



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILTERN CONSERVATION BOARD HELD ON WEDNESDAY 27TH MARCH 2013 AT RESTORE HOPE DAIRY, LATIMER HP5 1TU AT 10.00AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.50 PM.

PRESENT:

Member	Appointing Body
Appointed by Local Authorities	
Cllr Marion Mustoe	Central Bedfordshire Council
Cllr David Nimmo-Smith	Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr Brian Norman	Three Rivers District Council
Cllr Richard Pushman	Buckinghamshire County Council
Cllr Ian Reay	Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr Chris Richards	Aylesbury Vale District Council
Cllr Jeremy Ryman	Chiltern District Council
Cllr Dave Taylor	Luton Borough Council
Cllr Alan Walters	South Buckinghamshire District Council

Appointed by the Secretary of State	
Dr. Heather Barrett-Mold	Secretary of State
Mike Fox (Chairman)	Secretary of State
Dr. Simon Mortimer	Secretary of State
Ray Payne	Secretary of State
Helen Tuffs	Secretary of State
John Willson	Secretary of State

Elected by Parish Councils	
Cllr Mary Goldsmith	Bedfordshire
Cllr John Griffin	Oxfordshire
Cllr Margaret Jarrett	Hertfordshire
Cllr Shirley Judges	Buckinghamshire
Cllr Barbara Wallis	Buckinghamshire
Cllr Julia Wells	Oxfordshire

Officers	
Deirdre Hansen	Clerk to the Board
Steve Rodrick	CCB Chief Officer
Chris Smith	CCB Finance Officer
Colin White	CCB Planning Officer

1 member of the public was present : Alison Doggett

12/13.52. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Anna Babcock, Cllr. David Barnard, Cllr. Roger Emmett, Bettina Kirkham and Cllr. Bill Storey.

12/13.53. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

12/13.54. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held 24th January 2013 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

12/13.55. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising not on the agenda.

12/13.56. Public Question time

The Chairman welcomed Alison Doggett, whose appointment to the Board will commence 1st April 2013.

12/13.57. Report from the Executive Committee

The Chief Officer reported the matters discussed and decisions taken, by the Executive Committee under delegated powers.

At its meeting on 5th March 2013 the Executive Committee:

1. Received and approved a finance report for the period April-Jan 2013.
2. Approved discretions to the Pension Policies.
3. Discussed and approved the Draft Budget for 2013-14.
4. Discussed the Medium Term Financial Plan.
5. Reviewed and approved the Treasury Management Strategy.
6. Received and discussed the review of Members' allowances.
7. Reviewed and approved the Risk Register.
8. Discussed the report on High Speed 2.

- 1. The Board NOTED the matters discussed by the Executive Committee and the decisions made under delegated authority.**

12/13.58 Report from the Planning Committee.

Members received the report from the Planning Officer, the purpose of which was to bring to the attention of the Board the items considered by the Planning Committee on 14th February 2013 and the decisions taken under delegated powers. The following were noted:

1. High Speed 2 update
2. AONB Management Plan Review
3. Feedback from events
4. Strategic Growth Plans and LEPs
5. Development Plan Responses
6. Planning applications update.

Some discussion took place on the matters reported.

The Planning Officer also reported that he had made two applications to Scottish and Southern Electricity plc for the undergrounding of electrical cabling. The application for undergrounding at Cobstone Mill, above Turville, had been successful.

- 1. The Board NOTED the report from the Planning Committee.**

12/13.59 Draft Budget 2013-14.

The Finance Officer presented the draft budget 2013-14 as approved by the Executive Committee for consideration and adoption by the board.

1. Core expenditure of £539,310 will be covered for 80% by the Defra grant, the balance coming from local authorities, town and parish councils and a proportion of the Board's earned income (£3,107).
2. Ongoing activity of £38,860 is covered by the balance of earned income £31,428 and earmarked reserves.
3. Project activity of £208,715 will mainly be met by various HLF and other grant funds (£205,362), the balance of the Defra grant, Chalk Streams project externally generated funds and earmarked reserves.
4. Small Grants Fund of £20,000 is proposed to be funded from earmarked and restricted reserves.

The total impact on the reserves is a reduction of £30,785.

- a. £7,432 for ongoing activity
- b. £3,353 for projects
- c. £20,000 for a small grants fund.

10.30 Richard Pushman joined the meeting.

The draft budget subject to decisions to be made on members allowances was discussed and the members posed questions to the Finance Officer.

