



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

Thursday 26th March 2026 at 10.00am at

Room A, The Hive, 1 Arnison Ave, High Wycombe HP13 6DD

The online session will be available from 9.45am

AGENDA

1. Standing Items

- 1.1 Apologies for absence
- 1.2 Introductions
- 1.3 Declarations of interest in any of the agenda items
- 1.4 Notice of urgent business
- 1.5 Chair's announcements
- 1.6 Approval of minutes of the previous meeting (11.12.25)
- 1.7 Matters arising
- 1.8 Consideration of motions submitted by members
- 1.9 Public Questions

2. Items for Decision

- 2.1 2026/27 Budget
- 2.2 Appointment of Statutory Officers
- 2.3 Future of Planning Committee

Presentation: Working with Farmers in the Chilterns National Landscape: Nick Marriner, Nature Recovery Manager

3. Items for Noting / Information

- 3.1 Planning Function Report
- 3.2 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- 3.3 Statutory Purposes, Duties, Powers and Functions

4. Minutes & Recommendations of Committees

- 4.1 Executive Committee draft minutes (26.02.26)
- 4.2 Planning Committee draft minutes (22.01.26)

5. Any urgent business

6. Next meeting: Thursday 25th June, 10am, St Leonards Parish Hall, Jenkins Lane, St Leonards, Tring, HP23 6NW

Meeting ends

Close 1.00pm

Future meeting dates 2026

Planning Committee	Executive Committee	Board
Thursday 30 April Location Chinnor Offices	Tuesday 19 May	Thursday 25 June (inc AGM)
Thursday 29 October Location Chinnor Offices	Tuesday 1 September	Thursday 1 October (Strategy tbc)
	Thursday 19 November	Thursday 10 December

Dr Elaine King, Chief Executive Officer

Summary of Actions Required

Agenda number	Agenda item	Actions required
1.	Standing Items	
1.1	Apologies for absence	
1.2	Introductions	
1.3	Declaration of interest in any of the agenda items	
1.4	Notice of urgent business	
1.5	Chair's announcements	
1.6	Approval of minutes of the previous meeting (11.12.25)	APPROVE
1.7	Matters arising	
1.8	Consideration of motions submitted by members	
1.9	Public Questions	
2.	Items for Decision	
2.1	2026/27 Budget	APPROVE
2.2	Appointment of Statutory Officers	APPROVE
2.3	Future of Planning Committee	APPROVE
3.	Items for Noting / Information	
3.1	Planning Function Report	NOTE
3.2	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion	NOTE
3.3	Statutory Purposes, Duties, Powers and Functions	NOTE
4.	Minutes & Recommendations of Minutes	
4.1	Executive Committee meeting draft minutes (26.02.26)	NOTE
4.2	Planning Committee meeting draft minutes (22.01.26)	NOTE
5.	Any urgent business	
6.	Next meeting: Thursday 25 th June 2026, 10am, St Leonards Parish Hall, Jenkins Lane, St Leonards, Tring, HP23 6NW	

Board Meeting

Thursday 11th December 2025

Chilterns National Landscape

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CONSERVATION BOARD FOR
THE CHILTERNs AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
Held in The Jubilee Room, The Gateway Offices, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury
Buckinghamshire HP19 8FF on Thursday 11th December 2025 at 10.00am.**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Appointed by Local Authorities

Cllr Louise Price (Chair)
 Cllr Justine Fulford
 Cllr Gavin McLauchlan
 Cllr Philip Spicer
 Cllr Martin Tett
 Cllr Caroline Smith-Wright
 Cllr Adrian England

Appointing Body

Three Rivers District Council
 Buckinghamshire Council
 Oxfordshire County Council
 Central Bedfordshire Council
 Buckinghamshire Council
 Hertfordshire County Council
 Dacorum Borough Council

Appointed by the Secretary of State

Juliet Vickery
 Cat Moncrieff
 Simon Mortimer
 Gemma Harper
 Jennifer Morgan
 Baljit Dhillon
 Matthew Stanton

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

Elected by Parish Councils

Cllr John Harfield
 Cllr John Griffin
 Cllr Charles Hussey

Bedfordshire Parish Councils
 Oxfordshire Parish Councils
 Buckinghamshire Parish Council

CCB Staff

Dr Elaine King
 Dr Matt Thomson

 Dr Kate Heppell
 Dr Victoria Thomson
 Graham Hurst
 Kathryn Foster
 Neil Jackson
 Gareth Clay
 Allen Beechey
 Dr Wendy Morrison
 Eloise Small
 Lorna Coldwell

Chief Executive Officer
 Head of Strategy and Planning
 Deputy Monitoring Officer
 Head of Landscape
 Planning Adviser (Policy)
 Finance Officer (s151 Officer)
 Senior Finance Manager
 Conservation and Landscape Officer
 Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer
 Chilterns Chalk Streams Project Manager
 Heritage & Archaeology Manager
 Administration Officer
 Clerk to the Board

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Other

No members of the public were present.

25/26.14 Standing Items

14.1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from:

Officers:

Andy Brock-Doyle – Head of Operations

Board Members:

Cllr Greg Smith, Buckinghamshire Council

Cllr Hector Sants*, Buckinghamshire Parish Councils

Cllr Sue Rowland*, Oxfordshire Parish Councils

Cllr James Norman*, South Oxfordshire District Council

*(Those * joined the meeting online)*

14.2 Introductions

Introductions were made by all, including those online.

14.3 Declarations of Interest in any of the agenda items

None declared.

14.4 Notice of Urgent Business

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

14.5 Chair's Announcements

The Chair discussed the National Landscapes Association Chairs and Lead Officers event and said it was good to meet other Chairs and to discuss their experiences and hear more about the issues they face.

14.6 Approval of Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 25.09.25 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

14.7 Matters Arising

None.

14.8 Considerations of motions submitted by members

No motions submitted.

14.9 Public Question Time.

No public present.

25/26.15 Items for Decision

15.1 Board and Committee Meetings and Dates 2026

The meeting calendar for meetings in 2026 was proposed as:

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Thursday 11th December 2025Planning Committee:Thursday 22nd January, 10am Chinnor OfficesThursday 30th April, 10am Chinnor OfficesThursday 29th October, 10am Chinnor OfficesExecutive Committee:Thursday 26th February, ChinnorThursday 19th May, ChinnorThursday 1st September, ChinnorThursday 19th November, ChinnorBoard:Thursday 26th March, AylesburyThursday 25th June (including AGM)Thursday 1st October (Strategy tbc)Thursday 10th December

Matt Thomson, Deputy Monitoring Officer, advised that he is aware that setting dates for the following year in December is proving difficult with diary management, and the dates for 2027 will be agreed earlier, likely at the June AGM.

There have been issues recruiting for the Planning Committee for some time, resulting in quoracy issues. A paper will be brought to the March Board meeting outlining options for the future of the committee including converting to an advisory panel, which would decrease the administrative burdens on Officers needed to run effectively and also allow members to meet online. There are very clear procedures set out in legislation that must be met for a Committee, including the requirement for attendance in person to contribute to being quorate.

The Chair of the Planning Committee, Cllr Sue Rowland, commented that should the Committee become an advisory group or similar that increased communications between members and Officers would be needed to make any panel more effective. She also said that planning is one of the most important functions of the CCB and would be disappointed to lose the perceived status that comments from a committee gives, versus those from a panel. Cllr Tett agreed that planning will be the most important issue to face the Chilterns over the coming years, following government proposals.

It was noted that the CCB is not currently a statutory consultee on planning matters or Local Plans, only for nationally significant infrastructure projects. Currently the Planning Committee tends to retrospectively ratify any comments that have been submitted by Officers, as per the scheme of delegation agreed at the September Board meeting and in line with the objectives contained within the Management Plan. The advantages and disadvantages of any proposals will be examined when ideas are presented to the board in March.

Elaine King, the Chief Executive Officer, confirmed that planning is a priority for the team and there are no plans to underplay its importance, it is about finding the most efficient way to proceed. Juliet Vickery suggested some form of training for Board members to increase knowledge regarding planning for those who do not feel equipped in this area, which was agreed as a good idea and will be investigated further.

The Planning Inspectorate runs webinars that could be utilised. It was noted that planning expertise is not necessarily needed, rather a "common sense" approach, with Officers using their expertise to explain planning points. The Real Time System was rarely utilised by board members, and more Officer time was spent supporting its use. Now the

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organisation is moving to SharePoint, it is hoped this will address the problems and Board members will have greater and easier access to planning documents.

Matthew Stanton offered to join the Planning Committee as an additional Secretary of State appointee.

Cllr Sants suggested a standing item be included on the Board agenda for planning to signal the importance of the matter and to allow time to be given to it by Board members.

