



Chilterns National Landscape

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CONSERVATION BOARD FOR THE
CHILTERNNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
Held at Buckinghamshire Council Offices, The Jubilee Room,
The Gateway Offices, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP19 8FF
on Thursday 19th September 2024 at 14.00.**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Appointed by Local Authorities

Cllr Louise Price
Cllr Richard Newcombe
Cllr Sally Symington
Cllr David Bartholomew
Cllr Greg Smith
Cllr Patricia Birchley
Cllr Philip Spicer

Appointing Body

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

Appointed by the Secretary of State

Colin Courtney
John Nicholls (Chair)
Gemma Harper
Paul Mains

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

Elected by Parish Councils

Cllr John Griffin
Cllr John Harfield

Oxfordshire Parish Councils
Bedfordshire Parish Council

CCB Staff

Andrew Brock-Doyle
Lorna Coldwell
Graham Hurst
Elaine King
Eloise Small
Matt Thomson

Head of Operations
Clerk to the Board
Finance Officer (S151 Officer)
Chief Executive Officer
Administration Officer
Head of Strategy & Planning; Deputy
Monitoring Officer
Head of Engagement & Partnerships
Head of Landscape
Project Support Officer
Planning Advisor
Conservation and Landscape Officer

Annette Weiss
Kate Heppell
Claudia Bernardini
Michael Stubbs
Neil Jackson

Other

Simon Kearey
James Wheatcroft
Tom Beeston

The Chiltern Society
The Chiltern Society
The Chiltern Society

No members of the public were present.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Ch'.

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

24/25.18 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from:

Geeta Ludhra - Secretary of State, *Cllr Paula Hiscocks - Hertfordshire County Council, Simon Mortimer - Secretary of State, Cllr Charles Hussey - Buckinghamshire Parish Councils, Cllr James Norman - South Oxfordshire District Council, Cllr Robert Carington - Buckinghamshire Council, *Cllr Sue Rowland - Oxfordshire Parish Councils, *Cllr Heather Wallace - Buckinghamshire Council (part), *Cllr Sir Hector Sants – Buckinghamshire Parish Councils, *John Shaw - Secretary of State, *Joe Stewart - Secretary of State.

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

24/25.19 Declarations of Interest in any of the agenda items

None.

24/25.20 Chair's Announcements

The Chair is holding 1-1 telephone calls with every Board Member and asked that members respond to his invitations and to also complete the Board skills matrix, which will help identify areas of expertise amongst Board members. This will be important as we advise Defra on the skills required as part of their upcoming recruitment for Secretary of State members on the Board.

The Board agenda has been modified in the light of these calls, and the number of meetings held each year will be addressed at the December Board meeting, along with a discussion on locations and timings. Any thoughts on the matter should be directed to the Chair before then.

24/25.21 Notice of Urgent Business

There was no urgent business, all items covered in the agenda.

24/25.22 Approval of Minutes of the previous meeting (AGM on 20.06.24)

The minutes were approved as true record and signed.

24/25.23 Matters Arising

No matters arising, all covered by the agenda.

24/25.24 Considerations of motions submitted by members

No motions submitted.

24/25.25 Public Question Time.

No questions.

24/25.26 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

Papers were distributed to Board members.

2.1 Updated Committee memberships

Matt Thomson had provided a paper detailing the membership of Committees and how the issue of extra Parish Council members on the Executive Committee had been resolved. The Chair noted the need for another Local Authority member to join the Executive Committee and invited volunteers to put their names forward. Paul Mains commented that the HR Advisory Group would welcome new members.

Executive Committee Membership:

Local Authority (requirement: 4)

- Cllr Richard Newcombe
- Cllr Philip Spicer
- Cllr Louise Price
- One vacancy

Secretary of State (requirement: 3)

- Geeta Ludhra
- Paul Mains
- John Nicholls

Parish Council (requirement: 2)

- Cllr John Griffin
- Cllr Sir Hector Sants
- Cllr Charles Hussey (as an "observer")
- Cllr Sue Rowland (as an "observer")

The August meeting of the Executive Committee was not quorate, so it was not possible to formally elect a new Chair and Deputy Chair. It was noted that Cllr Sir Hector Sants volunteered to act as Chair, with John Nicholls as Deputy Chair. Those positions are expected to be confirmed at the next Executive Committee meeting.

Planning Committee Membership:

Local Authority (requirement: 4)

- Cllr Paula Hiscocks
- Cllr Robert Carington
- Cllr Louise Price (new appointment)
- Cllr Heather Wallace (new appointment)

Secretary of State (requirement: 3)

- Colin Courtney
- Simon Mortimer
- Joe Stewart (new appointment)

Parish Council (requirement: 2)

- Cllr Charles Hussey

- Cllr Sue Rowland

The July meeting of the Planning Committee was also inquorate. Cllr Rowland indicated a willingness to continue as Chair, and that remains to be confirmed at the next meeting at which time a Deputy Chair **will** also be elected. Chris Hannington and Paul Hayes will continue as co-opted members of the Committee.

