



Executive Committee

**10.30 a.m. 7th Dec
The Lodge, Chinnor**

Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Declaration of Interest
3. Minutes
4. Matters Arising
5. Public Question Time
6. Finance Report to October 2011
7. Medium Term Financial Plan (2012-2015)
8. Financial Support from Parish Councils
9. Celebrating the Olympics and Queen's Jubilee
10. Report on HS2
11. Chief Officer's Report
12. A.O.B.
13. Dates of meetings



DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 13th SEPTEMBER 2011 at THE LODGE, 90 STATION ROAD, CHINNOR OXON. OX39 4HA COMMENCING AT 10.30 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 13.20PM

Present:

Mike Fox	Chairman, Board member
Cllr Bill Storey	Board member
Cllr Richard Pushman	Board member
Cllr Alan Walters	Board member
Cllr Jeremy Ryman	Board member
Steve Rodrick	CCB Chief Officer
Chris Smith	CCB Finance Officer

In attendance	
Deirdre Hansen	Clerk to the Board

16. Item 1- Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from: Cllr Shirley Judges, Cllr John Griffin, Kevin Mayne and Mike Woods.

17. Item 2- Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

18. Item 3- Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman once Cllr Walters had been added to apologies for absence.

19. Item 4- Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting 18th May 2011:

Item 9: proposed financial memorandum of agreement with local authorities for 2012-15. The CEO has not pursued this yet. It is his intention to start with an informal approach.

Item 12: Report on HS2- public consultation response. He had been called to give evidence at the public enquiry and gave a brief report on this.

Item 13: Cycleway. Wokingham Borough Council had submitted a bid to the Sustainable Transport Fund for funding for a link with the Chiltern cycleway and other linked routes.

Item 13: Wycombe Community Sports Stadium: the proposed plans have been withdrawn by WDC.

20. Item 5- Public Question time

No members of the public were present.

21. Item 6- Treasury Management:

The Finance Officer gave the members a report on the interim review of the Treasury Management Strategy for 2010-11. The review showed income slightly less than forecast £8,555 rather than £8,575 a 0.2% shortfall.

Funds that are temporarily surplus are invested. The average rate of return achieved during the year was 1.28%.

The Committee NOTED the Treasury Management performance for the year 2010-11.

22. Item 7- Finance Report to August 2011:

The Finance Officer advised members of the Board's financial position as at the end of August 2011 and the likely position at the end of the financial year. The current financial position is satisfactory.

A detailed quarterly review of financial activity is undertaken. These reviews have resulted in some changes to the anticipated final overrun as was shown in the accompanying papers.

They included a higher than anticipated local authority grant income.

The Committee NOTED the financial position for the year to August 2011.

23. Item 8- Medium Term Financial Plan 2011-2015:

The Chief Officer and the Finance Officer presented an update to the Forecast presented to the Executive Committee in May 2011.

The latest update to the Forecast showed a slight improvement in the projected financial position.

Since the last Executive meeting in May a number of changes in the financial position have occurred:

- i. Core expenditure in 2011-12 is now projected to be £33,500 lower than the original budget
- ii. Funding of £46,575 has been secured from the Environment agency for Chalk stream work. The allocation includes a £2,000 contribution towards overhead costs.
- iii. £4,500 has been allocated to the EU Timber Project to be met from Earmarked Reserves.

The net result of the changes is a reduction in the forecast funding shortfall 2014-15 to £125,000 unless appropriate measures are taken. The intervening years show less challenging figures. The Chief Officer highlighted the need to be in balance by 2014-15.

The Committee NOTED the updated position and NOTED that half-yearly updates to the medium plan (2011-2015) will be presented to the Board.

24. Item 9- Budget Re-alignment Plan:

The Finance Officer and the Chief Officer reported updates on the progress of the previously adopted budget re-alignment plan to ensure all actions needed to reduce costs and increase income are undertaken.

A cost reduction programme is already underway, but will need to be increased over the next 3 years. The drive to increase earnings has also begun, but will take longer to achieve.

The Board's ability to raise additional income will be dependent upon the aptitude of staff. A number of steps have been taken to ensure staff understanding of the context and to provide greater skills for the successful generation of income.

- i. A financial briefing session is held at each monthly staff meeting.
- ii. A workshop on fundraising has been held, led by Kevin Mayne.
- iii. A review of the web site had been undertaken with the view of carrying more advertising, sponsorship and on-line sales.
- iv. An internal review is being undertaken of all events to reduce costs and increase potential revenue.
- v. An internal review of all costs has been undertaken identifying potential cost reductions of £30,000 p.a.
- vi. An internal review has been undertaken of all literature assessing scope to review print runs and attract income

The Committee NOTED the progress to date against the Budget Re-alignment Plan.

25. Item 10- Review of Risk Register:

The Finance Officer and the Chief Officer presented the recent risk register review they had undertaken. They had concluded that in the majority of cases the control measures in place are adequate to control the risks facing the Board. A reduction in the risk likelihood has been applied to risks 2e and 3a. Risk 3a now also includes the possibility of a reduction in local authority grant aid.

- 1. The Committee CONFIRMED this version of the Risk Register as controlling risks currently faced by the Board.**

- 2. The Committee NOTED that the Register will be reviewed again in six months.**

26. Item 11- Financial Reserves Policy:

The Chief Officer and the Finance Officer outlined the proposed changes to the structure of the Board's financial reserve holdings.

1. The Chiltern Conservation Board reserves policy provides for the following categories of reserve:
 - a. General Reserve equal to approx. 4 months core management activity. This reserve stands currently at @ £170,000
 - b. Restricted Reserves created by donations and grants provided for specific purposes. These reserves total £23,781.
 - c. Earmarked Reserves created by the Board for particular future use. These reserves total £328,612 which include a budget equalisation reserve of £228,466 to fund the transition to a reduced funding regime over the next four years.

2. It is proposed to amend the policy for the following reasons:
 - a. As core Board expenditure will reduce in future the reserve could be reduced by a similar percentage.
 - b. The equalisation Reserve balance is greater than the funding deficit forecast over the four year period; hence this reserve could be reduced.
 - c. There will be a lack of funding for one-off projects.
 - d. If the proposal is adopted it will be necessary to agree a strategy and process for identifying suitable activity and allocation of funds.

1. The Committee AGREED to reduce the General reserve to £135,000

2. The Committee AGREED to reduce the Budget Equalisation Reserve to a maximum of £150,000

3. The Committee agreed the transfer the residual fund of £113,466 to a new earmarked reserve, The Development Reserve.

4. The Committee AGREED to advise the full Board to delegate authority to the Executive Committee to approve allocations from the Development Reserve

27. Item 12- Re-instatement of allowances for members of the Sustainable Development Fund panel.

Mike Fox and Alan Walters declared a personal interest as members of the SDF panel.