1. **The Board APPROVED the dates for the Board meetings to be held in 2026**
2. **The Board APPROVED the dates for the Executive Committee meetings to be held in 2026**
3. **The Board INSTRUCTED Officers to explore dates for the 2027 meeting schedule**
4. **The Board OFFERED FEEDBACK as set out above and INSTRUCTED Officers to develop options for the Planning Committee, for Board approval in March 2026, and in the meantime APPROVED the Planning Committee dates for 2026.**

15.2 English Devolution/Local Government Reorganisation

Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning, had provided a detailed paper regarding the plans for local authorities to seek approval from central government to replace the current tiers of local government with unitary and strategic authorities.

All Local Authorities have now submitted their expressions of interest. There has been some agreement between Local Authorities and still some outcomes yet to be revealed as to which will merge or not into new unitary authorities. There are many potential outcomes, with varying implications. It is likely that the western end of the Chilterns National Landscape area will become a single unitary authority covering South Oxfordshire and one strategic authority over that. Buckinghamshire Council is already a unitary authority and also its own strategic authority. It is expected that the eastern side will be a much denser concentration of unitary and strategic authorities, retaining two in Bedfordshire and two or three in Hertfordshire (for authorities in both counties covering the Chilterns), which will result in an odd pattern across the Chilterns National Landscape.

Where the organisation will fit into the new distribution of functions is still unclear and there may be a governance issue surrounding number of Local Authority appointees and a possible impact on funding. Local Authority members are asked to provide whatever intelligence they have. Cllr McLauchlan advised it is a tricky situation; proposals were submitted at the end of November, but no response is expected for several months, and postponements may happen. His opinion is that until more is certain there is nothing to proceed with. Cllr Tett advised that following a change of personnel in central government since the plans were originally announced, ideas may alter further.

The powers for both authorities are still vague, and in nine priority areas have been identified, none of which include the Chilterns. Simon Mortimer commented that there may well be implications for the governance of the Board, as the original 15 Local Authorities may possibly decrease to six, which would influence numbers of Local Authorities appointees versus Secretary of State appointees. The Board agreed that at this time there was little point spending too much Officer time until more information is available from central government.

The Chief Executive Officer, Elaine King, explained how the Local Government Reorganisation may link to governance work being explored by Defra in relation to

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National Landscapes and National Parks. For example, Defra is exploring the general power of competence for National Landscapes/Conservation Boards. Other, non-Conservation Board National landscapes are following developments more closely since they are embedded in local authorities so a reorganisation is significant for them. Defra ministers have also said they want our statutory purposes to emphasise nature recovery. However, this risks damaging the current holistic nature of our purposes in relation to the natural beauty of the landscape, and already includes nature along with cultural heritage, archaeology, chalk streams, etc. To make nature “front and centre” indicates a lack of understanding of our existing purposes.

Gemma Harper offered that whilst the Board needs to focus on the day to day business, it should consider the future and the appetite for risk. Whilst the Board cannot influence many elements, it can influence others. Focus should be on adapting to pressures on the landscape.

Cllr Sants suggested to liaise closely with Defra and ask what their vision is for National Landscapes and National Parks. The relationship with Defra is already good at different levels and the organisation has a good opportunity to influence.

Cllr Tett asked for a list of the organisation’s current statutory purposes, the importance of them, and how they may change in the future. The CEO advised that these would be circulated.

Cllr Spicer suggested setting out a timeline of work that the organisation has carried out, along with how the political structure has altered along the way and how, if at all, this has changed the Board’s aspirations. This would enable people to see the milestones and achievements from over the years.

Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning, advised that there are plans for a follow up induction session for new members and a refresher programme for longer-standing members. This will include detail on our statutory purposes and will be extended to staff members.

The Chair commented that it was a productive discussion, and a complex area with many uncertainties, so information sharing will be important as the situation unfolds. All Local Authority members agreed to engage with senior members and feedback information of importance.

Cllr Adrian England arrived at 10.54

- 1. The Board NOTED the updates provided by Officers**
- 2. The Board GAVE FEEDBACK as above in relation to the devolution and local government reorganisation programmes, and ADVISED officers not to devote further resources engaging with local authorities’ reorganisation programmes for at least two years**
- 3. The Board INSTRUCTED Officers to continue to engage with Defra to discover where the organisation should be heading towards for the future**

15.3 Statutory Officers

Matt Thomson, Deputy Monitoring Officer, provided a paper with details of the three statutory officers the Chilterns National Landscape is required to have. This is similar to a Local Authority. The roles are the Head of Paid Services (Chief Executive Officer), which is not altering, the Monitoring Officer and the S151 Finance Officer. Both of the latter are proposed to be altered.

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The current Monitoring Officer is Jenny Caprio, Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer at Buckinghamshire Council. The S151 Officer is Graham Hurst who is employed by the CCB and plans to retire at the end of March 2026. It is proposed to bring both roles in house and to ensure best practice by bringing both roles onto the Senior Leadership Team. It was proposed that Matt Thomson, currently Deputy Monitoring Officer to become the Monitoring Officer, and Kathryn Foster, the Senior Finance Manager, to become the S151 Officer. There were no objections. Thanks were given to both previous officers for their assistance and support.

- 1. The Board APPROVED re-appointing the statutory role of Monitoring Officer and Finance (section 151) Officer and INSTRUCTED the CEO to take the necessary actions for Board approval in March 2026**

15.4 Planning Statutory Consultee Consultation

A current Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) consultation aims to review and simplify the statutory consultee system. It provides an opportunity for the Chilterns Conservation Board to seek identification as a statutory consultee which it is not for planning applications and Local Plans. Statutory consultees benefit from a requirement on the decision maker to consult them on certain types of plans or proposals; in return there is a requirement on statutory consultees to give a 'substantive' response when consulted.

Members agreed that this is not an opportunity to miss: the CCB is tasked with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the landscape: there are currently no statutory consultees for this aspect of the environmental impact of development proposals; Natural England is a statutory consultee only for impacts on SSSIs and agriculture, but decision-makers expect them to respond on landscape matters too. Being a statutory consultee on planning applications would give the CCB ability to fulfil its statutory purposes. Board members expressed surprise that the CCB is not already a statutory consultee on all matters and gave full support to efforts to strengthen our influence

Matthew Stanton suggested that if not granted statutory consultee status, the team could instead work with existing statutory consultees to ensure that landscape and natural beauty matters are included in their responses. Any financial implications of the additional staff capacity required would need to be assessed, although there is a possibility that fees could be reclaimed.

The Head of Strategy and Planning requested that recommendation (b) be disregarded since statutory consultee roles should not be duplicated between organisations, and CCB were better placed to respond on landscape matters than NE.

- 1. The Board GAVE FEEDBACK as noted above and ADVISED Officers of its view with regards to principles and the nature of a consultation response, including with regard to other National Landscapes**
- 2. The Board ADVISED Officers to seek the identification of the Chilterns Conservation Board as a statutory consultee**
- 3. The Board ADVISED formalising the Chilterns Conservation Board's status in development plan preparation by seeking specific consultation body status and development plan prescribed body status**

Philip Spicer left the meeting at 12.00

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Thursday 11th December 2025**15.5 Deer Management in the Chilterns**

Neil Jackson, Conservation and Landscape Officer, advised the board that deer numbers are continuing to grow at a rapid rate, and this is impacting on the Chilterns National Landscape. The Nature Recovery Plan highlights the importance of sustainable deer management to ensure practical nature recovery. The Chilterns has a high number of wooded areas, many of which have no substantial ground flora, as it is all eaten by deer. Excessive deer numbers also have a detrimental effect on farmers' crops and can be responsible for road traffic accidents.

Other National Landscapes and the National Landscape Association are working on this issue and want to encourage decision makers to recognise the seriousness of this issue, and particularly to help with funding.

The proposed strategy will be evidence-led and include monitoring and evidence gathering to underpin decision-making. This will be made explicit.

The importance of good communications to educate the public was noted, and the Communications team is creating new webpages to explain our approach to highlight the importance of sustainable management and the need for reducing numbers. It was suggested that this work includes highlighting the health benefits of venison and the importance supporting local food supply chains.

1. The Board APPROVED the proposal to support improved deer management in the Chilterns National Landscape

Thanks were given to Allen Beechey and Neil Jackson who are both, after many years of service, leaving the CCB in December 2025. Their achievements and impact on the organisation are enormous, speeches as tribute were made by Cllrs Hussey and Fulford. The Chief Executive Officer, Elaine King presented them each with a gift from the Board.

Cllr Martin Tett left the meeting at 12.25

Cllr Adrian England left the meeting

A presentation was given by Gareth Clay, Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer: *An Update on the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme (FiPL) in the Chilterns National Landscape*

The Chair, Cllr Price commented it was good to hear about the work being carried out on the ground, and the Chief Executive Officer, Elaine King advised that the FiPL Officer and team have been great at highlighting the wide range of projects funded through the programme, including reporting to Defra on our achievements and the value of the funding. Government ministers recognise the importance of the programme, and it is hoped that more funding will be allocated.

