Chilterns National Landscape

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

Executive Committee

On Thursday 19 November 2026 at 10.00am at

The Lodge, 90 Station Road, Chinnor, OX39 4HA
and by remote video conferencing.

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

The online session will be available from 9.45am

AGENDA

1. **Standing Items**
   - 1.1 Apologies for absence
   - 1.2 Declaration of interest in any of the agenda items
   - 1.3 Chair's announcements
   - 1.4 Notice of urgent business
   - 1.5 Approval of minutes of the previous meeting (1 September 2026)
   - 1.6 Matters arising
   - 1.7 Consideration of motions submitted by members
   - 1.8 Public questions
2. **Items for Decision**
   - 2.1 Quarter 2 Finance Report
   - 2.2 Quarters 1 and 2 Delivery Report
   - 2.3 HR Policies
3. **Items for Noting / Information**
   - 3.1 Chief Executive Officer's Report
   - 3.2 Funding Report
   - 3.3 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Update
4. **Any Urgent Business**
5. **Next Meeting**: Thursday 25 February 2027, Chinnor Village Centre, High Street, Chinnor, OX39 4DH

Dr Elaine King, CEO

Future Meeting Dates 2026

Executive Committee	Board
	Thursday 10 December 2026, 10am Buckinghamshire Council Offices, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF

Future Meeting Dates 2027

Executive Committee	Board
Thursday 25 February 2027 10am Chinnor Village Centre, High Street, Chinnor, OX39 4DH	Thursday 25 March 2027, 10am Buckinghamshire Council Offices, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF
Thursday 20 May 2027 10am Chinnor Village Centre, High Street, Chinnor, OX39 4DH	Thursday 17 June 2027, 10am Buckinghamshire Council Offices, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF
Thursday 2 September 2027 10am Venue tbc	Thursday 30 September 2027, 10am Buckinghamshire Council Offices, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF
Thursday 18 November 2027 10am Chinnor Village Centre, High Street, Chinnor, OX39 4DH	Thursday 9 December 2027, 10am Buckinghamshire Council Offices, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF

CCB Executive Committee Meeting Tuesday 1 September 2026

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	Local Authority – Central Beds Council
Cllr Charles Hussey	Board Member	Non-voting observer
Cllr Gavin McLauchlan	Board Member	Local Authority - Oxfordshire CC
Cllr Hector Sants	Board Member – Chair	Parish Councils - Buckinghamshire
Baljit Dhillon	Board Member	Secretary of State
Nicola Thomas	Board Member	Secretary of State
Cllr Louise Price	Board Member	Local Authority – Three Rivers DC

Officers 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

CCB Executive Committee Meeting Tuesday 1 September 2026

All items covered on the agenda.

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
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
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 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 RECCOMENDATION to the Board with some minor adjustments between now and the Board meeting in October 2026**

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 McLauchlan 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:

- 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 meeting
Thursday 19th November at 10am, at The HUB Conference Centre, High Wycombe

Further meeting Dates:

Executive Committee	Board
	Thursday 1st October 206 10am Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury
Thursday 19th November 2026 10am, The HUB Conference Centre, High Wycombe	Thursday 10th December 2026 10am Gateway Offices, Buckinghamshire Council, Aylesbury

Future Meeting Dates 2027:

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

CCB Executive Committee Meeting Tuesday 1 September 2026

Thursday 18th November 2027 10am Venue TBC	Thursday 9th December 2027 10am Buckinghamshire Council Offices, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF

The meeting was closed at 12.48.

The Chair…… Date……..

Item 2.1 **Quarter 2 Finance Report**

Author: Kathryn Foster, Senior Finance Manager

Purpose: To provide an update to the Executive Committee on Financials to 30 September 2026 and other finance matters.

Quarter 2 26/27 – 1 April – 30 September 2026 – Management Accounts - Core

£'000s	Year to date Quarter 2 Actual 26/27	Year to date Quarter 2 Budget 26/27	Quarter 2 Budget Variance	Full Year Forecast 26/27	Full Year Budget 26/27
Defra Income	369	357	12	750	718
Local Authority Income	61	61	0	122	122
Other income	97	105	(8)	230	260
Total Income	**527**	**523**	**4**	**1,102**	**1,099**
Staff costs	327	364	37	723	762
Office costs	35	35	0	69	71
Governance costs	8	11	3	22	21
Communications costs	6	3	(3)	9	10
Telecoms & IT costs	13	12	(1)	27	26
Other costs	79	88	9	239	210
Total Costs	**468**	**513**	**45**	**1,089**	**1,099**
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	**59**	**10**	**49**	**13**	**(0)**

1. Results for the half year 1 April to 30 September 2027 show us exceeding our budget with a **surplus year to date of £59k** (Budgeted surplus £10k). The main driver behind this budgetary surplus is a saving on Core staff costs for the year to date, arising from the delayed starts for two roles, Head of Programmes and Office Administrator. Full details of our Core CCB Management Accounts with narrative comments on budget variances can be reviewed in **Appendix 1.**
2. **Appendix 2** shows overall (Core and Projects) CCB Profit and loss to Quarter 2. Projects show an **income of £2.005m** (the main elements being Mending the Misbourne's total project funds of £1m received in May, plus Smarter Water Catchment 26/27 funding of £364k). **Expenditure is £969k,** resulting in a **net surplus of £1.036m**.
3. **Appendix 3** shows the overall CCB balance sheet as at 30 September 2026. Total core reserves are **£822k,** including the year-to-date surplus. This comprises General reserves of £598k and Development reserves of £224k.

Full year forecast and 27/28 onwards

4. As summarised in the table above, we have completed a reforecast exercise to 31 March 2027. The details of this forecast are included within the CCB Core Management accounts report in **Appendix 1**. We forecast a **surplus of £13k** for the full year versus our original breakeven budget. Whilst we have made savings due to delays on recruitment and staff

changes, some shortfalls in income and additional costs have partially offset these savings.

5. **Income – the main <u>income</u> variances in our forecast are:**
    - Shortfalls on project overhead recoveries **£15.5k** (related to a delay in recruiting our new Rivers Officer and hence reduced overhead recovery; and Not Bourne Yesterday (NBY) recoveries due to the decision to delay submission of the delivery phase application by three months)
    - Reduced project income - **£16k** (delays on income from the Nature Ridge project (**£11k)** and reduced income from costs of attending the HS2 Review Panel and Additional Projects (**£5k**))
    - Additional RDEL income from Defra's Wildlife Rich Habitat programme **£11k**
    - Defra income includes **£47.5k** of CDEL income to Core which offsets the costs of Rent (**£23.5k** Office costs) and **£24k** for other costs (Transformation consultancy and Climate Adaptation Plan development). We have allocated **£20k** CDEL funding to our IT transformation project consultancy costs which we previously requested be funded from reserves)
6. **Costs – the main <u>cost</u> variances in our forecast are:**
    - **Staff costs savings of £39k-** the delays in recruitment of roles and FTE savings on our Head of Programmes. Note we have included the costs of replacing our Nature Recovery Manager from 1 January 2027.
    - **Office, IT and Comms costs** - additional repairs and maintenance costs of **£2k** have been offset by savings on insurance (**£2k**) (see below). Some additional costs for IT on our core Fidget Contract of **£3k** have been partially offset by other small savings on IT and Telecoms costs. We are delaying some website development work for the Communications Team into 27/28.
    - **Other costs** - Core Consultancy is mainly on track with our budget. A small £2.5k saving is forecast on our Data Protection work but this is still evolving. We provided for legal costs of **£6.5k** to progress work on contracts but we are deferring this into 27/28, so a reduced spend of £1.5k is included in our forecast.
    - We have additional project donation costs versus budget of **£14k.** This relates to the delay on the Not Bourne Yesterday (NBY) project and represents January 2027 to March 2027 staff costs. There are also reduced project recoveries of **£6k** in respect of NBY within income. Note we requested permission to use £20k of reserves for these costs at September's Executive Committee meeting, but we are now forecasting to cover these costs from in year funding.
7. There are several areas in our forecast where we have been prudent and our final position may show further savings. Within Project donations costs for NBY of £14k, relating to October and November salaries, could be funded from our final Lottery development budget. This will be possible once we receive payment of some Environment Agency WEIF funding.
8. Further CDEL funding (at least £5k) can potentially be allocated to staff costs and timings on the Nature Ridge project may bring further income into 26/27 now this project is underway (£11k). In addition, whilst we are exploring funding additional consultancy work for the Planning Team, we have to date only spent £22k out of the total £75k budget.
9. Work on high level plans and finances for 27/28 has begun, but we are not yet in a position to present numbers at this early stage. For example, recent staff changes, such as our Nature Recovery Manager leaving at the end of the year, need to be fully considered. Our Head of Programmes recently joined us (October) and we are awaiting

funding decisions on several projects including from Defra's Farmer Collaboration Fund and from the Heritage Lottery for the Not Bourne Yesterday project.

10. Defra has not advised whether we will receive a repeat of this year's £177k RDEL uplift funding in 27/28. Not receiving a similar uplift next year will pose a major challenge to our budget - as demonstrated this year – as it is crucial to ensuring a breakeven budget. Without an uplift, we are likely to be presenting a significant deficit budget for 27/28. However, the long term objective continues to be a breakeven budget beyond 27/28. We continue to liaise with Defra and the National Landscapes Association to seek updates on this funding.

11. A draft budget for 27/28 and a three-year plan to 29/30 will be presented at the February meeting.

CDEL Spend

12. In addition to a CDEL pot of **£348k for 26/27** (as for 25/26) we have also been allocated a portion of Defra's Wildlife Rich Habitat fund (£207k).

13. Whilst we have now received the full CDEL allocation for 26/27, we are struggling to fully utilise these funds due to lack of staff capacity in the CCB and amongst our partners. There is therefore a risk that we will need to return some monies to Defra. Our original submission to Defra allocated £200k to 30x30 projects and £148k to innovation, invest to save or income generation. We are now forecasting only £100k 30x30 spend and approximately £70k of other CDEL spend. We will continue to review allocating staff costs and considering other capital spend on innovate/invest to save equipment.

Insurance renewal

14. We have recently renewed our insurance via our broker J Bennett & Son. They have secured a saving on our management liability insurance and this is included in our forecast. This saving reflects the work that has been done in improving our employment policies and procedures, which reduces the perceived future risk of employment claims. Note the key elements and premiums for our insurances are summarised below. Our commercial and management liability insurance runs from 1 October and our professional indemnity cover from 18 December each year.

Type	**Cover**	**Annual Premium**
Commercial	£10m Public and Employers	£16,065 (25/26 £16,204)
Cyber liability	First and Third Party £100k	Included in commercial policy
Management Liability	£1m Trustees and individual liability, £250k Employment practices liability	£2,495 (£1,427 relates to employment practices cover) (25/26 £6,977)
Professional Indemnity	£1m	£2,208

Cashflow and Banking

15. As at 30 September we held **£5.087m** in cash (see Balance sheet in **Appendix 3**). Further funds have recently been moved to our 95-day Nationwide account which offers the best interest rates (3.2%). Latest HSBC money market rates for three months are 2.68%.

16. Our Unity Trust Bank current account is now open. This has taken over six months. The application process took much longer than anticipated due to a high volume of applications and the ever-increasing bank due diligence further enhanced by our unusual board governance. This will diversify our portfolio and allow more flexibility on term invested and interest rates. Importantly, it will enable us to move more of our funds into banks with better environmental ratings.

17. See **Appendix 4's** MotherTree data showing banks' tCo2 per £10,000 invested. **TCO2** stands for metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent and is the standard unit of measurement for pricing carbon. One tCO2 represents the financial and environmental value of emitting, reducing, or removing one metric ton of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Our main bank, HSBC, is one of the worst. Unity Trust bank is not listed but they feature in the Green League Table of Banks, alongside Nationwide, as ranked **"Great"** versus HSBC's "Worst".

18. We will now move funds to Unity Bank. However, any transfers over £100k need to be made in a HSBC branch so this will take time. Unity's current rates are 2.9% for 95-day Notice and 4.12% for a six month fixed term deposit account.

19. We will be considering a full move to Nationwide and Unity Trust in the longer term. A number of day-to-day banking considerations need to be addressed first, including interaction with our accounting and payroll systems.

