



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILTERN CONSERVATION BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY 16th October 2014 at Pitstone Memorial Hall, vicarage Road, Pitstone, Bedfordshire LU7 9EY COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 13.00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

Member	Appointing Body
Appointed by Local Authorities	
Cllr. David Collins	Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr. Lynn Lloyd	South Oxfordshire District Council
Cllr Wendy Jordan	Three Rivers District Council
Cllr Marion Mustoe	Central Bedfordshire Council
Cllr David Nimmo Smith	Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr Ian Reay (Chairman)	Hertfordshire County Council
Cllr Chris Richards	Aylesbury Vale District Council
Cllr Jeremy Ryman	Chiltern District Council
Cllr David Taylor	Luton Borough Council

Appointed by the Secretary of State	
Gill Gowing	Secretary of State
Simon Mortimer	Secretary of State
Helen Tuffs	Secretary of State
Ian Waller	Secretary of State
Elizabeth Wilson	Secretary of State

Elected by Parish Councils	
Cllr Simon Deacon	Hertfordshire
Cllr Mary Goldsmith	Bedfordshire
Cllr John Griffin	Oxfordshire
Cllr Anthony Penn	Buckinghamshire
Cllr Barbara Wallis	Buckinghamshire
Cllr Julia Wells	Oxfordshire

Officers	
Allen Beechy	Chalk Streams Officer
Kath Daly	Countryside Officer
Deirdre Hansen	Clerk to the Board
Steve Rodrick	CCB Chief Officer
Chris Smith	CCB Finance Officer
Sarah Wright	CCB Boxwood land Project Officer
Colin White	CCB Planning Officer

14/15 18. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr David Barnard, North Herts District Council, Dr Heather Barrett-Mold, Secretary of State Appointment, Alison Doggett, Secretary of State Appointment, Cllr Roger Metcalfe, Wycombe District Council, Ray Payne, Secretary of State Appointment, Cllr Alan Walters, South Buckinghamshire District Council.

14/15.19. Introduction of new members.

The Chairman welcomed the newly appointed Board Members, Cllr Wendy Jordan (Three Rivers DC) Tony Penn (Buckinghamshire Parish Councils) and Simon Deacon (Hertfordshire Parish Councils) and invited them to introduce themselves to the Board.

14/15.20 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

14/15.21. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held 26th June 2014 were approved and signed by the Chairman after the following amendments were made:

- 14/15.9.1 'Reserve' was added after Budget Equalisation,
- 14/15.10 2nd paragraph reports was amended to report's,
- 14/15.10.8 the 's' was removed from points
- 14/15.15 1st paragraph's' was removed from Chilterns.

14/15.22. Matters Arising

The Chief Officer informed the Board that:

1. The Hillforts Conference had been well attended and the feedback had been very encouraging. This conference may well turn out to be an annual event.
2. The Ridgeway Trail new partnership has been formed. Oxfordshire County Council is the host and a new Ridgeway Trail Partnership Officer will be appointed. A Partnership Management Committee will be formed and they should start meeting in the autumn. A Board representative is to be part of the Management Committee.

14/15.23. Public Question time

No public questions.

14/15.24. Election of Parish Councillor to the Planning Committee

This item was pushed back awaiting the arrival of the Chair of the Planning Committee.

14/15.25. Annual Audit Return

The Finance Officer reported that the Audit Commission had completed their audit of the Board's accounts for 2013-14. The opinion of the auditors based on the information provided is that the annual return is in accordance with proper practices and no matters have come to their attention that give cause for concern that the relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

The internal auditor has brought two matters to the attention of the Board as detailed in the "Issues arising report":

- a. Cash banking: this has already been addressed, cash to be banked sooner.
- b. When changing the Board's insurers a significantly reduced premium has led to a reduced cover for fidelity guarantee. During discussion with the insurers they indicated that any increase would be subject to a substantial additional premium. The Executive Committee decided that the increase in premium was disproportionate to the risk, but will review the position annually.

1. The Board APPROVED and ACCEPTED the audited annual return and the issues arising report for 2013-14 and AGREED to the responses and action set out above.

14/15.26. Election of Parish Councillor to the Planning Committee.

The Chief Officer advised the Board that following the AGM in June a vacancy had remained on the Planning Committee which could only be filled by a parish councillor. Since the AGM two new parish council members had been appointed to the Board. The Board was required to make an appointment to the Planning Committee.

Both new members, Simon Deacon and Tony Penn, sought election to the Committee. Following an election Tony Penn was duly elected.

1. The Board APPOINTED Tony Penn to the Planning Committee with immediate effect until the AGM in June 2015.

14/15.27. Report from the Executive Committee

The Chief Officer reported the matters considered and decisions taken, by the Executive Committee under delegated powers at its meeting on 27th September 2014.

