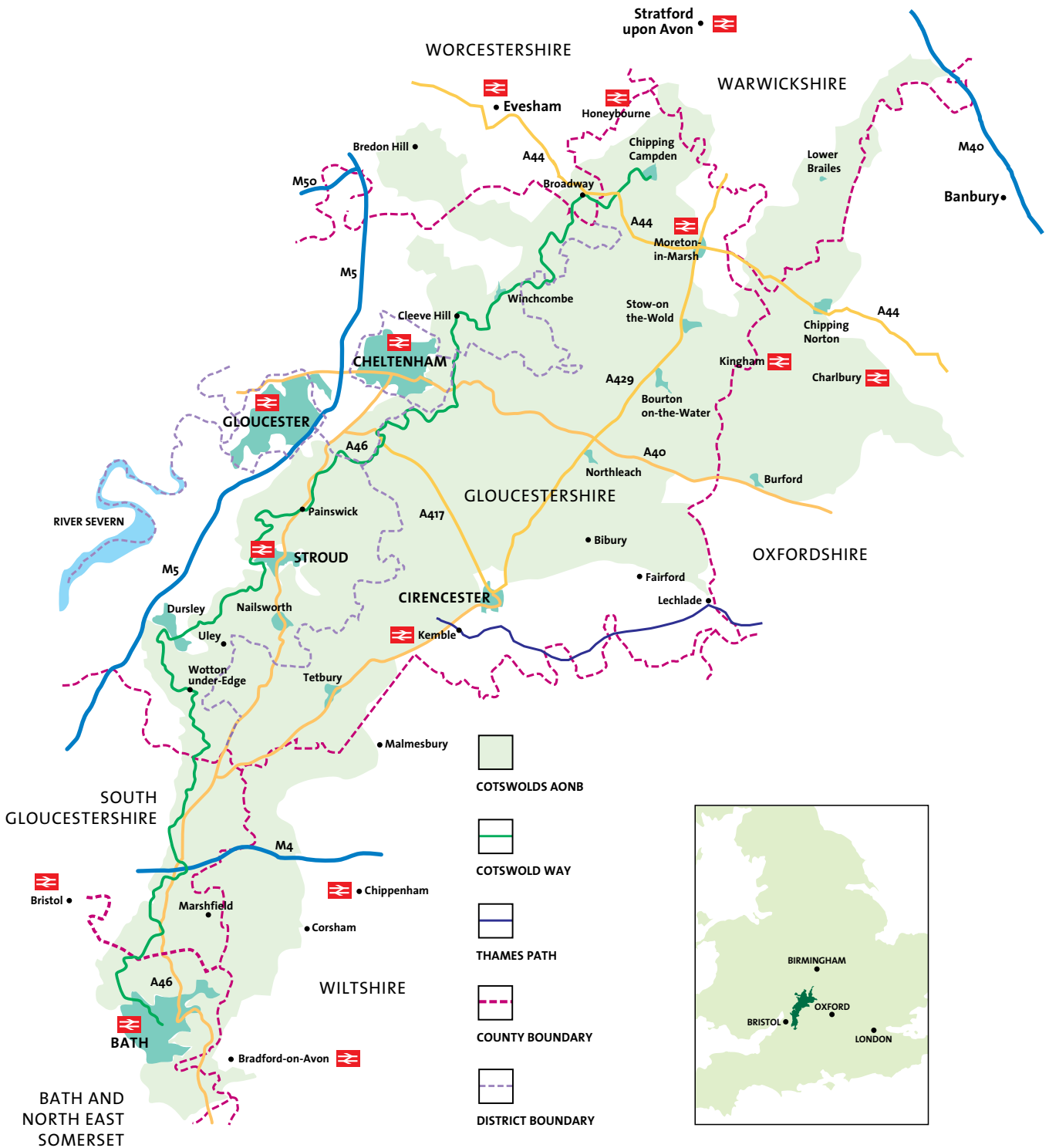


# Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2013-2018



[www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk)

# Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



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# Ministerial foreword



Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are some of our finest landscapes. They are cherished by residents and visitors alike and allow millions of people from all walks of life to understand and connect with nature.

I am pleased to see that this management plan demonstrates how AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards can continue to protect these precious environments despite the significant challenges they face. With a changing climate, the increasing demands of a growing population and in difficult economic times, I believe AONBs represent just the sort of community driven, collaborative approach needed to ensure our natural environment is maintained for generations to come.

AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards have been the architects of a landscape-scale approach to land management. This approach is a key feature of the Government's Natural Environment White Paper and emphasises the need to manage ecosystems in an integrated fashion, linking goals on wildlife, water, soil and landscape, and working at a scale that respects natural systems.

This management plan also makes the important connection between people and nature. I am pleased to hear that local communities have been central to the development of the plan, and will be at the heart of its delivery. From volunteers on nature conservation projects, to businesses working to promote sustainable tourism, it's great to hear of the enthusiasm and commitment of the local people who hold their AONBs so dear.

AONBs are, and will continue to be, landscapes of change. Management plans such as this are vital in ensuring these changes are for the better. I would like to thank all those who were involved in bringing this plan together and I wish you every success in bringing it to fruition.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Benyon." The signature is written in a cursive style.

**Richard Benyon MP**  
**Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries**  
**Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs**



**Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs**

# Chairman's foreword



The national importance of the Cotswolds landscape was recognised by its designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1966.

Its quiet beauty, its warm stone, its sheltered valleys and the long views out over the vale bring delight to all who live, work or visit here. The Cotswolds have been lived in for thousands of years, loved and cherished for generations. We have inherited something very special, something very precious.

It is a place to explore on foot, by bicycle and on horseback: the words health and wellbeing could have been invented for it. It deserves to be accessible to all who could benefit from it.

And simply because it is so beautiful, it is also – almost paradoxically – a prime economic asset, something none of our international competitors can imitate. In marketing terms, it is a global brand. And not just for tourism: in a global economy, with people increasingly able to locate anywhere they wish, it is the quality of our environment that gives the United Kingdom a unique attractiveness as a place in which to do business. A healthy natural environment goes hand in hand with a healthy economy.

The Conservation Board is charged with promoting the sensitive management of the Cotswolds and encouraging a greater understanding and appreciation of the area's special qualities and is the only body able to take a landscape-scale view of the Cotswolds as a whole.

We nevertheless need the support of everyone responsible for taking decisions affecting the landscape. This statutory plan has been drawn up after wide consultation and sets out objectives for the next five years. As well as informing the Board's own activity we hope it will guide the work of local authorities, agencies, other organisations, businesses and individuals.

It is designed to encourage economic activity and not to stifle it, and should ensure that the landscape continues to provide all the social and environmental benefits that flow from a creatively managed ecosystem.

I hope that everyone active in the Cotswolds will read the plan and engage with it in the ways we have suggested. We have inherited a great treasure; let us use it intelligently, secure its many benefits, and pass it on to our successors so that they in their turn will be able to enjoy it as much as we do.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff West".

**The Revd Jeff West OBE FSA  
Chairman  
Cotswolds Conservation Board**

# Vision

## **Our vision for the Cotswolds in 20 years is a landscape:**

- which retains its remarkable visual unity and scenic diversity;
- is richer in nature, and where the cultural heritage is conserved;
- is home to vibrant communities supported by a sustainable local economy;
- provides a warm welcome and high-quality experience for everyone seeking inspiration, tranquillity and to be active outdoors; and
- is adapting successfully to a changing climate and economic conditions.

# Introduction



# Introduction

The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2013-18 has three closely interrelated functions.

Firstly, it is the statutory plan which sets out the Cotswolds Conservation Board’s (“the Board”) policies for the management of the Cotswolds AONB and for the carrying out of its functions in relation to it.<sup>1</sup> The actions the Board itself will take to deliver the Plan’s objectives are set out in the Board’s three-year rolling business plan.

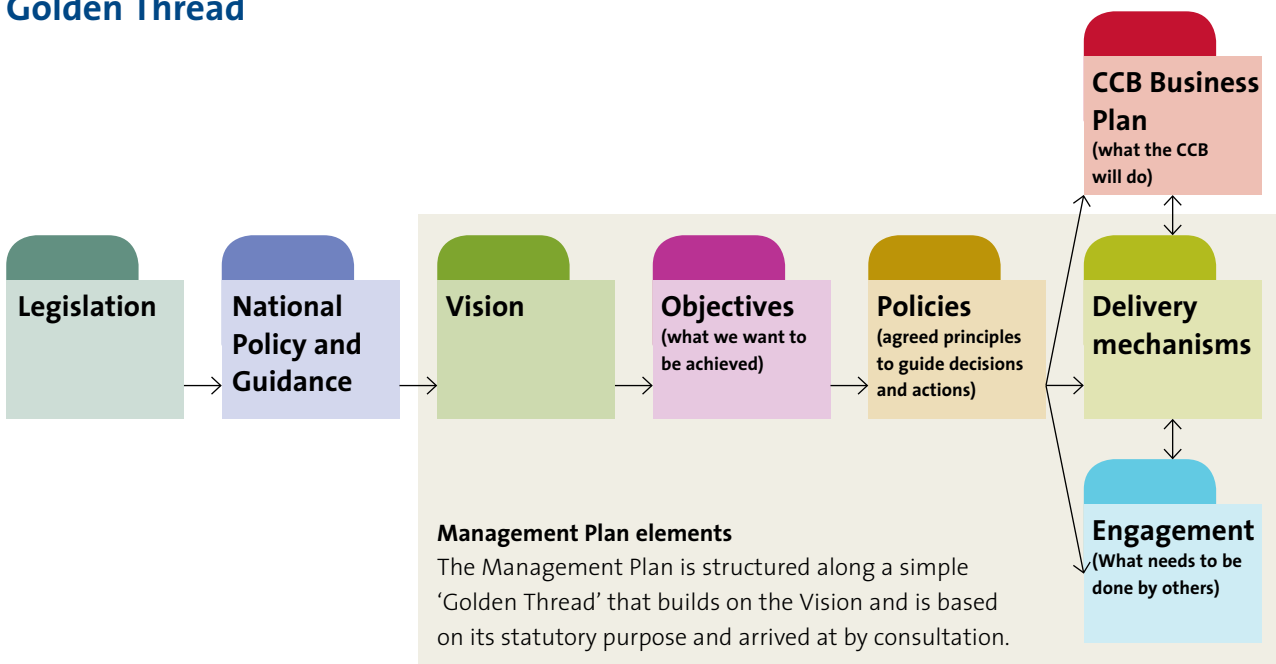
Secondly, it informs public bodies of the means by which they can demonstrate compliance with their statutory duty to “have regard to” the purpose of designation of the AONB when undertaking their functions.<sup>2</sup>

Thirdly, it guides the engagement of public bodies, landowners, businesses and individuals in the

management of the AONB. It includes information regarding available and potential delivery mechanisms. The types of actions the Board would encourage others to take individually or in partnership with others, including the Board, to deliver the Plan, are set out in the Engagement section (see p67).

This statutory plan has significant weight in influencing the wide range of future decisions that will affect the AONB. It will operate alongside other statutory plans and programmes and a wide range of other national and local initiatives. The Board will seek formal recognition of the Plan as a “material consideration” in adopted Core Strategies/Local Plans and Neighbourhood Planning documents.

## Golden Thread



1. Section 89, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as amended by the NERC Act 2006  
 2. Section 85, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

Implementation of the plan will be monitored and evaluated by the Board. An assessment of achievements will be provided as part of the Board’s annual report.



# Protected Landscapes: AONBs

## Protected Landscapes: AONBs

AONBs and National Parks were brought into being by the same legislation in 1949 and have the same status and level of protection. AONBs are particularly special landscapes whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard them.

The statutory purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.<sup>3</sup>

The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 confirmed the significance of AONBs. Section 85 places a statutory (legal) duty on all relevant authorities to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty when discharging any function in relation to, or affecting land within, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) designates the UK's AONBs as Category V – Protected Landscape/Seascape – ‘a protected area where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value’.

More information on AONBs and their status and protection can be found on the websites of the following organisations:

- Cotswolds Conservation Board ([www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk)),
- Defra ([www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)),
- Natural England ([www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)), and the
- National Association for AONBs ([www.landscapesforlife.org.uk](http://www.landscapesforlife.org.uk)).

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

### The Cotswolds Conservation Board

The Cotswolds Conservation Board was established by Parliament in 2004 and has two statutory purposes:<sup>4</sup>

- a) to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB; and
- b) to increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB.

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

Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a statutory duty on the Conservation Board to produce a five-year management plan for the AONB. This is the third such document, and is structured around the Board's purposes.



# Special Qualities of the Cotswolds

## (Statement Of Significance)

The area is a rich mosaic of historical, social, economic, cultural, geological, geomorphological<sup>5</sup> and ecological features. The special qualities of the Cotswolds include:

- the unifying character of the limestone geology – its visible presence as natural outcrops, its use as a building material and through the plant and animal communities it supports;
- the Cotswold escarpment, including views to and from it;
- the high wolds – a large open, elevated landscape with commons, ‘big’ skies and long-distance views;
- river valleys, the majority forming the headwaters of the Thames, with high-quality water;
- dry stone walls, which give the AONB its essential character in many areas;
- internationally important flower-rich limestone grasslands;
- internationally important ancient broadleaved woodland, particularly along the crest of the escarpment;
- variations in the colour of the stone from one part of the AONB to another which add a vital element of local distinctiveness;
- the tranquillity<sup>6</sup> of the area;
- well-managed arable and livestock farms;
- distinctive settlements, developed in the Cotswold vernacular, high architectural quality and integrity;
- accessible landscape for quiet recreation; and
- historic associations.



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

6. Tranquillity is very difficult to define but is essentially the absence of inappropriate noise, development, visual clutter and pollution, “a feeling of being away from it all”.

# Special Qualities of the Cotswolds

## Benefits of Managing the Cotswolds AONB

### Benefits of Managing the Cotswolds AONB

The Cotswolds AONB delivers multiple benefits for society:

- **scenic beauty** – an understanding and appreciation of the aesthetic benefits of landscape conservation;
- **cultural heritage** – an understanding and appreciation of heritage;
- **green infrastructure**<sup>7</sup> – providing connected, multifunctional and well-promoted green spaces and networks; and
- **sustainable economic growth** through appropriate development, rural businesses and tourism<sup>8</sup>.
- **ecosystem services** (see page 10).

#### Ecosystem services

The benefits people get from nature are often described as ‘ecosystem services’. Ecosystem services may be categorised as:

- **Provisioning services** provided by natural resources such as food, water, fibre, and fuel;
- **Regulating services** provided by natural systems including clean water and air, fertile soils, and climate regulation;
- **Cultural services** including recreation, cultural heritage, spiritual and aesthetic values, inspiration and education;
- **Supporting services** providing the basic infrastructure of life including soil formation, the cycling of water and nutrients, fixation of carbon by plants and the ecosystems themselves. All other ecosystem services ultimately depend on these supporting services.

Many of the objectives set out in this Plan influence the management of land and natural systems in the AONB to help sustain and improve the range and quality of public benefits and ecosystem services that are provided. The table below categorises the range of ecosystem services, the contribution made by ecosystems in the Cotswolds and the links to the objectives of the Management Plan (see pages 13-16).



7. The Green infrastructure network includes open spaces, parks and gardens, allotments, woodlands, street trees, green roofs, fields, hedges, lakes, ponds, playing fields, as well as footpaths, cycleways and waterways.
8. The Gross Value Added to the economy of the Cotswolds AONB is estimated to be £337m/annum. “An assessment of the economic value of the Cotswolds AONB” Cumulus Consultants for CCB (2013).

## Ecosystem Services

Provisioning Services	Link to Plan Objective/s
<p><b>Food (e.g. crops, livestock, fish, game)</b> Cotswold farmers produce food through arable crops, the breeding of store lambs, suckled calves and, increasingly, finished lamb and beef and a limited quantity of dairy products.</p>	CEO2
<p><b>Water supply</b> The catchments on the Cotswolds provide drinking water for much of the population of south-east England.</p>	CEO3
<p><b>Fibre (e.g. timber, arable crops, wool)</b> Historically, the Cotswolds has been an important producer of wool and timber, and there are opportunities to develop local markets and innovative uses.</p>	CEO2
<p><b>Fuel (e.g. renewable energy)</b> The Cotswolds provides good conditions for renewable energy including hydro, solar and biomass and there is considerable scope for further development of this resource, particularly woodfuel.</p>	CEO3
<p><b>Genetic diversity</b> The “Cotswold Lion” local breed of sheep helps retain important genetic diversity as well as contributing to local distinctiveness.</p>	CEO2 CEO3
Regulating Services	Link to Plan Objective/s
<p><b>Water purification and waste treatment</b> Ecosystems can help in the filtering out and decomposition of organic wastes introduced into water bodies and can also assimilate and detoxify compounds through soil and sub-soil processes. The Cotswolds generally has good water quality, although some rivers and ground-waters do not meet current standards of ‘good ecological status’.</p>	CEO3
<p><b>Water flow and flood risk</b> Healthy porous soils and vegetation, particularly woodlands, help to regulate water flow and alleviate flooding in times of high and low rainfall. Action in the Cotswolds to manage catchments can help reduce peak flood levels and sustain river flows during drought periods.</p>	CEO3
<p><b>Disease and pest regulation</b> Diseases and pests are regulated by natural factors such as predators and climate, although additional interventions may be required. A healthy and diverse ecosystem is less vulnerable to pests and disease.</p>	CEO5
<p><b>Pollination</b> Pollination of crops is important for food supply. Most wildflowers are also dependent on insect pollination, yet the numbers of wild and managed pollinators, such as bees, are in decline.</p>	CEO3
<p><b>Climate regulation and carbon storage</b> Plants influence climate both locally and globally. Carbon is absorbed from the atmosphere in farmland and woodlands and an important carbon store is provided in the soils.</p>	CEO2 CEO3 CEO5

# Ecosystem Services

## Ecosystem Services

Cultural Services	Link to Plan Objective/s
<p><b>Cultural heritage and historic environment</b> Human influence in the Cotswolds can be traced back more than 5,000 years and includes 436 scheduled ancient monuments and more than 9,000 listed buildings.</p>	CEO4
<p><b>Spiritual and religious values</b> The Cotswold landscape and relative tranquillity provide spiritual inspiration and enrichment from nature for many people.</p>	UEO1
<p><b>Aesthetic values</b> The Cotswolds is renowned internationally for the beauty of its landscapes that have inspired arts and culture.</p>	UEO1
<p><b>Inspiration</b> The Cotswolds has strong traditions of literature, art, folklore and oral history inextricably linked to the Cotswolds landscape.</p>	UEO1
<p><b>Education</b> The Cotswolds provides a location for both formal and informal education and the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens educational programme provides opportunities for pupils to learn about and experience the Cotswolds environment.</p>	UEO2
<p><b>Recreation and tourism</b> More than 23 million visitor days are spent in the AONB each year, and tourism is worth around £1 billion to the local economy.</p>	UEO2, UEO3 UEO5
Supporting Services	Link to Plan Objective/s
<p><b>Wildlife/biodiversity</b> Increased recognition of the roles that organisms and their interactions play in driving ecosystem processes has led to efforts aimed at increasing biodiversity, in terms of species richness and composition and restoring and connecting habitats. The Cotswolds contains important and rare habitats and species and their conservation is vital to sustaining the ecosystems that deliver the range of services set out above.</p>	CEO5
<p><b>Primary production</b> The degree to which solar energy is assimilated and biomass accumulated is dependent, in part, on the biological composition of plant communities and their interactions.</p>	CEO2 CEO5
<p><b>Soil production</b> Soil formation is driven by the interaction between plants and micro-organisms and the underlying geology. Many ecosystem services depend on healthy soils but soils form slowly and can be quickly degraded and lost due to inappropriate land management, erosion, climate warming, and inundation of coastal soils due to sea-level rise.</p>	CEO2 CEO5
<p><b>Nutrient cycling</b> Plants, animals and micro-organisms play a crucial role in the cycling of nutrients essential for the delivery of ecosystem benefits. Disturbance of natural processes can lead to enrichment of terrestrial and aquatic habitats by, for example, increased inputs of nitrogen and phosphorus from sewage and fertiliser runoff, leading to poor water quality and, in some cases, undesirable algal blooms.</p>	CEO2 CEO5

## Plan Structure and Consultation

The Vision is taken forward through a series of **objectives** informed by relevant legislation, national policies and guidance which are linked to the Board's statutory purposes and duty.

