



**Cranborne  
Chase  
National  
Landscape**

**Cranborne Chase National Landscape  
Partnership Board Meeting  
7<sup>th</sup> October 2025**

**Avonway Community Centre, Fordingbridge.  
13.30-15.30**

FINAL Minutes

Representative	Organisation	Present	Apologies
Fleur de Rhe-Philippe MBE	Chair / Independent	Y	
Vacant	Vice Chair		
Cllr Bridget Wayman	Wiltshire Council	Y	
Lynn Trigwell	Wiltshire Officer		A
Cllr Nabil Najjar	Wiltshire Council		
Cllr Bill Parks	Wiltshire Council (Sub BW)		A
Cllr Janet Richards	New Forest District Council	Y	
Keith Baker	NFDC Officer	Y	
Cllr Shane Collins	Somerset Council		
James Divall	Somerset Council		
Stephen Dury	Somerset Council		
Cllr Edward Heron	Hampshire Council	Y	
Laura Wood	Hampshire County Council Officer		
Cllr Sherry Jespersen	Dorset Council		
Giles Nicholson	Dorset Council		A
Charles Routh	Natural England		A
Rachel Webb	Natural England		A
Chris Gibbard	Forestry Commission	Y	
Alistair Fitzgerald	Independent	Y	
Ian Nockolds	Wiltshire Association of Town & Parish Councils		A
Steve Butler	Dorset Association of Town & Parish Councils (DATPC)	Y	
Lindsay Dedden	Dorset Association of Town & Parish Councils (DATPC) (Sub SB)		A
Chris Farr	Country Land and Business Association		A

Francis Taylor		Commission to Protect Rural England		A
Katie Davies		National Farmers Union		
<b>CCNL Team</b>		<b>Position</b>		
Linda Nunn	FT	CCNL Director	Y	
Richard Burden	PT	Principal Landscape and Planning Officer	Y	
Sarah Newland	PT	Project Support Officer ( <i>taking minutes</i> )	Y	
Craig Daters	FT	Nature Recovery Officer	Y	
Chloe Lockyer	PT	Communications Officer	Y	

## 1. Welcome and apologies.

- 1.1. Apologies were received from Ian Nockolds, Cllr Bill Parks, Lynn Trigwell, Giles Nicholson, Chris Farr (who replaces Mark Burton from CLBA) Lindsay Dedden and Charles Routh.
- 1.2. New to the Board are Laura Wood replacing Lisa Wood for Hampshire Council. Shane Collins for Somerset Council and Chris Gibbard for the Forestry Commission.

## 2. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising.

- 2.1. There were no queries or matters arising from the last meeting. The Chair will sign the minutes, and with the exception of any data protection issues, they will be published on the website.

## 3. Report A – Cranborne Chase National Landscape Budget Update

- 3.1. LN gave an update for the grants and expenditure for 2025-2026
- 3.2. Total Grants Received: Approx. £1.4 million.
  - 3.2.1. Core Budget: £299,512, derived from £74,878 in local authority contributions, tripled through Defra match funding.
  - 3.2.2. Project Funds Available: £31,500, under significant pressure due to prior year invoice transfers and limited flexibility.
- 3.3. Funding Breakdown
  - 3.3.1. Defra Capital Uplift: £251,914 (restricted use under Defra's criteria: 30x30, or income-generating / invest to save).
  - 3.3.2. Access for All, all capital; increased this year to £175,474.
  - 3.3.3. FiPL Funding: £644,404 (ring-fenced, not part of core budget).
- 3.4. Financial Challenges
  - 3.4.1. Rising costs and static core funding over four years.
  - 3.4.2. Local authority contributions are critical; reductions have a tripled negative impact.
  - 3.4.3. Rent increase from Rushmore Estate to £16,950, now to be covered via capital uplift under IFRS 16, freeing much needed revenue budget.
  - 3.4.4. EH offers sponsorship for Annual Planning Seminar.

### 3.5. Proposed Capital Expenditures:

- 3.5.1. Rent Prepayment: For three years.
- 3.5.2. Website Redesign: Similar to North Wessex Downs.
- 3.5.3. Thermal Drone Survey: £18,000–£25,000 proposed to assess deer populations and inform deer management strategies.
- 3.5.4. Signage Projects: Traditional fingerposts in Dorset and potential signage improvements in Hampshire and New Forest areas.

