

# Cotswolds Conservation Board Annual Review 2008-09



Cotswolds

Area of Outstanding  
Natural Beauty



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

# Chairman's Introduction



Niel Curwen MBE

## Welcome to the fourth annual review of the Cotswolds Conservation Board.

As guardians of the Cotswolds AONB, we have many responsibilities towards ensuring that this special landscape is conserved and enhanced for future generations. Our management plan, which was published and distributed last year, provides the strategic framework in which the Board works and sets a vision for the future management of the AONB, together with clear objectives and policies to guide us on our journey forward.

I am delighted to share with you many of our achievements of the past year which range from the launch of a new farmland bird initiative in partnership with Natural England, to help reverse the decline in the number and variety of our farmland birds, to unveiling a new website for the Board providing up to date information on our many and wide-ranging activities.

It has been a successful year for the Board, particularly in terms of the number of high profile visits that we have received. Dr Helen Phillips, Chief Executive Officer of Natural England, visited us in November to see first hand some of the Board's work. She went away duly impressed, particularly with our range of activities, both on a strategic and practical basis.

In March 2009 we were the first protected area to be visited by Huw Irranca-Davies MP, Minister for the Natural & Marine Environment, Wildlife & Rural Affairs. He was particularly keen to see our work in the development of rural skills training, as well as our strategic work on landscape strategy and guidelines. Our proactive involvement with the landscape was well received by the Minister and provided us with an official seal of approval.

We were also fortunate to have the opportunity of showing David Cameron MP some of our work in developing rural skills in the Cotswolds. With his constituency in Witney, Mr Cameron took much interest in the work of the Board in conserving and enhancing the AONB and enjoyed the opportunity of meeting drystone walling students who were training on a course run by the Board in partnership with one of our local colleges.

As well as individual visitors, we have also hosted a number of overseas study visits including groups from Norway, Japan and Sweden.

Following on from a successful initial year incorporating the management of the Cotswold Way National Trail, we were delighted to be given the welcome task by Natural England of continuing to oversee the management of the Trail for a further two years.

Last year we were thrilled to help celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens. As a committed and enthusiastic group of volunteers, the wardens provide a very public face for the Board and we are ever grateful for their continued hard work and dedication.

Of course we cannot achieve our goals by working in isolation and therefore rely very much on strengthening our partnerships with local organisations, bodies and groups. In addition to our own projects, we have provided a great deal of advice and support to other organisations, groups and individuals, from sustainable community projects to planning consultations. We are looking forward to continuing our work this year and to encouraging, supporting and facilitating the positive actions of those living, working and visiting the Cotswolds AONB.

**Niel Curwen MBE**

Chairman  
Cotswolds Conservation Board

*Congratulations to Niel Curwen who was awarded an MBE in the 2009 New Year Honours for his contribution to the work of the Cotswolds Conservation Board and in helping to conserve and enhance the AONB.*

# Foreword



The Lord Plumb of Coleshill, DL FRAGS

**In England we tend to break our work down into small pieces and not always make the links between them. One thing that we can learn from Europe and North America is how to assemble the various related strands of activity into one large, cohesive picture.**

One of the Board's strengths is that it is one of the few, if not the only, organisation that looks at the AONB in its entirety. Spanning three regions and fifteen local authorities can be something of a challenge - but that makes it all the more appropriate for the Board to take account of the whole AONB picture.

The past year has been a time of financial hardships across the world and a whole series of budget settlements for the future are under considerable strain. However it is a time when we need to continue to invest in our environment. The return on our investment - our quality of life, exercise, health, well being, inspiration and tranquillity is better than any bank can offer.

The financial crisis is reawakening not only how we manage our finances, but also how we engage with, and our impact on the environment. How often we travel, how much we throw away, how much oil we use for the car or heating our houses, as well as how we make more of our local countryside rather than foreign travel

options and how we exploit the potential for growing our own food, will all affect our environment for future generations.

The UK looks to be falling short on renewable energy targets, as well as adaptation to and mitigation of climate change. Whilst the Board may object to some aspects of green energy, there is no doubt that the AONB and the Board can play their full part.

Our Sustainable Development Fund is supporting a variety of green energy solutions in local communities, whilst advice on the most appropriate renewable energy solutions for the AONB in the form of published fact sheets is easily accessible. We are also researching the impact of climate change and globalisation on the future appearance of the Cotswolds, along with preparing associated advice to give to farmers, land owners and land managers.

Despite the difficulties of the past year, it has been a time of celebration with the 40th anniversary of the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens. The wardens are an integral part of our organisation, without whom we would not be able to carry out the immense amount of work that is achieved on the ground, year after year. We are, as always, indebted to their commitment to the AONB.

We look forward to further celebrations in 2009/10 with the 100th anniversary of the first National Park in Europe, and the 60th anniversary of the legislation that paved the way for our protected areas in England - the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act in 1949.