Matthew Stanton left the meeting at 13.03.

25/26.16 Items for Noting/Information

None.

25/26.17 Minutes and Recommendations of Committees

Board Meeting

Thursday 11th December 2025**17.1 Executive Committee Draft minutes (13.11.25)**

1. The Board NOTED the draft Committee minutes

17.2 Planning Committee Draft Minutes (23.10.25)

1. The Board NOTED the draft Committee minutes

25/26.18 Any Urgent Business

None.

25/26.19 Next MeetingThe next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 26th March 2026, venue to be confirmed.**Future meeting dates for 2026:**

Planning Committee Meetings	Executive Committee Meetings	Board Meetings
Thursday 22 nd January, 10am Chinnor Offices	Thursday 26 th February, 10am Chinnor	Thursday 26 th March, 10am Gateway Offices, Aylesbury
Thursday 30 th April, 10am Chinnor Offices	Thursday 19 th May, 10am Chinnor	Thursday 25 th June (including AGM)
	Thursday 1 st September, 10am Chinnor	Thursday 1 st October (Strategy tbc)
Thursday 29 th October, 10am Chinnor Offices	Thursday 19 th November, 10am Chinnor	Thursday 10 th December

The meeting was closed at 13.05.

The Chair.....

Date.....

Item 2.1 Budget Envelope 2026/27**Author:** Kathryn Foster, Senior Finance Manager**Purpose:** To set out a proposed 2026-27 Core Budget envelope for approval by 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)

- Our 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 was presented to Executive Committee on 26th February and the Committee recommends this to the Board for approval.
- The budget envelope has been completed at a high level with reference to staffing/resources and an overall/historic review for our other cost categories. A final budget will be brought to the Board for approval at its meeting in June, once the 2026/27 business planning process is complete. The deficit is anticipated to be at or around the level in the table above.
- Our 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 deficit for 25/26 of £66k (budgeted deficit: £118k) we are predicting a net deficit of **£14k** aggregated over the three years 24/25 to 26/27. On reviewing our February management accounts, we are confident that our current year deficit is in line with forecasts and is indeed likely to improve as we work through allocating some final core costs to CDEL.

2. Income

- We have now received confirmation of Defra funding allocations for Revenue (RDEL), Capital (CDEL), Access for All and the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. and these figures are included in our budget envelope. We also have indicative figures from Defra for 27/28 and 28/29 which has allowed us to develop a three-year budget plan. The settlements are flat, so we have the ongoing pressures of inflation and still no provision made in the funding formula for Conservation Boards incurring additional costs, but the certainty is nevertheless welcome.
- 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. For now, we have therefore included 25/26 levels (£129k) with no increases expected. Since the Executive Committee meeting on 26th February, Buckinghamshire Council has written to advise they will reduce their contribution for 26/27 by £14k due to financial constraints. We intend to seek inflationary increases from other Local Authorities for 2026/27. Luton Borough Council has indicated that it will be increasing its annual contributions to the required level, which would be an increase of £7k. We are waiting for confirmation of this. We also hope to save £7.5k if SODC waives the business rates that it currently charges us.
- 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 reduction in employers' contributions of 4.6% (currently 20.9%; new contribution being 16.3%). This is now confirmed as being effective from 1 April 2026. 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 annually to Core staff costs.
- 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
 - GIS role 0.4 FTE £15k – with the Heritage & Archaeology Manager leaving, and our Landscape and Conservation Officer 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. The latter will meet the income generation criterion, as they would be involved in securing funding.
- 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, the latter of 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 two years - £3.25k in 26/27 and 27/28. In addition, we have made a provision in 26/27 to cover Not Bourne Yesterday staff costs between the end of Development Phase funding and hearing from the Lottery on whether the project will be funded through to the Delivery Phase. Submission is now planned for August instead of May, with decision in early December), total cost in 26/27 £21k.
- 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 and developing our Annual Review (which will support our fundraising activities).

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 27/86 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. The figures presented for 27/28 and 28/29 are worst case scenarios. 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 saving measures being explored (including investigating registering for VAT refunds and business rates exemptions (see Executive Committee Q3 Finance paper).
 - Utilising Defra additional funding both for CDEL and the new Wildlife-Rich Habitats creation fund (criteria to be confirmed). Defra has also indicated that further funding pots may come on stream in due course.

Recommendation

- 1. To APPROVE the budget envelope 26/27; full detailed final budget to be presented for approval at the June Board meeting.**
- 2. To APPROVE the 3% pay rise included in our budget envelope for all staff effective 1 April 2026.**
- 3. To NOTE the initial projections for 27/28 onwards and provide feedback.**

Item 2.3**Future of Planning Committee**

Author: Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy & Planning

Purpose of Report: Summary of purpose and intended outcome.

Background

1. This paper responds to the Board's resolution at its December 2025 meeting to instruct officers to develop options for the future of Planning Committee for the Board's approval.

Matters for consideration in relation to the future of Planning Committee

2. The purpose of any committee (under local government legislation, which is applied to the CCB by the CROW Act 2000 and CCB's [Establishment Order](#)) is to discharge those functions of the Board that are delegated to the committee. Administrative requirements (including in relation to membership, quorum, publicity, meeting in person, public attendance, recording of minutes, etc.) are attached to the operation of committees commensurate with this role to ensure openness, accountability, etc.
3. The administrative burden and cost of operating CCB's Planning Committee is not justified by the nature of the Board's functions that are delegated to it. As previously noted, the Committee has had problems with maintaining membership and achieving quorum due to the statutory requirements of committees, especially the requirement to meet in person.
4. Other than appointing its chair and deputy chair, co-opting members, and having the authority to appoint sub-committees, the only function specifically delegated to Planning Committee is "the decision to develop or publish for consultation" policies or strategies relevant to planning matters: the decision to approve/adopt such policies or strategies is reserved to the Board. Delegation to officers of the function of responding to planning consultations is also subject to retrospective endorsement by the Committee. For the most part, in practice Planning Committee operates as an advisory panel to officers and to the Board.
5. One argument advanced in favour of retaining a Planning Committee suggests that this signals the importance that the Board places on its planning function. An alternative perspective is that the importance of a function to the Board is usually signalled by not delegating that function to a committee, and reserving decisions on that function only to full meetings of the Board (such as approval of the budget or Management Plan). Indeed, constitutionally, the Board has signalled the importance it places on planning matters by reserving to the Board significant decisions, including the approval of new or revised CCB planning policies and the approval of responses to consultations that depart from normal Board policy: such decisions have always been reserved to the Board, despite having a Planning Committee.
6. Another argument is that consultation responses may carry more weight if they bear the imprimatur of having been considered by the Committee. In practice, however, it is rare for (a) consultations to be considered by the Committee in advance of submission of a response, and (b) the decision-maker to be made aware of the consideration of a response by the Committee. Furthermore, if there was no Committee, the relevant imprimatur would be that of the full Board, which arguably would carry more weight.

7. In practice, Planning Committee's decision-making authority is restricted to directing officers' responses in the rare cases of matters live at the time of a meeting, and to retrospectively endorsing responses submitted by officers under their delegated authority. The added value of retrospectively endorsing submissions that have already been made is low, and there is a need to focus discussions on looking ahead, such as developing policies in response to development trends or changes in legislation. There is also a question of balancing the scrutiny of officers' work across the organisation: rather than signalling the importance placed by the Board on its planning function, the unique scrutiny of the planning team's work by Planning Committee arguably signals a lack of faith in its planning officers, since no other function of the CCB is required to run decisions made in line with Board policies and priorities under delegated authority past the Board or a committee, and having to do so adds to officers' already heavy workloads.
8. Finally, it is worth noting that the Cotswolds National Landscape does not maintain a formal Planning Committee. Their planning function operates effectively through its Board and an informal Planning & Infrastructure Working Group, and we are not aware of their Board's commitment to planning being questioned.

Proposed Options

9. Four options are proposed as follows:
10. **No fundamental change:** Planning Committee is retained in its current format (possibly with small tweaks to its TORs and/or delegation - to be discussed in the medium term).
 - a. **Pros:** easy to do; maintains signal of importance attached to planning function (but see para 5).
 - b. **Cons:** retains administrative burdens; does not address membership, quorum and in-person requirements and other issues identified above.
11. **Hybrid – less active Planning Committee with informal Planning Panel:** Planning Committee is retained as an entity, but without regular scheduled meetings. Committee members are simultaneously appointed to an advisory Planning Panel, which will meet regularly, but allowing for online or hybrid meetings and reducing other administrative burdens. Panel meetings could also be more open to other Board members, but without quorum or membership requirements. Meetings of the formal Planning Committee to be convened on an *ad hoc* basis to address key matters.
 - a. **Pros:** maintains signal of importance attached to the planning function (but see para 5); maintains body to discharge Board functions (but see para 4); allows for more responsive regular advisory meetings, without quorum or attendance requirements and other administrative burdens.
 - b. **Cons:** complex; membership of the Planning Committee would still need to meet legal requirements, including appointment by the Board; meetings of the formal Committee would still need to meet quorum and in-person requirements.
12. **Planning Panel only** (this is your officers' recommendation): Dissolve Planning Committee and replace with an advisory Planning Panel with no statutory restrictions on membership, quorum, notice, public attendance, in-person attendance etc. Planning Panel to meet both regularly and as needed, online or hybrid, open to other Board members. Panel could have a set membership (approved by the Board as for Planning Committee) or could comprise whichever

Board members are able to attend at the time. All key decisions on planning matters reserved to the Board.

