



# Chilterns National Landscape

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

**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025 at 10.00am at**

**The Jubilee Room, The Gateway Offices, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP19 8FF  
(Buckinghamshire Council Offices)**

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

## **AGENDA**

### **1. Standing Items**

- 1.1 Apologies for absence
- 1.2 Introductions
- 1.3 Declarations of interest in any of the agenda items
- 1.4 Notice of urgent business
- 1.5 Chair's announcements
- 1.6 Approval of minutes of the previous meeting (19.06.25)
- 1.7 Matters arising
- 1.8 Consideration of motions submitted by members
- 1.9 Public Questions

### **2. Items for Decision**

- 2.1 Appointment of Committee members
- 2.2 Constitution Review
- 2.3 HR policies
- 2.4 EDI Ambition Statement

### **3. Items for Noting / Information**

- 3.1 None

### **4. Minutes & Recommendations of Committees**

- 4.1 Executive Committee draft minutes (09.09.25)

### **5. Any urgent business**

- 6. Next meeting: Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2025, 10am, Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury.

*Meeting ends*

The Board meeting will be followed by a **Strategy Session** led by the Senior Leadership Team.

*Close 1.00pm*

**Future meeting dates 2025**

| Planning Committee  | Executive Committee  | Board   |
|---|--|---|
| Thursday 23 <sup>rd</sup> October @10am<br>Location Chinnor Offices | Thursday 13 <sup>th</sup> November @10am<br>The Chinnor Village Centre | Thursday 11 <sup>th</sup> December @10am<br>The Jubilee Room, Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury |

*Dr Elaine King, Chief Executive Officer*

## Summary of Actions Required

| Agenda number | Agenda item   | Actions required |
|---------------|---|------------------|
| 1.            | <b>Standing Items</b>   |                  |
| 1.1           | Apologies for absence   |                  |
| 1.2           | Introductions   |                  |
| 1.3           | Declaration of interest in any of the agenda items  |                  |
| 1.4           | Notice of urgent business   |                  |
| 1.5           | Chair's announcements   |                  |
| 1.6           | Approval of minutes of the previous meeting (19.06.25)  | <b>APPROVE</b>   |
| 1.7           | Matters arising   |                  |
| 1.8           | Consideration of motions submitted by members   |                  |
| 1.9           | Public Questions  |                  |
|               |   |                  |
| 2.            | <b>Items for Decision</b>   |                  |
| 2.1           | Appointment of Committee members  | <b>APPROVE</b>   |
| 2.2           | Constitution Review   | <b>APPROVE</b>   |
| 2.3           | HR policies   | <b>APPROVE</b>   |
| 2.4           | EDI Ambition Statement  | <b>APPROVE</b>   |
|               |   |                  |
| 3.            | <b>Items for Noting / Information</b>   |                  |
| 3.1           | None  |                  |
|               |   |                  |
| 4.            | <b>Minutes &amp; Recommendations of Minutes</b>   |                  |
| 4.1           | Executive Committee meeting draft minutes (09.09.25)  | <b>NOTE</b>      |
|               |   |                  |
| 5.            | <b>Any urgent business</b>  |                  |
| 6.            | Next meeting: 11 <sup>th</sup> December 2025. 10am, Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury |                  |

Board Meeting

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2025

## Chilterns National Landscape

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE CONSERVATION BOARD FOR THE CHILTERNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

Held at Sarratt Village Hall, The Green, Sarratt, Rickmansworth WD3 6AS  
on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2025 at 09.30am.

#### MEMBERS PRESENT

##### **Appointed by Local Authorities**

Cllr Louise Price  
Cllr Justine Fulford  
Cllr Philip Spicer

##### **Appointing Body**

Three Rivers District Council  
Buckinghamshire Council  
Central Bedfordshire Council

##### **Appointed by the Secretary of State**

John Nicholls (Chair)  
Colin Courtney  
Simon Mortimer  
John Shaw

Secretary of State  
Secretary of State  
Secretary of State  
Secretary of State

##### **Elected by Parish Councils**

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

Bedfordshire Parish Councils  
Oxfordshire Parish Councils  
Buckinghamshire Parish Council  
Oxfordshire Parish Councils  
Buckinghamshire Parish Council

##### **CCB Staff**

Elaine King  
Matt Thomson  
Monitoring Officer  
Andy Brock-Doyle  
Graham Hurst  
Kathryn Foster  
Lorna Coldwell  
Eloise Small  
Wendy Morrison

Chief Executive Officer  
Head of Strategy and Planning; Deputy  
  
Head of Operations  
Finance Officer (S151 Officer)  
Senior Finance Manager  
Clerk to the Board  
Administration Officer  
Heritage and Archaeology Manager

##### **Other**

Tom Beeston  
Anna Oliveri  
Ian Black  
Simon Kearey  
Richard Newcombe  
Paula Hiscocks

The Chiltern Society  
Natural England  
The Ridgeway National Trail  
The Chiltern Society  
Former Board member  
Former Board member

No members of the public were present.

Board Meeting

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2025**25/26.1 Standing Items****1.1 Election of Chair and Deputy Chair (AGM item)**

Cllr Louise Price was proposed by John Nicholls, seconded by Cllr Philip Spicer as Chair of the Board and unanimously elected.

Cllr Hector Sants was proposed by John Nicholls and seconded by Colin Courtney as Deputy Chair of the Board and unanimously elected.

**1.2 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from:

Board Members:

Cllr Greg Smith\* – Buckinghamshire Council, Paul Mains\* – Secretary of State, Cllr Robert Carrington – Buckinghamshire Council, Gemma Harper – Secretary of State, Cllr Martin Tett – Buckinghamshire Council, Geeta Ludhra – Secretary of State.

Officers:

Anna Oliveri\* – Natural England,  
Annette Weiss\* – Head of Engagement and Partnerships,  
Neil Jackson\* – Conservation and Landscape Officer,  
Kate Heppell – Head of Landscape.

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

**1.3 Declarations of Interest in any of the agenda items**

None.

**1.4 Notice of Urgent Business**

There was none, with all matters covered on the agenda.

**1.5 Approval of Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 27.03.25 were approved as a true record and signed.

**1.6 Matters Arising**

The Chair advised regarding minute 45.3 that the revised Constitution will be brought to the September Board meeting.

Regarding minute 46.4, John Nicholls and Paul Mains' term of office has been extended by Defra to September 2025, when it is expected the new Secretary of State members will have been appointed.

**1.7 Considerations of motions submitted by members**

No motions submitted.

**1.8 Public Question Time.**

No public present.

**1.9 Appointment of Committee Members**

With the current uncertainty of Board membership following recent elections in some Local Authorities, it was proposed to confirm the current membership of committees and

Board Meeting

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2025

appoint new members at the September Board meeting, with a reminder that all Board members are invited to attend committee meetings should they wish.

**The Board RESOLVED to APPROVE that the following members were confirmed as appointed to the Executive Committee (ExCo):**

Local Authority Representatives

Cllr Philip Spicer

Cllr Louise Price

Two vacancies

Secretary of State Representatives

Paul Mainds (until September 2025)

John Nicholls (Deputy Chair)

One vacancy

Parish Council Representatives

Cllr John Griffin

Cllr Sir Hector Sants (Chair)

Parish Council members Cllr Charles Hussey and Cllr Sue Rowlands attend the committee as non-voting observers.

**The Board RESOLVED to approve that the following members were confirmed as appointed to the Planning Committee (PlanCo):**

Local Authority Representatives

Cllr Louise Price (Deputy Chair)

Cllr Robert Carington

Cllr Heather Wallace

One vacancy

Secretary of State Representatives

John Nicholls

Simon Mortimer

One vacancy

Parish Council Representatives

Cllr Charles Hussey

Cllr Sue Rowland (Chair)

*A resolution was passed to adjourn the meeting for a presentation to the Board by Dr Wendy Morrison, Heritage and Archaeology Manager at the Chilterns National Landscape.*

Dr Morrison gave a highly informative presentation, with the Chair commenting that it was great to hear about some of the “field activities” being carried out by the staff team.

*The meeting was reconvened.*

## Board Meeting

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2025**1.10 Chair's Announcements**

The Chair confirmed that board members Richard Newcombe, Paula Hiscocks, Sally Symington, Patricia Birchley, Colin Courtney, Geeta Ludhra, Joe Stewart, John Shaw would be stepping down from the Board for various reasons. He gave thanks to all for their contributions over their terms. He welcomed the new Local Authority appointees.

**25/26.2 Items for Decision****2.1 Finance Report**

The overall combined deficit was £328,200, which comprised a Core Surplus of £109,500 and a Project deficit of £437,700. The core surplus exceeded forecast expectations but reflects a year where additional Defra core and capital funding were received. The project deficit reflects project spend from reserves and is not a matter for any concern. A report following the internal and external audits will be provided at the September Board meeting.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the Annual Accounts for 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025**
- 2. The Board APPROVED and SIGNED the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2024-25**

**2.2 2025/26 Budget**

The Senior Finance Manager, Kathryn Foster, had circulated a paper with the final budget overview, following the budget envelope presented to the Board on 27/03/25. The overall position is a budget deficit of £118,000 and this is proposed to be funded from the current year core surplus and the small remainder from reserves. When a three year settlement from Defra is known (we have been advised that this is likely to be in June/July), a new business plan for 2026/27 – 2028/29 will be developed.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the budget for 2025/26, including funding the £118,000 deficit in 2025/26 from the surplus in 2024/25 and from reserves**
- 2. The Board APPROVED the use of reserves towards organisational transformation work that are not deemed to be eligible for Defra CDEL funding, to a maximum of £80,000.**

**2.3 Reserves Policy and Financial Approvals**

Kathryn Foster, Senior Finance Manager, had provided a paper outlining interim changes to the Financial Approvals, which had been discussed thoroughly and agreed at the Executive Committee meeting on 07/05/25 for recommendation to the Board.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the Reserves Policy and changes to Financial Approvals effective for the new financial year**
- 2. The Board NOTED the changes will be incorporated in the updated Financial Regulations as part of wider improvements to the Constitution**

**2.4 Delivery Plan**

Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations, had circulated a paper to update the delivery model adopted last year and which was developed in conjunction with the 2025/26 budget planning process.

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The Delivery Plan has maintained the same model as the previous year, with some improvements including a structure more akin to the functional areas of the organisation: HR, Finance, IT and Admin. A large amount of work took place around resources and staff capacity, which will be subject to further work this year. Some capacity issues remain, but there is now a better understanding of what these are, which will enable us to better manage it this year.

