

PLANNING & INFRASTRUCTURE WORKING GROUP

Summary: Review of the progress of the Planning and Infrastructure Working Group and planning-related activity.

Recommendation: That the Executive Committee notes the report.

Report by: John Mills, Planning Lead

PLANNING & INFRASTRUCTURE WORKING GROUP (PIWG) MEMBERS

- Nigel Adcock, Local Authority Board Member
- David Broad, Parish Council Board Member
- Liz Hodges, Parish Council Board Member
- Graham Hopkins, Co-opted Board Member (Chair)
- Cate Le Grice Mack, SoS Board Member
- Caroline Mumford, Cotswold Voluntary Warden
- Liz Reason, Parish Council Board Member
- Ray Sanderson, Parish Council Board Member
- Officers: John Mills, Planning Lead; Simon Joyce, Planning Officer

PIWG MEETINGS SINCE THE LAST EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- The last PIWG meeting was on 10 September 2025. At this meeting we discussed: the draft Executive Committee paper; planning-related position statements; the PIWG Terms of Reference; and the 'seek to further' duty.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI) DATA

- In Q1 (April – June 2024) we provided a substantive response to 94% (17/18) of pro-active planning applications, above our primary consultation thresholds, by the original deadline. For reference, the average for 2024/25 was 89%. Our target range is 70-94%.

MANAGEMENT PLAN LOCAL MONITORING INDICATORS¹

- **Outcome 1 – Climate Action / Policy CC1 – Climate change mitigation**
 - **Local_10** (Total predicted output from new renewable energy schemes permitted in the Cotswolds National Landscape each year)
 - Q1: 3,147mWh per annum² (For reference, 2024/25 = 0).
- **Outcome 2 - Working Together / Policy CC3 – Compliance with Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000**
 - **Local_11** (% of decisions that are made in line with the CNL Board recommendations, where the Board has objected):
 - Q1: 66% (2 out of 3). (N.B. For reference, the average for 2024/25 was 83%).

¹ As set out in Appendix 6 of the [Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030](#). This paper just shows the local, planning-related indicators.

² This relates to a solar energy scheme at Farncombe Estate, Broadway (Ref: W/24/00190/FUL (Wychavon District Council). There was also a domestic scale solar energy scheme permitted by Stratford on Avon District Council but this didn't include details of the amount of energy that would be generated.

- **Local_12** (% of decisions, for development management proposals that we have commented on, that explicitly refer to the 'seek to further' duty):
 - Q1: 19% (6 out of 31). (N.B. For reference, the figure for 2024/25 was 19%).
- **Local_13** (% of decisions (for development management proposals that we have commented on) that, in the CNL's opinion, adequately address the 'seek to further' duty):
 - Q1: 19% (6 out of 31)³ (N.B. For reference, the figure for 2024/25 was 11%).
- **Outcome 11 – Development and Infrastructure / CE13 – Development and transport principles**
 - **Local_16** (Number of adopted Local Plans with policy-level reference to the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan):
 - Q1 (10 out of 15 (i.e. 76%)) (This is the same as for 2024/25 because no new Local Plans were adopted in Q1).
- **Outcome 11 – Development and Infrastructure / CE14 – Major development**
 - **Local_17** (Number of development proposals that the CNL has commented on, which have been permitted, that the Board considers to be major development⁴):
 - 2024/25: Three⁵ (N.B. This is, coincidentally, the same figure as for 2023/24).
- **Outcome 11 – Development and Infrastructure / CE15 – Development priorities and evidence of need**
 - **Local_18** (Number of new housing units (i.e. dwellings) permitted within the CNL through planning applications that the CNL board has commented on):
 - Q1 = 0 (N.B. For reference, the figure for 2024/25 was 153).
- **Outcome 11 – Development and infrastructure / CE16 – Waste management and circular economy**
 - **Local_19** (Number of landfill and strategic waste management sites permitted):
 - Q1: 0 (For reference, 2024/25 = 0)

OTHER PLANNING-RELATED DATA

- In Q1, we commented on 22 'major'⁶ planning applications. For reference, the total for 2024/25 was 82 (i.e. an average of 20.5 per quarter).
- In Q1, we commented on 24 'minor' planning applications. For reference, the total for 2024/25 was 96 (i.e. an average of 24 per quarter).

³ This is the same as for 'Local_18' (i.e. in Q1, all of the decisions that explicitly referred to the 'seek to further' duty adequately addressed this issue).

⁴ 'Major development', in this context, is as defined in paragraph 190 and footnote 67 of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (i.e. taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined).

⁵ 27 dwellings at Tetbury, s.73 application at Oathill Quarry and redevelopment of Avonpark Village care village at Winsley near Bath.

⁶ 'Major' development, in this context, is as defined in Part 1, [Article 2](#), of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (i.e. 10+ dwellings, etc.).

