



Chilterns National Landscape

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

Thursday 1st October 2026 at 10.00am at

The Gateway Conference Centre, Gatehouse Rd, Aylesbury HP19 8FF

Board members are encouraged to attend in person to ensure the meeting is quorate; however, voting is not permitted for remote attendees. will not be accessible online.

The workshop for Board members and the Senior Leadership Team only will begin at 10am and will not be accessible online.

The Board Meeting will commence at 11am, opening for observer members, CCB officers and online attendees at 10.45am.

AGENDA

10am Workshop: “Board Reflection – Better Conversations, Better Decisions” - 45 minutes

10.45am Online session opens for 11am meeting start

1. Standing Items

- 1.1 Apologies for Absence
- 1.2 Declarations of Interest in any of the Agenda Items
- 1.3 Notice of Urgent Business
- 1.4 Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings (26 March and 25 June AGM), and ratification of decisions made ‘in principle’ at the AGM
- 1.5 Matters Arising
- 1.6 Consideration of Motions submitted by members
- 1.7 Public Questions
- 1.8 Chair’s Announcements

2. Items for Decision

- 2.1 Members’ Allowances Scheme
- 2.2 Further changes to the Constitution
- 2.3 Co-option to the Board and Appointment of Members to Committees and Advisory Groups
- 2.4 Business Planning

3. Items for Noting / Information

- 3.1 CEO Update
- 3.2 EDI Update
- 3.3 Planning Function Update and Planning Advisory Group action points (5 August)
- 3.4 Executive Committee Draft Minutes (1 September)

4. Any Urgent Business

5. Next Meeting: Thursday 10th December 2026, 10am, Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury.

Future meeting dates 2026-27

(2027 Board and ExCo dates to be confirmed under item 1.4.)

Executive Committee	Board	Planning Advisory Group
Thu 19 Nov 2026, 10am Thu 25 Feb 2027, 10am Thu 20 May 2027, 10am Thu 2 Sep 2027, 10am Thu 18 Nov 2027, 10am	Thu 10 Dec 2026, 10am Thu 25 Mar 2027, 10am Thu 17 Jun 2027, 10am (AGM) Thu 30 Sep 2027, 10am Thu 9 Dec 2027, 10am	Thu 29 Oct 2026, 10am (Dates in 2027 to be set by the Group.)

Dr Elaine King, Chief Executive Officer

Item 1.4 **Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings (26 March and 25 June AGM), and ratification of decisions made 'in principle' at the AGM**

Author: Matt Thomson, Monitoring Officer

Purpose of Report: To seek ratification of resolutions made 'in principle' at the 25 June Board meeting and AGM, alongside approval of the draft minutes of that meeting and the meeting of 26 March.

Background

1. Due to the extraordinary nature of the June Board meeting being held online, the meeting was not quorate because the Local Government Act 1972 requires members to be physically present. Therefore, no formal resolutions were made but the Board discussed agenda items, reviewed reports and reached an informal consensus. Decisions were made 'in principle', for subsequent ratification at the next Board meeting.
2. Attached to this paper are the draft minutes of the Board meetings of 26 March 2026 and 25 June 2026, the latter of which included the AGM.
3. This paper seeks the formal ratification of the in-principle resolutions made at the 25 June meeting (which includes the in-principle approval of the draft 26 March minutes), and the approval of the draft 25 June/AGM minutes.
4. Note that it is not the intention that the Board should *reconsider* the in-principle resolutions previously agreed, simply to provide the formal ratification of those resolutions. However, if there are significant concerns they may be raised, and consideration given to those concerns. The Board may choose to ratify each resolution in turn or ratify all resolutions subject to any matters raised in the meeting.
5. The in-principle resolutions of the 25 June meeting are reproduced below (excluding the resolution to adjourn the formal meeting for the climate presentation, and resolutions only to 'note' the contents of a paper). These should be read alongside the original papers and the draft minutes appended to this agenda. Updates on progress with these work areas may be provided by the relevant officers at the meeting.

26/27.1 Standing Items

1.1 Election of Chair and Deputy Chair (AGM item)

It was agreed unanimously for Cllr Louise Price be re-elected as Chair of the Board, and for Cllr Hector Sants to be re-elected as Deputy Chair, also unanimously.

1.5 Approval of Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 26.03.26 were approved as a true record and signed.

26/27.2 Items for Decision

2.1 Finance Report

1. The Board **APPROVED** the Annual Accounts for the year end 31st March 2026
2. The Board **APPROVED** the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2025-26, with signing of the documents to be completed via post under the Urgency Procedure
3. The Board **APPROVED** the internal audit plan for 2025-26
4. The Board **NOTED** the initial findings from the internal audit

2.2 FY 2026/27 Budget

1. The Board **APPROVED** the final budget for 2026/27

2.3 FY 2026/27 Annual Delivery Plan

1. The Board **NOTED** the work undertaken, including with the Executive Committee and managers, to define priority outcomes and key delivery areas for the next four years in line with the Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan
2. The Board **APPROVED** the Annual Delivery Plan for 2026-27, subject to further discussion with the Executive Committee and any substantive changes to be approved at a future Board meeting
3. The Board emphasised the need to ensure that work to address capacity is completed and reported back to the Executive Committee

2.4 Evolution of the Planning Committee

1. The Board **RESOLVED** 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
2. The Board **APPROVED** the proposed Terms of Reference with no alterations
3. The Board **APPROVED** the consequent changes to the Constitution with no alterations

2.5 Appointment of Members to Committees and Advisory Groups

1. The Board **APPOINTED** Secretary of State appointee Jen Morgan to fill the vacancy on Planning Advisory Group
2. The Board **NOTED** expressions of interest in joining advisory groups for later confirmation

2.6 Lessons Learned from the Management Plan Review

1. The Board **NOTED** the contents of the paper
2. The Board **GAVE THANKS** to all mentioned for their contributions to the successful refresh of the Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan

2.7 Risk Register

1. The Board **APPROVED** the updated Risk Register

2.9 Future Meeting Dates

1. The Board **APPROVED** the calendar of Board and Executive Committee meetings as above (see agenda sheet)
2. Officers will circulate dates for an inaugural Planning Advisory Group meeting in July 2026

26/27.3 Items for Noting/Information

3.2 EDI Update

1. The Board **NOTED** the update and **APPROVED** the inclusion of a facilitated discussion at the October board meeting

Recommendation

1. That the Board **RATIFIES** the resolutions made 'in principle' at the 25 June meeting (including AGM) set out under paragraph 5, including approval of the minutes of the meeting of 26 March (appendix 1)
2. That the Board **APPROVES** the draft minutes of the meeting of 25 June, including the AGM (appendix 2).

Board Meeting

Thursday 26th March 2026

Chilterns National Landscape

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CONSERVATION BOARD FOR
THE CHILTERNs 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 26th 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 has announced a development corporation for the Greater Oxford area, similar to the situation in Cambridge,

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Thursday 26th March 2026

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 projected deficit will reduce 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 1st 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 and that this is already in place 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 explain the work being carried out by the staff team with regards to Farmer Clusters throughout the Chilterns. This work forms part of efforts to support wildlife and ecosystems on farmland, and provide support for farmers.

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 recent work carried out by the Planning team. Officers are seeing the benefits of appointing an additional Planning Adviser, Victoria Thomson, in September 2025. The team is achieving more and is 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 Board members were invited to provide feedback on items they would like to see in updates and reports to the Board.

Cllr Greg Smith asked how Buckinghamshire Council had not appropriately considered the Chilterns National Landscape in its draft Local Plan. Matt Thomson advised that they, along with other Local Authorities, had not approached the CCB in the early stages of the draft plans, which is one of the requirements for a LA in the s85 Protected

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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 revitalised under its new co-Chairs, Baljit Dhillon and Juliet Vickery. The Group is supporting the organisation's EDI programme and helping to embed the EDI Ambition Statement across all activities, including by defining EDI objectives and demonstrating impact through the emerging 2026-30 Business Plan. The co-Chairs noted the breadth of work already under way and the opportunities ahead.

Inclusion is not simply about access; it also unlocks diverse perspectives, knowledge and creativity that can strengthen collective stewardship of the landscape. Communities and cultures bring varied approaches to caring for the environment, and fostering stronger connections enables these shared ideas to benefit the Chilterns.

The Accessibility Hub has recently been launched on the website, and Board members were encouraged to promote it across 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

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. It outlined five

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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 25th June 2026, 10am St Leonards Parish Hall, Jenkins Lane, St Leonards, Tring HP23 6NW.

Future meeting dates for 2026:

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

The meeting was closed at 12.52.

The Chair.....

Date.....

Board Meeting

Thursday 25th June 2026

Chilterns National Landscape

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

Due to the extreme heat and the Red Weather Alert issued by the Met Office, the meeting was held online via Teams on Thursday 25th June 2026 at 10.00am

MEMBERS PRESENT

Appointed by Local Authorities

Cllr Louise Price (Chair)
Cllr Val Bryant
Cllr James Norman
Cllr Justine Fulford
Cllr Gavin Mclauchlan
Cllr Caroline Smith-Wright
Cllr Kathryn Gibbon
Cllr Greg Smith
Cllr Adrian England

Appointing Body

Three Rivers District Council
North Hertfordshire Council
South Oxfordshire District Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Oxfordshire County Council
Hertfordshire County Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Dacorum Borough Council

Appointed by the Secretary of State

Simon Mortimer
Juliet Vickery
Jen Morgan
Nicola Thomas
Baljit Dhillon
Catherine Moncrieff
Gemma Harper

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

Elected by Parish Councils

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

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

CCB Staff

Elaine King
Matt Thomson
Andy Brock-Doyle
Kathryn Foster
Annette Weiss
Kate Heppell
Lorna Coldwell
Ruth Staples-Rolfe
Eloise Small

Chief Executive Officer; Head of Paid Service
Head of Planning; Monitoring Officer
Head of Operations
Senior Finance Manager; Section 151 Officer
Head of Engagement and Partnerships
Head of Landscape
Clerk to the Board
Mend the Gap Project Manager
Administration Officer

Board Meeting

Thursday 25th June 2026**Other**

Anna Oliveri
Peter Phippen
Dave Keeley

Natural England
The Chiltern Society
Oxfordshire County Council

No members of the public were present.

Due to the extraordinary nature of the meeting being held online, the meeting was not quorate as the Local Government Act 1972 requires members to be physically present. Therefore, no formal resolutions were made but the Board discussed agenda items, reviewed reports and reached an informal consensus. Decisions were made 'in principle', for subsequent ratification at the next Board meeting; hence **all resolutions recorded in these minutes should be taken as being 'in principle' only**. Any decision required due to time constraints could be made under the Urgency Procedure (article 2.29 of the Code of Governance in the Constitution 2025).

Prior to the meeting, Matt Thomson, Head of Planning, in the role of Monitoring Officer, had circulated a paper to all Board Members with details explaining this approach.

26/27.1 Standing Items**1.1 Election of Chair and Deputy Chair (AGM item)**

It was agreed unanimously for Cllr Louise Price be re-elected as Chair of the Board, and for Cllr Hector Sants to be re-elected as Deputy Chair, also unanimously.

1.2 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from:

Board Members

Cllr Philip Spicer, Central Bedfordshire Council

Matthew Stanton, Secretary of State

Cllr John Griffin, Oxfordshire Parish Councils

Officers

None.

Guests

Tom Beeston, The Chiltern Society

1.3 Declarations of Interest in any of the agenda items

None.

1.4 Notice of Urgent Business

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

1.5 Approval of Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 26.03.26 were approved as a true record and signed.

1.6 Matters Arising

None.

Board Meeting

Thursday 25th June 2026**1.7 Considerations of motions submitted by members**

No motions were submitted. The Chair advised that members could submit any motions for discussion and agreement by the Board when they feel it necessary. A document will be circulated by Matt Thomson, Head of Planning, setting out the procedure for this. In practice, a member should advise the Chair of the Board and the Chief Executive Officer and the item can be added to a future agenda.

1.8 Public Question Time.

No public present.

1.9 Resolution to Adjourn the meeting

A resolution was passed to adjourn the meeting for a presentation to the Board "Planning for Climate Change across the Chilterns National Landscape" by Dr Gemma Harper and Professor Kate Heppell.

The session comprised a highly informative presentation and discussion, with many questions and observations from Board members. Members thanked both Gemma and Kate for their clear and thought-provoking presentations on this important subject. It was agreed that the Board will discuss the subject more at future meetings, especially development of the Climate Adaptation Plan for the Chilterns National Landscape.

The meeting was reconvened.

1.10 Chair's Announcements

None to be made.

26/27.2 Items for Decision**2.1 Finance Report**

Kathryn Foster, Senior Finance Manager, had provided a comprehensive paper detailing the current financial position of the organisation. The overall combined deficit was £577,790. This comprised a Core Surplus of £842 and a Project deficit of £578,632.

The Core result exceeded forecast, which originally predicted a deficit of £118,000. This improved position is a result of better interest income and improved income recovery from projects and CDEL alongside staffing cost savings. The Project deficit results from spending on projects that hold reserves in advance. Project reserves are £3 million at the end of the financial year, with £762,000 unrestricted Core reserves.

The Reserves Policy details a minimum amount that should be held, based on various criteria. The Senior Finance Manager suggests retaining a higher level of reserves due to the forecasted deficit in future years. As a publicly funded body, it is difficult to increase reserves annually as Defra issues grants with the stipulation that all funds be used in-year.

The Internal Audit completed as part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return made some recommendations, including the need for an update to the Financial Regulations and member allowances, and to ensure the Risk Register is reviewed every 12 months. The final report will be presented at a subsequent Board meeting. The AGAR will need to be authorised via the Urgency Procedure, due to legislative requirements.

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It was noted that some lines in the budget had sizeable variances, such as consultancy. The variance on consultancy was partly due to a reallocation from staff costs (planning officer not recruited and planning consultancy being used instead) and transformation costs (originally planned to be funded from reserves but covered in-year due to savings overall versus budget).

- 1. The Board APPROVED the Annual Accounts for the year end 31st March 2026**
- 2. The Board APPROVED the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2025-26, with signing of the documents to be completed via post under the Urgency Procedure**
- 3. The Board APPROVED the internal audit plan for 2025-26**
- 4. The Board NOTED the initial findings from the internal audit**

2.2 FY 2026/27 Budget

The Senior Finance Manager, Kathryn Foster, had circulated a paper with the final budget overview, following the budget envelope presented to the Board on 26/03/26. The budget envelope was approved by the Board at the March meeting, with some alterations made following discussion at the Executive Committee meeting in May. Additional funding from Defra has resulted in a break-even budget, rather than the £58,000 deficit as previously expected.

The proposed budgets for subsequent financial years remain as they were, with no significant alterations. Officers are looking for additional funding to plug the deficit, and cost saving measures such as the VAT review being carried out, along with utilising different funding streams from Defra. Updated forecasts will be provided at the December Board meeting.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the final budget for 2026/27**

2.3 FY 2026/27 Annual Delivery Plan

Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations, had provided a comprehensive paper to update the Board on the strategic & annual planning that had taken place this year, and to seek approval for the Annual Delivery Plan (FY26-27).

A significant amount of work has been carried out with the Executive Committee and with managers throughout the organisation to ensure alignment. A four-year plan (FY2026-30) will sit alongside the Management Plan (which is for all stakeholders to deliver) and focusses on what the Chilterns National Landscape (CNL) Team will specifically deliver over the next four years.

Five priority outcomes have been identified and agreed for the organisation for the next four years. Partnership working and improved data and evidence have been given increased visibility.

Additional work is required, and any significant changes to the Plan will be brought back to the Board for approval at a future meeting. In the meantime, the Annual Delivery Plan presented to the Board has also been submitted to Defra as required for our funding arrangements.

The plan comprises 20 key delivery areas which will be reported to the Executive Committee. This will reduce the amount of data and ensure information is more accessible and focused more clearly where important delivery lines are delayed. The development of KPIs and measuring of success will be a focus for the Senior Leadership Team in the upcoming year. This will develop around other monitoring and evaluation requirements to ensure an efficient framework.

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The Head of Operations confirmed that, whilst always challenging, capacity is largely in place to ensure planned work can be delivered, especially in relation to projects, with capacity issues focused on a limited number of roles. Difficult decisions have already been made to stop or postpone some items, with more work being required on prioritisation.

The recruitment of a new Head of Programmes and the new Office Administrator will also have a positive impact on the capacity of the team.

- 1. The Board NOTED the work undertaken, including with the Executive Committee and managers to define priority outcomes and key delivery areas for the next four years in line with the Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan**
- 2. The Board APPROVED the Annual Delivery Plan for 2026-27, subject to further discussion with the Executive Committee and any substantive changes to be approved at a future Board meeting**
- 3. The Board emphasised the need to ensure that work to address capacity is completed and reported back to the Executive Committee**

2.4 Evolution of the Planning Committee

Matt Thomson, Head of Planning, discussed the review of the future of the Planning Committee. He had circulated proposed Terms of Reference for a Planning Advisory Group (PAG) that helps to navigate obstacles placed by legislation - such as the need to quorate and meet in person.

Cllr Rowland, Chair of the Planning Committee, advised that, whilst she feels disappointed at the need to move in this direction, it is the best way from a practical point of view and hopes it will ultimately strengthen the planning function and encourage all Board members to contemplate what they can contribute to the PAG, as broad and diverse perspectives would be welcomed and people are easier to accommodate in a hybrid meeting format.

- 1. The Board RESOLVED 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**
- 2. The Board APPROVED the proposed Terms of Reference with no alterations**
- 3. The Board APPROVED the consequent changes to the Constitution with no alterations**

2.5 Appointment of Members to Committees and Advisory Groups

It was confirmed membership of the Executive Committee as follows:

Local Authorities:

Cllr Gavin Mclauchlan

Cllr Louise Price

Cllr Philip Spicer

Vacancy

Secretary of State:

Baljit Dhillon

Matthew Stanton

Nicola Thomas

Parish Councils:

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Cllr Hector Sants (Chair)
Cllr John Griffin (Deputy Chair)

Non-Voting Observers:
Cllr Sue Rowland (Parish Councils)
Cllr Charles Hussey (Parish Councils)

It was confirmed membership of the Planning Advisory Group as follows:

Local Authorities:
Cllr Robert Carington
Cllr James Norman
Cllr Louise Price (Deputy Chair)
Cllr Philip Spicer

Secretary of State:
Simon Mortimer
Matthew Stanton
Vacancy

Parish Councils:
Cllr Sue Rowland (Chair)
Cllr Charles Hussey

Non-Voting Co-opted Members:
Paul Hayes
Chris Hannington

Matt Thomson, Head of Planning, encouraged local authority members to attend an Executive Committee meeting as a guest, or to speak with an existing member. Cllr Gibbon asked for further information as to what membership entails.

