

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

**HELD AT GREYSTONES FARM, GREYSTONES LANE, BOURTON-ON-THE-WATER,
GLOUCESTERSHIRE, GL54 2EN**

TUESDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2024, 10:00am

Present

Rebecca Charley (Vice-Chair, acting
Chair for this meeting)
Sue Crawford
Andy Graham
Graham Hopkins

Juliet Layton
Cate Le Grice-Mack
Martin Mitchell
Ben Stokes

Also in Attendance

Andy Parsons (AP)
Magda Glanowska (MG)
Simon Smith (SS)
Mark Connelly (MC)
Scott Brown (SB)
John Mills (JM)

Fred Constantine Smith (FCS)
James Webb (JW)
Becky Waite (CEO Designate)
Amanda Davis (observing)
John Swanton (observing)

1. INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

- Apologies – apologies were received from Brendan McCarthy (Chair). Paul Crossley wasn't present but no apology had been received.
- Introductions and announcements – introductions were made around the table for Becky Waite's benefit.
- Declarations of interest – no interests were declared.
- Public questions – there were no public questions.

2. MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING – 21 MAY 2024

- Decision - resolved that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee Meeting held on 21 May 2024 be approved as a correct record.
- Actions Arising – all actions arising were either completed or in progress, the CEO ran through a quick verbal update.

3. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING – 16 JULY 2024

- The Executive Committee noted the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 16 July 2024.
- There was a brief explanation around the recruitment of a new CEO, following a request for such from BS. A second discussion ensued around the importance of a connected, holistic approach to rail travel across the Cotswolds (following a meeting GH had with Oxfordshire/GloUCEstershire Community Rail Partnership. This led to an observation that the connections between rail travel and wellbeing and inclusion are also important.

4. REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chief Executive gave a verbal update on key activity since the previous meeting:

Team Members

- Helen Komor started as our Outdoor Learning Officer at the beginning of September. This role is part funded by the Ernest Cook Trust for 3-years.
- Alice Chapman, Climate Action Co-ordinator (Graduate), starts on 7 October.

Recruitment and induction for new Chief Executive:

- The Chief Executive offered thanks to the CNL employee team for their input to the recruitment process.
- Before Becky Waite takes up the role at the beginning of December she will have attended the following meetings:
 - Gloucestershire LNP Board
 - CNL Executive Committee
 - CNL Board
 - NLA Lead Officers
- The Chief Executive is currently putting together a handover pack.
- James Webb will cover the interim period between AP leaving and Becky Waite starting on 4 December.

Board Members

- Defra have been in contact to start the process for the 2025 recruitment of CNL's Secretary of State vacancies (minimum of three). In addition, those with terms ending in 2025 are:
 - Ellie Fujioka (1 term)
 - Brendan Costelloe (2 terms)
 - Graham Hopkins (2 terms)
 - Katherine Chesson (1 term)
- Board Member inductions have taken place for:
 - Chris Brant (Cherwell DC)
 - Martin Smith (Wiltshire Council)
 - Liz Reason (PG2)
 - Andrea Graham (Co-opted)
 - Doug Huyler (Co-opted)

Property Matters

- Office space
 - The Chief Executive is currently in conversation with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust about making the current 'licence to use' a more substantive lease agreement. This would include converting the café space at Greystones Farm into workspace for the team, whilst maintaining the current desks upstairs (potentially up to a total of 17 desks) and the hot desking arrangement at RWH.
 - However, there are a few things to be clarified before this can proceed.
 - Timing is important because some of the Defra uplift capital has been set aside to create the workspace, and this must be allocated this FY.

- Barn storage
 - A 12-month licence on National Trust barns at Sherborne has been signed. Notice will be given on our current barn storage facilities.
- Comments – a discussion followed, prompted by GH drawing attention to a recent article by The Guardian labelling National Park Boards in a very negative light. A discussion followed around the importance for the CNL Board to continue work to increase the diversity of its own employee team, Board member cohort, and continuing to work with a farming community which is already active in regenerative agriculture and nature friendly practice. SC also observed that the size of CNL's Board is unusually large, and asked if it would be possible to suggest to Defra a reduction in the size of the Board.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the update.
- Actions Arising – (1) promote the upcoming SoS Board vacancies to a wide network, (2) consider speaking to Defra about Board size and membership.

5. FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL OVERVIEW

The Head of Finance (HoF) gave a summary of the Q1 financial position 2024/25. She reassured the Board that there are no concerns, and explained that the main differences identified are timings-related and are resolved. The latest reforecast is complete and although there are significant changes from the budget, those are all explained and discussed in detail with the Finance and Governance Committee.

The Chief Executive also gave an update on the changing situation with the funding from National Highways for the Biodiversity Improvements funding (Designated Funds), which is now just a one-year programme rather than the initial three years that was planned. We are currently seeking financial compensation for the work we have completed in Year 2 (current FY). SS added the reassurance that there are currently three ideas being worked through to minimise the in-year risk and that his confidence on the Grasslands team is such that he feels their potential to remain sustainable is robust. JS observed that this update was very helpful and thanked the team members for their efforts on the project so far.

The Chief Executive gave an overview of the Key Performance Indicators 2024/25.

- Comments – following a question from BS about how the KPIs are established and linked to the Business Plan Framework, a brief discussion ensued to explain the process and offer reassurance that the two are closely related and work alongside each other.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – none.

6. MANAGEMENT PLAN 2025-30

SS offered an opportunity to review and discuss version 2 of the draft Plan, before it goes out for consultation. He gave a thorough update about the details/ response rate for the first round of consultation, and alerted Executive Committee members to the next round of timings.

