



# Chilterns National Landscape

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

**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2026 at 10.00am at**

**St Leonards Parish Hall, Jenkins Lane, St Leonards, Tring HP23 6NW**

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

## AGENDA

### 1. Standing Items

- 1.1 Election of Chair and Deputy Chair (AGM item)
- 1.2 Apologies for Absence
- 1.3 Declarations of Interest in any of the Agenda Items
- 1.4 Notice of Urgent Business
- 1.5 Approval of Minutes of the Previous Meeting (26.03.26)
- 1.6 Matters Arising
- 1.7 Consideration of Motions submitted by members
- 1.8 Public Questions
- 1.9 Resolution to Adjourn the Meeting

### **Presentation to the Board:**

*“Planning for Climate Change across the Chilterns National Landscape”* by Dr Gemma Harper (Board Member, Chief Executive JNCC) & Prof Kate Heppell (Head of Landscape at the Chilterns National Landscape) (20 minute presentation and 10 minutes questions)

*Meeting reconvenes*

- 1.10 Chair's Announcements

### 2. Items for Decision

- 2.1 Finance Report
- 2.2 FY 26-27 Budget
- 2.3 FY 26-27 Annual Delivery Plan
- 2.4 Evolution of the Planning Committee
- 2.5 Appointment of Members to Committees and Advisory Groups
- 2.6 Lessons Learned from the Management Plan Review
- 2.7 Risk Register
- 2.8 CEO Update
- 2.9 Future Meeting Dates

**3. Items for Noting / Information**

- 3.1 Report on Nature Recovery & Climate Adaptation Plan
- 3.2 EDI Update
- 3.3 Planning Function Update

**4. Minutes & Recommendations of Committees**

- 4.1 Executive Committee Draft Minutes (19.05.26)
- 4.2 Planning Committee Draft Minutes (30.04.26)

**5. Any Urgent Business****6. Handover to New Chair (if applicable)****7. Next Meeting: Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025, 10am, Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury.**

The meeting will be followed by a buffet lunch and a site visit to see some of the work the team is doing with Chilterns farmers.

**Future meeting dates 2026**

<b>Planning Committee / PAG</b>	<b>Executive Committee</b>	<b>Board</b>
Inaugural Planning Advisory Group meeting (if applicable) TBC – see item 2.9	Tuesday 1 <sup>st</sup> September 2026 10am, The Village Centre Chinnor	Thursday 1 <sup>st</sup> October 2026 10am Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury
Thursday 29 <sup>th</sup> October 2026 10am CCB Offices, Chinnor	Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup> November 2026 10am, The Village Centre Chinnor	Thursday 10 <sup>th</sup> December 2026 10am Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury

*Dr Elaine King, Chief Executive Officer*



10. The Constitution's current Code of Governance includes some particular requirements and delegations of authority to the Chair and Deputy Chair. For example:
  - a) The Chair is required to be a member of the Executive Committee (not necessarily the Committee's Chair, but that can be beneficial).
  - b) The Chair and Deputy Chair assist with the identification and selection of members of standing Committees.
  - c) The Chair and Deputy Chair have a role in determining whether and when to hold extraordinary meetings, etc.
  - d) The Chair and Deputy Chair may be consulted by officers on a variety of matters of urgency that cannot wait until a Board meeting can be held.
11. In addition, the Chair undertakes performance appraisals of the CEO and of Secretary of State appointees to the Board and reports on these to Defra.
12. The Chair and Deputy Chair are entitled to claim special allowances in support of the additional responsibilities of their positions.
13. For continuity and succession planning, it is normally assumed that the Deputy Chair should in due course go on to succeed the Chair of the Board, should the latter resign or cease to be a member of the Board, but this is at the discretion of the Board and of course the choice of the Deputy Chair.
14. All of the above is currently indicative: it is intended that a comprehensive role specification for the Chair of the Board, Deputy Chair, and chairs and deputy chairs for standing committees will be prepared and approved by the Board for inclusion in the Constitution in due course.

### **Recommendations**

- 1. That the Board RE-ELECTS Cllr Louise Price as Chair of the Board for 2026/27 or elects an alternative Chair as set out in para 4 above.**
- 2. That the Board RE-ELECTS Cllr Sir Hector Sants as Deputy Chair of the Board for 2026/27 or elects an alternative Deputy Chair as set out in para 4 above.**

Board Meeting

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2026

## Chilterns National Landscape

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CONSERVATION BOARD FOR  
THE CHILTERN AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY  
Held in Room A, The Hive, Arnison Avenue, High Wycombe HP13 6DD  
commencing at 10.10am**

### MEMBERS PRESENT

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

Cllr Louise Price (Chair)  
Cllr Justine Fulford  
Cllr Gavin McLauchlan  
Cllr Philip Spicer  
Cllr Greg Smith

#### **Appointing Body**

Three Rivers District Council  
Buckinghamshire Council  
Oxfordshire County Council  
Central Bedfordshire Council  
Buckinghamshire Council

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

Juliet Vickery  
Simon Mortimer  
Jennifer Morgan  
Baljit Dhillon

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

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

Cllr John Harfield  
Cllr John Griffin  
Cllr Sue Rowland

Bedfordshire Parish Councils  
Oxfordshire Parish Councils  
Oxfordshire Parish Councils

#### **CCB Staff**

Dr. Elaine King  
Dr. Matt Thomson

Dr. Kate Heppell  
Annette Weiss  
Graham Hurst  
Kathryn Foster  
Andy Brock-Doyle  
Nick Marriner  
Dr. Wendy Morrison  
Ruth Staples-Rolfe  
Eloise Small  
Lorna Coldwell

Chief Executive Officer  
Head of Strategy and Planning;  
Deputy Monitoring Officer  
Head of Landscape  
Head of Engagement and Partnerships  
Finance Officer (S151 Officer)  
Senior Finance Manager  
Head of Operations  
Nature Recovery Manager  
Heritage and Archaeology Manager  
Mend the Gap Programme Manager  
Administration Officer  
Clerk to the Board

#### **Other**

Tom Beeston

The Chiltern Society

No members of the public were present.

### **25/26.20 Standing Items**

Board Meeting

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2026**20.1 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from:

Officers:

None

Board Members:

Cllr James Norman\*, South Oxfordshire District Council

Cllr Adrian England\*, Dacorum Borough Council

Cllr Charles Hussey, Buckinghamshire Parish Councils

Cllr Hector Sants, Buckinghamshire Parish Councils

Matthew Stanton, Secretary of State

Cat Moncrieff, Secretary of State

Gemma Harper, Secretary of State

Cllr Caroline Smith-Wright, Hertfordshire County Council

Val Bryant, North Hertfordshire Council

Nicola Thomas, Secretary of State

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

**20.2 Introductions**

Introductions were unnecessary, with all attendees having met previously.

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

None declared.

**20.4 Notice of Urgent Business**

Elaine King, Chief Executive Officer, advised that she would raise a matter regarding the Management Plan at the end of the meeting.

**20.5 Chair's Announcements**

The Chair expressed her thanks to two valued members of the team that are leaving. Graham Hurst, the S151 Officer is retiring following many years of service, and Dr. Wendy Morrison, Heritage and Archaeology Manager is forming a community interest company and will remain a partner on some of the CCB's projects. Elaine King, Chief Executive Officer gave her thanks to both for their efforts and their many accomplishments during their time at the Chilterns National Landscape. They were both presented with a token of appreciation.

**20.6 Approval of Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 11.12.25 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

**20.7 Matters Arising**

Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning, advised that Officers had taken guidance from Board members at the December meeting not to spend time engaging with the Local Government Reorganisation for now. However, central government have announced a development corporation for the Greater Oxford area, similar to the situation in Cambridge,

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and will monitor the situation for any impacts this may have on the National Landscape. Cllr McLauchlan kindly offered to obtain further information and share it with Officers.

### **20.8 Considerations of motions submitted by members**

No motions submitted.

### **20.9 Public Question Time**

No public present.

### **25/26.21 Items for Decision**

#### **21.1 2026/27 Budget**

Kathryn Foster, Senior Finance Officer, had provided a comprehensive paper detailing the proposed budget envelope for financial year 2026/27 for approval. The budget envelope was presented to the Executive Committee at the February meeting, which recommended approval. As a budget envelope, it is a high level budget and detail will be refined in the coming months alongside the business planning process.

There is a forecasted deficit for the financial year 2026/27 of £58k, and the forecasted deficit for the current financial year 2025/26 is £66k against a budgeted deficit of £118k. Savings have been made possible by, amongst other things, increased interest from savings accounts, and delayed staff and consultancy costs. More staff costs have been recovered from capital (CDEL) funds. When aggregated over previous years, this represents a £14k deficit. Additional revenue (RDEL) funds were provided by Defra in financial year 2024/25, giving a surplus which is now being used to offset current deficits. Now that Defra has confirmed both core revenue and capital funding for the year, a more concrete budget can be drawn together along with indicative figures for the following two years.

We may receive a further uplift of funding from Defra but this has not been confirmed. Some uncertainty remains and the Senior Finance Officer expects to take a more detailed budget to the Executive Committee meeting in May and then the Board meeting in June. Lots of work has been carried out with Local Authorities to secure their full contributions. Buckinghamshire Council has advised it will be reducing its contribution and Central Bedfordshire Council continues to not respond to attempts to contact them. Luton Council has increased its contribution for 26/27. All other LAs continue to pay their requested share.

The triennial review of Buckinghamshire Council's pension scheme found it is in surplus, so employer contributions will be reduced for the next three years which will contribute to savings in staff core costs. Indicative funding from Defra for financial years 2027/2028 and 2028/29 project significant deficits but this is a worst case scenario and Officers will seek to ensure a deficit of below £50k each year. Defra funding tends to be advised close to the start of a new financial year, and is a flat cash settlement, highlighting the importance of the new funding strategy.

The potential impact of the current global situation has been accounted for but remains an ongoing situation that will be monitored for impacts on costs, such as energy and fuel prices. Contingencies have been put in place where possible. There is forecasted an

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increase in governance costs for Board members allowances, which historically have not all been claimed but will be budgeted for going forward.

Simon Mortimer asked if the Board is comfortable to approve a budget with an accumulating deficit over several years and queried the level of reserves held to know if they would be able to meet the deficit. The Senior Finance Officer advised that there are more than £600k reserves, of which just over half are ringfenced for statutory purposes such as redundancies should the organisation be forced to wind down. Whilst the level of deficit is not one that Officers would want to tolerate, the level of reserves do give comfort. Officers are confident that the projections will alter over the course of the next two years, and plans are in place to secure income going forward.

Tom Beeston, Chief Officer at The Chiltern Society, offered to write to Local Authorities to stress the importance of the Chilterns National Landscape and the savings they make for LAs carrying out statutory duties on their behalf, which was welcomed by the Chief Executive Officer.

1. **The Board APPROVED the budget envelope for 26/27**
2. **The Board APPROVED the 3% pay increase for all staff effective 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026**
3. **The Board NOTED the initial projections for 27/28 onwards subject to concerns detailed above**

### **21.2 Appointment of Statutory Officers**

Elaine King, Chief Executive Officer, had provided a paper that was taken as read. Following the retirement of the S151 Officer Graham Hurst, and Buckinghamshire Council employee Jenny Caprio happy to relinquish the role of Monitoring Officer, replacements are needed. Senior Finance Officer, Kathryn Foster, is proposed as S151 Officer and current Deputy Monitoring Officer, Matt Thomson, as Monitoring Officer.

Cllr Rowland queried if, as the Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson has capacity to take on the role without being overwhelmed. It was confirmed that he is currently carrying out the work, and the appointment of an additional Planning Adviser to the planning team in September last year has created more capacity. It was confirmed that the legalities of an in-house Monitoring Officer have been explored, and whilst there is the potential for a conflict of interest this is standard practice and procedures are in place to ensure transparency, namely a direct line to the Chair is necessary.

1. **The Board APPROVED the appointment of Kathryn Foster, the Senior Finance Officer, as Finance (S151) Officer**
2. **The Board APPROVED the appointment of Matt Thomson, the Head of Strategy and Planning (and current Deputy Monitoring Officer), as the Monitoring Officer**

### **21.3 Future of Planning Committee**

The Chair advised that, following the paper circulated by Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning, no decision would be taken at this meeting regarding the future of the Planning Committee. Members were invited to share their views for consideration by the Committee at its meeting in April, with a final proposal to be brought to the June Board meeting. Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning, reiterated the

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importance of planning to the Chilterns National Landscape. He explained that the proposal to move to a panel was intended to formalise existing practice, rather than to change how the Board operates in relation to planning. As the Board has no statutory planning responsibilities, it does not make formal decisions. The Planning Committee therefore operates largely in an advisory capacity, with actions taken by Officers confirmed retrospectively. He noted that there have been ongoing challenges with quoracy and the statutory requirement for in-person meetings. Officers consider that removing these obligations would provide a more efficient and effective approach, as well as reducing the administrative burden associated with servicing a formal committee.

It was acknowledged that enhanced communication would be required; this is already being supported through the introduction in January of a monthly Planning Update circulated to Board members and the staff team. A standing Planning item is also now included on Board agendas to ensure that all members are kept fully informed of planning matters. Sue Rowland, Chair of the Planning Committee, emphasised that any changes should deliver clear and tangible benefits, ensure that the planning function is carried out to the highest standard, and strengthen the organisation's responses to planning applications, Local Plan consultations, and related matters.

- 1. The Board DISCUSSED the options for the Planning Committee as detailed above, which will be taken into consideration by the Committee and a further recommendation to be made at the June Board meeting**

*Philip Spicer left the meeting at 11.33.*

#### **Presentation:**

#### **Working with Farmers in the Chilterns National Landscape**

Dr. Kate Heppell, Head of Landscape

Nick Marriner Nature Recovery Manager

An informative presentation was made, to show the work being carried out by the staff team with regards to Farmer Clusters throughout the Chilterns in a bid to support the wildlife population and eco-systems on farmland, and support for the farmers to do so.

#### **25/26.22 Items for Noting/Information**

##### **22.1 Planning Function Report**

Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning, provided an update to the Board on the key work carried out recently by the Planning team. Officers are seeing the benefits of appointing an additional Planning Adviser, Victoria Thomson, in September 2025 who has settled in well. The team are achieving more and are very busy, including responding to various consultations, such as proposed Government reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and a raft of Local Authority draft Local Plans. Monthly planning updates are now being circulated to a wider audience, and he is happy to receive feedback as to what Board members would like to see in updates and reports to the Board.

Cllr Greg Smith asked what had Buckinghamshire Council in their draft Local Plan done to not appropriately consider contributions from the Chilterns National Landscape? Matt Thomson advised that they, along with other Local Authorities, had not approached the

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organisation in the early stages of the draft plans, which is one of the requirements for a LA in the s85 Protected Landscapes duty. It has been mentioned to remind LAs that they are not meeting the s85 duty by not consulting early.

Jennifer Morgan gave thanks for the planning update as it acted as a reminder that as a resident her voice counts and she was able to make comments to the LA.

**1. The Board NOTED the paper and PROVIDED FEEDBACK as noted above**

**22.2 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion**

The EDI Advisory Group has been reinvigorated, with new co-Chairs Baljit Dhillon and Juliet Vickery. The Group is supporting the organisation's EDI work and ensuring the EDI Ambition Statement is embedded in all our activities including articulating EDI objectives and demonstrating impact as part of the emerging 2026–30 Business Plan. The Chairs have been struck by the breadth of activity underway and the opportunities ahead.

Inclusion is not only about access - its about unlocking different perspectives, knowledge, creativity that can help to strengthen the landscape collectively. Different communities and cultures bring different ways they care for our environment, by creating connection we can utilise these collective ideas for the benefit of the Chilterns.

The Accessibility Hub has recently been published on the website, Board members were asked to spread the word about it to their networks.

**1. The Board NOTED the update**

**22.3 Statutory Purposes, Duties, Powers and Functions**

Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning, provided a paper detailing the Chilterns National Landscape's current statutory purposes, the importance of the purposes and how they may change in the future. He also outlined the organisation's duties, powers and functions and how they relate to its purposes. Much of this detail is included in the Constitution that was circulated in September 2025 and has been provided for information purposes for Board members.

**1. The Board NOTED the update**

**25/26.23 Minutes and Recommendations of Committees**

**23.1 Executive Committee Draft minutes (26.02.26)**

It was noted that an amendment is needed to minute 7.2, which the Clerk to the Board will action.

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

**23.2 Planning Committee Draft Minutes (22.01.26)**

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

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Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2026**25/26.24 Any Urgent Business**

Elaine King, Chief Executive Officer, advised that Natural England has formally confirmed that the Management Plan meets the necessary requirements. They also outlined five specific areas where the Plan reflects good practice, comprising: a clear articulation of the legislative framework and statutory purposes; strong communication of the Chilterns Special Qualities; strong embedding of the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOFs); demonstrating cross-boundary coordination with the four Local Nature Recovery Strategies; and a robust evidence base. She gave credit to Matt Thomson for coordinating the team in developing the new Plan. A report will be tabled for the June Board meeting to include lessons learned from the process.

Natural England also identified outstanding elements (which they know are in progress); a Delivery Plan and a Climate Change Adaption Plan. Kate Heppell will be presenting on the latter at the June Board meeting.

**25/26.25 Next Meeting**

The next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2026, 10am St Leonards Parish Hall, Jenkins Lane, St Leonards, Tring HP23 6NW.

**Future meeting dates for 2026:**

<b>Planning Committee Meetings</b>	<b>Executive Committee Meetings</b>	<b>Board Meetings</b>
Thursday 30 <sup>th</sup> April, 10am Chinnor Offices	Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup> May, 10am Chinnor	Thursday 25 <sup>th</sup> June, 10am St Leonards Parish Hall, Jenkins Lane, St Leonards, Tring HP23 6NW including AGM
	Thursday 1 <sup>st</sup> September, 10am Chinnor	Thursday 1 <sup>st</sup> October Strategy session. (The Gateway, Buckinghamshire Council Offices, Aylesbury)
Thursday 29 <sup>th</sup> October, 10am Chinnor Offices	Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup> November, 10am Chinnor	Thursday 10 <sup>th</sup> December (The Gateway, Buckinghamshire Council Offices, Aylesbury)

The meeting was closed at 12.52.

The Chair.....

Date.....

<b>Item 2.1</b>	<b>Finance Report – Year Ended 31 March 2026</b>
<b>Author:</b>	Kathryn Foster, Senior Finance Manager
<b>Purpose:</b>	To present the Annual accounts for the year ending 31 March 2026 and the Annual Governance and Accountability (AGAR) return for the financial year 2025-26.

### **Annual accounts for the year ended 31 March 2026**

1. The CCB Annual accounts for the year ended 31 March 2026 are attached and consist of a Combined Core and Projects Profit and Loss Account (**Appendix 1**) together with Balance Sheet (**Appendix 2**).
2. Overall, The CCB had a combined deficit of **£577,790**. This comprised a Core Surplus of **£842** and a Project deficit of **£578,632**.
3. The Core result exceeded even our forecast expectations (**£842 surplus**; original Core budget was a **£118k deficit**, reforecast (as at 31 December 2025) was £65k deficit). For information, an analysis of Core Actuals versus Budget and Forecast is included in **Appendix 3**. In summary, our improved position is a result of better interest income and improved recovery of income from projects and CDEL alongside cost savings on staffing (Head of Programmes not yet recruited and improved project recovery of staff costs) offset by some additional consultancy and governance costs.
4. The Project deficit reflects project spend from reserves, in particular the Mend the Gap programme (Net Spend £650k for 25/26). Note a full breakdown of current project reserves is included in our balance sheet in Appendix 2.
5. Appendix 2 includes an analysis of the CCB's reserve position as at 31 March 2026. The CCB has **project reserves of £3.035m** and **Core/Unrestricted reserves of £762k**. in line with our reserves policy we have reviewed our reserves as at 31 March 2026. The minimum reserves required to ensure we can cover three months of salaries, wind up costs or project cashflows is **£335k** (based on May 2026 salaries and redundancy calculations). We hence have £427k of reserves above this minimum. We recommend maintaining our current development reserve at £224k and retain a higher level of general reserves especially in view of our initial 27/28 and 28/29 deficit projections.
6. The AGAR is required by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and is subject to external audit once it has been approved by the Board and subsequently published on the CCB's website. The Accounting Statement of the AGAR is prepared under local government accounting principles which do not recognise deferred income and therefore income is recognised when funds are received.
7. We are required to submit our **AGAR and internal audit report** for external audit by 30<sup>th</sup> June. We can only submit to our external auditor once sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR have been approved by the Board. These accompany this paper (**Appendix 4**). The external auditor's report will be made available at a subsequent board meeting (work will be carried out in August/September). Note our external audit is completed by **PKF Littlejohn** who have been appointed by Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd (SAAA) as external auditor for all smaller authorities for the five financial years 2022/23- 2026/27.
8. The AGAR shows that the Board has overall funds carried forward of **£3,797,561**. These are separately itemised on the CCB balance sheet in Appendix 2. The CCB has **£4,611,408** cash reserves mainly arising from Project reserves received in advance, such as Mend the Gap, which has reserves of £2,020,489 as at 31 March 2026.

### **Internal Audit**

9. We have used the **Shared Audit services of Hertfordshire County Council (SIAS)** for our internal audit since 2019. We have considered the independence of our internal auditors as required by our external auditors and no exceptions have been found.
10. Please review and approve our internal audit work programme for 25/26 in **Appendix 5**.
11. Our internal audit has already commenced to ensure we comply with the 30<sup>th</sup> June deadline for filing of our AGAR and internal audit report, but the final report is still pending. SIAS has verbally advised that the report will include the following recommendations:
  - The update of our financial regulations and members allowances scheme in 26/27 – this has been delayed from 2025/26.
  - Annual review of our risk register – it was last reviewed in December 2024 – this should be reviewed every 12 months – this is only being reviewed now so is overdue but noted by our internal auditors.

