

FIFTIETH MEETING OF THE COTSWOLDS CONSERVATION BOARD

HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL, CIRENCESTER

THURSDAY 7TH DECEMBER 2017

Present:

Chairman	-	Liz Eyre
Vice-Chairman	-	Nick Holliday
Harry Acland		Mark MacKenzie-Charrington
Jo Barker		Charles Mathew
David Broad		John Matthews
Matthew Darby		Brendan McCarthy
Mike Dean		Tony Merry
Stephen Gray		Mark O'Sullivan
Mollie Groom		Hedley Ringrose
Ann Holland		Daniel Szor
Sue Hope		David Thackray
Nick Hurst		Richard Wakeford
Peter Jones		Simon Wheeler
Simon King		Penny Williamson (from 10.55.a.m.)
George Lambrick		Roger Wilson
Ed Macalister-Smith		Simon Wheeler

Also in attendance:

Chris Brant	Communications Officer
Mark Connelly	Land Management Officer
Martin Lane	Director
Sandy Marcal	Administrative Assistant
Ally Rood	Planning Officer
Simon Smith	Project Development and Business Planning Officer
Richard Watson	Trails and Access Officer
James Webb	LEADER Programme Manager
Ed Bonn	Rural Skills and Grants Officer

Apologies for absence were received from the following:

Rebecca Charley	Adrian Hardman
Andrew Clark	Elizabeth Hodges
Diane Crone	Martin Veal
Matthew Darby	

Absent:

Nigel Colston

Tony Illot

B 3.1 INTRODUCTIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed the following new Board Members to the Meeting - Jo Barker, Simon King, Brendan McCarthy and Daniel Szor - and informed Members that Tony Illot would replace Ken Atack as Cherwell District Council's appointee, but that he had been unable to attend that day's Meeting. The Chairman also explained that the Board had a new DEFRA representative Dan Jones, who had replaced Margaret Reed.

The Chairman extended her thanks to the following Officers and Board Members who would shortly be leaving the organisation - Chris Brant, Communications Officer; Richard Watson, Trails and Access Officer; Val Kirby (retired from the Board on 30th November); and Penny Williamson.

Mr Lane informed Members that ballot papers for the election to appoint a Parish Representative for Group 6, as successor to Penny Williamson, would be sent out later in the day.

B 3.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at this stage of the Meeting.

B 3.3 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been submitted in accordance with the Board's Constitution.

B 3.4 MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cotswolds Conservation Board held on 29th June 2017 be approved as a correct record.

Arising thereon:-(i) Minutes

Members expressed disappointment at the late circulation of the Minutes and requested confirmation that, in future, Minutes of the Board's Meetings would be included in the relevant papers; and be available to Members at the earliest opportunity (ideally within one week) after the Meeting. In response, Mr Lane was confident that meeting administrative arrangements would return to normal following successful recruitment by Cotswold District Council.

(ii) A417 Improvements

Mr Lane reported that a Steering Group Meeting with Highways England had taken place at the start of November 2017 where it had been reported that four of the five options had been dismissed, with Highways England being advised to review the one option remaining. Consequently, the planned consultation, due to start during December 2017, would now be delayed until 2018.

Mr Lane informed Members that no further information had since been received from Highways England and that another Steering Group Meeting was expected to take place in January 2018. It was reported that Mr Brant, Communications Officer, would also be contributing to a Communications Meeting scheduled for the week commencing 11th December 2017.

(iii) National Parks

Mr Lane informed Members that Shadow Environment Minister; David Drew MP (Stroud), had released a video on Social Media inviting comments on the creation of a National Park for the Cotswolds.

It was reported that Mr Lane and the Chairman had met with Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP (Cotswolds) where the item had been discussed. Mr Clifton-Brown had offered to host a meeting of MPs to promote further discussion at the beginning of 2018.

Mr Lane explained that all Meetings with MPs over the summer had been met with positive responses.

A Meeting had been arranged with Lord Gardner, Board Members and Officers on 8th November 2017; during which time the LEADER programme, the Cotswold Way, the Farming Debate and Agri-Enviro and Rural Development Schemes post-Brexit, Rural Skills, and National Parks had all been discussed. Mr Lane also reported that he and the Chairman had attended a National Association Meeting in London where the Minister had spoken positively of his visit to the Cotswolds.

B 3.5 MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Board received the confirmed Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee held on 21st September 2017, and the unconfirmed Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee held on 9th November 2017.

B 3.6 PRESENTATION - GLORIOUS COTSWOLDS GRASSLANDS

Mr Connelly provided an update and presentation to Members on this topic; following the conclusion of the Save Our Magnificent Meadows project on 6th October 2017. Mr Connelly also informed Members that a film had been uploaded to the Board's YouTube channel.

The presentation highlighted the aims and targets of the new Scheme and an explanation was given in regards to current bids, including to the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation.

