

## Item 13 Appendix A - Cotswolds National Landscape - "Effectiveness of the Board" Questionnaire Results January 2021

28 responses received

### Question 1: Your role as a Board Member

	No. Responses	Average score	Lowest Score	Highest Score
1) I understand what is expected of me as a Board Member	28	4.2	2	5
2) I understand our Statutory Purposes	27	4.2	2	5
3) I receive (through meeting papers and updates) appropriate information to help me measure the progress of the organisation	28	4.5	3	5
4) I am able to bring my expertise to the table	28	3.8	2	5
5) The Board is making best use of my skills and experience	27	3.5	2	5
6) I enjoy being a Board Member	27	4.4	3	5

#### How could the Board make better use of your gifts and talents?

The old committees and now the working groups seem to be the most beneficial ways to develop, to contribute and to exchange ideas.

Would that my talents and gifts such as there are could be of greater use but time does not allow.

I am a geomorphologist and therefore interested in landforms. I also have an interest in the rural economy. Unfortunately I have very little time...

I can help with connective and collaborative issues relating to farmers and landowners through the NFU and FWAG. I can also help with a base for Rural Skills development and training at Guiting. It is likely that volunteering growth will continue and post COVID the health and wellbeing connections to the natural environment will presumably be in greater demand.

I am still on a learning curve. I need to know more about the strategy and what has been done to validate any plans. For example, I do not know the extent to which plans have been subject to consultation with residents. In local government an endless amount of time is spent validating plans through consultation and it is only when that process is complete that inspectors add weight to plans. It is a thankless task and may have happened.

Has there been a skills / gifts / talents audit of Board Members?

E.g. by having a 'register' of open issues, and then more frequently asking for volunteer input (in a controlled way so as not to overwhelm officers!)... e.g. I have a degree in forestry but we've never had a discussion on forestry and woodland management despite its significant impact on our landscape.

Personally, and this is an observation not a criticism, I think there is a huge disparity between the background of Sec State Appointees and Local Authority members in so much as much of what I read is about land management and livestock issues, none about which I have a clue (obviously).

I think it is for me to suggest how I can offer more to specific projects as they come up.

Help me to better understand Statutory Purposes, Glover and the future of National Landscapes, inclusion and other likely success indicators. With a more deeply rooted understanding of our national Purpose and Vision, to the extent that I am clear with our own Business Plan, I would feel more confident in offering relevant, targeted input. At the moment, I'm being a team player, which includes experience in (health and education setting) business planning, performance management, analysis including demographics and contextual data, and local community development, politics, voluntary sector etc. I feel more representative of the "local everyday resident" in the Cotswolds than many Board members who may be landowners, professional experts, senior leaders in their field, business owners, etc. I've been a lifelong keen walker and appreciator of the outdoors, including photography, drystone walling, navigation, socialising on walks including guiding, camping, kayaking. Was pleased to have been involved recently in the "Experiences" development, and in the work to develop the Parish and Town cluster members. I've recently started work as a part-time Parish Clerk, giving me another dimension in understanding the perception and the potential value added of the CCB and its work. Planning input by CCB is valued highly, as is the recent emphasis on engaging younger people. Involvement in the Development of the next Countryside Code might have been an area for CCB to gain greater recognition among "villagers of the Cotswolds" this year "suffering" the new countryside visitor from Britain inexperienced in accessing the Countryside. Is that our role? Natural England's role. How do we relate? How does CPRE relate? County Council ROW and highways functions. Public Health. Education. I'd like to understand all these better.

Nothing to add really although as Chair, I'm conscious that my visibility around the organisation has been hampered by the current crisis. Nothing much we can do about that but the role of Chair requires

Given capacity - not sure. Organisation still doesn't make use of LA members enough re partnerships and Parish Members in terms of communicating with parishes and raising our profile. Still talk too much to ourselves.

I think it more a question of how I can better contribute - time issues etc.

How could the Board make better use of your gifts and talents? I hope I'm contributing on the Vision and Fund Raising. It's great to be among other Board members with very different skills; especially those The Board feels united in its passion for the Cotswolds, there is now more ambition and forward thinking, brought by Andy and Brendon

I felt I was able to contribute more of my skills to the Conserving & Managing Sub-Committee than I do at present.

Better able to answer after a full year, and I suspect this is limited by current restrictions anyway.

