ITEM 3, APPENDIX E

Cotswolds
National
Landscape

Cotswolds Conservation Board Statement of Accounts

Financial year ending 31st March 2026

Cotswolds Conservation Board
The Threshing Barn
Marsden Manor Road
Rendcomb
Gloucestershire
GL7 7EU

www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk

BACKGROUND

The Cotswolds Conservation Board was established in 2004 under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The Board's Establishment Order (SI 1777/2004) was agreed by Parliament in July 2004. The Board's statutory purposes are to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and to increase the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the AONB. In fulfilling these purposes, the Board seeks to foster the economic and social well-being of people living in the AONB.

In February 2025 the Board adopted a Management Plan for 2025-2030, which articulates its vision, its objectives and its policies for the management of the AONB. The key priorities are: (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 and (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.

The Board's Business Plan sets out a wide-ranging programme of activity associated with the delivery of its purposes. The Board operates to a budget based on the agreed grant aid from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Natural England and local authorities. Additionally, the Board either takes the lead role or actively participates in a range of partnership schemes to secure external funding for additional project work.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Accounting Framework

Under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the Board is classed as a smaller relevant body for financial reporting purposes. As such it is required to comply with the mandatory guidance for Conservation Boards issued in March 2026 by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance.

This Statement of Accounts summarises the Board's activities for the period from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. It has been prepared in accordance with proper accounting policies and practices, and on an accruals basis.

Income and Expenditure Account

The Board has adopted the National Park Authority model for its Income and Expenditure Account to enable comparability with similar organisations.

The Account shows the costs of providing services across the various activities and projects that the Board has supported during the year, and how these projects were financed from grants and income. Gross revenue expenditure for the year was £3,481,816 (2024/25 £4,154,349) and gross income was £3,694,157 (2024/25 £4,226,325). Taken together, these items show a net surplus for the year of £212,341 (2024/25 surplus £85,794).

Balance Sheet

The Balance Sheet details the Board's financial position as at 31 March 2026, listing the value of its assets and liabilities. The Board's practices on financial reserves comply with the formal guidance issued in July 2014 (CIPFA LAAP Bulletin 99). The Finance Officer considers that the level of reserves,

taken with their future targets, are at an acceptable level. A current Reserves Policy was adopted by the Board in February 2024 and reviewed by the Board in February 2026.

ANNUAL REVIEW

The Board publishes an Annual Review by the end of July each year describing its activities in the previous year, and setting out its performance against the Business Plan. This publication is available on-line at www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

2024/25 Net (Restated) £		2025/26 Expenditure £	Income £	Net £
1,869,829	Conservation of Natural Environment	1,507,611	(375,578)	1,132,033
448,953	Conservation of Cultural Heritage	414,743	(162,902)	251,841
434,397	Recreation Management and Transport	626,575	(249,499)	377,076
323,613	Promoting Understanding: Information Interpretation and Education	462,369	(58,094)	404,275
122,467	Volunteers	182,280	(16,431)	165,849
65,658	Forward Planning	98,688	-	98,688
144,707	Corporate Management and Administration	189,688	-	189,550
3,409,625	**Net Cost of Services**	3,481,816	(862,504)	**2,619,312**
(40,749)	Interest Receivable		(43,837)	(43,837)
3,368,876	**Net Operating Total**	3,481,816	(906,341)	**2,575,475**
(529,743)	DEFRA Contribution		(529,744)	(529,744)
(381,916)	DEFRA Capex / Revenue Uplift		(329,212)	(329,212)
(145,071)	Local Authority Contributions		(162,002)	(162,002)
(2,143,548)	DEFRA – Farming in Protected Landscapes		(1,349,467)	(1,349,467)

(254,391)	DEFRA – Removing Barriers		(417,391)	(417,391)
(3,454,670)	**Total Financing**		(2,787,816)	**(2,787,816)**
(85,794)	**(Surplus) Deficit for the Year**	3,481,816	(3,694,157)	**(212,341)**

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2026

31 March 2025			**31 March 2026**
£		**Note**	**£**
-	**Fixed Assets & Long-Term Investments**	1	**-**
509,103	Debtors and Prepayments	3	330,228
1,884,142	Short Term Investments		2,099,705
-	Stock		-
266,663	**Cash and Cash Equivalents**		**720,213**
2,659,908	**Current Assets**		**3,150,146**
(1,278,301)	Creditors and Accruals	4	(1,389,148)
(51,044)	Receipts in Advance		(218,094)
(1,329,345)	**Current Liabilities**		**(1,607,242)**
1,330,563	Net Current Assets		1,542,904
1,330,563	**Total Net Assets**		**1,542,904**
	Financed by:		
960,162	Restricted Funds		1,183,741
277,900	Earmarked Reserves		287,650
92,501	General Fund		71,513
1,330,563	**Total Reserves**		**1,542,904**

