

Natural Cambridgeshire Board Meeting

Minutes

Tuesday, 2nd February 2021 via zoom

Present: Richard Astle , Chair (Athene Communications), Martin Baker (WLT), Sarah Smith (National Trust), Cllr Tim Wotherspoon (Cambs County Council), Roger Mitchell (Independent Trustee), Cameron Adams (Environment Agency – Advisor), Chris Bowden (Independent - Advisor), Professor Peter Landshoff (Independent Trustee), John Torlesse (Natural England), Tim Breitmeyer (Landowner), Cllr Pippa Heylings (South Cambs District Council), Adrian Cannard (CPCA - Advisor), James Littlewood (Cambridge Past Present and Future), Matthew Bradbury (Nene Park Trust), Becca Britton (Urban and Civic), Mark Nokkert (Cambs ACRE - Advisor), Helen Dye, Co-ordinator (Natural Cambridgeshire).

Apologies: Hannah Ward (RSPB), Rob Wise (NFU), Kirsten Bennett (Cambs ACRE); Carly Leonard (PECT)

Record of Actions/Decisions:

- ACTION 1: PL and MBkr, in consultation with LA Planners, to take forward a projected Policy and Planning WG.
- ACTION 2: Governance and finance matters to be progressed by a small WG group, including RA, RM and HD, with a view to establishing a Financial Ops Group, ahead of the next trustees meeting.
- ACTION 3: HD and MBry to take forward Prospectus development, into which landscape-led project and other costings (JL) would feed.
- ACTION 4: JL to brief Landscape project leads, with a view to having worked-up landscape plans within 6-8 weeks (so by 16th March, 2021) specifying the 'package' for each area, and a spreadsheet of projects, prioritising what is 'shovel ready'.
- ACTION 5: MBry and RB to facilitate discussions for AC and CA to explore Thames Basin/Surrey Heath example.
- ACTION 6: MBkr to incorporate further considerations to the BNG paper.
- ACTION 7: MBry and RB to look at improvements to the Developing with Nature Toolkit with a view to addressing BNG for smaller sites, and MBry to make introductions to Jonathan Drucker.
- ACTION 8: MBry and HD to draw up a plan, in preparation for a further meeting of the Funding and Fundraising WG towards the end of Feb (date tbc).
- DECISION 1: More detail required around the concept of a Fund, before progressing Fund proposal further with the Mayor.

Record of Discussions

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 RA welcomed all to the meeting, including Cllr Tim Wotherspoon (who replaces Cllr Lina Nieto on the board) and Helen Dye, NC's new co-ordinator. It is noted that this is the first meeting of the new organisation, which was granted Charitable Incorporated Organisation status on 8 January 2021. RA thanked everyone for their hard work in getting the application through, and RM in particular for liaison with the Charity Commission.

2 Minutes of last meeting

- 2.1 **Minutes of last meeting** were approved as a true and accurate record with actions dealt with or in progress. **Matters arising** included ongoing review of Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty applications. It is understood that on the back of the Glover Review, Natural England are undertaking a review of the status of all such applications (a 'heck of a job'), with correspondence being submitted to those named persons who had previously submitted applications. It is understood the review also includes looking at other options for landscape designations.

3 Partnership Forum (PF)

- 3.1 PL provided an update on the speaker line up for the next PF scheduled for Tuesday, 16 March 2021.
- 3.2 There was a brief discussion about the format of the Forum, which now attracts a large and broad audience, comparative to its genesis which had been smaller productive Policy and Planning Forum with clear outputs and actions. While it was felt that the new format was an effective engagement mechanism that enables communication, information sharing and discussion with a broad audience, it was recognised that there may be merit in considering the leadership that Natural Cambridgeshire can take in relation to Policy and Planning matters. Specifically, implementing biodiversity net gain, in addition to delivering 'Developing with Nature' and other considerations likely to come out of the Environment Bill.
- 3.3 It was therefore proposed that, in consultation with the planners, a Policy and Planning working group be revived, which could meet once or twice a year, with the timescale and agenda set by members of that working group with the output of each meeting being a clear set of actions.
- ACTION 1: PL and MBkr to take forward.**

4 Governance

- 4.1 Speaking to matters of Governance, TB and PH have now been added as trustees; RW is awaiting clearance from his organisation. The list of Natural Cambridgeshire trustees can be viewed on its record on the [Charity Commission \(CC\) website](#).
- 4.2 As Natural Cambridgeshire is now formally a trustees-led Charitable Incorporated Organisation, it is timely to review, explain and refresh the Terms of Reference for working groups, to clarify what is meant by working groups, including Task and Finish and Standing Groups. It was also noted that the new organisation is required to have an AGM, for which a date would need to be set.

