



Chilterns National Landscape

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

Executive Committee

On Thursday 19th May 2026 at 10.00am at

Chinnor Village Hall, Church Road, Chinnor OX39 4PQ

and by remote video conferencing.

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

The online session will be available from 9.45am

AGENDA

1. Standing Items

- 1.1 Apologies for absence
- 1.2 Declaration of interest in any of the agenda items
- 1.3 Chair's announcements
- 1.4 Notice of urgent business
- 1.5 Approval of minutes of the previous meeting (26th February 2026)
- 1.6 Matters arising
- 1.7 Consideration of motions submitted by members
- 1.8 Public questions

2. Items for Decision

- 2.1 Quarter 4 Finance Report
- 2.2 2026/27 Budget
- 2.3 Quarter 4 Delivery Report

3. Items for Noting / Information

- 3.1 Annual Planning
- 3.2 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Update
- 3.3 Funding Report
- 3.4 Chief Executive Officer's Report

4. Any Urgent Business

5. **Next Meeting:** 1st September 2026

Dr Elaine King, CEO

Future Meeting Dates 2026

Planning Committee	Executive Committee	Board
		Thursday 26 th June 2026 (including AGM) 10am St Leonards Parish Hall, Jenkins Lane, St Leonards, Tring
Thursday 29 th October 10am CCB Offices, Chinnor	Tuesday 1 st September 2026 10am, The Village Centre Chinnor	Thursday 1 st October 2026 10am Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury
	Thursday 19 th November 2026 10am, The Village Centre Chinnor	Thursday 10 th December 2026 10am Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury

Summary of Actions Required

Agenda No.	Agenda Item	Actions Required
1	Standing Items	
1.1	Apologies for absence	
1.2	Declaration of interest in any of the agenda items	
1.3	Chair's announcements	
1.4	Notice of urgent business	
1.5	Approve minutes of the previous meeting (26 th February 2026)	APPROVE
1.6	Matters arising	
1.7	Consideration of motions submitted by members	
1.8	Public questions	
2	Items for Decision	
2.1	Quarter 4 Finance Report	APPROVE
2.2	2026/27 Budget	APPROVE
2.3	Quarter 4 Delivery Report	APPROVE
3	Items for Noting / Information	
3.1	Annual Planning	NOTE
3.2	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Update	NOTE
3.3	Funding Report	NOTE
3.4	Chief Executive Officer's Report	NOTE
4	Any Urgent Business	
5	Next Meeting: 1 st September 2026	



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

CCB Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday 26th February 2026

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:

- o 52 (44 in Q2) delivery lines reported as completed or progressing on track
- o 27 (35 in Q2) delivery lines reported as being slightly delayed / slightly limited in effectiveness
- o 15 (19 in Q2) delivery lines reported as being significantly delayed / significantly limited in effectiveness
- o 0 (6 in Q2) delivery lines have not yet started
- o 1 (2 in Q2) delivery lines have been placed on hold
- o 9 (2 in Q2) delivery lines have been postponed
- o 2 (0 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 the National Lottery being worked on alongside the North Wessex Downs. This would be the first step of a large, exciting piece of work exploring how to enable nature recovery across the two landscapes. Discussions are ongoing with HS2 Ltd regarding receiving the funds for the Mending the Misbourne project, and lessons learned from the Chess catchment are informing our approaches.

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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 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 discussed current challenges and opportunities for environmental legislation in the UK. She will share notes with members, which included discussion on water regulation, delivery of the UK's delivery of biodiversity targets and the increasing need for independent scrutiny, such as by the Office for Environmental Protection and civil society.
- The Senior Leadership Team continue to ensure that staff feedback from surveys is addressed and changes made, alongside wider ongoing organisational development work.

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

CCB Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday 26th February 2026

Thursday 30 th April 2026 10am CCB Offices, Chinnor	Tuesday 19 th May 2026 10am, The Village Centre Chinnor	Thursday 26 th June 2026 (including AGM) 10am Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury
No meeting	Tuesday 1 st September 2026 10am, The Village Centre Chinnor	Thursday 1 st October 206 10am Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury
Thursday 29 th October 10am CCB Offices, Chinnor	Thursday 19 th November 2026 10am, The Village Centre Chinnor	Thursday 10 th December 2026 10am Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury

The meeting was closed at 12.27.

The Chair.....

Date.....

Item 2.1**Quarter 4 Finance Report****Author:**

Kathryn Foster, Senior Finance Manager

Purpose:

To provide the Executive Committee with a Finance Report for Quarter 4 to 31 March 2026

1. Draft year end accounts to 31 March 2026**1.1 Core Financial Results for the year ended 31 March 2026**

Appendix 1 shows the full detailed draft Core performance versus budget for the year ended to 31 March 2026 along with our budget and forecasts. Note that these are first draft numbers, reconciliations to projects and balance sheet still need to be completed prior to our audit and finalisation of our Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). This will be completed for the board meeting on 25th June, and our internal audit will take place in the week commencing 8th June.

CORE	Full Year Draft Actuals	Latest Full Year forecast (9+3)	Full Year forecast (6+6)	Original Budget	Full Year Actuals v Budget Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Defra Income	686	587	603	633	53
Local Authority income	129	129	129	129	-
Other Income	288	251	239	219	71
TOTAL Income	1,103	969	971	981	124
Staff costs	710	713	728	809	99
Office costs	65	66	68	66	1
Governance costs	30	30	26	19	(11)
Communications costs	14	18	20	20	6
Telecoms & IT costs	25	27	26	24	(1)
Other costs	265	179	219	161	(104)
TOTAL COSTS	1,109	1034	1,087	1,099	(10)
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(6)	(66)	(116)	(118)	114

The budget shows a **draft Core deficit of £6k** for the full year end 31 March 2026. As anticipated in our reforecast, this is a significant improvement on our **original budget deficit of £118k**. This is due to a combination of better than anticipated interest income +£35k, improved recovery of Core costs against projects +£15k (Access for All and FIPL) and better utilisation of CDEL funding against Core (see the section on CDEL).

The significant improvement to results from our forecast of £66k deficit are largely attributable to the CDEL utilisation against Core staff costs **£26k** (we identified several capital projects and reviewed the time Core staff spent working on these projects and allocated accordingly). We also had additional interest income **+£6k**, increased project recharges **+£9k** (staff time on FIPL and Access for All), savings on training **+£4k** and

delays on other spends such as consultancy **£6k** and print costs **£2k** (some of these costs have now been added into our 26/27 budget).

1.2 Defra Capital Funds (CDEL)

The CCB was allocated **£348k** of Capital Funds by Defra for the financial year 25/26. We returned a balance of £5,750 unspent at the end of the year and were also required to return £105,750 of funds in respect of the value of the capital lease (five years) on our office. The capital lease funds will be released each year to us as claimed, meaning our rent is effectively funded for the next 4.5 years.

The remaining **£236k** has been spent across a number of projects; £21k funding our current year rent (capital lease), £137k on 30x30 biodiversity projects (internal CCB projects and projects via partners), £35k on IT transformation projects and £28k on a Climate Adaptation Research and Development plan (in partnership with North Wessex Downs NL). More detailed analysis on CDEL spend is included in **Appendix 4**.

1.3 Local Authority Contributions

Following discussions at the March Board meeting, we are working on advising our local authorities of their required contributions for the next three years, incorporating 5% uplifts year on year. Further analysis on the CCB's inward investment to each local authority will be completed early on in 26/27.

1.4 Projects

Appendix 2 shows the overall CCB position as at 31 March 2026. Project income is **£2,566k**, costs are **£3,122k** and there is a deficit on projects of **£555k** overall. Much of this deficit is driven by the Mend the Gap (MTG) Programme where all the funds were received in advance and taken to reserves. MTG deficit to 31 March 2026 is £650k as this project is now progressing with high levels of expenditure.

2. Balance sheet and Treasury Management

Appendix 3 shows the latest balance sheet as at 31 March 2026. It includes a breakdown of Projects and Core reserves. Our estimated minimum General Reserves as calculated on 31 March 2026 are **£330k** (this covers three months salaries/redundancy). Total Core reserves (General and Development) as at 31 March are **£728k**, giving a "surplus" reserves for transfer to Development reserve of £398k. This has been significantly boosted by the better than anticipated 25/26 result.

As at 31 March 2026 we held cash balances of **£4.6m** with **£3.76m** of these funds held in higher interest earning accounts (and the remaining **£764k** earning interest at 1.42% instant access).

We continue to explore other options to diversify our surplus cash funds, separate out different project funds and maximise our interest earning potential alongside Nationwide and HSBC Money Market accounts. The Cotswolds National Landscape uses Unity Trust Bank, and we are in the process of opening a savings account with them. A six month fixed term deposit earns 3.45% interest which is very competitive and comparable with Nationwide. We are expecting £1m of HS2 funds from the Mending the Misbourne project soon and will need to carefully invest to maximise interest for the benefit of the project.

3. VAT review

As discussed at February's Executive Committee meeting, we are currently completing the VAT 33 refund scheme application form for submission to HMRC and have been liaising with the National Landscapes Association and Defra to seek guidance and keep them informed of our intentions. As part of the application, we must forecast VAT recovery for the next five years across Core and Projects, which is complex. We predict that irrecoverable VAT is at least £50k annually for the CCB and VAT 33 refunds would most benefit our projects as they tend to have more VATable costs (eg River restoration works, Professional fees). This has been delayed due to other commitments but will be completed by Quarter 2 26/27.

4. Business Rates

We are very disappointed that our application for full exemption from business rates to South Oxfordshire District Council has been rejected. Our annual rates are now £8,204 for 26/27 an increase of 15% on 25/26. This does incorporate the small business discount. Note SODC are contributing the full £11,137 to us for 25/26 as their local authority contribution. We are currently drafting an appropriate response to their rejection and in the meantime have factored the increased rates into our budget for 26/27.

Recommendations

- 1. To NOTE and PROVIDE FEEDBACK on the draft CCB financial reports as of 31 March 2026 and other finance updates.**

APPENDIX 1**Budget Variance**

Chilterns Conservation Board

For the Year ended 31 March 2026

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

Account	Draft Full Year Actuals	Updated Forecast (9+3)	Full Year Forecast	Original Budget	Budget Variance	Comments
Trading Income						
Defra Income						
Defra Core Grant	513,896	513,899	513,899	513,900	(4)	
Defra Capital Grant	172,136	74,000	88,999	120,002	52,134	See CDEL analysis below
Total Defra Income	686,032	587,899	602,898	633,902	52,130	
Other income						
Local Authority Contribution	129,768	129,670	129,670	129,660	108	
Project Income	32,264	35,034	35,034	34,500	(2,236)	Currently removed accrual for HS2 Review admin £3.7k until we can invoice
Interest Income	60,096	53,876	48,625	24,996	35,100	
Internal Fee Income	170,924	161,680	155,429	158,082	12,842	Access for All CNL staff charge £17k (forecast £10k), FIPL £15k (forecast £11k)
Donations Received	54	0	0	0	54	
Other Revenue	23,000	0	0	0	23,000	Match funding for CDEL R&D project from NWD
Sale of merchandise	472	400	254	0	472	
Total Other income	416,579	380,660	369,012	347,238	69,341	
Total Trading Income	1,102,610	968,559	971,910	981,140	121,470	
Gross Surplus	1,102,610	968,559	971,910	981,140	121,470	
Operating Expenses						
Staff costs						
Salaries	523,819	523,457	534,528	592,035	68,216	
Employers National Insurance	64,031	63,456	63,510	76,064	12,033	
Pensions Costs	107,377	107,689	110,145	120,625	13,248	
Medical Insurance	3,193	3,057	3,057	3,356	163	
Staff expenses	202	350	451	450	248	
Staff Training	8,337	12,000	12,000	12,000	3,663	Historically budget not spent as need co-ordination/consolidation of training needs, note included NL conference approx £4k
Travel Expenses	2,792	3,000	4,119	4,300	1,508	
Recruitment	406	406	406	500	94	
Total Staff costs	710,156	713,415	728,216	809,330	99,174	Planning Advisor not recruited need now being met by consultancy instead, delayed recruitment of Administrator and better than budgeted staff allocations to projects in year
Office costs						
Cleaning	3,562	3,474	3,368	2,856	(706)	
Rates and Water rates	7,492	7,484	7,484	7,490	(2)	
Rent	21,650	21,813	21,813	21,975	325	Funded by CDEL - see analysis below
Light, Power, Heating	2,620	2,000	2,870	4,000	1,380	

