

Cotswolds Conservation Board Annual Review 2010-11



Cotswolds

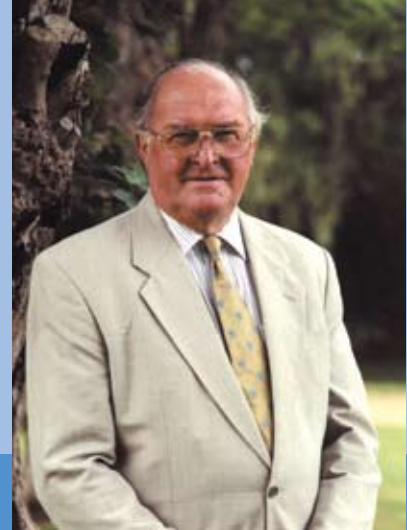
Area of Outstanding
Natural Beauty

2011 **CELEBRATING**
45 YEARS 1966



Foreword

The Lord Plumb of Coleshill, DL FRAGS



Last year we found ourselves in another challenging situation as the potential impacts of the Comprehensive Spending Review started to become clear. The prospect of significant budget cuts force all of us to evaluate what we do and how we can do it more efficiently. Despite these increasingly stringent financial circumstances, political support for the Board and its work remains strong and we were delighted to receive the announcement by the Minister for the Natural Environment and Fisheries, Richard Benyon MP, that Defra would take over direct responsibility for the funding and strategic oversight of Conservation Boards and AONB Partnerships from April 2011.

This represents clear recognition by the government of the contribution that AONBs make to the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. It was a welcome move and a very positive statement that not only helped to confirm the government's support for AONBs but also provides parity with National Parks.

It was interesting to read the review of the Conservation Board by Land Use Consultants last year which produced some useful feedback and recommendations on the work and functions of the Board. It showed how quicker decision making and statutory status has enabled the Cotswolds AONB voice to be heard on national issues such as government policy, planning, and allocation of resources to projects. The findings showed us that we have achieved much since the Board's inauguration in 2004. But as pressures on budgets and development issues continue, we are aware of the continued need not to rest on our laurels but instead

strive to ensure that our voice remains audible to the policy makers.

It is becoming increasingly important for the Board to understand and communicate the wider environmental, social and economic benefits of its work, of the Cotswolds and of protected areas in general. The developing government agendas around the themes of well-being and 'big society' have the potential to impact positively on the work of the Board, not just through supporting volunteering, recreation and community work but also at the strategic level.

I was delighted to host the Board's Annual Forum in February which examined the subject of 'localism' and how it could affect the AONB. Whilst the full implications remain unclear, there are likely to be as many opportunities as there are challenges. I believe the Board is in a strong position to grasp these opportunities and build on its ability to strengthen the social and economic well-being

of the many people who live and work in the Cotswolds, while continuing to ensure that the conservation and enhancement of our precious landscape remain our primary purpose.

A major aspect of the localism agenda is the increasing emphasis being placed on the role of volunteers in our society, and I must pay thanks to the hard work and enthusiasm of our Cotswold Voluntary Wardens who have once again dedicated thousands of hours towards helping the Board deliver its purpose of conserving and enhancing the Cotswolds AONB as well as increasing understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Henry Plumb".

The Lord Plumb of Coleshill, DL FRAGS
Patron

Chairman's Introduction



Jeff West

Welcome to our 2010-11 Annual Review. I am delighted once again to present the achievements of the Cotswolds Conservation Board, with much thanks to the ongoing enthusiasm and hard work of all our staff, volunteers and members.

One of the benefits of the Board is that we can offer a strategic view on large scale infrastructure projects that cross several local authority boundaries such as the Wormington to Sapperton gas pipeline that was constructed last year. In doing so we were able to secure additional investment of £400,000 towards new walling grants to both safeguard and enhance the Cotswolds landscape. This figure has more than doubled in value through community and landowner contributions.

The Board's AONB-wide view is also demonstrated in the delivery of initiatives such as Explore the Cotswolds by Public Transport, Higher Level Stewardship, the guided walks programme and the Sustainable Development Fund. All have been, and continue to be delivering services for local communities, landowners and local authorities that would otherwise not be in place.

Many of the Board's partnership projects last year announced excellent results. The Cotswolds Ancient Woodland Project and the Farmland Bird Project demonstrated how working together proactively can help to deliver enormous benefits for wildlife and habitats. This same

philosophy is being used in the development of a landscape scale habitat restoration and recreation project. This made great strides last year and was boosted by the publication of the Lawton report which confirmed the role that AONBs can play in such schemes.

Our desire to help promote and encourage sustainable tourism across the Cotswolds was further strengthened with the development of a sustainable tourism strategy along with the submission of our application for the Cotswolds AONB to be awarded the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. This was achieved with much help and support by our tourism partners for which I am very grateful. I was also particularly pleased to help launch the new 'Escape to the Cotswolds' Discovery Centre at Northleach last summer. This is a unique place to help people gain a greater understanding of, and appreciation for the Cotswolds AONB, as well as inspire more people to explore the Cotswolds further. I do hope that many more people will be encouraged to visit the centre in the future.

