

FIFTY-THIRD MEETING OF THE COTSWOLDS CONSERVATION BOARD

HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,  
COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL, CIRENCESTER

THURSDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2018

Present:

Chairman	-	Liz Eyre
Vice-Chairman	-	Ed Macalister-Smith
Jo Barker		Gary King
David Broad		Simon King
Nicholas Bumford		George Lambrick
Phil Chapman (from 10.15 a.m.)		Mark MacKenzie-Charrington
Nigel Colston		Charles Mathew (until 1.00 p.m.)
Mike Dean		John Matthews (until 1.00 p.m.)
Stephen Gray		Brendan McCarthy (from 11.35 a.m.)
Catherine Le Grice-Mack		Tony Merry
Adrian Hardman		Andrew Parsons
Martin Horwood		Hedley Ringrose
Nick Hurst		Daniel Szor
Peter Jones		David Thackray
David Kerr		Roger Wilson

Also in attendance:

Edward Bonn	Rural Skills and Grants Officer
Mark Connelly	Land Management Officer
Lioba Erwert	LEADER Programme Administrator
Becky Jones	Volunteer Co-ordinator/Trails & Access Officer
Martin Lane	Director
John Mills	Planning and Landscape Officer
Della Morris	Finance and Office Administrator
Mandy Pressland	Office Manager
Simon Smith	Project Development and Business Planning Officer
James Webb	LEADER Programme Manager

Apologies for absence were received from the following:

Harry Acland  
Rebecca Charley  
Matthew Darby  
Jacqui Fenn

Mollie Groom  
Liz Hodges  
Sue Hope  
Martin Veal

### B 3.1 INTRODUCTIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed the following new Board Members to the Meeting - Secretary of State Appointees Catherine Le Grice-Mack, Andrew Parsons, Gary King and Nicholas Bumford; and Local Authority Members, Martin Horwood and Phil Chapman.

The Chairman also welcomed new Board Officers Della Morris (Finance and Administration Officer) and Lioba Erwert (LEADER Programme Administrator) to the Meeting and explained that David Shelmerdine had been appointed as the Board's Finance Officer, working one day per week for a trial period. The Chairman also explained that Mandy Pressland was now the Office Manager for the Board.

### B 3.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from the Board's Members or Officers.

### B 3.3 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been submitted in accordance with the Board's Constitution.

### B 3.4 MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING AND BOARD AGM

**RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2018 be approved as a correct record.**

#### Matters Arising:

A Member suggested that an email link to draft versions of the Executive Committee Minutes be sent to all Board Members following the Executive Committee Meetings, as opposed to solely circulating these with the next Board Meeting's papers.

### B 3.5 MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Board received the Minutes of the Meetings of the Executive Committee held on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2018, 20<sup>th</sup> September 2018 and 8<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

### B 3.6 COTSWOLDS AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN 2018-2023

The Planning and Landscape Officer introduced the item and explained that the Board's Management Plan had now been published. Copies of the full Plan and the separate Executive Summary were distributed at the Meeting.

He informed the Board that the Plan had been discussed in detail at the June 2018 Board Meeting and had since undergone a final round of consultation, followed by adoption being recommended by the Executive Committee in September 2018. He concluded by urging Members to publicise the Plan and inform relevant interested parties of its whereabouts.

The Chairman explained that she would be writing to the various local authority Leaders within the AONB area asking them to endorse the Plan and submit written endorsements by 1<sup>st</sup> February 2019. She also echoed the comments of the Officer in regards to Board Members making the Plan a 'live' document.

A Member commented that a summary sent by the Officer to town and parish councils within the AONB would be a good way of promoting the Plan. In response, the Planning and Landscape Officer explained that a summary PDF document would be sent to all relevant councils as well as being published on the Board's website.

Another Member praised the Officer on a clear and concise Management Plan and, on behalf of the Board, extended his thanks to the Officer for his work in relation to this item. These comments were echoed by the Chairman and other Members of the Board.

