

MEETING OF
THE COTSWOLDS CONSERVATION BOARD
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM MEETINGS

WEDNESDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2020

Present

Brendan McCarthy (BM) (Chairman)	Rebecca Charley (RC) (Vice-Chair)
David Broad (DB)	Cate Le Grice Mack (CGM)
Paul Crossley (PC)	Norman Kay (NK)
Amanda Davis (AD)	Charles Mathew (CM)
Graham Hopkins (GH)	

Also in Attendance

Andy Parsons (Chief Executive)
Ann Wyatt (Head of Finance)
Alana Hopkins (Communications Officer)
Benjamin Dent (new Secretary of State Board Member) - observing

1. INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

- Apologies – apologies were received from Nigel Colston, Mike Dean, Ed Macalister-Smith and Clive Webster.
- Introductions and announcements – the Chairman welcomed Members to the Meeting. The Chairman thanked Ben Amor for his support and wished him well for the future.
- Declarations of interest – no interests were declared.
- Public questions – there were no public questions.

2. MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING – 27 MAY 2020

- Decision - resolved that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee Meeting held on 27 May 2020 be approved as a correct record.
- Matters Arising - the Chief Executive confirmed the following in relation to the actions arising from the previous meeting:
 - the Register of interests will be published on the new website once the website is 'live';
 - AP, BM and RC met to discuss finances and the impact of COVID 19;
 - The Kingfisher Trail project proposal had been revised and approved at the Extraordinary Meeting of the Executive Committee on 6 August;
 - Developments in relation to the A417 are addressed in the Chief Executive's Report; and
 - That the Chief Executive will re-circulate the presentation outlining Defra's initial response to the Glover Review to the Executive Committee members.

3. MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee received the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Executive Committee held on 6 August 2020.

- Decision - resolved that the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Executive Committee Meeting held on 6 August 2020 be approved as a correct record.

4. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING - 24 JUNE 2020

The Executive Committee received the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 24 June 2020.

- Matters Arising – AD commented on item 20 and will email the Chief Executive.

5. REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chief Executive set out the key actions since the last meeting. The Team were thanked for their efforts in clearing out the office and the two downstairs rooms. The impact of COVID 19 was highlighted in relation to Rural Skills and the work of the Voluntary Wardens where it is proving particularly challenging to restart guided walks. The Chief Executive set out that the focus of this meeting was to cover proposed future improvements to the financial reporting, the COVID 19 risk register which assesses risks over a 12-month period rather than the 3-5 year timeframe used for the Corporate Risk Register and the Communications Strategy which has been prepared in extraordinary times.

- Comments – (a) GH explained that there had been five major changes made to the proposed A417 scheme which are mostly positive for the CCB and that working as an integrated group (NT, NE, CCB and Glos WT) was proving very effective. GH highlighted that the 4th collaborative session with Highways England will be on the 17 September and following this meeting Highways England will issue the revised scheme for public consultation in October. There was discussion around Highways England's understanding of 'landscape-led'. GH also advised that the majority of discussions were focussed around what is essentially a new 'green' bridge at Shab Hill and that Highways England seem to understand the issues raised and the meetings had been positive. (b) CM requested more information on the Ourboretum Project and the Chief Executive provided background and highlighted that the ambition was to eventually expand outside of Gloucestershire. AD wished to thank John Mills as Planning and Landscape Officer for his work on the EV charging centre and the quality of his paper. NK asked whether the Team had returned to the office and the Chief Executive explained that the team were working remotely but able to book the office and that the position would be reviewed at the end of October.
- Decision - resolved that the paper was noted by the Executive Committee.
- Actions Arising – Chief Executive to forward the summary email re the A417 from GH to the rest of the Executive Committee.

6. QUARTER 1 FINANCIAL REPORT

The Head of Finance presented the Quarter 1 Financial Report.

