



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

**Held at Chesham Town Hall, Chesham, Buckinghamshire HP5 1EP
on 6th December 2022 at 10.00am.**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Appointed by Local Authorities

Cllr Paula Hiscocks
Cllr Steve Jarvis
Cllr Lynn Lloyd
Cllr Richard Newcombe
Cllr Sally Symington

Appointing Body

Hertfordshire County Council
North Hertfordshire District Council
South Oxfordshire District Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Dacorum Borough Council

Appointed by the Secretary of State

Colin Courtney
Paul Mains
John Nicholls
Joe Stewart
Elizabeth Wilson

Secretary of State
Secretary of State- Chair
Secretary of State- Deputy-Chair
Secretary of State
Secretary of State

Elected by Parish Councils

Cllr John Griffin
Cllr Sue Rowland
Cllr Adrian Watney

Oxfordshire
Oxfordshire
Hertfordshire

CCB Staff

Allen Beechey- in part
Lynne Cordice
Deirdre Hansen
Graham Hurst
Elaine King
Wendy Morrison
Eloise Small
Annette Weiss

Chalkstreams Project Manager
Senior Administration Officer
Clerk to the Board
Finance Officer (S151 Officer)
Chief Executive Officer
Heritage and Archaeology Manager
Administration Officer
People and Society Officer

Other

Tom Beeston
Cllr Jilly Jordan

Chief Officer, Chiltern Society
Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment,
Buckinghamshire Council

Stephen Rudd

Team Manager, Natural England,
Thames Solent.

22/23.31 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Andrea Baughan, Buckinghamshire Council, Cllr David Bartholomew, Oxfordshire County Council, Cllr Robert Carington, Buckinghamshire Council, *Cllr Paul Duckett, Central Bedfordshire Council, Nick Graham, monitoring Officer, *Cllr John Harfield, Bedfordshire Parish Councils, *Cllr Charles Hussey, Buckinghamshire Parish Councils, Cllr Carl Jackson, Buckinghamshire Council, *Geeta Ludhra, Secretary of State appointee, *Alex Nelms, Farmer (in part), Cllr Robert Roche, Luton Borough Council, John Shaw, Secretary of State appointee, *Cllr Sir Hector Sants, Buckinghamshire Parish Councils, Cllr Jon Tankard, Three Rivers District Council, Matt Thomson, CCB Planner, *Ian Waller, Secretary of State appointee and Cllr Gareth Williams, Buckinghamshire Council. (*Those * listened in on the meeting online*)
*Simon Kearey, Chairman, Chiltern Society.

22/23.32 Declarations of Interest

No declaration of interest in any agenda item was made.

22/23.33 Notice of Urgent Business

None

22/23.34 Minutes of the Board Meeting 6th September 2022.

It was raised that the minutes of the 6th September had not reflected fully the discussions under item 22/23.25 Planning. Clerk to discuss with the concerned councillors. A Board member had provided a recent example of a case in his local parish where a real time system would potentially have avoided the difficult situation where the CCB had commented on a neighbourhood plan and the Councillor was unaware. A local individual had misunderstood the CCB's comments, which had caused difficulties locally for the Councillor.

Otherwise, after the amendment on page 1, that Cllr Sir Hector Sants is a Buckinghamshire Parish Council member, not an Oxfordshire Parish Council member, the minutes of the Board meeting 6th September 2022 were approved and signed by the Chair.

22/23.35 Matters Arising

None

22/23.36 Public Question Time.

None

22/23.37 Chair's Update

The Chair, Paul Mains, reported on his activities since his last update 6th September and highlighted the following:

1. Board membership:
 - a. He has been having discussions with Defra on the recruitment for the two Board Members who will be standing down in 2023, Elizabeth Wilson and Ian Waller. Defra would be seeking farmer/landowners and links to higher education.

