

The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Business Plan 2023 - 2024

Registered Office

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Company number 4729800
Charity number 1158871

1. The National Association for AONBs

1.1. Charitable Objectives

The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) is a Charitable Company limited by guarantee. It has three objects for **Place, People, & Partnerships**:

- to promote the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty including the physical, natural, cultural and built environment in and around Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, other Protected Areas, and those areas for which such designation might be pursued,
- to advance the education, understanding and appreciation of the public in relation to the conservation and enhancement natural beauty including the physical, natural, cultural and built environment of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, other Protected Areas and those areas for which such designation might be pursued, and
- to promote the efficiency and effectiveness of those organisations promoting or representing Areas of
 Outstanding Natural Beauty, other Protected Areas and those areas for which such designation might be
 pursued.

1.2. Membership

Members are those involved in the planning and management of 8000 square miles of the UK's most beautiful and cherished landscapes. Membership includes all of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) partnerships¹ in England and Wales, the two independent AONB Conservation Board, as well as some of those Local Authorities with statutory responsibility for AONBs, and a number of voluntary bodies and individuals with an interest in the future of these iconic landscapes.

1.3. Strategy

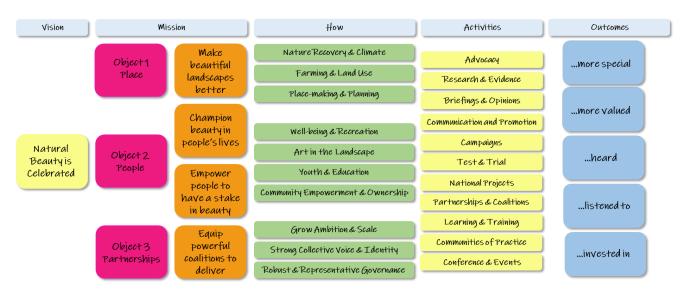
The "National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Strategy 2021 - 23" was adopted at the Annual General Meeting in November 2021. The Strategy was developed during a period of continued uncertainty for the Association as the Government's response to the Landscape Review was still awaited. Whilst the Government has now published a response to the Review, this has taken the form of a consultation, meaning the period of uncertainty still hangs over the preparation of this Business Plan.

At the AGM in November 2022 the membership resolved to pursue a rebrand and renaming of the NAAONB to National Landscapes. A new strategy reflecting this decision, encompassing the values and priorities of this new identity, will need to be prepared to make it a meaningful transition. This is an opportunity for the Association to move with confidence, clear in our knowledge and understanding of what needs to be done, without letting the government's handling of Landscapes Review further prolonged uncertainty. This shift is a demands leadership from the Board and the Association staff.

The Board have adopted the guiding framework in Diagram 1 as the basis for developing this interim business plan and a more detailed strategy for adoption at the AGM 2023.

¹ AONB partnership in this instance includes any management Partnership, Conservation Board, Joint Advisory Committee or Joint Committee.

Diagram 1: Strategic Framework



2. The operating context

2.1. Positioning of the NAAONB

The NAAONB has established itself as the voice of the AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards by working closely with them, and with Local Authorities, statutory agencies, central governments and other interested bodies. By doing so it delivers the multiple wellbeing benefits for the public of beautiful, accessible, landscapes and furthers the work of AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards, helping them deliver their statutory responsibilities.

The NAAONB

- has a mission to deliver across all of its charitable objects
- is an influential, trusted organisation that is accepted as the voice of the AONB network,
- encourages and harnesses the collective experience, enthusiasm and goodwill of the AONB network,
- brings the AONB network together as a cohesive and coherent entity,
- · develops and supports collaboration across all designated landscapes,
- celebrates the unique identity of its individual members,
- collaborates with others to achieve shared objectives,
- is a vital point of contact with the AONB network for governments.

The rebrand and renaming to National Landscapes will help signal the renewal of AONB as the landscape designation of choice for the 21st century. An opportunity to build on the legacy and learning of AONB and amplify the ambition and delivery of local teams through a stronger collective and individual profile. New logos and visual identity will be a noticeable, high-profile change, but these will be symbolic of the transformative change which AONBs have known are needed for many years, an opportunity to deliver on long frustrated ambitions.