APPENDIX 1**Budget Variance**

Chilterns Conservation Board

For the Year ended 31 March 2026

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

Account	Draft Full Year Actuals	Updated Forecast (9+3)	Full Year Forecast	Original Budget	Budget Variance	Comments
Repairs & Maintenance	6,063	7,400	7,378	6,776	713	Transferred further costs to CDEL
Insurance	23,440	23,524	24,922	23,000	(440)	
Total Office costs	64,827	65,695	67,835	66,097	1,270	
Governance costs						
Board Meetings	2,354	1,800	1,806	1,850	(504)	
Members Allowances	15,897	16,530	14,363	9,816	(6,081)	
Finance costs	11,295	11,500	10,059	7,082	(4,213)	
Total Governance costs	29,545	29,830	26,228	18,748	(10,797)	Historic member allowances paid and VAT review £4.5k unbudgeted
Communications						
Advertising & Marketing	13,392	15,130	16,830	19,070	5,678	NR and Man Plan design costs now fully paid and on budget, savings are on extra budget for others inc Annual review cost not used
Website running costs	922	3,298	3,298	1,488	566	Website set costs have transferred to CDEL
Total Communications	14,314	18,428	20,128	20,558	6,244	
Telecoms & IT costs						
Computer and IT Equipment	10	2,078	1,304	0	(10)	Laptops costs transferred to CDEL
IT Software and Consumables	9,302	10,500	10,561	11,736	2,434	Overall on forecast take the two lines together
IT support and maintenance	11,967	10,795	10,300	8,712	(3,255)	Overall on forecast take the two lines together
Telephone & Internet	3,725	3,700	3,716	3,802	77	
Total Telecoms & IT costs	25,005	27,073	25,881	24,250	(755)	
Other costs						
Consulting	103,284	109,624	131,996	59,900	(43,384)	Planning consultancy in line with forecast, shortfall is transformation works ADF £3k and LD Consulting £2k
Legal Expenses	3,121	3,121	6,999	7,000	3,879	
Defra Capital Spend	148,238	53,000	68,000	80,000	(68,238)	See CDEL Analysis below
Event costs	3,001	3,000	2,028	2,950	(51)	
General Expenses	1,884	1,600	1,582	1,600	(284)	
Postage, Freight & Courier	581	700	965	750	169	
Printing & Stationery	1,138	3,420	3,420	3,582	2,444	N/R and Man Plan printing not yet complete inc in 26/27 budget £2225 - need to cfwd into 26/27
Subscriptions	3,715	4,289	4,289	4,724	1,010	Included additional subs for planning magazine £555
Bank Fees	92	111	94	156	64	
Total Other costs	265,055	178,865	219,373	160,662	(104,393)	
Total Operating Expenses	1,108,902	1,033,306	1,087,661	1,099,645	(9,257)	
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	(6,292)	(64,747)	(115,751)	(118,505)	130,727	

APPENDIX 1**Budget Variance**

Chilterns Conservation Board

For the Year ended 31 March 2026

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

Account	Draft Full Year Actuals	Updated Forecast (9+3)	Full Year Forecast	Original Budget	Budget Variance	Comments
CDEL Reconciliation						
CDEL funding	172,136					
CDEL Match funding (NWD)	23,000					
Total CDEL Income	<u>195,136</u>					
Defra Capital Spend	148,238					
Rent funded in 25/26	21,000					
Staff costs funded 25/26	25,897					
Total CDEL spend	<u>195,135</u>					
Analysis of Forecast Deficit to actual	(64,747)					
CDEL used for staff costs	25,897					
Add interest income	6,220					
Add project recharges	9,244					
Delayed consultancy	6,340					
Training below budget	3,663					
Printing of NR and Man plan into 26/27	2,282					
Saving Adv & Marketing costs	1,738					
Equip costs to CDEL	2,068					
Website costs to CDEL	2,376					
Other small variances	<u>(1,373)</u>					
Draft Deficit	<u>(6,292)</u>					

APPENDIX 2**Profit and Loss**

Chilterns Conservation Board

For the year ended 31 March 2026

Account	TOTAL CORE	TOTAL PROJECTS	TOTAL CCB
Turnover			
Access Grant	0	434,178	434,178
Defra Capital Grant	172,136	64,086	236,222
Defra Core Grant	513,896	786,968	1,300,864
Donations Received	54	0	54
Interest Income	60,096	71,880	131,976
Internal Fee Income	170,924	62,321	233,245
Local Authority Contribution	129,768	64,425	194,193
Other Revenue	23,000	22,373	45,373
Project Income	32,264	1,059,951	1,092,215
Sale of merchandise	472	7	480
Total Turnover	1,102,611	2,566,189	3,668,800
Gross Profit	1,102,611	2,566,189	3,668,800
Administrative Costs			
Access grant expenditure	0	434,178	434,178
Advertising & Marketing	13,392	3,600	16,992
Bank Fees	92	0	92
Board Meetings	2,354	0	2,354
CCB Core Contribution	0	33,744	33,744
CCB recharges	0	170,470	170,470
Citizen Science	0	10,172	10,172
Cleaning	3,562	0	3,562
Computer and IT Equipment	10	73	82
Consulting	103,284	72,071	175,355
Defra Capital Spend	148,238	64,086	212,325
Education Costs	0	16,652	16,652
Employers National Insurance	64,031	66,124	130,154
Enhancements	0	467,423	467,423
Event costs	3,001	24,559	27,560
Finance costs	11,295	0	11,295
FiPL Grant	0	654,044	654,044
FiPL Grant Year 4 24/25	0	31,279	31,279
General Expenses	1,884	45,816	47,701
Insurance	23,440	0	23,440
Irrecoverable VAT	0	3,433	3,433
IT Software and Consumables	9,302	4,136	13,438
IT support and maintenance	11,967	1,915	13,883
Legal Expenses	3,121	0	3,121
Light, Power, Heating	2,620	0	2,620
Medical Insurance	3,193	2,651	5,844
Members Allowances	15,897	0	15,897
Mitigation	0	118,777	118,777
Nature Recovery	0	85,518	85,518
Other costs (activity) NLHF	0	3,186	3,186
Other costs NLHF	0	370	370
Pensions Costs	107,377	105,056	212,433
Postage, Freight & Courier	581	66	648
Printing & Stationery	1,138	920	2,058
Professional fees (activity)	0	109,158	109,158
Project donations	0	2,000	2,000
Publicity and promotion	0	983	983
Rates and Water rates	7,492	0	7,492
Recruitment	406	449	854
Rent	21,650	3,000	24,650
Repair and conservation work	0	2,634	2,634
Repairs & Maintenance	6,063	18	6,081
Research and survey expenditure	0	21,849	21,849
Salaries	523,819	535,227	1,059,046
Staff expenses	202	1,168	1,370
Staff Training	8,337	6,759	15,096
Subscriptions	3,715	106	3,821
Telephone & Internet	3,725	2,594	6,319
Training for volunteers	0	3,102	3,102
Travel and expenses for volunteers	0	735	735
Travel Expenses	2,792	11,389	14,181
Website running costs	922	99	1,022
Total Administrative Costs	1,108,902	3,121,591	4,230,492
Operating Profit	(6,291)	(555,401)	(561,692)
Profit on Ordinary Activities Before Taxation	(6,291)	(555,401)	(561,692)
Profit after Taxation	(6,291)	(555,401)	(561,692)

APPENDIX 3 Balance Sheet

Chilterns Conservation Board
As at 31 March 2026

Account	31 Mar 2026	31 Mar 2025
Current Assets		
Cash at bank and in hand		
Business 95 Day saver	531,389	513,373
GBP PayPal	86	270
HSBC Current Account	65,920	63,185
HSBC Mmkt 2mf	1,500,000	0
HSBC Money Market 1mf	750,000	1,500,000
HSBC Money Market 3mf	1,000,000	2,000,000
HSBC Reward Account	764,012	1,099,694
Total Cash at bank and in hand	4,611,408	5,176,522
Accounts Receivable	255,081	276,485
Accrued Income	8,267	12,235
Inventory	1,000	1,000
Less Provision for Doubtful Debts	(9,296)	(9,296)
Prepayments	13,438	6,574
Total Current Assets	4,879,897	5,463,520
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year		
Accounts Payable	609,904	802,254
Accruals	116,404	149,415
Business Card - Laura Baker	409	0
Business Card - Lynne Cordice	11	852
Income in Advance	340,118	130,915
NIC Payable	1,336	405
PAYE Payable	(159)	771
PayPal	4	4
Pensions Payable	792	2,183
Rounding	(2)	(1)
Student Loan Deductions Payable	0	(102)
Treasury Account	6	6
VAT	(40)	0
Wages Payable - Payroll	(2,180)	1,468
Total Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	1,066,601	1,088,171
Net Current Assets (Liabilities)	3,813,297	4,375,349
Total Assets less Current Liabilities	3,813,297	4,375,349
Net Assets	3,813,297	4,375,349
Capital and Reserves		
Beacons of the Past: Earmarked Reserves	24,095	24,095
CCC Forward Plan	61,357	61,357
Central Chilterns Conservation Agriculture	86,976	86,976
Chalk Streams Earmarked Reserve	168,951	168,951
CHAP	18,611	18,611
Chess Smarter Water Catchment Earmarked Reserves	169,936	169,936
Commons: Earmarked Reserves	21,837	21,837
Current Year Earnings	(561,692)	(328,200)
Development Reserve	224,123	224,123
Earmarked Reserves: Small Projects	5,380	2,900
Farm Advice: Earmarked Reserves	9,541	9,901
FIPL Earmarked Reserve	180,295	180,295
HS2 AP Reserve	(18,128)	(18,128)
Mend the Gap: Earmarked Reserves	2,728,773	2,728,773
Nature Calling Reserve	19,131	19,131
NBY Reserve	(25,061)	(25,061)
New Shoots Reserve	(10,633)	(10,633)
North Chilterns Farm Cluster	21,876	21,876
Red Kites Earmarked Reserve	5,859	5,859
Retained Earnings	326,200	0
Revenue Reserve	184,320	841,199
Tracking the Impact (Rebel Restoration) Reserve	97,047	97,047
Younghusband Legacy Fund	74,505	74,505
Total Capital and Reserves	3,813,297	4,375,349
Project reserves bfwd	3,640,347	
In year project deficit	(555,401)	
Project Reserves 31.3.26	3,084,945	
Core Reserves	734,643	
In year deficit	(6,291)	
Core Reserves 31.3.26	728,351	
TOTAL RESERVES	3,813,297	