### **Recommendations**

1. **That the Board APPROVES the CCB Annual accounts for the year ended 31 March 2026.**
2. **That the Board APPROVES and SIGNS the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2025-26.**
3. **That the Board APPROVES the internal audit plan for 2025/26.**
4. **That the Board NOTES the initial findings from the internal audit.**

**APPENDIX 1****Profit and Loss**

Chilterns Conservation Board

For the year ended 31 March 2026

<b>Account</b>	<b>Core</b>	<b>Projects</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Turnover</b>			
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	179,853	55,644	235,497
Local Authority Contribution	129,768	64,425	194,193
Other Revenue	23,000	22,373	45,373
Project Income	32,264	1,064,648	1,096,912
Sale of merchandise	472	7	480
<b>Total Turnover</b>	<b>1,111,539</b>	<b>2,564,210</b>	<b>3,675,749</b>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>1,111,539</b>	<b>2,564,210</b>	<b>3,675,749</b>
<b>AGAR = Total Other Receipts</b>			
<b>Administrative Costs</b>			
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	177,687	177,687
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	16,727	16,727
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	2,119	45,816	47,936
Insurance	23,440	0	23,440
Irrecoverable VAT	0	3,433	3,433
IT Software and Consumables	10,198	4,928	15,126
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	96,984	96,984
Other costs (activity) NLHF	0	3,186	3,186
Other costs NLHF	0	370	370
Pensions Costs	106,585	105,056	211,641
Postage, Freight & Courier	581	66	648
Printing & Stationery	1,138	920	2,058
Professional fees (activity)	0	109,158	109,158
Project donations	2,082	0	2,082
Publicity and promotion	0	2,870	2,870
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	522,862	535,227	1,058,090
Staff expenses	202	1,168	1,370
Staff Training	8,337	6,759	15,096
Subscriptions	3,715	2,106	5,821
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	3,047	11,279	14,326
Website running costs	998	24	1,022
<b>Total Administrative Costs</b>	<b>1,110,697</b>	<b>3,142,842</b>	<b>4,253,539</b>
<b>Surplus/(deficit)</b>	<b>842</b>	<b>(578,632)</b>	<b>(577,790)</b>
<b>Staff Costs</b>			
Recruitment	406	449	854
Salaries	522,862	535,227	1,058,090
Pensions	106,585	105,056	211,641
Employers NI	64,031	66,124	130,154
Medical insurance	3,193	2,651	5,844
Members allowances	15,897	0	15,897
<b>Total Staff costs</b>	<b>712,974</b>	<b>709,506</b>	<b>1,422,480</b>
<b>AGAR = Staff costs</b>			
<b>Other costs</b>	<b>397,723</b>	<b>2,433,335</b>	<b>2,831,058</b>
<b>AGAR = Other Payments</b>			

**APPENDIX 2****Balance Sheet**

Chilterns Conservation Board

As at 31 March 2026

<b>Account</b>	<b>31 Mar 2026</b>	<b>31 Mar 2025</b>
<b>Current Assets</b>		
<b>Cash at bank and in hand</b>		
Business 95 Day saver	531,389	513,373
GBP PayPal	86	270
HSBC Current Account	65,920	63,185
HSBC Mmkt 312	1,500,000	0
HSBC Money Market 786	1,000,000	2,000,000
HSBC Money Market 871	750,000	1,500,000
HSBC Reward Account	764,012	1,099,694
<b>Total Cash at bank and in hand</b>	<b>4,611,408</b>	<b>5,176,522</b>
Accounts Receivable	252,481	276,485
Accrued Income	8,267	12,235
Inventory	1,000	1,000
Less Provision for Doubtful Debts	0	(9,296)
Prepayments	13,438	6,574
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>4,886,594</b>	<b>5,463,520</b>
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>		
Accounts Payable	609,833	802,254
Accruals	138,666	149,415
Business Card - Laura Baker	409	0
Business Card - Lynne Cordice	11	852
Income in Advance	340,118	130,915
NIC Payable	0	405
PAYE Payable	0	771
PayPal	0	4
Pensions Payable	0	2,183
Rounding	(2)	(1)
Student Loan Deductions Payable	0	(102)
Treasury Account	0	6
Wages Payable - Payroll	0	1,468
<b>Total Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	<b>1,089,034</b>	<b>1,088,171</b>
<b>Net Current Assets (Liabilities)</b>	<b>3,797,559</b>	<b>4,375,349</b>
<b>Total Assets less Current Liabilities</b>	<b>3,797,559</b>	<b>4,375,349</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>3,797,559</b>	<b>4,375,349</b>
<b>Capital and Reserves</b>		
<b>Project reserves</b>		
Beacons of the Past: Earmarked Reserves	24,095	24,095
CCC Forward Plan	0	61,357
Central Chilterns Conservation Agriculture	70,362	86,976
Chalk Streams Earmarked Reserve	213,151	168,951
CHAP	0	18,611
Chess Smarter Water Catchment Earmarked Reserves	283,893	169,936
Commons: Earmarked Reserves	21,837	21,837
Earmarked Reserves: Small Projects	3,846	2,900
Farm Advice: Earmarked Reserves	9,541	9,901
FIPL Earmarked Reserve	158,540	180,295
HS2 AP Reserve	18,509	(18,128)
Mend the Gap: Earmarked Reserves	2,020,489	2,728,773
Mending the Misbourne Project Reserve	49,449	0
Nature Calling Reserve	0	19,131
Nature Towns & Cities Project Reserve	400	0
NBY Reserve	(19,380)	(25,061)
New Shoots Reserve	0	(10,633)
North Chilterns Farm Cluster	41,728	21,876
Red Kites Earmarked Reserve	5,859	5,859
Tracking the Impact (Rebel Restoration) Reserve	51,002	97,047
Younghusband Legacy Fund	81,808	74,505
<b>Total Project Reserves</b>	<b>3,035,128</b>	<b>3,638,227</b>
<b>Core Reserves</b>		
General Reserve	538,308	513,000
Development Reserve	224,123	224,123
	762,431	737,123
<b>Total Capital and Reserves</b>	<b>3,797,559</b>	<b>4,375,349</b>

AGAR = Total value of cash investments

AGAR = Total Balances carried forward

**Reconciliation - General reserves**

<b>General Core reserve bfwd 1.4.25</b>	<b>513,000</b>
Transfer to Small Projects	(2,480)
In Year surplus	<b>842</b>
CHAP	311
CCC Forward Plan	226
SWC Historic Adjustment	(31,462)
MTG Historic Adjustment	<u>57,872</u>
<b>Core Reserves Cfwd</b>	<b><u>538,309</u></b>

**APPENDIX 3****CORE Budget Variance**

Chilterns Conservation Board

For the Year ended 31 March 2026

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

Account	FINAL Full Year Actuals	Updated Forecast (9+3)	Full Year Forecast	Original Budget	Budget Variance	Comments v forecast and budget
<b>Trading Income</b>						
<b>Defra Income</b>						
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
<b>Total Defra Income</b>	<b>686,032</b>	<b>587,899</b>	<b>602,898</b>	<b>633,902</b>	<b>52,130</b>	
<b>Other income</b>						
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	179,853	161,680	155,429	158,082	21,771	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	
<b>Total Other income</b>	<b>425,508</b>	<b>380,660</b>	<b>369,012</b>	<b>347,238</b>	<b>78,270</b>	
<b>Total Trading Income</b>	<b>1,111,539</b>	<b>968,559</b>	<b>971,910</b>	<b>981,140</b>	<b>130,399</b>	
<b>Gross Surplus</b>	<b>1,111,539</b>	<b>968,559</b>	<b>971,910</b>	<b>981,140</b>	<b>130,399</b>	
<b>Operating Expenses</b>						
<b>Staff costs</b>						
Salaries	522,862	523,457	534,528	592,035	69,173	
Employers National Insurance	64,031	63,456	63,510	76,064	12,033	
Pensions Costs	106,585	107,689	110,145	120,625	14,040	
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	3,047	3,000	4,119	4,300	1,253	
Recruitment	406	406	406	500	94	
<b>Total Staff costs</b>	<b>708,663</b>	<b>713,415</b>	<b>728,216</b>	<b>809,330</b>	<b>100,667</b>	Planning Advisor ( £26k budgeted) not recruited need now being met by consultancy instead, delayed recruitment of Administrator and better than budgeted staff allocations to projects in year. Original budget included part year programme manager £40k

**APPENDIX 3****CORE Budget Variance**

Chilterns Conservation Board

For the Year ended 31 March 2026

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

<b>Account</b>	<b>FINAL Full Year Actuals</b>	<b>Updated Forecast (9+3)</b>	<b>Full Year Forecast</b>	<b>Original Budget</b>	<b>Budget Variance</b>	<b>Comments v forecast and budget</b>
<b>Office costs</b>						
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	
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)	
<b>Total Office costs</b>	<b>64,827</b>	<b>65,695</b>	<b>67,835</b>	<b>66,097</b>	<b>1,270</b>	
<b>Governance costs</b>						
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)	
<b>Total Governance costs</b>	<b>29,545</b>	<b>29,830</b>	<b>26,228</b>	<b>18,748</b>	<b>(10,797)</b>	Historic member allowances paid and VAT review £4.5k unbudgeted
<b>Communications</b>						
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	998	3,298	3,298	1,488	490	Website set costs have transferred to CDEL
<b>Total Communications</b>	<b>14,390</b>	<b>18,428</b>	<b>20,128</b>	<b>20,558</b>	<b>6,168</b>	
<b>Telecoms &amp; IT costs</b>						
Computer and IT Equipment	10	2,078	1,304	0	(10)	Laptops costs transferred to CDEL
IT Software and Consumables	10,198	10,500	10,561	11,736	1,538	Overspend across the two lines due to additional laptops held in year (24/25 Capital spend), now being rationalised and cost review in this area is taking
IT support and maintenance	11,967	10,795	10,300	8,712	(3,255)	place
Telephone & Internet	3,725	3,700	3,716	3,802	77	
<b>Total Telecoms &amp; IT costs</b>	<b>25,901</b>	<b>27,073</b>	<b>25,881</b>	<b>24,250</b>	<b>(1,651)</b>	

**APPENDIX 3****CORE Budget Variance**

Chilterns Conservation Board

For the Year ended 31 March 2026

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

<b>Account</b>	<b>FINAL Full Year Actuals</b>	<b>Updated Forecast (9+3)</b>	<b>Full Year Forecast</b>	<b>Original Budget</b>	<b>Budget Variance</b>	<b>Comments v forecast and budget</b>
<b>Other costs</b>						
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	2,119	1,600	1,582	1,600	(519)	
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 fwd into 26/27 (included in budget)
Project Donations	2,082	0	0	0	(2,082)	Contribution to CWF & Nature Calling at end of programmes
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	
<b>Total Other costs</b>	<b>267,372</b>	<b>178,865</b>	<b>219,373</b>	<b>160,662</b>	<b>(106,710)</b>	
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>1,110,697</b>	<b>1,033,306</b>	<b>1,087,661</b>	<b>1,099,645</b>	<b>(11,052)</b>	
<b>Net Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b>842</b>	<b>(64,747)</b>	<b>(115,751)</b>	<b>(118,505)</b>	<b>141,451</b>	

**APPENDIX 3****CORE Budget Variance**

Chilterns Conservation Board

For the Year ended 31 March 2026

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

<b>Account</b>	<b>FINAL Full Year Actuals</b>	<b>Updated Forecast (9+3)</b>	<b>Full Year Forecast</b>	<b>Original Budget</b>	<b>Budget Variance</b>	<b>Comments v forecast and budget</b>
<b>CDEL Reconciliation</b>						
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	<b>25,897</b>					
Total CDEL spend	<u>195,135</u>					
<b>Analysis of Forecast Deficit to actual</b>	(64,747)					
CDEL used for staff costs	25,897					
Add interest income	6,220					
Add project recharges	18,173					
Delayed consultancy	6,340					
Training below budget	3,663					
Printing of NR and Man plan into 26/27	2,282					
Core Funding to CWF & Nature Calling	(2,082)					
Saving Adv & Marketing costs	1,738					
Equip costs to CDEL	2,068					
Website costs to CDEL	2,300					
Other small variances	(1,010)					
<b>Final Surplus</b>	<u><u>842</u></u>					

## Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2025/26

We acknowledge as the members of:

### Chilterns Conservation Board

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2026, that:

	Agreed		'Yes' means that this authority:
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓		<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>
3. We have assured ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓		<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓		<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓		<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A
			✓
10. We have put in place arrangements for the effective IT and data management in accordance with proper practices during the year under review.	✓		<i>has made suitable arrangements for its IT and data management and has complied with proper practices in doing so.</i>

\*Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

25/06/2026

and recorded as minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by the Chair and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chair

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Clerk

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

<https://www.chilterns.org.uk/> BLICLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE/WEBPAGE ADDRESS

## Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2025/26 for

### Chilterns Conservation Board

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2025 £	31 March 2026 £	
			<i>Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures <b>must</b> agree to underlying financial records.</i>
1. Balances brought forward	4,703,551	4,375,351	<i>Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value <b>must</b> agree to Box 7 of previous year.</i>
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	0	0	<i>Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.</i>
3. (+) Total other receipts	4,427,540	3,675,749	<i>Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.</i>
4. (-) Staff costs	1,272,976	1,422,480	<i>Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.</i>
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	<i>Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).</i>
6. (-) All other payments	3,482,764	2,831,059	<i>Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).</i>
7. (=) Balances carried forward	4,375,351	3,797,561	<i>Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. <b>must</b> equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).</i>
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	5,176,522	4,611,408	<i>The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – <b>To agree with bank reconciliation.</b></i>
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	154,495	152,364	<i>The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.</i>
10. Total borrowings	0	0	<i>The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).</i>

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	
11 Do the figures in the accounting statements above exclude any trust transactions?	✓		<i>For guidance refer to the Practitioners' Guide sections 2.31 to 2.33.</i>

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2026 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

**Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval.**

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

25/06/2026

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

25/06/2026

as recorded in minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by Chair of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

SIGNATURE REQUIRED



## SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT FOR PROVISION OF INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE BETWEEN THE SHARED INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE (SIAS) AND CHILTERN'S CONSERVATION BOARD

### 1. The Service and Service Delivery

- 1.1. In consideration of the Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) paying the fees (set out in part 2) SIAS shall provide the CCB with the following:
  - An assurance that the processes and controls for managing income, expenditure and significant risks are adequate.
  - An appraisal of the adequacy, reliability and effectiveness of those controls in offsetting any risks which may prevent the achievement of objectives.
  - A report that outlines the control opinion, findings and any recommendations for action as necessary.
- 1.2. The services provided will cover records for the 2025/26 financial year.
- 1.3. SIAS shall be contactable between the hours of 09:00 to 17:00 Monday to Friday excluding any public holidays or such other periods and times as the parties shall agree in writing.
- 1.4. The Services will be provided by the Hertfordshire County Council's Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS).

### 2. Fees

- 2.1 The fee and payment terms in relation to the services for the review of the 2025/26 financial year are set out in Appendix 2.
- 2.2 The Chilterns Conservation Board shall be invoiced upon issue of the final report and the Board shall pay such amounts within thirty (30) days of the date of such invoice.

### 3. Personnel

Services will be provided by the Shared Internal Audit Service.

### 4. Completion Date of Estimated Timeline

A new agreement will be required for the continuation of the service beyond the current year. In the event of either party wishing to dissolve the agreement a period of 30 days' notice should be given before the start of the financial year.

**5. Accommodation/co-location of staff**

The arrangements for providing the requirements of audit will be agreed at the time of audit.

**6. Board Responsibilities**

The Board shall comply with the obligations set out in Appendix 1 of this Specification.

**7. Complaints**

Where either Party has any complaints or issues which it wishes to discuss in relation to the Service, these should be, wherever possible, resolved through the normal day to day contacts or through the head of the relevant team providing the Service (contact names and numbers are provided below).

Board contact:

Dr Elaine King (Chief Executive Officer) Tel: 01844 355500

SIAS contact:

Alan Cooper (Client Audit Manager) Tel: 01438 845509

**8. Dispute Resolution**

Where a dispute arises in relation to any aspect of the Service which cannot be resolved through the process set out in paragraph 7 above, either Party may issue a notice of service review to the parties named below.

Board contact:

Dr Elaine King (Chief Executive Officer) Tel: 01844 355500

SIAS contact:

Darren Williams (Head of SIAS) Tel: 01438 844341

The Council will institute a period of formal review of the Service by both Parties of specified elements of the Service. The Parties shall agree the duration of the formal review period and any arrangements to withhold payments for the Service pending the outcome of the review. Where the Parties are still unable to agree on any matter, the Parties may refer the matter to the parties named in clause 8 of the Agreement and the provisions of that clause will apply to such dispute.

**9. Representatives**

The Parties' representatives for the purposes of this Agreement are as set out below:

Board Representative: Dr Elaine King (CEO)

SIAS Representative: Darren Williams (Head of SIAS)

**10. Appendices to this Specification**

Appendix 1 – Service Delivery

Appendix 2 – Fees

**SERVICE DELIVERY****Appendix 1**

SIAS will:

1. Carry out internal control checks at a mutually agreed time.
2. Provide the Board with an initial booking letter confirming the details of documentation required in advance of and during the audit. The timings and contact details will be provided when agreed.
3. Review a sample of the previous year's finance information in respect of:
  - Accounting Records
  - Financial Regulations
  - Payments
  - Risk Management
  - Budget Setting and Budget Monitoring
  - Income
  - Petty Cash
  - Payroll
  - Assets and Investment Registers
  - Bank Reconciliations
  - Year-End Processes
4. Leave the Board with a summary of key findings and recommendations for improvement and agree timescales for implementation.
5. Review implementation of recommendations made during the previous internal control checks.
6. Send a draft and final report.

The Board will:

7. Provide the Internal Auditor carrying out the Internal Audit with desk space if required and / or meet virtually via MS Teams.
8. Ensure that the records are made available and key staff are available to answer questions and provide requested documentation.
9. Implement any recommendations made by the Auditor within the agreed timescales.

**FEES**

**Appendix 2**

**SERVICE CHARGE FOR THE AUDIT OF THE 2025/26 FINANCIAL YEAR**

The fees in relation to the review of the 2025/26 financial year will be £1648 plus VAT.

**PAYMENT TERMS**

Bills will be paid within 30 days of the invoice date in accordance with stated payment terms.

Invoices shall be emailed/sent to:

office@chilternsaonb.org,

Chilterns Conservation Board  
The Lodge  
90 Station Road  
Chinnor OX39 4HA

Where the Board wishes to withdraw from this agreement or provides less than 7 days notice of cancellation of an Internal Audit visit, it shall be liable for the full amount remaining for that financial year. No refunds will be given.

**Item 2.2****FY 26/27 Core Budget****Author:**

Kathryn Foster, Senior Finance Manager

**Purpose:**

To seek approval by the Board for our final 2026/27 Budget.

**2026-27 Core Budget – Overview**

£'000s	Actual 23/24	Actual 24/25	Actual 25/26	Budget Envelope 26/27	Final Budget 26/27	Budget 27/28	Budget 28/29
Defra Income	513	724	686	557	718	558	558
Local Authority Income	124	127	129	129	122	130	134
Other income	160	301	296	262	260	247	243
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>798</b>	<b>1,153</b>	<b>1,111</b>	<b>948</b>	<b>1,099</b>	<b>935</b>	<b>935</b>
Staff costs	595	716	709	742	762	779	802
Office costs	57	54	65	68	71	72	74
Governance costs	13	23	29	20	21	20	21
Communications costs	19	28	14	10	10	10	11
Telecoms & IT costs	22	22	26	25	26	26	27
Other costs	115	200	267	141	210	123	125
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>822</b>	<b>1,043</b>	<b>1,110</b>	<b>1,006</b>	<b>1,099</b>	<b>1,030</b>	<b>1,060</b>
<b>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	<b>(23)</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>(58)</b>	<b>(0)</b>	<b>(95)</b>	<b>(125)</b>

1. 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.
2. 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 the CCB has a boost to reserves of approximately £100k which gives comfort and cushion for 27/28 onwards.
3. Our key assumptions for the budget are outlined below and we have highlighted areas where the additional RDEL uplift is being utilised. Full line by line detail of the budget can be found in **Appendix 1**.

**Income**

4. **Core Defra Funding** - We have now received confirmation of Defra funding allocations for Revenue (RDEL) £514k, Capital (CDEL) £348k, Access for All (£429k) and the Farming in Protected Landscapes (£818k) programmes. These figures are

incorporated into our final budget as appropriate along with our one off RDEL uplift of £176k as noted above.

5. **CDEL Capital lease funding** – Defra has confirmed the release of £23.5k per annum of CDEL for our premises capital lease and this has been factored into our budgets for 26/27 onwards.
6. **Local Authority Funding** – since our original budget envelope calculations, Buckinghamshire Council has advised of a £14k reduction in funding for 26/27 (contribution was £55k in 25/26 and will be £41k for 26/27, though note that the actual contribution in 25/26 should have been £61k so a real term loss of £20k). For most other local authorities, we have assumed 5% inflationary increases. Whilst we continue to seek full contributions from Luton and Central Beds, for prudence our budget assumes contributions at historic levels only for these two.
7. **Project recharge income is £165k.** This reflects ad hoc recharges of Core staff to projects (including Access for All and FIPL now these programmes are confirmed to continue) and other core recharges, for example overheads. It also includes a specific recovery for a new Head of Programmes role from Not Bourne Yesterday (NBY) albeit now phased to the last quarter of the year, along with overhead recharges for our long-term projects including Mend the Gap, FIPL, Smarter Water Catchment and Mending the Misbourne.
8. **Project income of £57k** includes income from the Flood Drought Research Infrastructure (FDRI) Project (for our Head of Landscapes 1 day per week), Nature Towns & Cities, Nature Ridge Landscape Connections and HS2 Associated Projects.
9. **Interest income is £40k.** This reflects declining interest rates and reducing project cash balances that we hold. For the Mend the Gap and Mending the Misbourne projects, where significant funds were received upfront, we are attributing their share of interest to the programme.

### Expenditure

10. The CCB's largest cost is its staff. A 3% inflationary pay rise for all staff has been included in this budget. This adds a cost of approximately £16k to Core.
11. Some individual pay increases have been made over and above inflationary levels following a review of roles in line with our job grading framework.
12. The recent triennial valuation of our Pension scheme has resulted in a reduction in employers' contributions of 4.6% (currently 20.9%; new contribution being 16.3%). This is effective from 1 April 2026. We have factored this reduction into our budget/three-year plan. The scheme will next be revalued in March 2029. This provides a significant saving in staff costs to core (and projects) for 26/27 of £25k.
13. Staff costs outlined represent Core (non-project) staff only and are net of any costs directly recharged to projects. Where appropriate the project recharges income includes ad hoc staff recharges.
14. A few changes to new roles are included in our budget for 25/26:
  - **Communications Officer** – replacement role FTE increased from 0.29 to 0.6 – additional £13k
  - **GIS role 0.4 FTE £15k** – with the Heritage & Archaeology Manager leaving, and our Landscape and Conservation Officer having retired in December, this role, now being carried out by an existing member of staff, recognises the need for a GIS focussed resource.

- **Head of Programmes** – full time role assumed joining from 1 July 26 - cost £53k in 26/27 and £74k from 27/28 onwards. This role is unlikely to be appointed now until Quarter 3 as recruitment has only just commenced. We have assumed funding from NBY of £10k and CDEL of £20k from 27/28 onwards once the role is established. The latter will meet the income generation criterion, as they would be involved in securing funding.
  - **Restructure of the administration team** following our Senior Administration Officer's retirement, and the creation of the new GIS role, we have created a Finance Administrator role through reprofiling an existing staff role. We are also currently recruiting for a new Office Administrator. This adds costs of £3k in 26/27 and £8k per annum ongoing (part funded by a reduction in hours by the Senior Finance Manager).
15. We have budgeted to continue with consulting costs for Health & Safety £5.7k and HR £13k.
  16. We have added the costs of an **outsourced Data Protection Officer** to our budget for £12.5k. We had originally hoped to resource this role internally with training, but this has not been possible.
  17. **Continued Transformation works on IT and HR totalling £32.5k.** These works are being funded by the RDEL uplift. They were omitted from our original budget envelope on the assumption they would be funded by reserves or CDEL.
  18. We have included £75.6k of **Planning Consultancy costs**.
  19. **Our staff training budget totals £17.5k.** This is an enhanced training budget for 26/27 partly funded from RDEL and includes provision for a packaged online training programme for staff to include data protection/data security and safeguarding.
  20. **National Landscapes Conference attendance £7k.** In previous years we have tried to enable 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 will be attending.
  21. **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. This all funded by the RDEL uplift.
  22. Ongoing legal costs are to be funded 50% by projects but 26/27 also includes contract review costs of £4k. This is work carried over from 25/26 that we did not complete.
  23. **Project donations** – we have included our contribution to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape led Nature Ridge Landscape Connections Project £7.5k over two years - £3.25k in 26/27 and 27/28. We are a partner to the project. In addition, we have made a provision in 26/27 to cover Not Bourne Yesterday staff costs between the end of Development Phase funding and a final decision from the Lottery on whether the project will be funded through to the Delivery Phase. Submission is now planned for August instead of May, with decision in early December), total cost in 26/27 £21k. The RDEL uplift provides an opportunity for the CCB to support some of our key projects with "Match Funding". The Chilterns Chalk Stream Project (CCSP) and Not Bourne Yesterday (NBY) both have very tight budgets and we are using the extra RDEL to make contributions of £10k each in 26/27 for these two projects.
  24. **Outstanding Chilterns** magazine will not be produced in 26/27 and the **Chilterns Walking Festival** will be paused in 26/27. Whilst the Festival did not incur significant external costs, it did put pressure on administration capacity in the core team.

- 25. Insurance costs** have increased significantly in the last few years following a large increase at renewal in September 2024. This is a combination of increased costs of management liability insurance and an extra premium on our commercial insurance to ensure our water-focussed projects are adequately covered. We have also added professional indemnity insurance which is an additional cost of £2k per annum.
- 26. Marketing costs** are reduced after 25/26 following completion of the Management Plan and the Nature Recovery Plan. We have included a general provision for communications costs, such as for drafting planning guidance, other ad hoc core communications needs and developing our Annual Review (which will support our fundraising activities).

