

Cotswolds Conservation Board Annual Review 2007-08

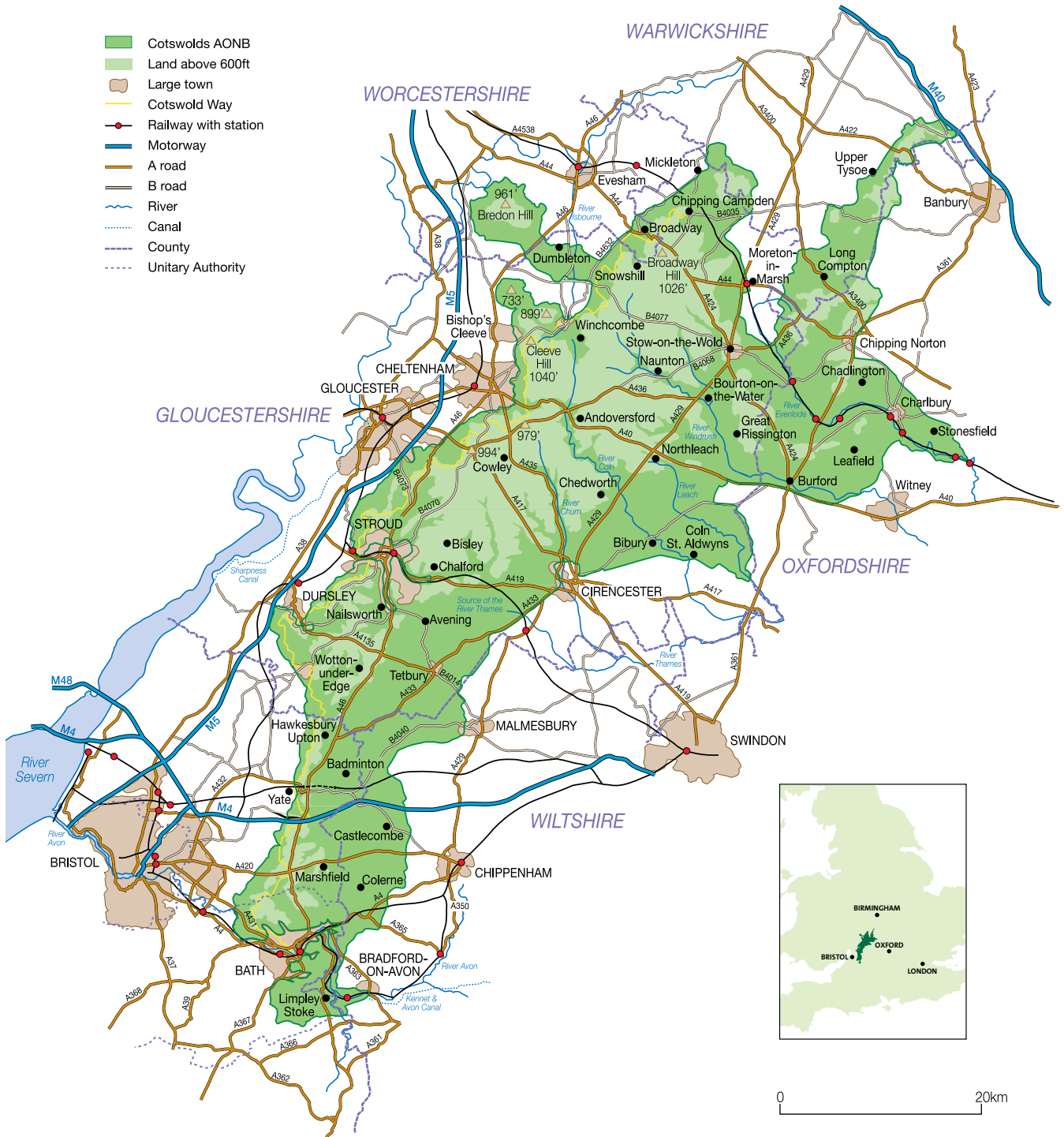


Cotswolds

Area of Outstanding
Natural Beauty



The Cotswolds is the largest of 40 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in England and Wales, covering 790 sq miles (2,038 sq kms).



Based on the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office
 © Crown copyright
 The Countryside Agency, John Dower House, Crescent Place, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL50 3RA
 © The Countryside Agency 2005 Licence No. 100018881

Cover photo - Cotswold Voluntary Wardens completing access work on the Cotswold Way National Trail.

Chairman's Introduction



Niel Curwen

It has been four years now since the board was established back in 2004 and we have a strong and effective organisation which is delivering efficiently in many areas of work.

The board is the only body that cares for the AONB as a whole and with that comes a good deal of responsibility, the need to ensure that we are as knowledgeable as we can be about all of the issues that are affecting the Cotswolds today and the need to respond appropriately to them. It is abundantly clear in board meetings that not only do we have 40 board members who take this responsibility very seriously, but also that a lot of careful thought and consideration goes into running the organisation by people who are eminently capable of doing an excellent job.

Last year saw the culmination of the board's flagship project which was supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, 'Caring for the Cotswolds'. The AONB will benefit from the conservation efforts made during this project for many years to come and the board would like to thank all of those who took part - whether they be officers, voluntary wardens, partner organisations, landowners or members of the public. We are proud to say that the Heritage Lottery Fund has congratulated us on the completion of a 'successful project'.

This year has also been a turning point for the board because we have all worked together to review the

AONB management plan. The development and consultation process for this review has brought everybody who is connected with the AONB together and strengthened our collective understanding and awareness of the key issues affecting the AONB. The very process of revising the plan has helped us to form a strong sense of direction and provided a clear focus for the future.

We administer the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), on behalf of Natural England and Defra and I am proud to say that over the past three years the cumulative effect of distributing SDF grants to projects that help to conserve and enhance the AONB has been significant. We have given many thousands of pounds to businesses, organisations and individuals within the AONB to help them become more sustainable in the way that they operate.

