



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

Executive Committee

On Thursday 29th February 2024 at 10.00am

**Meeting Room at Chilterns Conservation Board, 90 Station Road, Chinnor, OX39 4HA
and by remote video conferencing Chinnor, OX39 4DH**

The session will be open from 9.45am

Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Declaration of Interest
3. Notice of Urgent Business
4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (14.11.23)
5. Matters Arising
6. Public Questions
7. Chair's Update
8. Chief Executive's Update (p)
9. Finance and Budget Report
 - 9.1 Quarter 3 Financial Update (p)
 - 9.2 Budget (p)
 - 9.3 Report on Quarter 3 Delivery (v)
 - 9.4 Funding Update (p)
 - 9.5 Business Planning (p)
10. Strategy and Governance
 - 10.1 Management Plan Review (p)
 - 10.2 Constitution (p)
 - 10.3 Monitoring Officer (p)
 - 10.4 Complaints and feedback procedures (p)
 - 10.5 Governance T&F Group (v)
11. HR Strategy update and HR Advisory Group
 - 11.1 HR Strategy and Implementation Plan (p)
 - 11.2 HR Advisory Group update [v]
12. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion update (p)

13. Urgent Business
14. Agenda items for 14th March Board meeting
15. Time and date of next meeting

2024 meeting dates:

Board meetings	Executive Committee	Planning Committee
Thursday 14 th March @10.00 am The Paralympic Room, The Gateway Offices, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP19 8FF (Buckinghamshire Council Offices)	Thursday 16 th May @10.00 am	Thursday 25 th April @ 10.00 am
Thursday 20 th June @ 5.00 pm	Thursday 15 th August @ 2.00 pm	Thursday 25 th July @ 5.00pm
Thursday 19 th September @ 2.00 pm	Thursday 7 th November @ 2.00pm	Thursday 17 th October @ 2.00pm
Thursday 12 th December @10.00 am		

Elaine King, CEO



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE of the Chilterns Conservation Board HELD ON Tuesday 14th November 2023 at CCB offices, The Lodge, 90 Station Road, Chinnor OX39 4HA commencing at 10.00 AM.

Present:

Colin Courtney	Board Member - Chair
Cllr John Griffin	Board Member
Cllr Charles Hussey	Board Member
Paul Mainds	Board Member
John Nicholls	Board Member - Deputy Chair of the Board
Cllr Sir Hector Sants	Board Member

Attending online:

Cllr Richard Newcombe	Board Member
Cllr Sue Rowland	Board Member
Cllr Phillip Spicer	Board Member

In attendance:

Andrew Brock-Doyle	Head of Operations
Deirdre Hansen	Clerk to the Board
Kate Hepple	Head of Landscape
Graham Hurst	Finance Officer
Elaine King	Chief Executive Officer
Vicki Pearce	Communications Manager
Matt Thomson	Head of Strategy & Planning
Annette Weiss	Head of Engagement & partnerships

The Chair welcomed all present and members introduced themselves.

23/24.18. Apologies for absence.

None.

23/24.19. Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

23/24.20. Notice of Urgent Business

There was no notice of urgent business.

23/24.21. Minutes of the previous meeting 11/07/23

CCB Executive Committee Meeting 2023

Tuesday 14th November 2023

The minutes of the meeting 11/07/23 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair after the following correction was made: minute number 23/23.9 was amended to 23/24.9.

23/24.22. Matters Arising

All items covered on the agenda.

23/24.23. No public present

23/24.24. Chair's update

1. In view of the full agenda, the Chair mentioned that he would provide an update at the December Board meeting. In addition, much of the work he has been involved in, is covered by the agenda.
2. After five months in post his impression is that the management team are carrying a substantial workload in providing support to various internal and external activities. He believes the Executive Committee needs to watch the workload the Committee and others are putting on the team. The CCB is a small organisation with limited resources. Many of the papers submitted are asking for feedback and suggestions to reduce the work load and simplify procedures would be appreciated.

1. The Committee NOTED the Chair's update.

23/23.25. Chief Executive's update

The CEO, Elaine King, gave a verbal update.

1. She now has a complete and fully functioning Senior Management Team (SMT).
2. There is a clear system in place for reporting to the Board and the Executive Committee (ExCo). Much of the areas of work she oversees or is contributing to are specific agenda items on this ExCo's agenda.
3. She set out some staff changes including two new Project Support Officers (one starting in January 2024) and two Communications Officers.
4. The SMT is working well, they as a team and individually are covering a huge range of work and making good progress as shown in the papers accompanying the agenda.
5. Since the last ExCo meeting she has had a range of meeting with partners and other stakeholders e.g.:
 - NAAONB National Conference where the Beacons of the Past project was shortlisted for the Bowland award.
 - Rebacca Pow, Under Parliamentary Secretary of State at Defra visited the river Chess to hear about the work of the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project and the Thames Water funded Smarter Water Catchment pilot which the CCB hosts.
 - She sits on the FiPL Panel with the Head of Landscapes, Kate Heppell and Board member Cllr James Norman.
6. She meets regularly with the Finance Officer. Graham Hurst, and has worked with Graham and the Senior Administration Officer Lynne Cordice to submit our six-monthly grant claim and progress report to Defra.
7. She thanked the SMT for their hard work as well as the whole staff team.
8. She expressed specific thanks to the Chair, Colin Courtney, and Deputy-Chair, John Nicholls, for their input and support in the last few months.
9. The Clerk, Deirdre Hansen, who is leaving the organisation at the end of the year was thanked for her contributions and support. The CEO is exploring how best to cover Deirdre's work in future.

Members had some questions on staff changes and project staff.

CCB Executive Committee Meeting 2023

Tuesday 14th November 2023

1. The Committee NOTED the CEO's update.

23/24.26 Finance and Budget Report

26.1. Quarter 2 Financial Update

The Finance Officer, Graham Hurst, reported on the financial results to the 31st October 2023.

1. Core income was £592k, in line with expectations. The full annual Defra grant has been received, resulting in £241k received in advance.
2. It was noted that recharges to projects of core staff costs and overheads cannot be shown as income in our accounting software, but shows as both income and expenditure reduced. Staff costs are £87k less than budget which is in line with the budgeted £107k recharged for the period.
3. £70k exceptional charges provision is included in management costs.
4. If the CCB core finances remain on budget a £70k deficit outturn is expected resulting from the exceptional costs.
5. Income from projects to the end of October is £1.632m with costs of £746k, £886k to be transferred 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.
6. Chalk streams, it was noted that the water companies are invoiced at the end of the year.

1. The Committee NOTED the CCB Financial Position on 31st October 2023.

26.2. Report on Quarter 2 Delivery

The Head of Operations, Andrew Brock-Doyle, had provided a detailed report on the CCB's Q2 Delivery Plan. Significant progress has been achieved as shown in the accompanying report. Areas of concern are capacity and financial resources. Other generic key risks and issues were highlighted.

The detailed report is not just a tool for the ExCo, but is also used by the SMT for business planning. Members discussed the report. Concern was expressed on slow progress with finalising and documenting policies and procedures. Paul Mainds, Secretary of State appointed Board member, offered his time and assistance in this area. **The Head of Operations, Andrew Brock-Doyle will take this forward.**

Given the RAG status of some of the delivery lines in the report, it was suggested that staff focus on the priorities in particular of HR, Finance, and policies and procedures. Cllr Sir Hector Sants offered his assistance on the annual planning process. **The Head of Operations, Andrew Brock-Doyle will take this forward.**

Members offered their comments.

1. The Committee NOTED the quarter 2 update and provided feedback.

26.3. Funding Update

The CEO, Elaine King, presented a detailed update on the progress with an emerging Funding Strategy including developing a new process for planning and assessing potential new work streams and funding applications. She also made some key observations on the CCB's funding pipeline.

CCB Executive Committee Meeting 2023

Tuesday 14th November 2023

A funding pipeline has been created on Teams giving the SMT an early view of what is ongoing, allowing it to assess ideas, make decisions and report to the ExCo and the Board. The process needs to be thought of as program management, and focuses on delivering the CCB's strategic priorities while also documenting when the ExCo is informed, consulted and asked to approve new work and funding applications. Once fully operational the process will provide greater transparency to both the SMT and ExCo.

Members asked about the CCB's agility to respond to short-notice funding opportunities. These will also be assessed through the new system

It was agreed that the SMT's overview in assessing potential new work streams and funding pipelines was crucial. It was noted that the CEO is the best fundraiser for the CCB.

Members gave feedback on the processes.

- 1. The Committee NOTED and OFFERED feedback the progress on the process for planning and assessing potential new work streams and funding applications, and key observations on the CCB's funding pipeline.**

26.4 Business Planning

The Head of Operations, Andrew Brock-Doyle presented a paper on the proposed process that the CCB is looking to undertake for Business Planning 2024/25. A draft delivery plan and reporting structure identifying the key workstreams going forward was presented, representing an evolution of the process agreed last year.

The ExCo had requested greater robustness, more integrated delivery and a stronger future focus. The SMT is keen to have greater CCB ownership of the process ensuring a top down- bottom up approach is used. This paper in full will be presented at the December Board meeting reducing the need for extensive discussion.

- 1. The Committee ENDORSED and RECOMMENDED to the Board the high-level process for Annual Planning this year.**
- 2. The Committee NOTED the framework for the Delivery Plan**

23/24.27 Rebranding

The Deputy Chair, John Nicholls, presented an updated report on AONB rebranding following the Board's strong reservations expressed at the September Board meeting. Significant developments have taken place since the September Board meeting and following Board member comments, the Deputy Chair, John Nicholls, sought further feedback from members and presented a report with options for a way forward. '

He asked the Exco to:

- consider the issues and options set out in the report
- identify any further options
- recommend a preferred position to the Board and
- consider any short-term actions needed before the next Board meeting.

CCB Executive Committee Meeting 2023

Tuesday 14th November 2023

Members had considered the report, with some doing further research. a number of members expressed a revised opinion that the CCB should support the rebranding, with one member maintaining their opposition to the rebranding, in line with the original Board view expressed in September.

The overall view was that the National Association for AONBs had not communicated well. A majority consensus was reached with a recommendation that the CEO and Deputy Chair should attend the rebranding launch event on 22 November.

- 1. The Committee CONSIDERED the issues and options set out in the report.**
- 2. The Committee IDENTIFIED further options. See recommendation 3 in the papers.**
- 3. The Committee RECOMMENDED to the Board:**
 - a. ACCEPTING a rebranding in principle**
 - b. MAKING our own implementation plan which would be conditional on continued progress toward the conditions set out in our response to the Government's response to Glover (as set out in section 3 in the papers).**
 - c. ENGAGING with our local stakeholders as part of an ongoing process.**
- 4. The Committee CONSIDERED any short-term actions needed before the next meeting, (CEO and Deputy Chair to attend the rebranding launch event)**

Agenda items 11 and 12 were swapped around.

23/24.28 HR Strategy update and HR Advisory Group (HRAG).

28.4 Board Member, Paul Mains gave an update on the HRAG which had met 30/10/23. Two new Board members had volunteered their services to this group, Cllr Sue Rowland and Cllr Robert Roche. These additions to the HRAG to be approved by the Board at the December meeting. The Membership of the HRAG is now as follows, Board members, Paul Mains- Chair, Colin Courtney, Geeta Ludhra, John Nicholls, Cllr Robert Roche and Cllr Sue Rowland. Paul Mains thanked all the members. This group does not meet regularly, but comes together when issue arise. They will meet in January '24 and meet the new HR Advisor.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the update and that the Board at its December meeting will be asked to approve the new members of the HRAG.**

28.1 & 2 The CEO, Elaine King, presented a paper on the 2023/24 HR Strategy and its associated implementation plan as approved by the ExCo in February. The HR Strategy and Implementation Plan 23/24 runs out December '23. The CEO, Elaine King, will create a new Implementation Plan 24/25, update the HR Strategy and take it to the HRAG by the end of November.

Members had the opportunity to provide feedback.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the update on the delivery of the HR Strategy and provided feedback.**
- 2. The Committee SUPPORTED the proposal to review and update the HR Strategy and develop a new implementation plan, in consultation with the HRAG and these documents to be approved by the Board at its December meeting.**

CCB Executive Committee Meeting 2023

Tuesday 14th November 2023**28.3. HR Transformation Plan**

The Head of Operations, Andrew Brock-Doyle had presented a detailed HR Simplified Transformation Plan.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the HR Simplified Transformation Plan as presented.**

23/24. 29. Strategy and Governance**29.1. Integrated Strategic Workstreams**

The Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson, presented an update on progress with aligning our strategic workstreams and asked the Committee for observations and endorsement of the proposed direction of travel.

The Management Plan Review is at the centre of the work, as this is a statutory requirement with firm timescales. Further influential factors are Natural England's AONB Boundary Review, our work on Governance and Partnership and our improved Operational Planning Process.

The initial paper presented to the Exco in July on the internal and external work streams named "Parallel Governance Workstreams" was complex and somewhat misleading, highlighting the need for careful integration and coordination and a simple flowchart. Officers have now produced a simplified diagram as presented. It is suggested that a "Programme Office" is established to provide light-touch oversight of the various workstreams, comprising of the Deputy Chair and the Chair of the Governance TFG John Nicholls and the Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson.

The September Board meeting endorsed a broad approach to the Management Plan Review and agreed to the creation of a TFG to assist this work. Board member, Gemma Harper was nominated and accepted to Chair this TFG. The Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson and Gemma Harper have had constructive discussions. The Head of Strategy and Planning thanked the Board for nominating her and thanked the Deputy-Chair, John Nicholls, Chair of the Governance TFG and Cllr Sir Hector Sants, Chair of the 25- year Vison TFG for their challenging contributions.