The Chief Officer and the Finance Officer outlined the proposal to re-instate the annual allowances to members of the SDF panel allowing for the full annual payment to be made. Payments to be made from the existing fund.

1. It was AGREED to re-instate an annual allowance of £550 to member of the SDF panel.

2. It was AGREED to re-instate an allowance of £824 to the Chairman of the panel.

3. It was AGREED that the allowances would apply to the year 01/04/2011-31/03/2012.

28. Item 13- Review of Member's Allowances.

The Chief Officer outlined the proposed review mechanism, sought approval for the terms of reference and advised the committee to appoint a member to the review panel. The committee recommended to the board that the review panel should be entirely

independent and 2 members should have a financial background.

1. **The Committee APPROVED the terms of reference.**
2. **The Committee APPROVED the proposed independent membership of the panel.**
3. **The Committee NOTED the likely cost of the review.**

29. Item 14- Financial support from Parish Councils.

The Chief Officer reported to the committee that the Board's resolution to seek financial contributions from town and parish councils had been implemented.

The Committee NOTED that all town and parish councils had been requested to provide a financial contribution of between £25-£500 from 2012 onwards.

30. Item 15- Report on HS2

The chief Officer reported on the formal public consultation on HS2. He outlined the main areas of activity, as provided in the report, and sought guidance from the Committee on the Board's next steps in its campaign to stop HS2 crossing the Chilterns.

The Committee AGREED the Board's strategy upon HS2 for the period until the government makes an announcement on whether it intends to proceed.

31. Item 16- Chief Officer's report.

The Chief Officer has submitted written reports on the following:

High Speed 2, The Timber project, Ancient Woodland inventory, Commons, Planning and Development, Wycombe Stadium; see item 19, Arla Development near Aylesbury, Draft National Policy framework, Chalk Streams, Chalk Grassland Day, Natural Environment White Paper, Historic Environment, Green Tourism Business Scheme, Cycleway, Events attended.

The Committee NOTED the Chief Officer's reports.

32. Item 17- Presentation on the new Chilterns AONB web-site.

Claire Forest gave the members a comprehensive presentation of the new web-site, which met with general approval. Work has not yet been completed, but it will be launched at the Forum. The control of the site will be in-house, but an external webmaster will be required.

33. There was no other business.

34. Future meeting dates: Wednesday 7th December at 10.30am at the offices in Chinnor.

The meeting closed at 1.20pm.

Item 6 Finance Report

Author: Chris Smith Finance Officer

Summary To the end of October 2011 the expenditure against the core budget was 4.1% below profile and income 0.5% above profile. Total expenditure, including projects, is 0.3% above profile and income 11.2% above profile. The latter is due to early payment of Chalk Streams grant money from the Environment Agency. The end of year surplus is currently forecast to be £3,428 below the budget at £15,437, largely due to higher than anticipated local authority grants and the use of an earmarked reserve to support the Ancient Woodland Survey.

Purpose of Report: To advise members of the Board's financial position to the end of October and likely position at the end of the financial year.

Background

1. The current financial position is satisfactory with no significant problems to report.
2. In view of the importance of income generation a detailed sheet of "other income" is attached for the Committee's information.
3. "Non-core projects" are those funded by Natural England (SDF and Chalk Streams), and others funded by other external sources and from reserves. One significant development has occurred since the start of the year which is a large grant from the Environment Agency for Chalk Streams work. Although the grant has been received the expenditure is yet to be incurred.
4. The budget for core income includes the balancing figure required to match the aspirations in the four year plan. Progress is being made against this target as shown on the final attached sheet. The Countryside Festival was budgeted to break even. In the event a net £4,614 was earned.
5. Although core expenditure is below the profile it is anticipated that this will change by the end of the year.

Recommendations:

1. **To note the current financial position.**

BUDGET 2011-12

MONTH 7: OCTOBER 2011

Description	Annual Budget	Profiled Budget to date	Actual to date	Variance	Projected Outturn	Year End Variance	Notes
	£	£	£	£	£		
Expenditure							
Department 100:							
Promotion and Awareness							
Core expenditure:							
Information Officer & E&A Officer	(88,315)	(51,517)	(51,447)	70	(88,195)	120	
Travel and subsistence	(1,700)	(992)	(703)	288	(1,700)	-	
Subscriptions magazines / newspapers	(400)	(233)	(109)	125	(400)	-	
Web site	(13,000)	(7,583)	(13,439)	(5,855)	(21,250)	(8,250)	Additional costs to be met from reserve
Printing & distribution costs	(2,400)	(1,400)	(814)	586	(2,400)	-	
Events and exhibitions	(1,500)	(875)	(805)	70	(1,500)	-	
Photography	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Miscellaneous	(400)	(233)	(51)	182	(400)	-	
Core projects:							
103 Countryside Festival	(4,510)	(2,631)	(5,184)	(2,553)	(5,185)	(675)	

Description	Annual Budget	Profiled Budget to Date	Actual to Date	Variance	Projected Outturn	Year End Variance	Notes
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
105 Annual Report	(1,100)	(1,100)	(1,012)	88	(1,100)	-	
106 Annual Forum	(2,000)	(1,167)	(50)	1,117	(1,000)	1,000	
107 Chalk and Trees / What's On	(13,365)	(6,683)	(315)	6,368	(13,365)	-	
108 Environmental education	(2,500)	-	(1,009)	(1,009)	(1,500)	1,000	
109 Getting Close to Nature	(1,000)	(583)	(153)	430	(1,000)	-	
110 Enjoying Woodlands	(3,500)	(1,710)	-	1,710	(3,500)	-	
111 Environmental Tourism	(1,000)	(583)	(263)	320	(1,000)	-	
112 Chilterns Awards	(500)	(292)	-	292	-	500	
113 Historic Environment	(2,000)	(1,167)	(870)	297	(2,000)	-	
Sub total	(139,190)	(78,749)	(76,224)	2,525	(145,495)	(6,305)	
Department 200:							
Countryside Management							
Core expenditure:							
Countryside & FLU Officer	(73,345)	(42,785)	(42,860)	(76)	(73,475)	(130)	
Travel and subsistence	(2,000)	(1,167)	(557)	610	(1,400)	600	