Appendix 4 – Analysis of CDEL spend

Project	Details	Total £'000	Core/Project	CDEL Category
Capital Lease	Current year rent	21	Core CCB	Invest to save
Climate Adaptation Plan	Consultancy work completed by Footprint Ecology part funded by North Wessex Downs	51	Core CCB	Research & Development
IT Transformation Projects	Sharepoint/Cloud Payroll/Risk Assessor/Contact Management/GIS/Website development	35	Core CCB	Invest to save
Physical Assets	Computers and Fire Safety	9	Core CCB	Invest to save
Permanent Wildflower Margins	Central Chilterns Farmer Cluster	1	Project CCB	30x30
Species Rich Chalk Grassland restoration	Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northants Wildlife Trust	48	External Partner	30x30
Species Rich Chalk Grassland restoration	Chiltern Society – equipment purchase	26	External Partner	30x30
Hedgerows	North Chilterns Farmer Cluster	56	Projects CCB	30x30
Luton Henge	Nature Calling Luton Henge Project	6	Projects CCB	30x30
CDEL systems Development	Across 30x30 and invest to save projects	6	Core CCB	30x30/Invest to save
Match funding from NWD		(23)	Core CCB	R&D
TOTAL CDEL Income/Spend		236		

Item 2.2 Updated Budget 2026/27**Author:** Kathryn Foster, Senior Finance Manager**Purpose:** To set out an updated 2026-27 Core Budget for approval by the Executive Committee**1. 2026-27 Budget – Overview**

£'000s	Actual 2023/24	Actual 2024/25	Draft Actuals 2025/26	Original Budget Envelope 26/27	Updated Budget 26/27	Budget 27/28	Budget 28/29
Defra Income	513	724	686	557	714	557	557
Local Authority Income	124	127	129	129	122	129	129
Other income	160	301	287	262	260	252	249
Total Income	798	1,153	1,103	948	1,096	938	935
Staff costs	595	716	710	742	762	793	817
Office costs	57	54	65	68	71	70	71
Governance costs	13	23	30	20	20	20	21
Communications costs	19	28	15	10	10	10	11
Telecoms & IT costs	22	22	25	25	25	26	26
Other costs	115	200	265	141	209	114	114
Total Costs	822	1,043	1,109	1,006	1,097	1,033	1,060
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(23)	110	(6)	(58)	(1)	(95)	(125)

- The original budget envelope was presented to the board in March and showed a deficit for 26/27 of **£58k**. Our proposal was to fund this deficit from our 24/25 surplus, as aggregating the three years 24/25, 25/26 and 26/27 netted a deficit of just £14k. Alongside this budget envelope, we projected figures into 27/28 and 28/29 (above) indicating deficits of £95k and £125k respectively.
- 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 and final reviews have taken place.
- Since the Board meeting in March, Defra has confirmed a one off RDEL uplift for 26/27 for the CCB of **£176k**, which is very welcome, relieving pressure on our reserves and allowing opportunity for more investment in our 2026/27 activities. The uplift has also resulted in significant changes to the budget, which is shown above, and is now breakeven. With the much-improved position for year end 31 March 2026 (draft deficit £6k, forecast deficit £66k) the CCB has a boost to reserves of approximately £100k which gives comfort and cushion for 27/28 onwards.
- Our key budget assumptions for the original budget envelope were included in the March Board papers. Please see the detailed notes on a line-by-line basis in **Appendix 1 (pages 1 to 4 for review)**.

- At this stage we have not updated our forecasts for 27/28 and 28/29. This update will be completed ahead of the June Board meeting alongside our business planning process.

2. RDEL Uplift

The key elements of use for the RDEL uplift of **£176k** are outlined below:

- **Funding our original budget envelope deficit of £58k.** This included Planning Consultancy of £75k, new Head of Programmes role (from 1 July) £53k along with 3% pay rise for all eligible staff and increased training provision to reflect enhanced investment in the staff team.
- **Funding net additional costs from our original budget envelope £11k.** The main element here is the significant reduction in funding from Buckinghamshire Council (contribution reduced by £14k from £55k per annum to £41k, though note that the actual contributions in 25/26 should have been £61k, so a real term loss of £20k).
- Our original budget envelope included **£20k of CDEL funding towards our new Head of Programmes role.** For prudence, we propose to use RDEL uplift funding for this instead of CDEL. This would be a one off as, once the role is established, it is expected to generate income. One day per week of this role will also be funded by the Not Bourne Yesterday project (NBY) but with NBY delivery phase submission being extended into Q3 26/27, funding in 26/27 is limited.
- **Project funding contributions £20k.** The RDEL uplift provides an opportunity for the CCB to support some of our key projects. The Chilterns Chalk Streams Project (CCSP) and Not Bourne Yesterday (NBY) both have very tight budgets. Our revised budget includes a one-off contribution of £10k in 26/27 for these two projects.
- **Continued Transformation works on IT and HR totalling £32.5k.** Further additional IT works of £20k will be funded from CDEL and/or reserves.
- **National Landscapes conference attendance £7k.** In previous years we have enabled as many staff as possible to attend the conference, within budget limits, and utilised project funding wherever possible. The RDEL uplift provides an opportunity for more staff to attend the conference as it provides an invaluable training and updates. This year, 16 of the staff team, plus the CCB's Chair, will be attending the conference.
- **Data Protection Officer £12.5k.** The original budget envelope did not include costs for this role as we had hoped to source it internally and provide appropriate training. This has not been possible, and we are now seeking provision of this service externally. In year one, set up costs are approximately £4k, with ongoing costs of £8.5k per annum.
- **Additional training needs.** The original training budget included £17.5k to reflect enhanced training provision for staff. We continue to review our training needs, especially to support our transformation activities, and have allocated a further £2.5k from the RDEL uplift.
- **Continuing team development activities £14k.** This will support further work with Future Nature Ltd, following two very successful team development sessions run at the end of 2025. New work will include team development activities and individual Lumina Spark assessments.

Recommendation

1. To **APPROVE** the updated budget for 26/27; full detailed final budget to be presented for approval at the June Board meeting.

APPENDIX 1

CHILTERN CONSERVATION BOARD

BUDGET 2026/27

	Actual 23/24	Actual 24/25	Draft Actual 25/26	Original Budget Envelope 26/27	Updated Budget 26/27	Assumptions and Comments
	£	£	£	£	£	
Trading Income						
Defra Income						
Defra Core Grant	513,896	628,145	513,896	513,996	690,719	Core RDEL £514k, RDEL uplift £176k
Defra Capital Grant						£23.5k re capital lease, Removed £20k funding from CDEL for Head of Programmes and use RDEL uplift for prudence. Other CDEL income assumed offset by costs so currently excluded from budget
	-	95,934	172,136	43,500	23,500	
Total Defra Income	513,896	724,079	686,032	557,496	714,219	
Other income						
Local Authority Contribution	124,448	127,442	129,768	129,670	121,967	Bucks reduction now included, 5% uplift for other LAs
Project Income						Project income continues at 26/27 levels, alternatives will be sought as 26/27 projects end. Includes FDRI, Nature Towns & Cities, Nature Ridge and HS2 AP
	19,760	31,461	32,264	56,500	57,500	
Interest Income	18,792	50,176	60,096	40,000	40,000	Declining rates and balances assumed
Internal Fee Income	112,979	211,371	170,924	165,000	161,873	Recharges per Projects to include overheads to projects and cross charges to NBY, FIPL and Access for All projects
Other Revenue						For 25/26 this represented match funding from NWD for CDEL Climate Adaptation project
	-	-	23,054			
Advertising income	8,166	7,792	-	-	-	Outstanding magazine no longer produced
Sale of merchandise	235	544	472	-	-	
Total Other income	284,380	428,785	416,578	391,170	381,340	
Total Trading Income	798,276	1,152,865	1,102,610	948,666	1,095,559	
Gross Surplus	798,276	1,152,865	1,102,610	948,666	1,095,559	

APPENDIX 1

CHILTERN CONSERVATION BOARD

BUDGET 2026/27

	Actual 23/24	Actual 24/25	Draft Actual 25/26	Original Budget Envelope 26/27	Updated Budget 26/27	Assumptions and Comments
	£	£	£	£	£	
Operating Expenses						
Staff costs						
Total Salaries	577,973	694,163	695,226	715,890	710,942	Standard 3% pay increase, other changes from salary review. Head of Programmes cost for 9 months £53k. Employer pension contributions reduced from 20.9% to 16.3%
Medical Insurance	5,146	3,410	3,193	3,500	3,500	
Staff expenses	640	180	202	500	500	
Staff Training	5,907	11,668	8,337	17,500	41,000	Enhanced training and also includes Future Nature work and National Landscapes conference attendance
Travel Expenses	2,479	3,893	2,792	4,000	4,000	
Recruitment	2,909	3,245	406	1,000	2,000	For Office Administrator and Head of Programmes recruitment
Total Staff costs	595,053	716,560	710,156	742,390	761,942	
Office costs						
Cleaning	3,305	3,196	3,562	3,500	3,500	
Rates and Water rates	6,127	7,324	7,492	7,500	8,700	Includes increased rates for 26/27 15%
Rent	20,500	18,825	21,650	23,500	23,500	Funded by CDEL
Light, Power, Heating	7,739	4,180	2,620	3,500	4,500	Uplift now included as tariff will renew in July and global uncertainties
Office Equipment	312		-	500	500	Fire system maintenance
Repairs & Maintenance	3,052	4,484	6,063	4,000	4,000	25/26 includes one off items Approx £2k
Insurance	15,944	16,036	23,440	26,000	26,000	Includes full year professional indemnity 26/27
Total Office costs	56,978	54,045	64,827	68,500	70,700	

APPENDIX 1

CHILTERN CONSERVATION BOARD

BUDGET 2026/27

	Actual 23/24	Actual 24/25	Draft Actual 25/26	Original Budget Envelope 26/27	Updated Budget 26/27	Assumptions and Comments
	£	£	£	£	£	
Governance costs						
Board Meetings	828	1,161	2,354	2,000	2,000	
Members Allowances	6,356	9,657	15,897	10,800	10,800	25/26 included backdated allowances, budget is based on current ongoing cost £900 per month
Finance costs	5,880	12,443	11,295	7,000	7,000	Internal and external audits 26/27 onwards £7k (£6.5k for 25/26), 25/26 included VAT review costs £4.5k
Total Governance costs	13,065	23,260	29,545	19,800	19,800	
Communications						
Advertising & Marketing	496	10,022	13,392	5,000	5,000	26/27 onwards contingency for general comms work eg planning guidance, 25/26 included management and nature recovery plan costs
Magazine costs	16,506	16,848	-	-	-	
Website running costs	2,163	1,104	922	5,000	5,000	Increased now with new provider and incorporated contingency for further website development work
Total Communications	19,165	27,974	14,314	10,000	10,000	
Telecoms & IT costs						
Computer and IT Equipment	3,850	-	10	-	-	Assumed ongoing IT hardware will be funded by CDEL
IT Software and Consumables	7,594	9,315	9,302	11,000	11,000	
IT support and maintenance	7,456	9,175	11,967	10,000	10,000	
Telephone & Internet	3,182	3,508	3,725	4,000	4,000	
Total Telecoms & IT costs	22,082	21,998	25,005	25,000	25,000	Flat year on year but there have been additional costs in 25/26 for extra laptops and cost review in this area taking place

APPENDIX 1

CHILTERN CONSERVATION BOARD

BUDGET 2026/27

	Actual 23/24	Actual 24/25	Draft Actual 25/26	Original Budget Envelope 26/27	Updated Budget 26/27	Assumptions and Comments
	£	£	£	£	£	
Other costs						
Consulting	52,425	70,508	103,284	93,700	138,700	Planning consultancy £75k , HR £13k and H&S £5.7k. DPO £12.5k including set up Continuing transformation consultancy of £32.5k funded by RDEL uplift. Further £20k of IT transformation works to be funded by CDEL or reserves
Legal Expenses	20,000	7,755	3,121	6,500	6,500	26/27 Contract review work £4k bfwd from 25/26
Defra Capital Spend	-	95,934	148,238	-	-	Any costs will be covered by corresponding CDEL income
Event costs	866	2,164	3,001	7,600	7,600	Specific events for 26/27 to support climate adaptation works
Project Donations	27,000	13,157	-	25,182	45,182	Nature Ridge Landscapes Connections £7.5k over 2 years and Not Bourne Yesterday contingency support £21k (funds staff for Oct to Dec for gap between development and delivery projects). Match funded for CCSP £10k and NBY £10k funded from RDEL uplift
General Expenses	7,074	2,360	1,884	1,500	1,500	Better analysis to cost lines such as events or travel going forward
Postage, Freight & Courier	478	264	581	500	500	
Printing & Stationery	1,344	1,528	1,138	2,000	4,250	£2.25k bfwd from 25/26 for printing of Management and Nature recovery plans
Subscriptions	5,898	6,202	3,715	4,250	4,850	Add subscriptions for Monitoring and Finance officers and normal National Landscapes annual subscription
Bank Fees	150	184	92	150	150	
Total Other costs	115,234	199,528	265,055	141,382	209,232	
Total Operating Expenses	821,577	1,043,365	1,108,902	1,007,073	1,096,674	
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	(23,301)	109,500	(6,292)	(58,407)	(1,115)	

Item 2.3**Quarter 4 Delivery Report**

Author: Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations

Purpose of Report: To update the Executive Committee on the progress of the Chilterns National Landscape team between Jan – Mar 2026 against the FY25-26 Delivery Plan.