- a. **Pros:** resolves all issues identified above; maintains Board member input into planning activities on an advisory basis (as currently); maintains signal of importance placed by the Board on the planning function.
 - b. **Cons:** none.
13. **Dissolve Planning Committee without replacing it:** Key decisions reserved to the Board, with officer delegation in line with delegation principles, undertaken without the need for retrospective endorsement (as applies to all other officer activities).
- a. **Pros:** very easy to do; reduces pressure on planning team; regularises Board approval of key planning decisions, giving greater attention to planning matters.
 - b. **Cons:** fails to maintain the perceived signal of importance attached to planning by the Board (but see para 5).
14. Your officers are in agreement that the most appropriate way forward is option 3 “Planning Panel only”, for the reasons given in para 12, and this is the basis of the recommendation below.
15. Whichever solution is selected by the Board (including a different option or amendment to the options above), details will need to be worked up, including necessary changes to the Constitution, draft TORs, etc. It is therefore suggested that Planning Committee meets as usual in April, pending the Board’s approval of the necessary constitutional changes etc. at its June meeting.

Additional questions

16. Whichever solution the Board selects, there are additional questions the Board may wish to consider, including the following:
17. **Co-optees:** The Board’s committees are entitled to co-opt up to four non-voting members to fill skills gaps, gaps in geographical coverage, address diversity issues, etc. If retained as a committee, this will continue to be Planning Committee’s responsibility. Consideration may be given to enabling the Planning Panel to co-opt members too, or reserve decisions on co-option to the Board (the latter would be the preference of officers). An informal Panel would also be free to co-opt on the basis of a specified number of representatives from an organisation (e.g. the Chiltern Society) rather than specific individuals.
18. **Chair/deputy chair:** Should a Panel have a chair and deputy chair selected from Board members, or should the Panel be chaired by officers? (Officers have no particular preference, but note the allowances question below.)
19. **Allowances and expenses:** Consideration will need to be given to whether Panel members should be entitled to (a) an additional allowance similar to the existing Committee member allowance (and special allowance for the Committee Chair), and (b) claim reasonable expenses. This will necessarily need to be considered in light of the available budget, but it would be officers’ recommendation that permanent Panel members should be entitled to an allowance, given the nature of the work, including a special allowance for the Panel chair (if such a post is retained). However, it is our consideration that expenses should not be paid (subject to exceptional circumstances) since the Panel can meet online.

Recommendation

1. That the Board **RESOLVES** to dissolve the Planning Committee after its April meeting and to appoint an advisory Planning Panel at the Board's AGM in June, subject to the approval of necessary changes to the Constitution and of Terms of Reference for the Panel.
2. That the Board **INSTRUCTS** officers to draft the necessary changes to the Constitution and Terms of Reference for the Planning Panel, and make proposals in response to the matters raised in paras 17-19 above, in consultation with the Board chair and chair of Planning Committee, for approval at the Board's AGM in June.

Item 3.1**Planning Function Report****Author:**

Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy & Planning

Purpose of Report:

To update the Board on the activities of CCB's planning function.

Background

1. At its December 2025 meeting, the Board requested that a standing item on planning activity be included on the Board agenda to signal the importance of the matter and to allow time to be given to it by Board members. The request aligns with the suggestion that there should be greater communication from officers to the Board on planning activities generally.
2. Please note:
3. The 'Planning Team' refers to the officers/contractors working specifically on planning matters for the CCB, which are currently:
 - a. Matt Thomson (Head of Planning & Strategy; c.1-2 dpw on planning)
 - b. Mike Stubbs (consultant planning adviser (Development Management); approx. 2-3 days/week)
 - c. Victoria Thomson (consultant planning adviser (Policy); approx. 2-3 days/week)
4. The 'Planning Function' is used to describe both what we do and who we are, the latter of which includes the Planning Team, Planning Committee (and/or its successor) and may include any other officer, contractor or volunteer contributing to this work.

New monthly Planning Update

5. Officers immediately began work on a monthly "Planning Update" intended to facilitate the distribution of information about CCB's planning activities, initially for Planning Committee members, with the intention of gradually increasing circulation. Editions of Planning Update covering activity for the following months have subsequently been circulated as follows:
 - [December 2025](#), circulated as a 'pilot' with Planning Committee papers, 16 January 2026.
 - [January 2026](#), circulated to Planning Committee members, 4 February 2026.
 - [February 2026](#), circulated to all Board members, Planning Committee co-optees and the CCB staff team, 26 February 2026.(Please note that links should work for Board members and staff, but not for external readers.)
6. Further information on CCB's planning activities may be found in the draft minutes of Planning Committee included as item 4.2 with this agenda, and in the Planning Committee papers which may be downloaded from [here](#).

Coming soon: Planning Briefings

7. The planning team is currently working on a number of "Planning Briefings", which will be made available initially to Board members and staff. The idea of these briefings is to record thinking on key issues (even if not associated with a consultation response or other advocacy work) or provide information about new policies or legislation. A number of briefings are in the pipeline, including on the interpretation of the Protected Landscapes Duty (for us as a Conservation Board,

under s.85 of the CROW Act). New Planning Briefings will be noted in and linked from Planning Updates.

Q4 2025/26 Planning “Highlights”

8. This quarter, we have been mostly working on the following (greater detail on these is being prepared for Planning Committee in April):
 - Understanding interpretations by the Courts, Secretaries of State and the Planning Inspectorate of the **Protected Landscapes Duty**, or at least trying to.
 - Responding to MHCLG’s consultation on **Statutory Consultees** in the Planning System, following the Board’s steer at its December 2025 meeting, including seeking statutory consultee status for Conservation Boards for planning applications and local plans. In doing so we engaged with the National Landscapes Association (NLA) and Cotswolds colleagues.
 - Working with the NLA on its [response to the National Planning Policy Framework consultation](#).
 - Providing a high-level CCB response to MHCLG’s parallel consultation on **Design and Placemaking** Planning Practice Guidance, expressing concern about the reduction of clarity about and emphasis upon the importance of recognising context in the design of places (“context” being the features of the site itself and its surroundings, including landform, topography, geography, landscape character, landscape and visual impact, and views inwards and outwards). NLA and other NL colleagues who had not had capacity to focus on this consultation welcomed our submission.
 - Responding to Buckinghamshire Council’s informal consultation on potential development sites to include in its emerging **Local Plan for Buckinghamshire** (ahead of the formal publication expected before the end of July 2026).
 - Preparing for and participating in hearings for the public examination into the **Dacorum Local Plan**, and gearing up to respond to another new planning application for 1,400 homes on **land east of Tring** (refused on appeal by the Secretary of State mere months ago, and subject to significant objection at the local plan examination). See the [Dacorum Local Plan Planning Briefing](#).
 - Preparing a response to the **Grand Union Canal Transfer** nationally significant infrastructure project proposal consultation, including working with the Landscapes team and other stakeholders including the National Trust.
 - Other significant proposals as set out in the Planning Updates linked above. Planning proposal (development management) casework represents a major proportion of our workload, but is difficult to summarise concisely. The team is looking at how best to report on trending issues for future reports.
9. Officers are also continuing to work on improving our processes, procedures and general ways of working, including how best to exchange intelligence on live casework to Board members and staff. In addition, we are developing training sessions to increase understanding of the planning system and our role in it for Board members and staff.

Recommendation

1. **That the Board NOTES the contents of this paper, and provides any feedback for consideration by Officers and/or Planning Committee.**

Item 3.2**Report on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion****Author:**

Annette Weiss, Head of Engagement & Partnerships and Baljit Dhillon, EDI Advisory Group Co-Chair

Purpose of Report:

To update the Board with progress on the CCB's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion work, as set out in its Ambition Statement.