It would be useful to do a skills and experience audit of Board members. This is a common way to identify any gaps and also to ensure that we are making best use of people's talents and professional backgrounds. A form of this should be made available to the working groups, steering groups and task-and-finish groups, to enable them to have ready access to expertise which may not be present currently among their own group members. This would also prove a useful way of involving Board members in group activity as required.

I think in my current role I am in a position to use my skills but with regards to other people I would just ask "do we know what everyone's skills are and how much time they have to offer?"

Its early days , and the whole period we have been in some form of WEFH/lock down /zoom society , but my feeling is that its been very difficult for me to add much value yet ( my skills being best Gifts & Talents – this is virtually a two way process and dependent upon the officer and chairman of the working party how much use is made of the knowledge oof individuals. (it is easier to get to know people at face to face meetings rather than zoom – that may well be an age issue!) As a Town Councillor and Vice-chairman of GAPTC have a good working knowledge of the communities we all try to serve – and the difficulties oof communication. As farmers/contractors albeit mainly outside the AONB and having formal agricultural education enables me to look somewhat more in depth at the realities of problems perceived or real. As a long term member of the national executive of WFU/Fern(now both disbanded) and West Midlands Chairman, not just simple tasks' such as creating and working exhibition stands "linking producer and consumers2; but also direct lobbying in Parliament gave a greater understanding of the different actors and voices of influence. But don't think any of the above is a gift or a talent!

Selection to working/task groups could better consider relevant skills/knowledge/experience of individuals rather than rely on the result of an election process (provided of course that those individuals wish to be involved).

*Other comments provided in response to question 1:*

Re qu 1 - Prior to joining the Vision T&F Group, my answer would have been 2, because I was struggling to see how I was going to contribute beyond helping to assess the Caring for the Cotswold applications, but it is becoming clearer now.

Re qu 2 - I know what they are, but I am not yet clear how we collectively interpret "preserve and enhance". I suggest defra should organise an annual afternoon's online training session for new members of NP and AONB boards to accelerate their understanding of organisations' purposes and board members' expected roles. Given many new board members are defra appointees, surely this would be in the dept's best interest. This week's Cabinet Office training for new board members across a wide range of Arm's-Length Bodies was very good.

Re qu 3 - Impressive - appropriate detail, presented accessibly.

Re qu 4 - I'm beginning to.

Re qu 2 - I think it would be useful to have regular reminders of our statutory purposes

Re qu 3 - This is now very effective much more so than in the past. The regular updates are clear and concise so it's easy to understand where we are at any particular time.

Re qu 4 - Generally I think this is true although I could be more creative about how my expertise could be applied.

Re qu 5 - would like to hear more from officers - suspect covid has restricted

Re qu 6 - Most of the time anyway!

**Question 2: Our performance as a Board**

	No. Responses	Average score	Lowest Score	Highest Score
1) Board agendas and papers focus on the key issues we need to discuss	27	4.2	3	5
2) Appropriate time is given to items under discussion	27	4.1	2	5
3) Members are included in discussions and everyone is encouraged and is able to contribute in meetings	28	4.5	3	5
4) Decisions taken are clearly indicated and reflect the balance of opinion	27	4.4	3	5
5) There is an appropriate balance between member and employee contributions in debates and decision making	26	4.2	3	5
6) Board meetings are an appropriate use of my time	27	4.3	2	5

*How could Board meetings be structured differently to improve decision making?*

Could more papers be taken as read and advertise one relevant and current topic (a hot potato?) to be discussed in detail.

I think that more time should be available for ideas to be discussed on projects and income generation

Use of executive summaries. Assumption that we have read the papers and therefore faster presentation and meetings!

Nothing to add. The Chairman has a challenging task with such a large Board.

Don't know yet. Haven't formed an opinion. There does seem to be rather a lot of us and so meetings - if not well chaired (which the one I have been to was) - could be unwieldy.

I think that decision making and governance are generally good to very good. But I do think that there is an unnecessary caution about agenda-ing what some might regard as "politically challenging" (small "p") topics. So, we should be driven by evidence wherever it might lead us. And the evidence around eg the impact of pheasant rearing (positive and negative) on wildlife and nature is strong, but I doubt we'll discuss it because it's "sensitive" – and that is not a comment about shooting which I am entirely sanguine about, it's a comment about impact on wildlife. Similarly, our statutory duty is to conserve and enhance natural beauty, but in the face of significant evidence of erosion of that through inappropriate housing development, we haven't taken stock of that and had a discussion about what we should do ("politically" sensitive with our local authority colleagues)...