Jen Morgan offered to sit on the newly formed PAG, with other Secretary of State members expressing an interest in the future. Again, all Board members were invited to attend a meeting as a guest. Expressions of interest for other advisory groups will be circulated to those Chairs imminently.

- 1. The Board APPOINTED Secretary of State appointee Jen Morgan to fill the vacancy on Planning Advisory Group**
- 2. The Board NOTED expressions of interest in joining advisory groups for later confirmation**

2.6 Lessons Learned from the Management Plan Review

Matt Thomson, Head of Planning, had circulated a paper that was taken as read. Key lessons included learning about resourcing requirements and building those needs into planning development of the next plan. A larger steering group including external stakeholders would be beneficial, as well as increasing engagement with stakeholders and highlighting the legislative necessity of them participating.

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The 'strategy' role on Senior Leadership Team (SLT) had been amended to share responsibility for development of the Management Plan more broadly, led by the CEO, to address capacity and prioritisation issues.

Members were asked to consider joining the Task and Finish Group for the next review, which will be gearing up next year for a much more comprehensive review.

Thanks were given to members of the Management Plan Review Task and Finish Group and other contributors:

Gemma Harper (Chair)

Simon Mortimer

Hector Sants

Joe Stewart (former member)

Matt Thomson

Elaine King

Kate Heppell

Annette Weiss

Vicki Pearce

Anna Oliveri (Natural England)

Stephen Rudd (Natural England)

Hazel McDowell (Natural England)

All individual and organisations who responded to consultations.

- 1. The Board NOTED the contents of the paper**
- 2. The Board GAVE THANKS to all mentioned for their contributions to the successful refresh of the Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan**

2.7 Risk Register

The Chief Executive Officer, Elaine King, had circulated a paper in advance. She commented that the organisation is in a much stronger position than when the last Risk Register was reviewed, however we cannot be complacent. The register has been updated in line with the new Management Plan, strategic planning, the budget and feedback from Board Members. The document consolidates risks, strengthens links to strategic priorities and provides the Board with clearer oversight. It was noted that this Risk Register relates to the Chilterns National Landscape organisation, and not the landscape itself. In answer to a question, she confirmed that GDPR and Privacy risks are addressed; for example, a Data Protection Officer has been appointed.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the updated Risk Register**

2.8 Chief Executive Officer Update

The Chief Executive Officer had provided an update of work carried out since the previous Board meeting in March 2026. Highlights included:

- The Senior Leadership Team continues to oversee the organisation's operations, and strategic priorities, meeting weekly. There has been a significant focus on ongoing budget development and business planning, through to 2030.
- Engaging with MPs and Local Authorities on a range of subjects.
- The results from the staff engagement survey conducted in October 2025 continue to be taken forward with specific measures put in place

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Elaine King, the Chief Executive Officer, advised that dates were being brought to Board Members earlier than previous years to enable planning in busy diaries. The dates were proposed as:

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

Dates for the Planning Advisory Group will be circulated to PAG members for them to agree.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the calendar of Board and Executive Committee meetings as above**
- 2. Officers will circulate dates for an inaugural Planning Advisory Group meeting in July 2026**

26/27.3 Items for Noting/Information**3.1 Report on Nature Recovery and Climate Adaptation Plan**

Kate Heppell, Head of Landscape, updated the Board with the progress on the Nature Recovery Plan and the next steps for the Climate Adaptation Plan. Work continues with external partners and stakeholders, along with the team of the Chilterns National Landscape. Research has been commissioned for a systematic review of scientific and policy literature, climate modelling to assess impacts on “landscape character”, and visualisations of potential future landscapes. Findings will be presented at the National Landscape Association Conference in July 2026.

[Nature Recovery Plan | Chilterns National Landscape](#)

1. The Board NOTED the update**3.2 EDI Update**

Annette Weiss, Head of Engagement and Partnerships, alongside Baljit Dhillon, EDI Advisory Group Co-Chair, reported that upskilling all staff in EDI, through further training and development is a focus for the group. A range of EDI training for both staff and Board members has been provided over the last 2-3 years and is part of a continuous and ongoing development programme.

There will be a short period of reflection at the October Board meeting, to facilitate discussions on how the Board supports constructive challenges and to reflect on what will help members to make the best decisions and contribute in a meaningful way.

- 1. The Board NOTED the update and APPROVED the inclusion of a facilitated discussion at the October board meeting**

3.3 Planning Function Update

Matt Thomson, Head of Planning, updated the Board on the planning function activities in Q1 of 2026-27. Monthly planning briefings are being circulated to members, and he welcomes any feedback on this increased communication. There are two consultant Planning Advisers, both part time, alongside the Head of Planning, who amongst other things respond to consultations on

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national and local planning policy, planning applications and major infrastructure proposals, working with other National Landscapes and the National Landscapes Association where appropriate.

1. The Board NOTED the update

26/27.4 Minutes and Recommendations of Committees

4.1 Executive Committee Draft minutes (19.05.26)

4.2 Planning Committee Draft minutes (30.04.26)

1. The Board NOTED the draft Committee minutes

26/27.5 Any Urgent Business

None.

26/27.6 Handover to new Chair (if applicable)

Cllr Price remained as Chair to the Board, therefore no handover was necessary.

26/27.7 Next Meeting

The next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 1st October 2026, 10am at Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury.

Future meeting dates:

Planning Committee Meetings	Executive Committee Meetings	Board Meetings
Inaugural Planning Advisory Group meeting - TBC	Tuesday 1 st September, 10am, The Village Centre, Chinnor	Thursday 1 st October 10am, Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury
Thursday 29 th October 2026, 10am CCB Offices, Chinnor	Thursday 19 th November, 10am, The Village Centre, Chinnor	Thursday 10 th December, 10am, Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury

The meeting was closed at 13.21.

The Chairman.....

Date.....

- impacts for the organisation, beyond perhaps sending a letter etc., such motions should not require much notice and require little discussion.
- b. Motions declaring recognition of an issue or setting a particular policy or emphasis of policy that is already broadly aligned with existing strategic policy and priorities. This might include declaring a climate or biodiversity emergency or signing up to a declaration made by other relevant organisations. A good recent example is Buckinghamshire's resolution in relation to Chalk Streams (see annex 1).
 - c. Motions seeking new or changes to policy, new areas of work, etc. John Nicholls' paper on principles of delegation for the Constitution in December 2023 is a good example. Such motions may require significant discussion, as well as needing to be supported by evidence etc, and will inevitably impact on the organisation's capacity and resources.
9. In terms of checks and balances (which will need to be defined in procedures and potentially in the Constitution), considerations will include:
 - a. That motions require a proposer and a seconder to be considered by the Board or Committee. A higher degree of member support might be sought for more complex motions.
 - b. That resolutions may be made on the basis of a simple majority vote. This is normal practice for Board/Committee decisions, and the Constitution does not currently specify any circumstances under which a specific majority or unanimity is required.
 - c. Circumstances under which advance notice of a motion is required. For example, using the broad types of motion outlined above, type (a) could be made without advance notice (but preferably set out under this agenda item, type (b) could be made in sufficient time for the details of and evidence in support of the motion – similar to that given in Annex 1 – to be circulated with the papers, and type (c) could require at least a month's notice to ensure that papers can be included and officers and other members can have the opportunity to consider impacts.
 - d. Motions that have the potential to impact on programmed activities and/or require additional capacity or resources should be required to be accompanied by proposals as to how these can be accommodated.
 10. Members are therefore asked to consider whether there is a role for and an appetite for motions to be submitted to the Board and its Committees. If so, whether officers should be tasked with drafting guidance, procedures and/or changes to the Constitution, and along which lines. Officers' recommendation would be that the Governance Review Task and Finish Group be charged with exploring details of these matters for approval by the Board.
 11. If there is no appetite for member motions, the Board could resolve to remove the item from the Order of Business specified in the Constitution.

Recommendation

1. That members **CONSIDER** the contents of this paper and, if satisfied that Member motions should be a part of the Board's role, **INSTRUCT** the Governance Review Task and Finish Group to advise officers on draft guidance and procedures, and propose changes to the Constitution if necessary, for approval by the Board.

Annex 1: Buckinghamshire Council notice of motion to Council (approved on 25 November 2025)**Notice of Motion – Protecting Buckinghamshire’s Chalk Streams**

Proposer: Councillor Ade Osibogun

Seconded: Councillor David Moore

This motion seeks to reinforce the Council's existing commitments under the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and previous recommendations made by the Transport, Environment, Communities and Climate Change Select Committee (TECC), ensuring that Buckinghamshire continues to lead the way nationally in protecting and restoring its chalk streams — one of our county's most precious and globally significant natural assets.

This Council notes:

- Buckinghamshire is home to many globally rare and ecologically important chalk streams, including the The Wye, River Misbourne, River Chess, Hamble Brook and Hughenden Stream. They are one of the wonders of the world. These beautiful habitats are a defining feature of our natural heritage and contribute to biodiversity, flood mitigation, and public wellbeing.
- Only 260 chalk streams exist globally, the vast majority of which are located in southern and eastern England. Buckinghamshire therefore has an international responsibility to protect them.
- Chalk streams are under severe threat due to over-abstraction, pollution, and inappropriate development.
- The Chilterns Chalk Stream Project, The Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, CaBA Chalk Stream Strategy, and the Chilterns Conservation Boards Chalk Stream Planning Guidance offer a blueprint for responsible planning and protection of these habitats.

This Council therefore resolves:

1. That as Local Planning Authority it has due regard when preparing the emerging Local Plan for Buckinghamshire to:
 - a. the Chilterns Chalk Streams Planning Guidance, in relation to:
 - Key planning principles to ensure avoidance of harm and support positive outcomes for chalk streams health and biodiversity.
 - Specific policy recommendations covering water use, biodiversity, sustainable drainage, and development buffers.
 - b. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes and specifically: PRIORITY 10: Conserve, enhance and restore Chalk Streams and associated measures.
2. To work with key partners including the Chilterns Chalk Stream Project, the various Catchment Partnerships, BBOWT, River Thame Conservation Trust and other partners

to publicly promote the importance, status and protection of chalk streams across Buckinghamshire.

3. To request that Cabinet write to DEFRA and local water companies urging action to further regulate abstraction and invest in water infrastructure that protects chalk streams and seeks to minimise any flood risk.
4. Ensure that the actions from this motion and any subsequent policy implementation remain consistent with future legislative developments, including amendments to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the Environment Act 2021, and any successor biodiversity or water management legislation.

Item 2.1**Members' Allowances Scheme**

Author: Kathryn Foster, Senior Finance Manager; Matt Thomson, Monitoring Officer

Purpose of Report: Outline and seek approval for proposed updates to our Members Allowances Scheme – Appendix 1 of CCB's Constitution.

Background

1. The CCB's Members' Allowances Scheme is appended to our Constitution as Appendix 1, but is not formally a part of the Constitution, enabling details to be updated where necessary by the Executive Committee without reference to the full Board, unless "changes to the rates would alter the structure of the scheme in the Constitution, or could not be accommodated within the Budget". The current Scheme has been in place since June 2016 without review.
2. Members of the Board are entitled to allowances under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 ("the Regulations"), which are explicitly applied to Conservation Boards. The Regulations are issued under the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the relevant provisions of which are applied to the CCB through our Establishment Order. The allowances are therefore provided for in statute in the same way as are allowances for local authority members.

Proposals

3. This year, our internal audit report noted that we had paid historic back dated allowances to eligible members. They advised that backdated payments should be recognised as a one-off exception and not adopted as standard practice, with future payments processed in a timely manner in accordance with the approved Scheme. They recommended we update the Scheme to clearly reflect this and reinforce that allowances should be claimed and paid in line with the scheme.
4. We also need to make other updates. The newly established Planning Advisory Group needs to be included in the Schedule as a special case, as previously agreed by the Board. This change is necessary as currently advisory groups are not eligible for Members Allowances.
5. The Scheme also needs to be updated to reflect new HMRC mileage rates.
6. Currently only 11 out of 25 Members claim allowances, costing approximately £10k per annum. If all allowances were claimed the annual cost would be approximately £20k representing a significant additional cost in our budget.
7. The changes necessary to address the above potentially (a) alter the structure of the Scheme and (b) affect the ability of the Scheme to be met within the current Budget; hence this paper seeks full Board approval for the proposed changes.

Proposed Changes to the Members Allowances Scheme

8. It is proposed that revised Scheme presented in Appendix 1 be effective from 1 October subject to approval by the Board. It was not practical to represent the amendments clearly as tracked changes, but the Scheme has been revised as follows:
 - a. Adding a statement that the Scheme will be reviewed on annual basis (a requirement of the Regulations).
 - b. Adding the Planning Advisory Group (PAG) specifically into the Scheme (where appropriate as a replacement for references to the Planning Committee); the

Board had determined in June that PAG members should qualify for allowances to reflect the importance that the Board places on the work of this Group.

- c. Specifying that allowances must be claimed in-year and no backdating of allowances will be permitted beyond the current financial year.
 - d. Including a generic statement that payments of mileage allowances will be paid in line with prevailing HMRC rates to reduce the need to update those figures as they change (the current figures will be included for ease of reference as an 'information note' not forming a formal part of the Scheme).
 - e. Removing the reference to the Board's gratitude towards Members who do not claim allowances following an earlier observation from the Board that this appeared to passively discourage claims contrary to the purpose of the allowances being to avoid exclusion from membership on the basis of cost.
9. Following discussion at Executive Committee on 1 September, we recommend consideration be given to a general allowance for membership of our advisory groups to encourage and recognise participation there. The Cotswolds National Landscape Board (CNLB) include an additional allowance for this purpose of £200 per annum, per group, for a maximum of two groups per member. One of the CNLB's advisory groups that benefits from this allowance is their Planning and Infrastructure Working Group, although this is differently constituted from our PAG. Amendments proposed to accommodate this are highlighted in yellow in the Appendix. For budgetary reasons, it is currently proposed that this allowance would only be paid to members not already being paid a special allowance, but this is open to discussion.

Potential further changes for future consideration

10. A number of future further changes have been suggested, and officers seek a steer on whether these should be pursued for inclusion in the next annual review of the Scheme. These could be considered in more detail by the Finance Advisory Group and/or Governance Review Task and Finish Group.
11. **Chair and Deputy Chair allowances:** As part of our ongoing review of the Constitution, we need to consider the roles and responsibilities of committees/groups and their Chairs and Deputy chairs, where applicable. Linked to this, we recommend that consideration should in due course be given to the level of Members allowances for the Chairs and Deputy chairs of the Board and its committees and advisory groups.
12. Under the existing Scheme, the allowances for the Board Chair and Chair of Executive Committee have parity, but this does not reflect the significant additional responsibilities of the Board Chair over and above meeting attendance. The same is not the case for the Executive Committee Chair, whose role is closer to the chair of the Planning Committee/Advisory Group. It is understood that the current Scheme was drafted on the understanding that the Board Chair also chaired Executive Committee (which is the case with the Cotswolds National Landscape Board).
13. **Planning Advisory Group:** The Scheme is currently amended to ensure that the Planning Advisory Group members can claim allowances on the same basis as the previous Planning Committee. However, a historic disparity exists whereby the Chair of Planning Committee is eligible for the same allowances as the Deputy Chair of ExCo and the Deputy Chair of the Planning Committee is only eligible for a committee allowance.
14. **Additional allowances:** We also recommend that consideration be given in due course to childcare allowance and dependent care allowances for members, which are allowed for under the Regulations.
15. **Allowances by default:** Consideration might also be given to paying allowances to all Members by default with an option for members to formally opt out/forego their

allowances on annual basis. This is how the Cotswold Conservation Board operates. Whilst an additional cost to the CCB, this approach would promote clarity both for members and for budgeting.

Recommendations

- 1. That the Board APPROVES the revised Members' Allowances Scheme as set out in Appendix 1, and DETERMINES whether to include the proposed additional allowance for advisory group membership, with changes to be effective immediately.**
- 2. That the Board ADVISES on the other future possible changes to the Members' Allowances Scheme as set out in paras 10-15, and INSTRUCTS the Finance Advisory Group and/or the Governance Review TFG to explore these further.**

Appendix I: Members' Allowances Scheme**From 1 October 2026 (once approved by the Board)**

Role	Annual Allowance
Board Member	£300 per annum
Executive Committee / Planning Advisory Group Member	£555 per annum
Deputy Chair (Board & Executive Committee)	£832 per annum
Chair (Planning Advisory Group)	£832 per annum
Chair (Board or Executive Committee)	£2,224 per annum
Member of Other Advisory Groups (Maximum of two per Member)	£200 per annum

All Members are entitled to register for the allowances as outlined above.

The determination of allowances and other benefits for Board Members is governed by the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

Allowances are offered to ensure that no one is excluded from Board Membership on the grounds of cost. The Board will review and agree its Scheme of Members' Allowances on an annual basis, determining the types and levels of financial allowances and/or expenses to enable Board Members to participate fully in Board activities while being sufficiently economical to avoid damaging the Board's activities or becoming a financial reward for Members.

Whilst all Members are entitled to claim the allowances described the relevant allowance must be claimed in the current year of service, claims for prior financial years will not be backdated.

Once a Member has registered to receive allowances, they will continue to be paid until the end of their period of office. Any allowances are paid via CCB's payroll and Board Members must provide all relevant payroll information to allow registration.

1. Basic Allowance

This is a general allowance which all Board Members are entitled to. All Board Members receive the same amount per annum. Once formally registered for, this allowance is paid monthly.

2. Special Responsibility Allowances

These are additional allowances paid to Board Members who hold positions with significant responsibilities over and above the general duties of an ordinary Board Member. As for the basic allowance, once registered for, these allowances are paid monthly and in addition to the Basic Allowance.

Members may claim for any or all of the following special allowances when they are a member of the relevant group or hold the position of chair or deputy chair as indicated:

- The allowance for being Chair or Deputy Chair of the Board
- Membership of the Executive Committee, or the allowances for Chair or Deputy Chair, and
- Membership of the Planning Advisory Group, or the allowance for the Chair of the PAG, and
- Membership of no more than two other advisory groups.

For budgetary reasons, no member may claim the special allowance for more than one Chair or Deputy Chair position.

3. Mileage Allowance

This is an allowance paid in respect of mileage incurred by a Board Member in travelling to and from official meetings and other approved duties. The business mileage rate will be based on the pence per mile rate using HMRC's approved Mileage Allowance Payment (MAP).

4. Fares and Parking

A Board Member can seek reimbursement of actual expenditure incurred on other fares or parking fees in respect of attendance at official meetings and other approved duties. Receipts must be produced.

5. Withholding Allowances

Where a Member is suspended or partially suspended from their responsibilities or duties as a Member of the Board and/or from their responsibilities or duties which attract a special responsibility allowance, that part of the basic allowance and/or special responsibility allowance, and travelling and subsistence allowances, payable to them in respect of the period of suspension or partial suspension will be withheld.

