



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

4 November 2020 at 10.00 am

By *remote video conferencing

Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Declaration of Interest
3. Minutes of Previous Meeting (26.02.20)
4. Matters Arising
5. ~~* Public Question Time~~
6. Statement of Accounts 2019-20
7. Board Review including Report from Executive and Planning Committees
8. Mend the Gap
9. Future establishment of the Board
10. A.O.B

** In accordance with The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020*

<u>Full Board</u>	Wednesday 24 th February 2021
	Wednesday 21 st April 2021 AGM only
	Wednesday 23 rd June 2021
	Wednesday 20 th October 2021
<u>Executive Committee</u>	Wednesday 27 th January 2021
	Wednesday 28 th April 2021
	Wednesday 15 th September 2021
<u>Planning Committee</u>	Wednesday 18 th November 2020
	Wednesday 3 rd March 2021
	Wednesday 14 th July 2021
	Wednesday 17 th November 2021



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CONSERVATION BOARD FOR THE CHILTERN'S AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY held on Wednesday 26th February 2020 at Hambleton Village Hall, Hambleton RG9 6RP commencing at 10.05

MEMBERS PRESENT

Appointed by Local Authorities

Cllr Bill Bendyshe Brown
Cllr Steve Jarvis
Cllr. Lynn Lloyd
Cllr Charles Mathew
Cllr Hugh McCarthy
Cllr Richard Newcombe
Cllr Ian Reay
Cllr Nick Rose

Appointing Body

Buckinghamshire County Council
North Hertfordshire District Council
South Oxfordshire District Council
Oxfordshire County Council
Wycombe District Council
Aylesbury Vale District Council.
Hertfordshire County Council
Chiltern District Council

Appointed by the Secretary of State

Colin Courtney
Paul Mains
John Nicholls
Ray Payne
Elizabeth Wilson

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

Elected by Parish Councils

Cllr Susan Biggs
Cllr John Griffin
Cllr Charles Hussey

Oxfordshire
Oxfordshire
Buckinghamshire

CCB Officers

Graham Hurst
Elaine King
Claire Readey
Donna Webb
Annette Weiss

Finance Officer
Chief Executive Officer
Development and Funding Manager
Administrative Officer
People and Society Officer

Other:

Deirdre Hansen

Clerk to the Board

The Chairman welcomed all present.

19/20.21 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Alison Balfour-Lynn, Hertfordshire Parish Councils, Alison Doggett, Secretary of State appointee, Cllr Paul Duckett, Central Bedfordshire Council, John Shaw, Secretary of State appointee, Cllr Clive Thomas Buckinghamshire Parish Councils and Ian Waller, Secretary of State appointee.

Absent without apologies: Cllr Raj Khiroya, Three Rivers District Council.

19/20.22 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

19/20.23 Minutes of the Ordinary Board Meeting 16th October 2020.

The minutes of the Board Meeting of 16th October 2019 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record after under item 19/20.17 "October 2019" was removed from the recommendation at the end of the item.

19/20.24 Matters Arising.

An update on the state of the rivers in the Chilterns AONB was requested.

19/20.25 Public Question Time.

No public present.

19/20.26 Board Review including reports from the Executive and Planning Committees.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) had provided a summary of ongoing activities with the following highlights:

1. She talked about the staff changes that had taken place.
 2. She informed the meeting that the Planning Officer is leaving in March. They are now recruiting for a Principal Planning Officer. The Board wished Lucy Murfett well in her new position. She has been an effective Planning Officer, and made a great impact during her time with the CCB.
- Members expressed their appreciation for the CCB teams' achievements and their diligent commitment to their work. It was noted that the workload and activity keep increasing.
3. The new website is expected to be up and running in June.
 4. The CCB had responded to the Government announcement that HS2 will go ahead and expressed its disappointment with this decision.
 - a. It was noted that the relevant Local Authorities and Statutory Agencies will be receiving S17 applications soon and that the response time for these will be short.
 - b. It was noted that a hydrology report on a green tunnel had identified problems due to the area and the geology. This issue had been brought to the Select Committee by the CCB four years ago.
 5. Reports from the Executive Committee, the Planning Committee, Landscape and Conservation, Chalk, Cherries & Chairs Landscape Partnership Scheme, Beacons of the Past, People and Society and Development and Communications had been received.

Members had the opportunity to ask questions and comment.

1. The Board NOTED the review**19/20.27 Business Plan and Budget 2020-21**

The CEO presented the Business Plan and Budget for 2020-21, which had been approved for recommendation to the Board by the Executive Committee at their meeting 20th January 2020. The CEO informed the Board that the Development and Funding Manager had driven the Business Plan forward with the staff, taking a lead from the Management Plan, linking it to the Budget and the Risk

Register. The Business Plan is for one year, but is forward looking with the aim being to develop a longer-term planning framework to set longer-term organisational priorities.

The CEO confirmed that the new Buckinghamshire Council has agreed to make the same financial contribution in 2020-21 as the five combined Councils had made in 2019-20.

It was noted that Defra had not yet confirmed the new settlement for 20/21, but the Finance Officer has assumed, for budgeting purposes, that the contribution will be at the same level as in 2019-20.

The Finance Officer confirmed that he has taken a conservative view on spending and that he is looking at a balanced budget. He was asked to provide detailed budget arrangements with the papers in future.

Members asked questions and discussed the papers.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the Business Plan**
- 2. The Board NOTED the draft Budget.**

19/20.28 HR Advisory Group

The Vice-Chairman gave a summary report on the functions, the membership and actions of HR Advisory Group.

It was noted that this group does not have decision making powers, it only advises. The HR Advisory Group reports to the Chairman of the Executive Committee, who reports to the Board.

The CCB's new ways of working and new staff require the HR policies and processes to be reviewed and updated.

The Vice-Chairman is working on a coherent and contemporary set of documents that will form the basis for future policies. It will take some time to do this and, once completed, he will bring the papers to the Board. The AGM is the place to accept or reject the proposals. The work is not expected to be completed before the AGM in June 2020.

- 1. The Board NOTED the report on the HR Advisory Group.**

19/20.29 Review of the Risk Register

The CEO presented the updated Risk Register to the Board.

The Risk Register is reviewed and updated annually. The Executive Committee had suggested some minor changes which are now incorporated.

Members discussed and reviewed the Risk Register, noted the immediate key funding risks and the recommendations in the Government's Landscapes Review (Glover Review), including a need to improve diversity.

Following the Chairman's meeting with DEFRA he asked the members their thoughts on the suggestion that the CCB consider setting up a Risk Register for the AONB as a whole, in addition to the current risk register concerned with the management of the Board. The Board indicated that it was in favour of such an approach.

- 1. The Board REVIEWED and APPROVED the updated Risk Register.**

19/20.30 Glover Review of Designated Landscapes.

The CEO gave a presentation to update the Board on the Landscapes Review and related work. She highlighted the 27 key recommendations made by the review team and how these have been incorporated into the CCB's Business Plan, along with reporting on, the outcomes of our Partnership Forum meeting, team away days to develop a Monitoring and Evaluation framework,

and visits held and planned with National Lottery Heritage Fund, Defra and Natural England. The CEO also described her work with other AOB Lead Officers on the National Association of AONB's Colchester Declaration.

The CEO was thanked for her presentation. She recognised the work of the whole team and drew attention to her slides, which use the improved branding organised by the Communications Officer.