I think we need to get out of COVID restrictions to give this an honest fair answer.

Re qu 1 - This has steadily improved over the years and I find there is much better focus on what is really important now.

Re qu 3 - I think the chair now does an excellent job in getting us all fully involved in discussions and encouraging us to contribute when this is relevant.

I find the present structure is fine and no change is needed.

Andy has done a lot of work on this and we are improving the information flow, decision making and monitoring all the time. We've already made good headway. I'm very aware that we need all members to contribute and feel that they are being recognised as such. Not helped by the lack of physical meetings but we're are doing our best virtually. I'm still keen on ensuring we all know how the income is coming in each year in a very clear way. Ann has made very significant improvements to the way our financial information is presented and I'm sure we can continue to work on this. Our three income streams need to be clearly shown. Grants for running the organisation, payments we receive for developing and delivering projects and the money we fundraise from the public, sponsors, trusts etc. Even though the latter is recycled, we should separate the processes of raising and spending money so that we can take decisions on the absolute priorities ( given that everything we do is important!) This will be important as we produce our vision and subsequent management plan.

Seeing as they are so few, a whole day with more updates / presentations or training 10-12 lucnh 2-4? Engage public more?

I have no problem with the decision making process at the moment - all views are heard and considered, a balanced judgement made and clear way forward identified. Decisions also seem practical and realistic, leading to deliverable actions and reasonable timeframes.

Clearly, there is a lot of duplication of items between the Exec Cttee and the full Board. Perhaps this is necessary for governance and accountability back to all the local authorities, but it is not very efficient, especially for those on the Exec Cttee who have to sit through the same papers being discussed twice. It also reduces the Board's time for wider and deeper discussions about policies and activities. Could the Exec Cttee be given greater delegation of corporate governance? The Exec Cttee papers and minutes could be tabled as one item for the Board, whose members are assumed to have read the papers and minutes, and are then offered the chance to raise questions or contribute based on their experience (as on safeguarding), but otherwise it is assumed the Exec Cttee has undertaken due diligence. This would allow the Board meetings could focus on guidance rather than governance, for example, ensure its activities aren't siloed; discussing how Board members can contribute to partnership working and act as ambassadors; checking CNL's medium term objectives and priorities are still correct, ie, does the Business Plan need adjusting as different threats and opportunities emerge? Etc.

I think the Exec decision making is handled quite well at present. At the full board meetings it's more tricky due to the high number involved; however, the principles that we have at the Exec about what is the board paper for? are we looking for a decision? or is this just for sharing information? is to be recommended.

I feel that some issues are perhaps worthy of input from the wider board, prior to meetings – so these thoughts could be reflected in discussion papers.

I think this is developing since Andy P has been in post. There has been considerable improvement since he started and I feel now that the decision making process is much clearer and more open.

With such a large Board it is difficult to see a marked change in decision making. It has in recent year changed with more appropriate information and action sheets produced.

*Other comments provided in response to question 2:*

Re qu 3 - I have been surprised at how effectively such a large group engages online. Certainly everyone is encouraged to contribute. Some people might feel uncomfortable speaking up in such a large group, and currently are deprived of the chance to catch someone in the margins to ask questions or raise a point privately, but there's nothing we can do about that.

Re qu 4 - Certainly the case so far, but I don't think I've yet witnessed a contentious decision

Re qu 4 - I don't fully understand what is meant by "decisions taken are clearly indicated". I agree that decisions taken reflect the balance of opinion

Re qu 6 - Certainly a good way of getting to know the breadth of CNL's work!

**Question 3: Relationships**

	No. Responses	Average score	Lowest Score	Highest Score
1) The relationship with the executive allows Board Members to make an appropriate level of challenge (and vice versa)	25	4.0	2	5
2) The relationship between Board Members and executive is an open and transparent one and I feel able to be honest with what I think	26	4.3	2	5
3) I am confident that I will be made aware of significant problems/issues before they become a crisis	26	4.2	3	5
4) The Chair gives appropriate weight to the views of Board Members and the executive in meetings and in decision making	24	4.5	3	5
5) The Chair provides appropriate leadership to the Board	26	4.6	3	5
6) The relationship between the Chair and Chief Executive enhances the Board Member role and improves decision making	24	4.8	4	5

*How could relationships between Board Members and the executive be made stronger?*

Despite Covid this seems to have improved greatly in recent months . New Chairman and new Chief Executive?!

