Climate Action

Summary: An overview of the proposed Climate Mitigation Action Plan.
Recommendation: That the Executive Committee approves the Climate Mitigation Action Plan.
Report by: Fred Constantine Smith, Climate Action Lead and Alice Whitehead, Climate Action Coordinator

BOARD MEMBERS REPRESENTED ON THE GROUP

- o Ben Dent
- o Rosie Pearson
- o Martin Brown
- o Graham Hopkins
- o Isabel Ross
- o Liz Reason

RECORD OF MEETINGS

Working Group meetings this FY:

- o 8th April - Reviewing climate action priorities for the next 18 months.
- o 11th March, 2nd April - Individual meetings with Working Group Chair.
- o 6th August – Climate Mitigation Action Plan workshop.
- o 11th November - Climate Mitigation Action Plan workshop.
- o 25th September - Climate Mitigation Action Plan workshop.
- o 17th December – Reviewing final draft of Climate Mitigation Action Plan.

Background

The CNL has an opportunity to lead the way in creating a net zero and climate-resilient landscape, while developing pathways that other protected landscapes can follow. This paper sets out a full draft of the Climate Mitigation Action Plan (Appendix 1), which provides a strategic overview of climate action within the CNL over the next three years.

Justification

In 2022, the CNL commissioned Small World Consulting (SWC) to model a pathway to net zero emissions by 2050 or sooner. The most challenging element of the SWC pathway for the CNL was its proposal for 21,000 ha of new woodland and 1,500 km of new hedgerows by 2050. The scale of this proposal highlights the importance of woodland creation as a mitigation measure. However, in the context of the CNLs landscape sensitivity and statutory purposes, the scope of proposed woodland creation is challenging. The SWC

model also underestimated the potential of other land uses to sequester carbon and reduce emissions, including regenerative agriculture and species-rich grassland.

The subsequent 3Keel report reiterated the need to address SWC's proposal with landscape sensitivity within the CNL, whilst also proposing a detailed range of actions across areas such as planning, food and drink, and transport. In response, the CNL commissioned a woodland sensitivity mapping exercise. This work has informed a revised woodland creation target of 9,367 ha that better reflects the character of the Cotswolds landscape, but which creates a clear shortfall in mitigation compared to the original SWC pathway.

The Action Plan responds to this challenge by moving the CNL into a delivery phase built on the wide range of actions set out by 3Keel. It also addresses the mitigation shortfall by setting out how the CNL will improve its understanding of the potential of other land uses to sequester carbon and how it will then work with stakeholders to increase the uptake of these land uses. In addition, the Plan includes a mechanism to monitor increases in woodland canopy cover across the CNL.

Development of the Action Plan

The case for an action plan was first taken to the Board in June 2025, with a first draft presented in October 2025. Since June, the CNL has undertaken a structured process to develop the Climate Mitigation Action Plan. This has drawn on the recommendations of the SWC and 3Keel reports and has been shaped through engagement with both the Climate Action Working Group and the wider CNL team.

A Theory of Change approach was used to ensure that the Action Plan is focused on clear outcomes in areas where the CNL can have the greatest impact. This approach helped to identify priority themes, clarify the organisation's role within each, and ensure alignment with the CNL's statutory purpose, while recognising the importance of engaging with wider emissions sources, including energy and transport.

As part of this process, actions were prioritised based on:

- The scale of potential impact,

- The degree of influence available to the CNL,

- The role of partners and stakeholders, and

- Where CNL involvement would add the greatest value.

This has resulted in a focused set of actions that reflect both ambition and deliverability.

Action Plan

The Action Plan sets out a series of priority actions across nine key thematic areas, outlining intended outcomes, supporting activities and measurable outputs. Together, these actions represent the areas where the CNL can most effectively contribute to climate mitigation, while supporting the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and the vitality of local communities.

Where possible, clear objectives have been set for each priority area. In some cases, it is not yet possible to define a definitive target; the intention is to develop and agree these as the Action Plan progresses.

