



Members of the Executive Committee of the Conservation Board for the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are hereby summoned to a meeting of the

**Executive Committee**

**On Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at 10.00am**  
**Meeting Room at Chilterns Conservation Board, 90 Station Road, Chinnor, OX39 4HA**  
**and by remote video conferencing Chinnor, OX39 4DH**  
The session will be open from 9.45am

**Agenda**

1. Apologies
2. Declaration of Interest
3. Notice of Urgent Business
4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (11.07.23)
5. Matters Arising
6. Public Questions
7. Chair's Update
8. Chief Executive's Update
9. Finance and Budget Report
  - 9.1 Quarter 2 Financial Update
  - 9.2 Report on Quarter 2 Delivery
  - 9.3 Funding Update
  - 9.4 Business Planning
10. Rebranding
11. Strategy and Governance
  - 11.1 Integrated Strategic workstreams
  - 11.2 Schemes of Delegation
12. HR Strategy update and HR Advisory Group
  - 12.1 HR Strategy (approved February 2023)
  - 12.2 HR Strategy implementation plan – update
  - 12.3 HR Transformation Plan
  - 12.4 HR Advisory Group update

13. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion update
14. Landscape Team update
15. Urgent Business
16. Agenda items for 12th December Board meeting
17. Time and date of next meeting

**2023 meeting dates:**

<b>Board meetings</b>	<b>Executive Committee</b>	<b>Planning Committee</b>
12 <sup>th</sup> December 2023	14 <sup>th</sup> November 2023	18 <sup>th</sup> October 2023
<i>Location TBC</i>	<i>Location Chinnor</i>	<i>Location Chinnor</i>

Elaine King, CEO



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE of the Chilterns  
Conservation Board HELD ON Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at CCB offices, The Lodge, 90  
Station Road, Chinnor OX39 4HA commencing at 10.00 AM.**

Present:

Colin Courtney	Board Member- Chair
Paul Mains	Board Member
Cllr Richard Newcombe	Board Member
John Nicholls	Board Member- Deputy Chair of the Board
Cllr Sue Rowland	Board Member
Cllr Sir Hector Sants	Board Member
Cllr Philip Spicer	Board Member

In attendance:	
Deirdre Hansen	Clerk to the Board
Graham Hurst	Finance Officer
Elaine King	Chief Executive Officer

The CEO welcomed all present and opened the meeting. The Committee sent best wishes to Cllr Charles Hussey after his major surgery.

**23/24. 1. Election of Chair**

Colin Courtney, Chair of the Board, was nominated and elected unopposed as Chair of the Executive Committee. He took the chair.

**23/24.2. Apologies for absence.**

Apologies received and accepted from Cllrs John Griffin and Charles Hussey.

**23/24.3. Declarations of interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

**23/24.4. Notice of Urgent Business**

There was no notice of urgent business.

**23/24.5. Minutes of the previous meeting 09/05/23**

The minutes of the meeting 09/5/23 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

**23/24.6. Matters Arising**

- All items covered on the agenda.

### **23/24.7. No public present**

### **23/24.8. Chair's update**

1. At the previous meeting Paul Mains, then Chair, had notified the meeting of the intention to write to the Secretary of State at Defra raising issues on better communication, the flat financial settlement and the recruitment process for Secretary of State appointed Board members, which he has done. Paul Mains had verbally received confirmation of receipt of the letter from Sion McGeever, one of Defra's deputy directors. This correspondence was asked to be circulated to Committee members.

#### **Action clerk**

2. As new Chair to the Board he is getting to grips with the ApprovalMax system, the approvals system for orders and invoices.
3. We have another new Board member, James Norman, representing SODC, he has a farming background.
4. He has been having introductions to our stakeholders with assistance from the CEO and the previous chair of the board.
5. He has taken part in the monthly online Natural England Management Advisory Group (MAG) together with the CEO, Elaine King, the Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson, and Paul Mains. NE has employed consultants to carry out the scoping work for the AONBs Boundary Extension work. Their initial confidential report will be available to MAG members in August 2023. Members will have four weeks to respond. The report will consist of an evaluation of 60 potential areas which will then be reduced to Candidate Areas for wider consultation summer 2024. The project is running about two months behind schedule. He also raised the drain on our resources of supporting this project and undertook to write further on this subject.
6. Time has been taken up with sensitive issues which have financial implications. Matters to be discussed.
7. He had attended the EDI workshop for staff and board members, which he found very useful.

#### **1. The Committee NOTED the Chair's update.**

### **23/23.9. Chief Executive's update**

The CEO, Elaine King, gave a verbal update.

1. The HR strategy work is progressing well and the Implementation Plan on track. The CEO regularly reviews hybrid working. Currently full time staff are required to be in the office two days a week, and that will likely soon be three days a week.
2. A new freelance HR consultant is being employed, contracts to be signed imminently. She will take on the planned training day for CCB managers in August. Our previous HR consultant will also be available to assist where required.
3. The draft handbook went out to staff, comments have been received back and there are unlikely to be many changes required to the draft staff handbook. Clerk was asked to circulate the draft staff handbook to the Committee members. **Action clerk.** It was also asked if an up-to-date organogram could be circulated to all Board members. **Action clerk.**
4. The HR strategy implementation plan is working.
5. Some small staff changes are planned which do not affect our staff costs. We will shortly go out to recruitment on the following roles:
  - Project Support Officer- Fran Crowther is moving to the post of Assistant Manager on the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs project.

- Communications Officer - Kim-Lin Hooper left the CCB in early July for another role. The team was already under resourced and the senior team has explored how capacity can be increased from three days per week to full time. By analysing the work of the Communications Team, it has become obvious that some of their work can be recharged to the projects, which will provide additional funding. Funding and recharging will be covered under the Finance item of the meeting.
- 6. The Chalk Cherries and Chairs project is almost ready to submit the overdue claim of nearly £ 500k.
- 7. Beacons of the Past. The Chiltern Open Air Museum held a Green Festival the previous weekend. It is a good example of where CCB staff (this time chalk streams team and our Heritage and Archaeology Manager) are engaging with the public and of providing the CCB with visibility during the summer season of festivals and other events.
- 8. EDI training and workshops have been held.
- 9. External events: the CEO has been invited by Chiltern Railways to a parliamentary reception hosted by Greg Smith MP. The Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson was quoted in their new environmental strategy. The CEO has also been invited to other events discussing the future of the countryside. Events like this increase our visibility.

**1. The Committee NOTED the CEO's update.**

**23/24.10 Budget- Finance**

**10.a.** The Finance Officer, Graham Hurst, reported on the financial results to the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

1. Core income was only £32k as the Defra grant of £257k was not received until July. This year Defra required much more information accompanying the grant application, more like an audit. This had slowed the process down.
2. It was noted that recharges to projects of core staff costs and overheads cannot be shown as income in our accounting software, but shows as both income and expenditure reduced.
3. The Core deficit of £128k would have been nil if the Defra grant had been received by the 30<sup>th</sup> June.
4. Project income relates to Green Recovery Challenge Fund (£197k), HS2 Community and Environment fund (£57k), Chalk, Cherries and Chairs partner funding (£16k) and Affinity Water funding for the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project (£10k).
5. Project expenditure was £160k with a deficit of £101k, funded by project and CCB reserves. The CCB will be refunded from Project funding.
6. Chalk, Cherries and Chairs is progressing on clearing the overdue claims, with CEF funding received and the NLHF claim in the final stages before submission.
7. Current staff numbers are in line with budget: F/T eight core staff and nine project staff. P/T six core staff and three project staff.
8. The Budget has been reforecast:
  - Core income recharges have been conservatively reforecast following detailed analysis as £184k instead of £155k.
  - Local Authority expected income has been reduced as not all LAs have increased their contributions.
  - Staff costs have been increased by £14k due to adjustments to start and leaving dates.
  - Staff costs remain at 80% of core costs, office costs are 6% and consultant's costs 4%.
9. The Internal audit has now started.
10. The situation with Thames Water was noted as a risk.

The Chair thanked the Finance Officer.

**1. The Committee NOTED the CCB Financial Position on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023.**

**10 b. Business Plan- linking delivery Plan 2023-24 to Budget and Resources Plan.**

The Head of Operations, Andrew Brock- Doyle, had provided a detailed report on headcount coverage, identifying the resources within the CCB, how they are funded and are proposed to be funded for the rest of the year.

Optimisation of recharge from Core to Projects is being examined in detail and opportunities are being explored.

It was noted that the CCB aspires to using the CMS project tool to give more visibility but noted that each funder requires information in a different format and a cultural shift for the CCB itself is required.

The report showed clearly opportunities being explored.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the current headcount coverage in terms of core and project work and the opportunities that are currently being explored.**

**10.c. Report on Quarter 1 Delivery**

The Head of Operations, Andrew Brock- Doyle, had provided a detailed report identifying progress made against the Delivery Plan workstreams and delivery lines during Q1 2023 as well as identifying key risks and issues and the RAG status.

The Committee was pleased with the detailed report and thanked the Head of Operations. There was some discussion on future presentation of the information – with preference for brevity in a main report and any essential detail in an appendix.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the progress made in Q1 along with the identified risks and issues.**

**23/24.11. a. Governance Review and next steps.**

The Committee had received a report by the Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson, that sets out steps to: further develop and implement the Governance Task and Finish Group recommendations; review the Code of Governance and develop a scheme of delegation; and enhance the strategic role of the Board and the operational role of the Executive Committee.

The meeting discussed the paper and agreed the following recommendations.

- 1. The Committee INVITED the Chair of the Governance Task and Finish Group to work with officers to analyse requirements to address tensions between and gaps within matters relating to the discharge of the Boards' functions by its Committees and Officers.**
- 2. The Committee REQUESTED that the Governance Task and Finish Group considers the outcome of that analysis and develops recommendations for a scheme of delegation (or similar) to be approved as part of the Code of Governance including the Financial Regulations of the Board.**

3. **The Committee REQUESTED that the Governance Task and Finish Group draws up recommendations for the potential membership of the Board Advisory Group (BAG) and how partners could be engaged in that process taking a holistic approach, but realising that the BAG is not legally binding.**
4. **The Committee INVITED Board members to volunteer to participate in the work of the Governance Task and Finish Group and AUTHORISES the Task and Finish Group's Chair to call on the input of officers and Board members with the appropriate skills and experience at the Group's discretion.**

#### **11.b. HR Advisory Group and HR Strategy**

The Chair to write to Board members to seek further membership of this Advisory Group to ensure we have sufficient numbers and appropriate skills and diversity within the Group.

#### **11.c Resourcing Governance Workstreams**

The CEO, Elaine King, had presented the Committee a paper laying out that the CCB's limited budgets mean that a number of high-priority, time-critical workstreams in the CCB's 2023-24 Business Plan are not sufficiently resourced to be delivered effectively. It is proposed to use the Development Reserve to enable delivery of these key workstreams.

These work streams are:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). We have developed an ambition statement and action plan which included training for staff and Board members. This is a priority for the CCB and embedded in our Business Plan 2023-24, but required additional resources.
- Parallel Governance workstreams:
  - i. CCB internal Governance Review PW1
  - ii. CCB-led Review of the Chilterns AONB Management Plan (a Statutory requirement) PW2
  - iii. CCB-led 25-year vision project PW3
  - iv. Natural England's AONB Extension project PW4
  - v. Natural England's Enhanced Management and Governance Arrangements (EMAGA) PW5

The above work requires internal staff resources, with bespoke EDI training being bought in.

To free up the Head of Strategy and Planning to lead on the parallel workstreams, to provide more capacity for the Head of Engagement and Partnerships, and to bring in external training resources, the Committee was asked to approve the release of £38.25k of the Development Reserve for the forthcoming year to fund this work in the short term.

The Committee discussed the proposal extensively. Updated objectives for the Governance and the 25-year Vision TFGs will need to be considered. We must not lose the opportunity these work streams bring and we must ensure we have a clear long-term vision. The Board to be updated at its next meeting with a clear set of deliverables and a timetable for the work using the Development Reserve. This will be progressed by the senior team with the Chairs of the 25-year Vision (Sir Hector Sants) and Governance T&F group (John Nicholls), and of the Planning Committee (Cllr Sue Rowland). We must not lose sight of risks of not completing the work in 12 months.

1. **The Committee APPROVED the use of the Development Reserve to the value of £38.25k.**

The Chair of the Planning Committee had provided an additional paper outlining the current demands on the CCB's Planning Function especially with the additional corporate strategic work. The planning function is recognised as a vital element of the CCB's work. The Planning Committee wished to share its

concerns about the capacity in the Planning function with the Executive Committee. The Chair of the Planning Committee expressed her support for creating additional capacity on planning.

- 2. The Committee NOTED the concerns of the Planning Committee about capacity and resources in the Board's Planning function and took these into account when considering the CEO's proposals for resourcing key workstreams.**

**23/24.12. Funding Strategy**

This will be brought to the next meeting.

**23/24.13. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.**

The Head of Engagement and Partnerships, Annette Weiss, to bring broader recommendations for the next steps to the next meeting. Mobility impairment and related access issues to be considered.

**23/24.14. Beacons of the Past-update.**

The Heritage and Archaeology Manager, Wendy Morrison, Manager of the Beacons of the Past project had presented a comprehensive end of project update on the Beacons of the Past project.

The project was completed on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022. The long-term benefits of the project are far ranging and there are lasting legacies that include material assets (e.g., interpretation panels), the LiDAR data and strategic impact, such as greater partnership working with national public bodies).

Thanks were expressed to the Heritage and Archaeology Manager, Wendy Morrison and the project team.

**23/24.15. Urgent Business**

The current situation with Thames Water raised the question of the CCB's financial risks. The Finance Officer gave a brief outline of possible financial challenges that may arise.

**23/24.16 Next board Meeting 12<sup>th</sup> September.**

Consider inviting Natural England for an update on the boundary review. Chair and CEO to take forward.

**23/24.17. Next meeting: 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023- at the CCB offices in Chinnor.**

Future meetings: TBC

It was resolved that the meeting went into closed session under the Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960 to discuss personnel matters.

The Chairman.....

Date.....



**Item 9.1**                      **Finance Report****Author:**                      Graham Hurst, Finance Officer**Summary:**                      Finance Report 31 October 2023

The 7 months financials to 31 October 2023 are attached as an appendix to this report:

**Core 7-month summary**

- Income was £592k, in line with expectations. We have now received our full annual allocation from DEFRA so 5 months funding of £214k has been received in advance.
- Recharges of Core staff cost and overheads have been budgeted as income. Our accounting software cannot show the recharge of staff costs as income, instead these recharges reduce Core employment expense and allocates the cost to projects. Staff costs are £87k less than budget which is in line with the budgeted £107k recharge for the period.
- The management accounts include the £70k of exceptional costs as previously advised.
- The Core surplus is £135k after exceptional costs. However, £214k of this represents income in advance. If the CCB finances remain on budget, then the outturn is expected to be £70k deficit resulting from the exceptional costs.

**Projects 5-month summary**

- Income from projects for the year to date is £1.632m and costs £746k leaving £886k to transfer to project reserves. This is not a surplus, but reimbursement of costs paid out in advance as all projects are budgeted on a break-even basis.

**Audit**

- We are still awaiting our final external auditors report.

**Recommendation**

- 1. To note the CCB's financial position at 31 October 2023**

**Profit and Loss**

Chilterns Conservation Board

For the 7 months ended 31 October 2023

<b>Account</b>	<b>Apr-Oct 2023</b>	<b>Core</b>	<b>Projects</b>
<b>Revenue</b>			
Advertising Income	8,166.45	8166.45	0
DEFRA	915,307.61	513895.61	401412
Fee Income	262.50	0	262.5
Interest Income	17,898.53	17898.53	0
Local Authority Contribution	100,585.30	50398	50187.3
Other Revenue	1,760.00	1640	160
Project Income	1,180,166.48	0	1180126.48
Sale of merchandise	147.72	128.75	18.97
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>2,224,294.59</b>	<b>592,127.34</b>	<b>1,632,167.25</b>
<b>Administrative Costs</b>			
Advertising & Marketing	6,593.80	220	6373.8
Bank Fees	47.35	47.35	0
Board Meetings	179.98	179.98	0
Chess SWC Landowner Gra	6,815.70	0	6815.7
Cleaning	1,812.36	1812.36	0
Computer and IT Equipment	4,918.98	3541.38	1377.6
Consulting	76,731.05	21179.05	55552
Employers National Insuranc	40,218.51	22096.2	18122.31
Event costs	9,384.20	1061.07	8323.13
Finance costs	672.00	672	0
FiPL Grant	106,398.74	0	106398.74
FiPL Grant Year 3 23/24	40,093.46	0	40093.46
General Expenses	87,407.35	2396.44	85010.91
HLF Equipment and material:	5,780.08	0	5780.08
HLF Equipment and material:	16,396.03	0	16396.03
HLF Evaluation	2,263.15	0	2263.15
HLF Full Cost Recovery	5,866.00	0	5866
HLF Irrecoverable VAT	8,060.61	0	8060.61
HLF New building work	1,485.36	0	1485.36
HLF New Staff Costs	135,433.38	0	135433.38
HLF Other costs	2,235.07	0	2235.07
HLF Other costs (activity)	7,147.98	0	7147.98
HLF Other costs (capital)	5,160.97	0	5160.97
HLF Paid Training Placemen	10,679.00	0	10679
HLF Professional fees relatin	55,596.09	0	55596.09
HLF Professional fees relatin	14,519.76	0	14519.76
HLF Publicity and promotion	2,330.00	0	2330
HLF Repair and conservator	2,079.59	0	2079.59
HLF Training for staff	301.67	0	301.67
HLF Training for volunteers	2,586.48	0	2586.48
HLF Travel and expenses for	1,050.60	0	1050.6
HLF Travel for staff	2,744.30	0	2719.5
Insurance	8,904.26	8904.26	0
IT Software and Consumable	5,239.29	4218.99	1020.3
IT support and maintenance	3,675.61	3121.61	554
Legal Expenses	10,328.40	10328.4	0
Light, Power, Heating	2,975.42	2975.42	0
Magazine costs	12,018.00	12018	0
Medical Insurance	2,443.82	2443.82	0
Members Allowances	3,344.56	3344.56	0
Nature Recovery	(2,500.00)	0	-2500
Office Equipment	681.60	249	432.6
Pensions Costs	76,447.52	42323.56	34123.96
Postage, Freight & Courier	280.34	209.16	71.18
Printing & Stationery	1,817.87	1024.74	793.13
Project donations	(2,500.00)	0	-2500
Rates and Water rates	3,748.84	3748.84	0
Recruitment	2,909.05	2909.05	0
Rent	11,000.00	9250	1750
Repairs & Maintenance	2,147.88	2147.88	0
Research and survey expend	11,630.39	18	11612.39
Salaries	407,776.90	220924.32	186852.58
Staff expenses	1,578.19	453.3	1124.89
Staff Training	6,294.33	4619.75	1674.58
Subscriptions	3,593.56	3544	49.56
Telephone & Internet	2,911.40	1785.56	1125.84
Travel Expenses	5,262.55	1545.61	3741.74
Website running costs	10,881.62	1473.62	9408
<b>Total Administrative Costs</b>	<b>1,255,881.00</b>	<b>396,787.28</b>	<b>859,093.72</b>
<b>Surplus / (Deficit)</b>	<b>968,413.59</b>	<b>195,340.06</b>	<b>773,073.53</b>

<b>Chilterns Conservation Board</b>					
<b>1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024</b>					
<b>Actual 7 Months to 31 October 2023</b>					
<i>Version 7Nov2023.</i>					
<b>CORE</b>	<i>Original Budget</i>	<b>Reforecast 2024</b>	<b>Budget for 7 mths (reforecast)</b>	<b>Actual to October 2023</b>	Notes
<b>Income</b>					
Advertising Income	6,250	6,250	3,646	8,166	Advertising income £8k annual amount
DEFRA	513,895	513,895	299,772	513,896	Five months in advance £214124
DEFRA Access grant	-	-	-	-	
Fee Income and recharge to projects	155,809	183,719	107,169		Payroll recharged monthly- £86,872 netted from payroll, overheads when invoiced
Interest Income	500	500	292	17,899	Mainly MTG to be realysed
Local Authority Contribution	126,776	106,521	62,137	50,398	Only Herts CC, Dacorum BC and Oxford CC and South Oxford DC paid
Other Revenue			-	1,640	Fees charged
Sale of merchandise	550	550	321	129	
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>803,780</b>	<b>811,435</b>	<b>473,337</b>	<b>592,127</b>	
<b>Less Operating Expenses</b>					
Advertising & Marketing	150	150	88	220	
Bank Fees	150	150	88	47	
Board Meetings	1,800	1,800	1,050	180	
Cleaning	2,800	2,800	1,633	1,812	
Computer and IT Equipment	3,500	3,500	2,042	3,541	Front loaded expenditure
Consulting	31,200	31,200	18,200	21,179	HR £6780, EDI £900, Planning £13500
DEFRA capital projects	-	-	-	-	
Employers National Insurance	47,960	49,264	28,737	22,096	Actual is less recharged to Projects £6641
Event costs	2,000	2,000	1,167	1,061	
Finance costs	9,000	9,000	5,250	672	Awaiting audit fees
General Expenses	3,946	2,000	1,167	2,396	NAAONB Conference £1785
Insurance	5,000	5,000	2,917	8,904	Annual cost, note greater than budget, some recharge possible
IT Software and Consumables	10,000	10,000	5,833	4,219	
IT support and maintenance	7,000	7,000	4,083	3,122	
Legal expenses	750	750	438	20,000	
Light, Power, Heating	6,500	6,500	3,792	2,975	
Magazine costs	12,000	12,000	7,000	12,018	Full year printing costs inv in advance
Medical Insurance	5,200	5,200	3,033	2,444	
Members Allowances	7,500	7,500	4,375	3,345	
Nature Recovery	5,000	5,000	2,917	-	
Office Equipment	1,500	1,500	875	249	
Pensions Costs	87,028	89,003	51,918	42,324	Actual is less recharged to Projects £9595
Postage, Freight & Courier	1,000	1,000	583	209	
Printing & Stationery	1,100	1,100	642	1,025	
Rates and Water rates	6,825	6,825	3,981	3,749	
Recruitment	2,000	5,000	2,917	52,909	
Rent	20,500	20,500	11,958	9,250	
Repairs & Maintenance	2,000	2,000	1,167	2,148	Annual testing and monitoring fees
Research and survey expenditure	5,000	5,000	2,917	18	
Salaries	490,371	499,818	291,560	220,924	Actual is less recharged to Projects £70636
Staff expenses	1,000	1,000	583	453	
Staff Training	5,000	5,000	2,917	4,620	EDI training
Subscriptions	5,000	5,000	2,917	3,544	Na for AONB £2985 annual fee
Telephone & Internet	5,000	5,000	2,917	1,786	
Travel Expenses	1,500	1,500	875	1,546	
Website running costs	7,500	7,500	4,375	1,474	
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>803,780</b>	<b>817,560</b>	<b>476,910</b>	<b>456,459</b>	
<b>Net Loss / Profit</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-6,125</b>	<b>-3,573</b>	<b>135,668</b>	Surplus DEFRA in advance £214k, £20k OH to recharge
<b>Summary % of Core Costs</b>					
Employment costs	80%	655,785	382,541	344,042	
Office costs	6%	52,225	30,465	32,107	
Consultants costs	4%	31,200	18,200	21,179	
IT costs	3%	20,500	11,958	10,882	
Magazine and social media	2%	19,500	11,375	13,492	
Audit and Actuary costs	1%	9,000	5,250	672	
Other	4%	29,350	17,121	34,086	
	100%	817,560	476,910	456,459	

**Profit and Loss**

Chilterns Conservation Board

For the 7 months ended 31 October 2023

<b>Account</b>	<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>Total Administrative Costs</b>	<b>Transfer to / from reserves</b>
BLEF Tourism ex 460	13,839.00	8,285.69	5,553.31
Chalkstreams Total	10,988.38	101,152.90	(90,164.52)
CCC Total	627,245.51	272,912.20	354,333.31
Chalkscapes ex 501	0.00	473.50	(473.50)
CHAP	0.00	28,332.59	(28,332.59)
Chess Smarter Water Catchment	328,271.28	160,802.06	167,469.22
Chiltern Walking Festival ex 451	1,678.19	1,364.35	313.84
Farming in Protected Landscapes	401,412.00	202,177.14	199,234.86
Green Recovery Fund	198,545.59	5,650.00	192,895.59
HS2 Additional projects ex 271	50,187.30	1,866.62	48,320.68
HS2 Review ex 270	0.00	7.50	(7.50)
Mend the Gap ex 310	0.00	76,069.17	(76,069.17)
<b>Net projects</b>	<b>1632167.25</b>	<b>859093.72</b>	<b>773073.53</b>

**Item 9.2****Report on Quarter 2 Delivery****Author:**

Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations with SMT Team

**Purpose of the report:**

To update the Executive Committee on progress with the CCB's Delivery Plan, focusing on key risks and issues and proposed mitigation where applicable. Note that the significant achievements during this quarter, of which there are many, are included in the Full Report which is included as an Appendix with this document. This document only highlights areas of concern so that the Executive Committee has a clear awareness of this and can advise on mitigation.

**Summary:**

Overall progress against the delivery plan during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter of FY 2023-24 has been good with progress against 21 delivery items on track (22 in Q1), 16 reported as having slight delays or where delivery has been slightly limited in effectiveness (14 in Q1) and progress against four delivery items significantly delayed or limited in effectiveness (three in Q1). Two delivery items not started in Q1 have now started.

