

FIFTY-FOURTH MEETING OF THE COTSWOLDS CONSERVATION BOARD

HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL, CIRENCESTER

TUESDAY 26TH MARCH 2019

Present:

Chairman	-	Liz Eyre
Vice-Chair	-	Ed Macalister-Smith
David Broad		Simon King
Nicholas Bumford		George Lambrick
Rebecca Charley		Catherine Le-Grice Mack
Mike Dean		Mark MacKenzie-Charrington
Jacque Fenn		Charles Mathew
Mollie Groom		John Matthews
Adrian Hardman		Brendan McCarthy
Liz Hodges		Andrew Parsons
Sue Hope		Hedley Ringrose
Martin Horwood		Daniel Szor
David Kerr		David Thackray
Gary King		Martin Veal

Also in attendance:

Mark Connelly	Land Management Officer
Martin Lane	Director
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:

Nigel Colston	Peter Jones
Matthew Darby	Tony Merry
Stephen Gray	Roger Wilson
Nick Hurst	Jo Barker

Absent:

Henry Kenney-Herbert	Phil Chapman
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B 4.1 INTRODUCTIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman informed Members of the appointment of Harvey Sherwood and Anna Field as Glorious Grasslands Project and Assistant Project Officers and also welcomed Mr. Ian Wilkinson, Director of Cotswolds Seeds Ltd, to the Meeting.

B 4.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

B 4.3 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

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

B 4.4 MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING AND BOARD AGM

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 6th December 2018 be approved as a correct record.

B 4.5 MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Board received the Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee held on 26th February 2019.

Matters Arising:

A Member noted that the Meeting location should be amended so as to read the George Moore Community Centre in Bourton-on-the-Water and not the Conservation Board Offices in Northleach.

The Chairman informed Members that, with regard to Minute 6.19, the Minutes of the Board's Away Day had been circulated to all Members and that she considered the actions from the day to be very clear.

The Vice-Chairman explained that he was keen to ensure that the Board took action on the outcomes of the Away Day and that he considered that, in order to do this, the Executive Committee would need to establish a working group to report back to the Board at its next Meeting in June 2019. He added that the working group's purpose should be to establish issues of governance and more staffing policies in the organisation.

It was therefore duly Proposed and Seconded that this recommendation be taken to the next Executive Committee Meeting in April 2019 and that work be subsequently undertaken in preparation of the June 2019 Board Meeting.

RESOLVED that a working group be established at the April 2019 Executive Committee Meeting in regard to establishing issues of governance and developing more staff policies.

B 4.6 COTSWOLDS LEADER PROGRAMME UPDATE AND PRESENTATION

The LEADER Programme Manager introduced the item and explained that the Board was now dealing with 43 projects of which four had been approved at the February 2019 Executive Committee Meeting and were now being contracted. He added that the Board currently had an 88% rate of completed projects (totalling £1.4m) having been contracted. The Manager also drew attention to the 'hotspots' and 'blackspots' within the area and explained that whilst the 'black spots' were generally in very rural locations, there were still approximately 10 to 15 projects to come forward which would further contribute to the good level of geographical spread already obtained. He concluded by informing Members that whilst a capital programme, LEADER focussed primarily on people.

Mr. Ian Wilkinson, Director of Cotswold Seeds, then addressed the Meeting and explained how his company had benefited from a LEADER grant. Mr. Wilkinson then responded to various questions from Members and Officers.

Various Members drew attention to the fact the LEADER Programme linked many benefits to landscape, tourism and education and despite noting some issues, particularly regarding the lack of take-up in the Cultural/Heritage Priority, considered the Programme was one which should be commended and celebrated.

The Chairman informed Members that, as the Board was the accountable body for the Programme, she wished to extend her thanks, on behalf of the Board, to the Programme Manager, Officers and the LAG Group in overcoming all obstacles in regard to the Programme. The Chairman also highlighted how beneficial she considered the Programme had been in delivering projects which made a difference to the local economy, despite the Board's primary aim being to conserve and enhance the AONB.

The Director explained that, following communication with DEFRA regarding the future Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS), Officers had been advised that the Board had been asked to 'drop' the rural development wording of its earlier test and trials proposals as this was seen by DEFRA as not appropriate for the ELM scheme. The Director added that he still felt there was an opportunity that if the Board undertook such tests, land management could be undertaken alongside rural development, of which, he reported, the Board had many demonstrable examples.