Local Authority Funding

20. By way of an update, we have now received funding from seven of our nine local authorities, totalling **£107k**. This includes **Buckinghamshire Council's** reduced contribution for 26/27 of £41k (£61,139 request 26/27).

21. Our CEO has held productive meetings with both Luton Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council in recent weeks (see CEO's Report) and is meeting Bucks Council's CEO in early December. Nevertheless, it clear at this stage that, while contributions will be made, they will not be at the requested level for 26/27. We have therefore raised requests for the lower contributions for both Local Authorities: **Luton £4,499** (request £8,924) and **Central Beds £10,000** (request £28,110). Note that these lower contributions are in line with our budget.

External Audit

22. We have now received the external audit report from **PKF** and the final reports have been published on our website. See the final report in **Appendix 5**

23. Two except for matters were raised in the report:

- **Disclosure error on staff costs** - as in previous years, we included health insurance and recruitment costs within staff costs, which auditors have identified as incorrect. They have restated the figures on their report and requested we restate the comparatives for next year's return.
- **Risk assessment** - we incorrectly confirmed Yes to the assertion "we carried out an assessment of the risks facing the authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance

where required". The CCB's updated Risk Register was approved at the June 2026 Board meeting, but this had been delayed and, without it having been updated on an annual basis, the auditors did not accept that we can demonstrate Yes to this assertion. They have, however, noted the updated Risk Register and added to their report that this has been addressed since year end.

24. Other matters not affecting their opinion, but which they draw to the attention of the authority, are:

- Internal audit highlighted the weaknesses in relation to regular reviews of the financial regulations. This must be addressed in a timely manner.
- We have not provided evidence that we have considered the independence of the internal auditor during the year under review. This needs to be done annually (last year we stated we would do this bi-annually and they accepted). It was considered at the June 2026 board meeting but again this was after year end.

25. We have some clear actions to address for 2026/27:

- **Review and update of our Financial Regulations** (see Paragraph 26 below)
- **Ensure proper process is followed on considering auditors' independence and reviewing the Risk Register pre year end, or annually in June, so covering each financial year**
- **Review of disclosures in the various AGAR boxes for 2026/27** to ensure they are correct with reference to the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practioners' Guide.

26. Both our internal and external auditors highlighted the need to update **our Financial Regulations** – **Section 3.6.1 of our Constitution**. We are proposing to remove Financial Regulations (and later 3.6.2 Financial Instructions and 3.6.3 Contract Standing orders) from the Constitution to an appendix (Appendix 2) which will simplify the constitution and allow easier amendment and review of our financial regulations on an ongoing basis. We would include a statement within the constitution under Section 3.6.1 Financial Regulations stating, *"The management of the Board's financial affairs will be conducted in accordance with the Financial Regulations set out in Appendix 2 of this constitution"***.** With the Committee's approval, we intend to propose this amendment to the Board in December and draft, updated Financial Regulations, will be presented to the Committee in February. In so doing, we intend to have fully updated and approved Financial Regulations by 31 March 2027. Amended Financial Instructions and Contract Standing orders will follow in 2027/28.

Recommendation

That the Executive Committee:

1. **NOTES the Quarter 2 Management accounts and our forecast to 31 March 2027**
2. **NOTES the external audit report and our responses**
3. **APPROVES the approach on updating our Financial Regulations**
4. **NOTES the other finance updates provided.**

APPENDIX 1
Budget Variance
Chilterns Conservation Board
For the 6 months ended 30 September 2026

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

Account	Year to date Actual	Year to date Budget	Variance	Variance %	Full Year Budget	Full Year Forecast	Commentary on main variances year to date versus budget
Trading Income							
Defra Income							
Defra Core Grant	345,310	345,360	(51)	-0.01%	690,720	701,997	Includes one off RDEL uplift for year of £177k
Defra Capital Grant	24,092	11,750	12,342	105.04%	27,382	47,542	Funding rent to date (Capital lease release £11,750) and othe CDEL costs see below
Total Defra Income	**369,402**	**357,110**	**12,292**	**3.44%**	**718,102**	**749,539**	
Other income							
Local Authority Contribution	61,033	60,984	49	0.08%	121,968	122,033	On track only Central Beds and Luton have yet to pay. Budget includes lower figures for these two as prudent.
Project Income	18,740	23,250	(4,510)	-19.40%	57,888	41,668	FDRI £11.5k,HS2 review income £4.5k and NTC £2.5k. Budget assumed some Nature Ridge income to 30 Sept, delayed in Q3 and Q4
Interest Income	21,647	19,998	1,649	8.25%	39,996	41,647	
Internal Fee Income	56,224	61,754	(5,530)	-8.96%	161,868	146,299	Budget variance is due to lower overhead recovery (Rivers Officer only recruited in October, assumed in budget from 1 April)
Sale of merchandise	190	0	190	0.00%	0	310	
Total Other income	**157,833**	**165,986**	**(8,153)**	**-4.91%**	**381,720**	**351,956**	
Total Trading Income	**527,235**	**523,096**	**4,139**	**0.79%**	**1,099,822**	**1,101,495**	
Gross Surplus	**527,235**	**523,096**	**4,139**	**0.79%**	**1,099,822**	**1,101,495**	**Additional CDEL and Interest income offset by shortfalls on Core Project income and internal fee income from Project recharges**
Operating Expenses							
Staff costs							
Salaries	241,414	263,866	22,453	9%	549,555	518,497	Delays on recruitment of Office Administrator £5k (budget 1 July, started 10 Aug) and Head of Programmes by 1 Qtr £17.8k (budget 1 July, started 20 Oct). Other savings on Clerk hours £1.6k, Finance Administrator (budgeted FT but continues on 34 hours per week)
Employers National Insurance	32,167	34,831	2,664	8%	72,579	68,630	
Pensions Costs	39,038	42,606	3,568	8%	88,812	84,004	
Medical Insurance	1,210	1,527	317	21%	3,147	2,482	
Staff expenses	0	150	150	100%	500	500	
Staff Training	9,317	17,067	7,751	45%	41,001	41,050	Year to date training is mainly National Landscapes conference and Lumina Spark Portraits
Travel Expenses	1,955	1,595	(360)	-23%	4,020	4,705	Reflects increase in mileage rate of 22% (45 to 55p) which wasn't included in the budget
Recruitment	1,984	2,000	16	1%	2,000	2,984	
Total Staff costs	**327,084**	**363,642**	**36,558**	**10%**	**761,614**	**722,852**	
Office costs							
Cleaning	2,119	1,752	(367)	-21%	3,504	3,769	Includes one off costs for Grundon sacks, timing
Rates and Water rates	4,551	4,350	(201)	-5%	8,700	9,111	Additional costs due to water leak
Rent	11,750	11,750	0	0%	23,500	23,500	Being funded by CDEL from 25/26 - Capital lease
Light, Power, Heating	1,009	2,250	1,241	55%	4,500	2,659	Now moved to Octopus energy from Brititsh Gas. We continue to benefit from our solar panel electricity
Repairs & Maintenance	2,634	1,998	(636)	-32%	3,996	5,634	Additional ad hoc maintenance issues - electrical and plumbing
Insurance	13,090	13,002	(88)	-1%	26,004	23,975	
Office Equipment	0	250	250	100%	500	526	Timing, budget is fire system maintenance
Total Office costs	**35,153**	**35,352**	**199**	**1%**	**70,704**	**69,175**	

APPENDIX 1
Budget Variance
Chilterns Conservation Board
For the 6 months ended 30 September 2026

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

Account	Year to date Actual	Year to date Budget	Variance	Variance %	Full Year Budget	Full Year Forecast	Commentary on main variances year to date versus budget
Governance costs							
Board Meetings	132	1,248	1,116	89%	2,496	1,737	June meeting online and autumn meeting in Q3 - timing
Members Allowances	5,364	5,940	576	10%	11,880	13,633	There will be additional charges from Q3 will our updated Board allowances
Finance costs	2,687	3,498	811	23%	6,996	6,317	Did not commission FRS102 pension report £600 as no statutory requirement
Total Governance costs	**8,182**	**10,686**	**2,504**	**23%**	**21,372**	**21,687**	
Communications							
Advertising & Marketing	4,669	1,901	(2,768)	-146%	5,003	5,040	This is timing on spend, full year will be in line with budget. Management Plan design and printing and summary flyers £2k, Tote Bag design £300, CNL annual review design £2.5k
Website running costs	1,254	1,500	246	16%	5,000	3,504	Timing but full budget will not be needed in 26/27
Total Communications	**5,923**	**3,401**	**(2,522)**	**-74%**	**10,003**	**8,544**	
Telecoms & IT costs							
IT Software and Consumables	5,330	5,212	(118)	-2%	11,500	11,704	Increases from Q3 due to new Fidget Contract
IT support and maintenance	5,115	5,049	(66)	-1%	10,002	11,443	
Telephone & Internet	1,982	1,934	(48)	-2%	4,362	3,989	
Total Telecoms & IT costs	**12,427**	**12,195**	**(232)**	**-2%**	**25,864**	**27,136**	
Other costs							
Consulting	50,646	63,383	12,737	20%	138,701	135,239	Operations consultancy spend to date on budget: HR £6k, Risk Fluent £3k, Data Protection £4k, Transformation works (net of CDEL) £16k, Planning Consultancy £22k versus a budget of £32k year to date
Legal Expenses	0	2,166	2,166	100%	6,498	1,500	Works not taking place - contract reviews
Defra Capital Spend	12,342	0	(12,342)		0	24,042	Offset by additional CDEL Income above; CDEL funding £7k of our IT Transformation costs and £5k of further Climate Adaptation Plan costs
Event costs	0	2,657	2,657	100%	8,096	7,592	Timing, budget will be used Q3 and Q4, NR event cost approx £6k Q3
Project donations	10,000	13,750	3,750	27%	45,182	59,807	Timing, £10k is contribution to CCSP. £3.75k contribution to Nature Ridge not yet paid
General Expenses	885	700	(185)	-26%	2,050	2,097	
Postage, Freight & Courier	13	125	112	90%	500	13	
Printing & Stationery	2,207	1,623	(584)	-36%	4,254	3,704	Timing, Nature Recovery Plan print £1.3k and Shoppers £600
Subscriptions	3,297	3,445	148	4%	4,850	4,792	
Bank Fees	(92)	78	170	218%	156	(62)	
Total Other costs	**79,298**	**87,927**	**8,629**	**10%**	**210,287**	**238,723**	
Total Operating Expenses	**468,068**	**513,203**	**45,135**	**9%**	**1,099,844**	**1,088,117**	**Staff costs savings due to hiring delays and savings on Planning consultancy.**
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	**59,167**	**9,893**	**49,274**	**498%**	**(22)**	**13,378**	

APPENDIX 2
Profit and Loss
Chilterns Conservation Board
For the 6 months ended 30 September 2026

Account	Core	Projects and Programmes	Total
Turnover			
Access Grant	-	214,375	214,375
Defra Capital Grant	24,092	161,519	185,611
Defra Core Grant	345,310	-	345,310
Interest Income	21,647	22,960	44,607
Internal Fee Income	56,224	10,085	66,309
Local Authority Contribution	61,033	-	61,033
Other Revenue	-	106	106
Project Income	18,740	1,595,637	1,614,377
Sale of merchandise	190	-	190
Total Turnover	**527,235**	**2,004,682**	**2,531,917**
Gross Profit	**527,235**	**2,004,682**	**2,531,917**
Administrative Costs			
Access grant expenditure	-	83,706	83,706
Advertising & Marketing	4,669	-	4,669
Bank Fees	- 92	-	- 92
Board Meetings	132	-	132
CCB Core Contribution	-	17,723	17,723
CCB recharges	-	57,121	57,121
Citizen Science	-	15,350	15,350
Cleaning	2,119	-	2,119
Community Grants	-	243	243
Consulting	50,646	25,069	75,715
Defra Capital Spend	12,342	34,726	47,068
Education Costs	-	13,878	13,878
Employers National Insurance	32,167	30,615	62,782
Enhancements	-	18,749	18,749
Event costs	-	362	362
Finance costs	2,687	-	2,687
FiPL Grant	-	11,958	11,958
FIPL Grant 26/27	-	27,094	27,094
General Expenses	885	13,575	14,460
Insurance	13,090	-	13,090
Irrecoverable VAT	-	13,137	13,137
IT Software and Consumables	5,330	1,612	6,942
IT support and maintenance	5,115	976	6,090
Light, Power, Heating	1,009	-	1,009
Medical Insurance	1,210	1,193	2,403
Members Allowances	5,364	-	5,364
Mitigation	-	18,403	18,403
Nature Recovery	-	132,855	132,855
Pensions Costs	39,038	39,108	78,146
Postage, Freight & Courier	13	12	26
Printing & Stationery	2,207	132	2,339
Professional fees (activity)	-	89,112	89,112
Project donations	10,000	-	10,000
Rates and Water rates	4,551	-	4,551
Recruitment	1,984	425	2,408
Rent	11,750	1,500	13,250
Repair and conservation work	-	50,472	50,472
Repairs & Maintenance	2,634	332	2,966
Research and survey expenditure	-	9,884	9,884
Salaries	241,414	240,450	481,863
Staff expenses	-	312	312
Staff Training	9,317	3,716	13,033
Subscriptions	3,297	311	3,608
Telephone & Internet	1,982	1,327	3,309
Training for volunteers	-	6,215	6,215
Travel Expenses	1,955	7,273	9,228
Website running costs	1,254	-	1,254
Total Administrative Costs	**468,068**	**968,924**	**1,436,992**
Operating Profit	**59,167**	**1,035,758**	**1,094,925**

