



Chilterns National Landscape

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

Executive Committee

On Thursday 26th February 2026 at 10.00am at

Chinnor Village Centre, High St, Chinnor OX39 4DH

and by remote video conferencing.

Voting (Executive Committee) members are encouraged to attend in person to ensure the meeting is quorate; voting is not permitted for remote attendees. Remote access will be available for non-voting members.

The online session will be available from 9.45am

AGENDA

1. Standing Items

- 1.1 Apologies for absence
- 1.2 Declaration of interest in any of the agenda items
- 1.3 Chair's announcements
- 1.4 Notice of urgent business
- 1.5 Approval of minutes of the previous meeting (13th November 2025)
- 1.6 Matters arising
- 1.7 Consideration of motions submitted by members
- 1.8 Public questions

2. Items for Decision

- 2.1 Quarter 3 Finance Report
- 2.2 Quarter 3 Delivery Report
- 2.3 2026/27 Budget Envelope
- 2.4 Job Grading Framework

3. Items for Noting / Information

- 3.1 Annual Planning
- 3.2 Strategic and Operational Planning Cycles (verbal update)
- 3.3 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Update
- 3.4 Funding Report
- 3.5 Chief Executive Officer's Report

4. Any Urgent Business

5. **Next Meeting:** 19th May 2026

Dr Elaine King, CEO

Future Meeting Dates 2026

Planning Committee	Executive Committee	Board
Thursday 22 nd January 2026 10am CCB Offices, Chinnor	Thursday 26 th February 2026, 10am, The Village Centre Chinnor	Thursday 26 th March 2026 10am Venue tbc
Thursday 30 th April 2026 10am CCB Offices, Chinnor	Tuesday 19 th May 2026 10am, The Village Centre Chinnor	Thursday 26 th June 2026 (including AGM) 10am Venue tbc
No meeting	Tuesday 1 st September 2026 10am, The Village Centre Chinnor	Thursday 1 st October 2026 10am Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury
Thursday 29 th October 10am CCB Offices, Chinnor	Thursday 19 th November 2026 10am, The Village Centre Chinnor	Thursday 10 th December 2026 10am Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury

Summary of Actions Required

Agenda No	Agenda Item	Actions Required
1	Standing Items	
1.1	Apologies for absence	
1.2	Declaration of interest in any of the agenda items	
1.3	Chair's announcements	
1.4	Notice of urgent business	
1.5	Approve minutes of the previous meeting (13 th November 2025)	APPROVE
1.6	Matters arising	
1.7	Consideration of motions submitted by members	
1.8	Public questions	
2	Items for Decision	
2.1	Quarter 3 Finance Report	APPROVE
2.2	Quarter 3 Delivery Report	APPROVE
2.3	2026/27 Budget Envelope	APPROVE
2.4	Job Grading Framework	APPROVE
3	Items for Noting / Information	
3.1	Annual Planning	NOTE
3.2	Strategic and Operational Planning Cycles	NOTE
3.3	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Update	NOTE

3.4	Funding Report	
3.5	Chief Executive Officer's Report	
4	Any Urgent Business	
5	Next Meeting: 19 th May 2026	

CCB Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday 13th November 2025

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 Thursday 13th November 2025 at The Village Centre, High Street, Chinnor OX39 4DH
commencing at 10.10 AM.**

Present:

Cllr Hector Sants	Board Member – Chair
Cllr Philip Spicer	Board Member
Cllr Charles Hussey	Board Member
Cllr Louise Price	Board Member
Cllr John Griffin	Board Member
Cllr Gavin Mclauchlan	Board Member
Cllr Martin Tett	Board Member
Matthew Stanton	Board Member

In attendance:

Elaine King	Chief Executive Officer
Andy Brock-Doyle	Head of Operations
Graham Hurst	Finance Officer (s151 Officer)
Matt Thomson	Head of Strategy and Planning; Deputy Monitoring Officer
Lorna Coldwell	Clerk to the Board and Minute taker
Kathryn Foster	Senior Finance Manager
Kate Heppell	Head of Landscape

25/26.6 Standing Items

6.1 Apologies for absence

Board Members:

Baljit Dhillon

Nicola Thomas

Officers:

None

Guests:

Richard Newcombe

6.2 Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

6.3 Chair's Announcements

The Chair welcomed new members to the Executive Committee, and everyone introduced themselves. Cllr Griffin volunteered to be Vice-Chair, he was proposed by Cllr Sants, seconded by Cllr Mclauchlan, and duly appointed.

CCB Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday 13th November 2025**6.4 Notice of Urgent Business**

Cllr Griffin raised the role of the Executive Committee following the Board approving at the September Board meeting that the HR Advisory Group ceases to operate. This item will be added to the next Executive Committee agenda.

Elaine King, CEO raised the role of the Monitoring Officer and S151 Officer for discussion should there be time.

6.5 Approval of Minutes of the previous meeting 09/09/25

The minutes of the meeting 09/09/25 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

6.6 Matters Arising

All items covered on the agenda.

6.7 Consideration of Motions Submitted by Members

None at this meeting.

6.8 Public Questions

No members of the public were present.

25/26.7 Items for Decision**7.1 Quarter 2 Finance Report**

The Senior Finance Manager, Kathryn Foster, reported on the accounts to 30th September 2025.

1. There is a Core deficit of £39k for the year to 30th September 2025, against a budgeted deficit of £68k for the same period. Income exceeded budget forecasting due higher than budgeted interest from various bank accounts. The forecast is in line with the budget deficit. However, some costs may need to be carried forward to next year due to timings and therefore included in next year's budget.
2. Defra allocated £348k of Capital Funds for the financial year 25/26. 100% of these funds have now been drawn down. Understanding the complexity of permitted spending has taken a lot of Officer time but progress has now been made regarding the interpretation of its use. CDEL is being used to fund our rent as a capital five-year lease. We are awaiting assurances from Defra on how we ensure these funds are ringfenced for us in future years. CDEL funds cannot be 'top sliced' to cover staff costs.
3. Three of the Local Authorities do not make their full financial contribution, leaving a shortfall of £30k. Work is being carried out to ensure LAs understand the work the organisation carries out and that it was created at the request of its LAs. The National Landscapes Association is also advocating for Defra to develop a clear funding formula. The Local Authority Task and Finish Group met recently and agreed actions to support Officers engaging with Local Authorities.
4. Project income is £1326k, costs are £804k and there is a surplus on projects of £522k overall. This surplus arises due to timings of funding received in advance and will be spent by year end.
5. The AGAR has been signed off by the external auditor PKF Littlejohn, and the completed paperwork is available on the Chilterns National Landscape website.
6. The VAT review being undertaken has highlighted that the organisation may be able to recover VAT payments under Section 33 of the VAT Act. and eligibility continues to be investigated. The current legislation results in National Parks and National Landscapes hosted by a Local Authority being able to claim refunds of VAT , but Conservation Boards cannot We are investigating formal application to the Treasury for CCB to be eligible for VAT refunds but will first seek the views of the National Landscapes Association and Defra.

It is planned to provide a "break even" budget for financial year 26/27, and a budget envelope will be provided for the Executive Committee at the February meeting. Cllr Tett commented his surprise that

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Thursday 13th November 2025

only a one-year budget is provided, given that several projects run over multiple years. Projects are self-funded and therefore separate from core activities which are funded by Defra and Local Authority contributions and are mainly salaries.

Elaine King, the CEO clarified that the Committee agreed this approach, given capacity issues before the Senior Finance Manager joined and the lack of visibility of our income from Defra one year to the next, making budgeting a challenging process. The recently implemented Reserves Policy provides clarity around earmarked reserves and will be forwarded to Committee members. Project reserves are strictly for those projects and cannot be used elsewhere.

The CCB pays £7k per annum for our premises in business rates to SODC. We are investigating an application for full exemption from rates as a not-for-profit organisation as we understand the Cotswold Conservation Board have been successful in obtaining this exemption in the past.

1. The Committee OFFERED FEEDBACK and NOTED the Q2 Finance report

Cllr Price arrived at 10.21.

7.2. Quarter 2 Delivery Report

The Head of Operations, Andy Brock-Doyle had provided a paper to update the Executive Committee on the progress of the CCB team between July and September 2025 against the financial year 2025-26 Delivery Plan. In Q2 (July – September 2025):

- 44 (52 in Q1) delivery lines reported as completed or progressing on track (53)
- 35 (26 in Q1) delivery lines reported as being slightly delayed / slightly limited in effectiveness
- 19 (13 in Q1) delivery lines reported as being significantly delayed / significantly limited in effectiveness
- 6 (15 in Q1) delivery lines have not yet started
- 3(2 in Q1) delivery lines have been postponed or cancelled

Capacity remains an issue. While work was carried out last year to carefully allocate resources, but it is still proving difficult to progress and complete some work, such as the transformation programme. The Senior Leadership Team is scrutinising the delivery plan with a view to delaying items until next year. This will show in reporting on the following quarters. Some work cannot be delayed without an impact on other projects, and some are behind schedule due to external factors. It was agreed to include a narrative in future reporting to identify the cause of delays, along with an assessment of risk where delivery is postponed or cancelled. The “Key Achievements” section is a new element to the quarterly reporting, to give a more balanced view of not only areas delayed but also achievements, of which there are many.

1. The Committee OFFERED FEEDBACK and NOTED the Q2 Delivery report

7.3. Annual Planning 2026-27

The Executive Committee was provided with a paper by Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations as an update on the Annual Planning cycle taking place between October 2025 and March 2026 for the next financial year. Annual planning is carried out through five workstreams and there is no plan to alter this. The key principles for annual planning this year were set out in the paper. include:

- Increasing ownership of the annual business plan across the team to improve the way that it is used throughout the year to improve monitoring and critical management decisions
- Increasing the transparency between programme and project plans and the annual business plan
- Increasing the transparency and links between the annual business plan and 5-year strategic planning
- Increasing line of sight for managers about what input will be required of them in terms of inputs into the planning cycle required from managers including time required of them
- Linking both the staff engagement survey and team development into the development of the annual

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business plan

- Expanding the annual business plan to incorporate and reflect risks and the risk register more closely
- Increasing the efficiency of the annual planning process to that the plan can be completed on time
- Ensuring that there is enough time in the planning cycle to ensure that there can be a focus on addressing the deliverability of the plan during the planning process rather than acting retrospectively

Cllr Sants requested that the Executive Committee have sight of the draft plan to influence prioritisation and understand any questions around deliverability, before being presented with a finished plan for approval to the Board.

1. The Committee OFFERED FEEDBACK and NOTED the Annual Planning 2026-27

Cllr Sants left the meeting at 11.38 and Cllr Griffin took over as Chair.

7.4. Funding Report

A comprehensive report from the CEO was circulated and taken as read. It was noted that Officers and staff are currently operating within a climate of financial uncertainty and are developing a funding strategy for the next financial year, aligned with the Annual Planning cycle. Defra has indicated that further information regarding the Core Revenue Grant will be available in early 2026. Staff are required to complete a mandate form when seeking to apply for external funding. These are reviewed and approved by the Senior Leadership Team to avoid a scattergun approach, manage risk and ensure alignment with strategic priorities. This can be challenging when there is a short window to apply for government funding.

1. The Committee OFFERED FEEDBACK and NOTED the CEO's update

Cllr Spicer left the meeting at 12.07.

7.5 Committee Dates in 2026

Thursday 26th February

Tuesday 19th May

Tuesday 1st September

Thursday 19th November

It was noted that whilst all dates may not work for all individual Committee members, dates were organised to reflect quarterly reporting and to work alongside Board meeting dates.

1. The Committee APPROVED the dates for the Executive Committee meetings in 2026

7.6 Chief Executive Officer's Report

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

- The SLT continues to take oversight of the organisation's activities, meeting weekly to plan, monitor, and deliver across a range of areas. A key focus of attention has continued to be on ongoing budgeting and business planning.
- New Board members inductions have been conducted and there is a full complement of Secretary of State appointees.
- A working group to raise awareness and visibility of the Chilterns Management Plan and the s85 Duty amongst our local authorities has been convened.
- Collaboration with other National Landscapes and the National Landscapes Association continues, with all parties trying to raise awareness of challenges, especially regarding funding, to MPs and central Government as well as liaising with Defra officials on several areas including governance, legislative changes and funding.

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The Chair thanked the CEO for putting together the report.

1. The Committee OFFERED FEEBACK and NOTED the CEO's update

25/26.8 Any Urgent Business

Due to time constraints, the CEO will bring a paper to the Board on the role of the Monitoring Officer and S151 Officer at its December meeting.

25/26.9 Next Executive Committee meeting

Thursday 26th February 2026 at 10am, at The Village Centre, Chinnor.

Further meeting Dates:

Planning Committee	Executive Committee	Board
		Thursday 11 th December, 10am Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury
Thursday 22 nd January 2026 10am CCB Offices, Chinnor	Thursday 26 th February 2026, 10am, The Village Centre Chinnor	Thursday 26 th March 2026 10am Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury
Thursday 30 th April 2026 10am CCB Offices, Chinnor	Tuesday 19 th May 2026 10am, The Village Centre Chinnor	Thursday 26 th June 2026 (including AGM) 10am Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury
No meeting	Tuesday 1 st September 2026 10am, The Village Centre Chinnor	Thursday 1 st October 206 10am Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury
Thursday 29 th October 10am CCB Offices, Chinnor	Thursday 19 th November 2026 10am, The Village Centre Chinnor	Thursday 10 th December 2026 10am Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury

The meeting was closed at 12.15.

The Chair.....

Date.....

Item 2.1**Quarter 3 Finance Report****Author:**

Kathryn Foster, Senior Finance Manager

Purpose:

To provide the Executive Committee with a Finance Report for Quarter 3 to 31 December 2025

1. Management Accounts to 31 December 2025**1.1 Core Financial Results for the 9 months 01 April 2025 – 31 December 2025**

Appendix 1 shows the full detailed Core performance versus budget for the nine months to 31 December 2025 along with our budget year to date.

As part of our half year review, we completed a full year reforecast for our Core cost areas. This is included in the report alongside our full year budget figures. We have updated this forecast now to the end of March based on the nine months to December and latest information.

CORE	Year to Date Actuals	Latest Full Year forecast (9+3)	Full Year forecast (6+6)	Original Budget	Full Year Forecast v Budget Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Defra Income	411	587	603	633	(45)
Local Authority income	97	129	129	129	-
Other Income	186	251	239	219	32
TOTAL Income	694	969	971	981	(13)
Staff costs	547	713	728	809	96
Office costs	50	66	68	66	-
Governance costs	23	30	26	19	(11)
Communications costs	12	18	20	20	2
Telecoms & IT costs	20	27	26	24	(3)
Other costs	94	179	219	161	(18)
TOTAL COSTS	746	1034	1,087	1,099	66
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(52)	(66)	(116)	(118)	53

See comments in Appendix 1 regarding the main budget variances along with year-to-date budget figures.

The CCB shows a Core deficit of **£52k** for the nine months to 31 December 2025. We are now forecasting a **full year deficit of £66k** which is a significant improvement on our original budget deficit of £118k. This is due to a combination of better than anticipated interest income £28k and net cost savings (savings on staffing of £56k offset against overspends on other costs (consultancy) of £18k and governance costs of £11k.

Our original Budget included £80k of transformation costs which we assumed would be funded either by CDEL or from reserves, depending on which elements were deemed eligible under the CDEL funding criteria. We have been able to recover some of these

costs against CDEL (our SharePoint IT project at £20k). The balance of these transformation costs for the full year is forecast to be £40k. These costs are included in full in the deficit predicted of £66k. If we remove these costs (which are one off) our **forecast deficit for the year reduces to £26k**.

1.2 Defra Capital Funds (CDEL)

The CCB was allocated **£348k** of Capital Funds by Defra for the financial year 25/26. We have now drawn down 100% of these funds, with a small amount yet to be allocated (see below).

Defra has confirmed that long term leases, such as our office tenancy, can be treated as capital, and we have released CDEL funds in our accounts equivalent to our rent paid to date. For the year, a total of £21k of rental costs will be covered by CDEL funds. The remaining 4.5 years of costs for our five-year office lease (commenced 1 Oct 2025) will be funded by this year's CDEL. Defra has now shared a Change Control Notice (CCN) funding agreement with us confirming these funds are ringfenced for us in future years.

In addition, because we must use current year CDEL to fund the capital lease, we are required to return that element of the funds which equates to £105,750. We have factored in the guaranteed annual CDEL release of £23,500 against our rent in 26/27 budget.

Of the remaining CDEL funds, £20k is earmarked for our IT Transformation Project (£9.5k spent to date), £23k for the Climate Adaptation plan, £5k for Fire Safety equipment, £5k for our GIS Project and £140k for 30x30 nature recovery projects either being internally delivered or via partners including the Chilterns Society and the North Chilterns Partnership.

The small remaining balance on our CDEL allocation is £25k and we are currently exploring options to allocate core costs to this CDEL funding from areas such as website development, our Risk Assessor platform and climate adaptation work. If we conclude that the costs can be allocated to CDEL funding, this will further reduce our deficit for 25/26.

1.3 Local Authority Contributions

All our local authorities have now made their full contributions to the CCB for this financial year, with Buckinghamshire, Central Bedfordshire and Luton contributing less than required. We have calculated the inward investment that the CCB brings to these three Local Authority areas - such as through project funding, the Access for All programme and the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme - to demonstrate our value and it far exceeds the contributions that they are required to make to the CCB.

Buckinghamshire Council is supportive of the CCB but has advised that it is unable to increase contributions due to budget restrictions. It has also indicated that contributions for 26/27 will almost certainly be less.

The CCB's CEO met with Luton Council's CEO in November, with a follow up meeting with a council Director scheduled for the end of February.

No response has been received from Central Bedfordshire Council, despite repeated requests for a meeting. On this basis we have now invoiced their standard minimum contribution to ensure there is no risk to these funds.

See Funding Report (item 2.5) for more detail.

1.4 Projects

Appendix 2 shows the overall CCB position as at 31 December 2025. Project income is **£1,575k**, costs are **£1,497k** and there is a surplus on projects of **£78k** overall. This surplus arises due to timings ie £269k of Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL), £327k of Access for All and £380k of Thames Water funding have been received in advance this year and will be spent by 31 March 2026 (with a skewed proportion of spend being in March 2026).

2. Balance sheet and Treasury Management

Appendix 3 shows the latest balance sheet as at 31 December. It includes a breakdown of Projects and Core reserves and highlights our minimum General Reserves as calculated on 31 March 2025 of £388k. Total reserves (General and Development) as at 31 December are £685k.

As at 5 February we held cash balances of **£4.94m** with **£4m** of these funds held in higher interest earning accounts (and the remaining **£839k** earning interest at 1.42% instant access). We are using a mix of 95 Day (Nationwide) and Money market (1-3 months) (HSBC) accounts to achieve better interest on our surplus funds. Inevitably, as the funds we have received in advance (Thames Water, Mend the Gap, Defra FIPL and Core/CDEL) are spent, the opportunities to earn interest will diminish. We do have the Mending the Misbourne funds of £1m due in advance and will be transferring the bulk of this to our Nationwide account to ensure interest is maximised.

