

Board Meeting

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024



**Chilterns  
National  
Landscape**

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

**Held at Buckinghamshire Council Offices, The Paralympic Room,  
The Gateway Offices, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP19 8FF  
on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024 at 10.00.**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

**Appointed by Local Authorities**

Cllr Louise Price  
Cllr Robert Carrington  
Cllr Richard Newcombe  
Cllr Sally Symington  
Cllr David Bartholomew  
Cllr Greg Smith  
Cllr Philip Spicer

**Appointing Body**

Three Rivers District Council  
Buckinghamshire Council  
Buckinghamshire Council  
Dacorum Borough Council  
Oxfordshire County Council  
Buckinghamshire Council  
Central Bedfordshire Council

**Appointed by the Secretary of State**

Colin Courtney  
John Nicholls (Chair)  
Paul Mains  
Joe Stewart  
Simon Mortimer

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

**Elected by Parish Councils**

Cllr John Griffin  
Cllr John Harfield  
Cllr Charles Hussey  
Cllr Sue Rowland

Oxfordshire Parish Councils  
Bedfordshire Parish Councils  
Buckinghamshire Parish Council  
Oxfordshire Parish Councils

**CCB Staff**

Andrew Brock-Doyle  
Lorna Coldwell  
Graham Hurst  
Elaine King  
Eloise Small  
Matt Thomson  
  
Kathryn Foster  
Jenny Caprio  
Allen Beechey

Head of Operations  
Clerk to the Board  
Finance Officer (S151 Officer)  
Chief Executive Officer  
Administration Officer  
Head of Strategy & Planning; Deputy  
Monitoring Officer  
Senior Finance Manager  
Monitoring Officer  
Chilterns Chalk Stream Project Manager

**Other**

Simon Kearey  
Tom Beeston

The Chiltern Society  
The Chiltern Society

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John' or a similar name.

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No members of the public were present.

The Chairman welcomed those present in person and online and introductions were made.

**24/25.32 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from:

Annette Weiss – Head of Engagement & Partnerships, Chilterns National Landscape, John Shaw – Secretary of State, Geeta Ludhra – Secretary of State, Hector Sants – Buckinghamshire Parish Councils, \*Cllr Paula Hiscocks – Hertfordshire County Council, \*Cllr James Norman – South Oxfordshire District Council, \*Gemma Harper – Secretary of State, \*Cllr Heather Wallace – Buckinghamshire Council, \*Kate Heppell – Head of Landscape, Chilterns National Landscape.

*(Those \* listened in on the meeting online)*

**24/25.33 Declarations of Interest in any of the agenda items**

None.

**24/25.34 Chair's Announcements**

The Chair asked all Board Members to respond to his request for a telephone conversation. He suggested a role definition for Board Members might be helpful. All agreed that it would. The Chair will draft a document, initially for Local Authority representatives, and send it to those members for review.

**24/25.35 Notice of Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business, as relevant items are covered in the agenda.

**24/25.36 Approval of Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 19.09.24 were approved as a true record and signed.

**24/25.36 Matters Arising**

Cllr Sue Rowland asked for an update on the National Planning Policy Framework. Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning, advised that he will circulate a briefing regarding the outcome of the government's consultation.

It was noted that there is still a vacancy for a Local Authority Board Member on the Executive Committee and volunteers were requested.

**24/25.37 Considerations of motions submitted by members**

No motions submitted.

**24/25.38 Public Question Time.**

No questions.

**24/25.39 Items for Decision**

**1. Summary of Items for Decision**

A brief overview of the items for discussion for decision was supplied and taken as read.



## **2. Background for Items for Decision**

### **2.1 Chair's Report**

There were no further suggestions for any improvements to the agenda format.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the agenda format**
- 2. The Board APPROVED the proposals for four meetings per year, three of them in Aylesbury to conduct normal business, with the fourth scheduled elsewhere as strategy session in the morning with an afternoon site visit**
- 3. The Board APPROVED a start time of 10am for Board meetings and a duration of three hours**

### **2.2 Board and Committee meeting dates in 2025**

It is recognised that diaries are busy. It was raised that May is a busy month for Local Authorities, particularly Buckinghamshire Council in 2025, as elections will be taking place and therefore Board membership may alter.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the dates and times for the next Board and Executive Committee meetings**
- 2. The Board APPROVED the specific dates and times for the Planning Committee meetings**
- 3. The Board AUTHORISED officers to identify any remaining specific dates and time of meetings for approval at the Board's next meeting in March.**

