

MEETING OF
THE COTSWOLDS CONSERVATION BOARD
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

HELD AT THE CONSERVATION BOARD OFFICES, NORTHLEACH

THURSDAY 9TH NOVEMBER 2017

Present:

Vice-Chairman (In the Chair)	Nick Holliday
David Broad	Ed Macalister-Smith
Nigel Colston	Tony Merry
Mike Dean (to 12.05 p.m.)	Mark O'Sullivan
Sue Hope	Martin Veal
	Richard Wakeford

Apologies:

Liz Eyre	Val Kirby
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Also in Attendance:

Anna Clarke	Finance & Administration Officer
Mark Connelly	Land Management Officer
Martin Lane	Director
Simon Smith	Project Development and Business Planning Officer
Richard Watson	Cotswolds Trail & Access Officer/Visitor, Interpretation & Events Officer
James Webb	LEADER Programme Manager

E 3.2 INTRODUCTIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Board's Vice Chairman announced that the Chairman had given apologies for the meeting and that he would therefore be chairing the Executive Committee meeting.

The Chairman apologised for the light agenda and stated the reason was that the Management Plan which was due to be presented at the Meeting had been delayed owing to staff illness and that an update would be provided by Mr Lane, later in the Meeting.

The Chairman and Mr Lane provided an update to Members in regards to the recent MP Briefings, alongside recent meetings with Andrew Sells (Chairman, Natural England) and Lord Gardner, Defra Minister. Mr Dean and Mr Veal offered to contact Laurence Robertson MP and Jacob Rees-Mogg MP respectively.

In response to a Member's question, it was also reported that Lord Gardner reacted positively to the Agri-Environment and Rural Development proposals and associated discussion.

The Chairman announced the Executive Committee was to meet in early 2018 to discuss Agri-Environment and Rural Development post-Brexit and the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan.

In light of a discussion on the current agri-support, Mr Colston expressed concern that he felt there was not enough time, prior to 2022 to run a pilot scheme, before the government had a scheme in place. In response, Mr Lane commented that development thinking could be undertaken in 2018, leaving up to three years for the pilot.

Mr Lane provided an update on the situation regarding the Management Plan and explained to Members that the Plan was unlikely to be presented at the Board Meeting in December and consequently proposed and explained an alternative timetable. This consisted of; the Board dealing with updates at the December Meeting (Stage consultation); the Executive Committee granting permission for the Stage 2 consultation document at an extra meeting in January 2018 with this then being followed by consultation in February/March 2018. Mr Lane explained that as the Final Plan would not be ready for March 2018, the adoption would consequently take place in June 2018. He also advised Members that delaying the process further would not see adoption until December 2018 at the earliest, which he considered to be too late given discussions over other initiatives with Defra. Some members considered that further delays would be acceptable, if it meant the Board took fuller account of Brexit discussions and the 25 year Environment Plan.

In response to various Member's questions, Mr Lane summarised that the initial workshop feedback from the review had called for a different plan, which was currently expected to be adopted on 1st April 2018. Mr Lane agreed with a Member's concern that the shortage of staff owing to illness, and the resulting stretch in resources, had caused the delay.

The Chairman explained to Members that the Plan would be taken away and the implications considered. He explained the need to update the Board in December and that it would be useful to get a delegation for the Executive Committee to progress the Plan and review at an extra Executive Committee Meeting in January 2018.

E 3.3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

E 3.4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

E 3.5 MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

21st September 2017

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee held on 21st September 2017 be approved as a correct record, subject to the following amendments;-

(i) by deletion of the words '10.10 a.m.' after the name of Mr Dean in the list of attendees;

(ii) by inclusion of the words "and provide an audit trail" after "pink papers" in Minute E 3.4.

(iii) by deletion of the following words in Minute E 3.5.b i:-

'Mr Wakeford updated members of the successful meeting, though expressed his great disappointment at the consultant's Natural Capital report.

Mr Wakeford also provided an update on the post-Brexit farming and rural development.

Mr Macalister-Smith asked that on the basis National Parks were promoting healthy exercise, whether Healthy Cotswolds should follow suit. Mr Macalister-Smith volunteered to complete work on the idea for which he was thanked by the Chairman and fellow Members.'

and their substitution by the words 'This was held over in the absence of Dr Kirby.';

(iv) by deletion of the words 'This was held over in the absence of Dr Kirby.' in Minute E 3.5.c i and their substitution by the following words:-

'Mr Wakeford updated members of the successful meeting, though expressed his great disappointment at the consultant's Natural Capital report.

Mr Wakeford also provided an update on the post-Brexit farming and rural development.