1. The Board **CONFIRMED** the appointment to Executive Committee of Cllr Sue Rowland and Cllr Charles Hussey as “observers”.
2. The Board **CONFIRMED** the appointment to Planning Committee of Cllr Louise Price, Cllr Heather Wallace and Joe Stewart.

2.2 HR Policies and timetable for approval

The HR Advisory Group (HRAG) were provided six policies to review, and comments received for four of them. It **was** agreed at the Executive Committee meeting in August that policies would be reviewed as quickly as possible, in priority order according to risk. Six policies were therefore **included** for approval. Any changes to policies will be addressed in the improvement phase after the December Board meeting, along with a staff consultation. The policies for approval by the Board have been scrutinised by the HR Advisor. A question **was** raised regarding Trade Unions, and if any staff were members – it is not thought **that** there are any.

Thanks were given to Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations for the work to develop the policies.

1. The Board **APPROVED** the six policies subject to comments and points raised during the discussion.
2. The Board **APPROVED** the updated Policy Timetable identifying when other policies **will** come to the Board to be approved.

2.3 NPPF consultation response

The Board discussed the **proposed** response to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) consultation in detail focusing in particular on the questions relating to the proposed revised policies on setting housing targets, on renewable energy, on the Green Belt and on the nature of the plan-led system.

There was a difference of **view** on the renewable energy policy, with some members looking for greater control **over** installations in the National Landscape and others seeking greater flexibility to **facilitate** a move to zero carbon energy, given the potential long-term impacts of climate **change** on the natural beauty of the area and the urgency of mitigation; officers noted a similar difference of view among the different National Landscape teams. A **compromise** was reached to continue with promoting a discretionary approach (as **set** out in the Management Plan and Renewable Energy Position Statement) in **which** proposals would be considered on the basis of their impacts on the special **qualities** of the National Landscape, but that the situation should be kept under review through the Management Plan.

1. The Board **APPROVED** the “direction of travel” for a submission in response to the consultation, subject to points raised in the discussion by the Board

2.4 Lighting Position Statement

Michael Stubbs, Planning Advisor, introduced the revised draft Lighting position statement, noting its format of an accessible recommended policy approach (the “model policies”) supported by detailed technical guidance.

Credit was given to Planning Committee for their engagement with developing the statement, especially to Cllr Charles Hussey and co-opted members Paul Hayes and Chris Hannington who had formed the statement’s working group. The Board offered its thanks to Michael Stubbs for his work on the document.

The Board asked officers to investigate strengthening the parts of the statement that related to impacts on biodiversity.

1. The Board **APPROVED** the content of both parts of the Lighting Position Statement, subject to strengthening references to biodiversity impacts.
2. The Board **AUTHORISED** officers to apply Chilterns National Landscape branding to the approved statement and rationalise the illustrations prior to publication.
3. The Board **AUTHORISED** officers to keep the technical appendices to the Lighting Position Statement under review and update technical matters as necessary without further Board approval, unless the review indicates that a changes to the model policies are necessary.

2.5 Constitution Review

The current constitution needs urgent review. The supplied paper was noted and referred to the Task and Finish Group (TFG) for further work.

3. The Board **APPROVED** the priorities for the review of the Constitution and **INSTRUCTED** officers, working with the Governance TFG, to develop the necessary amendments for subsequent approval by the Board.
4. The Board **APPROVED** the proposed revised structure for the Constitution.

2.5 Management Plan Review

Gemma Harper gave huge thanks to Matt Thomson and the team, for such a comprehensive assessment for the refresh of the Management Plan, and the changes to be made in its content for the 2025-30 plan.

The Board observed that changing “policies” to “actions” could comprise a significant change and would best be addressed through the next review. Similarly, the next review would represent a better opportunity to provide advice on the definition of “major” development. An observation about increasing the emphasis on regenerative farming practices was determined to be better addressed through the Nature Recovery Plan for the time being.

1. The Board **APPROVED** the outline of areas of the Plan considered to need amend and **MADE OBSERVATIONS**.
2. The Board **AUTHORISED** officers to continue with amendments, subject to the approval of the Management Plan Review Task and Finish Group, with final sign-off by the Board Chair.

2.7 Risk Register

Following feedback from the June Executive Committee meeting, the Risk Register has been updated and further improved. Board members are asked to forward any comments to the Chief Executive Officer via email, and the final version will be tabled for the December Board meeting.

