

## MINUTES OF THE 74<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE NAAONB MANAGEMENT BOARD

Held on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2017 11.00am 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 Denise Hewlett, Paul Walton, Chris Woodley-Stewart, Lucy Barron, Lisa Tomos and David Henshilwood.

### 2. Minutes and matters arising

The Chairman called for any errata in the minutes of the previous meetings, a number of typos were highlighted.

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

Agreed: Unanimously

### Matters arising

The Chief Executive commented on the production of a Brexit paper. He explained that on reflection it would be more cost effective to write the paper himself, subject to some reappportioning of work across the team, rather than commission someone externally to write the paper. Accepting the intention to reduce workload on the staff he explained that NAAONB staff were probably best placed to make an informed pitch, and managing a contract would be time consuming in itself. This, he felt, was the preferred option over using £6000 of NAAONB reserves.

The Chief Executive highlighted that under strategic risk, the resourcing strategy is to be covered later on the agenda of this meeting.

### 3. Communications update

This paper was introduced by Jill Smith, the Board was thanked for feedback received.

The Chief Executive commented that he had received some feedback from the membership stating that there was little value in the NAAONB communicating its value as a charity, with members preferring to see communications focused solely on the work of the AONB teams/partnerships/conservation boards. He stated that, despite this feedback, he felt it is critical for the NAAONB to continue to communicate its function, purpose, and activities. Without this activity there would clearly be a risk to of funding.

Rose Day requested that the Chairmen be included in this communication as Chairmen are not always included by Lead Officers. Jill Smith confirmed that they are.



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### **ACTION Jill Smith to manage the inclusion of AONB Chairmen in relevant communications**

Nick Holliday queried performance and monitoring of communications impact - activity v achievement. He queried what the priorities for the next 6 months are and how the Board can feed in.

The Chief Executive responded that the strategic direction for the organisation has been outlined and agreed by the Board and the AONB Family. The communications strategy and its focus is based on this direction.

Jill Smith added that the communications action plan is a dynamic document which is regularly updated and any comments that are fed to the Chief Executive will be passed on and included. There was a discussion about the use of traditional tools versus social media. A comment was made about the difficulty of reporting success from twitter.

It was suggested that a letter be written to the papers getting the message across in the Chairman's name.

A request was made that we work more closely with the National Press and cultivate appropriate journalists such as the Farmers Guardian.

Jill Smith added that relationships are being developed with diverse organisations for the diverse messages we are communicating.

Mat Roberts added due to the size of the charity, there is need to be tightly focused.

The Chief Executive clarified that it would be valuable to tighten up the target audience and to report on success to the Board.

Rose Day added that it is important to limit reporting due to restraints on time.

Richard Clarke added that the engagement from the AONB Lead Officers is something which is being focused on at the moment as this is not important enough to them at the moment. NAAONB needs to consider how we get them to be more engaged even in the good times.

Mehdi Kurrimbux added that at the Dedham Vale forum the Minister gave a speech with press present. It was suggested that press be attracted to the Conference for photo opportunities of the Minister.

There was than a brief discussion around the frustration of the use Basecamp, the response was that Basecamp is currently under review.

**Resolved** that this report was noted. Additional monitoring and performance is to be reported and communications audiences be tightened.

A presentation of the changes to the website was then given, this was gladly met by the Board.

Mat Roberts requested that there be budget put aside for refreshing NAAONB websites frequently.

#### **4. Landscapes for Life Conference briefing**

This paper was introduced by Jill Smith, it was reported that bookings were looking very healthy at close of early bird bookings.

The Chief Executive highlighted that there has been positive feedback about the new format of Conference. He felt, as do others, that full days of public sector funded field trips are gone.

#### **5. Business Plan Reform**

This paper was introduced by the Chief Executive and feedback was requested. A Trustee workshop day was suggested to focus on this subject.

The Chair added that Lucy Barron's feedback from her discussions with the membership is crucial.

Nick Holliday commented that the priorities identified by the membership are negative and difficult to agree with - trends in society are not being reflected, AONBs need to reposition themselves.



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It was suggested that the Board respond that the priorities have been received but are not the direction the Board wish to go in.

The Chief Executive responded that the future is as much about tackling the big issues as well as the smaller ones of immediate concern. He felt that some of these big issues are not landing among the Family.