These are followed by a series of **Themes**. Each thematic section contains a short description of its different aspects, followed by:

- special qualities of the AONB associated with that theme;
- key issues with respect to each theme; and
- relevant Plan objective/s.

These are all used to develop:

- **policies** to guide activity
- **indicative delivery mechanisms** and
- **monitoring indicators** to demonstrate achievement of the objectives.

All these in turn lead to the **actions** encouraged in the **Engagement** section (see page 68). Actions the Board intends to take are set out in detail in the Board's three-year rolling business plan.<sup>9</sup>

### Consultation

This Plan has been produced with a full and comprehensive documented programme of public involvement and consultation. It is also supported by a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), a Habitats Regulation Assessment as required by the European Habitats Directive and an Equalities Assessment.<sup>10</sup>

9. [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/board](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/board)

10. All documents are available on the Board's website [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk)

#### COTSWOLDS CONSERVATION BOARD POSITION STATEMENT



### Development in the setting of the Cotswolds AONB

#### Introduction

1. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are designated by the Government for the purpose of ensuring that the special qualities of the finest landscapes in England and Wales are conserved and enhanced. In policy terms they have the same planning status as National Parks.
2. The Cotswolds Conservation Board is the body set up by Parliament to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB and increase the awareness and understanding of the special qualities of the AONB. The Board also has a duty to have regard to the social and economic needs of those who live and work in the Cotswolds.

#### Purpose

3. This Statement provides guidance to and local planning authorities, landowners and other interested parties regarding the consideration of the impact of development and land management<sup>1</sup> proposals which lie outside the AONB but within its "setting".
4. **The Board considers the setting of the Cotswolds AONB to be the area within which development and land management proposals, by virtue of their nature, size, scale, siting materials or design can be considered to have an impact, positive or negative, on the natural beauty and special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB.**
5. This Statement expands upon issues raised in the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2008-13<sup>2</sup>, in particular key issue LK3 and policy LP1.

**LK3:** *The surroundings of the AONB are also important to its landscape character and quality. Views out of the AONB and into its surrounding areas can be very significant. Development proposals that affect views into and out of the AONB need to be carefully assessed in line with Planning Policy Statement 7 to ensure that they conserve and enhance the natural beauty and landscape character of the AONB.*

<sup>1</sup> "Development" includes transport and other infrastructure as well as proposals requiring planning applications. "Land management" includes tree planting, energy crops, and drainage schemes.

<sup>2</sup> Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2008-13, Cotswolds Conservation Board (2008) <http://www.cotswoldsaonb.com/page.asp?pageID=12>

### Position Statements

The Board has issued a number of **Position Statements** which amplify some policies in the Plan. These are usually subject to consultation with local authorities and relevant organisations and individuals. They contain further background information and are reviewed and updated on a regular basis to ensure compliance with national policy.

All Position statements can be viewed on the Board's website at [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/positionstatements](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/positionstatements)

# Plan Structure and Consultation

## Conserving and Enhancing – Objectives

## Conserving and Enhancing – Objectives

### Introduction

The purpose of the designation of the Cotswolds AONB and the primary purpose of the Cotswolds Conservation Board is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB.

The objectives and thematic policies in this section contribute to the achievement of this purpose. Conserving and enhancing the characteristic Cotswolds environment provides a wide range of benefits that are beyond monetary value and become of ever greater importance as the surrounding urban population grows and the impacts of change in the wider world accelerate. These benefits include:

- an internationally important, large-scale managed landscape;
- high-quality food and wood products produced close to local markets;
- biodiversity, geological and cultural resources, many of national and/or international importance, which are fragile, irreplaceable within a lifetime and, in the case of geological and archaeological sites and the extensive historic built environment, finite;
- helping to meet the water needs of southern England and providing local flood risk management;
- capturing and storing CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere (carbon sequestration) through its woods and vegetation cover; and
- a tranquil resource, which contributes to the health and well-being of the wider population, with distinct restorative benefits, sense of place, opportunities for relaxation and escape in natural surroundings.

### Objectives

**CEO1:** *By 2018 it can be demonstrated that organisations and individuals responsible for land management and development management have conserved and enhanced the special qualities of the Cotswold landscape.*

**CEO2:** *By 2018 sustainable farming and forestry remain the primary means by which the distinctive landscapes of the Cotswolds are managed.*

**CEO3:** *By 2016 national and local agencies have put in place policies and guidance to implement the sustainable provision and use of natural resources in the Cotswolds AONB.*

**CEO4:** *By 2018 relevant organisations have demonstrably better identified, recorded and promoted, the distinctive historic and cultural and natural heritage of the Cotswolds AONB, which is better understood by residents and visitors.*

**CEO5:** *By 2014 relevant organisations have strengthened landscape-scale restoration and the re-linking and management of habitats to reverse ecological fragmentation and to improve the resilience of the Cotswold landscape, habitats and water environment to the effects of climate change.*

**CEO6:** *By 2014 national and local development management and transport authorities and agencies have policies and guidance to make decisions which conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB, maintain local distinctiveness, provide services and support a buoyant rural economy.*

# Understanding and Enjoying – Objectives

## Introduction

The Conservation Board's second purpose is "increasing the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the area of outstanding natural beauty".<sup>11</sup> The objectives and policies in this section (see p51) contribute to the achievement of this purpose.

This purpose has taken on increasing relevance over the last few years as more people seek to explore and enjoy the Cotswold landscape. The Government's commitment, through its Natural Environment White Paper, to have "by 2020 significantly more people engaged in biodiversity issues, aware of its value and taking positive action"<sup>12</sup>, is an example of one aspect of delivering this purpose which helps to make the connection with conserving and enhancing the AONB.

The Cotswold countryside has long been valued for its wealth of opportunities for outdoor recreation and quiet enjoyment. These opportunities provide the means to explore and discover the richness of the natural beauty and historic interest of the AONB while at the same time contributing to physical and mental health and well-being. The publicly accessible open spaces include public footpaths and bridleways, commons, woodlands, parks and gardens, canals and waterways, and green spaces associated with settlements, such as village greens. Together these form the extensive "green infrastructure" of the Cotswolds which provide significant economic, social and health benefits.<sup>13</sup>

## Objectives

**UEO1:** *By 2018 it can be shown that residents and visitors demonstrably value the natural beauty, historic character and cultural heritage of the Cotswolds and understand the need to invest in and sensitively manage the special qualities of the area.*

**UEO2:** *By 2018 relevant organisations make the Cotswolds a landscape available for all to explore and enjoy, which is demonstrably regarded by residents and visitors as a place for positive, high-quality experiences.*

**UEO3:** *By 2018 providers of opportunities to improve health, through recreation and better housing conditions in the Cotswolds AONB, can show successful outcomes.*

**UEO4:** *By 2016 public support, commitment and participation in conserving and enhancing the AONB by volunteering and involvement with relevant organisations has increased significantly.*

**UEO5:** *By 2016 the Cotswolds is widely recognised and valued as a sustainable visitor destination, where local communities benefit, businesses prosper and the environment is sustained through the co-ordinated delivery of quality and enriching visitor experiences.*

11. Section 87, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000  
12. "Natural Choice – securing the value of nature" Defra (2011)  
13. "Benefits of green infrastructure." Report to Defra and CLG. Forest Research, (2010)



# Understanding and Enjoying – Objectives

## Fostering Economic and Social Well-Being – Objectives

### Fostering Economic and Social Well-Being – Objectives

In delivering its two purposes the Board has a statutory duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of people living in the AONB.

Addressing this duty informs the overall strategic approach to the management of the Cotswolds AONB. This section of the Plan identifies the key social and economic management issues relevant to the AONB as a whole. It examines the likely impacts on the AONB from a variety of forces and identifies objectives for the management of these. The Board seeks to deliver its duty through the achievement of its two purposes rather than as a separate strand of activity.

***Securing the resilience of the Cotswold economy and the quality of life in the light of demographic changes and economic conditions.***

#### Key Issues

The UK population is projected to exceed 70 million by 2027.<sup>14</sup> Much of the increase in population in rural areas is the result of migration for lifestyle reasons, including retirement. The scale of development required to provide housing, employment and services to this expanding and ageing population will be considerable and the pressure to develop land and introduce other urban land uses within and around the AONB will become significant. The AONB is surrounded by the towns and cities of Banbury, Bath, Cheltenham, Chippenham, Cirencester, Evesham, Gloucester, Keynsham, Oxford, Stroud, Swindon, and Yate all of which are expected to accommodate significant housing and employment development in the next 20 years.

The increasing demand for more reliable journey times between employment centres will lead to pressure for road widening and other ‘improvement’ schemes on major roads in the AONB. This could be mitigated if increasing fuel prices produce changing working

patterns with more working from home and less lengthy daily commuting; this would be assisted by the provision of high speed broadband and improvements to rail networks through electrification and increased capacity.

Unless effectively managed, all of these pressures will work cumulatively to impact adversely on the landscape character, tranquillity and economy of the area. The Board’s role is to ensure that the conservation and enhancement of the landscape is incorporated into strategies, plans and decisions of other agencies and bodies which address these issues in a coherent and consistent way, and to encourage relevant activity. Public bodies have a duty under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act to “have regard to” the purpose of designation of the Cotswolds AONB when undertaking their functions.<sup>15</sup>

The successful development of the rural economy has an important role to play in securing resources to manage the AONB. The high-quality environment is a strong factor in attracting inward investment and tourism to create employment opportunities both locally and in surrounding towns and cities. The AONB is an attractive location for entrepreneurs and for associated workforces, with 14% of employment critically dependant on the high quality environment and landscape of the AONB.<sup>16</sup> In the same study 74% of businesses surveyed suggested that a deterioration in the quality of the landscape

14. Office for National Statistics, (2012).

15. Guidance on how public bodies can comply with this duty is set out in “Duties on relevant authorities to have regard to the purposes of National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads” Defra (2005), <http://archive.defra.gov.uk/rural/documents/protected/npaonb-duties-guide.pdf> and “England’s statutory landscape designations: a practical guide to your duty of regard” Natural England NE 243 (2010)

16. ‘Assessment of the Economic Value of the Cotswolds AONB’ Cumulus Consulting for CCB (2013)

would affect business performance, with 25% reporting it would have a 'serious' effect on their business.

The appropriate management of the AONB also provides opportunities for people to enjoy healthy active lifestyles through access, participation and enjoyment of space and tranquillity.<sup>17</sup>

Providers of such activities acknowledge the importance of the quality of the landscape in attracting visitors. Over 120 providers of holidays in the Cotswolds AONB are currently listed on the 'Our Land' website.<sup>18</sup>

***Demonstrating the relevance of protected landscape management in the wider environmental, social and economic context***

The context in which designated landscapes sit now differs considerably from what it was when the concept was enshrined in statute in 1949.<sup>19</sup> At that time the main threats to natural beauty were suburbanisation, lack of high-quality public access, and quarrying. Whilst these issues still remain of concern, new challenges and opportunities present themselves to increase the relevance of the concept beyond the original purpose of designation.

Designated landscapes are now additionally recognised as important resources to:

- stimulate the rural economy;
- contribute to people's health and well-being;

- provide examples of landscape-scale biodiversity initiatives;
- provide green infrastructure, water and food;
- contribute towards addressing climate change issues; and
- provide havens of tranquillity of value to residents and surrounding urban populations.

The ability of nationally designated landscapes, particularly AONBs and National Parks, to fully deliver these benefits to society is often constrained by the fragmented administrative arrangements in which they are situated. The AONB Management Plan is the mechanism by which:

- these benefits can be brought to the attention of national and local policy makers and decision takers;
- a consistent and comprehensive approach to the management of the AONB, in order to deliver these benefits, can be communicated to delivery organisations;
- the AONB is managed as a whole – this is important because biodiversity, and local residents and visitors who see the landscape and attractions as “the Cotswolds”, do not recognise the administrative boundaries that fragment the area; and
- a unified approach can be taken to the provision of high-quality access to natural environments, providing greater understanding and social and economic benefits through tourism.

**Objectives**

***ESO1: By 2015 the Board has understood the potential impacts of economic and demographic changes on the quality of life and the economy of the AONB, and by 2017 the Board has a response in place.***

***ESO2: By 2018 national and local agencies recognise the value and relevance of the AONB as a valuable source of “ecosystem services”, economic and health benefits.***

17. See Understanding and Enjoying section for more details

18. [www.our-land.co.uk](http://www.our-land.co.uk)

19. National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949

Policies to guide decisions and actions to secure these objectives are identified in subsequent thematic sections of the Plan.

# Conserving and Enhancing



# Conserving and Enhancing

## Landscape

The landscape of the Cotswolds is the result of millions of years of natural evolutionary and climatic processes and thousands of years of human settlement and use. It is a rich mosaic of historical, social, economic, cultural, geological, geomorphological<sup>20</sup> and ecological features.

### Landscape Character

The Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) was published in 2004,<sup>21</sup> The LCA identifies the following eight principal elements that occur across the AONB and which, either singly or in combination, contribute to the unique character and quality of the Cotswold landscape (within 19 distinct landscape character types):

- dry stone walls
- ancient semi-natural woodland and veteran trees
- permanent pasture including unimproved calcareous grassland
- archaeological sites and monuments and their settings and remnant historic landscapes
- vernacular stone buildings and their settings
- settlement patterns and their relationship to landscape
- parkland and historic designed landscapes
- hedges

To provide a spatial dimension for this plan, Landscape Strategy and Guidelines for each landscape character type have been produced by the Board.<sup>22</sup> These set out detailed guidance for the conservation and enhancement of the distinctive characteristics identified in the landscape character types.

Natural England is reviewing all of its Natural Character Areas profiles (NCAs). The Cotswolds NCA is particularly relevant to the AONB although it is not contiguous with the AONB boundary. There is close alignment between the NCA “Statements of Environmental Opportunity” and the Management Plan.<sup>23</sup>

### Significant Achievements 2008-13

Landscape Strategy and Guidelines published for each Landscape Character Area are used in planning and land management decisions.

Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2008-13 and accompanying suite of landscape guidance wins Landscape Institute Award 2010.

7km of dry stone walls restored through £1 million National Grid grant package linked to Wormington to Sapperton gas pipeline.

Development and approval of Green Infrastructure Strategy, which includes a number of initiatives and priority projects, will contribute to positive management of the Cotswolds AONB (Bath and North East Somerset Council, 2012)

Undergrounding of overhead electricity wires at Ashton-under-Hill, Marshfield and Lansdown, Bath.

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

21. [http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/landscape\\_character\\_assessment/index.htm](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/landscape_character_assessment/index.htm)

22. Landscape Strategy and Guidelines for all landscape character types are available on the Board's website at [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk).

23. Other NCAs including part of the AONB are Severn and Avon Vales; Dunsmore and Feldon; Northamptonshire Uplands; Upper Thames Clay Vales; Avon Vale; and Bristol, Avon Valleys and Ridges

## Key issues

- Changes in agriculture and forestry will inevitably have an impact on the appearance of the landscape in the future, particularly as a result of climate change and global market influences, with some changes being seasonal and others incremental.
- It is important to protect the scenic beauty of the escarpment and other skylines from both inappropriate developments and inappropriate landscape management.
- The surroundings of the AONB are also important to its landscape and scenic beauty. Views out of the AONB and into it from surrounding areas can be very significant in this regard. The Board has published a Position Statement on development in the setting of the Cotswolds AONB.<sup>24</sup>
- Tranquillity is under pressure from increasing noise, light and traffic. The Board has published a position statement on tranquillity in the Cotswolds AONB.<sup>25</sup>
- The loss of traditional skills is a significant issue for the future management of the landscape.
- The coherence of the landscape can be harmed by numerous small-scale incremental changes, some of which are not regulated by planning legislation or other controls.

## Objectives

**CEO1:** *By 2018 it can be demonstrated that organisations and individuals responsible for land management and development management have conserved and enhanced the special qualities of the Cotswold landscape.*

## Policies

**LP1:** *The key characteristics, principal elements, and special qualities (including tranquillity), which form the natural beauty of the Cotswolds landscape are conserved and where possible enhanced.*

**LP2:** *Development proposals<sup>26</sup> and changes in land use and management, both within and outside the AONB, take account of guidance and advice published by the Board.<sup>27</sup>*

24. [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/positionstatements](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/positionstatements)

25. [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/positionstatements](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/positionstatements)

26. See 'Development and Transport' section for further consideration of 'development'.

27. This includes the LCA, the Landscape Strategy and Guidelines, and Position Statements

## Delivery Mechanisms

- Landscape Character Assessments, Landscape Strategies and Guidelines, position statements and other guidance published by the Board, agencies and local authorities are used to inform decisions and the development of projects. This guidance is used to inform the provision of agri-environment schemes, (including woodland grant schemes), Heritage Lottery Fund landscape partnership programmes and other funding schemes.
- Projects which link high quality landscape management with the provision of local produce and products e.g. Cotswold Choice.
- The development of funding streams and projects linked to the provision of ecosystem services, particularly high quality water supply.

