

# **Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

*Cranborne Chase*

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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**Cranborne Chase**  
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

## **Partnership Board Meeting** **20<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

**10.30am via Teams**

### **MINUTES**

MS the outgoing Chair welcomed those present, who introduced themselves as follows:

Fleur de Rhe Philipe	appointed as Chair during this meeting
Cllr Ann Bellows	New Forest District Council
Richard Burden	Principal Landscape and Planning Officer
Steve Butler	Dorset Association of Town and Parish Councils
Simon Cramp	Hampshire County Council Officer (standing in for G King)
Cllr Edward Heron	(joined 10.52am) Hampshire County Council
Linda Nunn	AONB Director
Richard Payne	New Forest District Council Officer
Mike Short	outgoing Partnership Board Acting Chairman
Zak Sibthorpe	Forestry Commission
Lynn Trigwell	Wiltshire Council, Head of Natural and Historic Heritage
Cllr Bridget Wayman	Wiltshire Council
Rachel Webb	(standing in for Charles Routh Natural England)

Jacqueline Burden (minutes)

#### **Apologies:**

Garry King	Hampshire Council Officer
Alistair Fitzgerald	Independent rep

### **1. Minutes and Matters arising from last meeting 30 May 2022**

1.1 The minutes of the last meeting were checked, and the following actions from the last meeting were updated

The <b>Minutes</b> were approved
<b>Matters Arising</b>

End of year out-turn for 2021-22 sent, but still needs rectifying
DEFRA funding match request
LN & LT talk re WC accounting
Report Cd RB attended Planning Committee as BW unavailable
Report Db Arrangements for Chase and Chalke visits not progressed

<b>Actions Minutes of the Meeting and Matters Arising</b>
The Minutes of the meeting were signed as a true record and can now be placed on the AONB website.

## 2. Report A – Constitutional/Governance Issues

**2.1 Purpose:** *To inform the Board on constitutional and governance issues regarding the Cranborne Chase AONB Partnership*

Recommendation 1. LN expanded on her report, outlining the new Partnership agreement, which is now for 3 years. A new signing sheet to be sent to each of the 7 x Local authorities in view of the personnel changes since the last time Agreement was signed and legal departments will need to be consulted. Cllr Ann Bellows had already spoken with New Forest. Target date for signing and returning to LN set at 1 April 2023.

Recommendation 2. An increased DEFRA grant of 14.7% is welcomed for a three year period.

Recommendation 3. With one ideal candidate to replace Mike Short as Chair, he was thanked for doing a wonderful job as he stepped down and FRP then took the Chair.

Recommendation 4. Delay of Management Plan publication until 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 needs 1 side of A4 to state that it is not expedient to review the Plan by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024. This should ensure that the Plan remains regarded as a 'material consideration' in planning terms for a further year. All agreed.

Recommendation 5. DEFRA supports a name change to National Landscapes and may allocate resources to assist with the rebrand. A number of AONBs are not keen, as some prefer to keep 'AONB', and all agree increased resources would be preferable to accompany the new name.

After some discussion, the Chair, BW & AB particularly supported the name change although agree the AONB is sorely underfunded. A name change could present a big opportunity. The public will better recognise the shorter branding of National Landscape, feeling CCWWAONB too much of a mouthful.

<b>Recommendations: Report A Constitutional/Governance Issues</b>
1. That the Local Authorities on the Board consider the revised Partner Agreement. If content, an appropriate Officer would need to sign the Agreement covering the period 2022/3 – 2024/5 and return the signature to the AONB office; each will then be attached to the Agreement document. Any queries to be directed to <a href="mailto:lindanunn@cranbornechase.org.uk">lindanunn@cranbornechase.org.uk</a>
2. That the Board notes the increased grant funding offer from Defra for a three year period 2022/3 – 2024/5.
3. That the Board welcomes Fleur de Rhe Philippe as the new Cranborne Chase AONB Partnership Chairman.
4. That the Local Authority members of the Board consider along with planning colleagues, and any other relevant officer, if it could be agreed formally that the full revision of the Cranborne Chase AONB Management Plan be postponed for a year, whilst maintaining the status of the Plan as a material consideration

within planning and other matters for that additional year. The AONB Director is content to offer a formal letter to each Local Authority partner stating that is not expedient to revise and publish a revised AONB Management Plan until 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025, instead of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024.

