

**MEETING OF THE
COTSWOLDS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE BOARD –**

**HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBERS, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, COTSWOLD DISTRICT
COUNCIL, TRINITY ROAD, CIRENCESTER GL7 1PX
TUESDAY 21st October 2025, 10:00am**

Present

Nigel Adcock (NG)
Cheryl Agg (CA)
Jo Barker (JB)
Chris Brant (CB)
David Broad (DB)
Rebecca Charley (Vice Chair, RC)
Katherine Chesson (KC)
Brendan Costelloe (BC)
Paul Crossley (PC)
Matthew Darby (MD)
Amanda Davis (AD)
Ben Dent (BD)
Ellie Fujioka (EF)
Andrea Graham (AG)
Andy Graham (AG)
Jon Grantham (JG)
Beverley Hardman (BH)
Liz Hodges (LH)
Graham Hopkins (GH)
Martin Horwood (MH)
Doug Hulyer (DH)
Juliet Layton (JL)
Cate Le Grice Mack (CLGM)
Nick Martell-Bundock (NMB)
Brendan McCarthy (Chair, BM)
Hannah McDonnell (HM)
Rosie Pearson (RP)
David Powell (DP)
Liz Reason (LR)
Margaret Reid (MR)
Isabel Ross (IR)
Anisa Saleh (AS)
Ray Sanderson (RS)
Martin Smith (MS)
Ben Stokes (BS)
John Swanton (JS)
Sarah Whalley-Hoggins (SWH)
James Williams (JW)

Also in Attendance:

Maria Carter (Minute-taking)

Magda Glanowska (MG)

Della Morris (DM)

Fred Constantine Smith (FS)

Simon Smith (SS)

Rebecca Waite (RW)

Sarah West (SW)

Alice Whitehead (AW)

Observing: Mark Connelly, Alana Hopkins, Anna Field, Bec Foster, Becky Jones, John Mills, James Webb.

1. INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

- Apologies – apologies were received from:
Susan Crawford
Adrian Hardman
Isabel Ross
Ray Sanderson
Liz Reason
Martin Smith
- Introductions and announcements – The Chair paid tribute to Richard Lloyd (previous Board member) who had recently passed away. A minute's silence was held to remember him. Board members made various comments about Richard's contributions in protection of the environment and his work across the Cotswolds.
- New members welcomed: All new members were asked to introduce themselves and give a little background to their careers, interests and areas of representation (new members listed in bold in these minutes).
- The Chair announced his tenure as SoS Board member would come to an end in June 2026, he will step down after that.
- Declarations of interest – no interests were declared.
- Public questions – there were no public questions.

2. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING – 24 JUNE 2025

- Decision - resolved that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board Meeting held on 24 June 2025 be approved as a correct record. The only change was a minor correction from AD, in her comment, to a word at the bottom of page 7.
- Actions Arising – all actions arising were either completed or in progress. The CEO provided an update in reference to the value-added document and said this would be sent shortly. The annual review had been sent out to Board members. The other outstanding business was an update on the work of the voluntary wardens and that was being covered in the business of the meeting today, with a presentation by Sarah West.
The Chair asked the CEO if the annual report could be finalised sooner after year end, as by the time it comes out people are only looking forward. The CEO agreed to look at this.

3. MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING – 23 SEPTEMBER 2025

- The Board noted the Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting held on 23 September 2025. Two amendments were sought and recorded from GH and AD.

4. REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Engagement team and fundraising

The CEO discussed the new structure of the engagement team and the CEO commended their work, she spoke about each of the staff members and explained their areas of work and how well the team were working together.

She explained that Helen Komer has engaged over 1,500 children and young people in the first year of the Access to Nature project. Bec Foster joined the team in September as the new Grants Coordinator. She will be managing the 'Caring for the Cotswolds' small grant scheme, which is being supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) over the next three years. Bec has already made an impressive start by reviewing grant documentation and is preparing to launch the revamped scheme soon. Rowan Wynne-Jones began her new role as Water Restoration Officer in August. Rowan's work includes a mix of delivery and research that builds on the Everyone's Evenlode project.