6. Approved Duties

The following are deemed to be qualifying approved duties for the purposes of the Conservation Board's Members' Allowances Scheme:

1. Attendance at a meeting of the Board.
2. Attendance at a meeting of any committee/sub-committee of the Board.
3. Attendance at a meeting of any panel, working party or other group authorised in advance by the Board.
4. Attendance at a meeting of an association of which the Board is a Member, and to which the Board Member concerned has been appointed by the Board to represent it.
5. Attendance at seminars/conferences/official visits arranged by or authorised by the Chief Executive Officer or Chair.
6. Attendance at meetings of outside bodies to which a Board Member has been appointed to serve as the Board's representative (except where such allowances are payable by the outside body).

The CCB has many other events and occasions when Board Members are invited to attend such as walks, festivals, tourism networks, evening lectures and training days. We appreciate Board Members attending these, but are unable to pay expenses.

Item 2.2**Further Changes to the Constitution****Author:**

Matt Thomson, Monitoring Officer

Purpose of Report:

To outline changes proposed to the Constitution for the Board's approval, in relation to amendments to the Member Code of Conduct to facilitate engagement, and to update the Board on work regarding changes subsequent to approval of the Scheme of Delegation.

Background

1. Decisions on changes to the CCB's Constitution, including its standing orders and regulations, are reserved to meetings of the Board under the Scheme of Delegation, approved in September 2025.
2. Approval of the Scheme of Delegation was recognised as necessitating additional changes to other parts of the Constitution, but these were not pursued at the time. It was hoped to address those changes at this Board meeting, but this has not so far been possible due to limited officer capacity. The current approved Constitution does include some signposting of areas where the changes are needed, and an indication that conflicts between the Scheme of Delegation and other parts of the Constitution should be resolved in favour of the Scheme. Officers are grateful for the Board's patience on these matters and seek the support of the Governance Review Task and Finish Group (see also item 2.3) to progress this work.
3. In the meantime, a need has been recognised to review the Member Code of Conduct to recognise that Member engagement with the officer team, including the provision of certain information, is necessary for the Board's operation and sometimes required by legislation or for another reason, such as compliance with banking or insurance conditions.

Code of Conduct

4. In order for the CCB to operate effectively and comply with legislation and conditions of service providers, certain information is required from the Board's members.
5. Some information (such as basic contact details) is clearly required to enable engagement between the CCB team and its Board members. Other information, including that sought for the Register of Interests, is required to meet statutory requirements from local government legislation, applied to the CCB through our Establishment Order. Further information is required by our bank or insurance providers, including in relation to legislative requirements placed on them in relation to combating money laundering and other criminal activities; requirements for personal information relating to both Members and officers is likely to increase as financial organisations become more sophisticated about security.

NOTE: It is incumbent on the CCB officer team to ensure that information provided by Members is appropriately protected and managed (e.g. in terms of the General Data Protection Regulations) and personal information redacted in published materials as appropriate. If Members (or officers) become aware of personal information published inappropriately by the CCB, please bring this to the attention of the Monitoring Officer (mthomson@chilterns.org.uk) and the Administration Team (office@chilterns.org.uk).

6. In addition to the practical requirements of the CCB meeting its statutory requirements and being able to operate financially, the '[Nolan Principles of Public Life](#)' (on which our

Code of Conduct is based) include, in relation to the principle of 'accountability' the statement that 'Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this'. It is officers' view that providing information required by the CCB, with justification, is an important part of this scrutiny.

7. This matter was discussed under item 2.1 of the September Executive Committee meeting, and the following proposal is made with that discussion in mind.
8. As a temporary measure in advance of a wider review of the Code of Conduct, it is proposed to amend the Code as follows:

"Whenever a member is acting in their capacity as a member or co-opted member they:

[... points 1-9 ...]

10. Must (a) have regard to any relevant advice provided to them by the CCB's Chief Executive Officer, Finance Officer, or Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer, where such advice is offered pursuant to their statutory duties, when making decisions on behalf of or part of the CCB, and (b) provide any information, including personal information, that is reasonably required of them by the CCB's Chief Executive Officer or other officer acting on their instructions."

9. This amendment includes a minor revision in relation to the sources of advice to which Members should have regard, to include all three of the CCB's 'statutory officers' and exclude the Deputy Monitoring Officer, since the legislation allows for any officer to deputise for the Monitoring Officer upon their instruction (and the same implicitly applies to the CEO and Section 151 Officer).
10. The explanatory note to the Code already includes an outline of how failure to comply with the Code may lead to censure and other sanctions, which ultimately may include withholding of voting rights, withholding of allowances/expenses, suspension or partial suspension, or expulsion from the Board. It is officers' view that such measures should be held as a last resort, and that Members who are unwilling to provide information reasonably required of them should instead voluntarily reconsider their position on the Board.

Recommendation

1. That the Board **APPROVES** the proposed amendments to the Code of Conduct set out in paragraph 8 above.
2. That the Board **INSTRUCTS** the Governance Review TFG to continue to support the Monitoring Officer in considering further amendments to the Constitution, including those needed consequent to the approval of the Scheme of Delegation.

Item 2.3 **Co-option to the Board and Appointment of Members to Committees and Advisory Groups**

Author: Matt Thomson, Monitoring Officer

Purpose of Report: To update the Board on membership of Committees and Advisory Groups, consider and approve appointments where appropriate, and consider proposals for co-option to the Board

Background

1. Recent practice (to be regularised in the Constitution) is that the Board reviews its committees and advisory groups at its AGM, and seeks to appoint members to fill any vacancies on committees, or add new members to the advisory groups the Board has convened, at ordinary Board meetings. Most of this paper relates to these matters.
2. Related to this (broadly speaking) the Board is empowered to co-opt non-voting members to its number to assist with maximising the diversity of experience, skills and backgrounds appropriate to its functions. Currently the Board has no co-opted members: the Constitution allows for up to two on the Board (although there is no limit in legislation, and this might be an area the Board wishes to reconsider in future). The first part of this paper proposes one co-option.

Co-option of Simon Mortimer to the Board

3. Earlier this year, we learned that the Defra Secretary of State would be unable to re-appoint Simon Mortimer to the Board as a result of Cabinet Office rules on public appointments, and, as a result of his previous term of office, Simon has now reached the maximum length of service considered appropriate in those rules. His appointment will technically expire as soon as the Secretary of State notifies us of their new appointments, expected in the next few weeks.
4. Simon brings a wealth of expertise in land management, planning, research, and links to academia, as well as considerable experience contributing to the work of the CCB and the Chilterns National Landscape. He has indicated that he would be interested in continuing that work as a co-optee (including continuing to contribute to the work of the Planning Function – see below). Officers have discussed this with the Board Chair and Deputy Chair who have indicated their agreement in principle.
5. It is therefore recommended that the Board co-opts Simon Mortimer as a non-voting member.

Constitutional matters relating to co-option and rationalising the roles of other Board attendees

6. There is a case for reviewing the Constitution's approach to co-opted members.
7. As noted above, the Constitution currently restricts the number of co-opted Board members to two (Committees may co-opt up to four, as may the PAG, and other advisory groups may co-opt as determined in their own Terms of Reference, or at the Board or ExCo's discretion, as appropriate). Other aspects of the Constitution's approach to co-opted members are slightly confused, but since they are workable in practice, their review has not been a priority so far.
8. Any review of that part of the Constitution could also consider rationalising the roles of other regular Board attendees, including representatives of Natural England, the Chiltern Society, the National Trails and/or local authority officers. Currently, the only roles accounted for in the Constitution other than those of Members, co-optees and officers, are members of the public, whose engagement with meetings is somewhat

restricted. While experience has not identified any particular problems relating to such attendees, it may prove valuable to define their roles and responsibilities in order to manage expectations and to facilitate the management of any issues that do arise, including in relation to consideration of confidential or sensitive matters (the Constitution does not currently account for excluding anyone other than members of the public from confidential sessions).

9. Options could include

- a) co-opting regular attendees – this would restrict the role to named individuals (although that could be reviewed), and would require the number of Board co-optees specified in the Constitution to be amended, and/or
- b) defining a role for ‘non-voting observers’ (or similar) in the Constitution, regularising the ability of such attendees to contribute to discussions in ways that are different from members of the public, and/or
- c) leaving things largely as they are, but redefining the speaking rights of members of the public in the Constitution, although this could have risks if any members of the public (or the press) did attend.

10. None of the above is a high priority, but the Governance Review TFG could explore these issues.

Executive Committee (ExCo)

11. Since no volunteers came forward at or in advance of the June Board meeting/AGM to fill the vacancy for a local authority member on ExCo, that vacancy remains. Local authority appointed Members are therefore again encouraged to put their name forward. This may be done at the meeting, or by approaching the Committee Chair (Cllr Sir Hector Sants), the Chief Executive Officer or Monitoring Officer, if Members would like to learn more about the Committee. All Members are always welcome to attend ExCo meetings (online or in person).

12. Current membership is as follows:

- Local Authority appointees: Cllrs Gavin Mclauchlan, Louise Price, Philip Spicer (plus one vacancy).
- Secretary of State appointees: Baljit Dhillon, Matthew Stanton, Nicola Thomas.
- Parish Council appointees: Cllrs Sir Hector Sants (Chair), John Griffin (Deputy Chair); in addition, Cllrs Charles Hussey and Sue Rowland attend as non-voting observers.

Planning Advisory Group (PAG)

13. Technically speaking, PAG now has the full complement of Members set out in its Terms of Reference. There is flexibility to consider additional appointments, and Members are of course welcome to attend meetings (online or in person).

14. While Simon Mortimer is currently a member of PAG, his tenure as a member of the Board will end when the Secretary of State confirms the two new appointments to the Board at some point in the next few weeks, after which there will be a vacancy for a Secretary of State member on PAG. Secretary of State appointees are encouraged to put their name forward. Again, this may be done at the meeting, or by approaching the PAG Chair (Matthew Stanton), the Chief Executive Officer or Head of Planning, to learn more about the PAG.

15. At its meeting in August, the PAG agreed to co-opt Simon Mortimer at the end of his appointment, which requires ratification by the Board.

16. Current membership is as follows:

- Local Authority appointees: Cllrs Robert Carington, James Norman, Louise Price, Philip Spicer.
- Secretary of State appointees: Jen Morgan, Simon Mortimer*, Matthew Stanton (Chair) (plus one vacancy*).
- Parish Council appointees: Cllrs Sue Rowland (Deputy Chair), Charles Hussey.
- Non-Voting Co-opted Members: Chris Hannington, Paul Hayes, Simon Mortimer*

* See paras 14-15 above.

Other advisory groups

17. The Board also convenes and appoints members to a number of less formal advisory groups, as set out below. (Executive Committee convenes and appoints members to the Finance Advisory Group.) The context for advisory groups is another area of the Constitution that would benefit from rationalising, but the key point is that advisory groups (which may take a number of forms including working groups and task and finish groups), as the name suggests, have a role in advising the Board and the committees and officers to which the Board's functions are delegated, and cannot themselves discharge those functions. As a result, such groups are less formal than committees and sub-committees, and can operate with more flexibility.
18. All of the current advisory groups would benefit from new members, and Board Members are therefore encouraged to put their names forward, either at the Board meeting, or by approaching the groups chairs and officers named below.
19. **EDI Advisory Group:**
 - a) Chair: Baljit Dhillon.
 - b) Secretariat: Annette Weiss.
 - c) Members: Juliet Vickery.
 - d) Co-optees: John Shaw, Andy Shipley, Martha Glennon
20. **Governance Review TFG:**
 - a) Chair: vacant.
 - b) Secretariat: Matt Thomson.
 - c) Members: Charles Hussey.
 - d) Co-optees: Lynn Lloyd.
21. **Management Plan Review TFG:** Further to the 'lessons learned' discussion at the June Board meeting, it is intended to evolve this TFG into a wider stakeholder steering group (perhaps retaining a core group to oversee this evolution).
 - a) Chair: vacant – Jen Morgan has expressed interest subject to capacity and there being no other volunteers.
 - b) Secretariat: Matt Thomson.
 - c) Members: Hector Sants, Simon Mortimer. Expression of interest from Cat Moncrieff.
22. **Vision TFG:** Cllr Sants has proposed that the Vision and Management Plan Review TFGs could be merged – they already have strong links and have always had an overlap in membership, embedded in the terms of reference.
 - a) Chair: Hector Sants.
 - b) Secretariat: Matt Thomson

- c) Members: Robert Carington. Expressions of interest from Jen Morgan, Cat Moncrieff.

23. **Finance Advisory Group** (convened and appointed by Executive Committee, included here for information):

- a) Chair and Secretariat: Kathryn Foster (Finance Officer).
- b) Members: Hector Sants, John Griffin. Expression of interest from Cat Moncrieff.

Recommendation

1. That the Board **APPROVES** the co-option of Simon Mortimer as a non-voting member, and **RATIFIES** his co-option to the Planning Advisory Group, once his current appointment to the Board concludes.
2. That the Board **CONFIRMS** membership of the Executive Committee, and **APPOINTS** to the Committee a local authority member if any put their name forward, following a vote if necessary.
3. That the Board **CONFIRMS** membership of the Planning Advisory Group, and **APPOINTS** to the Group a Secretary of State member to succeed Simon Mortimer if any put their name forward, following a vote if necessary.
4. That the Board **CONFIRMS** membership of the other advisory groups and **APPOINTS** to the relevant groups Members who have expressed an interest as set out above, or do so at the meeting.

Item 2.4 FY26-27 Business Planning

Author: Andrew Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations

Purpose: To present and seek approval from the Board for the updated FY26-27 Annual Delivery Plan and high level 4-year Strategic Plan for the organisation.

Background

1. The Annual Delivery Plan was approved by the Board at its June 2026 meeting as well as some of the key elements of the strategic planning being undertaken at the same time.
2. In the June 2026 Board meeting it was identified that planning was ongoing, partly due to, for the first time, the organisation planning across multiple years (the remaining 4 years of the Management Plan) and partly because we had been asked by the Executive Committee to give more consideration to issues with staff capacity.
3. It was therefore agreed at the June 2026 Board meeting that any substantive changes to the Annual Delivery Plan would be brought back to the Board to approve at a future date.
4. As a result of work during the intervening period, a significant number of changes have been made to the Annual Delivery Plan and so the full updated Plan is included here for approval, as well as the full version of the high-level Organisation Strategic Plan.
5. A more detailed version of the Strategic Plan has been developed for internal use which provides more granular information on objectives against key delivery and sub-delivery areas as well as a clarification of scope at the sub-delivery area level.
6. The work done on Strategic Planning, and the key changes made, are available to Board members as part of the papers submitted to Executive Committee in June 2026.
7. Any planning document is by its nature a live document and subject to change during the course of the planning cycle to ensure that it remains relevant to changing circumstances, through a proper change control process. It is therefore important to note that the high-level Organisation Strategic Plan and the updated Annual Delivery Plan presented here for approval are the same as those presented to the Executive Committee in June 2026.

The updated Annual Delivery Plan has also been sent to Defra as part of our reporting requirements, with the caveat that it was subject to the Board approving it at this meeting.

8. Any substantive changes to the 4-year Organisation Strategic Plan or the Annual Delivery Plan will be identified to the Executive Committee.

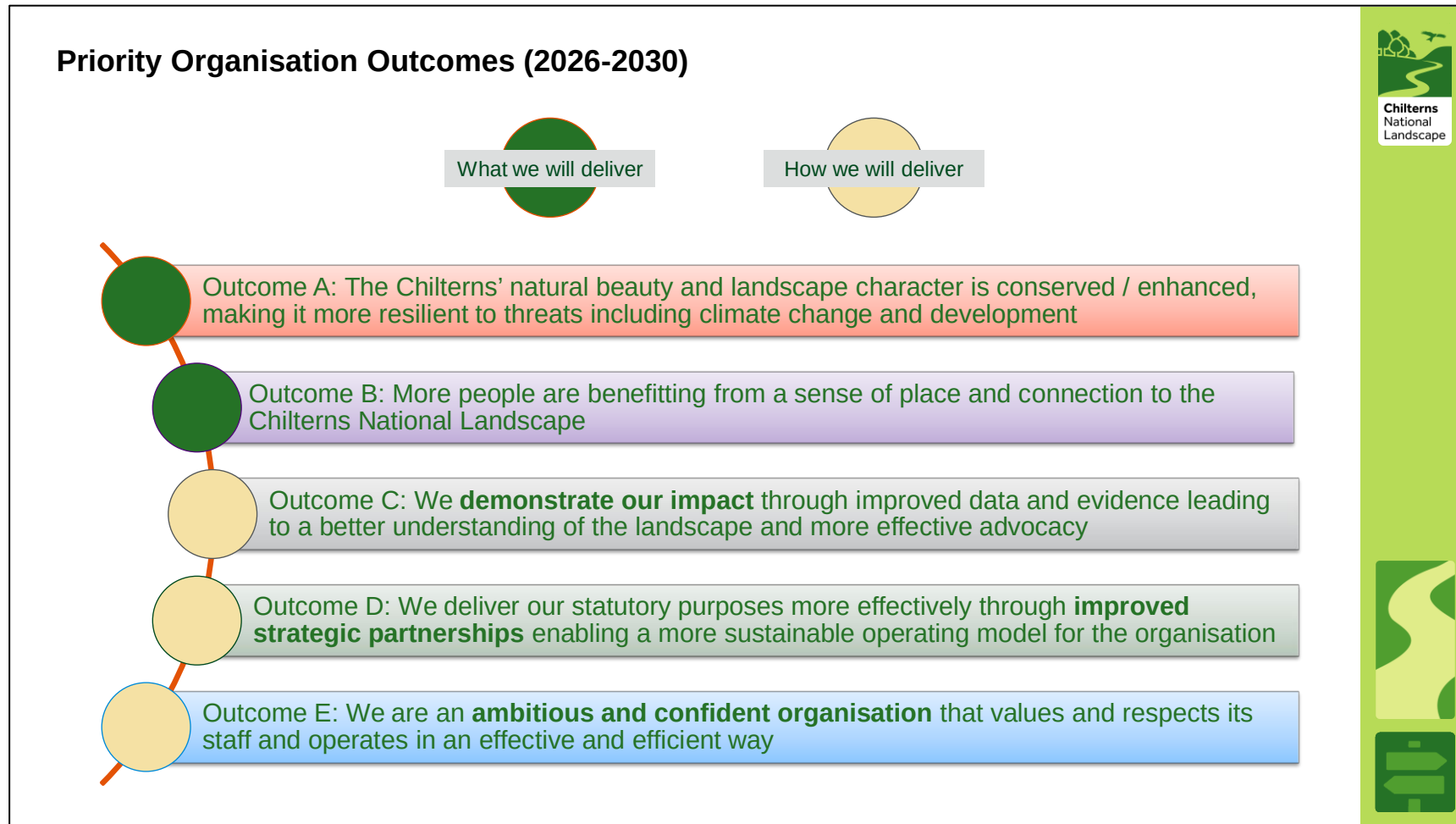
Recommendations

1. **That the Board APPROVES the high-level 4-year Strategic Plan and the updated FY26-27 Annual Delivery Plan.**