RESOLVED that the update report be noted.

Note:

The Chairman wished to extend her thanks to Mr. Wilkinson for attending the Meeting and sharing his thoughts on the LEADER Programme.

B 4.7 BUSINESS PLAN 2019/20 - 2021/22

The Project Development and Business Planning Officer introduced the item and explained that the consultation draft had also been sent to DEFRA. He explained that there had been various conversations regarding the amount of Plan information being presented to the Executive Committee and the Board and it had since been decided that concise information would continue to be presented to the Board.

The Chairman added that Executive Committee Meeting papers were available to all Board Members on the Board's website. With regard to the Plan itself, the Chairman also drew attention to the separation between staff and running costs and direct project costs and highlighted that all projects fell under the Board's ambitions.

A Member expressed concern regarding the clarity of the figures which had been presented in the Business Plan and drew attention to the fact that earmarked reserves were only listed within the Board's Annual Accounts. She also stated that the agency agreements showed a large deficit and that she felt this should be a key concern for the Board.

In response, the Director explained that the Board had already committed to reviewing reserves alongside the Statement of Accounts and might look to separate these into restricted and unrestricted following this review. With regard to the agency agreement, he informed the Board that notice had been served to The Friends in March 2018 and this had been followed by formal notification in July 2018. He added that discussions with The Friends were ongoing regarding a future agreement.

The Chairman also explained that the Board had been unable to recoup substantial costs from the Friends in regard to the necessary installation of fire alarms at the Discovery Centre.

In response to further questions from Members, it was reported that the benefits the Board brought into the AONB were of great benefit to the local authorities and more work should be done to recognise this; if no new agreement was reached between The Friends and the Board, then the deficit of £246,000 would be required to be written off; the Glorious Grasslands project did not generate any income as the project was funded largely through grant costs; the Rural Skills project clearly showed profitability and that this approach was considered suitable for the other projects in the future; the Executive Committee would research the suggestion of the outcomes listed in the Business Plan being changed to themes and the details listed under those themes would include the predicted dates and outcomes; and Officers had attempted to gain Parish Council contributions but this had been unsuccessful and it would consequently therefore be removed from the next Budget Summary.

Various Members expressed their support for the Business Plan and commented that it represented a coherent document and thanked the Officer for his work in relation to the Plan.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) **the fifth draft of the outward facing 2019/22 Business Plan be adopted for dissemination to partners and used as a supportive bidding document;**
- (b) **the Executive Committee review the level of detail of the financial information it receives when considering quarterly reports and drafts of subsequent business plans.**

B 4.8 DRAFT POSITION STATEMENT ON DARK SKIES AND ARTIFICIAL LIGHT

The Land Management Officer introduced the item and, in doing so, extended his thanks to Board Member George Lambrick for his work in relation to the item. He also explained that a draft tranquillity statement would be presented at the next Board Meeting in June 2019.

Mr. Lambrick expressed his thanks to the Dark Skies Task and Finish Group for their assistance and explained that the majority of the Group Members were not Board Members and that he hoped they could all be thanked in writing, for their input. Mr. Lambrick added that the Board needed an effective policy to establish standards to which the local authorities should abide, whilst also recognising that registering the AONB as a recognised dark skies area would take considerable financial input. He concluded by recommending the Statement to the Board for approval.

A Member drew attention to a meeting being organised in Bath on 6th June 2019 regarding dark skies and development (at the Dorothy House site in Bath), she considered Board Members might be interested in attending.

RESOLVED that the draft Dark Skies and Artificial Light Position Statement be adopted.

B 4.9 DRAFT POSITION STATEMENT ON CONSERVING AND CELEBRATING CULTURAL CAPITAL IN THE COTSWOLDS AONB

The Land Management Officer introduced the item and, in doing so, drew attention to the fact that 'sporting heritage' had been missed from the Cultural Capital Assets and Activities list. He also requested that Board Members consider and forward any further options for engagement on the position statement.

A Member commented that he considered both the dialect of the Cotswolds and reference to the fact small village fetes and flower shows across the AONB were 'dying' due to a lack of interest should also be included.

Another Member added that the paper should be uploaded to the Board's website, with the invitation and intention to encourage members of the public to comment with their ideas and suggestions.

The Chairman reminded Members that any comments on the document should be sent to the Land Management Officer via email and urged all Board Members to bring the document to the attention of their relevant town and parish councils and various local authorities.

