

**MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
COTSWOLDS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE BOARD -**

HELD AT ROBINSWOOD HILL COUNTRY PARK, RESERVOIR ROAD, GLOUCESTER

TUESDAY 23 MAY 2023, 10:00am

Present

Rebecca Charley (RC) (Vice-Chair, acting Chair)	David Broad (DB)
Paul Crossley (PC)	Andy Graham (AG)
Ed Macalister-Smith (EMS)	Cate Le Grice-Mack (CLGM)

Also in Attendance

Andy Parsons (Chief Executive)
Magda Glanowska (Head of Finance)
Mark Connelly (Land Management Lead)
Scott Brown (Farming Engagement Lead)
Simon Smith (Nature Recovery Lead)
James Webb (Partnerships and Fundraising Lead)
Simon Joyce (Planning Officer)
Alana Hopkins (Comms Lead)

Ben Dent attended and presented Item 8. John Swanton and Sue Crawford attended.

1. INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

- Apologies – apologies were received from Brendan McCarthy, Phil Chapman and Graham Hopkins (GH).
- Introductions and announcements – Nina Stubbington (Grants and Outreach Officer) was introduced ahead of the meeting starting. Magda Glanowska (Head of Finance) was also introduced. In addition, Ed Macalister-Smith was thanked for his time with the Board, this being his last Executive Committee meeting. Clive Webster is no longer a councillor, so has left the Board, he was also thanked for his contributions to the Board's work. The AGM will take place in June, and there will be a re-election to the CNL Executive Committee for the next 3-year term. Thanks were expressed to the current members of the Committee.
- Declarations of interest – no interests were declared.
- Public questions – there were no public questions.

2. MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING – 24 JANUARY 2023

- Decision - resolved that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee Meeting held on 24 January 2023 be approved as a correct record.
- Actions Arising – all actions arising were completed.

3. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING – 21 FEBRUARY 2023

- The Executive Committee noted the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 21 February 2023.

4. REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The CEO gave a verbal update to update the Executive Committee on key activity since the last meeting, with main points being:

- *Board Membership* - there will be a number of new Board Members, mainly as a result of the recent local elections. Cllr Nigel Adcock has already been confirmed by Tewkesbury BC. In addition, Cotswolds DC will be informing the Board shortly of their new representative. There are also potential changes at five other local authorities. The interviews have taken place for the two Secretary of State vacancies, and the Board is awaiting confirmation of any appointments.
- *Annual General Meeting* - at the beginning of June the Chair will write to all Board Members, asking them to register their interest if they are keen to serve on the Executive Committee, Finance and Governance Committee and/or the four Working Groups. Positions will be confirmed at the AGM on 27 June.
- *Team updates* - Mike Elliott (Climate Action Lead) left in the period. Magda Glanowska (Head of Finance), Lorna Baggett (Glorious Cotswold Grasslands BNG Programme Officer), Nina Stubbington (New to Nature Placement) and Michele Holden (interim finance support and guidance) started during the period.
- *Office move* – the team have now moved out of the Old Prison and are settling into three new locations.
- *National rebrand* – the ‘National Landscapes’ rebrand is going ahead, likely in autumn 2023, although timing isn’t confirmed. A small group of Board Members will be meeting on 26 May to review our own rebranding process and the future implementation of a new National Association of AONBS-led rebrand.
- *Cotswolds Plus Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP)* – the CEO has agreed to Chair the new partnership and will be working hard to involve all local tourism bodies. The administrative duties are being undertaken by Cotswolds Tourism. The new structure of tourism bodies is a result of the recent De Bois review of destination management/marketing organisations.
- Comments – RC, EMS and CLGM all offered congratulations on the move out of the Old Prison. RC acknowledged the role that the CNL Board has played in leading the way with the national rebrand process.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the update.
- Actions Arising – none.

5. OPERATIONAL AND FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

The HoF gave a summarised overview of the year-end financial position, concluding that the position is becoming more positive. The General Fund has shown an improvement during the year and Designated Reserves have also increased, through the introduction of the new Development Fund. There is more work to do in current and future years to continue to improve the financial sustainability of the organisation, but current indications are showing that this will be achievable. With regard to the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), the CEO mentioned the Farming in Protected Landscapes (grant spend) and Planning (statutory consultee) KPIs as being particularly noteworthy at year-end.

