

**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF
COTSWOLDS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE**

HELD AT Hannover Suite, Royal George Hotel, Birdlip, GL4 8JH

TUESDAY 16 JULY 2024

Present:

Brendan McCarthy (Chair)	Rebecca Charley (Vice-Chair)
David Broad	John Swanton
Martin Brown	Juliet Layton
Katherine Chesson	Cate Le Grice Mack
Paul Crossley	Martin Mitchell
Amanda Davis	Rosie Pearson
Matt Darby	David Powell
Ben Dent	Margaret Reid
Andy Graham (left at 11.10am)	Ray Sanderson
Graham Hopkins	Ben Stokes
Martin Horwood	

Also in Attendance:

Andy Parsons (Chief Executive)
 Magda Glanowska (Head of Finance)
 Mark Connelly (Land Management Lead)
 John Mills (Planning Lead)
 Rebecca Jones (Access and Volunteers Lead)
 Fred Constantine-Smith (Climate Action Lead)
 Alana Hopkins (Communications Lead)
 James Webb (Partnerships Lead)
 Della Morris (Team Support Officer)
 Hannah McDonnell (Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership)
 Nick Williams (Kier, Senior Project Manager)
 Caitlin Hunt (Year 10 student on work experience – shadowing Ben Stokes)

1. INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

- Apologies - apologies were received from Alastair Adams, Jo Barker, Sue Crawford, Ellie Fujioka, Paul Hodgkinson, Nigel Adcock, Sarah Whalley-Hoggins, Isabel Ross, Emma Sims, Brendan Costelloe, Liz Hodges.
- Introductions and announcements – the Chair welcomed the Members, including new Board members: Chris Brant (Cherwell District Council), Martin Smith (Wiltshire Council), and Liz Reason (Parish Group 2) – none of whom were able to attend having only recently been appointed. The Board was also notified that the following Members have now left the Board: Nick Bumford, Jane Hull, Tony Merry, Phil Chapman. The Chair also informed the Board that Defra has informed him that recruitment to fill the three Secretary of State Board vacancies will not begin until early 2025. There is a plan to co-opt some Board Members with the specialisms required between now and then. The Board’s new Climate Action Lead, Fred Constantine Smith also introduced himself.

- Declarations of interest – there were no declarations of interest.
- Public questions - there were no public questions.

2. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING – 20 FEBRUARY 2024

- Decision – Amanda Davis noted a typo on page 2, which should be corrected to “the National Association of Local Councils’ (NALC) Big Collaboration”. Following this comment, the Board resolved that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board Meeting held on 20 February 2024 be approved as a correct record.
- Actions arising from the meeting – all actions have been completed.

3. MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 21 MAY 2024

The Board noted the Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 May 2024.

4. PRESENTATION 1: GLOUCESTERSHIRE COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP

Hannah McDonnell from Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership (GCRP) gave an energised and engaging presentation about the work of GCRP and its sister organisation Oxfordshire CRP, now referred to jointly as GO Community Rail Partnership. She emphasised the importance of collaborative working with other organisations such as the CNL Board, the importance of connecting young people to the countryside, and the importance of engaging people with public transport – for leisure, opportunity and wellbeing.

- Comments – the presentation was very well received, and prompted a range of comments and questions. Martin Brown asked where buses fit in and HM replied that the name is a bit misleading as GOCRP, in practice, works in partnership with many bus companies, and uses an integrated approach – essential in more rural areas where smaller railway stations were closed many decades ago. Cate Le Grice Mack stated that she had been involved with Travelwatch some 30 years ago, and observed that the agenda hasn’t changed much since then. She asked when the Department for Transport will improve their involvement, and how GOCRP and the CNL Board can help encourage/ influence that. HM replied that GOCRP are keen to continue collaborating with DfT to create change – but that it is a long process. Ben Stokes noted that demand responsive transport presents a good solution. He wondered how his local on-demand service could be better promoted, so that it worked as well as The Robin run by Gloucestershire County Council. He also stated the opinion that government must do more, and provide more funding to demand-responsive transport. HM agreed and said that a core part of GOCRP’s work is to push for positive change. Andy Graham noted that the emphasis on young people was very positive, and that co-creating projects and programmes with them will always bring about the best results. He also noted that GOCRP’s joined-up approach working across local authorities. He asked if GOCRP are working strategically in relation to new housing developments, public transport, etc. HM answered that all GOCRP’s work is strategic and evidence-based. Martin Horwood asked what GOCRP can really advocate for? HM answered that advocacy is led by grassroots needs, and is evidence based. Graham Hopkins noted that reopening formerly closed railway stations (rural) should be intended as ‘very light rail’ use only. He mentioned the Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre in Dudley, and offered his own help/ support for technical solutions, should it be required. Amanda Davis asked how to link the north and south

Cotswolds. Rosie Pearson noted that the visitor economy may be an area to focus on – making public transport easier and better to understand for overseas tourists, many of whom are not comfortable driving on the opposite side of the road to at home. She also mentioned electric hire cars at train stations.

