



Chilterns National Landscape

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

Due to the extreme heat and the Red Weather Alert issued by the Met Office, the meeting was held online via Teams on Thursday 25th June 2026 at 10.00am

MEMBERS PRESENT

Appointed by Local Authorities

Cllr Louise Price (Chair)
Cllr Val Bryant
Cllr James Norman
Cllr Justine Fulford
Cllr Gavin McLauchlan
Cllr Caroline Smith-Wright
Cllr Kathryn Gibbon
Cllr Greg Smith
Cllr Adrian England

Appointing Body

Three Rivers District Council
North Hertfordshire Council
South Oxfordshire District Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Oxfordshire County Council
Hertfordshire County Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Dacorum Borough Council

Appointed by the Secretary of State

Simon Mortimer	Secretary of State
Juliet Vickery	Secretary of State
Jen Morgan	Secretary of State
Nicola Thomas	Secretary of State
Baljit Dhillon	Secretary of State
Catherine Moncrieff	Secretary of State
Gemma Harper	Secretary of State

Elected by Parish Councils

Cllr John Harfield	Bedfordshire Parish Councils
Cllr Charles Hussey	Buckinghamshire Parish Council
Cllr Hector Sants	Buckinghamshire Parish Council
Cllr Sue Rowland	Oxfordshire Parish Councils

CCB Staff

Elaine King	Chief Executive Officer; Head of Paid Service
Matt Thomson	Head of Planning; Monitoring Officer
Andy Brock-Doyle	Head of Operations
Kathryn Foster	Senior Finance Manager; Section 151 Officer
Annette Weiss	Head of Engagement and Partnerships
Kate Heppell	Head of Landscape
Lorna Coldwell	Clerk to the Board
Ruth Staples-Rolfe	Mend the Gap Project Manager
Eloise Small	Administration Officer

Other

Anna Oliveri
Peter Phippen
Dave Keeley

Natural England
The Chiltern Society
Oxfordshire County Council

No members of the public were present.

Due to the extraordinary nature of the meeting being held online, the meeting was not quorate as the Local Government Act 1972 requires members to be physically present. Therefore, no formal resolutions were made but the Board discussed agenda items, reviewed reports and reached an informal consensus. Decisions were made 'in principle', for subsequent ratification at the next Board meeting; hence **all resolutions recorded in these minutes should be taken as being 'in principle' only**. Any decision required due to time constraints could be made under the Urgency Procedure (article 2.29 of the Code of Governance in the Constitution 2025).

Prior to the meeting, Matt Thomson, Head of Planning, in the role of Monitoring Officer, had circulated a paper to all Board Members with details explaining this approach.

26/27.1 Standing Items

1.1 Election of Chair and Deputy Chair (AGM item)

It was agreed unanimously for Cllr Louise Price be re-elected as Chair of the Board, and for Cllr Hector Sants to be re-elected as Deputy Chair, also unanimously.

1.2 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from:

Board Members

Cllr Philip Spicer, Central Bedfordshire Council
Matthew Stanton, Secretary of State
Cllr John Griffin, Oxfordshire Parish Councils

Officers

None.

Guests

Tom Beeston, The Chiltern Society

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 26.03.26 were approved as a true record and signed.

1.6 Matters Arising

None.



1.7 Considerations of motions submitted by members

No motions were submitted. The Chair advised that members could submit any motions for discussion and agreement by the Board when they feel it necessary. A document will be circulated by Matt Thomson, Head of Planning, setting out the procedure for this. In practice, a member should advise the Chair of the Board and the Chief Executive Officer and the item can be added to a future agenda.

1.8 Public Question Time.

No public present.

1.9 Resolution to Adjourn the meeting

A resolution was passed to adjourn the meeting for a presentation to the Board "Planning for Climate Change across the Chilterns National Landscape" by Dr Gemma Harper and Professor Kate Heppell.

The session comprised a highly informative presentation and discussion, with many questions and observations from Board members. Members thanked both Gemma and Kate for their clear and thought-provoking presentations on this important subject. It was agreed that the Board will discuss the subject more at future meetings, especially development of the Climate Adaptation Plan for the Chilterns National Landscape.

The meeting was reconvened.

1.10 Chair's Announcements

None to be made.