Description	Annual Budget	Profiled Budget to Date	Actual to Date	Variance	Projected Outturn	Year End Variance	Notes
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
Publications	(250)	(146)	-	146	(250)	-	
Events / exhibitions	(300)	(175)	-	175	(300)	-	
Miscellaneous	(200)	(117)	(78)	38	(200)	-	
Core projects:							
203 Commons	(7,000)	(5,710)	(4,772)	938	(7,000)	-	including 4,000 applied to Commons Project
204 Chalk grassland group	(3,000)	(1,750)	(354)	1,396	(3,000)	-	
205 Land management survey	-	-	-	-	-	-	
206 State of Environment Report	(2,000)	(1,167)	(346)	820	(1,600)	400	
207 Support for Trees & Woods Mgt	(3,500)	-	-	-	(3,500)	-	
208 Orchards Project	-	-	-	-	-	-	
209 Ancient Woodland Survey	(5,000)	-	-	-	(5,000)	-	
Sub total	(96,595)	(53,015)	(48,967)	4,048	(95,725)	870	
Department 300:							
Planning and development							
300 Core expenditure:							
Planning Officer	(59,280)	(34,580)	(34,552)	28	(59,230)	50	

Description	Annual Budget	Profiled Budget to Date	Actual to Date	Variance	Projected Outturn	Year End Variance	Notes
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
Travel & subsistence	(1,180)	(688)	(534)	155	(1,180)	-	
Miscellaneous	(150)	(88)	-	88	(150)	-	
Core projects:							
301 Planning Committee	(570)	(280)	(219)	61	(570)	-	
302 Planning conference	(1,200)	(1,200)	(428)	773	(1,200)	-	
303 Design guidance	-	-	(13)	(13)	(25)	(25)	
304 Building design awards	(1,500)	(1,500)	(1,318)	183	(1,500)	-	
305 Technical assistance	(1,500)	(875)	(634)	241	(1,500)	-	
309 Wood Fuel Group	(500)	(292)	-	292	(500)	-	
310 Planning Policies	(1,500)	-	-	-	(1,500)	-	
311 High Speed Two	(1,000)	(583)	(3,138)	(2,555)	(3,000)	(2,000)	£2,000 added by Exec Cttee for external experts - Balance from reserve
Sub total	(68,380)	(40,086)	(40,835)	(749)	(70,355)	(1,975)	
Department 400:							
Recreation and Access							
Core expenditure:							
Access Officer	(25,635)	(14,954)	(14,896)	58	(25,495)	140	
Travel and subsistence	(500)	(292)	(322)	(30)	(500)	-	

Description	Annual Budget	Profiled Budget to Date	Actual to Date	Variance	Projected Outturn	Year End Variance	Notes
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
Miscellaneous	(100)	(58)	(137)	(79)	(150)	(50)	
Core projects:							
401 Chiltern country leaflets	(3,100)	(100)	(395)	(295)	(3,100)	-	
402 Access conference	(1,000)	-	-	-	(1,000)	-	
404 Countryside Close to Home	-	-	-	-	-	-	
405 Cycling in the Chilterns	(3,000)	(1,200)	(1,123)	77	(3,000)	-	
Sub total	(33,335)	(16,604)	(16,873)	(269)	(33,245)	90	
Department 500:							
Corporate Services							
Core expenditure:							
Chief Officer / Admin Officer	(99,405)	(57,986)	(58,556)	(570)	(101,430)	(2,025)	
Travel and subsistence	(1,750)	(1,021)	(774)	246	(1,750)	-	
Staff training	(2,555)	(1,490)	(1,097)	393	(2,555)	-	
Premises	(27,570)	(18,426)	(17,357)	1,069	(26,963)	607	
Office costs	(14,115)	(7,930)	(6,266)	1,665	(13,825)	290	
Office furniture & equipment	(1,000)	(583)	(416)	167	(1,000)	-	
IT (incl OS licences)	(10,470)	(3,191)	(2,046)	1,145	(6,190)	4,280	

Description	Annual Budget	Profiled Budget to Date	Actual to Date	Variance	Projected Outturn	Year End Variance	Notes
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
Meetings & events	(375)	(219)	(230)	(11)	(375)	-	
Finance	(19,810)	(11,109)	(9,692)	1,418	(18,450)	1,360	
Personnel	(1,580)	-	-	-	(1,580)	-	
Legal services	(6,000)	(3,500)	(3,175)	325	(4,500)	1,500	
Insurance	(8,200)	-	-	-	(8,550)	(350)	
Miscellaneous	(565)	(330)	-	330	(565)	-	
Sub total	(193,395)	(105,786)	(99,610)	6,176	(187,733)	5,662	
Department 600							
Member Services							
Core expenditure:							
Members' allowances	(34,320)	(20,020)	(18,962)	1,058	(34,320)	-	Excludes SDF Panel allowances
Board member training	(1,750)	(1,021)	(1,200)	(179)	(1,750)	-	
Board meetings	(1,355)	(790)	(458)	332	(1,355)	-	
Miscellaneous	(50)	(29)	-	29	(50)	-	
Core projects:							
601 Executive Committee	(150)	(88)	(70)	17	(150)	-	
Sub total	(37,625)	(21,948)	(20,691)	1,257	(37,625)	-	

Description	Annual Budget	Profiled Budget to Date	Actual to Date	Variance	Projected Outturn	Year End Variance	Notes
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
Central Budgets							
Inflation at 2% on non staff costs	-				-		absorbed in cash limited budgets
Increase in VAT rate	-				-		absorbed in cash limited budgets
502 Project support budget	(2,960)	-	-	-	(2,960)	-	
Sub total	(2,960)	-	-	-	(2,960)	-	
TOTAL CORE EXPENDITURE	(571,480)	(316,188)	(303,199)	12,989	(573,138)	(1,658)	
Other expenditure							
Contribution to SE Protected Landscapes Co-ordinator	(2,000)	(2,000)	(2,458)	(458)	(2,458)	(458)	
Merchandise purchases	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Project expenditure:							
- Friends of Red Kites	(1,000)	(583)	(453)	130	(1,000)	-	
- Conserving the Chilterns Chalk Streams	(37,865)	(22,088)	(18,167)	3,921	(82,440)	(44,575)	Additional Environment Agency Project
- EU Timber Project	-	-	(4,500)	(4,500)	(4,500)	(4,500)	Met from reserve
- Sustainable Development Fund	(40,000)	(1,994)	(5,556)	(3,562)	(40,000)	-	Including SDF Panel allowances
- Ancient Woodland Survey	(18,000)	(10,007)	(21,867)	(11,860)	(41,660)	(23,660)	
- Chilterns Commons Project	(78,835)	(12,470)	(10,132)	2,338	(78,035)	800	