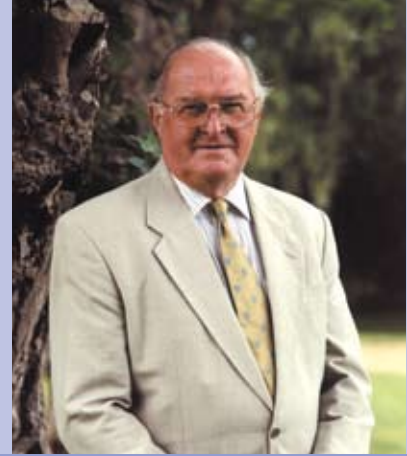
The board is not a planning authority for the AONB but acts as an advisor and watchdog when it comes to planning and development. Last year we objected strongly to National Grid's plans to build a 40km gas pipeline from Wormington in Worcestershire to Sapperton in Gloucestershire because parts of it would cut straight through the AONB. The board was pleased to learn in December that National Grid withdrew plans for the pipeline as revised figures for the South West showed that demand for gas was not as high as originally predicted.

One of the new areas of development for the board has been green tourism following the appointment of a Green Tourism Officer. The Cotswolds Green Tourism Project is run by the board in partnership with West Oxfordshire District Council and has five main objectives which are: to work with local Cotswolds tourism businesses to recognise the landscape of the AONB as a fundamental asset on which the local tourism industry is based; to stimulate business and visitor interest in a Visitor Payback Scheme; to conserve and enhance the AONB by delivering community access and conservation projects; to work in partnership with organisations with a commitment to sustainable tourism and to support the local economy and bring financial gains to the AONB.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has been involved with helping to conserve and enhance the AONB in 2007-08, whether they be staff, board members, voluntary wardens, partner organisations or members of the public. We can all be proud that we have a meaningful and productive connection to the place where we live and work.

Niel Curwen
Chairman
Cotswolds Conservation Board

Foreword



The Lord Plumb of Coleshill, DL FRAGS

The Lord Plumb of Coleshill, DL FRAGS is patron of the Cotswolds Conservation Board.

The Cotswolds is changing and faces many new challenges, such as the pressure for new development, the threat of the onset of climate change, global pressures on the way that land is used, the pressure from changing lifestyles and the need to provide adequate housing and infrastructure.

Standing in the Cotswolds landscape and surveying a beautiful view, that seems to have existed quietly and unimposingly for many centuries, it becomes clear that there is great value in working hard to conserve and enhance the AONB and ensure that, whatever challenges the world throws at us, we will carefully develop strategies to make sure that change benefits the area wherever possible, rather than threatening its unique qualities.

Climate change is indeed a serious issue for the AONB and its implications must be addressed. It is important that the board works hard over the next five years to ensure that we fully understand the possible impacts of climate change on the area and then put a programme of measures in place to help the AONB adapt.

Another pressure on the area is the effects of globalisation on agricultural land use. There was once a time when farming in the UK relied more heavily on subsidies from Europe but this is changing and the industry is now more susceptible to the impact of global markets. Changes in land use for the production of crops on a worldwide scale prompted by new consumption patterns in the east, the global impact of climate change and the increased production of biofuels, could have knock-on effects in the Cotswolds; the main change is likely to be that as food prices and demand rise across the world, food surpluses will become a thing of the past and there will be increasing pressure to intensify agricultural production in the UK. It is important that the impact of intensification on the Cotswolds is managed properly and is not damaging and so the board must work to understand the issue and influence the impact of national policies as they are developed.

A third key force for change in the AONB is the pressure from development, changing lifestyles and transportation. It is predicted that within the next 20 years the UK population is going to increase by around 10% and that the South West will see a significant population rise of around three-quarters of a million people. The development that will be needed to accommodate that rise will have a negative impact on the Cotswolds if it is not managed

properly. The board will be working hard to ensure that the Cotswold landscape is considered in the regional and national strategies and plans that are put in place to address these issues.

The Cotswolds is the largest of 40 AONBs in England and Wales. In 2000 the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (The Crow Act) stipulated that AONBs share the same status of protection in relation to scenic beauty as National Parks. But, I am sorry to say that this is not reflected in the level of resourcing given to AONBs. It is important to understand that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), has had to pass on higher level funding cuts to its delivery body, Natural England. However, it is more difficult to accept the disparity in funding where in the spring of this year National Parks received a 4.2% funding increase but, in comparison AONBs are again facing significant funding cuts. I urge all those in a position to make a difference to consider the national value of AONBs and work towards parity of investment to ensure a healthy future for all protected landscapes.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Henry Plumb".

**The Lord Plumb of Coleshill, DL FRAGS
Patron**

Highlights



Many of the board's wide ranging achievements are detailed in this review but, in summary, we:

- adopted the new Cotswolds AONB Management Plan
- completed the Heritage Lottery Funded Caring for the Cotswolds Project
- negotiated hosting arrangements for the Cotswold Way National Trail team
- completed the Landscape Strategy and Guidelines for all 19 landscape character types
- secured National Grid's consideration of alternative routes to their pipeline proposal from Wormington to Sapperton, a proposal that was withdrawn in the autumn
- secured amendments to Gloucestershire Nature map via Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
- congratulated wardens who broke an all time record last year working 41,144 hours – that's over 500 more than the previous year.

The AONB in 2007-08 in numbers:

12	The number of two-day drystone walling courses held across the summer.
15	The number of new access walks developed for wheelchair, power scooter and buggy users as part of the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens 'Walks on Wheels' project.
22	The number of areas of complex common land (Jurassic limestone grassland) in target areas in the AONB that are now being sensitively managed as a result of the Caring for the Cotswolds project.
40	The length in kms, of the Wormington to Sapperton gas pipeline. We objected to plans to build part of the pipeline through the AONB and in December National Grid withdrew plans.
46	The number of shows that wardens attended in the summer of 2007.
268	The number of responses to the new AONB Management Plan consultation process.
522	The number of trees that wardens planted.
4,133	The number of people who took part in our wardens guided walks programme.
5,143	The number of eight hour days worked collectively by the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens in 2007-08 – that's the equivalent of 23 people working full time for the organisation across the year.
47,000	The number of 'Explore the Cotswolds by public transport' leaflets distributed in and around the AONB in 2007-08.
£142,640	The overall value of work undertaken on projects funded by the board in 2007-08 through the Sustainable Development Fund.
£267,436	The value of volunteer time put in across the year ¹ .
£838,000	The amount, in pounds, of 'match funding' that we attracted across the year ² .

