



CONSERVATION BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILTERN'S CONSERVATION BOARD HELD ON TUESDAY 23 JANUARY 2007, IN THE LARGE DINING ROOM, JUDGES LODGINGS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.30AM AND CONCLUDING AT 1.01PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

Member

Appointing Body

Appointed by Local Authorities

| | |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Cllr Chris Brearley | Three Rivers District Council |
| Cllr Brian Golby | Mid Beds District Council |
| Cllr Susan Howkins | Chiltern District Council |
| Cllr Marion Mustoe | South Beds District Council |
| Cllr David Nimmo-Smith | Oxfordshire County Council |
| Cllr Richard Pushman | Buckinghamshire County Council |
| Cllr Ian Reay | Dacorum Borough Council |
| Cllr Chris Richards | Aylesbury Vale District Council |
| Cllr Bill Storey | Hertfordshire County Council |
| Cllr Andrew Strange | Luton Borough Council |
| Cllr Julian Thomson | South Oxfordshire District Council |
| Cllr Alan Walters | South Bucks District Council |

Appointed by Secretary of State

Mike Fox
 Sir John Johnson (Chairman)
 Kevin Mayne
 Dr. Mike Render
 John Willson

Elected by Parish Councils

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|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Cllr Mary Goldsmith | Bedfordshire |
| Cllr John Griffin | Oxfordshire |
| Cllr Margaret Jarrett | Hertfordshire |
| Cllr Shirley Judges | Buckinghamshire |
| Cllr Barbara Wallis | Buckinghamshire |
| Cllr Julia Wells | Oxfordshire |

In attendance

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| Alistair Helliwell | Natural England |
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Officers

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| Tracy Adams | Chilterns Conservation Board, |
| Steve Rodrick | Chilterns Conservation Board, Chief Officer |
| Colin White | Chilterns Conservation Board, Planning Officer |
| Maureen Keyworth | Buckinghamshire County Council and Clerk to the Board |

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from David Barnard, Roger Emmett, Bettina Kirkham and Dr Simon Mortimer.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 OCTOBER 2006

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2006 were confirmed.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Item 4 – Matters Arising – The Chiltern Society

The Chairman informed the Committee he had recently met with the new Chairman of the Chiltern Society, John Taylor. He confirmed that there would be no weakening of relationships between the Society and the Board.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions.

6. REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Members received the report of the Chief Officer, the purpose of which was to advise the Board of the matters considered by the Executive Committee and decisions taken under delegated authority, and to seek confirmation from the Board that Chris Smith be appointed as the Board's Finance Officer

Sir John Johnson was elected Chairman of the Executive Committee for the coming year.

The Committee noted that the financial position as at December 2006 was satisfactory. However, grant payments still were awaited from Natural England.

The Board was asked to endorse Chris Smith as Finance Officer to the Board with effect from 1 April 2007. He will take over from Chris Sweeney (and Mike Collier, his deputy) at Hertfordshire County Council, who is currently the Section 151 Officer.

Progress on the Sustainability Plan was satisfactory. Arrangements were being made to install solar panels at the Board's offices.

Discussion took place with regard to looking at the carbon footprint for the Board as a whole, including members and staff, which would be presented at a future meeting.

The Chief Officer reported that tree planting would take place on 2 March at 10.00am in Common Wood, Penn Street.

RESOLVED:

- 1. The Board NOTED the decisions made by the Executive Committee under delegated powers.**

2. The Board AGREED that Chris Smith should be appointed as the Board's Finance Officer with effect from 1 April 2007.

7. DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN

Members received the Report of the Chief Officer, the purpose of which was to seek the approval of the Board for the Business Plan for 2007/08

The Committee was informed that until Natural England had agreed the core funding and grant payments, the budget could not be confirmed. Ideally the Plan should be a three year rolling plan, but further negotiations would be needed with Natural England and the Local Authorities based on an annual increase of 3% (standstill). Costings for production of the Management Plan also needed to be included and NE was working on providing some guidance in this regard.

It is proposed that the core expenditure for 2007/08 be set at £628,275. A grant of £479,620 was being sought from NE with local authorities being requested to provide a contribution based on a 3% increase from last year.

With regard to the Project Budget, the Chief Officer commented that it will not be easy to obtain funding and it would be a challenging year. However, it was hoped that the Sustainability Fund may be funded, by Natural England, up £100,000.

The Chief Officer referred to the priorities in the Work Programme, which reflected the priorities of the Board and those of Natural England's strategic directions, which included the cross cutting themes:

- Social Inclusion
- Health and Wellbeing
- Lifelong Learning
- Climate Change

The Chief Officer stated that at the last meeting it was agreed that a Lifelong Learning Strategy should be prepared, but further work was needed with regard to the formal education sector.