Overall

- The Delivery Plan approved for FY25-26 was split into five workstreams and contains 28 active delivery areas (the same as last year) with 109 delivery lines (a slight increase from 103 last year). In Q4 (Jan-Mar 2026) the status of delivery across the CNL Team was as follows:

Completed	Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Significantly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Not due to have started	On Hold	Postponed	Cancelled
On Track						
47 (54)	31 (28)	9 (16)	0 (0)	1 (2)	16 (8)	5 (1)

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

- Progress in each of the five workstreams is detailed below along with an identification of key achievements during the quarter.
- Where we are reporting significant delays or where work has had to be put on hold, postponed or cancelled the reason for this, the impact and the key mitigating actions that it has been agreed to take are identified as requested during the Executive Committee meeting in November 2025.
- Appendix 1 identifies the delivery status reported for all four quarters against individual delivery lines.

Workstream 1: Improve Strategic Alignment

Completed	Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Significantly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Not due to have started	On Hold	Postponed	Cancelled
On Track						
7 (6)	6 (8)	1 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0)	1 (0)

Numbers in brackets represent previous quarter figures

Key achievements this quarter:

- Formal approval received from Nature England for the Management Plan (along with positive feedback on the Plan and a request for a delivery plan to be developed in support of the Management Plan)
- Draft final R&D report on Climate Adaptation received from consultant
- Discussions held with NLA Green Finance team and involvement with new Nature Circle initiated
- Advertisement for the Chilterns displayed on M4 flyover
- Landscape Connections (Nature Ridge) application to the Heritage Lottery successful
- Participated in working group that shaped new Defra Farmer Collaboration Fund
- Secured £1m funding for Mending the Misbourne project from HS2
- Multi year Affinity Water funding secured and agreement with Thames Water drafted for Chilterns Chalk Stream Project core funding

- Thames Water funding for Smarter Water Catchment secured

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

MEDIUM RISK / IMPACT	
1.1.1 Management Plan: Complete refresh of the Management Plan	
Status	Significantly delayed At the end of Q4 we are close to having a designed plan ready for publication and have received confirmation of approval from Natural England but identifying that there needs to be a supporting delivery plan. No further progress made on Local Authority or other stakeholder engagement.
Issue	Internal – Lack of staff capacity and availability This is mainly in relation to the capacity of the CEO, Head of Strategy & Planning and the Communications Manager, with the latter in particular having competing workloads and the need for a lot of time going back and forward with the published
Impact / Risk	The impact of not having a Management Plan published in paper is limited in terms the ability of the organisation to deliver its programme of work, especially as the Management Plan is accessible via the website. However, there is a reputational risk in not having the plan published and accessible for all. In particular it limits engagement on the plan and means that other strategic documents such as the Nature Recovery Plan that refers heavily to the Management Plan are impacted.
Mitigation	A pdf document of the Management Plan is expected to be ready by the end of March and will be initially published on the website so that it is available at the earliest opportunity. In the meantime, we have published the Schedule of Amendments for the Plan on our website .
LIMITED RISK / IMPACT	
1.4.1 Nature Recovery Monitoring Indicators: Ensure that Citizen Science & monitoring programmes align to Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework monitoring requirements	
Status	Postponed
Issue	Internal – Lack of staff capacity This is mainly in relation to staff within the Landscape Team
Impact / Risk	There is a risk that citizen science activities become more diffuse and are not aligned with organisation outcomes meaning that staff effort may be directed towards programmes that are poorly aligned with organisational strategy. However not considered a substantial risk as new citizen science activities are being planned by the Chilterns Chalk Stream Project with a focus on streamlining rather than expanding these activities
Mitigation	Will be addressed in planning for FY26-27
NO IMPACT / RISK	
1.5.6 Programme Funding (Heritage): Ensure heritage funding for following years is based on a sustainable model	
Status	Cancelled
Issue	Internal – Heritage and Archaeology Manager (HAM) left the organisation
Impact / Risk	There is no impact / risk for this delivery line – in fact, there are two potential benefits which were drivers. Firstly, with the HAM leaving and setting up an independent CIC this allows for more flexibility to raise funds for this work and secondly it de risks the organisation where it might have been difficult to raise funds with the HAM within the organisation
Mitigation	No mitigation required

Workstream 2: Increase Operational Effectiveness

Completed	Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Significantly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Not due to have started	On Hold	Postponed	Cancelled
On Track						
6 (9)	9 (8)	(6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	8 (4)	0 (0)

Numbers in brackets represent previous quarter figures

Key achievements this quarter:

- 4 new HR processes drafted and under review
- External Data Protection Officer procurement process undertaken (Mar) and appointed (Apr)
- Results of staff survey and Team Development sessions circulated

- Three staff qualified as Mental Health First Aiders and group now started operating in this area and three managers attended leadership training workshop
- Changes to the Operations Team agreed and successful handover completed with long time Senior Administrator retiring from the organisation (Apr)
- Budget envelope for FY26-27 agreed by Board (Mar)
- Financial work on Defra capital funding completed with over 90% of grant spent from standing start this year
- New Information Management structure established and in use by almost all of the staff base
- Draft standard operating procedures to address risk drafted for the Nature Recovery team and all field staff now fully equipped with first aid kits
- Chilterns Chalk Stream Project new Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding signed off

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

HIGH RISK / IMPACT	
2.1.5 HR Compliance: Put in place all other requirements identified in agreed HR policies to ensure organisational compliance with policies	
Status	Significantly delayed There has been significant progress in this area with a competitive tender process undertaken to appoint an external Data Protection Officer (and now appointed in Q1 of 2026-27) which means the organisation is now compliant in this area. This followed extensive work done to ascertain whether it would be something we could do internally or with the Cotswolds National Landscape
Issue	Internal – Lack of staff capacity There continues to be issues with the Head of Operations capacity which is why getting safeguarding training in place is something that is still outstanding
Impact / Risk	We still need to be more rigorous in terms of our data protection as we are potentially not fully compliant and we need to address safeguarding training as soon as possible to improve our compliance in this area
Mitigation	A discovery meeting has now been held with external Data Protection Officer and there is a now a process in place to improve our ways of handling data. Safeguarding training has been identified and has now been booked for the Safeguarding Lead
MEDIUM RISK / IMPACT	
2.3.3 Information Governance & Compliance: Ensure the organisation is compliant with data protection requirements including GDPR and Cyber Essentials	
Status	Postponed Given that we have now appointed an external Data Protection Officer progress in this area will be replanned following the finalisation of the discovery part of their work
Issue	Internal – Lack of staff capacity External – Need to link into work of external Data Protection Officer The lack of staff capacity specifically relates to the Head of Operations who has been leading the appointment of the external DPO and the Communications Manager who has been acting as the interim Data Protection Lead
Impact / Risk	There is limited risk in terms of cyber security, as the organisation is operating in a way that is consistent with cyber essentials, with the exception of the use of mobile phones. However, there is still a need to bring together all draft policies on document retention, privacy, confidential information and data management to ensure effective policies and that staff understand the policies and related processes and procedures.
Mitigation	Work on this area will be brought into line with the work and recommendations of the external Data Protection Officer which means that a clearer view on the work needed will inform development in this area
2.4.1 Risk Assessments: Embed new ways of working to ensure consistent recording and addressing of risk across the organisation	
Status	Significantly delayed It has been agreed to input a set of Standard Operating Procedures to reduce the number of times that the staff have to undertake risk assessments and therefore in the long term ensure robustness is balanced with pragmatism. As such the time taken to develop the Standard Operating Procedures has meant that this delivery line has become more delayed
Issue	Internal – Lack of staff capacity This work is now being led by the person who is moving into the Finance Administrator role and therefore there is more limited time to address H&S External – Change in delivery line requiring more work with external H&S consultant

	We have a limited amount of time that we can call upon with our H&S consultant and this therefore impacts how quickly we can move in this area
Impact / Risk	There will continue to be a lack of robustness in the way that some teams undertake Risk Assessments until we can put Standard Operating Procedures in place and ensure that all teams are using them and Risk Assessments in the right way
Mitigation	The work to produce Standard Operating Procedures is being undertaken one team at a time. This means that all other teams are continuing to use the risk assessment forms, which minimises the risk
2.6.2 Contract Management: Develop a standardised set of commercial contracts for the organisation	
Status	Postponed to consider in FY26-27 Work has not progressed at all this quarter and the first contract created in conjunction with the external experts BEB created significant issues when first used
Issue	Internal – Lack of staff capacity This relates in particular to the Head of Operations who was working with BEB and who is the only person involved in this work
Impact / Risk	There continues to be a lack of robustness in the way that contracts are developed which necessitates a significant amount of senior management time in reviewing and correcting them.
Mitigation	Not currently identified as key issue here is around capacity
2.6.4 New Work Governance: Develop detail around the process and templates for undertaking new work and embed across the organisation	
Status	Significantly delayed and limited in effectiveness (same as Q3) The high-level process was developed in FY24-25 and a detailed process has now been developed. However, there are some critical questions to get right in order to strike a balance between robust governance and being overly restrictive especially where we have staff working as part of broader programmes with other organisations. Work began in January underway to review and revise the process to make it more manageable
Issue	Internal – Lack of staff capacity This relates in particular to the Head of Operations and the Head of Landscape who were reviewing the process in conjunction with the Senior Finance Administrator
Impact / Risk	Whilst there is greater clarity in terms of the way in which new work is raised and considered the process still needs to be properly embedded. As such reviewing new work continues to necessitate a significant amount of time of both managers and senior managers, and approaches are still being made with limited clarity about the implication of taking on new work (although these are now being addressed before any applications / commitments are made).
Mitigation	Needs to be included and prioritised in the planning for FY26-27
LIMITED RISK / IMPACT	
2.1.4 HR Processes: Develop / update required processes, procedures and templates to support revised policies and improve ways of working	
Status	Significantly delayed Work has progressed with draft processes in place for recruitment, offboarding, onboarding and annual performance management and which are at the final review stage before being signed off. Draft processes have been created across a number of other areas as well.
Issue	Internal – Knock on impact of delivery of another delivery line Internal – Lack of staff capacity and capability The time taken to produce and finalise the sign off the HR policies has had a continued knock-on effect in terms of developing the processes. These are being addressed in a more timely manner but it remains difficult to catch up time lost, and issues remain with the Head of Operations' capacity.
Impact / Risk	Whilst the impact is internal there continues to be inefficiency with inconsistent ways of doing things in an area where we are looking to make staff touch points easy with a focus on resolving issues rather than on the process itself.
Mitigation	Prioritisation exercise has taken place to focus on processes where there is the greatest need in order to get these up and running first.
2.4.2 Health & Safety Policies, Processes and Procedures (Organisation): Review and put in place updated policies, processes and procedures being developed in partnership with Risk Fluent	
Status	Significantly delayed (same as Q3) Bringing on board a new Administration Officer with responsibility to address some of these areas has meant that in this quarter we have been able to address some of the most critical of the areas, including fire management and first aid. All of the field team have now received first aid training and we have invested in ensuring that all field staff have first aid kits and proper processes are in place to ensure replenishment of these kits. We have undertaken a complete fire risk assessment and are working on putting in place recommendations from that assessment – this includes introducing a new fire alarm system. However, there are a number of other areas

