



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

**Held at Rackleys Chiltern Hills, Marlow Road, Cadmore end, Buckinghamshire
HP14 3PP at 10.10am.**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Appointed by Local Authorities

Cllr David Bartholomew
Cllr Andrea Baughan
Cllr Paula Hiscocks
Cllr Steve Jarvis
Cllr Lynn Lloyd
Cllr Richard Newcombe

Appointing Body

Oxfordshire County Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Hertfordshire County Council
North Hertfordshire District Council
South Oxfordshire District Council
Buckinghamshire 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 John Harfield
Cllr Charles Hussey
Cllr Adrian Watney

Oxfordshire
Bedfordshire
Buckinghamshire
Hertfordshire

CCB Staff

Deirdre Hansen
Graham Hurst
Elaine King
Eloise Small
Matt Thomson
Annette Weiss

Clerk to the Board
Finance Officer (S151 Officer)
Chief Executive Officer
Administration Officer
Head of Strategy & Planning
Head of Engagement & Partnerships

Other

Tom Beeston
Sarah Wright

Chiltern Society Chief Officer
National Trails Project Officer

The Chairman welcomed those present in person and online.

22/23.47 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Robert Carington, Buckinghamshire Council, Cllr Paul Duckett, Central Bedfordshire Council, Nick Graham, Monitoring Officer, * Professor Kate Heppell, Research Lead SWC, Cllr Carl Jackson, Buckinghamshire Council, Geeta Ludhra, Secretary of State appointee, *Alex Nelms, Chair NFU Bucks, Beds and Oxon, and farmer, Cllr Robert Roche, Luton Borough Council, Cllr Sue Rowland, *John Shaw, Secretary of State appointee, *Cllr Sir Hector Sants, Buckinghamshire Parish Councils, Cllr Sally Symington, Dacorum Borough Council, *Cllr Jon Tankard, Three Rivers District Council, Ian Waller, Secretary of State appointee and *Cllr Gareth Williams, Buckinghamshire Council. (*Those * listened in on the meeting online*)
Simon Kearey, Chairman Chiltern Society.

22/23.48 Declarations of Interest

No declaration of interest in any agenda item was made.

22/23.49 Notice of Urgent Business

None

22/23.50 Minutes of the Board Meeting 6th December 2022.

The minutes of the Board meeting 6th December 2022 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

22/23.51 Matters Arising

None

22/23.52 Public Question Time.

No public present.

22/23.53 Chair's Update

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

1. He has been supporting the CEO, Elaine King with recruitment. Board members John Nicholls, Vice-Chair, and Cllr Lynn Lloyd were thanked for their involvement with the interviewing process.
2. He has spent time on the HR strategy. The CEO, Elaine King will show how it will be rolled out.
3. Business Plan Strategy. He has been having discussions with the Deputy Chair, John Nicholls and the Head of Strategy & Planning, Matt Thomson on the business Planning cycle. Looking far enough ahead for budgeting and Planning is important. A five-year view, a link to the budget and the timing all need to be incorporated. The Head of Strategy & Planning has produced an outline Plan and timings. This year's business Plan will be a hybrid, but the work on the 2024 Business Plan will be scheduled to start later this year to be finalised and approved by the end of the year. Losing senior staff members late in 2022 has made the work more challenging for the preparation of the 2023/24 Business Plan.
4. Local Authorities.
 - a. The CEO, Elaine King, had written to all our Local Authority members as agreed at the last board meeting outlining the expected financial commitment from them