### **Budgets 2027- 2029**

- 27.** Defra has provided indicative funding for all Protected Landscapes for 2027/28 and 2028/29 and are, for the first time, including these in our grant funding agreement. The cash settlements are flat but it gives a significant level of certainty to aid longer term planning which the CCB has not had in recent years. Based on this, we have developed a high-level budget for these years using 26/27 as our base.
- 28.** We have assumed that Project income, Local Authority income and recharges will continue at 26/27 levels. Core Project income is uncertain as some current projects start to come to an end. In addition, from 27/28 onwards some nature recovery projects end, so creating a further funding gap.
- 29.** One of the significant issues with a flat cash settlement is that every year we are worst off in real terms and need to generate approx. £30k just to cover inflation on our cost base.
- 30.** We are continuing to work on the agreed principle of developing a break-even budget. The figures presented for 27/28 and 28/29 are worst case scenarios. With a track record of reducing budgeted deficits as a year progresses, we are committed to reducing funding gaps and moving the annual deficit to below £50k. There are four key elements to achieving this:
- **Securing further project specific funding and grants** - a range of staff to be involved, including the new Head of Programmes.
  - **Securing unrestricted funding** – led by our CEO and informed by a new Funding Strategy.
  - **Implementing a set of cost cutting actions** – some of which have already been identified - such as staff restructuring, FTE reductions and other cost saving measures being explored (including investigating registering for VAT refunds for example).
  - **Utilising Defra additional funding** both for CDEL and the new Wildlife-Rich Habitats creation fund (criteria to be confirmed). Defra has also indicated that further funding pots may come on stream in due course.
- 31.** We will continue to update and review our longer-term forecasts for 2027/28 and 2028/29 as the current year progresses

### **Recommendation**

- 1. That the Board APPROVES the final budget for FY26/27.**

## APPENDIX 1

## CHILTERNES CONSERVATION BOARD

## BUDGET 2026/27

	Actual 23/24	Actual 24/25	Actual 25/26	Original Budget Envelope 26/27	FINAL Budget 26/27	Assumptions and Comments
	£	£	£	£	£	
<b>Trading Income</b>						
<b>Defra Income</b>						
Defra Core Grant	513,896	628,145	513,896	513,996	690,719	Core RDEL £514k, RDEL uplift £176k
						£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
Defra Capital Grant	-	95,934	172,136	43,500	27,382	
<b>Total Defra Income</b>	<b>513,896</b>	<b>724,079</b>	<b>686,032</b>	<b>557,496</b>	<b>718,101</b>	
<b>Other income</b>						
Local Authority Contribution	124,448	127,442	129,768	129,670	121,967	Bucks reduction now included, 5% uplift for other LAs
Project Income	19,760	31,461	32,264	56,500	57,886	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
Interest Income	18,792	50,176	60,096	40,000	40,000	Declining rates and balances assumed
Internal Fee Income	112,979	211,371	179,853	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	-	-	23,054	-	-	For 25/26 this represented match funding from NWD for CDEL Climate Adaptation project
Advertising income	8,166	7,792	-	-	-	Outstanding magazine no longer produced
Sale of merchandise	235	544	472	-	-	
<b>Total Other income</b>	<b>284,380</b>	<b>428,785</b>	<b>425,507</b>	<b>391,170</b>	<b>381,726</b>	
<b>Total Trading Income</b>	<b>798,276</b>	<b>1,152,865</b>	<b>1,111,539</b>	<b>948,666</b>	<b>1,099,827</b>	
<b>Gross Surplus</b>	<b>798,276</b>	<b>1,152,865</b>	<b>1,111,539</b>	<b>948,666</b>	<b>1,099,827</b>	

## APPENDIX 1

## CHILTERN CONSERVATION BOARD

## BUDGET 2026/27

	Actual 23/24	Actual 24/25	Actual 25/26	Original Budget Envelope 26/27	FINAL Budget 26/27	Assumptions and Comments
	£	£	£	£	£	
<b>Operating Expenses</b>						
<b>Staff costs</b>						
Total Salaries	577,973	694,163	693,478	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	3,143	
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	3,047	4,000	4,020	
Recruitment	2,909	3,245	406	1,000	2,000	For Office Administrator and Head of Programmes recruitment
<b>Total Staff costs</b>	<b>595,053</b>	<b>716,560</b>	<b>708,663</b>	<b>742,390</b>	<b>761,605</b>	
<b>Office costs</b>						
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
<b>Total Office costs</b>	<b>56,978</b>	<b>54,045</b>	<b>64,827</b>	<b>68,500</b>	<b>70,700</b>	

## APPENDIX 1

## CHILTERNES CONSERVATION BOARD

## BUDGET 2026/27

	Actual 23/24	Actual 24/25	Actual 25/26	Original Budget Envelope 26/27	FINAL Budget 26/27	Assumptions and Comments
	£	£	£	£	£	
<b>Governance costs</b>						
Board Meetings	828	1,161	2,354	2,000	2,500	
Members Allowances	6,356	9,657	15,897	10,800	11,880	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
<b>Total Governance costs</b>	<b>13,065</b>	<b>23,260</b>	<b>29,545</b>	<b>19,800</b>	<b>21,380</b>	
<b>Communications</b>						
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	998	5,000	5,000	Increased now with new provider and incorporated contingency for further website development work
<b>Total Communications</b>	<b>19,165</b>	<b>27,974</b>	<b>14,390</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>10,000</b>	
<b>Telecoms &amp; IT costs</b>						
Computer and IT Equipment	3,850	-	10	-	-	Assumed ongoing IT hardware will be funded by CDEL
IT Software and Consumables	7,594	9,315	10,198	11,000	11,500	
IT support and maintenance	7,456	9,175	11,967	10,000	10,000	
Telephone & Internet	3,182	3,508	3,725	4,000	4,360	
<b>Total Telecoms &amp; IT costs</b>	<b>22,082</b>	<b>21,998</b>	<b>25,901</b>	<b>25,000</b>	<b>25,860</b>	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	Actual 25/26	Original Budget Envelope 26/27	FINAL Budget 26/27	Assumptions and Comments
	£	£	£	£	£	
<b>Other costs</b>						
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	8,100	Specific events for 26/27 to support climate adaptation works
Project Donations	27,000	13,157	2,082	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	2,119	1,500	2,050	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	
<b>Total Other costs</b>	<b>115,234</b>	<b>199,528</b>	<b>267,372</b>	<b>141,382</b>	<b>210,282</b>	
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>821,577</b>	<b>1,043,365</b>	<b>1,110,697</b>	<b>1,007,073</b>	<b>1,099,827</b>	
<b>Net Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b>(23,301)</b>	<b>109,500</b>	<b>842</b>	<b>(58,407)</b>	<b>(0)</b>	

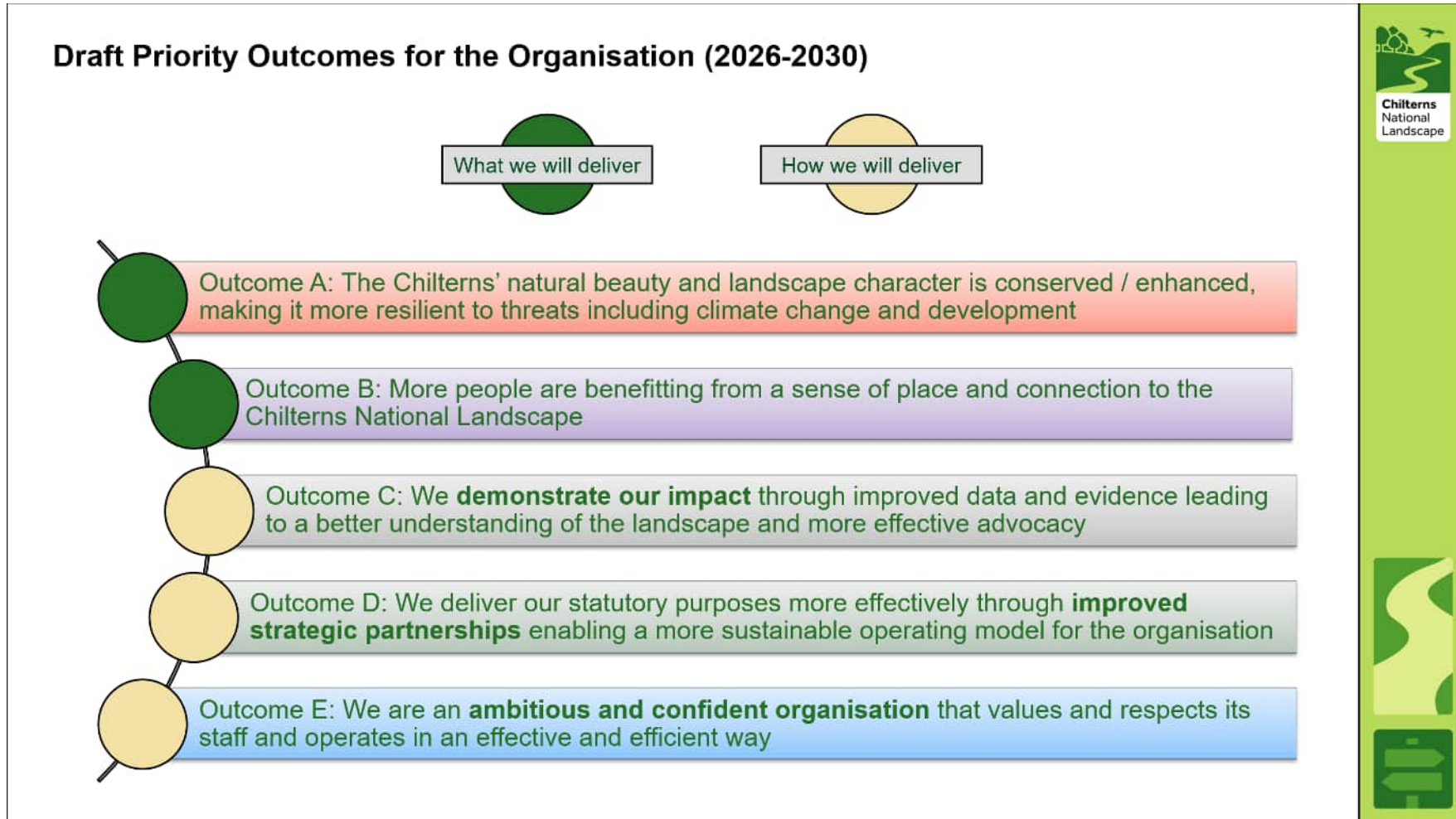
**Item 2.3**                      **FY26-27 Annual Delivery Plan****Author:**                      Andrew Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations**Purpose:**                      To update the Board on the strategic planning that has taken place this year and to seek approval from the Board for the FY26-27 Annual Delivery Plan.**Background (Focus on Strategic Planning)**

1. The Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan is a plan for the whole of the Chilterns National Landscape (CNL) to be implemented by many different partners working within the Landscape.
2. A missing component of the CNL Team's planning in recent years, has been the absence of a CNL Team Strategic Plan, which focuses on what the CNL Team will do to deliver its part of the overall CNL Management Plan over the lifetime of the Plan.
3. The publication of a new CNL Management Plan to 2030 offered an opportunity this year to undertake strategic planning looking ahead to the next 4 years to provide more medium-term clarity for the organisation and to provide a better framework for the FY26-27 Delivery Plan.
4. Developing the medium-term view for the organisation also allows a more considered focus on key areas of risk, such as staff capacity and securing funding, and allows better consideration of the operating model needed for the organisation to effectively deliver going forward.
5. As such there has been a focus on strategic planning during this planning cycle which has also involved consultation with the Executive Committee and with Managers across the organisation.
6. Because of the additional time required to consider more strategically what we are looking to deliver over the next 4 years, the need to adapt the planning and reporting framework, and continued capacity constraints within the Senior Leadership Team, means we are not fully through the process of finalising the full FY26-27 Delivery Plan. Whilst we are presenting the Delivery Plan here, any changes to this plan that result from the completion and review of planning at a more detailed level will therefore be brought back to the Board for their approval.

**Strategic Objectives**

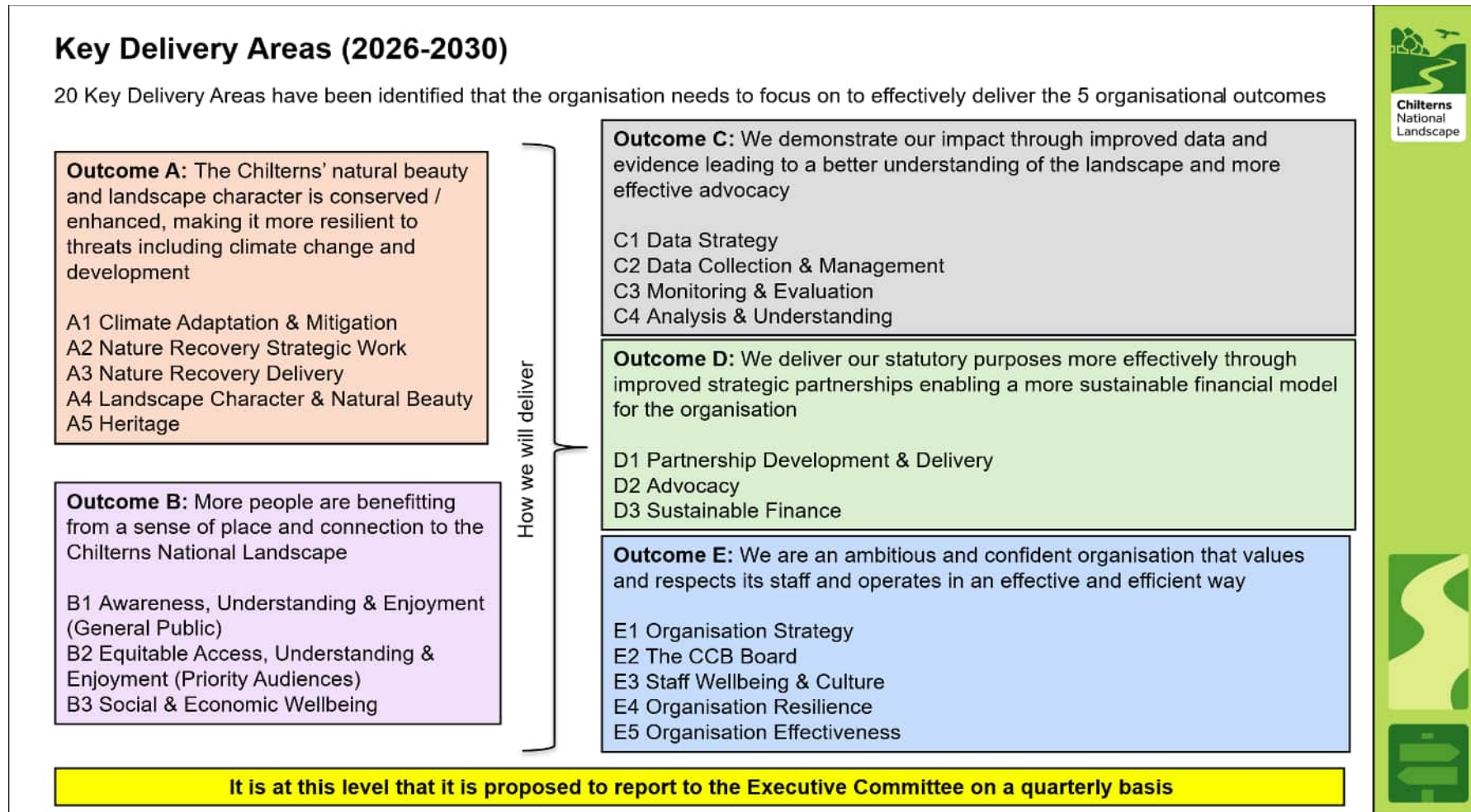
7. A starting point to planning this year has been to ensure clarity and alignment of priority outcomes for the organisation for the next 4 years. These outcomes, reviewed and agreed with both the Executive Committee and managers across the organisation, can be seen in the following diagram.

8. The first two outcomes, rightly focus on our statutory purposes as an organisation and the following three outcomes focus on how we intend to ensure that we deliver the first two outcomes, bringing into focus the need for more data-led evidence of our impact as well as the need to continue to improve the way we work with partners.



**Key Delivery Areas**

9. Underpinning these 5 priority outcomes we have identified 20 key delivery areas through which we will deliver the priority outcomes over the next 4 years, as can be seen on the diagram below.



10. Currently we report to the Executive Committee against over 100 lines in the Annual Delivery Plan and this has three clear consequences:

- Too much focus on whether individual line items are on track rather than whether the overall outcomes are being achieved.
- Difficulty in providing all the information around impact and consequences when we are not delivering on time.
- Pulling the report together every quarter takes a considerable amount of staff time and effort.

11. The plan going forward this year (and in future years) will be to report against these 20 key delivery areas, enabling us to have better focused conversations to understand the impact and consequences of delays in delivery at a more strategic rather than operational level.

### **Sub Delivery Areas**

12. As the 20 key delivery areas are still very much at the strategic level, we have gone through a process of identifying what needs to be done over the course of the next 4 years in each of these areas. This has resulted in the identification of 71 sub-delivery areas. These are detailed on the FY26-27 Delivery Plan.

13. By taking this more strategic approach, we have been able to more effectively spread activity to address capacity issues across the organisation (for example the potential to push activity from year 1 to year 2) and have a clearer view of what we need to prioritise.

14. The first of these 4 years forms the FY26-27 Delivery Plan for which we are seeking approval.

### **Recommendations**

- 1. That the Board NOTES the work done with the Executive Committee and managers to define the priority outcomes and key delivery areas for the next 4 years in line with the CNL Management Plan.**
- 2. That the Board APPROVES the FY26-27 Delivery Plan as presented in this document, noting that there is still work to be done around the detail of this plan and that any alterations to the plan as a consequence of this work will be re-presented to the Board.**

**Appendix: Delivery Plan FY26-27**

Key Delivery Area	Sub Delivery Area	Key Activities
Outcome A - The Chilterns' natural beauty and landscape character is conserved / enhanced, making it more resilient to threats including climate change and development		
A1  Climate Adaptation & Mitigation	A1.1 Understanding Climate Change Impact	A1.1.1 Complete Research & Development climate report (CHESS-SCAPE modelling)
		A1.1.2 Review final Research & Development report and carry out additional analysis (Local Authority climate explorer) to fully understand impact of climate change
		A1.1.3 Create and convene climate change working group with external partners
		A1.1.4 Carry out climate change risk assessment
		A1.1.5 Identify, evaluate and select adaptation actions
		A1.1.6 Identify policy responses
		A1.1.7 Work with the UK Centre of Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH) through Flood & Drought Research Infrastructure (FDRI) project to better understand impact of climate change on Chilterns' chalk streams
		A1.1.8 Convene NetZero working group for the organisation
	A1.2 Improving Climate Literacy in the CNL Team	A1.2.1 Complete Climate Literacy training
		A1.2.2 Present key findings from Research & Development work to CNL staff team
A1.2.3 Run 2 CNL team workshops to identify risks and opportunities alongside key proposed actions based on enhanced understanding of impacts of climate change on landscape		
A2  Nature Recovery Strategic Work	A2.1 Delivering the Nature Recovery Plan (NRP)	A2.1.1 Finalise design of the NRP & leaflets
		A2.1.2 Set NRP launch date, book venue & speakers and advertise launch
		A2.1.3 Run Nature Recovery Plan launch event
		A2.1.4 Embed NRP outcomes into funding proposals, work plans and activities
	A2.2 Supporting Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSS)	A2.2.1 Familiarise the CNL team with the content of the four LNRSS
		A2.2.2 Embed LNRSS priorities into new work process so that CNL team use LNRSS priorities when planning work
		A2.2.3 Attend LNRSS Delivery meetings (Bucks, Oxon, Beds & Herts) to start to align activity
		A2.3.1 Finalise farmed land technical approach document

	A2.3 Developing Key Technical Approaches	A2.3.2 Develop funding action plan for strategy relating to support around farmed land (farmer clusters and FiPL)
		A2.3.3 Identify how to operationalise farmed land technical approach document
	A2.4 Supporting Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)	No activity planned for this year
A3 Nature Recovery Delivery	A3.1 Facilitating Land Manager Delivery	A3.1.1 Facilitate farmer cluster meetings for the Chess/Misbourne, North and Central Farmer Clusters
		A3.1.2 Manage delivery projects for the Chess/Misbourne, North and Central Farmer Clusters
		A3.1.3 Develop agreed priorities for farmer clusters and apply for funding
		A3.1.4 Offer strategic support for Christmas Common and South Chilterns Farmer Clusters
		A3.1.5 Develop delivery plans with land managers, stakeholders and partners for catchment initiatives focusing on the Chess & Misbourne (CCSP)
		A3.1.6 Publish the catchment plan for the Hughenden Stream (CCSP)
		A3.1.7 Develop the catchment plan for the Ver including partner workshops (CCSP)
	A3.2 Delivering Nature Recovery Components of Landscape Scale Programmes	A3.2.1 Collate Nature Recovery data, align with North Wessex Downs and hold three workshop across CNL to assess partner's appetite for projects and develop potential project list (Nature Ridge)
		A3.2.2 Deliver large scale (>1km) river restoration project on the Chess (CCSP)
		A3.2.3 Fund and oversee the Cholsey Marshes, Withymead, Beale Park & Pangbourne riparian habitat enhancements (all projects over 50K) (Mend the Gap)
		A3.2.4 Strengthen the catchment approach along the Thames with Thames 21 (Mend the Gap)
		A3.2.5 Enable Rectory Farm and Equi Centric grazing chalk grassland projects and support the South Chilterns Farm Cluster & Botanical Consultant to undertake further chalk related projects (Mend the Gap)
	A3.3 Delivering Specific Habitat & Species Focused Nature Recovery Projects	A3.3.1 Develop CNL deer management Hub on our website to raise awareness and support to stakeholders
		A3.3.2 Fund appropriate deer management activities through FiPL
		A3.3.3 Support work of South Chilterns Deer Management Group
		A3.3.4 Fund appropriate conservation grazing and species-rich grassland creation/restoration projects

	A3.4 Distributing Government Funding	A3.3.5 Complete Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) plant survey audit of the Misbourne catchment (CCSP)
		A3.3.6 Treat known & new INNS plant sites on the rivers Chess and Misbourne (CCSP)
		A3.3.7 Collect & analyse monitoring data and use it to shape restoration projects, land management & community education (CCSP)
		A3.3.8 Provide advice to homeowners & landowners on how to best maintain their section of chalk stream (CCSP)
		A3.4.1 Raise awareness of Farming in Protected Landscape (FiPL) funding & distribute grants across CNL in line with strategy
		A3.4.2 Distribute CDEL funding from Defra aligned to 30by30 and PLTOF 1 outcomes
A4 Planning & Development	A4.1 Providing Planning Guidance	A4.1.1 Identify & prioritise programme for development / review of standing advice (inc model policies & consultation protocols)
		A4.1.2 Identify funding opportunities where possible
		A4.1.3 Deliver programme as agreed
	A4.2 Engaging on Planning Policies	A 4.3.1 Work with policy makers (where possible) and/or respond to consultations, prioritising around key issues where appropriate, in line with Management Plan and standing advice
	A4.3 Engaging with Planning Proposals	A4.3.2 Respond to consultations, prioritised according to agreed protocol, in line with Management Plan and standing advice
	A4.4 Delivering Landscape Mitigation Projects	A4.4.1 Deliver Mend the Gap mitigation work
		A4.4.2 Deliver HS2 AP mitigation funding projects (Biodiversity & Connectivity project)
		c) Provide support to planning team to address large-scale landscape mitigation (needs fleshing out to be clear what this entails)
A5 Cultural Heritage	A5.1 Embedding consideration and understanding of cultural heritage across all of our work	A5.1.1 Add consideration of heritage into new work process documentation
		A5.1.2 Embed assessment of important heritage considerations for new projects & incorporate information into projects accordingly
		A5.1.3 Work with CHAP CIC to embed consideration of heritage into programme work
		A5.2.1 Develop heritage aspects of Nature Ridge Project

	A5.2 Delivering Heritage Components of Landscape Scale Programmes	A5.2.2 Deliver heritage elements of FiPL
Outcome B: More people are benefitting from a sense of place and connection to the Chilterns National Landscape		
B1 Awareness, Understanding & Enjoyment (General Public)	B1.1 Developing & Promoting Digital and Marketing Assets	B1.1.1 Promote content on CNL website and through communications channels
		B1.1.2 Plan promotional campaigns
		B1.1.3 Review CNL marketing assets and update/reprint or plan new assets
	B1.2 Embedding Delivery in Internal Projects	B1.2.1 Advise and support CNL project managers
		B1.2.2 Support Not Bourne Yesterday Programme delivery stage
		B1.2.3 Support Mend the Gap Programme (inc review of any Access applications)
	B1.3 Providing Support to Partnerships & Internal Staff	B1.3.1 Provide advice & support to CNL projects and partnerships as required
		B1.3.2 Support Chilterns Tourism Network events
		B1.3.3 Support Chilterns Discovery Day (11/12 July)
	B1.4 Raising Awareness through Communications	tbc
B1.5 Exploring Collaborative Development Opportunities	B1.5.1 Scope opportunities for future Walking Festivals	
B2 Equitable Access, Understanding & Enjoyment	B2.1 Developing & Embedding the EDI Ambition	B2.1.1 Oversee & organise the EDI Advisory Group (inc organise meetings, prepare papers, report to Exec/Board)
		B2.1.2 Produce a CNL technical approach paper around delivering EDI
		B2.1.3 Plan and offer programme of EDI training for staff and Board
		B2.1.4 Look into the Disability Confident Scheme
		B2.2.1 Support Luton Henge Legacy