The CNL team submitted a bid to the NLHF Landscape Connections scheme in September – this has been a huge amount of work for the CNL team, together with partners National Trust and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. If successful, a project manager will be employed to design, plan and cost a large delivery phase.

The CEO was expecting to hear the outcome of another NLHF bid: 'The Great Big Climate Circus'. If successful, the project will start in early 2026. This project was developed by Creative Sustainability and World Jungle with the CNL team as a supporting partner. It will address climate-themed issues with local engagement in communities in Gloucestershire using music and poetry.

The CEO updated the Board members about potential amendments to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill as it passes through parliament, specifically with respect to the suggested repeal of the 'seek to further' duty. The CEO reported that this has now been reneged possibly due to lobbying activity, including open letters to No. 10 and Defra from circa 200 bodies. The CNL team will continue to keep the passage of the Bill under review.

The CEO outlined the areas that would be discussed in the meeting and introduced the staff who would be presenting for the Climate Action Plan and Nature recovery. She welcomed the Head Warden, Sarah West who would be speaking about the Voluntary Wardens. RW would also be updating the Board on Business Planning for the CNL.

Comments:	
JS asked how other National Landscapes fundraise - as the CNL team appears to be very successful at this. The Chair commended the team's efforts and made the point that the CNL team wouldn't be as effective without its successful fundraising. The Board members discussed concerns about water quality in the Cotswolds and that Local Authorities do not hold any powers to make water companies accountable for their actions. CLGM was concerned that issues affecting water courses in the Cotswolds were getting worse and considered that the CNL team should be more vocal about protection of watercourses. JW clarified that under the Water Resources Act 1991 the Environment Agency and Defra are given powers to hold water companies to account and so they should be the organisations to engage. Also, MPs can hold water companies to account in their constituencies (SWH).	
Decision:	Actions Arising:
The Board noted the update.	Action: CEO to consider relevant speakers at next Board to address the enforcement action of those bodies that hold water companies to account.

5. 30 by 30 AND OTHER IMPORTANT TARGETS

Simon Smith presented slides that showed the impact of how nature had been adversely affected in the Cotswolds and why action was so critical now, he cited Sir John Lawton's report, Making Space for Nature (2010). He stressed that wildlife can adapt to Climate Change and it is adapting now, but it needs urgent assistance.

The Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan (based on 40% of land for nature recovery) requires 34,000 ha change from land held in arable and permanent pasture. To emphasise the scale of change required, the GCG team seeds about 100 ha a year. SS also said woodland and grasslands (and mixed) needed to increase significantly – citing the right habitats created in the right places.

Simon explained how 30x30 is an international agreement and most important policy driver for nature recovery. With the Land Use Framework for England, this Government seem to be committed to specific land use change targets.

Where do we go from here?

- Quantify ambition across sectors in terms of targets for habitats as part of Local Nature Recovery Strategy delivery. We've done the 'where' but not the 'how much'.
- Delivery focus – we need to be able to act on targets now and drive resources to the delivery of nature recovery in the Cotswolds. The Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework should help with this. Funding is available from sources like Big Chalk, FiPL and Lottery programmes.

- The Nature Recovery Working Group will be important for ongoing work.

The Chair thanked Simon for his presentation.

Comments:	
• MD – thanked Simon Smith for his presentation. MD described how they have achieved 40% for nature recovery on their farm through agri-environmental schemes and how vital they are for nature recovery. He stated we have an urgent crisis in the Cotswolds concerning the renewal of higher tier countryside stewardship with 5 year options which threatens good work and investment in nature recovery (with Bredon Hill being one such example). Farmers and landowners need consistent good Agri – environment schemes to assist them. • NA – concerned that nature won't be able to go through the gears – can nature hold onto habitat? Simon responded by saying that wildlife is adapting to Climate change now. However, future wildlife will be different to the wildlife we have now and we are managing for future wildlife, not historic wildlife. • Comments made regarding 30 by 30 targets in terms of how this fits with building targets. Is this realistic? Simon responded by saying that we need to consider the whole landscape – if more building we need to improve nature recovery alongside those developments. • AG thanked Simon for his presentation. Since 2007, many farmers went into Entry Level Stewardship schemes, creating mass uptake and better understanding for nature recovery. The land use framework has been long overdue. Will it be possible to have a short overview at the February Board on the assistance available to the farming community, as this will be a huge ask from the arable and grassland sectors. Could we have a speaker on the national perspective? We need the inside story on how we can help. • SWH – We need to use 'greyfield' sites for future allocations and we need to move at pace, this is of paramount importance but need clarity as to location of greyfield sites in CNL. • CGM commented on farming productivity and employment for organic farming rising over past 40 years, yet the wider farming sector is still to be convinced. Regenerative farming is a good practice and we need better messaging.	
Decision:	Actions Arising:
The Board noted the report.	Action: CNL Board to write to SoS to state importance of renewal of higher tier countryside stewardship with 5 year options for nature recovery and to ask to continue them to be renewed. Action: Ask for a national speaker on farming challenges and in particular how the Board can help encourage