Rose Day commented that there is a need for communications for the Family, but, also for the NAAONB. The priorities chosen by the Lead Officers do not allow NAAONB to have its own priorities. The Chief Executive responded that inevitably there is a tension here that needs to be managed. This is always part of the day job. He explained that good work is being put on hold as the membership has requested focus on different priorities.

There was a brief discussion around the need to change.

Mat Roberts commented that people need to be put back in the center of the future of sustainable development, he suggested that people need to be in the middle of what we do so that they have a safety net.

Nick Holliday stated that the NAAONB needs the Board in the right place, there is a clear need for trustees to lead by example.

The Chief Executive responded that early adopters are being continually highlighted; the NAAONB is selective over what it promotes, taking particular care to amplify the more progressive work and those responsible.

There was a general discussion around the need to adopt a more progressive stance on the way we work and the way the AONB Family is encouraged to operate.

The Chief Executive responded that this feedback from the Board is very helpful as it has not been easy responding to the recommendations from the membership.

There was then a discussion regarding people who could be utilised, for example Jules Pretty. He is a Professor of Environment and Society at Essex University and there may be the potential to work with him on subjects such Health and Wellbeing in and around AONBs.

**Resolved** that there be a full day workshop focussing on the business plan and resourcing strategy, possible dates will be circulated to the Board. Timeframe is to get the Business plan to the membership at the AGM in Nov.

**ACTION Amber Carter to poll Board to find a suitable date and to arrange necessary meeting room and overnight accommodation**

## **6. NAAONB Membership Fees**

This paper was introduced by the Chief Executive and questions were taken from the Board. Mat Roberts commented that the difference between the two rates of inflation is relatively immaterial.

**Resolved** that membership fees be linked to CPI

Proposed: Mat Roberts

Seconded: James Williamson

Agreed: Unanimously

## **7. Fundraising and Complaints Policy**

This paper was introduced by the Chief Executive

Mat Roberts commented that this policy is neither broad or specific.

The Chief Executive clarified that only complaints directed towards the activity of the NAAONB would be caught by this policy. Any others would be passed on to the intended recipient.



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James Williamson requested that this be reviewed every three years.

Rose Day added that there is a grammatical typo - one national association - it wants (both within the document and the letter).

**ACTION Howard Davies to reword funding and complaints policy to be more grammatically correct**

**Resolved** that this policy, with above amendment, be adopted by the NAAONB

Proposed: Mat Roberts

Seconded: Rose Day

Agreed: Unanimously

### **8. Bookkeeping/Accountancy Support**

This paper was introduced by the Chief Executive

James Williamson commented that the recommended firm Whittingham Riddell are good to work with in his experience.

Paul Walton's comment, received by email, was noted but the recommendation from the Chief Executive was not swayed.

**Resolved** that Whittingham Riddell be appointed from April 2018.

Proposed: Nick Holliday

Seconded: James Williamson

Agreed: Unanimously

### **9. Board meeting costs**

This paper was introduced by Amber Carter

There was an observation from Nick Holliday that meetings could be moved to a 1pm start time finishing at 6pm as this would allow for travel on off-peak trains.

Mat Roberts offered free use of a new Interserve building being built at Birmingham International Station - building will theoretically be ready for use no earlier than Jan 2018.

It was suggested that the time of the meeting be moved to a later time in order to make travel tickets cheaper and to make start times easier.

There was a comment that improvements with video conferencing could reduce travel costs as they could be avoided completely in some cases.

**Resolved** that there be a provisional decision to move the Board to a 1pm start and retain meetings in Birmingham.

Proposed: Rose Day

Seconded: James Williamson

Agreed: Unanimously

**Meeting broke for lunch at 12.50**

**Meeting resumed at 13.20**



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## 10. The Landscape Institute draft MoU

The Chief Executive gave a brief update on this subject, but, the paper was deferred to the next meeting. He reported that there is a good relationship which is moving forward, the draft of this is still being worked out so this has been delayed while further discussion is undertaken.

## 11. Governance, Finance, and Resilience

This paper was introduced by the Chairman

The Chair suggested that examination of this be added to the workshop mentioned previously.

