

**MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
COTSWOLDS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE BOARD -**

**HELD AT COTSWOLDS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE, MARSDEN MANOR FARM,
RENDCOMB, CIRENCESTER, GL7 7EU**

TUESDAY 20th JANUARY 2026, 10:00am

Present

Brendan McCarthy (Chair)
Rebecca Charley (Vice-Chair)
Sue Crawford (SC)
Paul Crossley (PC)
Amanda Davis (AD)
Juliet Layton (JL)
Cate Le Grice-Mack (CGM)
Rosie Pearson (RP)
Ben Stokes (BS)

Also in Attendance:

Maria Carter (MC) minute-taking
Fred Constantine Smith (FCS)
Ben Dent (Board, BD)
Graham Hopkins (Board, GH)
Magda Glanowska (MG)
John Mills (JM)
Emma Reed (Defra)
Rebecca Waite (RW)
James Webb (JW)
Alice Whitehead (AW)

1. INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

- Apologies – No apologies were received.
- Introductions and announcements – Emma Reed was observing the meeting and shadowing the CEO. Emma comes from the Fiscal, Outcomes and Efficiency team at Defra, she also had an interest with the Local Government reforms. GH and BD were observing. The CEO confirmed those who were continuing to stand on the Board and those soon to stand down. There were three reserves for the SoS Board positions, with one vacancy to fill. The CEO said that new Board members are already observing on some of the working groups. Emma was made welcome to the meeting by the Chair.
- Declarations of interest – no interests were declared.
- Public questions – None received.

2. MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING – 23 September 2025

- Decision - There were some alterations required for the minutes recorded for the Executive Committee Meeting held on the 23 September 2025 from SC and

the Chair. BS had an alteration but was satisfied that the action had been covered elsewhere in the Board minutes.

- Actions Arising – all actions arising were either completed or in progress.

3. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING – 21 October 2025

- The Executive Committee noted the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 21st October 2025. There were no amendments reported.

4. REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

- RW gave the highlights from her report she said that the CNL team had been able to assist two interviews on BBC radio covering Caring for the Cotswolds scheme and CNL's 60th anniversary. The Field and Folk film, that will be used to mark the anniversary will launch in the summer this year.
- She thanked JW and all the Engagement team for their work; the team's bid applications have been hugely successful this last year. The Engagement team are currently recruiting for a role in partnership with NT for the Landscape Connections project. She asked Board members to share about the role with their networks.
- She thanked the Planning Officers for their high standard of work on the many planning development consultations that were being received and on the Statutory Consultee Process and NPP Framework. The Chair and CEO noted their expertise and acknowledged their reputation, both nationally and regionally, with LAs, Government and NLA. She said that JM had been successful in assisting in the approval of a £370k project to remove overhead electricity cables at Bredon Hill and to replace with underground cables. The project will enhance the visual beauty in the area.
- Simon Smith is continuing to seek endorsement of the 2025-2030 Management Plan. So far, eleven LAs have endorsed the Plan. We are waiting to hear from four LAs regarding their endorsement:
 - Bath and North East Somerset
 - Warwickshire
 - Worcestershire
 - Wychavon

The Chair will be writing to the Board member representatives to seek the responses about the Management Plan.

- Nature Recovery Working Group will operate from spring 2026.
- The CEO was pleased to report that all staff have achieved Carbon Literacy certification.
- New priorities will include development of a Fundraising Strategy as well as renewed focus on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Furthermore, the CEO will be conducting a "Board Member Lifecycle" review (covering job specifications, recruitment and lengths of terms of Board members).
- The CEO was pleased to confirm the FiPL programme will be extended by three years. She explained there had been a vacancy in the team for a year.

- The CEO explained the actions arising table for the Board. Items will grey out as they are completed. Thames Water and NFU representatives would be speaking at the next Board, among a very full agenda.
- She pointed to Annex 2 of her paper that listed all the main groups (including WGs) that support the delivery of the Annual Work Programme.

