

Tuesday, 5 September 2023

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EXECUTIVE

You are summoned to a meeting of the Executive, which will be held in Committee Room 1, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB on **Wednesday, 13 September 2023 at 2.00 pm.**



Giles Hughes
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Executive

Councillors: Andy Graham (Leader), Duncan Enright (Deputy Leader), Joy Aitman, Lidia Arciszewska, Dan Levy, Andrew Prosser, Carl Rylett, Alaric Smith and Geoff Saul.

Recording of Proceedings – The law allows the public proceedings of Council, Executive, and Committee Meetings to be recorded, which includes filming as well as audio-recording. Photography is also permitted. By participating in this meeting, you are consenting to be filmed.

As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record any part of the proceedings please let the Democratic Services officers know prior to the start of the meeting.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**
To receive any Apologies for Absence from Members of the Executive.
2. **Declarations of Interest**
To receive any Declarations of Interest from Members of the Executive on any items to be considered at the meeting.
3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 7 - 14)**
To approve the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 12 July 2023.
4. **Receipt of Announcements**
To receive any announcements from the Leader of the Council, Members of the Executive or the Chief Executive.
5. **Participation of the Public**
Any member of the public, who is a registered elector in the District, is eligible to ask one question at the meeting, for up to three minutes, of the Leader of the Council, or any Member of the Executive on any issue that affects the district or its people.

Notice, together with a written copy of the question, must be provided to Democratic Services, either by email to:

democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk

or by post to:

Democratic Services, West Oxfordshire District Council, Woodgreen, Witney OX28 1NB.

Questions are to be received no later than 2.00pm two clear working days before the meeting (e.g. for a Wednesday meeting, the deadline would be 2.00pm on the Friday before).

A response may be provided at the meeting, or within three clear working days of the meeting. If the topic of the question is not within the remit of the Council, advice will be provided on where best to direct the question.

The appropriate Executive Member will either respond verbally at the meeting or provide a written response which will be included in the minutes of the meeting.

6. **Review of Community Grant Schemes (Pages 15 - 24)**

Purpose:

To consider proposals to refine the community grant funding so that is better aligned to the outcomes intended from the Council Plan and fosters greater community engagement.

The report sets out the process through which the Service Level Agreements will be awarded for 2024/25 onwards and the Civic Crowdfunding Platform will be introduced to ensure that the defined outcomes are achieved.

Recommendations:

That the Executive Resolves to:

1. Grant delegated authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and Executive Members for Stronger Healthy Communities, Planning and Sustainable Development, Environment and Climate Change to approve Service Level Agreement awards;
2. Agree the maximum Service Level Agreement award will be £25,000 per annum unless in exceptional circumstances where evidence has been provided to justify the need for a higher award;
3. Permit organisations who are awarded a Service Level Agreement to also submit projects to the SpaceHive Crowdfunding Platform.

7. **Asylum Dispersal Grant (Pages 25 - 52)**

Purpose:

To consider the planned expenditure of the Asylum Dispersal Grant

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

1. Approve the expenditure of £147,000 detailed within sections 3 and 5 of this report;
2. Delegate authority to make any amendments to these allocations, providing these are compliant with the ring fenced grant conditions, to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Executive Member responsible for Stronger Healthy Communities and the Informal Executive.

8. **Service Performance Report 2023-24 Quarter One (Pages 53 - 64)**

Purpose:

To provide details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2023-24 Quarter One (Q1).

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

1. Note the 2023/24 Quarter I Service Performance Report; and
2. Ask officers to review the performance indicator data set to better reflect the emerging priorities and actions in the revised Council Plan.

9. **Financial Performance Report 2023/24 Quarter One (Pages 65 - 80)**

Purpose:

To detail the Council's financial performance for Quarter One 2023-2024 (April to June).

Recommendation:

That the Executive resolves to:

1. Note the Council's Financial Performance for Quarter One 2023-2024 (April to June).

10. **Channel Choice and Telephone Access (Pages 81 - 94)**

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to outline the Council's success in supporting the shift in customer demand to digital channels and to consider adjusting telephone access hours as part of a balanced approach to customer contacts that responds to customer preferences.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

1. Agree the reduced telephone access hours, on a trial basis, with effect from Monday 16th October 2023, and
2. Receive a further report, detailing the findings and recommendations from the trial, to an Executive meeting in the first quarter of 2024/25

11. **Procurement and Contract Management Strategy (Pages 95 - 118)**

Purpose:

To present an updated draft Procurement and Contract Management Strategy for comment and consideration by Executive.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

1. Approve the updated Procurement and Contract Management Strategy;
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Governance to amend the approved Contract Procedure Rules to remove reference to the obsolete Procurement Strategy and Procurement Code, which the Procurement and Contract Management Strategy will replace.

12. **Endorsement of Cotswold National Landscape Management Plan 2023-2025 (Pages 119 - 202)**

Purpose:

To seek the Council's endorsement of the Cotswolds National Landscape (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - AONB) Management Plan 2023 – 2025, produced by the Cotswolds National Landscape Board.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

1. Endorse the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2023–2025 for use as:
 - Part of the evidence base for the review of the Local Plan;
 - Part of the evidence base for the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans;
 - Part of the evidence base for the preparation and implementation of relevant Council strategies, policies and projects;
 - As a material consideration in the determination of planning applications; and to inform the development and delivery of the Council's services and activities.

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the

Executive

Held at Eynsham Village Hall, 46 Back Lane, Eynsham, Witney OX29 4QW at 2.00 pm on
Wednesday, 12 July 2023.

PRESENT

Councillors: Andy Graham, Joy Aitman, Lidia Arciszewska, Dan Levy, Andrew Prosser, Carl Rylett, Geoff Saul and Alaric Smith.

Officers: Elizabeth Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer), Frank Wilson (Group Finance Director - Publica), Claire Locke (Group Manager - Commissioning), Bill Oddy (Assistant Director for Commercial Development), Andrew Brown (Democratic Services Business Manager) and Max Thompson (Senior Democratic Services Officer) (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Chris Hargraves (Planning Policy Manager), Barry Clack (Communications Manager), Anne Learmonth (Democratic Services Officer) and Michelle Ouzman (Democratic Services Officer).

Other Councillors in attendance: Michele Mead, Rosie Pearson and Julian Cooper.

55 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Duncan Enright.

56 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Carl Rylett declared that he lived in an adjacent property to the site of the West Eynsham Strategic Development Area (SDA), and that he would leave the meeting hall whilst the item was considered.

57 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Previous Meeting, held on Wednesday 21 June 2023, were unanimously agreed by the Executive, and signed by the Leader of the Council as a true & accurate record.

58 Receipt of Announcements

The Council's Senior Democratic Services Officer, Max Thompson, gave the members of the public in attendance a brief overview of the way that the meeting would run.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Andy Graham, welcomed all attendees to the meeting, and thanked members of the public for attending. The Leader advised that the meeting was the fifth in the series of the Council's "Executive on Tour", with previous meetings being held around the West Oxfordshire District in Charlbury, Chipping Norton, Woodstock and Carterton.

The Leader advised public attendees that Members of the Executive would remain in attendance after the meeting had concluded, so they could meet each other on an informal basis, and discuss any issues that residents wished to raise with them.

The Leader further advised that the final two Agenda Items contained commercially sensitive information and details of a private nature, and as such, the meeting would need to agree to enter into private session prior to consideration of those items. The Leader informed attendees that this would be highlighted at the appropriate juncture.

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59 Participation of the Public

Councillor Ross Macken, Chair of Eynsham Parish Council, addressed the Executive and made a statement on behalf of Eynsham Parish Council. The statement related to the West Eynsham Strategic Development Area Masterplan.

A copy of the statement is attached to the original copy of the minutes.

60 Financial Performance Report 2022/23 Year End (Q4)

Councillor Dan Levy, Executive Member for Finance, introduced and gave a detailed overview of the report, which provided details of the Council's financial performance during Quarter 4 of Financial Year 2022/2023 (January 2023 to March 2023 inclusive).

The Chief Finance Officer, Elizabeth Griffiths explained and gave details of an amendment which had arisen relating to income received from the Council's leisure provider GLL, whereby levels of debt had been reduced since the end of the previous financial year, and that the debt provision would be adjusted as appropriate. The Executive noted the explanation given.

Councillor Dan Levy proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report, taking into account the point raised by the Chief Finance Officer. This was seconded by Councillor Andy Graham, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note the 2022/23 end of year financial performance;
2. Recommend to Council to approve the carry forward of the Capital Budget of £2,372,557;
3. Recommend to Council to approve the transfers to and between earmarked reserves as detailed in the report, and to include an additional adjustment from the bad debt provision of £670,207 to be placed in a budget deficit smoothing reserve as explained by the Chief Finance Officer for reasons set out at the meeting.

61 Service Performance Report 2022-23 Quarter 4

Councillor Dan Levy, Executive Member for Finance, introduced and gave an overview of the report, which provided details of the Council's operational performance during Quarter 4 of Financial Year 2022/2023 (January 2023 to March 2023 inclusive).

Councillor Dan Levy proposed that the Executive note the contents of the report. This was seconded by Alaric Smith, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note the contents of the 2022/2023 Q4 performance report.

62 West Eynsham Strategic Development Area (SDA) Masterplan

Councillor Carl Rylett left the meeting ahead of the item being considered.

Councillor Dan Levy, Executive Member for Finance, introduced and gave an overview of the report, which considered an addendum to the West Eynsham SDA Masterplan which had been produced by the four main landowner/developers in response to further engagement with third party landowners.

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The Executive Member thanked the work of the Joint Climate and Environment & Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committees for their work relating to the masterplan, and also thanked Eynsham Parish Council for their representations on the matter.

Councillor Dan Levy proposed that the Executive agree to recommendation 'A' and amend recommendation 'B' to approve the recommendation from overview and scrutiny to reject the masterplan addendum, and further agree to disregard recommendation 'C'. This was seconded by Lidia Arciszewska, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note the content of the report;
2. Approve the recommendation of the Joint Climate and Environment & Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 8 June 2023 to;
3. Reject and not take forward the West Eynsham Strategic Development Area Masterplan Addendum.

Councillor Carl Rylett returned to the meeting hall at after the conclusion of this agenda item.

63 West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041

Councillor Carl Rylett, Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development, introduced and gave a detailed overview of the report, which considered a focused consultation paper which is intended to help inform the preparation of the new Local Plan 2041.

The Executive Member stated that the 8 week Local Plan public consultation would start in late August 2023. The Executive paid tribute to the strong response to a previous consultation and emphasised the importance of local residents having their say.

Councillor Carl Rylett proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Andrew Prosser, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note the content of the report;
2. Agree that the Local Plan focused consultation paper be published for an extended period of stakeholder engagement for 8 weeks from late August to help inform the preparation of the new Local Plan 2041;
3. Authorise the Planning Policy Manager to make any necessary minor amendments to the focused consultation paper in liaison with the Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development, prior to consultation taking place.

64 Updates to Terms of Reference of Future Oxfordshire

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced and gave an overview of the report, which detailed changes to the programmes within the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal and required adjustments to the working of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, including corresponding amendments to the Terms of Reference.

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Councillor Andy Graham proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Andrew Prosser, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Approve the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's revised Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding.

65 **Combe Village Design Statement (VDS)**

Councillor Carl Rylett, Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development, introduced and gave an overview of the report, which considered the final version of the Combe Village Design Statement (VDS), following feedback from a 6-week period of public consultation. The report also recommended that Council formally adopt the statement as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The Executive Member and the Leader of the Council both paid tribute to the engagement and support of Combe Parish Council, commending them for their work on the project.

Councillor Carl Rylett proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Andy Graham, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note the content of the report including the consultation summary report;
2. Recommend to Council to formally adopt the final version of the Combe Village Design Statement as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

66 **Our House Funding Extension for 2023-24**

Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare, introduced and gave an overview of the report, which updated Executive members on the 'Our House' project since its inception, with a recommendation that funding be extended from 1 November 2023 to 31 October 2024.

In debate, the Executive detailed the importance of the Our House project, and whilst the project is not necessarily compulsory for the Council, it provides an important 'safety net' for tenants.

Councillor Geoff Saul proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Joy Aitman, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Approve an extension to the Our House project for one year from 1 November 2023 to 31 October 2024;
2. Agree to use Housing Reserves of £112,500 as set out in section 3;
3. Agree to continue with the current Support Provider (Cottsway) via waiver;
4. Delegate authority to the Business Manager for Housing in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare to make any minor amendments to this funding extension;

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5. Delegate authority to the Business Manager for Housing in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare to apply for external funding should any become available to continue the project.

67 Planned Expenditure of the Ukraine Homelessness Prevention Grant - Homes for Ukraine Top Up 2023-2024

Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare, introduced and gave an overview of the report, which considered the planned expenditure of the Homelessness Prevention Grant – Homes for Ukraine top-up 2023/2024.

Councillor Geoff Saul proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Dan Levy, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Approve the expenditure of £220,541 detailed within section 3 of the report;
2. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Resident Services in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare and the Chief Finance Officer to make any amendments to these allocations, subject to compliance with the ring fenced grant conditions;
3. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Resident Services in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare, and Chief Finance Officer to make decisions on any other uplifts or grants that may be given over the financial years 2023-24 to address increased demands on the Housing Service, subject to compliance with the ring fenced grant conditions.

68 Leisure - Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (Districtwide)

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects, introduced and gave an overview of the report, which sought approval for budgetary provision for the appointment of a consultant to prepare a Strategic Outcomes Planning Model for the District.

In debate, the Executive highlighted the importance of leisure provisions within the District and also more widely, and that it assists with good health and well-being practises.

Councillor Alaric Smith proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Andy Graham, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Authorise Officers to commence a Strategic Outcomes Planning Model for the District;
2. Agree to include a provision of £26,850 within the 2023/24 Leisure budget;
3. Appoint specialist leisure consultants to undertake the work.

69 Matters raised by Overview and Scrutiny or Audit and Governance

Councillor Dan Levy, Executive Member for Finance, introduced and gave a detailed overview of the report, which considered a recommendation made to the Executive by the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 14 June 2023.

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Councillor Dan Levy proposed that the Executive agree it's response to the recommendation from the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out in Annex B. This was seconded by Councillor Alaric Smith, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Explore the idea of the recruitment of a permanent Credit Controller to help strengthen staffing levels within the Council's finance team.
2. Agree to consider the idea now with partners, and depending on the outcome of those discussions, include provisions within the draft budget for 2023/2024.

70

Commercial Solar Photovoltaic Installations on Council Estate

Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Change, introduced and gave a detailed overview of the report, which sought agreement to invest in the installation of Solar Photovoltaic Installations (PV) on the roofs of buildings owned, and in some cases leased by the Council, based on the business case set out in the report. The report further sought to agree to enter into a contract with the preferred contractor for the installation of the solar PV.

The Executive stated that proposed work would be carried out on a case by case basis, and would not be undertaken if any work were to be deemed financially unviable unless the work was unavoidable due to structural condition of the building.

Councillor Andrew Prosser proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report, with the wording 'Chief Finance Officer' replaced with 'Section 151 Officer'. This was seconded by Councillor Dan Levy, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Recommend to Council to agree to proceed with investment in roof mounted solar PV based on the business cases in the report;
2. Agree to enter into sale agreements for the electricity generated, with the tenants, where financially viable and delegate decisions on whether or not to proceed with individual agreements to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance;
3. Agree to enter into contract with the preferred contractor identified in Annex A, for the provision and installation of Solar PV and related equipment;
4. Delegate to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Executive Members for Finance and Climate Change the decision to exclude any tenanted sites based on further Due Diligence associated with energy usage or vulnerability around continued tenant occupation;
5. Delegates to the Section 151 Officer the decision to adjust the indicative electricity sale price to tenants as long as changes to the projected project returns are in-line with projections contained within the report;
6. Recommend to Council to agree that funding for contingency costs of £27,634 is approved with delegation to the Section 151 Officer for expenditure of contingency subject to the business case still being viable or expenditure being unavoidable due to structural condition of the building;

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7. That revenue funding of £11,200/year is allocated for the part-time shared Energy Manager post and included in the next budget update. Noting that this will be funded from Solar PV income.

71 Exclusion of Press and Public

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, proposed that Executive agree to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the remaining exempt items of business, on the basis that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information. This was seconded by Councillor Alaric Smith, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 4(2)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 to:

1. Exclude the press and public from the meeting on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

72 Exempt Annexes for item 16: Commercial Solar Photovoltaic Installations on Council Estate

This item was not considered at the meeting as the Executive did not make reference to any exempt information contained within the main agenda item.

73 Cleaning and Maintenance of Public Conveniences

Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment, introduced and gave an overview of the report, which provided a summary of options for the delivery of the public convenience cleaning and maintenance service.

In debate, it was highlighted that there would be a review of the distribution of the services, when discussions are undertaken regarding potential further contracts.

Councillor Lidia Arciszewska proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Dan Levy, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Approve a further one-year extension under a contract waiver for the cleaning and maintenance of Public Conveniences with Danfo;
2. Approve the reduced specification/service requirements for the one-year extension;
3. Instruct officers to conduct an in-depth review of service provision to be carried out during the period of extension to inform future contract options.

74 Funding for Landlord's Works and Approval of New Lease's at Investment Property in Cumnor

Councillor Dan Levy, Executive Member for Finance, introduced and gave an overview of the report, which sought authority to agree new leases with existing occupiers at the subject property, and to seek funding for Landlord's Works required.

Councillor Dan Levy proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Andy Graham, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

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The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Approve the proposed capital budget of up to £125,000 for refurbishment works;
2. Approve the proposed new leases to the current sub tenants;
3. Delegate the decision on the final costs of works and terms of leases to the Assistant Director for Property & Regeneration in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and Executive Member of Resources;
4. Recommend to Council to add £125,000 to the Capital Programme for this item to be financed from the Property Improvement and Incentive Reserve.

The Meeting closed at 3.04 pm

CHAIR

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 13 SEPTEMBER 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>REVIEW OF COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEMES</p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>ALL</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Joy Aitman – Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities Email: joy.aitman@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Andy Barge – Assistant Director, Communities Email: andy.barge@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To consider proposals to refine the community grant funding so that is better aligned to the outcomes intended from the Council Plan and fosters greater community engagement.</p> <p>The report sets out the process through which the Service Level Agreements will be awarded for 2024/25 onwards and the Civic Crowdfunding Platform will be introduced to ensure that the defined outcomes are achieved.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – 2022/23 Revenue Grant Allocations</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p><i>That the Executive Resolves to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Grant delegated authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and Executive Members for Stronger Healthy Communities, Planning and Sustainable Development, Environment and Climate Change to approve Service Level Agreement awards;</i> b) <i>Agree the maximum Service Level Agreement award for Lots 1 to 3 will be £25,000 per annum unless in exceptional circumstances where evidence has been provided to justify the need for a higher award;</i> c) <i>Permit organisations who are awarded a Service Level Agreement to also submit projects to the SpaceHive Crowdfunding Platform.</i>
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All • Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife • Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>No</p>

Exempt	No
Consultees Consultation	Findings from the 'Your Voice Counts' Council Plan consultation, learning from other councils, current Community Revenue Grant Recipients, Executive Members and Chief Executive Officer.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 On the 8th March 2023 the Executive resolved to introduce a new approach to grant funding from 2024-25. This comprises two new elements - a Civic Crowdfunding platform, and the introduction of 3-year Service Level Agreements (SLAs) aligned to the outcomes intended from the West Oxfordshire Council Plan.
- 1.2 To allow for a managed transition, the Executive agreed that the Community Revenue grant funding recipients of 2022–23 be awarded the same level of community revenue grant for 2023-24. Details of the organisations awarded this funding are listed as Appendix A.
- 1.3 The budgetary allocations for the new approach agreed in March 2023 between Service Level Agreements and the Civic Crowdfunding Platform are set out below:-

Budget Item	£
3 Year Service Level Agreements (Lots 1-3)	132,000
3 Year SLA Housing and Debt Advice (Lot 4)	150,000
Crowdfund Pledges (WODC contribution)	120,000
Total	402,000

- 1.4 This report provides an update on work to deliver the new approach.

2. THE FUTURE APPROACH TO REVENUE GRANT FUNDING

Service Level Agreements

- 2.1 SLA applications will be invited across four Lots:
1. Improving our natural environment and the access to it, so that we enable physical and mental wellbeing and cohesive, connected communities.
 2. Taking action towards the climate and ecological emergencies, so that we reduce carbon footprints and encourage nature recovery.
 3. Increasing community resilience and amplifying the voice of the seldom heard, so that we take action on issues most important to our residents and their needs, such as access to food, supporting young people and cultural provision.
 4. Providing residents with high quality, independent housing advice, welfare and debt advice services, so that they are empowered to tackle their problems and we support those who are unable to deal with difficult circumstances on their own

- 2.2** The total budget available for SLA Lots 1-3 is £132,000. As opposed to making outline allocations to apportion the budget across Lots 1–3 it is suggested the allocations be informed by the proposals that come forward to help achieve the desired outcomes from those lots. It is difficult to predict what projects will come forward and retaining this flexibility may prove useful.
- 2.3** SLA applications aligned to delivering our desired outcomes in the four Lots will be accepted from:
- Constituted voluntary and community groups
 - Registered and excepted charities
 - Community Interest Companies
 - Independent statutory bodies in appropriate circumstances
- 2.4** Commercial organisations and exempt charities will not be eligible to apply for SLA funding nor will town and parish councils, other statutory bodies, organisations providing a statutory service on behalf of a statutory body, education providers or unconstituted groups and associations.
- 2.5** The SLA application process will be set up in the Publica Group electronic tendering system <https://in-tendhost.co.uk/publicagroup>, hosted on behalf of the Council. This will provide a transparent and robust assessment framework within which to assess applications, including a set of evaluation criteria.
- 2.6** SLA applications will be considered by a grants panel consisting of a lead offer for each lot and the Executive Members with responsibility for environment, climate change and ecology, communities and social welfare. The panel will appraise applications received once each has been screened against the following evaluation criteria:
- Evidence of financial need by the applicant body
 - Strategic fit and alignment to the relevant lot's outcome
 - Extent of impact, innovation and collaborative working
 - Fit with any existing provision to avoid duplication or displacement activity
 - An assessment of risks associated with the proposed activity
 - Proposed monitoring and evaluation
- 2.7** The grants panel(s) will make recommendations as to which applications should be funded. It is recommended that the Executive grant delegated authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and Executive Members for Stronger Healthy Communities, Planning and Sustainable Development, Environment and Climate Change to approve Service Level Agreement awards.

2.8 It is proposed that the maximum SLA award for Lots 1 to 3 will be £25,000 per annum, unless an applicant has been able to demonstrate exceptional circumstances where evidence has been provided to justify the need for a higher award. This level of investment will enable a number of organisations to deliver projects of scale.

2.9 The three-year service level agreements will be executed, ready for 1st April 2024 implementation.

2.10 It is proposed that an award of an SLA does not preclude an organisation from also submitting projects to the Council's Civic Crowdfunding platform for the opportunity to raise money from the wider public.

Civic Crowdfunding platform

2.11 The Civic Crowdfunding platform provides a new and accessible way that our residents can be at the heart of civic change and provides a springboard for locally-led ideas to attract funding more easily. This aligns directly with the key aims of the Council, which has a drive to be aspirational, innovative and bold; and sits well with the Council priorities of 'Putting Residents First' and 'Working Together for West Oxfordshire.

2.12 The Council is looking to support projects which deliver on the following outcomes:

- Community led change
- Improved health and food equity
- Well connected and resilient communities
- Improved mental and physical wellbeing across all age groups and backgrounds
- Improved essential local infrastructure that facilitates rural living
- Improved environmental outcomes, such as carbon reduction, improved biodiversity or green infrastructure

2.13 The projects which will be more likely to attract Council support are those which:

- Improve the physical and mental wellbeing of our local communities
- Directly address climate change
- Enhance lives through events and activities
- Support young people's ideas and ambitions
- Help to tackle the barriers and challenges many of us experience in life, such as poverty, ill health, distance from services, social isolation/loneliness
- Cultivate food equity, building a fair food system for everyone
- Protect and enhance our natural and built environment
- Invest in and maintain the facilities we rely on for these activities to take place

2.14 The maximum pledge to be made by the Council has been set at £10k. The maximum amount the Council will pledge has been set at 40% of project costs with scope to extend to 50% for projects of particular interest.

2.15 A priority for the Executive will be to dedicate funds specifically to projects led by young people and wishes to encourage young project creators to come forward with ideas.

3. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

3 year Service Level Agreements (SLAs)

3.1 An SLA information event, detailing the application process for community groups eligible to apply for a service level agreement, will be hosted on 5th October. It is hoped that a wide range of eligible organisations will attend – both past recipients and those who have not received funding from the Council before. Applications will be invited until the close of tendering on 31 December 2023.

Civic Crowdfunding Platform

3.2 A briefing for all Councillors will take place on 27th September. At the same time the dedicated website will go live. A Creators Workshop for potential applicants will be held in mid October. The Communications team will deliver a plan to maximise the visibility of the scheme to both donors and prospective applicants. Organisations of all scale, including those new to organising projects will be encouraged to attend the workshop. Projects will be live on the platform and able to receive pledges of support in early November.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The overall approved budget to support this area of work is £468,000 – as set out in the table below. This is contained within existing budgets and it is hoped represents an opportunity to be more effective in achieving greater community impact.

Budget	£
Service Level Agreement Lots 1-3	132,000
Civic Crowdfunding platform fee	30,000
Civic Crowdfunding platform pledges	120,000
Improved grants capability (Funding Officer)	25,000
SLA Lot 4 (Housing, welfare and debt advice services)	150,000
Cotswold National Landscape	11,000
	468,000

- 4.2 The proposed budget for SLA's Lots 1-3 is £132,000. The budget for Lot 4 is £150,000. The budget for the Civic Crowdfunding platform is £120,000.
- 4.3 By entering into 3 year SLA's the Council is committed to an agreed level of funding to successful recipients for 2024-25, 2025-26 and 2026-27. This commitment will need to be met in the 2024-25 budget which will be approved by Council in February 2024 and will need to be reflected in subsequent annual revenue budgets approved by the Council, or met from reserves.
- 4.4 Currently organisations are required to apply for funding on an annual basis, making it difficult to deliver long term outcomes and creating a significant administrative burden for both the applicant organisations as well as the Council.
- 4.5 Lot 4 is already delivered via a commissioning approach with the West Oxfordshire Citizens Advice Bureau providing high quality welfare advice and support to residents. In recognition of the Covid-19 pandemic impacts and current cost of living crisis and the increased demands on this service, the Executive agreed the budget for this be increased by £70,000 from within existing resources to provide a total budget for this activity of £150,000.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The proposal within this report relates to the Council's discretionary grants budget and not to any statutory schemes. The way in which this resource is invested is at the Council's discretion, subject to appropriate governance, transparency and financial safeguards.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 The Council engaged with 2022-23 Community Revenue Grant recipients to notify them of the review of community grants schemes and committed to rolling forward their 2022-23 grant for 2023-24 as part of a managed transition. This mitigated any reputational risk to the Council and a potential negative financial impact on the recipients themselves. The recipients have been engaged with from an early stage and this has been well received, with many thankful for the long notice period for change.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 7.1 The Council is a signatory to the Oxfordshire Compact and the supporting funding code and will wish to ensure adherence to the key provisions in this around consultation and the provision of appropriate notice around the introduction of changes. The managed transition described in section 1 allows for this.

7.2 The proposed approach of three year grant funding, supported by service level agreements to provide a framework for all parties on areas such as delivery, quality and agreed outcomes also accords with the Oxfordshire Compact.

7.3 The proposal does not negatively impact on any protected characteristics.

7.4 An Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken of the Community Grant Review proposals presented to the Executive in March 2023. This included the service level agreements proposed in this paper and can be found at Annex C of the 8 March 2023 Executive Paper.

8. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The inclusion of Lots 1 and 2, with a focus on environment, climate and nature recovery, supported by three year SLA's, provides good potential for a positive impact on tackling the climate and ecological emergencies through local action.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS


9.1 Whilst not recommended, Executive could decide not to award three year service level agreements for Lots 1-3. This would save £132,000 each year. The Executive could also decide not to award a service level agreement for welfare advice and support and this would save £150,000 per annum. Both of these options would place the authority in an unusual position in it not offering any form of grant support and remove the scope to achieve Council Plan priority outcomes through grant funding. This option would also have a significant, negative community impact.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None.

Community Revenue Grants 2022/23		
Organisation	Nature of grant	Awarded
Thomas Gifford Trust	Provision of community activities in Charlbury	£5,700
Wild Oxfordshire	Delivering training, advice and information to WODC and community groups on nature recovery	£2,000
Community First Oxfordshire	Supporting local communities to find community led solutions to community challenges	£12,000
Cotswold Conservation Board	Supporting for core activities and to deliver its statutory purposes	£10,300
Volunteer Link Up	Supporting with core activities to provide volunteers services including befriending and transport support to appointments	£12,000
Homestart Oxford	Supporting family wellbeing groups for young families and under 5's in person and online in and around Witney/south of district	£5,000
My Life My Choice	Provision of information to support members with learning disabilities with advice, support and activity information	£4,251
Chipping Norton Theatre	Provision of community programme of arts, entertainment and wellbeing activities for local residents	£25,900
Lower Windrush Valley Project	Protection and conservation of biodiversity and increase opportunities for people to access the countryside	£5,000
Homestart Banbury, Bicester and Chipping Norton	Supporting vulnerable families and under 5's in Chipping Norton and the north of the district	£2,900
Wychwood Forest Trust	To enhance quality of the environment for residents and wildlife	£30,000
Age UK Oxfordshire	To fund role of community development worker in West Oxfordshire supporting older people	£10,000
Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire	To provide debt, money, benefits, housing, energy debts, employment, consumer advice	£62,800

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 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE MEETING – 13 SEPTEMBER 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>ASYLUM DISPERSAL GRANT</p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Joy Aitman - Stronger Healthy Communities Email: Joy.aitman@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Phil Martin, Assistant Director Business Support Email: Phil.martin@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Report author</p>	<p>Phil Martin, Assistant Director Business Support Email: Phil.martin@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To consider the planned expenditure of the Asylum Dispersal Grant</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Home Office - Funding Eligibility for Local Authorities Asylum Dispersal Scheme: Grant Payment 3 Annex B - Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p><i>That the Executive resolves to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Approve the expenditure of £147,000 detailed within sections 3 and 5 of this report;</i> <i>2. Delegate authority to make any amendments to these allocations, providing these are compliant with the ring fenced grant conditions, to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Executive Member responsible for Stronger Healthy Communities and the Informal Executive.</i>
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A Good Quality of Life for All ● Working Together for West Oxfordshire
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>YES</p>

Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Executive Member with Responsibility for Stronger Healthy Communities; Chief Executive; S151 Officer, Head of Legal Services and Director of Governance

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Home Office changed the criteria for the 3rd round of Asylum Dispersal Grants to reflect concerns raised by Local Authorities in relation to the pressure on local services associated with supporting Asylum Seekers, including Contingency Accommodation / Hotels into the funding formula.
- 1.2 The Home Office awarded West Oxfordshire District Council £147,000 through the Asylum Dispersal Grant, which was calculated on the number of asylum seekers resident in the local authority area as of the 1st April 2023.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On the 14th November 2022, the Home Office contacted the Council to inform it that they had commissioned a hotel in Witney to house Asylum Seekers on a temporary booking basis.
- 2.2 The hotel became fully operational on the 18th November and initially was designated / operated as a 'spot booking' venue and was run by a 3rd party company (Fine Fair) on behalf of the Home Office.
- 2.3 Due to the designation of the hotel, no funding was made available to the Council, County Council or NHS despite the need to provide basic support and health care to the individuals living in the hotel. After much lobbying by the Council and local MP, the Home Office change the designation of the hotel to 'Contingency Accommodation' on the 16th December 2022. At this point they confirmed that they had procured a longer term contract with the hotel owner to accommodate asylum seekers along with making funding available to the Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) who are responsible for commissioning / providing healthcare services to the people living in the hotel.
- 2.4 Whilst the change in designation was clearly a step in the right direction, no funding had been allocated to the Council to cover the time Officers were spending on co-ordinating the efforts of the various agencies who were supporting the people in the hotel and community / faith organisations who were actively involved in helping to meet basic needs such as clothing etc.
- 2.5 Running in parallel with the opening of the hotel, the Home Office through its 3rd party contractor (Clear Springs Ready Homes) had identified a property in Carterton, which they were proposing to house a small number of individuals as of the 9th December. The Council and other agencies were consulted in May 2022 on the suitability of the property and location and responded raising a number of concerns regarding the proposal but these were largely ignored.
- 2.6 Due to GDPR and other restrictions despite many requests to the Home Office for information on the individuals living in Carterton and what support arrangements are in place, to date all the Council has been told is a monthly welfare check is carried out and any issues would be raised with the relevant agency / organisation. The Council have asked Asylum Welcome, who they have been working closely with to provide support / advice to the people in the hotel, to reach out to the individuals in Carterton to make sure they are Ok and are looking at formalise support going forward.

3. PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The current approach for providing support to the people in the hotel and wider community groups involved is unsustainable as it has relied heavily on a small number of officers who have taken on the role in addition to their other responsibilities.
- 3.2 The proposal is to employ a dedicated Migration Support Officer on a 12 month Fixed Term Contract initially, who would provide both the capacity and support needed both internally as well as to the wider community going forward.
- 3.3 To complement the new coordinators role, the proposal incorporates funding to explore / implement a communication portal to address the ongoing challenge in the hotel of providing information in a form which can easily be accessed and updated. Currently there is a wide range of different languages spoken in the hotel and a reliance on the hotel management team / volunteers putting posters up in multiple languages, however the information can quickly become outdated and is not seen by everyone. As the majority of individuals have access to the internet via their phones, some form of multilingual portal, which community / faith groups could update and post information regarding activities would address this and improve overall communication throughout the hotel.
- 3.4 An area that requires urgent support is the actual co-ordination of activities and volunteering opportunities, as one of the big areas of concern at the moment is trying to give people a sense of purpose as this will help improve both their mental and physical wellbeing. Also this will help to ensure the children have things to do during the school holidays. An organisation has been identified that is ideally positioned to deliver this support, who are both locally based and able to mobilise the resources required very quickly.
- 3.5 Organisation such as Asylum Welcome / Care4Calais have done an amazing job of supporting the people in the hotel via their weekly drop in centre and being in the hotel on a day to day basis but their resources and funding is under significant pressure. It is being proposed that the Council provide these type of organisations with some financial support to ensure access to these services and support continue. To ensure the funding is inclusive and meets the needs of all asylum seekers in the district the proposal will look to expand the current focus of the support to include the individuals who are living in the dispersed accommodation in Carterton.
- 3.6 As there are a wide range of local organisations providing support and activities to the people in the hotel, which is either currently being funded through the use of their own reserves or donations the proposal includes the creation of a small grant scheme. This scheme aims to help ensure future support is financially more sustainable as well as unlocking activities that aren't currently run due to their costs. These could include the provision of regular food related sessions, where the residents of the hotel can cook food that reflects their own cultures and background, which will help with their wellbeing and mental health. The funding may also be used to cover the cost of transport or basic equipment to give the individuals in the hotel an opportunity to integrate into the wider community through volunteering type activities.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The small team from the Council have worked closely with local community and faith groups as well as support organisations such as Asylum Welcome / Care4Calais since the hotel

opened and recognise that they are better positioned to provide the ‘on the ground’ support to the individuals than the Council, hence why the majority of the funded is directed towards them.

- 4.2 This approach is consistent with the other Councils across Oxfordshire who also recognise whilst a wider systems approach worked well during the pandemic and also the Homes for Ukraine scheme a focused localised approach that reflects the area is more applicable in this instance.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council received the full amount of the grant on the 30th June 2023.
- 5.2 The proposals set out in the table below are aimed at meeting the needs of both the people living in the hotel and wider community, whilst being compliant with the terms of the grant from the Home Office.

Proposed Funding Item	Amount
Migration Support Officer	£52,000
Communications portal	£10,000
Refugee Co-ordinator	£20,000
Support Organisations	£20,000
Community Grant Scheme	£20,000
Sub Total	£122,000
Retained fund	£25,000
Total	£147,000

- 5.3 The remaining funding (£25,000) will be retained to help support any unforeseen developments and the allocation of this would be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Executive Member responsible for Stronger Healthy Communities and the Informal Executive.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Council would look to use a Memorandum of Understanding to set out the principles and practices that will apply to the working relationship between itself and any organisation it financially support. This will also outline the monitoring arrangements, responsibilities, accountability and governance structures.

6.2 The proposed grant scheme will have clear criteria, timescales and funding arrangements set out to ensure that the Council can effectively evaluate and monitoring the delivery of successful proposals.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

7.1 There is a reputational risk to the Council if it does not use this grant funding effectively for the specific purposes set out in the Home Office document - Funding Eligibility for Local Authorities Asylum Dispersal Scheme: Grant Payment 3, which can be found in Annex A.

7.2 Unless the current support arrangements are made more resilient / sustainable there is a risks destabilising the current status quo, which could have a negative impact upon the wider community as well as the resources of other agencies such as the NHS & Police. .

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.1 Please see attached Equalities Impact Assessment – Annex B

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

None

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None



Home Office

Funding Instruction for Local Authorities: Asylum Dispersal Grant

Financial Year 2023-2024

Scheme Reference: 395

Asylum & Protection Transformation

Grant 3

Date of Issue 7 June 2023

Version 0.1



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TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF FUNDING

1. DEFINITIONS

- 1.1. An “**Annex**” means the annexes attached to this Funding Instruction.
- 1.2. “**Asylum Dispersal**” means the policy of dispersal of those seeking asylum accommodation in the UK introduced by the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. The legislative intention was that by distribution across the country no one area would be overburdened by the obligation of supporting asylum seekers.
- 1.3. An “**Asylum Seeker**” means, a person who has entered into a legal process of refugee status determination.
- 1.4. The “**Authority**” means the Secretary of State for the Home Department acting through the Asylum & Protection Transformation Team on behalf of the Crown.
- 1.5. “**Branding Manual**” means the HM Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland’s Branding Manual ‘Funded by UK Government’¹ first published by the Cabinet Office in November 2022, including any subsequent updates from time-to-time.
- 1.6. A “**Clause**” means the clauses in this Funding Instruction.
- 1.7. “**Commencement Date**” means the date on which the Funding Instruction comes into effect and from which Eligible Expenditure may be claimed, being the 01 April 2023.
- 1.8. “**Contingency Accommodation – Hotels**” means contingency accommodation in a hotel.
- 1.9. “**Contingency Accommodation – Other**” means contingency accommodation such as hostels, and former military accommodation This may include people (who may or may not be related) living at the same address and who share cooking facilities, bathrooms, or toilets, or living areas.
- 1.10. “**Crown Body**” (or “**Crown**”) means the governments of the United Kingdom (including the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive Committee, the Scottish Executive and the National Assembly for Wales), including, but not limited to, ministers and departments and particular bodies, persons, commissions, or agencies from time-to-time carrying out functions on its behalf.
- 1.11. “**Data Protection Legislation**” means (i) the UK GDPR, (ii) the Data Protection Act 2018 (‘DPA 2018’) to the extent that it relates to the processing of Personal Data and privacy, (iii) all applicable Law about the processing of Personal Data and privacy, and (iv) (to the extent that it applies) the EU GDPR.

