



Chilterns National Landscape

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE of the Conservation Board for the
Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
HELD ON Wednesday 7th May 2025 at The Meeting Room, Chilterns Conservation Board,
90 Station Road, Chinnor OX39 4HA commencing at 11.00 AM.**

Present:

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Cllr Hector Sants | Board Member – Chair |
| Sue Rowlands | Board Member – online |
| Cllr Charles Hussey | Board Member |
| Cllr Louise Price | Board Member |
| Cllr Richard Newcombe | Board Member |
| Cllr Phillip Spicer | Board Member |
| Cllr John Griffin | Board Member |
| John Nicholls | Board Member – Chair of the Board |
| Richard Newcombe | Board Member |

In attendance:

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Elaine King | Chief Executive Officer |
| Andy Brock-Doyle | Head of Operations |
| Graham Hurst | Finance Officer |
| Matt Thomson | Head of Strategy & Planning and Deputy Monitoring Officer |
| Lorna Coldwell | Clerk to the Board and Minute taker |
| Kathryn Foster | Senior Finance Manager |
| Kate Heppell | Head of Landscape |
| Annette Weiss | Head of Engagement and Partnerships - online |

The Chair welcomed all present.

24/25.52 Standing Items

52.1 Apologies for absence

Paul Mains – Secretary of State.

52.2 Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

52.3 Chair's Announcements

No announcements from the Chair.

Cllr Richard Newcombe advised that, as he is not standing for re-election at Buckinghamshire Council, he will therefore be replaced after its Annual General Meeting.

Cllr Louise Price has been elected to Hertfordshire County Council and remains appointed to the Board by Three Rivers District Council.

HWL

52.4 Notice of Urgent Business

None.

52.5 Approval of Minutes of the previous meeting 24/02/25

The minutes of the meeting 24/02/25 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair. The Chair of the Board asked if papers can be presented to the next Executive Committee relating to minute 48.2, recommendation to identify any further functions to be performed by the Executive Committee.

52.6 Matters Arising

All items covered on the agenda.

52.7 Consideration of Motions Submitted by Members

None at this meeting.

52.8 Public Questions

No members of the public were present.

24/25.53 Items for Decision

53.1 Reserves Policy

The Senior Finance Manager, Kathryn Foster, advised that there is currently a brief Reserves Policy set out in the Constitution and that it would be useful to have a more comprehensive policy to be included in the new Financial Regulations, which are being drafted. Based on assessments that have been carried out, it is proposed that an overall Unrestricted Reserves comprises a new consolidated General Reserve of £338k (combining the current General Reserve and Revenue Reserve) and a separate Development Reserve of £258k.

- 1. The Executive Committee APPROVED the proposed new framework for the Reserves Policy and that this be incorporated into the Financial Regulations being updated as part of the review of the Constitution**
- 2. The Executive Committee APPROVED the consolidation of reserves into General Reserve for recommendations to the Board.**

53.2 2025/26 Budget

The Senior Finance Manager, Kathryn Foster, had provided a paper to set out the proposed final 2025-26 Core Budget. This budget envelope shows a £97k deficit for 2025-26 and proposes to use the current 2024-25 year surplus, estimated to be £111k, to fund the deficit. The anticipated position after two years is a surplus of £14k and relieves pressure on reserves to fund the deficit. The guidance from Defra on the use of the allocated £348k Capital (CDEL) funds is being assessed. There is still uncertainty over how those funds will be used. It is hoped that the forthcoming three-year settlement from Defra will make future budget setting easier going forward.

- 1. The Executive Committee APPROVED the final 2025/26 Budget for recommendation to the Board**
- 2. The Executive Committee APPROVED the use of reserves towards the organisational transformation work that are not deemed to be eligible for Defra CDEL funding for recommendation to the Board.**

53.3 Financial Approvals

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The Senior Finance Manager, Kathryn Foster, had provided a paper detailing the need to make changes to the Financial Approvals. This is an interim measure whilst the Constitution review and updating of Financial Regulations is being undertaken. The increased limits proposed better reflect inflationary costs and the current economic reality, making the approval of payments more efficient.

- 1. The Executive Committee APPROVED the changes to Financial Approvals effective from 01/04/25 for recommendation to the Board.**
- 2. The Executive Committee NOTED that these changes will be incorporated into the Financial Regulations as part of the updated Constitution**

53.4 Local Authority Engagement Advisory Group

The Chair of the Board, John Nicholls, proposed to establish an informal working group to address working relations with Local Authorities within the Chilterns National Landscape. The group would meet infrequently to discuss items set out in his paper, including how to improve the relationship between the organisation and Local Authorities. Board members Cllr Richard Newcombe, Gemma Harper, Cllr Louise Price, and Cllr Hector Sants have volunteered to take part in the working group, which will also involve the CEO Elaine King and the Senior Finance Manager, Kathryn Foster. Similar work with town and parish councils would be conducted later.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer, Matt Thomson, advised that it would be prudent to co-opt Cllr Newcombe to the Executive Committee when he ceases to be a Board member, which will be addressed before the next meeting.

- 1. The Executive Committee APPROVED the establishing of a group and IDENTIFIED participants**

53.5 Exclusion of the Public and Press

The Head of Strategy & Planning and Deputy Monitoring Officer, Matt Thomson, advised that the procedure for a confidential session is being reviewed to enable a proportionate approach. As there were no members of the public present, it was proposed to leave the video and sound of the Zoom call enabled, which was unanimously agreed. The call is not recorded. It was resolved to exclude the public, of which there were none present.