Difficult in zoom times but personal communication to discuss relevant issues with each.

Important that the CE and Chair, with greater information, will recognise problems at earliest.

This is very difficult under current circumstances but I thought that the away day we had in 2019 was excellent value for fostering those relationships.

By getting back to face to face meetings and sharing coffee so maybe a ten minute or so shared coffee break on line?

The Board management is challenging by virtue of its size, there is an element of slight disconnect and inclusivity. I am not sure how this can be improved, COVID and zoom has not helped to encourage networking and bonding of old and new members, however zoom has enabled a great deal to be achieved in challenging times.

I have been really encouraged by the contact that I have had with staff - all of whom have been open, supportive, helpful. There's a bit of me that would like to ask staff this question the other way around 1 Chair-CEO relationship appears good now... but we are potentially in a honeymoon period where both are new-ish, so in order to cement good practice before it might be needed (entirely absent under the previous regime) we could do with an open annual report from the Chair to the Executive on CEO performance, backed up by open annual feedback from a staff survey, and an annual report from the CEO on staffing matters (again, entirely absent under the previous regime). 2 Can we please have an expectation that says that Board Members always hear anything that might look like bad / difficult / even great news from internally rather than from the media? This is working well just now through the WhatsApp group, but it could usefully be part of our standard modus operandi.

I think the CCB is lucky to have such a talented and committed CEO running things.

I think this works pretty well at present. If Board Members feel they want to better understand how the executive works they should be encouraged to join meetings to see how things work.

Been a long time since an awayday style "getting stuck in". Feel exec are strong. Feel relationships on topics of focus are strong. Turnover in key officers, and board members, have left us in a strong position of potential, and now we need to fully realise that potential. A really productive "awayday" might help strengthen relationship between the two. I'm also not sure that board members who are not on Exec could feel there is enough left to discuss or decide, as Executive seem to agree decisions and direction to recommend to Board. Is there enough left for Board to add? I'd like to see more TOR set/ regularly reviewed for working groups, and sharper feedback into exec and onto board.

Nothing to add but conscious that fixing Exec for three years limits options for members.

Effective along with other communication methods.

Nothing to offer at this time.

Executive branch or executive committee?

I would recommend that at each Exec meeting, one Board member be invited as a guest to talk about their particular area of interest, background and responsibility. This could be a good way of making

I suspect that some board members do not feel they have access to the Exec. Not suggesting this is deliberate, but a hangover from years gone by.

A lot depends upon the Chairman and CEO relationship which often affects the members themselves. This is the first time such a survey has been undertaken and clearly shows a wish to become more accountable and aware.

*Other comments provided in response to question 3:*

Re qu 1 - But I'm not sure the 'vice versa' works, and it should!

Re qu 1 - an open discussion is encouraged; feedback is given respectfully, and well received

Re qu 1 - Not sure what this means... the executive committee or the executive branch? Challenge to the executive or challenge to organisation as a whole?

Re qu 2 - Not sure what this means... the executive committee or the executive branch? Challenge to the executive or challenge to organisation as a whole?

Re qu 3 - This is something which has been much improved. In the past some issues only became apparent at the last moment.

Re qu 3 - the systems and attitudes seem robust

Re qu 4 - Not enough experience to know but I have no concerns about our present chair getting this right.

Re qu 4 - collaborative, but with an appropriate amount of challenge

Re qu 6 - This is an important relationship and from what I have seen I am sure they are working well, but I haven't sufficient experience of seeing them operate together to be able to make an informed comment. From what I have gleaned, there has been a sea change in the last year - for the positive.

Re qu 6 - Hard for me to judge given short time I've been involved, but there is every indication that they are united in a strategy of how to increase the Board's impact.

Re qu 6 - The relationship seems very good in board meetings but I have no knowledge of what it is like the majority of the time

## Other Comments

*Any other comments about your role as Board Member or other areas where you think we could do better/go faster than we are at present?*

Bring on more working groups.

The elephant in the room seems to be how to hold worthwhile and inclusive meetings with such a large Board. The solution for this is, I fear, beyond my pay grade !

I think much has been achieved since Andy has arrived but priorities need to be emphasised and driven.

I was expecting us to be able to have more say in lobbying Govt. Are we making full use of our political influence as an organisation and through our individual MPs? Perhaps a lobbying agenda should be

Questions submitted in advance of meetings?