Mr Macalister-Smith asked that on the basis National Parks were promoting healthy exercise, whether Healthy Cotswolds should follow suit. Mr Macalister-Smith volunteered to complete work on the idea for which he was thanked by the Chairman and fellow Members.'

(v) by deletion of the words 'the Bath Partnership Board' in the second line of the final paragraph of Minute E 3.5.C.ii and their substitution by the words 'the Bathscape Partnership Board';

- (vi) **by deletion of the words ‘a mitigated disaster’ in the first line of the second paragraph of Minute E 3.7 and their substitution by the words ‘an unmitigated disaster’.**

Matters Arising:

- (i) Minutes of Meetings of the Executive Committee (Minute E 3.4 page 15)

In response to a question, it was reported that;-

- (a) Mr Lane and Mrs Eyre had attended the Steering Group Committee hosted by Highways England on the 6th October 2017 and that a detailed briefing had been given at the start of the last Meeting;
- (b) the Board had written to the Secretary of State at the Department for Transport in autumn 2014 to explain that the brown root advocated by Gloucestershire County Council was not considered to be acceptable;
- (c) Mrs Eyre had written to Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP, Secretary of State at the Department for Transport and a copy of the response received would be circulated to all Members;
- (d) It was anticipated that further details on consultation options would be received from Highways England following a meeting which was due to be held on 10th November 2017;

E 3.6 EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2016/17

Miss Clarke provided an update to Members and explained that the Report was considered satisfactory and had been signed by Grant Thornton. She explained that there had been two recommendations;

- i. The Financial Officer signs accounts before the Chairman (this issue arose due to the fact a temporary accountant was being used).
- ii. The Board maintain a Fixed Asset Register (currently only for amounts above £10,000).

Mr O’Sullivan commented that a fixed asset was normally considered an item that had a life expectancy of over 12 months; and, owing to the complications this could present if reduced, he considered the £10,000 to be a reasonable amount.

Mr Broad also commented that complications from reducing the amount dramatically could prove problematic and Mr Veal agreed, reiterating his concerns relating to recent staffing pressures.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

E 3.7 BUSINESS PLAN 2017/18 – QUARTER 1 AND 2.

The item was extended to include Quarter 1 and 2 of the Business Plan, owing to recent Officer absence.

Mr Smith provided an update to Members. The Officer drew Members attention to the Agenda report and explained the finances of the Discovery Centre, Café and wider site.

In response to a Member's question, the discovery cost of £200,000 was explained to be a long-standing cost (investment) and was planned to be covered in due course.

Mr Wakeford asked if the Objectives and Achievements could be presented side by side in future reports to ease of comparison. This was noted by the Officer, but Members were reminded this had been presented in the past but Members had agreed the current format two years ago.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

E 3.8 2018-2021 BUSINESS PLAN

Mr Smith provided an update to Members. He explained that the Plan did not currently include feedback from the Executive Committee or the Sub-Committees and welcomed feedback prior to the set deadline in the recommendations.

Mr Holliday drew Members attention to the deadline for feedback; 17th November 2017.

Mr Macalister-Smith questioned if the Management Plan was delayed whether more context would be needed in relation to the changes. He also said he thought it was very helpful to have the 25 Vision for the Cotswold Landscape included, though felt the Living and Working section should be developed and enhanced as at present it only contained four actions.

Mrs Hope asked whether the agri-environment / rural development schemes had been included and Mr Smith informed her he would confirm this.

Mr O'Sullivan expressed concern at the speed of which the Future Landscapes was progressing and asked if there were any ambitions to bring it to a close. He expressed he wished to see previous work properly integrated and how and when the output of the project had been achieved. Also, in reference to the Living and Working Sub-Committee, he explained he felt other issues such as broadband needed to be incorporated.

Mr Veal thanked the Officer for, what he considered, a clear and precise summary of the Business Plan.

Mr Wakeford expressed his concern at the way in which items had been classified and stated he was happy to take the item to Sub-Committee as proposed. The Officer responded that the placing of items followed the structure of the Management Plan and were aligned, but agreed it could be shown more clearly.

Mr Veal said he felt the item should go back to the Living and Working Committee, prior to it returning to the Executive Committee.

Mr Holliday reminded Members that the emphasis would be on Committee Chairmen in preparation for the deadline the following week.

RESOLVED that the report be noted, subject to the following recommendations;

(a) that the production schedule for the 2018-2021 Business Plan be noted;

(b) that comments on the 2018-2021 Business Plan be invited before the deadline of 17th November 2017.