Note our due diligence checks by Nationwide have now been concluded. We are looking to move further funds now to Nationwide as they offer the best interest rates (6-month rate is 3.7% versus 2.88% with HSBC). Nationwide do not offer new accounts currently, pending their takeover of Virgin money. This change should be complete by April 2026, and we hope to then open another account with them and so benefit from different notice periods.

3. VAT review

Our VAT review of income by Azets Accountants is now complete and the report is at **Appendix 4**. This work was commissioned due to concerns that some of our new activities may be deemed to be business activities for VAT purposes.

Azets reviewed our current and potential future income sources and have provided guidance on this. The majority of CCB income is funding and grants in nature where the payment is freely given with no benefit expected in return. However, any consultancy where services are being provided is deemed to be business income and would count towards the VAT registration threshold in making an assessment.

The report has been shared with staff, and we will continue to carefully monitor the levels of any business income with reference to the VAT registration threshold of £90k. Note that the report refers to the potential advisory work in the Lottery-funded Landscape Connections project, which is via a partnership agreement. On further review by Azets this been deemed non-VATable).

The CCB is not registered for VAT and, unlike other National Landscapes, who are not Conservation Boards and are hosted by a local authority, we are not eligible to claim

VAT refunds on our non-business activities (VAT Preferential status under Section 33 of the VAT Act 1994). This means that most of our non-staff costs are effectively 20% higher than other National Landscapes and National Parks. The CCB's CEO has raised this issue with Defra. Our VAT review with Azets also highlighted that we should seek to investigate our eligibility again for Section 33 refunds. We have always understood that to be eligible we must meet the following criteria:

- Undertake a function ordinarily carried out by local government and
- Have the power to draw funding directly from local taxation.

However, on reviewing Section 22 (3) K of the Act, it is apparent that the Treasury has the power to admit bodies to the refund scheme, and it appears that several bodies who do not meet the criteria have been admitted. Examples are water companies, Transport for London and the BBC.

We are currently completing the VAT 33 refund scheme application form for submission to HMRC and are liaising with the National Landscapes Association and Defra to seek guidance and keep them informed of our intentions. As part of the application, we must forecast VAT recovery for the next five years across Core and Projects, which is complex. We predict that irrecoverable VAT is at least £50k annually for the CCB and VAT 33 refunds would most benefit our projects as they tend to have more VATable costs (eg river restoration works, professional fees).

4. Buckinghamshire Council Pension Triennial valuation

The valuation was conducted as at 31 March 2025 – see **Appendix 5**. Our current employer contribution rate is 20.9% and, following the actuarial valuation, a reduction in contribution rates to 16.3% is recommended for the period 1 April 2027-31 March 2029. This reduction will be confirmed by 31 March 2026 and is the result of a funding surplus for CCB's share of the scheme. We estimate for the year ended 31 March 2027 this saves £25k across core staff salaries and £25k across projects.

5. Business Rates

We have applied for full exemption for business rates to South Oxfordshire District Council. Our annual rates are £7,135 which incorporate the small business discount of 15%. We will wait to hear if we are successful. Note SODC are contributing the full £11,137 to us for 25/26 as their local authority contribution.

6. Bank Mandate changes - HSBC

Our current bank signatories are:

Elaine King
Graham Hurst
John Nichols
Lynne Cordice
Kathryn Foster

Lynne Cordice is retiring on 10th April and to ensure a smooth handover we need to add **Laura Baker our Administrator onto our Mandate**. Laura will be taking over payroll and payments. In addition, we need to now remove former Chair and Board member John Nichols as a signatory. We propose not to add Board members to our mandate in the future. As per our financial approvals, our Chair or Vice Chair are required to approve any Purchase order or invoices for payments over £50,000.

Recommendations

1. To **APPROVE** the proposed changes to bank mandates
2. To **NOTE** and **PROVIDE FEEDBACK** on the CCB financial reports as of 31 December 2025, the full year forecast to 31 March 2026 and other finance updates.

APPENDIX 1

Budget Variance

Core is Communications, Corporate Services, Engagement & Partnerships, Landscapes, Strategy & Planning.

Account	Year to date Actual	Year to date Budget	Full Year Forecast (9+3)	Full Year Budget	Variance v budget	Comments
Trading Income	£	£	£	£	£	
Defra Income						
Defra Core Grant	385,422	385,425	513,899	513,900	(1)	
Defra Capital Grant	25,447	64,626	74,000	120,002	(46,002)	Actuals represents rent YTD which we are releasing CDEL against £15,125 and IT project costs to date. Forecast assumed CDEL used to fund full year rent (£21k) the Climate Adaptation plan £23k and further IT project costs to £20k plus several other Core Projects
Total Defra Income	410,868	450,051	587,899	633,902	(46,003)	
Other income						
Local Authority Contribution	97,250	97,245	129,670	129,660	10	In line with budget expectations, no success on increasing LA contributions inspite of concerted efforts
Project Income	23,159	25,875	35,034	34,500	534	This is FDRI and HS2 AP project income
Interest Income	44,876	18,747	53,876	24,996	28,880	Higher than anticipated cash balances still held (spend very end loaded for FIPL, CDEL, SWC) FIPL recovery for Core staff costs included in Q3, forecast Q4 so timing only (£11.5k) incs CNL Access time in FY forecast (year end adjustment)
Internal Fee Income	117,391	105,608	161,680	158,082	3,598	
Sale of merchandise	298	0	400	0	400	
Total Other income	282,974	247,475	380,660	347,238	33,422	
Total Trading Income	693,842	697,526	968,559	981,140	(12,581)	
Gross Surplus	693,842	697,526	968,559	981,140	(12,581)	
Operating Expenses						
Staff costs						
Salaries	403,608	447,606	523,457	592,035	68,578	
Employers National Insurance	47,795	57,302	63,456	76,064	12,608	
Pensions Costs	82,882	91,195	107,689	120,625	12,936	
Medical Insurance	2,368	2,520	3,057	3,356	299	
Staff expenses	202	350	350	450	100	
Staff Training	7,397	9,499	12,000	12,000	0	Still plan to spend training budget for the full year
Travel Expenses	2,156	3,203	3,000	4,300	1,300	
Recruitment	406	500	406	500	94	
Total Staff costs	546,814	612,175	713,415	809,330	95,915	Significant variance to budget represented by Planning advisor £25k (now being sourced via consultancy), Programme Manager £40k, delays in admin officer recruitment £12k, additional core resource allocated to projects £10k and adjustment for an historic overpayment to HMRC £5k
Office costs						
Cleaning	2,605	2,142	3,474	2,856	(618)	
Rates and Water rates	6,757	6,687	7,484	7,490	6	
Rent	15,775	16,100	21,813	21,975	162	£21k funded by CDEL
Light, Power, Heating	1,435	2,500	2,000	4,000	2,000	
Repairs & Maintenance	6,433	6,776	7,400	6,776	(624)	
Insurance	16,972	17,175	23,524	23,000	(524)	Forecast included £5k for Professional indemnity insurance which is only £2k per annum
Total Office costs	49,978	51,380	65,695	66,097	402	
Governance costs						
Board Meetings	1,557	1,400	1,800	1,850	50	
Members Allowances	13,309	6,828	16,530	9,816	(6,714)	

Finance costs	7,800	4,380	11,500	7,082	(4,418)	Additional £1.5k versus forecast for VAT review, full year forecast now £11.5k
Total Governance costs	22,666	12,608	29,830	18,748	(11,082)	VAT review not budgeted and add costs of backdated members allowances
Communications					0	
Advertising & Marketing	9,660	18,470	15,130	19,070	3,940	Timing - still plan to spend design costs of NR and Man plans but delayed. Forecast includes comms costs savings to offset against add website running costs
Website running costs	2,799	1,116	3,298	1,488	(1,810)	
Total Communications	12,459	19,586	18,428	20,558	2,130	
Telecoms & IT costs					0	
Computer and IT Equipment	2,078	0	2,078	0	(2,078)	Plan to allocate to CDEL at year end
IT Software and Consumables	7,598	7,701	10,500	11,736	1,236	
IT support and maintenance	8,096	6,534	10,795	8,712	(2,083)	
Telephone & Internet	2,720	2,853	3,700	3,802	102	
Total Telecoms & IT costs	20,492	17,088	27,073	24,250	(2,823)	Unbudgeted Computer and IT equipment, plan to charge to CDEL at year end
Other costs						
Consulting	72,780	46,175	109,624	59,900	(49,724)	Represents Transformation costs not able to fund from CDEL £40k plus net additional planning costs £10k reallocated from staff costs
Legal Expenses	3,121	4,400	3,121	7,000	3,879	Delays on spend due to resource issues - will cfwd into 26/27 £4k
Defra Capital Spend	9,499	80,000	53,000	80,000	27,000	Only £20k of Transformation costs charged as CDEL. Other unbudgeted costs able to recover as CDEL spend include Climate Adaptation £23k and other core projects (Fire Safety)
Event costs	2,234	2,475	3,000	2,950	(50)	Includes Xmas do and Chairs conference - forecast understated
General Expenses	1,211	700	1,600	1,600	0	Includes offsite SLT not forecast/budgeted
Postage, Freight & Courier	532	689	700	750	50	
Printing & Stationery	899	3,043	3,420	3,582	162	Timing - costs relate to printing of Management Plan and NR plan still not completed
Subscriptions	3,715	4,321	4,289	4,724	435	
Bank Fees	83	117	111	156	45	
Total Other costs	94,075	141,920	178,865	160,662	(18,203)	Transformation costs not offset against CDEL £40k , offset by reduced CDEL spend and legal costs
Total Operating Expenses	746,483	854,757	1,033,306	1,099,645	66,339	
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	(52,641)	(157,231)	(64,747)	(118,505)	53,758	
Includes Transformation works (net of that funded by CDEL)	28,998		40,140			
Restated (Deficit)/Surplus	(23,643)		(24,607)			

CDEL Analysis:

	Forecast	Budget
Transformation works	20,000	80,000
Programme Manager	-	40,000
Climate Adaptation Plan	23,000	-
Other Core Projects	10,000	-
Defra Capital Spend	53,000	120,000
Rent	21,000	-
Defra income utilised	74,000	120,000

APPENDIX 2

Profit and Loss**Chilterns Conservation Board****For the 9 months ended 31 December 2025**

Account	Core	Projects	Total
	£	£	£
Turnover			
Access Grant	-	326,871	326,871
Defra Capital Grant	25,447	1,193	26,640
Defra Core Grant	385,422	269,314	654,736
Interest Income	44,876	52,426	97,303
Internal Fee Income	123,016	40,097	163,113
Local Authority Contribution	97,250	64,425	161,674
Other Revenue	-	13,000	13,000
Project Income	17,534	807,638	825,172
Sale of merchandise	298	7	305
Total Turnover	693,842	1,574,971	2,268,813
Gross Profit	693,842	1,574,971	2,268,813
Administrative Costs			
Access grant expenditure	-	21,554	21,554
Advertising & Marketing	9,660	-	9,660
Bank Fees	84	-	84
Board Meetings	1,557	-	1,557
CCB Core Contribution	-	25,308	25,308
CCB recharges	-	125,824	125,824
Citizen Science	-	8,829	8,829
Cleaning	2,605	-	2,605
Computer and IT Equipment	2,078	947	3,025
Consulting	72,780	56,714	129,494
Defra Capital Spend	9,499	1,193	10,692
Education Costs	-	14,709	14,709
Employers National Insurance	47,795	49,119	96,914
Enhancements	-	320,465	320,465
Event costs	2,234	7,766	10,000
Finance costs	7,800	-	7,800
FiPL Grant	-	105,949	105,949
FiPL Grant Year 4 24/25	-	12,846	12,846
General Expenses	1,211	37,172	38,383
Insurance	16,972	-	16,972
Irrecoverable VAT	-	2,989	2,989
IT Software and Consumables	7,598	2,748	10,346
IT support and maintenance	8,096	1,388	9,484
Legal Expenses	3,121	-	3,121
Light, Power, Heating	1,435	-	1,435
Medical Insurance	2,368	2,050	4,418
Members Allowances	13,309	-	13,309
Mitigation	-	103,387	103,387
Nature Recovery	-	17,063	17,063
Other costs (activity) NLHF	-	1,356	1,356
Other costs NLHF	-	370	370
Pensions Costs	82,882	79,305	162,188
Postage, Freight & Courier	532	66	599
Printing & Stationery	899	901	1,800
Professional fees (activity)	-	75,443	75,443
Publicity and promotion	-	983	983
Rates and Water rates	6,757	-	6,757
Recruitment	406	449	854
Rent	15,775	2,250	18,025
Repair and conservation work	-	50	50
Repairs & Maintenance	6,433	18	6,451
Research and survey expenditure	-	12,042	12,042
Salaries	403,608	386,666	790,274
Staff expenses	202	810	1,012
Staff Training	7,397	4,812	12,209
Subscriptions	3,715	80	3,794
Telephone & Internet	2,720	1,977	4,697
Training for volunteers	-	2,729	2,729
Travel and expenses for volunteers	-	735	735
Travel Expenses	2,156	8,224	10,380
Website running costs	2,799	76	2,874
Total Administrative Costs	746,484	1,497,363	2,243,847
Operating Profit	(52,642)	77,608	24,966
Profit on Ordinary Activities Before Taxation	(52,642)	77,608	24,966
Profit after Taxation	(52,642)	77,608	24,966

APPENDIX 3

Balance Sheet

Chilterns Conservation Board

As at 31 December 2025

Account	31 Dec 2025	31 Mar 2025
	£	£
Current Assets		
Cash at bank and in hand		
Business 95 Day saver	525,675	513,373
GBP PayPal	15	270
HSBC Current Account	35,278	63,185
HSBC Money Market 1mf	750,000	1,500,000
HSBC Money Market 3mf	1,750,000	2,000,000
HSBC Reward Account	1,899,070	1,099,694
Total Cash at bank and in hand	4,960,038	5,176,522
Accounts Receivable	158,031	276,485
Accrued Income	3,750	12,235
Inventory	1,000	1,000
Less Provision for Doubtful Debts	(9,296)	(9,296)
Prepayments	17,781	6,574
Total Current Assets	5,131,303	5,463,520
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year		
Total Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	723,162	1,088,171
Net Current Assets (Liabilities)	4,408,142	4,375,349
Total Assets less Current Liabilities	4,408,142	4,375,349
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year		
Pension Scheme Liability	(1,102,000)	(1,102,000)
Total Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	(1,102,000)	(1,102,000)
Net Assets	5,510,142	5,477,349
Capital and Reserves		
Project Reserves:		
Beacons of the Past: Earmarked Reserves	24,095	24,095
CCC Forward Plan	61,357	61,357
Central Chilterns Conservation Agriculture	85,860	86,976
Chalk Streams Earmarked Reserve	168,951	168,951
CHAP	18,611	18,611
Chess Smarter Water Catchment Earmarked Reserves	169,936	169,936
Commons: Earmarked Reserves	21,837	21,837
Earmarked Reserves: Small Projects	2,900	2,900
Farm Advice: Earmarked Reserves	9,541	9,901
FIPL Earmarked Reserve	180,295	180,295
HS2 AP Reserve	(18,128)	(18,128)
Mend the Gap: Earmarked Reserves	2,728,773	2,728,773
Nature Calling Reserve	19,131	19,131
NBY Reserve	(25,061)	(25,061)
New Shoots Reserve	(10,633)	(10,633)
North Chilterns Farm Cluster	21,876	21,876
Red Kites Earmarked Reserve	5,859	5,859
Tracking the Impact (Rebel Restoration) Reserve	97,047	97,047
Younghusband Legacy Fund	83,808	74,505
Current Year Project Reserves	77,608	0
Total Project Reserves	3,723,661	3,638,226
Core Reserves:		
Development Reserve	231,123	231,123
General Reserve	506,000	396,500
Current Year Earnings	(52,643)	109,500
Total Core Reserves	684,480	737,123
Pension Reserve	1,102,000	1,102,000
Total Capital and Reserves	5,510,142	5,477,349
Minimum Reserves as at 31 March per policy	388,000	
Reserves to fund 31.3.26 Deficit	118,000	
	506,000	



Chilterns National Landscape

Summary and income analysis

Date – 27 November 2025



Work undertaken

We have been asked to provide a high-level review of the various sources of funding received by Chilterns National Landscape and the VAT treatment of these funds.

We have reviewed contracts and agreements that have been provided to us and based on these and other information that has kindly been provided, our view on the VAT treatment of these funds is given in the table below.

Key findings

The principal issue with all the funding sources is whether these are grants or supplies of services. There is no clear HMRC guidance and whether a payment is a grant or consideration in return for a supply of services comes down to several factors. When considering if a grant, the basic test is to look to see if the payment has been given freely by the funder with no expectation of anything in return, and that the funder does not benefit or gain directly from making the payment. If this is the case, then this is likely to be a grant.

The table below shows all sources of funding and indicates whether these can be treated as grants or should be treated as supplies of services.

The funds that have the narrative as 'Non-business' and in green highlight are those funds that are considered grants.

The funding that is considered a supply of services for a consideration is highlighted in orange with the narrative 'VATable'. In general, this is anything that is considered consultancy, and where it is considered that the fund provider is receiving something in return for the payment. If registered for VAT these sources of income would give rise to a VAT liability and VAT would need to be charged to the recipients and accounted for to HM Revenue & Customs. It is these sources of funds that need to be considered when applying the VAT registration tests.

Several of the sources that have the narrative 'VATable' also have a narrative 'Exempt (see note 1)' and highlighted in red. As Chilterns National Landscape is an 'eligible body' for the purposes of the provision of education, vocational training and research these events and supplies can potentially be treated as supplies of research, education, or vocational training. It is not clear cut and will depend upon on the exact nature of what is being supplied. If these are educational then these are exempt supplies for UK VAT purposes and do not give rise to a VAT liability. These would also not be included when applying the VAT registration threshold tests. With regards to the archaeology field school events, we are comfortable that these are educational and therefore can be treated as an exempt supply.

An extract from the HMRC guidance note 701/30 Education, vocational training and research, has been provided on the last page that gives HMRC definitions for education and research. With regards to research, care is as if this is provided under a contract as a subcontractor as HMRC consider this as a taxable supply and not an exempt supply.