**Background**

The Delivery Plan for 2023-24 was presented to the Board in March 2023. A quarterly reporting process was then established within CCB with delivery leads reporting progress against the plan. The Quarter 1 report was presented to ExCo in July 2023. A request was made in the meeting that, given the length of the report, this should be included in the Appendices with a summary presented as a paper.

As can be seen from the Full Report on Q2 Progress, overall good progress is continuing to be made on delivery but there are some key areas of risk that continue to be a challenge. The CCB's Risk Register will be reviewed in January and updated to reflect these risks. The report below is in two parts – those areas categorised as significantly delayed or limited in impact, followed by other key risks and issues that are impacting across the organisation.

**Update – Delivery Items Significantly Delayed / Limited in Impact****1.1 Empowered People (SP1 – Building Organisational Resilience)**

Consultation with staff on the Discovery Phase, to give them ownership in identifying what to address and improve in the organisation, has been completed but a clear programme has yet to be developed to address this and implementation work has been limited.

**Key Issue:**

Lack of Capacity – This should be a key focus of the Head of Operations, but capacity has been limited due to ongoing operational involvement in Chalk, Cherries and Chairs, fighting operational fires and by a lack of internal support in this area.

**Mitigation:**

- Improve ability for Head of Operations to focus more time in this area (discussions ongoing with CEO to address this)

- Prioritise establishment of clear transformation workstreams and incorporate into business planning (including budgeting and resourcing) for 2024-25 (see HR Simplified Transformation Programme)

## **1.2 Supportive Policies & Procedures (SP1 Building Organisational Resilience)**

Ad hoc work has progressed in this area but the development / review of Board level and operational policies, processes and procedures has been limited. The Employee Handbook has not been launched in the organisation and needs further review, which is in hand, but will mean further delays. (see agenda item 12)

Key Issue:

Lack of Capacity – As above re Head of Operations but also in terms of the Clerk who has had limited capacity (and who leaves the organisation in December). The switch to a new HR consultant has also reduced momentum in this area.

Mitigation:

- Improve ability for Head of Operations to focus more time in this area (discussions held)
- Prioritise establishment of clear transformation workstreams and incorporate into business planning (including budgeting and resourcing) for 2024-25
- Establish HR transformation programme (HR Simplified) aligning work on policies (handbook), processes, procedures, templates, and a new HR system - with key delivery of core elements by March 2024 (initial discussion held with HR consultant and see papers at agenda item 12.2 and 12.3)
- Ensure effective transition of work being undertaken currently by the Clerk (underway)
- Prioritise clarifying governance processes before Clerk leaves (underway)
- Review workload and focus of Clerk (underway)
- Start delivery of HR training for managers (started in October)

## **2.4 Chalkscapes (SP2 – Delivering the Workstreams to which we are Committed)**

Elements of the Chalkscapes Development phase are being progressed e.g. University of Bedfordshire research into the barriers and enablers of ethnic groups accessing greenspace (report due to be published in November). We are also exploring with the University to secure funds for next phase of the work through a Collaborative Targeted Outreach programme. A Nature Calling application to Arts Council England was successful and will link to the work above. However, workstreams relating to nature recovery have not progressed and there is still a need to provide the Development phase report by independent advisors to all partners.

Key Issue: Lack of capacity to take this forward means that it continues to be de-prioritised, notwithstanding the work connected to EDI described and there is a risk that partners will become disengaged from working with CCB.

Mitigation:

- Internal meeting to agree options for addressing all elements of the work flowing from Chalkscapes
- Partner meeting to enable communications and agree way forward

## **2.7 Enhanced Management & Governance Arrangements (SP3 – Providing Leadership & Securing Influence)**

No progress this quarter as Natural England identified that they did not have resource to support this work.

Key Issues: Lack of financial resource to pay for additional work that this has created / Lack of internal capacity

Mitigation:

- Refocus effort on CCB Governance Review
- Address future of the project with Natural England

**Other Generic Key Risks and Issues Raised**

Key Issue / Risk	Description	Mitigation
Lack of Capacity	<p>This is the most common issue raised in terms of delay to implementation and has been identified across the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operational Effectiveness (SP1)</li> <li>• Finance (SP1)</li> <li>• Communications (SP1)</li> <li>• Chalk, Cherries &amp; Chairs (SP2)</li> <li>• Chalkscapes (SP2)</li> <li>• Farming Focused Projects (Farmer Clusters) (SP2)</li> <li>• Strategy Development (SP3)</li> <li>• Planning (SP3)</li> <li>• Landscapes Approach (SP3)</li> <li>• Partnership &amp; Engagement - EDI (SP3)</li> </ul> <p>Note that this comes from:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) a lack of capacity to deliver some items that we committed to in the 2023-24 business plan</li> <li>b) a short / medium increase in strategy work (both internal and external) alongside delivery</li> <li>c) significant ad hoc requirements</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of Development Reserves (agreed at last ExCo meeting)</li> <li>• Recruitment into comms team and of PSOs (undertaken)</li> <li>• SMT meeting more regularly (currently weekly) to ensure more time to address issues</li> <li>• Improving clarity on Strategic Priorities as part of the annual planning process and departmental strategy, priorities, and plans</li> <li>• Improved resource planning as part of the annual planning process</li> <li>• Improved focus on addressing resource requirements as part of funding applications</li> </ul>
Restricted Financial Resources	<p>In addition to a lack of capacity, delivery is being impacted by an overall lack of financial resources. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to move to more work efficient office space (due to cost)</li> <li>• Putting in place increased robustness around areas such as HR and Legal (contracts) where we need to bring in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear identification of requirements during annual planning process and inclusion in budgets going forward</li> <li>• Effective review of funding to ensure that financial proposals cover these areas</li> <li>• Agreement of overheads options and application against projects and new work (ongoing)</li> </ul>

	<p>external expertise to support development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application of new systems to support more efficient working (e.g. new HR system)</li> <li>• Purchase of a trailer to support field activity (where we currently rely on the good will of staff) / purchase of office furniture as the organisation has expanded</li> </ul>	
<p>Lack of Information / External Delay in Providing Information</p>	<p>The following areas have all to some extent been impacted by delays in receiving information without which work either cannot be progressed, will be more limited in the way it can progress or creates uncertainty about future workload:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heritage Focused Projects (SP2) - CHAP: Delay in permissions from Historic England for dating Bledlow Cross</li> <li>• Strategy Development (SP3) – AONB Extension: Sharing of Natural Beauty Assessments delayed causing knock on impact in engaging stakeholders. Detail and next steps still awaited from Natural England</li> <li>• Strategy Development (SP3) – Management Plan Interim Review: Awaiting outcomes and Target Framework from Defra (work progressing in line with Benyon recommendations)</li> <li>• Strategic Engagement (SP3) – Glover Landscapes Review: Defra review of the funding formula is ongoing so difficult to plan against budget going forward</li> <li>• Landscapes Approach (SP3): Natural England has not yet completed draft management plan guidance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More planful in terms of being realistic in timelines for delivery (building in expected delays)</li> <li>• Ensuring planning is more visible and agreed</li> <li>• Development of light touch approaches where appropriate (e.g. Management Plan – see Agenda item 11.1)</li> <li>• Ensuring improved clarity and agility in resourcing to be able to cope with changing circumstances</li> </ul>
<p>Need for Integration and</p>	<p>Given issues with capacity and work that has multiple threads there is a need for CCB to be</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting held to address this with development of</li> </ul>



<p>Holistic Planning</p>	<p>better at integrating work, planning holistically, and establishing better programme structures. This is especially true in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategy and governance work</li> <li>• HR work</li> <li>• Operational effectiveness work</li> </ul>	<p>Integrated Strategy Workstream (Nov)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated IWS plan (see Agenda Item 11.1)</li> <li>• Identification of clear Operational Effectiveness workstreams and integration into Annual Planning</li> <li>• Establishment of HR Simplified to focus delivery of key HR elements</li> </ul>
<p>Funding Robustness</p>	<p>There are two key risk areas here in terms of delivery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial resilience: This includes not only the funding strategy but also the robustness in funding governance and processes (significant work has happened in the last quarter to put a framework around this in terms of schemes of delegation, the development of new work process and the establishment of a funding pipeline</li> <li>• SWC/ CCSP (SP2) The overall financial status of Thames Water as a key funder (mitigated to some extent in current financial year through increased shareholder investment) and the fact that we are waiting for the final OFWAT decision on funding for SWC initiative roll out will not be known until Dec 2024. Whilst both projects are progressing as planned there is impact in terms of potential risk to staff retention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure effective embedding of funding pipeline and new work processes (aligned to schemes of delegation) as standard ways of working</li> <li>• Ensure effective integration of financial planning into overall annual planning processes (including funding)</li> </ul>
<p>Reputational Risk</p>	<p>There are two key areas where this is impacting / being impacted by delivery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Branding visibility (this includes working through how we agree the path forward on this, how we tackle the impact of a possible change in rebranding and how we clearly cost the impact of a change in rebranding)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gain clear alignment on how we approach rebranding with ExCo and Board</li> <li>• Provide clarity around rebranding plan once approach is agreed</li> <li>• Ensure integration of rebranding work into business plan for next year (including full costing)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project delivery including projects like Chalkscapes where we need more clarity on the way forward (see above) and Mend the Gap (where there are unrealistic local expectations in terms of access to funding)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved contractual arrangements – Mend the Gap (being addressed)</li> </ul>
Recruitment	<p>The fact that it was not possible to recruit to a number of positions has impacted ability to deliver in the three areas below</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning Officer</li> <li>• Nature Recovery Officer for CCSP</li> <li>• EDI Resource</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replanning underway in terms of resourcing planning requirement</li> <li>• Contingency plans in place to use some of the capacity of the newly recruited PSO (also allows for coverage of a core salary)</li> <li>• CCB EDI resourcing was linked to Chalk, Cherries and Chairs resourcing. This was delayed due to internal CCB employment processes and therefore it is no longer deemed feasible to resource to an EDI position. Replanning is underway linked to Arts Council funding</li> </ul>

**Recommendation**

- That the Committee **NOTES** the Quarter 2 update and provides feedback.

**9.2 Appendix:** Report on Quarter 2 Delivery**Author:** Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations**Summary and purpose:** This paper identifies progress that has been made against Delivery Plan workstreams & delivery lines during the second quarter of 2023, as well as identifying key risks & issues and the RAG status

Delivery Line	Identified Q2 Output	Progress	Key Risks & Issues	RAG Status
<b>SP1 BUILDING ORGANISATIONAL RESILIENCE</b>				
<b>Operating Model</b>				
1.1 Empowered People	Agree implementation plan, priorities and quick wins / Resolve quick wins / Start implementation of priority areas	Majority of discovery meetings with staff now held but not yet documented / Implementation plan with priorities and quick wins has not yet been agreed and there has been very limited implementation / Some work undertaken around improving the recruitment and onboarding areas including updating the employment offer letter and terms and conditions templates / A new HR advisor has been hired and work has started to make this relationship more effective / A Key Documents folder has been established under the Virtual Lodge on Teams (although still sparsely populated at this stage) / <i>Note: HR training session will be held in October and new HR Transformation Programme to be developed for delivery by end of March 2024 focused on simplifying HR</i>	Issue: Lack of Head of Operations capacity means progress on finalising the Discovery phase of Operational Effectiveness work has been slowed due to ongoing time commitments on Chalk, Cherries and Chairs project, addressing issues such as insurance and overall scope of activity  Issue: Lack of overall capacity within CCB with no team under Head of Operations to advance this work	In progress (significantly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
1.3 Supportive Policies & Procedures	Approve, launch and implement policies in line with plans	Limited work undertaken on approving, launching and implementing new policies or procedures / Key exceptions to this have been development of a new funding pipeline, progress on schemes of delegation (to be signed off in Nov / development of improved ways of working around COSHH with COSHH forms and folders in place in Key Documents folder / Work at the Board level has been focused on new board members and offering advice at committee / The HR Handbook has not been fully launched into the organisation in main due to a switch in HR Consultants and lack of	Issue: Current content of delivery plan does not effectively identify the way in which work in this area is being approached  Issue: There is a need to work out a more effective way of working with the new HR consultant as it is currently not efficient	In progress (significantly delayed / limited in effectiveness)

		feedback from staff. <i>Note during HR training in October it was identified that the HR Handbook needs a further review especially around its length, its look and feel and the need to ensure alignment with processes, procedures and templates</i> / Budgeting, planning and financial procedures strengthened for Chalk, Cherries and Chairs / Significant work undertaken to improve coverage of insurance policy with better understanding of current and new activity (although still work to do to improve transparency around what is covered / not covered) / <i>Complaints and feedback procedures at Board level is being updated at start of Q3</i>	Issue: There is a need to sort out the office to make it easier to work in and for work stations to be more consistent  Issue: There is a lack of capacity in terms of completing Board level governance work	
1.6 Effective Business Planning, Reporting & Review	Report on Q1 progress to Executive Committee / Identify required changes to FY24-25 business planning process / Initiate background work on FY23-24 business plan	Report on Q1 progress submitted to ExCo although with restricted review from Senior Management Team (feedback from ExCo taken on board and incorporated into Q2 reporting cycle) <i>Note that this has been strengthened for Q2 with SMT reviewing the reporting from Delivery Leads</i> / No work undertaken on FY24-25 business planning process or background work due to capacity constraints <i>Note identification of the process / timeline of the annual business and identification of the key workstreams has taken place in October and being presented to the Nov ExCo meeting</i>	Risk: There is a risk that work undertaken by the Clerk will not be effectively handed over therefore creating a loss of momentum in this area  Risk: There is a risk that having started this work and then having to suspend it because of lack of capacity that staff may become disengaged from it	In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
1.7 Facilities & Infrastructure	Implement according to prioritised plan	Agreed between CEO and Finance Officer that the organisation cannot afford to move at the end of the lease period and therefore focus of work in this area will switch from finding a new office to the lease extension and improving facilities in current office for the rest of the year / A new chemicals storage cabinet has been purchased and another ordered to ensure we adhere to safe practice in the storage of chemicals / <i>Note an office clear out to make the office more functional is in the planning stage with a target to do this in Q3</i>		In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
Organisation Governance				
1.4 Effective Organisational Level Governance	Implementation (tbc)	Work focused this quarter on identifying a more effective and strategic way to deal with the different strands that make up organisation level governance. <i>Note that drawn up plans and timelines have been discussed with the ExCo Chair and Vice Chair</i>	Issue: Need to pull different strands of work together and treat holistically to improve effectiveness and ability to co-ordinate work	In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)

		<i>along with the leads of Task and Finish Groups in Oct and operational work will start again in Q3 in line with the plan if signed off at the ExoO meeting in November</i>		
Financial Resilience				
1.5 Financial Resilience	Executive Committee reports (finance & budget)	Funding pipeline established for the organisation but still needs to be embedded in normal ways of working / Emerging Funding Strategy presented to the Board (Sep) / April to August accounts showed income in line with expectations and included full grant payment from NLHF to the CCC project / Internal audit report gave substantial assurance of effective controls, and the auditors made no recommendations (Sep) / <i>Note: Work ongoing to clarify CCB staff recharges to projects which should be signed off in Oct / Q2 actuals against budget to be presented in Nov ExCo/ SMT contributing to reducing financial risk through assessing RAG ratings on Q2 reporting and planning mitigation in Nov</i>	Issue: Ongoing need to inform staff team regarding process for planning and securing approvals for new funding applications, and ensure they follow it consistently	In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
Engaging Communications				
1.2 Engaging Comms	Roll out Phase 1 of Internal Comms Strategy	Audience mapping workshop took place to progress the strategy project. <i>Note Comms Manager is meeting with the consultant in Nov for a presentation of the results from the workshop and will then move to the second phase of the project (identifying and agreeing the key priority audiences and creating a messaging strategy for how to engage with them / New Comms Officer is now in post - started 3rd Oct and will be taking on more of the day to day social and content planning / Comms Manager focus has been on onboarding new Comms Officer and implementing new processes for the comms team to easily track ongoing priorities along with a structure for managing guidelines and policies for comms using Trello to develop a more efficient and autonomous team / New social media management tool has been purchased and implemented giving the team and project teams complete visibility of all social posts going out and at "touch of a button" reports that will save hours of administration time</i>	Issue: Comms team are under pressure to deliver, with significant time taken supporting projects and reacting to national announcements such as the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill amendments, Northern leg of HS2 scrapped, state of nature report, visit from Rebecca Pow, widening the welcome workshop, planning consultations. This has impacted ability to deliver strategy and other important business issues.  Issue: The comms team has been working at a significantly reduced capacity during Q2. Although the	In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)

			strategy has progressed there are other areas of planning and strategic comms work that hasn't been able to happen.	
<b>SP2 DELIVERING THE WORKSTREAMS TO WHICH WE ARE COMMITTED</b>				
Major Programmes				
2.3 Chalk, Cherries & Chairs	Establish and embed effective programme management governance / Implement in line with revised plan	<p>Programme Management: Final report for HS2 Community Engagement Fund (CEF) funding submitted and approved (Sep) / Financial claim to National Lottery Heritage Fund (NHLF) for outstanding £0.5 million was submitted and paid (Aug) / <i>Note NHLF narrative reporting for Q1 was submitted (slightly late in early Oct 23 as new reporting format being used)</i> / Extensive budget work with partners and team resulting in detailed project &amp; overall budgets in place to end of Scheme (Nov 24). <i>Note this was approved by NHLF along with request to extend CCC to end Nov 24 in Oct /</i> Scheme reporting and meeting schedule is now in place meaning that steering group, delivery team and Project Management team are all aligned with transparency around reports needed and claim deadlines / Scheme planner developed mapping out delivery until scheme end / Helen Walsh joined CCC (Sep) on a 3 month contract end Sep - Dec 23 as comms officer <i>Note looking in Q3 to extend this contract to end of project /</i> New evaluator appointed in July 23 to work with us until scheme end and produce final evaluation report / Delivery: 4 cross themed working groups are now well established, and have each met several times to take their respective areas of work forward. on volunteering, partnership working, impact and legacy and diverse engagement / Some project elements coming to a close, such as the Chiltern Rangers trainees, and Woodlanders Lives research project / Tracking the Impact, our surveying project has had another very successful season, as has New Shoots which has seen a group of 20 or so young people taking part in conservation activities each month / Revitalised Grim's Ditch project is now half way through delivery, with several guided walks having</p>	<p>Issue: Project management time &amp; resource capacity continues to be limited, especially due to the high level of historic work taking place to get the project back on track</p> <p>Issue: Information Management has historically been poor &amp; with hand over to new project management continues to slow down project management &amp; tasks such as reporting</p> <p>Issue: EDI role agreed with NHLF are vacant so work is not progressing in this areas, but in part being mitigated by the Diverse Engagement Cross themed working group.</p> <p>Risk: Due to complexities of internal financial processes and the reworking of the budget, there's a risk that future NLHF claims will be delayed, but we are doing all we can to avoid this.</p>	In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)

		<p>taken place, and a weekend of geophysical surveys involving 34 children / young people / Strategic discussions are beginning to be had between the PMO and various CCB staff and other external partners about legacy and what could continue beyond the life of CCC.</p>	<p>Risk: Cross themed working groups will require significant impetus &amp; therefore there is a risk that these may not be fully effective</p> <p>Risk: Due to the new budgets in place, and the lack of spend tracking under the previous project manager, there is a risk we will not be able to stay on top of what we are spending - we are working with the finance team to mitigate this, as well as the delivery team and partners.</p>	
<p>2.13 Mend the Gap</p>	<p>Consult and develop Phase 2 of the Programme</p>	<p>Three larger projects have been signed off and have their final agreements being confirmed for 2024 to 2026 (Withymead Nature reserve, BBOWT Cholsey marshes and LWS project and Schools landscape enhancement project) / Three more going to the panel and then to December steering group meeting (Sulham Wetland, Rectory farm chalk grassland and Forest Bathing, Derby University social prescribing research) / Six tenders being prepared for Mitigation planting from Goring and Purley this winter / Small grants scheme continues to be popular with landowners and communities and small grants enhancement and community work (Goring Gap Environmental Organisation) continuing to be undertaken / Agreement for South Stoke Park project in place with Parish Council / Currently establishing budget for next two years including recharge negotiations / Project Support Officer recruited to start in Jan 2024 to support communications, the small grant programme and building administrative capacity as larger projects come onboard</p>	<p>Issue: Alignment with the steering group on recharge not being agreed (proposal being prepared)</p> <p>Issue: Reputational damage as community members wanting a quick push through of their proposals as they see their opportunity to get funding dwindling.</p> <p>Risk: Target operating model not being confirmed with longer term vision for this programme of work (proposals being discussed).</p>	<p>In progress (on track)</p>

<p>2.8 Chilterns Chalk Streams Project &amp; Smarter Water Catchment</p>	<p>CCSP1: Delivery of Year 3 action plan milestones                  CCSP2: Co-ordinate delivery of milestones under water quality theme and develop programme                  CCSP3: Develop control programme                  CCSP4: Finalise and submit applications for inclusion in Smarter Water Catchment roll out from 2025                  CCSP5: Contract tendering and consent applications                  CCSP6: Submit consent applications for Moor Recreation Project / Lead local flood authority / Agree design and submit consent applications to Environment Agency                  CCSP7: Deliver volunteer training courses / Support trained volunteers to</p>	<p>CCSP1: Delivery in progress. Most milestones on track but those associated with Wildlife Corridors and Involving people themes are behind schedule or require milestone change/postponement due to capacity issues. / Both working groups have met to agree contingency plans / Still awaiting plan from Chiltern Soc for Involving people milestones / CCSP2: K Heppell leading Water Quality Theme. Milestone delivery on track / CCSP3 Control programme completed for this year / CCSP4: Timescale for milestone development for 2024/25 agreed. Process will begin in Q3 / CCSP6 On track. Flood modelling complete and design revised. Note application for consent to be resubmitted to Bucks Council on 3rd Nov to enable delivery in March 2024 / CCSP7. 2023-24 training course programme on track for completion. Note last two course dates (pond management) set for 13th &amp; 14th November / CCSP8. Survey underway and to be completed by 4th November / CCSP9. Summer River Schools programme completed Note Winter/Spring 24 programme (including Trout in the Classroom) has been planned and will get underway in November. CCSP10: Note Audit not started yet. Due for delivery in Q3</p>	<p>Risk (Overall): Uncertainty over Thames Water's financial status has been partially mitigated through increased shareholder investment. This has reduced risk to SWC initiative &amp; CCSP funding in the current FY. However, risk to both remains significant. Should TW need to be taken over by government or by another owner there is a risk that funding allocated to the SWC initiative will be withdrawn leading to the cessation of the initiative. Loss of funding to CCSP is also a highly likely scenario</p> <p>Issue (Overall): Lack of certainty over funding for continuation of Chess SWC threatening staff retention.</p> <p>Risk (Overall): Funding for Chess SWC in place until April 2025. We will not know until December 2024, at the earliest, whether funding will be available for continuation of the pilot. The SWC process does not currently allow for ringfencing of funds to underwrite posts beyond the end of the current funding cycle (AMP8). The CCSP does not have sufficient funding to underwrite the two SWC posts that it currently hosts. There is therefore a significant risk that SWC</p>	<p>In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)</p>
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	<p>establish monitoring sites                  CCSP8: Undertake Chess water vole survey                  CCSP9: Deliver River Schools Programme                  CCSP10: Audit current access / Produce draft strategy</p>		<p>staff will move on or have to be put on notice of redundancy. CCSP Manager is currently exploring options to secure funding to underwrite these posts but would appreciate the Board's assistance in identifying a solution.</p> <p>Issue (CCSP1): Loss of capacity through staff leaving and lack of Nature Recovery Officer is continuing to threaten delivery of milestones in Wildlife Corridors, Involving People and Working Together themes despite contingency plans having been developed.</p> <p>Risk (CCSP4): Smarter Water Catchment initiative roll out has been accepted by EA and has now been submitted in Thames Water's Business Plan which was submitted to OFWAT in October. Final determination by OFWAT will not be known until December 2024 (funding for Chess SWC confirmed to April 2025). Should OFWAT reject or reduce the total funding allowance for delivery of Water Resources Management Plan, future funding for the Chess SWC and/or SWC roll-out could be reduced or cancelled.</p>	
<p>Projects &amp; Programmes in Development</p>				