Update and issues

1. Three new Board members have joined the Equity Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group (Baljit Dhillon, Juliet Vickery and Gemma Harper) and bring with them a great breadth of EDI expertise and lived experience. An Advisory Group meeting with the new members was held on 6 January and the group will be meeting quarterly. Terms of reference have been drawn up. Juliet and Baljit will be jointly chairing the group and the Chair will be providing an EDI update at Exec and Board meetings. Main points from meeting:
 - a. The importance of clearly articulating EDI objectives and demonstrating impact as part of the emerging 2026–30 Business Plan. The Advisory Group will continue to work alongside the development of the 2026–30 Business Plan to help articulate clear EDI outcomes and support the communication of impact.
 - b. Need for infographics and engaging public-facing information to communicate our EDI work and EDI Ambition.
 - c. Priority groups – make explicit reference to hidden disabilities and learning disabilities.
2. Launched on 27 February, a new [Accessibility Hub](#) has been developed for the Chilterns National Landscape website and has been very well received. The hub represents an important step in improving accessibility, visibility and confidence for visitors, reinforcing our commitment to the Chilterns being 'for everyone'. This brings together all our accessibility and inclusion information in one place and gives it much greater visibility on our home page. It contains information on Exploring Accessible Places, Business & Resources and our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Ambition. The hub includes a large amount of new content produced over the last 18 months including Access Guides and Videos, with new audio guides to be added in April. The hub provides a huge step-change in our accessible information provision and ensures that EDI is centre stage.
3. All of the 2025/26 Defra Access Funding (total £429,229) has now been allocated. The majority of the funding has been used to grant fund external projects, but some CCB-led projects have also been funded. These projects are really making a huge difference on the ground. See update in Appendix 1.
4. Defra has confirmed that National Landscapes will receive a final year of Access Funding in 2026/27, the same amount as last year £429,229.

5. A new section on the CCB's website focussing on youth volunteering, work experience and traineeships has been developed and will go live at the end of March. This is a follow-on from the Next Gen project which identified a gap for this type of information and presents a one-stop shop pulling together information and signposting to opportunities.
6. EDI focused work is being delivered through a range of Chilterns National Landscape projects. For example, the Mend the Gap programme 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 Communications 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 drew attention due to the work we are doing on accessibility and inclusion. This led to some unpleasant (and in some cases abusive) calls and emails from members of the public. The Communications team published 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



Chilterns Conservation Board Briefing

Statutory Purposes, Duties, Powers and Functions

Overview

1. Further to a request at the Board's December 2025 meeting, this briefing sets out CCB's current statutory purposes, the importance of them, and how they may change in the future, with additional material setting out how the CCB's duties, powers and functions relate to its purposes.
2. Legislation relating to AONBs (now known as National Landscapes) and Conservation Boards generally is mostly set out in Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. In addition, the CCB's existence and operation is governed by its Establishment Order.

Briefing

Purposes, Duties, Powers and Functions

3. The following text (paras 4-9) is extracted from the CCB's Constitution (section 1.1), approved in September 2025.
4. The purposes, duties, powers and functions of the Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) are mostly defined in sections 85-89 of and Schedules 13-14 to the [Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000](#) ("the CROW Act") and/or in the [Establishment Order](#) for the Chilterns Conservation Board. [The CCB's Constitution reflects the provisions of those statutory instruments, and adds further detail on implementation or delivery, agreed by the Board.
5. The statutory purpose of the designation of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, now known as the Chilterns National Landscape, is that of "conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area" ([section 82\(1\) of the CROW Act](#)).
6. All public bodies, including the CCB, have a general duty to "seek to further" the above purpose when undertaking any function relating to or affecting land in the designated area ([section 85 of the CROW Act](#)). [Guidance on the application of this duty](#) was published in December 2024.
7. Conservation Boards, including the CCB, have four specific duties under [section 87 of the CROW Act](#):
 - To "seek to further" both the purpose of designation ("conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area") and the purpose of "increasing the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the area", but to "attach greater weight to" the first purpose if there is a conflict between the two.
 - To "seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the area" while fulfilling the first duty, in co-operation with local authorities and other relevant public bodies.
 - To "have due regard to the needs of agriculture and forestry and to the economic and social interests of rural areas" in the exercise of certain functions (from [section 37 of the Countryside Act 1968](#)).
 - To "have due regard to the protection against pollution of any water, whether on the surface or underground" which by be abstracted, in the exercise of certain functions (from [section 38 of the Countryside Act 1968](#)).



8. In fulfilling the above duties and purposes, the CCB is empowered under [section 87\(4\) of the CROW Act](#) to “do anything which, in the opinion of the board, is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to” the accomplishment of the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area and/or of increasing the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the area, so long as it would be lawful to do so.
9. Further specific powers and functions are set out in [Schedule 14 to the CROW Act](#) and in [Part III](#) and [Part IV](#) of the CCB’s Establishment Order. Further explanation of these powers and functions may subsequently be included in this Constitution or published separately.

Purposes: discussion

10. CCB’s **primary purpose** is the same as the purpose of the designation: that of **conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area**. All National Landscape teams share this purpose.
11. In addition, Conservation Boards have a secondary purpose of **increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area**. This secondary purpose is also a purpose of designating National Parks (but is not a quality that National Parks are designated for) and a statutory purpose for National Park Authorities. Hence, Conservation Boards have a purpose that is not related to the reasons for their designation. [Section 87\(A1\) of the CROW Act](#) states that if it appears that there is a conflict between the purposes, then greater weight should be attached to the primary purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty (this reflects the “[Sandford Principle](#)” established for National Parks), and aims to avoid harm to natural beauty arising from people’s enjoyment of the area.
12. Neither “natural beauty” nor “special qualities” are defined in legislation, although [section 99 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act](#) clarifies that land and landscape features that have been created or influenced by humans can be said to have natural beauty. Natural England’s “[Guidance for Assessing Landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England](#)” sets out six factors that contribute to natural beauty (chapter 6), and this remains the best guidance on this point. Each Protected Landscape’s natural beauty and special qualities should be described in their Management Plan (not a statutory requirement).

How might these purposes change?

13. There have been moves to amend the purposes of Protected Landscapes (both National Parks and National Landscapes) to include purposes relevant to nature recovery and climate adaptation, most cogently presented in the government-sponsored ‘[Glover Landscapes Review](#)’ of 2019, although no specific action has yet been taken on this suggestion.
14. Arguably, there is no need to add such additional purposes, since both nature recovery and climate adaptation are clearly an integral part of conserving and enhancing natural beauty:
 - The concept of nature recovery is implicit since “natural heritage features”, including flora and fauna, form one of Natural England’s six factors related to natural beauty, and natural heritage also contributes to other factors (scenic quality, wildness, etc.).
 - The concept of climate adaptation is also implicit, since the natural beauty of a landscape cannot be conserved (or enhanced) if it is not resilient to climate change.
 - The risk of adding these additional purposes is that nature recovery or climate adaptation measures could as a result be privileged over other aspects of the natural beauty for which a landscape has been designated, resulting in an asset that, while performing well as a nature reserve, may lose its value as a protected landscape.

Duties: discussion

15. As noted in paragraph 6 above, the CCB shares with all public bodies (and statutory undertakers) the Protected Landscapes Duty, which, for National Landscapes like the Chilterns is under section 85 of the CROW Act. Interpretations of that duty in the planning system will be the subject of a separate



forthcoming Planning Briefing. Defra has published guidance [here](#), and the NLA has published general guidance [here](#), and planning-specific guidance [here](#).

16. As noted in paragraph 7, the CCB has a specific duty under section 87 of the CROW Act – unique to Conservation Boards, but similar to National Park Authorities – to seek to further (a) the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area, and (b) the purpose of increasing the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the area, but, as noted in para 11, the first purpose takes precedence.
17. The CCB is also subject to some other specific duties (also set out in paragraph 7), relating to the economic and social well-being of local communities and of rural areas, the needs of agriculture and forestry, and the prevention of pollution of water resources. It should be noted that these are all issues that the CCB is required to take into account in undertaking its functions: they are not matters that are a responsibility for the CCB on their own. For example, the CCB is not responsible for working to improve the economic well-being of people living in the Chilterns – rather it should consider the impacts of its work on its primary and secondary purposes on people’s economic well-being, etc.

Powers and functions

18. As noted in paragraphs 8 and 9 above, the CCB benefits from a limited power of competence (to do anything lawful that it considers will facilitate the achievement of its purposes), some specific powers, and a range of specific functions shared with local authorities. For the most part, the CCB exercises its activities through that power of competence by advising stakeholders in relation to their policies and decisions, by informing and educating the public, and by distributing grants and other monies for environmental improvement and other relevant projects and initiatives.
19. In addition to the powers and functions noted above, the CCB is responsible (under sections 89-90 of the CROW Act) for preparing and adopting the AONB Management Plan for the Chilterns National Landscape, and reviewing that plan on a five-year cycle. In non-Conservation Board National Landscapes, the responsibility for producing and adopting the Management Plan rests with each constituent local authority. In the Chilterns, currently, the local authorities are not under any obligation to adopt the Management Plan, participate in preparing it or deliver its objectives.
20. A more detailed briefing on the CCB’s powers and functions will be prepared in due course.