5. That the Board notes the likely change of name/branding of Cranborne Chase AONB to Cranborne Chase National Landscape.

**Actions: Report A Constitutional/Governance Issues**

1. Relevant Officer to sign Partner Agreement sheet and return to LN
2. Each LA agrees to continue to accept the AONB Management Plan as a material consideration for a further year up until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025

**2. Report B – AONB budget updates**

**2.1 Purpose:** *To inform the Board of expenditure to date in the AONB core and project budgets. Additional funding streams from the:*

- *Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund*
- *Farming in Protected Landscapes programme*
- *the Chase & Chalke Landscape Partnership Scheme*
- *Access for All (Defra)*

Recommendation 1. LN explained the distinction between the core (with the DEFRA grant and LA contributions) and projects budgets. Project budget element is small. Seeking external funding is very time consuming but necessary.

Recommendation 2. LN explained the small project budget and the take-up of external funding if there is larger project work to undertake. The first claim for the standard AONB grant from Defra is in September and the final claim mid March. The core budget is underspent to date as staff have left and recruiting has been difficult. Project expenditure is on track. 'Access for All' is specifically intended for improvements for the less able, but work has to be completed by end of March. There is approximately £80k which may have to be returned to be redistributed across other AONBs. Discussion on whether this money can be spent on highways – i.e. parking. Discussion on interpretative board for the less able. Electric tuk tuks from Tisbury Station, and Trampers are a good idea but come with all the attendant maintenance, booking, housing and security that comes with hiring out these vehicles.

LN confirmed to EH that Rights of Way teams had been contacted.

Everyone very happy with recommendation 3.

**Recommendations Report B AONB Budget Updates & Appendix 1:**

1. That the Board notes the expenditure of core and project budgets to date for 2022-23
2. That the Board notes the expectation from Defra that Local Authorities will increase their contributions at least as of 2023-4 and 2024-5 to match its ongoing additional grant allocation to AONBs

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| 3. That the Board acknowledges the external funding streams being utilised for additional work over and above that undertaken through the standard AONB funding |
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<b>Actions: Report B AONB Budget Updates</b>
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LN to send a further email to highlight delivery deadline in connection with the extra money for access by DEFRA this year only
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RW will provide LN with contact details for Marilyn Crofts and Katy Mainprice
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### **3. Report C – AONB Teamwork Update**

**3.1 Purpose:** *To inform the Board of the work of the team since May 2022*

3.2 LN reported that staff vacancies had considerably impacted on the work of the Team. One critical post remains unfilled (see Action 4). LT suggested combining the post and offering at a higher grade. She also invited use of a new Wiltshire Council 'landing page' for vacancies.

**3.3 Richard Burden (PT Principal Landscape and Planning Officer)** reported on the various planning applications noting that Kingsdown Farm could be seen as an example of 'how could you let this happen' by anyone wishing to be critical of the AONB and is just seen by many as a 350,000-ton tip on which to put up agricultural buildings. The visit by the Committee saw an extension given for 2 more years to tip, without additional landscape planting which the Lead Planning Officer was recommending.

3.4 Knook Camp: Needs landscape enhancement and management agreed so that new accommodation blocks will not be obvious to everyone.

3.5 Lighting Policies have been prepared with the aim to try to engage CEOs and cascade downwards rather than up the chain. CEOs did not respond but successful seminar with planning staff. Simon Williams is following this through with lead Planning Officers.

Hopefully a new National Landscapes brand will elevate awareness at highest levels?