### **2.3 HR Policies and Timetable for Approval**

The Chair gave his thanks to the HR Advisory Group and Lucy Dowson, the Operational Effectiveness Support Officer, and commented that lots of progress has been made. The final suite of policies should be ready to bring to the March Board meeting for approval. It was raised that the HR policies were distributed with only two working days to read and that more would be preferable to read any further documents. It was agreed that further policies will be circulated in good time ahead of Board meetings.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the HR policies following HR policies:**  
**HR03 Anti Bribery & Corruption**  
**HR12 Health & Wellbeing**  
**HR16 Recruitment**
- 2. The Board APPROVED the updated timetable identifying when remaining policies will come to the Board to be approved**

### **2.4 Governance Review**

#### **2.4a Scheme of Delegation**



The Governance Task and Finish Group have been working on updating the Constitution, which is unclear in parts and has been added to over the years. The proposal is to "road test" the scheme of delegation as a living document in line with previously agreed principles.

The Procurement Act 2023 came into effect in October 2024, and it was queried if this will affect the Chilterns National Landscape team. Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning advised the Establishment Order dictates which parts of Parliamentary Acts apply and this will be investigated. Joe Stewart offered to assist.

**2.4a 1. The Board INVITED the Governance TFG to continue working with an Officer to develop the Scheme of Delegation alongside the review of the Constitution**

**2.4a 2. The Board APPROVED the interim Scheme of Delegation be put into operation on a trial basis, with further development and a final report to a later Board.**

**2.4b Progress with the Constitution Review**

Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning shared that significant progress has been made in reviewing the Constitution, and the draft document had been circulated with changes highlighted. This is again a living document that may be updated regularly going forward. The Chair encouraged new members to join the Governance Task and Finish Group.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the Constitution as proposed to be changed and AUTHORISED officers to make any minor changes necessary to provide a clean, formatted, and branded version for publication.**
- 2. The Board INVITED the Governance Review TFG, working with Officers, to continue to review the Constitution and bring further proposed changes to the Board for approval.**
- 3. The Board INVITED the Executive Committee, working with the Finance Officer, Finance Advisory Group, and the Governance Review TFG, to consider reviewing section 3.6 (Financial and Contract Regulations) with further development and a final report to a later Board.**

**2.5 Management Plan Review**

The Management Plan is a shared plan, which is to be delivered not only by the Chilterns National Landscapes team but also all stakeholders in the Chilterns, such as Local Authorities and is therefore aimed at everyone. Gemma Harper, Chair of the Management Plan Review Task and Finish Group, gave thanks to Matt Thomson and the team for the enormous amount of work completed for the refresh of the Plan. Consultation will take place for seven weeks, and the plan published at the end of March subject to Board approval at the March meeting. A Delivery Plan will be a separate document that feeds into the Management Plan but noting that this is only for the organisation.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the schedule of proposed changes as the basis for consultation beginning on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2024**



## **2.6 Risk Register**

Elaine King, the Chief Executive Officer, advised that the format of the Risk Register has been altered following Board Member feedback. The key risks identified relate to finances, capacity issues with staff, Health and Safety and data protection. A discussion ensued regarding the risk about the quality and lack of diversity of Board Members. It was pointed out that this is something that the Board has little control over, due to the way Board members are appointed, but that, due to the reputational and operational risks, it needs to be included on the risk register and measures taken to try to improve diversity, such as where opportunities arise to influence selection of members by local authority Leaders and by the Secretary of State.

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

## **2.7 Finance Advisory Group – Terms of Reference**

The group currently consists of the Finance Officer, the Senior Finance Manager, the Chief Executive Officer, and two board members Cllr Hector Sants and Cllr Richard Newcombe. It was convened to give advice and challenge to Officers on the finances. Further members would be welcomed. It was agreed to alter the terms of reference, so that the Chair of the group is not an Officer of the Chilterns National Landscape.

- 1. The Board to APPROVED the Terms of Reference subject to the above amendment**
- 2. The Board APPROVED the establishment of the Finance Advisory Group**

## **24/25.40 Items for Noting/Information**

### **1. Quarter 2 Finance Report**

The Finance Officer, Graham Hurst, had provided the accounts for four months of the year, ending 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024. Overall, the Board received Income of £1,773,179 and had expenditure of £1,411,195 resulting in an excess of income of £361,985. This excess is not “profit” but results from the timing differences from receiving income in advance of expenditure. Overall, the organisation is operating within its budget. Core year summary:

- Core income was £484k compared to a budget of £443k. This surplus is due to unbudgeted project income of £22,000 and an Access grant of £13,000 which is used to offset expenditure incurred plus interest received of £5,000 which is higher than budgeted interest rates.
- Core expenditure was £431k against a budget of £438k so is in line with expectations.
- The Core surplus is £53k but this is expected to decrease in quarters 3 and 4 in line with the timing of expenditure.

