

FIFTY-SECOND MEETING OF THE COTSWOLDS CONSERVATION BOARD

HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL, CIRENCESTER

THURSDAY 28TH JUNE 2018

Present:

Chairman	-	Liz Eyre
Vice-Chairman	-	Ed Macalister-Smith
David Broad		Mark MacKenzie-Charrington
Nigel Colston		Charles Mathew
Mike Dean		Brendan McCarthy
Mollie Groom		Tony Merry
Sue Hope		Daniel Szor
David Kerr		Martin Veal
Simon King		Simon Wheeler
George Lambrick		Roger Wilson

Also in attendance:

Ed Bonn	Rural Skills and Grants Officer
Mr. David Cook	Woodward Hale Chartered Accountants
Mark Connelly	Land Management Officer
Alana Hopkins	Communications Officer
Martin Lane	Director
John Mills	Planning and Landscape Officer
Simon Smith	Project Development and Business Planning Officer
Alex Witcomb	Administrative Assistant

Apologies for absence were received from the following:

Harry Acland	Liz Hodges
Jo Barker	Nick Hurst
Rebecca Charley	Peter Jones
Matthew Darby	John Matthews
Stephen Gray	Hedley Ringrose
Adrian Hardman	David Thackray

Absent:

Tony Illott

B 2.1 INTRODUCTIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman informed Members that owing to the high number of apologies for the Meeting, she would be contacting those Members not present at the Meeting to remind them of the requirement of Board Members to engage as part of their roles in the activities of the Board, which included attending Board Meetings.

The Chairman explained that of the 13 Applicants for the Secretary of State vacancies on the Board, five had been recommended to the Minister. She would be sending 'pen portraits' to the Minister, detailing the skills and attendance records of Members. It was also reported that 2019 would see a recruitment process to fill the remaining, and any new, vacancies.

The Chairman gave a brief summary of the 50th anniversary of the Cotswold Wardens celebrations which had taken place on 23rd June 2018 at the Royal Agricultural University. The Chairman commended the Wardens on such a long period of service and extended the Board's congratulations to them on receiving the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

The Director informed Members that, owing to personal circumstances, the Board's Monitoring Officer was unable to be present at the Meeting and the Director extended his best wishes on behalf of the Board to him and his family.

B 2.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr. King declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item 12.b as he served on the Rural Sub-Committee for the European Investment Fund, who appraised the rural bids to growth fund.

B 2.3 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

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

B 2.4 MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING AND BOARD AGM**RESOLVED that:**

(i) subject to deletion of the words 'Cotswold Carer' in the second line of the fifth paragraph of Minute B4.7 and their substitution by the words 'Caring for the Cotswolds', the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cotswolds Conservation Board held on 22nd March 2018 be approved as a correct record;

(ii) the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Board held on 22nd March 2018 be approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising:

The Director provided a brief update in relation to the A417 and explained that the Steering Group had now transferred to a Stakeholder Group, which still included all previous partners. It was reported the first Meeting of the Group would take place on 29th June 2018.

B 2.5 MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Board received the Minutes of the Meetings of the Executive Committee held on 26th April 2018 and 31st May 2018.

The Chairman informed Members of the transfer to 'Decision-Style' Minutes for a trial period to March 2019 to record Meetings of the Executive Committee. The Chairman explained she hoped this would provide greater clarity to non-Executive Board Members.

B 2.6 REVIEW OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

The Director introduced the item and explained that it was closely related to the Annual Return. The Director also highlighted additions to the Statement, including recent actions relating to the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) which came into force in May 2018.

In response to various questions from Members, it was reported that the financial threshold referred to was in relation to the Board's turnover being in excess of £200,000; and that a list of Legislation Powers available to the Board was contained within the Board's Establishment Order and was shared with Local Authorities but, to date, had not been implemented owing to resource shortage, but would be revisited in preparation for the A417 and National Park items.