In discussion, the following was noted:

- It was important that talks and presentations to local groups and organisations be shared among staff, Board members and volunteers in order to accommodate all requests.
- Responses on behalf of the National Association of AONBs were carried out by the Chilterns AONB as a result of receiving comments from other AONBs. The CAONB did not necessarily carry out all the work itself.
- In answer to a request that climate change should be made prominent in the plan, the Chief Officer stated that a specific section on Climate Change could be placed in the body of the text, but that the priorities stated were not in any order of preference.
- The images of people in CCB publications could show a wider range of groups to encourage more participation by groups currently under represented.
- The need to promote sustainability was discussed. Parishes have the power to work on renewable energy which can further support local community.

- With two growth area committees in place, as well as possible changes in local government a member suggested that the Board should investigate whether any sources of funding may be available. The Chief Officer agreed on the need to work with these new committees. For example the Board is a member of the Chalk Arc Steering Group which covers the area of Luton and Dunstable, but had not yet explored the possibility of receiving funding directly.
- It was suggested that reference should be made to input from the Parishes as well as the Local Authorities.
- The survey of land cover change was discussed. Initially this would be carried out on an annual basis in order to establish the baseline.
- With regard to the promotion of alternatives to using the car for visiting the countryside, members noted that over the years the Board had worked with a number of travel companies including Arriva and Chiltern Railways. There were four rail lines and three bus companies operating in the Chilterns and the need to build new and stronger relationships was noted.
- The Planning Forum needed to be included in the Plan
- Under Built Environment, members noted that the planning policy guidelines would be ready by March 2007. It was felt this may be too ambitious to have them completed given the scale of the work programme. It was also noted that the Planning Officer would be involved directly with the south east plan. Members congratulated the Planning Officer on this work.
- A member requested the production of a summary of CCB/AONB planning policies and guidance for parishes as well as the possibility of some training once the local elections had been held in May 2007.
- With regard to planning issues, parishes should be encouraged to work on local design frameworks.
- In answer to a question on whether there was a role for the Board to lobby water authorities in connection with extraction policies and chalk stream flow, it was noted that this was carried out through the Project Steering Group and the Chief Officer agreed to add this to the Plan.
- With regard to the Commons Network, Kath Daly was congratulated on her work on the Commons network database, which would shortly be accessible through the AONB website.
- An item with regard to Local Authorities in the context of the White Paper would be put into the foreword of the Business Plan.

RESOLVED:

1. **The Board APPROVED the Business Plan for 2007-08, including the budget and work programme, subject to the comments received at the meeting.**

The Board AGREED:

2. **To seek an increase of 3% in the core financial contributions from local authorities and Natural England**
3. **To seek up to an additional £15,000 from Natural England and local authorities towards the additional costs of reviewing the AONB Management Plan**

4. **To seek grant aid from Natural England of:**
 - £479,000 for core costs (76.9%) – including £12,000 for the Management Plan**
 - £121,000 for project costs (47.8%)**
 - £100,000 for the Sustainable Development Fund (100%)**

8. REPORT FROM THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Members received the Report of the Planning Officer, the purpose of which was to bring the Board's attention to the items considered by the Planning Committee and decisions taken under delegated powers.

Barbara Wallis was elected Chairman of the Planning Committee for the coming year.

As a result of consultation on the Chilterns Roofing Materials (Tile) Technical Note, a good spread of responses had been received. All changes were approved and the revised, adopted Note will be published in March 2007.

The need to increase the use of local building materials and the prominence of the Board and AONB was stressed in the Development Plans responses, all of which were sent under delegated powers.

There was increased attendance at the 4th Annual Planning Conference, and feedback was positive.

With regard to the Buildings Design Guide, information was sought on how to proceed with the adoption of this document as a supplementary planning document. However, it appears that this will not be possible because of government guidelines and recommendations. It was hoped that the revised guidance would be published in 2008.

Discussion took place with regard to the incursion of major housing developments into the AONB particularly with regard to two specific sites in the Wycombe Area. It was noted that in respect of these sites, no dwellings would be built in the AONB, but on sites immediately adjacent.

A member asked the Planning Office to comment regarding windfall sites. The suggestion was that all sites, including windfall sites should be included to meet the proposed housing figures. In rural areas a disproportionate number of new dwellings tend to be on windfall sites. Recent government guidance indicated that windfall sites could no longer be included in meeting housing allocation targets. This may result in local planning authorities having to identify more housing sites in rural areas within the Local Development Framework.

RESOLVED:

The Board NOTED:

1. **The progress made in connection with the drafting of the Chilterns Roofing Materials Supplementary Technical Note;**
2. **The responses made on Development Plans and also NOTED the progress on the Building Design Guide review;**
3. **The current situation regarding responses on planning applications.**

9. PRESENTATION BY NATURAL ENGLAND

Members received a presentation by Alistair Helliwell, Team Leader Chilterns and North Wessex Downs. A copy of the presentation is available on request.