¹ [Branding Funded By UKG-.pdf \(civilservice.gov.uk\)](https://civilservice.gov.uk/branding-funded-by-ukg-.pdf)

- 1.12. **“Day”** means any calendar day Sunday through Saturday (inclusive).
- 1.13. **“Delivery Partner”** means any Third-Party whether an organisation or an individual working with the Recipient, whether remunerated or not, in the delivery of this Funding Instruction for the provision of the Purpose.
- 1.14. **“Dispersal Accommodation (DA)”** means primarily self-catering accommodation, provided under section 95 of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act. It consists of a mix of bed-sits, self-contained accommodation, and maisonettes to house single adults, couples and families and rooms in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) for adults. Supported persons are provided with specific facilities as standard, e.g. cooking facilities, kitchen utensils, bathing facilities, linen, basic furniture and refuse disposal. If the household contains young children, additional specific equipment is provided as required, e.g., stair gate, cot and sterilising equipment.
- 1.15. **“Eligible Expenditure”** means all costs, expenses, liabilities, and obligations that are related to, incurred by or arise out of the delivery, activities and operations of the Purpose by the Recipient during the funding period 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and which comply in all respects with the eligibility rules set out in this Instruction as determined by the Authority at its sole discretion.
- 1.16. **“Funding”** means the Authority’s financial contributions towards a Recipient’s Eligible Expenditure incurred supporting Asylum Dispersal and in accordance with the terms and outcomes of this Instruction.
- 1.17. The **“Funding Instruction”** (or the **“Instruction”**) means this document which describes the conditions under which a Recipient may claim Funding.
- 1.18. The **“Funding Period”** means the period for which the Grant is provided from the Commencement Date to 31 March 2024.
- 1.19. **“Information Acts”** means the Data Protection Legislation, Freedom of Information Act 2000 (‘FOIA’), the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (‘EIR’) and any subordinate or amended legislation made under these Acts from time to time together with any guidance or codes of practice issued by the relevant government department(s) concerning the legislation.
- 1.20. **“Initial Accommodation (IA)”** means Initial Accommodation that is provided under s98 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 and is provided whilst S95 eligibility is being decided. They are lodgings for people who have asked for asylum and would otherwise be destitute without the accommodation.
- 1.21. **“In Writing”** means modes of representing or reproducing words in visible form including but not limited to paper correspondence, email, display on screen and electronic transmission.
- 1.22. **“Law”** means any applicable law, statute, bye-law, regulation, order, regulatory policy, guidance or industry code, judgment of a relevant court of law, or directives or requirements of any regulatory body, delegated or subordinate legislation.
- 1.23. A **“Month”** means a calendar month.
- 1.24. **“Overflow Dispersal Accommodation (ODA)”** means Contingent Accommodation as accommodation which is used as part of a Contingent Solution. A Contingent Solution is then defined as “an accommodation solution developed and proposed by the Provider, and accepted by the

Authority which is appropriate for housing destitute Asylum Seekers, in such scenarios that may from time to time arise where the region(s) have reached the Service User Volume Cap and there is a need for further accommodation for a period of time.

- 1.25. An **“Overpayment”** means Funding paid by the Authority to the Recipient in excess of the amount due.
- 1.26. **“Personal Data”** has the meaning given to it in UK Data Protection Legislation.
- 1.27. A **“Recipient”** means a participating local or regional authority to which the Authority has agreed to provide Funding under this Instruction as a contribution towards eligible expenditure incurred supporting Asylum Seekers.
- 1.28. **“Schedule”** means the Schedules attached to this Funding Instruction.
- 1.29. **“The Scheme”** means the Asylum Dispersal Scheme.
- 1.30. **“Staff”** means any person employed or engaged by the Recipient and acting in connection with the operation of this Instruction including the Recipient’s owners, directors, members, trustees, employees, agents, suppliers, volunteers and Delivery Partners (and their respective employees, agents, suppliers and Delivery Partners) used in the delivery of the funded outcomes
- 1.31. **“Third Party”** means any party whether person or organisation other than the Authority or the Recipient.
- 1.32. A **“Working Day”** means any day Monday to Friday (inclusive) excluding any recognised UK public holidays.

2. THIS INSTRUCTION

- 2.1. The Authority is exercising the power conferred to it by Section 110 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 and Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 to make awards of grant funding.
- 2.2. This Instruction consists of (12) Clauses, one (1) Schedule, and two (2) Annexes and replaces any funding instructions previously issued by the Authority providing funding to support the Asylum Seeker Dispersal Scheme.

3. SCOPE AND DURATION

- 3.1. In keeping with established HM Treasury funding policies, the Authority will issue a fresh instruction for each financial year for which Funding is approved. This will occur whether or not any changes are made.
- 3.2. This instruction sets out the terms under which the Home Office will make funding available to local authorities in England, Wales, and Scotland during the financial year 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and to assist with their costs of supporting requests for properties made under Asylum Seeker assumed dispersal.
- 3.3. The Recipient has made commitments to support the Scheme, and the Authority has agreed to provide Funding to the Recipient as a contribution to supporting Asylum Seeker Dispersal.

- 3.4. Unless specifically stated otherwise, any Funding will be in respect of a Recipient's costs in fulfilment of its statutory duties and anything otherwise agreed with the Authority.
- 3.5. The Recipient shall be free to determine how best to utilise the Funding but for monitoring and Schemes' evaluation purposes must be able to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the eligibility conditions in supporting Asylum Seeker Dispersal.

4. TRANSPARENCY, CONFIDENTIALITY, DATA PROTECTION AND DATA SHARING

- 4.1. The Recipient acknowledges that grant funded arrangements issued by Crown Bodies may be published on a public facing website and that the Authority shall disclose payments made against this Instruction in accordance with the UK Government's commitment to efficiency, transparency and accountability.
- 4.2. The Recipient undertakes to keep confidential and not to disclose, and to procure that their staff keep confidential and do not disclose any information which they have obtained by reason of this Instruction.
- 4.3. Nothing in this Clause 4 applies to information which is already in the public domain or the possession of the Recipient other than by reason of breach of this Clause 4. Further, this Clause 4 shall not apply to information which is required to be disclosed pursuant to any law or pursuant to an order of any court or statutory or regulatory body.
- 4.4. The Recipient and the Authority will comply at all times with its respective obligations under UK Data Protection Legislation.
- 4.5. The Recipient shall ensure that any personal information concerning any Asylum Seeker disclosed to them in the course of delivering these Schemes is treated as confidential and should only be disclosed to a third party in accordance with the provisions of UK Data Protection Legislation. In the event of any doubt arising, the matter shall be referred to the Authority whose decision on the matter shall be final. In particular, the Recipient shall:
 - 4.5.1. have in place appropriate policies and procedures to recognise and maintain the Asylum Seeker's need for confidentiality; and
 - 4.5.2. ensure that without the consent of an Asylum Seeker, details of that individual Asylum Seeker are not released to any organisation not party to this Instruction.
- 4.6. The Recipient shall not use any information which they have obtained as a result of delivering the Scheme (including, without limitation, any information relating to any Asylum Seeker) in any way which is inaccurate or misleading.
- 4.7. On receipt of personal data from the Authority, the Recipient will become an independent controller of that data in that the Recipient, in delivering the Schemes, will, at any time determine the purpose and means of the processing of the personal data. In doing so they shall comply with the applicable Data Protection Legislation in respect of their processing of such Personal Data, will be individually and separately responsible for its own compliance and with respect to its processing of Personal Data as independent Controller, implement and maintain appropriate technical and organisational measures to ensure a level of security appropriate to that risk,

including, as appropriate, the measures referred to in Clause 32(1)(a), (b), (c) and (d) of the GDPR, and the measures shall, at a minimum, comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Legislation, including Clause 32 of the GDPR.

- 4.8. In the event of any unauthorised disclosure, the Recipient is responsible for following its local data protection arrangements and referring any personal data breach to the Information Commissioner's Office within 72 hours of identifying the initial incident.
- 4.9. In the event of any unauthorised disclosure the Authority must be informed without delay. The Authority will decide on what, if any, remedial action should take place and the Recipient shall be bound by and will abide by the decision of the Authority.
- 4.10. Where a Recipient is responsible for an unauthorised disclosure in breach of this Instruction, that Recipient will be liable for any consequences of such unauthorised disclosure, including (but not confined to) any civil or criminal liability.
- 4.11. The Authority also expects the Recipient to share relevant information on the delivery of the Scheme and on Asylum Seeker Dispersal with its partners; before doing so, the Recipient must ensure that a formal agreement has been signed with the relevant deliverers of the Scheme.
- 4.12. All approaches made by any person or organisation not party to this Instruction in respect of delivery to fund the Scheme must be referred to the Authority's press office for their advice and/or action.
- 4.13. Where applicable, the Recipient and the Authority are required to comply at all times with its respective obligations under the Information Acts, any subordinate legislation made, and any guidance issued by the Information Commissioner.
- 4.14. The Recipient shall ensure that it has adequate provisions and effective controls in place to manage:
 1. data and prevent Data Incidents,
 2. the processing of data shared between itself and any Delivery Partner; and
 3. compliance with its obligations arising from the Data Protection Legislation.
- 4.15. The Recipient agrees to assist and cooperate with the Authority to enable the Authority to comply with its obligations under the Information Acts whenever a request is made for information which relates to or arises out of this Instruction.
- 4.16. No information shall be disclosed if such disclosure would be in breach or is exempted from disclosure under the Information Acts.
- 4.17. The provisions of this Clause 4 shall survive the termination of this Instruction, however that occurs.

5. FUNDING

Eligible Expenditure

- 5.1. Funding provided must not be used for any purpose other than achieving delivery of the outcomes detailed in this Instruction, nor is it permissible to move/transfer any such funds elsewhere without prior written consent from the Authority.
- 5.2. Any funding issues resulting from an Asylum Seeker moving from a participating local authority during the term of the Funding are to be resolved between the Recipient and the relevant local authority.
- 5.3. No aspect of the activity funded by the Authority may be party-political in intention, use or presentation.
- 5.4. The Funding may not be used to support or promote religious activity. This will not include activity designed to improve inter faith relationships and/or working.

Overpayments

- 5.5. The Authority must be notified at the earliest opportunity if a Recipient expects its Funding requirement to be lower than expected, in order to avoid overpayments.
- 5.6. In the event that an overpayment is made, howsoever caused, the Authority must be notified as soon as reasonably practicable. In such instances, the Authority may require immediate reimbursement of the overpayment or may adjust subsequent payment(s) accordingly.

Cessation of Funding

- 5.7. The Authority reserves the right to cease making payments through this Instruction if it has reasonable grounds to believe that the Asylum Seeker has sought to deceive the Authority, the relevant Recipient or a partner agency in relation to their circumstances, including their inclusion on the Scheme or their activities whilst so involved.

General

- 5.8. Unauthorised spends that exceed the maximum stated Funding levels will not be reimbursed by the Authority.
- 5.9. The relevant Recipient will be the single point of contact for invoicing and payments.
- 5.10. Any payments made under this Instruction will also cover VAT or other duties paid by the Recipient to the extent that these are not otherwise recoverable by the Recipient.

6. DATA RECONCILIATION AND PAYMENTS

- 6.1. The Recipient will receive payment notifications in the form set out in Annex A, which includes numbers of Asylum Seekers accommodated and the financial support allocated.
- 6.2. The payment notification will set out the number of asylum seekers resident in an area at the time the report was run. The Recipient will have the opportunity to make representations if they believe that the level of Funding allocated is less than that or more than to which they are entitled under the terms of this

Instruction. Any discrepancies regarding the amounts paid must be notified by the relevant Recipient to the Dispersal Grants Team (asylumdispersalgrant3@homeoffice.gov.uk) within Thirty (30) days of the Annex A notification being sent, following reconciliation against the Authority's records.

- 6.3. At the end of the period for which support is paid, final checks will be carried out to ensure that the payments already made accurately reflect the amounts to which the Recipient is entitled.
- 6.4. Where a Recipient believes that the level of Funding actually paid by the Authority is less than that to which they are entitled under the terms of this Instruction, the Recipient may make representations to the Authority's Funding Team. Any discrepancies must be notified to the Dispersal Grants Team (asylumdispersalgrant3@homeoffice.gov.uk) via the dispute process (Annex B) within Thirty (30) days of a payment being made.
- 6.5. Payments will be made by BACS using account details that the Recipient must supply to the Authority on headed notepaper, signed by a senior finance official. The Recipient is responsible for ensuring that the Authority has been notified of its correct bank account details and any subsequent changes. The information which the Authority requires to enable a new account or change of BACS payment details is as follows:

Supplier Details

1. Registered name of company
2. Trading name of company
3. Company registration number
4. Vat registration number

Supplier Address Details

1. Registered Address
2. Credit Control/Finance Address

Contact Details

1. Email address for purchase orders
2. Email address for remittance advice
3. Email address for invoice queries
4. Telephone Number for Accounts Receivable/Credit Control

Payment Details

1. Bank Name
2. Branch name and address
3. Company Bank Account Name
4. Bank Account Number
5. Bank Account Sort Code

- 6.6. In the event of a change in bank details, the relevant Recipient should immediately notify the Authority of the new information. Such notification must be provided in writing, in PDF format, and in accordance with the requirements of Clause 6.5.
- 6.7. In line with Cabinet Office guidance and with respect to due diligence, site visits will be arranged with all Local Authorities where the recipient has been paid £100,000 or above.

7. MONITORING & EVALUATION

- 7.1. The Recipient should itself manage and administer the quality and level of delivery relating to the support it provides to Asylum Seekers.
- 7.2. The Recipient shall monitor the delivery and success of the Project throughout the Funding period to ensure that the Purpose is being met and that this Instruction is being adhered to.
- 7.3. In all cases, to assist with monitoring and evaluation of the Schemes, the Recipient shall supply the Authority with all such financial information as is reasonably requested from time-to-time, on an open book basis.

8. BREACH OF FUNDING CONDITIONS

- 8.1. Where a Recipient fails to comply with **any** of the conditions set out in this Instruction, or if any of the events mentioned in Clause 8.2 occur, then the Authority may reduce, suspend, or withhold payments, or require all or any part of the relevant payments to be repaid by the Recipient. In such circumstances, the Recipient must repay any amount required under this Clause 8.1 within ninety (90) Days of receiving the demand for repayment.
- 8.2. The events referred to in Clause 8.1 are as follows:
 - 8.2.1. The Recipient purports to transfer or assign any rights, interests or obligations arising under this Agreement without the agreement in advance of the Authority, or
 - 8.2.2. Any information provided in the application for Funding (or in a claim for payment) or in any subsequent supporting correspondence is found to be incorrect or incomplete to an extent which the Authority considers to be material, or
 - 8.2.3. The Recipient takes inadequate measures to investigate and resolve any reported irregularity.

9. ACTIVITIES – GENERAL

Sub-contracting

- 9.1. When procuring works, goods or services the Recipient must ensure that it complies with its statutory obligations, for example the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 in England, Northern Ireland & Wales. In any event, the Recipient shall demonstrate value for money and shall act in a fair, open and non-discriminatory manner in all purchases of goods and services to support the delivery of the Scheme.
- 9.2. The Recipient must take all reasonable steps to ensure that anyone acting on its behalf shall not bring the Authority or the Scheme into disrepute; for instance, by reason of prejudicing and/or being contrary to the interests of the Authority and/or the Scheme.

Hours of Operation

- 9.3. The Recipient shall note that the Authority performs normal business during the hours of 09.00 to 17.00 on Working Days.

Staff Standards

- 9.4. At all times whilst delivering the Schemes the Recipient shall be mindful of the intent, and apply the spirit, of the UK Government’s “Code of Conduct for Recipients of Government General Grants”² which outlines the standards and behaviours that the government expects of all its Delivery Partners.
- 9.5. The Recipient shall:
- 9.5.1. ensure that it has relevant organisational policies in place to deliver the activities funded by this Instruction. These shall remain current for the duration of this Instruction and be reviewed regularly by appropriately senior staff. All staff must be aware of these policies and of how to raise any concerns.
- 9.6. The Recipient shall use all reasonable endeavours to comply with the requirements of the Computer Misuse Act 1990.
- 9.7. The Recipient shall implement the Schemes in compliance with the provisions of UK Data Protection Legislation.

10. LIABILITY

- 10.1. The Authority accepts no liability to the Recipient or to any third party for any costs, claims, damage or losses, however they are incurred, except to the extent that they are caused by the Authority’s negligence or misconduct.

11. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

- 11.1. The Parties shall attempt in good faith to negotiate a settlement to any dispute between them arising out of or in connection with this Instruction, in line with Annex B.
- 11.2. The Parties may settle any dispute using a dispute resolution process which they agree.
- 11.3. If the Parties are unable to resolve a dispute in line with the requirements of Clauses 11.1 or 11.2, the dispute may, by agreement between the Parties, be referred to mediation in accordance with the Model Mediation Procedure issued by the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (“CEDR”), or such other mediation procedure as is agreed by the Parties. Unless otherwise agreed between the Parties, the mediator will be nominated by CEDR. To initiate the mediation the Party shall give notice in writing (the ADR Notice) to the other Party, and that latter Party will choose whether or not to accede to mediation. A copy of the ADR Notice should be sent to CEDR. The mediation will start no later than ten (10) Working Days after the date of the ADR Notice.
- 11.4. The performance of the obligations which the Recipient has under this Instruction will not cease or be delayed because a dispute has been referred to mediation under Clause 11.3 of this Instruction.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supplier-code-of-conduct>

12. CONTACT DETAILS

For queries relating to this Instruction or the submission of payment applications, please email the relevant Dispersal Grants Team at: Asylumdispersalgrant3@homeoffice.gov.uk.

SCHEDULE 1

1. PAYMENTS SCHEDULE

Introduction

A payment will be made to facilitate Local Authorities to support requests for properties made under Asylum Seeker Dispersal. The payment is to address concerns raised by Local Authorities in relation to pressure on local services associated with supporting Asylum Seekers.

This Asylum Dispersal Scheme will support Local Authorities through grant payments of £750 per asylum seeker in Home Office Supported Asylum Seeker accommodation as of 1st April 2023.

Payment Profile

Under this funding instruction the Authority will only make one Payment to the Recipient based on the eligibility criteria on 1st April 2023. No further funding will be paid by the Authority to a Recipient under this funding instruction. The Authority may opt to make further payments under further funding instructions but does not commit to do so within this instruction.

Payment: Ongoing Participation and Contribution

The Payment will be based on eligibility criteria on 1st April 2023. Eligibility will be based on number of occupied beds in Home Office Supported Asylum Seeker accommodation under the following categories, within the geographical bounds of the local authority:

- Dispersal Accommodation (DA)
- Overflow Dispersal Accommodation (ODA)
- Initial Accommodation (IA)
- Contingency Accommodation – Hotels
- Contingency Accommodation - Other

We will notify local authorities of their eligibility for the payment in June 2023. The payment will be made by 30th June 2023.

Payment will only be made for occupied beds in Home Office Supported Asylum Seeker accommodation within the geographical bounds of the local authority on 1st April 2023. If the Asylum Seeker is not a resident on that date or if Home Office Supported Asylum Seeker accommodation exists within an authority but is not occupied, then payment will not be made.

As per Clause 6.1, the Recipient will receive payment notifications in the form set out in Annex A, which includes the number of asylum seekers accommodated and the financial support allocated.

If a local authority has not received payment notification by 30th June 2023, they should email the Dispersal Grants Team at: Asylumdispersalgrant3@homeoffice.gov.uk

Payment details and timings are set out in Clauses 6.1 to 6.7.

ANNEX A – PAYMENT ALLOCATION

Annex A – Local Authority payment notification.

Annex A will be shared as a separate attachment.

ANNEX B – DISPUTED CLAIMS RESOLUTION

In this schedule, the following expressions shall have the meanings set out below:

Standard Dispute Timetable: the standard timetable for the resolution of Disputes set out below: All disputes need to be submitted no later than Thirty (30) days after payment.

Introduction

- 1.1 The Dispute Resolution Procedure shall start with the service of a Notice of Dispute.
- 1.2 The Notice of Dispute shall:
 - 1.2.1 set out the particulars of the Dispute in the form provided;
 - 1.2.2 elect the Dispute should be dealt with under the Dispute Timetable
- 1.3 Unless agreed otherwise in writing, the Grant Recipient shall continue to comply with their obligations under the Agreement regardless of the nature of the Dispute and notwithstanding the referral of the Dispute to the Dispute Resolution Procedure.
- 1.4 The time periods set out in the Dispute Resolution Timetable shall apply to all Disputes unless the Parties agree in writing that an alternative timetable should apply in respect of a specific Dispute.
- 1.5 If at any point it becomes clear that an applicable deadline set out in the Dispute Resolution Timetable cannot be met or has passed, the Parties may agree in writing to extend the deadline. Any agreed extension shall have the effect of delaying start of the subsequent stages set out in the Dispute Resolution Timetable by the period agreed in the extension.
- 1.6 The Parties shall use all reasonable endeavours to settle any Dispute between them in good faith and in accordance with the procedures set out in this Schedule.
- 1.7 In the first instance, the Authority and the Grant Recipient will use their respective reasonable endeavours to resolve all Disputes as soon as possible, at the levels and within the timescales below:

Owner	Expedited/Asylum figures Dispute Timetable
Project Manager; then	Within Twenty (20) Working Days
Programme Manager	Within Twenty (20) Working Days
Senior Responsible Officer	Within Ten (10) Working Days

To submit a dispute, please fill in Part 1 with the original Home Office Figures and Part 2 with the Local Authority figures and return the form with a covering email and supporting evidence to: asylumdispersalgrant3@homeoffice.gov.uk		
Dispute Annex B		
Part 1:	Home Office Figures	
	Grant Recipient:	Grant Funded Workstream: Asylum Seeker Dispersal
	Period 2023-2024	Total number of resident asylum seekers on the 1 April 2023 with the LA
	Total Funding Received	- £

Dispute Annex B		
Part 2:	Local Authority Figures	Please indicate if it's an over payment or under payment.
	Grant Recipient:	Grant Funded Workstream: Asylum Seeker Dispersal
		Delete as appropriate: Underpayment* Overpayment
	Period 2023-2024	Total number of resident asylum seekers on the 1 April 2023 with the LA
	Total Funding Received	- £
*If your dispute regards an underpayment, please provide the postcode.		

Please note, the numbers of supported asylum seekers residing in each Local Authority will vary on a daily basis. The Grant is based on data recorded at a specific point in time and for that reason queries relating to variances of fewer than 5 people will not be considered.

Equality and Rurality Impact Assessment Form

When completing this form you will need to provide evidence that you have considered how the ‘protected characteristics’ may be impacted upon by this decision. In line with the General Equality Duty the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard for the need to:

- a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

This form should be completed in conjunction with the guidance document available on the Intranet

Once completed a copy should be emailed to cheryl.sloan@publicagroup.uk to be signed off by an equalities officer before being published.

1. Persons responsible for this assessment:

Names: Phil Martin	
Date of assessment: 24.08.23	Telephone: 07764352360 Email: Phil.martin@publicagroup.uk

2. Name of the policy, service, strategy, procedure or function:

Asylum Dispersal Grant
Is this a new or existing one? New

3. Briefly describe it aims and objectives

The Asylum Dispersal Grant is allocated to Local Authorities to assist with the support of Asylum Seekers. A grant of £147,000 has been received by West Oxfordshire District Council and a proposal is being presented to the Executive in regards the allocation of the grant to provide capacity within the Council as well as supporting organisation such as Asylum Welcome and Community / Faith Groups who are currently bridging the gap in terms of providing support to the people living in the hotel.

4. Are there any external considerations? (e.g. Legislation/government directives)

The Asylum Dispersal Grant is part of the Home Office current arrangements to temporary house Asylum Seekers.

More detailed delivery expectations are set out in Annex A – Home Office - Funding Eligibility for Local Authorities Asylum Dispersal Scheme: Grant Payment 3

5. What evidence has helped to inform this assessment?

Source	✓	If ticked please explain what
Demographic data and other statistics, including census findings	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Recent research findings including studies of deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Results of recent consultations and surveys	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Results of ethnic monitoring data and any equalities data	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Anecdotal information from groups and agencies within Oxfordshire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	To help co-ordinate activities across the County a regular Migration Partnership meeting is held, where the allocation of the Asylum Dispersal Grant were discussed. It was felt that a 'systems' approach would not be the best approach due to hyper local nature of the support being provided.
Comparisons between similar functions / policies elsewhere	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Analysis of audit reports and reviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	

6. Please specify how intend to gather evidence to fill any gaps identified above:

No gaps identified

7. Has any consultation been carried out?

No formal consultation has been carried out, however there is regular dialogue with a wide range of groups who are currently involved with supporting the people living in the hotel.

If NO please outline any planned activities

8. What level of impact either directly or indirectly will the proposal have upon the general public / staff? (Please quantify where possible)

Level of impact	Response
NO IMPACT – The proposal has no impact upon the general public/staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
LOW – Few members of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
MEDIUM – A large group of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	<input type="checkbox"/>
HIGH – The proposal will have an impact upon the whole community/all staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: e.g. Who will this specifically impact?	
Individuals living in the Hotel	

9. Considering the available evidence, what type of impact could this function have on any of the protected characteristics?

Negative – it could disadvantage and therefore potentially not meet the General Equality duty;

Positive – it could benefit and help meet the General Equality duty;

Neutral – neither positive nor negative impact / Not sure

	Potential Negative	Potential Positive	Neutral	Reasons	Options for mitigating adverse impacts
Age – Young People			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of different age groups, but it is not specific to age	

Age – Old People			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of different age groups, but it is not specific to age	
Disability			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people with disabilities but is not specific to disability	
Sex – Male			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups, but it is not specific to gender	
Sex – Female			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups, but it is not specific to gender	
Race including Gypsy and Travellers			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of all races, but it is not specific to race	
Religion or Belief			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of all religions, but it is not specific to religion	
Sexual Orientation			✓	This proposal is inclusive to all types of sexual orientation, but it is not specific to sexual orientation	
Gender Reassignment			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups, but it is not specific to gender	
Pregnancy and maternity			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people who are pregnant and/or on maternity, but it is not specific to this group	
Geographical impacts on one area			✓	The proposal is inclusive to the whole of West Oxfordshire district, however will primarily focus in Witney and Carterton where the Asylum Seekers are currently living. That said if more Dispersed Accommodation was established in other part of the district the proposal would cover these as well.	
Other Groups		✓		The purpose of the grant is to support Asylum seekers either living in Contingency	

				Accommodation / Hotels or dispersed Accommodation.	
Rural considerations: ie Access to services; leisure facilities, transport; education; employment; broadband.				Access to services such as Education and Health have been a priority for the Asylum Seekers living in the hotel / dispersed accommodation.	

10. Action plan (add additional lines if necessary)


Action(s)	Lead Officer	Resource	Timescale

11. Is there is anything else that you wish to add?

Declaration

I/We are satisfied that an equality impact assessment has been carried out on this policy, service, strategy, procedure or function and where an negative impact has been identified actions have been developed to lessen or negate this impact. We understand that the Equality Impact Assessment is required by the District Council and that we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this assessment.

Completed By:	Phil Martin	Date:	24.08.23
Line Manager:	Frank Wilson	Date:	24.08.23
Reviewed by Corporate Equality Officer:	Cheryl Sloan	Date:	29.08.23

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 13 SEPTEMBER 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023-24 QUARTER ONE</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>ALL</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Dan Levy – Executive Member for Finance. Email: dan.levy@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Giles Hughes – Chief Executive Officer. Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>To provide details of the Council’s operational performance at the end of 2023-24 Quarter One (Q1).</p>
<p>Annex</p>	<p>Annex A – Service Dashboards</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p><i>That the Executive Resolves to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Note the 2023/24 Quarter 1 Service Performance Report</i> 2. <i>Ask officers to review the performance indicator data set to better reflect the emerging priorities and actions in the revised Council Plan.</i>
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All • Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife • Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>YES</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>NO</p>

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The Council monitors service performance each quarter and a report on progress towards achieving the aim and priorities set out in the Corporate Plan is produced at the end of Q2 and Q4. On 13 July 2022, the Executive agreed to revise the Council Plan and develop an Action Plan that will set out how the priorities in the Council Plan will be delivered. Following consultation with stakeholders, a final draft was presented to the Executive on 11 January 2023 and adopted at Full Council on 18 January 2023.
- 1.2. A high-level Commissioning Framework was approved by the Executive in October 2020 which sets out the relationship between Publica and the Council and their respective responsibilities. Publica provides the necessary information, including a range of performance indicators, to the Council so it can assess whether the commissioned services are being delivered in accordance with the agreed quality and standard. The Council's Chief Executive Officer is responsible for reviewing and approving the information provided in this report prior to its publication.
- 1.3. The Council's Chief Executive has received a report on service performance and has assessed it in line with the high level Commissioning Statement. Particular attention has been drawn to the following:
 - i. At the end of Q1, the council tax collection rate was the highest it has been for Quarter One since before 2019-20. The service reports progress in collecting previous year's debt following the reinstatement of recovery process and the current cycle being up to date. There is still a sizeable sum outstanding, but manageable payment schedules to collect the arrears have been issued to those residents affected.
 - ii. For Business Rates, the collection rate is back to pre-pandemic levels for Q1 and the reinstated recovery process has made progress with collecting previous years debt:
 - a. 17.69% of outstanding 2020-21 arrears
 - b. 16.55% of outstanding 2021-22 arrears
 - c. 5.60% of outstanding 2022-23 arrears
 - iii. Through the Homes for Ukraine scheme, the Council has been actively supporting Ukrainian families and individuals in finding permanent homes. Additionally, the Council provides assistance with sourcing furniture, white goods, and offers general support to ensure guests have everything they need to set up their homes.
 - iv. Forty-five of the targeted 69 affordable homes were delivered in Q1, including 22 for affordable rent and 23 for shared ownership. Some forecasted completions have been moved back to Q2/Q3 but the year-end total completions is anticipated to be up to target.
 - v. The Executive agreed to additional resources in the budget 2022-23 to increase enforcement activities around fly tipping and improving its response to issues raised. Q1 of this year has seen a significant reduction in fly-tipping and CCTV cameras are planned to be installed at fly tipping hot spots later in the year.

2. COUNCIL PRIORITIES

- 2.1. The West Oxfordshire Council Plan 2023 – 27 was adopted at Full Council on 18 January 2023. This presents five strategic priorities, of equal importance, for the District:
- Putting Residents First
 - A Good Quality of Life for All
 - A Better Environment for People and Wildlife
 - Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency
 - Working Together for West Oxfordshire
- 2.2. Portfolio Holders will work with officers to develop an Action Plan that will identify a range of actions to be taken over the next 12 months and beyond to make progress on the delivery of the Council Plan priorities.
- 2.3. As highlighted in the external auditors Value for Money conclusion the Council performance indicator set needs to be reviewed to better reflect the new Council Plan and Action Plan to provide assurance that the Plans are being delivered and to offer appropriate insights towards accomplishing the strategic aims.

3. SERVICE PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

- 3.1. The Council's performance has been mixed, with progress in Tax Collection Rates, Land Charges Response Times and Planning Determination Times. However, the cost-of-living crisis continues to result in increased customer contact for certain services. The challenging economic situation has put additional strain on residents, leading to an upsurge in queries and concerns.
- 3.2. Processing times for Housing Benefit Changes of Circumstance and New Claims for Council Tax Support are showing a negative trend but processes have been implemented to mitigate this and at the time of writing, the service reports much improved performance due to the changes.
- 3.3. Customer Satisfaction continues to be high, and the Council topped the Gov Metric league table in May.
- 3.4. Missed bin collections have improved due to further training and collaboration with our environmental services partner, Ubico.
- 3.5. The Council remains committed to further improving its performance and service delivery and actively investing in the development and implementation of automation and self-serve options for customers. By providing accessible and efficient self-help tools, customers can address their queries and concerns independently, leading to a decrease in the need for repeated interactions with services. It will continue to monitor and assess the impact of improvement programs in reducing customer contact and enhancing operational efficiency.

KEY POINTS BY SERVICE AREA THEMES

- 3.6. Customer Services
- Average call waiting time for Q1 saw a reduction in average waiting time from Q4 by 8 seconds to 77 seconds. This is a marked improvement from Q1 2022-23 with a reduction in average by over 100 seconds.

- Call numbers continue to decrease. This trend is expected to continue with further work surrounding Channel Choice encouraging customers to self-serve where possible. The service is proactively working with other services to reduce processing times and repeat contact by using direct links to back-office systems resulting in improved customer experience.
- The spike in 'After Call' work in the top chart in May has been attributed to Council Tax reminder letters and residents calling in to discuss these letters.
- Customer Satisfaction continues to be high, and the Council has been in the top four of the Gov Metric league table each month placing 2nd in April, 1st in May and 4th in June. Although this is based on a small proportion of our calls, numbers are comparable to other District Councils, hence the 'league tables' being a useful comparator.
- Welch Way reopened on 24 July for face-to-face customers. In the interim, advisors had been working out of Woodgreen to ensure continued service.

3.7. Development Management

- The service has performed very well processing applications within agreed times.
61 minor applications were determined in Q1, compared to 90 applications in the same period of the previous year. 96.72% of these were determined within the agreed time (including EOT)
9 major applications were determined in Q1, compared to 7 applications in the same period of the previous year. 88.89% of these were determined within the agreed time (including EOT)
220 other applications were determined in Q1, compared to 310 applications in the same period of the previous year. 96.36% of these were determined within the agreed time (including EOT)
- Application numbers continue to slow but nonetheless, total income received for Q1 is £387,651 which is £84,651 above the target. Pre-App income was marginally below the target of £16,353 sitting at £15,093.
- There were 11 appeals decided this quarter, four of which were allowed. As this metric is cumulative, it may well reduce throughout the year depending on how many appeals are received.
- The service reports a substantial reduction in enforcement cases this quarter.
- The key findings not requiring Member authorisation from the PAS report that went to cabinet this quarter have been implemented which has seen an upturn in performance.
- There was one complaint received in Q1, which was not upheld.

3.8. Housing

- Homelessness continues to be an issue and the amount of homeless people presenting continues to be high.
- Hostels are still running at capacity. As there has been a reduction in homelessness at Cotswold, West households have been able to utilise them. There are 2 hostels in West, one which only has 60% capacity currently due to maintenance issues.
- Use of B & B and Travelodge accommodation has reduced from last year and this has reduced the budget pressure from Housing Benefit Subsidy losses as a consequence but this

remains and area of risk and the team are seeking alternative emergency accommodation solutions to better match demand and supply.

- Implementation of the Ukrainian Top Up Fund has been secured and will be used for additional specialist staffing to free up the wider Housing Team.
- Further funding to work with Housing Association partners has been allocated for properties for refugees. Depending on developers, these properties will become available in Q3/Q4.
- Properties continue to be added and removed from the Long-Term Empty Homes (LTE) list but there is an upward trend.
- Maintaining registers of long-term empty properties, can help monitor the situation, target interventions, and communicate with property owners more effectively.
- Forty-five properties including 22 for affordable rent and 23 for shared ownership have been delivered in Bampton and Witney.
- Forecasted completions at Eynsham and Carterton have been moved back to Q2 and Q3.
- Year-end total completions are anticipated to be healthy at this stage.

3.9. Revenues and Benefits

- Q1 started with a backlog of work for new claims and change of circumstances cases and an increased number of applications from residents because of the Cost-of-Living Crisis continue to be received.
- To improve performance, investigations were made into the automation capability. On speaking with other councils, who were able to achieve 70% of processing automation as opposed to the 40-45% that the service was achieving, it became apparent that the same capability was possible, but processes had to change to maximise on the capabilities of the system. This way of working will continue to be tested and monitored but week-by-week, the processing stats are reducing.
- A recent audit of the Council Tax Services indicated that a significant sum of arrears had accumulated during challenging circumstances associated with the pandemic. The recovery of these arrears had been suspended to support customers in difficult financial circumstances and to facilitate the adoption of a new Council Tax platform enabling self service payments. The recovery process has now been reinstated and the current cycle is up to date, resulting in significant improvements in the collection of those arrears through manageable payment schedules for those residents affected.
- The collection rate for Q1 is well above target and the highest it has been since prior to 2019/2020. Officers will look to reinstate pre-pandemic targets moving forward.
- Collection of prior years arrears continues to progress and in the order of 10% of prior years' arrears has also taken place in the first quarter.

3.10. Waste and Environment

- Composting tonnages increased in Q1 as would be expected during gardening season coupled with heavy rains giving weight to grass cuttings etc. Recycling tonnage remains consistent but residual waste has lessened to the lowest it has been since before Q1 2020-21.
- To improve the performance of missed bins, a great deal of work has been completed with crews to ensure they are comfortable using the in-cab technology (Alloy). There were some issues that have since been rectified with Alloy in that Service Failures were being logged as

access issues. This would have had an impact on the number of reported misses, but the target was still achieved with 107.6 bins per 100,000 missed in the quarter against a target of 110.

- There is a backlog of containers to be delivered to residents and a project team is in place to get the backlog under control and any new containers delivered within agreed times. Work is also underway with Customer Services to ensure no repeat orders are put through.
- Q1 saw a 62% reduction in fly tips indicating that the work the Environmental Services Officer has undertaken developing relationships with agencies dealing with rural crime has had a positive impact and surveillance cameras are to be rolled out soon at fly tipping hot spots.

3.11. The service dashboards are attached at Annex A.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1. None

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1. None

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

6.1. None

7. BACKGROUND OPTIONS

7.1. None

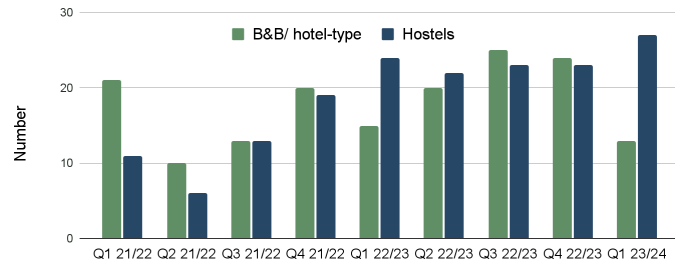
END



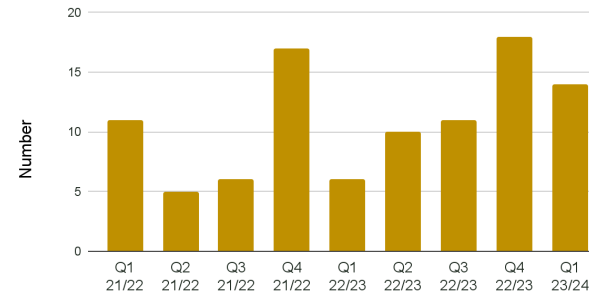
Housing Quarter I

The Number of households in Emergency Accommodation (B&B/hotel type; and hostels owned and managed by the Council) at the end of each quarter

** 22 bed spaces available in hostels

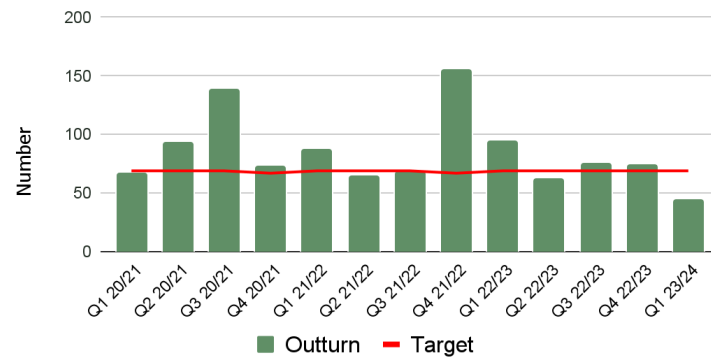


The number of successful 'move ons' from Emergency Accommodation to long term accommodation

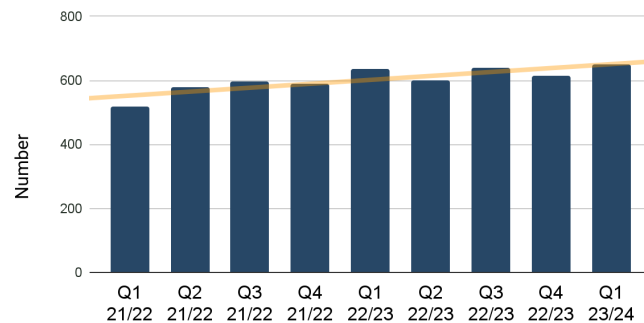


The number of affordable homes reaching practical completion

*practical completion is when the property is ready for occupation; Target is from Local Plan



The number of Long Term Empty Properties (6 months plus) in the District



Homelessness continues to be an issue and the amount of homeless people presenting continues to be high.

