



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

**Held at the Paralympic Room, The Gateway Offices, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury,
Buckinghamshire HP19 8FF (Buckinghamshire Council Offices) on Tuesday 13th
June 2023 at 10.00am.**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Appointed by Local Authorities

Clr David Bartholomew
Clr Paula Hiscocks
Clr Steve Jarvis
Clr Jane MacBean
Clr Richard Newcombe
Clr Philip Spicer

Appointing Body

Oxfordshire County Council
Hertfordshire County Council
North Hertfordshire District Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Central Bedfordshire Council

Appointed by the Secretary of State

Colin Courtney
Paul Mainds
Joe Stewart
Elizabeth Wilson

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

Elected by Parish Councils

Clr John Griffin
Clr John Harfield
Clr Sue Rowland
Clr Sir Hector Sants

Oxfordshire
Bedfordshire
Oxfordshire
Buckinghamshire

CCB Staff

Andrew Brock-Doyle
Deirdre Hansen
Graham Hurst
Elaine King
Eloise Small
Matt Thomson
Annette Weiss

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

Other

Sarah Wright

National Trails Project Officer

The Chairman welcomed those present in person and online. All those present introduced themselves.

22/23.62 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from *Cllr Robert Carington, Buckinghamshire Council, *Cllr Lynn Lloyd, South Oxfordshire District Council, Geeta Ludhra, Secretary of State appointee, *John Nicholls, Secretary of State appointee, Cllr Robert Roche, Luton Borough Council, *John Shaw, Secretary of State appointee, Cllr Sally Symington, Dacorum Borough Council, Cllr Jon Tankard, Three Rivers District Council, Ian Waller, Secretary of State appointee, Cllr Adrian Watney, Hertfordshire Parish Councils and Cllr Gareth Williams, Buckinghamshire Council. (*Those * listened in on the meeting online*)

Tom Beeston, CEO Chiltern Society and Simon Kearey, Chairman Chiltern Society.

22/23.63 Declarations of Interest

No declaration of interest in any agenda item was made.

22/23.64 Notice of Urgent Business

The Chair notified the meeting he had some words of thanks to offer at the end of the meeting.

22/23.65 Minutes of the Board Meeting 14th March 2023.

The minutes of the Board meeting 14th March 2023 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

22/23.66 Matters Arising

All items covered on the agenda.

22/23.67 Public Question Time.

No public present.

22/23.68 Chair's Update

The Chair, Paul Mainds, reported on his activities since his last update 13th March and highlighted the following:

1. Great to see the new Head of Operations, Andrew Brock-Doyle, who joined us in April. A further senior team member – Head of Landscape - will join us in July.
2. Improving our connections with Local Authorities (LA), this had been discussed at the previous Board meeting. Following discussion with some of the LA Board members a better approach would be rather than invite LAs to meet us, we should go out to them, targeting appropriate officers, leaders and CEO's as far as practical aiming for the autumn.
3. No update yet on the two new Secretary of State appointees. Three suitable names had been put forward by the panel to the Secretary of State. He will keep chasing Defra for details of the appointments.
4. The Natural England Boundary Review work is continuing. He attends monthly meetings, and it is promising to see the progress being made.
5. He undertook to write to the Secretary of State 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 and it is much less than National Parks. The letter has been delayed and will be sent after the AGM, which has the benefit of including the name of a new Chair.

6. There is disappointment that there has no reply to the email of 6th April regarding Governance to Sion McKeever, Deputy Director, Access, Landscapes, Peatland and Soil at Defra. The CEO, Elaine King, The Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson and the Deputy Chair, John Nicholls, had all contributed to this email.
7. Following the May Executive Committee meeting, a meeting on the generation of the 25 year vision work and governance was held 31st May. The Clerk, Deirdre Hansen, and the Deputy Chair, John Nicholls will prepare notes for discussion at the July Executive Committee meeting on the different roles, relationships, and schemes of delegation between Board and Officers. Action DH and JN. The outcome will be put to the Board at a future meeting.
8. He thanked Board members and staff with whom he has worked with in the last two and a quarter years. We have faced some big challenges and made big changes, there is always more to do, progress is being made. Thanks, in particular to the CEO, Elaine King and the Deputy Chair John Nicholls.

1. The Board NOTED the update.

22/23.69 Chief Executive's Update

The CEO, Elaine King, had issued a report following her update for the Board meeting 14th March 2023.