The Vice-Chairman explained that, following consultation with the Chairman and Director, he would be investigating the suite of policies in the Staff Handbook, which had been inherited from Cotswold District Council in 2006, to ensure they were up-to-date and fit for purpose.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the Corporate Governance Review be agreed;**
- (b) the Annual Governance Statement 2017/18 be approved.**

B 2.7 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND ANNUAL RETURN 2017/18

The Chairman welcomed Mr. David Cook of Woodward Hale Chartered Accountants to the Meeting, who introduced the item.

Mr. Cook explained various aspects of the report, including highlighting total expenditure and income and the net deficit of the Board.

The Chairman explained that the Forward Plan contained a review of reserves, and that this would be discussed at the July 2018 Executive Committee Meeting.

Mr. Mathew commented he wished to see some of the figures displayed with brackets to give a clearer view. Mr Cook agreed that this would assist with the presentation of the figures.

The Chairman reminded Members of the requirement of Members to assist with the selling of the Board's book and of increasing membership of Caring for the Cotswolds, which both brought additional income to the Board.

The Project Development and Business Planning Officer confirmed that, for 2018/19, Board's own balance was showing a small surplus of under £10,000, but was also showing a small deficit on the Agency agreement. It was also reported that the current year's budget was close to break even and/or a small deficit. Mr. McCarthy stressed that he considered the Board should not move away from the figure and that the Executive Committee should review the figures in due course.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the Statement of Accounts 2017/18 be approved;**
- (b) the Annual Return 2017/18 be approved.**

B 2.8

ANNUAL REVIEW 2017/18 AND COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

The Chairman extended her thanks to the Communications Officer for the presentation of the new promotional items which highlighted the Board's area/ remit, plans and projects. The Chairman was of the opinion that more promotion was needed by the Board in relation to the LEADER Programme, and requested that Members share the review with as many interested parties as possible.

The Communications Officer explained that, in addition to hard copies, the review would be available in electronic PDF versions and on the Board's Website, and would be circulated amongst relevant bodies.

The Chairman also reported that all Members were being requested to sell a minimum of three books to help assist with marketing of the Board, and to increase direct income for the Board.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the Board receives and actively promotes the Board's Annual Review 2017/18;**
- (b) the Board receives the latest issue of Cotswold Lion, July-December 2018;**

(c) Board Members be requested to assist in raising awareness and increasing sales of the Cotswolds AONB book.

B 2.9 DRAFT COTSWOLDS AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN 2018 - 2023

The Planning and Landscape Officer introduced the item and explained that the initial aim had been to add clarity and focus to the Plan. He drew attention to the Polices, which now incorporated comments from the Executive Committee.

It was reported that Natural England had expected the Board to complete a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and this had therefore added to the time-line of the Plan, owing to a consultation, which would commence in July 2018 and target 15 local authorities and the three agency bodies - Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency.

Ms. Hope enquired as to the issue for local authorities regarding what was considered major developments in AONBs. In response, the Planning and Landscape Officer explained that the draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) would provide a definition of major development (10 or more houses) that was not included in the current NPPF.

Mr. Veal expressed his concern that local authority Officers needed to be made aware of the Plan and to give it due consideration. In response, the Director explained that site visits and workshops had been scheduled for October 2018 and suggested that a workshop might be combined with an invitation to local authority Planning Officers and Board Members. In addition, Mr. Wilson suggested it would be beneficial to extend the invitation to include town and parish councils.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the Board endorses the changes that have been made to the Management Plan;**
- (b) the Board endorses the conclusions of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Environmental Report and the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report;**
- (c) the Board endorses the proposed Management Plan timescales and milestones;**
- (d) the Board delegates adoption of the Management Plan to the Executive Committee at its Meeting on 20th September 2018.**

Note:

The Board wished to extend its thanks to the Planning and Landscape Officer for his work in relation to this item.

B 2.10 UPDATES(a) Task and Finish and Working Groups

The Chairman drew Members' attention to the circulated report and explained that the Groups were not yet at the stage of presenting formal reports to the Board.

The Vice-Chairman explained that the first Meeting of the Walking Capital Group had taken place and brief action notes had been circulated within 24 hours after the Meeting - he considered that this approach should be replicated by all other groups.

