

MINUTES OF THE 81st MEETING OF THE NAAONB MANAGEMENT BOARD OF TRUSTEES

HELD AT LOCKSIDE MEETING ROOMS BIRMINGHAM
THURSDAY 31st OCTOBER 2019

Attendees - Board Members Philip Hygate, Rose Day, Chris Woodley-Stewart, James Williamson, Nick Holliday, Lucy Barron, Mat Roberts, Paul Walton

Attendees - Staff Howard Davies - Chief Executive, Richard Clarke - Policy & Development Manager, Clare Elbourne, Administrative Officer, Ian Rappel – Wales Development Manager

Attendees - Observers Stuart Pasley – Natural England, Saliya Jayaweera – Defra, Carole Rothwell – Natural Resources Wales

Apologies – Denise Hewlett

The meeting started at 1.05 with thanks given to both Rose Day and Mat Roberts for time spent as trustees for the NAAONB. Formal thanks will be given at the upcoming AGM at which they will both be stepping down from their trustee roles. Congratulations were recorded for Amber Carter on the birth of her son Felix.

1. Apologies

Apologies have been received from Denise Hewlett, NAAONB Trustee.

2. Declarations of Interest

None received.

3. Minutes and matters arising

The Chairman called for any errata in the minutes of the previous meetings. These were noted and the minutes have been amended accordingly.

Minutes of the 80th meeting of the NAAONB Board of Trustees

Resolved that with the amendment of a few typos, the minutes be accepted as a true report.

Agreed nem. con.

4. Sustainability and Governance Report

Richard Clarke reported that after a year of engagement with AONB staff, trustees and partners, Matthews Associates have produced their final draft report on the Sustainability and Governance Report. It has been agreed to hold a workshop with trustees on December 11th in Birmingham with the aim of discussing how to take forward the recommendations in the report in the light of the Glover Review of Designated Landscapes. Resources for Change will facilitate the meeting.

A summary of the report will be presented at the AGM in November by Lindsey Simpson from Matthews Associates.

Stuart Pasley arrived during this item.

5. AGM 2019 – Agenda and Papers

The agenda and papers for the 2019 AGM were presented by Howard Davies.

James Williamson raised a couple of queries about the financial report (item 6) – these have been passed on to Whittingham Riddell for clarification.

Howard Davies stressed that his CEO's report (item 7) was very much a draft and he welcomed comments and additions from staff or trustees.

Following the introduction of item 8 (election of trustees) there was a long discussion on how best to recruit new trustees in the future. At the AGM Mat Roberts and Rose Day will stand down – Nick Holliday has agreed to be co-opted for a further year. Each trustee was given time to express their opinions on the issue of trustee recruitment/co-opting. Questions centred on whether/how to co-opt new trustees in the short to medium term and how to move towards a more diverse board (following the conclusions of both the Matthews report and the Glover Review) and how to identify and fill skills gaps within the board. It was suggested that a governance working group could be established at the workshop on December 11th. It was clarified that three trustees or a third of board members were needed for a meeting to be quorate.

Action: HD to look at Mem & Arts document to check whether trustees can be co-opted at any point of the year and to check/update the document to allow trustees who are dialing into a meeting to be considered present and contributing to the number of trustees in order to be quorate.

Proposal: the Board resolves to undertake to develop a recruitment process for Trustees to the Board which aims to establish and implement acceptable best practice. Also the NAAONB Equality and Diversity policies and Mem & Arts document need to be reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose.

Proposer: Mat Roberts

Seconded: James Williamson

Against: None

Motion carried

Ian Rappel joined the meeting during this item

6. Organisational Values and Beliefs

Howard Davies presented this paper. He said the organisation's values and beliefs had never previously been written down. He welcomed feedback. It was suggested that the document should be more explicit about the belief that nature recovery and climate change were the greatest challenges currently faced. Howard responded that whilst these may be the priorities for the work programme, the underpinning organisational beliefs and values remained as set out in the paper. It was argued though that this language might unnecessarily date the document.

Resolved: that this paper be accepted with minor modifications

Agreed: nem.com

Action: remove the word 'conflict' in the teamwork section and add 'trustees' in the last paragraph. Lucy Barron to draft something on the importance of advocacy in the 'Direction' section.

7. The Chairman's Conference

It was noted that given the upcoming General Election it was very unlikely that Lord Gardiner would be able to attend the Chairman's Conference this year.

8. ELMs Tests and Trials

Richard Clarke reported that he had received a contract from Defra for the Tests and Trials work. This needs to be signed and returned within a few days. The upfront payments from Defra are to fund the National Association's delivery of the Farming for the Nation project and the National Association will distribute funding on to the 12 participating AONB partnerships – the total is £990,000 for 18 months. A very successful workshop was delivered the previous week by Robert Deane (Rural Focus) and Paul Tiplady who will be facilitating aspects of the project on behalf of the NAAONB.

It was recorded that thanks should be expressed to Richard Clarke and Marie Micol for their efforts in getting the project to this stage.

There was a discussion around the various risks connected to the project.