- 4.3 For the purposes of the Charity Commission register and compliance, Natural Cambridgeshire is required to provide a description of its activities (400 characters) and relevant policy documents. CL said that [Peterborough Environment City Trust](#) had done some recent work on organisational policies and kindly offered to share those with Natural Cambridgeshire. It was noted that, once they are compiled, a full set of policy documents would subsequently be circulated to all trustees for their review.
- 4.4 A bank account is in the process of being set up with Metro Bank. Once this is done HMRC can be informed in order that we can register for and eligible to claim Gift Aid. It was noted that we have 18 months to get accounting set-up, which includes deciding the accounting year.

ACTION 2: Above matters to be progressed by a small group, including RM, RA and HD, with a view to establishing a Financial Ops Group, ahead of the next trustees meeting.

5. Co-ordinator's Update

- 5.1 HD reported back on her first month in post (see report), adding that she had recently attended a webinar briefing by Teeside University who are intending to bid for funds to champion the Nature theme being proposed for Government's intended 2022 Festival, and which LNPs are being considered as a delivery vehicle.

6. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA)

- 6.1 Further to the meeting with the Mayor's office before Christmas, and the subsequent meeting with John T Hill, the Combined Authority's Director of Business and Skills, the appetite to build stronger relationships with the business board was not as strong as has been previously thought, with the invitation to go back to the Mayor.
- 6.2 Reflecting on the reasons for this, it was felt that the political landscape, specifically the relationship between Combined Authorities (reference: Manchester and Birmingham) and Central Government, had changed since the meeting in December, in fact devolution had changed. Whereas combined authorities and local enterprise partnerships in the past had had more freedom to spend allocations as they saw fit, all local areas would now be required to submit more detailed bids to central funds, including to the [Shared Prosperity Fund](#) (new approaches to tackle entrenched socio-economic and environmental issues) and the [Levelling up Fund](#) (housing). It was also reported that the Fund the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Climate Commission (CPICC) were considering was more 'Big Picture' rather than 'Nature Specific'.
- 6.3 Discussions about where next to take 'Doubling Nature' followed:
- 6.3.1 Given the limited discretion that local areas will have to spend public funds, it was felt that merit would lie in a flexible approach to **fully costed fundable projects** that offer clearly defined benefits to people, the environment and private funders (philanthropy) and investors. Further to the Funding and Fundraising working group which had met on 18th January 2021, suggestions included pulling together work to date to form of a '**Prospectus**', that would incorporate opportunities available by the carbon market, biodiversity net gain, habitat banking and other opportunities. CA, CA and CB reported that in preparation to submit a bid to the Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund (NEIRF), there was not yet a clear candidate project that meets the criteria of the call, although Future Parks Accelerator felt they had a model

that was ready to be tested/piloted (see section 7 for further discussion about the NEIRF).

- 6.3.2 It was noted that the [Economics of Biodiversity: the Dasgupta Review](#) had been published today, endorsed by HRH The Prince of Wales, the Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Sir David Attenborough, with the launch hosted by the [Royal Society](#). The review examines and highlights the institutional and systemic changes required of the private and public sectors, in order that balance is restored to the natural world, upon which we are all a part of and up on which we rely to prosper.
- 6.3.3 While the relative merits of a technocratic approach (detailed, resource intensive and time consuming) vs an opportunistic approach (builds momentum) to securing funds for the future of nature in Cambridgeshire were explored, given the forthcoming mayoral elections, and given that Mayor James Palmer had shown initial enthusiasm for the Fund for Nature, the board were asked to consider the merits in appealing to the candidate mayors to ask them to put this Fund into their manifestos.
- 6.3.4 The point was also made, that even with a large funding award, the capability to line-up projects that meet the mood music of the moment, and the risks in doing that, should be considered, and funders will still want to know what they are getting for their money. Merit will perhaps therefore lie in **preparedness** and being clear about what we have got that fits specified criteria, and that also provides sound rationale and justification. There is an important role in developing the capability and capacity to work that out. We need to have projects ready to offer to people, and those projects need justification, and we need to get on with it. That said, it should be acknowledged that there is anxiety around what the infrastructure for biodiversity net gain and what offsetting payments will look like, and this is a difficult time.
- 6.3.5 **Cross-cutting themes** emerging from the **landscape-led** projects were: a) discussion with landowners; b) access to nature and health (infrastructure and projects); c) woodlands, wetlands and meadows; and d) community engagement. (See 7.1 for further).
- 6.3.6 The role of **philanthropy** was considered, and it was noted that the experience of fundraisers was that securing a lead gift (or gifts) makes a proposition more credible and makes others want to join in.

