

PROPOSED REVISIONS TO CNL'S BUSINESS PLANNING APPROACH

Summary: To outline the work undertaken in the last few months to revise CNL's existing business planning approach along with proposed next steps, in the context of preparing for Local Government Reform.

Recommendation: That the Board agrees with the suggestion to augment and streamline the existing business planning approach.

Report by: Bex Waite (Chief Executive)

1. BACKGROUND

A paper was tabled at the Executive May 2025 on potential considerations with regards to the Conservation Board size and structure in the context of Local Government Reform. As part of that paper the recommendations outlined in Table 1 were endorsed by the Executive as potential channels to explore. This paper seeks to address several of those recommendations, specifically those that pertain to business planning and governance.

Table 1 – Recommendations re: Conservation Board in the context of Local Government Reform

1	Reviewing the scope and role of existing Working Groups (currently Planning and Infrastructure, Climate Action, Wellbeing and Inclusion, and Projects and Fundraising) and considering the addition of a new Working Group on Nature Recovery.
2	Reviewing Board governance through drawing on the experiences of other protected landscapes, and liaison with current CNL Board members, staff and Defra colleagues.
3	Defining specific roles for existing Board members and co-opting non-Board members with required expertise onto Working Groups.
4	Reviewing role specifications for the three categories of Board member as well as ensuring consistency in relating to terms served.
5	Clarifying strategic accountability between Working Groups, the Executive and Board in terms of progress against delivery e.g. with regards to the Management Plan, Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework, CNL strategic plans, etc
6	Reviewing how Working Group membership is undertaken as well as considering length of appointment to provide greater continuity and closer relationships with CNL officers.
7	Holding an annual meeting of Working Group Chairs to share experience, ensure consistency and align annual workplans.
8	Exploring how to overcome barriers to inclusion. E.g. through an equity, diversity and inclusion statement to influence new appointments to both the Board and organisation.
9	Increasing diversity of experiences shaping CNL's work, including opportunities for diversifying new Board members as well as increasing diversity of engagement strategies, for example more targeted external fora, or more accessible documentation.
10	Expanding induction and progression processes and offering (possibly in partnership with the National Landscape Association) additional training in thematic areas such as carbon literacy, nature recovery, landscape sensitivity and land management, corporate governance and planning.

11	Ensuring full utilisation of networks to exploit engagement with council officers, local NGOs, landowners and farmers.
12	Conducting a skills audit to inform the appointment of SoS and council representatives, covering all skills, not just technical expertise.

2. CURRENT BUSINESS PLANNING APPROACH

Currently the CNL has a Business Planning Framework (see Annex A) that is due to elapse in 2026. While acting as a useful one-page illustration of organisational outcomes, it incorporates a mix of outputs, outcomes and activities across a range of themes including:

- 1) People
- 2) Process
- 3) Customer (landscape & environment)
- 4) Customer (community & engagement)
- 5) Customer (partners & stakeholders)
- 6) Finance

At a team and individual level, delivery is enacted through the Annual Work Programme. Currently these two documents do not clearly juxtapose.

3. PROPOSED BUSINESS PLANNING APPROACH

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 "line" will be linked to personal objectives across the relevant team members; thus providing a "golden thread" from the business plan through to each member of the team.

4. EXISTING AND PROPOSED KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

In terms of determining how it will be known the organisation is successfully delivering these priorities, the revised Annual Work Programme will incorporate a set of Key Performance Indicators outlined in Table 2 below. These are illustrative and 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. See Annex B for example terms of reference.

