



Chilterns National Landscape

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

Thursday 14th March 2024 at 10.00am at

**The Paralympic Room, The Gateway Offices, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury,
Buckinghamshire HP19 8FF (Buckinghamshire 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 (12.12.23)
5. Matters arising
6. Public Question Time
7. Chairman's Update
8. Chief Executive Officer's Update (p)
9. Finance and Business Planning
 - 9.1 Quarter 3 Finance Report (p)
 - 9.2 Quarter 3 Delivery Report (p)
 - 9.3 2024/25 Core Budget (p)
 - 9.4 2024/25 High Level Delivery Approach and Plan (p)
 - 9.5 Funding Update (p)
10. Strategy and Governance
 - 10.1 Management Plan Review (p)
 - 10.2 Governance Review update and proposals for next steps (p)
11. HR Strategy update and HR Advisory Group
 - 11.1 HR Strategy and Implementation Plan (p)
 - 11.2 HR Advisory Group update [v]
12. Report of Planning Committee (p)
13. Any urgent business
14. Next meeting: Thursday 20th June 2024 at 1700hrs. Location tbc.

The meeting will be followed by a presentation by Professor Gurch Randhawa, Professor of Diversity in Public Health & Director of the Institute for Health Research, University of

Bedfordshire, on their research report, commissioned by the Chilterns National Landscape as part of its Chalkscapes project, *Co-creating Spaces for Supporting Diverse Communities to use Greenspaces and the Countryside*.

Future meeting dates 2024

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

Dr Elaine King, Chief Executive Officer

Summary of Actions Required

Agenda number	Agenda item	Actions required
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 (12.12.23)	APPROVE
5	Matters arising	
6	Public Question Time	
7	Chairman's Update	
8	Chief Executive Officer's Update (p)	NOTE
9	Finance and Business Planning	
9.1	Quarter 3 Finance Report (p)	NOTE
9.2	Quarter 3 Delivery Report (p)	NOTE
9.3	2024/25 Core Budget (p)	APPROVE & NOTE
9.4	2024/25 Delivery Plan (p)	APPROVE
9.5	Funding Update (p)	NOTE
10	Strategy and Governance	
10.1	Management Plan Review (p)	APPROVE
10.2	Governance Review update and proposals for next steps (p)	APPROVE
11	HR Strategy update and HR Advisory Group	
11.1	HR Strategy and Implementation Plan (p)	APPROVE
11.2	HR Advisory Group update [v]	
12	Report of Planning Committee (p)	CONSIDER & NOTE
13	Any urgent business	
14	Next meeting: Thursday 20 th June 2024 at 1700hrs. Location tbc.	

CCB Board Meeting

Tuesday 12th December 2023

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

**Held at the Wycombe Area Offices of Buckinghamshire Council, Queen
Victoria Road, High Wycombe HP11 1BB on Tuesday 12th December 2023 at
10.10am.**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Appointed by Local Authorities

Cllr Philip Spicer

Appointing Body

Central Bedfordshire Council

Appointed by the Secretary of State

Colin Courtney

Secretary of State

Gemma Harper

Secretary of State

Paul Mains

Secretary of State

John Nicholls

Secretary of State

Simon Mortimer

Secretary of State

John Shaw

Secretary of State

Joseph Stewart

Secretary of State

Elected by Parish Councils

Cllr Charles Hussey

Buckinghamshire

Cllr John Griffin

Oxfordshire

Cllr Adrian Watney

Hertfordshire

CCB Staff

Deirdre Hansen

Clerk to the Board

Graham Hurst

Finance Officer (S151 Officer)

Elaine King

Chief Executive Officer

Matt Thomson

Head of Strategy and Planning.

Eloise Small

Administration Officer

Other

Lorna Coldwell

Clerk to the CCB from 01/01/24

Simon Kearey

Chairman Chiltern Society

Sarah Wright

National Trails Project Officer

CCB Board Meeting

Tuesday 12th December 2023

1 member of the public was present.

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

23/24.19 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr David Bartholomew, Oxfordshire County Council, Tom Beeston, Chief Officer Chiltern Society, Cllr Robert Carington, Buckinghamshire Council, Cllr John Harfield, Bedfordshire Parish Councils, Cllr Paula Hiscocks, Hertfordshire County Council, Cllr Steve Jarvis, North Hertfordshire District Council Geeta Ludhra, Secretary of State appointee, Cllr Jane MacBean, Buckinghamshire Council, Cllr Richard Newcombe, Buckinghamshire Council, *Cllr James Norman, South Oxfordshire District Council, Cllr Robert Roche, Luton Borough Council, *Cllr Sue Rowland, Oxfordshire Parish Councils, *Cllr Sir Hector Sants, Buckinghamshire Parish Councils, Cllr Sally Symington, Dacorum Borough Council, Cllr Jon Tankard, Three Rivers District Council, Cllr Gareth Williams, Buckinghamshire Council.
CCB Staff:

*Andrew Brok-Doyle, Head of Operations, Kate Heppell, Head of Landscape,
*Vicki Pearce, Communications Manager and *Annette Weiss, Head of Engagement & Partnerships

*(Those * listened in on the meeting online)*

23/24.20 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest on any agenda item were made.

23/24.21 Notice of Urgent Business

The Chair had an item of urgent business

23/24.22 Minutes of the Board Meeting 12th September 2023.

The minutes of the Board meeting 12th September 2023 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair after the following amendments were made:

- By the name Cllr Paula Hiscocks, Hertfordshire Council was added as her appointing body.

23/24.23 Matters Arising

No matters arising, not covered by the agenda.

The meeting was closed to allow for public questions.

23/24.24 Public Question Time.

No public questions.

The meeting was reopened.

CCB Board Meeting

Tuesday 12th December 2023**23/24.25 Chair's Update**

The Chair, Colin Courtney, reported on his activities since the last meeting 12th September 2023 highlighting the following:

1. In September he attended a Chiltern Rangers, 10 years celebration event that recognised the excellent work that John Shaw and his team have been doing. Chiltern Rangers are an important partner to the CCB.
2. With the CEO, Elaine King, he had met with Tom Beeston, Chief Officer and Simon Kearey, Chair of the Chiltern Society. One of the topics they touched was the public perception and confusion of the roles of our respective organisations. This is something to be addressed in the rebranding and /or Management Plan.
3. He attended a Bucks Rural Forum meeting. Very enlightening with a strong farming focus.
4. He had taken part in the October Walking festival. He thanked the Head of Partnership and Engagement, Annette Weiss, and all involved in this excellent walking festival.
5. He attended various Natural England Boundary Review (MAG) meetings. Consultation on this is now expected in the spring / summer of 2024 with a recommendation to the Secretary of State by the end of 2025.
6. He had written to Natural England requesting financial support for the CCB's staff contribution to the boundary review. A response has been received from Marian Spain the Chief Executive, saying no funds are available and Defra has commenced a review of the funding formula to address inflationary pressures and disparities in AONB and National Park funding.
7. More members have come forward to join the HR Advisory Group. More members are needed for our Planning Committee (especially Secretary of State), Executive Committee (Local Authority) and Management Plan Task and Finish Group.
8. The November Executive Committee meeting had a good discussion on rebranding proposals.
9. The Executive Committee also discussed pressure on the Senior Management Team in delivering a challenging Business Plan whilst providing support to the needs of various committees, advisory groups, task and finish groups, the Natural England boundary review and more. It has been agreed that Officers will scale back on Board papers and meeting reports to reduce this administrative burden.
10. We are reviewing and updating CCB policies which in itself is a major administrative workload. Board members Hector Sants and Paul Mains have agreed to assist the Head of Operations, Andrew Brock-Doyle.
11. He attended a Defra meeting regarding the appointment process for Secretary of State members. Defra advised that it is looking at reviewing the current quorate requirements for meetings that exclude online attendees.

CCB Board Meeting

Tuesday 12th December 2023

12. He commented on the recent Government announcement on Protected Landscapes, such as the plan to designate a new National Park and additional funding, saying the Chair and the CEO believe that it would not be productive to discuss this any further or make plans until we receive more clarity from Defra.

1. The Board NOTED the update.

23/24.26 Chief Executive's Update

The CEO, Elaine King, had given a comprehensive report on activities since the 12th September Board meeting. She highlighted the following:

1. Green Finance: the CEO read out a statement from the Head of Landscape, Kate Heppell.
 "A member of her staff has been approached by a charity called Rebel Restoration (the 'environmental donation arm' of a new energy company called Rebel Energy) about the possibility of c. £100K funding to support our New Shoots programme and two grassland restoration projects in 2024. This has raised questions about whether CCB can raise funds through charitable or corporate donations under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

At the same time this approach has highlighted the need to create a due diligence and ethics charter procedure for work with new organisations - this is quite pressing given emerging green finance opportunities. We are meeting with the National Parks Partnership, who have more experience of this through their 'Revere' initiative, in January to explore what such a due diligence and ethic charter procedure might look like.

The deadline to send project information to Rebel Restoration is mid-January. The CCB does not have a full due diligence/ethics procedure set up in this timescale, Board members with legal and/or relevant experience are asked to form a small working group to act as a sounding board and consider the Rebel Restoration offering in early January".

Members held a brief discussion on funding. The Government has stated that protected landscapes need to find private funding. Members recognised that private investment is needed for nature recovery. The CCB will need to look at due diligence procedures. Hector Sants offered to assist. Board members were invited to contact the Head of Landscape and the Deputy Chair if they felt able to assist. It was also recognised that we are having discussions with National Parks who have done a lot of work already on Green Finance.

2. The Chalkscapes project commissioned ground breaking research exploring the barriers and enablers for diverse communities using green spaces and the countryside. The research has been carried out by the University of Bedfordshire's Institute of Health Research. The report will be published soon

CCB Board Meeting

Tuesday 12th December 2023

and should lead the way in informing how we can better connect diverse communities with greenspace and the countryside. We will now be seeking funding to develop a Community Targeted Outreach Programme in Luton and High Wycombe. Once the research is published it will be circulated to members.

3. The Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson, gave a brief update on meetings with Defra and the National Landscapes Association that he had attended on behalf of the CEO.
 - a. Funding news: Defra' has announced an additional £10m for National Parks and National Landscapes/AONBs for 24/25, split 50/50. Each NL/AONB will get a share of the £5m, with discussions ongoing as to how the funds will be split.
 - b. This additional spend for 24/25 is intended for Defra to have a higher base line for National Parks/National Landscapes and normalise the spend for future years. It also shows the Government's commitment to protected landscapes going forward.
4. An assessment has been announced for a new National Park. More will be announced in the middle of 2024. However, it is to be noted that 2024 will see a spending review and most likely a general election. The work to identify an area for a new National Park will not have an impact on the Boundary Review in the Chilterns.

The CEO was thanked. The CEO thanked the staff team for all their hard work, which the Chair endorsed.

1. The Board NOTED the update.

23/24.27 Finance and Budget

1. Finance Report:

The Finance Officer, Graham Hurst, had provided a summary report on core funding and project funding for the seven months to 31st October 2023.

Core funding:

1. Core Income was £592k in line with expectations. Defra has paid its full annual allocation, showing five months £214k received in advance.
2. Staff costs are £87k less than budget which is in line with the budgeted £107k recharge for the period.
3. Exceptional costs of £70k have been included in the management accounts.
4. After exceptional costs there is a core surplus of £135k, however £214k of this is income in advance. If the CCB finance remain on budget, the outturn is expected to show a £70k deficit resulting from the exceptional expenses, which will be met from reserves.

Project funding:

1. Income received from projects year to date is £1.632m with costs of £746k and £886k to be transferred to project reserves. This does not represent a

CCB Board Meeting

Tuesday 12th December 2023

surplus, but reimbursement of project costs paid in advance, as all projects are budgeted on a break-even basis.

2. The latest Chalk Cherries Chairs grant claim has been submitted for £246,777, monies expected by 15/12/23. The finances for the project are now up to date.

Budget 2024/25:

The 24/25 budget is currently in draft and may change materially with the additional Defra funding for 24/25 announced on 29 November. We are awaiting our allocation to include in a new draft budget. It is intended to take the next draft budget to the Executive Committee in February for agreement by the Board in March.

Audit 22/23:

1. The external auditors have issued an interim report advising that we did not make provision for public rights. That provision had been made, but accidentally a period of 29 days instead of the required 30 days had been published.
2. The auditors also recommend that we formally consider the independence of our internal auditor. The Executive Committee to assess and confirm the independence of the internal auditor. **Action S151 Officer/CEO/ Chair for the Feb '24 Executive agenda.**

Members discussed the additional Defra funding. We need certainty to be able to plan strategically.

