

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

HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM MEETINGS

TUESDAY 25 JANUARY 2022, 10:00am

Present

Brendan McCarthy (BM) (Chair)
David Broad (DB)
Graham Hopkins (GH)
Andy Graham (AG)
Paul Crossley (PCr)

Rebecca Charley (RC) (Vice-Chair)
Phil Chapman (PCh)
Ed Macalister-Smith (EMS)
Cate Le Grice Mack (CGM)

Also in Attendance

Andy Parsons (Chief Executive)
Mark Connelly (Land Management Lead)
Scott Brown (Farming Engagement Lead)
Caroline Regan (FiPL Programme Administrator)
Rebecca Jones (Access and Volunteers Lead)
Simon Smith (Nature Recovery Lead)
James Webb (Partnerships and Fundraising Lead)
Harvey Sherwood (GCG Project Officer)
Anna Field (GCG Asst. Project Officer)
Simon Joyce (Planning Officer)

Adrian Hardman (Board Member – observing)

1. INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

- Apologies – apologies were received from Clive Webster.
- Introductions and announcements – Andy Graham was welcomed to the Executive Committee and Mike Dean was thanked for his years of service to the Committee. The Chair also welcomed Adrian Hardman to the meeting.
- Declarations of interest – no interests were declared.
- Public questions – there were no public questions.

2. MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING – 14 SEPTEMBER 2021

- Decision - resolved that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee Meeting held on 14 September 2021 be approved as a correct record.
- Actions Arising – the revised terms of reference for the Board and Exec will be presented at the June AGM for adoption. All other actions had been completed.

3. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING – 12 October 2021

- The Executive Committee noted the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 12 October.

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:

- The Everyone's Evenlode team (part of the Thames Water Smarter Catchments programme) are in place.
- Iris McCormick (FiPL Engagement Officer) and Simon Joyce (Planning Officer) also joined the team.
- New Board Members – Steve Bucknell (Wilts Council) and Brendan McCarron (PC5) – joined the Board during the period.
- The Finance and Governance Sub-Committee recruited an independent member, David Powell, who will be attending his first meeting in February.
- The Government responded to the Landscapes Review. Our consultation response will be completed by the deadline of 9 April:
 - End-February - first draft for comment by Board Members
 - Mid-March - comments received from Members
 - End-March – final submission
- The CEO recently received a letter from Natural England, giving an update on the “All England Assessment” of landscape designations (which will “*reflect the spirit of the Hobhouse Map that led to the establishment of the first National Parks 70 years ago*”).
- We have received an additional £36,000 of core Defra funding for 2021/22 and spend will be prioritised on:
 - Carbon baselining analysis
 - Landscape Strategy and Guidelines – interactive map for the website
 - IT and GIS Improvements
- A ‘schedule of works’ report on the Old Prison lease has been completed by Kirkham Pryer Surveyors. It is proposed that the Finance and Governance Sub-Committee will review the report and agree next steps, including liaison with our landlord. This work is being completed ahead of the July 2023 lease break, when we will be vacating. The Chief Exec will provide further updates to the Exec Committee.
- Comments – good discussion on the Landscapes Review, with Members generally positive about the response. The Chair emphasised that our position must be to work with Defra rather than against. PCh supported this approach, as did GH (with the caveat that we may need to fulfil the role of ‘critical friend’ when required). GH suggested that, due to the current high workload, he and CGM could draft a consultation response (on behalf of the Board) on the Great British Railway industry wide strategy. The Chair suggested that the CEO should think about this offer.
- Decision – resolved that (1) the consultation timetable for the Landscapes Review was sensible, (2) The Finance and Governance Sub-Committee should lead on

matters relating to the property lease, with the wider Board being informed at the appropriate time.

- Actions Arising – The CEO will speak to GH and CGM regarding the Great British Rail consultation.

5. OPERATIONAL AND FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

The CEO gave an overview of the financial and operational performance of the organisation, commenting that the Finance and Governance Sub-Committee will review the Q3 results in detail at their meeting on 7 February. As it stands, the useable reserves target should be achieved one year ahead of plan.