Last year I had the opportunity to attend the National Association for AONBs Annual Conference, co-hosted by the Kent Downs, High Weald and Surrey Hills AONBs and the Parc Naturel Régional des Caps et Marais d'Opale. One of the key messages that I took from the conference was the requirement for AONBs to secure biodiversity and tranquility, and at the same time achieve economic growth with local solutions. I believe the Board is well placed to achieve this. We have a strong record of delivering effective and creative schemes at the local level through working collaboratively with our many partners and volunteers across the AONB. I therefore look forward to building on our experience in the future.

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

Jeff West
Chairman
Cotswolds Conservation Board

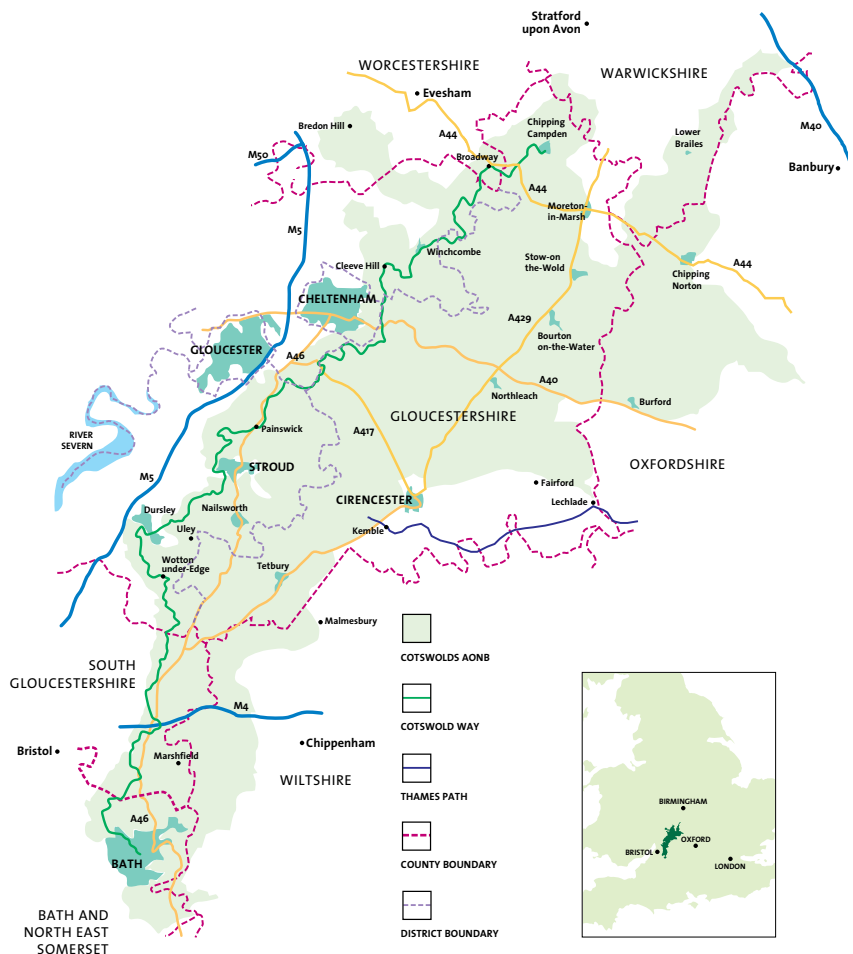
The Cotswolds – an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Cotswolds was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty by Government in 1966 in recognition of its rich, diverse and high-quality landscape. It is one of the UK's best known and most loved areas – enjoyed by millions for its peaceful countryside, Cotswold stone buildings, picturesque towns and villages, rich heritage and opportunities for recreation and relaxation.

Covering 2,038 sq km (790 sq miles), it is the largest member of the family of 38 AONBs in England and Wales, and the second largest protected landscape in England after the Lake District National Park. The Cotswolds represents 10% of the combined total AONB area in the UK.

The area embraces a large number of communities set within a variety of distinctive landscapes, extending from South Warwickshire and Worcestershire in the north, through Gloucestershire and West Oxfordshire, and including parts of Wiltshire, South Gloucestershire and Bath & North East Somerset in the south.

AONBs and National Parks are internationally recognised as 'protected landscapes', a category of protected area which is about lived-in, working landscapes of high environmental value. Their recognition by the International Union for Conservation of Nature is a measure of the importance of such areas and the contribution they make to conservation. Protected Landscapes account for around 23% of land in England and 6% of all the protected land and water globally.





Cotswolds Conservation Board

The Cotswolds Conservation Board is an independent statutory body established in 2005. The Board has two purposes:

- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- to increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB

In fulfilling these purposes, the Board seeks to foster the social and economic well being of local communities in the AONB.