ACTION 3: MBry and HD to take forward Prospectus development, into which landscape-led project and other costings (JL) would feed.

- 6.4 Prompted by the question, '*should we take a lead on mapping?*', considerations of **Trees & Woods, Water, Nature & People, and Access** followed:
- 6.4.1 It was reported that the County **Trees & Woods working group** has only met twice. The Natural Cambridgeshire **Trees working group** had had a challenge in finding land on which to plant. It had identified the banks of the Cam; its Conservators had been on board with although now more cautious. It was noted that the question of, '*is there more land needed to double nature?*' was being addressed in Local Plans. Considerations about tree disease and what that means for canopy cover and woodland management were not discussed.
- 6.4.2 While it was recognised there are no big opportunities for water and carbon (with the clear exception of the Cambridgeshire peatlands), there is a need for '*more space*

for nature, more space for people' (and people enjoy trees); and biodiversity net gain requirements in a couple of years will be looking at what propositions there are in this area that can be taken forward. It was therefore suggested there is a piece around **working with landowners** to explore what that 'space' might look like and working up some projects/bids. (The group may wish to consider the benefits of community supported agriculture, social and therapeutic horticulture and care farms, and bold cycling and walking infrastructure plan proposals (ref: CCC [Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan](#) (LWCIP) consultation anticipated Spring 2021) in addition to traditional parks and public green (and blue) spaces.)

- 6.4.3 It was recognised Access to nature will be critical to raising funds and engaging people, which ties closely with the health and wellbeing agenda. A project which includes an area of lowland peat, would be a good start. And a further point on philanthropy is that local people will most likely want to give to local projects, so we must consider what is important to them, and what they want. People generally give once they have seen that others have given.
- 6.4.4 The point was made that our knowledge-based economy means there is global competition with other areas with attracting and retaining qualified staff, and a recent survey conducted by Cambridge Ahead of young staff of its member companies identified close access to green space as a top priority for those who live and work in an area.
- 6.4.5 It was recognised there is a need to flesh out more on projects, prioritising those who have a project they want funding. Also need to identify the measurements and mechanisms to clearly show the benefit and value back to investors.
- 6.4.6 While structure and momentum were felt to be important, it was felt that while we don't have to wait for all the answers, we must be mindful of available resources and the scale and pace at which actions can be progressed.

7. Working Group Reports

7.1 Landscape-led Projects

- 7.1.1 Landscape-led Projects are all at a different stage of development, with some just coming together to establish vision and partnerships, and others more advanced. While all are reliant on time and resources for their development and implementation, common cross-cutting themes include:
 - a) discussion with/advice to landowners
 - b) access to nature and health (infrastructure and projects)
 - c) woodlands, wetlands and meadows
 - d) community engagement.
- 7.1.2 Mindful of the importance of having a menu of options for funders or investors, it was recognised that all scales of projects need to be included and costed. Disaggregation for which there are tangible asks for specific projects that are local and achievable will maximise appeal, particularly for local areas and philanthropy. Consideration should therefore be given to:
 - a) signage

- b) identification of areas that are important for connectivity which may/may not feature in large landscape projects, and which may be highly deficient yet have maximum social and welfare benefits.
- c) addressing the issue of problematic car-parking e.g. small refuges close the Network for Nature may be an opportunity to be progressed with Cambs County Council.

A framework/guide for targeted improvement to nature would be helpful in targeting existing funds e.g. South Cambridgeshire's Zero Carbon Communities Grants.

- 7.1.3 A suggested approach was for each project to imagine they had £3m to spend, and to come up with a plan for what they would spend it on. It was felt that between 6 weeks and 2 months was an achievable timeframe.

