

## Chilterns Conservation Board 2006-07 - SERVICE ASSURANCE ASSESSMENT

AREA OF ASSURANCE	ADEQUACY	BASIS OF ASSESSMENT	ACTIONS TO ADDRESS WEAKNESSES
1. Board operates in line with legislative requirements	Good	<p>Adopted AONB Management Plan in place 2002 – 2008 Approved by DEFRA.</p> <p>Accordance with CROW Act 2000</p> <p>Accordance with Establishment Order</p> <p>Accordance with the Audit and Accounting Regulations 2003 and Amendments 2006</p>	<p>Review will begin in late 2006 and published in 2008. Indicators need revision.</p>
2. Board's activities are in line with the Management Plan	Good	<p>Annual Business plan incorporating work plan and budget approved by the Board</p> <p>Annual Forum provides an opportunity for stakeholder feedback and input.</p> <p>Publish Annual Review</p>	<p>Need to identify longer term priorities</p> <p>Need to factor in climate change impact</p>
3. Performance against the Business Plan and other targets is monitored through appropriate performance indicators and customer and stakeholder feedback, and appropriate action is taken to address any performance issues	Adequate	<p>The Board receives a twice yearly report.</p> <p>Progress on projects needs to be more closely monitored</p>	<p>Need to develop longer term condition indicators for the AONB</p>

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4. Performance is reported regularly and clearly to members to ensure that decisions are taken on the basis of adequate and timely information	Good	<p>Reports to the Board and Executive Committee</p> <p>Report to project steering groups, where these exist</p>	Closer monitoring of projects needed.
5. Staffing resources are adequate in numbers and skills to deliver the Board's objectives, and staff responsibilities have been clearly defined and are understood	Adequate	Staff are still coming to terms with the additional workload of managing an independent organisation, the skills needed and additional responsibilities	<p>Financial management capacity needs to be reviewed. Continuing support from finance advisor</p> <p>Payroll to be undertaken in house for 2006-07 capacity and performance reviewed</p>
6. The Board has ensured its financial stability	Good	<p>Annual grant for core costs and projects negotiated with the Countryside Agency/Natural England.</p> <p>Cash Flow Forecasts</p> <p>Memorandum of Agreement on funding with CA/NE and local authorities</p> <p>Advance payment of core grant on a quarterly basis avoids cash flow problems</p> <p>An unrestricted reserve equivalent to approximately 4 months operating costs has been established.</p>	<p>Should seek rolling three year grant agreement with Govt.</p> <p>Seek re-assurance that NE will continue to provide advance quarterly payments of core grant.</p> <p>Rapid access to reserves arranged in case of need</p>

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<p>7. Processes have been established to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all expenditure has been properly authorised and accurately recorded</li> <li>• all income has been properly collected and accurately recorded</li> <li>• assets are recorded and managed effectively</li> <li>• the budget has been effectively managed, with variations being reported and appropriate action agreed and taken</li> </ul>	Good	<p>Standing Orders and Regulations.</p> <p>Auditor Reports</p> <p>Advice from Internal Audit and Finance Officers (Herts CC)</p> <p>Reports to the Executive Committee</p>	Staff to be given regular training and reminders to help them cope with the new financial systems
8. There are effective risk management arrangements in place, covering the identification, control, monitoring and review of service risk	Adequate	Risk Assessment	More needs to be done to 'mainstream' risk management into service delivery/project implementation.
9. The Board can show that it has sought to achieve value for money in the use of resources	Good	<p>Financial Regulations</p> <p>Reports to the Board and Executive Committee</p> <p>Assessment of grant applications and claims by the Countryside Agency/Natural England</p>	<p>Tendering and regular re-tendering for ongoing contracts</p> <p>Regular Comparison with market prices</p>
10. The Board can demonstrate that it has prepared robust business cases to support any new developments, and that	Adequate	<p>Business Plan and Work Programme</p> <p>Applications to the Countryside</p>	Need to establish more rigorous mechanisms to evaluate objectives/outcomes.

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the risks of these developments are reviewed and monitored on a continual basis		Agency/NE and others for grant aid. Regular reports to steering groups, where they exist	
11. The Board can show that it has given due consideration to insurance, health and safety, community safety, environmental impact and other risks in making decisions	Adequate	Covered in project and activity planning	Need to be more rigorous
12. Recommendations from reports from auditors and other review agencies have been considered and appropriate action taken	Good	Auditor's report and recommendations reported to Board and Executive Committee.  Recommendations and responses agreed with Finance Officer	Need to monitor progress in implementing recommendations
13. Partnership arrangements are well founded, clearly defined and adequately monitored for their effectiveness in meeting the Council's objectives	Adequate	Memorandum of Agreements Grants/Finance conditions	Need to be kept under review

### SERVICE ASSURANCE STATEMENT

Chief Officer.....

Date .....

The services assurance assessment has been completed for 2006/07. An assessment of the level of assurance provided by controls currently in place has been carried out and is detailed in the Service Assurance Assessment

## **Overall Assessment**

Overall within the Board, the level of assurance provided for the specific areas covered in the service assurance assessment is considered to be **Good**.

I am satisfied that except for matters identified in the service assurance assessment and those detailed below, adequate systems of internal control have been in place throughout the financial year and are ongoing.

## **Specific Risks**

Management arrangements for addressing the high risks not covered in the specific areas of assurance in the service assurance assessment (as identified by the risk register) are considered to be **adequate**.