### 3.6. Deer Management Initiative

- 3.6.1. Strong support for a landscape-wide drone survey to establish baseline data.
- 3.6.2. Concerns raised about effectiveness, landowner cooperation, and long-term strategy and these will all be taken into account.
- 3.6.3. A new deer officer is being appointed by the Forestry Commission (FC) to coordinate efforts within FC land.

### 3.7. Project Viability and Capital Use

- 3.7.1. If no suitable projects emerge by December, unspent capital could be returned to Defra for redistribution.
- 3.7.2. Team capacity restricts proactive project development.
- 3.7.3. Ideally, we need a range of projects on the shelf, ready to go.

### 3.8. Access for All Projects

- 3.8.1. £175,000 allocated for 2025; today's site visit incorporating an ongoing beneficiary.
- 3.8.2. Staff management time may be partially funded from this capital, subject to strict Defra evidence requirements.

### 3.9. The Board endorses the following recommendations:

- 3.9.1. That the Board notes total core and project planned expenditure for 2025-2026 and recognises the limitations due to the limited staff resources and continuing lack of increase in core revenue funding.
- 3.9.2. That the Board recognises and endorses the planned Capital Uplift budget expenditure of £251, 914 and that further thought will be given to ensuring it is used effectively, or the remaining amount returned to Defra.
- 3.9.3. That the Board endorses the fact that the Access for All capital funding is being effectively allocated so far and that similar projects are being sought to utilise the remaining funds.
- 3.9.4. That the Board endorses the planned spending for FiPL.
- 3.9.5. That if the Board is aware of potential projects/areas for expenditure of the Capital Uplift or Access for All monies, to contact LN with some urgency

## 4. Report B – Teamwork Update

- 4.1. RB opened the discussion with an update on planning issues, particularly focusing on Kingsdown Farm near the A350. He highlighted concerns over the importation of 450,000 cubic metres of inert material under the guise of agricultural operations, which contradicts the board's long-standing position against waste importation into national landscapes. Parish councils are divided in their response, and enforcement appears weak. He also mentioned issues at Littledown, Shaftesbury, where developers failed to deliver promised landscaping, prompting local residents to raise concerns. The local councillor has been engaged along with the Council's cabinet portfolio holder for Environment. The Planning Authority's first moves are to seek retrospective planning applications to address the situation. Training for Wiltshire

planners in NL and DNS matters was well received, and Wiltshire's portfolio holder for Environment was impressed by the CCNL presence and briefing on NL matters at Chalke History Festival.

- 4.2. Craig Daters, Nature Recovery Officer, followed with an update on the Nature Recovery Plan. The draft has been circulated and feedback is being gathered. He emphasised the importance of the upcoming Nature Recovery Delivery Plan, which will focus on practical actions aligned to 2030 targets. Craig is actively engaging with stakeholders, including landowners and NGOs, to integrate efforts. He also discussed the Landscape Recovery Projects on the River Wylde and River Allen, which are pioneering 20-year hybrid funding models combining public and private finance. These projects could serve as models for long-term sustainable land management.
- 4.3. LN provided a comprehensive overview of other team members activities and developments:
  - 4.3.1. Communications: Chloe Lockyer has joined as the new Communications Officer, replacing Angela Willis.
  - 4.3.2. Dark Skies: The stargazing guide has been highly successful, and the team now owns a portable planetarium for events. Planning is underway for Starfest 2026.
  - 4.3.3. Volunteer Coordination: Melissa Howell, Ranger, is now covering the whole of CCNL and is making a significant impact supporting volunteers. Linda is preparing a further National Lottery bid to try and secure funding to retain Melissa and support the legacy of 700 volunteers from the Chase & Chalk scheme.
  - 4.3.4. The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme continues, with Defra officials visiting to observe the Local Assessment Panel at work on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> October.
  - 4.3.5. The new CCNL Management Plan 2025-30 has been adopted by Hampshire County Council and Wiltshire Council. NFDC, Dorset and Somerset will be followed up.
- 4.4. Legislation Concern: There is a rumour that the strengthened Section 85 duty from the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 may be revoked, which could undermine efforts to conserve and enhance National Landscapes. A Joint letter from National Parks England and the National Landscapes Association has been circulated, and the Board considered whether to send their own response or support the existing one.  
**[post meeting note: Government has dropped the idea]**
  - 4.4.1. **ACTION**
  - 4.4.2. LN to draft a **covering letter** referencing the National Landscapes Association response regarding Section 85, for circulation to local MPs to raise awareness and encourage support.
- 4.5. **The Board endorses the following recommendations:**
  - 4.5.1. That the Board acknowledges the achievements of individual team members since the last meeting
  - 4.5.2. That Board Members extend a welcome to Chloe Lockyer, Communications Officer
  - 4.5.3. That the Board endorses efforts to retain CCNL Ranger, Melissa Howell, within the team into the future
  - 4.5.4. That the Board supports a letter signed by the Chair raising awareness to local MPs