Delivery of the Action Plan will be contingent on available resources. Where additional capacity or funding is required, this will be clearly identified alongside opportunities to secure external support or partnerships.

Timeline and Workplan

The Action Plan covers the period 2026–2029 and is supported by a workplan that allocates responsibilities across teams. This approach is intended to ensure accountability, support cross-team collaboration, and enable the organisation to track progress against its net zero ambitions.

While activity will continue across all themes throughout the plan period, prioritisation by quarter provides a clear framework for sequencing work and managing capacity, ensuring that effort is focused where it can deliver the greatest impact. An example of the thematic timeline is included in Appendix 2.

Appendix 1 – Climate Mitigation Action Plan

Priority	Outcomes	Activities	Outputs
Grant-giving process to aid our climate target.	**WHAT -** Increased proportion of grants related to climate action that are supported by CNL, such as FIPL and Caring for the Cotswolds. **WHY** – To increase the volume of climate related projects being supported by the CNL. This could deliver on our adaptation and mitigation objectives across all thematic areas. **OBJECTIVE -** Proportion of grants given/number of grants won that deliver on climate action in the CNL. Wider application of lessons from case studies.	1. Liaise with Engagement team to understand the type and number of climate related grants that are approved through Caring for the Cotswolds. 2. Advise and support the Engagement team to strengthen climate related Caring for the Cotswolds projects. 3. Evaluate the success of climate related grants approved through FiPL. 4. Monitor the availability of external climate related grants that become available.	1. Create a record of climate related grants approved through Caring for the Cotswolds. The team can draw on this data to see where the demand is, plus any unmet need. 2. Work with the Engagement team to potentially increase the number of climate related grants approved through Caring for the Cotswolds. 3. Create a record of climate related FIPL grants, with case studies on the most impactful of these. To be used in Comms (website, Lion) and where appropriate, share with partners and National Landscape Association. 4. Share news and updates of external climate related grants with partners to potentially increase climate funded activity in the CNL.

Priority	Outcomes	Activities	Outputs
Develop and deliver an engagement strategy to raise awareness and use of woodland guidance, supporting delivery of the woodland cover target.	**WHAT -** Deliver on the new canopy cover target (9,367 ha), through an increased rate of planting in the right areas. This will be achieved through raising awareness of our guidance and proactively working with stakeholders. **WHY-** To increase the area of woodland cover in the next ten years reflecting the sensitivity of the landscape whilst delivering a meaningful impact on our pathway to net zero. **OBJECTIVE** Number of delivery stakeholders (Woodland Trust, Forestry Commission, Western Forest) engaged and utilizing both the woodland sensitivity map and the Landscape Strategy and Guidelines in woodland creation plans. This could be measured through website usage or references in planning applications. Rate of planting annual target (374.68 ha). Management Plan Target: Increase tree canopy and woodland cover by 2050 across the CNL by 4.59% of the CNL (The target for 2030 is 0.92% of the CNL (1,873 Ha).	1. Update woodland sensitivity map in line with the landscape strategy and guidelines. 2. Build on existing relationships with farmers and landowners to raise awareness of the sensitivity map and other guidance, whilst directing them to grant opportunities for tree planting. 3. Develop relationships with delivery stakeholders (e.g. Woodland Trust, Forestry England, Western Forest), raising awareness of the opportunity map and other guidance supporting them to deliver woodland creation in the right place. 4. Engage with local authorities to incorporate the mapping and other guidance into local tree planting targets, reflecting the landscape sensitivity of the CNL. 5. Assess annually updated data on woodland creation in CNL. As part of this activity, Land Management Team will provide Climate Working Group and new Nature Recovery Working Group with annual updates on CNL's responses to woodland applications.	1. Updated guidance on woodland creation. a. Provide guidance on the purpose and correct usage of the sensitivity mapping in line with existing guidance such as landscape strategy and guidelines (LSG). b. Explore feasibility of incorporating woodland sensitivity mapping layers with LSG and Nature Recovery layers into an online interactive map. 2. (&3,4)Produce an engagement strategy to ensure stakeholders utilise CNLs woodland guidance. a. To communicate the purpose and correct usage of the sensitivity mapping in line with existing guidance such as LSG with key stakeholders including land managers, delivery bodies and local authorities. b. Strategy for continued consultation with key stakeholders to maintain their use of the sensitivity mapping and other guidance, maintain the goal of increasing the proportion of successful woodland applications in the CNL. 5. Establish an annual monitoring form to track progress toward target. a. This will include available annual data, and more comprehensive analysis as data becomes available.

