

Natural England Board



Title: **Confirmed minutes of the sixty third Natural England Board meeting on 22 June 2016**

Members attending	Senior Leadership Team
Andrew Sells (Chairman)	
Julia Aglionby	James Cross, Chief Executive
Andy Clements	Tim Hill, Chief Scientist
Will Cockbain	Paul Lambert, Chief Finance and Governance Officer
Teresa Dent	Alan Law, Chief Strategy and Reform Officer
	Julie Lunt, Chief Legal Adviser
Joe Horwood	Guy Thompson, Chief Operating Officer
Nigel Reader	Ken Roy, Director Chairman and Executive Office
Simon Lyster	Invited speakers
John Varley	Matt Heard Area Manager, Somerset, Avon and Wiltshire (Area 11)
Apologies	Liz Newton, Director Landscape, Access and Geodiversity
	Caroline Cotterell, Manager, Conservation Strategy
	Stefan Terry, Undivided
	Mel Hughes, Director, Innovation and Reform
	Rob Cooke, Director, Terrestrial Biodiversity
	Mike Smith, Manager, Terrestrial Biodiversity
	Ian Fugler, Director, Sustainable Development
	Rachel Hoskin, Senior Specialist, Sustainable Development
	Secretariat
	Gill Hunt

Welcome from the Chairman

The Chairman extended his welcome and asked for declarations of interest. Apart from the usual declarations exceptions were received as follows:

- Andy Clements in relation to item 2 and the Seabird Survey.

1. Confirmation of the May 2016 Minutes and Matters Arising (NEB M62 01)

1.1 The minutes of the May meeting were confirmed subject to the following amendments:

- 11.2, no comments were made on the updated Terms of Reference for NESAC.

Action: Board and Executive Services (BES) to amend and publish confirmed May Board minutes.

1.2 The Board noted the update against outstanding actions from the May Board meeting and advised actions 5 and 10 be carried over to July.

Action: BES to include an update on the remaining May actions in the July Matters Arising paper.

2. Chief Executive Report (NEB 63 01)

2.1 James Cross introduced the report and welcomed Matt Heard to the meeting.

2.2 Matt gave an update on activity in his Area Team and the Board noted:

2.2.1 The key challenge for the team had been to think outside functional silos and to identify focus areas where Natural England could make a difference.

2.2.2 There was local appetite to do things differently and see the value in nature and not in specific administrative processes.

2.2.3 Close work with the Environment Agency was already taking place and was a positive step forwards with teams coming together to deliver objectives and projects.

2.2.4 Planning and licensing applications formed a huge part of the team's current workload and they were actively looking for more strategic ways to deal with these work areas such as the use of natural capital, building of strategic mitigation packages and a change in the role of Natural England from reactive case by case basis to proactive engagement in local plans.

2.2.5 The team had experienced positive engagement with the Local Economic Partnership (LEP) and the LEP were now starting to understand the economic value of a strong natural environment particularly in relation to tourism.

2.2.6 There was strong interest in the local community about what farming might achieve in relation to flood retention given the issues on the Somerset levels.

2.2.7 Conversations about expiring HLS schemes and CS were happening. These continue to be challenging and time consuming but the local plan was helping to focus resource.

2.3 The Board thanked Matt for his time and passed on their congratulations at the success of the recent crowd funding project at Shapwick Heath.

- 2.4 The Board noted the financial performance update at Annex 1 and the challenges of the reporting system now that the Single Operating Platform (SOP) had been implemented. Paul Lambert informed the Board that technical fixes had been promised to allow financial reporting to commence for 2016/17.
- 2.5 The Board noted the list of staff who had successfully applied for voluntary exit and were satisfied the impact of the loss of individuals had been considered carefully and, where business need dictated, specific applications had been refused.
- 2.6 Julie Lunt took the Board through Annex 9, the Eurasian Beaver Legal Status and the following action was identified.

Action: Julie Lunt to provide a more detailed briefing for Board Members in relation to Beavers being added to Schedule 2.