The Delivery Plan is also sent to Defra. It was suggested that this be used as a further opportunity highlight that more core funding would enable further work to be done. It was commented that the Delivery Plan is a thorough and impressive piece of work, and thanks were given to the team.

A discussion ensued around Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in respect of supporting minority groups in enjoying and benefitting from the Chilterns National Landscape. Annette Weiss, Head of Engagement and Partnerships, advised that this is being addressed with all projects and is well embedded with the team. The EDI Ambition Statement is being updated currently, and it was emphasised that partnership work is so important for outreach opportunities. Workshops to improve accessibility are also planned.

### **1. The Board APPROVED the Delivery Plan**

#### **2.5 Management Plan**

Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning, advised of the amendments to the Management Plan arising from the refresh review and sought the Board's approval of the amended Plan. Thanks were given to the Task and Finish Group for its work on the refresh, particularly given the challenges of the Chilterns Boundary Review being cancelled part through the process. The assistance of Natural England with the management Plan was also acknowledged. Anna Olivieri from Natural England stressed that the Management Plan is an invitation to people in the Chilterns to collaborate. It was commented that an endorsement from the Local Authorities located in the Chilterns is particularly important, to ensure delivery of the Plan, and we need to ensure that the correct people in local authorities are contacted. The Plan is for all stakeholders in the National Landscape to deliver through partnership and collaboration. An executive summary leaflet was suggested, to help make this clear and the newly formed working group for improving relations with Local Authorities will discuss this as part of its work.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the proposed schedule of amendments**
- 2. The Board AUTHORISED Officers to continue working with Natural England in the context of a standard Defra foreword**
- 3. The Board AUTHORISED Officers to proceed with the design stage and make any necessary corrections, updates, and/or cosmetic changes subject to sign off from the Board Chair and CEO.**

#### **2.6 Nature Recovery Plan**

Kate Heppell, Head of Landscape and Neil Jackson, Conservation and Landscape Officer, had provided a paper seeking authority to publish the Plan. Whilst not a statutory requirement, the Plan forms an important supplement to the Management Plan, will feed into various elements of our work, and will act as a guide for other stakeholders. It was noted that partners and stakeholders have engaged positively with the Plan as part of its development and in providing feedback to the consultation. The Board commended the Plan on its quality and depth.



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A discussion ensued around deer management within the National Landscape. It was pointed out that effective deer management is essential to ensure many aspects of nature recovery can be achieved, and work being done to address the problem was described. It was agreed that a summary report on a recent deer survey would be provided to the Board.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the Nature Recovery Plan**
- 2. The Board APPROVED the publication of the Nature Recovery Plan subject to final adjustments and sign off from the Chair and CEO**

## **2.7 HR Policies**

The following policies were considered, having been reviewed and recommended for approval by the Board by the HR Advisory Group:

- Absence Management Policy
- Learning and Development Policy
- Redundancy Policy
- Information Technology and Acceptable Use Policy

- 1. The Board APPROVED the HR policies**

## **25/26.3 Items for Noting/Information**

### **3.1 Chief Executive Officer's Update Quarter**

Elain King, CEO, had provided an update regarding areas of work since the previous Board meeting. Highlights included:

- Thanks were given to the Senior Leadership Team for all their continued hard work. There has been lots of engagement with MPs and Local Authority Councillors during this period, particularly relating to the appointment of new Board members by local authorities and Defra. Meetings have been held with external stakeholders, such as the NFU, Defra, the National Landscapes Association and other National Landscape colleagues.
- Focus has also been on dealing with the outcomes of Natural England cancelling the Chilterns Boundary Review, including responding to questions from MPs and writing to Natural England's CEO and the Defra minister.

- 1. The Board NOTED the update**

## **25/26.4 Minutes and Recommendations of Committees**

### **4.1 Executive Committee Draft minutes (07.05.25)**

### **4.2 Planning Committee Draft minutes (17.04.25)**

- 1. The Board NOTED the draft Committee minutes**

## **25/26.5 Any Urgent Business**

None.

## **25/26.6 Handover to new Chair**

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John Nicholls handed over to Cllr Louise Price. Thanks were given to the outgoing Chair for all his work and guidance over his tenure.  
A reminder was given that the September Board meeting had been proposed as a strategy session.

**25/26.7 Next Meeting**  
The next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025, 10am at Buckinghamshire Council Offices, Aylesbury.

**Future meeting dates:**

| Planning Committee Meetings                             | Executive Committee Meetings                                    | Board Meetings  |
|---|---|---|
| Thursday 23 <sup>rd</sup> October, 10am Chinnor offices | Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> September, 10am Chinnor Village Centre  | Thursday 25 <sup>th</sup> September 10am, Gateway Aylesbury |
|   | Thursday 13 <sup>th</sup> November, 10am Chinnor Village Centre | Thursday 11 <sup>th</sup> December, 10am Gateway Aylesbury  |

The meeting was closed at 12.30.

The Chairman.....

Date.....

**Item 2.1****Appointment of Committee members**

**Author:** Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy & Planning, in role of Deputy Monitoring Officer

**Purpose of Report:** To appoint members to the Board's standing committees (Executive Committee and Planning Committee) and inform members of opportunities to participate in other groupings.

**Background**

1. The discharge of the Board's functions through standing and other committees is governed by the CCB's [Establishment Order](#) (mostly [article 17](#)) and by the Constitution.
2. The size of each committee is determined by the Board in the Constitution. In the case of both Executive Committee (ExCo) and Planning Committee (PlanCo) there are nine Board members appointed to each committee, plus up to four non-voting 'co-opted' members who are not members of the Board (to increase expertise and/or diversity). The proportion of the nine Board members on each committee from each of the appointing groups (local authorities, Secretary of State, and parish councils) is determined in law to reflect the composition of the Board as a whole. (For further details see item 1.9 of the Board's June 2025 meeting.)
3. Committee membership has historically been determined at the Board's AGM, following a procedure in which members express interest in serving on a committee to the Board Chair, who then selects members to appoint to the committees from the expressions of interest received. Recent experience has found this not to be workable, with the AGM taking place in June, only a few weeks after local elections in May, and during or before the appointment process for Secretary of State appointments (which usually takes place over the summer). In addition, individual members' circumstances change at any time during the year, resulting in the potential for an almost continuous churn of committee members.
4. To resolve these issues, the Board needs to be able to make appointments to the committees at any of its meetings, especially when – as is currently the case – there has been significant change to the Board's membership and each committee has several vacancies.
5. A broad general approach has been defined (as follows), which will need to be worked into the Constitution and its supporting procedure notes. This is the procedure that has been followed on this occasion.
6. Instead of standing committees being dissolved prior to the AGM and completely re-appointed (an established practice not set out in the Constitution, but which may have a basis in the local government legislation that backs up our Establishment Order), members sitting on a standing committee will retain their membership until (i) they resign from the committee, (ii) they cease to be a member of the Board, or (iii) they are removed from the committee by a resolution of either the committee or the Board.
7. Similarly, each standing committee's Chair and Deputy Chair will remain in that position until they resign, cease to be a Member or are removed by resolution.

8. Prior to each Board meeting when there are vacancies on either committee, officers will circulate an invitation to all Board members to express interest in joining the relevant committee(s) and provide an opportunity for existing committee members to notify their intention to resign from the committee (members may of course resign at any time).
9. Officers will work with the Board Chair and committee Chairs to collate expressions of interest and advise on selecting members to appoint (meeting statutory limitations and taking account of the need to ensure an appropriate range of skills, diversity and/or a geographic spread of members where possible). The Board Chair's decision will be paramount.
10. The appointments selected by the Board Chair will be presented to the Board for approval. If there remain outstanding vacancies, then the Board chair may select members to fill those vacancies from any members who volunteer at the meeting, with the Board confirming those selections.
11. There may be other – better – ways of achieving this outcome, and the Governance Review TFG will be happy to receive suggestions (through the Deputy Monitoring Officer) to work into the Constitution.
12. The following two sections set out a summary of the standing committees' functions, existing memberships, those members who have expressed an interest in joining each committee who have been selected by the Board Chair, and any outstanding vacancies.
13. In addition to our two standing committees, the Board benefits from a number of less formal advisory groups, any or all of which would benefit from additional expertise – see annex. If members would be interested in contributing to the work of any of those groups, they may contact the officer secretariat (email addresses in annex).

### **Executive Committee**

14. In summary, Executive Committee (ExCo):
  - a) Regulates and controls the Board's finances, including budgets, accounts, insurance, etc;
  - b) Monitors and reviews the implementation of the Board's policy and strategy, e.g. in the Management Plan and operational plans, making recommendations to the Board;
  - c) Prepares employment policies, including health and safety, and oversees all human resources matters (with the assistance of the HR Advisory Group);
  - d) Provides members for the Appeals Sub-Committee (see below);
  - e) Considers other matters of an organisational or administrative nature referred to it by the Board.
15. ExCo meets four times a year, usually at the CCB office in Chinnor for half a day. Members must attend in person to vote and to contribute to the meeting being quorate.
16. **The current situation with membership of ExCo is:**

Local Authority (requirement: 4)

  - Cllr Louise Price
  - Cllr Philip Spicer

- Cllr Martin Tett (new appointee)
- **One outstanding vacancy**

Secretary of State (requirement: 3)

- Baljit Dhillon (new appointee)
- Matthew Stanton (new appointee)
- Nicola Thomas (new appointee)

Parish Council (requirement: 2)

- Cllr John Griffin
- Cllr Sir Hector Sants (Chair)

17. In addition, Parish Council members Cllr Charles Hussey and Cllr Sue Rowlands attend the committee as non-voting observers.
18. The committee may co-opt up to four non-voting members who are not members of the Board to assist with optimising skills, diversity and experience or the balance of the committee. ExCo currently has no co-opted members.
19. The position of Deputy Chair of ExCo is currently vacant, but it is understood that there is a volunteer for this position, and that it will be filled at the next ExCo meeting in November.
20. Volunteers would be welcome to fill the above Secretary of State vacancy (and any arising before or at the Board meeting). Volunteers may make themselves known to the Board Chair, committee Chair and DMO in advance of the meeting, or at the Board meeting itself. If the number of volunteers exceeds the number of vacancies, then the Board Chair will select the appointee(s) in accordance with para 5(d) above.

