



Cranborne Chase National Landscape

Minutes for the Partnership Board Meeting

**Cranborne Chase
National Landscape**

5 June 2024 at Knowle Farm, Bowerchalke

Representative	Organisation	Present	Apologies
Fleur de Rhe-Philippe MBE	Chair / Independent		Apologies
Vacant	Vice Chair		
Cllr Piers Brown	Dorset Council		
Giles Nicholson	Dorset Council Officer		
Graham Stanley	Senior Ranger-Dorset Council	Y	
Russell Goff	Countryside Service Dorset Council	Y	
Cllr Janet Richards	New Forest District Council	Y	
Keith Baker	NFDC Landscape Architect	Y	
Jonathan Doyle	Somerset Council Officer		Apologies
Cllr Bridget Wayman	Wiltshire Council		Apologies
Cllr Nabil Najjar	Wiltshire Council		
Lynn Trigwell	Wiltshire Officer		Apologies
Sarah Valdus	Wiltshire Council, Director of Environment	Y	
Cllr Edward Heron	Hampshire County Council		Apologies
Garry King MCIEEM CBIol MSB FLS	Hampshire County Council Officer		Apologies
Charles Routh	Natural England		Apologies
James Fry	Forestry Commission		Apologies
Alistair Fitzgerald (acted as Chair)	Independent	Y	
	Wiltshire Association of Town & Parish Councils		
Steve Butler	Dorset Association of Town & Parish Councils (DATPC)	Y	
Mark Burton	Country Land and Business Association		Apologies
Francis Taylor	Campaign to Protect Rural England	Y	
Katie Davies	National Farmers Union		Apologies
CCNL Team	Position		
Linda Nunn FT	CCNL Director	Y	
Richard Burden PT	Principal Landscape and Planning Officer	Y	
Steve Tonkin PT	Dark Skies Adviser		Apologies
Sarah Newland PT	Support Officer		Apologies
Robert Hall FT	Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer	Y	

Angela Willis	PT	Communications Officer	Y	
Celine Mills	PT	Farming in Protected Landscapes Support Officer (<i>taking minutes</i>)	Y	
Robert Lloyd	FT	Chase & Chalke LPS	Y	
Rachel Limb	PT	Chase & Chalke LPS	Y	

1) Welcome and apologies

- 1.1 Apologies were received from: Fleur de Rhe-Philippe; Jonathan Doyle; Cllr Bridget Wayman; Cllr Edward Heron; Garry King; Charles Routh; James Fry; Lyndsey Deddon; Mark Burton; Katie Davies; Steve Tonkin; Sarah Newland.
- 1.2 In the absence of Fleur de Rhe Philippe, Alistair Fitzgerald had kindly offered to chair the meeting. Many thanks to Alistair.
- 1.3 Thanks were extended to the Mann family for hosting the meeting at Knowle Farm, and for the tour of the farm using the new Bailey trailer funded by Farming in Protected Landscapes.

ACTION: A letter of thanks to be sent to the Mann family from the Partnership Board (LN).

2) Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

- 2.1 The Minutes from the Board Meeting on 24 January 2024 were agreed. With the exception of confidential items, these will be published on the website.

3) Report A – Update on National Landscape Budget 2023-24

- 3.1 LN Presented an update on the CCNL core and project budgets 2023-24, as previously circulated. These were fully expended bar a small underspend in core and the full Defra grant was claimed.

3.2 LN then explained the budget and funding from Defra for 2024-25. Defra has given the usual core and project funding as in 2023-24 plus an additional £164,194.54. Fifty percent of this is capital and fifty percent is revenue. This eases the pressure somewhat as it was all originally intended as capital. LN went through some of the budget lines in the forecast and explained potential expenditure if the Board was to agree.

3.3 As far as projects are concerned, 3 projects remain in the list ie Promotion of CCNL, Dark Night Skies and the Heritage Trail (developing a 360mile Long Distance route around and across the NL).

3.4 The Sustainable Rural Tourism allocation would be to continue the work started here 10 yrs ago that we started through funding from LEADER (European) monies. Whether we can continue depends on if Wiltshire Tourism is able to offer some match towards the Defra grant hence enabling us to take on rural tourism officer.

3.5 Road signs will be going up in the Wiltshire part of the NL due to £3000 from National Landscapes Association linked to the rebranding. Hopefully some of the additional capital funding from Defra can be used on further signage in the Dorset, Hampshire and Somerset parts of the NL.