The settling in period and familiarisation of Board interactions, structure and process are quite challenging for new members who are not familiar with such a large and diverse range of issues and skill sets. The Board functions well and it feels to me as though it is working better and more progressive than when I joined it. Some areas where farmers and landowners could improve on post development of national and local policy will need support from the CNL or other Orgs. This is an opportunity for CNL to engage in areas where we have common objectives and to help accelerate the outcomes. Nature Recovery Landscape management Climate change mitigation, soil, water and air and carbon audits Adding value to farm produce, developing more local food retail Farmer engagement with countryside education and understanding Hosting and engaging with volunteer groups Developing increased permissive access Tourism and rural business development Reconciling environmental and economic success Greater collaboration with other organisations such as regional NFU, FWAG, Colleges and Universities will help to accelerate and build trust quicker when new policies are being initiated or encouraged. Topic focus meetings might identify where we can collaborate better. Reaching out collaborating and connecting will be more effective. Topical newsletters highlighting new initiatives and developments to farmers land managers.

Ask me in a year's time.

I feel very positive about the current team, leadership, expertise and management. The challenging issues for me are more to do with whether we're meeting our statutory duties, and if not (due to forces perhaps outside our control) what we're going to do about that. This reflects particularly on relationships with our Local Authorities, but also with our influence up the line with MPs and Ministers, and with national agencies. Our impact is improving, but we're not yet punching above our weight, and we should be!

We really are progressing in the right direction. Pleased with the energy, quality of work, team spirit, resilience, reputation (much improved), relationships / stakeholder management, finances, sense of officers and some Board members readiness for national strategic reshaping of AONB/NPs (such as the drive to rebrand as NL). We do now need to harness the significant "external voices" that can influence national politics and policy development, as we are planning to do. Perhaps in addition, we could do with the equivalent as local residents of the Cotswolds might self-identify? Would that be Adam Henson, Pru Leith, This Country, a top chef, cheesemonger, brewer, farmer? Youngster, aspiring young families, city executives with a pad in the country, Board level company man, landed gentry, retired to the country? And are we clear enough what distinguishes the Cotswolds and sets it apart from any other AONB? And our NL contribution to the sustainability, climate, environmental challenges, as well as how the economic and health challenges of the world with Covid might change our vision and plans.

I did suggest that if any subject merits deep and urgent consideration we might give a slot of a set time.

Relatively minor points but I do want good board behaviours from everyone. Turning up or giving apologies in advance, turning the screen on(!), contributing not just listening. As far as I know , everyone draws the allowance and is therefore receiving public money for their contribution - so needs to earn it!

I've seen a huge improvement in operations, focus, actions etc lately. Congratulations to Andy and Brendan, and to the various teams who are clearly responding so well to the new leadership partnersip.

I do like that we have stopped obsessing about becoming a National Park. We need to become one, I really don't know what AONB means to anyone externally, so the Brand shift is great. I am not saying we back off the Park ambition, but just start to act like one (within our remit & resources), take the lead amongst all AONB's regarding supporting progressive DEFRA ambitions, and push the Park agenda but as a strategy to achieve it, not as ever being seen as a victim 'if only we were a national park...' My desire for Park status is not 'political' it's that 'people' have an idea of what National Parks are about, not so for AONB's; is it just a designation to signpost to people that there might be a nice view up the road somewhere??

Hard to tell so soon. Has any analysis been done to try to assess activities against impact? The resources are so tight and the role so broader, allocating effort effectively is inevitable a huge challenge. Does anyone on the board have relevant expertise to conduct even a fairly quick 80:20 review?

This form was difficult to complete. Perhaps I'm not sufficiently versed in using it, but we could be sent a more easily manipulable document.

I think the Board does a generally wonderful job but I do worry that in some areas the Board and staff could be more willing to accept to accept a degree of change and hence be more proactive in strategic in enabling that change in a sensitive way. It will never be possible to address new challenges by simply carrying on as usual. This is particularly relevant in respect of two significant modern challenges: the climate crisis and the housing crisis facing young people.

I believe that often reading/informing oneself of the opposite of ones beliefs can give a more rounded and better informed decision. E.g. rewilding and free ranging beef – v- USA beef lots . Or use of terminology that is almost undefinable yet becomes the ‘buzz word e.g. Road map –Or Regenerative agriculture If we are not roundedly informed then could it be that we do the ‘4legs good , 2 legs bad!!!

The current combination of Chair and Chief Executive is very proactive and performing very well. A significant improvement on previous.