(Priority Audiences)	B2.2 Working with Economically & Socially Disadvantaged Communities	B2.2.2 Strategically partner Nature Towns & Cities, deliver access advice and contribute Access Funding to support access ambitions
		B2.2.3 Support the North Chilterns Partnership (inc contributing to a Natural England led funding bid)
		B2.2.4 Support CNL projects working with disadvantaged communities (e.g Not Bourne Yesterday)
	B2.3 Working with Young People	B2.3.1 Launch and promote the new Youth pages
		B2.3.2 Support CNL's youth engagement work, maximise opportunities
		B2.3.3 Support youth projects through Government Access funding
	B2.4 Working with Disabled People	B2.4.1 Promote the Accessibility Hub
		B2.4.2 Add new resources generated through the Government Access funding to the Accessibility Hub
		B2.4.3 Support projects which benefit disabled people through Government Access funding
	B2.5 Distributing Government Access Funding	B2.5.1 Distribute Government Access Funding (£429,000 to allocate incl to CNL projects)
	B2.6 Providing Support to Partnerships & Internal Staff	B2.6.1 Input to CNL projects with EDI focus (Not Bourne Yesterday)
		B2.6.2 Input to wider partnerships funding bids and new project development
	B3  Social & Economic Wellbeing	B3.1 Promoting Volunteering & Lifelong Learning
B3.1.2 Promote the CNL Volunteer Portal		
B3.2 Embedding Business Promotion in Other Projects		B3.2.1 Support projects, networks & partnerships which help deliver economic & social wellbeing objectives
		B3.2.2. Promote sustainable visiting through the CNL website
		B3.2.3 Promote sustainable visiting through projects & partners
Outcome C: We <b>demonstrate our impact</b> through improved data and evidence leading to a better understanding of the landscape and more effective advocacy		
		C1.1.1 Agree purpose & vision for data strategy (incl outlining strategic context)

C1 Data Strategy	C1.1 Creating a Data Strategy	C1.1.2 Determine the reporting elements that will arise from the data strategy (e.g. State of the National Landscape, Corporate Strategy, Landscape Strategy)
		C1.1.3 Cross-check alignment with & expectations from UK National Data Strategy and others
		C1.1.4 Agree data principles & priority questions that need to be addressed in data strategy
		C1.1.5 Agree data governance framework & how success will be measured
		C1.1.6 Identify elements that need to meet regulatory compliance
		C1.1.7 Write a first draft of the data strategy
		C1.2 Embedding a Data Strategy
	C1.2.2 Agree core data domains / critical questions & brainstorm skills / capacity constraints	
	C1.2.3 Identify training needs around data	
C2 Data Collection & Management	C2.1 Improving & Aligning Data Collection for Monitoring & Evaluation	C2.2.1 Identify key learnings from pilot project as well as next steps including key requirements from all staff
		C2.2.2 Scope & write brief for external consultant to design & create data entry systems with metrics calculator
		C2.2.3 Identify funding source to meet requirements
	C2.2 Improving Management & Use of Data	No activity planned for this year (moved to future year due to lack of capacity)
	C2.3 Aligning Data Collection to Advocacy Requirements	C2.3.1 Identify objectives of advocacy work
		C2.3.2 Identify data needs for advocacy work
C3 Monitoring & Evaluation	C3.1 Developing & Embedding KPIs	C3.1.1 Agree key principles around KPIs (incl how these fit in with other reporting requirements)
		C3.1.2 Develop draft set of KPIs and review these against other reporting requirements
		C3.1.3 Agree KPIs with Executive Committee
	C3.2 Developing & Embedding an Environmental Monitoring Framework (Quantitative Evidence)	No activity planned for this year (moved to future year due to lack of capacity)

	C3.3 Developing Outcome Focused Narratives (Qualitative Evidence)	No activity planned for this year (moved to future year due to lack of capacity)
	C3.4 Aligning Citizen Science Activities to the Environmental Monitoring Framework	C3.4.1 Review existing principles for working with Citizen Science data and refine if appropriate with team
C4 Analysis & Understanding	C4.1 Improving the Robustness of Citizen Science Approaches	No activity planned for this year (moved to future year due to lack of capacity)
	C4.2 Maximising the Value of Data through Enhanced Analysis	No activity planned for this year (moved to future year due to lack of capacity)
	C4.3 Upskilling Internal Analysis Capability	3.4.1 Determine GIS training needs for staff
		3.4.2 Plan GIS training in line with identified training needs
		3.4.3 Deliver basic GIS support for mapping purposes
3.4.4 Identify and circulate details of GIS CPD		
Outcome D: We deliver our statutory purposes more effectively through <b>improved strategic partnerships</b> enabling a more sustainable operating model for the organisation		
D1 Partnership Development & Delivery	D1.1 Understanding Strategic Partnership Requirements	D1.1.1 Update paper on strategic partnerships (inc understanding operational & resource implications of different options)
		D1.1.2 Clarify our strategic partnership working offering
		D1.1.3 Identify where we are spending too much time on partnerships
		D1.1.4 Agree strategic partnerships offering with the Executive Committee
	D1.2 Articulating the Long Term Vision for the Landscape	D1.2.1 Clarify current information on long-term vision & complete draft vision
		D1.2.2 Test potential impact of the draft vision with key audiences
		D1.2.3 Identify how the vision will be embedded in communication
		D1.2.4 Embed the vision in communication

	D1.3 Establishing Strategic Frameworks to strengthen partnerships across the Chilterns	D1.3.1 Understand & agree with the Executive Committee what type of overall strategic partnership body (e.g. Forum) is needed for the Chilterns ( <i>Following review of work on partnership engagement (see D1.1)</i> )
		D1.3.2 Understand & agree with the Executive Committee how an overarching strategic partnership body will work and the resource needed to support it
	D1.4 Reviewing the Management Plan	D1.4.1 Publish the Chilterns NL Management Plan for 2025-30
		D1.4.2 Monitor national level developments around Management Plans
		D1.4.3 Develop clear plan & timetable for Management Plan review
	D1.4 Increasing Effective Partnership Working	D1.4.1 Understand effective operational partnership models & where to apply them
		D1.4.2 Develop more effective partnership working through the North Chilterns Partnership
		D1.4.3 Develop Future Towns & Cities in line with an agreed & effective partnership model
		D1.4.4 Develop more effective partnership working through the development of the Nature Ridge Landscapes Connection bid
		D1.4.5 Develop more strategic interventions around farmer clusters
		D1.4.6 Review & align work of the CNL team to Local Nature Recovery Strategies where applicable
		D1.4.7 Continue to develop new partnerships through Not Bourne Yesterday development phase
		D1.4.8 Develop partnerships around legacy of Mend the Gap programme
		D1.4.9 Explore more strategic & effective ways of working with longer term partners (eg Chiltern Society & Chilterns Rangers)
	D1.5 Reviewing the Management Plan	D1.5.1 Publish the Chilterns NL Management Plan for 2025-30
D1.5.2 Monitor national level developments around Management Plans		
D1.5.3 Develop clear plan & timetable for Management Plan review		
D2 Advocacy	D2.1 Improving Impact & Influence with Central Government	D2.1.1 Develop & articulate a clear advocacy strategy
		D2.2.2 Develop toolkit / messaging for effective advocacy
		D2.2.3 Advocate in line with developed strategy

	D2.2 Improving Impact & Influence with Local & Regional Government	tbc
	D2.3 Improving Partnership Working with Protected Landscapes & Other National Advocacy Bodies	tbc
	D2.4 Improving Advocacy & Awareness with Commercial and Other Partners	tbc
D3 Sustainable Finance	D3.1 Developing a Longer-Term Fundraising Strategy to Diversify Income	D3.1.1 Develop and agree funding plan as part of Annual Business Plan for FY26-27
		D3.2.1 Develop and agree funding strategy for FY26-30
	D3.2 Accessing Green Finance Opportunities	D3.2.1 Explore Green Finance for farmed land
		D3.3 Securing Restricted Funding for Projects & Legacy Work
	D3.3.2 Develop and agree medium term funding strategy	
	D3.3.3 Where needed bid for and/or consolidate longer term funding to secure farm cluster facilitators across Central, Chess/Misbourne and North Chilterns	
	D3.3.4 Apply for delivery funding across Central, Chess/Misbourne and North Chilterns farmer clusters	
	D3.3.5 Develop funding bid with NCLP (including farm cluster facilitator and delivery funding)	
	D3.3.6 Identify required resources and build into planning requirements	
	D3.4 Amplifying Advocacy for Increased Core Funding	D3.4.1 Review strategy with the Cotswolds and identify if information needs to be revised
		D3.4.2 Seek further opportunity to advocate to get this issue on the table
	D3.5 Securing Unrestricted Funding	D3.5.1 Identify charities & other potential fundraisers in overall fundraising strategy
		D3.5.2 Review our operating model to identify and agree what opportunities there are to leverage funding
		D3.5.3 Generate relationships with potential funders

		D3.5.4 Input funding proposals to potential funders	
Outcome E: We are an <b>ambitious and confident organisation</b> that values and respects its staff and operates in an effective and efficient way			
E1 Organisation Strategy	E1.1 Articulating & Embedding the Organisation Vision, Mission & Values	E1.1.1 Review and update organisation vision, mission & values	
		E1.1.2 Agree organisation mission, vision & values with staff & Board	
	E1.2 Driving Improved Strategy Alignment	E1.2.1 Develop organisation strategy for FY 2026-30	
		E1.2.2 Agree organisation strategy for 2026-30 with staff & Board	
		E1.2.3 Map organisation strategy against the Chilterns NL Management Plan	
		E1.2.4 Map personal objectives to organisation strategy to identify and address gaps	
		E1.2.5 Review existing project objectives against organisation strategy	
	E1.3 Telling our Story Effectively	E1.3.1 Review & identify the stories that we want to tell	
		E1.3.2 Understand how stories need to be told / what impactful opportunities are available	
		E1.3.3 Develop priority stories	
		E1.3.4 Provide staff training in effective story telling	
	E2 The CCB Board	E2.1 Implementing an Updated Governance Framework	E2.1.1 Complete & agree updated Constitution
			E2.1.2 Embed understanding of the updated Constitution
E2.1.3 Complete decision-making accountability review and agree with the Board			
E2.1.4 Advocate for improved governance arrangements			
E2.2 Improving Support to the Board		E2.2.1 Transfer Board support to new Office Administrator role	
		E2.2.2 Complete and agree Board processes, including meeting preparation and onboarding	
		E2.2.3 Start to embed new processes and improve effectiveness of support to the Board and its committees	
		E2.3.4 Transfer all Board documentation into Sharepoint in a way that is simpler to use	
E2.3 Maximising Board Effectiveness		E2.3.1 Resolve status of Planning Committee	
		E2.3.2 Agree required Advisory / Task and Finish Groups	
		E2.3.3 Finalise agreed and consistent terms of reference for Committees and Task and Finish / Advisory Groups (as required)	
		E3.2.4 Review and improve the Board skills matrix	
		E2.3.5 Build presentation of organisation strategy into Board presentations	

		E2.3.6 Identify and record where Board Member direct support will be impactful and facilitate this
E3 Staff Wellbeing & Culture	E3.1 Focusing on Health & Wellbeing	E3.1.1 Identify and implement a plan for addressing Health & Wellbeing issues identified in the staff survey
		E3.1.2 Make mental health support more transparent across the organisation
		E3.1.3 Review provision of benefits and healthcare
		E3.1.4 Develop, agree and embed a new policy on menopause
	E3.2 Embedding Health & Safety	E3.2.1 Complete development of standard operating procedures
		E3.2.2 Understand further work needed on health & safety policy and procedures and develop a clear plan for implementation
		E3.2.3 Develop agreed priority policies & procedures as needed around health & safety
		E3.2.4 Develop draft calendar of health & safety activity needed
		E3.2.5 Draw up a training plan for the organisation around health & safety and embed in employee lifecycle
		E3.2.6 Deliver health & safety training identified in the plan
		E3.2.7 Review ongoing arrangement with health & safety advisor
	E3.3 Developing a High Performing Team Culture	E3.3.1 Identify next steps around Team Development
		E3.3.2 Deliver programme of activity around Team Development (to be further developed)
E4 Organisation Resilience	E4.1 Clarifying our Operating Model	E4.1.1 Articulate current operating model
		E4.1.2 Articulate future operating model with clear identification of change
	E4.2 Addressing Capacity	E4.2.1 Undertake strategic planning and link this to annual resource planning
		E4.2.2 Develop more efficient way to undertake resource planning for FY27-28
		E4.2.3 Identify technology related training needed to support tracking of workload
		E4.2.4 Identify and agree ways to improve internal governance and ways of working to reduce areas of insufficient staff capacity throughout the year
		E4.2.5 Continue to actively manage issues of over capacity
		E4.2.6 Recruit Head of Programmes

	E4.3 Addressing Capability & Staff Development	E4.3.1 Establish new staff training plan including clear identification of generic and mandatory staff training requirements
		E4.3.2 Monitor and identify ways to improve the capture of staff training requirements
		E4.3.3 Identify on-line training portal to enable staff to train more effectively
		E4.3.4 Develop staff training strategy (technical paper) including identification of future capability requirements, career development opportunities and retention
		E4.3.5 Ensure recruitment in line with strategy
		E4.3.6 Develop more robust succession planning where applicable
E5 Organisation Effectiveness	E5.1 Improving Information Management & Technology	E5.1.1 Complete transition of organisation information to new Sharepoint structure
		E5.1.2 Ensure all controls, processes and procedures are written up around information management
		E5.1.3 Train staff on information management changes
		E5.1.4. Review our IT service provision and cost then action accordingly
		E5.1.5 Stand up and embed volunteer management system
		E5.1.6 Review the effectiveness of the CRM system and action accordingly
	E5.2 Optimising Ways of Working	E5.2.1 Complete HR processes and procedures
		E5.2.2 Embed HR processes and procedures through training
		E5.2.3 Identify work needed on finance policies and processes including prioritisation
		E5.2.4 Review, update and approve finance sections of the Constitution
		E5.2.5 Identify work needed on IT policies and processes including prioritisation
		E5.2.6 Clarify roles and responsibilities around safeguarding, data protection, EDI, staff wellbeing, HR and IT
		E5.2.7 Complete redesign of contract templates and processes
	E5.3 Improving Operational Governance	E5.3.1 Review & update risk register
		E5.3.2 Identify how to review & mitigate risk more effectively during the year
		E5.3.3 Review & mitigate organisation risk
		E5.3.4 Complete strategic planning with Managers
		E5.3.5 Establish improved Senior Leadership Team: Manager rolling programme of consultation
E5.3.6 Review the effectiveness of how the Senior Leadership Team operates		

		E5.3.7 Complete and embed new work processes across the organisation
	E5.4 Ensuring Effective Compliance	E5.4.1 Appoint & train Safeguarding Lead
		E5.4.2 Review & update safeguarding policies & procedures
		E5.4.3 Appoint Data Protection Officer
		E5.4.4. Establish data protection lead / champions
		E5.4.5 Undertake gap analysis of data protection across the organisation
		E5.4.6 Review and update data protection policies
		E5.4.7 Clarify how to embed safeguarding and data protection into onboarding and mandatory training
		E5.4.8 Review DBS ways of working to fit into onboarding and other processes

**Item 2.4****Evolution of the Planning Committee****Author:**

Matt Thomson, Head of Planning / Monitoring Officer

**Purpose of Report:**

Following a long-standing review of the future of the Planning Committee, this paper proposes its evolution into a 'Planning Advisory Group', proposing the approval of the group's terms of reference, and consequent amendments to the Constitution.

**Background**

1. Members and officers have been discussing the future of the Planning Committee over the past couple of years, seeking workable options which:
  - a. optimise effectiveness and responsiveness,
  - b. reduce the impact of statutory requirements on the operation of a group that did not formally discharge any of the Board's functions (which is the statutory purpose for committees),
  - c. maintain the opportunity for officers to benefit from the expertise and different perspectives of Board members and other advisers, and
  - d. continue to demonstrate the high value attached to the planning function by the Board.
2. In March 2026, the Board resolved to instruct the Planning Committee to consider the outcome of the Board's deliberations, and present recommendations to the Board in June. At its April 2026 meeting, the Planning Committee resolved the following: (as recorded in the draft minutes – see item 4.2 on this agenda):
  - a. The Committee APPROVED in principle the proposal to transform into an advisory group, subject to the FEEDBACK as indicated above [see the minutes]
  - b. The Committee AGREED with the options noted in paragraph 34 of the paper regarding proposed Terms of Reference, subject to further consideration by the convened working group which was ENDORSED with members as indicated above [ditto]
  - c. The Committee AUTHORISED Officers, subject to endorsement from the Committee Chair to recommend to the June Board meeting approval of the Terms of Reference and the alteration to an advisory group
3. This paper presents the outcome of those resolutions, taking into account subsequent email correspondence with the working group, including the Committee Chair, Cllr Sue Rowland.
4. The paper therefore proposes that the Planning Committee be dissolved, and replaced with a new body, to be named the 'Planning Advisory Group' (PAG). The PAG will initially continue with the Committee's membership, and will meet in hybrid format on a quarterly basis. Further details are provided in the draft Terms of Reference attached in Appendix 2. Amendments to the Constitution that have been identified as necessary consequent to the first two recommendations are included in Appendix 1.
5. It is emphasised that the recommendation to dissolve a standing committee is not one that has been taken lightly. The recommendation is not an indication of any

fault with the performance of the committee members, or any reduction in the Board's or officers' commitment to the application of the planning system to achieve the statutory purpose of seeking to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Chilterns National Landscape. Rather, it increases the potential for effectiveness by freeing the strategic discussion of planning policy and practice from the administrative constraints of following committee procedures. This is in the context of the Board's new direction of travel in relation to the delegation of more authority for officers act on the Board's behalf in line with its purposes, policies and priorities.

6. Officers would like to take this opportunity to thank all current and previous committee members, especially the Chair and Deputy Chair. We look forward to working with the same highly valued people in the new Planning Advisory Group.

### **Recommendation**

- 1. That the Board RESOLVES to dissolve the Planning Committee and convene a new Planning Advisory Group, comprising the current Board members and co-opted members of the Planning Committee (plus any new members elected under item 2.5).**
- 2. That the Board APPROVES the proposed Terms of Reference attached as appendix 2, subject to any alterations agreed during the meeting.**
- 3. That the Board APPROVES the consequent changes to the Constitution set out in appendix 1, subject to any alterations agreed during the meeting.**

## Board 25 June 2026 – Item 2.4 – Appendix 1

**Proposed amendments to the Constitution (amended September 2025)  
consequent on the approval of the evolution from Planning Committee to  
Planning Advisory Group**

A link to of the Constitution will be made available to members along with the Board papers. Please note that further work is needed on adding to, reviewing and tidying up the Constitution (especially its numbering, which has gone a little awry).

The following changes are proposed to be made to the Constitution in relation to the dissolution of the Planning Committee. A short explanation of some changes is made where the author considers the reason may be unclear.

In section 2.2.2 “The Code of Governance” (beginning on p.8):

- i. In article 2.7 “Standing Committees” (p.9), amend the title to read simply “Committees”; delete item (ii); in item (iii) delete “standing committee,“; in item (iv) delete “standing”; in item (vi) replace “paragraphs 3.8.i to 3.8.v” with “items (i) to (iv) of this article” – The dissolution of Planning Committee negates the need for any distinction between “standing committees” and any other type of committee (a distinction that was already meaningless in terms of this Constitution).
- ii. Similarly, replace all instances of “standing committee(s)” simply with “committee(s)” – Ditto.
- iii. In article 2.10 “Co-opted Members” (p.10), in item (i) replace “of the Executive Committee or Planning Committee” simply with “committee”.
- iv. In article 2.11 “Convening meetings ... (etc)” (p.10), in item (i) delete “or Planning Officer”.
- v. In article 2.21 “Public question time” (pp.12-13), under item (i) delete “, save that in relation to meetings of the Planning Committee questions shall be posed at the time the relevant item is before the committee”.
- vi. Delete the whole of article 2.23 “The Planning Committee” (pp.14-15) – This will be superseded by the proposed PAG Terms of Reference; parts have already been superseded by the Scheme of Delegation (see Constitution note at the start of section 2.2.2).
- vii. In article 2.26 “Delegation to the CEO” (p.16), delete items (ix) and (x) – Ditto.
- viii. In article 2.29 “Urgency Procedure” (pp.18-19), items (ii)(d) and (ii)(e), replace “Head of Strategy and Planning” with “Head of Planning”.
- ix. In article 2.33 “Schedule of Delegated Functions” (pp.20-23):
  - o For the “Decision to develop or publish for consultation any strategy or policy statement on ‘planning matters’ (etc)”, replace “Planning Committee” with “Head of Planning”, and add, under “Limitations”: “Key documents.” – The *approval* of any such policy will remain with the Board as it is now.

- For the “Determination of any response to a consultation (etc)”, replace “Head of Strategy and Planning” with “Head of Planning”, and replace “Subject to retrospective ratification by Planning Committee” with “Key documents.”

Board 25 June 2026 – Item 2.4 – Appendix 2

# Planning Advisory Group

Draft Terms of Reference v2, June 2026

Note: to be approved at the Board meeting, 25 June 2026

## Background

1. Managing the use and development of land through the planning system is identified by the Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) as a key means through which to directly further the Board's primary purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Chilterns National Landscape. Planning can also assist with the CCB's other responsibilities, including promoting the understanding and enjoyment of the area's special qualities, and having regard to fostering the social and economic well-being of its communities, the vitality of local economies, and the prevention of the pollution of its water resources.
2. However, the CCB has no direct planning powers. We must rely on advocacy and advice to influence the public bodies that set planning policy and make decisions on planning applications, and also to seek to influence all those who promote or undertake development in and around the Chilterns National Landscape. The CCB is authorised to provide such advocacy and advice as part of our discretionary power to "do anything which, in the opinion of the Board, is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to" the accomplishment of its statutory purposes and functions. The Board also has a duty to "seek to further" the purposes of "conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area" and of "increasing the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the area" (but where there appears to be a conflict between these purposes, to attach greater weight to the first).
3. The CCB works to achieve these outcomes through:
  - a. standing published advice and guidance
  - b. advice to and support of local planning authorities and other stakeholders involved in planning and development, and
  - c. responding to formal consultations on national, regional and local planning policies and on applications for planning and related consents.
4. The CCB employs a planning team, comprising qualified officers who are authorised to advocate and advise on behalf of the Board, subject to their actions aligning with the CCB's policies and priorities as set out in the 'key documents' defined in the Constitution, including the Management Plan and various approved statements of policy. The planning team are also authorised to seek technical advice from other CCB officers, volunteers, and external consultants when resources allow, and to work in partnership with other stakeholders, including other protected landscapes teams and the National Landscapes Association. The proposed Planning Advisory Group which is intended to replace the Planning Committee will also be an important source of strategic advice and member input for the planning team.

## Purpose of the Planning Advisory Group

5. The role of the Planning Advisory Group (“the PAG”) is to support the Board and its officers on the effective delivery of the Board’s statutory purposes in relation to planning matters through informed member input and strategic advice. This includes:
  - a. Advising on priority-setting for the planning function’s work programme;
  - b. Providing strategic oversight and constructive scrutiny of the work of the planning team;
  - c. Advising the Board on the development of new and the review of existing CCB planning policies and guidance;
  - d. Advising on the planning and development content of the Management Plan; and
  - e. Advocating for the appropriate resourcing of the planning function.
6. From time to time, the Board may request, or the PAG may resolve to offer, a formal recommendation on a planning matter for approval by the Board, such as a change to the Board’s established policy on a particular issue. Such recommendations should be the subject of a resolution by the PAG, agreed by consensus where possible or, failing that by a simple majority vote (see paragraph 25 below); where there is dissent within the PAG or between PAG members and officers, the recommendation should present options for consideration and resolution by the Board.

## Membership

7. The Board shall aim to appoint approximately one-third of its members to the PAG to meet the following guidelines:
  - a. That the proportion of PAG members from each appointing group is as similar as is reasonably practicable to the proportion on the Board as a whole
  - b. That PAG members generally have experience with or an interest in planning and development matters, but without ruling out those with enthusiasm to engage in the subject
  - c. That PAG members provide reasonable geographical coverage across the Chilterns National Landscape and/or its setting
  - d. That the PAG is able to demonstrate an appropriate diversity of background, experience and perspectives.
8. The PAG shall not be invalidated should fewer (or more) members be appointed than specified above, or if the guidelines are not fully met.
9. The PAG may co-opt up to four non-Board members to assist with achieving the above guidelines and must seek retrospective approval of this appointment at the next Board meeting.

**Transitional arrangements for first appointments (2026):**

In the case of the first appointment of members and co-optees to the PAG at the Board AGM in June 2026, the candidates for appointment shall include all current members of the Planning Committee, and co-optees to the Committee, unless (a) they choose to resign, (b) the Board resolves to de-select them, or (c) they cease to be a member of the Board. Where a PAG member ceases to be a member of the Board at this time, the Board may consider co-opting them to the PAG.

