

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**Summary:** To (1) provide a high level summary of activity since the last Board meeting in June 2021 and (2) outline the key decisions/ discussions required from this meeting.

**Recommendation:** That the Board notes the report

**Report by:** Andy Parsons - Chief Executive

**PRIORITY ACTIVITY SINCE THE LAST MEETING** (not recorded in other papers)1. Team and Board Members

- The headline news for the period is that the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme has been launched. An Assessment Panel has been set up (including three Board Members and one team member) and they met on 30 September to assess the first eight grant applications, awarding £252k. The team should be congratulated for working at great pace since the programme started.
- Nine new Board Members have joined since the last meeting in June, with only one vacancy remaining (Secretary of State).
- Ann Wyatt, Head of Finance, has started her maternity leave (likely to be at least 12 months) and Diane Bassett is providing maternity cover.
- Alana Hopkins, Communications Lead, is now a Certified Digital Marketing Practitioner, after recently passing her final exam.
- Ed Bonn, Rural Skills Officer, is now qualified to lead dry stone walling courses.
- There has been significant recruitment activity, including the Farming in Protected Landscapes team, a Planning Officer and two roles currently being advertised (in Education and Community Outreach) as part of the Thames Water Smarter Water Catchments programme.
- The Future Planning Day ‘virtual’ event on 6 July was a big success – an opportunity to reflect on our newly adopted Vision and a very positive start in setting out the key priorities for the next Management Plan.
- Team and Board Members took part in the Cotswold Way relay to celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a long distance trail. Event partners included John Lewis, Robert Welch Designs, Cotswolds Voluntary Wardens, Cotswold Way Association and the Ramblers. Over 80 people attended the event at Chipping Campden School on Sunday 19 September.

## 2. Engagements (Chief Executive)

- 7 & 8 July – Landscapes for Life Annual Conference (held virtually).
- 29 July & 16 August – attended Glos Local Nature Partnership Board meetings.
- 2 August - Ministerial visit to the Cotswolds, with Lord Benyon and Defra officials visiting Guiting Manor Farm and the North Cotswolds farm cluster. Brendan McCarthy, Nick Bumford, Scott Brown and Heidi Gibbs all supported the visit. We received very positive feedback from Defra post-visit.
- 6 August – met with Dan Rex, CEO of the Queen’s Green Canopy, to discuss how the Cotswolds National Landscape could get involved in the celebration.
- 24 August – introductory meeting with Tony Bostock of Cotswolds Rivers Trust.

- 25 August – met with Jonny Loose, National Trust General Manager for the Cotswolds, to discuss various areas of potential collaborative work.
- 26 August – attended Ground Control’s ‘Green Gains’ event in Billericay, the key notes speaker was Tony Juniper, Chair of Natural England.
- 7 September – attended an A417 Designated Funds Partnership Panel meeting.
- 21 September – attended an A417 Statement of Common Ground meeting, with Mark Connelly.
- 24 September – introductory meeting with Estelle Bailey (CEO) and Prue Addison (Conservation Strategy Director) at Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT).
- 1 October – with Brendan McCarthy, met with the Chair and Vice-Chair of Friends of the Cotswolds to discuss future plans.
- 4 October – attended the National Association of AONB’s Lead Officer meeting, with the focus on (1) the government’s pending response to the Glover Review and (2) Farming in Protected Landscapes.

### **OVERVIEW OF THIS BOARD MEETING – 22 JUNE**

3. The key items of focus at this meeting are:
- Item 8b – in the 2019 ‘Colchester Declaration’ all AONBs pledged to write a Nature Recovery Plan for their respective protected landscapes. Simon Smith has led and facilitated the production of the plan for the Cotswolds and is now seeking Board adoption.
  - Item 8c – in the lead up to COP26, and ahead of our new Climate Change Strategy being finalised, this paper clearly sets out our bold commitments to the climate crisis, the role we should play and the resources we will need to start to gain traction and become a more ‘carbon literate’ National Landscape.
  - Item 9 – the Finance and Governance Sub-Committee met for the first time in September, its role will be to inform and advise the Board at each meeting on all finance, governance, risk and audit issues - providing recommendations (where appropriate) for formal Board adoption.

### **SUPPORTING PAPERS**

- None

OCTOBER 2021