19/20.31 Any Other Business

1. The hope was expressed that Local Authorities would adopt the emerging joint Chiltern Society and CCB Transport Policy.
2. Concern was expressed on the effects on the setting of the AONB with the plans for a third bridge at Reading.
3. The CEO updated the meeting on MHCLG's new statutory instrument for the new Buckinghamshire Unitary Authority and her communications on the matter with the CEOs of our Local Authorities.
4. Concern was expressed about the protection of trees not covered by Tree Preservation Orders and not in Conservation Areas.
5. Three Board members will be leaving the Board at the formation of the new Buckinghamshire Unitary Authority, Cllrs Bill Bendyshe- Brown, Hugh McCarthy and Nick Rose. The Chairman thanked them for their work and help given to the CCB and wished them well for the future.

19/20.32 Open for Business Programme.

The People and Society Officer gave a presentation on the Open for Business Programme. This is a three-year HS2 Business and Local Economy Fund funded programme working with a range of partners.

The Chilterns Pass was launched earlier in the month. This is a new way to reach new audiences and an opportunity to promote independent Chilterns businesses and attractions, while also promoting the countryside and environmental messages.

A similar initiative is already operating successfully in East Anglia.

The Chilterns Walking Festival has some new themed walks and outdoor events this year and the CCB will be holding a Celebration of Chilterns Food and Drink (7-12 April) based on the successful Taste of the Chilterns pilot festival 2017.

Media coverage about the Chilterns Pass has been good.

She was thanks for her presentation.

Future Meeting Dates

Full Board:

17th June (and AGM) 2020

21st October 2020

Executive Committee

6th May 2020

23rd September 2020

Planning Committee:

4th March 2020

15th July 2020

18th November 2020

Lunch would be followed by a site visits to the Chiltern Valley Winery and Turville Studios.

The Chairman.....date.....

CHILTERN CONSERVATION BOARD				
BALANCE SHEET				
As at 31 March 2019			As at 31 March 2020	
£	£		£	£
		CURRENT ASSETS		
1,000		Stocks in hand	1,000	
53,829		Debtors	64,643	
888,013		Bank and cash	4,675,374	
	942,842			4,741,017
		LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		
382,000		Creditors and receipts in advance	4,177,680	
	382,000			4,177,680
	560,842	NET CURRENT ASSETS		563,337
		LONG TERM LIABILITIES		
1,100,000		Defined Benefits Pension Scheme	947,000	
	1,100,000			947,000
	(539,158)	TOTAL ASSETS LESS TOTAL LIABILITIES		(383,663)
		REPRESENTED BY:		
(1,100,000)		Pensions Reserve	(947,000)	
43,642		Reserves - Restricted	43,233	
417,200		Reserves - Earmarked	420,104	
100,000		Reserves - General	100,000	
	(539,158)			(383,663)

CHILTERNNS CONSERVATION BOARD						
STATEMENT OF MOVEMENT IN RESERVES						
	Friends of Red Kites	Chalk Streams	Development Reserve	Budget Equalisation Reserve	General Reserve	Pensions Reserve
	£	£	£	£	£	£
As at 31st March 2019	5,859	37,783	293,744	123,456	100,000	(1,100,000)
Transfers		5,000		(5,000)		
Movements in the year		(5,409)		7,904	-	153,000
As at 31st March 2020	5,859	37,374	293,744	126,360	100,000	(947,000)
	Restricted	43,233	Earmarked	420,104		

CHILTERNs CONSERVATION BOARD			
REVENUE ACCOUNT YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020			
	£	£	£
INCOME			
DEFRA	442,015		
Local Authorities	110,860		
Other Income	30,470		
Project Income	602,869		1,186,214
EXPENDITURE			
People and society		360,970	
Landscape and conservation		484,663	
Planning and development		101,591	
Overheads		236,495	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE			1,183,719
SURPLUS FOR YEAR			2,495

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/20 Part 3

To be completed by Local Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and other Smaller Authorities*:

- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure exceeded £25,000 but did not exceed £6.5 million; or
- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less but that:
 - are unable to certify themselves as exempt (fee payable); or
 - have requested a limited assurance review (fee payable)

Guidance notes on completing Part 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/20

1. Every smaller authority in England that either received gross income or incurred gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 **must** complete Part 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return at the end of each financial year in accordance with *Proper Practices*.
2. **The Annual Governance and Accountability Return is made up of three parts, pages 3 to 6:**
 - The **Annual Internal Audit Report** is completed by the authority's internal auditor.
 - **Sections 1 and 2** are to be completed and approved by the authority.
 - **Section 3** is completed by the external auditor and will be returned to the authority.
3. The authority **must** approve Section 1, Annual Governance Statement, before approving Section 2, Accounting Statements, and both **must** be approved and published **before 1 July 2020**.
4. An authority with either gross income or gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 or an authority with neither income nor expenditure exceeding £25,000, but which is unable to certify itself as exempt, or is requesting a limited assurance review, **must** return to the external auditor by email or post (not both) **no later than 30 June 2020**. Reminder letters will incur a charge of £40 +VAT:
 - the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Sections 1 and 2, together with
 - a bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2020
 - an explanation of any significant year on year variances in the accounting statements
 - notification of the commencement date of the period for the exercise of public rights
 - Annual Internal Audit Report 2019/20

Unless requested, do not send any additional documents to your external auditor. Your external auditor will ask for any additional documents needed.

Once the external auditor has completed the limited assurance review and is able to give an opinion, the Annual Governance and Accountability **Section 1, Section 2 and Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate** will be returned to the authority by email or post.

Publication Requirements

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities must publish the following information on a publicly accessible website:

Before 1 July 2020 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited;
- **Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2019/20**, approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2019/20**, approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2020 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of conclusion of audit
- **Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate**
- **Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR** including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review.

It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return constitutes the annual return referred to in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Throughout, the words 'external auditor' have the same meaning as the words 'local auditor' in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

*for a complete list of bodies that may be smaller authorities refer to schedule 2 to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Guidance notes on completing Part 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/20

- The authority **must** comply with *Proper Practices* in completing Sections 1 and 2 of this Annual Governance and Accountability Return. *Proper Practices* are found in the *Practitioners' Guide** which is updated from time to time and contains everything needed to prepare successfully for the financial year-end and the subsequent work by the external auditor.
- Make sure that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is complete (no highlighted boxes left empty), and is properly signed and dated. Where amendments are made by the authority to the AGAR after it has been approved by the authority and before it has been reviewed by the external auditor, the Chairman and RFO should initial the amendments and if necessary republish the amended AGAR and recommence the period for the exercise of public rights. If the AGAR contains unapproved or unexplained amendments, it may be returned and additional costs will be incurred.
- The authority **should** receive and note the annual internal audit report if possible before approving the annual governance statement and the accounts.
- Use the checklist provided below to review the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for completeness before returning it to the external auditor by email or post (not both) no later than 30 June 2020.
- Do not send the external auditor any information not specifically requested. However, **you must inform your external auditor about any change of Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer or Chairman, and provide relevant email addresses and telephone numbers.**
- Make sure that the copy of the bank reconciliation to be sent to your external auditor with the Annual Governance and Accountability Return covers all the bank accounts. If the authority holds any short-term investments, note their value on the bank reconciliation. The external auditor must be able to agree the bank reconciliation to Box 8 on the accounting statements (**Section 2, page 5**). An explanation **must** be provided of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8. More help on bank reconciliation is available in the *Practitioners' Guide**.
- Explain fully significant variances in the accounting statements on **page 5**. Do not just send a copy of the detailed accounting records instead of this explanation. The external auditor wants to know that you understand the reasons for all variances. Include complete numerical and narrative analysis to support the full variance.
- If the external auditor has to review unsolicited information, or receives an incomplete bank reconciliation, or variances are not fully explained, additional costs may be incurred.
- Make sure that the accounting statements add up and that the balance carried forward from the previous year (Box 7 of 2019) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2020).
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), on behalf of the authority, **must** set the period for the exercise of public rights. From the commencement date for a single period of 30 consecutive working days, the approved accounts and accounting records can be inspected. Whatever period the RFO sets it **must** include a common inspection period – during which the accounts and accounting records of all smaller authorities must be available for public inspection – of the first ten working days of July.
- The authority **must** publish the information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, including the period for the exercise of public rights and the name and address of the external auditor **before 1 July 2020**.