Income sources

Defra/Government Funding	
Core Defra Funding - £513k for 24/25 and 25/26	
Additional Core Defra funding for 24/25 £114k	
Defra Capital funding £114k for 24/25, additional funding for 25/26 (strict capital criteria)	
Access for All – Defra scheme	
Farming in protected landscapes – Defra Scheme	
Local authority funding – set as 20% to our core Defra funding of 80% - across our 7	
local authorities in relation to geographic size – approx. £129k per annum	
Bank interest income	

Current projects and Grants		
National Lottery Heritage funding - £1.1M in 23/24, £563k 24/25 – Chalk, Cherries and Chairs funded project – funding based on quarterly claims of costs		Non-business
Match funding – required by the National Lottery project from various local bodies and private landowners/farmers – often a contribution/donation to work done		Non-business
Mend the Gap funding - £2.7M from Network Rail given to CNL as part of reparation for the impact of the electrification through the Goring Gap area. Steering group set up to oversee spend and annual reporting to Network Rail.		Non-business
Thames Water – Smarter Water catchment River Chess funding based on agreement £698k for 24/25. Funding is based on funding key roles and project delivery. Regular reporting on activity/spend. Additional £50k funding to CCSP programme not subject to an agreement.	Contract held	Non-business
Affinity Water – various funding not subject to agreement; contribution to funding for Farm Cluster facilitators £39.5k and £30k, annual contribution to Chilterns Chalk Stream project £86k, specific project funding on the Chess – funding advanced based on claims of actual costs		Non-business
Rebel Restoration – grant agreement from this charity to support Citizen work	Contract held	Non-business
Rothschild Foundation – grant agreement from this charity to support Farm Cluster work in the central Chilterns.	Contract held	Non-business



Nature Calling – grant funding for this arts and nature project in Luton – see agreement	Contract held	Non-business
HS2 Additional Projects funding – we claim against a pot of funds allocated to us £500k for nature recovery projects within Hs2 impacted corridor. Mainly actual costs refunded but we are able to claim for staff costs related to the delivery costs at a daily rate as agreed. These funds are administered for HS2 by Buckinghamshire Council (i.e. we raise invoices on Bucks).		Non-business
Environment Agency – specific grant funding for delivery projects on application Thames 21 – Annual contribution £6.8k to co-hosting of the south Chilterns catchment partnership.		Non-business
BLEF funding (23/24) – Business & Local Economy funding via HS2 – scheme to support local economies disrupted by the HS2 construction.		Non-business
Reading university £10k in 24/25	Contract held	VATable
FDRI (Flood Droughts Research Infrastructure from 25/25 – contract for 1 day per week of a staff member £34k per annum. UKCEH the lead partner has been awarded a grant from UKRI and is subcontracting services out to various partners including CNL.	Draft contract held	VATable
HS2 Review AP – ongoing - £15k income in 24/25 (relating to 2020 to 2024) for staff time attending the Review Group (this group includes representatives from various charities to review mitigation, data collection and reporting on HS2 monies)		Non-business
Future funding work		
Ad hoc small pieces of work and advice for external organisations e.g. GIS surveys, training, other expert advice.		VATable Exempt (see note 1)
Pilio – 23/24 and 24/25 total approx. £14k – officer time invoiced in days on the Defra T&T project.		VATable
Ad hoc advisory work for various organisations such as Thames 21		VATable
Archaeology Field school – Educational. The course is run for members of the public and students over 3 weeks in the summer. This year income was £13,000. Estimated 26/27 income could be £37.5k.		Exempt (see note 1 below)
Drone reports for corporates/charities. Anticipated income for 25/26 £5k, could increase to £12k per annum.		VATable
Corporate team days -income estimated as £5k		VATable
Landscapes connections – advisory services to another National Landscape as part of a National Lottery project – approx. £20K		VATable
Lectures/public talks on Heritage and Archaeology topics approx £5k		VATable Exempt (see note 1)
Other external consultancy £8-10k		VATable



Note 1

Eligible bodies – VATA 1994 Schedule 9 Group 6 Item 1 (d)

(d) a public body of a description in Note (5) to Group 7 below;

Chilterns National Landscape is a public body formed under statutory instrument.

Note (5) to Group 7 of Schedule 9 of the VAT Act 1994 reads:

(5) “public body” means -

- (a) a Government Department within the meaning of section 41(6);
- (b) a local authority;
- (c) a body which acts under any enactment or instrument for public purposes and not for its own profit and which performs functions similar to a Government department or local authority.

With regards to the below two future activities these could be seen as VAT exempt if seen as training/educational.

- Ad hoc small pieces of work and advice for external organisations e.g. GIS surveys, training, other expert advice.
- Lectures/public talks on Heritage and Archaeology topics approx £5k

Extract from VAT notice 701/30 – definition of education

5.1 What the term ‘education’ covers

Education means a course, class or lesson of instruction or study in any subject, regardless of when and where it takes place.

Education includes:

- lectures
- educational seminars
- conferences and symposia
- recreational and sporting courses
- distance teaching and associated materials

If a separate charge is made for registration, this is part of the provision of education.

5.6 The meaning of the term ‘research’

Research includes:

- original investigation undertaken in order to gain, advance or expand knowledge and understanding
- devising a specialised software programme as part of a research project before carrying out the main tasks.



BARNETT
WADDINGHAM

Part of **HOWDEN**

123 Chilterns Conservation Board

**31 March 2025 valuation employer
results schedule**

Buckinghamshire Pension Fund

Barnett Waddingham LLP

19 December 2025



Introduction

This schedule is provided to Buckinghamshire Council as administering authority to Buckinghamshire Pension Fund (the Fund). It has been generated from our online employer results modelling tool **Illuminate Me**. It may be shared with Chilterns Conservation Board (the Employer) but it does not constitute advice to them. The Fund is part of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

The purpose of this document is to provide a summary of the preliminary results of the actuarial valuation as at 31 March 2025 in relation to the Employer's individual funding position along with proposed contribution rates. A full valuation report will follow by 31 March 2026, which will provide details of the valuation method, assumptions and results of the valuation.

The purpose of the valuation is to review the financial position of the Fund and to set appropriate contribution rates for each employer in the Fund for the period from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029 as required under Regulation 62 of the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 (the Regulations) as amended. These contributions rates will be based on each employer's own membership/funding unless the employer participates in a pool, in which case the funding position of the pool will be considered.

Please note that member contributions are paid into the Fund at rates as set out in the Regulations.

We recommend that this report is read alongside the Fund's draft Funding Strategy Statement (FSS) where appropriate for the Employer to further understand the results as set out in this schedule. The draft Funding Strategy Statement was emailed to employers on 3 November 2025 and you are invited to respond to the consultation on the document which is open until Friday 12 December.

Compliance statement

This schedule is subject to and complies with Technical Actuarial Standard 100: Principles for Technical Actuarial Work (TAS 100) as a component communication of the 31 March 2025 valuation. This schedule does not constitute advice to the Employer.

Employer results

Contribution rates

The total contribution rates payable by employers consists of two elements, the primary rate and the secondary rate. The primary rate covers the cost of benefit accrual expressed as a percentage of pay. The secondary rate of an employer's contributions is any percentage or amount by which, in the actuary's opinion, contributions at the primary rate should, in the case of a Scheme employer, be increased or reduced by to reach the total rate payable reflecting any circumstances particular to that employer (for example, to recover a funding deficit identified or to manage any contribution rate changes).

The proposed minimum contribution rates for the three-year period from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029 are detailed below. These contribution rates have been provided to the administering authority and reviewed via [Illuminate Me](#). The Employer may pay further amounts at any time.

Contribution rate results	Previously certified		Provisionally certified	
	31 March 2026	31 March 2027	31 March 2028	31 March 2029
Year ending				
Total contributions	20.9%	16.3%	16.3%	16.3%
<i>Consisting of:</i>				
Primary rate (of pay p.a.)	20.9%	17.7%	17.7%	17.7%
Secondary rate (% of pay plus £ p.a.)	-	-1.4%	-1.4%	-1.4%
Contribution rate analysis				
Estimated annual pay	£955k	£990k	£1.03m	£1.06m
Estimated Total contributions	£200k	£161k	£167k	£173k
Increase (in absolute terms)	-	-19.5%	3.7%	3.7%

Contribution rate commentary

The primary rate has been calculated assuming the employer is open to new entrants.

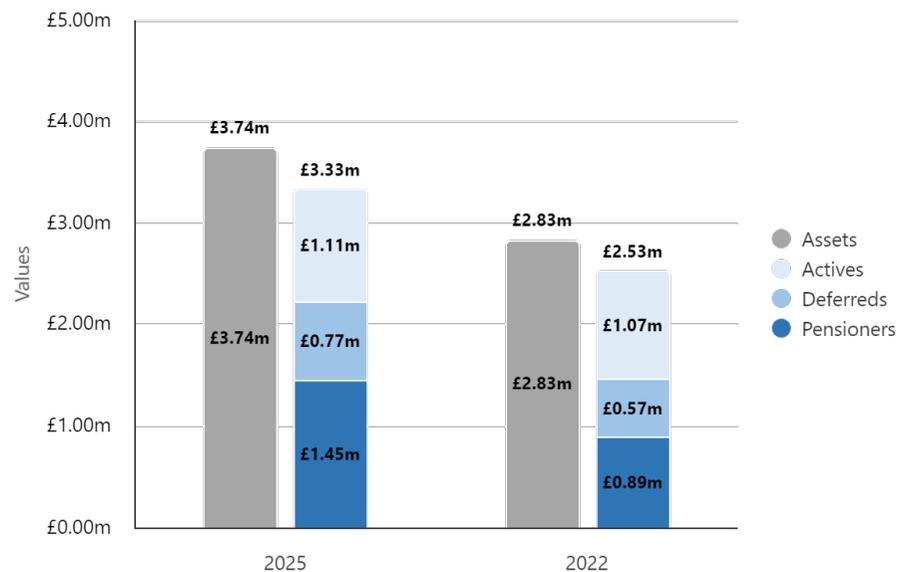
The contributions payable allow for a return of surplus. This has been spread over a period of 8 years.

Please refer to the draft Funding Strategy Statement for further information on the approach taken to setting contribution rates.

Funding position

Each participating employer, or group of similar employers, will likely have differing results to the Fund as a whole depending upon their own profile of membership within the Fund, and how this has changed in the inter-valuation period.

Using the proposed assumptions, the preliminary results as at 31 March 2025 for Chilterns Conservation Board are set out in the chart below. We have included the funding position at 31 March 2022 for comparison.



The Employer has a funding surplus of £405k at 31 March 2025, relating to a funding level of 112.2%, compared to a funding surplus of £299k at 31 March 2022, relating to a funding level of 111.8%.

McCloud judgment

As part of the valuation, we have estimated the increase in liabilities for each employer as a result of the McCloud remedy. The increase in the liabilities is based on the McCloud underpin for eligible members as determined by the LGPS McCloud remedy regulations which became law on 1 October 2023. The liabilities calculated as part of the 2025 valuation, will need to reflect that eligible members may receive a pension uplift at retirement if their benefits would have been higher had they continued to accrue service in the discontinued final salary scheme until 31 March 2022. The estimate is based on data provided by the Fund. Please note that this allowance will change from year to year as the impact on members will change from year to year. Information at whole fund level will be included in the final whole fund valuation report.

For more information, please contact the administering authority. Further information can be found on the LGPS member website here:

<https://www.lgpsmember.org/mccloud-remedy>.

We have estimated that there has been no increase in liabilities as a result of the McCloud remedy.

Risks

There are many factors that affect the Fund's funding position and could lead to the Fund's funding objectives not being met within the timescales expected. Some of the key risks that could have a material impact on the Fund are:

- Employer covenant risk
- Investment risk
- Inflation risk
- Mortality risk
- Member options risk
- Regulatory risk
- Climate risk

The sensitivity of the funding results to some of these risks is set out in the Fund's Funding Strategy Statement (FSS) and will be set out in the final valuation report which will be published by 31 March 2026. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list. Further information on these risks and more will be set out in greater detail in the FSS.

Gender Pensions Gap

The Gender Pensions Gap (GPG) can mean the differences in retirement income or retirement wealth for men and women. It is influenced by the gender pay gap, as well as other factors, principally working patterns.

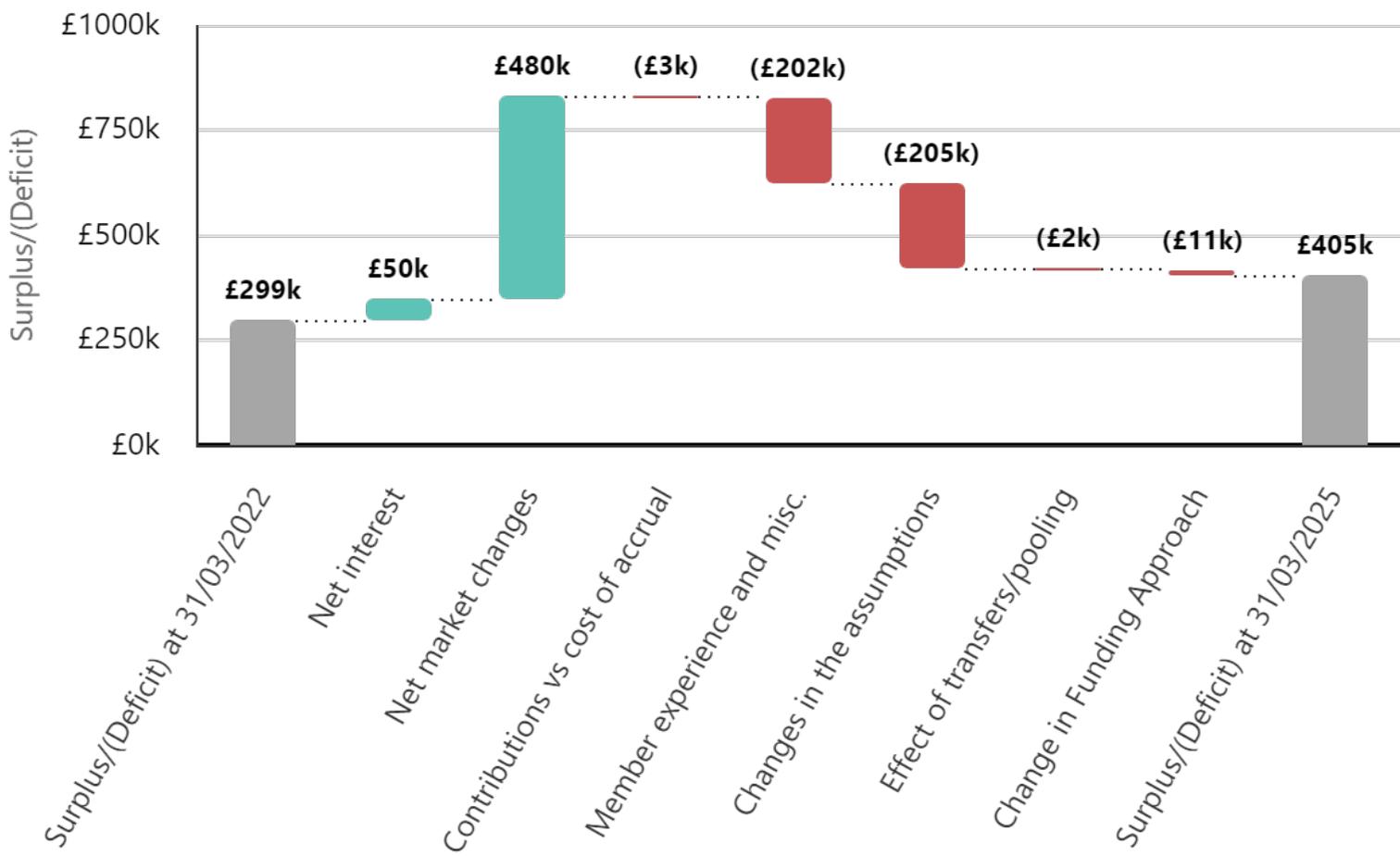
There has been increasing interest in the GPG in the LGPS in the last few years. In 2023, the Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) set up a working group made up of fund officers, consultants, actuaries, Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and SAB representatives, to consider how this issue should be dealt with in the LGPS.

In the recent Access and Fairness consultation, it was proposed that LGPS funds report on their GPG and this information will be included in the final whole fund valuation report.

If you would like more information on the Gender Pensions Gap and the additional services Barnett Waddingham can provide, please get in touch using the contact information at the end of this report.

Funding position reconciliation

The table below shows a breakdown of the change in the funding position since the previous valuation (this will be at pool level if the Employer is pooled).



More details of each change are in Appendix 3.



Next steps

The agreed contributions payable by the Employer will be set out in the Rates and Adjustments Certificate issued alongside the actuarial valuation report by 31 March 2026. The administering authority is happy to discuss the proposed rates with the Employer.

Appendix 1 Information and methods

Membership data

The membership data provided for the Employer is summarised below and this is what the results are based on. Checks have been applied to the data for reasonableness, but the Employer should let the Fund know if this does not look in line with their expectations of the existing membership profile. If there are any material changes to the data then the figures in this report may need to be reissued.

	31 March 2025			31 March 2022		
	Current Number	Salary/Pension	Average Age	Current Number	Salary/Pension	Average Age
Active	28	£955k	49.0	22	£619k	49.0
Deferred (inc. Undecided)	18	£56k	51.0	14	£36k	49.0
Pensioner and Dependant	6	£76k	64.0	4	£40k	61.0

Valuation of liabilities

Using the valuation assumptions shown below, we estimate the future cashflows which will be made to and from the Fund throughout the future lifetime of existing active members, deferred pensioner members, pensioners and their dependants. We use these to calculate the amount of money which if invested now, would be sufficient together with the assumed growth in the assets to make those payments in future. This amount is called the present value of members' benefits and separate calculations are made in respect of service up to the valuation date (past service), and for service after (future service).

We compare the value of existing assets with the value of past service benefits (allowing for future salary and pension increases). If there is an excess of assets over accrued liabilities then there is a surplus, otherwise, there is a deficit.

To calculate contribution rates we first calculate the value of future benefits. If an employer is open to new members, we will usually consider the value of benefits accruing in the first year. If an employer is closed to new members, then we will usually consider a longer term, for example, the value of benefits

accruing in the remaining working lifetime of the members. The value of these benefits is then expressed as a percentage of payroll over the same period, having first deducted the projected contributions to be paid by the members.

If there is a deficit, additional contributions are required to be paid by employers over an agreed period, either as a percentage of payroll, or as monetary amounts.

If there is a surplus, an adjustment may be made to the total contribution rate using a negative secondary rate. Any adjustment will be made as appropriate after consideration of any circumstances particular to the Employer.

More information on the valuation of liabilities and the rules around setting contribution rates is set out in the FSS.

McCloud

Regulations in respect of the McCloud and Sargeant judgments in respect of historical age discrimination came into force on 1 October 2023. Where available, we use the pay and service history included in the valuation data extracts to estimate the cost of the remedy. For relevant members, we compare the estimated value of the final salary benefits and CARE benefits accrued during the remedy period, using an assumption for future salary growth, to determine whether the final salary underpin is likely to apply.

Assets

Assets are calculated as a six-month smoothed market value straddling the valuation date. The purpose of smoothing the asset value is to help stabilise employer contributions and it means that contribution rates are not singularly dependent on the market value of assets and market conditions on one particular day.

Assets are not separately held for each employer. The Fund holds assets in respect of all of the employers in the Fund and each employer has a notional share of these assets. Each employer's own notional share is fully re-apportioned at the actuarial valuation by accumulating the assets from the previous valuation with respect to the Fund's investment return achieved over the period, and with allowance for cashflows paid in respect of the Employer and any other experience.