3.6 Bonham Plain: England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO) planting scheme. The AONB had maintained its objection to this planting scheme that would cover 80+ hectares (circa 200 acres) on Greensand Terrace with 70% Douglas fir. It was at Disputed Case stage and the meeting to discuss this took place on 18 January. AONB objection was on principle and process. The planting would significantly change the landscape character of this area; neither was there an LVIA nor EIA undertaken. ZS reported The South West Forestry and Woodlands Advisory Committee would report in March to the FC Commissioners with a final decision on the planting. Richard attended, as did the landowner and several FC officers.

**3.7 Tracy Adams (PT Farm Conservation Advisor)** advised the Board that her 3 year Nadder Valley Farmer Group facilitation project had ended on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022. She has since applied for a further 3 years facilitation funding and awaits the result in June.

There was a brief discussion on an apparent lack of a farm cluster in the northwest area of the AONB.

3.8 Tracy was also working as Project Lead for the Chase & Chalke 'Nurturing Nature' project working alongside contractors Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and others in the C&C team. The project involves engaging with volunteers to undertake species ID and survey training. It has always been an ambition that a large corps of trained volunteers would be one of the legacies of the LPS for the AONB. Tracy is working 2 of her 3 days a week on Nurturing Nature.

**3.9 Mel Capper (PT Communications Officer)** MC's input will be greatly missed since leaving to join the National Trust in November 2022. MC had been involved in a multitude of different project work and the

team will try to continue all of those although there will inevitably be delays. MC had been working on a 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary film, a dark sky animation, 40 new Anniversary walks, the community bottom-up Nature Recovery initiative amongst others. The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of The Hart is due to be collated/edited in the next 6 weeks.

**3.10 Steve Tonkin (PT Dark Sky Advisor).** Steve has been working his way through giving dark sky talks to the 20 parishes that have requested one and ST has so far completed 14. He does an excellent job as there is a need to retain the Dark Skies status which will only be achieved if many more domestic and business premises continue to replace & point their outside lighting downwards (if needed at all). LN thanked AB for taking part in the training to become a Dark Sky Custodian. The Dark Sky Accreditation Scheme is running and take up is excellent.

**3.11 Linda Nunn (FT Director).** LN is obviously aware of and involved to some degree or another with all that the team is undertaking.

**3.12** South West Wiltshire Area Board is organising a 'green recovery' event in May that the team will be involved in. Gemma Worswick starts on February 20<sup>th</sup> as Nature Recovery Officer.

**3.13** LN reminded the Board that the National Association had produced a Statement of Commitment to Action on Climate Change. BW is unhappy and felt most strongly about some of the issues surrounding this. On what base is the AONB starting from? Is there evidence of climate change affecting the AONB? She would like to see what the Statement says first, prior to signing. Renewable energy – how can we sign up when things are not available, it seems extreme.

LN aware some AONB's have 30 staff whilst CCWW AONB has four at present. A concern was expressed that details had not yet been finalised and it would therefore be unwise to sign something that the Board had not read in its entirety.

FdRP said most have already signed and DEFRA, our main funders may well not be happy if we don't. There are a lot of words and a good deal of expectations. Mapping, table, figures are confusing. Data is not understood. Aware that North Wessex Downs has signed.

SB felt that with lots of declarations of emergencies, it could all contradict before long and cited China building coal nuclear power stations.

RB advised the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph needed to clarify that any actions should not conflict with the statutory purposes of the AONB designations.

AB would sign to keep DEFRA happy then put 'on the backburner'.

SC had not seen the statement in detail and queried the purpose of the Colchester Declaration.