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

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

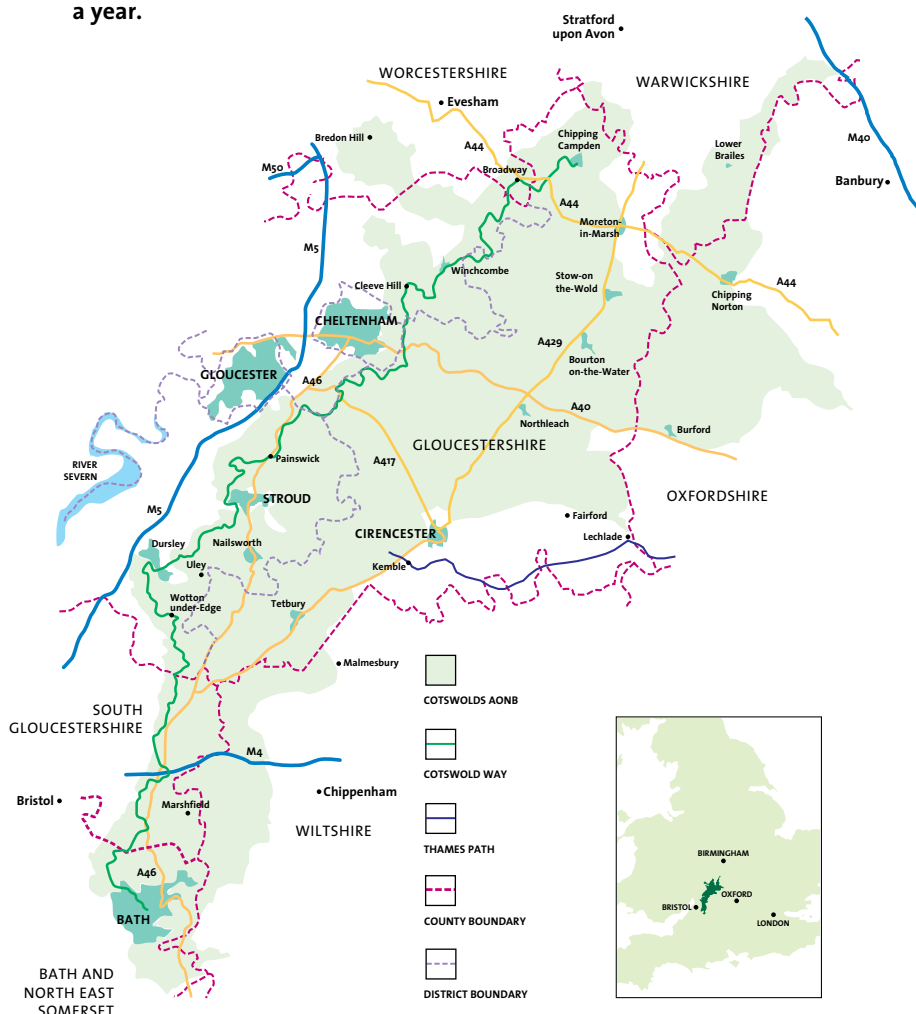
# The Cotswolds - an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

**The Cotswolds was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1966 in recognition of its rich, diverse and high quality landscape. It is the third largest protected landscape in England and Wales after the Lake District and Snowdonia, and covers 2,039 sq km (790 sq miles) stretching from Warwickshire and Worcestershire in the north, through Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire, down to Bath and Wiltshire in the south. It has a population of 157,000 people and attracts 23 million visitors a year.**

Underlying much of the Cotswolds AONB is oolitic limestone used for the distinctive Cotswolds walls and buildings for which the area is famous. Its countryside is diverse with rolling landscapes, ancient woodlands, limestone grasslands with rare flora and swathes of arable fields. Five European Special Areas of Conservation, three National Nature Reserves and over 80 Sites of Special Scientific Interest testify to the great variety of wildlife and habitats found in the AONB.

The AONB status was a result of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act which was passed in 1949. This act established how the countryside could be protected and enjoyed by future generations, paving the way for the creation of today's family of National Parks, AONBs, National Nature Reserves and National Trails.

A year long celebration is taking place to mark 100 years of national parks and protected areas in Europe, with the first national park designated in Sweden in 1909. 2009 also marks 60 years of protected countryside since the 1949 Act and is part of the Diamonds in the Landscape celebrations. Further details of these celebratory activities can be found at: [www.diamondsinthelandscape.org.uk](http://www.diamondsinthelandscape.org.uk).



# The Cotswolds Conservation Board

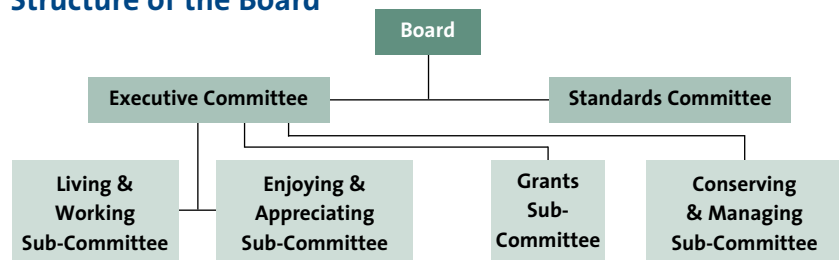
The Cotswolds AONB is looked after by the Cotswolds Conservation Board on behalf of those who live, work and visit the area, now and for future generations.

The Board is an independent statutory organisation made up of 37 members appointed by local authorities, parish councils and Government. It has a team of 15 staff based in the market town of Northleach, and is supported by over 350 voluntary wardens who dedicate thousands of hours each year to practical conservation and promotional work throughout the AONB.

The Board works closely with all those who have the interests of the AONB at heart and plays a key advisory role in reconciling development and conservation - whether guiding long term trends or formally commenting on planning applications and policies. Specialist staff give advice and information on a wide range of topics such as wildlife, farm conservation, landscape improvements, recreation and access, archaeology and transportation.

The Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2008-13 sets out the Board's detailed policies and actions to achieve its key aims of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB, while increasing the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities. The Management Plan can be downloaded from the AONB website: [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk)

## Structure of the Board



### Tribute

#### Tony Phillips OBE

1927-2009

Member of the Cotswolds Conservation Board, Tony Phillips died on 23 June 2009, aged 82.

Tony had been a Board member since its launch in 2004, as well as a member of its Executive Committee, and Vice Chairman of the Board's Conserving & Managing Sub-Committee. Tony was a former leader of West Wiltshire District Council and had spent 53 years in local government, accumulating a wealth of knowledge and experience in local government affairs; he was the only councillor to serve on the district council from its inception in 1973 until 2009 when it was disbanded to make way for Wiltshire Council. Tony had been elected to the Southwick seat for Wiltshire Council at the June 4 elections.

A strong advocate and ambassador for the AONB and the Conservation Board, Tony always offered help and encouragement wherever he could, and made many positive contributions. His enthusiasm and good sense of humour made him a popular figure among his fellow members and staff.

A former land surveyor, Tony was a specialist in forestry and woodland management. In 1980, he purchased Rocks East Woodlands - over 100 acres of historic woodlands near Bath in the Cotswolds AONB - and later developed it into a woodland education and training centre. He went on to restore an historic woodland garden, and set up a Trust to ensure its future management. Along the way he won the national Countryside Award for the promotion of understanding of woodlands between town and country people. He received his OBE in 1988.

