

## REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**Summary:** To (1) present a new timeline for the production of the Management Plan, (2) give the Board an update on property matters, (3) give an overview of our work on Climate Change, (4) provide a high level summary of activity since the last Board meeting in February 2022 and (5) outline the key decisions/ discussions required from this meeting.

**Recommendation:** That the Board approves the new timeline for the Management Plan and notes all other sections of the report.

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

## MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Introduction

1. The current Management Plan was adopted in September 2018. There is a legal requirement to review it and have an updated plan in place within five years, so we need to have a revised plan in place by September 2023. This revised plan would then normally run until 2028.
2. The national situation concerning National Landscape/AONB management planning has changed rapidly and extensively since a production schedule and issues paper for a Cotswolds plan were presented to the Board in February 2022.

### A changing situation

3. Most AONBs are scheduled to produce a plan to run from 2024 to 2029, a year later than our production cycle.
4. Conversations with the National Association of AONB's indicate that most AONBs would also wish to delay by a year to produce plans that run from 2025 to 2030, two years later than our current schedule. Defra and Natural England support this delay and are currently working on new advice on delaying Management Plans.
5. There are many reasons why this delay is widely supported by AONB Boards/Partnerships and Government bodies:
  - Management Plans running from 2025 to 2030 would be aligned with the timeframe of the government's 25 Year Environment Plan.
  - Natural England are working on new guidance on Management Plan production and structure. This delay would allow for a new cohort of plans to be drawn up following its publication.
  - Defra are working on new targets and policies for Protected Landscapes in response to the Landscape's Review and Natural England are working on a new Strategy for Protected Landscapes. It makes sense for the next cohort of plans to be produced in the light of these.
  - The government response to the Landscapes Review is likely to entail significant changes to the purposes of designation for Protected Landscapes which will have consequences for Management Plans.

6. We are also in the midst of wider significant policy developments both nationally and locally, the outcomes of which may significantly influence a Cotswolds Management Plan.
  - The role of protected areas in delivering the UK government's policy to protect 30% of all four nations' land and seas for nature by 2030 ('30x30').
  - Our current work on better understanding the local requirements for climate change mitigation and their impacts.
  - The development and publication of Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
  - Further development and roll-out of new funding mechanisms for environmental management and nature recovery including: Environmental Land Management, Biodiversity Net Gain and Payment for Ecosystem services.

#### **Next steps**

7. In order to accommodate all of the above and also to provide for continuity in having a functional Management Plan it is proposed to undertake a limited interim review to produce a plan for publication in 2023, but to only run that plan for two years. This will allow for a further thorough review that can fully consider all of the above leading to the publication of a fully revised plan in 2025. This new plan will then be aligned with most other plans and the 25 Year Environment Plan.
8. This proposal is permissible within the legislation as the Countryside and Rights of Way Act states that Management Plan reviews need to be at "intervals of not more than five years".
9. Discussions with partners and within the team have indicated that there are limited changes that should helpfully be made now. The interim review will be limited to:
  - Inclusion of our new vision
  - Removal of the ambitions
  - A technical review of the wording of the policies
10. A revised production schedule, *Appendix A*, has been produced. It is similar to the schedule presented to the Board in February 2022 and still includes two full six-week consultation periods for partners.
11. The production of this plan is subject to a number of legal requirements including issuing formal notification to Natural England and local authorities.
12. Subject to the extent of revision between plans it may also be necessary to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening assessment. Advice will be sought as to their need for this interim review.

**The Board is asked to approve the new timeline to produce a Management Plan for the period 2023-25**

## **PROPERTY MATTERS**

### **The Old Prison**

13. The Chief Executive and the Chair have informed the landlords (Friends of the Cotswolds) that we will be exercising the lease break in July 2023. Formal written notification will be served at least six months prior to this date.
14. A condition survey has been completed on behalf of the Board and the breakdown of remedial works and associated 'estimated' costs were shared with the landlord in February 2022.
15. The landlord has now engaged their own surveyor to review the Board's survey and they visited the premises in June.
16. It is hoped that a clear way forward will be agreed in the next few weeks.

