

FIFTY-FIFTH MEETING OF THE COTSWOLDS CONSERVATION BOARD

HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,  
COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL, CIRENCESTER

TUESDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2019

Present:

Chairman - Liz Eyre  
Vice-Chair - Brendan McCarthy

David Broad	David Kerr
Nicholas Bumford	Simon King
Phil Chapman	George Lambrick
Rebecca Charley	Catherine Le-Grice Mack
Brendan Costello	Ed Macalister-Smith
Paul Crossley	Charles Mathew
Matthew Darby	John Matthews
Amanda Davis	Tony Merry
Mike Dean	Dominic Morris
Jacqui Fenn	Shaun Parsons (until 12.10 p.m.)
Mollie Groom	Ben Stokes
Adrian Hardman	Daniel Szor
Steve Harvey	Sarah Whalley-Hoggins
Graham Hopkins	Clive Webster (from 10.15 a.m.)
Norman Kay	

Also in attendance:

Mark Connelly	Land Management Officer
John Mills	Planning and Landscape Officer
Della Morris	Finance and Office Administrator
Andy Parsons	Chief Executive
Mandy Pressland	Office Manager
David Shelmerdine	Finance Officer
Simon Smith	Project Development and Business Planning Officer

Apologies for absence were received from the following:

Jo Barker	Garry King
Nigel Colston	David Thackray
Liz Hodges	

### B 3.1 INTRODUCTIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman and Member Mike Dean informed the Board of the recent passing of Board Member, Mr. Roger Wilson. The Chairman requested that all those present stand in two minute's silence in memory of Mr. Wilson whose funeral service had taken place on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

Following the silence, the Chairman added that she considered Roger to have been a good friend and that she would miss their regular coffee meets in Winchcombe. A letter of condolence on behalf of the Board had been sent to Mr. Wilson's widow.

The Chairman then welcomed the following new Members to the Meeting - Steve Harvey, Paul Crossley, Amanda Davis and Shaun Parsons and also to the Board's recently-appointed Chief Executive, Andy Parsons.

### B 3.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from the Board's Members or Officers.

### B 3.3 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

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

### B 3.4 MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING

**RESOLVED that, the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2019 be approved as a correct record.**

### B 3.5 MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Board received the Minutes of the Meetings of the Executive Committee held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2019 and 5<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

In relation to the Minutes of the Executive Committee of 17<sup>th</sup> September 2019, Ed Macalister-Smith highlighted that reference to him under Minute E. 2.32 should be amended to Officer 'Ed Bonn'.

The Vice-Chair also highlighted to the Board that amendments had been made to the Executive Committee Minutes of 17<sup>th</sup> September 2019 and these were as detailed under Minute E. 3.5 of the Minutes of 5<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

### B 3.6 CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION

The Board received a report detailing the Board's action plan for completing the review of the Board's strategy and position statements relating to climate change.

Board Member Norman Kay was then invited to address the Meeting by the Chairman. Mr. Kay explained that he and fellow Board Member Clive Webster had been asked by the Chief Executive to consider the statement and to feed into the review. He explained that the climate change situation globally would only worsen over time if no immediate action was taken and that he had been impressed by the recent National Meeting of AONBs who had agreed to produce an action plan. Mr. Kay added that he wished, on behalf of the Board, to request that the Executive Committee formulate a plan to report back to the Board during 2020 detailing plans to mitigate and adapt the Board's approach, as he considered the Colchester Declaration's belief that ensuring meaningful measures were in place by 2024 was not an appropriate response to the global crisis.

The Chief Executive commented that he acknowledged that subsequent national reports had been published since the Board's previous Climate Change Strategy had been produced and the Board had therefore agreed to review this Strategy and associated documents and had also already agreed a process to look at renewables.

Various Members commented that whilst they supported the approach by the Board, they considered that there were two omissions in relation to access to transport and farming within the AONB. Those Members highlighted that there was a large amount of transportation involved in food production and that they considered the Board should have a clearer statement on local food production, food markets and soil and water protection in addition to tree planting, which had been a recommended action nationally.

The Chairman thanked Members for their contributions and requested that any further comments be sent to the Land Management Officer.

**RESOLVED that the Board's action plan to review its strategy and position statements relating to climate from all potential angles, be approved.**

#### B 3.7 COUNTER FRAUD AND CORRUPTION POLICY

The Board's Finance Officer informed the Board that the Policy was an update of a previous policy dated 2009. He informed the Board of various aspects of the report and confirmed that the Executive Committee had reviewed the Policy at its November 2019 Meeting.