The Head of Strategy and Planning mentioned that all protected landscapes had asked Defra to give a liberal interpretation of the criteria for the additional funding.

Cllr Philip Spicer offered to help with the CCB's sustainability plans.

The Finance Officer was thanked for his work.

- 1. The Board NOTED the CCB's financial position at 31 October 2023.**
- 2. The Board NOTED the External Audit Report.**

2.Report on Quarter 2 Delivery

The Head of Operations, Andrew Brock-Doyle presented a report on progress with the CCB's Delivery Plan in Quarter 2. A full report had been presented and discussed at the Executive Committee in November.

Projects are progressing well. Highlighting the following:

- Chalk, Cherries and Chairs is back on track, entering the last year of the project.
- Mend the Gap: three large projects signed off as well as more smaller ones being signed off by the Steering Group. More tenders being prepared. A

CCB Board Meeting

Tuesday 12th December 2023

Project Support Officer has been recruited to start January 2014 for the project.

Key Risks and Issues: these were discussed at the November Executive Committee; our biggest risk is capacity constraints to deliver across the organisation.

1. The Board NOTED the Quarter 2 update and PROVIDED feedback.

3.Funding Strategy

The CEO, Elaine King, presented a report compiled with the Head of Operations, Andrew Brock-Doyle, to update the Board on progress with an emerging Funding Strategy. Approval was sought for the process for planning and assessing potential new work streams and funding applications. The report also makes key observations on the CCB's funding pipeline.

Following from the Board's request in September for visible links to resource planning and budgets, and to provide the Executive Committee with greater visibility and scrutiny of emerging work and associated funding applications, the strategy had been presented and discussed at the November Executive Committee. The strategy increases visibility and transparency to the Board.

Funding pipeline: some applications have commenced before our formal process for assessing and signing off funding applications was in place. The Finance Officer and Senior Managers have been involved in the process with oversight from the CEO.

Two major applications have been made, one to the Rothschild Foundation (£200k) and we expect to hear in December and another to Defra's Landscape Recovery Fund (£750k), which was unsuccessful. The work done on failed bids is not lost and can be repurposed.

Funding of £365k has been awarded by the CCB's Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) panel to support long term, landscape scale nature recovery on farmland through the North Chilterns Farmer cluster.

The risks to the CCB are considered small, but we do need to ensure staff capacity is available.

Board member Joseph Stewart offered assistance in writing bids.

Members discussed the funding process proposed, including assessing risks, improving communications and when to decide to continue with bids or call a halt.

1. The Board APPROVED and offered feedback on the process for planning and assessing potential new work streams and funding

CCB Board Meeting

Tuesday 12th December 2023**applications, and key observations on the CCB's funding pipeline.****4. Business Planning**

The Head of Operations, Andrew Brock-Doyle, presented a report updating the Board on progress with Annual Business Planning, ensuring an aligned understanding of process and key work areas next year and for the following three years.

The Senior Management Team has identified an approach to Annual Business Planning for the year 2024/25 that builds on what was agreed by the Board in March 2023 and also addresses key issues raised by the Executive Committee in last year's planning cycle and at the November '23 meeting.

Key principles:

- Alignment of delivery plan, budget, resources and funding.
- Staff ownership and understanding.
- Oversight by the Executive Committee and Board
- Lessons learned.
- Clear view of proposed activity for the next four years.
- Linkage to the Management Plan and statutory requirements.
- Identification of the ambition of the organisation to deliver against the strategic priorities of the organisation.
- Clear identification of the role of the CCB.

A major change has been the evolution in the way the CCB is looking at delivering its strategic objectives, as shown by the Target Operating Model, presented to the Executive Committee in November 2023.

The model was discussed extensively at the November Executive Committee and member comment incorporated accordingly.

Members asked questions on funding, staffing, operational effectiveness and staff wellbeing.

Staff wellbeing is a priority for the CCB and improvements will include it being addressed through new HR processes and procedures, a new HR system and training for managers.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the approach endorsed by the Executive Committee meeting November 2023 and NOTED and provided feedback on progress made to date on the annual business plan.**

23/24.28 Rebranding

CCB Board Meeting

Tuesday 12th December 2023

The CEO, Elaine King and the Deputy-Chair, John Nicholls updated the Board on the renaming of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) to National Landscapes and made recommendations.

A clear paper was presented which set out the history, the discussions at the Executive Committee, the national rebranding launch event and Government developments and commitments, as well as the reputational and funding risks involved by not accepting the rebranding.

The CCB is the only AONB that had not accepted the rebranding.

Following the September Board meeting the Deputy Chair, John Nicholls, had attended on behalf of the Chair, a meeting led by the then National Association for AONBs on the purpose of the rebranding. He subsequently wrote a report, giving updated information and seeking further views from Board members. Those that had responded showed more nuanced views. The Executive Committee considered the rebranding, and the majority view was a conditional acceptance of rebranding. The CEO and the Deputy Chair were asked by the Executive Committee to attend the rebranding launch event 22 November.

The CEO and Deputy Chair's paper set out evidence that the Government is acting to deliver the improved Purposes, Powers and Resources to National Landscapes as recommended by proposal 24 of the Landscapes Review. This work meets the criteria that the Board had set out to approve the renaming.

For example, 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 (not National Parks). The Government has also announced an additional £15m for protected landscapes and a search for a new National Park. The distribution of this money has not yet been detailed, and a continued unified National Landscapes voice will be critical in influencing Defra over the coming months and the CCB should not isolate itself, potentially damaging its reputation and funding.

The Deputy Chair highlighted the positive reasons for the rebranding. National Landscapes alongside National Park and National Trails indicates a parity of importance and visibility between all protected landscapes, which we have long sought. The launch was very successful, and was welcomed by ministers and key influencers in the sector. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act is also a step in the right direction, along with promise of a new and fairer funding formula and a more strategic and visible coming together of all AONBs as National Landscapes

Members were presented with an implementation plan if the rebranding was approved.

CCB Board Meeting

Tuesday 12th December 2023

A new logo was discussed, but not presented, as final discussions with the design agency are ongoing.

Members asked the Communication Manager to share some guidance if questioned.

Members commented positively on the Deputy Chair and CEO's paper. The fourth recommendation was amended, as Board decisions must be made at meetings in person.

1. The Board **ENDORSED** 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. The Board **RESOLVED** that implementation should be subject to adequate progress on improved purposes, powers and resources for National Landscape.
3. The Board **ACCEPTED** that the recent progress set out in the report sufficiently meets the condition in 2 above to enable rebranding to proceed.
4. The Board **APPROVED** the implementation programme as presented and **AUTHORISED** the staff to continue discussion and development of the logo and any strap line and that the outcome will be circulated to the Board for comment. The Board **AUTHORISED** the Chair and CEO to make the final decision.

23/24.29. Strategy and Governance

1. Governance Task and Finish Group (TFG) update and proposals for next steps.

The Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson, updated the Board on progress with the scheme of delegation, seeking approval for underlying principles of delegation and next steps for the Governance TFG.

The Deputy Chair, Chair of the Governance TFG, John Nicholls, presented a paper setting out the principles of delegation. If these principles are accepted by the Board, they will form an addendum to the Code of Governance.

1. The Board determines CCB strategy and the means of its implementation. These are the "Key Documents"
2. All decisions complying with the Key Documents are taken by the Chief Executive Officer without further reference to the Board.
3. Considering any decision which might extend beyond the Key Documents (5 and 6 below), the CEO consults the Chair to agree whether it would materially modify their purpose or intention. If so, or if there is no

CCB Board Meeting

Tuesday 12th December 2023

- agreement, it is referred to the Executive Committee, which refers the matter to the Board if it considers it necessary. If not, the CEO takes the decision.
4. To enable rapid responses, emails and virtual meetings will be used and the Executive Committee will act as an Advisory Group for such decisions, but with the expectation that its advice will be followed and ratified by the Board at a subsequent meeting.
 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 – to be further discussed and agreed- will be referred to the Executive Committee because of their scale and potential impact.

Governance Task and Finish Group: Future operations

The Governance TFG has made considerable progress on the overall structure of future governance arrangements.

The Board has approved its recommendation to establish a Board Advisory Group to engage stakeholders in future strategy. Work was paused awaiting the outcome of Governance work by Defra and Natural England. This work has not progress and it is suggested that the Governance TFG commences work again.

- 1. The Board ENDORSED the principles of delegations set out above as the basis for detailed work by the Governance TFG to review and revise all documentation relating to delegations for a further report to the Board.**
- 2. The Board AUTHORISED the Executive Committee to set and keep under review the exceptional project costs referred to in 7. above.**

CCB Board Meeting

Tuesday 12th December 2023

2. Variation to the Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG) terms of reference in the Code of Governance.

The Board was asked to approve corrections to a minor inconsistency in the Terms of Reference of the HRAG in the Code of Governance.

67.d) to be amended 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.

Membership of the HRAG to be approved: Board members: Colin Courtney, Geeta Ludhra, Paul Mains (Chair), John Nicholls, Robert Roche and Sue Rowland.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the variation of 67 d) of the Code of Governance as presented.**
- 2. The Board APPROVED the appointment of the above-mentioned Board members to the HRAG.**

3. Update of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act.

The Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson, gave a report on the implications of the passing into law of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023. Section 245(6) in particular, which amends provisions in the CROW Act 2000, are pertinent to the Management Plan.

The aspects of importance are:

- a. Strengthening the duty under s85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The duty to “have regard to” the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB now changes to “seek to further the purposes” of conserving and enhancing the AONB
- b. Strengthening the duty placed on Conservation Boards under s87 of the CROW Act (S245 (7)). The duty to have “regard” to the Board’s statutory purposes is amended to seeking to “further” those purposes.
- c. Changes affecting the nature, preparation and implementation of Management Plan (s245 (8-9)). The Act empowers the Secretary of State to define regulations that could have a significant impact on Management Plans.

Officers have not yet had the opportunity to fully understand how those changes are going to affect the CCB’s operations, but this will be the focus of the Head of Strategy and Planning over the coming weeks and months.

It was noted that Defra is engaging bodies for input to interim guidance for the Act, ahead of establishing a Statutory Instrument.

- 1. The Board NOTED the contents of the paper.**

CCB Board Meeting

Tuesday 12th December 2023**23/24.30 Integrated Strategic Workstreams**

The Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson, presented a paper updating the Board on the integrated Strategic Workstreams programme, and seeking to both confirm existing membership and seek new members for three relevant TFGs.

There are three relevant TFGs to this work, the Governance TFG, chaired by John Nicholls, the Long-term Vision TFG chaired by Hector Sants and the Management Plan TFG chaired by Gemma Harper.

Currently all members of the TFGs are board members, but there is opportunity to co-op non-board members.

There are key connections between all of these groups.

Governance TFG: Current members of the TFG agreed to continue serving: Colin Courtney, Charles Hussey, Richard Newcombe, John Nicholls (Chair) and Adrian Watney. Lynn Lloyd had served on the TFG, but has since left the Board. Board members were invited to join this TFG and contact the Chair. It was agreed to ask Lynn Lloyd to join the TFG.

Long Term Vision TFG: chaired by Hector Sants, with members Robert Carington, John Nicholls and Joseph Stewart.

Management Plan TFG: chaired by Gemma Harper; members were invited to join this group. Simon Mortimer, Hector Sants and Joseph Stewart volunteered to join the TFG.

The November Executive Committee had endorsed a proposal for the Deputy Chair, John Nicholls, to provide strategic oversight of the “Integrated Strategic Workstreams” programme, supporting the Head of Strategy and Planning and reporting to the Executive Committee.

- 1. The Board NOTED progress with the Integrated Strategic Workstreams programme.**
- 2. The Board CONFIRMED and APPROVED the membership of the three TFG mentioned above. The Board will SEEK additional members from the Board and invited suitable candidates to be co-opted.**

23/24.31 Report from the Planning Committee

The Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson, gave a report on items discussed at the October Planning Committee and had presented a draft copy of the minutes of that meeting for information.

Main points:

- a. Problems with recruitment of a part-time Planning Officer

CCB Board Meeting

Tuesday 12th December 2023

- b. Lighting Position Statement - this is delay due to capacity problems.
- c. CCB - HS2 position. Capacity issues are playing a part again.
- d. London Luton Airport expansion NSIP Examination. This is taking a lot of staff time.

Members commented that a follow up on HS2 would be useful. The Planning Committee “Real time” system was raised, it is not ready yet to be rolled out to the whole Board.

The Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson and the Planning Advisor, Mike Stubbs, were thanked for all the work they do behind the scenes and with limited resources.