## Monitoring indicator

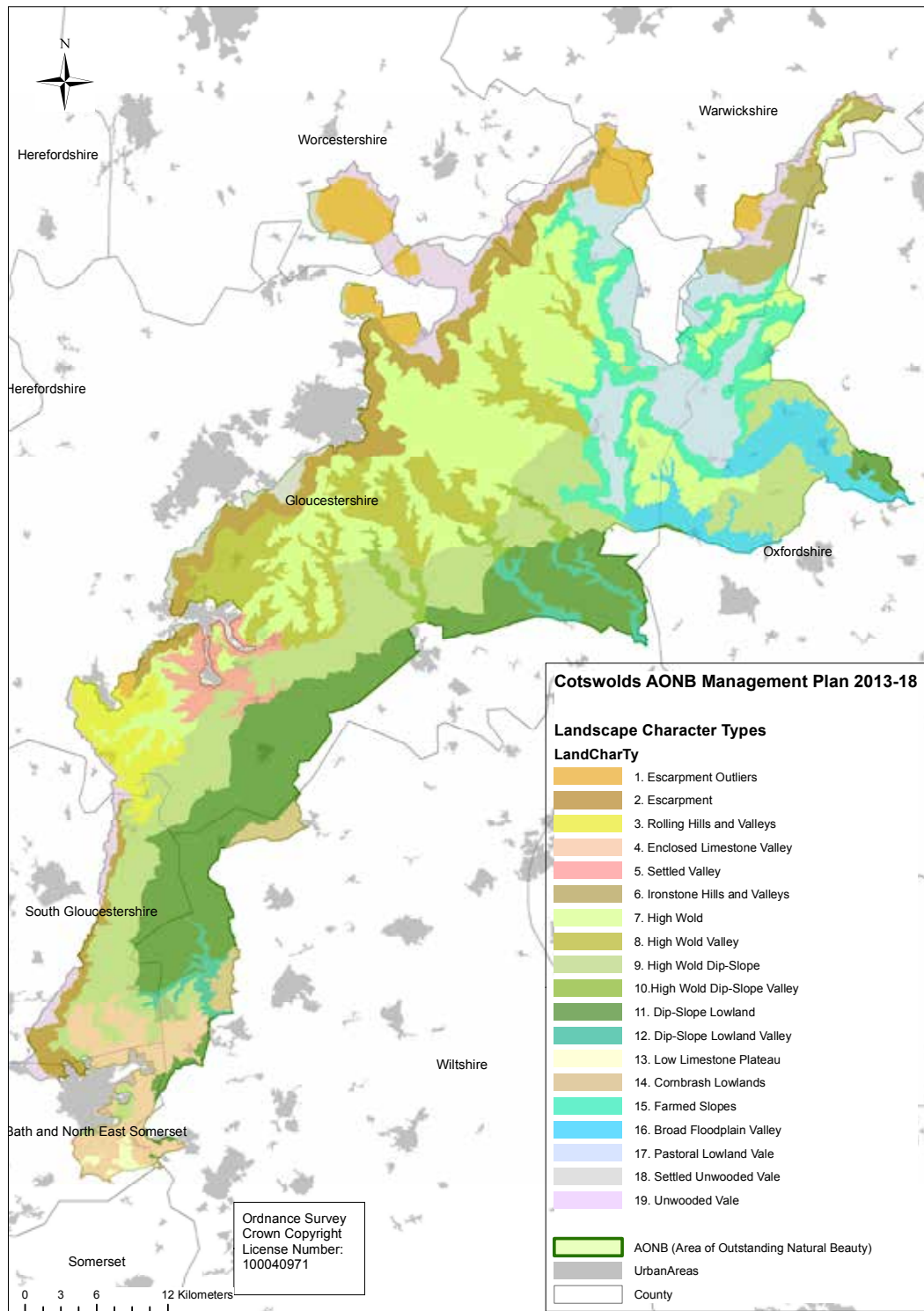
### Landscape character

Changes identified through analysis of fixed-point photography for each of the 19 landscape character types identified in the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA). Viewpoints are revisited by the Conservation Board at a minimum of five-year intervals.

## Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines



## Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Types



## Rural Land Management

Farming has been the principal influence on the development of the Cotswolds landscape. Farm incomes are volatile depending on global influences. By area, 10% of the Cotswolds AONB is woodland and 86% is farmland, of which 44% is grassland. Rural land management provides employment opportunities for those living in the Cotswolds, but numbers of farm and forestry workers have been in decline for many years.

The type and location of woodland cover in the Cotswolds is an essential element of its landscape character. Woodland cover varies greatly but its location, particularly along the escarpment, in the enclosed limestone valleys, and in significant blocks within the dip slope landscape, makes it an important feature.

### Special qualities

- a mix of pasture, arable cultivation and woodland, with subtle differences in the balance between these elements from one part of the AONB to another;
- well-drained, thin, shallow, calcareous soils which are light and easily worked, suitable for growing cereals and oil seeds;
- large estates with long-term and sustained positive management within the AONB;
- large commons along the crest of the scarp;
- small/medium-scale historic field patterns defined by dry stone walls and hedges;
- the iconic Cotswold Lion breed of sheep;
- well-maintained and sensitively managed farmland, boundaries and farm buildings, including traditional barns and stone walls;

- ancient woodland, especially beech, is a particularly distinctive and prominent feature of the scarp and enclosed limestone valleys. Part of this woodland is included within the Cotswold Beech Woodland Special Area of Conservation, which indicates that it is of European importance;
- parkland, including wood pasture, often associated with the large estates;
- veteran and potential veteran trees.

### Significant Achievements 2008-13

121 Higher Level Stewardship applications approved generating over £2.6 million p.a. in landowner income.

Ancient Woodlands Project brings into management 1,270ha of ancient woodland.

Woodland planting guidance based on landscape character is published and used for woodland creation schemes.



## Key issues

- The Cotswold's agricultural economy has undergone a pronounced resurgence in the last few years with higher incomes in all sectors. However, in the Cotswolds all sectors face the uncertainty caused by reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and by potential diseases.
- Some farmers and landowners in the Cotswolds are dependent upon diversification and equestrian options to sustain the economics of their farming businesses, particularly in the light of commodity price volatility.
- Changes in farming patterns, linked to changes in the economics of particular crops or traditional farming practices can potentially lead to changes in landscape character and farmland biodiversity.
- The arable sector specifically has seen significant consolidation of businesses with combinations of Farm Business Tenancies, share farming and seasonal cropping licences used to extend some arable businesses to cover 1,500 acres or more.
- The splitting up of farms can result in clusters of equestrian-related uses which may be unsympathetic to the landscape. The Board has issued guidance on the keeping of horses and ponies in the AONB.<sup>28</sup>
- There is a limited revival in interest in the rural skills necessary to maintain the landscape and associated habitats, largely sustained by environmental payment schemes.
- Farmers markets<sup>29</sup> and campaigns such as 'Taste of the West'<sup>30</sup> and 'Buy Local' encourage consumers to purchase locally sourced food with high environmental standards and understand how food is produced.
- Many woodlands are either under-managed or not managed at all. This is due to many factors but especially to the loss of appropriate markets for woodland products. Woodlands have the potential to directly help implement renewable energy policies, by providing wood for fuel as an alternative to fossil fuels.
- Some recent shelter-belt and woodland planting does not take proper account of its landscape setting and, in particular, its effects on traditional open views across the Cotswolds as seen from many roads where most people view the open landscape.
- The Board has published guidelines for tree planting for each of the landscape character types identified in the AONB Landscape Character Assessment.<sup>31</sup> Appropriately located tree planting can produce health benefits, but the priority is woodland management.
- Increasing prevalence of tree pests and diseases resulting from climate change, increased global trade, travel and the importation of diseased material.

## Objectives

**CEO2:** *By 2018 sustainable farming and forestry remain the primary means by which the distinctive landscapes of the Cotswolds are managed.*

28. [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/keepingofhorses](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/keepingofhorses)

29. <http://www.localfoods.org.uk/home>

30. <http://www.tasteofthewest.co.uk>

31. [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/woodlandtext](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/woodlandtext)

## Policies

**RLMP1:** Sustainable farming and forestry, which contributes to maintaining the special qualities of the AONB within a buoyant rural economy, remain the principal land uses within the Cotswolds.

**RLMP2:** Rural land management, which conserves and enhances natural resources – including biodiversity, landscape character and the historic environment - and which aids public enjoyment of the Cotswolds AONB, is supported and rewarded.

**RLMP3:** Woodland, parkland, hedgerow, urban and veteran trees are managed and, where appropriate, expanded, in order to conserve and enhance their landscape, ecological and cultural value.

**RLMP4:** Skills required to care for the landscape and its special qualities are increased, with the opportunities to acquire and develop such skills made available to all.

Achieving Objective CEO2 will contribute significantly to securing the objectives to comply with the duty of the Board to foster the social and economic well-being of people living in the AONB.

## Delivery Mechanisms

- Agri-environment schemes including woodland advice and grant schemes and farm diversification schemes
- Environmental regulation, including tree and woodland protection, and environmental impact assessments
- The Rural Development Programme for England (or equivalent) providing rural business development
- Land management skills training e.g. Cotswolds Rural Skills Programme
- Landowners cooperative activity such as Deer Management Groups

## Monitoring indicator

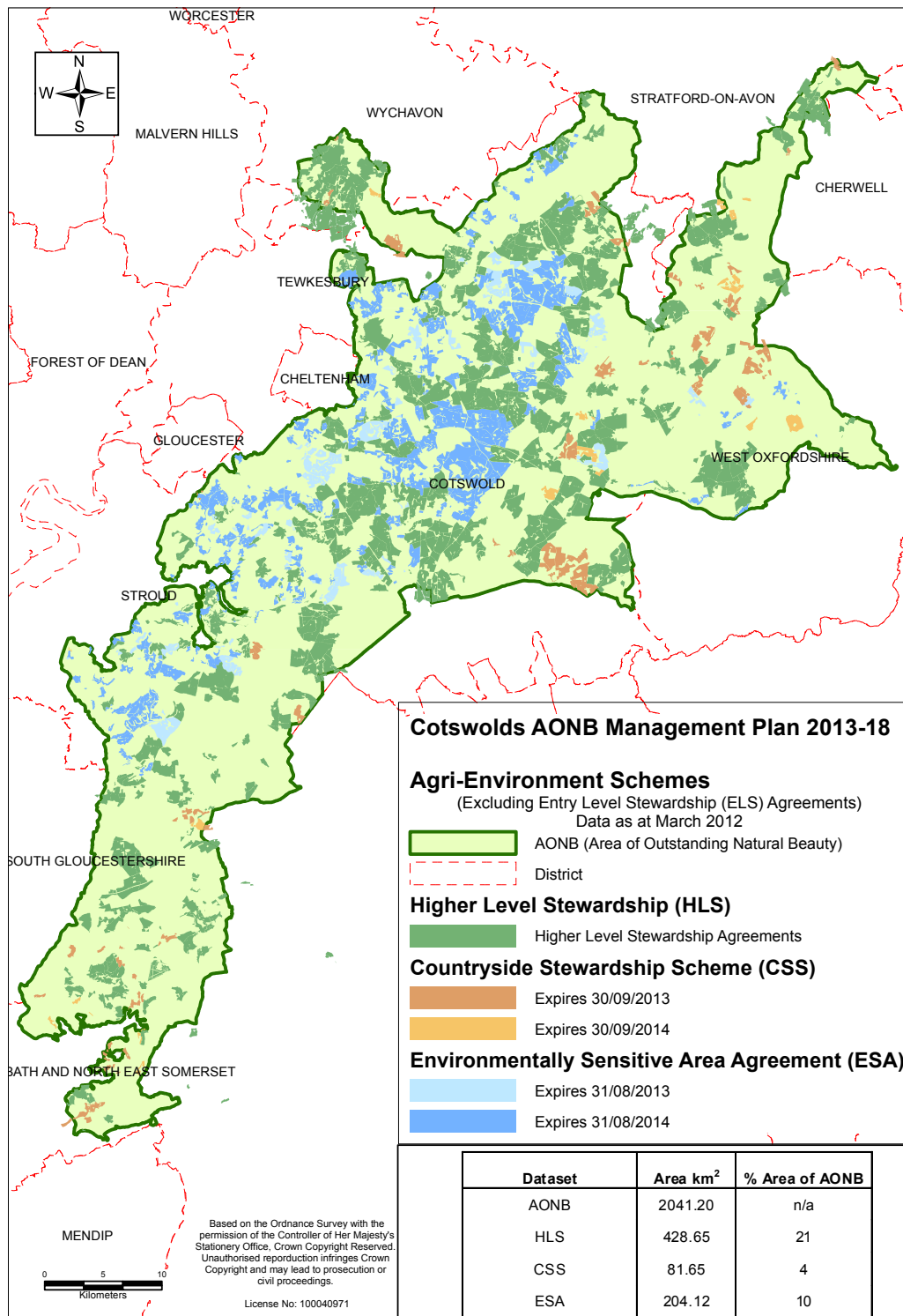
### Farmed landscape

- Change in % of land managed under agri-environment schemes
- Change in % of woodland on farms
- Changes in farmland type (permanent pasture/ rough grazing/arable land, etc)
- Changes in farm numbers and sizes
- Changes in stock numbers

### Woodland landscape

- Change in % of AONB which is woodland
- Change in % of woodland under management for public benefit
- Change in % of established eligible National Inventory of Woodland and Trees stock in the Cotswolds AONB covered by a Woodland Grant Scheme management agreement
- % of ancient woodland sites covered by a Woodland Grant Scheme agreement
- Change in rate of new woodland creation

## Agri-Environment Schemes in the Cotswolds



## Natural Resources and Services

The principle of conserving natural resources within the Cotswolds AONB, using them in the most sustainable way, and enhancing their contribution to the needs of society is fundamental to the future management of the area. Human activity requires the management of noise, light and atmospheric pollution, as well as dealing with waste creation and disposal.

Alongside energy efficiency, renewable energy sources are now seen by Government as a priority for reducing carbon emissions to at least 34% below 1990 levels by 2020 and 80% by 2050<sup>32</sup> and to maintaining reliable energy supplies.<sup>33</sup>

### Special qualities

The following resources are considered particularly distinctive to the Cotswolds AONB:

- **High-quality building stone** – seams of high-quality limestone occur within the AONB and have for centuries been extensively quarried for building. It is important to maintain supplies of high-quality building stone to ensure that repairs and new buildings can be constructed in a way that is in keeping with their distinctive surroundings, particularly within the Cotswolds area itself, but also at important locations elsewhere.

- **Water supply and flood management** –The rivers throughout the area are largely fed by flow from deep in the limestone aquifers. Some of the waters from the aquifers are of a very high quality, which sustains a diverse ecosystem within the rivers. The aquifers are also a very important source of drinking water for extensive areas outside the AONB. The objectives of the Water Framework Directive<sup>34</sup> and the Floods Directive<sup>35</sup> are important in this regard.

### Significant Achievements 2008-13

Over 15MW of renewable energy generation capacity, supported by the Board, approved by local planning authorities.



32. Climate Change Act 2008

33. Annual Energy Statement DECC (2011)

34. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CONSLEG:2000L0060:20090625:EN:PDF>

35. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2007:288:0027:0034:EN:PDF>

## Key issues

- The unsustainable exploitation of natural resources in the AONB can result in harm to the natural beauty of the area, both directly – for example by quarrying – and through the predicted effects of climate change on soils and water.
- The National Policy Planning Framework requires that, as far as is practical, landbanks of non-energy minerals should be provided outside protected landscapes. Minerals planning authorities must balance meeting the demand for minerals with safeguarding the nationally important landscape. To ensure continued supplies of suitable high-quality building stone, and in recognition of the basic principle that those minerals can only be worked where they occur, existing quarries within the AONB must continue to operate effectively, but aggregate production should be a by-product, not the primary purpose of such quarries. Opportunities should be taken to use secondary/recycled aggregate, where suitable and appropriate, as an alternative building material.
- The presence of a significant number of urban areas close to the AONB can result in pressure to import waste into the AONB, particularly to former quarry locations. The Board has adopted a Position Statement on Minerals and Waste Planning.<sup>36</sup>
- The Board encourages householders, businesses and community groups to use energy efficiency and conservation measures to reduce demand for energy. The Board has issued guidance on this subject.<sup>37</sup> Encouraging people to use sustainable modes of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport is a key action to reducing carbon emissions.
- The Board has issued guidance on the types and scale of renewable energy technologies it considers may be suitable for the Cotswolds AONB.<sup>38</sup> A Position Statement on renewable energy generation in the Cotswolds AONB<sup>39</sup> sets out the Board's approach to renewable energy proposals in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy Statements for Energy.<sup>40</sup>
- Cotswold rivers often suffer from natural 'low flows' as levels in the aquifers drop during drought periods and concentrate pollutants. The management of flows from the AONB is an important part of aquifer recharge and flood control measures in the Severn Vale, Bristol Avon, Upper Thames and Oxfordshire.
- The conservation and the management of soils are increasingly important issues for the AONB, especially where soils are thin, vulnerable and susceptible to erosion.

## Objectives

**CEO3:** By 2016 national and local agencies have put in place policies and guidance to implement the sustainable provision and use of natural resources in the Cotswolds AONB.

36. To be updated following adoption of Management Plan 2013-18

37. To be updated following adoption of Management Plan 2013-18

38. To be updated following adoption of Management Plan 2013-18

39. To be updated following adoption of Management Plan 2013-18

40. [http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/meeting\\_energy/consents\\_planning/nps\\_en\\_infra/nps\\_en\\_infra.aspx](http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/meeting_energy/consents_planning/nps_en_infra/nps_en_infra.aspx)

## Policies

**NRP1:** Natural resources are used sustainably so as to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB and support the local economy, as well as developing their contribution and an understanding of their importance.

**NRP2:** Carbon emissions within the AONB are reduced by reducing energy consumption, applying energy conservation measures, encouraging more sustainable patterns of development, and utilising renewable energy generation technologies that are of an appropriate type and scale for their siting.

**NRP3:** Less waste is produced through waste minimisation and recycling of waste materials generated by residents and visitors, construction and redevelopment, agriculture and tourism providers. Such residual waste is disposed of locally only where there is no harm to the distinctive characteristics of the AONB.

