

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

HELD AT THE BEAR OF RODBOROUGH, RODBOROUGH COMMON, STROUD

TUESDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2022, 10:00am

Present

Brendan McCarthy (BM) (Chair)
David Broad (DB)
Graham Hopkins (GH)
Phil Chapman (PCh)

Rebecca Charley (RC) (Vice-Chair)
Cate Le Grice Mack (CLGM)
Paul Crossley (PCr)

Also in Attendance

Andy Parsons (Chief Executive)
Mark Connelly (Land Management Lead)
Rebecca Jones (Access and Volunteers Lead)
Simon Smith (Nature Recovery Lead)
James Webb (Partnerships and Fundraising Lead)
John Mills (Planning and Landscape Lead)

Ben Dent (BD) (Board Member and Chair of the Climate Action Working Group)
Iris McCormick (FiPL Farm Advisor – observing)

1. INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

- **Apologies** – apologies were received from Andy Graham, Ed Macalister-Smith and Clive Webster.
- **Introductions and announcements** – the Chair welcomed Iris McCormick (FiPL Farm Advisor) to the meeting, Iris was keen to attend as part of her personal development and wider understanding of the organisation.
- **Declarations of interest** – no interests were declared.
- **Public questions** – there were no public questions.

2. MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING – 24 MAY 2022

- **Decision** - resolved that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee Meeting held on 24 May 2022 be approved as a correct record.
- **Actions Arising** – John Mills gave an update on the A417 induced traffic data. John Mills also informed the Board of the engagement opportunities he has used to promote the Board’s planning work. The CEO informed the Committee that he was liaising with Ben Dent about setting up a series of podcasts about the work of the Board and the CNL.

3. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING – 21 JUNE 2022

- The Executive Committee noted the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 21 June 2022.

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 Chair, Vice Chair and CEO have drafted a discussion paper for local authority members with the aim of further improving relationships, understanding and future partnerships. A meeting is scheduled at the end of September.
- There will be a minimum of one Secretary of State vacancy in 2023, with the Board's priority to recruit a new member with financial/accountancy expertise.
- Property matters at the Old Prison are progressing, with roof works scheduled and a meeting with the Friends of the Cotswolds happening later that day.
- A series of team days, organised by Della Morris, occur quarterly. In June a BBQ and social was held at Chipping Campden Cricket Club and this month the team are volunteering for the Cleeve Common Trust.
- Ann Wyatt, Head of Finance, returns from maternity leave w/c 19 September. The CEO gave thanks to Diane Bassett, who provided maternity cover.
- The National Association of AONBs are drafting a 'big idea' prospectus to provide Defra (officials and ministers) with a clear vision and way forward, in light of government's response to the Landscapes Review.
- Defra has provided funding to the NAAONB to roll-out the National Landscapes brand this financial year.
- The CEO stated that the priorities for this meeting were (1) the Management Plan and (2) the Business Plan Framework.

5. OPERATIONAL AND FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

The CEO gave an overview of the financial and operational performance of the organisation. Q1 results meant that the year-end forecast was still on track. However, potential concerns for later in the year include (1) property costs, (2) rising inflation and (3) impact of pay awards.

- Comments – GH asked if we should review the risk register, in light of energy costs, etc. The Committee agreed that this would be a sensible action.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – review the corporate risk register, in light of escalating costs (external factors).

6. MANAGEMENT PLAN 2023-25

Simon Smith gave an overview of the progress to date and reminded Committee Members that the deadline for further comment (ahead of the next draft that will be presented to the October Board meeting) is 18 September. He highlighted the key wording and structural changes in the Plan.

- Comments – the Chair asked when the new Plan will be published in 2023. Simon Smith confirmed that the Plan will be presented for adoption at the February Board, before a period of design, then publication around June. The CEO, whilst acknowledging that this is a light touch review, was keen for the Plan to reflect the culture and language of the organisation (which has changed significantly since the previous Plan). The Chair stated the importance of gaining local authority endorsement and that it must be a useable document. CLGM felt that

the Plan should acknowledge the current pressures facing local authorities. PCh suggested giving careful consideration of the wording around % of affordable housing to ensure it is achievable. DB made a recommendation to alter the wording of the policy about electric vehicles, this was supported. GH asked what the quality management system looks like to monitor delivery of the Plan and warned the Committee about the exponential effect of not taking any climate action during the Plan period. BD supported this comment but also said that climate action is much more evident in this draft, compared to the current Plan. PCr reinforced the importance of ensuring all 15 local authorities support it. CLGM said that local authorities struggle to have a single vision or set of outcomes, and the opportunity is to create that for them. RC supported this and stressed the importance of being a help not a hindrance to them. Simon Smith reflected on the discussion and is now clear that a 'stand-alone' executive summary is very important and can be used to engage a much wider/generalist audience, whilst the full Plan will be a document for policy and decision-makers throughout the CNL. Mark Connelly is keen for the Plan to be adventurous. The Chair finished the discussion by congratulating Simon Smith on the progress to date and asked him to give consideration to what we are asking local authorities to endorse, e.g. is it the intention, the outcomes, the policies or the entire Plan?

- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the progress to date and endorsed the direction of travel of the new Plan.
- Actions Arising – (1) review the wording of the Outcomes to ensure they are impactful, (2) consider what we will be asking local authorities to endorse during the next round of consultations, (3) give careful consideration of the wording around % of affordable housing to ensure it is achievable, (4) create an executive summary that can be used to engage a wider audience.

