



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE of the Chilterns Conservation Board HELD ON Tuesday 1st November 2022 at Chinnor Village Centre, High Street, Chinnor OX39 4DH commencing at 10.00 am

Present:

Cllr John Griffin	Board Member
Cllr Charles Hussey	Board Member from 10.25
Cllr Lynn Lloyd	Board Member
Paul Mains	Board Member-Chair
John Nicholls	Board Member- Deputy Chair

In attendance:	
Deirdre Hansen	Clerk to the Board
Graham Hurst	Finance Officer
Elaine King	Chief Executive Officer

22/23.1a. Election of Chairman

Paul Mains was proposed and unanimously elected as Chair of the Executive Committee for the year 2022/23.

22/23 1.b. Election of Deputy Chairman

John Nicholls was proposed and unanimously elected as Deputy Chair of the Executive Committee for the year 2022/23.

22/23 2. Apologies for absence.

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from the following Board members: *Cllr Richard Newcombe, Cllr Sue Rowland and Cllr Sir Hector Sants.

*(Those * observed the meeting online)*

22/23.3. Declarations of interest

None.

22/23.4 Notice of Urgent Business

The CEO notified the chair of an item of urgent business.

22/23.5 Minutes of the previous meeting 03/05/22

The minutes of the meeting 03/05/22 were reviewed, approved as a true record, and signed by the Chair after the following amendments were made:

- 21/22.36.2 “and Chair” were removed from the first sentence.
- 21/22.38.1 after £636,670, “which is”, was included.
- 21/22.39 first paragraph ‘s’ was added to area.
- 21/22.39. a. in the second sentence wide was replaced with “made”.

22/23.6 Matters Arising

None

22/23.7 Chair’s update

1. The 25 Year Vision TFG chaired by Cllr Sir Hector Sants has met and have held discussions. Members of this TFG are Cllr Sir Hector Sants (Chair), Matt Thompson (Planner), John Nicholls (Deputy Chair CCB), Joe Stewart (CCB Board Member) and Cllr Robert Carington (CCB Board member). The TFG will report at the next Board meeting 6th December. The work on the 25-year vision is expected to be done during 2023 with a draft document to be completed by the end of 2023. It will require a dedicated person to work on this for a year, involving our stakeholders. Funding to come from reserves. Staffing to be progressed with CEO.
2. EDI TFG chaired by Geeta Ludhra is continuing to work on EDI and will report at the next Board Meeting.
3. HR TFG chaired by Cllr Carl Jackson will also report at the next Board Meeting.
4. John Nicholls, the Chair of the Governance TFG has circulated a summary report. The Chair thanked him for his work.
5. He had attended a meeting of the advisory group for the Boundary Extension.
6. He has been in touch with Defra about recruitment for two new suitable replacement Secretary of State appointed Board Members. Ian Waller and Elizabeth Wilson will step down after 9 years in June 2023. Both were appointed by the Defra Secretary of State. He has met with Ian Waller who has confirmed that he will be happy to continue to chair the FIPL committee and agrees that this is a separate role to being a board member.

10.25 Cllr Charles Hussey arrived

7. He had visited ‘Discover Bucks’ (the old ‘County Museum’ in Aylesbury) with the Wendy Morrison, Beacons of the Past Project Manager. In her new role, she is going to try to bring together various historical strands of the Chilterns and consider a joint project with three partners- CCB, MERL (Reading) and Discover Buckinghamshire.
8. He will be attending a literary event with Julian Barnes, author of Metroland in Amersham organised by the CCC project on 13/11/22.

22/23.8 Chief Executive’s update

The Elaine King, CEO had issued a comprehensive report to members. To note:

1. EDI, she will be meeting with Geeta Ludhra and Annette Venters, the People and Society Officer and John Shaw (Board member and Director of Chiltern Rangers) in the next few weeks. The People and Society Officer is developing an Engagement Strategy and Plan, the new website makes it easier to connect. She will report to the Board in December.
2. We have received another uplift in grant from Defra of £229k in 2022/23, with further funding expected in 2024/25 (none in 2023/24). This is for Capital spend improving access to the AONB for people from all backgrounds, ages, and abilities. The People and Society Officer is leading on this, and it is her priority for the coming months. We have projects in the pipeline, which can easily be brought on stream to meet the requirement to spend the funds and deliver the work by year end.

