

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. DEFRA Funding

- Defra have confirmed, via a Teams call to all Lead Officers on 1 October, that there will be a 1-year determination for the core grant funding in 2025/26. This will be in line with the current year award (c.£530k).
- The Comprehensive Spending Review (2025) should then lead to a longer 3-year agreement for the Board's core grant.
- There is currently no indication that their current additional funding will be available next financial year, these can be summarised as:
 - Farming in Protected Landscapes grant programme [although resources will be available to (1) administer the close of the programme until October 2025 and (2) to continue farmer and landowner liaison until March 2027];
 - Removing Barriers funding (Access for All);
 - Capital and Revenue Uplift funding.
- Please see Agenda Item 9(b) "process and priorities for setting the 2025/26 budget" for further information on this.

2. Team, Board Members and Volunteers

Team updates (since the last Board meeting):

- *Starters:*
 - Helen Komor – Outdoor Learning Officer, in September.
 - Alice Whitehead – Climate Action Co-ordinator (Graduate), in October.
- *Leavers:*
 - None
- *Chief Executive*
 - Becky Waite has been appointed Chief Executive of the Cotswolds National Landscape Board, and will start on 4 December.
 - James Webb, Partnerships Lead, will cover the interim period.

Board Member updates (since the last Board meeting):

- Defra have been in contact to start the process for the 2025 recruitment of CNL's Secretary of State vacancies (currently 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 District Council)
 - Martin Smith (Wiltshire Council)
 - Liz Reason (Parish Group 2)

- Andrea Graham (Co-opted)
- Doug Huyler (Co-opted)

3. **Property Matters**

Office space – Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

- 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 key matters that need 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.

Office space – Cotswold Business Centre, Upper Rissington

- Notice has been given to the landlord that we will be vacating the office when the lease agreement ends on 31 March 2025.

Barn storage

- A 12-month licence on National Trust barns at Sherborne has been signed. Notice has been given on our current barn storage facilities at Coln and Hampnett, both ending on 31 December 2024.

OVERVIEW OF THIS BOARD MEETING – 16 JULY

The key items of focus at this meeting are:

- Items 4 and 5 – thank you to Nina Stubbington and Mark Connelly for preparing presentations on key and inspirational areas of our work.
- Item 8(a) – to discuss version 2 of the Management Plan 2025-30 ahead of wider consultation with external partners and stakeholders
- Item 8(c) – Mark Connelly will be presenting an updated 'Management of Wild Deer' Position Statement for the Board to review and adopt.
- Item 9(b) – Magda Glanowska will provide an overview of the process and priorities for setting the 2025/26 budget and Board Members are asked to provide their views on the paper, ahead of full preparation over the coming months.
- Item 9(c) – the Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy (and the accompanying Confidential Reporting Procedure) are presented to the Board for consideration and adoption every three years.

SUPPORTING PAPERS

- None

OCTOBER 2024