- Comments – EMS asked whether the year-end forecast had taken into account any backdated increase in pay for 2021/22. The CEO confirmed that it hadn't but that it would likely be offset by other savings/ additional income.
- Decision – resolved that the paper was noted by the Executive Committee.
- Actions Arising – none.

6. FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

The Land Management Lead, supported by the Programme Administrator and Farming Engagement Lead, introduced the paper, giving a detailed summary of all programme activity, including: reprofiling the three-year spend; moving to a rolling application window; project pipeline; year-end reporting; administrative challenges.

- Comments – AG asked if projects could be mapped to get a feel for geographical coverage. The Programme Administrator confirmed that this will be done. GH asked if there are processes in place to capture lessons learnt and it was confirmed that there is (including Defra engaging an external agency to conduct a review). Further discussion took place about FiPL being used as a tool to overcome access issues. The Chair concluded by thanking the whole FiPL team for a fantastic start to the programme.
- Decision – resolved that the paper was noted by the Executive Committee.
- Actions Arising – share information on the geographical spread of grant recipients at the appropriate time.

7. FUNDRAISING WORKING GROUP

The Partnerships and Fundraising Lead started by summarising the Kingfisher Trail end of project report, concluding that it had met its original objectives. He then presented the External Bids paper, highlighting how our externally funded projects are enabling the team to get 'boots on the ground' and making a difference in our communities and for the environment.

- Comments – AG underlined the increasing importance of a coherent social media strategy, as demonstrated by the trail. CGM mentioned that some people had difficulty finding the kingfishers and asked that this be addressed ahead of the next trail. The Chair echoed everyone's feelings in giving the team involved a 'big well done'. GH was pleased to see the potential National Grid undergrounding project and made a suggestion connecting this to community wind turbines. AG and PCh both commented on how our projects are demonstrating our positive impact on people and place, with AG also suggesting more data on impacts would support the narrative as we move forward.

- Decision - resolved that the paper was noted by the Executive Committee.
- Actions Arising – none.

8. PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE WORKING GROUP

In the absence of the Planning and Landscape Lead, GH introduced the paper and welcomed our new Planning Officer. He highlighted the importance of the group's new terms of reference, which will be particularly useful to guide new position statements. The Planning Officer then gave a brief overview of his previous roles and his first impressions of this role.

- Comments – it was agreed that this additional resource was vital to ensuring we fulfil our role in this area of our work, especially in light of the planning related elements of the government's response to the Landscapes Review.
- Decision – resolved that the paper was noted by the Executive Committee.
- Actions Arising – none.

9. CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

The Land Management Lead gave an update on the consultation responses to the new Climate Change strategy, ahead of seeking Board adoption in February. He confirmed that a review and update would, likely, be required in 12-18 months, once the carbon baselining assessment has been completed. The CEO then updated the Committee on the upcoming carbon baselining exercise and the recruitment of a Net Zero Landscape Officer.

- Comments – the Committee were pleased that we had secured funding to complete the assessment, as we had previously recognised the need to improve the organisation's carbon literacy.
- Decision – resolved that the paper was noted by the Executive Committee.
- Actions Arising – none.

10. HEALTH, WELLBEING AND SOCIAL INCLUSION WORKING GROUP

The CEO introduced the paper which highlighted: areas of direct delivery; understanding third party activity and networks; priorities for 2022/23. The key message from the group is that health, wellbeing and social inclusion shouldn't be seen as a standalone project but must, instead, run through everything that the organisation does – either through core delivery or projects.

- Comments – AG was delighted to see the proposal about rolling out equality and diversity training across the organisation. He also informed the Committee about the village transport networks programme in Oxfordshire and offered to share this with the CEO. CGM suggested that we should seek to find a post graduate student to conduct an 'access routes map' for the National Landscape. DB supported this idea. The Chair and PCh suggested that we play a role in being a 'one stop shop' to list health and wellbeing activity in the Cotswolds, with the warning that this may lead to significant additional work for the team. CGM also said that the group members need to take the lead on some of the actions so that it doesn't all fall on the CEO.
- Decision – the Executive Committee endorsed the priorities for 2022/23.
- Actions Arising – (1) invite AG to the next working group meeting so that he can advise on Oxfordshire's village transport network, (2) consider the idea of

engaging a student to conduct an access routes mapping exercise, (3) consider the 'one stop shop' service for promoting health and wellbeing activity, (4) assign owners from within the working group to take forward the 2022/23 priorities.