**RESOLVED that the update report be noted.**

#### **B 3.7 THE GLOVER REVIEW OF NATIONAL PARKS AND AONBs**

The Chairman introduced the item and explained this item represented a two year piece of work undertaken by Officers on behalf of the Board, who had supported the direction of travel. She added that, since the last Board Meeting, more interested parties had come forward expressing their interest in the Board's work and stressed to Members the need for any amendments to the 24 question responses to be sent to the Board's Director by no later than 10 a.m. on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2018.

The Director explained that the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan had been launched in January 2018 and the Glover Review had started in June 2018, since which time Board Officers had sought to keep Board Members updated with its progress via their monthly updates. He explained that the deadline for submissions to the Review was 18<sup>th</sup> December 2018.

A Member commented that he considered the responses to be a very impressive submission and highlighted the response given to Question 16 regarding AONBs and National Parks as an example. However, he wished to see amendments to Section 20 on page 48 of the circulated report, by removing the commitment to the designation of the AONB as a National Park and stated that, whilst contrary to the Board's Management Plan, the Board should not proceed with the case for the Cotswolds being designated a National Park on the primary basis that more funding could be achieved for the Board as a National Park Authority in comparison to an AONB. Continuing, he added that, in his view, a National Park could be even more reliant on volunteers in the future and whilst happy to campaign for the Board's

Management Plan to have more force in the future, considered that the effects on planning and development if designated as a National Park would have a greater negative effect. The Member also drew the Board's attention to the fact that greater restrictions on development would squeeze development out of the National Park area into the Severn Vale, Cheltenham and the Stroud Valleys whilst making small urban areas within the designated area even more congested. He concluded that a wholesale removal of planning powers from local authorities would reflect a loss of democracy and, whilst understanding the options for delegation, felt this would not represent a delegation. He also stressed that there was already a good level of conservation in the area under the AONB and, therefore, no changes should be made to affect this.

A Proposition, that the response be amended in regards to Section 20 to read (i) note the ambitions in the Management Plan; (ii) note the concerns of Members in regards to planning and development in regards to the creation of a Cotswolds National Park; and (iii) ask for National Park status for the Cotswolds to be explored alongside other models as alternatives in regard to 'full planning status', was duly Seconded.

In response, the Director explained that the comments made were at odds with the decision made at the March 2018 Board Meeting and that the reason the response to the Glover Review and National Park statement had been listed as a separate item on the Agenda at this Board Meeting was due to the Board wishing to make open and clear comments about the current AONB system. He added that there was a wide recognition that there were weaknesses in the system and the Board had highlighted the distinct advantages of becoming a National Park. However, he wished to clarify that the Review was far more than an examination of the case for and against a National Park. The planned submission about a National Park was an expression of interest at this stage in an attempt to get the Review team, DEFRA and other bodies to look at the case made by the Board seriously.

Various Members then commented both in favour and against the comments made by the Board. Members explained that a National Park Authority would not seek to stop planning applications and recent examples had shown that some Parks dealt with around 3,000 applications per year; there were some constraints to the Review's questions as there was not an option to comment on the vision for a future structure for the next 50 years; National Parks were considered to manage erosion control better than AONBs at present; the comments made in regard to planning and development represented the views of a number of parish councils; National Parks were a key attempt to get people out of cities and towns and into the countryside, which would represent a key benefit to the current AONB set-up; a National Park would give rise to another level of bureaucracy; the key issue at present was that the Board was not a statutory consultee for local authorities; the Board currently operated on roughly the same boundaries as proposed for a National Park but with only 9% of the budget a National Park of the same area would receive; there were current brand issues with the AONB and these could be removed with a National Park; and the creation of a Park would help improve conservation in the areas surrounding the AONB.

Following a full debate by the Board, it was suggested that, with regard to the Proposition and the debate undertaken, the following wording be removed from the submission of the Board to Question 20 of the Glover Review; 'The Cotswolds should be designated England's next National Park - see separate submission' and the Proposition be amended to reflect this.