# Highlights of 2008-09

**The Board can celebrate a wide range of achievements in 2008-09, many of which are detailed in this review. But here are some of our key achievements in summary:**

- The Cotswold Farmland Bird Initiative commenced with the appointment of a project officer in October 2008.
- Four new position statements were adopted and published on the following subjects:
  - Biodiversity Planning
  - Telecommunications and the Rural Economy
  - Management of Roadside Verges
  - Management of Wild Deer
- The Board continues to respond actively to pressure from development and has participated in 73 planning and transport applications, as well as commenting in depth on five major land management policies.
- The Ancient Woodlands Project continued with the appointment of external consultants to raise awareness of the extra grants available in the Cotswolds.
- The Future of Farming and Forestry Study commenced in March 2009.
- Landscape Strategy and Guidelines for six character types were adopted by the Board completing the full set of guidelines for all 19 landscape character types.
- The Board accepted Natural England's invitation to oversee the management of the Cotswold Way National Trail team for a further two years.
- Fourteen dry stone walling and hedgelaying training courses were held, involving over 160 participants.
- Fifty-four competitors took part in the Dry Stone Walling and North Cotswolds Hedgelaying Competitions.
- The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens celebrated their 40th Anniversary with a series of events and activities throughout 2008.
- The Wardens contributed a record 41,719 hours of voluntary work and activities for the AONB.
- Visits were made to the Cotswolds AONB by Huw Irranca-Davies MP, Minister for the Natural & Marine Environment, Wildlife & Rural Affairs; Dr Helen Phillips CEO of Natural England; and David Cameron MP for Witney.
- Twenty-nine full applications were considered by the Grants Sub-Committee, leading to over £40,000 of grant funding awarded to 11 projects.
- Five circular walks have been developed to promote the Cotswold Way National Trail for short trips.
- Four tourism businesses were accredited by the Green Tourism Business Scheme.

# What did we achieve in 2008-09?

## Conserving and Enhancing



The primary purpose of the Cotswolds Conservation Board is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty and landscape of the AONB. We do this by working with landowners, farmers, conservation organisations and local communities to help preserve the distinctive countryside, wildlife and heritage of the Cotswolds.

### Biodiversity

#### Cotswold Farmland Bird Project

An exciting new conservation project was launched in October in conjunction with Natural England and the RSPB aimed at reversing the decline in the number and variety of birds that can be found on Cotswold farmland.

The project is working closely with farmers to promote the importance of thriving farmland bird populations and rich arable biodiversity. Project officers have also been providing advice tailored to farms and offering assistance with the effective delivery and management of the Environmental Stewardship Scheme within defined target areas in the Cotswolds.

Since the mid-1970's farmland bird populations in England have declined and the main aim of the project is to reverse that by increasing the population size and range of some important farmland bird species with a particular focus on lapwing, grey partridge, turtle dove, yellow wagtail, tree sparrow and corn bunting.

It is hoped that by the end of the project in 2011 we will see a rise in the range of farmland bird species and their numbers and that we will have gathered a lot of detailed information about farmland bird areas so that we can target future conservation work.

Since the start of the project, a great deal of work has been undertaken including the identification and recording of the top 150 farms; site visits made to 21 farms, 20 of which have agreed to implement Farm Environment Plans covering around 7,800 ha.

Lapwing.

#### Ancient Woodland Project

Ancient woodlands in the Cotswolds are exceptionally rich in wildlife, including many rare species and habitats. However, they are both rare and irreplaceable. There are major threats to our woodlands and landscape as a result of climate change, excessive grazing, pollution and inadequate management.

A large part of the Cotswolds AONB has been identified as an Ancient Woodland Priority Area (AWPA) by the Forestry Commission, enabling landowners to benefit from increased payments to the English Woodland Grant Scheme. Last year, additional support and resources became available as part of the Cotswolds Ancient Woodland Project, in partnership with the Forestry Commission and with support from Natural England.

The aim of the project is to support and promote appropriate management of ancient woodland. It provides landowners with help in meeting the costs of managing existing woodlands and the creation of new ones. The scheme is designed to help owners manage woodlands to their full potential in a number of





**Beechwood, Cooper's Hill.**

ways, for example by producing timber, providing a quality woodland experience for visitors or clearing areas of conifers to replace them with native species. In the Cotswolds this enhanced grant funding is particularly useful for planting native trees to link up smaller areas of woodland and create larger habitats that better sustain wildlife.

Following the appointment of consultants Pryor & Rickett Silviculture, a number of woodland owners have been contacted leading to a potential 18 England Woodland Grant Scheme applications covering over 1,000ha of ancient woodland.

The project will continue into 2009/10 with the second phase of follow-up work taking place during the year.

### Rural Land Management

The Cotswolds AONB is a living, working landscape. Many of the distinctive features in the landscape are a result of man's interaction with the land over the centuries. For example, there are over 4,000 miles of dry stone walls, constructed from the thin strata of oolitic limestone that lies just beneath the ground's surface. Hedgerows too are a prominent feature of the landscape, providing important wildlife habitats for key species. Some hedgerows and walls mark historical boundaries such as parishes and manors.

Many of our walls and hedges are in a state of disrepair which, coupled with a decline in the number of people living and working in the area who are capable of using rural skills means that without active conservation, they will deteriorate even further. The Cotswolds Conservation Board recognises the vital need to maintain these important features of the countryside and continued its work in developing and celebrating rural skills during 2008-09 by:

- holding an annual competition in rural skills. The dry stone walling competition encompassed the celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Dry Stone Walling Association and saw 26 competitors taking part including national finalists competing for the awards donated by His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales. The hedgelaying competition saw



## Case Study

### Dry stone walling trainee turned trainer

Our dry stone walling courses have not only encouraged trainees to further their knowledge and expertise in this traditional craft, but they have also inspired one former trainee to become a trainer himself and pass on his skills to others.