ACTION 4: JL to brief Landscape project leads, with a view to having worked-up landscape plans within 6-8 weeks (so by 16th March, 2021) specifying the 'package' for each area, and a spreadsheet of projects, prioritising what is 'shovel ready'.

7.2 Community-led Nature Recovery

- 7.1.1 The Communities working group had met on 6 January this year and is progressing the roll out of the nature recovery toolkit, mindful of limited resource to respond to demand for support and assistance, at present. It is meeting tomorrow, 3rd February, to progress actions, which include organising for a series of online 'Coffee Mornings' to which local areas will be invited to share information, best practice, and to network. It was noted that the Fens Biosphere Conference had generated interest in the Toolkit, and follow-up of that will be considered in due course.
- 7.1.2 South Cambridgeshire today had announced their commitment to doubling nature with the launch of the Council's Strategy and a series of events that will run over a Climate and Environment fortnight starting on Monday 22 February: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/council-lays-out-strategy-to-double-the-nature-on-its-doorstep-for-the-benefit-of-all/>.

7.3 Funding and Fundraising

7.3.1 Innovation

[Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund](#) (NEIRF): Identifying projects that meet all the NEIRF criteria is proving to be challenging. A candidate project, potentially hosted and co-funded by the Combined Authority, would need to develop a scalable, replicable and investable model within a year to two years. Inherent in testing an investable model is the necessity to attract repayable investment to allow investors to secure a return. The Combined Authority is in early discussions with various potential partners and is keen to explore further partnership opportunities with other partners of Natural Cambridgeshire. It also offered to provide a point of contact for those interested in either submitting or being part of a wider partnership NEIRF bid involving the Combined Authority.

- 7.3.2 It is understood discussions are ongoing with the Future Parks Accelerator project to determine its potential involvement in the proposed Combined Authority NEIRF bid. It was suggested merit may also lie to joining up the dots with regard to the Fens Biosphere on the sustainable agriculture agenda. It was suggested there may be

value in focussing in on strategic set-up mechanisms e.g. Land Trust Suitable Alternative Green Spaces funding project in the Thames Basin/Surrey Heath area, which it is understood took some time to bring the thinking together on. Whilst it was understood there may have been problems with that project, there would be merit in speaking to those involved.

- 7.3.3 Scope for the proposed Combined Authority NEIRF bid to consider options for setting up a future income generating Cambridgeshire-wide natural capital trust akin to the North Devon model was also briefly discussed.

ACTION 5: MBry/RB to facilitate discussions for AC/CA to explore Thames Basin/Surrey Heath example.

7.3.4 **Natural Cambridgeshire Organisational Funding**

It was commented that the heavy lifting required to establish and develop a new organisation should not be underestimated. Local Authorities who had pledged their financial support for Natural Cambridgeshire running costs, were asked to please expedite payment to the new organisation, which is kindly being hosted by Nene Park Trust.

7.4 **Measurement and Evaluation**

- 7.4.1 It was reported that there is a lot of activity going on in the background, and clarity around measurement and evaluation, including quantitative and qualitative measures, will evolve over time with the strongest measures being brought forward. For example, the Agri-environment scheme data will need to be looked at to work out what will come next.
- 7.4.2 While it was suggested that if we had a bag of things we wanted to measure, that this might make a good PhD project, there had been some initial discussions with the Cambridge Conservation Initiative and Forum about research opportunities, however landscape projects don't sit well with the innovation agendas of university research, and there's a challenge of quantifying the existing baseline first. That said, it was thought there is some scope for analysis including aerial photography.
- 7.4.3 Considerations of measuring benefits to investors, in order to justify where to invest and to quantify the benefits of investment, were discussed. A key question therefore is, *'have you got/will there be the right measurement(s) in place to provide investment benefits?'* The need for this information to be included was recognised and it was advised the Defra funded OxCam Local Natural Capital Planning Team had recently mapped and ascribed economic value to the growth arc's natural capital assets and ecosystem services which contribute an estimated £2.2 bn per annum. It is understood that Natural Capital Solutions had been previously commissioned to similarly map the natural capital assets and ecosystem services across Cambridgeshire. However, the study (overseen by the Wildlife Trust) had not calculated their economic contribution due to insufficient funding. It is understood that Cambridgeshire County Council's Green Spaces Manager is investigating possible options for completing the work and making this information available.
- 7.4.4 Agriculture and ELM, the successor to the Common Agricultural Policy, were felt to be the biggest areas where most gains can be made, mindful that any project or

return is as good as the funding lasts. Communities require micro-scale measurements. It was suggested that whilst waiting for direction from Government about what they want to do, consideration be given to a local 'State of Nature' report, as a subset of the National Biodiversity Network's 'State of Nature' report, as a generic baseline for Cambridgeshire (and with the added value that this could also form the basis of a Natural Cambridgeshire Annual Report, in due course).