¹ Based on the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) funding formula of £6.50 per volunteer hour.

² Match funding is the amount of money that goes towards the total cost of projects that does not go through the board's accounts. The figure above does not include South East

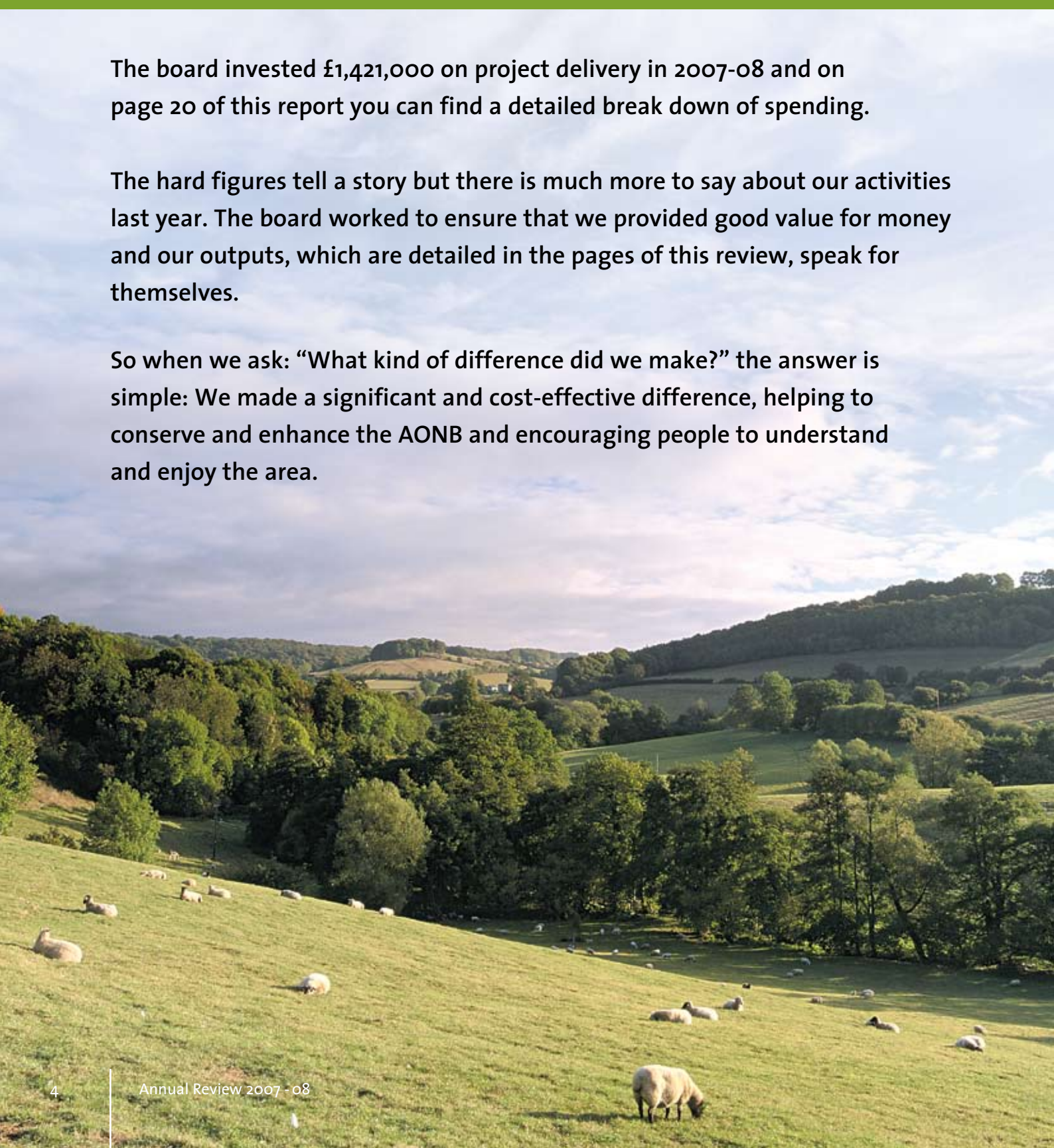
of England Development Agency (SEEDA) and HLF grant funding, as this money goes through the board's accounts.

What kind of difference did we make in 2007-08?

The board invested £1,421,000 on project delivery in 2007-08 and on page 20 of this report you can find a detailed break down of spending.

The hard figures tell a story but there is much more to say about our activities last year. The board worked to ensure that we provided good value for money and our outputs, which are detailed in the pages of this review, speak for themselves.

So when we ask: “What kind of difference did we make?” the answer is simple: We made a significant and cost-effective difference, helping to conserve and enhance the AONB and encouraging people to understand and enjoy the area.



So how did we do it?

Delivering on the ground



Much of the work that the board does has a direct impact ‘on the ground’ in the Cotswolds and can range from hands-on conservation projects to communications activity that encourages the public to enjoy and understand the AONB.

We successfully completed a five-year conservation project

The board’s ‘Caring for the Cotswolds’ project ended successfully last year. In all, £2.8 million was spent over the five years, with £1.4 million coming from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The project made huge improvements and advances on a conservation level in the project’s four areas of focus: Jurassic limestone grassland restoration, drystone walling, local distinctiveness and interpretation. The Heritage Lottery Fund has written to the board congratulating us on the completion of a successful project.

Achievements over the five years

Grassland

Half of the country’s remaining flower-rich Jurassic limestone grassland is in the AONB. (CG5 upright brome/tor grass). In the 1930s almost 40% of the Cotswolds was covered with unimproved limestone grassland; now it is only 1.5%. At only 3,000 hectares, the remaining unimproved limestone grassland in the Cotswolds is a small and fragmented remnant of what it once was.