APPENDIX 3
Balance Sheet
Chilterns Conservation Board
As at 30 September 2026

Account	30 Sept 2026	31 Mar 2026
Current Assets		
Cash at bank and in hand		
Business 95 Day saver	914,555	531,389
GBP PayPal	263	86
HSBC Current Account	9,561	65,920
HSBC Mmkt 312	1,000,000	1,500,000
HSBC Money Market 786	1,000,000	1,000,000
HSBC Money Market 871	1,500,000	750,000
HSBC Reward Account	662,805	764,012
Total Cash at bank and in hand	**5,087,185**	**4,611,408**
Accounts Receivable	38,455	252,481
Accrued Income	12,892	8,267
Inventory	1,000	1,000
Prepayments	21,143	13,438
Total Current Assets	**5,160,675**	**4,886,594**
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year		
Accounts Payable	147,461	609,833
Accruals	106,179	138,666
Business Card 1	142	409
Business Card 2	(68)	11
Capital Grant	1,840	0
Income in Advance	11,750	340,118
Net Zero Activities	889	0
Rounding	(3)	(2)
Total Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	**268,191**	**1,089,034**
Net Current Assets (Liabilities)	**4,892,484**	**3,797,559**
Total Assets less Current Liabilities	**4,892,484**	**3,797,559**
Net Assets	**4,892,484**	**3,797,559**
Capital and Reserves		
Project Reserves 30.9.26	**4,070,886**	**3,035,128**
Core Reserves 30.9.26	**821,598**	**762,431**
Total CNL Reserves 30.9.26	**4,892,484**	**3,797,559**

Bank League Table (Source MotherTree)

We rank the major banks based on how much £10,000 in a current account contributes in carbon emissions.

#	Bank	tCO2 per £10k in account
1	Barclays	2.376
2	HSBC	2.170
2=	First Direct	2.170
4	Chase	1.897
5	Santander	1.742
6	NatWest	1.295
6=	RBS	1.295
8	Monzo	1.088
9	Lloyds	0.704
9=	Halifax	0.704
11	Metro Bank	0.694
12	Starling	0.610
13	Virgin Money	0.517
14	Nationwide	0.432
15	The Cooperative Bank	0.328
16	Triodos	0.317

Section 3 – External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2025/26

In respect of **Chilterns Conservation Board – OT0011**

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02) as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2026; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor's limited assurance opinion 2025/26

Except for the matters reported below, on the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

The AGAR was not accurately completed before submission for review.

- Section 2, Box 4 incorrectly includes items which are not staff costs as defined in the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners' Guide. Please note that Box 4 should comprise payments made in relation to the employment of staff including only gross salary, employers' national insurance contributions, employers' pension contributions, gratuities for employees or former employees and severance or terminations payments to employees. Employment expenses which are benefits (mileage, travel, etc.), items of reimbursement of expenses for postage, stationery or other outlays made on behalf of the smaller authority, home working allowance, payroll processing costs and contractor/locum clerk costs in respect of individuals who are self-employed, are not staff costs for the purpose of completion of the AGAR in accordance with proper practice. The figures in Section 2, Boxes 4 and 6 should read £1,262,323 and £3,493,417 for the prior year, and £1,415,782 and £2,837,757 for the current year respectively. Please restate Boxes 4 and 6 in next year's prior year comparatives.

Section 1, Assertion 5 has been incorrectly completed. Information received from the smaller authority highlights that risk management arrangements were not reviewed and approved by the authority as a whole during the year. As a result, this assertion should have been answered 'No'. The authority has confirmed that this has been addressed since the year end.

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

In the completion of their detailed internal audit report, the internal auditor has drawn attention to weaknesses in relation to regular reviews of Financial Regulations. The smaller authority must ensure that action is taken to address these areas of weakness in a timely manner.

The smaller authority has not provided evidence that it has considered the independence of the internal auditor during the year under review. This is required to be done annually.

3 External auditor certificate 2025/26

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2026.

External Auditor Name: **PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP**

External Auditor Signature: PKF Littlejohn LLP Date: 16/09/2026

Item 2.2 **Quarters 1 & 2 Delivery Report**

Author: Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations

Purpose of Report: To update the Executive Committee on the progress of the Chilterns National Landscape Team between April - September 2026 against the FY26-27 Annual Delivery Plan.

Reporting Changes

1. As part of the annual planning cycle that took place at the end of 2025 / start of 2026 a 4-year Organisation Strategic Plan was developed with a focus on 5 key organisational outcomes. The achievement of these outcomes over the next 4 years to 2030 were based on delivery across 20 key delivery areas and 63 sub-delivery areas.

2. An Annual Delivery Plan for FY26-27 (which represents the first year of the 4-year Organisation Strategic Plan) was approved initially by the Board in June 2026, with an updated plan approved at the September 2026 Board meeting.

3. A key element of the change in planning and reporting this year is to make reporting more focused. Therefore, rather than reporting against all activity lines as in previous years (of which there were over 100) it was agreed that we would report to the Executive Committee against the 20 Key Delivery Areas. The rationale for this is that it should ensure that that the review of progress by the Executive Committee does not get focused on specific activity lines which may be of limited strategic value but is kept at a more strategic level

4. However, in compiling the reporting for quarters 1 and 2 it became clear that reporting only at the Key Delivery Area level would end up being meaningless as everything would be reported as either on track or slightly delayed and it would not allow the Executive Committee the scrutiny that they need. As such we are reporting on a hybrid model which shows:

    - An overview of progress by outcome – this shows against each of the 5 organisation outcomes how each sub delivery area is progressing.

    - For each outcome
        - The key achievements for the quarters.
        - A high level view of progress by activity line against each of the sub-delivery areas.

    - Where an activity line is either significantly delayed or has been put on hold, postponed or cancelled a more in-depth identification of the issue, mitigation and impact.

5. Note that whilst this means the report is more granular than the 20 Key Delivery Areas agreed it has in effect been bought down from over 100 lines being reported against to 63 Sub Delivery Areas (of which there are just 55 that are active this year). The other benefit of reporting at this level is that it is the same level that we are reviewing progress internally and therefore it means we do not have to spend time agreeing amalgamated statuses and can spend more time addressing / mitigating those areas that are significantly behind schedule.

Overview of Progress by Outcome

6. Table showing progress of Sub Delivery Areas against the 5 organisation outcomes

Outcome	Complete On Track	Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Significantly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness	Not Planned to Have Started	No Activity Scheduled for this Year
A. The Chilterns' natural beauty & landscape character is conserved / enhanced, making it more resilient to threats including climate change & development (17)	10	5	0	1	1
B. More people are benefitting from a sense of place and connection to the Chilterns National Landscape (8)	5	1	0	1	1
C. We demonstrate our impact through improved data and evidence leading to a better understanding of the landscape and more effective advocacy (12)	0	0	0	2	10
D. We deliver our statutory purposes more effectively through improved strategic partnerships enabling a more sustainable operating model for the organisation (11)	8	1	0	1	1
E. We are an ambitious and confident organisation that values and respects its staff and operates in an effective and efficient way (15)	7	4	2	2	0
Total	30	11	2	7	13
Percentage (does not include sub delivery areas where no activity is scheduled this year)	60%	22%	4%	14%	

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

7. Key achievements this quarter:

- Climate report reviewed and additional analysis (1km resolution) completed.
- Climate work being recognised as an example of good practice and being used as a basis by other organisations and was presented to the National Landscapes Association annual conference.
- New Net Zero group for the organisation convened and energy audit taken place to identify energy saving measures.
- National Landscapes Association climate literacy training attended by staff.
- Nature Recovery Plan finalised and published.
- Discussions held with partner organisations on how Nature Recovery Plan priorities can be incorporated into existing programmes / funding mechanisms.
- Local Nature Recovery Strategies embedded into work of the Landscapes Team.
- Farmer Cluster technical paper written and presented to the Board with agreed priorities and funding for the clusters identified (Nature Recovery Team).
- Working groups and farmer cluster set up for the Misbourne Catchment (Chilterns Chalk Stream Project).
- Delivery work started on Flaunden Brook and Dodds Mill (Chilterns Chalk Stream Project).
- Bat surveys at Beale Park recorded 11 out of the 17 UK species present (Mend the Gap).
- 2 more botanical surveys carried out on chalk grassland (Mend the Gap).
- Continued and more effective engagement with national and local planning policy consultation through Planning Adviser (Policy).
- Engaged with National Landscapes Association around response to National Planning Policy Framework and responded to local plans that has been well received (e.g. Bucks Local Plan)
- Submissions made on 26 planning applications or appeals.
- Pilot event run with youth rangers from the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire on soil coring in Hexton estate (Not Bourne Yesterday).
- Heritage embedded into plans for Not Bourne Yesterday delivery phase (industrial, agricultural, spiritual and paleo-environment heritage of chalk streams) (Not Bourne Yesterday).

8. Status by Sub Delivery Area:

Sub Delivery Area	Status	Activity Lines	Activity Line Status
A1 Climate Adaptation & Mitigation			
A1.1 Understanding Climate Change Impact		7	Complete / On Track (4) Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (2) Not Planned to have Started (1)
A1.2 Improving Climate Literacy across the Organisation		3	Complete / On Track (3)
A2 Nature Recovery Strategy Work			
A2.1 Launching & Embedding the Nature Recovery Plan		4	Complete / On Track (4)
A2.2 Supporting Local Nature Recovery Strategies		3	Complete / On Track (1) Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (2)
A2.3 Develop Key Technical Approaches		2	Complete / On Track (2)
A2.4 Supporting Local Wildlife Sites		0	No activity scheduled for this year

A3 Nature Recovery Delivery			
A3.1 Facilitating Land Manager Delivery		7	Complete / On Track (3) Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (2) Not Planned to have Started (1) **Postponed to consider next year (1)**
A3.2 Delivering Nature Recovery Components of Landscape Scale Programmes		5	Complete / On Track (3) Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (2)
A3.3 Delivering Specific Habitat & Species Focused Nature Recovery Projects		9	Complete / On Track (3) Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (1)
A3.4 Distributing Government Funding		2	Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (2)
A4 Planning & Development			
A4.1 Providing Planning Guidance & Advice		3	Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (3)
A4.2 Engaging on Planning Policies		2	Complete / On Track (1) Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (1)
A4.3 Engaging with Planning Proposals		2	Complete / On Track (1) Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (1)
A4.4 Delivering Landscape Mitigation Projects arising from Major Developments		2	Complete / On Track (2)
A4.5 Improving Understanding of Planning across the Organisation		1	Not Planned to have Started (1)
A5 Cultural Heritage			
A5.1 Embedding Consideration of Cultural Heritage in our Work (2)		2	Complete / On Track (2)
A5.2 Delivering Conservation & Enhancement of Cultural Heritage through our Programmes / Projects (4)		4	Complete / On Track (4) Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (1)

Outcome B: More people are benefitting from a sense of place and connection to the Chilterns National Landscape

9. Key achievements this quarter:

- Continued delivery of core communications (news stories, social media, newsletters etc)
- Newsletter performance and ways to improve engagement have been tested.
- New automated welcome emails for new subscribers have been put in place, highlighting things to do and put in place in the Chilterns.
- New webpage aimed at visitors from London developed.
- Annual Review redesigned to better demonstrate our impact and delivery.
- Review of website navigation and usability undertaken with proposed actions to be agreed next quarter.
- Improvements to Chess Valley walk promoted.
- Specific campaigns run around the launch of the Deer Management hub and the launch of the Nature Recovery Plan.
- Youth Hub launched and improvements made to / content added to both this and the Accessibility Hub.
- 6 pilot events delivered and 10 engagement events attended to promote Not Bourne Yesterday.
- 29 school sessions delivered around CCSP and 300 people engaged through walks, talks and theatre over the summer holidays.
- Launch event undertaken for a new Access Path and digital assets at Dunstable Downs.
- 2 events held with the Centre for Outdoor Accessibility Training for CNL staff and key stakeholders.
- Over £300,000 of Defra Access funding allocated.