3.6 Four further lines in the budget forecast are all concerned with trying our utmost to continue with the legacy of the Chase & Chalke projects and, in particular the volunteering elements, until we have the opportunity to make a further bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).

3.7 A further funding element this year only, is £107, 188 for 'Access for All' funding. This is for improvements to access for the less able. It is Capital Departmental Expenditure Limit (CDEL) funding and is strictly capital. There are 2 projects that have come up within Farming in Protected landscapes (FiPL) that could possibly utilise most of that funding but LN is open to any other suggestions from the Board. Any work funded through Access for All has to have clear evidence behind it of the need for the work.

3.8 Discussion points:

Q: Is the Access For All funds aimed solely at physical / mental health and well-being, or does it include disadvantaged groups too?

LN: Evidence of need is the key requirement of Defra and 'Access for All' could well include disadvantaged groups if this can be proven.

The following recommendations were approved by the Board:

- 1. The Board notes that the core and project expenditure is complete for 2023-2024, allowing the full Defra grant to be claimed.**
- 2. The board endorses the proposed 2024-2025 budget, in the knowledge that Defra is content for monies to be reallocated to different elements without needing to ask them.**
- 3. The Board notes the Defra increases in budget 2024-2025, alongside the additional monies for Access for All.**
- 4. The Board endorses the need to continue the legacy of the 5 year, £2.7million funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, potentially through two temporary, additional team members up until the end of March 2025 plus additional monies to secure a vehicle and extra equipment needed.**

4. Report B – Team Work Update

4.1 LN began by stating that most of the staffing issues had now been solved barring the vital position of Nature Recovery Officer which was now being advertised for the third time. This is a key position that would take some of the pressure off the rest of the team, once appointed.

4.2 Richard Burden, (RB) Principal Landscape and Planning Officer (PT)

4.3 RB has commented on 65 planning applications that have come in for comment since January 2024.

4.4 Solar Farm proposals: eg between Salisbury and Coombe Bissett, plus concern within the team at Wiltshire Council Pension Fund possibly 'blindly' investing in solar farms that could be impacting Protected Areas. There appeared to be scant recognition of our concerns.

The exemptions from the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) legislation mean most developments within this NL will not have to contribute to BNG ; a somewhat strange situation for one of the nation's finest landscapes. RB therefore requested that the Board re-endorses the CCNL BNG Planning Position Statement and backs its inclusion into Local Plans currently being prepared when RB responds to consultations on them.

4.5 A reviewed Landscape Character Assessment is soon to be received from Chris Blandford Associates which separates some of the downland river valley sides from the river valley bottoms, and reassesses the extent of wooded downland compared with the 2003 original.

4.6 Fiona Fyfe will be undertaking work to produce more detailed guidance on where trees and hedgerows could, and should not, be planted. Fiona compiled our Right Tree, Right Place document and is well placed to carry out this work. With the array of grants available for tree planting this guidance is needed to try & ensure planting is carried out that complements landscape character.

4.7 As if to illustrate the point, the National Trust is planning to 're-wild' circa 250 acres at Kingston Lacy with what is being termed 'wood pasture'. Whether it is wood pasture or not this is a substantial change to the arable downland landscape character and there appeared little knowledge or understanding of the importance of conserving and enhancing landscape within a nationally designated landscape.

4.8 North & North East Blandford: this is of major concern. Consists of 490 dwellings together with associated commercial development and a school; approved at Dorset Planning committee October 2023. On behalf of all objectors, RB requested SoS call-in because there are issues of national, not just local, significance. The development was taken to planning committee a second time, due to NPPF changes and s.85 revision; RB sustained NL objections and the local MP advised a rethink but Councillors approved again at this second committee meeting. Within 24 hours, the Secretary of State called in the application to make the decision himself [following our request in early November 2023]. The CPRE and Pimperne Parish Council are also strong objectors, alongside the CCNL. A decision has been made for the CCNL to seek Rule 6 status at the Inquiry. Funding will be sought towards a barrister to act on behalf of all the objecting parties.

Further major housing development is proposed for 1700 houses at Alderholt. An officer at Dorset Council has stated formally that the proposed 'SANG' will be able to absorb the increased recreational pressure which is contrary to the CCNL position based on the extensive experience of LN and RB. Whilst that officer was to cover the tranquillity issues there was no need to comment on the Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace or SANG. The potential scale and extent of recreational pressures facing the CCNL and the damage that can occur, particularly on road verges and Public Rights of Ways, from people venturing out from such a large development do not appear to be appreciated or understood. His comments appear to undermine the refusal by Dorset Council.