- Comments – GH asked about when the guidance to the National Planning Policy Framework from Defra would be expected. JM replied in the next two months. The Chief Executive took the opportunity to congratulate SS on the Big Chalk

Conference – the culmination of many years of work leading the coordination of the Big Chalk project, and a very well attended event, already receiving great feedback.

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

7. FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES (FiPL)

MC and SB provided a report on key activity and updates. They offered a reminder of key details around FiPL, including the extension of some team roles up to 2027. MC clarified that though FiPL roles will continue into the future for a limited time, grants will cease in 2025. There was an update on the value of project allocations and the total project values. The next panel meeting will be over the coming days and applications exceed the available funding, so the meeting is expected to be competitive. The legacy of the programme was also highlighted, with new team member, Maria Carter, working on case studies, farm walks, and a conclusion event in February 2025. The FiPL team will also be pulling together an impact report to demonstrate the value of the programme in the Cotswolds.

SB gave an update on the current management of the pipeline.

- Comments – there was a short discussion about the general themes emerging as part of the programme in the Cotswolds, and its possibility to influence in the future in the Cotswolds. There was also comment around how parish CNL Board Members can help promote the legacy of FiPL (MC responding that Board members will be invited to events when and where relevant). There was also an observation that maintaining contact (established as part of FiPL) with the farming community will be very important.
- Decision – The Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – none.

8. CLIMATE ACTION

FCS provided a thorough update on his progress since arriving in post in May 2024. This has been wide ranging, and has including developing relationships with local authorities and stakeholders, data collation, and working to realise the recommendations of the 3Keel report adopted by the Board. The Woodland Opportunity Mapping exercise has been one (complex) area of focus, and the ambition will be to produce something as a result which is novel, and reflects the nature and special qualities of the CNL. He explained his priority towards Christmas will be to establish if the Climate Adaptation Framework from the National Landscapes Association could be effective in the Cotswolds, and to consider where alterations, if any, are required.

- Comments – RC asked if local nature recovery partnership groups were aware of the woodland opportunity mapping project, as they are doing similar work themselves. FCS replied that he is in close liaison with all local authority partners.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – none.

9. PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

JM provided a report on key activities and updates, including an update following the last Planning and Infrastructure Working Group meeting. There was a brief discussion among Executive Committee members about the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) consultation from government.

- Comments – among Executive Committee members, there was a general feeling that the questions asked in the NPPF consultation did not allow respondents to give a full and holistic picture in their responses. Executive Committee members urged JM to answer the questions in the fullest manner possible, in order to address some of the complexities around the issue. There was also a strong feeling that in and around the Cotswolds, new build *quality* (in terms of sustainability, etc.) was at least as important as build *quantity* and this should be reflected in the Board's response. GH also observed that this topic relates to the CNL Renewable Energy Position Statement, especially with respect to the storage of renewable energy (as opposed to its generation) – he felt storage in the Cotswolds would be more appropriate. JS contributed his observation that often new build homes are purchased as second homes, and asks how this can be addressed. JL added that social housing should have more focus, and observed that in the Cotswolds there are at least two great examples of well built, sustainable social housing developments (one in Moreton-in-Marsh).
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.
- Actions Arising – JM to circulate comments on the survey to members of the Executive Committee and the PIWG ahead of submission.

10. PROJECTS AND FUNDRAISING

JW provided a thorough report on key activities and updates, including a review of the current National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) funding streams that the team will be submitting applications, the main one being the £150m 'Connected Landscapes' pot, which will fund up to 20 projects across England. He also briefly talked through the rest of the Projects and Fundraising paper.

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

11. WELLBEING AND INCLUSION

In Nicole Daw's absence the Chief Executive ran briefly through the paper on behalf of Nicole Daw, which provided a report on key activities and updates.

- Comments – AG asked about the scope of the group, observing that the value of wellbeing relies on an approach to it which is holistic and integrated. The Chief Executive explained the operational, tactical and strategic workstreams of the group. SC suggested that the sections of the Management Plan which refer to wellbeing and inclusion could be strengthened and suggested adding a discussion around wellbeing and inclusion in relation to the Management Plan at the next Executive Meeting in January. AD suggested two actions for the Wellbeing and Inclusion Working Group which are detailed below.
- Decision – the Executive Committee noted the report.

- Actions Arising – (1) Wellbeing and Inclusion WG to map out the skills and resources on the full CNL Board, (2) Wellbeing and Inclusion WG to map out how to link those resources to its work and the current climate action work, (3) add Wellbeing and Inclusion links to the Management Plan in the next report to the Executive Committee.

12. TRAILS, ACCESS AND VOLUNTEERING

In Becky Jones' absence, the Chief Executive presented this paper, which provided a report on key activities and updates. Becky and the Chair of CTAP have been sitting on the Funding Formula Review Group, with a view to opening a discussion around how the Cotswold Way National Trail is funded through Natural England. The Trails budgets have not been increasing with inflation and the Cotswold Way is one of only two that pays VAT on costs, thus reducing the budget further. The Chief Executive ran through the rest of the paper which gave an update across the breadth of trails and access activity.

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

13. FORWARD PLANNING

- The draft agenda for the Board meeting on 22 October 2024 was reviewed.

14. OTHER BUSINESS

- There was no other business.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- Tuesday 21 January 2025, 10:00am-1:00pm, Location: Robinswood Hill Country Park, Gloucester.

The Meeting commenced at 10:00am and closed at 12:55pm.

Rebecca Charley
Vice Chair (acting Chair for the meeting)