



Members of the Conservation Board for the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are hereby summoned to an ordinary meeting of The Chilterns Conservation Board on

**Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 10.00am at**

**The Council Chamber in the offices of the Wycombe Area, Buckinghamshire Council, Queen Victoria Road, High Wycombe HP11 1BB (old Wycombe District Council offices)**

**The online session will be available from 9.45am**

**AGENDA**

1. Apologies for absence
2. Declaration of interest in any of the agenda items
3. Notice of urgent business
4. Approve minutes of the previous meeting (12.09.23)
5. Matters arising
6. Public Question Time
7. Chairman's Update
8. Chief Executive Officer's Update paper
9. Finance and Budget
  - 9.1 Finance update to 31 October 2023
  - 9.2 Report on the last quarter's delivery
  - 9.3 Funding Strategy
  - 9.4 Business Planning
10. Rebranding
11. Strategy and Governance
  - 11.1 Governance T&F Group update and proposals for next steps
  - 11.2 Variation to the HR Advisory Group Terms of Reference and appointment of the new HRAG.
  - 11.3 Update on the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act
12. Integrated Strategic Workstreams
13. Report of Planning Committee
14. EDI update
15. Landscape update
16. Any urgent business

CCB Board Meeting

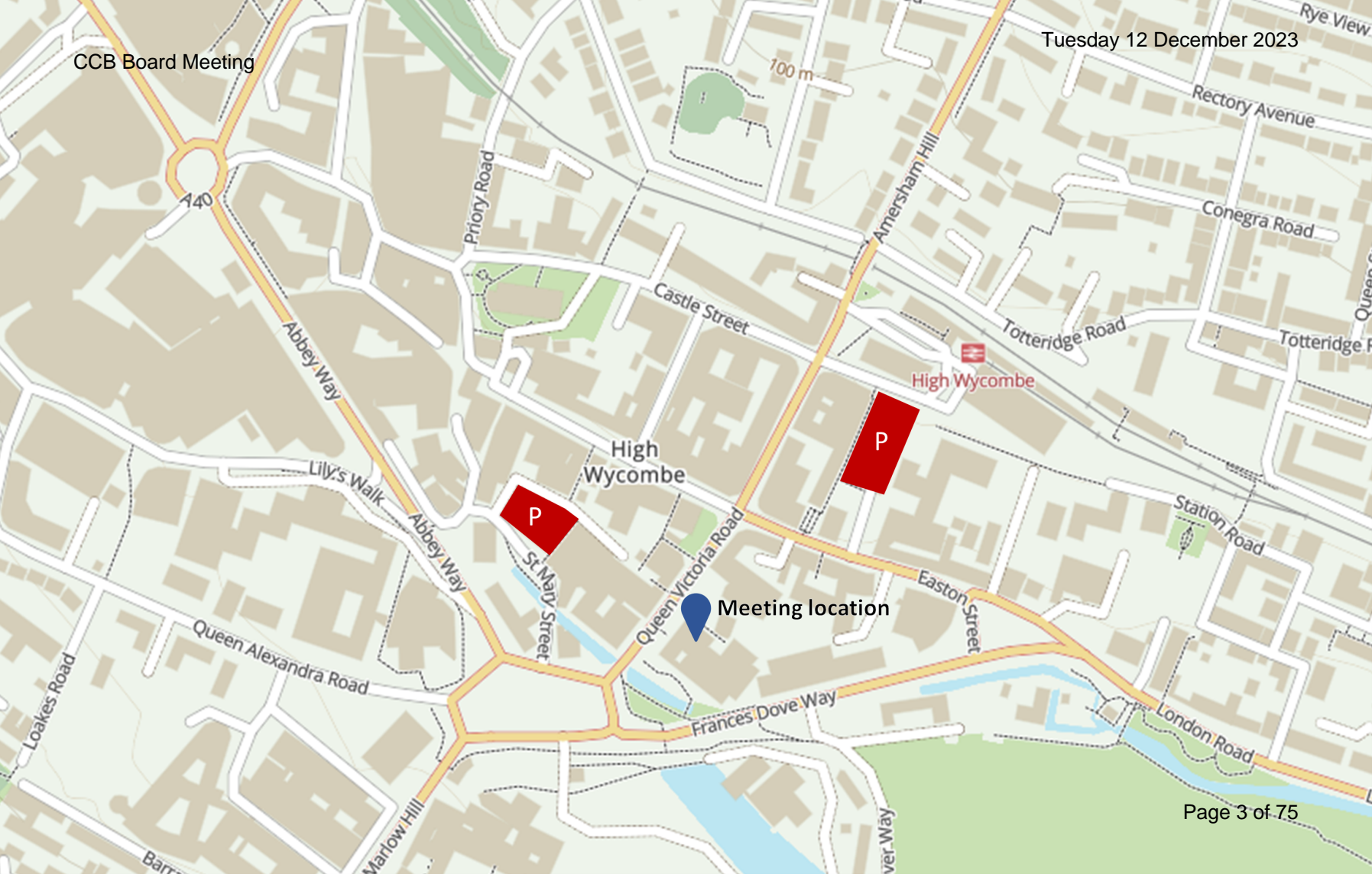
17. Next meeting: Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 10.00am Location tbc.

**Future meeting dates 2024**

<b>Planning Committee Meetings</b>	<b>Executive Committee Meetings</b>	<b>Board Meetings</b>
Thu 25 <sup>th</sup> January 2024 @ 2pm Chinnor	Thu 29 <sup>th</sup> February 2024 @10am Chinnor	Thu 14 <sup>th</sup> March 2024 @ 10am Location tbc
Thu 25 <sup>th</sup> April 2024 @ 10am Location tbc	Thu 16 <sup>th</sup> May 2024 @ 10am Chinnor	Thu 20 <sup>th</sup> June 2024 @5pm Location tbc
Thu 25 <sup>th</sup> July 2024 @ 5pm Location tbc	Thu 15 <sup>th</sup> August 2024 @ 2pm Chinnor	Thu 19 <sup>th</sup> September @ 2pm Location tbc
Thu 17 <sup>th</sup> October 2024 @ 2pm Location tbc	Thu 7 <sup>th</sup> November 2024 @ 2pm Chinnor	Thu 12 <sup>th</sup> December @ 10am Location tbc

Dr Elaine King, Chief Executive Officer

CCB Board Meeting



140

100 m

Privity Road

Amersham Hill

Rectory Avenue

Conegra Road

Castle Street

Totteridge Road

Totteridge F

High Wycombe

High Wycombe

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Lily's Walk

Abbey Way

St Mary's Street

Queen Victoria Road

Meeting location

Easton Street

Station Road

Queen Alexandra Road

Frances Dove Way

London Road

Loakes Road

Marlow Hill

Over Way

## Chilterns Conservation Board

### Summary of Actions required 12 December 2023

1. Apologies for absence
2. Declaration of interest in any of the agenda items
3. Notice of urgent business
4. Approve minutes of the previous meeting (12.09.23) **APPROVE**
5. Matters arising
6. Public Question Time
7. Chairman's Update
8. Chief Executive Officer's Update paper **NOTE**
9. Finance and Budget
  - 9.1 Finance update to 31 October 2023 **NOTE**
  - 9.2 Report on the last quarter's delivery **NOTE**
  - 9.3 Funding Strategy **APPROVE**
  - 9.4 Business Planning **APPROVE AND NOTE**
10. Rebranding **APPROVE**
11. Strategy and Governance
  - 11.1 Governance T&F Group update and proposals for next steps **APPROVE**
  - 11.2 Variation to the HR Advisory Group Terms of Reference **APPROVE**
  - 11.3 Update on the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act **NOTE**
12. Integrated Strategic Workstreams –**NOTE and APPROVE**
13. Report of Planning Committee **NOTE**
14. EDI update **NOTE**
15. Landscape update **NOTE**



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CONSERVATION BOARD FOR THE  
CHILTERN'S AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY**

**Held at Benson Parish Hall, Sunnyside, Benson OX10 6LZ on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup>  
September 2023 at 10.00am.**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

**Appointed by Local Authorities**

Cllr Steve Jarvis  
Cllr Richard Newcombe  
Cllr James Norman

**Appointing Body**

North Hertfordshire District Council  
Buckinghamshire Council  
South Oxfordshire District Council

**Appointed by the Secretary of State**

Colin Courtney  
Paul Mains  
John Nicholls

Secretary of State  
Secretary of State  
Secretary of State

**Elected by Parish Councils**

Cllr Charles Hussey  
Cllr John Griffin  
Cllr John Harfield  
Cllr Sue Rowland

Buckinghamshire  
Oxfordshire  
Bedfordshire  
Oxfordshire

**CCB Staff**

Fran Crowther  
Deirdre Hansen  
Kate Heppell  
Graham Hurst  
Elaine King  
Vicki Pearce  
Annette Weiss

CCC Assistant Project Manager  
Clerk to the Board  
Head of Landscape  
Finance Officer (S151 Officer)  
Chief Executive Officer  
Communications Manager  
Head of Engagement & Partnerships

**Other**

Tom Beeston

Chief Officer Chiltern Society

The Chairman welcomed those present in person and online. All those present introduced themselves.

**23/24.1 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr David Bartholomew, Oxfordshire County Council, \*Cllr Robert Carington, Buckinghamshire Council, \*Gemma Harper, Secretary of State appointee, \*Cllr Paula Hiscocks, Simon Kearey, Chairman Chiltern Society, \*Geeta Ludhra, Secretary of State appointee, \*Cllr Jane MacBean, Buckinghamshire Council, Simon Mortimer, Secretary of State appointee, Cllr Robert Roche, Luton Borough Council, \*John Shaw, Secretary of State appointee, Cllr Sir Hector Sants, Buckinghamshire Parish Councils, Cllr Philip Spicer, Central Bedfordshire Council, Joe Stewart, Secretary of State appointee, \*Cllr Sally Symington, Dacorum Borough Council, Cllr Jon Tankard, Three Rivers District Council, Cllr Gareth Williams, Buckinghamshire Council and Sarah Wright, National Trails Project Officer . (*Those \* listened in on the meeting online*)

### **23/24.2 Declarations of Interest**

Gemma Harper made a declaration of interest as CEO of JNCC, referenced to minute item 23/24.10. The JNCC is the UK's statutory nature advisor and responsible for coordinating the UK-scale evidence for the Global Biodiversity framework targets.

### **23/24.3 Notice of Urgent Business**

There was no notice of urgent business.

### **23/24.4 Minutes of the Board Meeting and the AGM 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023.**

The minutes of the Board meeting 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair after the following amendments were made:

- John Nicholls was added as listening in on the meeting online.
- Cllr Adrian Watney had given the clerk his apologies.
- 22/23. 70b.c the word 'principals' was replaced with 'principles'.

The minutes of the AGM 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

### **23/24.5 Matters Arising**

Paul Mains as previous Chair had followed up his correspondence to the Secretary of State at Defra and to Sion McGeever, Deputy Director, Access, Landscapes, Peatland and Soil at Defra , but has not yet received a response.

### **23/24.6 Public Question Time.**

No public present.

### **23/24.7 Chair's Update**

The Chair, Colin Courtney, reported on his activities since the last meeting 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023 highlighting the following:

1. He welcomed the new Board Members and Kate Heppell, the CCB's new Head of Landscape.
2. He had attended the EDI introductory training session, organised by Head of Engagement and Partnerships, Annette Weiss. This explored solutions to some of the challenges we need to address to improve accessibility to the Chilterns.
3. He had attended a Natural England (NE) Management Advisory Group (MAG) meeting regarding the Boundary Review. The MAG is still awaiting the overdue report on potential new areas.

4. He has written to NE about the drain on CCB resources and the support we are providing to boundary extension work. The letter has been received, but there has been no response. He will follow this up with a letter to Defra.
5. He has been having discussion with the CEO, Elaine King, and the Finance Officer, Graham Hurst, around plans to ensure we have the resources in place to deliver on our objectives in these challenging times.
6. The outstanding monies on the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs project have now been received. Thank you to the Head of Operations, Andrew Brock-Doyle, and the team who worked on this.
7. The July Executive Committee asked the Governance TFG to carry out further analysis and make recommendations as part of the ongoing development of the Code of Governance.
8. The Executive Committee also approved the use of £38,250 of Development Reserves to: recruit a Planning Officer to free up the Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson to lead on the parallel workstreams; provide more capacity for the Head of Engagement and Partnerships, Annette Weiss, to bring in external training resources for the forthcoming year to fund further EDI training.
9. We need more members for the Planning Committee, in particular a Secretary of State appointed member. Planning is a vital part of our work, which the later site visit amply shows. Members were asked to contact Cllr Sue Rowland, Chair of the Planning Committee, John Nicholls, the Deputy Chair, the CEO or the Chair himself.
10. The HR Advisory Group needs more members. Currently Paul Mains, John Nicholls, Geeta Ludhra and the Chair are members. Members were asked to contact the Chair if they had interest in joining the HRAG.

