



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2007, IN CHILTERN CONSERVATION BOARD OFFICES, THE LODGE, CHINNOR, COMMENCING AT 10.30 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.24 PM.**

**Present:**

Cllr Rhys Goodwin	Board Member
Sir John Johnson	Board Member
Cllr Marion Mustoe	Board Member
Richard Pushman	Board Member
Steve Rodrick	CCB Chief Officer
Chris Smith	CCB Finance Officer
Cllr Bill Storey	Board Member
Cllr Alan Walters	Board Member
Mike Woods	Buckinghamshire County Council

**In Attendance:**

Maureen Keyworth	BCC and Clerk to the Board
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**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Shirley Judges, Richard Brown and Kevin Mayne.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

**3. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 May were agreed as a correct record.

**4. MATTERS ARISING**

**Item 4: Matters Arising**

The Chief Officer confirmed that planning permission had been granted for the solar panels and they were now installed. Boris Johnson MP will be visiting the Offices on 23 November from 11.30 to 12.15pm for the official 'switching on' of the panels.

**Item 7: Finance Report 2007-08**

A press release had been published regarding the Board's concerns over funding, and as a result the CAONB had received local publicity. Members noted that there were no longer any delays in payment of quarterly grant payments by Natural England.

No further information had been received regarding cost of living awards. The Committee resolved to review the situation following a national settlement.

### **Item 8 Review of the AONB Management Plan**

The Committee noted that the services of Alan Wheeler had now been secured. Alan was making progress with preparation of the Strategic Environmental Assessment.

#### **5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public present to ask questions.

#### **6. AUDIT COMMISSION RETURN FOR 2006-07**

Members received the report of the Finance Officer, the purpose of which was to present the Annual Return, based on the accounts for 2006-07, for approval and for submission to the Audit Commission.

The Committee noted that the 'light touch' audit, had replaced the visit by the Audit Commission.

The Internal Auditor was in agreement with the Annual Return.

**The Committee APPROVED the Annual Return for 2006-07 and authorised the Chairman and Chief Officer to sign it prior to submission to the Audit Commission. This was duly done.**

#### **7. REVIEW OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

Members received the report of the Finance Officer, the purpose of which was to advise the Committee of amendments to the Financial Regulations and Financial Instructions to reflect both administrative changes and developing practices in financial governance.

The Committee noted from the report that additional sections had been included which had been previously requested. The Regulations were now in line with best practice. It was also noted that amendments to the Standing Orders as to Contracts were not required.

Discussion took place with regard to Reserves and whether there was guidance on the percentage required. The Board's reserves were currently approximately 40%. However, as the Board was not a precepting Authority, the Committee considered that it needed reserves to provide the necessary financial security. The Finance Officer stated that once he had drawn up a three year plan, further discussion could take place on the amount of reserves needed. Identifying reserves for specific purposes would be informative.

The Chief Officer confirmed that the Charities Commission guidelines were used which suggested three to four months running costs. The current reserves had seen the Board through the initial months prior to Natural England's funding having been received, without the need to have an overdraft.

**The Committee AGREED to advise the Board to adopt the updated Financial Regulations and Financial Instructions and NOTED that the existing set of Standing Orders as to Contracts will remain unchanged.**

#### **8. FLEXIBLE RETIREMENT POLICY**

Members received the report of the Chief Officer, the purpose of which was to advise the Board on the need to adopt a Flexible Retirement Policy as soon as possible.

The Chief Officer suggested that the Buckinghamshire County Council policy be used as a model, subject to some changes in the wording to suit the CCB.

The Policy would be reviewed once further HR support had been recruited. In this connection, members noted that advertisements had been placed as well as contact being made with local companies. Interviews would be taking place on 19 October.

**The Committee AGREED to advise the Board that it adopts the Flexible Retirement Policy based on the model version produced by Buckinghamshire County Council.**

**The Committee also AGREED that the policy should be reviewed when the Board has been able to engage specialist HR support and a report presented to the Executive Committee within the next year.**

## **9. REPORT ON ACHIEVING CARBON NEUTRALITY**

Members received the Report of the Chief Officer and Planning Officer, the purpose of which was to advise the Board on how carbon neutrality might be achieved by 2011.

The Committee noted that the current carbon generation was 31.4 tonnes per annum broken down as follows:

20.9 tonnes (office, staff and members)

10.5 tonnes (emissions generated by delegates attending CCB events)

The aim was for carbon neutrality within three years, which will include the adoption of a green tariff for energy once the current contract expires in 2008.

The options to achieve carbon neutrality are limited and therefore the Board will need to look to carbon offsetting. However, because of the uncertainties and poor media coverage of some offset schemes, the Chief Officer proposed that the Board should have its own carbon offsetting scheme through distribution of low energy light bulbs to community facilities and planting of trees. A proportion of delegate fees for conferences will be put towards the costs, as well as the savings through reduced operating costs. It was hoped that through these measures the Board could achieve a zero net carbon footprint by 2011.

