



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILTERN CONSERVATION BOARD HELD
ON Thursday 24th January 2013 at Ballenger Memorial Hall HP at 10.00 AM AND
CONCLUDING AT 13.10PM**

Member	Appointing Body
Appointed by Local Authorities	
Cllr David Barnard	North Herts District 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 Bill Storey	Hertfordshire County 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
Bettina Kirkham	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 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

Ian Reay as Vice-Chairman took the Chair in absence of Mike Fox, Chairman.

12/13.34. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Anna Babcock, Roger Emmett, John Griffin, Margaret Jarrett, Marion Mustoe and Dave Taylor.

12/13.35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

12/13.36. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held 21st June 2012 were approved and signed by the Chairman after the additions of the names of Cllr Alan Walters and John Willson to those being present at the meeting.

12/13.37. Matters Arising

1. Re item 12/13.23.4 the new insurance broker has ensured the required amount of insurance cover at a 50% reduction in premium.
2. Re item 12/13.23.6 there are four candidates to be interviewed for the vacancy of Secretary of State Appointment to the Board.
3. Re item 12/13.23.9 work on the AONB boundary review is on-going.
4. Re item 12/13.29 the Government report on the future of forestry is due 31/01/13

12/13.38. Public Question time

No members of the public were present.

12/13.39. Report from the Executive Committee

Members received a report from the Chief Officer advising the Board members of the matters considered, and decisions taken, by the Executive Committee under delegated powers.

At its meeting on 12th December 2012 the Executive Committee:

1. Received and approved a finance report for the period April-Nov 2012.
2. Discussed and approved a proposed revision to the format of the annual budget.
3. Approved a review of the Board's Financial Regulations.
4. Considered and approved a report recommending a change in the date of the AGM from October to June.
5. Approved a proposal to undertake a review of members' allowances.
6. Received a report on the appointment of an officer to manage the Box Woodland project.
7. Amended and approved a Home Worker's policy and Home Worker's agreement.
8. Approved a proposal for special project study leave.
9. Received and discussed a report on HS2 and approved a recommendation to consider, under specific circumstances, the option of a discontinuous tunnel.
10. Discussed a report on Ash Die back.

The Chilterns Woodland Forum will be held 08/03/13.

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

12/13.40 Proposed change of date of the AGM.

Following the instruction from the full Board at its AGM, the Chief Officer reported that the Executive Committee had considered the case for changing the date of the AGM from October to June. The Executive Committee had decided that there was merit in a case for making such a change from June 2013 without significant long term disadvantages. T

- 1. The Board APPROVED the change of date of its next AGM from October to June 2013 and to hold the AGM thereafter in June.**

10.25 Mike Fox arrived and took the chair.

12/13.41 Review of Members' Allowances.

The Chief Officer reported that following the October 2011 Board instruction to review the members' allowances for 2013-14, the Executive Committee (12/12/12) recommends that a review of the rates for members' allowances is commissioned to allow implementation to take effect from the AGM in June 2013. To allow this the Executive committee will be required to consider a proposal at its next meeting 05/03/13.

The Board discussed the terms of reference:

1. The role of the review panel will be to undertake a review of the members' allowances scheme on a five yearly cycle.
2. The panel will review allowances to ensure the allowances scheme is:
 - a. Adequately rewarding members for their effort and contribution.
 - b. Comparable with similar organisations.
 - c. Affordable
 - d. Capable of being monitored and administered according to best practice.
 - e. Reflects the balance between service which receives a monetary reward and that which is regarded as a voluntary public service.
3. The review will only cover allowances not expenses.
4. It was accepted that an allowance would continue to be paid for membership of the Board, but that the rates reviewed will include the special responsibility allowance for both the Chairman and Vice-chairman.
5. The panel to review whether it is appropriate to pay allowances for membership of the Executive and Planning Committee and, if so, at what rate.
6. Allowances are not based on attendance.
7. The panel will also review the existing policy of linking changes to Members' Allowances with any cost of living award given to staff.

The previously decided Panel will consist of three members; the Finance Officer, the HR advisor to the Board and an independent member. Philippa Batting, Chief Executive of Buckinghamshire Business First has agreed to serve as the independent member.

- 1. The Board AGREED to commission a review of allowances and that a draft report should be submitted to the Executive Committee on 5th March 2013 and subsequently to the full Board on 27th March 2013.**
- 2. The Board CONFIRMED the terms of reference and the proposed membership of the Review Panel.**
- 3. The Board AGREED that should change in the rate of allowances be recommended to and agreed by the Board, these should be implemented from the AGM in June 2013.**
- 4. The Board NOTED that the cost could be up to £2,000.**

12/13.42. 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 27th November 2012 and the decisions taken under delegated powers. The following were noted:

1. Bettina Kirkham had been elected Chairman for the following year.
2. The High Speed 2 update.
3. AONB Management Plan Review.

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

10.45 Claire Forrest, Sarah Wright, Kathy Daly and Cathy Rose, Officers CCB arrived.

12/13.43. Report on the need for a publicity and Promotions Strategy

The Information Officer advised the Board that new technology, contracting budgets and changes in the activity of some key partners meant that it is an appropriate moment for the Board to consider how it should be promoting itself and the AONB. The Board was given a presentation covering the following:

1. The Board has promoted itself and the AONB over many years through well-established means
2. The Boards strategic communication approach has evolved over time.
3. The development of mobile technology gives a broader range of media platforms for promotion.
4. Public expectations of information provision have risen and changed greatly in recent years.
5. The Boards range of work keeps expanding, requiring promotion to larger numbers of audiences.
6. Constraints imposed by budget cuts combined with a need to raise the Boards profile to secure income has meant that the Board needs to promote itself and the AONB effectively making full use of its assets and all other relevant, free online resources.
7. The decline in tourism, conservation and visitor access work undertaken by local authorities and tourist boards' places greater emphasis on the Board's capacity to provide visitor information.