Priority	Outcomes	Activities	Outputs

Increase support and knowledge sharing about regenerative farming principles and practices.	**WHAT** – Increase the proportion of farms, or farmed area, adopting regenerative practices in the CNL. To be underpinned by research into which regenerative actions have the greatest climate outcomes.
	
	WHY – Increasing the proportion of farms adopting regenerative practices will contribute to our mitigation objectives through carbon sequestration and emission reductions in agriculture. It should also contribute to climate adaptation through healthier and more resilient soils.
	
	OBJECTIVE –
	
	Rate of uptake of regenerative focused grants.
	
	Number or proportion of farms adopting regenerative practices to be related to a baseline figure.
		1. Evaluate the success of FiPL grants related to regenerative agriculture.
		2. Deliver a series of farm carbon assessments to understand the difference in emissions between conventional and regenerative farm systems.
		   a. Identify specific practices that have the greatest impact in CNL context.
		3. Review of land use and land management in the CNL. Based on previous review from 2015 (Farming, Forestry and the Equestrian Sector in the Cotswolds AONB 2015 [Farming, Forestry and Equestrian in the Cotswolds AONB](#))
		   a. Map out adoption of regen practices across the region to allow for successful monitoring of long-term changes.
		   b. Utilise Regenerative Agriculture Accelerator Programme and Emergent Generation members to gather qualitative and quantitative data on which ELM actions deliver the best regenerative outcomes.
			1. Create a portfolio of regen focused FIPL projects, with case studies on the most impactful of these.
			   a. To be used in Comms (website, Lion) and through partners' communications/networks
			   b. Seek to apply learning from most impactful projects by directing funding toward similar projects elsewhere in CNL.
			2. Report on the carbon footprint of regenerative systems vs conventional.
			   a. To include a resource on the carbon saving of different regen practices across the Cotswolds.
			   b. Comms campaign promoting findings and engaging farmers to see the potential gain of their transition.
			   c. To be used in grant giving process to increase the proportion of farms adopting regenerative practices.
			3. Create a baseline report on land use and land management in the CNL.
			   a. To be used to set out a pathway to reduce agricultural emissions in the CNL.

Priority	Outcomes	Activities	Outputs

Define a shared vision for land use and land management to reach net zero.	**WHAT –** Define a clear, shared vision for land use and land management that will enable the CNL to reach Net Zero.
	
	WHY – To show how land use and land management change will deliver both climate mitigation and climate adaptation. The vision should be endorsed internally and supported by partners so that it can be delivered collaboratively.
	
	OBJECTIVE - Set proportional and evidence-based land-use and land management change targets linked to carbon mitigation potential and landscape resilience. These may include:
	
	a) Woodland creation targets
	
	b) Hedgerow creation and restoration targets
	
	c) Grassland restoration targets
	
	d) Uptake of regenerative practices
		1. Assess the carbon sequestration potential of common soil types and land uses in the CNL.
		
		    a. Desk based review of existing data to produce a carbon baseline of each soil type across a spectrum of land uses.
		
		    b. Ground truth by funding sampling across a representative range of soil and vegetation types.
		
		2. Compile findings from woodland sensitivity mapping, regenerative farming study and Cotswolds soils project alongside our existing renewable energy position statement.
		
		    a. Produce proportional targets across land use and land management types to meet our net zero target.
		
		    b. Work with land management, nature recovery and partnerships and fundraising teams to understand how and where
			1. Summary report on Cotswold Soils project.
			
			    a. Sequestration potential of each key soil type, habitat and soil type/land use combination.
			