On being put to the vote, the Proposition to amend the wording was CARRIED, with the Record of Voting being - for 20, against 5, abstentions 3, absent 8.

**RESOLVED that, subject to the amendment of the wording to the response to Question 20 of the Glover Review as set out above, the report be noted, and the submission be approved.**

B 3.8 POSITION STATEMENT ON THE CASE FOR A COTSWOLDS NATIONAL PARK

The Director introduced the item and explained that the Executive Committee had agreed the Position Statement and to use the Statement with the Frequently Asked Questions. A media article had also been commissioned by the Board, as contained within the Meeting's papers, to advance the debate.

A Member commented that he considered the Board should seriously contemplate routes for the Board to generate its own income and suggested the Board's future involvement with planning and development could assist with this suggestion. Members highlighted that they had received a recent email request from Board staff inviting suggestions for businesses to be approached inviting sign up for Caring for the Cotswolds programme.

Members had nothing further to add to the debate following the discussion under the previous Agenda Item.

The Vice-Chairman wished to commend Appendix 'C' of the circulated report contained within the Meeting's papers and thanked the Director for commissioning the piece which had been written by Katie Jarvis who regularly wrote for the Cotswold Life Magazine.

**RESOLVED that the position statement and comments made be noted.**

B 3.9 DARK NIGHT SKIES

The Land Management Officer introduced the item and explained that the draft Position Statement on Dark Night Skies and Artificial Light would be presented to the Executive Committee at its Meeting in February 2019 and then to the full Board in March 2019. He added that, in his view, the AONB currently had a good level of dark skies and explained the benefits in relation to these areas.

A Member commented that he hoped the report would include more actions regarding stopping the addition of outside lighting and drew attention to the activities of Gloucestershire County Council, who had been replacing over 60,000 traditional street lights with LEDs to help reduce the lighting impact.

In response, the Land Management Officer responded that Recommendation 'd' of the report sought to address the effects of outside lighting and explained that a revised Position Statement on Dark Skies would be presented at the March 2019 Board Meeting.

A second Member expressed her support for the paper and commented that one issue was that local authorities had no powers to influence and change guidance on lighting on private developments. She also felt that the Board should consider lending it support to local authorities to help 'lobby' the Government in regards to changing laws and to also consider contacting estate agents within the AONB with regard to minimising the impact for the interim period.

In response to further Members' questions, it was reported that local authorities could implement lighting conditions through the planning application process, though the issue was 'retro-fitting' by tackling what was already in place.

The Chairman urged Board Members to seek funding sources in preparation for the Board Meeting in March 2019, to which a Member, who was also a Member of Oxfordshire County Council, agreed to fund £1,000 from his budget allocation towards the project for the current financial year and the potential for another £1,000 from the next financial year; and the Chairman also agreed to match that contribution from her budget as a Worcestershire County Council Member.

**RESOLVED that:**

- (a) the dark skies of the Cotswolds AONB be actively conserved and enhanced and enable the public to understand and enjoy them;**
- (b) a draft Position Statement on Dark Skies and Artificial Light be prepared for adoption at the March 2019 Board meeting;**
- (c) the Landscape Strategy and Guidelines for the Cotswolds AONB be reviewed by June 2019 to ensure that the recognition, conservation and enhancement of dark skies is properly taken into account;**
- (d) the support of local authorities and parish councils be sought in acknowledging the dark skies of the Cotswolds and their conservation and enhancement, leading to appropriate local plan policies;**
- (e) opportunities be sought to raise public awareness of the importance of dark skies and their protection and enhancement;**
- (f) appropriate external funding bids be made and resources secured in order to make an application to the IDA for Dark Sky reserve status and for maintaining that status.**

**B 3.10**     PRESENTATION - PILOT PARTNERSHIP PROJECT WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

The Project Development and Business Planning Officer introduced the item and explained that the funding for the scheme had been sourced from the Trails and Access budgets.