10. Appointments to the PAG, as Board members or as co-optees, shall be valid until the next Board AGM, unless a member or co-optee resigns or is deselected by the Board, or a member ceases to be a member of the Board. As a matter of general practice, to encourage continuity and make the best use of existing resources, the presumption will normally be that existing members are reappointed to the PAG.
11. Where a vacancy arises on the PAG, or if the PAG should determine to seek additional members or co-opted members (subject to paragraphs 7 to 9 above), the PAG may, with the assistance of the Head of Planning, seek expressions of interest or approach candidates, and appoint them to the PAG, subject to the Board's ratification at the next Board meeting.
12. Appointment of members to the PAG shall be reviewed at each Annual General Meeting of the Board.
  - a. The assumption shall be that, for continuity, existing members shall remain on the PAG unless (a) they choose to resign, (b) the Board resolves to de-select them, or (c) they cease to be a member of the Board. Where a PAG member ceases to be a member of the Board, the Board may consider co-opting them to the PAG.
  - b. At least two weeks prior to the AGM, the Head of Planning shall invite Board members to express an interest in joining the PAG. The Head of Planning shall consult with the current PAG chair or deputy chair before recommendations are made to the Board AGM on the appointment of new PAG members taking into account the advice of the Head of Planning (If the positions of PAG chair and deputy chair are both vacant, the Head of Planning shall make these recommendations.)
13. Members of the PAG shall be encouraged to undertake at least basic planning training, which may be provided by the CCB, or through their own employers, appointing bodies or other networks. Where not provided by the CCB, such training should be broadly equivalent to that expected of local authority planning committee members. The CCB shall identify appropriate training resources, and provide reasonable financial support if resources allow. Undertaking planning training will not be an absolute requirement for membership of the PAG, but is recommended.
14. PAG members shall be entitled to an allowance and reasonable expenses in accordance with the Members' Allowances Scheme.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Scheme will need to be amended to enable some of this. A comprehensive review of the Scheme is planned for later in 2026.

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15. The PAG shall be supported by the Planning Team (currently the Head of Planning and two part-time consultant Planning Advisers), the Clerk to the Board, and the CEO.
16. Other members of the Board or the CCB staff team may also attend PAG meetings, for their own interest or at the request of the PAG.
17. The PAG may invite other persons, including CCB's key stakeholders, to attend PAG meetings (whether particular meetings or with regular attendance, in person or online). The purpose of such attendance is to provide information to the PAG to inform the PAG's advice to officers or the Board, and not to participate in the PAG's deliberations or recommendations or provide advice except where invited to do so or to provide factual or technical information.

### Meeting frequency, notice and quorum

18. The PAG will usually meet once a quarter. The timing of scheduled meetings will be set at the Board AGM to enable effective quarterly reporting to the Board by the Planning Team.
19. Meetings will usually be held in hybrid format, using the CCB's meeting room facilities.
20. Extraordinary meetings, to consider urgent matters of particular import, may be convened by the Head of Planning in consultation with the PAG chair, or by the Chair in consultation with the Head of Planning and/or the Chair of the Board or CEO. Such meetings may be held entirely online.
21. The agenda and any papers to review at each scheduled meeting will be prepared by the Head of Planning in consultation with the Chair and deputy chair and circulated not less than three clear working days in advance of the meeting, with the Head of Planning (or other relevant officer as authorised by the Head of Planning) acting as the Secretary for the PAG.
22. A written summary of the key discussion points and action items will be prepared by the Secretary for the PAG agreed by the Head of Planning and the Chair and circulated within four weeks of each meeting. This summary shall also be made available to the next meeting of the Board as part of the report of the planning function.
23. The Planning Team shall provide the PAG with regular updates of casework and other matters, through channels such as the monthly Planning Update, *ad hoc* Planning Briefings, and access to other materials made available electronically.
24. Since the role of the PAG is advisory, there is no quorum threshold for meetings where the intention is to discuss planning issues and provide a general steer for officers. However, the PAG should seek wherever possible to ensure discussions reflect a broad cross-section of appointed members.
25. No formal advice or recommendations to the Board (such as those made under paragraph 6 above) may be endorsed by a meeting of the PAG unless the meeting is attended (in person or online) by at least:
  - a. The Head of Planning (or specifically nominated deputy),

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- b. The PAG chair or deputy chair, or, where both positions are vacant or both are unavoidably absent, another PAG member who is a Board member, and
- c. At least two additional PAG members who are Board members.
- d. Co-opted members do not count towards this threshold.
- e. Where attendance at a PAG meeting does not meet this threshold, endorsement of any formal advice or recommendations to the Board that cannot wait for the next scheduled PAG meeting must be sought by the Head of Planning through email or other electronic means from other members of the PAG as soon as is practicable after the meeting.

## Governance and accountability

26. The PAG is convened by the Board, and reports to the Board.
27. The PAG will appoint a chair and deputy-chair from among its members. These roles should be confirmed or re-appointed annually at the first PAG meeting after the Board AGM. Where the position of chair or deputy chair becomes vacant, the PAG will appoint a replacement to the vacancy at the next meeting. Where multiple names are put forward for these roles, appointments shall be made by a majority vote of the PAG.
28. Changes to the membership and remit of the PAG, including to these Terms of Reference, must be approved by the Board.
29. As an advisory group, the PAG has no authority itself to discharge any of the Board's functions. Such authority is either reserved to the Board or delegated to a committee or to officers, as set out in the Constitution. In that capacity the PAG may provide officers with additional assurance and confidence that actions taken or proposed to be taken are aligned with Board policies and priorities. It may also provide a forum in which officers' actions under delegated authority are reviewed constructively and, where appropriate, challenged, with recommendations for changes to Board policies or priorities being referred to the Board for determination.
30. The operation and effectiveness of the PAG shall be reviewed by the Board after twelve months, i.e. at the AGM in 2027.

## PAG functions and responsibilities

31. In addition to the matters set out in paragraph 5 above, the PAG will be responsible for:
  - The initial Terms of Reference shall be proposed by the Head of Planning for approval by the Board. Once established, the PAG may review and recommend amendments to its Terms of Reference, membership arrangements and work programme for approval by the Board.
  - Appointing a chair and deputy chair of the PAG.

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## Working methods outside of meetings

32. The PAG will work collaboratively in whatever way is most effective and efficient, this could include virtual meetings, site visits, shared documents, email exchanges and other appropriate collaborative methods.
33. A document library, chat function and opportunity to work collaboratively on documents will be provided through Microsoft Teams.

## Resources

34. The PAG has no dedicated budget or allocated resources. Support will be provided by officers as set out in paragraph 15 above.



5. ExCo meets four times a year, usually at the CCB office in Chinnor for half a day. Members must attend in person to vote and to contribute to the meeting being quorate. The Constitution stipulates that ExCo has 9 members, and these are required by law to comprise 4 LA members, 3 Secretary of State members and 2 Parish Council members.
6. The current members of Executive Committee are:
  - a. Local Authorities: Gavin Mclauchlan, Louise Price, Philip Spicer, **one vacancy**
  - b. Sec of State: Baljit Dhillon, Matthew Stanton, Nicola Thomas
  - c. Parish Councils: Sir Hector Sants (chair), John Griffin (deputy chair)
7. The committee may co-opt up to four non-voting members who are not members of the Board to assist with optimising skills, diversity and experience or the balance of the committee. ExCo currently has no co-opted members, but Parish Council Board members Sue Rowland and Charles Hussey attend meetings as non-voting observers.
8. No members have so far put their names forward to fill the existing local authority vacancy on ExCo, and therefore we would **welcome volunteers from among the local authority appointees** to support the committee. If more than one suitable volunteer comes forward, appointment may be made on the basis of a simple majority vote.

### **Planning Committee / Planning Advisory Group**

9. Planning is one of the key ways in which the Board helps to conserve and enhance the Chilterns National Landscape. Whether convened as a committee or advisory group, this ensemble plays an important role in supporting that work by providing advice, oversight and strategic input to the Board and the planning team.
10. The group's work includes:
  - a. helping to shape the Board's responses to planning policy consultations, planning applications and major development proposals affecting the Chilterns and its setting;
  - b. contributing to the development of the Board's own planning policies and guidance, including planning-related aspects of the Management Plan; and
  - c. providing a forum for members to share their knowledge and experience and help guide the Board's planning priorities.
11. The Planning Advisory Group would normally meet four times a year, with meetings held in hybrid format to allow participation either in person or online (Planning Committee met three times a year, in person). Membership is expected to be around nine members, with appointments seeking a balance across the Board's appointing bodies while also reflecting a broad range of experience, geographical coverage and perspectives.
12. Members do not need to be planning professionals or have particular experience. An interest in planning and development issues affecting the Chilterns, together with a willingness to engage and learn, is just as valuable. Training and support will be available, and members with existing experience will have the opportunity to make a significant contribution to one of the Board's most influential areas of work.
13. The current members of Planning Committee / Planning Advisory Group are:

- a. Local Authorities: Robert Carington, James Norman, Louise Price (deputy chair), Philip Spicer
  - b. Sec of State: Simon Mortimer, Matthew Stanton, **one vacancy**
  - c. Parish Councils: Charles Hussey, Sue Rowland (chair)
14. The committee may co-opt up to four non-voting members who are not members of the Board to assist with optimising skills and experience or the balance of the committee. PlanCo currently benefits from two co-opted members (Paul Hayes and Chris Hannington) and the ability to co-opt members will continue to apply to the proposed Advisory Group.
15. Secretary of State appointee **Jen Morgan** has put her name forward as a candidate to fill the existing vacancy. Baljit Dhillon and Catherine Moncreiff have also expressed interest in contributing to the group, but preferred this to be in the future: it is good to have a waiting list!
16. It is therefore recommended that Jen Morgan be appointed to the Planning Committee / Planning Advisory Group.

### **Other Advisory Groups**

17. The Board or its committees can convene sub-committees, and a variety of different non-statutory groups, as noted above. Most of the listed groups are permanently seeking additional volunteers, and if members are interested in joining, then they are encouraged to contact the secretariat of the group at any time. Membership usually needs to be ratified by the Board or the convening committee, but this can depend on the group's terms of reference.
18. At this stage, the Monitoring Officer is seeking confirmation of the current membership of each group, and will circulate further details on Monday 22 June, along with expressions of interest so far received.
19. It is not recommended that appointments are necessarily formalised at this meeting, but it would be useful to canvas further interest in these groups, and make a note of expressions of interest for confirmation/ratification as appropriate by each group going forward.
20. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group
- Convened by the Board.
  - Secretariat: Annette Weiss, Head of Engagement & Partnerships – [aweiss@chilterns.org.uk](mailto:aweiss@chilterns.org.uk).
  - Co-Chairs: Baljit Dhillon & Juliet Vickery
21. Finance Advisory Group
- Convened by Executive Committee.
  - Chair and Secretariat: Kathryn Foster, Senior Finance Manager and Finance (section 151) Officer – [kfoster@chilterns.org.uk](mailto:kfoster@chilterns.org.uk)
22. Governance Review TFG
- Convened by the Board.
  - Secretariat: Matt Thomson, Monitoring Officer – [mthomson@chilterns.org.uk](mailto:mthomson@chilterns.org.uk).
  - Chair: vacant
23. Local Authority Engagement Working Group
- Convened by Executive Committee.
  - Secretariat: Elaine King, CEO – [elaineking@chilterns.org.uk](mailto:elaineking@chilterns.org.uk)
  - Chair: vacant

**24. Management Plan Review TFG**

- Convened by the Board.
- Secretariat: Matt Thomson, Head of Planning – [mthomson@chilterns.org.uk](mailto:mthomson@chilterns.org.uk).
- Chair: will be vacant, following Gemma Harper's departure from the Board

**25. Vision TFG**

- Convened by the Board.
- Secretariat: Matt Thomson, Head of Planning – [mthomson@chilterns.org.uk](mailto:mthomson@chilterns.org.uk).
- Chair: Hector Sants

**Recommendations**

- 1. That the Board APPOINTS (subject to a simple majority vote) a local authority member to fill the vacancy on Executive Committee from any volunteers that come forward at the meeting.**
- 2. That the Board APPOINTS Secretary of State appointee Jen Morgan to fill the vacancy on Planning Committee / Planning Advisory Panel (as appropriate), or APPOINTS (subject to a simple majority vote) a Secretary of State appointee to the Planning Committee / Planning Advisory Group, should another suitable member volunteer.**
- 3. That the Board NOTES any expressions of interest in joining the advisory groups for later confirmation/ratification as appropriate.**

**Item 2.6** **Lessons learned from the Management Plan Review**

**Author:** Matt Thomson, Monitoring Officer

**Purpose of Report:** To reflect on the experience of undertaking the recent Management Plan Review process, and agree on lessons learned to take forward into the next Review.

**Context – the ‘light-touch’ review and the ‘refresh’**

1. The review of the Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 was undertaken in unique circumstances. This included a combination of optimism and uncertainty around ongoing and potential changes, both nationally (for Protected Landscapes (PLs) as a whole) and locally (for the Chilterns). Much of this followed the publication of the government-commissioned Landscapes Review led by Julian Glover in 2019.
2. Locally, Natural England was exploring designating a potentially sizeable extension to the Chilterns National Landscape, and there was still political rhetoric circulating on redesignating the Chilterns as a National Park. We were also exploring potential enhanced governance arrangements for the CCB with Natural England.
3. Nationally, government formally recognised the uncertainties arising from ongoing potential reforms, including: reviewing the guidance on preparing Management Plans, devising what became the PL Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOFs), and embedding in Management Plans (MPs) elements of wider government objectives on nature recovery (including 30by30) and climate change (including a new statutory requirement for climate adaptation plans). As a result, environment minister Lord Benyon wrote to all PLs in 2022 giving those who needed to review their MPs in 2023 and 2024 (including the Chilterns) the option to delay full review of their plans by up to a year, subject to publishing what was termed (misleadingly) a **‘light-touch review’**. The CCB resolved to take advantage of this offer, and approved the ‘light-touch review’ attached at appendix 1 in March 2024, in effect extending the 2019-2024 plan to 2025.
4. The ‘light-touch review’ included the CCB’s proposal to undertake a **limited ‘refresh’** of the 2019-2024 plan, including ‘factual updates’ but mostly ‘rolling forward’ the plan to 2030, embedding the PLTOFs and strengthening areas of national and local priorities, including nature recovery, climate adaptation and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).
5. Undertaking a ‘limited refresh’ enabled us to meet our statutory obligations to review the plan within available resources, recognising that the CCB would want to undertake a more thorough review once the boundary review (since cancelled by NE) was completed (or if we became a National Park). A key informative was that the extant Management Plan preparation guidelines strongly advised that the depth and breadth of new evidence and consultation required to support a rolled-forward plan be minimal.
6. This is what the CCB went on to deliver, with the guidance and leadership of a Task and Finish Group, chaired by Board member, Dr Gemma Harper. The only departure from the original proposal was that the Board approved the refreshed plan in June 2025, rather than March, to allow for additional consultation with key stakeholders – especially local authorities – that hadn’t engaged in the earlier consultations, despite many opportunities.

7. Few if any of the reasons given for Defra offering the option of delaying MP reviews were resolved by the government in the intervening time – the new MP preparation guidelines, promised in Spring 2023, were finally issued in June 2025, the week before the CCB approved the ‘refreshed’ plan.
8. **Suggested learning points:**
  - a) **Context is important.** We should take a (more formal?) risk management approach to determine *how* we review the MP, taking account of external factors like legal or practice review and internal factors like resources.

### **The outcome – Natural England approval**

9. Ultimately, Natural England (NE) has been very positive about the refreshed plan. Its ‘formal letter’ confirming **compliance with the law and with guidance** on MP preparation (March 2026) is attached as appendix 2. The five points made in section 2 of that letter are particularly complimentary and have been reassuring in relation to issues on which we had not been confident. This included compliance with the guidance, which was only finalised after the review had been completed – we previously only had access to the former guidance and a very rough (and rather contested) version of the updated guidance.
10. The ‘**outstanding concerns**’ in section 3 of the letter relate to the refreshed plan not including a ‘**delivery plan**’ covering resources and funding (points 1 and 3). Including a delivery plan within a MP is discretionary under the legislation and guidance but should be made available alongside the MP. The form and content of a delivery plan are areas that were not clear from the former and draft guidelines and require additional engagement with stakeholders who will be delivering the plan. The 2019-2024 plan did not include, nor was it accompanied by, a delivery plan, other than a short list of ‘key actions’ at the end of each thematic chapter. We are now working on scoping the delivery plan alongside long-standing planned work through the organisational annual and strategic planning processes.
11. NE also noted the current absence of a Climate Adaptation Management Plan, either within or alongside the plan, which will be a requirement by 2028, and sought timelines/milestones for its preparation, both of which are already actions in our emerging delivery plan (and are also the subject of other items on this meeting’s agenda).
12. While the final endorsement from NE was very positive, as was our overall engagement with them leading to many improvements to the plan, two matters do stand out:
  - a) The requirement for formal endorsement of the plan by NE *after* it was approved by the Board was not clear to us (one of the reasons why NE’s letter was received nine months after the plan was approved). We have previously observed that the legislation is ambiguous, and the guidance (the new or previous versions) do not precisely align with the legislation.
  - b) In the last round of consultation before the plan was approved, NE advised that it was not appropriate for the CCB to state that we aimed to start the next review of the plan as soon as there was greater clarity about the future shape of the National Landscape through the boundary review, as there would not be such clarity until the new boundary was formally designated by the Secretary of State, which could take years. This was a surprise to us because the position they objected to was a key pillar of the ‘light-touch review’ approved by NE and the Secretary of State in 2024,

and the main justification for undertaking a 'limited refresh' of the former plan.

### 13. Suggested learning points:

- a) **Work more closely with NE on the Management Plan.** While the outcome was positive and successful, the process could have been smoother had we engaged more proactively with NE. For the next review it is suggested that NE officers (from both NE regional offices that cover the Chilterns) should be invited to sit on the broader 'steering group' proposed below – indeed this is recommended in the guidelines, but (in our defence) was not picked up by NE as an issue during the process.

### Organisational and procedural matters

14. Notwithstanding the unusual context for the MP review outlined above, and the decision to undertake a limited 'refresh', which (correctly, in line with the guidance) reduced the requirement to produce new evidence and engage more broadly and deeply on the plan's objectives, and the strategy for undertaking the review (being set by the Board, and approved at the outset by the Secretary of State and Natural England), our experience with this MP review has informed, and perhaps emphasised certain aspects of, how a fuller review in a 'normal' context needs to be undertaken. These are set out without further description of the issues faced during the review that informed them.

### 15. Suggested learning points:

- a) **Manage the process through a broader steering group.** The MPR TFG was incredibly effective (see 'acknowledgements below) with the 'refresh'. For a more comprehensive review, a steering group (as advised by NE's guidance) including external stakeholders – especially local authority officers – and NE officers would assist not only by bringing wider perspectives on the plan's content and preparation, but also helping to drive broader engagement. Populating this group may depend on the following point.
- b) **Improve our levels of engagement with external stakeholders, especially local authorities (LAs).** Members will know that improving engagement is already a priority for the CCB, and to be successful requires constructive action not only from CCB's officers, but its members (*especially* LA members), and officials at both Natural England and Defra. The Protected Landscapes Duties, and the (still unpublished) regulations that were meant to have accompanied it, were intended to facilitate such engagement, and we have made this point to Defra through their recent investigation into 'soft' governance practices in Protected Landscapes. Defra's guidance on the Protected Landscapes Duties is quite clear about stakeholders needing to engage with Management Plan processes to help demonstrate how they are complying with the duties, but that is less impactful than intended because Defra (and the government generally) is not enforcing compliance with these duties in the same way that they enforce, for example, the public sector equality duty. The recent draft National Planning Policy Framework (expected to be published in its final form this summer) included Protected Landscapes Management Plans for the first time as one of the pieces of evidence required to demonstrate the soundness of local plan policies – this may help encourage LAs and others to engage.

- c) **Be more specific about how we are following legislation and the new guidance in preparing the plan.** For the 'refresh' we focused on meeting the legal requirements, rather than the guidance, partly because the guidance was contested and under review. For the most part, we used 'plain English' to explain what we were doing to stakeholders, which may have undermined the imperative to engage in a statutory process.
- d) **Commit CCB staff resources to the review process through the annual plan, team plans and individual objectives.** It is well known that many CCB teams and officers are overstretched, or at least overcommitted, on a wide range of often competing priorities. Despite our best efforts, officer capacity to assist with the 'refresh' was often laid over the top of existing workloads, many of which were part of pre-existing multi-year work programmes with external funders to report to. The SLT is now working (with the Board and ExCo) on longer-term business planning that can account for the resources needed to support the next Review more effectively. We are also working on pivoting the working culture to be more collegiate and to allow for more attention to core priorities, such as the Management Plan, raising funds for new projects, staff development, etc.
- e) **Provide greater strategic leadership over the review process.** Management of the review process was vested in a single officer (the then Head of Strategy and Planning). This did not prove ideal, partly in relation to the points made in (d) above, with the process being seen as that officer's project (and hence one of many competing demands on people's time) rather than a joint organisational priority. Taking other related matters into account, the CEO has determined that officer accountability for CCB strategy should lie with the CEO, with responsibility for strategy development shared across SLT. This approach has a number of additional benefits, including in relation to strategic matters that fall within other SLT officers' remits, and enabling the now Head of Planning to devote more of his capacity to planning matters.

### **Plan content**

- 16. Clearly NE's endorsement letter demonstrates that there are no serious problems with the plan's content, and that our focus on strengthening nature recovery, climate and EDI, and embedding the PLTOFs, while not shifting the overall vision and objectives of the plan, was the right strategy for this review. There is of course always room for improvement.
- 17. Again, the agreed 'limited refresh' approach did mean that more radical changes (including some suggested by stakeholders) could not be included without raising the question of additional evidence, engagement and statutory assessments (SEA and HRA) to support them, which we did not have the time or resources to support this time around.
- 18. Rather than suggesting learning points on this topic, since plan content is really a matter for the next review, the following sets out a few observations on the plan's content that may inform discussions about the review. (Not at this Board meeting, though, please.)
- 19. **Who does what, when?** One of the general criticisms of the previous plan (which must also apply to the refreshed plan) is that it allows for almost any action to be justified (so long as it is consistent with the purpose of designation), because it attempts to cover all possible eventualities. The plan itself does not set

out priorities for delivery in the 2025-2030 period, nor does it specify who is responsible for delivering each intended outcome. This is one of the reasons why the CCB finds it hard to decide what it is *not* going to commit to deliver through each annual plan.

20. Arguably these are both matters to be settled through the delivery plan.
21. Another perspective is that future plans could be more specific about priorities for those five years, and who delivers what, while still giving broad guidance as to what other activities would still be appropriate or supported should someone suddenly find they have the will and resources to do them. One way of framing that sort of plan (which is the broad approach agreed by the Vision TFG) is that a long-term (20-50 years) vision for the future of the Chilterns National Landscape is worked up with stakeholders (possibly separately from the Management Plan) and endorsed by partners to include in their own delivery plans. The Management Plan is produced to define the priorities needing to be delivered in those five years in order for the vision to be achieved. While the Plan – and its priorities – is reviewed and updated every five years, the vision should remain stable until such time as there is a proven need to update it (e.g. when climate change and its impacts are better understood, national policy on landscape is reformed, or if the status or size of the National Landscape changes).
22. **The Golden Thread.** The plan does (or was intended to) highlight how each policy delivers an objective and each objective works to deliver CCB's or the Chilterns National Landscape's statutory purposes (they are slightly different). The introduction definitely contains a better description of those purposes, and the duties placed on the CCB and on other bodies. While the former plan indicated which strategic objectives each policy was intended to deliver, we removed those indications from this plan because (a) they weren't clear, and (b) they only related to the objectives of each thematic chapter, while in reality many of the policies (and indeed objectives) contributed to the achievement of objectives in other chapters. Furthermore, some interpretations of some of the plan's objectives and policies have been argued (but not proven) not to be entirely consistent with the purposes of the designation, and/or CCB's functions and duties. There is a case for looking at the structure of the plan to consider whether the golden thread could be clearer if the plan was to be expressed in a different way.
23. For example (straw person): the (only) purpose of the designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. The Protected Landscapes Duty (for National Landscapes, under s.85 of the CROW Act) only relates to this purpose. The Management Plan can only reasonably *require* stakeholders to seek to further that purpose, so most of the plan might focus on that, perhaps looking specifically at the six elements that NE consider to contribute to the appreciation of natural beauty (landscape quality, scenic quality, wildness, tranquility, natural heritage and cultural heritage). In addition, the CCB has a duty to increase the understanding and enjoyment of the area's special qualities, so the plan could talk about what the CCB will do to achieve that duty itself (and to support and encourage others to do so) in relation to each of the identified qualities (such as chalk streams). Our other duties (having regard to economic and social wellbeing, the needs of rural industries, pollution, etc., as well as general duties like those relating to equality and sound financial management) could run through all the other plan content, rather than being objectives in themselves.