- 1. The Board NOTED the content of the report and the October Planning Committee meeting draft minutes.**
- 2. The Board OFFERED OBSERVATIONS on the work of the Committee to be considered at the next Planning Committee meeting and going forward.**
- 3. The Board CONSIDERED the issues of HS2. The Planning Committee to explore depending on staff capacity.**

2/24.32 Update of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

The Head of Engagement and Partnership, Annette Weiss, presented a report on progress since the last meeting.

A new major project is “Nature Calling”. This art in the landscape project is receiving funding from the Arts Council following an application by the National Landscapes Association (NLA). The Chilterns is one of six main hubs in the two year programme and for us will involve working with diverse communities in Luton to co-create nature based activities. It will enable us to engage with new audiences. The programme will be officially launched and promoted in January.

The CCB needs more resources to support the work on EDI. Members discussed Defra Access funding, our ambitions and the exciting scope of new projects. Gemma Harper offered her assistance.

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

23/24.33 Landscape Team update

The Head of Landscape, Kate Heppell, had provided a report updating the Board on the three areas of strategic activity involving the landscape team since the last Board meeting.

- a. Farm Cluster SWOT analysis
- b. Woodland Strategy

CCB Board Meeting

Tuesday 12th December 2023

c. Working together on landscape-scale nature recovery.

Members were asked to note the increased work with farmers and landowners and send any comments back to the Head of Landscape.

A report had been presented on the CCB's Nature Recovery Ambition Statement.

The Chilterns Society thanked the Head of Landscape for attending their AGM. The Head of Landscape was thanked for her support to the Mend the Gap project.

1. The Board NOTED the Landscape Team update and NOTED the update on Nature Recovery.

23/24.34 Urgent Business

1. The Board was asked to consider holding committee meetings away from the CCB's offices in Chinnor. It is the Planning Committee's intention to hold at least one meeting away from the CCB's offices.
2. This was the Clerk's last Board meeting. Deirdre Hansen is leaving the CCB at the end of December to spend more time with her family. She has worked for the CCB since 2005. She was thanked for her services to the CCB, the Board and the CEO. The Board presented her with an engraved slate plaque, as a reminder of the CCB, carved by the Deputy Chair, John Nicholls, along with a gift voucher and a gift bag. Deirdre thanked the Board for their kind words, the beautiful and thoughtful engraving and the gifts. She had been honoured to work with such dedicated, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable people. She wished them well for the exciting future ahead.

23/24.35 Meeting dates.

The next Board meeting Thursday 14th March 2024 location TBC.

Future meeting dates:

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

CCB Board Meeting

Tuesday 12th December 2023

Location tbc	Chinnor	Location tbc
--------------	---------	--------------

The Chairman.....

Date.....

Item 8. CEO Update**Author:** Elaine King, CEO**Purpose of Report:** To update the Board on key areas of work during last period.**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. During this period, these items include business planning (budget, resource planning, and setting organisational priorities, HR Strategy, finance and fundraising, governance (including schemes of delegation), external engagement 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.
- All mid-term reviews are complete, and we are now looking at annual appraisal being completed by the end of the financial year.
- See paper 11.1 for further information on updates to the CCB's HR Strategy and its implementation.

Specific changes in the team are as follows:

- Deirdre Hansen, CCB's Clerk, officially left us at the end of December to spend more time with her family. I'm pleased to say that Lorna Coldwell joined us as the new Clerk in January and we are in the process of conducting a full handover with Lorna. Lorna will work 10 hours per month.
- Sarah Hebbes - Project Support Officer - joined the Mend the Gap programme on 2 January 2024.

Senior Team

- The Senior Management Team (SMT) continues to work very well together. During this particularly busy period, we have met weekly to discuss all the elements of next year's business plan.
- Both together and individually, the SMT is making great progress on a huge range of work areas, as the papers show.

Legal support

- During this period we have explored external legal support for work such as developing and reviewing contracts and landowner agreements and have established a relationship with a local law firm.

External Engagement

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

- 11 January: Meeting to discuss statutory consultee status with other Lead Officers and the NLA. The CCB's Head of Strategy and Planning joined the meeting, given his huge expertise in this area.
- 22 January: Regular meeting with Rachael Shimmin, CEO at Buckinghamshire Council.

- 24 January: Canal and River Trust reception at the London Wildlife Trust. This provided an opportunity to share details of the Access for All programme and relevant staff are now in contact with our Head of Engagement and Partnerships.
- 25 January: Staff from Defra's Future Landscape and Farming in Protected Landscapes teams visited us for a day to see some of our work and discuss current issues. Thanks to Kate Heppell, Adrian Porter and Gareth Clay for organising the visit.
- 26 January: Regular walk and catch up with Martin Tett, Leader of Buckinghamshire Council.
- 31 January: regular catch up with Estelle Bailey, CEO at BBOWT.
- 1 February: Attended the first of two excellent disability training sessions for the CCB staff team and Board members run by Mik Scarlet, at PHAB. See item 12 for more detail.
- 16 February: I took the opportunity to visit the hugely impressive river restoration work on the Hamble Brook that the CCB has coordinated in partnership with local landowners and organisations including the National Trust and the Environment Agency. Four EA staff also joined us, so a good opportunity to discuss current matters with them.
- 21 and 22 February: Annual meeting of National Landscape Lead Officers in Birmingham.
- Attend Natural England's monthly Management Advisory Group meetings for the Chilterns Boundary review project (along with the CCB's Chair, Head of Strategy and Planning and Conservation and Landscape Officer)
- 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 National Landscapes through monthly online Lead Officer meetings and a forum on the NLA's website specifically for Lead Officers.
- I have also contributed to specific meetings on items including the new Targets and Outcomes Framework, announced by Defra in January. See item 10.1 for more detail.

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 £10m funding - which is for capital, not revenue spend - is being split £5m to National Landscapes and £5m to National Parks. Discussions are continuing with Defra and the NLA regarding the formula by which the £5m will be allocated to each National Landscape and the criteria for its use.
- Along with the Head of Operations, I am also having conversations with Defra and the NLA regarding a funding settlement for 2025/26 and a funding formula for a longer term settlement, expected to be included in the CSR 2025. These discussions include providing information on the operational impacts of rises in inflation and other pressures on our resources.

Rebranding

- Further to the Board formally agreeing to join with other National Landscapes in rebranding, feedback on the logo from all board members has been collated, which identified three areas of concern that were shared with the designers. Two new options were reviewed by the CEO and Chair, with a final version approved on 20 February.

- The rebrand to the Chilterns National Landscape officially launched on 6 March, which included an email to over 800 contacts - including partners – with a guidance toolkit, plus social media posts on a range of platforms.
- Vicki has presented the rebrand to the staff team and advised how it will affect their work around branding and voice etc, including for projects.
- The rebrand has also provided an opportunity to implement new guidance, templates and comms related assets for the staff team and have been working hard to create documents such as: a new style guide, branding guidance, a tone of voice, a PowerPoint presentation template, letterhead (and more.)

Thanks

To the Senior Management Team, as well as the whole team staff team for all their hard work, and especially Vicki in advising on and coordinating the rebranding work so effectively. Thanks too, to Colin and John who have provided valuable leadership, support and insight on a wide variety of matters.

Recommendation:

- 1. To NOTE and provide feedback on the update**

Item 9.1 **Finance Report****Author:** Graham Hurst, Finance Officer**Summary:** Finance Report 31 January 2024

1. The 10 months financials to 31 January 2024 are attached as an appendix to this report:

2. **Core 10-month summary:**
 - Income was £591k adjusted for 2 months DEFRA and Local Authority contributions received in advance, this is in line with expectations.
 - Recharges of Core staff cost, and overheads have been budgeted as income. Our accounting software cannot show the recharge of staff costs as income, instead these recharges reduce Core employment expense and allocates the cost to projects. Staff costs are £101k less than budget (after adjusting for exceptional costs).
 - The management accounts include the £70k of exceptional costs as previously advised, these are included in staff costs and legal costs.
 - The Core deficit is £71k after exceptional costs. If the CCB had not incurred these exceptional costs the 10 month financials would be in line with budget.

3. **Projects 10-month summary**
 - Income from projects for the year to date is £2.1m and costs £1.4m leaving £693k to transfer to project reserves. This is not a surplus, but reimbursement of costs paid out in advance as all projects are budgeted on a break-even basis.
 - Most projects are working within budget although Chalk Streams is still to receive its Thames Water and Affinity funding for 23/24 (£130k) which is usually received in the final quarter of the year.

4. Audit

Our external auditors in their 2022/23 report advised that we should formally consider the independence of our internal auditors, currently Hertfordshire Shared Internal Audit Services (Herts SIAS). This was discussed at the February Executive Committee meeting and no independence issues were noted.

Recommendation

- 1. To note the CCB financial position at 31 January 2024**
- 2. To note that the independence of our internal auditors has been considered with no issues arising.**

Profit and Loss

Chilterns Conservation Board

For the 10 months ended 31 January 2024

Account	Apr 2023-Jan 2024	Core	Projects
Turnover			
Advertising Income	8,166.45	8166.45	0
DEFRA	829,657.83	428,246	401412
Fee Income	262.50	0	262.5
Interest Income	59,503.58	59503.58	0
Local Authority Contribution	138,954.80	88767.5	50187.3
Other Revenue	6,600.00	6440	160
Project Income	1,652,476.47	0	1652476.47
Sale of merchandise	235.64	206.69	28.95
Total Turnover	2,695,857.27	591,330.05	2,104,527.22
Gross Profit	2,695,857.27	591,330.05	2,104,527.22
Administrative Costs			
Advertising & Marketing	11,243.80	2380	8863.8
Bank Fees	137.60	136.84	0.76
Board Meetings	585.34	585.34	0
Chess SWC Landowner Grar	19,615.69	0	19615.69
Cleaning	2,453.31	2453.31	0
Computer and IT Equipment	6,111.80	3571.23	2540.57
Consulting	134,426.46	33581.66	100844.8
Employers National Insuranc	59,523.22	33797.79	25725.43
Event costs	14,424.83	1061.07	13363.76
Finance costs	672.00	672	0
FiPL Grant	106,398.74	0	106398.74
FiPL Grant Year 3 23/24	84,545.21	0	84545.21
General Expenses	154,453.73	4028.56	150425.17
HLF Equipment and materials	7,737.71	0	7737.71
HLF Equipment and materials	7,935.93	0	7935.93
HLF Evaluation	5,443.15	0	5443.15
HLF Full Cost Recovery	15,737.25	0	15737.25
HLF Irrecoverable VAT	17,569.00	0	17569
HLF New building work	5,774.76	0	5774.76
HLF New Staff Costs	205,040.58	0	205040.58
HLF Other costs	4,185.00	0	4185
HLF Other costs (activity)	9,345.09	0	9345.09
HLF Other costs (capital)	14,724.55	0	14724.55
HLF Paid Training Placement	31,040.00	0	31040
HLF Professional fees relatin	93,812.70	0	93812.7
HLF Professional fees relatin	29,372.76	0	29372.76
HLF Publicity and promotion	2,737.28	0	2737.28
HLF Repair and conservation	54,803.37	0	54803.37
HLF Training for staff	301.67	0	301.67
HLF Training for volunteers	5,235.13	0	5235.13
HLF Travel and expenses for	1,411.61	0	1411.61
HLF Travel for staff	3,786.40	0	3786.4
Insurance	13,822.30	13822.3	0
IT Software and Consumable	7,516.58	5918.05	1598.53
IT support and maintenance	5,820.21	5006.21	814
Legal Expenses	23,366.80	23366.8	0
Light, Power, Heating	6,891.66	6891.66	0
Magazine costs	12,018.00	12018	0
Medical Insurance	4,262.47	4262.47	0
Members Allowances	5,265.55	5265.55	0
Nature Recovery	(2,426.16)	0	-2426.16
Office Equipment	859.46	383.72	475.74
Pensions Costs	112,455.20	63665.41	48789.79
Postage, Freight & Courier	425.13	341.48	83.65
Printing & Stationery	2,953.11	1212.39	1740.72
Project donations	7,000.00	7000	0
Rates and Water rates	6,066.18	6066.18	0
Recruitment	2,909.05	2909.05	0
Rent	16,375.00	13875	2500
Repairs & Maintenance	2,721.84	2721.84	0
Research and survey expend	38,078.66	18	38060.66
Salaries	655,026.74	387897.06	267129.68
Staff expenses	1,790.92	473.9	1317.02
Staff Training	12,321.73	5554.75	6766.98
Subscriptions	5,961.72	5898	63.72
Telephone & Internet	3,995.38	2392.14	1603.24
Travel Expenses	6,932.18	2130.12	4802.06
Website running costs	10,990.13	1544.98	9445.15
Total Administrative Costs	2,073,985.51	662,902.86	1,411,082.65
Operating Profit	621,871.76	(71,572.81)	693,444.57
Profit on Ordinary Activitie	621,871.76	(71,572.81)	693,444.57
Profit after Taxation	621,871.76	(71,572.81)	693,444.57

Chilterns Conservation Board
1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

Version 14Feb 24.

