

MINUTES OF THE 75th MEETING OF THE NAAONB MANAGEMENT BOARD

Held on Thursday 12th October 2017 at 13.15 in Birmingham

Invitees - Board Members Philip Hygate, Rose Day, Chris Woodley-Stewart,

Nick Holliday, Mat Roberts, Paul Walton, Lucy Barron, Denise Hewlett, James Williamson

Invitees - Staff Howard Davies - Chief Executive, Jill Smith - Communications & Events Manager,
Richard Clarke - Policy & Development Manager, Amber Carter - Office & Membership Manager

Invitees - Observers Lisa Tomos - NRW, David Henshilwood - NE, Mehdi Kurrimbux - Defra

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Chris Woodley-Stewart, Nick Holliday, and representing Defra at this meeting was Dan Jones in Mehdi Kurrimbux's place. Denise Hewlett and Mat Roberts were not in attendance. Jill Smith attended via Skype.

2. Minutes and matters arising

The Chairman called for any errata in the minutes of the previous meetings.

A typo on page 5, under item 9 was highlighted.

Resolved that with amendments, the minutes be accepted as a true report.

Matters arising

The Chief Executive updated the Board on progress, working with National Parks, towards a paper on post-Brexit agri-support. At a previous Board meeting it was suggested and agreed that funds be taken from NAAONB reserves to employ an external contractor to undertake this work, however the CE explained that it would be more efficient to carry out the work in-house. Consequently, there has been no draw on reserves.

Richard Clarke updated the Board on the work commissioned by the AONB Family to draw together existing guidance documents for management planning. This work is now complete and whilst not endorsed by Defra and Natural England has been broadly welcomed.

3. Meeting dates and timing

This report was introduced by Amber Carter

A discussion was had as to the time of meetings, it was generally agreed that the timing is convenient and future meetings will have an afternoon start time (meeting will commence with lunch).

The Chief Executive reminded the Board that there is an offer, from Mat Roberts, of meeting space at a new Interserve owned complex which is being built at Birmingham International.

ACTION Amber Carter to doodle poll dates for future meetings.

4. Draft Business Plan 2018-20 and Budget 2018-19 **CONFIDENTIAL**

This report was introduced by Philip and the session was held in confidence.

5. Chairmen's Conference 2017

This report was introduced by Jill Smith

The invited speakers were discussed and there were several suggestions of others who could be approached.

Lucy Barron suggested that effort should be made to attract a speaker from the north of England as current suggestions have a southern focus., Paul Burgess was suggested for this.

The timing of the appearance of the Minister was discussed and, with encouragement from Dan Jones, it was agreed to bring the Minister earlier in the proceedings.

ACTION Jill Smith to approach speakers as suggested and invite the Minister to speak earlier.

6. AGM 2017 - Agenda and Papers

This report was introduced by the Chief Executive

Item 1 **Apologies**

Item 2 **Introduction of current NAAONB Board members with their portfolios** - verbal

Item 3 **AGM November 24th 2016 - Minutes and matters arising**

Item 4 **Review of membership rates** - for agreement

It was suggested that average increase in the Consumer Price Index be calculated at the end of December, rather than March.

Item 5 **Election of Trustees and appointment of auditors** - verbal

Discussions were had around this item outside of the meeting and an appropriate way forward has been reached.

Item 6 **Chairman's Annual Report 2016-17** (to be prepared prior to the AGM).

Item 7 **Company Secretary's Financial Report 2016-17**

The report was summarised by Jill Smith, the Chief Executive added that the level of reserves is in line with policy. A surplus has been transferred to reserves, however, the NAAONB should be mindful that this represents an underspend due to lack of capacity.

There was a query around the increase of membership fees in light of reporting a surplus and a good level of reserves. This was discussed and it was suggested that it should be made clear that there is intent to review the NAAONB reserves policy.

Item 8 **CEO's Report of work completed for NAAONB Business Plan Oct 2016 - Oct 2017**
(to be prepared prior to the AGM).

Item 9 **AOB**

7. Strategic Risk

This report was introduced by the Chief Executive, who summarized the report.

Richard Clarke updated the Board on the recent submission of an HLF resilience bid.

There was a brief discussion around the risk involved with new data protection legislation due to come in in May 2018.

8. Management Accounts

This report was introduced by Jill Smith, who summarized the report.