Hostels are still running at capacity. As there has been a reduction in homelessness at Cotswold, West households have been able to utilise them. There are 2 hostels in West, one which only has 60% capacity currently due to maintenance issues.

Implementation of the Ukrainian Top Up Fund has been secured and will be used for additional specialist staffing to free up the wider Housing Team.

Further funding to work with Housing Association partners has been allocated for properties for refugees. Depending on developers, these properties will become available in Q3/Q4.

Long Term Empty Homes

Properties continue to be added and removed from the list but as the graph indicates there is an upward trend.

Maintaining registers of long-term empty properties, can help monitor the situation, target interventions, and communicate with property owners more effectively.

There have been challenges this quarter due to the absence of the Empty Homes Coordinator due to bereavement, but work has now resumed.

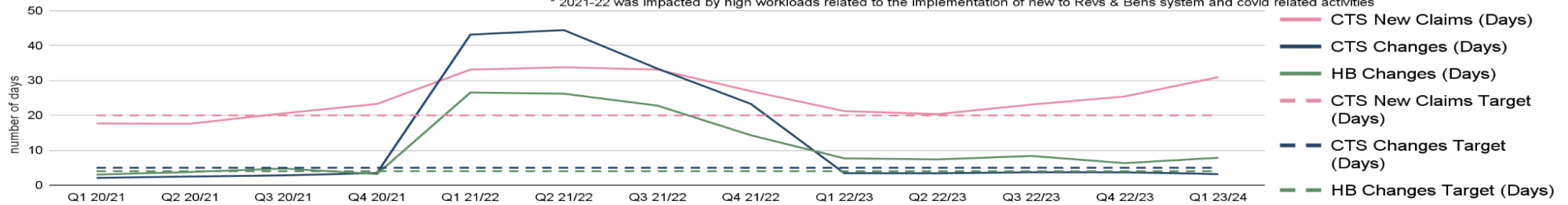
Affordable Housing Delivery

Forty-five properties including 22 for affordable rent and 23 for shared ownership have been delivered in Bampton and Witney. Forecasted completions at Eynsham and Carterton have been moved back to Q2 and Q3. Year-end total completions are anticipated to be healthy at this stage.

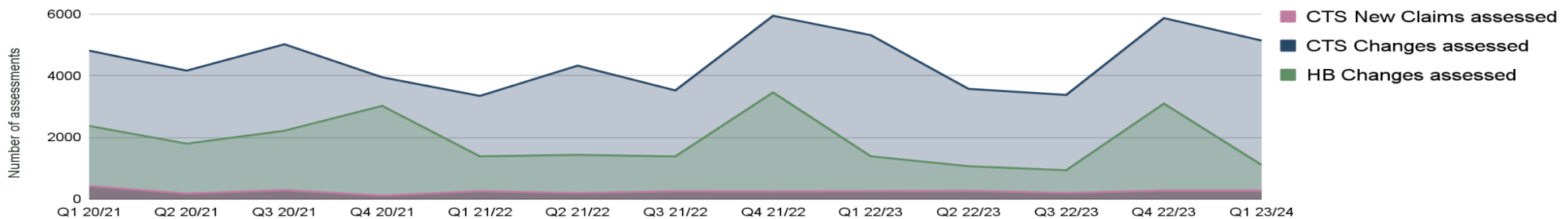
Revenues and Benefits Quarter I

Average number of days to process Council Tax Support (CTS) New Claims and Changes and Housing Benefit (HB) Changes

* 2021-22 was impacted by high workloads related to the implementation of new to Revs & Bens system and covid related activities



Number of assessments for Council Tax Support (CTS) New Claims and Changes and Housing Benefit (HB) Changes



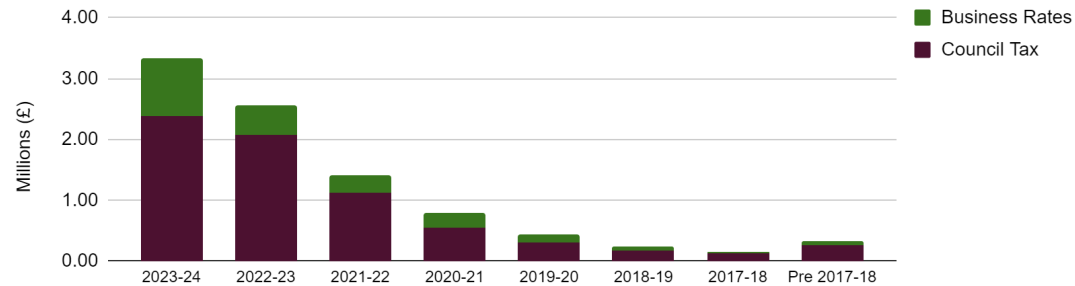
23/24 Collection Rates

Council Tax Business Rates

Actual Target Actual Target

	Council Tax Actual	Council Tax Target	Business Rates Actual	Business Rates Target
QTR	38.3%	23%	38.1%	25%
YTD	38.3%	23%	38.1%	25%

Council Tax & Business Rates Aged Debt



Qtrly Aged Debt

% Change Council Tax

174.78%

% Change Bus. Rates

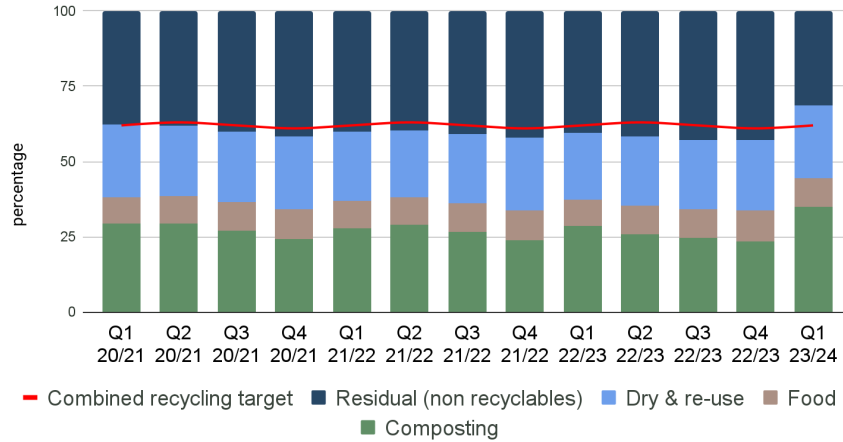
182.27%

Q1 started with a backlog of work for new claims and change of circumstances cases and a large number of applications from residents as a result of the Cost-of-Living Crisis continues to be received. Initial changes to procedures to place more reliance on the customer to provide supporting documentation, have not been as successful as anticipated. In order to improve performance, investigations were made into the automation capability. On speaking with other councils, who were able to achieve 70% of processing automation as opposed to the 40-45% that the service was achieving, it became apparent that the same capability was possible but processes had to change in order to maximise on the capabilities of the system. This way of working will continue to be tested and monitored but week-by-week, the processing stats are reducing. A recent audit of the Council Tax Services indicated that a significant sum of arrears had accumulated during challenging circumstances associated with the pandemic. The recovery of these arrears had been suspended to support customers in difficult financial circumstances and to facilitate the adoption of a new Council Tax platform enabling self service payments. The recovery process has now been reinstated and the current cycle is up to date, resulting in significant improvements in the collection of those arrears through manageable payment schedules for those residents affected. The collection rate for Q1 is well above target and the highest it has been since prior to 2019/2020.. As the target has been consistently hit in Q1, reinstating the previous target of 29% and investigating adjusting the targets for Q2 and Q3 respectively should be considered.

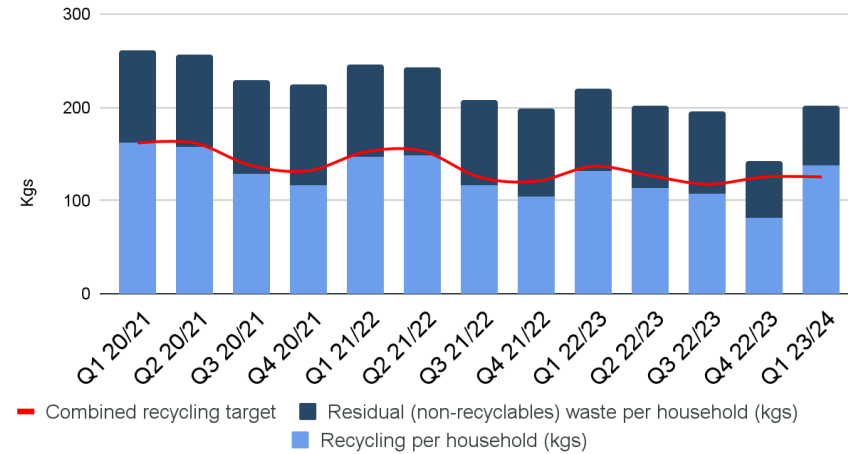


Waste and Environment Quarter I

(Cumulative) Household waste collected composition



Household waste collected per household



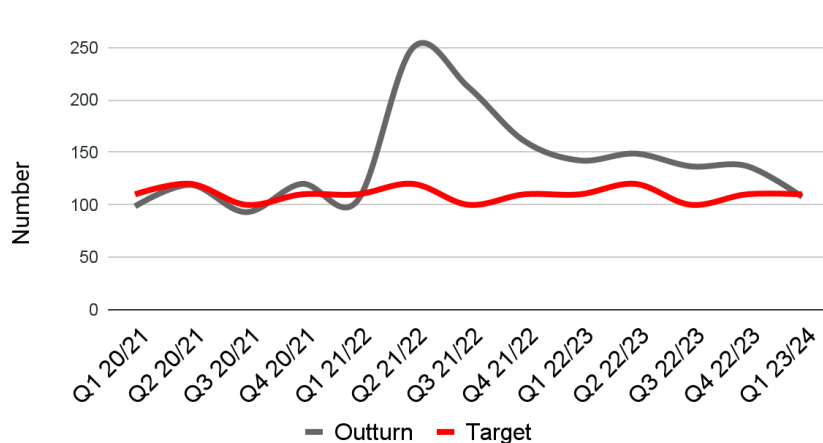
Composting tonnages increased in Q1 as would be expected during gardening season coupled with heavy rains giving weight to grass cuttings etc. Recycling tonnage remains fairly consistent but residual waste has lessened to the lowest it has been since before Q1 2020-21.

To improve the performance of missed bins, a great deal of work has been completed with crews to ensure they are comfortable using the in-cab technology (Alloy). There were some issues that have since been rectified with Alloy in that Service Failures were being logged as access issues. This would have had an impact on the number of reported misses but the target was still achieved with 107.6 bins per 100,000 missed in the quarter against a target of 110.

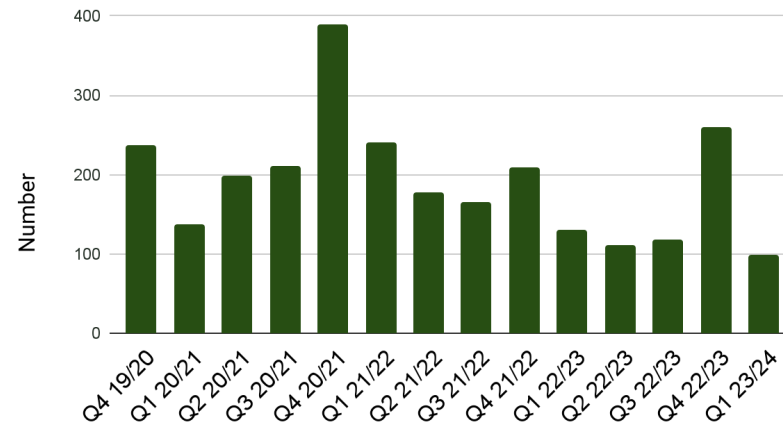
There is a backlog of containers to be delivered to residents and a project team is in place to get the backlog under control and any new containers delivered within agreed times. Work is also underway with Customer Services to ensure no repeat orders are put through.

Q1 saw a 62% reduction in fly tips indicating that the work the Environmental Services Officer has undertaken developing relationships with agencies dealing with rural crime has had a positive impact and surveillance cameras are to be rolled out soon at fly tipping hot spots.

Missed bins per 100,000 scheduled collections



Number of flytips collected



This quarter's rating:

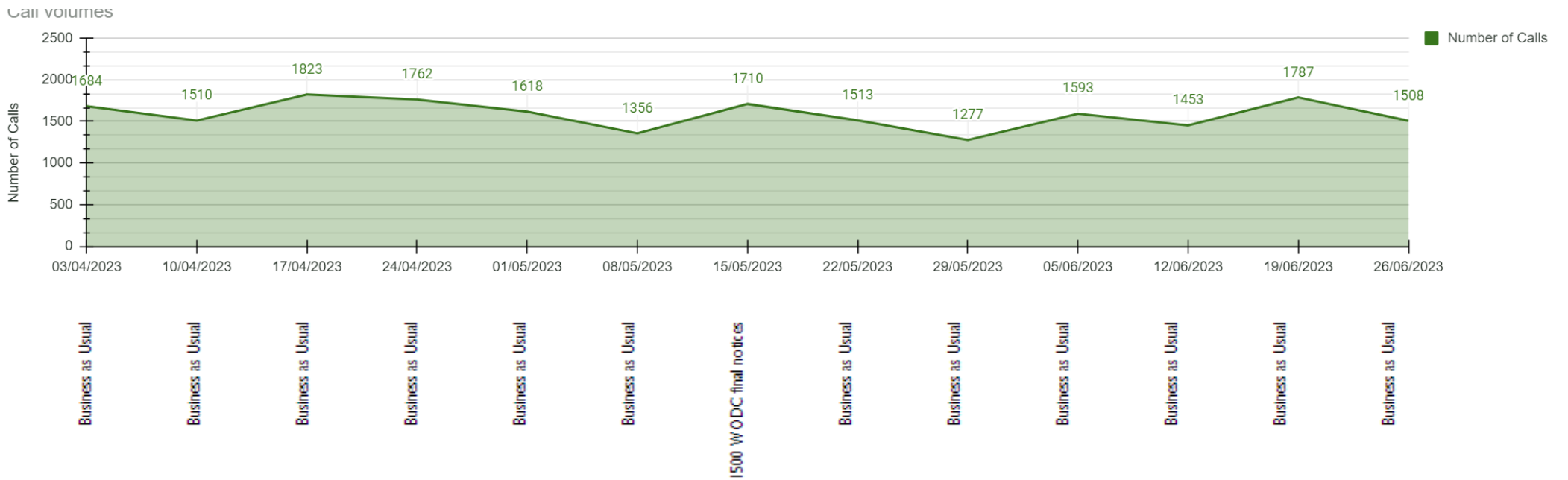
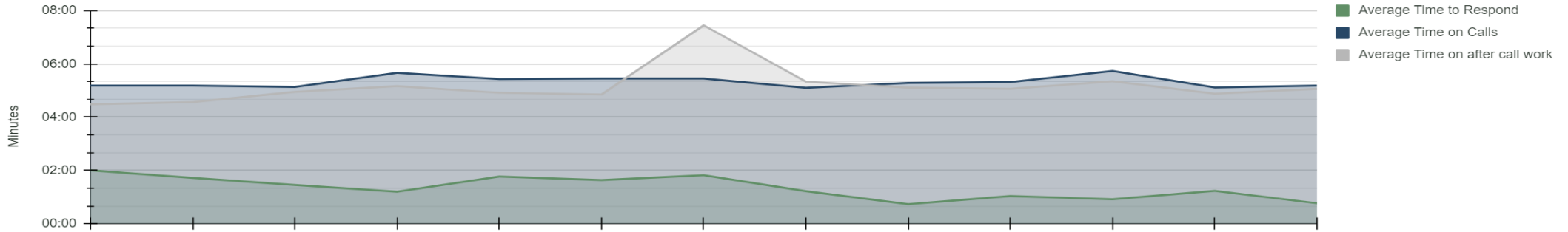


Satisfied

Customer Services Quarter I



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL



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Average call waiting time for Q1 saw a reduction in average waiting time from Q4 by 8 seconds to 77 seconds. This is a marked improvement from Q1 2022-23 with a reduction in average by over a minute and forty seconds.

Call numbers continue to decrease. This trend is expected to continue with further work surrounding Channel Choice encouraging customers to self-serve where possible. The service are proactively working with other services to reduce processing times and repeat contact by using direct links to back office systems resulting in improved customer experience.

The spike in After Call Work in the top chart in May has been attributed to Council Tax reminder letters and residents calling in to discuss these letters.

Customer Satisfaction continues to be high and the Council has been in the top four of the Gov Metric league table each month placing 2nd in April, 1st in May and 4th in June. Although this is based on a very small proportion of our calls, numbers are comparable to other District Councils, hence the 'league tables' being a useful comparator.

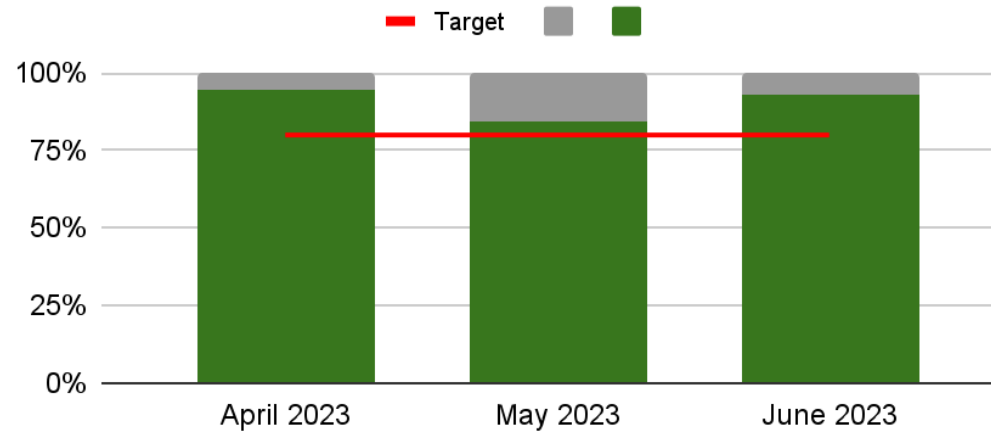
Welch Way will reopen on 24 July for face to face customers. In the interim, advisors had been working out of Woodgreen to ensure continued service.

Development Management QI 2023-24

Team Stats (3 month rolling)

	In Hand	Decided
Major	10	9
Minor	55	61
Other	24	220
	Won	Lost
Appeals	73	23
	Received	Responded
Preapps	108	108
	Received	Responded
PDC	120	119

Planning Decisions (PS1/PS2) made within 8 weeks or agreed time (Excludes applications for discharge of conditions, pre application advice and general enquiries)

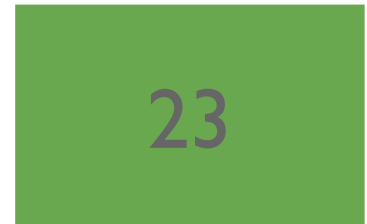


Cases in Hand

Principal



Senior



Planner



The service has performed very well processing applications within agreed times.

- 61 minor applications were determined in Q1, compared to 90 applications in the same period of the previous year. 96.72% of these were determined within the agreed time (including EOT)
- 9 major applications were determined in Q1, compared to 7 applications in the same period of the previous year. 88.89% of these were determined within the agreed time (including EOT)
- 220 other applications were determined in Q1, compared to 310 applications in the same period of the previous year. 96.36% of these were determined within the agreed time (including EOT)

Application numbers continue to slow but nonetheless, total income received for Q1 is £387,651 which is £84,651 above the target. Pre-App income was just shy of the target of £16,353 sitting at £15,093.

There were 11 appeals decided this quarter, four of which were allowed. As this metric is cumulative, it may well reduce throughout the year depending on how many appeals are received.

The service reports a substantial reduction in enforcement cases this quarter.

The key findings not requiring Member authorisation from the PAS report that went to cabinet this quarter have been implemented which has seen an upturn in performance.

There was one complaint received in Q1, which was not upheld.

KEY	In hand	+/-	+/-
Planners	45	10	20
Seniors	25	5	10
Principals	15	3	5



WODC FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

1st April - 30th June 2023

Service Area	£k			Variance (under) / over
	Original Budget	Profiled Budget	Actual Exp.	
Democratic and Committee Services	1,195	386	401	15
Environmental & Regulatory Services	594	121	147	26
Environmental Services	8,041	696	808	112
Finance, Human Resources & Procurement	1,035	916	917	1
ICT, Change & Customer Services	2,210	854	843	(11)
Land, Legal & Property	1,147	444	471	27
Leisure & Communities	1,282	190	170	(20)
Planning & Strategic Housing	1,174	296	236	(60)
Revenues & Housing Support	1,407	215	174	(41)
Investment Property and Retained Services	(3,037)	(1,196)	(855)	341
Total cost of services	15,048	2,922	3,312	390
Plus:				
Investment income receipts	(1,189)	(297)	(363)	(66)
Cost of services before financing:	13,859	2,625	2,949	324

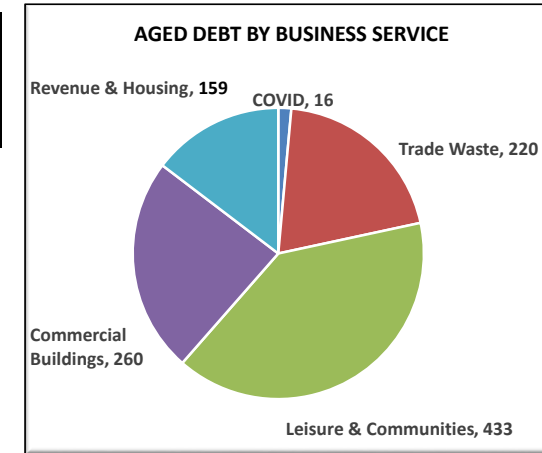
AGED DEBT SUMMARY

	Jun-23	Mar-23	Dec-22	Movement vs. prior period		
Invoices	1,666	1,233	1,297	433	35%	↑
£k	1,088	1,913	613	-825	43%	↓

Aged Debt Summary:

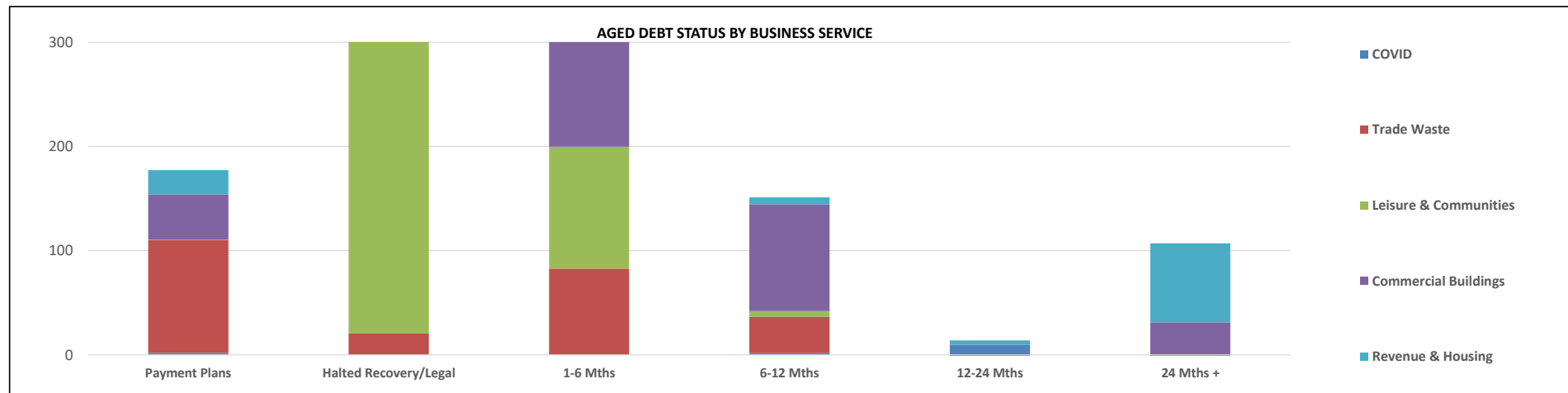
Whilst there has been a notable increase in the number of invoices outstanding when compared to the previous quarter, this is being driven by annual or semi-annual subscriptions being billed in April.

Business Waste has been a priority focus for Aged Debt activity over the past quarter due to this spike in billing volumes. Whilst we have been able to clear a significant amount of the invoices which became overdue during that period, further process improvements will need to be implemented by the end of August, in preparation for the next subscription billing cycle.



Overall Summary:

Q1 results show an overall overspend compared to budget. The most significant variance is in Investment Property. Void units at Des Roches Square have cost the Council £71k in rent and £72k in Business Rates in Q1. A new tenant has now been signed on a 10 year lease and will move in in Q2. Void units at Talisman have cost the Council £96k in Q1 but a new tenant has now been signed for Unit 1. Market conditions are such that it is necessary to offer an inducement of an initial rent free period to secure tenants on a 10 or 15 year lease, which the Council has done over the last 18 months. Therefore there will continue to be a shortfall of rental income compared to budget for the remainder of this financial year.



 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 13 SEPTEMBER 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023-24 QUARTER ONE</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>ALL</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Dan Levy – Executive Member for Finance Email: dan.levy@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>James Howse – Interim Director of Finance Email: james.howse@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Detailed Revenue Budget Comparison Annex B – Capital Spend Against Budget</p>
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>To detail the Council's financial performance for Quarter One 2023-2024 (April to June).</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p><i>That the Executive Resolves to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Note the Council's Financial Performance for Quarter One 2023-2024 (April to June).</i>
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • A Good Quality of Life for All • A Better Environment for People and Wildlife • Responding to the Ecological and Climate Crisis • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>NO</p>

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL - Budget Monitoring

Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/24 - Quarter 1, 1st April 2023 to 30th June 2023

Quarter 1			
Original Budget 2023/24	Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£	£

Service Area

Democratic and Committee Services	1,194,663	386,153	401,402	15,249
Environmental & Regulatory Services	594,312	121,272	147,656	26,385
Environmental Services	8,041,444	696,270	808,394	112,124
Finance, Human Resources & Procurement	1,035,473	916,503	917,269	766
ICT, Change & Customer Services	2,210,012	854,746	843,510	(11,236)
Land, Legal & Property	1,147,227	444,636	471,685	27,049
Leisure & Communities	1,282,513	190,159	170,186	(19,973)
Planning & Strategic Housing	1,174,379	296,633	236,041	(60,592)
Revenues & Housing Support	1,406,799	215,399	174,279	(41,120)
Investment Property and Retained Services	(3,037,786)	(1,196,415)	(855,047)	341,368
Total cost of services	15,049,036	2,925,356	3,315,375	390,020

Plus:

Investment income receipts	(1,189,728)	(297,432)	(363,609)	(66,177)
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Cost of services before financing:	13,859,308	2,627,924	2,951,766	323,842
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The 2023/24 budget was approved by full Council in February 2023 and set an overall annual revenue budget of £350,129 deficit to be funded from General Fund balances.

This report sets out the revenue budget position as at Quarter 1 (Q1). It shows an overall Q1 overspend compared to the profiled Q1 budget of £323,842. This means that the overall revenue outturn position is likely to be worse than the budgeted deficit of £350,129. Further action is therefore required to mitigate the risk of a significantly increased 2023/24 deficit.

Poor performance in some income generating areas is a continuation of that seen in 2022/23 i.e. Building Control, Land Charges and voids in our Investment Property portfolio. Building Control and Land Charges have been underperforming against budget for a number of years due to a decline in market share. Whilst the reasons for this can be complex, strategies will need to be implemented to reverse this decline so as not to add to the significant budget gap identified in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

As part of the 2024/25 budgeting process, the MTFs will be revisited during the Autumn to incorporate inflationary increases and revised expectations on income. On the basis of the Q1 position reported here, it is expected that there will be significant additional pressures on the Council's MTFs, particularly in relation to reduced income. These pressures will be modelled and brought back to the Executive and Council as part of the budget setting cycle.

SIGNIFICANT VARIANCES

A full list of variances by cost centre is included in Annex A. The most significant variances, listed by Service Area (as set out in the table above), are as follows:

Environmental & Regulatory Services, £26,385 overspent at Q1

1.1. Building Control

Income is £24,000 below budget, a decline of 26% compared to the same period last year. The service struggles against competition from the Private sector and the general state of the economy. With the sharp rise in interest rates over the last year, mortgage and borrowing costs have impacted on the volume of house renovations and moves which shrinks the market for Building Control commercial services. The latest estimates for the Bank of England base rate is that it will peak this year at 5.75% and will fall gradually. Building Control income has been below budget for the last decade in spite of the budget being reduced periodically. The forecast for this year is that income will be underachieved by £90,000. It would be appropriate to undertake a review of the service to determine if there are any strategies that could be put in place to reverse the decline in income and to set an achievable budget in 2024/25 and beyond without simply cutting the targets more sharply and accepting the losses.

Environmental Services, £112,124 overspent at Q1

1.2. Recycling

An additional £80,000 of growth was included in the budget for the Suez contract, taking the budgeted sum to £1m for the 2023/24 financial year. At the end of Q1 this contract is £40,000 overspent and is forecast to be up to £200,000 overspent at year end. This represents an increase in costs for this contract of £558,000 since 2020/21. With no increase in income from recycling credits or savings in the Ubico contract to offset it, this growth will increase the budget gap.

1.3. Green Waste

Income is £68,000 below budget. As 98% of green waste income is collected by the end of August the forecast is that the service will be £65,000 overspent at year end. The licence fee was increased by £5 for 2023/24 to £45 with current figures showing that licence renewals have fallen 4% from 2022/23. Fees & charges are reviewed individually as part of the budget setting process which begins in Q2.

Planning & Strategic Housing, £60,592 underspent at Q1

1.4. Development Management

Planning Fee income is £85,000 above target at the end of Q1, a 39% improvement on the equivalent period last year, boosted by a major application received in June. Planning income is very volatile and is arguably the most inconsistent income stream in the Council with significant increases/decreases seen on a monthly basis. Whilst comparison against previous periods is standard to provide context for current performance, previous results are not a guarantee of future

performance. Much is dependent on the receipt of major applications which are impacted by general economic conditions i.e. interest & inflation.

Revenues & Housing Support, £41,120 underspent at Q1

1.5. Homelessness

Focussed work during the first quarter of the year has been done by the Homelessness Team to reduce the number of clients housed in Travelodge and to increase the pace of move on and secure tenancies being found. The result is that the average number of clients in emergency accommodation has reduced from 60 to 50 since reporting the 2022/23 outturn, a significant improvement, not just for our clients but also financially for the Council.

The Government have recognised the additional pressure placed upon Homelessness Services nationally from the Afghan & Ukrainian Refugee schemes and has provided an additional £220,541 funding which the Council received in April 2023. The under spend in Homelessness is a timing difference between the grant being received and the profiling of the related expenditure. The grant will be fully spent by the end of this financial year.

Land, Legal & Property, £27,049 overspent at Q1

1.6. Land Charges

Similar to Building Control, Land Charges struggles against competition from Personal Search companies and therefore sees a below budget performance in their income. LLCI searches have transferred to the Land Registry, for which we have received compensation funding from the government of £14,000 per year for two years. The impact of the transfer of these basic searches will therefore not be seen in the budget until 2025/26. In Q1 income is £17,000 below budget almost the same as Q1 2022/23 and the outturn last year was income £66,000 less than budget. The forecast for this year is therefore similar to outturn last year.

1.7. Legal

The overspend relates to court costs for a Judicial Review application brought against the Council by the Friends of The Cotswolds in relation to a Planning matter and external consultant work to undertake a review of Legal Services across the Publica partner Councils. The review recommended that transformation work to implement better systems and increased capacity across the legal services was required.

Investment Property and Retained Services, £341,368 overspent at Q1

1.8. Investment Property

Q1 performance in Investment Property follows on from the outturn position reported to Members in July 2023, with income £296,000 below budget. This was due to vacant units in Des Roches, Talisman & Marriotts Close. During Q1 new tenancies have been signed for Unit 1 Talisman and Des Roches and Sports Direct will be opening in Marriotts Close in September. It is now a market standard to offer rent free or rent reduced periods for new tenants in return for the stability of a 10-15 year lease so most of the positive impact on rental income will be seen in 2024/25 and beyond. This area will therefore be a significant pressure on the 2023/24 outturn position. An updated forecast will be provided in the Q2 reporting.

Council Tax & Business Rates Update

In recognition of previously identified Covid related arrears issues, this report includes an update on the Council Tax and Business Rates position.

The tables shows the arrears specific to 2020/21 to 2022/23, which have been most effected by the Pandemic and Cost of Living Crisis and compares the Q1 position to that at 31st March 2023.

Council Tax Arrears	20/21	21/22	22/23	Total
	£	£	£	£
31.03.2023	1,282,456	2,209,117	2,993,806	6,485,379
Collected in Q1	-90,963	-168,766	-435,126	-694,855
Credited/Refunded in Q1	-98,967	-44,964	-248,552	-392,483
Balance 30.06.23	1,092,526	1,995,387	2,310,128	5,398,041

Business Rates Arrears	20/21	21/22	22/23	Total
	£	£	£	£
31.03.2023	400,670	749,187	1,319,753	2,469,610
Collected in Q1	-87,699	-117,195	-290,540	-495,434
Credited/Refunded in Q1	-106,778	-221,352	-86,229	-414,359
Balance 30.06.23	206,193	410,640	942,984	1,559,817

The above tables show that in Q1 some £1,190,289 (£694,855 council tax + £495,434 business rates) has been collected in relation to 2020/21, 2021/22 & 2022/23 arrears.

It should be noted that levels of Council Tax refunds raised in Q1 for the selected years stand at £47,835 and Business Rates refunds stand at £315,684. The remainder relate to credits for reliefs that have been applied for in the current financial year and backdated where appropriate.

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Annex A - Comparison of Q1 Budget Monitoring

	Q1 position		
	Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
	£	£	£
Democratic Services			
DRM001-Democratic Representation and Mgmt	99,230	104,936	5,706
DRM002-Support To Elected Bodies	115,352	117,282	1,930
ELE001-Registration of Electors	18,203	17,442	(761)
ELE002-District Elections	58,925	62,812	3,887
ELE004-Parliamentary Elections	0	0	0
ELE005-Parish Elections	0	1,103	1,103
ELE006-County Elections	0	0	0
ELE007-European Elections	0	0	0
ELE008-Police & Crime Commissioner Elections	0	0	0
SUP001-Administration	94,443	97,827	3,384
Total - Democratic Services	386,153	401,402	15,249

	Q1 position		
	Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
	£	£	£
Environmental & Regulatory Services			
BUC001-Building Control - Fee Earning Work	(16,470)	2,819	19,289
BUC002-Building Control - Non Fee Earning Work	842	836	(5)
EMP001-Emergency Planning	2,278	2,899	622
ESM001-Environment - Service Mgmt & Supp Serv	25,734	25,547	(187)
PSH002-Private Sector Housing-Condition of Dwellings	750	0	(750)
REG001-Environmental Health General	0	3,214	3,214
REG002-Licensing	(9,934)	(11,816)	(1,882)
REG009-Environmental Protection	52,784	51,494	(1,290)
REG010-Noise Control	0	0	0
REG011-Authorised Process	(11,972)	(9,957)	2,015
REG013-Pollution Control	34,785	38,342	3,557
REG016-Food Safety	36,726	35,700	(1,025)
REG021-Statutory Burials	0	(55)	(55)
TAC309-Other Trading Services - Markets	5,750	8,633	2,883
Total - Environmental & Regulatory Services	121,272	147,656	26,385

BUC001 - Income is £24k below target in the first quarter of the year, a 26% worsening of the position in the same period in 22/23. This continues the downward trend seen in Building Control fee income since before the Pandemic.

Q1 position		
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

Environmental Services

CCC001-Climate Change	64,738	65,381	643
COR301-Policy Initiatives - Shopmobility	4,120	4,094	(26)
CPK001-Car Parks - Off Street	144,889	137,174	(7,715)
ENI002-Grounds Maintenance	115,584	120,341	4,757
ENI303-Landscape Maintenance	19,497	15,392	(4,105)
FLD001-Flood Defence and Land Drainage	45,229	50,742	5,514
REG004-Dog Warden	10,661	22,571	11,911
REG005-Public Health Sewerage	(7)	(7)	0
REG018-Pest Control	3,740	1,274	(2,466)
REG019-Public Conveniences	27,803	22,032	(5,771)
REG023-Environmental Strategy	20,869	20,047	(821)
RYC001-Recycling	822,651	859,098	36,447
RYC002-Green Waste	(1,188,816)	(1,120,991)	67,825
STC004-Environmental Cleansing	276,646	285,096	8,450
STC011-Abandoned Vehicles	0	(310)	(310)
TRW001-Trade Waste	(198,292)	(187,725)	10,567
TRW002-Clinical Waste	0	0	0
WST001-Household Waste	501,096	488,759	(12,337)
WST004-Bulky Household Waste	8,515	8,263	(252)
WST301-Env. Services Depot, Downs Rd, Witney	7,771	7,698	(73)

Total - Environmental Services

696,270	808,394	112,124
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CPK001 – Income is £14k below budget, a 14% improvement on the same period last year, but is offset by a £20K under spend in Business Rates. Business Rates liability across the Council will be reviewed as part of the 24/25 budget setting process.

REG004 – the over spend shows a continuation of the 22/23 outturn position. The 24/25 budget will be reviewed in line with the future strategy for the service area.

RYC001 – the Suez contract is £40k overspent and the current forecast is it will be £145k overspent by the end of the year.

RYC002 - Fee income is £68k below budget. With around 98% of fee income for the year collected between March and August the forecast is Green Waste licence income will be £65k below budget at the end of the year. The cost of a green waste licence will be discussed as part of the fees & charges budget setting exercise for 2024/25.

STC004 - the income budget includes recharges to Parishes for bin collection. In Q1 this income is £7k below target

TRW001 - Income is £11k below budget which reflects a small decrease in customer base since the billing cycle up to the end of March 2023.

WST001 – Bin replacements are £11k underspend for household waste, but bin replacement expenditure across the waste service overall is on budget.