### **1. The Board NOTED the update.**

#### **23/24.8 Chief Executive's Update**

The CEO, Elaine King, gave an update on activities since the 13<sup>th</sup> June Board meeting.

1. The CCB now has a fully functioning Senior Management Team. The agenda shows the range of work the team have been progressing.
2. We are recruiting for a part-time planning officer, two project support officers and a full-time communications officer. And the Head of Engagement and Partnerships is working an extra day a week.
3. She attended the National Association for AONB conference with four CCB colleagues. It had been an inspiring conference and always good to catch up with the other AONBs. The team attending the conference will get together and share information from the conference with the Board. The Beacons of the Past project was nominated and shortlisted for the Bowland award. It did not win, but the project was celebrated at the conference.
4. The Defra grant for all AONBs this and next financial year is a flat settlement and Defra is looking at a new funding formula ahead of the next Comprehensive Spending Review. If our grant increases, Local Authorities will also need to increase their contributions to ensure the 80% Defra: 20% Local Authority ratio required by Defra.
5. New draft guidance for AONB and National Park Management Plans was issued by Natural England at the conference with comments due back by 29<sup>th</sup> September.

6. We have not yet been allocated outcomes and targets from Defra, which makes it harder to plan some of the detail in our next Management Plan. Apparently, they are awaiting Ministerial sign off.
7. The new cycle of developing the CCB's Business Plan is due to start. The Senior Team will be looking at it this month and linking it to the budget, resourcing plan and funding strategy.
8. Bids have been submitted to the Rothschild Foundation and to Natural England's Landscape Recovery Scheme.

Members asked questions on Defra targets of which there are no answers as yet. Members asked about the Local Authority funding contributions The CEO will share details with members.

The CEO was asked about the HR strategy timetable and its roll out. She had reported on progress at the July Executive Committee meeting and is due to report again to the Committee in November. The HRAG was requested to meet before the next Executive Committee meeting. Action Chair.

There was also a question on progress on the Policies and Procedures framework paper presented at the June meeting, can an update be brought to the next meeting? CEO to action.

The CEO was thanked.

## **1. The Board NOTED the update.**

### **23/24.9 Funding Strategy**

The CEO, Elaine King, gave a presentation showing the work in progress to strengthen the CCB's financial position. She outlined current and potential sources of funding, a strategic funding model, the current pipeline for funding applications, a process for ongoing review and decisions making, and the key/next steps.

The Finance Officer has balanced our budget. We know our Defra settlement for 24/25 is flat, and there is no knowledge of the Defra 25/26 settlement. Defra is expecting us to source finance from other areas, especially green finance, which the CCB is exploring.

The CCB has not had a funding strategy before and this work enables us to take a more strategic approach going forward, which includes identifying the gaps in our resources to ensure that we can effectively deliver our planned work. The funding strategy also integrates with development of the Business Plan, Resourcing Plan and Budgets, and will require help from Board members.

The Chair commented on an excellent start and members discussed next steps, asked questions and offered suggestions. We are in a difficult position at present with not yet being advised by Defra of the outcomes and targets that the CCB will be required to deliver. It is not completely clear how Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) will operate, and we need to have ongoing conversation with planners and councillors to inform how and where the BNG funds are used.

It was noted that the South Downs National Park has set itself up as a new green financing brokerage service for businesses.



The CEO thanked the Head of Operations, Andrew Brock-Doyle, for all his work.

**1. The Board NOTED the activities being taken to develop a Funding Strategy and offered feedback.**

**23/24.10 Update by the Head of Landscape**

The Head of Landscape, Kate Heppell, took up the post on 18/07/23 after a two-year secondment from Queen Mary University to the CCB. She gave a short introduction to her work experience.

Her responsibilities are around nature, climate strategy, green finance and leading the staff on the landscape team. Her role has some strategic priorities, including building organisational resilience, delivering existing workstreams and providing leadership and securing influence.

She gave a presentation on the draft plan for a nature recovery and climate strategy for the CCB and initial thoughts on developing a green finance strategy.

She outlined the drivers to produce a Nature Recovery Plan and a Climate Adaptation Strategy for the CCB. The global crises of rapid decline in biodiversity and climate change are closely linked.

There are three policy drivers for the Nature Recovery in AONBs:

- i. The 2019 National Association of AONB Colchester Declaration
- ii. Global Biodiversity Framework “30x30” target
- iii. The government’s Environmental Improvement Plan 2023.

The CCB signed the 2019 Colchester Declaration which includes a pledge for AONBs to prepare a Nature Recovery Plan by 2024.

The UK signed up to the “30x30” target in 2022, which aims to “ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water and coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services are effectively conserved and managed.”

The government’s Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 (EIP 2023) sets out the national plan to halt biodiversity decline.

The CCB’s Nature Recovery Plan needs to be developed and embedded in the Management Plan, due for delivery March 2025.

Green Finance is a blend of government funding and private funding. The Head of Landscape, Kate Heppell and the Deputy Chair, John Nicholls had attended a workshop on Green Finance. Green Finance is described as an economic model that works for nature. The whole CCB team will need to be upskilled on green finance. The CCB needs to determine where to position itself in the market with the suggestion being to look at small scale projects to gain knowledge and experience, working in partnership. It is a rapidly emerging field, with enterprises focussing on large scale biodiversity

Climate Strategy. The Colchester Declaration includes a statement on the need for AONB Management Plans to include meaningful measures around climate change mitigation and adaptation including measurable targets to support Net Zero. The CCB will be required to have its own NetZero ambition and strategy. Firstly, the emissions arising from CCB activities need to be established. Next steps are to obtain agreement

for consultancy work on CCB 'NetZero by 2050' strategy, develop a budget and write a brief and commission the work. The aim is to publish the Climate Adaptation Plan as supporting documentation to the next Management Plan.

The members discussed to presentation and offered feedback.

**1. The Board NOTED the activities being taken to develop a strategy for Nature Recovery, Climate and Green Finance and offered feedback.**

**23/24.11 Finance**

The Finance Officer, Graham Hurst, had provided a summary report on core funding and project funding for the first five months of the financial year

1. Defra has paid one month in advance and core income was in line with expectations £315,000.
2. Staff costs recharged to projects £75,000 was in line with budget £76,000.
3. Exceptional costs of £70,000 have been included in the management accounts.
4. After exceptional costs there is a core deficit of £23,000. Core activities breakeven before these costs and income received in advance from Defra (£42,000)
5. The Chalk Cherries and Chairs project claims are now up to date and the CCB has been paid in full to date £624,000.
6. Other project income was Chilterns Smarter Water Catchment Water £208,000 and Green Recovery Challenge Fund £198,000.
7. Project expenditure was £638,000 and a surplus was made, mainly to repay Chalk, Cherries and Chairs reserves of £446,000.
8. We have received our daft internal audit report which gives substantial assurances of effective controls and the auditors make no recommendations.

The Finance Officer was thanked for his work. The Head of Operations and his team were thanked for the recovery of the CCC monies.

**1. The Board NOTED the financial position at 31 August 2023.**

**23/24.12 Rebranding of AONBs**

The Communications Manager, Vicki Pearce, had presented a comprehensive report and gave a presentation on the rebranding work done by the NAAONB and a creative agency. The NAAONB intends to launch the rebranding in November 2023. Following the proposal of the Glover Landscapes Review to rename AONBs as 'National Landscapes', the NAAONB has been working with Defra on rebranding all AONB landscapes and their teams to coincide with the launch of the new name, the NAAONB will be relaunched as the National Landscapes Association. The Board was shown the proposed new logo for the Chilterns AONB.

Members had a robust discussion on the proposals. It was noted that the titles National Parks and now National Landscapes 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.**

#### **23/24.13 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion update**

The Head of Engagement & Partnerships, Annette Weiss, gave an update on ongoing EDI work. Noting the following:

1. EDI training for staff and Board members had taken place in July led by Dr Anjana Khatwa.
2. Follow up workshops with staff will take place.
3. Dr Anjana Khatwa will help with public and stakeholder engagement programmes, citizen science and the like.
4. Interest in specific disability training will take place later in the year.
5. Widening the Welcome workshops later this month is the opportunity to provide a more strategic approach to Access Funding.

The Head of Engagement & Partnerships, Annette Weiss, was thanked for her work. Gemma Harper, Secretary of State appointee would like to follow up on the area of cultural intelligence and the CCB's appetite for risk on EDI with the CEO and the Head of Engagement and Partnerships.

1. **The Board NOTED the update on EDI.**

#### **23/24.14 Management Plan review**

The Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson, had presented a paper on a revised approach to reviewing the Management Plan taking advantage of the offer made by Defra minister Lord Benyon to delay publication of amended plans by up to a year. A draft timetable has been put forward and the Board was asked to approve the setting up of a Management Plan Review Task and Finish Group. All other TFG will continue their work and be part of the work on the Management Review. Members were asked to contact the Chair if they were interested in joining Management Plan Review TFG.

S89 of the CRoW Act requires that AONB Conservation Boards publish a Management Plan every five years. Our current Management Plan was approved February 2019 and published October 2019. Which makes it necessary to review our Management Plan during 2024.

A light touch review had been agreed and recommended by the Executive Committee November 2022. Guidance and outcome focussed targets to the Management Plan will have an impact on the work but has not yet been issued by Natural England/Defra.

Draft timetable:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
12 Sep 2023	Board agrees approach in principle. Board sets up Management Plan Review TFG.
By end of Sep 2023	CEO issues notification (CROW s.90) of intention to review the Management Plan to NE, our host LAs and Defra Secretary of State
Oct 2023	MPR TFG initial meeting to initiate officer activity on preparing the light-touch review
Oct/Nov 2023	Officers undertake review assessment and prepare draft light-touch review paper. Opportunity for initial officer engagement with LA officers. (14 Nov: Brief progress report to Exec Cttee)
12 Dec 2023	Draft light-touch review paper presented to Board.
Jan/Feb 2024	Officers revise light-touch review paper following Board, liaising with TFG. Engagement with LAs and other stakeholders as necessary (determined by TFG) – might need to be formal consultation with prescribed bodies under CROW s.90.
Mar 2024	Board approves final light-touch review paper. CEO submits approved light-touch review paper to NE, LAs and Defra SoS (CROW s.90)
Apr 2024-Mar 2025	MPR TFG and officers develop programme to make the amendments to the Management Plan envisaged in the light-touch review, including appropriate engagement.
Mar 2025	Publish amended Management Plan by this date.

1. The Board **APPROVED** the revised approach to delivering a light-touch review of the Management Plan outlined in the paper, including the draft timetable above.
2. The Board **AGREED** to convene a Task and Finish Group to oversee the Management Plan Review. Secretary of State appointee Gemma Harper has agreed in principle to Chair this TFG.

#### **23/24.15 Meeting dates 2024**

1. The Meeting **AGREED** the following meetings dates for CCB Board meetings in 2024.

<b>Planning Committee Meetings</b>	<b>Executive Committee Meetings</b>	<b>Board Meetings</b>
Thu 25 <sup>th</sup> January 2024 @ 2pm Location tbc	Thu 29 <sup>th</sup> February 2024 @10am Chinnor	Thu 14 <sup>th</sup> March 2024 @ 10am Location tbc
Thu 25 <sup>th</sup> April 2024 @ 10am Location tbc	Thu 16 <sup>th</sup> May 2024 @ 10am Chinnor	Thu 20 <sup>th</sup> June 2024 @5pm Location tbc
Thu 25 <sup>th</sup> July 2024 @ 5pm Location tbc	Thu 15 <sup>th</sup> August 2024 @ 2pm Chinnor	Thu 19 <sup>th</sup> September @ 2pm Location tbc
Thu 17 <sup>th</sup> October 2024 @ 2pm Location tbc	Thu 7 <sup>th</sup> November 2024 @ 2pm Chinnor	Thu 12 <sup>th</sup> December @ 10am Location tbc

**23/24.16 Urgent Business**

None

**23/24.17 Next Meeting: 12<sup>th</sup> December 2023, Venue the Offices of the old Wycombe District Council, High Wycombe.**

**23/24.18 Introduction to Mend the Gap**

The Programme Manager for Med the Gap, Ruth Staples-Rolfe gave a comprehensive presentation of the work being undertaken on the programme. Members were invited to join her and local stakeholders on a site visit to South Stoke to visit some of the work the programme is engaged in.