### **Planning Committee**

21. In summary, Planning Committee (PlanCo):

- a) Oversees all representations on behalf of the Board in relation to national and local planning policy; planning applications and enforcement; policies of statutory bodies; transport planning and projects; infrastructure proposals; and any other proposals or policies relevant to physical development, all within the AONB and/or its setting. (In practice, preparation and submission of most such representations is delegated to officers, having regard to established Board policies and priorities, ratified retrospectively by PlanCo – to be regularised through the Scheme of Delegation.)
- b) Developing CCB's own planning policies, including the planning input to the Management Plan, for recommendation to the Board for its approval.

22. PlanCo meets three times a year, usually at the CCB office in Chinnor for half a day. Members must attend in person to vote and to contribute to the meeting being quorate.

23. **The current membership of PlanCo is:**

Local Authority (requirement: 4)

- Cllr Robert Carington
- Cllr Louise Price (Deputy Chair)
- Cllr James Norman (new appointee)

- **One vacancy**

Secretary of State (requirement: 3)

- Simon Mortimer

- **Two vacancies**

Parish Council (requirement: 2)

- Cllr Charles Hussey
- Cllr Sue Rowland (Chair)

24. The committee may co-opt up to four non-voting members who are not members of the Board to assist with optimising skills and experience or the balance of the committee. PlanCo currently benefits from two co-opted members (Paul Hayes and Chris Hannington).
25. Volunteers would be welcome to fill the above Local Authority and Secretary of State vacancies (and any arising before or at the Board meeting). Volunteers may make themselves known to the Board Chair, committee Chair and DMO in advance of the meeting, or at the Board meeting itself. If the number of volunteers exceeds the number of vacancies, then the Board chair will select the appointee(s) in accordance with para 5(d) above.

### **Recommendations**

1. **That the Board APPROVES the membership of Executive Committee as set out in paragraph 11, subject to any resignations notified to the Board and any appointments made at the meeting by the Chair (para 15).**
2. **That the Board APPROVES the membership of Planning Committee as set out in paragraph 18, subject to any resignations notified to the Board and any appointments made at the meeting by the Chair (para 20).**

**Annex: Other groupings**

In addition to the standing committees, the Board or its committees can convene sub-committees, and a variety of different non-statutory groups (panels, working parties, task and finish groups (TFG), etc.). The current membership of these groups is given here for information. Most of the listed groups are permanently seeking additional volunteers, and if members are interested in joining, then they are encouraged to contact the secretariat of the group.

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion TFG**

Convened by the Board.

Secretariat: Annette Weiss, Head of Engagement & Partnerships – [aweiss@chilterns.org.uk](mailto:aweiss@chilterns.org.uk).

Chair: tbc

- Baljit Dhillon (new volunteer)
- John Shaw (co-opted/tbc)

**Finance Advisory Group**

Convened by Executive Committee.

Secretariat: Kathryn Foster, Senior Finance Manager – [kfoster@chilterns.org.uk](mailto:kfoster@chilterns.org.uk)

Chair: Graham Hurst, Finance (section 151) Officer.

- Cllr Hector Sants

**Governance Review TFG**

Convened by the Board.

Secretariat: Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy & Planning/DMO – [mthomson@chilterns.org.uk](mailto:mthomson@chilterns.org.uk).

- John Nicholls (Chair – co-opted/tbc)
- Charles Hussey
- Richard Newcombe (co-opted)
- Lynn Lloyd (co-opted)

**Local Authority Engagement Working Group**

Convened by Executive Committee.

Secretariat: Elaine King, CEO – [elaineking@chilterns.org.uk](mailto:elaineking@chilterns.org.uk)

- Richard Newcombe (co-opted – chair)
- Hector Sants
- Gemma Harper
- Louise Price
- John Nicholls (co-opted/tbc)

**Management Plan Review TFG**

Convened by the Board.

Secretariat: Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy & Planning – [mthomson@chilterns.org.uk](mailto:mthomson@chilterns.org.uk).

- Gemma Harper (Chair)
- Simon Mortimer
- Hector Sants

**Vision TFG**

Convened by the Board.

Secretariat: Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy & Planning – [mthomson@chilterns.org.uk](mailto:mthomson@chilterns.org.uk).

- Hector Sants (Chair)
- John Nicholls (co-opted/tbc)
- Robert Carington

**Item 2.2**                      **Constitution Review**

**Author:** Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy & Planning, in role of Deputy Monitoring Officer

**Purpose of Report:** To approve a new Scheme of Delegation for inclusion in the Constitution, and make further changes in relation to the dissolution of the HR Advisory Group and other minor corrections and updates.

**Background**

1. This paper sets out a number of recommendations for changes to CCB's Constitution, last approved by the Board in December 2024. The recommended changes arise from three principal activities, as follows:
  - a. The ongoing review of the Constitution, led by the Governance Review TFG, currently focused on developing **Scheme of Delegation**; this also results in consequent changes to other parts of the Constitution.
  - b. The dissolution of **HR Advisory Group** by resolution of Executive Committee at its meeting of 9 September 2025.
  - c. The approval (under item 2.3 of the current agenda) of **new HR policy HR23 Appeals**, which, if approved, will change the status of the Appeals Sub-committee to an Appeals Panel.
2. There is some overlap between the amendments recommended in relation to each of the above. However, these are made and presented here separately (a) for a complete and clear audit trail, and (b) in the eventuality that the Board's decisions in relation to each are different from the recommendation or are deferred. Specific overlaps are highlighted in the relevant appendices, but please note that there are no conflicts between the proposed amendments.
3. A version of the whole Constitution including the amendments proposed through this paper shown in tracked changes is available [here](#) to Members for ease of reference. That document will be messy, and the section and paragraph numbering particularly requires an overhaul. The amendments set out in Appendices 1-3 should be taken as authoritative.

**Scheme of Delegation**

4. The rationalisation of how the Constitution arranges for the discharge of the Board's functions through delegation to committees, sub-committees and officers (mostly through section 2.2.2 – the Code of Governance) has been a matter central to the work of the Governance Review TFG since it was set up in 2021.
5. The Board approved Delegation Principles in December 2023, which set the direction of travel for developing a more detailed Scheme of Delegation which would give greater clarity on how decisions needed to be made, enabling particularly Executive Committee and senior officers to get on with delivering the Board's priorities, without constantly referring back to the Board for approval, thereby also enabling the Board to focus on key strategic issues, rather than operational decisions.
6. The Delegation Principles as drafted in 2023 focused on resource-related matters, principally the appointment of new staff and taking on new areas of work. Nonetheless, their application in the following 18 months demonstrated the value of their core underlying principle: that the Board had resolved to delegate as fully



as possible to its committees and officers (as appropriate) so long as decisions are made wholly in compliance with certain 'key documents', the determination of which is reserved to the Board. In short, the Board sets the strategy and priorities and the means to deliver them, and empowers the organisation to deliver within those parameters, only needing to refer back to the Board when there is a chance that the parameters may be exceeded.

7. The Governance Review TFG has put considerable effort into drafting a Scheme of Delegation that embodies this principle, and this is now put before the Board with a recommendation for approval as proposed, with the opportunity for further scrutiny, development and review going forward.
8. Members familiar with the previous approach to delegation will note, especially from the proposed changes to the matters reserved to the Board, a change of emphasis from generally reserving matters to the Board unless specifically delegated to a committee or officer, to generally delegating matters to officers, unless specifically reserved to the Board or delegated to a committee. The key difference, and the safeguard from the Board's perspective, is that matters are only delegated to an officer – or to a committee – **subject to compliance with the Board's strategies, policies and resources as set out in certain 'key documents'**. If there is any risk that an action or decision could exceed these parameters, including the approved budget, then consideration must be given to referring the matter back up the chain, to the CEO and to the Board if necessary.
9. For extra clarity, the proposed changes to the matters reserved to the Board are explained in detail in the Annex to Appendix 1.
10. The proposed Scheme of Delegation is in two parts, comprising a revised and expanded set of Principles, and a Schedule of specific delegations, including limitations on those delegations in addition to compliance with the 'key documents'.
11. While the Principles are considered to be complete, the Schedule of specific delegations will need to evolve further as not all delegations included in the approved Constitution (especially in the Financial Regulations, etc.) have been transposed into the Schedule yet. Similarly, officers have not had the capacity so far to completely audit the Code of Governance and the rest of the Constitution for all amendments that might need to be made consequent to the approval of the proposed Scheme. A note preceding the Code of Governance will for the time being explain that where there is any conflict between the Code and the Scheme, then the Scheme should be taken as definitive, and that any delegation remaining apparent in the Code or the Constitution as a whole but not covered in the Schedule is now subject to compliance with the 'key documents'.
12. The proposed amendments to the Constitution set out in Appendix 1 also include some additional amendments identified by officers, and approved in principle by the TFG, which are either consequential to the proposed Scheme of Delegation, or help to provide a context for it. The **proposed amendments to the Constitution set out in Appendix 1** are recommended for the Board's approval.

### **HR Advisory Group**

13. At its meeting of 9 September 2025, the Executive Committee resolved to dissolve the HR Advisory Group (HRAG). The HRAG was convened and appointed by Executive Committee, and the Committee are not looking for the Board to re-open discussions on the purpose or utility of that group. However, the HRAG was referred to in the Constitution, and decisions on changes to the Constitution are a matter reserved to the full Board (under the existing Code of Governance and the proposed Scheme of Delegation).

14. Including HRAG in the Constitution was always an anomaly, since it was a body that *advised* Executive Committee and the CEO on their decisions relating to HR, and had no decision-making authority of its own. Advisory bodies, by their nature, need to be flexible and responsive to changing circumstances, hampered by applying to them constitutional status whose purpose is to fix the authority of a decision-making body.
15. Consequently, the **proposed amendments to the Constitution set out in Appendix 2** (all relating to current section 2.2.2, the Code of Governance) are recommended to the Board.

### **Policy HR23 Appeals**

16. Draft policy HR23 (see item 2.3 on this agenda) proposes an amended approach to HR-related appeals which recognises the dissolution of the HRAG (see above) and in which the status of the body responsible for considering appeals is amended from a sub-committee to an advisory “panel”. This approach increases the flexibility and responsiveness of the appeals process, and removes the administrative burden of convening a sub-committee, which is subject to legal requirements in terms of membership, publicity and quorum. The statutory requirements for convening committees and sub-committees necessary in order for such groups to directly discharge the functions delegated to them by the Board. In practice, which has been limited, the appeals sub-committee has tended to advise the Board or the CEO rather than directly make decisions, so the additional administrative burden of convening a sub-committee has not been justified.
17. For the same reasons as for the dissolution of HRAG, there is no need to include reference to the Appeals Panel in the Constitution, since it is advisory and does not discharge the functions of the Board. The functions of and arrangements for the Appeals Panel will be set out in policy HR23 and/or any accompanying procedure notes.
18. Consequently, the **amendments to the Constitution set out in Appendix 3** (all relating to current section 2.2.2, the Code of Governance) are recommended to the Board, subject to their approval of policy HR23 under agenda item 2.3.