Officers recommend to complete the "roll-forward" of the current Management Plan as previously agreed by the Board as soon as possible, and as resources allow, ahead of the March 2025 deadline.

Terms of Refence for the Management Plan Review TFG have been drafted for the ExCo to consider. Membership for this TFG is being sought. Committee suggestions for membership welcomed. Membership of the other TFG is well established and they are working well, but new membership suggestions welcomed.

Members asked about a stakeholder engagement plan for the TFGs. Sufficient staff resource is required.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the content of the paper as the basis for future actions by Officers and the TFGs, subject to further steers from the Committee and /or the Board.**
- 2. The Committee ENDORSED the nomination of the Deputy-Chair of the Board and the Head of Strategy and Planning in an advisory capacity to provide co-ordinating oversight to delivery of the Integrated Strategic Workstreams.**
- 3. The Committee ENDORSED the proposal to complete the "roll-forward" of the current Management Plan as quickly as resources allow, and only take advantage of further opportunities to delay that Review in exceptional circumstances.**

CCB Executive Committee Meeting 2023

Tuesday 14th November 2023

- 4. The Committee WILL SUGGEST to the Chairs of the Management Plan Review, the Vision and Governance TFGs potential members for consideration. Membership to be confirmed by the Board, unless that part of the draft Terms of Reference is not approved.**

29.2 Principles of CCB Delegations

The Deputy-Chair, John Nicholls, presented a paper of the analysis of gaps in delegations of authorities.

Discussions between Officers and the Chair have resolved the basic principles as set out in Code of Governance, the paper and taking account of the new processes for planning and assessing potential new work streams and funding applications as set out and discussed in 23/24.26.3 above.

- Board determines CCB Strategy and the means of implementation.
- All decisions complying with the Key Documents are taken by the CEO.
- Decisions possibly beyond the Key Documents, the CEO consults the Chair. If they do not agree, it is referred to the ExCo, which can refer the matter to the Board. If referral to the Board is considered not necessary, the CEO makes the decision.

There was some discussion on the need to seek approval for increased headcount and members suggested that this only be necessary for increases to the SMT, and that FTE is a more accurate parameter.

- 1. The Committee ENDOSED the principles as laid out, as an underlying basis of more detailed work to be undertaken by the Governance TFG, which will subsequently produce comprehensive recommendations to the Board.**

23/24.30. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

The Head of Engagement and Partnerships, Annette Weiss, had presented an updated report on EDI progress since the last meeting.

It was noted that additional resources for our EDI work had been obtained from Defra Access Funding and via the NAAONB, from the Arts Council's Nature Calling Arts in the Landscape project. This last fund does require a £20k contribution from the CCB, which we will seek outside funding for, and requires 40 days of staff time over two years. The staff time contribution needs to be worked out.

Members made suggestions.

The Head of Engagement and Partnerships, Annette Weiss, was thanked for obtaining this funding. It poses an opportunity and a challenge.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the update on EDI in particular the need for additional resource to support this growing area of work - a strategic priority for the CCB**

23/24.31. Landscape Team update

The Head of Landscape, Kate Heppell gave a report on her team's strategic work, this report will be taken to the Board in December. The report covered:

- Farm Cluster SWOT analysis and FiPL working closely with the clusters.
- Woodland Strategy, best practice.
- Working together on landscape-scale nature recovery.
 - Chilterns AONB Nature Recovery Ambition Statement. This report is designed to be taken to partners of the CCB to explain our ambitions to produce a Nature Recovery plan over the next 18 months. It was noted that Local Authorities are doing extensive work on their own Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

CCB Executive Committee Meeting 2023

Tuesday 14th November 2023

Members had the opportunity to ask questions and make comments.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the update on landscape team activity and provided feedback.**
- 2. The Committee NOTED the update on Nature Recovery and provided feedback**

23/24.31. Urgent Business

1. Given the number of papers to read for this meeting the Chair asked what members considered the ideal. There were differing views on this matter.
 - Focus on the information needed to make decisions.
 - One- or two-page summaries
 - More appendices
 - All the detail.
 - Recommendations at the beginning of the paper.
2. The Chair mentioned the following:
 - He has had a letter exchange with the Chief Executive of Natural England, Marian Spain. She had pointed out that Defra have commenced a project to review funding pressures at AONBs and NPs.
 - A confidential report on the Boundary review has been produced. The consultation process will start in the new year. He thanked the Conservation and Landscape Officer, Neil Jackson, for reviewing the report.
 - He had attended a Buckinghamshire Rural Forum meeting online, Chaired by our Board member Cllr Gareth Williams, Deputy Leader Buckinghamshire Council and Health and Wellbeing Cabinet Member Buckinghamshire Council. The meeting is rural focussed and very enlightening.
 - He had attended Defra meetings online re the appointment process of Secretary of State appointees.

23/24.32. Next board Meeting 12th December 2023.

23/24.33. Next Exco meeting: Thursday 29th February 2024- at the CCB offices in Chinnor.

Further meetings: Thursday 16th May, Thursday 15th August and Thursday 7th November 2024.

The Chairman.....

Date.....

Item 8.	CEO Update
Author:	Elaine King, CEO
Purpose of Report:	To update the Committee 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 Deirdre and Lynne 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 communications team is now awaiting final files from the agency and the launch date is set for the 6 March.

- 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.
- Vicki and the comms team have used the rebrand as 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.)
- A comms engagement plan for the launch has also been created with the team contributing to a list of partners to send details of the new brand to. A guidance toolkit has also been created for partners to use.

Thanks

To the Senior Management Team, as well as the whole team staff team for all their hard work, and especially Vicki in coordinating and advising on 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.

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). We would normally engage our internal auditors in April, so this is the last Executive meeting prior the appointment of the internal auditors where we can consider this issue.

I would propose that we consider the reappointment of Herts SIAS, provided no independence issues are raised, rather than putting the internal audit out to tender because of the very limited number of accounting firms who have the required experience and the costs

involved in such a process being not good use of our limited resources. I can confirm that the CCB senior management team including Elaine and myself are independent of Herts SIAS and I will obtain Herts SIAS assurance that they consider that they are independent of the CCB and its senior management team.

Recommendation

- 1. To note the CCB financial position at 31 January 2024**
- 2. To confirm that the Executive have considered the independence of Herts SIAS**

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 Gra	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 material	7,737.71	0	7737.71
HLF Equipment and material	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 relat	93,812.70	0	93812.7
HLF Professional fees relat	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				
Interest Income	183,719	153,099		Payroll recharged monthly- £104k netted from payroll, overheads when invoiced
Local Authority Contribution	500	417	59,504	Mainly MTG to be realysed
	106,521	88,768	88,768	All except Three Rivers and Luton have made their annual contributions. Actual relates to 10 months Pilio Group fees
Other Revenue		-	6,440	
Sale of merchandise	550	458	207	
Income Total	811,435	676,196	591,330	
Less Operating Expenses				
Advertising & Marketing Bank	150	125	2,380	Communications strategy project - value £10554
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 Event costs	49,264	41,053	33,798	Actual is less recharged to Projects £7425
Finance costs	2,000	1,667	1,061	
General Expenses	9,000	7,500	672	Awaiting audit fees
Insurance	2,000	1,667	4,029	NAAONB Conference £1785, Staff christmas £727
IT Software and Consumables	5,000	4,167	13,822	Annual cost, note greater than budget, some recharge possible
IT support and maintenance	10,000	8,333	5,918	
Legal expenses	7,000	5,833	5,006	
Light, Power, Heating	750	625	23,367	
Magazine costs	6,500	5,417	6,892	Includes provn for insurance excess
Medical Insurance	12,000	10,000	12,018	
Members Allowances Nature	5,200	4,333	4,262	Full year printing costs inv in advance
Recovery	7,500	6,250	5,266	
Office Equipment	5,000	4,167		Noted to be reviewed No spend
Pensions Costs	1,500	1,250	-	
Postage, Freight & Courier	89,003	74,169	384	Actual is less recharged to Projects £9595
Printing & Stationery	1,000	833	63,665	
	1,100	917	341	
	6,825	5,688	1,212	
	5,000	4,167	7,000	Funding from David Youngusband legacy
Project donations	20,500	17,083	6,066	
Rates and Water rates	2,000	1,667	2,909	
Recruitment	5,000	4,167	13,875	
Rent	499,818	416,515	2,722	Annual testing and monitoring fees
Repairs & Maintenance	1,000	833	18	
Research and survey expenditure	5,000	4,167	387,897	Actual is less recharged to Projects but includes other staff payments
Salaries	5,000	4,167	474	
Staff expenses	5,000	4,167	5,555	
Staff Training	1,500	1,250	5,898	EDI training
Subscriptions Telephone & Internet	7,500	6,250	2,392	AONB £2985 annual fee
Travel Expenses			2,130	
Website running costs			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 **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, it has been prepared with reference to the 2024-25 Business Plan and reflects the costs associated with that plan:

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 staff resources is £139k of which £70k is rechargeable to projects. Therefore, the net cost of the additional 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. **Income 2024/25**
 - 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 any contribution 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. 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.
- 9 potential new roles have been identified as being required in FY24-25. Of these:
 - 2 are permanent core roles costed into the break-even budget presented. These roles are budgeted to be recruited from July 2024.
 - 3 are potential permanent core roles that would only be recruited when funding is secured.
 - 1 is a fixed term core role which will be recruited only when funding is secured.
 - 1 is a potential permanent core role for which we have agreed 12 months initial funding using CCB reserves.
 - 2 are fixed term project roles which will be fully funded if we secure the project or otherwise not recruited
- In addition another 4 roles initially identified as being needed in FY24-25 have been removed from the budget for this year
 - 3 are potential permanent core roles that in calculating a break-even budget have been delayed until FY25-26.
 - 1 is a core fixed term role that in calculating a break-even budget we have decided not to recruit
- All other costs have been reviewed on a line-by-line basis by the Senior Administrator, Head of Operations and Finance Officer.

5. Financial Control

- In applying greater rigour to the budgeting process CCB staff and management will have a more transparent understanding of the budget and its constituent budget lines (*see also Appendix 1 – Enhanced Budget Process*)
- All budget holders will have a clear view of their budgets and be expected to track them on an ongoing basis
- There will be improved review of tracking overall spend with the SMT reviewing monthly to ensure an ongoing and clear understanding of spend against budget enabling management decisions to be made in a timely fashion (this will involve a new management reports being developed). This will be done in conjunction with a review of the funding pipeline.
- CCB will only recruit additional staff identified when CCB has the financial ability to pay for them in 2024-25 and future years.

6. Budgets 2025- 28

- Budgets for 2025-26 to 2027-28 would normally be available with this report, however, as the CCB faces uncertainties over its income they do not provide meaningful information.
- The income uncertainties that the CCB faces include the risk associated with the Smarter Water Catchment project, given Thames Water’s financial position, and 2024-25 being the last year of the Farming in Protected Landscapes project, which provides a recharge to core.
- In addition, the Chalk Cherries & Chairs project will be completed in November 2024, and we will need another project of a similar value to replace the contribution that the CCC project currently makes to core. It is hoped that the Not Bourne Yesterday application will serve this purpose.
- Further information on projects in the pipeline are outlined in the Funding Strategy update (paper 9.4).
- The current DEFRA flat settlement comes to an end 2024-25. Defra is currently exploring a one-year uplift for 2025-26 ahead of the Comprehensive Spending Review, where there is potential for a large increase from 2026-27 onwards based on a new funding formula. This is currently being explored and we await further details.
- Anticipated staff costs have been calculated for each of the next 4 years. For 2024-25 the net core staff cost, after recharges, is £585,437 and the Budget is break-even.
- Core staff costs net of recharges against committed projects increase each year as the visibility of income from projects becomes less certain and are therefore not anticipated in the CCB forecasts. These costs, which include the phasing in of the additional staff resources identified as required, are:

2024-25	£591,479
2025-26	£1,071,203
2026-27	£1,250,551
2027-28	£1,292,944

Recommendation

1. To approve a budget for recommendation to the Board

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	5 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 **Funding Strategy**

Author: Elaine King, CEO

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

Background

At the last Executive Committee meeting in November 2023, and the subsequent Board meeting on 12 December 2023, members were provided with updates on work in progress on the following:

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

Having approved the new Strategic Funding Model (3.) in September 2023, the Board gave approval in December 2023 for a process by which the CCB identifies, develops and signs off proposals for new work and new funding streams (5.).

As set out in these earlier papers, this approach for assessing new work and funding sources provides a number of improvements including: an early line of sight and greater visibility of funding proposals for the Senior Management Team (SMT) and the Executive Committee; a clearly documented process, which includes focus on how new work or funding proposals deliver CCB's strategic priorities; and clarity on when the Executive Committee is informed, consulted and asked to approve new work and/or sources of funding.

This paper therefore provides an update on implementation of those areas of work and, in particular, sets out key elements of and observations on the current pipeline of externally funded projects.

A process for assessing proposals for New Work and New Funding

Now fully operational, the new process means that proposals for new work and new funding streams have greater visibility, are being developed and assessed more consistently, and work is being planned and delivered in line with deadlines and available staff capacity. In line with the agreed processes, this includes - in some cases - proposed new work or new sources of funding not being pursued.

The decision-making process has been further improved through the approval by the Board, in December 2023, of the principles for a Scheme of Delegation. This provides clarity on the CEO's delegated authority and has enabled the CEO and SMT to make effective decisions in a timely manner, while bringing proposals to the ExCo as required.

