

**ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SIXTH MEETING OF THE BOARD OF NATURESCOT (FORMERLY SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE)**

**BOARD VIRTUAL MEETING SPACE, 26 AUGUST 2020**

**OPEN SESSION CONFIRMED MINUTES**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mike Cantlay	Chair
Angus Campbell	Deputy Chair
Cath Denholm	Deputy Chair
Kate Broughton	Member
Bob Furness	Member
Ian Gillies	Member
Jackie Hyland	Member
Aoife Martin	Member
Susan Murray	Member
Neil Skene	Shadow Board Member

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Francesca Osowska	Chief Executive
Jane Macdonald	Director of Business Services & Transformation
Sally Thomas	Director of People & Nature
Robbie Kernahan	Director of Sustainable Growth
Stuart MacQuarrie	Deputy Director of Business Services & Transformation
Ross Johnston	Deputy Director of Sustainable Growth
Jason Ormiston	Head of External Affairs
Graham Boyle	Chief of Staff
Sara Lewis	Governance Support Manager (minutes)
Jen Graham	Graduate Placement (Young Employee Panel)
Lynda Thomson	Head of People & Organisational Development (item 7)
Clive Mitchell	Outcome Manager - People and Nature (Item 7)

**APOLOGIES**

None

**AGENDA ITEM 1: OPENING REMARKS AND APOLOGIES**

1. The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the one hundred and eighty-sixth meeting of the former Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). He congratulated attendees for being present at this, the first meeting held under the name NatureScot. Particular welcome was given to Jen Graham from NatureScot's Young Employee Panel. He was informed that Jane Macdonald would be joining the meeting at a later point. A reminder

was given that the meeting was being video recorded for the purposes of the minutes only, and would be deleted after use. There were no objections. It was noted that this was the last Board meeting attendance from both Ross Johnston and Neil Skene.

2. There were no apologies.
3. The Chair updated the Board on his recent activities including his meeting with the Cabinet Secretary, where opportunities to strengthen the position of NatureScot in enhancing biodiversity and contributing to nature-based solutions for climate change were discussed.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 2: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

4. There were no declarations of interest.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 3: MINUTES AND ACTION POINTS**

5. Board members were content to **approve** the minutes of the SNH Board Meeting on the 06 May 2020, subject to a minor amendment.

#### **Action Points**

6. The **actions points** were discussed and the following updates were provided:

**Action Point** (AP01/181) Aoife Martin updated that work was progressing in preparing the Protected Areas Committee Review for the Board, which will be an agenda item at the December 2020 meeting.

**Ongoing.**

**Action Point** (AP03/181) Bob Furness provided an update on setting up a joint Scientific Advisory Committee meeting with Natural England. It was agreed that this action would become 'business as usual', and be discharged as an action point.

**Discharged.**

**Action Point** (AP13/181) Ross Johnston informed that NatureScot remain awaiting direction from Scottish Government (SG) on the disposal of Kinloch Castle.

**Ongoing.**

**Action Point** (AP02/185) Liaison with the Western Isles Council regarding their general youth employment strategy remains pending after an introductory conversation by the Director of Business Services & Transformation (DBS&T).

**Ongoing.**

7. Members agreed to discharge **AP01/185** (SNH Input to Scottish Government's National Performance Indicator 4), **AP03/185** (Further Consideration of ReRoute Recommendations regarding Youth Employment at SNH), and **AP04/185** (Inclusion of Young Employment Panel in SNH Decision Making).

#### **AGENDA ITEM 4: MATTERS ARISING**

8. The issue of an apparent increase in wildlife crime during the Covid-19 situation,. Discussion ensued regarding the action taken by NatureScot, including assisting investigation by Police Scotland, enforcement action in removing wildlife management licences, and working with Partnership Against Wildlife Crime Scotland (PAWS). The link to the Werritty Report on Grouse Moor Management was acknowledged, and the response to this from Scottish Government awaited.
9. The Board requested more information on this issue, including comparative evidence of any wildlife crime increase.

**Action Point 01/186**

#### **AGENDA ITEM 5: DEPUTY CHAIRS' REPORT**

10. Cath Denholm updated on her involvement in the following:

- Mentoring the Shadow Board Member.
- Sharing NatureScot best practice on business planning, homeworking.
- Involvement in Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) meetings and strategic plan.
- Completion of deep dive for the JNCC Audit and Risk Committee.