John Hepworth from Kidlington in Oxfordshire first embarked on our walling course in 2003 with trainer John Bendle. He then progressed to an intermediate course followed by successful completion of the LANTRA Level 2 qualification at Abingdon & Witney College in 2007. Since then he has been working as a professional dry stone waller in West Oxfordshire and Dorset, working for estates such as Cornbury Park.

With his passion for dry stone walling firmly embedded, last year John returned to the Cotswolds to help encourage others to take up the craft. He taught on our courses at Naunton and Lansdown, and will be carrying out further teaching for us on four more courses during 2009-10.



an increase in the number of competitors this year, with 28 people taking part.

- running 12 courses for beginners in dry stone walling, attracting over 140 participants.

### Hedgelaying competition November 2008



- enabling 14 trainees on the 'Walling No Barrier' apprenticeship scheme to pass the nationally recognised LANTRA Level 2 walling exam. The project was supported by funding from LEADER+ and the Ernest Cook Trust, and was run by Abingdon and Witney College in partnership with the Cotswolds Conservation Board and the Dry Stone Walling Association of Great Britain.
- organising two hedgelaying training weekends in the Midland style, attracting 21 participants.

*"Well done on another superbly organised event, it took a lot of work to get the site ready well done all involved, the hedge now laid looks very impressive, and is a good advert for the AONB and hedgelaying."*

**Robin Dale, Chairman, National Hedgelaying Society.**

*"Course tutor was excellent as was the content of the course."*

**Chris Simon, dry stone walling course participant at Tetbury.**



**Ancient Large Leaved Lime.**

## Climate Change

### Farming & Forestry study commenced

Farming, which accounts for 86% of the land area of the AONB, and forestry a further 10%, have been the principal influences on the development of the special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB. The impact of Foot and Mouth Disease in 2001 underlined the interdependence of activities in the Cotswold countryside, especially the key relationship between farming, tourism and recreation.

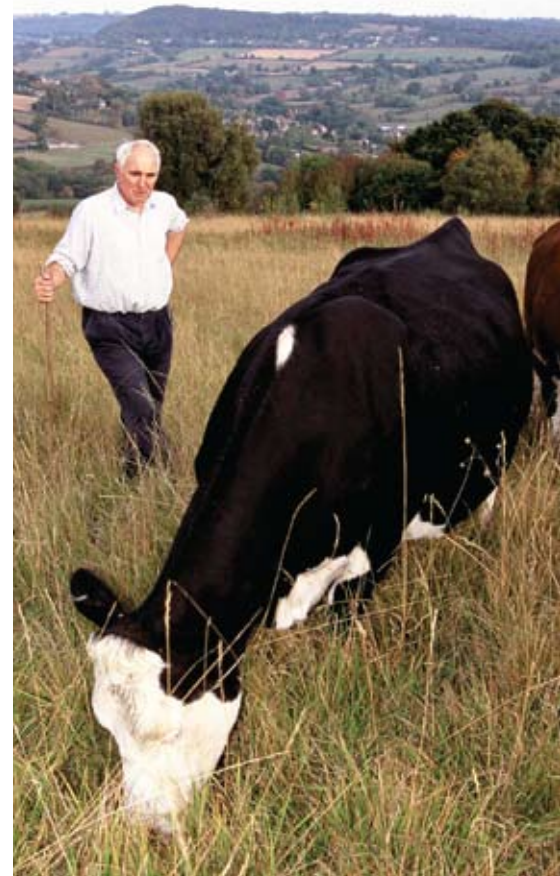
Given the importance of farming and forestry to the Cotswold landscape, special features and economy, the Board commissioned a report in March 2009 to assess the likely impact of climate change and globalisation on farming and forestry, and to identify possible scenarios for change in the main rural land uses and activities in the Cotswolds over the next 20 years.

The specific objectives of the study are:

- to update the 2003 farming study, and identify significant changes and trends
- to assess the current position of forestry within the Cotswolds AONB
- to provide an overview of the impact of climate change and globalisation
- to identify various scenarios on the possible impacts of climate change and globalisation on farming and forestry, with estimates of probability
- to propose policies and actions to promote and guide change in farming and forestry
- to align the conclusions of the study to the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan.

The full report will be issued during 2009-10, however early indications show that there are a number of key issues arising from the research, namely that climate change and

global economic pressures mean that change in the Cotswolds landscape is inevitable. How we, farmers and landowners respond to this change is a challenge and an opportunity that will need to be harnessed if we are to continue to enjoy the AONB's special qualities in future years.



# Understanding and Enjoying



We work to increase the understanding, enjoyment and appreciation of the Cotswolds AONB by those who live, work and visit this special area. Improving access and opportunities for recreation, combined with providing a range of information materials helps to fulfil these aims.

## Information & Interpretation

Providing a range of information for people to understand the Cotswolds AONB area and the work of the Cotswolds Conservation Board is an important part of our role.

This year, our range of information and interpretation media increased to reach an ever-widening audience locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

### New website went live

A new website developed for the Cotswolds AONB went live in January 2009 and attracted 447,413 hits and 15,487 visits during its first three months.

The new site at [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk) offers plenty of fresh, new features including monthly events, details of the activities of the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens, plus an interactive map. The Cotswold Way National Trail has a dedicated website, linked to the Cotswolds AONB site, and forms part of the family of national trails in the UK. [www.nationaltrail.co.uk](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk)

## Publications

The Board has continued to produce and promote a range of publications that aim to inform the public and partners about the AONB.

- Last year, we published two editions of the popular Cotswold Lion newspaper that were distributed freely to 110,000 people via tourist information centres, libraries and other leisure outlets.
- Two thousand copies of a new 8-page leaflet outlining the work and the purpose of the Board were produced.
- Four Board newsletters were circulated in hard copy and electronically during the year providing partners with regular updates about Board activities.



## Publicity

The Cotswolds has continued to feature in numerous national, regional and local press articles, as well as media broadcasts. A regular 'Country Notebook' feature in Cotswold Life magazine helps to generate awareness of areas of interest such as wildflowers and hibernating animals, plus the magazine highlights a monthly circular walk in the Cotswolds, including walks along the Cotswold Way National Trail.