- (Defra grant 80% : Local Authority 20%). The response has been largely positive.
- b. We are considering holding an event, later in the summer, or finding another mechanism to brief and engage with the leaders and CEOs of our Local Authorities linking in our Local Authority Board members.
 - c. Local Authority Board members or any other board members with ideas were asked to consider suitable locations in their areas for our September and December Board meetings. Our June Board meeting will be held at the offices of Buckinghamshire Council.
5. He attends online meetings on the Boundary Review. Recently all members of the Management and Technical Advisory Groups were present as well as the consultants engaged in the process. It was confirmed that the process end will be presented to the Secretary of State end 2024 and response expected in 2025. A confidential map showing the initial work done on the criteria was shown. Informal consultations will begin soon and run till the end of August. Formal and public consultations will take place spring and summer 2024. The Head of Strategy, Matt Thomson and the Conservation and Landscape Officer, Neil Jackson, will provide Board members with a briefing paper how to deal with questions from the public and local interest groups.
 6. Secretary of State appointments. We are losing two of our Secretary of State appointed Board members this summer. The recruitment process has started, and applications are being sifted. Interviews will commence w/c 27th March.
 7. Defra funding. There is a flat settlement for the coming year. In view of the recently announced increase of £4.4m for National Parks, and no additional funding for AONBs, the Chair with the Finance Officer, Graham Hurst, intends to write to Defra highlighting the point that we and the Cotswolds AONB do the same work as National Park Authorities (excluding Planning decisions), but have received a flat settlement.
 8. He attended the annual Reading University Court and agreed with the Vice-Chancellor that a partnership with Reading University would be an encouraging development. The Heritage and Archaeology Manager, Wendy Morrison, is progressing the Chiltern Heritage and Archaeology Partnership (CHAP) with the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) at Reading University.
 9. He had attended with Board member Cllr Lynn Lloyd and the Head of Engagement & Partnerships, Annette Weiss, a wheelchair launch event at Aston Rowant Nature Reserve.
 10. He thanked Board members for responding to opportunities for greater engagement with the Board.

1. The Board NOTED the update.

22/23.54 Chief Executive's Update

The CEO, Elaine King, had issued a report following her update for the Executive Committee 14th February.

She highlighted the following:

1. The CEO has been particularly busy recently as outlined in the report. There are two senior vacancies on the team and recruitment for Head of Operations and Head of Landscapes is in progress. It was decided that the CCB currently did not have the

funding to recruit an Executive Assistant for the CEO. Once funding is secured the role will be looked at again.

2. Her letter to the Local Authorities as mentioned in the Chair's report has had an excellent result with nearly all Local Authorities coming forward with the requested funding.
3. The Team is keen to apply to the Radio 4 today programme invitation to put forward a team to be guest editor in the summer.
4. She is making good progress with connecting with charitable organisations and others that may support our work. Once the two vacant posts are filled, she will be able to spend more time on fundraising.
5. The Chalkscapes project has now submitted its development report, with help from consultants. Going forward several small bids will be submitted, not one large one, and partners re-engaged.
6. An induction session for Board members has been held. It is also a good refresher for existing Board members.

Members asked questions and discussed the report. Tom Beeston, Chiltern Society CEO mentioned that the Chiltern Society fully supports the CCB.

1. The Board NOTED the report.

22/23.55 Finance

The Finance Officer, Graham Hurst, had provided the finance report to the 31st December 2022, the budget for 2023/24 and projected budgets for 2025,2026 and 2027.

Finance:

1. Core finances are looking at a £9,000 deficit for the year to 31st March.
2. The External auditors have now submitted their late report. There were no matters that gave them cause for concern.
3. Budget. The 2023/24 budget is set to break even with several assumptions which are reasonable but could change.
4. Defra funding is fixed for the next three years, meaning funding is getting tighter, but the CEO, Elaine King, is working on new forms of resources.
5. Local Authorities have been very positive in our request for funding.
6. Other income and recharges. Although NLHF projects can't contribute to core costs, other sources of finance do allow recharge, which we make use of. FiPL project funding has been extended by Defra by a year, adding to contributions to core costs.
7. Pensions costs are due to rise to 20.9% even though our pension pot is 111% funded. It is the actuaries who have recommended the increase.
8. No additional staff has been included in the budgets. 80% of our total income is used for staff costs.
9. Consultancy costs (Planning and HR) are high, we need to keep a close eye on those.
10. More visibility is required for the budgets 2025-27 going forward. New projects need to be found to replace those ending in the next few years.

