**TASK AND FINISH AND WORKING GROUPS**

**Summary:** A progress update on the Board’s Task and Finish and Working Groups.

**Recommendation: To note the progress updates.**

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**Background**

The report below provides a summary of the work of the task and finish and working groups from December.

**Caring for the Cotswolds Task and Finish group**

* + Last Caring for the Cotswolds new member event (23 January 2019) went ahead with acceptable attendance; new members, potential new members, grant recipients all attended.
	+ Manor Cottages (a founding and very generous contributor) has been acquired by a larger company. Their donations are now on hold for the foreseeable future.
	+ Calls for funding applications to close on 5th April.
	+ Date of next meeting: tba.

**Rural Skills Task & Finish Group**.

* + Development proposal for the programme and supporting information is due to be submitted to the Executive Committee for consideration at its 30th April meeting.
	+ Date of next meeting: tba

**A417 Task & Finish Group**

* + Highways England (HE) confirmed Option 30 as preferred route, announced on 14th March 2019. Formal consultations expected over summer / autumn 2019.
	+ HE reviewing Board’s suggestions for alternative arrangements for how A436 joins A417 – recognising that the suggestions are better from a landscape and economic perspective than original proposals.
	+ Board, National Trust and Wildlife Trust have jointly written to SoS at Defra highlighting that the scheme is not applying policies or approaches outlined in Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan.
	+ Task and finish group undertook a walk through on site with HE and their consultants on 17th December 2018.
	+ Landscape and environment technical working groups held on 15th January and 12th February with next meeting scheduled for 28th March.
	+ Strategic Stakeholder Panel meetings held on 7th February.
	+ Date of next meeting: 19th March 2019.

**Dark Skies Task & Finish Group**

* + Terms of Reference fulfilled
	+ Report considered by the Board on 6th December
	+ Draft Dark Night Skies and Artificial Light position statement considered by Executive Committee on 26th February and recommended to the Board for adoption.
	+ Two Board members offered to support the Dark Skies Initiative. Application form completed and submitted. Successful launch of the Cotswolds Dark Skies Initiative on Saturday 16th March at Guiting Power with 80 people attending. The Keynote speaker was Will Gater, Astronomy Journalist, author and presenter whose presentation ‘Chasing Darkness’ explored what can be seen with dark skies and the impact of artificial light. The weather, unfortunately, prevented the hoped for follow-on stargazing.
	+ Date of next meeting: No further meeting planned.

**Walking & Exploring Working Group**

* + Discussion on the inclusion of core costs in project development. Simon Smith agreed to take a paper to the Executive Committee.
	+ Engagement with young people – new work with Young Gloucestershire Partnership planned following success of pilot project.
	+ Visit England Trails Project. Project to be completed by March with new section on National website for visitors from Germany, Holland and USA. Potential international partnering with other Trails e.g.Taiwan.
	+ Bathscapes HLF funding now agreed, at the core of Walking and Exploring Capital purpose. Tenders to be submitted on basis of CCB report to Bathscapes on radial and circular routes, no overheads or core staff costs covered but implementation unlikely before 2020 and after Gateway Project completed.
	+ Gateways Project – Good progress, no “Variation” required by RPA for changed specification of funding supplies for Wardens to implement. Aim to complete Autumn. Alana input to be required shortly re Sign Board design and implementation.
	+ Coswolds Trails and Access Group – Next meeting postponed as Nick Holliday stepped down as CTAP chair. Becky to discuss with Martin. New ToR to be discussed at next CTAP. David kindly volunteered to attend on behalf of W&EC.
	+ Work on “Cotswolds Walking & Exploring Capital” Branding planned, alongside review of existing branding guidelines.
	+ Discoverer Pass – GWR agree to be lead administrator
	+ Cotswold Lion – agreed this was a strong edition, congratulations to Alana.
	+ Date of next meeting: in April 2019, date tba.

**Planning & Infrastructure Working Group**

* + Meeting held on 31st January 2019.
	+ The Group discussed a number of topics, including:
		- **Recent consultation responses**, including endorsement of the proposal that local planning authorities should, as part of the evidence base for producing their Local Plans, produce a report that specifically addresses the potential implications of the Local Plan for the AONB.
		- **Major development** (as defined in paragraph 172 and Footnote 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework), including endorsement of the proposal that – in order to most effectively target it’s limited resources - the Board should only respond to planning applications that it considers to be major development.
		- **Planning protocol**, including the criteria that local planning authorities should use for consulting the Board on planning applications and the proposed updating of the 2011 planning protocol.
		- **External Funding Working Group challenge**, including endorsement of the PIWG draft response (subject to specific amendments). Further consideration still to be given to how PIWG members (and other Board members) could potentially contribute to securing additional planning-related funding and income.
	+ Date of next meeting: 29th April 2019

**External Funding Working Group**

* Met on 6th December. Agreed to invite a professional fundraiser to the next meeting to provide missing perspective/experience.
* Phil Chapman has joined the group.
* Response to a challenge issued to the Planning and Infrastructure Working Group received
* Fundraiser Ali Jones found by Dan Szor and met the Working group on 13th March. Draft structure for a fundraising strategy and plan agreed. Initial draft based on existing content of detailed work programme and budget to be considered at next meeting.
* Final fundraising plan will inform a challenge paper for Board members, now postponed to late summer.
* Date of next meeting 13th June 2019.

**Glorious Cotswolds Grasslands Working Group – to be established**

* **Remit**: To support the delivery of the Glorious Cotswolds Grasslands project and the establishment of the Cotswolds Meadows Service.
* Support and monitor project progress against indicators and targets
* To advise on the establishment of the Meadows Service as a self-financing operation.
* To provide an interface with the land managing community of the Cotswolds including farming, equine, conservation bodies and highway authorities.
* **Timescales**: January 2019 to March 2022.
* **Date of first meeting**: 28th April 2019.
* **Proposed membership**: 3 Board members and 3 external members.
* **Officer Leads**: Mark Connelly and Harvey Sherwood.

**Supporting paper(s):**

**None.**