

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

HELD AT THE GOODS SHED, TETBURY, GL8 8EY

TUESDAY 24 JANUARY 2023, 10:00am

Present

Brendan McCarthy (BM) (Chair)	Phil Chapman (PC)
David Broad (DB)	Clive Webster (CW)
Graham Hopkins (GH)	Ed Macalister-Smith (EMS)

Also in Attendance

Andy Parsons (Chief Executive)
Ann Wyatt (Head of Finance)
Mark Connelly (Land Management Lead)
Scott Brown (Farming Engagement Lead)
Mike Elliott (Climate Action Lead)
Rebecca Jones (Access and Volunteers Lead)
Simon Smith (Nature Recovery Lead)
James Webb (Partnerships and Fundraising Lead)
John Mills (Planning and Landscape Lead)

Sue Crawford and John Swanton (both Secretary of State Board Members) also attended.

1. INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

- Apologies – apologies were received from Rebecca Charley, Andy Graham, Cate Le Grice-Mack and Paul Crossley.
- Introductions and announcements – the Chair thanked Ann Wyatt for all she has achieved for the organisation, since she started in June 2020. Ann will be leaving in February to take up a new role.
- Declarations of interest – no interests were declared.
- Public questions – there were no public questions.

2. MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING – 13 SEPTEMBER 2022

- Decision - resolved that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee Meeting held on 13 September 2022 be approved as a correct record.
- Actions Arising – the only outstanding action is to set up a mentoring scheme for new Board Members, this will be carried forward.

3. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING – 11 OCTOBER 2022

- The Executive Committee noted the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 11 October 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:

- *National strategy* – there are national steering groups currently working on:
 - A protected landscapes outcomes framework (Simon Smith involved))
 - An updated Management Plan guidance
 - The formation of a National Landscapes, Parks and Trails Partnership (CEO involved), with the early priorities being:
 - ✓ Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
 - ✓ Recovering Nature
 - ✓ Green Finance
- *NAAONB Conference 2023* – will be hosted by Bath University, with the conference themes being green finance and the national rebrand of AONBs. The CNL team will host one of the field trips.
- *Board* – the recruitment for the Secretary of State vacancies started this week. Local authority Board Member meetings are continuing, with the main focus being demonstrating our value-add; the Management Plan; potential themes for future collaboration and funding. The strategy day on 18 July is currently being planned, it will include a site visit to the A417 and a workshop to review alignment and synergies between working groups.
- *Team* – interviews for the new Head of Finance are taking place on 26 January. The Work Programme for 2023/24 is largely complete and will be presented at the February Board meeting for adoption. The CEO also congratulated John Mills for becoming a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute.
- *Property* – lease negotiations with the Friends of the Cotswolds is reaching its conclusion. An offer has been made to them to vacate the property early. The team has visited the new workspaces at Robinswood Hill, Greystones Farm and Cotswold Business Centre.
- *CEO annual leave* – the CEO will be out of the country between 24 March and 16 April 2023. James Webb will deputise during the period and will act as the first point of contact for the Chair, Vice-Chair and Board Members.
- *Priority for the meeting* – the final draft version of the Management Plan (2023-25) is the main item agenda, ahead of seeking formal Board adoption next month. Adequate time should also be given to the two confidential matters (under item 15).
- Comments – regarding national developments, CW enquired about the status of ELM, with GH adding his concerns around wildlife conservation (should ambition be weakened). Mark Connelly gave an overview of the current picture and it was agreed that an update to Board in February would be useful.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – prepare a paper to go to Board in February to cover key national strategies impacting on the CNL.

5. OPERATIONAL AND FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

The HoF gave a summarised overview of the current financial performance of the organisation, including: projected year-end reserves position; general fund; projects and contributions to core. She also informed the Committee that the draft budget and

mid-term financial plan will be reviewed at next week's Finance and Governance Sub-Committee. Thereafter it will be presented to the Board in February for adoption. The CEO gave a brief update on the KPIs and said that the Farming in Protected Landscapes KPI would be covered under item 7.

- Comments – CW asked about the detail behind the social media KPI and EMS congratulated the whole team on delivering a solid financial performance in very challenging times.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – Alana Hopkins to contact Clive Webster to discuss the social media KPI.

6. MANAGEMENT PLAN 2023-25

Simon Smith gave a summary of the work and consultations completed since the previous Executive Committee meeting. One of the key priorities was to demonstrate a clear distinction between the Management Plan and Local Plans. He also explained that not all the SEA, HRA and EIA assessments will be completed in time for the February Board meeting, so Members will be asked to adopt the Plan subject to any further recommendations from those assessments.

