

Chilterns National Landscape – Chilterns Conservation Board

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

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 Landscape^[1] and for the execution of the Board’s functions. The Board’s position is that a comprehensive review of the Plan would not be expedient until the ongoing proposal to extend the boundaries of the National Landscape is completed. We therefore propose the following approach to the review of the Plan:

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

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

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

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

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.