

MEETING OF
THE COTSWOLDS CONSERVATION BOARD
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM MEETINGS

TUESDAY 25 MAY 2021

Present

Brendan McCarthy (BM) (Chairman)	Rebecca Charley (RC) (Vice-Chair)
David Broad (DB)	Cate Le Grice Mack (CGM)
Ed Macalister-Smith (EMS)	Paul Crossley (PC)
Amanda Davis (AD)	Clive Webster (CW)
Graham Hopkins (GH)	

Also in Attendance

Andy Parsons (Chief Executive)
Ann Wyatt (Head of Finance)
Alana Hopkins (Communications Lead)
Mark Connelly (Land Management Lead)
Benjamin Dent (BD) - observing

1. INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

- Apologies – apologies were received from Mike Dean and Norman Kay.
- Introductions and announcements – the Chairman welcomed Members to the Meeting and gave an update on the Secretary of State Board appointments. He informed the Committee that the Board Meeting and Annual General Meeting in June will be held at the Baptist Church in Cirencester and the July Strategy Day will now be held virtually.
- Declarations of interest – no interests were declared.
- Public questions – there were no public questions.

2. MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING – 24 FEBRUARY 2021

- Decision - resolved that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee Meeting held on 24 February 2021 be approved as a correct record.
- Matters Arising – none.
- Actions Arising – the Comms Officer will continue to work on Google Analytics data, especially as it is a requirement of the Gateways post-project reporting.

3. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING – 24 MARCH 2021

- The Executive Committee noted the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 24 March 2021. A grammatical error on p.5 will be corrected.

4-8. APPROVAL AND SUBMISSION OF ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) 2020/21

The Head of Finance introduced Items 4-8 and invited comments from the Executive Committee.

- Comments – EMS suggested that the Board’s commitment to equality and diversity should be recorded in the Annual Governance Framework. There was a discussion about preferred suppliers and managing contracts.
- Decision – the Committee approved the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2020//21. It was agreed that the new Finance and Governance Sub-Committee will oversee the monitoring of suppliers and contracts.
- Actions Arising – update the Annual Governance Framework to record the Board’s work on equality and diversity.

9. REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chief Executive briefed the Committee on the outline plans for the Board’s Strategy Day on 6 July, which will now be held virtually. He also mentioned that the Voluntary Wardens will be leading three walks during the summer for Board Members, with a maximum of 15 people on each walk.

- Comments – although disappointed, the Committee understood the reasons for holding the Strategy Day virtually. They expressed caution with attempting a hybrid of face-to-face and virtual as this hasn’t, from experience, worked well in the past. It was also suggested that the title of ‘Strategy Day’ should be replaced with something else.
- Decision – it was agreed to hold the day virtually and to contract the professional services of a company specialising in virtual meeting facilitation. Board Members could be offered the Board’s office premises in Northleach if they had concerns about internet connectivity.
- Actions Arising – get a note out to all Board Members, Employees and Volunteers to give more details about the 6 July.

10. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE (INC. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS)

The Head of Finance introduced the agenda item.

- Comments – CGM congratulated the Head of Finance on the clarity of reporting and this was supported by all Members. There was discussion on the improved reserves position, acknowledging that whilst a ‘target’ is necessary there may be occasion when the reserves need to be utilised, regardless of whether they have reached the target figure.
- Decision – resolved that the paper was noted by the Executive Committee.
- Actions Arising – none.

11. OUR VISION FOR THE COTSWOLDS

The Chairman and Chief Executive introduced the item, giving thanks to the Vision Task and Finish Group that have been meeting since December 2020. Special mention was given to the work of the Communications Officer in producing the final version.

- Comments – there was significant discussion about the Vision, with Members having varying views on priorities. Many of the important points raised will form part of the thinking of, and development of, the next Management Plan for the period 2023-28 (which will be the first part of the journey in achieving our longer term Vision). All agreed that it was a high quality and inspirational statement that should be fully supported.

- Decision - resolved that the Vision should be presented to the June Board meeting for adoption.
- Actions Arising – none.

12. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs) 2021/22

The Chief Executive introduced the item, outlining the changes in the headline KPIs for 2021/22.