The Executive Committee had:

1. Received a Finance Report April to August 2014. There were no exceptional items to report.
2. Reviewed the Risk Register; the impending retirement of the Chief Officer was a major changed risk.
3. Approved the Annual Treasury Management Report- the returns for 2013-14 were close to estimate.
4. Reviewed the Financial Regulations and updated expenditure authority levels as advised by the auditor.
5. Adopted new Discretionary Pension Policies as required by the recent changes to the Local Government Pension scheme.
6. Discussed the programme for recruiting a Chief Officer.
7. Was advised of recent Board member appointments. It was agreed to prepare a clearer specification for the role of a Board member.
8. Discussed and agreed the principles for a High Speed 2 Community and Environment Fund.
9. Agreed that the proposed alumni of former Board members should be referred to as a Fellowship and open to members who have served for at least three years.

The Chairman informed the Board that following an internal selection process Kath Daly had been appointed as acting Chief Officer for a 6 month term commencing 1st January 2015.

The role of Chief Officer had not been reviewed in the last ten years and Kath Daly's remit would be to review the role to ensure that the Boards statutory requirements were best met and that the Board would remain fit for purpose for the next 5-10 years.

Kath Daly was invited to lay out the background of the review, the context, the timeline and potential aspects of the review. There is a new management plan in place, the staff team is stable, but the Board membership is undergoing significant changes.

A steering committee has been set up (Ian Reay, Ray Payne and Helen Tuffs) to oversee the review. The Chairman invited any other members interested in joining the Review Group to contact him.

The proposed terms of reference of the review will be presented at the Executive Committee in December and a final presentation made to the Board in January 2015, the recommendations that follow are to be presented to the Board in April 2015 and implementation to begin to take place April-June 2015. It is intended to involve external partners.

The Chairman reminded the Board that this is a large task and that there may be budget implications.

The Board discussed the proposals and contributed suggestions.

- 1. The Board NOTED the issues considered by the Executive Committee at its meeting on the 17th September and the decisions made under delegated authority.**
- 2. The Board NOTED the presentation made by Kath Daly and the suggested comments.**

14/15.28. 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 10th September 2014 and the decisions taken under delegated powers. The following items were discussed:

1. Election of Chairman; Helen Tuffs was nominated and unanimously elected as Chairman of the Committee until the Board's next AGM.
2. The Presentation of the plans for Highlands Farm Henley
3. High Speed 2 update
4. AONB Management Plan Review
5. Events
6. Development Plans responses.
7. Planning applications update

The Planning Officer gave some guidance on the matters discussed and the member provided comments.

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

14/15.29. Report on the Box Woodland Project

The Box Woodland Project Officer gave a detailed presentation on the success of the work achieved by the project and future aspirations and possibilities. Many skilled volunteers had become involved and a successful web presence had been created. The project runs from January 2013 till June 2015.

The Board discussed ways of continuing the legacy of this project.

The Chairman thanked Sarah Wright for her excellent work on the project.

- 1. The Board NOTED and would help promote the success of this project, the projects web pages and volunteer opportunities.**
- 2. The Board PROVIDED feedback on future aspirations as had been set out in the presentation and papers on informing the Board of the plan for the future and the legacy of the project.**

14/15.30. Report on Chilterns Chalk Streams Project.

The Chalk Streams Project Officer gave a detailed presentation to the Board on the Project's achievements so far this year and the objectives for the remainder of the year.

The Chalk Streams Project was set up to protect and conserve all major chalk streams in the AONB. It is a partnership, led by the Board, with its own project officer. The projects objectives are to raise awareness, provide advice, encourage practical conservation, provide education and improve physical access on chalk streams, their habitat and wildlife.

Achievements reported so far this year include:

1. The Annual Forum
2. Seven advisory visits on four rivers completed.
3. Five habitat enhancing training workshops were held on Chilterns chalk streams
4. Restoration of the river Wye at Desborough Park recreation ground.
5. An enhancement scheme on the river Ver near Colney Street was completed.
6. Training courses have been held.
7. The project is the co-host of the catchment based approach in the Colne catchment.
8. The project continues to support the Thames and South Chilterns catchment partnership.
9. The project is working on a review of the State of England's Chalk Rivers report.

The objectives for the remainder of the year include:

1. Work on the river Bulbourne
2. Work on the river Misbourne
3. The Sarratt meadows project
4. Advice to the River Chess Association
5. Complete and launch an Education Website.

Board member had the opportunity at ask questions and provide feedback.

- 1. The Board PROVIDED feedback on the achievements to date and the planned programme for the remainder of the year.**

14/15.31. Report on the New Environment Land Management Scheme (NELMS) and the Farm Advice Project.

The Conservation and Landscape Officer gave a presentation and a detailed report to the Board on the developments with the national agri-environment and advised the Board of the developments on the local Farm Advice initiative.

1. Due to reforms to the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and due to cuts to UK Government funding existing schemes are being rationalised and will be re-launched as the NELMS due to come into effect January 2016. The details of the scheme are still vague and the near closure of existing schemes has created a considerable hiatus.
2. In 2011 the Environment Agency (EA) asked the Board to deliver a 3 year Farm Advice Project to address issues of diffuse pollution and sedimentation of water bodies on farmland. The EA contribute £50,000 to the project, the Board £4,000 plus staff time. Workshops have been held, mail outs have taken place, farm visits have been made and the Board has worked closely with the EA.