Key achievements

- £857,000 of grants invested in 440 local projects with a total value of £2,266,000
- 17 kms of walls restored and 206 landowners’ walling projects supported
- 470 hectares of flower-rich limestone grassland brought under sustainable management
- Local distinctiveness guide published and over 15,000 copies distributed in partnership with Cotswold Life Magazine
- Three interactive educational games kiosks aimed at Key Stage 2 pupils (7-11 years) developed.

These sites need to be grazed properly to thrive. We conserved and enhanced flower-rich Jurassic limestone grassland sites in the AONB by introducing a grassland project designed to ensure that as many sites as possible moved into sustainable management:

- We worked with local farmers, landowners and graziers to ensure that more than 90 Jurassic limestone grassland sites within the project’s target area are sensitively managed. This included 22 areas of ‘complex common land’.

- Our limestone grassland work attracted significant amounts of external funding from the former Rural Development Service and Natural England.
- Landowners were successfully encouraged to enter agri-environment schemes to ensure long-term sustainability of their sites.



Drystone walling

The AONB has a network of drystone walls at least equivalent to the length of the Great Wall of China but many of these are in a bad state of disrepair. This, coupled with the fact that knowledge of rural skills is in decline in the area, means that there is a need to support drystone walling as a skill, and the landowners who are responsible for repairing their own walls.

The project helped conserve drystone walls in the Cotswolds by:

- establishing a grants scheme to encourage the restoration and management of just under 17kms of drystone walls in project areas – covering up to 50% of restoration costs

- encouraging rural skills by providing two-day drystone walling training courses for over 1,000 people
- subsidising course fees for more than 50 trainee drystone wallers and offering apprenticeship opportunities
- surveying drystone walls within 33 parishes in the Cotswolds.

Local distinctiveness

The beauty and character of the Cotswolds is made up of a combination of natural and man-made features that blend together to create the area's unique qualities. Local distinctiveness is a valuable asset in the AONB that

must be conserved if the area is to retain its unique appearance. We aimed to prevent the loss of local characteristics by identifying distinctive Cotswold features and then working to conserve and enhance them:

- We provided a grants scheme that encouraged restoration, repair and reintroduction of distinctive built features in the landscape, with 19 successful applications.
- We researched the local distinctiveness of the AONB and published the results. The Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change document can be found on our website, along with a public guide to local distinctiveness at www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk



Interpretation

The more fully aware people are of the unique qualities of the AONB the more likely they are to respect the area and want to help conserve it. The Cotswolds is a fascinating and varied place which offers rich opportunities for leisure activities and relaxation. This part of the Caring for the Cotswolds Project, helped us to communicate with the public using 'interpretation' techniques.



We:

- created a portable exhibition of six interpretation banners that are being placed in venues throughout the AONB. They let people know how they can help to conserve their area.
- produced three interactive kiosks housing an educational computer game designed to introduce 7-11 year olds to the Cotswolds AONB.

Summary of achievements over the five-year project

- 650 metres of wall restored during drystone walling training courses on 29 sites.
- 206 landowners supported through the drystone walling grants programme. The total value of the walling restoration work was just over £1.5 million, with around half a million pounds paid by the board in grants.
- 17 kms of wall restored through grant awards.
- Drystone wall surveys completed for 33 parishes, with data captured onto the board's Global Information Systems (GIS).
- Limestone Grassland Management Strategy compiled in association with English Nature and the National Trust and published in 2005.
- Grants of more than £200,000 paid to local communities and landowners towards the sustainable management of flower-rich limestone grasslands.
- Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change detailed guide published in May 2005.
- Local Distinctiveness Summary Guide published in collaboration with Cotswold Life Magazine in May 2007.
- 19 Local Distinctiveness grants were issued to individuals, local communities and organisations. The total value of the projects supported was £163,100, with £62,200 of grants paid by the board.
- Quantum Sheep and the Wonderful Wolds computer game developed and launched at the end of 2007. The game has been shortlisted for the Best E-Learning Award at this year's Big Chip Awards (a digital awards scheme).
- Four interpretation grants were issued to individuals, local communities and organisations.
- Total value of the interpretation projects supported was £9,750, with £4,100 of grants paid by the board.

We continued to build on our 'landscape scale' approach to land management

Since its inception in 2004, the board has been working towards landscape scale land management and last year we made significant steps forward in this area. This type of land management is important to secure the future and biodiversity of the Cotswold landscape. The landscape scale approach helps us work to mitigate the causes of climate change and to conserve a robust set of unique landscape characteristics that define the Cotswolds.



- We worked in partnership with the Forestry Commission and Natural England to develop the Cotswolds Ancient Woodland Project to ensure that increased grant aid and support is available for woodland owners, when it comes to managing ancient and native woodlands within the Forestry Commission's Ancient Woodland Priority Area (AWPA).
- We completed Landscape Strategies and Guidelines for all 19 of the AONB's landscape character types. This approach looks at the entire landscape in an AONB-wide context and provides local planners, land managers and decision makers with information that helps them make informed decisions about the suitability of proposed development or change within the Cotswold landscape.
- We worked with the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to refine the South West 'Nature Map' in the Gloucestershire part of the AONB. The nature map shows where the characteristic habitats which typify the county and support its wildlife can be expanded and linked to help wildlife survive in an uncertain future.

We encouraged rural skills

The landscape of the AONB depends on the main economic activities of farming, tourism and quarrying. However, fewer than 5% of people

living in the AONB work in agriculture, hunting, forestry and quarrying. The number of people living and working in the area who are capable of using rural skills to help conserve it is in decline. The board continued to work to reverse this decline in 2007-08 by encouraging rural skills development. We did this by:

- holding an annual drystone walling and hedgelaying competition. In all 26 hedgelayers attended the North Cotswolds Hedgelaying Competition in November and 17 people took part in our drystone walling competition in October.
- running four two-day beginners hedgelaying courses in the Midland style, which took place at Great Rissington across the winter; 39 people took part.
- providing 14 two-day summer drystone walling courses across the AONB at a cost of £49 per person; 134 people took part.
- forming a partnership with Abingdon and Witney College and the Dry Stone Walling Association of Great Britain, to run a walling apprenticeship scheme, 'Walling No Barrier' which, in 2007-08, was run on the Cornbury Estate near Charlbury in West Oxfordshire (courtesy of Lord Rotherwick). The board subsidises students' course fees and encourages them to 'pair up' with experienced wallers.



