

PROPOSED REVISIONS TO CNL'S BUSINESS PLANNING APPROACH

Summary: To put forward the business planning approach and associated documents for endorsement by the Executive.

Recommendation: That the Executive endorses the newly proposed business plan and the proposed supporting documentation.

Report by: Bex Waite (Chief Executive)

1. BACKGROUND

A paper was tabled at the previous Executive and Board (September and October respectively) on potential considerations with regards to the Conservation Board size and structure in the context of Local Government Reform. Following much work across the CNL and taking into account Board and Executive inputs, this paper seeks endorsement of the revised business planning approach and associated documents.

2. CURRENT BUSINESS PLANNING APPROACH

Previously, the CNL had a Business Planning Framework that provided a one-page illustration of organisational outcomes, incorporating a mix of outputs, outcomes and activities across a range of themes. At a team and individual level, delivery is enacted through the Annual Work Programme. The synergy between these two documents could be improved.

3. PROPOSED BUSINESS PLANNING APPROACH – MAINTAINING ORGANISATIONAL ALIGNMENT

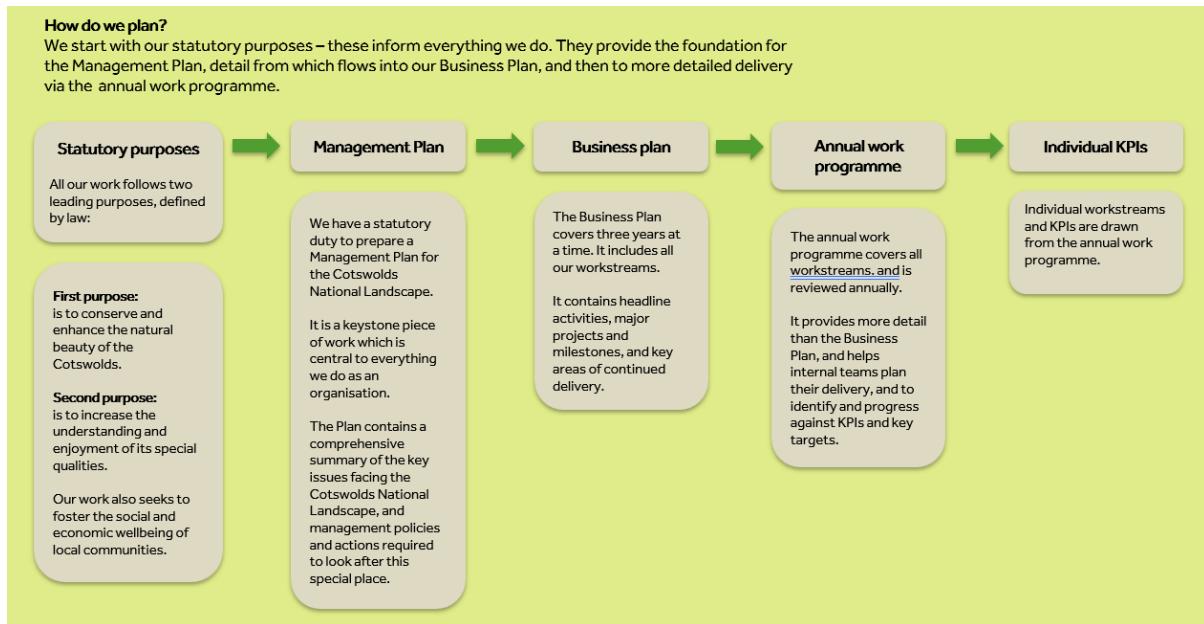
As part of the development of the 2025 – 2030 Cotswold National Landscape (CNL) Management Plan, the CNL Board endorsed the following priorities to make the Management Plan's outcomes a reality.

1. Informing, encouraging, and guiding efforts to ensure that the Cotswolds plays its part in both mitigating climate change whilst also adapting to its impacts.
2. Encouraging and supporting the recovery of nature across the Cotswolds - so that populations of wild species can flourish and successfully adapt to climate change by moving through the landscape.
3. Broadening engagement and improving access in the CNL so that a wider range of people can access the mental, physical and emotional benefits this brings.
4. Striving to ensure that all activities undertaken within the CNL and its setting conserve and enhance natural beauty and, in particular, the CNL's special qualities.

Over the past few months, a small group of CNL team members have been reviewing the business planning process and making recommendations as to how it can be simplified and better aligned with day-to-day delivery. The proposal is that the Annual

Work Programme will be revised to align with the four priorities above and in turn, delivery of each row of the business plan will be linked to personal objectives across the relevant team members; thus providing a “golden thread” from the management plan, through to the business plan, through to each member of the team.

Diagram 1 – The Importance of Organisational Alignment



Successful delivery of the business plan will be measured and monitored through the Annual Work Programme. This will incorporate a revised set of Key Performance Indicators outlined in Annex 2 at the end of this paper. The specific KPIs will need to be further developed by relevant team members and associated working groups. Working groups have been asked to update their terms of reference, ensuring further alignment with the business planning process. A section of the Annual Work Programme is shown in Diagram 2 below as an illustrative example.