Comments:

- AD made the point that under-grounding power cables was not the necessarily the most appropriate option in all cases. The CEO responded that it's approached on a case-by-case basis and GH said there are a few cases where the size of the endpoints is important – because a lot of land is required for these. A general discussion followed about other infrastructure projects.
- CGM spoke about her feelings of her expertise being under-utilised regarding land management and asked the Chair and CEO if they are aware of what skills Board members possess and how they would like to contribute. The CEO suggested a future skills audit and that this could be undertaken as part of the Board Member Lifecycle Review.
- AD asked if the new Nature Recovery Working Group would include the town and parish representatives. The CEO said all Board members with an interest could get involved in the Working Groups.
- AD made the point that the Management Plan did not require endorsement by town and parish councils. The CEO confirmed this was established by the founding legislation that the 15 constituent local authorities would otherwise have to produce their own Management Plans if the CNL did not exist.
- The members discussed the CNL at 60 anniversary and the CEO said the events would span the year across 2026. The Chair asked what the specific date would be. The designation order was confirmed on 19th August 1966.

Decision:	Actions ref:	Actions Arising:
The Executive Committee noted the update.	E/01/26/1 E/01/26/2 E/01/26/3 E/01/26/4	1.Outstanding Board members to provide the official response from their LA regarding the CNL Management Plan. 2.Streamline the process for Board members (for approval June). 3.CEO to follow up with CGM about Board member skills and engagement and best use within the organisation. 4.The Chair wanted his comment re: planning seminars from the September Executive taken into consideration.

Priorities for the meeting

The CEO outlined the priorities to discuss including Business Planning Approach, Projects and Fundraising, Planning and Infrastructure, Climate Action, Financial and Operational Overview.

5. BUSINESS PLANNING APPROACH

- The CEO explained she would like the Executive Committee members to endorse the Business Planning approach.

- She said that the annual work programme will be revised to align to the priorities of the Management Plan and link through to the business plan and personal objectives, providing a 'golden thread' to each member of the team. She said that the Working Groups (WGs) feed into the work of the organisation and teams are clear on their work outputs.

Comments:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair said that staff should be led by the CEO on their Working Group outputs. The CEO confirmed that each Working Group now has clear and consistent Terms of Reference to aid accountability. • The Chair said that he understands the Executive Committee has a role to ensure that the annual work programme is on track. • GH said that the Terms of Reference provide Board members with clarity – Board members and staff know what they are there to do. He suggested that WG chairs should meet to discuss how to support the CEO. • JL asked if the CEO had a project manager to pull all the work of the WGs together. The CEO confirmed that this role did not exist but that she saw it as part of her role. • BS asked who is reviewing the workplan? Chair responded to say that the CEO sets the annual work programme and the Executive Committee review it – the CEO said she welcomes comments made by Executive Committee members. • AD said that through the process she believed there was more clarity, transparency and that efficiencies had improved. • GH suggested efficacy had improved. • RP agreed that the improved alignment provided better clarity. • The Executive showed support for the approach. 	
Action reference:	Actions Arising:
E/01/26/5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CEO and Chair to meet together with WG Chairs to guide and enable working delivery of the Annual Work programme.

6. PROJECTS AND FUNDRAISING

JW outlined the report previously sent to the Executive Committee.

Comments:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JL asked about the ages of school children that were taking part in the Youth Panel for Caring for the Cotswolds. JW said these were 16/17/18-year-olds and the funding was able to support transport for these groups. • Bec Foster will be reporting back to Board about Caring for the Cotswolds mid-project review in the Feb 2027 Board. • For the Landscape Connections project, the team are currently recruiting for a Project Manager for 18 months who will plan, cost and develop the delivery phase application. This will include a feasibility study that will inform and evidence the larger bid.

