



Chilterns National Landscape

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

Held at Sarratt Village Hall, The Green, Sarratt, Rickmansworth WD3 6AS
on Thursday 19th June 2025 at 09.30am.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Appointed by Local Authorities

Cllr Louise Price
Cllr Justine Fulford
Cllr Philip Spicer

Appointing Body

Three Rivers District Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Central Bedfordshire Council

Appointed by the Secretary of State

John Nicholls (Chair)
Colin Courtney
Simon Mortimer
John Shaw

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

Elected by Parish Councils

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

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

CCB Staff

Elaine King
Matt Thomson
Monitoring Officer
Andy Brock-Doyle
Graham Hurst
Kathryn Foster
Lorna Coldwell
Eloise Small
Wendy Morrison

Chief Executive Officer
Head of Strategy and Planning; Deputy

Head of Operations
Finance Officer (S151 Officer)
Senior Finance Manager
Clerk to the Board
Administration Officer
Heritage and Archaeology Manager

Other

Tom Beeston
Anna Oliveri
Ian Black
Simon Kearey
Richard Newcombe
Paula Hiscocks

The Chiltern Society
Natural England
The Ridgeway National Trail
The Chiltern Society
Former Board member
Former Board member

No members of the public were present.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. H.' or a similar initials.

25/26.1 Standing Items

1.1 Election of Chair and Deputy Chair (AGM item)

Cllr Louise Price was proposed by John Nicholls, seconded by Cllr Philip Spicer as Chair of the Board and unanimously elected.

Cllr Hector Sants was proposed by John Nicholls and seconded by Colin Courtney as Deputy Chair of the Board and unanimously elected.

1.2 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from:

Board Members:

Cllr Greg Smith* – Buckinghamshire Council, Paul Mainds* – Secretary of State, Cllr Robert Carrington – Buckinghamshire Council, Gemma Harper – Secretary of State, Cllr Martin Tett – Buckinghamshire Council, Geeta Ludhra – Secretary of State.

Officers:

Anna Oliveri* – Natural England,
Annette Weiss* – Head of Engagement and Partnerships,
Neil Jackson* – Conservation and Landscape Officer,
Kate Heppell – Head of Landscape.

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

1.3 Declarations of Interest in any of the agenda items

None.

1.4 Notice of Urgent Business

There was none, with all matters covered on the agenda.

1.5 Approval of Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 27.03.25 were approved as a true record and signed.

1.6 Matters Arising

The Chair advised regarding minute 45.3 that the revised Constitution will be brought to the September Board meeting.

Regarding minute 46.4, John Nicholls and Paul Mainds' term of office has been extended by Defra to September 2025, when it is expected the new Secretary of State members will have been appointed.

1.7 Considerations of motions submitted by members

No motions submitted.

1.8 Public Question Time.

No public present.

1.9 Appointment of Committee Members

With the current uncertainty of Board membership following recent elections in some Local Authorities, it was proposed to confirm the current membership of committees and



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appoint new members at the September Board meeting, with a reminder that all Board members are invited to attend committee meetings should they wish.

The Board RESOLVED to APPROVE that the following members were confirmed as appointed to the Executive Committee (ExCo):

Local Authority Representatives

Cllr Philip Spicer
Cllr Louise Price
Two vacancies

Secretary of State Representatives

Paul Mains (until September 2025)
John Nicholls (Deputy Chair)
One vacancy

Parish Council Representatives

Cllr John Griffin
Cllr Sir Hector Sants (Chair)

Parish Council members Cllr Charles Hussey and Cllr Sue Rowlands attend the committee as non-voting observers.

The Board RESOLVED to approve that the following members were confirmed as appointed to the Planning Committee (PlanCo):

Local Authority Representatives

Cllr Louise Price (Deputy Chair)
Cllr Robert Carington
Cllr Heather Wallace
One vacancy

Secretary of State Representatives

John Nicholls (until September 2025)
Simon Mortimer
One vacancy

✓M.