Description	Annual Budget	Profiled Budget to Date	Actual to Date	Variance	Projected Outturn	Year End Variance	Notes
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
GRAND TOTAL EXPENDITURE	(749,180)	(365,330)	(366,332)	(1,002)	(823,231)	(74,051)	
Income							
Natural England: SDF	19,320	14,490	14,490	-	19,320	-	
Natural England: Chalk Streams	19,220	14,415	14,415	-	19,220	-	
Natural England: Core	465,305	348,979	348,979	-	465,305	-	
Local Authorities	75,335	105,085	105,085	-	105,085	29,750	Greater than forecast grants
Merchandise sales	5,000	2,917	2,983	66	5,000	-	
Other earned income	29,655	16,492	18,804	2,312	35,309	5,654	
Red Kite donations	1,000	583	60	(523)	100	(900)	
Chalk Streams external income	18,645	10,876	58,857	47,981	65,220	46,575	Additional Environment Agency Project
Ancient Woodland Survey external income	18,000	-	10,588	10,588	14,400	(3,600)	
Chilterns Commons Project: HLF	53,130	5,825	5,825	-	53,130	-	
Chilterns Commons Project: other	25,705	22,320	22,745	425	25,705	-	4,000 applied from core Commons budget
GRAND TOTAL INCOME	730,315	541,982	602,831	60,848	807,794	77,479	
NET INCOME / (EXPENDITURE)	(18,865)	176,652	236,498	59,846	(15,437)	3,428	

Description	Annual Budget	Profiled Budget to Date	Actual to Date	Variance	Projected Outturn	Year End Variance	Notes
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
RESERVE MOVEMENTS:							
Restricted Reserves:							
- Chalk Streams Reserve	-	-	-	-	2,000	2,000	Management fee from Environment Agency
- Red Kites Reserve	-	-	-	-	(900)	(900)	Donations not now being sought actively
Earmarked Reserves:							
- Budget Equalisation Reserve	(18,865)	-	-	-	-	18,865	
- Development Reserve	-	-	-	-	15,223	15,223	
- Woodland Research	-	-	-	-	(31,760)	(31,760)	for EU Timber Project match funding & Ancient Woodland Survey
TOTAL TRANSFERS TO / (FROM)	(18,865)	-	-	-	(15,437)	3,428	
RESERVES							

	Other Income		Budget	Budget	Actual	Variance	Projected
			for year	to date	to date		Outturn
			£	£	£	£	£
7							
100.4900	Promotion & Awareness	Earned income	-	-	121	121	65
103	Countryside Festival	Income	4,510	2,631	9,771	7,140	9,799
106.4900	Annual Forum	Income	500	292	170	(122)	500
107.4004	Chalk & Trees	Advertising income	4,345	2,535	2,110	(424)	4,345
107.4901	Chalk & Trees	Electronic subscriptions	-	-	380	380	400
109.4900	Getting Close to Nature		1,000	583	1,610	1,026	2,200
108.4900	Environmental Education		-	-	175	175	250
113.4900	Historic Environment		-	-	21	21	25
203.4900	Commons		300	175	618	443	625
204.4001	Chalk Grassland		200	117	264	147	265
206.4900	State of the Environment Report		-	-	270	270	270
300.4900	Planning	Earned income	-	-	50	50	550
302.4900	Planning Conference		1,200	700	1,215	515	1,200
304.4003	Building Design Awards		500	292	-	(292)	500
400.4400	Recreation & Access	Advertising income	-	-	490	490	290
401.4900	Access Publication		2,500	1,458	253	(1,205)	2,500
402.4900	Access Conference		1,000	583	-	(583)	1,000
405.4400	Chilterns Cycleway	Advertising income	-	-	200	200	200
500.4008	Corporate	4008	7,000	360	359	(1)	7,225
500.5900	Unidentified income		6,600	6,767	127	(6,640)	2,500
	Parish Councils	Funding from Parish Councils	-	-	600	600	600
			29,655	16,492	18,804	2,312	35,309

Item 7 Medium Term Financial Plan 2012-2015

Author: Chris Smith Finance Officer
 Steve Rodrick Chief Officer

Summary The outline medium term plan for the period 2012-2015 has been revised to reflect the predicted cuts in grant aid from Government and local authorities together with experience of fund raising in 2011-2012

Purpose of Report: To seek Committee approval for the medium term financial plan for 2012-2015 in order to prepare a detailed budget for 2012-2013.

Background

6. The Board's operating budget for 2011-2012 was prepared in the context of a four year medium term financial plan covering the period 2011-2015. One year on that medium term plan has been revised to reflect experience of 2011-2012 and anticipated changes to the operating environment for the next three financial years.
7. The current year's outlook is more positive than originally anticipated because local authorities did not cut their contribution as severely as had been expected. It is assumed that over the full period local authority cuts will mirror their own reduction in grant aid from central government. It will be immensely helpful if, however, they can buffer the full extent of those cuts. A number of other cost savings have been made.
8. The Parish and Town Councils have been approached for support and a number have already indicated they will.
9. The Board also decided to re-structure its reserves to create a Budget Equalisation Reserve intended to help balance the budget over the next three years.
10. The forecast has been affected by the generally poor economic outlook which means that the interest earned on reserves is likely to remain low for the duration of the plan.
11. The Board has a current pay freeze and had built into the plan a 2% cost of living award from 2012 onwards. At the time of writing the Chancellor has announced a pay ceiling of 1% for public sector workers for the next two years.
12. A paper presented to the Committee in September forecast a funding deficit of £37,000 in 2012-13 and £125,000 by 2014-15 unless no action was taken. Options were presented that largely removed that deficit.

13. Over recent weeks work has started to refine the global figures in the four year forecast with more detailed calculations for 2012-13. Some reductions to non-staff core expenditure have been applied.
14. A full draft detailed budget for 2012-2013 will be prepared and presented to the next meeting of the Executive Committee on 2nd March subject to approval of the medium term plan at this meeting. A draft provisional budget of operating costs has already been prepared and incorporated as Core Staff Employment and Core non staff costs.
15. Some of the factors affecting the budget for 2012-13 are given in Annex A.
16. The result of these calculations is a budgeted deficit of £31,891 for 2012-13. This compares to the Figure of £37,385 in the September version of the Four Year Forecast. The updated deficit is 3.8% of the total expenditure budget, including a planned deficit on the Ancient Woodland Survey to be met by an earmarked reserve.
17. Building the financial model to the end of the four year period presents something of a dichotomy. It is clear that the previous strategy of applying incremental savings each year to achieve a balanced budget is merely maintaining the reserves balance. The Board needs to use some of its Budget Equalisation Reserve to balance the budget on an annual basis, whilst at the same time aiming to live within its means by 2015-2016, i.e. expenditure and income are largely in balance without having to draw down from the Budget Equalisation Reserve. Given the uncertain outlook the Board needs to maintain a flexible approach, which its current level of reserves allows it to do.
13. The Plan is based on an assumed use of the ring fenced and earmarked reserve for the purposes they were intended for. The Development Reserve will be used to meet the cost of unforeseen project expenditure for which there will be no provision in the core budget.
14. The Committee needs to decide upon the following:
 1. Whether to award a cost of living increase and, if so, at what level? A 2% increase costs approx. £4,000.
 2. Whether to re-instate the discretionary salary increment based on performance – as above a 2% increment costs approx. £4,000
 3. Whether to increase mileage payments in line with adjusted HMRC rates? 40p pence to 42 pence.
 4. Whether or not to increase the car allowance by inflation? Total cost would be approx. £280.