The SMT regularly discusses and reviews new opportunities and proposals, which ensures that we both follow an agreed process and have the flexibility to explore short notice opportunities. Another part of the new approach is to ensure that, where possible, all funding applications include recharge to cover the input of 'core' staff, especially administration, finance, communications, the SMT and the CEO.

Funding pipeline

Slide 7 in agenda item 9 of the September 2023 Board papers, set out the details of the Funding Pipeline that was subsequently approved by the Board. The Pipeline is now populated and regularly updated and reviewed by the SMT. The bullet points below highlight some key observations that we believe will be of interest to the Executive Committee, focussing especially on risk.

The new process has been applied to six potential funding sources. Four of these have been taken forward with bids developed (described below) and one has been rejected (Defra/Natural England/NLHF Species Survival Fund for which the organisation did not have either capacity or level of preparedness to develop a bid).

- **Rothschild Foundation:** An application for £200K to support the Central Chilterns Farmer Cluster in upskilling in climate adaptation measures (focused on soil health) and readiness for green finance was successful. This two-year project started in Jan 2024 and provides a menu of advice, monitoring and evaluation opportunities for farmers. It includes two days/month of Nick Marriner's time for two years.
- **Thames Water, Chess Smarter Water Catchment project:** Kate Heppell and Harriet Bennett have secured £86K to support the continued development of the River Chess catchment farm cluster, and to support nature recovery and runoff mitigation work on farmland in the catchment. This is in addition to staff costs covered by the same Thames Water Smarter Water Catchment (SWC) programme.
- **Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund Round 3 bid led by Pilio:** the CCB has been invited to join Pilio in a NEIRF Round 3 application to co-design a commercial and governance model for aggregating demand and supply of ecosystem services in Buckinghamshire and associated catchment areas. The bid will comprise an 18-month long project worth £5,600 (14 days of staff time (Kate Heppell and Nick Marriner). The bid was submitted on 16 February with a letter of support from the CCB.
- **Rebel Restoration:** Following a due diligence exercise, Kate and Nick are now developing a £25K bid to Rebel Restoration to support continuation of the 'Tracking the Impact' citizen science monitoring programme, a project established through the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs project. When CCC ends in November 2024, this fund will enable us to employ a 0.5 FTE citizen science co-ordinator. We have already secured £22K funding from the Thames Water Chess SWC programme (2024/2025 funding) and £11K of HS2 Additional Projects funding to support the initiative in 2024-2025. If we are successful in securing Rebel Restoration funding, we would also seek to secure match-funding from the Mend the Gap programme to expand the monitoring into that programme area.

Risk: The senior team considers that the risks to CCB of the applications above are relatively small, though we need to flag that we will need to ensure that staff capacity is available to deliver the projects. This is because both the Rothschild Foundation

bid to support Central Chilterns Cluster when CCC ends, and an earlier large FiPL bid to support a North Chilterns farmer cluster (which was submitted prior to our new approach) were both successful. Our Head of Landscape has therefore started discussions with Affinity Water, which has ambition and funds to develop and support farmer clusters in the Chilterns and funding can include covering staff costs.

- [Big Chalk](#) is an ambitious programme that aims to restore a mosaic of habitats across 24,867 sq. km in the south of England, and includes a number of protected landscapes, including the Chilterns. The project will deliver nature recovery, climate change adaptation and a range of other benefits including supporting public health and wellbeing, and providing sustainable employment, carbon sequestration, a clean water supply, flood management and soil stabilisation.
- A programme lead has recently been employed by the National Landscapes Association to steer the direction of the initiative and is visiting the CCB on 4 March to discuss next steps.

Risk: The CCB is not committed financially at this stage. There are implications in terms of staff capacity - a number of staff are involved in so far as the partnership is exploring the key priorities for the project and establishing potential sources of funding. The intention is to develop an application to the NLHF's new funding stream Integrated Landscapes. The CCB's Head of Landscape recently convened a meeting of all staff involved to ensure that our collective input adds value, is focused and best uses staff capacity.

Heritage and nature recovery

- The CCB's proposed project, **Not Bourne Yesterday** was conceived and developed before the CCB had robust processes for developing and signing off funding applications, so presented a useful test case for us to trial the new process that was approved at the December Board meeting. As a result, it has been subjected to a great deal of scrutiny by the Senior Management Team and is expected to be ready for the submission date at the end of February.

A number of other funding applications in this area are at various stages of development. These are commercially sensitive, in part because they also involve other organisations, so a verbal update will be provided at the meeting.

Equality, Inclusion and Diversity

- Another priority area of work for the CCB is EDI. In 2023 this has led to development of an EDI Ambition Statement, action plan and delivering EDI training to staff. This commitment to EDI is shared by Defra and has led to Defra providing Access for All funding, to improve access to protected landscapes for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. In the first year of the three-year programme (2022/23), the CCB distributed c £230k. This financial year we will receive and distribute £54k and next year £261,480k.
- An internal Defra report on Year 1 of the **Access for All programme** outlines results and lessons learned from the programme, including that the programme has had a largely positive impact, though many protected landscapes (National Landscapes/AONBs and National Parks) have found the short timescales for spending the funds very challenging. The report includes a table of allocations,

showing that the Chilterns AONB was allocated the greatest amount across all protected landscapes in Year 1 (£489,666). This relates to Defra's allocation criteria which comprises total area of the protected landscape, population within the area, population within 25km of the area and Index of Multiple Deprivation. A additional weighting of 1.5 was applied to National Landscapes to ensure equity for smaller protected landscapes. The report can be provided on request.

Risk: The SMT consider risk to be low, in large part due to having engaged partners and others regarding the fund and demand likely to (again) exceed funding available. The CCB's Head of Engagement and Partnerships is leading this work. See paper 12 for more detail.

- The CCB is also collaborating with the National Landscape Association (NLA) on the **Nature Calling** project. Arts Council England is providing £532k over two years and Defra has committed £300k match funding. The Chilterns is one of six 'hubs' and the project is aimed at improving access to AONBs for a wider range of people, especially those from BAME communities. For more information on the project, refer to agenda item 12. and aiming to.
- **Risk:** the CCB is required to contribute 40 days staff time over two years and each hub is required to contribute up to £20,000 match funding. The NLA and project partner, Activate Arts, will be fundraising and we expect not to need to contribute these funds, though we are expected to contribute £2,000 and this is in next year's budget. We are also currently exploring how we will provide the staff time required.

Recommendation

1. **To NOTE and offer feedback on updates on delivering the Funding Strategy and key observations on the CCB's funding pipeline.**

Item 9.5 Business Planning

Author: Andrew Brock-Doyle (Head of Operations)

Summary: The paper updates the work that has been undertaken in terms of business planning for FY24-25, detailing the changes that have been made and seeks approval for the high level delivery plan

Background

In March 2023 the Board approved a new approach to business planning. Subsequent to this in November 2024 the Executive Committee was presented with a plan for the Senior Management Team intended to approach business planning for FY24-25. This built on, rather than deviated from, the new approach to business planning that was agreed in March 2023.

The Executive Committee noted that the lack of Senior Management Team (SMT) capacity at the end of FY23-24 meant that the Business Plan for the current year lacked robustness and in particular:

Lacked a clear identification of the integration of the different components (budget – delivery plan – resource plan) underpinned by a funding plan

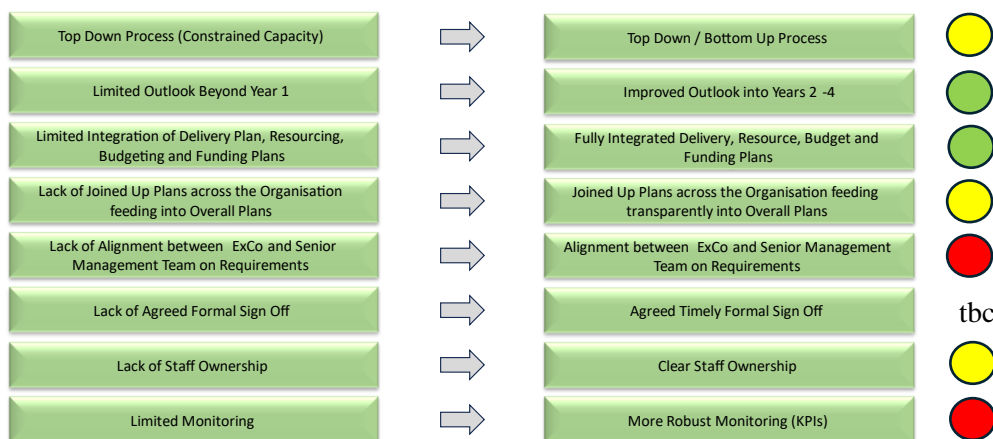
Did not identify transparently what resource was needed to deliver the CCB strategy and enable it to fulfil its purposes as identified in the AONB Management Plan

As such there was no agreed clear sign off of the business plan for FY23-24

Increased Robustness of Approach

A number of key principles were agreed around the approach for FY24-25 in order to address the concerns raised by the Executive Committee.

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



● Fully / mainly achieved ● Partially achieved ● Not achieved

Top Down – Bottom Up Process

- ✓ During this business planning cycle we have gone through a number of stages, starting with the SMT undertaking a review of the Management Plan to ensure that we the Delivery Plan was more in line with the requirements of the AONB Management Plan
- ✓ The SMT also reviewed work against the Management Plan to understand delivery priorities, level of effort required and what CCB's role should be
- ✓ On the back of bottom up planning that had taken place in the Landscapes Team (the team with the biggest delivery portfolio) since the appointment of the Head of Landscapes in June 2023 the SMT identified both a new delivery plan and the resources needed to deliver that plan
- ✓ Following costing of the plan the SMT identified what budget sacrifices needed to be made in order to broadly bring the budget in on a cost even basis and have not only reflected this in the resource plan but also kept a clear record of these sacrifices to enable identification of what CCB is unable to deliver
- ✓ At the same time all delivery leads were asked to complete a new template in line with the Delivery Plan below and to ensure continued alignment and integration with the budget and resource plan this included space for the identification of requirements against each delivery line
- ✓ Following this further adjustments have been made in order to identify a break-even budget and further sacrifices noted

Key Learnings / Improvements:

- *The need to be more planful and set aside more time in future planning cycles*
- *The need to address the lack of capacity in terms of leading and writing up this process*
- *The fact that the bottom up process has not been as robust as expected due to capacity constraints within the broader team and lack of strategic capability*

Improved Outlook (1+3 years)

- ✓ The Delivery Plan includes a greater focus on looking forward and includes for the first time not only annual objectives in addition to quarterly outputs for FY24-25 but also annual objectives for the following three years
- ✓ A new and updated resource plan includes all planned resources (as known by the SMT at this point) not only for FY24-25 but also looking forward across the following three years
- ✓ Overheads have now been calculated and forecast forward to enable more effective identification when inputting project proposals and allowing more transparency in terms of assumptions in the budget

Key Learnings / Improvements

- *At this point CCB still does not have a full budget view covering FY24-25 and the following three years as there is a need to look at non staff costs and to forecast them forward (although noting that staff costs make up almost 90% of core costs)*
- *There is more work to do within the team to be able to plan forward and therefore some of the information beyond the end of next year is not yet as robust as it could be (noting that there will always be a reduction in robustness the further forward planning is undertaken)*

Improved Integration of the Business Plan

- ✓ The budget, resource plan and delivery plan have been developed in parallel with assumptions and changes in one being carried across to the others. (Note that there is still some work to do in reviewing and agreeing the detail around outputs in the delivery plan)
- ✓ The full cost budget and resource plan was developed on the basis of an understanding of CCB priorities, as discussed within the SMT, across FY24-25 and the following years
- ✓ The resource plan includes for the first time this year a view of all known and potential recharges (aligned to the funding plan and pipeline) set out in one place so that it is transparent and can be formally updated as and when more information becomes available. This will then automatically feed through into data we are now recording on the percentage coverage of total cost of employment and CCB core contribution levels
- ✓ Where we have had to reduce costs in order to develop a break-even budget this is being reflected in resource plans and will also be reflected in the delivery plan

Key Learnings / Improvement

- *There is more work to do to fully integrate the funding plan – especially in providing more clarity around how the funding strategy could address and fund areas of the delivery plan, budget and resource plan that have been sacrificed in order to reach a balanced budget*
- *Whilst decisions have been made about what we should stop in CCB, in line with many organisations there is a perception that we have sided more on reducing and delaying workload rather than taking decisions to stop work altogether.*
- *Although work has been undertaken this year to understand resource capacity, especially in areas where there is clear capacity constraints, this work needs to be more robust and lead through to key decision-making on what CCB as an organisation can and cannot do*

Alignment on Requirements between SMT and Executive Committee

- ✓ Alignment was reached in the November Executive Committee about the approach to take to business planning

Key Learnings / Improvement

- *There was an intention to have greater input from the end of January from the Executive Committee. This has not happened due to issues with capacity and*

timing that needs to be rectified to ensure insight prior to the corresponding Executive Committee next year

Clear Staff Ownership

- ✓ Significantly more staff ownership through working through Comms budget with the Head of Comms and asking delivery leads to clarify resource and budget impacts in their delivery items
- ✓ Further staff ownership is scheduled to take place following approval of the budget to ensure there is clarity about what is in and not in the budget, that there is clear understanding of budget ownership and who is responsible for which elements of the budget and to outline how the SMT will review spend against budget through the year

Key Learnings / Improvement

- More work needs to be done with staff to ensure more effective input into delivery plan and aligned to this the resource plan and budget, as items were raised in conversation that were not input into the documentation that delivery leads were asked to fill in

More Robust Monitoring

- ✓ There is now clarity about all budgetlines and what is assumed under each budgetline at an operational level with the Head of Operations having run through this with both the Finance Officer and the Senior Administrator. This now means it is possible to be clear about the baseline budget with budget holders
- ✓ A new process of the SMT monitoring spend against budget will be embedded within the SMT meetings going forward so that there are clear levers to either reduce spending or to enable go ahead with spending that is conditional on securing funding

Key Learnings / Improvement

- *In order to do this effectively improved management monthly reporting will need to be created including dashboards that have required information – at the moment getting this information in a timely fashion and in a way that allows effective interrogation / understanding is not in place*

Delivery Plan

A draft delivery plan was presented to the Executive Committee in November 2023. As the SMT has gone through the business planning process this has been refined and updated

The first diagram (CCB Business Model) shows the proposed high level delivery model and the second (CCB Delivery Model showing work areas) shows the different components of those workstreams and how we will report against them. Note that we have pragmatically incorporated cross-cutting themes in the first model into specific areas in the second model so that it is clear where we report.

