



Chilterns National Landscape

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE of the Chilterns Conservation
Board for the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
HELD ON Thursday 7th November 2024 in The Chilterns Room, the Village Centre, Chinnor
OX39 4DH commencing at 2.00 PM.**

Present:

John Nicholls	Board Member – Chair of the Board
Cllr Charles Hussey	Board Member
Paul Mainds	Board Member
Cllr Hector Sants	Board Member
Cllr Louise Price	Board Member
Cllr Richard Newcombe	Board Member
Geeta Ludhra	Board Member
Cllr Sue Rowland	Board Member – online
Cllr Phillip Spicer	Board Member – online (part)

In attendance:

Elaine King	Chief Executive Officer
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
Annette Weiss	Head of Engagement and Partnerships – online

The Chair welcomed all present after introductions.

24/25.27. Election of Chair

Cllr Hector Sants was proposed and seconded as Executive Committee Chair for 2024/25.
Cllr Louise Price was proposed and seconded as Executive Committee Vice-Chair for 2024/25.

Cllr Sants took over as Chair of the meeting.

24/25.28 Apologies for absence

Cllr John Griffin – Parish Councils
Professor Kate Heppell, Head of Landscape – Chilterns National Landscape
Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations – Chilterns National Landscape

24/25.29. Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

24/25.30. Chair's Announcements

None at this meeting. Cllr Sants welcomed any feedback from members at any time regarding any matter.

24/25.31. Notice of Urgent Business

None.

HWK

24/25.32. Approval of Minutes of the previous meeting 15/08/24

The minutes of the meeting 15/08/24 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

24/25.33. Matters Arising

All items covered on the agenda.

24/25.34. Consideration of Motions Submitted by Members

None at this meeting.

24/25.35. Public Questions

No members of the public were present.

24/25.36. Items for Decision

None at this meeting.

24/25.37. Items for Noting/Information**37.1. Quarter 2 Finance Report**

The Finance Officer, Graham Hurst, reported on the accounts to 30th September 2024.

1. Total income was £1,773,179 and total expenditure was £1,411,195. This excess is not "profit" but results in the timing differences between receiving income in advance of expenditure.
2. The CCB core finances show it is operating with its budget.
3. Core income, adjusted for timing differences, was £484k which compares to budget of £443k resulting in a surplus of £41k. The main contributors to this surplus are:
 - unbudgeted project income of £22k;
 - Defra Access grant income of £13k which is used to offset expenditure incurred;
 - interest received of £5k, which is due to higher than budgeted interest rates.
4. Income from projects for the four months to September was £1,048k and project expenditure was £980k resulting in a £68k surplus arising from the timing effect of receiving income in advance of expenditure. In particular, the Chess Smarter Water Catchment Project received a total of £658k, largely funded by Thames Water.

The Finance Officer commented that the Finance Advisory Group met on 17th September and discussed banking and investment arrangements, CCSP overhead recharges and reforecasts and HR support. The next meeting is scheduled for November. More members are needed for the group, and all are invited to join. The newly appointed Senior Finance Manager, Kathryn Foster will be looking at the budget for next financial year and a re-forecast to the end of this financial year. The recent announcement regarding increases in employer NI payments has led to some reports suggesting that the increase did not apply to public bodies. This is incorrect, all public bodies have to comply with the NI legislation so are affected by the increase, but the effect has been mitigated by the large increases in budgets given to the public sector. It is unknown whether DEFRA will be increasing National Landscapes funding to help mitigate the increase in costs.

It was confirmed that the pension invoice received from Buckinghamshire Council discussed at the previous Executive Committee meeting has been paid, and the situation would arise again if any other pensions were to be taken earlier than retirement age.

A question was asked regarding Local Authority contributions, some of which are outstanding although all were received last financial year. It was noted that Buckinghamshire Council always pay swiftly. It was agreed to write to all Local Authorities detailing what work the Chilterns National Landscape team



achieve with the help of the contributions, and what responsibilities would fall to the Local Authority if the statutory requirements were not fulfilled by the team with thanks given where appropriate.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the Financial Position at year end on 30th September 2024.**
- 2. It was AGREED for the CEO to write to Local Authorities regarding contributions**

37.2. Quarter 2 Delivery Report

The Chief Executive Officer, Elaine King, had circulated a paper to update the Executive Committee on the progress of the Chilterns National Landscape team between July and September against the financial year 2024/25 Delivery Plan. The amount of work being undertaken is impressive, and whilst some items have slipped on the timeline the recent recruitment of the Senior Finance Manager and Lucy Dowson, the Operational Effectiveness Support Officer means that this will improve, and Q3 is expected to be more aligned with the planned timeframe.