Completion checklist – 'No' answers mean you may not have met requirements		Yes	No
All sections	Have all highlighted boxes have been completed?	✓	
	Has all additional information requested, including the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights , been provided for the external auditor?	✓	
Internal Audit Report	Have all highlighted boxes been completed by the internal auditor and explanations provided?	✓	
Section 1	For any statement to which the response is 'no', has an explanation been published?	✓	
Section 2	Has the authority's approval of the accounting statements been confirmed by the signature of the Chairman of the approval meeting?	✓	
	Has an explanation of significant variations from last year to this year been published?	✓	
	Has the bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2020 been reconciled to Box 8?	✓	
	Has an explanation of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8 been provided?	✓	
Sections 1 and 2	Trust funds – have all disclosures been made if the authority as a body corporate is a sole managing trustee? NB: do not send trust accounting statements unless requested.	✓	

***Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices**, can be downloaded from www.nalc.gov.uk or from www.ada.org.uk

Annual Internal Audit Report 2019/20

Chilterns Conservation Board

This authority's internal auditor, acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with relevant procedures and controls to be in operation **during** the financial year ended 31 March 2020.

The internal audit for 2019/20 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Agreed? Please choose one of the following		
	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	✓		
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. IF the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2018/19, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2018/19 AGAR tick "not covered")			✓
L. The authority has demonstrated that during summer 2019 it correctly provided for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓		
M. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	Yes	No	Not applicable
			✓

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

03/07/2020

14/08/2020

DD/MM/YY

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

Glenn Bayford

OF INTERNAL AUDITOR

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

18/08/2020

*If the response is 'no' you must include a note to state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).

**Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned, or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2019/20

We acknowledge as the members of:

Chilterns Conservation Board

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2020, that:

	Agreed		'Yes' means that this authority:
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓		prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓		has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓		during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓		responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A
			✓
has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.			

*Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

04/11/2020

and recorded as minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by the Chairman and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chairman

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Clerk

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Other information required by the Transparency Codes (not part of Annual Governance Statement)

Authority web address

www.chilternsaonb.org

AUTHORITY WEBSITE ADDRESS

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2019/20 for

Chilterns Conservation Board

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2019 £	31 March 2020 £	
			<i>Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures must agree to underlying financial records.</i>
1. Balances brought forward	542,258	560,842	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	0	0	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	858,534	5,256,691	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	547,069	675,049	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	320,432	508,670	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	560,842	4,633,814	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	888,011	4,675,373	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	72,000	89,530	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	0	0	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).
11. (For Local Councils Only) Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)	Yes	No	The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee for and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
		✓	<i>N.B. The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.</i>

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2020 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

04/11/2020

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

DD/MM/YY

as recorded in minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by Chairman of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate 2019/20

In respect of

Chilterns Conservation Board

1 Respective responsibilities of the body and the auditor

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2020; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

Our responsibility is to review Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with guidance issued by the National Audit Office (NAO) on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General (see note below). Our work **does not** constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would do.

2 External auditor report 2019/20

(Except for the matters reported below)* on the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met. (*delete as appropriate).

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

3 External auditor certificate 2019/20

We certify/do not certify* that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2020.

*We do not certify completion because:

External Auditor Name

ENTER NAME OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR

External Auditor Signature

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

DD/MM/YY

*Note: the NAO issued guidance applicable to external auditors' work on limited assurance reviews in Auditor Guidance Note AGN/02. The AGN is available from the NAO website (www.nao.org.uk)

Item 7 **Board Review (November 2020)****Author:** Elaine King, Chief Executive Officer**Summary:** This paper provides an overview of the team's activities and achievements in recent months. It highlights the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak and summarises key activities and achievements.**Purpose of Report:** To update the Board of the organisation's ongoing work and to invite feedback.**Background**

The Coronavirus outbreak began to impact our day-to-day work in early March. In the early stages, our work largely centred on making key decisions in line with emerging Government guidance. This included arranging for the staff team to work and be connected remotely, liaising with colleagues and partners to pause project work and suspend meetings and other events, and responding to requests for information, eg from Defra, the National Association of AONBs and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The second phase involved still reacting but also planning ahead, with a key focus being to explore how we can best deliver the AONB Management Plan and the Business Plan.

The third phase began in May, when lockdown restrictions started to be eased and we moved to activities which included providing guidance for visitors to the Chilterns, sign-posting local businesses that were starting to open, developing a suite of socially distanced walks and liaising with partners and others in tackling the more negative consequences of more people using the countryside, including fires and litter.

Site visits and survey work has now commenced again, which includes putting all the necessary measures in place to ensure staff safety, developing the necessary risk assessments and continuing to follow government guidance.

Despite the continued disruption to day-to-day life, the staff team has achieved a great deal in recent months. This paper highlights some of these achievements and provides a strategic overview of the impact, risks and opportunities of the current situation, while also looking ahead to the post-coronavirus recovery phase.

Recommendation

- 1. To note the paper and provide feedback.**

Item 7**Board Review (November 2020)****1.0 Summary**

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the CCB team has worked at home since mid-March. Everyone moved quickly to ensure they could work remotely and the team quickly adapted to a new way of working. Over the past few months, we have ensured clear and timely communications to the team regarding the latest Government advice and the decisions we were making as a result.

While the initial phase involved responding to a fast-moving situation, this evolved into a fairly settled pattern of work, still reacting to new developments, but also exploring the impact on and risks to all areas of work, while also identifying new needs and the opportunities to develop our work in different directions.

As lockdown measures began to ease in May, the team adapted and responded again to the changing situation and the opportunities and challenges this provided. With the second spike anticipated from September onwards, and new restrictions being imposed, we have continued to monitor the situation closely, communicate with the team and revise our plans accordingly.

The following update is a summary of the team's activities during the last period and includes how we have responded to and been affected by the impacts of Covid-19.

2.0 Report from Executive Committee, 23 September 2020

2.1 The Finance Officer reported on the financial position to the end of July 2020. A core surplus of £17,027 exists due to increased external income, though this will be used during the year due to commitments to projects.

2.2 The Finance Officer set out the results of the annual Treasury Management Review and the Committee agreed to maintain its strategy of using UK deposit accounts, maximising return without risking capital.

2.3 The Annual Accounts show that total income and expenditure has increased due to CCB's projects. The surplus for the year was £2,495. The increase in current assets is entirely due to the advanced payment by Network Rail for funding to the Mind the Gap joint venture with the North Wessex Downs AONB of £3,750,000. This is treated as deferred income in accordance with generally accepted accounting practice rules.

2.5 The CCB's pension scheme is 105.9% funded. Reserves were noted. Most are restricted. The free reserve is £100,000. The internal audit report required in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) has been completed and confirmed that there are no matters of concern to be brought to the attention of the Board.

2.6 The Chief Executive presented the Board Review, highlighting the CCB team's activities and achievements in recent months. The staff team is working well from home. More work has been generated due to Covid-19 and the team has responded to the opportunities that have arisen. The CCB's core work is in the Chilterns, but the CEO and the team are also working to have more of a voice nationally, for example through working with other AONBs and the National Association of AONBs.

2.7 The team is drafting an Expression of Interest for a bid for the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, launched by the Government on 14 September. The focus is on practical work to restore chalk streams, and connecting people with nature.

2.8 The Government is expected to respond to the Glover Review by the end of the year. Elaine continues to contribute to the Defra contact group for AONBs and National Parks.