Item 2.4 Appendix 1 Updated 4-Year Strategic Plan

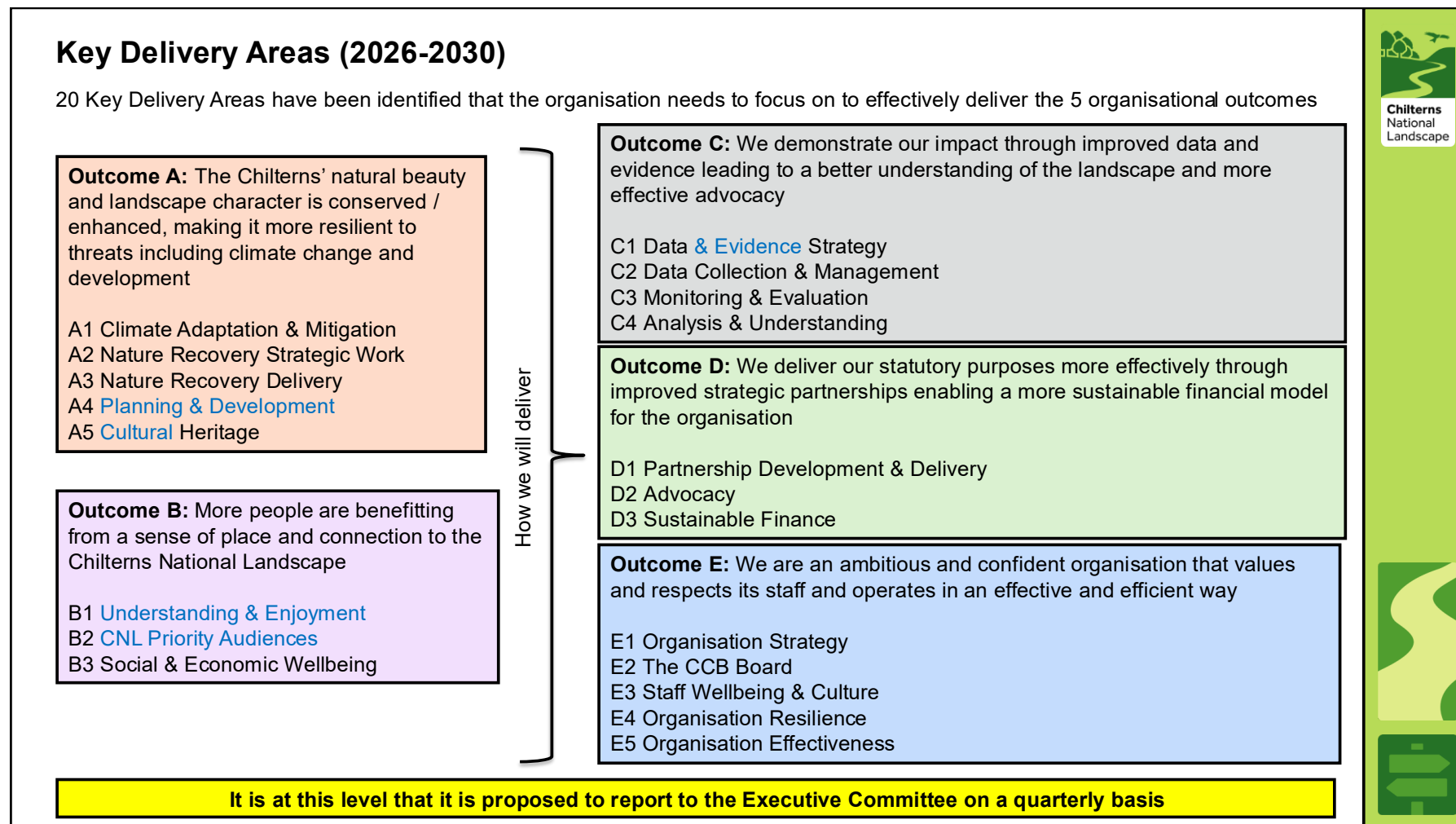
Priority Organisation Outcomes

The 5 overarching outcomes for the organisation for FY2026-30 remain the same as presented to the Executive Committee previously.



Key Delivery Areas

The 20 key delivery areas remain the same as previously presented to the Executive Committee but with some changes in the titles (highlighted in blue) to simplify and improve clarity.



Sub Delivery Areas

The following changes have been made to the sub-delivery areas (that will be reported to and reviewed by the SLT) under each of the 5 outcomes. Note that this section does not identify changes that have been made to the timing of activity to ensure capacity by for example moving it from the first year into subsequent years.

Outcome A: **16 sub-delivery areas remain** as it was felt that these effectively cover the 16 areas of work needed to deliver this outcome. However, the wording of some sub-delivery areas has been changed to reflect more clarity in the scope of specific activities.

Outcome B: **13 sub-delivery areas have been reduced to 7**. This reflects a thorough review of the sub-delivery areas to areas of overlap and uncertainty but also to reflect the limited capacity that we currently have in this area. This means that a lot of the focus in this area is now on internal upskilling and delivery through existing programmes / projects as well as grant giving (access grants) rather than broad outside support to partner organisations. The review also provided an opportunity to make simpler and more transparent communications work in the organisation.

Outcome C: **12 sub-delivery areas remain** as it was felt that these effectively cover the 12 areas of work needed to deliver this outcome. The wording of some sub-delivery areas has been changed to reflect more clarity in the scope of specific activities. It is acknowledged that this is a new area for the organisation and as such is impacted by capacity issues, and to address this the timing of much of the activity has been delayed so that it starts in the second rather than the first year of the strategic plan when the new Head of Programmes is recruited and had time to find his/her feet.

Outcome D: **14 sub-delivery areas have been reduced to 11**. This reflects a rethinking of this area to bring together different threads around strategic partnership activity into a more focused strand and also to rethink the way we prioritise advocacy work so that it is focused on local versus national rather than segmented into different audiences. It also removes overlap with communications work under Outcome B. In addition, the wording of some sub-delivery areas has been changed to reflect more clarity in the scope of specific activities.

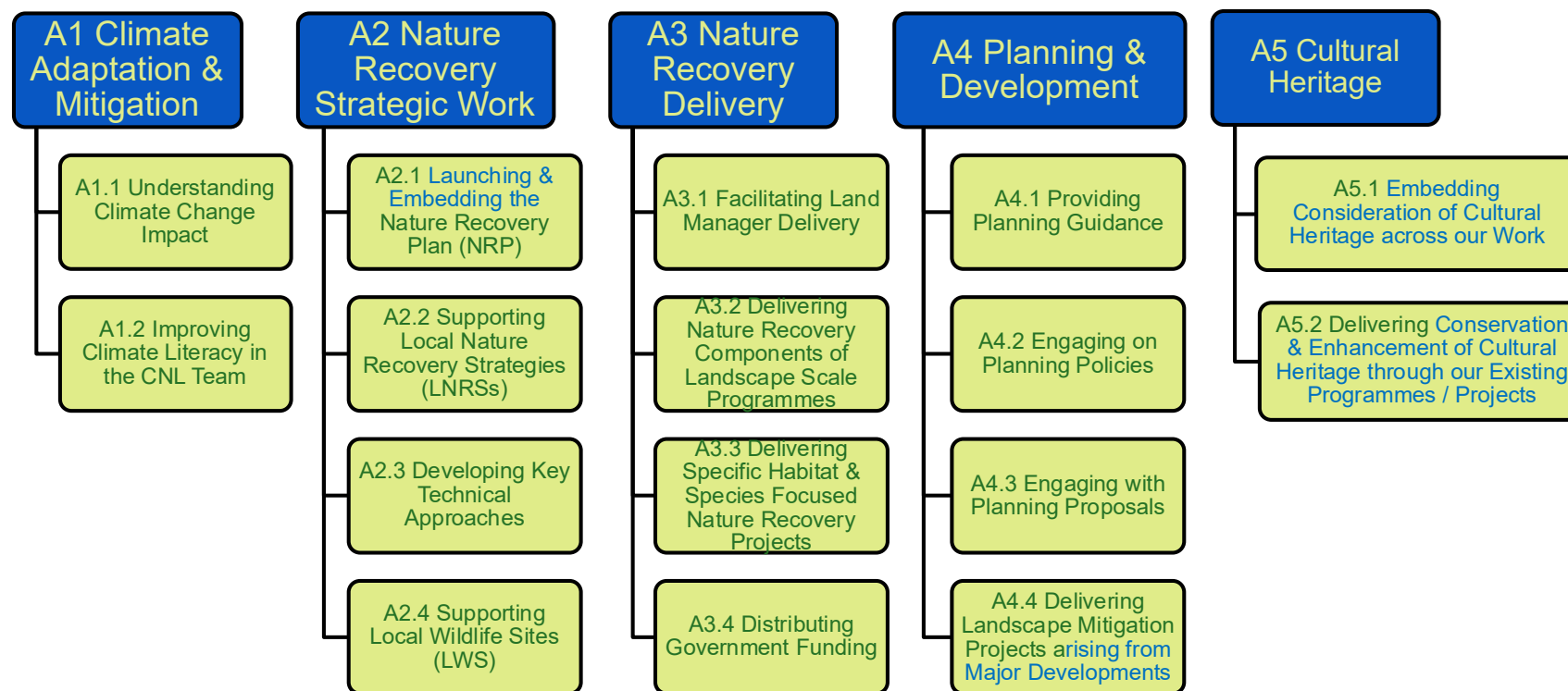
Outcome E: **16 sub-delivery areas have been reduced to 14**. This reflects thinking to tie in some work with the development of the next management plan and communications work in other outcomes, there by making it more strategically aligned and avoiding potential overlap

Overall, this means that through reviewing the 4-year Organisation Strategic Plan **the sub-delivery areas in the plan have been reduced from 71 to 60**. This reflects the reduction of activity in some areas as well as a change in thinking about how we achieve the same outcome with limited resource. It will also mean there is less overlap and more clarity in the different areas as well as a reduced reporting requirement.



Outcome A: Draft Key Delivery Areas and Sub Delivery Areas (2026-30)

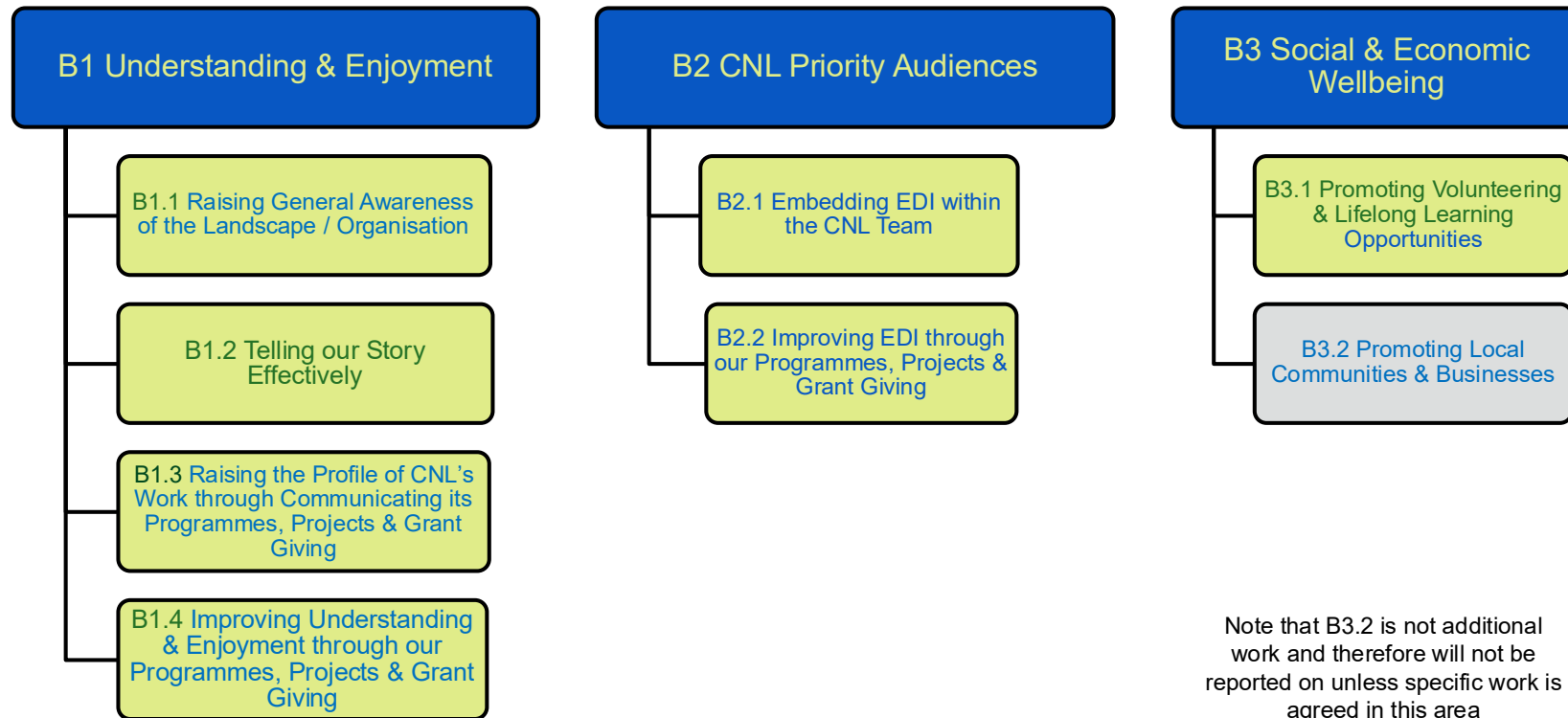
The 5 Key Delivery Areas under Outcome A can be further split into 16 Sub Delivery Areas



Note that delivery in this area is often matrixed – e.g. a single project can be on a catchment scale, working with farmers and on specific habitats – therefore these sub-delivery areas may change as we build up the reporting structure

Outcome B: Draft Key Delivery Areas and Sub Delivery Areas (2026-30)

The 3 Key Delivery Areas under Outcome B can be further split into 7 Sub Delivery Areas



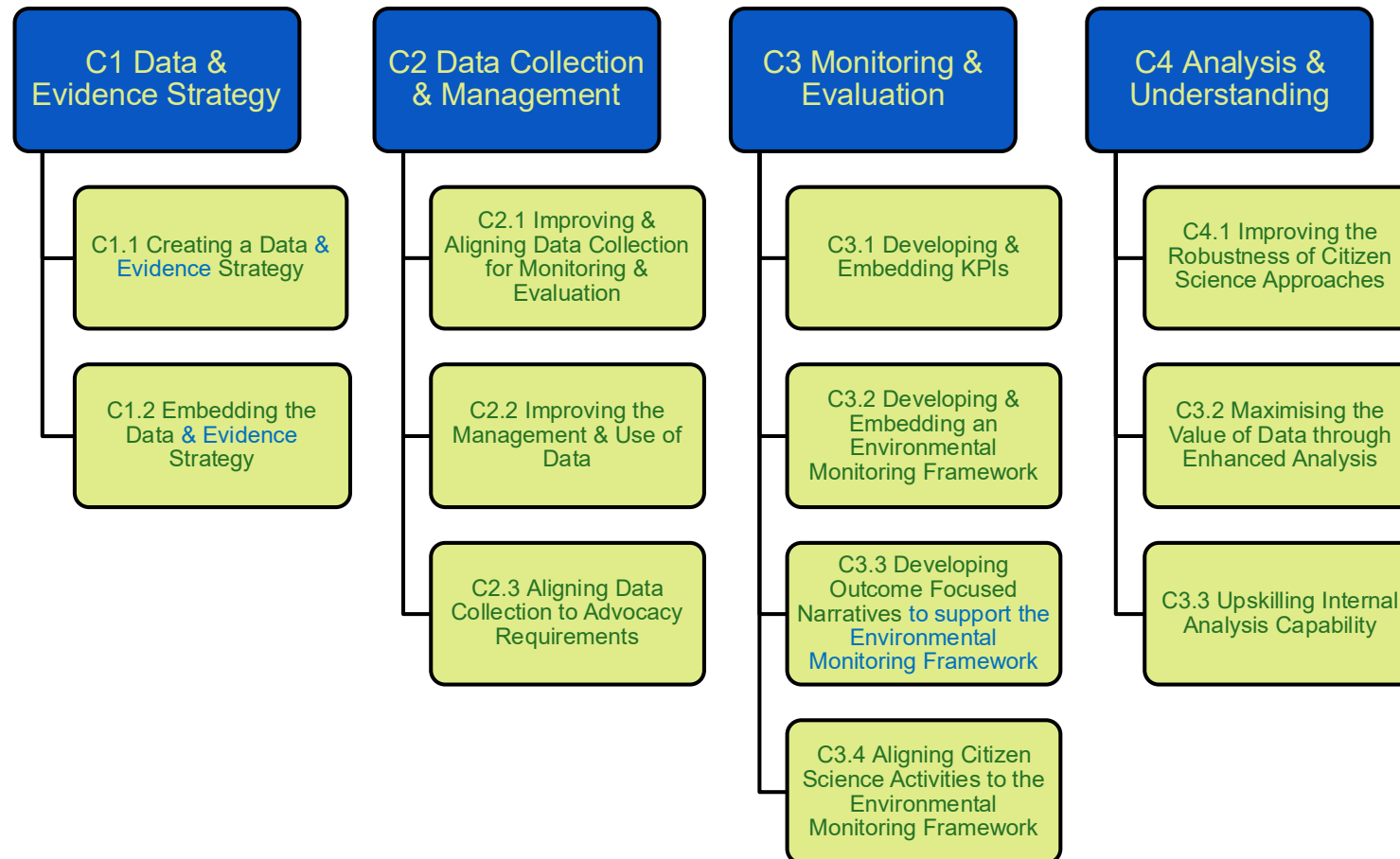
Note that B3.2 is not additional work and therefore will not be reported on unless specific work is agreed in this area

Note that whilst Health is not brought out separately as the CNL Team is not focusing on this there are clear health benefits from the work in Outcomes A and B that will help to deliver these benefits