Table 2 – Key Performance Indicators

KPI Theme	Individual KPI Descriptions	Potential Governance
Engagement & Fundraising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of 16-25 year olds who have gained work experience, training and skills through engaging with the CNL team. Farming in Protected Landscapes - percentage of spend against the FiPL grant for Year 5 20% management costs included in any new grant funding (NEW). % self-funded project work as compared to Defra/LA funding e.g from current baseline of 80:20 to 75:25 (NEW) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects and Fundraising Working Group FiPL Panel
Climate Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of climate action areas for 2025-30 identified by 3Keel that are underway by March 2026. Estimated amount of carbon stored and sequestered by habitats within Protected Landscapes (NEW) Potential woodland target (NEW) Potential KPI on engagement with local authorities (NEW). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate Action Working Group
Finance & Corporate Services eg HR & IT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development Fund tracked against target (forecast to year-end) IT Managed Service Provision - % of cases that are resolved within the parameters of the Pro Support SLA (needs reviewing) Awareness among all CNL employees, Board members and volunteers raised to ensure all H&S accidents, incidents and near misses are reported. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finance and Governance Committee Health and Safety team

Access & Inclusion (including Equity, Diversity & Inclusion/EDI)	TBC – terms of reference under development. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential KPI on volunteer hours (NEW) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access and Inclusion Working Group
Nature recovery	Creation of potential grasslands targets on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hectares created (NEW) Hectares restored (NEW) Grassland volunteer hours (NEW) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nature Recovery Working Group
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Consultee - % of pro-active consultations above main consultation thresholds that received a substantive response by the original deadline (i.e. standard responses + bespoke responses). Potential KPI on engagement with local authority planning teams (NEW) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning and Infrastructure working group

1. RECOMMENDATION

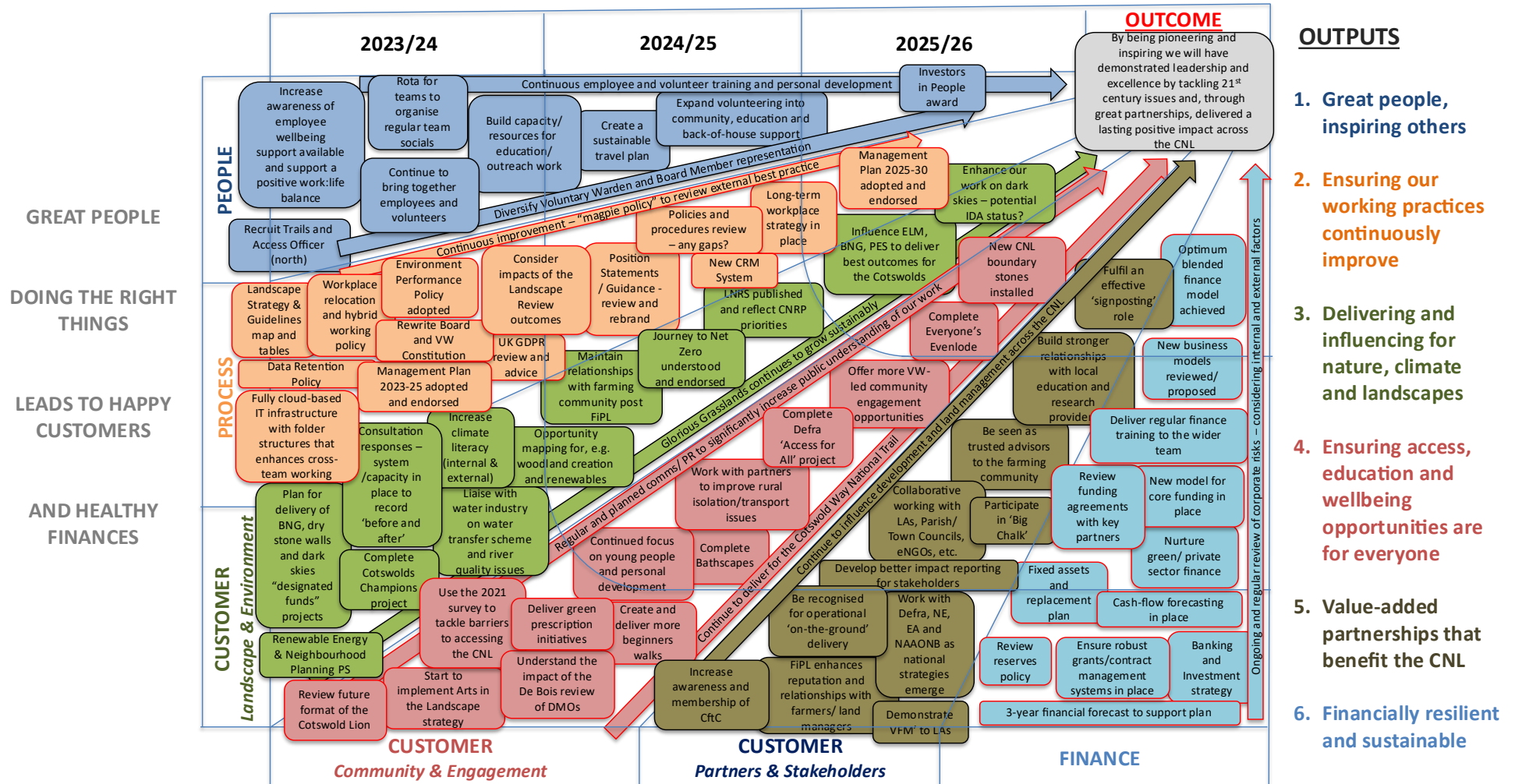
The Board is asked to endorse the work undertaken to date and its continuation as well as provide steer in terms of the proposed approach and any specific suggestions regarding the key performance indicators

