

## WORKING AND STEERING GROUPS

**Summary:** To present the priorities of the Working Groups, Steering Groups and Finance & Governance Sub-Committee, ahead of the June AGM.

**Recommendation:** That the Executive Committee notes the report.

**Report by:** Andy Parsons – Chief Executive

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- At a previous Executive Committee meeting there was a request for more clarity on the remit and priorities of the Board's Working and Steering Groups.
- Feedback from the Board Effectiveness questionnaire also highlighted the need to better understand the relationship between these respective groups and the Executive Committee.
- This paper sets out to provide this detail.

### 2. AGREED PRIORITIES

#### Working Groups

- Fundraising
  - *Caring for the Cotswolds* – to increase membership (businesses and individuals); to provide regular project updates and carry out site visits; to launch a new round of applications.
  - *Rural Skills* – to focus on developing a self-sustaining operation that has the optimum business mix of outreach and engagement; skills building; corporate days and tourism experiences.
  - *Kingfisher Trail* – to deliver the trail, maximising promotion and engagement opportunities; to work with partners and sponsors to demonstrate our ability to be innovative and fresh thinking; to ensure the auction supports the fundraising element of the project.
- Health, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion
  - To provide a focus for the Cotswolds National Landscape on the themes of health, wellbeing and social inclusion and to begin to address the following recommendations from the Landscapes Review:
    - Proposal 7 – a stronger mission to connect all people with our national landscapes.
    - Proposal 9 – new long term programmes to increase the ethnic diversity of visitors.
    - Proposal 10 – landscapes that cater for and improve the nation's health and wellbeing.
  - *Health and Wellbeing* - to liaise with Health and Wellbeing Boards (and other relevant organisations) to better understand the current health and wellbeing landscape; to be able to clearly articulate the benefits of access to the natural environment; to start the development of a rounded package that is accessible to stakeholders; to avoid duplication of effort

- and maximise benefits by identifying key partners to work with to improve the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors.
- *Social Inclusion* - to promote, champion and encourage diversity, inclusion and equality within the organisation; to start to develop a better understanding of communities both within the Cotswolds and slightly further afield; to explore relevant examples of best practice, e.g. RSPB; to act as a channel to challenge the organisation in terms of our practice, approach and development in support of underrepresented or disadvantaged individuals/ communities; to consider the future strategic agenda relating to diversity and inclusion and advise and make recommendations on appropriate initiatives and activities that will help the Cotswolds National Landscape achieve its key social inclusion aims.
  - Planning and Infrastructure
    - *Position Statements* - to review, update and consult on our Renewable Energy and Neighbourhood Planning Position Statements.
    - *Statutory Consultee* - to monitor our performance against statutory consultee criteria.
    - *Design Guidance* - to review existing design guidance across our local authorities (including design guidance relating to energy efficiency and mitigating impacts of climate change).
    - *Strategic transport issues* - to consider the Board's role in strategic transport planning.
    - The group will also support and advise the Planning and Landscape Lead when responding to relevant planning applications, as well as consultation responses to local plans, transport plans, etc.
  - Nominations for the Fundraising Working Group and Planning & Infrastructure Working Group will be requested ahead of the June AGM.

### **Steering Groups**

- A417 Missing Link
  - To provide advice, guidance and recommendations on the proposed road scheme as Highways England submits the Development Consent Order (DCO) application and the scheme enters the examination stage (subject to the Planning Inspectorate approving the DCO).
- Cotswolds Champions
  - To ensure the rail corridor mitigation and compensation project continues to deliver against its key funding objectives, acts as the grants panel for applications and has a clear plan to deliver a successful completion.
- Glorious Cotswold Grasslands
  - To support the team as the project enters a critical stage, with the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation funding ending this year. Implementing key recommendations of the business plan and seeking other sources of funding will be key to its longer term sustainability.

**Sub-Committee**

- Finance and Governance
  - To support the Board to ensure the financial stability and future growth of the Cotswolds Conservation Board.
  - To provide oversight of the finances and investments, financial strategy, income generation, innovation, financial objectives, plans and policies.
  - To review the financial performance of the Cotswolds Conservation Board quarterly and advise the Board accordingly.
  - To monitor the integrity of the financial statements of the Cotswolds Conservation Board and review and report on any significant financial reporting issues and judgements which those statements contain having regard to matters communicated to it by the external auditors.
  - To review the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and recommend to the Board for approval.
  - To review and propose the annual budget to the Board for approval.
  - To provide assurance to the Board on the adequacy and effectiveness of the internal control systems of the Cotswolds Conservation Board, including reporting on matters communicated by the internal auditors.
  - To review the internal controls and assurances against relevant risks on the risk register and make recommendations for improvements where appropriate.
  - To provide assurance to the Board that appropriate governance mechanisms are in place and effective throughout the organisation.
  - To provide oversight on governance best practice, changes in statutory requirements and emerging issues and advise the Board accordingly.
- Nominations for the Finance and Governance Sub-Committee will be requested ahead of the June AGM.

**3. REPORTING TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

- Following feedback from the Board Effectiveness questionnaire, and subsequent discussion with the Chairman and Vice-Chair, the 'standard' agenda format for Executive Committee meetings has been significantly changed and will take effect from September 2021 (see Item 19c).
- The Executive Committee will receive, comment on (and where required approve) reports from the Working and Steering Groups at each meeting.
- In addition, the agenda will also include reports from the Farming in Protected Landscapes Assessment Panel (tbc); Trails and Access (including the Cotswolds Trails and Access Partnership) and regular updates on the planning and development of the Management Plan for 2023-28.
- This will give a much clearer line of sight between the work of the various groups and the role of the Executive Committee.
- The Finance and Governance Sub-Committee will report into the full Board.