The Board agreed to update the bank mandate to make the following people signatories and therefore providing them permission to discuss the accounts with the bank:

The Chief Executive Officer

The Finance Officer

The Senior Finance Manager



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The Senior Administration Officer

- 1. The Board NOTED the Chilterns Conservation Board annual accounts for the year ending 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024.**
- 2. The Board APPROVED the updated bank mandates.**

## **2. Quarter 2 Delivery Report**

### **Overall Progress**

The Delivery Plan that was approved for this year was split into five workstreams containing 28 delivery areas and a total of 104 delivery lines. Between July and September 2024:

- 45 delivery lines reported as progressing on track
- 35 delivery lines reported as being slightly delayed
- 16 delivery lines reported as being significantly delayed
- 4 delivery lines were not due to start work in Q2

- 1. The Board NOTED the Quarter 2 update**

## **3. Funding Strategy Update**

The paper supplied by the Chief Executive was taken as read. The Core grant settlement from Defra remains unknown, with clarity expected in March or April 2025.

- 1. The Board NOTED the update**

## **4. Chief Executive Officer's Update**

A comprehensive paper detailing the Chief Executive Officer's recent work had been circulated and was taken as read. It was noted that the National Landscape Association has increased its staffing levels and is more proactive in supporting and advocating for National Landscapes at a national level. The staff survey results were largely positive but the Board noted that the Senior Leadership Team will be acting on points that need addressing, to include an action plan and pulse surveys. Natural England's Boundary Review project in the Chilterns has been further delayed but is expected to continue, and the public consultation expected in May 2025.

The Chair gave his thanks to the Chief Executive Officer.

- 1. The Board NOTED the update**

## **5. Annual Business Planning**

The Executive Committee will scrutinise the business plan before it is brought to the March Board meeting. The plan is linked to the budget, which will be brought to the June Board meeting to be finalised and approved. We do not expect to have clarity on our Defra grant settlement before the March Board meeting.

## **6. CROW Act section 85 Duty and Guidance Update**

The Local Authority Members were asked to highlight the s85 duty to their respective Planning Departments. The information will be circulated to Board Members as a PDF.



1. The Board NOTED the publication of the National Landscape Association's guidance to local planning authorities on the section 85 duty, and will promote the guidance to their own networks
2. The Board RESOLVED to thank the NLA team and members of its Planning and Placemaking Group for producing the guidance
7. Chilterns Chalk Streams Guidance Note and Position Paper

It was commented that the note and paper was excellent. Board Member Cllr Philip Spicer raised the potential impact of the Grand Union Canal Water Transport Scheme, which the Planning Team are aware of, along with proposals for reservoirs in South Oxfordshire. Applications will be responded to when received and reported to the Board.

1. The Board NOTED the update

#### 24/25.41 Minutes and Recommendations of Committees

##### 1. Executive Committee briefing draft notes (07.11.24)

The Senior Finance Officer corrected an item regarding NI contributions, which will be altered in the minutes before being signed at the next Executive Committee meeting.

##### 2. Planning Committee briefing draft notes (17.10.24)

Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning gave a brief update on the Luton airport proposal and the "further enhancement measures" that have been requested. He will circulate the submitted response to Board Members.

1. The Board NOTED the draft Committee notes

#### 24/25.42 Any Urgent Business

None.

#### 24/25.43 Next Meeting

The next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2025, 10 am at Buckinghamshire Council offices.

#### Future meeting dates:

Planning Committee Meetings	Executive Committee Meetings	Board Meetings
Thursday 23 <sup>rd</sup> January 2025, 10am, Chinnor offices	Monday 24 <sup>th</sup> February 2025, time and location TBC	Thu 27 <sup>th</sup> March 2025, 10am Buckinghamshire Council offices
Thursday 17 <sup>th</sup> April, 10am Chinnor offices		
Thursday 23 <sup>rd</sup> October, 10am Chinnor offices		

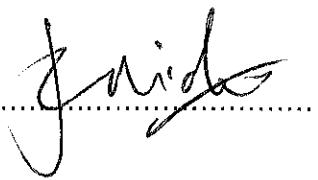
The meeting was closed at 12.34.

Following the meeting, a presentation was given by Allen Beechey updating Board members on the Chilterns Chalk Stream Project.



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The Chairman.....

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John N. Niles".

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Date..... 27/3/25