- PC asked about the baseline data that will be used for the feasibility study. JW said there would be lots of data required for the PM to bring together for the baseline to report against. The Vice-Chair said the PM should work with the LAs to access data for the baseline figures, as they held various historical data.
- CGM said there was little focus with engagement on the peri-urban areas. JW said that the Great Big Climate Circus project was delivering in Stroud, Dursley and Gloucester. These are urban locations, all with train stations, and with relatively easy access to the countryside. CGM was concerned that Transport planning is not a consideration alongside site development planning.
- RP said a positive plan towards market garden towns/the peri-rural development is required, and we need a vision for them from LAs.
- AD said that James' team could benefit from the Parish online tool. JW welcomed this.
- JW said that the Fundraising Strategy is being scoped at the moment.

Actions reference:	Actions Arising:
E/01/26/6	1. Beneficiaries of grants to speak at future Board meetings so that their impacts towards the CNL are clearly demonstrated. E.g. within the mid-programme review for Caring for the Cotswolds at Feb 2027 Board meeting.
E/01/26/7	2. AD to follow up with JW about Parish online tool.

7. PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

JM introduced his paper, highlighting the work of the Planning & Infrastructure Working Group (PIWG) and the wider planning-related work of the Board. In particular, he highlighted that the Board was seeking statutory consultee status, in response to the Government's consultation on the statutory consultee regime.

He also highlighted the large number of local plan consultations that he has been commenting on and the large amount of housing that is being considered for inclusion in local plans. This issue is particularly significant for Cotswold District Council. For example, their draft Local Plan anticipates that the number of homes in Moreton-in-Marsh would grow by 2.5 times, compared to the current baseline. Other settlements in the Cotswolds National Landscape could face a similar level of growth if Cotswold District Council has to meet its housing need figure in full.

Comments:

- CGM raised the point about public transport provision not being integrated into new development. This was supported by AD.
- JM responded by saying that the local authority plans considered transport and other considerations in line with the future growth of site allocations. However, transport provision is not so well integrated into speculative development proposals.

- JL – said that local plans had in mind the growth of local areas. However, the rate at which planning applications are coming into LAs mean that the local plans need review. The draft NPPF is supportive of housing developments near train station. LAs are duty bound to deliver housing by the national targets.
- JM commented that LAs are not duty bound to deliver the amount of housing in national targets and that they do have the option of setting a lower housing requirement.
- The group discussed how new local plans may be held up in review due to the Local Government reforms.
- GH mentioned that part of the recent PIWG meeting discussion had been about the proportionality of new development. At the PIWG meeting, JM had questioned whether it was still appropriate to apply the Board threshold for proportionality¹ given the amount of housing that is being considered in Local Plans. PIWG had agreed that the Board should continue to apply these thresholds.
- After a lengthy discussion about the best way to make representation of these issues within the CNL, the Executive members decided that the NPPF consultation route would be the best approach.
- The Executive Committee discussed how proposed housing developments were impacting the CNL region, especially where infrastructure lacked facilitating growing populations. There was real and urgent concern about the issues seen with respect to lack of joined-up transport and other essential services for people.
- The Executive members were concerned that growth for housing may seriously undermine the positive aspects of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

Decision:	Action reference:	Actions Arising
The Executive Committee endorsed the aim to be a statutory consultee on Planning.	E/01/26/8	1. CNL to respond to Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on NPPF consultation with supporting examples of how the changes that have been made to the Government’s ‘standard method’ for calculating housing need are impacting the CNL.
	E/01/26/9	2. Write separately to Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government about the points raised in the NPPF consultation. Copy to CNL MPs.

¹ The Board considers housing development within the CNL to be disproportionate if it would increase the number of dwellings in a settlement by more than 5% (as specified in the Board’s Landscape-led Development Position Statement). In recent local plan consultation responses, the Board has highlighted that the issue of proportionality is also relevant in parts of CNL settlements that have extended beyond the CNL boundary and in settlement that are adjacent to the CNL and overlooked from elevated views within the CNL. In these instances, the Board has advocated a proportionality threshold of 10%.

	E/01/26/10	3.JM to present paper on the NPPF consultation at the next Board.
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8. CLIMATE ACTION

FCS was seeking endorsement for the CA Plan from the Executive before presenting the Plan to the February Board. FCS explained that CNL Team leaders had considerable feedback on the Plan and that those points had been incorporated into the final version.

