



**The
Chilterns
CONSERVATION BOARD**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILTERN CONSERVATION BOARD HELD ON WEDNESDAY 23 MARCH 2011 IN THE PENN CHAMBER, THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL, THREE RIVERS HOUSE, NORTHWAY, RICKMANSWORTH, HERTS WD3 1RL, COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.32 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

Member

Appointing Body

Appointed by Local Authorities

Cllr David Barnard	North Herts District Council
Cllr Marion Mustoe	Central Bedfordshire 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 David Nimmo Smith	Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr Bill Storey	Hertfordshire County Council

Appointed by Secretary of State

Mike Fox (Chairman)	Secretary of State
Dr Heather Barrett-Mold	Secretary of State
Bettina Kirkham	Secretary of State
Dr Simon Mortimer	Secretary of State
Helen Tuffs	Secretary of State

Elected by Parish Councils

Cllr John Griffin	Oxfordshire
Cllr Margaret Jarrett	Hertfordshire
Cllr Shirley Judges	Buckinghamshire
Cllr Barbara Wallis	Buckinghamshire

Officers

Maureen Keyworth	BCC and Clerk to the Board
Steve Rodrick	CCB Chief Officer
Colin White	CCB Planning Officer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies were received from John Willson, Cllr Julia Wells, Kevin Mayne, Cllr Brian Norman, Cllr Mary Goldsmith, Cllr Roger Emmett, Cllr Alan Walters and Cllr Geoff Andrews

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2011 were agreed as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

None.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No members of the public were present.

6. REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Members received the report of the Chief Officer.

The Board discussed the Risk Register and noted that the two revisions to the document related to maintaining staff morale and security of the financial situation. The Chief Officer stated that the financial situation was satisfactory but there was a need to have plans in place with regard to how the Board will cope with any changes over the next three financial years. It was not anticipated that any announcements on the Government Budget will make a difference to the Board's financial situation.

The Board also noted the commitment of £20,000 to re-develop the website. This is a crucial part of the fund raising plan and any expenditure will be recovered in the long term.

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

7. REPORT FROM THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Members received the report of the Planning Officer, the purpose of which was to bring to the attention of the Board the items considered by the Planning Committee and decisions taken under delegated powers. The following was noted.

A draft position statement has been drawn in line with other AONBs and will be put out for consultation with Board members, technical groups and local authority officers. This is in relation to pressures relating to developments affecting the setting of the AONB. A report will be presented at the next Board Meeting. This was considered an important step forward particularly with regard to the plans for Booker Air Park and the milk processing plant at Aston Clinton, both of which will have an impact on the Chilterns.

The Annual Planning Forum will be held on 10 May. Members were asked to inform the Planning Officer that they will be attending. Items will include the Localism Bill and the implications with regard to Parish Plans and the Village Design Statements. The Chairman of the Planning Committee reported that she and the Planning Officer attended the Cotswold Annual Forum. David Buxton of DCLG gave a useful summary of his thinking on Neighbourhood Plans, which has been published on the Cotswold website.

With regard to review of the AONB and National Park boundaries, the Chief Officer

said he had contacted Natural England who agreed to provide further information.

The Board NOTED the report of the Planning Committee

8. BOARD MEMBER'S ALLOWANCE 2011-2012

Members received the report of the Chief Officer, the purpose of which was to report to the Board on the recommendation of the Executive Committee and to seek a decision on the level of Board member allowances.

The options discussed by the Executive Committee were set out in the report together with the anticipated reductions resulting from each of the options. It was noted that the Executive Committee was conscious of the need to recognise that members should be able to attend regardless of their own financial situation. However, it was at each member's discretion as to whether they wished to claim allowances. It was noted that the impact of any savings would not be seen until 2012/13.

Members' allowances were introduced at the inception of the Board and were set at District Council rates. Taking into account the cost of living adjustments and the freeze in allowances in the past years, this equates to a 4% cut since allowances were introduced. The Executive Committee have recommended that the allowance should be frozen for the time being and reviewed in 12 months time.

The Committee felt the best policy was to retain a link between Members' allowances and the cost of living award made to staff.

Members discussed payment of allowances to members of the SDF Panel, which meets six to eight times per annum plus site visits, and equates to more time than those for members on the Executive and Planning Committees.

It was noted that there was no mechanism for reviewing members' allowances and members agreed on the need for an independent review of allowances to coincide with the budget review. It was suggested that this should be in place for 2012/13. It was agreed that a mechanism be put in place to review members' allowances in the future.

The Board AGREED

- 1. To accept the recommendation of the Executive Committee to freeze all members' allowances for 2011/12**
- 2. That allowances should not be paid to members of the SDF Panel in 2011/12**

9. BUDGET 2011-2012

Members received the report of the Chief Officer and Finance Officer, the purpose of which was to present a draft of the 2011/12 budget for approval.

The Board was informed that the budget figures had not altered greatly since the last report. Currently, not all Local Authorities had confirmed their grant allocation and the budget would not be finalised until the information had been received. The current budget was based on a 35% cut in Local Authority funding.

The Chief Officer suggested that it may be useful to have a Memorandum of

Agreement with local authorities covering their financial contribution for the next three years. In answer to a member's question about the notice period if an Authority wished to pull out of the Board, it was noted that a Local Authority cannot pull out of the Board, but can refuse to give support. Members were in agreement that a Memorandum of Agreement should be considered for those local authorities which express a desire to have one.

With regard to reducing expenditure and increasing income from other sources, as already reported it had been agreed that the website would be re-developed. Through this, sales would be promoted and opportunities would be sought for advertising and sponsorship.

The estimated end of year position for the 2011/12 will require a draw down from the budget equalisation reserve of £18,000. The total draw down over the next four years is likely to be between £60,000 and £70,000.