CORE	Reforecast 2024	Budget for 10 mths	Actual to January 2024	Notes
Income				
Advertising Income	6,250	5,208	8,166	Advertising income £8k annual amount
DEFRA	513,895	428,246	428,246	DEFRA received for 12 months. Actual relates to 10 months portion only
DEFRA Access grant		-		
Fee Income and recharge to projects	183,719	153,099		Payroll recharged monthly- £104k netted from payroll, overheads when invoiced
Interest Income	500	417	59,504	Mainly MTG to be realysed
Local Authority Contribution	106,521	88,768	88,768	All except Three Rivers and Luton have made their annual contributions. Actual relates to 10 months
Other Revenue		-	6,440	Pilio Group fees
Sale of merchandise	550	458	207	
Total Income	811,435	676,196	591,330	
Less Operating Expenses				
Advertising & Marketing	150	125	2,380	Communications strategy project - value £10554
Bank Fees	150	125	137	
Board Meetings	1,800	1,500	585	
Cleaning	2,800	2,333	2,453	
Computer and IT Equipment	3,500	2,917	3,571	Front loaded expenditure
Consulting	31,200	26,000	33,582	HR £8930, EDI £900, Planning £21750
DEFRA capital projects		-		
Employers National Insurance	49,264	41,053	33,798	Actual is less recharged to Projects £7425
Event costs	2,000	1,667	1,061	
Finance costs	9,000	7,500	672	Awaiting audit fees
General Expenses	2,000	1,667	4,029	NAAONB Conference £1785, Staff christmas £727
Insurance	5,000	4,167	13,822	Annual cost, note greater than budget, some recharge possible
IT Software and Consumables	10,000	8,333	5,918	
IT support and maintenance	7,000	5,833	5,006	
Legal expenses	750	625	23,367	Includes provn for insurance excess
Light, Power, Heating	6,500	5,417	6,892	
Magazine costs	12,000	10,000	12,018	Full year printing costs inv in advance
Medical Insurance	5,200	4,333	4,262	
Members Allowances	7,500	6,250	5,266	Noted to be reviewed
Nature Recovery	5,000	4,167	-	No spend
Office Equipment	1,500	1,250	384	
Pensions Costs	89,003	74,169	63,665	Actual is less recharged to Projects £9595
Postage, Freight & Courier	1,000	833	341	
Printing & Stationery	1,100	917	1,212	
Project donations			7,000	Funding from David Youngusband legacy
Rates and Water rates	6,825	5,688	6,066	
Recruitment	5,000	4,167	2,909	
Rent	20,500	17,083	13,875	
Repairs & Maintenance	2,000	1,667	2,722	Annual testing and monitoring fees
Research and survey expenditure	5,000	4,167	18	
Salaries	499,818	416,515	387,897	Actual is less recharged to Projects but includes other staff payments
Staff expenses	1,000	833	474	
Staff Training	5,000	4,167	5,555	EDI training
Subscriptions	5,000	4,167	5,898	AONB £2985 annual fee
Telephone & Internet	5,000	4,167	2,392	
Travel Expenses	1,500	1,250	2,130	
Website running costs	7,500	6,250	1,545	
Total Operating Expenses	817,560	681,300	662,903	
Net Loss / Profit	-6,125	-5,104	- 71,573	
Summary				
Employment costs	655,785	546,487	497,797	
Office costs	52,225	43,521	50,160	
Consultants costs	31,200	26,000	33,582	
IT costs	20,500	17,083	14,495	
Magazine and social media	19,500	16,250	13,563	
Audit and Actuary costs	9,000	7,500	672	
Other	29,350	24,458	52,633	
	817,560	681,300	662,903	

Item 9.2	Quarter 3 Summary Delivery Report
Author:	Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations
Purpose of the report:	To update the Board on CCB's progress in Quarter 3 against the Delivery Plan agreed for FY23-24
Summary:	<p>Overall progress in delivering work this quarter has generally remained either on track or slightly delayed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 delivery items reporting as completed (up from 0 in Q2 and Q1) • 20 delivery items reporting as on track (19 in Q2, 22 in Q1) • 11 delivery items reporting as having slight delays or where delivery has been slightly limited in effectiveness (down from 17 in Q2 and 14 in Q1) • and 5 delivery items reporting as significantly delayed or limited in effectiveness (up from 4 in Q2 and 3 in Q1). <p>The only area newly reporting to be significantly delayed was comms where there has had to be a clear focus of resource on rebranding with other areas being delayed</p>

1. Key Highlights by Strategic Priority

SP1: Building Organisational Resilience

- New Key Documents folder giving staff a one-stop shop for all information requirements being populated with new HR and operations materials (e.g. recruitment templates, contract templates, insurance and chemicals information)
- New work / new funding process developed and agreed to provide effective scrutiny and ensure focus on strategic delivery and affordability
- Work undertaken on Mend the Gap to review and improve all contract documents (with legal volunteer)
- New CCB delivery model identified for next year (see paper under 9.4 2024/25 Delivery Plan) against which work will be planned, assessed and delivered
- Principles of delegation proposed by the Governance ask & Finish Group approved
- Approach to collating and aligning strategy work to make it more streamlined and cohesive approved
- New full time Comms Officer appointed (to replace previous part time Comms Officer) increasing operational communications and alignment with projects
- CCB rebranding approved by the Board and plan established to develop materials for a go-live date in March

SP2: Delivering the Workstreams to which we are Committed

- Chalk, Cherries and Chairs:
 - Central Chilterns cluster incorporated as a Community Interest Company (CIC)
 - End of Year Tracking the Impact analysis undertaken with 162 out of 228 squares surveyed (no expansion into Chess area) and 168 volunteers trained on survey methods / 224 on species ID training
 - Geophysics Survey of Grims Ditch undertaken (Sep 23) using new techniques

- New Comms Officer appointed, new budgets to end of scheme confirmed with partners and quarterly claim process streamlined
- 2 trails completed for Routes of the Past and digital mapping started
- Panning for new Chalk Festival and Chair Festival started and end of scheme (Nov 2024) and legacy planning started
- Mend the Gap:
 - Community Hubs now active in Pangbourne, Goring, Whitchurch South Stoke and Cholsey, with small grants proposals in the pipeline or being delivered.
 - 12 small grant projects in delivery and 4 larger projects progressing to sign off - Withymead access works, Rectory farm chalk grassland, BBOWT Wallingford to Goring Conservation Target area project and Sulham Wetland creation
 - 5 landowners having mitigation planting on their land and tenders for work went out this quarter
- Chilterns Chalk Streams Project (CCSP) / Smarter Water catchment (SWC):
 - INNS control programme completed (Oct '23)
 - Waterbody action plan for Ewelme Brook completed, plan for Misbourne underway and one stakeholder workshop has been completed (Nov '23).
 - Phase 2 of Hamble wetland creation project completed (Nov '23)
 - Moor Rec. Flood modelling completed (Oct '23). Bucks Council has asked for further modelling to be carried out, which has been commissioned
 - All training courses for volunteers to establish monitoring sites completed
 - Water vole survey completed (Sep '23) showing population decline of 50% since 2021 (12 sites not surveyed due to volunteer capacity / access permissions)
- Farmer Clusters / Farming in Protected Landscapes:
 - Central Chilterns: Application to Rothschild Foundation (£200k) successful to support farmers develop skills and understanding of regenerative farming practice / application to Landscape Recovery unsuccessful but with encouragement from Defra to resubmit for Round 3
 - North Chilterns: 2 year FiPL funding being delivered on track (inc hedgerow work, supplementary feeding and farm carbon toolkit) and project started with Bucks Bird Club with focus on feeding Corn Buntings on 4 tenant farms at Ashridge
 - Christmas Common: support ongoing and group developed own website www.christmascommonfarmers.org/home
 - £81,000 for 13 projects approved (inc hedging, volunteer scrub clearance, chalk stream enhancement, no fence collars for grazing, orchard hedge laying)
- Chilterns Heritage and Archaeology Partnership:
 - Outcomes for heritage work on Hexton Hills NNR agreed following meetings with Natural England and Heritage England
 - New interpretation panels for 3 sites delivered
 - Bledlow Cross Management Plan written and delivered and vegetation removed
- Other
 - Autumn Walking Festival took place in Oct with 543 participants with 68% visiting one or more local businesses
 - Additional £54,000 Defra Access funding secured to be spent by March 2024 with widening the welcome workshop held
 - 4-year Open for Business tourism programme was completed at end of Dec 2023

- Natural England stakeholder event around boundary extension successfully held (Nov)
- Executive committee and Board approved light-touch review to undertaking Management Plan Review enabling roll forward of plan to Mar 2025 and statutory notifications declaring CCB’s intention to review the Management Plan sent out (Dec)
- Ongoing AONB Network engagement with focus on rebranding and development of position on new funding formula
- First working group of Nature recovery plan taken place
- Cross sector initial meeting of Chilterns Heritage and Archaeology Partnership undertaken and Steering Group established
- Chess Valley visitor guide printed and distributed. New promotional video produced
- New Arts in Landscape – Nature Calling initiative given green light with CCB as one of 6 national hubs and focused on Luton

2. Delivery Progress

Delivery Line	Q1	Q2	Q3
1.1 Empowered People			
1.3 Supportive Policies and Procedures			
1.6 Effective Business Planning, Reporting & Review			
1.7 Facilities & Infrastructure	Not started		
1.4 Effective Organisational Level Governance (Governance Review)			
1.5 Financial Resilience			
1.2 Engaging Comms			
2.3 CCC			
2.13 MTG			
2.8 CCSP / SWC			
2.2 Not Bourne Yesterday			
2.4 Chalkscapes			
2.1 HS2 Additional Projects			
2.11 Develop Farmer Clusters			
2.12 Farming in Protected Landscapes			
2.5 CHAP			
2.9 Chilterns Walking Festival			
2.10 Defra Access Fund Projects			
2.14 Open for Business			
2.6 Chilterns AONB Extension			
2.7 Enhanced Management & Governance Arrangements			Closed
3.17 AONB Longer Term Vision		Suspended	Suspended
3.18 Management Plan Review	Not started		
3.7 AONB Network Engagement			
3.8 Defra, NE and Govt Engagement			
3.10 Glover Landscape Review			
2.15 Existing & New Planning Guidance			
3.9 Development and Infrastructure Proposals			
3.10 Planning & Related Policies			
3.11 HS2 Impact			
3.12 Chilterns Building Society Awards			
3.15 Nature Recovery Ambition Statement			
3.16 Climate Mitigation			
3.13 Cultural Heritage			
3.1 Access & Visitor Management			
3.2 Health and Wellbeing / Green and Social Prescribing			Suspended
3.3 Sustainable Tourism			
3.4 Local Business & Local Economy			
3.5 EDI Engagement			
3.6 Partnership Engagement			
3.14 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Approach			

Key	Completed	In progress (on track)	In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)	In progress (significantly delayed / limited in effectiveness)	No work
-----	-----------	------------------------	---	--	---------

3. Key Risks and Issues

A number of key risks and issues were raised with the Executive Committee in Nov 2023 and these are still relevant now

- 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 lack of resource to follow up on / deliver Chalkscapes).
- Difficulty in recruiting new staff resource (e.g. in planning)

Recommendation:

- 1. To NOTE the Quarter 3 update and provide feedback**

Item 9.3 **2024-25 Budget Report**

Authors: Graham Hurst, Finance Officer
 Andrew Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations

Summary: Core budget 2024-25 with key operational
 breakdown

1. This report comprises the financial budget and has been prepared with reference to the 2024-25 Business Plan and reflects the costs associated with that plan.

The budget was submitted to the Executive Committee in Feb 2024 and the Executive Committee is recommending approval of the single year budget for 2024-25.

However the Executive Committee also noted a potential high level of risk going forward including uncertainty around future core funding and increased levels of core expenditure on staff which requires additional scrutiny of the out-years (2025-28)

As such it has been agreed that the next Executive Committee meeting in May 2024 will look to understand more fully additional roles, costs and associated risks going forward.

