

**MEETING OF
THE COTSWOLDS CONSERVATION BOARD**

HELD AT CIRENCESTER BAPTIST CHURCH, CIRENCESTER

TUESDAY 22 JUNE 2021, (10:00am)

Present:

Brendan McCarthy (Chairman)	Rebecca Charley (Vice-Chair)
Garry King	Ben Dent
David Broad	Cate Le-Grice Mack
Nicholas Bumford	Phil Chapman
Liz Eyre	Ben Stokes
Amanda Davis	Ed Macalister-Smith
Shaun Parsons	John Swanton
Sarah Whalley-Hoggins	Brendan Costelloe
Clive Webster	Norman Kay

Also in Attendance:

Andy Parsons (Chief Executive)
Mark Connelly (Land Management Lead)
Alana Hopkins (Communications Lead)

Observing:

Martin Mitchell (new Parish Council Group 6 Member)
Margaret Reid (Head Warden, Cotswolds Voluntary Wardens)

1. INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

- **Apologies** - apologies were received from Jo Barker, Susan Crawford, Mike Dean, Adrian Hardman, Steve Harvey, Graham Hopkins, George Lambrick, Tony Merry. No apologies were received from Paul Crossley, Matthew Darby, Liz Hodges, Dominic Morris.
- **Introductions and announcements** – the Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. He especially welcomed a number of Board Members who were attending their first ‘in person’ meeting. He also reminded the Board of the six people who have recently left the Board, and who have accumulated many years of service between them.
- The appointment of Patrick Arran as the Board’s Monitoring Officer was confirmed.
- **Declarations of interest** – none.
- **Public questions** - there were no public questions.

2. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING – 24 MARCH 2021

- **Decision** - resolved that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board Meeting held on 24 March 2021 be approved as a correct record.
- **Matters Arising** – A Safeguarding Lead has now been appointed and all the team are undertaking online training on this subject.

3. MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - 25 MAY 2021

The Board noted the Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 May 2021.

4. REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chief Executive (CE) informed the Board of recent appointments to the team:

Nicole Daw – Trails and Access Officer

Scott Brown – Farming Engagement Lead

There is more recruitment activity to build the Farming in Protected Landscapes team and for a Planning Officer. John Mills has joined a national Planning Advisory Group.

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

5. Q4 FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL REVIEW

In the absence of the Head of Finance the CE presented the paper, noting the positive year-end reserves position which is now at £82,000, meaning that the Board is well on track to reach its reserves target by 2023.

- Comments – The Chairman commented that he felt the financial management of the organisation was exceptionally well run. This was supported by everyone.
- Decision - resolved that the Board notes the year-end financial position.
- Actions Arising – none.

6. OUR VISION FOR THE COTSWOLDS

The CE introduced the paper by reminding Board Members of the process over the past seven months to ensure a well thought through and well-constructed Vision could be presented to the Board for adoption.

- Comments – there was widespread discussion with many Board Members contributing. Topics included: how we communicate our Vision; changing the 'image' of the Cotswolds; working in partnership with others; putting people at the heart of our work; encouraging access for all; supporting local communities to thrive. One of the key points raised was around how we periodically measure progress in realising the Vision.
- Decision – resolved that the Board adopts the new Vision.
- Actions Arising – consider (1) how we communicate and promote the Vision to our external audience and (2) developing indicators to track progress (potentially with an annual review).

7. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2021/22

The CE presented the paper, recommending the Key Performance Indicators for 2021/22.

- Comments – Amanda Davis encouraged the team to consider ways in which 'qualitative' measures could support KPI4. Clive Webster suggested that the Board should consider local authority Green Infrastructure strategies when focusing on engagement work.

- Decision - resolved that the Board adopts the proposed KPIs for 2021/22.
- Actions Arising – none.

8. ART IN THE LANDSCAPE

The Communications Lead introduced the paper, explaining that the National Association of AONBs (NAAONB) has requested that all AONBs seek to gain Board approval for the nationwide strategy.