OTHER PLANNING-RELATED ACTIVITY

- Other planning-related activity since the last PIWG report for the Executive Committee meeting on 21 January 2025 includes:
 - **Local Plan consultations:**
 - **West Oxfordshire Local Plan – Draft Preferred Policy Options:** The consultation document was one of the best that I have seen with regards to how it addresses issues that are of relevance to the Board. A more significant test will come with the forthcoming (autumn 2025) consultation on proposed allocations.
 - **South Worcestershire Local Plan – Examination:**⁷ As part of the Local Plan examination process, further information has been provided on the proposed allocation of 1,000 dwellings at Mitton, in the setting of the CNL. This information indicates that the increase in the number of traffic movements on road within and / or along the boundary of the CNL would be less than 10%. On this basis, we have withdrawn our objection to this allocation.
 - **Significant planning-related decisions (since the last Executive Committee meeting):**
 - **W/25/00572/FUL: Change of use of field for clay pigeon shooting following temporary use, Farncombe Estate (Wychavon DC):** The applicant withdrew their application seeking to make the temporary consent for clay pigeon shooting on a field in proximity to rights of way (including the Cotswold Way) on the Farncombe Estate near Broadway. The Board had objected, as we did to the application for temporary (2 year) consent in 2023, due to the likely adverse impacts on the tranquillity of the CNL and granting permission would not seek to further the purpose of CNL designation.
 - **APP/F1610/W/25/3360893: Removal of condition 24 (use of parking spaces) of permission 18/01681/FUL – Redevelopment of existing scrap yard and haulage depot to create Electric Car Charging Service Station and Associated Works, Joe Gilder Metal Recycling, Fosseyway, Lower Slaughter (Cotswold DC):** The applicant's appeal against the Council's refusal to remove a condition restricting use of the EV charging station to EVs was dismissed. The Board supported the Council's refusal of this application, highlighting how removing the condition would make it likely that the car park would attract an increased number of non-EV vehicles (internal combustion engine and hybrid) making trips to the site and the CNL, resulting in an increase in traffic movements, noise and air pollution and CO2 emissions within the CNL, in turn potentially resulting in harm to the natural beauty of the CNL. The proposal provided neither means of mitigating this harm nor any enhancement which would further the purpose of the CNL's designation.
 - **24/02608/FUL: Erection of a partly subterranean building comprising a landscape observatory (West Oxfordshire DC):** The Council approved this application contrary to the Board's recommendations. We considered that, due to its design and prominent isolated location within an otherwise agricultural setting, the proposal would give rise to

⁷ 'South Worcestershire' covers Wychavon District (which overlaps with the Cotswolds National Landscape) and Malvern Hills District (which overlaps with the Malvern Hills National Landscape).

significant adverse effects upon landscape character and for receptors located at multiple viewpoints within the CNL and would comprise a new 'lit' element within the characteristically dark landscape. The application was determined under delegated powers and at present, no Officer report is available on the Council website.

- **Significant planning applications that we have objected to (since the last Executive Committee meeting):**
 - **25/00490/OUT: 2,800 dwellings and associated development, Land north of Ashchurch (Tewkesbury BC):** This application is for a substantial part of the Tewkesbury Garden Town settlement to the west of Tewkesbury in the setting of the CNL. The Board raised a holding objection, raising a number of concerns regarding the assessed significant adverse impacts of the development on the natural beauty of the CNL and its setting, in terms of views to and from the CNL, its tranquillity and its dark skies, which are three of its 'special qualities', and the effectiveness of the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures. We recommended several areas require further information or further consideration/refinement/clarification of the proposal to enable a comprehensive view on the likely scale of residual adverse impact on the CNL and its setting.
 - **P25/00901/F: The replacement of an operating V52 wind turbine with a tip height of 66m with a V92 wind turbine with a maximum tip height of 125m, Talbot Farm, Dyrham (South Gloucestershire Council):** Whilst recognising the climate emergency and need to transition to renewable energy sources, the Board objected to this application for a 125m replacement turbine on the Escarpment. We considered that the proposal comprises major development in the context of NPPF paragraph 190 and that the exceptional circumstances required by paragraph 190 have not been demonstrated. The proposal would give rise to significant additional harm to the landscape and scenic beauty of the CNL, when compared to the existing turbine. The proposal also provides neither an effective means of mitigating this harm nor any enhancement to the CNL and would not further the purpose of the CNL's designation.
 - **25/01621/OUT: Outline application for up to 120 dwellings, Land northeast of Mickleton (Cotswold DC):** The Board has objected to this outline application for 120 dwellings within the CNL's setting as, due to the quantum and location of development proposed and lack of effective mitigation and/or enhancement, we consider that the proposal would not conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the CNL and would potentially harm views to and from the CNL, its dark skies and its tranquillity, these being three of its special qualities.
- **Miscellaneous:**
 - **Planning Inspectorate Conference:** John gave a presentation on the 'seek to further' duty and participated in a panel discussion at the Planning Inspectorate's annual conference in Sheffield on 14 May. John also attended the conference session on 13 May. John subsequently provided input into provided written answers to the questions that were posed at the conference.
 - **Undergrounding of high voltage cables:** John undertook a site visit to the Kemerton / Overbury section of Bredon Hill, with Matt Darby and colleagues from National Grid, to look at a potential scheme to

underground approximately 1km of high voltage cables. The intention is to put an initial project proposal forward to the National Grid steering group on 25 September.

- **Review of planning decisions:** John circulated Simon Joyce's review of planning decisions in 2024/2025 to all of our local authorities, emphasising the need to address CNL-related considerations in case officer reports and decision papers, particularly the 'seek to further' duty. We did not receive any feedback or comments on this from our local authorities. We are also implementing the other recommendations from the review of planning decisions report, such as undertaking site visits, where appropriate, to provide a well-informed response.
- **National Landscapes Association:** John provided input into the NLA draft guidance on the 'seek to further' duty in relation to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects and on the NLA response to several Government consultations.
- **Defra's 'Protected Landscapes Regulations External Working Group (EWG)':** the work of this Group has been put on hold pending further changes to national planning policy and planning-related legislation.
- **Southern Protected Landscapes Planning Officers Group (SPLPOG):** John chaired the SPLPOG meeting on 21 May.

DECISIONS REQUIRED

- No decisions required.

NEXT STEPS

- Key work areas over the next few months will include:
 - Local Plan consultations – likely to include Cotswold District and West Oxfordshire District.
 - Over-arching review of planning-related Position Statements.
- Next PIWG meeting – 7 January 2026 (10.30-12.30)

NO SUPPORTING PAPERS

SEPTEMBER 2025