11. Angus Campbell updated on his involvement in the following:

- Board sub-group work with the Young Employment Panel.
- In receipt of heightened volume of enquiries from the general public regarding wild camping and respect for nature.
- Taken part in meetings concerning the impact of Covid 19 on fishing in the Western Isles.
- Green recovery and net zero carbon targets are commonplace discussions within the other organisations Angus is involved in.

12. Board members discussed the current issue of anti-social behaviour by some members of the public, leading to littering and damage of localised areas of the countryside. The increase in interest and enquiries regarding the Scottish Outdoor Access Code was noted, however access was a different issue from anti-social behaviour. Learning from this years' experience will inform actions for next year including educational communications to the public, provision of facilities, and enforcement of behaviour.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 6: CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

13. The Board noted the contents of the CE Report, including the following highlights:

- SNH rebrand to NatureScot.
- Accelerated work on organisational transformation.
- Green Recovery.
- Natural capital and environmental green finance.

- National Nature Reserve visitor management issues.
- Recruitment to Director and Deputy Director positions on the Senior Leadership Team.

## **AGENDA ITEM 7: NATURESCOT, THE FUNCTION OF OUR NEW ORGANISATION (BUILDING BLOCK 3)**

14. The Deputy Director of Business Services and Transformation (DBS&T) presented NatureScot's strategic focus, aligned with their purpose and goal. NatureScot's operating environment has been influenced by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment, climate and biodiversity emergencies, Covid-19 pandemic, the Green Recovery, and EU Exit. She also covered detail on how the collaboration with partners and stakeholders will inform how the organisation will operate.
15. The Board were asked to agree the future 'offer' of the organisation's resources to partners and stakeholders, as well as the next steps in moving towards a new organisational development framework. The core offer was stated as:
  - Nature-based solutions to address climate change, population health and inequalities.
  - Net zero natural resource management on land and at sea.
  - Natural capital approaches and enabling environmental Green Finance and Recovery.
16. The DBS&T recapped the work that had been developed over the previous 12 months, and that due to the aforementioned influences, the new organisation would require additional skills, digital connectivity, and different positioning from partner organisations and other Non-Departmental Public Bodies.
17. Members discussed the external offering, and the opportunities that the new brand identity provides in influencing biodiversity and climate change agendas, and adding value to Scotland. The key role of Board members in the strategic influencing of primary stakeholders was highlighted.
18. It was agreed that the future 'offer' of NatureScot resources should be clearly articulated, spelling out NatureScot's unique contribution to meet the IPBES drivers. It was accepted that the more accessible the 'offer', the more likely both staff and stakeholders would be to engage with it. It was seen as critical to make clear the difference to stakeholders that the NatureScot 'offer' would make, with the 'How' visibly stated and relevant to both SG and the general public. The reality of the economic situation was recognised, particularly regarding funding implications on withdrawing from the European Union and future public finances being weakened by Covid-19.
19. Additional points to consider included:
  - The ambition of NatureScot to become Scotland's world leader in nature by 2030.
  - The uniqueness of NatureScot's position against other Non-Government Organisations, including statutory duties.

20. The Board requested that more work be done to strengthen the 'offer' in light of the feedback given by Members. They advised that a final updated paper is presented to them after publication of the Programme for Government in September 2020.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 8: NATURESCOT: PROGRESS TOWARDS A GREEN RECOVERY**

21. The Director of Sustainable Growth (DSG) introduced this paper, which encouraged discussion regarding NatureScot's actions to influence Scotland's economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. It provided information on the various routes that NatureScot is following in pursuit of a green path to Scotland's economic recovery.
22. The Board were asked to offer further suggestions concerning where NatureScot could do more, in terms of engagement and influence, as well as to support the recommended approach to a green recovery.
23. The DSG described how other organisations must be pursued towards investment in nature-based solutions towards biodiversity loss and climate change, and the influencing role of NatureScot in achieving this. Much work has already been done in adding influence to the Report of the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery, Climate Change Committee, Just Transition Committee, Scottish National Investment Bank, the Infrastructure Commission, and Scottish Enterprise Link. Opportunities to engage with the Scottish Government over the coming months were discussed, as well as green recovery work being part of NatureScot's prioritised work.
24. The production of the NatureScot influencing plan was seen to be integral in highlighting areas of leadership for the organisation, and the importance of this work increasing pace was noted. Board members acknowledged their part in securing new stakeholder champions to promote the organisation as a leading prosperity creator for Scotland. They also saw the opportunities of involving young employees of NatureScot in influencing and leadership.
25. The Board were content to agree the recommendation to support the current approach.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 9: QUARTER 1 (Q1) PERFORMANCE REPORTS**

26. The DDBS&T introduced this paper which provided the Board with a quarterly update on performance towards delivery of the 2020/21 Interim Business Plan. The quarter took place during the start of the exceptional Covid-19 situation. It included reports in areas of Performance, Risk, Finance and People, as well as an update on National Performance Framework indicators, and customer care measures.
27. The Board were asked to note the report and confirm that they were content with the overall progress to date, as well as the headline achievements, and opportunities/issues identified.