			2. Creation of shared vision for land use and land management to reach net zero.
			
			    a. Model quantified role for each land use (agriculture, woodlands, grasslands, wetlands) to determine the optimum mix for reducing emissions and increasing carbon capture.
			
			    b. Where possible, use Spatial prioritisation of opportunity areas, targeting areas for change.
			
			    c. Outline of where CNL Board can directly deliver on this and where stakeholders will need to be engaged.
			
			    d. Use vision to inform 2030-35 management plan to guide

		the CNL can directly deliver on the vision set out in the land use strategy.	decision making across the CNL.

3. Influence and engage with key stakeholders, raising awareness of the land use strategy and seek adoption of the identified solutions in their own responses to the climate emergency.

3. Engagement strategy for shared vision.

    a. Creation of a user-friendly guide to interpret the shared vision

    b. Either private meetings or workshops with key stakeholders to share our vision of what a net zero landscape looks like in the CNL and how, through collaboration, it can become a reality.

Priority	Outcomes	Activities	Outputs
Planning – To include: a) Renewable energy production. b) Energy efficiency of new developments. c) Retrofitting existing housing.	**WHAT** a. Increase engagement with the CNL's energy-related position statements. b. Support the implementation of a low-carbon building delivery plan. c. Improve the energy efficiency of existing housing stock, including owner-occupied homes, rented properties and holiday lets, through retrofitting and energy-efficiency measures. **WHY** To reach net zero, energy consumption within the CNL must be addressed. While there are limitations on what the organisation can directly influence, there are clear areas where impact can be delivered. These include advocating for rooftop solar on commercial, industrial and agricultural buildings, and securing an appropriate balance between energy efficiency in new development and the need to reflect local distinctiveness and the area's special qualities. **OBJECTIVE** A. Establish a baseline understanding of renewable energy generation within the CNL and monitor the extent to	**A.** 1. Support a review of the renewable energy position statement. 2. Consider if appropriate to conduct a renewable energy resource assessment for the CNL. 3. Look at the appropriateness of setting renewable energy targets in the CNL. 4. Creation and online promotion of renewable energy guidance. 5. Review whether local authority decisions on renewable energy proposals are in line with the Board's position. 6. Assess our ability to monitor the number of renewable energy schemes that are being proposed / permitted and the amount of energy that they would produce. **B.** 1. Review existing low carbon building design guides in the CNL area and identify those that best reflect the special qualities, local distinctiveness, vernacular architecture of the landscape.	**A.** 1. Support production of updated renewable energy position statement if appropriate. 2. Support production of renewable energy resource assessment if appropriate. 3. Support creation of new renewable energy targets if appropriate. 4. Produce a laymans guide to renewable energy in the CNL. 5. Establish a monitoring form to track engagement with CNL Boards position. 6. Establish a baseline understanding of renewable energy uptake within the CNL and, if possible, include available annual data, to track this going forward. **B.** 1. Creation of a guidance document compiling best practice in the CNL context.

	which the CNL's energy-related position statements influence planning decisions. B. Increase awareness, engagement and application of the Low Carbon Building Design Guide within relevant planning and development processes. C. Track and report improvements in domestic energy efficiency across the CNL, including progress towards achieving EPC band C by 2030 in line with national targets.	C. 1. Develop a clear approach for signposting local and national grant schemes to support building retrofit, including programs such as Salix funding for public buildings. 2. Encourage uptake of retrofit measures and energy-efficient technologies (e.g. LED lighting) among local stakeholders, including residents, landlords and holiday-let operators. 3. Engage with building conservation officers.	2. Engage local authorities with design guidance. C. Delivery of retrofitting guidance. 1. Produce clear, accessible guidance for property owners within the CNL, setting out recommended low-carbon and energy-efficiency improvements and how to access available financial and technical support. 2. Develop a series of short, practical videos demonstrating retrofit approaches and energy-efficiency measures to reduce household carbon emissions, delivered in collaboration with local authorities and other relevant partners where appropriate.

