



**MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF THE CONSERVATION BOARD FOR
THE CHILTERN'S AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY**

**Held on Tuesday 7th September 2021 at Bledlow Ridge Village Hall, Chinnor Road
HP14 4AJ at 10.00am.**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Appointed by Local Authorities

Cllr David Bartholomew
Cllr Robert Carington
Cllr Carl Jackson
Cllr Steve Jarvis
Cllr Lynn Lloyd

Appointing Body

Oxfordshire County Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Buckinghamshire Council
North Hertfordshire District Council
South Oxfordshire District Council

Appointed by the Secretary of State

Colin Courtney
Paul Mains
John Nicholls
John Shaw
Ian Waller

Secretary of State
Secretary of State- Chairman
Secretary of State- Deputy-Chairman
Secretary of State
Secretary of State

Elected by Parish Councils

Cllr John Griffin
Cllr Charles Hussey
Cllr Sue Rowland
Cllr Adrian Watney

Oxfordshire
Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire
Hertfordshire

CCB Officers

Kath Daly
Elaine King
Graham Hurst
Annette Venters

Countryside Officer
Chief Executive Officer
Finance Officer (S151 Officer)
People & Society Officer

Other

Tom Beeston
Deirdre Hansen

CEO Chiltern Society
Clerk to the Board

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and asked them to introduce themselves.

21/22.5 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Andrea Baughan, Buckinghamshire Council, Alison Doggett, Secretary of State appointee, Cllr Paul Duckett, Central Bedfordshire Council, Geeta Ludhra, Secretary of State appointee, Cllr Peter Martin, Buckinghamshire Council, Cllr Phil McDowell, Dacorum Borough Council, Cllr Richard Newcombe, Buckinghamshire Council, Cllr Phillip Williams Three Rivers District Council and Elizabeth Wilson, Secretary of State appointee.

21/22.6 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

21/22.7 Notice of Urgent Business

None

21/22.8 Notes of the previous Board Briefing 23 June 2021.

The notes were reviewed, and 'Chairman' was added to Members present against Paul Mains. Deputy Chairman was added against John Nicholls.

21/22.9 Minutes of the Annual General meeting 21 April 2021 and the Extra Ordinary Meeting 24 June 2021.

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting 21 April 2021 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

The minutes of the Extra Ordinary Meeting 24 June 2021 were approved and signed by the Chairman after 'Chairman' was added to Members present against Paul Mains and Deputy chairman was added against John Nicholls.

21/22.10 Chairman's Update

The Chairman noted that nearly all the Board vacancies have been filled and we should soon have a full house.

1. He had taken part in the Defra quarterly Arm's Length Bodies meeting. This meeting is chaired by the Defra Permanent Secretary. Conflicts of interests were discussed, and he was pleased to report that we are now up to date thanks to help from CCB staff. The next item to look at is conflicts of interest within the staff team. He also updated the meeting on the Governance review the CCB is working on.
2. We have started the new Induction process, led by the CEO.
3. Bridging the gap between board members and staff is being explored.
4. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services at Buckinghamshire Council, Nick Graham, has agreed to take on the role of Monitoring Officer.
5. Share point should be available for Board Members soon allowing easier access to papers. It is presently being tested out.
6. He has spoken with the Chairman of the Cotswolds AONB and has been invited by him to attend their Board meeting in October.

21/22.11 Code of Conduct

The CEO informed members that the Code of Conduct which all members and co-opted members of the CCB are required to follow has been updated in line with current legislation. Approval was sought for the updated version of the Code of Conduct. A typo

was found which the clerk will correct. Thanks were made to the Clerk for her assistance with the updated document.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the updated Code of Conduct subject to the above correction.**

21/22.12 Board Member Engagement

The Chairman introduced the paper that provides an overview of the opportunities for Board Members to engage more with the work of the CCB.

Board Members have statutory responsibilities, must abide by the Nolan principles of public life and their role is to provide scrutiny and leadership to ensure effective and appropriate governance for the CCB.

The Countryside Officer gave some background to the paper presented. The skills audit introduced by the Deputy Chairman has provided a useful insight to the skills and interests that Board Members bring to the organisation. The audit was introduced to not only to enhance what the CCB can do for the Chilterns AONB, but also to add interest and enjoyment to the Board Members. The skills audit summary will be discussed at the next senior leadership team meeting.

The Countryside Officer is keen to hear Board Members' views on being part of the Board. She outlined the proposed steps:

1. Induction
2. The skills audit
3. Board away day
4. Business plan development
5. Terms of Reference.

The CEO noted that this paper is timely due to her and other AONB lead officers currently working with Defra on the Government's response to the Glover Review, plus the CCB team working with Natural England as part of its new designations programme, both of which includes exploring improved governance arrangements. Collectively we can support moves to deliver wider benefits and outcomes for protective landscapes.