<b>Recommendations: Report C AONB Teamwork Update</b>
1. That the Board notes the broad range and depth of work undertaken by the AONB team during 2022 to date, particularly with a much-reduced team complement
2. That the Board encourages planning officers to promote consistent lighting control policies, as promoted by members of the AONB team, as this is the main mechanism to avoid the threat of losing the International Dark-Sky Reserve status
3. That the Board sends sincere thanks and best wishes to Shirley Merrick, Alison Marsh and Mel Capper as they leave the team for pastures new; and welcomes Mark Eyers, Gemma Worswick, and hopefully a new Communications Officer, to the team

<b>Actions: Report C AONB Teamwork Update</b>
6 A4 adverts to go into local shop windows for AONB Support Officer – a critical post
7. The Chair wished to congratulate ST on his dark sky talk achievements
3.13 LN to check out completed Climate Action framework, toolkit and circulate before signing and this could require an extraordinary meeting.

#### 4. Report D – Chase & Chalke Landscape Partnership

4.1 Purpose: *To inform the Board on progress of the ‘Chase & Chalke’, Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS)*

4.2 LN expanded on the Chase & Chalke report outlining progress on the 20 projects and the excellent work being undertaken. The scheme ends in March 2024 but there is a lot still to achieve and for LN and JM to discuss, especially regarding the legacy of Chase and Chalke. A Living Landscape Centre has always been a vision of the AONB; a multi-functional hub for volunteers, an interpretative centre and countryside skills training facility plus Dark Sky Observatory.

The scheme evaluation phase has been undertaken, with a workshop event planned for 1<sup>st</sup> March to discuss and agree with partners and stakeholders how best to achieve the most effective outcomes in the time remaining.

<b>Recommendations: Report D Chase and Chalke Landscape Partnership</b>
1. That the Board commends the work undertaken by the Chase & Chalke team to date, summarised in this quarterly report.
2. That the Board acknowledges the ambitious vision of a multi-disciplinary, multi-functional Living Landscape Centre for the AONB and are content to receive an invitation to learn more about it.

**No Actions Report D Chase and Chalke Landscape Partnership**

#### 5. Report E – Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)

5.1 Purpose: *To inform the Board of applications and outcomes from Year 2 of the programme.*

5.2 LN said HD has been working exceptionally hard since her appointment and will now have a FiPL Support Officer again in Mark Eyers, who was also a strong appointment.

Year 1 completed and fully spent. Year 2 funding is very nearly all allocated with £57k of year 3 already allocated to projects.

BW is impressed with the variety of applications as she signs off the grant agreements.

FdRP felt similarly on the variety and especially keen on the Great Bustard project.

<b>Recommendations: Report E Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)</b>
1. That the Board recognises the considerable work undertaken in Year 2 by Helena Darragh to facilitate grant awards to the successful FiPL projects and welcomes Mark Eyers to the team

2. That the Board recognises and supports the increased number of 'nature, climate, people and place' outcomes that have been made possible by the FiPL programme, and endorses the trust placed in Protected Landscapes teams by Defra to manage such a programme

3. That the Board would support an extension to the FiPL programme by Defra after the end March 2024 particularly in terms of engaging local farmers in nature recovery, climate change action and increasing community awareness, understanding and involvement with the farming community of this AONB

#### **No Actions Report E Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL)**

8. AOB and date of next meeting

The meeting closed at 12.14pm, there being no other business and a future meeting will be arranged

Signed as a true record of the meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2023



By Fleur de Rhe Philipe (Chairman)

#### **ACTIONS**

##### **Actions Report A Constitutional/Governance Issues**

None

##### **Actions Report B AONB Budget Updates**

LN to send a further email to highlight delivery deadline in connection with the extra money for access by DEFRA this year only

RW will provide LN with contact details for Marilyn Crofts and Katy Mainprice

##### **Actions Report C AONB Teamwork Update**

A4 adverts to go into local shop windows for AONB Support Officer – a critical post

The Chair wished to congratulate ST on his dark sky talk achievements

LN to check out NAAONB Climate Change Statement, framework, toolkit and circulate before signing and this could require an extraordinary meeting

##### **Actions Report D Chase and Chalke Landscape Partnership**

None

##### **Actions Report E Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL)**

None