- b. The CEO, Elaine King has been conducting Board Member inductions with more to follow.
 - c. There are two vacancies for Local Authority members on the Planning Committee. Members were invited to approach the Chair of the Planning Committee, Cllr Sue Rowland if they were interested in joining this committee.
 - d. There is also a vacancy for either a Local Authority member or a Secretary of State appointed member on the Executive Committee. Interested Board members to contact the Chair.
2. Staffing.
 - a. Kath Daly, the Countryside Officer has left the CCB. She had worked at the CCB since 2005 and the Chair was sure Board members would join in acknowledging the Contributions that Kath has made to the work of the Board.
 - b. He has been supporting the CEO and the HR advisor to develop a future organisational chart. The CEO will report on progress to the Executive Committee, and then report to the Board.
 - c. He has been involved with recruitment for the new Mend the Gap Programme Manager.
 3. He attended the National Association of AONBs Chairs and Lead Officers conference online.
 - a. They had a presentation on Green Finance, which is a complicated field. If any Board Member has knowledge or is interested let the Chair know.
 - b. The branding/marketing of AONBs/ National Landscapes was discussed. This is the way forward alongside the boundary review. Sion McGeever at Defra is dealing with recommendations in the Glover Review and the Government's response, which includes rebranding AONBs. The People and Society Officer, Annette Weiss, is also exploring new signage for the Chilterns AONB.
 4. He attended the Canals and Rivers Trust 10th Anniversary reception at Westminster. He made good contacts which have been passed on to the CEO and the Chalkstreams Project Manager.
 5. He attended an interesting event organised by the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs Project Manager, Lachlan Stewart, where the author Julian Barnes was interviewed about his 1980s novel Metroland.
 6. He regularly attends Natural England's Management Advisory Group for the AONB Boundary Review.
 7. He continues to liaise with the Chair of the Cotswolds AONB, Brendon McCarthy.
 8. He reported on the work that the Cotswold have done on Local Authority funding and, after discussion, all agreed that further work needs to be done on securing the correct funding levels by Local Authorities and expectations going forward. Due to our core funding formula - 80% provided by Defra and 20% provided by Local Authorities - our Local Authority members need to be fully briefed. It was noted that there is a funding formula for Local Authorities and the CEO to advise Local Authority Members. Local Authority members informed the Board that timing is important due to Local Authority budget setting and spending priorities. Several Local Authority members encouraged the timetable to be brought forward, maybe to September. It was also commented that if the CCB did not exist, Local Authorities would have to fund the work we do themselves.
 9. Policies and Procedures. The Clerk, Deirdre Hansen, is working on this for the next Executive Committee meeting and the following Board meeting.
 10. He had visited 'Discover Bucks' (the old 'County Museum' in Aylesbury) with Wendy Morrison, the Heritage and Archaeology Manager. In her new role, she will be aiming to bring together various historical strands of the Chilterns and explore a joint project

with three partners - CCB, Museum of English Rural Life (MERL, at Reading University) and Discover Buckinghamshire.

11. Open Access for Board members is being worked on by the Senior Administration Officer, Lynne Cordice and Board Members, Lynn Lloyd, and Charles Hussey.

22/23.38 Task and Finish Groups update

1. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion TFG

Dr Geeta Ludhra as Chair, reported on the work this TFG has been conducting. The TFG has been meeting online, which has been productive while acknowledging that this is not the best place to discuss the topic. Geeta Ludhra has been researching Defra's EDI policies, the CCB's policies, when they were last updated, and what training the staff, volunteers and Board members have had. She is also having discussions with other AONBs. The ambition is to produce an EDI Vision Statement. It is noted that the language around EDI is complex. The TFG needs to meet face to face. It was emphasised that the embedded policy must influence and shape the work we do. People must feel we are an inclusive public body.

An Action Plan has been started, with three celebratory meetings a year proposed to develop case studies of good EDI work we do and publish them on our website. The meetings will be minuted and published on the shared drive for those Board members who are not able to attend these meetings. Resourcing the work is being discussed. The TFG is moving forward and would like other members to participate.

She was thanked for her report and work. EDI to be a standing agenda item for each Board meeting.

2. 25 Year Vision TFG

Cllr Sir Hector Sants chairing this TFG had issued briefing notes to the meeting and made additional comments.

- a. He will expand at the March Board meeting on the TFG's outcomes.
- b. Help will be required and there is money in the 2023/24 budget for this work.
- c. A list of stakeholders will be drawn up and distributed to all Board members.
- d. A process of external communications will be set out.

The Chair thanked Cllr Sir Hector Sants and the team. We are moving into a clear strategy role. More discussion at the March Board meeting.