**Resolved** that a re-examination of the role of trustees in resourcing the charity would be incorporated into the Board sub-group meeting in August

Proposed: Mat Roberts

Seconded: James Williamson

Agreed: Unanimously

## 12. Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales

This paper was introduced by Richard Clarke

**ACTION** Howard Davies to circulate the Sandford Principle briefing document to Trustees

The Chief Executive requested direction from the Board on the direction of response to recommendation from Welsh Government. He added that there is a progressive move towards realigning the requirements of the CRow Act in relation to the Welsh AONBs and the ambition of the newer legislative. He queried whether the Board was comfortable with the NAAONB continuing to take a more progressive leadership role in this matter.

There was a query on whether there is capacity to cope with this.

Nick Holliday endorsed the progressive agenda, but reminded trustees of the important to consider the politics of this and the possible risks.

The Chief Executive responded that risks need to be taken in order to make progress.

The Chair concluded that the Chief Executive be empowered to advocate in an assertive way.

The Chief Executive requested that the Board send any further thoughts to him by September.

**Resolved** that the Chief Executive be empowered to advocate on this in an assertive way.

Proposed: Nick Holliday

Seconded: Rose Day

Agreed: Unanimously

## 13. Strategic Risk

This paper was introduced by the Chief Executive

**ACTION** Amber Carter to strike out the finance sentence on the final version of these papers



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#### 14. Management Accounts

This paper was introduced by Jill Smith

The Chief Executive added that there were things budgeted last year which did not take place due to capacity issues. He also reported that, while we are making a surplus, there is still a resourcing issue. James Williamson queried the bad debts.

Amber Carter responded that there were some old invoices which were written off as continuing to chase payment was taking more staff time than the worth of the debt.

The Chief Executive commented that the level of involvement of the Honorary Treasurer needs to be established, a Skype meeting was suggested.

**ACTION Amber Carter to arrange meeting between James Williamson, Howard Davies and Amber Carter**

**Resolved** that the management accounts be noted.

Proposed: Rose Day

Seconded: Nick Holliday

Agreed: Unanimously

#### 15. NAAONB Portfolio & Staff Activity Report

This paper was introduced by the Chief Executive, he highlighted that there are plans to redesign this report in future.

Richard Clarke added that support document for management plans is to be taken to the tripartite for endorsement.

Nick Holliday commented it would be helpful to have the response reported.

**ACTION Richard Clarke to report on the result of taking context shaping information for management plans to the tripartite for endorsement**

#### 16. Defra Report

This paper was introduced by Mehdi Kurrimbux, he reported that the official timeline for the 25 year plan is being worked on by the Secretary of State, who continues to be engaged. High-level strategy regarding funding is business as usual, the spending review is planned to happen autumn next year. The Chief Executive added that this is planned for raising at next tripartite.

Mehdi Kurrimbux continued, stating that Lord Gardiner was appreciative of how the forum went at the Dedham Vale event and has sent a personal letter of thanks to Robert Erith.

Mehdi Kurrimbux added that the Conference is in the Ministers' diary.

The Chief Executive queried the integration of Defra's Food and Farming plan with that of the 25 Year Environment Plan, and whether they are to be two separate plans.

Mehdi Kurrimbux responded that the Secretary of State intends to put own stamp on this, and that there would be more information at the October Board meeting.

#### 17. Natural England Report

No report received.

The Chief Executive went through an email communication received from David Henshilwood in advance of the meeting, highlighting that Natural England are committed to revisiting approach to designation extensions. The Chief Executive is to have a meeting with Catherine Cotterell regarding this.

The Chief Executive added that there is a paper going to the Natural England Board in September which relates to the consultation around the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths AONB boundary.



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Jill Smith highlighted that the gov.uk policy documents archive is to be included on the NAAONB new website. **ACTION David Henshilwood to provide Jill Smith with the appropriate documents or links.**

### **18. Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru - Natural Resources Wales Report**

A hard copy of a report was circulated but no verbal report was given.

The Chief Executive mentioned a document he had put together which helped outline the links between the products of the Environment Act 2015 and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. It included reference to SoNaRR, area statements, wellbeing goals etc and how they link to the AONB and National Park management planning process. He offered to circulate this to trustees.

**ACTION Howard Davies to circulate the mapped diagram of the relationship between the Welsh documents to Trustees**

### **AOB**

None received

**Meeting closed at 14.10**

### **Dates of next meetings for information**

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2017 - to start at the newly agreed time of 1pm

Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2017 (AGM)



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