The Board comprises 37 members, 15 nominated by the local authorities, 14 appointed by the Secretary of State and 8 appointed by parish councils. Within the Board, an Executive Committee of 12 members is supported by 4 sub-committees

who look after the key areas of the Board's work. A team of 15 staff are based in the market town of Northleach in the centre of the AONB, and supported by some 300 Cotswold Voluntary Wardens who dedicate thousands of hours each year to conservation and promotional work throughout the Cotswolds.

The Board works closely with all those who have the interests of the AONB at heart and plays a key role in looking strategically at the AONB as a whole and the issues it faces and opportunities it provides.

In 2010-11, funding came from Natural England and through contributions from local authorities. It is also able to lever in significant resources and additional match funding through grant schemes, the Voluntary Wardens service and other projects such as the National Grid Gas Pipeline Project. In 2010-11, the Board was able to generate an additional £188 for the AONB for every £1 contribution by local authorities.

Evaluating the role of conservation boards

In 2010-11, Land Use Consultants (LUC) was invited by the Board to evaluate the benefits arising from the formation of the Board following the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 and to ensure that the lessons learnt over the first five years of the Board's existence are recognised in order to improve future practice. A report was published last year providing the first independent analysis of how that model has been

working in practice in the Cotswolds AONB.

The overall conclusion arising from this review of the Board's achievements to date was a positive one, confirming that the Board is more effective at delivering the purpose of AONB designation than the former AONB Partnership; that there is strong support for the Board especially among members and staff; and that it has performed better than the former Partnership in a number of important areas, whilst also taking on a new purpose and duty.

In remembrance

It is with much sadness that the Board reports the loss of the following seven Cotswold Voluntary Wardens who each gave a huge amount of time, enthusiasm and dedication to their work across all areas of the Cotswolds AONB. Conservation work, access improvement, publicity and promotion, parish warden activities, guided walks, district chairmen and countryside education are just some of the areas in which these wardens leave long-lasting legacies to us all.

- Audrey Lister (Central District)
- Ivor Morris (North District)
- Ken Hunter (South District)
- Nick Walker (North District)
- Paul Morgan (Central District)
- Peter Russell (South District)
- Tony Jones (North District)



Highlights from 2010-11



The Board had a significant number of achievements during 2010-11. Here are some of the highlights from this year:

- The Board negotiated a ground breaking mitigation package with National Grid in connection with the construction of a gas pipeline from Wormington to Sapperton resulting in £400,000 contribution from National Grid for dry-stone walling projects, over £96,000 for Board projects and £100,000 for community projects.
- The first year of the dry-stone walling grant scheme funded by National Grid awarded £213,468 to 29 walling projects worth a total of over £556,000 to restore 3,130m of dry-stone walls.
- The Cotswold Farmland Bird Project has delivered a total of 54 Higher Level Stewardship agreements worth £3.5million.
- The Cotswolds Ancient Woodland Project has contributed to 102 successful English Woodland Grant Scheme applications covering over 1,270 hectares, worth more than £1.4million.
- Cotswold Voluntary Wardens gave 43,772 hours of their time to conserving, enhancing and promoting the AONB, equating to over £300,000.
- A proposal for the Cotswolds Ecological Network project was initiated for landscape scale habitat restoration and recreation.
- The Cotswold Way National Trail Officer attended the first world trails conference held on the South Korean island of Jeju, on behalf of the 15 national trails in England and Wales.
- Escape to the Cotswolds – the discovery centre for the Cotswolds AONB – opened in the North Gallery adjacent to the Board’s offices in Northleach and attracted over 2000 visitors during its first season.
- Eighteen competitors took part in the annual Cotswolds Open Dry Stone Walling Competition held at Tetbury on Sunday, 3rd October, organised with the Cotswold branch of the Dry Stone Walling Association.
- The Sustainable Development Fund awarded 15 grants to a total value of £49,480.
- The Board was highly commended in the Landscape Institute Awards 2010, for the Board’s submission entitled: Strategic Planning for the Cotswolds Landscape.
- The Board submitted its application for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Landscapes in December. Part of the preparation for this submission included the drawing up of a sustainable tourism strategy and action plan in partnership with key tourism stakeholders.
- Twenty eight competitors took part in the annual North Cotswolds Hedgelaying Competition held near Ford on Saturday 20th November 2010.
- A brand new website to promote rural skills in the Cotswolds was launched.

Working in partnership for a better environment

We work in partnership with others to ensure the continued protection of our precious landscape.

The Wormington to Sapperton Gas Pipeline Project

Following years of lengthy consultation, construction work began in April 2010 on the new 44 km, 900mm-diameter pipeline linking National Grid's existing installations at Wormington near Broadway and Sapperton near Cirencester, and was completed in October.

This was a major construction project taking place in the AONB which had many implications for the Cotswolds landscape. The Board had strongly objected to the route, however following the decision by the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change to grant consent to the construction, the Board began a very positive and close working relationship with National Grid to ensure that the impact on the countryside was minimal and the landscape conserved and enhanced for the long term. The project was monitored on behalf of the Board by an ecologist funded by National Grid. This arrangement will continue until the impact of the pipeline on landscape and biodiversity is fully mitigated.