Appendix 2 Summary of the Fund results

Assumptions

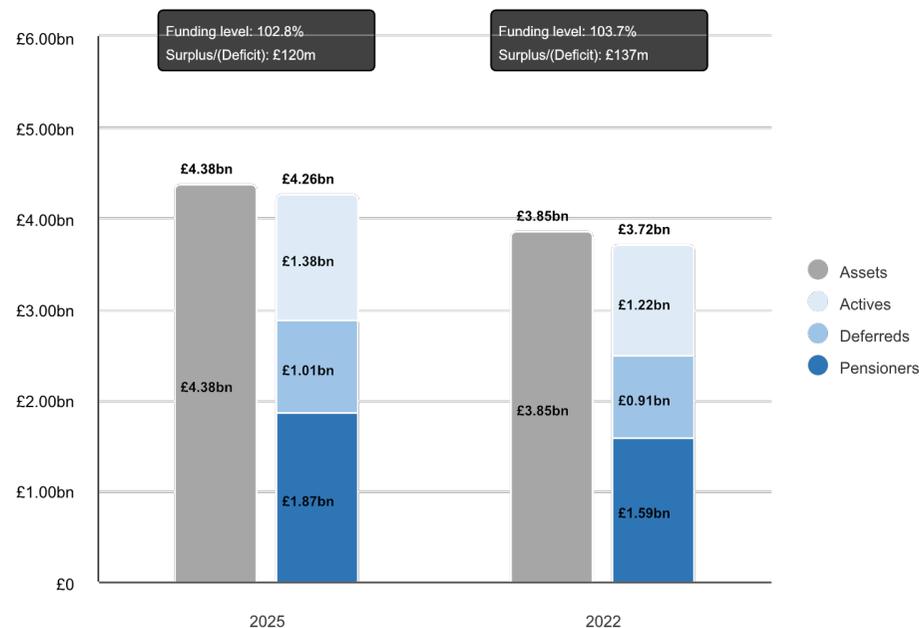
In summary, we have adopted the following key assumptions at 31 March 2025 (with comparison to those adopted at the previous funding valuation).

Key assumptions	31 March 2025	31 March 2022
Discount rate	5.1% p.a	4.6% p.a
CPI inflation	2.7% p.a	2.9% p.a
Salary increases	3.7% p.a	3.9% p.a
Post-retirement mortality	Male / Female	Male / Female
Member table and multiplier (males)	100% of S4PMA for males	110% of S3PMA for males
Mortality table and multiplier (females)	95% of S4PFA for females	95% of S3PFA for females
Projection model		
Long-term rate of improvement	CMI_2024	CMI_2021
Smoothing parameter	1.5%	1.25%
Initial addition to improvements		
Half-life overlay	0.0%	0.0%
	1 year	n/a

For more information on the derivation of the different assumptions in the table above, please see the draft Funding Strategy Statement which is available on request.

Past service funding position (whole Fund)

Using these assumptions, the chart below sets out the preliminary valuation results for the whole Fund as at 31 March 2025 (with comparison to the whole fund results at 31 March 2022):



Comments on Fund results

We have the following comments on the Fund results:

- Changes in market conditions has increased the Fund deficit by approximately £100m
- Payment of secondary contributions has decreased the Fund deficit by approximately £30m
- Higher inflation than assumed has increased the deficit by approximately £40m
- Lower salary increases than assumed has decreased the deficit by approximately £10m

Appendix 3 Explanation of reconciliation items

Funding level changes

Net market changes

This item affects both assets and liabilities. The contribution from the assets is the performance of the Fund compared to the assumption made at the previous valuation. The liabilities are valued based on market indicators and the assumptions automatically change over time (e.g. future expected inflation).

Contributions vs cost of accrual

This estimates the difference between contributions actually paid by the employer and the cost of benefits built up by members over the last three years.

Member experience

This covers all member experience, including salary increases, members who have died compared to assumed etc. This item could be positive or negative for employers depending on experience.

Changes in assumptions

While the market-related part of the change in assumptions was covered in the Net market changes item, a number of other assumptions have updated. This includes changes to the financial assumptions, where we may have assumed different levels of asset returns in future compared to the previous valuation, and the mortality assumptions, where the tables and models used have been updated to reflect recent mortality experience.

Effect of transfers/pooling

This item reflects the impact of member transfers into or out of the employer's section of the Fund or if an employer's assets have been reallocated through a funding pooling process.

Change in funding approach

This item reflects any other changes in the employer's funding position (for example, if the employer's funding category has changed). More details for any particular employer are available on request.

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Version 1

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Item 2.2**Quarter 3 Delivery Report**

Author: Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations

Purpose of Report: To update the Executive Committee on the progress of the Chilterns National Landscape team between Oct-Dec 2025 against the FY25-26 Delivery Plan.

Overall

- The Delivery Plan approved for FY25-26 was split into five workstreams and contains 28 active delivery areas (the same as last year) and 109 delivery lines (a slight increase from 103 last year). In Q3 (Jul-Sep 2025) the status of delivery across the CNL Team was as follows:

Completed	Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Significantly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Not due to have started	On Hold	Postponed	Cancelled
On Track						
52 (44)	27 (35)	15 (19)	0 (6)	1 (2)	9 (2)	2 (0)

Note "completed" refers to delivery lines where work has now been fully finished and is not expected to continue in the following year (e.g. projects that have been completed). It does not refer to the completing all outputs identified in a particular quarter or the whole year where that work will continue in the next year (these are reported as "on track").

- Progress in each of the five workstreams is detailed below along with an identification of key achievements during the quarter and where there are significant delays or where work has had to be put on hold, postponed or cancelled along with the key mitigating actions that it has been agreed to take. This section has been expanded to include more information on impact and mitigation as requested at the last Executive Committee meeting in November 2025.
- As this is the first time of reporting in more depth on the impacts of work being delayed, paused or stopped, and reporting on mitigation measures being put in place, the paper also includes delivery lines which were put on hold, postponed or cancelled in previous quarters.
- Appendix 1 identifies the delivery status against individual delivery lines.

Workstream 1: Improve Strategic Alignment

Completed	Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Significantly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Not due to have started	On Hold	Postponed	Cancelled
On Track						
6 (7)	8 (6)	2 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

Numbers in brackets represent previous quarter figures

Key achievements this quarter:

- Initial designed draft of Nature Recovery Plan completed. The Nature Recovery Plan is a part of the Management Plan and brings together different elements of Local Nature Recovery Strategies into an overall plan for the Chilterns. *As such it will underpin all work that we do in this area and ensure that there is alignment with key stakeholders across the Chilterns.*
- Work on an R&D report into climate impact funded through new core capital funding from Defra has been commissioned and work on the report has begun. *This is a critical first stage in the development of a Climate Adaptation Plan for the Chilterns on which work by CNL and other stakeholders will need to account for in the future*
- Information provided to the Office of Environmental Protection on challenges facing Protected Landscapes. *This will help scope out an inquiry into Protected Landscapes.*
- Significant liaison undertaken with the National Landscape Association and Defra over the funding formula and the financial disadvantages that a Conservation Board face. *Whilst this might not result in an immediate difference the longer-term goal is to improve the way in which Defra apportions funds to Protected Landscapes, so that the funding formula takes account of the different position that Conservation Boards are in and, ultimately provide, increased revenue to run the Conservation Board more effectively.*
- Application for Landscape Connection bid in partnership with the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and National Trails was submitted to the National Lottery. *This was confirmed as successful in February 2026 and will provide key funding for various elements of our work and establish a template for more effective partnership working with other National Landscapes and charities.*

Significant delays or where delivery has been put on hold, postponed or cancelled:

MEDIUM RISK / IMPACT	
1.1.1 Management Plan: Complete refresh of the Management Plan	
Status	Significantly delayed Whilst significant progress has been made towards finalising a draft designed document, it has not yet been completed. As such no further progress has been made in terms of Local Authority, Natural England and other stakeholder engagement
Issue	Internal – Lack of staff capacity and availability
Impact / Risk	The impact of not having a published Management Plan is limited in terms the ability of the organisation to deliver its programme of work. However, there is a reputational risk in not having the plan published and accessible for all. In particular it limits engagement on the plan and means that other strategic documents such as the Nature Recovery Plan that refers heavily to the Management Plan are impacted.
Mitigation	A pdf document of the Management Plan is expected to be ready by the end of March and will be initially published on the website so that it is available at the earliest opportunity. In the meantime, we have published the Schedule of Amendments for the Plan on our website .
LIMITED RISK / IMPACT	
1.1.2 Levelling Up and Regeneration Act: Follow implementation of s.245 of LURA and ensure CNL team and stakeholders are briefed on implications	
Status	Significantly delayed and limited in effectiveness: threats that the government plans to repeal the strengthened Duty have made it difficult to get traction with stakeholders, and have reduced the impetus to focus on developing and disseminating information on the Duty. The threat of repeal also resulted in needing to collate evidence of the Duty's efficacy and benefits.
Issue	External – Lack of strategic clarity

Impact / Risk	Risk centres on having limited traction whilst there is uncertainty around the future of the legislation. We have little influence on the outcomes. The risk for this delivery line is the potential to spend a lot of effort to then find that there has been a change in policy
Mitigation	Keep a watching brief and only consider more focus as the government's position is clarified

Workstream 2: Increase Operational Effectiveness

Completed	Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Significantly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Not due to have started	On Hold	Postponed	Cancelled
On Track						
9 (6)	8 (14)	6 (6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	5 (2)	0 (0)

Numbers in brackets represent previous quarter figures

Key achievements this quarter:

- New Administration Officer with a specific responsibility around Health & Safety and HR Administration started in October. *This is resulting in previously stalled work to progress.*
- All personnel folders have been fully set up, populated and transferred to new Sharepoint site. *This means that for the first time we have clear access to all staff contracts and a clear place to store all staff files, thus making us GDPR compliant in this regard.*
- All HR policies are now live and a review of HR policies by staff has been completed including confirming that staff have read critical HR policies. *This means that staff are more aware of HR policies and we are now legally compliant with requirements to have policies in place and operational.*
- Two Team Development days were held with an external consultant in November and December to support analysis of how we work together as a team more effectively. *This is a key step both in consolidating how we ensure we are more effective as a team and is critical in ensuring the whole team is fully engaged and trusts the process.*
- Organisation quarterly reforecasts and presentation of a set of management accounts now embedded into organisational ways of working. *This is key to ensuring clear visibility of our financial position which facilitates more effective management decisions and interventions.*
- Clarification of how we can spend c. £340k of capital (CDEL) funding in the grant for FY25-26 finalised with key projects identified, reviewed and funding generated. *This allows us to provide more support to partners to achieve our statutory purposes, especially in addressing the governments 30x30 nature recovery objectives.*
- Structure of new Information Management system agreed and built with guidance published to staff. *This is critical to improving the way in which we store and share information across the organisation and allows us to start the transition of information into the new system. When fully operational, this will significantly reduce time taken trying to find files and in certain cases having to undertake further work.*
- Improved process of scrutiny of quarterly progress put in place for the Senior Leadership Team. *This is a critical step to identify and implement more robust and timely interventions when required.*

Significant delays or where delivery has been put on hold, postponed or cancelled:

HIGH RISK / IMPACT	
2.1.5 HR Compliance: Put in place all other requirements identified in agreed HR policies to ensure organisational compliance with policies	
Status	Significantly delayed Following the development of the HR policies, work is underway to ensure that the policies are properly embedded in the organisation in terms of what is in place (ie if we talk about an EDI lead we have a clear role within the organisation that is identified in the policy). Work is underway to ensure that the policies work in practice and a significant amount of this relates to processes and procedures. Other priorities include establishing and ensuring the capability of statutory roles within the organisation – Data Protection Officer and Safeguarding Lead. These roles are not yet established, although we have identified interim leads to ensure that staff understand that there is an individual with the responsibility to address any issues that might arise in these areas.
Issue	Internal – Lack of staff capacity

	Internal – Financial constraints
Impact / Risk	We are on a journey towards compliance in this area but it is taking longer than expected due to a lack of capacity within the organisation and constraints on our revenue budget that preclude us from using external expertise. There is a potentially large reputational risk should an issue arise.
Mitigation	Identification of interim leads / Priority discussion with Cotswolds National Landscape
MEDIUM RISK / IMPACT	
2.1.4 HR Processes: Develop / update required processes, procedures and templates to support revised policies and improve ways of working	
Status	Significantly delayed Following the development of the HR policies, work is underway to develop clear and consistent processes to enable improved and more efficient ways of working across the CNL Team. This work has been delayed because of knock on impacts of completing HR policy work and limited capacity to review and finalise processes by those with HR expertise. The impact is internal but means that there continues to be inconsistent ways of operating and inefficiency in an area that should be easy to understand and where staff can be efficient. A prioritisation exercise has taken place to address the more critical processes first.
Issue	Internal – Lack of staff capacity and capability
Impact / Risk	Whilst the impact is internal there continues to be inefficiency with inconsistent ways of doing things in an area where we are looking to make staff touch points easy with a focus on resolving issues rather than on the process itself.
Mitigation	Prioritisation exercise has taken place to focus on processes where there is the greatest need in order to get these up and running first.
2.1.6 HR System: Establish and embed new HR system within the organisation	
Status	Postponed to consider in planning for FY26-27 This was a delivery line identified in the Delivery Plan as tbc because it would only go ahead if capacity was available. We have not progressed this partially because of lack of capacity (including the capacity of staff around further transformation) as well as being cautious about adding more cost into the organisation, where we could potentially cover the set up of the system through capital funding from Defra but then be left with higher running costs.
Root Cause	Internal – Lack of staff capacity Internal – Financial constraints
Impact / Risk	There re a number of HR processes that would be more efficient and effective if we used a system, including recruitment, performance management, travel and expenses and having all staff data within a system is also less of a risk from a GDPR perspective. As such there is a medium risk / impact of not having this in place. However, we are developing more robust HR processes and procedures to counter this risk.
Mitigation	Consider for planning in FY26-27 following the finalisation of HR processes and procedures and the possibility of funding the set up through Defra's core capital grant and rationalising costs against the costs of other external advisors.
2.3.3 Information Governance & Compliance: Ensure the organisation is compliant with data protection requirements including GDPR and Cyber Essentials	
Status	Significantly delayed Significant progress has been made in terms of Information Management Transformation and movement of all files onto Sharepoint. We are also looking at the different IT related policies that need to fit together to ensure we have an effective framework for GDPR compliance. The work is currently delayed because of the need to complete the Information Management Transformation work.
Issue	Internal – Lack of staff capacity
Impact / Risk	There is limited risk in terms of cyber security, as the organisation is operating in a way that is consistent with cyber essentials, with the exception of the use of mobile phones. However, we need to bring together all draft policies on document retention, privacy, confidential information and data management to ensure effective policies and that staff understand the policies and related processes and procedures.
Mitigation	Work on the Information Management Transformation, which includes aspects such as ensuring that sharing of data is more controlled, is a key mitigation aspect. We need to prioritise getting the relevant actors together to move from draft version of policies to full policies with clear staff training.
2.6.2 Contract Management: Develop a standardised set of commercial contracts for the organisation	
Status	Significantly delayed Work has been undertaken this quarter to produce a standard set of some of four of the most common types of contracts that we use as an organisation to ensure that we are contractually robust. This work has been carried out with a paralegal firm of contract specialists. However whilst the standard services contract has been put into place, a number of issues have arisen and capacity has meant that it has not been possible to embed the efficient use of this contract in the

	organisation. Three other contract templates have been developed but have not been reviewed or tested.
Issue	Internal – Lack of staff capacity
Impact / Risk	There continues to be a lack of robustness in the way that contracts are developed which necessitates a significant amount of senior management time in reviewing and correcting contracts.
Mitigation	Currently not identified as to get this over the line requires more staff time that is not available
2.6.4 New Work Governance: Develop detail around the process and templates for undertaking new work and embed across the organisation	
Status	Significantly delayed and limited in effectiveness The high-level process was developed in FY24-25 and a detailed process has now been developed. However there are some critical questions to get right in order to strike a balance between robust governance and being overly restrictive especially where we have staff working as part of broader programmes with other organisations. Work is currently underway in the 4 th Quarter to review and revise the process to make it more manageable
Issue	Internal – Lack of staff capacity Internal – Lack of defined organisational strategy
Impact / Risk	Whilst there is greater clarity in terms of the way in which new work is raised and considered the process still needs to be properly embedded. As such reviewing new work continues to necessitate a significant amount of time of both managers and senior managers, and approaches are still being made with limited clarity about the implication of taking on new work (although these are now being addressed before any applications / commitments are made)
Mitigation	Process to get this governance properly established is in place – it needs to be prioritised in the 4 th Quarter
LIMITED RISK / IMPACT	
2.1.3 Staff Handbook: Update the Staff Handbook and bring into line with updated HR policies and contract terms and conditions	
Status	Postponed to reconsider in planning for FY26-27 A new staff handbook was drafted in FY24-25. However it was not published internally because it was overtaken by work on HR policies, processes and procedures. It was due to be picked up again this year following the finalisation of HR policy and process work but this work has taken longer than planned and in the case of processes is ongoing.
Issue	Internal – Lack of staff capacity
Impact / Risk	The organisation used to have a staff handbook and policies and procedures for new staff. These documents were overlapping and the staff handbook had significant elements of policy in it. With the new HR policies established and work being done on new processes and procedures there is limited risk in not having a staff handbook, which will serve more as an overview for staff. It will be much easier to ensure the necessary content once the HR processes are finalised.
Mitigation	No mitigation required. Clarity for staff is being delivered through the work on HR policies and procedures. The Team Development days held in November and December were also beneficial in bringing the team together and providing newer members of staff an understanding of the culture that we are looking to foster across the organisation.
2.4.2 / 2.4.3 Health & Safety Policies, Processes and Procedures: Review and put in place updated policies, processes and procedures being developed in partnership with Risk Fluent	
Status	Significantly delayed Bringing on board a new Administration Officer with responsibility to address some of these areas has meant that in this quarter we have been able to address some of the most critical of the areas, including fire management and first aid. All of the field team have now received first aid training and we have invested in ensuring that all field staff have first aid kits and proper processes are in place to ensure replenishment of these kits. We have undertaken a complete fire risk assessment and are working on putting in place recommendations from that assessment – this includes introducing a new fire alarm system. However there are a number of other areas that we have not yet had a chance to address because of the extensive amount of time taken up in improving the risk management system in order to make it work for us an organisation
Issue	Internal – Lack of staff capacity External – Lack of capacity of external consultants
Impact / Risk	This is rated as low as we have targeted sorting out the most important areas of this work and for some other areas we already have clear frameworks in place and are operating in line with requirements (e.g. COSHH)
Mitigation	Review effectiveness of working with external health & safety experts in terms of the amount of time it involves internally to move things forward

Workstream 3: Conserve & Enhance Natural Beauty

Completed	Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Significantly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Not due to have started	On Hold	Postponed	Cancelled
On Track						
20 (16)	5 (10)	5 (3)	0 (3)	0 (1)	2 (0)	1 (0)

Numbers in brackets represent previous quarter figures

Key achievements this quarter:

- Draft copy of Farming Strategy written. *This is one of the key Technical Approach documents that we intend to develop and will define the way in which we will work with farmer clusters and other landowners.*
- CNL signed an ACCORD with c. 20 other national recording organisations setting out five core principles to underpin landscape scale citizen science projects. *This will allow for greater alignment and improvement in the way that citizen science projects are run.*
- Support continued over the Chess, Central and Central Chilterns Farming Clusters with more hands off support for the Christmas Common and South Chilterns clusters. This has included completion of the first year of Rothschild Foundation funded Farming Insects project and release of funds to allow second year of activity to continue.
- Agreed programme of Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund funded workshops and events completed as planned.
- As a result of grassland project surveys carried out under Mend the Gap, another £68,000 has been signed off to support grassland conservation projects.
- Design of Dodds Mill and Flaunden Brook restoration is complete.
- Contract received for work to start on Mending the Misbourne in April and new funding agreement for Smarter Water Catchment agreed.
- New Citizen Science Coordinator onboarded.
- Online interactive maps commissioned by Tracking the Impact
- New Chilterns Chalk Streams planning guidance disseminated, leading to Buckinghamshire Council resolution supporting chalk streams

Significant delays or where delivery has been put on hold, postponed or cancelled:

MEDIUM RISK / IMPACT	
3.8.2 Planning Advice: Produce and publish advice to Local Authorities and stakeholders	
Status	Significantly delayed and limited in effectiveness Work has progressed in some areas including the dissemination of Chalk Streams Guidance that has resulted in a Buckinghamshire Council resolution supporting Chalk Streams. However, there has been no further progress in preparing / reviewing planning advice in other areas.
Issue	External – Lack of certainty around reforms to the Planning System Internal – Lack of staff capacity
Impact / Risk	The ability to issue specific planning advice helps underpin efforts to conserve and enhance of the Chilterns but also enables the Planning Team to be more efficient in the way that they work as there is a resource that internal and external stakeholders can be directed to rather than a member of the Planning Team having to get involved. As such a significant element of the risk in the delay is in the fact that not having these resource in place prevent members of the Planning Team from addressing other planning issues.
Mitigation	Greater steer on prioritisation being sought from the Planning Committee during the 4 th Quarter / New planning resource was brought in during the 3 rd Quarter and in planning for FY26/27 we will look to ensure that the organisation can continue to afford this additional resource.
LIMITED RISK / IMPACT	
3.1.2 Nature Recovery Plan: Develop overall plan for the delivery of the Nature Recovery Plan (NRP) and support partner development of Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) plans	
Status	Significantly Delayed Whilst the Local Nature Recovery Plan has been drafted it has not yet been published, although progress has been made on this during this quarter. However, 2 of the 4 Local Nature Recovery Strategies produced by Local Authorities had not been published by the end of the quarter.