Members reflected on their experiences and gave feedback on the proposals.

The timetable for our own review work and input to Defra is tight. A Task and Finish group consisting of Board Members and staff was proposed and agreed. The Deputy Chairman welcomed volunteers.

- 1. The Board provide feedback on proposals for increasing Board Member engagement and input and APPROVED the forming of a Task and Finish group to consider issues the governance review should consider.**

21/22.13. Matters Arising

None

21/22.14 Public Question Time

No public present

21/22.15 Finance

The Finance Officer verbally reported on the following:

- i. That he had provided detailed financial management information at the last Executive Committee meeting.
- ii. The Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2020/21, which was signed off at the EOM in June, has not yet been signed by the external auditors. They should have completed their work by 30/09/21.
- iii. The internal auditors have discussed their report with him and brought two points to his attention:
 - a. The Financial Regulations were last reviewed in 2018 we have been asked to review them before the end of the financial year.
 - b. The interest on monies on deposit had not been updated on time due to the change over from Sage to Zero accounting systems. He was asked to update this information.
- iv. The Finance Officer reported that the Mend the Gap £3.75m received in advance is shown in a specific reserve. He noted that the management accounts as presented to the Executive Committee show we are on target.

The CEO commented that the Finance Officer does an excellent job, and that they work closely together. She thanked him for all his work.

1. The Board NOTED the Finance report.

21/22.16 Income generation

The CEO gave a verbal report on income. We need to be clear in our Business Plan and budgeting how we fund what we want to do and ensure our income matches our ambitions.

Defra currently provides approximately 80% of our core funding and Local Authorities approximately 20%. Projects are self-funding. We have been told that there is no extra money for protected landscapes from Government. We usually hear about our annual settlement in the April of the year we are working in, and this is a one-year settlement, making budgeting and forecasting extremely challenging.

The Government wants protected landscapes to explore private finance. The Development and Funding Manager has compiled a report setting out the CCB's current funding situation and the opportunities being explored. Report to be circulated.

We have four significant National Lottery Heritage Fund grants. The core staff team of approx. 10 members is funded by our Core funding. While funding for projects is welcome and enables the CCB to deliver more outcomes, for project staff there is continued uncertainty with fixed term contracts, and the CCB risks losing good staff at the end of a contract and is constantly looking for new funding.

Board Members are asked for help in securing more funding.

Members asked question on funding opportunities.

1. The Board NOTED the report.

21/22.17 Board Review

The Chief Executive Officer had provided a comprehensive overview of the team's activities and achievement since the last Board briefing in June. Highlighting the following items:

1. Glover Report: The Government is working on a consultation responding to the Glover Report. This is due to be published in the autumn.
2. Boundary extension work and exploring governance: Natural England and the CCB will be conducting a theory of change exercise for the management and governance element of the programme. Work has started and will increase in the next financial year.
3. Farming in Protected Landscapes: The CCB is administering this Defra-funded, three-year programme. The Countryside Officer reported that a new Farming Engagement Officer assigned to the programme will join the CCB in October and there is additional funding for administrative support.

The scheme supports our work with farmers and other land managers across four themes: Climate, Nature, People and Place. The money is to be directed to the farming community, NGOs and people/groups delivering the key objectives. The funding is front loaded with £50,000 to be spent by February 2022. A priority is to help small farmers and those who may not have been engaged with the CCB or stewardship schemes in the past.

The Countryside Officer thanked Ian Waller for his help and for stepping up to Chair the independent Panel that assesses applications. She thanked her colleagues who have all helped to get the programme up and running.

The CEO added her thanks and commented that the team continue to do an amazing job and work very hard, despite the challenges of Covid.

4. HS2: a petition has triggered a parliamentary debate 13 September. This is an opportunity to be heard and support others. The CCB has published a briefing for MPs.

It was acknowledged by members that the team are achieving a huge amount. The CEO was asked to convey the members thanks to all the team.

1. The Committee NOTED the report.**21/22.18 Presentation by Tom Beeston CEO Chiltern Society**

The CEO of the Chiltern Society gave a presentation on its draft Business Plan 2021-2026.

He explained their business plan, vision, values, mission, the (charitable) objectives, their aims, their membership, the volunteer groups that support their work, their growing volunteer base, their major projects, and the various partnership. Most of their projects are delivered in partnership with the CCB, including the Green Recovery Challenge Fund grant.

The Chairman thanked Tom Beeston for attending and presenting.

21/22.19 Urgent business

None

The Chairman thanked all for attending and thanked the staff for all their work.

Future meetings

<u>Full Board</u>	7 September 2021 7 December 2021 1 March 2022 14 June 2022
<u>Executive Committee</u>	10 August 2021 2 November 2021 1 February 2022 3 May 2022
<u>Planning Committee</u>	14 July 2021 13 October 2021 12 January 2022 13 April 2022

The Chairman.....

Date.....