RESOLVED that:

(a) the draft Position Statement on Conserving and Celebrating Cultural Capital in the Cotswolds AONB be adopted by the Board for external consultation and discussion;

(b) further steps be taken to explore the potential of a cultural capital approach to services and benefits that the AONB provides.

B 4.10 POTENTIAL RESEARCH POLICY WITH UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

The Director introduced the item and explained that he wished to thank the Friends of West Oxfordshire Cotswolds for their assistance with the research undertaken to date. He added that the Policy sought to focus on research partnerships with the University, who with the Board would then seek to jointly procure programme sponsors, but highlighted that both the University and the Board were acknowledged to be resource-stretched.

In response to a Member's question and request that a topic on rural economy be included, the Director confirmed that the list of topics were linked to the research areas contained within the Board's Business Plan and had evolved following discussions of these areas with the University.

Various Members drew attention to existing schemes and partnerships which they considered could provide assistance to the Board's Research Policy. Those suggestions included the Rollright Stones' Student Fund; Log and Capture in Hampshire (in association with the University of Reading); the partnership which existed between Oxford Brookes University and North Wessex Downs; the Geography Department at the University of Gloucestershire; and the Royal Agricultural University and Hartpury College.

The Director explained that, whilst noting the various suggestions, previous attempts at similar projects in connection with Board Members employed by, or with personal links to the various educational establishments, had proved unsuccessful. He added that the intention was to continue with the project as proposed with the University of Oxford and that, if it proved successful, the option for wider implementation could be investigated further.

RESOLVED that progress be noted and supported by Board Members with links to the University where appropriate.

B 4.11 UPDATES

(a) Task and Finish and Working Groups

RESOLVED that the progress update be noted.

(b) Partnership Board

RESOLVED that the progress update be noted.

B 4.12 HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY REVIEW

The Board received a report detailing a revised Health and Safety Policy, following its review by the Executive Committee at its Meeting in February 2019.

RESOLVED that the revised Health and Safety Policy be adopted by the Board.

B 4.13 EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2017/18

The Board received a report detailing the results of the external audit of the Annual Return 2017/18.

RESOLVED that the results of the external audit of the Annual Return for 2017/18 be noted.

B 4.14 RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS, REGISTER OF INTERESTS AND TRUSTEE LIABILITY

The Director provided a verbal update to the Board in regard to this item. In doing so, he explained that all Board Members had been contacted regarding providing Related Party Transactions and Register of Interest forms and that the deadline for receiving these was 3rd April 2019.

RESOLVED that the update report be noted.

B 4.15 ASSETS AND INVENTORIES REPORT

The Director introduced this item and informed Members that, following recommendation from the Board's Internal Auditor, the Fixed Assets threshold would be held at £10,000.

RESOLVED that the capital assets be regarded as Fixed Assets within the Board's accounts, with a threshold of £10,000.

B 4.16 SCHEME OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES 2019/20

The Chairman introduced the item and explained the Board was requested to approve a Scheme of Members' Allowances for 2019/20. In doing so, she proposed that the Board approve the Scheme as detailed in the circulated report which continued allowances at the same rate.

The Director also informed Members of the proposed recommendation regarding Child Care Allowance and Dependent Care Allowance and explained that the latter element had recently received support from DEFRA. He added

that both could be factors when someone was considering whether to seek appointment to the Board.

RESOLVED that the Board approves the recommended Scheme of Member's Allowances for 2019/20.

B 4.17 MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

There were no matters to report under this item.

B 4.18 DRAFT AGENDA FOR THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING - 30TH APRIL 2019

The Board noted the draft Agenda for the next Meeting of the Executive Committee, to be held on Thursday 30th April 2019 and the addition of the item in relation to the recommendation discussed under Minute B 4.5.

B 4.19 DATE OF NEXT CONSERVATION BOARD MEETING - 25TH JUNE 2019

It was noted that the next Board Meeting would be held on 25th June 2019.

B 4.20 OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman wished to extend her thanks to Board Member and Secretary of State appointee, The Ven. Hedley Ringrose, who was stepping down from the Board with effect from the end of the Meeting, for his work as a Board Member.

The Chairman also informed Members that Secretary of State appointee, Mr. Peter Jones, who was not present at the Meeting, would also be standing down from the Board, but would remain a Cotswold Warden.

The Meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and closed at 12.30 p.m.

Chairman