Date of production: 19 March 2026

Disclaimer: While every effort is made to ensure all the legal and policy references are correct, the CCB always recommends that these are checked as revisions and updates will occur.



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 26th February 2026 at The Village Centre, High Street, Chinnor OX39 4DH
commencing at 10.00 AM.**

Present:

Cllr Hector Sants	Board Member – Chair
Cllr Philip Spicer	Board Member
Cllr Charles Hussey	Board Member
Cllr Louise Price	Board Member – Chair of the Board
Cllr John Griffin	Board Member
Baljit Dhillon	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)
Kathryn Foster	Senior Finance Manager
Kate Heppell	Head of Landscape
Annette Weiss	Head of Engagement and Partnerships
Lorna Coldwell	Clerk to the Board and Minute taker

25/26.10 Standing Items

10.1 Apologies for absence

Board Members:

Sue Rowland – Oxfordshire Parish Councils

Cllr Gavin McLaughlan – Oxfordshire County Council

Nicola Thomas – Secretary of State

Officers:

Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning; Deputy Monitoring Officer (*listened online*)

10.2 Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

10.3 Chair's Announcements

The Chair commented that Cllr Tett has resigned from the Board and therefore the Executive Committee, so a new representative must be appointed from Buckinghamshire Council.

The strategic feedback workshop has been rearranged for 17th March, to be held online.

10.4 Notice of Urgent Business

All items covered on the agenda.

CCB Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday 26th February 2026**10.5 Approval of Minutes of the previous meeting 13th November 2025**

The minutes of the meeting 13/11/25 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

10.6 Matters Arising

All items covered on the agenda.

10.7 Consideration of Motions Submitted by Members

None at this meeting.

10.8 Public Questions

No members of the public were present.

25/26.11 Items for Decision**7.1 Quarter 3 Finance Report**

The Senior Finance Manager, Kathryn Foster, reported on the accounts to 31st December 2025.

Highlights include:

1. There is a Core deficit of £52k for the year to 31st December 2025 with a full year deficit of £66k forecast, which is a significant improvement on the original estimated deficit of £118k. This is a combination of better than anticipated additional interest, delays on recruitment, and net cost savings.
2. The organisation was allocated £348k of Capital Funds (CDEL) by Defra for financial year 2025/26. 100% of these funds have been drawn down, with a small amount yet to be allocated. Confirmation from Defra regarding items that can be treated as capital, such as the office tenancy, means that CDEL funds in the accounts have been released. £20k is earmarked for IT transformation, £23k for developing the Climate Adaptation plan, £5k for Fire Safety equipment. The small remaining balance of CDEL allocation is £25k and options are being explored to allocate core costs such as website development.
3. All Local Authorities have now made contributions for this financial year, with Buckinghamshire, Central Bedfordshire and Luton Councils contributing less than required.
4. Project income is £1,575k, costs are £1,497k and there is a surplus of £78k overall.
5. Currently £4.94m is held in cash with £4m of these funds held in higher interest earning accounts. The Senior Finance Manager asked members to share details if they are aware of any high interest earning accounts. Cllr Sants suggested the CCLA, which will be explored.
6. The VAT review is now complete and the report has been shared with the Board. Guidance has been provided and shared with staff, and the levels of business income that contributes to the VAT registration threshold of £90k will be monitored carefully. The organisation is not registered for VAT and, unlike other National Landscapes (except the Cotswolds Conservation Board) and National Parks, are not eligible to claim VAT refunds on non-business activities. This means most non-staff costs are effectively 20% higher than other National Landscapes and National Parks. An application is being submitted to the Treasury to seek admittance to the refund scheme. Certain conditions are not met by the CCB, but other bodies have been admitted that do not meet all the criteria. All members in agreement for the Senior Finance Manager to proceed with the application.
7. The Buckinghamshire Council Pension Triennial Valuation has taken place; contribution rates will provisionally decrease for the next three years.
8. A business rate exemption for the office premises has been applied for to South Oxfordshire District Council. A response has not yet been received. The Senior Finance Manager will speak with Cllr Norman who is their representative to see if the application can be followed up. This would amount to a saving of £7k.
9. Changes to the bank mandate are required, it is proposed to remove the Senior Administration Officer, who is retiring, and add the new Administrative Officer as well as removing the former

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Chair. It was further proposed to not add any Board Members to the mandate going forward. All in agreement.

Significant work has been undertaken to determine eligible CDEL expenditure, with Defra consulted throughout to ensure full compliance with all requirements. Cllr Spicer commented that he has campaigned for Central Bedfordshire Council to contribute the full amount required, and he will be raising the matter again with full Council to amend their budget. His efforts were acknowledged and thanks were given for his continued diligence.

The Chief Executive Officer, Elaine King, acknowledged the work of the Senior Finance Manager and the Head of Operations to create the reports to enable the Board and Executive Committee to make informed decisions. Thanks were given to both and the extended team.

1. **The Committee OFFERED FEEDBACK as detailed above and APPROVED the Q3 Finance report to 31st December 2025 and the full year forecast to 31st March 2026**
2. **The Committee NOTED the other finance updates**
3. **The Committee APPROVED the changes to the bank mandates**

7.2. Quarter 3 Delivery Report

The Head of Operations, Andy Brock-Doyle, had provided a paper which was taken as read. The paper updated the Executive Committee on the CCB team's progress between October and December 2025 against the financial year 2025-26 Delivery Plan. In Q3:

- 52 (44 in Q2) delivery lines reported as completed or progressing on track
- 27 (35 in Q2) delivery lines reported as being slightly delayed / slightly limited in effectiveness
- 15 (19 in Q2) delivery lines reported as being significantly delayed / significantly limited in effectiveness
- 0 (6 in Q2) delivery lines have not yet started
- 1 (2 in Q2) delivery lines have been placed on hold
- 9 (2 in Q2) delivery lines have been postponed
- 2 (xx in Q2) delivery lines have been cancelled

Several areas have caught up, and more delivery lines are on track. There has been a tightening of processes regarding decisions to delay or cancel items, which shows in the reporting figures. Some of the delays are caused by external factors, such as awaiting information from Defra, and the reason for delays (internal or external) is now more clear in the reporting. Cllr Sants requested that any items that pose a serious risk, either financially or reputationally, be highlighted at the start of the report. One item flagged is the need for a Safeguarding Officer and a Data Protection Officer, which will likely need to be provided externally. The Head of Operations is investigating options, including sharing with other National Landscapes. Dedicated leads for each area have been created in the interim, and a temporary Officer is in place. Lack of capacity remains an issue across the organisation.

Following feedback from the last meeting, reporting now includes more specific information regarding risks and subsequent impacts, which has altered the report format and made it longer. A reporting format is being developed for the next financial year and will be more outcome based, with fewer specific delivery lines. The current format will remain for the next two quarters. A suggestion was made to have quarterly Management Plan updates, which will be address in the changes to the report next year. Cllr Sants asked that the proposed format be circulated to the Executive Committee for comment before it is formally introduced. This will be partly shaped by the workshop on 17th March and also reflect reporting requirements from Defra. As much as possible, we will avoid producing multiple reports for different audiences.

Whilst the Management Plan appears to be behind, this has been signed off by the Board as the delay

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relates to the Plan being designed externally, which is almost complete. The new Sharepoint site was discussed. Roll out has been held up due to management pressures but is progressing. An annual digital strategy update was proposed and the Head of Operations will report on this in the future.

1. The Committee OFFERED FEEDBACK as detailed above and APPROVED the Q3 Delivery report

11.3 2026/27 Budget Envelope

The Senior Finance Manager, Kathryn Foster, provided a detailed paper to set out a proposed 2026/27 core budget envelope, for recommendation to the Board. This is proposed following preparation with the CEO, Head of Operations and other members of the Senior Leadership Team. The initial budget shows a deficit of £58k for 2026/27, with an improved forecast for 2025/26 which predicts a net deficit of £14k aggregated over the three years 2024/25 to 2026/27. The core (RDEL) Defra grant is confirmed as a flat cash settlement for 2026/27 with indicative figures for 2027/28 and 2028/29. We have also been advised our allocation of CDEL, FiPL and Access for All for 2026/27. Note the FiPL programme will run for another three years to 2028/29. The others are one year only.

The proposed budget envelope has been subject to detailed discussion and scrutiny and will be refined further as more information becomes available. A funding strategy is being developed to secure unrestricted income and address other funding gaps, as the Defra core grant leaves a shortfall, in part due to rising inflationary costs. Any VAT money recoveries would help with this, and other CDEL funding opportunities continue to be explored. Dialogue continues between National Landscape teams and Defra regarding the need for additional revenue funding, in addition to capital.