7.5. Biodiversity Net Gain

- 7.5.1 Biodiversity net gain was also discussed, and it was reported that South Cambridgeshire had adopted the minimum 10%, whilst keeping 20% ambitions on the table in the form of an 'invitation' to aspire to 20%. In response to the question of looking at 'minimum access', in relation to the MBkr's paper, it was felt that this is separate and parallel. The question of connectivity areas in relation to biodiversity net gain, and how/where included, was also raised. It is understood that South Cambridgeshire is progressing 20% through the Building and Development Team, and recognises the need to ensure political advocacy.
- 7.5.2 Given that without policy support there won't be any income, it was suggested that a small working group involving local authority planners form to ensure resulting metrics that are developed are legally and policy compliant. This will require maps that show boundaries of each area, and then get some decision about whether a County policy or District policies are the way forwards. The subsequent questions might then include: *'what are the delivery mechanisms? Is it an local authority lead, a developer lead or a Natural Cambridgeshire lead? Is the delivery model a Natural Capital Trust, or a model that would support local authorities and espoused in Local Plans? Support of MBkr's paper was expressed, including the idea of a 'top-down tasking' i.e. that the Planning Officers be tasked with finding the best solution for the county.*
- 7.5.3 It was suggested that a champion amongst the politicians would help with a 'top down' approach (who?), and that 20% would be a decision for this Group to make, framed on the basis of the paucity of wildlife and habitat areas in the county. It is understood that South Cambridgeshire where inviting people/developers to join the ambition towards 20%. Support was expressed of this being worked through with the Planning Officers, who meet regularly, and also of recognising the value of 'stepping stones', and the value in giving this closer attention as it often doesn't get factored into biodiversity net gain calculations. There was support for advocacy for 20% in the County Plan.
- 7.5.4 Consequently, given all of the above, Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Plans have the potential to become/will be the 'go to' places for local connectivity and micro quantifications.
- 7.5.6 Let's remember to look to other areas, e.g. Buckinghamshire, to learn from them, and also important to not lose sight of the fact that lots of net gain will be achieved 'on site'.

ACTION 6: MBkr to incorporate further considerations into the biodiversity net gain paper, following today's discussions. It is recognised further political advocacy is required before the paper can be adopted as Policy.

7.6 Developing with Nature Forum

- 7.6.1 Further to feedback from the Developing with Nature Forum, it was reported that there was more work to be done on the Toolkit, specifically about how on smaller sites/larger sites 20% can be achieved.
- 7.7.2 It was recognised that having a proper chat about Suitable Alternative Green Spaces (SANGS) would also help to inform that discussion and may provide some answers. It was suggested Jonathan Ducker would be the best person to consult to inform any possible facilitated workshop for the Forum.

ACTION 7: MBkr and RB to look at improvements to the Developing with Nature Toolkit with a view to addressing biodiversity net gain for smaller sites, and MBry to make introductions to Jonathan Drucker.

8. **Other matters** (as listed on agenda)

It was agreed these be taken forward outside of the meeting.

9. **AOB including summation of proceedings:**

DECISION: In weighing up the 'seize the moment' appetite for pushing for a £25m Fund against corporate social responsibility, philanthropy and public monies approach to fund the priority landscapes, it was felt that more detail was required around the concept of the Fund before progressing this further with the Mayor.

ACTION 8: MB and HD to draw up a plan, in preparation for a further meeting of the Funding and Fundraising WG towards the end of Feb (date tbc).

10. **Dates of next meetings:**

Tuesday 13th April, 10-12:30pm
Tuesday 8th June, 10-12:30pm
Tuesday 3th August, 10-12:30pm
Tuesday 5th October, 10-12:30pm
Tuesday 7th December, 10-12:30pm