Proposal: To accept the contract once it had been adequately scrutinized by James Williamson, Howard Davies and Richard Clarke (Proposer: Lucy Barron)

Seconder: Rose Day

Agreed: nem.com

9. Glover Review

Howard Davies reported that all recommendations from the National Association had made their way into the final report. He stated that the process had been iterative and work to support the delivery of the recommendations is ongoing. Lucy Barron wanted thanks recorded for the hard work of all staff in influencing the report.

Howard reported that the National Association has become part of a coalition of NGOs set up to help take the recommendations of the report forward. At a recent meeting of the coalition there was unanimous agreement on 4 key areas: the crucial importance of nature recovery and climate change; the need for greater inclusion (serving the whole nation); the need for resources and the need to strengthen the duty of regard.

(Item 16 – brought forward) Defra Report

Saliya Jayaweera gave a verbal update. He started by saying that he had taken over from Dan Jones who is now working full time on the Glover Review. Saliya will be leading on sponsorship and he talked about the 4 year AONB settlements which were now coming to an end. Because of the General Election, Defra would not be able to give any exact amounts in terms of commitments moving forward into the next FY. He promised to work closely with Howard Davies to ensure that AONBs are given sufficient communication to enable them to feel confident about continued funding. There was a plea for clarity on this issue to avoid having to put AONB staff on redundancy notices.

In terms of the Glover review it was reported that there will be a 12 month period to prepare a response and then a further 2-3 years to start progressing key issues. Trustees raised the question of why this would take so long and stressed the need to identify things that Defra could do immediately in light of the review.

(Item 17 – brought forward) Natural England Report

Stuart Pasley reported for Natural England. They are working through the implications of the Glover Review. This will take time due to the knock on (domino) effect of the recommendations. Natural England are keen to develop a collaborative conversation around the review and there have been suggestions of a greater role for Natural England in light of the report's recommendations.

(Item 18 – brought forward) Natural Resources Wales report

Carole Rothwell reported that NRW have been commissioned by the Welsh Government to examine the potential implications of the Glover report for Wales. They are thinking of the National Landscapes Service in terms of a collaborative undertaking rather than a new body.

10. Communications Update

There was a discussion around the paper prepared by Ruth Colbridge which outlined the roles for a new communications/advocacy post which is planned to begin at the start of next financial year. The recommendations were welcomed with the caveat that a lot was going to be expected of a role that is 0.7 FTE. Perhaps the scope of the role should be reduced or the hours increased if the budget would allow for this. Howard Davies clarified that this role would not include running conference as had happened with the previous communications manager post.

Proposal: To accept the recommendations of the paper in principle subject to consideration of how much was expected (Proposer James Williamson)

Seconder: Rose Day

Agreed: nem.com

11. The Colchester Declaration Update

Chris Woodley-Stewart reported on the progress of the Colchester Declaration and the much greater acceptance that nature recovery must be at the heart of what AONB teams do. A working group has been established and there are plans for funding proposals to be submitted to the lottery (for approx. £250,000) with the possibility of then applying for a much larger grant (£4 million) from the Horizon Fund for pilot approaches.

Resolved that this paper be noted.

Chris Woodley-Stewart and Carole Rothwell left after this item

12. Business Plan and Budget Update

The main issue for this item was whether to go ahead with the 2020 conference despite the lack of a guaranteed grant from Defra for FY 19/20.

Action: HD to look at cancellation charges for the conference venue

Proposal: to go ahead with the conference in spite of the funding risk ((Proposer Mat Roberts)

Seconder: James Williamson

Agreed: nem.com

13. Strategic Risk

Howard Davies reported on the current risks and said that a 'live' document of current risks was on Basecamp. It was noted that the risks in the Financial report were wrong and needed correcting.

Resolved that this report be noted.

Action: CE to proof read the Financial Report and liaise with Whittingham Riddell over any changes

14. Management Accounts

This report was introduced by Clare Elbourne. Income from conference was higher than planned this year due to higher numbers attending. Also salary costs are predicted to be lower than budgeted as Amber Carter is on maternity leave and the advocacy post will not be filled till the next financial year. It is planned to invest in staff development from the salary budget.

The question over the need for VAT registration was raised in the light of the Defra contract for the Tests and Trials work.

Proposal: if professional advice recommends VAT registration then this should be done as a matter of urgency (Proposer: James Williamson)

Seconder: Rose Day

Agreed: nem.com

Action: document approach for when a member pulls out – to be carried forward to next meeting's actions (carried forward from previous meeting)

15. NAAONB Staff and Trustee Activity Report

It was noted that the full RAG document is available electronically.

Ian Rappel gave an update on his new role and progress on consultations which have helped to start to draw the Welsh AONBs together.

Richard Clarke reported that the Future Landscapes project ends next month. There will be an event in November for all participants to think about how to take the learning forward.

Howard Davies reported on the successful Arts Council bid and that a contract would be issued after interviews in early November.

Resolved that this report be noted.

Meeting closed 4.25pm

Dates of next meetings for information

Action Point: CE to arrange dates for future meetings in consultation with trustees and staff