**NRP4:** Soils are managed sustainably in accordance with best practice to minimise erosion and water pollution and maximise resilience to drought.

**NRP5:** Water resources are conserved and their quality enhanced, by appropriate management and use, in order to both secure aquifer recharge and reduce low flows and flooding.

## Delivery Mechanisms

- Minerals and Waste Local Plans/Core Strategies together with local authority recycling and waste strategies
- Energy efficiency and carbon emission reduction schemes renewable energy generation programmes and projects developed by local authorities and other agencies.
- Compliance with Water Framework Directive requirements as set out in River Basin Management Plans and Catchment Management Plans
- Catchment Sensitive Farming programme or equivalent, together with Soil Management Plans.

## Monitoring indicator

### Natural resources and services

- Increase in renewable energy capacity permitted/constructed
- Increase in number and area of Soil Management Plans

### Water quality

- Change in % of water bodies achieving “Good” ecological status

## Historic Environment

Shaped by more than 5,000 years of human activity, the Cotswolds AONB contains a wealth of archaeological sites and historic buildings set within a distinctive historic landscape. The AONB as a whole is a highly significant historic asset. The AONB designation recognises the importance of this heritage and reinforces the need to protect and manage characteristic features.

### Special qualities

- The Cotswolds is particularly rich in terms of both quality and density of archaeological and historical sites of all periods including one of the most important groups of Neolithic chambered cairns in the country, and a major group of Roman villas.
- During the Middle Ages and in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the area was predominantly a pastoral and sporting landscape. This is reflected in its market towns, estate villages and houses, set within a historic landscape of field systems, commons, drove roads and woodland. Wealth derived from the wool trade in particular provided the resources to develop churches, farmsteads and houses of high quality.
- The great estates of Blenheim to the east and Badminton in the south-west dominated parts of the area in the eighteenth century. There are also a number of important historic designed landscapes, often associated with smaller country houses. Two World Heritage Sites, Blenheim Palace and the City of Bath, adjoin the AONB.
- The decline of the pastoral economy and the comparative absence of industrialisation led to the survival into the late nineteenth century of an unusually high proportion of relatively unaltered seventeenth – and early eighteenth-century buildings. As a result, the Cotswolds came to be recognised as the quintessential pre-industrial English landscape. This notion was strongly expressed through the Arts and Crafts movement in the late nineteenth century and continues today in the cultural life of the AONB.

In 2003 the Cotswolds AONB Partnership published a study 'Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change'.<sup>41</sup> The aim of the study was to assist understanding of what it is that makes the Cotswolds AONB different from other parts of the country, with particular reference to the built environment. The study categorised local distinctiveness of the built environment of the Cotswolds in terms of the key themes of settlement, boundaries, roofs and walls.

### Significant Achievements 2008-13

Friends of the Cotswolds confirmed as preferred bidder for the Old Prison site, Northleach, safeguarding access to a Grade II\* building and access to the Cotswolds Rural Life Collection.

Development and approval of Bath World Heritage Site setting Supplementary Planning Document (Bath and North East Somerset Council 2012).

41. [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/localdistinctiveness](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/localdistinctiveness)

## Key issues

- There is a need to promote better awareness of Historic Environment Records (HERs) and Historic Landscape Characterisation Assessments held by local authorities as a key source, although other sources should also be used.
- Local authorities are encouraged to produce on-line local lists of non-designated heritage assets of local significance, thereby providing a degree of protection.
- The management of archaeological sites, historic buildings and landscape features such as barns and walls requires careful consideration, particularly those that are at risk of loss or disrepair. Agri-environment schemes should also seek greater opportunities to improve the management of the historic environment.
- Careful planning and design are required to ensure that development pressure does not adversely affect the traditional character of villages and other settlements throughout the AONB.
- Features that give towns and villages their distinctive character need to be respected and accommodated by, or protected from, new development.

## Objectives

**CEO4:** *By 2018 relevant organisations have demonstrably better identified, recorded and promoted, the distinctive historic and cultural and natural heritage of the Cotswolds AONB, which is better understood by residents and visitors.*

## Policies

**HEP1:** *The historic environment and cultural heritage of the AONB is conserved, managed and recorded.*

**HEP2:** *The significance of the high-quality historic environment of the AONB is communicated to the public.*

**HEP3:** *Design guidance is used to inform decision making regarding the conservation and management of the historic environment.*

Achieving Objective CEO4 will contribute significantly to securing the objectives to comply with the duty of the Board to foster the social and economic well-being of people living in the AONB.



## Delivery Mechanisms

- Using Historic Environment Records (HERs), Historic Landscape Character Assessment, World Heritage Site Management Plans and other guidance published by English Heritage, local authorities the Board and other agencies to inform conservation of the historic environment
- Practical conservation activity and site management by English Heritage, local authorities, The National Trust and other organisations and landowners.
- Heritage Lottery Fund, agri-environment programmes and other grant schemes.
- Research and interpretation developed by English Heritage, historical societies, civic societies, and local authorities, including heritage open days.

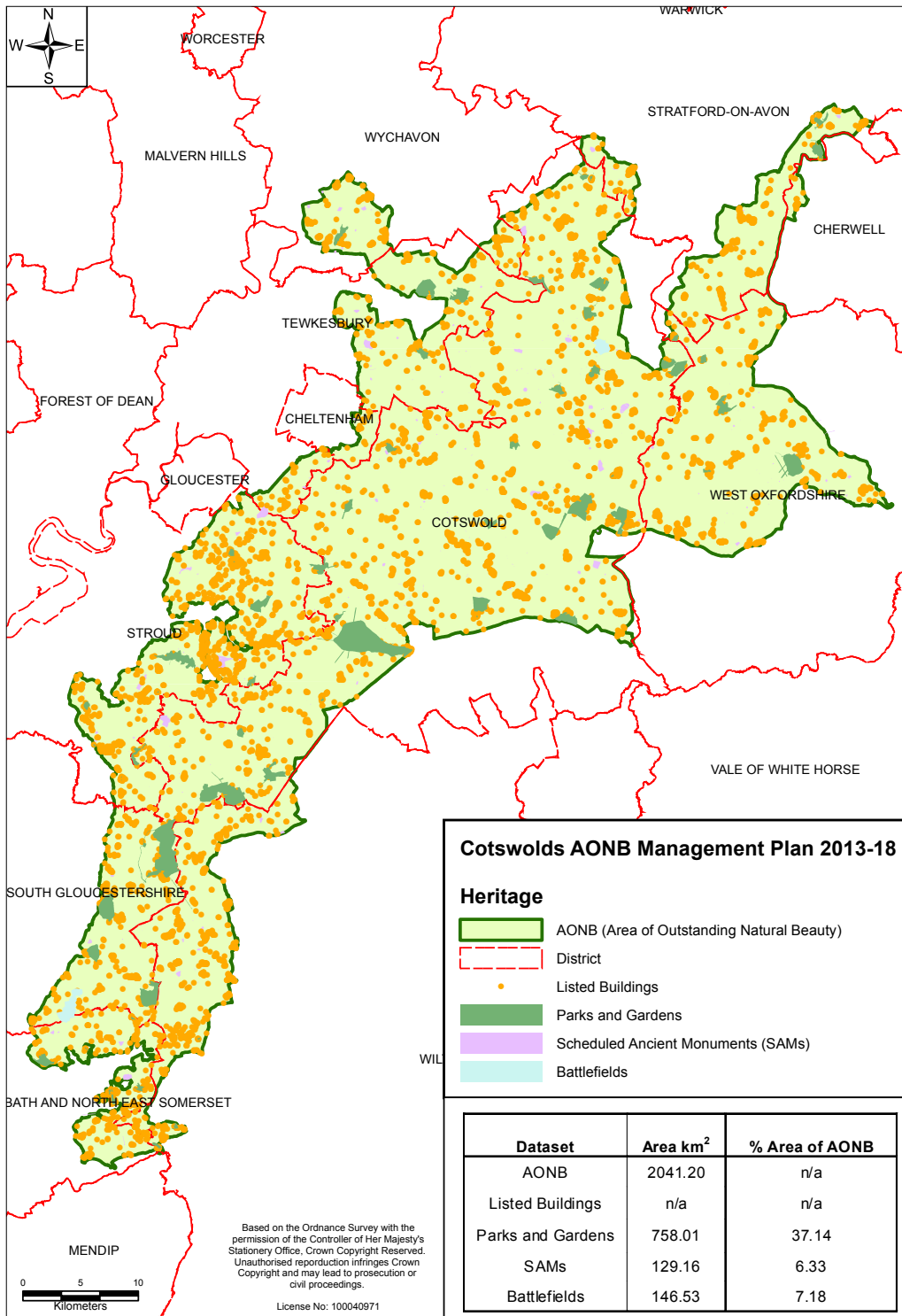
## Monitoring indicator

### Historic Environment & Built Environment

- Change in area of land under agri-environment schemes for the management and protection of archaeological features
- Change in % of heritage assets at risk
- Change in number of Local Authorities with Historic Environment Records available online



## Cotswolds AONB Historic Environment



# Biodiversity

## Description

Geology and past land management practices have resulted in the Cotswolds supporting a range of distinctive features, habitats and their dependent flora and fauna. Many sites are the remnants of semi-natural communities resulting from low-intensity land management practices. Of particular importance in the Cotswolds are unimproved grassland, ancient woodland, limestone streams and rivers, and open farmland.

## Special qualities

The Cotswolds exhibits a significant degree of retention of important habitats and species which are in decline elsewhere. The Cotswolds AONB contains many such sites designated for their biodiversity, including five Special Areas of Conservation, three National Nature Reserves, 89 Sites of Special Scientific Interest and a large number of local sites. Biodiversity 2020<sup>42</sup> is the government's strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystems services. The Board is well placed to help respond and deliver the outcomes set out in the strategy.

Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006) includes lists of habitats and species which are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The following habitats and species, many of which are included in those lists, are considered to be characteristic of the Cotswolds, and may represent a stronghold of that particular habitat or species.<sup>43</sup>

42. <http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2011/08/19/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020/>

43. As determined by the Biodiversity Theme workshop, October 2011.  
(\* ) Habitat not on NERC Act list

## Habitats

- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland
- Lowland beech and yew woodland
- Wood pasture and parkland
- Lowland calcareous grasslands
- Rivers and ponds
- Arable field margins important for birds and plant species
- Hedgerows
- Traditional orchards
- Areas important for bats (batscapes)\*

## Species

- Farmland birds, such as skylark, linnet, corn bunting
- Pearl-bordered fritillary
- Arable plants
- Juniper
- Cotswold pennycress
- Bats
- Dormouse
- Water vole
- Brown hare
- Otter
- Limestone grassland butterflies (including Marsh fritillary in the Cotswolds)
- Violet click beetle
- White clawed crayfish
- Bath asparagus (*Ornithogalum pyrenacium*)\*
- Native brown trout

## Significant Achievements 2008-13

Cotswolds Farmland Birds Project, as part of the South West Farmland Bird Initiative has, through working with farmers, delivered 42,000ha managed for biodiversity benefit in a total of 110 Environmental Schemes.

Cotswolds Ecological Network Forum founded. Principles for collaboration have been agreed and two Nature Improvement Areas proposed within the AONB. (\*\*)

## Key issues

- Characteristic habitats and some species are in decline or have been lost because of a range of factors including, notably, changes in farming and forestry practices, climate change influences, lack of or inappropriate management, together with development pressures, including brownfield site development.
- Whilst the protection and management of important sites and species is an essential task, it is also important to move beyond a piecemeal site-based approach and improve the quality of habitats in the wider landscape.<sup>44</sup>
- There is limited knowledge about the overall biodiversity resource of the AONB. This is because of the scale of the task and a lack of recorders.

## Objectives

**CEO5:** *By 2014 relevant organisations have strengthened landscape-scale restoration and the re-linking and management of habitats to reverse ecological fragmentation and to improve the resilience of the Cotswold landscape, habitats and water environment to the effects of climate change.*

## Policies

**BP1:** *There is no further net loss of characteristic habitats and species.*

**BP2:** *A linked large-scale landscape approach is taken to the conservation and expansion of coherent and resilient ecological networks within and adjoining the AONB.*

**BP3:** *The biodiversity resource of the Cotswolds AONB is sufficiently understood to guide the successful conservation of the characteristic habitats and species.*

**BP4:** *Targeted action is taken for the recovery of characteristic species and the enhancement of characteristic habitats.*

44. Biodiversity 2020, Defra (2011) (\*) Species not on NERC Act list  
(\*\*) The Nature Improvement Areas are targeted areas of a wide ecological network incorporating areas identified in the Gloucestershire and South West Nature Maps and Oxfordshire's Conservation Target Areas.

### Delivery Mechanisms

- Landscape scale initiatives developed by the Cotswolds Ecological Network Forum and others e.g. Nature Improvement Areas
- Agri environment schemes including woodland management and creation schemes
- Biological recording and record centres
- Practical conservation activity by bodies such as the Wildlife Trusts Conservation Volunteers, The National Trust, and Cotswold Wardens
- Initiatives and projects developed by Local Nature Partnerships

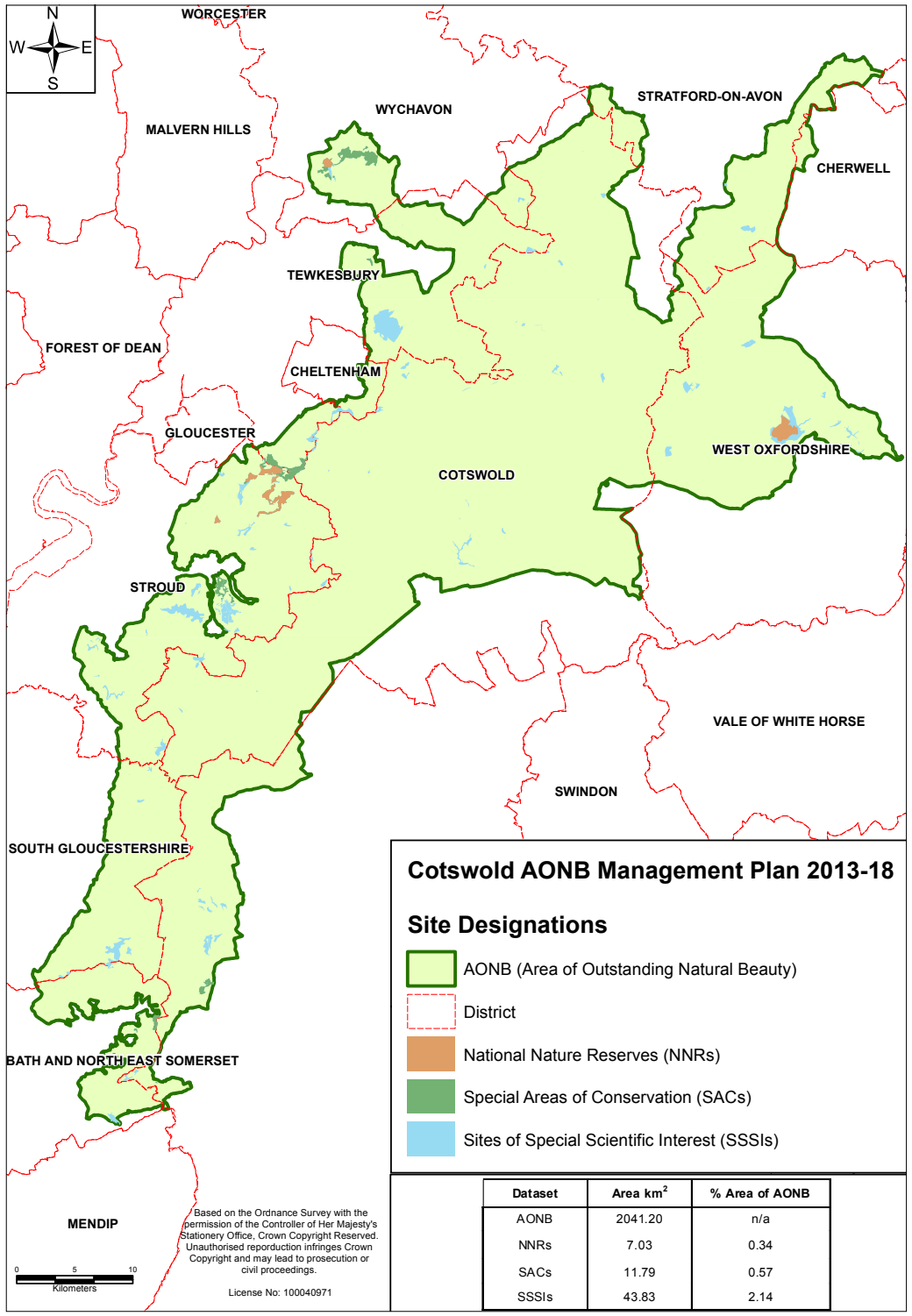
### Monitoring indicator

#### Biodiversity

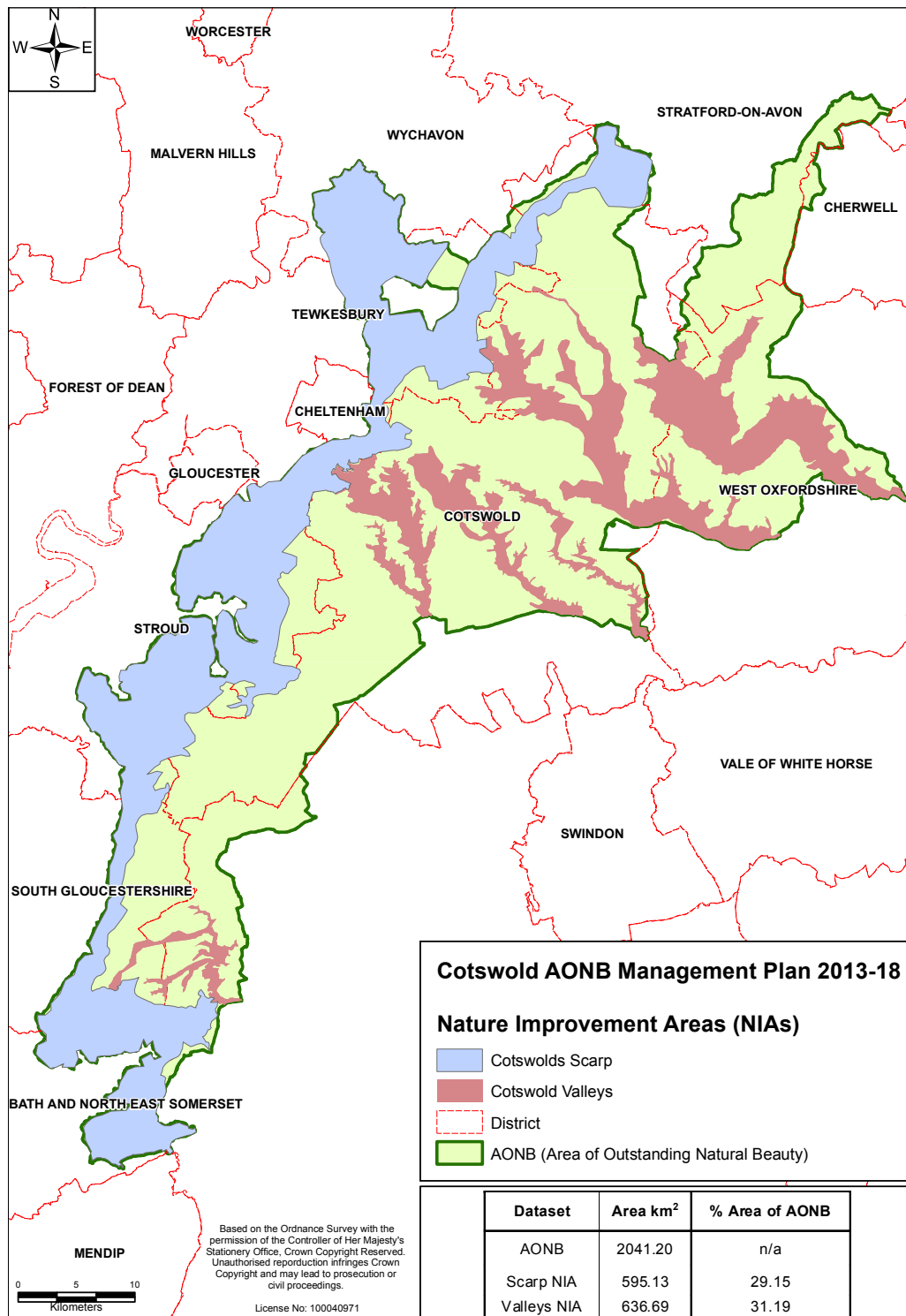
- Change in % by Area of Sites of Special Scientific Interest in “favourable” condition
- Change in % by area of Sites of Special Scientific Interest in “unfavourable recovering”, “unfavourable no change” and “unfavourable declining” condition
- Change in % of area of priority habitats which are managed under agri-environment schemes
- Change in % of AONB included in “strategic nature areas”
- Change in % of Local Nature sites in favourable condition
- Change in % of degraded ecosystems