2.2 Not Bourne Yesterday	Write Development Phase application	Meetings held with NHLF to get guidance on submission of proposal, which has been reworked along with budget / New timelines mean submission now delayed from Dec (Q3) to Feb (Q4) / Proposals being discussed for larger packages of work for financial year of 2024/25 / <i>Note ExCo will see presentation of Not Bourne Yesterday in Q3 and sign off procedures as an in-flight project being discussed and will be presented to ExCo</i>	Risk (Overall): NLHF decides not to approve application (NBY)  Issue: Lack of capacity to take this forward means that it continues to be de-prioritised, notwithstanding the work connected to EDI described. (Chalkscapes)	In progress (on track)
2.4 Chalkscapes	Develop revised plan & approach / Submit revised project for funding	Elements of the Chalkscapes Development phase are being progressed / Progressing discussions with University of Bedfordshire re research into the barriers and enablers of ethnic groups accessing greenspace <i>Note report due to be published in November</i> and exploring with the University securing funds for next phase of the work through a Collaborative Targeted Outreach programme / Nature Calling application to Arts Council England was successful and will link to the work above / Workstreams relating to nature recovery have not progressed / Note still need to provide Development phase report by independent advisors to all partners	Risk: Partners become disengaged from working with CCB (Chalkscapes)	In progress (significantly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
Mitigation Focused Projects				
2.1 HS2 Additional Projects	Develop revised plan & approach / Submit revised project for funding	Investigating opportunities for new projects along the Misbourne (with Chalk Streams Project, AB) and potential heritage projects (with Chilterns Heritage and Archaeology partnership, CHAP / Encouraging external partners (including Bucks Ecology Unit) to submit further applications / Progress on CCB administered Landscape and Biodiversity Project has slowed slightly as CCC project officers have been focussing on work in the last year of the CCC project but this will not ultimately affect total delivery / Good progress made on other partner AP projects including the Wendover Canal Towpath upgrade and the Sustrans led Misbourne Greenway / CCB now hosts the HS2 AP web page for the Chilterns HS2 Review Group, updated regularly by the CCB comms team	None identified	In progress (on track)
Farming Focused Projects				
2.11 Develop Farmer Clusters	Develop strategy to engage all farmers /	Christmas Common cluster successfully secured a second round of Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Funding / CCB carrying out	issue: Progress with Christmas Common limited by facilitator fund	In progress (on track)

	landowners in the Chilterns	SWOT analysis of different cluster models to identify opportunities for further support / Submitted (i) FiPL proposal to support North Chilterns farm cluster - secured; (ii) Rothschild Foundation and Landscape Recovery bid to secure funding for Central Chilterns cluster - awaiting outcome.	criteria and facilitator (Alison Cross) unable to devote further time (Farming Clusters)	
2.12 Farming in Protected Landscapes	Allocate £246,595 grants equitably (inc geographically) across the AONB / Promote FiPL (articles, events, attendance, other communications)	£259,611 allocated this quarter / Good distribution of projects across all 4 FiPL themes / Projects include chalk grassland restoration, nettlebed creamery habitat creation, north Chilterns farm cluster package, Chess cluster farm carbon project, heritage orchard creation / Project work updated and FiPL promoted in Sep monthly newsletter / National FiPL report in monthly newsletter	Issue: North Chilterns capacity to facilitate needs to be explored (Farming Clusters)  Issue: 48% on north and central Chilterns projects, only 4% on south Chilterns. (FiPL)	In progress (on track)
Heritage Focused Projects				
2.5 Chilterns Heritage & Archaeology Partnership	Write heritage research framework for the Chilterns / Develop CHAP focusing on Natural England and Historic England	DEFRA Access Project (3 Augmented Reality apps in stages of completion - this continues with refinement before launch / Beacons Legacy interpretation panels for 3 sites delivered <i>Note ready for launch (15 Nov)</i> / Two candidate locations identified for annual (income generating) field school <i>Note to be narrowed down in Q3</i> and relationship with external partners for field school (HE/Oxford) confirmed / Bledlow Cross Management Plan written and delivered <i>Note Bledlow Cross on track for dating in Q3 dependant on consultant capacity</i> / CCC support for Routes to the Past continuing with volunteers now recruited for mapping and trail creation research / Writing for book for Grims Ditch ongoing / Chilterns Stories project workflow continues <i>Note draft to be ready in Q3</i> / Supported and advised the Chiltern Society with the development of a Strategic Vision for their Heritage & Culture Working Group.	Issue: Lack of uptake from candidate sites for field school; delays in permissions from Historic England for dating Cross	In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
Access, Economy & Social Wellbeing Focused Projects				
2.9 Chilterns Walking Festival (CWF)	Plan October 2023 Chilterns Walking Festival (identify new	Planning undertaken for October Walking Festival with a programme of 60 walks, new walks and walk leaders involved. <i>Note was successfully delivered in October</i>	Issue: Further delay of Chesham Moor bridge installation. We are	In progress (on track)

	walks, partners and opportunities)		confident this will now take place Feb 2024.	
2.10 Defra Access Fund Projects	Deliver installation of accessible bridge at Chesham Moor in September (delayed project)	Installation of the accessible bridge at Chesham Moor has been further delayed until Feb 2024 / Being managed by AP as part of a wider improvement project on the River Chess / Further Defra Access funding has been made available for 2023/24 and CCB has secured £54,000.	Issue: Open for Business programme will end Nov 2023. There is a legacy programme in place and core activities will continue, but without the funding to enable major activity. Additional core time will be required for allocating 2023/24 Defra access funding, but this should not be significant.	In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
2.14 Open for Business	Promote and support businesses with digital media campaign and new visitor itineraries	Delivered with a 3 month campaign promoting bookable Visitor Experiences and the October Walking Festival / New page on Chilterns AONB website promoting Chess Valley and itineraries with detailed report on website.		In progress (on track)
SP3 PROVIDING LEADERSHIP & SECURING INFLUENCE				
Strategy Development				
2.6 Chilterns AONB Extension	Natural England undertake targeted stakeholder engagement / CCB promote and respond	Expected sharing of LUC Consultants Natural Beauty Assessments delayed by Natural England review of report <i>Note NE shared reports 6th and 11th October / Note Engagement with stakeholders delayed until mid November / Updated FAQs, project timeline and comms update still awaited from NE</i>	Issue: Boundary Extension project progress delayed beyond NE's timetable.  Issue: Lack of capacity	In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
2.7 Enhanced Management & Governance Arrangements	tbc	No progress as Natural England revealed that they didn't have much resource to support the project / Have disengaged somewhat, and focused instead on implementing CCB's own Governance Review / Discussion of the future of the project with NE is required.	Issue: Need to integrate and plan work holistically  Issue: Defra recognised they have not produced indicator framework - Benyon paper is a solution for this	In progress (significantly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
3.17 AONB Longer Term Vision	Develop 25 year vision	No progress. Progressing the Vision has been paused pending alignment of the "Parallel Governance Workstreams", in particular with regard to the relationship with the AONB Extension and Management Plan Reviews		In progress (on track)
3.18 Management Plan Interim Review	Develop plan for interim review	September Board approved an outline timetable for following Defra's "Benyon option" of delaying the review of the Management Plan by up to one year, and set up a new Task & Finish Group,		In progress (on track)

		chaired by Gemma Harper, to oversee to the project. <i>Note progress with the TFG to begin in October</i>		
Strategic Engagement				
3.7 AONB Network Engagement	tbc	Continued engagement on rebranding, reforms through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, draft management plan guidance, etc	Issue: Work is time intensive but CCB is a small voice and therefore outcomes do not always matched effort.  Risk: Defra review of funding formula is ongoing - aim is to ensure increased grant settlements for AONBs in FY2025-26 Comprehensive Spending Review - hard to plan budgets	In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
3.8 DEFRA, Natural England & Government Engagement	Keep up to date with DEFRA and Natural England / Maintain engagement	Continued engagement on rebranding, reforms through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, draft management plan guidance, etc. / Responses submitted to DLUHC consultations on permitted development rights and infrastructure planning procedures		In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
3.19 Glover Landscapes Review	Engage with DEFRA and Natural England	No specific work required during this quarter but note change to Section 85 Duty and the weight given to management plans in Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill <i>Note Bill given Royal Assent in October</i>		In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
Planning				
2.15 Existing & New Planning Guidance	Implement review programme	Lighting Position Statement discussed at Planning Committee following technical input from our consultants, WSP / <i>Note revised draft to be circulated for comment by email, with draft to be signed off by PC chair for approval by the Board in December /</i> No progress on reviewing/updating existing guidance due to lack of capacity.	Issue: Lack of capacity in planning team (partly as a result of added Corporate Strategy work) means that Position Statement updates and some engagement on areas such as local plan progress is not getting the focus it needs with a risk of delay or elements not being addressed. This could be even greater when dealing with major proposals (e.g. Luton Airport, HS2 etc).	In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
3.9 Development & Infrastructure Proposals	Respond as required	See PC reports		In progress (on track)
3.10 Planning and Related Policies	Respond as required	See PC reports		In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
3.11 HS2 Impact	Respond as required	Further delays in HS2 planning submissions and appeals / HS2 Ltd decided to shift responsibility for some of the Chilterns work		In progress (on track)

		between main works contractors aiming to speed up delivery / Key overbridge designs have been challenged (Bowood Lane still under planning appeal, Leather Lane has new designs submitted - both likely to be switched from EKFB to Align to build) / CCB continue to monitor, provide advice and comment on designs and support other stakeholders - including investigation around sinkhole that appeared above tunnel in Shardeloes Park		
3.12 Chilterns Building Society Awards	Develop new awards format for Chilterns Society for 2024-25	No progress required this quarter		In progress (on track)
Landscapes Approach				
3.15 Nature Recovery Ambition Statement	Create short Nature Recovery Plan ambition statement for partners and start to meet with key contacts	Short 'ambition statement' document created / Meetings with key contacts in local authorities and wildlife trusts have commenced	Issue: Lack of capacity in team to deliver plan in longer term (Nature Recovery Plan and Climate Adaptation).	In progress (on track)
3.16 Climate Mitigation	No activity until AONB management guidance received - first draft suggests Climate Adaptation Plan requirement	First draft of AONB management plan advice received at end of Sep 2023	Issue: Defra has not fleshed out draft management plan guidance Issue: Increased requirements for Climate Change Adaptation Plans in management plans	In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
3.13 Cultural Heritage	Draft and develop Chilterns Heritage & Archaeology Partnership (CHAP)	Organised a series of meetings at high level with Heritage England and Natural England concerning CHAP / <i>Note setting a meeting for late Nov/early Dec with 40+ potential partners to further shape CHAP's direction and establish a quarterly meeting</i> / Giving talks to local communities to establish interest in CHAP	Issue: Lack of partner 'buy in' (Cultural Heritage)	In progress (on track)
Access, Economy & Social Wellbeing Approach				
3.1 Access & Visitor Management	Lead, advise and develop this area of work	Widening the Welcome workshop took place with 50 attendees / 2023-24 and 2024-25 Access Fund has been promoted and further activity planned to drive forward collaborative projects / Advice and support given to CCB projects and partners on improving and	None identified	In progress (on track)

		developing Accessibility / <i>Note further Accessibility improvements in the Chess Valley following the recent audit are being planned</i> / New Accessibility pages have been added to Chilterns AONB website and Improved Accessibility information in production.		
3.2 Health & Wellbeing / Green & Social Prescribing	Explore potential	Continuing to support CCB projects in particular Mend the Gap through investigating Forest Bathing opportunities		In progress (on track)
3.3 Sustainable Tourism	Lead, develop and promote tourism	Advice and support given to CCB projects and partners / Working in partnership with Chilterns Tourism Network, Visit Buckinghamshire and Visit Hertfordshire / Planning sustainable tourism promotion of the Chess Valley and promoting Accessible Chilterns.		In progress (on track)
3.4 Local Business & Local Economy	Lead, advise and develop this area of work / Seek funding and new opportunities	Delivered Open for Business and planning legacy, inc adding new businesses to our website and tourism programmes.		In progress (on track)
<b>Engagement Approach</b>				
3.5 EDI Engagement	Lead EDI engagement	Contact maintained and developed with EDI groups, supporting them and promoting them / Supported projects on EDI, including Mend the Gap and Chalk, Cherries and Chairs Diverse Engagement group	None identified	In progress (on track)
3.6 Partnership Engagement	Develop and nurture relationships	Partnership engagement work has continued throughout the quarter / <i>Note in next quarter looking to clarify and expand this work through the Integrated Strategic Workstreams work</i>		In progress (on track)
3.14 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Approach	Agree Engagement Plan / Promote Engagement Plan / Provide staff training	Staff were followed up after the EDI training to ensure further support and additional training opportunities / <i>Note Disability training is planned in Q4</i> / EDI Ambition statement and approach made visible on Chilterns AONB website		In progress (on track)
<b>Additional Work not in Delivery Plan</b>				
Deer Management	Support for improved deer management	Further deer stalker workshop held / Deer management and venison article published in 'Outstanding' magazine	No significant risks or issues raised	In progress (on track)

Woodland Partner & Stakeholder Engagement (inc Woodland Strategy & Felling Licences)	FC - felling licences, Chilterns woodland strategy, planting on farmland, nature recovery targets, Chilterns Management Plan, climate change strategy. Other -Red Kites	Forestry Commission / CCB collaboration meeting in July agreed to quarterly meetings to progress landscape and woodland design training (both regional and national with NAAONB), woodland strategy, Chilterns Management Plan etc. / Numerous felling licence applications responded to / Offered variety of heritage advice to Forestry Commission, Historic England and Natural England on felling licences / Assisted SOAG and Oxon with potential scheduling of a wooded site to protect earthworks / Further investigation into viability of Pine Marten introduction / Red Kites - continued concern related to public nuisance impacts of Red Kites - comms work and support to Wallingford Town Council / Bucks Rural Forum - member of steering group, Rural Farm Tour to Hard to Find Farm, Flackwell Heath - diversification and planning.	Issue: Available resources to support and champion Chiltern Woodlands (23% of land area) and woodland objectives and policies within AONB management plan.	In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
Undergrounding Partner & Stakeholder Engagement / Government Consultation		OFGEM Undergrounding allowance - promoted scheme based around Aston Rowant with SSE / Contributed to Natural England chaired steering group for UKPN scheme / Latimer/Chenies progressing well with 2 extensions to this project in discussion + 2 other potential schemes / Options for National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) investigated / No government consultations responded to in this quarter	Issue: Available resource to identify and promote further projects	In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)

## Recommendation

**That the committee NOTES the progress made in Q2 along with the identified risks and issues**



**Item 9.3****Funding Strategy**

**Author:** Elaine King, CEO and Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations

**Purpose of Report:** To update the Committee on progress with an emerging Funding Strategy, including a process for planning and assessing potential new work streams and funding applications, and key observations on the CCB's funding pipeline.

**Background**

At the last Board meeting on 12 September, members were provided with an update (agenda item 9) on work in progress on the following:

1. The CCB's current financial position
2. Current and potential sources of funding
3. A Strategic Funding Model
4. Plans for a pipeline of funding applications
5. A high level process showing the connections between authorising, developing and signing off funding proposals
6. Key next steps/actions

Work has progressed well since September. This report gives a further update on progress with points 3, 4 and 5 above, with a particular focus on progress with developing a) a process by which the CCB identifies, develops and signs off proposals for new work and new funding streams and b) a pipeline of externally funded projects.

**A process for assessing proposals for New Work and New Funding**

Slides 5 and 6 in agenda item 9 of the September Board papers, set out a high-level view of both the CCB's proposed Strategic Funding Model and an in-year process showing the linkages between authorising, developing and signing off funding proposals. This responds to Board members' requests that the CCB's planned activities better links to resource planning and budgets, in addition to providing the Executive Committee with greater visibility and scrutiny of emerging work and associated funding applications.

The set of slides at item 9.4, accompanying this paper, provide further detail on the key elements of a new process to assess proposed new work and new funding streams. The slides include the key improvements that will be made through this new approach, which include: an early line of sight and greater visibility of funding proposals for the Senior Management Team (SMT) and the Executive Committee; a clearly documented process, which includes focus on how new work or funding proposals deliver CCB's strategic priorities; and clarity on when the Executive Committee is informed, consulted and asked to approve new work and funding.

Once fully operational, the new process means that proposals for new work and new funding streams will have greater visibility, be developed and assessed more consistently, and work can be planned and delivered in line with deadlines and available staff capacity.

In addition, the SMT will regularly update and review information, enabling us to plan how we respond to emerging funding opportunities and ensure that projects in particular do not duplicate activities and are connected both operationally and strategically.

The new process is at an early stage of development, and we would welcome feedback and advice from the Executive Committee.

### **Funding pipeline**

Slide 7 in agenda item 9 of the September Board papers, set out the details of a Funding Pipeline being developed and regularly reviewed by the senior team. The Pipeline has now been populated and the bullet points below highlight some key observations that we believe will be of interest to the Executive Committee, focussing especially on risk.

### **Nature Recovery**

- One of the CCB's strategic priorities, as identified in the 2023/24 Business Plan, is to expand and enhance our nature recovery work, especially that relating to working in partnership with farmers and landowners. The CCB is currently working with four farmer clusters and has ambitions to enhance this work in the future. For more detail, refer to the report by CCB's Head of Landscape, Kate Heppell, at agenda item 14.1.
- Key to realising our ambitions is to secure long-term funding, and therefore a number of applications have been made recently, including one to the Rothschild Foundation (£200k), and another to Defra's Landscape Recovery Fund (£750k) to support landscape scale nature recovery in the Central Chilterns farmer cluster. We expect to hear about both applications in early December.
- These two applications were developed and submitted prior to development of a process for assessing and signing off funding applications. However, the CCB's Finance Officer was involved with developing and agreeing the budgets, the CEO had oversight of the application and the Head of Landscape and Head of Operations reviewed and challenged the applications. The Chair and Deputy Chair also signed off the bids, albeit at a very late stage of development.
- Similarly, the CCB applied for, and was recently awarded (October), £365k by its FiPL panel to support landscape scale, long term nature recovery on farmland through the North Chilterns farmer cluster. Again, this application was not subject to a formal sign off process, in part as developing the application was agreed much earlier in the year (June) when the CCB did not have a clear sign off process.
- **Risk:** the senior team considers that the risks to CCB of the applications above are relatively small, though we need to flag that, if we are successful with the Rothschild Foundation bid, we will need to ensure that staff capacity is available to deliver the projects. The same is the case with the FiPL grant, while the Landscape Recovery Fund will enable the CCB to employ a Development Officer for two years. Our Head of Landscape has therefore started discussions with Affinity Water, which has ambition and funds to develop and support farmer clusters in the Chilterns and includes covering staff costs.

## NEIRF

- The CCB is exploring other forms of funding, including Defra's [Natural Environment Readiness Fund](#) (NEIRF). The closing date for Round 3, which focussed on helping farmers address barriers to accessing private investment to help nature's recovery, is this month and we will be looking to potentially apply for a Round 4 once details are available in the coming months.

## Big Chalk

- [Big Chalk](#) is an ambitious programme that aims to restore a mosaic of habitats across 24,867 sq. km in the south of England, and includes a number of protected landscapes, including the Chilterns. The project will deliver nature recovery, climate change adaptation and a range of other benefits including supporting public health and wellbeing, and providing sustainable employment, carbon sequestration, a clean water supply, flood management and soil stabilisation.
- **Risk:** The CCB is not committed financially at this stage. There are implications in terms of staff capacity - a number of staff are involved in so far as the partnership is exploring the key priorities for the project and establishing potential sources of funding. The intention to develop an application to the NLHF's new funding stream Integrated Landscapes. The CCB's Head of Landscape recently convened a meeting of all staff involved to ensure that our collective input adds value, is focussed and best uses staff capacity.

## Equality, Inclusion and Diversity

- Another priority area of work for the CCB is EDI. In 2023 this has led to development of an EDI Ambition Statement, action plan and delivering EDI training to staff. This commitment to EDI is shared by Defra and has led to Defra providing Access for All funding, to improve access to protected landscapes for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. In the first year of the three-year programme (2022/23), the CCB distributed c£230k. This financial year we will receive £54k and next year £261k.
- **Risk:** The SMT consider risk to be low, in large part due to having informed partners and others regarding the fund and demand likely to (again) exceed funding available. The CCB's Head of Engagement and Partnerships is leading this work.
- The CCB has also explored other opportunities to improve EDI in the Chilterns, which has included collaborating with the National Association for AONBs on a project application titled Nature Calling - to be funded by Arts Council England and aiming to improve access to AONBs for a wider range of people, especially those from BAME communities. The CCB committed to collaborating on a funding application in early 2022. The subsequent application was submitted to ACE in July 2023 and in October we heard that the bid was successful. ACE is providing £532k over two years and Defra has committed £300k match funding. The Chilterns is one of six 'hubs'. For more information on the project, refer to agenda item 13.

- **Risk:** the CCB is required to contribute 40 days staff time over two years and each hub is required to contribute up to £20,000 match funding. The NAAONB and project partner, Activate Arts, will be fundraising and we expect not to need to contribute these funds. Nevertheless, our Finance Officer – who has been consulted throughout development of the application – has allocated £20k for this purpose. We are also currently exploring how we will provide the staff time required.

### **Heritage and nature recovery**

- The CCB's proposed project, Not Bourne Yesterday was conceived and developed before the CCB had robust processes for developing and signing off funding applications but is due to submit a Development Phase funding application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) in January 2024. The project therefore presents a useful test case for us to trial a new sign off process, which we would expect to start at step 19 in the proposed New Work Process (see slides). The project application also introduces new financial elements, including seeking to reclaim the costs of core staff time on such projects.
- Ahead of the Committee meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> November, Wendy Morrison, Heritage and Archaeology Manager, will be presenting the updated project proposal, including financial elements and a timetable for sign off, to the Executive Committee at 3pm on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> November.

### **Recommendation**

- 1. To NOTE and offer feedback on the process for planning and assessing potential new work streams and funding applications, and key observations on the CCB's funding pipeline.**



# New Work / New Funding Process

Nov 2023 (Head of Operations)

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY

## Item 12.2 Proposed New Work Process

**Author:** Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations

**Summary:** This slide deck identifies the proposed process that CCB should adopt in developing and approving new work and new funding proposals. It identifies the key changes from today, the process and a RACI against the process.

**Background:** To date there has been a lack of consistency and robustness in the approval process for new work and new funding, with funding proposals being developed in some cases with a lack of Senior Management Team / ExCo knowledge. As a result, new work has been committed to without an understanding of its alignment to CCB strategy and without clarity around whether the work is affordable or whether budgets cover the costs of hosting such work. In addition to this, ExCo has identified that it does not have enough visibility of new work and funding proposals that are being developed.

The development of this process aims to address this situation by providing a process that has early intervention, clear governance steps and clear roles and responsibilities. Whilst more work is required to flesh out the process in its entirety, we are looking for input from ExCo now as it is important that both SMT and ExCo are aligned on and agree the process to ensure effective communication and joined up governance.