Some assumptions have been made, such as creating a new Senior Programme Manager role, which is increasingly essential to ensure the effective development, delivery and oversight of our various programmes and projects.

d. Whilst figures beyond 26/27 show an increasing deficit, this is a worst case scenario and it remains the intention to deliver a annual budget deficit of below £50k. Officers continue to monitor budgets closely and have a range of actions identified that can be taken to reduce the deficit closer to year end, should it be necessary.

- 1. The Committee OFFERED FEEDBACK as detailed above and APPROVED the 2026/27 Budget Envelope recommendation to the Board**
- 2. The Committee NOTED the initial projections for 2027/28 onwards and PROVIDED FEEDBACK as noted above**

11.4. Job Grading Framework

Elaine King, the Chief Executive Officer, provided a paper with an updated Job Grading Framework. Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations, has worked to update elements beyond adding annual inflationary salary increases, such as clarifying salary ranges and ensuring these better reflect the job roles and job titles in the organisation. It also links to the HR policy work that has been carried out. The updated Framework should inform both existing staff and recruitment purposes. Feedback has been sought from the staff team, who are happy with the transparency the framework now provides.

- 1. The Committee APPROVED the framework**

12.1 Annual Planning

Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations, provided a paper to update the Committee on the annual planning process and to set the context for the strategic workshop being held on 17th March. The new Management Plan is in place and the team is now developing a prioritised plan for the organisation for the next four years of the Plan. These plans will be discussed in detail at the strategic workshop. Cllr

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Spicer stressed the need to monitor and evaluate impact, especially after a project or piece of work has been completed.

1. The Committee NOTED the report and gave FEEDBACK as detailed above

Cllr Sants left the meeting at 11.40, Cllr Griffin took over as Chair.

12.2 Strategic and Operational Planning Cycles

Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations, has provided the Executive Committee Chair Cllr Sants a document which he will circulate to all members. The paper summarises the Executive Committee's role in relation to HR matters following the agreed dissolution of the HR Advisory Group. He will circulate that paper for any newer members for clarity purposes.

1. The Committee NOTED the update

12.3 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Update

Annette Weiss, the Head of Engagement and Partnerships and Board Member Baljit Dhillon, as representatives of the Equity Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Advisory Group provided a paper to give an update on the progress of the EDI Ambition. A co-chair model for the group was agreed, with Baljit Dhillon and Juliet Vickery assuming this role. A lot of activity is already being carried out in the Chilterns, and the aim is to strengthen what is already being carried out across the landscape. Recognising the value that different communities can bring to the landscape and taking guidance from others will enable to the organisation to continue to strengthen the resilience of the landscape and how various communities can be built into this.

Annette Weiss, Head of Engagement and Partnerships, advised that the EDI Advisory Group has new members who will play an important role in terms of business planning. Plans are being developed to generate more visibility, including an [Accessibility Hub](#) is being launched this week, which will showcase much of the EDI and access work being carried out across the Chilterns by the CCB and its partners. Annette requested that members share the work we are doing to maximise visibility, and to give any feedback to the group.

1. The Committee NOTED the update

12.4 Funding Report

Elaine King, the Chief Executive Officer provided a paper to update on progress with delivering the Funding Strategy. The predicted deficit was discussed earlier, which highlights the need to bring in additional funding to the organisation. A more strategic approach is wanted for additional visibility to avoid duplications of work or various staff approaching the same external partners.

As previously mentioned, a significant amount of time has been spent to understand the CDEL funding parameters. This means that going forward when settlements are allocated the criteria will stand and therefore be distributed more efficiently. The flat cash settlement for 2026/27 from Defra is roughly the same as previous years with an indicative figure given for the years until 2028/29. Local Authority contributions have been discussed, with additional advocacy work needed to try to receive full contributions from all.

Kate Heppell, Head of Landscape, discussed a joint bid being worked on alongside the North Wessex Downs from the National Lottery which would be the first step of a large, exciting piece of work to do with how to enable nature recovery across the two landscapes. Discussions are ongoing with HS2 Ltd regarding funding for the Mending the Misbourne project, and legacy lessons learned from the Chess catchment are informing our approaches.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) scheme has been extended for a further three years, with a similar amount of capital money granted. A bid for funding from the Natural England Species

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Recovery Programme led by an external partner was unsuccessful, whilst many others have been successful.

It was commented that when staff leave the organisation, it is important to make sure their knowledge is retained to ensure the resilience of the team. The Chief Executive Officer agreed and said it was a priority for the Senior Leadership Team. Handover documents are created, files created on Sharepoint and meetings are held for forward planning before leaving. Additional handover time has been built in before the retirement of the Senior Administration Officer, to enable a seamless transition.

1. The Committee OFFERED FEEDBACK as detailed above and NOTED the update

12.5 Chief Executive Officer's Report

Elaine King, the Chief Executive Officer provided a paper to update on works carried out since the last Committee meeting. Highlights included:

- The Head of Landscapes has commissioned a consultant to carry out work to look at the impacts of climate change in the National Landscape. This will look terms of climate change, biodiversity, and nature recovery over the next 30 and 60 years using climate modelling and then be used as a framework for other National Landscapes. The findings will be brought to the Board in the future.
- The Senior Leadership Team continue to meet weekly to plan, monitor and share information and deliver across a range of areas, focus recently has been places on the upcoming budget and business planning.
- Ongoing engagement with MPs and local authorities via email and face to face meetings. The need to protect chalk streams in legislation will be debated in Parliament. The desire to reinstate the Boundary Review continues.
- The CEO attended an even hosted by UCL Law School for "Environmental Governance in Turbulent Times: Ten Years on from Brexit" which concerned the direction of travel. She will share notes with members, which included discussion on water regulation and the new framework.
- The Senior Leadership Team continue to ensure that staff feedback from surveys is delivered, and wider organisational development is met.

1. The Committee NOTED the update

25/26.13 Any Urgent Business

None at this time.

25/26.14 Next Executive Committee meeting

Thursday 19th May 2026 at 10am, at The Village Centre, Chinnor.

Further meeting Dates:

Planning Committee	Executive Committee	Board
		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

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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 12.27.

The Chair.....

Date.....

Chilterns Conservation Board

Planning Committee meeting 22nd January 2026

Chilterns National Landscape

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE OF
THE CHILTERNES CONSERVATION BOARD held on Thursday 22nd January 2026 at the
offices of the Chilterns Conservation Board, The Lodge, 90 Station Road, Chinnor OX39
4HA commencing at 10.15 AM**

Present:

Cllr Sue Rowland	Board Member	Parish Councils
Cllr Louise Price	Board Member	Local Authorities
Cllr Charles Hussey	Board Member	Parish Councils
Chris Hannington	Co-opted Member	
Paul Hayes*	Co-opted Member	
Simon Mortimer	Board Member	Secretary of State
Cllr James Norman	Board Member	Local Authorities

In attendance:

Matt Thomson*	Head of Strategy & Planning; Deputy Monitoring Officer	Officer
Mike Stubbs	Planning Adviser (Dev Mgt)	Officer
Victoria Thomson*	Planning Adviser (Policy)	Officer
Lorna Coldwell	Clerk to the Board and Minute taker	Officer

*listened online

No public present.

The Chair welcomed all present including those online.

25/26.14 Apologies for absence

Apologies received and accepted from Committee members:

Matthew Stanton – Secretary of State member

Apologies received and accepted from Officers:

Elaine King – Chief Executive Officer

25/26.15**Declarations of Interest**

None declared.

25/26.16 Notice of Urgent Business

None.

25/26.17 Approval of Notes of the previous meetings

The minutes and notes from the meetings of 23rd January 2025, 17th April 2025, and 23rd October 2025 were approved and signed by the Chair. It was noted that the meeting of 23rd

Chilterns Conservation Board

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January, Chris Hannington and Paul Hayes did not receive an invitation and were therefore absent by default.

25/26.18 Matters Arising

The Chair requested and was provided with updates on the following matters:

Luton Airport

The Secretary of State approved the application. Discussion focused on interpretation of the strengthened s85 duty and mitigation funding. A contribution of £250k was secured, deferred until a trigger point in the 2030s, with no associated administration funding. Judicial Review proceedings brought by LADACAN (Luton and District Association for the Control of Aircraft Noise) were dismissed on all five grounds.

Action – MT to circulate Judicial Review summary to Planning Committee members

Watlington Relief Road

No decision has yet been made. Officers continue to monitor progress.

Pitstone Quarry

No update.

Potten End SANG

This was refused by Dacorum Borough Council but allowed on appeal (covered later in the agenda).

Grand Union Canal Transfer

Consultations are being monitored, with a further round expected.

Strategic Planning Capacity

It has been recognised that responsibility for CNL strategy, especially the Management Plan, would be shared across the Senior Leadership Team going forward, rather than the sole responsibility of the Head of Strategy and Planning.

25/26.19 Considerations of Motions Submitted by Members

No motions received.