### **Constitution review – next steps**

19. The Constitution review is very much still ongoing, and there remains much to do. It is proposed that the Governance Review TFG is invited by the Board to consider and prioritise what further actions are needed, and to bring its recommendations to the December Board meeting.

### **Recommendation**

**It is recommended that the Board:**

1. **APPROVES** the proposed amendments to the Constitution set out in Appendix 1 in relation to the insertion of a new Scheme of Delegation (paras 4-12);
2. **APPROVES** the proposed amendments to the Constitution set out in Appendix 2 consequent to the Executive Committee’s dissolution of the HR Advisory Group; and
3. **APPROVES** the proposed amendments to the Constitution set out in Appendix 3 in relation to the Appeals Sub-Committee, subject to the approval of new policy HR23 under item 2.3 on this agenda.

## **Appendix 1: Amendments to the Constitution to support and insert a Scheme of Delegation and amendments consequential to that.**

Please note that, other than the Section numbers, the paragraph numbering in this paper is provided for ease of reference in relation to this paper only. This paragraph numbering will be amended to fit in with the numbering system in the Constitution, which itself requires some attention.

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Insert the following text to replace current Section 1.1:

### **1.1 Purposes, Duties, Powers and Functions**

1. The purposes, duties, powers and functions of the Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) are mostly defined in sections 85-89 of and Schedules 13-14 to the [Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000](#) ("the CROW Act") and/or in the [Establishment Order](#) for the Chilterns Conservation Board. This Constitution reflects the provisions of those statutory instruments, and adds further detail on implementation or delivery, agreed by the Board.
2. The statutory purpose of the designation of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, now known as the Chilterns National Landscape, is that of "conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area" ([section 82\(1\) of the CROW Act](#)).
3. All public bodies, including the CCB, have a general duty to "seek to further" the above purpose when undertaking any function relating to or affecting land in the designated area ([section 85 of the CROW Act](#)). [Guidance on the application of this duty](#) was published in December 2024.
4. Conservation Boards, including the CCB, have four specific duties under [section 87 of the CROW Act](#):
  - a. To "seek to further" both the purpose of designation ("conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area") and the purpose of "increasing the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the area", but to "attach greater weight to" the first purpose if there is a conflict between the two.
  - b. To "seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the area" while fulfilling the first duty, in co-operation with local authorities and other relevant public bodies.
  - c. To "have due regard to the needs of agriculture and forestry and to the economic and social interests of rural areas" in the exercise of certain functions (from [section 37 of the Countryside Act 1968](#)).
  - d. To "have due regard to the protection against pollution of any water, whether on the surface or underground" which by be abstracted, in the exercise of certain functions (from [section 38 of the Countryside Act 1968](#)).
5. In fulfilling the above duties and purposes, the CCB is empowered under [section 87\(4\) of the CROW Act](#) to "do anything which, in the opinion of the board, is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to" the accomplishment of the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area and/or of increasing the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the area, so long as it would be lawful to do so.
6. Further specific powers and functions are set out in [Schedule 14 to the CROW Act](#) and in [Part III](#) and [Part IV](#) of the CCB's Establishment Order. Further

explanation of these powers and functions may subsequently be included in this Constitution or published separately.

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Insert the following text as new Section 1.4:

**1.4 Definitions and Interpretation**

7. Within this Constitution:
- a. ‘Chilterns Conservation Board’, abbreviated as ‘CCB’, refers to the statutory body established under the CROW Act as ‘the Conservation Board for the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’.
  - b. ‘the Board’ refers to the governing assembly of 27 Members which oversees the delivery of CCB’s functions.
  - c. ‘planning matters’ refers to national and local planning policy; planning applications and enforcement; policies of statutory bodies; transport planning and projects; infrastructure proposals; and any other proposals or policies relevant to physical development, all within the AONB and/or its setting (definition approved by the Board, December 2022).
  - d. ‘The 1972 Act’ refers to the Local Government Act 1972.
  - e. Any power, authority or function that may be delegated by the Board is referred to as a ‘function’. A body or officer delegating a function is referred to as the ‘delegator’, and the body or officer receiving the delegation as the “delegatee”.

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Insert the following heading and two paragraphs of text to replace “2.2: Decision Making, including Delegation Principles”. Delete the whole of the section headed “(b) 2.2.1 Delegation Principles”.

**2.2 Decision-making**

- 8. The following articles represent the residual contents of the Code of Governance (approved in 2021 and re-incorporated into the Constitution in 2024) subsequent to the development of the Scheme of Delegation (see section 2.3 below). This section shall be subject to further review to rationalise and update its contents.
- 9. Any general or specific delegation outside of section 2.3 below, including within the following Code of Governance, is hereby made subject to the Delegation Principles set out in section 2.3 below. If there is any conflict between the Delegation Schedule and a delegation defined outside of section 2.3, then the Delegation Schedule should be taken as definitive.

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Delete the following articles from current section headed “(b) 2.2.2 Code of Governance”:

- 2.3 Revocation, suspension and variation of the Code of Governance (replaced by reserving amendments to the Constitution to the Board).
- 2.4 The Board (replaced by the matters reserved to the Board).

[Further amendments need to be identified and made to this section consequent to approval of the proposed Scheme of Delegation, especially in relation to matters delegated to the standing committees and to the CEO. The delegations implied in those sections are interspersed with procedural guidance, which needs to be

retained (not necessarily in the Constitution) and this requires more thought. In the meantime, para 9 above applies.]

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Insert the following text as new Section 2.3:

### **2.3 Scheme of Delegation**

10. All authority relating to the discharge of the purposes, duties, powers and functions is initially vested in the Board of the CCB, unless assigned in statute to a specific statutory officer. Under [Article 17 of the Establishment Order](#), the Board can delegate the discharge of its functions to a committee, sub-committee or officer(s) of the Board. This section presents how this is done through (a) general principles for the delegation of functions, and (b) a schedule of delegated functions or categories of functions.

#### **Delegation Principles**

11. To discharge its statutory functions as set out in section 1.1, the Board determines its principles, strategies and policy, and the means of their implementation, through the following “key documents”:
- a. This Constitution.
  - b. The statutory AONB Management Plan for the Chilterns National Landscape.
  - c. The annual Business Plan (comprising Delivery Plan, Resource Plan, Budget, Funding Strategy and Risk Register).
  - d. The documents, statements or commitments listed in Schedule X [to follow].
12. The underlying principle of this set of delegations is that the Board retains in full the determination of these ‘key documents’, but resolves to delegate as fully as possible subsidiary decisions which are wholly in compliance with them. Any decisions which extend beyond the key documents, in relation for example to changing the budget or the functions of CCB, are not delegated and are to be referred to the Board for determination.
13. Subject to the above limitation, any function of the Board not specifically reserved to the Board (in this Constitution or by statute) may be delegated by the Board to a committee, sub-committee or officer(s), subject to conditions. Unless prevented by such conditions, a delegated function may be delegated further (cascaded) to a sub-committee or officer(s), with the same or additional conditions.
14. Any general delegation to officers must comply with the relevant officers’ job description and objectives (expressed in a personal or team plan), unless specifically detailed in writing.
15. The delegation of any function does not imply that the delegator cannot continue to exercise that function themselves (this principle is enshrined in s.101(4) of the 1972 Act), although this should only occur in exceptional circumstances. If the delegator exercises such a function, they must inform the relevant delegatee.
16. Where a delegatee considers that exercising a function may result in exceeding the conditions of the delegation (including the ‘key documents’), the delegatee should consult with the delegator before exercising the function to determine whether exercising the function would materially modify the purpose of delegation. For this purpose:

- a. Where the relevant delegator is the Board, or a committee or sub-committee of the Board, and there is not a timely scheduled meeting to report to, then the delegatee should consult with the relevant Chair (or in their absence, Deputy Chair) and the CEO (unless the CEO is the delegatee).
  - b. On such consultation, the relevant delegator should consider whether exercising the function would exceed the conditions of their delegated authority, and if so refer up the delegation chain.
  - c. If exercising the function is found to exceed the conditions of the delegation and so materially modify the purpose of delegation, then the exercise of that instance of the function must be referred up to the delegation chain, if necessary to the Board.
  - d. If a matter cannot be resolved through a scheduled meeting of the Board or a committee or sub-committee, the Urgency Procedure may be followed, and retrospective ratification of the decision sought subsequently.
17. Where procedures relating to urgency or resolving uncertainties are invoked, those involved in discharging the function must work with the CEO and DMO to reflect on how the urgency or uncertainty could have been avoided, and what changes to the Constitution, policies or procedures might reasonably be made, taking any recommendation to the Board for its consideration. A register of urgent or uncertain matters should be retained by the DMO.

### **Urgency Procedure**

18. From time to time a function, including a function exceeding the conditions of delegation, a decision on which cannot be deferred, may need to be discharged:
- a. In the absence of a scheduled Board or relevant committee or sub-committee meeting; or
  - b. In the absence of the relevant officer delegatee, and no alternative arrangements (e.g. temporary delegation) are in place.
19. In such circumstances the following urgency procedure should be observed:
- a. In relation to officer delegations, within a chain of delegation, then the function shall be discharged by the next available officer up the chain of delegation; if there is no such officer available, then the following should be observed.
  - b. Consideration may be given to convening an extraordinary meeting of the Board (for reserved functions) or a committee or sub-committee to or through which the function is delegated, following the relevant procedures, and taking account of any scheduled Board or committee meetings that could discharge the function as set out below.
  - c. If there is within the timeframe needed for discharging the function a scheduled meeting of the Board or any of its committees or sub-committees, consideration may be given to taking the matter to that meeting. In doing so, opportunities must be taken to seek and collate the views of Board members (for matters reserved to the Board) or the members of the committee or sub-committee to or through which the function is delegated, by email or other means, and these presented to the meeting in question. Any decision made on the relevant function at such a meeting must be taken to the next meeting of the Board, committee or sub-committee (as appropriate) to (i) seek ratification, and

- (ii) report on any reflections on application of the urgency procedure. If ratification is not secured, appropriate steps must be determined and taken.
- d. If it is not considered expedient or practicable to either arrange an extraordinary meeting, or utilise a scheduled Board, committee or sub-committee meeting, then the function may be discharged by a conditional decision of the CEO (or in their absence the most appropriate available member of the SLT) and the Chair of the Board (for reserved matters) or appropriate committee Chair (or in the absence of either, the appropriate Deputy Chair). For planning matters the CEO (or their deputy) may be substituted by the Head of Strategy and Planning, or advised by the same or their deputy.
- e. For (b), (c) and (d) above, the consideration should be undertaken as appropriate by the CEO (or their deputy) and the Board or relevant committee Chair (or their deputy), with the Head of Strategy and Planning advising or substituting for the CEO on planning matters.