Issue	External - Delay in publication of LNRSS Internal - Impact delay in publication of Management Plan
Impact / Risk	Delays in the publication of the LNRSSs mean that the overall impact of a delay in publishing the Nature Recovery Plan (NRP) are limited as the publication of the NRP was always meant to occur following LNRSS publication. Launching the NRP ahead or at the same time as the LNRSSs would detract from the launch of those strategies and launching the NRP after means there is an opportunity to ensure it is reviewed and any alignment issues addressed before launched.
Mitigation	No mitigation required until all LNRSSs are published. If needed it will be possible to publish the NRP in advance of the Management Plan.
3.1.3 Local Nature Recovery Strategies: Ensure internal understanding of LNRSS and clarify internal support required to help deliver Local Nature Recovery Strategies	
Status	Significantly Delayed This activity is delayed until the 4 th quarter and potentially beyond as Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire only launched their LNRSS in Dec 2025 and Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire are launching their LNRSSs in 2026.
Issue	External - Delay in publication of LNRSSs
Impact / Risk	This is an internal activity that cannot happen until LNRSSs are published and therefore the only impact will be that the Landscape Team will be slightly delayed in ensuring that they fully understand the content of each LNRSS and how they will support it through their programmes of work.
Mitigation	No mitigation required. Activity will take place in the 4 th Quarter (or beyond) in line with LNRSSs being published.
3.1.7 Citizen Science Strategy: Develop strategy / approach paper on Citizen Science	
Status	Postponed to consider in planning for FY26/27 The CNL Team is currently defining a number of technical approaches to the way in which we work that will inform and support our overall organisational strategy. It was decided that priority should be given to the development of the farming technical approach because of the greater need for clarity in that area.
Issue	Internal – Change in internal prioritisation Internal – Lack of staff capacity
Impact / Risk	A citizen science framework is in place and the CNL Team is delivering significant citizen science programmes through this framework. Whilst our approach going forward in this area needs more consideration it is not currently an issue.
Mitigation	No mitigation required. Will be revisited in planning for FY26/27
3.1.8 Landscape Character – Natural Beauty Capability: Understand organisation requirement and ensure transfer of skills and knowledge around Landscape Character / Natural Beauty	
Status	Postponed to consider in planning for FY26/27 Work has been done in this area throughout the year, including ensuring hand over of knowledge before the retirement of our Landscape and conservation Officer. However since then it has been decided that it is more of a priority for the CNL Team to understand Climate Change and Adaptation with a focus on producing a Climate Adaptation Plan next year and understanding how that might impact Landscape Character and Natural Beauty. Part of this change in priority has seen a number of staff undertake carbon literacy training.
Issue	Internal – Change in internal prioritisation Internal – Lack of staff capacity
Impact / Risk	Whilst further development of capability is needed in this area the delay in completing this work to allow for a focus on Climate Adaptation and Mitigation should strengthen the overall knowledge base of the team
Mitigation	No mitigation required. Will be revisited in planning for FY26/27
3.3.5 Not Bourne Yesterday Water Projects: Deliver water projects within the Not Bourne Yesterday agreed programme of work	
Status	Significantly delayed Work on a couple of the water projects (Hamble and Hughenden) has not been able to progress as quickly as planned because of delays in getting the right agreements in place. However these have been resolved at the start of the 4 th quarter.
Issue	Internal / External – Delay in external agreements
Impact / Risk	The key risk here was not in the projects themselves but in the potential knock-on in terms of creating a tighter timescale for the May 2026 application for the delivery phase of Not Bourne Yesterday. If the submission of the application is delayed the organisation may need to support project staff from core funding during the interim period.
Mitigation	Decisions were made to reduce work in other areas to compensate for some of the delay and contingency has been added into the budget for next year to support the continuation of existing staff if there is a need to delay submission of application beyond May 2026.

Note that this is "Limited" because there is still reasonable expectation of submitting in May – if a point is reached where we need to submit later the rating may increase to Medium depending on the financial impact.

3.8.4 Internal Planning Advice: Provide planning advice to internal colleagues and Board Members	
Status	Significantly delayed and limited in effectiveness The pace of change in national planning reforms and lack of clarity in terms of its interpretation is hampering the ability to be clear on advice and as such has meant that scarce resource has been directed elsewhere. However, it has been identified that more can be done in terms of generic advice to staff and Board.
Issue	External: Lack of certainty around national planning reforms
Impact / Risk	The inability to provide more generic advice to the staff team and at Board level results in a lower level of understanding of planning than there would otherwise be. This can result in not understanding planning issues fully or the need to involve the Planning Team more directly rather than people having the understanding already. As such this impacts more on time and resources than it does in terms of poor decision-making.
Mitigation	Focus on more generic introductions to the principles of the planning system, but including highlighting of areas of reform.
NO RISK / IMPACT	
3.1.5 FiPL Changes: Understand changes to FiPL and clarify requirements in moving from delivering grants to delivery of other priorities	
Status	Cancelled There has been a change in direction from Defra over FiPL from a year ago when it was proposing to evolve the programme and reduce funding to a new commitment to the programme for next year and indicatively for the following two years
Issue	Internal / External – Lobbying to continue successful programme
Impact / Risk	None – the change in direction means the continuation of a successful programme and more funding stability
Mitigation	No mitigation required.

Workstream 4: Improve Understanding & Enjoyment

Completed	Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Significantly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Not due to have started	On Hold	Postponed	Cancelled
On Track						
13 (12)	1 (1)	0 (2)	0 (0)	1 (1)	1 (0)	0 (0)

Numbers in brackets represent previous quarter figures

Key achievements this quarter:

- EDI Ambition Statement approved by the Board in September. *This will result in more concise and clear public facing content being prepared to go on the new Access Hub to be launched in early 2026.*
- Youth Engagement Strategy completed as part of the Chalk, Cherries & Chairs Next Generation project and now on the CNL website. *This lays out key elements of our approach to youth engagement and provides more transparency to staff and partners in this regard.*
- Work agreed to create a new Volunteering Hub through which all volunteer management will happen. *This will not only improve the experience for volunteers being able to see all opportunities in one place but will also enhance the robustness of our volunteer management and strengthen our compliance for example with GDPR requirements.*
- Over £322,000 of Access for All funds granted to date for this year. *All Access for All grants support improved access to the Chilterns and directly contribute to addressing our second purpose around understanding and enjoyment.*
- Nature Calling project completed with legacy through Luton Henge and the Nature Towns and Cities project.
- Outreach events taken place through Not Bourne Yesterday. *This is aimed at providing increased access and enjoyment of the Landscape with different groups.*
- Water saving project at Chenies school delivered including 6 week education programme.

Significant delays or where delivery has been put on hold, postponed or cancelled:

LIMITED RISK / IMPACT	
4.2.3 Chilterns Walking Festival: Deliver the Chilterns Walking Festival and clarify its future	
Status	Postponed to consider in FY26/27 planning A significant element of this has been delivered this year with the Walking Festival having taken place in 2025. However, it has been decided that rather than go ahead and plan another Walking Festival for May 2026 that the organisation should take a pause for a year both to reduce pressure on internal capacity but also to re-evaluate how the festival can be funded in the future with the continued restrictions on the organisation's core revenue grant
Issue	Internal – Financial constraints Internal – CNL staff capacity
Impact / Risk	There is limited impact because CCB is currently looking to have a break for a year in the walking festival and is not currently committed financially or in terms of planning for the event in 2026. In addition walks organised by programmes and projects such as those put on by CCSP will go ahead and there are other walking festivals around the Chilterns that will still take place and these and general walking opportunities will continue to be promoted on the CNL website
Mitigation	Whilst the Chilterns Walking Festival will not go ahead in May the promotion of other walking activity in the Chilterns will continue and communications around the absence of the walking festival will focus on the organisation looking to identify how it can be revitalised / restructured
NO RISK / IMPACT	
4.1.5 PLTOF Access Targets: Understand data requirements and collection method for PLTOF 9 (Access) targets	
Status	On hold This delivery line was identified at the beginning of the year based on the upcoming release of PLTOF targets. However, to date this information has not yet been released by Defra and therefore delivery against this line is on hold
Issue	External – Awaiting information
Impact / Risk	There is no impact or risk to the organisation. Monitoring of access can still be collated using an older set of indicators. Going forward evidencing of CNL Team work will be part of the development of KPIs that is planned to take place in FY26-27
Mitigation	No mitigation required

Workstream 5: Effectively Communicate

Completed	Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Significantly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Not due to have started	On Hold	Postponed	Cancelled
On Track						
7 (3)	5 (4)	2 (5)	0 (3)	0 (0)	1 (0)	1 (1)

Numbers in brackets represent previous quarter figures

Key achievements this quarter:

- All staff now trained on Hubspot contact management system. *This will improve engagement with key stakeholders and ensure better GDPR compliance by keeping all contact details in one place.*
- Significant progress made in the getting complete draft versions of the Management Plan and Nature Recovery Plan (both should be ready in the 4th Quarter. *These documents are critical strategic documents for both CNL and our partners to guide our work going forward.*
- Annual Review has been published along with three monthly newsletters
- Access Hub and Deer Management Hub sites have been created for the website but have not yet gone live – this is imminent

Significant delays or where delivery has been put on hold, postponed or cancelled:

MEDIUM RISK / IMPACT	
5.2.1 Management Plan Publication: Design, print, publish and communicate the CNL Management Plan	

See 1.1.1	
LIMITED RISK / IMPACT	
5.4.1 CNL Brand: Agree and embed mission and values both internally and externally and measure impact of narrative and brand delivered through activation plans	
Status:	Significantly Delayed Because of the capacity of the Communications Team including the Management Plan taking longer than expected work on this delivery line has been deprioritised
Issue	Internal – CNL Staff Capacity
Impact / Risk	Whilst broader in scope the two Team Development days held in November and December covered a lot of the same ground and therefore has produced a lot of information which will be important for the development and embedding of the vision, mission and values of the organisation. Whilst there remains a risk of a lack of alignment across the staff whilst the vision, mission and values are yet to be agreed this has been offset by the progress made in the Team Development days
Action / Mitigation	It has been agreed that there will be follow up to the Team Development days and as part of this process we will re-evaluate how clarification of mission, vision and values
5.5.2 Internal Messaging: Develop and deliver improved internal communications messaging for staff	
Status:	Postponed to consider in FY26/27 Planning Because of the capacity of the Communications Team including the Management Plan taking longer than expected it was agreed that this delivery line should be postponed to reconsider in the FY26-27 planning
Issue	Internal – CNL Staff Capacity
Impact / Risk	This is an internal piece of work and the requirement for it is as a strand in the development of a higher performing team, that is clear in its purpose. Therefore whilst the organisation still needs to improve internal messaging with staff so that there is more clarity around how the organisation works and how individual roles contribute, especially at key moments such as at onboarding, there were 2 externally facilitated Team Development days held in November and December that addressed staff understanding and connectedness across the organisation which were well attended and which the staff found extremely useful.
Action / Mitigation	It has been agreed that there will be follow up to the Team Development days and as part of this process we will re-evaluate the requirement around internal messaging and build this into the plan for FY26/27

Note that the cancelled delivery line in this workstream relates to the Boundary Extension which was reported to the Executive Committee at the time and therefore not replicated here.

Recommendation

- 1. To NOTE and OFFER FEEDBACK on progress made in Quarter 2 against the Delivery Plan**

Appendix 1**Status of Individual Delivery Lines**

Key

Delivered (Everything planned in this delivery line has been delivered with no continuation of the delivery line)
On Track (Everything is being delivered to plan but the delivery line is expected to continue into next year)
In Progress (Not started when planned to or slightly delayed / slightly limited in effectiveness)
In Progress (Not started when planned to or significantly delayed / significantly limited in effectiveness)
Not scheduled to have started
On hold
Postponed to reconsider in FY25-26 planning
Cancelled

Delivery Area / Delivery Line	Q1 (Apr-Jun)	Q2 (Jul-Sep)	Q3 (Oct-Dec)	Q4 (Jan-Mar)
Workstream 1: Improve Strategic Alignment				
1.1 Strategic Development				
1.1.1 Management Plan				
1.1.2 Levelling Up and Regeneration Act				
1.1.3 Nature Recovery Plan				
1.1.4 Climate Adaptation Plan				
1.2 Organisational Governance				
1.2.1 Constitution				
1.2.2 Board & Committee Operations				
1.3 Strategic Engagement / Influence				
1.3.1 Government Engagement				
1.3.2 National Landscapes Association / Protected Landscapes Network Engagement				
1.3.3 Strategic Partner Engagement				
1.4 Monitoring & Evaluation				
1.4.1 Nature Recovery Monitoring Indicators				
1.5 Financial Sustainability				
1.5.1 Income Diversity				
1.5.2 Core Funding				
1.5.3 Programme Funding (Nature Recovery)				
1.5.4 Programme Funding (Land)				
1.5.5 Programme Funding (Water)				
1.5.6 Programme Funding (Heritage)				
Workstream 2: Increase Operational Effectiveness				
2.1 HR				
2.1.1 Personnel Files				
2.1.2 HR Policies				
2.1.3 Staff Handbook				
2.1.4 HR Processes				
2.1.5 HR Compliance				
2.1.6 HR System				
2.1.7 Staff Engagement				
2.1.8 Staff Wellbeing				
2.1.9 Organisation Development				
2.2 Finance				
2.2.1 Annual Budgeting & Forecasting				
2.2.2 Budget Management				
2.2.3 Capital Budget				
2.2.4 Financial Policies & Regulations				
2.2.5 Financial Processes & Procedures				
2.2.6 Financial Optimisation				
2.3 IT & Information Management				
2.3.1 Information Management Framework				

2.3.2 Information Management Transition				
2.3.3 Information Governance and Compliance				
2.4 Health & Safety				
2.4.1 Risk Assessments				
2.4.2 H&S Policies, Processes & Procedures (Organisation)				
2.4.3 H&S Policies, Processes & Procedures (Field)	No activity scheduled			
2.5 Admin & Office Management				
2.5.1 Office Environment				
2.6 Internal Governance & Ways of Working				
2.6.1 Partnership Working				
2.6.2 Contract Management				
2.6.3 Management Effectiveness				
2.6.4 New Work Governance				
2.6.5 Collaborative Working			Postponed	
2.6.6 Prog Governance & Legacy Planning (Mend the Gap)				
Workstream 3: Conserve and Enhance Natural Beauty				
3.1 Operationalising Strategy				
3.1.1 PLTOF Target Setting				
3.1.2 Nature Recovery Delivery Plan (Delivery Planning, Support and Reporting)	No activity scheduled			
3.1.3 Local Nature Recovery Strategies (Internal Alignment)	No activity scheduled			
3.1.4 Farming Strategy	No activity scheduled	No activity scheduled		
3.1.5 FiPL Changes		On hold	Cancelled	
3.1.6 Scaling Citizen Science	No activity scheduled	No activity scheduled		
3.1.7 Citizen Science Strategy	No activity scheduled	No activity scheduled	Postponed	
3.1.8 Landscape Character – Natural Beauty Capability			Postponed	
3.2 Farming & Landowners				
3.2.1 Farming in Protected Landscapes				
3.2.2 Farming Clusters				
3.2.3 Christmas Common Farming Cluster				
3.2.4 Chess Farming Cluster				
3.2.5 North Chilterns Farming Cluster				
3.2.6 South Chilterns Farming Cluster				
3.2.7 Mend the Gap - Grasslands				
3.2.8 HS2 Landscape & Biodiversity Connectivity Project / HS2 Panel Review Group				
3.3 Water				
3.3.1 Chilterns Chalk Stream Project				
3.3.2 Mending the Misbourne				
3.3.3 Smarter Water Catchment				
3.3.4 Mend the Gap - Wetlands				
3.3.5 Not Bourne Yesterday – Water Projects				
3.3.6 Flood & Drought Research Infrastructure				
3.4 Woodland				
3.4.1 Deer Management				
3.5 Landscape Character				
No prioritised activity for FY25/26				
3.6 Heritage				
3.6.1 Field Schools				
3.6.2 Heritage Outreach				
3.6.3 Heritage Projects				
3.6.4 Not Bourne Yesterday – Heritage Projects				
3.7 Citizen Science				
3.7.1 Tracking the Impact				
3.7.2 CCSP – Chess Citizen Science				
3.8 Planning				
3.8.1 Planning Strategy & Rationalisation				
3.8.2 Planning Advice				
3.8.3 Planning Consultations				
3.8.4 Internal Planning Advice				

