

Meeting minutes

Chiltern AONB Review Group Meeting 31

Meeting date Wednesday 7th February 2024
Meeting location Teams Meeting
Meeting time 13:00-15:30

Attendees:

Members (Those who make the quorum of the forum)	Attendees (presenters/additional attendees)	Apologies
(TH) - DfT Chair	SM - EKFB	ALIGN
(NJ) - Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB)	CJ - Wendover Canal Trust	
(GP) - HS2		
(MT) - Natural England (NE)		
(LB) - Natural England (NE)		
(SA) - HS2		
(AB) - Buckinghamshire Council		

Signed
Chair
Date

Tom Hinds

1 Introductions

1.1 All those present introduced themselves.

2 Review of Minutes and Actions

2.1 GP shared with group that minutes from September 2020 to December 2022 need to be

3 Contractor update - EKFB

3.1 SM presented the following:



1MC12-EKF-SE-PRE-
CS03-000024.pdf

3.2 MTa asked if the area had been seeded or natural growth. SM answered seeded

3.3 The presentation continued and SM opened the floor to further questions

3.4 NJ noted that when there is more details of the Bowood Lane design it would be helpful to share. SM accepted

3.5 NJ observed that a few of the stakeholders were disappointed in the Bowood Lane overbridge having attended some EKFB workshops that suggested some significant greening of the bridge. SM understood. NJ noted that the Leather Lane overbridge is still under discussion between the Align team and local stakeholders

3.6 LB asked if there was any update on discussions about whether or not traffic did actually have to go both ways on Bowood Lane, or was it whether there was the option of the Council just introducing traffic one way, which would allow more space for the greening

3.7 SM recalled that there wasn't any appetite for the Council to do so

3.8 TH offered any more questions, none from the floor.

3.9 SM left meeting

4 Ongoing project update

4.1 Landscape and Biodiversity Connectivity Project - NJ updated group that there are 2 new sites of work going on and from previous update and that colleagues are continuing to work in this area. NJ noted that the focus has been drawn away from the outworking of the additional project as colleagues were concentrating on the wider delivery of the final year of the NHLF funded Chalk, Cherreis and Chairs Landscape Partnership Scheme.

4.2 NJ reminded the group that the total funds allocated to this project is £500,000 and that last year (April 2022 to March 2023) the spend on the project was just over £100,000.

From April to December 2023, the spend was just under £19,000, reflecting the work priorities of colleagues delivering the AP.

- 4.3 The actual remaining funds is just over £293,000
- 4.4 NJ sent apologies to the panel that there has been slow progress but keeping an eye for new projects
- 4.5 NJ moved onto discussing the Ridgeway project. The Project Officer is leaving and that the role has been reduced to a part time role. NJ reassured the group that the National Trail Group are still fully committed to the project and that they will provide a briefing for the group
- 4.6 NJ moved onto the Misbourne Cycleway. In terms of a potential request for funding, Sustrans have managed to secure funding from another source
- 4.7 There were no further questions from the panel.
- 4.8 NJ updated group that as part of the detailed design principles of the Chilterns Environmental Integration Plan there would be access links to the North Link and the Wendover Link to be delivered by design and construction
- 4.9 A request came from the Buckinghamshire public rights of Way Department for any information on this because they've been contacted by Align who are taking over. They wanted to pick up where these northern and Wendover links were.

5 Proposed Projects

Canal towpath – Halton extension proposal

- 5.1 CJ from Wendover Canal Trust presented the following:



2024 01 19
Wendover Canal tov

- 5.2 TH opened floor to questions on the proposal for the request to extra funding
- 5.3 SA asked what is the number of people that benefit from the two options
- 5.4 CJ couldn't confirm however people are confident to use that as a safe traffic free route from Halton to Wendover, when previously they might have been clogging up the B 4009
- 5.5 TH asked about timescales
- 5.6 CJ answered ideally contract by May 2024 with construction Summer 2024
- 5.7 No further questions were asked

- 5.8 LB moved onto asking about the boundary issue asking if funds can or cannot be spent outside the 3km extent. She highlighted the original criteria documentation which referred to the 3km boundary as a guide rather than a firm limit.
- 5.9 It was agreed that it was flexible between 3km and 5km buffer for the right project
- 5.10 Discussions continued on funding request and CEF and BLEF were mentioned
- 5.11 SA took an action to check if the extension of the Wendover Canal Towpath upgrade might be eligible for CEF or BLEF.
- 5.12 TH will check with Wendover canal Trust as to their precise timescales, when they will need to know the outcome of the funding request.

EOI on Chalfont St Peter nature reserve

- 5.13 This was not yet a fully-fledged project proposal, but the initial idea looked interesting.
- 5.14 Although it was not currently sited within the AONB, it was considered that it may be following the ongoing boundary review.
- 5.15 The panel noted the site was quite close to the Colne Valley regional park fund boundary – might that panel be interested in funding? SA took an action to check.

Ongoing Project update

- 5.16 Discussion followed concerning the allocation of remaining AP funds. 38% of the total fund has already been allocated to access related funds and the Review Group would like to see more biodiversity and heritage projects coming forward.
- 5.17 NJ took an action to find out if any of the River Misbourne projects identified by Affinity Water might be submitted for AP funding.
- 5.18 AB took an action to check with the Bucks ecology team if the proposal to convert the A413 central reservation to a wild flower margin is to come forward.
- 5.19 The group expressed an aspiration to identify sufficient pipeline projects to allocate all remaining funds by the end of 2024 but recognised this would be an ambitious target.

6 Budget update

- 6.1 The remaining balance in the additional project budget was still at £1.3m
- 6.2 SA updated group that admin budget is at £29,000 set against £33,000. The reason for the difference is that the U&A allows local authorities to use the SLA to seek costs, but for those non-local authority members it's within that funding allocation

- 6.3** SA sought an uplift in the funding for both this panel and the Colne Valley panel in regards to the fact there wasn't any designs from HS2 until the towards the end of last year, beginning of this year and therefore it's reasonable to uplift by another £15,000 on both accounts which should then cover the cost until the end of the year for the invoices that are expected to come from the non local authority members.
- 6.4** SA confirmed the request was for an additional £15,000 per panel
- 6.5** TH asked if invoice issues raised at previous meetings have now been resolved
- 6.6** SA is closing out with Bucks as there is a legacy issue. However the plan is to create a new agreement where money can be transferred when all is brought up to date from reconciliation reports and status of spend

7 AOB

- 7.1** SA suggested that for the Wendover Towpath opening in June HS2 would like to release some communications. Conversation went on where LB mentioned it will be worth linking it in with the additional projects on the Chilterns website, so as to encourage more interest.
- 7.2** From discussions, in order to maintain momentum, this meeting occurrence will happen every 2 months now rather than every 3 months.
- 7.3** Next meeting scheduled for Tuesday 16th April.