

**MEETING OF
THE COTSWOLDS CONSERVATION BOARD**

HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM MEETINGS

WEDNESDAY 7 OCTOBER 2020 (10.00am)

Present:

Brendan McCarthy (Chairman)	Rebecca Charley (Vice-Chair)
George Lambrick	Garry King
David Broad	Catherine Le-Grice Mack
Nicholas Bumford	Charles Mathew
Phil Chapman	John Matthews
Brendan Costelloe	David Kerr
Paul Crossley	Dom Morris
Ben Stokes	Liz Hodges
Amanda Davis	Graham Hopkins
Clive Webster	Ed Macalister-Smith
Shaun Parsons	Norman Kay
Ben Dent	Sue Crawford

Also in Attendance:

Andy Parsons (Chief Executive)
Ann Wyatt (Head of Finance)
Alana Hopkins (Communications Officer)
Simon Smith (Development and Special Projects Officer)

1. INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

- **Apologies** - apologies were received from Nigel Colston, Mollie Groom, Mike Dean, Liz Eyre and Adrian Hardman.
- **Introductions and announcements** - the Chairman welcomed Members to the Meeting. He welcomed the three new Secretary of State Board Members, although at this point in the meeting only Ben Dent was in attendance.

The Chairman also welcomed Margaret Reid, Head Warden of the Cotswolds Voluntary Wardens, who will attend future Board Meetings to gain a wider understanding of the work of the Board.

- **Declarations of interest** - none.
- **Public questions** - there were no public questions.

2. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING - 24 JUNE 2020

- **Decision** - resolved that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board Meeting held on 24 June 2020 be approved as a correct record, with the addition of the following text at item 16 (Future Landscapes) – *“George Lambrick suggested that some of the points raised were of strategic importance and that the Board could give more thought to how it may be possible to take this forward”*.

- Matters Arising – Amanda Davis commented that the work of Gloucestershire County Council in tackling Ash Dieback should also be noted.

3. MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING OF 6 AUG 2020

The Board noted the Minutes that dealt with the matter of the Kingfisher Trail 2021.

4. MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - 9 SEPTEMBER 2020

The Board noted the Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 September 2020.

5. REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chief Executive presented a review of key actions since the last meeting and also set out priorities for the meeting. In particular the Chief Executive gave an in-depth summary of the Board's continued involvement in the A417 road scheme. This included the collaborative work involving Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (GWT), National Trust (NT) and Highways England (HE) as well as an overview of how the Board will respond to the upcoming supplementary consultation.

- Comments – with regard to the A417, Cate Le Grice-Mack asked how the increase in vehicle movements and impacts on other AONBs were being assessed. George Lambrick responded by saying that the judicial review of the Road Investment Strategy, due to take place this autumn, will be considering this exact point. Ed Macalister-Smith raised concerns over the crossings (with regard to access for all types of users) and the Chief Executive responded by informing the Board that a Bridges Brief covering these concerns (written by the Board, GWT and NT) is being prepared and will be submitted to HE.
- Decision – the Board acknowledged the tight timescales involved in responding to the A417 consultation and agreed that the Steering Group, Chairman and Vice-Chair should work together to finalise the submission.
- Actions Arising – circulate the collaborative response to Highways England following the four workshop sessions to Board Members.

6. Q1 FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL REVIEW

The Head of Finance introduced the changes to the financial reporting and said that this was work in progress with further improvements being planned for Q2. The financial challenges of Covid-19 are being well managed by the team but the cautious approach will continue for the remainder of the financial year. The Chief Executive gave an overview of the new Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

- Comments – Board Members praised the new financial reporting and welcomed the clear reporting summary of the KPIs.
- Decision - resolved that the Board note the efforts being made to ensure the Board's finances are being well managed during uncertain times,
- Actions Arising – None.

7. COVID-19 RISK REGISTER

The Head of Finance introduced the new Covid-19 Risk Register and explained how this would be reported to the Executive Committee going forward.

- Comments – there was a general discussion about how Board Members continue to interact with each other, and the team, during Covid-19. It was accepted that, although Zoom meetings were effective, the benefits of face-to-face engagement was something that the Members missed. The WhatsApp group certainly helps but it isn't the full answer.
- Decision – resolved that the Board notes the new Covid-19 Risk Register.
- Actions Arising – consider holding a small meeting to brainstorm ideas for how Board Members can continue to contribute to the work of the Board outside of meetings, working groups, etc.

8. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The Communications Officer presented the Communications Strategy 2020-23, highlighting that it was, to some extent, framed by the Glover Review and focused on the new brand; improving our digital activity; engaging with new audiences and fundraising (in collaboration with the Partnerships and Fundraising Officer).