## 5. Report C – Chase & Chalke Landscape Partnership Scheme

- 5.1. LN Summarised the work of Chase & Chalke since 2020 and the recent closure of the scheme.
- 5.2. The full Evaluation Report (Report C Appendix 1) spans over 170 pages and includes a positive executive summary.
- 5.3. The final Evaluation Report, Completion Report and final claim were submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, marking the end of the £2.7 million project.

#### 5.4. Project Closure:

- 5.4.1. All necessary documentation has been transferred to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- 5.4.2. The project officially concluded last week (30<sup>th</sup> September 2025).

#### 5.5. Achievements and Retained Assets:

- 5.5.1. Acquisition of a second Hilux pickup (low mileage) approved by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- 5.5.2. A £43,000 adapted transit van will now serve as a mobile information unit. All three vehicles will be wrapped in matching logos / designs.
- 5.5.3. Creation of over 60 walking leaflets covering the Chase & Chalk area and parts of the national landscape.
- 5.5.4. A fully stocked tool store for volunteer and practical conservation work.
- 5.5.5. A legacy of 700+ volunteers

#### 5.6. **The Board endorses the following recommendations:**

- 5.6.1. That the Board congratulates the immense amount of work undertaken by the Chase & Chalke team members since 2020 and thanks the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and Lottery players, for their belief and investment in CCNL
- 5.6.2. That the Board welcomes the goodwill, training and commitment of the 700+ volunteers that are being supported by Melissa Howell to continue into the future both for their benefit and that of this National Landscape

### 6. **Report D – Churches of CCNL**

- 6.1. RB presented this report to ensure the Board are aware of this comprehensive piece of research.

#### 6.2. Heritage and Natural Beauty

- 6.2.1. Emphasis was placed on the importance of cultural and heritage elements within the concept of natural beauty.
- 6.2.2. Churches were identified as key markers of “time depth” in the landscape, representing long-standing community and historical presence.

#### 6.3. Church Survey Project

- 6.3.1. Dr. Sean Beer conducted a comprehensive survey of 108 parish churches, including:
- 6.3.2. At least four photographs per church and churchyard.
- 6.3.3. A wide-ranging spreadsheet database.
- 6.3.4. The resulting article is available on the website and was described as high-quality and informative.

#### 6.4. Potential for Further Research

- 6.4.1. The dataset is available for further study and could support a future project.
- 6.4.2. Interest was expressed in engaging volunteers or students to work with the data.

#### 6.5. Churchyards and Community Role

- 6.5.1. Churches often serve as the only community space in smaller villages.
- 6.5.2. Maintenance varies widely, with some managed by community service schemes and others undergoing partial rewilding.

#### 6.6. Rewilding and Maintenance Challenges

- 6.6.1. Rewilding efforts are divisive; some villagers prefer neat churchyards while others support wildlife-friendly approaches.
- 6.6.2. Tree growth, screening, and uneven maintenance practices were noted as issues.

6.6.3. Managing churchyards for wildlife requires intentional and informed effort, not neglect. Consideration of guidance or policy on churchyard management was suggested, along with potential collaboration with dioceses and wildlife trusts.

6.6.4.

6.7. Visibility and Landscape Character

6.7.1. Contrary to expectations, many churches are not prominent in the landscape due to low siting and overgrown trees. This challenges traditional assumptions about churches as visual landmarks.

