

**MEETING OF
THE COTSWOLDS CONSERVATION BOARD**

HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM MEETINGS

WEDNESDAY 24 JUNE 2020 (10.00 am)

Present:

Brendan McCarthy (Chairman)	Rebecca Charley (Vice-Chair)
Jo Barker (until 12.45 pm)	George Lambrick
David Broad	Catherine Le-Grice Mack
Nicholas Bumford	Charles Mathew
Phil Chapman	John Matthews
Brendan Costelloe	Tony Merry
Paul Crossley	Dom Morris
Matt Darby	Ben Stokes
Amanda Davis	Daniel Szor (until 12.15 pm)
Mike Dean	Sarah Whalley-Hoggins (until 12.35 pm)
Liz Eyre	Clive Webster
Jacqui Fenn	
Adrian Hardman	
Steve Harvey	
Liz Hodges	
Graham Hopkins	
David Kerr	
Garry King	

Also in Attendance:

Andy Parsons (Chief Executive)
Ann Wyatt (Head of Finance)
David Shelmerdine (Acting Finance Officer)
James Webb (Partnerships and Fundraising Officer)
Alana Hopkins (Communications Officer)
Mark Connelly (Land Management Officer)

1. INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

- **Apologies** - apologies were received from Nigel Colston, Mollie Groom, Norman Kay and Shaun Parsons.
- **Introductions and announcements** - the Chairman welcomed Members to the Meeting and thanked them for attending the Board's first virtual meeting. He explained that this was also the first paperless Board meeting with printed copies of the meeting papers being sent to only six Board Members, representing a saving of approximately 2,200 sheets of printed paper.

The Chairman welcomed Ann Wyatt as the Board's Head of Finance to the meeting and explained that a Chief Executive's report would now be included as part of the Agenda for every Board meeting.

The Chairman also expressed his thanks to three Secretary of State Board Members who were leaving the Board – Dan Szor, Simon King and David Thackray. As Dan Szor was in attendance, the Chairman, Chief Executive and all present extended their thanks to Dan for his efforts in relation to his membership of the Board’s Caring for the Cotswolds Group and with his Cotswolds Distillery business. They hoped that Dan would continue his working relationship with the Board going forward.

The Chairman added that he had been involved with the appointment and recruitment of three new Board Members who would officially join the Board in the autumn.

- Declarations of interest - Charles Mathew declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item (7) as he was a Member of the Oxfordshire Local Pension Fund Committee. Cate Le-Grice Mack declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item (9) as she had been involved with one of the businesses involved.
- Public questions - there were no public questions.

2. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING - 24 MARCH 2020

- Decision - resolved that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board Meeting held on 24 March 2020 be approved as a correct record.
- Matters Arising - None.

3. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE BOARD - 24 MARCH 2020

- Decision - resolved that the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Board held on 24 March 2020 be approved as a correct record.
- Matters Arising - the Chairman reminded the Board of the increase in membership of the Executive Committee for 2020-21.

4. MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - 27 MAY 2020

The Board received the Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting held on 27 May 2020.

- Matters Arising - the Chairman highlighted the new format for Minutes going forward.

5. REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chief Executive presented a review of key actions since the last meeting and which also set out priorities for the meeting.

- Comments - Members wished to formally thank the Chief Executive and Officers for their work to date following the Chief Executive’s appointment in December 2019.
- Decision - resolved that the paper be noted by the Board.
- Actions Arising - none

6. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Acting Finance Officer presented the annual review of the Board’s Corporate Governance Framework and its Annual Governance Statement.

- Comments - Ed Macalister-Smith questioned if the Equality Standards Policy dated 2010 within the document should now be reviewed.
Paul Crossley questioned if the Board was managing work in relation to Public Rights of Way. The Chief Executive confirmed that Trails Officer Becky Jones was liaising closely with local authorities in relation to this.
- Decision - resolved that the Board (a) notes the Annual Internal Audit Report 2019/20; (b) agrees the annual review of the Corporate Governance Framework; and (c) approves the Annual Governance Statement.
- Actions Arising - the Chief Executive to take forward the possible review of the Equality Standards Policy.

7. ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2019/20

The Acting Finance Officer presented the Bank Reconciliation (as at 31 March 2020), AGAR Accounting Statements and Statement of Accounts for 2019/20.

- Comments - Ed Macalister-Smith commented that he was interested in the comparison between Local Authority members' pension schemes and the Board's own scheme. In response, the Chief Executive explained that the Board had been running at a 128% target with an employer contribution of 22%, but following discussions with GCC this has now reduced to 19%.
Following a further suggestion from Ed Macalister-Smith, Adrian Hardman explained that as the Board was an admitted body into the Gloucestershire Scheme, it would be unusual for the Board to invest funding into a project that the Scheme itself had not. He also highlighted the figures presented within the report represented a snapshot in time and one that was pre-Covid 19 outbreak.
- Decision - that the Board (a) notes the Bank Reconciliation as at 31 March 2020; (b) approves the Statement of Accounts 2019/20; and (c) approves the Accounting Statements 2019/20
- Actions Arising - none

8. ANNUAL REVIEW 2019/20

The Communications Officer presented the Annual Review to the Board for approval.

- Comments - Members wished to thank Officers for their efforts in preparing the Review. In response to a Member's question regarding an entirely digital Review, the Communications Officer explained this had been partly due to the large number of printed copies of the Review that remained unused each year.
- Decision - resolved that the Board approved the Annual Review.
- Actions Arising - none

9. KINGFISHER SCULPTURE TRAIL 2021

The Partnerships and Fundraising Officer presented the plan for an AONB-wide Kingfisher Trail in 2021. This included the Art of Fundraising proposal and a cash-flow forecast.

- Comments - various Board Members expressed their support for the project and its intention to assist the hospitality sector's recovery from Covid-19 and that the Board should support the project to enable a start prior to the autumn. Other Members expressed that the Board should instead consider placing the project on hold for 12 months, given the impact to businesses of the Covid-19 outbreak and the

requirement for substantial contributions to be made by businesses by November 2020. The Board also discussed the option for a 'lost kingfisher' theme with the intention of including areas of the Cotswolds that were not covered by the rivers that were proposed to be included within the Trail and the risk of a possible second lockdown situation in spring 2021.

The Chairman highlighted that for the Trail to take place successfully, a final decision would be required by the Board by the end of July 2020 with approval being based on the level of confidence in securing the required levels of funding. There is a potential fall-back option of delaying until 2022.

- Decision - that the Board delegate the decision to the Executive Committee and that a decision must be reached by the end of July.
- Actions Arising - (a) Officers to continue to seek commitment from potential sponsors and (b) prepare a revised paper to be taken forward to the July 2020 Executive Committee meeting.

10. HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY AND PROCESS

The Chief Executive prepared a paper summarising the Health and Safety activity during 2019/20.

- Comments - none
- Decision - resolved that the new Policy and Process be adopted by the Board.
- Actions Arising - none

11. REFRESHED BRAND IDENTITY

The Communications Officer presented a report detailing the Board's new brand identity.

- Comments – a few Members expressed concern regarding the resolution of the Board's logo within the presentation and plan and also the shades of colours chosen. The Vice-Chair requested if the colours could be tested for colour-blindness.
- Decision - resolved that the new identity be adopted by the Board.
- Actions Arising - the Communications Officer to review the comments with the graphic designers and feedback to the Members

12. BUSINESS PLANING - IN LIGHT OF COVID-19

The Chief Executive presented a report regarding how the Covid-19 (C-19) pandemic had impacted on the Board's operations and finances for 2020/21.