2.2. Managing change

The NAAONB is operating within a period of continued public-sector reform and enhanced devolution. The Landscapes Review is yet to conclude. The government has published its Environmental Improvement Plan which has improving nature as its "apex goal". Whilst this offers some clarity on the priorities of this government, the delivery picture for AONB at national and local level is complex. A commitment to a National Land Use Framework alongside refresh of National Planning Policy Framework and the development of Natur Recovery Strategies will all play in to the thinking and decisions of a great number of AONBs whose Management Plans are due to be renewed.

The NAAONB will work flexibly, using a mix of approaches to delivery. It will maintain a small team to deliver its core work programme, continue to support and co-ordinate AONB staff working on national issues, collaborate with others on the delivery of shared objectives, and buy in external support where this is most cost-effective.

The NAAONB supports enhanced devolution and tailors its approach to suit the specific needs of the membership in each of the devolved nations.

2.3. Corporate Risk

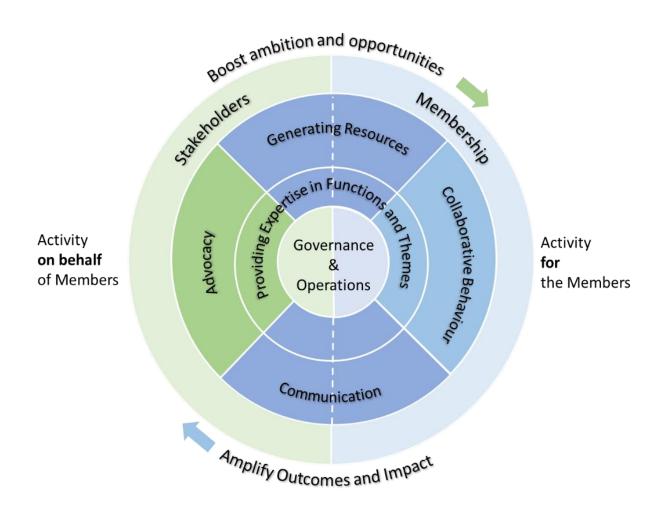
The NAAONB prepares a risk register and reviews this quarterly. This allows the charity to assess and monitor potential and possible risks in its day-to-day activities, project work and within the wider context of the AONB network.

To maximise flexibility around income levels, the budget for the delivery of this plan incorporates a small contingency around grant aid and membership income.

3. Delivery

3.1 The Functions of the NAAOB

The functional activity of the NAAONB in support of the strategy is represented below. These are not mutually exclusive, where addressing each of the Strategy's Key Actions will require a varying mix of functions. Their value lies in demonstrating the virtuous relationship between the national and local delivery context, with the execution of the functions enabling the Association to amplify the outcomes and impact of its membership which in turn boosts their ambition and opportunities.





Building and Sustaining Collaborative Behaviour

- Enable collaborative behaviors across landscape work, supporting and encouraging AONB teams and partners to work more effectively together and with others
- Support and develop a wide range of expertise within the AONB network to foster innovation and collective action
- Ensure AONBs benefit fully from the development opportunities and exchange of good practice provided by the NAAONB nationally
- Ensure the AONB network and the national and international networks of protected areas are well connected and informed on respective activity
- Help the AONBs to engage a more diverse and representative audience to actively participate in shaping priorities.

Ref	Activity	Milestone	By when
1.1	Growing a broad and tailored	Produce and publish an initial suite of professional	Nov 23
	professional development offer for	development opportunities, promoted and	
	members and non-members	published on the website	