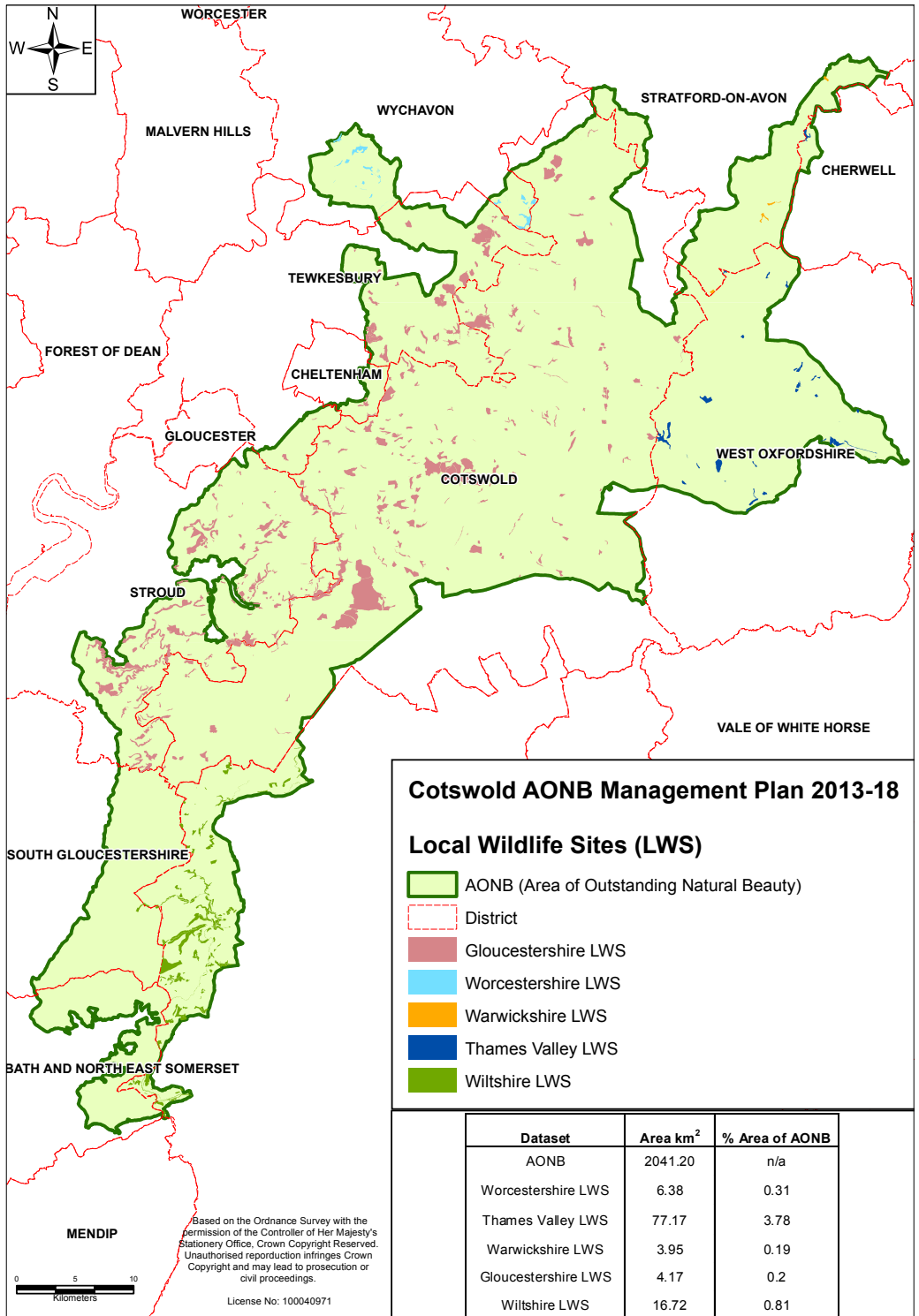
## Cotswolds AONB Biodiversity



## Cotswolds AONB Biodiversity

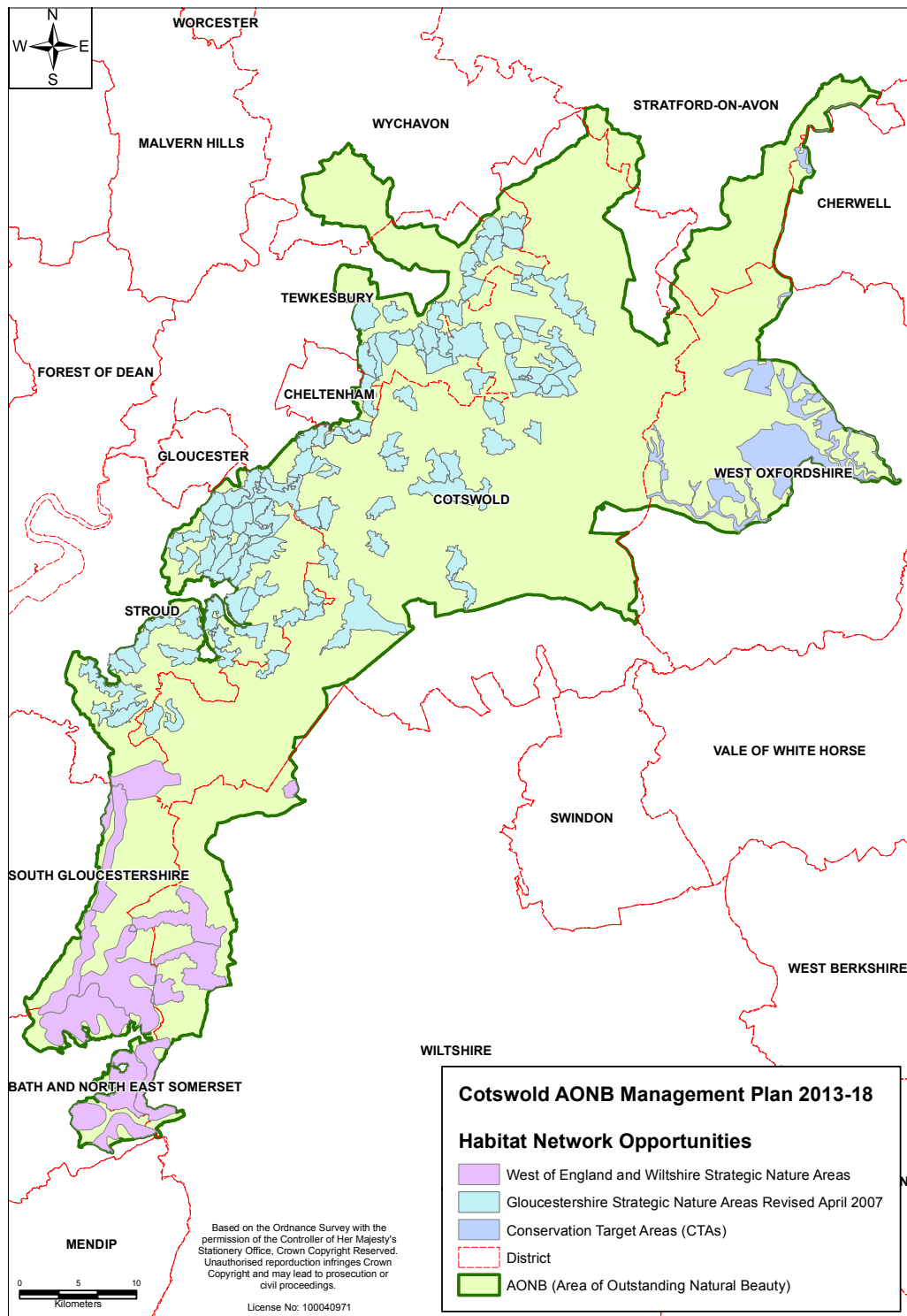


## Cotswolds AONB Biodiversity





## Cotswolds AONB Biodiversity



## Development and Transport

Towns, villages and individual buildings and their settings form a vital element of the character of the Cotswolds, particularly because of the widespread use of limestone and the area's distinctive architecture. The planning and design of development, both within the AONB and around it, is of crucial importance in maintaining the landscape and scenic beauty of the area. Decision making is the responsibility of the local planning authorities within the context of the National Planning Policy Framework, Local Plans/Core Strategies and Neighbourhood Plans.

Accessibility to and through the Cotswolds has risen because of motorways and other high speed roads through, and close to, the AONB. This much-enhanced road network has resulted in both positive and negative consequences. Negatively, much of the traffic now uses the AONB as a "short cut" between surrounding motorways which serve the major cities. Positively, the routes provide accessibility for tourists, who contribute circa £1 billion to the local economy. Transport planning and management is the responsibility of the highways authorities in the context of National Transport Policy and Local Transport Plans.

Four railway lines serve the Cotswolds AONB area providing good access to all parts of the UK. All of these rail services are potentially more attractive to short-to-medium distance commuters as fuel costs rise.

With regard to public transport, perceptions of problems discouraging wider use include the frequency of services, long journey times, reliability, uncoordinated connections between different modes of transport, people's access to the network, and standards of comfort and service.

### Significant Achievements 2008-13

Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2008-13 endorsed by 14 local planning authorities as a material consideration for strategic planning and decision making.

Conservation Board recognised as statutory consultee for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects and National Planning Statements.

Comprehensive HGV weight limits introduced in the Gloucestershire part of AONB.

Position Statements issued on a range of planning and land management topics to provide detailed guidance, including Affordable Housing, Renewable Energy, Miscanthus, and Road Verge Management.

132 new affordable homes provided (Cotswold District Council).

Signage audit and sign rationalisation, Fosse Way (A429) (Gloucestershire County Council)

85% of significant planning applications determined in accordance with Board advice.

50,000 "Explore the Cotswolds by public transport" guides and timetables issued per annum.

## Key issues

- There is a need to manage development pressures and landuse changes, both within and contiguous with the boundaries of the AONB, with sensitivity in order to maintain a balance in promoting economic and social viability whilst retaining traditional Cotswold character. The Board has issued Position Statements on Housing and Development<sup>45</sup>; and Employment<sup>46</sup> in the Cotswolds AONB.
- The importance of providing affordable housing throughout the Cotswolds is recognised as vital to ensure that balanced communities can survive and prosper. The Board is particularly concerned that those who care for the landscape of the AONB have an opportunity to live within it. The Board has issued a Position Statement on Affordable Housing in the AONB<sup>47</sup>. Consideration has also been given to the specific housing needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.
- Market towns and larger villages appear relatively thriving. However, there is considerable concern in smaller communities regarding loss of local facilities and services leading to social isolation. The Localism Act and provision for Neighbourhood Planning provides an opportunity for local people to actively engage in the development of their community.
- Nearly 1 in 8 of the households living in the Cotswolds AONB is without a car<sup>48</sup> and many other 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 and on local shops and facilities which are vulnerable to closure.
- The AONB retains traditional agricultural buildings that have not, as yet, been converted for other uses. Conversions need to be carefully appraised so that the buildings' distinctive character and setting are retained and adverse impacts on important nature conservation interests, such as bats, are avoided.
- Noise and activity arising from developments in the countryside, together with lighting, can have an adverse impact on tranquil and dark sky areas. The Board has issued a Position Statement on Tranquillity and Dark Skies in the Cotswolds AONB.<sup>49</sup>
- Equine-related activities provide valuable farm diversification opportunities. The Board has issued a Position Statement on the Keeping of Horses in the AONB.<sup>50</sup>
- Tourism is an important element of the economy of the AONB. It is inevitable that there will be a continuing need for new sustainable tourist-related developments within the AONB during the life span of this Management Plan. The Board has published a Sustainable Tourism Strategy which deals with this issue in detail.<sup>51</sup>
- Modern telecommunications, including access to high-speed broadband, are vitally important to a successful rural economy. The Board has issued a Position Statement on Telecommunications in the Cotswolds AONB.<sup>52</sup>
- The AONB and its surroundings may well attract proposals for developments of significant scale, such as wind turbines. These could have significant adverse effects on the AONB landscape. The Board has issued Position Statements on renewable energy<sup>53</sup> and development outside the AONB<sup>54</sup> acknowledging the wider positive benefits of proposals which conserve and enhance the AONB.

45. To be updated following adoption of the 2013-18 Management Plan

46. To be updated following adoption of the 2013-18 Management Plan

47. To be updated following adoption of the 2013-18 Management Plan

48. Census 2001, updated by estimate. CACI (2012)

49. [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/positionstatements](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/positionstatements)

50. [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/keepingofhorsespositionstatement](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/keepingofhorsespositionstatement)

51. [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/sustainabletourism](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/sustainabletourism)

52. To be updated following adoption of Management Plan 2013-18

53. To be updated following adoption of Management Plan 2013-18

54. To be updated following adoption of Management Plan 2013-18

- Within the Cotswolds AONB there are various rural 'brownfield sites' (i.e. previously developed land and buildings), including ex-MOD properties and redundant airfields. Whilst the re-use of such sites may bring economic benefits, the impact of large-scale residential or industrial use on the character of the AONB and the biodiversity it may hold needs to be carefully assessed.
- The Fosse Way (A429) and the A40 are long-established through-routes within the AONB. Major new roads, including the A417, have also been built through the AONB to serve long-distance movement. Traffic management, including lower speed limits, is required to deal with congestion on some of these routes, poor air quality and traffic 'rat-running' along minor roads and through villages to and from these routes. The Board has issued a Position Statement<sup>55</sup> and guidance on road verge management.
- The use of minor roads, by lorries and other large vehicles, causes problems for residents and visitors and can impact on the landscape. The highway authorities have introduced lorry routing schemes, including weight, width, height and length restrictions.
- The character of minor roads can be harmed by attempts to slow traffic by over-engineered traffic calming solutions that fail to respond to local character and distinctiveness. The Board is encouraging highway authorities to undertake clutter audits, to remove unnecessary signage, and to use discretion as permitted by national guidance<sup>56</sup>. The Board's Transport Protocol and Highway Maintenance Guidance, agreed with the highway authorities, ensure that the design and materials of traffic management schemes and their impact on the special qualities of the AONB are fully considered.
- Increasing traffic volumes mean that cycling and horse riding is not always safe on some roads. This is particularly evident on major through-routes, in congested villages and on minor roads that are used as 'rat runs' by residents, commercial traffic and visitors. Low-cost speed reduction schemes may be appropriate in these circumstances.
- Increasing demand for air transport is leading to expansion of controlled air space over the AONB, with a reduction of tranquillity caused by increased visual intrusion and noise.

## Objectives

**CEO6:** *By 2014 national and local development management and transport authorities and agencies have policies and guidance to make decisions which conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB, maintain local distinctiveness, provide services and support a buoyant rural economy.*

55. [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/managementofroadsideverges](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/managementofroadsideverges)

56. <http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/signing-the-way/signing-the-way.pdf>

## Policies

**DTP1:** All Local Plan documents, neighbourhood planning, and planning decision-making processes should have regard to the statutory AONB Management Plan, and Position Statements, Landscape Strategies and Guidance issued by the Board, as well as the following criteria in determining the acceptability of a proposed development in the Cotswolds AONB. Development should:

- be compatible with the distinctive character of the location as described by the relevant landscape character assessment, strategy and guidelines;
- incorporate designs and landscaping consistent with the above, respecting the local settlement pattern and building style;
- be designed to respect local building styles and materials;
- incorporate appropriate sustainability elements and designs;
- have regard to the impact on tranquillity, including dark skies;
- not have an adverse impact on local community amenities and services as well as access to these;
- protect, and where possible enhance, landscape and biodiversity;
- be in accordance with a more sustainable pattern of development, reducing dependence on car travel.

**DTP2:** Only development meeting these criteria, which supports the local economy, improves access to local services and increases the opportunity for people to live and work in their local community will be promoted in Local Plans, unless required for some clearly identified national interest.

**DTP3:** The special qualities of the AONB are fully respected in the planning, design, provision and management of all types of transport<sup>57</sup> and associated infrastructure to address road safety and congestion issues.