Ms. Hope enquired as to the process for the circulation of information from the Groups to all Board Members and if the information would be published on the website. The Director explained that there was no definitive solution in place currently, but added that he would aim to have a process in place by the July 2018 Meeting of the Executive Committee for reporting to Board Members.

RESOLVED that the progress with the establishment of the Task and Finish and Working Groups be noted.

(b) Partnership Board

The Director explained the Partnership Board had last met on 27th June 2018, with full attendance at the Meeting by Board Members, and that it had been agreed outside the formal Meeting that the Board should withdraw from the Agency Operational Agreement.

The Director also confirmed that the Friends had been successful in securing the Growth Bid, which was estimated at around £91,000, but Board Members had still agreed to issue the notice.

The Director confirmed the Board was still responsible for the café area, but that a Meeting had been arranged for 18th July 2018 to discuss how the schedule of works arising from the Growth Fund would impact on the café.

Some Members expressed the view that the Old Prison and Discovery Centre at Northleach had a well-recognised connection to the Board, but highlighted the possibility of future funding needs for building repairs and the lack of funding from the Friends.

RESOLVED that the latest progress update be noted.

(c) Leader Programme

In the absence of the LEADER Programme Manager, Mr. Colston provided a summary of the LAG Executive Meeting of 27th June 2018. Mr. Colston explained that it was generally considered that extra Board Officer support would enable the Programme to conclude effectively.

The Chairman wished to extend her thanks to the LEADER Group for their technical work in relation to the Programme.

RESOLVED that the update report be noted.

B.2.11 GOVERNMENT'S NATIONAL PARKS AND AONB REVIEW

The Director introduced the item and explained that both he and the Chairman had written to Mr. Julian Glover, who would be chairing the Review. Following the March 2018 Board Meeting, the Board had written to Mr. Andrew Sells, Chairman of Natural England, formally making a request that they consider the merits of the Cotswolds AONB becoming a National Park. The Director also informed Members that a Meeting had been arranged with Mr. Sells for 3rd July 2018, and that a number of NGOs had also contacted the Board requesting Meetings.

Various Members explained that they considered the main opposition would come from planning officers of local authorities and reiterated the intention that the Board's Management Plan should be 'forced' upon Officers to ensure they were aware of the Board's intentions and were willing to listen to all points of view.

RESOLVED that the establishment of the National Parks and AONBs' 2018 Review be noted.

B.2.12 MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

In the absence of the Monitoring Officer from the Meeting, the Director explained that Mr. Tony Illott, the appointee of Cherwell District Council, had not attended a Meeting of the Board since his appointment in August 2017, and therefore had ceased to be qualified as a Board Member.

RESOLVED that:

(a) the cessation of qualification of Mr. Tony Illott as a Board Member, due to lack of attendance, be noted;

(b) Cherwell District Council be notified of the situation, and be requested to appoint a replacement Board Member.

B.2.13 DRAFT AGENDA FOR THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING ON 19TH JULY 2018

The Board noted the draft Agenda for the next Meeting of the Executive Committee, to be held on Thursday 19th July 2018.

The Chairman explained that she would be absent from the Meeting owing to attending a Meeting of Worcestershire County Council; and advised Members that the Vice-Chairman would therefore be Chairing the Meeting.

Mr. McCarthy enquired if all Members could receive the Budget, Actual and Forecast details within the Budget Report contained within Quarters 1 and 3.

Ms. Hope enquired into the Task and Finish and Working Group reports item scheduled for the July 2018 Executive Committee Meeting. The Director confirmed he hoped this would include a review into communication from the Groups to the Executive and to the Board.

B.2.14 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN FOR 2018/19

The Chairman explained that the Review of Reserves would be undertaken in November 2018.

B. 2.15 DATE OF NEXT CONSERVATION BOARD MEETING - 4TH OCTOBER 2018

It was noted that the next Board Meeting would be held on 4th October 2018, and would comprise a day of site visits and briefings.

B 2.16 OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business that was urgent.

The Meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and closed at 12.00 noon.

Chairman