3. Telling our Conservation Strategy Story (NEB 63 02)

- 3.1 Alan Law introduced the item and welcomed, Liz Newton, Caroline Cotterell and Stefan Terry. In discussion the Board:
 - 3.1.1 Noted Stefan Terry's presentation of the Conservation Strategy narrative and the design concept.
 - 3.1.2 Advised more illustrations or case studies might be helpful in demonstrating how the Conservation Strategy might work on the ground – and be seen as relevant, in urban environments as well as rural.
 - 3.1.3 Sought clarification on the intended audience for the narrative, welcomed it as a tool for internal staff and NGO's to understand our future approach, within the parameters of the current Strategic Direction, and agreed it might need to be presented differently depending upon the audience.
 - 3.1.4 Welcomed the strong linkage between the narrative and the emerging Defra 25 year plan for the environment and encouraged use of a stronger message around the links and the part the Conservation Strategy might play to deliver parts of the 25 year plan.
 - 3.1.5 Considered the continued role of the Conservation Strategy Group (CSG) and agreed the Group should meet again with a view to assessing the tasks left to complete against the Terms of Reference and then make a recommendation on the future of the Group to September Board.

Action: Teresa Dent to chair the next meeting of the CSG with the agenda to cover the tasks remaining considered against the Terms of Reference and come back to the September Board with a recommendation on the future of the Group.

4. Reform Plan and Narrative to 2020 (NEB 63 03)

- 4.1 Alan Law introduced the paper and welcomed Mel Hughes. In discussion the Board noted:
 - 4.1.1 The progress made to date towards working more efficiently, being smarter and achieving better outcomes and the reform plan was a roadmap to achieving the strategic direction.

4.1.2 The role of innovation was to assist in achieving outcomes where efficiencies could no longer be made.

4.2 The Board welcomed the change plan for Wildlife licensing and encouraged the executive to develop other change plans and create a more cohesive picture of change within the organisation.

5. Agri-environment scheme progress and forward look (NEB 63 04)

5.1 Alan Law introduced the paper and welcomed Rob Cooke and Mike Smith. The Board noted a change in the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for this area of work from Guy Thompson to Alan Law and the change from monthly updates to the Board to quarterly more strategic updates. In discussion the Board:

5.1.1 Commended the performance of staff outlined in the paper given the pressures surrounding the work and the limited capability of the IT programme in relation to the delivery of CS.

5.1.2 Welcomed the recognition within the CAP-D Programme of the need to switch resources to CS functionality development to ensure that future releases of updates enable a reduction in the number of costly workarounds currently required to process applications.

5.1.3 Encouraged the continued efforts to seek further assistance from technical funding to aid the processing of applications swiftly given the number of manual workarounds still in place.

5.2 The Board noted CS money was not currently accessed for National Nature Reserves under Natural England ownership and advised it might be helpful to seek information on what other countries had in place.

5.3 The Board advised that, subject to the outcome of the referendum, it might be helpful to begin looking at the next programme of CAP and the modulation rates and begin work providing figures of spend, predicted spend and how money had been spent.

Action: Alan Law to bring initial analysis of ES/CS spend and predicted spend to the September Board meeting.

6. Uplands Update (NEB 63 05)

6.1 The Board noted the update on activity in the uplands from Julie Lunt and Rob Cooke.

7. Update on High Speed 2 (NEB 63 06)

7.1 Alan Law introduced the paper and welcomed Ian Fugler and Rachel Hoskin. In discussion the Board:

7.1.1 Noted the timeline for the 'no net loss' assessment report commissioned from

Natural England and agreed to discuss the final version at the July Board meeting.

- 7.1.2 Noted Natural England had maintained a clear separation between the team advising HS2 on environmental and licensing issues and the team preparing the 'no net loss' report.
- 7.1.3 Agreed the overall purpose and focus of the report.
- 7.1.4 Discussed the evidence and rationale for considering Ancient Woodland separately from other habitats given the complexities of assessing woodland types and appropriate compensation levels.
- 7.1.5 Agreed the Woodland Trust was well placed to determine compensation on a case by case basis for ancient woodlands affected.
- 7.1.6 Considered the longevity of compensation habitats and the legacy of looking after and funding management of compensation sites.
- 7.2 In conclusion the Board accepted the work to date and agreed to review the final report at the July Board with a view to summarising key messages early to inform Defra and the HS2 project team.

Action: Alan Law to bring the final HS2 report to the July Board.

Action: James Cross and Andrew Sells to visit the Chairman of HS2 post July Board to give key messages from the report.