5. Whether or not to go ahead with the planned review of Members' allowances- budgeted cost £2,000.
6. Whether or not to continue with the staff incentive scheme. In place for 2011-2012 in as discretionary salary increments have been frozen. The cost is met in full by additional income raised. No payments are made unless an agreed threshold is reached.

Recommendations:

1. **To decide on possible changes detailed in paragraph 14.**
2. **To approve the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2012-2015 subject to changes above.**

Annex A

Budget 2012-13

Starting point	2011-12 Projected outturn at October 2011
DEFRA grant	Reduced by 5.4% per annum until and including 2014-205
LA Grants	Reduced by 8% to the figure in the Four Year Plan
Core salaries	2% pay award plus contractual increments (no change to employers' NI or pension) Discretionary increment of max 2% reinstated and based on performance.
Members' allowances	2% increase in rates and £2,000 cost of review of scheme.
Car mileage rate	Increased from 40p per mile to 42p in line with HMRC threshold. Car allowance is unchanged
Countryside Festival	Budgeted to earn a £2,000 surplus
Events programme	Expenditure matched by income overall
Clerk services	Reduced to reflect new arrangements

Item	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Notes
	£	£	£	£	
Expenditure:					
Core - staff employment costs	347,795	357,120	365,085	373,190	2% awards + contractual & discretionary increments
Core - non staff costs	225,343	212,730	212,730	212,730	
Contribution to SE Landscapes Officer	2,458	3,000	3,000	3,000	
Chalk Streams Project	82,440	143,780	37,865	37,865	
SDF	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	
EU Timber Project	4,500				
Ancient Woodland Survey	41,660	15,620			
Commons Project	78,035	112,040			
Friends of Red Kites	1,000				
Merchandise purchases					
Total expenditure	823,231	884,290	658,680	666,785	If no further action is taken

Item	2011-12		2012-13		2013-14		2014-15	Notes
	£		£		£		£	
Income:								
NE Core	465,305		440,182					
NE Chalk Streams	19,220		18,185					
SDF	19,320		18,270					
DEFRA Total Grant	503,845		476,637		450,899		418,096	21.5% reduction excl. inflation
Local authorities	105,085		96,632		91,414		84,763	21.5% reduction excl. inflation
Parish Councils			3,000		5,000		7,000	2011 figure in earned income
Caring for the Chilterns Fund			3,000		5,000		10,000	Net income
Chalk Streams external funding	65,220		125,595		15,103		13,466	35% reduction excl. inflation
Commons Project	78,835		112,040					
Ancient Woodland Survey	14,400		-					
Earned income, sales, donations	40,409		35,495		29,655		29,655	
Total income	807,794	-	852,399		597,071	#	562,980	If no further action is taken

Funding shortfall	15,437	31,891	61,609	103,805	If no further action is taken
Item	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Notes
	£	£	£	£	
Options					
Increase Earned Income	-	1,000	5,000	10,000	compared to 11-12
Use of Earmarked Reserves	30,660	25,620	10,000	17,000	
Use of Restricted Reserves		5,000	5,000	5,000	
Reduction to SDF	-	-	5,000	15,000	compared to 11-12
Reduction of core non staff expenditure	-	-	5,000	10,000	compared to 11-12
Reduction in Chalk Streams Project expenditure	-	-	5,000	6,000	compared to 11-12
Reduction in members' allowance payments	-	-	750	1,000	compared to 11-12
Sub total	30,660	31,620	35,750	64,000	
Use of Equalisation Reserve	-	271	25,859	39,805	£65,935
Added to Development Reserve (-)	15,223				
Total	15,437	31,891	61,609	103,805	

Item	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Notes
	£	£	£	£	
Reserves					
Brought forward	522,393	506,956	476,065	435,206	
Earmarked reserves	30,660	25,620	10,000	17,000	
Restricted Reserves	0	5,000	5,000	5,000	
Equalisation reserve	0	271	25,859	39,805	
Development reserve	-15,223	0	0	0	surpluses added to this reserve
Total	506,956	476,065	435,206	373,401	
Breakdown of Reserves	End of 11-12	End of 12-13	End of 13-14	End of 14-15	
General	135,000	135,000	135,000	135,000	
Budget Equalisation	150,000	149,729	123,870	84,065	
Development	128,689	128,689	128,689	128,689	
Earmarked	69,486	43,866	33,866	16,866	
Restricted	23,781	18,781	13,781	8,781	
Total	506,956	476,065	435,206	373,401	

Item 8 Support from Parish Councils

Author: Steve Rodrick Chief Officer

Summary: All 117 parish and town councils were invited in September to contribute to the Boards operating costs. To date 10 have responded offering £900 this year.

Those declining to provide support have cited a variety of reasons.

Purpose of Report: To report on progress to members on securing financial support from parish and town councils

Background

4. Following the Board's decision to seek financial contribution from parish and town councils a sub group of parish council elected Board members met during the summer to paper the request. In early September a letter and a limited amount of supporting literature was sent to all 117 councils.
5. At the time of writing (21st Nov) the following have responded.

Name of Parish	Amount
Bradenham Parish Council	£50.00
Stokenchurch Parish council	£50.00
Highmoor Parish Council	£50.00
Bix and Assendon Parish Council	£50.00
Seer Green Parish Council	£100.00
Great Missenden Parish Council	£250.00
Aston Rowant Parish Council	£100.00
Ibstone Parish Council	£75.00
Turville Parish Council	£50.00
Sundon Parish Council	£25.00
Benson Parish Council	£100.00
Sub total	£900.00

n.b Three Rivers DC currently recovers 50% of its contribution from Sarratt PC and Chorleywood PC. Beaconsfield Town Council has offered £50 in 2012-2013

3. In total 12 councils have provided support this year (10% of the total). Reasons for refusal include.
 - No money left this year
 - Thinks the parish lies outside the AONB
 - As statutory body the Board should get its money from Govt
 - Need to complete a grant application form.