2. 2024-25 Budget

- The 2024-25 Budget has been prepared in consultation with the CEO, Head of Operations and CCB Senior Management Team (SMT) and incorporates consultation with key delivery leads across CCB.
- These consultations have identified additional staff resources considered necessary to successfully undertake the CCB’s work program.
- The CCB’s ability to fully incorporate these additional resources is limited to the finances available and therefore it is envisaged that additional staff will only be engaged once there is reasonable certainty that finances are available to meet the additional costs.
- The 2024-25 Budget has been prepared on a break-even basis insofar as we can predict income and costs with reasonable certainty.
- The cost of the additional core staff resources is £139k of which £70k is rechargeable to projects. Therefore, the net cost of the additional core staff resource is £69k for 2024-25.
- All other income and costs have been reviewed and assumptions noted.
 - This budget effectively breaks even with a £84.00 surplus.

3. 2024/25 Income

- The CCB annual grant from DEFRA is fixed for 2024-25 and therefore no increase in Local Authority contributions is assumed. Note CCB has not received contributions from Three Rivers or Luton.
- DEFRA is proposing to pay a Capital Grant in 2024-25. The details of amount and conditions are currently uncertain, so we have excluded it from the budget. However, it is assumed that it will be possible to recover some capital and staff costs where they are connected to capital projects and these assumptions are built into the core budget.

4. 2024/25 Expenditure

- The CCB's largest cost is staff. A 4% inflationary pay rise for all staff joining before October 2023 has been included in this budget.
- Staff costs represent core (non-project) staff only and is net of any costs recharged to projects.
- Built into the break-even budget presented are:
 - Two (2) part-time permanent core roles (totalling 1.4 FTE) to address lack of administrative and financial capacity to support both core and project work.
 - An uplift of the Head of Engagement & Partnerships role from 3 to 4 days (0.2 FTE) a week to support more strategic development and funding in this area. In 2023-24 this additional day has been funded through reserves but we are now looking to make this uplift permanent.
- A total of six (6) other roles have been identified as being required for effective on the ground delivery in 2023-24.
 - Two (2) of these roles are fixed term project roles that will only be recruited if we are successful in an application we have submitted in February and would be fully funded from an external funder.
 - Another four (4) roles (totalling 3.6 FTE) are required to support the delivery of our core programme but will only be recruited if we are able to secure funding for these roles
- All other costs have been reviewed on a line-by-line basis by the Senior Administrator, Head of Operations and Finance Officer.

5. 2024/25 Financial Control

- In applying greater rigour to the budgeting process CCB staff and management will have a more transparent and robust understanding of the budget and its constituent budget lines
- All budget holders will have a clear view of their own budgets and be expected to track them on an ongoing basis.
- There will be improved review of tracking overall spend, with the SMT reviewing spend against budget monthly.
- CCB will only recruit additional staff identified when CCB has the financial ability to pay for them in 2024-25 and future years.

Recommendations:

- 1. To APPROVE the budget for 2024-25**
- 2. To NOTE and offer feedback on the approach identified to ensure robustness of the budget for years after 2024-25**

Chilterns Conservation Board
1 April 2024 to 31 April 2025

Version Feb22-24

	2023	2024 Budget
Income		
Advertising Income	6,250	7,130
DEFRA	513,895	513,895
Fee Income and recharge to projects	155,809	132,787
Interest Income	500	7,450
Local Authority Contribution	126,776	120,826
Sale of merchandise	550	267
Total Income	803,780	782,355
Less Operating Expenses		
Advertising & Marketing	150	302
Bank Fees	150	200
Board Meetings	1,800	800
Cleaning	2,800	2,390
Computer and IT Equipment	3,500	-
Consulting	31,200	51,640
Employers National Insurance	47,960	37,035
Event costs	2,000	2,900
Finance costs	9,000	4,365
General Expenses	3,946	3,981
Insurance	5,000	10,794
IT Software and Consumables	10,000	10,331
IT support and maintenance	7,000	5,064
Legal expenses	750	7,500
Light, Power, Heating	6,500	7,659
Magazine costs	12,000	16,750
Medical Insurance	5,200	2,509
Members Allowances	7,500	6,319
Nature Recovery	5,000	2,000
Office Equipment	1,500	220
Pensions Costs	87,028	71,562
Postage, Freight & Courier	1,000	459
Printing & Stationery	1,100	1,545
Rates and Water rates	6,825	8,253
Recruitment and other staff costs	2,000	3,150
Rent	20,500	18,500
Repairs & Maintenance	2,000	3,089
Research and survey expenditure	5,000	-
Salaries	490,371	474,331
Staff expenses	1,000	979
Staff Training	5,000	10,005
Subscriptions	5,000	7,015
Telephone & Internet	5,000	3,776
Travel Expenses	1,500	3,834
Website running costs	7,500	3,016
Total Operating Expenses	803,780	782,271
Net Loss / Profit	- 0	84

No uplift, Annual grant £448k, Top up £65k fixed.
 Linked to Resource plan, costed by person / project / month
 Net of MTG interest
 Kept at same level as 23/24 note Luton and Three Rivers £0 contribution
 Books etc

Nominal spend
 Nominal spend
 4 Board meetings refreshments
 Office cleaning, waste disposal and gardening.
 Possible DEFRA Capital spend funding
 Planning, HR and some Comms
 See staff assumptions
 Farm cluster meetings
 Internal and external audit fees, Actuaries fees
 Expenditure that is not captured elsewhere
 Based on 23/24 and review of insurances
 Specific software subscriptions
 IT maintenance, backups etc
 Est of legal costs to review contracts etc
 Energy cost uplift
 Design and print costs
 Based on headcount
 To review but 23/24 only 7 members were paid allowances
 Nature Calling To review funding source
 Essential only, to review funding sources
 See staff assumptions
 Based on 23/24 actual
 Based on 23/24 actual
 Assumes inflationary increase
 Calc per person
 Rent of The Lodge Chinnor
 Annual maintenance plus identified essential repairs
 None unless funded
 See staff assumptions
 Based on 23/24 actual + staff uplift
 Identified training needs
 National Assoc and other memberships
 Based on 23/24 actual
 Based on 23/24 actual
 Web hosting etc

Staff assumptions	
Resource plan new roles	228,647
Recharged	129,447
Net cost	99,200
Increased head count	
Salary inflationary increase	4.0%
Employer pension contribution	20.9%

Summary		
Employment costs	76%	594,907
Office costs	7%	56,683
Consultants costs	7%	51,640
IT costs	2%	15,395
Magazine and social media	3%	19,766
Audit and Actuary costs	1%	4,365
Other	5%	39,516
		782,271

Item 9.4	2024-25 Delivery Plan
Author:	Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations
Purpose of the report:	To obtain Board approval for both the way in which CCB plans to structure the delivery, monitoring and reporting on the delivery of its work
Summary:	xxx
Recommendation:	That the Board APPROVES THE High Level Delivery Plan

High Level Delivery Plan

1. Following strategy meetings of the Senior Management Team as part of the Annual Planning cycle a new draft delivery model was presented to the Executive Committee in November 2023.
2. This delivery model:
 - a. Improves transparency of the work that CCB undertakes in relation to its purposes and duties
 - b. More accurately reflects the way in which we deliver as an organisation
 - c. More clearly identifies the strategic priorities that we have
 - d. Provides an improved way of planning, monitoring and reporting:
 - i. This means that rather than reporting on landscape work with farmers in multiple areas this will in future be reported in the same place
 - ii. That the purposes, duties and strategic priorities of the organisation drive the planning, monitoring and reporting rather than for example projects (thus reinforcing the fact that projects should be strategically aligned to our overall strategy)
 - e. Identifies more clearly those cross cutting delivery mechanisms that apply to all of our work
 - f. Reduces the confusion within the staff of where to report in the current delivery model

Note that the model does not set out to reflect organisational structure although in some cases the organisational structure mirrors this delivery model

CCB Delivery Model

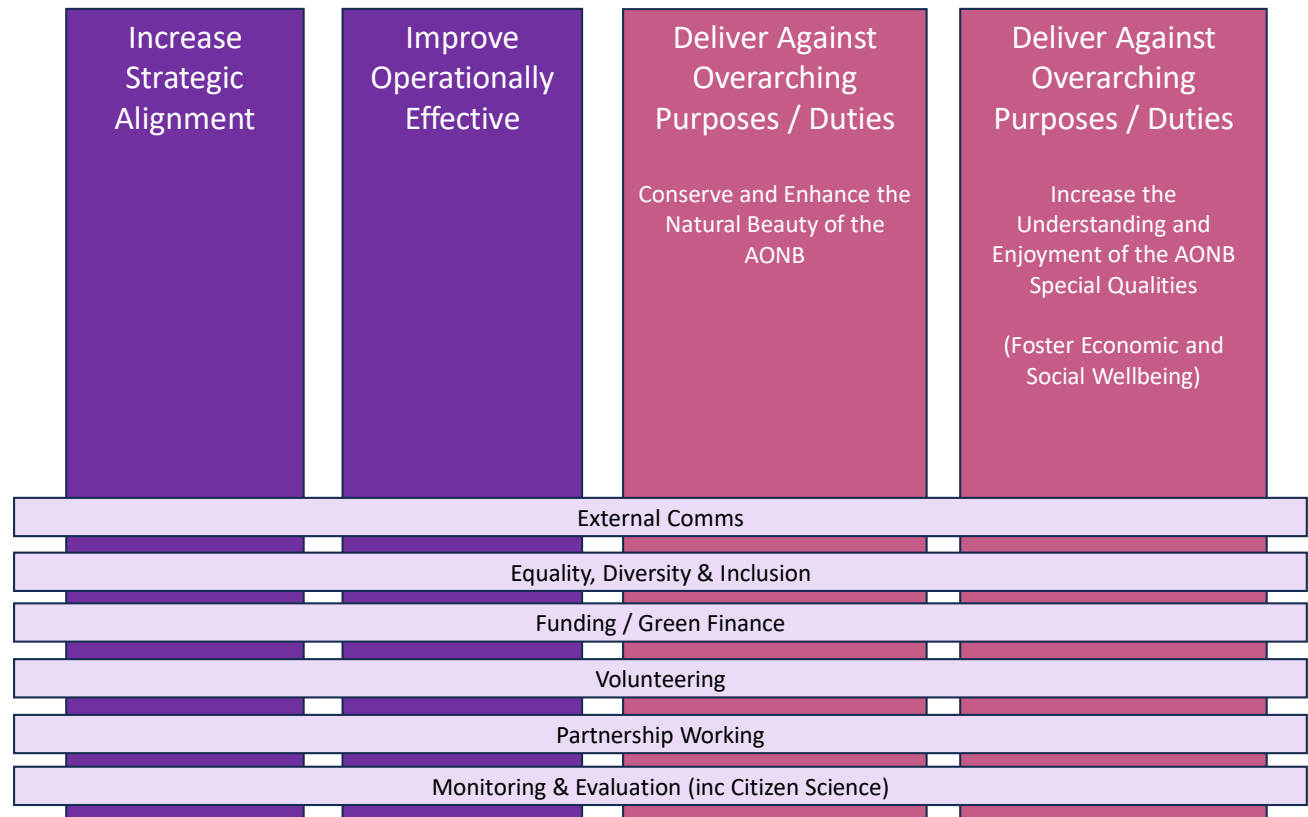
The diagram opposite identifies the underlying operating model of how CCB plans to deliver over the next 4 years

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

It identifies the need to be operationally effective in order to deliver to our full potential