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

1. Fixed Assets & Long-Term Investments

The Board maintains asset and inventory registers for all of its significant assets. Board policy is that assets with an individual value in excess of £10,000 are recorded in the Fixed Assets Register but treated as any other purchase in annual income and expenditure account. The Board currently has eight vehicles and one seed harvester in excess of this threshold with a total value of £157,405 (2024/25 - £144,429).

2. Income

The Board derived income from the following main sources:

Source	2024/25 Restated £	2025/26 £
DEFRA Grant	529,743	529,744
DEFRA Capex / Revenue Uplift	381,916	329,212
DEFRA – FIPL	2,143,548	1,349,467
DEFRA – Removing Barriers (Access)	254,391	417,391
Local Authority Contributions	145,071	162,002
Natural England	76,919	166,090
Thames Water	183,969	51,044
Severn Trent	46,630	6,100
British Mountaineering Council	41,000	-
National Grid – Landscapes Initiatives	-	211,599
National Highways - Biodiversity	114,578	-
Highways England – Dark Skies and DWS	99,504	-
National Landscapes Association – Gen Green	69,720	-
National Lottery Heritage Fund	-	124,965
Ernest Cook Trust (OLO)	20,000	20,000
National Trails	-	20,000
Wessex Water	-	25,000
Wild Oxfordshire	-	38,000
Seed sales	13,635	93,653
Interest earned	40,749	43,837
Other grants and earned income	78,769	106,053
Total	**4,240,142**	**3,694,157**

3. Debtors and Prepayments

Year-end debtors and prepayments are categorised in the table below:

Source	2024/25 £	2025/26 £
CDEL – Access (Instalment 2)	-	104,348
National Trails UK (NTUK)	-	20,000
Cheltenham Borough Council	-	15,425
Southill Solar Ltd		15,000
Natural England – Cotswold Way	47,460	133,023
Severn Trent – maintenance grant	-	6,100
Prepayments – CDC Rates for FY26/27	-	9,893
Prepayments - other	1,680	5,655
Marsden Estate – rent deposit	-	6,000
FiPL Grants – Claim 4	441,419	-
Other debtors	18,545	14,784
Total	**509,104**	**330,228**

- No debts were written off during the year, and no provisions were required.

4. Creditors and Accruals

A breakdown of the main categories of creditors and accruals is shown below:

Category	2024/25 £	2025/26 £
Local Authorities and Other Public Bodies	55,926	177,299
Cotswold District Council	-	102,715
Farming in Protected Landscape grants	1,037,765	591,911
National Trust	118,831	196,301
Stowell Park Estate – Hampnett LEI	-	98,369
Landscape Connections (RIA)	-	110,094
English Heritage Trust		62,217
Other	116,807	268,336
Total	**1,329,329**	**1,607,242**

5. Value Added Tax

The Board was not registered for Value Added Tax in 2025/26.

6. Member Allowances

Board members are paid allowances and reimbursed expenses in accordance with a Member Allowances Scheme which is reviewed annually and published in the Board's Constitution. Payments in 2025/26 are summarised in the table below:

Category	2024/25		2025/26	
	Allowances £	Expenses £	Allowances £	Expenses £
Board Chair/Vice Chair	5,250	270	6,541	333
Executive/ Committee Members	4,725	71	4,713	43
Ordinary Members	9,642	2,579	10,865	2,334
Total	**19,617**	**2,920**	**22,119**	**2,710**

7. Related Party Transactions

Concept

The principal issue in determining whether a person or an organisation is a related party is the degree of control exerted by one party over the other. This can arise during a financial period where:

- one party has direct or indirect control of the other party;
- one party has influence over the financial and operational policies of the other party; or
- the parties are subject to common control or influence from the same source.

The Government

The Government has influence over the general operations of the Board. It is responsible for providing the statutory framework within which the Board operates. The Secretary of State appoints fourteen members of the Board under arrangements set out in the Board's Establishment Order. The Government provides a large proportion of the Board's funding in the form of grants channelled through the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and Natural England. Other government departments and agencies such as the Rural Payments Agency also fund the Board's activities.