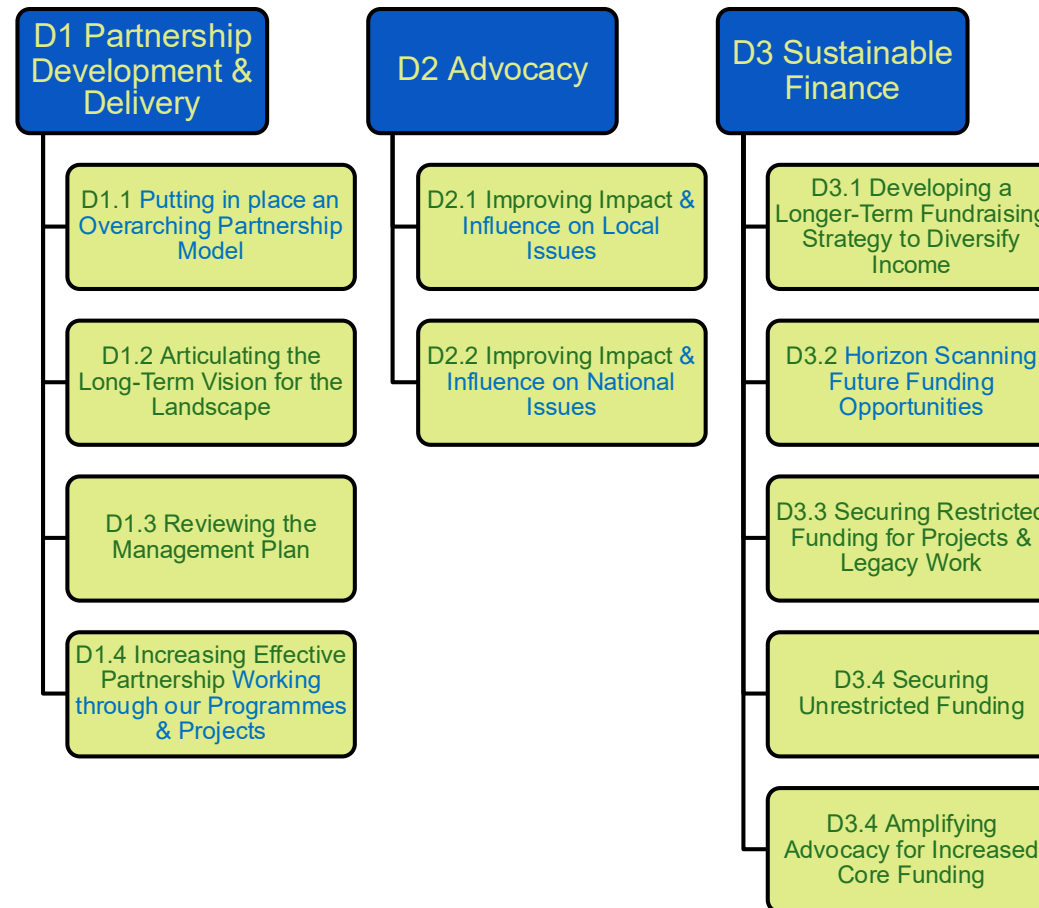
Outcome C: Draft Key Delivery Areas and Sub Delivery Areas (2026-30)

The 3 Key Delivery Areas under Outcome C can be further split into 12 Sub Delivery Areas



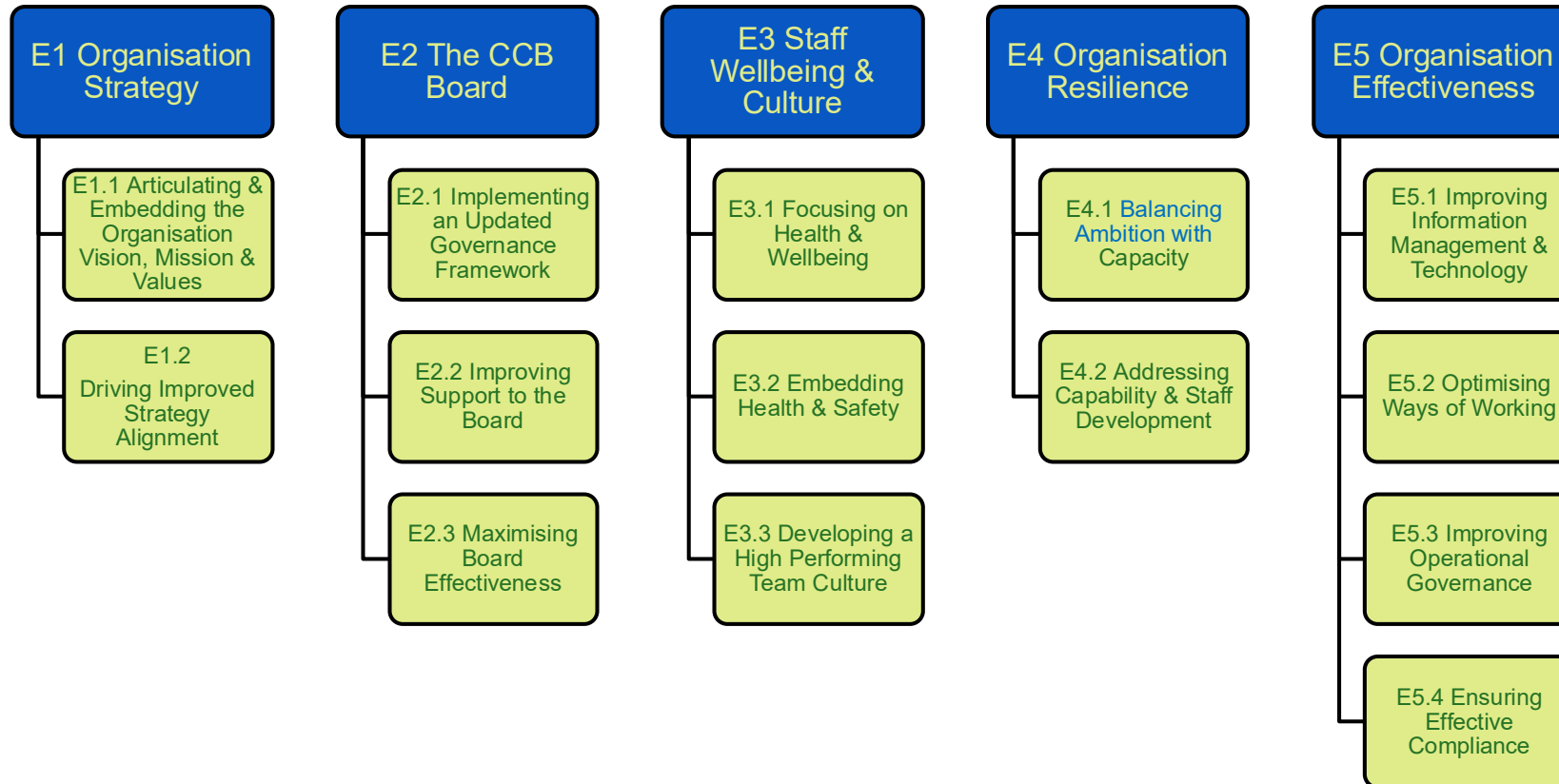
Outcome D: Draft Key Delivery Areas and Sub Delivery Areas (2026-30)

The 3 Key Delivery Areas under Outcome D can be further split into 11 Sub Delivery Areas



Outcome E: Draft Key Delivery Areas and Sub Delivery Areas (2026-30)

The 5 Key Delivery Areas under Outcome E can be further split into 14 Sub Delivery Areas



Item 2.4 Appendix 2 Updated Annual Delivery Plan (FY26-27)

As part of the development of a 4-year Organisation Strategic Plan (aligned to the timing of the Management Plan) we have identified the key activity that will need to be undertaken in each of the 4 years.

The Annual Delivery Plan (FY26-27) represents the first of those 4 years. It was first presented to and agreed by the Board in June 2026 with the acknowledgement that there were a few areas to complete, such as the communications activity.

In addition both the Executive Committee (in May 2026) and the Board (in June 2026) requested that we review the plan further to address capacity constraints (see Business Planning paper presented to the Executive Committee in September 2026), and it was agreed that any substantive changes would be reported back to the Board for approval.

The full updated Annual Delivery Plan is presented here, because there are a number of substantive changes (see 2.5 Business Planning paper presented to the Executive Committee September 2026 for an overview of the work carried out and the key changes made) and to ensure that the plan is presented in a complete format as the changes have inevitably impacted all parts of the plan.

Key to the Annual Delivery Plan

Black Font = Individual non project / programme funded activities (note that these activities may take place over more than one year but are not ongoing annual activities). Note that whilst these activities are currently funded externally this does not mean they would automatically stop if there was no funding available – however a decision would need to be made on whether to use core funding to continue these activities

Green Font = Activities that are currently mainly externally funded through programmes / projects (does not include our grant giving programmes)

Blue Font = Ongoing annual activity (note that these activities may not start in Year 1 of the 4-Year Strategic Plan but are likely to occur on an ongoing basis for a number of years as part of the core activity of the organisation (e.g. responding to planning applications)

Purple Font = CCB Grant giving activity (from Defra funds) – note this does not include grant giving from within projects like Mend the Gap

Key Delivery Area	Sub Delivery Area	Key Activities (FY26-27)
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 R&D report & carry out additional analysis (Local Authority climate explorer to fully understand impact of climate change) A1.1.3 Create & convene climate change working group with external partners A1.1.4 Carry out climate change risk assessment A1.1.5 Identify, evaluate & select climate adaptation actions A1.1.6 Work with UKCEH through Flood & Drought Research Infrastructure (FDRI) project to better understand impact of climate change on Chilterns chalk streams A1.1.7 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 R&D work to CNL staff team A1.2.3 Run 2 CNL team workshops to identify risks & opportunities alongside key proposed actions in response to enhanced understanding of impacts of climate change on landscape
A2 Nature Recovery Strategic Work	A2.1 Launching & Embedding the Nature Recovery Plan	A2.1.1 Finalise design of plan & leaflets A2.1.2 Set launch date, book venue & speakers & advertise event A2.1.3 Run launch event A2.1.4 Embed NRP outcomes internally & externally into funding proposals, work plans & activities

	A2.2 Supporting Local Nature Recovery Strategies	A2.2.1 Familiarise the CNL team with the content of the 4 LNRS A2.2.2 Embed LNRS priorities into new work process so that CNL team use LNRS priorities when planning work A2.2.3 Attend LNRS Delivery meetings (Bucks, Oxon, Beds, Herts) to start to align activity (CNL team)
	A2.3 Developing Key Technical Approaches	A2.3.1 Finalise farmed land technical approach document A2.3.2 Consider how to operationalise farmed land technical approach document
	A2.4 Supporting Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)	No activity scheduled for this year
A3 Nature Recovery Delivery	A3.1 Facilitating Land Manager Delivery	A3.1.1 Facilitate farmer cluster meetings for Chess/Misbourne, North & Central Farmer Clusters (Nature Recovery Team) A3.1.2 Manage delivery projects for Chess/Misbourne, North & Central Farmer Clusters (Nature Recovery Team) A3.1.3 Develop agreed priorities for farmer clusters (Nature Recovery Team) A3.1.4 Provide strategic support for Christmas Common & South Chilterns Farmer Clusters (Nature Recovery Team) A3.1.5 Develop delivery plans with land managers, stakeholders & partners for catchment initiatives (focus on 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 (following nationally recognised methodology) inc 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 & hold 3 workshop across CNL to assess partners' 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 Enable the Cholsey Marshes/Withymead/ Beale Park & Pangbourne Riparian habitat enhancements (MtG) A3.2.4 Strengthen the catchment approach along the Thames with Thames 21 (MtG) A3.2.5 Enable the Rectory Farm and Equi centric grazing chalk grassland projects & support the South Chilterns Farm Cluster & botanical consultant to do further chalk related projects (MtG)
	A3.3 Delivering Specific Habitat & Species Focused Nature Recovery Projects	A3.3.1 Publish our deer management website to raise awareness A3.3.2 Fund appropriate deer management activities through Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) A3.3.3 Fund appropriate conservation grazing & species-rich grassland creation/restoration projects (FiPL) A3.3.4 Support the work of South Chilterns Deer Management Group (FiPL) 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 & Misbourne (CCSP) A3.3.7 Collect & analyse monitoring data & 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 Distributing Government Funding	A3.4.1 Raise awareness of Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) funding & distribute grants across the CNL in line with strategy A3.4.2 Distribute CDEL funding aligned with 30by30 and PLTOF 1 outcomes

A4 Planning & Development	A4.1 Providing Planning Guidance	A4.1.1 Identify & prioritise programme for development or review of standing advice (inc model policies & consultation protocols) A4.1.2 Produce planning guidance in line with agreed programme (to be defined once programme has been agreed) A4.1.3 Support the planning team to understand the impacts of development & how they can be mitigated through planning guidance
	A4.2 Engaging on Planning Policies	A4.2.1 Work with policy makers (where possible) and/or respond to consultations on planning policy (prioritising around key issues where appropriate in line with Management Plan & standing advice) A4.2.2 Support the Planning team to understand the impacts of development & how they can be mitigated through planning policy
	A4.3 Engaging with Planning Proposals	A4.3.1 Respond to consultations on planning proposals (prioritised according to agreed protocol in line with Management Plan & standing advice) A4.3.2 Support the Planning team to understand the impacts of development proposals & how they can be mitigated
	A4.4 Delivering Landscape Mitigation Projects arising from Major Developments	A4.4.1 Deliver mitigation work in the Mend the Gap area (Mend the Gap) A4.4.2 Deliver HS2 AP mitigation funding projects (Biodiversity & Connectivity project)
A5 Cultural Heritage	A5.1 Embedding Consideration of Cultural Heritage across our Work	A5.1.1 Add consideration of cultural heritage into new work process documentation A5.1.2 Assess each new project for important cultural heritage considerations & incorporate information into project accordingly A5.1.3 Work with CHAP CIC and Planning Team to embed consideration of cultural heritage into programme work

	A5.2 Delivering Conservation & Enhancement of Cultural Heritage through our Programmes / Projects	A5.2.1 Deliver cultural heritage work of Not Bourne Yesterday (development phase) A5.2.2 Embed cultural heritage work within delivery phase proposal for Not Bourne Yesterday (Not Bourne Yesterday) A5.2.3 Develop cultural heritage aspects of proposed Nature Ridge project (Nature Ridge) A5.2.4 Provide cultural heritage funding grants (FIPL)
Outcome B: More people are benefitting from a sense of place and connection to the Chilterns National Landscape		
B1 Awareness, Understanding & Enjoyment	B1.1 Raising General Awareness of the Landscape / Organisation	B1.1.1 Develop & deliver comms activity that raises awareness of the Chilterns National Landscape & the organisation's role (inc staff profiles, brand) B1.1.2 Plan promotional campaigns for the year B1.1.3 Deliver identified promotional campaigns for the year B1.1.4 Review CNL comms & marketing assets to identify requirement for updating / developing new assets B1.1.5 Update / develop new comms & marketing assets (as required) B1.1.6 Promote comms & marketing assets through planned campaigns B1.1.7 Manage media relations & respond to media enquires (as required) B1.1.8 Develop & maintain digital comms channels inc website (e.g. readability, structure, simplification, interactive map) B1.1.9 Work with partner to amplify key messages B1.1.10 Redesign & restructure Annual Review to demonstrate greater impact & delivery against key areas B1.1.11 Develop plan for delivering new signage across the Landscape

	B1.2 Telling our Story Effectively	B1.2.1 Identify the stories that we want to tell internally & externally B1.2.2 Develop internal and external comms strategy (inc impact & opportunities) B1.2.3 Start developing priority stories
	B1.3 Raising the Profile of CNL's Work through Communicating its Programmes, Projects & Grant Giving	B1.3.1 Provide strategic communications advice, planning & support to programme & project teams, ensuring activity is aligned with organisational priorities, audiences and key messages B1.3.2 Undertake comms on the work of the CNL Team around conserving & enhancing natural beauty & landscape character (e.g. Nature Recovery, FiPL etc) B1.3.3 Undertake comms on the work of the CNL Team around improving understanding & enjoyment of the Chilterns (e.g. Access for All, EDI etc) B1.3.4 Undertake comms that demonstrates our impact through partnership working & increased focus data & evidence B1.3.5 Work with partners to amplify programme / project work B1.3.6 Undertake specific comms around Not Bourne Yesterday (Not Bourne Yesterday) B1.3.7 Undertake specific comms around delivery of Mend the Gap (Mend the Gap) B1.3.8 Undertake specific comms around the Chilterns Chalk Stream Project (CCSP)
	B1.4 Improving Understanding & Enjoyment through our Programmes, Projects & Grant Giving	B1.4.1 Advise & support CNL programme & project managers B1.4.2 Deliver engagement activities through Not Bourne Yesterday (development phase) (NBY) B1.4.3 Deliver engagement activities through Mend the Gap (MtG) B1.4.4 Deliver engagement activities through the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project (CCSP)
	B2.1 Embedding EDI	B2.1.1 Convene & support the EDI Advisory Group B2.1.2 Update the Ambition Statement & action plan (as required)

B2 CNL Priority Audiences	within the CNL Team	B2.1.3 Develop a programme of EDI training for CNL Team (Staff & Board Members) B2.1.4 Undertake training / awareness work with the CNL Team (Staff & Board Members)
	B2.2 Improving EDI through our Programmes, Projects & Grant Giving	B2.2.1 Advise & support CNL programme & project managers around EDI B2.2.2 Award grants through Access for All funding & promote projects funded B2.2.3 Award grants for access through FiPL funding B2.2.4 Embed engagement with economically & socially disadvantaged communities into development of Nature Ridge Landscape Connections (pre-development phase) (Nature Ridge) B2.2.5 Expand youth pages on the CNL website with additional digital assets & videos B2.2.6 Embed EDI in the development of Not Bourne Yesterday development phase (NBY) B2.2.7 Deliver schools programme in Mend the Gap (MtG) B2.2.8 Deliver Trout in the Classroom (CCSP) B2.2.9 Launch Accessibility Hub & update with digital assets B2.2.10 Develop & agree technical approach paper on Access
B3 Social & Economic Wellbeing	B3.1 Promoting Volunteering & Lifelong Learning Opportunities	B3.1.1 Develop & agree technical approach paper on Volunteering B3.1.2 Launch the CNL Volunteering Website B3.1.3 Promote volunteer opportunities through the Volunteer Hub B3.1.4 Ensure volunteering / apprenticeship opportunities are embedded in the Not Bourne Yesterday Delivery Phase application (NBY) B3.1.5 Provide citizen science volunteering opportunities around water monitoring (CCSP) B3.1.6 Provide citizen science volunteering opportunities / upskilling through Tracking the Impact (TTI)

		B3.1.7 Undertake guided walks & talks (CCSP) B3.1.8 Undertake guided walks & talks as part of Not Bourne Yesterday development phase (NBY)
Outcome C: We demonstrate our impact through improved data and evidence leading to a better understanding of the landscape and more effective advocacy		
C1 Data & Evidence Strategy	C1.1 Creating a Data & Evidence Strategy	No activity scheduled for this year
	C1.2 Embedding the Data & Evidence Strategy	No activity scheduled for this year
C2 Data Collection & Management	C2.1 Improving & Aligning Data Collection for Monitoring & Evaluation	C2.1.1 Identify key learnings from pilot project & next steps (inc key requirements in relation to the Landscape Team) C2.1.2 Embed the Nature Recovery Action Data model into the work of the Landscape Team
	C2.2 Improving the Management & Use of Data	No activity scheduled for this year
	C2.3 Aligning Data Collection to Advocacy Requirements	No activity scheduled for this year