### **Acknowledgements**

24. The CEO and the Head of (Strategy and) Planning would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the following important contributions:
- a) Members of the Management Plan Review TFG, chaired by Gemma Harper, with Simon Mortimer, Hector Sants and (former member) Joe Stewart, who brought a strong and essential strategic drive and also necessary attention to detail. Gemma Harper, particularly, provided constructive challenges on the process and content, and also supported and coached the Head of Strategy and Planning throughout the process.
  - b) All the officers who contributed to the review, especially:
    - i. Kate Heppell (and members of her team), who successfully bolstered the plan's nature and climate content, and embedded the PLTOFs (which were still being resolved by Defra throughout the process);
    - ii. Annette Weiss, who similarly strengthened the plan's approach to EDI; and
    - iii. finally and most importantly Vicki Pearce and her colleagues in the communications team, who often stepped up to produce content when others (including the Head of Strategy and Planning) were distracted by other priorities, and since approval have been working tirelessly to make the plan look and read as good as it deserves to be, and to get the plan into the inboxes and bookshelves of our partners and stakeholders.
  - c) Natural England's officers, particularly Anna Oliveri, Stephen Rudd and Hazel McDowell.
  - d) All the stakeholders (individuals and organisations) who responded to our consultations and requests for information as part of the review.

### **What's next?**

25. The refreshed Management Plan was launched on 17 June 2026, with a [news story on our website](#) and social media posts, including [this one on LinkedIn](#).
26. The next step is to seek endorsement from our local authority partners, and other stakeholders where possible, and to secure commitments (and, hopefully, resources) from them to deliver on the plan, which we could reflect in the delivery plan. All of this should take place during 2026/27.
27. In the longer term, we will need to undertake a review of this plan by March 2030. The current rule-of-thumb is that a full review should take approximately 36 months, including the gathering of evidence and assessment of the state of the Chilterns. The current assumption in the emerging business plan is to work with a reconvened Management Plan Review TFG to set things up in Q4 of 2026/27 to start work on the review in 2027/28.

### **Recommendations**

- 1. That the Board NOTES the content of this paper.**
- 2. That the Board OFFERS OBSERVATIONS on the suggested lessons learned.**

- 3. That the Board THANKS the CCB members, the officers (both of the CCB and NE), and other stakeholders mentioned (by name or implied) in paragraph 24 for their contributions to the successful refresh of the Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan.**



**Chilterns**  
National  
Landscape



# Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024:

## “Light Touch” Review Statement



**This statement sets out the Chilterns Conservation Board's "light-touch review" of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2019-2024, extending the plan to March 2025, in accordance with Defra Minister the Rt Hon Lord Benyon's letter of July 2022.**

## **The Chilterns Conservation Board's approach to the Management Plan review**

The content of the Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 ("the plan") was based on sound evidence and extensive engagement with our partners and communities. It continues to include appropriate policy for the management of the National Landscape<sup>[1]</sup> and for the execution of the Board's functions. The Board's position is that a comprehensive review of the plan would not be expedient until the ongoing proposal to extend the boundaries of the National Landscape is completed. We therefore propose the following approach to the review of the plan:

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

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

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

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



## Vision for the Chilterns National Landscape

The vision for the Chilterns National Landscape will continue to be as set out on p.23 of the plan, including the ten supporting advocacy statements for the Conservation Board.

## Proposed Structure for the refreshed Management Plan 2024-2029

The plan's structure will remain the same: a contextual introduction, statement of significance, summary of the state of the Chilterns, aspirations for the future (including the vision), thematic chapters, and a chapter on implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

## Chilterns Conservation Board Objectives 2024-2025

Continue to pursue the objectives, policies, and actions of the Management Plan through delivering agreed corporate and strategic priorities as defined in Chilterns Conservation Board's annual business plan(s).

Support Natural England with the proposed extension to the boundaries of the Chilterns National Landscape.

Improve stakeholder engagement and partnership arrangements to enhance the management and governance of both the Chilterns Conservation Board and the (extended) National Landscape, and to secure additional resources.

Complete the refresh of the Management Plan and begin work on a new 25-year vision.

[1] Future plans, including the proposed refreshed plan, will also account for the rebranding of AONBs as National Landscapes, which has been reflected in this statement.



**Chilterns  
National  
Landscape**



**Date** 23.03.2026

**Our ref:** Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030

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Dear Elaine,

**S.90 Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 consultation with Natural England.**

Thank you for forwarding the Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030 for formal consultation under S.90 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act).

Natural England is a non-departmental public body established under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Natural England's purpose as outlined in the Act is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development. The observations in this plan represent the formal views of Natural England in discharging its duties under S90.

Natural England also has responsibilities as a statutory consultee in Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment. These formal responses have been undertaken separately but are complementary to the Management Plan Consultation.

Our observations on the Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030 focus on three areas:

1. The statutory requirements for AONB Management Plans as identified in the CRoW Act 2000 and associated guidance;
2. Natural England guidance: [Management plans for Protected Landscapes in England - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/management-plans-for-protected-landscapes-in-england)
3. Any outstanding concerns of Natural England in its capacity as a statutory consultee for the Management Plan.

**1. Meeting the statutory requirements of Part IV CRoW Act 2000**

Natural England considers that the Plan meets the statutory requirement. That the constituent local authorities for the Chilterns National Landscape (AONB) have, by acting jointly, produced a plan that formulates their policy for their AONB. In coming to this conclusion we have taken account of the Introduction section which was provided as a separate documents, dated 11.02.2026, and which we expect to be incorporated in full into the text of the final published Management Plan document. If for any reason this is not the

case, then please advise us of this.

## 2. Following the guidance for AONB Management Plans

We consider that the Plan has broadly followed the guidance and presents a strategy for the management of the AONB. The AONB Plan represents good practice in the following areas:

- The Plan clearly articulates the statutory purposes of Chilterns National Landscape, with strong legislative framing and promotes the use of the management plan as the “single most important policy document.”
- Strong communication of the Chilterns Special Qualities which clearly articulate the distinctive combination of elements within the landscape that collectively form the basis of the natural beauty and sense of place that is unique to the Chilterns
- Strong embedding of the Protected Landscape Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF) targets across thematic chapters and a comprehensive section on Nature within the plan which references Lawton Principles with policies and objectives mirroring these principles.
- The plan demonstrates cross-boundary co-ordination with the four Local Nature Recovery Strategies with spatial coverage of the Chilterns National Landscape to produce a robust plan for Nature Recovery
- Robust core evidence base for the plan set out prominently in chapter 3, includes quantitative data, national and local indicators, environmental condition assessments, heritage records, visitor data, and drivers of change.

## 3. Outstanding concerns

We made considerable comments on the Plan at the public consultation stage and we recognise the significant work done to incorporate changes across the document, and Nature Recovery Plan.

In general, the Plan is well constructed, however, Natural England feels that it could be improved by the addition of the following during implementation of this Plan and production of the next:

- **A Delivery Plan** with actions, responsibilities, success criteria indicators, timescales, and partners. Ideally, this should set out the prioritisation and sequencing of delivery tasks and should clearly assign who delivers which actions and identify funding streams. We note the commitment in chapter 11 of the Management Plan to produce a three year rolling delivery plan, supported by annual reporting. Such a Plan will be a crucial document for partners to see and understand how they can contribute to driving action to conserve and enhance natural beauty and recover nature across the Chilterns National Landscape. Following on from the strategy and policies, it will set out the ‘who and how’ of target delivery, and will help to ensure that the Chilterns Conservation Board have robust plans in place to respond to a variety of scenarios that impact their operations.
- **A Climate Change Adaptation plan**, the commitment to producing a plan is noted, it would be helpful to clarify timelines, setting out the key milestones to meet the requirement for a plan to be in place by 2028.

- **Include a resource and funding strategy** to support the Delivery Plan, as advised in Natural England Management Plan guidance. This is not a requirement but would strengthen and support the Delivery Plan.

In conclusion, Natural England recognises that the production of this final draft represents the culmination of many months of intensive work on the part of The Chilterns National Landscape staff and Conservation Board. We congratulate you on this huge effort, and for the significant contribution the review makes to ensuring that Protected Landscapes deliver for nature, climate, people and place. My colleagues and I look forward to receiving copies of your published Plan and to working with you and the National Landscape Partnership during its implementation, review and monitoring stages. Please do not hesitate to contact me or Anna Oliveri if there are any points you wish to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Horton', is displayed within a light grey rectangular border.

Graham Horton  
Deputy Director, Thames Solent Area Team

Cc – Defra

**Item 2.7****Risk Register****Author:**

Elaine King, Chief Executive Officer

**Purpose of Report:**

To seek approval for the updated Risk Register which has been reviewed and updated in line with the new Management Plan, four-year strategic planning, Annual Delivery Plan and the Budget as well as feedback from Board member strategy sessions. The revised register consolidates risks, strengthens links to strategic priorities and provides a clearer basis for Board oversight.

**Introduction**

1. As a statutory body tasked with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Chilterns National Landscape, the Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) operates within a complex political, financial and accountability framework. The Risk Register supports good governance by identifying the principal risks that could affect delivery of the Board's statutory duties, strategic objectives and operational resilience.
  - **Ensuring delivery of statutory duties:** The Register helps ensure that external pressures, operational disruption or resource constraints do not prevent the Board from meeting its statutory responsibilities, including those arising from the Environment Act and the Protected Landscapes Duty.
  - **Securing public and private confidence:** The Board's funding depends on central government, local authorities, charitable trusts, grant-making bodies and emerging green finance partners. A transparent and actively managed Risk Register demonstrates strong corporate governance and supports confidence that public and partner funding is being managed responsibly.
  - **Managing long-term uncertainty within short-term funding cycles:** Conservation requires multi-year and often multi-decade planning, including for climate adaptation, landscape recovery and partnership development. The Register helps ensure that short-term financial or operational shocks do not undermine longer-term environmental outcomes.
2. With an annual budget of approximately **£4.5 million**, including a core central government grant of **£0.5 million** and additional central government capital funding of **£0.7 million**, and a team of **27** staff, the CCB is exposed to both financial volatility and capacity pressures. At the same time, as an independent statutory body, it must meet specific legislative, governance and public accountability requirements.

**Key Observations**

3. The review has consolidated the Risk Register to reduce repetition and duplication, and to provide a clearer focus on the Board's core risks. The updated Register indicates that internal controls are generally robust and have strengthened in recent months, but that external financial, policy, reputational and cyber-security pressures continue to present material challenges.

4. The updated Risk Register tracks **16 core risks**, categorised under five thematic areas:
  - Strategic Relationships and Reputation
  - Statutory and Performance Delivery
  - Financial Sustainability and Governance
  - Governance, Compliance and Public Safety
  - Digital Infrastructure, Assets and Information Security
5. Each risk is assessed using a standard **5x5 risk matrix**, scoring both **likelihood** (probability) and **impact** (severity) on a scale of 1 to 5. The overall risk number is calculated by multiplying likelihood by impact, producing a score between 1 and 25. This provides a consistent indication of the relative significance of each risk: higher scores represent greater exposure and therefore require closer Board oversight, stronger controls and more urgent mitigation.
6. The colour rating attached to each score distinguishes between low, medium, high and critical risks. This supports prioritisation of management action and enables the Board to monitor whether further controls are reducing risks to an acceptable level.
7. Before further mitigation, **1** risk has a critical exposure score of 16 (Staff Capacity and Capability), **4** risks have high exposure scores of 12, and **11** risks have medium exposure scores of 8 or 9. No risks currently have a low exposure rating before further mitigation.
8. Following successful implementation of the further controls set out in the Register, the risk profile improves significantly: **0** critical or high risks, **8** risks are medium but have declined within this band, and **8** are now low risk.
9. The principal vulnerabilities requiring continued Board attention are:
  - **Funding volatility** and the need to maintain strong relationships with funders and partners
  - **Brand visibility** and the need to ensure that government, funders and partners understand and value the work of the CCB
  - **Recruitment and retention** of high-quality staff amid core budget uncertainties
  - **Cyber-security and data compliance**, including the need to protect systems, data and operational continuity.

### **Addressing Core Vulnerabilities**

#### ***Funding volatility and relationships with funders and partners***

10. The short-term nature of public sector funding remains a primary risk. While the confirmed one-year Defra grant provides immediate stability, years two and three remain indicative, which improves but still limits long-term forward planning. This uncertainty is compounded by acute financial pressures facing local authority partners. Buckinghamshire, Central Bedfordshire and Luton currently do not meet their full contribution requirements, resulting in a direct core income shortfall of just over **£21,000**.
11. Newer government funding sources, including the three-year extension to the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme and the Wildlife Rich Habitats fund, provide important opportunities. However, much of this funding is Capital

and does not fully cover the corporate, administrative and senior management overheads required to support delivery.

12. A major pressure on our core budget is the cost of specialist external support. As an independent statutory body, the CCB cannot rely on in-house legal counsel, IT, HR, finance, or compliance teams, so these services must be procured and managed directly. These additional corporate costs include data protection, health and safety, HR, and IT expertise. They reduce organisational risk but place a persistent burden on unrestricted core funding. Despite raising this with Defra, the funding formula applied to National Park and National Landscape grants do not recognise the additional costs incurred by a Conservation Board.
13. Mitigation and response: Maintaining proactive senior-level engagement with Defra officials, MPs, local authority leaders and partner organisations is an operational priority. The CCB is also mitigating local authority funding shortfalls by developing a stronger evidence-based inward investment case, improving budget management, pursuing overhead recovery where funder rules permit, and providing robust evidence to Defra and the National Landscapes Association on the true cost of operating a Conservation Board.

#### ***Brand visibility and recognition of the CCB's role and value***

14. Securing large-scale external project funding is vital to achieving the Board's ambitions and to recovering a proportion of core organisational overheads. Major initiatives such as the Network Rail-funded *Mend the Gap* programme, the HS2-funded *Mending the Misbourne* project and the forthcoming National Lottery Heritage Fund delivery phase application for *Not Bourne Yesterday* are central to the CCB's operating model. However, developing applications, advocating for funding and providing organisational support for delivery require significant staff time that is not always fully funded.
15. If potential funders do not clearly understand the value of the Chilterns National Landscape and the role of the CCB, opportunities to secure external revenue and corporate investment are placed at risk. This also affects engagement with Defra and wider government, where limited understanding of Conservation Boards, and how they differ from National Park Authorities and local-authority-hosted National Landscapes, can result in Conservation Boards being under-represented in funding discussions, meetings and reports.
16. Mitigation and response: The CCB is implementing a comprehensive External Communications Plan alongside the rollout of the National Landscape branding guidelines introduced at the end of 2024. It is also diversifying income by developing corporate partnerships and exploring green finance opportunities, drawing on the National Landscapes Association Green Finance team and the professional networks of Board members.
17. In parallel, the CCB is continuing to advocate for a stronger understanding of Conservation Boards within Defra and across wider government. This includes providing evidence on the governance, delivery and funding pressures specific to Conservation Boards; working with the National Landscapes Association to make the case for fair and sustainable funding; and ensuring that the contribution of the Chilterns National Landscape is visible in national policy discussions.

***Recruitment and retention of high-quality staff, and capacity challenges***

18. Delivery of the Board's strategic activity and practical field work relies on the capacity, capability and institutional memory of its 27 staff. Ongoing funding uncertainty can make it difficult to offer long-term contractual security, creating a risk of talent loss and recruitment bottlenecks. This is particularly acute for specialist roles, including planning, programme management, communications, finance and operations, where the Board is competing in a wider market for experienced staff.
19. At the same time, statutory requirements such as the Protected Landscapes Duty, the Management Plan and Defra's Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework create additional capacity demands. The scale of the approved work programme therefore needs to remain closely aligned with available resources, skills and management capacity.
20. Mitigation and response: The Board is actively managing this risk through business planning, clear prioritisation and a Resource Plan that aligns staff capacity with the agreed work programme. Key teams have been strengthened, including Communications and Operations, and further capacity and capability gaps are being identified, with new or expanded roles developed where funding permits.
21. Recruitment and retention are also being supported through an improved recruitment process, stronger onboarding and induction, opportunities for training and development, staff engagement follow-up and continued investment in wellbeing and team development.
22. Business planning now includes a Resource Plan to help ensure that staff capacity is aligned with the agreed work programme. Key teams have already been strengthened, including Communications and Operations, with additional finance capacity included within the Operations function. The Board is also identifying capacity and capability gaps and, where funding permits, creating or expanding roles to meet priority needs, including the proposed Head of Programmes role and increased Communications Officer hours.
23. An improved recruitment process is also being implemented, with stronger onboarding and induction arrangements and clearer opportunities for training and development. These measures are intended to support staff retention, improve resilience across teams and ensure that the organisation has the right capacity and capability to deliver the Management Plan and Business Plan effectively.

***Cyber-security and data compliance***

24. Digital vulnerability represents the Board's highest unmitigated risk exposure, with a pre-mitigation critical score of 16. A successful ransomware attack or major systems breach could disrupt finance systems, halt operations and cause significant data loss. Hybrid working and historic information management practices also create ongoing risks relating to GDPR compliance and secure information governance. Recent investment through the IT Transformation programme has reduced this risk substantially, but continued focus is required given the potential legal, financial and reputational consequences.
25. Mitigation and response: Technical and regulatory risks are being reduced through strengthened controls. The Board's external IT provider, Fidget,

maintains 24-hour systems monitoring, endpoint security software, firewalls and multi-factor authentication across financial platforms. The newly appointed external Data Protection Officer is completing a comprehensive framework and gap analysis to strengthen data protection compliance.

26. Further planned controls include fuller use of the HubSpot CRM across the team, mandatory staff training on GDPR and cyber-phishing awareness, and a review of Business Continuity and device security protocols to reduce information vulnerabilities.

### **Concluding Remarks**

27. The updated Risk Register provides a clearer, more focussed basis for Board oversight. It identifies the principal risks facing the CCB, the controls already in place and the further actions required to reduce exposure to an acceptable level.
28. The overall risk profile demonstrates that the most significant exposures are being actively managed, but that continued Board attention is required in relation to funding sustainability, strategic visibility, staffing resilience and cyber-security. Subject to approval, the Register will continue to be used as a live management tool and reviewed regularly through the year.

### **Recommendation**

1. That the Board **APPROVES** the updated Risk Register.

Description of Risk	Responsibility	Current Control Measures	Assessment of Current Control			Further Control Measures Required	Status Update	Assessment with further Control		
			Likelihood	Impact	Score (L x I)			Likelihood	Impact	Score (L x I)
<b>1. STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIPS AND REPUTATION</b>										
<p><b>1.1 Partner disengagement and Funding Volatility</b></p> <p>Includes withdrawal or reduced level of support and/or funding from key partners such as Defra and local authorities, plus potential impact of Local Government Reorganisation and shifting political environment and priorities.</p>	CEO/Board members	<p>CEO and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) maintain proactive, senior-level engagement with Defra, MPs, local authorities and other partners.</p> <p>Defra has issued a 1-year confirmed grant with years 2 and 3 kept indicative, improving baseline forward planning.</p> <p>Board Members actively promote the Chilterns National Landscape within their respective appointing bodies.</p> <p>Early-stage partner engagement embedded into the 2030–35 Management Plan development cycle.</p> <p>Stakeholder management and engagement is an explicit priority in the Four Year Business Plan and 2026/27 Annual Plan.</p>	3	4	12	<p>Establish steering group involving key partners and stakeholders for next Management Plan development cycle.</p> <p>Leverage the National Landscapes Association to maintain a united front during funding negotiations with Defra.</p> <p>Pivot the planning function to be seen by LAs as part of their own planning service toolbox rather than in opposition to them.</p>		2	4	8
<p><b>1.2 Brand Misunderstanding and Weak Visibility</b></p> <p>Weak branding could have implications for securing funding.</p>	Communications Manager/SLT	<p>Full rollout of the National Landscape rebranding assets and brand guidelines.</p> <p>Communications Team proactively ensures consistent and effective brand implementation.</p> <p>Expansion of the core Communications Team completed in early 2026.</p> <p>Implementing an effective programme of external communications through social media, website and wider visibility raising activities.</p> <p>Upgraded IT and contact management systems to streamline partner engagement.</p> <p>All key partners actively engaged in developing/reviewing the Management Plan.</p>	3	3	9	<p>Deliver targeted staff training to fully embed the brand identity across all work, especially external-facing projects.</p> <p>Implement the External Communications Plan, including use of audience segmentation data, and upskilling staff.</p>		2	3	6
<p><b>1.3 Governance Failure or Loss of Integrity</b></p> <p>Includes loss of reputation due to scandal / impropriety, or bringing the Board into disrepute</p>	Board Chair / CEO / Monitoring Officer	<p>Continuous oversight of operational risks by the SLT.</p> <p>Regular discussions between Chair and CEO.</p> <p>Crisis Communications Plan drafted and due for completion in July 2026.</p> <p>Comprehensive review and improvement of internal HR policies completed, including updated Whistleblowing and Safeguarding policies.</p> <p>Conduct onboarding and refresher training for all Board members, including the Nolan Principles and Constitutional responsibilities.</p>	2	4	8	<p>Roll out staff training on the newly implemented Crisis Communications Plan.</p> <p>Implement External Communications Plan and social media guidelines across staff team.</p> <p>Complete staff training and implementation of relevant policies.</p>		1	4	4
<p><b>1.4 Stakeholder and Land Manager Tensions</b></p> <p>Includes tensions between landowners, farmers, local communities and visitors.</p>	Head of Programmes/ Programme & Project Managers	<p>Work closely with partners, especially farmers and landowners, through projects and core activities.</p> <p>Close collaborative delivery via existing steering groups and local initiatives (e.g., Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Luton's Nature Towns and Cities project, Nature Ridge project, Chilterns Chalk Streams Project, Mend the Gap, Not Bourne Yesterday, North Chilterns Partnership).</p> <p>Proactive public awareness campaigns to address localised conflicts (e.g., adhering to the Countryside Code, ensuring dogs are kept on leads in lambing season).</p> <p>Regular flow of information and content from staff to Communications Team for social media posts, website etc.</p> <p>SLT oversight of sensitive or high-impact policy publications (e.g., deer management strategy).</p>	3	3	9	<p>Utilise incoming Head of Programmes (recruiting June/July 2026) to oversee partner risk management and enhance project/programme delivery.</p> <p>Pivot the planning function to be seen by LAs as part of their own planning service toolbox rather than in opposition to them.</p>		2	2	4
<b>Implement</b>										

<p><b>2.1 Failure to meet Statutory Duties and National Frameworks</b></p>	<p>Executive Committee / CEO / Monitoring Officer / SLT</p>	<p>Four-year Business Plan and clear Annual Plans operationalised.</p> <p>"Golden Thread" framework links all 30 staff objectives directly to Management Plan priorities.</p> <p>Nature Recovery Plan published in June 2026 to embed Environment Act obligations.</p> <p>Quarterly delivery, risk, and compliance reporting to the Executive Committee.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>Climate Adaptation Plan in development for Defra's 2028 deadline.</p> <p>Developing a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to assess and deliver impact is a priority outcome in the new Business Plan.</p> <p>Incorporate upcoming, delayed interim guidance from Natural England regarding Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) duties as soon as it is released.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>4</p>	
<p><b>2.2 Staff Capacity and Capability</b></p>	<p>Executive Committee / CEO / SLT</p>	<p>Business Planning includes a Resource Plan to ensure staff capacity matches work programme.</p> <p>Key staff teams enhanced eg Communications, Operations (including Finance).</p> <p>Identifying capacity and capability gaps and creating new roles (funding permitting) eg Head of Programmes and increasing Communications Officer hours.</p> <p>Implementing an improved recruitment process, including improved on-boarding/induction and opportunities for training and development.</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>Keep organisational structure and capability requirements under review (part of HR Strategy), including exploring further SLT succession planning.</p> <p>Put in place more effective resource planning that addresses individual staff capacity issues.</p> <p>Implement organisational training plan for all staff</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>9</p>	
<p><b>3. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND GOVERNANCE</b></p>										
<p><b>3.1 Core Revenue Contraction (Local Authority and Defra)</b></p>	<p>CEO / Board Members</p>	<p>CEO maintains direct, senior-level engagement with Defra officials and Local Authority executives/elected members.</p> <p>Defra has issued a 1-year confirmed grant with years 2 and 3 kept indicative.</p> <p>Three-year contribution advisory letters issued to Local Authorities well in advance.</p> <p>Collaborating with the National Landscapes Association to push Defra to reflect high corporate services costs in our core grant.</p> <p>Working with the NLA's fundraising team to actively explore alternative green finance and corporate funding opportunities.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>Provide an evidence-based "inward investment case" document to all Local Authorities by autumn.</p> <p>Further develop and maintain relationships with Local Authorities</p> <p>Develop a pipeline of advocacy material to support funding bids for planned work</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>8</p>	
<p><b>3.2 Challenges in Diversifying Income and Securing Full Project/Programme Cost Recovery</b></p>	<p>CEO/SLT</p>	<p>SLT conducts weekly Funding Pipeline review to identify income gaps early.</p> <p>Implementing a project Mandate Form to rigorously assess delivery risks and cost visibility before bidding.</p> <p>Proven track record of securing funding, with partners, from existing funders on flagship initiatives (e.g., Nature Ridge, Not Bourne Yesterday).</p> <p>Key funding principles agreed by the Board in strategy sessions to inform an updated Funding Strategy.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>Fully embed the Mandate Form across entire staff team.</p> <p>Formalise a comprehensive Funding Strategy, including focus on staff upskilling in Green Finance/CSR.</p> <p>New Head of Programmes role (recruiting June/July 2026) will include focus on income-generation.</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>6</p>	