4.9 There are also proposed developments at Frome [a further 1,700 dwellings] and a smaller one south-east of Blandford but both of these are of less immediate concern.

5. Angela Willis (AW) Communications Officer (PT)

5.1 AW explained that the new logo was now incorporated in all our communications work and whilst not slavishly following the 'guidelines' sent out by the National Landscapes Association (NLA), the team is looking to use the basics to help promote that 'new look' to help promote the rebrand. The NLA has not continued to push and promote the new branding as expected.

5.2 AW has produced and had distributed 22,000 copies of The Hart to all domestic and business addresses within the NL. It has had a very good response with a 55.2% upsurge in visits to the web site. Copies are available in the room to take away.

5.3 AW played a key role in organising the Annual Forum and promoting the StarFest that took place in April in Shaftesbury. Both were very successful events.

AW has also produced a new Sec 85 leaflet to take into account the new Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) additions to the duty and a temporary postcard about the NL for the Chalke History Festival in place of the general leaflet which is out of date.

5.4 Web site and SM views are all increasing. AW also asked if Board members were willing, their email addresses could be added to the e news database.

6. Steve Tonkin (ST) Dark Skies Advisor, PT

6.1 ST has continued with stargazing activities and talks to parish councils and other groups since our January meeting. Unfortunately, due to bad weather, many of the planned star-gazing sessions had to be postponed. ST managed 8 star gazing evenings and undertook 8 talks at various locations around the NL.

The annual StarFest that took place in early April centred on Shaftesbury. The focus of StarFest this year was on astro-tourism and volunteering to assist with parish Dark Sky Accreditation applications.

6.2 ST continues to feedback on policy issues to the UK Dark-Skies Partnership and assists Richard immensely regarding commenting on lighting issues in planning applications; often several in one week. He also makes advisory visits to properties.

6.3 Discussions are again underway to improve the lighting for the 'We Out Here' festival due at Wimborne St Giles this summer. They made considerable improvements last year and are keen to reduce their light emissions even further.

6.4 ST is working on Management Plan Review and played a role in the Annual Forum alongside the rest of the team.

6.5 A 'Big Dipper' campaign postcard has been produced to distribute widely amongst communities and businesses encouraging the use of the correct light fittings, bulbs and their siting.

6.6 ST also compiled and submitted the CCNL Annual Report to Dark Sky International as required.

7. Sarah Newland (SN), Support Officer (PT)

7.1 SN has been with the team for almost a year now and has got to grips (mostly!) with the new Oracle system. SN is a great help in ordering supplies, sending invoices for payment and keeping track of finances at the office. She is keeping the office running very smoothly which is a great boon to the team.

7.2 SN did a fabulous job in organising the Annual Forum for the first time and will soon be a key player in organising the team presence at the **Chalke History Festival 24th June – 1st July**. This, as LN is sure everyone knows, is by far our biggest in person commitment of the year, seeing several thousand people through the marquee annually, from 9am-9pm, for the 7 days of the festival.

7.3 This year, there is also a talk: **FROM ALIENS TO ASTEROIDS: A HISTORY OF ACCIDENTAL ASTRONOMY** by **Chris Lintott**, Monday 24th June 21:00 (60 Min). This is being linked to the National Landscape / International Dark Sky Reserve in the History Festival promotional literature and will be introduced by our own Steve Tonkin.

8. Robert Hall (RH) Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer (FiPL - FT) FT and Celine Mills (CM) FiPL Business Support Officer (PT)

8.1 RH and CM both started very early in the year and have taken up the challenge of managing the FiPL programme in its fourth and final year with much commitment and skill.

8.2 They both started as year three of FiPL was drawing to a close and hence were faced with tying up year three, with minimal time in the roles. Year four applications were already coming in, therefore there was an awful lot to contend with, including the end of financial year pressures.

8.3 Year three ended, unfortunately, with a £37,500 underspend. This was entirely down to applicants ringing in, late in the day, to request extensions into 2024-25 or to say they could not complete their work, hence 'handing money back' to the programme with no time for the team to re-allocate. This was pretty disappointing as the team had managed to ensure the budget was only a couple of thousand pounds underspent whilst over just a few weeks this rose to the £37,500 figure. This figure has now to be taken off the full amount allocated to CCNL for this final year. To summarise, in 2023-2024 (Year 3) we provided a total of £523,000 to 51 projects.