1.2	Connect ideas, people and resources across the AONB family in order to provide personal and professional development opportunities, and to aid local and national delivery.	Roll out plans for thematic communities of practice across the year, supported by hubs on the National landscapes Platform as trial of how well it can support this way of working.	March 2024
		Audit National Landscapes Platform – seek feedback from users on functionality. Consider options for future use.	July 23
1.3	Drive delivery of the Colchester	Undertake a process and impact review of the	Sep 23
	Declaration, supporting Colchester	Declaration and its delivery. Set up and coordinate	
	Declaration Pilots as required.	Big Chalk Topic Workgroups; Help Coastal Cluster	
		develop a Vision and Terms of Reference.	
	Help AONBs engage with and influence	Establish a time-bound LNRS Community of	Ongoing
	the relevant Local Nature Recovery	Practice group to support AONB officers with	
	Strategy processes.	information, knowledge sharing and practical	
		help.	
	Support the introduction of Nature	50% of Nature Recovery Plans finalised and	Mar 24
	Recovery Plans across the AONB	published and a further 40% in a final draft form.	
	network, helping the transition into	The timing of the latter will be tied into the	
	delivery activity.	relevant LNRS timelines.	
1.5	Maintain regular dialogue with Lead	Host regular Lead Officer Online Forums to	Ongoing
	Officer, facilitating the flow of	provide briefing on the Association's activities and	
	intelligence and developing robust	share intelligence.	
	shared positions		
1.6	Work with Defra and partners to	Contribute to development of workstream plans;	Oct 23
	establish a National Landscapes, Parks	recruitment of partnership chair; recruitment of	
	and Trails Partnership	funded posts	



Policy and Advocacy

- provide insight and intelligence to Defra, Natural England, Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales on all aspects of AONBs
- improve our policy making processes and decisions by engaging AONB members in constructive debate about priority topics, and developing systems to crystallise commonalities across the network
- support policy making processes and decisions through meetings with Ministers and other senior figures
- use the wide range of expertise within the AONB network to inform policy development affecting AONBs
- provide technical support to AONB partnerships/conservation boards, government agencies, and the public
- developing accords with organisations around shared objectives and develop work with those we are already aligned

Ref	Activity	Milestone	By when
	Improve policy and advocacy systems and ways of working	Develop and agree a policy-advocacy- communications strategy for presentation to June Board	June 2023
		Test approach by producing policy statements and/or new publications using new strategy and reflect on possible improvements to way of working	April 2024
		Enhance capacity and system for horizon scanning and stakeholder analysis	July 2023
	Raise awareness of the work of AONB teams in preparation for next general election (i.e. no later than Jan 2025)	Prepare and support delivery of an advocacy plan to engage policymakers, politicians and public during 2023 and 2024	From June 2023 to April 2024
		Contribute to organising a profile-raising event, attended by parliamentarians and MPs from across the political spectrum, as well as peer organisations and NGOs.	April 2024
	Enhance the quality of debate and discussion around protected area management in the UK and internationally	Produce guidance for advocacy/comms outputs that can be easily used by NAAONB and AONB teams – with clear protocols for peer review and sign off	Sept 2023
		Organise at least one workshop to bring together AONB network to reflect and share knowledge on policy coherence within shifting political, legal and regulatory landscape.	April 2024
		Prepare and support delivery of an advocacy plan around agriculture / ELMs / FiPL	May
		Support planning and regenerative agriculture groups to convene	Ongoing
		Contribute to development of refreshed KPIs	Oct 2023
	Lead thinking and advocate for AONB vision of how AONBs/Protected	Develop a think piece based on analysis of the Colchester Declaration targets, National Targets and individual AONB	June 23

	Landscapes should contribute to meeting	targets from their Nature Recovery Plans.	
	30by30.	Use this to influence Defra and Natural	
		England.	
2.3	Further the positive impact of the	Host a face-to-face meeting of the Chairs	May 22
	NE/NAAONB/NPE Tripartite agreement.	of the Tripartite to showcase AONB	
		delivery	
2.4	Support AONBs to develop impactful	Publish Guidance, with Natural England	Mar 23
	Management Plans, working in		
	partnership with Natural England to		
	produce meaningful guidance		
2.5	Support AONBs to adopt or maintain	Publish Guidance with Natural England	Mar 23
	robust governance which respects the		
	integrity of the national designation,		
2.7	Instigate regular meetings with Ministers,	Develop a clear schedule and implement	Ongoing
	MPs, MS's and civil servants to highlight	a 'back to the office' reporting system to	
	the value of the AONB designation, AONB	maintain and share intelligence.	
	partnerships and Conservation Boards to		
	society		
2.11	Foster and support relations with CPRE,	Regular meetings between CX and	Ongoing
	CNP, LI and key eNGO (RSPB, WT, NT)	counterparts/senior officials. Minimum	
		annual meeting with Chairs	