4. Improve Understanding & Enjoyment / Social & Economic Wellbeing				
4.1 Strategy Development				
4.1.1 EDI Ambition Statement				
4.1.2 EDI & Youth Engagement Strategy / Development				
4.1.3 Volunteering Strategy & Approach				
4.1.4 Linking People & Nature Recovery				
4.1.5 PLTOF Access Targets	On hold	On hold	On hold	
4.2 Access & EDI				
4.2.1 Defra Access for All Fund				
4.2.2 Access & EDI Project Support				
4.2.3 Walking Festival			Postponed	
4.2.4 Mend the Gap – Access & EDI Projects				
4.3 Engagement				
4.3.1 Nature Calling				
4.3.2 North Chilterns Engagement				
4.3.3 North Chilterns Partnership				
4.3.4 Not Bourne Yesterday - Engagement				
4.3.5 Mend the Gap – Public Engagement				
4.4 Health & Wellbeing				
No prioritised activity for FY25/26				
4.5 Volunteering				
4.5.1 Volunteer Management	No output scheduled			
4.6 Education				
4.6.1 CCSP – Education Programme				
5. Effectively Communicate				
5.1 Operationalising Strategy				
5.1.1 Activation Plans				
5.1.2 Crisis Communications	No output scheduled	No output scheduled		
5.1.3 Contact Management				
5.1.4 Image Library	No output scheduled	No output scheduled		
5.2 Strategic Comms				
5.2.1 Management Plan				
5.2.2 Nature Recovery Plan				
5.2.3 Boundary Review	Cancelled			
5.2.4 Annual Review				
5.2.5 Other Strategic Comms				
5.3 Operational Comms				
5.3.1 Brand & Profile				
5.3.2 CNL Website				
5.3.3 Project Comms & Support				
5.4 Brand & Profile				
5.4.1 CNL Brand				
5.4.2 Brand Guidelines				
5.5 Internal Comms				
5.5.1 Internal Comms Platform	No output scheduled	No output scheduled		
5.5.2 Internal Messaging			Postponed	

Acronyms

Common acronyms used in the table are given below:

CCSP = Chilterns Chalk Stream Project
 CHAP = Chilterns Heritage & Archaeology Partnership
 CNL = Chilterns National Landscape
 CNLF = Chilterns National Landscape Forum
 Defra = Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
 FiPL = Farming in Protected Landscapes

H&S = Health & Safety
 HS2 = High Speed 2
 MTG = Mend the Gap
 NBY = Not Bourne Yesterday
 NRP = Nature Recovery Plan
 PLTOF = Protected Landscape Targets & Outcomes Framework
 SWC = Smarter Water Catchment

Item 2.3 Budget Envelope 2026/27**Author:** Kathryn Foster, Senior Finance Manager**Purpose:** To set out a proposed 2026-27 Core Budget envelope for recommendation to the Board.**1. 2026-27 Budget Envelope – Overview**

£'000s	Actual 2023/24	Actual 2024/25	Full Year forecast (9+3)	Budget 26/27	Budget 27/28	Budget 28/29
Defra Income	513	724	587	557	557	557
Local Authority Income	124	127	129	129	129	129
Other income	160	301	251	262	252	249
Total Income	798	1,153	969	948	938	935
Staff costs	595	716	713	742	793	817
Office costs	57	54	66	68	70	71
Governance costs	13	23	30	20	20	21
Communications costs	19	28	18	10	10	11
Telecoms & IT costs	22	22	27	25	26	26
Other costs	115	200	180	141	114	114
Total Costs	822	1,043	1,034	1,006	1,033	1,060
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(23)	110	(66)	(58)	(95)	(125)

- A first draft budget envelope for 2026/27 has been prepared following consultation with the CEO, Head of Operations and other members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). This has been completed at a high level with reference to staffing/resources and an overall/historic review for our other cost categories.
- Our initial budget envelope shows a deficit of £58k for 26/27. This includes the part year costs of a new Senior Programme Manager (£53k), with some income identified to part fund the role (£30k), and Planning Consultancy of £75k (25/26: £48k).
- With an improved forecast out-turn for 25/26 (budgeted deficit: £118k) we are predicting a net deficit of **£14k** aggregated over the three years 24/25 to 26/27.
- A full detailed budget envelope for 26/27 onwards is included in Appendix 1 along with historical comparatives for information.

2. Income

- We now have indicative confirmation of overall Protected Landscapes funding from Defra for 26/27, 27/28 and 28/29. This applies to RDEL, CDEL, Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL) and Access for all. This has allowed us to make reasonable

assumptions for flat cash settlement funding for Core of £513k. Defra figures are high level and we still need individual national landscapes confirmation which we will receive shortly.

- We have received a CCN (Change Control Notice) confirming the release of £23.5k per annum of CDEL for our premises capital lease and this has been factored into our budgets for 26/27-28/29.
- There is some uncertainty around Local Authority funding, so for now we have included 25/26 levels (£129k) with no increases expected. Buckinghamshire Council has indicated some budget cuts but we remain optimistic that we can apply inflationary increases to other Local Authorities, notwithstanding the fact that Central Bedfordshire and Luton Councils choose to contribute significantly less than they should.
- Project recharge income is £165k. This reflects ad hoc recharges of Core staff to projects (including Access for All and FIPL) and other core recharges, for example overheads. It also includes a specific recovery for a new Senior Programme Manager role from Not Bourne Yesterday (NBY) along with overhead recharges for our long-term projects including Mend the Gap, FIPL and Mending the Misbourne.
- Project income of £57k includes from the Flood Drought Research Infrastructure (FDRI) Project, Nature Towns & Cities, Nature Ridge Landscape Connections and HS2 Associated Projects.
- Interest income is £40k. This reflects declining interest rates and reducing project cash balances that we hold. For the Mend the Gap programme, where significant funds were received upfront, we are attributing its share of interest to the programme.

3. Expenditure

- The CCB's largest cost is its staff. A 3% inflationary pay rise for all staff has been included in this budget. This adds a cost of approximately £16k to core.
- The recent triennial valuation of our Pension scheme has resulted in a provisional reduction in employers' contributions of 4.6% (currently 20.9% new contribution being 16.3%). We have factored this reduction into our budget/three-year plan. The scheme will next be revalued in March 2029. This provides a significant saving in staff costs to core (and projects) for 26/27 £25k.
- Staff costs outlined represent Core (non-project) staff only and are net of any costs directly recharged to projects. Where appropriate the project recharges income includes staff recharges.
- The increases to Employer's National Insurance contribution, effective 1 April 2025 represent ongoing costs and this adds approximately £15k to Core staff costs annually.
- The Project Support Officer and Heritage and Archaeology Manager roles are redundant from 1 April 2026.
- There are a few changes to new roles included in our budget for 25/26:
 - Communications Officer – replacement role FTE increased from 0.29 to 0.6 – additional £13k of costs
 - GIS role 0.4 FTE £15k – with the Heritage & Archaeology Manager leaving, and Neil Jackson having retired in December, this recognises the need for a GIS focussed resource.

- Senior Programme Manager – full time role assumed joining from 1 July 26 – cost £53k in 26/27 and £74k from 27/28 onwards – we have assumed funds from NBY of £10k and CDEL of £20k (income generation element, as they would be involved in sourcing funding/grants) would assist in funding this role.
- We have budgeted to continue with consulting costs for Health & Safety £5.7k and HR £13k.
- We still have £20k of our original transformation budget to spend. These costs will either be funded by CDEL or from development reserves and are not currently included in the budget envelope.
- We have included £75k of Planning Consultancy costs. This includes some carry over of costs from 25/26 (Budgeted £25k only £12k used).
- Our staff training budget totals £12k in line with the current year. We have included additional training costs for a Data Protection Officer role and a Safeguarding role totalling £5.5k. We are reviewing how these functions can be delivered in the CCB – either through existing staff or outsourcing, which would add further costs.
- Ongoing legal costs are to be funded 50% by projects but 26/27 also includes contract review costs of £4k. This is work carried over from 25/26 that we did not complete.
- Project donations – we have included our contribution to the Nature Ridge Landscape Connections Project £7.5k over 2 years - £3.25k in 26/27 and 27/28. In addition, we have made a provision for a donation to cover NBY staff in case there are delays in the delivery project being agreed and started, total cost in 26/27 £21k.
- Our Outstanding Chilterns magazine will not be produced in 26/27 and the Chilterns Walking Festival will be paused in 26/27. Whilst the Festival did not incur significant external costs, it did put pressure on administration capacity in the core team.
- Insurance costs have increased significantly in the last few years following a large increase at renewal in September 2024. This is a combination of increased costs of management liability insurance and an extra premium on our commercial insurance to ensure our water-focussed projects are adequately covered. We have also added professional indemnity insurance which is an additional cost of £2k per annum.
- Marketing costs – these are reduced after 25/26 following completion of the Management Plan and the Nature Recovery Plan. We have included a general provision for communications costs, such as for drafting planning guidance, other ad hoc core communications needs.

4. Budgets 2027- 2029

- Defra has provided a top-level allocation for all Protected Landscapes for 26/27 which comprises a flat cash settlement similar to this financial year. It has also provided indicative figures for 27/28 and 28/29. Based on this we have developed a high-level budget for these years using 26/27 as our base.
- We have assumed that Project income, Local Authority income and recharges will continue at 26/27 levels. Core Project income is uncertain as current projects start to come to an end. In addition, from 27/28 onwards some nature recovery projects end, so creating a further funding gap.
- We are continuing to work on the agreed principle of developing a break-even budget. With a track record of reducing budgeted deficits as a year

progresses, we are committed to reducing funding gaps and moving the annual deficit to below £50k. There are four key elements to achieving this:

- Securing further project specific funding and grants - a range of staff to be involved, including the new Senior Programme Manager
- Securing unrestricted funding –led by our CEO and informed by a new Funding Strategy.
- Implementing a set of cost cutting actions – some of which have already been identified - such as staff restructuring, FTE reductions and other cost savings
- Utilising Defra additional funding both for CDEL and the new wildlife rich habitat creation fund (criteria still to be advised). Defra has also indicated that further funding pots may come on stream in due course

Recommendation

- 1. To APPROVE the budget envelope 26/27 for recommendation to the Board.**
- 2. To note the initial projections for 27/28 onwards and provide feedback**

APPENDIX A

**CHILTERN NATIONAL LANDSCAPE
BUDGET ENVELOPE**

Core is Communications, Corporate Services, Engagement & Partnerships, Landscapes, Strategy & Planning.

	Actual 23/24	Actual 24/25	Full Year Forecast (9+3) 25/26	Budget 26/27	Budget 27/28	Budget 28/29	Assumptions
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
Trading Income							
Defra Income							
Defra Core Grant	513,896	628,145	513,899	513,996	513,996	513,996	Indicative from Defra
Defra Capital Grant	-	95,934	74,000	43,500	43,500	43,500	£23.5k re capital lease, £20k re Programme Mger, further CDEL will be available but will cover costs not included below
Total Defra Income	513,896	724,079	587,899	557,496	557,496	557,496	
Other income							
Local Authority Contribution	124,448	127,442	129,670	129,670	129,670	129,670	Assumed flat, Potential reduction from Bucks offset by inflationary increases from others
Project Income	19,760	31,461	35,034	56,500	56,500	56,500	Project income continues at 26/27 levels, alternatives will be sought as 26/27 projects end
Interest Income	18,792	50,176	53,876	40,000	35,000	25,000	Declining rates assumed
Internal Fee Income	112,979	211,371	161,680	165,000	160,064	166,065	Recharges continue at 26/27 as reflect a number of ongoing projects, inflationary uplift of 3% added
Advertising income	8,166	7,792	-	-	-	-	
Sale of merchandise	235	544	400	-	-	-	
Total Other income	284,380	428,785	380,660	391,170	381,234	377,235	
Total Trading Income	798,276	1,152,865	968,559	948,666	938,730	934,731	
Operating Expenses							
Total Staff costs	595,053	716,560	713,415	741,865	792,997	816,787	27/28 Full year Programme Manager costs, 28/29 increase is inflation at 3%
Office costs							
Cleaning	3,305	3,196	3,474	3,500	3,605	3,713	
Rates and Water rates	6,127	7,324	7,484	7,500	7,725	7,957	Exemption applied for
Rent	20,500	18,825	21,813	23,500	23,500	23,500	Funded by CDEL
Light, Power, Heating	7,739	4,180	2,000	3,500	3,605	3,713	
Office Equipment	312	-	-	500	515	530	Fire system maintenance
Repairs & Maintenance	3,052	4,484	7,400	4,000	4,120	4,244	
Insurance	15,944	16,036	23,524	26,000	26,780	27,583	Includes full year professional indemnity 26/27
Total Office costs	56,978	54,045	65,695	68,500	69,850	71,241	
Governance costs							
Board Meetings	828	1,161	1,800	2,000	2,060	2,122	
Members Allowances	6,356	9,657	16,530	10,800	11,124	11,458	
Finance costs	5,880	12,443	11,500	7,000	7,210	7,426	Internal and external audits 26/27 onwards
Total Governance costs	13,065	23,260	29,830	19,800	20,394	21,006	
Communications							
Advertising & Marketing	496	10,022	15,130	5,000	5,150	5,305	26/27 onwards contingency for general comms work eg planning guidance
Magazine costs	16,506	16,848	-	-	-	-	
Website running costs	2,163	1,104	3,298	5,000	5,150	5,305	Increased now with new provider and incorporated contingency for development work
Total Communications	19,165	27,974	18,428	10,000	10,300	10,609	
Telecoms & IT costs							
Computer and IT Equipment	3,850	-	2,078	-	-	-	Assumed ongoing IT hardware will be funded by CDEL
IT Software and Consumables	7,594	9,315	10,500	11,000	11,330	11,670	
IT support and maintenance	7,456	9,175	10,795	10,000	10,300	10,609	
Telephone & Internet	3,182	3,508	3,700	4,000	4,120	4,244	
Total Telecoms & IT costs	22,082	21,998	27,073	25,000	25,750	26,523	
Other costs							
Consulting	52,425	70,508	109,624	93,700	96,511	99,406	Planning consultancy £75k, HR £13k and H&S £5.7k
Legal Expenses	20,000	7,755	3,121	6,500	2,575	2,652	26/27 Contract review work £4k bfwd from 25/26
Defra Capital Spend	-	95,934	53,000	-	-	-	Any costs will be covered by corresponding CDEL income
Event costs	866	2,164	3,000	7,600	3,090	3,183	Specific events for 26/27 to support climate adaptation and Nature recovery work
Project Donations	27,000	13,157	-	25,182	3,750	-	Nature Ridge Landscapes Connections £7.5k over 2 years and Not Bourne Yesterday contingency support £21k
General Expenses	7,074	2,360	1,600	1,500	1,545	1,591	
Postage, Freight & Courier	478	264	700	500	515	530	
Printing & Stationery	1,344	1,528	3,420	2,000	1,545	1,591	
Subscriptions	5,898	6,202	4,289	4,250	4,378	4,509	
Bank Fees	150	184	111	150	155	159	
Total Other costs	115,234	199,528	178,865	141,382	114,063	113,622	
Total Operating Expenses	821,577	1,043,365	1,033,306	1,006,547	1,033,354	1,059,787	3% increase year on year costs
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	(23,301)	109,500	(64,747)	(57,881)	(94,624)	(125,056)	
Savings with FTE reductions and NR Project funding					(51,821)	(53,376)	
Revised deficit					(42,803)	(71,680)	

Internal Guidance: Draft Job Grading Framework

The key to understanding a Job Grading framework is that the term “Job Title” is different from the term “Role Title”.

A “Job Title” refers to a job that a number of different people within an organisation might do. It is different to a role title which refers to the specific individual role that someone does (e.g. the Mend the Gap Programme Manager, the Heritage Archaeology Manager and the Chilterns Chalk Stream Project Manager all have different role titles that describe their specific role but are all Programme Managers (that describes their job).

Within a Job Grading Framework, the grade and salary range are linked to the Job Title.

Job Grade	Salary Range	Pathway (Job Title)			Criteria	Experience
		Admin	Specialist	Management		
1	FY25-26 Living Wage to £30k	Admin Officer			<p>Scope: Clearly defined role requirements, with limited freedom to act; work generally standardised</p> <p>Management: Administering office and financial processes; delivering projects with some guidance; supporting bid applications</p> <p>External: Mainly internal though liaison with Board Members and the public and guiding volunteers as required</p>	Relevant qualifications and some experience; vocational training & experience
2	FY25-26 £28k to £36k	Senior Admin Officer	Technical Specialist (inc Project Officer)	Assistant Project Manager	<p>Scope: Self-guided task management within clear project and business plans; some diversity in role requirements with some freedom to act within agreed frameworks</p>	Relevant qualifications plus some similar work experience.

Internal Guidance: Draft Job Grading Framework

		Project Support Officer			<p>Development: Responsible for development of small-scale projects and plans</p> <p>Management: Some budget management and income generation responsibilities; possibly a professional with specific responsibilities or responsibilities for a small team and guiding volunteers</p> <p>External: Relationship management required for partners and local fora</p>	
3	FY25-26 £33k to £42k	Office Manager	Senior Technical Specialist (inc Senior Project Officer)	Project Manager	<p>Scope: Responsible for a section, project or programme including budgets and fundraising; the work is diverse with freedom to act within broad frameworks and plans</p> <p>Development: Full project development responsibilities and possibly overseeing a number of projects; innovating new projects and initiatives, policy and development</p> <p>Management: Full budget and income generation responsibilities; responsibilities for a small team and external contracts</p> <p>External: External influencing and advising; extensive relationship management required for partners, advisers and regional fora and representation of the CNL Team</p>	<p>Relevant qualifications and relevant experience and track record of success</p> <p>Some experience managing staff and / or volunteers (management)</p> <p>Some professional experience required (specialist)</p>
4	FY25-26 £40k to £50k		Technical Expert	Programme Manager Functional Manager	<p>Scope: Work is complex and involves making a wide range of highly diverse decisions; considerable amount of independent activity is required within the framework of organisational strategies and plans and is subject only to general guidance</p>	<p>Relevant qualifications with significant, varied experience and track record of success</p>

Internal Guidance: Draft Job Grading Framework

					<p>Development: Responsibility for business, project and programme development, supporter development, and depending on the role income generation and fundraising.</p> <p>Management: Leadership of key functional area, multiple projects and resources; significant responsibility for CNL Team activity, usually involving work guidance of others and financial management</p> <p>Usually manages a team and will have significant project or professional responsibilities or expertise, or be a technical expert who leads work in their technical area for the organisation</p> <p>External: Significant external liaison and relationship management; complex partnership management and external representation of the CNL Team; high level external influencing and advising</p>	<p>Experience managing staff and volunteers (management)</p> <p>Extensive professional experience (specialist)</p>
5	FY25-26 £48k to £65k			Head of Functional Area	<p>Scope: Leadership of internal teams in pursuit of CNL Team purposes</p> <p>Management: Significant responsibility for business, project and programme development and, depending on the role, income generation and fundraising. Member of the Senior Leadership Team.</p> <p>Manages a team within the organisation</p> <p>Development: Responsible for supporting strategic direction and organisational development</p>	<p>Relevant qualifications with significant, varied experience and track record of success managing teams at a senior level in an organisation</p> <p>Track record of leadership</p>

Internal Guidance: Draft Job Grading Framework

					External: High level external liaison and complex relationship and partner management	
6	FY25-26 £65k to £90k			Deputy CEO CEO	Scope: Leadership of staff team in pursuit of CNL Team purposes Management: Overall responsibility for activities, staff management, governance and financial management Development: Responsible for strategic direction and organisational development External: High level external liaison and highly complex relationship and partner management	Relevant qualifications – with significant, varied experience managing an organisation Track record of leadership and management success

Apprenticeships/interns are not included as part of this grading system

Job Grading Framework Guidance

Below are some of the key principles around the way in which the Job Grading Framework will operate.