Local Authorities

The fifteen local authorities covered by the Cotswolds area each appoint a Board member under the terms of the Board's Establishment Order.

Parish Councils

Parish Councils, Town Councils and Parish Meetings appoint eight members of the Board in accordance with the arrangements set out in the Establishment Order.

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (GWT)

An occupancy license was issued by GWT from May 2023 for the sharing of office premises at Greystones Farm in Bourton-on-the-Water and at Robinswood Hill Country Park, Gloucester. Our rental agreement with GWT ceased on 14th October 2025 and we are no longer using any of their offices.

Members and Officers

The Board approved Codes of Conduct for members and officers as part of its Constitution. The Codes include requirements to disclose and record interests where they may have, or appear to have, an influence on the decisions of the Board and are circulated to members and officers. The Board's procedural rules impose quorums on meetings to ensure decisions are not taken in isolation and require members to disclose interests at each meeting before the matter in which they have an interest is discussed. A public register of these interests is maintained by the Board's Monitoring Officer. In addition to the above, Board members and officers sign and return related party transaction declaration forms each year. During the year the Board made the following related party transactions:

- Land at Asthall (Rosie Pearson Board Member of CCB and Landowner) was one of six sites included in a combined £3,000 grant for a Pre-Restoration Review from Farming in Protected Landscapes funds.
- Publica – (David Powell – Board Member of CCB and a non-executive Director of Publica) – CCB paid £8,506 to Publica for HR and administrative services in FY25/26.
- Southill Community Energy Community Benefit Society (SCECBS) and Sustainable Charlbury (SC) – (Liz Reason – Board Member of CCB and Board Member of SCECBS and Trustee of SC) – the SCECBS surpluses are distributed to its associated charity, SC. £15k was donated to CCB under the associated S106 agreement in FY25/26.
- Doug Hulyer Member of CCB Board and Chair of Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership to which CCB contributed £1,000 in FY25/26.

8. Employee Remuneration

The table below shows contracted employee numbers and their respective total remuneration received during the year in bandings of £5,000 at the financial year end. Total remuneration includes gross salary, employer Superannuation and National Insurance contributions.

Band (£)	**2024/25 (Number of employees)**	**2025/26 (Number of employees)**
0 – 5,000	3	2
5,000 - 10,000	0	2
10,000 - 15,000	0	2
15,000 - 20,000	2	2
20,000 - 25,000	4	0
25,000 - 30,000	2	4
30,000 - 35,000	7	2

35,000 - 40,000	0	3
40,000 - 45,000	3	1
45,000 - 50,000	2	3
50,000 - 55,000	1	0
55,000 - 60,000	1	2
60,000-65,000	4	3
65,000-70,000	2	2
100,000 - 105,000	0	1
Total	**31**	**29**

At the 31st March 2026 there were 19 whole time equivalent employees (31st March 2025: 23). The figures shown above are based on bandings of total actual remuneration received during the year.

9. Retirement Benefits and Pensions

The Board is a member of the Gloucestershire Pension Fund, which is a defined benefit scheme administered in accordance with the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations. Under the Regulations, the fund is subject to an independent triannual actuarial valuation to advise on each employer's contribution rate and on the funding levels of the scheme.

The latest valuation was carried out as at 31 March 2025 (the previous valuation was on 31 March 2022) and this will determine the minimum contributions CCB needs to pay for 3 years beginning 1 April 2026. The final valuation report was published in March 2026.

There has been a large shift in the funding environment since the previous valuation, mainly rising interest rates which have pushed up the expected future investment return across all asset classes predicted over the long term which in turn reduces the value placed on future pension benefits ("liabilities"). The funding position at 'Whole Fund' level has improved to 152% (from 110% at 2022). This is a very good result, but it must be noted that the funding position only recognises benefits earned to date, therefore when setting contribution rates there is also a consideration of the cost of future service benefits.

As required by LGPS Regulations, employer contributions are made of two elements:

- *Primary Rate* - the estimated cost of benefits being built up each year, after deducting the members' own contributions and including an allowance for administration expenses.
- *Secondary Rate* - an adjustment for the difference between the Primary rate above, and the actual contribution the employer needs to pay.

CCB funding level stands at 176% (+44% vs last valuation) and has £2.21m surplus (+£1.22m vs last valuation). Due to this, the contributions from 1 April 2026 will reduce to 13% of pay for the next three years (19.8% between 2022-2025).

The funding strategy is designed to provide an 85% likelihood that both past and future service benefits will be at least fully funded on the Fund's Ongoing participation basis at the end of a 20-year horizon.