**DTP4:** Affordable housing is provided to meet identified local needs.

**DTP5:** The current level of local services and access to those services by all is maintained where possible to support sustainable communities.

**DTP6:** Issues of importance for the management of the AONB landscape are fully reflected in strategies and plans produced by other agencies.

**DTP7:** Opportunities are taken to promote walking, cycling and public transport, pilot innovative schemes and provide an alternative to private car use where possible.

Achieving Objective CEO6 will contribute significantly to securing the objectives to comply with the duty of the Board to foster the social and economic well-being of people living in the AONB.

57. Transport includes walking, cycling and horse riding as well as road and rail transport.

## Delivery Mechanisms

- National Planning Policies, Local plans/Core Strategies including the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) , neighbourhood planning, Local Transport Plans
- Position Statements and design guidance produced by the Board, agencies and local authorities
- Affordable housing programmes developed by local authorities, and social housing providers.

## Monitoring indicator

### Development

- Number of affordable homes constructed/year
- Change in % of adopted Local Plans, Minerals Local Plans and Waste Local Plans with reference to AONB Management Plan in policy or supporting text
- Availability and scope of design guidance
- Change in % of settlements with Parish Plans, Neighbourhood Plans or Village Design schemes.

### Tranquillity and Dark Skies

- Change in % of AONB recorded as 'most tranquil'
- Change in % of AONB least affected by light pollution.



## Climate Change and Globalisation

### Objectives and Policies

Global warming is “*unequivocal*”. This is the finding of the most recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).<sup>58</sup> The report also states that “*most of the observed increase in globally averaged temperatures since the mid-20th century is very likely due to the observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations*”.

As the largest designated landscape in southern England, the Cotswolds AONB can play a part in the national response to climate change. Through the policies in this Management Plan, the partnerships involved can develop a comprehensive approach to mitigate and adapt to climate change within and, to some extent, around the AONB. This is particularly the case with the provision of water supplies and control of flooding, soil management, species and habitat adaptation, tourism provision and renewable energy generation. .

### Future climate scenarios for the Cotswolds AONB<sup>59</sup>

The UK Climate Impacts Programme has summarised headline messages from its latest climate modelling scenarios.<sup>60</sup> In the area covering the Cotswolds, taking the central estimate for regional projections under the medium emissions scenario, the Cotswolds are likely to experience increasingly warmer, drier summers and milder, wetter winters. The area is also likely to see an increase in extreme weather events.

Climate change will potentially impact on all aspects of the Cotswolds AONB. The Board has published the results of a study of the potential impacts of both climate change and globalisation on farming and forestry, and the rural economy in the Cotswolds AONB.<sup>61</sup> The Board has also published a Climate Change Strategy for the Cotswolds AONB, which has been used to inform this Management Plan.<sup>62</sup>

### Addressing climate change in the Cotswolds AONB – Mitigation

Future climate change scenarios are heavily dependent on current and future levels of global greenhouse gas emissions. Reducing the carbon footprint by achieving reductions in greenhouse gas emissions will potentially reduce the degree and impact of climate change. Government Policy is to reduce carbon emissions to 34% below 1990 levels by 2020 and 80% by 2050.<sup>63</sup> The 2009 Renewable Energy Directive sets a target for the UK to obtain 15% of its energy from renewable sources by 2020.<sup>64</sup> The Board has issued Position Statements on renewable energy generation in the Cotswolds AONB<sup>65</sup> and Energy Crops<sup>66</sup> in the Cotswolds AONB.

58. ‘IPCC Fourth Assessment Report: Climate Change’, (2007).

59. Further detail is provided in the “Climate Change Strategy for the Cotswolds AONB” published by CCB (2012) <http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/userfiles/file/climate-change/climate-change-strategy-adopted-june-2012.pdf>

60. UKCP09 Climate Change projections (2009)

61. “The Future of Farming and Forestry in the Cotswolds AONB” CCB (2009) [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/climatechange](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/climatechange)

62. “Climate Change Strategy for the Cotswolds AONB” published by CCB (2012) [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/climatechangestrategy](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/climatechangestrategy)

63. Climate Change Act 2008

64. EU Directive 2009/28/EC

65. [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/positionstatements](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/positionstatements)

66. [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/positionstatements](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/positionstatements)



All organisations in the Cotswolds have their part to play in reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. This can be achieved through increasing energy efficiency; using appropriate forms of renewable energy; reducing car use and using public transport more, and purchasing locally produced food and services.

### **Addressing climate change in the Cotswolds AONB – Adaptation**

Although there is still the opportunity to reduce the more extreme effects of climate change through mitigation measures, significant impacts will occur because past greenhouse gas emissions have already raised carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere and will continue to do so. A further increase appears unavoidable even under the most optimistic of scenarios. For the Cotswolds AONB, this will potentially pose a threat to the natural beauty of the area.

The Board has therefore set out in the Climate Change Strategy how it, and partner organisations involved in managing the AONB, can help the AONB to adapt to the impacts of climate change in a way that helps to conserve and enhance its natural beauty.



## Threats to the special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB arising from globalisation

The UK economy is increasingly being impacted by exposure to global markets. European agricultural support mechanisms are moving away from supporting prices. Pressures on global resources are arising from the global impacts of climate change, which affect agricultural productivity and cause population movement. Other pressures include increasing global population and increasing consumption particularly in India, China and Brazil.

This increasing demand is causing commodity prices to rise worldwide. There will be increasing pressure to intensify food production in the UK as surpluses become a thing of the past. Acting alone the Board can have negligible impacts on such global forces. The Farming and Forestry<sup>67</sup> study illustrates the spectrum of potential opportunities and challenges arising from globalisation. Impacts may include:

- increasing pressure to intensify production and introduce new crops;
- greater emphasis on long-term planning and spreading risk, resulting in some instances to more diversified rural enterprises;
- the introduction and spread of pests and diseases; and
- pressure from population movements. "

The impact of such intensification of agriculture on the character of the Cotswolds could be negative if not managed with the conservation and enhancement of the area in mind. Intensification could lead to loss of biodiversity and historic environment features.

### Climate Change Objective

**CCO1:** *By 2016 the Board has developed a comprehensive programme of measures – which relevant organisations are implementing – based on the Climate Change Strategy to assist with mitigating the effects of, and adapting to, the local consequences of climate change and globalisation.*

### Climate Change Policy

**CCP1:** *Mitigation and adaptation measures, as set out in the Cotswolds Climate Change Strategy, are taken to develop resilience to the impact of climate change.*

67. "The Future of Farming and Forestry in the Cotswolds AONB"  
CCB (2009) [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/climatechange](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/climatechange)

## Globalisation Objective

**GO1:** *By 2016 the Board has developed a strategy – which relevant organisations are implementing – to address the impact of globalisation on the local economy.*

## Globalisation Policy

**GP1:** *Measures identified in the Board's strategy, which require the local economy to adapt to the impact of globalisation, are pursued.*

## Significant Achievements 2008-13

Climate Change Strategy published 2012.

Climate Change Advisory Service, funded by National Grid, provides 80 farm and rural business owners with guidance on undertaking measures to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Achieving Objective CCO1 will also contribute significantly to securing the objectives to comply with the duty of the Board to foster the social and economic well-being of people living in the AONB.



# Understanding and Enjoying



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## Awareness and Understanding

The Cotswolds is a well-known destination for visitors from the UK and overseas. The Cotswolds landscape has long provided inspiration for artists, craftworkers, writers and musicians, many of whom have made, and continue to make, the area their home. The quintessentially English and picturesque towns and villages with the distinctive traditional architecture of the Cotswolds have frequently been used in film and TV productions, such as most recently Castle Combe for “War Horse” and Bibury for “Stardust”.

The accessibility and variety of the Cotswolds landscape provide many educational opportunities for schools and young people to learn more about nature and the countryside.

There are many organisations which share similar aims to the Board and which are involved in promoting and engaging people in conservation and recreation work in the Cotswolds e.g. Wildlife Trusts, National Trust, Woodland Trust. These provide more opportunities to raise awareness of the Cotswolds and its special features.

### Significant Achievements 2008-13

New ‘Escape to the Cotswolds’ visitor centre for the AONB opened at Northleach in 2010.

New ‘Escape to the Cotswolds’ website launched 2011.

50,000 copies of Cotswold Lion newspaper distributed twice a year.

AONB Education Programme established by Voluntary Wardens and 83 school visits undertaken.

Cotswold Way website overhauled and users increased to over 100,000 per annum.

### Special qualities

- One of the best-known landscapes in England.
- A plethora of material on the Cotswolds exists in the form of books, travel guides, articles and websites.
- A wide range of information and interpretation material provided by the Conservation Board and other organisations.
- A network of visitor information centres.

### Key issues

- The provision of education and learning opportunities can help to reach new audiences and encourage a deeper understanding and awareness of the Cotswolds and the natural environment.
- With many conservation and other organisations operating across the Cotswolds AONB, often based on local authority administrative boundaries, there is a fragmented approach to the provision of information regarding the Cotswolds.
- The provision of information and interpretation in a variety of formats can help to increase the understanding and awareness of the Cotswolds. The growth and variety in electronic media will continue to present many opportunities for presenting information and helping to reach new audiences.

## Objectives

**UEO1:** By 2018 it can be shown that residents and visitors demonstrably value the natural beauty, historic character and cultural heritage of the Cotswolds and understand the need to invest in and sensitively manage the special qualities of the area.

## Policies

**AU1:** Awareness and appreciation of the special qualities of the AONB is improved for all who live, work in and visit the Cotswolds.

**AU2:** An understanding and appreciation of the purposes of the designation, and the positive benefits of helping to conserve and enhance the AONB, is fostered in businesses, organisations, landowners and policymakers.

**AU3:** A co-ordinated and consistent approach to information and interpretation is achieved in partnership with others to improve opportunities for enjoying and experiencing the AONB.

Achieving Objective UEO1 will contribute significantly to securing the objectives to comply with the duty of the Board to foster the social and economic well-being of people living in the AONB.

## Delivery Mechanisms

- “Events, walks and talks” – guided walks, courses, themed events and presentations, which are provided by the Board, local authorities, and other conservation organisations
- Visitor information and interpretation sources, including the Escape to the Cotswolds centre at Northleach, museums, tourist information centres, libraries and transport hubs.
- On line information provision, including the Board’s websites<sup>68</sup>, social media (Facebook and Twitter), with comprehensive downloadable information, maps and visitor guides.

## Monitoring indicator

### Awareness and Understanding

Change in % of respondents “highly valuing” the Cotswold landscape in residents and visitor surveys.

68. <http://www.cotswoldsruralskills.org.uk/>,  
<http://www.escapetothecotswolds.org.uk/>

## Exploring and Enjoying

The Cotswolds is one of the largest and most popular rural areas in England for outdoor recreation and enjoyment, particularly walking, cycling and horse riding.

The Cotswolds features a range of different landscape types, each offering their own opportunities for exploring and enjoying, such as limestone grassland, ancient woodlands, historic parks and gardens, river valleys and numerous picturesque villages.

Within the landscape are numerous settlements of distinctive traditional architecture. The Cotswolds has a rich cultural and historic landscape for exploring with many Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and Medieval sites and features.

There is an extensive green infrastructure including a generally well-signed and maintained public rights of way network, which enables a high level of access throughout the AONB, including the Cotswold Way and Thames Path National Trails, plus over 18 named long-distance recreational routes. This rich network of rights of way, access land and promoted routes provides a direct link between people and the landscape.

There are many countryside sites and viewpoints, particularly along the scarp edge, which offer facilities for the public such as car parks, picnic areas, toilets and interpretation boards.

A range of information on walking, cycling and riding in the Cotswolds is available to help people discover different parts of the AONB, including the lesser-known areas. The existing high standard of the National Trails in particular provides good opportunities for access to the countryside for those with less confidence or familiarity with open countryside.

### Significant Achievements 2008-13

Cotswold Way, managed by the Board since 2008, achieves 200,000 users/annum.

Footpath Improvement scheme (Wiltshire Council and Castle Combe PC).

Cotswolds Discoverer integrated bus and rail ticket scheme launched 2012.

Publication highlighting the range of Promoted Routes across the Cotswolds published in 2011.

Cotswold Way designated a pilot project for the future management of National Trails in 2012.

13 circular walks linked to Cotswold Way designed, signed on the ground and continually updated, with 78,000 users visiting the web page [www.nationaltrail.co.uk/cotswold/](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/cotswold/) per annum.

Three-year framework for the Cotswold Way consulted upon and published.

Start/finish marker for the Cotswold Way at Bath Abbey unveiled.

Launch of the "Outdoors West" website [www.outdoorswest.org.uk](http://www.outdoorswest.org.uk)

15,000 copies of the Explore the Cotswolds by Public Transport guide published annually with online timetable links established.

New circular, stile-free walks created including 15 'Walks on Wheels' and 14 Jubilee 'Miles without Stiles'.

## Special qualities

- Tranquil, generally high-quality, experience of attractive English lowland countryside
- Distinctive vernacular architecture
- Access, particularly on foot, is generally straightforward with adequate waymarking and maintenance
- Large number of promoted routes including two National Trails
- Range of visitor attractions linked to countryside, heritage and recreational themes.

## Key issues

- The Cotswolds attracts relatively low numbers of under-represented, hard to reach groups. In particular people from inner-city areas, ethnic minority groups, and young and less mobile people are infrequent users of the rural environment.

- The low level of public transport provision inhibits visiting much of the Cotswolds for recreation for those without access to a car.
- Overuse of some of the more popular countryside and recreational sites, combined with reduced funding for site management, leads to degradation and erosion of key areas, including important sites for biodiversity.
- Reduced funding in countryside management can impact on accessibility standards.
- Quality of signing and maintenance of access structures (bridges, gates etc.) is not consistent across the area.
- Fragmented and low provision of multi-user paths hinders a wider cross-section of the population – such as horse riders, cyclists and those with mobility impairments – from accessing the path network.

## Objectives

**UEO2:** By 2018 relevant organisations make the Cotswolds a landscape available for all to explore and enjoy, which is demonstrably regarded by residents and visitors as a place for positive, high-quality experiences.

## Policies

**EE1:** Residents, visitors and particularly hard-to-reach groups are encouraged to access and enjoy the Cotswolds countryside.

**EE2:** The cultural significance and heritage of the Cotswolds is widely recognised by all who live and work in or visit the area.

**EE3:** There is greater use of more sustainable methods of travel to and around the Cotswolds for enjoyment and recreation.

**EE4:** There is an improved co-ordinated approach to the management of public access and quiet recreational activities compatible with the conservation of the landscape.

Achieving Objective UEO2 will contribute significantly to securing the objectives to comply with the duty of the Board to foster the social and economic well-being of people living in the AONB.

### Delivery Mechanisms

- The management and improvement of the rights of way network by local authorities and others with the assistance of volunteer activity, with coordination of activity encouraged by the Board’s Access Forum.
- The provision of a wide range of access opportunities, including the Cotswold Way and Thames Path National Trails, other long distance routes, circular walks, bridleways and cycle routes promoted by the Board, local authorities and agencies.
- Access to sites and land provided by conservation organisations, through agri-environment schemes, open access land and inheritance tax exemption provisions.
- Projects to increase the opportunities for access to the countryside for all by the Board, local authorities, conservation organisations and agencies.
- Use of public transport to access the countryside is encouraged by the provision of comprehensive timetable information by the Board “Explore the Cotswolds” and ticketing schemes – “Cotswold Discoverer”.

### Monitoring indicator

#### Enjoying and Exploring

- Change in total length of rights of way
- Change in total length of National Trails
- Change in % of registered common land
- Change in % of Section 16 CROW Act dedicated land which encourages provision of more publicly accessible green space
- Change in % of Section 15, CROW Act land<sup>69</sup>
- Change in area of open space brought about by agri-environment schemes
- Change in satisfaction ratings in surveys of residents and visitors.



69. <http://www.cotswoldsruralskills.org.uk/>,  
<http://www.escapetothecotswolds.org.uk/>



## Health and Well-being

Better health (both mental and physical Health) and well-being are two of the major social and economic benefits that can be secured through good management of the natural environment in both rural and urban settings.<sup>70</sup>

Sedentary lifestyles are a major and growing concern, which are creating many major avoidable health problems such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease and some cancers.<sup>71</sup> Poor mental health affects millions of people, and not only reduces well-being but is also associated with poor physical health, health inequalities and lower productivity. The escalating costs of health care means there will be more emphasis on prevention, rather than cure, with people needing to become more engaged and interested in their own health.

There is increasing national<sup>72</sup> and local<sup>73</sup> encouragement and guidance to promote contact with the natural environment and informal recreation to improve health and well-being.

The Cotswolds has an ageing population with 23% of the resident population aged over 65 years. That part of Gloucestershire which is within the Cotswolds, experiences a higher number of excess winter deaths<sup>74</sup> and road traffic incidents compared to the rest of the county. The energy efficiency of household dwellings (SAP score<sup>75</sup>) indicates that Gloucestershire may be below the average rate for England and this low score is an important contributory factor to excess winter deaths<sup>76</sup>.

70. "Position Statement: Health & Wellbeing" Natural England (2008)

71. Foresight Report: Tackling obesity. Future choices (Government Office for Science) <http://www.foresight.gov.uk/OurWork/ActiveProject>

72. "Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our strategy for public health in England" DHSS (2010)

73. "Active Planning Toolkit", Gloucestershire NHS (2011)

74. Excess Winter Deaths Index 2008-2011 is the excess of deaths in winter compared with non-winter months from 01.08.2008 to 31.07.2011 expressed as a percentage

### Significant Achievements 2008-13

Cotswolds Natural Health Service promotion launched summer 2012.

Health and Well-being seminar held autumn 2011.

Six "Walking for Health" hubs operating in the AONB operated by the Ramblers Association and GP surgeries.

### Special qualities

- Good practice and actions being piloted locally to link access to the environment with health and well-being e.g. partnership working between the Public Health and Well-Being Board and the Local Nature Partnership in Gloucestershire.
- A variety of information exists to help people with limited mobility access and enjoy different parts of the AONB e.g. Walks on Wheels and Miles without Stiles walking routes.
- The health of people in the Cotswolds is generally better than the national average with a higher life expectancy and higher percentages of healthy eating and physical activity<sup>77</sup>.

75. The Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) is the methodology used to assess and compare the energy performance of dwellings.