<p><b>3.3 Challenges in Retaining and Recruiting Staff, including due to Funding Uncertainty</b></p>	<p>Executive Committee/SLT</p>	<p>Annual salary benchmarking reviews conducted to keep baseline pay transparent, fair and competitive, plus publish Job Grading Framework.</p> <p>High-value total reward benefits package is maintained (including a 20% employer pension contribution, Employee Assistance Programme, and discretionary Christmas closure leave).</p> <p>Hybrid and flexible working frameworks add to positive employment package.</p> <p>High priority given to staff health and wellbeing eg Annual Staff Engagement Survey, six-monthly Pulse Surveys, and actively follow up on staff feedback.</p> <p>Trained four Mental Health First Aiders (March 26) and established Wellbeing Lead</p> <p>Planned and delivered two Team Development sessions.</p> <p>Succession planning actively addressed with key measures introduced at CEO/SLT level eg Head of Operations actively deputises for CEO and carries out key functions, recruiting for Head of Programmes (June/July 26).</p> <p>Proactively advocate to Defra regarding the critical necessity of revenue funding (RDEL) over capital project grants (CDEL) to sustain core staff infrastructure.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>Continue to advocate for higher levels of RDEL funding from Defra and a fairer funding formula to reflect Conservation Boards' additional corporate costs.</p> <p>Improve communication of total reward package for staff (inc benefits and pensions) both internally and during recruitment.</p> <p>Implement further team development session and individual Lumina Spark profiles planned for 2026.</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>6</p>	
<p><b>3.4 Internal Controls Failure, Cash-Flow Failure or Financial Malpractice</b></p>	<p>CEO/Senior Finance Manager/s151 Officer</p>	<p>Finance capacity enhanced via in-house Senior Finance Manager (SFM) from October 2024 SFM formally designated by the Board as Section 151 Officer in March 2026, in line with best practice.</p> <p>Strict protocols and segregation of duties enforced for payroll and accounts (Finance Administrator compiles, Senior Finance Manager checks, CEO approves).</p> <p>Robust Reserves Policy is operational, establishes a clear, ring-fenced minimum operational cash buffer, and is reviewed annually. Surplus reserves are allocated to Development Reserve.</p> <p>March 2026 actuarial valuation confirms the Buckinghamshire Pension scheme is in surplus, reducing required employer contribution pressures. Regular liaison with Buckinghamshire Pension scheme to ensure correct contributions paid.</p> <p>Comprehensive commercial insurance portfolio reviewed annually and covers all our activities.</p> <p>External and Internal Audits conducted in line with best practice, to deadlines and are published.</p> <p>Board's Financial Regulations enhanced in 2025/26 cycle and improved Financial Approvals updated in March 2025.</p> <p>Finance Administrator role created in May 2026 to ensure specific focus on finances.</p> <p>Continuous review and improvement of internal governance policies and procedures.</p> <p>Quarterly budget monitoring reports in place for Executive Committee and Board, monthly review of cash flow forecasts , and daily operational monitoring of cashflow.</p> <p>Business planning process for 26/27 extended for 4 years aligned with new Management Plan and supported by indicative Defra funding for 3 years</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>Deliver a full review and formal update of the Board's Financial Regulations during the 2026/27 cycle, as part of updating the Constitution.</p> <p>Continue to develop improved budget monitoring especially for projects.</p> <p>Regular update of 3 year projections.</p> <p>Finance Administrator role will have increasing impact once new Office Administrator is recruited (interviews June 26).</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>2</p>	
<p><b>4.GOVERNANCE, COMPLIANCE AND PUBLIC SAFETY</b></p>										
<p><b>4.1 Constitutional Non-Compliance and Unclear Delegation</b></p>	<p>CEO/Board Chair /Monitoring Officer</p>	<p>Monitoring Officer role is successfully delivered in-house by Matt Thomson (established March 2026) to provide day to day statutory oversight.</p> <p>A Scheme of Delegation is fully operational, establishing explicit operational boundaries between the Executive Committee, full Board and Executive.</p> <p>Active, legally compliant committee structures are maintained (Executive Committee, Planning Committee).</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>Continue to keep the Constitution under review and ensure it is fit-for-purpose, including completing the updates necessary consequent on approval of the new Scheme of Delegation during the current cycle.</p> <p>Deliver a Board inclusivity workshop to optimise member engagement and ensure strategic challenge at all levels.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>4</p>	

<p><b>4.2 Insufficient Skills, Capacity or Diversity within the Board</b></p>	<p>Board Chair / CEO / Monitoring Officer / EDI Advisory Group</p>	<p>CEO and Monitoring Officer coordinate directly with the Defra Public Appointments Team to ensure recruitment packs are fully inclusive.</p> <p>Robust onboarding, annual online briefings, staff presentations, and targeted landscape site visits are embedded for all new Board members.</p> <p>Board Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Ambition Statement and Action Plan are actively operationalised, with EDI a standing agenda item.</p> <p>A dedicated EDI Advisory Group meets regularly to scrutinise and advise on organisational culture.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>Refresh the Board Skills Matrix to identify precise knowledge and experience gaps before the next recruitment round.</p> <p>Coordinate with senior local authority leaders (CEOs and Council Leaders) to ensure the timely, skilled appointment of Parish and Local Authority members.</p> <p>Provide feedback/lessons learned to the Defra Public Appointments Team after each recruitment campaign.</p> <p>Build member recruitment and review processes into work programme for the MO.</p> <p>Provide improved information on the role of Board members and specific positions (e.g. Board chair, etc)</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>6</p>	
<p><b>4.3 Health, Safety and Safeguarding Failures</b></p> <p>Includes accidents to staff member, volunteer or contractor, and risk to staff of lone working (office or 'in the field')</p>	<p>Head of Operations / Project &amp; Programme Managers / All Staff</p>	<p>Risk Assessment platform is in place and being used, requiring staff to develop comprehensive written risk assessments for all external events and visits.</p> <p>Retained health and safety experts (Risk Fluent) provide statutory updates, compliance audits, and support risk management.</p> <p>A dedicated Safeguarding Lead has been appointed (Head of Operations) with a clearly defined role description.</p> <p>A comprehensive and up to date Safeguarding Policy is active, backed by mandatory Enhanced DBS checking protocols for all staff delivering youth or school-facing projects or working with vulnerable adults.</p> <p>Relevant policies developed and approved by the Board eg Lone Working.</p> <p>Annual PAT testing of all electrical equipment being undertaken.</p> <p>Fire Risk training undertaken for 18 members of staff (June 26).</p> <p>All relevant field staff have undertaken up-to-date first aid training.</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are being developed to improve the way in which risk is addressed.</p> <p>Safeguarding training to be conducted in 2026/27 cycle.</p> <p>Complete outstanding policies / procedures around H&amp;S.</p> <p>Further training for staff to ensure written risk assessments are developed and delivered consistently.</p> <p>All staff to be made aware of and trained in updated and new H&amp;S policies, and ensure volunteers and contractors are advised.</p> <p>Online Fire Risk training to be undertaken by remaining staff team.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>3</p>	
<p><b>4.4 Regulatory Non-Compliance (Employment Law and Data Protection (inc GDPR))</b></p>	<p>Head of Operations / Communications Manager</p>	<p>External HR Advisor retained to provide legal and regulatory updates and interpretations on UK employment law.</p> <p>HR policies agreed and operational across the organisation.</p> <p>External Data Protection Officer (DPO) appointed (May 2026).</p> <p>IT Transformation Programme is driving improved file management, internal staff security, and enhanced cybersecurity protocols.</p> <p>HubSpot CRM is in use and able to securely isolate, track, and manage external contact data in accordance with statutory privacy frameworks.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>DPO is reviewing current data protection provisions, identifying gaps and making recommendations for future frameworks, protocols and data handling (complete end of Q2 2026).</p> <p>Implement DPO recommendations.</p> <p>Fully embed the HubSpot data protocol across all staff and deliver GDPR training to all staff.</p> <p>Refresher training for managers on effective use of HR policies.</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>4</p>	
<p><b>5. DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE, ASSETS AND INFORMATION SECURITY</b></p>										

<p><b>5.1: Ransomware Attack or Systemic Cyber-Breach</b></p>	<p>Head of Operations / Office Administrator</p>	<p>Firewall protections, endpoint security software and off-site back ups are maintained via our external IT support provider (Fidget).</p> <p>Fidget provides a range of services including 24-hour systems monitoring and anti-virus management.</p> <p>Multi-factor authentication is operational across main financial platform (Xero) and approvals (ApprovalMax).</p> <p>External consultant providing staff training to ensure consistent understanding and embedding of new IT systems.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>Provide training for staff around phishing and other cyber security actions</p> <p>Ensure staff are reminded regularly about how to recognise phishing attempts.</p> <p>Agree strategic back-up following move to Sharepoint (keep physical or move online).</p> <p>Resolve mobile phone policy and enact recommendations to ensure full cyber security compliance.</p> <p>Review requirement for multi-factor authentication on other platforms.</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>6</p>
<p><b>5.2: Hardware, Digital Asset, or Connectivity Failure</b></p>	<p>Head of Operations / Office Administrator</p>	<p>Staff file management structures have been improved under the IT Transformation Programme to a shared online platform.</p> <p>All laptops are logged and covered under a comprehensive commercial insurance portfolio.</p> <p>Regular review and upgrade/ replacement/ repair of hardware assets eg staff laptops before failure occurs.</p> <p>IT and Acceptable Use Policy as well as Confidentiality Policy are approved and operational.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>Complete transition of files to Sharepoint.</p> <p>IT protocols for file management, including sharing, to be rolled out fully to all staff.</p> <p>Review IT provision for effectiveness (and value for money).</p> <p>Develop and implement a Disaster Recovery &amp; Business Continuity Protocol outlining clear alternative operating procedures if core cloud systems go offline for more than 48 hours.</p> <p>Complete all IT related policies and fully roll out and embed across staff team.</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>4</p>

**Item 2.8****CEO Update****Author:**

Elaine King, CEO

**Purpose of Report:**

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

**Background**

1. This report comprises highlights since the Board meeting in March 2026.

**Senior Leadership Team (SLT)**

2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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 refreshed Management Plan, which launched on 17<sup>th</sup> June, and the Nature Recovery Plan being launched to coincide with the Board meeting. R&D work is also underway ahead of developing a Climate Adaptation Plan. Ground-breaking work on the impacts of climate change on chalk landscapes 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 this Board meeting and is leading a workshop at the national conference in July.
5. 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. See paper 2.6 for more detail.

**Local and national government engagement**

6. 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 convening in Westminster, with invites to be circulated shortly.
7. Defra's recruitment campaign closed this week for applications for Board members to be appointed to Conservation Boards and National Park Authorities. Matt and I supported the Defra Public Appointments Team with the campaign, which included being available to address enquiries made by a number of prospective applicants.
8. Meetings with local authorities include productive discussions with senior officers at Dacorum Borough 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.

9. 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 (CCRI) 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.
10. 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 are also expecting that the report comments and makes recommendations on the specific challenges faced by Conservation Boards, given the contributions made to workshops and information that Matt and I shared with the researchers.
11. 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.
12. 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**

13. 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.
14. 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 in May. 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. Our River Chess Project Coordinator, Steph Horn, attended a very productive meeting with HS2's CEO, Mark Wild, this month. He was particularly interested in citizen science activities and farmer clusters. A follow up visit is in the pipeline so that he can learn more about this area of our work.
15. 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***

16. 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***

17. 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***

18. 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***

19. 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).

20. 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.

### ***Head of Programmes***

21. 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, 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***

22. 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.

23. 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 and again in June to explore next steps and further measures that can be implemented. A Wellbeing Plan has also been prepared.

**Recommendation:**

1. That the Board **NOTES** and **PROVIDES FEEDBACK** on the update.

**Item 2.9**                      **Future Meeting Dates**

**Author:** Elaine King, CEO and Matt Thomson, Monitoring Officer

**Purpose of Report:** To agree future meetings dates for the Board, Executive Committee and Planning Committee / Planning Advisory Group.

**Background**

1. Traditionally, the Board has identified and agreed meeting dates in the following year for the Board and its committees at its December meeting. Increasingly it has been found that suitable venues are already booked and members are already committed. Decisions on the meeting calendar have therefore been brought forward to the June Board meeting and AGM.

**Board and Executive Committee Meetings**

2. The pattern of Board and Executive Committee meetings is broadly determined by the annual business plan cycle and requirements for financial and performance reporting, with the days and times of meetings influenced by those that have worked best for members in the past, and the availability of Chairs and/or Deputies.
3. The proposed meeting dates for the Board and Executive Committee in 2027 are set out in the table below. Meetings will normally be in the mornings, starting at 10am, and may be followed (to be determined) by a site visit or other activity. Board meetings will normally be held in a large, accessible venue, such as Buckinghamshire Council's offices in Aylesbury; Executive Committee meetings will normally be held in the CCB offices in Chinnor, or the alternative venues in Chinnor (the Village Hall or Village Centre).

<b>Executive Committee</b>	<b>Board</b>
Thursday 25 <sup>th</sup> February 2027	Thursday 25 <sup>th</sup> March 2027
Thursday 20 <sup>th</sup> May 2027	Thursday 17 <sup>th</sup> June 2027
Thursday 2 <sup>nd</sup> September 2027	Thursday 30 <sup>th</sup> September 2027
Thursday 18 <sup>th</sup> November 2027	Thursday 9 <sup>th</sup> December 2027

**Planning Committee / Planning Advisory Group**

4. Planning Committee meetings have traditionally been timed to allow for quarterly reporting of planning activity (but without a fourth meeting in July), and this pattern is expected to be followed for the Planning Advisory Group (PAG), but with a summer meeting. We have not sought to identify dates yet, due to discussions on the future of the Committee/PAG. There is less pressure on this group because the Committee can usually make use of the meeting room in the CCB's offices, which will be made easier with the PAG meetings moving to a hybrid format.

5. It is only the Board and Committee dates that are constitutionally required to be determined by the Board, so the PAG will be able to determine its own calendar.
6. However, with the PAG facilitating hybrid meetings, it has been proposed to hold its inaugural meeting in the quarterly-reporting-friendly July slot that Planning Committee tended not to use, and it would be an opportunity missed not to identify a meeting date using this opportunity.
7. Suggested dates for the PAG meeting are currently:
  - a. Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> July – PM
  - b. Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> August – AM or PM
  - c. Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> August – AM or PM

### **Recommendation**

1. **That the Board APPROVES the calendar of Board and Executive Committee meetings as set out in paragraph 3.**
2. **That the Board CONSIDERS dates for an inaugural Planning Advisory Group meeting in July 2026 from the range set out in paragraph 7 (or other suitable alternative).**



### **Climate Adaptation Plan (CAP) Update**

5. Climate change alongside nature decline, is one of the biggest challenges of our generation. Average surface temperature in the UK has already risen by 1.5 °C since pre-industrial times (as of 2024) with projections ranging from +2 and +4 °C warming by 2100 depending on our global climate change mitigation actions. The future extent and impacts of climate change depends on our global emissions pathways over the next few decades.
6. The policy context in this area continues to evolve. Defra [25 Year Environment Plan](#) (25YEP) contained a commitment to ensure that Governments policies, programmes and investment decisions consider the possible extent of climate change this century. The subsequent [Environmental Improvement Plan 2023](#) (EIP2023) indicated that organisations must be prepared for global warming levels up to +4 °C, and Climate Change Committee advice is to plan for +2 °C of global warming and assess risk for +4 °C of global warming by 2100.
7. The Climate Change Act (2008) gave the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs powers (called the Adaptation Reporting Power, ARP) to ask public authorities, statutory bodies and other organisations performing functions of a public nature to report on their progress in adapting to climate change on a 5-year cycle. National Landscapes reported for the first time in ARP4 (published in March 2025) by contributing to the [Protected Landscapes High Level Report](#) alongside National Parks, but are required to create their own Climate Adaptation Plan (CAP) by 2028 as part of ARP5 (to be published in March 2030). Data from the ARP reporting forms the evidence base for the [UK Climate Change Risk Assessment](#) (CCRA) which also operates on a five-year rolling cycle.
8. Natural England advise that Climate Adaptation Plans should consider the impacts of climate change on all parts of the Protected Landscape including nature, people and place. Advice from the National Landscape Association suggests that the CAP should collect evidence to consider how climate change will affect the ability of the National Landscape to conserve and enhance natural beauty, and to promote opportunities for public understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities. The plan should identify which special qualities of the landscape are most at risk and set out the collective actions that partners will take to address these risks.
9. Each National Landscape should identify the framework it is using to integrate climate change thinking into strategic priorities and to generate systematic evidence for monitoring and evaluation of the plan. A risk assessment should be used to assess the assets and services of the National Landscape in the context of climate change and quantify the level of vulnerability that assets will experience. An action plan should then identify where action and adaptation should be prioritised to build resilience.
10. Work began in November 2025 with a focus on addressing a critical evidence gap: the impact of climate change on chalk landscapes. To support this, commissioned research has delivered:

- A systematic review of scientific and policy literature
- Climate modelling to assess impacts on: 'Landscape character', 'Species climate envelopes' and 'Pests, diseases and invasive non-native species'
- Visualisations of potential future landscape adaptations to support stakeholder engagement

11. Findings will be presented at the National Landscape Association Conference (July 2026), contributing to national best practice. This research provides a robust evidence base for the next phase: a formal climate risk assessment.

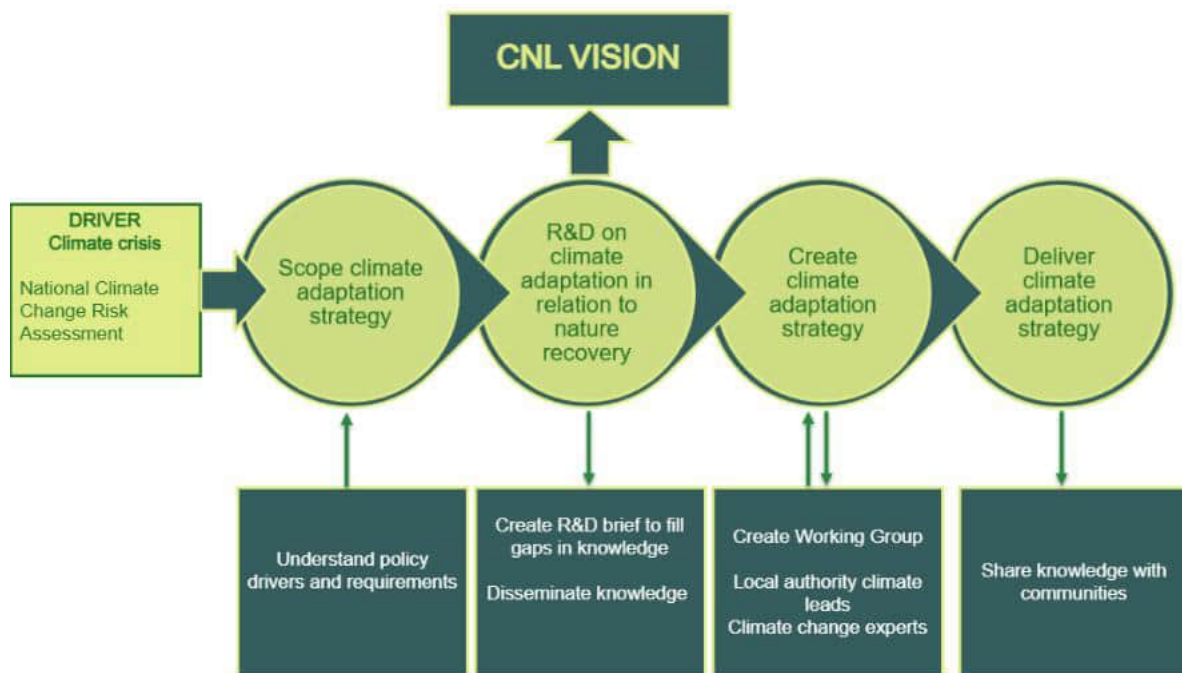


Figure 1 Workflow for production and delivery of the Climate Adaptation Plan.

12. In 2026/27 the focus will shift towards plan development and delivery including
- Establishing a multi-partner working group to oversee CAP production
  - Selecting an appropriate adaptation framework
  - Completing a climate risk assessment using the commissioned evidence
  - Identifying priority adaptation actions
  - Working with lead partners to drive implementation
  - Developing a monitoring and evaluation framework
13. The Nature Recovery Plan is entering implementation, with strong partner alignment and delivery mechanisms already in place. The Climate Adaptation Plan is progressing from evidence gathering to strategic development, with clear milestones toward 2028. Together, these programmes position the organisation to respond proactively to biodiversity loss and climate change, while strengthening partnership delivery across the National Landscape.

**Recommendation:**

- 1. That the Board NOTES and OFFERS FEEDBACK on updates.**

**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 Board on progress with the CCB's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Ambition.

**Update**

1. 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 were:
2. Investing in staff and upskilling them in EDI should be a priority, especially as staff have indicated they are looking for further 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".
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. The group proposed that at the September Board meeting we include a facilitated discussion focused on how the Board supports constructive challenge, participation and consideration of different perspectives in its discussions and decision-making. The intention is to provide an opportunity for members to reflect collectively on the conditions that help the Board work effectively and make the best use of the breadth of experience, expertise and perspectives around the table. This supports our collective governance responsibilities. Baljit has offered to facilitate the discussion in her capacity as a Board member and EDI Advisory Group Co-Chair, drawing on her background in governance, coaching and organisational change. The discussion would be facilitated in a way that encourages participation from all Board members and enables consideration of a range of perspectives. We anticipate requiring approximately 45 minutes for this agenda item.
7. This proposal was presented and discussed at the Executive Committee meeting in May and was very well received and endorsed.

**Recommendation**

1. **That the Board CONSIDERS and APPROVES the inclusion of a facilitated Board discussion at the September Board meeting as outlined above.**



response or other advocacy work) or provide information about new policies or legislation. New Planning Briefings are noted in and linked from Planning Updates. Planning briefings produced to date have covered the following topics:

- [The new plan-making system](#)
- [Changes to local planning authority Planning Committees](#)
- Outcome of a [Luton Airport Judicial Review](#)
- [Changes to National Policy Statements on Energy](#)
- Consultation on a new [National Planning Policy Framework](#)
- [Secretary of State intervention in local plans](#)
- Preparations for [Spatial Development Strategies](#) in the Chilterns
- Consultation on changes to [statutory consultees](#) in the planning system
- A report on the CCB's engagement in the [Dacorum Local Plan](#) Examination.

### **Q1 2026/27 Planning 'Highlights'**

8. This quarter, we have been mostly working on the following (greater detail on these is being prepared for the inaugural meeting of the Planning Advisory Group in July):

- Assessing and responding to a flurry of **local plan consultations**. Following the introduction of a new plan-making system (further detail is provided in the briefing referred to above), we are currently within a transitional period, during which both the 'legacy' and new systems are in operation. Both are required to work to strict (and challenging) timetables, and so local authorities are either working to conclude existing local plans by the end of the calendar year, or to meet the first government deadline for 'scoping consultations' (broadly equivalent to Regulation 18 consultations under the legacy plan-making system). We have recently been consulted on – or alerted to forthcoming consultation on – plans and supporting documents such as design codes from Buckinghamshire Council, Dacorum Borough Council, St. Albans City and District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Hillingdon Council, Central Beds Council, and Luton Borough Council. Given the number of local planning authorities within and adjoining the Chilterns, the anticipated identification of the authorities (or groups of authorities) required to prepare Spatial Development Strategies, and the tighter timescales for the preparation of new plans, we expect this increased level of work to become the new normal. In support of this, we are reviewing the CCB Model Policy, and preparing a training offer and other practical support for local planning authorities.
- Responding to a national [consultation](#) on new **permitted development rights for onshore wind turbines** in England, welcoming the exclusion of National Landscapes from the proposed permitted development right, but seeking appropriate consideration of National Landscapes when wind turbines are proposed in their setting, too: our response is available [here](#).
- Continuing to work with the **Grand Union Canal Transfer** (GUCT) design team on the southern section of this significant scheme.
- Assessing the outcome of another legal challenge to the Secretary of State's approval of the **Luton Airport** Development Consent Order: the latest challenge was rejected by the Court of Appeal on 21 May 2026 because it was out of time. The Planning Team has concluded that the High Court's decision in November 2025 to reject the challenge by LADACAN (the Luton and District Association for the Control of Aircraft Noise) is the end of the matter and Luton's proposal will now progress to its implementation.
- Planning proposal (**development management**) casework represents a major proportion of our workload – and one that is also growing – but is

difficult to summarise concisely. The team is looking at how best to report on trending issues for future reports.