Generating Resources

- Strengthen the relationship with existing funding partners and work to establish additional funding partnerships.
- Proactive development of large-scale high impact funding projects with partners which spread and scale action for nature and people
- Grow opportunities for diversifying funding streams and a sustainable funding model

Ref	Activity	Milestone	By when
3.1	Increasing the financial resilience of	Develop and adopt a Resourcing Strategy as part	Dec 23
	NAAONB, developing a strategic	of the Green Funding and Finance Accelerator	
	approach to diversifying sources of	Programme	
	income		
	Deliver a Green Funding and Finance	Complete initial audit of green finance capability	July 23
	Accelerator Programme to support	and opportunity to inform a work programme.	
	AONBs to navigate and maximise		
	opportunities from private investment	Recruit central team	Aug 23

	in nature and other funding opportunities.		
3.2	Proactive national funding bids to build further resilience within the NAAONB and AONB network	Successful application for Art in the Landscape festival to include activities for all AONB teams during 2025.	August 2023
		Ginkgo Prize 2022 awarded and three new commissions delivered.	
3.3	Strengthen relationships with national funding organisations and trusts Lottery trusts NE WG	Meetings/project visits with Heritage Lottery, Natural England, Welsh Government	Ongoing
3.4	Organise a paid-for national conference to explore key issues of the day	Three day residential conference held in Bath in early September	Sep 23
3.5	An annual programme of paid-for events to explore issues, challenge and inspire, and innovate	A minimum of a two paid for events, including a Chairs Conference.	Nov 22



Communication

- Boost the public facing activities of AONBs, amplifying good practice locally, nationally, and internationally
- Maintain and develop AONB network's public profile at conferences and seminars
- Share with external stakeholders, topical news, learning and career opportunities

Ref	Activity	Milestone	By when
4.1	Rebrand the NAAONB as National Landscapes	Have in place a narrative and brand guidelines including tone of voice for the new National Landscapes brand for use by all AONB teams and the NAAONB. New logos signed off and in place for all AONBs and NAAONB. Revised website for NAAONB ready. Launch date to be confirmed	June 2023
4.2	Produce a short and practical Communications Plan, incorporating audience segmentation, channels, events, with clear links into Government priorities and external hooks	Communication Plan, integrating and supporting an Advocacy Plan in place.	Jul 22

4.2	Produce and lead on the delivery of	Regular bulletin to members and stakeholders	Ongoing
	externally focused communication	directing them to new information and resources	
	highlighting the work of the AONB	on the website, complimenting other channels such	
	network and the NAAONB	as social media.	
4.3	Lead on the design, planning, and	Comms Plan will determine key themes alongside	Ongoing
	execution of innovative national	brand value work. A 'landscapes for life week' tbc.	
	campaigns to support the delivery of	Website will be built to host such activity.	
	key messages		
4.4	Provide an annual report for Defra,	Produce Annual Report '22	April 23
	based on key metrics linked to the 25		
	YEP, showcasing positive outcomes		
	from AONB Partnership and		
	Conservation Board work		
	Climate Change Communication Group	Coordination of a toolkit for use by all AONB staff	July 2023
		and NAAONB on how to talk about climate change	
		in a way that does not scare, that generates action,	
		that demonstrates the contribution of the AONB	
		family and individual partnerships and that can be	
		built into project development plans.	