- Project funding for 10 schools in the Mend the Gap area mainly finalised (Mend the Gap).
- Mend the Gap project represented at the Goring Festival (Mend the Gap).
- Trout in the Classroom delivered to 9 schools across the Chess and Misbourne catchments (CCSP).
- New citizen science opportunities created through expansion into the Misbourne with 9 different survey types and new flow monitoring at another 12 sites (CCSP).

10. Status by Sub Delivery Area

Sub Delivery Area	Status	Activity Lines	Activity Line Status
B1 Awareness, Understanding & Enjoyment			
B1.1 Raising General Awareness f the Landscape / Organisation		11	Complete / On Track (10) Not Planned to have Started (1)
B1.2 Telling Our Story Effectively		1	Not Planned to have Started (1)
B1.3 Communicating the Achievements of our Programmes & Projects		7	Complete / On Track (7)
B1.4 Improving Understanding & Enjoyment through our Programmes / Projects & Grant Giving		4	Complete / On Track (3) Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (1)
B2 CNL Priority Audiences			
B2.1 Embedding EDI across the Organisation		4	Complete / On Track (4)
B2.2 Improving EDI through our Programmes / Projects & Grant Giving		10	Complete / On Track (9) Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (10)
B3 Social & Economic Wellbeing			
B3.1 Promoting Volunteering & Lifelong Learning Opportunities		10	Complete / On Track (5) Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (5)
B3.2 Promoting Local Communities & Business		0	No activity scheduled for this year

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

11. The majority of work in Outcome C was replanned to start from next year in response to the challenge from the Executive Committee to address capacity more specifically in our planning activity. The recruitment of a new Head of Programmes will enable more leadership and free up the time of the Head of Landscapes to take work forward in this area in FY27-28.

12. Whilst 4 activities remain in the plan for this year, they are all planned to take place in the second half of the year and therefore there is no reporting under this outcome for these quarters.

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

13. Key achievements this quarter:

- Management Plan published alongside 8 page Management Plan Summary Document, supported by significant communications
- Attended Bucks NEP Green Finance Working Group
- Successful farmer cluster bids presented for FiPL funding (Nature Recovery Team).

- Funding for the Chilterns Chalk Stream Project has included 5 successful offers for funding and an equivalent number of agreements.

14. Status by Sub Delivery Area

Sub Delivery Area	Status	Activity Lines	Activity Line Status
D1 Partnership Development & Delivery			
D1.1 Establishing an Overarching Partnership Model		3	Not Planned to have Started (3)
D1.2 Articulating the Long-Term Vision for the Landscape		0	No activity scheduled for this year
D1.3 Reviewing the Management Plan		4	Complete / On Track (3) Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (1)
D1.4 Increasing Effective Partnership Working in Projects & Programmes		5	Complete / On Track (4) Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (1)
D2 Advocacy			
D2.1 Improving our Impact & Influence on Local Issues		2	Complete / On Track (1) Not Planned to have Started (1)
D2.2 Improving our Impact & Influence on National Issues		2	Complete / On Track (1) Not Planned to have Started (1)
D3 Sustainable Finance			
D3.1 Developing a Longer-Term Fundraising Strategy to Diversify Income		2	Complete / On Track (1) Not Planned to have Started (1)
D3.2 Improving Future Funding Opportunities through Horizon Scanning		2	Complete / On Track (1) Not Planned to have Started (1)
D3.3 Securing Restricted Funding for Projects & Legacy Work		8	Complete / On Track (5) Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (3)
D3.4 Securing Unrestricted Funding		3	Complete / On Track (3)
D3.5 Amplifying Advocacy for Increased Core Funding		2	Complete / On Track (3)

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

15. Key achievements this quarter:

- 4 year plan for the organisation developed, reviewed and agreed with the Executive Committee and approved by the Board (Jun, Sep)
- Annual Delivery Plan for FY26-27 approved and signed off by the Board (Jun, Sep) including review of capacity
- Constitution (inc Schemes of Delegation, transition from Planning Committee to Planning Advisory Group and Members Allowances) updates approved in Q1 and Q2 Board Meetings (Jun, Sep)
- First Planning Advisory Group meeting held (Aug)
- Responsibility for logistical organisation of Board and Executive Meetings handed over to new Office Administrator (Sep)
- New Member induction successfully delivered (Sep)
- A new Office Administrator (Aug), Head of Programmes (Oct) and Rivers Officer (Nov) have successfully been recruited
- First organisational IT provider contract drafted (Aug)

16. Status by Sub Delivery Area

Sub Delivery Area	Status	Activity Lines	Activity Line Status
E1 Organisation Strategy			
E1.1 Articulating & Embedding the Organisation Vision, Mission & Values		2	Not Planned to have Started (2)
E1.2 Improving Strategic Alignment in our Planning		6	Complete / On Track (3) Not Planned to have Started (3)
E2 The CCB Board			
E2.1 Implementing an Updated Board Governance Framework		2	Complete / On Track (2)
E2.2 Improving Support to the Board		4	Complete / On Track (2) Not Planned to have Started (2)
E2.3 Maximising Board Effectiveness		3	Complete / On Track (2) Not Planned to have Started (1)
E3 Staff Wellbeing & Culture			
E3.1 Focusing on Health & Wellbeing		4	Complete / On Track (2) Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (2)
E3.2 Embedding Health & Safety		4	**Significantly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (1)** Not planned to have Started (3)
E3.3 Developing a High Performing Team Culture		6	Complete / On Track (3) Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (2) **Significantly Delayed of Limited in Effectiveness (1)** Not Planned to have Started (1)
E4 Organisation Resilience			
E4.1 Balancing Ambition with our Capacity		5	Complete / On Track (1) Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (2) **Significantly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (1)** Not Planned to have Started (1)
E4.2 Managing Staff Development		4	Complete / On Track (1) Not Planned to have Started (3)
E5 Organisation Effectiveness			
E5.1 Improving our Information Management & Technology		7	Complete / On Track (4) Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (1) **Significantly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (1)** Not Planned to have Started (1)
E5.2 Optimising Our Ways of Working		4	Complete / On Track (1) **Significantly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (1)** Not Planned to have Started (2)
E5.3 Improving Operational Governance		5	Complete / On Track (2) Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (1) **Significantly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (1)** Not Planned to have Started (1)
E5.4 Programme & Project Management		1	Not Planned to have Started
E5.5 Ensuring Effective Compliance		8	Complete / On Track (4) Slightly Delayed or Limited in Effectiveness (1) Not Planned to have Started (3)

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

17. Table of activity lines which are significantly delayed or where delivery work has been put on hold, postponed or cancelled in the reporting period.

Activity	Status	Description	Risk / Issue	Mitigation	Impact of Delay
A3.1.6 Publish the catchment plan for the Hughenden Stream	Postponed to consider next year	The catchment plan for the Hughenden Stream was developed last year and work around Hughenden Manor (which is in the plan) is progressing. A lack of capacity in the team means the story map around which the plan will be put into the public domain has been deferred to Q1 of FY27-28	None identified	None required	None. Progression of work is not reliant on publication of the catchment plan
E3.2.1 Complete development of standard operating procedures	Significantly delayed or limited in effectiveness	Taking longer than expected to develop due to capacity of the Finance Administrator (covering both Finance and Office Administration during the first half of the year, change in personnel in our Risk Advisor and significant changes to the Nature Recovery Team capacity	Issue: Effective risk assessment is not happening around the Nature Recovery Team's work and a lack of focus across all work in terms of risk assessment	New Office Administrator appointed freeing capacity of the Finance Administrator Intensive work undertaken to get new personnel in our Risk Advisor up to speed Hiring of new Head of Programmes and work to include them on the client side of Risk Assessment	Medium: There is a risk assessment process in place – this is about making it simpler to use. However it is known that within the Nature Recovery Team there are issues with using the current process so there is a lack of governance in a potentially high risk area of work
E4.1.2 Clarify requirements for staff around non day-to-day delivery	Significantly delayed or limited in effectiveness	Developing the 4 year plan for the organisation has taken 6 months of work leaving no time to update the requirements for staff in planning for work that is not related to non day-to-day delivery	Issue: There continues to be a lack of aligned understanding around capacity needs outside of direct day-to-day delivery	Update the assessment that was done for last year and agree and circulate before planning starts in Q4 for FY 27-28. Therefore although not effective for this year will be effective for next year	Medium: There continues to be an underestimation of the work involved in managing staff and in undertaking other activity across the organisation that is not related to day-to-day delivery
E5.1.1 Continue transition of information to new Sharepoint	Significantly delayed or limited in effectiveness	During Q1 and Q2 there although progress has been made in some areas – in terms of Nature Recovery	Issue: Limited capacity of the Head of Operations and Head of Landscapes to	Extend the length of the project by 6 months into FY27-28 to ensure that there is enough time to	Medium: There continues to be confusion around the location of files and therefore inefficiency around work. This is

structure (Nature Recovery / Admin / Governance)		and Admin there has been limited capacity to move files because this work continues to fall on the Head of Operations and Hed of Landscapes. Part of the capacity review identified that the timeline for this work would need to be extended by 6 months into FY27-28	review and move files across into the new filing structure Issue: Time and resource has been taken up with the development of a new IT provider contract	transfer and clean up files Finalise IT provider contract to allow more focus on file movement	mitigated by the fact that most of this information is historical in nature with current work being undertaken through Sharepoint
E5.2.2 Complete HR processes / procedures for key lifecycle stages	Significantly delayed or limited in effectiveness	Whilst work has continued in this area in Q1 and Q2 there has been a lot of BAU disruption with both the Finance Administrator covering this and commenting on it during the first 6 months and then the onboarding of a new Office Administrator who will have the responsibility for HR. In addition to this the capacity of the Head of Operations continues to be an issue. With a new Office Administrator on board there has also been a move from Manager Self Service to greater support which has had an impact in terms of the need to rework process	Issue: More people involved in reviewing the processes internally leading to delays	Reduce the number of people involved in the finalisation of HR processes / procedures Ensure more focused review of each HR process to ensure it gets over the line quicker	Medium: There continues to be uncertainty about the way in which key HR processes are being conducted
E5.3.4 Complete annual planning (with greater consultation with Senior Managers)	Significantly delayed or limited in effectiveness	Whilst the annual planning has been completed there are still significant issues around ownership of the plan and planning. Whilst improvements were made over last year	Issue: A lack of engagement with managers around the planning for the organisation means that that there is no meaningful connection with	Ensure that there is renewed focus through the SLT on the planning process for FY27-28 and what this means now that there is a framework 4 year plan in place	Medium: A significant amount of time and effort goes into planning in the SLT and in particular it takes up a large amount of the Head of Operations time. If this is not effective then this needs to be revisited as it is

		with a couple of sessions with senior managers at the start of the process – this level of engagement proved to be unsustainable and needs to be rethought next year	the plan and that quarterly reporting is seem as bureaucracy rather than something that is essential to the effective performance of the organisation		wasted effort. In addition if the planning process and the subsequent plan does not improve effectiveness of the organisation then this also needs to be revisited

Recommendation

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

Item 2.3 **HR Policies**

Author: Andy Brock-Doyle, Head of Operations

Purpose of Report: To approve changes to the Bullying and Harassment Policy and associated HR policies following legislative changes in relation to preventing sexual harassment in the workplace introduced on 30 October 2026 under the Employment Rights Act 2025.
The report also seeks approval for the introduction of a standalone Menopause Policy, supporting our commitment to employee health, wellbeing, equity and inclusion.

