

**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF
COTSWOLDS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE**

HELD AT COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL, TRINITY ROAD, CIRENCESTER

TUESDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2022

Present:

Brendan McCarthy (Chair)	Jo Barker
Liz Hodges	Nick Bumford
Phil Chapman	Sue Crawford
Steve Bucknell	Matt Darby
Brendan Costelloe	Ben Dent
Andy Graham	Norman Kay
Paul Hodgkinson	Graham Hopkins
Jane Hull	Garry King
Cate Le Grice-Mack	Mike Dean
Tony Merry	Martin Mitchell
Dom Morris	Isabel Ross
Ben Stokes	John Swanton
Liz Eyre	Sarah Whalley-Hoggins

Also in Attendance:

Andy Parsons (Chief Executive)
Diane Bassett (Head of Finance – Maternity Cover)
Rebecca Jones (Access and Volunteers Lead)
Margaret Reid (Head Warden)
Simon Smith (Nature Recovery Lead)
Mark Connelly (Land Management Lead)

Observing:

Ashley Smith – Stroud DC Councillor

PRE-MEETING TALK

At 9:30am Robert Weaver (RW), CEO at Cotswold District Council, gave a talk to the Board. He informed Members of his recent meetings with the Chief Executive and that there is a strong appetite to develop a really positive partnership – especially in the areas of rural skills, agriculture and parish/ town council engagement. He advised the Board of the partial refresh of Cotswold District Council’s Local Plan, which is currently out for consultation. Questions and feedback from Board Members included:

- Norman Kay – does CDC have a clear and coherent climate change policy? RW said that he would send the information to the Chief Executive for forwarding.
- Jane Hull – it would be good to have a clear understanding of areas where CDC lead and areas where CNL lead. This was agreed by everyone.
- Andy Graham – asked if CDC were considering sharing their local plan approach with neighbouring local authorities.

The Chair thanked RW for his talk and invited him to stay on and listen to the upcoming presentations.

1. INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

- Apologies - apologies were received from Rebecca Charley, Ed Macalister-Smith, Paul Crossley, Brendan McCarron, Amanda Davis, David Broad, Clive Webster. No apologies were received from Adrian Hardman, Steve Good, Jo Stafford.
- Introductions and announcements – the Chair informed Members that after 20+ years of service, including five as Chair, Liz Eyre is attending her final meeting. The Chair also stated that this was, likely, Norman Kay's last meeting and that Stroud DC would appoint a replacement in due course. Finally, the Chair welcomed Ashley Smith, a Stroud DC Councillor, to the meeting in an observing capacity.
- Declarations of interest – none.
- Public questions - there were no public questions.

2. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING – 12 OCTOBER 2021

- Decision - resolved that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board Meeting held on 12 October 2021 be approved as a correct record.
- Matters Arising – all actions arising from the meeting were completed.

3. MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - 25 JANUARY 2022

The Board noted the Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 January 2022.

4. PRESENTATION 1: COTSWOLDS VOLUNTARY WARDENS

Rebecca Jones and Margaret Reid gave an inspiring presentation on the breadth of work carried out across the CNL.

- Comments – the Chair thanked Margaret and Rebecca, stating that the role of the Voluntary Wardens really sets us apart from other protected landscapes. Sue Crawford suggested that thought should be given to how Wardens engage with a younger audience for walks. Steve Bucknell encouraged the Wardens to apply to Area Boards for potential grants to support their work. Cate Le Grice-Mack felt that the Wardens are in an excellent position to introduce more school students to field work, at a time when schools have been reduced in their capacity to do so. Paul Hodgkinson and Robert Weaver offered to help promote their work and to signpost people to signing up.
- Decision – resolved that the Board notes the presentation and that a very big 'thank you' is passed on, from the Board to all Wardens.
Actions Arising – none.

5. PRESENTATION 2: THE LANDSCAPES REVIEW – GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Jon Taylor, Head of Future Landscapes Strategy and Governance at Defra, gave an informative presentation on the Landscapes Review, the key items of the government's response and focused on the proposals around reviewing statutory purposes.

- Comments – there was a wide ranging and positive discussion around various matters, including: resources; cross-government buy-in and dependencies, e.g. the Planning Bill; the duty of regard (comparing it to Green Belt duties placed upon public bodies) and strengthening the management plans; statutory consultee status; agri-

transition and the potential impacts on the farming industry. Ben Dent had a specific question around whether Defra had given any consideration on splitting the scale of ambition across the AONB network, as the size of the AONBs and the teams varies so greatly. The Chief Executive informed the Board of the timeline for completing its response to the consultation, which has a deadline of 9 April. The Chair concluded by thanking Jon Taylor for his time and insights, which had been really helpful in helping the Board to fully understand the process and priority areas.

- Decision – resolved that the Board notes the presentation.
- Actions Arising – none.

6. REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chief Executive gave an update on the key activity that has happened since the last meeting in June, with notable time and resources being given to the A417 examination and designated funds.

- Comments – the Chief Executive informed the Board of the potential National Grid ‘Visual Impact Provision’ (VIP) project for the CNL, which could involve the removal of 18 pylons and the undergrounding of new infrastructure. Representatives of National Grid will be presenting at the June Board meeting.
- Decision – resolved that the Board notes the report.
- Actions Arising – none.

7. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Chair encouraged Members to take the papers as read and invited questions.

- Comments – none.
- Decision - resolved that the Board notes the report.
- Actions Arising – none.

8. PLANS, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES FOR APPROVAL/ ADOPTION

8(a) Management Plan 2023-28

Simon Smith introduced the paper, informing Members that the final plan will be presented for adoption at the February 2023 Board meeting, and published during the spring/ summer. The timeline has been shortened with the key decision being to create a first draft ahead of two rounds of public consultation. Rather than facilitating themed workshops at the start of the process, it is recommended that ‘issue specific’ workshops be held at a future date, if deemed necessary and subject to consultation feedback.

- Comments – The Chair and Jane Hull made reference to the current review of management plans being conducted by Natural England and Defra, suggesting that the Board may have to adapt its format mid-process, and that we should acknowledge this as a risk. Ben Dent stressed that we must ensure external stakeholders feel like they have had the opportunity to co-design the plan and Simon Smith assured him that this would be the case. The Chief Executive reminded the Board of our Business Plan outcome of becoming a more engaging and influential organisation that others wanted to work with, saying that this would be a good test to see if the Board had achieved its objectives.
- Decision – resolved that the Board approves the production timeline and plan.
- Actions Arising – none.

8(b) Climate Change Strategy

Mark Connelly introduced the strategy, informing the Board that normally a strategy like this would be reviewed in ten years but that, in this case, a review will likely be required in 12-18 months, following the completion of the carbon baselining assessment and the recruitment/ activity of the Net Zero Landscape Officer.

- Comments – Norman Kay, as a member of the Climate Change working group, didn't feel that the strategy could be adopted because, although worthy, it hadn't been signed off by the working group at a meeting. Mark Connelly replied by saying that two-way communication with the group had taken place by email. It should also be noted that the Board's working groups are not decision making bodies. Cate Le Grice Mack raised the issue of biodigesters being very inefficient. Sarah Whalley-Hoggins asked when the Board could expect to see the updated Position Statement on Renewable Energy, the Chief Executive replied by saying that the revised statement would be presented to the Board for adoption in October 2022, once the carbon baselining assessment and associated recommendations were known, and that two working groups - Planning and Infrastructure and Climate Change – would need to collaborate on its production.
- Decision – resolved that the Board adopts the Strategy.
- Actions Arising – none.

8(c) Annual Work Programme 2022/23

The Chief Executive introduced the programme and thanked the team for their contributions in its development.

- Comments – The Chair stated that it was a comprehensive programme and the Board should adopt it.
- Decision – resolved that the Board adopts the Work Programme for 2022/23.
- Actions Arising – none.

8(d) Working and Steering Groups 2022/23

The Chief Executive introduced the proposal, which had no significant changes from the current groups. He informed the Board that, in light of the climate crisis commitment, the Climate Change working group will continue with a new remit. The only other minor change was the renaming of the Fundraising working group to 'Projects and Fundraising'.

- Comments – none.
- Decision – resolved that the Board approves the proposal.
- Actions Arising – none.

9. FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE SUB-COMMITTEE**9(a) Minutes of the previous meeting on 7 February**

The Board noted the Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 February 2022.

9(b) Q3 Financial Performance

The Head of Finance informed Members that, at the end of Q3, the Board remained on track to achieve its useable reserves target one year ahead of plan.

9(c) Budget 2022/23

The Head of Finance informed Members that, at present, there will be a requirement to draw on useable reserves (£58k) in order to deliver a balanced budget in 2022/23.

However, the budget is prudent and doesn't include (1) an uplift in Defra core funding, or (2) projects associated with the A417 designated funds programme.

- Comments – Graham Hopkins encouraged the Board to approve the budget, acknowledging that, in reality, the risk is low. Paul Hodgkinson asked about the reasons for moving the office from the Old Prison, the Chief Executive gave a full response. Sarah Whalley-Hoggins highlighted the costs of Member allowances (£21,600) and suggested that consideration should be given to this, in light of the budgetary pressures; she offered to have her allowance removed and Steve Bucknell followed with the same offer. Members' allowances are paid to reflect the workload of all Members, but can be declined on an individual basis. Steve Bucknell asked whether lessons had been learnt with regard to the property issues.
- Decision – resolved that the Board adopts the budget for 2022/23.
- Actions Arising – inform Board Members as soon as the Defra grant is confirmed for 2022/23 and the impact on the budget position.

9(d) Risk Management Framework

The Board adopted the Risk Management Framework and Key Risk Register.

10. FORWARD PLANNING

The Board Members noted the draft agenda for the June 2022 Board Meeting, with the addition of the first draft of the management plan. The Chair outlined the significant matters that the Board will be focused on over the next 12 months:

- The Landscapes Review – consultation response and next steps
- Property/ office matters
- Management Plan development, consultation and production
- Farming in Protected Landscapes
- A417 Missing Link – examination and designated funds

11. OTHER BUSINESS

- None.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 21 June 2022, 10.00am to 1.00pm, at Cirencester Baptist Church, Chesterton Lane, Cirencester GL7 1YE, followed by the Annual General Meeting.

The Board Meeting commenced at 09:30 and closed at 13:05.

Chairman