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

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



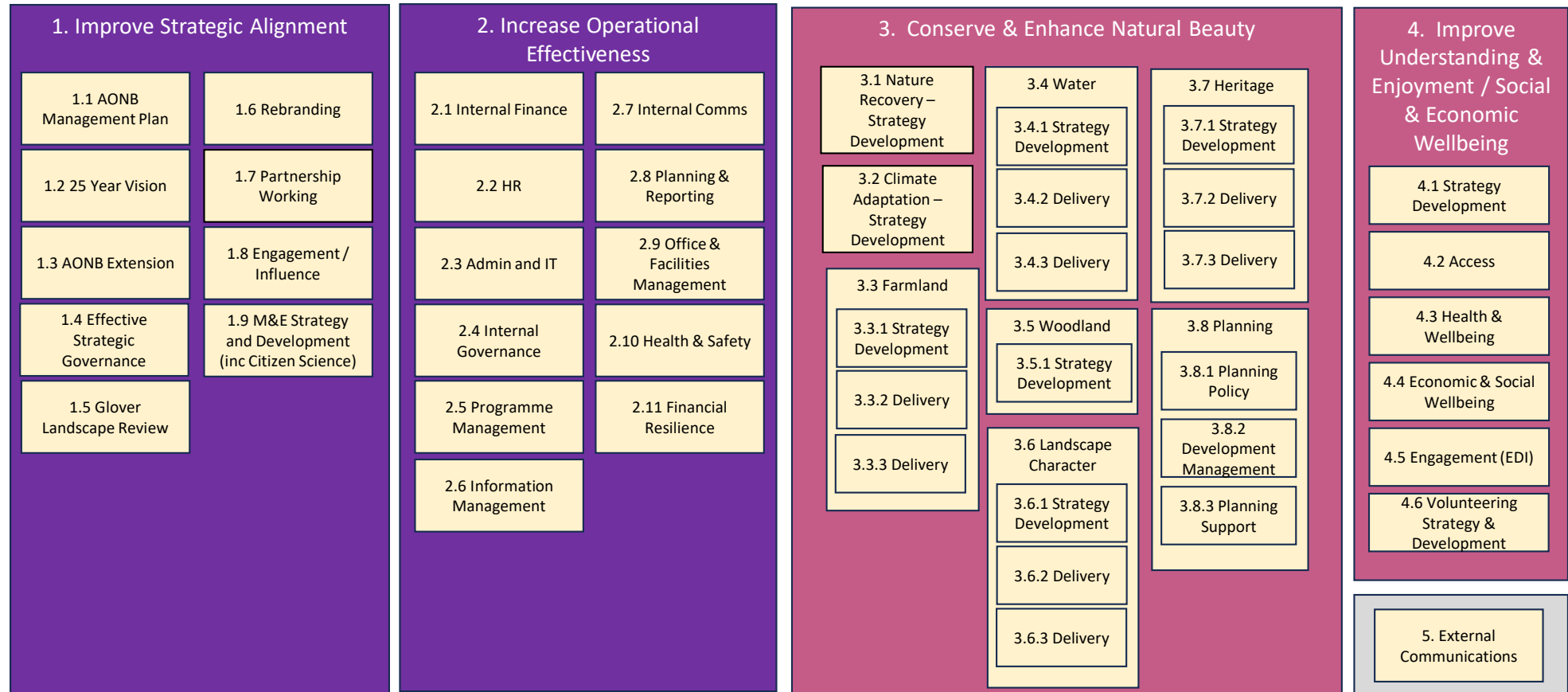
Enabling Workstream

Technical Delivery Workstreams

Cross Cutting Delivery Mechanisms



CCB Delivery Model (Showing Workstreams and Delivery Areas)



Enabling Workstream	Technical Delivery Workstreams	Delivery Areas
---------------------	--------------------------------	----------------



3. Reporting will therefore occur against the following workstreams and the constituent Delivery Areas under them:

- Improve Strategic Alignment
- Increase Operational Effectiveness
- Conserve and Enhance Natural Beauty
- Improve Understanding & Enjoyment / Social & Economic Wellbeing
- External Communications

Note that pragmatically we have incorporated the cross cutting Delivery Mechanisms into different workstreams with the exception of external communications

4. An exercise is currently underway to complete the full delivery plan by quarter and to ensure there is a clear understanding and mapping of where projects report into. At the moment all delivery leads have been asked to fill in their sections of the plan and the Senior Management Team is due to review the delivery plan to ensure it is aligned to budget and resource plans, and to ensure that it is robust and consistent
5. Whilst we are looking for approval from the Board for the high level approach and delivery plan, we will bring the detailed delivery plan to the next Executive Committee for comment and then presentation at the next Board Meeting.
6. Also as we embed the new delivery approach we anticipate that there may be a need for limited changes to this model as we start to use it in practice.

Increased Robustness of Delivery Plan

7. This year we have also looked at increasing the robustness of the delivery plan especially in relation to:
 - a. Improving transparency around what is included in each delivery area and what the annual outcomes are
 - b. Improving the ability of the organisation to look forward 4 years rather than being focused on the next 2 months
 - c. Clarifying how each delivery area maps back to and delivers against the Management Plan
 - d. Identifying priority areas to provide a framework for strategic / operational decision-making where resources are scarce
 - e. Clarifying what the role of CCB is and the level of effort needed to deliver
 - f. Identifying resource and budget implications of each delivery area to ensure more effective alignment of the budget, resource plan and delivery plan

Existing Information	New Information
Delivery Reference	
Delivery Area	
	Description
	Organisation Priority
Lead	
	Mapping to FY23-24 Delivery Plan
	Mapping to Management Plan
	CCB Role (Lead / Support / Advise) – 4 years
	Effort Level (H/M/L) – 4 years
	Annual Outcome – 4 years
Quarterly Outputs – 1 year	
	Resource Implications
	Other Budget Implications

Recommendations:

1. To **APPROVE** high level delivery approach and plan
2. To **NOTE** the plan for submitting the full Delivery Plan for approval

Item 10.1**Management Plan Review****Author:**

Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy & Planning

Summary:

The paper updates on the work of the Management Plan Review TFG, provides detail on the new Targets and Outcomes Framework and seeks approval for the “light-touch review” statement for submission to Natural England/Defra to extend the application of the current Plan to the end of March 2025.

Background

1. The Chilterns National Landscape team is required to “prepare and publish a plan which formulates their policy for the management of their area of outstanding natural beauty and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it” (a “management plan”) and to review that plan at least every five years (ss.89-90 of the CROW Act 2000).
2. The current Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 (“the current Plan”) would normally need to be reviewed by the end of March 2024. However, Defra recognised that ongoing reforms have created uncertainty and offered, through a letter from Lord Benyon in July 2022, the option of a “light-touch review”, in effect extending the application of relevant plans by up to a year.
3. The Board set up the Management Plan Review (MPR) Task and Finish Group (TFG) to oversee the review of the Plan, chaired by Gemma Harper, and supported by the officer team, with the head of strategy & planning as secretariat.
4. This paper updates the Board on progress, sets out proposals for future activity, and, in particular, seeks approval for:
 - a. the “light-touch review” submission to Defra that triggers that option to extend the current plan (annex 1); and
 - b. the Terms of Reference for the MPR TFG (annex 2).
5. The paper also includes at annex 3 for information an introductory note on Defra’s new Targets and Outcomes Framework for protected landscapes, published at the end of January, which will need to be embedded in the Management Plan going forwards.

The story so far

6. Executive Committee, in November 2022, approved a proposed approach to “roll-forward” the current Plan with minimal amendments to cover 2024-2029, on the basis that it would not be expedient to comprehensively review the Plan in advance of the boundary review. Initially it was proposed to pursue this approach in preference to Defra’s “light-touch review” option.
7. By the time of the Board meeting of September 2023, details of processes and timescales had been clarified, and the Board agreed that it was no longer tenable to not take the option of extending the current Plan to March 2025. The Board also convened the MPR TFG to be chaired by Gemma Harper.

8. In advance of volunteers coming forward to join the TFG, the TFG chair and officers worked together on developing thinking on the Review, and we sent statutory notifications to our host local authorities, and to Natural England (as proxy for the Secretary of State) informing them of our intention to review the Management Plan, including an outline of the approach being taken.
9. Following a TFG recruitment drive, the MPR TFG held its first meeting on 21 February 2024. The meeting covered a range of relevant issues, including agreeing proposed Terms of Reference (attached at annex 2 for the Board's approval), enhancing the text of the proposed "light-touch review" submission to Defra (see below) and setting parameters for future work on the Review.
10. The TFG proposes the following overall Review programme, based on the approach previously agreed by the Board and Executive Committee:
 - a. Submit the "Light-Touch Review" paper to Natural England (as proxy for the Secretary of State) by the end of March 2024, thereby extending the current Plan to the end of March 2025.
 - b. During 2024/25, undertake a "refresh" of the current Plan with factual updates, rolling forward its policy content to 2029, and embedding Defra's new Targets and Outcomes Framework (see annex 3). This refresh may include additional amendments to reflect changing national priorities, e.g. on nature recovery, climate adaptation and EDI.
 - c. When the new boundaries of the National Landscape are closer to being confirmed, commence a comprehensive review of the Plan for the expanded designated area, working with current and new stakeholders.

"Light-Touch Review" Statement - approval

11. The TFG approved a draft "light-touch review" statement, for consideration by Executive Committee on 29 February 2024. This draft was also circulated to Natural England to seek their views on whether it would meet the requirements set out in Lord Benyon's letter.
12. Natural England confirmed by email on 4 March 2024 that **the draft "light-touch review" statement "meets the criteria set out in Lord Benyon's letter of July 2022" and that therefore the Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 "can run until the end of March 2025"**.
13. Further to discussion at the Committee, and subsequent discussions with Natural England, officers and the TFG chair, some presentational amendments have been made to the statement, in particular to clarify the narrative over the actions proposed to be taken in reviewing the Plan. It is officers' view that these amendments will not affect Natural England's conclusions about the statement meeting Defra's criteria.
14. Before publication we also intend to apply our new branding to the statement and ensure that the text complies with our new style guidance etc.
15. The Board is therefore invited to APPROVE the "light-touch review" statement, as developed by the TFG and recommended for approval by Executive Committee, and to AUTHORISE the Chief Executive Officer to sign off any final edits, including applying our new branding to the document.

16. Executive Committee also authorised a timetable for publication of the statement, the remainder of which is set out below for information.

Week commencing	Action
11 th Mar	Thu 14 th : Board considers and approves “light-touch review” statement.
18 th Mar	Mon 18 th : Send notification to LAs & NE (Sec of State by proxy) of intention to publish by the end of March; seek final confirmation from SoS that the statement meets the criteria necessary to extend the Plan to March 2025.
25 th Mar <i>(Head of Strategy & Planning on leave Mon-Wed)</i>	Work with Comms to publicise, including placing the statement on our website alongside the existing MP, and notify wider stakeholders. Thu 28 th : Head of Strategy & Planning to double-check everything.

Management Plan Review – next steps

17. The Board has already authorised the MPR TFG to continue overseeing the review process, and the TFG has accordingly drafted the Terms of Reference attached. The Board is therefore invited to APPROVE the TFG’s proposed Terms of Reference at annex 2.
18. The TFG have considered a broad approach to the subsequent “refresh” of the Management Plan during 2024/25, and propose that this should take a phased approach in four stages, agreed by the Group as follows:
- I. Orientation or deep-dive phase: including the focused topic sessions, research/evidence gathering, and an officer evaluation of the factual updates needed; some focused stakeholder engagement on these elements.
 - II. Draft Plan generation: drafting amendments coming out of phase 1; some focused stakeholder engagement would be valuable.
 - III. Formal and informal stakeholder engagement and public consultation.
 - IV. Sign-off, adoption and publication (including endorsement by partners).
19. This broad approach has been designed to align with other strategic priorities, including the development of the Nature Recovery Plan, being led by the Head of Landscapes. Officers will continue to ensure alignment, especially in terms of stakeholder engagement, with other priorities, including the Governance Review and Boundary Review.
20. The TFG will next meet on Wednesday 10th April, when, among other things, it will consider a proposal for a detailed project plan for the “refresh” review of the current Plan during 2024/25 based on the agreed phased approach above.

21. The Board are invited to APPROVE the above broad approach. Officers will then work with the TFG to finalise details of the project plan and then deliver the review during 2024/25. The final refreshed Plan will be approved by the Board at its meeting in March 2025.

Recommendations:

1. to APPROVE the text of the “light-touch review” statement attached at annex 1, and to AUTHORISE the Chief Executive Officer to sign off any final edits, including applying our new branding to the document (para 15)
2. to APPROVE the Management Plan Review TFG’s proposed Terms of Reference attached at annex 2 (para 17)
3. to APPROVE the broad approach to the “refresh” of the current Plan during 2024/25 (para 21)

Item 10.1 – Annex 1: Text of “Light-Touch Review” statement for approval**Chilterns National Landscape – Chilterns Conservation Board
Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 – “Light-Touch” Review
Statement**

DRAFT v.4 for Board approval, 14 March 2024

This statement sets out the Chilterns Conservation Board’s “light-touch review” of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2019-2024, extending the Plan to March 2025, in accordance with Defra Minister the Rt Hon Lord Benyon’s letter of July 2022.

The Chilterns Conservation Board’s approach to the Management Plan review

The content of the Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 (“the Plan”) was based on sound evidence and extensive engagement with our partners and communities. It continues to include appropriate policy for the management of the National Landscape¹ and for the execution of the Board’s functions. The Board’s position is that a comprehensive review of the Plan would not be expedient until the ongoing proposal to extend the boundaries of the National Landscape is completed. We therefore propose the following approach to the review of the Plan:

1. **March 2024:** Extend the application of the Plan to the end of March 2025, in accordance with Lord Benyon’s letter of July 2022 (this statement).
2. **2024-25:** Refresh the Plan for the period 2025-30 with factual updates, reference to new Defra targets and consideration of changing national priorities, rolling forward the main policy content of the Plan.
3. **From 2025 on:** Undertake a comprehensive review of the Plan reflecting the new designated area of the National Landscape.