	landowners transitioning agricultural land into land for nature recovery. Action: Simon Smith to provide slides for circulation to Board members.
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6. CLIMATE ACTION

Fred Constantine Smith led the presentation with Alice Whitehead. He explained that Board members can find more information about the Climate Action Plan on the CNL website, last Board papers, or they can email himself and Alice for further information.

He updated the Board about the work carried out in the last six months to develop the Action Plan. Alice discussed an approach to monitoring the CNL pathway to net zero.

Fred sought to get feedback from the Board on:

- How do we best engage Local Authorities and other stakeholders with the Action Plan?
- What is the role for Board members in the Action Plan?

Fred stated that due to the CNL team's core purposes and level of influence there is a need to target our influence in each priority area, considering the resources we have available to deliver action. He went on to describe a draft prioritisation scoring approach where the top five activities are land-use related. He asked *what do we do with this?* Do we focus on the top five by possible engagement while only focussing on some of the lower activities where we can influence change within our remit?

Fred said they will come back to the Executive in January with a draft Climate Action Plan then, to take to the Board in February.

Comments:

Fred asked for feedback on: How do we best engage Local Authorities and other stakeholders with the Action Plan?

- CLGM – why are LAs a priority for engagement ? Why are they so important? All stakeholders are important. But farmers and transporters are an important part . Not sure I agree with it.
- AD said that businesses could be included in the first bullet point with 'landowners, parish councils, climate groups, residents and visitors'.
- NA – CNL team Working Groups and LA staff isn't listed there. In Tewkesbury – I talk to our planning officer on a regular basis. Are there conversations happening about Climate Action, yes. I can link CNL leads with staff officers at Tewkesbury.
- DB made the point that landowners in the Cotswolds have huge potential for sequestration of carbon and that a focus on landowners are more important than LAs.
- SWH said there were lots of discussions about Climate Action at Stratford District Council and budget was allocated for this. She said that she was sure they would welcome a meeting with the CNL team to discuss and share more.

- AG said that there was time between now and when the final draft of the Action Plan is prepared to talk to LAs (those that are willing). He suggested a workshop between CNL team leads and 'with the willing' (LA staff) to discuss and take back to their teams.
- GH said that members of this Board are here to represent those councils, what actions have they got? Fred said that was listed on the next slide. The Action Plan comes back in January/February so individuals to make individual actions for their respective LAs.
- JL said that many LAs had declared Climate emergencies, it is clear that from briefings we see about regenerative/nature friendly farming that this can make a huge impact, we cannot influence farmers and landowners but you (the CNL team) can. The drive for change needs to be through policy (planning) – that is where all the drivers and much work is focussed for change on the ground.
- CA said that Gloucestershire County Council had a wholistic approach to Local Nature recovery.
- RP - West Oxfordshire District Council has regular briefings on Climate Action & where there is overlap with others. And likewise, Bath and NW Somerset Council have their Climate Action Plan on the Council website.

Decision:	Actions Arising:
Board members provided feedback to staff.	Action: To take on feedback from Board members, providing the final draft of the Climate Action Plan in January's Executive Committee.

7. COTSWOLDS VOLUNTARY WARDENS – CARING FOR THE COTSWOLDS

The Head Warden, Sarah West was introduced by the Chair. SW gave a presentation on the history and structure of the wardens, what they do and future challenges, including the longevity of the current warden groups.