4. The majority have yet to reply and even those declining our application this year have indicated a fresh application should be made for 2012-2013. It is hoped that up to 30 councils will provide support with a value of £3000 in 2012-13. It is not realistic to expect all councils to provide funding but by 2015 the aim should be for 50% to provide assistance totalling over £7,000.

Recommendations

1. **To welcome the support provided by parish and town councils and to aim for contributions from at least 30 in 2012-2013.**
2. **To maintain the target of securing support from 50 councils by 2014-15 raising in excess of £7,000.**

Item 9 Celebrating the Olympics and Queen's Jubilee

Author: Steve Rodrick Chief Officer

Summary: The board should consider whether, and if so how, to mark the 2012 Olympics, Paralympics and Queens 60th Jubilee. If it is decided it should, a number of suggestions and budgetary implications are given. It is suggested a budget of £3,000 is created to celebrate all three events

Purpose of Report To seek a decision from members on whether the Board should mark the Olympics, Paralympics and Queen's Jubilee?

2012 Olympics

1. Next year, 2012 (27th July- 12th Aug) will be notable for the London Olympics and Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Should the Board celebrate either or both? The Olympics would be a double celebration as the Paralympics, with its spiritual home in Stoke Mandeville, will be held as well.
2. Rowing is the one of the sports in which Great Britain can expect to do well - a sport with its spiritual home on the Thames and based on the clubs at Henley and Marlow (home of Steve Redgrave) as it passes through the Chilterns. The 1948 London Olympic rowing course was at Henley!
3. The Olympic torch will pass through the Chilterns on 8th, 9th and 10th July.
4. The primary aims of any celebration should be:
 - To encourage a healthy lifestyle by taking exercise
 - To promote the Chilterns as a place for outdoor activity
 - To promote the Chilterns as a visitor destination

What should we do?

5. We should aim to participate in a small number of local events organised in the towns and villages through which it passes including Luton, Hemel Hempstead, Marlow, Henley, Aylesbury and Stoke Mandeville.
6. The torch will be taken by boat along the Thames between Henley and Marlow. This may provide special PR opportunities.

7. The PR given to the torch route will highlight specific venues and backdrops in the AONB.
8. The web site should have an Olympic theme with dedicated pages and the summer edition of Chalk and Trees should be a special Olympic edition.
9. There is particular scope to promote enjoyment of the Thames, not least as the rowing events will take place at Dorney rowing lake, only a few miles outside the AONB between Slough and Windsor.
10. To consider creating a lasting memorial to the games;
 - Tree Planting
 - Chalk Figure
 - Sculpture
 - Re-named landscape features

2012 Paralympics

11. The Paralympics, with its special association with Bucks and Stoke Mandeville, will take place between 29th August - 9th September.
12. The Board should aim to mark these games in the same way.
13. It is suggested the proposed budget be £2,000. Much can be done by simply badging planned events and publications.

Queen's Diamond Jubilee

14. The Queen's Diamond Jubilee is being marked by a special holiday on 5th June.
15. Suggestions:
 - 60 Places to visit
 - 60 Things to do
 - 60 Trees
 - 60 Royal Connections
 - A Jubilee Exhibition 1952 – 2012
16. The web site and Chalk and Trees could also be badged depending upon what it is decided to do. It would also be fitting to commemorate the year with a lasting memorial. No doubt many trees will be planted.
17. The indicative recommended budget is £1,000

Recommendations

- 1. The Board should celebrate the Olympics incl. the Para Olympics and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.**
- 2. A provisional budget should be created by allocating £3,000 from the Development Reserve.**
- 3. A sub group of Board members to be created to decide on the programme.**

Item 10 **Report on HS2**

Author: Steve Rodrick Chief Officer

Summary: The Board has maintained an active role whilst the Government analyses the responses to the public consultation and decides on whether to proceed to the next stage.

Purpose of Report To advise members of HS2 related activity and to seek guidance on the next steps if the Government decides to proceed to the next stage.

Secretary of State for Transport

1. The Committee will have noted that Rt.Hon Justine Greening MP was appointed as the new Secretary of State for Transport to replace Phillip Hammond who was appointed Secretary of State for Defence.

2. From Rotherham, Justine Greening has been the MP for Putney, Roehampton and Southfields since 2005. She has a background in economics and finance and her previous position was as Economic Secretary to the Treasury. She has actively campaigned against the expansion of Heathrow.

2. The chairman wrote to the Secretary of State encouraging her to respond to criticism by the Transport Select Committee and delay her announcement on whether to proceed to the next stage in view of the complexity and sensitivity of the proposal. In particular there seems to be no support for the Government’s preferred route, even amongst supporters of HS2.

3. Since the last meeting of the Executive Committee the Board has kept in close touch with local MPs and Cheryl Gillan addressed the Annual Forum in Amersham on 11th November.

Transport Select Committee

4. The Transport Select Committee report was published on 7th November. Whilst the headline was that whilst the Committee supported the case for a high speed railway, the report was deeply critical of just about all major aspects of the current proposal and the way it had been presented.

5. It criticised the failure to investigate fully alternatives, cast serious doubts over the preferred route, and was highly sceptical of the claims about economic regeneration. It recommended that a new business be prepared which gives less weight to the value of time saved and greater weight the impact on the environment - currently its give none.

It unequivocally stated that HS2 should not be referred to a carbon reducing scheme.

Labour Party Statement on HS2

5. The Labour Party published its position on HS2 which was supportive, but in recognition of the damage to the Chilterns and in conjunction with its belief that the railway should go via Heathrow, suggested a route alongside the M40. In fact it suggested it would, thus, avoid the AONB altogether. A letter has been sent correcting this mistake.

Meeting with HS2 Ltttd

6. On 16th November Mike Fox, Ray Payne and Steve Rodrick met Sir Brian Briscoe, chairman of HS2 Ltd and Peter Miller, Head of the HS2 Ltd Environmental Planning Team.
7. HS2 Ltd gave an undertaking that the Board would be invited to participate in at least two of the environmental fora it will be creating.
8. HS2 Ltd confirmed that it had not been instructed by the DfT or any other government department including DEFRA, to revise its business plan to incorporate a monetised value for environmental impacts, as would be required under the Ecosystem Appraisal approach newly adopted by Government. The Board has already written twice to the Secretaries of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and for Transport, to ask whether the Government will be applying this approach to its own projects. The answers do not make it clear that they will, so a further letter has been sent seeking clarification.