The Finance Officer was thanked for his work.

Members asked questions and discussed finance, green finance, corporate and private sources.

The CEO, Elaine King, remarked that all the extra time the CCB staff have been working on Natural England projects costs money and she has asked for funding from Natural England to contribute to these staff costs.

- 1. The Board NOTED the CCB financial position and audit report.**
- 2. The Board NOTED the 2025-2027 Budget projections.**
- 3. The Board APPROVED the 2023/24 Budget.**

22/23.56 Business Plan and Budget 2023/24 and forward years.

The Head of Strategy & Planning presented a full report on the proposed Business Plan for 2023/24, a key aspect of the evidence we submit to Defra as part of our claim for the core grant. It is proposed to mainly roll forward the 2022/23 priorities and objectives, they remain relevant for 2023/24. The 2022/23 Plan was a robust Plan with an ambitious work programme of which most will extend past the year. A full review of progress on the 2022/23 Business Plan was provided.

The 2023/24 Plan moves forward towards a new approach to preparation, reporting and review as agreed to recommend to the Board by the Executive Committee 14 February. The New approach will be in place for the preparation of the 2024/25 Business Plan. The new approach will involve more reporting to and oversight by the Executive Committee, the Business Plan will be linked to the budget and there will be a clear timetable. A golden thread will link the Management Plan, our Statutory Duties, and the Business Plan.

The three current strategic priorities remain:

1. Building organisational resilience
2. Delivering existing workstreams
3. Providing leadership and securing influence.

The meeting discussed the review and the proposal, noting that there is still more to follow once discussed at the next Executive Committee meeting. Several issues were highlighted to be discussed at the next meeting. Clerk to include on the agenda.

The Chair acknowledged and thanked for the work that had been done on this. He drew particular attention to p49 which set out the proposed annual calendar.

The CEO, Elaine King mentioned that this work had taken a lot of time and resources not only from the Head of Strategy & Planning, but the whole staff team. Everyone had stepped up at short notice to provide their contributions.

The Head of Strategy & Planning was thanked for the enormous amount of work he had done on the Business Plan and the proposals.

- 1. The Board NOTED the review of progress against the commitments and activities in the Business Plan 2022-23 as set out in the papers annex 1.**
- 2. The Board APPROVED the new approach to Business Plan preparation, reporting and review as recommended by the Executive Committee and set out in the papers annex 2.**

3. **The Board APPROVED the draft outline Business Plan 2023-24 including strategic priorities as recommended by the Executive Committee and set out in the papers appendix 3.**
4. **The Board APPROVED the skeleton Delivery Plan for 2023-24.**
5. **The Board AUTHORISED the CEO to finalise the details of the Business Plan, including the Delivery Plan for 2023-24 in consultation with the Board Chair and Executive Committee.**
6. **The Board AGREED to move forward with the future Plan ready for the next meeting.**

22/223.57 Planning Committee

The Head of Strategy & Planning, Matt Thomson, had issued a report summarising key discussions held at the Planning Committee meeting 11th January with updates where appropriate.

1. Two new members are to join the Planning Committee with Board approval. Cllrs Sally Symington (Dacorum Borough Council) and Jon Tankard (Three Rivers District Council) have agreed to join the Planning Committee.
2. The Real-Time system stage 1 is nearly ready to go out for the next Planning Committee. Officers will send it out.
3. The CCB is dealing with an application for 1400 homes at Marsh Croft near Tring. We are working with the Chiltern Society and others. It is adjacent to the AONB and affects Chiltern beechwood, the setting of the AONB and has a landscape impact. The Head of Strategy & Planning is due to attend the hearing.
4. Expansion of Luton Airport from 18m passengers to 32m, a national significant infrastructure project is on the horizon.
5. The new Lighting position statement in the Chilterns paper will go to the next Planning Committee meeting for recommendation to the Board in June.
6. The position of Local Authority Board members who sit on their Local Authority Planning Committee and on the Board's Planning Committee was discussed. The Local Government Act 2011 does allow for this, however there were conflicting thoughts on the matter. The Head of Strategy and Planning was asked in future to give advice on this to Local Authority Board members.