The pipeline was required to meet the growing demand for reliable and economic gas supplies in the South West of England. The work involved fencing the working area, removing

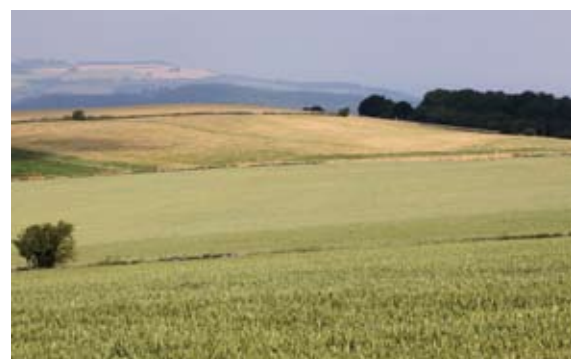
and storing topsoil, and digging a trench which was then backfilled once the pipeline had been laid. Reinstatement of the land continued after construction was completed.

As well as working closely with the Board, National Grid worked extensively with other partners including parish councils, local residents, walking groups and the Gloucestershire County Council Rights of Way team to ensure the majority of footpaths and bridleways that cross the pipeline construction area remained open throughout the work, with stiles or kissing gates being installed at crossing points to allow access. Local archaeologists were also involved during the entire construction process with some interesting finds including a Roman settlement, Bronze Age funeral monument and some prehistoric flint work.

To help the Board continue to invest in conserving and enhancing the landscape during and after the pipeline construction, National Grid provided a total of £400,000 towards the reinstatement and restoration of dry-stone walls along the pipeline corridor. In addition, the Board was also able to secure more than £96,000 towards supporting other projects initiated by the Board. This funding will help support a range of climate change related projects during 2011-12.

National Grid also helped support local communities during the construction period with a £100,000 grant scheme available for a variety of community projects including the Winchcombe Walkers Festival, Shipton Reading Room and Elkstone Village Hall.

In total the pipeline project has contributed nearly one million pounds in funding and in-kind contributions to mitigating the impact of the pipeline on AONB communities and the wider landscape.



Images show pipeline construction followed by land reinstatement 1 year later.

Conserving & enhancing



The lapwing is one of the Cotswold Farmland Bird Project's 'Arable Six'

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

Cotswolds Ancient Woodland Project

The Cotswolds Ancient Woodland Project was launched in 2008 to promote the grant aid available to woodland owners, seek the restoration of plantations to native broadleaf cover and to generate English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) applications within the Cotswolds Ancient Woodland Priority Area (CAWPA).

Further progress was made last year and by March 2011, the project had directly and indirectly generated 102 EWGS grant application covering over 1,270ha worth a total £1,441,219. This includes 92ha of Planted Ancient Woodland Site restoration.

The CAWP has been a great success to date and clearly demonstrates the value of pro-actively identifying and contacting woodland owners directly.

Cotswold Farmland Bird Project

The Cotswold Farmland Bird project is one of 4 sister projects under the umbrella of the South West Farmland Birds Initiative launched in April 2008. The aim of the project is to

reverse the decline in farmland birds, focusing on six farmland specialists: the 'Arable Six' – grey partridge, lapwing, turtle dove, yellow wagtail, tree sparrow and corn bunting.

The scheme encourages land managers to adopt measures that provide nesting habitat, summer and winter food for farmland birds.

By March 2011, the Cotswold Farmland Bird Project had delivered in total:

- Over 130 one-to-one farm visits
- 54 HLS agreements
- Around 31,000ha under agreement
- 20 further applications in progress
- 27 related events with 500 attendees
- Total 'live' HLS agreement spend in the Cotswolds worth £3.5 million over 10 years

There is still much interest being generated across the Cotswolds and it is hoped to continue the project through to 2012.





Conservation work and achievements of the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens

Nearly 300 Voluntary Wardens continued to play an important role for the Board by volunteering their time and skills to help keep the Cotswolds special.

2010-11 was another successful year achieving a record total of 43,772 hours work by 280 active volunteers, worth over £300,000. This represents an increase over the previous year despite many work parties and guided walks being cancelled due to bad weather.

