

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE CHILTERN CONSERVATION BOARD

2018/19

BACKGROUND

The Chilterns is a beautiful area of rolling chalk hills, woodlands, streams and quiet valleys with brick and flint cottages. In 1965 it was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), in recognition that it is one of the finest landscapes in the country. The Chilterns Conservation Board is the public body with responsibility for protecting and enhancing the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It was established by Parliamentary Order in 2004, following national legislation to improve the protection and management of AONBs: to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Chilterns AONB; and to increase the understanding and enjoyment of the AONB's special qualities. In addition, the Conservation Board has a secondary duty to foster the social and economic well-being of local communities, where that is compatible with its primary duties.

The Chilterns AONB is one of 46 AONBs in UK. AONBs belong to the same family as National Parks which is recognised as containing the finest countryside in the UK. The Chilterns AONB covers 833 square kilometres. Its landscapes have been shaped by the activities of farmers and foresters over hundreds of years and many ancient countryside features can still be found. It is also a haven for wildlife such as the spectacular red kite and the endangered water vole. The Chilterns AONB has a resident population of 80,000 and attracts millions of visits every year by people who come to enjoy its landscapes and recreational opportunities.

MEMBERSHIP

The Conservation Board has 27 members, drawn from a wide range of communities across the Chilterns. Each member is independent and does not represent any other organisation. Thirteen members are nominated by the local authorities in the Chilterns, 8 are appointed by the Secretary of State from applications by the public and 6 are elected by parish councils.

The work of the Conservation Board is guided by the Management Plan for the Chilterns AONB, which was updated in February 2019 and is regularly reviewed. (see <https://www.chilternsaonb.org/conservation-board/management-plan.html>)

The Plan provides a framework for the actions of the Board, its partner organisations and local communities across the whole Chilterns. Four fifths of the Conservation Board's core funding is supplied by central government and the remaining fifth comes from local authorities. The Board also makes bids to other sources of funding to raise support for individual projects.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

On your desk you will find a copy of the CCB Annual Review which provides a full analysis of all the work being undertaken. I do encourage you all to read this report as there is a huge amount of work being undertaken to preserve the beauty of our national heritage. It is of particular importance that you read the final page where the CCB's vision is provided.

Also of importance on the penultimate page you will see that in June 2018 the Board unanimously agreed to request a review to consider National Park status. It is felt that the Chilterns AONB deserves enhanced recognition to enable it to fulfil its purpose for caring for the Chilterns. National Park status would provide greater recognition to the value of the Chilterns and would create the potential for a more strategic view to be taken on the planning of development across the whole AONB area. However, this request will take a very long time to be considered due to the government review currently being undertaken of National Park/AONB status called for by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

CCB Management

The CCB owes a huge debt to the Chief Executive, Sue Holden, who has set a strong and robust agenda for taking the CCB forward. This includes visiting local authority Leaders and Chief Executives as well as setting up meetings with government ministers and officers. It is with great sadness that she has elected to stand down from this role in July 2019. She will be replaced by Dr Elaine King, currently a Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Board appointment. A scientist by training, Elaine has a degree in Applied Biology from Brunel University and a PhD for her research on bovine tuberculosis in badgers and cattle from Bristol University. I will be encouraging her to come and meet all Members at a Members Briefing event to be arranged in the autumn.

BILL BENDYSHE-BROWN

THE COUNTY COUNCIL'S CHILTERN CONSERVATION BOARD REPRESENTATIVE