### **Resolving uncertainties**

20. If there is uncertainty about the application of these delegations to a particular decision, or if a potential decision technically requires referral to the Board but in the opinion of the CEO is of such minor impact as to make this an unnecessary step, the CEO and Board Chair may agree the course of action to be followed. In the event of disagreement, the particular decision shall be referred to the Board.

### **Delegation Schedule**

21. The Schedule sets out the delegation of the Board's functions to its committees, sub-committees and officers, listed by function categories. The Schedule also includes (a) functions delegated by statute to specific (statutory) officers, and (b) those functions reserved to the Board (i.e. not delegated). For ease of reference, the reserved functions are also listed separately below.

### **Functions reserved to the Board**

22. The following functions are reserved to the Board, meaning that the Board considers these matters to be of such strategic importance that they cannot be delegated to a committee or officer without first resolving to amend the Constitution. The reserved functions are also included in the Schedule under the relevant function category heading. If there is any conflict between this list and the Schedule, then the Schedule should be taken as definitive.
- a. In relation to the 'key documents' defined in article 11 above:
    - i. Approval of the Board's Constitution, or amendments to it.
    - ii. The decision to review, adopt or publish an AONB management plan for the Chilterns under ss.89-90 of the CROW Act 2000.
    - iii. Approval of the annual Business Plan (comprising Delivery Plan, Resource Plan, Budget, Funding Strategy and Risk Register).
    - iv. The decision to develop or publish for consultation any strategy or policy statement on non-'planning matters' relating to either or both of the Board's statutory purposes intended to be presented as being a strategy or policy either of the Board or of a partnership or other group of which the Board is a member.
    - v. The decision to approve any strategy or policy statement on 'planning matters' and/or relating to either or both of the Board's

statutory purposes that is presented as being a strategy or policy either of the Board or of a partnership or other group of which the Board is a member.

- b. Arrangements for the discharge of functions by a committee, including convening the committee and appointing its members.
- c. Approval of the calendar of meetings of the Board and its Committees.
- d. Appointment of Board members to outside bodies.
- e. Election of the Board Chair and Deputy Chair.
- f. Approval of any protocols or policies relating to the Members' Code of Conduct contained in the Constitution.
- g. Approval of the Compliments and Complaints procedure and amendments to it.
- h. Appointment and dismissal of the Chief Executive Officer, Monitoring Officer and Finance (section 151) Officer.
- i. Determination of a Board response on proposals that could amend the extent or purpose of the Chilterns National Landscape, or the nature, powers, duties, functions and responsibilities of the Chilterns Conservation Board.
- j. Approval of the Board's annual accounts.

#### **Schedule of Delegated Functions**

| <b>Power/function</b>   | <b>Delegated from</b> | <b>Reserved / delegated to</b> | <b>Limitations</b>  |
|---|-----------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>General functions</b>  |                       |                                |   |
| The discharge of any function not otherwise referred to in this Schedule that has been delegated to them through their job description, the Business Plan, a team plan, their annual objectives or a written instruction from a manager in their line-management chain. | tbc (was CoG 2.4.i)   | Any officer                    | Unless the function is reserved to the Board, or would not comply with the 'key documents'. |
| <b>Constitutional functions</b>   |                       |                                |   |
| Approval of the Board's Constitution, or amendments to it (a 'key document' under article 11).  | tbc (2.4.iii.a, g, h, | Board                          | Compliance with the CROW Act 2000 and the Establishment Order.                              |
| Arrangements for the discharge of functions by a committee, including convening the committee   | EO Art.17 (2.9)       | Board                          | Statute   |



| Power/function  | Delegated from         | Reserved / delegated to                 | Limitations   |
|---|------------------------|---|---|
| and appointing its members.   |                        |   |   |
| Arrangements for the discharge of a committee's functions by a sub-committee, including convening the sub-committee and appointing its members.         | EO Art.17 (2.9 & 2.11) | The relevant committee                  | Statute   |
| Approval of the calendar of meetings of the Board and its Committees  | tbc (2.4.iii.b)        | Board                                   | None  |
| Appointment of Board members to outside bodies  | tbc (2.4.iii.c part)   | Board                                   | Publication of a register of appointments to outside bodies.                |
| Appointment of Officers to outside bodies   | tbc (2.4.iii.c part)   | CEO                                     | Key documents. Publication of a register of appointments to outside bodies. |
| Election of the Board Chair and Deputy Chair  |                        | Board                                   |   |
| Election of a Committee or Sub-Committee Chair and Deputy Chair   |                        | The relevant committee or sub-committee |   |
| Approval of any protocols or policies relating to the Members' Code of Conduct contained in the Constitution.   | tbc (2.4.iii.h part)   | Board                                   | <a href="#">The Seven Principles of Public Life</a> (the Nolan principles)  |
| Approval of the Compliments and Complaints procedure and amendments to it.  | tbc (2.4.iii.i)        | Board                                   | Statute   |
| <b>Strategic or policy functions</b>  |                        |   |   |
| Decision to review, adopt or publish an AONB management plan for the Chilterns under ss.89-90 of the CROW Act 2000 (a 'key document' under article 11). | tbc (2.4.iii.m)        | Board                                   | Statute   |
| Decision to develop or publish for consultation   | Board, Dec 2022        | Planning Committee                      |   |

| Power/function  | Delegated from                      | Reserved / delegated to | Limitations |
|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| any strategy or policy statement on 'planning matters' intended to be presented as being a strategy or policy either of the Board or of a partnership or other group of which the Board is a member (a 'key document' under article 11).  |                                     |                         |             |
| Decision to develop or publish for consultation any strategy or policy statement on non-'planning matters' relating to either or both of the Board's statutory purposes intended to be presented as being a strategy or policy either of the Board or of a partnership or other group of which the Board is a member (a 'key document' under article 11). | tbc (new, but related to 2.4.iii.l) | Board                   | None        |
| Decision to approve any strategy or policy statement on 'planning matters' and/or relating to either or both of the Board's statutory purposes that is presented as being a strategy or policy either of the Board or of a partnership or other group of which the Board is a member (a 'key document' under article 11).                                 | tbc (new, but related to 2.4.iii.l) | Board                   | None        |
| Determination of a Board response on proposals that could amend the extent or purpose of the Chilterns National   | tbc (2.4.iii.n)                     | Board                   | None        |

| Power/function  | Delegated from   | Reserved / delegated to       | Limitations   |
|---|--|-------------------------------|---|
| Landscape, or the nature, powers, duties, functions and responsibilities of the Chilterns Conservation Board.   |  |                               |   |
| Determination of any response to a consultation or similar formal enquiry on any 'planning matters'   | Board, Dec 2022, to Planning Committee and thence to HSP | Head of Strategy and Planning | Subject to retrospective ratification by Planning Committee   |
| <b>Resources and financial functions</b>  |  |                               |   |
| Approval of the annual Business Plan (comprising Delivery Plan, Resource Plan, Budget, Funding Strategy and Risk Register) (a 'key document' under article 11). | tbc (2.4.iii.d)  | Board                         | None  |
| Approval of the annual accounts.  | Tbc (2.4.iii.d)  | Board                         | None  |
| Approval of changes to Members' allowances and expenses rates under the Scheme that is in the Constitution  | tbc (2.4.iii.g)  | ExCo                          | Unless changes to the rates would alter the structure of the scheme in the Constitution, or could not be accommodated within the Budget |
| Appointment and dismissal of the Chief Executive Officer, Monitoring Officer and Finance (section 151) Officer  | tbc (2.4.iii.k)  | Board                         | None  |
| Approval of employment policies including health and safety, industrial relations and related issues  | tbc (2.4.iii.j)  | ExCo                          | None  |

### **Appendix 1 – Annex: Proposed changes to functions reserved to the Board – summary and explanation**

The following table sets out the functions that are reserved to the Board in the existing approved Constitution and sets out the reasoning behind the changes proposed in relation to them.

| Existing reserved function  | Reason for change  | Proposed reserved function  |
|---|--|---|
| The Board meeting shall exercise all the powers, duties and functions of the Board that are not specifically delegated to a standing committee. | Lack of flexibility and responsiveness, counter to direction of travel to delegate more (with limitations). Doesn't account for general or specific delegations to officers or sub-committees.   | Remove this function from the Board's reserved functions.   |
| a) approval of the Code of Governance for the conduct of the business of the Board  | The Code of Governance is now part of the Constitution, and this function should relate to the whole Constitution – see also points (f) & (g). Should also cover amendments to the Constitution.   | Approval of the Board's Constitution, or amendments to it (a 'key document' under article X).   |
| b) approval of a Calendar of Meetings for the discharge of the business of the Board  | Clarify by reference to "and its committees"; reference to discharge of business is superfluous.   | Approval of the calendar of meetings of the Board and its Committees.   |
| c) appointment of members or officers to outside Bodies   | It's not clear how often the Board appoints its members to outside bodies, if at all, but this should require a Board decision. Officers frequently sit on outside bodies, but it is not clear what sort of roles or how formally this provision would be intended to apply. Seeking Board approval for officer appointments is not established practice and may be problematic. | Appointment of Board members to outside bodies.<br><br>(Add (not reserved) to CEO delegation: "Appointment of officers to outside bodies.")                   |
| d) approval of the annual budget and the Board's annual accounts  | The budget is now part of the annual Business Plan, which is a 'key document' the approval of which was not previously mentioned in the Constitution. The accounts are important but   | Approval of the annual Business Plan (comprising Delivery Plan, Resource Plan, Budget, Funding Strategy and Risk Register) (a 'key document' under article X) |