There are still some further refinements to be made to this model as one outstanding piece of work is to review and rationalise the delivery plan following bottom up input so for example where it is identified as delivery we will be able to clearly identify what that delivery is

The key benefit of this delivery plan is that we will be able to group all work together thematically whereas in the current delivery plan it was done by project. Therefore if a project is delivering against more than one area it will report in the relevant area

We have not yet addressed the issue of KPIs as this is a piece of work that needs to be done in conjunction with understanding the Defra Outcomes Framework. However in order to add more robustness to the Delivery Plan we have introduced the requirement for annual objectives to sit above quarterly targets

The delivery plan this year has a number of new elements in order to ensure improved understanding. Against each delivery line we are including information the following information

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

CCB Delivery Model

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

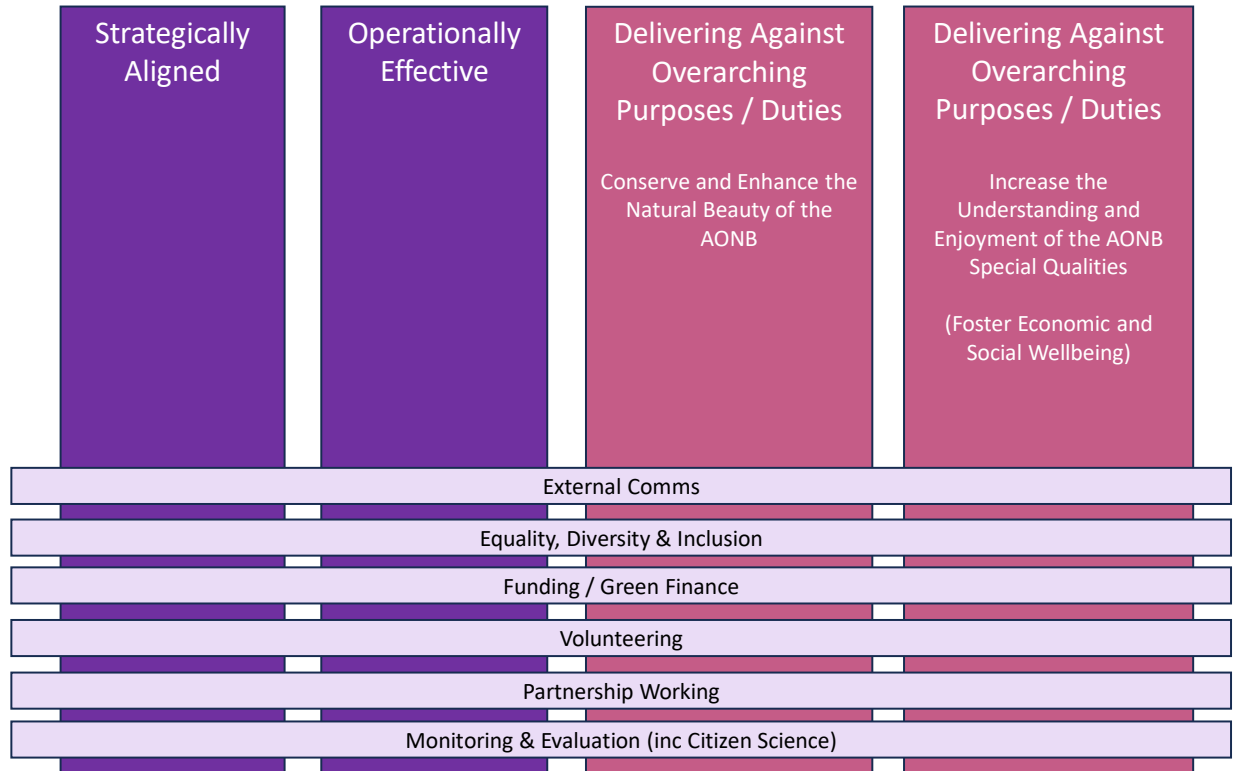
It identifies the need to be strategically aligned to understand what it is that we are delivering and why

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

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

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

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



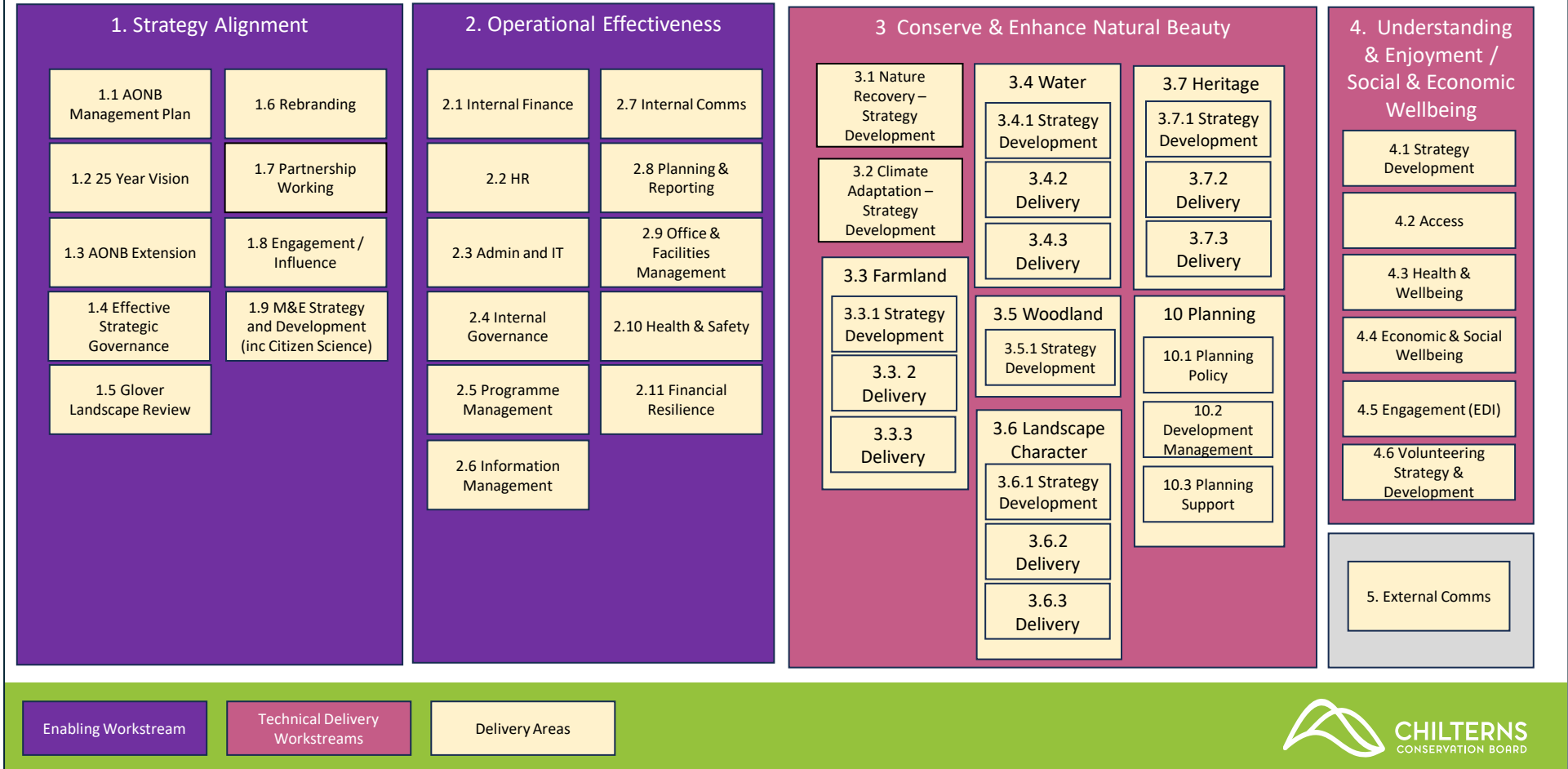
Enabling Workstream

Technical Delivery Workstreams

Cross Cutting Delivery Mechanisms



CCB Delivery Model (Showing Work Areas)



Budget

Details of the enhanced budgeting element of this years business planning can be seen in Appendix 1 – Enhanced Budget Process.

Resource Planning

A new combined resource and operational budget has been created that looks at current year, FY24-25 and the three following years.

In order to make this process more robust and accurate this document includes interlinking tabs to drive improved information with single source of entry:

Existing Information	New Information
Total Cost of Employment Master	Identifies by year the total cost of employment of all staff
Full Time Equivalent	Identifies by month the staff who are planned to be working for the organisation on basis of their FTE
Total Cost of Employment	Identifies the total cost of employment for each staff member on a monthly and annual basis
Recharge Assumptions	Identifies in one place all the potential recharge assumptions from existing projects and those in the pipeline
Recharge Actual	Identifies the actual amount of each staff member's total cost of employment that should be recharged to projects on a monthly and annual basis
Recharge Percentage	Identifies the percentage of each staff member's total cost of employment that will be recharged to projects on a monthly basis
Core Funding Requirement	Identifies the actual amount of each staff member's total cost of employment that needs to come from core funds (ie is not covered by projects) on a monthly basis
Core Budget	Calculates the core budget and draws directly off figures in the resource sheets
Budget Analysis Sheets	Identify different elements of the budget (e/g calculation of inflationary increases, budget sacrifices made, budget savings identified etc)

Recommendation

1. That the Committee **CONSIDERS** the paper and **OFFERS OBSERVATIONS** on the approach

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. CCB 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. We are now at the stage of finalising our submission to trigger that option to extend the current plan.

The story so far

4. 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.
5. 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 a Management Plan Review Task and Finish Group to be chaired by Board member, Gemma Harper.
6. In advance of volunteers coming forward to join the TFG, the TFG chair and officers worked together on developing thinking on the Review, and 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.
7. Following a TFG recruitment drive, the Management Plan Review (MPR) TFG held its first meeting on 21 February 2024. The meeting covered a range of relevant issues, including agreeing proposed Terms of Reference (to be approved by the Board in March), enhancing the text of the proposed “light-touch review” submission to Defra (see below) and setting parameters for future work on the Review.
8. The TFG has now agreed the overall Review programme as to:

- 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 below). 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.

Protected Landscapes Targets & Outcomes Framework – an introduction

9. At the end of January, Defra finally published its “Targets and Outcomes Framework” (TOF) for protected landscapes¹. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.

¹ For full details, please see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework>

10. Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes.
12. All Protected Landscape bodies (including CCB) 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.
13. 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 Landscape and working with the Landscape Team, the preparation of which is being coordinated with the Management Plan Review.
14. 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.
15. 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.
16. 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.
17. 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.

Discussion

18. The TFG approved, and recommends for the Committee's consideration:
 - a. The draft “light-touch review” statement for submission to Natural England, attached to this paper (details of the wording of the statement have been further enhanced through discussion between officers and the TFG chair). **The statement has been carefully crafted to meet the specific requirements of Lord Benyon's letter of July 2022.**
 - b. A timetable to publication of the statement, set out below.

Week commencing	Action
26 th Feb	Thu 29 th : ExCo consider revised statement and recommend to Board.
4 th Mar	Receive any observations from LAs or NE. Thu 7 th : Circulate revised statement to the Board.
11 th Mar	Thu 14 th : Board considers and approves 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 confirmation from SoS that the statement meets the criteria necessary to extend the Plan to March 2025.
25 th Mar <i>(Head of Strategy and 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.

- c. The “refresh” review of the current plan 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. 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.

Recommendation

- 1. That the Committee CONSIDERS the paper and OFFERS OBSERVATIONS on the approach agreed by the TFG to be taken with the Management Plan Review.**

- 2. That the Committee APPROVES the attached “light-touch review” statement for submission to Natural England/Defra to extend the application of the current Plan to the end of March 2025.**

Chilterns National Landscape – Chilterns Conservation Board

Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 – “Light-Touch” Review Statement

DRAFT v.3 for Executive Committee, 29th February 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.

In 2024/25, it is the Board’s intention to recommend to our partners that we “refresh” the Plan by considering factual updates and rolling forward its policy content to 2029. 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.

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.

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.

- Author:** Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy & Planning
- Summary:** The paper summarises progress to date with reviewing the Board's constitutional documents and bringing them together into a single Constitution. It also outlines an approach and matters to be taken into account during the review.
- Purpose of Report:** To seek the Committee's observations on the proposed approach and on the matters to be taken into account in the review of the Constitution.