- 1. The Board CONSIDERED and ADOPTED the Draft Budget for 2013-14.**

12/13.60. Review of Members Allowances:

The Chief Officer advised the Board that the Executive Committee had considered the Review Panel's Report on members' allowances and accepted several of the recommendations, but not all. The financial implications of the review have not yet been incorporated in the draft budget for 2013-14. The report was circulated with the agenda.

The Executive Committee had considered all the Panel's recommendations, but it is not recommending that the Board accept all the panel's recommendations. It advised the Board to make a number of amendments.

The Review Panel made 9 recommendations:

1. There should be no link between attendance rates and payment of allowances. Accepted
2. Allowance rates for both the Executive Committee and Planning Committee remain on a par. Accepted
3. The Chairman of the Board's special responsibility allowance should cover the role of being a member of the Executive Committee, but an additional special responsibility payment should be offered if they also chair the Executive Committee. Accepted
4. There should not be a link between the annual cost of living award given to staff and the allowances paid to Board members. The Committee did not accept this recommendation and advised that the default arrangement should be that the link is retained.
5. The Board should decide annually whether, and by how much, to adjust allowances. Accepted in the context of the amendment to Recommendation 4. The starting point for such consideration is the cost of living award offered to staff.
6. The Board foregoes an increase in all allowances in 2013-14. The Committee did not accept this recommendation.

7. The Board considers a reduction of £30 to the basic Board members allowances for the full Board, Executive and Planning Committee in 2013-14. The Committee did not accept this recommendation.
8. Consideration should be given to capping the total costs of the Board members allowance scheme as a maximum percentage of the Board's budget. The Committee accepted this recommendation, but further work is needed to identify the baseline for a cap.
9. The Board commits to undertaking a full review of the Allowances Scheme every 5 years, but decides annually whether this is an appropriate cycle. Accepted.

Additional general recommendations were:

1. All members to be invited to confirm before the beginning of the financial year whether they intend to take up part, all or none of their entitlement to allowances. This will assist budget planning.
 2. Identifying ways of assessing collective performance of the Board.
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1. **The Board ACCEPTED the proposed amendments, as suggested by the Review Panel and amended by the Executive Committee, to be made to the Members' Allowance Scheme in time to be incorporated in the budget for 2013-14 and implementation at the AGM in June.**
 2. **The Board ACCEPTED the additional recommendations on the notification of intent to claim allowances and possible means for improvement of collective performance of Board members.**

12/13.61. Small Grants Scheme

The Chief Officer presented a short slide presentation of projects funded by the Sustainable Development Fund since 2005/06. He outlined a proposal to create a Small Grants Fund from reserves which would offer grants of up to £2,000.

1. The Sustainable Development Fund has been funded by grant aid provided by Natural England specifically for this purpose. Following the transfer of funding provision from Natural England to Defra, the sum the Board has chosen to allocate to the SDF was reduced to £40,000 and in 2012-13 to £30,000.
 2. The Defra grant is no longer sufficient to provide support for a SDF. It was proposed that a sum of £20,000 was allocated from the Development reserve for a small grant scheme. It was proposed to consider annually whether the scheme would be affordable.
 3. Small grants of £500-£1,000 would be the norm, but exceptionally larger grants may be considered.
 4. It was proposed that a new Small Grants Panel be formed of members to replace the formally constituted SDF panel. Due to the size of the fund the panel would not need to meet on the same basis as the SDF to administer the fund.
 5. Administration costs including promotion, site visits and monitoring should cost no more than a few hundred pounds. Panel members would not be entitled to an allowance, but could claim travel expenses.
 6. The grant application would be managed by the Countryside Officer with the Panel meeting once or twice a year to provide oversight. The panel would receive the application by email. A quick turnaround is planned.
 7. The application process and forms would be similar to that currently in use.
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1. **The Board AGREED to create a Small Grants Scheme to replace the Sustainable Development Fund with effect from 1st April 2013.**
 2. **The Board DECIDED to allocate an initial sum of £20,000 from the Development Reserve to create the SGS.**
 3. **The Board AGREED to create a grants panel of Board members.**

4. **The Board AGREED that panel members would not receive an allowance, but would be eligible to claim travel and subsistence expenses.**
5. **The Board AGREED that the Countryside Officer is delegated with authority to approve grants of up to £500.**

12/13.62 Draft Business Plan including Work Programme 2013-14.

The Chief Officer presented the Board with the draft business plan and work plan for 2013-14. He outlined that the priority with diminishing resources, is to maintain the scale and breadth of the current work programme with a number of new initiatives when external funding can be secured.