Natural England have said this week they expect public consultation for the Boundary Review to take place in March/April 2025. It is likely that capacity issues are causing the delays, the CEO will speak with Natural England as staff and Board Member hours are being put into the project.

Full explanations by staff were given for any items that are "red" in the delivery report, and the Senior Management Team are continually assessing prioritisation and balance of workloads for all staff.

The staff survey results are in the process of being analysed and a report will be given to the Board in due course.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the Q2 Delivery report and OFFERED FEEDBACK**

37.3. Funding Strategy Update

The Executive Committee was provided with a paper detailing progress on delivering the Funding Strategy. One of the key issues facing all protected landscapes is uncertainty over future government funding. There are concerns that funding in future years will not increase in line with inflation or reflect the increasing requirements being placed on protected landscapes by the government. It is unlikely that the settlement for 2025/26 will be known until March or April 2025, which means some assumptions will need to be made for budget forecasting. Diversifying sources of funding is important, whilst ensuring that any "compensation money" received adheres to ethical codes. Members of the team continue to explore the opportunities offered by green finance, which includes discussions with the National Landscape Association.

- 1. The Committee NOTED and OFFERED FEEDBACK on the Funding Strategy update**

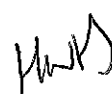
37.4. Chief Executive Officer's Update

A comprehensive paper was circulated by the CEO, with highlights including:

- 3 new members of staff have been recruited
- Advertising for a Planning Officer is ongoing
- The Boundary Review Team continue to support Natural England as it explores an extension to the Chilterns AONB boundary
- The CEO continues to meet with external stakeholders to engage with external stakeholder parties
- The Chalk, Cherries and Chairs Project is shortlisted for a Buckinghamshire Culture award, and has received much positive feedback

The Risk Register will be discussed at the December Board meeting, the CEO welcomes any comments for any adjustments to be made as necessary.

The Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson gave an update on the "Luton Rising" application at Luton Airport. Further urgent representations were submitted to the Secretary of State that make it clear that Chilterns National Landscape do not believe that the airport is able to meet the Section 85



obligation, and that there are no ways to mitigate the harm to the AONB the expansion will cause. Matt Thomson and John Nicholls, Chair of the Board both gave apologies to Cllr Sue Rowland, Chair of the Planning Committee for not sending the final comments to her for review before submitting to the Secretary of State. A copy will be supplied to her.

1. The Committee NOTED the CEOs update and PROVIDED FEEDBACK

37.5. HR Strategy Update; Strategy, Policies and HR Advisory Group (HRAG)

An update was provided to the Executive Committee on progress with delivering the HR Strategy Implementation Plan for 2024/25. A comprehensive update was provided to the Board at the meeting on 19th September, where six policies were approved. Since then then development and approval of HR policies has progressed in line with the agreed timetable. 4 more are with the HRAG for review since 1st November and brought to the Board for approval in December. A further 6 policies will be submitted to the HRAG on 14th November for recommendation for approval at the December Board meeting. A staff engagement survey has been circulated to the staff team, the anonymous results have been collated by the HR Advisor and will be reviewed by the Senior Management Team, shared with the staff team with a view to develop an action plan to address the feedback. This will be shared with the HRAG in due course.

1. The Committee NOTED the HR Strategy update and OFFERED FEEDBACK

24/25.38. Any Urgent Business

None, all items covered in the agenda.

24/25.39. Next Executive Committee meeting

It will be discussed at the December Board meeting the number of meetings annually going forward. It is likely that Board meetings decrease to 3 full meetings, with a 4th meeting more for strategy and site visits. A significant amount of staff time is taken up with preparing papers for meetings. A discussion ensued around Executive Committee meetings, and how having 4 aligns with financial reporting on a quarterly basis. It was suggested it would be helpful to plan a timetable for an annual work programme of items that need to be discussed at each quarterly meeting.

The Executive Committee meeting dates for 2025 will be confirmed at the December Board meeting, the Senior Management Team will determine potential dates.

Further meeting Dates:

Planning Committee	Executive Committee	Board
		Thu 12 th December @ 10am The Gateway, Buckinghamshire Council Offices, Aylesbury (TBC)

The meeting was closed at 15.38

The Chair.....

Date 29/2/25