In response to various Member questions, Mr Connelly and Mr Lane explained that The Friends were not involved as their current focus was on The Discovery Centre, Northleach; but discussions had been undertaken with the 'Back from the Brink' project, who were meeting with Officers and providing a presentation on 11th December 2017.

B 3.7 PRESENTATION - COTSWOLDS GATEWAYS

Mr Smith provided an update to Members and explained the Project proposals, namely to increase tourism time and income, particularly in rural areas; in addition to developing outdoor activities, primarily walking and cycling.

Mr Smith explained that the creation of a Mobile App had been investigated, but had proved too expensive and time-consuming. It had therefore been decided to upload the routes, in a downloadable format, to the Board's website and use an existing free-usage Apps.

A Member requested a copy of the presentation, and the Chairman expressed the hope that all Members would promote the scheme and, in agreement with Mr Lane, suggested the presentation be uploaded to the Board's website alongside the papers for that day's meeting.

Mr Wakeford commented that he hoped the Board could work in conjunction with local cycling organisations to promote an off-road Cotswold Way bridleway for use by cyclists.

B 3.8 DRAFT COTSWOLDS AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN - 2018-2023

The Board received a progress update in respect of the Management Plan review process.

The Chairman informed Members that she wished to add an additional recommendation, to allow the Executive Committee to agree Stage Two Consultation Draft of the Management Plan at its Meeting on 25th January 2018 and to consequently delegate authority to the relevant Officer(s) to progress the consultation.

Members were informed that the first draft of consultation had been targeted at statutory bodies, which had included Historic England and the 15 Local Authorities. It was reported that comments had been received from all of the statutory bodies and from six of the local authorities. It was explained that staff illness had resulted in the delay of these comments being published and that, consequently, the second round of consultation would now take place during February to March 2018, resulting in adoption in June 2018.

Mr Lane explained that the second round of consultation would be much wider and, consequently, any Board Member could make comments at this stage.

Members would also be able to comment on the draft document released for discussion ahead of the Executive Committee Meeting on 25th January 2018.

Mr Macalister-Smith expressed the wish to see the comments received from the statutory bodies and suggested that, in addition to them being made viewable to Members, some indication be given as to how these had been fed back into the Plan.

The Chairman reminded Local Authority Members of the value of the Management Plan process compared to the relatively small amount of money the Authorities contributed.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) progress to date be noted;**
- (b) the revised timeline be agreed;**
- (c) the Executive Committee be authorised to agree the Stage Two Consultation Draft of the Management Plan at its Meeting on 25th January 2018, incorporating comments received from Board Members, and to delegate authority to the relevant Officer(s) to progress the consultation.**

B 3.9 DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN 2018-2021

The Board received a progress update in respect of the Draft Business Plan.

Mr Smith explained that, owing to staff illness, the Plan had not been triggered over the summer months as usual. Mr Smith reminded Members that responses were required to be submitted by 15th December 2017.

Mr O'Sullivan commented that he felt, with reference to page 28, that mention to 'health walks' would be more beneficial than the current reference to 'prescription walks'. This was noted by the Officer.

Various Members commented that they felt there should be greater involvement with Parish Councils and that more reference be made to building heritage; which they felt would consequently provide a good basis for the Local Authority planning decisions.

It was also suggested that the Board should write to all Parish Councils inviting them to contribute financially to the Board's work. Mr Lane explained that all Parish Councils had been contacted previously, but that this would be a suitable point in time to renew discussion with the eight Parish Appointees.

It was suggested that the Plan undergo a thorough realistic appraisal of proposed achievements.

The Chairman summarised the points made by Members and reminded Members of the deadline to submit comments. The Chairman also explained

that the majority of Sub-Committees would be meeting prior to the Executive Committee Meeting on 25th January 2018.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the production schedule for the 2012-21 Business Plan be noted;**
- (b) comments on the 2018-21 Business Plan be requested by no later than the deadline of 15th December 2017;**
- (c) Local Authority Board Members seek to ensure their authorities engage in the Plan's consultation throughout January 2018.**

B 3.10 REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES AND OTHER UPDATES

The Board received activity reports and copies of the Action Points arising from recent Sub-Committee Meetings.

(a) Living & Working Sub-Committee

Ms Rood reported that the last Meeting of the Sub-Committee had taken place on 5th September 2017 and had discussed the update regarding the Management Plan, West Oxfordshire District Council's Local Plan review and the National Rail works through protected landscapes. Ms Rood explained that relationships with Network Rail had previously proved difficult, but hoped that in future more co-operation would exist between the Board and Network Rail.

Mr Hurst added that he felt it was important to reinstate the involvement that had previously been made in regards to planning applications.

Mrs Hope commented she felt the main issue with Network Rail had been their failing to not follow their own agreed protocols and suggested that Network Rail be written to, explaining the requirement of them to comply with procedures. The Chairman responded that the Executive Committee had already agreed to write to Network Rail.

Members commented that they were concerned about the response from West Oxfordshire District Council regarding the Local Plan inquiry and the fact the actual housing plan revision had been increased by 20%. It was reported that Members had until 20th December 2017 to respond to the Inspector.