- Comments – CM thanked AW for the Financial Report and the management accounts which were provided separately for Q1 (outside of the Executive Committee reporting framework). The Chairman suggested that presenting wage costs as a percentage of income would be a useful measure. CM also highlighted that the National Grid undergrounding funding and the Sherborne NT project were not yet included in the projections and this was confirmed as correct. The Head of Finance will continue to progress the change in accounting system and improvements to financial reporting.
- Decision – resolved that the paper was noted by the Executive Committee
- Actions Arising - none

7. CORPORATE RISK

The Chief Executive presented the six monthly update of the Key Risk Register and the new COVID 19 Risk Register. The Chief Executive again highlighted that there had been a light touch review of the Corporate Risk Register but full Team involvement in the development of the COVID 19 Risk Register.

- Comments – GH noted that some residual risks were still amber. This was confirmed by the Committee as being acceptable and that there could be further mitigating actions and effort put into managing these risks. GH raised the point of whether the internal audit programme could be linked to the Corporate Risk Register. The Head of Finance suggested that the idea could be developed such that the formal Internal Audit covers statutory requirements and in addition there is a board assurance review to address key risk areas. CM raised a query around maintenance liabilities in respect of the office and the Chief Executive stated this would be addressed as part of a long term review of office space. There was a discussion around diversity and the Chief Executive highlighted the upcoming social media campaign which would feature contributors from a range of backgrounds. AD shared recent observations that Bourton-on-the-Water had become a 'destination' for large families from Birmingham.
- Decision - resolved that the paper was noted by the Executive Committee.
- Actions Arising – (a) the Chief Executive will ensure the reporting of 'amber' and any new risks on the COVID 19 Risk Register at each meeting of the Executive Committee (b) AD to email details of Bourton-on-the-Water visitors to the Chief Executive so that these can be passed on the NAAONB to perhaps be used as a case study in their research around engagement.

8. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2020-23

The Communications Officer presented the Communications Strategy 2020-23 for review and approval. Key points highlighted were (a) the strategy is framed by the Glover Review concept that 'landscape is for everybody', (b) there is much better planning of social engagement, (c) better engagement with the Voluntary Wardens (d) the strategy is aligned with the Work Programme and Business Plan and (e) there is a detailed plan for year 1 only.

- Comments – the Chairman congratulated the Communications Officer and stated that it was a move in the right direction and that he liked the emphasis on social

media and the use of Voluntary Wardens as the 'frontline' and face of the Conservation Board. The Chairman questioned whether the strategy should have more 'edge' to really attract public support. PC questioned our position on copyright of the name and logo, how we generated revenue from users of the Cotswold Way and accessibility. The Chief Executive explained that Caring for the Cotswolds is our visitor giving scheme. The Head of Finance gave an update on the protection of the new name and logo. There was discussion of ensuring that the strategy support fundraising efforts. GH thanked the Communications officer for the SWOT analysis and raised the importance of a CRM system.

- Decision – to recommend to the Board for approval subject to the agreed changes being made.
- Actions Arising – (a) the Communications Officer will liaise with the Partnerships and Fundraising Officer to link the Communications Strategy to fundraising and changes made, Chairman to review before presenting the strategy to the Board in October and (b) the Chief Executive to consider a plan for implementation of a CRM system once current projects (e.g. new brand, new website, upgrade to accounting system, Rural Skills website and booking system) have been implemented.

9. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

The Chief Executive presented the proposed changes to the schedule of Board and Executive Meetings for review and approval.

- Comments – NK advised that the May Executive Committee meeting should be held towards the end of the month to follow elections and the Head of Finance highlighted the need to allow for the external audit process.
- Decision – approved.
- Actions Arising – the Chief Executive to consider the options for the exact timing of the May Executive meeting.

10. INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN

The Head of Finance presented the proposed work programme for the 2020/21 Internal Audit for review and approval.

- Comments – a discussion was had around the use of collection boxes and the 'non-cash' alternatives and the Communications Officer advised that this was being looked at in detail for example for use along the Cotswold Way.
- Decision – approved.
- Actions Arising – none.

11. LONE WORKING POLICY

The Chief Executive presented the Lone Working Policy for review and approval.