28. The DDBS&T referred to a brief overview of the Q1 performance update circulated to Board members since the end of the quarter, and informed that this report contained more detailed information.

29. The following areas were discussed:

- Business transformation, including the move to homeworking prompted by Covid-19, Health, Safety and Wellbeing, technology, and carbon saving impacts as a result of homeworking.
- Productivity during Covid-19, with indicators based on key deliverables. While mainly inconclusive and indirect measures were used, they gave a sense of the status quo.
- Covid-19 related impacts, including financial spend against projects, annual leave balances, flexi-time balances, and use of mobile phones, Lifesize video conferencing facility, and NetExtender virtual office technology.

30. Discussion followed around the future organisational appetite for homeworking past the Covid-19 pandemic. It was confirmed that decisions on agreements for individual staff members to continue on a full or part homeworking arrangement would be based where possible on both organisation and individual need. Members conferred on the disadvantage of simply moving carbon usage from the office to the workplace, and informed that Zero Waste Scotland had developed a tool to help with this. Acknowledgement was made of the suitability of homeworking and personal circumstances, as well as the need to consider possible impacts on the induction of future new employees.

**Action Point 02/186**

31. The Budget and Finance element of the report presented the financial situation as at 06 July 2020. 5 of the 6 performance indicators (PI) were rated 'green', with 1 'amber' (allocation tracker). The updated position showed the amber PI now reflecting 'green', with hard commitment having moved from 'green' to 'amber'. The hard commitment acceleration has been largely due to lockdown restrictions, which have reduced the number of contractual commitments.

32. Members confirmed that they were content with the management of the capital and operating budget during this quarter of financial year 2020/21.

33. Having considered the Risk and People metrics of the Q1 Performance Report, the Board confirmed it was content with overall progress to date, the headline achievements, and the opportunities and issues identified.

**AGENDA ITEM 10: AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE (ARC) QUARTERLY REPORT**

34. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) updated the Board on the work of the committee during the last quarter. Following two closely timed ARC meetings, the ARC Chair provided the following key highlights:

- 2019/20 Annual Report and Accounts agreed with Audit Scotland.
- Particular focus on the Covid-19 Business Resilience risk and control measures through a deep dive.
- 2019/20 Annual Health Safety and Wellbeing Report approved. Board members requested they be sent a copy.

*Post meeting note: Board members were sent a copy of the 2019 Annual Health, Safety and Wellbeing report after the meeting.*

- Update on Board member cyber security and phishing training.
- Several recent meeting observers included members of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Community Justice Scotland, and the NatureScot Shadow Board Member.

35. The Board noted the contents of the update, and thanked the Chair of the ARC for the committee's work during the quarter.

### **INFORMATION PAPERS**

#### **Beyond ReRoute – NatureScot's Youth Engagement Action Plan**

36. This information paper updated Board members on the finalised action plan previously requested by the Board, in order to ensure the engagement of young people in the work of NatureScot. The paper contained a statement of intent, to be used to communicate the commitment of the Board on this issue within NatureScot, as well as the action plan. The Board noted the contents of the paper.

#### **Forward Agenda – 28 October 2020**

37. The Board noted the forward agenda for 28 October 2020.

### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AOB)**

38. The Board discussed the latest Covid-19 situation, and possible future impacts to the organisation.

39. The Director of Sustainable Growth updated Board members on the recent changes to general licences

40. Deputy Chair Cath Denholm highlighted to Members that this was the last meeting for the NatureScot Shadow Board Member. Cath reflected on the usefulness of the shadowing experience in testing the accessibility of public service appointments. Neil Skene was thanked for his involvement, and the Executive Office staff for their support.

41. The Shadow Board Member gave feedback on their experience with NatureScot, and commented positively on the accessibility of the organisation

42. The Chair observed that this was also the last meeting for the Deputy Director of Sustainable Growth. Both Neil Skene and Ross Johnston were wished well for the future, and thanked for their service and commitment.

Date of Next Meeting

43. The next NatureScot Board Meeting is planned to take place on 28 October, via video conferencing.

44. The Chair thanked all those in attendance, particularly Jen Graham of the Young Employee Panel. The Chair then closed the meeting.

**END**