(b) Conserving & Managing Sub-Committee

Mr Connelly reported that the last Meeting of the Sub-Committee had taken place on 7th September 2017 and had discussed the Natural Capital Project and Post-Brexit Farming. He also reported that the Sub-Committee Meeting on 30th November 2017 had been postponed, owing to the three Board Members being unable to attend; the next Meeting would be scheduled for the New Year.

Mr Wakeford commented that he was disappointed with the consultant used for the Natural Capital project. The Chairman responded that whilst the consultant

did comply with the brief; the issue was that the brief was restricted due to finances.

Mr Wakeford also raised the issue of the Sub-Committee not giving enough attention to tenant farmers and that this would be reviewed in the future.

Note:

In response to a question by the Chairman regarding substitute Members serving on Sub-Committee, Mr Lane informed Members that substitutes were only permitted for the eight Parish appointees.

Mr Mathew highlighted that he had been listed as absent from the Meeting, but had previously sent his apologies.

(c) Enjoying & Appreciating Sub-Committee

Mr Brant presented an oral update in respect of the Sub-Committee. He explained that the Growth Programme Bid had been submitted on 30th November 2017 and that there was a twelve-week turnaround for a response. Mr Brant informed Members the final draft of the Bathscape Partnership access proposals had been submitted, and that the Board was awaiting a response.

Note:

Mr Holliday had replaced Dr Kirby as Chairman of the Sub-Committee and would serve in the position until March 2018.

(d) Grants Sub-Committee

Mr Bonn presented an oral update to Members in respect of the Sub-Committee. He provided details of the current applications and explained that two had been submitted - from Hawkwood College and Shipton Oliffe Parish Council.

The Chairman commented that she was pleased to see projects aimed at young people being included. Mr Holliday also thanked Mr Bonn for his assistance with the Committee.

RESOLVED that the latest progress reports be noted.

(e) The Cotswolds Discovery Centre, Northleach

The Board received an update on the Cotswolds Discovery Centre, which covered the submission of the Growth Bid for the site by the Friends of the Cotswolds and their Planning Application to Cotswold District Council for replacement glass galleries at the Centre.

Mr Lane explained the next Meeting of the Board Members on the Partnership Board was on 12th January 2018 and that the Full Partnership Board was due to meet soon after. Mr Lane also informed Members that the Friends planned

various fund-raising events for spring 2018 and to launch a Cotswolds Crafts Apprenticeship Scheme in connection with the University of Gloucestershire.

Mr Dean enquired if the Cotswolds Crafts proposal was in partnership with the Board, to which Mr Lane responded that The Friends appeared to wish to develop the bid themselves, in connection with the University of Gloucestershire.

Mr Lambrick advised those present that The Friends had decided to become a Membership Body in 2016, but this had not yet been fully implemented. He also expressed concern at the finances of the Café. Mr Lane responded that this was continuing to be closely monitored and that the financial viability of the café was inextricably linked to the welcome and condition of the building fabric.

RESOLVED that the latest progress report be noted.

(f) Cotswolds LEADER Programme

Mr Webb provided an update on the progress of the Cotswolds LEADER Programme.

Mr Webb amplified various aspects, including the start of recruitment for a new Member of the LAG Executive. He informed Members of two events scheduled for January 2018, taking place in Cirencester, and that both of these were Growth Fund & LEADER joint events.

Mr Webb urged Members to research new projects which had the potential to develop high quality jobs.

Mr Mathews added that the Programme would not necessarily create jobs in itself, but would help to safeguard existing jobs via investment. He also highlighted to Members the benefits of the Programme in relation to animal welfare.

RESOLVED that:

(a) the updated report be noted;

(b) the recommendation of the LAG Executive to reallocate an additional £75,000 to the Priority 1 investment theme be approved.

B 3.11 EXTERNAL AUDIT OF ANNUAL RETURN 2016/17

The Board received the results of the external audit of the Annual Return 2016/17.

Miss Clarke informed Members that the full report had been presented to the Executive Committee, who had been considered it to be satisfactory. She explained that the report had contained the following two recommendations:-

- (i) That the Financial Officer should sign the accounts before the Chairman - this issue had only arisen due to the fact that a temporary accountant was being used;
- (ii) The Board should maintain a Fixed Asset Register for all assets rather than, as present, only for assets with a value above £10,000) - advice was being sought on this recommended lower threshold.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

B 2.12 DRAFT AGENDA FOR THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ON 25TH JANUARY 2018

The Board noted the draft Agenda for the next Meeting of the Executive Committee, to be held on Thursday 25th January 2018.

B 2.13 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN 2017/18

The Board noted the updated Forward Plan for 2017/18 to 2018/19.

B 2.14 OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business that was urgent.

Note:

After the close of the formal business, Mr Brant provided a brief presentation to Members of the Board's new website due to be launched on 8th December 2017.

The Meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and closed at 12.38 p.m.

Chairman