- a. The Chair asked if with the Boundary Review in mind if we could consider and cost new signage for the Chilterns. The existing signage is not in a good state. The CEO will instigate a scoping report if this is possible and report to the Executive Committee and the Board. It was noted that the National Trust will need to be involved. Members discussed new signage.
- b. It was asked if the leaflets that we provide for visitors can be translated into other languages and it was agreed that this should be explored as part of the Engagement Plan.
3. Mend the Gap programme: we are recruiting for a new Programme Manager, interviews arranged. John Nichols, Deputy Chair and Cllr John Griffin expressed an interest to be more involved with this programme. The CEO will introduce them to Fran Crowther, Project Support Officer. It was noted that the governance arrangements for the Steering Group could be reviewed, in part to ensure we draw on expertise of more people.
4. Policies and Procedures. Deirdre Hansen, Clerk to the Board, is continuing to work on this and will report at the next Board meeting.
5. File sharing. This is still being worked on, no progress to report. The CEO will put Cllr Lynn Lloyd in Contact with Lynne Cordice, Senior Administration Officer, who has been investigating this facility for Board members.
6. Personnel and Recruitment.
 - a. The Administration and Communications function from 9th August 2022 is the CEO's responsibility.
 - b. The Development and Funding Manager left the CCB at the end of September.
 - c. The Admin Officer left at the end of August. A replacement has been recruited, due to start 7th November.
 - d. Dr Wendy Morrison, Project Manager Beacons of the Past, has joined the CCB as a permanent member of staff as of 1st November. The Beacons of the Past Project has come to completion at the end of October 2022. Having a staff member with suitable skills in the cultural heritage and historic field adds strength to the staff team. It was noted that Historic England is very interested in the work being done in this area.
 - e. A Citizen Science Coordinator joined the Chilterns Chalk Streams project on 31st October. The Chalk Streams team continues to grow, currently standing at eight members.
 - f. Laura Silverstone and Adrian Porter who were employed for 12 months on our collaborative Green Recovery Challenge Fund Chalkstreams project have moved from the Chiltern Society to become permanent members of the CCB staff team. They will continue in the same roles.

The members discussed personnel and funding. It was acknowledged that the differing moving parts on the staff team need to be built into a resilient staff team.

7. New Board Members. Cllr Reena Ranger, Hertfordshire County Council has left the Board and has been replaced by Cllr Paula Hiscocks. Cllr Fatima Begum, Luton Borough Council has been replaced by Cllr Robert Roche. He has been a CCB Board member before.
8. Members asked if the "Skills Audit" carried out by John Nicholls, Deputy Chair, could be shared with members. CEO will discuss with the Deputy Chair.

1. The Committee NOTED the CEO's report.

22/23.9 Finance Report and Budget Update

The Finance Officer, Graham Hurst, reported on the Core and Project activities for the year ending 30th September 2022.

9.1 Finance:

1. Core income for the period was £540,261. It includes our full annual Defra grant.
2. Core expenditure for the period was £340,572 which is higher than budgeted. Largely due to an increase in payroll costs.
3. Core activities generated a £199,689 surplus, which includes a Defra payment in advance of £259,950.
4. Project income received for the period was £420,016, of which £266,056 was from the Chess Smarter Water Project and £74,591 from Beacons of the Past.
5. Project expenditure was £596,970 resulting in a cash shortfall of £176,953 which has been met from CCB reserves.
6. Two projects are still giving cause for concern, all other projects are comfortable.
 - a. Chalk, Cherries & Chairs: a timetable has now been agreed to catch up with the delayed claims. By Christmas a year's claims will be coming through and by 31st March 2023 all the claims will be up to date. Concern was expressed that this could happen again. It was noted that this is a different project to the usual format of projects and safeguards will be in place.
 - b. Chalkscapes. Outside contractors are now supporting the CCB in completing this project. The CEO reported that the National Lottery will honour all the monies owed. The development phase is to be completed, a line will be drawn under the project and a new claim submitted.

9.2 Audit Report:

The external audit report has still not been finalised, an interim report advising as such has been issued and published on the CCB website.