C3 Monitoring & Evaluation	C3.1 Developing & Embedding KPIs	No activity scheduled for this year
	C3.2 Developing & Embedding an Environmental Monitoring Framework	No activity scheduled for this year
	C3.3 Developing Outcome Focused Narratives to support the Environmental Monitoring Framework	No activity scheduled for this year
	C3.4 Aligning Citizen Science Activities to the Environmental Monitoring Framework	No activity scheduled for this year
C4 Analysis & Understanding	C4.1 Improving the Robustness of Citizen Science Approaches	No activity scheduled for this year

	C4.2 Maximising the Value of Data through Enhanced Analysis	No activity scheduled for this year
	C4.3 Upskilling Internal Analysis Capability	C4.3.1 Determine GIS training needs for Landscape Team C4.3.2 Deliver 1:1 upskilling in the Landscape Team (as required)
Outcome D: We deliver our statutory purposes more effectively through improved strategic partnerships enabling a more sustainable operating model for the organisation		
D1 Partnership Development & Delivery	D1.1 Putting in place an Overarching Partnership Model	D1.1.1 Review & update paper on strategic partnerships to clarify options around our overarching partnership model D1.1.2 Clarify how different overarching partnership models would work in practice D1.1.3 Agree overarching partnership model to be established
	D1.2 Articulating the Long-Term Vision for the Landscape	No activity scheduled for this year

	D1.3 Reviewing the Management Plan	D1.3.1 Publish the Management Plan for 2025-30 D1.3.2 Develop & publish the delivery plan for the Management Plan 2025-30 D1.3.3 Monitor national level developments around Management Plans D1.3.4 Develop a clear plan & timetable for the review of the current Management Plan & development of the next Management Plan
	D1.4 Increasing Effective Partnership Working through our Programmes & Projects	D1.4.1 Identify lessons from the North Chilterns Landscape Partnership to test / clarify effective partnership working D1.4.2 Develop more effective partnership working through the development of the Nature Ridge Landscapes Connection bid D1.4.3 Continue to develop new partnerships through the Not Bourne Yesterday development phase (NBY) D1.4.4 Develop new partnerships through the Mending the Misbourne project (CCSP) D1.4.5 Address partnership legacy for the Mend the Gap Programme (discuss with RSR - what does this actually mean we are doing)
D2 Advocacy	D2.1 Improving Impact & Influence on Local Issues	D2.1.1 Develop & agree an advocacy strategy covering local & national issues D2.1.2 Advocate on local issues as they arise
	D2.2 Improving Impact & Influence on National Issues	D2.2.1 Support NLA & PLP advocacy focused on where we have expertise / significant interest D2.2.2 Advocate & raise awareness of national issues related to Protected Landscapes with Local MPs, Local Officers & Elected Members

D3 Sustainable Finance	D3.1 Developing a Longer-Term Fundraising Strategy to Diversify Income	D3.1.1 Develop & agree medium-term funding strategy (inc programmes / projects / unrestricted funding) D3.1.2 Clarify fundraising roles, responsibilities & ways of working
	D3.2 Horizon Scanning Future Funding Opportunities	D3.2.1 Clarify what horizon scanning entails and how it will be used D3.2.2 Start exploring potential of Green Finance for farmed land
	D3.3 Securing Restricted Funding for Projects & Legacy Work	D3.3.1 Identify key diversified income sources for specific programmes / projects D3.3.2 Develop funding action plan for farmed land (for farmer clusters & FiPL) D3.3.3 Bid for & consolidate longer term funding for facilitation across the Central Chilterns, Chess/Misbourne & North Chilterns farm clusters (Nature Recovery) D3.3.4 Apply for delivery funding across the Central Chilterns, Chess/Misbourne & North Chilterns farm clusters (Nature Recovery) D3.3.5 Develop funding bid with the North Chilterns Landscape Partnership (inc farm cluster facilitator & delivery funding) D3.3.6 Secure development phase funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for Not Bourne Yesterday (NBY) D3.3.7 Secure matched funding commitments for Not Bourne Yesterday (NBY)
	D3.4 Securing Unrestricted Funding	D3.4.1 Identify potential funders (inc charities & HNWS) D3.4.2 Generate relationships with potential funders in line with strategy (e.g. Nature Circle) D3.4.3 Develop & submit funding proposals to identified potential funders in line with strategy

	D3.5 Amplifying Advocacy for Increased Core Funding	D3.5.1 Review strategy with the Cotswolds and identify if any information needs to be updated to support advocacy D3.5.2 Seek further opportunity to advocate for increased core funding
Outcome E: We are an ambitious and confident organisation 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 & update the organisation vision, mission & values E1.1.2 Agree the organisation mission, vision & values with staff & the Board
	E1.2 Driving Improved Strategy Alignment	E1.2.1 Develop 4-year strategic plan for the organisation (FY26-30) with SLT & Managers E1.2.2 Agree 4-year strategic plan with the Board E1.2.3 Identify & agree ways to embed understanding of the strategic plan across the organisation (inc links between Management Plan, 4-year Organisation Strategic Plan & Annual Delivery Plan) E1.2.4 Review personal objective setting & make changes to objective setting form / process (as required) to ensure alignment of personal objectives to plans E1.2.5 Clarify approach to mapping programme & project objectives to the strategic plan in future years
E2 The CCB Board	E2.1 Implementing an Updated Governance Framework	E2.1.1 Complete & agree updated Constitution (inc Scheme of Delegation) E2.1.2 Advocate for improved governance arrangements (i.e. through legislation inc our Establishment Order)

	E2.2 Improving Support to the Board	E2.2.1 Service the Board & Executive Committee E2.2.2 Complete & agree Board processes (inc meeting preparation & onboarding) E2.2.3 Start to embed new processes to improve effectiveness of support to the Board & its committees
	E2.3 Maximising Board Effectiveness	E2.3.1 Resolve the status of Planning Committee E2.3.2 Agree required Advisory Groups E2.3.3 Finalise consistent terms of reference for Committees and Advisory Groups
E3 Staff Wellbeing & Culture	E3.1 Focusing on Health & Wellbeing	E3.1.1 Investigate & if appropriate undertake a mental health survey for the organisation E3.1.2 Develop a wellbeing plan for the organisation (inc addressing issues in the annual staff survey / mental health survey) E3.1.3 Make mental health support more transparent across the organisation E3.1.4 Review provision of healthcare benefits E3.1.5 Develop, agree & embed a new policy on menopause
	E3.2 Embedding Health & Safety	E3.2.1 Complete development of standard operating procedures E3.2.2 Clarify further work needed on health & safety policies & procedures (inc contracts) & develop a clear plan for implementation E3.2.3 Develop draft calendar of health & safety activity needed E3.2.4 Identify required ongoing health & safety training for the organisation (as part of the wider Organisation Training Plan)

	E3.3 Developing a High Performing Team Culture	E3.3.1 Identify next steps around Team Development work E3.3.2 Deliver programme of activity around Team Development work (inc Lumina Sparks) E3.3.3 Establish more effective & planful ongoing SLT: Manager consultation E3.3.4 Develop & agree plan for improved internal comms E3.3.5 (improve internal brand alignment
E4 Organisation Resilience	E4.1 Balancing Ambition with Capacity	E4.1.1 Undertake resource planning review of Annual Delivery Plan & update 4-yr Strategic Plan (as required) E4.1.2 Clarify requirements for staff around non day-to-day delivery E4.1.3 Develop more efficient way to undertake resource planning for FY27-28 (inc requirement to record time) E4.1.4 Establish effective on-going review of capacity alongside risk within SLT
	E4.2 Addressing Capability & Staff Development	E4.2.1 Identify mandatory training for staff E4.2.2 Establish & pilot new staff training plan E4.2.3 Undertake key compliance training (e.g. fire, safeguarding, EDI, GDPR) E4.2.4 Develop staff training technical paper (inc identification of future capability requirements, career development opportunities) E4.2.5 Identify on-line training portal to establish in FY27-28 E4.2.6 Undertake recruitment of Office Administrator, Head of Programmes and programme / project recruitment (as required)

E5 Organisation Effectiveness	E5.1 Improving Information Management & Technology	E5.1.1 Continue transition of information to new Sharepoint structure (Nature Recovery / Admin / Governance) E5.1.2 Start work on establishing effective image library E5.1.3 Write up key controls, processes & procedures around information management E5.1.4 Train staff on information management changes & to equip them with skills to manage information on an ongoing basis E5.1.5 Complete & launch volunteer management system (inc all content) E5.1.6 Review the effectiveness of the CRM system & action accordingly E5.1.7 Review IT service provision / cost & establish more robust contractual arrangements
	E5.2 Optimising Ways of Working	E5.2.1 Complete HR processes & procedures for key lifecycle stages E5.2.2 Launch & embed HR processes & procedures through staff training E5.2.3 Identify & agree work needed on finance / IT policies & processes (inc prioritisation) E5.2.4 Clarify roles & responsibilities around EDI, staff wellbeing & operations
	E5.3 Improving Operational Governance	E5.3.1 Review & update risk register E5.3.2 Review way in SLT operates & implement new ways of working to increase robustness E5.3.3 Agree & put in place SLT ways of working to review & mitigate risk more consistently during the year E5.3.4 Complete crisis comms work E5.3.5 Complete annual planning with greater consultation with Senior Managers) E5.3.6 Complete redesign of new work process

	E5.4	E5.4.1 Appoint & train Safeguarding Lead
		E5.4.2 Review & update safeguarding policies & procedures
	Ensuring Effective Compliance	E5.4.3 Appoint Data Protection Officer
		E5.4.4 Identify & establish data protection lead / champions
		E5.4.5 Undertake gap analysis of data protection requirements
		E5.4.6 Clarify roles and responsibilities around safeguarding & data protection (inc training)
		E5.4.7 Review DBS ways of working to fit into onboarding & other processes

Item 3.1**CEO Update****Author:**

Elaine King, CEO

Purpose of Report:

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

Background

1. This report comprises highlights since the Board meeting on 25th June 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. A strategy day was also held on 30 July.
3. A significant focus has been making final improvements to the four year Business Plan and the Annual Plan that flows from it. More detail is in the Business Plan paper at item 2.4. Other key areas of focus include planning the launch of the new Nature Recovery Plan, planning development of a new Climate Adaptation Plan, recruiting a new Head of Programmes, supporting and guiding programmes and projects both proactively and troubleshooting reactively, assessing proposals from the team for making external funding applications - which are now submitted to the SLT using a standard Mandate Form - and responding to requests for information and reporting from Defra and others.
4. This period has been a particularly busy one for meetings and wider engagement with partners, stakeholders and others connected to our work. The sections below give a flavour of some of the activities and is not an exhaustive list.

Engagement with local and national government

5. Engaging with our local authorities continues to be a priority and the team collaborates with all of them to varying extents on many areas of our work. I've continued to work with our Senior Finance Manager to secure full financial contributions from our local authorities. See the Q1 Finance Report at item 2.1 for more detail.
6. A very recent welcome development is that, following difficulties for many months in engaging **Central Bedfordshire Council**, our Chair and I have been invited to meet with the CEO. A meeting is scheduled for 23 October. With thanks to Cllr Philip Spicer, appointed to the Board by the Council, who tabled a written question asking that the CEO meet us to discuss their financial contribution to the CCB.
7. Other senior meetings during this period have included regular discussions with senior management, including the CEO, at **Dacorum Borough Council** (in July and September), and a meeting with Tony Bradford, Head of Environmental Management Services at **Hertfordshire County Council**, exploring further opportunities to collaborate, the potential impacts of Local Government Reorganisation and planning for our teams to get together. A meeting with Dave Keeley, Operations Manager (Countryside) at **Oxfordshire County Council**, also explored greater communication and collaboration between the Council's officers and the CCB, building on the proactive role that Cllr McLauchlan is already playing as a CCB Board member.

8. Upcoming meetings with local authorities include one with the CEO and Deputy CEO at **South Oxfordshire District Council** and another with the CEO at **Buckinghamshire Council**.
9. The Monitoring Officer, Matt Thomson, is keeping abreast of developments with the Local Government Reorganisation process. A [briefing](#) on the situation at the time was circulated to Board members on 28 August. In the short period since then, we have learned that several local authorities, including Hertfordshire County Council in the Chilterns, have initiated (or discussed initiating) legal challenges to the decisions of the MHCLG Secretary of State in July concerning the reorganisation of county and district councils in some areas. In early September the Secretary of State announced that further work on this aspect of Local Government Reorganisation will be 'paused' while the local authorities' concerns are considered. An updated (hopefully more concise) briefing will be provided shortly, but key outcomes of this to be noted in the short term are:
 - a. This affects decisions to abolish remaining county councils and rearrange remaining district councils into unitary authorities only, which in the Chilterns is the authorities in Oxfordshire and Hertfordshire.
 - b. There is no timeline for resolving the issues and 'unpausing' the reorganisation, other than that the elections of 'shadow' authorities in the relevant areas will no longer take place in May 2027 (those elections will revert to 'normal'), and the new authorities will not be brought into effect in April 2028.
 - c. This does not affect reorganisation of Surrey, which was running at least a year ahead of the rest of the programme, and where the replacement of the county and district councils with two unitary authorities has in effect been completed.
 - d. While the legal challenges are not now going to take place, all of the relevant areas will almost certainly need to reconsider the proposals, including undertaking further consultations and providing additional evidence for the MHCLG to consider, and MHCLG will need to do additional work on the programme; all of which means that our partners in two thirds of our local authorities will be tied up with that activity for at least another year.
 - e. Inevitably this will result in additional costs and uncertainty for all of our local authorities and other stakeholders – as well as ourselves – which is not entirely unhelpful, but should result in better or at least more robustly justified decisions in the future.
 - f. The 'pause' does not affect the proposed introduction of 'strategic authorities', the legislation for which does not depend on the reorganisation of counties and districts into unitary authorities. We still expect the creation of four such authorities across the Chilterns: Thames Valley, Buckinghamshire, Bedford/Luton/Milton Keynes, and Hertfordshire, the last of which will be a mayoral authority. We continue to try to understand what that will mean for the Chilterns National Landscape.
10. This reporting period has involved less engagement with local MPs, largely due to the need to focus on other work. However, I am meeting with the CEOs at the National Landscapes Association and the Campaign for National Park in September to plan a site visit for MPs and Peers that are members of the **All Party Parliamentary Group for National Parks and National Landscapes**. More on the APPG from its Chair, Barry Gardiner MP, [here](#).
11. Defra's recruitment campaign for Secretary of State appointments to Conservation Boards and National Park Authorities is progressing, aiming to fill two vacancies on our Board. The Chair and I have assisted Defra by talking with prospective candidates, sifting and short-listing and Louise interviewed alongside Defra on 21 and 27 August.
12. 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, which aimed to develop a clearer understanding of the values, behaviours, and organisational cultures that shape governance

across Protected Landscapes. We are still waiting for the report, and Defra's response, to be published.

13. This work is considered an exploration of 'soft governance' and we continue to seek clarification from Defra on its 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 Thomson and I shared with the researchers.

Engagement with Arm's Length Bodies and government agencies

14. In parallel to the Defra-led soft governance work above, we have continued to support and contribute to an **Office for Environmental Protection (OEP)** inquiry into the role of National Parks and National Landscapes in delivering the government's biodiversity targets. The inquiry comprises a number of specific lines of exploration, focussing on the legal, policy and governance factors affecting delivery of environmental outcomes. We have provided a great deal of insight and evidence in the past few months, especially to a deeper dive into the governance arrangements at the CCB as a Conservation Board, and a focus on the role of strategic planning and our collaborative work with farmers.
15. Members of the SLT have met together with the OEP team, in addition to 1 to 1 interviews being conducted with SLT members, selected staff, partners and Board member Cllr James Norman. A table of the additional costs of being a Conservation Board, rather than a National Landscape hosted by a local authority, has also been provided to the OEP researchers. See Appendix 5 at item 2.1 for more detail.
16. The OEP also ran a very informative workshop at the NLA's annual conference in July. Workshop material, including background to the inquiry and some early conclusions, is [here](#).
17. In July, Board member Baljit Dhillon, represented the CCB at a very productive meeting with Oliver Munn, the new CEO at the **Rural Payments Agency**. Follow up actions include providing examples of where the CCB can support the RPAs work, exploring opportunities to share data and evidence, and organising a site visit to the Chilterns in the Autumn to demonstrate our partnership working.

Engagement with the National Landscapes Association and other Protected Landscapes

18. We continue to work closely with the **National Landscapes Association (NLA)** and other National Landscapes on a range of areas. These relationships are hugely valuable and we appreciate the opportunities to share insight, experiences and information, and plan strategically with our colleagues across the country as the NLA team continues to grow in capacity and expertise. Activities include monthly online Lead Officer meetings, communities of practice on specific areas such as planning, access and communications, and a new programme of Town Hall online events for all members of National Landscapes staff teams.
19. A specific example is the National Landscapes Association's initial reaction to the government's revised **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**, published on 17 August. The CCB's Planning Team contributed to the response, which can be viewed via LinkedIn [here](#). The planning team is collaborating with the NLA and other National Landscapes to develop a more comprehensive briefing; an initial briefing was circulated to Board members in the August [Planning Update](#) and will be discussed by the Planning Advisory Group (PAG) in October.
20. In summary, there is a continued and deeply concerning further shift, including by changing the understanding of sustainable development, towards favouring proposals for new

development, even where these conflict with other national priorities. Our Planning Team's view is that the outcome for planning policy on Protected Landscapes (PLs) is mixed – as follows:

Good:

- New reference to the Protected Landscape Duties (e.g. s.85 of the CROW Act).
- New reference to PL Management Plans as evidence for development plans.
- New inclusion of chalk streams as examples of natural features that need special consideration.
- New requirements for protecting or improving watercourses.

Bad:

- Weight to be attributed to PLs in the planning balance reduced from 'great' to 'substantial' (the same as is applied to everything else).
- Removal of PLs having "the highest status of protection".
- Removal of wildlife and cultural heritage as important considerations in NLs (but retained for National Parks).
- 'Exceptional circumstances' considerations for major development proposals in PLs continue to be weakly defined as meeting need, the cost of alternatives and the capacity for mitigation.

Frankly bizarre:

- Proposals for development *within* settlements must take account of PL policy, but consideration of PLs for proposals *outside of* settlements is ambiguous, especially in relation to an apparent presumption in favour of developing land within 800m of a railway station.