Members discussed the report and made observations.

1. **The Board APPROVED the appointment of Cllr Sally Symington and Cllr Jon Tankard to the Planning Committee.**
2. **The Board NOTED the report and MADE observations for future actions by the Committee and Officers.**

22/23.58 EDI and 25-year Vision TFG updates

- a. EDI

The Head of Engagement & Partnerships, Annette Weiss, presented a draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion ambition for consideration and feedback. Once approved the EDI Ambition will be visible to all on our website. Members provided feedback and suggested some alterations.

- 1. The Board CONSIDERED the EDI Ambition presented and provided feedback.**
 - 2. The Board APPROVED the EDI Ambition subject to some changes.**
- b. 25-year Vision for the Chilterns AONB**
The Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson presented a report on behalf of the “25- year vision” TFG laying down the outline of a process to create a vision document and how we would engage with stakeholders. The members discussed the recommendations.
- Creating a vision statement is a worthwhile exercise and can be used as a tool to show funders and stakeholders quantifiable outcomes and impacts. It also helps recognise what success looks like on the way to achieving the vision.
- Resourcing the work on a vision will require staff capacity and expertise, plus outside assistance. Funding this with the current budget constraints needs careful thought. The chair of the TFG estimates the work would require a budget of up to £30,000. After discussion with the finance officer, who confirmed that it would be an appropriate use of this reserve, the Chair asked the board to support the proposal that £30K be made available from the development reserve. This was discussed and the board recommended the proposal. After further discussion with the chair of the TFG, the CEO will present an options paper to the Executive as to how best to proceed from here.
- 1. The Board CONSIDERED the TFG recommended approach to developing a new long-term vision for the Chilterns AONB and APPROVED the approach subject to any observations agreed by the Board.**

22/23.59 Policies for Review

a. Risk Register.

The Risk Register was reviewed and updated by the Executive Committee in February and recommended to the Board for approval.

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

It was moved to suspend Standing Orders (Code of Governance 3) for item 22/23.59 b.

b. Terms of Reference for the HR Advisory Group

The Executive Committee at its meeting 14th February reviewed and amended the terms of reference for the HRAG, they are recommended for approval.

Following one further amendment in a) changing the minimum number of members from three to four the amended Terms of Reference were approved.

2. The Board REVIEWED and APPROVED the new terms of reference for the HRAG.

It was moved to reinstate the standing orders.

22/23.60 Updating the CCB's constitution.

The Clerk, Deirdre Hansen, and the Monitoring Officer, Nick Graham, recommended that item 1 of our constitution, The role of the Monitoring Officer should be updated due to the appointment of a Deputy Monitoring Officer.

1. The Board AGREED the new arrangements for the Monitoring Officer, item 1. Of our constitution.

22/23.61 Update on Chilterns Access Projects

Head of Engagement & Partnerships, Annette Weiss, reported how the year 1 funds of the Defra funding to improve access to the Chilterns has been allocated.

A good range of project applications were received. The budget was £227,000 for the year to 31/03/23 and funding has been fully allocated.

Due to short notice of receipt of this capital only funding, it has not been possible for this year to reach out far and wide and precluded larger and more ambitious projects.

There will be no funding 2023/24 but there is further funding for 2024/25. With a successful outcome of year 1 there are opportunities for more strategic and larger scale project in the future.

It was noted there is an access centre at Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve.

1. The Board NOTED the update on the Chilterns Access projects.

22/23.62 Next Meeting: 13th June 2023 at the offices of Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury plus AGM.

Future Meeting dates 2023.

Board Meetings	Executive Committee	Planning Committee
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.....