The focus of this paper is on the Board’s intention during 2024/25 to recommend to our partners that we “refresh” the Plan by considering factual updates and rolling forward its policy content to cover the period 2025-30. The refreshed Plan’s objectives, delivery and monitoring content will be enhanced with reference to Defra’s Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework.

We will consider additional amendments in refreshing the Plan that reflect changing national priorities since the Plan was approved in 2019. This will include increasing emphasis on nature recovery and climate adaptation, as well as fostering inclusion through access to, and participation with, the National Landscape. Some of these details may be presented in documents produced alongside the refreshed Plan, and elements of these could be integrated into the refreshed version or into the next comprehensive iteration of the Plan.

When the new boundaries of the National Landscape are closer to being confirmed, and as soon as it is practicable to do so, we will commence a comprehensive review of the Plan for the expanded designated area, working with our current and new stakeholders.

¹ Future Plans, including the proposed refreshed Plan, will also account for the rebranding of AONBs as National Landscapes, which has been reflected in this statement.

Vision for the Chilterns National Landscape

The Vision for the Chilterns National Landscape will continue to be as set out on p.23 of the Plan, including the ten supporting advocacy statements for the Conservation Board.

Proposed Structure for the refreshed Management Plan 2024-2029

The Plan's structure will remain the same: a contextual introduction, statement of significance, summary of the state of the Chilterns, aspirations for the future (including the Vision), thematic chapters, and a chapter on implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Chilterns Conservation Board Objectives 2024-2025

Continue to pursue the objectives, policies and actions of the Management Plan through delivering agreed corporate and strategic priorities as defined in Chilterns Conservation Board's annual business plan(s).

Support Natural England with the proposed extension to the boundaries of the Chilterns National Landscape.

Improve stakeholder engagement and partnership arrangements to enhance the management and governance of both the Chilterns Conservation Board and the (extended) National Landscape, and to secure additional resources.

Complete the refresh of the Management Plan and begin work on a new 25-Year Vision.

Item 10.1 – Annex 2: proposed MPR TFG Terms of Reference for approval

Proposed Terms of Reference: Management Plan Review Task & Finish Group
Draft following MPR TFG meeting of 21 February 2024, for approval by the Board on 14 March 2024.

Background

1. The Chilterns Conservation Board is required to “prepare and publish a plan which formulates their policy for the management of their area of outstanding natural beauty and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it” (a “management plan”) and to review that plan at least every five years (ss.89-90 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000).
2. The current Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 (“the Plan”) would normally need to have been reviewed by the end of March 2024. However, Defra has recognised that ongoing reforms have created an uncertain context for management plan review, and has offered, through a letter from Lord Benyon in July 2022, an option to undertake a “light-touch” review, extending the application of the current Plan by up to a year.
3. CCB also needs to have an eye to producing a new Management Plan to set out the policy for the new designated area following the completion of Natural England’s ongoing review of the AONB’s boundaries. Work cannot start on this until the proposed new boundaries are reasonably certain and in the public domain, and the process could take up to three years: it may therefore be necessary to twin-track early work on the new Management Plan with the review of the current Plan.

Purpose of the Task and Finish Group (TFG)

4. The TFG has been convened to oversee progress with the review of the Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 (“the Plan”).
5. Priority 1, by the end of March 2024, is the production of the “light-touch review” statement, compliant with Lord Benyon’s letter of July 2022, extending the application of the Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 to at least the end of March 2025.
6. Priority 2 is to oversee the “refresh” review of the Plan by the end of March 2025 (possibly extended to the end of December 2025, or beyond, by arrangement with Defra). This review will roll forward to 2024-29 the main policy content of the Plan, with factual updates, embed the Targets and Outcomes Framework and consider additional amendments to reflect changing national priorities, such as nature recovery, climate adaptation and EDI.
7. Thereafter the TFG may be requested to oversee the subsequent (or possibly parallel) development of a new Management Plan for the new designated area of the Chilterns AONB as soon as the boundaries are sufficiently certain to do so.

Governance and accountability

8. The TFG is convened by the Board, and reports to the Board.
9. By approving these Terms of Reference, the Board authorises the Executive Committee to receive reports from the TFG and for the TFG to seek the guidance of the Executive Committee if the chair of the TFG and the chair of the Board, in

consultation with the Chief Executive Officer, consider it would be more expedient to do so than wait for the next Board meeting.

10. Any changes to the membership and remit of the TFG, including to these Terms of Reference, must be approved by the Board.

TFG functions and responsibilities

11. The TFG will be responsible for:

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

12. The TFG will not be responsible for the following, but may advise the other TFGs and/or the Board on these matters as they relate to the Management Plan:

- Developing the long-term Vision for the new Management Plan for the extended AONB, which is the responsibility of the Vision Task and Finish Group, chaired by Sir Hector Sants.
- Proposing changes to the Board's governance structures, which are the responsibility of the Governance Task and Finish Group, chaired by John Nicholls.

Membership

13. The TFG chair will seek to ensure that the TFG's membership shall comprise:

- Board members:
 - The Board's nominated TFG chair: Gemma Harper.
 - Ideally, one representative of each of the Governance and Vision TFGs, nominated by each TFG.
 - Any other member of the Board as volunteers or accepts an invitation from the TFG chair to join.
- Current membership (at March 2024):
 - Gemma Harper (chair)
 - Simon Mortimer
 - Hector Sants
 - Joe Stewart

- Officer team:
 - Matt Thomson, head of strategy & planning (secretariat to the TFG)
 - Annette Weiss, head of engagement & partnerships
- 14. The TFG is authorised to request the reasonable assistance of other Board members, officers and external contacts.

Quoracy

15. The TFG chair and secretariate will seek to ensure that meetings of the TFG are attended (in person or online) by both the TFG chair and officer secretariat (or a specifically nominated substitute for the meeting), plus at least two others, which may be members or officers.

Working methods and meetings

16. The TFG will work collaboratively in whatever way is most effective and efficient, this could include virtual meetings, site visits, shared documents, email exchanges and so on.
17. A document library, chat function and opportunity to work collaboratively on documents will be provided through Microsoft Teams.
18. The TFG chair may call a meeting of the group as and when required.

Resources

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

Meeting schedule

20. The TFG's inaugural meeting was on 21 February 2024.
21. The TFG shall set a schedule of regular meetings of 90 minutes approximately once every six weeks, with the option to vary frequency as needed.

Item 10.1 – Annex 3: Protected Landscapes Targets & Outcomes Framework – an introduction

1. At the end of January, Defra finally published its “Targets and Outcomes Framework” (TOF) for protected landscapes². The Framework specifically applies certain outcomes defined in the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 to protected landscapes (National Parks and National Landscapes) in the form of 10 Targets.
2. Several of the Targets will require agreement between the protected landscapes as to how their achievement will be met by different areas, which will be determined with regard to each area’s special qualities and the opportunities presented with regard to each outcome.
3. The Targets are:
 1. Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline).
 2. Bring 80% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042.
 3. For 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having ‘actions on track’ to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.
 4. Continuing favourable management of all existing priority habitat already in favourable condition outside of SSSIs (from a 2022 baseline) and increasing to include all newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment schemes by 2042.
 5. Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.
 6. Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.
 7. Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat in Protected Landscapes by 2050.
 8. Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline).
 9. Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using existing metrics in our Access for All programme.
 10. Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes.
4. All Protected Landscape bodies (including ourselves) are expected to embed these targets in our Management Plans, and it is anticipated that the increased weight that is likely to be applied to Management Plans as a result of s.245 of the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 may be considered as being dependent on Targets being addressed in our Plans.
5. It will be important for us to work with partners to secure delivery through related mechanisms – a key one being Local Nature Recovery Strategies, which is already a focus for our Nature Recovery Plan, being led by the Head of

² For full details, please see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework>

Landscape and working with the Landscape Team, the preparation of which is being coordinated with the Management Plan Review.

6. The Targets will be reviewed on a 5-year cycle alongside the review of the Environmental Improvement Plan; this also coincides with the cycle of Management Plan reviews. Defra anticipates that there will be a delay between these (and future) Targets being announced and their being apportioned between the different Landscapes; it is suggested that Management Plans being prepared in such times could include provisional local targets.
7. Natural England will be responsible for collating data across the different Protected Landscapes and has published indicators for each Target to assist with the process of setting targets and measuring success. Baseline datasets are being developed and expect to be made available to protected landscapes teams in Spring.
8. The detail of the specific Targets was not reported to the Management Plan Review TFG with regard to the approach to be taken to the Review. However, the attention being paid to the principles behind the TOF was a key factor influencing the aspiration to enhance where possible the emphasis to be given to nature recovery and climate adaptation in the “refreshed” Plan that we will be working on in 2024/25.
9. More detailed consideration of the TOF and its Targets and their applicability to the Chilterns National Landscape will be presented to the Board and its Committees and working groups as appropriate, as we progress with the Management Plan Review and the Nature Recovery Plan in particular over the coming months.

Item 10.2**Governance Review**

Author: Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy & Planning, with John Nicholls, chair of the Governance Review TFG

Summary: The paper provides an update on work relating to the Governance Review, including the reconvening of the TFG, an approach to continuing the review of the Constitution, and steps required to implement the Board Advisory Group, in pilot form, by the June Board meeting.

Background

1. At its meeting of 12 December 2023, the Board considered and approved the proposals in a paper from the Governance TFG concerning the principles for the delegation of decisions in the Board's operations, and the future activities of the Governance TFG. This paper provides an update on progress with various matters relating to the governance review.

Governance TFG

2. While the request for more volunteers to join the Governance TFG was unsuccessful, the previous members who remain on the Board have confirmed their continued interest: John Nicholls (chair), Colin Courtney, Charles Hussey, Richard Newcombe and Adrian Watney.
3. The TFG chair has contacted former member Lynn Lloyd about being co-opted onto the TFG, and Lynn is considering the invitation favourably, subject to her capacity, which is most welcome. Additional volunteers would of course also be welcomed – please contact John Nicholls directly.
4. The TFG has not met formally for some time, but there are now a number of factors which suggest that convening a programme of meetings would be beneficial. Principal among these is that Natural England's support for the Enhanced Management and Governance Arrangements (EMAGA) programme has ground to a halt, and the Board once again needs to take command of enhancing its own governance.
5. There are now two key priorities for the TFG: (1) to continue, and accelerate, the updating and review of the documents that make up the Board's Constitution, especially with regard to delegation, and (2) to implement the previous recommendations of the TFG in terms of setting up a "Board Advisory Group" (BAG).
6. In addition, the TFG will develop and propose for the Board's approval its own Terms of Reference (taking the lead from the Management Plan Review TFG).

Constitution

7. Our former Clerk (as Deputy Monitoring Officer) had been working with the Monitoring Officer and the Head of Operations to progressively review the Board's Constitution. This included redefining the role of the Monitoring Officer (approved by the Board in March 2023), and draft changes to the Complaints and Feedback Procedure (currently being considered by Executive Committee).

Responsibility for the Constitution has now been re-delegated to the head of strategy & planning to facilitate alignment with the Governance Review.

8. The TFG Chair proposes that one key task is to go through all the Constitution documents which define delegations (e.g. the Code of Governance, etc.) to ensure they properly reflect the new Principles of Delegation agreed by the Board in December 2023. The Chair proposes to give each TFG member one of the relevant documents and ask them to check the wording and report back to the Group.
9. At the same time, it will be beneficial to ensure that other recent changes, including the redefinition of the role of Planning Committee, the definition of its functions and the associated delegation to officers (agreed by the Board in December 2022) are assimilated into the Constitution, ensuring also that they are aligned with the Principles of Delegation.