- Other significant proposals as set out in the Planning Updates linked above.
9. Officers are also continuing to work on improving our processes, procedures and general ways of working, including how best to exchange intelligence on live casework to Board members and staff. In addition, we are developing training sessions to increase understanding of the planning system – and our role in it – for Board members and staff.

### **Recommendation**

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



# 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 Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2026 at Chinnor Village Hall, Chinnor OX39 4PQ  
commencing at 10.00 AM.**

Present:

Cllr Philip Spicer	Board Member
Cllr Charles Hussey	Board Member
Cllr Gavin McLauchlan	Board Member
Cllr John Griffin	Board Member – Chair
Baljit Dhillon	Board Member
Nicola Thomas	Board Member
Matthew Stanton	Board Member

In attendance:	
Elaine King	Chief Executive Officer
Andy Brock-Doyle	Head of Operations
Kathryn Foster	Senior Finance Manager; S151 Officer
Annette Weiss	Head of Engagements and Partnerships
Lorna Coldwell	Clerk to the Board and Minute taker

## **25/26.15 Standing Items**

### **15.1 Apologies for absence**

Board Members:

Cllr Hector Sants – Buckinghamshire Parish Councils

Cllr Sue Rowland – Oxfordshire Parish Councils

Cllr Louise Price – Three Rivers District Council

Officers:

Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning; Monitoring Officer

Kate Heppell, Head of Landscape

Introductions were made by all.

### **15.2 Declarations of interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

### **15.3 Chair's Announcements**

No announcements were made.

### **15.4 Notice of Urgent Business**

All items covered on the agenda.

## CCB Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2026**15.5 Approval of Minutes of the previous meeting 26<sup>th</sup> February 2026**

The minutes of the meeting 26/02/26 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair. It was noted that two new representatives from Buckinghamshire Council are needed, the Chief Executive Officer has written to them advising.

**15.6 Matters Arising**

All items covered on the agenda.

**15.7 Consideration of Motions Submitted by Members**

None at this meeting.

**15.8 Public Questions**

No members of the public were present.

**25/26.16 Items for Decision****16.1 Quarter 4 Finance Report**

The Senior Finance Manager, Kathryn Foster, reported on the accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026. These are draft figures, with further work to be carried out before the completion of the AGAR. Highlights include:

1. There is a Core deficit of £6k for the full year end 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026. This is a significant improvement on the original budget forecast deficit of £118k, achieved due to a combination of better than anticipated interest income, improved recovery of Core costs against projects, and better utilisation of CDEL funding against Core costs following extensive work to determine what CDEL can be used against. Savings were made against staff costs with the use of consultants rather than employing additional team members.
2. The organisation was allocated £348k of Capital Funds by Defra for financial year 2025/26. A small amount of £5,750 was returned unspent at the end of the year, and £105,750 of funds were returned in respect of the value of the capital lease which will be released annually, effectively meaning that rent costs are funded for the next 4.5 years.
3. Local Authority contributions, as discussed at the March Board meetings, have unfortunately decreased. Officers continue to engage with the LAs to demonstrate where the required contributions are spent in their areas.
4. Project income is £2.566m, costs are £3.122m and there is a deficit of £555k overall. Much of this deficit is driven by the Mend the Gap programme where all funds were received in advance and taken to reserves. The project is now progressing with high levels of expenditure.
5. As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026, cash balances held are £4.6m with £3.76m of these funds held in higher interest earning accounts, the remaining £764k held in instant access accounts.
6. Officers continue to evaluate other options and are in the process of opening a savings account with Unity Trust Bank and are mindful that future funding needs to be invested carefully to ensure the maximum interest is achieved for the benefit of the project.
7. Officers are completing the paperwork for a VAT 33 refund scheme for submission to HMRC and will be completed by Q2 of 2026/27.
8. A business rate exemption application for the office that was made to South Oxfordshire District Council was rejected. Cllr Mclauchlan offered to share contacts to discuss this further with SODC.

It was noted that the summary costs are different to the budget due to funding by CDEL, redeployment of funds and some transformational costs. Officers are mindful to spread monies between different banks and not have it all in one. More work needs to be carried out with regards to month to month forecasting.

With regards to Local Authority and Defra funding, the organisation is most vulnerable in terms of staffing costs. Contingencies are in place, and there is a degree of flexibility within this. Some

## CCB Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2026

operations improvement work is ongoing, with the Data Protection Officer and some HR issues falling into this category.

**1. The Committee OFFERED FEEDBACK as detailed above and APPROVED the Q4 Finance report to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026**

**16.2 2026/27 Budget**

The Senior Finance Manager, Kathryn Foster, provided a detailed paper to set out a proposed 2026/27 core budget. Since the original budget envelope was presented to the Board at the Match meeting, there has been a £176k one year RDEL uplift from Defra, which relieves pressures on what was originally suspected to be a deficit budget. The RDEL funding will be used in part for the Head of Programmes role, which will be recruited this year, rather than CDEL as originally planned.

The significant reduction in Local Authority contributions has meant that additional funding has needed to be identified to support the budget.

Transformation works (IT and HR) were approved last year to be funded from reserves. The Chief Executive Officer advised that additional staff will be given the opportunity to attend the National Conference for training and networking purposes, with team development sessions another part of continuing to invest in staff.

The budget includes provisions for external support for the Data Protection Officer, a necessary role that can not be performed by any existing staff in-house, along with enhanced training provision for staff.

Cllr Spicer suggested that with elections in upcoming years across the various Local Authorities, that to contact all parties to educate who the Chilterns National Landscape are and the work that they carry out would be a good idea so that the organisation is known to all should there be a change in power in the future. Kathryn Foster, Senior Finance Manager, confirmed that all LAs are being written to with three year contribution expectations; it was suggested to include the S151 Officer in this too.

The Chief Executive Officer, Elaine King, advised that Defra is planning to send to all LAs a letter explaining what they need to do and what is expected of them in relation to National Landscapes. This should help explain Conservation Boards, which were set up to provide services so the LAs do not have to deliver the statutory purposes of the designation themselves. The National Landscapes Association has agreed to advocate for Conservation Boards.

It was noted that aspects of the budget feel uncertain, which is an accurate reflection of the current situation. Funding is often provided or offered at short notice, which is helpful nevertheless, with funding this year being greater than had been anticipated.

**1. The Committee OFFERED FEEDBACK as detailed above and APPROVED the updated 2026/27 Budget for recommendation to the Board in June**

**16.3. Quarter 4 Delivery Report**

The Head of Operations, Andy Brock-Doyle, had provided a paper which was taken as read to update the Executive Committee on the progress of the CCB team between January and March 2026 against the financial year 2025-26 Delivery Plan. In Q4:

- 47 (54 in Q3) delivery lines reported as completed or progressing on track
- 31 (28 in Q3) delivery lines reported as being slightly delayed / slightly limited in effectiveness
- 9 (16 in Q3) delivery lines reported as being significantly delayed / significantly limited in

## CCB Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2026

effectiveness

- o 0 (0 in Q3) delivery lines have not yet started
- o 1 (2 in Q3) delivery lines have been placed on hold
- o 16 (8 in Q3) delivery lines have been postponed
- o 5 (1 in Q3) delivery lines have been cancelled

The Head of Operations commented that direction had been taken as instructed by the Executive Committee and staff are being less ambitious in planning work and better at actively managing the existing portfolio. This is shown in the number of items that have been cancelled, although there is still room for improvement. There is no significant change from Q3, workstreams are being moved ahead and not falling further behind, with lots of amazing work being delivered.

Examples of slower than anticipated progress include the Management Plan, which has absorbed a lot of time for various teams. It was underestimated how much time even the “light touch review” would take. This obviously had a knock on effect on other work.

HR compliance continues to progress, but again at a slower rate than originally planned. The high risk areas have been focused on, along with key points of the employee cycle such as onboarding, and additional time is being taken to make sure that any assessment tools are improved so that they will be implemented and used successfully.

Cllr McLauchlan asked whether certain areas of work could be replicated from other agencies or shared with others on a consultancy basis for a fee. The Head of Operations advised that most of these functions are embedded within Local Authorities, who therefore do not need external assistance and are too large an organisation to be copied by the Chilterns National Landscape. Working with the Cotswolds National Landscape team is always investigated but needs often do not align timewise.

Additional administrative staff have been recruited, to enable complete coverage of all necessary functions, and to ensure that everything can be completed in a timely manner. The new Head of Programmes role will also free up capacity for the Head of Operations.

Gap analysis work is being carried out to identify any areas that the Chilterns National Landscape are not compliant in, such as Data Protection and Safeguarding.

It was confirmed that, by May 2027, all HR work should be completed, with only a few items remaining behind schedule.

Cllr Hussey proposed the use of AI as staff capacity is and remains a problem; it was discussed that a policy and guidance regarding the use of AI within the organisation would be needed, and what benefits it would provide. He will forward central government guidance for the use of AI within the organisation. It was noted a “human touch” is always needed, and strong security measures to guarantee safety would be needed, along with assessing any ethical issues staff may have concerning its use.

Cyber training and the need for all staff to be aware of the issues was raised, which will be mandatory for all staff going forward.

### **1. The Committee OFFERED FEEDBACK as detailed above and APPROVED the Q4 Delivery report**

## **25/26.17 Items for Noting**

### **17.1 Annual Planning**

## CCB Executive Committee Meeting

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Elaine King, Chief Executive Officer, circulated a paper to show the progress in developing a four year strategic planning framework. She flagged to the Executive Committee that collaboration takes time, and the Senior Leadership Team want to make sure that all staff are involved in the planning process, and to be clear how their objectives are linked to the Management Plan. This inevitably takes time to do. Once this process has been put in place, subsequent years should be quicker, but the organisation want to complete a robust and well understood plan, where staff can see their contributions.

Matthew Stanton asked how it was decided which areas were going to be stopped, as this may affect staff morale. The Head of Operations advised that a prioritisation exercise was undertaken, and a “top down” strategic look would take place alongside a “bottom up” resource led review. The organisational strategy fits within the team strategy.

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

**17.2 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Update**

Annette Weiss, Head of Engagement and Partnerships along with Board Member Baljit Dhillon, EDI Advisory Group Co-Chair, presented the key priorities for EDI in the organisations Business Plan to 2030.

Baljit Dhillon advised that some encouraging discussions regarding EDI have been held by an enthusiastic group of people who want to assist with the changes to the Board following new members being appointed. She discussed how to use this as an opportunity to evolve and reflect on the way Board members engage with each other and during meetings. She proposes during the June Board meeting, if time is available, to facilitate a breakout session to carry out a reflection piece in smaller groups posing points to be discussed and then feedback given around the themes. Following the movement of members, this would enable a way to create safety and details of how Board Members can work together, contribute in meetings, and feel they are able to ask questions. This will be in addition to the usual training and opportunities for Board Members to become involved in EDI and learn more about it.

It was noted that this exercise will work better in person, so all Board Members are encouraged to attend the June meeting in person, which is also the AGM so an important meeting regardless. Breakout rooms can be organised for anyone who is only able to attend online.

Cllr McLauchlan detailed his experiences in a previous role to identify and implement ideas from staff for them to input into thought processes and will share with the Chief Executive Officer further.

**1. The Committee OFFERED FEEDBACK as detailed above and NOTED the update and AGREED the inclusion of a more substantive EDI discussion at the June Board meeting**

**17.3 Funding Report**

Elaine King, Chief Executive Officer, had circulated a paper to update on progress regarding the delivery of the Funding Strategy, which was taken as read. Wildlife Rich Habitats funding from Defra has been obtained and will be announced publicly next week.

The Chief Executive Officer is investigating corporate funding in collaboration with the National Landscapes Association to diversify income. Further research is needed to identify suitable opportunities.

This financial year is the first of a three year flat cash settlement from Defra with year one figures confirmed and indicative for subsequent. Local Authority contributions, as previously discussed, have decreased this year and staff will continue to engage with LAs to ensure they are aware of the

## CCB Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2026

requirement to contribute financially to reflect the Chilterns National Landscape's role in delivering their statutory duties.

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

**17.4 Chief Executive Officer's Report**

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

- The Senior Leadership Team continue to oversee the organisation's operations and strategic priorities, coordinating delivery across all areas of work with a significant focus on budget setting and business planning.
- Engagement with local MPs and Local Authorities continues, liaising on a wide range of subjects such as chalk streams protection, water quality, planning, nature recovery, and airport expansion.
- There have been a number of staff changes, with various staff members leaving and new recruits. The job specification for the new role of Head of Programmes will be shared to all Executive Committee members for comment.
- Recruitment information for new Secretary of State roles has been circulated, with existing Board Members offering to discuss the role with prospective candidates.

**1. The Committee NOTED the update**

**25/26.18 Any Urgent Business**

None at this time.

**25/26.19 Next Executive Committee meeting**

Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> September at 10am, at The Village Centre, Chinnor.

**Further meeting Dates:**

Planning Committee	Executive Committee	Board
		Thursday 26 <sup>th</sup> June 2026 (including AGM) 10am Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury
No meeting	Tuesday 1 <sup>st</sup> September 2026 10am, The Village Centre Chinnor	Thursday 1 <sup>st</sup> October 206 10am Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury
Thursday 29 <sup>th</sup> October 10am CCB Offices, Chinnor	Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup> November 2026 10am, The Village Centre Chinnor	Thursday 10 <sup>th</sup> December 2026 10am Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury

The meeting was closed at 13.00.

The Chair.....

Date.....

Chilterns Conservation Board

Planning Committee meeting 30<sup>th</sup> April 2026

# Chilterns National Landscape

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE OF  
THE CHILTERNES CONSERVATION BOARD held on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2026 at the offices  
of the Chilterns Conservation Board, The Lodge, 90 Station Road, Chinnor OX39 4HA  
commencing at 10.05 AM**

Present:

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

In attendance:

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

\*listened online

No public present.

The Chair welcomed all present including those online. Introductions were made where necessary.

**25/26.26 Apologies for absence**

Apologies received and accepted from Committee members:

Simon Mortimer – Secretary of State

Apologies received and accepted from Officers:

Elaine King – Chief Executive Officer

**25/26.27 Declarations of Interest**

None declared.

**25/26.28 Notice of Urgent Business**

None.

**25/26.29 Approval of Notes of the previous meetings**

The minutes and notes from the meeting of 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2026 were approved and signed by the Chair.

## Chilterns Conservation Board

Planning Committee meeting 30<sup>th</sup> April 2026**25/26.30 Matters Arising**

The Chair queried some outstanding matters from previous meetings, and noted that the Judicial Summary for the Luton Airport matter had been circulated. She asked if there were any updates on the Grand Union Canal Transfer, and Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy & Planning advised that the second round of consultations is being carried out.

A summary interpretation of the s85 duty in relation to planning is being worked on, and will be circulated to all when completed. The duty as a whole is under review by Central Government.

Guidance for colour palettes as discussed at the January meeting is being considered, however will need external assistance from a professional colour advisor so is reliant on funding. Some other advice will be possible to produce in house, and will be brought to the Planning Committee in due course. Updating the renewable energy guidelines and producing a SANGs guidance document are included within the Officers' schedule of works.

Updates to the National Planning Policy Framework are still with Central Government, as well as the updates to statutory consultees consultation.

Action: MT to forward the full comments made on the Grand Union Canal Transfer application

**25/26.31 Considerations of Motions Submitted by Members**

No motions received.

**25/26.32 Public Question Time**

None in attendance.

**25/26.33 Planning Committee work programme**

Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning had provided a report outlining ongoing and future work on planning guidance, funding opportunities and various initiatives that are part of the work programme.

Membership of the Planning Committee remains as:

Local Authority members	Cllr Robert Carrington (Buckinghamshire) Cllr James Norman (South Oxon) Cllr Louise Price (Three Rivers) – Deputy Chair Cllr Philip Spice (Central Beds) (recognising likely online attendance)
Secretary of State members	Simon Mortimer Matthew Stanton <i>One vacancy</i>
Parish Council members	Cllr Charles Hussey (Bucks Parish Councils) Cllr Sue Rowland (Oxon Parish Councils) – Chair

Along with 2 co-opted members, Chris Hannington and Paul Hayes.

Following guidance from the March Board meeting, additional resources have been provisionally secured to increase the professional planning capacity to 7 days (FTE) per week, subject to sign off at the Executive Committee meeting in May. If members need to contact the Planning team, it is best to do so via the generic [planning@chilterns.org.uk](mailto:planning@chilterns.org.uk) email as all 3 Planning Officers monitor this email and the work can be allocated appropriately.

Local elections will be taking place in certain Local Authority areas in May, although only Three Rivers District Council will have a direct impact on the Chilterns National Landscape

## Chilterns Conservation Board

Planning Committee meeting 30<sup>th</sup> April 2026

The Planning Team will be working on a Planning Function Technical Approach, which will support the Chilterns National Landscape Business Plan up to 2030. It will show the operation mechanisms for implementing the strategic direction of the Chilterns National Landscape. The draft Business Plan when finalised will be signed of by Executive Committee and then full Board in the next two months.

Cllr Hussey asked if Officers are happy that the balance is correct between being able to deliver the plan whilst planning the plan, and was assured that whilst there has been an increase in administration to complete in the long term it will enable a more streamlined future work programme, with structures in place to enable more efficiency in reactive work going forward. The planned reorganisation of Local Government will require a new way of engaging with Local Authorities, and it is hoped that this will enable a closer working relationship.

The new Planning Updates are circulated to all Board members now, along with planning briefings for improved communication between Officers and members. It was noted that they are very useful, and may be of benefit to other National Landscape teams.

Cllr Rowland commented that the live reporting spreadsheet is a useful tool that more members should make use of, and can be used to monitor what has happened with various applications and consultations. It is utilised by Officers to record what work is being carried out.

Action: MT to promote live reporting system in planning updates with links

**1. The Committee NOTED these updates and OFFERED OBSERVATIONS as detailed above**

**25/26.34 Future of Planning Committee**

Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy & Planning had provided a further paper detailing suggestions for the next step in a long running discussion at Planning Committee and Board. This will be a recommendation to be submitted to the Board for agreement in the June meeting.

From an Officer perspective, the administration requirements for the Committee to fulfil the statutory requirements are disproportionate to the work of the Committee which is either retrospective or providing advice to Officers and the Board.

Due to this, Officers are proposing a Planning Advisory Panel which negates the need for a quorum with various representatives, the need to meet in person, and the advertising of the meeting requirements amongst other matters. This would enable more time to be spent on planning matters, rather than administrative tasks along with simplifying the procedure. Concerns were raised regarding the significance given to submissions from a "committee" rather than an "advisory group." It was noted that this would have a negligible impact, and that the fact all three Officers are highly qualified and experienced is of greater significance from a reputational perspective.

Cllr Rowland, Chair of the Planning Committee, expressed support for the proposal to establish an advisory group, subject to the Terms of Reference and the group's name being finalised, together with a review of the arrangements being scheduled in approximately 12 months to ensure they remain appropriate and are operating effectively for all parties.

A working party consisting of Cllr Rowland, Cllr Price, Cllr Hussey, and Cllr Norman will be convened online to finalise Terms of Reference to be brought to all Planning Committee members for agreement before being put to the Board for approval in June. It was agreed that with the new flexibility to return to 4 meetings a year, as hybrid will be easier.

## Chilterns Conservation Board

Planning Committee meeting 30<sup>th</sup> April 2026

Cllr Rowland asked for members to be told when Officers are attending planning enquiries, as many are broadcast online and would be interesting to watch.

Action: MT to share link for any planning enquiries, whether Officers are attending or not

1. **The Committee APPROVED in principle the proposal to transform into an advisory group, subject to the FEEDBACK as indicated above**
2. **The Committee AGREED with the options noted in paragraph 34 of the paper regarding proposed Terms of Reference, subject to further consideration by the convened working group which was ENDORSED with members as indicated above**
3. **The Committee AUTHORISED Officers, subject to endorsement from the Committee Chair to recommend to the June Board meeting approval of the Terms of Reference and the alteration to an advisory group**

### 25/26.35 Development Management Casework Update Q4 2025/26

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

- BC-C&SB PL/25/2447/FA Mop End Battery Farm – the objection was refused by Buckinghamshire Council in March 2026, with almost an entirely National Landscape reasoning.
- Grand Union Canal Transfer CBC & DBC – Phase 2 of public consultation has been completed. This is an enormous infrastructure project to move water from the Midlands to near Luton, by Affinity Water. The extent of the engineering required through the Chilterns National Landscape is not known, but are engaging and Officers are trying to find out more details.
- BC PL/26/00731/OA Land to the West of Stokenchurch Business Park, Ibstone Road, Stokenchurch – the entire site is within the Chilterns National Landscape, and was in the Wycombe District Council Local Plan 2019 for employment. It is a proposed new industrial building with car parking and mitigation to improve the boundary.
- BC PL/25/4490/FA Manor Farm Ibstone Road Ibstone – creation of a new landscape including formation of a new pond and swimming pool. Officers submitted an objection due to concerns of the hydrology that will affect the Hamble Brook, using the Chilterns Chalkstream guidance document.
- BC PL/25/5077/FA The Spinney City Road Radnage – whilst no comments were submitted under protocol, the application poses an interesting design dilemma.
- BC PL/25/6761/VRC Molins near Saunderton – application for a data centre that was originally approved in 2008, novel in that it would have a green roof. An application for housing was refused, an amended plan for the data centre including alterations to glazing has been submitted. Officers would want to ensure that it meets the Chilterns National Landscape lighting guidance.
- SODC P25/S4092/O Land east of Benson Crowmarsh Gifford – is with the Local Authority Planning Department for a decision, Officers have asked for reassurance on planting buffering up in terms of mitigation. It can be seen as part of a wider panorama.
- SODC P25/S1430/O Land at Watlington Road Lewknor – to do with setting within the Chilterns National Landscape. It was refused by SODC, and is with the Planning Inspectorate for appeal.

### 35.1 Land east of Tring (Marshcroft) (verbal update)

This application for 1400 homes was dismissed by the Secretary of State on appeal in 2025, an application was made in September 2025 to resubmit. Dacorum Planning Committee rejected

## Chilterns Conservation Board

Planning Committee meeting 30<sup>th</sup> April 2026

the application in April 2026, as the proposed development would constitute inappropriate development and would result in spatial and visual harm to the openness of the Green Belt, members disagreed that the land was Grey Belt. The benefits of the scheme did not outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and the adjacent Chilterns National Landscape. The applicant failed to adequately address the harm to views from the Ridgeway, proposing only additional tree planting as mitigation, which Chilterns National Landscape Planning Officers considered insufficient.

**1. The Committee NOTED the contents of the paper and ENDORSED the responses made in connection with the applications**

**25/26.36 Planning Policy Casework Update Q4 2025/26**

Victoria Thomson, Planning Adviser (Policy) advised this was a quarter worth reporting for consultations.

The Buckinghamshire Council Local Plan, Regulation 18 consultation made no reference to the Chilterns boundary which was disappointing. The Planning Officer made views known and offered assistance, the Regulation 19 consultation is expected soon.

Proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) raised a number of concerns for the future protection of National Landscapes, a detailed assessment was provided to the National Landscapes Association to be included in their submission which is available in full online.

The Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance was another national consultation, consolidating 4 existing different sources of government guidance. A response was submitted that expressed concern regarding the loss of reference to understanding context, a key stage in place shaping and the promotion of good design.

Dacorum Local Plan Examination – Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy & Planning attended the examination to address a number of issues with regards to the National Landscape, which the Inspectors took seriously.

The North Herts Design Code was issued for consultation in March, an made no reference to the Chilterns National Landscape. Officers issued a response offering constructive advice on how to address the National Landscape and practical support to do so.

The Chair commented that it was an excellent paper, and gave thanks to Victoria Thomson, Planning Adviser.

**2. The Committee NOTED the contents of the paper and ENDORSED the responses made on planning policy matters under delegated authority**

**25/26.37 Urgent Business**

None.

Cllr Norman raised a concern about Planning Committee reforms with Local Authorities, regarding what a committee will define as “minor development.” He also commented that there have been several appeals, whilst not in the Chilterns National Landscape, which show inconsistencies with Inspectors.

**25/26.38 Date of Next and Future Meetings**

- Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2026, Chinnor Offices

Chilterns Conservation Board

Planning Committee meeting 30<sup>th</sup> April 2026

The meeting was closed at 12.56.

**The Chair**.....

**Date**.....