Background

1. From 30 October 2026, the Employment Rights Act 2025 strengthens existing legislation relating to sexual harassment in the workplace, placing greater responsibility on employers to take proactive steps to prevent it. The changes include strengthening the existing duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment to a requirement to take all reasonable steps and introducing specific protections relating to harassment by third parties, such as customers, visitors and contractors. These changes reinforce the importance of employers identifying potential risks, taking preventative action and ensuring appropriate procedures are in place to address concerns.
2. Working with our HR Advisor, we have identified the policies requiring amendment and have made the relevant changes to strengthen our approach to preventing and addressing sexual harassment in the workplace.
3. The Bullying and Harassment Policy includes a new section on sexual harassment and is attached as Appendix 1. Other HR policies requiring only minor amendments are listed below under Associated HR Policies and are not attached as appendices.
4. At the same time, we have also taken the opportunity to review our approach to employee health and wellbeing and are proposing the introduction of a standalone Menopause Policy. This is intended to provide clearer guidance and support for employees experiencing menopause-related symptoms.

Bullying and Harassment Policy (see Appendix 1)

5. The Bullying and Harassment Policy has been updated to strengthen the provisions relating to sexual harassment, reflecting the increased responsibilities placed on employers to take proactive and reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.
6. Additional information has been included to provide a clearer definition of sexual harassment, explain the different forms it can take and provide examples of behaviours that may constitute sexual harassment. This will help employees and managers recognise inappropriate behaviour and understand the standards expected within the organisation.
7. The policy has also been strengthened to explain the steps the organisation takes to prevent and mitigate the risk of sexual harassment. This includes promoting a respectful working environment, ensuring employees know how to raise concerns

and making clear that allegations will be taken seriously and addressed appropriately.

Associated HR Policies

8. As part of the review, amendments have also been made to other relevant HR policies to ensure a consistent approach to sexual harassment across the organisation. Where appropriate, explicit references to sexual harassment have been added alongside other forms of bullying and harassment, together with examples of behaviours that may constitute sexual harassment. References have also been included within the Grievance and Disciplinary Policies to clarify how concerns or allegations of sexual harassment can be raised and addressed through the appropriate procedures.
9. The policies updated include:
    - Lone Working
    - EDI
    - IT & Acceptable Use
    - Grievance
    - Disciplinary

Menopause Policy (see Appendix 2)

10. We intend to introduce a new standalone Menopause Policy, complementing our existing Health and Wellbeing Policy. This reflects our commitment to creating an inclusive and supportive working environment that recognises the different health and wellbeing needs of our employees.
11. Menopause and perimenopause can have a significant impact on an individual's physical and emotional wellbeing and their experience at work. The introduction of a dedicated policy will help raise awareness, reduce stigma and encourage open conversations between employees and managers, ensuring that appropriate support and workplace adjustments are considered where needed.
12. The policy also supports our wider commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, helping employees feel supported at work, reducing the potential impact on sickness absence and retention, and enabling experienced and valued employees to continue contributing effectively to the organisation.

Recommendation

13. **That the Executive Committee NOTES the legislative changes relating to sexual harassment effective from 30 October 2026 and the corresponding amendments made to the relevant HR policies.**
14. **That the Executive Committee APPROVES the updated Bullying and Harassment Policy.**
15. **That the Executive Committee APPROVES the associated amendments made to other relevant HR policies as detailed above.**

16. **That the Executive Committee APPROVES the introduction of the new standalone Menopause Policy, complementing the existing Health and Wellbeing Policy.**

CHILTERNS CONSERVATION BOARD

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

Appendix 1.

Last Approval Date	September 2024
Approved By	CCB Board
Version (November 2026)	3.0
Approval Cycle	Every 3 Years
Review Deadline	September 2027
Responsible Officer	Chief Executive

HR02 – BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

Chilterns National Landscape

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) has a fair, consistent and sensitive mechanism for dealing with complaints of bullying and harassment. The organisation wants to provide a safe working environment where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect, free from harassment, bullying and intimidation.

1.2 The CCB is committed to the view that bullying and harassment is unlawful and will not be tolerated. The organisation will investigate promptly and thoroughly any allegations of bullying or harassment regardless of whether the matter has been raised formally or informally.

1.3 The CCB recognises its responsibility for preventing bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment as set out in the Equality Act 2010, the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act and Employment Rights Act 2025

2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to paid employees only.

2.2 This policy covers any behaviour both within and outside of working hours which may impact upon the work of the CCB, its reputation and its working relationships. It applies both on and off the organisations premises, whilst undertaking work for, or representing the organisation, as well as to any type of communication including e-mail, online activity and social media (please refer to the CCB (**IT and Acceptable Use Policy**).

2.3 This policy is not intended to deal with bullying or harassment by members of the public. However, the CCB will support employees who suffer such treatment in the course of their work. The CCB's complaints procedure will be used where members of the public make formal complaints against an employee.

2.4 This policy does not form part of any employment contract and the CCB may update it at any time.

3. Overview

3.1 This policy identifies what is considered bullying and harassment and sets out the way in which you as an employee and we as an employer will deal with complaints of bullying and harassment.

3.2 Taking part in any of the following behaviour will lead to action under the CCB **Disciplinary Policy**, and potentially dismissal for misconduct or gross misconduct:

- bullying or harassing anyone else (see sections 4 and 5 below)
- threatening anyone who raises a harassment or bullying complaint, including explicitly / implicitly indicating that a complaint will be used as the basis for decisions affecting the employee
- retaliating against anyone who raises a harassment or bullying complaint
- making allegations maliciously or in bad faith
- giving false or intentionally misleading information during any investigation

HR02 – BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

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3.3 The CCB regularly assesses the risk of harassment in the workplace and actively encourages individuals to report any incidents of bullying or harassment that they experience or observe.

3.4 If an employee complains about harassment or bullying, they should not be victimised as a result. If they believe that this has happened to them, they should tell a member of the Senior Leadership Team as soon as possible.

3.5 The CCB has a duty to protect all employees, workers, volunteers and job applicants, and anyone else who works with us. That means that if an employee changes their mind after having raised a complaint of harassment or bullying (even where they complained informally or in confidence), the organisation may choose to investigate anyway to carry out our duty. The CCB will always talk to the employee about that first and take their views into account.

3.6 Complaints of bullying and harassment can raise strong feelings and are always seen as serious. This is why the CCB as an employer, and the person making the complaint, have an obligation to maintain confidentiality as far as possible at every stage, including during the investigation and following the outcome.

4. What is Harassment?

4.1 Harassment is where a person is subject to uninvited conduct that, as an intended or unintended consequence, violates their dignity, or creates a hostile, humiliating, degrading or similarly offensive environment.

4.2 Harassment can be in connection with but is not limited to certain protected characteristics. The CCB **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy** (EDI) defines “protected characteristics”. Harassment could be carried out by a work colleague or by a third party.

4.3 Physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct can all amount to harassment. So can things you say or do online, especially on social media.

4.4 Harassment can take various forms including, but not limited to:

- unwanted verbal or physical attention
- behaviour which causes intimidation or humiliates a colleague in the presence of others, including name-calling and insensitive jokes
- conduct of a sexual nature which is unwanted, unreasonable or offensive, including lewd comments and displaying pornographic material
- verbal or written harassment through jokes and offensive language
- visual displays such as posters and graffiti
- coercion ranging from pressure for sexual favours to pressure to participate in political or religious groups
- isolation or non-cooperation at work, as well as excluding colleagues from social activities

4.5 This policy covers isolated or ongoing incidents of offensive behaviour that may occur against one or more individuals. When someone treats another person less favourably because they either submit to such behaviour or refuse to do so, the CCB may also consider that to be harassment.

HR02 – BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

Chilterns National Landscape

4.6 The impact on the victim is very important. A person's behaviour can amount to bullying or harassment even if they had no idea that it would be perceived that way.

5. Sexual Harassment

5.1 Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Sexual harassment is unlawful and will not be tolerated by the CCB.

5.2 Sexual harassment can include, but is not limited to:

- Unwelcome sexual comments, jokes, gestures or remarks.
- Unwanted physical contact, touching or sexual advances.
- Sending or displaying sexually explicit or inappropriate images, messages or material.
- Repeated unwanted requests for dates or sexual attention.
- Inappropriate sexual behaviour at work-related events, meetings or social activities.
- Sexual harassment through email, messaging platforms, social media or other digital communications.

5.3 Sexual harassment can occur between individuals of any sex or gender, regardless of their role or seniority. A single incident may constitute sexual harassment, and behaviour does not have to be intended to cause offence to be unlawful.

5.4 The CCB is committed to taking all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in connection with work. This includes identifying and assessing risks, providing mandatory training and guidance, promoting respectful behaviour and reviewing the effectiveness of preventative measures.

5.5 The CCB recognises that sexual harassment may be carried out by employees or third parties, including contractors, service providers, volunteers and members of the public. Such behaviour will not be tolerated, and the CCB will take appropriate preventative and responsive action.

5.6 Any employee who experiences, witnesses or becomes aware of sexual harassment is encouraged to
raise their concerns using the existing reporting arrangements set out in sections 7 and 8 of this policy.

6. What is Bullying?

6.1 Bullying is any behaviour that leaves the victim feeling threatened, intimidated, humiliated, vulnerable or otherwise upset. It does not need to be connected to a "protected characteristic" and is usually, but not exclusively repeated and persistent behaviour.

6.2 As with harassment, physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct can all amount to bullying. It can take various forms from extreme behaviour involving violence and intimidation through to subtle actions such as deliberate exclusion – sending someone to Coventry for example. Examples of harassment include, but are not limited to:

- conduct which is intimidating, physically abusive or threatening
- conduct that belittles, ridicules or humiliates an individual, especially in front of colleagues

HR02 – BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

Chilterns National Landscape

- picking on one person when there is a common problem
- shouting at an individual to get things done
- consistently undermining someone and their ability to do the job
- setting unrealistic targets or excessive workloads
- online including “cyber bullying” i.e. bullying via e-mail, or social media
- setting an individual up to fail e.g. by giving inadequate instructions or unreasonable deadlines.

6.3 Although bullying is often related to a power imbalance it does not mean that it always involves a more senior person bullying a more junior person. It can also take the form of someone spreading rumours about, refusing to follow the instructions of or mocking a more senior person.

6.4 Constructive and fair feedback about an employee’s behaviour or performance from their line manager or work colleagues is not bullying. It is part of normal employment and management routines and should not be interpreted as anything different.

7. Taking Informal Action

7.1 The CCB recognise that issues can be resolved informally before formal procedures are used. Where someone feels comfortable doing so, they may speak to the person who they feel is harassing or bullying them and explain to them that their behaviour is unwelcome, inappropriate or upsetting.

7.2 However, the CCB recognises that sometimes it is difficult or inappropriate to approach the person they feel is harassing or bullying them (for example where there is an imbalance of power). If this is the case an employee can talk to their line manager or a member of the Senior Leadership Team informally and in confidence.

7.3 If the issue is with the employee’s line manager, or there’s another reason the employee would prefer not to discuss it with them, they should instead talk to any member of the Senior Leadership Team. If the issue is with the CEO, the employee should write to the Chair (chair@chilterns.org.uk) or Deputy Chair (deputychair@chilterns.org.uk) of the Board.

7.4 If an employee is concerned about the way a colleague is being treated, it may be appropriate to challenge the behaviour directly, but only where they feel comfortable and safe to do so, and where this would not make the situation worse. If they do not feel able to do this, or if they have done so and the behaviour continues, they should speak to their manager, any member of the Senior Leadership Team. If the issue is with the CEO, the employee should write to the Chair (chair@chilterns.org.uk) or Deputy Chair (deputychair@chilterns.org.uk) of the Board.

7.5 Managers are required to act on any complaint of bullying and harassment. Failure to do so may be regarded as misconduct which, if proven, will result in disciplinary action.

7.6 Managers are required to keep a record of any complaints that they receive to evidence what course of action they have taken to investigate any complaints of bullying and harassment. Complaints will be dealt with under the CCB **Grievance Policy.**

8. Taking Formal Action

8.1 It’s not always possible, or appropriate, to resolve issues informally. If an employee finds themselves in this situation, they should follow the CCB **Grievance Policy**.

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Chilterns National Landscape

8.2 If the organisation finds that an employee has been subjected to bullying or harassment, the CCB will take appropriate steps to ensure the behaviour does not continue or recur.