**6.8. The Board congratulated Dr Beer, and agreed to support further work publicising the attributes, character, and significance of the churches of this National Landscape.**

## 7. Report E – Sustaining Landscape Character and Tree Planting

7.1. RB explained that the recently produced Sustaining Landscape Character is an abbreviated, and quicker to read, version of the Landscape Character Assessment 2024. Together with Trees in the Landscape and Tree Planting Guidance for CCNL, he emphasised the importance of these documents aiming to steer activities and future management so that they focus on the enhancement of the landscape character of the National Landscape.

7.2. New landscape distinctions include:

7.2.1. Recognition of River Valley loors as distinct from Valley Sides.

7.2.2. Inclusion of Grovely Wood, Stockton Wood, and Great Ridge as extra area of wooded chalk downland, despite having differing histories to Cranborne Chase wooded chalk downland.

7.3. Supporting sections:

7.3.1. New sections include topography, geology, and hydrology maps to help understand landscape formation and character.

7.3.2. A landscape character map is included, and a zoomable version is available on our web site to guide planning and other decision making.

7.4. Tree Planting Strategy – “Right Tree, Right Place”:

7.4.1. Collaboration with Fiona Fyfe led to guidance on tree planting in various landscape types (villages, river valleys, escarpments).

7.4.2. Emphasis on planting trees appropriate to landscape character.

7.4.3. Some landscapes (e.g., open downs) are unsuitable for dense tree planting due to visual and ecological impacts.

7.4.4. Posters were created to visually communicate appropriate tree planting strategies with the leaflet available with further detailed information. These are the basis for the ‘take away’ leaflet Trees in the Landscape.

7.4.5. The booklet Tree Planting Guidance for CCNL focuses on different types of planting and the likely suitable places for planting in this NL.

7.5. Concerns Over Inappropriate Planting:

7.5.1. Examples cited where tree or hedge planting conflicted with landscape character or historical views (e.g., Collingwood Corner).

7.5.2. Issues with farming payments system leading to unmanaged hedgerows and inappropriate land use.

7.5.3. Concerns about future disease risks and reluctance to replant after ash dieback due to the cost of subsequent removal.

7.6. Hedgerow Management:

- 7.6.1. Encouragement for proper hedge laying to support biodiversity and sustain landscape character and views.
- 7.6.2. FiPL project funding could target hedge laying
- 7.6.3. Financial and logistical barriers to planting and maintaining trees and hedges after the initial funding runs out.

**7.7. The Board endorses the following recommendation:**

- 7.7.1. That Board members endorse the following documents and encourage their use:
  - 7.7.1.1. Sustaining Landscape Character
  - 7.7.1.2. Trees in the Landscape
  - 7.7.1.3. Tree Planting Guidance for Cranborne Chase National Landscape

**8. Report F – Compensation for Impacts of Inhabitants of Major Developments**

- 8.1. Over and above the West of Warminster and East of Shaftesbury urban developments, huge numbers of houses are proposed on the edges of this NL, for example at Fordingbridge, Blandford, Alderholt, Frome, and Wimborne. RB informed the Board that, based on the conclusion to the Cranborne Chase Position Statement on Housing that developers would be expected to contribute compensation for the long term impacts of the additional population on the character and fabric of the NL, he and LN had put forward proposals to developers of major housing schemes a framework for compensation. That compensation would enable the CCNL partnership to make the physical fabric of the NL more robust and able to withstand the added recreational pressures of the new inhabitants of those developments. The framework also included support for a Ranger Service to sustain visitor enjoyment and to coordinate conservation actions. Significant sums are involved, and developers have engaged positively.
- 8.2. Formal support from the Board is requested to add weight to negotiations and moves to get such a scheme incorporated, in principle, in Local Development Plans.
- 8.3. Experience with the Dorset Heathlands and New Forest Recreation Area compensation schemes informed our framework. Board discussion related to the statutory wildlife issues central to those schemes. Our proposals seek to learn from those schemes, and similar ones at Fleet Nature Reserve and Chichester Harbour NL, and not reinvent the wheel through duplicating their research and costly consultants' reports. Fundamentally those schemes address recreational impacts, albeit focusing on their wildlife impacts, and are relevant parallels.
- 8.4. With time for discussion limited by the commitment to a site visit after the meeting, the Board felt unable to address the specific details and questions around the operation of a compensation framework in the report. It was therefore agreed to bring this to a future meeting for further discussion.

**8.5. ACTION**

- 8.5.1. Bring to the next meeting.