26/27.2 Items for Decision

2.1 Finance Report

Kathryn Foster, Senior Finance Manager, had provided a comprehensive paper detailing the current financial position of the organisation. The overall combined deficit was £577,790. This comprised a Core Surplus of £842 and a Project deficit of £578,632.

The Core result exceeded forecast, which originally predicted a deficit of £118,000. This improved position is a result of better interest income and improved income recovery from projects and CDEL alongside staffing cost savings. The Project deficit results from spending on projects that hold reserves in advance. Project reserves are £3 million at the end of the financial year, with £762,000 unrestricted Core reserves.

The Reserves Policy details a minimum amount that should be held, based on various criteria. The Senior Finance Manager suggests retaining a higher level of reserves due to the forecasted deficit in future years. As a publicly funded body, it is difficult to increase reserves annually as Defra issues grants with the stipulation that all funds be used in-year.

The Internal Audit completed as part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return made some recommendations, including the need for an update to the Financial Regulations and member allowances, and to ensure the Risk Register is reviewed every 12 months. The final report will be presented at a subsequent Board meeting. The AGAR will need to be authorised via the Urgency Procedure, due to legislative requirements.



It was noted that some lines in the budget had sizeable variances, such as consultancy. The variance on consultancy was partly due to a reallocation from staff costs (planning officer not recruited and planning consultancy being used instead) and transformation costs (originally planned to be funded from reserves but covered in-year due to savings overall versus budget).

1. **The Board APPROVED the Annual Accounts for the year end 31st March 2026**
2. **The Board APPROVED the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2025-26, with signing of the documents to be completed via post under the Urgency Procedure**
3. **The Board APPROVED the internal audit plan for 2025-26**
4. **The Board NOTED the initial findings from the internal audit**

2.2 FY 2026/27 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 26/03/26. The budget envelope was approved by the Board at the March meeting, with some alterations made following discussion at the Executive Committee meeting in May. Additional funding from Defra has resulted in a break-even budget, rather than the £58,000 deficit as previously expected.

The proposed budgets for subsequent financial years remain as they were, with no significant alterations. Officers are looking for additional funding to plug the deficit, and cost saving measures such as the VAT review being carried out, along with utilising different funding streams from Defra. Updated forecasts will be provided at the December Board meeting.

1. **The Board APPROVED the final budget for 2026/27**

2.3 FY 2026/27 Annual Delivery Plan

Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations, had provided a comprehensive paper to update the Board on the strategic & annual planning that had taken place this year, and to seek approval for the Annual Delivery Plan (FY26-27).

A significant amount of work has been carried out with the Executive Committee and with managers throughout the organisation to ensure alignment. A four-year plan (FY2026-30) will sit alongside the Management Plan (which is for all stakeholders to deliver) and focusses on what the Chilterns National Landscape (CNL) Team will specifically deliver over the next four years.

Five priority outcomes have been identified and agreed for the organisation for the next four years. Partnership working and improved data and evidence have been given increased visibility.

Additional work is required, and any significant changes to the Plan will be brought back to the Board for approval at a future meeting. In the meantime, the Annual Delivery Plan presented to the Board has also been submitted to Defra as required for our funding arrangements.

The plan comprises 20 key delivery areas which will be reported to the Executive Committee. This will reduce the amount of data and ensure information is more accessible and focused more clearly where important delivery lines are delayed. The development of KPIs and measuring of success will be a focus for the Senior Leadership Team in the upcoming year. This will develop around other monitoring and evaluation requirements to ensure an efficient framework.



The Head of Operations confirmed that, whilst always challenging, capacity is largely in place to ensure planned work can be delivered, especially in relation to projects, with capacity issues focused on a limited number of roles. Difficult decisions have already been made to stop or postpone some items, with more work being required on prioritisation.

The recruitment of a new Head of Programmes and the new Office Administrator will also have a positive impact on the capacity of the team.

1. **The Board NOTED the work undertaken, including with the Executive Committee and managers to define priority outcomes and key delivery areas for the next four years in line with the Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan**
2. **The Board APPROVED the Annual Delivery Plan for 2026-27, subject to further discussion with the Executive Committee and any substantive changes to be approved at a future Board meeting**
3. **The Board emphasised the need to ensure that work to address capacity is completed and reported back to the Executive Committee**

2.4 Evolution of the Planning Committee

Matt Thomson, Head of Planning, discussed the review of the future of the Planning Committee. He had circulated proposed Terms of Reference for a Planning Advisory Group (PAG) that helps to navigate obstacles placed by legislation - such as the need to quorate and meet in person.