Environmental Impact Assessment

9. HS2 Ltd confirmed their timetable for undertaking an Environmental Impact Assessment. It will begin in the early spring with publication of a scoping report. Data collection will take place during spring, summer and autumn. The report itself will be prepared from late summer onwards concluding in spring 2013. There will be some consultation but it is not yet clear on the extent to which this will include public consultation. As a statutory body, the Board expects to be consulted on all parts of the report.
10. The timing is designed to enable the Hybrid Bill to be laid before Parliament by October 2013. The EIA will only cover the initial section between London and Birmingham.

Parliamentary Lobby Day

11. A lobby day for MPs took place on Monday 28th November in the Grand Committee Chamber in the Houses of Parliament. The event was

chaired by Andrea Leadsom, MP for South Northamptonshire, Jerry Marshall, chairman of the AGAHST federation of local groups and the Board's Chief Officer who spoke about the environmental impacts. A small number of MPs attended at some point during the session, but there was an unfortunate clash with a major debate in the House on North Africa which limited the numbers.

Visit to Kent Wildlife Trust

12. Staff and members have already made several visits to Kent to see HS1. A further visit was made on 22nd November to talk specifically to the Kent Wildlife Trust about the impact of the railway on wildlife. The chairman of HS2 Ltd, once Director of Planning for Kent CC, had stated publicly that many of the misgivings about the environmental impact of HS2 had been resolved for HS1.
13. Requests have been made to HS2 Ltd for the information on which these claims have been made, but it seems they are based on hearsay as no formal monitoring has taken place. Whilst the passage of time has helped to heal some of the landscape scars and some embankments and new planting have some benefits for wildlife, the results are generally disappointing and in the absence of any monitoring, before or after, there is no evidence as to how they have been successful, if at all.
14. The close alignment of HS1 with the M20 motorway creates an entirely different local environment which helps to mask the intrusion caused by the railway in a way which can never be achieved in the Chilterns.

Legal Advice

15. The Board attended a meeting with legal counsel organised by local action groups and the HS2 Action Alliance. Following that meeting further consideration will be given as to whether HS2 Ltd has complied with the legislation covering Strategic Environmental Assessments.

Wider HS2 Group

16. The Board has continued to convene a meeting of local authorities and local action groups. A meeting took place on 8th November and the next meeting is scheduled for 22nd December.

Next Steps

Announcement on Next Stage

17. An announcement is expected on or near to 20th December. It has to be assumed that the Government will stick to its preferred route, but has to show some acknowledgment of the response to the public

consultation (believed to be overwhelmingly against), the doubts of the Transport Select Committee, and the preference of many pro HS2 groups, including the Labour Party, for an alternative route via Heathrow and the M40.

18. The Board needs to prepare a number of responses depending upon the announcement. The basic position must remain unchanged - the claimed benefits of HS2 are not persuasive and do not justify the damage to the AONB that the current proposal would cause

Environmental Impact Assessment

19. If the Government instructs the next stage of development it will commission an Environmental Impact Assessment. This is piece of work that the Board must take a direct and continuous involvement in to ensure all potential impacts are included. The Board must ensure it is consulted at all stages including interpretation of the findings.

Environmental and Community Fora

20. HS2 Ltd has indicated that during 2012 it intends to create a number of community and environmental fora. The Board must seek involvement in each. This is likely to require both staff and Board members being nominated to take part to ensure good coverage and attendance.

Design and Mitigation

21. It is likely that when the Government makes its announcement later this month it will also instruct additional mitigation of the route through the Chilterns. The Board must be prepared to work closely with HS2 Ltd to ensure the best possible outcome for the AONB if the railway is to be built. This includes detailed scrutiny of all aspects of design.

Revised Business Plan

22. In line with the Transport Select Committee Report the Board must continue to press for the business plan for HS2 to be revised to incorporate a value on the environmental impacts, based on the National Ecosystem Appraisals approach adopted by Government in June 2012.

Liaison with local Groups, Local Authorities and MPs

23. It is crucial that the Board continues to work closely with environmental bodies, local action groups and local authorities. The Board has also built good relationships with local MPs which will be even more vital in the run up to the presentation of a Hybrid Bill to Parliament in late 2013.

Recommendations

- 1. The Board follows the next steps identified in the paper.**
- 2. In 2012 involvement with the Environmental Impact Assessment, the new fora to be created by HS2 Ltd, and scrutiny of mitigation and design are a high priorities in the Board's overall work programme.**
- 3. Funding is allocated as required from the Development Reserve, subject to authority being given by the Executive Committee.**

Item 11 Chief Officer's Report

High Speed 2

1. See paper prepared for Item 10 of the Executive Committee

Ancient Woodland Inventory

2. The national inventory was published in 1990 but has subsequently been found to under-record ancient woodland by approximately 20%. Ancient woodland is woodland which has existed continuously since 1600. It is irreplaceable and essential it is identified and protected.
3. The Chilterns re-survey is being supported by the Board together with Natural England, Forestry Commission, Bucks CC, Herts CC, Dacorum BC, Chiltern DC and Wycombe DC. The survey work has been taking place during the summer and autumn.
4. It has been decided to extend the project into spring and early summer of 2012 to allow additional survey work to take place – this has to take place once woodland plants have started to appear from March onwards.
5. The provisional date for launching the final report is 29th June in Chilterns District Council's Chamber in Amersham.

Commons

6. In June the Heritage Lottery Fund approved a grant of £403,000 for the Chilterns Commons Project. Rachel Sanderson has been appointed as the Project Officer and began working in July. The project will be supporting directly, management of commons and helping local communities become more involved.
7. The project will be overseen by a Steering Group including relevant agencies, landowners and representatives from active community groups.
8. The project was officially launched at Totternhoe Knolls near Dunstable on 30th September by Alison Doggett, local historian and geographer, and now chairman of The Chiltern Society.
9. The project has already held a number of events and is supported by several capable and enthusiastic volunteers

Wycombe Sports Stadium

10. This project now appears to be dead following Wycombe DC's decision not to take an active part in its development, and the decision by the

owner of London Wasps and Wycombe Wanderers to put the clubs up for sale.

Arla Dairy near Aylesbury

11. This development will be built on a green field site approximately 2 miles to the east of Aylesbury in open countryside, highly visible from the Chilterns escarpment. It will involve the construction of up to 1 million square feet of new buildings for occupation by a milk processing facility, and let industrial space. The Board's concern was the high visibility of the very large buildings from the scarp ridge. The scale of the buildings makes it near impossible to hide them all year round by screening.
12. Aylesbury Vale DC approved the application which was advertised as a departure from local planning policies. The Department for Communities and Local Government decided not to call it in.
13. It would be reasonable to conclude that the decision by the local planning authority and the decision not to call it in reflect the changed approach to major development embodied in the government's proposed new National Planning Policy Framework.
14. The implications need to be digested and given further consideration. It seems to indicate that even major and intrusive development in open countryside can, and will be, approved.