Our wardens

Worked to conserve and enhance the area and encouraged people to enjoy it.

The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens were established in 1968 and are celebrating their 40th anniversary this year. The wardens are an integral part of the Cotswolds Conservation Board and put thousands of voluntary hours in every year to help conserve and enhance the AONB. From carrying out access improvement work on the ground to talking to the public about the AONB at countless summer shows, the wardens make a valued effort. Last year they:

- worked a record number of hours across the year (41,144) – that’s over 500 more than the previous year
- planted 522 trees
- worked to conserve over 22 woodland sites (around 9.3 hectares) and 21 grassland sites (around five hectares)
- laid 915 metres of hedge and planted 131 metres of new hedge
- restored 594 metres of drystone wall
- installed 87 stiles and 138 gates
- replaced 101 waymarks and signposts
- led 256 guided walks, with 4,133 people attending
- attended 46 summer shows and gave 25 talks to local groups
- checked and helped to look after 3,498 miles of public rights of way in the AONB.



We made a significant contribution to sustainable tourism within the AONB

The Cotswolds is undoubtedly a beautiful place and is held up across the world as an example of the very best that the English countryside has to offer. Millions of tourists from the UK and abroad visit every year to discover and enjoy the Cotswolds. The tourism industry in the area clearly benefits from being able to promote such a quality product – a landscape that thrives because of the care and attention paid by those who manage it. These efforts ultimately generate the tourism revenues in the Cotswolds that help support the local economy. The board promotes sustainable tourism through the Cotswolds Green Tourism Project ³ in partnership with West Oxfordshire District Council. The project works to ensure that tourism facilities are provided in the most efficient way to avoid those very destinations, so valued by visitors and residents alike, from being degraded over time. Last year we worked to achieve this by:



³ The Cotswolds Green Tourism Project is funded by the Cotswolds Conservation Board, West Oxon Leader Plus and the South East of England Development Agency (SEEDA).

- Successfully encouraging nine new tourism businesses to become members of the Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS)⁴.
- Helping ten tourism businesses to collect voluntary visitor contributions, which will fund access and conservation improvements in the Cotswolds AONB. One holiday cottage agency collects voluntary contributions on behalf of all of its members.
- Holding ten green tourism workshops/advisory sessions.
- Starting work to secure the extension of the Cotswolds Green Tourism Project, from its current target area in West Oxfordshire, to the whole of the Cotswolds AONB.



We encouraged people to understand and enjoy the AONB

The more people know and understand the Cotswolds AONB, the better placed we all are to help conserve and enhance it. Public enjoyment of the landscape not only brings physical and mental health benefits, it also supports our conservation goal and can generate real economic benefits for the area.

- We promoted hundreds of guided walks in the area, many of them led by our wardens. (The wardens led 256 walks with 4,133 people taking part).
- We delivered a programme of family focused guided walks held during three half-terms across the year, with around 300 people taking part.
- We placed three interpretation kiosks, housing an educational computer game about the AONB, in three Bristol attractions. The game, 'Quantum Sheep and the Wonderful Wolds' encourages 7-11 year olds to learn about landscape change in the Cotswolds over time and has an accompanying lesson planning pack aimed at Key Stage 2 Geography and History pupils.

⁴ The GTBS is the leading sustainable tourism certification scheme in the UK with over 1,400 members. Businesses opting to join are assessed by a qualified grading advisor against a rigorous set of criteria covering a range of areas, like energy and water efficiency, waste management, biodiversity and more.

Delivering on the ground



- The wardens worked with the board to develop a walks pack designed for use by wheelchair, power scooter, buggy users and those who want an easy walk on a good surface. Walks on Wheels is a set of 15 walks, with route descriptions and maps which have been tested by disability and access groups from within the AONB. This project was delivered to help celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens in 2008.
- We created a series of walk descriptions and maps that people can download from our website. The set of 12 walks is based in the north Cotswolds around Bourton-on-the-Water, Burford, Chipping Norton and Stow-on-the-Wold. They are designed to enable

people to get to their starting point using public transport.

- We published 47,000 'Explore the Cotswolds by public transport' leaflets, a useful set of four information booklets that enables people to travel, with ease, across the AONB by bus and train. An additional 5,000 copies of the timetable booklet that covers the North Cotswolds was printed and distributed to stations along the North Cotswolds railway line courtesy of the Cotswolds and Malverns Transport Partnership. One of the booklets lets people know how they can walk and explore the Cotswold Way National Trail by public transport.
- We gave thousands of people access to information about the AONB by distributing 110,000 free copies of the Cotswold Lion across the area. 3,000 copies of the

grants listing publication, Cotswold Grants were also made available to farmers and members of the public. Both of these publications are also available on the website www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

- We produced a leaflet about a guided town walk in Chipping Campden – provided by the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens.
- We renewed old interpretation panels about the AONB, West Oxfordshire and the Wychwood Forest at Charlbury Station in Oxfordshire.
- We worked with a writer to help her produce a Japanese tour guide about the AONB. The guide is now on sale in bookshops in Japan.
- We updated and transformed a series of existing fact sheets into a professionally designed information pack about the AONB. Packs are available on request
Tel: 01451 862000.



Strategic advice and delivery

The board prides itself on the direct impact that much of its work has ‘on the ground’ in the Cotswolds, but it also works at a higher strategic level to influence, advise and persuade on matters that affect the AONB.

We developed new policy

Change is constant in the AONB, and the board works to adapt its policies to new circumstances and forces for change. We did this last year in a number of ways:

New Management Plan:

This year the board reviewed the existing AONB Management Plan as required by the 2000 Crow Act. The new five-year plan, which was adopted by the board in March 2008, and details policies and priorities for action, differs from the last management plan in that it is no longer shared by the 17 local authorities that sit within the AONB, but now belongs to the board. However, there is a strong emphasis on partnership working and the need for public bodies to fulfil their commitment to work towards helping to conserve and enhance the AONB. The new document is available on our website at www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

“The board is pleased to present its first AONB management plan, which is the culmination of a great deal of work and careful research, and sets a vision for the future management of the AONB together with clear objectives and policies. The plan will guide us in exercising our responsibilities and taking actions to ensure the future of the Cotswolds.”