- Comments – EMS expressed thanks to the HoF for taking the Board through a smooth year-end process and for presenting the positions so clearly at the meeting. He feels, as an organisation, the Board is now much stronger position, with a more professional approach to financial management. The CEO praised the CNL team for their ability to manage the recent growth. Simon Smith congratulated the Glorious Cotswold team for their success in the first full year post external funding.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – none.

6. MANAGEMENT PLAN 2023-25

Simon Smith gave a summary of the work completed since Board adoption in February, which has included confirmation from Natural England that both the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) require no further comments. As such, the Management Plan is now on the website and being employed as a live document. The next step will be seeking endorsement/support from local authorities. Following the changes prompted by recent local elections, it has been decided to delay writing to the local authorities until next month. The Management Plan will now be taken from a Word document to a designed version, with the aim of making it more accessible to a broader audience. Work over the next year will focus on evidence. This work will link to climate action outreach work. External consultation and production for the 2025-30 Management Plan will begin in 2024.

- Comments – discussion followed around the need/ requirement for local authorities to endorse the Management Plan. Whilst they are not required to do so, it is clearly preferable if they support the Plan's ambition. Key to this is relationship building and having a clear understanding of its role within Local Plan development.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report
- Actions Arising – the CEO to write to all local authority leaders and CEOs to seek their endorsement of the Management Plan.

7. FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES (FiPL)

Mark Connelly and Scott Brown presented a thorough picture of the overwhelmingly positive experience of the FiPL programme so far. A successful second year has resulted in an increase of funding from Defra, and an extension of the programme until March 2025 (programme was originally to run until March 2024). £1.76m is available to allocate in the next financial year. Praise was offered to the FiPL team, who have worked relentlessly to see the programme be successful in the Cotswolds. £1.1 million was allocated across 42 approved projects in 2022/23, and the team is currently dealing with 64 live projects (as many extend over multiple financial years). Thanks were also expressed for the contributions made by CNL colleagues in admin and finance roles for their part in the work. The CNL team is currently recruiting a Farming Engagement Officer, and further recruitment to strengthen the team will take place later in the year. The plan for the next 12 months is to focus on identifying and supporting strong/viable project proposals. The final year of the programme will focus on delivery and fulfilment of projects, and sharing news of their success. To help the FiPL team over the next year, they are requesting Rural Payments Agency-held data on land owners. This will be with the intention of increasing their pipeline and reaching out to farmers/land manager

who have, to date, not benefitted from the programme.

- Comments – RC commented that pushing to reach out to new areas and applicants will be essential. She also noted that the increase in available funding for allocation can be seen as a positive reflection of how hard the team has worked so far. Great demonstration of the role that the CNL Board has to play as a facilitator, and a great demonstration of how we can extend our reach. Other Executive Committee Members echoed this sentiment, and emphasised that the FiPL programme shows we can't and shouldn't attempt to do everything as an organisation in a silo – FiPL demonstrates how effectively partnership working and facilitation works. All those present agreed. AG asked if there are any geographical trends with the project enquiries and applications. Scott Brown replied that the southern end of the Cotswolds provides fewer enquiries, but the hope is that the RPA data may help with this. All present agreed that recording and reporting feedback from successful applicants will be useful for the CNL Board and Defra. Defra already have an independent reporting body gathering data in this way. The intention is to learn what has worked well for future farming initiatives.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – none.

8. CLIMATE ACTION

BD presented the current position with the Layman's Guide version of the Small World Consulting (SWC) full technical report. He stressed the distinction that the Layman's version must stick to the original language and definitions as in the SWC original report. BD thanked Mike Elliott for the groundwork she had put into the report prior to leaving the team. BD clarified that the objective is to set out and create a pathway to net zero, which is balanced with CNL's designation as a protected landscape. As the SWC report is based on robust evidence, it offers an opportunity for a wide range of stakeholders and partnership organisations to endorse the report and co-operate to create change. SWC have fed back their comments on the Layman's Guide, which BD will incorporate into the current version, ahead of seeking Board adoption next month. BD also outlined the activity plan for the year ahead, including delivering a series of thematic workshops during the autumn.