21. In early July, 15 of the team, and Board member Jen Morgan, attended the **NLA's Annual Conference** at the University of East Anglia. This was an excellent opportunity to connect with colleagues, gather information and share our own insight, too. Our Head of Landscape, Kate Heppell, ran a workshop with Clare Downing, Climate Change Coordinator at the NLA, on tools for mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change, focussing on the R&D work that we commissioned on the impacts of climate change at a landscape scale in the Chilterns and other chalk landscapes. Ruth Staples-Rolfe and Janet Tuppen, Programme Manager and Project Support Officer, respectively, for the Mend the Gap programme also hosted a fringe event exploring monitoring and evaluation. Presentations and workshop material from the conference can be viewed [here](#).

22. 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.

23. We continue to collaborate with the **Cotswolds Conservation Board** on a range of matters. I meet online with Rebecca Waite, the CEO, at least once a month and also joined her and the High Sheriff of Gloucestershire, Dame Fiona Reynolds, on a walk and talk in June on a Gloucestershire farm that is employing some very innovative regenerative practices. Shared areas of work include contributing insight to the OEP and Defra on the financial, legal, policy and governance challenges and opportunities of being a Conservation Board, planning for developing new Management Plans, strategic and operational planning issues, and Defra funding arrangements.

Engagement with partners

24. 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, and working on shared areas of work. I also brought together Tom and Em Adler, CEO at the **Surrey Hills Society** in July, which was a great opportunity to swap notes on areas of shared interest.

25. Specific meetings with other partners include: James Blake, CEO at the **YHA** and taking up the role of CEO at the **Yorkshire Dales National Park** in late September; Richard Benwell, CEO at **Wildlife and Countryside Link** to discuss their forthcoming campaign on Protected Landscapes; Martin Gallagher, CEO at the **Clare Foundation** - a charity that connects organisations and communities to create positive change in Buckinghamshire; and **UKELA** – the UK Environmental Law Association - to discuss mentoring schemes and other ways to provide experience and insight into the application of environmental law for undergraduates from under-represented backgrounds.
26. We have also supported key partners with funding bids focused on nature recovery, climate adaptation and community engagement. This includes supporting **Three Rivers District Council** with a National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) funding application, due to be submitted this Autumn, which is seeking around £5 million and proposes to deliver major conservation and community engagement activity at Rickmansworth Aquadrome. This links well to one of the [accessibility guides](#) produced by the CCB through Defra's Access for All programme. We have also supported **Luton Borough Council's** vision for a River Lea linear park and their application to DEFRA to be part of its National River Walks Programme. We have also contributed staff time to supporting the Natural England-led **North Chilterns Partnership** with its Expression of Interest to the NLHF.
27. We continue to liaise with **HS2 Ltd** through the Chilterns Review Group. We appear to be close to securing an inflationary uplift to the £1m awarded to us earlier this year for the Mending the Misbourne project. HS2 Ltd and Buckinghamshire Council is still progressing our other request for an inflationary uplift to the remaining assurance funding, which has devalued due to the delays to the scheme. We also continue to chase the publication of minutes of the Review Group meetings dating back to January 2025 and ensure that remaining assurance funds are distributed in the most equitable and effective way.
28. With Kate Heppell, Head of Landscape, I attended a water security roundtable convened by **Affinity Water**; and Cllr Gavin McLauchan represented the CCB at **Wild Oxfordshire's** nature recovery celebrations.
29. Upcoming meetings and events with partners include **Natural England** on future governance arrangements; Kathryn Brown, Executive Director of Science at the **UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology**; **Phab** celebration and awards reception at the House of Lords; and **CPRE's** centenary celebrations at the House of Commons.

Nature Recovery Plan

30. Supporting the recently published [Chilterns Management Plan](#), the [Chilterns Nature Recovery Plan](#) was published during this period and brings together the latest evidence on where nature recovery is most needed across the Chilterns. The Plan provides a shared framework to help organisations align their work, identify opportunities to collaborate and focus effort where it can have the greatest impact. We would appreciate all Board members sharing the Plan with colleagues and other relevant contacts.

Staff changes

31. In mid-August, we said a fond farewell to our **Landowner and Farming Engagement Advisor, North Chilterns**, Melinda Dresser. In her short time at the CCB, Melinda established herself as a very competent and popular member of staff. Melinda will be joining the Freshwater Habitats Trust and we hope to continue to work with her through collaborative projects in future.

32. Other staff changes include Laura Baker transitioning into the role of Finance **Administrator**, coinciding with our new **Office Administrator**, Louisa Merrett-Richardson, joining us in August. Eloise Small has also transitioned from Administration Officer to **Farming in Protected Landscapes and GIS Support Officer**.
33. On recruitment, a **Rivers Officer** has been appointed and joins us on 2 November, and our new **Head of Programmes** will join the team on 20 October. With thanks to Board members Cllr Louise Price and Nicola Thomas for their valuable contributions on the interview panel for Head of Programmes. More details on both roles will follow in due course.

Staff Wellbeing

34. One of the CCB's five key outcomes is to develop a resilient organisation, key to which is supporting the wellbeing of our staff. A number of measures are in place, with others being explored. Existing measures include: an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) for all staff, provided by Westfield Health, our group healthcare provider; providing clear information to staff on how to access the elements of the EAP; organising training for a number of staff as Mental Health First Aiders; establishing a Wellbeing Group which meets every 6-8 weeks; ensuring robust health and wellbeing policies; developing a Wellbeing Plan and establishing a Wellbeing Lead for the organisation.
35. We are also progressing the team development work, initiated at the end of last year, by continuing to work with Future Nature, comprising facilitators and coaches Howard Davies and Richard Clarke, who both have a strong background in Protected Landscapes and understand us as an organisation very well. Next steps include whole-team workshops and Lumina Spark profiling for every member of staff. The programme represents a capital investment which will equip the team with the behavioural insight, collaborative tools and structured action-learning discipline required to translate our vision and strategic priorities into coherent, accountable and sustainable delivery, while building and strengthening leadership capability across the organisation.

Board Induction programme

36. Finally, please note that an induction/refresher session for all Board members is scheduled for 28 September. We are working on improving the programme in the longer term, with updated material and follow up sessions. In the meantime, two site visits for Board members and staff have been organised (7 October and 18 November), Baljit Dhillon will be facilitating a Board workshop session at the next Board meeting, and we have published a programme of online presentations from the staff team for Board members.

Recommendation:

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

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

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

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

Update and recommendation

The EDI Advisory Group met on 16 July. Main points arising:

1) Board reflective session

- Baljit presented a discussion paper for the Board reflective session scheduled for the 1 October Board meeting. The session sits within our wider commitment to inclusion and effective governance and will provide an opportunity to reflect on the conditions that enable different perspectives, experience and expertise around the Board table to contribute effectively to discussion and decision-making.
- The objective is to arrive at a shared understanding of how we can draw more effectively on the breadth of experience, expertise and perspectives on the Board, share insights and make better decisions together. Baljit will facilitate the session, support open and thoughtful conversation, with the emerging insights synthesised into practical learning that can support ongoing Board effectiveness. The group felt the discussion paper is clear and concise.
- Recognising that Board members are at different starting points, the briefing paper will signpost existing information on the respective roles of the Board and Executive Committee, together with Board member roles and responsibilities. This is intended to provide a common foundation for the discussion, rather than duplicate induction material.
- The paper was discussed at the last Executive Committee meeting and was well received. Feedback reinforced the importance of providing a clear common foundation for the reflection, including clarity around Board member roles and collective responsibilities, whilst avoiding detailed questions in advance that might encourage prepared responses. This feedback, alongside subsequent discussions with Board members, has informed the final briefing and facilitation design.
- It was agreed the paper would be circulated in advance, setting out the purpose, scope and intended outcomes of the session and highlighting the opportunity for members to reflect together on **how the Board** makes best use of the breadth of experience, expertise and perspectives around the table. The detailed facilitation approach will not be set out in advance, allowing perspectives and themes to emerge naturally through the discussion.

2) Staff and Board EDI upskilling – induction, training & development, communication

- The Board induction programme was discussed and suggestions made for how this could be enhanced over time to help new Board members understand and connect with the organisation and landscape, including through site visits which can provide important first-hand context for Board discussions and decisions. In the immediate term, existing induction materials are being updated and the one-hour presentation format will continue, alongside opportunities for Board members (not just new ones) to participate in the wider training and development programme, covering current areas of work, government policy

and priorities, and challenges and opportunities. A programme of on-line presentations by CNL staff showcasing our projects will continue. Learning from these activities can help inform the longer-term development of the induction approach.

- The discussion also highlighted the importance of two-way communication in supporting Board engagement. Recent examples where changes or cancellations to development sessions had not reached attendees demonstrated the need for clear and reliable communication arrangements. As Board members volunteer their time and may rearrange other commitments to participate, ensuring timely communication of changes is an important part of creating the conditions for successful engagement. It was agreed that communication arrangements around Board training and development opportunities should therefore be reviewed and strengthened.
- The programme of confirmed 2026/27 CNL staff and Board training events was shared. This includes both formal and informal training, providing an excellent opportunity to get an in-depth look at CNL projects, spend time with staff and key partners, learn about our work and get out and about in the landscape. There was discussion around encouraging greater Board participation. It was agreed that there should be a clear expectation that Board members engage in at least one training / development opportunity each year, alongside ensuring opportunities are accessible through appropriate formats, timings, advance notice and a range of options.
- The group also discussed the Protected Landscapes Partnership's recent Sense of Belonging research and the potential synergies with CNL's EDI work. Baljit has since met with the author, Saskia Luqmani, to explore the findings further, including how insights around belonging, participation and contribution may help inform the Board reflective session and CNL's wider thinking about inclusion.

3) EDI Action Plan update

- Annette ran through the EDI Action Plan. Over the last three months main activity has been:
 - Promoting Defra Access for All programme 26/27 and assessing applications. So far £307,725 of funding has been allocated (total budget £429,229).
 - Supporting CNL and partner projects, including input to the Natural England-led North Chilterns Partnership EOI for a Lottery bid with proposals for youth work experience and traineeships.
 - Launching the CNL Youth Hub.
 - We are scaling up our EDI communications, including showcasing projects we've supported through the Defra Access funding. Key events in June/July include:
 - Launch of new [Access trail and sensory garden at Dunstable Downs](#), part funded and supported by CNL with Defra Access for All funding. Follow-on communications promoting two new Access Guides and videos at Dunstable Downs added to our [Accessibility Hub](#).
 - Supported University Bedfordshire with a [Greenstakeholder event](#) as part of Luton Borough Council's Nature Towns & Cities project in June
 - Two training events were held at the Centre for Outdoor Accessibility Training for CNL staff and key partners (30 attendees). A programme of site visits and online training has been circulated to staff and Board members taking place October to January.
 - Launch of new [Chilterns National Landscape Youth Hub](#) 28 July, with a communications campaign taking place throughout August.

Recommendation:

1. To NOTE and OFFER FEEDBACK on updates.

Item 3.3**Planning Function Update****Author:**

Matt Thomson, Head of Planning

Purpose of Report:

To update the Board on the activities of CCB's planning function, including the inaugural meeting of the Planning Advisory Group (PAG).

Background

1. This paper provides an update on Planning Function activities. Further to the paper brought to the Board in June, we have identified an error in which quarter we reported on then: the intention had been that we updated the Board on activities in the quarter prior to the previous Planning Advisory Group (PAG) meeting, highlighting the PAG's reflections as discussed at their meeting. This update corrects that.
2. The paper also shares the draft action points of the 5 August 2026 PAG meeting for information (appendix 1), and seeks the Board's final approval of the PAG Terms of Reference (appendix 2).

Planning Function activities, April-June 2026

3. The Planning Updates setting out the work of the Planning Team during the months of [April](#), [May](#) and [June](#) 2026 have been circulated to Board members, co-opted PAG members and all CCB staff. These and both earlier and later Updates may be accessed [here](#). (These links are not currently accessible to other Board attendees or members of the public.)
4. The quarter's activities, some updates of activities during July, and matters to be considered in subsequent months were discussed at the inaugural meeting of the PAG on 5 August. The 'action notes' from that meeting are attached as appendix 1. Updates on and matters arising from those notes include:
 - a. After the meeting, separate discussions were had with PAG Members, and we are pleased to report that Matthew Stanton has agreed to act as PAG Chair, with Sue Rowland as Deputy. Those roles will be confirmed at the next meeting.
 - b. The PAG agreed not to amend the Group's Terms of Reference that had been approved in principle by the Board in June. The ToRs are attached as appendix 2 for ease of reference (with the note about transitional arrangements for first appointment of members now removed). This means that the Terms of Reference as ratified under item 1.4 of this agenda should now stand.
 - c. The PAG agreed to co-opt Simon Mortimer after his term as a Board member ends (see item 2.3), and asked the Planning Team to explore with the Chiltern Society the potential for co-opting (or engaging by other means) a representative from the Society or their Planning Group.
 - d. The Planning Team were also tasked with continuing to develop (a) the information available to members, including means to highlight the provision of new materials, and (b) the provision of training for local authority planning officers, and for CCB Members and staff.
5. Casework highlights (if that is the right word) during April to June 2026 included, in summary, submissions made on 15 new planning proposals or appeals, and on 5 local and national planning policy consultations, plus engagement with the Dacorum Local Plan examination. Further details of all of these and more may be found in the monthly Planning Updates.

6. In the first eight weeks or so of Q3, additional work has been undertaken, which will be reported more fully to the next PAG meeting (29 October). Some information has been provided in the [August](#) Planning Update, and more will follow in the September update in the next few days. Activities include:
- a. Getting our heads around the new **National Planning Policy Framework** ('the government's rulebook for planning') which was published in August, several weeks ahead of expectations. We circulated an initial reaction in the August Planning Update, and linked to the NLA's similar statement. We will be looking at this in more detail with the PAG: watch this space.
 - b. Digesting the outcome of the MHCLG consultation on **statutory consultees** in the planning system: our attempt to acquire statutory consultee status for planning applications was unsuccessful, and we were also disappointed that the government followed through on their proposal to remove that status from the Gardens Trust (although they will have 'notification' status).
 - c. Contributing to an NLA submission in relation to the MHCLG consultation on **permitted development rights** (including schools, assets of community value, defence and conservation). A particular concern relates to Natural England being granted blanket permission to support development for conservation measures within an 'environmental development plan', including within National Landscapes, without reference to the relevant National Landscape team.
 - d. Submitting responses on local plan consultations in **Buckinghamshire** and **Three Rivers**, and considering responses in relation to **Dacorum** (next local plan), **St Albans**, and the **West London Waste Plan**. Local plan consultations are expected to rapidly increase following the publication of the NPPF and the decision to pause Local Government Review.
 - e. Planning and related applications are also on the increase, as is their complexity, with applications related to new technology, including solar arrays, vehicle charging stations, hydroponic farming buildings and data centres.
 - f. The public inquiry on the appeal relating to the proposal for 1,400 homes on **land east of Tring**, which we have been preparing to attend, was postponed from September to November to account for the new NPPF.

Planning Briefings

7. No new Planning Briefings were published this quarter, but plenty are in the pipeline, including on the new NPPF and application of the Protected Landscapes Duty. These existing library of Briefings can be accessed by Board and Planning Committee members, and CCB staff, [here](#). The idea of these briefings is to record thinking on key issues (even if not associated with a consultation response or other advocacy work) or to provide information about new policies or legislation.

Recommendation

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



Chilterns National Landscape

ACTION NOTES FROM THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING ADVISORY GROUP held on Wednesday 5 August 2026 in hybrid format at the offices of the Chilterns Conservation Board and online via Teams.

Present:

Cllr Sue Rowland	Board Member	PCs
Chris Hannington*	Co-opted Member	
Paul Hayes*	Co-Opted Member	
Cllr Charles Hussey*	Board Member	PCs
Jen Morgan	Board Member	SoS
Cllr James Norman*	Board Member	LA
Cllr Louise Price*	Board Member	LA
Matt Thomson	Head of Planning; Monitoring Officer	Officer
Elaine King	CEO	Officer
Mike Stubbs	Planning Adviser (Dev Mgt)	Officer
Victoria Thomson*	Planning Adviser (Policy)	Officer

*attended online

2. Election of Chair and Deputy Chair

It was agreed that Sue Rowland would continue as Chair for this meeting. The issue will be raised again with James Norman, Matthew Stanton (and others) after the August meeting to determine who will take it on for future meetings. Sue Rowland to then take on the Deputy Chair role, and Louise Price advised that she is happy to offer support where needed. **MT action.**

3. Apologies

Apologies received and accepted from:

- Cllr Robert Carington (LA)
- Simon Mortimer (SoS)
- Matthew Stanton (SoS)

6. Minutes of Minutes of 30 April 2026 Planning Committee meeting

The Minutes of the April meeting are to be approved at the next Board meeting (1 October) subject to a correction on page 7: in the first bullet point, the Minutes should state that the application was refused, rather than the objection (minute 25/26.35). **MT action.**

7. Matters arising

The PAG requested that the Planning Team:

- Progress the summary interpretation or briefing on the Protected Landscapes Duty (minute 25/26.30). **MT action (with team).**

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- Develop a mechanism for ensuring that updates on planning consultations and inquiries are brought to Members' attention, with links to online resources where available, including livestreaming of hearings etc where CCB officers are in attendance. **Planning Team to action.**

9. PAG Terms of Reference and Order of Business

The PAG agreed not to propose further changes to the PAG Terms of Reference, which may be taken to the Board for final approval in October. **MT action.**

The PAG agreed to remove "notice of urgent business" and "consideration of motions submitted by members" out of the standard order of business, and to retain the order of business separately from the Terms of Reference to enable flexibility. **MT action.**

Notes were taken of a wider discussion under this item relating to ways of working (of both the PAG and the Planning Team). While no specific agreement was made on that discussion at the meeting, the Planning Team will review their notes and consider how to progress the ideas raised. **Planning Team action.**

10. Co-opted members

The PAG agreed to co-opt Paul Hayes, Chris Hannington and Simon Mortimer, for ratification by the October Board, with thanks to Paul and Chris for their significant contributions to date. **MT action.**

The PAG asked the Head of Planning to begin a conversation with the Chiltern Society about how they might be involved with the group (co-opting a representative, inviting as 'observer', etc.) **MT action.**

11. PAG work programme

The Planning Team is to bring its emerging training proposal to PAG, noting the interest in strengthening the technical knowledge of LPA teams, building stronger relationships with them, determining and providing the information LPA teams need, and showing examples of good and bad practice (working with the NLA to provide examples from outside the Chilterns where appropriate). Supporting the provision of training through the NLA could assist with making case studies and upskilling less critical of LPA colleagues. **VT action.**

MT advised that the Team has recently created a [DM Casework Responses](#) folder in the system: the Planning Team will file future casework responses there, and add some from the backlog (note that there is already a [Policy Casework](#) folder, too). Work is also underway on creating and sharing more permanent and stable links, with better instructions on how to access and navigate the materials available in SharePoint. Members accessing the files in the meantime are asked to take care to avoid accidental deletions. **Planning Team action: improve delivery and continue to improve systems**

12. Development Management Casework update Q1 2026/27

The PAG asked the Team to circulate the 'Dunkerswell' decision. **MS action.**

MS to circulate the CCB response to the [Pheasant's Rise application](#) (Chesham) which includes the exceptional development test discussed at the meeting. [actioned 05/08]

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MS to circulate the recent CCB submission regarding the [Land East of Tring application](#) (which includes the chronology of events discussed at the meeting). [actioned 05/08]

EK offered to circulate links to information about the CCB's Landscape Connections project. Officially led by the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, it has pre-development phase funding, and the North Wessex Downs National Landscape team has just recruited a manager and officer to develop the work. If successful, it will be a very ambitious 10-year project. Information is not yet available on the CCB or North Wessex Downs website, but can be found via the following links:

- <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/strategic-initiatives/landscape-connections>
- <https://grantrnav.threesixtygiving.org/grant/360G-NLHF-HA-25-01135#>
- <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/lc-nature-ridge-landscape-connections>
- https://www.linkedin.com/posts/north-wessex-downs-national-landscape_protectedlandscapes-landscapeconnections-activity-7478464650896994304-CGIQ/

13. Planning Policy Casework update Q1 2026/27

Planning Team to continue to flag trends in all casework reports. **Planning Team action.**

CCB to raise the concern about compliance with the Protected Landscapes Duty (Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000) with North Herts. **MT action.**

Planning Team to assess the implications of the recent changes to NSIP procedures for the CCB, and share an updated briefing on Permitted Development Rights decisions. **Planning Team action.**

14. Urgent Business

Charles Hussey reminded the Group that the reforms to local planning authority Planning Committees (and related guidance) come into force on 31 October, affecting what can be called in to Planning Committees. Our briefing on the issue is available [here](#). It was agreed that the concerns the changes raise regarding local democracy are for LPAs to highlight, and not for the CCB to raise with the Office for Environmental Protection.