3. Governance TFG

Vice-Chair, John Nicholls, Chair of this TFG, had issued a report summarising progress on this work and setting out the way forward. The TFG has been reviewing the CCB's own governance arrangements. Defra and Natural England are now also looking at AONB governance.

Members acknowledged the TFG's hard work, recognising the moving parts contributing to this strategic report.

4. HR TFG

The Chair reported on behalf of Cllr Carl Jackson. Carl Jackson has reviewed the HR Handbook, which now needs to be reviewed and approved by the HR Advisory group before it is put to the Executive Committee and ultimately the

Board. The HR advisory group (Lynn Lloyd, Paul Mainds, Elaine King, Geeta Ludhra and Carol Hatcliff (HR advisor)) will meet early in the new year. A future work plan will be produced. The excellent support provided by the HR Advisor is much appreciated. Any Board members interested in joining the HR Advisory group should let the Chair know.

1. The Board NOTED the update.

22/23.39 Chief Executive's Update

The CEO, Elaine King, had issued a report on delivery of the CCB's priorities as set out in the 2022/23 Business Plan since the last board meeting 6th September 2022.

They broadly fall under three strategic priorities as clearly laid out in the report:

Organising for the future

Delivering existing workstreams.

Leadership and influence.

She highlighted the following:

1. Currently we work with a one-year Business Plan and she is working on looking further ahead. That will give a clear process for setting priorities, developing an action plan and setting objectives for all staff. She aims to be able to do that in the next financial year. The business plan will state our key priorities. An update will be provided at the March meeting.
2. Green Finance. A comprehensive approach to greening financial systems, mobilising finance for clean and resilient growth and capturing the resulting opportunities. This is a complicated area. The CCB has commissioned a consultant to work on this for us. The work is in light of Defra making clear that AONBs will not receive more funding and that we need to diversify our sources of funding.
3. File sharing. The Senior Administration Officer, Lynne Cordice, is working on this with two board members. She has set up files in Teams. Board members will be invited to view the files.
4. Strategic priorities. We need to develop a policy and strategy on tackling and adapting to climate change. We need to look at the Board's own emissions, as well as provide leadership and guidance for people across the AONB. The CCB also still needs to develop a Nature Recovery Plan and the CEO is discussing this with the team, which includes learning from the work other AONBs are doing in this area.
5. The Mend the Gap Programme has a new Programme Manager, due to start at the end of February. Two Board members are also supporting the programme.

Members asked questions and discussed the report. The challenges were noted, and members offered their help.

Ian Waller remarked that the Central Chilterns Farm Cluster as a group are nearly carbon neutral.

The Chair thanked the CEO and her team.

1. The Board NOTED the report.

22/23.40 Finance and Budget

The Finance Officer, Graham Hurst, had provided draft budgets for 2024-2027 together with estimated current year outturn for the CCB Core activities.

Finance:

1. Core income is expected to be £923,000 which is higher than originally budgeted because of unexpected uplift to our Core Defra grant. £61,000 in March 2022 and a grant for capital spending to improve access to the Chilterns AONB announced in August 2022.
2. Core expenditure is expected to be £937,000. This is much higher than budgeted, reflecting the additional expenditure that we have been able to make due to the Defra increased grants.
3. Budget and 5-year plan.
 - a. Staff changes: funding from projects will contribute to core funding as staff costs can be recharged from certain projects.
 - b. Pension and NI costs are due to rise.
 - c. Tri-annual Buckinghamshire Council Pension Scheme, of which we are members, is due next year.
 - d. The largest increase in budget costs is staff costs, approximately 80% of our expenditure.

Members had the opportunity for discussion.

4. We have still not received our final External Audit report.

The CEO expressed her thanks to and pleasure at working with the Finance Officer, Graham Hurst.

1. The Board NOTED the CCB financial position.

2. The Board NOTED the CCB Budget discussion paper.

22/23.41 Planning

The Planner had issued a comprehensive report on the discussions the Planning Committee had held at its October meeting with updates where appropriate.

The Chair of the Planning Committee Cllr Sue Rowland, highlighted the following:

1. The Real-Time System is being developed, and the planning element due to be rolled out soon is an information system. Eventually it will be coordinated and integrated with wider work.
2. There are two vacancies on the Planning Committee. As directed by our Statutory Instrument, we should have more Local Authority members. It is acknowledged that some Monitoring Officers advise their members not to join, but the Localism Act 2011 does give Local Authority members who sit on their Local Authority Planning Committee the opportunity to join an outside body's Planning Committee.