2.9 The Countryside Officer is working with the team and partners on identifying priorities for a delivery plan for the AONB Management Plan.

2.10 The CCB submitted Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2019/20 to the NAAONB, which compiles the data and sends them to Defra. The CCB's KPIs show positive impact with increases in metrics including the number of volunteers, the value of volunteer time, attendance at events that we have convened, the number of young people engaged and number of partnerships where the CCB is part of the steering group or a lead partner.

2.11 The Chairman and members expressed thanks to the Chief Executive and commended the team on all its work and progress being made.

2.12 The CEO updated members on the development with the Mend the Gap programme. The Committee approved the Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Agreement.

2.13 The Deputy Chairman explained the draft of Phase 1 of the report on the future establishment of the Board. The Committee agreed the document is very helpful and Phase 2 and 3 work is now progressing.

3.0 Report from Planning Committee, 15 July 2020

3.1 The Committee welcomed Matt Thomson as the Board's new Planner since the end of June, succeeding Lucy Murfett who had left CCB in March to become planning policy manager at SODC. The paperwork for the meeting had been prepared by Mike Stubbs, the Board's planning advisor, who is continuing to support the Board's planning activity, particularly on the development management caseload.

3.2. The Committee received and approved an update on development management activity, which included the usual mixture of cheer at instances where the Management Plan and Design Guide were having a positive influence on developments and despair at proposals that did not (yet) do so.

3.3 There was a discussion of various initiatives concerning sub-regional transport planning activity. The Committee resolved to submit strong representations on aspects of the draft Reading Transport Strategy that would cause direct harm as well as increased traffic movements in the Chilterns around Caversham, including a relief road and Thames crossing, while commending the plan's focus on sustainable and active modes of travel elsewhere. Disappointing progress with securing support from highways authorities for the Transport Planning in the Chilterns initiative (joint with Chiltern Society) was noted, and the Planner encouraged to step up activity promoting the idea.

3.4 Responses made to consultations and engagement with other transport strategies, local plans and a change to the law on sky-writing were noted, and the committee noted active and forthcoming local, regional and national consultations and other engagement activity.

3.5 The next meeting of Planning Committee is on Wednesday 18 November and will again be held virtually. Meeting dates for 2021 have been agreed and are included elsewhere in the Board papers.

4.0 Over-arching and core work

4.1 Administration, finance and IT (Donna and Lynne)

- All administration, finance and IT continues to be carried out effectively from home since the office was closed on 17 March.
- Lynne continues to explore how we might best use the Hubspot contact management system and is developing a set of operational procedures to help ensure the CCB team uses and manages personal contact data to ensure GDPR compliance.
- We are continuing to review and improve systems to facilitate working from home as effectively as possible, which includes reviewing telecommunications – looking at various hosted telephone systems to enable working from home or the office.
- Donna is progressing making the office Covid secure, for example by installing hand sanitiser units, signs and a track and trace QR poster, ready for when staff return to the office.

4.2 Chilterns Partnership (Kath)

- The second of two Chilterns Partnership Meetings was held on 22 September and provided an opportunity to feedback from the consultation process regarding priority objectives, to introduce the proposed task and finish groups and to agree next steps in creation of a prioritised partnership delivery plan.
- The first Annual Partnership Forum was held online on 15 October with a panel discussion and Q&A on the theme of Green Recovery in the Chilterns. Panel Members: Marian Spain, CEO Natural England; Pauline Walsh, CEO Affinity Water; Dr Prue Addison, Conservation Strategy Director BBOWT; Jonathan Smales, Executive Chairman Human Nature, with Howard Davies, CEO at the National Association of AONBs chairing. The forum was recorded and is available to watch [here](#).
- The forum was very well attended with 180 registrations and 120 individuals attending on the day. A follow up survey was sent to all participants. Of results received so far, 100% felt that the event was well organised/ very well organised, and that the speakers were very good/ excellent. A good number of those who responded would be interested in getting involved with the task and finish groups.
- Next steps are to bring the task and finish groups together to create the delivery plan and impact monitoring framework.

4.3 Conservation and Landscape (Neil)

- **Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELM)** – A series of discussions with stakeholders – including farmers, local authorities, Chiltern Society, wildlife trusts, Woodland Trust and the NAAONB – contributed to our ELMs response to Defra in July. Concerns have been raised that recent statements from DEFRA might indicate a dilution of ambition with a possible shift in emphasis from ‘public money for public goods’ to support for food production. We will continue to support our farm clusters and work with the NAAONB to help our farmers adapt to post Brexit conditions.
- We have been developing good relationships with DEFRA team members and, as part of her National work, Elaine has been able to highlight the CCB’s continued work to support farmers and landowners throughout the pandemic.
- **Woodland Strategy** – A further response to Defra’s draft England Woodland Strategy was submitted before the 11 September deadline. We continue to work with local initiatives including Oxtrees – Oxford’s ambition to double tree cover across the county.
- **Hertfordshire Tree Resilience Strategy** – input in conjunction to response to draft Forestry Research Tree Resilience guidelines.
- **Forestry Commission EIAs and Felling Licences** – technical advice and comment concerning a number of FC proposals. Increasingly we are able to highlight the value of the Beacons of the Past Lidar survey in identifying hidden archaeological value within woodlands.
- Unfortunately, in May we became aware of a case in the Oxfordshire Chilterns where a lapse in procedures allowed a tree planting scheme to proceed on a chalk grassland site

which, in time, will lead to a loss of this important habitat and scenic views from a stretch of the Chiltern Way. We are therefore working to improve procedures and partnership working to avoid such conflicts in future. As a result, Natural England has identified problems in use of priority habitat data and is working with the Forestry Commission at a national level to agree future protocols.

- **HS2** – we raised strong objections to the removal of 1km of ancient hedgerow beside Bottom House Farm Lane at the beginning of May – prime bird nesting season. We also expressed concern at the closure with poor or non-existent diversions for footpaths east of Great Missenden. We provided written and verbal briefings to both the Chilterns Review Group and Bucks Council executives.
- In September we raised concerns over the accentuated designs of the Amersham Vent Shaft – structures becoming more prominent than expected and lighting at night being proposed. Our concerns, including a [briefing document](#), were shared as part of HS2's public consultation on the vent shaft design, with local MPs, on social media and posted on our website.
- We continue to provide technical comment on emerging HS2 designs, most recently the Wendover Viaduct, landscape and ecological mitigation.
- In recent weeks, we have been investigating the HS2 activities at Jones's Hill Ancient Woodland, near Wendover. Ecologists recently identified Barbastelle bats – one of the UK's rarest mammals and, as with all UK bats, a protected species - in the woodland. We are liaising with relevant people and organisations and working to engage with HS2 designers to understand HS2's plans for the site, the timescales for the work and the mitigation planned to reduce the impact of works.
- **UKPN Electricity infrastructure undergrounding** – concerns were raised over a threatened cut to the undergrounding budget and potential significant delay to the two Chilterns Proposals – Latimer/Chenies and Dunstable Downs. A Letter from the CCB's Chair and Chief Executive were sent to UKPN directors, OFGEM, the Natural England chair of the steering group, and local MPs (Dame Cheryl Gillan and Andrew Selous) – both of whom were very supportive. UKPN are now committed to progressing our projects once full consents are obtained. OFGEM were also grateful for our input.
- **Rural Forum** – provided support for the adoption of the successful Wycombe Rural Forum within the new unitary authority. The first Buckinghamshire wide forum was held on 15 of October with up to 60 attendees (including Steve Baker MP). This was a great opportunity to promote the AONB and work of the Conservation Board, with Annette making a well-received presentation on work to support local businesses through the Chiltern Tourism and Food Networks.
- **Christmas Common Farm Cluster** – aiming to revitalise the group, post the Covid-19 lockdown, with various projects including field margin enhancement for moths and butterflies with the support of Butterfly Conservation. The cluster has hosted Zoom webinars on Natural Capital and the Farm Carbon Toolkit and has recently welcomed new members. Our thanks go to Nick Marriner for securing funds from Natural England, enabling project work helping farmland birds this coming winter.