E 3.9.a LIVING & WORKING SUB-COMMITTEE

i. Oral Update

Mr Veal informed Members the Committee had not met since the last Executive Committee Meeting.

E 3.9.b ENJOYING & APPRECIATING SUB-COMMITTEE

i. Action Points from last Meeting, 21st July 2017

Mr Holliday informed Members he had volunteered to replace Dr Kirby as Chairman of the Sub-Committee.

Mr Watson updated Members on the Cotswold Gateways Growth Fund project and explained that preparation was under way to submit a bid on the 30th November 2017. He advised that itineraries for the National Trails Discover England project were currently being worked on. He also reminded Members that no further progress had been achieved with the National Trails Funding.

In response to a Member's question, Mr Holliday confirmed that Dormy House would be a contributor to Caring for the Cotswolds from January 2018.

E 3.9.c CONSERVING & MANAGING SUB-COMMITTEE

i. Oral Update

Mr Wakeford informed Members the Sub-Committee would be meeting again shortly. He also stressed the requirement to have more advice and support from the Communications Officer to assist with more engagement of the wider public in the work of the Sub-Committee.

ii. Magnificent Meadows, Flowers on the Edge and Glorious Grasslands

Mr Connelly provided an update on the item and informed Members that the National Association had established a sub-group for Flowers on the Edge.

Mr Connelly also reported that the Farmers Group had now met twice and the response received had been very encouraging. He explained that those attending had been interested in the idea of a pilot but expressed the fact the next meeting was not due to take place until after the 25 Year Plan had been released.

Mr Wakeford also commented that he felt the meetings had been very constructive.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

E 3.9.d GRANTS SUB-COMMITTEE

Mr Holliday informed Members the Sub-Committee had not met since the last Executive Meeting and was expected to meet in December 2017 or January 2018.

E 3.9.e THE COTSWOLDS DISCOVERY CENTRE, NORTHLEACH

Mr Lane informed Members that the Café was now operating reduced winter hours and would be closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. He explained that the Friends had been invited to develop the Growth Bid and that the Growth Plan was due at the end of November 2017.

The Friends had agreed not to support the LEADER playground as they wished to invest money in other initiatives. Mr Lane also reported that the theatre productions and camping weekend in August had been successful and that a meeting of the Partnership Board was overdue owing to the fact it had not met since August 2017.

Mr Lane also informed members of the resignation of Mrs Williamson as a Parish Appointee from the Conservation Board and the upcoming election procedure.

RESOLVED that the latest progress report be noted.

E 3.9.f COTSWOLDS LEADER PROGRAMME UPDATE

Mr Webb presented an update report on the progress of the Cotswolds LEADER programme.

Mr O'Sullivan questioned as to why there were no West of England LEADER Groups listed in the Performance Management Table. Mr Webb responded that as the team who compiled the data were based in Worcester, the Table reflected only Groups based in the Midlands.

In response to a question from Mr Macalister-Smith regarding the risks of the Cotswolds staying at a middle performance level, Mr Webb explained that the

focus was on the bottom quarter and whilst the Cotswolds were quite close, it had remained mid table for a number of months.

Mr Webb provided Members with an update of Wooton Farm Shop. Mr Veal suggested a similar setup in the future could be established at the Discovery Centre.

RESOLVED that the updated LEADER progress report be noted.

E 3.10 NATIONAL PARKS CONFERENCE REPORT 2017

Mr Lane told Members of the Conference he had attended with Mrs Eyre at the South Downs National Park. Mr Lane expressed to Members that various Park Authority members attending conference considered the Cotswolds to be an ideal location for a future National Park and that the Cotswolds compared very well to the South Downs. The final morning session had highlighted the need for Parks to appeal to and communicate with a more diverse and younger audience.

Mr Lane explained to Members the next conference would take place in the Yorkshire Dales in 2019 and he would pass more details on to all Members, once they were published.

E 3.11 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN FOR 2017/18-2018/19

Mr Lane informed Members the next Special Meeting in January 2018 would discuss Agri-Environment and Rural Development post-Brexit, National Parks and the Management Plan. He also reminded Members that the CPRE report due the week commencing 13th November 2017 may also be discussed.

Mr O'Sullivan enquired as to whether officers could produce a report on the communications and engagement connected to landowners and if this could be presented at the February Meeting. Mr Lane suggested that such a review should be in the context of the Communications Strategy as a whole.

RESOLVED that the updated Forward Plan for 2018 be noted.

E 3.12 OTHER BUSINESS.

There was no other business that was legally or constitutionally urgent.

The Meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and closed at 1.00 p.m.

Chairman