**9. Report G – Dorset Local Plan Options Consultation**

- 9.1. The consultation outlines significant housing development proposals, including 1,194 dwellings within the National Landscape and 10,309 dwellings within 5 km of its boundary. Key sites include Wimborne (3,400 homes), Cranborne (87), Sixpenny Handley (107), and Blandford (1,000+ homes).
- 9.2. Key Concerns Raised

- 9.2.1. Impact on Landscape: Developments threaten the character and setting of the National Landscape. Concerns were raised about visual intrusion and recreational pressure from nearby housing.
- 9.2.2. Planning Policy: Criticism of the proposal to introduce flexible settlement boundaries, which undermines planning certainty and could lead to speculative development. Emphasis was placed on NPPF paragraph 190, which presumes against major development in protected landscapes unless under exceptional circumstances.
- 9.2.3. Renewable Energy: Lack of recognition of designated landscape sensitivity in renewable energy proposals, such as wind turbines and solar farms.
- 9.2.4. Infrastructure and Services: Concerns about whether existing infrastructure (e.g. electricity, sewage, transport) can support the proposed scale of developments.

### 9.3. Suggestions and Recommendations

- 9.3.1. Alternative Approaches: Some members suggested overtly exploring the option of new settlements to concentrate development and better support infrastructure and services. Others advised caution, recommending the Board focus on critiquing current proposals rather than proposing alternatives.
- 9.3.2. Recreational Mitigation: Recommendation to include on-site recreational space in new developments to reduce pressure on the National Landscape.
- 9.3.3. Evidence Base: Request for sensitivity and capacity studies to justify site selections and assess landscape impact.

### 9.4. **The Board endorses the following recommendations:**

- 9.4.1. The Board agreed on the need for a strong, evidence-based response highlighting the potential harm to the National Landscape and the inadequacy of the current consultation in addressing landscape, infrastructure, and planning policy concerns.
- 9.4.2. In particular, the Board is very concerned that the Local Plan renewable energy proposals do not reflect the adopted Cranborne Chase Management Plan nor the national protection that should be afforded to NLs, and expressed strong opposition to flexible development boundaries.
- 9.4.3. Next Steps: Richard to draft a formal response reflecting the Board's concerns and circulate for comment.
  - 9.4.3.1. Deadline: Submission required by next Monday.

## 10. Report H – Partial Statutory Consultee Status for National Landscapes

- 10.1. National Landscape Association is seeking views on a MHCLG proposal that NLs should be partial statutory consultees on planning matters.
- 10.2. RB emphasised that the promotion of NLs to statutory consultees on policy planning matters could ensure that we can input our experience and knowledge at the plan preparation stages instead of, for example, having to oppose a Local Plan when it is out for public consultation.
- 10.3. Cranborne Chase has had a Planning Protocol with its LPAs for two decades that includes engagement on Local Plan and other policy matters. However, since the formation of unitary councils, engagement with National Landscapes has decreased at the formative stages of planning. National Landscapes are often only consulted at the public consultation stage of local planning, limiting their ability to influence plans constructively. This has led to more objections rather than collaborative input.

10.4. Discussion:

- 10.4.1. The term “statutory consultee” lacks clarity on when engagement should occur (beginning, middle, or end of the process).
- 10.4.2. Without early engagement, the statutory status may not offer practical benefits.
- 10.4.3. Being a statutory consultee could encourage planning teams to engage earlier to avoid objections later.
- 10.4.4. Early involvement would allow National Landscapes to support or remain neutral on aspects of plans, rather than objecting wholesale.

10.5. General agreement that statutory consultee status could be beneficial if it leads to earlier and more effective engagement. The Board. supports moving forward with the proposal.

**10.5.1. ACTION**

- 10.5.2. LN to draft a letter to the NLA

10.6. **The Board endorses the following recommendation:**

- 10.6.1. The Board considers that statutory consultee status could be beneficial if it leads to earlier and more effective engagement with the issues involved and those views be put to the National Landscape Association in a letter.

11. AOB and date of next meeting

- 11.1. The meeting finished at 15.45.
- 11.2. Most of the group then transferred to Project Manna where there was a fascinating talk and tour of the initiative.
- 11.3. The next meeting will be online in the new year. SN will send a doodle poll in due course.

Meeting minutes signed as correct  
By Chair, Fleur de Rhé-Philippe MBE



Date: October 2025