Board Advisory Group

10. Another key activity is to implement the proposal to support the strategic work of the Board through a "Board Advisory Group" (BAG), as also agreed by the Board in December 2022. It had originally been envisaged that the BAG would be established for the AGM in June 2024, and the formation of the Group will be most immediately valuable in terms of enhancing engagement with stakeholders on the Management Plan Review and moving towards formalising a partnership approach to the management of the National Landscape.
11. Officers have begun work on identifying the potential first tranche of members for the BAG, building upon other projects, such as the initial outcome of the now-defunct EMAGA programme and the Comms Team's ongoing engagement strategy, led by the Head of Partnerships & Engagement.
12. One element of this is looking at those stakeholders that we are already working in partnership with, through our externally-funded delivery projects, but we also need to expand our horizons with new stakeholders that we aren't used to working with.
13. A key task for the TFG will be to propose Terms of Reference for the BAG (as well as for itself).
14. The Senior Team have also been considering the formation of the BAG, and will be making the following observations or recommendations to the TFG:
 - a. The BAG may initially be convened in the form of a pilot, on the basis that the perfect is the enemy of the good, etc. We expect to learn by experience and develop the BAG as we go, especially in the context of current uncertainties (strengthened s.85 duty, reforms of Management Plan processes, and of course the Boundary Review).
 - b. Initial membership of the BAG could helpfully be focused around the Management Plan review as a priority, including identifying members in terms of how they can assist the Board with the specifics of (i) the new Targets and Outcomes Framework and (ii) the changing national priorities for protected landscapes that we've recognised as areas in which the "Refresh" of the Management Plan may need particular attention, i.e.

nature recovery, climate adaptation and EDI (there is significant overlap between all of these).

- c. It would be hoped that together the BAG membership would provide a strong connection between strategic thinking and delivery on the ground.

Next Steps

15. It is proposed to progress the above aspirations through three or four TFG meetings, supported by actions through the officer team, between now and the Board meeting and AGM in June, with members of the pilot BAG (now affectionately referred to as the BAGuette, following the TFG chair's suggestion) in attendance.

Recommendations:

1. to **APPROVE** the proposed approach to continuing the review of the Constitution (paras 7-9), with observations if appropriate
2. to **APPROVE** the proposed approach to implementing the Board Advisory Group (paras 10-14), with observations if appropriate
3. to **APPROVE** the membership of the TFG, and seek further volunteers to support its work

Item 11.1**HR Strategy****Author:** Elaine King, CEO**Purpose of Report:** To present the Board with an updated HR Strategy and Implementation Plan for 2024/25 and to seek feedback.**Background**

In early 2023, the CCB established an HR Strategy and an Implementation Plan. These reflected the principles of the CCB's Business Plan and recognised the need to drive forward effective HR management, in addition to introducing HR practices that are clear, fair and consistently applied. The purpose of the Strategy and Plan therefore focused on establishing and embedding processes and procedures that enable the effective management of employees, support a positive working environment, develop skills, and help the CCB deliver its planned outcomes.

Progress on delivery of the 2023 Strategy was reported to the Executive Committee throughout 2023, with the last update in paper 12.2 in November. Since that time, key elements of the HR implementation plan continue to be delivered and the draft HR Strategy for 2024/25 therefore builds on this work and emerging needs of the organisation.

Towards the end of 2023, the CCB also developed a comprehensive HR Transformation Plan (*HR Simplified*) which was presented to the Committee in November 2023 (paper 12.3) and requires formal sign off by the Board at its meeting in March 2024. Significant elements of HR Simplified have been delivered or initiated (recognising that some work is ongoing).

This includes many of the elements of Phase 1, (eg improving processes, procedures and templates for recruitment, onboarding, and probation; providing guidance for managers ahead of mid-year reviews in October/November; conducting training for line managers; and amending the schedule of policies following advice from Hector Sants and Paul Mains) and Phase 2 (eg providing templates for contract variations and improving documentation for annual leave, absence and sickness).

Another key new workstream is to identify and embed a new HR system. Potential systems have been explored and we expect to decide on a new system in the next few weeks.

The pressure of other work means that important elements of the 2023 HR Strategy are not complete. This includes finalising the updated HR Handbook and associated policies and procedures. While a large majority of the policies and procedures are now complete, the draft HR Handbook needs more work. Having circulated the Handbook to the staff team and listened to their feedback in June 2023, and after seeking advice from our new HR Advisor, Jo Moss, (who joined us in July), we have this month commissioned Jo to review and redesign the HR Handbook to make it more welcoming and accessible.

The last key element of the draft new HR Strategy 2024/25 and Implementation Plan is to reflect the role of the HR Advisory Group and the principles of a new Scheme of Delegation.

The structure, terms of reference and reporting arrangements of the HR Advisory Group (HRAG) were reviewed and agreed by the Board in March 2023, with a variation agreed in December 2023 (paper 11.2). In addition, principles for a Scheme of Delegation were endorsed by the Executive Committee in November 2023 (paper 11.2).

The Governance Task & Finish Group is now using those principles to produce comprehensive recommendations, for consideration by the Board at its meeting in June 2024. Once agreed, the Scheme of Delegation will be embedded in the revised Constitution, also due to be brought to the Board in June 2024.

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

Implementation

The HR Strategy Implementation Plan is appended to this paper and comprise the following key deliverables:

1. Secure Board approval for the HR Transformation Programme (*HR Simplified*)
2. Introduce and embed the HR Transformation Programme (*HR Simplified*)
3. Revise the employee HR Handbook and HR policies
4. Seek employee comments on the HR Handbook and HR policies
5. Introduce the HR Handbook and policies
6. Implement training for line managers in accordance with agreed policies & *HR Simplified*
- 7a. Keep organisation structure under review to ensure resources and deliverables align
- 7b. Review project deadlines and redeployment opportunities/notice requirements
- 7c. Review all job descriptions to dovetail into new appointments
- 7d. Implement annual salary benchmarking to inform reward strategies
8. Review hybrid working arrangements and revise as necessary
9. Implement staff survey to inform operational practices
10. Develop a comprehensive Scheme of delegation
11. Embed a new Scheme of Delegation in the CCB's Constitution
12. Convene regular EK/HR Advisor general reviews
13. CEO liaise with the HR Advisory Group as required
14. CEO submit summary report against implementation plan to Executive Committee

Recommendation:

1. The Board **APPROVES** the new HR Strategy and Implementation Plan.

Chilterns Conservation Board - proposed HR Implementation Plan (Board 14/3/2024)		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1	Secure Board approval for the HR Transformation Programme (<i>HR Simplified</i>)												
2	Introduce the HR Transformation Programme (<i>HR Simplified</i>)												
3	Revise the employee HR Handbook and HR policies												
4	Seek employee comments on the HR Handbook and HR policies												
5	Introduce the HR Handbook and policies												
6	Implement training for line managers in accordance with agreed policies & <i>HR Simplified</i>												
7a	Keep organisation structure under review to ensure resources and deliverables align												
7b	Review project deadlines and redeployment opportunities/notice requirements												
7c	Review all job descriptions to dovetail into new appointments												
7d	Implement annual salary benchmarking to inform reward strategies												
8	Review hybrid working arrangements and revise as necessary												
9	Implement staff survey to inform operational practices												
10	Develop a comprehensive Scheme of Delegation												
11	Embed a new Scheme of Delegation in the CCB's Constitution												
12	Convene regular EK/HR Advisor general review												
13	CEO liaise with the HR Advisory Group as required												
14	CEO submit summary report against implementation plan to Executive Committee												

Item 12**Report of Planning Committee****Author:**

Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy & Planning

Summary:

The paper updates the Board on the work of the Planning Committee.

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 for the Board 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 meeting of Planning Committee held on 25 January 2024 was not quorate and, as such is to be considered as a “briefing”, with “notes” rather than minutes. For a variety of reasons, the draft notes are not ready for circulation with the Board papers. The following observations and updates are made by way of a summary of key elements of the Committee papers and reflections made during the “briefing”.

Planning Committee work programme

3. **Capacity** continues to be an issue for the planning team. The planning adviser, Mike Stubbs, is stepping up to back-fill much of the head of strategy & planning’s strategic planning activities and will have more capacity going forward. Nonetheless, we need to fill the part-time planning officer role as agreed last year. Further to the lack of success with formal recruitment and with appealing to our professional networks, and recognising that using students, recent graduates or volunteers would be too resource-intensive to be beneficial, we are now exploring offering a secondment opportunity to local authority planning departments, within the existing National Landscape and local authorities in the areas being considered for designation under the Boundary Review. The Committee helpfully suggested appealing to recently retired planners – this is an avenue worth exploring, but it is not clear exactly how to track them down. We remain optimistic.
4. The Committee discussed issues with the **meeting not being quorate**. Issues have been relieved with Simon Mortimer adding to the number of Secretary of State appointees on the Committee, and Simon was welcomed in person at the meeting. The option of attending meetings online is valued by many members (and officers), especially given travel times and the location and timing of meetings. The balance between the convenience of online attendance and the statutory requirement for in-person attendance is an issue for the Board and both of its Committees. The alternative of having an “advisory group” advising decisions by officers under delegated authority is one option to avoid the statutory constraints, but for the Planning Committee in particular, being able to state explicitly that a consultation response has been guided and approved by a Committee is recognised as adding to the impact of the response, especially with regard to planning appeals.

5. The Committee suggested (as a partial solution) arranging the meeting agenda so that important items for decision were considered first, with items for update or general discussion later on. Concentrating the matters that needed quorum into shorter time might enable (some) more members to attend in person for at least part of the meeting. Officers will test this idea with the next meetings.

Policy Casework update

6. The impacts of the **Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023** are still being assessed by the sector. We will report on key impacts as soon as we are able. We are also awaiting Defra's "interim guidance" on the interpretation of the strengthened duty to seek to further the purposes of designation (with increasing impatience). The longer the interim guidance is delayed, the more decisions could be made which set a precedent for how the strengthened duty should be interpreted, including high profile decisions such as on the expansion of Luton Airport (see below). It might be appropriate for the Board to express its concern about the lack of guidance. (NB: this is the professional view of the head of strategy & planning, and not an outcome of the discussion at the Committee meeting.)
7. Since the meeting (and therefore not discussed), the statutory requirement for **biodiversity net gain** (BNG) in the planning system has come into effect – the entire planning and development sector has recognised that it is not at all prepared. The head of strategy & planning recently attended a (free) RTPPI training course on the subject, which was not at all helpful in terms of understanding the overall process, and from which the main learning point was that the necessary biodiversity assessments are too complicated for mere planners to understand, and not enough local authorities employ enough ecologists to make it work. Making it work will, however, be a key focus for our Nature Recovery Plan, and the Landscapes Team are actively engaging with partners on this front: BNG is likely to be a significant source of funding for nature recovery projects going forwards.
8. We responded critically but constructively to two local plan consultations, both in Hertfordshire. The latest iteration of the **Dacorum local plan** has scaled back on its unwelcome growth aspirations, but clarification is still needed on the spatial strategy for development around Hemel Hempstead, particularly on the town's northern edge close to the current National Landscape boundary. We also have other concerns, including the impacts on the borough's chalk streams, and the nature and location of "SANGs" (new open land intended to deflect recreational activity away from the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC at Ashridge and Tring Park).
9. Our response to the **Three Rivers local plan** consultation was more supportive, although we do have concerns that they appear to be influenced more by protecting the Green Belt than conserving and enhancing the National Landscape. The area covered by both plans has the potential to be affected significantly by the boundary review, and working out how to take account of that review while it is in progress has been a challenge for both councils.

Development Management casework

10. Since the October Committee meeting:
 - a. We made **12** new comments/objections/representations.

- b. **3** applications were granted on which CCB made supportive comments and **1** granted on which we had raised objections.
 - c. **5 appeals** were determined, with 3 dismissed and 2 granted (allowed). CCB had raised objections to all these appeals.
11. Details of these and other cases are given in the Committee papers.
12. A significant amount of time had been devoted to participating in the examination into the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) proposal to expand the capacity of **Luton Airport** from 18 million to 32 million passengers per annum by 2045, including appearing and giving evidence at two hearing sessions. The planning advisor, Mike Stubbs, gave an informative and entertaining presentation to the meeting. He had applied his forensic analysis to large amounts of the evidence submitted by the applicants, including their environmental statements, and so on, and had recognised that the proposals were taking little if any account of the impacts of increased overflying on the appreciation of the special qualities of the AONB. The examining panel picked up on Mike's observations and required the applicants to undertake a "special qualities assessment", under guidance from Natural England and us. This is an entirely new approach that could set a precedent for the consideration of other infrastructure projects in other protected landscapes.
13. The examining panel were also very interested in the ongoing boundary review and in the strengthened section 85 duty, both of which subjects we gave evidence on. Even with the recently reported delays to the boundary review project, it is possible that the proposed revised boundaries of the National Landscape could be in the public domain before the Secretary of State for Transport makes his/her decision: which legally must be made in August.

Recommendations:

- 1. to **NOTE** the update on the work of the Planning Committee given in this paper and offer any observations to the Committee with regard to its priorities or work programme
- 2. to **CONSIDER** the head of strategy & planning's view that the Board could write to Defra encouraging them to expedite publication of the interim guidance on the strengthened s.85 duty