Governance and Operations

We will:

• Support effective governance and management

Ref	Activity	Milestone	By when
5.1	Produce the first National Landscapes strategy involving members and stakeholders, reflecting the new values, vision and mission.	Adoption of the first National Landscapes Strategy by the Members at the AGM	Nov 23
5.2	Actively improve equity of opportunity in relation to the work of the NAAONB and the AONB network	Develop and publish an EDI Strategy	Sep 22
5.3	Improve and manage admin systems.	Ensure correct HR documentation is in place and being maintained/updated appropriately. Ensure IT systems are up to date, useful and functioning. Maintain relationship with IT support contract.	Ongoing

		Ensure finance and procurement systems are robust and resilient. Incorporate the annual budget into Xero to improve monitoring and reporting. Ensure GDPR systems are appropriate, functioning and being adhered to.	
5.4	Support a diverse Board of trustees to have the necessary information, knowledge and skills to lead the organisation.	Run an inclusive recruitment campaign for up to 4 trustees, for appointment at the AGM	November 2023
	S	Ensure correct governance documentation is in place and being maintained/updated appropriately.	
		Create annual system to ensure updates happen regularly.	
5.5	Review and improve the membership services structures and comms, including induction for members and staff	Consolidate member offer and benefits, with proactive and clear relationship management	Jun 23
	Improve recruitment and induction process.	Check smooth running of current systems and gather feedback from newest employees.	Apr 2023
	μιους33.		Apr 2023
		Create and improve staff desk instructions/training.	
		Ensure adequate employee exit process.	September 2023



Wales

Activity	Milestone	Date
Evaluate current Welsh AONB funding and support to better understand opportunities for reform and identify	Deliver SDF evaluation exercise with the appointed consultant.	June 2023
barriers to implementation.	Evaluate WG & NRW funding model in view of providing recommendations to WG and NRW in advance of the 25/26 financial year.	March 2024

Improve collaborative working between	In partnership with a consultant deliver a development	Dec 23
AONBs with a view to addressing	programme for AONB staff built around the Lumina	
national priorities through local action.	Spark model. Building on the carbon calculator reports	
	developed by "Small World Consulting" the AONB	
	cohort will investigate how they can take this forward	
	on a localised and national level.	
Work with partners to deliver a series of	Bring together a group of land managers within each	March 202
workshops within AONBs to inform	AONB to deliver a series of workshops to inform what	
future policy thinking around the	voluntary actions would be optimal within AONB	
Sustainable Farm Scheme and its	landscapes. This would take place through the delivery	
interaction with these landscapes.	of a pilot workshop, followed by a proof of concept	
	before rolling out workshops to the wider AONB	
	family.	
	family.	

3. Monitoring and review

3.1. The review cycle

In light of a rapidly changing internal and external context the NAAONB Board of Trustees will undertake its next business plan review in one year, to pursue the new strategy which will be developed and adopted in 2023. This will enable a re-alignment of business plan delivery with longer term aims set out in this medium to long term Strategy. Performance will be reviewed quarterly against business plan targets.

This Business Plan identifies expected income and expenditure over a one-year period.

3.2. Monitoring and review of the plan

Progress on this plan will be reported to the NAAONB Board at each meeting. Papers and minutes of all meetings will be freely available to both members and the public on the Landscapes for Life website's Board page. An annual review of progress will be reported to the full membership at the AGM.

4. Funding the 2023 – 2024 Business Plan

The budget summary is at Annex 1. Expenditure has been forecast against implementing the Work Plan. The summary shows that:

- the work programme as outlined is affordable,
- the uncertainties of the near future around income have been taken into account so far as is possible and reasonable, and
- against current assumptions, a prudent level of reserves will be maintained. The NAAONB Reserves Policy is regularly reviewed at each AGM.

5. Corporate Governance

The NAAONB became a Charitable Company limited by guarantee on 14th October 2014 having previously operated as an incorporated controlled company limited by guarantee. As a charitable company, the NAAONB is required to apply Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) for accounting and reporting – including reporting on public benefit with regards its charity Objects.