	that we have not yet had a chance to address because of the extensive amount of time taken up in improving the risk management system in order to make it work for us an organisation.
Issue	Internal – Lack of staff capacity The new Finance Administrator is leading the work in this area and their time is limited both because of the hand over they have had to go through this quarter and their taking up of new finance responsibilities as well as their focus on developing Standard Operating Procedures. External – Lack of capacity of external consultants The current support model in this area has limited days of support and the organisation is unable to afford more so the ability to process quicker is limited.
Impact / Risk	This is rated as low as we have addressed most of what was identified as the higher risk areas such as fire management and first aid.
Mitigation	Review effectiveness of working with external health & safety experts in terms of the amount of time it involves internally to move things forward. Reset with the recruitment of new Office Administrator.
2.4.3 Health & Safety Policies, Processes and Procedures (Field): Review and put in place updated policies, processes and procedures being developed in partnership with Risk Fluent in relation to field work	
Status	Postponed to reconsider in planning for FY26-27 The most important element of health & safety for those operating in the field is the effective functioning of risk assessments. As such the decision to undertake additional work to develop Standard Operating Procedures for the Nature Recovery Team means that other work in this area has had to be postponed.
Issue	Internal – Lack of staff capacity As 2.4.2 External – Lack of capacity of external consultants As 2.4.2
Impact / Risk	This is rated as low as we have targeted sorting out the most important areas of this work and for some other areas, we already have clear frameworks in place and are operating in line with requirements (e.g. COSHH).
Mitigation	Review effectiveness of working with external health & safety experts in terms of the amount of time it involves internally to move things forward.
2.5.1 Office Environment: Continue to improve the office environment to create a more productive, welcoming and inspiring workplace	
Status	Postponed to reconsider in planning for FY26-27 Whilst some elements of work have progressed this quarter such as the hanging on new pictures in general it has been agreed to review this area of work and potentially to expand the group looking at this to also look at wellbeing. This will be investigated in Q1 of FY26-27
Issue	Internal – Lack of prioritisation / responsibility Because of the nature of this work, it invariably is deprioritised against more urgent work in terms of delivery of the Management Plan and as such is liable to not be progressed Internal – Building restrictions Whilst there are a number of areas of the building that we would like to improve the design of the building means that options are limited
Impact / Risk	This is rated as low as the building is functional rather than optimal and there is nothing in the building that is effectively stopping people undertake their work. However, it is recognised that ideally the office would be a more inspiring place to come in and work from
Mitigation	Review following liaison with owners and to look into expanding the staff group to focus on wellbeing with the office as a part of this focus group

Workstream 3: Conserve & Enhance Natural Beauty

Completed	Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Significantly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Not due to have started	On Hold	Postponed	Cancelled
On Track						
20 (20)	6 (5)	1 (5)	0 (0)	0 (1)	3 (2)	3 (0)

Numbers in brackets represent previous quarter figures. Note that one delivery line was identified as cancelled in Q3 (3.1.5 FiPL Changes) when it was actually on hold. This amendment has been made in the above table

Key achievements this quarter:

- Contacts developed between Landscape team members and Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) delivery teams to ensure alignment

- Farming technical approach paper developed and presented at March Board meeting
- FiPL delivery funding of £664 for FY25-26 fully allocated
- Further delivery funding of £664k for the Farming in Protected Landscape programme secured from Defra (with potential for an additional 2 years after FY26-27) as well as £206k for nature recovery work
- Scaling citizen science feasibility study completed by consultants and submitted to Natural England
- 2025-26 winter supplementary feeding project completed (24 tonnes of seed) and Winter Big Farmland Bird project completed for 6th year (Central Chilterns Farmer Cluster)
- 49 farmers and landowners engaged and 8 farmer events / workshops held with 13ha of herbal ley and 15ha of cover crops planted, 26ha of arable reversion and 1.8km of hedge renovated (Chess Farmer Cluster)
- 6 ponds restored and over 38,000 whips planted with c.5km of hedges renovated and 20 winter bird surveys carried out (North Chilterns Farmer Cluster)
- Options appraisal for Hamble Brook conducted and Hughenden Stream designs completed and currently under review (CCSP)
- Black poplar planted with bat and owl boxes installed at Withymead (Mend the Gap)
- Project at Pangbourne Meadows to bring the meadows back into a better condition expected to be signed off in next quarter (Mend the Gap)
- Catchment Monitoring Design for the Chess completed (Flood & Drought Research Infrastructure project)
- 2 volunteer workshops with c. 100 volunteers held and presentation given to 350 delegates at the 2026 annual BTO conference (Tracking the Impact)
- 23 planning applications responded to as well as responses submitted to Buckinghamshire Local Plan consultation
- Monthly Planning Updates now being issued and circulated to the staff team and the Board

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

LIMITED RISK / IMPACT	
3.1.2 Nature Recovery Plan: Develop overall plan for the delivery of the Nature Recovery Plan (NRP) and support partner development of Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) plans	
Status	Significantly Delayed (same as Q3) Whilst the Local Nature Recovery Plan has been drafted it has not yet been published, although progress has been made on this during this quarter.
Issue	Internal - Impact of delay in publication of Management Plan
Impact / Risk	Delays in the publication of the Management Plan and Local Nature Recovery Strategies mean that the overall impact of a delay in publishing the Nature Recovery Plan (NRP) is limited as the publication of the NRP was always meant to occur following LNRS publication. Launching the NRP ahead or at the same time as the LNRSs would detract from the launch of those strategies and launching the NRP after means there is an opportunity to ensure it is reviewed and any alignment issues addressed before launched.
Mitigation	The Landscape Team have reviewed LNRSs and contacts have been made with LNRS delivery Teams. Awaiting publication of the Management Plan
3.8.1 Planning Strategy & Implementation: Produce strategy paper on approach to planning and rationalise the planning function to be more of a critical friend to Local Authorities	
Status	Postponed to reconsider in planning for FY26-27
Issue	Internal / External – Need for greater engagement with Local Authorities
Impact / Risk	Before solidifying Planning Team protocols and procedures in this area there is a need for more Local Authority engagement to ensure that what is put in place will work. This engagement is building with increased planning capacity but needs to be pulled together
Mitigation	Will be revisited and more precisely articulated in terms of what is needed in planning for FY26-27
NO RISK / IMPACT	
3.6.1 Field Schools Run heritage field school	
3.6.2 Heritage Outreach Deliver talks, training and taster sessions on archaeology	
3.6.3 Heritage Projects: Deliver & support partners to deliver archaeological projects/capital works on the ground	
Status	Cancelled
Issue	Departure of Heritage & Archaeology Manager
Impact / Risk	None – this work will continue (and have more opportunity to be broadened through the CIC that has been established by Dr Wendy Morrison. The Chilterns National Landscape team will

	continue to have access to the departed HAM for 20 days a year for the next 4 years and she will continue as a partner in both Not Bourne Yesterday and the Nature Ridge projects
Mitigation	The Chilterns National Landscape team have signed a memorandum of understanding and will continue to have access to the departed HAM for 20 days a year for the next 4 years to continue the embedding of heritage and archaeology into the thinking of the organisation. No replacement is being sought as this is an opportunity to focus the role of the Chilterns National Landscape team without losing the capability in the Landscape

Workstream 4: Improve Understanding & Enjoyment

Completed	Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Significantly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Not due to have started	On Hold	Postponed	Cancelled
On Track						
10 (13)	4 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	1 (1)	0 (0)

Numbers in brackets represent previous quarter figures

Key achievements this quarter:

- The reconvened EDI Advisory Group had their inaugural meeting in January
- The Accessibility Hub on the CNL Website was launched in March, highlighting our EDI ambition
- Final grants for the Access for All Fund were allocated meaning a total of £429,000 has been allocated this year
- A further £83,000 has been allocated to access projects (with a focus on schools) through the Mend the Gap Programme
- The Luton Towns and Cities programme, of which the CNL Team is a strategic partner, commenced in January (inc the running of an Access workshop in March)
- A Development Review Meeting was held with the National Lottery Heritage Fund for Not Bourne Yesterday, which reaffirmed that the project development was on the right track but agreed to slightly postpone the actual submission
- Work began and is nearing completion on a new and expanded Volunteer Portal which will house all information about volunteers from CNL and through the landing page in the website provide more focused signposting to volunteering opportunities across the Chilterns
- Trout in the Classroom delivered to 7 schools

Significant delays or delivery lines put on hold, postponed or cancelled during the quarter:

No delivery lines were identified as significantly delayed, or newly postponed / cancelled or put on hold in Q4.

Workstream 5: Effectively Communicate

Completed	Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Significantly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Not due to have started	On Hold	Postponed	Cancelled
On Track						
4 (6)	7 (6)	1 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (1)	1 (1)

Numbers in brackets represent previous quarter figures

Key achievements this quarter:

- New annual communication plan has been developed structured around quarterly themes aligned to project activity and key publications

- A revised structure for the Annual Review was agreed, confirming it as the organisation's flagship advocacy report highlighting achievements and demonstrating accountability for public funding ((due to be published in July)
- 3 monthly newsletters and 5 news items published online, with continuous posting including landscape photos, access guide site series and reels from Luton Henge workshops
- The Accessibility Hub was launched in February giving improved access to the website
- Further improvements to the website were also finalised so it is now accessibility compliant and easier for the comms team to make changes (e.g. bringing featured pages to the fore, ability to navigate across multiple layers, new action blocks so changes can be made in one rather than multiple places)
- New "hero" photo library established to allow images being actively used to be managed more effectively than trying to manage the full library of images improving our GDPR robustness
- Management plan progresses to final stages before publication

Significant delays or delivery lines put on hold, postponed or cancelled during the quarter:

LIMITED RISK / IMPACT	
5.4.1 CNL Brand: Agree and embed mission and values both internally and externally and measure impact of narrative and brand delivered through activation plans	
Status:	Postponed to reconsider in planning for FY26-27
Issue	Internal – CNL Staff Capacity Because the Management Plan has taken significantly longer and more Communications Team capacity than expected work on this delivery line has been deprioritised throughout the year and it was therefore decided to postpone all work in this area until FY26-27
Impact / Risk	The delay in this work means that there continues to be a risk that there is a lack of alignment between staff and a lack of understanding of our mission and values. However, this risk is significantly reduced by the Team Development work that was started in December 2025.
Action / Mitigation	As a lot of information has already been gathered in respect of this delivery line there is a need to replan as part of a wider strategic refresh in FY26-27 and to ensure it is aligned to the Team Development work
5.4.2 Internal Brand Guidelines: Develop & embed brand guideline for projects, programmes and partnerships	
Status:	In progress (significantly delayed / limited in effectiveness)
Issue:	Internal – CNL Staff Capacity Because the Management Plan has taken significantly longer and more Communications Team capacity than expected work on this delivery line has been deprioritised throughout the year and it was therefore decided to postpone all work in this area until FY26-27
Impact / Risk	Brand guidelines already exist for the organisation and with a number of projects and programmes individual discussions and agreements have been made to that the risk is considered low. This is more about ensuring that there is consistency and that staff understand where to access brand guideline
Action / Mitigation	Need to relook at this as part of an integrated brand framework in FY26-27
5.5.1 Internal Comms Platform: Design, develop & set up an effective internal communications platform for the organisation	
Status:	Postponed to reconsider in FY26/27 Planning
Issue	Internal – CNL Staff Capacity The transition of data from old Sharepoint sites and the F Drive to the Information Management Transformation Programme is taking longer than originally planned and is now expected to take most of the next financial year to complete because of the sheer quantity of files and a lack of clear knowledge of many of the files stored there As such the new Sharepoint site is still being used to communicate progress on the transition and it has been agreed that we need to get through this before using it as a channel for broader internal comms in order to address capacity constraints and also to support change management by limiting the level of change in the organisation
Impact / Risk	Internal communications remain a challenge for the organisation with the two main forms of internal communication – email and through staff meetings not providing the ability for ongoing reminders and

	reinforcement of deadlines / reinforcing positive culture in the organisation.
Action / Mitigation	In planning for FY26-27 we will consider whether there is an opportunity to develop this internal communications channel alongside the Information Management Transformation Programme rather than after the transition of files

Recommendation

- 1. To NOTE and OFFER FEEDBACK on progress made in Quarter 4 against the Delivery Plan.**

Appendix 1**Status of Individual Delivery Lines**

Key

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

Delivery Area / Delivery Line	Q1 (Apr-Jun)	Q2 (Jul-Sep)	Q3 (Oct-Dec)	Q4 (Jan-Mar)
Workstream 1: Improve Strategic Alignment				
1.1 Strategic Development				
1.1.1 Management Plan				
1.1.2 Levelling Up and Regeneration Act				
1.1.3 Nature Recovery Plan				
1.1.4 Climate Adaptation Plan				
1.2 Organisational Governance				
1.2.1 Constitution				
1.2.2 Board & Committee Operations				
1.3 Strategic Engagement / Influence				
1.3.1 Government Engagement				
1.3.2 National Landscapes Association / Protected Landscapes Network Engagement				
1.3.3 Strategic Partner Engagement				
1.4 Monitoring & Evaluation				
1.4.1 Nature Recovery Monitoring Indicators				Postponed
1.5 Financial Sustainability				
1.5.1 Income Diversity				
1.5.2 Core Funding				
1.5.3 Programme Funding (Nature Recovery)				
1.5.4 Programme Funding (Land)				
1.5.5 Programme Funding (Water)				
1.5.6 Programme Funding (Heritage)				Cancelled
Workstream 2: Increase Operational Effectiveness				
2.1 HR				
2.1.1 Personnel Files				
2.1.2 HR Policies				
2.1.3 Staff Handbook	No activity scheduled	Postponed	Postponed	Postponed
2.1.4 HR Processes	No activity scheduled			
2.1.5 HR Compliance				
2.1.6 HR System	No activity scheduled	Postponed	Postponed	Postponed
2.1.7 Staff Engagement				
2.1.8 Staff Wellbeing				
2.1.9 Organisation Development	No activity scheduled			
2.2 Finance				
2.2.1 Annual Budgeting & Forecasting				
2.2.2 Budget Management				
2.2.3 Capital Budget				
2.2.4 Financial Policies & Regulations	No activity scheduled		Postponed	Postponed
2.2.5 Financial Processes & Procedures			Postponed	Postponed
2.2.6 Financial Optimisation				
2.3 IT & Information Management				
2.3.1 Information Management Framework				

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

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

Acronyms

Common acronyms used in the table are given below:

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

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

Item 3.1 Annual Planning**Author:** Elaine King, CEO**Purpose and Summary:** To update the Executive Committee on progress in developing the four-year strategic planning framework and associated documents, and to seek feedback ahead of Board approval in June 2026.**Background**

Over recent months, the CCB has made significant progress in its strategic planning for the organisation. For the first time, we will produce an Organisation Strategy that will align to the new Management Plan (2025–2030), approved by the Board in June 2025 and by Natural England in March 2026.

The strategic planning process has resulted in identifying:

- Five key organisational outcomes the CCB will deliver against over the next four years
- 20 key delivery areas divided into 76 sub delivery areas
- objectives for each of the 76 sub delivery areas
- a high level four-year plan (timed to align with the Management Plan)
- a top-down strategic prioritisation exercise

This will form the basis going forward for developing the Annual Business Plan with its suite of connected documents:

- Delivery Plan
- Budget
- Resource Plan
- Risk Register
- Funding Plan

While the Annual Business Plan will be updated annually, the Budget will have a 1+3 year forecast to align to the strategic planning that has been undertaken this year.

The relationship between these key documents, and the process and timetable for developing them, was set out in slides 4–7 of the deck discussed at the Committee's Strategy Session in March 2026. These slides are included at Appendix I for ease of reference.

The process and timetable

The strategic planning process began with a Board workshop on 10 September 2025, designed and led by the Senior Leadership Team to:

- brief the Board on our statutory purposes and duties, particularly for newly appointed members
- set the current internal and external context
- create a shared sense of ownership and purpose
- explore key strategic and operating principles, some of which emerged from a prioritisation exercise conducted by the Executive Committee in May 2025
- begin to explore a future operating model.

A series of key outcomes and principles was agreed, and a slide deck summarising them was circulated to the Board in December 2025.

Between September 2025 and April 2026, a series of meetings was also held between the SLT and managers across the organisation. The SLT held two workshop sessions, developed plans through its weekly meetings, and provided updates at team meetings.

Although not primarily designed to inform the strategic planning process, two externally facilitated Team Development sessions, held in November and December 2025, provided valuable insight from across the staff team and helped build a shared sense of purpose, ambition and collaboration.

A Strategic Planning workshop with the Committee in March 2026 provided an opportunity to test emerging thinking and gather feedback. The five key organisational outcomes that form the core of the four-year Organisation Strategy were discussed and approved in principle, with changes now incorporated into the ongoing development process.

As of mid-May 2026, the four-year Organisation Strategy is largely complete and will be submitted to the Board for approval in June.

The following documents that form part of the Annual Business Plan will also be submitted to the Board for approval:

- Delivery Plan
- Risk Register
- Budget

Note that the Board approved the Budget Envelope at its meeting in March 2026, and approval for the final detailed Budget will be sought in June (see item 2.2, 2026/27 Budget).

The remaining two documents that form part of the Annual Business Plan will also be worked on before the Board Meeting in June but may not be finalised in time for approval at that meeting.

Progress and Reflections

The strategic planning process is guided by the principle that all Board members and staff should have meaningful opportunities to contribute their views, insight and expertise. This has inevitably taken time to plan and deliver, but the result is a richer and more meaningful plan that provides visibility over the next four years, is understood and supported by those responsible for delivering it and demonstrates strong collaborative leadership.

We have also remained agile in responding to a fast-moving external environment. Recent developments reflected iteratively in the plan include:

- Defra funding opportunities
- requirements linked to government targets, including PLTOFs and EIP targets
- the need to develop a Climate Adaptation Plan
- evolving Defra expectations for reporting, monitoring and evaluation

The process has been robust, with draft plans tested, revised and refined through repeated discussion and review.

One of the key challenges identified in the risk register and highlighted by the Executive Committee is pressure on staff capacity. This requires us to be clear about:

- the work we will continue
- the work we will stop, delay or reduce

Decisions have been informed by the prioritisation criteria shared with the Committee at the March Strategy Session (see slide 5 in Appendix I). As a result, a number of areas of work have been removed, postponed or scaled back, either for this year or across the full four-year period. These include various aspects of heritage work, coordinating and delivering the Chilterns Walking Festival, tourism, and elements of our access work, including distributing funding.

Once the four-year Strategy is complete, we will repeat this exercise (through the development of the Resource Plan) to ensure continued alignment between priorities and capacity.

Current Work and Next Steps

Throughout this process, we have sought to balance the need to engage and motivate the staff team with the need to avoid overload and confusion. We therefore continue to engage the team, maintain momentum and manage expectations carefully.

Key observations:

- Staff Performance Development Reviews (PDRs) were held in March/April, and all members of the team are now setting their objectives for 2026/27 against the five Organisational Outcomes and delivery areas in the four-year Team Strategy and Annual Business Plan. Final objectives should be submitted to the SLT by mid-May, after which they will be reviewed to ensure full alignment with organisational outcomes and key delivery areas.
- Refinement and discussion will inevitably be needed in the coming weeks, as this is the first time the CCB has developed a four-year Strategy.
- Staff are being asked to show how their work will contribute to new high-level outcomes, including climate adaptation and mitigation, data and evidence, and strategic partnerships.
- A further requirement is that all members of the team set an individual objective focused on staff wellbeing and culture. This reflects one of our key outcomes on organisational resilience and our commitment to valuing and supporting staff.
- Further work will involve linking priorities to available resources and addressing any resourcing and capacity issues that emerge. This includes identifying work that we will stop, postpone or reduce, together with any associated impacts.

Most importantly, we will ensure that, over the next four years, the Organisation Strategy actively informs and drives all our work and the way we operate, both individually and as a coherent and dynamic team.

Recommendations:

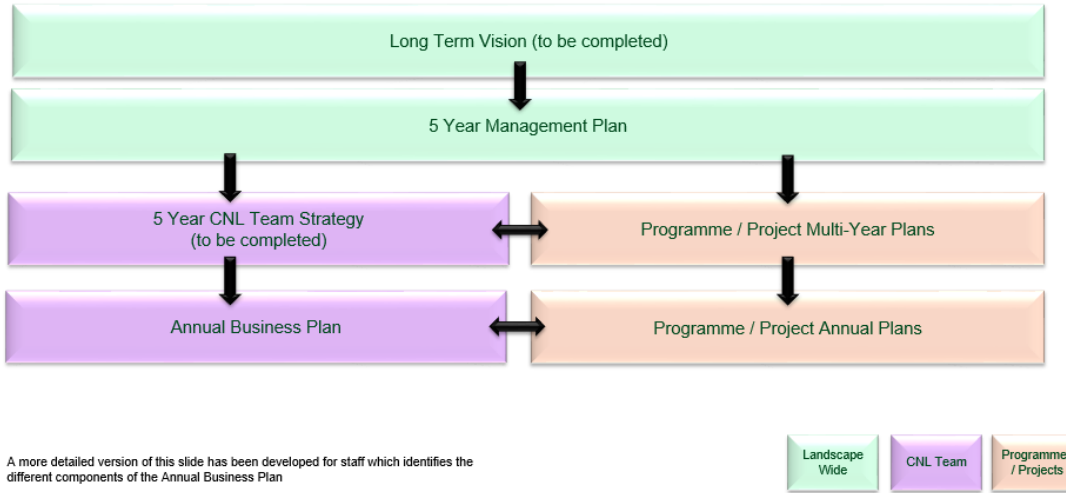
1. That the Committee:

CONSIDERS the progress made in developing the four-year strategic planning framework and associated documents and PROVIDES FEEDBACK to inform finalisation ahead of Board approval in June 2026.