Diagram 2 – A Snapshot of the Annual work Programme

Cotswolds National Landscape Board - 2025/26 Annual Work Programme						Progress	Comments
FUNCTION	Accountable	Responsible	By When	Target Measures			
Development of a future workplace strategy for the organisation regarding new office location.	CEO	CEO, MG	Mar-26	Plan and timeline agreed by the Board in February 2025.		✓	Completed
Ensure the Board continues to adhere to the recently adopted Investment strategy .	CEO	MG	Oct-25	Strategy adopted and implemented.		✓	In progress / on track
Continue to develop the organisation's risk management systems to reflect current best practice.	CEO	CEO, MG	Mar-26	New risk management system embedded.		✓	Not started
Develop a Finance Manual to support understanding of processes.	MG	JR	Dec-25	Greater team-wide understanding of financial systems and processes.		✓	On Hold
PARTNERSHIPS AND FUNDRAISING							
Develop CNL's Engagement work	JW	JW, NS		Caring for the Cotswolds - roll out of the new community grant scheme Access to Nature – focus on deeper engagement in year 2 Water Restoration – completion of year 1 milestones		🟡	Off track
Develop CNL's fundraising priorities	JW	JW, MG, Working Group	Mar-26	Create Terms of Reference for the Projects & Fundraising Working Group Begin to develop a CNL Fundraising Strategy		🟡	In progress
COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT							
Put in place plans to celebrate the CNL at 60 in 2026.	AH	AH, JW	Nov-25	Agreed plan in place.		🟡	Utilising some of the capital uplift to produce a support the 60th anniversary celebrations.
Play an active role in the development of a Cotswolds element of Arts in the Landscape (a national programme) by contributing to the One	AH	AH	Mar-26	Completion of documentary and attendance at screenings.		🟡	Ongoing.

4. MONITORING DELIVERY AND REVIEWING THE BUSINESS PLAN

How will we know the business plan is on track for successful delivery?

Tool	Process	Document
Success indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KPIs to be reviewed on a quarterly basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KPI tab within Annual Work Programme
SMART Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant team section within Annual Work Programme • Individual objectives to be reviewed quarterly (currently) with potential to be biannual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Work Programme • Staff performance reviews
Business planning approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly reviews of business plan at all-team meetings and every other Executive meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Plan
Robust Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Groups • Executive Committee • Finance & Governance Committee • The Board • Internal teams e.g. Health & Safety, Facilities, EDI, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms of reference • Minutes • Recording actions

5. RECOMMENDATION

The Executive is asked to endorse the proposed business plan and supporting documentation.

Bex Waite, October 2025

AGENDA ITEM 5

Annex A – Proposed Business Plan Framework for 2026-2029

BUSINESS PLAN 2026-2029						
HEADLINE OUTCOME:		Striving to ensure that all activities undertaken within the CNL and its setting conserve and enhance natural beauty and, in particular, the CNL's special qualities.			Cotswolds National Landscape	
		2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	OUR PRIORITIES	
PEOPLE (INTERNAL)			Continuous employee and volunteer training and personal development Diversify Board member representation Diversify Voluntary Warden membership			
PROCESS FINANCE (INTERNAL)	Form a team wellbeing group to increase awareness of support available etc. Review resource in Trails and Access team		Form a team socials committee Continue to develop Engagement team Update Health & Safety and Safeguarding policies	Expand volunteering into community, education and back-of-house support Encourage sustainable travel for team	Continue to bring together employees and volunteers Review requirements and costs for Investors in People award	
	Continuous Improvement – “maggie policy” to review external best practice Create a review timetable for all policy reviews		Work with Defra, NE, EA and NLA as national strategies emerge Refine IT infrastructure with folder structures that enhances cross-team working Implement recommendations from GDPR review Inc. Data Retention policy Maintain 3-year financial forecast to support business plan		Environment Performance Policy adopted New CRM System Begin work on Management Plan 2030-35	Informing, encouraging, and guiding efforts to ensure that the Cotswolds plays its part in both mitigating climate change whilst also adapting to its impacts.
LANDSCAPE & ENVIRONMENT (CONSERVE & ENHANCE)	Ongoing and regular review of corporate risks – considering Internal and external factors		Maintain Glorious Grasslands programme Continue to influence development and land management across the CNL Continue participation with Big Chalk		Create a review timetable of Position Statements (and start reviewing) Consultation responses – system / capacity in place to record ‘before and after’ Increase awareness of woodland opportunity mapping work Increase climate literacy (internal & external)	
COMMUNITY & ENGAGEMENT & UNDERSTANDING & ENJOYMENT	Climate Action Plan developed and implementation commenced. Influence ELM, BNG, PES to deliver best outcomes for the Cotswolds Explore GCG scope to include woodland management Enhance our work on dark skies – potential IDA status?		Support delivery of LNRSs Deliver National Highways 30yr project		Continue to deliver for the Cotswold Way National Trail Continued comms to increase public understanding of our work Develop and deliver CfC scheme, increase awareness and membership. 2025-28.	
	Continue Chair role of LVEP Management Board Prepare an advance list in readiness for further access-related funding /grants. Allocate and oversee Defra ‘Access for All’ funds Create and deliver more beginners walks		Refine the youth engagement offer (work experience, volunteering, schools) Deliver a programme of CNL60 celebratory activities Demonstrate VFM to LAs and other stakeholders through value add report + annual review.		Maintain strong relationships with local education and research providers	

Annex 2 – Key Performance Indicators: Topic Groups & Governance

KPI Topic	Governance
Engagement & Fundraising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects and Fundraising Working Group • FiPL Panel
Climate Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Action Working Group
Finance & Corporate Services eg HR & IT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance and Governance Committee • Health and Safety team (internal) • Facilities team (internal)
Access & Inclusion (including Equity, Diversity & Inclusion/EDI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access and Inclusion Working Group • EDI team (internal) • Wellbeing team (internal)
Nature recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature Recovery Working Group
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Infrastructure Working Group