5.0 People and Society (Annette)

We have been busy supporting our rural economy in many different ways over the last six months. See [here](#) for a visual summary of our activities and achievements.

Chilterns Walking Festival

- After careful consideration and consultation with walk leaders and businesses we decided to proceed with the autumn [Chilterns Walking Festival](#) (CWF) 17 Oct - 1 Nov. There has been strong support for the event, it is seen as something positive to focus on, bringing health and wellbeing benefits and an opportunity to generate additional footfall for local businesses.

- The programme consists of 65 walks, some of them delivered by the Beacons of the Past and Chalk, Cherries and Chairs teams. There are lots of new walks, including artist-led walks in Chesham, Visit Midsomer walks in Amersham and a number of themed walks starting from the Mercure Lambert Hotel in Aston Rowant, our new primary sponsor. The CWF is a great collaborative effort involving multiple partners and volunteers. Take-up for the walks has been excellent, and the Festival has generated high levels of engagement, including interest on social media.

Countryside Access

- During lockdown we saw much greater recreational use of the countryside, with many more people exploring the countryside on their doorstep as well as audiences from further afield. This demonstrated the value of the Chilterns countryside as never before, but also created visitor management issues. We played an important role reviewing and disseminating Government guidance and communications regarding countryside access and the Countryside Code.
- To help with visitor management, we developed a series of 23 [social-distance friendly walks](#) away from the honeypot sites, downloadable from the Chilterns AONB website. This was done in partnership with the Chiltern Society. They have been very well received and have achieved extensive media coverage including being up there in the Independent's [7 great summer days out for the family](#).
- We have seen a sharp increase in demand for our most popular promoted routes, especially the Chilterns Cycleway and Chess Valley walk. However it is clear that the signage and interpretation along these routes is now dated and is negatively impacting the visitor experience. Investment in these routes is overdue and we are hoping to secure green recovery funding.

Open for Business project

- The [Chilterns Pass](#) was put on hold from March 2020. We have kept in regular contact with businesses and taken soundings to judge the best time to re-start. Work briefly resumed at the start of September contacting businesses that had signed up to the Chilterns Pass to assess if they were fully re-opened and if they were ready and able to proceed. It was evident that the sector was not yet ready and we are therefore delaying the re-start of the Chilterns Pass until early 2021. Looking forward, we see the Chilterns Pass as a key recovery tool for the sector that has suffered greatly over the last few months.
- The Celebration of Chilterns Food & Drink which was scheduled to take place in October has been postponed till next year.
- The Bucks and Chilterns Tourism Network met on 15 September for the first time since lockdown. This was very well attended and included discussion of 'Extending the Season' aimed at encouraging people to continue to visit restaurants, attractions and other businesses beyond the traditional summer season and into the autumn.

Fostering the economic and social wellbeing of local communities

- The CCB submitted a response to the All Party Parliamentary Group for Hospitality and Tourism's 'Pathways to Recovery' Inquiry. This was a combined response with Visit Buckinghamshire, Buckinghamshire Business First, and the Chilterns Tourism Network. We also worked with other AONBs to produce a response on behalf of the National Association of AONBs. The APPG's [report](#) was published in June and refers to evidence provided in our submission, in addition to making recommendations consistent with those we made.
- We promoted local businesses as they came out of lockdown – highlighting those that were Open for Business, communicating messages about 'Know before you Go', and

encouraging people to continue to #shoplocal following a drop in sales once lockdown restrictions were lifted.

- Social media campaigns promoted community shops in the Chilterns, family places to visit over the summer holidays and walking/cycling activities combined with places to eat, drink and local produce.
- A Tourism Recovery Plan was prepared and collaboration continues with the Chilterns Tourism Network and Visit Buckinghamshire to promote a Christmas campaign and an extended season from December 2020 to March 2021.
- Regular communications with businesses, signposting them to information on business grants, sharing and updating them on sector news.

6.0 Communications (Claire and Vicki)

Strategic Communications Planning

- Helen Valvona is now in post and providing additional part-time capacity to Vicki from September. Helen is already an established Comms volunteer and will be a real help to the team.

Operational communications (Vicki)

- *Outstanding Chilterns* magazine is in production and working towards a publication date of 27 October. It was agreed to publish at this time in order to support the 'Extending the Season' campaign promoting the local Chilterns economy into the Autumn.
- The new Chilterns AONB website has made significant progress with the test/development site now live. The team will be working on content creation over the coming weeks and we are working towards a public "go live" date in Nov/Dec. Significant attention has also been given to the new interactive map with all destinations and points being reviewed.
- The Board's Annual Review 2019/20 content has been written and will be sent to the designers for creation in the next. In order to save on cost and paper, this year's edition will be distributed as an online document which will be published on our website and sent as an attachment to all local authorities, partners, MPs and others.
- CCB website, e-newsletters and associated social media channels continue to be updated regularly with Board and project news and any relevant government advice.
- We continue to support our project teams with communications advice and promotion. We have been supporting the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs team with their "Chilterns Celebration" series of events throughout October, the Chilterns Walking Festival, and the Planning team with web page design and advice.

7.0 Fundraising

Green Recovery Challenge Fund (Claire)

- After a successful Expression of Interest (EOI) to the Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund, we submitted a full application to the Fund in October, in partnership with non-governmental organisations including the Chiltern Society and Chiltern Rangers.
- The application comprises a suite of projects which will help contribute to the delivery of the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project's Business Plan. The proposal comprises practical river restoration work, education and engagement activities and improved signage and interpretation on popular river walks.
- Deadlines were extremely challenging. We expect to hear the result in November.

8.0 Planning (Matt Thomson and Mike Stubbs)

Development management (Mike):

- Since the last Planning Committee (15 July) CCB has been consulted on 40 planning applications (to the end of October) and responded to 26, to date.
- A variety of work and development pressures continue, largely as before, with residential development consistently the most common planning application but also a noticeable rise in tourism and leisure uses. The latter includes holiday 'pods' and a comprehensive redevelopment of a golf course for holiday accommodation. Covid-19 has been mentioned as a material planning consideration, perhaps unsurprisingly, in applications that promote 'staycation' holidays and access and provision of recreational space.
- Another trend and potentially a threatening one involves increased lighting within the AONB, be it applications to illuminate multi-use games areas for schools or new build residential with large glazing voids. The new AONB Management Plan policy (DP8) is having some traction with planning authorities, when assessing these applications, however it is a matter to monitor.
- CCB did submit [evidence](#) to the All Party Parliamentary Group on their recent Dark Skies review. With AONBs having been described as having an 'intrinsic dark sky' environment by the Institute of Lighting (ILP) professionals, this is an issue of increasing importance.
- We have enjoyed some success in assisting to negotiate design and layout amendments (North Stoke Golf Club) and in a number of applications the LPAs have agreed with CCB's recommendations to refuse planning permission, albeit, several factors are at play when such decisions are made. An application posing a major threat at Chorleywood in Three Rivers DC (800 and 300 dwellings scheme) is undetermined at time of writing but the LPA commissioned an independent review of the landscape case and this chimed with the objections previously raised by CCB.
- Looking forward, a number of environmental impact assessment scoping consultations indicate that other major schemes are being developed for likely submission in 2021. These include applications at London Luton Airport (to increase from 18 to 19 million passengers per annum or mppa) and their longer term aspirations (to 32 mppa) as well as an airspace consultation for arrivals into Luton, coordinated by NATS.
- Other scoping applications dealt include a major new settlement in Central Beds (within the setting of the AONB) and the new road within the Princes Risborough development expansion area (impacts on setting and views).
- Local Plan allocations within the AONB in Wycombe district are now producing planning applications (notably at Naphill and Hughenden).