Appendix I

CNL Strategic & Annual Planning (Simplified Overview)

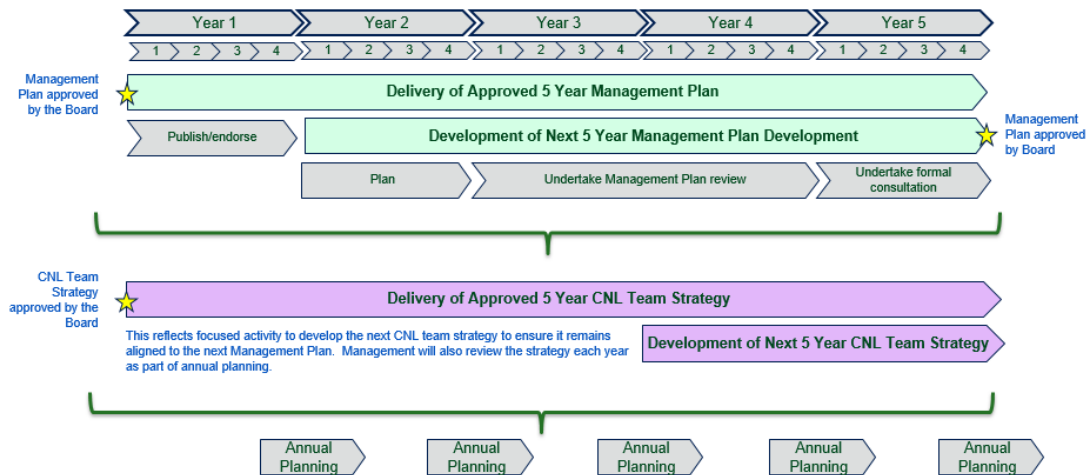
This slide sets out a simplified version of how strategy setting and planning occurs both at the Chilterns National Landscape scale as well as for the CNL Team.



A more detailed version of this slide has been developed for staff which identifies the different components of the Annual Business Plan



Strategic and Annual Planning Cycle (Simplified Overview for next cycle in 2030)



A more detailed version of this slide has been developed showing the current planning cycle that has been concentrated to account different timelines in approving the current Management Plan and the need to develop both the Long-Term Vision and the CNL Team Organisation Strategy (see next slide)



Key Dates and Timelines

→ Currently in place

- Current Management Plan 2025-30 (approved by the Board in Jun 2025)
- Annual Business Plan for FY25-26 (approved by the Board in Jun 2025)

→ To be approved by Jul 2026

- Annual Business Plan for FY26-27 (to be signed off by the Board in the June Board Meeting)

→ To be put in place by March 2027

- Long Term Vision for the Landscape (work on this started in 2024 but was then suspended due to the need to work on the Management Plan)
- CNL Forum (work was started to identify what this will be and how it will operate but again was suspended due to the need to work on the Management Plan. It is important that this is launched at a time when there is a clear requirement for it to ensure that it is relevant – as such it will need to be in place for the next Management Plan Review starting in FY27-28)
- 4 Year CNL Team Strategy to 2030 to align with the Management Plan (which we are 1 year into) – work is already underway on this and this Strategy Session is part of that work

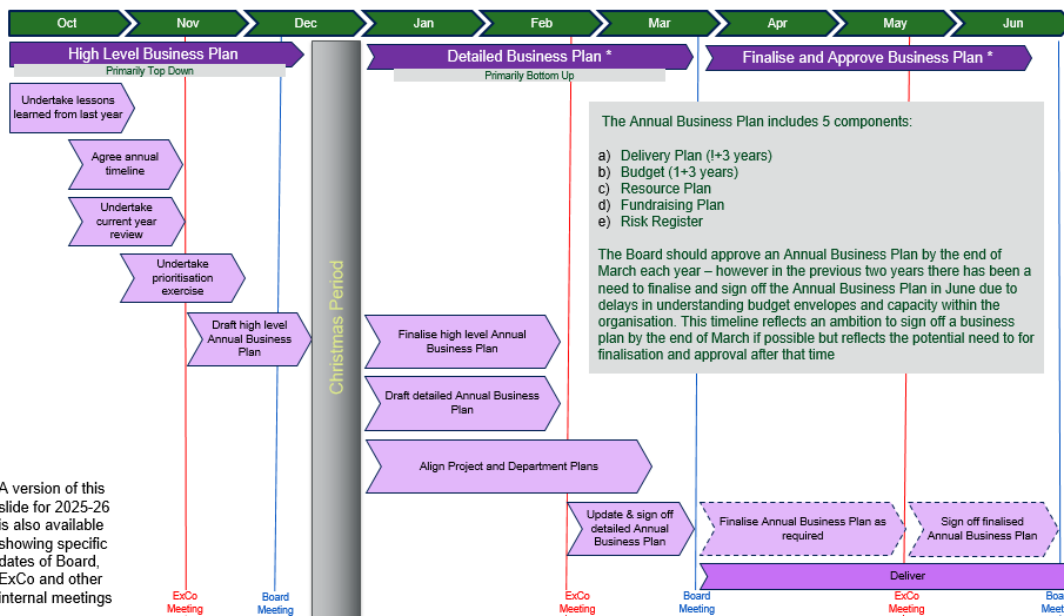


Outcomes

- We will operate a condensed timetable for the development of the new Management Plan (over 4 years rather than 5).
- To ensure the robustness of the next iteration of the Management Plan we will over the next year ensure that all key components (identified above) are also in place to allow for:
 - a) a meaningful review of the Management Plan against the Long-Term Vision
 - b) a mechanism to improve partnership working on the Management Plan, and
 - c) clarity around the role of the CNL Team in delivering the Management Plan



CNL Team Annual Planning Cycle Timeline (Simplified Overview)



A version of this slide for 2025-26 is also available showing specific dates of Board, ExCo and other internal meetings



Prioritisation Criteria

All activity is being prioritised against 6 criteria (see left hand column) and then classified as essential, important, nice to have (as well as identifying activity that should be stopped).

Note we are not expecting Members to read the whole table – it is in here for illustration to show how we are prioritising

Criteria	Essential	Important	Nice to Have	Stop
1. Legal / Statutory	E1: Legal or Statutory Requirement	n/a	n/a	n/a
2. Government	E2: Government Requirement (e.g. linked with funding / across all NLAs)	Government Request (which can be turned down but with an impact)	Government Request (which can be turned down with limited or no impact)	n/a
3. Outcomes Delivery	E3: Essential to effectively deliver priority outcome for the organisation	Important to effectively deliver priority outcome for the organisation	Helps to deliver identified priority outcome for the organisation	Limited in helping deliver identified priority outcome for the organisation
4. Strategic Clarity	E4: Essential for improving strategic clarity for the organisation	Important for improving strategic clarity for the organisation	Helps to improve strategic clarity for the organisation	Limited in improving strategic clarity for the organisation
5. Improve Ways of Working	E5: Essential to improving the way we work as an organisation	Important to improving the way we work as an organisation	Helps to improve the way we work as an organisation	Limited in improving the way we work as an organisation
6. Risk	E6: Addresses identified high level risk in the organisation in a significant way or will add to high level risk if not undertaken	Addresses identified medium level risk in the organisation in a significant way or will add to medium level risk if not undertaken	Addresses identified high or medium level risk but only in a limited way or will add to high or medium level risk in a limited way if not undertaken	Only addresses low level risk in the organisation and will only add to low level risk if not undertaken



Item 3.2 **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Update**

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

Purpose of Report: To update the Executive Committee with progress on the CCB's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Ambition.

Update and recommendation

The EDI Advisory Group met on 16 April with the main focus being to review and agree key priorities for EDI in the CCB's Business Plan to 2030, and to define what we want success to look like.

Main points arising:

- Investing in staff and upskilling them in EDI should be a priority, especially as staff have indicated they are looking for more guidance in understanding and embedding EDI in their work. This will include communicating our EDI work to the public and partners, being confident in the language we use, working with diverse communities, and delivering EDI focused projects. This is very much in line with a key strategic objective in our [EDI Ambition](#) to "Improve EDI knowledge and capability within the Chilterns National Landscape team".
- We have provided a range of EDI training for staff and Board over the last 2-3 years, but training and personal development needs to be continuous and part of an ongoing staff development programme.
- Suggestions were made for a programme of training and development opportunities and project visits for staff and Board members which will be progressed and shared.
- The need to upskill and encourage greater Board member involvement was discussed. If we want to engage communities and partners inclusively, we should reflect internally on how we create conditions for constructive dialogue, challenge and inclusion of perspectives. Boards and leadership teams help set the tone for how organisations listen, engage with differing perspectives and work collaboratively in partnership with others to deliver shared outcomes.
- The group proposed that at the next Board meeting we include a more reflective and substantive EDI discussion focused on the conditions that support effective Board dialogue, constructive challenge and psychologically safer contribution. Baljit has offered to facilitate a light-touch reflective governance discussion in her capacity as a Board member and EDI Advisory Group Co-Chair, drawing on her background in governance, coaching, organisational change and psychological safety. We would require 30 minutes for this agenda item.

Recommendation:

- 1. To discuss and agree the inclusion of a more substantive EDI discussion at the next Board meeting as outlined above.**

Item 3.3 **Funding Report****Author:** Elaine King, CEO**Purpose of Report:** To update the Executive Committee on progress with delivering the Funding Strategy.**Background**

This paper provides an update on the CCB's Funding Strategy since the Committee's last meeting in February 2026 and sets out key observations on the current pipeline of externally funded projects.

Future Funding

As reported previously, this financial year is the first of a three-year flat cash settlement, with year one figures confirmed by Defra and years two and three indicative. Our income this year therefore comprises: Core Revenue (RDEL) funding (£513,896); Core Capital (CDEL) funding (£347,722) and Access Capital funding (£429,229).

The Defra Access for All programme formally ended on 31 March 2026 and the Access Capital funding for this financial year is confirmed as for this year only. In January, Defra also confirmed grant funding for the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, comprising £818,310 each year for the next three years.

Additional Defra funding made available more recently includes a new additional fund for all Protected Landscapes to contribute towards delivering biodiversity targets set out in the Environment Act 2021. Defra has advised our funding allocation and a government announcement with further details is expected imminently.

Defra has also allocated an additional £3m RDEL funding to National Landscapes. This is a one-off uplift (£176,723) for 26/27, in addition to our RDEL Core grant for 26/27. We have allocated the funds to items including reducing the Budget deficit, staff salaries, funding 15 team members to attend the NLA's national conference (a superb training and networking opportunity), ongoing IT Management and HR Transformation costs, a cash contribution to the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project (in addition to existing hosting and staff employment support), extra planning consultancy and additional staff training and development activities.

Local Authority contributions

This period involved proactive engagement with local authorities, largely to ensure that we collaborate and use resources most efficiently, and to ensure that local authorities understand the relationship between themselves and the Conservation Board, particularly the requirement to contribute financially to reflect our role in delivering their statutory duties in the designated area.

Engagement has focussed especially on the three local authorities that do not contribute the full amount required. Luton Borough Council has agreed to increase its contribution from 2026/27 (in 2025/26 contributions were £1,019 instead of £8,500 - these will increase to £4,500). Despite repeated efforts, Central Bedfordshire Council has not responded to our requests to discuss their contribution (£10,000 instead of £25,496) and Buckinghamshire Council has reduced its contributions further and not responded to my email of 30 March, following disquiet expressed by members at the last Board meeting, seeking to discuss the matter (£55,455 instead of £61,139 in 2025/26 reducing to £41,211 in 2026/27).

Diversifying income

We continue to work to secure funds that enable us to recharge to cover core overheads. This includes recharging from projects - where funder rules allow - and from other sources of restricted income.

A new Funding Strategy is being developed and, alongside this, a number of opportunities are being explored with regards to funding from national and locally based charitable trusts and corporates. This includes discussions with the National Landscapes Association's green finance team, who have already helped raise the profile of the Chilterns through a major advertising campaign delivered in partnership with JC Decaux. The company provided free advertising space to a number of National Landscapes through its prestigious Community Channel, which included a huge [image](#) of the Chilterns on a digital billboard beside the M4 Hammersmith Flyover.