- Comments – there was an extensive discussion between all Members. Main items included: the Vision, the importance of the Board's climate-related work; links to the national picture; biodiversity net gain targets; improved approach to external engagement. The Chair drew the debate to a close by suggesting that part of our future work is to agree a much shorter vision for the organisation, which will sit alongside the current vision for the place. He congratulated Simon Smith on developing an excellent Plan.
- Decision – the Executive Committee endorsed the Plan for Board adoption.
- Actions Arising – (1) provide any final feedback by 6 February, (2) review and update the Vision statement for 2023.

7. FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

Mark Connelly introduced the item by covering four points: (1) Iris McCormick is leaving the team to take up an exciting new role at the RAU, (2) there is the potential for a one-year extension to the project – not confirmed by Defra, (3) Trudy Harrison MP is planning to visit the CNL next week to look at some FiPL projects, (4) there has been a change to Countryside Stewardship rates of pay, that has led to some additional calculations being required and the likelihood of renewing contracts with some grant beneficiaries. Although this will be difficult to manage in the short term, it is good news for farmers and land managers. He finished by stating that there were no concerns over the payment of grants this financial year (as per the KPI) and that Q4 will get it back on track before year-end.

- Comments – members had a good discussion on the changes to Countryside Stewardship rates. CW asked if there was a map available to see how spread out the projects were across the CNL. Scott Brown replied by saying that it was well spread and that the team will present a map of projects when at the February Board meeting.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – none.

8. CLIMATE ACTION

Mike Elliott gave an overview of the paper, summarising that the previous few months have been focused on internal engagement, and finalising both the technical and layman's guide to the Small World Consulting report (both will be complete within the next month). The next step will be to use these tools to engage externally, by running various visioning workshops, to help inform the next Management Plan (2025-30) amongst other benefits.

- Comments – GH led the main discussion point about the impacts of ash tree dieback and future woodland creation. Mark Connelly gave an informed response about the current situation, including felling, restocking and natural regeneration. This has, of course, led to concerns over future tree stocks.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – none.

9. PROJECTS AND FUNDRAISING

James Webb gave a detailed introduction, focusing on how the role has involved over the past three years. Highlights from the paper included: the current recruitment of a New to Nature trainee (one of 70 roles across the country); the continued impressive delivery from the Everyone's Evenlode team; outdoor learning activity; Caring for the Cotswolds and a summary of recent bids. He summarised the CNL team's work in this area as *"delivering outputs, attracting investment and improving visibility"*.

- Comments – The Chair congratulated James and the team for their excellent work over the period.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – none.

10. PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

John Mills introduced the paper, saying that some of what he had to cover had already been covered in previous items. He went on to give the Committee an insight into the team's very high performance against the KPI of providing substantive responses to planning applications. He wisely said that this has triggered conversations around optimal use of resources and employee time. John also demonstrated the Board's influencing role in the A417 road scheme, housing developments and quarry operations. He also ensures due time and consideration is given to liaising with local authority partners on their Local Plan consultations. The current priority is responding to the National Planning Policy Framework consultation.

- Comments – it was noted by all Members that the level of expertise and influencing is to be commended.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – none.

11. WELLBEING AND INCLUSION

The paper was taken as read

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

12. A417 MISSING LINK

The paper was taken as read

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

13. GLORIOUS COTSWOLDS GRASSLANDS

Simon Smith updated the Executive Committee on another record breaking year, delivered by a skilled and expert team. The current priority is to start, and then deliver, the three-year biodiversity net gain project, funded by National Highways' designated funds programme, and in partnership with the National Trust.

- Comments – EMS asked if the team made follow up visits to check that the wildflower creation/restoration has worked. Simon Smith confirmed that this is part of their normal work programme and will become even more important with the BNG project. The CEO congratulated Simon on his detailed approach to finances and risk, when evaluating the BNG funding.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report and look forward to their Board presentation in February.
- Actions Arising – none

14. TRAILS, ACCESS AND VOLUNTEERING

Becky Jones gave an overview, including: (1) the Cotswold Way National Trail additional funds, (2) the Bathscapes project nearing completion, (3) the National Grid VIP project, (4) progress with the Removing Barriers capital funded projects, (5) support given to access related designated funds.

- Comments – GH asked about the recent issues in Dartmoor NPA with regard to Right to Roam. Should consideration be given to the Board having a position? After discussion, it was agreed that a CNL Board position wasn't required at this time. EMS informed the Committee that he has started the process of succession planning, ahead of stepping down as the Chair of CTAP.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – none.

15. CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS

The Executive Committee, CEO and HoF discussed two separate confidential items.

16. FORWARD PLANNING

- The agenda for the February Board Meeting was noted.

17. OTHER BUSINESS

- None

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 23 May 2023, 10am-1pm at GWT Robinswood Hill Country Park, Reservoir Road, Gloucester, GL4 6SX.

The Meeting commenced at 10:00am and closed at 1:15pm.

Chair