The Board had previously discussed whether contributions from Parish Councils should be sought, and it was noted that if the Board was to make such a request it would need to do so quickly because the Parish Council budgets would be set in the Autumn and it would be considered too late to increase the precept.

Work on the historic environment was also raised. The Chief Officer stated that the work on the Historic Landscape Characterisation, which had dominated the work programme in recent years was now at an end and they would need to consider the future role of the Historic Environment Group. The Chairman of the Planning Committee said that this work should continue and she would be happy to prepare a paper on the way forward, to present to the Board.

With regard to fundraising, a member suggested that this work could be carried out by a volunteer group rather than add pressure to staff members. The Chief Officer said the funding would only be used for operational costs and the target was not vast and should be achievable. Another member suggested setting up a 'Friends of the CCB' as a way of receiving donations but it was considered that this may overlap the work of other organisations such as The Chiltern Society.

It was suggested that the employment of an expert in fundraising should be considered. Such an experienced person could recover their costs and could also support the Board in drawing up a fundraising strategy.

The Board

- 1. NOTED and AGREED the budget for 2011-12.**
- 2. NOTED that an updated version of the Medium Term Financial Forecast will be prepared once local authority contributions were confirmed.**

10. REPORT ON HS2

Members received the report of the Chief Officer, the purpose of which was to advise the Board of the public consultation phase and seek agreement on the Board's programme during the consultation period.

The consultation process had started and was web based. Copies of the main and summary reports were difficult to get but hard copies could be obtained on request. This issue had been raised with MPs and ministers.

The public exhibition dates had been announced with the first one held at Euston. The exhibition would not reach the Chilterns until May. It was not clear how tailored each exhibition would be to local venues and what level of expertise be available. HS2 had said that a series of visualisations had been prepared. It was assumed that they would be in the exhibitions but the Chief Officer believed they should also be displayed on the website.

It was noted that there was no legal requirement to prepare an Environmental Impact Assessment and only the strategic Appraisal of Sustainability had been published. The figures in the revised Business Plan also appeared to be weaker than before and most gains will go to London.

The knock on implications for existing rail transport were now emerging but were not apparent in the documentation. The upgrade to the West Coast mainline could be completed within a shorter timescale.

The anti HS2 alliance was broadening and the CPRE had now expressed its opposition. It was also noted that the Labour Party was reviewing its Transport Policy and a poll specifically on HS2, resulted in 96% voting against it. Action Groups Against HS2 (AGAST) were trying to fill the gap between high level lobbying and retaining lobbyists with expertise to get over the message that HS2 will have an impact on everyone in the country. The 'Conserving the Chilterns and Countryside group' had employed a lobbyist but their aim was to have the route moved.

In discussion the following was noted:

- It was hoped the Board's draft response would be ready before the end of May, in order that other organisations can also use it.
- The Transport Select Committee will be examining the business case for HS2.
- The Chief Officer urged members to encourage friends and family around the country to object
- Beyond Birmingham the profile for HS2 is still low

The Board AGREED to

- 1. Promote awareness of the consultation and encourage responses on both the overall strategy and impact of the preferred route.**
- 2. Publish information on the local environmental impact which is not provided by DfT and HS2 Ltd**
- 3. Continue participating actively in the Stop HS2 campaign.**
- 4. Contribute up to £2,000 to the costs of commissioning external technical experts to assess the revised business case and environmental impacts.**
- 5. Prepare a full draft response for consideration by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 18 May.**

11. REPORT ON WATER MEADOWS - LITTLE MISSENDEN AND SARRATT

Members received the report of the Chief Officer which sought to inform the Board of the new partnership with the Environment Agency.

The Board also received a presentation.

With regard to Doctors Meadow, the cost is £23,000 and it was hoped that the work would be completed by the Winter.

The Environment Agency has provided further funding of £23,000 for Sarratt Water Meadows. The agreement has been signed and they are now working with the landowner.

A member raised concerns about Hughenden Stream, which is in poor condition. The Officer stated that work was being undertaken with Wycombe District Council through Hughenden Park. A feasibility Study has been commissioned for the rest of the stream through the Hughenden grounds. Investigations on the low flow have shown an obstruction at Mill End rather than at the Pumping Station.

The Board NOTED the proposed partnership with the Environment Agency to improve the water meadows at Little Missenden and Sarratt.

12. REPORT ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND

Members received the report of the Chief Officer which sought to inform the Board of how the SDF was allocated in 2010-2011 and to seek guidance on the priority categories for 2011-12.

It was noted that over the years there had been 152 projects from 95 organisations, with a total of £371,000 in grants given out. Members agreed that the value that it achieves cannot be underestimated.

The Board

1. NOTED the success of the SDF in 2010-2011

2. APPROVED the priority categories for 2011-2012

13. REPORT ON THE CHILTERN LEADER PROGRAMME

Members received the report of the Chief Officer, which sought to inform the Board that the budget of the Chilterns LEADER programme will be reduced and to decide whether to make representations to DEFRA.

The Board was informed that the programme would be reduced by 26% in future, which would mean less grants and limits to administer the fund. Currently the programme was near capacity for 2011/12 and it was hoped some applications could be deferred to the following year.

The Chief Officer said the feeling was that if all interested groups wrote to the Minister, they may be listened to, particularly the CLA and NFU. It was noted there is no guaranteed funding for 2012/13 and it could end up with money having to be paid back to Europe.

The Board SUPPORTED sending requests to government to reduce the scale of the cuts and to show flexibility in order to cope with them.

14. DATE OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Conservation Board, will be held on Wednesday 15 June 2011 at 10.00am in St Giles' Church Hall, The Ride, Totternhoe LU6 1RH. Dates of future meetings:

19 October including the AGM

CHAIRMAN