Mr Helliwell commented that he had been working with the Chairman and Chief Officer over the last few weeks to help deliver the AONB objectives.

In discussion, the following was noted:

- Entry Level Stewardship, managed by Natural England, does not include bio fuels, for which DEFRA has other grant schemes
- It was noted that Alistair Helliwell will be the primary contact for NE for all the Chilterns including Herts and Beds. NE teams in the east of England will deal directly with management of the environmental stewardship schemes. It was agreed that a future joint meeting with both teams of NE and the CCB would be useful.
- NE would like to be more involved in providing advice and support on Stewardship but it was difficult due to the scale of the operation.
- The issue of increasing fragmentation of land ownership was discussed. It was recognised that this would make it more difficult to apply for environmental stewardship grants. The Board's Land Owners pack was intended to provide information to new owners of land.
- Concern was expressed with regard to hedge management and in particular the increasing trend to allow roadside hedges to grow up obscuring views of adjacent countryside. NE does encourage rotational cutting
- With regard to historic environment, Mr Helliwell confirmed that the team member for this area was currently on maternity leave and it would be difficult to attend all task group meetings. However, if there were particular issues being discussed he agreed that NE would like to be involved. The Chief Officer stated that this type of input would be invaluable to the Task Group.
- With regard to the Rural Development Programme for England a member expressed concern about how the Chilterns as a whole could be covered if the stewardship schemes are regionalised. Mr Helliwell stated that not much power is given to regional areas. However, the Chilterns AONB was in an excellent position to be at the forefront of joint character area proposals. NE valued joint character area proposals and when writing targeting statements with character areas with cross boundaries, it was possible that the Chilterns AONB could take a lead. He hoped that further funding would be generated into the Chilterns.

10. REPORT AND PRESENTATION ON THE LAND USE SURVEY

Members received a report and presentation from the Farming and Land use Officer, the purpose of which was:

- To inform the Board about progress on the landscape survey carried out in 2006, and to present preliminary results on patterns of land use and land use change.
- To promote discussion about plans for developing the survey work to provide information on the drivers of change in land use, land cover and other attributes of landscape appearance.

A copy of the presentation is available on request.

RESOLVED:

The Board

1. **Noted the findings of the 2005 and 2006 surveys**
2. **AGREED to repeat the survey annually using the same approach**
3. **AGREED to investigate ways of using volunteers to enrich the survey data through verification of findings and gathering of information on drivers of change.**

11. PRESENTATION ON AGRY-ENVIRONMENT SCHEME UPDATE

Members received a report and presentation from the Farming and Land Use Officer, the purpose of which was to advise on the current level of uptake of grants, highlight the issue of low numbers of applications to the HLS in the Chilterns and to identify ways of enhancing the area of farmland covered by the agri-environment grant schemes in general. A copy of the presentation is available on request.

RESOLVED:

The Board AGREED

1. **to actively promote both the Entry Level Scheme and particularly the Higher Level Scheme**
2. **To lobby DEFRA to reduce the thresholds for entry to the Higher Level Scheme**
3. **That the Board's Farming and Land Use Officer spends more of her time assisting farmers prepare applications to the HLS.**
4. **That countryside management services should be encouraged to give priority to encouraging applications to the agri-environment schemes and assist with applications.**

12. REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN

Members received the report of the Chief Officer on the review of the AONB Management Plan, the purpose of which was to inform the Board of the need to review the plan and the process advised by Natural England. A timetable was put forward for consideration.

RESOLVED:

The Board

1. **NOTED the process and resource implication of reviewing the Management Plan.**
2. **AGREED to seek agreement from Natural England on means by which the review process can be lightened to reduce the financial and staff costs.**

13. DATE OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Board will be held on Wednesday 28 March 2007 at 10.00am venue to be confirmed

Dates of future Board meetings are as follows:

Tuesday 19 June 2007, Mid Beds District Council

Wednesday 10 October 2007 (to include the AGM) (venue to be confirmed)

14. ESTABLISHMENT OF A CLIMATE CHANGE GROUP (for information)

Members received the report of the Chief Officer the purpose of which was to confirm that a sub-group has been formed and to inform the Board of its Terms or Reference and work programme.

The Board NOTED the Report

15. UPDATE ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND (for information)

Members received the report of the Countryside Officer, the purpose of which was to update members on the current position.

The Board NOTED the Report

16. REPORT ON 40TH ANNIVERSARY PARISH FUND

Members received the report of the Information and Interpretation Officer, the purpose of which was to inform members of the success of the scheme and how grants were allocated.

The Board NOTED the Report

Chairman