**Further 2023 Meeting dates:**

<b>Executive Committee</b>	<b>Planning Committee</b>
14 <sup>th</sup> November 2023	18 <sup>th</sup> October 2023 note change
Location Chinnor	Location Chinnor

The Chairman.....

Date.....

## **COMMERCIAL – IN CONFIDENCE**

### **Update for Board meeting 12 December 2023**

#### **Background**

Now I have a complete and fully functioning senior team, and we have a clearer system of reporting to the Executive Committee and the Board, many of the areas of work that I am either overseeing, or contributing to, are addressed at specific items in the agenda. These items include quarterly reporting, business planning, HR Strategy, finance and funding, governance (including schemes of delegation) and rebranding.

This update therefore briefly outlines progress with work where it is not already covered in the agenda or might benefit from a little more information. I will expand and take questions on this note at the meeting.

#### **HR update**

- I currently line manage the senior team (four people), plus the Clerk, Communications Manager and the Senior Administration Officer. Meetings are held monthly with all those people. Mid-term reviews were carried out in November and two to do this month.
- My mid-term review was held on 30 November.

Specific changes in the team are as follows:

- Lizzie Krupa, Communications and Community Engagement Officer for the CCC project, left the CCB on 27 October.
- Josh Biddle, Farming Officer for the Smarter Water Catchment project left, on 3 November as his wife has been offered a job in Pakistan.
- Deirdre Hansen, CCB's Clerk, is leaving on 31<sup>st</sup> December to spend more time with her family. We are currently making plans to cover Deirdre's work.
- Hannah Parry-Wilson, Citizen Science Coordinator, reduced her days from five to 3.5 days per week from 30 October, to complete her PhD thesis.
- Kate Heppell – Head of Landscape, joined on 18 July.
- Fiona Skeggs – Communications Officer joined full time on 3 October to replace Kim-Lin Hooper
- Claudia Bernadini – Project Support Officer, joined on 1 November to replace Fran Crowther who was appointed Assistant Project Manager to the CCC project in June.
- Sarah Hebbes - Project Support Officer will be joining the Mend the Gap programme on 2 January 2024.

#### **Senior Team**

- The Senior Management Team (SMT) is working very well. We meet once a week, and in the past two weeks have met more frequently. Both together and individually, the SMT is making great progress on a huge range of work areas, as the papers show.
- There is still a lot to be done – which is clear from the papers - and we have some significant and delicate challenges to address, but nevertheless the direction of travel is very positive.

#### **External Engagement**

This period has involved a range of meetings with partners and other stakeholders – see below for details.

- 4-7 September: NAAONB annual conference, Bath University. Joined by five other members of staff, including Wendy Morrison who led the Beacons of the Past project, which was short-listed for the Bowland Award,

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- 19 September: visit to College Lake to view access infrastructure funded through Defra's Access grant
- 21 September Rebecca Pow, Defra Minister, visit to the River Chess to hear about the work of the Chilterns Chalk Streams project and the Thames Water funded Smarter Water Catchment pilot, which the CCB hosts.
- 27 September: Environmental Funders Network visit to hear about the Chilterns Chalk Streams project. Members comprise philanthropists, charitable trusts and high net worth individuals who support environmental projects.
- 13 October: Networking lunch for philanthropists and HNW individuals at Woodrow High House.
- 22 and 23 November: Launch of National Landscapes followed by Chairs and Lead Officers annual meeting.
- I'm also a member of the CCB's Farming in Protected Landscapes panel and attend their monthly meetings. Kate Heppell has also been a member since joining us in July.
- I also keep up to date with other AONBs through monthly online Lead Officer meetings and a forum on the National Association for AONBs' website specifically for AONB and Conservation Board Lead Officers.

### Finance

- Liaised regularly with Graham Hurst, our Finance Officer. This has included submitting our six-monthly grant claim report to Defra grant (April to September 2023). I'm also talking informally with a number of potential funders.

### Government announcement

- On 29 November, ahead of CoP28, the Government [announced](#) a package of measures to protect nature and better connect people with green spaces. It also published its [implementation plan](#) for the Landscapes Review. The CCB [responded](#) and I did media interviews including a live interview on Sky News.
- The measures include an additional £10m funding for Protected Landscapes, the designation of a new National Park, the exploration of a new, fairer funding formula for National Landscapes and National Parks, and confirmation of other funding for Protected Landscapes, including a fourth year of funding for Defra's Farming in Protected Landscapes programme and funding in year 2 of Defra's Access for All programme.
- The National Landscapes Association will be briefing Lead Officers on 6<sup>th</sup> December, and I can update further at the Board meeting.

### Thanks

To the Senior Management Team, as well as the whole team staff team for all their hard work – it's been a particularly busy period since the Board last met. Thanks too, to Colin and John who have provided valuable leadership, support and insight on a wide variety of matters.





- Our external auditors have issued an interim report dated 29 September 2023 advising that we did not make provision for public rights. We did make provision for public rights from 19 June 2023 until 27 July 2023 which is a period of 29 days and not the statutory 30 days. Note we had no requests for information during, or after this period.
- We should also formally consider the independence of our internal auditors Hertfordshire Shared Internal Audit Services.
- A copy of the auditors' report is attached.

### **Recommendation**

- 1. To NOTE the CCB financial position at 31 October 2023**
- 2. To NOTE the External Audit Report**

### Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2022/23

In respect of **Chilterns Conservation Board - OT0011**

#### 1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02) as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/>

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2023; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

#### 2 External auditor’s limited assurance opinion 2022/23

On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

Please see below.

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

The smaller authority has submitted its AGAR and supporting documentation prior to 30 September 2023; however, we have not been notified of the dates set by the authority for the exercise of public rights and are therefore unable to complete our review work to enable to smaller authority to publish the required documentation in line with statutory requirements. Please note, we are not able to certify completion of our review until such time as we have been notified of the public rights period and that period has expired. Once we can confirm the public rights period has expired and completed our review, a final report will be provided with the certificate of completion detailing any qualifications and ‘other’ matters.

Our fee note for the limited assurance review will be issued when we certify completion.

#### 3 External auditor certificate 2022/23

We do not certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2023.

We do not certify completion because:

We have received the AGAR and supporting documentation, but we have not received notification of the period for the exercise of public rights and have not completed our review work prior to 30 September 2023

External Auditor Name

**PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP**

External Auditor Signature



Date

29/09/2023

### Profit and Loss

Chilterns Conservation Board

For the 7 months ended 31 October 2023

Account	Apr-Oct 2023	Core	Projects
<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>	<b>Notes</b>
<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 realalysed
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</b>	<b>% 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>

<b>Item 9.2</b>	<b>Report on Quarter 2 Delivery</b>
<b>Author:</b>	Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations with SMT Team
<b>Purpose of the report:</b>	To update the Board on progress with the CCB's Delivery Plan in Q2 (Jul-Sep) of FY 2023-24
<b>Summary:</b>	Overall progress during this time period 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 (3 in Q1). Two delivery items not started in Q1 have now started.
<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b>That the Board NOTES the Quarter 2 update and provides feedback.</b>

A full progress report including a focus on key risks and issues and a full update against delivery lines was presented to the Executive Committee meeting in November 2023. This paper contains a summary of those papers.

### **Key Areas of Progress**

#### *SP1 – Building Organisational Resilience*

- Working with new HR advisor, work is underway to put in place a new HR Simplified Transformation Programme to embed a new HR system, employee handbook and align HR processes, policies and procedures. Training session held in October with all line managers. Focus included holding effective 1:1 meetings and conducting appraisals.
- New funding pipeline established, and new process put in place to improve line of sight / governance around sign off for new work / funding based on MSP (Managing Successful Programmes) approach and aligned to new Schemes of Delegation.
- Information management is being improved with focus on collating all key organisational documents in one easy to access location.
- Insurance coverage and robustness improved to ensure coverage of new activities.
- Further improvements made to quarterly reporting cycle with the SMT reviewing all key risks and issues and identifying key mitigation actions.
- Work started on the annual business planning with a greater focus on top down – bottom-up planning / clear alignment around delivery planning, budgeting and resource planning.
- Risk assessment and COSHH information improved to address health and safety along with the purchase of a chemicals storage cabinet.
- New Communications Officer now in post and audience mapping workshop taken place to progress Communications Strategy work. New tool purchased to ensure improved visibility and coordination of social media posts / new process in place to allow the Communications Team to track ongoing comms priorities more effectively.

#### *SP2 – Delivering the Workstreams to Which We Are Committed*

- Chalk, Cherries & Chairs: Final report to HS2 Community Fund submitted/approved and two claims submitted to National Lottery Heritage Fund (NHLF) for total of £0.75million bringing us up to date on reporting and claims. Eight month extension to the project agreed to end of Nov 2024 securing additional funding for core roles in 2024-25. Significant delivery progress made with revitalised Grim's Ditch project halfway through

completion (including guided walks and surveying), successful season for Tracking the Impact and delivery of new group of 20 young people going through the New Shoots programme. Also key working groups set up to address overall legacy and impact and specifically around volunteers, diverse engagement and partnership working.

- Mend the Gap: Three large projects signed off for 2024-26 implementation (Withymead Nature Reserve, BBOWT Cholsey Marshes and LWS project, Schools Landscape Enhancement Project) with three more projects to be considered by the Steering Group in December. Six tenders being prepared for mitigation planting from Goring to Purley this winter and a new Project Support Officer recruited to start in January 2024.
- Chilterns Chalk Streams Project / Smarter Water Catchment: Milestones on track except for Wildlife Corridors and Involving People where capacity constraints have slowed implementation. Flood modelling work has been completed with revised design resubmitted to Buckinghamshire Council in November to enable delivery in Mar 2024. Summer River Schools programme was completed, as was the volunteer training programme with the last two courses (on pond management) delivered in Nov as was the planned water vole survey.
- Not Bourne Yesterday: After discussion with NLHF, application submission pushed back from Dec 2023 to Feb 2024. Presentation made to Executive Committee in Nov 2023.
- Chalkscapes: Following the decision not to pursue Chalkscapes as a single project, some elements of work have progressed, including the imminent publication of a report on barriers / enablers for ethnic communities accessing greenspaces, and the successful Nature Calling application made to the Arts Council England with Chilterns as one of six regional hubs.
- HS2 Additional Projects: Progress made on a number of projects including Wendover Canal Towpath upgrade, but progress has slowed with resource focused on delivering last year of the CCC project.
- Farmer Clusters: Christmas Common Cluster successfully secured a second round of Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Funding and CCB carried out a SWOT analysis of different cluster models to identify further opportunities. FiPL grant to support the North Chilterns cluster secured and currently awaiting outcome of a proposal to the Rothschild Foundation whilst a bid for Landscape Recovery funding was unsuccessful.
- Farming in Protected Landscapes: Another £260k in funding was allocated this quarter including projects on grassland restoration, Nettlebed Creamery habitat creation, heritage orchard creation and the Chess farmer cluster carbon project.
- Chilterns Heritage & Archaeology Partnership (CHAP) – Beacons of the Past project legacy interpretation panels for three sites were launched in November and Bledlow Cross Management Plan written and delivered.
- Chilterns Walking Festival: Successfully delivered in October (programme of 60 walks).
- Defra Access for All funded projects: Installation of an accessible bridge at Chesham Moor has been delayed until Feb 2024 but further Access funding for this FY has been made available by Defra at short notice, with CCB securing £54k.
- Open for Business: Campaign completed to promote bookable visitor experiences and new page on website promoting Chess Valley set up.

### *SP3 – Providing Leadership and Securing Influence*

- AONB Extension: Natural England shared reports from LUC Consultants on Natural Beauty Assessments in Nov 2023 but still awaiting updated project timeline.
- Integrated Strategy Workstream: Work taken place with the Executive Committee to bring together different strands of work into more cohesive Integrated Strategy Workstream to ensure more effective delivery.
- Management Plan: New Management Plan Task & Finish Group established in September chaired by Board member Gemma Harper.
- Rebranding – subject to discussion at item 10.

- Planning – covered in item 13 on the agenda for this meeting.
- HS2 Impact: Key overbridge designs challenged with new designs at Leather Lane being submitted and support provided around investigation into Shardloes Park sinkhole.
- Nature Recovery Ambition Statement: Short ambition statement document created and meetings with key contacts in Local Authorities and Wildlife Trusts commenced.
- Heritage: Cholesbury Camp near Tring removed from Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register in Nov 2023 following work undertaken through Beacons of the Past. Meeting taking place in the new year with 40+ potential partners to help shape CHAPs direction.
- Access: Widening the Welcome workshop took place to promote the available Access funding for 2023-24 and 2024-25.
- Sustainable Tourism: Continued advice and support given to partners such as Visit Buckinghamshire and Visit Hertfordshire and through the Chilterns Tourism Network.
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: CCB EDI Ambition Statement and approach made visible on the website and disability training planned for early next year.
- Woodland Management: Collaborative meeting to progress landscape and woodland design training took place in July 2023 along with further investigation into the viability of pine martin introduction.