- Comments - Cate Le-Grice Mack commented that it was impressive how little the Board's finances had been negatively affected by the virus so far and that she was pleased the Rural Skills Programme would soon be restarting.
- Decision - resolved that the impact of C-19 on the Board's operation and finances be noted and that there is a clear need to keep a close eye on it for the remainder of the year, as this is an ever-changing environment.
- Actions Arising – none

13. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Chief Executive presented a report regarding the new key performance indicators (KPIs) to be introduced during 2020/21 and drew attention to the introduction of a blue measure which highlighted over-performance.

- Comments - none
- Decision - resolved that the new KPIs be noted by the Board.
- Actions Arising - none

14. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

The Chief Executive presented a report detailing the proposal to change the schedule of meetings (Board and Executive from 2021/22).

- Comments - David Broad commented that he considered the proposals would not help with the current issue of Board Members feeling they were not engaged with the Board's work and projects. The Vice-Chair explained that a new induction process for Board Members going forward could assist with this. The Chief Executive also commented that engagement via Working Groups and Steering Groups has been really positive and that it shouldn't be limited to the formal meeting structures.
- Decision - resolved that the review and proposal for a subsequent decision to be made at the October 2020 Board meeting be supported by the Board.
- Actions Arising - none

15. ENVIRONMENTAL LAND MANAGEMENT - TEST FOR DEFRA AND POLICY DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

The Board received a report presenting the results of the ELM Test and to consider whether a separate response to the ELM Policy discussion document should be submitted.

- Comments - Ed Macalister-Smith expressed his concern regarding food standards in a post-Brexit climate.
The Chairman explained that the National Association of AONBs was currently drafting its response and that the Board would then need to subsequently decide if it should submit its own individual response.
- Decision - resolved that (a) the results of the ELM test are noted and (b) that the Board supports the NAAONB's response to the ELM Policy discussion document currently being prepared.
- Actions Arising - none

16. FINDINGS FROM THE 'FUTURE LANDSCAPES' COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

The Board received a report presenting the findings from the Future Landscape workshops. NB – it should be noted that this is as a snapshot of views held by a few Cotswolds residents and may not be representative of the whole AONB.

- Comments - none
- Decision - resolved that the findings of the report be noted.
- Actions Arising - the Chief Executive to circulate the presentation to the Members.

17. THE GLOVER REVIEW

The Chief Executive displayed a presentation outlining DEFRA's early thinking/response to the Review.

- Comments – The Board discussed how it could take forward the work of encouraging visits to, and enjoyment of, the Cotswolds AONB by a more diverse audience.
- Decision - resolved that the early response of the Review be noted.
- Actions Arising - the Chief Executive to circulate the presentation to Members after the meeting.

18. INFORMATION PAPERS

The Committee noted the current priorities and progress updates detailed in the following papers:

- (a) External Bids Update
- (b) Walking and Exploring Working Group
- (c) Planning and Infrastructure Working Group
- (d) A417 Steering Group
- (e) Glorious Cotswolds Grasslands Steering Group

19. FORWARD PLANNING

- (a) Executive Committee and Board Meeting Dates 2020/21
- (b) Draft Agenda - September 2020 Executive Committee Meeting
- (c) Draft Agenda - October 2020 Board Meeting

20. OTHER BUSINESS

- Nick Bumford commented on the impacts of Ash Dieback which may not be fully appreciated by the wider public. He also made the point that not all landowners are taking responsibility for dangerous trees and had concerns about roadside trees becoming a liability. Amanda Davis confirmed that in Gloucestershire, Councillor Paul Hodgkinson had the responsibility for roadside trees. The Chairman added that the Board needs to ensure its website carries the latest information on Ash Dieback and what is currently being done about it.

21. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 7 October 2020 - 10.00am to 1.00pm at Cotswold District Council, Council Chamber, Cirencester (subject to Covid-19 restrictions)

The Meeting commenced at 10.00am and closed at 1.15pm

Chairman