Niel Curwen, Chairman.

New position statements:

The board approved four position statements last year. These documents clarify our position on key issues affecting the AONB. They are formulated in addition to the policy statements in our management plan and provide more detailed background and examples. They covered:

- employment
- transport
- affordable housing
- housing and development.

All of the statements can be viewed on our website at www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

We responded to a large number of consultations

The board acts as a ‘watchdog’ for the AONB, ensuring that it is aware of any proposed changes that may affect the area. We do this by making ourselves aware of consultations on a range of issues, from regional spatial strategies to requests for new flight paths. The board responds in accordance with its policy and objects to any plans that would be inappropriate for the AONB. Here is a taste of the responses that we made in 2007-08:

- HLS targeting for JCA 107, Cotswolds – Natural England
- Cotswold Canals Conservation Management Plan – British Waterways
- Oxfordshire County Council Forestry Statement – Oxfordshire County Council
- Wiltshire Rights of Way Improvements Plan – Wiltshire County Council
- Little Avon Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy – Environment Agency
- Miscanthus planting proposal at Salford, Oxfordshire – Natural England



- Conservation Principles – English Heritage
- Lorry Management Strategy – Gloucestershire County Council
- Planning application at National Star Centre – Cotswold District Council
- Airspace change proposal – National Airspace Agency
- Community Strategy – Cheltenham Borough Council
- Expansion proposals – Bath University
- National Affordable Housing Policy Review – Taylor Review
- Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document – Wychavon District Council
- Planning White Paper – Department of Communities and Local Government.

We distributed grants

In 2007-08 the board received an allocation of £63,000 to dispense as grant funding through the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF). The full amount was distributed to 12 projects that helped to conserve and enhance the AONB. The overall value of the work undertaken was £142,640.

For the past three years the board has been administering SDF grants aimed at encouraging individuals, community groups and businesses to co-operate in developing practical

and sustainable solutions to manage their activities. Projects we supported over the past year ranged from those encouraging community involvement in conservation and sustainable living to “grass roots” conservation work designed to impact positively on local biodiversity.

Here is a taste of some of the projects we funded:

- A state-of-the-art ‘Lidar’ survey of a stretch of the Cotswolds Escarpment including the Cranham area, the results of which will provide valuable and hitherto unseen information about the ‘lie of the land’ and archaeological features in the survey area. (See case study on page 17.)
- The installation of a sustainable energy source (a ground source heat pump) in Toddington’s new village hall.
- A hedgelaying project at Moreton-in-Marsh where a group of volunteers were trained to restore a hedge that runs alongside a public footpath adjacent to the town’s allotment.
- A theatre project where Cotswold Voluntary Wardens worked in partnership with Red Dog Productions to demonstrate to Cotswold school children the links between Shakespeare, the woollen industry and the landscape in which they live. (See case study page 17.)

We objected to plans for inappropriate development

One of the initial driving forces behind the designation of AONBs and National Parks in the mid-20th century was to guard against what is seen as inappropriate development in some of Britain’s finest landscapes. Although the board is not a planning authority for the AONB, it still acts as an advisor to the 17 local authorities that sit within the area. We also respond to planning and development consultations that significantly affect the AONB or may set a precedent.

In 2007, we objected to National Grid’s plans to build a 40km gas pipeline from Wormington in Worcestershire to Sapperton in Gloucestershire. The majority of the planned pipeline would have cut through the AONB. The board made a formal objection to what was then the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) on the grounds that the Environmental Impact Assessment for the pipeline had not fully considered the AONB or an alternative route outside of it. National Grid was then asked by the DTI to identify such a route. In December 2007 National Grid announced that it had decided to withdraw plans for the pipeline on the grounds that revised figures showed that demand for gas in the South West was not rising as quickly as originally forecast. National Grid has said that the pipeline will be reviewed again in the summer of

2008. The board was the only organisation to take a wholly strategic view of the impact of the pipeline on the area as a whole and was supported by Natural England in doing so.

We worked in partnership and levered in funding

The board is the one overarching body that cares for the AONB as a whole but we cannot work alone. We work in partnership with many organisations and bodies within the area to ensure that the AONB is properly conserved and enhanced and that people have the opportunity to understand and enjoy it. Whether it be with Natural England, one of the 17 local authorities in the AONB, local history groups, parish

councils or the tourism bodies in the area, we are constantly working alongside others to achieve shared objectives. In some instances we work with other organisations to 'lever in' funding from external bodies and in others our partner organisations are the ones providing the funding. Here are some of the ways in which we have worked with others this year:

- We worked in partnership with the Drystone Walling Association of Great Britain and Abingdon and Witney college to run a walling training and apprenticeship course: Walling No Barrier.
- We joined forces with Natural England and the Forestry Commission to establish the Cotswolds Ancient Woodland

Project. (More information on page 8.)

- We worked in partnership with West Oxfordshire District Council to run the Cotswolds Green Tourism Project. (More information on page 10/11.)
- We continued to support Friends of the Cotswolds, a registered charity created with the support of the board in 2006. In 2007-08 the board supported the Friends financially, providing over £5,000 for their running costs.
- The board became host to the new Cotswold Way National Trail team under a one-year agreement with Natural England where it pays 100% of the running costs. This is an interim arrangement pending the conclusion of a review into National Trails by Natural England but it is hoped that the board goes on to host the trail in the long term.
- The board hosted the first Cotswolds Access Conference on January 23rd at Cotswold District Council in Cirencester. In all, 55 people attended from a wide range of partner organisations.
- We communicated effectively with our partner organisations during the year and held two forum events for partners and an annual forum.
- 32 farmers attended our Farming Forum in March.