Bex Waite, October 2025

AGENDA ITEM 8

Annex A – Current Business Plan Framework

Business Plan Framework 2023-26





Cotswolds
National
Landscape

**Planning and Infrastructure Working Group (PIWG)
Terms of Reference (Version 6, October 2024)**

Objective

- To influence, guide and monitor development in the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) and its setting, including transport and other infrastructure, to ensure that it:
 - (i) positively contributes to:
 - a. conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL;
 - b. increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the CNL; and
 - c. in fulfilling (a) and (b), fostering the social and economic wellbeing of local communities in the CNL, including the provision of affordable housing, particularly housing that is affordable in perpetuity (e.g. social rented housing), local community amenities and services. sustainable transport and green / blue infrastructure.
 - (ii) addresses the climate and nature emergencies, including mitigation, adaptation, flood resilience and nature recovery (in a way that is compatible with the purpose of AONB designation).
- This will be achieved by:
 - influencing strategic planning at all levels e.g. national, sub regional, county, unitary, district and neighbourhood plans;
 - influencing significant planning and infrastructure proposals in line with the CNL Management Plan and associated documents;
 - increasing understanding and awareness of the relationship between the CNL's natural and built environments;
 - developing positive, collaborative relationships with local authorities and other key stakeholders.

Proposed group remit

To advise on, support, advocate and / or facilitate (as appropriate):

- The Board's responses to consultations on:
 - national planning and infrastructure policy;
 - local plans;
 - neighbourhood plans; and

- individual planning and infrastructure applications, including planning appeals.

ensuring that the purpose of CNL designation, the purposes and duty of the Board and the 'seek to further' duty are taken into full account and applied consistently across the CNL.

- The criteria used for determining when the Board should respond on planning and infrastructure consultations.
- Reviews, updates to and promotion of the Board's current planning and infrastructure related Position Statements.
- The need for new Position Statements and the drafting and promotion of these Position Statements.
- Monitoring, as appropriate, compliance with the 'seek to further' duty, under Section 85 of the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000.
- Monitoring, as appropriate, the overall impact of planning and infrastructure development on the CNL.
- The added value that the Board provides on planning-related issues.
- Developing and maintaining positive and collaborative relationships with local authorities and other key stakeholders.
- The work of the Planning Lead and the Planning Officer in delivering the above objectives and remit, whilst helping to ensure that the associated workload does not exceed capacity.