	Q1 position		
	Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
	£	£	£
Finance, Human Resources & Procurement			
SUP003-Human Resources	47,887	46,576	(1,311)
HLD313-Lease Cars	0	0	0
SUP009-Accountancy	92,901	96,026	3,125
SUP010-Internal Audit	31,793	34,760	2,967
SUP011-Creditors	10,860	9,265	(1,595)
SUP012-Debtors	15,117	10,116	(5,001)
SUP013-Payroll	14,213	13,404	(808)
SUP019-Health & Safety	8,606	8,553	(53)
SUP020-Training & Development	7,478	10,997	3,519
SUP033-Central Purchasing	9,791	9,731	(61)
SUP035-Insurances	2,511	2,496	(15)
Total - Finance, Human Resources & Procurement	916,503	917,269	766

Q1 position		
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

ICT, Change & Customer Services

SUP002-Consultation, Policy & Research	41,007	43,445	2,438
HLD301-ICT Purchases	0	(0)	(0)
HLD323-ICT Purchases West Oxon	0	265	265
SUP005-ICT	648,915	650,530	1,615
SUP006-Telephones	(1,250)	(2,815)	(1,565)
SUP008-Reception/Customer Services	152,374	150,656	(1,718)
SUP014-Cashiers	28	0	(28)
SUP041-Business Solutions	3,028	3,010	(18)
TMR001-Street Naming & Numbering	0	(695)	(695)
TMR002-Street Furniture & Equipment	835	(2,781)	(3,616)
TOU002-Tourist/Visitor Information Centre	9,809	1,895	(7,914)

Total - ICT, Change & Customer Services

854,746	843,510	(11,236)
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Q1 position		
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

Land, Legal & Property

ADB301-3 Welch Way (Town Centre Shop)	25,692	25,103	(589)
ADB302-Guildhall	9,216	3,118	(6,097)
ADB303-Woodgreen	147,452	145,787	(1,665)
ADB304-Elmfield	124,145	139,242	15,096
ADB305-Corporate Buildings	122,415	96,469	(25,946)
ADB306-Depot	(7,002)	(1,841)	5,161
LLC001-Local Land Charges	(37,741)	(36,583)	1,158
SUP004-Legal	75,283	120,668	45,385
TAC303-Swain Court & Newman Court Ind Est	(14,824)	(20,278)	(5,454)

Total - Land, Legal & Property

444,636	471,685	27,049
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ADB304 –Business Rates are £15k overspent as a result of the national revaluation from 1st April 2023, the budget will be reviewed for 2024/25

ADB305 – Carter Jonas undertook the year end revaluations for the Statement of Accounts, an accrual for which was posted in 2022/23. This accrual is not yet matched with the final invoice which has caused the under spend in Q1. The invoice has been received in Q2 eradicating the under spend.

SUP004 – the overspend is £35k legal costs for Friends of the WODC Cotswolds vs WODC relating to a Planning matter and £13k charge for Cadence – the Council’s share of an external consultant report reviewing the provision of legal services across WODC, CDC & FoDDC.

Q1 position		
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

Leisure & Communities

CCR001-Community Safety (Crime Reduction)	24,508	15,367	(9,141)
CCR002-Building Safer Communities	4,943	(1,968)	(6,911)
CCR301 - Communities Revenue Grant	171,705	175,651	3,946
CCT001-CCTV	5,815	8,666	2,852
CSM001-Cultural Strategy	22,234	20,891	(1,343)
CUL001-Arts Development	14,461	10,236	(4,225)
ECD001-Economic Development	32,557	35,281	2,724
REC001-Sports Development	4,579	1,077	(3,503)
REC002-Recreational Facilities Development	28,549	28,298	(251)
REC003-Play	21,098	22,748	1,650
REC301-Village Halls	3,753	3,701	(52)
REC302-Contract Management	(216,208)	(217,478)	(1,270)
SUP016-Finance - Performance Review	27,933	27,678	(255)
TOU001-Tourism Strategy and Promotion	44,232	40,037	(4,195)
Total - Leisure & Communities	190,159	170,186	(19,973)

CCR001 - £9k underspend professional fees vs an £11k underspend for the same period last year. The under spend for the whole of 22/23 was £37k so this budget will be reviewed for 24/25.

Q1 position		
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

Planning & Strategic Housing

DEV001-Development Control - Applications	(82,585)	(146,800)	(64,215)
DEV002-Development Control - Appeals	21,304	22,072	768
DEV003-Development Control - Enforcement	43,732	43,269	(462)
ECD301-WOSP - West Oxon Strategic Partnership	0	0	0
ENA001-Housing Enabling	27,624	27,261	(363)
ENI301-Landscape Initiatives	15,073	14,105	(968)
HLD315-Growth Board Project (Planning)	52,381	51,211	(1,169)
PLP001-Planning Policy	142,101	150,504	8,403
PLP003-Implementation	(258)	(256)	2
PLP004-Conservation	27,271	26,663	(608)
PSM001-Planning Service Mgmt & Support Serv	49,991	48,011	(1,980)

Total - Planning & Strategic Housing

296,633	236,041	(60,592)
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DEV001 - £85k overachievement of Planning income, a 39% improvement over Q1 22/23 due to a major application received in June for £170k. Unbudgeted Agency staff costs covering maternity leave are £16k

PLP001 – The over spend relates to IT licences

Q1 position		
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

Revenues & Housing Support

HBP001-Rent Allowances	135,646	134,784	(862)
HBP003-Local Housing Allowance	0	41	41
HBP005-Benefit Fraud Investigation	1,472	1,479	7
HOM001-Homelessness	87,710	33,215	(54,495)
HOM002-Homelessness Grants	0	1,250	1,250
HOM003-Rent In Advance Scheme	0	0	0
HOM004-Refugees	0	500	500
HOM005-Homelessness Hostel Accommodation	0	(1,809)	(1,809)
HOM006 - The Old Court	0	16,513	16,513
HOM007 - Afghan Resettlement	(76,134)	(72,067)	4,067
LTC001-Council Tax Collection	66,685	61,723	(4,962)
LTC002-Council Tax Support Administration	1,784	1,907	123
LTC011-NNDR Collection	31,467	27,556	(3,911)
PSH001-Private Sector Housing Grants	12,999	12,647	(352)
PSH004-Home Improvement Service	(46,230)	(43,459)	2,771
Total - Revenues & Housing Support	215,399	174,279	(41,120)

HOM001 - The Council have received an additional Homelessness Prevention Grant of £220k for 23/24 to assist with the additional pressure relating to the Homes for Ukraine scheme. A paper went to the Executive on 12th July to gain approval on how to spend this additional grant funding. The under spend in this case is a timing difference between the receipt and expenditure of the grant.

HOM006 - Council Tax bills relating to 21/22 that were not charged in error at the time have now been charged in the current year.

Q1 position		
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

Retained Services

COR002-Chief Executive	76,131	77,192	1,061
COR003-Corporate Policy Making	18,866	18,312	(554)
COR004-Public Relations	2,953	5,155	2,202
COR005-Corporate Finance	138,767	126,797	(11,970)
COR006-Treasury Management	0	6,605	6,605
COR007-External Audit Fees	14,250	14,569	319
COR008-Bank Charges	52,500	62,193	9,693
COR302-Publica Group	(20,000)	(14,561)	5,439
FIE341-Town Centre Properties	(391,774)	(350,775)	40,999
FIE342-Miscellaneous Properties	(416,935)	(414,133)	2,802
FIE343-Talisman	(365,999)	(296,361)	69,638
FIE344-Des Roches Square	(241,102)	(83,815)	157,287
FIE345-Gables at Elmfield	(39,467)	(13,735)	25,731
NDC001-Non Distributed Costs	162,275	197,646	35,371
TAC304-Witney Industrial Estate	(60,268)	(65,370)	(5,102)
TAC305-Carterton Industrial Estate	(125,944)	(117,681)	8,263
TAC306-Greystones Industrial Estate	51	(7,083)	(7,134)
TAC308-Other Trading Services - Fairs	(719)	0	719

Total - Retained Services

(1,196,415) (855,047) 341,368

COR005 - £11k underspend Professional Fees

FIE341 - Rental income for Marriotts Close is affected by void units, most significantly Unit 7 which has been vacant since Debenhams closed in May 2021. Sports Direct signed a lease at the beginning of August to take on Unit 7 and should be ready to open in September

FIE343 - £96k rent lost due to void units but Unit 1 is now let on a 10 year lease

FIE344 - Unit 1 has been empty since the Order of St John moved out and in Q1 this represents a loss of £71k in rent and a £72k Business Rates liability. New tenants have now signed a 10 year lease professional fees for which are £12k.


FIE345 - Rental income for the Elmfield office is below target as the budget assumed an earlier move out of Council staff and tenants moving in than has been the case.

NCD001 - the cash contribution required to keep the pension contribution at 17.6% varies with the triennial revaluation of the pension scheme. The over spend recognises a shortfall in the budget in 2023/24 which will be addressed in the budget setting process for 2024/25.

Capital Programme 2023/24

Scheme	2023/24 Original Budget	Funded By	Actual Expenditure Q1	
Agile Working	2,150,000.00	Borrowing	5,233	a
Replacement dog and litter bins	25,000	Borrowing		
Chipping Norton Roof Replacement	1,000,000	Borrowing		b
Ubico Fleet - Replace Vehicle Hire Costs	2,000,000	Borrowing	40,637	
Update to Planning System (Idox)	150,000	Borrowing		
Update to Finance System (ABW)	25,000	Borrowing		
Electric vehicle charging points	200,000	Borrowing		
Investment Strategy for Recovery	5,000,000	Borrowing		
CCTV - Upgrading	255,635	Capital Receipts		
Shop Mobility - Replacement stock	10,000	Capital Receipts		
Affordable Housing in Witney (Heylo)	212,125	S106	253,500	c
Improvement Grants (DFG)	800,000	Grant	126,241	
Carterton Leisure Centre PSDS Project	1,300,000	Grant		d
IT Provision - Systems & Strategy	100,000	Revenue contribution	88,261	
Council Buildings Maintenance Programme	200,000	Revenue contribution		
IT Equipment - PCs, Copiers etc	40,000	Revenue contribution		
Community Grants Fund	200,000	Revenue contribution	37,773	
Windrush Public Art		S106	4,676	
Weavers Fold	378,000	S106		
Play Parks	100,000	S106		e
EVCP Woolgate	167,000	S106		
Chipping Norton Creative	8,297	S106		
Carterton Connects Creative (Swinbrook s106)	44,500	S106		
Raleigh Crescent Play Area (s. 106)	75,000	S106		
Developer Capital Contributions		S106	310,010	
	14,440,557		866,330	

- a. The refurbishment of the ground floor at Woodgreen commences on 29th August to include the relocation of Main Reception and upgrading of the Committee Rooms. Agile working related expenditure will therefore be coming through in the remaining quarters of the year.
- b. A tender pack for immediate repairs in the order of £80,000 has gone out to contractors for costing, with the work taking place as soon as the tender process is complete
- c. This is the final contract payment for the housing scheme delivered last financial year
- d. An Investment Grade Proposal is being prepared for the decarbonisation of Carterton Leisure Centre and will be completed by 31st October 2023 at a cost of £243,000.
- e. A report went to the 21st June 2023 Executive outlining the future leasing of play areas at Cedar Drive, Waterford Lane and Raleigh Crescent to Witney Town Council after repairs have been completed.

 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 13 SEPTEMBER 2023
Subject	TELEPHONE CHANNEL ACCESS
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Dan Levy, Executive Member for Finance. Email: Dan.Levy@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Jon Dearing, Assistant Director for Resident Services Email: Jon.Dearing@publicagroup.uk
Report author	Michelle Clifford, Business Manager for Customer Experience Email: Michelle.Clifford@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	The purpose of this report is to outline the Council's success in supporting the shift in customer demand to digital channels and to consider adjusting telephone access hours as part of a balanced approach to customer contacts that responds to customer preferences.
Annexes	Annex A – Equalities Impact Assessment
Recommendation(s)	<p><i>That the Executive resolves to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Agree the reduced telephone access hours, on a trial basis, with effect from Monday 16th October 2023, and</i> <i>2. Receive a further report, detailing the findings and recommendations from the trial, to an Executive meeting in the first quarter of 2024/25.</i>
Corporate priorities	Putting Residents First
Key Decision	NO, as the recommendations are in relation to a trial period.
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Internal.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In 2021 Resident Services restructured at the Business Manager level. One of the objectives of this change was allow for a Business Manager dedicated to improving the customer experience. The resultant post of Business Manager for Customer Experience is responsible for leading the Customer Service Teams, improving digital access, making processes customer focussed and improving performance.
- 1.2 This has led to the formation of a multi-skilled Channel Choice Team. This Team has been working to implement/improve access to digital services. The Team have created/improved digital access around many processes with very high take up rates. Examples include Green Waste sign-up, Bulky Waste, Licensing Applications, Fly Tipping and Abandoned Vehicle reporting, Planning Validation and implementation of the 'Open Portal' where customers can self-serve in relation to Housing Benefit and Council Tax services.
- 1.3 There is more to do and current focus is on improving the Chatbot on the Council's Website, improving the usability of Web pages, increasing take up of the 'Open Portal' and making Waste container ordering simpler.
- 1.4 Over the last three years the provision of more and improved digital customer access to services, coupled with the impact of the pandemic which imposed access restrictions, has led to customers changing their service access habits.
- 1.5 The volume of calls (WODC and CDC combined) fell by 23% between 2021 and 2022, to 191,031. During this period the volume of Web Form utilised by customers tripled to over 98,000. This shift of contact method continues into 2023 when, for the first time, we have seen digital access volumes exceed telephone access volumes in the first half of the year.
- 1.6 This report, therefore, recommends that the Council's resources are realigned to reflect the change in customer behaviour.

The Council is also investing in improvements to the customer receptions at the Welch Way offices and the Wood Green offices so that effective face to face access is available for those who need it and will continue.

- 1.7 It is important to note that, due to system configuration, any changes to telephone access would need to be mirror across the two Councils (WODC and CDC).

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1 As a result of the changing customer needs and the resultant shift from telephone contact to digital contact, the Customer Services Management Team have undertaken extensive analysis of the telephone data. As well as the significant call volume reductions, the data shows:
 - a) Telephone lines are busiest earlier in the day, with the busiest period being between 9am and 10am,

- b) Based on the most recent data, call volumes reduce steadily throughout the day; with the last hour of the day volumes being only 45% of the first hour of the day,
- c) Mondays and Tuesdays are the busiest days with Wednesdays seeing the least volume of calls throughout the average week, and
- d) Wait times increase between 12pm and 2pm, as almost 50% of the workforce are taking a lunch break throughout that period.

2.2 The conclusions drawn from the increase in digital contact, the reduction in telephone call volumes and the call patterns described in paragraph 2.1 are that:

- (a) It is time to shift resources away from the telephone channel, while still maintaining that channel every working day and for a significant part of the day,
- (b) Telephone access reductions should be in the afternoons when call volumes reduce, and
- (c) Increasing and improving digital access is where more resources should be focussed in the future.

2.3 What the data does not show is what the reaction of the customers will be. Based on the experiences of other organisations (public and private sector) it is anticipated that a reduction in call access times will result in a further shift to digital channels. In order to test this assumption it is recommended that we enter into the new arrangements as a trial and collect data on demand, waiting times, channel shift, customer satisfaction and customer complaints. This data will then inform a further report around whether the new telephone opening hours should be made permanent.

2.4 The data tells us demand falls after 2pm and the recommendation is therefore to close front and back office telephone lines at 2pm every day. This uniform approach will make messaging more straightforward and improve our recruitment opportunities; making posts more attractive to those that need to work around school hours.

2.5 It is intended that the Out of Hours Service will not change and still commence at 5pm every day. The cost of providing an external Out of Hours service from 2pm every day would outweigh the financial savings and therefore hamper our ability to deliver on our customers' digital access needs. However, there are three services that will need 2pm to 5pm cover. They are:

- Reporting of dangerous structures (and other life threatening events). These are very rare but do need cover,
- Assisting those who are presenting as homeless or are under the threat of homelessness,
- Support for residents in the lead-up to an election.

The first two of those are year-round requirements and will be resolved by introducing an emergency line between 2pm and 5pm. The management of this line will be closely managed so that we don't have non-urgent contacts taking up this vital resource.

The election issue will be addressed by a separate (temporary) telephone line that will only be available and resourced in the lead-up to an election. The Customer Service Managers

will meet with Elections Teams to draw up a plan specific to each election but resources can be sourced at very short notice for this task, or any emergency event, and the mechanism for this is explained in 2.6 below.

When customers attempt to telephone after 2pm they will be given information on how to access services on-line. They will also be given information on what to do in an emergency. For non-emergency matters other channels, such as face to face, email and the wide range of digital services will be available as normal.

2.6 The implementation of these changes will clearly require a reduction in working hours for many of our Customer Service Officers (some Officers will continue full time as Managers, Reception, Front Office and some technical Officers will be required all day). There has been a commitment to effect this change without any mandatory redundancies and there are three key ways in which we will achieve this:

- i. Where an officer wishes to voluntarily reduce their hours, this will be agreed,
- ii. Where a vacancy occurs we will recruit to the post 9am to 2pm, and
- iii. When we have future 'back office' vacancies we will fill them (where appropriate) with the 2pm to 5pm Customer Service Officer resource. So (for example) a full-time Licensing vacancy might be filled by two/three Customer Service Officers. This approach will not work in every service area but will in enough to allow us to absorb those excess hours.

The approach described in bullet point iii (above) has several advantages:

- It means that we will not need to make any redundancies,
- We will get customer focussed officers working in the back office,
- We will improve the back office knowledge of our Customer Service Officers, and
- We will have an instant Customer Service resource that we can second (full-time) back in the Telephone Service should they be required. This will mean a temporary reduction in back office capacity but as the back office Services will have gained some capacity from reducing direct telephone access 2pm-5pm, this should more than balance that capacity issue.

2.7 During the trial period the excess hours within the Customer Service Team will be used to help other Services reduce their outstanding workloads. This will reduce the need for customers to make repeat calls and therefore, further, reduce telephone call volumes.

2.8 This change is intended to meet the changing needs of our customers. No change to other access channels (including Face to Face) are being proposed. The Welch Way and Woodgreen receptions will continue to be available 9am to 5pm every weekday.

2.9 The recommendations propose that a further report be made in quarter 1 of 2024/25, with details of the outcomes the data collection exercise that will have taken place during the trial. This is the point at which the decision will be made as to whether the change is made permanent or not.

2.10 A Communications plan is being developed, so that customers are aware of the changes and the reasoning. This will include amendments to Web pages, documents and signage.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1 The Council could decide not to reduce the telephone opening hours. However, this would fail to recognise the customer shift to digital access channels and would miss an opportunity to make the Council more efficient.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The way in which the Council's services are accessed has been changing for several years. The data shows that telephone access has been declining significantly, while digital access increases. The recommendations reflect the changing needs of our customers while maintaining all forms of access.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Excluding the Managers and Face to Face Officers (mentioned above) each of the 30 Customer Service Officers (24.93 fte) will have a reduction in hours of 0.32 fte. This reduction across the 30 Officers equates to a total reduction of 7.98 fte. This makes the total efficiency saving £238,100 to be shared equally between WODC and CDC. So the total **saving to WODC is £119,050** per annum.

5.2 The first £50,000 per annum of this will be delivered in 2023/24 and the remainder (£69,050 per annum) in 2024/25.

5.3 The Service has already started to fill vacancies on reduced hours and is holding some vacancies. This will allow the 2023/24 target to be met during the trial period.

5.4 As there will be no redundancies, the cost of implementation will be support service resources and will therefore fall within existing budgets.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no Legal implications associated with the recommendation.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

7.1 There is a risk in not agreeing the recommendation, in that the Council would miss an opportunity to make services more efficient.

7.2 The reduction in telephone access opening hours could bring a reputational risk. However, the Council would be maintaining all forms of access and better meeting the changing needs of its customers.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.1 No services or service access channels are being taken away, so the impact is minimal. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and shared with the Council's Director of Governance.

- 8.2** Encouraging a further shift to digital and self-serve channels will create more capacity for Teams to provide support to those customers in the greatest need.

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The recommendation does not have any climate change implications.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None.

(END)

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Equality and Ruralty Impact Assessment Form

When completing this form you will need to provide evidence that you have considered how the ‘protected characteristics’ may be impacted upon by this decision. In line with the General Equality Duty the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard for the need to:

- a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

This form should be completed in conjunction with the guidance document available on the Intranet

Once completed a copy should be emailed to the Council’s Monitoring Officer.

1. Persons responsible for this assessment:

Names: Michelle Clifford	
Date of assessment: 16 August 2023	Telephone: 01993 861272 Email: Michelle.Clifford@publicagroup.uk

2. Name of the policy, service, strategy, procedure or function:

Telephone Access Hours

3. Briefly describe it aims and objectives

To reduce telephone access for customers to 9am-2pm every day. This will reflect the shift to digital access and make an efficiency saving.

4. Are there any external considerations? (e.g. Legislation/government directives)

None

5. What evidence has helped to inform this assessment?

Source	✓	If ticked please explain what
Demographic data and other statistics, including census findings	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Recent research findings including studies of deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Results of recent consultations and surveys	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Results of ethnic monitoring data and any equalities data	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Anecdotal information from groups and agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Comparisons between similar functions / policies elsewhere	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	National comparisons with other LA's and Private Sector organisations
Analysis of audit reports and reviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Call volume/pattern data

6. Please specify how intend to gather evidence to fill any gaps identified above:

Not applicable

7. Has any consultation been carried out?

No.

If NO please outline any planned activities

Customer feedback will be gathered, along with complaint and satisfaction data, during the trial period. The decision around making this change permanent will be made in 2024.

8. What level of impact either directly or indirectly will the proposal have upon the general public / staff? (Please quantify where possible)

Level of impact	Response
NO IMPACT – The proposal has no impact upon the general public/staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
LOW – Few members of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	<input type="checkbox"/>
MEDIUM – A large group of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
HIGH – The proposal will have an impact upon the whole community/all staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: e.g. Who will this specifically impact?	

9. Considering the available evidence, what type of impact could this function have on any of the protected characteristics?

Negative – it could disadvantage and therefore potentially not meet the General Equality duty;

Positive – it could benefit and help meet the General Equality duty;

Neutral – neither positive nor negative impact / Not sure

	Potential Negative	Potential Positive	Neutral	Reasons	Options for mitigating adverse impacts
Age – Young People			✓	The proposal is inclusive to young people.	
Age – Old People			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all ages.	
Disability			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people with disabilities.	
Sex – Male			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups.	
Sex – Female			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups.	
Race including Gypsy and Travellers			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of all races.	
Religion or Belief			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of all religions.	
Sexual Orientation			✓	This proposal is inclusive to all types of sexual orientation.	
Gender Reassignment			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups.	

Pregnancy and maternity			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people who are pregnant and/or on maternity.	
Geographical impacts on one area			✓	The proposal is inclusive to the whole of the District.	
Other Groups			✓	This proposal is inclusive to all other groups that are not mentioned.	
Rural considerations: ie Access to services; leisure facilities, transport; education; employment; broadband.			✓	The proposal is inclusive to the whole of the District.	

10. Action plan (add additional lines if necessary)


Action(s)	Lead Officer	Resource	Timescale
Obtain Council approval	Michelle Clifford		Set/October 2023
Commence Trial period	Lisa Cresswell	Customer Services and ICT	16 th October 2023
Report Trial findings	Michelle Clifford		February 2024

11. Is there is anything else that you wish to add?


n/a

Declaration

I/We are satisfied that an equality impact assessment has been carried out on this policy, service, strategy, procedure or function and where an negative impact has been identified actions have been developed to lessen or negate this impact. We understand that the Equality Impact Assessment is required by the District Council and that we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this assessment.

Completed By:	Michelle Clifford	Date:	16.8.23
Line Manager:		Date:	16.8.23
Reviewed by Corporate Equality Officer:		Date:	

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 <p style="text-align: center;">WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 13 SEPTEMBER 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>ALL</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Dan Levy – Executive Member for Finance Email: dan.levy@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Phil Martin – Assistant Director, Business Services Email: phil.martin@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Ciaran O’Kane – Senior Procurement Business Partner Email – ciaran.okane@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To present an updated draft Procurement and Contract Management Strategy for comment and consideration by Executive.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Procurement and Contract Management Strategy</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p><i>That the Executive Resolves to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Approve the updated Procurement and Contract Management Strategy;</i> <i>2. Delegate authority to the Director of Governance to amend the approved Contract Procedure Rules to remove reference to the obsolete Procurement Strategy and Procurement Code, which the Procurement and Contract Management Strategy will replace.</i>
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Putting Residents First ● A Good Quality of Life for All ● A Better Environment for People and Wildlife ● Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency ● Working Together for West Oxfordshire
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>NO</p>

Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	<p>West Oxfordshire District Council – Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>Leadership Management Team</p> <p>Publica Commissioning and Procurement Board.</p>

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The revision of the current Procurement and Contract Management Strategy was partly in response to the Internal Audit recommendation as well as the Team recognising the importance of the Council having a Strategy that incorporated the latest available guidance from Central Government including Social Value and Climate Change.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1 The current version of the Procurement Strategy has in place since 2015. Following the UK's withdrawal from the European Union, Central Government advised that an overhaul of the 2015 Public Procurement Regulations would take place. The new Procurement Bill is encountering a number of delays and had yet to be laid before parliament.
- 2.2 The Government introduce updates to current legislation through the publication of Procurement Policy Notes (PPN's). This draft Procurement and Contract Management Strategy includes all relevant updates.
- 2.3 An update from Central Government in Spring 2023 confirmed that the new Procurement Bill would not be published until 2024, at the earliest, which the team felt was too long to wait for. Therefore, the proposed Procurement and Contract Management Strategy now incorporates current relevant best practice as well as the latest information from Government.
- 2.4 Depending on what comes out of the new Procurement Bill, further revisions to the Strategy may be required.
- 2.5 Following the approval of this Procurement and Contract Management Strategy, references to out-of-date documentation will need to be amended in the Contract Procedure Rules to ensure that there is consistency in terminology across all Procurement documentation.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The alternative option is to wait until the Procurement Bill has been laid in parliament and prepare a new Procurement and Contract Management Strategy.
- 3.2 This would not be in line with best practise.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The updated Procurement and Contract Management Strategy will ensure that Social Value and the climate change agenda are embedded in both the commissioning and procurement process.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications from this report. However, compliance with the Councils Contract Rules will support the best use of taxpayers' money.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no specific legal implications from this report or the Strategy, however the Council continues to have a legal duty to comply with the Public Contract Regulations.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 There is a potential risk that the Procurement and Contract Management Strategy may need to be further update when the Procurement Bill is laid in Parliament. The Procurement team will advise accordingly if significant updates are required.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1 There are no specific equalities implications from this report however the Council continues to have a legal duty to comply with Modern Slavery legislation.

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Strategy has been revised to recognise the importance of climate change and the Council's key priority to become a Carbon Neutral Council by 2030.
- 9.2 The Strategy recognises that supply chains are the biggest contributor to the overall carbon output of local councils and advocates engaging with suppliers at the earliest opportunity to make climate intentions and ambitions clear at the pre-procurement stages is key to reducing the Council's carbon footprint.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Not Applicable

(END)

Procurement and Contract Management Strategy

Approved 2023

By



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Background

Following Brexit, the Government announced its intention for a radical overhaul of public procurement law and a green paper was published on this topic in January 2021. The Government has stated its aim is to provide the UK with a modern, fit for purpose set of rules, to minimise the bureaucratic burden for contracting authorities and businesses, and to facilitate innovation and the participation of SMEs.

However, any change to procurement law is not expected until “at least 2023” but it is important that in the meantime, our procurement activities are undertaken consistently to a high standard and in line with best practice to achieve economic and social benefits for all of our communities.

This Strategy will be further updated as and when new legislation becomes available.

I. Introduction

Publica provides Procurement Services to its Partner Councils, Ubico and Cheltenham Borough Homes. The Services include

- Supporting and guiding officers in line with best practices and Procurement principles;
- Commissioning – considering **all** options before a decision has been made to provide a service;
- Assisting with Procurement of the appropriate goods, services or works in line with internal and external policies;
- Effective supplier and contract management;
- Disposal of assets (if necessary).

Demand for local public services is rising, and cost pressures are increasing, yet government funding to councils has reduced markedly and looking forwards there is great uncertainty surrounding the future of local government funding. It is therefore important that Procurement deliver better results for public services by

- Maximising the value – including the ‘social value’ achieved from every £1 spent;
- Generating income (‘commercialisation’) – where possible;
- Being Innovative and working with Innovative supplier.

In addition, Local Authorities and their communities are faced with many Economic, Social and Environmental challenges.

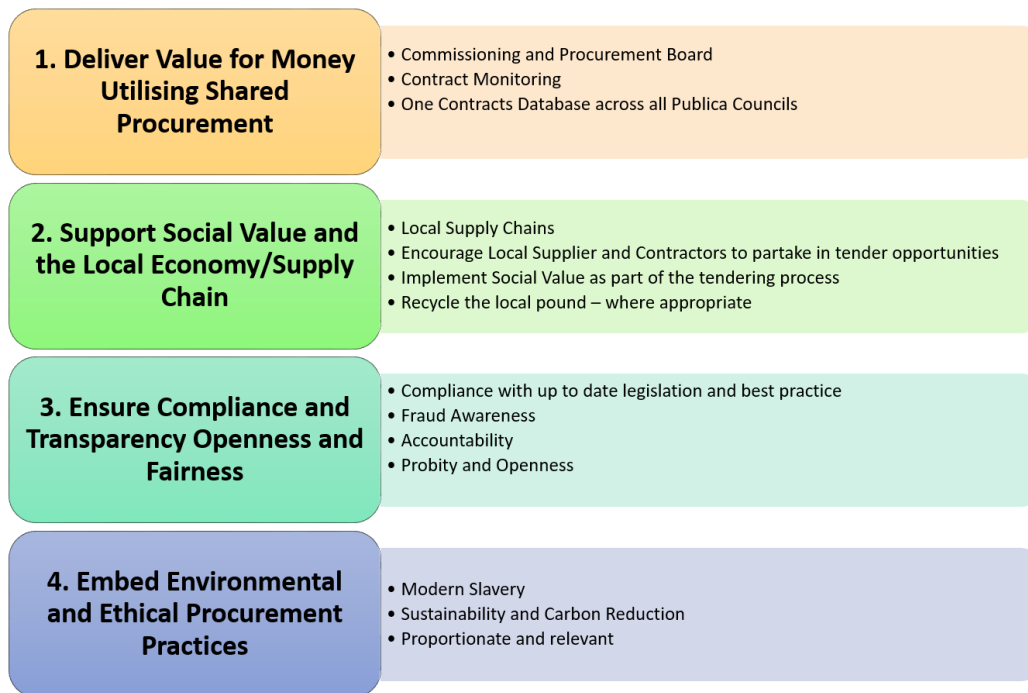
Publica procurement will provide leadership and make best use of resources through partnership, being effective commissioners and working with budget holders, suppliers and other stakeholders. We will aim to develop a common approach to procurement across all partners ensuring the processes and documentation are standardised and establishing a joint contracts database which will lead to effective commissioning, improved practises and financial savings.

This document sets out Publica's strategic approach to procurement and contract management. It is not intended to be a procurement or contract management manual; however, the principles contained within the strategy should be applied to all procurement activity. Consideration of this strategy is not optional and it should be read in conjunction with the Contract Procedure Rules, Commissioning and Procurement User Guide and other relevant organisational policies.

2. Our Vision

Our vision for Procurement and Contract Management over the term of this strategy is to demonstrate value for money through the effective Commissioning and Procurement of goods, services and works on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits to the community and Councils, whilst minimising the impacts to the environment.

Meeting this vision and ensuring success of this strategy will depend on the implementation and effectiveness of all of the following key principles.



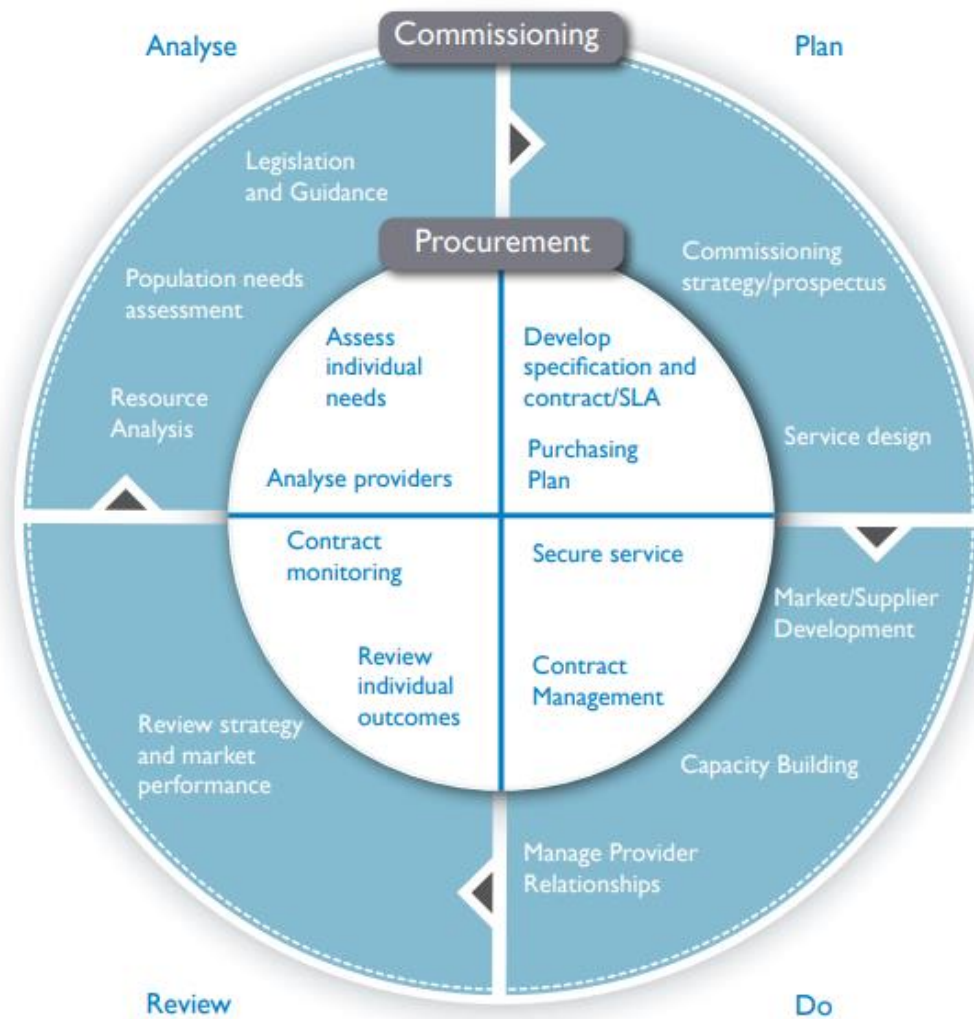
3. Effective Commissioning and Procurement

A key Publica Business Priority is to get Commissioning right. [The Publica Commissioning and Procurement User guide](#) sets out the importance and principles of effective Commissioning and Procurement. In addition, Procurement by its very nature is well placed to support delivery of all of the Business Priorities.

Publica is mindful that the impact of procurement is far greater than processes, objectives, principles, and that effective Commissioning and Procurement can incorporate a wide-ranging socio – economic agenda.

To ensure Publica carry out effective Commissioning and Procurement the team will maintain a forward plan with details of upcoming relevant procurements with a value of over £100,000. The forward plan will be a discussion point at Commissioning and Procurement Board who meet on a monthly basis. The Board includes Senior Managers all relevant stakeholders.

3.1 Commissioning Cycle



4. Procurement and the Climate Emergency

There is now a renewed focus on environmental issues, due to the Climate Emergency, statutory obligations and local authority targets as well as clear links from climate change to economic recovery, jobs, skills, protecting the vulnerable and healthy communities.

Public partner councils have all declared climate emergencies and each are faced with local targets to achieve 'Net Zero' or be 'Carbon Neutral' by 2030. A vital mechanism to respond and contribute to these challenges is **Effective Commissioning, Procuring and Contract Management**.

Supply chains are the biggest contributor to the overall carbon output of local councils and often it is an accumulation of small factors that add up to make a difference. An example of this might be the carbon emissions due to transport of products by suppliers. This often is not something that the councils can control, but it certainly influences the levels of emissions the council contributes to as a whole. One way in which procurement will make a significant change is through influencing the supply chain, and encouraging climate action by suppliers.

Engaging with suppliers at the earliest opportunity to make climate intentions and ambitions clear at the pre-procurement stages is key to reducing the Councils carbon footprint.

The consideration of environmental issues will be embedded in all the Council's procurement of goods, services and works, reducing the impact of activity and enhancing and protecting our environment.

Key Actions

- adopt the principles of resource and waste minimisation for materials, energy, water, air and land in support of carbon reduction and climate change, reusing and recycling wherever possible;
- consider the costs and benefits of environmentally-friendly goods, services and works;
- Challenging at the pre-tender stage the product, material, design and works selected to ensure environmental considerations are part of procurement decision making;
- wherever possible and practicable, specify a requirement in line with nationally or locally agreed specifications; where such exact specification is not possible, enable suppliers to submit offers for environmentally-friendly alternatives;
- work in partnership with other public bodies to maximise sustainable procurement gains through collaboration and information sharing;
- Ensure that all organisations have equal access to procurement opportunities, from larger organisations to SME's and the voluntary sector, in order to ensure fair and equitable opportunities for all.

Delivery

- Utilise the Councils Impact Assessment Tool (IAT) which will consider a wide range of impacts that a procurement or the project it delivers will have on the environment and social factors. Enabling works, materials or services to be reconsidered before procurement commences to limit negative impacts and maximise benefits. Before starting a tender process the IAT will help to identify key environmental opportunities in higher value contracts.
- Mandate that any environmental requirements identified as part of the toolkit process must be included in any tender specification;

- Ensure that all procurements require suppliers to submit information on their environmental policies and practices and for larger contracts, on their key performance indicators;
- Using open tenders to encourage local suppliers, unless there is a specific need or benefit offered by securing contracts via Procurement Frameworks;
- Making ethical considerations using Blueprint for Better Business principles
- Promoting purpose driven and responsible local supply chains;
- Encouraging innovation related to more sustainable goods, works and services, through effective market research and use of outcome specifications.

These actions will be delivered by the qualitative scoring of tenders based on:

- The environmental and sustainability policies that suppliers are demonstrating they are putting into practice. Considering matters like reduced packaging in the supply chain, sustainable travel and locally sourced products;
- Where feasible evaluating whole life costs when sourcing goods and services.

Contract performance

- Make sure that the relevant climate and sustainability requirements and performance are embedded into the contract and contract monitoring;
- Move towards measuring the carbon emissions and savings that result from the council's contracts.

Championing sustainability in the first instance will allow councils to set expectations and give suppliers the chance to adapt or discuss how they might make improvements. It equally gives suppliers the opportunity to share their climate innovations and insights, and for councils to learn from them.

5. Modern Slavery

Procurement Regulations make certain modern slavery offences grounds for mandatory exclusion of bidders from public procurement. (This forms part of the tender evaluation exercise). Standard procurement documentation requires bidders to self-certify their compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

We are committed to ensuring the suppliers with whom we do business understand the risks of modern slavery in supply chains, and take appropriate action to identify and address those risks, with particular focus on supporting victims of modern slavery.

Modern slavery risks will be addressed during the procurement process: -

- When identifying the need, approach to be taken and the market - **pre-procurement**
- When deciding the requirement - **specification stage**
- When selecting suppliers to invite to tender - **selection stage.**

- When awarding the contract - **award stage**.
- In the performance of the contract - **contract conditions and contract management**.

6. Social Value

Publica will take a holistic approach when considering its activities and take into account the wider economic, social and environmental effects of their actions.

In essence, Social Value serves as an umbrella term for these broader effects, and organisations, which make a conscious effort to ensure that these effects are positive, can be seen as adding social value by contributing to the long-term wellbeing and resilience of individuals, communities and society in general.