- 1. The Executive Committee APPROVED the motion to exclude any members of the public and press**

53.6 Natural England's Boundary Review project (confidential paper)

This agenda item was discussed in closed session because, while Natural England had advised the CCB's Chief Executive in April that it would be cancelling its Chilterns Boundary Review project, the announcement was not expected to be made public until after the Executive Committee meeting. The paper sought to inform the Committee, advise it on current and planned actions and seeking observations and advice from the Committee.

The Committee expressed its significant concern at the cancellation of the work, not least due to the lost opportunities and the significant investment of time and resources by the Chilterns National Landscape team and various stakeholders already expended on the project. Members questioned whether the decision was connected to the government's apparent drive for economic growth at all costs.



The CCB's CEO and Chair have written to Natural England's CEO to make clear the CCB's deep disappointment at the decision and to request assurances that the review can be resumed in the future.

Further actions include drafting a statement for publication at the time Natural England announces its decision, outlining the CCB's concerns and highlighting the potential environmental implications of this decision. The CEO will also prepare a paper for the next Executive Committee meeting, with an update and next steps.

1. The Executive Committee NOTED the paper and its contents in closed session

Update: Natural England announced its decision on 9th June. The CCB responded with a [statement](#) published on its website and circulated to key stakeholders and partners, including MPs and local authorities. The CCB is now able to publish the confidential paper, and this is included in an updated set of papers for this Executive Committee meeting, posted [here](#) on the CCB's website.

24/25.54 Items for Noting/Information

54.1. Quarter 4 Finance Report

The Senior Finance Manager, Kathryn Foster, reported on the accounts to 31st March 2025.

Core profit was £111k for the year to 31st March 2025, against a budgeted surplus of £10k. This is mainly due to better than anticipated interest income which will continue next financial year, lower planning consultancy costs, and legal contract review being deferred into financial year 2025-26.

An additional £114k capital funds were received from Defra for 2024-25. These monies have been spent on Core and Project activities, including a drone, water monitoring equipment and IT investments. Project income is £3.277m, costs are £3.572m and there is a deficit on projects of £295k overall.

The year-end review and reconciliation work are being undertaken.

1. The Committee NOTED the financial position as of 31st March 2025

54.2. Quarter 4 Delivery Report

The Head of Operations, Andy Brock-Doyle, had circulated a paper to update the Executive Committee on the progress of the Chilterns National Landscape team between January and March 2025 against the financial year 2024-25 Delivery Plan. In Q4 (January-March 2025):

- 51 (49 in Q3) delivery lines reported as completed or progressing on track (51) (50%)
- 24 (29 in Q3) delivery lines reported as being slightly delayed / slightly limited in effectiveness (23%)
- 13 (15 in Q3) delivery lines reported as being significantly delayed / significantly limited in effectiveness (13%)
- 15 (9 in Q3) delivery lines have been postponed for reconsidering in FY25-26 planning (15%)

1. The Committee NOTED the Q4 Delivery report

54.3. Funding Strategy

The Executive Committee was provided with a paper detailing the progress on delivering the Funding Strategy by Elaine King, Chief Executive Officer, which was taken as read. Whilst overall funding from Defra has increased this year, revenue funding has declined in real terms because of inflation, increases to employer National Insurance contributions, and new requirements being placed on



National Landscapes by the government. The three-year settlement from Defra is expected in June/July. The CCB continues to press Defra to recognise the additional funding challenges of conservation boards, and to contribute its views on a fairer funding formula.

The CEO and members of the team are also actively exploring, with some success, securing funds from other sources. She gave thanks to the team for their efforts.

1. The Committee NOTED the Funding Strategy update

54.4. Chief Executive Officer's Update

A comprehensive paper was circulated by the CEO, which was taken as read with highlights including:

- The SLT continue to oversee the organisation's activities, planning, monitoring, and delivering across a wide range of areas.
- The public consultation for the Nature Recovery Plan will commence on 6th May.
- Support has been given to Defra in the recruitment campaign for new Secretary of State Board members, including ensuring succession planning amongst Board members.
- Final adjustments are being made to the Management Plan refresh, the final version of which will be taken to the next Board meeting on 19th June.
- Collaboration with the National Landscapes Association and other Protected Landscapes continues on a range of areas including funding arrangements, implementing Defra's biodiversity targets, responding to the draft Land Use Framework and implementing s85 of the CRoW Act (as amended by s245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act).
- Following up on the staff engagement survey including establishing two focus groups, one on IT and Information Management, the other on improving the office environment. Work on the latter has included replacing the outside footpath, improving external lighting, purchasing new equipment and improving the office environment for staff, such as standing desks and new kitchen items.

1. The Committee NOTED the CEO's update

24/25.55 Any Urgent Business

None, all items covered in the agenda.

Cllr John Griffin wished to flag that, whilst on the Risk Assessment already, cyber security is a big topic currently in the media. The Head of Operations, Andy Brock-Doyle, confirmed that information management is being addressed, including conversations with the CCB's IT provider, who are happy with the current system in place.

24/25.56. Next Executive Committee meeting

Tuesday 9th September 2025 at 10am.

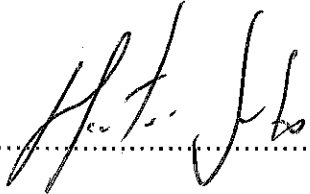
Further meeting Dates:

| Planning Committee | Executive Committee | Board |
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| | | Thursday 19 th June, 10am Location tbc |

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| | Tuesday 9 th September, 10am Chinnor Village Centre | Thursday 25 th September, 10am Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury |
| Thursday 23 rd October, 10am Chinnor Office | Thursday 13 th November, 10am Chinnor Village Centre | Thursday 11 th December, 10am Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury |

The meeting was closed at 12.52.

The Chair.....



Date.....

9/09/25