The Plan used the Theory of Change approach to ensure that the CNL team focus in their areas of influence to deliver the greatest impact.

He focussed the Executive Committee member's attention on Appendix 1 – a definitive version for delivery, providing a framework for the next three years.

Comments:

- The Chair said how good it was to see a deliverable plan. He said that he had some reservations around the food and diet section and suggested it was reframed.
- RP said that Government advice has already been given, but it's about CNL's influence. AW said there was scientific data about the carbon emissions of beef and that this information was meant to be helpful to provide people with an informed choice.
- FCS said that CNL is partnering with others and PC said there was a role in education about the diet and health issues but certainly there is the argument to eat better meat, but less of it. CGM considered that local food for local people was important.
- BS suggested that that were sensitivities on messaging, given that much of the CNL is managed by the farming community.
- JL said that people will go where they can afford to buy food for good value, many people are living in poverty in the Cotswolds and they cannot afford to go to local farm shops. AW said this point was an issue where the CNL team could influence, they had to accept they couldn't change behaviour here.
- SC thought the Action Plan was very good and could it be shared with the supermarkets?
- RP thought it was important to use our influence within the CNL region and to reduce meat intake.
- The Chair asked that the messaging in the Plan is considered carefully, so that the farming community's aim to produce quality food for people is respected. GH supported this point, saying that food production was essential, even though it created a carbon footprint.
- ER liked the way it was structured and suggested some additional information and context.
- GH said the way we say things needs careful consideration.
- BD said a lot of work had been put into the plan and it is urgent that we get on with it and particularly for woodland (next five years planting), where our

<p>mitigations now will assist us in the short and longer term. JL said the Plan was also important for flood management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AD made a point about having the right tree in the right place, yet often she believed there was a difference of opinion between those planting trees and the CNL. She wanted to know whose view has most influence. There was a discussion around the need to review existing CNL Woodland guidance. • FCS also thanked Doug Hulyer for his support. 	
Decision:	Actions Arising:
<p>The Executive Committee supported the Climate Action Plan.</p> <p>Action reference: E/01/26/11</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Climate Action team to consider the points made by Executive Committee members for the Plan before it is presented to the Board.

9. FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL OVERVIEW

MG highlighted some points from her report that had been previously sent to the Executive Committee members.

MG said that the Q3 figures will be going to the next F&G Committee, the Capex funding had been fully allocated.

MG was looking forward to a new member of staff, Lyna, joining as Finance Manager at the end of February. She also hoped that CNL will be able to recruit a new internal auditor soon.

Comments:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair commended MG and the CEO on the good job of fully allocating the Capital funding and the on-going work of the team. • The CEO added some points on finance: Defra had contacted her to say they will be reviewing how the capex funding (2025-26) was allocated across every National Landscape. In addition, the CNL had been successful in negotiations with Defra to capitalise rent for 10 years on the Marsden office and 5 years on the storage barn at Pindrup. She thanked the Finance team for their work on this. 	
Decision:	Actions Arising:
The Executive Committee noted the update.	None.

10. FORWARD PLANNING

- The February Board will include items on the NPPF, water quality, challenges and opportunities facing farmers in the Cotswolds, the CNL Business Plan, Climate Action Plan and Finance and Governance Committee report.
- The June Board and AGM will be on 23rd June at the Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

- The CEO said she had been successful in her application to join a EuroParc pilot scheme (of Protected Areas), testing a cross-Europe Management Effectiveness Evaluation Framework.
- The CEO added she had also been successful in her application to join the South West Forestry and Woodland Advisory Committee. She would be participating as an individual but also able to represent views from a protected landscapes perspective.
- Mid-Counties Coop – AD will be stepping down from her Co-Op role shortly.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Executive meeting will be on Tuesday 19 May at the CNL Marsden office.

The Meeting commenced at 10.05am and closed at 1.11pm.

DRAFT