

MEETING OF
THE COTSWOLDS CONSERVATION BOARD
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM MEETINGS

WEDNESDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2020

Present

Brendan McCarthy (BM) (Chairman)	Rebecca Charley (RC) (Vice-Chair)
David Broad (DB)	Cate Le Grice Mack (CGM)
Ed Macalister-Smith (EMS)	Norman Kay (NK)
Amanda Davis (AD)	Charles Mathew (CM)
Graham Hopkins (GH)	Nigel Colston (NC)
Mike Dean (MD)	Clive Webster (CW)

Also in Attendance

Andy Parsons (Chief Executive)
Ann Wyatt (Head of Finance)
John Mills (Planning and Landscape Lead)
Benjamin Dent (BD) - observing

1. INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

- Apologies – apologies were received from Paul Crossley
- Introductions and announcements – the Chairman welcomed Members to the Meeting.
- Declarations of interest – no interests were declared.
- Public questions – there were no public questions.

2. MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING – 9 SEPTEMBER 2020

- Decision - resolved that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee Meeting held on 9 September 2020 be approved as a correct record.
- Matters Arising – all matters arising were either completed or were to be discussed within various agenda items at the meeting.
- Actions Arising – the Board should consider how it can become the ‘glue’ between the various local authorities when, for example, the outcomes of planning applications can have an impact across districts and/ or counties. The example discussed was that of quarries and the resultant increase in HGV movements across a wider area.

3. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING – 7 OCTOBER 2020

The Executive Committee noted the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 7 October 2020.

4. REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chief Executive set out the key actions and activity since the last meeting. He also set out that the main focus of this meeting was to cover the financial position at Q2; the

formation of a new working group focusing on health, wellbeing and social inclusion; budget assumptions for 2021/22; the Planning & Development and Housing Position Statements.

- Comments – the general feedback was that this ‘scene setting’ report was very helpful to set the tone for the meeting. EMS generated a discussion about the Chief Executive’s meeting with Natural England with regard to the Landscapes Review. NK suggested that the Board should consider how it appoints Parish Council Members and their terms of office.
- Decision - resolved that the paper was noted by the Executive Committee.
- Actions Arising – the Chief Executive will review the process for appointing Parish Council Members and also look at their terms of office.

5. QUARTER 2 FINANCIAL REPORT

The Chairman started by thanking the Head of Finance for the clear and concise reporting format. The Head of Finance then introduced the Quarter 2 Financial Report and gave an update on the transition to Xero accounting software. Following the financial discussion, the Chief Executive gave a summary of the Key Performance Indicators.

- Comments – RC stated it was impressive that, in the current circumstances, the team have been able to successfully manage the finances. CM asked for reasoning on Glorious Cotswolds Grasslands and employee costs, this was answered by the Head of Finance. GH asked whether we should consider moving to an ‘ethical’ bank, something that the Board is currently looking at as part of its investments review. AD asked specific questions around the expenditure lines related to health and wellbeing and these were answered by the Head of Finance. RC was pleased that the team were being transparent about KPIs that are currently red and that they have clear reasons why this is the case, along with plans to improve.
- Decision – resolved that the paper was noted by the Executive Committee
- Actions Arising - none

6. HEALTH, WELLBEING AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

The Chief Executive gave a summary of the need for creating a new working group focusing on this important area of the Board’s future work.

- Comments – CGM commented that this was very timely and wondered whether it was a ‘task and finish’ group rather than a ‘working’ group, suggesting that these themes should, in the future, flow throughout the organisation. It was broadly felt that it should be a working group as proposed. GH suggested that the group should consider the Purpose, Objectives and Outcomes to ensure a clear focus is maintained. BD questioned whether there needed to be a limit on the number of Members and also strongly encouraged the involvement of external members that represented diversity. AD reminded everyone that this is about achieving an ‘unmet’ part of our Business Plan, as well as fulfilling the ambition detailed within the Landscapes Review. AD also mentioned that the geography should include both large urban areas and more remote rural communities within the National Landscape. EMS fully supported this proposal as it has been something he has championed for a long time. EMS also recommended local authority members being involved as public sector partnerships will be very important. CM suggested

the new group should make contact with Directors of Public Health at each local authority (acknowledging they have huge pressures on time and other resources at present). NK strongly supported the proposal, as did all other Members.

- Decision - to recommend to the Board for adoption.
- Actions Arising – the Chief Executive and Head of Finance to give consideration to (a) membership criteria and (b) producing a high-level ‘Purpose’ to give Members a clear steer on what the group will be looking to achieve.

7. SAFEGUARDING POLICY

The Chief Executive gave a short introduction to the new policy and accompanying processes.