### Country Shows

Two large country shows were attended by Board staff, with support by the voluntary wardens. A third show was due to take place but unfortunately was cancelled due to bad weather. The Board's mobile exhibition trailer was taken to the two-day Cotswold Show in Cirencester and the three-day Stoneleigh Country Festival. In addition, the wardens attended 47 shows across the AONB. The Cotswold Way National Trail attended the OS Outdoors Show at the NEC.



## Interpretation Kiosks

Three new locations in Stroud, Gloucester and Slimbridge were sought for the Board's interpretation kiosks, featuring interactive educational video games with time travelling hero 'Quantum Sheep'.

'Quantum Sheep and the Wonderful Wolds' is designed to introduce the concept of landscape change over time to 7-11 year olds by taking them on a journey through four eras in time.

Primary school teachers were offered the opportunity to visit the attractions with pupils studying History and Geography at Key Stage 2, to play on the kiosks. An accompanying lesson planning pack is downloadable from the Board's website.

The kiosks were created as part of the Caring for the Cotswolds project which came to an end last year.

## Explore the Cotswolds by public transport

Forty-seven thousand sets of Explore the Cotswolds by Public Transport guides were published, with an additional 20,000 timetables updated later in the year. The guides feature information on things to see and do with transport routes, accompanied by bus and train timetable booklets. A guide to walking the Cotswold Way National Trail using public transport also featured as part of the set.

## Tourism, Recreation & Access

### Green Tourism Project

The Board secured LEADER+ funding in 2007 to recruit a project officer to implement a pilot green tourism project in West Oxfordshire, through to September 2008.

The Green Tourism Project has two main strands:

- 1 Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS) which is a national scheme that encourages tourism businesses to 'go green' by giving awards to businesses that improve their environmental performance
- 2 'Step Into the Cotswolds' Visitor Payback Scheme encourages visitors to the Cotswolds to make voluntary contributions towards projects that help to improve countryside access.

During 2008-09 the project had many successes, including:

- Six tourism businesses participated in the GTBS, of which four passed. In total the Board's Green Tourism Project has enabled 14 businesses to receive the national GTBS accreditation since the project began in 2007.
- A celebration event was held in July 2008 to recognise the achievements of these tourism businesses.
- Two 'Step into the Cotswolds' Walks were created during 2008 at Stonesfield and Milton-under-Wychwood, including hedge planting and dry stone walling on the Stonesfield route, plus the design and production of walk leaflets. The walks were made possible thanks to £2,000 of visitor payback contributions which have been generated since the start of the project and £6,000 which was awarded to the project by the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment.
- A local food workshop was organised in September 2008 and attended by 13 tourism businesses who were encouraged to think about how they use and promote local produce.
- The project received over £18,000 LEADER+ funding, which funded the Green Tourism Project Officer post through to the end of September 2008. This brought the total LEADER+ funding for the project to £60,000.



## Half term walks.

### Downloadable Walks

The Cotswolds AONB website features a number of downloadable walks, including the two most recent walks developed in Stonesfield and Milton-under-Wychwood, as part of the Step into the Cotswolds project.

### Guided Walks

The Board promotes a wide range of guided walks around the AONB via its website, the Cotswold Lion newspaper

and PR activities. The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens delivered a comprehensive programme of 261 interpretative walks attracting almost 4,000 local people and visitors. Half term walks in October 2008 were promoted with 500 flyers distributed by wardens and two adverts placed in the Gloucestershire and Avon Primary Times.



# Strategic Management and Planning

The Board works in partnership at a higher strategic level to influence, advise and persuade on matters that affect the Cotswolds AONB. It monitors change within the AONB and frequently responds to consultations from a range of organisations.

## Responding to pressure from development

One of the key forces for change upon the Cotswolds is the pressure from development, for housing and infrastructure. As part of its conserving and enhancing responsibilities, the Board is consulted on any major development proposals that may have an impact on the AONB.

Over the past 12 months the Board formally commented on 73 planning and transport applications and policies, plus five comments on major land management policies. Some of the major schemes and policy documents that the Board has commented on are highlighted here:

- Response to Defra's consultation on Cross Compliance
- Bath & North East Somerset Path Order Response
- Natural England's Review of National Strategic Recreational Trails and Routes
- Warwickshire County Draft Minerals Core Strategy
- Stratford on Avon District Draft Core Strategy
- West of England Draft Waste Core Strategy
- Residential Development at Upper Rissington

- Stroud District Core Strategy
- Cotswold District Settlement Hierarchy
- Department for Communities and Local Government draft Planning Policy Statement on ecotowns
- Wind turbine at Farnicombe Farm, Whichford
- South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy

The Board undertook on behalf of Natural England a baseline study of green infrastructure (GI) in the Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy area. This will be used by the local authorities to develop landscape and recreation schemes as part of future housing allocations.

## Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

The Cotswold Landscape Character Assessment identified 19 different landscape character types (LCTs) in the AONB.

Using the Landscape Character Assessment, Landscape Strategies and Guidelines have been produced for each of the landscape character types.

Local planners and decision makers can use this information to help them make informed decisions about the suitability of proposed

development or change within the Cotswold landscape. Last year the final set of six Landscape Strategies and Guidelines were adopted by the Board completing the full set of guidelines for all 19 landscape character types. All 19 guidelines are downloadable from the Cotswolds AONB website.

## Four new position statements

The Board approved and published four new position statements last year. These documents clarify our position on key issues affecting the AONB and play an important role in the strategic framework in which local planning departments and developers can work. They are formulated in addition to the policy statements in our management plan and provide more detailed background and examples. The new statements covered:

- Telecommunications and the Rural Economy
- The Management of Wild Deer
- The Management of Roadside Verges
- Biodiversity Planning

Full details of all position statements and responses to major planning applications and policies can be found on the Cotswolds Conservation Board pages of our website:

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

# People and Partnerships

The Cotswolds Conservation Board works in partnership with a range of local organisations and strategic bodies with the common goals of ensuring the continued protection of our precious landscape.