Stow-on-the-Wold



Case studies

The board is delivering efficiently and cost-effectively in ways that really benefit the AONB. Here are just a few case studies:

The Compton Abdale Crocodile

The villagers of Compton Abdale successfully applied for a Caring for the Cotswolds local distinctiveness grant to cover up to 50% of the cost of repairs to a well-known and beloved village feature. Now their stone water conduit, which was carved in the shape of a crocodile's head back in the 19th century and channels spring water from the limestone hillside into the River Coln, has been restored to its former glory.

As you can see from the pictures the crocodile had been worn by



time and had lost its sharp detail. Thanks to a £2,000 grant from the board a local stonemason was able to bring the village's 'exotic pet' back to life.



Restoration of Alderton medieval fish pond

Cotswold Voluntary Wardens worked as part of the North Wiltshire Medieval Pond Restoration Group to restore Alderton medieval fish pond. Disused since the demolition of the local manor house 200 years ago, the pond sits next to Alderton Church and was neglected, overgrown and full of debris before the project began.

The pond was the medieval equivalent of a freezer. Owned by the manor it was an important source of food and provided an essential stock of fresh fish in the winter.

The group cleared overgrown trees and shrubs, removed a build up of rubbish and dredged the pond under the supervision of archaeologists. They also, installed fencing and carried out walling repairs.

Funding for the pond restoration came from the board (the Countryside Fund and the Sustainable Development Fund), North Wiltshire District Council, Wiltshire Biodiversity, Wessex Watermark and Wiltshire Community First.



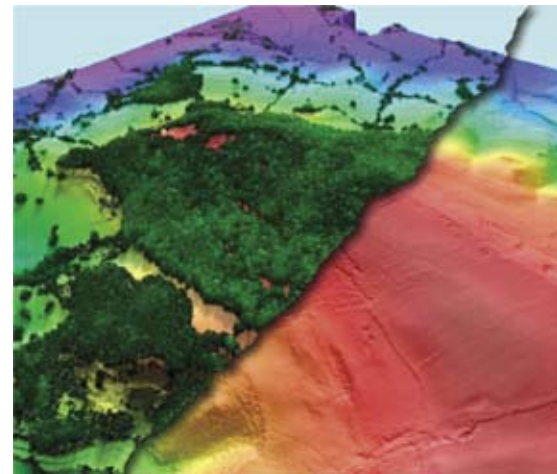
The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens worked with Red Dog Productions

In the summer of 2007, Red Dog Productions worked in association with the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens, who are part of the Cotswolds Conservation Board, to inspire children to learn more about the AONB by mixing the pleasure of walking with educational workshops about Cotswold heritage. Pupils also had a chance to enjoy the magic of theatre by taking part in a workshop about Red Dog’s touring production, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The children then went on to perform in an evening production of the play at their school.

The project was made possible by a £15,000 Sustainable Development Fund grant from the board. Guided walks led by the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens allowed the children to experience and explore settlement patterns, building materials and styles, grassland and the significance of wool in shaping the Cotswold landscape. The workshops introduced pupils to peg loom weaving and they had the chance to create display materials based on the morning’s walk. Pupils were also given a booklet produced by Red Dog Productions about the landscape and heritage of the Cotswolds.

Sustainable Development Fund grant for Lidar survey

The board met part of the cost of a ‘state-of-the-art’ aerial (Lidar) survey of part of the Cotswold Escarpment. The £18,000 grant was given to Cranham Local History Society, and enabled a light aircraft with some sophisticated survey equipment on board to gather data which produced images of the archaeological features on the surface of the Escarpment, over an area stretching from Leckhampton Hill in the north to Stroud in the south.



The survey was undertaken to broaden the understanding and knowledge of historical features previously hidden beneath the dense canopy of trees that covers much of the Escarpment. LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) uses a scanning radar range finder that



Quantum the sheep

bypasses obstructions like foliage to measure the height of the ground surface and other features in large areas of landscape with a resolution and accuracy that provides highly detailed models of the land surface.

The resulting digital 'map' is available free of charge to anyone who needs the information, as long as it is not used for commercial purposes. The society has created an informative website about the survey at: www.cranhamsurvey.org.uk

Badminton Estate

An entire section of wall that runs along the A433 and borders the Duke of Beaufort's Badminton Estate was in a bad state of repair but a Caring for the Cotswolds project drystone walling grant helped to change all that. The board awarded four separate grants totalling £82,373 for the restoration of 2,442 metres of wall. Work took place over a three-year period, ending in 2007.



Interpretation kiosks

Meet an energetic and lovable Cotswold sheep, who will take you on a journey through time and make sure that you learn all about the main elements that have gone into making today's Cotswold landscape. Seven to eleven year olds have been playing with

Quantum during the spring of 2008 on a new interactive video game available in three Bristol venues: Bristol Zoo, Windmill Hill City Farm and Noah's Ark Zoo Farm.

The aim of the game is to help Quantum rescue a lost lamb from four periods in history. Our hero goes back in time to either the Celtic, Roman, medieval or Victorian era and encounters all sorts of flora and fauna which makes the Cotswolds what it was and what it is today.

The kiosks were created as part of the interpretation element of the board's five-year Caring for the Cotswolds Project.

Landscape Strategies and Guidelines

The board has produced a set of 19 Landscape Strategies and Guidelines designed to be used by local decision makers and planners to help them make informed decisions about the suitability of proposed development or change within the Cotswold landscape. By building on the findings of the Cotswolds AONB landscape character assessment, the Landscape Strategies and Guidelines provide an overview of the forces for change that are influencing the landscape and outline ways in which change can be managed in a sustainable and positive way. They:

- Identify the forces for change that have influenced the landscape of the Cotswolds AONB in the past and are likely to do so in the foreseeable future. This was achieved through a combination of field work, research and analysis of existing policy and strategy documents and consultation with local authority and government agency staff.
- Consider the implications of these changes on landscape character. This was achieved by evaluating the key environmental features of each landscape character type such as key habitats, historic sites and features, and cultural and perceptual qualities and then



exploring the implications of land use change for each landscape character type and assessing the effects on landscape character and key landscape features.