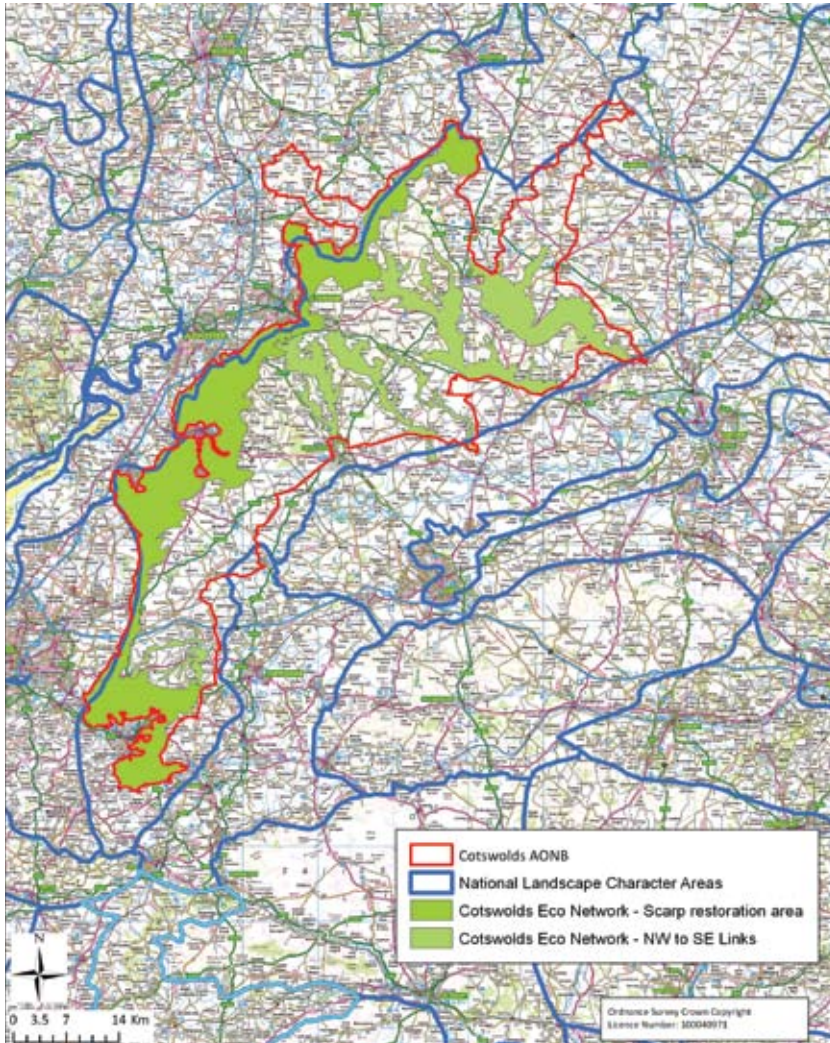
“On behalf of the Parish Council I would like to thank you and your team for carrying out the rebuilding of the dry stone wall next to the footpath leading to the activity park.”

Almost 70% of wardens' hours were spent on conserving and enhancing the countryside and its features, and improving access to it.

“Thank you to the wardens & the Cotswolds Conservation Board formally for organising hedgelaying at the Triangle Orchard, Old Midford Road, Midford, Bath in January. The team of Avon Valley Volunteers together with the brilliant tree surgeon Keith Stuffins, did over 2 days a masterclass in hedgelaying. Please pass on our thanks.”

Voluntary Wardens' conservation and access work during 2010-11 at a glance:

- 19 bridges constructed
- 107 kissing gates installed
- 171m of streams and ditches cleared
- 173 finger posts installed
- 187 trees planted
- 413 steps in banks constructed
- 800 hedge trees and shrubs planted
- 835m of fencing erected
- 905m of hedgerow laid
- 921m of dry-stone walls built
- 1131 contacts made with parishes, landowners and the general public
- 4,266 path miles patrolled
- 9,681 sq m of woodland coppiced and 16,588 sq m cleared
- 23,291m of paths and bridleways cleared
- 118,409 sq m across 23 grassland sites cleared



An ecological network map for the Cotswolds AONB.

The Cotswolds Ecological Network

In 2010-11, the Board initiated a project proposal for an 80 mile long wildlife corridor based on the Cotswolds scarp. The proposal aims to develop habitat connectivity on a landscape scale by the creation of large habitat blocks. This will help our wildlife adapt to climate change.

Following the publication of the 'Lawton Review' in September which identified Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty as having considerable potential to develop ecological networks across England, the thinking behind the wildlife corridor along the scarp was extended to the whole AONB resulting in the creation of a draft 'ecological network map'. This map

is already leading to potentially significant resources being brought to the Cotswolds for landscape scale habitat restoration and recreation, including a project to recreate limestone grasslands across the Cotswolds which is being incorporated into a national Heritage Lottery Fund bid entitled 'Magnificent Meadows'.

Keeping rural skills alive in the Cotswolds

Interest and awareness in rural skills is growing as more people are becoming keener to learn more about some of these ancient skills and techniques. In 2010-11, the Board continued to develop and enhance its rural skills programme, featuring two brand new courses on woodland coppicing. A total of 14 courses were organised and 127 people trained in a variety of rural techniques.

A significant boost was given to the rural skills courses and competitions with the development of a brand new website – www.cotswoldsruralskills.org.uk. The new website provides a one-stop-shop for people looking for a course in the Cotswolds, and offers a full online booking facility. The site is also being promoted to other course providers in the AONB to advertise their own courses. As well as purchasing a course, visitors to the site can also buy gift vouchers redeemable against the cost of a course.



The Board trained 127 people in a variety of rural skills.