**Dr Helen Phillips with, from left to right Peter Holmes, Natural England; Martin Lane, Cotswolds Conservation Board; and Neil Harris, Natural England.**

## Defra Visit

Huw Irranca-Davies MP, Minister for the Natural & Marine Environment, Wildlife & Rural Affairs paid a visit to the Cotswolds AONB in March to learn about the Board's work and activities.

Mr Irranca-Davies was keen to see our strategic work on landscape strategy and guidelines and how this might relate to the Government's consideration of the impact of climate change on the environment and landscape. The Board's work on the celebration and development of rural skills and the popularity of the

two-day courses and competitions were included in his itinerary.

His visit to the Cotswolds was his first to an AONB or National Park and he was particularly interested in the way the Board engages with the planning process, advising and influencing policy whilst not having any actual planning powers.

Overall, the visit was a great success and the feedback we received from the Minister following his visit was very positive.

## Natural England Visit

Dr Helen Phillips, Chief Executive Officer for Natural England visited the AONB in November to find out more about the work of the Board. She spent the day being briefed about the AONB and discovered more about a range of subjects including the Cotswold Way National Trail and the new Cotswold Farmland Bird Project, plus targeting of Higher Level Stewardship grants on the AONB and rural skills work. The response following the visit was very positive, with Dr Phillips said to be extremely impressed with the work of the Board.



**Huw Irranca-Davies MP (right) with Niel Curwen, Cotswolds Conservation Board (centre); and Mark Tufnell.**



### David Cameron MP Visit

The leader of the Conservative Party, David Cameron MP, showed a keen interest in work that is being undertaken to help conserve the Cotswolds, when he visited a conservation training site within his Witney constituency in October 2008.

During his visit to Milton Downs Farm near Burford in West Oxfordshire, Mr Cameron was shown how the Board is working to encourage the development of rural skills in the area.

During his time there he was able to see how great efforts are being made in the Cotswolds to ensure that the rural skill of drystone walling is maintained. He had the opportunity to meet drystone walling students who were training on a course that is run by the Board in partnership with Abingdon and Witney College.

The trainees that David Cameron met learnt to wall at Milton Downs Farm and qualified with a nationally recognised LANTRA drystone walling certificate on a new course run in partnership with the college.

### Overseas Group Visits

The Board was privileged to host three visits by overseas groups from Japan, Norway and Sweden.

In September 2008, academics and civil servants from Japan identified the Cotswolds Conservation Board as a best practice model in the management of protected

landscapes. The group spent a week in the Cotswolds on their study tour which involved contributions from a range of partner organisations including National Trust, West Oxfordshire District Council, Wychwood Project and Natural England.

In March 2009, a group visited the AONB from Norway as they were interested in the work of the Board, particularly our implementation of the European Landscape Convention, as well as our landscape assessment and landscape strategy and guidelines work.

In September 2008 the planning officer met with a group of lawyers from the Swedish Environment Department. The purpose of their visit was to learn about the legislative background to the protection of landscapes in the UK. The planning officer gave a presentation regarding the legal basis of AONBs and conservation Boards which was very well received by the group.

### Two forums for partners

The Board held two forum events designed to keep all of our key partner organisations up to speed with progress on the work of the Board and encourage everybody with a stake in the AONB to share ideas. Fifty five people attended the events to hear a range of presentations including Gloucestershire's proposed Lorry Management Zone.

### Cotswold Way National Trail

The Board is working with the four Highway Authorities - Bath & North East Somerset; South Gloucestershire; Gloucestershire County; and Worcestershire - to oversee delivery of the Cotswold Way National Trail.

### Flying the flag for the Cotswolds

The Board has regularly represented the Cotswolds AONB locally, nationally and internationally by participating in a number of events and conferences to share skills and training opportunities with our colleagues from other protected landscapes.

Last year, staff and Board members attended the following key events:

- National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) conference in Shropshire in July 08
- Association of National Park Authorities (ANPA) conference in the Lake District in September 08
- Europarc Federation conference in Romania in September 08
- Europarc Volunteer Workshops (Grundtvig programme) in Germany in November 08 and in Italy in April 09.



### The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens celebrate 40th Anniversary

**The 350 strong group of Voluntary Wardens continued to play an important role for the Board and support them in achieving their aims in 2008/09.**

It was a milestone year with the celebration of their 40th anniversary and, during the year they contributed a record 41,719 hours while completing hundreds of practical projects and leading numerous guided walks. During the year, a number of notable events and projects took place, helping to raise public awareness for the Board and the AONB, including:

- The launch of the Walks on Wheels project by the Duchess of Beaufort
- The planning and installation of a topograph on Painswick Beacon

#### Walks on Wheels at Dover's Hill.



- The launch of a new education project with primary schools from across the AONB
- The appointment of many more parish wardens, strengthening their presence in the countryside
- An all day anniversary event at Cirencester with 200 guests with a formal address by Lord Plumb and Baroness Young.

The Wardens are an integral part of the Cotswolds Conservation Board and donate thousands of hours of their time to help conserve and enhance the AONB. Clearing scrub from small and large sites, installing bridges and stiles, monitoring and repairing dry stone walls, attending shows and talking to members of the public are just some of the many valuable projects that the Wardens undertake every year.

During 2008/09, the Wardens undertook a tremendous amount of work, some of which is highlighted here:

- installed 34 bridges, mainly on behalf of Rights of Way Authorities
- built or renovated 750 metres of dry stone walling
- laid almost 1,100 metres of hedgerow and provided practical support for the annual hedgelaying competition
- collected litter at several sites across the southern cotswolds
- planted 892 trees
- installed 85 waymarkers and signposts
- led 261 guided walks for 3,929 people
- patrolled 3,634 miles of footpaths
- attended 47 shows
- gave 54 talks

*“Not only did they (the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens) set about their way-marking work in a business-like and cheery manner; they also undertook a considerable amount of maintenance to the Macmillan Way through Grove Wood alongside the river and fitted a new kissing gate at the top end of the wood closest to the village. Well done lads.”*

**Sherston Parish Council.**



### Cotswold Way National Trail

The 102 mile (164km) trail follows the limestone escarpment on the western edge of the Cotswolds from the market town of Chipping Campden in the north, to Bath in the south. It was originally launched as a walking route in 1970 and after a programme of access improvement work, became a National Trail in 2007.