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
|   | not a 'key document' and so need to be treated separately.   | Approval of the annual accounts.  |
| e) exercise of the Board's powers of borrowing  | This is not consistent with existing delegations to ExCo, nor with the Financial Regulations.  | Remove this function from the Board's reserved functions.   |
| f) determination of all constitutional and funding issues affecting the Board and its members           | This function is too broad to be meaningful and would include some matters that would be appropriate to delegate under the Principles. All Constitutional matters are, however, covered under (a).   | Remove this function from the Board's reserved functions.   |
| g) approval of the members' allowances scheme   | The Scheme itself is part of the Constitution, so covered under (a) above. The <u>rates</u> of allowances and expenses are proposed to be extracted from the Constitution to allow more regular updates (e.g. to account for inflation) by ExCo. | Remove this function from the Board's reserved functions.   |
| h) approval of the members' Code of Conduct and relevant protocols                                      | The Code of Conduct is part of the Constitution, so covered under (a) above, but it is reasonable to reserve decisions on any protocols or policies related to the Code to the Board.  | Approval of any protocols or policies relating to the Members' Code of Conduct contained in the Constitution.   |
| i) approval of a complaints procedure   | Should refer to compliments too, and also cover amendments to it.  | Approval of the Compliments and Complaints procedure and amendments to it.                                      |
| j) approval of employment policies including health and safety, industrial relations and related issues | There is no strategic reason for the Board to <u>have</u> to approve all HR policies; it is proposed to delegate this function to ExCo.  | Remove this function from the Board's reserved functions.   |
| k) appointment and dismissal of the Chief Executive Officer and Monitoring Officer                      | Should also include the s151 Finance Officer; all three statutory officers are appointed by the "local authority" in the legislation, with that applied to the Board through our Establishment Order.  | Appointment and dismissal of the Chief Executive Officer, Monitoring Officer and Finance (section 151) Officer. |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| l) approval of the strategies, policies, plans and programmes that guide the Board in the discharge of its powers and duties  | This is not specific enough as to its relationship to the Board's own strategies/policies (rather than others that "guide the Board" which the Board cannot itself approve) and to strategies/policies that deliver its purposes. There also needs to be Board approval to start work on or consult on strategies/policies of the Board.  | Decision to approve any strategy or policy statement relating to either or both of the Board's statutory purposes that is presented as being a strategy or policy either of the Board or of a partnership or other group of which the Board is a member (a 'key document' under article X)                                    |
|   |   | Decision to develop or publish for consultation any strategy or policy statement relating to either or both of the Board's statutory purposes intended to be presented as being a strategy or policy either of the Board or of a partnership or other group of which the Board is a member (a 'key document' under article X) |
| m) adoption of the management plan under section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000   | This should precede the more general strategies/policies function, and also include the decision to review and publish a Management Plan, in line with ss.89-90 of the CROW Act   | Decision to review, adopt or publish an AONB management plan for the Chilterns under ss.89-90 of the CROW Act 2000 (a 'key document' under article X).  |
| n) determination of a Board response on any proposals that affect the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or the Board, its powers, duties, functions and responsibilities, particularly, but not exclusively, from central, regional or local government, neighbouring authorities, partnerships and other external bodies, except where the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Chair, considers that such response should be determined by officers, or a standing committee or sub-committee | A matter is not "reserved" to the Board if it may be delegated to officers or committees – it's either reserved or not.<br>The purpose of this provision is to reserve to the Board responses to proposals that would change the extent or purposes of the National Landscape or the nature or purpose, functions or duties of the Board.<br>The "any proposals that affect" part could be minor planning applications, rights of way diversions, etc., some of which benefit from approved delegation to PlanCo. | Determination of a Board response on proposals that could amend the extent or purpose of the Chilterns National Landscape, or the nature, powers, duties, functions and responsibilities of the Chilterns Conservation Board.   |

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| o) determination of any matters where policy issues are relevant which have been referred for decision by any standing committee of the Board | This is covered under the Principles (and in legislation): any matter delegated to a Committee, sub-committee or officer may be referred back up the delegation chain. | Remove this function from the Board's reserved functions. |
|---|--|---|

**Appendix 2: Amendments to the Constitution in relation to dissolution of the HR Advisory Group**

23. All of the following amendments are to be made within the text as set out in section 2.2.2 (“the Code of Governance”) of the Constitution as approved in December 2024. The amendments, if approved, will be carried forward in parallel with any other amendments approved as a result of this paper.

| Existing article of section 2.2.2                   | Amendment  |
|---|--|
| 2.24 (“The Executive Committee”) (i)(h)             | Delete “The Executive Committee has appointed an HR Advisory Group in accordance with paragraph 3.9 to assist in this.”  |
| 2.25 (“The HR Advisory Group (amended 12/12/2023)”) | Delete whole article, including the heading, and sub-para (i) points (a)-(d).  |
| 2.26 (“The Appeals Sub-Committee”)                  | In sub-para (i)(a) delete “and by the HR Advisory Group if appropriate,”<br><br>Note that this whole article is proposed to be deleted in relation to Policy HR23. |



**Appendix 3: Amendments to the Constitution in relation to approval of policy HR23 “Appeals”**

24. All of the following amendments are to be made within the text as set out in section 2.2.2 (“the Code of Governance”) of the Constitution as approved in December 2024. The amendments, if approved, will be carried forward in parallel with any other amendments approved as a result of this paper.

| Existing article of section 2.2.2    | Amendment   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 2.24 (“The Executive Committee”) (i) | Delete the whole of sub-paragraph (i): “i). Provide members to sit on the appeals sub-committee as specified in paragraph 3.25.” and renumber subsequent sub-paragraphs. (Note that the reference to para 3.25 in that provision is an error – should be 2.26.) |
| 2.26 (“The Appeals Sub-Committee”)   | Delete the whole article, including the heading, and sub-para (i) points (a)-(b).<br><br>Note that sub-para (i)(a) is proposed to be partially amended in relation to the dissolution of HRAG.  |

**Item 2.3**                      **HR Policies**

**Author:**                      Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations and Lucy Dowson,  
Operational Effectiveness Support Officer

**Purpose of Report:**        To approve five HR policies

**Background**

- Throughout the 24/25 financial year, the Operations Team, with the support of the HR Advisory Group, has been reviewing and updating all the CCB's HR policies.
- The new policies have been presented to the Board for approval in tranches, including six in September, three in December 2024, seven in March 2025 and four in June 2025.
- The Health and Safety Statement of Intent was also approved by the Board in March 2025.
- HR policies that have been approved to date are:
  - Bullying and Harassment
  - Grievance
  - Disciplinary
  - Whistleblowing
  - Lone Working
  - Safeguarding
  - Health and Wellbeing
  - Anti-Bribery and Corruption
  - Recruitment
  - Confidentiality
  - Equity, Equality, Inclusion & Diversity
  - Annual Leave
  - Performance Management
  - Reward and Remuneration
  - Travel & Subsistence
  - Flexitime & Time off in Lieu
  - Health and Safety Statement of Intent, Arrangement and Roles & Responsibilities
  - Absence Management
  - Learning and Development
  - Redundancy
  - IT & Acceptable Use Policy

**Policies for Approval**

- We are seeking approval for the following five policies. Note that the policies are not included in this document. They are attached as a separate PDF in the covering e-mail.
  - Retirement
  - Flexible Working
  - Appeals
  - Bereavement & Compassionate Leave
  - Family Related Leave
- These are the last of the HR policies that were identified and agreed with the HR Advisory Group to draft, review and approve.

- Thank you to the HR Advisory Group for their time and valuable contributions throughout this process. Paul Mains, as Chair, has been instrumental in helping us move forward and complete this work.

### **Recommendation**

- 1. To APPROVE the five HR Policies identified in this document**

## Item 2.4 Revised EDI Ambition

**Author:** Annette Weiss, Head of Engagement & Partnerships

**Purpose of Report:** To share the revised Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Ambition Statement with the Board for consideration and approval.

### Background

The CCB is committed to putting EDI at the heart of its core values, and the Board approved our first EDI Ambition in March 2023. A lot has changed in that time, with the CCB delivering and supporting much more EDI focused work, staff/Board EDI training has been undertaken and substantial progress made on embedding EDI at a strategic and operational level.

We have been revising our EDI Ambition over the last few months, led by the EDI Task and Finish Group and with additional input from staff. We would now like to share this and seek formal approval from the Board.

Once approved, we intend to give our EDI Ambition much greater visibility on our website, and our Communications team is currently developing plans to do this.

The EDI Ambition Statement is set out below.

### Chilterns National Landscape – Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Ambition

The Chilterns National Landscape (CNL) is committed to ensuring that the natural beauty, culture, and health benefits of the Chilterns are available and accessible to everyone. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) are core to our values, our day-to-day work, and our strategic goals. This ambition statement outlines our commitment to embedding EDI throughout our operations, partnerships, and project delivery.

EDI must be integrated throughout our strategic framework, from the overarching Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan to our Vision and as a core work area and cross-cutting theme in our Delivery Plan.

**“We ensure that all voices are heard and respected, promoting equal access and opportunities for everyone to enjoy, participate in and contribute to the conservation, enhancement, understanding and enjoyment of the Chilterns.”**

*(Chilterns National Landscape Vision and Values 2025)*

### **Chilterns National Landscape Vision: The Chilterns for Everyone**

At the heart of our EDI ambition is our CNL organisational vision:

*A Chilterns National Landscape cared for forever and for everyone. A place where people are inspired by its distinctive natural beauty, space and tranquillity, to enjoy and care for the landscape. A place where natural beauty and cultural heritage is celebrated and enhanced. A place which gives space for nature to flourish, and which provides us with the ingredients for healthy living, such as clean water, healthy soils and thriving wildlife. A place where communities live, work and breathe. A haven for people and wildlife.*

We know that making this vision a reality takes ongoing effort, partnership, and openness to change. We have an EDI Task and Finish Group made up of staff and Board members

which has helped develop and refine this statement in collaboration with the wider CNL team and our partners.

This EDI Ambition Statement is both a commitment and a call to action - for our staff team, Board members, partners, and communities - to work together to ensure that the Chilterns truly is a landscape for everyone.

### **Why EDI Matters in the Chilterns**

National Landscapes were created for the benefit of the nation and have always been for everyone to enjoy. Yet research has consistently shown that certain groups face significant barriers to enjoying green spaces. A study by the University of Bedfordshire on how diverse communities engage with greenspaces and the countryside found that only 33% of participants in the Luton/Dunstable area visited greenspaces weekly, with older individuals, those facing various challenges, and people from minority ethnic backgrounds being the least frequent users.

Despite being surrounded by diverse urban centres – such as Luton, High Wycombe, Aylesbury, Chesham, Reading, and Dunstable - the current demographic of visitors to the Chilterns does not reflect this diversity. The people that could benefit most from the Chilterns landscape are those facing the greatest barriers and those who are the most disconnected.

We are working to change this. By proactively engaging underrepresented communities we can unlock new perspectives and encourage more people to experience, value and care for their local greenspaces and wider Chilterns countryside.