Thank you for the wonderful hedgelaying course held on our property! The work was superb and many locals have positively commented on the work.

Green Barrow Farm, Castle Combe

Gaining a competitive edge

The rural skills competitions organised by the Board each year help to not only keep these important skills alive but also celebrate and award best practice. The following competitions were organised during 2010-11:

- The Cotswolds Hedgelaying Competition, supported by the National Hedgelaying Society attracted 28 competitors and more than 100 spectators.
- The Cotswolds AONB Open Dry-stone Walling Competition held at Tetbury in October attracted 28 competitors and, despite the rain over 40 spectators turned up to lend support.

Dry-stone walling and hedgelaying courses

Dry-stone walls and hedgerows are important distinctive features which not only mark historic boundaries but also provide important habitats for wildlife such as the common toad, field mouse and Cotswold pennycress.

In 2010-11, the Board helped to maintain these important features of the countryside by:

- Organising 8 dry-stone walling courses which attracted 72 people.
- Organising four weekend courses in hedgelaying for beginners in Rissington and Fosse Cross using the Midland style, and in Castle Combe in the Somerset style.

Woodland coppicing

Woodland coppicing, which dates back to the Neolithic, is carried out to produce items such as stakes and binds for hedgelaying and in doing so helps to encourage the re-growth of trees and shrubs and prolongs their lives.

Two new one-day woodland coppicing courses were organised by the Board at Withington and Snowhill in Gloucestershire and at Broadway, Worcestershire and attracted 17 participants who learned a range of skills including tree felling, identifying and extracting a range of coppice products along with the potential uses for harvested coppice.





3,130m of dry-stone walls were reinstated thanks to the new fund

Dry-stone Walling Grant Fund

Administered by the Board, the fund was launched in conjunction with National Grid in June 2010. Landowners, farmers and local communities located within the 5km wide pipeline corridor were invited to apply for grant funding to assist with the cost of reinstating dry-stone walls on their land.

The grant scheme attracted a great deal of interest and many

applications, the majority of which were successful in obtaining funding towards a variety of projects.



In summary:

- Thirty three applications were received, of which 29 were approved.
- £213,468 in grant aid was awarded.
- 3,130m of dry-stone walls were either repaired or rebuilt in the AONB.
- Dry-stone walling projects totalled over £556,000 in value.

From 1st June 2011, the dry-stone walling grant scheme is being extended to the whole of the Cotswolds AONB.

Understanding & enjoying the Cotswolds



We work to increase the understanding, enjoyment and appreciation of the Cotswolds AONB by those who live, work and visit this special area.

Awareness & Understanding

'Escape to the Cotswolds' discovery centre opened

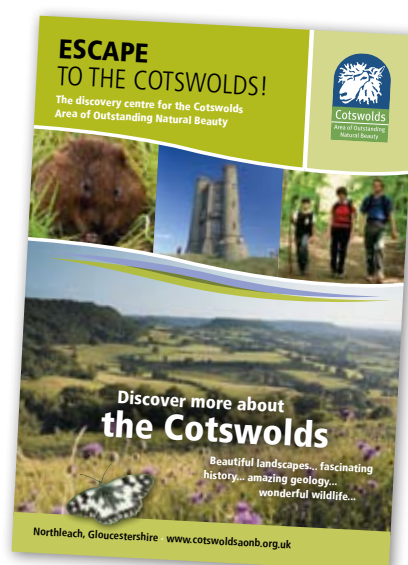
'Escape to the Cotswolds', a brand new discovery centre for the Cotswolds AONB, was officially opened in July 2010 at a special launch event, marking a significant milestone in the Board's interpretation activities. It received more than 2,000 visitors through its doors during its first season, along with a great deal of media coverage and many positive comments from customers.

Housed in the Old Prison at Northleach, the new centre provides

a useful and unique facility to tell the fascinating story of the Cotswolds AONB to visitors and local residents. Through a series of well designed information displays, the history, geology, nature, people, land management and recreational opportunities are clearly illustrated. The new development has also enabled the reopening of the original female cell block within the former 18th century house of correction.

"Really interesting museum – thanks very much. Great idea having all the walks publicised too."

R Whiteford



Publications and events

Providing a range of information for people to understand the Cotswolds AONB area and the work of the Board is an important part of our role. In 2010-11, the Board produced:

- Two editions of the Cotswold Lion newspaper which were distributed to 110,000 people via visitor information centres and libraries as well as by many of our wardens. The Lion continues to be a very popular publication among visitors, walkers and local residents.
- Over 37,000 copies of the Explore the Cotswolds by Public Transport guide and timetables. These remain the only guides to help people get around the whole of the Cotswolds AONB in a sustainable way.

Over 2,000 people visited our new centre during its first 3 months.