- Comments – CGM welcomed the introduction of the policy and stated that it was very concise. AD queried whether there was a safeguarding policy in place.
- Decision – resolved that the Lone Working Policy be approved.
- Actions Arising – the Chief Executive to complete the drafting of a safeguarding policy for consideration at the next Executive Committee meeting.

12. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

The Head of Finance presented an overview of the Q1 KPI data.

- Comments – There was a short discussion around what was included in the engagement figures and RC queried whether the cost saving of moving to electronic Board papers had been calculated. The Chief Executive confirmed the calculation of the engagement figures and stated that the saving was both the cost of paper and associated printing costs.
- Decision – resolved that the KPIs be noted.
- Actions Arising – none.

13. WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

The Chief Executive Officer presented a review of progress against the Annual Work Programme and highlighted that this had also been used to update Defra and that it shows the incredible amount of work achieved by the team during the COVID 19 pandemic.

- Comments – the Chairman stated that there were no questions and that the current pressures on the organisation were accepted.
- Decision – resolved that the Work Programme be noted.
- Actions Arising – none.

14. BUSINESS PLAN FRAMEWORK 2020-23

The Chief Executive presented a review of progress against the three-year Business Plan Framework.

- Comments – NK questioned whether work had started on the Environmental Performance Policy and the Chief Executive confirmed it was still the plan to complete this year. AD highlighted the need to begin work on health and wellbeing initiatives particularly in light of the COVID 19 recovery. The Chairman queried whether a Health and Wellbeing Working Group was needed and this was agreed by the Chief Executive. CGM commented that we should be looking at what makes functional communities in our response to the housing review. There was a discussion whether at the end of the three year timeframe of the Business Plan we would be on track towards becoming a National Park and the work that needed to be done with stakeholders. The Chairman concluded that although we have a clear ambition to secure NP status, we need to be clear about our role in ensuring a full and expansive debate is undertaken to help identify the issues and develop the rationale for such a change.
- Decision – resolved that the Business Plan Framework be noted.
- Actions Arising – (a) the Chief Executive Officer to consider establishing a Health and Wellbeing Working Group and to provide an update at the next Executive Committee meeting, (b) the Planning and Landscape Officer to respond to CGM re the housing review.

15. GENERAL UPDATES

The Chief Executive presented the General Updates Paper and also stated that (a) the involvement of the Conservation Board in the Evenlode project may not be as planned due to changes in timing and other projects, (b) a meeting was held with Thames Water

and a bid will be submitted in due course and (c) a bid will be made to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund.

- Comments – none.
- Decision – it was resolved that the General Updates Paper be noted.
- Actions Arising – none.

16. COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS

The Chief Executive presented a summary of the comments, compliments and complaints received by the Board during 2019/20

- Comments – the Chairman stated that this illustrates the level of public engagement which is welcome. CGM highlighted that there appeared to be a lack of awareness of who to complain to.
- Decision – resolved that the summary of the comments, compliments and complaints be noted.
- Actions Arising – the Chief Executive Officer to change the reference to ‘Director’ in the associated policy.

17. FORWARD PLANNING

- (a) Draft Agenda - October 2020 Board Meeting
- (b) Draft Agenda - November 2020 Executive Committee Meeting

18. OTHER BUSINESS

- CM stated (a) his involvement in the Longmead restoration project and that he had initiated contact with Glorious Cotswolds Grasslands, (b) that the Conservation Board should be aware of the Rollrights road scheme consultation by Oxfordshire County Council and (c) that the Conservation Board should be aware of the work of Windrush Against Sewage Pollution (WASP).
- The Chief Executive stated that he had been pleased to receive an email from Gloucestershire County Council to confirm a 5% increase in their contribution to the Conservation Board and that this would be fixed for three years.
- The Chairman queried when the first meeting for the Kingfisher Trail would be held and the Chief Executive confirmed that this was on 10 September, that minutes would be circulated and that contracts had now been signed.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 18 November 2020 - 10.00am to 1.00pm. Meeting location to be confirmed subject to COVID 19 situation.

The Meeting commenced at 10.00am and closed at 1.00pm

Chairman