation schemes at priority locations through the MtG area.
- South Stoke Mitigation Projects - discussions with Christ Church College and the Diocese of Oxford have moved forward since the last report to the Board. The agents for both these landlords have indicated support in principle for mitigation schemes on their land at South Stoke. The next step is to develop the design for the schemes for the relevant South Stoke sites.
- Network Rail has responded positively to our enquiry as to whether it may be willing to enable a mitigation project on NR-owned land outside Moulsoford where the impact of the electrification equipment is particularly bad. The proposal is at an early stage, but NR will hold an internal meeting in mid-August to discuss whether it is able to take the site out of its current use as a storage/holding compound and thereby facilitate a plating scheme.

Chalkscapes

- The Chalkscapes development stage is now six months into its 23-month timetable.
- Jenny Ponsford, the Development Manager of the Chalkscapes project, has resigned due to ill-health and we are seeking to replace her on a full-time basis.
- The rest of the Development Team, Inga Garriock and Luke Burgess, continue to make excellent progress developing project plans. For example, confirmed pilots include events for both the wider community as well as the project's priority audiences (eg under-served audiences including BAME and young people in the project area). Consultations with our target audiences will begin in September 2021 and events run from February – July 2022.
- Events include: TOKKO goes Wild (a series of events spanning six weeks where young people will explore the project area to learn skills in orienteering, natural and social history and creative activities to engage with the project principles and natural environment), a community art piece and workshops led by local Luton artist from the BAME community; and an event celebrating Wildlife in the Margins with a collaboration between the National Trust and the Wildlife Trust.
- Chalkscapes has appointed Prof. Gurch Randawaha and team from the University of Bedfordshire to help inform the community engagement elements of Chalkscapes. The commission will be complete by next Spring.
- A Chalkscapes 'intranet' has been established to share project information with partners. Project documents and summaries can be viewed [here](#): Board members have been granted access but, if the link does not work, please contact Claire Readey creadey@chilternsaonb.org
- The Chalkscapes Advisory Group (Steering Group) is in urgent need of a chair. The commitment would be a quarterly 1.5-hour meeting from now until November 2022 and associated input. Please contact Claire Readey creadey@chilternsaonb.org if you are interested in the role.
- The introduction of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, and an Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme in due course, presents a wonderful opportunity for Chalkscapes, something which is recognised by NLHF. This period of uncertainty provides a good opportunity for the formation of a farmer cluster in the North Chilterns area, through which Chalkscapes can support farmers through the transitional period, helping them to access ELM, and other new funding opportunities, at the appropriate level.

6.0 National focus

- Liaising with a range of organisations and individuals, including our partners - both nationally and locally – continues to be a key feature of much of our work. This has

included conversations with our local authorities over responding to the Covid-19 emergency, for example the CEO is a member of Buckinghamshire Council's Strategic Partners Board.

- We are also working with the National Association of AONBs (NAAONB), AONB Lead Officers, National Parks and others on a range of operational and strategic matters, including responding to the Landscapes Review, Climate Adaptation and Mitigation, Nature Recovery Plans and securing funding.
- Strong links have also been maintained and developed with Defra, Natural England and the Environment Agency on a range of matters. We have worked especially closely with Natural England regarding its new designations programme and the announcement on 25 June that they will be exploring an extension to the Chilterns AONB, alongside new management and governance measures to support the improved conservation, understanding and enjoyment of the Chilterns landscape.

Defra

- The CCB staff team continues to communicate and share information on our work with Defra. We are liaising with Defra, Natural England and others on the Landscapes Review, the Government's Farming in Protected Landscapes scheme, Nature Recovery Networks, sustainable tourism, the rural economy, HS2 and developing measures to improve the protection of chalk streams.
- Elaine continues to represent the AONB network with several other AONB colleagues on Defra's Contact Group for AONBs and National Parks, exploring implementation of the Review's recommendations. The group is currently meeting every week in the lead up to the Government publishing a consultation this summer/autumn on its proposals to implement the recommendations in the Landscapes Review.

NAAONB

- Members of the team continue to work closely with Lead Officers and their teams in other AONBs and the National Association of AONBs on a range of strategic and operational matters, including comms, nature recovery, visitor management and farming. This includes regular meetings with the South East and East Protected Landscapes group (SEEPL).
- Elaine continues in her role as a member of the NAAONB's Colchester Declaration Steering Group - along with Kath and Claire. The Declaration was agreed by all AONBs in July 2019 and aims to increase the scale and pace of conservation activity in AONBs, along with increasing our engagement with people and local communities.
- Work includes developing an ambitious plan for nature recovery across all AONBs in England and has resulted in securing Natural England funding for a national Nature Recovery Officer to work across all AONBs in England.
- Claire is leading the development of a proposal as part of the Colchester Declaration, work. The Urban Hinterland Cluster (Kent, High Weald and Surrey Hills AONBs) seeks to engage with young, black people aged 16 - 24 in central London.
- Elaine meets with other AONB Lead Officers and National Parks to discuss collaborative working on Nature Recovery Networks and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilots (of which Buckinghamshire is one).
- Members of the CCB team also attended the online NAAONB annual conference on 7/8 July, which covered a range of subjects, including the role of protected landscapes in climate change adaptation and mitigation, developing nature recovery networks and collaborating with farmers to deliver positive environmental outcomes.
- The blog summarising the presentations at the [conference](#) includes key points from a key note speech made by Lord Benyon, the Defra minister responsible for protected landscapes, who thanked AONBs and National Parks for all their hard work, especially their role as 'the places where people have been healed in body and mind' during the Covid-19 crisis.

Other

- [The Landscapes for Everyone](#) national conference was held online on 13 October 2020. The proceedings are now available online ([morning](#) and [afternoon](#) sessions). Elaine chaired the morning session, which included a keynote speech from Julian Glover and a series of expert presentations.
- Elaine was invited to chair a second online national conference on the Landscapes Review – ‘Glover Review’ proposals, this time on [Farming with Nature](#) in May. The event was very successful and all presentations and discussions are now available [online](#).
- The staff team is involved with either chairing or acting as members of external Boards and steering groups. For example, Elaine continues in her role as member of the Buckinghamshire Culture Development Board and the Bucks and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership.
- The announcement of the Chilterns AONB boundary extension has generated positive interest from residents, community groups, NGOs and local councils, leading to valuable new connections being made and meetings held or planned. This includes with CEOs, senior managers and Chairs at South Oxfordshire District Council, Luton Borough Council, Three Rivers District Council and Buckinghamshire Council.
- We continue to engage with the Chilterns’ MPs and in recent weeks Elaine and members of the team have held meetings with Joy Morrissey MP (Beaconsfield), Steve Baker MP (High Wycombe), Sarah Green MP (Chesham and Amersham) and Greg Smith MP (Buckingham). Elaine also had a walk and chat with Gagan Mohindra MP (SW Hertfordshire) and Tom Beeston, CEO at the Chiltern Society.