8. Health, Safety and Wellbeing – Lone working (NEB 63 07)

- 8.1 The Board welcomed Paul Lamberts update on Health and Safety and the progress made in addressing issues surrounding lone working. The Board also noted the near hits for illness at work were largely stress related with a large proportion of cases citing the challenges and pressures around CS rollout as one important driver.

9. Bovine TB Update (NEB 63 08)

- 9.1 The Board noted Tim Hill's update on Bovine TB and the positive feedback received from a range of sources praising the work of Natural England staff working on the programme.

10. Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) Update

- 10.1 Nigel Reader gave a verbal update on the activity of ARAC including the sign off process for the Annual Report and Accounts.

11. Natural England Science Advisory Committee (NESAC) Update (NEB 63 09)

- 11.1 Andy Clements drew the Boards attention to the minutes of the last meeting and highlighted the discussion around Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) and changes to the baselines for sites and species.

- 11.2 The Board welcomed Andy's offer to bring an item to a future Board meeting on FCS.

Action: Andy Clements and Tim Hill to consider when to bring an item on FCS to the Board.

- 11.3 The Board noted Ian Boyd would be attending the next meeting of NESAC.

12. Board Innovation Group (BIG) Update (NEB 63 10)

- 12.1 Simon Lyster introduced the item and highlighted the discussion had around the future of the group and the reinvigorated focus of environmental need for innovation rather than just a business need. The Board:
- 12.1.2 Noted Simon's request for additional Board Members and the need for an Area Manager to join the group.

13. Board Natural Flood Management Group (BNFMG) Update (NEB 63 11)

- 13.1 James Cross introduced the item and the Board noted the minutes of the May meeting and the verbal update of the June meeting. The Board:
- 13.1.1 Noted the group were considering the practical applications of Natural Flood management and the final produce of the group would be a handbook for staff.
- 13.1.2 Noted the new methodology for collecting practitioner evidence and the opportunities to use this in other areas.

14. Board Diary for 2016 and 2017 (NEB 63 12)

- 14.1 The Board noted the Board Diary and requested further dates for 2017 be proposed by BES prior to the next Board meeting.

Action: BES to provide proposed 2017 dates to Chairman prior to the July Board meeting.

15. Any Other Business

- 15.1 The Board noted efforts by Board members to engage with clergy in respect of the HLF and Bats in Churches bid.
- 15.2 Nigel Reader informed the Board that the Remuneration Committee had met that morning and the minutes would be presented to the July Board meeting.
- 15.3 Andy Clements raised a request from Edward Darling of Redlist revival to use the Natural England logo on certificates being developed. The Board agreed to discuss in more detail at the July Board meeting.

Actions log

No	Agenda Item/Paper	Ref	Action	Owner
1	Confirmation of the May 2016 Board Minutes and Matters Arising (NEB M62 01)	1.1	Produce confirmed May Board minutes.	BES
2	Confirmation of the May 2016 Board Minutes and Matters Arising (NEB M62 01)	1.2	Include an update on the remaining May actions in the July Matters Arising paper.	BES
3	Chief Executive Report (NEB 63 01)	2.6	Provide a more detailed briefing for Board Members in relation to Beavers being added to Schedule 2.	Julie Lunt
4	Telling our Conservation Strategy Story (NEB 63 02)	3.1.5	Chair the next meeting of the CSG with the agenda to cover the tasks remaining considered against the Terms of Reference and come back to the September Board with a recommendation on the future of the Group.	Teresa Dent
5	Agri-environment scheme progress and forward look (NEB 63 04)	5.3	Bring initial analysis of ES/CS spend and predicted spend to the September Board meeting.	Alan Law
6	Update on High Speed 2 (NEB 63 06)	7.2	Bring the final HS2 report to the July Board.	Alan Law
7	Update on High Speed 2 (NEB 63 06)	7.2	Visit the Chairman of HS2 post July Board to give key messages from the report.	James Cross and Andrew Sells
8	Natural England Science Advisory Committee (NESAC) Update (NEB 63 09)	11.2	Consider when to bring an item on FCS to the Board.	Andy Clements and Tim Hill
9	Board Diary for 2016 and 2017 (NEB 63 12)	14.1	Provide proposed 2017 dates to Chairman prior to the July Board meeting.	BES