Local and neighbourhood plans (Matt and Mike)

- Following legal advice, the new Buckinghamshire Council has agreed to withdraw the draft Chiltern & South Bucks Local Plan, which failed the duty to cooperate test with regard to planning for overspill from Slough. Bucks Council will now progress with a local plan for the whole new unitary area rather than a new plan for the former council areas. While this may increase the time it will take to get a new plan in place, NPPF policies for the AONB should offer better protection against speculative development than Green Belt will, and the focus for growth is expected to be adjacent to Slough and away from the AONB. This will also focus greater attention on areas that benefit from existing and emerging neighbourhood plans.
- The North Herts Local Plan and Central Beds Local Plan are now progressing to the end of their examinations. We are engaging with Dacorum Council on their emerging local plan: the council has taken a strong view against development within the AONB, but the tightness of boundaries around Tring, Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead means that there will be proposed allocations that may be challenging in terms of setting and indirect impact, especially with regard to the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC at Tring Park and Ashridge. Dacorum's officers are taking as sensitive an approach as they are able and engagement is positive.

- The South Oxfordshire local plan examination Inspector has issued his preliminary findings and the council is now consulting on its main modifications. We have serious concerns about the Inspector's approach to towns (and potentially villages) in and on the edge of the AONB(s), where he has required that housing requirements should be applied as a target that must be met and exceeded and now cannot be reduced through neighbourhood plans despite no evidence that such levels of growth can be accommodated without harm to the AONB(s). We have drafted a strongly worded letter to be sent to the council's leaders and are considering taking legal advice on whether the Inspector may have failed in his duties under s.85 of the CRoW Act.

Strategic transport planning (Matt)

- Responses were submitted to the draft Reading Transport Strategy and the England's Economic Heartland transport strategy and proposals for a statutory sub-regional transport body in line with discussions at the July Planning Committee meeting and the CCB/CS Transport Planning in the Chilterns paper. On the latter initiative, the letters to highways authorities in the Chilterns area seeking their support are being updated to reflect to EEH proposals, and to include Reading Borough Council, whose area is not within the Chilterns, because the Borough abuts the AONB and proposals in their transport strategy will have direct and indirect impacts.
- As noted by Neil under "Conservation and Landscape" above, progress with HS2 continues apace:
 - We have submitted strong representations on the "Crown of Thorns" design for the tunnel vent shaft at Amersham, including a [briefing note](#) on our involvement with the evolution of the scheme (we do not approve of the current design).
 - We have continued to liaise with Natural England and other stakeholders on the detailed design of key infrastructure such as viaducts and tunnel portals as they come forward through "schedule 17" applications.
 - We are currently addressing, with others, the activities taking place at Jones' Hill Wood south of Wendover. HS2 has been [accused](#) of committing wildlife crimes and has had to stop site clearance activities due to the presence of rare barbastelle bats. HS2's operatives are currently flooding the wood with powerful lights during the night, apparently to help remove protesters from the woods. Concerns have been expressed that the lights are disturbing bats, which is a crime under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as well as contravening HS2's own construction code of practice. The lighting is also contributing to light pollution in the AONB.

National issues (Matt)

- We have responded to the government's consultation on "Changes to the current planning system" and (by the time of the Board meeting) the Planning White Paper "Planning for the future". In both cases we took as constructive an approach as we could, focusing on issues of direct relevance to the conservation and enhancement of AONBs.
- Our response to the "Changes" consultation was influential on responses from other AONBs, and we are currently working on coordinated responses to the Planning White Paper with those other AONBs that have the capacity to respond, and the National Association of AONBs, which represents the 34 AONBs in England.
- Key points to note are that, as usual with national consultations on reforming the planning system, there is a mixture of good and bad ideas, and the success of all of it will very much depend on how it is implemented. In particular, there is the usual dichotomy between an ideal of speed and simplicity that needs to be balanced with the quality of outcomes and the fact that planning is dealing with a complex range of issues. In the current batch of consultations a new factor is the idea that if individual buildings are designed well (which essentially means looking pretty, rather than creating places that are sustainable or function well) then they should be swiftly approved, even if their

development causes harm and/or they are a form of development that isn't actually needed in the location.

3.0 Projects

Chalk, Cherries & Chairs (Kath, Harriet, Lizzie, Nick and Sam)

- Despite the disruption caused by Covid-19 the project has continued to deliver successfully across the three themes of Wildlife, History and Community with much activity going ahead either outdoors or online.
- A particular highlight has been the first annual '[Chilterns Celebration](#)' festival of events – a month long programme of events and activities for our target audiences including socially distanced walks and activities, on-line talks and the Chilterns Champions conference (jointly organised with Wendy Morrison, Beacons of the Past). The aims of the festival were to showcase the work of the CCC project and to promote volunteering opportunities.
- Another highlight has been the scaling up of practical habitat management work - see details below, and the successful completion of the first season of volunteer wildlife survey (Tracking the Impact Project) in spite of Covid-19.
- Sam and Wendy have reviewed the Heritage Theme and refocused activity into one far more integrated programme which is already starting to deliver greater impact. Delivery partners, Bucks New University and Amersham Museum, have continued to make progress across their projects despite lockdown.
- Kath has continued to manage the project, after the departure of the Project Manager in March, with support from Claire and Wendy. Recruitment for a new [Project Manager](#) is now underway and interviews are planned for 8 December.
- Nicola Thomas, Partnership Manager, Bucks and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership has agreed to chair the CCC steering group.

- Key Achievements / Issues

Wildlife Theme

- 65 volunteer wildlife surveys carried out (out of 85 planned)
- 14 online zoom volunteer [training workshops](#) held – 355 attendances
- Active WhatsApp group for survey volunteers (65 people)
- Evaluation survey sent to volunteers
- Need to widen engagement with new audiences and young conservation volunteers
- Over 400 people signed up for 24 October online event - 'Outstanding in their field' - Citizen Science conference (joint with Beacons of the Past and Chilterns Chalk Streams Project). Keynote speaker was Chris Packham.

Harriet is doing a fantastic job in setting up and overseeing a growing number of site specific projects including:

- Old Callowdown Farm - Lodge Hill SSSI including seven week contractor led scrub clearance project, new stock fencing, stock and water supply to SSSI. In addition, 1,700m new hedgerow to be planted, 33.5ha restoration of grassland, 1.6ha flower rich margin, 4.1ha winter bird food
- Promised Land Farm includes 1,565m hedgerow coppicing, 650m planting, 2,800m stock fencing
- Manor Farm – includes 1,100m hedgerow planting and 450m of stock fencing

A tender is being let for a contractor to offer Whole Farm Plans for all 18 Cluster farmers (actual take up to be reported at next Board meeting).

DEFRA has made significant funding available to the JNCC to work across their partnership of NGOs that run national wildlife recording schemes (incl. Butterfly

Conservation, British Trust for Ornithology and Plantlife) CCC has been invited to sit on various national working groups to share best practice and ideas from the Tracking the Impact project.

Heritage Theme

- New Heritage working group established and up and running
- River Wye Project underway and working with local schools, with one already receiving an activity day
- Volunteer engagement process streamlined and new adverts for heritage volunteers continue to gain new signups as a result of walks and talks.
- Volunteers continuing to be active, for example Woodlanders' Lives project has found more take up during lock down and produced several videos and written pieces of work.
- Two guided walks, two online talks, and a heritage theme panel at the conference delivered for the Chilterns Celebration and recordings made permanently available.
- Survey work of one section of Grims Ditch planned for the coming months.