In response to a Member's question, the Finance Officer confirmed that a Confidential Reporting Procedure had also been reviewed by the Executive Committee in November 2019.

**RESOLVED that the Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy be adopted by the Board.**

#### B 3.8 PLANNING GUIDANCE AND CONSULTATION WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The Planning and Landscape Officer informed the Committee of the details of the report and summarised that the intention was to ensure a consistent approach for local authorities to consult the Board on planning applications and ensure that any responses given by the Board were given due consideration by those respective authorities. The Officer added that the responses from the authorities had been mixed in terms of level of assistance given to the Board.

A Member commented that, in his view, the 5% and reference to 100 properties was sensible, but that a reference should also be included to a sequential 5% on a rolling three year basis. He also expressed that the figure of 100 properties also gave a potential target number for developers to aim for and that the wording should therefore be amended to state 'without exception, 100 or more dwellings'. One Board Member also strongly objected to these 'rules of thumb' for major development.

Various Members commented that the response from many of the local authorities consulted had been disappointing and that the Board needed to ensure, through its local authority Members, that good working relationships were established. Those Members also stated that reference to affordable housing needed inclusion as this would help to ensure that houses were being built to the highest possible standard, which would also assist with climate change mitigation.

Other Members added that reference to setting, in addition to scale, needed to be included as they considered the paper currently focussed on housing and not on general planning considerations. References to travel to and from housing sites; industrial development; biodiversity criteria; proximity to protected sites and relationships with town and parish councils were also considered to require inclusion by Members.

The Chairman summarised the debate by explaining that the Board had received a mixed level of responses from the local authorities it had consulted and that this had highlighted the need to ensure that working relationships with those authorities were more firmly established going forward. She added that the points raised by Members were relevant and would help to ensure the responsibilities of the Board - to conserve and enhance - were given due consideration during the determination and decision on applications within the AONB. She also confirmed that an updated document would be presented to the Executive Committee at its Meeting in February 2020.

**RESOLVED that, the Board:-**

- (a) endorse the principle of consultation criteria that should be applied consistently across the whole of the Cotswolds AONB;**
- (b) note current progress on developing the consultation criteria;**
- (c) agree that it is not necessary to further update the 2011 planning protocol;**

**Further work, through the Planning and Infrastructure Working Group, will be required for the following recommendations (taking into account Board Member comments):-**

**(d) endorse the proposed position relating to the upper thresholds above which the scale of housing developments and allocations in the AONB should be considered to be disproportionate and to constitute major development;**

**(e) endorse the proposed position relating to taking a landscape-led approach to housing provision in the AONB;**

**(f) endorse the proposed position relating to evidence of affordable housing need that should be required for housing proposals within the AONB;**

**(g) endorse the proposed position relating to choice-based lettings systems.**

**B 3.9 A417 MISSING LINK**

The Planning and Landscape Officer presented the report and confirmed that the Board's response had been submitted on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2019. He also wished to extend his thanks to Board Member David Kerr for his technical calculations prior to the submission, which he considered would prove beneficial to the submission. He also informed the Board that the application was likely to now be submitted by Gloucestershire Highways in summer 2020.

**RESOLVED that the Board's response to the A417 Missing Link Public Consultation be noted.**

**B 3.10 EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2018/19**

The Chief Executive introduced the report and explained that in March 2019 the Internal Auditor had completed his audit work and was asked to take on the role of Responsible Finance Officer (on a 'contracted' basis) by the Director. He will remain the RFO until 30 June 2020 and therefore the Board will be appointing a new independent Internal Auditor for the financial year 2019/20.

**RESOLVED that the results of the external audit review for 2018/19 be noted.**

**B 3.11 DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN 2020-23**

The Chief Executive introduced the report and in doing so extended his thanks to all the Board's Officers and the Chairman for their work in relation to the Plan. He informed the Board that the Plan had been presented to the Executive Committee at its Meeting in November 2019. The Chief Executive added that a one year detailed work programme and budget for 2020/21 was

currently being produced and this would be presented to the Executive Committee in February 2020, with onward recommendation to the Board in March 2020.

In response to various questions from Members, it was reported that the Board's priorities would be reviewed in regard to increasing income streams and this would be as detailed in the one year work programme; the Board's 'own' communications platforms related to the Board's website and social media channels and 'paid platforms' related to those which incurred a production cost, such as the Cotswold Lion magazine.

The Chairman reminded Members that the Plan was a 'living' document and would exist under the Board's Management Plan and was intended to clearly highlight the Board's targets and aspirations to its Members, Officers and external parties.