### **Key Risks and Issues**

A number of key risks and issues were raised with the Executive Committee in Nov 2023. Key amongst these were:

- Capacity constraints to deliver across the organisation (both current programmes and critical work next year).
- Restricted financial resources (impacting ability to move forward in some areas)
- Lack of information / delays in information from external parties (increasing uncertainty and slowing down plans).
- Need for more holistic planning and integration of work (especially around strategic area delivery).
- Funding robustness (especially in relation to Thames Water).
- Reputational risk (especially around rebranding and lack of resource to follow up on / deliver Chalkscapes).
- Difficulty in recruiting new staff resource in planning and the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project.



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

<b>Author:</b>	Elaine King, CEO and Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations
<b>Purpose of Report:</b>	To update the Board on progress with an emerging Funding Strategy, including seeking approval for a process for planning and assessing potential new work streams and funding applications. The report also makes key observations on the CCB's funding pipeline.
<b>Recommendation:</b>	To APPROVE 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.

**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 9.3.2, 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 Board.

### **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 Board, 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 15.
- 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 the former application in early December and were advised on 29 November that we were unsuccessful with the latter.
- 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. 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, was in November 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. She also met with leaders of the programme on 5<sup>th</sup> December.

## 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](#), an action plan and delivering EDI training to staff and Board members. This commitment to EDI is shared by Defra and has led to Defra providing [Access for All funding](#) to Protected Landscapes to improve access 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 is 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 (now the National Landscapes Association) on a project application titled Nature Calling - to be funded by Arts Council England and aiming to improve access to National Landscapes 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 14.

- **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 National Landscapes Association 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 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 February 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 / New Funding Process (see slides at 9.3.2). The project application also introduces new financial elements, including seeking to reclaim the costs of core staff time on such projects.

### **Recommendation**

- 1. To APPROVE 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

December 2023 (Head of Operations)

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY

## Item 9.3.2

## 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.

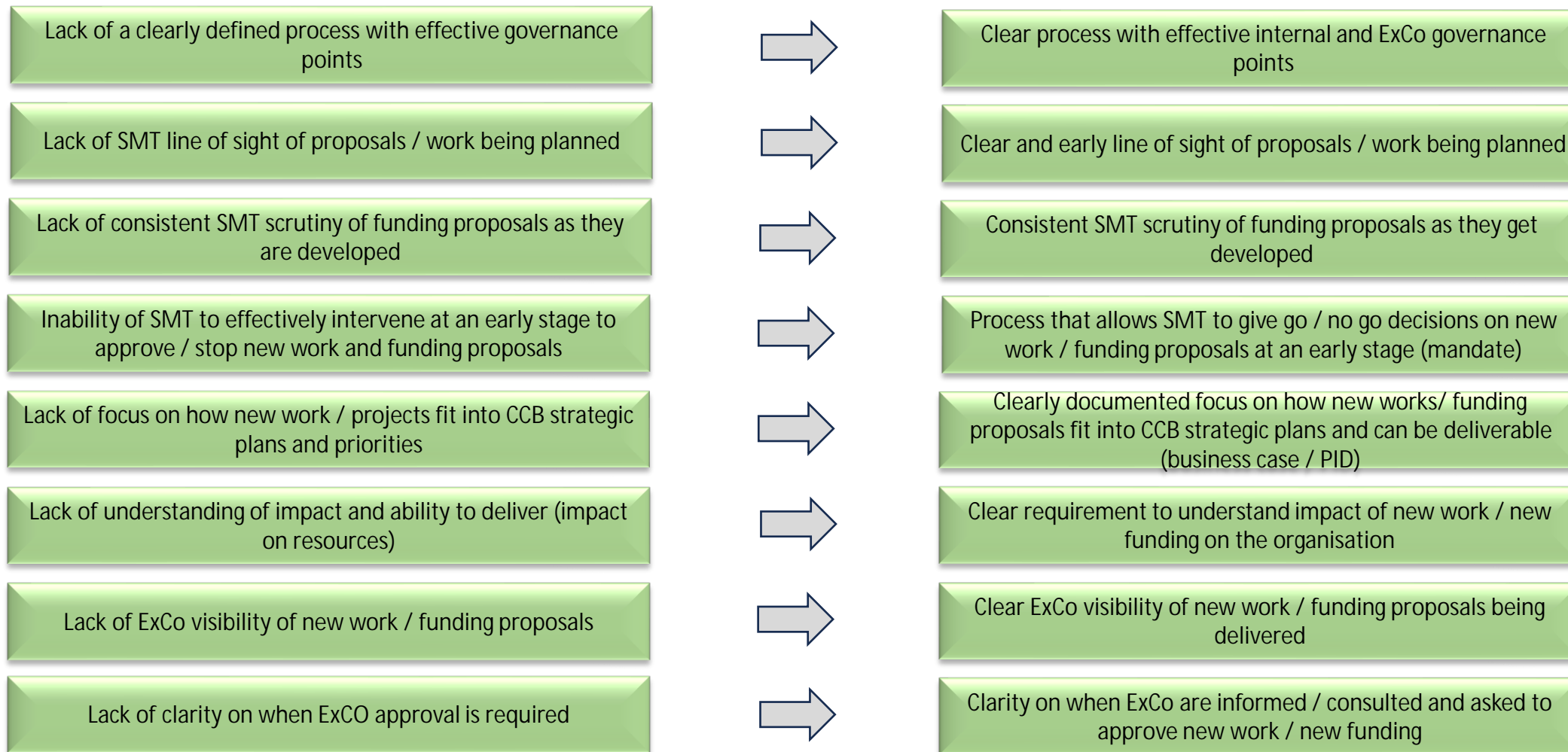
**Recommendation:** That the Board APPROVES the high-level process for New Work / New Funding set out in the deck and provides feedback



# 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

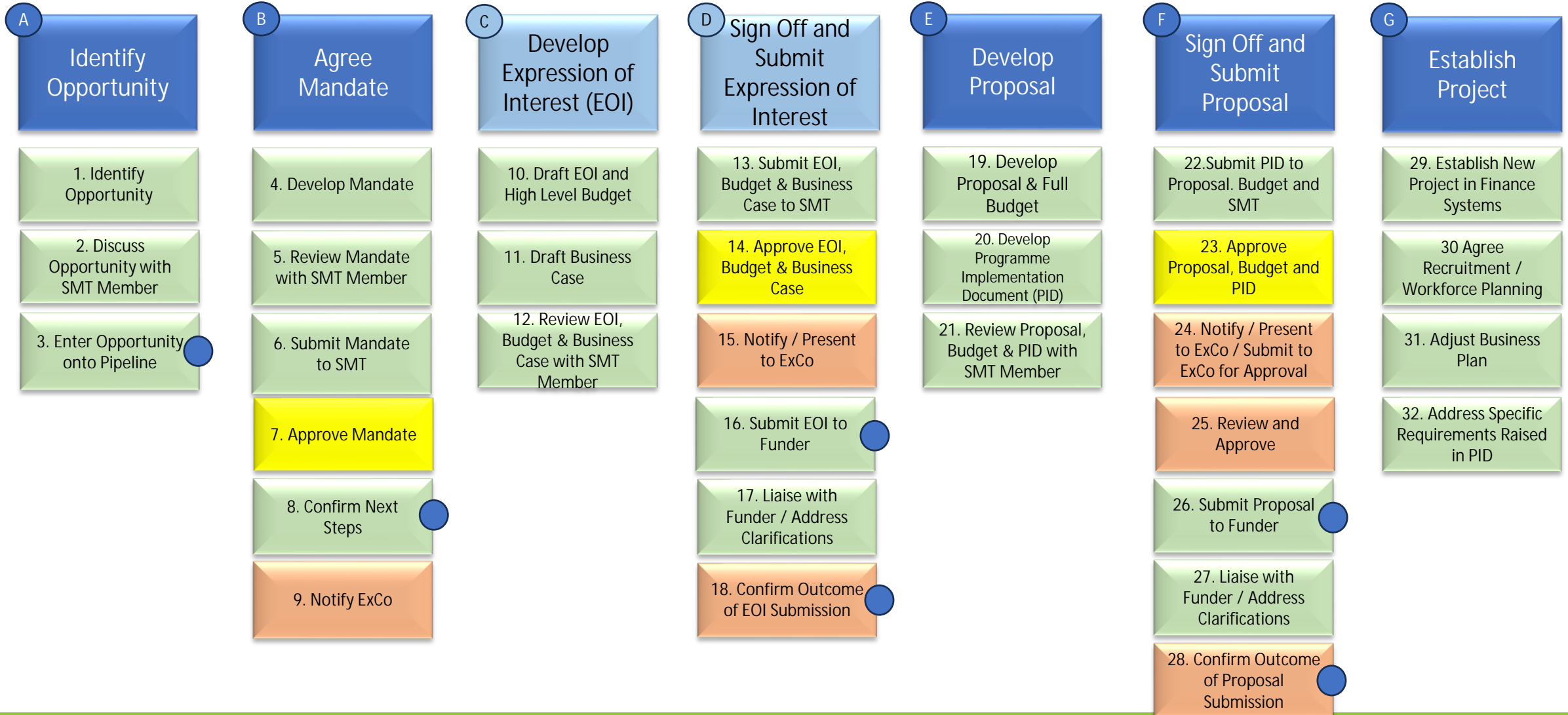


# Process (including RACI)



# 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



High Level Process Step
Generic Process Step
SMT Review
ExCo Notification / Review / Approval
● Steps at which Pipeline is updated

## 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)

**Item 10**                                    **Rebranding****Author:** Elaine King, CEO and John Nicholls, Deputy Chair**Purpose of Report:** To update the Board on the renaming of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) to National Landscapes and to make recommendations.**Recommendations:**            **That the Board:**

- 1) endorses the principle of renaming the Chilterns AONB as the Chilterns National Landscape, of the Chilterns Conservation Board as the Chilterns National Landscape Board, and of the staff team as the Chilterns National Landscape Team**
- 2) resolves that implementation should be subject to adequate progress on improved purposes, powers and resources for National Landscapes**
- 3) accepts that the recent progress set out in the report sufficiently meets the condition in recommendation 2 to enable rebranding to proceed**
- 4) approves the implementation programme in Appendix 4 and authorises our staff to continue discussion and development of the logo and any strap line, and that the outcome be circulated to the Board for sign-off.**

**Background**

The National Association of AONBs (now National Landscapes Association, or NLA) has coordinated a rebrand of 33 of the 34 AONBs in England as 'National Landscapes'. This renaming was recommended in the Landscapes ('Glover') Report and was funded by Defra. CCB's response at the time was to accept the principle but make implementation conditional on major progress in the status and resourcing of AONBs.

The proposal was agreed at the NLA's AGM in December 2022 and progress on the plans was reported to the 12 September Board (paper 12). Members raised major concerns, set out more fully in section 1.3 below. The meeting concluded inter alia that we should not take part in the rebranding launch on 22 November, largely due to concerns over the short notice of the launch, the name 'National Landscape' and the design of the logo.

Following an invitation to all members to express their views, the Executive Committee considered the evidence in November and reiterated the CCB's previously established position: that rebranding be accepted in principle, but that implementation should await significant progress on the issues mentioned above. It concluded that the CCB should be represented at the launch in the meantime.

This report summarises the history of decisions on this issue, reports the advice of the Executive Committee, and catalogues the progress on status and resources made since the Board meeting, concluding that this amounts to sufficient progress for adoption of the rebranding. A programme is recommended.

**1. History of decisions on rebranding****1.1 The Landscapes Review**

Proposal 24 of the Landscapes Review, in its entirety, reads:

*AONBs strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources, renamed as National Landscapes*

The Review Panel believed that 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' is not a well-recognised term, it is 'cumbersome', and proposed that their national importance be properly reflected in a way that elevates them alongside National Parks.