Background

1. One of the statutory functions of the Chief Executive Officer (Head of Paid Service) under s.4 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (which applies to CCB under Art.17(7) of our Establishment Order) is to prepare a report setting out proposals covering *inter alia* "the manner in which the discharge by the authority of their different functions is co-ordinated". Along with other considerations that may be determined by law or by the Board, such a report, once approved, is commonly known as the Constitution.
2. One of the roles that the Board has defined for the Monitoring Officer (MO, see also item 10.3) is to keep the Constitution under review, to ensure that it is both lawful and fit for purpose. This is consistent with the MO's statutory role (under s.5 of the 1989 Act) to notify the Board of "any proposal, decision or omission" that has, is likely to or would lead to maladministration or a contravention of the law.
3. As reported to the Committee in February 2023, the Board approved its first Constitution in January 2005 (although the document was then known as "Standing Orders and Regulations"), and various parts of that document have since been amended, repealed or replaced, without necessarily maintaining the integrity of the document as a whole.
4. As a result, CCB has operated with reference to a portfolio of constitutional documents, including the Code of Governance, Code of Conduct and a range of standing orders, financial regulations and other policy statements. Over the past year, the Clerk, as Deputy Monitoring Officer (DMO), has been working with the MO, the CEO and others to begin to review these constitutional documents and bring them back together into a single Constitution document. The first part of that review was completed when the Board approved the updated "Role of the Monitoring Officer" – the first section of the original Constitution ("Standing Orders and Regulations").
5. The CEO has now delegated her duty to prepare reports proposing matters relevant to the Constitution to the Head of Strategy & Planning to take forward working with the MO/DMO (see also item 10.3) and the Governance Review Task and Finish Group.
6. It is proposed to build on the excellent foundations prepared by Deirdre Hansen, as our previous DMO, in collating the existing elements of the Constitution and

tracking their provenance in terms of Board decisions since 2005, and continue to review the provisions of the Constitution to ensure the following:

- a. They (the provisions) are consistent with legislation and good practice.
 - b. They are internally consistent with each other.
 - c. They provide a context for effective and consistent decision making without unreasonably constraining opportunities for innovation.
 - d. All sections are presented in clear and concise language, and a clear and consistent format that enables unambiguous references to be made to the Constitution's provisions.
 - e. The provenance of each provision is clear, i.e. whether it is a statutory requirement, or a decision of the Board, and what the source is or when the decision was made (this was the intention of the "Statutory Requirements" section of the current Code of Governance).
 - f. The Constitution does not duplicate or conflict with other policies or standing orders of the Board, and that it does not include matters that would be more appropriately covered elsewhere.
7. Further to a suggestion from Board Member James Norman (local authority appointee for South Oxfordshire DC), we are considering adding to the Constitution a summary of the Board's purposes, duties, functions and powers (the Cotswolds Conservation Board's Constitution includes this as "Article 1").
8. We shall bring further details of the review of the Constitution to the Board meeting in June and invite the Committee's consideration of the above approach to the review.

Recommendation

1. **That the Committee CONSIDERS the paper and OFFERS OBSERVATIONS on the approach proposed to be taken and the matters to be taken into account.**

Item 10.3**Monitoring Officer****Author:**

Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy & Planning

Summary:

The paper summarises the statutory role of the Monitoring Officer (and Deputy), discusses some issues with how the role is fulfilled, and present options for the future appointment of the MO/DMO.

Purpose of Report:

To seek the Committee's observations on the Monitoring Officer and its recommendations on how the role should be taken forward.

Background

1. As the Board will be aware, Nick Graham, is leaving his current role at Buckinghamshire Council, and as a result will also finish supporting CCB as our Monitoring Officer. This coincides with the phased departure of our Clerk, Deirdre Hansen, who has been supporting Nick as Deputy Monitoring Officer. These circumstances provide the Board with an opportunity to review how the Monitoring Officer role operates, taking into account other ongoing changes around the organisation's governance.
2. Buckinghamshire Council has already agreed in principle to the provision of one of their officers to continue in the role of Monitoring Officer, although the details of that arrangement still need to be explored and finalised. CCB's CEO and Head of Strategy and Planning are meeting with our current MO and Buckinghamshire Council's suggestion for his successor on Monday 26th February, and will give a verbal update to the Committee.
3. This paper sets out some matters that the Committee might wish to consider before making a recommendation to the Board concerning the future of the Monitoring Officer role (and the Deputy Monitoring Officer).

What is a Monitoring Officer and why do we need one?

4. The role of Monitoring Officer (MO) is defined in section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 ("the 1989 Act") – one of three statutory officers that local authorities (and some other public bodies, such as fire and rescue authorities) should have, alongside the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) and section 151 (Finance) Officer.
5. Article 17(7) of CCB's Establishment Order applies the provisions of section 5 of the 1989 Act to the Board "as if the Board were a relevant authority" for its provisions. That section provides that it is the Board's "duty" to "designate one of their officers (to be known as "the monitoring officer") as the officer responsible for performing the duties imposed by this section" (emphasis added).

What does the Monitoring Officer do?

6. The main duty of CCB's MO (defined through the Establishment Order and s.5 of the 1989 Act) is to monitor (hence the name) the activities of the organisation, and, if it appears to them that "any proposal, decision or omission by the

authority” is unlawful or represents maladministration or some other failure, they should report the matter to the Board, following consultation with the CEO.

7. Other functions are also indirectly ascribed to the MO through the Establishment Order’s references to various pieces of legislation (some of which have since been significantly amended), through the development of the Board’s standing orders and codes of conduct and governance. It is not clear whether all of the functions ascribed to local authority MOs necessarily apply to the Conservation Board’s MO.
8. The Board approved an updated “Role of the Monitoring Officer” (see annex) as Part 1 of CCB’s updated Constitution in March 2023 (see also item 10.2 on this agenda). The details of many aspects of that paper are included in other parts of the Constitution, including the Codes of Governance and of Conduct.

Who can be the Monitoring Officer?

9. The provision referred to in para 5 above requires that the Monitoring Officer be an “officer” of the Board, implying they should be directly employed by and responsible to the Board. However, there is no statutory definition of an “officer” under the local government acts. With regard to the similarly-defined Section 151 (Finance) Officer, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) previously advised:

“The statutory role must be performed by an ‘officer’ of the authority. Although ‘officer’ is not defined the legal view is that the terms ‘staff’ and ‘officer’ in the Local Government Act 1972 and elsewhere are intended to embrace all employees of local authorities. It is permissible for an authority to procure non-statutory financial management services from an individual on the basis of a service contract.”¹

10. CIPFA updated this guidance in 2023², deliberately written with a wider audience than just local government in mind, and took a less legalese position, advising instead that “it is vital that the [Section 151 Officer] is a full and active member of the organisation’s senior leadership team” in order to deliver their statutory role and contribute to wider executive functions (p.9). It is therefore reasonable to consider that the engagement of an MO should follow a similar approach.
11. While a Section 151/Finance Officer is required to be qualified in a relevant financial discipline, there is no similar qualification for the MO to be qualified in law – a matter that is of concern to the Law Society and other bodies representing the legal profession. Conversely, there are many officers in local government and other areas of the public sector who are required to interpret and implement legislation, maintain standards, ensure legislation and other complex procedures are followed, etc., without needing themselves to be a qualified practitioner of the law – it is perhaps more important to ensure that such officers have access to legal advice than to be a lawyer themselves. Certain professions³,

¹ CIPFA (2016) The Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government, appendix D, p.27.

² <https://www.cipfa.org/members/the-role-of-the-chief-financial-officer/the-role-of-the-cfo-in-public-service-organisations>

³ Other qualifying professions are available: <https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/for-barristers/public-and-licensed-access/licensed-access-recognition-regulations.html>

including – to choose one at random – the planning profession, are recognised by the legal profession as being sufficiently adept at working with the law to be granted the right to directly brief legal counsel, instead of having to go through a solicitor.

12. Section 5 goes on to specify that a local authority MO cannot be the same officer as the Head of Paid Service (there is some uncertainty with regard to the precise wording of that provision as to whether it applies to Conservation Boards). The MO also cannot also be the Section 151 Officer.
13. In the absence of absolute legal clarity on the MO's officer status, CCB has historically employed the services of an MO through agreement with one of our host authorities (currently Buckinghamshire Council). Recognising that it is beneficial for the MO to be actively engaged in the management of the organisation in order to be fully effective, in 2016 CCB moved to supporting our MO with a Deputy Monitoring Officer (DMO), in the form of the Board's Clerk, who would be present at all Board and Committee meetings, and could advise in real time on the lawfulness of activities and/or be alert to matters of maladministration discussed at those meetings. Being in frequent contact with Board Members also enabled the Clerk to fulfil the MO's role in monitoring Members' interests, etc. As an employee, too, the DMO was engaged on the review of the Board's constitution last year and was an adviser to the Governance Task and Finish Group on related matters.
14. Just as there is a lack of clarity over the requirement to appoint an "officer" as the MO with regard to s.5 of the 1989 Act, there may be an issue with how the DMO's role has been implemented, in that s.5(5) provides that the MO's duties "shall be performed by him personally or, where he is unable to act owing to absence or illness, personally by such member of his staff as he has for the time being nominated as his deputy for the purposes of this section".
15. For comparison, the Cotswolds Conservation Board directly employs its MO, who is not otherwise an officer, on a zero-hours contract, assuming 2-4 days' work per year. The MO is expected to review all Board and Committee papers and attend the AGM. Cotswolds' new Constitution also states how the role will be fulfilled, using almost identical wording to that used in our own MO Role paper (see annex). The 3-year review of governance documents is understood to be contracted outside of the standard 2-4 days.
16. The CEO and Head of Strategy and Planning are meeting with the Board's current MO and other officers of Buckinghamshire Council to explore these issues further on Monday 26th February. We will verbally update the Committee on any outcomes from that meeting.

Discussion

17. The arrangement of making use of the services of an officer of a host authority as MO appears to have proved sufficiently effective for CCB, especially with the support of the Clerk as DMO.
18. However, there are questions about whether the arrangement strictly conforms to the provisions of legislation, as identified in paras 9-10 and 14 above.
19. In addition, there could be issues going forward around the ability for the Board and the Senior Management Team to engage in real-time with a remote MO

(whose capacity is currently estimated as just 2 days per annum). Our new Clerk works 10 hours per month, which is considerably less capacity than our former 0.2FTE Clerk/DMO.

20. One outcome of this issue is that some aspects of the MO/DMO's role(s) already fall to others, including, for example, the Head of Strategy and Planning's engagement with the Governance TFG, identifying and seeking to resolve through that group issues with delegation and the function of the Planning Committee. Other issues identified that might have been picked up earlier include compliance with statutory requirements for publicising Board and Committee Meetings, inconsistencies and errors in the Code of Governance, non-compliant constitution of Committee membership and compliance with procedures on recruiting Committee members. None of these issues are considered to be a result of the competence of either the MO or the DMO, which is not in question, but rather (a) the MO/DMO's combined capacity to devote to CCB's governance, (b) their not being able to be fully embedded in CCB's daily management, and (c) the issues not being raised as the result of a complaint or maladministration challenge by a stakeholder or member of the public.
21. We have an offer from Buckinghamshire Council to negotiate a new agreement for them to provide to us the services of their Monitoring Officer, which could be supported with a Deputy MO from the Board's staff, who might be the Clerk, or another officer.
22. Alternatively, the Board could appoint one of its own officers as MO, possibly with the support of legal advice from Bucks Council's MO. There may be other options.

Recommendation

1. **That the Committee CONSIDERS the content of this paper and RECOMMENDS to the Board how the statutory role of Monitoring Officer should be taken forward.**

Annex: The Role of the Monitoring Officer, approved by the Board, March 2023**ROLE OF THE MONITORING OFFICER**

The role of the Monitoring Officer was introduced by the Local Government Housing Act 1989 section 5, which applies to the Chilterns Conservation Board.

The role of the Monitoring Officer is to ensure the sound governance, lawfulness, and fairness of all Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) decision making.

The Monitoring Officer:

- Is responsible for ensuring that the CCB's Constitution is properly maintained, operates efficiently, and is adhered to.
- Has a key role in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct within the authority including administering any complaints (*complaints of Local Authority and Parish Council members are dealt with by their own authority*) about members conduct and
- Must report any unlawfulness or maladministration to the CCB.

This is fulfilled through:

1. Reviewing, with CEO and Chair, every three years, the governance documents including Members Code of Conduct, Code of Governance and DEFRA's Conservation Board Guidance
2. Giving advice, as required, to the CEO and Deputy Monitoring Officer who is also Clerk to the Board
3. Meeting the CEO, Chair and Deputy Monitoring Officer (Clerk to the Board) once a year to review governance process and practice
4. Sharing news on relevant legislative change and insights on best governance practice
5. Seeking legal opinion on issues of risk (to be paid for by CCB)
6. Being directly contactable by Board Members who wish to report maladministration or a complaint

The role is estimated to involve around two days per year, but more time would be required if a problem arose.