1. The Board to **OFFER FEEDBACK** on the Risk Register.

24/25.27 Items for Noting/Information

1. Quarter 1 Finance Report

The Finance Officer, Graham Hurst, had provided the accounts for four months of the year, ending 31st July 2024. Overall, the Board received Income of £1,568,783 and had expenditure of £798,378 resulting in an excess of income of £770,404. 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:

- Income was £672k compared to budget of £295k. This is mainly due to receipt of £315k DEFRA funding in advance of expenditure. After adjusting for timing effects, the adjusted income is £306k and in line with expectations.
- Expenditure was £289k against budget of £292k so is in line with expectations.
- The Core surplus is £16k.

At the May Executive Committee meeting, it was agreed to establish a Finance Advisory Group, although due to the Committee meeting not being quorate, the decision was not officially approved. Members are invited to join. The Terms of Reference will be brought to the December Board meeting.

It was noted that contributions from Local Authorities are under budget. Thanks were given to Buckinghamshire Council, the largest contributor, who always pays its share and on time. A new Senior Finance Manager will be starting in October, and Graham Hurst will be reducing his hours. The Chair thanked him for all his work to date.

1. The Board **NOTED** the Chilterns Conservation Board annual accounts for the year ending 31st July 2024.

2. Quarter 1 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 April and June 2024:

- 59 delivery lines reported as progressing on track
- 26 delivery lines reported as being slightly delayed
- 7 delivery lines reported as being significantly delayed
- 10 delivery lines were not due to start work in Q1



The Chair thanked Andy Brock-Doyle for the report which is clearer to understand and thanked the team for the work contained within it.

1. The Board NOTED the Quarter 1 update

3. Funding Strategy Update

The Funding Pipeline is populated and regularly updated and reviewed by the Senior Management Team. The Chief Executive Officer gave credit to the whole team for the work that is carried out, as it takes a lot of time to put the bids together. Active efforts are being made to diversify and increase sources of funding, as there is still uncertainty over future funding from Defra.

1. The Board NOTED the update and OFFERED FEEDBACK.

4. Chief Executive Officer's Update

A comprehensive paper detailing the Chief Executive Officer's recent work had been circulated. Main areas of work included exploring new funding opportunities, especially green finance and the National Lottery Heritage Fund's (NLHF) new Landscape Connections grant programme, and collaborating with the National Landscapes Association on a number of areas.

The CEO flagged that Defra is shortly starting a recruitment campaign for Secretary of State appointments to the Board. She stressed the need to increase diversity on the Board, especially in light of a recent media article criticising the lack of diversity on National Park boards, pointing out that Conservation Boards have the same governance arrangements as National Parks. The Board has some influence on Defra appointments, and this links to the Board skills matrix mentioned previously, to ensure that any skills gaps can be filled.

The Boundary Review remains a key area of work, with a public consultation is expected early next year.

1. The Board NOTED the update

5. Chilterns National Landscape Forum

The proposed format of the Chilterns National Landscape Forum has evolved. It will be based on nine Thematic Working Groups which relate to the main headings within the Management Plan (eg Nature Recovery, Understanding and Enjoyment, Historic Environment etc). Each Thematic Group will be invited to nominate a representative which will make up the Forum. They will be invited to attend Board meetings and contribute expertise and knowledge to input to the CCB's wider strategic work. The proposed membership of these Thematic Groups is being finalised after which people will be invited to join the Forum.

24/25.28 Minutes and Recommendations of Committees

1. Executive Committee briefing draft notes (15.08.24)

The Chair advised that Hector Sants will be Chair of the Executive Committee, to be confirmed at the next meeting.

On

2. Planning Committee briefing draft notes (25.07.24)

Sue Rowland urged all members to attend the meetings to ensure that they are quorate. She also commented on the **workload** of Matt Thomson and is pleased that a Planning Officer is being recruited to **support** him.

1. The Board NOTED the draft Committee notes**24/25.29 Any Urgent Business**

- The Chair asked for any comments on the new format of the agenda to be sent to him.
- The Chief Executive Officer advised that she has been approached regarding a "Board Apprentice" scheme, where government organisations are encouraged to take on apprentices to **improve** diversity on Boards across all sectors. Gemma Harper said the scheme **had** worked well at JNCC, her employer, and volunteered to be a buddy if an apprentice is recruited..

24/25.30 Next Meeting

The next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 12th December at 10am, at the Gateway Offices, Aylesbury.

24/25.31 Meeting dates for 2025

To be finalised at the December Board meeting.

Future meeting dates:

| Planning Committee Meetings | Executive Committee Meetings | Board Meetings |
|--|--|---|
| Thu 17 th October 2024 @ 2pm Chinnor office | Thu 7 th November 2024 @ 2pm Chinnor office | Thu 12 th December @ 10am The Gateway, Aylesbury |

The meeting was closed at 16.20.

Following the meeting, a **presentation** by Prof. Kate Heppell, Head of Landscape and Neil Jackson, Conservation and Landscape Officer, was given to update the Board on the development of a Chilterns Nature Recovery Plan

The Chairman.....

Date...12.12.24