## **1.2 Our response to the Review**

CCB's comments on the Government's response to the Landscapes Review did not dissent from re-naming but 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. "*

## **1.3 September 12 CCB Board**

Against a tight imposed deadline, the Board objected to the proposal for the reasons summarised below. It accepted neither the principle nor the detailed proposals for the Chilterns being rebranded and asked for discussions with NLA on a delay of rebranding, reconsideration of the 'National Landscapes' name, and changes to our proposed logo. The pro and con arguments at the September Board discussion, supplemented by subsequent clarifications, can be summarised as:

### **Against**

The meeting, and subsequent comments from members, showed a wide range of concerns, but the principal points were that:

- If we rebrand at all, it should be for our own local reasons to address Chilterns needs, rather than being imposed for external political reasons
- The need has not been adequately evidenced by NLA
- 'AONB' is locally understood and valued, and describes precisely what we are; 'National Landscape' does not
- We are being 'bounced' into a rapid decision by NLA and Defra
- The logo etc proposed for CCB is not acceptable

### **For**

- The most important point is that 'National Landscapes', alongside National Parks and National Trails, indicates a parity of importance and visibility between all protected landscapes, which we have long sought.
- NLA commissioned market research from Ipsos. While two-thirds of the population live within 30 minutes of an AONB, less than half recognise the AONB 'brand' compared to 70% recognition of National Parks. This is even more marked in younger age groups and suggests that the rather cumbersome AONB title is not cutting through.
- Cotswolds National Landscape rebranded two years ago. Their Chair and CEO advise that this was well-received by partners, including Councils, who were all using the new name within two months. Their notes are in Appendix 1.

## 1.4 November Executive Committee

CCB's Deputy Chair subsequently sought further views from Board members. The responses received were more nuanced than simply being for or against, but broadly speaking twelve expressed support for rebranding to varying degrees and two strongly opposed, with one suggesting a different approach.

The Deputy Chair produced a paper for the 14 November Executive Committee ([paper 10](#)). That meeting felt that the National Association for AONBs had not communicated the rebranding well and had given inadequate notice of the launch. Nevertheless, the consensus was a conditional acceptance of rebranding, though one member maintained their opposition.

The Committee (which was technically inquorate due to on-line attendances) discussed four options and agreed **recommendations** to this Board meeting:

- 1. ACCEPT a rebranding in principle**
- 2. MAKE our own implementation plan which would be conditional on continued progress toward the 'strengthened purposes, powers and resources' conditions in our previous Glover response. We would take our own view of when that tipping-point had been reached**
- 3. ENGAGE with our local stakeholders regarding the rebranding, as part of our ongoing engagement activities.**

The Committee also CONSIDERED any short-term actions needed before the next meeting and agreed that the CEO and Deputy Chair should attend the rebranding launch event.

## 1.5 The launch event

The launch event evidenced great enthusiasm among all the 33 National Landscapes and strong endorsement from Defra. The new Nature Minister, Rebecca Pow MP, chose the Lead Officers' and Chairs' conference the following day, as her first event attended in her new role, and was very positive. Details of comments made are in Appendix 2.

The events demonstrated unity and enthusiasm among the other National Landscapes, and their partners, and there is clearly a tangible 'National Landscapes movement' which we should be part of. Having 33 National Landscapes in England speaking with one voice and then one isolated AONB pursuing its own route, would diminish our present substantial influence and our claim for resources. National Landscapes acting as a coherent group is clearly increasing 'clout' with Defra and others, and there is evidence that this is already bearing fruit (see 1.6 below).

## 1.6 Other events since the September Board meeting

In our view, the Government has signalled its increased commitment to National Parks and National Landscapes in the years since the Landscapes Review was published. This has accelerated in recent months, and days, through a series of commitments and announcements. Full details are in Appendix 3, but the key points are:

- The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act has greatly enhanced the status of Protected Landscape Management Plans, for which AONBs, including the CCB, have long campaigned



- Defra has responded to the Landscapes Review and has confirmed that it is exploring a new, more equitable, funding formula
- The latest round of Defra Access for All funding has come exclusively to National Landscapes rather than National Parks
- Government has announced an additional £15m for protected landscapes and the search for a new National Park.

These shift the ground in directions for which National Landscapes have been jointly advocating for a long time and evidences the benefits of joint action. While the distribution of the £15m and the National Park search have not been detailed, a continued unified National Landscapes voice will be critical in influencing it in National Landscapes' collective favour and it is not a time for CCB to isolate itself.

We believe there is now clear evidence that the Government is acting to deliver the improved Purposes, Powers and Resources to National Landscapes, as recommended in Proposal 24 of the Landscapes Review. It is therefore our view that the criteria set out by CCB Board members before a renaming will be approved have been met.

#### **4. Recommendation**

Consistent with CCB's previous response to the Glover report and with the advice of the Executive Committee, it is **RECOMMENDED that the Board:**

**1) endorses the principle of renaming the Chilterns AONB as the Chilterns National Landscape, of the Chilterns Conservation Board as the Chilterns National Landscape Board, and of the staff team as the Chilterns National Landscape Team**

**2) resolves that implementation should be subject to adequate progress on improved purposes, powers and resources for National Landscapes**

**3) accepts that the recent progress set out in the report sufficiently meets the condition in recommendation 2 to enable rebranding to proceed**

#### **5. Local detail: branding for a Chilterns National Landscape**

If the above recommendation is accepted, we need to consider and programme local implementation. A programme is suggested in Appendix 4, which sees implementation early in the New Year. The imperatives driving this will be explained at the meeting, but they include the problem that being the only AONB not have rebranded is already presenting communications issues for the staff team, not least when explaining who and what we are when speaking to the media and other external stakeholders. We are also being asked by partners whether we are now a National Landscape. There are therefore potential reputational issues of not rebranding, and without delay.

If the Board accepts this programme, then the staff team needs to be empowered to finalise details, including the logo and any 'strapline'. The logo was a matter of strong concern to the Board, but the next meeting is not until March, so it is suggested that proposals be circulated to the Board by email to secure a consensus for sign-off.

**It is RECOMMENDED that the Board approves the implementation programme in Appendix 4 and authorises our staff to continue discussion and development of the logo and any strap line, and that the outcome be circulated to the for sign-off.**

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Notes from Cotswold Conservation Board on their rebranding two years ago**

- “Not a single Board Member raised any concerns
- Team members loved it – even those that had been around for a long time
- Pre-launch we informally consulted with local authorities (direct discussion and via Board Members), some key DMOs, Howard Davies, Defra, etc.
- Within weeks (even days) we were referred to as CNL at external meetings – it became the norm exceptionally quickly
- Our 400+ voluntary wardens were delighted as they were fed up with having to explain what an AONB actually is to guided walk participants. With the new term they could more easily compare to National Parks and National Trails
- For formal communications, e.g. planning responses, we simply say that the Cotswolds National Landscape is a designated AONB
- Area= National Landscape
- Organisation = National Landscape Board
- Team = National Landscape Team

We have recently written to all local authorities requesting their endorsement for our latest Management Plan (2023-25). Responses show that it has been well and truly adopted.”

Cotswolds National Landscape have supplied their PowerPoint presentation on rebranding, which can be forwarded to our Board members on request.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Notes from the National Landscapes launch event**

Elaine King and John Nicholls attended the evening launch event of the renamed National Landscapes at the Royal Society in London on 22 November. The event was attended by newly renamed National Landscape teams, staff and trustees from the newly renamed National Landscapes Association (formerly the National Association for AONBs), partner NGOs (such as CPRE, National Trust, Disabled Ramblers and British Ecological Society) and a number of National Parks.

Guests included Marian Spain (CEO at Natural England), Julian Glover (lead author of the [Landscapes Review](#)), Fiona Reynolds (co-author of the Landscapes Review) and Drew Bennellick (Head of Land and Nature at the National Lottery Heritage Fund). The event was a very positive celebration of National Landscapes and included speeches from Dr Anjana Khatwa, NLA Trustee and Shail Patel from the Disabled Ramblers.

The narrative on social media was also largely positive. For example, Julian Glover, lead author of the Landscapes Review, [tweeted](#) ‘*Big ambition & an even bigger buzz tonight at launch of @NatLandAssoc - a moment that will change England & Wales for better. A pleasure to be there. Now for action*’.

Siôn McGeever, Defra’s Deputy Director for Access, Landscapes, Peatland and Soil, [tweeted](#) ‘*This is so exciting. National Landscape teams really make magic happen, and never have we needed that magic more than now. This is a great way to restate our commitment and raise our ambition. Really looking forward to continuing our work together!*’

*#welcomenationallandscapes’.*

### **Lead Officers and Chairs meeting**

The following day, Elaine and John attended the annual meeting of Lead Officers and Chairs in London.

The keynote speech was given by Defra Minister, Rebecca Pow, who was that day confirmed as having the brief for Protected Landscapes. She was extremely supportive of the renaming and said it is *‘more than a name change’ as it will ensure National Landscapes will get the attention they deserve, have a clear identity, and will be better understood’.*

The Minister tweeted afterwards *‘Delighted to welcome a new era for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty as they become #NationalLandscapes. The name change reflects renewed values and ambitions for nature, climate, people and place. #WelcomeToNationalLandscapes’.*

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **Evidence of the Government’s delivery of and commitment to Proposal 24 in the Landscapes Review**

#### **1. Written Ministerial Statement to support nature recovery in Protected Landscapes (13<sup>th</sup> September)**

On Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023, the Defra Secretary of State tabled a [Written Ministerial Statement](#) setting out a package of measures to support nature recovery in Protected Landscapes. These measures were detailed in a briefing circulated to Board members and a [news item](#) on the CCB’s website.

The package included:

- i. New legislation through an amendment to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill to enhance National Park and AONB Management Plans by placing a stronger requirement on public bodies to contribute to their delivery. The Act was subsequently passed on 21 September 2023.
- ii. Funding for the new Protected Landscapes Partnership involving the National Landscapes Association, National Parks England, National Trails UK and Natural England, which will deliver projects and programmes on nature recovery and widening access to nature.
- iii. An extension of funding for the [Farming in Protected Landscapes programme](#) (FiPL), with funding for a fourth year to March 2025.
- iv. New funding formula - during a subsequent roundtable for Protected Landscapes, the then Secretary of State, Therese Coffey, also confirmed that her officials were exploring a new funding formula, aimed at levelling up the disparity between funding of National Parks and National Landscapes.

The announcement also referred to the positive impact of Defra’s [Access for All programme](#), which has enabled the CCB to improve access to the countryside for people from all ages, backgrounds and abilities, and confirmed that the Government would shortly publish its response to the Landscapes Review consultation.

The announcement also confirmed the imminent publication of Defra's new Outcomes Framework, which will define the contribution that Protected Landscapes should make to national targets. These are intended to guide local decision-making and prioritisation

## **2. Renaming of AONBs to National Landscapes (22 November 2023)**

The renaming of AONBs delivers one of the Landscape Review's key recommendations, that AONBs be renamed to National Landscapes. The Review said, '*We think the current cumbersome title 'AONB' should be replaced. Our suggestion is that they should be called National Landscapes*' (page 10).

The Government subsequently confirmed its commitment to AONBs being renamed as National Landscapes in its Environmental Improvement Plan 2023. It also reiterates this commitment in its [response](#) to the Landscapes Review (page 3), stating that its 'action plan [will] support our existing Protected Landscapes to achieve their full potential through additional funding, greater collaboration across the national network, and strengthened legislation'.

The renaming of AONBs to National Landscapes was agreed by majority decision at the National Association for AONBs' (NAAONB) AGM in December 2022. Work started in early 2023, led by the NAAONB, with funding of £250k from Defra.

## **3. Government pledge to boost access to nature and improve access to green space (29 November 2023)**

The renaming and launch of National Landscapes were set to coincide with Defra's [announcement](#) the following week that reiterated its commitment towards nature recovery in National Parks and National Landscapes and committed to increased funding. Defra published a [news item](#) and a [blog](#). The CCB responded with a [press release](#).

The package of measures confirmed a number of existing commitments and reiterated the Government's support for National Landscapes and National Parks. All the measures are brought together in an action plan for Protected Landscapes, based on the [outcomes](#) to its consultation on the Landscapes Review.

Existing measures announced included:

- i. Strengthened legislative duties on public authorities to consider and take action to conserve and enhance biodiversity in Protected Landscapes. This was set out in the [Environment Act 2021](#) and now the [Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023](#), which includes a statutory purpose for public bodies to help deliver Protected Landscapes' Management Plans.
- ii. Further amendments to the LURA give priority to Protected Landscapes across a range of government policies, to support the delivery of [Local Nature Recovery Strategies](#), and include updating planning law.
- iii. A new [Protected Landscapes Partnership](#). This is Defra's response to the recommendation in the Glover Review for a national landscapes service and, along with Natural England's strengthened Management Plan guidance, is intended to support investment and delivery in Protected Landscapes. The PLP brings a variety of benefits to the National Landscapes network, not least because its work has been directly influenced by the National Landscapes Association and has resulted in the

recruitment of 3.8FTE under the priorities of nature recovery and improving access to Protected Landscapes.