- Comments – CGM stated that this should cover the role of the Voluntary Wardens, the Chief Executive confirmed that they will be informed as part of the training requirement. AD was pleased to see that we are putting this in place. AD also recommended a wording change in section 4 of the policy, inserting the word ‘anyone’. NK advised that the links would need to be made at County level and reinforced the need to consult with the Statutory Child Protection Agency at the earliest opportunity if the need arises. The Chairman pointed out a typing error in Annex A (Code of Conduct).
- Decision – to recommend to the Board for adoption.
- Actions Arising – correct the typing error and include the recommended wording.

8. BUDGET ASSUMPTIONS

The Chief Executive gave an overview of the budget assumptions for 2021/22.

- Comments – CGM suggested that there is the potential to rethink the rural skills programme, to include more modern skills. RC stated that a list could be drawn up of skills that could be considered that aren’t deemed ‘traditional’. GH commented further that these skills/ jobs should support the socio-economic health of the Cotswolds. CM reinforced the need to prioritise income generation. The Chairman concluded that the budget should be presented in such a way that there is absolute clarity on the net contributions of its various income streams, with annual targets being set.
- Decision – resolved that the budget assumptions be noted.
- Actions Arising – the Chief Executive and Head of Finance to give consideration to the points made ahead of setting the final budget.

9. PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT POSITION STATEMENT and 10. HOUSING POSITION STATEMENT

The Planning and Landscape Lead gave a full introduction on the history of these draft position statements, commenting that it is very timely to be producing them in light of the proposed planning reforms. He also explained the consultation process, which would start next week and run until the end of January 2021.

- Comments – CGM informed the Committee about a Bank of England report on what really drives house prices and agreed to forward to everyone. CW gave his congratulations on a job well done. CW also encouraged the Board to push beyond the definition of ‘natural beauty’ and to have an ambition to challenge its constraints. The Planning and Landscape Lead responded by saying that the

Planning and Development Position Statement was, in effect, the umbrella position statement and that more specific guidance will sit underneath it, e.g. Renewables. CW asked if there was a consultancy role for the Board as it clearly has a lot of expertise in this field. This could be considered but the Board must remain mindful of any potential conflict of interest. EMS requested that consideration is given to ‘windfall’ development and the serious issues of second homes and the ‘Airbnb’ rental market. EMS was encouraged by the new ‘tone of voice’ but reminded the Committee of our Statutory Duty and our right to object to planning proposals that do not, in our opinion, fully consider AONB designation. NK was pleased that the statements referenced socio-economic considerations and highlighted the big concern of ‘affordable’ houses not being genuinely affordable to much of the local population. DB commented that they were both excellent papers and gave an example in his local village about the issues of affordability. The Chairman summed up the discussion by thanking the Planning and Landscape Lead for a very thorough and high quality piece of work that has been written in the right tone. He also encouraged Members to feedback any further comments, via email, to the Planning and Landscape Lead.

- Decision – the Executive Committee commended the work of the Planning and Landscape Lead and supported the upcoming consultation.
- Actions Arising – (a) Executive Committee Members to feedback any further thoughts within the consultation timeframe, (b) the Planning and Landscape Lead to inform the Board’s Local Authority Members of who, within their respective authorities, will be responsible for responding to the consultation.

11. GENERAL UPDATES

The Chairman introduced the paper. In particular he gave a summary of the A417 consultation response that was submitted during the previous week. The Chairman thanked the Officers and the Steering Group for their efforts in producing a well-balanced and well-structured response.

- Comments – Regarding the A417 consultation response, CM called it ‘first class’ and it was endorsed by the whole Committee. The discussion led to a wider debate on road traffic, including reducing speed limits in built up areas and the issues of rat running. GH suggested that a wider and more strategic focus on transport more generally (including road and rail) should be something that the Board could consider in the future.
- Decision – that the paper be noted and the A417 consultation response be fully endorsed by the Executive Committee.
- Actions Arising – None.

12. FORWARD PLANNING

- (a) Draft Agenda - December 2020 Board Meeting
- (b) Draft Agenda – February 2021 Executive Committee Meeting

13. OTHER BUSINESS

- The Head of Finance informed the meeting that she was undertaking a review of the Board’s Delegation of Authority (as detailed in the Constitution), with a view to presenting her recommendations to the Executive Committee within the next

two weeks, ahead of seeking Board adoption in December. The Committee agreed with this proposal.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 24 February 2021 - 10.00am to 1.00pm. Meeting location to be confirmed subject to COVID 19 situation.

The Meeting commenced at 10.00am and closed at 1.00pm

Chairman