### **New Premises**

17. The Chief Executive is currently reviewing various options for relocating the Board's offices from July 2023.
18. Consideration is being given to single or multiple locations, giving thought to the large geographic spread of the team and the size of the CNL (NB – the current thinking is for two bases).
19. Key requirements include:
  - Flexible 'hot desking' space for up to 15 desks (hybrid working arrangements has removed the need for one desk per person)
  - Meeting space for 1-1s, small meetings and larger gatherings (preferably)
  - Kitchen and breakout space
  - Adequate car parking space (ideally with EV charging and bike racks)
  - Connections to public transport (acknowledging the limitations in the Cotswolds National Landscape)
  - Cost effectiveness (rents, service charges, utilities, etc.) and without the constraints/ liabilities of being fully repairing
20. The Chief Executive believes that the next move will, most likely, be for the short to mid-term (e.g. two to four years). This will give the organisation time to fully assess its office and storage needs for the longer term, once it has vacated the Old Prison.
21. The Chair and the team are regularly updated on progress and consulted on options.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE AND NET ZERO**

22. Since our last Board Meeting in February 2022, we have appointed Maaïke (Mike) Elliott as our new Climate Action Lead. Mike previously worked for UK Research and Innovation's Global Food Security programme, where she focused on the link between climate change and our food system, liaising with policy makers, industry and government at national level, as well as the research community and the public.
23. To set us on the right path to achieving our [Climate Crisis Commitment](#), Mike's first step is to help us understand the current baseline for greenhouse gas (GHG)

emissions, carbon storage and carbon sequestration in the Cotswolds National Landscape and identify interventions that will help us to achieve Net Zero by 2050.

24. At the May Executive Committee, Dr Dmitry Yumashev from Small World Consulting presented his team's research quantifying the Cotswolds National Landscape's baseline GHG emissions/ storage/ sequestration, as well as a research-led pathway to achieving Net Zero in the Cotswolds by 2050. Small World Consulting has already completed this same analysis for all 15 UK National Parks.
25. Mike will circulate the final report to all Board Members as soon as it is published.
26. Mike will be working with colleagues and key stakeholders to collaboratively identify the most suitable pathway for the Cotswolds National Landscape and will be presenting her early thinking at the October Board meeting.

### **KEY ENGAGEMENTS (Chief Executive)**

- A417 Missing Link:
  - 3 March – Examination Hearing (Environmental Matters)
  - 17 March – Designated Funds Partnership Panel meeting
  - 4 April - Strategic Stakeholder Panel meeting
  - 5 April – Statement of Common Ground meeting
  - 6 April – Designated Funds (processes workshop)
  - 9 May - Strategic Stakeholder Panel meeting
  - 6 June - Strategic Stakeholder Panel meeting
- 10 March – attended the Cotswold Lakes Trust, Challenge Fund Appeal Reception
- 12 March – talk given to Brimpsfield and Mid-Cotswold Garden Society
- 14 March – met with National Trust to discuss various matters, attendees: Nick Droy (Assistant Director), Jonny Loose (GM, Cotswolds), Sarah Cook (Project Manager)
- 16 March – with Mark Connelly, presented to the Blockley Forum (farming theme)
- 21 March – attended the FarmED Funders and Steering Group meeting
- 22 March – attended a Cotswold Integrated Localities Partnership meeting
- 31 March – attended an “All England Strategic Landscape Mapping Assessment” workshop
- 4 April – site visit to Southill Solar Farm
- 13 April – meeting with Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, MP
- 3 May – catch up meeting with Kathy O’Leary, CEO at Stroud District Council
- 5 May – attended the Visitor Economy and Tourism Business Group meeting
- 10 May – introductory meeting with Estelle Bailey, CEO at BBOWT
- 20 May – with James Webb, Alana Hopkins, Becky Jones and Margaret Reid, met with the Gloucestershire Rural Communities Council team to discuss potential partnership ideas
- 7 June – met with Mike Dawson (CEO) and Cllrs Bird and Gore at Tewkesbury Borough Council

### **OVERVIEW OF THIS BOARD MEETING – 21 JUNE**

The key items of focus at this meeting are:

- Items 7 and 9 – to understand the year-end position of the organisation.

- Item 8a – to review, and if in agreement adopt, a new Volunteer Policy.
- Item 9d – the review, and if in agreement approve, a new approach for calculating Board Member allowances.

**SUPPORTING PAPERS**

- Appendix A – Management Plan 2023-25 Timeline

JUNE 2022