

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Summary: To (1) provide a high level summary of activity since the last Board meeting and (2) outline the key decisions/ discussions required from this meeting.

Recommendation: That the Board notes the report.

Report by: Andy Parsons - Chief Executive

KEY ACTIVITY (not included in other papers)

1. National and Regional Activity

Levelling Up and Regeneration Act

- The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 ('the LURA') became law on 26 December 2023. The measures that are set out in the LURA are wide ranging, with potentially significant implications for the planning system. This includes significant new measures that relate explicitly to National Landscapes.
- See *Appendix A* for further details.

Protected Landscapes – Targets and Outcomes Framework

- On 31 January Defra published the Protected Landscapes' Targets and Outcomes Framework, as part of the government's announcement one year on since the publication of the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP).
- The Framework isn't intended to cover all areas of our work, they are specifically linked to three EIP outcomes:
 - Goal 1: Thriving plants and wildlife
 - Goal 2: Mitigating and adapting to climate change
 - Goal 3: Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment
- The targets are for the place, not the Protected Landscapes body/organisation.
- See *Appendix B* for the new targets.

Defra Funding

- *Water Restoration Fund* (£5m in 2023/24) - the team have submitted a bid into the Water Restoration Fund to improve the water environment and water quality in the Sherborne Brook and River Windrush (National Trust owned land). We are still awaiting a final decision but, sadly, it appears that the full allocation will go to National Park land acquisition proposals.
- *Capital Funding* (£10m in 2024/25) – the 10 National Parks will receive £5m and the 34 National Landscapes will receive £5m. We have had confirmation that the CNL Board will be allocated £383,000. The team are currently discussing how best to utilise the funding to further the aims and objectives of the CNL Management Plan.

National Landscapes – brand rollout

- The Chair, Vice Chair, CEO and Alana Hopkins attended a very successful National Landscapes launch event in November.

New National Park Designation

- As previously mentioned, Natural England have been tasked with completing a review and recommendation for Defra, identifying a preferred area for consideration to be England's next National Park. The area may currently be designated or undesignated. The recommendation is due in summer 2024.

National Parks' Climate Change and Energy Group

- The CEO now attends these meetings, chaired by Richard Leafe (CEO of the Lake District NPA). At its most recent meeting the CEO presented on the work the CNL Board has been doing with 3Keel and the pathway to net zero.

2. Team, Board Members and Volunteers

Team

- *Starters:*
 - Jonathan Rogers, Management Accountant (Dec 2023)
 - Ellie Robinson, FiPL Admin Assistant (Dec 2023)
- *Leavers:*
 - Mandy Pressland, Finance and Operational Support Officer (Nov 2023)
 - Harvey Sherwood, Glorious Cotswold Grasslands team (Feb 2024)
 - Heidi Gibbs, FiPL Farm Engagement Officer (Feb 2024)
- *Recruitment:*
 - Interviews for the Climate Action Lead took place on 26 January. We received 41 applications and interviewed five candidates. Andrea Martens has been appointed and will be joining the team in mid-March.
 - A Glorious Cotswold Grasslands Programme Assistant is currently being recruited.

Board Members

- Two candidates put themselves forward for the Parish Group 5 vacancy. Following a vote, Ray Sanderson (Malmesbury Town Council) has been elected to the Board.
- There will be a minimum of four Secretary of State vacancies for the 2024 recruitment round.

KEY ENGAGEMENTS (Chief Executive)

- 14 Nov – attended the CPRE Gloucestershire Annual Awards event.
- 28 Nov – participated in the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership (GLNP) 'all partners' session and the Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester.
- 30 Nov and 30 Jan – attended the GLNP Board meetings.
- 6 Dec – gave a presentation on the work of the CNL team to Ratley and Upton Parish Council.
- 8 Dec – attended a grants panel meeting to review applications into Cotswold District Council's Rural England Prosperity Fund.
- 8 Jan – attended a Green Finance webinar, hosted by the new Nature Based Solutions team at the National Landscapes Association.
- 10 Jan – with James Webb, Becky Jones and Simon Smith, met with senior representatives from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to discuss an exciting new programme called 'Strategic Initiative for Protected Landscapes'. The programme is scheduled to launch in April and James Webb will lead on developing our application.
- 11 Jan – chaired the Management Board meeting of the Cotswolds Plus Local Visitor Economy Partnership.
- 30 Jan – met with Andy Graham, Board Member and Leader at West Oxfordshire District Council, to discuss ways in which the CNL Board can work more collaboratively with local authorities at all levels.
- 31 Jan – attended Publica's 'Employee Relations' training.
- 9 Feb – met with Camilla Burrows, CEO of Wild Oxfordshire to discuss, amongst other topics, the Evenlode Catchment Partnership and Thames Water.

- A417 Missing Link:
 - 5 Dec – Strategic Stakeholder Panel meeting and site tour.
 - 18 Jan – Environmental Working Group: Construction

OVERVIEW OF THIS BOARD MEETING – 20 FEBRUARY

The key items of focus at this meeting are:

- Item 4 – Rebecca Charley (Vice Chair) will give the Board an overview of the new legislation on Biodiversity Net Gain, which came into force on 12 February.
- Item 5 – Lorna Baggett (Glorious Cotswolds Grasslands team) will provide an update on the Biodiversity Project, funded by National Highways' Designated Funds.
- Item 8(a) – Ben Dent (Board Member), the CEO and Russell Ashfield (3Keel) will present 3Keel's final report on the net zero work, and the Board will be asked to approve the report and its priority objectives.
- Item 8(b) – the CEO will present the Annual Work Programme for 2024/25, and seek Board adoption.
- Item 9(b) – Magda Glanowska (Head of Finance), David Powell (Board Member) and the CEO will present the Operating Budget for 2024/25, and seek Board adoption.
- Item 9(c) – the CEO will present the Risk Management Framework and updated Key Risk Register for Board adoption.

SUPPORTING PAPERS

- Appendix A – Levelling Up and Regeneration Act
- Appendix B – Targets and Outcomes Framework

FEBRUARY 2024