We are also pursuing lines of inquiry following the BBC's Countryfile [programme](#) on 3rd May, which featured the Chilterns and highlighted some of the team's collaborative nature recovery work with farmer clusters and on chalk streams.

Funding pipeline

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

Heritage and nature recovery

- We are working with National Landscapes Association to explore corporate funding for the Tracking the Impact project (and the River Chess citizen science programme) through their green finance platform '[Your Natural Partner](#)'. Tracking the Impact and the Chess citizen science project are the two Chilterns National Landscape projects currently showcased.
- **HS2 Additional Projects: Mending the Misbourne (Secured)** In August 2025, we secured £1m from the HS2 Review Group for the 'Mending the Misbourne' project, which will develop and deliver a strategic river catchment plan for the River Misbourne using a similar delivery template to River Chess Smarter Water Catchments initiative. See news item [here](#). A legal agreement confirming the £1m grant was signed off in early January 2026 and the funds were transferred to our bank account in May.
- **HS2 Chilterns Review Group** – the group was set up under Select Committee assurance in 2019 to develop detailed design principles and oversee allocation of the £3m Additional Project budget. After many months of chasing, we have now received back payments for March 2020 to December 2024 of £15k and are chasing reimbursement for staff contributions from January 2025 onwards. We have not budgeted to receive them as we have been advised that there is no further funding for the Group.
- **Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) (Secured)** - In January 2026, Defra announced the extension of the programme until FY2028/29 with an additional three years for project delivery at £818,310 total allocation per annum for the Chilterns National Landscape. Of this, £548,996 per annum is available for capital project delivery and £115,372 for revenue project delivery. A further six months of administration funding will be available in FY29/30 to cover programme closure costs.
- **Landscape Connections – Nature Ridge (Secured)**: Launched in July 2024, [Landscape Connections](#) is the National Lottery Heritage Fund's 10 year, £150m grants programme, focussing on nature recovery, heritage and people in protected landscapes. As a result of

conversations with NLHF and partners, we have worked with the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (leading the bid) and National Trails UK to complete a funding bid for the pre-development project stage. The £259k application for 18-months of funding was confirmed as successful in mid-February and includes £21k to pay for technical advice from CCB staff. The project aims to create a nature corridor focused on the chalk ridge and Ridgeway National Trail as it passes through the two National Landscapes.

- **Chess Smarter Water Catchments (SWC) (Secured):** Thames Water has advised its intention to offer a further £1.4m to fund work in the Chess catchment for four years until 31 March 2030 through the Chalk Streams Flagship Restoration Project. Any existing underspend can also be used to support the programme of activities in 2026/7. While a welcome development, this is less funding than we had sought and has necessitated reprofiling the proposed work programme and discussing plans and funding allocations with partners.

A legal agreement has been signed for one-year of funding for CCB staff, totalling £178k and we are in receipt of all the staff and pre-delivery funding for this financial year. The project delivery budget is still to be determined.

Diversity Equity and Inclusion

- **Defra Access for All funding:** this three year programme was aimed at improving access to protected landscapes for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds and ended in March 2026. We are now reporting on spend, outcomes and impact to Defra to help inform future arrangements. Defra has now made available one further and final year of funding. Our allocation is £429,229, the same as previous years, and we are now [promoting](#) the fund to support access and inclusion in the Chilterns National Landscape. Detail of previous projects funded are on our [website](#). Defra has confirmed that this funding will not continue beyond this financial year.
- **Nature Calling:** The Chilterns was one of six hubs participating in this Arts Council and Defra funded programme designed to deepen people's engagement with nature and heritage, and to reach new, underserved communities. Activity focused in and around Luton leading to the development of Luton Henge. The CCB received over £60,000 directly to support the programme to date. More on the project [here](#). The programme finished in November 2025 but legacy activity is in place, with partners and projects using the Henge as an asset for community engagement, including another festival this summer.
- The CCB is a strategic partner on [Luton's Nature Towns and Cities programme](#), a two-year programme, which commenced in January 2026 led by Luton Council and funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project is focused on nature recovery, providing better physical and emotional connections to nature and ensuring more equal access to public green spaces. The CCB is being funded to provide advice and deliver some activity through the programme (£7,500 over two years).

A **Collaborative Targeted Outreach Proposal (CTOP)**, developed by the University of Bedfordshire, following [research](#) funded by the CCB's Chalkscapes project, has been incorporated in the programme.

Recommendation:

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

Item 3.4**CEO Update****Author:**

Elaine King, CEO

Purpose of Report:

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

Background

This report comprises highlights since the Executive Committee meeting in February 2026.

Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

The SLT continues to oversee the organisation's operations and strategic priorities, meeting weekly to plan activity, monitor risk, share information and coordinate delivery across all areas of work. During this period, I was on annual leave for four weeks. Andy Brock-Doyle acted as CEO during this time and, together with the SLT and wider staff team, ensured the continued smooth-running of the organisation.

A significant focus has been on ongoing budget development and business planning, including developing high level outcomes and priority activities through to 2030. This has included responding to a number of funding opportunities, including additional Defra funding through an RDEL uplift to the core grant and funding linked to delivering the Environment Act 2021 nature recovery targets. Further detail is provided in the Funding Report at item 3.3.

The organisational transformation programme continues to require significant time, especially in relation to HR process development, information management and health and safety/risk assessments. Alongside this, progress has been made on designing the new Chilterns AONB Management Plan and Nature Recovery Plan as well as work ahead of developing a Climate Adaptation Plan. Ground-breaking work on the impacts of climate change on chalk landscape. has established an important evidence base, helping to address a gap in existing evidence and understanding. Kate Heppell, Head of Landscape, will present the findings and next steps at the June Board meeting and is leading a at the national conference in July.

The Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan received formal approval from Natural England in March 2026. The process has been positively recognised for clearly articulating the statutory purposes and Special Qualities of the Chilterns National Landscape, a robust core evidence base, coordination with the four Local Nature Recovery Strategies, strong embedding of government targets and alignment with national policy priorities.

Local and national government engagement

Engagement with MPs and local authorities has continued through meetings and emails. We have liaised with MPs on a range of subjects including improving chalk streams protection, water quality, planning, nature recovery and airport expansion. A Parliamentary roundtable with Chilterns MPs, is currently being developed for June 2026 in Westminster, with invites to be circulated shortly.

Meetings with local authorities include a productive discussion with Gerard McCleave, Corporate Director at Luton Borough Council, in February 2026, and senior officers at Dacorum Council in March. In April, we also provided insight to consultants establishing the Destination Dacorum project, which seeks to encourage inward investment to the area.

Defra and the NLA continue to explore governance challenges across Protected Landscapes, including Conservation Boards. Members of the SLT contributed evidence and insight to a Defra commissioned review by the Countryside & Community Research Institute at the University of Gloucestershire and Ecorys. Aiming to develop a clearer understanding of the values, behaviours, and organisational cultures that shape governance across Protected Landscapes, the resulting report is now with Defra and expected to be published in due course. This work is considered an exploration of 'soft governance' and we are seeking

clarification from Defra on their plans, if any, to explore 'hard governance', which is where the greatest improvements can potentially be made.

We have continued to share insights and evidence on governance with the [Office for Environmental Protection](#), following its visit in mid-October as part of scoping its current inquiry into National Parks and National Landscapes.

We are also liaising with the NLA on means by which Defra can more robustly support National Landscapes in making clear to local authorities their legal obligations to deliver statutory Management Plans and advocating the range of services that we can provide. This is in part due to concerns over the lack of engagement and financial support from some local authorities, the implications of the Local Government Reorganisation and the rapidly shifting political context following the May 2026 local elections.

External engagement

Close collaboration continues with Tom Beeston, Chief Executive at the Chiltern Society, particularly in advocating for the Chilterns National Landscape with MPs, local councils, and their elected members.

Specific meetings with other partners include meeting with BBOWT's CEO, Estelle Bailey, in April. We continue to sit on the HS2 Chilterns Review Group and, since being awarded £1m for the Mending the Misbourne project in August 2025, have chased constantly to receive the funds, which were transferred to us earlier this month. We have also asked HS2 to provide an inflationary uplift to the remaining assurance funding, which has devalued due to the delays to the scheme. A meeting is also scheduled with HS2's CEO, Mark Wild, in June.

In March, I contributed to a Natural England workshop exploring metrics for improving health outcomes through access to the natural environment, especially in urban areas. This provided an opportunity to highlight the important role of Protected Landscapes and share insight on related elements of our work, including the Nature Calling project in Luton and the current Nature Towns and Cities project being led by Luton Council and to which we are a partner. Following the workshop, one of Natural England's Access Officers visited the Chilterns to see some of our access improvements, using the Defra Access for All fund, and to gather insight on further opportunities should Defra make more funding available.

Staff changes

Heritage and Archaeology Manager

At the end of March, we said farewell to our Heritage and Archaeology Manager, Wendy Morrison. During her time at the CCB, Wendy led the highly successful Beacons of the Past project, played a key role in developing the successful Lottery application for the Not Bourne Yesterday project and established the Chilterns Heritage and Archaeology Partnership (CHAP). Wendy has now established CHAP as a CIC and we continue to benefit from her insight and expertise through this partnership arrangement.

Communications Officer

In February, we also said goodbye to Helen Valvona who left to start a role with Bucks Cricket, which helps to improve access to cricket for those in economically disadvantaged communities. In April we welcomed Emily Christie to the Communications Team to replace Helen. Emily joins us from East Berkshire Citizens Advice and has a wealth of expertise in marketing, social media, stakeholder engagement, web design and content creation.

Senior Administration Officer

We also said goodbye to Lynne Cordice, our Senior Administration Officer, who retired in April and played a pivotal role in the organisation for several years. Fortunately, Lynne's early notice enabled a smooth handover process and provided the opportunity to review the wider structure of the finance, administration and operations functions. This has resulted in a more integrated

Operations Team reporting directly to the Head of Operations. Recruitment is currently underway for an Office Administrator post.

Head of Planning

Further to discussions at the March Board meeting, which reaffirmed the Board's commitment to strengthen the planning function, the Head of Strategy and Planning role has been reviewed and renamed Head of Planning, to reflect the increased proportion time Matt Thomson will dedicate to planning. The remaining time will be divided between wider SLT functions (including strategy) and governance functions (including the Monitoring Officer role).

The change also reflects the collective responsibility of the SLT for organisational strategy and will, for example, help address one of the learning points of the recent Management Plan Review process, that there was not enough strategic ownership of that project (a paper on this and other learning points will be brought to the Board in June).

Head of Programmes

Further to approval of the Budget Envelope at the Board meeting in March, which included a new senior role to focus on developing, resourcing and delivering the CCB's programmes and projects, a detailed job description has been developed. The requirements of the role confirm that it sits within the SLT and recruitment for a Head of Programmes will therefore commence later this month. The full salary costs are already included in the Budget Envelope approved by the Board in March.

Staff Engagement Survey

As reported previously, the annual Staff Engagement Survey was conducted in October 2025. As in 2024, the results were very positive with the report making the overall observation that the CCB has a strong foundation of pride, wellbeing and culture, and recommending that future work focusses on ensuring long-term commitment, clarifying our organisational vision, investing in staff development and ensuring managers are fully equipped to support their staff.

A key theme emerging from the survey is that staff feel well supported with their wellbeing. Nevertheless, we continue to explore further means by which we can support the team. Advice was sought from Westfield Health, our group healthcare provider and in March, three of the team trained and qualified as Mental Health First Aiders, with one other already trained from a previous role. With the CEO, the group met in April to explore next steps and further measures that can be implemented. A Wellbeing Plan has also been prepared.

Recommendation:

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