Last year saw the successful transition of the Trail from Gloucestershire County Council to the Conservation Board as Natural England formally appointed the Board to co-ordinate the management of the Trail, under an initial one year agreement. Following that successful first year, the Board was delighted to extend the agreement for a further two years. A new project team has been formed to oversee the Trail, headed up by James Blockley, National Trail Officer who is working alongside Don Field.

Successful management of the Trail relies upon the hard work and commitment of the Cotswold Way Voluntary Wardens who play a key role in the monitoring and maintenance of the Trail throughout the year.

With the new team firmly in place, a great deal of work and a number of achievements have been made. Some of these are highlighted below:

#### Monitoring

- People counters, which were installed at six locations in March 2007, showed an overall increase in visitor numbers to the Trail during 2008-09 of 3% over the previous year.
- The report logging procedure by wardens was evaluated and improved, leading to a significant enhancement in the process and an increase in the number of reports received, up 49% from the previous year.
- The wardens spent 1681 volunteer hours on Cotswold Way specific duties, including general patrolling and helping on workparties.

#### Managing

- Highway Authorities, in partnership with the National Trail team carried out extensive works to improve the Trail and elevate certain areas to National Trail standard
- Works took place to reopen the footpath near Cam, following extensive flooding
- A diversion around Cleeve Hill was opened to ensure the Trail follows definitive routes. This was the culmination of nearly nine year's legal and improvement works and represented the completion of the Cotswold Way's longest route change.

#### Promoting and Enhancing

- A public arts consultant was employed to help with the development of a suitable start/finish trail marker to be installed at Bath Abbey, leading to the appointment of an artist to design an intriguing stone obelisk.
- Designers were appointed to create a series of 25 brass circular plaques to be recessed into pavements in and around Bath to improve the signing of the Trail
- In response to a Natural England review highlighting barriers to using the Trail, a series of five short circular walks along the Cotswold Way have been developed, with more being added over time
- The Cotswolds Way introductory leaflet and the Companion Guide were updated and distributed in 2008. The Companion Guide generated over £2,000 of revenue for the Trail during 2008-09
- The Cotswold Way website has seen a year-on-year increase in traffic. The site has been continually updated during 2008/9, with particular attention being paid to certain areas, including the development of a page specifically aimed at providing information for disabled users.
- The website has also directly received around 400 comments and questions during 2008-09, plus a further 400 comments were received via letter, phone

and email. The overwhelming majority of these were positive comments and notes of thanks. A couple of these comments are included below.

- A series of 12 monthly three-page articles in Cotswold Life magazine was negotiated which will run from January to December 2009.

*"My wife and I have just finished walking the Cotswold Way in 7 days in June, as part of a plan to walk the 15 National Trails of England and Wales over several years. It is a terrific walk, with wonderful views and an*

*incredible array of churches and monuments. Thanks for keeping it so well maintained and well signposted."*  
**John Bishop, June 2008.**

*"I have just got back to Canada after having spent five days hiking the Cotswolds Trail and I wanted to say what a lovely time I had and what an impressive job you all do keeping up the trail. Thank you!"*  
**Jamie Evrard, July 2008.**





### Sustainable Development Fund

The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) grant scheme, which has been administered by the Board for four years, is designed to support projects that bring social, environmental and economic benefits to the Cotswolds AONB. It aims to develop and promote new methods of achieving a more sustainable way of life.

Last year the Board allocated £40,000 to issue as grant funding through the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF). Seventy enquiries led to 29 applications considered by the Grants Sub-Committee, requesting over £170,000 of SDF grants. Out of the 29 applications, 11 projects were approved with an estimated total value of over £100,000.

The successful projects supported by the SDF during 2008-09 were:

Applicant	Scheme	Grant Paid	Final project value	Grant as % of final project value
Toddington Village Hall	Installing light tubes	£5,260	£ 7,015	75
Rendcomb Village Hall	Energy saving heating system	£6,372	£28,013	23
Gretton Village Hall	Water conservation & energy efficiency	£13,770	£38,638	36
Kennet & Avon Canal Trust	Production of a Conservation Statement	£1,200	£1,600	75
Bledington Parish Council	Soil & gas tests for a potential community recreation area	£2,924	£4,235	69
Rollright Parish Council	Development of a community nature reserve	£922	£2,071	71
Wotton-Under-Edge Town Council	Development of a community amenity area	£2,458	£4,030	73
Bisley Community Composting Scheme	Zero Waste Week events promoting waste reduction and recycling	£776	£1,298	60
CPRE - South Cotswolds	Hedgelaying project	£3,500	£8,547	67
Uley Go Zero	Energy roadshow promoting energy efficiency & new technologies	£972	£1,397	70
Stinchcombe Parish Plan Steering Group	Walks and cycle leaflets	£1,846	£ 3,466	53
<b>Total</b>		<b>£40,000</b>	<b>£100,308</b>	

## Case Study

### Toddington Village Hall

The Board was delighted to have been able to help support this very worthwhile project through SDF to build a new, energy efficient village hall for the community of Toddington, worth a total value of £680,000.

Grant funding was issued to the village hall in three phases over successive years. During the first year of the project, over £4,500 was awarded to help fund a feasibility study into alternative energy sources for the new village hall, including an energy conservation project with a primary school. The second year saw nearly £14,000 of funding go towards the installation of ground source heat pumps in the new hall building. The heat pumps

supply all the hall's heating needs including hot water. Finally, last year £5,260 was awarded to the project for the installation of light tubes to the roof to provide daylight to the entrance and internal corridor, thereby conserving energy during the daylight hours.

The hall users are now benefiting from lower running costs, and importantly, the project is sending out a message to the wider community about how to use scarce resources wisely and in doing so provides an example to other building developments.