Parish Council Representatives

Cllr Charles Hussey
Cllr Sue Rowland (Chair)

A resolution was passed to adjourn the meeting for a presentation to the Board by Dr Wendy Morrison, Heritage and Archaeology Manager at the Chilterns National Landscape.

Dr Morrison gave a highly informative presentation, with the Chair commenting that it was great to hear about some of the "field activities" being carried out by the staff team.

The meeting was reconvened.



1.10 Chair's Announcements

The Chair confirmed that board members Richard Newcombe, Paula Hiscocks, Sally Symington, Patricia Birchley, Colin Courtney, Geeta Ludhra, Joe Stewart, John Shaw would be stepping down from the Board for various reasons. He gave thanks to all for their contributions over their terms. He welcomed the new Local Authority appointees.

25/26.2 Items for Decision

2.1 Finance Report

The overall combined deficit was £328,200, which comprised a Core Surplus of £109,500 and a Project deficit of £437,700. The core surplus exceeded forecast expectations but reflects a year where additional Defra core and capital funding were received. The project deficit reflects project spend from reserves and is not a matter for any concern. A report following the internal and external audits will be provided at the September Board meeting.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the Annual Accounts for 31st March 2025**
- 2. The Board APPROVED and SIGNED the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2024-25**

2.2 2025/26 Budget

The Senior Finance Manager, Kathryn Foster, had circulated a paper with the final budget overview, following the budget envelope presented to the Board on 27/03/25. The overall position is a budget deficit of £118,000 and this is proposed to be funded from the current year core surplus and the small remainder from reserves. When a three year settlement from Defra is known (we have been advised that this is likely to be in June/July), a new business plan for 2026/27 – 2028/29 will be developed.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the budget for 2025/26, including funding the £118,000 deficit in 2025/26 from the surplus in 2024/25 and from reserves**
- 2. The Board APPROVED the use of reserves towards organisational transformation work that are not deemed to be eligible for Defra CDEL funding, to a maximum of £80,000.**

2.3 Reserves Policy and Financial Approvals

Kathryn Foster, Senior Finance Manager, had provided a paper outlining interim changes to the Financial Approvals, which had been discussed thoroughly and agreed at the Executive Committee meeting on 07/05/25 for recommendation to the Board.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the Reserves Policy and changes to Financial Approvals effective for the new financial year**
- 2. The Board NOTED the changes will be incorporated in the updated Financial Regulations as part of wider improvements to the Constitution**

2.4 Delivery Plan

Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations, had circulated a paper to update the delivery model adopted last year and which was developed in conjunction with the 2025/26 budget planning process.



The Delivery Plan has maintained the same model as the previous year, with some improvements including a structure more akin to the functional areas of the organisation: HR, Finance, IT and Admin. A large amount of work took place around resources and staff capacity, which will be subject to further work this year. Some capacity issues remain, but there is now a better understanding of what these are, which will enable us to better manage it this year.

The Delivery Plan is also sent to Defra. It was suggested that this be used as a further opportunity highlight that more core funding would enable further work to be done. It was commented that the Delivery Plan is a thorough and impressive piece of work, and thanks were given to the team.

A discussion ensued around Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in respect of supporting minority groups in enjoying and benefitting from the Chilterns National Landscape. Annette Weiss, Head of Engagement and Partnerships, advised that this is being addressed with all projects and is well embedded with the team. The EDI Ambition Statement is being updated currently, and it was emphasised that partnership work is so important for outreach opportunities. Workshops to improve accessibility are also planned.