Publica and its partner councils should consider social value through their policy and spending decisions to maximise the benefit for their communities. In addition, Publica and its partner councils encourage their supply chains to pay their staff and sub-contractors a Living Wage.

See Appendix I for Publica Social Value statement

7. Contract Management

Contract Management is concerned with the continuous review and management of the contractual terms and/or service level agreement secured through the procurement process to ensure suppliers and partners deliver the outcomes agreed. Managing the contracts and relationships with our delivery partners, is imperative to ensure that:

- the strategic priorities agreed at the outset are delivered in a cost effective and timely manner;
- non-compliance or variation is identified early for escalation and resolution
- risks and costs are managed;
- Contract reviews are undertaken and lessons learnt inform the commissioning and procurement process to ensure continuous improvement.

Officers responsible for managing and monitoring contracts must ensure:

- A copy of the original contracts is accessible to them and reviewed regularly, to ensure they are aware of the contracted terms.

- That contractors' business continuity plans are in place and are reasonable. Periodic reviews of these plans should be undertaken.

7.1 Contract Management Principles

The following principles will underpin Publica's approach to contract management

- **Ensure that contracts are known and understood by all those who will be involved in their management** – Make sure that adequate resource are identified and appointed well before award of contracts and that there is an effective handover or transition from sourcing to contract management.
- **Be clear about accountability, roles and responsibilities** - Ensure contract ownership, management processes and governance mechanisms are clear with defined roles and responsibilities at appropriate levels of seniority. Make sure contracts have a documented Contract Management Plan.
- **Establish and use strong governance arrangements to manage risk and enable strategic oversight** – ensure that governance structures are proportionate to size and risk of contracts, are suitably empowered and support the business outcomes and objectives.
- **Adopt a differentiated approach based on risk** – distinguish between tactical and strategic contracts and direct the strongest resource to contracts where the risks and rewards are highest. Consider a self-managing approach for lower risk contracts.
- **Manage contracts for business/public service outcomes** – the owners of the required outcomes should be accountable for successful contract performance and should work closely with procurement to manage contracts.
- **Accept that change will happen and plan for it** – develop flexible approaches to change through joint working with suppliers; accept that change will affect both parties during the contract life, but control costs with robust change control mechanisms. Ensure that controls are in place to prevent changes from altering the strategic intent of the contract.
- **Measure and report on performance and use KPI's and data efficiently to incentivise good performance** – administer contracts proactively and efficiently, making maximum use of benchmarking and performance measurement data. Ensure KPIs and incentives are appropriate and proportionate to the contract.
- **Drive continuous improvement, value for money and capture innovation** - actively use contract tools and provisions to leverage the relationship, continually drive value for money and seek out and implement innovative ideas for improvement.
- **Accept that successful delivery of major projects is best achieved through a single fully integrated team** – where the supplier and client work as a single team with one focus, delivery of the successful outcomes.

8. Fraud

The Publica partners are committed to countering fraud and corruption and officers who procure goods, services and works must be fully aware of the rules and procedures that support this aim.

Successful counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements should be the consequence of effective business systems, governance practices and controls, specifically the:

- Contract Procedure Rules
- Financial Rules
- Whistle Blowing Policy
- Employee's Code of Conduct or Business Conduct Policy, and
- Counter Fraud and Anti- Corruption Policy and Fraud Response Plan

Please see Appendix 2

9. Freedom of Information Act 2000

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI) may affect suppliers and contractors to the Council. Procurement related information is likely to be the subject of a number of requests under the FOI Act.

That information must be provided unless it is covered by one of the Act's exemptions.

Requests for information are retrospective which means that any information an external party has provided in the past or may provide in the future will be subject to FOI e.g. contracts, tender documents, development proposals. Personal data is exempt under FOI, because it is already within the terms of the Data Protection Legislation.

10. Data Protection

The Data Protection Legislation consist of the UK- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018(DPA 2018) (and regulations made thereunder) and the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003 (SI 2003/2426).

Article 28 of the Data Protection Legislation adds a requirement upon controllers (the organisation who determines the purposes and manner in which personal data is processed) to ensure that certain provisions are included in contracts where there is personal data being passed from one party as the controller to another acting as a processor of that personal data.

The aim of the Article is to ensure that a controller of data who passes personal data to the processor controls how that processor can use that data. In order to achieve this, the Article stipulates that any processing of personal data by a processor shall be governed by a contract containing certain Information.

Procurement will therefore ensure that Data Protection Legislation is addressed where required at each stage of a regulated procurement and recorded appropriately on the Contract register by:

- ascertaining what type of personal data will be held as part of the contract and where that data will reside
- identify how the data will be obtained, how it will be stored and who it will be shared with
- identify which suppliers are affected by Data Protection Legislation and record accordingly on the Contract register

11. What is next?

Over the past number of years, the Procurement team have made a lot of service improvements to the Procurement service, however there is still a lot to do. Strategic actions over the coming years include but are not limited to the following;

Task	Details
Category Management	Improve our strategic approach to category management so that we can segment spend into areas which contain similar or related products and services enabling opportunities for consolidation and efficiency.
Regulation	Prepare and adapt to upcoming changes to regulations following publication of the Post Brexit green paper and upcoming white paper.
Spend Analysis	Introduce spend analysis as a process to analyse the historical spend (purchasing) data across Publica to provide answers to questions concerning spend visibility, compliance and control.
Further improve self-serve provision.	Improve self – service provision by establishing in-house frameworks and Dynamic Purchasing Systems for key areas of spend. This will release the procurement

	team to concentrate on strategic areas of procurement.

Appendix I - Social Value Statement



Background

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 (the Act) provides a legal obligation on public bodies to consider how the services they commission and procure, over the thresholds provided for in the Public Contract Regulations, might improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the local area and how, in conducting procurement it can secure Social Value.

Whilst the obligation only applies to above threshold procurements for services (or mixed contracts where services is a large part of the contract), Officers should consider Social Value in all of the Publica Council's procurement requirements when it is proportionate and relevant to do so.

The aim of the Act is not to alter the commissioning and procurement processes, but to ensure that, as part of these processes, the Publica Council's consider the wider impact of the services delivered. This also includes encouraging Officers to talk to stakeholders, including the local community, to design better services, and explore finding new and innovative solutions.

The Publica Councils have a combined annual spend of circa £26m on a range of goods and services. The Act provides a significant opportunity to think creatively about how we can secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits from this spend.

In addition, the Publica Councils want this statement to be the start of a conversation about how we use our wider processes, resources and influence to support value in our local areas.

1. What is Social Value?

The Social Value Act does not define what 'Social Value' means. Therefore, the Publica Councils has proposed the following definition of Social Value that links back to the Publica Councils vision:

Social Value is the wider social, environmental and economic benefits that we will secure from commissioning and procuring activities.

2. The Social Value Model

The Social Value model sets out the Governments Social Value priorities for Procurement. There are five themes and eight policy outcomes, which flow from these themes. These are

Themes		Policy Outcomes
Theme 1	COVID -19 recovery	Help local communities to manage and recover from the impact of COVID-19
Theme 2	Tackling economic inequality	Create new business, new jobs and new skills
		Increase supply chain resilience and capacity
Theme 3	Fighting climate change	Effective stewardship of the environment
Theme 4	Equal opportunity	Reduce the disability employment gap
		Tackle workforce inequality
Theme 5	Wellbeing	Improve health and wellbeing
		Improve community cohesion

There should be a clear ‘golden thread’ from the government priorities to the development of strategies and business cases for programmes and projects, through to our Procurement specifications.

3. How we will deliver Social Value

The Publica Councils procure a wide range of goods and services, and it is recognised that there can be no ‘one size fits all’ model. This statement should be applied in a proportionate manner and be tailored to reflect the service, goods or works that are being procured. It is the role of commissioners and procurement leads to consider, on a contract-by-contract basis, the potential Social Value outcomes that could be delivered through the procurement exercise and the most appropriate procurement strategy to achieve these.

We will apply Social Value in a way that is fair and transparent to all providers.

In addition, the Publica Councils aspire to ensure that the concept of Social Value is considered in all our organisational change activities including those applying to how we assess services that are delivered directly by the Council.

The Publica Councils contract rules dictate the procurement process to be followed above specific thresholds. Therefore, our approach to Social Value will be as follows:

Informal – all procurement below £25,000

Officers will ensure that the specification/statement of requirement takes in to account our Social Value priorities and that all bidders are given the opportunity to contribute to Social Value regardless of the category of the procurement.

Formal – all Procurements above £25,000

Officers will ensure that the specification/statement of requirement takes in to account our Social Value priorities and include relevant and proportionate Social Value outcomes that the Publica Councils wish to see from the procurement exercise. Officers may wish to include consultation with community groups to ensure that any practical support is not prescribed but co-created with the community.

Officers will also consider making Social Value a contractual obligation within the specification/statement of requirement where it is appropriate to do so. Examples could include

- Reducing carbon footprint
- Recruiting apprentices for a specific project
- Community wellbeing
- Encouraging core contractors and suppliers to pay their own employees a Living Wage and ensuring the principles of the Living Wage filter through the supply chain.

Social Value can be included as evaluation criteria and be assessed in line with Price and Quality.

4. Consultation

It is important that the local communities are engaged in shaping and deciding what is important to them, as well as engaging with the market to understand their ideas for how they can contribute our Social Value policy outcomes. In order to ensure our proposed ideas really do add Social Value we need to engage with communities to understand their existing assets and then use this information to build the Social Value requirements. This will ensure that we are adding and not simply duplicating the value already existing within the community as this could have an adverse impact.

Appendix 2 - Fraud Awareness



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Fraud can occur at all stages of the procurement cycle and can be internal, external or both where there is collusion. Officers must be aware of the risks, detailed below, and the fact that they apply not just to large, high value contracts but also to low level spend. Officers engaged in all stages of the process need to be alert to the possibility of abuse when raising or approving requisitions, when writing or evaluating specifications, as well as further on in the process once the contract has been awarded.

Pre-tendering risks:

- **Needs assessment** – Need or timing tailored to benefit a specific supplier
- **Bid tailoring** – Narrow, broad or vague specifications
- **Bid splitting** – To circumvent approval thresholds.
- **Contract waivers** – To circumvent a fair and proper tendering process.
- **Abuse of position/conflict of interest/bribery** – Officers, Members or Suppliers acting inappropriately and for personal gain.

Tendering/bid evaluation risks:

- **Leaking confidential information** – staff providing details to contractors for unfair advantage.
- **Influencing the evaluation** – staff influencing an outcome for a preferred supplier.
- **Fictitious companies bidding** – to mislead and influence the evaluation process.
- **Cartels/collusive bidding/inflated bids** – suppliers colluding to influence the outcome.
- **Cover pricing** – obtaining artificially inflated prices to give a misleading impression of the extent of competition

Post-tendering risks:


- **Poor Contract Management** – allows abuse and possible fraud by the supplier.
- **Claims for fictitious services/goods** – charging for goods not supplied.
- **Charging for different quality goods/product substitution** – inferior goods supplied for inflated prices and altered contract terms.
- **Fictitious companies/staff/contractors** – diverting payments.

Fraud awareness and training for all staff involved in the procurement process is mandatory and includes training on the fraud indicators officers must be alert to.

To manage the risk of bribery and corruption, procedures for declaring gifts and hospitality and conflicts of interest are also mandatory and the organisation encourages a culture of transparency that is supportive of whistleblowing.

Segregation of duties, a centralised contract register and proactive contract management further mitigate the risk from fraud.

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 <p style="text-align: center;">WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 13 SEPTEMBER 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>ENDORSEMENT OF COTSWOLD NATIONAL LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2023-2025</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>All wards within the Cotswolds National Landscape and its setting</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Carl Rylett – Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development Email: carl.rylett@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager Email: chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Janice Bamsey, Principal Planning Policy Officer Email: janice.bamsey@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>To seek the Council’s endorsement of the Cotswolds National Landscape (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - AONB) Management Plan 2023 – 2025, produced by the Cotswolds National Landscape Board.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Cotswold National Landscape Management Plan 2023-2025</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p><i>That the Executive Resolves to:</i></p> <p><i>1. Endorse the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2023–2025 for use as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Part of the evidence base for the review of the Local Plan;</i> • <i>Part of the evidence base for the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans;</i> • <i>Part of the evidence base for the preparation and implementation of relevant Council strategies, policies and projects;</i> • <i>As a material consideration in the determination of planning applications; and to inform the development and delivery of the Council’s services and activities.</i>
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All • Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife • Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	The Cotswolds National Landscape Board (Cotswolds Conservation Board) have undertaken extensive consultation with a broad range of stakeholders, including West Oxfordshire District Council, in the preparation of the management plan.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** The Cotswolds was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1966 in recognition of the national importance of its rich, diverse and high quality landscape. About a third of West Oxfordshire lies within the Cotswolds AONB - now known as the Cotswolds National Landscape.
- 1.2** The Cotswolds National Landscape Board (an independent statutory body, working in partnership with a wide range of other organisations) is responsible for preparing and publishing a management plan for the Cotswolds National Landscape, and reviewing it at intervals of no more than five years. In February 2023, the Board adopted the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2023–2025¹, following a review of the 2018-2023 Management Plan and extensive consultation (including with this Council).
- 1.3** Although the Board will play an important role in the delivery of the Management Plan, its successful delivery is also dependent on a wide range of stakeholders. As the Plan’s vision and policies are intended to guide the work of stakeholders, such as the Council, each local authority within the Cotswolds has now been asked to endorse the new Management Plan.

2. WEST OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN 2031

- 2.1** Our current adopted local plan contains a policy – Policy EHI - giving great weight to the conservation and enhancement of the Cotswolds’ natural beauty, landscape and countryside, including its wildlife and heritage. The Cotswolds AONB Management Plan is specifically identified as a material consideration in decision making relevant to the AONB.
- 2.2** The approved Management Plan in operation at the time of the adoption of the Local Plan 2031(2013-2018) was endorsed by the District Council as supplementary guidance.
- 2.3** The subsequent Management Plan, covering the period 2018-2023, was also endorsed, except for those aspects that related to: the promotion of the Cotswolds as the Walking and Exploring Capital of England; and the promotion of the Cotswolds as England’s next National Park.
- 2.4** Other documents and advice produced by the Cotswolds Board, including the Landscape Character Assessment, Strategy and Guidelines and Position Statements, are also material considerations which are taken into account when making planning decisions.

3. NEW MANAGEMENT PLAN 2023-2025

- 3.1** The new Management Plan runs for two years rather than the usual five. This is in anticipation of significant national and local policy developments for protected landscapes, especially in relation to climate action and the implementation of the Glover review on protected landscapes. During the two-year span of this interim plan, the Board intends to develop the evidence and data to build in meaningful targets towards net zero in the next plan.

¹ <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/planning/cotswolds-aonb-management-plan/>

3.2 The Management Plan sets out a clear vision (in Chapter 2) for the Cotswolds, underpinned by three key issues: the climate emergency; nature’s decline and the ecological crisis; and health and societal change. From the vision and these key issues, a series of policies have been developed.

3.3 The policies are set out under three cross-cutting themes, together with two additional themes:

Cross-cutting: Climate change – mitigation and adaptation

Natural and cultural capital

Working together

Other: Conserving and enhancing – influencing and delivering for landscape, nature and the climate

Increasing understanding and enjoyment – ensuring access, learning and wellbeing opportunities for everyone

3.4 These themes reflect the topics and issues raised last year as part of our work on the review of both the Council Plan and the Local Plan. There may not, however, be complete alignment between the Management Plan and local authority plans. The Chief Executive of the Cotswolds National Landscape recognises this and stresses that endorsement of the Management Plan does not require full alignment.

3.5 The Cotswolds National Landscape Chief Executive explains it is intended that the Management Plan will help inform the development of future plans and so it is, to a certain extent, aspirational in nature. He highlights page 13 of the Plan which addresses this particular point and gives reassurance to local planning authorities where there is not alignment that their adopted policies will not be over-ridden:

“One of the areas which the Management Plan policies relate to is in the policy-making and decision-taking of local planning authorities (LPAs). For example, it is hoped that LPAs will have regard to the Management Plan policies when reviewing and developing their own policies, including those within their development plans. The Management Plan policies are aspirational and as such, they might go further than current policies in individual development plans. It is intended that these aspirational policies will aid in helping to develop and evidence new local plan policies.

The Management Plan should be a material consideration in planning decisions. However, it is recognised that planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the LPA’s development plan (unless material considerations indicate otherwise)”.

3.6 The new interim Management Plan, and the review work to be undertaken over the next two years, will provide a useful resource for consideration as part of the work on the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041. The Board’s emphasis on the need for all stakeholders to work

together and to deliver on the issues prioritised by the Government² (such as nature recovery and access to nature and the countryside) reflects our emerging approach.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The District Council could choose not to endorse the Management Plan. This may have implications for meeting our duty, under the CROW Act s.85, with regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape. There would also be potential confusion with the current policy wording of the Local Plan.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The report raises no direct legal implications.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The report presents no significant risks.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1 No specific issues identified.

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Management Plan places considerable emphasis on the climate and ecological emergencies. Endorsement of the Plan will assist in addressing these.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 None.

(END)

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-government-response>

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COTSWOLDS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2023-2025

Cotswolds National Landscape Board
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Website: www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

A note on terminology

In June 2020 the Cotswolds National Landscape Board decided to replace the term Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) with National Landscape.

This plan uses the name Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) for the area designated as the Cotswolds AONB. At times it is abbreviated to National Landscape.

AONB is still the legal designation and is used within this plan when referring to AONB's outside of the Cotswolds and the designation nationally.

The name used for the organisation associated with the designation is the Cotswolds National Landscape Board. At times this is abbreviated to National Landscape Board or The Board.

The legal name of the organisation remains the Cotswolds Conservation Board but this name is no longer used in most circumstances.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2023-2025

The Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan is a statutory plan, which sets out the vision, outcomes and policies for the management of the Cotswolds National Landscape for the period 2023-2025. These are summarised in the table overleaf.

The vision sets the overall context for the plan and was adopted in 2022 following consultation with stakeholders. The vision was drawn up in the light of three interlinked key issues:

- **Key Issue 1, The Climate Emergency**
- **Key Issue 2, Nature's decline and the Ecological Crisis**
- **Key Issue 3, Health and societal changes**

The plan goes on to define the special qualities of the National Landscape. These are the aspects of the area's natural beauty which make it distinctive and which are considered valuable, especially at a national scale. It is the impact of these key issues amongst others, on the special qualities that has informed the development of the plan's outcomes and policies.

The outcomes express the desired state of the National Landscape. They are arranged under three over-arching headings which reflect the National Landscape's purpose of designation (to conserve and enhance natural beauty) and the National Landscape Board's additional purpose (to increase understanding and enjoyment). These headings are illustrated further with three broad aims:

1. Cross Cutting Themes; **Tackling 21st century issues through progressive partnerships.**
2. Conserving and Enhancing Natural Beauty; **Influencing and delivering for landscape, nature and climate.**
3. Increasing Understanding and Enjoyment; **Ensuring access, learning and wellbeing opportunities are for everyone.**

When viewed together the outcomes paint a powerful picture of what the Cotswolds would be like if this plan's vision became a reality:

Outcome 1 - Climate Action: The National Landscape is a place that is mitigating and adapting to climate change, and has a clearly defined pathway towards Net Zero emissions.

Outcome 2 - Natural and Cultural Capital: The natural and cultural capital assets of the National Landscape - and the services which they provide – are better understood, conserved and enhanced.

Outcome 3 - Working Together: Through collaborative partnerships and a shared understanding, the purposes of the National Landscape and its Board are applied consistently across the whole area.

Outcome 4 - Landscape: The evolving landscape and much-loved character of the Cotswolds is better understood and at the heart of all we do and the decisions we make.

Outcome 5 - Local Distinctiveness: In a world of constant and rapid change, the local distinctiveness of the National Landscape is valued, conserved and enhanced.

Outcome 6 - Tranquillity: Noise pollution and visual disturbance are minimised to maintain tranquillity across the National Landscape.

Outcome 7 - Dark Skies: Fewer areas of the National Landscape are affected by light pollution.

Outcome 8 - Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage: The historic environment and cultural heritage of the National Landscape is better understood, conserved and enhanced.

Outcome 9 - Biodiversity and Nature Recovery: There is concerted unified action for a widespread recovery of nature - conserving, restoring and enhancing a connected mosaic of distinctly Cotswolds habitats and species.

Outcome 10 - Rural Land Management: Land management conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the National Landscape whilst balancing the competing pressures of recovering nature, tackling climate change, food production, supporting livelihoods and public access.

Outcome 11 - Development and Transport: Development and transport schemes positively contribute to the purposes of protected landscape designation and also plays a key role in facilitating the economic and social well-being of local and rural communities.

Outcome 12 - Health and Wellbeing: The National Landscape plays a full part in improving the nation's health, benefitting the mental and physical wellbeing of those who experience it.

Outcome 13 - Access and Recreation: The Cotswolds is recognised as a welcoming place, where barriers to access are being removed and everyone feels connected to the landscape.

Outcome 14 - Sustainable Tourism: Businesses and visitors have a shared commitment to contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the National Landscape.

The policies outline in detail how these outcomes can be achieved and are perhaps the most important – and most utilised part of the plan.

Although the National Landscape Board will play an important role in delivering the vision, outcomes and policies of the Management Plan, their successful delivery is also dependent on all individuals and organisations with an interest in the Cotswolds.

The Management Plan identifies key actions for specific stakeholders. This is a plan for the place not the body. The Management Plan also identifies key indicators for each policy which will be used to gauge progress in its delivery.

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Contents at a Glance

CROSS CUTTING (PURPOSES 1 AND 2) Tackling 21st century issues through progressive partnerships.			PURPOSE 1: TO CONSERVE AND ENHANCE THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE COTSWOLDS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE¹ Influencing and delivering for landscape, nature and climate.								PURPOSE 2: TO INCREASE THE UNDERSTANDING AND ENJOYMENT OF THE SPECIAL QUALITIES OF THE COTSWOLDS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE Ensuring access, learning and wellbeing opportunities are for everyone.		
OUTCOME 1: CLIMATE ACTION	OUTCOME 2: NATURAL & CULTURAL CAPITAL	OUTCOME 3: WORKING TOGETHER	OUTCOME 4: LANDSCAPE	OUTCOME 5: LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS	OUTCOME 6: TRANQUILLITY	OUTCOME 7: DARK SKIES	OUTCOME 8: HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT & CULTURAL HERITAGE	OUTCOME 9: BIODIVERSITY AND NATURE RECOVERY	OUTCOME 10: RURAL LAND MANAGEMENT	OUTCOME 11: DEVELOPMENT & TRANSPORT	OUTCOME 12: HEALTH & WELL-BEING	OUTCOME 13: ACCESS & RECREATION	OUTCOME 14: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM
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POLICY CC2: Climate Change - Adaptation	POLICY CC4: Soils	POLICY CC7: Compliance with Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act	POLICY CE2: Geology						POLICY CE9: Problem Species, Pests and Diseases	POLICY CE11: Major Development			
	POLICY CC5: Water	POLICY CC8: Working together								POLICY CE12: Development Priorities & Evidence of Need			
										POLICY CE13: Waste Management and the Circular Economy			

¹ In delivering purposes 1 and 2, the Board has a duty to foster the social and economic wellbeing of people living in the National Landscape. This duty is addressed through relevant policies under the two purposes.

CHAIR'S FOREWORD

The Cotswolds National Landscape has previously produced a Management Plan every five years, with the current plan expiring in 2023. We've made the decision to undertake a limited interim review of this current plan to cover the period 2023-25, so that we can align with the timeline of the government's 25-year Environment Plan and accommodate any changes in policy resulting from the 2019 Landscapes Review.

Our plan continues to address the many issues currently facing the Cotswolds National Landscape. These include helping to mitigate and adapt to climate change, supporting the recovery of wildlife and helping nature to thrive, ensuring everyone has access to the landscape to help improve their health and wellbeing, producing food and other products, and ensuring businesses and livelihoods are maintained. All this, whilst still maintaining the special characteristics and elements of natural beauty which make it a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Many of these demands are increasing but our understanding of their consequences is improving all the time. In our Vision for the Cotswolds, we acknowledge the need to constantly find new win-win solutions that conserve and enhance the landscape and serve the people who live, work, and visit here. Working collaboratively, in partnership with others, will be essential to help identify and implement these solutions. During the two-year span of this interim plan we will further develop the evidence and data, particularly around climate action, so that we can build in meaningful targets towards net zero in our next plan. The new plan will inform how we work in the Cotswolds National Landscape to balance the needs of nature, people, climate – and how we transition into a future that will surely be very different from now.

Brendan McCarthy

Chair, Cotswolds National Landscape Board

February 2023

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

MANAGEMENT PLAN - CONTEXT

What is the Cotswolds National Landscape?

The Cotswolds National Landscape was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1966, and extended in area in 1990. Although AONB is still the legal name of the designation it was rebranded as a National Landscape for most purposes in June 2020. At 790 square miles, or 2038 square kilometres, it is the largest AONB – and the third largest protected landscape, including National Parks – in England. The National Landscape stretches from Bath and Wiltshire in the south, through Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire to Warwickshire and Worcestershire in the north. It cuts across 15 local authority areas.

AONBs are landscapes whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard them². The statutory purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance their natural beauty³.

Each AONB has been designated by reason of its 'special qualities'. These include the flora, fauna, historical and cultural associations as well as landscape and scenic views. Information on the 'special qualities' of the Cotswolds National Landscape is provided in Chapter 4.

Further information on National Landscape (AONB) designation is provided in Appendix 1 and information on 'natural beauty' is provided in Appendix 2.

What is the Cotswolds National Landscape Board?

The Cotswolds National Landscape Board ('the Board') was established by Parliament in 2004 as the Cotswolds Conservation Board and has two statutory purposes⁴:

1. To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape.
2. To increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

In fulfilling these roles, the Board has a duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of people living in the National Landscape.

In circumstances where these purposes and duties are irreconcilable, the Board must give priority to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape⁵.

The Board consists of 37 members, of whom 15 are nominated by local authorities, eight by parish councils and 14 are appointed by government. The Board's work programme is delivered by a small

² Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) (2015) *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Landscape Protection and Enhancement Support Scheme (England) 2015 – 17. Application to European Commission*.

³ Section 82, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

⁴ Section 87, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, as amended by the NERC Act 2006.

⁵ This prioritisation of conserving and enhancing is known as the 'Sandford Principle', after Lord Sandford, who chaired the National Parks Policy Review Committee between 1971 and 1974.

team of staff, supported by volunteers including the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens who deliver a programme of practical projects and guided walks across the National Landscape.

Further information about the Board can be found in Appendix 3 and on the Board's website: www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

What is the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan?

The Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan ('the Management Plan') is a statutory plan⁶, which sets out policies for the management of the National Landscape⁷. The National Landscape Board is the body responsible for preparing and publishing the Management Plan and for reviewing it at intervals of no more than five years. This is the fifth such document prepared by the Board.

Although the Board is the body responsible for preparing and publishing the Management Plan and will play an important role in its delivery, the Board doesn't actually own or directly manage any of the land in the National Landscape or its setting. As such, the policies of the Management Plan are also intended to guide the work of other stakeholders in delivering the Management Plan's vision and outcomes.

Why do we have a Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan?

The Management Plan is a key mechanism for achieving the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the National Landscape's special qualities. The Management Plan is the only plan to guide the management of the National Landscape as a whole.

Who will deliver the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan?

This plan is ultimately about partnership working to make the vision a reality.

The National Landscape Board will play an important role in delivering the vision and outcomes of the Management Plan. However, their successful delivery is also dependent on other stakeholders, including local authorities and other public bodies, land owners and land managers, non-government organisations, developers, businesses and individuals. Many of these stakeholders already make a significant contribution to delivering the vision and outcomes of the Management Plan. This is a plan for the place and all the bodies and individuals engaged in it.

It is a legal requirement for 'relevant authorities', including all public bodies, to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape⁸. This legal requirement is known as the 'duty of regard'. So, for example, local planning authorities shall have regard to this purpose when developing their Local Plans and when making decisions on planning applications.

The duty of regard is intended to ensure that the purpose for which an AONB has been designated (i.e. to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB) is recognised as an essential consideration in any decisions or activities that impact on the AONB, with the expectation that adverse impacts will be avoided or mitigated where possible⁹

⁶ Section 89 (1), Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as amended by the NERC Act 2006.

⁷ Section 89, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

⁸ Section 85, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

⁹ Natural England (2010) England's statutory designated landscapes: a practical guide to your duty of regard.

More information about the ‘duty of regard’ is provided in Appendix 4.

How will the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan be delivered?

How the Board will contribute to the delivery of the Management Plan itself, as well as encourage and support other stakeholders is set out in a three yearly Business Plan Framework which in turn is delivered through an annual work programme.

Every individual and organisation with an interest in the National Landscape can help make this plan’s vision and outcomes a reality by contributing to its delivery. The ‘Stakeholder Delivery’ table in Appendix 5 provides an indication of the key measures that the Board invites specific stakeholders to undertake in order to help deliver this plan.

How will the delivery of the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan be monitored?

The Board will monitor and evaluate its contribution to the delivery of the Management Plan through the quarterly and annual review of its work programme. The ‘State of the Cotswolds Report’ – together with other local and national monitoring and surveys - will contribute to the provision of evidence, which is a crucial part of managing the National Landscape.

The Board will endeavour to monitor the key actions identified in the ‘Stakeholder Delivery’ table in Appendix 5. It will also endeavour to monitor compliance with the ‘duty of regard’ (see Appendix 4).

Appendix 6 shows the key indicators that will be used to monitor the delivery of the Management Plan. The monitoring indicators will demonstrate change over time. There are timed targets within supporting documents such as the Board’s key performance indicators and the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan. National targets for protected landscapes supported by an outcomes monitoring framework are currently being worked on.

MANAGEMENT PLAN - PROCESS

In order to align with the timing of national and local policy development and guidance this plan is based on an interim review of the 2018 to 2023 plan and will run for two years from 2023 to 2025. A more thorough review will be undertaken to produce a fully revised plan in 2025. Two years is a very short period to achieve the vision and many of the outcomes within this plan so although it runs until 2025 it looks towards the desired state of the Cotswolds in 2030.

Much of the groundwork for the preparation of this plan was undertaken in 2021. A new vision was consulted on and adopted and we held a forward planning day to look at key issues and outcomes.

Throughout 2021 and 2022 research was commissioned taking a closer look at the natural capital and carbon footprint of the National Landscape and a Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan was developed and published.¹⁰

A consultation focussing on the wording of policies was undertaken internally and with our local authority partners over the summer of 2022 and a wider fuller consultation was undertaken in the

¹⁰ The Natural Capital Evaluation can be examined via a dashboard on this webpage, where the Cotswolds Nature recovery Plan can also be downloaded: <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/looking-after/cotswolds-nature-recovery-plan/>

Autumn. Throughout both of these consultations 66 responses were received from 44 individuals representing 37 organisations. More individuals contributed as several responses were compiled from across teams.

MANAGEMENT PLAN STRUCTURE AND USE

The core of the plan is made up of four components

- Vision
- Key Issues
- Special qualities
- Outcomes and policies

The vision sets the overall context for the plan and was adopted by the Cotswolds National Landscape Board in June 2021 following consultation with stakeholders. The vision was drawn up in the light of three identified key issues:

- **Key Issue 1, The Climate Emergency**
- **Key Issue 2, Nature's decline and the Ecological Crisis**
- **Key Issue 3, Health and societal changes**

The plan goes on to define the special qualities of the National Landscape. These are the aspects of the area's natural beauty which make the area distinctive and which are considered valuable, especially at a national scale. It is the impact of these key issues amongst others, on the special qualities that has informed the development of the plan's outcomes and policies.

The outcomes and policies are arranged under three over-arching headings which reflect the National Landscape's purpose of designation (to conserve and enhance natural beauty) and the National Landscape Board's additional purpose (to increase understanding and enjoyment). These headings are illustrated further with three broad aims:

1. Cross Cutting Themes
Tackling 21st century issues through progressive partnerships.
2. Conserving and Enhancing
Influencing and delivering for landscape, nature and climate.
3. Increasing Understanding and Enjoyment
Ensuring access, learning and wellbeing opportunities are for everyone.

The outcomes express the desired state of the National Landscape and the policies outline how this can be achieved.

The supporting text for each outcome outlines the underlying issues that the policies are aiming to address. The outcomes have been derived from the vision and were used to establish the policies. They form the link between the long-term vision and immediate action.

The policies are perhaps the most important – and most utilised - part of the Management Plan. They serve five main purposes:

1. They are principles for how the Cotswolds National Landscape should be managed in order to:
 - a. conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape;
 - b. increase the understanding and enjoyment of the National Landscape’s special qualities;
 - c. foster the social and economic well-being of local communities;
 - d. address issues that are having an adverse effect on the National Landscape;
 - e. achieve the vision and outcomes of the Management Plan.
2. They provide a framework for action by all stakeholders with a role to play in the management of the National Landscape including the National Landscape Board.
3. They represent the policies of the Board.
4. They are intended to guide, influence and be used by stakeholders in their own plans, policies, proposals, work programmes and decision making.
5. Together with other guidance produced by the Board, they are intended to facilitate a consistent and co-ordinated approach across the whole of the Cotswolds National Landscape¹¹.

It is important that all of the policies should be considered in their entirety, particularly in relation to development and rural land management. For example, when a development is being proposed in the National Landscape, the developer and the local authority should have regard to all of the policies, not just to Policy CE10 (Development and Transport – Principles).

One of the areas which the Management Plan policies relate to is in the policy-making and decision-taking of local planning authorities (LPAs). For example, it is hoped that LPAs will have regard to the Management Plan policies when reviewing and developing their own policies, including those within their development plans. The Management Plan policies are aspirational and as such, they might go further than current policies in individual development plans. It is intended that these aspirational policies will aid in helping to develop and evidence new local plan policies.

The Management Plan should be a material consideration in planning decisions. However, it is recognised that planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the LPA’s development plan (unless material considerations indicate otherwise).

The policies are consistent in the use of the verbs ‘must’, ‘will’ and ‘should’, as outlined below:

- **‘Must’** is used where the relevant stakeholder has a statutory requirement to implement the policy.
- **‘Will’** is used where the Board is the stakeholder with primary responsibility for applying and / or delivering the policy.
- **‘Should’** is used where a stakeholder other than the Board has primary responsibility for applying and / or delivering the policy (although the Board would still play an active role in many of these).

The plan goes on to consider how it can be delivered and monitored. Further detail and evidence are then provided in appendices.

¹¹ The Management Plan and guidance documents produced by the Cotswolds National Landscape Board are the only publications that guide the management of the Cotswolds National Landscape as a whole. This is why the Board’s guidance documents are specifically mentioned in several policies. The variation in local conditions and the importance of other plans and guidance that relate to specific parts of the National Landscape (i.e. individual local authorities) is also recognised.

CHAPTER 2 - VISION

A COTSWOLDS VISION: A NATIONAL LANDSCAPE FOR EVERYONE

A time of opportunity

The Cotswolds is good for us; we feel better when we are here and engaged with the natural beauty of the landscape around us. In recent years we have been reminded of the intrinsic relationship between ourselves and the natural world – and the condition it is in. We believe the Cotswolds National Landscape offers opportunities for optimism, regeneration, wellbeing, and inclusion.

Challenges lie ahead

We are in the midst of a global climate emergency and an ecological crisis. Our awareness of ongoing social and economic inequalities is heightened. In the Cotswolds, these concerns are as real for us too, and we face significant challenges: climate change; threats to wildlife and habitat; changes to the farming landscape and agriculture; finding ways to deliver opportunities for younger people and provide for an ageing population; and achieving access to, and involvement in, the countryside for everyone – in ways which help benefit the countryside and encourage a diverse range of people to appreciate and care for the Cotswolds.

What can we do, and how should we do it?

To address these issues and begin to make improvements, we need to challenge ourselves. We must avoid complacency, and not adhere doggedly to past beliefs – this will hold us back, and limit how much positive change we can introduce. Instead, we need to embrace new ways of thinking in order to find win-win solutions which both conserve and enhance natural beauty, and serve the people who are here. We will work hard, and in partnership – to find outcomes which offer the most positive benefits and the least negative impact. We will need to demonstrate collaboration and leadership. We will need to be energetic and proactive. We will need to be bold, brave, and confident. Above all, we will need to acknowledge that we can't do it all alone – we want to work with other organisations and individuals to achieve results which benefit all of us, and nature.

The future should be bright

The treasured landscapes which make the Cotswolds nationally and internationally important are diverse in character, as are the people who live, work, and visit here. There is no 'one size fits all' for the future – but we have a greater opportunity than ever before to pull together as communities across the Cotswolds, and to work with each other to harness our dedication and expertise to forge the future of the Cotswolds. This place, the Cotswolds National Landscape, is for everyone, from all walks of life. In sharing it and looking after it, we will continue to create a place that is vibrant, unique, welcoming, and truly special – for people and for nature. We will work towards ensuring that the Cotswolds stays a working landscape, where agriculture thrives and supply chains are secure. Our communities should be connected and diverse, but self-sustaining. Visitors should feel welcome to enjoy being here, confident about access, and motivated to give something back to help look after the landscape. This should be a place where the landscape, nature, and people work in harmony with each other.

The Cotswolds will be a place that will inspire generations of people to look after it – now and in the years ahead.

CHAPTER 3. KEY ISSUES

The Board has identified three key issues that it considers to be having a significant effect on this plan's outcomes and in achieving its two purposes of:

- conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape; and
- increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Landscape.

These can be summarised as follows:

- **Key Issue 1, The Climate Emergency**

Mitigating and adapting to climate change whilst conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape.

Climate change is happening, and we are already experiencing the dangerous impacts of a rapidly heating climate. Many of the defining characteristics and special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape are threatened, however, a window of opportunity remains to prevent its worst impacts, and to help people and wildlife adapt.

The Cotswolds National Landscape Climate Change Strategy¹² (adopted by the National Landscape board in February 2022) summarises our current understanding of the climate change impacts on the Cotswolds and what stakeholders can do to both adapt to and mitigate these impacts.

Ambitious climate action is necessary to mitigate climate change and avoid its worst consequences for the Cotswolds, and the Cotswolds National Landscape is not exempt from playing a full part. Farming needs to change to improve soils to continue producing food, reduce soil loss, sequester carbon and help with improving water quality and flood management; tree cover needs to increase to capture carbon and support nature recovery, much more of our energy needs will have to be met through low carbon energy technologies. Buildings need to become energy efficient and infrastructure needs to be more resilient. All this has to be done in ways that conserve and enhance the Cotswolds for future generations.

The Landscapes Review¹³ emphasised the importance of the role National Landscapes should play in mitigating and adapting to climate change:

“National landscapes should take a leading role in the response to climate change through their Management Plans.”

In November 2021 the National Landscape Board adopted a Climate Change Commitment¹⁴ in which states that:

“It is our commitment to identify a scenario which allows us to endorse a path to Net Zero emissions (or better) by 2050 (or sooner).”

¹² <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CNL-Climate-Change-Strategy-Adopted-Feb-2022.pdf>

¹³ Landscapes Review, Julian Glover, September 2019

¹⁴ <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/about-us/corporate-documents-reports/>

In line with all AONB's commitment in the Colchester Declaration¹⁵, this scenario will include clear, measurable targets to achieve Net Zero. This pathway will be in place in time for inclusion in the 2025 Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan.