**Recommendation:** That the Executive Committee NOTES the high-level process for New Work / New Funding set out in the deck and provides feedback

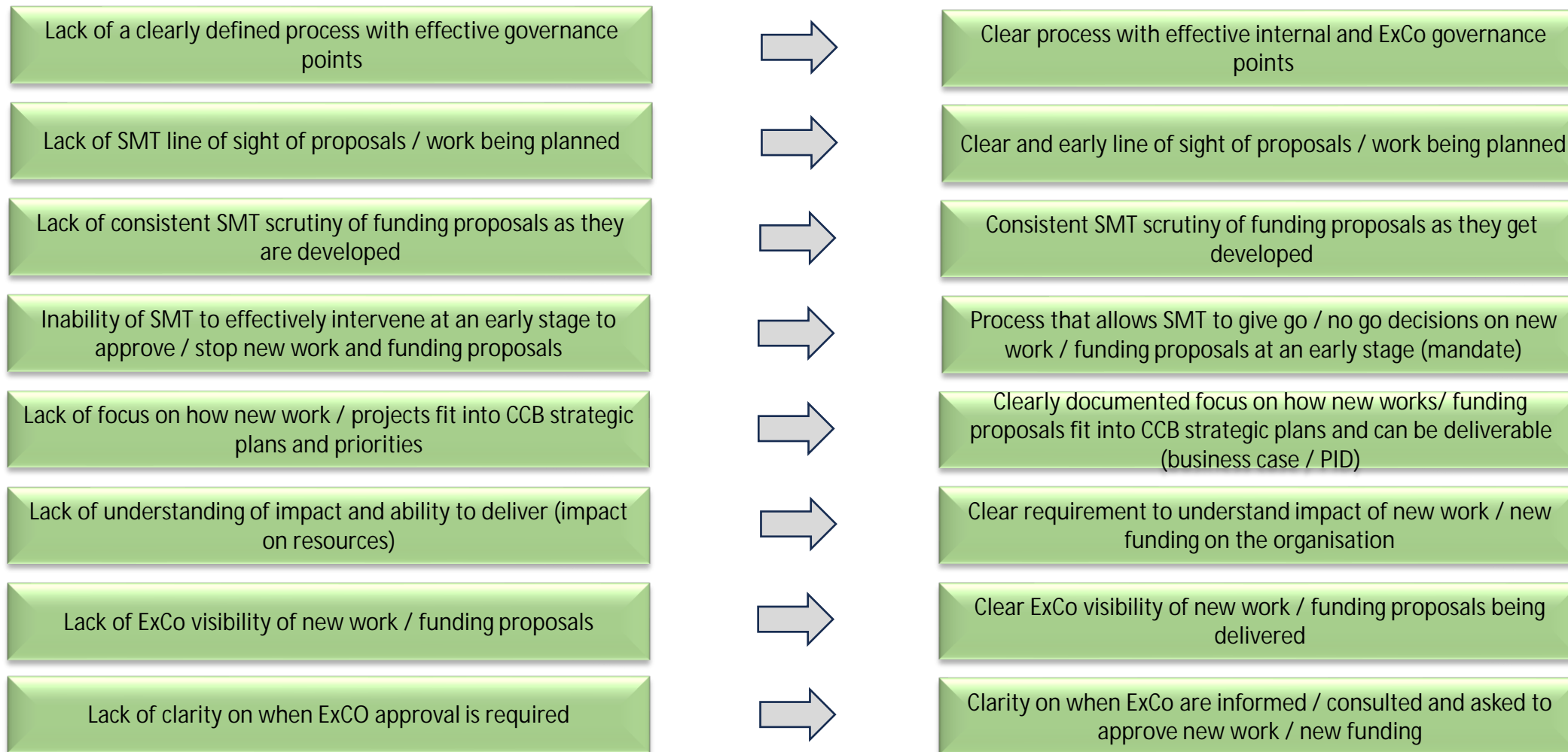




# Key Changes



## Key Changes





## Key Change Elements

Key Element	Description
Alignment to best practice programme development	<p>The process outlined ties in the development of new work and funding proposals to best practice through weaving elements of Managing Successful Programmes into the CCB ways of working in this area. This is particularly key in three areas – the development of a mandate for the work at the start, the development of a business case during the EOI stage which is then further developed into an overall Programme Implementation Document</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <pre> graph LR     A[Mandate] --&gt; B[Business Case]     B --&gt; C[Programme Implementation Document]             </pre> </div> <p>The key strength of MSP is that it focuses on what needs to be answered rather than establishing specific templates that need to be filled in. This allows us to develop our own templates but also to flex our requirements for work of different sizes, complexity and impact on the organisation</p> <p>The development of these three documents not only ensures that there is a focus on how work fits in with the strategic priorities of the organisation but ensures that the bid lead also addresses the ability of the organisation to deliver the proposed work. It ensures that this focus remains through the full development of work</p>
Early Scrutiny	The development of a mandate ensures the SMT has early sight of potential work / funding proposal development (alongside the new funding pipeline) that provides an opportunity for the SMT to stop work at an early stage that does not fit in with strategic priorities or raises concerns about ability to deliver.
Approval Stages	The new process require a minimum of two approvals by SMT and three for large projects going through an Expression of Interest stage
Scrutiny by ExCO	The new process incorporates a number of key points along the process where ExCo are either informed of progress, where new work / new funding proposals are presented to ExCo to ensure more effective understanding and feedback and where thresholds are crossed where ExCo approval is required

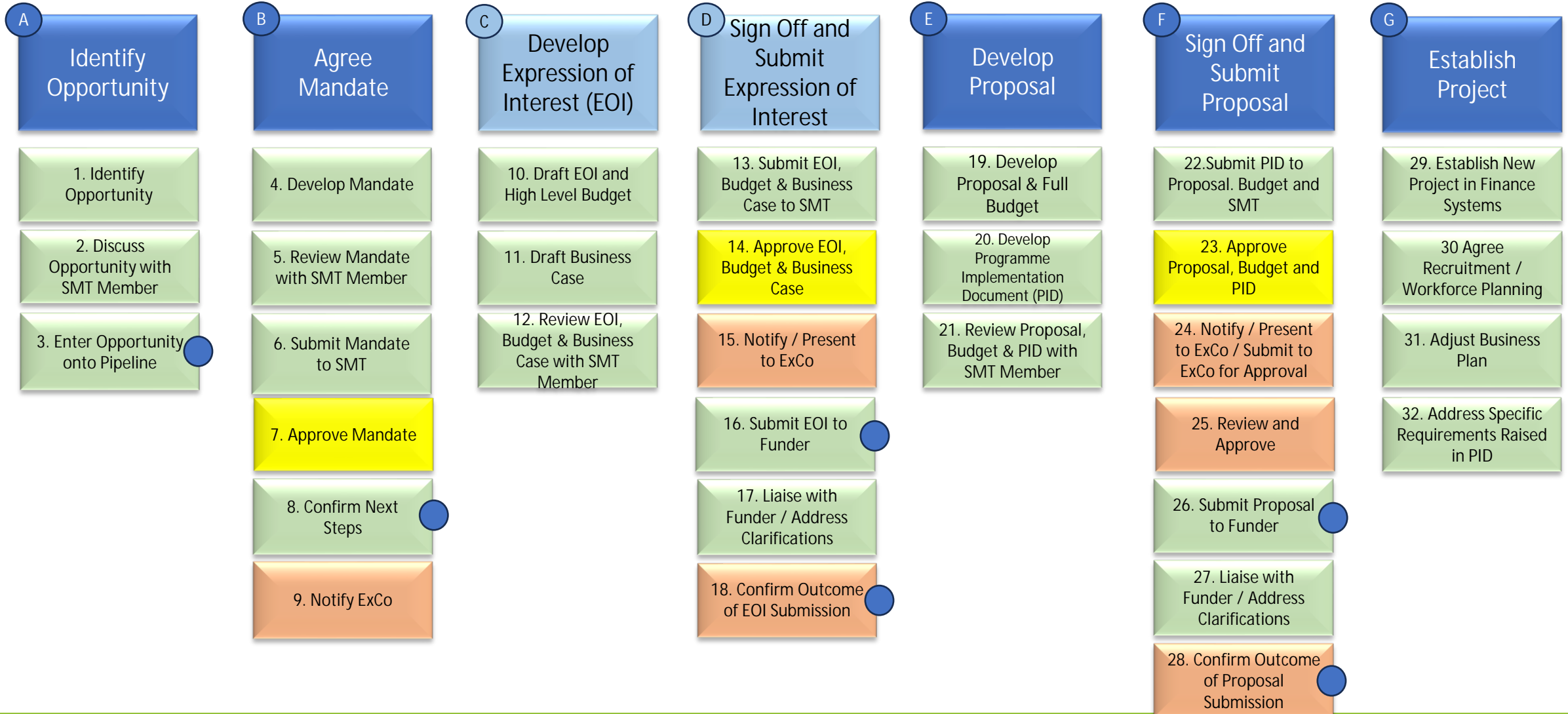


# Process (including RACI)



# New Work / New Funding Process

Process steps C / D only required when an Expression of Interest stage is needed. However, the questions answered through the development of a business case will be incorporated in the development of the Project Implementation Document (PID) to ensure the same level of scrutiny



## New Work / New Funding RACI

Process Step	Funding Lead	Bid Team	Relevant SMT Member	Finance Officer / Head of Ops	SMT	CEO	ExCo
1. Identify Opportunity	R	R	R		I	A	I
2. Discuss Opportunity	A		R		I	I	
3. Enter Opportunity into Pipeline (and Update)			A / R		I	I	
4. Develop Mandate	R	R	A	(C)			
5. Review Mandate	R	R	A				
6. Submit Mandate to SMT	R		A		I	I	
7. Approve Mandate			R		R	A	
8. Confirm Next Steps	I	I	A / R		R	R	
9. Notify ExCo						A / R	I
10. Draft EOI and High Level Budget	R	R	A	C	(C)	(C)	
11. Draft Business Case	R	R	A	C			
12. Review EOI, Budget and Business Case	R	R	A	C			
13. Submit EOI, Budget and Business Case to SMT	R		A	I	I	I	
14. Approve EOI, Budget and Business Case			R	R	R	A	
15. Notify / Present to ExCo	R		R			A / R	I / C
16. Submit EOI to Funder	R	I	A		I	I	
17. Liaise with Funder / Address Clarifications	R	C	A	C			
18. Confirm Outcome of Submission	R	I	A	I	I	I	I

## New Work / New Funding RACI

Process Step	Funding Lead	Senior Staff	Relevant SMT Member	Finance Officer / Head of Ops	SMT	CEO	ExCo
19. Develop Proposal and Full Budget	R	R	A	C	(C)	(C)	
20. Develop Programme Implementation Document (PID)	R	R	A	C			
21. Review Proposal, Budget and Programme Implementation Document	R	R	A	C			
22. Submit Proposal, Budget and PID to SMT	R		A	I	I	I	
23. Approve Proposal, Budget and PID			R	R	R	A	
24. Notify or Present to ExCo / Submit to ExCo for Approval			R			A / R	I / C
25. Review and Approve Proposal (where threshold is met)							A / R
26. Submit Proposal to Funder	R	I	A		I	I	
27. Liaise with Funder / Address Clarifications	R	C	A	C			
28. Confirm Outcome of Submission	R	I	A	I	I	I	I
29. Establish New Project in Finance Systems	R		R	A / R			
30. Agree Recruitment / Workforce Planning			R	C		A	
31. Adjust Business Plan			R	A / R	C	C	
32. Address Specific Requirement Addressed in the PID	R		A / R	C	C	C	

Process Step 24/ 25: This will align to the Scheme of Delegation with approval sought from ExCo where one of the thresholds is met. Further threshold will be introduced based on value of proposal (tbc)





# Annual Business Planning Approach 2024-25

Oct 2023

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY



**CHILTERN**  
CONSERVATION BOARD

## Item 9.4

# Annual Business Planning Approach

### Author:

Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations

### Summary:

This slide deck identifies the proposed process that CCB is looking to undertake for business planning for the FY24-25 year. It identifies improvements to our current approach and the key principles that will guide it, as well as setting out a timeline for delivery and an identifies how information will be structured and interconnected. Finally, the document sets out a draft delivery plan and reporting structure, identifying the key workstreams going forward.

### Background:

CCB went through a top-down annual planning approach to define the business plan for FY2023-24. As a result of this ExCo were keen to ensure that there was greater robustness in the approach for planning for FY2024-25, including ensuring that the approach was more future focused and more integrated in the way in which delivery planning, resource planning, financial planning and funding were aligned.

In addition, the SMT is keen to ensure that there is greater ownership within CCB of the planning process and is therefore looking to ensure that the organisation goes through a top down – bottom up process that will result in greater clarity across the organisation.

### Recommendation:

That the Executive Committee **AGREES** the high-level process for Annual Planning this year

That the Executive Committee **NOTES** the framework for the Delivery Plan and provides feedback



# Introduction

- The purpose of this document is to set out a proposed approach and timeline to develop the FY24-25 business plan (delivery plan – budget – resource plan – funding plan) for consultation and sign off by the Board.
- This approach builds on the “CCB Business Plan – New Approach” document that was presented and agreed by the Board in March 2023.
- It identifies the key changes proposed from the actual process last year to this year.
- It incorporates additional information about key concepts of the approach to ensure that they have the focus needed and also allow alignment around these key concepts.





# Key Principles and Changes from Last Year

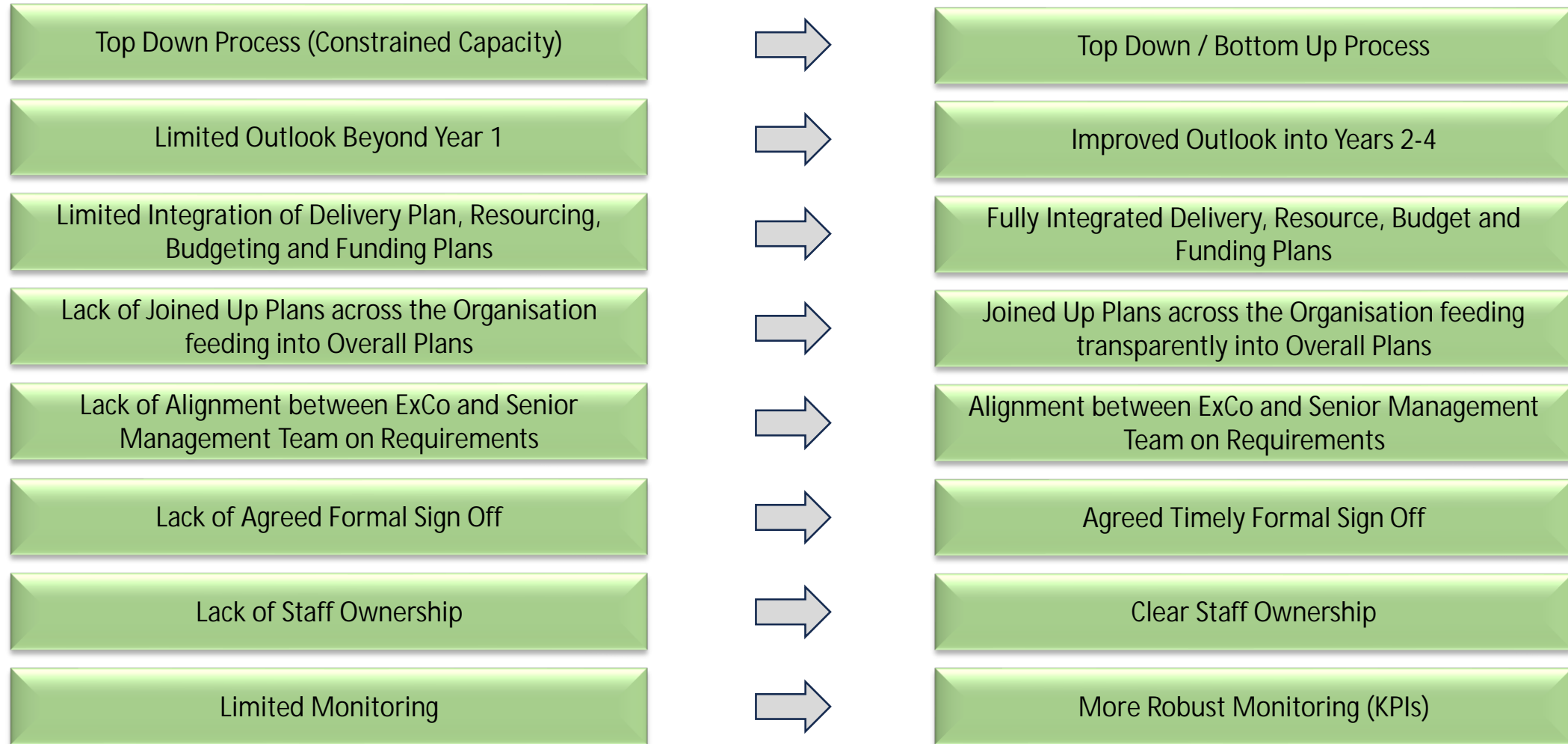
# Key Principles

The business plan should be developed in a way that

- clearly demonstrates the integration and alignment of the proposed budget, resource plan, delivery plan and funding
- clearly demonstrates integration and alignment to other strategic documents such as HR Strategy Plan
- allows clear input, ownership and understanding by the staff team (top down – bottom up approach)
- allows for effective governance ensuring input and scrutiny by the Board / ExCo
- reflects lessons learned from the current year (Year 0), a detailed identification of requirements (Year 1) and projected requirements for a further 3 years (Years 2-4)
- clearly demonstrates how it delivers the AONB Management Plan and CCB Strategy
- identifies the ambition of the organisation, identifying both areas that can be addressed with currently secured funding but also where funding would need to be secured
- developed in a timely, iterative way that will allow sign off in time for the start of the new financial year



## Key Changes from FY23-24 to FY 24-25 Planning

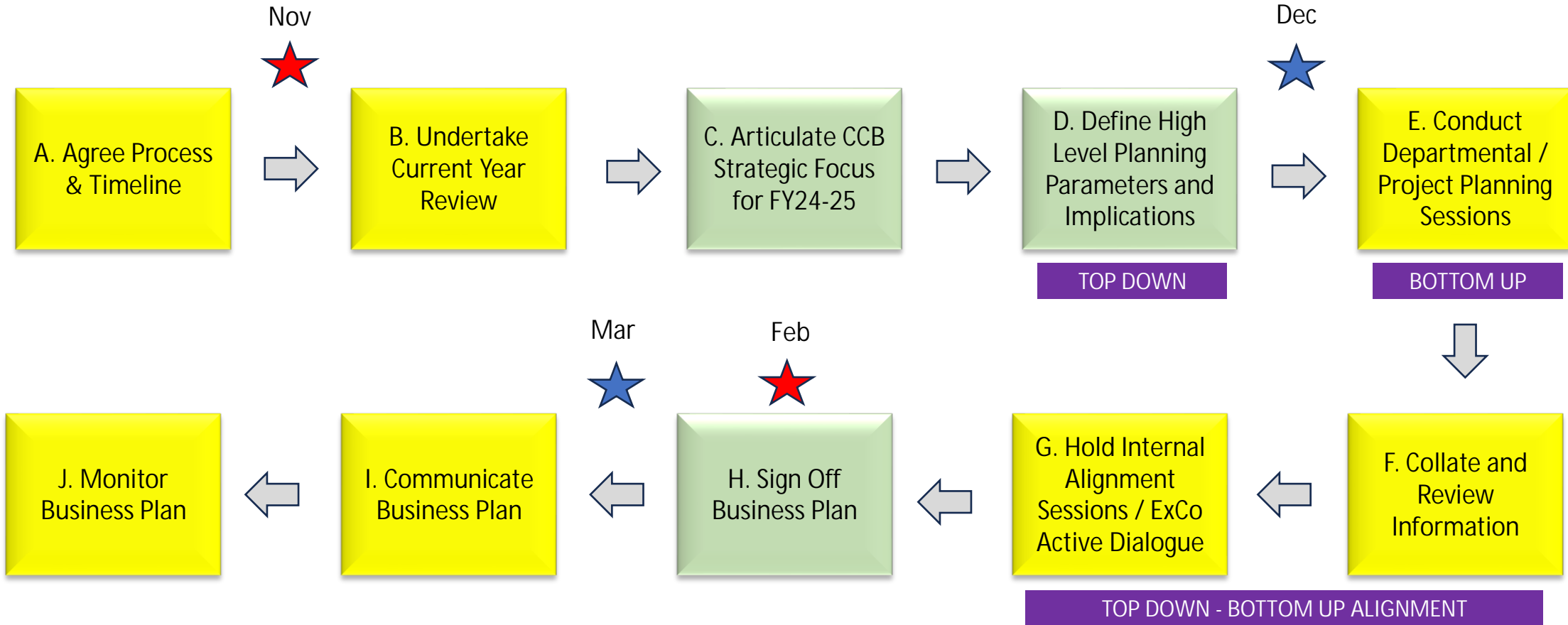




# Process and Timeline



# High Level Process



ExCo Meeting



Board Meeting

Areas of Annual Business Planning not focused on in 2023 document



## Annual Planning Timeline for FY24-25 Planning

Activity	Oct				Nov				Dec				Jan				Feb				Mar				Apr				FY2024				
ExCo / Board Meetings					X				X								X				X												
A. Agree Process & Timeline		X	X	X	X				X																								
B. Undertake Current Year Review					X	X	X		X																								
C. Articulate Strategic Focus for FY24-25					X	X	X		X																								
D. Define High Level Planning Parameters & Implications								X	X	X	X																						
E. Conduct Department / Project Planning									X	X	X	X																					
F. Collate and Review Information										X			X																				
G. Hold Internal Alignment Sessions / ExCo Active Dialogue													X	X	X																		
H. Sign Off Business Plan															X	X	X				X												
I. Communicate Business Plan																						X	X										
J. Monitor Progress																																	X





# Alignment to Agreed 2023 Approach



## Proposed Process Alignment to Agreed 2023 CCB Business Plan – New Approach

Agreed 2023 CCB Business Plan Approach	Proposed Approach for FY24-25 Planning	High Level Process Step
CEO and officers begin background research for Budget and Business Plan (Sep)	Significant work has gone into this, especially within the Landscapes Team where there has been work to review current and future ways of working (SWOT analysis) and how the team needs to be set up. Further work will be conducted in November through undertaking the current year review	B. Undertake current year review
CEO and officers undertake a review of progress on those parts of the AONB Management Plan that are (or could be) CCB's responsibility to deliver (Oct)	In proposed process but in for Nov	C. Articulate CCB Strategic Focus for FY24-25
Develop recommendation for Strategic Priorities for the next Business Plan (which may roll forward existing priorities) and other significant workstreams (new or existing)	In proposed process but in for Nov	C. Articulate CCB Strategic Focus for FY24-25
Identify budget, fundraising and/or business development implications (Oct)	In proposed process but in for Nov	D. Define High Level Planning Parameters and Implications (Nov)
Executive Committee considers outline draft Business Plan, based on the above, plus a progress report on plan preparation, and provides guidance to the CEO and officers (Nov)	The requirements of this element need to be considered. We are not going to reach this this year due to continued capacity constraints meaning we were unable to start the work on this in October that would have been required. We have a draft outline Delivery Plan (but no other components) and there is no real progress reports as the areas above have not been addressed in October but will need to be addressed in November. Suggestion is that these get a progress report in place for the Board meeting in Dec when we will have made more progress	Agreement of process, timeline and high level delivery plan in for Nov  Progress report with input from considerations of implications and strategic priorities proposed for Board meeting in Dec



## Proposed Process Alignment to Agreed 2023 CCB Business Plan – New Approach

Agreed 2023 CCB Business Plan Approach	Proposed Approach for FY24-25 Planning	High :Level Process Step
Board considers the progress report on plan preparation and outline draft plan, including observations from the Executive Committee	Yes we have the ability to produce a progress report for December based on undertaking the activities and timeline identified for this year. It is important to note however that this would include only a top-down outline draft plan as activity to ensure its robustness with bottom-up consideration will not have been completed and that we would need to consider how to get ExCo observations into this as we will be developing work	Yes would happen after D. Define High Level Planning Parameters and Implications
Officers develop the Budget and Business Plan in active dialogue with the Chair and Executive Committee, with the CEO seeking guidance on any areas of contention and uncertainty	The process and timeline in this area leaves out a critical step in the annual planning cycle which is bottom up planning across different departmental areas. This takes time and effort that need to be factored in and should happen in advance of liaison with the Chair and ExCo (so that the latter discussion have the required information). As such it proposed that this should happen in December and the more formal liaison with the Chair and ExCo should happen in January	G. Hold Internal Alignment Sessions / ExCo Active Dialogue
Executive Committee considers reports outlining the draft Budget and Business Plan for onward recommendation to the Board in March	In process outlined for this year both as part of the active dialogue leading to a sign off of the draft Business Plan in the February ExCo meeting for onward recommendation to the Board in March	G. Hold Internal Alignment Sessions / ExCo Active Dialogue H. Sign Off Business Plan
Board approves the Business Plan alongside the Budget and an outline programme of fundraising / business development for the year	In process outlines for this year in March	H. Sign Off Business Plan

## Additional / Expanded Process Steps

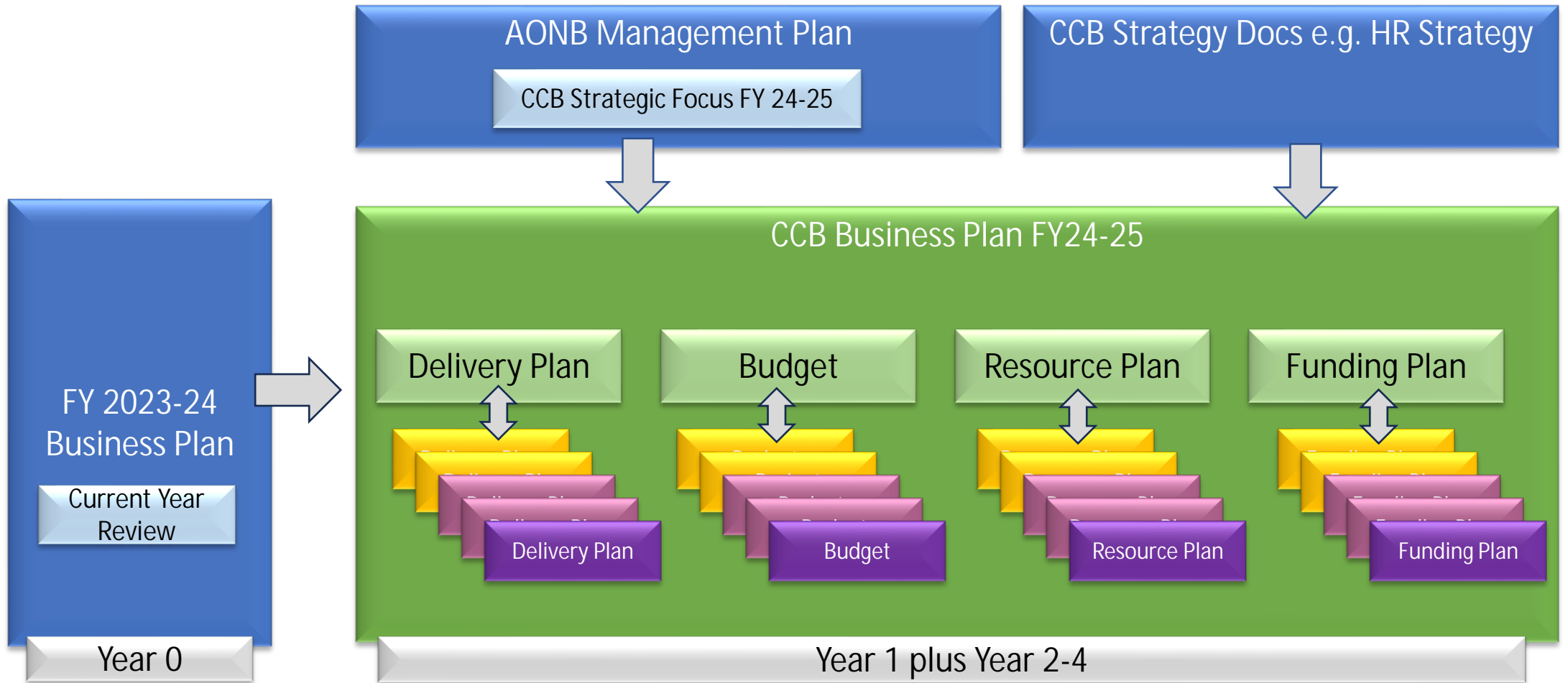
Additional / Expanded Process Step	Requirement
A. Agree Process and Timeline	Although not formally in the proposed process agreed in March 2023 it is important that this happens as last year there were significant issues raised about this as we went through the process. Therefore to ensure alignment this needs to be agreed by ExCo in Nov
B. Undertake Current Year Review	This was in as part of the deliverable of the Delivery Plan but has been bought out as a specific process step for this year to ensure that it is undertaken at the beginning of the process and can therefore be considered as we go through the annual planning process
D. Conduct Departmental / Project Planning Sessions	<p>Last year the annual planning process was a top-down process and this has had a lot of consequences in terms of robustness / integration and ownership especially in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a lack of ownership and engagement with the delivery plan outside of the Senior Management Team</li> <li>• a lack of robustness in resource planning and budgeting</li> <li>• a lack of understanding around availability of budgeting</li> <li>• a disconnect between organisational and project planning and budgeting</li> <li>• a lack of robustness in tracking burn rates</li> <li>• a lack of understanding about capacity and what we need more resources (linking into funding plans)</li> </ul>
F. Collate and Review Information	A key element in terms of having a top down – bottom up planning process is to ensure that information is collated into a single overall plan and reviewed
G. Hold Internal Alignment Sessions	Another key element of having a robust top down – bottom up planning process is to ensure that there is agreement in terms of what needs to be rationalised. The biggest issue with planning is the involvement of key staff stakeholders who input their requirements that then get changed behind closed doors in processes that they are not involved in which takes all ownership away from them
I. Communicate Business Plan	It is essential that when the business plan is agreed and signed off that the whole organisation is aware of this and what it means to their department / team. This ensures understanding and alignment of what is in the plan
J. Monitor Business Plan	This was initiated last year with quarterly reporting against the delivery plan but needs to be made more robust going forward including more effective management reporting against all elements of the plan