8.4 In 2024-25 (Year 4) we were allocated £804,129 in total, which results in a total of £766,629, after taking off the £37,500 penalty underspend.

8.5 The salaries, on-costs, travel, any training and Local Assessment Panel (LAP) costs are taken from this total with the remainder available for projects. RH and CM have received 20 applications so far, of which 7 have been approved and 13 are awaiting a decision. An additional 32 live enquiries are in the system, which have applications being worked up and/or site visits being undertaken by RH. The next LAP meeting is due to take place in late June.

8.6 RH and CM attended an in-person FiPL workshop in the SE earlier this month at which Defra announced that after the end of March 2025, all FiPL teams will be given a 6month extension to undertake various monitoring tasks to be set by Defra. The FiPL Officers from each Protected Area will additionally have an 18month extension (through to 2027) to undertake work within the Environmental Land Management Scheme, within their National Park or Landscape. Exactly what this role will entail has not been divulged as yet;

and probably hasn't yet been decided. Defra has agreed that training will be given in whatever this future role might be.

8.7 LN would like to congratulate RH and CM for picking up the FiPL programme with such gusto and for moving it forward with very good organisational skills, knowledge and experience.

9. Linda Nunn (LN), Director (FT)

9.1 Chairman's NLA Climate Change Statement – LN had suggested the following wording to ensure this NL retained influence over any proposals to site wind turbines or solar farms within this NL:

LN therefore suggests the following wording is sent to the NLA along with Fleur de Rhe-Philipe's signature:

The Chairman of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership signs the Statement on Climate Change with the caveat that it will retain its right, and intention, to resist any plans, nationally or locally, that seek to lessen constraints on siting renewable energy facilities within the designated area or its setting.

9.2 Looking forward to 2024/5, there are a number of key tasks that require LNs focus:

- The review of the National Landscape Management Plan (Report C) and organise consultations on that review. It would be very helpful if Board representatives would be willing to comment on chapters of the Management Plan review documents, as they are drafted
- Submitting a bid to secure funding to manage the ongoing legacy from Chase & Chalke
- Filling the remaining vacancy of Nature Recovery Officer (and any temporary posts with the additional monies from Defra) and bringing a final Nature Recovery Plan to the Board for endorsement
- Expenditure of all of the additional monies coming from Defra in 2024-25 including Access for All
- Ensuring the 'new' FiPL team have the training and support for it to distribute the funds effectively during the final 2024-25 year

Discussion points:

Q Is the National Trust (NT) likely to plant trees on arable land at Kingston Lacey as suggested?

RB: 20ha and above of tree planting requires an Environmental Impact Assessment, which hopefully will address concerns. The ongoing management of such planting, including capability and resources, is key to any such proposal.

LN: The Head of Nature Recovery at NT has asked to discuss their long-term strategy with the CCNL office, which will include this site.

Q: Will the additional 6mths of FiPL staff funding after April 2025 have to be paid from 2024-2025 budgets?

LN: Defra will provide additional funding for this 6mths, the 2024-2025 budget is not affected by this.

SV: The Climate Change Chairman's Statement refers to '*resist any plans... that seek to lessen constraints on siting renewable energy facilities...*'. Is it correct to assume that this does not restrict siting renewable energy facilities on existing buildings? Does the statement require additional wording to clarify this?

RB: Our Position Statements include positive encouragement for renewable energy facilities within/on existing buildings or new development. Excepted are any listed building or buildings within a Conservation Area. Reference can be made to refer for detail to the CCNL Management Plan to highlight this point.

The Board approved the following recommendations:

- 1. The Board recognised the achievements of individual team members since January 2024 within their various spheres of work, on behalf of CCNL.**

2. **The Board members in attendance are content to have their email addresses added to the CCNL mailing list.**
3. **Board members reaffirmed their endorsement of the Biodiversity Net Gain Position Statement, and support and promote inclusion of it into the emerging Local Plans.**
4. **The Board is content with the wording to accompany the Chairman's signature on the National Landscapes Association Climate Change Statement.**
5. **The Board understands the reasons for, and fully supports the CCNL team in maintaining the objection to the North and North East of Blandford development proposal at Inquiry.**

10. Report C – Chase & Chalke Landscape Partnership Scheme

10.1 LN provided an update on Chase & Chalke through providing the last quarterly report to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Sections of primary interest had been highlighted.