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Q1 Apr-Jun Q2 Jul-Sep Q3 Oct-Dec Q4 Jan-Mar Total E E E E E E E E E	24/25	2,070.4
Frojects (Restricted) F	-	
Income Green Funding and Finance 67,040.00 239,773.00 - 239,773.00 - 546,586.00 Wales Officer 47,986.00 - 37,500.00 - 37,500.00 122,986.00 Art in Landscape 17,920.00 - - - - - 17,920.00 ELMs Advocacy 5,768.00 - - - - 5,768.00 Nature Recovery 10,406.00 - - - - 10,406.00 Climate Change 22,554.00 - - - - - 22,554.00		25/26 £
Green Funding and Finance 67,040.00 239,773.00 - 239,773.00 - 546,586.00 Wales Officer 47,986.00 - 37,500.00 - 37,500.00 122,986.00 Art in Landscape 17,920.00 - - - - - 17,920.00 ELMs Advocacy 5,768.00 - - - - - 5,768.00 Nature Recovery 10,406.00 - - - - - 10,406.00 Climate Change 22,554.00 - - - - - - 22,554.00		ı
Wales Officer 47,986.00 - 37,500.00 - 37,500.00 122,986.00 Art in Landscape 17,920.00 - - - - - 17,920.00 ELMs Advocacy 5,768.00 - - - - - 5,768.00 Nature Recovery 10,406.00 - - - - - 10,406.00 Climate Change 22,554.00 - - - - - 22,554.00	506,953.00	67,040.0
Art in Landscape 17,920.00 - - - - 17,920.00 ELMs Advocacy 5,768.00 - - - - 5,768.00 Nature Recovery 10,406.00 - - - - - 10,406.00 Climate Change 22,554.00 - - - - - 22,554.00	93,392.20	
ELMs Advocacy 5,768.00 - - - - 5,768.00 Nature Recovery 10,406.00 - - - - - 10,406.00 Climate Change 22,554.00 - - - - - - - 22,554.00	920.00	920.0
Climate Change 22,554.00 22,554.00	268.00	268.0
	783.00	783.0
Total Projects (Restricted) Income 171,674.00 239,773.00 37,500.00 239,773.00 37,500.00 726,220.00	54.00	54.0
	602,370.20	69,065.0
Expenditure		
Green Funding and Finance - 132,052.00 - 115,832.00 - 115,831.00 - 179,546.00	- 439,913.00	-
Wales Officer - 25,523.45 - 25,523.45 - 25,523.45 - 104,593.80	- 93,392.20	-
Art in Landscape - 5,000.00 - 7,500.00 - 4,500.00 17,000.00	-	-
ELMs Advocacy 5,500.00 - 5,500.00	-	-
Nature Recovery 9,623.00 - 9,623.00 Climate Change - 7,250.00 - 7,250.00 - 4,000.00 - 4,000.00 - 22,500.00	-	-
	- 533,305.20	
Total Projects (Restricted) Expenditure - 169,825.45 - 156,105.45 - 157,854.45 - 154,977.45 - 638,762.80 Projects (Restricted) SURPLUS/-Deficit 171,674.00 69,947.55 - 118,605.45 81,918.55 - 117,477.45 87,457.20	69,065.00	60 065 0
		69,065.0
Notes on the Budget Reserves £	24/25 £	25/26 £
Unrestricted Funds	2.020.55	2.070
Reserves Policy currently £125,000. Six months core costs £152,000 Net movement - 45,337.69 Palance at start of year 1, indicative Year 2, and estimate Year 3.	- 3,938.69	- 2,078.4
Defra Core Grant confirmed Year 1, indicative Year 2, and estimate Year 3 Balance at start of year 201,130.00 Assumes agreement on Green Funding & Finance. Immediate reprofile required Year End Forecast 155,792.31	155,792.31 151,853.62	151,853.6 149,775.1
Sid in prep. to Defra to increase overall pot for National Landscapes Rebrand	131,033.02	1-75,775.1
Bid preperation for Arts Council England and a charitable trust for Arts Restricted Funds		
Landcape Parks and Trails Partership negotiations in progress, next 6 months Net movement - 84,216.80	- 18,392.20	-
Balance at start of year 171,674.00	87,457.20	69,065.0
Year End Forecast 87,457.20	69,065.00	69,065.0
1		
Total Reserves		
Total Reserves 14 Net Movement - 129,554.49	- 22,330.89	- 2,078.4
	- 22,330.89 243,249.51	- 2,078.4 220,918.6