# Interconnection of Key Documents



# Overview of Interconnection of Key Documents



# Delivery Plan Framework (Key Workstreams)

## Kick Off Planning Meeting

- The Senior Management Team had a kick off planning meeting at the start of November to look at key elements of work that we need to undertake with a 1+3 years planning horizon
- The focus of this session was four-fold:
  - To identify additional principles that we need to follow in terms of our annual planning and the way in which we set up the delivery plan (these complement and add granularity to the Key Design Principles on slide 5)
  - To identify and agree key elements of work that need to be undertaken over the next 4 years (future proofing)
  - To identify how this work is linked into our overarching purposes / duties (the golden thread)
  - To clarify and agree how we reflect this work operationally (ie through workstreams) which will also be used to plan and report against in FY 24-25

## Additional Principles for Annual Planning

- Demonstrate the golden thread of how we aim to deliver our overarching purposes and duties
- Highlight what is particularly important / strategic (and agree KPIs)
- Identify cross cutting themes / areas of work and connections between them
- Be clear on where we are resource constrained and identify how far we can go in delivering our ambition
- Be clear on the role we should have (deliver / partner / facilitate)
- Ensure that the way we structure information facilitates efficient and effective monitoring and reporting
- Be clear about the trade-off between setting strategy and delivery (going through transition)
- Recognise the contribution that staff make to strategy development and resource planning, and understand what role we want them to play in developing strategy (both specific strategy development in an area and our overall CCB strategy)
- Be clear on how we communicate the way in which we respond to new opportunities for delivery (understanding potential sensitivities and changes to ways of working)
- Need to build in that we will need to review against DEFRA requirements when there is more clarity on these

## Target Operating Model Showing How CCB Delivers

The diagram opposite identifies the underlying operating model of how CCB should deliver over the next 4 years

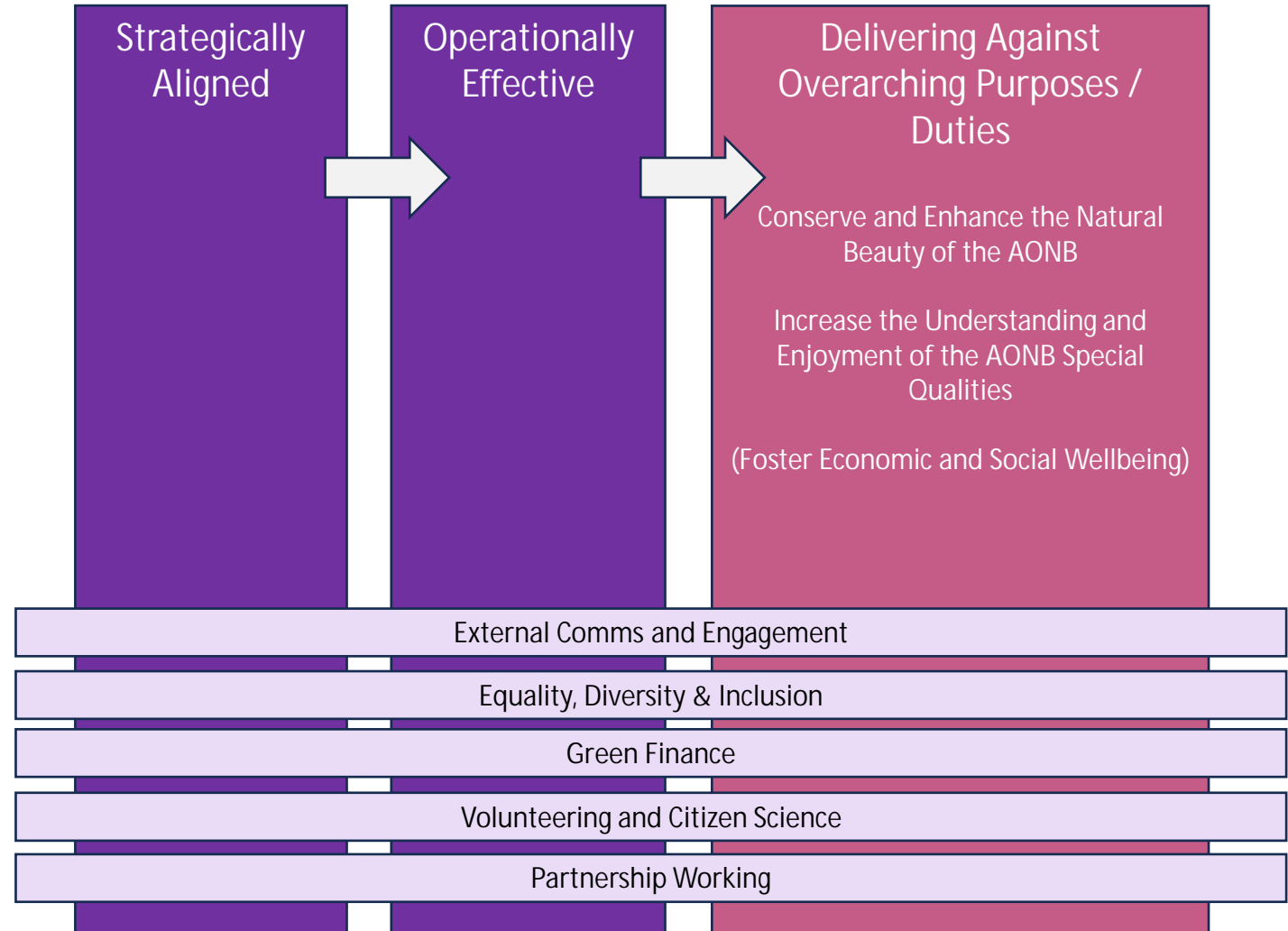
It identifies the need to be strategically aligned to understand what it is that we are delivering and why

It identifies the need to be operationally effective in order to deliver

It also recognises that there are key technical delivery workstreams that specifically address our overarching purposes and duties but also cross-cutting workstreams that also are critical in this delivery

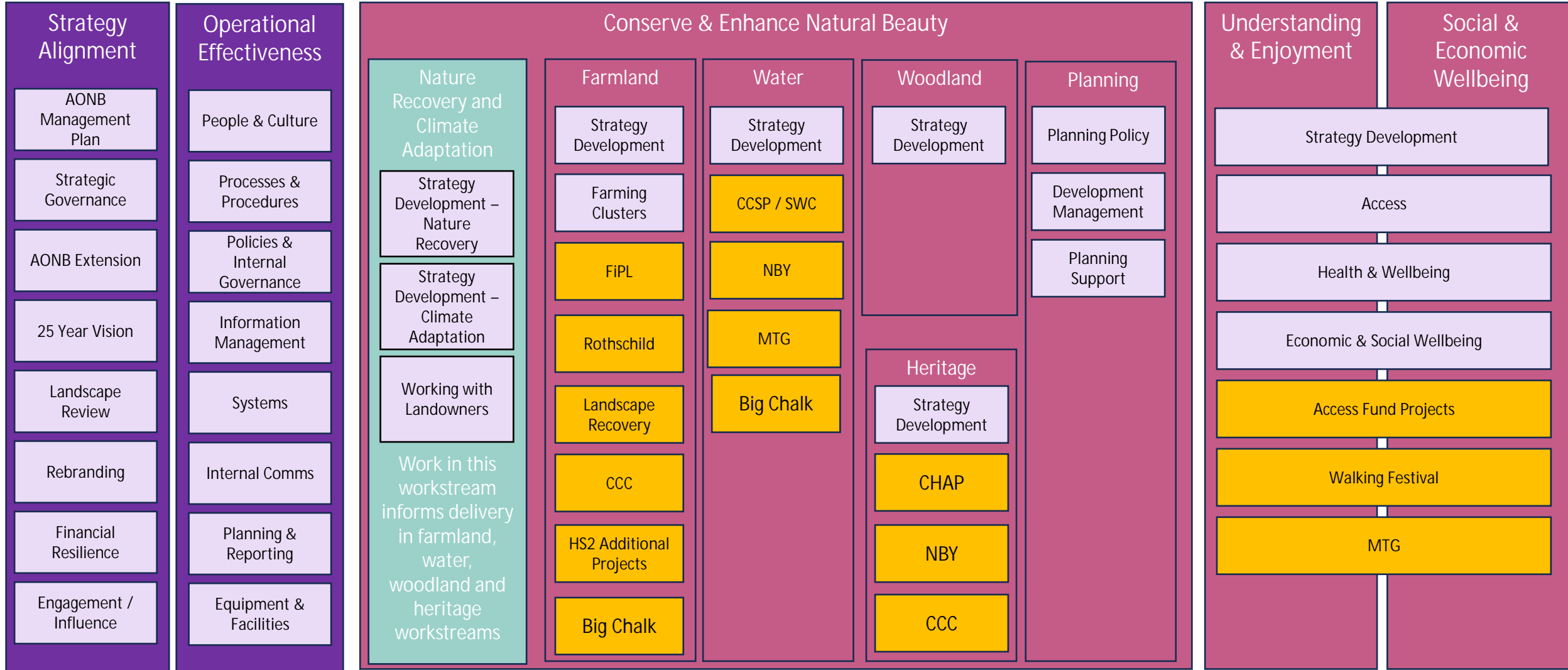
*Note that this is not an organisational structure but a model showing the way in which we will deliver*

*As the Annual Planning is undertaken between Nov 2023 and Mar 2024 we will look to test and refine this model*





# Draft Delivery Plan Structure (Key Delivery Workstreams)



Note:

- Projects appearing in multiple area does not reflect differentiated delivery but that they contribute to multiple workstreams
- Not all future delivery projects reflected, only the most significant
- Cross cutting workstreams not represented



the AONB title and we have a local opportunity to retain or vary the tag line as we so wish (see below).

NAAONB aims to demonstrate that, in the post-Glover world, AONBs can act as a coherent body and are worthy of the enhanced powers and resources which we are united in seeking. Defra have backed the initiative, and things do indeed seem to have shifted in the AONBs' favour in terms of powers and resources since our Board meeting: the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act was amended to enhance the status of Management Plans (a major gain, set to be enshrined in a Statutory Instrument), Defra is willing to explore a new Funding Formula, and the focus of the latest round of Access Grants is on AONBs to the exclusion of National Parks. The government response to Glover is understood to be imminent and may carry this process further.

CCB should support and add to this momentum: the key questions are therefore whether dissent from the rebrand would jeopardise this wider process, and whether it would risk reputational damage to CCB with government and especially with our peers. The NAAONB's view, endorsed by our officers, is that it would do both.

The Board was rightly concerned by the very tight deadline and being 'bounced' into a decision. Our officers' comment that at the time of the June Board they had reservations about the proposal and were negotiating with NAAONB without a deadline, so did not bring a report. NAAONB subsequently set 22<sup>nd</sup> November as a deadline, so it was brought to the next available meeting, albeit with a very unsatisfactory degree of urgency.

## **2. What would be re-named?**

There is a lack of clarity about whether the proposed re-branding is of the area (the Chilterns AONB in our case), or of the organisation (CCB), or of both. The material provided by NAAONB does not cast light on this.

Even with re-branding, the statutory designation of all areas would remain AONB. Most AONBs are managed via local AONB partnerships, named as such, so if the term AONB as a 'trading name' changes it follows that the partnership's title must change too. However, the term 'AONB' does not feature in our organisation's title, so if re-branding is accepted it does not necessarily follow that we would need to change CCB's name. Moreover, the two Conservation Boards were created by statute, so it is only by statute that their formal name can be changed.

That does not prevent the adoption of a new 'trading name' if appropriate: the Cotswold Conservation Board voluntarily changed both area and organisation to 'National Landscape' a couple of years ago. However, its website shows some difficulty in explaining the parallel 'statutory' and 'trading' names of both the AONB and the organisation.

Given this lack of clarity, this report assumes that the re-branding would be of the area – the AONB- but that any change in the 'trading' name of our organisation would not be a requirement of re-branding. It would be a separate issue for us to determine independently. With our limited 'brand recognition' and anecdotal confusion with the Chiltern Society, this is clearly worth considering at some point.

So the Committee needs to decide whether the choice and timing of any re-titling of CCB is for us to determine at our convenience, taking such local factors into account, or whether it would be more practical to do so now, as part of a wider rebrand, so the marketing and pr effort could be done in a single hit.

### 3. What we would actually have to do

If we were to agree to the rebranding, we would need to:

- Retitle the website to ‘Chilterns National Landscape’, plus any revised logo and whatever tag line we chose and review the text to introduce explanation. The statutory designation remains AONB so the textual changes might just be to ‘headline’ elements.
- We are not obliged to replace the entry-point road signs, which is a matter for Highway Authorities to determine at their expense. The first new signs might follow the boundary review. They were not changed after the last rebranding five years ago, so this does not seem to be an urgent or necessarily a determining issue.
- Review our stationery and publications, probably introducing the new logo etc as existing stocks run out, though many of our publications are now electronic.
- Use the new logo on all newly-created assets.

### 4. Previous CCB responses and subsequent events

CCB’s original response to the Glover review welcomed Proposal 24, which included the ‘National Landscape’ suggestion. However, in our comments on the Government’s response to Glover we stressed that:

**“Any name change must be representative of a transformative step change for AONBs, with an ambitious new title linked directly to delivering the Landscapes Review’s Proposal 24: strengthened purposes, powers and resources.**

**While a name change must reflect a step change in funding, we also consider that any final decision on the rebranding of the existing Protected Landscapes should be deferred until the future status and governance of these areas is fully understood and agreed. “**

We listed the Natural England All-England assessment and boundary extension work, and the outcome of future spending reviews, among our pre-conditions for re-branding.

Developments since our Board meeting suggest that this wider picture is improving substantially: the advances are listed in Section 1 above. This results from coherent joint pressure from AONBs, of which the rebranding work seems to have been a significant element. However, our conditions are not yet fully met, which gives us the option of supporting the rebrand in principle but deferring our own actions in section 3 above until we feel that the clearly-stated preconditions in our Glover response have been sufficiently fulfilled. This could be a logical and consistent stance for CCB.

#### 4. Board decisions in September

The draft minutes read:

##### 23/24.12 Rebranding of AONBs

Members had a robust discussion on the proposals. It was noted that the National Parks had not been included in the rebranding as recommended by the Glover Review\*, which continues to create separation and gives the impression that the two designations are different. The connection between people and nature was not represented, the logo did not show a local distinctiveness and it was felt that it did not connect to our key audiences. Any references to protected landscapes was missing and it was felt that a more appropriate national identity should be put forward. The Board wishes to retain our existing rolling hills logo.

The Board unanimously rejected recommendations 1 and 2 as presented and expressed the view that they were being presented with a fait accompli.

1. **The Board DID NOT ACCEPT recommendation 1. as tabled and ASKED the Officers to ask the NAAONB to**
  - a. **Delay the rebranding launch and**
  - b. **Reconsider the new name 'National Landscapes' and**
  - c. **Change the proposed branding logo for the for the Chilterns AONB taking account of the discussion held at the meeting.**
2. **The Board DID NOT wish to take part in the rebranding launch November 2023.**
3. **The Board PROVIDED further observations on the content of the paper.**

*\* Note: subsequent checking showed this to be inaccurate: Glover recommended AONBs should be re-termed National Landscapes but NOT that NPs should also be.*

The following concerns were expressed at the meeting, with comments in italics:

- 'National Landscapes' is not unifying as it does not include National Parks, which perpetuates the impression of a two-tier system, when the Landscape Review recommended that both designations be renamed National Landscapes. *(This is inaccurate: see above)*
- Members would like to see a step change from the government in purposes, powers and resources before a rebrand. *(This is wholly consistent with our comments on Glover -see above- and is in progress as described in Section 1 above)*
- 'National Landscapes' does not make clear that the landscapes are protected *(but then neither does 'AONB')*
- The need to recognise balancing national solidarity and identity with regional distinctiveness that ensures local people recognise and understand who and what we are.
- The process appears not to have been collaborative or consultative.

- The red kite logo is unacceptable (*Work is in hand on this and will be reported at the meeting*)
- Members also noted the absence of people in the logos, though it was pointed out that people feature in other assets that have been created (*and there are no people in our current logo, which the Board is keen to retain*)
- Some Board members felt the use of the words Beauty, Outstanding and Protected should be retained/used in the name. (*There is flexibility in the 'tag line'*)

## 5. Subsequent views of Board members

Following the Board decision Elaine and I met the NAAONB CEO, John Watkins, and Board members were emailed a meeting summary and invited to express their views. A subsequent follow-up email indicated that non-response would be construed as having no particular feelings either way.

Four responses have been received from parish Councillors, six from Sof S appointees, and two from upper-tier Local Authority members. Fifteen did not respond so can be assumed not to have particular views.

The twelve responses were nuanced, and it is wrong to categorise them simply as 'for or against', and some made points on both sides of the argument. But broadly speaking nine suggested acquiescence, with varying degrees of enthusiasm and some strong caveats. Two strongly opposed re-branding as currently proposed, and one suggested a hybrid third way. Responses are summarised below, with commentary in italics.

### Positives about re-branding, plus caveats

- Clearer public understanding is needed of what an AONB is, which should be the aim of re-branding nationally. 'National Landscape' is not ideal for this, but locally-defined tag lines can clarify. (*The tag line issue is considered later in this report*)
- It is important for AONBs to act collectively to increase 'clout' with Defra and others, and there is evidence that this is already bearing fruit.
- If we accept re-branding, we should lobby for NP's and the Broads to become National Landscapes too.
- While accepting the principle, we should urge postponement of implementation pending clarification of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, of Government's response to Glover and of the proposed Landscapes Partnership. (*As noted elsewhere in this report, matters have since moved in AONBs' favour in the now on LUR Act and the Glover response is imminent*).
- We should avoid not being seen as part of the unified consensus alongside the other AONBs.
- There are more pressing issues for us to focus on and we should pick our battles.

### Reservations about re-branding

- NAAONB have simply asserted the need for change but not evidenced it with, for example, surveys, focus groups or cost-benefit analysis. They should provide this and allow proper time for responses. The lack of transparency raises issues of the Association's governance. *(The PowerPoint presentation provided by NAAONB's consultants shows some evidence of this type, but it does not seem extensive)*
- 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' is widely-understood and valued established brand. It summarises the purpose of designation precisely, whereas 'National Landscape' is a confusing term with no obvious meaning or resonance unless 'Protected' is included.
- We need to engage a Chilterns audience in a unique way, which might vary from a unified AONB brand. Our task is to increase local public awareness and engagement in the best way we can, rather than to accommodate a change driven by NAAONB and Defra for national-level reasons. The target is unclear: local people, government or the public at large?
- Unlike other AONBs, which are directly run by LAs, we are an arm's length grouping of many LAs and others: we do not 'own' the title and cannot speak for our LA members. We need to consult on any change and carry others with us.
- We are being bounced into a politically-driven change programme without time to consider/consult. There is strong dissatisfaction with the process, and this should be made clear to NAAONB.
- We should not pursue this just for a small Defra grant for implementation (reportedly up to £5000 per AONB), and/or concern at wider Defra funding allegedly being tied to compliance.
- One of the main outputs would be new road signage, so the boundary review gives us a longer timescale to consider this. *(See Section 2 above re road signs)*
- Dislike of the overall national branding proposal - type face, logos and colours - quite apart from our local 'red kite' issue.
- If other AONBs also have reservations, CCB should provide leadership. *(Several AONBs do. This situation will be researched and reported at the meeting).*

### Third strand

One member felt we should make our views clear to Defra and NAAONB and see how they react, but if we are not listened to then support the rebranding.

### 6. Possible ways forward

This report aims to help discussion and not to make recommendations. There are two main issues to be determined: **first**, do we accept the principle of re-branding; **secondly**, if we do, do we accept the specific proposals for the Chilterns?

### The principle

We seem to have four broad options, though there may be others which will emerge from our discussion.

**1. Reject the rebranding** and accept any friction and loss of reputation with NAAONB/Defra, with possible grant implications. At the present stage of improvement to Defra's attitude to AONBs, recorded above, this is a significant issue, so the objection in principle would need to be a strong one to justify the risk of jeopardising relationships.

**2. Accept and implement the rebranding** (subject to local adjustments in the next section) but recognise this brings with it the dissent and dissatisfaction of some of our Board members and possibly of our partners.

**3. Accept the rebranding in principle and conditionally:** commit in principle now, but make our own implementation conditional on continued progress toward the conditions set out in our response to the Government's response to Glover (Section 3 above). We would take our own view of when the tipping-point had been reached. This would be both logical and consistent with our previous comments, while avoiding the 'diplomatic repercussions' of full rejection. We might also consider whether and how to consult our local partners. We would also assume that the rebranding applied to the area and that any rebranding of CCB itself would be a matter for us, as indicated in Section 2 above.

If we decide to recommend option 2 or 3, it would be helpful to be represented at the launch event, so we need to discuss the Board's previous decision that we should not.

**4. The 'hybrid' suggestion** of expressing our concerns to Defra and NAAONB but accepting re-branding if this bears no fruit. We would need to remain neutral on the re-branding, and its launch event, while this proceeds.

### Local implementation

If we pursue options 2, 3, or 4, we have discretion on the detail of the Chilterns re-branding and can meet some of our members' reservations in that respect: NAAONB indicate that both the logo and the 'tag line' can be changed. We can amend the logo from the red kite to be closer to our existing one: work on this is already in progress and will be reported at the meeting. We can also change the tag line. There are many ways of doing so. Just to pose an illustration for discussion, we could move from:

Chilterns National Landscape  
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

to:

Chilterns National Landscape  
Protecting Outstanding Natural Beauty

...and thus retain the key words in the AONB title while incorporating the Board's wish that 'protection' should feature. This would also better explain what the otherwise vague 'National Landscape' title actually signifies. But this is just one example: members might suggest others.



We have a further issue: while we dislike the imposition of a November 22<sup>nd</sup> deadline, that is the situation. Given the strength of feeling and the previous Board decisions, can/should the Executive Committee make a decision now so as to meet that deadline and avoid any 'diplomatic' difficulties?

If we decide on option 2 or 3 above, we could either:

- simply advise NAAONB that the matter is still under our consideration and steer clear of the launch events etc, remaining neutral until we can recommend a position to our Board; or
- indicate a decision 'in principle', which remains to be ratified by the Board, and participate on that provisional basis in the launch.

**Recommendations:**

- 1. That the Executive Committee CONSIDERS the issues and options set out in the report.**
- 2. That the Executive Committee IDENTIFIES any further options.**
- 3. That the Executive Committee RECOMMENDS a preferred position to the Board.**
- 4. That the Executive Committee CONSIDERS any short-term actions needed before the next Board meeting.**

**Item 11.1**

**Integrated Strategic Workstreams**

**Author**

Matt Thomson, head of strategy & planning

**Purpose of Report**

To update the Committee on progress with aligning our strategic workstreams and seek observations on and approval of their proposed directions of travel.

**Overview and introduction**

1. In July 2023, the Executive Committee considered a paper setting out the internally and externally driven “Parallel Governance Workstreams” that CCB needed to take account of in its strategic work programming. Officers have continued to keep a version of that paper up to date (access can be provided on request). The complexity of the paper, along with its misleading “governance” title (which only represented part of the picture), was difficult to digest, but clearly highlighted the need for careful integration and coordination.
2. In response to requests from the Committee for a simplified flow-chart, officers have produced the “simplified diagram” attached as Appendix 11.3.1.
3. The diagram places the **Management Plan Review** (MPR) at the centre because it is a statutory requirement with the clearest and firmest timescales.
4. The **AONB Boundary Extension** is the next most influential factor, but with limited CCB influence over timescales and outcomes (and timescales are constantly slipping).
5. Work on our **Governance & Partnership** arrangements is now much more within CCB’s control, after Natural England and Defra reduced their direct support for the “Enhanced Management and Governance Arrangements” workstream. Governance and Partnership work is the nexus in which a lot of the strategic integration and coordination can happen. It also has an intimate and iterative relationship with our future long-term **Vision** and the Management Plan review. In particular, implementing the Governance TFG’s recommended “Board Advisory Group” (BAG) concept (or an interim version of it) could be critical to achieving buy-in for the Vision and Management Plan with stakeholders/partners.
6. Our improved **Operational Planning** processes will obviously support all of this.
7. The collection of external influences on the right-hand side of the diagram will all also have impacts – although it is less clear how or when, and we will need to be responsive to these.
8. The flow-chart is supported with an indicative Gantt-style table of timescales in Appendix 11.3.2, which also indicates the lead individuals involved in each workstream. It has been suggested that a “Programme Office” could be established to provide light-touch oversight of the workstreams to promote their coordination and integration, comprising the deputy chair of the Board and chair of the Governance TFG, John Nicholls, and the head of strategy and planning, Matt Thomson.