The Chair thanked Cllr Sue Rowland for taking on the Chair of the Planning Committee. He advised any Local Authority members wishing to join the Planning Committee to let Sue Rowland or himself know.

Members had the opportunity to comment.

1. The Board NOTED the report and MADE observations.

22/23.42 Signage

The People and Society Officer had issued a report on the Chilterns Gateway signs, which are now out of date. It is proposed the CCB commences initial work looking at options and opportunities for a new gateway signage scheme to coincide with a boundary review extension to the Chilterns.

It was noted that the scheme will require a long lead time, design principles need to be agreed and a hierarchy of locations, precise locations can not be agreed until the new boundary has been approved by the Secretary of State. This is estimated to be in 2025. Required approvals of the various Highway Authorities need to be obtained and funding secured.

Board members were invited to join the working group or offer support or advice.

She was thanked for her work.

1. The Board NOTED the report and the request for involvement.

22/23.43 Any Urgent Business

None

22/23.44 Dates of the next meeting

Tuesday 14th March 2023 was confirmed as the date for the next Board meeting, location TBC.

22/23.45 Boundary Review

Stephen Rudd, Natural England Team Manager, Thames Solent, Senior Responsible Officer for Landscape Review Chilterns and Surrey Hills, gave a presentation on the Boundary Review process. There is a project team. Stephen Rudd explained question of why the boundary review is being carried out and outlined the draft search area, the evidence required and the timetable. He also summarised the other Natural England project being carried out in the Chilterns AONB – to explore enhanced management and governance arrangements.

He reminded the members that Natural England (NE) is a large organisation whose vision is thriving nature for people and the planet.

The work on the boundary review has started. Land Use Consultants (LUC) are on board doing the technical work.

There is a Management Advisory Group (MAG) and a Technical Advisory Group (TAG). Why are they doing the review? In 2013 the CCB made a submission for a boundary extension, and the 2019 Landscapes Review recommended that the Chilterns be designated a National Park. In 2021 a ministerial statement was issued announcing the boundary extension as part of Natural England's Designations Programme. The boundary review work is based on guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England.

He outlined NE's approach and described their methodology. Legislation required NE to address – Natural Beauty, then desirability to designate, which leads to a proposal from NE of where the boundary should be.

The proposed timeline is: consultants have started in December 2022 and a submission is expected to be made to the Defra Secretary of State for approval in 2025.

Consultants have been appointed on the Enhanced Management and Governance project. NE will hold a workshop with Local Authorities in February 2023.

Members had the opportunities to ask questions.

The Chair thanked Stephen Rudd for his presentation.

22/23.46 Chilterns Chalk Streams Project Update

The Project Manager, Allen Beechey, gave an update on this partnership project. It is its 25th Anniversary this year. The project has a new website: www.Chilternstreams.org

River Chess Smarter Water Catchment Project: Funded by Thames Water. There is an early focus on education moving onto more practical restoration work. All the work is done in partnership. It was noted that the water companies have increased their funding by a factor of 10. This has allowed the core team to be expanded. The Smart Water Catchment Project is a ten-year project.

Green Recovery Challenge Fund: funded by Defra, a one-year partnership project with the Chiltern Society and other partners eg Chiltern Rangers.

There are eight schemes involving, education, engagement, access and interpretation, and river restoration. The project end date is March 2023.

Chess Smarter Water Catchment: tracking water quality. This is a Thames Water initiative (2020-25).

The Chair thanked him and his team for all their work and all that Allen has done for the CCB.

Meeting dates 2023

Board Meetings	Executive Committee	Planning Committee
14 th March 2023	14 th February 2023	11 th January 2023
13 th June 2023 plus AGM	9 th May 2023	12 th April 2023
12 th September 2023	11 th July 2023	26 th July 2023 <i>note change</i>
12 th December 2023	14 th November 2023	18 th October 2023 <i>note change</i>
Location TBC	Location Chinnor	Location Chinnor

The Chairman.....

Date.....

Following lunch Allen Beechey, Project Manager, Chilterns Chalkstreams Project led a guided walk on the River Chess.