Cllr Rowland, Chair of the Planning Committee, advised that, whilst she feels disappointed at the need to move in this direction, it is the best way from a practical point of view and hopes it will ultimately strengthen the planning function and encourage all Board members to contemplate what they can contribute to the PAG, as broad and diverse perspectives would be welcomed and people are easier to accommodate in a hybrid meeting format.

1. **The Board RESOLVED to dissolve the Planning Committee and convene a new Planning Advisory Group, comprising the current Board members and co-opted members of the Planning Committee**
2. **The Board APPROVED the proposed Terms of Reference with no alterations**
3. **The Board APPROVED the consequent changes to the Constitution with no alterations**

2.5 Appointment of Members to Committees and Advisory Groups

It was confirmed membership of the Executive Committee as follows:

Local Authorities:

Cllr Gavin Mclauchlan

Cllr Louise Price

Cllr Philip Spicer

Vacancy

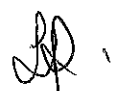
Secretary of State:

Baljit Dhillon

Matthew Stanton

Nicola Thomas

Parish Councils:



Board Meeting

Thursday 25th June 2026

Cllr Hector Sants (Chair)
Cllr John Griffin (Deputy Chair)

Non-Voting Observers:
Cllr Sue Rowland (Parish Councils)
Cllr Charles Hussey (Parish Councils)

It was confirmed membership of the Planning Advisory Group as follows:

Local Authorities:
Cllr Robert Carington
Cllr James Norman
Cllr Louise Price (Deputy Chair)
Cllr Philip Spicer

Secretary of State:
Simon Mortimer
Matthew Stanton
Vacancy

Parish Councils:
Cllr Sue Rowland (Chair)
Cllr Charles Hussey

Non-Voting Co-opted Members:
Paul Hayes
Chris Hannington

Matt Thomson, Head of Planning, encouraged local authority members to attend an Executive Committee meeting as a guest, or to speak with an existing member. Cllr Gibbon asked for further information as to what membership entails.

Jen Morgan offered to sit on the newly formed PAG, with other Secretary of State members expressing an interest in the future. Again, all Board members were invited to attend a meeting as a guest. Expressions of interest for other advisory groups will be circulated to those Chairs imminently.

1. **The Board APPOINTED Secretary of State appointee Jen Morgan to fill the vacancy on Planning Advisory Group**
2. **The Board NOTED expressions of interest in joining advisory groups for later confirmation**

2.6 Lessons Learned from the Management Plan Review

Matt Thomson, Head of Planning, had circulated a paper that was taken as read. Key lessons included learning about resourcing requirements and building those needs into planning development of the next plan. A larger steering group including external stakeholders would be beneficial, as well as increasing engagement with stakeholders and highlighting the legislative necessity of them participating.



1. The Board NOTED the update

2.9 Future Meeting Dates

Elaine King, the Chief Executive Officer, advised that dates were being brought to Board Members earlier than previous years to enable planning in busy diaries. The dates were proposed as:

Executive Committee	Board
Thursday 25 th February 2027	Thursday 25 th March 2027
Thursday 20 th May 2027	Thursday 17 th June 2027
Thursday 2 nd September 2027	Thursday 30 th September 2027
Thursday 18 th November 2027	Thursday 9 th December 2027

Dates for the Planning Advisory Group will be circulated to PAG members for them to agree.

1. The Board APPROVED the calendar of Board and Executive Committee meetings as above
2. Officers will circulate dates for an inaugural Planning Advisory Group meeting in July 2026

26/27.3 Items for Noting/Information

3.1 Report on Nature Recovery and Climate Adaptation Plan

Kate Heppell, Head of Landscape, updated the Board with the progress on the Nature Recovery Plan and the next steps for the Climate Adaptation Plan. Work continues with external partners and stakeholders, along with the team of the Chilterns National Landscape. Research has been commissioned for a systematic review of scientific and policy literature, climate modelling to assess impacts on "landscape character", and visualisations of potential future landscapes. Findings will be presented at the National Landscape Association Conference in July 2026.