Several important grants schemes have been closed or are suspended. The discretionary spending by Natural England and the Forestry Commission has virtually disappeared; several key grant schemes based on EU funds are ending and following the unusual weather conditions landowners and farmers are not undertaking significant environmental work. The long running decline in availability of funds and staff from local authorities is now acute. In this challenging operating environment the Board is well placed to making a little go a long way and promoting voluntary activity.

The Board does have funds to continue nearly the entire existing work programme and there is scope to develop some new projects.

1. **The Board APPROVED the business plan including the work programme.**

12/13.63 Effectiveness of the System of Internal control.

The Finance Officer presented a review of the system of internal control for the Board to consider. The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011 requires this review of the effectiveness of its system of internal control, which includes the arrangements for the management of risk, financial control systems and the provision of an effective internal audit system, to be approved by the full Board annually.

The Executive Committee had reviewed, on 5th March 2013; the risks faced by the Board and had concluded that the risks faced by the Board are controlled effectively. A review of the Board's insurance arrangements conducted in 2012 has ensured that the risks are covered appropriately and value for money is secured.

1. **The Board REVIEWED and APPROVED the arrangements in place to ensure an effective system of internal control, including the management of risk.**

12/13.64 Report on HS2

The Chief Officer advised members of recent HS2 developments and anticipated activity in the next few months.

Most recent activity includes:

1. Judicial Reviews
2. Longer tunnels.
3. Bucks Blueprint
4. Community Forums.
5. Bucks and Herts Planning Forum.
6. Environmental Statement.
7. Communication with the Secretary of State.

A full report of most the activities and recommendations regarding HS2 were presented to and approved by the Executive Committee on 5th March 2013.

Ad 1.

The rulings on the Judicial Reviews were announced 15th March 2013. The judge had ruled that the consultation on compensation was unfair and illegal and must be re-run. The Government has decided not to appeal. The judge had ruled that neither the Strategic Assessment or Habitat Regulations applied, but leave to appeal has been granted. The other JR's had failed, however it is believed that at least two further appeals are being lodged. The timetable has slipped and it is no longer believed that Royal Assent will be achieved during this parliament.

The next major element of work will be the assessment of the Draft Environmental Statement which is expected in May 2013. It will be imperative that the Board scrutinises all relevant parts closely. It was proposed to engage additional expertise to help with the process as well as setting up a special sub group of the Board to prepare its response.

It was proposed that due to the ineffectiveness of the community forum process and HS2 Ltd apparent unwillingness to engage with the Board, that the Board write to the Secretary of State for Transport to express its concerns and support the case for an extended tunnel. A meeting should also be sought with the Secretary of State or the Minister of State, who is taking the lead on HS2.

The Board discussed the issues, as well as "the evaluation of non-markets effects" and offered the Chief Officer additional assistance with this important unprecedented work that will need to be carried out. The Chief Officer thanked the members for their support and would refer back to the Board as the work progressed.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the engagement of technical expertise to assess the draft Environmental Statement at a cost not exceeding £5,000, initially and offered the Chief Officer assistance with this additional work load.**
- 2. The Board AGREED to set up a sub group of the Board to oversee the Board's response to the Environment Statement.**
- 3. The Board AGREED to write to the Secretary of State expressing concern over the effectiveness of the process of engagement conducted by HS 2 Ltd and to seek a meeting.**

12/13.65 Report on AONB Management Plan.

The Planning Officer reported that the review of the AONB Management Plan is ongoing. Various discussions have taken place; work has started on a work plan and the SEA scoping report. Wide ranging discussions have taken place and the outcome of these has led to the conclusion that the nature and the scale of the likely amendments is such that it would be expedient to publish a revised Management Plan rather than a report on the review specifying any amendments as required under the CRow Act 2000, s89(10)(c). The consultation programme has been developed. A small Members sub group is being set up and a time table has been produced. Members were updated on the progress.

- 1. The Board NOTED the current position in connection with the AONB Management Plan Review.**
- 2. The Board APPROVED the publication of a revised Management Plan rather than a report on the review specifying any amendments.**

- 3. The Board APPROVED the formation of a Management Plan Review Member sub group and identified participants for this.**

12/13.66. Report on the Works Programme 2012-13

The Chief Officer provided the members with an update on the works programme 2012-13. All detail had been provided with the agenda.

12/13.67. AOB:

There was no other business.

12/13.68. Date of next meeting:

Monday 24th June 2013 at Kempster Hall, Christchurch Centre, Henley-on-Thames RG9 1AG.

12/13.69. Future dates: Tuesday 17th October 2013.

The meeting closed 12.50

The Chairman..... Date.....