- iv. A 4<sup>th</sup> year of funding for the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. The CCB has already received £1.44m in years 1-3 and has been allocated £1.12m in year four (2024/25).
- v. Three years of funding for the Access for All programme, which provides £14.5m for making Protected Landscapes, National Trails, forests and the wider countryside more accessible for people of all ages, abilities and needs. The CCB received and distributed £227,000 in year 1 (2022/23) and has been allocated £261,480 in year 3 (2025/26). Further detail [here](#).
- vi. More recently, Defra has made available further funding of £910,000 for year 2 (2023/24) of its Access for All programme, which is being prioritised for National Landscapes, as part of efforts to level up funding with National Parks. The CCB has been allocated £54k.
- vii. Confirmation that the Government is reviewing the long-term funding model for Protected Landscapes 'to ensure that it is fair and transparent'.

New measures announced include:

- i. An additional £10m for National Landscapes and National Parks 'in recognition of their increasing role for nature and people'.
- ii. A further £5m for Protected Landscapes to apply for to 'improve the water environment in these special places.
- iii. The Government has commissioned Natural England to begin identifying an area which will be considered for designation as the next National Park in England. The Chilterns are not specifically mentioned, though the Landscape Review recommended that the Chilterns be designated a National Park, along with the Cotswolds and Dorset, and we know that these three landscapes are potentially in the frame.
- iv. £2.5m to help more children and disadvantaged young people to access green space and the countryside. This funding does not appear to be specifically for Protected Landscapes and we will try to find out more.



Display Week:

1

					11 Dec 2023					18 Dec 2023					25 Dec 2023					1 Jan 2024					8 Jan 2024					15 Jan 2024					22 Jan 2024																	
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ASK	ASSIGNED TO	PROGRESS	START	END																																																
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Send Email partners, stakeholders and local authorities	Comms team	0%	7/2/24	7/2/24																																																
Publish new homepage slider	Comms team	0%	7/2/24	7/2/24																																																
<b>Phase 4 Ongoing brand implementation</b>																																																				
Individual emails/offer to meet to Local Authorities from Elaine?	EK/VP	0%	12/2/24	16/2/24																																																
Submit case studies for publishing on the NLA new website	VP	0%	19/2/24	23/2/24																																																
Comms team send email to suppliers/designers with new brand guidelines	VP	0%	26/2/24	1/3/24																																																
Create evolution of logo page for website	Comms team	0%	4/3/24	11/3/24																																																
Discuss requirements for branded assets with team - eg. gazebo's, uniform, banners etc. and gather costs - must be spent and claimed before 31st March	Staff team/Comms	0%	12/2/24	16/2/24																																																





**Governance Task and Finish Group: future operations**

Paper by John Nicholls, chair of the Governance Task and Finish Group

**Purpose of report**

- 1 To consider membership of the Governance Task & Finish Group.
2. To recommend approval of a set of principles for delegation of decisions, as the basis of further detailed work by the Group
3. To consider other aspects of its future workload

**Background**

The Governance Task & Finish Group made substantial progress on the overall structure of future governance arrangements, culminating in Board approving its recommendations on, for example, establishing a Board Advisory Group to engage stakeholders in future strategy. Its operations were then paused pending governance work by Defra and Natural England, but as neither has come to anything it is time to recommence operations.

**1. Membership of the T&F Group**

The original membership comprised Llyn Lloyd, Charles Hussey, Colin Courtney, Adrian Watney and Richard Newcombe, with John Nicholls chairing. Llyn has since left the Board, and it would be helpful if previous members indicated whether they are still willing to serve and for one or two new members to join.

**2. Principles of Delegation**

A lack of clarity on the relative decision-making role of staff and Board members has caused some confusion. Executive Committee has approved suggested principles as a basis for remedying this (Appendix 1 attached)

**It is RECOMMENDED that the Board endorses these principles, and that they then form the basis of detailed work by the T&F Group to review and revise all documentation relating to delegations for a further report to the Board.**

**3. Other future work of the T&F Group**

An early task will be to scope and timetable the Group's further work, focusing on the detail and implementation of its previous suggestions, including the Board Advisory Group. It is suggested that the Group draws up a programme for approval at the March Board.

## Appendix 1

### Principles for delegation of decisions

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 and Senior Management Team structure in line with the HR Strategy).

These are the 'Key Documents' referred to below.

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

3. When contemplating any decision which might extend beyond the Key Documents (5 and 6 below), the CE 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 CE 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 **staffing decision** might extend beyond the Key Documents if any of the following apply:

- it increases the total approved staff budget, including all on-costs
- it changes the Senior Management Team structure
- it changes the balance of staff activity and/or the subject matter of CCB's activities significantly beyond that assumed in the Key Documents

6. A **project decision** might extend beyond the Key Documents if any of the following apply:

- it imposes any additional costs on the core budget, through staff, capital contribution, or other costs
- it requires a change in the balance of workload within the staff team which could impact on the priorities of the Key Documents
- it extends CCB's range of activities beyond the Key Documents
- in the opinion of the CEO, it carries a high level of complexity or risk

7. Notwithstanding these principles, approval of projects which comply with the Key Documents but exceed a total cost of £xxx will be referred to the Executive Committee because of their scale and potential impact.

**Item 11.2**                      **Variation to the Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG) Terms of Reference in the Code of Governance and appointment of members of the HRAG**

**Author:** Deirdre Hansen Clerk to the Board

**Purpose of Report:** To ask the Board to approve a variation to the Terms of Reference for the HRAG in the Code of Governance which had been updated 14/03/23. And to appoint members to the HRAG.

**Recommendation:**

- 1. To approve the variation of 67 d) of the CCB's Code of Governance as presented.**
- 2. To approve the appointment of Board members: Colin Courtney, Geeta Ludhra, Paul Mains, John Nicholls, Robert Roche and Sue Rowland to the HRAG.**

**Background**

1. The HRAG has discovered a minor inconsistency in its Terms of Reference in the Code of Governance which it would like to correct and is asking the Board to approve this variation.
2. The Board is asked to approve the appointment of the following board members to the HRAG:  
Colin Courtney  
Geeta Ludhra  
Paul Mains  
John Nicholls  
Robert Roche  
Sue Rowland

## 1. Variation to the terms of Reference for the HRAG

The current Terms of Reference for the HRAG group as amended 14/03/23:

### *The HR Advisory Group*

67. *The HR Advisory Group shall:*

- a) *Comprise a minimum of four members including the board chairman, deputy chairman and one member of the Executive Committee and at least one co-opted member all chosen by the chairman of the Executive Committee in consultation with the chief executive officer.*
- b) *The HR Advisor and the chief executive officer shall be invited to attend as appropriate.*
- c) *Review all HR arrangements as necessary including, but not limited to, the HR Policies, Procedures, Staff Handbook and confidential staff survey.*
- d) *Convene an appeals panel as required to hear and determine all disciplinary and other appeals arising under the relevant conditions of service for all the Boards' employees. As per 68.b) in the Code of Governance and advise on appeals from senior managers and/or the chief executive officer.*

### *The Appeals Sub-Committee*

68. *The Appeals Sub-Committee shall*

- a) *comprise three members of the Executive Committee, of which one shall be a local authority member, one shall be a member appointed by the Secretary of State, and one shall be a parish council member if possible. The members, assisted by one or more external members, and by the HR Advisory Group if appropriate, shall be chosen by the chairman of the Executive Committee in consultation with the chief executive officer. If the matter under appeal arises from a decision of the Executive Committee, the members chosen to sit shall be members of the Board who do not sit on the Executive Committee together with one or more external members.*
- b) *hear and determine all disciplinary and other appeals arising under the relevant conditions of service for all the Board's employees.*

The requested variation relates to 67. d) members of the appeal panel are selected by the Chair of the Executive Committee in consultation with the

CEO. The Terms of Reference 67 d) refers to the HRAG “convening” an appeals panel, presumably these are the group chosen by the Chair of the ExCo so 67 d) should refer to “Convene an appeals panel chosen as provided under section 68 a)”.

Section 68 b) in the Code of Governance refers only to hearing and determining all disciplinary and other appeals under the relevant conditions of service for all the Boards’ employees, therefore the Terms of Reference in the Code of Governance 67 d) should be varied to read:

**“Convene an appeals panel comprising members selected by the Chair of the Executive Committee as required to hear and determine all disciplinary and other appeals arising under the relevant conditions of service for all the boards; employees as provided in section 68 b) of the Code of Governance and advise on appeals from senior managers and/or the Chief Executive Officer.”**

2. Committees and Advisory Groups are usually appointed at the AGM. Additional and new members were invited to the HRAG after the AGM. The Board is asked to appoint the new HR Advisory Group.

### Item 11.3 Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 update

**Author:** Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning

**Purpose of Report:** To update the Board on the implications of the passing into law of the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023, in particular section 245 which amends provisions of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 pertinent to the management of AONBs.

#### Background

1. The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 received Royal Assent on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2023. The Act makes significant changes to the operation and governance of local government in England, including significant reforms to the planning system. There is some way to go before your officers will have an informed understanding of exactly how those changes are likely to affect the Board's operations, both in terms of our engagement with the planning system specifically and our local authorities more generally. This will be a focus for officers and for the Planning Committee over the coming weeks and months.
2. The purpose of this paper, however, is to highlight the potential implications of section 245 of the Act, which will come into effect on Boxing Day. This provision is the result of an amendment proposed at the last minute in the House of Lords, which was accepted and supported by the Government.
3. Section 245 is a rather convoluted piece of legislation<sup>1</sup> in that it has been drafted to account for the different legislative needs of the different types of protected landscapes in England (National Parks, the Broads, and AONBs), combined with a need to separate the law in England from that applying in Wales. Focusing on the application of the provision to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England (and at some distance from Wales) (ss.245(5-10)), there are three aspects of importance.
4. **Strengthening the duty under section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000** (s.245(6)): s.85 of CROW currently places a duty on all public bodies (defined in the Act, but essentially this includes any public body from a government department to a parish council, including statutory undertakers) that when "exercising or performing any functions in relations to, or so as to affect" land in an AONB, to "have regard to" the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of that AONB.
5. This is the duty that is at the heart of, particularly, the Board's influence on decisions that affect the use of land in the AONB and its setting. It is a far-reaching duty, but not necessarily a strong one, because the legal test is simply that the public body "has regard to" the AONB's purposes. In performing their functions, the body can just recognise that the AONB exists, and determine that their activity is more important than the conservation and enhancement of the AONB. Nonetheless, where a public body cannot demonstrate that they have been through this process, their activities can be challenged, and this is indeed the basis of the Mend The Gap project which resulted from National Rail/GWR

<sup>1</sup> Full text: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/55/section/245/enacted>

being unable to demonstrate that they had considered either the Chilterns or North Wessex Downs AONBs in their electrification plans.

6. The new Act changes the duty from “have regard to” to “seek to further the purposes” of conservation and enhancement. Government’s officials have been at pains to convey that this is intended to indicate a step-change in the application of the duty, and that it has been considered carefully by senior government lawyers. This will of course require testing through the courts, but the general consensus is that this will make a difference, since any decision or activity will need to demonstrate how any opportunities for the purposes to be furthered have been sought, and what options were considered, and why they were rejected.
7. Exactly what it means to “further” the AONB purposes could be affected by subsequent regulations in relation to the content and preparation of Management Plans (see below).
8. **Strengthening the duty placed on Conservation Boards under s.87 of the CROW Act (s.245(7)):** This provision similarly strengthens (or makes more onerous, depending on one’s point of view) the duty placed on AONB Conservation Boards ourselves from having “regard” to the Board’s statutory purposes, to, again, seeking to “further” those purposes. A Conservation Board’s statutory purposes continue in all other respects as before.
9. **Changes affecting the nature, preparation and implementation of Management Plans (s.245(8-9)):** While the Act itself does not make these changes, it empowers the Secretary of State to define regulations that could have a significant impact on Management Plans, including their nature and the means by which they are prepared and implemented.
10. First, the regulations may require that Management Plans contribute to meeting certain targets defined in relation to the Environment Act 2021. These targets are understood to relate to the environmental outcomes framework that Defra intended to publish earlier this year, the absence of which is one of the reasons why Defra have allowed for Management Plan reviews to be delayed by up to a year.
11. Second, the regulations may set out more precisely how Management Plans “must” further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB. This is clearly related to changing the duty of regard to a duty to further those purposes. It is not yet clear how regulations could be drawn up for this purpose which would recognise the manifold circumstances of different protected landscapes – it may be that this is better achieved through the revised Management Plan Guidance currently in preparation.
12. Finally, and potentially most importantly, the regulations may set out how public bodies (the same set of bodies subject to the s.85 “duty to seek to further”) “may or must” “contribute to the preparation, implementation or review” (emphasis added) of a Management Plan. This potentially would have the effect of binding the activities of any public body not just to furthering the purposes of the AONB in non-specific way, but to specifically deliver on the objectives of the Management Plan. It could also go beyond affecting the incidental activities of those bodies, but also dictate what the activities of those bodies should be in relation to an AONB. While this could be incredibly positive for the delivery of Management

Plans, it might also encourage stakeholders to seek to ensure that Management Plans are less specific and/or less ambitious.