She highlighted the following:

1. The changes to the staff team, with the Head of Landscape joining 18th July, are working well and she is enjoying working with Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations.
2. Summer is here and a lot of activities are going on in the projects e.g., Citizen Science events, have a look at the website <https://www.chilternsaonb.org/whats-on/events/>
3. EDI is a key part of our work. The Head of Engagement & Partnerships will give more information later in the meeting minute 22/23.73 Board members were encouraged to take part in the EDI training 26th June or 5th July.
4. 25 Year Vision work and Governance work is being done, but timing is important ensuring the multiple workstreams fit together and the groups communicate. Keeping the momentum going with limited resources is a challenge.
5. Management Plan: as noted at an earlier meeting it will be a light touch roll-over of the current Plan this time. AONBs are waiting for Natural England guidance for new Management Plans.
6. Natural England's Boundary Review and Enhanced Management and Governance Arrangements project: the staff team are contributing to this work. Specific targets and outcomes will come to us from Defra, but no additional funding which means we may have to draw on reserves to be able to deliver our key work. She has asked for additional funding from Defra and NE.
7. Funding: most LAs have been proactive following her letter in January seeking the full 20% contribution to Defra's 80%/ Conversations are continuing with them and also potential and existing funders. She is working on strategies to increase funding.
8. She is being invited to contribute at strategic conferences including a conference organised by Julian Glover - "Future Countryside" on the 6th of June.
9. Members asked questions and discussed the report.

The CEO was thanked.

1. The Board NOTED the report.

22/23.70 a. Business Plan

The Head of Operations, Andrew Brock-Doyle, had provided a report outlining the work done for the Business Plan 2023-24.

- A review of 2022-23
- A new approach to business planning
- An outline Business Plan including a 3-year plan.
- A draft Delivery Plan.

The Executive Committee at its meeting in May had asked for a Business Plan to be affordable and realistic. 2023/24 is a hybrid year whilst we are looking to increase robustness in linkages between the Business Plan, the Finance Plan and the Resources Plan all of which come down from the Management Plan. An update to be given to the Executive Committee in July with a presentation to the Board in September. It was noted that resources are limited. The question was raised if an ambitious integrated Business Plan could be presented, but also a Plan showing the effect of a 30% increase and decrease in output.

A clear plan identifying actions for this year and next year was presented to the Board.

1. The Board NOTED the report and PROVIDED feedback on the actions being undertaken this year to improve the robustness of the Business Plan.

b. Operational Effectiveness.

The Head of Operations, Andrew Brock-Doyle, had provided a report including timelines on the current work being undertaken to increase operational effectiveness within the CCB.

The first step to improve robustness in the CCB's operations had been to appoint the Head of Operations, who had joined in April. He also line manages the Managers of the Mend the Gap programme and the Chalk Cherries and Chairs project.

The four key area in the first quarter's work have been:

- a. The Business Plan as mentioned in 22/23.71a
- b. Chalk Cherries and Chairs programme- Return to Green. Even though there have been problems with the programme management, the programme contains some good plans. Discussions have been held with the National Lottery Heritage Fund and resourcing agreed. Historical reporting has been submitted. Financial reporting is being progressed, due to be submitted this summer. It is acknowledged that the programme is overly complex and simplification is required. Returning the programme to green has been a team effort and the whole team were thanked for their contributions.
- c. Programme/Project approach- the aim is developing an effective Programme/Project management approach in the CCB. How we identify suitable projects, and manage and strategically deliver programmes. Applying Managing Successful Programmes (MSP) principles. The MSP approach is being used with the Mend the Gap Programme and is being integrated going forward with the Not Bourne Yesterday funding application. Going forward this approach will be adapted to existing Programme/Projects.
- d. Operational effectiveness- discovery stage. Key elements emerging are:

- Robust financial information for project managers to assist in the effective management of their projects
 - A consistent project management approach and toolkit.
 - Identifying how strategy is linked to operational delivery and making it more effective.
 - Having platforms of communication and ways of working which are consistent and sympathetic.
 - Easy access to information and the effective management of that information.
2. **The Board APPROVED the approach and timeline to ensure effective management of the Chalk Cherries and Chairs Programme.**
 3. **The Board APPROVED the approach and timeline to introduce best practice Programme Management in the CCB.**
 4. **The Board APPROVED the approach and timeline around identifying and addressing key operational issues within the CCB.**

22/23.71 Finance – Annual Accounts 2022/23 and AGAR 2022/23

The Finance Officer, Graham Hurst, had provided the Annual Accounts consisting of a combined Profit and Loss Account and a Balance Sheet for the year to 31st March 2023 as well as the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2022/23.

Annual Accounts:

1. The overall combined outturn for the year is a deficit of £453,696. Core activities showed a surplus of £8,112 and Projects a deficit of £461,808.
2. The project deficit is mainly made up of the March expenditure on the Green Recovery Challenge Fund project (this has now been received) and 18 months historical claims of the Chalk Cherries and Chairs project. Progress is being made in bringing the CCC claims up to date and all project deficits will be covered by outstanding funding claims.
3. The AGAR is required by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. It is prepared under local government accounting principles which do not recognise deferred income and therefore income is recognised when funds are received rather than earned, hence the deficit on Projects.
4. The external auditors report can only be completed once the sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR have been approved by the Board.
5. The internal auditors have not yet commenced the internal audit. Once completed their report will be made available to the Board. An extension claim will be submitted to the external auditors.
6. The completed AGAR will be published on the CCB website.
7. The AGAR shows overall funds carried forward of £4,180,479, separately itemised in the Balance Sheet. The cash reserves mainly arise from the prepayment of the Mend the Gap funds of which still £3,605,621 remains.