It was noted that the agenda contained an incorrect date which had not been updated from the previous meeting. The Head of Strategy and Planning apologised for this oversight.

25/26.20 Public Question Time

None in attendance.

25/26.21 Planning Committee work programme – Future of Planning Committee

Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning had provided a report outlining ongoing and future work on planning guidance, funding opportunities and lessons learned from previous guidance projects.

The membership of the Planning Committee is confirmed as:

Local Authority members	Cllr Robert Carrington (Buckinghamshire) Cllr James Norman (South Oxon) Cllr Louise Price (Three Rivers) – Deputy Chair Cllr Philip Spice (Central Beds) (recognising likely online attendance)
Secretary of State members	Simon Mortimer

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	Matthew Stanton <i>One vacancy</i>
Parish Council members	Cllr Charles Hussey (Bucks Parish Councils) Cllr Sue Rowland (Oxon Parish Councils) – Chair

If members need to contact the Planning team, it is best to do so via the generic planning@chilterns.org.uk email as all 3 Planning Officers monitor this email and the work can be allocated appropriately.

The production of new and reviewing of existing planning guidance was discussed, which is an ongoing process as part of the planning work programme. Due to the upcoming significant reforms in planning guidance and age, some of the existing documents are out of date. The recent Chilterns Chalk Stream guidance was produced with external funding that was identified by other members of the Chilterns National Landscape team and was agreed by all as efficient and effective way to produce new guidance. Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning, is keen to work with the extended team in the future to identify any other potential funding for other guidance. It was noted that any guidance specific to the Chilterns would be better completed “in house”, including with the support of consultants, but more general policies could be left to the National Landscape Association or produced in partnership with them or other National Landscapes. Whilst all agreed that further guidance on the strengthened s85 duty of the CROW Act would be useful, the ongoing interpretations depending on various rulings mean that the Government and/or Defra are better suited to provide. In the meantime, the Committee requested a short interim statement on interpretation of the s85 duty in relation to planning. The Planning Committee advised Officers that the most important new guidance is for colour and colour palettes in new buildings, as part of the suite of design guidance. Issues relating to colour have arisen frequently in the last 12 months. This would need expert external assistance to devise. Whilst any guidance provided by the Chilterns National Landscape is only guidance, many Local Authorities are receptive to it and will use in determining applications. In addition to this and the s85 duty briefing, the Committee noted a continued need for some guidance on SANGs (not as a high priority), and agreed to retain the existing Chilterns Buildings Design Guide and technical notes for the time being pending the ongoing planning reforms.

Future of Planning Committee

A lengthy discussion was held with a number of differing views expressed, following the various options as set out in the agenda papers. There are several suggestions for moving forward, and feedback at the December Board meeting indicated significant support for retaining the committee, although the Board resolved that officers should explore options. A committee entails various administrative burdens, such as Officer time, and the need for various members in person attendance to be quorate. This is set out in legislation. An advisory group would require less administrative need and be able to meet online. The dissolution of the Planning Committee is not a decision that can be undertaken lightly, but any solution needs to recognise the best way to carry out work. A proposal to retain the Planning Committee but meet more often as an advisory group was tabled. This would enable members to be more responsive when needed but retain the committee which could be called upon if the need arose. Local Authority Planning Officers are usually unaware of whether an Officer or the committee has submitted comments unless it is raised during a hearing. The key item is to ensure that whatever is put in place best serves the needs of the Board best in terms of planning, which is and will continue to be an important matter. It was requested that the proposal be shared with the Planning Committee members prior to being put forward at the Board meeting.

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It was agreed by all that better communications are needed between Officers and members regardless and the proposed regular planning update to Planning Committee members and likely the wider Board members was be welcomed in the proposed format.

Action: Planning Team to provide a short interim briefing on interpretation of the s85 duty in planning.

Action: MT has steering for way forward in relation to new planning guidance – colour and colour palettes used for planning applications within the National Landscape

Action: MT to carry out regular (monthly) planning updates to be distributed

1. **The Committee NOTED these updates and OFFERED FEEDBACK as noted above regarding the future of the Planning Committee**
2. **The Committee OFFERED GUIDANCE on priorities for the review and preparation of planning guidance, as noted above**
3. **The Head of Strategy and Planning will provide a paper for the next steps on the Planning Committee to be discussed at a future Board meeting**

25/26.22 Development Management Casework Update Q3 2025/26

Mike Stubbs, Planning Advisor (DM) had provided a detailed paper on live cases with updates since the last Planning Committee meeting. The Committee was provided with feedback on the following cases:

- BC 23/02077/APP and PINS APP/J0405/W/25/3372885 Land to the south of Bishopstone, Dinton Bucks (Kimblewick Solar) – the application was granted by the Planning Inspector following appeal.
- TRDC 23/2073/OUT Land to north of Little Green Lane – will be heard by the Planning Committee at Three Rivers District Council
- BC PL/25/3225/OA OS Parcel 7124 Bledlow Road Saunderton – the impact on the Chilterns National Landscape is a material consideration,
- BC PL/25/2744/OA Land at Cutlers Farm Marlow Road Lane End – observations were made on the merit of a major development in the Chilterns National Landscape
- BC-C&SB PL/25/2447/FA Mop End Farm battery storage facility near Amersham substation – a new objection submitted that supersedes the previous objection in September.
- BC PL/25/4490/FA Manor Farm Ibstone – an objection was submitted in relation to the extraction of water to the aquifer due to the sensitivity of the nearby chalk stream.
- PINS APP/X0415/C/24/3356478 Land at West of Field Cottage Chartridge – an enforcement notice appeal to remove surfacing/hardstanding outside the permitted area; decision issued on 12th January to uphold the notices and dismiss the appeal.

22.1 Special Report Marlow Film Studios decision

The appeal was allowed by the Secretary of State in November 2025. The Planning Inspector did not believe that the s85 duty of the CROW Act had been fulfilled; the Secretary of State determined that in following Defra guidance the mitigation factors such as the colour palette, planting and enhancement of previously developed land was sufficient to meet the duty and therefore the Inspector's comments were overridden. This is a similar situation to the Luton Airport decision in which, when deciding applications involving major infrastructure, some harm is unavoidable. However, in such cases it was decided that the duty can be fulfilled through mitigations put in place and off-site financial contributions. Considerable weight was attributed to the increased number of jobs that would be made by the film studio in the area and the education facilities that will be on site.

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Planning Committee meeting 22nd January 2026**1. The Committee NOTED the updates in the paper and endorsed the responses made in relation to applications****25/26.23 Planning Policy Casework Update Q3 2025/26**

The Planning Committee were informed by Planning Officers about policy developments.

Buckinghamshire Council Local Plan

A response has been submitted, mostly supportive and offering advice on improving the plan's compliance with national policy and legislation. Buckinghamshire Council are continuing to engage with CCB officers as the plan progresses.

Eye and Dunsden Neighbourhood Plan Submission Draft 2011-2035

A response was submitted in support of the plan and noting the promotion of a "valued landscape status." This phrase has been omitted from the proposed new NPPF.

23.1 Reforms to the Statutory consultee system (submitted 13th January 2026)

Victoria Thomson, Planning Adviser (Policy) informed the committee of the response to the recent consultation on proposed revisions to statutory consultees in the planning system. Following a discussion at the December Board meeting, a response was submitted requesting the Chilterns Conservation Board be included as a statutory consultee for planning applications and for Local Plans. This would grant the Board more profile and weight within the planning system. If this is not permitted, Officers will pursue the opportunity to formalise more robust engagement protocols with Local Authorities. The response also requested that Natural England clarifies the status of its own responses with regard to National Landscapes. The Chair commended the Officer on an excellent piece of work and gave thanks.

23.2 Introduction to the NPPF review (live consultation)

Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning informed the Committee of the current consultation on a revised National Planning Policy Framework that came out before Christmas and runs until March 2026. As yet there has not been a meaningful discussion with colleagues from other National Landscapes, which will likely be done via email. Careful consideration is needed as to what the changes will mean. Some elements are to be welcomed, such as a much clearer division in the proposed NPPF for Local Plan making and decision making, along with a much clearer indication of what is a policy rather than supporting text which should be helpful for interpretation. It is frustrating that the existing faults within the NPPF have not been addressed. It was noted that the use of "valued landscape" has been omitted. It was questioned if there was anything related to giving weight to not developing certain types of land, following a recent report about national security effected by lack of biodiversity and food security issues. He surmised that a co-ordinated response would be ideal but would want the Chilterns National Landscape to contribute significantly to this.

1. The Committee NOTED the contents of the paper**25/26.24 Urgent Business**

None.

25/26.25 Date of Next and Future Meetings

- Thursday 30th April 2026, Chinnor Offices
- Thursday 29th October 2026, Chinnor Offices

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The meeting was closed at 13.05.

The Chair.....

Date.....