Item 11.1**HR Strategy****Author:** Elaine King, CEO**Purpose of Report:** To present the Committee 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 Executive Committee APPROVES the new HR Strategy and Implementation Plan and RECOMMENDS them to the Board.**

Chilterns Conservation Board - proposed HR Implementation Plan (Exec 29/2/2024)		January	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	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												

Item 12 **Update on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)**

Author: Annette Weiss, Head of Engagement & Partnerships

Purpose of Report: To update the Executive Committee on EDI progress since the last meeting

- The CCB has been working with partners and grant applicants to support and fund projects using the [Defra access funding](#). Most of the 2023/24 funding (£54,000) is now allocated and we have a good range of EOI for 2024/25 (£261,480 funding). Projects include making the bird hides at College Lake wheelchair accessible, an access survey at Woodoaks Farm to inform an ambitious programme in 24/25, improving accessibility at Road Farm (a care farm), resurfacing of the Wendover Canal towpath and a new wheelchair accessible toilet at Buckmoorend farm shop & café (a key stop off point on the Ridgeway National Trail).
- We are also planning to use the Defra grant to improve our online accessible walks information and develop new content, using videos (eg [Exmoor Strolls](#)), virtual tours, and providing information in different formats such as British Sign language.
- 15 CCB staff attended a disability and equality training session led by [Mik Scarlet](#) of PHAB which was very successful. A repeat will take place on 6 March and Board members have been invited. Mik is also undertaking some access surveys for us and will be an important source of expertise for the future.
- We have agreed a press release and media plan to launch the University of Bedfordshire's groundbreaking research "Access to greenspaces – co-creating spaces for helping diverse communities to use green spaces and the countryside". The research, commissioned by the CCB with NLHF funding, is an ideal opportunity to seek further funding to develop a Community Targeted Outreach Programme in Luton. Professor Gurch Randhawa will be presenting the research to the Board at its 14 March meeting.
- Nature Calling is now underway and over the next few weeks we will be setting up a project Advisory Group with Revoluton Arts. The writing and arts commissioning brief will go live in March with a view to commencing in June. The priority now is to work with the National Landscapes Association to secure £20,000 match funding as our contribution to the project.
- The National Landscapes Association has recruited an Arts Development Manager to help raise the profile of the arts across the National Landscapes and contribute to Nature Calling.
- The CCB continues to deliver EDI engagement through our projects, with advice and support from the Head of Engagement and Partnerships which results in benefits across the organisation. Project work includes:
 - INSTAR consultants being appointed by Chalk, Cherries & Chairs (CCC) project to help co-create and develop Experience Days aimed at young people age 14-18 in two Bucks Opportunity Areas to be delivered summer 2024. There will be a research phase, focus groups and learning workshop as well as the Experience Days themselves, ensuring a legacy of skills, knowledge and partnership development.

- CCC is looking to appoint a consultant to advise on diversifying the 'Tracking the Impact' Citizen Science programme, piloting new approaches to attracting underserved audiences.
- Mend the Gap programme is supporting and developing a number of projects and initiatives to improve Access for All and reach new audiences in the project area.
- The Chess Smarter Water Catchment project commissioned a Chess Valley access improvement plan. There is lots of synergy with wider access initiatives in this area, including on-going improvements to the Chess Valley Walk and opportunities to link into the new Misbourne Greenway when complete.

Recommendation

That the Committee notes the update on EDI and, in particular, notes the need for additional resource for Nature Calling and the opportunity for a Community Targeted Outreach Programme in Luton.

Appendix 1 – Enhanced Budget Process

Author: Andrew Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations

Summary: Identification of the enhanced process undertaken to develop the FY24-25 core budget

Background

1. In FY23-24 with limited senior team capacity (two roles were vacant at the time) a business plan was put together that included the usual budget process.
2. In FY23-24 the Executive Committee identified:
 - a. that the business plan needed more robustness, in particular in identifying the links between the budget, resource plan, delivery plan and funding plan.
 - b. that the business plan needed to be clearer on the ambition of the organisation and the extent to which this has been curtailed by budget and resource constraints, as well as the impact on delivery.
3. The budget has also in the past been put together with limited involvement of the Senior Team and others responsible for delivering work on the ground and due to the limited capacity of the Finance Officer has been constructed to some degree around rolling budget items forward from previous years.
4. This paper sets out what has been put in place to address the concerns of the Executive Committee and to ensure that the budget is significantly more robust than in previous years.

Improved Robustness for the 2024-25 Budget Process

5. The development of the budget for FY24-25 has included a number of new and enhanced stages to address the concerns raised by the Executive Committee last year (see above)

Stage	Description	Key Links	Impact / Evidence
1. Top Down Full Cost Budget NEW	The Senior Management Team (SMT) went through draft work plans / delivery assumptions to identify the full cost of delivering CCB requirements both in terms of resources and budget requirements	Delivery Plan → Budget / Resource Plan	Full budget and resource requirements for delivering the ambition of CCB recorded
2. Top Down Budget Review ENHANCED	The Full Cost budget identified a budget and resource plan that was not affordable given the current and expected income. The SMT took a number of decisions about how we	Budget → Resource Plan / Delivery Plan	Amended budget and resource plan – updated in line with the decisions around delivery. Where costs / resources have been removed as part of this review this has been

	could deliver work differently (incl. what we could stop, deprioritise, delay and deliver in a different way) thus creating a tighter budget envelope		recorded to enable improved future operational and funding decisions
3. Bottom Up Budget Input NEW	Delivery leads were requested to identify budget and resource implications of the work that they would be responsible for delivering in FY24-25 against delivery lines within the Delivery Plan itself	Delivery Plan → Budget / Resource Plan	Resulted in delivery leads being able to feed in costs and to understand what has been included in budgets. <i>Note that this element will be further improved in following years</i>
4. Detailed Resource Plan ENHANCED	The Head of Operations developed a resource plan that calculates known and required resources for the next 4 years (was previously single year) with funding assumptions to identify more accurately funding needed from core.	Resource Plan / Funding Plan → Budget	Improved and collated understanding of resource requirements with ability to interrogate and calculate different data sets / Increased visibility of future years / More accurate input of resource costs into budget
5. Budget vs Actuals Review ENHANCED	The Head of Operations worked through the budget with the Senior Administrator to clarify current year spend against budget lines to improve the robustness of all budget lines and reduce reliance on rolling budgets forward from previous budgets	Budget – → Delivery Plan	Improved understanding of coverage in each budgetline / More accurate budgetlines based on actual spend / Improved clarity for budget holders on individual budget and resource requirements included
6. Budget Finalisation ENHANCED	As well as being brought into SMT business planning conversations the Head of Operations and the Finance Officer have spent significant time running through the budget and the assumptions that lie behind it. This has included making final adjustments to ensure that a balanced budget can be put forward to the Board	Budget → Resource Plan / Delivery Plan	Amended budget and resource plan / Improved alignment of financial and operational understanding and alignment about what is included in the budget

Appendix 3: Report on Quarter 3 Delivery of FY23-24
Author: Andrew Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations

Summary: This paper identifies progress made against Delivery Plan workstreams & delivery lines during the third quarter of FY23-24 as well as identifying key risks and issues and respective RAG rating

Purpose of Report: See overview paper 9.3

Delivery Line	Identified Q3 Output	Progress	Key Risks & Issues	RAG Status
SP1: Building Organisational Resilience				
Operating Model				
1.1 Empowered People	Implement according to prioritised plan	<p>Not been possible to finalise documentation and establish an effective prioritised plan with identified quick wins from information collated at discovery meetings held earlier in the year due to a continued lack of capacity in the Operations Team with Head of Operations role continuing to provide programme management input into two large scale programmes and in addressing urgent organisational issues (inc significant increase in workload to address to address operational issues within the Landscapes team).</p> <p>Work has been undertaken in this area in a more ad hoc fashion focused on embedding the single point of reference Key Documents folder to act as a one-stop shop for staff can and which now contains more updated HR documentation around recruitment, probation, annual performance and change in employment, the current HR handbook and more updated operational documentation around insurance. In addition there has been increased planned communication with staff around the annual planning process and how they will be engaged during Q4.</p>	<p>Issue: Lack of Head of Operations capacity means progress on finalising the Discovery phase of Operational Effectiveness work has been slowed due to ongoing time commitments on Chalk, Cherries and Chairs project, addressing issues such as insurance and overall scope of activity</p> <p>Issue: Lack of overall capacity within CCB with no team under Head of Operations to advance this work</p>	<p>In progress (significantly delayed / limited in effectiveness)</p>

		Note that to date in Q4 further work has taken place in this area including disability training for staff, uploading of comms rebranded templates and information into the Key Documents folder, review of salary levels across some areas of the organisation, and demonstration on 2 HR platforms	Issue: Current content of delivery plan does not effectively identify the way in which work in this area is being approached	
1.3 Supportive Policies & Procedures	Approve, launch and implement policies in line with plans	Limited work has been undertaken on approving, launching and implementing new policies or procedures due to lack of capacity in the Operations Team. Two key areas to be addressed this quarter are: a) the development of a process and responsibilities around New Work / New Funding which seeks to ensure effective scrutiny in the organisation in line with schemes of delegation and that all new work and new funding is planned with a clear understanding of strategic objectives and affordability (there is a need for further embedding and finalisation of templates in this area going forward) b) the collation and development of new processes around operational support for the Board and Committees and other work that the Clerk / DMO is expected to carry out (information has been collated from the outgoing Clerk and it is aimed to finalise this in Q4) to ensure more effective support and clarity of responsibilities in supporting the Board and Committees from the beginning of the new financial year	Issue: There is a need to work out a more effective way of working with the new HR consultant as it is currently not efficient Issue: There is a need to sort out the office to make it easier to work in and for work stations to be more consistent Issue: There is a lack of capacity in terms of completing Board level governance work	In progress (significantly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
1.6 Effective Business Planning, Reporting & Review	Report on Q2 progress to Executive Committee / Produce outline draft of FY 24-25 business plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on Q2 progress submitted to ExCo including full review by the SMT of risks and issues resulting in presentation of a more focused report for ExCo to consider. More work was planned to tighten up identified outputs for second half of the year but only done in ad hoc manner with a request to delivery line owners to update but not central review 	Risk: There is a risk that work undertaken by the Clerk will not be effectively handed over therefore creating a loss of momentum in this area Risk: There is a risk that having started this work	In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New delivery model and template developed for FY24-25 that will identify clearer delivery model, annual objectives and reporting by delivery themes linked to purpose and strategy rather than by project • Model presented to ExCo in Q3 (a finalised version will be presented as part of business plan in Q4) 	and then having to suspend it because of lack of capacity that staff may become disengaged from it	
1.7 Facilities & Infrastructure	Implement according to prioritised plan / Develop plan for new offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision made last quarter that we could not afford to move to new offices • Focus this quarter on improving current facilities, adjustable stands purchased for all computers and new organisational calendar put up • Plan identified to undertake clear up of the office to improve the working environment and create new working space in the outbuilding (proposed to be carried out in December but delay in implementation due to other priorities) • <i>Note in Q4 a list of required maintenance work drawn up and quotes sought</i> 		In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
Organisation Governance				
1.4 Effective Organisational Level Governance (Governance Review)	Implementation (tbc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board approved "Principles of Delegation" proposed by the Governance TFG and authorised ExCo to monitor delegation parameters • ExCo developed, and Board approved, an approach to strategy alignment, in particular aligning work of the Governance, Vision and Management Plan TFGs with ongoing work to 	Risk: Board or Staff Team waver from agreed strategic priorities, especially in response to external or political influences (such as a random National Park announcement).	In progress (on track)