It is hoped to continue in this vein with the inclusion of a small grants scheme to encourage more farmers to engage with the programme.

In recent times the focus of the Boards efforts in working with the farming sector has been to promote the agri-environment and forestry grants. To date most of the AONB has been eligible for grant aid and

uptake has been high. The proposed changes, reduction of grant availability and proposed targeting will mean a significant reduction in the area of land covered by these schemes. This in turn will lead to a reduction in the work undertaken.

The Board is advising National England of the potential impact and is seeking a broadening of proposed target areas.

The reduced significance of the grant schemes is forcing the Board to rethink how it encourages environmentally friendly land management in its efforts to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB and its working relationship with the farming and forestry sectors.

Members discussed the issues and Ian Waller, as farmer, provided some additional information. A working group of members and officer will be organised to give the matter consideration.

The Conservation and Landscape Officer was commended for his work on this project.

12.15 David Nimmo-Smith left the meeting.

- 1. The Board NOTED the CAP reform and the agri-environment scheme developments impacting Chiltern Farmers.**
- 2. The Board AGREED to set up a working group to investigate the promotion of environmentally friendly land management in partnership with the farming and forestry sectors.**

14/15.32 HS2- Community and Environment Fund

The Chief Officer informed the Board of the request to Parliament to provide monies for a HS2 Community and Environment Fund in recognition of the burden of hosting national infrastructure to be used and allocated by local communities to projects they deem to be local priority. A report on the principles of the proposed scheme had been approved by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 17th September.

1. It is commonly accepted that communities affected by the burden of hosting national infrastructure should benefit in some way in addition to the formal compensation scheme; there are a number of recent examples.
2. Such a scheme is a matter for parliament to deal with.
3. The Board and Buckinghamshire local authorities and a number of other affected organisations have formed a group to develop a proposal.
4. The scheme should cover the whole route.
5. The group has come up with a scheme for a fund in the region of £250m
6. Buckinghamshire CC has been nominated as the lead local authority amongst the 51M group of local authorities
7. The Board will contribute staff and a financial contribution in the order of £2,000.

The draft proposal was presented to the Board with the agenda and the Board discussed and refined the proposal for a scheme that meets everybody's needs.

On 1st October the Government announced that it will be creating a fund of up to £30m to support communities and businesses near to the HS2 route. The Board welcomed the fund, but the modest sum is disappointing. It is considerably lower than comparable settlements and it will cease operating after 2027. The Government has appointed consultants to develop the proposal instead of a fund to be administered locally.

The fund applied to the whole line over 10 years means that the sums available for the Chilterns is very limited.

Considerable additional efforts will need to be made to secure compensation, mitigation and design improvements during the design and construction phase.

- 1. The Board REFINED and APPROVED the principles for an HS2 Community and Environment Fund.**
- 2. The Board AGREED to lobby for more funds to be available than £30 million.**
- 3. The Board AGREED that the funds should be administered and distributed by a local body.**

14/15.33. Report on Chilterns LEADER programme 2015-2020.

The Chief Officer reported that the LEADER programme will restart in January 2015 for 5 years. A paper on the new programme had been distributed. It should be noted that the geographic definition of the Chilterns has changed since the last programme.

The Conservation Board has been closely involved in the bidding process, preparing strategy and by serving on the Local Action Group (LAG), the Chief Officer and the Chairman have served to date on the LAG.

The current Chief Officer recommended that the Chief Officer continues to serve as well as a Board member. He will prepare a brief of the work involved and circulate.

- 1. The Board AGREED that a Board member with relevant expertise and the Chief Officer are put forward as members of the Local Action Group in place of the retiring Chief Officer.**

12.30 Jeremy Ryman left the meeting

14/15.34. Works Programme Progress Report.

The Chief Officer provided a report on the Works Programme Progress. Members commented that the presentations on the projects and work of the Board were very helpful and useful.

- 1. The Board NOTED the work programme 2014-15.**

14/15.35. Presentations.

The Chairman informed the Board that this was the last meeting Simon Mortimer would be attending as his appointment as a Secretary of State appointed member of the Board has come to an end after 10 years. He was presented with a token of the Boards appreciation of his work for the Board during those 10 years.

Simon Mortimer thanked the Board and commented that he had enjoyed his time serving the Board.

The Chairman announced that this would be Steve Rodrick's last Board meeting before retiring. One of the new research bursaries announced in "Chalk and Trees" is named the "Steve Rodrick Bursary for Enjoyment of the Countryside" details are available on the website. A formal presentation will be made in December.

14/15.36. Date of next meeting: Thursday 29th January 2015 at 10.00am location TBC.

Dates of future meetings: Thursday 26th March 2015, Thursday 25th June 2015 and Thursday 8th October 2015

The meeting closed 13.00

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