Comms and Engagement Theme

- The successful Chilterns Celebration festival of events was organised for October 2020 and included a number of third-party events, and events designed to reach key audiences (young and urban audiences) for the CCC. A full schedule of events is viewable at: www.chilternsaonb.org/ccc-fest.html
- Chris Packham was confirmed as the keynote speaker for our online Chilterns Champions Conference on 24 October, along with almost 30 speakers from BTO, BBOWT, CEH, a variety of heritage projects and volunteers including some inspirational young people. The conference is an online celebration of citizen science in the UK and aims to inspire more people in the Chilterns to get involved
- Over 40,000 people were reached on Facebook alone, through targeted Facebook ads about Chilterns Celebration events during the month of October
- Several new talks and workshops were uploaded to the CCB Youtube channel, gathering over 200 views in October 2020
- Creation of two new Woodlanders' Lives craft videos, focusing on lace making and the stories of Woodlander volunteers.
- Creation of a Lodge Hill drone video (as landscape scale conservation work begins there, there will be filming at beginning, middle and end)- the first segment can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/w7131WxxNnw>
- Creation of a new volunteer webpage on the CCB website, and printable resources for partners to use to help promote opportunities across the partnership (view the PDF online [here](#))
- Creation of a new heritage trail around the Wycombe Rye - being piloted and delivered with Wycombe Museum, to target families with KS2 age children and school groups. two pilot sessions already delivered as part of the Chilterns Celebration (view the trail online [here](#))

Chilterns Chalk Streams Project (Allen & Ceri)

- Ceri, our Chalks Streams Education and Engagement Officer, began her period of maternity leave on 14 May. The CCSP's Project Officer has picked up a number of education & engagement projects that were either delayed by lockdown or incomplete.
- One such project was the publication of an educational book to accompany the CCSP's [Trout in the Classroom Project](#). The book was funded through the Catchment-based Approach's Water Resources Communications and Education Fund.
- The project commissioned filming for two chalk stream films and an animation on how chalk streams work in March. Following a delay due to lockdown, filming took place in August and the animation was completed this month. First edits of the films were also

received in September. The films and animation were commissioned for the CCSP's Chalk Streams education website which is being developed alongside the new CCB website.

- Riverfly monitoring started again in August, after lockdown, and most river groups are now actively monitoring again.
- The monitoring programme for the Water in a Dry Landscape was interrupted by lockdown with the spring survey being cancelled. The Summer sampling round did take place, albeit with a lower number of volunteers, resulting in the CCSP Project Officer surveying the remaining unallocated sites.
- The CCSP was able to work Chiltern Rangers' staff to deliver a restoration project on the R. Wye at the West Wycombe Estate. Work included weir removal, tree work (carried out in March) and channel narrowing. The project was completed in July. Work was carried out by Chiltern Rangers staff and volunteers.
- In September, the CCSP and Chiltern Rangers began work on another river enhancement scheme on the R. Wye, this time at Wye Dene, downstream of Funges Meadow reserve. The project will enhance over 200m of chalk stream. The project is being delivered by Chiltern Rangers staff and volunteers.
- Working with Queen Mary University of London and the River Chess Association, the Project secured £38,000 from Thames Water for the continuation of the successful [ChessWatch](#) monitoring programme.
- The CCSP also partnered QMUL, CEH Wallingford and University College London in a £250K bid to the UK Research Institute grant fund for a citizen science project focussing on developing monitoring techniques for assessing the health of winterbournes in the Chilterns. The outcome of the application is expected in November.
- The Project has secured £430,000 of funding over five years from Affinity Water to support delivery of the new CCSP Business Plan, which includes an expansion of the staff team.
- The Project Officer worked with CCB colleagues and the Chiltern Society to submit a bid to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund for £293,000 in October, to support delivery of work set out in the Business Plan, including practical river restoration, education and engagement, and signage.
- The CCSP has partnered with Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust on an Education and Engagement Project as part of the funding from Affinity Water for the next five years. Talks with partners are ongoing regarding funding of other elements of the business plan.
- The Project has been working with local groups and the water companies to progress plans for new abstraction reductions. Thames Water has announced its intention to close Hawridge pumping station in the upper Chess catchment in 2024. Affinity Water [announced](#) in September that it had ceased abstraction from their sources in Chesham and Chartridge and plans to cease abstraction in the upper R. Ver and Mimram catchments in 2024. The Project Officer and CEO joined Affinity Water on the River Chess on World Rivers Day to mark this occasion and [responded](#) to the announcement.
- The Project Officer took part in the Chiltern Society's Chalk Streams Conference on 16 October, representing the Project and the CCB on the expert panel. Defra Minister, Rebecca Pow, gave the keynote speech. The full event can be viewed [here](#).
- The Project Officer and the CCB's CEO continue to engage with key organisations and individuals involved with chalk streams, including MPs, Defra, Environment Agency, Water Companies and Ofwat. This includes contributing to the work of the Chilterns River Action Group, convened by the Chiltern Society, and working with ARUP on a project exploring how best to restore chalk streams to a healthy state. Elaine met with Thames Water's new CEO, Sarah Bentley, on 8 October, along with Paul Jennings of the River Chess Association and Professor Kate Heppell of Queen Mary University, who is working with Allen on the ChessWatch project.

- Elaine was also invited to give a presentation to Affinity Water's board meeting in August, and the company's CEO, Pauline Walsh, was one of a panel of experts that took part in the CCB's Chilterns Partnership Forum on 15 October. More recently, Elaine has been asked to contribute an article for 'The Loop', Affinity Water's six-monthly magazine.

Beacons of the Past (Wendy and Ed)

- The project has met one of its key deliverables, against all expectation, by [identifying a new hillfort](#)
- Project delivery timetables are being brought in line with the significant delays to capital works and volunteer engagement brought about by Covid-19 restrictions and impacts.
- The [LiDAR portal](#) continues to be available online, with over 3300 registered users and an average of around 20 different people logging in every day to help find and map archaeological sites.
- Over 10,000 archaeological features have been recorded by our 'Citizen Scientists' and over 1000 already worked on through the Reviewers Portal (higher level trained volunteers who validate entries for inclusion in the official Historic Environment Records)
- In response to lockdown, workshops and training are still being delivered online. Ed's workshops have now involved 200 participants since May 2020.
- *Beacons of the Past* is participating (inasmuch as shifting guidelines allow) in the Chilterns Walking Festival with one walk planned.
- A four page article on the project will appear in *British Archaeology* on news stands in December (national readership 50,000)
- Nearly all of the bespoke artwork for display panels is complete and invitation to tender is going out to display panel suppliers in the next month.
- *Beacons of the Past* has co-hosted the *Chilterns Champions: Outstanding in their fields* Citizen Science conference, with the project manager chairing the heritage theme. This is a collaboration between three of the CCB's projects: *Beacons of the Past*, the *Chalk, Cherries & Chairs* Landscape Partnership; and the *Chilterns Chalk Stream Project* with a session chaired by each. Chris Packham gave the keynote address. Around 400 people registered to attend The event was captured on YouTube and can be seen [here](#); it has already had nearly 1000 views.
- A series of [video lectures](#) have also been prepared for those who missed Ed's workshops.
- Wendy has worked with Historic England to secure £28,380 in additional funds to increase the scale of capital works delivered on four hillforts in the southern and central Chilterns, to include comprehensive erosion mitigation at Ivinghoe Beacon. She will be working next to secure a similar amount for three sites in the Northern Chilterns.
- Several landowners have been engaged to discuss improved management of archaeological features on their land.
- Ed has been supporting Neil with responding to felling licence applications, using the LiDAR data to demonstrate extant archaeological earthworks in woodland.
- Ed is offering training and support to other CCB staff in the use of GIS, so that better use can be made of spatial data across the company, for both insight and analysis, and communication purposes. Ed has assisted Vicki, our Comms Officer, with the mapping for the new website.