11. A417 MISSING LINK STEERING GROUP

The CEO introduced the paper, highlighting the huge workload required to ensure the organisation continues to represent its views through the examination process. A special mention was given to GH for the time he has put into supporting the team. He also gave an update on the Designated Funds programme, with the organisation involved in three potentially significant projects.

- Comments – The Chair commented that the organisation's written representations have been excellent, using the right tone and message. CGM asked about figures related to induced traffic projections as a result of the completed scheme. DB agreed that this data would be very useful.
- Decision – resolved that the Executive Committee endorsed (1) the responses to the Examiner's Questions and (2) the Written Representation.
- Actions Arising – locate the induced traffic data and share with the Executive Committee.

12. GLORIOUS COTSWOLDS GRASSLANDS STEERING GROUP

The Nature Recovery Lead introduced the paper, with the headlines being: the project has more than doubled the original targets set three years ago; the team have moved from fixed term to permanent contracts as a result of the success to date and the firmly held view that this work is core to our operations.

- Comments – The Chair welcomed Harvey Sherwood and Anna Field to the meeting and congratulated them on their work and commitment in achieving great results for this nationally important habitat. Harvey was pleased to have been invited to the meeting and confirmed that they would be producing a map detailing the geographical spread of their work, via Land App. Anna Field was delighted that the organisation has shown confidence in their work, resulting in a longer term programme of work.
- Decision – resolved that the paper was noted by the Executive Committee and that the team should be proud of their achievements.
- Actions Arising – none.

13. COTSWOLDS CHAMPIONS STEERING GROUP

The Farming Engagement Lead gave an overview of the project, informing the Committee that the project sum had now largely been spent. The mitigation project, being delivered in partnership with FWAG, has progressed more slowly but there have been some notable successes – including the creation of a new farm cluster.

- Comments – none.
- Decision – resolved that the paper was noted by the Executive Committee.
- Actions Arising – none.

14. TRAILS, ACCESS AND VOLUNTEERING

The Access and Volunteers Lead gave an overview of current activity and priorities. The number of Voluntary Wardens and Glorious Cotswold Grassland volunteers is now approaching 500 people! The priorities for the next 2-3 months are: completing the Cotswold Way projects, enabled by the additional funding (from Natural England and match funded by other partners); completing the two new short walks in Bourton-on-the-Water (funded by Visit England via Cotswold District Council).

- Comments – everyone acknowledged the breadth of work that is being done in this area of our work. The Chair gave thanks to EMS for his role in CTAP. EMS further thanked the Cotswold Way Association who are increasingly becoming great partners for our organisation. PCr said that creating short walks, as we are doing in Bourton, is so important in encouraging people that are new to walking and the countryside.
- Decision – resolved that the paper was noted by the Executive Committee.
- Actions Arising – none.

15. MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Nature Recovery Lead presented a paper that gave suggestions on workshop topics as part of our external stakeholder consultation, currently scheduled for April. He stated that he had considered, amongst other things, the outcomes from the July Forward Planning Day and Defra's national priorities.

- Comments – The Chair challenged the need to hold the workshops so early in the process and, perhaps, thought should be given to producing a first draft that is then consulted on later in the year. CGM asked if we should consult only on 'thorny issues'. PCh reminded the Committee that significant consultation occurred during the creation of the Vision and the Management Plan is its delivery vehicle.
- Decision – resolved that thought should be given to the process.
- Actions Arising – consider the points raised and review the developmental plan and timetable ahead of presenting it to the Board in February.

16. FORWARD PLANNING

- Draft Agenda – the agenda for the February Board Meeting was reviewed, with the Chair reminding the CEO to include an item on the Management Plan. Robert Weaver, CEO at Cotswold DC, will be giving a talk at 9:30am and Jon Taylor, who led the government response to the Landscapes Review, will be presenting.

17. OTHER BUSINESS

- None.

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 24 May 2022, 10am-1pm at Guiting Manor Farms, Guiting Power, Glos. GL54 5UX.

The Meeting commenced at 10:00am and closed at 1:03pm

Chair