13. The Board is advised to take the changes to the CROW Act into account as it goes forward with reviewing the Management Plan. Care will need to be taken to ensure that our stakeholders are kept apprised of the changes and their implications as matters are clarified, especially through any new published guidance or regulations.

### **Recommendation**

- 1. That the Board NOTES the contents of this paper.**



**Item 12. Integrated Strategic Workstreams**

**Author:** Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy & Planning

**Purpose of Report:** To update the Board on the Integrated Strategic Workstreams programme, and confirm existing and/or seek new members for three relevant TFGs.

**Background**

1. At its meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023, the Executive Committee considered a paper setting out progress and future action with regard to integrating activity on some of CCB's key strategic workstreams, and endorsed the approach to seeking to optimise connections between those workstreams, including a broad programme of work.
2. The connections identified include those between three significant Task and Finish Groups (TFGs): those relating to Governance (chaired by John Nicholls), the long-term Vision (chaired by Hector Sants), and the review of the Management Plan (chaired by Gemma Harper). A key additional connection is between all of these and (a) our engagement and partnerships work, and (b) our communications work, including development of a Communications Strategy including improved understanding of our audiences.
3. The Committee endorsed a proposal for the Board's deputy chair John Nicholls to provide strategic oversight of the "Integrated Strategic Workstreams" programme, supporting the Head of Strategy and Planning in that regard, and reporting to the Executive Committee. (More details are given in the draft Executive Committee minutes.)
4. To support this, the Committee is now seeking the Board to confirm the existing membership of the three TFGs, and/or seek volunteers for new members. There are benefits in having members shared between the TFGs. It is also possible to co-opt people who are not Board members onto the TFGs.
5. The current TFG memberships are as follows:
6. **Governance TFG:** John Nicholls (chair), Charles Hussey, Colin Courtney, Adrian Watney and Richard Newcombe. Lynn Lloyd was a member until her membership of the Board ended earlier this year: Lynn's expertise would be welcomed as a possible co-optee.
7. **Vision TFG:** Hector Sants (chair), John Nicholls, Robert Carington, Joseph Stewart.
8. **Management Plan TFG:** Gemma Harper (chair), Hector Sants (agreed at Executive Committee).

**Recommendations**

1. That the Board NOTES progress with the Integrated Strategic Workstreams programme.
2. That the Board CONFIRMS the current membership of the TFGs, and SEEKS new members, from volunteers from the Board's membership, and/or suggesting candidates as co-opted members.

**Item 13. Report of Planning Committee**

**Author:** Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy & Planning

**Purpose of Report:** To update the Board on the work of the Planning Committee and seek the Board's guidance on whether and how to update its position on HS2.

**Background**

1. Article 8(j) of the Code of Governance provides that meetings of the Board should "receive and consider the minutes and recommendations of committees". The purpose of this provision is not to amend or approve the draft minutes, which is a function of the subsequent meeting of the relevant Committee, but to keep the Board apprised of the work of the Committees and provide space in the Board agenda to consider any recommendations made by the Committee that are not specifically considered elsewhere on the agenda. The Board may also take the opportunity to reflect on the work of the Committee and steer the Committee's priorities or work programme.
2. The draft minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2023 are attached to this paper for the above purpose.
3. The following observations and updates are made with regard to the draft minutes.

**Recruitment of additional Planning Officer (draft minute 23/24.16):**

4. Recruiting a temporary part-time planning officer continues to be unsuccessful. Negotiations with specialist temporary staff agencies and ongoing appeals to our networks have not yet resulted in any positive leads. A number of people have suggested a variety of possible alternative solutions such as using volunteers, year-out students, recent graduates, etc. While suggestions are of course welcomed, it is essential for this purpose that we engage an experienced professional, to avoid the need to invest significant time in training/coaching and quality control of the postholder's work, reducing any benefit gained from the exercise in terms of freeing up capacity elsewhere.

**Lighting Position Statement (draft minute 23/24.16, draft resolutions 1 & 2):**

5. Capacity has affected progress with finalising the Lighting Position Statement, and it has not been possible to circulate a draft to Planning Committee for comment and sign off by the Committee Chair for approval at this Board meeting, as anticipated at the Committee. These actions are now proposed to be deferred with the expectation of approval at the Board meeting in March 2024.

**HS2 Position (draft minute 23/24.16):**

6. Capacity has also affected officers' ability to collect evidence and draft options for a revised CCB position on HS2 following the recent announcements that Government has withdrawn support for the construction of HS2 north of Birmingham, and has withdrawn public funding for the completion of the line between Old Oak Common, west of London, and the intended terminus at London Euston Station (Government maintains in-principle support for this

connection, but is now seeking private sector financing for what is an incredibly expensive piece of infrastructure.)

7. Officers' initial view is that the permanent cancellation of the northern section(s) of HS2, and the removal of certainty over the delivery of the connection between a west London suburb and the centre of the capital, (a) critically undermines the strategic economic case for HS2 as a means of using rail connectivity to help "level up" the English regions, and (b) fatally undermines the often-stated justification for HS2 as saving 20 minutes on the normal rail journey time between Birmingham and London.
8. This means that the key justification for HS2 is now its potential to relieve capacity on existing routes between London and Birmingham (including rail, road and air). The extent to which that aspect of HS2's objectives will be met depends on how the railway is planned to connect with centres of population and of economic activity, and to other transport services. Officers' initial assessment is that the railway as currently proposed is not sufficiently well-connected to achieve this objective, and risks becoming a white elephant – further research is needed.
9. CCB's current position on HS2 is that it will have a significant and lasting negative impact on the Chilterns AONB, and our focus since the project was given the go-ahead has been to secure the best possible outcome for the environment despite the decision. We have been pursuing this in three key ways: (a) holding HS2 to account through its various local engagement vehicles, including the design review panel, (b) employing HS2 funding to deliver environmental enhancement projects, and (c) responding to consultations on the "schedule 17" applications and similar consent processes.
10. The initial question for the Board is, in the light of the changes to the extent and connectivity of HS2, is there a case for CCB to change its public position on the project? For example:
  - Should CCB advocate for the construction of HS2 through the Chilterns to stop? This would have to also call for structures to be removed and the landscape restored. It's not currently considered that this is a sensible option, given how far construction has progressed, and the cost of removal/restoration.
  - Are there other options we could explore and advocate? For example, one approach might be that since the railway is being constructed through the Chilterns, then there may be opportunities to secure benefits for the Chilterns and local communities that had previously been rejected on the basis of the desire for the line to operate at "high speed". For example, providing stations/interchanges at Aylesbury and at Calvert (where HS2 crosses East-West Rail) could improve connectivity, thereby enabling HS2 to relieve capacity more effectively on roads and other railways passing through the Chilterns.
  - Given internal capacity constraints, it may of course be preferable to take no new action, and continue with our existing interactions with the design and construction processes.

**London Luton Airport Expansion NSIP examination (draft minute 23/24.18):**

11. This area of work has been taking up a considerable proportion of the planning team's capacity, with good cause given the potential significance of the

proposal's long-term impact on the Chilterns AONB. Officers have attended relevant sittings of the examination online and in person, and assisted the examination panel with additional evidence that the panel has requested. The planning adviser is currently working with the panel, the development promoters and other stakeholders on developing a potentially ground-breaking new methodology for assessing the impacts of aviation activity on the special qualities of protected landscapes.

12. Our impression so far is that we have shifted the perspective of the examination in terms of the weight that needs to be applied both to the existing AONB and its potential new boundaries in considering the proposal.
13. The examination runs until February, and the Panel should report to the Secretary of State in May, with a final decision required by law by August 2024.

### **Recommendation**

1. That the Board NOTES the content of this report and the draft minutes of the October meeting of the Planning Committee.
2. That the Board OFFERS OBSERVATIONS on the work of the Committee to be considered at the next Planning Committee meeting, and going forwards.
3. That the Board CONSIDERS the issue of HS2 and determines whether its current position on HS2 should be revised, and if so a broad approach to be explored/investigated by Officers and Planning Committee.



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE OF THE CHILTERN'S  
CONSERVATION BOARD**

**held on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2023 at CCB offices, The Lodge, 90 Station  
Road, Chinnor OX39 4HA commencing at 10.00 AM**

**Present:**

Cllr Charles Hussey	Board Member
John Nicholls	Board Member
Cllr Sue Rowland	Board Member - Chair
Cllr Jon Tankard	Board Member
Cllr Adrian Watney	Board Member - Deputy Chair

**In attendance:**

Deirdre Hansen	Clerk to the Board & minute taker
Elaine King	Chief Executive Officer
Mike Stubbs	Planning Advisor
Matt Thomson	Head of Strategy & Planning

Chris Hannington	Co-opted member attended remotely
Paul Hayes	Co-opted member attended remotely

No public present.

The Chair welcomed all present and introductions were made.

**23/24.11. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from Board members Cllr Paula Hiscocks, Cllr Jane MacBean and Cllr Sally Symington.

**23/24.12. Declarations of Interest**

None.

**23/24.13. Minutes of the meeting 26<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

The minutes of the meeting held 26<sup>th</sup> July 2023 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

**23/24.14. Matters Arising from the minutes**

All items covered on the agenda.

**23/24.15. Public Questions**

No public present.

**Agenda item 6 National Trust “Protecting Our Roots” programme at the Ashridge Estate was moved further down the agenda as they were due to attend the meeting at 10.30.**

**23/24.16 The Planning Committee Work Programme**

The Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson, had provided an update for the Committee on progress with the work programme.

1. **Recruitment:** the Executive Committee has agreed the release of additional funding to employ a part-time Planning Officer to backfill for the Head of Strategy and Planning while he is spending time on Strategy and the Management Plan. It is a struggle to find a suitable applicant. Members were asked if they had any contacts, a job pack can be circulated.
2. **Lighting Position Statement:** the Peer Review with technical appendix has been completed, the CCB officers are reviewing this. They expect to circulate it by email to the Planning Committee members for comment the first week of November. Comments to be returned by mid-November with the intention to take the Position Statement to the Board in December.
3. **Real-Time System:** the Microsoft Teams platform for the Real-Time System is in place and Committee members have been given access to it. Some members have been having problems accessing the system. Officers have lacked capacity to add material and there are some issues with handling databases. The user instructions for accessing and interpreting data have not yet been completed. Members were asked to provide feedback on their attempts on interacting with the system.
4. **HS2:** following the Prime Minister’s decision to cancel the remaining section of HS2 north of Birmingham to Manchester and rumours that the planned connection to Euston Station in Central London might be cancelled terminating the line at Old Oak Common the reduced connectivity undermines the business case to continue the line to Birmingham. Much damage to the environment in the Chilterns AONB has already been done, probably irreversible. It is noted that the issues are extremely complex. Concern was expressed about mitigation for the harm to the Chilterns AONB. The CCB has a formal position on HS2 mitigation approved by the Board. It was agreed that the Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson would present a draft statement to the Board in December. He will circulate it to the Planning Committee members first for comment.  
Agenda item 7 was halted.

**23/24.17 Chris Miller, National Trust General Manager Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire, and David White, National Trust Project Manager for the Ashridge Gateway project joined the meeting online and agenda item 6 was introduced.**

They jointly gave a presentation on Protecting Our Roots at the Ashridge Estate, a landscape scale strategy plan for the Ashridge Estate.

Members had to opportunity to ask questions and make comments.

Chris Miller and David White were thanked for their presentation and left the meeting.

Agenda item 7 was resumed.

**5. Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill:**

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill is expected to come into effect in the New Year. Officer will report in greater deal to the Board now there is more certainty. Some last minutes amendments to the Bill may prove to have significant effect for protected landscapes.

- a. It changes the “duty of regard” in S85 of the CRoW Act to “duty to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing ..” etc.

- b. It empowers the Secretary of State to issue regulations requiring public bodies to contribute to the “preparation, implementation and review” of the Management Plans and to define how they must do this.

Defra is rushing to get guidance out and has asked the CCB for support and help with this. The Head of Strategy and Planning will provide more information at the next Board meeting.

#### **6. Chilterns AONB Boundary Review**

Natural England have completed their field evaluation of the area of search for the potential extension on the Chilterns AONB. The report is still confidential. It is intended to commence engagement with stakeholders next month and public engagement summer 2024.