9.3 Budget:

The Finance Officer presented a draft budget, which members questioned and discussed. The increase in salary and pension costs was noted. Any surplus in 2022-23 will be used for any deficits in 2023-24. A certain amount of staff costs can be recharged to projects.

A skeleton 2023-24 budget will be presented at the December board meeting as well as a five-year budget plan forward.

9.4 Treasury and Investment Management:

The CCB's current investment policy is to invest surplus funds in deposit accounts at major banking institutions where the risk is minimal.

It is proposed and was agreed to add parent local authorities, those not under a S114 order, to those bodies the CCB can deposit surplus funds.

9.5 Reserves Policy Review:

The Finance Officer proposed amending the Reserves Policy to bring the Revenue Reserve into the General Reserve amounting to a combined reserve sufficient to meet the quarterly liabilities as they fall due, considering that most of our projects are finance by quarterly claims. Defra pay our core grant half yearly in advance.

The Development Reserve to be earmarked for the continued development of activities not financed from core funding. The meeting discussed this proposal and agreed to recommend approval to the Board.

The Chair thanked the Finance Officer.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the CCB financial position on 30 September 2022.**
- 2. The Committee ACCEPTED the revised Treasury and Investment Policy.**
- 3. The Committee AGREED to recommend the revised Reserves Policy to the Board.**

22/23.10 Board Meeting 6th December

The Board meeting will be held in Chesham. Alex Nelms 4 Counties Chair of the NFU has been invited and Stephen Rudd, Natural England is to be invited. Allen Beechey, the Chalk Streams Project Manager, has been invited to speak and arrange a “Chalk Streams” site visit.

22/23.11 AONB Management Plan

In July this year the Defra Minister Rt Hon Lord Benyon wrote to all Protected Landscapes Management Plan Partnerships advising those required under S89 of the CRoW Act to review their Management Plans during 2023 and 2024 that they would have the option to delay publication of their Plan by up to one year.

The existing guidance on preparation and review of a Management Plan is significantly out-of-date and it is Defra and Natural England’s intention to publish new guidance in the context of the Landscapes Review. This is one of the reasons for the option to delay publication of the reviewed plans for up to a year.

Matt Thomson, the Planner, had presented a paper on the time limited option to delay the review of the Management Plan for up to a year. Under S89 of the CRoW Act the review is due before October 2024.

In view of the various reforms, reviews, designations programme, internal governance review, internal organisational restructurings, the 25-year vision for the Chilterns Task and Finish Group and the team’s full work programme it is suggested to roll the existing policy content of the current Management Plan forward. It is recognised that some aspects of the current Management plan require additional attention and an appendix will be provided. Engagement with stakeholders remains a vital aspect of each review. The Board could commit to undertaking a comprehensive review ahead of the next five-year cycle as soon as the boundary review and other outcomes of ongoing work are clearer.

- 1. The Committee CONSIDERED the issues relating to the review of the Management Plan outlined in the report.**
- 2. The Committee APPROVED the principle of working on the basis that the most expedient form of review will be one that focusses on rolling the existing Plan’s policy content forward and undertaking a comprehensive review as soon as other work- principally the boundary review- indicates that there is a stable strategic context in which to proceed. This would enable the proposed Board Advisory group to make an input.**

Under the Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960 a resolution was passed to exclude the public

22/23.12 HR Issues- discussed

The meeting reopened

22/23.13 Urgent Business

1. The Finance Officer has been notified by the Chiltern Society that costs that were being incurred under Green Recovery Challenge project could reach £185,000 in January/February 2023 and that financial assistance may be sought from the CCB under the partnership agreement that was in place.
2. Chalk Streams: Allen Beechey, Chalk Stream Project Officer and Professor Kate Heppell, Chalk Streams Project Research Lead have given evidence to an inquiry by Buckinghamshire Council's Select Committee on Chalk Streams. Buckinghamshire Councillor Robert Carington, also a CCB board Member led on this for Buckinghamshire Council. They have produced a report with many welcome recommendations. The CEO will send members the link to this report.

22/23.14 Next meeting: 14th February 2023- Location Chinnor, Village Centre.

Future meetings: 9th May 2023, 11th July 2023, and 14th November 2023.

The Chairman.....

Date.....