

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Summary: To (1) provide a high level summary of activity since the last Board Meeting in October 2020; (2) outline the key decisions/ discussions required from this Meeting.

Recommendation: That the Board notes the report

Reviewed by the Executive Committee: Yes / No

If yes, the Committee's comments: N/A

Report by: Andy Parsons - Chief Executive

PRIORITY ACTIVITY SINCE THE OCTOBER BOARD MEETING (not recorded in other papers)

1. Team

- The team met to review operations (employees and volunteers) during the second national lockdown. The key decisions were:
 - Rural skills courses programmed in November and December were postponed. The Rural Skills Officer is looking to reschedule before the financial year-end.
 - All Voluntary Warden activity, with the exception of parish wardening, were stopped until the restrictions ease. The Glorious Cotswolds Grasslands volunteer work parties also ceased.
 - The Partnerships and Fundraising Lead liaised with the PR consultant working with us on the Kingfisher Trail to agree how we keep the momentum going in finding hosts for the sculptures at a time when many businesses will be closed.
 - Employees continued to conduct site visits as necessary to fulfil their work requirements.
 - The office continued to be manned by one person each day, Monday – Thursday, to carry out administrative tasks.
 - The Communications Lead updated the various digital channels.

2. Engagements (Chief Executive)

- Continued to attend meetings and workshops regarding the A417 Missing Link road scheme. The Board's consultation response is included within Item 13.
- 8 Oct – attended the Oxfordshire Environment Board meeting.
- 13 Oct – met with Tom Moat, Natural England, to discuss their report to government on the Glover Review.
- 20 Oct – with colleagues, Board Members and Cotswold Tourism, attended a workshop to start the development of bookable rural skills experiences (facilitated by Chris Brant of Unmissable England).
- 22 Oct – facilitated a workshop with the Board's Parish Council Members to review their role and identify ways of increasing our visibility and influence at a local/ community level.
- 26 Oct – had my Q2 performance review, with the Chairman and Vice-Chair.

- 29 Oct – attended the artist’s panel meeting for the Kingfisher Trail. Five artists are on the panel and are helping with approaching and selecting the remaining artists to paint the 21 sculptures.
- 3 Nov – with Anna Field (Glorious Cotswolds Grasslands Project Officer) met with Severn Trent Water to discuss ways in which we could become a ‘strategic partner’ in their *Great Big Nature Boost* programme.
- 5 Nov – attended the official launch of Natural England’s *Nature Recovery Network Delivery Partnership*.
- 6 Nov – attended the first NAAONB Collaboration Advisory Group meeting.
- 19 Nov – attended the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership Board Meeting.
- 21 Nov – appeared on BBC Radio Gloucestershire to talk about Ourboretum.
- 26 Nov – attended the NAAONB ‘Collaboration Group’ meeting.
- 30 Nov – attended a Defra meeting for all National Park and AONB Lead Officers. There were two key discussion points:
 - *Future Farming* – this will be discussed at Item 12.
 - *National Landscape Service* – the Secretary of State has stated a clear intention to set up a new statutory body – the National Landscape Service (NLS), a recommendation from the Landscapes Review. Its remit will likely include: to be a national champion and to have a stronger voice in Whitehall; to develop strategic programmes and increase collaboration between national landscapes; to leverage additional funding. Establishing a NLS will require legislation so it is unlikely to be operational until at least 2022. There are many current unknowns, e.g. size of organisation; impact on local service delivery and local governance, and Defra has encouraged further discussions over the coming months. We can expect a statement from the Minister in the coming weeks.
- 30 Nov – attended a Partnership Board Meeting for *Discover England’s Walking Trails* (a Discover England Fund project).
- 1 Dec – attended the SW National Landscapes Forum.

OVERVIEW OF THIS BOARD MEETING – 9 December 2020

3. The key items of focus at this meeting are:
- Item 5 – to review our financial position at the end of Q2 and to discuss how the second national lockdown may impact on our year-end position.
 - Item 6 – after much informal discussion around the subjects of health, wellbeing and social inclusion, the Board is asked to approve the proposal to set up a new working group focused on these ever more important subjects.
 - Item 8 – Members will be asked to adopt proposed amendments to the Board’s Financial and Contract Regulations.
 - Item 9 – the Budget Assumptions (2021/22) paper will give an early insight ahead of full budget adoption in March 2021.
 - Item 10 – the Partnerships and Fundraising Lead will give a presentation on how the *Caring for the Cotswolds* grant scheme has evolved during the past year.
 - Item 12 – the Land Management Officer will summarise, and invite discussion on, the recently published Agricultural Transition Plan.