**1. The Committee NOTED the current measures to reduce carbon emissions.**

**The Committee AGREED**

**2. That the Board should create its own Carbon Emissions Offsetting Scheme.**

**3. That the Offsetting Scheme should be based, in 2007-08, on planting 100 native trees and giving away 150 low energy light bulbs.**

**4. The Board should switch to green tariff for its energy supply from September 2008 onwards – subject to agreement that the renewable energy is being generated in ways acceptable to the Board.**

**5. That a Budget of £2,000 be created, based on £500 savings on energy and mileage costs, £1,000 raised from delegates fees for events the Board organises and £500 allocated from the core budget.**

## **10. PROGRESS ON REVIEWING THE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Members received the report of the Chief Officer and Consultant with regard to progress on reviewing the AONB Management Plan.

The Committee noted that progress on the Strategic Environmental Assessment is slower than anticipated because of the amount of data that is required. Much of the Assessment will be based on the best available information rather than Chilterns specific information.

Workshops will be held in the next few months and it is also proposed that in depth discussions will be held on the afternoon of the next Board meeting and at the Annual Forum.

Members noted that Alan Wheeler has made a positive contribution to progress of the work.

**The Committee NOTED that the process of reviewing the Plan had begun.**

#### **11. REPORT ON EU FUNDED PROGRAMMES (LEADER AND INTERREG IVB)**

Members received the Report of the Chief Officer, the purpose of which was to advise members of current involvement in bidding for EU funds and to report that SEEDA has invited a full bid from the Chilterns to the LEADER Fund.

The LEADER programme deals with funds from the Rural Development Programme for England. The Board prepared an expression of interest for the Chilterns. The deadline for first round bids is 19 January 2008. Business Link will be co-ordinating the preparation of the bid.

The Chief Officer informed members that SEEDA has indicated there will not be enough money for all bids and is placing emphasis on work connected to farming and forestry. Decisions on successful bids will be made by May/June 2008. Members were also informed that the Chiltern Bid does not have to be split into two parts.

With regard to the Interreg IVb, bidders must have European partners. Work is currently being undertaken with partners in developing links between the countryside and urban areas around Paris and London. Matched funding will be through the Sustainable Development Fund. Kent County Council is doing most of the preparatory work.

Alan Walters informed members that South Bucks District Council is also interested in the Leader Programme. Currently there are three bids in for Buckinghamshire, one of which is in the Colne Valley.

It was agreed that the Chief Officer would write a briefing note on the LEADER programme to all members.

#### **The Committee**

- 1. Noted the Board's involvement with bids to the LEADER and Interreg IVb Programmes and endorsed continuing staff involvement with the preparation of both bids.**
- 2. AGREED to encourage Board members to become involved with the LEADER Local Action Groups.**
- 3. AGREED in principle to employ a LEADER programme manager, providing the costs are fully covered by the LEADER programme.**

#### **12. ANNUAL FORUM (9TH NOVEMBER)**

Members received the Report of the Chief Officer, the purpose of which was to seek the Committee's approval of the planned arrangements for the Annual Forum 2007.

**The Committee APPROVED the programme for the Annual Forum.**

### **13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

### **14. DATE OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS**

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be held on Tuesday 11 December 2007 at 10.30am.

Future Dates

<b>Board Meeting 2008</b>	<b>Executive Committee 2008</b>
22 January	27 February
26 March	21 May
18 June	17 September
15 October	10 December
21 January (2009)	

### **15. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

#### **RESOLVED**

**That the press and public be excluded for the following item which is exempt by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972 because it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)**

### **16. FINANCE REPORT 2007-08**

Members received the report of the Chief Officer and Finance Officer, the purpose of which was to advise members of the Board; of the financial position to the end of August and likely position at the end of the financial year.

The Committee noted that income was on target. Arrangements are now in place with Natural England whereby future quarterly grant payments will be received promptly. Expenditure was 17% below profile but this is expected to change as the year progresses.

One virement of £4,864 is proposed between Countryside Management and the Project Support Budget.

Because project budgets span more than one year, work is currently being undertaken to produce a document giving an overview of projects as a whole.

Higher interest rates have made a positive impact on the budget.

#### **The Committee**

- 1. NOTED the current financial position**
- 2. NOTED progress on other finance related activity**
- 3. APPROVED the virement of £4,864 from Countryside Management to Project Support.**

## **17. PERSONNEL REPORT**

Members received the report of the Chief Officer, the purpose of which was to ask the Committee to agree to the Board taking out a policy to provide financial support for employees in the event of them requiring health care (Health Cash Plan) and to note the other items presented.

### **Health Cash Plan for Employees**

Members were asked to consider the introduction of a Health Cash Plan through HSBC, which would provide a level of assistance for a range of medical care, as noted in the Report.

**The Committee AGREED that the Health Cash Plan be taken out at Level 1 for all existing staff, and that all new staff become eligible once they have completed their probationary period.**

**CHAIRMAN**