The wardens are the volunteering arm of Cotswolds National Landscape. There are 373 active wardens (2024-25) and they are the largest volunteer group in the Cotswolds. The volunteering arm was established in 1968 (57 years in operation). It is estimated there was just over 55,300 hours devoted to 'wardening' in 2024-25.

The core activities of the warden's work is:

- Work Parties
- Parish Wardening
- Walk Leading (listed on the CNL website up to May 2026)
- Outdoor Learning

SW spoke about these in more detail. She said the Voluntary Warden's mission, is to conserve and enhance the landscape.

SW spoke about the challenges of attracting new volunteer wardens from more diverse and younger age groups and stated how the Cotswolds should be for everyone (including people from a diverse range of cultures and abilities), not just

people, 'like us'. SW is working with DH, supported by Becky Jones and Nicole Daw (CNL team) to discuss these matters and take forward into the future, so will keep the Board updated.

Comments:	
The Board spoke positively about the work of the wardens.	
Decision:	Actions Arising:
	Action: SW to keep Board updated on the work and initiatives of the voluntary wardens.

8. PLANS, STRATEGIES AND POLICIES FOR BOARD APPROVAL/ADOPTION

The CEO updated the Board on the work that had been made on the proposed changes to CNL's business planning approach. Her paper outlined this to the Board. The CEO asked for endorsement and feedback on the proposed approach. She also added that there would be a new Nature Recovery Working Group and interested Board members should contact herself.

The CEO will come to the January Executive Committee meeting with the final draft Business Plan and look for endorsement from the Board in February.

Comments:	
• EF made a point that the indicators used are lag, we need to see some lead indicators in the key performance indicators. • JS asked about the woodland targets – do we have control on this? Whose target is it? The CEO said that the target was within the CNL sphere of influence. She had put the target in and it would come from mapping data. JS also made a comment about funding that had been distributed through CNL to a wealthy organisation. He was concerned that the smaller businesses and organisations should not lose out in funding rounds. • SWH – some local authorities are struggling to maintain control of 5-year housing land supply targets. She was concerned that more permissions were being granted for small developments in rural areas. She called for a meeting to discuss this, as the bar for harm caused to natural environment is raised. She said she expected the volume of housing development applications to increase. Other representatives agreed with her concerns.	
Decision:	Actions Arising:
Board members provided feedback above. SWH asked that a meeting be held with the CNL planning team regarding increasing volumes of small housing development applications.	Action: CEO to provide final draft of Business Plan for endorsement in February. Action: John Mills to arrange Board member engagement on housing pressures potentially via the Planning & Infrastructure Working Group.

9. FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

DP and MG both gave a verbal update to their reports already submitted to the Board. DP commended the work of the finance team in producing a financial manual, he also said that funding uncertainty is a key challenge. MG outlined the reports with budget setting being the team's focus now.

Comments:	
- AG said he believed that LAs needed to send a positive signal about funding commitment to the CNL team, even through the Local Government Review changes. He stressed it is the time to commit to the CNL team and no time to create more uncertainty. He suggested a Service Local Agreement (three years) between LAs and the CNL team. He suggested the relationship between LAs and the CNL team was integral for delivery to the public and to 'give us every reason to keep funding'. He also stressed to not leave it too late to have those conversations with LAs. - Chair liked the proposal of a three-year funding agreement and he thanked the LA Board members for their support.	
Decision:	Actions Arising:
Update the Board	Action: CEO to consider how to continue strengthening engagement with LAs.

10. FORWARD PLANNING

The CEO asked Board members if they would like to raise any items for discussion at the next Board, but they could always contact her after the meeting in any case. Proposed items would be the fundraising strategy, the Nature Recovery Working Group priorities, a session and presentation on water quality, and she would also look at the future of farming policy and how that can assist nature recovery.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair asked the new Board member representatives what they thought about their first meeting with all providing positive feedback.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next CNL Board meeting will be held on 24th February 2026. Location Council Chambers, Cotswold District Council, Trinity Road, Cirencester GL7 1PX.

The Meeting commenced at 10:05am and closed at 12.49pm.