- Decision – the Board congratulated Hannah and are keen to remain an active partner and supporter of the work of Community Rail Partnerships.
- Actions Arising – The Chief Executive will share a ‘who’s who’ of CNL Board Members with Hannah McDonnell.

5. PRESENTATION 2: OVERVIEW OF A417 CONSTRUCTION

Nick Williams (NW) presented work to date on the A417 Missing Link project, with construction now well underway.

- Comments – John Swanton noted how pleasantly surprised he has been with the relatively smooth traffic flow throughout the scheme so far. David Powell asked if the scheme will increase traffic through the area. NW replied that currently, there are 41,000 daily users on the road. The new scheme will have capacity for 61,000 so the daily use is likely to rise. The Chief Executive assured the Board that Kier are still running a collaborative working approach and are providing regular updates on work to the nearby stakeholders.
- Decision – The Board thanks Nick for his detailed update on the scheme.
- Actions Arising – none.

6. REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chief Executive updated the Board on recent activity since the last full Board meeting in February 2024, covering team, regional and national updates. Recruitment for the new CEO has begun, and is planned to be concluded in August. The Chair complimented the current Chief Executive and the team for the changes they have made over the last five years – 79 applications were received for CEO role, which he viewed as a reflection of the positive changes and the current appeal of the organisation. The Chief Executive also introduced new team members: Fred Constantine-Smith (Climate Action Lead), Tom Harcourt (GCG Programme Assistant), and Maria Carter (FiPL). He also noted that FiPL advice and guidance roles now have funding until March 2027. James Webb updated about a new role just recruited to the team: Outdoor Learning Officer. This role will work across the Cotswolds, with children and young people to increase access to nature. The focus will be on providing introductory experiences, which can be built on, hopefully towards work experience. The new role-holder will arrive in early September, and the post is fixed term for three years, part funded through an Ernest Cook Trust grant and in partnership with GOCR and World Jungle. John Mills is finalising his part time secondment to the National Landscapes Association. He has devised and shared a survey with all protected landscapes about the new ‘seek to further’ duty, collated and analysed the results, and is now finalising his report. He also co-led a very successful workshop on the subject at the recent National Landscapes Association Annual Conference. The Chief Executive commended JM for his excellent work on this very important matter.

- Comments – Ben Dent asked if the Defra decision to delay SOS member recruitment would have an effect on the Board. The Chair replied that the risk will be mitigated by the co-opting of Board members to cover the gap between now and early 2025.
- Decision – the Board noted the report.

- Actions Arising – none.

7. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

The Chief Executive introduced the paper on the year-end Work Programme progress and year-end KPIs. He explained how the Development Fund works and why that KPI is currently showing as red (due to the National Highways Biodiversity Improvement project funding, which the Finance and Governance Committee define as an opportunity risk rather than an organisational risk).

- Comments – Rosie Pearson noted that the work programme detail relating to local authority member groups is marked ‘in progress’ and asked for clarity. The Chief Executive replied that conversations with local authority Board Member and local authority officers remain a priority and will continue into 2024/25.
- Decision – the Board noted the report.
- Actions Arising – none.

8. PLANS, STRATEGIES AND POLICIES FOR BOARD APPROVAL /ADOPTION

8a. MANAGEMENT PLAN 2025-30

John Mills (Planning Lead) presented the first version of the Management Plan 2025-30 for consideration. He talked through the process and progress to date, outlined key changes, and summarised the next steps.

- Comments – the Chair asked when the draft version of the national guidance on Management Plans would be finalised. JM answered summer 2024, and also emphasised that the document contains mostly content which is intended as guidance not mandatory. Amanda Davis asked that the Plan contain more emphasis on the Biodiversity Duty as it relates to parish and town councils. David Broad supported her comment. The Chair summarised by identifying the challenge of communicating the Management Plan and CNL as an organisation to small and more local organisations, e.g. town and parish councils. The Chief Executive added that the newly formed Management Plan Steering Group has parish council representation, therefore they can play in role in ensuring the content reflects these comments. Rosie Pearson noted that in places, e.g. Outcome 1, there is a reference to the Small World Consulting report, she felt that it would be sensible to identify the disproportionate carbon footprint from the Cotswolds as such. She also pointed out that linguistically, there are two instances of ‘but’ in the next paragraph – which should be removed or replaced with more encouraging language. Fred Constantine Smith responded in agreement. Ben Stokes mentioned Sue Crawford’s previous point from the last Executive Committee meeting about engaging with young people, and suggested that well-facilitated workshops could give them an opportunity to contribute to the Management Plan. David Powell mentioned that business and financial planning should, ideally, run in tandem with the Management Plan period, acknowledging however that the current funding model makes this very difficult. John Swanton offered general encouragement, and reminded the room that Board Members are intended as an additional resource to team members when required. Ben Dent stated his view that the Management Plan remains a very formal document. He introduced the idea of alternative formats and asked how it could be co-created with new audiences.
- Decision – the Board noted progress to date on the Management Plan 2025-30.