## Resources

9. In July, ExCo approved the release of £38,250 from the Development Reserve to support this and related work, in line with the CEO's report. That resource was to be broken down as follows:
  - Appointment of a 1-year part-time planning officer role to free-up time for the head of strategy and planning to oversee the strategic work: **£26,400**
  - The initial recruitment process was unsuccessful, and alternatives are being pursued. The funding is now likely to be spent between late Q3 2023/24 and Q3 2024/25.
  - Extending the capacity of the head of engagement and partnerships by one day per week from September 2023 to March 2024 to lead, guide and support the stakeholder engagement element of the Governance and Partnership workstream: **£6,800**
  - Provision of bespoke EDI training: **£5,000**.
10. Other than the EDI training, the resources released from the Development Reserve only cover staff costs.
11. Looking ahead to the 2024/25 financial year, as part of the Operational Planning process, the Board will need to consider what resources are available to be directed to supporting the Strategic Workstreams, especially the Management Plan Review itself, which (beyond the "light-touch" Benyon paper stage) will be resource-intensive. This will be covered through the Operational Planning (business plan/budget/delivery plan) process. If no additional resources can be secured, decisions will have to be made about what scheduled work is deferred or cancelled.

## Timescales

12. Key known timescales are indicated in the "simplified diagram", and an indicative Gantt chart of giving more detail up to June 2024 (for the Board/AGM) is attached as Appendix 11.3.2.
13. All timescales, other than the current milestones for the Management Plan Review and for Operational Planning, are subject to change, especially with regard to their relationship with the AONB Boundary Extension project and other external influences outside our control.
14. Note that the Defra-approved "Benyon" process for the Management Plan Review allows for the extension of the date by which we must complete the "rolled-forward" review of the current Management Plan, from end of March 2025 to the end of December 2025, and possibly beyond. The Chilterns being subject to a boundary review would be a qualifying reason for such an extension. Defra has also indicated that they may unilaterally extend deadlines if there are further delays to the publication of the Management Plan Guidance or the Outcome Indicator Framework.
15. Officers' recommendation is to complete the "roll-forward" of the current Plan as quickly as resources allow – ahead of March 2025 if possible, and not to take advantage of any additional opportunities to delay this review. This would enable the Board to focus on developing its long-term Vision with stakeholders, and work

on the new Management Plan for the new boundaries of the AONB, unencumbered by an ongoing lengthy review of the current Plan.

### **Management Plan Review (MPR) TFG**

16. Item 14 of the September 2023 Board meeting endorsed the broad approach to the Management Plan Review and authorised the creation of a TFG, nominating Board member Gemma Harper as chair.
17. Gemma Harper has met with the CEO and/or the head of strategy and planning several times to progress the workstream.
18. Terms of Reference (TORs) for the TFG have been drafted and attached as Appendix 11.3.3 for the Committee's consideration. The Committee's views on the draft TORs are sought, both in terms of their specific application to this TFG, and as a template for TORs for the Governance and Vision TFGs (and potentially other similar groupings in the future).
19. The Committee's suggestions (or volunteers) for membership of this TFG would be welcomed. Enquiries outside of the Committee meeting may be directed to Gemma Harper (and copied to the head of strategy and planning, if appropriate).
20. It is anticipated that close working between the Management Plan Review, Vision and Governance TFGs will be necessary, including occasional shared meetings. Membership of more than one TFG would be welcome, in addition to the "Programme Office" roles (para 8).

### **Governance TFG**

21. In July Executive Committee resolved to invite the Governance TFG to pursue four lines of work. Two of these related to matters of the delegation of authority, which are not the subject of this paper (item 11.2 refers).
22. The other lines relate more directly to the strategic workstreams, and particularly to taking steps to implement the TFG's earlier recommendation to create a "Board Advisory Group", including identifying potential members of that group and how they could be engaged with shaping and implementing the objectives of the (existing and future) Management Plan.
23. A key aspect of this would be overseeing the head of engagement and partnerships' role in leading, guiding and supporting the stakeholder engagement element of the Governance and Partnership workstream, utilising their new capacity released from the Development Fund. This would include drawing on existing and emerging information on stakeholder mapping and engagement through:
  - The NE Enhanced Management and Governance Arrangements (EMAGA) project (to be merged into the general Governance workstream);
  - CCB's Communications Strategy and Audience Engagement work;
  - The "Technical Advisory Group" for the NE AONB Extension project;
  - Older work undertaken prior to the Covid lockdowns on developing a Chilterns AONB Partnership.
24. The BAG (a more suitable name is sought) might be seen as the new AONB partnership – or a strategic partnership board, helping to coordinate a range of more specialised partnerships (e.g. LNPs, CCB project partnerships, etc.)

25. The BAG would also be a key forum in which the future long-term vision for the Chilterns AONB could be developed.
26. Membership of the Governance TFG already exists and has been very effective. No need for a change to the group's membership has been identified, but the Committee's observations would be welcome.

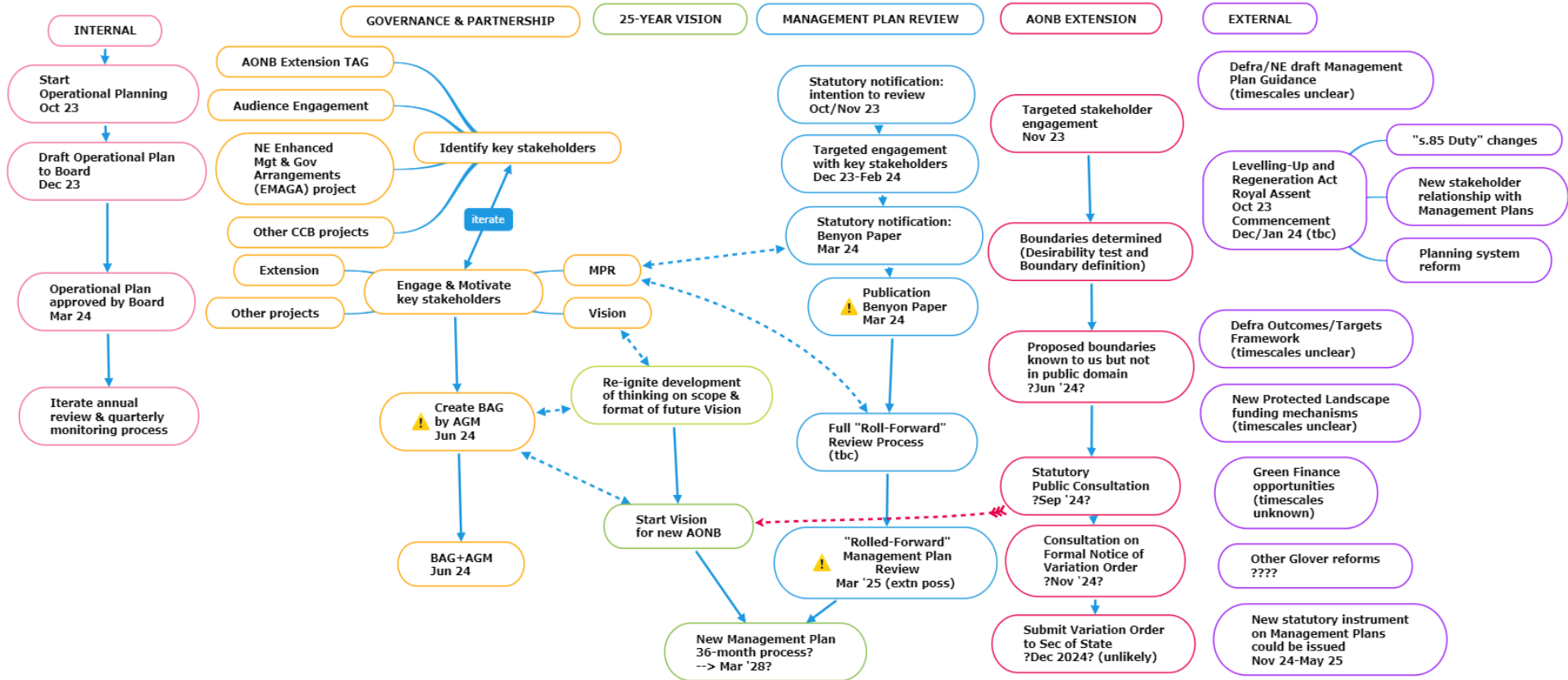
### **Vision TFG**

27. The Vision TFG has an established and effective membership; again, while no need for change has been identified, the Committee's observations would be welcome.
28. The Group has met several times (but not for a while), culminating in a definition of the scope and nature of a long-term vision for the Chilterns AONB, approved by the Board in March 2023.
29. The Management Plan Review process now provides greater clarity on how the preparation of a long-term vision would fit into and integrate with other Strategic Workstreams: i.e. as part of the preparation of the new Management Plan for the new boundaries of the AONB.
30. But that doesn't mean that we have to wait to begin work, not least because the opportunity to contribute to the development of a new vision is one way in which to engage, inspire and motivate (existing and new) stakeholders/partners, e.g. in the BAG. Working on the Vision therefore needs to go hand in hand with developing our new Governance arrangements (and engaging people with the Management Plan reviews), even if the new vision isn't finalised or applied before the new boundaries of the AONB are known.
31. It is therefore proposed to reactivate the Vision TFG, initially to work with the Governance TFG to explore how to engage stakeholders, perhaps initially on "non-geographical" elements of the vision, and/or augmenting the existing scope of the vision agreed by the Board.

### **Recommendations:**

1. That the Committee **NOTES** the content of the paper as the basis for future action by officers and the TFGs, subject to future steers from the Committee and/or the Board.
2. That the deputy chair of the Board and the head of strategy and planning are nominated in an advisory capacity to provide coordinating oversight to the delivery of the Integrated Strategic Workstreams, reporting to Executive Committee for this purpose (para 8).
3. That the Committee **APPROVES** the proposal to complete the "roll-forward" review of the current Management Plan as quickly as resources allow, and only to take advantage of any further opportunities to delay that review in exceptional circumstances (para 15).
4. That the Committee **SUGGESTS** to the respective Chairs of the Management Plan Review, Vision and Governance TFGs potential members for their consideration (membership to be confirmed by the Board, unless that part of the draft TORs is not approved).

**APPENDIX 11.1.1: SIMPLIFIED WORKSTREAMS FLOW CHART**



14<sup>th</sup> November 2023

**APPENDIX 11.1.2: INDICATIVE INITIAL TIMESCALES**

Task	2023		2024						
	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Beyond
CCB meetings	ExCo 14 <sup>th</sup>	Board 12 <sup>th</sup>		ExCo 29 <sup>th</sup>	Board 14 <sup>th</sup>		ExCo 16 <sup>th</sup>	Board & AGM 20 <sup>th</sup>	
<b>Management Plan Review (MPR) – Matt Thomson, TFG chair Gemma Harper</b>									
MPR TFG meetings		Tbc	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Statutory notification intention to review	Notify	Consider observations							
Draft Benyon-compliant statement		Agree at Board							
Statutory notification intention to adopt			Notify	Consider observations					
Final Benyon-compliant statement					Agree at Board. Publish. Notify.				
“Roll-forward” review						Research. Stakeholder engagement.			Complete by Mar 2025
<b>Chilterns AONB Extension (Natural England) – Neil Jackson</b>									
	Targeted (confidential) stakeholder engagement							Proposed boundaries may be known (confidential).	Statutory public consultation, Sep 2024 (tbc)
<b>25-Year Vision – Matt Thomson, TFG chair Hector Sants</b>									
Vision TFG meetings		Re-convene	Tbc	...	...	...	...	...	...
Develop scope, format, etc.				Engage stakeholders	...	...	...	...	...
Develop Vision for new AONB									Engage stakeholders alongside Extension consultation, Sep 2024 (tbc)

14<sup>th</sup> November 2023

Task	2023		2024						
	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Beyond
<b>Governance &amp; Partnership – Annette Weiss &amp; Matt Thomson, TFG Chair John Nicholls</b>									
Governance TFG		Reconvene	Tbc	...	...	...	...	...	...
Engage partners & stakeholders	Use MPR notification & Extension event	Stakeholder map from existing sources	Use MPR notification	Scope BAG	Begin to convene BAG			BAG meeting with AGM	
<b>Operational Planning – Andy Brock-Doyle, ExCo</b>									
Operational Plan (inc. budget & delivery plan)		Draft OP to Board			Board approves OP				
Quarterly Reporting	ExCo			ExCo			ExCo		



### **APPENDIX 11.1.3: DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW TASK AND FINISH GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE (MPR TFG TORs)**

#### **Background**

The Chilterns Conservation Board is required to “prepare and publish a plan which formulates their policy for the management of their area of outstanding natural beauty and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it” (a “management plan”) and to review that plan at least every five years (ss.89-90 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000).

The current Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 (“the Plan”) would normally need to have been reviewed by the end of March 2024. However, Defra has recognised that ongoing reforms have created an uncertain context for management plan review, and has offered, through a letter from Lord Benyon in July 2022, an option to undertake a “light-touch” review, extending the application of the current Plan by up to a year.

CCB also needs to have an eye to producing a new Management Plan to set out the policy for the new designated area following the completion of Natural England’s ongoing review of the AONB’s boundaries. Work cannot start on this until the proposed new boundaries are reasonably certain and in the public domain, and the process could take up to three years: it may therefore be necessary to twin-track early work on the new Management Plan with the review of the current Plan.

#### **Purpose of the Task and Finish Group (TFG)**

The TFG has been convened to oversee progress with the review of the Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 (“the Plan”).

The immediate priority, by the end of March 2024, is the production of a “light-touch review” statement, compliant with Lord Benyon’s letter of July 2022, extending the application of the Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 to at least the end of March 2025.

Thereafter the TFG may be requested to:

- Oversee the completion of the review of the Plan by the end of March 2025 (possibly extended to the end of December 2025, or beyond, by arrangement with Defra). This review will roll forward the main policy content of the Plan, with limited factual updates (in accordance with Executive Committee’s resolution of November 2022, amended by the Board’s resolution of September 2023), to cover the period from 2024-2029.
- Oversee the subsequent (or possibly parallel) development of a new Management Plan for the new designated area of the Chilterns AONB as soon as the boundaries are sufficiently certain to do so.

#### **Governance and accountability**

The TFG is convened by the Board, and reports to the Board.

By approving these Terms of Reference, the Board authorises the Executive Committee to receive reports from the TFG and for the TFG to seek the guidance of the Executive Committee if the chair of the TFG and the chair of the Board, in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer, consider it would be more expedient to do so than wait for the next Board meeting.

Any changes to the membership and remit of the TFG, including to these terms of reference, must be approved by the Board.

## TFG functions and responsibilities

The TFG will be responsible for:

- Agreeing its Terms of Reference, membership and work programme;
- Making strategic decisions on the nature and timing of engagement with partners, stakeholders and the public;
- Making strategic decisions on the form and content of the Management Plan and related documents, on the basis of recommendations from officers;
- Approving outputs of the review process, and recommending to the Board the approval of content for publication, adoption or consultation, where appropriate;
- Supporting officers in the technical undertaking of the review and meeting statutory requirements for its delivery, and making strategic decisions to facilitate the delivery of all aspects of the Review;
- Championing the Management Plan Review as a high priority in the Board's work programme;
- Working closely with the Governance Task and Finish Group to ensure that the Management Plan benefits from necessary governance structures, and with the Vision Task and Finish Group to ensure that engagement on the Plan is fed into the Vision work, and *vice versa*.

The TFG will not be responsible for:

- Developing the long-term Vision for the new Management Plan for the extended AONB, which is the responsibility of the Vision Task and Finish Group, chaired by Sir Hector Sants.
- Making changes to the Board's governance structures, which are the responsibility of the Governance Task and Finish Group, chaired by John Nicholls.  
...but may advise the other TFGs and/or the Board on these matters as they relate to the Management Plan.

## Membership

The TFG's membership will comprise:

- Board members:
  - The Board's nominated TFG chair: Gemma Harper.
  - One representative of each of the Governance and Vision TFGs, nominated by each TFG.
  - Any other member of the Board as volunteers or accepts an invitation from the TFG chair to join.
- Officer team:
  - Matt Thomson, head of strategy & planning (secretariat to the TFG)
  - Annette Weiss, head of engagement & partnerships
  - Others tbc

## Quoracy

To be quorate, meetings of the TFG should be attended (in person or online) by both the TFG chair and officer secretariat (or a specifically nominated substitute for the meeting), plus at least two others comprising at least one Board member and one officer (tbc).

## Working methods and meetings

The TFG will work collaboratively in whatever way is most effective and efficient, this could include virtual meetings, site visits, shared documents, email exchanges and so on.

A document library, chat function and opportunity to work collaboratively on documents will be provided through Microsoft Teams.

The chair may call a meeting of the group as and when required.

## Resources

The TFG will have no budget or allocated resources. Support will be provided by the CCB officer member(s) of the group.

## Meeting schedule

tbc

## Item 11.2 Principles of CCB delegations

**Author:** John Nicholls, Deputy Chair CCB, Chair Governance Task and Finish group.

**Purpose of Report:** At its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> July, The Executive Committee “INVITED the Chair of the Governance Task and Finish Group to work with officers to analyse requirements to address tensions between and gaps within matters relating to the discharge of the Boards’ functions by its Committees and Officers.”

**Summary:** Analysis of the gaps in delegations of authorities.

Discussions with officers and the Chair have resolved the basic principles set out in this report and the Committee’s approval is requested.

### Recommended principles

1. The Board determines:

- CCB’s strategy (by approving the Management Plan and annual Business Plan – which comprises a Resource Plan, Delivery Plan and Budget)
- the means of its implementation (by approving the staff budget in line with the HR Strategy).

These are the ‘Key Documents’ below.

2. All decisions complying with the Key Documents are taken by the CEO without further reference to the Board.

3. When contemplating any decision which might extend beyond the Key Documents (5 and 6 below), the CEO consults the Chair to agree whether it would materially modify their purpose or intention. If so, or if there is no agreement, it is referred to the Executive Committee, which refers the matter to the Board if it considers it necessary. If not, the CEO takes the decision.

4. To enable rapid responses, emails and virtual meetings will be used and the Executive Committee will act as an Advisory Group for such decisions, but with the expectation that its advice will be followed.

5. A **decision on core staff (i.e., those funded by core funds, not project funding)** might extend beyond the Key Documents if:

- it increases the total approved budget for core staff, including all on-costs
- it extends CCB’s range of activities beyond the Key Documents

6. A **project decision** might extend beyond the Key Documents if:

- it imposes any additional costs on the core budget, through staff, capital contribution, or other costs
- it extends CCB’s range of activities beyond the Key Documents

## **Recommendation**

- **That the Executive Committee APPROVES the principles above, as the underlying basis of more detailed work to be undertaken by the Governance T&F Group, which will subsequently produce comprehensive recommendations to the Board.**

COMMERCIAL – IN CONFIDENCE

**CHILTERN'S CONSERVATION BOARD  
HR STRATEGY 2023**

**Introduction**

Reflecting the principles of the CCB's Business Plan and my observations, this HR Strategy seeks to support compliance and appropriate, effective management of employees which in turn supports a positive working environment, develops skills and the delivery of required outcomes.

Several long-standing, time-consuming employee issues have been navigated over the last 12 months; there is now an opportunity and a pressing need to drive forward effective HR management to limit recurrence of similar issues and introduce more streamlined, uniform HR practices.

**Governance, Monitoring and Responsibilities**

**The Board** approves headcount and salary costs within the budget process; the Board must approve any increase in headcount and/or salary costs.

The structure, terms of reference and reporting arrangements of the HR Advisory Group (**HRAG**) to be reviewed and agreed by the Executive Committee, including the "Board's Personnel Appeal Panel"

The **HRAG** or members of it will support the CEO on specific issues and on an as required basis.

The responsibility for the delivery of the agreed HR Implementation plan lies with the **CEO**, actively supported by our HR Advisor. The CEO will report progress against the plan at each scheduled Executive meeting.

**Implementation**

1. Implement an updated employee handbook and HR policies, which comply with prevailing legislation and support effective people-management
2. Ensure recruitment and onboarding processes are compliant, clear and support employee engagement
3. Ensure termination of employment, for whatever reason, is managed sensitively and in accordance with agreed policies. Exit interviews are undertaken and any learning points are taken forward.
4. Review organisation structure to ensure resources are aligned to meet deliverables
5. Balance hybrid working arrangements with the needs of the organisation to deliver to deadline and to budget.
6. Implement streamlined performance management/review procedures (appraisals) to support effective performance and development and support onboarding.
7. Where possible, identify alternative opportunities for employees coming to the end of a specific project /proactively manage retention to the end of the project term.
8. Implement training for line managers in accordance with agreed policies and agree manager's accountabilities
9. Implement annual salary benchmarking to inform reward strategies
10. Implement staff survey to inform operational practices

**Carol Hatcliff  
HATCLIFF ROGERS HR**

**Item 12.2****HR Strategy update****Author:**

Elaine King, CEO

**Summary:**

The HR Strategy 2023-24 and an associated implementation plan was approved by the Executive Committee in February 2023. This report presents an update on progress and proposes next steps for an updated Strategy and implementation plan for the coming year.

**Purpose of the report:**

To update the Executive Committee on delivery of the HR Strategy and outline plans for an updated Strategy.

**Background**

The CCB's HR Strategy and Implementation Plan were approved at the Executive Committee meeting in February 2023. Progress on the Plan is set out below, with numbers representing each activity as set out in the Plan.

- The Plan itself was circulated to the Executive Committee for its meeting on 14 February (4).
- Work due for completion by the end of January 2023 comprised: review of organisational structure (2); set recruitment schedule for recruiting Head of Operations, Head of Landscape and Executive Assistant (2a); and finalise job descriptions above (2b). This was all completed on schedule (notwithstanding that we terminated the recruitment process for an Executive Assistant due to lack of funds).
- Revising the employee handbook and HR Policies (1) was due for completion by the end of January. A new draft of the handbook was provided by our HR Advisor in early March. Employee comments on the staff handbook (3) were due to be gathered in February/March. Pressure of other work meant that the handbook wasn't reviewed as quickly as planned, so staff received the handbook in June and feedback was duly received.
- The CCB started working with a new HR Advisor - Joanne Moss - in July, which required a period of handover from our previous HR Advisor - Carol Hatcliff - and Jo familiarising herself with the organisation.
- I held scheduled general HR reviews (5) with our HR Advisor in April and June as planned. Due to changing HR Advisors, a review was not conducted in October, though a thorough handover took place in August/September, and Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations, and I met with Jo on 7 November to plan future work and discuss the working arrangements going forward.
- Hybrid working arrangements (7) were reviewed in June, as scheduled, and will be reviewed again in November. Full time staff are currently working a minimum of two days a week in the office. This is pro-rated for part time staff.
- Project deadlines and redeployment opportunities have been reviewed (14) and given greater prominence by Andy Brock-Doyle as part of a wider piece of work relating to improving operational effectiveness, especially with regards to resource planning and setting budgets.
- Annual salary benchmarking to inform reward strategies (15) was discussed by the HR Advisory Group in a meeting on 2 November, where it was agreed that this exercise would take place in January/February 2024, in line with CCB policy and ahead of confirming the budget for the 2024/25.

