

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Summary: To (1) provide a high level summary of activity since the last Board meeting in June 2023 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. Regional and National Activity**Written Ministerial Statement

- A recent Ministerial Statement ('package of measures') – included an announcement that there would be new legislation in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill to enhance management plans and placing a stronger requirement on partners to contribute to their delivery.
- See *Appendix A* for a full Members briefing.

Protected Landscapes Partnership

- Following the appointment of the Protected Landscapes Partnership Manager, there are currently a number of Partnership roles being recruited:
 - Equity Diversity and Inclusion Lead (hosted by Natural England)
 - Nature Recovery Lead (hosted by Natural England)
 - Big Chalk Programme Lead (hosted by the NAAONB)
 - Evidence Co-ordinators x2 (hosted by Natural England)

Comprehensive Spending Review

- Defra has started a process to pull together a robust business case for Protected Landscapes in preparation for the next Comprehensive Spending Review (likely to be 2025). The three key principles are:
 - ✓ Ensure operational costs are met
 - ✓ Support and incentivise the delivery of government objectives – Nature / Climate / People / Place
 - ✓ Be evidence based and equitable

National Landscapes – brand rollout

- The national rebrand to National Landscapes will be launched on 22 November. All AONBs are now onboard.

NAAONB Conference

- The NAAONB Conference in Bath (4-7 September) was very successful, with record attendance. Thanks to Magda, John, Alana, Jennifer, Rowan, Lorna and Brendan for attending. Thanks also to Simon, Mark, Nicole, Becky and Mike for organising field trips and walks. The theme was *Invested and Investing In Our Landscapes*.

Cotswolds Plus Local Visitor Economy Partnership

- Since the last meeting, Visit England has approved the Cotswolds Plus Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP).

- The Management Board has met twice and early progress, driven by the Executive Officers Group (representing the existing DMOs), is encouraging
- Thanks goes to James Webb and Becky Jones for supporting some of the key workstreams, and to Alana Hopkins for supporting the Management Board.

2. Team, Board Members and Volunteers

Team

- *Starters:*
 - Olivia Blackwell has joined the team as a Farming in Protected Landscapes Farming Engagement Officer.
- *Leavers:*
 - Following the conclusion of the Support Services team review, Mandy Pressland (Finance and Operational Support Officer) has made the decision to accept a new role and has left the team.
- *Vacancies:*
 - Interviews for the Management Accountant vacancy have taken place and, at the time of this paper being written, no decision has been made.
 - A Programme Support Officer is currently being recruited internally.
 - A Farming in Protected Landscapes Admin Support role is being recruited externally.
- Simon Smith is now retained as an expert advisor for the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership as it develops the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the County.
- The Moreton Show was another success this year; it was a whole team effort, including Voluntary Wardens, with Alana Hopkins co-ordinating the planning and delivery.
- The team had a volunteering day at Rodborough Common on 3 October. The day involved scrub clearance and a walk (with ice cream!). 18 people managed to get along – a great success.

Board Members

- Emma Sims (Wychavon DC) has joined the Board since the last meeting.
- David Powell (Chair of the Finance and Governance Committee) and Margaret Reid (Chair of the Cotswolds Trails and Access Partnership) have joined the Board as 'Co-opted' Members.
- The Secretary of State (SoS) didn't appoint any Members in this year's recruitment round; therefore the two vacancies will roll over to 2024.
- Brendan McCarron (Parish Group 5) has left the Board and recruitment for his replacement is underway.

KEY ENGAGEMENTS (Chief Executive)

- 7 July and 15 September – Chaired the Cotswolds Plus LVEP Management Board.
- 12 July – CEO and John Mills met with the National Trust at their newly acquired site at Tinkley Gate. Potential funding opportunities for the site, including undergrounding of powerlines are being looked at.

- 13 July and 5 October – attended the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership Board Meeting.
- 14 July – attended a Nature Based Solutions event in London, with other AONB Lead Officers, NAAONB and the National Parks Partnership. Focused on the emerging theme of green finance.
- 16 August – met with Beth Brook, CEO of Heart of England Forest, to learn more about our respective organisations and to consider potential ways of working together in the future.
- 29 August – gave a briefing on the work of the CNL Board to Cotswold District Council Members. The meeting was recorded for the benefit of those who couldn't attend.
- 12 September – attended the Cotswold District Council Cabinet Meeting, when the CNL Management Plan was being discussed. Thank you to both Juliet Layton and Paul Hodgkinson for their very positive endorsements of the CNL Board and team.
- 21 September – radio interview on Cotswolds Radio, hosted by Paul Hodgkinson.
- 26 September – CEO and Mark Connelly attended the National Grid Cotswolds 'Visual Impact Provision' project Stakeholder Reference Group.
- 29 September – on the interview panel for the recruitment of a national EDI Lead for the Protected Landscapes Partnership.
- 5 October – CEO and James Webb presented to all of Gloucestershire's S151 Officers. The focus was on (1) the financial picture and (2) our 'value add' to Gloucestershire's economy, communities and environment. It was a very positive meeting with the takeaway comment being *"up until now you've been a line item in a spreadsheet, it's been great to see the huge amount of work and benefit that happens behind that"*.
- 6 October – attended, by invitation, the UK National Parks 'Climate and Energy' group meeting. An excellent learning opportunity and attendance will continue.
- A417 Missing Link:
 - 11 July – Strategic Stakeholder Panel meeting.
 - 30 August – Joint Statement of Common Ground meeting, including National Trust and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.

OVERVIEW OF THIS BOARD MEETING – 17 OCTOBER

The key items of focus at this meeting are:

- Item 4 – Nicole Daw, Trails and Access Officer, will be talking about her role in delivering the access element of the Bathscape Landscape Partnership.
- Item 5 – Simon Smith, Nature Recovery Lead, will present what is happening (now and in the near future) with the Big Chalk Partnership.
- Item 8(a) – The Constitution of the Board has undergone a thorough update to better reflect the organisation of today, we are now seeking its adoption.
- Item 9(b) – Magda Glanowska, Head of Finance, will inform the Board of the process and key priorities/assumptions for the 2024/25 budget.

SUPPORTING PAPERS

- Appendix A – Written Ministerial Statement (Members Briefing)

OCTOBER 2023