- Comments – Board Members congratulated the Communications Officer, recognising it as vastly improved compared to previous versions. Margaret Reid was encouraged by the inclusion of the work of the Voluntary Wardens, which underlined the improved relationships. Garry King emphasised the role of Board Members and their own social networks. The Chairman agreed but also emphasised that Members shouldn't feel obliged to do this and there are other ways to support raising the profile. There was a lot of discussion around capacity; priorities; raising our profile (which is a means to an end, not the end itself) and credibility. Board Members agreed that more could be done around listening and responding to people who live and work in the National Landscape, e.g. what's important to them. Baseline data is scarce and surveys/ engagement are resource heavy. One potential way forward is to partner with educational establishments, with the Countryside and Community Research Unit, RAU and Oxford Brookes all being mentioned.
- Decision - resolved that the Board adopts the Communications Strategy.
- Actions Arising – consider how to gain feedback and insights from individuals, communities and businesses, in order to fully assess future priorities.

9. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

The Chief Executive presented the proposed schedule of meetings, to start in 2020/21.

- Comments – Board Members were happy with the new timetable. The Chairman requested that meetings be moved from Wednesdays to Tuesdays and the Board were in agreement with this.
- Decision – resolved that the Board adopts the new schedule of meetings from 2020/21.
- Actions Arising – resend the dates for the 2020/21 meetings, with meetings being held on Tuesdays.

10. LONE WORKING POLICY

The Chief Executive presented the new Lone Working Policy and explained that this was part of the overall programme of improvements to the Board's health and safety management.

- Comments – Margaret Reid welcomed it and said that the Parish Wardens, in particular, should now be made aware of the policy.
- Decision - resolved that the Board adopts the new Policy.
- Actions Arising – ensure the policy is communicated to all Voluntary Wardens.

11. BUSINESS PLAN FRAMEWORK

The Chief Executive gave an update on the progress against the Business Plan Framework 2020-23. It highlighted the significant progress that has been made in year one, despite the Covid-19 restrictions and challenges. It also highlighted the need to move forward on the health, wellbeing and social inclusion agenda, something that will be considered at the next Executive Committee meeting.

- Comments – Members were encouraged by the progress and appreciated the simple, visual picture of the Board's key activities.
- Decision – resolved that the Board notes the progress.
- Actions Arising – none.

12. NATURE RECOVERY

The Development and Special Projects Officer gave an interesting and enlightening presentation on Nature Recovery – at a local, regional and national level.

- Comments – the presentation prompted an excellent discussion, covering matters such as planning and the potential opportunities presented by Biodiversity Net Gain and Biodiversity Credits; mapping holdings that are already making a difference; landowner and land manager engagement; the importance of agricultural practices and looking to influence ELM. Thought will need to be given to how we would work with other partners such as FWAG, LEAF and NFU.
- Decision – resolved that the Board notes the in-depth and ongoing work in this area. All agreed that this will be a central theme to much of the Board's activities over the coming years.
- Actions Arising – none.

13. GENERAL UPDATES

The Chief Executive informed the Board that the National Association for AONB's bid to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, and the Board's own bid, were both unsuccessful. The competition was very high and the fund hugely over-subscribed.

- Comments – Cate Le Grice-Mack asked if we could learn from the successful bids to help with future funding bids.
- Decision - resolved that the Board notes the general updates of activity.
- Actions Arising – none.

14. COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

The annual summary was presented to the Board

- Comments – the Chairman mentioned the large amount of support and complimentary comments for the work of our Planning and Landscape Officer.
- Decision - resolved that the Board notes the annual summary.
- Actions Arising – none.

15. FORWARD PLANNING

The draft agenda for the November Executive Committee Meeting was noted.

16. OTHER BUSINESS

- The following resolution was passed:
 - The Chairman explained to the meeting the arrangements with the Company's bankers, Lloyds Bank plc ("the Bank"), whereby the Bank be instructed to collect and credit to any account of the Company credits of whatever nature payable to any of the payees (or their respective trading names) listed in Section 1 and the Continuation Sheet. A draft indemnity to the Bank was produced to the meeting and approved. It was resolved that any one director be authorised to sign the indemnity and to advise the Bank of any payee to be added to or deleted from the indemnity from time to time.
- Liz Hodges and Amanda Davis raised a similar concern that some members of the public were not appreciating 'what nature is all about' and that they have an expectation of a more manicured countryside.
- Nick Bumford asked that the Chief Executive pass on the Board Members' 'thanks' to all team members for their continued hard work and dedication.

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 9 December 2020 - 10.00am to 1.00pm, via Zoom.

The Meeting commenced at 10.00am and closed at 1.00pm

Chairman