Some climate change mitigation and adaptation measures have the potential to adversely affect the natural beauty of the National Landscape, but with careful design and implementation, many of these measures can not only conserve but also enhance natural beauty. The challenge is to develop a pathway to net zero which also conserves and enhances natural beauty.

- **Key Issue 2, Nature's decline and the Ecological Crisis**

Enabling wildlife to recover, flourish and adapt to climate change through a robust nature recovery network which additionally provides us with clean air and water and healthy soils.

The story of our loss of wildlife is well documented and understood. This plan is about how we can turn this around and most importantly turn it around now. Climate change is a well-recognised driver combining with habitat destruction to threaten the loss of our already diminished wildlife at an even greater scale and pace. The need for action is urgent if we are to avoid a mass extinction event. The Landscapes Review¹⁶ found that this urgent need to do more for nature was a dominant theme:

In our call for evidence, the message was clear: more than any other single thing, people and organisations agreed that our landscapes should do more for nature.

We know what we have to do to allow our wildlife to flourish and adapt to climate change. We need to create a robust and resilient nature recovery network – a landscape rich in joined up and well managed habitats. Such a nature recovery network is not only good for wildlife, it provides a range of 'ecosystem services' such as clean water or food or a beautiful place to get away from it all and enjoy some peace surrounded by nature. These ecosystem services are critically important to the wellbeing and economy of people living in and around the Cotswolds.

The Landscapes Review proposed that:

National Landscapes should form the backbone of Nature Recovery Networks – joining things up within and beyond their boundaries

AONB's collectively responded to the challenge of the Landscapes Review with the Colchester Declaration¹⁷ which contains commitments to produce nature recovery plans and restore habitats and populations of endangered species.

The Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan was adopted as Cotswolds National Landscape guidance in October 2021. It represents a detailed look at the species and habitats of the Cotswolds and what should be done to enable their recovery and adaptation to climate change.

¹⁵ A commitment to tackle the climate emergency and ecological crisis signed by all AONBs at a national conference in Colchester in 2019. <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/projects/Colchester-declaration>

¹⁶ Landscapes Review, Julian Glover, September 2019

¹⁷ A commitment to tackle the climate emergency and ecological crisis signed by all AONBs at a national conference in Colchester in 2019. <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/projects/Colchester-declaration>

- **Key Issue 3, Health and societal changes**

Ensuring that livelihoods are maintained and that everyone within and around the National Landscape can realise the health and wellbeing benefits of accessing its natural beauty.

We face unprecedented environmental challenges in the form of the climate emergency and ecological crisis. We have to respond quickly and vigorously to address them and furthermore we have to do this in a way that supports livelihoods and communities. The solutions have to work in social and economic terms as well as environmental if they are to have a lasting impact.

The mental and physical health benefits of accessing natural beauty are becoming increasingly understood and appreciated. The Landscapes Review published by Julian Glover in 2019 challenged Protected Landscapes to do more to welcome people and crucially to do a lot more to ensure that people from currently underrepresented groups can enjoy the benefits of accessing them too. A Challenge that the Cotswolds National Landscape Board intends to address, building on current activity and continuing to work with stakeholders, old and new.

The impact of these key issues on the natural beauty of the National Landscape were considered during the development of the vision and the outcomes.

CHAPTER 4. THE SPECIAL QUALITIES OF THE COTSWOLDS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

The 'special qualities' of a National Landscape are those aspects of the area's natural beauty which make the area distinctive and which are considered valuable, especially at a national scale. They are the key attributes on which the priorities for its conservation, enhancement and management are based. They bring out the essence of the National Landscape as an evocative description of the area rather than as a statistical account.

THE SPECIAL QUALITIES OF THE COTSWOLDS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Cotswolds is a rich mosaic of historical, social, economic, cultural, geological, geomorphological¹⁸ and ecological features. The special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape are:

- the unifying character of the limestone geology – its visible presence in the landscape and use as a building material;
- the Cotswold escarpment, including views from and to the National Landscape;
- the high wolds – a large open, elevated predominately arable landscape with commons, 'big' skies and long-distance views;
- river valleys, the majority forming the headwaters of the Thames, with high-quality water;
- distinctive dry stone walls;
- flower-rich grasslands particularly limestone grasslands;
- ancient broadleaved woodland particularly along the crest of the escarpment.
- variations in the colour of the stone from one part of the National Landscape to another which add a vital element of local distinctiveness;
- the tranquillity of the area, away from major sources of inappropriate noise, development, visual clutter and pollution;
- extensive dark sky areas;
- distinctive settlements, developed in the Cotswold vernacular with high architectural quality and integrity;
- an accessible landscape for quiet recreation for both rural and urban users, with numerous walking and riding routes, including the Cotswold Way National Trail;
- significant archaeological, prehistoric and historic associations dating back 6,000 years, including Neolithic stone monuments, ancient drove roads, Iron Age forts, Roman villas, ridge and furrow fields, medieval wool churches and country estates and parks;
- a vibrant heritage of cultural associations, including the Arts and Crafts movement of the 19th and 20th centuries, famous composers and authors and traditional events such as the Cotswolds Olympics, cheese rolling and woolsack races.

¹⁸ Geomorphology is the physical features of an area, strongly influenced by geology.

CHAPTER 5. OUTCOMES AND POLICIES

CROSS CUTTING THEMES

Tackling 21st century issues through progressive partnerships

THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

OUTCOME 1 - CLIMATE ACTION: The National Landscape is a place that is mitigating and adapting to climate change, and has a clearly defined pathway towards Net Zero emissions.

1.1. Our climate is rapidly changing, driven by greenhouse gas emissions from human activities. We are already experiencing the dangerous impacts of a rapidly heating climate and many of the defining characteristics and Special Qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape are threatened by climate change and potentially our responses to it. Even if we cut emissions to zero tomorrow, further warming is inevitable due to the legacy of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere that will take decades to decline to safe levels. However, a window of opportunity remains for ambitious climate action to prevent its worst impacts, and to help people and wildlife adapt.

1.2. The need for climate action is urgent, but it needs to be well thought out and carefully implemented. The Cotswolds National Landscape is not exempt from playing a full part, but all this can be and should be done in ways that conserve and enhance the Cotswolds for future generations. Improving carbon literacy and understanding of the Cotswold landscape will help ensure the Cotswolds National Landscape remains both beautiful and resilient into the future.

POLICY CC1: CLIMATE CHANGE – MITIGATION

CC1.1. Greenhouse gas emissions should be minimised through a range of measures, including:

- Reducing energy demand in existing and new buildings and infrastructure:
 - Improving energy efficiency, for example, by retrofitting existing buildings. Where traditional buildings including listed buildings are retrofitted, this must be undertaken by historic building specialists and in a manner that is compatible with the purpose of National Landscape (AONB) designation;
 - Reducing embodied carbon through secondary and recycled material use within all construction unless demonstrably unachievable on technical and practical grounds;
 - Utilising passive measures, for example the orientation of buildings and the provision of high levels of insulation;
 - Sustainable construction methods and management plans to reduce and manage construction waste should be implemented;
 - Incentivising voluntary sustainability standards, for example BREEAM, Building with Nature, and One Planet Living principles.
- Reducing energy demand through transport and travel:
 - Reducing car use for example, through increasing green and active travel including public transport and Increasing shared mobility through car sharing schemes;
 - Reducing the need to travel for example by encouraging home working and affordable housing provision close to sources of employment, services and facilities;
 - Improving the sustainability of travel through for example; public transport hub promotion/ integration and information, and prioritising the provision of walking, cycling and public transport use, including adequate cycle parking
 - Providing sufficient infrastructure for the charging of electric vehicles, scooters and bikes;
 - Promoting messages aimed at minimising air travel by Cotswolds residents.
- Generating energy from low carbon sources in a manner consistent with the purpose of National Landscape (AONB) designation;
 - All developments, should have a net zero operational carbon balance and 100% energy provided by low carbon sources. Alternatives to fossil fuel energy sources should be used.
- Purchasing locally produced food products and services and encouraging small-scale vegetable growing in gardens and allotments.

CC1.2. Climate change mitigation including the sequestration of carbon should be a key component of land management practices and Environmental Land Management, and rural development support mechanisms in the National Landscape.

CC1.3. Climate action should be undertaken in a way compatible with the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

POLICY CC2: CLIMATE CHANGE - ADAPTATION

CC2.1. The risks posed by the consequences of climate change should be reduced through a range of adaptation measures, including those identified in relevant policies of this Management Plan¹⁹.

CC2.2. Climate change adaptation should be a significant driver in all new development, infrastructure and transport provision²⁰.

CC2.3. Climate change adaptation should be a key component of land management practices and Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms, in the National Landscape.

CC2.4. Further research into the predicted impacts of climate change on the Cotswolds National Landscape should be undertaken. This research should be used to advise and inform sustained behavioural change to adapt to climate change and conserve and enhance the National Landscape and its special qualities.

1.3. Global and UK average temperatures have increased by around 1.2°C since the 1850 – 1900 period. The UK Met Office’s 2021 report²¹ states that climate change trends projected for the 21st century show an increased chance of warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers along with an increase in the frequency and intensity of extremes.

1.4. Between 2009-2018, UK winters have been on average 5% wetter than 1981-2010 and 12% wetter than 1961-1990, and that summers in the UK have also been 11% and 13% wetter, respectively” Total rainfall from extremely wet days increased by around 17% in the decade 2008-2017 for the UK as a whole and surface water flooding is projected to increase in frequency and severity in the future. In addition to increasing precipitation volumes, climate change has already made it 12-25% more likely that the UK will again experience a summer as hot as 2018, an extreme that is projected to become 50% more likely with future warming .

1.5. In November 2021 the Cotswolds National Landscape Board adopted a Climate Change Commitment²² in which states that:

“It is our commitment to identify a scenario which allows us to endorse a path to Net Zero emissions (or better) by 2050 (or sooner).”

1.6. The National Landscape Board first published a ‘Climate Change Strategy for the Cotswolds National Landscape’ in 2012 and an updated version was adopted in February 2022²³. Most of the measures proposed in the strategy to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, and

¹⁹ Relevant policies (with the most relevant shown in **bold**) include: CC6, para 1; **CC4, para 2; CC5, para 1;** CE6, para 1; **CE7, para1;** CE8; **CE9, para 3;** CE10, paras 1 & 3; CE11, para 2; and UE3.

²⁰ Additional measures not explicitly addressed in the Management Plan include protecting transport infrastructure from extreme weather events and ensuring that all new and retrofit development recognises the need to compensate for hotter summers and extreme weather events.

²¹ Met Office (2021), UK Climate Projections: Headline Findings, July 2021, version 3 p. 6-7.

https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/binaries/content/assets/metofficegovuk/pdf/research/ukcp/ukcp18_headline_findings_v3.pdf

²² <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/about-us/corporate-documents-reports/>

²³ <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CNL-Climate-Change-Strategy-Adopted-Feb-2022.pdf>

much of the supporting information has been incorporated into the Management Plan to some degree.

1.7. Farming needs to change to improve soils to continue producing food, reduce soil loss, sequester carbon and help with improving water quality and flood management; tree and hedgerow cover needs to increase to capture carbon and support nature recovery. To achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions, much more of our energy needs will have to be met through low carbon energy technologies, buildings need to become energy efficient and infrastructure needs to be more resilient.

1.8. The percentage of households in the Cotswolds National Landscape having no car is 3%, and many people do not have access to a car during the day. This means they are heavily dependent on the frequency and quality of public and/or community transport to access local services. It also exacerbates issues of rural isolation. The introduction and use of technology to help address transport issues and offer increased alternatives such as car sharing and call-up public transport systems could provide viable options for residents and visitors alike whilst simultaneously helping to mitigate climate change. The provision of affordable housing within the National Landscape would help reduce the climate impact of travel to work journeys for those living and working in the area. Any consideration of the carbon footprint of Cotswold's residents must include the impact of flying which is estimated to be two and a half times higher than the UK average.²⁴

1.9. Measuring embodied carbon shows that maintaining, refurbishing and retrofitting traditional buildings can reduce carbon emissions in the built environment by over 60%²⁵ by 2050 compared to new building. Done correctly this can conserve the buildings as a heritage asset, make them more liveable in a changing climate and help mitigate climate change. Passive energy conservation measures, for example the orientation of buildings and the provision of high levels of insulation, also help to minimise the risk of overheating.

1.10. The National Landscape Board has commissioned a "Carbon Footprint Assessment" which when finalised will help inform the development of a pathway to net zero. A review of the Climate Change Strategy will likely be required during the period of this management plan, following the completion of this assessment in 2023.

NATURAL AND CULTURAL CAPITAL

OUTCOME 2 - NATURAL AND CULTURAL CAPITAL: The natural and cultural capital assets of the National Landscape - and the services which they provide – are better understood, conserved and enhanced.

²⁴ A Green House Gas Emissions Assessment and Target Recommendations for the Cotswolds National Landscape. 2023

²⁵ <https://historicengland.org.uk/content/heritage-counts/pub/2019/hc2019-re-use-recycle-to-reduce-carbon/#:~:text=THERE'S%20NO%20PLACE%20LIKE%20OLD%20HOMES,-5&text=Heritage%20Counts%20is%20an%20annual,responsibilities%20for%20the%20nation's%20heritage.>

POLICY CC3: NATURAL AND CULTURAL CAPITAL - PRINCIPLES

1. The natural and cultural capital of the Cotswolds National Landscape and the services they provide – should continue to be assessed and evaluated.
2. The use of natural and cultural capital accounting should be encouraged in order to fully understand the implications of investment, development and management decisions.
3. The financial and non-financial benefits of natural and cultural capital and the services they provide should be promoted.
4. Proposals affecting the Cotswolds National Landscape should have regard to – and seek to conserve and enhance – the natural and cultural capital of the National Landscape and the services they provide.
5. Natural and cultural capital and services they provide should be key components of Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms in the Cotswolds National Landscape.

The Cotswolds National Landscape has a wealth of natural and cultural capital (the stock of natural and cultural heritage assets) that provide goods and services, often called ecosystem services, that benefit wider society as a whole.

Natural capital stock includes renewable and non-renewable natural resources e.g. geology, minerals, soils, water, air, plants, animals, habitats and ecosystems. The National Landscape's cultural heritage assets are equally rich, including the cultural-historical landscape, individual heritage assets, historic settlements and vibrant cultural activity.

Ecosystem services include; food and fuel provision, the regulation of climate and purification of water, and well-being benefits to people through recreation and appreciation of nature.

These assets - and the services that they provide - are of local, national and, for some services, international importance. However, they are not fully understood or valued.

The Cotswolds National Landscape Board published a Position Statement on 'Conserving and Celebrating Cultural Capital in the Cotswolds AONB' in 2019²⁶ and in 2021 the Board published 'A Natural Capital Evaluation of the Cotswolds National Landscape'²⁷ and a 'Cotswolds Natural Capital Atlas'²⁸.

²⁶ <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Conserving-and-Celebrating-Cultural-Capital-in-the-Cotswolds-AONB-Adopted-March-2019.pdf>

²⁷ <https://envsys-ltd.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=d434eb386d21442694eaa0186a82bb76>

²⁸ <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Cotswolds-Natural-Capital-Atlas.pdf>

POLICY CC4: SOILS²⁹

1. Soil degradation should be halted and reversed by managing soils in a way that: (i) increases organic content, water retention and carbon sequestration; and (ii) minimises erosion, water pollution and compaction.
2. Soil management should remain a key component of Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms in the Cotswolds National Landscape.

Across the National Landscape there are many different soil types, which are subject to degradation from a variety of factors. Loss of soil organic matter results in soils being more prone to drought and less resilient, and requiring higher levels of input to support yields. This, in turn, leads to compaction of soils and the leaching of nitrate and pesticides to groundwater.

With a predicted 22% decrease in summer rainfall by 2080, the free draining Cotswold soils will become more prone to drought. Extreme weather events and a predicted 22% overall increase in winter rainfall could lead to flooding and poaching of soils³⁰. These combined impacts would lead to soil damage, erosion and nutrient loss. Soil management practices will, therefore, become even more important.

POLICY CC5: WATER³¹

1. Water resources should be carefully managed and conserved to: improve water quality; ensure adequate aquifer recharge; ensure adequate river flows; and contribute to natural flood management systems.
2. Development (new and existing sites) should assess and minimise flood risk and implement sustainable drainage schemes, adopt high water efficiency standards in line with RIBA 2030 Climate Challenge targets, and water conservation measures, for example rainwater harvesting and/or water recycling and grey water systems.
3. Sewerage pollution from storm overflows should be minimised and be at least within legal and regulatory requirements.

The Cotswolds is home to a large aquifer which supplies water to homes and businesses both inside and outside the National Landscape. Groundwater sources also need to be carefully managed to ensure the water is safe to use and that abstraction does not impact negatively on river flows.

The rivers in the National Landscape are important for water supply, recreation and biodiversity. They provide a range of habitats which are reliant on particular water flow and levels. However, some stretches of Cotswold's rivers are already prone to low flows, resulting in damage to riverine habitat, concentration of pollutants and less water for abstraction. Over abstraction can have a detrimental impact on these factors. Summers are predicted to become drier, which would exacerbate this problem even further.

²⁹ Soils are addressed under Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services, rather than meriting their own section, because they are not key features of the special qualities of the National Landscape.

³⁰ Cotswolds National Landscape Climate Change Strategy. February 2022.

³¹ Water is addressed under Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services, rather than meriting its own section, because it is not a key feature of the special qualities of the National Landscape.

Around half of the area's groundwater is classed as being of poor quality, particularly in the north and west, due to pollutant inputs. The main sources of pollution are from wastewater treatment works followed by agricultural runoff. Water discharged from wastewater treatment works contains phosphate, nitrogen and ammonia and at times of peak flow raw sewerage is discharged directly into rivers. Flood management strategies should aim to avoid these occurrences. Agricultural runoff contains phosphates bound to silt and nitrogen.

The water in the National Landscape is mainly fed by flow from deep in the limestone aquifers. The Environment Agency has been establishing projects within the National Landscape to improve the ecological condition of the rivers. Catchment Management Plans (CMP) provide the actions needed to achieve good ecological condition. Water Framework Directive data for 2016 indicates that 35% of the monitored river lengths in the National Landscape are in good ecological condition. Since 2013 there has been a decrease in the length of river in poor ecological condition.³² There are concerns with phosphate and sediment levels in some watercourses and groundwater supplies.

The Cotswolds National Landscape is not, at present, an area widely prone to flooding. However, in extreme rainfall events, such as that of July 2007, some towns and villages have been affected by flooding from rivers or as a result of limited drainage. Climate change is likely to increase the risk of flooding and the frequency of such extreme rainfall events.

The rivers that originate in the National Landscape flow downstream through larger towns and villages outside of the National Landscape which are more prone to flooding. As such, land management in the rivers valleys of the National Landscape can play a key role in helping to reduce flood risk downstream. Natural flood management works with natural processes to 'slow the flow' of flood waters. This helps to reduce the maximum water height of a flood (the 'flood peak') and / or delay the arrival of the flood peak downstream, increasing the time available to prepare for floods. Sustainable drainage systems, and ecological river restoration projects are important components of natural flood management.

With the anticipated drier summers and wetter winters, there is likely to be an increased demand for rainwater harvesting and storage.

WORKING TOGETHER

OUTCOME 3 - WORKING TOGETHER: Through collaborative partnerships and a shared understanding, the purposes of the National Landscape and its Board are applied consistently across the whole area.

This Management Plan is a place-based plan for the Cotswolds National Landscape, not just the National Landscape Board - the Board is unable to deliver the plan by itself. The Plan helps inform the activity of a multitude of partners, stakeholders, landowners, communities and visitors in order to contribute to the purposes of the protected landscape designation.

³² State of the Cotswolds 2017.

POLICY CC6: DEVELOPING A CONSISTENT, COORDINATED AND LANDSCAPE-LED APPROACH

1. Stakeholders across the Cotswolds National Landscape should take a consistent and co-ordinated approach to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape, including its special qualities and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities.

The Cotswolds National Landscape is an administratively complex area, extending across 15 local authorities and three geographical regions. This makes it very challenging to develop and deliver a consistent approach to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape including its special qualities and increasing the understanding and enjoyments of its special qualities. However, the potential benefits are huge, including better coordination of planning, development, Environmental Land Management schemes, nature recovery planning, tourism and recreation.

Taking a consistent approach, in this context, means being consistent in having regard to (and, ideally, being compatible with): the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape; national policy relating to AONBs; the policies of the Management Plan; and the guidance and position statements published by the Board. However, this does not necessarily mean that decisions made or actions taken will always be the same across the whole of the National Landscape, as these will vary depending on local social, economic and environmental circumstances.

Guidance on what is meant by 'landscape-led' is provided in the Board's Landscape-led Development Position Statement.

POLICY CC7: COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 85 OF THE COUNTRYSIDE AND RIGHTS OF WAY ACT

1. Relevant authorities, including public bodies, must comply with Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (the 'duty of regard') and should have regard to the supporting guidance published by Defra and Natural England.

The legal requirement for public bodies to have regard to the purpose of National Landscape (AONB) designation ('the duty of regard') provides an important mechanism for conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape. Further information on the 'duty of regard' is provided in Appendix 4.

POLICY CC8: WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

1. Stakeholders should work in partnership to support the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities. Stakeholders should also cooperate in fostering the economic and social well-being of communities in and around the National Landscape.
2. Communities and businesses within and around the Cotswolds National Landscape should be encouraged to value and celebrate being part of a nationally recognised landscape and to contribute to the purpose of National Landscape (AONB) designation.
3. All relevant stakeholders should work together to ensure the successful implementation of the Landscapes Review proposals that Government identified as priority in its response to the review³³.

The Landscapes Review³⁴ challenges Protected Landscapes to do a great deal more for both people and nature. It also recognises that this will require more resources and new ways of working. A proactive, multi-partnership approach is needed to enable the National Landscape to realise additional benefits through, for example, funding sources and increased participation across the National Landscape. This approach is also needed to help local communities and businesses recognise and celebrate the benefits of being part of a designated landscape.

Though there is generally a significant level of appreciation for the Cotswolds landscape amongst communities and businesses in and around the National Landscape, awareness and understanding of its status as a protected landscape and the implications of this are lacking. This reduces awareness of the need for protection and enhancement of the sense of place, its distinctive features and special qualities.

CONSERVING AND ENHANCING

Influencing and delivering for landscape, nature and climate.

LANDSCAPE

OUTCOME 4 - LANDSCAPE: The evolving landscape and much-loved character of the Cotswolds is better understood and at the heart of all we do and the decisions we make.

³³ Government Response to the Landscapes Review. Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs. January 2022.

³⁴ Julian Glover September 2019

POLICY CE1: LANDSCAPE

1. Proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the Cotswolds National Landscape, should have regard to, be compatible with and reinforce the landscape character of the location, as described by the Cotswolds Conservation Board's Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines. There should be a presumption against the loss of key characteristics identified in the landscape character assessment.
2. Proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the Cotswolds National Landscape, should have regard to the scenic quality of the location and its setting and ensure that views - including those into and out of the National landscape – and visual amenity are conserved and enhanced.
3. Conserving and enhancing landscape character should be a key objective of Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms in the Cotswolds National Landscape.
4. Rural skills training and the utilisation of those skills – such as dry stone walling, stone-masonry, traditional woodland management and hedgelaying – will be supported to ensure the long-term retention, creation and management of the key features of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

Landscape changes over time. Such change is often perceived as slow or non-existent, but when a view or place is compared to its earlier self, even over a comparatively short time span, the change can be dramatic. Since National Landscape (AONB) designation in 1966 much has changed in the Cotswolds, driven to a large extent by technological advances in agriculture, Environmental Land Management schemes and woodland grants, changes in the shooting and equestrian sectors, tree diseases, fluctuations in commodity prices, population growth and migration and changes in employment and communications, all of which can be influenced by Government policy and financial support. Continued change is inevitable and will have an impact on the landscape and the appearance of the Cotswolds in the future. Addressing the climate emergency, nature's decline and the ecological crisis will cause more change. This change needs to be managed and guided to ensure the Cotswolds retains its landscape character and special qualities.

It is important to consider the cumulative impact of changes on landscape character. This applies to both incremental building development and land use change particularly equestrian development and horticultural production under polytunnels.

The surroundings and setting of the National Landscape are important to its landscape and scenic beauty. For example, the impact of development and land management outside the National Landscape on views from - and to - the National Landscape is an important consideration, as is the retention of key views.

New support mechanisms for farming, forestry and other land management sectors could impact the conservation and enhancement of the landscape and special qualities of the National Landscape. It could also lead to legislative changes in environmental protection and management impacting on the conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape and its special qualities.

The loss of traditional skills is a significant issue for the future management of the landscape and the special qualities of the National Landscape.

In 2021 the National Landscape Board published a position statement on Landscape Led Development³⁵ supported by appendices.³⁶

POLICY CE2: GEOLOGY

1. Proposals that are likely to impact on the geological features of the Cotswolds National Landscape should have regard to these features and seek to conserve and enhance them.
2. The geological features of the Cotswolds National Landscape should be conserved and enhanced through effective management.
3. Opportunities should be sought to promote awareness and understanding of the geological features of the Cotswolds National Landscape.
4. Exploration and research into the geology of the Cotswolds National Landscape should be continued in order to improve understanding of the landscape, and of the geological resource and its importance to inform the conservation and management of geological and geomorphological sites.

The Cotswolds National Landscape is significant for its geology and geomorphology with some features unique to the area. The geology influences the landscape, soils and biodiversity and has played a significant role in the National Landscape's industry and heritage. Survey work has also identified the Cotswolds as significant for tufa streams and springs. It is vital that this geological resource is protected, conserved, enhanced, promoted and better understood.

LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS

OUTCOME 5 - LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS: In a world of constant and rapid change, the local distinctiveness of the National Landscape is valued, conserved and enhanced.

³⁵ <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Landscape-Led-Development-Position-Statement-FINAL-April-2021.pdf>

³⁶ <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Landscape-Led-Development-Position-Statement-FINAL-April-2021-Appendices.pdf>

POLICY CE3: LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS

1. Proposals that are likely to impact on the local distinctiveness of the Cotswolds National Landscape should have regard to, be compatible with and reinforce this local distinctiveness. This should include:
 - being compatible with the Cotswolds Conservation Board’s Landscape Character Assessment, Landscape Strategy and Guidelines and Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change;
 - being designed and, where relevant, landscaped to respect local settlement patterns, building styles, scale and materials and in accordance with design guidance prepared by local planning authorities;
 - using an appropriate colour of limestone to reflect local distinctiveness.
2. Innovative designs, compatible with the conservation of natural beauty – which are informed by local distinctiveness, character and scale – should be welcomed.
3. The development of design guidance – which is supported by a robust evidence base and which reflects relevant guidance published by the Cotswolds National Landscape Board – will be encouraged.
4. Provision should be made for the quarrying of limestone, at an appropriate scale, in order to provide building materials that help maintain and enhance the local distinctiveness of the National Landscape. Any production of aggregate and agricultural lime should be secondary and necessary for local and necessary operational purposes. Any such mineral sites should be required to demonstrate that they do not have any significant adverse effects on the natural beauty of the National Landscape including its special qualities or the integrity of existing wildlife sites.

As outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, one of the special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape is the unifying character of the limestone geology – its visible presence in the landscape and its use as a building material. Development pressures could potentially erode this local distinctiveness, for example, through the use of inappropriate building materials and inappropriate design. The publication and promotion of design guidance that reflects local distinctiveness is an essential tool for addressing this issue. It will also be important to maintain an adequate supply of locally sourced, appropriately coloured limestone.

Local distinctiveness includes natural elements including but not limited to: woodlands, grasslands, species, the shape and scale of fields, and the character of field boundaries such as hedges and walls. These elements should guide the design of new green and blue infrastructure.

TRANQUILLITY

OUTCOME 6 - TRANQUILLITY: Noise pollution and visual disturbance are minimised to maintain tranquillity across the National Landscape.

POLICY CE4: TRANQUILLITY

1. Proposals that are likely to impact on the tranquillity of the Cotswolds National Landscape should have regard to this tranquillity, by seeking to avoid and where avoiding is not possible, minimise noise pollution and other aural and visual disturbance.
2. Measures should be taken to remove and where removal is not possible minimise existing sources of noise pollution and other aural and visual disturbance in order to enhance the tranquillity of the Cotswolds National Landscape.
3. Proposals that are likely to impact on the tranquillity of the CNL should have regard to – and be compatible with – the National Landscapes Board’s Tranquillity Position Statement.³⁷

Research undertaken by CPRE has identified a growing loss of tranquil areas in England, down from 75% of England in the 1960s to around 50% in 2007³⁸. Although the Cotswolds National Landscape has a relatively high level of tranquillity, the National Landscape is being increasingly affected by unwanted, man-made noise and by activity arising from developments. For example, the increasing demand for air transport is leading to expansion of controlled air space over the National Landscape. Additionally, the use of drones, both commercially and privately, is likely to increase, further reducing levels of tranquillity.

Tranquillity relates to issues of visual impact and light pollution as well as noise and other disturbance. However, given that Policy CE1 addresses visual impacts and Policy CE5 addresses light pollution, Policy CE4 has an emphasis on noise. This incorporates issues such as significant increases in traffic in the towns, villages and smaller settlements of the National Landscape, including increased traffic arising from developments outside of the National Landscape.

The National Landscape Board published a position statement on tranquillity in 2019.

It is important to note that this policy is not intended to prevent the noise arising from normal working countryside operations such as operating power tools or farm machinery or non-mechanised quiet recreation.

³⁷ Cotswolds National Landscape Board (2019) Tranquillity Position Statement ([link](#)).

³⁸ CPRE (2007) Developing an Intrusion Map of England ([link](#)).

DARK SKIES

OUTCOME 7 - DARK SKIES: Fewer areas of the National Landscape are affected by light pollution.

POLICY CE5: DARK SKIES

1. Proposals that are likely to impact on the dark skies of the Cotswolds National Landscape should have regard to these dark skies, by seeking to avoid and where avoiding is not possible, minimise light pollution.
2. Proposals that are likely to impact on the dark skies of the CNL should have regard to recognised standards and guidance, in particular, that published by the Institution of Lighting Professionals and the Commission for Dark Skies.
3. Measures should be taken to increase the area of dark skies in the Cotswolds National Landscape by removing and where removal is not possible minimising existing sources of light pollution.
4. Consideration will be given to seeking a formal dark sky designation for those parts of the Cotswolds National Landscape that are least affected by light pollution.

‘Light pollution’ of the night sky is an intrusion into the countryside at night, which can have harmful effects on the health of people and wildlife. Although the Cotswolds National Landscape has relatively dark skies at night, compared to other parts of England (being ranked 13th in terms of the darkest skies in England), light pollution from the surrounding urban areas and the market towns does adversely affect the darks skies of the National Landscape in those locations. With ever-increasing levels of new housing in the National Landscape, light pollution is likely to get worse unless action is taken to address this issue.

The National Landscape Board adopted and published a Cotswolds Dark Skies & Artificial Light Position Statement ³⁹ in 2019. It is supported by two appendices:

[Appendix A Cotswolds night lights map](#)⁴⁰

[Appendix B1 Institution of Lighting Professionals Guidance Notes For the reduction of Obtrusive Light](#)⁴¹

[Appendix B2 Commission for Dark Skies Good Lighting Guide](#)⁴²

³⁹ <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Cotswolds-Dark-Skies-Artificial-Light-Position-Statement.pdf>

⁴⁰ <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Dark-Skies-Artificial-Light-Appendix-A-Night-lights.pdf>

⁴¹ <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Dark-Skies-Artificial-Light-Appendix-B-ILP-Guidance-Notes-For-the-reduction-of-Obtrusive-Light.pdf>

⁴² <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Dark-Skies-Artificial-Light-Appendix-B-CfDS-Good-Lighting-Guide.pdf>

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

OUTCOME 8 - HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE: The historic environment and cultural heritage of the National Landscape is better understood, conserved and enhanced.

POLICY CE6: HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

1. Proposals that are likely to impact on the historic environment and cultural heritage of the Cotswolds National Landscape should have regard to heritage assets and their setting, and seek opportunities to conserve and enhance them. This should include respecting the historical elements of landscape character including features such as; buildings, sites, layout and context, including the relationship between the existing feature or settlement and the landscape.
2. Heritage and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessments should be used when considering any change to a heritage asset and to influence decisions regarding the management of the historic environment and cultural heritage assets.
3. The historic environment and cultural heritage of the Cotswolds National Landscape, both designated and non-designated⁴³, should be conserved and enhanced through effective management.
4. Designated historic environment sites, such as scheduled monuments and listed buildings, and non-designated heritage assets of equivalent significance, should be protected, in line with national policy and guidance.
5. Historic environment and cultural heritage should be a key component of Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms in the Cotswolds National Landscape.
6. Opportunities should be sought to promote the awareness, understanding and use of Historic Environment Records, Conservation Area Appraisals, Historic Landscape Characterisation and Heritage Strategies and Action Plans. These should be used to influence decisions regarding the management of the National Landscape's historic environment and cultural heritage.
7. The cultural heritage of the Cotswolds should be better understood and celebrated in arts, cultural, and social activities across the National Landscape.

Our historic environment and cultural heritage is the result of a complex history of interaction between people and the natural environment. The historic landscape and natural environment form the foundations of our regional identity and local distinctiveness, contributing to the character and natural beauty of the area.'

Cultural heritage in the Cotswolds runs deeper than associations made with established examples such as the Arts and Crafts Movement or the music of Vaughan Williams. It is more than how the landscape inspires people. It is intrinsically linked to our understanding of the landscape, the changing seasons, farming, and the natural world. Cultural heritage includes oral history, folklore,

⁴³ 'Non-designated' covers the full spectrum of undesignated assets related to the historic environment, for example, ranging from archaeological sites to sites associated with the Arts and Crafts movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

superstition, tradition and ritual. Without understanding and celebrating this rich cultural heritage, there is a risk it will be lost, and with it will go a key part of the local identity.

The historic environment is irreplaceable and is continuing to decline and be lost due to development, changes in land management and a lack of understanding and management particularly with regard to the wider historic landscape and the less visible and non-designated sites which have little or no protection. The historic environment also includes historic and cultural features of the wider landscape including but not limited to: field (enclosure) patterns and road and path networks.

If historic buildings go out of use, they become at high risk of dereliction and potentially full loss. It is important to keep historic buildings in use, or adapt them appropriately for re-use wherever possible to prolong their lives and character.

Not all heritage assets have currently been identified and it is likely that heritage assets of equal significance to designated sites such as listed buildings or scheduled monuments may survive within the Cotswolds.

The need to understand and promote the connectivity of historic sites and their settings as part of the wider landscape character is vital in order to effectively conserve and manage the historic environment and Historic Landscape Character⁴⁴. Historic Environment Records (HER) of non-designated assets of local significance and Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC), produced by local authorities need to be better promoted and used by all stakeholders. Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is a method of identification and interpretation of the varying historic character within an area that looks beyond individual heritage assets as it brings together understanding of the whole landscape and townscape into repeating HLC Types. It can be used to help secure good quality, well designed and sustainable places

Land management, farming practices, wildlife conservation and public access all impact upon the historic environment. Current agri-environment/ELM (Environmental Land Management) schemes have contributed to the management and conservation of historic features such as archaeological remains, registered Historic Parks and Gardens, barns, dew ponds and walls in the wider landscape. It is essential that new support mechanisms will play a significant role in encouraging investment in the National Landscape which conserves and manages the historic environment.

New developments, by virtue of their scale and design, surrounding the historic cores of settlements can cause separation of historic cores from the wider landscape and have a detrimental effect on their distinctive character. The conversion or extension of historic buildings and farmsteads, the introduction of domestic clutter, lighting and landscaping resulting from development can harm the historic character of buildings and their setting, and their relationship to the wider landscape.

Climate change is likely to increase the extremes of wetting and drying, leading to accelerated decay of stonework and an increased risk of subsidence. Increased flooding and erosion may cause damage to buildings and to archaeological sites. Policy CE6 should help to reduce the potential impacts of climate change on the historic environment. Additional measures relating to climate change are provided in Policies CC1 and CC2.

⁴⁴ More information on Historic Landscape Characterisation at <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/methods/characterisation-2/>

BIODIVERSITY AND NATURE RECOVERY

OUTCOME 9 - BIODIVERSITY AND NATURE RECOVERY: There is concerted unified action for a widespread recovery of nature - conserving, restoring and enhancing a connected mosaic of distinctly Cotswolds habitats and species.

POLICY CE7: BIODIVERSITY AND NATURE RECOVERY

1. Biodiversity (including the abundance of wildlife) in the Cotswolds National Landscape should be conserved and enhanced by establishing a coherent and resilient nature recovery network across the Cotswolds National Landscape and in its setting. This should be achieved in accordance with the outcomes, priorities, targets and measures within the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan⁴⁵ and focus on the priority species and habitats listed in Appendix 7.
2. Policy and strategic documents that are likely to impact on the biodiversity of the National Landscape should have regard to the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan. This would include, but is not limited to, the following:
 - i. Local Plans.
 - ii. Neighbourhood Development Plans.
 - iii. Green Infrastructure Strategies.
 - iv. Tree and Woodland Strategies.
 - v. Ecological Emergency and Climate Change Strategies.
 - vi. Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
3. Proposals that are likely to impact on the biodiversity of the National Landscape should have regard to – and be consistent with – the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan. This would include, but is not limited to, the following delivery mechanisms:
 - i. Environmental Land Management and other grant schemes and rural development support mechanisms;
 - ii. Biodiversity Net Gain;
 - iii. Payment for Ecosystem Services including but not limited to carbon sequestration and storage, flood management, water supply and water quality improvements.
4. A mitigation hierarchy should be applied to development proposals whereby adverse impacts on biodiversity are: (i) avoided; (ii) mitigated; and (iii) compensated for. Development proposals should provide a net-gain in biodiversity of at least 20% particularly with regard to the species and habitats listed in Appendix 7.
5. Damage or loss of irreplaceable habitat should be avoided. Irreplaceable habitat includes but is not limited to:
 - I. Ancient and veteran trees
 - II. Ancient woodland (continually wooded since 1600);
 - III. Ancient unimproved grassland (surviving since 1945);
 - IV. Ancient hedgerows (present since before the Enclosure Acts, passed mainly between 1720 and 1840)
6. Measures to conserve and restore biodiversity including the outcomes, priorities, targets and measures within the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan should be delivered in a way that is compatible with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

The story of our loss of wildlife is well documented and understood. This plan is about how we can turn this around and most importantly turn it around now. Climate change is a well-recognised driver combining with habitat destruction to threaten the loss of our already diminished wildlife at

⁴⁵ <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Cotswolds-Nature-Recovery-Plan-Full-Version-1.pdf>

an even greater scale and pace. The need for action is urgent if we are to avoid a mass extinction event.

We know what we have to do to allow our wildlife to flourish and adapt to climate change. We need to create a robust and resilient nature recovery network – a landscape rich in joined up and well managed habitats. The Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan⁴⁶ was adopted as Cotswolds National Landscape guidance in October 2021. It represents a detailed look at the species and habitats of the Cotswolds and what should be done to enable their recovery and adaptation to climate change.

The current extent of wildlife rich habitats within the Cotswolds is 48,000 Ha which is 23% of the area of the National Landscape. The extent of these habitats needed to form a robust nature recovery network that will enable wildlife to flourish and adapt to climate change is 82,000 Ha, 40% of the area. The rationale for these figures is outlined in the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan and summarised in Appendix 8.