76. "How Healthy is Gloucestershire?" Gloucestershire NHS (2011)

77. "How Healthy is Gloucestershire?" Gloucestershire NHS (2011)

## Key issues

- The Cotswolds could be better used for a variety of health and well-being needs, particularly by the elderly and mobility-impaired people.
- Traditional Cotswold housing can have poor energy performance, resulting in difficulty in maintaining warm homes during winter.
- Good opportunities to build new partnerships with the health sector and, in particular, the new public health boards under the auspices of local authorities during the lifetime of the Management Plan.

## Objectives

**UEO3:** *By 2018 providers of opportunities to improve health through recreation and better housing conditions in the Cotswolds AONB can show successful outcomes.*

## Policies

**WB1:** *Opportunities are taken to improve residents' and visitors' health, well-being and quality of life through creation, use and improvement of recreational facilities, including woodland and access land.*

**WB2:** *The energy efficiency of traditional Cotswold homes is improved to secure benefits for health.*

Achieving Objective UEO3 will contribute significantly to securing the objectives to comply with the duty of the Board to foster the social and economic well-being of people living in the AONB.





### Delivery Mechanisms

- Initiatives developed by Health and Wellbeing Boards linked to encouraging access to the natural environment
- Practical conservation activities and guided walks led by the Board, conservation organisations and local authorities providing healthy outdoor activity
- Landscape management by many individuals, rural businesses and organisations which secures the tranquillity and scenic beauty of the Cotswolds to provide a source of physical and mental refreshment.
- Schemes and advice operated by national and local authorities and agencies to improve the energy efficiency performance of Cotswold stone homes.

### Monitoring indicator

**Health and Well-being**  
NHS Health indicators.

## Participation

The management of the AONB provides opportunities for residents and visitors to participate in a wide range of volunteering and local community-based activities. Such activity is known to increase an individual's own interests, personal skills and learning, which in return produces a feeling of self-worth and respect. People who volunteer in their community have a personal attachment to the area and want to make it a better place for themselves and for others.

There are 283 town and parish councils and meetings in the Cotswolds AONB. Elected members of such councils undertake significant local work for their community. The Localism Act<sup>78</sup> provides opportunities for local people to become involved in planning their local area through Neighbourhood Plans and other initiatives such as Community Right to Buy.<sup>79</sup>

The Cotswolds Voluntary Warden Service has been established for over 45 years and provides opportunities for involvement in practical conservation tasks, running a guided walk programme and educational activity. Other organisations including the National Trust, the Woodland Trust, The Conservation Volunteers and the Wildlife Trusts offer opportunities for participation in a range of activities within the AONB.

The Conservation Board and other organisations have developed training schemes through which residents and visitors can learn and develop rural skills required for the management of the special features of the AONB, such as dry stone walling. Acquisition of such skills can lead to employment opportunities.

78. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents/enacted>

79. "A Plain English Guide to the Localism Act – an update" Defra (2011). <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/localismlainenglishupdate>

### Significant Achievements 2008-13

Cotswold Wardens undertake 175,000 hours of activity with 17,000 visitors on guided walks.

Over 600 trainees on Rural Skills programme.

Rural Skills website launched in 2011 offering rural skills and corporate training.

Hedge-laying competition celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2012.

Dry stone walling competition celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2009.

### Special qualities

- Long-standing level of active participation in caring for the Cotswolds.
- A parish warden network is providing valuable links between parish councils and voluntary wardens.
- Many conservation organisations that have long-standing levels of participation in the management of nature reserves and the wider countryside in the Cotswolds.
- Growing recognition and interest in the value of learning and developing rural skills in the AONB.
- Two national trails monitored and maintained largely by volunteers.

## Key issues

- Need to encourage and support the purpose of the AONB through residents' involvement in localism, including neighbourhood plans.
- Improved coverage by the parish warden network would increase active working with local communities to ensure rights of way are accessible and that liaison with landowners and occupiers produces positive outcomes.

- Need to work with a variety of agencies to provide opportunities in environmental work in the Cotswolds, recognising the positive impact this can make to people's quality of life and self-esteem whilst delivering the purpose of the AONB.

## Objectives

**UEO4:** *By 2016 public support, commitment and participation in conserving and enhancing the AONB, by volunteering and involvement with relevant organisations, has increased significantly.*

## Policies

**P1:** *Active public participation in the management of the Cotswolds AONB is supported by the provision of community and voluntary activity including the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.*

Achieving Objective UEO4 will contribute significantly to securing the objectives to comply with the duty of the Board to foster the social and economic well-being of people living in the AONB.

## Delivery Mechanisms

- A wide range of volunteer programmes and projects provided by the Board, local authorities, conservation organisations and local groups and societies. These provide residents and visitors the opportunity to undertake practical conservation tasks, community involvement – e.g. litter picks, “Walkers are Welcome” and research based activities such as biological and historic environment recording.
- Rural skills training and competitions provided by the Board and conservation organisations.

## Monitoring indicator

### Participation

- Change in number of people attending guided walk programme
- Change in number of people attending Rural Skills courses
- Change in Cotswold Voluntary Wardens numbers and hours

## Tourism

The Cotswolds remains a popular destination for both overseas and domestic visitors, attracting some 23 million<sup>80</sup> leisure visits every year. Valued at more than £1 billion to the local economy<sup>81</sup>, tourism is the number one industry in the Cotswolds AONB. National tourism policy<sup>82</sup> highlights the Cotswolds as being one of England’s ‘world famous and exceptional destinations’ which has the ability to attract overseas visitors to England.

The Cotswolds AONB Sustainable Tourism Partnership was set up in 2010 to bring together tourism bodies and organisations, including private sector and local community representatives from across the Cotswolds, with the aim of developing, delivering and monitoring progress with the Sustainable Tourism Strategy & Action Plan 2011-16.

With the full support of the partnership, the Sustainable Tourism Strategy formed the basis of the Board’s successful application in 2011 for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. The Charter approach ensures that organisations, local people and businesses are working together to protect the area, whilst at the same time increasing opportunities for visitors to discover and enjoy its special qualities.

As part of its commitment to retaining the Charter after the initial five-year period, the Board will continue to develop and strengthen its links with the tourism sector and business community.



80. The Value of Tourism to the Cotswolds AONB 2001 & 2003.

81. This figure has been derived from the Gloucestershire and West Oxfordshire Economic Impact of Tourism reports 2010.

82. England A Strategic Framework for Tourism 2010-20

### Significant Achievements 2008-13

European Charter for Sustainable Tourism awarded 2011.

Cotswolds AONB Sustainable Tourism Strategy adopted and published 2010/11.

Cotswolds Sustainable Tourism Partnership established.

Visitor giving scheme, Step into the Cotswolds, piloted in West Oxfordshire from which six new circular walks were created.

### Special Qualities

- The internationally renowned, high-quality and diverse landscape, villages, towns and buildings, with a wealth of accessible historical, natural and cultural sites, are the main attractions for visitors to the Cotswolds.
- The Cotswolds landscape and infrastructure offers a wide range of good quality walking, cycling and horse-riding opportunities for quiet enjoyment by visitors.
- New sustainable tourism products have been developed and delivered in a partnership between the Board and tourism organisations, for example the Cotswolds Discoverer scheme with train and bus operators.
- Development of the “Our Land” sustainable tourism initiative is helping businesses and visitors to connect more closely with the AONB and its landscape.

## Key issues

- Limited collaborative working between public sector tourism organisations across the Cotswolds.
- Heavy reliance among visitors on the use of private cars.
- Insufficient, specific, visitor-focused information, in a variety of formats, about the AONB, its sense of place and distinctive features.
- Lack of up-to-date and accurate research data to improve understanding of visitor profiles, patterns and tourism trends across the Cotswolds in order to inform future development.

## Objectives

**UEO5:** *By 2016 the Cotswolds is widely recognised and valued as a sustainable visitor destination, where local communities benefit, businesses prosper and the environment is sustained through the co-ordinated delivery of quality and enriching visitor experiences.*

## Policies

**TOR1:** *The tourism sector is aware of and understands the benefits of conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the AONB and the need to communicate this to visitors and residents.*

**TOR2:** *There is more collaborative working between public sector tourism organisations across the AONB, enabling greater overall efficiency and use of resources.*

**TOR3:** *The impacts and patterns of tourism across the Cotswolds are understood and sustainably addressed.*

Achieving Objective UEO5 will contribute significantly to securing the objectives to comply with the duty of the Board to foster the social and economic well-being of people living in the AONB.



## Delivery Mechanisms

- Sustainable tourism initiatives such as “Our Land” involving the Board, local authorities and tourism providers developed
- Environmental accreditation schemes for sustainable tourism business e.g “Cotswold Green Leaf”
- Visitor giving schemes operated by the Board and other agencies with tourism operators to provide funding for environmental projects.
- Development of single destination management plan for the Cotswolds by the Destination Management Organisations.

## Monitoring indicator

### Tourism

- Change in numbers of visitors aware of the AONB and its special character.
- Change in number of businesses signed up to “Our Land” or similar green accreditation scheme.
- Change in income generated through visitor giving scheme.





# Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation



# Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

## Implementation

### Delivery of the Management Plan

Implementation of the objectives and policies of this AONB Management Plan needs the support and involvement of many other organisations and individuals who have key parts to play in the future of the area. Many of these have been involved in drawing up the Plan. The Plan identifies, in each section, available and potential delivery mechanisms by which the objectives may be realised. Specific detailed mechanisms are not included as these may change or cease to be available over the five-year life of the Plan.

The Board will contribute by providing leadership; facilitating discussion and co-operation; co-ordinating where appropriate, including formulating joint bids to secure necessary resources; and by continuing to take direct action itself. The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens will continue to act on behalf of the Board to undertake practical land management tasks, lead guided walks and interpret and inform residents and visitors of the special qualities of the Cotswolds.

It is important that strategies, plans and action programmes of key partners and other influential organisations within the Cotswolds should reflect the vision, objectives and policies of this Management Plan. This will include parish councils, rural landowners and managers, farmers, community and voluntary organisations, specialist interest groups, statutory agencies, businesses, and local authorities. Such organisations will contribute, both individually and through a range of other partnerships, in particular through Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Nature Partnerships.

For government, local authorities, other public bodies and other 'relevant authorities', active support for the implementation of this Plan is the key to satisfying their general legal duty under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to "have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB".

### Engagement

Actions suggested for agencies, organisations, groups and individuals working alone or in partnership to achieve the objectives of this Management Plan are identified in the Engagement section (see p68).

The Board will prepare a Business Plan showing clearly what tasks it will undertake in a rolling three-year period. It is recognised that it is essential to fully involve partners in agreeing tasks, targets, and above all, responsibilities and resource allocations to secure their real commitment to Business Plan tasks that require their involvement.

### Monitoring

#### Checking progress in implementing the Management Plan and the state of the AONB

In addition to monitoring the successful implementation of the Management Plan, the Board has an obligation to monitor the state (or condition) of the AONB. Both types of monitoring play important roles in identifying key issues and in assessing the continued relevance of Management Plan objectives and policies.

#### Monitoring progress

Implementation of the Management Plan will be monitored by reviewing progress on actions in the Engagement section and on the detailed tasks specified in the Board's Business Plan. The extent to which success criteria have been met will also be monitored. Regular annual reports are produced by the Board, setting out achievements.



### Monitoring the state of the AONB

Monitoring the state of the AONB is a more long-term process. Good baseline information is required in respect of each of the special characteristics of the Cotswolds AONB. A relevant indicator that can be consistently measured over time should then be identified for each special characteristic. However, information relating to the whole AONB can be difficult to assemble, particularly given the size and administrative complexity of the Cotswolds AONB.

The statutory agencies operating in the area, particularly Natural England, English Heritage and the Environment Agency, together with the local authorities, make positive contributions to the efficient collation of data for monitoring as part of their general duty to conserve and enhance the AONB.

### Indicators

The final choice of indicators, as set out under each section, is influenced by factors including: practical considerations such as time, resources and availability of data; the need for meaningful indicators that focus on the AONB's primary concerns with landscape and the environment; and the need to ensure that indicators make practical contributions to baseline data on the state of the AONB, rather than act simply as performance indicators.

### Landscape character

Changes identified through analysis of fixed-point photography for each of the 19 landscape character types

identified in the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA). Viewpoints are revisited by the Conservation Board at a minimum of five-year intervals.

### Farmed landscape

- Change in % of land managed under agri-environment schemes.
- Change in % of woodland on farms.
- Changes in farmland type (permanent pasture/rough grazing/arable land, etc).
- Changes in farm numbers and sizes.
- Changes in stock numbers.

### Woodland landscape

- Change in % of AONB which is woodland.
- Change in % of woodland under management for public benefit.
- Change in % of established eligible National Inventory of Woodland and Trees stock in the Cotswolds AONB covered by a Woodland Grant Scheme management agreement.
- % of ancient woodland sites covered by a Woodland Grant Scheme agreement.
- Change in rate of new woodland creation.

### Natural resources and services

- Increase in renewable energy capacity permitted/constructed.
- Increase in number and area of Soil Management Plans.

### **Water quality**

- Change in % of water bodies achieving “Good” ecological status.

### **Historic Environment & Built Environment**

- Change in area of land under agri-environment schemes for the management and protection of archaeological features.
- Change in % of heritage assets at risk.
- Change in number of Local Authorities with Historic Environment Records available online.

### **Biodiversity**

- Change in % by Area of Sites of Special Scientific Interest in “favourable” condition.
- Change in % by area of Sites of Special Scientific Interest in “unfavourable recovering”, “unfavourable no change” and “unfavourable declining” condition.
- Change in % of area of priority habitats which are managed under agri-environment schemes.
- Change in % of AONB included in “strategic nature areas”.
- Change in % of Local Nature sites in favourable condition.
- Change in % of degraded ecosystems.

### **Development**

- Number of affordable homes constructed/year.
- Change in % of adopted Local Plans, Minerals Local Plans and Waste Local Plans with reference to AONB Management Plan in policy or supporting text.
- Availability and scope of design guidance.
- Change in % of settlements with Parish Plans, Neighbourhood Plans or Village Design schemes.

### **Tranquillity And Dark Skies**

- Change in % of AONB recorded as ‘most tranquil’.
- Change in % of AONB least affected by light pollution.

### **Awareness And Understanding**

- Change in % of respondents “highly valuing” the Cotswold landscape in residents and visitor surveys.

### **Enjoying And Exploring**

- Change in total length of rights of way.
- Change in total length of National Trails.

- Change in % of registered common land.
- Change in % of Section 16 CROW Act dedicated land which encourages provision of more publicly accessible green space.
- Change in % of Section 15, CROW Act land.
- Change in area of open space brought about by agri-environment schemes.
- Change in satisfaction ratings in surveys of residents and visitors.

### **Health and Well-Being**

NHS Health indicators.

### **Participation**

- Change in number of people attending guided walk programme.
- Change in number of people attending Rural Skills courses.
- Change in Cotswold Voluntary Wardens numbers and hours.

### **Tourism**

- Change in numbers of visitors aware of the AONB and its special character.
- Change in number of businesses signed up to “Our Land” or similar green accreditation scheme.
- Change in income generated through visitor giving scheme.

## **Evaluation**

### **Learning and applying lessons**

Monitoring and reviewing these indicators will provide a means of assessing and communicating change over time, and will thus inform reviews of this plan. The indicators will only be part of the analysis. Issues, changes and trends will need to be re-examined through appropriate research and information.

As part of the Management Plan review process, evaluation will be necessary to reflect on the lessons learned from the experience of operating the Management Plan and Action Plan. It will also highlight how external changes have affected, and are affecting, the state of the AONB itself.

# Engagement



# Engagement

## Engagement

The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2013-18 has three closely interrelated functions.

Firstly, it is the statutory plan which sets out the Cotswolds Conservation Board's ("the Board") policies for the management of the Cotswolds AONB and for the carrying out of its functions in relation to it.<sup>83</sup> The actions the Board itself will take to deliver the Plan's objectives are set out in the Board's three-year rolling business plan.

Secondly, it informs public bodies of the means by which they can demonstrate compliance with their statutory duty to "have regard to" the purpose of designation of the AONB when undertaking their functions.<sup>84</sup>

Thirdly, it guides the engagement of public bodies, landowners, businesses and individuals in the management of the AONB. It includes information regarding available and potential delivery mechanisms. The types of actions the Board would encourage others to take individually or in partnership with others, including the Board, to deliver the Plan, are set out in this Engagement section.

Mechanisms currently available to help deliver the Plan objectives are set out under each section.

Set out in this section of the Management Plan are the actions the Board wishes organisations and individuals to consider taking alone or in partnership with others including the Board. Whilst not all suggested actions may be currently possible for the identified partner/s, the Board considers that taking them would:

- better deliver the purpose of designation of the AONB;
- assist the Board to better deliver its own purposes; and
- deliver the objectives of this Management Plan.