### **What we mean by EDI**

- **Equity** is about fairness, not uniformity. We are committed to recognising people's different needs and experiences and removing obstacles that prevent fully enjoying and benefiting from the Chilterns. This means treating everyone fairly regardless of their race, religion, socio-economic background, age, ability, sex, gender identity, sexuality, marital status or other [protected characteristic](#).
- **Diversity** is about recognising, respecting and celebrating each other's differences. A diverse environment is one that embraces and embeds people from a wide variety of backgrounds and mindsets and welcomes diverse voices.
- **Inclusion** is about cultivating a sense of belonging, where every individual feels respected, heard, and valued.

Together, equity, diversity and inclusion provide the foundation for a thriving, representative, and resilient Chilterns National Landscape.

### **Our Priority Audiences**

Given limited resources, we are prioritising communities where we can have the greatest impact. Our primary focus over the next two years 2025-2027 comprises the following (priorities and resources may change over time enabling us to address other groups in the future):

1. **Culturally and ethnically diverse communities**, especially in economically and socially disadvantaged urban areas surrounding the Chilterns including Luton/Dunstable, High Wycombe, Reading and Aylesbury. The proximity of the Chilterns countryside to highly populated and super-diverse communities is different

to many other National Landscapes. We are also the only National Landscape served by the London Tube network.

2. **Young people (under 25)**, particularly those who may thrive in outdoor learning environments, including neurodiverse individuals.
3. **Disabled people**, with a focus on improving access for those with mobility, sensory, and mental health challenges. A quarter of the population are disabled, with higher rates amongst culturally diverse communities and economically and socially challenged backgrounds. The Chilterns is home to national centres of excellence such as the Stoke Mandeville Paralympic Centre and the Centre for Outdoor Accessibility Training. This also sets us apart from other National Landscapes and has helped to drive our vision.

We recognise that other groups also face barriers to engagement, and we will continue to take advantage of opportunities to broaden participation wherever possible. Individual CNL projects may define their own audience priorities based on context and need.

In addition to the CNL's own work programme, the Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan 2025-29 has EDI embedded throughout and it is for all stakeholders and partners to deliver, with everyone playing their part.

### **Our Approach to EDI**

Our work seeks to reduce structural and systemic barriers - whether in our recruitment practices, HR policies, volunteering opportunities or public-facing initiatives. As an organisation, we are committed to ensuring that inclusion is a lived value across everything we do. We are delivering on our EDI ambition by:

- **Developing strategic partnerships across the Chilterns** to deliver the EDI ambitions in our CNL Management Plan. We are a small organisation but have a pivotal leadership role to play in producing and championing the CNL Management Plan. This means galvanising and supporting others to deliver. Developing, leading or supporting partnerships to help deliver our EDI ambitions is key to what we do and we work closely with many different delivery partners.
- **Improving representation** across our staff team and volunteers through open, transparent recruitment and inclusive workplace practices. The environment sector is one of the least diverse in terms of staff and leaders within the sector. We are taking active steps to diversify our recruitment.
- **EDI leadership.** We are not directly involved in the recruitment of Board members due to the way Board members are appointed, as set out in our Establishment Order. However, we actively encourage appointing authorities to consider EDI in their decision-making and encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds to put themselves forward. We have a Board member nominated as an EDI lead and Board members on our EDI Task & Finish Group, ensuring it is embedded at the highest level. EDI is also a standing item at Board meetings.
- **Embedding EDI in training and development**—ensuring our values translate into practice. We provided general EDI training on diversity and disability for the whole staff team and Board members in 2024 with additional bespoke training and support for on an on-going basis. EDI is a standing item at every other team meeting.

- **Reducing barriers** to participation through targeted outreach, inclusive project design, and collaboration with community organisations. We are increasingly developing co-created approaches, see examples below.
- **Commissioning research and piloting activity** to share learning, best practice and understanding of underserved audiences and promote opportunities for more inclusive engagement. See examples below which includes research into diversifying volunteering, youth engagement and barriers and enablers to accessing greenspaces. We play an important role in disseminating this research as widely as possible, with partners and others in the sector and nationally, including bringing stakeholders together through workshops and conferences.
- **Involving those with lived experience** in helping to shape our EDI approach and co-created projects. We have developed close links with experts in accessibility and inclusion such as [PHAB](#), and value being able to draw on their knowledge and lived experience for guidance, training and advice. We share this expertise with partners and stakeholders to encourage and support their EDI work.
- **Seek funding and resources** to help us deliver our EDI ambitions.

### **Examples of Our EDI Work: Progress on EDI 2024-2025**

See below examples of our EDI work over the last couple of years. Much of our EDI work is planned and delivered in partnership with others.

**Developing strategic partnership and projects in Luton and North Chilterns:** A major investment of staff time and resources including:

- Appointing a North Chilterns Engagement & Partnerships Officer. This 12-month post based in Luton, commenced in Nov 2024 to develop EDI projects and partnerships in the North Chilterns. We are now exploring funding opportunities to continue this work.
- Delivering [Nature Calling](#) in Luton, part of a £2m national arts programme designed to inspire new communities to connect with their local National Landscape. Working with communities in Luton, a Luton Henge community monument was co-created and built, providing a lasting legacy.
- We contributed to, and are a strategic partner, in the Luton Council-led Nature Towns & Cities bid "[Roots to Healthy Places](#)". This is a £1 million partnership project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project aims to improve access and connections to nature across our communities with a particular focus on those who have the greatest barriers to accessing our green spaces. It includes the recommendations from the Chalkscapes Access to Greenspace research, commissioned by the CNL, for delivering a Collaborative Targeted Outreach Programme.
- We have funded countryside access improvements in and around Luton and led stakeholder events to share learning and expertise on countryside access.

**Access for All:** Allocated over £300,000 of DEFRA Access Funding for inclusion-focused projects that improve countryside access and facilities. This included purchasing mobility vehicles, replacing stiles with accessible gates, improving path surfaces, producing countryside guides and digital information on accessible visiting. See [here](#) for examples of projects that the CNL has funded through the programme. Other CNL projects are contributing to our accessibility ambitions in many different ways, eg [Mend the Gap](#) is carrying out an access audit to review and improve local routes.

**Inclusive communications and greater visibility:** Enhancing our website and publications to better reflect and support inclusive messaging including [blogs](#) and case studies. This includes videos produced by diverse community groups which we have funded and which are helping to champion inclusive countryside visiting [see here](#).

**Commissioning and sharing EDI focused research** including:

- [Chalkscapes](#) research on the barriers and enablers to using greenspace by diverse communities. a Collaborative Targeted Outreach Programme.
- Youth engagement [research](#) on undeserved audiences in High Wycombe age 14-18 highlighting how nature and heritage organisations could better engage with young people in the future.
- Research on [diversifying citizen science volunteering](#) and on our flagship youth volunteering programme [New Shoots](#) to capture feedback and help adapt and co-create future programmes.

**Engaging young people:** we have delivered and supported a wider range of work:

- [Next Gen](#) is a heritage and nature-based partnership group led by CNL focused on encourage more young people to get involved in conservation and heritage activities. The Next Gen partners have been piloting some innovative approaches to working with young people.
- [Not Bourne Yesterday](#) is a NLHF development stage project, aiming to reconnect communities with their local chalk streams. The focus of NBY is on reaching diverse audiences including young people, with plans for traineeships.
- MtG is supporting schools in the programme area to engage with the local landscape with its [Landscape Literacy Project](#).
- [The Chilterns Chalk Streams Project](#) has been delivering a wide range of sessions for primary and secondary schools throughout the Chilterns, to deepen understanding and engagement with chalk streams.

**Updating our HR policies on EDI.** This has been a major area of work revising and updating a whole suite of HR policies relating to EDI. This included revisions to the core EDI Policy, as well as related policies on Bullying and Harassment, Anti-Bribery and Corruption, and Recruitment. EDI principles have been embedded throughout to support a fair and inclusive workplace, uphold high standards of conduct and foster a positive organisational culture.

**Embedding EDI in the Chilterns NL Management Plan 2025-2029.** The ambition and narrative around EDI were strengthened and embedded in the new Management Plan.

### **LOOKING AHEAD: CNL's Strategic EDI Objectives for 2025–26**

We have defined eight strategic EDI objectives to focus on for the coming year:

1. Approve and make visible our revised EDI policies. Raise awareness amongst staff and Board and incorporate into our induction and training programmes. Ensure the policies are aligned with and embedded in our work, and that our working practices match the policy aspirations.
2. Review EDI training and development needs for all staff and Board members, from induction onwards. Build on the diversity and disability training already provided over the last couple of years to increase knowledge and confidence. Share learning, resources and facilitate knowledge sharing with staff, Board members and partners.



3. Sign up for Disability Confident Scheme accreditation and aim for Employer (level 2) in 2025/26.
4. Support EDI engagement and partnership development in Luton and the North Chilterns through Nature Towns and Cities and through Luton Henge legacy opportunities.
5. Allocate 2025/26 Defra Access Funding (£429,000) to help develop and support EDI initiatives.
6. Clarify and communicate our strategy around EDI and engaging young people, sharing learnings and opportunities.
7. Develop our organisational approach to volunteering focused on citizen science and how we can make it more relevant and diverse.
8. Make our EDI Ambition Statement and aspirations more visible throughout our website and Comms, along with our CNL vision, mission and values.

### **Recommendations**

- 1. That the Board APPROVES the EDI Ambition Statement, subject to feedback provided at the meeting.**



# Chilterns National Landscape

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE of the Conservation Board for the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

**HELD ON Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2025 at The Meeting Room, Chilterns Conservation Board,  
90 Station Road, Chinnor OX39 4HA commencing at 11.00 AM.**

### Present:

|                       |                                   |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Cllr Hector Sants     | Board Member – Chair              |
| Sue Rowlands          | Board Member – online             |
| Cllr Charles Hussey   | Board Member                      |
| Cllr Louise Price     | Board Member                      |
| Cllr Richard Newcombe | Board Member                      |
| Cllr Phillip Spicer   | Board Member                      |
| Cllr John Griffin     | Board Member                      |
| John Nicholls         | Board Member – Chair of the Board |
| Richard Newcombe      | Board Member                      |

### In attendance:

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Elaine King      | Chief Executive Officer                                   |
| Andy Brock-Doyle | Head of Operations  |
| Graham Hurst     | Finance Officer   |
| Matt Thomson     | Head of Strategy & Planning and Deputy Monitoring Officer |
| Lorna Coldwell   | Clerk to the Board and Minute taker                       |
| Kathryn Foster   | Senior Finance Manager                                    |
| Kate Heppell     | Head of Landscape   |
| Annette Weiss    | Head of Engagement and Partnerships - online              |

The Chair welcomed all present.