10.2 LN then ran through several powerpoint slides that emphasised the amazing amount of work by the C&C team but also by the 661 volunteers who have signed up to date. It is these volunteers that must be supported after September whilst hopefully a new funding scheme is applied for.

10.3 The projects that are the most vital ones to continue with are all the natural heritage projects (Nurturing Nature, Crystal Clear Ebble, Wonderful Woodlands, Greater Grazing and Ancient Ways) together with the historic heritage project Champions of the Past (major LiDAR project) and the Walking Festival and associated promotion of a multitude of small circular walks. Cultural heritage projects will be considered as and when time and finances allow as these are of immense value to visitors and local communities alike.

10.4 Chase & Chalke was always intended to encourage and engage with volunteers hence it is this part of the scheme that, above all else, be supported into the future.

Discussion points:

Q: Where do the ChalkeEscape walk leaders / walk marshalls / participants live – do they come from within the CCNL area?

RL: The majority come from within the C&C area or a 5 mile radius and we are very lucky to have gathered such a huge group of passionate volunteers and participants.

Comment: It would be a great shame for many of the projects and all the valuable volunteers to not continue. This has been an incredible programme of work and a priority to try and take forward.

Recommendations:

That the Board congratulates the Chase & Chalke team on five years of dedicated work to see the 20 Chase & Chalke projects come to fruition

That the Board continues to endorse the aim of the National Landscape team to explore another bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund to continue the legacy of Chase & Chalke

The Board noted the report and conveyed their thanks and encouragement to both the C&C team and all the volunteers involved, both for work already undertaken and for the future.

11. Report D – Update on Management Plan Review

11.1 LN Updated the Board on the Review of the CCNL Management Plan.

11.2 Natural England released the draft **Management Plan Guidance** in August 2023. Management Plans are also required to have the Defra/Natural England '**Outcomes Framework**' at their core. This framework will define the contribution that Protected Landscapes should make to national targets for nature recovery, to guide local decision making and prioritisation. This framework has recently been received and a training / discussion seminar organised and attended by LN.

11.3 Noting the above, there are some experienced staff within this National Landscape team and it is anticipated that a Stakeholder Engagement Plan and an Issues Report can be relatively swiftly compiled. The review process however, together with the necessary engagement process and allowing for the formal 3month consultation process, does mean the timetable will be tight. It will inevitably mean that other areas of work will have to be delayed.

11.4 Whilst LN will move forward with the Management Plan review quickly, it may be advantageous to consider how Board members may wish to be involved in the process. LN has again secured the very able assistance of Paul Tiplady who has assisted the team in previous review processes.

11.5 Paul has a long-standing knowledge of this National Landscape and thorough understanding of the requirements of the review process. Paul will also undertake the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening/scoping processes through a second contract; it has been advised that all National Landscape \Management Plans should undergo a full SEA. LN can undertake the Habitats Regulations Assessment, as long as this is checked by a competent Officer either from Wiltshire Council or from within the Partnership.

11.6 An outline timetable of the review process was given (as in Report D).

Discussion points:

Q: Will need to speak with each local authority individually to ensure they have time to adopt the new Management Plan. Some local elections are due in Spring 2025 which may affect the timescales.

Q: Dorset Council has recently had a change in administration. RB offered an induction into the work of the CCNL and support understanding the Management Plan.

The Board approved the following recommendations:

- a. **The Board endorses the timetable and process as outlined in the Report D.**
- b. **The Board members agree to contact LN if they specifically wish to be involved in reviewing sections of the Plan during this process and / or who else within their local authorities might be best placed to comment in advance of the 3 month formal consultation process.**

12. Any other business

12.1 LN updated the Board on the new staffing structure and themed work of the National Landscapes Association.

12.2 A 'Celebrate Chase and Chalke' event will be held at Larmer Tree Gardens on **Wednesday 24 July 2024** to celebrate the work of the programme and support work going forward. There will be activities, talks and walks throughout the day and evening. All Board members were encouraged to attend – a flyer will be circulated.

13. Date of next meeting

A date will be agreed by email for October 2024.

*Meeting minutes signed as a correct record:
By Chair, Alistair Fitzgerald*

Date: June 7th 2024