- Comments – GH suggested that the wording for KPI2 should be amended to ‘Process and Method’ improvements. CW reminded the Committee not to lose sight of ‘diversity’ when considering public engagement as part of KPI4. BD stated that KPI3b about statutory consultee status was an output rather than an outcome but acknowledged it may be an appropriate measure for this year. CW questioned how effective the Board is in its role as consultee and felt that the Planning and Landscape Lead’s role should be more focused on proactive not reactive activity. CGM felt that the Board focused on providing value-add to Local Planning Authorities and tries to avoid duplication of effort.
- Decision – resolved that the proposed KPIs should be presented to the June Board meeting for adoption.
- Actions Arising – none.

13. WORKING AND STEERING GROUPS

The Chief Executive gave an overview of the priorities for the various Working Groups, Steering Groups and Sub-Committee.

- Comments – CW had a concern about how the work of the Planning and Infrastructure Working (PIWG) Group was framed. He felt the focus should be at a landscape scale rather than getting involved in the detail of responding to individual planning applications. The Chairman agreed with the points made by CW and suggested that this was worthy of further discussion at the next PIWG meeting.
- Decision – resolved that the recommended groups should be taken forward into 2021/22 and that nominations for membership of three groups will be sought from Board Members.
- Actions Arising – email all Board Members to seek nominations ahead of the June AGM.

14. ANNUAL REVIEW

The Communications Officer gave an overview of the key topics to be included in the Annual Review for 2020/21.

- Comments – a question was raised as to whether the review would be printed or digital only. It was confirmed that it would only be available in digital/PDF format.
- Decision – resolved that the range of topics was appropriate and demonstrated the key achievements of the year.
- Actions Arising – none.

15. CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

The Land Management Lead gave an update on progress in producing the Board’s revised Climate Change Strategy, which will go out for external consultation before

seeking adoption at the October Board meeting. He asked whether, in light of the growing pressures around climate change (and in particular woodland creation and low carbon energy), the Board should accept some level of harm to the natural beauty of the AONB or continue to protect its primary purpose of designation.

- Comments – this led to really good and in-depth discussion and debate, with all Committee Members participating. Topics covered included development standards; carbon capture; how current energy causes harm, e.g. air pollution; protecting the visual amenity; preserving vs. conserving; accepting the need; the merits of becoming a lobbying/ campaigning organisation; the need to access ‘experts’ to help inform the debate. It was agreed that we should seek to find solutions in line with our purposes and that of our designation. With more low carbon energy and woodland creation schemes likely over the coming years, it is important that the Board continues to assess them on a case-by-case basis – evaluating both the merits and the risks of these schemes. The Chairman concluded by stating that this was a good piece of work (albeit still in progress) and encouraged Members to feedback any further thoughts by the deadline.
- Decision – resolved that the update report be noted by the Committee.
- Actions Arising – Committee Members to feedback further comments to the Land Management Lead by Friday 4 June.

16. FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

The Chief Executive and Land Management Lead gave a verbal update on the current situation, and the programme’s linkages to the Glover Review and future ELM.

- Comments – the Committee were supportive of the Board’s involvement in the three-year programme. Members were asked to keep the information confidential.
- Decision – resolved that the verbal update was noted by the Executive Committee.
- Actions Arising – update all Board Members once more detail becomes available from Defra.

17. EXTERNAL BIDS

In the absence of the Partnerships and Fundraising Lead, the Chief Executive gave a short introduction to the item.

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

18. FORWARD PLANNING

- (a) Draft Agenda – June 2021 Board Meeting – noted.
- (b) Draft Agenda – June 2021 Annual General Meeting – noted.
- (c) Draft Agenda – September 2021 Executive Committee – noted.

19. OTHER BUSINESS

- AD asked that the Chairs and Lead Officers of the various Working and Steering Groups hear each other’s updates at future Executive Committee meetings when the new agenda format is introduced, to encourage cross-working.

- CW mentioned that Cotswold District Council are investigating the possibility of having a stand at the Moreton-in-Marsh one-day show in September and thought it may be an opportunity for the Board to partner with them.

20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 14 September 2021 - 10.00am to 1.00pm. Meeting location to be confirmed.

The Meeting commenced at 10.00am and closed at 1.08pm

Chairman