In the wider countryside agri-environmental programmes are the most important single mechanism for developing a nature recovery network and Environmental Land Management Schemes will play a critically important role. It is essential that they include the measures recommended in the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan.

Additional funding mechanisms are starting to play an increasingly significant role in supporting the recovery of nature particularly Biodiversity Net Gain as mitigation from development and Payments for Ecosystem Services. Water and carbon collection and storage are becoming increasingly valued as ecosystem services and their importance will continue to grow.

Although the national statutory requirement for net gain in biodiversity arising from development proposals will be 10%, this plan states that it should be 20% within the Cotswolds National Landscape. The justification for this enhanced net gain in biodiversity is outlined in appendix 8. This justification includes:

- The Landscapes Review stating that National Landscapes should form the backbone of Nature Recovery Networks
- The Governments response to the Landscapes Review:
 - Linking improvements to the way these areas are protected and managed for nature recovery to the commitment to protect 30% of UK land for nature by 2030.
 - Stating that they; “will put our protected landscapes at the heart of delivering our nature recovery”.

The inclusion of species within the biodiversity net gain policy is aspirational and would take place outside of the formal development plan related biodiversity net gain process.

This priority habitats and species list in Appendix 7 is adapted from Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, which lists the habitats and species that are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The habitats and species in appendix 7 are considered to be: (i) characteristic of the Cotswolds; and / or (ii) those for which the Cotswolds National Landscape is considered to a stronghold. There are other priority habitats and species within the National Landscape, which merit an appropriate level of protection, but which do not meet the two criteria outlined above. Habitats and species not on the NERC Act list but which have been identified, by the National Landscape Board and relevant stakeholders, as priorities for the Cotswolds National Landscape are also included.

⁴⁶ Adopted by the National landscape Board in October 2021. <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/looking-after/cotswolds-nature-recovery-plan/>

The Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan defines ancient and veteran trees (based on a list of characteristics), ancient woodland (continually wooded since 1600) and ancient grasslands (“unimproved” and predating modern agricultural practices) as irreplaceable habitat. A wildflower grassland present in 1945 at the end of the Second World War is likely to be ancient. This should be taken into account when considering proposals that are likely to impact on them.

Ancient hedgerows (present since before the Enclosure Acts, passed mainly between 1720 and 1840) are included as irreplaceable habitat and this should be taken into account when considering proposals that are likely to impact on them because:

- Hedgerows are a priority habitat.
- Hedgerows are a key characteristic / feature of many of the landscape character types within the National Landscapes’s Landscape Character Assessment.
- Ancient hedgerows are an important component of the historic environment and the cultural heritage of the area.

Although Policy CE7 focusses on the National Landscape and its setting, consideration will also need to be given to ecological networks in the wider environment, for example, river corridor ecological networks where the rivers start in the National Landscape but extend well beyond its boundaries.

One of the ways wildlife adapts to climate change is to move northwards to a new ‘climate space’. This means that we need to think about the Cotswold’s future wildlife in addition to that currently present, particularly that currently found to the south of the Cotswolds. Big Chalk is a partnership programme aiming to improve ecological connectivity across and between the calcareous landscapes of southern England from the south coast to the midlands.

RURAL LAND MANAGEMENT

<p>OUTCOME 10 - RURAL LAND MANAGEMENT: Land management conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the National Landscape whilst balancing the competing pressures of recovering nature, tackling climate change, food production, supporting livelihoods and public access.</p>
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POLICY CE8: RURAL LAND MANAGEMENT

1. Rural land management in the Cotswolds National Landscape and in the setting of the National Landscape should have regard to – and help deliver – the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape including its special qualities. It should also help increase the understanding and enjoyment of the National Landscape’s special qualities.
2. Rural land management in the Cotswolds National Landscape and in the setting of the National Landscape should have regard to – and, ideally, help to deliver – the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan. It should also be compatible with guidance produced by the Cotswolds Conservation Board, including the:
 - i. Cotswolds National Landscape - Landscape Strategy and Guidelines;
 - ii. Cotswolds National Landscape – Landscape Character Assessment;
 - iii. Cotswolds National Landscape Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change;
 - iv. Cotswolds National Landscape Board Position Statements.
 - v. Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan.
 - vi. Cotswolds National Landscape Climate Change Strategy
3. Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms in the Cotswolds National Landscape should be designed specifically for the National Landscape. These mechanisms should:
 - i. address paragraphs 1 and 2, above;
 - ii. be managed locally to ensure effective local delivery;
 - iii. deliver public goods and services.

The two main aspects of rural land management are farming and woodland management.

The Cotswolds National Landscape is a farmed landscape and its landscape largely a product of farming. 87% of land in the CNL is agricultural land, 49% of which is arable and 43% grassland⁴⁷. Farming is worth around £800 million annually to the National Landscapes economy and in turn provides the landscape which supports the Cotswolds tourism industry annually worth around £1 billion.

Farming has an essential role to play in nature recovery as many of the distinctive Cotswold habitats are a result of farming activity and farming operations such as grazing are necessary to manage and restore them.

Sustainable and regenerative farming practices have an important role to play in delivering multiple environmental objectives whilst simultaneously producing food.

Changes in farming practices, linked to changes in farming policy and the economy of particular crops and livestock, can potentially lead to changes in the landscape of the Cotswolds National Landscape and affect its natural beauty and special qualities, including farmland biodiversity. Changing farming economics, demographics, practices and rural business diversification result in the decline of small mixed farming units and create clusters of land uses which have a detrimental impact upon the landscape such as horse paddocks and ‘gentrification’.

⁴⁷ <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/farming-forestry-and-the-equine-sector-in-the-cotswolds-aonb-november-2015.pdf>

Bringing woodlands back into management is a priority. Lack of management is due to many factors, but especially due to the loss of appropriate markets for woodland products. Woodland planting should consider its impacts on the landscape setting and, in particular, its effects on the open views that people enjoy from viewpoints, roads and Public Rights of Way. Right Tree, Right Place, Right Reason principles should be applied when planting trees. For example, the planting of 'privacy belts' around property is having a detrimental impact on landscape character and views, particularly from roads. Often inappropriate, fast-growing species are selected and strategies to encourage more appropriate species should be found. In some instances, tree planting that is implemented to mitigate the visual impact of new development can also adversely affect landscape character. Issues relating to landscape character are addressed under Policy CE1 (Landscape). Also, the creation of new woodland should occur where it best meets the objectives of the Nature Recovery Network and it should be appropriately managed. Opportunities for natural regeneration should be looked for in concert with opportunities for planting to assist this process.

Farming, woodland management and other rural land management practices that make a positive contribution to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape have been largely reliant on payments from agri-environment schemes. It is critical that Environmental Land Management Schemes maintain and build on what has been achieved to date. In addition, payments for carbon sequestration, nature recovery and ecosystem services are areas that will grow.

Climate change is likely to result in an increase in crop and grass yields, but with a greater variability in quantity and quality, including crop failure. New management methods and new varieties are likely to be adopted in response to warmer, drier conditions. The area of energy crops and novel crops is likely to increase. The overall area of grassland is not expected to change significantly, but management may become more extensive. With regards to forestry, increased timber and biomass production can be expected, but with a reduction in quality. Some species, such as oak, are expected to fare better than others such as beech. Land management practices, together with Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms, will need to encompass and deliver climate change mitigation and adaptation measures appropriate to the National Landscape. Relevant measures to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, in relation to rural land management, are outlined elsewhere in this Management Plan, notably in policies CC1 and CC2.

POLICY CE9: PROBLEM SPECIES⁴⁸, PESTS AND DISEASES

1. The population of grey squirrel and deer in the Cotswolds National Landscape should continue to be controlled and managed. This should be undertaken and coordinated at a landscape scale.
2. National guidance - and guidance produced by the Board - on Ash Dieback should be followed to ensure any measures implemented will conserve and enhance the qualities of the landscape.
3. National and local guidance - including guidance from Government Agencies and the Non Native Species Secretariat - on invasive non-native species, pests and diseases should be followed and appropriate biosecurity measures promoted.

⁴⁸ These species are not addressed in the Biodiversity section as they are not species that we are that we are aiming to conserve and enhance (see Annex 8).

Increasing deer and grey squirrel populations and lack of co-ordinated management is having an adverse impact on the landscape of the Cotswolds National Landscape and on the quality of woodland, woodland biodiversity and timber. There is a need for more deer management groups.

There is an increasing prevalence of tree pests and diseases resulting from climate change, increased global trade, travel and the importation of diseased material. In particular, Ash Dieback will have an increasing impact on woodland and trees in the landscape during the life of the Management Plan.

There are a number of invasive non-native species present in the National Landscape that are having a harmful impact, particularly on biodiversity. These include Himalayan Balsam and New Zealand Pygmy Weed in rivers and ponds, and Holm oak and Cotoneaster on species rich grassland. Driven by climate change and globalisation, there is an increasing risk of further plant and animal pests and disease becoming established in the National Landscape and having a harmful impact on landscape, biodiversity and the economy.

DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORT

OUTCOME 11 - DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORT : Development and transport schemes positively contribute to the purposes of protected landscape designation and also plays a key role in facilitating the economic and social well-being of local and rural communities.

POLICY CE10. DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORT - PRINCIPLES

1. Development and transport proposals in the CNL and its setting should have regard to – and help to deliver – the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL. In doing so, they should have regard to – and be compatible with the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan and guidance produced by the Cotswolds National Landscape Board, including the:
 - (i) Cotswolds National Landscape - Landscape Strategy and Guidelines;
 - (ii) Cotswolds National Landscape - Landscape Character Assessment;
 - (iii) Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan;
 - (iv) Cotswolds National Landscape Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change;
 - (v) Cotswolds National Landscape Board's Position Statements.
2. Development and transport proposals in the CNL should, have regard to – and help deliver – the purpose of increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the CNL's special qualities. They should also contribute to the economic and social well-being of CNL communities, in a way that is compatible with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL.
3. Development and transport proposals in the Cotswolds National Landscape and its setting should comply with relevant national planning policy and guidance, particularly with regards to those paragraphs of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that explicitly relate to AONBs.
4. The purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the National Landscape's special qualities should be identified as strategic priorities in Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans, Local Transport Plans and other relevant plans and strategies. These plans and strategies should explicitly identify the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan as a material consideration.
5. The cumulative impacts of development proposals on the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape should be fully assessed.
6. A landscape-led approach should be applied to development and transport proposals in the CNL and its setting, proportionate to the type and scale of development being proposed, whereby proposals:
 - a) address the natural beauty of the CNL as primary consideration at all stages of the development process (including design), from initial conception through to implementation;
 - b) address all of the factors that contribute to the natural beauty of the area;
 - c) address access to natural beauty including the character of the public rights of way network and its role within wider green infrastructure.
 - d) reflect and enhance the character of the local area;
 - e) avoid adverse effects where possible and, if adverse effects can't be avoided, minimise them; and
 - f) deliver substantially more beneficial effects than adverse effects for the natural beauty of the CNL.⁴⁹

This landscape-led approach is particularly important for major development⁵⁰.

This policy provides principles relating specifically to development and transport. However, it is important to note that development and transport proposals should have regard to the Management Plan policies as a whole. For example, Policy CE7 (Biodiversity and Nature Recovery, paragraph 4, relating to biodiversity net gain, would be a key consideration in development proposals.

Policy CE10 refers to relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for context, as this national policy underpins much of what Policy CE10 is seeking to achieve. However, Policy CE10 expands on this national policy by referencing relevant case law and best practice.

Planning legislation and policy affords the highest level of protection to AONBs (National Landscapes) in relation to landscape and scenic beauty – the same level of protection as for National Parks. Although some level of development may be required to meet local (National Landscape) housing needs and to ensure that the vitality of National Landscape settlements is maintained and enhanced, development should not be at such scale that either individually or cumulatively, it erodes the special qualities of the National Landscape. This would undermine the reason for the Cotswolds being designated as an AONB (National Landscape) in the first place.

With regards to cumulative impacts, a particularly important consideration is where multiple, separate developments have been implemented or proposed in the same locality. Individually, they might not be particularly significant. However, collectively, their impacts could be significant.

In planning decisions, AONB considerations will need to be weighted in the overall planning balance alongside other relevant considerations. In line with national planning policy, great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape. It is worth noting that case law has clarified that this great weight should also be applied in relation to the impact of development outside an AONBs on views from the AONB. (i.e. development in the setting of the AONB). More information on this issue is provided in the Board's position statement on Development in the Setting of the Cotswolds AONB.⁵¹

The factors that contribute to natural beauty include landscape quality / beauty, scenic quality / beauty, relative tranquillity (including dark skies), relative wildness, natural heritage (including biodiversity) and cultural heritage (including historic environment). These factors derive from Natural England's 'Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England'⁵². The 'special qualities' of the National Landscape are a key component of natural beauty.

Increasing traffic volume and vehicle sizes on the National Landscape's roads can lead to congestion, noise and air pollution, damage to roadside verges (with consequent drainage and soil erosion issues), reduced safety for non-motorised road users and traffic 'rat-running' along minor roads and through villages. Measures to address these issues should be integral considerations in new developments and can include lowering speed limits, the provision of suitably designed speed reduction schemes, the provision of off-road routes for non-motorised users and the provision of appropriate signage. In line with the recommendations in the Board's Tranquillity Position

⁴⁹ This was a design principle for the A417 Missing Link Scheme – see Case Study 3 in Appendix 1 of the Board's Landscape-led Development Position Statement for further details ([link 1](#) – main document; [link 2](#) – appendices).

⁵⁰ 'Major development', in this context, equates to the definition provided in Footnote 60 of the NPPF ([link](#)). See also Policy CE11.

⁵¹ Cotswolds National Landscape Board (2017) *Development in the Setting of the Cotswolds AONB* ([link](#)).

⁵² Natural England (2011) *Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England* ([link](#) – see Table 3 and Appendix 1).

Statement, if a development proposal would increase in traffic movements (or HGV movements) by 10% or more, this should, as a 'rule of thumb', be considered significant in terms of impact on tranquillity.⁵³

The distinctive character of minor roads reflects and contributes to the character of the wider National Landscape and these roads are an important means for people to experience the National Landscape. Insensitive, over-engineered road schemes and excessive lighting can have a detrimental impact. Impacts on landscape character are addressed in Policy CE1 (Landscape).

Further information on what is meant by a landscape-led approach to development is provided in the Board's 'Landscape-led Development Position Statement'.⁵⁴ Appendix 3 of the Position Statement specifically addresses landscape-led principles for major development.

POLICY CE11: MAJOR DEVELOPMENT

1. In line with national planning policy, permission should be refused for major development within the CNL, in the context of paragraph 177 of the NPPF, other than in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest.⁵⁵
2. Relevant stakeholders should fully assess relevant site allocations and development proposals to see if they constitute major development. In considering or deciding whether a proposed development constitutes major development, relevant stakeholders should have regard to the major development checklist in Appendix 5 of the Board's Landscape-led Development Position Statement.⁵⁶
3. Local authorities and other relevant stakeholders should explicitly state whether they consider relevant allocations and development proposals⁵⁷ to be major development.
4. The mandatory major development 'tests' specified in paragraph 177 of the NPPF should be rigorously applied and documented for all allocations and development proposals that are deemed to be major development.
5. When relevant stakeholders are considering or applying the major development 'tests' specified in paragraph 177 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), it should be recognised that:
 - 'exceptional need' does not necessarily equate to 'exceptional circumstances';⁵⁸
 - no permission should be given for major development save to the extent the development was needed in the public interest, met a need that could not be

⁵³ Cotswolds National Landscape Board (2019) *Tranquillity Position Statement* ([link](#) – see Section 4.5).

⁵⁴ Cotswolds National Landscape Board (2021) *Landscape-led Development Position Statement* ([link 1](#) – main document; [link 2](#) – appendices).

⁵⁵ Paragraph 177 of the NPPF ([link](#)).

⁵⁶ Cotswolds National Landscape Board (2021) *Landscape-led Development Position Statement* ([link 1](#) – main document; [link 2](#) – appendices).

⁵⁷ There are examples of case law where planning permissions have been quashed because the local authority (specifically, the planning committee) did not explicitly address the issue of major development and the related issue of 'exceptional circumstances' (e.g. *R (Mevagissey Parish Council) v Cornwall Council* [2013] EHCW3684 (Admin)).

⁵⁸ This principle is recognised in relevant case law (*R (Mevagissey Parish Council) v Cornwall Council* [2013] EHCW 3684 (Admin) ([link](#)), paragraph 52): 'Even if there were an exceptional need ... that would not necessarily equate to exceptional circumstances for a particular development, because there may be alternative sites that are more suitable because development there would result in less harm to the AONB landscape.'

addressed elsewhere or in some other way and met that need in a way that to the extent possible, moderated detrimental effect on the environment, landscape and recreational opportunities.⁵⁹

6. When making decisions on major development proposals, local authorities (and / or other relevant decision makers) should not simply weigh all material considerations in a balance, but should refuse an application unless they meet the exceptional circumstances and public interest criteria.⁶⁰

As with Policy CE10, Policy CE11 refers to relevant sections of the National Planning Policy (NPPF) for context, as this national policy underpins much of what Policy CE11 is seeking to achieve. However, Policy CE11 expands on this national policy by referencing relevant case law and best practice.

Paragraph 177 of the NPPF states that ‘when considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest’. Footnote 60 of the NPPF explains that ‘whether a proposal is ‘major development’ is a matter for the decision maker, 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’ (footnote 60). This definition of major development differs from the definition in The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015⁶¹ (or ‘DMP’ for short), albeit that DMP definition is still a relevant consideration in relation to footnote 60 of the NPPF.

Paragraph 172 of the NPPF specifically addresses the issue of major development in the context of planning permissions (i.e., as part of the development management process). However, legal opinion has stated that ‘it would arguably amount to an error of law to fail to consider [paragraph 177] at the site allocations stage of plan making ... The consequence of doing so would be to risk allocating land for major development that was undeliverable because it was incapable of meeting the major development test in the NPPF’⁶². As such, it is appropriate to address the issue of major development at the plan-making stage as well as at the development management stage.

The ‘Assessment of Site Allocations Against Major Development Considerations’ undertaken by the South Downs National Park Authority in 2015⁶³ and 2017⁶⁴ as part of their Local Plan process is an excellent case study in this regard.

The major development checklist in the Board’s Landscape-led Development Position Statement is not intended to set rigid criteria. Instead, they are intended to help guide the decision maker (and other stakeholders) through the process of assessing if a proposed development constitutes major development.

⁵⁹ R (Advearse) v Dorset Council v Hallam Land Management Ltd [2020] EWHC 807 (link). Direct quote from paragraph 35.

⁶⁰ R (Mevagissey Parish Council) v Cornwall Council [2013] EHC 3684 (Admin) (link), paragraph 51: ‘The planning committee are required, not simply to weigh all material considerations in a balance, but to refuse an application unless they are satisfied that...’

⁶¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/595/contents/made>

⁶² Landmark Chambers (2017) *In the matter of the South Downs National Park and in the matter of paragraph 116 of the NPPF* (link – see paragraph 5).

⁶³ South Downs National Park Authority (2015) *South Downs Local Plan Preferred Options: Assessment of Site Allocations Against Major Development Considerations – Technical Report* (link).

⁶⁴ South Downs National Park Authority (2015) *South Downs Local Plan Pre-Submission: Assessment of Site Allocations Against Major Development Considerations – Technical Report* (link).

Due to their scale, major infrastructure and development projects, such as roads or energy developments, are likely to have a more significant impact on the natural beauty of the National Landscape than smaller-scale developments. There is an even stronger need for these projects to be exemplars for how they have regard to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the National Landscape including its special qualities. For example, the construction phases of the A417 Missing Link scheme.

Further guidance regarding major development is provided in Appendix 9 of the Management Plan and in Section 7.3, Appendix 3 and Appendix 5 of the Board's Landscape-led Development Position Statement.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Cotswolds National Landscape Board (2021) *Landscape-led Development Position Statement* ([link 1](#) – main document; [link 2](#) – appendices)

POLICY CE12: DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES AND EVIDENCE OF NEED

1. Housing delivery in the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) should be focussed on meeting affordable housing requirements, particularly housing that is affordable in perpetuity such as social rented housing.⁶⁶
2. When local planning authorities are reviewing their Local Plans, they should give consideration to setting policies for affordable housing provision in the CNL that require:
 - at least 50% affordable housing in market housing developments;
 - 100% affordable housing on Rural Exception Sites, with a lower percentage only being permitted in exceptional circumstances and the absolute minimum being 75%;
 - on-site affordable housing provision for housing developments of five units or fewer.
3. Priority should be given to maintaining and enhancing local community amenities and services and improving access to these amenities and services. Priority should also be given to supporting local employment opportunities⁶⁷.
4. It should be recognised that:
 - (a) The housing need figure derived from the Government's 'standard method' for calculating housing need is an unconstrained assessment of housing need⁶⁸ and does not present a target for housing provision⁶⁹.
 - (b) The decision on how many homes should be planned for (i.e., the 'housing requirement' figure in Local Plans) should only be made after consideration of the constraints that the local authority faces, including the AONB designation, and consideration of the land that is actually available for development.⁷⁰ As such, when these constraints are factored in, the 'housing requirement' could potentially be smaller than the standard method's 'housing need' figure.
 - (c) The application of national planning policies relating to AONBs may mean that it is not possible to meet objectively assessed needs (OAN) in full in local authority areas that overlap with the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL).⁷¹
 - (d) The CNL is unlikely to be a suitable area for accommodating unmet needs from adjoining, non-designated areas.⁷² In the context of the CNL, this includes unmet needs relating to adjacent urban areas and unmet needs arising in local authority areas that do not overlap with the CNL.
 - (e) Meeting housing need is never a reason to cause unacceptable harm to the CNL.⁷³
 - (f) The scale and extent of development in the CNL should be limited.⁷⁴
5. Consideration should be given to whether the constraints relating to the AONB designation merit 'exceptional circumstances' which may justify using an alternative approach to the standard method for assessing housing need.⁷⁵
6. When the allocation of sites is being considered in the Local Plan process, regard should be given to the evidence of need specific to: (i) the settlement / parish where the allocation is being proposed; and (ii) the CNL 'sub-area' within which the allocation is being proposed.
7. Within the CNL, windfall housing proposals on undeveloped land adjoining, or outside of, built up area boundaries (or equivalent) should only be supported where there is robust evidence of

a specific local housing need such as needs identified through a neighbourhood plan or affordable housing needs specific to a particular settlement.

8. Where choice-based lettings systems, such as Homeseeker Plus, are used as part of the evidence base for affordable housing need:⁷⁶

- the 'local connection' component of the choice-based lettings system should be applied consistently; and

data from the choice-based lettings systems should not be used explicitly as a measure of affordable housing need unless the data has been verified and there is a clear local connection to – and preference for – the settlement in question.

9. When local authorities are reviewing their Local Plans, they should give consideration to setting policies that ensure that new market housing is used as a principal residence rather than as a second home or holiday home.

The Cotswolds National Landscape is a living and working landscape in which the social and economic wellbeing of local communities is an important consideration. Maintaining vibrant and thriving local communities is essential to the long-term future of the National Landscape. The provision of housing and services that meets local needs plays an important role in achieving these aspirations. However, these aspirations should be delivered in a way that is compatible with the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

With regards to paragraphs 1 to 3 of Policy CE12, Government guidance recognises that National Parks are not suitable locations for unrestricted housing. Instead, *'the expectation is that new housing will be focussed on meeting affordable housing requirements, supporting local employment opportunities and key services'*. The same guidance requires National Park Authorities to work to *'ensure that ... affordable housing remains so in the longer term'*.⁷⁷ AONBs have the same level of

⁶⁶ Sections 5.4 and 5.5 of the Board's Housing Position Statement ([link 1](#) – main document; [link 2](#) – appendices) provide additional context on this issue.

⁶⁷ Sections 5.4 and 5.5 of the Board's Housing Position Statement ([link 1](#) – main document; [link 2](#) – appendices) provide additional context on this issue.

⁶⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments>. Paragraph 001.

⁶⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-current-planning-system/outcome/government-response-to-the-local-housing-need-proposals-in-changes-to-the-current-planning-system#proposed-changes-to-the-standard-method-for-assessing-local-housing-need..>

⁷⁰ See previous footnote. The issue of how constraints should be addressed is also covered in the Government's guidance on Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment ([link](#)). Key extracts from this guidance are provided in Appendix 1 of the Board's Housing Position Statement ([link 1](#) – main document; [link 2](#) – appendices).

⁷¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment#landscape>. Paragraph 041.

⁷² See previous footnote. Section 5.3 of the Board's Housing Position Statement ([link 1](#) – main document; [link 2](#) – appendices) provides additional context on this issue.

⁷³ See footnote 2, above.

⁷⁴ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021) *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) ([link](#)). Paragraph 176.

⁷⁵ Paragraph 61 of the NPPF ([link](#)) recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances that justify an alternative approach to the 'standard method', albeit that this alternative approach would still have to reflect current and future demographic trends and market signals.

⁷⁶ Sections 5.6 and 5.10 of the Board's Housing Position Statement ([link 1](#) – main document; [link 2](#) – appendices) provide additional context on this issue.

⁷⁷ Defra (2010) *English National Parks and the Broads – UK Government Vision and Circular 2010* ([link](#)). Paragraphs 78 and 79.

protection as National Parks, with regards to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty, and the scale and extent of development in both designations should be limited.⁷⁸ As such, it is logical to apply the same principles, outlined above for National Parks, in AONBs as well.

The targets in paragraph 2 of the Policy CE12 are based on what the Board would consider to be best practice within other protected landscapes. The Board acknowledges that these aspirations might exceed current policy in Local Plans. However, we consider that they are appropriate targets to aim for in a protected landscape, where the main focus for housing provision should be the provision of affordable housing. We acknowledge that these targets would be subject to viability assessments.

Paragraph 35 of the NPPF states that, in order to be sound, Local Plans should ‘as a minimum, seek to meet the area’s objectively assessed needs’ (OAN). However, Government guidance also states that the application of policies in the NPPF relating to the protection of AONBs ‘*may mean that it is not possible to meet objectively assessed needs in full through the plan-making process*’.⁷⁹ As such, it should be recognised that, in some circumstances, it might be appropriate for the housing requirement figure identified in development plans (that overlap with AONBs) to be less than the OAN figure.

With regards to paragraph 6 of Policy CE12, the lack of a specific housing need figure, or housing requirement figure, for the AONB ‘sub-area’ within which an allocation is being considered could potentially make the allocation (and the Plan) unsound. This was the case in West Oxfordshire, where the Local Plan inspector concluded that ‘*in the absence of a housing need figure for the Burford – Charlbury sub-area ... the allocation in the plan of housing sites, and the reliance on additional windfall housing development, in the Burford – Charlbury area, over and above existing completions and commitments, would not be sound*’⁸⁰.

The wording of paragraph 7 of Policy CE12 is based on paragraph 5.39 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan, which states that: ‘Within the Cotswolds AONB, windfall housing proposals on undeveloped land adjoining built up areas ... will only be supported where there is convincing evidence of a specific local housing need such as needs identified through a neighbourhood plan or affordable housing needs specific to a particular settlement, for example through a rural exception site’⁸¹.

There is concern that second home ownership, retirement homes and buy to let have removed housing from the market that could otherwise be made available to first home owners. This results in increased demand within a reduced pool of housing stock, which inflates house prices and makes housing less affordable. The Board is particularly concerned that those who care for the landscape of the National Landscape and other key workers have an opportunity to live within it.

All of these issues. Including relevant case studies, are addressed in more detail in the Board’s Housing Position Statement. The recommendations in the Housing Position Statement are based on government guidance and on best practice in the Cotswolds and other protected landscapes. Many of these recommendations have now been incorporated into Policy CE12, although the Position Statement provides additional, useful context.⁸²

⁷⁸ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021) *National Planning Policy Framework* ([link](#)). Paragraph 176.

⁷⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment#landscape>. Paragraph 041.

⁸⁰ Planning Inspectorate (2018) *Report on the Examination of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031* ([link](#)). Paragraph 219.

⁸¹ West Oxfordshire District Council (2018) *West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031* ([link](#)).

⁸² Cotswolds National Landscape Board (2021) *Housing Position Statement* ([link 1](#) – main document; [link 2](#) – appendices)

POLICY CE13. WASTE MANAGEMENT AND THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

1. Waste management should align with the following hierarchy, as set out in the Government's Waste Management Plan 2021:
 - a. Prevention
 - b. Prepare for reuse
 - c. Recycling
 - d. Other recovery
 - e. Disposal
2. Measures that help to deliver a circular, or closed-loop, economy, in which waste generation is avoided, should be encouraged.
3. Proposals for new landfill sites and strategic waste facilities should not normally be permitted in the Cotswolds National Landscape, especially where they involve importing significant amounts of waste into the National landscape (for example, waste generated in neighbouring urban areas).
4. Any waste management facilities that are permitted in the National Landscape should: (i) be sited in such a way that adverse environmental impacts are minimised, in line with relevant permitting regimes; and (ii) be primarily to receive waste that arises within the National Landscape. (Within close proximity to the proposed facility).
5. The management or use of waste by way of depositing it to land as an inert 'recovery' operation, land raising and bunding or for further restoration of previous landfill operations, should only be allowed: (i) in very limited circumstances within environmental limits; (ii) where it can demonstrate a significant net-benefit for the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the National Landscape; and (iii) where it complies with the policies of the relevant Waste Local Plan and relevant environmental regulations.

Communities and businesses within the Cotswolds produce a significant amount of waste which needs to be disposed of in an appropriate and safe manner. In future, efforts must concentrate on minimising waste and dealing with it in close proximity to where it is produced. The reduction of waste should be promoted by supporting policies and plans which result in re-use, reduction and recycling of waste materials and the efficient and effective collection of waste in a manner that will support its management as high up the waste hierarchy as is practicably possible

Proposed activities including development, should proactively support the transition to a circular economy throughout the Cotswold National Landscape. They should apply waste avoidance and reduction practices and adopt procurement strategies that favour the purchase of goods and services, which contribute to closing energy and material loops within supply chains

The significant number of urban areas close to the National Landscape has the potential to create pressure to import waste into the National Landscape, particularly to former quarry locations. This can generate additional lorry traffic within the National Landscape, with associated negative impacts on communities, the rural road network and roadside verges. There are also implications for the groundwater resource due to the permeable nature of limestone.

Infilling with inert waste is sometimes proposed for quarries within the Cotswolds National Landscape. The need for infilling should be minimised by ensuring that a sufficient quantity of by-

product is retained during the quarry operation to enable an appropriate restoration scheme to be achieved. Retrospective infilling may require a considerable number of HGV movements which can adversely affect the tranquillity of the National Landscape and result in unnecessary greenhouse gas emissions. As such, the potential benefits of restoring a former quarry to a more natural landform will need to be weighed in the balance against these potential adverse effects.

INCREASING UNDERSTANDING AND ENJOYMENT

Ensuring access, learning and wellbeing opportunities are for everyone.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

OUTCOME 12 - HEALTH AND WELLBEING: The National Landscape plays a full part in improving the nation's health, benefitting the mental and physical wellbeing of those who experience it.

POLICY UE1: HEALTH AND WELLBEING

1. Opportunities for improving health and wellbeing in the Cotswolds National Landscape should be created, improved and promoted, including, where appropriate, the provision of: green spaces or water within easy reach of communities, walking, cycling and riding routes, including routes for disabled people; opportunities to access and interact with nature; and volunteering and personal development opportunities.
2. Children and young people resident within and around the National Landscape should be provided with environmental education opportunities to experience the Cotswolds National Landscape through direct contact with the natural environment.
3. The health sector should make greater use of the benefits that the National Landscape provides for the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors, for example, by prescribing exercise in the Cotswolds National Landscape countryside.

A lack of physical activity can lead to a variety of chronic diseases and conditions such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease which, combined with an ageing population, is leading to a public health crisis. A lack of access to scenic, wildlife-rich greenspace and other open spaces can also adversely affect mental health. Many people, particularly children and young people, do not readily have opportunities to learn about the environment or to develop an understanding and appreciation of the Cotswolds countryside.

The health and wellbeing benefits of volunteering in the countryside cannot be underestimated. Volunteering helps to improve physical health, and working and walking in the outdoors can also help with a variety of mental health challenges such as social isolation, bereavement and low confidence and self-esteem. The variety of opportunities available across the National Landscape and wider partnership of organisations needs to be more clearly signposted.

There is a need to implement and develop a variety of approaches to address these issues, including the provision of outdoor activities and experiences. There is also a need to promote the link between physical and mental health and enjoying and understanding the special qualities of the National Landscape. This should include encouraging more partnership working between health professionals and other stakeholders to implement measures such as 'green' prescriptions (for

example, prescribing walks in the Cotswolds National Landscape). Where appropriate, links should be developed between these health and wellbeing aspirations and the enhancement of ecological networks and the provision of green infrastructure.

ACCESS AND RECREATION

OUTCOME 13 - ACCESS AND RECREATION: The Cotswolds is recognised as a welcoming place, where barriers to access are being removed and everyone feels connected to the landscape.

POLICY UE2: ACCESS AND RECREATION

1. A safe, pleasant, accessible, clearly waymarked and well-connected Public Rights of Way network should be maintained, enhanced and promoted across the Cotswolds National Landscape.
2. Improvements to rights of way must be undertaken in a way that minimises any adverse effects on the natural beauty of the National Landscape and on its special qualities. Innovative ways of providing named routes without introducing additional signage should be explored.
3. Open Access Land and other land including Country Parks, that is open to public access⁸³ should be maintained, enhanced and promoted across the Cotswolds National Landscape. Where appropriate, more land should be made available for public access.
4. Sustainable funding for National Trails, including the Cotswold Way and Thames Path, should be secured.
5. Visitors, residents and local communities should be provided with opportunities to increase their understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape.
6. A priority for engagement in the National Landscape should be individuals who are not currently enjoying or engaged with the benefits of the landscape. Particularly those from within the National Landscape and from the surrounding urban areas, especially those from areas of high deprivation and those that are not traditional visitors to the Cotswolds.
7. Easily accessible online, downloadable and onsite resources for walking, cycling, horse riding, volunteering and educational activities should be provided in the National Landscape to help promote access to the area and understanding and appreciation of its special qualities.
8. Visitor facilities and routes that are accessible to those of all abilities should be provided.
9. Guided walks and activities for those who are not confident walking in the countryside should be provided to increase confidence and share knowledge of the National Landscape and its special qualities.
10. Arts and cultural experiences should be provided to encourage people to deepen their emotional connection to the landscape and support the engagement of new and existing audiences.
11. The Countryside Code should be promoted to educate visitors and communities to act appropriately in the countryside and to improve understanding between visitors and those living and working in the area.
12. The provision of new, and level of use of existing access and recreational opportunities should not have a significant adverse impact on the Cotswolds National Landscape. Where recreational use is having or is likely to have, an adverse impact on the special qualities of the National Landscape or on the integrity of existing wildlife sites, steps should be taken to evaluate, prevent or mitigate these impacts. Such steps can include enhanced maintenance and wayfinding, onsite engagement, legal restrictions, and the provision and promotion of access and recreational opportunities in new alternative suitable locations.

13. Where irreconcilable conflicts exist between conservation and public enjoyment in the Cotswolds National Landscape, then conservation interest should take priority.

The use of the term “everyone” within the wording of this outcome is deliberate and is intended to promote equality, diversity and inclusion.

The extensive 3000 miles of public rights of way network provides a huge opportunity to enhance public enjoyment and appreciation of the CNL. For some people, due to financial, health or cultural reasons there are barriers to accessing and enjoying this network. These barriers should be broken down and access provision should be adapted and extended where possible to reach the widest demographic and people of all abilities both inside the National Landscape and in the surrounding urban areas. The access offer needs to have a wide geographical spread and offer opportunities for people walking, cycling, horse riding and users of off-road mobility scooters, wheelchairs and pushchairs where appropriate and legal access allows.

The Landscapes Review published by Julian Glover in 2019 challenged Protected Landscapes to do more to welcome people, and to do a lot more to ensure that people from currently underrepresented groups can enjoy the benefits of accessing them too.

Partners including the National Landscape Board, Highway Authorities, Parishes and landowners should work together to improve rights of way furniture, surfacing and facilities for the benefit of everyone.

Digital platforms such as websites and social media should be used, alongside targeted communications in more difficult to reach communities to promote the extensive guided walks and guided walks programme that will appeal to a variety of audiences.

Offering high quality arts and cultural experiences which encourage people to deepen their emotional connection to the landscape will be an important part of how new and existing audiences are engaged in the future. Weaving thought-provoking and inspiring arts and culture activity into access and recreation work has the potential to connect people with nature and the landscape. The Arts in the Landscape strategy, led by the National Association of AONBs, and adopted by the Cotswolds National Landscape Board in 2021 will support this work.

Lack of long-term funding from Natural England for National Trails makes long-term planning, maintenance and promotion more challenging. On-going partnership working with the Cotswold Way Association (CWA) and new National Trails Charity (NTUK) will be key to the long term sustainability of the Trails.

The recreational use of the National Landscape should not be allowed to adversely affect the National Landscape’s special qualities. For example, measures will need to be put in place to minimise and mitigate recreational pressure arising from new developments both inside and outside the National Landscape, especially where these developments are located close to sensitive locations, such as designated nature conservation sites.

The prioritisation of ‘conserving’ over ‘public enjoyment’ is known as the ‘Sandford Principle’, after Lord Sandford, who chaired the National Parks Policy Review Committee between 1974 and 1974.

⁸³ This includes access land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (which includes commons) and where public access is permitted on land managed by landowners, non-government organisations and charities such as the National Trust, the Wildlife Trusts and the Woodland Trust.

This principle is embedded in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, in relation to Conservation Boards.⁸⁴

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

OUTCOME 14 - SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: Businesses and visitors have a shared commitment to contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the National Landscape.

POLICY UE3: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

1. Tourism within the Cotswolds National Landscape is delivered and managed in a way that minimises adverse effects on the natural beauty of the National Landscape and the emission of greenhouse gases.
2. Visitors, residents, local businesses and communities should be provided with opportunities to directly contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape and improve access to the area through local individual, community and employee volunteering opportunities.
3. The 'Caring for the Cotswolds' visitor giving scheme will raise awareness of the National Landscape and generate funds from visitors to directly help look after it by supporting projects which conserve habitats and species, look after heritage and landscape, improve access, and help provide education resources encouraging people to understand the landscape and nature better.
4. Visitors should be provided with a variety of accommodation options over a range of prices. The siting and design of visitor accommodation should be compatible with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape including its special qualities.
5. Air travel arising from the Cotswolds as a destination should be minimised.
6. Existing sustainable and integrated transport initiatives should be supported and new initiatives developed to help facilitate the car free visitor experience.

The natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape is the foundation on which the tourism industry in the Cotswolds is based. This natural beauty is an asset which needs to be managed and maintained. The tourism sector should, therefore, contribute to the conservation and enhancement of this natural beauty. New tourism products that increase the sustainable tourism offer should be encouraged. Further research and evidence are needed to better understand the impacts and patterns of tourism in the National Landscape to ensure it remains sustainable. Updated visitor and tourism survey data would help to underpin Policies UE2 and UE3.

A recent carbon footprint assessment of the National Landscape⁸⁵ has calculated that each year visitors are responsible for 308,806 tCO₂ whilst in the National Landscape, and 1,134,848 tCO₂ when travelling to and from it. 48% of the second figure is caused by flights. The tourism sector locally

⁸⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/section/87>

⁸⁵ Small World Consulting. A Carbon Footprint Assessment of the Cotswolds National Landscape. 2022 (unpublished)

(accommodation, attractions, food and drink etc) should be moving towards becoming net zero through both how it operates within the National Landscape and by targeting closer audiences.

