

MINUTES OF THE 80th MEETING OF THE NAAONB MANAGEMENT BOARD OF TRUSTEES

HELD AT LOCKSIDE MEETING ROOMS BIRMINGHAM
HELD ON THURSDAY 13TH JUNE 2019

Attendees - Board Members Philip Hygate, Rose Day, Chris Woodley-Stewart, James Williamson, Nick Holliday, Mat Roberts, Paul Walton (Skype), Denise Hewlett (Skype).

Attendees - Staff Howard Davies - Chief Executive, Richard Clarke - Policy & Development Manager, Clare Elbourne, Administrative Officer, Amber Carter - Office & Membership Manager.

Attendees - Observers Alison Chapman – Natural England, Dan Jones – Defra (Skype)

Speakers – Simon Matthews and Lindsey Simpson

1. Apologies

Apologies have been received from Lucy Barron, NAAONB Trustee, and Carole Rothwell - NRW Observer.

2. Declarations of Interest

None received.

3. Minutes and matters arising

The Chairman called for any errata in the minutes of the previous meetings. At the meeting it was clarified that the term 'nem.com' means that there are no dissenters rather than unanimous.

Minutes of the 79th 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.

Matters arising

Item 5 – The Bowland Award – checked, it is only AONB members who can have a vote

Item 7 – Review of Insurances – Howard Davies has been in touch with BHIB insurers with regards to increased turnover and the premium has been altered accordingly.

4. Glover Review Update

Howard Davies gave an update on the progress of the Glover Review. He and several lead officers have met with Julian Glover. Indications are that the review could recommend the creation of a single body to represent protected landscapes. The review team are travelling to the US to meet with the National Park Federation to better understand how the single body works in the US. Other observations by the review panel include that the marine environment has not been adequately addressed by the protected landscapes system in the UK and that AONBs and National Park Authorities have very different cultures. The current publication date looks to be around September 2019. Government will need to respond to the report but it is not clear, at this stage, who will do this.

Resolved that this paper be noted.

Chris Woodley-Stewart and Rose Day arrived during this item.

5. Sustainability and Governance Draft Final Report

Simon Matthews and Lindsey Simpson presented the interim findings of the Sustainability and Governance Report. In terms of feedback about the NAAONB from AONB members key points included: recognition that the NAAONB is trusted and knowledgeable and doing a good job within the resources available – it is clear that Howard Davies has strong support personally from the membership, although there was some feeling that there is an over-reliance on the Chief Executive and that other staff members and trustees could step forward and become more visible. Desire to see more communications work (Newsletter and/or chief exec blog) – Chris Woodley-Stewart made the point that this should not be communication for communication's sake. One of the key issues for individual AONBs was the security of future funding which provoked a discussion about whether there is a tendency to be more worried about institutional security rather than threats to the environment.

Simon Matthews also raised a concern that had been highlighted by Roger Taylor, their charity expert about whether the NAAONB was truly aligned with its charitable purpose as an environmental charity. Would it be more accurate to say that NAAONB is an umbrella organization that delivers environmental benefits through its members rather than directly? Lindsey reported that there were three main possible courses of action in light of this concern: 1) for the NAAONB to remain as it is 2) to split the environmental and umbrella functions and 3) Become a Community Interest Company or something similar. The consultants suggested that this is a serious issue but board members contended that a serious issue does not equate to a serious risk. There is also a question of whether the NAAONB are maximizing the benefits of being a charity, in terms of fundraising and expanding membership.

The consultants are still in the process of finishing the work and completing the final report.

Resolved that this paper be noted.

Denise Hewlett and Dan Jones joined the meeting by Skype during this item

{13. Defra Report – moved forward}

Dan Jones presented a report from Defra. He apologized for the delay and confusion around the administration of the tests and trials funding. They will be looking at the AONB proposals for the scheme soon. He reported that there have been some concerns raised over double funding – i.e. that Defra core funding is being used to raise more money from Defra. There was a discussion around the possible reputational damage to AONBs if funding for the tests and trials work would now not be forthcoming after previous positive indications.