The Board then received a presentation from the Volunteer Co-ordinator/Trails & Access Officer.

A Member commented that Officers might wish to research the Twitter #Iwill young people campaign running in January 2019 to see if any sources of funding could be provided to the Board as a result.

Following the presentation, the Chairman explained that she wished to add a further recommendation to the effect that a more detailed paper regarding any future project proposal and its funding be presented to the February 2019 Executive Committee Meeting.

**RESOLVED that:**

- (a)        **the report be noted;**
- (b)        **a detailed report be presented to the Executive Committee at its Meeting in February 2019.**

**B 3.11**     2019-22 BUSINESS PLAN

The Chairman introduced the item and explained that the deadline for comments from Members was 14<sup>th</sup> December 2018. The Board would then consult with funding partners, for example local authorities, during January 2019.

The Project Development and Business Planning Officer then amplified various aspects of the Business Plan and explained that the Plan followed the Management Plan in regards to its structure.

**RESOLVED that the report be noted.****B 3.12**     UPDATES

- (a)        Task and Finish and Working Groups

**RESOLVED that the progress update be noted.**

- (b)        Partnership Board

**RESOLVED that the latest progress update be noted.**

(c) LEADER Programme

The LEADER Programme Manager introduced the item and responded to various questions from Members.

The Chairman highlighted that the Board was the only protected landscape in the LEADER Programme and one that supported the creation of jobs.

**RESOLVED that the update report be noted.**

B 3.13 GLORIOUS COTSWOLDS GRASSLANDS

The Board received an update report detailing progress around the Board's Glorious Cotswolds Grasslands three-year project.

**RESOLVED that the update report be noted.**

B 3.14 CARING FOR THE COTSWOLDS

The Board received an update report detailing recent progress on grant awards through the Caring for the Cotswolds scheme.

**RESOLVED that the update report be noted.**

B 3.15 RESERVES POLICY REVIEW

The Director introduced the report and explained that the Review had been presented to the Executive Committee at its Meeting in November 2018, and was now commended to the Board for endorsement and adoption.

A Member expressed concern that the Board currently held two months expenditure in reserves and enquired if the Board had a long-term ambition to build up the reserves it held. In response, the Director explained that the annual grant the Board received from DEFRA had reduced since 2009 and that the Board's Annual Turnover had reduced. He also highlighted that the Policy was in line with percentage thresholds used previously and that the Board's Finance Officer was satisfied with the level, despite their being a wide acceptance that the Board needed to grow income streams in the future.

**RESOLVED that:**

**(a) the Reserves Policy and Strategy be approved;**

**(b) the reserves policy be set at £130,000.**

B 3.16 MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

There were no matters to report under this item to the Board.



B 3.17 SCHEDULE OF BOARD AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING DATES FOR 2019

The Board received an agreed schedule of dates for Board and Executive Committee Meetings in 2019.

The Director drew attention to the fact that, for 2019, Board Meetings would now take place on a Tuesday as opposed to a Thursday, following requests from local authority Members, whose organisations regularly held meetings on Thursdays; and also the fact that the December 2019 Board Meeting would now take place on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

**RESOLVED that the schedule for Board and Executive Committee Meetings for 2019 be noted.**

B 3.18 DRAFT AGENDA FOR THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING ON 26<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2019

The Board noted the draft Agenda for the next Meeting of the Executive Committee, to be held on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2019.

The Chairman explained that the Agenda would also now include a Youth Project Proposal following the discussion under B 3.10.

B 3.19 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN FOR 2018/19

The Forward Plan for 2018/19 was noted.

B 3.20 DATE OF NEXT CONSERVATION BOARD MEETING (AND AGM) - 26<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2019

It was noted that the next Board Meeting would be held on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2019, followed by the Board's AGM.

B 3.21 OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business that was urgent.

The Meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and closed at 1.10 p.m.

Chairman