Though there is generally a significant level of appreciation for the Cotswolds landscape amongst visitors, awareness and understanding of its status as a protected landscape and the implications of this are lacking. This reduces awareness of the need for protection and enhancement of the sense of place and its distinctive features and special qualities.

Limited availability of low-cost accommodation, including camping, can exclude families and those on low incomes from staying in the area, reducing the diversity of visitors. Provision of such accommodation should be compatible with the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty.

The limited provision of public transport - and limited integration of this provision - restricts the scope for visitors (and residents) without a car to explore the Cotswolds resulting in a heavy reliance on car usage. Transport providers should be supported to increase and promote integrated travel initiatives in order to encourage a car-free visitor experience.

Most of the local authorities across the National Landscape, together with the Board, have joined together to form Cotswolds Tourism, the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) for the Cotswolds. However, further collaboration is needed to ensure the entire National Landscape is covered by a proactive and joined-up DMO which works proactively with neighbouring DMOs.

CHAPTER 8. DELIVERY AND MONITORING

COTSWOLDS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE BOARD DELIVERY

The Board will play an important role in delivering the vision, outcomes and policies of the Management Plan. How the Board will contribute to the delivery of the Management Plan is set out in a three yearly Business Plan Framework which in turn is delivered through an annual work programme. Together these show how the vision, outcomes and policies of the Management Plan are translated into measurable actions for the Board.

STAKEHOLDER DELIVERY

Although the Board is the body responsible for preparing and publishing the Management Plan and will play an important role in its delivery, the Board doesn't actually own or directly manage any of the land in the National Landscape or its setting. As such, the policies of the Management Plan are also intended to guide the work of other stakeholders in helping to deliver the Management Plan's vision and outcomes.

The detail of how other stakeholders contribute to the delivery of the Management Plan is too complex to cover in this Management Plan, particularly given that the National Landscape cuts across 15 local authority areas. However, the 'Stakeholder Delivery' table in Appendix 5 outlines the key actions that the Board invites specific stakeholders to undertake in order to help deliver the Management Plan. The actions and policies listed in the table are not intended to be exhaustive.

In essence, stakeholders are asked to:

- have regard to the Management Plan, including its vision, outcomes and, perhaps most importantly, its policies;
- incorporate the Management Plan's vision, outcomes and policies into their own plans, policies, proposals, work programmes and decisions, where appropriate.

MONITORING

The National Landscape Board will monitor and evaluate its contribution to the delivery of the Management Plan through the quarterly and annual review of its work programme. The 'State of the Cotswolds Report' – together with other local and national monitoring and surveys - will contribute to the provision of evidence, which is a crucial part of managing the National Landscape.

Where practicable the Board will monitor the key actions identified in the 'Stakeholder Delivery' table in Appendix 5 and compliance with the 'duty of regard' (see Appendix 4).

The delivery of the Management Plan will be monitored through a suite of monitoring indicators which have been developed for each policy. These are listed in Appendix 6.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. NATIONAL LANDSCAPE (AONB) DESIGNATION

The Cotswolds National Landscape was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1966 and extended in area in 1990. At 790 square miles, or 2038 square kilometres, it is the largest AONB and the third largest protected landscape in England.

Although AONB remains the legal names of the designation the Board of the Cotswolds Conservation Board decided in June 2020 to use the name National Landscape for the area designated as an AONB and the name Cotswolds National Landscape Board for the Cotswolds Conservation Board.

This plan uses the term National Landscape for the designated area and National Landscape Board for the organisation. It still refers to AONBs when referring to the use of the designation nationally or areas outside of the Cotswolds.

AONBs are landscapes whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard them⁸⁶. They have the same landscape status as National Parks.

The statutory purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance their natural beauty⁸⁷. AONBs are designated in law following a prescribed process which includes an objective appraisal of landscape quality, statutory assessments by the national conservation agencies and wide consultation with stakeholders including local landowners, residents and businesses⁸⁸.

Each AONB has been designated by reason of its 'special qualities'. These include the flora, fauna, historical and cultural associations as well as landscape and scenic views, as outlined in Chapter 2 of the Management Plan.

AONBs exist within a legal framework which has been progressively strengthened since the first AONBs came into existence after the Second World War. The primary, or enabling, legislation for the designation of AONBs was the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 subsumed and strengthened the AONB provisions of the 1949 Act. It confirmed the purpose and significance of AONBs, clarified the procedure for their designation, and created a firm legislative basis for their designation, protection and management. The Act also provided for the establishment of Conservation Boards to manage AONBs -see Appendix 3.

Areas of Outstanding National Beauty are part of a family of protected areas recognised and classified by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) throughout the world. IUCN recognises AONBs and National Parks in England and Wales as Category V Protected Landscapes – a protected area whose special qualities are the result of the interaction between people and nature. They are managed mainly for landscape protection and recreation.

⁸⁶ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) (2015) *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Landscape Protection and Enhancement Support Scheme (England) 2015 – 17. Application to European Commission*.

⁸⁷ Section 82, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

⁸⁸ National Association of AONBs (2018) *AONB Management Plan Revision. Specimen text: policy and legal framework*.

APPENDIX 2. NATURAL BEAUTY

The concept of natural beauty is one of the cornerstones of legislation to protect landscapes in the UK. It has been the basis for the designation of AONBs and National Parks since the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act.

Natural beauty goes well beyond scenic or aesthetic value. It encompasses everything that makes an area distinctive: geology, climate, soil, plants, animals, communities, archaeology, buildings, the people who live in it, past and present, and the perceptions of those who visit it⁸⁹. It is widely accepted that natural beauty is, in part, due to human intervention, such as agriculture⁹⁰.

Natural England has developed a list of natural beauty criteria⁹¹ to be used when assessing landscapes for designation as AONBs or National Parks, as outlined in the table below. It is Natural England's view that the practical application of the natural beauty criteria is identical for National Park and AONB designations, despite there being differences in the degree to which the criterion is clarified in the legislation⁹². So, for example, the extent to which wildlife and cultural heritage are factored into natural beauty assessments by Natural England is the same for both AONBs and National Parks. It is also the Government's formal position that the natural beauty required of an AONB and a National Park are the same⁹³.

Table of factors related to natural beauty⁹⁴

Landscape quality This is a measure of the physical state or condition of the landscape.
Scenic quality The extent to which the landscape appeals to the senses (primarily, but not only, the visual senses).
Relative wildness The degree to which relatively wild character can be perceived in the landscape makes a particular contribution to sense of place.
Relative tranquillity The degree to which relative tranquillity can be perceived in the landscape.
Natural heritage features The influence of natural heritage on the perception of the natural beauty of the area. Natural heritage includes flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features.
Cultural heritage The influence of cultural heritage on the perception of natural beauty of the area and the degree to which associations with particular people, artists, writers or events in history contribute to such perception.

The list is not intended to be exhaustive and other factors may be relevant in some circumstances. Not all factors will be relevant in every case.

⁸⁹ Countryside Agency (2001) *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans. A guide*. Countryside Agency Publications. West Yorkshire.

⁹⁰ Natural England (2011) *Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England*.

⁹¹ See Footnote 36.

⁹² See Footnote 36.

⁹³ See Lords Hansard 20 Mar 2006 (Col 51) and Commons Hansard 13 June 2000 (Col 556W).

⁹⁴ Table extracted from the Natural England guidance – see footnote 43.

APPENDIX 3. COTSWOLDS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE BOARD

The Cotswolds Conservation Board ('the Board') was established by Parliamentary Order⁹⁵ in 2004. It was renamed as the Cotswolds National Landscape Board for most purposes in June 2020 (although the legal name remains unchanged). It has two statutory purposes⁹⁶:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape.
- To increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

In fulfilling these purposes, the Board has a duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Landscape⁹⁷.

These purposes and duties are modelled on those of the National Park Authorities. In circumstances where the two purposes are irreconcilable, the Board must give priority to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape⁹⁸.

The Board consists of 37 members, of whom 15 are nominated by local authorities, eight by parish councils and 14 are appointed by government. The Board's work programme is administered by a small team of staff, supported by a network of Cotswold Voluntary Wardens who deliver a programme of practical projects and guided walks across the National Landscape. It is one of only two Conservation Boards in England, the other being the Chilterns Conservation Board.

The Board has a statutory responsibility, under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000, to draft and publish the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan and to review it at least every five years. The Board's work programme for how it will contribute to the delivery of the Management Plan is set out in the Board's separate, rolling, three-year Business Plan.

The Board has a series of functions or powers that it shares with the Local Authorities, as specified in the Board's Establishment Order.

As the only organisation with responsibilities for the Cotswolds National Landscape as a whole, the Board produces a variety of publications and guidance. This is to facilitate a consistent and coordinated approach across the whole of the National Landscape, which puts the purpose of National Landscape designation at the heart of plans, proposals, decisions and work programmes affecting the National Landscape.

Board publications that are of particular relevance to the Management Plan – and which are referred to in some of the Management Plan policies and or supporting text - are outlined below:

- **Cotswolds National Landscape - Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)**⁹⁹: The LCA provides an assessment of the character, distinctiveness and qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape. It also identifies and describes the National Landscape's component

⁹⁵ The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Establishment of Conservation Board) Order 2004

⁹⁶ Section 87, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, as amended by the NERC Act 2006.

⁹⁷ Section 87 of the CROW Act specifies that, '*a conservation board ... shall for that purpose [i.e. fostering social and economic well-being] co-operate with local authorities and public bodies whose functions include the promotion of economic or social development within the area of outstanding natural beauty*'.

⁹⁸ This prioritisation of conserving and enhancing is known as the 'Sandford Principle', after Lord Sandford, who chaired the National Parks Policy Review Committee between 1971 and 1974.

⁹⁹ <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/our-landscape/landscape-character-assessment/>

landscape character types (LCTs). It identifies 19 different LCTs in the Cotswolds National Landscape.

- **Cotswolds National Landscape - Landscape Strategy and Guidelines¹⁰⁰**: The Landscape Strategy and Guidelines provides an overview of the forces for change that are influencing the landscape of the Cotswolds National Landscape and outlines a series of landscape and land management strategies to help guide change in a positive and sustainable way. It is intended to help developers, local planning authorities, land managers and other decision makers to make informed decisions about the suitability of proposed development - or other changes - within each of the LCTs.
- **Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan¹⁰¹**. The Nature Recovery Plan represents a detailed look at the species and habitats of the Cotswolds and what should be done to enable their recovery and adaptation to climate change. It sets priorities and targets for nature's recovery and describes the measures that can achieve it.
- **Positions Statements¹⁰²**: The Board issues a number of Position Statements, which 'amplify' specific policies in, or add new policies to, the Management Plan. They contain further background information and recommended good practice. They are reviewed and updated on a regular basis.
- **Cotswolds National landscape Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change¹⁰³**: This document aims to assist a wide range of stakeholders to broaden their understanding of what makes the Cotswolds National Landscape special and different from other parts of the country.
- **The Cotswolds National Landscape Climate Change Strategy¹⁰⁴** (adopted by the National Landscape Board in February 2022). This summarises our current understanding of the climate change impacts on the Cotswolds and what stakeholders can do to both adapt to and mitigate these impacts.

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/our-landscape/landscape-strategy-guidelines/>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/looking-after/cotswolds-nature-recovery-plan/>

¹⁰² <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/our-landscape/position-statements-2/>

¹⁰³ Cotswolds Conservation Board (2003) *Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change*. Produced by Latham Architects for the Cotswolds AONB Partnership.

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CNL-Climate-Change-Strategy-Adopted-Feb-2022.pdf>

APPENDIX 4. THE ‘DUTY OF REGARD’

Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 states that:

- *In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.*

This duty is known as the ‘duty of regard’ (or the ‘duty to have regard’). It is the equivalent of Section 96 of the Environment Act 1995, which provides for a duty of regard in National Parks.

In this context, ‘relevant authority’ includes any:

- Minister of the Crown;
- public body;
- statutory undertaker;
- person holding public office.

Guidance on the duty of regard, published by Defra in 2005, provides an indicative - but not exhaustive - list of relevant authorities¹⁰⁵.

The duty of regard is intended to ensure that the purpose for which an AONB has been designated (i.e. to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB) is recognised as an essential consideration in any decisions or activities that impact on the AONB, with the expectation that adverse impacts will be avoided or mitigated where possible¹⁰⁶. Relevant authorities will also be expected to have regard to this purpose where activities outside the boundaries of an AONB may have an impact within the AONB¹⁰⁷.

The use of the word ‘duty’ in the legislation means that having regard to AONB purposes is something all ‘relevant authorities’ must do: it is not discretionary. This point is reinforced by use of the word ‘shall’ rather than, for example, ‘may’¹⁰⁸.

Relevant authorities are expected to be able to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the duty of regard. Where their decisions may affect AONBs, they should be able to clearly show how they have considered the purpose of AONB designation in their decision making. The Defra guidance, together with guidance published by Natural England¹⁰⁹, considers it to be good practice for the relevant authority to:

- **consider the duty of regard at several points** in any decision-making process or activities, including during initial thinking, at more detailed planning stages, and at implementation;
- **provide written evidence** that they have had regard and considered whether it is, or is not, relevant;
- **undertake and make publicly available an assessment** of any policy, plan, programme or project which is likely to affect land within these areas;

¹⁰⁵ Defra (2005) *Duties on relevant authorities to have regard to the purposes of National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads*. Defra Publications. London

¹⁰⁶ Natural England (2010) *England’s statutory designated landscapes: a practical guide to your duty of regard*.

¹⁰⁷ See Footnote 48.

¹⁰⁸ See Footnote 48.

¹⁰⁹ See Footnote 48.

- ensure that decisions affecting these areas are **properly considered and recorded** in high level policy documents and public statements;
- **set out the actions they have taken to comply** and any examples of good practice;
- **make reference to the duty of regard** in their annual reports and/or other appropriate monitoring documents.

Relevant authorities are encouraged to follow this best practice guidance when seeking to fulfil their statutory duty of regard.

In line with the Defra and Natural England guidance on the duty of regard, the Board will monitor compliance with the duty of regard. For example, with regards to planning, we will monitor whether planning decisions have addressed relevant considerations. Where appropriate, we will liaise with relevant local planning authorities to help resolve any issues.

On a related point, it is worth noting that Section 84 of the CRoW Act states that:

- *A local planning authority whose area consists of or includes the whole or any part of an area of outstanding natural beauty has power ... to take all such action as appears to them expedient for the accomplishment of the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty or so much of it as is included in their area.*

There are many opportunities for relevant authorities and other organisations to take a proactive approach to supporting the purpose of AONB designation and management of the AONB. As stated in the Defra guidance, the duty of regard provides an '*opportunity for all relevant authorities to show their commitment to conserving and enhancing our finest landscapes, to which end clear public expressions of this commitment would be helpful to all*'.

APPENDIX 5. STAKEHOLDER DELIVERY – PRIORITY ACTIONS

National Landscape Board Delivery

How the National Landscape Board will contribute to the delivery of the Management Plan is set out in a three yearly Business Plan Framework which in turn is delivered through an annual work programme.

Recommended Stakeholder Actions

Every individual and organisation with an interest in the National Landscape can help make this plan’s vision and outcomes a reality by contributing its delivery. Many of these stakeholders already make a significant contribution to delivery. This ‘Stakeholder Delivery’ table provides an indication of the key measures that the Board invites specific stakeholders to undertake in order to help deliver this plan.

Stakeholder	Key measure (i.e. ‘if you do nothing else to support the implementation of the Management Plan, please do this’)	Most relevant policies
All stakeholders	Have regard to the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan and other National Landscape guidance. This should include helping to deliver the vision, outcomes and policies of the National Landscape Management Plan by: (i) addressing them – and, where appropriate, adopting them - in relevant plans, policies, proposals, work programmes, decisions and actions; and (ii) recognising them as priorities for investment.	CC3, CE1, CE3, CE8, CE10
All ‘relevant authorities’¹¹⁰	Comply with Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (the ‘duty of regard’) and have regard to the supporting guidance published by Defra and Natural England.	CC7
Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)	Ensure that the Government’s response to the Landscapes Review published in 2019, enhances the level of protection afforded to AONBs and champions their value to the nation.	CC6, CE10
	Following the Government’s review of protected landscapes, publish new guidance on protected landscapes ¹¹¹ , reinforcing the role and purpose of our protected landscape family.	CC6, CE1, CE8, CE10
	Review the Government’s guidance on ‘the duty of regard’ to make the duty more robust.	CC7
	Ensure that Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms contain measures appropriate for the Cotswolds National Landscape.	CE8
Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	Publish new guidance, to accompany the National Planning Policy Framework, which clarifies and explains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the meaning of ‘highest status of protection’; • that development in AONBs should be limited; • what the development priorities should be for AONBs (i.e. affordable housing and improvement of services); 	CC6, CE10, CE11, CE12

¹¹⁰ As defined in Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, which is explained in Appendix 4. Includes all public bodies and statutory undertakers.

¹¹¹ For example, an updated version of ‘*English National Parks and the Broads. UK Government Vision and Circular 2010*’ (Defra, 2010), but which would also address NATIONAL LANDSCAPES.

Stakeholder	Key measure (i.e. 'if you do nothing else to support the implementation of the Management Plan, please do this')	Most relevant policies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> what constitutes 'exceptional circumstances' and 'in the public interest', in the context of major development. 	
Natural England	Support the establishment and delivery of Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms specifically for the Cotswolds National Landscape.	CE8
	Provide funding for National Trails through three-year rolling funding streams, and provide cohesive national co-ordination for the long term.	UE2
	Ensure that Natura 2000 sites, National Nature Reserves and SSSIs are brought into good condition.	CE7
Forestry Commission	Develop and support land management and rural development support mechanisms appropriate for the Cotswolds National Landscape.	CE8, CE7
	Ensure that publicly funded woodland creation schemes reflect Cotswolds National Landscape Board guidance including the Landscape Strategy and Guidelines and the Nature Recovery Plan.	CE1, CE7
Environment Agency	Support the delivery of the Cotswold Nature Recovery Plan and the River Valleys Nature Improvement Area, for example, through appropriate policies and actions in River Basin and Catchment Management Plans.	CE7
	Lead on the delivery of actions to implement the Water Framework Directive.	CC5
Historic England	Facilitate greater access to the Cotswolds National Landscape Historic Landscape Character Assessment and Historic Environment Records.	CE6
	Work with other stakeholders to enhance the interpretation of core properties and scheduled ancient monuments.	CE6
	Support measures to ensure that scheduled ancient monuments are brought into good condition.	CE6
Health and Wellbeing Boards	Commission health walks and conservation activity as an adjunct or alternative to normal prescription treatment.	UE1
	Invest in programmes to help deprived communities, within the Cotswolds National Landscape and surrounding areas, overcome barriers preventing them from realising the mental and physical health benefits of enjoying the National Landscape.	UE2
Local Enterprise Partnerships	Support the development of funding mechanisms that leverage private finance to provide for payments for ecosystem services.	CE8, CE10, CE1, UE3
Local Authorities	Endorse the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan.	
	Recognise the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan as a material consideration in Local Plans and in planning decisions.	CE10
	Include a policy specifically about the Cotswolds National Landscape in Local Plans, which specifies how the purpose of National Landscape designation will be achieved in the Local Plan area.	CE10

Stakeholder	Key measure (i.e. ‘if you do nothing else to support the implementation of the Management Plan, please do this’)	Most relevant policies
	Ensure that Local Nature Recovery Strategies take account of the outcomes, priorities and measures of the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan.	CE7
	Prioritise the provision of affordable housing to meet identified local needs arising from within the National Landscape.	CE12
	Maintain and enhance public access, roads, public transport and countryside management, in line with the policies of the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan.	UE2, CE10, UE3, CE1, CE6, CE7, CE8
Town and Parish Councils and Parish Meetings	Use the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines to inform Neighbourhood Plans, Parish Plans and Village Design Statements and when considering planning applications.	CC6, CC7, CE10, CE12
	Celebrate and promote the fact that the town or parish lies within the Cotswolds National Landscape by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • utilising National Landscape boundary markers; • incorporating ‘within the Cotswolds National Landscape’ text in village or town entry signs; • providing information about the Cotswolds National Landscape on information panels and displays in the town or parish. 	UE2
Conservation organisations	Help to halt and reverse declines in priority habitats and species.	CE7
	Help to establish and manage coherent and resilient nature recovery networks that join up across the National Landscape as outlined in the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan.	CE7
Historic environment and cultural heritage organisations	Support the conservation, enhancement, promotion and monitoring of the historical environment and cultural heritage of the Cotswolds National Landscape.	CE6
Farmers, landowners, land managers and related organisations	Use the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan and guidance published by the Cotswolds Conservation Board, including the Landscape Strategy and Guidelines and Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan, to inform investment, development, and land management decisions and actions.	All
	Ensure that environmental land management and rural development support mechanisms support the Cotswolds National Landscape’s policies and guidance.	CE8
Tourism organisations and tourism providers	Support the development of and contribute to the Caring for the Cotswolds visitor giving scheme.	UE3
	Support a coordinated approach to tourism across the whole of the Cotswolds, including the implementation of the Cotswolds Destination Management Plan (published in 2014).	CC6, UE2, UE3
Geology Trusts	Support the conservation and enhancement of geological and geomorphological features in the Cotswolds National Landscape.	CE2
	Support the increased understanding and awareness of geological and geomorphological features in the Cotswolds National Landscape.	CE2

Stakeholder	Key measure (i.e. 'if you do nothing else to support the implementation of the Management Plan, please do this')	Most relevant policies
Developers and infrastructure providers (including utilities, rail and highways)	Avoid adverse impacts on the Cotswolds National Landscape resulting from development and infrastructure provision. Mitigate unavoidable impacts and, as a last resort, compensate for impacts that cannot be mitigated on site, for example, by enhancing visual amenity.	CE1, CE10
	Ensure that any major infrastructure projects that are permitted in the Cotswolds National Landscape are 'landscape-led' ¹¹² .	CE11

¹¹² See Policy CE11, paragraph 2, for more details on what 'landscape-led' means in this context.

APPENDIX 6. MONITORING INDICATORS

MANAGEMENT PLAN OUTCOMES AND POLICIES

CROSS CUTTING

Climate Action (Outcome 1)

Policy CC1 – Climate Change Mitigation

- Indicator 1: Total output from new renewable energy schemes permitted in the Cotswolds National Landscape.
- Indicator 2: Endorsement by the National Landscape Board and adoption by partners of a path to Net Zero emissions for the National Landscape (or better) by 2050 (or sooner), including clear, measurable targets.
- Indicator 3: Extent of tree canopy and woodland cover (Ha)

Policy CC2 - Climate Change Adaptation

- Indicator 4: Research into the predicted impacts of climate change on the Cotswolds National Landscape.

Natural and Cultural Capital (Outcome 2)

Policy CC3 – Natural and Cultural Capital Principles

- Indicator 5: Extent to which the natural and cultural capital of the Cotswolds National Landscape has been assessed and evaluated.

Policy CC4 – Soils

- Indicator 6: Area of land under agri-environment/Environmental Land Management schemes for soil management.

Policy CC5 - Water

- Indicator 7: % of water bodies achieving 'good' ecological status.

Working Together (Outcome 3)

Policy CC6 - Developing a Consistent Coordinated and Landscape-led Approach

- Indicator 8: % of respondents 'highly valuing' the Cotswold National Landscape in residents & visitor surveys.

Policy CC7 – Compliance with Section 85 of the CRoW Act

- Indicator 9: % of planning decisions that demonstrably have regard to the purpose of National Landscape designation.
- Indicator 10: % of planning decisions that are made in line with CNL Board recommendations.

Policy CC8 - Working Together (see Indicator 8)

CONSERVING AND ENHANCING

Landscape (Outcome 4)

Policy CE1 – Landscape

- Indicator 11: Changes to landscape character identified through fixed-point photography.

Policy CE2 – Geology

- Indicator 12: Condition of designated geological sites.

Local Distinctiveness (Outcome 5)

Policy CE3 – Local Distinctiveness

- Indicator 13: Publication of development design guidance.

Tranquillity (Outcome 6)

Policy CE4 – Tranquillity

- Indicator 14: % of National Landscape recorded as ‘most tranquil’.

Dark Skies (Outcome 7)

Policy CE5 – Dark Skies

- Indicator 15: % of National Landscape affected by light pollution.

Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage (Outcome 8)

Policy CE6 – Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage

- Indicator 16: Area of land under agri-environment/Environmental Land Management schemes for the management and protection of archaeological features.
- Indicator 17: Number of sites identified as Heritage at Risk.

Biodiversity and Nature Recovery (Outcome 9)

Policy CE7 – Biodiversity and Nature Recovery

- Indicator 18: SSSI condition.
- Indicator 19: % of area of priority habitats managed under agri-environment/Environmental Land Management schemes.
- Indicator 20: Extent of wildlife rich habitat (Ha) created or restored outside of protected sites.
- Indicator 20: Extent of habitats (Ha) within a nature recovery network

Rural Land Management (Outcome 10)

Policy CE8 – Rural Land Management

- Indicator 21: % of land (including woodland) managed under agri-environment/Environmental Land Management schemes.
- Indicator 22: Establishment of a Cotswolds-specific package of Environmental Land Management and rural support payments.

Policy CE9 – Problem Species, Pests and Diseases

- Indicator 23: Extent of tree pests and diseases.

Development and Transport (Outcome 11)

Policy CE10 – Development and Transport Principles

- Indicator 24: Number of adopted Local Plans with policy-level reference to the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan.

Policy CE11 – Major Development

- Indicator 25: Number of major developments permitted by local planning authorities.

Policy CE12 – Development Priorities and Evidence of Need

- Indicator 26: Number of new housing units permitted.

Policy CE13 – Waste Management and the Circular Economy

- Indicator 27: Number of landfill and strategic waste management sites permitted.

UNDERSTANDING AND ENJOYMENT

Health and Well-being (Outcome 12)

Policy UE1 – Health and Wellbeing

- Indicator 28: Number of educational projects run by the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens.

Access and Recreation (Outcome 13)

Policy UE2 – Access and Recreation (see also Indicator 8):

- Indicator 29: Number of improvements made to the Public Rights of Way network by the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens.
- Indicator 30: Downloads of walking and exploring resources from the Cotswolds National Landscape Board website.

Sustainable Tourism (Outcome 14)

Policy UE3– Sustainable Tourism

- Indicator 31: Number of businesses that are signed up to the Caring for the Cotswolds visitor giving scheme.
- Indicator 32: Income generated through the Caring for the Cotswolds visitor giving scheme.

APPENDIX 7. PRIORITY HABITATS AND SPECIES

This list of priority habitats and species for the Cotswolds National Landscape is adapted from Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, which lists the habitats and species that are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The habitats and species listed below are considered to be: (i) characteristic of the Cotswolds; and / or (ii) those for which the Cotswolds National Landscape is considered to be a stronghold of those particular habitats or species. There are other priority habitats and species within the National Landscape, which merit an appropriate level of protection, but which do not meet the two criteria outlined above. Habitats and species with an asterisk (*) are not on the NERC Act list but have been identified, by the National Landscape Board and relevant stakeholders, as priorities for the Cotswolds National Landscape.

HABITATS

Lowland mixed deciduous woodland
Lowland beech and yew woodland
Wood pasture, parkland, veteran trees and large areas of tree, scrub and grassland mosaic.
Lowland wildflower rich calcareous and neutral grasslands
Flushes, streams and rivers
Arable field margins important for birds and plant species
Hedgerows
Common box woodland
Areas important for bats ('batscapes') *
H7720 petrifying springs with tufa formation (Crataneurion)*

SPECIES

Farmland birds, such as skylark, lapwing and corn bunting
Pasqueflower
Pearl-bordered fritillary
Arable plants
Juniper
Cotswold pennycress
Bats
Dormouse
Water vole
Brown hare
Limestone grassland butterflies
Marsh fritillary
Violet click beetle
White clawed crayfish
Native brown trout
Bath asparagus*
Common box*
Rockrose pot beetle
Rugged oil beetle
Ancient woodland ground flora, such as helleborines and angular Solomon seal.
Ancient grassland flora such as musk and fly orchid.

APPENDIX 8. WHY BIODIVERSITY IS AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION IN THE COTSWOLDS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

Introduction

This appendix sets out why biodiversity is an important consideration in the Cotswolds National Landscape (including why a higher biodiversity net gain requirement would be appropriate in the cotswolds national landscape, compared to neighbouring, non-designated areas).

Statutory purposes, duties and powers

The Cotswolds National Landscape is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The statutory purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of these areas.¹¹³ Local authorities and other ‘relevant authorities’ have a statutory duty to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of AONBs.¹¹⁴ Local authorities also have the statutory power to take action to accomplish this purpose.¹¹⁵

Link between natural beauty and biodiversity

Natural heritage (including biodiversity) is one of the factors that contributes to the natural beauty of AONBs.¹¹⁶ As such, the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity is an important consideration when having regard to the purpose of AONB designation.

Paragraph 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that ‘*the conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in [AONBs]*’.¹¹⁷

Landscapes Review, Government response and ‘30 by 30’

The Government-commissioned Landscapes Review Final Report¹¹⁸ proposes that:

- national landscapes¹¹⁹ should form the backbone of Nature Recovery Networks - joining things up within and beyond their boundaries;¹²⁰
- national landscapes should have a renewed mission to recover and enhance nature;¹²¹
- there should be stronger purposes in law for our national landscapes, including ‘recover, conserve and enhance ... biodiversity’;
- strengthened [AONB] Management Plans should set clear priorities and actions for nature recovery.¹²²

¹¹³ Section 82 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 ([link](#)).

¹¹⁴ Section 85 of the CROW Act 2000 ([link](#)). Further information on the ‘duty of regard’ is provided in Appendix 4 of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023 ([link](#)) and in guidance published by Defra ([link](#)) and Natural England ([link](#)).

¹¹⁵ Section 84 of the CROW Act 2000 ([link](#)).

¹¹⁶ Natural England (2011) *Guidance for assessing landscapes for designations as National Park or AONB in England* ([link](#)). Table 3, page 13, and Appendix 1, page 25.

¹¹⁷ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021) *National Planning Policy Framework* ([link](#)). Paragraph 176, page 50.

¹¹⁸ Defra (2019) *Landscapes Review Final Report* ([link](#)).

¹¹⁹ The phrase ‘national landscapes’ relates to AONBs and national parks.

¹²⁰ Proposal 4, page 52.

¹²¹ Proposal 1, page 36.

¹²² Proposal 3, page 43.

The Government's response¹²³ to the Landscapes Review Final Report states that:

- Working with ... AONBs in the coming years, we will ensure our protected landscapes boost biodiversity.¹²⁴
- Our vision for protected landscapes is a coherent national network of ... nature-rich spaces ... Protected landscapes will drive forward nature recovery.¹²⁵
- The Prime Minister has committed to protect 30% of UK land for nature by 2030 (30 by 30)¹²⁶ ... Achieving 30 by 30 will rely on improvements in how these areas are protected and managed for nature recovery.¹²⁷
- We will put our protected landscapes at the heart of delivering our nature recovery ... policies.¹²⁸
- Given their spatial scale, and track records in planning and delivering landscape-scale restoration projects, protected landscapes could play a particularly important role in the delivery of the Nature Recovery Network.¹²⁹
- We will explore ways for protected landscapes to support responsible authorities in preparing [Local Nature Recovery Strategies].¹³⁰
- By strengthening the first purpose [of protected landscape designation] for nature ... we will ensure these areas can contribute to this ambitious commitment for biodiversity and our wider nature recovery ambitions.¹³¹
- We will strengthen this purpose [to 'conserve and enhance'], making it clear that we need to actively recover nature in these areas, rather than simply conserve what remains.¹³²
- A core function of protected landscapes should be to drive nature recovery.¹³³

The British Ecological Society (BES)¹³⁴ and Wildlife and Countryside Link (WCL)¹³⁵ has both published reports on the Government's '30 by 30' aspiration. Both reports recognise the important role that protected landscapes should play in achieving this. However, they state that, until significant reform is delivered, protected landscapes should not automatically be included in the 30 by 30 target. Both reports make similar recommendations to the Landscape Review in this regard.

The executive summary of the BES report¹³⁶ sets out the following criteria that should be used to determine and inform what a site (or protected landscape) must achieve to be counted towards 30 by 30:

¹²³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-government-response/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-government-response>

¹²⁴ Landscapes review: government response ([link](#)). Foreword.

¹²⁵ Landscapes review: government response ([link](#)). Introduction.

¹²⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-commits-to-protect-30-of-uk-land-in-boost-for-biodiversity>.

This press release implies that the 30% figure includes the entirety of AONBs: '*Existing National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other protected areas already comprise approximately 26% of land in England. An additional 4% ... will be protected to support the recovery of nature*'. However, the Government's response to the Landscapes Review states that '*at present, under their current statutory purposes, level of protection and management, protected landscapes cannot be said to contribute towards 30 by 30 in their entirety*'.

¹²⁷ Landscapes review: government response ([link](#)). Since the publication of the review - nature and climate.

¹²⁸ Landscapes review: government response ([link](#)). Chapter 2: Nature and climate.

¹²⁹ Landscapes review: government response ([link](#)). The Nature Recovery Network and 30 by 30.

¹³⁰ Landscapes review: government response ([link](#)). The Nature Recovery Network and 30 by 30.

¹³¹ Landscapes review: government response ([link](#)). The Nature Recovery Network and 30 by 30.

¹³² Landscapes review: government response ([link](#)). A stronger mission for nature recovery.

¹³³ Landscapes review: government response ([link](#)). A stronger mission for nature recovery.

¹³⁴ British Ecological Society (2022) *Protected Landscapes and Nature Recovery*. ([Link](#)).

¹³⁵ Wildlife & Countryside Link (2021) *Achieving 30x30 in England on land and at sea*. ([Link](#)).

¹³⁶ British Ecological Society (2022). *Protected Landscapes and Nature Recovery – Executive Summary*. ([Link](#)).

1. Long term biodiversity protection against internal and external pressures.
2. Improves ecological resilience.
3. Effective management and monitoring.
4. Effective governance and engagement of local communities.

Colchester Declaration

The ‘Colchester Declaration’ is a formal commitment by the family of AONBs, under the umbrella of the National Association of AONBs (NAAONB), to redress declines in species and habitats within the context of a wider response to climate change.

The commitments include that, by 2030:

- At least 200,000ha of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in AONBs will be in favourable condition.
- At least 100,000ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside of protected sites will have been created / restored in AONBs.
- At least 36,000ha of new woodland will have been planted or allowed to regenerate in AONBs following the principle of the right tree in the right place.

Considerations specific to the Cotswolds National Landscape

Two of the ‘special qualities’ of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL)¹³⁷ are the:

- Flower-rich grasslands particularly limestone grasslands;
- Ancient broadleaved woodland particularly along the crest of the escarpment.

The special qualities of the CNL are those aspects of the area’s natural beauty which make the area distinctive and which are valuable, especially at a national scale. They are the key attributes on which the priorities for the area’s conservation, enhancement and management should be based.

In the 1930s, 40% of the CNL was covered in wildflower-rich grasslands. Sadly, agricultural intensification and changing land management practices have led to the loss of almost all of this wildflower grassland ... less than 1.5% remains.¹³⁸

In 2019, the CNL Board published the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan (CNRP)¹³⁹ which identifies that in order to form a robust nature recovery network, the extent of wildlife rich habitats within the CNL needs to expand from 48,000ha (23% of the CNL area) to 82,000ha¹⁴⁰ (40% of the CNL area), with the target being to achieve this by 2050. This is consistent with the current scientific evidence¹⁴¹

The highest priority habitats in the CNRP are:

- veteran trees;
- ancient woodland;

¹³⁷ Chapter 2 of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023 provides a full list of the area’s special qualities.

¹³⁸ <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/looking-after/our-grasslands-projects/glorious-cotswolds-grasslands/#:~:text=Sadly%2C%20agricultural%20intensification%20and%20changing,be%20managed%20to%20be%20maintained.>

¹³⁹ Cotswolds Conservation Board (2021) *Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan* ([link](#)).

¹⁴⁰ The figure rises to over 103,000ha if arable fields containing environmental measures are included.

¹⁴¹ Defining and delivering resilient ecological networks: Nature Conservation in England. Isaac. N.J. et al 2017. *Journal of Applied Ecology*

- ancient, unimproved, limestone grassland.

The CNRP states that achieving this target will require a farmer and land manager led approach to nature recovery, for example, through Environmental Land Management Schemes and Payment for Ecosystems. Biodiversity Net Gain mechanisms will also play an important role. It is also intended that the CNRP will feed into the forthcoming Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

APPENDIX 9. MAJOR DEVELOPMENT

Footnote 55 of the NPPF clarifies that:

- *‘For the purposes of paragraphs 172 [relating to protected landscapes, including AONBs] and 173 [relating to Heritage Coasts], whether a development is ‘major development’ is a matter for the decision maker, 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’.*

As such, it is not possible or appropriate to apply a blanket definition for what should be treated as major development in the Cotswolds National Landscape. Nevertheless, there are some key factors that help to define if a development is major, as outlined below.

The purpose for which the Cotswolds AONB has been designated is to conserve and enhance its natural beauty. Therefore, the judgement as to whether or not a development is major development depends, to a large degree, on whether or not the development could have a significant adverse impact on the natural beauty of the National Landscape. As outlined in Appendix 2, natural beauty incorporates a number of criteria, including landscape quality, scenic quality, tranquillity, natural heritage and cultural heritage. Within the context of the Cotswolds National Landscape, those aspects of the National Landscape’s natural beauty which make the area distinctive and which are particularly valuable – the National Landscape’s ‘special qualities’ - are listed in Chapter 2.

On this basis, a development should be considered ‘major’ if, by reason of its nature, scale and / or setting, it could have a significant adverse impact on any of the above criteria, including the National Landscape’s ‘special qualities’. As well as potential impacts within the National Landscape, consideration should also be given to impacts on these criteria within the setting of the National Landscape, particularly in the context of visual impact (i.e. views into and out of the National Landscape) and impacts on tranquillity.

As outlined in paragraph 172 of the NPPF, applications for such development should include an assessment of:

- a. *‘the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy’;*

The Board would expect any such development proposal be accompanied by a statement of need in the context of national considerations and, ideally, in the context of needs arising from within the National Landscape. The impacts of permitting or refusing the development should be clearly identified, including the social, economic and environmental impacts, with specific reference to the impacts upon the natural beauty, special qualities of the National Landscape, and the economic and social needs (including housing needs) of the local communities affected. Such a statement should be based upon objective assessment and clear evidence.

- b. *‘the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way’;*

The Board would encourage any such development proposal to be accompanied by a report setting out a sequential approach to site selection. This should evidence the extent to which alternative sites have been assessed before the selection of sites within the National Landscape, and clearly identify why sites outside of the designated area could not be developed. The report should also identify and

evidence why the need for the development could not be met in some other way. The report should include relevant evidence of the cost of developing outside of the National Landscape.

c. 'any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated'.

The Board would expect any such development proposal to be accompanied by a report identifying any detrimental effects upon the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities. Such a report should relate directly to the special qualities of the National Landscape as a whole as well as those specific to the development site.

Any mitigation identified to moderate these impacts should be:

- clearly detailed, in line with the duty to conserve and enhance the National Landscape,
- be compatible with the objectives of the National Landscape Management Plan, and
- be capable of realisation through robust planning conditions or obligation.

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