83. Section 89, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as amended by the NERC Act 2006

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

## Engagement

Partner	Suggested Action	Plan objective/s supported
<b>Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)</b>	Review the “Section 85 duty” advice to make the reporting, monitoring and challenging process more robust.	All
	Review the funding formula for AONBs to ensure transparency and fairness.	All
	Review existing Management Plan guidance and consider the necessity for, and appropriateness of, a 5-year review period and the scope of associated SEA, HRA and Equalities processes given the resource requirements involved in their preparation.	All
	Advise the Board of its other investments and planned expenditure in the AONB – so that the Board can develop a wider picture of public sector investment in the landscape and environment.	All
	Recognise the work of the Board as a priority for investment to secure departmental objectives and as part of the wider Defra family.	All
	Champion Protected Landscapes and their value to the nation and economy across Government and as delivery partners within Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform scheme design.	All
	Streamline the approval process for varying the route of the Cotswold Way and Thames Path National Trails.	UEO2
	Provide national leadership on the development of Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs) beyond the pilot projects, recognise the locally developed NIAs for the Cotswolds and maintain a national register and map of NIAs.	CEO5
<b>Department for Communities, and Local Government (DCLG)</b>	Publish a new Government Circular on Protected Landscapes, reinforcing the role and purpose of our protected landscape family.	CEO1
	Include reference in guidance for Neighbourhood Planning to the consideration of protected landscape management.	CEO1

## Engagement

Partner	Suggested Action	Plan objective/s supported
<b>Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC)</b>	Recognise the expertise and opportunities provided by protected landscapes in the development of energy conservation and climate change policy.	CC01 CEO5
<b>Department for Culture, Media and Sport. (DCMS)</b>	Support the development and implementation of a single Destination Management Plan for the whole Cotswolds, recognising the contribution of the Cotswolds landscape to the rural economy via tourism.	UEO5
	Support the establishment and operation of a visitor giving scheme for the whole Cotswolds.	UEO5
	Facilitate the delivery of universal high-speed broadband and improved mobile coverage throughout the Cotswolds AONB.	ESO1
<b>Natural England</b>	Review the appropriateness of the different protected landscape designations and consider whether the separation of NPs and AONBs is still relevant.	All
	Be mindful of, and use evidence from, the AONB Management Plan, Landscape Character Assessment, Position Statements and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines to guide the targeting of their investments in the Cotswolds, the development of local guidance such as National Character Areas and the responses to consultations.	CEO1 CEO2 CEO5
	Maintain environmental investment in the AONB in line with future RDPE allocation.	CEO1 CEO2
	Engage partners in the AONB to identify the land management challenges and priorities and determine where future potential delivery of RDPE schemes could make a significant difference to integrated land management.	CEO1 CEO2
	Investigate delegating responsibility for responding to non-biodiversity related planning applications impacting on the Cotswolds under a revised Planning Protocol.	CEO6



## Engagement

Partner	Suggested Action	Plan objective/s supported
<b>Natural England</b>	Advise the Board of its other investments in the AONB so that the Board can develop a wider picture of public sector investment in the landscape, biodiversity, historic environment, green infrastructure and access.	All
	Support the locally developed NIAs in the Cotswolds.	CEO5
	Enter into discussions regarding the suitability of the Cotswolds AONB for a Global Geopark or similar geo-conservation initiative.	CEO1 UEO1
	Provide funding for National Trails through NT Partnerships with three-year rolling streams, and provide cohesive national co-ordination for the long term.	UEO2
<b>English Heritage</b>	Advise the Board of its investments and planned expenditure in the AONB so that the Board can develop a wider picture of public sector investment in the landscape, biodiversity and historic environment.	CCO1 CEO4
	Endorse the Board's Management Plan, landscape character assessment, position statements and landscape strategy and guidelines to guide the targeting of their investments in the Cotswolds, development of local policies and responses to consultations.	CEO4
	Review whether the Conservation Board could provide a local management option for properties in care.	CEO4
	Facilitate greater access to the Cotswolds AONB Historic Landscape Character Assessment and Historic Environment Records.	CEO4
	Work with the Board to enhance the interpretation of core properties and scheduled ancient monuments.	CEO4 UEO1
<b>Forestry Commission</b>	Target EWGS to meet the Cotswolds woodland management and woodland creation objectives.	CCO1 CEO1 CEO2

## Engagement

Partner	Suggested Action	Plan objective/s supported
<b>Forestry Commission</b>	Endorse the Board's Management Plan, Landscape Character Assessment, Position Statements and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines to guide the targeting of their investments in the Cotswolds, development of local policies and responses to consultations.	CEO1 CEO2
	Require and scrutinise Environmental Impact Assessments for woodland creation schemes.	CEO1 CEO2
	Advise the Board of its other investments and planned expenditure in the AONB so that the Board can develop a wider picture of public sector investment in the landscape, biodiversity and historic environment.	CEO1 CEO2
	Consider the use of the Board as a delivery partner in the reconstituted Forest Service as proposed by the Independent Panel.	CEO1
	Support the development of the thriving market needed to stimulate the conditions necessary to bring derelict woods back into management.	CEO2
<b>Environment Agency</b>	Advise the Board of its investments and planned expenditure in the AONB so that the Board can develop a wider picture of public sector investment in the landscape, biodiversity and historic environment.	CCO1 CEO1 CEO3
	Endorse the Board's Management Plan, Landscape Character Assessment, Position Statements and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines to guide the targeting of their investments in the Cotswolds, development of local policies and responses to consultations.	CCO1 CEO1 CEO3
	Engage the Board in the preparation and delivery of River Basin and Catchment Management Plans.	CCO1 CCO1 CEO3
<b>Health and Wellbeing Boards</b>	Recognise and promote the Cotswolds AONB as a significant asset to promote healthy activity.	UEO3

## Engagement

Partner	Suggested Action	Plan objective/s supported
<b>Health and Wellbeing Boards</b>	Work with the Cotswolds Conservation Board and other partner organisations to commission health walks and conservation activity as an adjunct or alternative to normal prescription treatment, developing healthier and more active lifestyles and an associated reduction in NHS costs.	UEO3
	Invest in programmes using the AONB environment to stimulate greater physical activity and exercise, particularly amongst the 5 – 18 and 19 – 64 age categories.	UEO3
	Invest in programmes to help deprived communities within the catchment of the Cotswolds AONB overcome barriers preventing them from realising the mental and physical health benefits of enjoying the AONB.	UEO3
<b>Local Enterprise Partnerships</b>	Commission additional research on the value of the AONB to the local economy; in influencing business leader decisions on personal and/or business locations and investment strategy; in overall consideration of the quality of life.	ESO1
	Support the development of a Cotswolds Rural Skills Academy.	ESO1
	Support the development and implementation of a single Destination Management Plan for the whole Cotswolds.	ESO1
	Seek a high-quality environmental gain from any investment strategy.	All
<b>Local Authorities</b>	Include, within adopted Core Strategy/Local Plans policy, references to conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the AONB, and the recognition of the AONB Management Plan as a material consideration in planning decisions, including the protection of the setting of the AONB.	CEO1 CEO6
	Address AONB issues, objectives and policies by inclusion in related strategies such as Local Transport Plans, Green Infrastructure Strategies and Health and Wellbeing work plans.	All

## Engagement

Partner	Suggested Action	Plan objective/s supported
<b>Local Authorities</b>	Endorse the Board's Landscape Character Assessment, Position Statements, Landscape Strategy and Guidelines to guide decision making in the Cotswolds.	CEO1 CEO6
	Recognise the work of the Board as a priority for investment.	ALL
	Endorse and implement the Board's guidance for the design and management of highways.	CEO6
	Secure the provision of affordable housing to meet identified local needs.	ESO1
	Consider use of the Board as a delivery partner including for rights of way and countryside sites management.	UEO2
	Consider using the Board as an external adviser on landscape, biodiversity, heritage, forestry, agri-environment and countryside access issues.	ALL
<b>Town and Parish Councils</b>	Use the AONB Management Plan and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines to inform Neighbourhood plans, Parish plans and Village Design Statements, taking account of the landscape within settlements and their wider landscape.	CEO6
	Follow guidance in Road Verge Management Position Statement	CEO6
	Engage with Cotswold Voluntary Wardens and Parish Wardens to secure local conservation objectives.	UEO4
	Utilise the AONB boundary markers and/or the incorporation of "within the Cotswolds AONB" text with village or town name entry signs to celebrate the fact that the settlement lies within the AONB.	UEO1
<b>Conservation Organisations</b>	Use the AONB Management Plan, Landscape Strategy and Guidelines and Position Statements to inform site-based management plans.	ALL

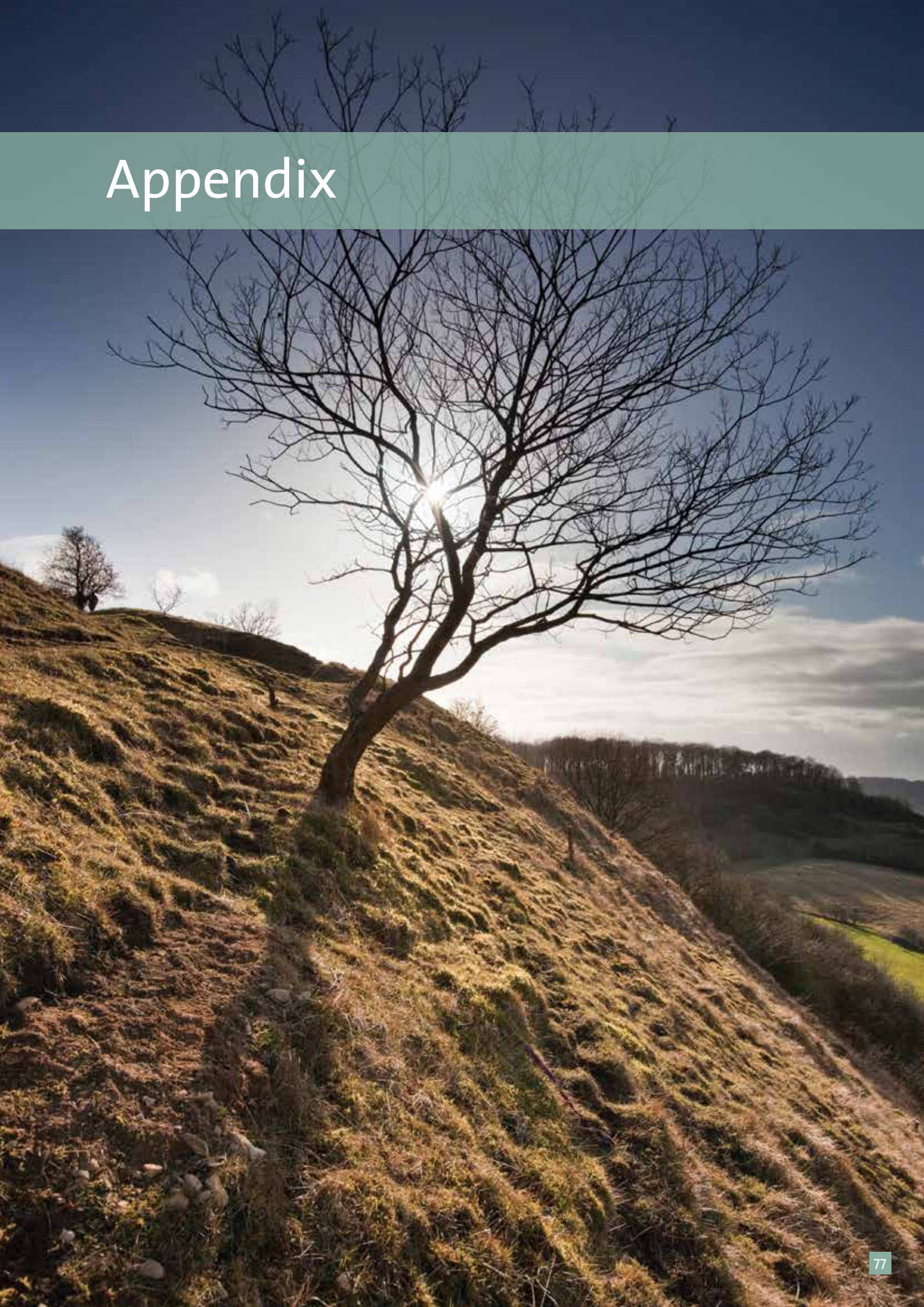
## Engagement

Partner	Suggested Action	Plan objective/s supported
<b>Conservation Organisations</b>	Engage with AONB-wide fora and working groups to develop and implement a consistent approach to site and landscape management.	CEO1 CEO5 CEO6
	Continue to engage with the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens to secure local conservation objectives.	CEO1 UEO4
	Continue to develop and offer opportunities for voluntary participation in management of sites, landscape and cultural heritage.	UEO4
<b>Business Network bodies (e.g. National Farmers Union, Country Business Association, Chambers of Commerce)</b>	Encourage members to engage with Board projects and initiatives.	ALL
	Provide Board and partner organisations with views regarding projects and initiatives through consultation responses and engagement with fora, working groups etc.	ALL
<b>Landowners/rural businesses</b>	Consider and use the Board's published guidance on the conservation and enhancement of the AONB, and dealing with the impacts of climate change, to inform investment, development, and land management decisions and actions.	ALL
<b>Visit England</b>	Support the development of a visitor payback scheme for the Cotswolds.	UEO5 ESO1
	Support the development and implementation of a single Destination Management Plan for the whole Cotswolds.	UEO1 UEO5
<b>Tourism organisations</b>	Support the development of a visitor giving scheme for the Cotswolds.	UEO5
	Support the development and implementation of a single Destination Management Plan for the whole Cotswolds.	UEO5
	Encourage members to participate in the Cotswolds Sustainable Tourism Partnership.	UEO5

## Engagement

Partner	Suggested Action	Plan objective/s supported
<b>Tourism providers</b>	Participate in the Cotswolds Sustainable Tourism Partnership.	UEO5
	Participate in and support the “Our Land” Project and visitor giving schemes.	UEO4, UEO5 ESO1
	Help deliver the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Landscapes	UEO5
	Support the development and implementation of a single Destination Management Plan for the whole Cotswolds.	UEO5
<b>Geology Trusts</b>	Enter into discussions regarding the suitability of the Cotswolds AONB for a Global Geopark or similar geo-conservation initiative.	CEO1 UEO1
<b>Local Nature Partnerships</b>	Support the development of the Cotswolds Scarp NIA and Cotswolds Rivers NIA.	CEO5
	Take full regard of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan and support its implementation, adding value to existing work wherever possible.	CEO1 CEO5
	Work through the Conservation Board to engage with spatial planning for the Cotswolds AONB.	CEO1 CEO6
	Support and work with a Cotswolds LNP.	CEO1, CEO5
<b>Utility Companies</b>	Consider undergrounding distribution networks where financially viable and where enhancement to visual amenity will arise.	CEO1

# Appendix



# Appendix 1

## Appendix 1

### A) Abbreviations

AA	Appropriate Assessment	LNR	Local Nature Reserve
ADAS	Agricultural Development Advisory Service	LPA	Local Planning Authority
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	LTP	Local Transport Plan
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan	MPG	Minerals Planning Guidance
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy	NAAONB	National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
CCB	Cotswolds Conservation Board	NE	Natural England
CLA	Country Land and Business Association	NFU	National Farmers Union
CPRE	Campaign to Protect Rural England	NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
CROW	Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000	NNR	National Nature Reserve
SAC	Special Area of Conservation	RIGS	Regionally Important Geological/ Geomorphological sites
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government	RoW	Rights of Way
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport	RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	SAP	Standard Assessment Procedure
DECC	Department for Energy and Climate Change	SAMs	Scheduled Ancient Monuments
DBERR	Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform	SINC	Site of Importance for Nature Conservation
EA	Environment Agency	SMR	Sites and Monuments Register
EGWS	English Woodland Grant Scheme	SPA	Special Protection Area
EH	English Heritage	SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment	SUSTRANS	The Sustainable Transport Charity
ERDP	England Rural Development Programme	TB	Tuberculosis
ESA	Environmentally Sensitive Area	TCV	The Conservation Volunteers
EU	European Union	UNESCO	The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment	WGS	Woodland Grant Scheme
FC	Forestry Commission		
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund		
ICT	Information and communications technology		
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources		
JAC	Joint Advisory Committee		
LA	Local Authority		
LDD	Local Development Document		
LDF	Local Development Framework		
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership		
LNP	local Nature Partnership		



## B) Explanation of terms

**Habitats Regulations Assessment** is required by the Birds and Habitats Directives of the European Union to assess the effects of a plan on a nature conservation site of European importance to enable a judgement to be made as to whether there will be an adverse effect on the site's integrity.

**Agricultural land classification** is the method of grading agricultural land devised by MAFF (now Defra) to indicate the quality of farmland. Agricultural land is graded according to the degree to which its physical characteristics (particularly climate, relief and soil) impose long-term limitations on the agricultural use of the land. The best and most versatile land is classified Grades 1, 2 and 3a.

**Agri-environment schemes** refers to a range of schemes operated by Defra which are designed to encourage environmentally friendly farming and public enjoyment of the countryside.

An **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** is an area designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, with the primary purpose of designation being to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

**Biodiversity** means 'biological diversity' and includes the whole variety of life on earth in all its forms, or any part of it and its interaction.

**Category V Landscape** refers to Category V (Protected: Landscape/Seascapes) of lived-in landscapes in the United Nations List of Protected Areas. These areas are characterised by their scenic beauty, for example, as mountain, hill, wetland and coastal scenery.

A **Conservation Board** is a management organisation to represent the full cross-section of interests within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as provided for in the Countryside and Rights Way Act 2000. It is particularly appropriate for extensive AONBs with a multiplicity of local authority and interest groups, such as in the Cotswolds.

The **Cotswolds AONB Partnership** was a partnership of local, regional and national organisations representing farmers, landowners, communities, the tourism sector, government agencies, local authorities and wildlife trusts. The Partnership currently had 34 member organisations, 17 of which were local authorities with a geographical stake in the AONB. The Partnership was superseded by the Cotswolds Conservation Board in 2004.

**Cotswold Voluntary Wardens** are the voluntary arm of the Cotswolds Conservation Board; there are currently around 340 voluntary wardens who undertake a wide range of practical tasks, guided walks and landscape monitoring throughout the AONB.

**Decoupling** refers to breaking the direct link between farm subsidies and production.

**Geodiversity** covers the variety of rocks, fossils, minerals and natural processes within an area.

**Geomorphology** is the study of landforms, or of the arrangement and forms of the earth's crust.

A **Habitat** is the place in which a particular animal lives, or the wider interaction of plants and animals that are found together.

**High forest** is all woodland except stands managed as coppice or coppice-with-standards, or with potential to achieve a tree cover of more than 20%.

**Indicators** are ways of quantifying and measuring the impact of policy objectives.

The **International Union for Conservation of Natural Resources** (IUCN) is the World Conservation Union.

**Local Transport Plans** define five-year strategies for transport provision. County councils and unitary authorities prepare them for their areas.

**Modulation** is the process under EU legislation of recycling a proportion of payments made direct to farmers under CAP commodity regimes.

**National cycle routes** are part of the national cycle Network. It is designed to provide good quality, direct links between towns and villages and through the heart of urban areas.

**Natural beauty** includes the landscape, flora and fauna, geological or physiographical features and heritage, including archaeology, historic environment and settlement character.

A **Parish Plan** sets out a vision of how local communities would like their town or village to be.

**The National Planning Policy Framework** is the Government's national guidance for land use planning. There is also a series of Minerals Planning Guidance notes (MPGs).

The '**Silkin test**' refers to the test which must be met by major developments in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as currently set out in paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The **South West Protected Landscapes Forum** encourages networking and exchange of information and ideas between the two National Parks and 12 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the South West region.

**Strategic Environmental Assessment** is to be required based on a European Directive intended to promote sustainable development, by ensuring that an environmental assessment is carried out for certain plans and programmes that are likely to have significant impacts upon the environment.

**Sustainability** has been defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development as 'development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

**Village Design Statements** are documents that describe the visual character of a village as seen through the eyes of its inhabitants. Residents of an interested village volunteer to undertake a study of their village and its environment and through consultation and discussion determine what they feel this to be.

**The City of Bath and Blenheim Palace World Heritage Sites** have been recognised by UNESCO (the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation) as places of outstanding universal value for their architecture, town planning, landscape, archaeological remains and its role as a setting for social history.



# Cotswolds Conservation Board



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