- 1. The Committee AGREED that officers will circulate the latest draft of the Lighting Position Statements electronically and SEEK comments from Committee Members by email.**
- 2. The Committee AUTHORISES the Chair to approve a final draft to be referred to the Board’s December meeting for approval.**
- 3. The Committee NOTED the updates and review.**

**Agenda item 8. Policy Update was moved further down the agenda.**

#### **23/24.18. Development Management response and updates**

The Planning Advisor, Mike Stubbs, advised the Committee of 12 new comments/objections/responses that had been made. Since July three applications were granted to which the CCB had made supportive comments, two applications were refused to which the CCB had raised objections. Two appeals were dismissed to which the CCB had objected and one granted to which the CCB had raised objection.

Particular note was made of the following Appeals/Planning Applications:

- 21/040008/MFA Berkhamsted Golf Driving Range Spring Garden Lane, Northchurch, Berkhamsted. CCB comments/holding objection. The buildings don’t meet the Chilterns Building design guide.
- 23/02077/APP Land to the south of Bishopstone off Kimblewick Road, Dinton. CCB comments on the setting and cumulative assessment similar as for 22/00986/APP Callie’s Solar Farm, Ford. Refused by AVDC. CCB comments on setting and cumulative assessment.
- 23/01894/FUL. Frithsden Vineyard, Frithsden Lane, Frithsden. CCB holding objection on the visual impacts.
- 23/07332/FUL. Hutton Farm Estate, OS parcel 5940 Main Road, Rotten Row, Hambleden. Demolition of existing farm buildings and the erection of a shooting lodge. The CCB had objected to an earlier planning application which had been withdrawn. Cllr Charles Hussey made a declaration of interest as a Hambleden Parish Councillor and withdrew from the discussion. The meeting discussed this application and agreed to continue the objection. The application is contrary to DM44.
- Case reference AS-057, an NISP, Luton Rising- Luton Airport expansion plan. The Planning Advisor had attended the examination. The Secretary of State had allowed the appeal to increase the passenger flow from 18m p.a. to 19m p.a. with several conditions. Luton is looking to increase the number even further. It is felt that the need and the economic case for this increased passenger through put has not been proven. Further comment can be made up to the deadline of 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023. The Planning Advisor will keep the Planning committee updated.
- Planning appeal 3323268 Land West of Thame Road, Chinnor. This appeal is ongoing and evolving.



- Appeal 3296251 Papist Way, Cholsey. The appeal has been dismissed. The CCB had objected, but the inspector had dismissed the appeal on other grounds. It was noted that SODC no longer have a 5-year housing supply.
- 22/06443/ULEA land adjacent south side Marlow Road and A404 junction Westhorpe Park, Little Marlow. The CCB objected, the development is harmful to the setting of the AONB.

**1. The Committee NOTED and ENDORSES the responses made in connection with the applications as listed.**

Agenda item 8.

**23/24.19. Policy Update**

The Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson, gave a report on policy developments and consultations since the July Planning Committee meeting.

Since the July meeting the CCB has responded to:

1. **DLUHC consultation** on “additional flexibilities to support housing delivery, the agricultural sector, businesses, high streets and open prisons: and a call for evidence on nature-based solutions, farm efficiency projects and diversification (mainly relating to permitted development rights). The proposed reforms will weaken current planning controls over the conversion of agricultural buildings and some existing tourist accommodation to residential use in the AONB. Councils already have appropriate controls in place. The proposed planning reforms could lead to development harmful to the rural and tourist economy of the Chilterns.
2. **DLUHC consultation** on operational reforms to the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) consenting process. Reforms to the rules and processes that govern decisions on NSIPs. The CCB as a conservation board is deemed a statutory consultee. The CCB has put the case that all other AONBs and partnerships should be given equal status and given statutory consultee status in the NSIP application process.
3. **Changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**  
DLUHC issued a revised edition of the NPPF including changes to policy for onshore wind development. The CCB had fed into the consultation through a response from the National Association of AONBs. The main changes are:
  - a. A new footnote noting that wind energy development can be delivered through Local, Neighbourhood and Community Right to Build Development Orders. Community led support is required and restrictions that should apply in the AONB are still relevant.
  - b. Emphasising the benefits of reusing existing renewable energy sites to increase capacity or extend life has been added. This still includes a reference to the impacts of the proposals being acceptable.

**1. The Committee NOTED the contents of this report and ENDORSED the responses made on the two consultations above.**

**23/24.20 Urgent Business**

1. The CEO, Elaine King thanked the Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson and the Planning Advisor, Mike Stubbs for all the work they do not only the Planning work, but the extra work for staff, NAAONB and Defra.
2. The Planning Advisor thanked Katie Miller, Planner Kent Downs AONB for her work on appeal 3307648 by Vineyard Farms Ltd. The development proposed is construction of a new winery building including café/restaurant and visitor centre with energy centre, car park, access road and landscaping. This appeal was dismissed and the case could be used in future appeals.

**23/24.21 The next meeting was agreed as Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2024@2pm.**

**Future dates:**

**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2024@10am**

**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> July 2024@5pm**

**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2024 @2pm**

**The Chair.....**

**Date.....**

<b>Item 14</b>	<b>Update on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)</b>
<b>Author:</b>	Annette Weiss, Head of Engagement and Partnership
<b>Purpose of the report:</b>	To update the Board on EDI progress since the last meeting
<b>Recommendation:</b>	That the Board notes the update on EDI in particular the need for additional resource to support this growing area of work – a strategic priority for the CCB.

- Greater visibility has been given to the CCB's [EDI ambition statement](#), accessibility information and EDI engagement on our website. We have added new content on a new [Accessible Chilterns](#) page. We are continuing to expand and improve this information, incorporating learnings from the accessibility surveys and expertise provided by disability groups over the last few months.
- We held a Widening the Welcome workshop in September focusing on how to make visiting the Chilterns more accessible and inclusive. Over 55 people from a cross section of organisations attended including those from the countryside and conservation sector, visitor attractions as well as farms, community groups and hospitality businesses. One of the aims of the workshop was to generate ideas and collaboration for accessibility projects with a view to the forthcoming [Defra access funding](#). In addition to the £261,480 of funding we were expecting in 2024/25, we have also secured £54,000 of additional Defra funding for 2023/24 and are in the process of allocating this funding.
- We will be offering some disability training (including neurodiversity) to staff and Board members in Jan/Feb, details to be confirmed shortly. Additional training resource will be required in 2024/25 to support staff with their EDI work and trialling pilot activities.
- We will soon be publishing the groundbreaking research that we commissioned through the Chalkscapes project (funded by NLHF) on “Access to greenspaces – co-creating spaces for helping diverse communities to use green spaces and the countryside”. Carried out by the University of Bedfordshire Institute of Health Research, it is the biggest survey of its kind in the country. We hope it will lead the way in informing how we can better connect diverse communities with nature and, in this context, we are seeking opportunities to develop a Community Targeted Outreach Programme in Luton.
- The National Landscapes Association (NLA) has been successful with its ‘Nature Calling’ Arts in the Landscape bid to Arts Council England, in partnership with Activate Performing Arts. The Chilterns is one of six main hubs, involving a 2 year programme working with diverse communities in Luton to co-create nature based activities. This is a major boost to taking forward our EDI engagement aspirations in the northern Chilterns and will incorporate learning from the University of Bedfordshire research. The NLA is currently recruiting an Arts Development Manager to deliver this project and its wider arts engagement ambitions – [see here](#) for details of the role and Nature Calling programme. The kick-off meeting with key partners will take place 11 December and the programme will be officially launched and widely promoted in January.
- We continue to deliver EDI engagement through our projects, partnerships and communications. Additional resource is needed to support this area of work and we are currently looking at ways to resource this.
- A focus over the next few months is on building EDI contacts and stakeholder relationships as part of the CCB's Integrated Management Workstreams.

<b>Item 15.1</b>	<b><u>Landscape Team update</u></b>
<b>Author:</b>	Kate Heppell, Head of Landscape
<b>Summary:</b>	This report provides an update on three areas of strategic activity involving the landscape team which have been initiated since the last Board meeting in Sept 2023.
<b>Purpose of Report:</b>	To update the Board on strategic activities being carried out by the landscape team.
<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b>That the Board NOTES the update on landscape team activity.</b>

### **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. One bid for funding to support this cluster over the next two years is currently awaiting decision (Rothschild Foundation).

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 potential source of funding to our Chilterns farm clusters, which helps deliver projects relating to nature, climate, people and place.

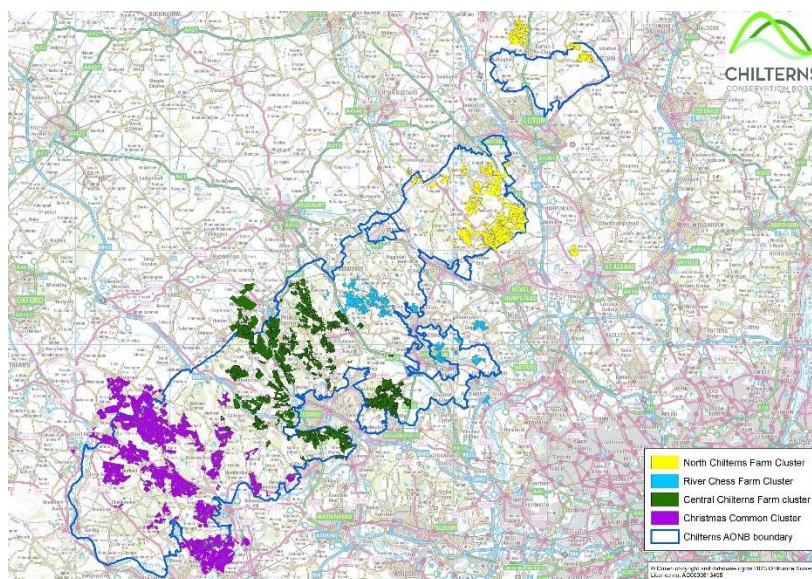


Figure 1 Location of four farm clusters in the Chilterns AONB

Working with the farming community through farm clusters is 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.

## 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.

**Item 15.2**                      Chilterns AONB Nature Recovery Ambition Statement

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

**Purpose of Report:**        To update the Board 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 15 months.

**Background:**                See attached report

**Recommendation:**        **That the Board NOTES the update on Nature Recovery.**



## 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).

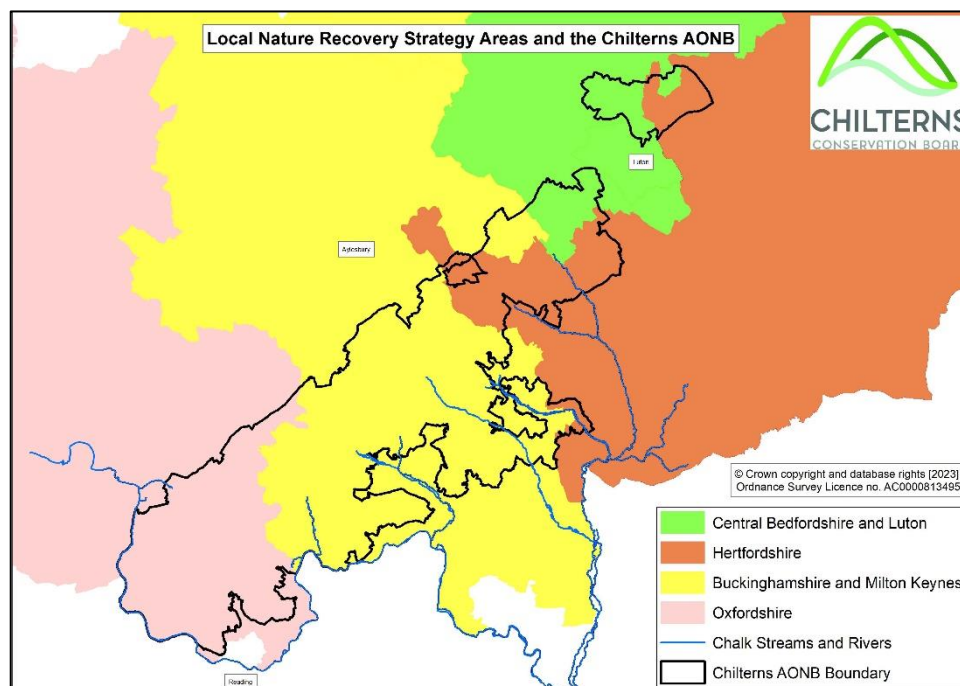


Figure 1 Map of Chilterns AONB showing the location of the four local authorities currently preparing Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

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)