

# Natural England Board



## Confirmed minutes of the 105<sup>th</sup> Natural England Board meeting 15<sup>th</sup> September 2021

<b>Board Members Attending</b>	
Dr Tony Juniper, Chairman	Kerry ten Kate
Lord Blencathra, Deputy Chairman	Henry Robinson
Rosamund Blomfield-Smith	Kim Shillinglaw
Dr Andy Clements	Peter Unwin
Catherine Dugmore	Professor Michael Winter
Dr Clare Fitzsimmons	
<b>Executive Team</b>	
Marian Spain, Chief Executive (and ex-officio Board Member)	Navroza Ladha, Chief Officer Legal, Governance & External Affairs
Alan Law, Deputy Chief Executive	Gleny Lovell, Chief Officer Business Management and Change
Tim Hill	Oliver Harmar, Chief Operations Officer
<b>Guests</b>	
David Hill, Director-General Environment Rural and Marine Defra	Ken Roy, Director, Corporate Governance, Natural England
Paul Leat, Defra Communications	Mick Oliver, Chief of Staff, Legal, Governance & External Affairs
Graham Tibbetts, Legal, Governance & External Affairs	

### Welcome from the Chairman and Declarations of Interest

The Chairman welcomed the Board to the 105<sup>th</sup> meeting. He welcomed Clare Fitzsimmons to her first Board meeting.

With reference to declarations of interest:

- Catherine Dugmore will take membership on the Board of Housing 21 from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021.
- Kim Shillinglaw confirmed that she has been working with the Wellcome Trust on investment into research and development.

**ACTION: Legal and Governance Team to update the Register of Interests**

**1. Review of July 2021 Minutes and Matters Arising (NEB 105)**

- 1.1 The Board approved the minutes with no changes.
- 1.2 Professor Michael Winter updated the Board on the Social Science Panel, six people have been selected from 52 applicants with a good balance of career and experience. The first meeting will be held in November.
- 1.3 There were no comments on the matters arising or on actions carried forward from previous Board meetings.

**2. Chief Executive Officers Report (NEB 105 01)**

- 2.1 The Board reviewed the short Chief Executive Report and noted the following specific items:
- 2.2 **Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)** – The Board noted a level of continuing debate about the overall approach and the metric. The Chairman and Marian Spain have reviewed the metric with the team and are satisfied with its progress. Alan Law noted that the primary intent for BNG is to “hold the line” to avoid further nature being lost to development, with the ‘gain’ element being the smaller part of the equation. Working examples of use of the BNG metric are being developed with some partners.
- 2.3 **Natural England Landscape Advisory Panel** – The work on setting up this panel is progressing in parallel with constructive discussions with National Parks and AONBS on the Terms of Reference.
- 2.4 **Hen Harrier Recovery** – The Board noted the current position:
  - The Brood Management Trial will finish next year, the success of the trial will need to be assessed to direct options in the future. In addition, a report to NESAC on the effectiveness of the removal and social science.
  - The Southern reintroduction will be reviewed by NESAC in relation to changes of approach of captive breeding rather than release. An external examination of evidence will be held in November and reported back to Board.
  - These decisions will be in context to a wider Defra evaluation of the whole Hen Harrier Action Plan on the six points of the recovery plan.

**ACTION: NESAC date for HH review to be issued to Board Members (Tim Hill).**

**3. National Nature Reserve (NNR) Strategy (NEB 105 02)**

- 3.1 Alan Law introduced this paper, referencing a previous Board NNR Strategy discussion in May 2020.
- 3.2 The proposal is to develop additional new NNR criteria that are focussed on nature recovery and areas with a potential to be of high conservation value and good use for people in the future. Board agreed to delegate sign off principles to the CEO.
- 3.3 Dr Andy Clements supported the proposal noting that there is no intention to dilute standards required of NNRs and noting the support for the NNR partnership. Dr Clements asked that in the final revision of the criteria, recognition is given to the continuing principle that the primary land use for NNRs is nature conservation.
- 3.4 In the Board discussion, it was recognised that a future discussion on Access was

required balancing the two statutory duties for nature and access which the NNRs may be opportune place to test and learn from.

- 3.5 In response to queries about priorities, Alan Law offered the view that some new NNRs would be in peri urban spaces – based on voluntary agreements.
- 3.6 In implementing this new work, Board asked for the Executive to refresh the processes for approving “approved bodies for NNR Management”.
- 3.7 The Board concluded to adopt the recommendations.

**ACTION: Alan Law to revise the detailed proposal (re NNR criteria) to include a recognition that the primary land use for NNRs is nature conservation.**

**ACTION: LGEA to schedule a future Board discussion on access and conservation.**

**ACTION: Alan Law to explore any appropriate changes to current processes for approving approved bodies for NNR management in parallel with expansion of the NNR suite.**

- 3.8 This part of the formal board was concluded in preparation for the public meeting considering the Cotswolds Water Park SSSI designation.