- On an ongoing basis, and especially through developing the Business Plan, the organisation structure will be kept under review to ensure resources align with planned deliverables. Linked to this, will be a review of all job descriptions (10).
- A staff survey will be implemented to inform operational practices once HR Simplified (see below) has been introduced (16).
- Planned training (9) for managers was delayed slightly from May/June, in part due to a transition to a new HR Advisor, with the first session taking place on 19 October.
- The training session in October enabled us to take further feedback on the draft handbook (1, 3, 8). Plans are now in place to finalise the staff handbook and associated policies, which includes ensuring the documents are more concise and the tone better reflective of the CCB's culture.
- Introducing a new Handbook and policies is part of a wider programme of work aimed at improving the CCB's HR systems and processes. Since joining the CCB in April 2023, the CCB's Head of Operations, Andy Brock-Doyle, has reviewed the CCB's current approach to HR and has developed an *HR Transformation Programme (HR Simplified)* which will be rolled out during the second half of FY 2023-24.
- The slides circulated with this paper sets out the framework that will guide HR Simplified and identifies the phasing, high level timeline and responsibility for delivery. HR Simplified builds on and supports the delivery of work identified in the HR Strategy, particularly points 1,2,3,6 and 8 and will ensure delivery of specific actions in the implementation plan, such as training for managers (11, 12, 12a) and identifying training needs (13). The core focus of HR Simplified is planned to be delivered by the end of March 2024, in an integrated way, with a focus on process, policy, procedures, templates and the implementation of a new HR system.
- Ensuring that the CCB has effective HR systems in place is not in the current implementation plan but is key to the effectiveness of all the CCB's HR activities. HR Simplified therefore includes identifying the functionality required from an HR system and exploring HR software, such as [Breath](#), as a potential tool to manage our HR operations, including integration with payroll. The costs will be included in the draft budget for 2024/25 onwards.
- Finally, the CCB's HR Strategy and implementation plan end in December 2023. I propose to review and update the HR Strategy and create a new implementation plan for 2024/25. This will include a number of new workstreams including reflecting our commitment to supporting staff wellbeing by developing a Wellbeing Strategy and implementation plan. It also needs to be consistent with any HR related matters agreed under item 11.2 – Schemes of Delegation. I suggest that the updated Strategy and implementation plan be reviewed by the HR Advisory Group in late November with a view to tabling them for approval at the next Board meeting on 12 December 2023.
- **Recommendation**
  - **That the Executive Committee NOTES the update on delivery of the HR Strategy implementation plan and provides feedback.**
  - **That the Executive Committee APPROVES the proposal to review and update the HR Strategy and develop a new implementation plan, in consultation with the HR Advisory Group, and these documents be approved by the Board at its December meeting.**





# HR Simplified Transformation Programme

October 2023 (Head of Operations)

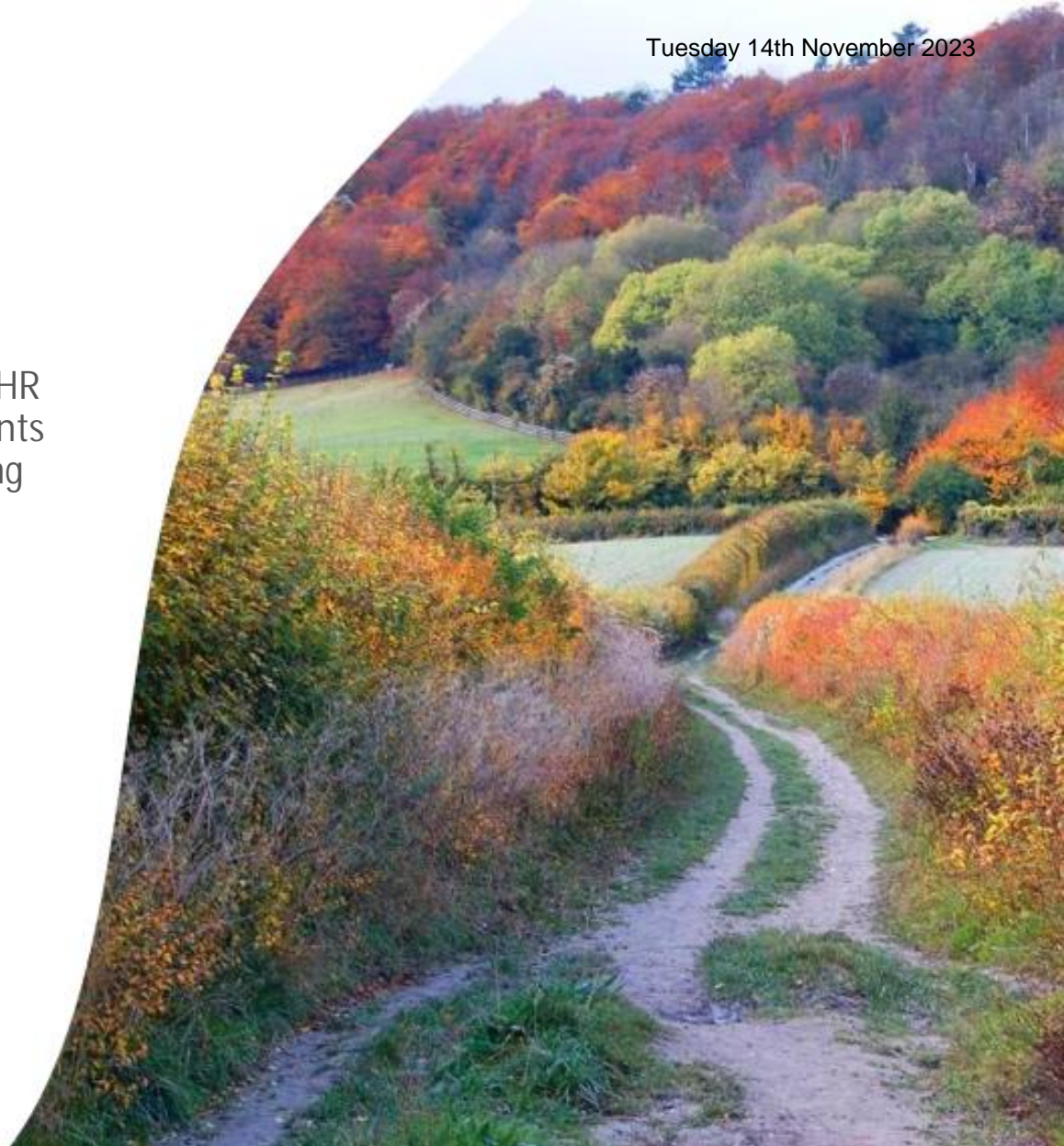


## Purpose

This document sets out how CCB will conduct an HR Transformation Programme (HR Simplified) during the second half of FY 2023-24.

HR Simplified builds on and supports the delivery of work identified in the HR Strategy. It pulls together key elements of the HR Strategy (HR Strategy points 1,2,3,6,8 and 9 where there are key dependencies with the aim of delivering the core elements of these by the end of March 2024 in an integrated way with a focus on process, policy, procedures, templates and the implementation of a new HR system.

This document identifies the framework that will guide HR Simplified and identifies the phasing, high level timeline and responsibility for delivery.



# Vision, Goal and Key Design Principles

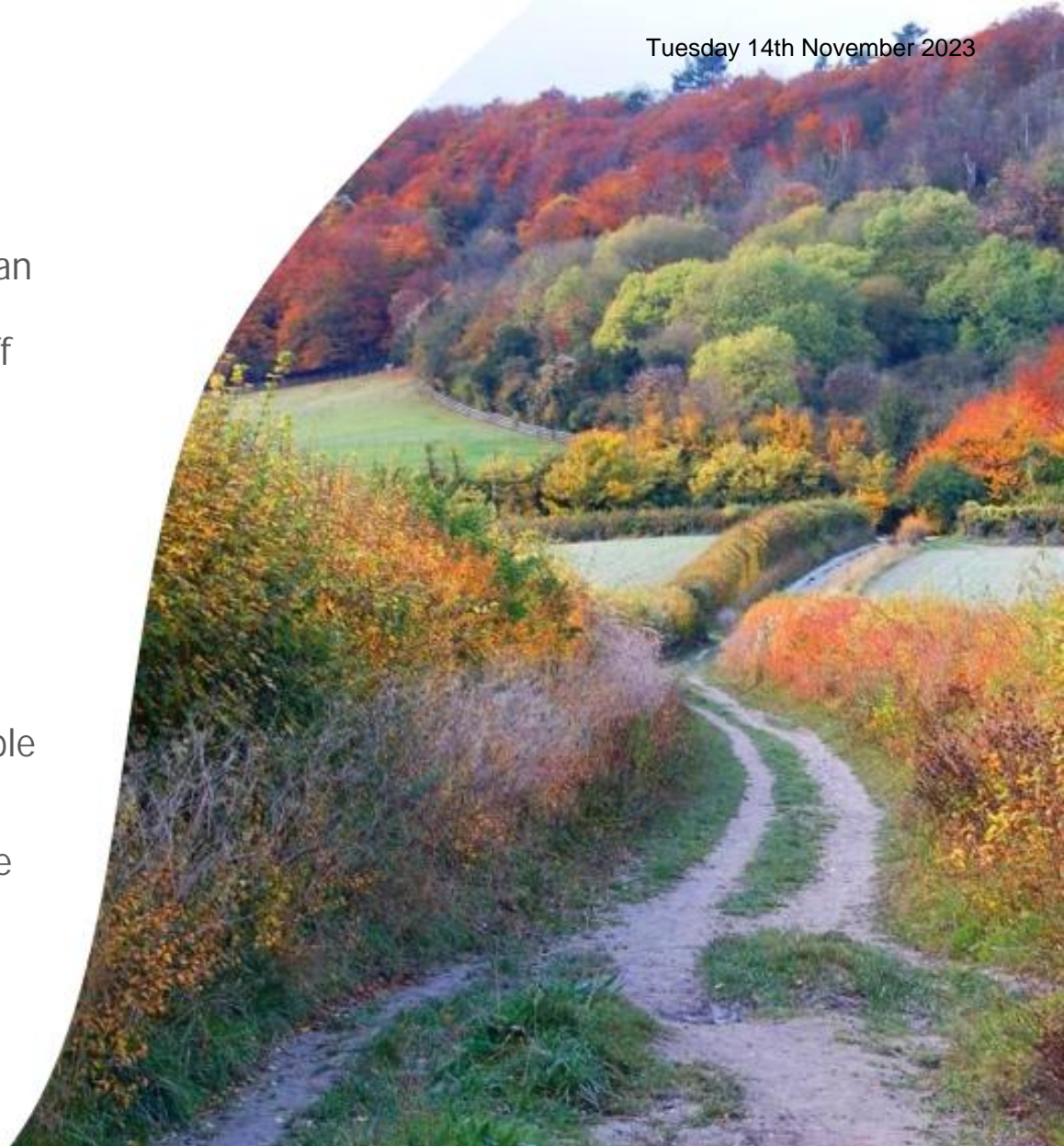


## Vision and Goal

A simplified HR landscape where line managers and staff understand and can access transactionary HR services quickly and reliably, allowing time and effort to be focused on areas that add value to the organisation and its staff

The goal of the HR Simplified is ensure that the HR offering to staff is significantly improved on what it is today through having:

- An improved, user-friendly and welcoming employee handbook with clear policies
- Clear integrated processes, procedures and templates that are accessible and easy for staff to follow and provide clarity for line managers
- An operational HR system that drives effectiveness and efficiency in the way in which conduct HR
- A greater ability for staff and line managers to be able to self serve



## Key Principles

- Improved efficiency through defined workflows (HR system) and the ability to self-serve
- Greater transparency on where to find information (process / procedures / policies and templates)
- Greater engagement with the HR landscape (employee handbook)
- Improved understanding of HR processes and what is required of staff and line managers
- Improved consistency in the way we operate
- Improved ability to collate and measure HR performance
- Greater focus on value add HR activity

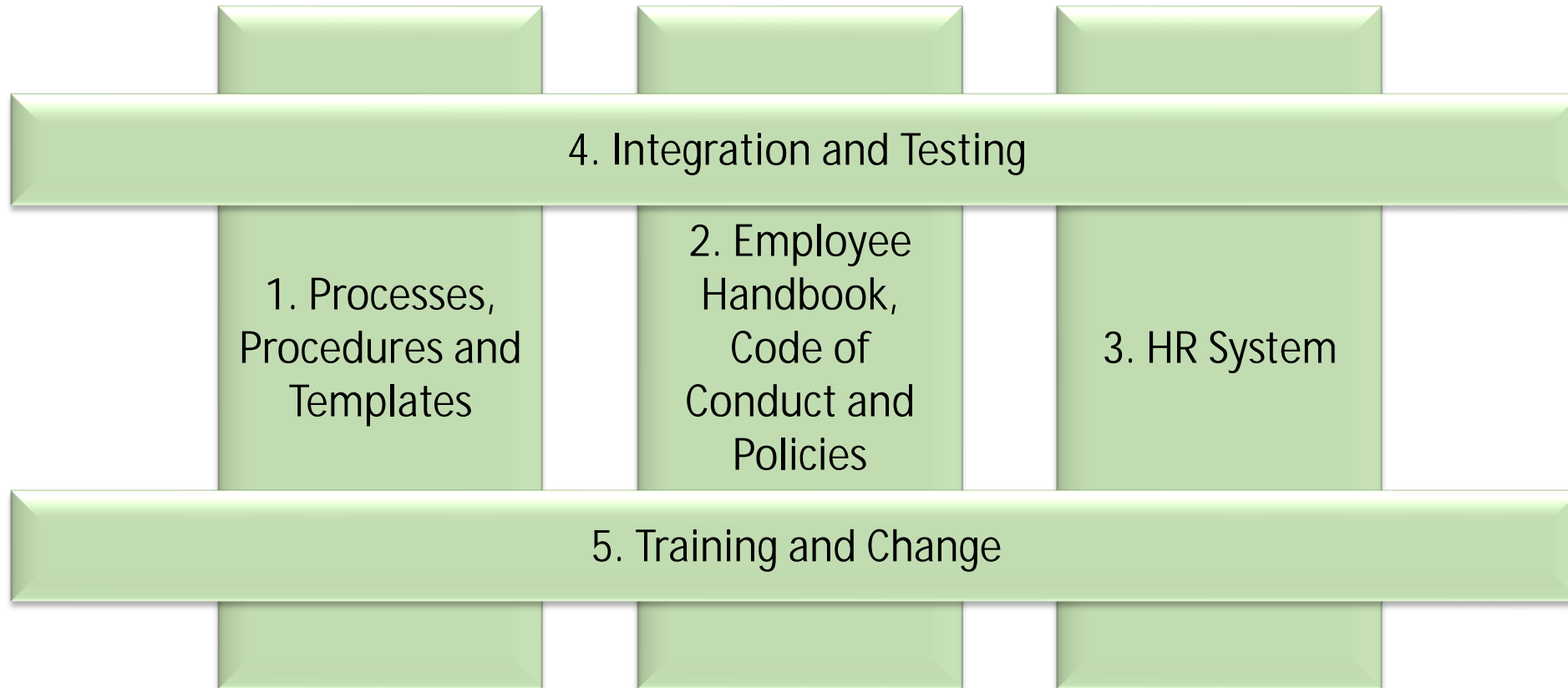




# HR Simplified Operating Model and Framework

# Key Transformation Workstreams

HR Simplified will focus on the following workstreams



# CCB Process Hierarchy

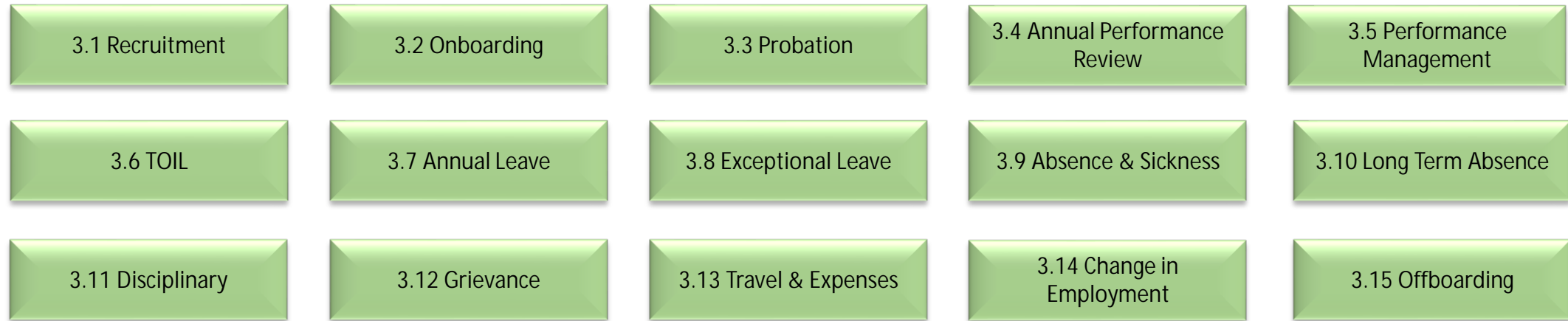
HR processes are one of the six pillars of the overall process framework for CCB which will categorise processes in the following way (note that this is subject to revision as processes become defined)





# HR Processes

The following HR processes will be defined for CCB

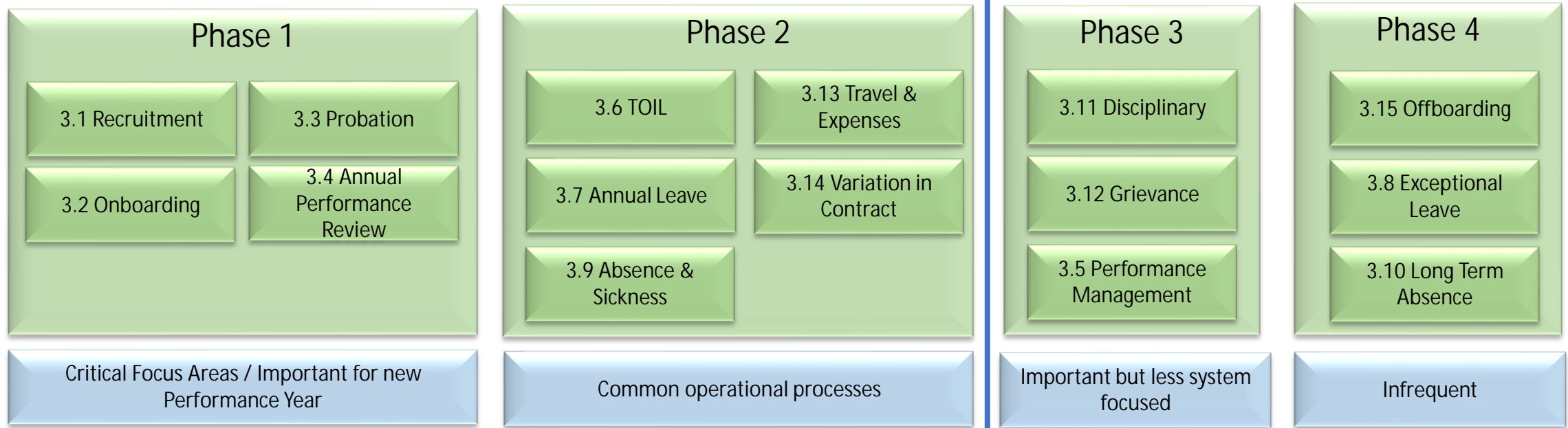


The following areas will not be defined as part of HR Simplify:

- Strategic Workforce Planning / Workforce Planning (integrated into Annual Business Planning)
- Whistleblowing (defined under Governance Processes)
- Payroll which is a process that sits in both HR and Finance will be defined under Finance processes for CCB

# Phasing

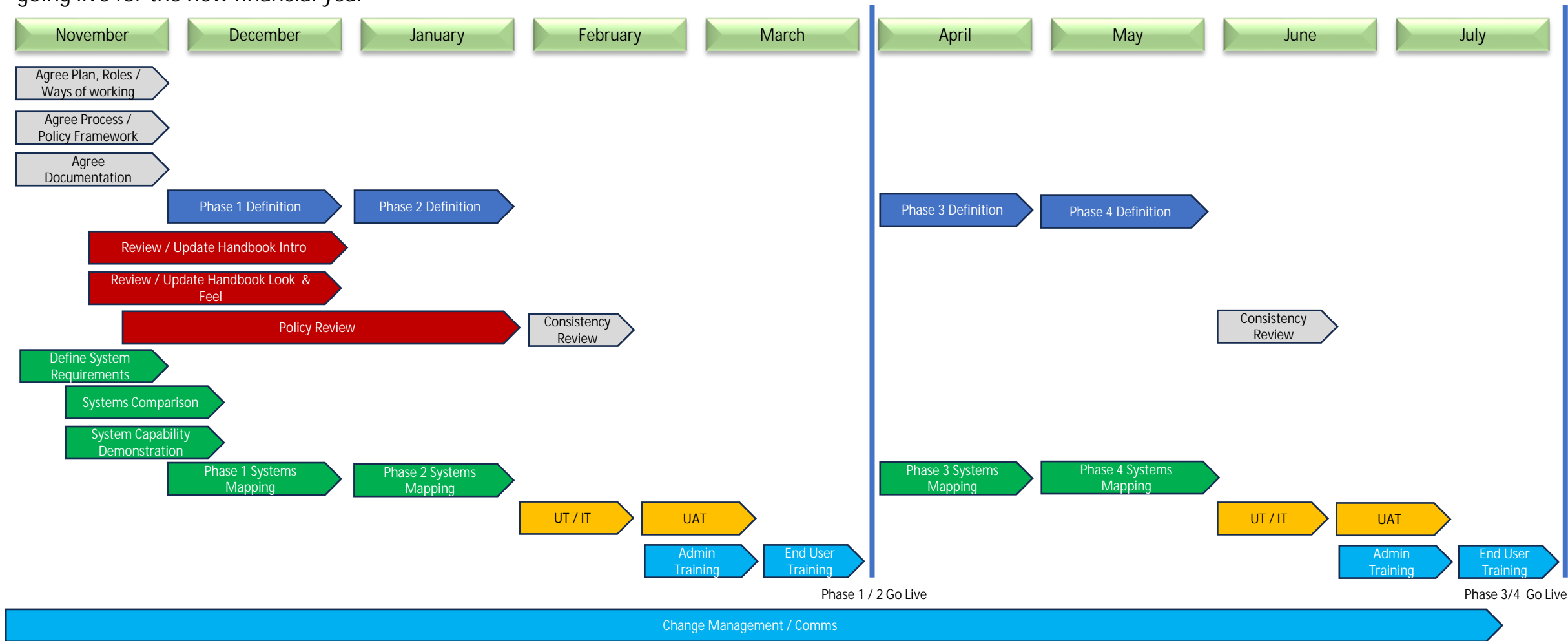
There is a need to have an updated suite of all HR processes, policies, procedures and templates and we need key elements of this to be within a system to drive efficiency. However there is a recognition that there is a lot to do in order to define this and to prepare the organisation and therefore a need to phase the work. Phasing is based on criticality and on key deadlines (performance year / financial year / leave year).



Phasing will need to account for how different processes are dealt with in the new HR system adopted. Note that whilst the leave year is the start of January it is envisaged that this timescale is too tight and there is currently a systemised way of doing this with the ability to transition leave over at a later date

# Plan on a Page

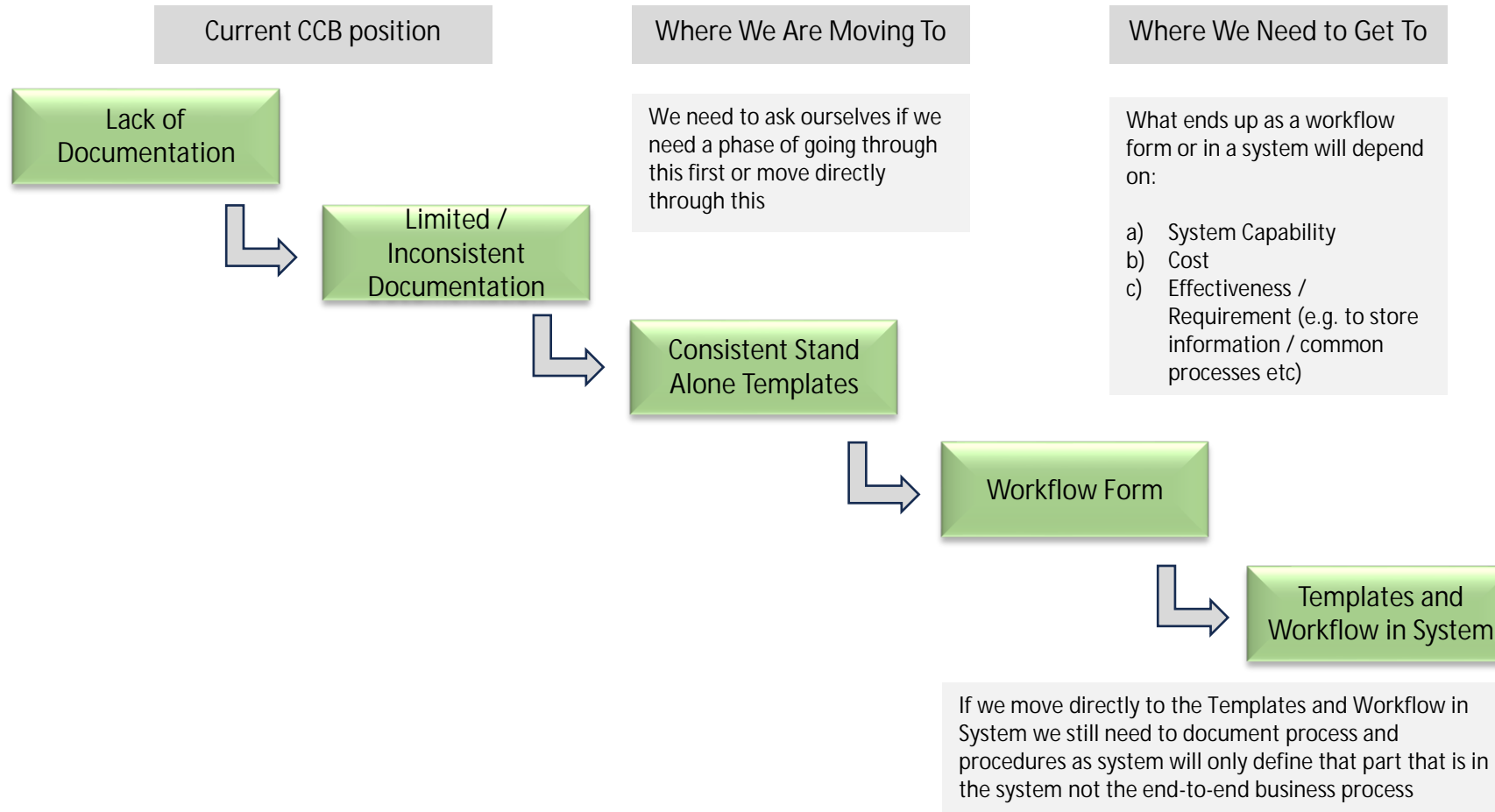
The table below is the high-level plan on a page for the work that needs to be undertaken based on 2 go lives with critical systems based processes going live for the new financial year



UT = Unit Testing (to make sure the system works / IT = Integration Testing to make sure any integration with other systems works / UAT = User Acceptance Testing to make sure the system is logical and staff will be able to use it

# What Are We Aiming For ?

We need to be clear in terms of how we want to define processes, procedures and templates and what will be within an HR system and what will be outside of this system





**Item 13 appendix****Nature Calling – Arts Lottery funded project led by the NAAONB Nov 23-Dec 24 – Project Summary**

- £532k Funding just confirmed by ACE for a 2 year Arts in the Landscape project led by NAAONB starting Nov 2023 to Dec 2025. Total project budget just under £1 mil
- Chilterns is one of 6 main hubs. Use the arts as a means of engaging with underserved audiences in Luton, commissioning local artists to work with target communities and co-create arts activity.
- CCB will need to contribute 40 days staff time over 2 years and will require up to £20,000 match funding.
- Priority is to agree the role/job spec for the 40 days staff input and decide on the best options for the staff resource – it could be a freelance person based in the Luton area, with arts experience and knowledge of our target communities. It will also require some CCB core staff time to coordinate/oversee (Annette is the project lead for this).
- Revoluton Arts provided a letter of support for the bid and will be an important source of expertise/partnership. Likewise Gurch/Nasreen.
- Expecting to hear from Ruth at NAAONB for an inception meeting this week.