### **24/25.52 Standing Items**

#### **52.1 Apologies for absence**

Paul Mains – Secretary of State.

#### **52.2 Declarations of interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

#### **52.3 Chair's Announcements**

No announcements from the Chair.

Cllr Richard Newcombe advised that, as he is not standing for re-election at Buckinghamshire Council, he will therefore be replaced after its Annual General Meeting.

Cllr Louise Price has been elected to Hertfordshire County Council and remains appointed to the Board by Three Rivers District Council.

## CCB Executive Committee Meeting

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2025**52.4 Notice of Urgent Business**

None.

**52.5 Approval of Minutes of the previous meeting 24/02/25**

The minutes of the meeting 24/02/25 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

The Chair of the Board asked if papers can be presented to the next Executive Committee relating to minute 48.2, recommendation to identify any further functions to be performed by the Executive Committee.

**52.6 Matters Arising**

All items covered on the agenda.

**52.7 Consideration of Motions Submitted by Members**

None at this meeting.

**52.8 Public Questions**

No members of the public were present.

**24/25.53 Items for Decision****53.1 Reserves Policy**

The Senior Finance Manager, Kathryn Foster, advised that there is currently a brief Reserves Policy set out in the Constitution and that it would be useful to have a more comprehensive policy to be included in the new Financial Regulations, which are being drafted. Based on assessments that have been carried out, it is proposed that an overall Unrestricted Reserves comprises a new consolidated General Reserve of £338k (combining the current General Reserve and Revenue Reserve) and a separate Development Reserve of £258k.

- 1. The Executive Committee APPROVED the proposed new framework for the Reserves Policy and that this be incorporated into the Financial Regulations being updated as part of the review of the Constitution**
- 2. The Executive Committee APPROVED the consolidation of reserves into General Reserve for recommendations to the Board.**

**53.2 2025/26 Budget**

The Senior Finance Manager, Kathryn Foster, had provided a paper to set out the proposed final 2025-26 Core Budget. This budget envelope shows a £97k deficit for 2025-26 and proposes to use the current 2024-25 year surplus, estimated to be £111k, to fund the deficit. The anticipated position after two years is a surplus of £14k and relieves pressure on reserves to fund the deficit. The guidance from Defra on the use of the allocated £348k Capital (CDEL) funds is being assessed. There is still uncertainty over how those funds will be used. It is hoped that the forthcoming three-year settlement from Defra will make future budget setting easier going forward.

- 1. The Executive Committee APPROVED the final 2025/26 Budget for recommendation to the Board**
- 2. The Executive Committee APPROVED the use of reserves towards the organisational transformation work that are not deemed to be eligible for Defra CDEL funding for recommendation to the Board.**

**53.3 Financial Approvals**

## CCB Executive Committee Meeting

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2025

The Senior Finance Manager, Kathryn Foster, had provided a paper detailing the need to make changes to the Financial Approvals. This is an interim measure whilst the Constitution review and updating of Financial Regulations is being undertaken. The increased limits proposed better reflect inflationary costs and the current economic reality, making the approval of payments more efficient.

- 1. The Executive Committee APPROVED the changes to Financial Approvals effective from 01/04/25 for recommendation to the Board.**
- 2. The Executive Committee NOTED that these changes will be incorporated into the Financial Regulations as part of the updated Constitution**

#### **53.4 Local Authority Engagement Advisory Group**

The Chair of the Board, John Nicholls, proposed to establish an informal working group to address working relations with Local Authorities within the Chilterns National Landscape. The group would meet infrequently to discuss items set out in his paper, including how to improve the relationship between the organisation and Local Authorities. Board members Cllr Richard Newcombe, Gemma Harper, Cllr Louise Price, and Cllr Hector Sants have volunteered to take part in the working group, which will also involve the CEO Elaine King and the Senior Finance Manager, Kathryn Foster. Similar work with town and parish councils would be conducted later.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer, Matt Thomson, advised that it would be prudent to co-opt Cllr Newcombe to the Executive Committee when he ceases to be a Board member, which will be addressed before the next meeting.

- 1. The Executive Committee APPROVED the establishing of a group and IDENTIFIED participants**

#### **53.5 Exclusion of the Public and Press**

The Head of Strategy & Planning and Deputy Monitoring Officer, Matt Thomson, advised that the procedure for a confidential session is being reviewed to enable a proportionate approach. As there were no members of the public present, it was proposed to leave the video and sound of the Zoom call enabled, which was unanimously agreed. The call is not recorded. It was resolved to exclude the public, of which there were none present.

- 1. The Executive Committee APPROVED the motion to exclude any members of the public and press**

#### **53.6 Natural England's Boundary Review project (confidential paper)**

This agenda item was discussed in closed session because, while Natural England had advised the CCB's Chief Executive in April that it would be cancelling its Chilterns Boundary Review project, the announcement was not expected to be made public until after the Executive Committee meeting. The paper sought to inform the Committee, advise it on current and planned actions and seeking observations and advice from the Committee.

The Committee expressed its significant concern at the cancellation of the work, not least due to the lost opportunities and the significant investment of time and resources by the Chilterns National Landscape team and various stakeholders already expended on the project. Members questioned whether the decision was connected to the government's apparent drive for economic growth at all costs.

## CCB Executive Committee Meeting

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2025

The CCB's CEO and Chair have written to Natural England's CEO to make clear the CCB's deep disappointment at the decision and to request assurances that the review can be resumed in the future.

Further actions include drafting a statement for publication at the time Natural England announces its decision, outlining the CCB's concerns and highlighting the potential environmental implications of this decision. The CEO will also prepare a paper for the next Executive Committee meeting, with an update and next steps.

### 1. The Executive Committee NOTED the paper and its contents in closed session

*Update: Natural England announced its decision on 9<sup>th</sup> May. The CCB responded with a [statement](#) published on its website and circulated to key stakeholders and partners, including MPs and local authorities. The CCB is now able to publish the confidential paper, and this is included in an updated set of papers for this Executive Committee meeting, posted [here](#) on the CCB's website.*

## 24/25.54 Items for Noting/Information

### 54.1. Quarter 4 Finance Report

The Senior Finance Manager, Kathryn Foster, reported on the accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

Core profit was £111k for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, against a budgeted surplus of £10k. This is mainly due to better than anticipated interest income which will continue next financial year, lower planning consultancy costs, and legal contract review being deferred into financial year 2025-26.

An additional £114k capital funds were received from Defra for 2024-25. These monies have been spent on Core and Project activities, including a drone, water monitoring equipment and IT investments. Project income is £3.277m, costs are £3.572m and there is a deficit on projects of £295k overall.

The year-end review and reconciliation work are being undertaken.

### 1. The Committee NOTED the financial position as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025

### 54.2. Quarter 4 Delivery Report

The Head of Operations, Andy Brock-Doyle, had circulated a paper to update the Executive Committee on the progress of the Chilterns National Landscape team between January and March 2025 against the financial year 2024-25 Delivery Plan. In Q4 (January-March 2025):

- 51 (49 in Q3) delivery lines reported as completed or progressing on track (51) (50%)
- 24 (29 in Q3) delivery lines reported as being slightly delayed / slightly limited in effectiveness (23%)
- 13 (15 in Q3) delivery lines reported as being significantly delayed / significantly limited in effectiveness (13%)
- 15 (9 in Q3) delivery lines have been postponed for reconsidering in FY25-26 planning (15%)

### 1. The Committee NOTED the Q4 Delivery report

### 54.3. Funding Strategy

The Executive Committee was provided with a paper detailing the progress on delivering the Funding Strategy by Elaine King, Chief Executive Officer, which was taken as read. Whilst overall funding from Defra has increased this year, revenue funding has declined in real terms because of inflation, increases to employer National Insurance contributions, and new requirements being placed on

National Landscapes by the government. The three-year settlement from Defra is expected in June/July. The CCB continues to press Defra to recognise the additional funding challenges of conservation boards, and to contribute its views on a fairer funding formula.

The CEO and members if the team are also actively exploring, with some success, securing funds from other sources. She gave thanks to the team for their efforts.

1. The Committee NOTED the Funding Strategy update

54.4. Chief Executive Officer’s Update

A comprehensive paper was circulated by the CEO, which was taken as read with highlights including:

- The SLT continue to oversee the organisation’s activities, planning, monitoring, and delivering across a wide range of areas.
- The public consultation for the Nature Recovery Plan will commence on 6<sup>th</sup> May.
- Support has been given to Defra in the recruitment campaign for new Secretary of State Board members, including ensuring succession planning amongst Board members.
- Final adjustments are being made to the Management Plan refresh, the final version of which will be taken to the next Board meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> June.
- Collaboration with the National Landscapes Association and other Protected Landscapes continues on a range of areas including funding arrangements, implementing Defra’s biodiversity targets, responding to the draft Land Use Framework and implementing s85 of the CRoW Act (as amended by s245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act).
- Following up on the staff engagement survey including establishing two focus groups, one on IT and Information Management, the other on improving the office environment. Work on the latter has included replacing the outside footpath, improving external lighting, purchasing new equipment and improving the office environment for staff, such as standing desks and new kitchen items.

1. The Committee NOTED the CEO’s update

24/25.55 Any Urgent Business

None, all items covered in the agenda.

Cllr John Griffin wished to flag that, whilst on the Risk Assessment already, cyber security is a big topic currently in the media. The Head of Operations, Andy Brock-Doyle, confirmed that information management is being addressed, including conversations with the CCB’s IT provider, who are happy with the current system in place.

24/25.56. Next Executive Committee meeting

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2025 at 10am.

Further meeting Dates:

| Planning Committee | Executive Committee | Board  |
|--------------------|---------------------|--|
|                    |                     | Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup> June, 10am<br>Location tbc |

CCB Executive Committee Meeting

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2025

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
|   | Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> September, 10am<br>Chinnor Village Centre  | Thursday 25 <sup>th</sup> September,<br>10am Gateway Offices,<br>Buckinghamshire Council,<br>Aylesbury |
| Thursday 23 <sup>rd</sup> October, 10am<br>Chinnor Office | Thursday 13 <sup>th</sup> November,<br>10am Chinnor Village Centre | Thursday 11 <sup>th</sup> December,<br>10am Gateway Offices,<br>Buckinghamshire Council,<br>Aylesbury  |

The meeting was closed at 12.52.

The Chair.....

Date.....