The hall was officially opened by Lord Lieutenant of Gloucestershire on 28 March 2009.

## Case Study

### Walking & Cycling around Stinchcombe

With the help of a grant of over £1,800 from the SDF, an enthusiastic group of ramblers were able to produce a series of 15 leaflets promoting walking and cycling routes around and beyond the village of Stinchcombe.

Following an initial idea put forward over a year ago to encourage more people, including children into the countryside, the group came together to map out a set of walks and cycle rides. The routes take people through the village of Stinchcombe to Slimbridge, Berkeley, Cam and even as far as Bristol and Bath. Along the way, places of interest and historical facts are provided by the leaflets, plus suitable places to stop for refreshments.

The routes are aimed at a wide range of abilities, with some very long walks, some with inclines, and shorter, flatter ones.

The set of leaflets, which have been very well received by both residents and visitors, are free, with donations going towards the village hall. They are also available to download from [www.stinchcombepc.co.uk](http://www.stinchcombepc.co.uk)



Elise Blackshaw/www.proofsheets.co.uk

# Summary **financial** statement

1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009


Income and expenditure account	2007-08	2008-09
	£	£
<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>1,552,803</b>	<b>1,047,798</b>
Project delivery	1,421,391	925,021
Corporate management and administration	139,202	131,492
Interest receivable	(7,790)	(8,715)
<b>Income</b>	<b>(1,529,717)</b>	<b>(1,134,793)</b>
Natural England provision	(627,271)	(856,311)
Local authorities' contribution	(176,617)	(175,564)
Heritage Lottery Fund contribution	(569,695)	0
Other	(156,134)	(102,918)
<b>Deficit/(surplus) for year</b>	<b>23,086</b>	<b>(86,995)</b>
<b>Deficit/(surplus) for the year after movement on reserves</b>	<b>38,084</b>	<b>(65,463)</b>

## Balance sheet

Fixed assets	0	0
Current assets	288,703	422,861
	288,703	422,861
Less: current liabilities	(175,611)	(226,774)
<b>Net current assets</b>	<b>113,092</b>	<b>196,087</b>
Long term pension asset/(liability)	27,000	(69,000)
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>140,092</b>	<b>127,087</b>
<b>Financed by</b>		
General fund balance	16,654	82,117
Other reserves	50,438	113,970
Pension reserve	73,000	(69,000)
	<b>140,092</b>	<b>127,087</b>

## Note

Please refer to [www.cotswoldsaoib.org.uk](http://www.cotswoldsaoib.org.uk) for our full Statement of Accounts and auditor's opinion.



## Looking forward to 2009-10

During 2009-10, the Board's work will include:

- Building on the findings of the Future of Farming & Forestry Study to develop a full understanding of the potential impact of climate change on the landscape and working with farmers, landowners and rural communities to adapt to these changes.
- Continuing with the work of the Farmland Bird Project and encourage more farmers to implement Farm Environment Plans.
- Continuing with the Cotswolds Ancient Woodland Project to further encourage appropriate management of ancient woodland in the AONB.
- Holding the annual hedgelaying and dry stone walling competitions.
- Co-ordinating rural skills courses throughout the year.
- Managing and promoting the Cotswold Way National Trail.
- Supporting and promoting the work of the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens.
- Continuing to influence local, regional and national policies and programmes to ensure they address the conservation and enhancement of the AONB and the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities
- Finalising and submitting the lottery proposal entitled 'My Countryside', linking urban communities with the AONB.
- Supporting projects through our Sustainable Development Fund.
- Producing our regular publications including the Cotswold Lion, the Explore guides and timetables as well as continuing with our press and publicity work.
- Continuing to work towards securing the EUROPARC Charter for Sustainable Tourism.



## Who's Who The Cotswolds Conservation Board 2008-09

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

**Chairman** Niel Curwen MBE

**Vice Chairman** Jeff West

### Staff

**Director** Martin Lane

**Land Management Officer**  
Mark Connelly

**Office Manager** Margaret Fletcher

**Administration Officer** Claire Rossiter

**Planning Officer** Malcolm Watt

**Project Development/Business  
Planning Officer** John Mills

**Information & Interpretation Officer**  
Claire Cunningham

**Volunteer Co-ordinator** Rebecca Jones

**Drystone Wall Project Officer**  
Jonathan Gahan

**Sustainable Development Fund  
Project Officer** Anne Powell

**Financial Officer** Reg Talbot

**Technical Accountant** John Hunt

**Cotswold Way National Trail Officer**  
James Blockley

### Cotswolds Conservation Board

Fosse Way  
Northleach  
Gloucestershire GL54 3JH

**Tel:** 01451 862000

**Fax:** 01451 862001

**Email:** [info@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk](mailto:info@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk)

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

**Assistant National Trail Officer**  
Don Field

**Committee Clerk** Stephen Holley

**Monitoring Officer** Nigel Adams

**Student placement** Helen Walton

**National Association for Areas of  
Outstanding Natural Beauty  
Communications & Development  
Manager**  
Jill Smith

**Supported by over 350 Cotswold  
Voluntary Wardens**

### Board members

Peter Abbott

Michael Banks\*

Ken Betteridge\*

Libby Bird

Ann Boon

Jo Burgon\*

Rebecca Charley

Andrew Clark

Niel Curwen\*

Mathew Darby

Peter Doyle\*

John Evetts

Liz Eyre

David Folkes

Stephen Gray

Tim Hill\*

Liz Hodges

Nick Holliday\*

Sue Hope\*

Verena Hunt\*

Richard Lloyd\*

Will Manley

Jim Mason

John Matthews

Susie Moore\*

Adrian Phillips

Tony Phillips\*

Ian Plaister

Simon Randall

George Reynolds

Christopher Saint

Don Seale

Christine Shine

Carole Soden

Julie Soutter

Janatha Stout

Lloyd Surgenor\*

Carole Topples\*

Martin Veal

Robert Vines

Judith Webb

Jeff West\*

**Please note:** staff and Board members  
are shown for the period April 2008  
to March 2009.

\* Members of the Board's Executive  
Committee.