**Background**

Nature Calling is a significant national commissioning programme that brings together the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) and its members across England, with Activate Performing Arts & Poetry School, culminating in a season of diverse, multi-art form performances & installations across the country. Themes of landscape, belonging, language, nature recovery, the climate emergency and unheard voices are at its heart.

The project builds on earlier work to develop the AONBs' Art in the Landscape strategy, developed in partnership with Activate. Art in the Landscape is the AONB family's long-term commitment to working with the arts to find new ways to engage audiences who haven't previously felt welcome in the countryside.

In 2022 the NAAONB signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Arts Council England committing both parties to exploring opportunities for Arts Organisation and AONBs to work together to engage audiences currently underserved for both Protected Landscapes and Arts and Culture – very often these audiences overlap.

Nature Calling combines the enormous creative potential of the partnership, targeting underfunded areas and embedding diverse representation. It responds to significant opportunities to celebrate the country's distinctive landscapes, by commissioning new work from exceptional & diverse artists in a programme that culminates in a bold new national celebration, focussing on engaging new audiences from priority places.

The project will also incorporate skills development for AONB officers, artists and producers.

**Project summary**

The 2 year project is expected to commence November 2023 with development taking place in 2024 and delivery in 2025. The Chilterns is one of the six main 'hub' AONBs involved (along with Dorset, Forest of Bowland, Lincolnshire Wolds, Mendip Hills and Surrey Hills AONBs). Other AONBs will be encouraged to participate as 'spoke' AONBs to host smaller events and activities.

The project will enable AONBs to partner with local artists or arts organisations to find new ways to engage audiences who are currently underrepresented in their AONB. The hubs will develop a programme of arts activity working with their target communities. Communities will be at the heart of the project, co-creating the activity with artists. The aim is for 50% of the artists commissioned to come from underrepresented backgrounds.

Training, mentoring and support will be available to all AONBs and the NAAONB is recruiting a National Arts Development Manager. The intent is that AONBs will build a lasting legacy of skills, delivering arts projects which engage with underserved groups as well as strong relationships formed with local and regional arts organisations, funders and community groups.

The overarching theme for the programme is words. Arts can enable us to describe landscape through the language of experience to really connect with people. Through the theme of words you could also explore: local dialect, people's own poetry and words around nature or conservation issues, people's heritage stories, folk knowledge around plants and animals, stories of personal connections with nature. Common language bonds communities. But not knowing the language of nature and landscape can also reinforce exclusion. There are many other possibilities that artists and communities could explore through this project.

Six writers, new to writing about nature/landscape will be commissioned. The Chilterns will initially host one each of the commissioned writers. After this, AONB teams, community groups and commissioned artists will together take inspiration from the written commission and respond to the writing to create their piece; this could take the form of performance, installation or digital commissions. Writing may take the form of a song, a piece of prose, poetry, rap... Their words will then inspire other artists to create new works to be produced at one of the six sites. This will build on our existing relationship with Poetry School, but also be flexible enough to incorporate visual arts, dialect, performance, music etc.

### Funding

Arts Council England have confirmed a grant of £531,797 and Defra has committed £300,000 match funding. The total project budget is just under £1 million, with the remainder coming from AONBs, local authorities, sponsorship and fees.

### What is expected of the CCB

The Chilterns is one of 6 hub locations. Each hub location is likely to cost £70-80,000 including commissioning, producing, engagement and marketing costs. The hub locations will need to secure a minimum of £20,000 match funding. We hope some of this will be covered by additional national funding led by the NAAONB/Activate Arts, but AONBs will also need to contribute with local or regional funding bids.

In addition the CCB will need to commit staff input to move the project forward, working with the commissioned artists and target communities. This is likely to be 40 days or more over the 2 year project.

### Local/regional arts organisations and engagement in the Luton area

We would work with established commissioning agencies to help us develop relationships and projects, or work directly with artists through a brief and tendering process, drawing on the list by [Revoluton Arts](#) or through the Culture Trust's networks. Revoluton Arts provided a letter of support for this bid and are keen to work with us.

CCB has previously spoken to artist Sophie Gresswell and the Culture Trust to discuss ideas for participatory arts work, so will follow up on these relationships and investigate further possibilities with the support of the National Association's Arts Development Manager.

There is a women's creative writing group for positive social change called Qalam Creative Writing Collective. They take part in 'creative walking journeys at various locations to make time for reflection and introspection, thus facilitating opportunities to produce new work.' Qalam is part of the Revoluton Arts' 'Firestarter' programme in collaboration with producer mentor, Shabnam Shabazi, spoken word artist, Amerah Saleh and artistic facilitator, Shana Kiely.

We would like to involve/be advised by Professor Gurch Randhawa and Dr Nasreen Ali from the University of Bedfordshire in this project, who were the leads on the Chalkscapes research, because of their close relationships with the communities in Luton.

**Item 14.1****Landscape Team update****Author:**

Kate Heppell, Head of Landscape

**Summary:**

This report provides an update on three areas of strategic activity involving the landscape team which have been initiated since the last Executive Committee meeting in July 2023.

**Purpose of Report:**

To update the Executive Committee on strategic activities being carried out by the landscape team

**Background****1 Farm Cluster SWOT analysis**

The CCB is currently involved with four farm clusters in the Chilterns, and our staff support these clusters through facilitation and on-the-ground project co-ordination and delivery. We have two staff (Nick Marriner and Harriet Bennet) involved in facilitation and delivery of projects with the Central Chilterns Farm Cluster, currently through funding from our Chalk, Cherries and Chairs project. Two bids for funding to support this cluster over the next two years are currently awaiting decision (Rothschild Foundation and Defra's Landscape Recovery Fund).

Nick Marriner has also been tasked with facilitating and supporting a North Chilterns Farm Cluster, and they have recently been awarded substantial Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) funding (c. £350k) for project delivery over the next two years.

Josh Biddle was employed full-time by the Chess Smarter Water Catchments programme as a farm adviser to facilitate and help deliver projects for a new Chess catchment farm cluster. Josh left the CCB on 3 Nov 2023 and Harriet Bennett is now employed temporarily on a fixed-term contract until March 2024 to support the cluster.

Neil Jackson supports Alison Cross (external facilitator and FiPL panel member) with facilitation of the Christmas Common farm cluster.

Our FiPL Officer, Gareth Clay, also works closely with the clusters, as FiPL presents an important real and potential source of funding to our Chilterns farm clusters, which helps deliver projects relating to nature, climate, people and place.



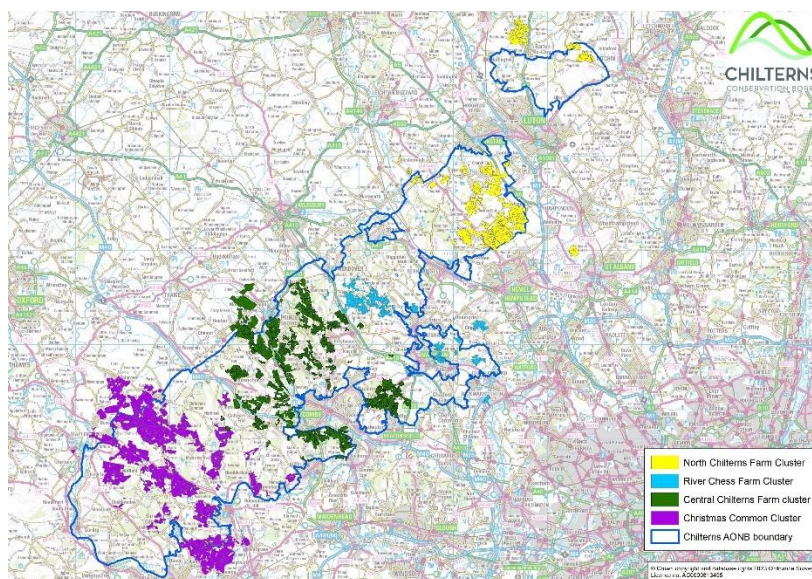


Figure 1 Location of four farm clusters in the Chilterns AONB

Farm clusters are an important mechanism by which our nature recovery ambitions on farmland might be realised during this and the next management plan cycle. We have, therefore, identified a need for CCB to review its future resourcing of these farm clusters in terms of staff time, staff resource and potential sources of funding for facilitation. To this end, on 10 October 2023 all seven staff involved in farm cluster work, alongside Alison Cross, carried out a SWOT analysis of CCB resourcing of the farm clusters. It was a first opportunity for the group to come together to consider how cluster facilitation has been progressing, lessons learnt, and what an appropriate resourcing package might look like for future farm clusters in the Chilterns. Kate Heppell and Nick Marriner are preparing a report on the critical lessons learnt from this analysis for presentation to the CCB Board in December 2023.

## 2 Woodland Strategy

The Chilterns AONB is one of the most wooded landscapes in England with 23% woodland cover; 56% of which is ancient woodland. Broadleaved trees dominate, with ancient beechwoods as a distinctive feature. Cherry orchards, juniper and very rare native box woodlands on scarp slopes are also important components of the mosaic treescape. In 2019 we estimated that only 64% of the AONB woodlands were in active management, so enabling improved woodland condition, and ensuring no net loss of woodland are important ambitions for the Chilterns area.

The Chilterns Woodlands Project ended in 2020 and since that time our projects have lacked a specific woodland focus, and small-scale woodland initiatives as a component of larger projects have not always been realised. Our Nature Recovery Plan will need to set ambitions for any woodland creation and for improved woodland condition in the Chilterns, so it is timely to start work on a woodland strategy for the Chilterns should resources allow. Quarterly catch-up meetings with the Forestry Commission were initiated in July 2023 and at the first meeting the Forestry Commission suggested that a resource might be made available to help with the development of a woodland strategy for the Chilterns. The lead officer has since changed roles and we are now liaising with other staff at the Forestry Commission team to discuss the form that such a strategy might take, and the resource required. Such a strategy might outline the woodland resource in the Chilterns, identify issues

related to woodland including, set out the strategic objectives in relation to woodland and signpost to woodland owners best-practice in woodland management and where funding exists to support woodland activities.

### **3 Working together on landscape-scale nature recovery**

The 'landscape team' (WM, AB, AP, NM, HB, GC, NJ) are now meeting on a fortnightly basis to share progress updates, collaboratively comment on draft bid proposals and present areas of work and projects to one another. Whilst various members of the team have collaborated to address specific projects, the team have not worked together on landscape-scale nature recovery in the Chilterns that covers woodland, farmland, heritage and chalk streams in the same geographical area. It is likely that such opportunities will become a more frequent occurrence in future with the government's increased emphasis on landscape-scale delivery of nature recovery. Any response to such opportunities would require us to better understand the types of issues involved in such projects, and this seems particularly pertinent with the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain where both planning and nature recovery are operating in conjunction with one another.

Such opportunities are also time-constrained and are likely to require rapid response from members of the delivery team in CCB, therefore, a clear process is needed to enable staff to present opportunities to the rest of the team, discuss any on-the-ground issues with delivery (including staff resource), discuss fit with CCB priorities, alert senior team and obtain permission to proceed. Led by Adrian Porter, the landscape team has met to carry out a SWOT (strength-weakness-opportunities-threat) analysis of a theoretical landscape-scale recovery to discuss initial opportunities and issues, and the intention is to follow this with a meeting to construct a workable process flow and RACI (responsible-accountable-consulted-informed) analysis for discussion by the senior team. The desire is to create a draft process of sign-off, for adaptation by Andy Brock-Doyle, that works for the organisation both from a bottom-up and top-down perspective.

#### **Recommendation**

**That the Committee NOTES the update on landscape team activity and provides feedback.**

**Item 14.2**                      Chilterns AONB Nature Recovery Ambition Statement

**Author:**                      Kate Heppell, Head of Landscape

**Purpose of Report:**        To update the Executive Committee on our Nature Recovery Plan

**Summary:**                    This report is designed to be circulated to partners of CCB to explain our ambitions to produce a Nature Recovery Plan over the next 18 months.

**Background:**                See attached report

**Recommendation:**        That the Committee NOTES the update on Nature Recovery and provides feedback.



## A Nature Recovery Plan for Chilterns AONB: Purpose and scope

### 1.0 Why do we need a Nature Recovery Plan for the Chilterns AONB?

The Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) is an independent body established by Parliamentary Order in July 2004 with a duty to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and the purpose of increasing understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the AONB. Every five years, together with partners and stakeholders, the Chilterns Conservation Board creates a Management Plan for the Chilterns AONB. The current [Management Plan \(2019-2024\)](#)<sup>1</sup> identifies priorities for nature recovery within the AONB, and our next Management Plan (2025+) will involve the creation of a Nature Recovery Plan for the Chilterns AONB.

The loss of wildlife both across the world and nearer to home is increasingly being recognised by the British public and Government alike. For example, the [UK State of Nature 2023 report](#)<sup>2</sup> found that the abundance of 753 terrestrial and freshwater species studied in the UK has declined by an average of 19% since records began in the 1970s. The reasons for the observed decline in wildlife are well understood, and include habitat degradation and loss, alongside climate change.

*Why does it matter?* Many of us believe that wildlife has value in and of itself. Taking a purely human centric view, we must also recognise the importance of wildlife to people: from economic benefits through ecosystem services<sup>3</sup>, to personal enjoyment, health and wellbeing. Examples of economic benefits include the vital pollination of crops, healthy soils to grow food and produce timber, natural flood management, healthy and sustainable drinking water supplies and temperature regulation. A recent [Office of National Statistics publication](#)<sup>4</sup> states that '*The direct gross value added of nature to the UK economy in 2020 is estimated to be £51 billion; this is larger than the equivalent estimate for the construction of buildings, telecommunications, or insurance services industries.*'

The benefits of wildlife to our wellbeing are well documented and can arise through spending time in nature for leisure activities in addition to personal fulfilment from engaging with the natural world through activities such as practical volunteering. Of course, recent global temperature rises, changes in rainfall patterns leading to flooding and deterioration of air quality are all examples of changes to the natural environment which are proving dangerous, even life-threatening, to human health.

*Why now?* There is an upswell in public opinion calling for action to tackle the impacts of climate change and greater recognition of the need to look after nature. In 2018 the UK Government responded with its 25 Year Environment Plan and subsequently the [Environmental Improvement Plan 2023](#)<sup>5</sup>. In 2019, the National Association of AONBs issued the [Colchester Declaration](#)<sup>6</sup>. The UK is also responding to the [Global Biodiversity Framework](#)<sup>7</sup> "30 x 30" target adopted by the Convention

on Biological Diversity in Montreal 2022, which aims to “Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed...”.

Last, but no means least, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023, marked the official start of the [Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#)<sup>8</sup> process. Careful alignment and partnership working between the CCB and local authorities creating Local Nature Recovery Strategies will be critical to ensure successful delivery of both the AONB Nature Recovery Plan and the Local Nature Recovery Strategies without duplication of effort (Figure 1).

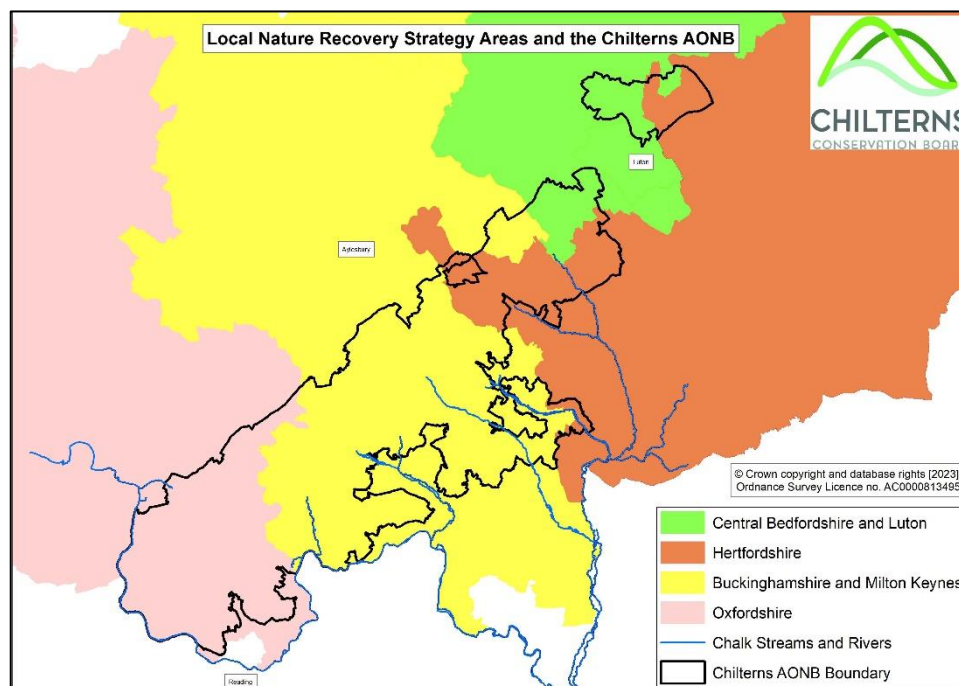


Figure 1 Map of Chilterns AONB showing the location of the four local authorities currently preparing Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

We are, therefore, at an ideal time to work with others to ensure that the decline in nature is reversed. We not only want to see a reverse in decline but also a year-on-year recovery of nature within the Chilterns alongside other protected landscapes. It is time for individuals, organisations and Government to recognise a shared responsibility to see our Chilterns' nature recover.

Our high level aims for Nature Recovery in the Chilterns are as follows:

- Habitat conditions improve and become more robust to the impacts of climate change across the AONB and not just at designated sites
- Designated wildlife site condition (e.g. SSSIs) is improved and sites are sustainably managed
- Native biodiversity and bio-abundance increases (species diversity and richness, and total numbers)
- Invasive Non-Native Species decline
- Landowners and farmers are supported to include positive wildlife management measures within their holdings and farmed land



- Data are collected for a variety of purposes; to create baseline surveys, identify nature recovery opportunities, assess progress with nature recovery alongside identification of areas where progress with nature recovery is not being made, and to inform decision making
- Wildlife surveying through both volunteer effort and cutting-edge science is extended across the AONB

## 2.0 Preliminary Nature Recovery Priorities for the Chilterns AONB

The following sections identify some preliminary Nature Recovery priorities for Chilterns AONB.

Chalk grassland currently covers approximately 8,300 hectares or 1% of the AONB. Chalk grassland is particularly important due to its high biodiversity value, and because it is critical to the survival of many nationally rare and scarce invertebrate species including butterflies. Chilterns grasslands also support species, such as pasque flower and Chiltern Gentian, which are uncommon in other chalk grasslands of southern England<sup>9</sup>. Our Nature Recovery plan will set area-based targets for sustainable grassland habitat management with a roadmap to improve both coverage and condition. Other grassland types, such as acidic grassland, are very important in terms of habitat type but are much smaller in extent in the Chilterns.

**Condition of SSSIs and priority habitats** There are 64 SSSIs in the Chilterns covering 3213 ha. The majority (98.8%) are thought to be in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition, although this is based on historic data from Natural England (the government plans to update assessments by 2028). Of the 997 ha in 'unfavourable but recovering' condition, over 70% are calcareous or neutral grassland, and these sites are of particular importance for Nature Recovery. Our Nature Recovery Plan will outline our ambitions to work with landowners and partners to help improve the condition of our Chilterns SSSIs.

**Farmland, hedgerows and hedgerow trees** Working collaboratively with farmers and farming communities will be critical to the success of any Nature Recovery Plan for the Chilterns AONB. We would like to offer farmers access to support for environmentally sympathetic farming practices that lead to improvements for nature, whilst producing the food that the nation needs. For example, the UK has lost 50% of its hedgerows since the 1940s, and recent farmer-led work in the Chilterns has focused on improving hedgerow connectivity for the benefit of wildlife, healthy soils and climate. As we develop our Nature Recovery Plan, we will be seeking an open dialogue with Chilterns farmers and would welcome suggestions on additional measures by which we can support farmer-led nature-friendly action in the Chilterns.

**Trees and Woodland** The Chilterns AONB is one of the most wooded landscapes in England with 23% woodland cover; 56% of which is ancient woodland. Broadleaved trees dominate, with ancient beechwoods as a distinctive feature. Cherry orchards, juniper and very rare native box woodlands on scarp slopes are also important components of the mosaic treescape. In 2019 we estimated that only 64% of the AONB woodlands were in active management. Enabling improved woodland condition and ensuring no net loss of woodland are important ambitions for the area.

**Chalk stream and other freshwater habitats** Chalk streams are an internationally rare and precious habitat, and we are fortunate to have nine chalk streams on the dip slope of the Chilterns, with many more, shorter streams draining the scarp slope. The condition of the nine dip slope chalk streams is assessed by the Environment Agency as part of the Water Framework Directive. Of these

nine, five were assessed in 2022 as being of poor ecological status, and four of moderate ecological status. Our Nature Recovery Plan will state our ambition and tangible actions for partnership working to improve the health of these iconic streams.

**People and engagement** Many groups of people and individuals could benefit from experiencing nature in the Chilterns and contribute to Chilterns Nature Recovery including local rural and urban communities, landowners, farmers and businesses. We want visitors and local people alike to feel welcome and their voices heard in our Nature Recovery Strategy. Our Citizen Science activities are growing, and we have recently developed a Chilterns Engagement Strategy. Our Nature Recovery Plan will identify the future activities we should focus on to best support communities to restore abundant wildlife and healthy habitats in the Chilterns.

**Heritage** Cultural heritage can usefully be considered as three distinct but interrelated aspects: (i) archaeological assets (known and unknown); (ii) built environment (buildings and historic properties); and (iii) social history / traditions (including oral histories, storytelling, folklore, traditional crafting and contemporary arts). Only the first two are relevant to nature recovery, and the emphasis here is on preservation and protection. Even if a proposed nature recovery site does not contain a listed monument, it may be that an unknown archaeological feature exists and should be protected through a bottom-up approach (i.e. led by landowners, farmers and land managers with advice from specialists). Our Nature Recovery plan will outline this approach and our longer-term ambitions in this area.

### 3.0 Next steps

Over the next 18 months we will be developing a separate Nature Recovery Plan as a supplement to the next Chilterns Management Plan. If you are a partner of Chilterns Conservation Board, or a resident and/or stakeholder in Chilterns AONB we would very much welcome your input to our Plans. Please do email Kate Heppell [kheppell@chilternsaonb.org](mailto:kheppell@chilternsaonb.org) to discuss how you can get involved.

### 4.0 References

<sup>1</sup> Chilterns Management Plan 2019-2024. Available at: <https://www.chilternsaonb.org/what-we-do/future-proofing-the-chilterns/management-plan/> (Accessed: 26 October 2023)

<sup>2</sup> State of Nature 2023. Available at: <https://stateofnature.org.uk/> (Accessed: 26 October 2023)

<sup>3</sup> The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review 2021. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/602e92b2e90e07660f807b47/The\\_Economics\\_of\\_Biodiversity\\_The\\_Dasgupta\\_Review\\_Full\\_Report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/602e92b2e90e07660f807b47/The_Economics_of_Biodiversity_The_Dasgupta_Review_Full_Report.pdf) (Accessed: 3 November 2023)

<sup>4</sup> Office of National Statistics (2023) Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/articles/developingsupplyandusetablesforuknaturalcapitalaccounts/2023> (Accessed: 26 October 2023)

<sup>5</sup> Defra (2023) Environmental Improvement Plan 2023. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan> (Accessed: 26 October 2023)

<sup>6</sup> The Colchester Declaration (2019) Available at: <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/projects/colchester-declaration> (Accessed: 26 October 2023)

<sup>7</sup> Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (2022) Available at: <https://www.cbd.int/gbfl/> (Accessed: 26 October 2023)

<sup>8</sup> Defra (2023) Local Nature Recovery Strategies. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-nature-recovery-strategies/local-nature-recovery-strategies> (Accessed: 26 October 2023)

<sup>9</sup> Natural England (2014) National Character Area Profiles. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles> (Accessed: 26 October 2023)