- Comments – there was general support for the strategy, although Cate Le Grice-Mack thought the report could have been more inspiring. Liz Eyre suggested liaising with musical artists and get their thoughts on how the Board can better engage. Ed Macalister-Smith underlined the importance of art in bringing generations of families together. The Board also debated the merits of a national co-ordinating role.
- Decision – resolved that the Board adopts the NAAONB ‘Arts in the Landscape’ strategy, with a caveat that any support funding undergoes rigorous review.
- Actions Arising – none.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK AND KEY RISK REGISTER

In the absence of the Head of Finance the CE introduced this paper. He explained that the review and updating of the Board’s corporate risk will become the responsibility of the new Finance and Governance Sub-Committee.

- Comments – it was noted that Table 4 (Management Plan: Land Management Use) in the Appendix was missing from the papers. Amanda Davis commented that, overall, it was well thought through and demonstrated the competence of the team.
- Decision – resolved that the Board notes the Risk Management Framework and Key Risk Register.
- Actions Arising – none.

10. BOARD SKILLS AUDIT QUESTIONNAIRE

The CE introduced the paper, reminding the Board of the previous questionnaire about ‘Board Effectiveness’ and how that has led to improvements in how future meetings will be structured. This questionnaire identified gaps within the Board’s expertise and knowledge and these will be taken into account when recruiting new Members.

- Comments – the Chairman suggested that new Board Members should complete the questionnaire to ensure it remains up-to-date.
- Decision – resolved that the Board notes the results of the questionnaire.
- Actions Arising – arrange for new Board Members (and existing ones who haven’t yet completed it) to complete the questionnaire as part of their induction process.

11. WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

This paper was presented by the CE. He reflected that, in extraordinary times, the team has delivered on so many fronts and that he was proud of their achievements during the year.

- Comments – Margaret Reid (Head Warden) informed the Board that the Voluntary Wardens recorded 24,800 hours of volunteering in 2020/21. Although that is 50% of the previous year it remains a hugely impressive figure in the circumstances. Ben

Stokes asked why the Board withdrew its involvement in the 'Discoverer' scheme and the Comms Lead, along with Ed Macalister-Smith, provided a response. Cate Le Grice-Mack hoped that the hedge-laying competition will resume in future years.

- Decision – resolved that the Board notes the progress against the Work Programme for 2020/21.
- Actions Arising – none.

12. FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

The Land Management Lead provided a detailed verbal update, reminding Members that information was currently under embargo by Defra, until the Written Ministerial Statement is published. He informed the Board that our organisation has made significant progress with recruitment of new team members and the assessment panel.

- Comments – this led to significant discussion, involving most Board Members. Topics included: communications; linking to the Vision; reputational risks; organisation's that are eligible; attendance at events and shows. Everyone agreed that this was a hugely exciting opportunity – both for the organisation and for the Cotswolds National Landscape.
- Decision - resolved that the Board notes the information provided about Farming in Protected Landscapes.
- Actions Arising – none.

13. EXTERNAL BIDS

The 'information only' paper was noted.

- Comments – none.
- Decision - resolved that the Board notes the current External Bids.
- Actions Arising – none.

14. FORWARD PLANNING

The Board Members noted the draft agendas for:

- September 2021 Executive Committee
- October 2021 Board Meeting

15. OTHER BUSINESS

- Phil Chapman congratulated the team, and in particular James Webb and Alana Hopkins, on the Kingfisher Trail which launched at the end of May.
- Amanda Davis applauded the networking of James Webb, which has helped to raise the profile of the organisation.
- The CE gave a brief overview of the Forward Planning Day on 6 July and also informed the Board that Highways England has submitted the Development Consent Order for the A417 road scheme and are awaiting approval.
- The Head of Finance (via the CE) gave an update on the 2021/22 budget, now that outstanding actions for Glorious Cotswold Grasslands; Cotswold Way; and Bathscape had been completed. She also informed the Board that the forecast at the end of Q1 would include the impact of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 12 October 2021, 10.00am to 1.00pm, at Cotswold District Council, Council Chambers, Trinity Road, Cirencester.

The Board Meeting commenced at 10.00am and closed at 12:20pm.

Chairman