Priority	Outcomes	Activities	Outputs

Communication around a low carbon diet	**WHAT -** Proactively work with relevant stakeholders to ensure there is an active comms campaign in CNL area around how to maintain a healthy, low carbon diet whilst ensuring sustainability of farming within the CNL.
	
	WHY - According to the SWC diets within the Cotswolds are 10% higher in GHG emissions than the UK average and account for 24% of emissions in the CNL area. As a result, we need to reduce the associated emissions by 5% each year to reach our Net Zero target.
	
	OBJECTIVE - Number of engagement pieces surrounding the need for sustainable consumption of food and drink within the region.
		1. Develop a campaign focused on appropriate messaging around low carbon food and drink consumption.
		
		   a. To highlight the importance of local produce and include imagery for social media posts and associated blurbs.
		
		2. Review and collation of local food and drink producers to eventually contribute towards an online portal.
		
		3. Engaging with stakeholders connected to urban populations to develop comms strategy
			1. In partnership with a relevant stakeholder or authority, create guidance on low carbon food and drink in the Cotswolds.
			
			   a. Guidance or portal on local food produce in the Cotswolds. This could include directory of farm shops, community supported agriculture and sustainable case studies.
			
			   b. Posting of imagery or short videos on social media on the importance of a low carbon diet and purchasing locally.
			
			2. In partnership with a relevant stakeholder or authority, create a template celebrating local food produce within the CNL.
			
			   a. To include case studies on low carbon food and drink in the CNL.
			
			3. Work with outdoor learning office and external stakeholders to create engagement strategy with those living in urban areas to access local farms.

Priority	Outcomes	Activities	Outputs
Development of more and improvements to existing active travel routes, independent from roads.	**WHAT -** Creation and improvements to existing active travel routes to connect rural settlements in an accessible manner. Where new routes are needed these hope to include a mixture of permissive routes and public rights of way. Promotion and encouragement of active travel routes, to ensure both new and existing active travel routes are used and their accessibility is known. **WHY -** According to findings from SWC, vehicle fuel and car manufacturing and maintenance making up 16% of resident based GHG emissions. Fast and dangerous roads in the landscape often put residents and visitors off using various modes of active travel locally.. **OBJECTIVE -** Creation of new active travel routes and improvements of active travel routes within CNL.	1. Understand the current barriers to accessing bridleways within the region. 2. Laise with highways authorities to understand which routes would most benefit from improved cycling access; what authorities are already doing and so where CNL can add value. 3. Continue our proactive relationship with partners and landowners to allow for the creation of new and improvements to existing active travel routes. 4. Establish and use funding opportunities to support the creation and improvements of active travel routes, including potential to involve wardens. 5. Work with engagement team to assess how to get more young people involved in active transport – e.g. how can we engage with schemes to get all primary school children to a standard where they are able to ride a bike to a competent standard.	1. Creation of evaluation guidance of issues regarding access to bridleways in the CNL. 2. Summary document highlighting which routes could have the most beneficial impact. a. To include a resource highlighting newly developed cycle routes. 3. Work with partners and landowners to increase the proportion of accessible active travel routes, both through creating new routes and improving existing routes. 4. Include active travel funding plan in the wider fundraising plan. 5. Create a young people active travel strategy to reflect opportunities and challenges of getting young people to access active travel options.