9. NAAONB Portfolio & Staff Activity Report

This report was introduced by the Chief Executive, who called for a steer on how the Board would like to receive these updates from staff in future, as the current method is not fit for purpose. It was generally agreed that there is need for the report to be more focussed on outcomes and implications rather than activity.

The “to watch” items on the dashboard were highlighted as not being a concern as they refer to outdated targets. The “at risk” item, the governance handbook was agreed as no longer a priority as the Charities Commission have now produced guidelines on this. It was suggested that the Charities Commission guidance be adopted by the NAAONB.

Resolved that the Charities Commission guidance be adopted by the NAAONB.

Agreed: unanimously

Richard Clarke reported on his work with the House of Commons on the NERC Act and the welcome position the NAAONB is in to influence things.

The Chairman reported on a very successful Chilterns Society event which he attended, and The Chief Executive spoke on a theme of the importance of natural beauty.

10. Defra Report

This report was introduced by Dan Jones, he reported that Defra are ambitiously aiming to get the 25 Year Plan published before the year is out and an agriculture bill on future agriculture support mechanisms is to be published soon after the 25 year plan. Dan suggested the Chief Executive speak to the Defra team working on this to present the offer from NAAONB.

ACTION Howard Davies to progress this meeting

Defra have set up the working group on performance metrics and they have a date in the diary for November. There are no plans for a spending review at this stage.

The Shropshire Hills Conservation Board decision should be made soon.

Lord Gardiner has now had successful visits to Cranborne Chase AONB and Tamar Valley AONB and he is interested in the designation process, which Defra are working on with Natural England.

The Chief Executive highlighted that a sub group has been developed to specifically look at the agricultural issues and it is proposed that the questions posed by Defra will be shared with them with responses fed back to Defra to support the AONB offer.

11. Natural England Report

This report was introduced by David Henshilwood. He reported that the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths boundary extension will be going out to statutory consultation after Christmas.

The Defra online consultation facility, called Citizen Space, is being used for this and it will help to collate feedback.

There is an ongoing review of the way landscape designations are carried out, the terms of reference have been presented in the paper. They are undergoing a modernisation of the process and are developing a new way of prioritising proposals. John Butterfield is full time on this review and they are looking for another member of staff to work on this.

The Chief Executive added that there is a current consultation on raising the value of special qualities beyond the boundaries. The NAAONB welcomes this discussion with Natural England as NAAONB is supporting the AONB Family in this area by producing management plan guidance, but, this is difficult as it is not the statutory advisor.

12. Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru - Natural Resources Wales Report

This report was introduced by Lisa Tomas. NRW is developing a set of area statements which will go to informal public consultation. Local authorities are producing wellbeing plans which statutory agencies, of which NRW is one, have a role in signing off.

NRW are looking at a new collaborative way to deal with funding. This reflects the requirements of Welsh Government's natural resources policy.

Welsh Government is currently consulting on the delivery of sustainable management for natural resources which opens doors on a number of proposals.

There will be a round table discussion on post-brexit agriculture, who should be represented at this is currently being established.

The Chief Executive added that the English offer has been shared with Welsh AONBs and National Parks in order that a single offer can be produced. A meeting with Peter McDonald is being arranged. NRW is revising management planning guidance fit for AONBs and National Parks.

The Chief Executive highlighted that Wales and England are two different very different political and legislative worlds. A question for future meetings is how NAAONB trustees want to work as a UK charity, recognising the increasing influence of devolution.

AOB

Lucy Barron offered to work on a review of the Landscapes for Life Awards with the current portfolio holder - Chris Woodley-Stewart as the process and criteria need reviewing,

ACTION Lucy Barron and Chris Woodley-Stewart to bring paper on L4L Awards to next Board meeting.

The Chief Executive highlighted the need to begin planning the L4L Conference 2018 and 2019. Kent AONB Partnership have offered to work with NAAONB around the 2018 conference and 2019 is the 10 year anniversary of the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act It should be a celebration of natural beauty and planning should begin now to secure appropriate speakers.

Jill Smith gave a summary of feedback of Conference 2017, there was a general feeling of value for money - great content, though, not impressed with the venue or food. The field trips are missed - there were comments about value of fieldtrips and seeing the sharp end of delivery. The feedback

also noted that there is little time to reflect at conference without the field trips. The Chief Executive commented that it is important that if field trips are revisited in another format, and their cost needs to be clear.

Richard Clarke queried the level of feedback received on outcomes, such as changed behaviours.

Jill Smith responded that this was reflected in the feedback.

Meeting ended 16.10