8.3 The CCB will provide any employee who makes a complaint with the necessary support and information throughout the investigation and once an outcome has been reached. The organisation will seek to communicate with the employee in their preferred way, taking into account their personal circumstances and any reasonable adjustments required.

8.4 The CCB will treat any complaint sensitively and in confidence and will aim to keep the individual's identity confidential as far as possible, within the constraints of ensuring that an impartial investigation is conducted. However, there may be circumstances where information must be shared to investigate the concern properly or where the matter involves criminal activity, safeguarding, or a serious risk and may need to be referred to the police or another appropriate authority.

8.5 If the CCB thinks it necessary, the organisation may take steps to separate the employee from the person they are complaining about while an investigation is undertaken. Whatever action the CCB takes in this regard, it is not a pre-judgment of the complaint, it is simply the organisation taking measures to avoid matters getting worse during the investigation.

8.6 The CCB will look at ways of addressing the employee's relationship with the person accused, and support will be provided to both parties. The organisation may, for example, change a work pattern or suggest counselling or mediation.

8.7 The CCB recognises that bullying and harassment are sensitive topics and, although the organisation encourages employees to let us know if they have been subjected to such behaviour so that the CCB can deal with it effectively, the organisation recognises there may be times where an employee might feel this is not possible. In such circumstances they do have an option to be able to report incidents, in confidence by contacting the Chair of the Board (chair@chilterns.org.uk) by e-mail.

9. Complaints Made Against the CCB and its Employees

9.1 If someone wants to make a complaint against the CCB, or any of its employees, they should be directed to the **Complaints Procedure** on the **CCB website**.

9.2 However, if an external complaint is made directly to an employee, either against the CCB or an individual employee this should be reported immediately to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

9.3 If an employee is made aware by someone that their behaviour is unwelcome, inappropriate or upsetting, they will be given the opportunity to share and discuss their point of view in a transparent and inclusive way. However, they should always strive to:

- listen carefully to any complaint and the concerns raised;
- respect the other person's point of view;
- understand / acknowledge that there may be a different perception of their behaviour;
- identify what aspects of behaviour they might need to change;
- consider their general conduct / behaviour at work in light of the nature of the complaint.

9.4 The CCB will provide the necessary support and information to any employee who has a complaint made against them whilst the organisation conducts an investigation, and appropriate support will continue to be given to the employee following the outcomes of an investigation.

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Chilterns National Landscape

9.5 Sometimes, the CCB may decide that it is inappropriate to discuss the full outcome of an investigation with the employee for example where confidentiality of the other party is required. We recognise that this may leave them feeling dissatisfied. The organisation would only adopt this approach where it identifies further harm could result, or if there is a legal requirement to do so.

10. Data Confidentiality and Record Keeping

10.1 All information will be treated in line with the CCB **Confidentiality**, **Data Protection** (in review) and **Data Retention Policies** (in review) with records of investigations, statements, interviews and actions being stored securely in the appropriate employee's personnel file.

10.2 The Data Protection Act 2018 identifies that any data kept should be necessary, fairly and lawfully processed, adequate, relevant, accurate and secure.

11. Effective Application of this Policy

11.1 The CCB views any complaint made in bad faith as an act of misconduct, and this will normally lead to action under the CCB **Disciplinary Policy**. In some cases, bad faith complaints may lead to summary dismissal for gross misconduct.

11.2 If an employee makes a complaint of bullying and harassment or is interviewed in connection with someone else's complaint, they should maintain proper confidentiality. Failure to do this may result in action under the CCB **Disciplinary Policy.**

11.3 The CCB is committed to addressing concerns raised by employees who feel they have been unfairly treated in the application of this policy or believe the organisation has breached the policy. If an employee wishes to raise a grievance, they should follow the CCB **Grievance Policy.**

11.4 If an employee is found to have breached this policy, the CCB may consider that to be misconduct. The organisation might deal with it by providing (additional) training, and in serious cases, it could be dealt with under the CCB **Disciplinary Policy**.

Managers have a responsibility for ensuring that all employees have been made aware of this Policy.

This policy is subject to periodic reviews and amendments to ensure it remains up to date with current laws, regulations, and organisational needs.

CHILTERNS CONSERVATION BOARD

MENPOPAUSE POLICY

Appendix 2

Last Approval Date	
Approved By	CCB Board
Version (November 2026)	1.0
Approval Cycle	Every 3 Years
Review Deadline	
Responsible Officer	Health and Wellbeing Lead

HR21– MENOPAUSE POLICY

Chilterns National Landscape

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) provides an inclusive and supportive working environment for employees experiencing the menopause, including perimenopause, and promotes their positive health and wellbeing.

1.2 The CCB recognises that menopausal symptoms may affect an employee's health, comfort and working life. The organisation is committed to reducing stigma, encouraging respectful conversations and considering appropriate workplace support and adjustments.

1.3 This policy should be read alongside the CCB Health & Wellbeing Policy and the organisation's obligations under health and safety legislation and the Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments where applicable.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to paid employees only.

2.2 This policy covers the menopausal wellbeing of employees both within and outside of working hours which may impact upon the work of the CCB, its reputation and its working relationships. It applies both on and off CCB premises, whilst undertaking work for, or representing the organisation.

2.3 This policy does not form part of any employment contract and the CCB may update it at any time.

3. Overview

3.1 This policy sets out how the CCB will support employees experiencing menopausal symptoms and how employees can raise concerns about their wellbeing at work.

3.2 The policy identifies the best way for employees to raise any concerns they have about their wellbeing and how managers should respond, the support available and possible workplace adjustments.

3.3 The CCB recognises that every experience of the menopause is different and that support should reflect the needs and circumstances of the individual employee.

3.4 Employees can access the CCB Employee Assistance Programme through Westfield Health, in accordance with the Health & Wellbeing Policy.

4. Definition of the Menopause

4.1 The menopause is a natural stage of life involving hormonal changes and the ending of menstrual periods. It may also occur as a result of medical treatment or surgery. Perimenopause is the transition leading up to menopause, during which symptoms may begin.

4.2 The menopause most commonly occurs between the ages of 45 and 55, although symptoms may begin earlier. The nature, severity and duration of symptoms vary significantly between individuals.

HR21– MENOPAUSE POLICY

4.3 Common symptoms may include hot flushes, night sweats, sleep disturbance, heavy or painful periods, fatigue, low mood, anxiety, difficulty concentrating, memory problems, headaches, dizziness, joint pain and recurrent urinary tract infections.

4.4 Symptoms may affect an employee's comfort, confidence or performance at work and may also exacerbate existing health conditions. The CCB will not make assumptions about how an individual is affected.

5. The CCB's Approach to the Menopause

5.1 The CCB aims to create a working environment in which employees feel comfortable discussing menopausal symptoms and seeking support without fear of embarrassment, discrimination or disadvantage.

5.2 Harassment, bullying, inappropriate comments or discriminatory behaviour relating to the menopause are unacceptable and may be addressed under the CCB Disciplinary Policy.

5.3 All employees are expected to treat colleagues respectfully, respect their privacy and understand that individual workplace adjustments may be appropriate.

5.4 The CCB will consider the impact of the working environment, duties, working arrangements and workplace stress on employees experiencing menopausal symptoms.

6. Training

6.1 The CCB will promote awareness of the menopause and ensure that all managers and other relevant employees attend appropriate training to understand the potential impact of menopausal symptoms at work and how to offer positive support.

6.2 Training and guidance will help managers recognise the potential impact of symptoms, hold sensitive conversations and identify suitable support or adjustments.

6.3 Employees will be signposted to appropriate internal and external sources of information and support.

7. Managers' Responsibilities

7.1 Managers will seek to create an environment in which employees feel able to raise concerns about menopausal symptoms. Discussions must be handled sensitively, professionally and confidentially.

7.2 Where necessary, managers should use their monthly 1:1 meetings with employees to give them the opportunity to talk openly about their menopausal symptoms.

7.3 Managers should listen without making assumptions, consider the effect of symptoms on the employee's working life and explore appropriate support together.

7.4 Managers should consider any unexpected changes in performance or sickness absence with care and ensure employees are aware of available support.

7.5 Managers will consider requests for adjustments sympathetically, arrange appropriate risk assessments where necessary, and review agreed measures regularly.

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Chilterns National Landscape

7.6 Managers should challenge inappropriate comments or behaviour and familiarise themselves with the CCB Bullying and Harassment Policy and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

7.7 Managers may seek advice from the Health and Wellbeing Lead when considering support or adjustments.

8. Raising a Concern

8.1 Employees experiencing menopausal symptoms that affect their work are encouraged to raise any concerns with their line manager at an early opportunity.

8.2 Employees who would prefer not to speak to their line manager may contact the Health and Wellbeing Lead. The Health and Wellbeing Lead will provide advice, support and signposting to employees and managers on menopause-related wellbeing concerns and will promote appropriate awareness and training

8.3 Employees are encouraged to seek advice from their GP or other appropriate healthcare professional where needed. They should also refer to Westfield Health, and with the employee's consent, an occupational health referral may be considered to help identify appropriate support

8.4 Where an employee requires support, the line manager will discuss the impact of symptoms and consider appropriate practical measures. A Wellbeing Plan may be developed in accordance with the CCB Health & Wellbeing Policy.

8.5 Where a Wellbeing Plan is appropriate, the manager and employee, with advice from the Health and Wellbeing Lead where needed, will agree and regularly review the measures to be put in place.

8.6 The CCB will consider reasonable workplace adjustments, and where possible, adjustments will be tailored to individual circumstances and reviewed to ensure they remain effective.

8.7 Where necessary, an individual workplace risk assessment will consider factors such as temperature and ventilation, drinking water, toilet and washing facilities, personal protective equipment, breaks, working times, workload and workplace stress.

8.8 Any sickness absence will be managed under the CCB Absence Management Policy, subject to applicable reasonable adjustments. Return-to-work arrangements will be discussed with the employee where required.

8.9 Information about symptoms, support and adjustments will be treated confidentially, with access limited to those who need the information for a legitimate purpose.

8.10 If an employee wishes to raise their concern formally at any point, they should set out the details of their concern in writing, following the CCB **Grievance Policy** as soon as possible, to allow this to be properly considered.

9. Data Confidentiality and Record Keeping

9.1 Information concerning an employee's menopausal symptoms is defined as sensitive personal information. This information will only be disclosed to others where necessary. All information will be treated in line with the CCB **Confidentiality**, **Data Protection** (in review) and **Data Retention**

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Policies (in review) with records of investigations, statements, interviews and actions being stored securely in the appropriate employee's personnel file.

9.2 The Data Protection Act 2018 identifies that any data kept should be necessary, fairly and lawfully processed, adequate, relevant, accurate and secure.

10. Effective Application of this Policy

10.1 The CCB views any complaint made in bad faith as an act of misconduct, and this will normally lead to action under the CCB **Disciplinary Policy**. In some cases, bad faith complaints may lead to summary dismissal for gross misconduct.

10.2 If an employee makes a complaint or is interviewed in connection with someone else's complaint, they should maintain proper confidentiality. Failure to do this may result in action under the CCB **Disciplinary Policy.**

10.3 The CCB is committed to addressing concerns raised by employees who feel they have been unfairly treated in the application of this policy or believe the organisation has breached the policy. If an employee wishes to raise a grievance, they should refer to the CCB **Grievance Policy.**

10.4 If an employee is found to have breached this policy, the CCB may consider that to be misconduct. The organisation might deal with it by providing (additional) training and, in serious cases, it may be dealt with under the CCB **Disciplinary Policy**.

Managers have a responsibility for ensuring that all employees have been made aware of this Policy

This policy is subject to periodic reviews and amendments to ensure it remains up-to-date with current laws, regulations, and organisational needs.

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 October.

Background

1. This report comprises highlights since the Board meeting on 1 October 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. During this period, we were delighted to welcome our new Head of Programmes, Louise Hartley. Louise joined us on 20 October has quickly become a valuable member of the SLT.

3. A significant focus in the past few weeks has included planning and delivering the launch of the new Nature Recovery Plan, onboarding our new Head of Programmes, reforecasting the budget and looking to future years (see item 2.1), meeting and briefing senior officers in our local authorities, planning an MP and Peer site visit to the Chilterns in 2027, supporting and guiding programmes and projects both proactively, and troubleshooting reactively, assessing proposals from the team for making external funding applications, and responding to requests for information, reporting and site visits 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 Q2 Finance Report at item 2.1 for more detail.