1. The Board APPROVED the Delivery Plan

2.5 Management Plan

Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning, advised of the amendments to the Management Plan arising from the refresh review and sought the Board's approval of the amended Plan. Thanks were given to the Task and Finish Group for its work on the refresh, particularly given the challenges of the Chilterns Boundary Review being cancelled part through the process. The assistance of Natural England with the management Plan was also acknowledged. Anna Olivieri from Natural England stressed that the Management Plan is an invitation to people in the Chilterns to collaborate. It was commented that an endorsement from the Local Authorities located in the Chilterns is particularly important, to ensure delivery of the Plan, and we need to ensure that the correct people in local authorities are contacted. The Plan is for all stakeholders in the National Landscape to deliver through partnership and collaboration. An executive summary leaflet was suggested, to help make this clear and the newly formed working group for improving relations with Local Authorities will discuss this as part of its work.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the proposed schedule of amendments**
- 2. The Board AUTHORISED Officers to continue working with Natural England in the context of a standard Defra foreword**
- 3. The Board AUTHORISED Officers to proceed with the design stage and make any necessary corrections, updates, and/or cosmetic changes subject to sign off from the Board Chair and CEO.**

2.6 Nature Recovery Plan

Kate Heppell, Head of Landscape and Neil Jackson, Conservation and Landscape Officer, had provided a paper seeking authority to publish the Plan. Whilst not a statutory requirement, the Plan forms an important supplement to the Management Plan, will feed into various elements of our work, and will act as a guide for other stakeholders. It was noted that partners and stakeholders have engaged positively with the Plan as part of its development and in providing feedback to the consultation. The Board commended the Plan on its quality and depth.



A discussion ensued around deer management within the National Landscape. It was pointed out that effective deer management is essential to ensure many aspects of nature recovery can be achieved, and work being done to address the problem was described. It was agreed that a summary report on a recent deer survey would be provided to the Board.

1. The Board APPROVED the Nature Recovery Plan
2. The Board APPROVED the publication of the Nature Recovery Plan subject to final adjustments and sign off from the Chair and CEO

2.7 HR Policies

The following policies were considered, having been reviewed and recommended for approval by the Board by the HR Advisory Group:

- o Absence Management Policy
- o Learning and Development Policy
- o Redundancy Policy
- o Information Technology and Acceptable Use Policy

1. The Board APPROVED the HR policies

25/26.3 Items for Noting/Information

3.1 Chief Executive Officer's Update Quarter

Elain King, CEO, had provided an update regarding areas of work since the previous Board meeting. Highlights included:

- o Thanks were given to the Senior Leadership Team for all their continued hard work. There has been lots of engagement with MPs and Local Authority Councillors during this period, particularly relating to the appointment of new Board members by local authorities and Defra. Meetings have been held with external stakeholders, such as the NFU, Defra, the National Landscapes Association and other National Landscape colleagues.
- o Focus has also been on dealing with the outcomes of Natural England cancelling the Chilterns Boundary Review, including responding to questions from MPs and writing to Natural England's CEO and the Defra minister.

1. The Board NOTED the update

25/26.4 Minutes and Recommendations of Committees

4.1 Executive Committee Draft minutes (07.05.25)

4.2 Planning Committee Draft minutes (17.04.25)

1. The Board NOTED the draft Committee minutes

25/26.5 Any Urgent Business

None.

25/26.6 Handover to new Chair



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John Nicholls handed over to Cllr Louise Price. Thanks were given to the outgoing Chair for all his work and guidance over his tenure.

A reminder was given that the September Board meeting had been proposed as a strategy session.

25/26.7 Next Meeting

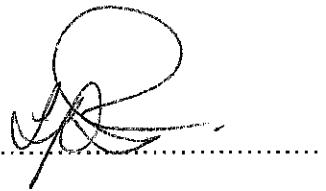
The next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 25th September 2025, 10am at Buckinghamshire Council Offices, Aylesbury.

Future meeting dates:

Planning Committee Meetings	Executive Committee Meetings	Board Meetings
Thursday 23 rd October, 10am Chinnor offices	Tuesday 9 th September, 10am Chinnor Village Centre	Thursday 25 th September 10am, Gateway Aylesbury
	Thursday 13 th November, 10am Chinnor Village Centre	Thursday 11 th December, 10am Gateway Aylesbury

The meeting was closed at 12.30.

The Chairman...



Date.....

25/9/25

