

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

- John Mills' part-time secondment to the National Landscapes Association (NLA), to advise on the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA), is coming to an end. He devised a survey which was shared across all Protected Landscapes and, using the results, he is finalising a report to present to the NLA and all Lead Officers. The main purpose is to help identify the potential implications and opportunities of the 'seek to further' duty. The duty will have different implications across Protected Landscapes due to the varying statutory purposes of each designation. John co-led a workshop on this topic at the NLA conference (see below) with Ruth Larbey (NLA) and Tim Slaney (acting CEO Downs National Park).

New National Park Designation

- At the National Trails UK conference in May the Nature Minister, Rebecca Pow, informed the audience that the 'front runners' to become the next National Park had been agreed with Natural England and would be announced imminently. The General Election was called very shortly afterwards and therefore this didn't happen. It is now a case of waiting to understand how the new government will take forward this ambition.

National Landscapes Association – annual conference

- This year's conference was held at Harper Adams University, Shropshire from 3-5 July. The theme was "Changing Landscapes: Changing Minds". The host National Landscapes were: Shropshire Hills, Cannock Chase and Clwydian Range and Dee Valley. John Mills, Fred Constantine Smith and the Chief Executive represented the Cotswolds.

2. Team, Board Members and Volunteers

Team

- *Starters:*
 - Fred Constantine Smith – Climate Action Lead
 - Tom Harcourt – Glorious Cotswold Grasslands Programme Assistant
 - Maria Carter – FiPL Communications and Engagement Officer
- *Leavers:*
 - There were no leavers in the period.
- *Recruitment:*
 - Recruitment for the Board's next Chief Executive is underway, supported by Gatenby Sanderson (recruitment consultants). The selection and interview panel are: Brendan McCarthy, Rebecca Charley, Rosie Pearson and David Powell. Final interviews will take

place in mid-August, and will include an opportunity for candidates to meet some of the team (including volunteers).

Board Members

- *Starters:*
 - Chris Brant – Cherwell District Council
 - Martin Smith – Wiltshire Council
- *Leavers:*
 - Phil Chapman – Cherwell District Council
 - Nick Bumford – Secretary of State
 - Jane Hull – Secretary of State
- *Secretary of State vacancies*
 - The vacancies will be carried over to the 2025 recruitment campaign.

KEY ENGAGEMENTS (Chief Executive)

- 21 February – National Landscapes Association (NLA) Lead Officers meeting in Birmingham, with a focus on identifying priorities to feed into Defra’s business planning process for the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review.
- 22 February – with James Webb, met the CEO and Chair of Cotswold Lakes Trust.
- 27 February – with Mark Connelly, attended National Grid’s Stakeholder Reference Group meeting to review pre-planning material for the VIP project.
- 7 March – hosted the National Landscapes Association’s Nature-based Solutions team, visiting the sites of the National Grid VIP project and the A417 Missing Link.
- 12 March – attended GFirst LEP’s farewell event “The One About Evolution”.
- 14 March – A417 Missing Link Strategic Stakeholder Panel meeting.
- 19 March – Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership Board meeting.
- 9 and 11 April – NLA workshops on Carbon Baselines and Climate Adaptation.
- 18 April – A417 Environmental Working Group – Construction.
- 23 April – National Parks’ Climate Change and Energy Group.
- 26 April – chaired the Cotswolds Plus Local Visitor Economy Partnership Management Board meeting.
- 30 April – visited the National Trust land and properties at Sherborne.
- 16 May – attended, and gave a welcome speech, the first National Trails UK Summit in Cheltenham.
- 20 May – with Mark Connelly, met with CPRE Glos to discuss the Dark Skies project.
- 22 May – A417 Stakeholder meeting.
- 5 June – NLA Lead Officer’s briefing.
- 12 June – with the FiPL team, visited a large-scale wetlands project in Chipping Campden.
- 13 June – NLA Green Finance steering group meeting.
- 14 June – Volunteer’s Conference at RAU.

OVERVIEW OF THIS BOARD MEETING – 16 JULY

The key items of focus at this meeting are:

- Item 4 – to hear from Hannah McDonnell at Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership (now also inc. Oxfordshire Community Rail Partnership).
- Item 5 – to hear about the construction to date of the A417 Missing Link, with a presentation from Nick Williams (Senior Project Manager at Kier).
- Item 8(a) – to discuss version 1 of the Management Plan 2025-30.
- Item 9(b) – to review the 2023/24 year-end financial results.

- Item 9(c)– to have a discussion about the local authority contributions to the Board’s work, including potential future concerns.

SUPPORTING PAPERS

- None

JULY 2024