1. The Job Grading Framework is owned by and will be updated by the CEO (or by the Head of Operations acting on behalf of the CEO).

Internal Guidance: Draft Job Grading Framework

2. The Job Grading Framework will be updated annually in line with the inflationary annual salary review (general annual increase).
3. Changes to the Job Grading Framework, such as reflecting above inflationary increases, or the addition of / change to the grading structure, will be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval as part of the annual planning process.
4. The Job Grading Framework assigns all roles a “job title” (this is a generic title such as Officer, Manager or Senior Manager into which specific roles fall as opposed to a “role title” which refers directly to the position of an individual.
5. The Job Grading Framework reflects the fact that the organisation has a number of different pathways – administration, technical specialists and management. Roles may cross over between these pathways
6. The Job Grading Framework will include the salary bands for different grades.
7. Going forward job packs will include the grade of the role being recruited. When a role is recruited, the assumption is that it will be recruited at the start of the salary band to which the role applies unless a case is made to recruit the role higher up in the salary band.

Item 3.1 Annual Planning



Author: Andy Brock-Doyle (Head of Operations)

Purpose of Report: To update the Executive Committee on annual planning process and to set the context for the strategic meeting on 9th March

High Level Planning – A More Strategic Approach

The process followed for Annual Planning this year has changed due to the following reasons:

1. An acceptance that during the last Annual Planning cycle we were not able to address and resolve some of the key issues – most notably those around staff capacity.
2. The finalisation of the Management Plan refresh offers an opportunity to be more strategic in our approach and to align timings and look further forward.
3. The need to start developing an organisation strategy sitting beneath the Management Plan that details the role of the Chilterns National Landscape Team in delivering the Management Plan. We are looking to do this across the new planning year and therefore want the annual planning cycle to align with and kick start this.

As a result the Senior Leadership Team has spent two offsites either side of Christmas looking at defining what the overall outcomes are that we are looking to achieve for the organisation over the next 4 years (the length of the current refresh of the Management Plan)

A Planning Journey

The organisation has become more planful over the last few years but it needs to go further.

In the last few years we have been on a journey that has moved from creating and reporting against a purely activities and outputs focus in our delivery plan to one with a greater focus on the outcomes of what we are trying achieve.

In addition we have looked to structure the way in which we plan in line with how we deliver (workstreams) to give greater accountability for different areas of the plan and rather than just report against projects looked to understand how those projects contribute to the delivery of different work areas in each workstream.

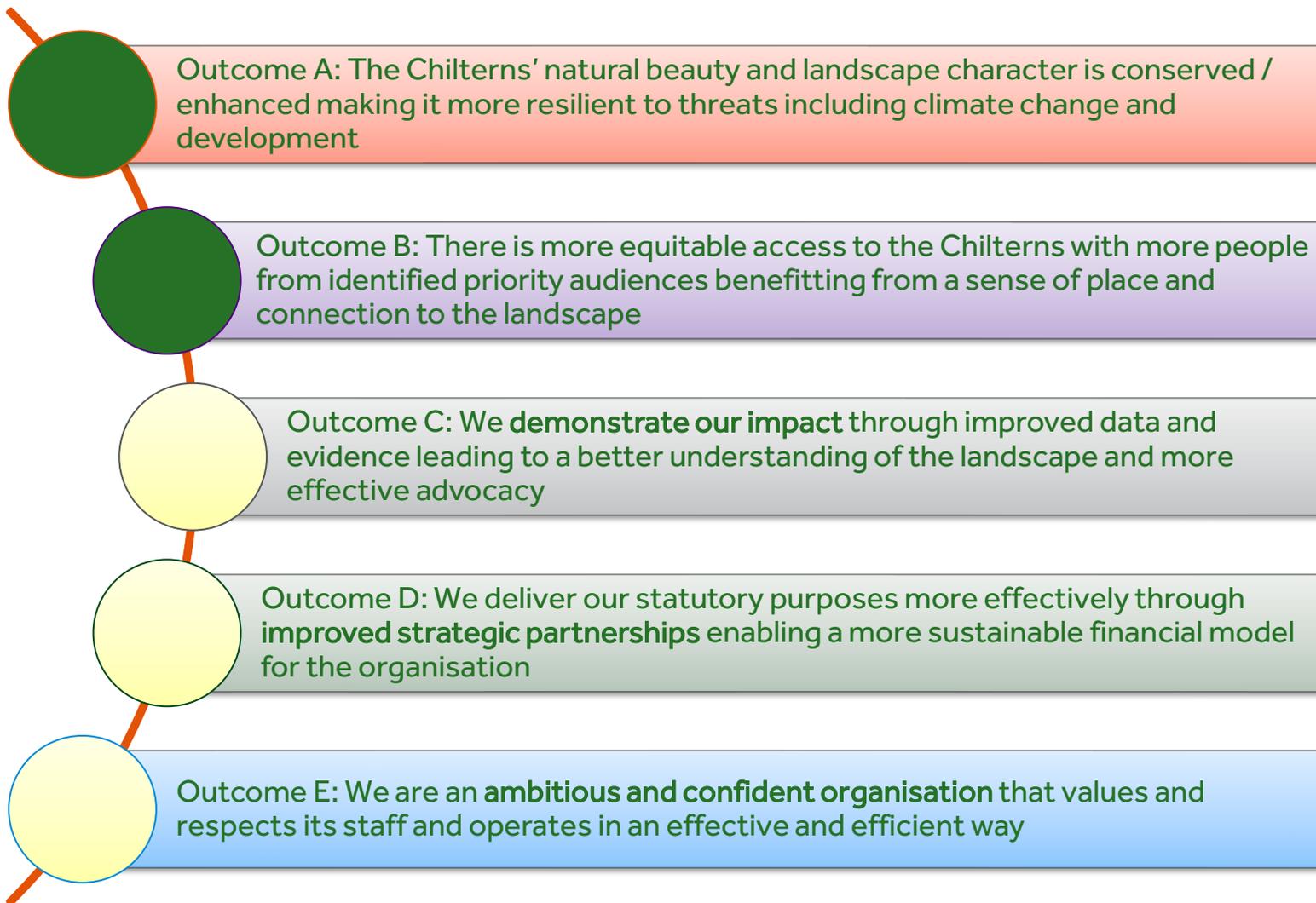
However, outcomes have been set at the delivery level rather than being strategic in terms of what we are looking to achieve as an organisation across a number of years

We also need to have a greater focus on being able to measure our impact





Draft Priority Outcomes for the Organisation (2026-2030) identified by the Senior Leadership Team



Outcomes A and B relate directly to our role in the delivery of the purposes of the Chilterns National Landscape

Outcomes C, D and E relate to the way in which we are looking to achieve those outcomes

Note that there is intended to be overlap between these outcomes (ie we can achieve Outcome A through improved strategic partnerships in Outcome D)



Draft Outcomes Based Approach showing key elements of work needed to achieve each outcome

Outcome A: The Chilterns' natural beauty and landscape character is conserved / enhanced making it more resilient to threats including climate change and development

- A1 Climate Adaptation and Mitigation
- A2 Nature Recovery (Strategy)
- A3 Nature Recovery (Land)
- A4 Nature Recovery (Water)
- A5 Nature Recovery (Woodland)
- A6 Landscape Character and Natural Beauty
- A7 Heritage

Outcome B: There is more equitable access to the Chilterns with more people from identified priority audiences benefitting from a sense of place and connection to the landscape

- B1 Equitable Access
- B2 Understanding & Enjoyment
- B3 Social & Economic Wellbeing
- B4 Health & Wellbeing

Outcome C: We demonstrate our impact through improved data and evidence leading to a better understanding of the landscape and more effective advocacy

- C1 Data Management (GIS)
- C2 Monitoring & Evaluation
- C3 Analysis & Understanding
- C4 Data for Advocacy

Outcome D: We deliver our statutory purposes more effectively through improved strategic partnerships enabling a more sustainable financial model for the organisation

- D1 Partnership Delivery
- D2 Advocacy
- D3 External Awareness
- D4 Sustainable Finance

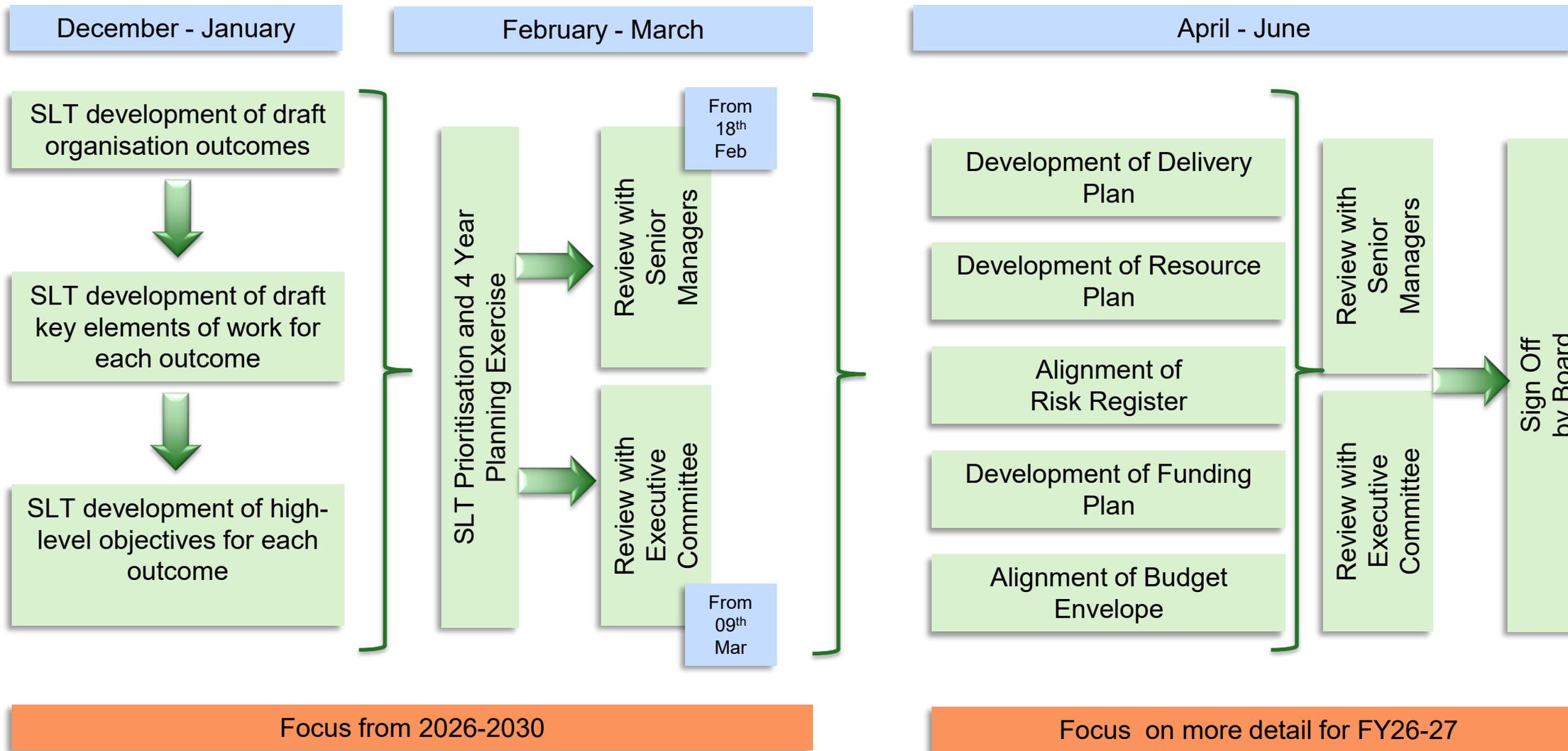
Outcome E: We are an **ambitious and confident organisation** that values and respects its staff and operates in an effective and efficient way

- E1 Strategy
- E2 Organisation Capacity & Capability
- E3 Staff Welfare
- E4 Internal Ways of Working
- E5 Internal Governance and Risk Management





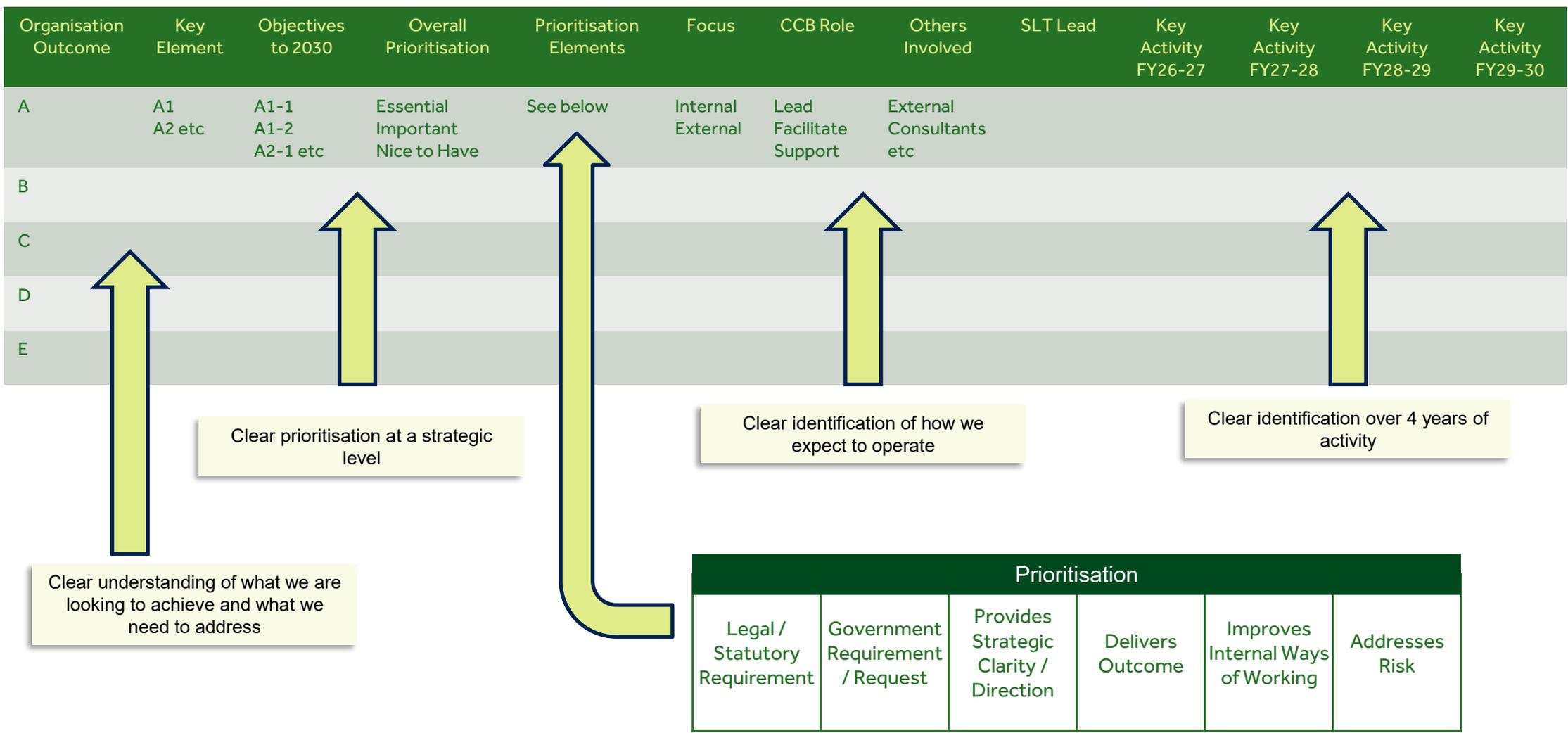
High Level Planning - Approach





High Level Planning – Prioritisation

Below is the template that is being populated to review on March 9th



Recommendation

1. To **NOTE** and **OFFER FEEDBACK** to enable an effective strategy session on March 9th 2006



5. A new section on youth volunteering, work experience and traineeships has been developed and will go live on the Chilterns National Landscape website at the end of March. This is a follow-on from the Next Gen project which identified a gap for this type of information, a one-stop shop pulling together information and signposting to opportunities.
6. There is EDI focused work being delivered through Chilterns National Landscape projects. Mend the Gap has progressed its [Learning through Landscapes](#) project with primary and secondary schools now co-creating enhancement projects within their school grounds.
7. The development of a designated EDI Lead role will further strengthen coordination and ensure continued embedding of EDI across workstreams.
8. The Comms team sent an email to the Board on 3 February updating on negative national media coverage regarding diversity in the countryside stemming from the Race Report. The Chilterns was one of the few National Landscapes named in the coverage, we stand out due to the amount we're doing on accessibility and inclusion. This led to some unpleasant (and in some cases abusive) calls and emails from members of the public. The Comms team put out a [short statement](#) in response, but did not engage further or try to put the record straight on the many falsities in the coverage. Individual staff emails were taken off our website to protect staff. The situation underlined the importance of clear and consistent messaging about why accessibility and inclusion are integral to our organisational vision.