- Six 'Update' newsletters distributed to a growing database of over 500 people, providing a more regular stream of news bulletins from the Board.
- A double-page feature on the AONB for the Cotswolds Tourism Visitor Guide 2011 which has a print-run of 80,000 and is distributed to potential visitors nationally and overseas.
- Staff and wardens participated in four country shows during 2010-11, using the Board's highly visible trailer. These were the Cotswold Show, Festival of the Tree at Westonbirt, Moreton Show and Wychwood Forest Fair. Wardens attended a further 39 shows and gave 26 talks to a variety of groups thereby helping to raise awareness and understanding of the AONB to many more people.

Media and online publicity

- The Board and the AONB have once again received much positive coverage in numerous national, regional and local press, broadcast and online articles. Twenty three press releases were issued and over £450,000 worth of press coverage achieved including a number of features on radio and TV.
- The AONB website received over 86,000 visits during 2010-11, representing an increase of 9%. A new AONB page was developed on the social networking site, facebook.com, and the AONB's profile page on twitter continues to grow with regular 'tweeting' and over 900 followers.
- The Cotswold Way website has been going from strength to strength. Visitor figures have continued to rise with a year-on-year increase of 50%, and over 91,000 individual users during 2010. This increase is the third

highest of all the National Trails, and is almost certainly down to efforts made to continually add new and exciting content.

Education project

The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens' Education Project continued to make much progress during 2010-11, building on the previous year. Wardens spent 536 hours working with 13 schools and 387 children in the AONB in a variety of activities that helped many more children explore and enjoy the countryside.

As well as working with children from the Cotswolds, wardens helped to run a wild day at Ilmington School where children from Coventry were introduced to the countryside by pupils at their twinned school in the village of Ilmington. Many of the children had not had the opportunity to explore the countryside before and thoroughly enjoyed the adventure of climbing trees, discovering nature and making campfires.



"Thank you so much for a lovely day. It was so action packed. The children loved each of the activities and most said that they would have loved to have spent more time at each place - especially the millennium wood - we'll have to do that again sometime. So please will you pass on our thanks and our appreciation for all their hard work and for giving up all their time."

Kingham School



Enjoying & Appreciating

Tourism is the Cotswolds' most important industry, helping to support the local economy through millions of pounds of visitor income generated and thousands of jobs supported throughout the AONB.

In 2010-11, the Board continued to lead the work of the Cotswolds AONB Sustainable Tourism Partnership, with which it developed and published its five year Sustainable Tourism Strategy & Action Plan for the AONB. The strategy formed the basis of an application to the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, which was submitted in December 2010.

The European Charter is awarded by the Europarc Federation to protected areas which can demonstrate they are delivering tourism in a sustainable way. By aiming for Charter status, the Board is taking a Cotswolds-wide approach and building on previous green tourism initiatives such as the Cotswolds Green Tourism Project, to position the Cotswolds as sustainable destination.

Celebrating our protected landscapes

In 2010-11 the South East Protected Landscapes (SEPL) group secured RDPE funding to support a major project to develop sustainable, rural tourism in the Protected Landscapes of the South East, including the Cotswolds AONB, which will be supported by a national promotional and marketing campaign.

The project aims to raise awareness of why our rural areas are special and how visitors can help keep them that way. It will involve telling stories, engaging and enchanting people with our landscapes – and put a sense of place and appreciation of landscape at the heart of the visitor experience.

Exploring the Cotswolds on foot and by bike

The popular guided walks programme, co-ordinated by the Voluntary Wardens, featured 295 walks throughout the year, attracting 4,310 adults and 44 children. This represented an increase of 20% more people than the previous year, proving that there is a growing demand for a variety of guided walks throughout the Cotswolds countryside.

As part of the guided walks programme, a series of themed nature events was organised to help support and celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity. A Bluebell Weekend, Wildflowers Week and Rivers Week saw a number of walks, talks and family events taking place to help more people learn about the important biodiversity of the Cotswolds.

As well as walking in the Cotswolds, cycling is a popular activity and, to help more people enjoy safe cycling in the countryside, a new set of six off-road cycling routes were researched and made available to download from the Board's website. To help promote the routes and encourage more people to explore the Cotswolds by bike, they were featured in Cotswold Life magazine between June and November 2010.



Cotswold Way National Trail



The 102-mile Cotswold Way National Trail is a flagship walking product, nationally recognised for its special features and quality of standard.

With continued funding from Natural England, the Board takes responsibility for the Cotswold Way's ongoing protection, development, promotion and maintenance in partnership with the four highways authorities through which the trail runs.

Representing the UK at the World Trails Conference

In early November, the Cotswold Way National Trail Officer, was invited to attend the first World Trails Conference held on the South Korean island of Jeju, on behalf of the 15 National Trails in England and Wales. James was given the

opportunity to deliver a presentation on the management, promotion and development of the Cotswold Way to the 200 delegates from across the globe, which was extremely well received and generated a great deal of interest from the other delegates.

An Economic Impact Study for the Cotswold Way was undertaken

In order to guide its work in managing and promoting the Cotswold Way National Trail, last year a study was commissioned which aimed to understand more about the benefits that the trail brings to local businesses.