Chalk Streams

15. Most of the streams have dried up along part or all of their length. This reflects the low recharge during the winter and very low rainfall in early spring. The streams will not now re-appear for some time unless there is very high rainfall in December - February.

Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP)

16. The NEWP published in June promoted the creation of Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) and Nature Improvement Areas (NIA).
17. Bids to create Local Nature Partnerships in Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire were successful, but those for Bedfordshire and Oxfordshire were not. However, in view of the limited funding available and well founded biodiversity networks in Beds and Oxon the net effect will not be great.
18. The bid to secure a share of £7.5 m fund to support 12 Nature Improvement Areas was unsuccessful. The work will, nonetheless, have provided a framework to improve coordination of efforts in the proposed NIA.

Countryside Festival

19. The Countryside Festival, a joint venture with the National Trust, was a great success with over 100 stalls and 5,000 visitors

Web Site

20. The new web site has been launched and has received many plaudits already. The site is now carrying adverts. As the site can be managed by staff the annual cost should fall from over £7,000 to less than £3,000.

Local Talks

22. Traditionally the autumn and winter is a busy time for giving talks to local groups. This year is no exception and several staff have been booked to give presentations to a variety of local groups.

Parish Councils

23. Following the decision by the Board earlier this summer, all parish and town councils have been approached and asked to provide financial support of between £25- £500. At the time of writing 11 councils have confirmed support (totalling £950) for this year and a number have indicated they might be able to provide support next financial year. The target is to secure support of £1,500 this financial year, £3,000 in 2012-13, £5,000 in 2013-14 and £7,000 in 2014-2015.

Sustainable Development Fund

24. So far this year grants totalling £27,000 have been made to 13 successful applicants. There is still £12,000 to allocate. This is higher than normal for this time of year perhaps indicating that there is shortage of match funding available.

The Chiltern Society

25. The chairman and Chief Officer attended The Chiltern Society AGM in October. Dominic Grieve, the MP for Beaconsfield, gave an address on the Big Society, new planning policy framework and HS2. Alison Doggett was elected as chairman to follow John Taylor.

Annual forum

26. This year's annual forum, held at Amersham Rugby Club on 11th November, was attended by over 90 delegates representing over 40 organisations. Presentations were given by the staff, John Morris, Director of the Chiltern Woodlands Project and Nick Phillips, Manager of the Chilterns LEADER Programme. The forum was also addressed

by Alison Doggett, in her new role as chairman of The Chiltern Society and finally by Rt.Hon Cheryl Gillan, MP for Chesham and Amersham.

27. Numbers were slightly down on previous years. No doubt this was partly due to charging for lunch but, more notably, the attendance by local authority officers was low.

Planning Conference

28. The Planning Conference was held in Berkhamsted Town Hall on 5th October. It was attended by over 40 delegates and addressed by speakers from the National Trust and Forestry Commission amongst others, on the subject of renewable energy. In the afternoon there was a visit to H.G.Matthews brickyard at Bellingdon near Chesham, which is now making considerable use of wood fuel to dry and fire their bricks. In the process they have tapped into a new niche market for traditionally made bricks which are in great demand for restoration work. It has also helped reduce their demand for oil by several hundred thousand pounds per year.

Planning Forum

29. The Forum was held in Aylesbury Vale DC's offices principally as an event to bring together the 13 councils in which the Chilterns AONB lies. Eight authorities attended this year. Inevitably the proposed National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provided the point of most discussion and concern.

North Wessex Downs AONB

30. Two Board members and two members of staff attended the annual conference of the North Wessex Downs AONB, which was held on the outskirts of Reading. After much upheaval in recent years they now have a new Director and Chairman which provides a more effective platform for collaborative working. The chairman of the North Wessex Downs AONB, Byron Cannon, attended our forum last month and was highly complementary.

Bishop of Oxford

31. The Bishop of Oxford invited the chairman and chief officer to attend a service on 18th October at Christ Church in Oxford. The service was dedicated to caring for the environment.

Box Wood

32. The Board is developing a proposal to enhance our understanding and stewardship of Box woodland for submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The aim is to submit the bid by the end of January and, if

successful will secure approx £30,000 for a project which would run from next May for two years.

Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve

33. The Board has always worked closely with Natural England on its outreach programme from Aston Rowant NNR. Recently this has also involved Sue and Murray Graham who farm the neighbouring Field Farm at Lewknor. They have used a significant grant from Natural England and a contribution from the Sustainable Development Fund to develop an educational base to attract schools and offer tractor trailer rides around the farm and up to the nature reserve. From next April the Board will take over from Natural England the primary role of promoting the outreach programme.
34. In October the Board jointly organised with Natural England the fifth Lantern Walk attended by over 200 people. The event takes a great deal of organisation and relies heavily on the support of a dozen volunteers.

Chalk and Trees

35. The autumn and winter edition of the Board's magazine, Chalk and Trees was published in late October. The print run is 15,000 and distributed widely across the Chilterns and in surrounding towns and villages. Approx 40% of the design and print cost is now covered by advertising revenue.

Penn Wood near Hazlemere

36. The Board has been commissioned by The Woodland Trust the Board to undertake an audit of access to Penn Wood. In the late 1990s the Board was instrumental in saving the wood from being converted to a golf course. The Woodland Trust acquired the wood shortly afterwards with a substantial grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and funds provided by local people, much of its raised via a campaign led by The Chiltern Society.

South East Tourism Project

37. The Chilterns Tourism Network is an informal group of 60 or so businesses, representing some of the key tourism stakeholders in the Chilterns. Members include B&Bs, hotels, campsites, tour operators, visitor attractions and statutory organisations such as the Chilterns Conservation Board and the National Trust. The main remit of the group is to develop a tourism brand for the Chilterns, to promote the Chilterns as a tourist destination, to increase overnight stays and to undertake collaborative work. The group was established in May 2011 and is open to all tourism businesses in the Chilterns. A steering group has been established which is currently working on an application to

the Leader programme for a Chilterns Tourism branding and promotion project.

38. The Chilterns AONB is one of 9 protected landscapes in the South East benefiting from a Rural Development Project for England project to develop sustainable tourism. Under the project of 'Our Land' the project is working with tourism businesses to help them inspire their guests about the landscapes they are visiting and to increase sustainable tourism in those regions through a regional marketing campaign taking place over the next three years. Businesses must give examples of how they care for their local environment, support the local community and promote the local area to visitors. Tourism-related businesses in the Chilterns are being encouraged to join the project by registering on the web site www.our-land.co.uk which has been set up by Responsible Travel. To date 8 businesses in the Chilterns are featured on the Our Land.