Priority	Outcomes	Activities	Outputs
Educate visitors on transport options on arrival using easily accessible, centrally stored information.	**WHAT -** Creation of accessible information to improve visitors awareness of sustainable transport options to the CNL. This may be created either in physical or digital format. **WHY -** Currently a large proportion of visitors come to the CNL via non sustainable methods. Transport has been identified as an area that CNL can reduce their visitor emissions in with vehicle fuel making up 16% of emissions and the associated car manufacturing and maintenance 4% of visitor emissions. **OBJECTIVE -** Increase engagement with newly created transport resources. If working with stakeholders (Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP), Cotswolds Tourism or Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership (GCRP)) it may be possible to gather their data on visitor travel.	1. Engage with relevant stakeholders (LVEP, Cotswolds Tourism or GCRP) to understand existing work in this area and assess where CNL can have an impact. 2. Review existing data from SWC on how visitors get to the CNL. A survey could take place via the LVEP requesting responses from visitors as how visitors got to their site that day. Work could also involve the Cotswold Way Association to understand how walkers get to / from their start / end location. 3. Consulting with key stakeholders, review provision of materials on visitor travel and public transport in the CNL.	1. Workshop with relevant stakeholders to understand what is already being done and set out how we can collaborate on incentives for visitors to use low carbon travel within the CNL. This could include the provision of EV and E-bike hire. 2. Create a list / pie chart / infographic of method of transport to the CNL by proportion. This can be used to raise awareness of transport challenges and provide evidence for potential solutions. 3. Draw on existing work to create new material to engage visitors on how to improve their transport methods. This could include new maps or better sign posting.

Priority	Outcomes	Activities	Outputs
Development of a delivery plan to lower the carbon footprint of heritage buildings.	**WHAT-** Creation of a delivery plan to lower the carbon footprint of heritage buildings. **WHY -** In line with our statutory purposes, it is important that we protect our heritage buildings within the CNL. However, we must also pursue mitigation measures to reduce the carbon footprints of buildings. According to research by Historic England embodied carbon in buildings via refurbishment and retrofit, rather than demolition, has the potential to reduce carbon emissions by more than 60% by 2050 (Historic England, 2019; The Heritage Alliance, 2021). **OBJECTIVE -** Number of heritage buildings carbon footprint reduced via low carbon measures.	1. Look at existing carbon footprint documentation on approaches to reduce the greenhouse gases of heritage buildings. 2. Engage with stakeholders such as English Heritage, National Trust and Church of England (or similar church organizations) to understand which buildings or type of buildings have the highest associated energy emissions. 3. Work closely with local stakeholders to create a delivery plan that can be used to lower the emissions. 4. Dissemination of this material to various parties of interest.	1. Summarize document of key case studies of successful emission reductions. 2. Documentation of identified buildings with high associated emissions. 3. Produce a guidance document with information discussing how to reduce the carbon footprint of heritage buildings. This could include highlighting existing pieces of work produced by stakeholders such as National Trust and English Heritage. a) Comms campaign to signpost owners of heritage buildings to best practice and guidance. 4. Workshop with local stakeholders do share guidance and success stories on reducing emissions.

Appendix 2 – Example of work timeline

	Output	Q4 25/26	Q1 26/27	Q2 26/27	Q3 26/27	Q4 26/27	Q1 27/28	Q2 27/28	Q3 27/28	Q4 27/28
Grant-giving process to aid our climate target.	1. Create a record of climate related grants approved through Caring for the Cotswolds. The team can draw on this data to see where the demand is, plus any unmet need.	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	2. Work with the Engagement team to potentially increase the number of climate related grants approved through Caring for the Cotswolds.			■		■		■		■
	3. Create a record of climate related FIPL grants, with case studies on the most impactful of these. To be used in Comms (website, Lion) and where appropriate, share with partners and National Landscape Association.		■							
	4. Share news and updates of external climate related grants with partners to potentially increase climate funded activity in the CNL.			■	■	■		■	■	■
Develop and deliver an engagement strategy to raise awareness and use of woodland guidance, supporting delivery of the woodland cover target.	1. Updated guidance on woodland creation.	■	■							
	2. (&3,4) Produce an engagement strategy to ensure stakeholders utilise CNLs woodland guidance			■						
	5. Establish an annual monitoring form to track progress toward target				■					
Increase support and knowledge sharing about regenerative farming principles and practices.	1. Create a portfolio of regen focused FIPL projects, with case studies on the most impactful of these	■	■							
	2. Report on the carbon footprint of regenerative systems vs conventional.			■	■					
	3. Create a baseline report on land use and land management in the CNL				■	■				