The situation has arisen that there is a need for the Board to have a comprehensive Publicity and Promotion Strategy.

The Board will need to consider:

- a. Its audience
- b. Core message
- c. All aspects of communication
- d. Public events
- e. Fixed features to raise awareness.
- f. Income generation.
- g. Best value.

With many elements to consider in compiling a Publicity and Promotion strategy a Board members workshop is proposed which will take place on the afternoon of the 27th March 2013 following the Board meeting.

- 1. The Board AGREED that a Publicity and Promotion Strategy be drawn up.**
- 2. The Board AGREED that a Board member workshop is organised to develop the strategy.**

12/13.44 Presentation on Box Woodland Project.

The Chief Officer introduced Sarah Wright, the Box Woodland Project Officer, appointed with effect from 7th January 2013 on a part time basis.

In September 2012 the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded the Chilterns Box Woodland project a £79,400 grant.

The Box Woodland Project Officer gave the Board an introduction to the project.

Box (*Buxus sempervirens*) is a native species in the Chilterns, but has become rare following centuries of clearance. There are now only three surviving native woodlands in the UK, the most impressive is considered to be the Ellesborough and Kimble Warrens, which lie wholly within the Chequers estate, near Wendover. It is however believed that there are many surviving fragments scattered across the Chilterns.

1. The primary objective of the project will be to engage volunteers in locating, surveying and recording any remaining Box Woodlands and to promote appropriate management
2. To boost Box populations in the Chilterns, the project will establish two propagation centres and plant a demonstration area at a publicly accessible site.

3. Box is a species with unusual historic uses including musical instruments, printing blocks and nit coombes for the navy. Today it is best known in horticulture. The project will explore and celebrate the historical cultural associations of Box through a number of events.
4. Public engagement and education will be given prominence.

A technical Steering Group has been set up under the Chairmanship of Dr Heather Barrett-Mold. It will provide guidance of the project and also consider the regional and national benefits of the work.

- 1. The Board NOTED that the Box Woodland Project has now commenced following the appointment of Sarah Wright as the Project Officer.**

12/13.45 Report on the Impact of wet weather in 2012.

The Countryside and the Activities and Learning Officers advised members of the impact of the unusual weather in 2012 on the AONB.

The unpredictable, extreme weather has had impacts across the Chilterns in many areas including groundwater levels and flow of chalk streams, crop production (arable and fruit), wildlife, site maintenance, access and recreation.

The winter 2011/12 was one of the driest on record and the year 2012 one of the wettest on record in England. The year had been a challenge for all activity in the Chilterns.

The weather conditions in 2012 had been exceptional following a period of several years of variable weather. The uncertainty is perhaps hardest to manage rather than the weather itself.

Not all impacts were negative and memories are short. The underlying issues of over-abstraction remain. Some event organisers may well become more conservative and more wet weather provision needs to be taken into consideration. Certain forms of farming will become more difficult and potentially more expensive with lower yields.

- 1. The Board NOTED the report and advice on any impacts, especially those which should influence the review of the AONB Management Plan and the Board's own work programme.**

12.20 David Barnard left the meeting.

12/13.46 Report on HS2

The Chief Officer advised members of recent HS2 activities. The proposal for HS2 continues to provide a significant workload and diversion from other aspects of the Board's work.

The Chief Officer reported that the Board needed to consider whether or not to support an option for a longer bored tunnel with a gap of 500 meters to satisfy EU safety guidance. The Executive Committee had issued a provisional statement, which had been provided to all members of the Board. He also advised the Board that there are significant cost and environmental benefits of reducing the design speed.

Most recent activity include:

1. A recent round of community forum meetings.
2. Pan Chilterns Forum organised by the Board.
3. Special bilateral meetings.
4. Government announcement on safeguarding land.
5. Consultation on compensation.
6. Judicial Review hearings.
7. Workshop on the Code of Construction Practice led by Ray Payne.
8. Workshop to consider noise.
9. Meeting with HS2 to discuss design and mitigation options for the section from Mantles Wood to Wendover.

Ray Payne guided the Board through the "Review of the Position Statement on Mitigation" and the paper was discussed by the members. The Board also discussed the benefits of adopting a reduced design speed.

Ray Payne brought to the Boards attention; the unsustainable burden of the additional work load created by HS2 in an already comprehensive programme of work, on the Chief Officer. There is no spare capacity given the heavy work load of other members of staff. The Chief Officer is in need of assistance.

- 1. The Board AGREED, once the Judicial Reviews are completed, to release the statement prepared on the possibility of a longer tunnel including the option of a tunnel with a gap.**
- 2. The Board AGREED to write to the Department for Transport requesting that it instructs HS2 Ltd to adopt a lower design speed for the railway as it passes through the Chilterns.**
- 3. The Board AGREED that the Chief Officer would put a proposal to the next Executive Committee (05/03/13) for additional assistance.**

12/13.47 Review of AONB Boundary and Management Plan

The Chief Officer informed the members that the review of the AONB Management Plan Review has started. Various discussions have taken place and are planned. The consultation programme is being developed. The members had been provided with a comprehensive timetable.

- 1. The Board NOTED the current position in connection with the AONB Management Plan review.**
- 2. The Board WILL continue to inform Officers about key issues and principles into the Review.**

12/13.48. 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.

12/13.49. AOB:

There was no other business.

12/13.50. Date of next meeting: Wednesday 27th March 2013, Latimer, Chesham.

12/13.51. Future dates: Monday 24th June 2013 and Tuesday 17th October 2013.

The meeting closed 13.10

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