Recommendation:

1. To **NOTE** and **OFFER FEEDBACK** on updates.

APPENDIX 1: Update on Defra Access funded projects 2025/26

Chilterns Total Defra Access grant 2025-26 £429,229		
Approved projects	Amount	Status
National Trust Hughenden/Bradenham/Coombe Hill/Watlington new Access gates and path resurfacing. Major project to install accessible gates which meet modern British Standards to replace older structures and surface upgrades in key locations. The work is spread across 4 popular visitor sites, all open access and close to large urban areas	119,007	On schedule
National Trust Dunstable Downs Chute Wood new access path	60,000	delivered
Chiltern Open Air Museum new access path to roundhouse and interpretation	26,200	On schedule
College Lake path new section of Accessible Path BBOWT	22,647	complete
Chiltern Rangers work experience pilot programme creating digital assets	22,535	On schedule
Centre for Outdoor Accessibility Training mobility vehicles and equipment	22,244	On schedule
CNL project management time on audio guides, digital assets, Access Hub	18,000	On schedule
CNL Project - new Volunteer recruitment and management portal	12,267	On schedule
Luton Henge Access Path upgrade - drainage and surfacing works	10,000	Estimate - tbc
CNL led: Audio guide of the Chilterns Countryside Access guide	9,480	On schedule
Ridgeway National Trail accessibility survey	8,868	complete
National Trust Dunstable Downs sensory Interpretation	6,500	On schedule
CNL led: PHAB additional Access audits, Access guides, videos	6,000	On schedule
Luton Henge design, production, installation of Interpretation at Luton Henge	5,174	On schedule
Sharpshots schools 4 photo workshops and creation of digital assets	5,045	On schedule
Luton Henge Access Path and benches	4,800	complete
CNL led: MoveMedia production of additional Access Videos	6,000	On schedule
CNL project - New Youth section on CNL website - research and content	3,510	On schedule
Chiltern Way finger signs	3,210	complete
Amersham Museum website accessibility improvements	2,868	complete
Dadimas videos and photos	1,950	complete
National Trust Hughenden interpretation board at Coombe Hill	1,744	On schedule
CNL Countryside Access leaflet distribution	1,699	complete
Luton Marsh Farm nature trail video Sidney Sambu	1,600	On schedule
Miles without Stiles design new walks - Chiltern Society	1,200	On schedule
Luton Videography and photography at Luton Henge Festival, Sidney Sambu	700	complete
Dave Olinski (Deep Light Media) EDI videography/images	490	complete
Mik Scarlet - Access workshop, Luton July 2025	400	complete
Total	384,138	

Proposals awaiting decision - can be delivered by 31 March

Chiltern Open Air Museum buggy to transport wheelchair users around site £8,000

Dunstable Downs final section of new Access route to Chute Wood £43,15

Item 3.4 Funding Report

Author: Elaine King, CEO

Purpose of Report: To update the Executive Committee on progress with delivering the Funding Strategy.

Background

This paper provides an update on the CCB's Funding Strategy since the Committee's last meeting in November 2025 and sets out key observations on the current pipeline of externally funded projects.

Future Funding

A key issue facing all Protected Landscapes is uncertainty over future government funding. As reported previously, this financial year is the last of a three-year flat cash settlement. Our income this year therefore comprises: Core Revenue funding (£513,896); Core Capital (CDEL) funding (£347,722), a new, additional fund for all Protected Landscapes; and Access for All Capital funding (£429,229). Defra also confirmed grant funding for the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme of £802,824 for this financial year.

Significant time has been spent by Officers in recent months to use the capital grant most effectively and in line with Defra criteria, while ensuring that we have the staff capacity to oversee delivery of the spending. One positive outcome of exploring all options for using the funds, is that Defra has agreed that we can use 2025/26 CDEL funding to defer future years payments on our office lease (see item 2.4 for further detail).

In early February, we received confirmation from Defra on Protected Landscapes' budgets for 2026/27 and indicative settlements for the subsequent two years to 2028/29. At this stage, the figures provided are top level allocations and we are waiting to hear exactly what settlements the CCB will receive.

We can, however, report the following:

- RDEL and CDEL funding will be a flat cash settlement, broadly similar to this year
- We expect the CDEL criteria for 2026/27 to be similar, which should result in a more efficient allocation of funding
- No changes to the funding formulae for both RDEL and CDEL
- The Access for All programme will conclude at the end of this financial year, but ringfenced capital funding for access improvements will continue in 2026/27 at a similar level and based on the same allocations.
- Defra is exploring a new fund that will contribute towards the Environment Act 2021 wildlife rich habitat creation target. We have provided Defra with indicative ideas on how we might spend the funds.
- Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) is confirmed for three years (as reported previously – see our [response](#) to the announcement in January).

We continue to discuss and share information with the National Landscapes Association (NLA), the Cotswolds Conservation Board and Defra on the two Conservation Boards (Chilterns and Cotswolds) having significantly higher operating costs. We have asked Defra to revisit the funding formula used to allocate funds and it is disappointing that Defra will not be doing so for next year's funding allocation and likely the subsequent two years too.

The reasons for having higher operating costs were set out in the Funding Update to the Board in March 2025. In summary, they comprise the fact that Conservation Boards cannot reclaim VAT, in contrast with all National Parks and all other National Landscapes. We also

need to cover many of our costs in areas including HR advice, legal advice, IT, governance, finance and Health and Safety, plus overheads such as rent, rates, utilities and insurance. See Q3 Finance Report for more detail.

Local Authority contributions

The Defra core grant to Conservation Boards comprises 80% of our core income, with Defra requiring that the other 20% be contributed by the local authorities whose area includes the Chilterns (and Cotswolds) National Landscape. As in the last reporting period, this period involved proactive engagement with local authorities, largely to ensure that we collaborate and use resources most efficiently, and to ensure that local authorities understand the relationship between themselves and the Conservation Board, particularly the requirement to contribute financially to reflect our role in delivering their statutory duties in the designated area.

Engagement has focussed especially on those local authorities that do not contribute the full amount required. These comprise Luton Borough Council (in 2024/25 contributions were £1,019 instead of £8,500), Central Bedfordshire Council (£10,000 instead of £25,496) and Buckinghamshire Council (£55,455 instead of £58,228).

During Q2 and Q3, emails were sent to all three Councils setting out the inward investment contributed by the CCB's activities in those local authority areas in 2024/25. This comprises (at a minimum): £123k for Luton Council; £160k for Central Bedfordshire; and £1.35m for Buckinghamshire Council.

A meeting was held in late November with Luton's CEO, but the Council's position remains unchanged. Buckinghamshire Council has confirmed that it will not be contributing the full amount required this year (and will likely be contributing less next year), and Central Bedfordshire has failed to respond to our emails. We have therefore requested purchase orders from the three Councils for the lower figures for this year.

Diversifying income

We continue to work to secure funds that enable us to recharge to cover core overheads. This includes recharging from projects - where funder rules allow - and from other sources of restricted income. We do need to be more proactive in this area of work, and plans are in place to develop a new Funding Strategy for the coming financial year.

Uncertainty over the timing and extent of our funding from Defra has created an imperative to explore with funders and our partners the best options for securing funding. While we now have indicative figures for the next three years, the imperative remains as a flat settlement is not sufficient to enable us to fully deliver our statutory purposes.

Funding pipeline

The Funding Pipeline is populated and regularly updated and reviewed by the SLT. The bullet points below highlight some key observations that we believe will be of interest to the Executive Committee, focussing especially on risk.

Heritage and nature recovery

- **Affinity Water (Secured)**: Since securing funding for the Farming and Landowner Adviser role in the North Chilterns as reported previously, Affinity Water has expressed interest in supporting the Farming and Landowner Adviser role in the Chess and Misbourne area in FY2025/6. Funding to support this role has now been secured. Harriet Bennett is carrying out this role, with funding split 50/50 between Affinity Water and Thames Water.

- We are now working with National Landscape Association to explore alternative corporate funding for the Tracking the Impact project (and the River Chess citizen science programme) through their green finance platform '[Your Natural Partner](#)'. Tracking the Impact and the Chess citizen science project are the two Chilterns National Landscape projects currently showcased.
- **HS2 Additional Projects: Mending the Misbourne (Secured)** In August 2025, we secured £1m from the HS2 Review Group for the 'Mending the Misbourne' project, which will develop and deliver a strategic river catchment plan for the River Misbourne using a similar delivery template to River Chess Smarter Water Catchments initiative. See news item [here](#). A legal agreement confirming the £1m grant was signed off in early January 2026 and we expect the funds to be transferred to our bank account in the coming weeks.
- **HS2 Chilterns Review Group** – the group was set up under Select Committee assurance in 2019 to develop detailed design principles and oversee allocation of the £3m Additional Project budget. After many months of chasing, we have now received back payments for March 2020 to December 2024 of £15k and are chasing reimbursement for staff contributions from January 2025 onwards.
- **Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) (Secured)** - In January 2026, Defra announced the extension of the programme until FY28/9 with an additional three years for project delivery at £818,310 total allocation per annum for the Chilterns National Landscape. Of this, £548,996 per annum is available for capital project delivery and £115,372 for revenue project delivery. A further six months of administration funding will be available in FY29/30 to cover programme closure costs.
- **Landscape Connections – Nature Ridge (Secured)**: Launched in July 2024, [Landscape Connections](#) is the National Lottery Heritage Fund's 10 year, £150m grants programme, focussing on nature recovery, heritage and people in protected landscapes. As a result of conversations with NLHF and partners, we have worked with the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (leading the bid) and National Trails UK to complete a funding bid for the pre-development project stage. The £259k application for 18-months of funding was confirmed as successful in mid-February and includes £21k to pay for technical advice from CCB staff. The project aims to create a nature corridor focused on the chalk ridge and Ridgeway National Trail as it passes through the two National Landscapes.
- **Chess Smarter Water Catchments (SWC) (Secured)**: Thames Water has advised its intention to offer a further £1.4m to fund work in the Chess catchment for four years until 31 March 2030 through the Chalk Streams Flagship Restoration Project. Any existing underspend can also be used to support the programme of activities in 2026/7. While a welcome development, this is less funding than we had sought and has necessitated reprofiling the proposed work programme and discussing plans and funding allocations with partners.

A legal agreement has been signed for one-year of funding for CCB staff, totalling £178k. We hold £82k of the funding as underspend from FY2025/26 and have invoiced for an additional £96k. The project delivery budget is still to be determined.

- **Natural England Species Recovery Programme (Unsuccessful)**: Towards the end of 2025 we worked in partnership with the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trusts (GWCT) to submit an Expression of Interest to the [Natural England Species Recovery Programme](#). The plan was for GWCT to anchor the application covering work across the Central, Chess Valley and North Chilterns Farmer clusters and focus on targeted works for identified and named Red Listed species (eg Corn Bunting and Duke of Burgundy

butterfly). The total request in the EOI was for £675,901 with £359,930 for work in the Chilterns. Unfortunately, we were advised in December 2025 that the EOI was not successful.

Diversity Equity and Inclusion

- **Defra Access for All funding:** this programme is aimed at improving access to protected landscapes for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. In 2025/26 we received £261,480 of funding with most of it now allocated (we expect all of it to be allocated shortly). We are expecting additional funding in 2026/27. More information and detail of previous projects funded are on our [website](#).
- **Nature Calling:** The Chilterns was one of six hubs participating in this Arts Council and Defra funded programme designed to deepen people's engagement with nature and heritage, and to reach new, underserved communities. Activity focused in and around Luton leading to the development of Luton Henge. The CCB received over £60,000 directly to support the programme to date. More on the project [here](#). The programme finished in November 2025 but legacy activity is in place, with partners and projects using the Henge as an asset for community engagement
- We also supported Luton Council with a successful multi-partner £1 million [bid](#) to the **National Lottery Heritage Fund's Nature Towns and Cities fund** (one of only 19 successful applications). The CCB is a strategic partner on the two-year programme, which commenced in January 2026. The project will focus on nature recovery, providing better physical and emotional connections to nature and ensuring more equal access to public green spaces.

A **Collaborative Targeted Outreach Proposal (CTOP)**, developed by the University of Bedfordshire, following [research](#) funded by the CCB's Chalkscapes project, has been incorporated in the programme. In addition, £5k of CCB advisory time is included for project advice and support on access and heritage.

Recommendation:

1. **To NOTE and OFFER FEEDBACK on updates on delivering the Funding Strategy.**

Item 3.5**CEO Update****Author:**

Elaine King, CEO

Purpose of Report:

To update the Executive Committee on key areas of work since the last Committee meeting.

Background

This report comprises highlights since the Executive Committee meeting in May 2025.

Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

The SLT continues to take oversight of the organisation's activities, meeting weekly to plan, monitor risk, share information and deliver across a range of areas. A key focus of attention has continued to be on ongoing budgeting and business planning (including developing high level outcomes and priority activities for 2026/27), progressing the organisational transformation programme (especially HR Policies, IT and Health and Safety), delivering two team development sessions with an external facilitator, conducting the annual Staff Engagement Survey, and liaising with Defra, MPs and the National Landscapes Association (NLA) on a range of areas.

Other key work being led and managed by the SLT include overseeing the design of the new Chilterns AONB Management Plan and Nature Recovery Plan, and starting to develop a Climate Adaptation Plan, including commissioning some groundbreaking work to provide an evidence base for the impacts of climate change at a landscape scale on chalk landscapes. The systematic review is being conducted in collaboration with the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and the National Landscapes Association and will fill a knowledge gap in existing evidence which focusses more on the effects of climate change on people, habitats and species and at a national, not landscape, level.

Further work includes supporting Defra in recruiting, onboarding and developing lessons learned for new Secretary of State appointed Board members, carrying out inductions and onboarding new Board members, engaging with local authorities (including attempting to secure full financial contributions), exploring funding opportunities, finalising the last tranche of new HR policies, conducting mid-term staff reviews, managing risk, including implementing new systems for risk assessments, and collaborating with the NLA and other National Landscapes.

Local and national government engagement

This period has seen continued high levels of engagement with MPs and local authorities through meetings and emails. We have liaised with MPs on a range of subjects including improving chalk streams protection, advocating for the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme and ongoing MPs' concerns at Natural England's decision to cancel its project to review the Chilterns boundary.

The new All Party Parliamentary Group on National Parks and National Landscapes held its first meeting in October. Hosted by the Campaign for National Parks and supported by the NLA and National Parks England, the group has now met twice and attracted a good number of MPs, including some from the Chilterns. I have been invited to present to a forthcoming meeting and, at the request of the APPG, provided a suggested itinerary for a site visit to the Chilterns National Landscape for the APPG's member MPs and Peers in Spring/Summer.

Meetings with local authorities include Mark Fowler, Luton Borough Council's CEO, in November (with a follow up meeting planned in February 2026), Darren Walsh, CEO, and senior directors at Dacorum Council in December and Richard Ambrose, Service Director at Buckinghamshire Council, also in December.

Time has also been spent in this period on a range of governance related areas. Defra and the NLA are exploring the challenges of the various Protected Landscape governance

arrangements, including that of Conservation Boards. Defra has commissioned the Countryside & Community Research Institute at the University of Gloucestershire and Ecorys to develop a clearer understanding of the values, behaviours, and organisational cultures that shape governance across Protected Landscapes. We are engaging with this research.

Evidence on governance has also been shared with the [Office for Environmental Protection](#). Members will remember that an OEP team visited in mid-October as part of scoping out a new inquiry into National Parks and National Landscapes.

Defra is also engaging more proactively with MHCLG on matters relating to Protected Landscapes, especially where this links to our local authorities, and we provided information to them on financial contributions received from our local authorities and ideas for how better liaison between the two departments could build on good practice and address barriers. MHCLG is also conducting a consultation on statutory consultees. Liaising with the Cotswolds Conservation Board and Chichester Harbour Conservancy, the Planning team has taken the opportunity to advocate for Conservation Boards to be statutory consultees by responding to the consultation. This was discussed in detail under item 2.4 at the December Board meeting.

Defra's campaign to recruit new Secretary of State appointed members to the Board concluded in October. We have liaised with Defra to share our induction material, give feedback on their new induction process for new National Park and Conservation Board members and provide information on our requirements for the 2026 recruitment campaign.

Other liaison with Defra during this period includes Kate and I briefing a senior official on our chalk streams work. They will be visiting us in the Spring. We also responded at short notice, between Christmas and New Year, to a request for the Secretary of State to visit a Chilterns farmer ahead of making announcements at the Oxford Farming Conference in early January. Farmers were lined up and Defra briefed but, unfortunately, other commitments meant the Secretary of State couldn't attend, so we hope that she will visit another time instead, especially as her constituency is in the Chilterns National Landscape!

External engagement

We continue to liaise closely with Tom Beeston, Chief Officer at the Chiltern Society in advocating for the Chilterns National Landscape with MPs, local councils, and their elected members.

Specific meetings with other partners include meeting with BBOWT's CEO, Estelle Bailey, and hosting a visit from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which included meeting with two of our other funders - Rebel Restoration and the Rothschild Foundation - at the Soil Association's Woodoaks Farm.

A not insignificant amount of time has been spent commenting on and finalising the legal agreement with HS2 Ltd for our Mend the Misbourne project. This is now complete and we are liaising with HS2 and Buckinghamshire Council to have the £1m grant funding transferred to us.

Following rumours last year that the government intended to repeal the s85 Protected Landscapes Duty, in early October I signed a letter to the Prime Minister, alongside over 200 people and organisations, that urged him not to repeal the duty and explain its benefits. The government subsequently said that it had no plans to repeal the duty.

However, the duty is still potentially at risk. In November, the independent Nuclear Regulatory Review report made several recommendations to government, including a proposal to remove or limit the Protected Landscapes duty. An FOI request obtained by the Campaign for National Parks (CNP) showed that the taskforce found no evidence of the duty conflicting with nuclear development in any National Park or National Landscape. Campaign organisations are now calling on the Secretary of State for Energy Security, Ed Miliband, to reject the Taskforce's

proposals to repeal or weaken the duty. A decision is expected to be made at the end of February.

See [here](#) for more information on the CNP's campaign and the government's guidance on the new duty [here](#).

Staff changes

In December, we said a fond farewell to two of our longest-serving members of staff. Neil Jackson, Conservation and Landscape Officer retired and Allen Beechey, Project Manager for the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project has moved to pastures new. We took the opportunity to celebrate their work with us at the team walk and Christmas lunch in December. More [here](#).

Staff Engagement Survey

Following the Staff Engagement Survey conducted in October 2024 and a Pulse Check in March 2025, the Survey was repeated in October 2025 and a report provided to the SLT by our HR Advisors in November 2025.

As in 2024, the results were very positive with the report making the overall observation that the CCB has a strong foundation of pride, wellbeing and culture, and recommending that future work focusses on ensuring long-term commitment, clarifying our organisational vision, investing in staff development and ensuring managers are fully equipped to support their staff. Key emerging themes were similar to the 2024 survey and are being addressed by the SLT, with the staff team, as part of ongoing work in this area.

A key theme emerging from the survey is that staff feel well supported with their wellbeing. Nevertheless, we continue to explore further means by which we can support the team and have sought advice from Westfield Health, our group healthcare provider. As a result, we plan to establish four Mental Health First Aiders, with three members of the team booked to conduct their training in March. A Wellbeing Plan is also being drafted.

Organisational Development

The Staff Engagement Survey is a key component of a wider organisational development programme, which includes improving our operational effectiveness and strengthening our organisational culture, shared identity, leadership and resilience. We therefore commissioned Howard Davies, an experienced facilitator and former CEO of the National Landscapes Association, to work with us to deliver two team development sessions.

Held on 24th November and 10th December, the sessions resulted in some very positive and insightful conversations and identified a set of important principles and ideas on our vision, ways of working, culture, structure and leadership. A clear theme from the workshops was a strong sense of shared commitment to the landscape, to each other and to doing the work well. The subsequent report makes some valuable recommendations, and we now intend to maintain the momentum created by discussing the findings with the team, embedding the recommendations into our emerging business plan and organisational strategy, and exploring next steps with Howard.

Other and related operational work includes all staff now confirming that they have read all the new HR policies and all field staff having conducted risk assessments using our new system. An updated Job Grading Framework has also been shared with the team to improve clarity and transparency on salaries and job grades across the organisation. See item 2.4 for more detail.

Recommendation:

- 1. To NOTE and PROVIDE FEEDBACK on the update.**