The Finance Officer was thanked for his work.

1. **The Board APPROVED the CCB's Annual Accounts for 31 March 2023.**

2. The Board APPROVED the Annual Governance Statement 2022/23 and the Accounting Statements 2022/23 and they were SIGEND.

22/223.72 Planning Matters

The Head of Strategy & Planning, Matt Thomson, had issued a report summarising key discussions held at the Planning Committee meeting 12th April with updates where appropriate.

He was asked on progress on the Real-Time system. Progress has been slow, but he is working with the Chair of the Planning Committee on a delivery plan. It will be on Teams. It is the intention that by the July Planning Committee meeting there will be material online for members to view.

The Chair of the Planning Committee, Sue Rowland, and the Head of Strategy & Planning, Matt Thomson, were thanked for their work.

1. The Board NOTED the update on planning matters.

22/23.73 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion update

The Head of Engagement & Partnerships, Annette Weiss, presented a report on the update of the EDI work. Noting the following:

1. A half day EDI training for staff and Board members will take place 26th June and 5th July led by Dr Anjana Khatwa. Board members were encouraged to attend.
2. Two 'Skills into Practice' workshops focussing on EDI are being offered to staff.
3. Defra Access Funding: the £227,000 has been spent through issuing grants to various organisations and reports submitted to Defra. One project has been delayed with Defra approval.
4. The reports were favourably received by Defra and focus is now on planning for the Access Funding in 2024/25 (no funding is available in this financial year).
5. She is seeking more resources which would allow us to be more ambitious, making the most of the opportunities.
6. A Gantt chart was provided for key activities and milestones over the next 12 months.

The Head of Engagement & Partnerships, Annette Weiss, was thanked for her work.

1. The Board NOTED the update on EDI.

22/23.74 Updating the CCB's Constitution.

a. Updating the Contact Standing Orders

The Clerk, Deirdre Hansen, presented updated Contract Standing Orders to comply with legislation.

The Clerk to ensure all staff are provided with a copy of the updated Contract Standing Orders and are given training in the use of these Standing Orders.

1. The Board APPROVED the updated Contract Standing Orders.

b. Update on CCB Policies and Procedures

The Head of Operations, Andrew Brock-Doyle, presented a framework for the scheme of policies which included a timetable for review, listing the organisational lead responsible and type. It is acknowledged that there are gaps and the work is not yet complete, but a timetable for progress was presented. Board members offered feedback and comment.

- 2. The Board NOTED and OFFERED feedback on the framework of the Scheme of Policies**
- 3. The Board NOTED and OFFERED feedback on when and how the policies will be approved.**
- 4. The Board NOTED and OFFERED feedback on the scope and timeline of the work on policies going forward.**

22/23.75 Urgent Business

1. The Chair informed the meeting that for several Board Members this was their last meeting. Elizabeth Wilson, Lynn Lloyd and Ian Waller are leaving the Board after many years of service.
 - Elizabeth Wilson was thanked for Chairing and Vice Chairing the Planning Committee for many years. Her contributions and time are very much valued. Elizabeth had enjoyed her time with the CCB and it had been a pleasure to work with the wonderful staff. Elizabeth was presented with a small token of thanks.
 - Lynn Lloyd was thanked for her contributions to the Planning and Executive Committees and her participation in the HRAG. Lynn had been involved with the CCB since the Chinnor cement works. She has enjoyed her involvement with the Board, the staff and the community groups.
 - Ian Waller was thanked for Chairing the FiPL Committee. He has agreed to continue to be involved with FiPL and Chair the Committee.

The Chair hoped that all will continue to stay in touch and that their paths continue to cross.

Small tokens of thanks will be forwarded to Lynn and Ian.

2. The Chair informed the meeting that he would not be standing as Chair at the AGM. He thanked the Board, the CEO and staff, it had been a pleasure to work with them. In particular thanks to John Nicholls, Vice-Chair for his support.

22/23.76 Presentation by Sarah Wright, Project Officer for the Ridgeway National Trail on the Ridgeway 50th Anniversary.

The Ridgeway National Trail starting at Avebury and finishing at Ivinghoe Beacon goes through the Chilterns and the North Wessex Downs AONB.

She was thanked for her presentation, noting that the Ridgeway is an important pleasure of the area.

Next Meeting: 12th September 2023 Venue TBC.

Future Meeting dates 2023.

Board Meetings	Executive Committee	Planning Committee
12 th September 2023	11 th July 2023	<i>26th July 2023 note change</i>
12 th December 2023	14 th November 2023	<i>18th October 2023 note change</i>
Location TBC	Location Chinnor	Location Chinnor

The Chairman.....

Date.....