- Actions Arising – (1) John Mills to feedback Board Member comments to Simon Smith so that they can be considered in future draft versions, (2) Alana Hopkins to consider options for engaging younger audiences.

9. FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

9a. Minutes of the previous meetings and update on the key areas under discussion

David Powell (DP) updated the Board with points of note from the last F&G Committee meeting. He paid tribute to Magda Glanowska for creating a 30-year predicted cashflow relating to the National Highways Biodiversity Improvement funding, which he acknowledged as 'no mean feat'. He also updated the Board on the process to appoint a new Internal Auditor.

- Comments – Amanda Davis asked why we don't have an external audit. MG responded with assurance that we do have an external auditor and all procedures are correctly followed. Graham Hopkins asked how often risk is covered and DP replied twice per year at F&G, and once per year at full Board meetings.
- Decision – The Board noted the minutes from the latest F&G Committee meeting.
- Actions Arising – none.

9b. Year-end financial result 2023/24

Magda Glanowska presented the results of the year-end finances, which demonstrated the growth and positive direction that the organisation is going in.

- Comments – the Chair commended MG, the Chief Executive, and Jonathan Rogers (Management Accountant) on the clarity of the presentation of the accounts. Amanda Davis asked about risk appetite. MG responded by saying that all invested funds have been invested in a low risk way. AD continued by asking about how risk appetite was assessed when taking on new projects. DP responded by explaining the Risk Management Framework is robust, and is subject to constant review by the F&G Committee, and that individual projects and programmes are considered by the CEO. He summarised by explaining that the organisation is generally risk averse due to its status as a public body. The Vice Chair reinforced this by saying that the F&G Committee was set up as part of the risk assessment, so that decisions are as sound as possible and reflect the right level of risk appetite.
- Decision – The Board noted the paper.
- Actions Arising – none.

9c. Local authority – annual financial contributions

The Chief Executive ran through the annual financial contributions made by local authorities in the Cotswolds National Landscape. He reminded the Board Members of the 80/20 rule relating to funding from Defra, and that we sit close to the threshold of this. He was very encouraged that 11 of the 15 authorities gave the Board an increase (generally related to CPIH) in this year's funding contribution. Board Members representing three of the four local authorities who didn't provide an uplift in funding are actively pursuing conversations with relevant officers and councillors to seek to understand how this can be addressed in future years. These are: Juliet Layton (Cotswold DC), Paul Crossley (BaNES) and Alastair Adams (Worcestershire CC). The CEO and Chair will also be liaising with Martin Smith (the recently appointed Member for Wiltshire Council). Local authority budgeting for 2025/26 will start in September 2024, so this remains a priority.

- Comments – Graham Hopkins pointed out that proportionality according to geographical area would be different to that according to population. The Chief Executive reminded the Board that this item is intended to offer openness and transparency around funding sources, in order to encourage collaboration. He also reminded Board Members about the value-add document which sits alongside the contributions summary and demonstrates the ROI for each local authority and the value of the work undertaken in their areas by the CNL team and the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens. Juliet Layton asked if this information is presented to local authority CEOs. The Chief Executive explained it has, and that he has met with Robert Weaver and Joe Harris from Cotswold District Council.
- Decision – The Board noted the paper.
- Actions Arising – (1) the Chief Executive and Partnerships Lead will update, and then circulate, the value-add document to all Board Members, (2) CEO to start conversations with all local authority partners for 2025/26 contributions.

9d. Virements and Contracts (for information)

Magda Glanowska summarised the Virements and Contracts paper.

- Comments – none.
- Decision – the Board noted the update.
- Actions Arising – none.

10. FORWARD PLANNING

The Board noted the draft agenda for the October 2024 meeting.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 22 October 2024, 10:00am-1:00pm, at Council Chambers, Cotswold District Council, Trinity Road, Cirencester, GL7 1PX. The meeting will be followed by a strategy workshop on 'Thriving Rural Communities'.

The Board Meeting commenced at 10:00am and closed at 12.37pm.

CHAIR

ENDS