[Nature Recovery Plan | Chilterns National Landscape](#)

1. The Board NOTED the update

3.2 EDI Update

Annette Weiss, Head of Engagement and Partnerships, alongside Baljit Dhillon, EDI Advisory Group Co-Chair, reported that upskilling all staff in EDI, through further training and development is a focus for the group. A range of EDI training for both staff and Board members has been provided over the last 2-3 years and is part of a continuous and ongoing development programme.

There will be a short period of reflection at the October Board meeting, to facilitate discussions on how the Board supports constructive challenges and to reflect on what will help members to make the best decisions and contribute in a meaningful way.

1. The Board NOTED the update and APPROVED the inclusion of a facilitated discussion at the October board meeting

3.3 Planning Function Update

Matt Thomson, Head of Planning, updated the Board on the planning function activities in Q1 of 2026-27. Monthly planning briefings are being circulated to members, and he welcomes any feedback on this increased communication. There are two consultant Planning Advisers, both part time, alongside the Head of Planning, who amongst other things respond to consultations on

The 'strategy' role on Senior Leadership Team (SLT) had been amended to share responsibility for development of the Management Plan more broadly, led by the CEO, to address capacity and prioritisation issues.

Members were asked to consider joining the Task and Finish Group for the next review, which will be gearing up next year for a much more comprehensive review.

Thanks were given to members of the Management Plan Review Task and Finish Group and other contributors:

Gemma Harper (Chair)

Simon Mortimer

Hector Sants

Joe Stewart (former member)

Matt Thomson

Elaine King

Kate Heppell

Annette Weiss

Vicki Pearce

Anna Oliveri (Natural England)

Stephen Rudd (Natural England)

Hazel McDowell (Natural England)

All individual and organisations who responded to consultations.

1. **The Board NOTED the contents of the paper**
2. **The Board GAVE THANKS to all mentioned for their contributions to the successful refresh of the Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan**

2.7 Risk Register

The Chief Executive Officer, Elaine King, had circulated a paper in advance. She commented that the organisation is in a much stronger position than when the last Risk Register was reviewed, however we cannot be complacent. The register has been updated in line with the new Management Plan, strategic planning, the budget and feedback from Board Members. The document consolidates risks, strengthens links to strategic priorities and provides the Board with clearer oversight. It was noted that this Risk Register relates to the Chilterns National Landscape organisation, and not the landscape itself. In answer to a question, she confirmed that GDPR and Privacy risks are addressed; for example, a Data Protection Officer has been appointed.

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

2.8 Chief Executive Officer Update

The Chief Executive Officer had provided an update of work carried out since the previous Board meeting in March 2026. Highlights included:

- The Senior Leadership Team continues to oversee the organisation's operations, and strategic priorities, meeting weekly. There has been a significant focus on ongoing budget development and business planning, through to 2030.
- Engaging with MPs and Local Authorities on a range of subjects.
- The results from the staff engagement survey conducted in October 2025 continue to be taken forward with specific measures put in place



national and local planning policy, planning applications and major infrastructure proposals, working with other National Landscapes and the National Landscapes Association where appropriate.

1. The Board NOTED the update

26/27.4 Minutes and Recommendations of Committees

4.1 Executive Committee Draft minutes (19.05.26)

4.2 Planning Committee Draft minutes (30.04.26)

1. The Board NOTED the draft Committee minutes

26/27.5 Any Urgent Business

None.

26/27.6 Handover to new Chair (if applicable)

CLr Price remained as Chair to the Board, therefore no handover was necessary.

26/27.7 Next Meeting

The next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 1st October 2026, 10am at Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury.

Future meeting dates:

Planning Committee Meetings	Executive Committee Meetings	Board Meetings
Inaugural Planning Advisory Group meeting - TBC	Tuesday 1 st September, 10am, The Village Centre, Chinnor	Thursday 1 st October 10am, Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury
Thursday 29 th October 2026, 10am CCB Offices, Chinnor	Thursday 19 th November, 10am, The Village Centre, Chinnor	Thursday 10 th December, 10am, Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury

The meeting was closed at 13.21.

The Chairman.....

Date..... 1/10/26.

SP

