



We care for the Chilterns

Open Forum following the Annual General Meeting

Of

The Chiltern Society

A company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales, no. 4138448,
also a registered charity, no. 1085163,
held on 14 October 2022 at the Hazlemere Community Centre.

Following the conclusion of the formal proceedings of the Annual General Meeting, the floor was opened for discussion and questions from the members. The following notes are a general summary of the discussions, questions and responses, but do not form part of the formal minutes of the Annual General Meeting.

1. Member's comment: Concern expressed on the reversal of EU legislation and withdrawal from land management schemes. Is the Society signing up to support amendments in legislation to take forward the Glover recommendations for protected landscapes, as the Campaign for National Parks is doing?

Response: TB stated that the Society has been focussing on building bridges to address these issues, as evidenced by a DEFRA representative attending the Society's afternoon conference on the delivery of Glover. The Society has noted the number of major organisations stepping up their external messaging, and is considering next week what the Society can best do itself for most impact.
2. Member's comment: Noting that the Society mentioned Parish Councils, queried whether the Society networked with village societies.

Response: SK indicated that he is open to talking to any society in the Chilterns. TB noted that the Society has taken on project staff that will assist with this (Amanda who is running the Wildbelt project which has as a focus linking to Parish Councils, and Piers who is a Community Officer focussed on information flow)
3. Member's comment: Do we help young people such as Duke of Edinburgh and local scout groups?

Response: TB advised that the Society indirectly increase the capacity of other charities such as Lindengate so they can support young people. No one at the Society is DBS checked and therefore is restricted from working with under 18s or vulnerable adults.
4. Member's comment: Has the Society thought about running quizzes?

Response: SK agreed that this is a great way of engaging people and will consider it for the Heritage Festival in 2023

5. Member's comment: Noting that stiles are increasingly being replaced by metallic kissing gates, instead of preferably wooden ones, asked for the Society's influence on this.
Response: DH noted that the metal gates last longer than the wooden ones, and that the type of replacement is influenced by the landowner and/or the council. WL noted that as a farmer, whilst aesthetically wooden gates are better, they are increasingly vandalised, or the hinges come off sooner, and are simply less fit for purpose than the metal counterparts. Another member noted that the galvanised steel of the gates will dull over the years so that they will be more matt and blend in better.
6. Member's comment: Commenting on cyclists on public footpaths who rarely give way and who can be rude, requested the Society to influence better behaviour.
Response: SK noted that the Society does have a cycling group and that this could be a good route to promote a responsible approach to use of footpaths, and promote the Countryside Code generally.
7. Member's comment: Noting that the waymarking of paths has been one of the great successes of the Society, but 70 years on, cautioning that these are needed on junctions only and not on every other tree.
Response: DH confirmed that it is the policy of the Rights of Way group to only sign where there is a change of direction.
8. Vice-President's comment: Who will hold HS2 accountable to return the countryside to its prior state in the years to come? Also Keith Hofmeister was thanked for his work.
Response: SK stated that the Society will, both current and future representatives. SK invited Jim Conboy to comment. JC noted that there was focus to ensure the situation is not made worse but HS2 are difficult to get them to adopt changes. A lot of effort is going into this and some oak trees were saved at Leather Lane which was a big achievement. Meetings are held monthly, and the Amersham Action Group, is also working hard on this.
A general discussion followed on the need to hold developers' accountable generally.
9. SK asked Cat Moncrieff to share some of ongoing work in relation to chalk streams. CM noted that the National Chalk Stream Strategy had been released approximately a year ago. Giving special protection to chalk streams was an initiative that the Society could get behind. Consequently the Society has done a lot with CCB on restoration of chalk streams, meadows, access and public engagement. Also through CRAG campaigning to keep sewage out of chalkstreams and protect them for the next 25 years enabling ground water to rise. CM encouraged all members to reduce their own water use in the home and garden as this impacts the restoration of chalk streams.
10. SK shared one initiative in the Heritage and Arts group with Dr Wendy Morrison working on the archeological framework for the Chilterns. SK asked for any volunteers interested in involvement in this archeological project to get in touch.

11. Member's comment: Noting that path maintenance groups cover large areas, but there are some areas where the council is looking at passing responsibility to more local volunteers. Is there a concern that the Society will lose this work?

Response: DH advised that he had heard that central Beds council are encouraging local groups. However, the Society does give hedge and brush cutter training. SK thought that as the Society has the equipment and trained volunteers there is an opportunity to work in harmony with such local groups.

Helen Griffiths
General Secretary
October 2022