- Comments – the CEO thanked BD for the significant contribution he has made to producing the Layman's Guide. He also reiterated that the SWC report is an independently commissioned report and should not be viewed as the Board's position on climate action. DB expressed concerns over the use of the phrase 'electric vehicle', instead he recommended the term 'zero emissions at tailpipe'. AP and BD reiterated that the Layman's Guide must maintain consistency of phrasing with the SWC technical report. Some concerns were expressed by members of the Executive Committee about who would take the work forward following Mike's departure. The CEO will temporarily take on the role of lead officer of the Climate Action Working Group, BD is committed to giving some of his time to this area of work and there is expertise in the wider team which will prove invaluable. In addition, funding is available to bring in an external facilitator to lead the workshops and interpret their outcomes. RC acknowledged the importance of the engagement workshops to explore the many complexities of this work, and finding the balance

between positive climate action and the various other needs of the Cotswolds farming and resident communities, as well as the landscape itself. The CEO informed the Committee that Cotswold DC has also commissioned SWC to produce similar research for the Council and that Gloucestershire County Council has indicated support to help with the upcoming workshops. PC noted the crossovers between climate action work with planning and nature recovery.

- Decision – the Executive Committee approved the Layman’s Guide to the SWC technical report (subject to BD reviewing any remaining feedback) and the activity plan for 2023/24, and they recommended that they be adopted at the June Board meeting.
- Actions Arising – (1) email BD with any final comments about the Layman’s Guide, (2) identify potential individuals/organisations to fulfil the ‘facilitator’ role, (3) continue to seek funding to resource the Board’s climate action work beyond 2023/24.

9. PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Simon Joyce presented a detailed overview of the Board’s planning related work during the period. This has included a focus on position statements, including Renewable Energy and Neighbourhood Planning – both of which will be presented to the Board in June for adoption. John Mills has also been working at a national level on the National Planning Policy Framework consultation. Simon Joyce has reviewed a number of appeals and planning decisions, explaining the CNL Board’s recommendations in each and clearly stated the rationale behind each decision.

- Comments – the Executive Committee commended the Planning team’s work and expertise, often dealing with difficult and contentious matters.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – none.

10. PROJECTS AND FUNDRAISING

James Webb summarised recent work priorities. Nina Stubbington (New to Nature trainee) is settling in well. The Everyone’s Evenlode project continues to impress, thanks to the great team in place. The working relationship with the Evenlode Catchment Partnership (ECP) is working well strategically. The key contact at Thames Water has left, so work will be required to establish an effective relationship with new contact. Delivery of the rural skills outreach work is now outsourced to external trainers, which is working well. Longer term, the intention is to seek full funding for the outreach programme, which would include an officer to manage it to and cover all associated costs. The Caring for the Cotswolds programme has paid all outstanding grants. The current available sum will be allocated across two years. This will be a key focus for Nina Stubbington, during her time with the Board.

- Comments – none.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – none.

11. WELLBEING AND INCLUSION

The CEO gave a short overview of the current work and the priorities for the year ahead, including continued (and more focused) involvement in the Removing Barriers Defra-funded project.

- Comments – none.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – none

12. TRAILS, ACCESS AND VOLUNTEERING

In Becky Jones' absence, the CEO and EMS gave an update on her behalf. There has been a lot of work and time in completing year-end reports for both Defra and Natural England. EMS will be stepping down from his role as Chair of the Cotswold Trails and Access Partnership (CTAP) and was thanked for his significant contribution. A new Chair will be appointed shortly. The recent Cotswold Voluntary Wardens Executive Meeting highlighted that their volunteering hours are now back up to pre-pandemic levels. Over 48,000 volunteer hours were given in 2022/23 – an outstanding effort.

- Comments – EMS praised both the Wardens and Becky Jones. He also commented on how much more closely the Wardens are aligned to the CNL core team and Board – and the positive changes that has brought.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – none.

13. CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS

- The Executive Committee, CEO and HoF discussed two confidential items.

14. FORWARD PLANNING

- The agenda for the June Board Meeting was noted.

15. OTHER BUSINESS

- None.

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- Tuesday 19 September 2023, 10am-1pm at Greystones Farm Nature Reserve, Greystones Lane, Bourton-on-the-Water, GL54 2EN.

The Meeting commenced at 9:55am and closed at 1:05pm.

Vice-Chair