		<p>enhance engagement and partnership activity (led by Annette Weiss)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed strategic alignment to be led by Matt Thomson, and overseen by the deputy chair, John Nicholls • Boardwide understanding of the need for and approach to strategic alignment much improved through the ExCo and Board discussions 	<p>Risk: One or more strategic workstreams become detached from the strategic alignment programme.</p> <p>Issue: Officer capacity remains a potential issue (a) in the absence of recruitment of the Planning Officer role to backfill the Head of Strategy & Planning's time, and (b) in terms of whether CCB has sufficient strategic capacity anyway.</p>	
Financial Resilience				
1.5 Financial Resilience	Submit Executive Committee reports (finance & budget) / Start budget planning for 2024-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance report submitted to Executive Committee meeting in Nov for first 7 months of FY23-24 • Funding strategy update submitted to Executive Committee meeting in Nov • Proposed new business planning approach for FY24-25 submitted to, and approved by, Executive Committee meeting in November • New work / new funding process and responsibilities submitted to and approved by the Executive Committee in November 	<p>Risk: There is a risk that Thames Water may go into special care and withdraw funding for projects</p> <p>Issue: Lack of capacity means follow up on funding pipeline not as rigorous as it could be</p>	In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top down budget planning started to identify budget ambition and improve integration of all elements of business plan • New funding pipeline updated throughout quarter (more effective review of pipeline needs to be built into SMT calendar • <i>Significant work undertaken in Q4 to date to ensure proper scrutiny of Not Bourne Yesterday bid and to address financial risk of key funder</i> 		
Engaging Communications				
1.2 Engaging Communications	Complete audience mapping. Create audience personas using insights from what is known and results from interviews with key stakeholders. Complete final team workshop for personas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcomed Fiona Skeggs to the team in October -as full time comms officer. Who will undertake daily operational communications outputs inc putting a social media planning schedule in place and supporting project and core team • Work undertaken with Annette Weiss and other team members to create video clips for social media including TikTok to launch alongside the rebrand. • Comms Manager focused on putting foundations and processes in place to ensure the comms team is streamlined and effective inc introducing Trello for the team (a collaboration tool that organizes your projects into boards) • New social media management tool (Metricool) introduced that allows us oversight of all social channels including projects and provides instant reports • Work undertaken to support Elaine King and Annette Weiss publish the Chalkscapes research including engagement plans for launch. 	<p>Issue: With Comms Officer leaving in July and another not working as it will be holiday time there will be significantly reduced capacity whilst a new Comms Officer is recruited and brought on board</p> <p>Issue: Comms team are under pressure to deliver, with significant time taken supporting projects and reacting to ad-hoc or unforeseen issues. This has impacted ability to deliver strategy and other important business issues.</p>	<p>In progress (significantly delayed / limited in effectiveness)</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comms files and documents available for the staff team restructured, identifying gaps and creating templates and guides to support the team. <i>Work continuing on this in Q4</i> • To date in Q4 significant time spent preparing for the rebrand to National Landscapes – to create assets for go live (e.g. new brand guidelines and style guide, presentations for partners and setting up new email / website addresses and website addresses. • Also in Q4 strategy work continued with completion of audience mapping - now in process of identifying 6 key audience types so that we can conduct the interviews 	<p>Issue: There are areas we could push forward with if we had budget inc for a copywriter (e.g. completing website - planning section, farming hub, improving accessibility pages, further enhancements to the website) and looking at a social media platform to help streamline processes and reduce admin time.</p>	
<p>SP2: Delivering the Workstreams to which we are Committed</p>				
<p>Chalk, Cherries & Chairs</p>				
<p>2.3 Chalk, Cherries & Chairs</p>	<p>Continue delivery / implementation as planned. Continue strategic discussions around legacy and end of scheme, initial drafts of legacy and management plans in place. Clear picture on Match Funding.</p>	<p>Programme Management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comms -new Comms Officer, Helen Walsh, started in Sep, with comms plan being pulled together, improved social media posting and website updates, support for key aspects of delivery inc Planning Toolkit, leaflet design, Tracking the Impact and Chalk Festival • Planning - end of scheme planning started inc areas such as delivery end dates, monitoring & evaluation, end of scheme evaluation and report(s), information management, knowledge management etc • Legacy planning – Work started to identify what legacy looks like post CCC, ensuring all digital outputs have the correct licencing etc. in place, as well as asset mapping. 	<p>Issue: Project management time & resource capacity continues to be limited, less so now due to the high level of historic work (although this is still an issue in part) but now focused on bringing delivery, reporting and evaluation to a close by end Nov '24</p> <p>Issue: Information Management has historically been poor & with hand over to new</p>	<p>In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDI - Identification undertaken of work which can be delivered instead of recruiting an EDI resource • Finance - All budgets were confirmed back to the delivery team once NLHF signed off the extended scheme's budget. Quarterly claims process further streamlined to make it more efficient, and work undertaken to produce standard budget vs spend reports. <i>(New reporting revealed a projected underspend for this FY but further analysis required to understand extent and mitigation in Q4).</i> • Q3 financial claim and reporting submitted on schedule with excellent feedback from Steering Group about progress. <p>Programme Delivery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery is on track, and several projects are due to end delivery next quarter Meetings held with all project leads separately over the quarter • Discussions around creation of possible Heritage Craft network • Agreed scope of Chair Festival with Wycombe Museum and preparations started • Work undertaken to understand requirement for Planning toolkit to be accessible on the internet • Cross themed working groups successfully established and working well with focus and work agreed and preparations in place for whole project meeting to discuss issues around legacy 	<p>project management continues to slow down project management & tasks such as reporting</p> <p>Issue: EDI role agreed with NHLF remains vacant but a plan is in place to use this budget for key EDI projects</p> <p>Risk: Due to complexities of the budget and internal financial reporting, as well as changing delivery etc, there is a risk of underspend, but analysis and action is being taken to fully understand and mitigate</p> <p>Risk: Cross themed working groups may not have sufficient resource to bring all plans to fruition</p> <p>Risk: Due to the new budgets in place, and the lack of spend tracking under the previous project manager, there is</p>	
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			<p>a risk we will not be able to stay on top of what we are spending - we are working with the finance team to mitigate this, as well as the delivery team and partners - progress has been made but this remains a risk</p> <p>Risk: due to delivery team members moving on to new areas of work / wrapping up projects, there is a risk that delivery will not be completed, hence closer management of delivery teams by ADF</p>	
Mend the Gap				
2.13 Mend the Gap	Complete Cholsey consultation event, hold board meeting at South Stoke, publish articles, update webpages updated and social media. Increase staff capacity for Q4 through recruitment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 2 delivery in final planning and initial delivery stage 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 phase (and being overseen by the new project support officer, Sarah Hebbes recruited in Q4). 	<p>Risk: The risk that delivery and claims slip behind so monitoring and plans important now.</p> <p>Risk: Limited time period for Mitigation tree planting season each year, impacted by staff illness this quarter (Covid) works now on track.</p>	In progress (on track)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operational efficiency supported through work with Austen Hall including due diligence and agreement templates being prepared for all proposals. Four larger projects progressing to final sign off - Withymead access works, Rectory farm chalk grassland, BBOWT Wallingford to Goring Conservation Target area project and Sulham Wetland creation. Communication strategy under review with increased staff capacity. 5 landowners having mitigation planting on their land and tenders for work went out this quarter. Budget and recharge signed off in this quarter, this will be done earlier next year and recharge is now set for three years. 	<p>Issue: as word spreads that money is being spent the demand for small grants goes up, at a point we need to reduce this less efficient way of working (small grants now under review)</p>	
Chilterns Chalk Streams Project (CCSP) and Smarter Water Catchment (SWC)				
<p>2.8 Chilterns Chalk Streams Project (CCSP) and Smarter Water Catchment (SWC)</p>	<p>Coordinate delivery of work programme. Develop draft work programme for 2024-25. Establish task group to begin development of 2025-2030 Business plan. Complete staff salary review and revise budget on basis of outcome CCSP1: Deliver Y3 action plan milestones / Develop Y4 action plan and budget CCSP2: tbd by SWC Steering Committee / Co-ordinate</p>	<p>CCSP1: Most Y3 milestones completed. <i>Note that to date in Q4 progress being made with milestone reporting / evidence submission and the Y4 plan and budget developed and agreed by steering group (20th Feb). Plan to spend underspend from year 3 (c £130K-£200K, depending on remaining milestone spend) is in development and will be agreed at March SG meeting.</i> CCSP2: Water Quality milestones all completed or in progress. Two milestones (CHE044a & 088 are behind schedule due to change in staff – Josh Biddle, Farm Advisor leaving). CCSP3: INNS control programme completed (Oct '23). Survey of Chess completed (Sept '23) <i>Note in Q4 to date strategy revision completed (Feb '24) and milestone wording for year 4 submitted and agreed by SWC steering group</i> CCSP4: Work to submit evidence for catchment readiness almost</p>	<p>Risk (Overall): Uncertainty over Thames Water's financial status continues. TW will need to secure additional funding in March/April. SWC funding for the current FY has been confirmed although there are CCB invoices that have yet to be paid. CCSP funding has been confirmed for the current FY but a PO has yet to be</p>	<p>In progress (on track)</p>

	<p>delivery of milestones under water quality theme and develop programme</p> <p>CCSP3: Complete control programme. Complete INNS survey and revise strategy based on findings. Submit milestone wording for inclusion in Y4 action plan</p> <p>CCSP4: Work with partners of both catchment partnerships to evidence catchment readiness for SWC roll-out. Develop waterbody action plans for the Misbourne & Ewelme Brook for inclusion in catchment plans. TW to begin assessment of catchment readiness in December</p> <p>CCSP5: Complete design and submit FRAP application to EA for Sarratt watercress beds project. Deliver wetland creation project on Hamble Brook</p> <p>CCSP6: Complete flood modelling and revise design based on outputs. Submit revised consent application for Moor Recreation Project to Bucks Council (Lead local</p>	<p>complete (one more reporting round to come). Waterbody action plan for Ewelme Brook completed, Plan for Misbourne underway and one stakeholder workshop has been completed (Nov '23). <i>Note a further workshop planned in 24-25 to finalise plan. Likelihood is that SWC roll-out will not now occur from 2025 (moved to 2030 in TW Business Plan), status of catchment readiness is unclear.</i></p> <p>CCSP5: Phase 2 of Hamble wetland creation project completed (Nov '23). <i>Note that further phase planned for 2024-25. FRAP for Sarratt WC Beds project submitted (Aug '23) consent received (Jan '24) and note that capital works to start on 29th Feb.</i></p> <p>CCSP6: Moor Rec. Flood modelling completed (Oct '23) but Bucks Council has asked for further modelling to be carried out, which has been commissioned, but this has forced delivery of capital works to be pushed back to 2024-25 (relevant SWC milestone has been postponed to year 4).</p> <p>CCSP7: Training course programme complete. All ARMI monitors now allocated sites. 2024-25 Citizen Science programme for Chess SWC developed and agreed by steering group. CCSP programme included in draft work programme for CCSP.</p> <p>CCSP8: Water vole survey completed (Sept '23). 12 sites were not surveyed due to lack of volunteer capacity and access permissions not being received. Population has declined by 50% from 2021. Figure will be impacted by the number of sites that couldn't be surveyed.</p> <p>CCSP9: Programme developed. Trout in the Classroom running at 8 schools on Chess, Wye & Ewelme Brook. School lesson sessions currently being delivered by education team.</p> <p>CCSP10: Work on access strategy has been delayed. Some progress towards a plan for the Wye has been made but development of overall strategy has been postponed to 2024-25.</p>	<p>received. TW Head of River Catchment Strategy sees no problem regarding continuation of funding to CCSP and SWC next FY. However, risk to both remains significant. Should TW need to be taken over by government or by another owner there is a risk that funding allocated to CCSP and SWC initiative will be withdrawn leading to the cessation of SWC and significant impact to CCSP.</p> <p>Issue (Overall): Lack of certainty over funding for continuation of Chess SWC & CCSP threatening staff retention.</p> <p>Risk (Overall): Funding for Chess SWC is in place until April 2025 (although this is predicated on the basis of TW continuing to remain solvent after April). However, funding for the continuation of</p>	
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	<p>flood authority). Commission topographic survey of Shafford Mill restoration reach. CCSP7: Support trained volunteer to establish monitoring sites / Develop 2024-25 Citizen Science programme CCSP8: Undertake Chess water vole survey / Collate survey results CCSP9: Develop autumn / winter education programme CCSP10: Produce draft strategy / Identify funding options for Phase 1</p>		<p>the pilot in AMP8 (2025-2030) is now in doubt. TW SWC staff are looking into alternative funding pathways for continuation of pilots and a limited roll-out, but Defra have directed TW to concentrate on meeting statutory objectives, which is likely to make continuation of SWC programme difficult to achieve.</p> <p>Risk (Overall) The SWC process does not currently allow for ringfencing of funds to underwrite posts beyond the end of the current funding cycle (AMP8). The CCSP does not have sufficient funding to underwrite the two SWC posts that it currently hosts. There is therefore a significant risk that SWC staff will move on or have to be put on notice of redundancy. CCSP Manager is currently exploring options to</p>	
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			<p>secure funding to underwrite these posts but would appreciate the Board’s assistance in identifying a solution.</p> <p>Risk (CCSP) Should funding to SWC and CCSP not continue in 2024-25, SWC staff may need to be made redundant. The CCSP will need to meet the associated cost from its reserve. In combination with the loss of funding (£50K) will significantly impact the CCSP’s future sustainability.</p> <p>Issue (CCSP1): Loss of capacity through staff leaving and lack of Nature Recovery Officer has continued to impact delivery of milestones in Wildlife Corridors, Involving People and Working Together. Contingency plans have been implemented successfully but scope of delivery and completion</p>	
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			<p>of milestones have been affected.</p> <p>Risk (CCSP4): Smarter Water Catchment initiative roll-out has been now been delayed: it is in Thames Water's Draft Business Plan for roll-out in AMP9 (2030-2035). Final determination on the Plan by OFWAT will not be known until December 2024. Should OFWAT reject or reduce the total funding allowance for delivery of Water Resources Management Plan, future funding for the Chess SWC and/or SWC roll-out could be reduced or cancelled.</p>	
Projects in Development				
2.2 Not Bourne Yesterday	Submit Development Phase application (by Dec 2023)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deadline moved to 29 Feb 2024 		In progress (on track)
2.4 Chalkscapes	tbc dependent on funding application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing in Q3. • Will be publishing Uni of Beds research in March – 	None	In progress (significantly delayed / limited in effectiveness)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions are ongoing regarding taking forward other Chalkscapes activities 		
Mitigation Focused Projects				
2.1 HS2 Additional Projects	CCB led Landscape and Biodiversity Project - support delivery and ensure timely invoicing for draw down of funds held by Bucks C. Others - support current projects and encourage further applications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of CCB led AP project (Landscape and Biodiversity Connectivity) somewhat slowed due to CCC team focussing on other priorities but work still proceeding and on-going discussions with other stakeholders concerning other project work. 	Issue: Staff resources limiting current progress on CCB led project but with the realigned and extended timetable (confirmed Q3 2022-23), this will not be an issue in the mid to long term.	In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
Farming Focused Projects				
2.11 Develop Farmer Clusters	Continue to support existing farmer clusters, identifying funding opportunities and training. Provide advice and support for new farming clusters. SWOT analysis to help develop strategic farm engagement approaches.	<p>Central Chilterns Farmer Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporated as a CIC and working through their set up to function as an independent organisations with facilitation support from CCB. Landscape Recovery application unsuccessful but with positive feedback from DEFRA on application and encouragement to resubmit at Round 3. CIC meeting held to discuss the feasibility and desire to resubmit. Application to Rothschild Foundation (£200k) successful for a conservation agriculture project supporting cluster members to develop their skills, understanding of 	<p>Risk: Central Chilterns Farmer Cluster - managing the transition and reduction in funding and capacity from CCC support to CCB support only. Reduction in facilitation time and delivery budgets will slow progress and careful management needed to cover the transition.</p> <p>Issue: North Chilterns Farmer Cluster -capacity to facilitate and ensure</p>	In progress (on track)