**RESOLVED that the comments made by the Board be noted and incorporated into the Plan's final design.**

#### B 3.12 LANDSCAPES REVIEW

The Chief Executive introduced, and drew attention to, various aspects of the report, notably that the Board had received a donation of 2,000 trees from the Woodland Trust as part of the Ash Dieback Appeal; the adopt a species on the threatened list and prepare a Species Action Plan to ensure its removal from the list by 2030, and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Cotswold Way which would take place on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

Various Members expressed that the Review and Board's proposed actions and activities could easily encompass areas of volunteering including those around health and wellbeing and social prescribing; school activities; tree-planting programmes; schemes that benefit young people and walking festivals.

Some Members expressed concern that the adoption by the Board of a single threatened species could come at the expense of other threatened species within the AONB.

The Board also considered that there was a requirement for sustainable farming and food production and physical, mental and learning disabilities to also be included within the Review.

**RESOLVED that the priorities and proposals outlined within the report be noted.**

#### B 3.13 RAIL CORRIDOR ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

The Planning and Landscape Officer introduced the report and summarised that 17 applications had been received by the Board for the position of Project Officer and that an appointment had since been made for Mr. Scott Brown who would commence working for the Board on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

The Officer informed the Board that a grants scheme would also be established early in 2020 and would open for applications shortly after.

Board Member Ben Stokes commented that as his Ward as a Local Authority Member included the area for the enhancement, he looked forward to being actively involved in the project.

**RESOLVED that progress on the Rail Corridor Enhancement Project be noted.**

**B 3.14 MEMBERS ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS**

There were no matters to report under this item.

**B 3.15 SECRETARY OF STATE - MEMBER APPOINTMENTS**

The Chairman explained that there was currently one vacancy on the Board and that three Secretary of State Members - Simon King, Daniel Szor and David Thackray - would be leaving the Board shortly. The Chairman advised these Members that they would soon receive an exit document that she hoped they would complete detailing their feedback on their service to the Board.

The Chairman added that she had proposed two extensions for Secretary of State Members Brendan McCarthy and George Lambrick for an additional period of three years and that she was awaiting 500 word appraisals from Members Jacqui Fenn and Nicholas Bumford. She also requested that all Members send a brief summary of their skills offering to the Board in order for a list of Members' expertise to be drawn up by herself and the Chief Executive. The Chairman concluded that whilst currently there was no appraisal scheme for Local Authority and Parish Members, DEFRA was expected to introduce this requirement in the upcoming future.

Two Parish Members expressed that they sought more information on the parishes they represented on behalf of the Board and wished to obtain assistance from the Board's Officers in corresponding with these parishes.

**RESOLVED that the verbal update be noted.**

**B 3.16 INFORMATION PAPERS**

(a) LEADER Programme Update

The Chairman and the Board wished to extend their thanks to Board Officers James Webb (Programme Manager), Lioba Erwert (Programme Assistant), Mandy Pressland (Office Manager) and Jo Burgen (ex-Board Member and current Chairman of Cotswolds LEADER) for their work in relation to the Programme.

The Chairman added that a celebration of the work of the Project would take place in March 2020.

**RESOLVED that the update report be noted.**

- (b) DEFRA ELMS Test and Trial Update

**RESOLVED that the report be noted.**

- (c) External Bids Update

**RESOLVED that the report be noted.**

- (d) Task and Finish and Working Group Reports

The Chairman drew attention to the fact that a number of the Board's Groups had now finished. All Groups would be reviewed in the New Year, ahead of the March AGM.

**RESOLVED that the progress update be noted.**

- (e) Draft Agenda - Executive Committee - 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020

Charles Mathew requested that an item being included in relation to the current position at the Little Rollright Stones in relation to a traffic re-routing proposal by Oxford County Council which he considered had the potential to cause issues in relation to air quality at the site. The Chief Executive responded that this would be added to the Agenda of the next Meeting of the Planning and Infrastructure Working Group who would be meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2020, with the potential option of referral to the Executive Committee in February 2020.

Sarah Whalley-Hoggins commented that, as one of the local authority Ward Members for the site, she planned to attend the Working Group Meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

The Forward Plan for 2018/19 was noted.

### B 3.17 OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business that was urgent.

### B 3.18 DATE OF NEXT CONSERVATION BOARD MEETING AND BOARD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 24<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2020

It was noted that the next Board Meeting and Annual General Meeting would be held on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

The Meeting commenced at 10.05 a.m. and closed at 12.38 p.m.

Chairman