6. A very welcome development is that, following difficulties for many months in engaging **Central Bedfordshire Council**, our Chair and I had a very productive meeting with the CEO, Marcel Coiffait, on 23 October. We had provided a briefing note to update on the inward investment that the CCB has made, and will potentially make, in the Council's area, such as through Farming in Protected Landscapes and the Access for All programmes. We discussed the CCB attending a meeting with elected members to brief them on our work, ahead of their budget discussions.

7. Annette and I also met with Gerard McLeave, Corporate Director at **Luton Borough Council** on 19 October. The Council has confirmed that it will be making its contribution for this financial year. Elected members have asked for information on the value we provide and so, as above, we provided a briefing note on the CCB's investment in the Council's area and, hopefully, will confirm the Council's full financial contribution for the next two years.

8. I also had a very helpful meeting with the CEO, Adrianna Partridge, and Deputy CEO, Suzanne Malcolm at **South Oxfordshire District Council** on 2 November. We work very closely with SODC officers in various areas but it was nevertheless a good opportunity to identify potential new areas of collaboration. Other senior meetings during this period have

included two-monthly discussions with senior management, including the CEO, at **Dacorum Borough Council** (in September and the next in December). I will be following up on the meetings above over the coming weeks.

9. Upcoming meetings with local authorities include the CEO at **Buckinghamshire** Council, Zina Etheridge, along with Tom Beeston, CEO at the **Chiltern Society**, on 23 November.

10. The Monitoring Officer, Matt Thomson, is continuing to monitor the **Local Government Reorganisation** process. A briefing on the situation at the time was circulated to Board members on 28 August, with the latest in relation to the Government's 'pause' of the process provided in the CEO's update to the Board in September. Since then, the Government has moved things forward a little, and the latest position is:

    a. Oxfordshire ('minded-to' LGR decision):
        i. Local authorities (LAs) to be reorganised into 3 unitaries: Greater Oxford, North Oxfordshire and Ridgeway (including South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Berkshire). Shadow authority elections: May 2028; Formal vesting day: 1 April 2029.
        ii. The Chilterns National Landscape will only overlap with Ridgeway Council.
        iii. Ridgeway Council will be in the Thames Valley Mayoral Strategic Authority, with the rest of Oxfordshire and Swindon.
    b. Buckinghamshire (no LGR decision needed):
        i. LA remains as Buckinghamshire Council.
        ii. The Chilterns NL continues to overlap with Buckinghamshire.
        iii. Buckinghamshire is continuing to favour being its own Strategic Authority. Unclear whether this would be mayoral.
    c. Bedfordshire (no LGR decision needed):
        i. LAs remain as Bedford, Central Beds and Luton.
        ii. The Chilterns NL continues to overlap with Central Beds and Luton.
        iii. Government favours a Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK) Strategic Authority, supported by Luton and MK, and the Government; Central Beds and Bedford are pushing for a larger SA including parts of Northamptonshire, because BLMK does not meet Government criteria. Either outcome will most likely be a Mayoral SA.
    d. Hertfordshire (still under review):
        i. Government is re-evaluating the two-, three- and four-unitary options, with a 'minded-to' decision expected late-2026 or early 2027.
        ii. It remains unclear which authorities will be overlapped by the Chilterns NL.
        iii. Hertfordshire's authorities favour a Mayoral Strategic Authority for the county, and this is understood to have Government support.

11. As previously noted, the current review of previous decisions and delay to implementation of new unitary authorities will not affect the introduction of **Strategic Authorities** (SAs) by the end of 2028. If disagreement still exists, the Secretary of State is empowered to determine the footprint of SAs at that time. Each SA is required to produce a Spatial Development Strategy, which will inform unitary authorities' local plans. In addition, Mayoral SAs must produce a (separate) Local Growth Plan. Regulations governing these plans have recently been published, and implications will be discussed by the Planning Advisory Group (PAG) in January.

12. No information or advice has been provided to us either by Defra or MHCLG in terms of how these changes will affect the Chilterns Conservation Board, and, indeed, there remains no indication that this is even being considered. A recent meeting of National Landscapes Lead Officers and the National Landscape Association discussed the subject and one action is for the NLA to identify and approach the relevant teams in both Defra and MHCLG.

13. Members (particularly local authority appointees) are requested to keep the Monitoring Officer updated with decisions and other intelligence on the Local Government Review and Strategic Authority processes and assist us with ensuring that the CCB is properly engaged by the new authorities.

14. This reporting period has involved less engagement with our **local MPs**, largely due to the need to focus on other work. However, the team did invite all our local MPs to the launch of the Nature Recovery Plan on 11 November, and I followed up with a personal invitation to each of them. Disappointingly, none attended the event and we clearly need to do more work to engage and inform them. A couple have asked for more information on the relevance of our work, and opportunities to attend events, in their constituencies which we are following up on. The recently published Annual Review is proving a very useful advocacy tool for showcasing our achievements and impact.

15. At a national level we are getting more traction. I provided a proposed itinerary to the CEOs at the National Landscapes Association and the Campaign for National Park for a site visit for MPs and Peers that are members of the **All Party Parliamentary Group for National Parks and National Landscapes**. This has been approved and I'm pleased to report that we will be hosting the APPG members and showcasing our work on 8 June 2027. I will also be writing to all our MPs encouraging them to attend the APPG's AGM on 24 November. More on the APPG from its Chair, Barry Gardiner MP, here. The visit will also involve members of the APPG on Chalk Streams, of which Sarah Green, MP for Chesham and Amersham, is Chair.

16. Defra's recruitment campaign for **Secretary of State appointments** to Conservation Boards and National Park Authorities has concluded. The new appointments have not been formally announced yet on the GOV.UK and we will advise members further once the information is available. In the meantime, we are liaising with our new members, including completing relevant paperwork and organising their induction. I have also offered insight to Defra on how its own induction process for new Board members can be improved.

17. 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 waiting for Defra to publish the report and its response to the recommendations. understand that the report will be published in December.

18. 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.

Engagement with Arm's Length Bodies and government agencies

19. 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 this year, 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.

20. 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.

The OEP has advised that it will be scoping the main messages for its report in December, with a view to publishing in 2027.

Engagement with the National Landscapes Association and other Protected Landscapes

21. 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, funding, devolution, LGR and a new programme of online events for all members of National Landscapes staff teams.

22. 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 the NLA's website 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 was discussed by the Planning Advisory Group (PAG) in October – further discussions and updates to follow.

23. 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.

24. 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. 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. Our next online meeting is on 18 November.

25. We are also planning an in person meeting to start early discussions on planning for the next review of our respective Management Plans. As the only two Conservation Boards in the country, and with differences in governance arrangements compared National Landscapes and National Park Authorities, we see huge opportunity in collaborating and share ideas.

26. The NLA also convenes the **Lead Officers and Chairs annual conference**. Louise Price, the CCB's Chair, and I are attending this year's meeting, in Birmingham, on the day of the Committee's meeting, so we send our apologies!

Engagement with partners

27. One of the team's most significant achievements during this period is the hugely successful launch of the Chilterns Nature Recovery Plan on 11 November. Joined by over 120 of our many partners, including funders, farmers, local authorities and community groups, plus Board members and the whole CCB team, we convened at the National Trust's Hughenden Estate, near High Wycombe. We heard from members of the team and our partners on the importance of the Plan, the partnership approach, and how the Plan is already being delivered, plus site visits to showcase our collaborative work on river restoration and supporting farmers. The whole team did a fabulous job organising, publicising and delivering the event. More on social media here.

28. Another key milestone during this period was to publish our Annual Report for 2025/26, in mid-October. With a new design and stronger focus on impact, the report really showcases the extent and impact of our work across the Chilterns and is a brilliant advocacy tool. Again, it was very much a team effort, with the whole team contributing by providing project updates, statistics, photos or proofreading, with planning and oversight from the Communications Team. More on social media here.

29. 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. An example is our forthcoming meeting with the CEO at Buckinghamshire Council on 23 November.

30. Specific meetings with other partners include Estelle Bailey, CEO at the BBOWT, a meeting to discuss Conservation Board governance with Amanda Craig, Director of Thriving Landscapes & Nature Recovery at Natural England, and joining Board member, Juliet Vickery, at the Mall Galleries in London on 1 October for the BTO's annual awards evening.

31. I had a very productive meeting with Kathryn Brown, Executive Director of Science at the **UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology** on 9 November. The team, and especially Kate, works very closely with CEH (based in Wallingford, in the Chilterns) on a number of areas, including water quality, climate adaptation, citizen science and research to improve pollinators through our farmer clusters, and we explored additional areas of potential collaboration.

32. Annette Weiss, Head of Engagement and Partnerships and I also enjoyed joining our partner and EDI training consultants**, Phab,** at its celebration and awards reception at the House of Lords on 21 October. Mik Scarlett, Co-CEO, and his colleagues at Phab have produced many of the access guides and information on our Accessibility Hub. Similarly, I joined **CPRE's** centenary celebrations and awards ceremony at the House of Common on 29 October. More detail on these two events in our social media posts here and here.

33. On 7 November, along with colleagues Louise Hartley and Ruth Staples-Rolfe, I attended a conference, **Women's Leadership in Protected Landscapes**, convened to celebrate, support and connect women leaders through sharing information and experiences. We heard from both experienced leaders and a very impressive panel of young women, too. I

led a workshop, with Louise and Ruth's help, exploring what successful leadership looks like in protected landscapes, whether current leadership models and organisational cultures are fit for purpose, and what needs to change so people with different strengths, experiences and aspirations can contribute and thrive. The response was extremely positive and we are now analysing the huge amount of insight and ideas gathered, with key outcomes being shared in due course. My LinkedIn post is here and many other people also posted their reflections after the event.

34. We also partnered with **Europarc Atlantic Isles** to deliver a webinar on 10 November on our collaborative approach to improving accessibility and inclusion in the Chilterns, in part through our Accessibility Hub. The session involved presentations from our own Annette Weiss, Josh Kyle, Visitor Operations and Experiences Manager at the National Trust, and Mik Scarlett, Co-CEO at Phab. 58 people registered for the event which generated very positive feedback and requests for more information and to collaborate, from access colleagues both in the UK and Europe. Listen to the recording here EUROPARC Atlantic Isles » Webinars.

35. We also hosted a meeting of the Landscape Observatory team on 12 November. Kate Heppell, our Head of Landscape, is contributing to the LO's work along with the consultants, Footprint Ecology, that we commissioned to explore the impacts of climate change on the Chilterns landscape. The LO is funded by the Protected Landscapes Partnership and provides a platform for advancing the latest critical thinking in conservation management, focussing on systematically mapping landscapes through high-resolution aerial images and cutting-edge AI; monitoring habitats, land use, and cultural heritage features; and managing the impacts of climate change through Adaptive Management plan practices.

36. During this period, we also joined more than 150 organisations, businesses, and individuals from across the food, farming, environmental, and animal welfare sectors in signing a letter from the Abattoir Sector Group to the Prime Minister calling on the Government to secure a sustainable network of local abattoirs across Britain. The letter warns that, without urgent intervention, further closures will undermine the Government's ambitions for food security, economic growth and a thriving British farming sector. A link to the letter, including a list of signatories, is here.

37. 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 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.

38. Upcoming meetings and events with partners include **Natural England** launching its Super National Nature Reserve in the North Chilterns on 16 December and joining a screening on 2 December of *The Evenlode Blueprint*, a new 30-minute documentary following the people, partnerships, and financial mechanisms behind the **Evenlode Landscape Recovery Project**, the UK's largest farmer-led nature recovery initiative.

Staff changes

39. At the end of September, we said a fond farewell to our **Citizen Science Coordinator for Tracking the Impact**, David Willis. Dave has joined the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust and will still be collaborating with us in that role. We are also sorry to be saying goodbye to our **Nature Recovery Manager**, Nick Marriner, after nine years at the CCB. Nick will finish working with us at the end of the year and we are currently discussing future plans with Nick and other members of the team. More detail will be shared in due course.

40. On recruitment, Helen Cardy joined us on 2 November as our new **Rivers Officer**, replacing Adrian Porter following his appointment as Project Manager for the CCSP. Our new **Head of Programmes, Louise Hartley, also** joined the team on 20 October.