- Help to inform the decision-making process and manage change in a sustainable and positive manner – this process is aided by the continuing development of ideas and advice to counter adverse landscape change and optimise beneficial landscape change.
- Provide local landscape indicators that could be used to monitor landscape change in future.

Access conference

The board hosted the first Cotswolds Access Conference on January 23rd at Cotswold District Council in Cirencester. In all, 55 people attended and heard an introduction from the board’s director Martin Lane and two board members Richard Lloyd and Jo Burgon. This was followed by a series of short presentations:

- land – Paul Harris, Oxfordshire County Council
- land – Charles Mann, NFU
- people – Ron Phelps, Ramblers Association

- people – Jacqui Stearn, Natural England
- information – Prof. Catherine Ward-Thompson, OPENspace, The University of Edinburgh.

An afternoon workshop followed, focusing on rights of way and access, access for all and information. For more information on the outcome of the day please contact our Land Management Officer, **Mark Connelly** on **01451 862006**.

Tributes

Two key figures who played instrumental roles in the history of the Cotswolds AONB died last year. Here we pay tribute to them.

John Hannis

1925-2008

Honorary Vice President of the former Cotswolds AONB Partnership, John Hannis died on February 28th 2008, aged 83.

John was a member of the Cotswolds AONB Partnership and the Joint Advisory Committee and a member of borough, district and county councils for over four decades. John was the last Mayor of Chipping Norton Borough Council and the first person to be awarded the title of Honorary

Citizen of the town. His first job on leaving school was on a farm, securing his strong knowledge and love of the countryside. A keen supporter and advocate of the AONB, John always offered his knowledge, support and enthusiasm and often called in on voluntary warden work parties in his local area.

John Workman

1923-2008

Honorary Vice President of the former Cotswolds AONB Partnership and Chairman of the Joint Advisory Committee 1993-98, John died aged 84 on 18 April 2008.

John lived all his life in Gloucestershire. He worked for many years as the Forestry Adviser for the National Trust and was internationally regarded for forestry

expertise. He was also a member of the trust’s Conservation Panel, and its Severn Regional Committee and was its representative on the Cotswolds AONB Joint Advisory Committee 1968-98. John was a very active member of some 30 other organisations, such as a Secretary of State member of the board of Exmoor National Park Authority, a founder of the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum in 1985 (Chairman for five years and Trustee for more than 15), founder member and Trustee of Gloucestershire Trust for Nature Conservation (and finally an Honorary Vice President), founder member and Chairman for 15 years of the Council for Gloucestershire Countryside, President of the Royal Forestry Society (1974-76.) He received the OBE in 1978.

Summary financial statement

1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008

Income and expenditure account	2006-07	2007-08
	£	£
Expenditure	1,398,809	1,552,803
Project delivery	1,255,235	1,421,391
Corporate management and administration	150,284	139,202
Interest receivable	(6,710)	(7,790)
Income	(1,334,530)	(1,529,717)
Natural England provision	(761,426)	(627,271)
Local authorities' contribution	(173,623)	(176,617)
Heritage Lottery Fund contribution	(238,474)	(569,695)
Other	(161,007)	(156,134)
Deficit for year	64,279	23,086
Deficit for the year after movement on reserves	8,237	38,084

Balance sheet

Fixed assets	0	0
Current assets	341,455	288,703
	341,455	288,703
Less: current liabilities	(231,277)	(175,611)
Net current assets	110,178	113,092
Long term pension asset/(liability)	(109,000)	27,000
Total net assets	1,178	140,092
Financed by		
General fund balance	54,738	16,654
Other reserves	35,440	50,438
Pension reserve	(89,000)	73,000
	1,178	140,092

The summary statement includes statutory adjustments required by the Financial Reporting Standard 17 report from the actuary to the board's pension fund. Before these adjustments, the board made a surplus after movement on reserves of £2,914 and the balance sheet balanced at £113,092. Subject to audit.





The Cotswolds Conservation Board 2007-08

Patron The Lord Plumb of Coleshill,
DL FRAGS

Chairman Niel Curwen

Vice Chairman Jeff West

Staff

Director Martin Lane

Land Management Officer
Mark Connelly

Office Manager Margaret Fletcher

Administration Officer Claire Rossiter

Information & Interpretation Officer
Claire Cunningham

Planning Officer Malcolm Watt

Project Development/Business

Planning Officer John Mills

Volunteer Co-ordinator Rebecca Jones

Project Manager †

Caring for the Cotswolds John Tabor

Grassland Project Officer †

Caring for the Cotswolds Jenny Phelps

Drystone Wall Project Officer †

Caring for the Cotswolds

Jonathan Gahan

Countryside Interpretation Officer †

Caring for the Cotswolds Becky Smith

Cotswolds Conservation Board

Fosse Way
Northleach
Gloucestershire GL54 3JH

Tel: 01451 862000

Fax: 01451 862001

Website: www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

Student Placement Harry Cox/
Helen Walton

Sustainable Development Fund
Project Officer Anne Powell

Financial Officer Reg Talbot

Committee Clerk Stephen Holley

Monitoring Officer Nigel Adams

Supported by over 340 Cotswold
Voluntary Wardens

Board members

Peter Abbott

Michael Banks*

Ken Betteridge*

Libby Bird

Ann Boon

Jo Burgon*

Rebecca Charley

Niel Curwen*

Mathew Darby

Peter Doyle

Nicholas Dummett

Liz Eyre

David Folkes

Stephen Gray

Tim Hill*

Sue Hope*

Verena Hunt*

Richard Lloyd*

Will Manley

Jim Mason

John Matthews

John Millington*

Susie Moore

Adrian Phillips

Tony Phillips*

Ian Plaister

Simon Randall

George Reynolds

Christopher Saint

Don Seale

Christine Shine

Carole Soden

Julie Soutter*

Caron Steel

Jonathan Stout

Lloyd Surgenor*

Rosemary Todd

Carole Toppel*

Mark Tufnell

Martin Veal

Robert Vines

Judith Webb

Jeff West*

Please note: staff and board members are shown for the period April 2007 to March 2008.

* Members of the board's Executive Committee.

† The Caring for the Cotswolds Project Team was dissolved at the end of the project in December 2008.