7. BUSINESS PLAN FRAMEWORK 2023-26

The CEO introduced the paper, explaining the activity to date, involving all team members as well as voluntary warden input. Following feedback from the meeting, the framework will be finalised ahead of seeking Board adoption in October. This will then be supported by a three-year financial forecast – drafted by the Finance and Governance Sub-Committee and submitted to the Board in February 2023 for adoption.

- Comments – GH would like to see closer links between the Business Plan Framework and the Management Plan. There was discussion on the Management Plan being for the area and that the Business Plan should highlight the Board's role in fulfilling its own responsibilities within the Management Plan. Simon Smith informed the Committee that national targets for the Management Plan would be set against the place not the organisation. PCh felt that the tone of the Business Plan was fabulous and RC stressed how much the level of wider team facilitation had increased in the last three years.
- Decision – the Executive Committee recommended the Business Plan Framework for Board adoption.
- Actions Arising – consider how to best demonstrate the links between the Management Plan and the Business Plan Framework.

8. FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

Mark Connelly gave an overview of recent and upcoming activity for the team. Defra has led national promotion of the scheme's successful first year, and this was followed up locally with the CEO writing to MPs highlighting some of the many excellent projects that are being delivered in the Cotswolds.

- Comments – CLGM led discussion on how the grant scheme can give more benefit to smaller tenant farmers, as their involvement has been limited to date. Mark Connelly has identified this as an issue and the team are actively identifying ways to better engage with tenant farmers.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – none.

9. CLIMATE ACTION

Ben Dent (working group Chair) introduced the paper. One of the working groups key concerns was that, should short-term action be identified, i.e. in the next two years, the lack of clear targets in the next Management Plan may lead to inactivity – which would create harmful delay in the net zero journey.

- Comments – the Executive agreed that the 2023-25 Plan must acknowledge the potential need to act quickly on climate action as required.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – ensure the 2023-25 Management Plan enables the Board (and its partners) to act quickly on climate action initiatives that may arise.

10. PROJECTS AND FUNDRAISING

James Webb gave an overview of current externally funded projects. Highlights included the young people engagement delivered through Everyone's Evenlode and Rural Skills Outreach. James informed the Board that we are currently applying to the 'New to Nature' programme for funding to employ a 12-month placement, prioritising recruiting an individual from an under-served community.

- Comments – Committee Members applauded the current work with young people. DB asked whether the National Grid VIP project was under any scrutiny as a result of the current energy costs/poverty. Mark Connelly replied by saying that the project was widely supported and, to date, this hadn't become an issue.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – none.

11. PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

John Mills gave an overview of our current planning related work. He has led on drafting NAAONB guidance on renewable energy, which will form part of the network's Climate Action Toolkit. The Working Group will work alongside the Climate Action Working Group to update the Board's own Renewable Energy Position Statement, which will be presented for Board adoption in February 2023. John also said that planning decisions that were in line with the Board's own recommendations were 100% in Q1 (six out of six).

- Comments – the Chair asked about current workload, and John replied that Simon Joyce was now completing all development management related work. Simon may also lead on the revision of the Neighbourhood Planning Position Statement.

CLGM commented that the team are doing an amazing job, and this was supported by everyone.

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

12. HEALTH, WELLBEING AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

The CEO introduced the paper and confirmed that Katherine Chesson is the Group's Chair, with Ben Stokes as Vice Chair. The Executive Committee was asked to endorse the Group's proposed new role as advisor to the 'access for all' project.

- Comments – CLGM asked to attend the Group's next meeting, which is being held at Jamie's Farm in Box on Thursday 29 September.
- Decision – the Executive Committee endorsed the Group's proposed new role as advisor to the 'access for all' project.
- Actions Arising – invite CLGM to the next meeting.

13. A417 MISSING LINK

The CEO informed the Committee that the Secretary of State would be making a decision on the scheme in November 2022. Current activity is focused on detailed design collaborative sessions and involvement in various designated funds bids.

- Comments – discussion was around the Biodiversity Net Gain designated fund bid and the importance of ensuring good governance and financial certainty for the length of the commitment, i.e. 30 years. The CEO will ensure that this is the case for all National Highways/designated funds bids and partnerships.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – none.

14. GLORIOUS COTSWOLDS GRASSLANDS

Simon Smith informed the Committee that 2022 has been a record breaking year for seed harvesting (both in terms of quantity and quality). The team is now mid sowing. The opportunities continue to grow through various partnerships and contracts.

- Comments – The Committee discussed the Biodiversity Net Gain project, funded through National Highway's Designated Funds, acknowledging its significant positive impact on the CNL and the importance of ensuring the finances are well thought through and robust (as it's a 30 year commitment).
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – none.

15. TRAILS, ACCESS AND VOLUNTEERING

Becky Jones introduced the paper covering (1) Cotswold Way National Trail, (2) Bathscapes, (3) Bourton-on-the-Water walks, (4) Voluntary Wardens and (5) potential funding opportunities.

- Comments – The Committee were hugely impressed with the breadth of work and achievements, led by Becky Jones and Nicole Daw.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – none.

16. FORWARD PLANNING

- Draft Agendas – the agenda for the October Board Meeting was noted.

17. OTHER BUSINESS

- Ben Dent made the suggestion that we could introduce a mentoring scheme for new Board Members. This was fully supported by the Committee. The CEO will draft some ideas for the Chair to consider.

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 24 January 2023, 10am-1pm at The Goods Shed, Old Station Yard, Tetbury.

The Meeting commenced at 10:00am and closed at 1:05pm.

Chair

DRAFT