Mend the Gap – joint venture between the CCB and North Wessex Downs AONB (Jo)

- Key governance documents (Terms of Reference & Memorandum of Agreement) have been revised and updated in line with feedback from project partners and are ready for signing by the relevant parties.
- Criteria for Mend the Gap enhancement projects have been developed in consultation with the project partners and including seeking feedback from the wider CCB and North Wessex Downs AONB teams. This has been a valuable piece of work which has helped to clarify the objectives of the scheme. The criteria provide a framework for consideration

of potential projects and schemes and are also a key tool for conveying the aims of the scheme to stakeholders and the local community.

- With the Enhancement Project criteria now available, the profile of the scheme is increasing within the programme area with a growing number unsolicited contacts from external organisations and individuals.
- A range of potential projects are emerging through discussions with stakeholders and interested parties. These include access-related projects linked with the Thames Path and Ridgeway Path, a possible foot passenger ferry link between Moulsoford and South Stoke; a land manager engagement project across the two AONBs within the programme area; a possible new foot ferry across the Thames.
- A workshop session with the South Chilterns Catchment Partnership has raised interest in the scheme and given rise to a number of nascent project ideas from across the membership of the partnership.
- Jo continues to speak with organisations and individuals within the programme area to explore potential links with and opportunities for Mend the Gap.
- In light of Covid-19 and changes to ways of working, Jo has also been able to give some input to wider CCB work, including advising on procurement and fundraising, and collating data from across the CCB team to feed into the NAAONB's KPI reporting.
- In November Jo will be giving a presentation to the North Wessex Downs' Council of Partners to bring the partnership members up-to-date on the programme and developing projects.
- A short film, providing an introduction to Mend the Gap and its objectives is also in the pipeline, with filming scheduled for next month.

Chalkscapes (Claire)

- In March this year, the CCB secured development funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for its new Landscape Partnership. Working with conservation organisations and community groups across Central Bedfordshire, Luton and Hertfordshire, this ambitious community, wildlife and heritage initiative will focus on the precious chalk landscape and communities of the North Chilterns.
- Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, initiating the project was put on hold, but we have now recruited a [Chalkscapes Development Manager](#), and are currently recruiting a [Development Officer](#), with an application deadline of 24 November. Help to publicise the advertisement would be most welcome.

4.0 National focus (Elaine and Team)

Liaising with a range of organisations and individuals, both nationally and locally, including our partner organisations, has been important during this period. This has included conversations with our local authorities over responding to the Covid-19 emergency, liaising with Defra, Natural England and others regarding implementation of the Landscapes Review, published in September 2019, and working with the National Association of AONBs (NAAONB), AONB Lead Officers, National Parks and others on a range of operational and strategic matters.

Defra

- The CCB staff team continues to communicate and share information with Defra, particularly since the CCB team hosted a visit by five officials from the Landscapes team on 11 March
- Engagement has included regular updates from the team, sharing the e-newsletter and responding to specific questions linked to the Glover Review, such as our views on specific elements of the Glover Review
- Elaine has collated information for Defra from AONBs on their planning work and activities to support farmers, landowners and rural businesses

- We have discussed with Defra and others the role of protected landscapes in rebuilding the rural economy and supporting people's health and wellbeing
- Information was provided to MHCLG and Defra on our governance arrangements, which informed thinking on new legislation: The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

NAAONB

- Worked closely with Lead Officers of other AONBs and the National Association of AONBs on a range of strategic and operational matters, plus providing peer support
- Contributed to NAAONB survey of impacts of Covid19 on AONBs (results sent to Defra)
- Elaine continues in her role as a member of the Colchester Declaration Steering Group. 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. Next meeting is in November.
- Work has included 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. The Officer started work in October.
- Claire also led the development of a proposal as part of the Colchester Declaration, work. The Urban Hinterland Cluster (Kent, High Weald and Surrey Hills AONBs) seeks employ a young, black environmental influencer to spearhead a campaign to engage with the environment young, black people aged 16 - 24 in central London.
- Similarly, Kath is working closely with eight other AONBs, and the South Downs National Park, in the development of the 'Big Chalk' cluster, which aims to work with landowners, farmers and local communities to build resilience in calcareous landscapes (chalk and limestone) on an unprecedented scale – the initiative will run from the south coast to the midlands.
- Elaine worked with the NAAONB and group of Lead Officers to develop a major funding bid for the Green Recovery Challenge Fund (GRCF). The bid comprised a Nature Recovery Officer for each of the 34 AONBs in England, plus a designated fund to distribute to partner projects within each AONB. The application was unsuccessful and we are exploring next steps to secure alternative funding for the project.
- Proposals were provided to Defra, Natural England and others in June with ideas for projects (including one in the Chilterns) that could be delivered under the Tier 3 Environmental Land Management Scheme.
- Elaine is a member of Defra's Contact Group for AONBs and National Parks implementing recommendations in the Landscapes Review. Meetings are convened every 4-6 weeks and involve information sharing and providing advice and ideas. She also 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). Next meeting is early November.
- The CCB contributed to NAAONB response to DEFRA's Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELM) consultation, while also developing a CCB response (Harriet and others in CCB team)
- Continued work on joint initiatives and engagement with South East and East protected Landscapes (SEEPL) with most recent meeting on 17 April.

Other

- We are developing and maintaining relationships with local MPs and have held a number of meetings in this period.
- Elaine did a socially-distanced walk with Marian Spain, CEO at Natural England, on 2 June and joined a panel at the launch of Natural England's Building Partnerships for Nature's Recovery event on 7 October.

- Claire and Elaine have also held virtual meetings with local councils, including Herts CC and Bucks Council to discuss Covid-19 emergency planning and recovery, and are both on partnership boards for Bucks Councils' 3 Rs for Recovery strategy.
- Buckinghamshire is one of five pilots for a new Local Nature Recovery Strategy, announced by the Secretary of State in July. Kath is leading on this work and meets regularly with the planning team, convened by Buckinghamshire Council and Natural England.
- The pilots were launched in one of our farmer clusters in August. Ian Waller, chair of the central Chilterns Farmer Cluster, hosted Defra, Natural England's Chief Executive, Marian Spain, and its Chair, Tony Juniper on his farm to explain the conservation work he is doing and how this relates to the new LNRS initiative. Defra published a [tweet](#) and [blog](#) on the LNRSs and the visit to the Chilterns.
- Elaine is a member of the [Buckinghamshire Culture](#) Development Board. Buckinghamshire Culture is a partnership that aims to build the quality of cultural opportunities in the county, strengthening the cultural sector, growing the creative industries and promoting a sustainable, inclusive approach to culture-led development. Set up in early 2020, the Development Board is working to shape and steer the development of the partnership, and the last meeting was held on 21 September.
- The Bucks and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership Board met on 6 October. Elaine is a member.
- On 20 October Elaine joined an online event hosted by Charlie Burrell and Isabella Tree at the Knepp rewilding project, and the Woodland Trust, to discuss the role of natural regeneration in nature's recovery and tackling the impacts of climate change.
- [The Landscapes for Everyone](#) (#LfE and #L4E) national conference was held online on 13 October. Focussing on proposals 7 and 17 of the Landscape Review (7: connecting everyone with landscapes and 17: creating vibrant communities), Elaine was invited to chair the morning session, which included a keynote speech from Julian Glover and a series of expert presentations. The Chilterns had a strong presence with one of our young volunteers, Emily, contributing as a Youth Ambassador, and our Beacons of the Past selected to submit an online [poster](#).