Staff Training, Development and Wellbeing

41. 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.

42. The annual **Staff Engagement Survey** was launched in October and we will report to the Committee on results in due course.

43. 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.

44. One of the ways in which we are investing in the team is to provide every member of staff the opportunity to carry out a **Lumina Spark** questionnaire. Lumina is a well-established psychometric and personality assessment tool designed to build self-awareness, improve communication, and develop leadership skills without pigeonholing people into rigid stereotypes. Each person's Portrait is unique to them and enables us - individually and as a team – to explore our preferences, behaviours and the different ways we might respond to situations.

45. Most of the team has now completed the questionnaire and held a debrief session with either Howard or Richard. Once all are complete, we will be discussing next steps for exploring how best to use the results to benefit individual staff and the organisations as a whole, with the intention of equipping the team to translate our vision and strategic priorities into coherent, accountable and sustainable delivery, while building and strengthening leadership capability across the organisation.

46. On training, following a successful site visit for Board members and the staff team on 7 Oct, where we visited partners at the **Chiltern Open Air Museum and Woodoaks Farm**, Annette Weiss has organised another event. On 18 November, 32 people are signed up to visit BBOWT's College Lake and the Natural History Museum in Tring. Both days showcase the access work that the team is doing with our partners, especially with funding from Defra's Access for All programme, and are also an important opportunity for Board members and staff to spend time together.

47. Following the Europarcs webinar on 10 November, we are in the process of joining the **Outdoor Recreation Network and Europarc Atlantic Isle**, as membership will provide both Board members and staff access to training and development opportunities and online resources.

Recommendation:

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

Item 3.2 **Funding Report**

Author: Elaine King, CEO

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

Background

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

Future Funding

2. As reported previously, this financial year is the first of a three-year flat cash settlement, with year one figures confirmed by Defra and years two and three indicative. Our income this year therefore comprises: Core Revenue (RDEL) funding (£513,896); Core Capital (CDEL) funding (£347,722), Access Capital funding (£429,229), Farming in Protected Landscapes funding (£818,310) and Wildlife Rich Habitat Capital funding (£206,540).

3. Defra also this year allocated to National Landscapes an additional £3m one-off uplift in RDEL funding, in addition to our RDEL Core grant. For the CCB, this comprised £176,723. We are waiting to hear from Defra if we will receive a similar allocation in 2027/28.

4. In October 2026, Defra advised that it will be making available Wildlife Rich Habitat Revenue funding. We have been allocated £11,377 to be spent in 2026/27. The funding is intended to support reporting on spending in 2026/27 and develop a pipeline of projects for subsequent years.

5. Defra Access Capital funding of £429,229 is confirmed for this year and the same indicative figures for the following two years. Farming in Protected Landscapes funding is confirmed at £818,310 for both this year and the following two years.

Local Authority contributions

6. We have continued to proactively engage with local authorities, largely to ensure that we collaborate and use resources most efficiently, and to ensure that local authorities understand the relationship between themselves and the Conservation Board, particularly the requirement to contribute financially as a reflection of our role in delivering their statutory duties. The Finance Report at item 2.1 provides more detail on progress with securing local authority contributions for this and the next two years.

Diversifying income

7. We continue to work to secure funds that enable us to recharge to cover core overheads. This includes recharging from projects - where funder rules allow - and from other sources of restricted income. The National Landscapes Association has also increased staff capacity for fundraising and are currently developing a programme to secure philanthropic funding for National Landscapes. This initiative is expected to be launched early in 2027.

Funding pipeline

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

Heritage and nature recovery

9. We are working with National Landscapes Association to explore corporate funding for the Tracking the Impact project (and the River Chess citizen science programme) through their green finance platform 'Your Natural Partner'. Tracking the Impact and the Chess citizen science project are the two Chilterns National Landscape projects currently showcased. For Tracking the Impact, we have received £25k from Rebel Restoration which has funded the project previously and connects organisations such as ours with businesses that want to support nature recovery initiatives.

10. **HS2 Additional Projects: Mending the Misbourne (Secured)** In August 2025, we secured £1m from the HS2 Review Group for the 'Mending the Misbourne' project, which will develop and deliver a strategic river catchment plan for the River Misbourne using a similar delivery template to River Chess Smarter Water Catchments initiative. See news item here. A legal agreement confirming the £1m grant was signed off in early January 2026 and the funds were transferred to our bank account in May.

11. We continue to liaise with HS2 regards a requested inflationary uplift to the Mend the Misbourne project of £36,000 due to the delays in completing HS2.

12. **HS2 Chilterns Review Group** – this group was set up under Select Committee assurance in 2019 to develop detailed design principles and oversee allocation of the £3m Additional Project budget. After many months of chasing, we received back payments for March 2020 to December 2024 of £15k. We have invoiced HS2 for reimbursement of staff time from January 2025 to March 2026, totalling £4.6k, and are awaiting payment. This will be the final funding received for our contribution to this group's activities, due to lack of further HS2 funds.

13. Buckinghamshire Council also holds funds for Additional Projects, in line with Parliamentary Assurances agreed in 2016. The funding is not competitive and is for the CCB to use for environmental integration and landscape enhancement projects within 3km either side of the HS2 route through the Chilterns National Landscape. £190k of this fund remains.

14. **Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) (Secured)**: Allocation is £818,310 per year for three years, of which £548,996 is available for capital project delivery and £115,372 for revenue project delivery. A further six months of administration funding will be available in FY29/30 to cover programme closure costs. The FiPL panel has approved funding for a number of internal CCB activities, in addition to external ones.

15. To date, **£740,435** has been awarded, including a total of **£385k** to farmer clusters. Projects in the pipeline total around £46k. We have £109, 472 to allocate by year end and we are fairly confident that we will be able to allocate this in time.

16. **Defra Wildlife-Rich Habitats Fund (Secured)**: This fund is being administered as part of the FiPL programme. Our allocation of £206k for FY26/27 has been fully allocated to initiatives comprising creation of hedgerow, wood-pasture and parkland, pond, calcareous grassland and wetland priority habitats.

17. **Landscape Connections – Nature Ridge (Secured)**: Launched in July 2024, Landscape Connections is the National Lottery Heritage Fund's 10 year, £150m grants programme, focussing on nature recovery, heritage and people in protected landscapes. We have worked with the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (leading the bid) and National Trails UK to help secure £259k for 18-months for a project pre-development stage. This includes £21k to pay for technical advice from CCB staff.

18. Nature Ridge aims to create a nature corridor focused on the chalk ridge and Ridgeway National Trail as it passes through the two National Landscapes. The Project Development Manager and Project Support Officer have both started work on the project.

19. **Chess Smarter Water Catchments (SWC) (Secured)**: Thames Water has advised its intention to offer a further £1.4m to fund work in the Chess catchment for four years until 31 March 2030 through the Chalk Streams Flagship Restoration Project. Any existing underspend can also be used to support the programme of activities in 2026/7. While a welcome development, this is less funding than we had sought and has necessitated reprofiling the proposed work programme and discussing plans and funding allocations with partners. A legal agreement has been signed for one-year of funding for CCB staff, totalling £178k and we are in receipt of all the staff and pre-delivery funding for this financial year. The project delivery budget is still to be determined.

Diversity Equity and Inclusion

20. **Defra Access for All funding 2023/24 to 2025/26:** this three year programme was aimed at improving access to protected landscapes for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds and ended in March 2026. We reported on spend, outcomes and impact to Defra to help inform future arrangements and demonstrate the difference it's made in the Chilterns. Defra has now made available a new tranche of funding from 2026/27 for three years. Our allocation for 2026/27 is £429,229 and we are expecting a similar allocation for the next two years (provisional at this stage).

21. We are promoting the Access for All fund as widely as possible to encourage a diverse range of applications and are actively assessing applications and awarding grants. £350,274 of grants have been awarded so far this year, including electric trikes and a trailer for Cycling without Age Oxfordshire, a Talking Trail and accessible interpretation at Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve, new access guides and videos for our Accessibility Hub and accessible board walks at two important wetland sites. This leaves £78,955 to allocate this financial year.

22. We have received additional applications for some substantial projects which will be reviewed at the next panel meeting on 7 December. We expect to be able to allocate all funds by year end. Details of previous projects funded are on our website. In addition to allocating grants to others, we have also used the funding to support substantial projects of our own including the Accessibility Hub, the Youth pages, an improved Chilterns volunteering hub (in progress) and accessible interpretation and digital assets.

23. The CCB is a strategic partner on Luton Borough Council's Nature Towns and Cities programme, 'Roots to Healthy Places', a two-year programme which commenced in January 2026 led by Luton Council and funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project is focused on nature recovery, providing better physical and emotional connections to nature and ensuring more equal access to public green spaces. The CCB is being funded to provide advice and deliver some programme activities (£7,500 over two years).

24. A **Collaborative Targeted Outreach Programme** (CTOP), developed by the University of Bedfordshire, following research funded by the CCB's Chalkscapes project, has also been incorporated into the Nature Towns and Cities project, and is currently being delivered across diverse communities in Luton. More here.

25. We also supported Luton Borough Council with its ambitious River Lea linear park vision and its recent application to DEFRA's National River Walks Programme. Although this initial application was unsuccessful, DEFRA has encouraged Luton Borough Council to provide additional evidence and re-apply, which they intend to do.

Recommendation:

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

Item 3.3	**Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Update**
Authors:	Annette Weiss, Head of Engagement & Partnerships, and Baljit Dhillon, EDI Advisory Group Chair
Purpose of Report:	To update the Executive Committee with progress on the CCB's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Ambition.

Update and recommendation

The EDI Advisory Group met on 15 October. Main points arising:

1) Two new members were welcomed to the group, Board member Cllr Kathy Gibbon and Andy Shipley from Natural Inclusion (Andy is a nature connection practitioner advising on encountering nature through non-visual senses).

2) The Board reflection session facilitated on 1 October was discussed. Three key themes emerged from the session and will be shared with Board members at its meeting on 10 December.

3) The programme of Staff and Board EDI training & development and induction was reviewed. This is a priority area and the programme of activity has been scaled up with regular events now on offer and visible on the Board sharepoint site. There has been good take-up from Board members. It was agreed to explore opportunities to combine Board meetings, site visits and induction activities, including informal opportunities for members to build relationships, while minimising additional travel and time commitments.

4) Site visits will continue, alongside offering online webinars and other virtual opportunities alongside in-person activities, recognising members' different availability and accessibility needs.

5) The EDI Advisory Group's terms of reference were discussed as these are up for review. It was agreed Baljit and Annette coordinate the review, including exploring the group's remit, advisory and challenge role, membership, confidentiality, information sharing and ways of working.

6) The group discussed the Protected Landscapes Partnership's (PLP) recent Sense of Belonging research. The PLP has invited National Landscapes to participate in a Test & Trial to measure sense of belonging using a scale they've developed. There is potential for CNL to be involved but this needs further scoping and ensuring it is complimentary to CNL's wider monitoring and evaluation work.

3) EDI Action Plan update:

Over the last three months the main activity has been:

- Promoting Defra Access for All programme 26/27 and assessing applications. So far £350,274 of funding has been allocated (total budget £429,229).

- Providing advice and support to several organisations looking to improve their accessibility including the Chiltern Society. Participated in an Oxfordshire Rail Partnership workshop sharing insights on access to nature and how to make this more inclusive.

- Supporting CNL and partner projects, including input to the Nature Ridge Landscape Connections which is now in its pre-development stage.

- Delivered a webinar for Europarc Atlantic Isles on 10 November: Widening the Welcome in the Chilterns: Accessibility Hub learnings 58 people from across Europe registered for the event and it was very well received. The webinar has been recorded and will be circulated and promoted.

- Enhancing and promoting the Accessibility Hub, adding new content and strengthening the resources for businesses section.

- Promoting the CNL Youth Hub- social media coverage and article in Countryside Jobs Service due to be published in November.

- A CNL staff and Board site visit was held on 7 October, visiting the Chiltern Open Air Museum and Woodoaks Farm. There was a good turnout (27 people) and a good mix of staff, Board members and key partners. It was well received and provided an important opportunity for informal learning, insights and inspiration. There are 27 people booked on the 18 November staff/Board site visit to College Lake and Tring NHM, and again, a good mix of staff and Board members.

Recommendation:

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