EK advised that the Management Plan for the Chilterns National Landscape was published in June. The CCB Admin Team has a plan in place to distribute hard copies, but electronic versions (full and summary) may be viewed [here](#).

Date of next meeting

Thursday 29 October 2026 (am). The Team will ensure that the 'Owl' meeting room camera is set up away from the projector to improve sound quality for online attendees.

Planning Advisory Group

Draft Terms of Reference v2, June 2026

Note: as “approved in principle” 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.
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

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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.¹
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

¹ 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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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),
 - 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

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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.

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.



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 1st September 2026 at Chinnor Village Hall, Chinnor OX39 4PQ
commencing at 10.07 AM.**

Present:

Cllr Philip Spicer	Board Member
Cllr Charles Hussey	Board Member
Cllr Gavin Mclauchlan	Board Member
Cllr Hector Sants	Board Member – Chair
Baljit Dhillon	Board Member
Nicola Thomas	Board Member
Cllr Louise Price	Board Member

In attendance:

Elaine King	Chief Executive Officer
Andy Brock-Doyle	Head of Operations
Kathryn Foster	Senior Finance Manager; S151 Officer
Kate Heppell	Head of Landscape
Lorna Coldwell	Clerk to the Board and Minute taker

26/27.1 Standing Items

15.1 Apologies for absence

Board Members:

Matthew Stanton* - Secretary of State
Cllr John Griffin – Oxfordshire Parish Councils

Officers:

Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning; Monitoring Officer
Annette Weiss* - Head of Engagement and Partnerships

** marked listened online*

1.2 Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

1.3 Chair's Announcements

No announcements were made.

1.4 Notice of Urgent Business

All items covered on the agenda.

CCB Executive Committee Meeting

Tuesday 1 September 2026

1.5 Approval of Minutes of the previous meeting 19th May 2026

The minutes of the meeting 19/05/26 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair subject to an amendment of minute 17.2.

1.6 Matters Arising

All items covered on the agenda.

1.7 Consideration of Motions Submitted by Members

None at this meeting.

1.8 Public Questions

No members of the public were present.

26/27.2 Items for Decision**2.1 Quarter 1 Finance Report**

The Senior Finance Manager, Kathryn Foster, reported on the accounts to 30th June 2026.

Highlights include:

1. The organisation is on track with budget forecasts at this stage in the year, much of the planned expenditure is weighted to later in the financial year. A surplus of £35k is showing, and Officers will be reforecasting financials to the end of the year following Q2 finalisation which will be brought to the Executive Committee meeting in November. There will also be a pre-budget envelope for 2027 and the financial year beyond.
2. Core reserves are £798k, consisting of £574k general and £224k development, which are ringfenced for longer term benefit projects/activities.
3. At the end of Q1, the organisation holds £4.9m in cash, this figure has been boosted by funding by receiving funding for the Mending the Misbourne project. The Senior Finance Manager is in the process of opening a further savings account at Unity Trust Bank, in addition to the current HSBC accounts utilised, who offer attractive interest rates at 3.85% for a six-month notice account. Unity Trust are well known in public sector organisations, however this is a long process which began in May and is still ongoing. The process is taking longer than anticipated due to a high volume of applications Unity Trust have received and Board's unusual governance structure. It was noted that the onboarding process for new Board members needs to be altered to advise that any person who is nominated to the Board must provide full personal details to make procedures such as this more efficient.
4. The Code of Conduct will be amended by Matt Thomson, Monitoring Officer, to include this stipulation and proposed changes will be taken to the October Board meeting. Cllr Philip Spicer advised of changes to Local Authority legislation whereby addresses are no longer needed to be published on a publicly accessible website, and this should alleviate any concerns Board members may have. Where and how personal data is being used by the organisation will be made clearer via the Code of Conduct. It was suggested that the Chief Executive Officer write to Local Authority Monitoring Officers to advise of this requirement from next year, so that any potential new appointees are aware.
5. Approval was sought to use Development reserves for a number of activities over and above our budgeted costs, although any opportunity to use in year surpluses or CDEL funds will be explored wherever possible:
 - i) Transformation costs of £20k above the budget line (£80k of Transformation costs to be funded from reserves were originally approved by the Board in June 2025)
 - ii) Not Bourne Yesterday net costs of £20k due to agreed delays to submitting the Delivery Phase application

CCB Executive Committee Meeting

Tuesday 1 September 2026

- iii) Climate consultancy costs of £30k to support development of the statutory Climate Adaptation Plan.

Further information relating to each item:

- i) Additional costs are needed to fund priorities already agreed, there are no foreseen additional extra costs. The additional funding will have a beneficial effect and not contribute to any longer term higher costs. Additional funding approved.
- ii) Learning laboratory costs were almost double the original anticipated amount, so alternative plans have been made which caused the delay. The National Lottery funding is ringfenced and the project is well supported. Additional funding approved.
- iii) It was agreed to wait until the Climate Adaption Plan was discussed before deciding on the request for additional funding.

It was noted that there is no policy for “topping up” reserves that are spent, as a publicly funded organisation should operate on a break even basis, and any additional reserves over the minimum required to continue operations should be spent on projects aligned with the statutory requirements.

6. The Chief Executive Officer has written to all local authorities in the Chilterns National Landscape outlining the expected level of contribution for the next three years. Positive responses have been received from six, who are supportive and have accepted the need for inflation reflected in their contributions. Ongoing dialogue is taking place with the other three to emphasise the need for full contributions, which amount to a shortfall of £45.5k on expected income.
7. It was proposed to consider limiting grant funding in council areas that do not fulfil their full contributions. The Chief Executive Officer advised that the legalities of this would need to be investigated, and a paper will be brought to a future Executive Committee meeting to see if any sanctions can be implemented within the governance rules. The Chief Executive Officer and Monitoring Officer have been asking Defra to provide clarity over local authority financial contributions for some time.
8. The internal audit review for 2025/26 has been completed and gave an overall audit opinion of “reasonable assurance”, “substantial assurance” was not achieved due to a recommendation to review the Financial Regulations, and a recommendation relating to the annual review of the Risk Register which was delayed. A review of the Financial Regulations will be brought to a future Executive Committee meeting before the next internal audit review. This should take place every three years. A suggestion is to make it an appendix rather than it be embedded in the Constitution, which would make it easier to review and update as part of the policy cycle review schedule. Clarity around member allowances was also raised, which is being discussed later in this meeting’s agenda.
9. The appeal to SODC over rates for the office building was rejected. The Chief Executive Officer, Elaine King, will speak with the Chief Executive Officer at SODC to see if an increase in their financial contributions could be made to offset the rates.

- 1. The Committee OFFERED FEEDBACK as detailed above and APPROVED the Q1 Finance report to 30th June 2026**
- 2. The Committee OFFERED FEEDBACK as detailed above and APPROVED the proposed use of Development Reserves for 2026/2027 for transformation costs and the Not Bourne Yesterday project**
- 3. The Committee NOTED the other finance updates as provided**

2.2 Members Allowances

CCB Executive Committee Meeting

Tuesday 1 September 2026

It was noted that some members of the Executive Committee are in receipt of allowances. The Senior Finance Manager, Kathryn Foster, outlined that the Members' Allowances Scheme forms part of the Constitution and has been in place since June 2016, without any subsequent reviews. The internal audit highlighted that backdated payments have been made to members, which should be a one off exception and not adopted as standard practice; the increase to HMRC mileage allowance rates needs to be reflected, in a manner that means any future increases can be incorporated without having to amend the entire scheme each time; changes to the Planning Committee which is now the Planning Advisory Group need to be included. Currently 11 of 25 Board members claim an allowance, at approximately £10k per annum.

There are longer term plans to review the level of allowances paid to the different committees and Chairs/deputy chairs and childcare/dependent allowances, but immediate changes are necessary following the internal audit report. It was suggested that the Terms of Reference for any advisory groups can include whether it is appropriate to pay an allowance for participation, along with Task and Finish Groups. It was agreed to add in allowances for advisory groups and take an updated paper to the Board for approval. Any allowances should be claimed and paid in line with the scheme.

- 1. The Committee OFFERED FEEDBACK as detailed above and APPROVED for recommendation to the Board for the proposed changes**
- 2. The Committee OFFERED FEEDBACK as detailed above regarding future possible changes to the Members Allowances Scheme**

2.3. HR Policies

The Head of Operations Andy Brock-Doyle detailed a paper requesting approval to the Family Related Leave and Bereavement and Compassionate Leave Policies as a result of legislative changes to statutory family-related leave introduced by the government in April 2026, additional changes to improve paternity pay, and to bring shared parental leave in line with maternity leave payments which are non-statutory requirements but would make the policies fairer for staff and avoid obstacles for taking certain forms of leave.

It was noted by Baljit Dhillon that going beyond the statutory requirements is beneficial to the staff team and demonstrates that the organisation values and supports its employees. Whilst there will be a potential for additional costs following implementation, an exercise has been undertaken which shows it will be a relatively small sum.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the statutory family-related leave changes effective from 6th April 2026 and the corresponding updates made to the Family Related Leave Policy and the Bereavement & Compassionate Leave Policy**
- 2. The Committee OFFERED FEEDBACK as detailed above and APPROVED the update Family Related Leave Policy**
- 3. The Committee OFFERED FEEDBACK as detailed above and APPROVED the update Bereavement & Compassionate Leave Policy**

2.4 Climate Adaptation Plan

Kate Heppell, Head of Landscape, provided a paper requesting £30k of Development reserves to support the production of the Climate Adaptation Plan (CAP), which is a mandatory component of the Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan and is required to be produced and published by 1 January 2028. Additional costs beyond this funding may be needed, such as if the staff team needs reconfiguring and additional capacity created to deliver the CAP. This will be addressed when appropriate. Developing the Nature Recovery Plan benefitted from support from an additional staff member – they have now retired and the role not replaced. The funding will support additional capacity, largely through commissioning work, to develop the Plan within the timeframe over the next 18 months. Cllr McLauchlan asked whether the Plan would be purely adaptation or include mitigation as well. The Head of Landscape advised that the statutory requirement is on adaptation only, and therefore the emphasis must reflect that, although she feels that the team are exploring mitigation already as part of

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their ongoing work, and this will be incorporated into the plan where possible. The Plan will focus not only on the required risk assessment, but also on the solutions that can be put in place for mitigation and adaptation. Work with external partners and consultancy work will be critical to the core work. Elaine King, the Chief Executive Officer, advised that this is a key piece of work for the organisation and will play a key role in the next Management Plan.

A question was raised as to whether the plan in full or part could be fed into parish councils' emergency plans. It was noted that the Plan will be for all stakeholders in the Chilterns National Landscape, as is the case for the Management Plan. The CAP will therefore make clear who will be responsible for each outcome and include workable and pragmatic solutions.

- 1. The Committee OFFERED FEEDBACK as above and APPROVED the use of £30k from the Development reserves to support the development of the Climate Adaptation Plan**

2.5 Business Planning

Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations, provided an update on work carried out since the last Executive Committee meeting in May, following Board approval of the Annual Delivery Plan in June 2026. The capacity of the staff team remains one of the highest areas of risk. An exercise has therefore been undertaken to assess the various projects against available staff capacity, taking a more pragmatic approach to determine which outcomes need to be delivered this year, which can be deferred to future years, and which may no longer be necessary. This approach follows a request from the Executive Committee.

Following this detailed mapping work, 39 activities have been removed from the business plan, with some outcomes postponed and kept under review until next year. The new Head of Programmes, once recruited, will alleviate some capacity restraints on the Senior Leadership Team - the Head of Landscapes in particular, although this will be more apparent in financial year 2027/2028. The recruitment of a new Office Administrator is now complete, which means there is a definitive split for various administrative roles in the team. The review of the four-year Strategic Plan has provided greater clarity and confidence around the organisation's ability to deliver the plan.

While capacity constraints can never be entirely ruled out, the organisation is now in a much stronger position to deliver its planned outcomes. Any items that may slip are being identified more proactively, with a greater awareness of the potential impact on delivery and the need to manage these accordingly. Team development sessions will be taking place to underpin the necessity to ensure that the staff team are aware of responsibilities outside of their immediate project works, such as the importance of attending fortnightly team meetings. Each staff member's objectives include one that is outside of their core work to assist with delivering the business plan. Work is also being done to map project objectives against the strategic plan objectives to ensure alignment.

It was noted that there is now a clear set of priorities, which helps the Senior Leadership Team assess proposals for new work. A risk and assurance framework would be helpful to assess risk the organisation faces and if the Board has the appetite to face those. It was suggested a paper be taken to a future Executive Committee meeting to consider if this would be useful and, if necessary, take to a Board meeting. A working group could be formed to manage this.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the work carried out to advance the strategic planning of the organisation and OFFERED FEEDBACK as detailed above**
- 2. The Committee APPROVED the 4-Year Strategic Plan (FY26-30) for RECOMMENDATION to the Board with some minor adjustments made between now and the Board meeting in October 2026**
- 3. The Committee APPROVED the updated Annual Delivery Plan (FY26-27) for RECOMMENDATION to the Board with some minor adjustments between now and the Board meeting in October 2026**

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26/2.3 Items for Noting**3.1 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Update**

Annette Weiss, Head of Engagement and Partnerships along with Board Member Baljit Dhillon, EDI Advisory Group Co-Chair had provided an update on progress on delivering the EDI ambition. At the October Board meeting Baljit Dhillon will be facilitating a reflective session with smaller group conversations for members to think about the conditions that are most conducive to the effective working of the Board. Cllr Louise Price, Chair of the Board gave her thanks and said it was an interesting initiative that will enable more discussions and allow members to give their thoughts, as the large board environment can be a barrier to some. It was noted to mix up members appointed by different authorities and a briefing paper circulated beforehand so that all members are aware and understand the objectives of the workshop. Executive Committee members were invited to share any further thoughts with Baljit.

Annette Weiss, Head of Engagement and Partnerships, recounted that there has been a great take up of both the staff team and Board members for site visits and training. Induction materials for Board members are being updated to reflect the need for upskilling in certain areas, such as EDI knowledge, and a programme of online presentations from staff showcasing the projects will continue. Promoting the Defra Access for All programme continues, with almost half of the total funding allocated, and EDI communications increasing, including showcasing projects that have been supported.

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

Cllr Gavin McLaughlan left at 12.31.

3.2 Funding Report

The Chief Executive Officer Elaine King had provided a paper to update the Executive Committee on progress with delivering the funding strategy. This financial year is the first of a three year flat cash settlement with year one figures confirmed by Defra and years two and three indicative. Income this year is £1.29m, Local Authority contributions as previously discussed fall short of predicted income and the need to diversify income remains crucial. The incoming Head of Programmes when appointed will assist with this, interviews are currently taking place.

The Funding Pipeline is regularly updated by the Senior Leadership Team, and work continues with the National Landscape Association to explore corporate funding. The organisation has a good relationship with Defra, and they are innovative at finding smaller pots of money that may be underspent, but the challenge is that this is often capital, not revenue, only short term and spend needs to be in-year. It was suggested that Secretary of State appointed Board members express their thoughts to Defra regarding funding. This may be challenging as the Defra Secretary of State does not encourage feedback or a flow of information. The Chair of the Board will write to request a formal process for feedback to be given, including their expectations of Board members, its priorities for National Landscapes and how we can be utilised more effectively.

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

Nicola Thomas left at 12.45

3.3 Chief Executive Officer's Report

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

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- The Senior Leadership Team continues to oversee the organisation's operations and strategic priorities, including a significant focus on making final improvements to the four year Business Plan and the Annual Plan that flows from it.
- Engagement with Local Authorities, MPs, government bodies, partners and other stakeholders takes place as a priority.
- Defra's recruitment for Secretary of State appointees to Conservation Boards and National Park Authorities is progressing, with the aim of filling two vacancies on the Chilterns Conservation Board.
- There have been various staff changes with some moving on and new recruits. Work continues for progressing the team development work, with a key outcome being to develop a resilient organisation and supporting the wellbeing of staff.

1. The Committee NOTED the update**26/27.4 Any Urgent Business**

None at this time.

26/27.5 Next Executive Committee meetingThursday 19th November at 10am, at The HUB Conference Centre, High Wycombe**Further meeting Dates:**

Executive Committee	Board
	Thursday 1 st October 2026 10am Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury
Thursday 19 th November 2026 10am, The HUB Conference Centre, High Wycombe	Thursday 10 th December 2026 10am Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury

Future Meeting Dates 2027:

Executive Committee	Board
Thursday 25 th February 2027 10am Venue TBC	Thursday 25 th March 2027 10am Buckinghamshire Council Offices, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF
Thursday 20 th May 2027 10am Venue TBC	Thursday 17 th June 2027 10am Buckinghamshire Council Offices, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF
Thursday 2 nd September 2027 10am Venue TBC	Thursday 30 th September 2027 10am Buckinghamshire Council Offices, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF
Thursday 18 th November 2027 10am Venue TBC	Thursday 9 th December 2027 10am Buckinghamshire Council Offices, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF

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The meeting was closed at 12.48.

The Chair.....

Date.....