		<p>regenerative farming practices, 2 year project delivery about to start.</p> <p>North Chilterns Farmer Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 year FiPL funded package of support on track and being delivered. • Hedgerow works all on track, supplementary feeding on track, Farm Carbon Toolkit package on track, plans to set up programme of cluster workshops. • Initial meetings with Natural England about links to their wider Hexton project and how we might link to this held. • Project up and running with Bucks Bird Club funding to focus on Corn Bunting populations with 4 tenant farmers of the National Trust at Ashridge - long term aim to invite them to the North Chilterns Cluster and expand the group. <p>Christmas Common Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued support for cluster through external facilitator and steering group involvement. • Group keen to continue and programme of events running through 2024 organised. • Cluster has developed their own website - www.christmascommonfarmers.org/home. 	<p>the full delivery of the FiPL project and to do the relationship building work to mature the group, add in new members and make the strategic connections in the area.</p> <p>Issue: FiPL: As fewer projects tend to come forward in last quarter, could have done with more projects approved in Q3 as otherwise there is not time to complete to DEFRA's March 31st requirement.</p>	
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<p>2.12 Farming in Protected Landscapes</p>	<p>Q1,2,3 planned outputs suggest annual delivery budget should be £739,785. this now recalculated as admin, advice and guidance budget not properly taken into account. delivery budget is approx £696,584. , thus Q3 should be £141,515</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £81,000 for 13 projects approved from target of £141,515. • Previous 2 quarters overdelivered in terms of new project approval funding by £63k in total so Oct-Dec shortfall not initially a concern. • 7 of 13 projects in central Chilterns (£47k) , 3 in south (£15k), 3 in north (£8.6k). • Programme themes of nature, climate, people, place well delivered. projects included: hedging, volunteer scrub clearance, chalk stream enhancement, chalk scrape creation, volunteer equipment and training, chalk grassland grazing and management, NoFence collars for grazing, cut and collect machinery, kissing gates, orchard, hedge laying. 		<p>In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)</p>
<p>Heritage Focused Projects</p>				
<p>2.5 Chilterns Heritage and Archaeology Partnership (CHAP)</p>	<p>Plan 2024 Excavations / Review and publish new heritage guidance for landowners and managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement meeting held with Natural England & Heritage England with agreed outcomes for heritage work on Hexton Hills NNR • Led a Heritage England meeting to instigate a national discussion on LiDAR curation; • New interpretation panels for 3 sites delivered, 2 in production 	<p>None</p>	<p>Not identified</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location identified for inaugural annual field school and funding secured • Bledlow Cross Management Plan written and delivered, vegetation removed, and new dating consultant engaged • CCC support for Routes to the Past continuing with 2 of 4 trails completed and digital mapping begun • Writing for book for Grims Ditch ongoing • Secured £46k from SWC for equipment and project delivery. 		
Access, Economy & Social Wellbeing Focused Projects				
2.9 Chilterns Walking Festival (CWF)	Promote and deliver October Chilterns Walking Festival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The autumn Chilterns Walking Festival took place Oct, with 543 participants on bookable walks and additional participants on third party walks. • An increasing number of participants are using local businesses (68% visited one or more local business). • <i>We are planning Walk leader training sessions in March 2024, jointly with the North Wessex Downs.</i> • <i>Plans for the May 2024 Walking Festival area underway, with new diverse walk leaders supported and collaborations developed to reach new audiences.</i> 	Issue: The installation of the Chesham Moor bridge has been further delayed to Sep 2024. This was funded through the 2022/23 Access funding, with a delay approved by Defra until September 2023. The Access bridge is being stored by the contractor Maydencroft ready for installation by September and this now looks like a firm date.	Not identified

<p>2.10 Defra Access Fund Projects</p>	<p>Promote new access initiatives / Plan, consult and promote 2024/25 access projects ideas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An additional £54,000 Defra Access funding has been secured to be spent by 31 March 2024. • We are promoting the Access fund and advising and supporting applications. • The Widening the Welcome workshop has led to several expressions of interest. An advisory group has helped assess and advise on initial EOI. 		<p>Not identified</p>
<p>2.14 Open for Business</p>	<p>Complete project and reporting / Investigate new opportunities to continue activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 4 year Open for Business tourism programme was completed end of December 2023. • The detailed final report has been submitted to Groundwork. This included a detailed summary of the outputs achieved by the project and reporting on legacy. • <i>Once approved by Groundwork we will share this widely with partners and stakeholders, and promote the many legacy opportunities.</i> 		<p>Not identified</p>
<p>SP3: Providing Leadership and Securing Influence</p>				
<p>Strategic Development</p>				
<p>2.6 Chilterns AONB Extension</p>	<p>Natural England stakeholder engagement events (November) for natural beauty assessment - opportunity for CCB to input. Followed by 'desirability to designate' assessment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November stakeholder consultation event successfully engaged a number of local authority and other organisations and provided useful input. • Natural England engaged with other stakeholders not able to attend events. Good opportunity for CCB to provide more detailed input 	<p>Boundary extension Risk: Risk of progress during 2024 becoming embroiled in general election proceedings. Risk: Perceived risk of NE resources being reduced</p>	<p>In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultants, LUC, agreed to assess areas not previously assessed. LUC will commence first assessment against desirability to designate test, taking into account further stakeholder input including local plan development strategies 	(e.g. diverted onto political National Park designation) - NE and Defra both deny this is a possibility.	
2.7 Enhanced Management & Governance Arrangements	tbc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further to the Q2 report, this workstream is now in effect SUSPENDED, with most elements now merged into the internal Governance Review (see 1.4). 	MP Review: - Risk: Defra not accepting our "light-touch review", which will invalidate the current Plan at the end of March 2024 (small risk, but consequences are uncertain - technically Defra funding is dependent on having a MP in place).	In progress (significantly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
3.17 AONB Longer Term Vision	Develop 25 year vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No progress. Work on the Vision has been SUSPENDED pending other strategic elements, notably the recognition that work on the content of a long-term vision is best deferred until the new AONB boundaries are better understood. Nonetheless, the TFG has determined to make a start on enhancing the understanding of the parameters, shape, or nature of the Vision during 2024/25. 	Risk: Longer term risk of stakeholders, the Board or CCB officers seeking to amend the Plan "too much" during 2024/25 - the roll-forward/refresh approach reduces the need for depth/breadth of engagement, because policy isn't changing; too much change could make necessary engagement too onerous for the timescales.	In progress (on track)
3.18 Management Plan Interim Review	Progress interim plan / Develop plan for new Management Plan for the amended boundary (if AONB Extension Project has progressed sufficiently)	ExCo and the Board approved the approach to be taken to delivering the Management Plan Review (MPR): taking the "Benyon" option to issue a "light-touch review" paper enabling us to delay publication of a "refreshed" (or rolled-forward) plan until March 2025. A MPR TFG was convened to be chaired by Gemma Harper, and volunteers sought; the chair worked with Matt Thomson to further develop parameters for the review. Statutory Notifications declaring CCB's intention to review the Management Plan were sent to all statutory consultees in		In progress (on track)

		December: these are the 9 host LAs, plus NE (NE confirmed that a separate notification for the Sec of State was not needed).	-Issue: Some of the factors that led Defra to enable PLs to delay publication of their plans still have not been resolved, and there are new factors to be taken account of (such as s.245 of LURA) - there may be opportunities for (or a need to call for) further flexibilities from Defra.	
Strategic Engagement				
3.7 AONB Network Engagement	tbc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued engagement with Lead Officers (<i>inc attendance at Lead Officer meeting in Feb</i>) Significant ongoing engagement on funding (with focus on 1 year and comprehensive spending review) as well as rebranding, nature recovery etc 	Issue: Lack of timely decisions and lack of clarity around decisions when they are made (e.g. Defra Capital Grant money)	In progress (on track)

3.8 DEFRA, Natural England and Government Engagement	Keep up to date with DEFRA and Natural England / Maintain engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing funding, boundary extension, targets and outcomes framework discussion 	Issue: High levels of engagement required to try and influence	In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
3.10 Glover Landscapes Review	Engage with DEFRA and Natural England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing engagement with Defra re new funding formula, looking at statutory consultee status, boundary extension Waiting new NP designation Ongoing engagement on rebranding 		In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
Planning				
2.15 Existing and New Planning Guidance	Implement review programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Officer capacity has restricted progress with the Lighting Position Statement. Currently anticipated to take to PC in January for Board approval in March 2024. 	Issue: Capacity constraints with ongoing focus on strategic workstreams and lack of success in recruiting a planning officer.	In progress (significantly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
3.9 Development and Infrastructure Proposals	Respond as required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses to planning (and similar) proposals as reported to PC. 		In progress (on track)
3.10 Planning and Related Policies	Respond as required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses to planning policy consultations as reported to PC. 	Issue: HS2 impact - consistent need for engagement with HS2, contractors and other stakeholders required to ensure CCB position recognised and considered.	In progress (on track)

3.11 HS2 Impact	Monitor realignment of major works between main works contractors (ALIGN and EKFB) - changes to designs and delivery. Review developments for Bowood Lane bridge appeal and green bridge designs for Leather Lane.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bowood lane - disappointing decision by appeals inspectorate appears not to have appropriately considered AONB special qualities. • Other areas, including Leather Lane, being reallocated between main works contractors, from EKFB to ALIGN. Impacts on design still to be confirmed. 		In progress (on track)
3.12 Chilterns Building Society Awards	Continue developing new Awards format	No progress this quarter. (Progress needed in Q4 for delivery in 2024/25.)		In progress (on track)
Landscapes Approach				
15. Nature Recovery Ambition Statement	Start to develop Nature Recovery Plan with key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Working Group meeting of Nature Recovery Plan has taken place • Kate Heppell working with team on creation of maps and data analysis for the plan • Gantt chart of activities for next 12 months has been agreed and work has commenced 		In progress (on track)
16. Climate Mitigation	Develop Climate Adaptation Strategy following AONB management guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance indicates this should be produced by 2028 so awaiting final MPG guidance before starting work 		In progress (on track)
13. Cultural Heritage	Make the Chilterns Heritage Ambition Statement (CHAS) visible / Integrate CHAS with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organised a cross-sector initial meeting of CHAP and established a Steering Group 		Not identified

	ongoing Cultural Heritage work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given talks to local communities to establish interest in CHAP Secured funding for CHAP activities from SWC Delivered Management Plan for Bledlow Cross 		
Access, Economy and Social Wellbeing Approach				
3.1 Access and Visitor Management	Lead, advise and develop this area of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and review of new access initiatives through the Defra Access funding, allocating grants, collaborating with partners to support strategic access projects. Working with Chess Smarter Water Catchment on their Access strategy, looking at further improvements along the Chess Valley Walk. Looking at accessibility ambitions in the MtG area. 	None	Not identified
3.2 Health and Wellbeing / Green and Social Prescribing	Lead, advise and explore potential	Health and wellbeing has been a cross-cutting theme rather than specific area of work.		Not identified
3.3 Sustainable Tourism	Lead, develop and promote tourism	This area of work has been delivered through Open for Business and by collaborative working with the Chilterns Tourism Network and Visit Buckinghamshire. The Chess Valley visitor guide has been printed and distributed and a new promotional video produced. Further promotion of the Chess Valley visitor destination is planned spring 2024.		Not identified

3.4 Local Business and Local Economy	Lead, advise and develop this area of work / Seek funding and new opportunities	This area of work has been delivered through Open for Business and by collaborative working with the Chilterns Tourism Network and Visit Buckinghamshire.		Not identified
Partnership & Engagement				
3.5 EDI Engagement	Lead EDI engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic input on EDI engagement to CCB Projects in particular CCC diverse engagement work and MtG Support for new Arts in the Landscape EDI Initiative in Luton, Nature Calling. Resource plan created identifying additional EDI resources needed and scoping undertaken re funding opportunities. 	Issue: Limited staff resource to cover a growing area of work.	Not identified
3.6 Partnership Engagement	Develop and nurture relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-going development of partnership contacts and relationships scaling up with the Integrated Strategic Management work (Boundary Review, Management Plan etc) and planning for on-going stakeholder engagement. 		Not identified
3.14 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Approach	Promote Engagement Plan / Provide staff training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>On-going support to CCB staff and Projects.</i> <i>Note that to date in Q4 Disability & Equality training has been delivered in Feb 2024 and currently identifying further training needs and 1:1 EDI support.</i> 		Not identified
Other Work not included in Delivery Plan				
Deer Management	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-going discussion with / support for individual stalkers. 	Issue: Involvement is low key	In progress (on track)

Woodland Partner & Stakeholder Engagement (including Woodland Strategy and Felling Licences)	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-going discussion with Forestry Commission (FC) officers and regular dialogue maintained. • Timely responses to FC felling licence consultations submitted. • Investigating opportunities for FC input into woodland strategy. 	None	In progress (on track)
Undergrounding / UKPN Partner & Stakeholder Engagement / Government Consultation	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular quarterly steering groups provide opportunity for CCB input • Investigating opportunities for further project work with UKPN 	Issue: UKPN Officer time spread thinly over all South East protected landscapes and input into Chilterns limited	In progress (slightly delayed / limited in effectiveness)