He also reported that they are preparing for the next spending review. Howard Davies asked if they was any feel for when the next grant agreements would be in place. Dan said that he wasn't able to give a timetable.

Dan Jones left the meeting after this item

6. Landscapes for Life Conference 2019

This report was introduced by Chris Woodley-Stewart, he reported that in term of income this has been the most successful conference so far and the point at which the conference breaks even had already been met. It had also beaten the sponsorship record. Howard expressed his thanks and said that this was the earliest that the NAAONB had been able to relax in terms of the finance.

Resolved that this paper be noted.

7. The Colchester Declaration

Howard Davies presented the reasoning behind the proposed Colchester Declaration. Although some AONB teams are doing a good job encouraging nature recovery, others have not been as active and it is thought that one of the key findings of the Glover Review will be that protected areas are not doing enough for nature. The idea of some sort of declaration was raised at the lead officer meeting in March 2019. The intention is to prepare a draft declaration which will be agreed at the Landscapes for Life conference in July 2019 and then between July and December 2019 to develop and agree a timetable for implementation. There was strong support from the Board for the proposal. Chris Woodley-Stewart is to be the board sponsor.

Resolved that this proposal be supported

Proposed Rose Day

Seconded Mat Roberts

Agreed nem.com

8. AONBs in Wales – an update

Howard Davies reported that the Welsh Government's Valued and Resilient statement gave greater priority to National Parks and AONBs. Howard has managed to secure £100,000 for a two year post of Wales Development Manager and Ian Rappel has been appointed. Ian will not be able to start in post till September 2019 but will be at this year's Landscapes for Life conference in July.

Resolved that this paper be noted.

9. Management Accounts

This report was introduced by Amber Carter. The only changes to budgetary expectations at this point were that Cumbria County Council have withdrawn their membership and that the new agency level membership of £4500 has not yet been used – this was created at the request of NRW but they have not, as yet, taken up membership.

Chris Woodley-Stewart asked for details of Cumbria County Council's decision. (He has subsequently persuaded them to change their decision.

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

Resolved that this paper be noted.

10. Strategic Risk

Howard Davies presented a paper on the strategic risk register and highlighted the top three greatest risks.

Resolved that this paper be noted.

11. Post Brexit Legislative Framework

Howard Davies reported that the Agriculture Bill is currently waiting for reading after the committee stage. Richard Clarke reported on the tests and trials work. A lot of work had been done on the proposals and then earlier this year the treasury put a block on all the funding. Unclear at this stage what is happening. Also the Environment Bill won't be agreed before Brexit.

Resolved that this report be noted.

12. NAAONB Staff and Trustee Activity Report

Richard Clarke reported that the HLF funded project Taking the Lead was going well and that six Topic Working Groups will be presenting their work at Conference.

Resolved that this report be noted.

13. Defra Report – verbal (presented earlier in the meeting)

14. Natural England Report - verbal

This report was introduced by Alison Chapman. She reported that they currently have proposals for 17 new designations; the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths extension is top of that list. Rose Day asked what had happened to other areas on the list. Alison Chapman said she will talk to John Butterfield about this. Howard Davies asked for formal feedback on the recent meeting with Natural England on nature recovery.

Resolved that this report be noted.

15. Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru - Natural Resources Wales Report

Carole Rothwell had been unable to attend the meeting due to travel problems caused by flooding but she had sent a written report which was read by Howard Davies.

Resolved that this report be noted.

AOB

Howard Davies presented a proposed accord with National Parks England. NPE have said they want to re-energize the accord with NAAONB and have drafted a new accord which they have suggested could be signed at conference. After some debate, it was suggested that from the NAAONB perspective there was no need for a further accord at this stage.

Proposal: to move forward with the existing accord with a robust framework of collaboration

Seconded: Chris Woodley-Stewart

Against: Mat Roberts

Motion carried

Rose Day left the meeting during AOB

Meeting closed 5.05pm

Dates of next meetings for information

Thursday 31st of Oct 2019. Thursday 28th of Nov 2019 (Chairmen's Conference & AGM)

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