The study found that tourism enterprises and service providers recognise that, as a National Trail, the Cotswold Way is an important addition to the tourism product of the Cotswolds. The report provides a useful benchmark and base from which to grow the trail in the future.

Three-Year Framework

The framework for the management and development of the Cotswold Way from 2011 to 2014 was completed during 2010-11 following extensive consultation and close partnership with a wide range of groups and individuals. The final version, to be published in 2011, is a robust yet flexible document which will be used to develop regular action plans as part of the Board's review procedure.

Wardens and Work Parties

The Trail Office continued to work closely with the Cotswold Way wardens to ensure the highest possible quality path and user experience. As well as monthly condition surveying, frequent work parties have been taking place on the Trail as part of a drive to bring more reactive and proactive maintenance back in-house.



Customer Feedback

Requests for information from existing and potential users has also seen a sharp increase. Most comments were very positive, including:

"I walked the entire Cotswold Way in July 2010 and enjoyed it immensely. Signage was great. I really appreciate all the work that goes into maintaining the trail."

30 January 2011



Strategic Management & Planning

We work in partnership at a higher strategic level to influence, advise and persuade on matters that affect the Cotswolds AONB.



Landscape planning award for Cotswolds Conservation Board

In 2010-11 the Board received the 'Highly Commended' award in the Strategic Landscape Planning category at the 2010 Landscape Institute Awards ceremony in London. The award was in recognition of the Board's approach to the strategic management of the AONB including the development of its landscape character assessment, local distinctiveness and landscape strategy and guidelines.

"The Cotswolds Conservation Board submission shows comprehensive and thorough use of existing methodology, good integration of contemporary issues associated with climate change and the economic value of landscape."

Award judge

Management Plan review

The Board is required by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to review the AONB Management Plan at five yearly intervals. The revised Plan will be published in 2013. To allow sufficient time for full consultation with partners, the Board has commenced the review process. This began with a Board workshop session in the autumn of 2010. Further discussion of issues and options to be considered by the review took place during the early spring of 2011. Consultation with partners will commence with a series of theme workshops in early and late summer 2011.

Planning Protocol with Natural England

The Board agreed with Natural England a protocol setting out the roles and responsibilities of each organisation with respect to strategic planning and development control in the Cotswolds AONB. The early

exchange of views is encouraged, and Natural England will stress to local authorities the need to obtain the views of the Board on issues affecting the landscape of the AONB.

Planning responses & guidance

Pressures on the landscape from housing, energy and transport infrastructure development continue to be among the key challenges facing the Board.

In 2010-11, the Board was formally consulted on 58 planning and transport applications and policies, some of which are highlighted below:

- Responses were made on the draft Rights of Way Improvement plans for Gloucestershire and Warwickshire.
- To facilitate the re-introduction of grazing to manage wildflower rich grassland, the Board supported applications to fence common land on Bannerdown Common and

Leckhampton Hill and for the installation of cattle grids on Rodborough and Minchinhampton Commons.

- The Board responded to the consultation on Trees and Woodland in Worcestershire, Biodiversity and Landscape Guidelines for their Planting and Management.
- The Board submitted a response to the proposed National Planning Framework and to the revised National Energy Statements.
- A position statement on Development outside the Cotswolds AONB (the “setting”) was adopted by the Board in 2010.
- Responses were made to Core Strategy document consultations issued by Cotswold, Stroud, Wychavon, Cherwell, Cheltenham Borough, Wiltshire, South Gloucestershire, West Oxfordshire, Bath and North East Somerset, and Stratford-on-Avon Councils.



“Very many thanks for this useful letter from the SoS. It will enable me to see the general approach of the SoS to pipelines in the AONB for elsewhere. Once again my thanks for the assistance.”

M Dobson

- Responses were made to significant planning applications in and near the AONB for renewable energy projects, housing development, a motorway service area on the M5, and minerals and waste proposals.
- The Board’s planning officer gave evidence at a planning inquiry into a proposed country house at Coln St Aldwyns,
- Responses were made to Local Transport Plan 3 consultations by the six highway authorities.
- A database of renewable energy projects submitted for planning approval in the AONB was maintained. There has been a significant rise in proposals for small scale photovoltaic panel installations. These have usually been supported by the Board in line with the Board’s position statement on renewable energy generation in the Cotswolds AONB.
- The Board undertook a review with the local authorities of its planning and transport activity which showed a generally acceptable level of effectiveness of its planning work. Only one of the 24



The Cotswolds Conservation Board received a Highly Commended award for its strategic landscape planning work.

significant planning applications responded to was not determined in accordance with the Board’s advice.

- A revised Telecommunications Position Statement was published to incorporate an addendum on broadband in the Cotswolds.

The Board made responses to two national consultations: Natural England’s consultation on Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England and to an invitation to shape the Nature of England – the ‘Lawton Report’

“May I express my support for your organisation. I think that you do an excellent job promoting, protecting and monitoring the Cotswolds AONB.”

P Sherwood

People communities and partnerships



Adam Henson and Jeff West at the Access Conference.

We work in partnership with a range of local and national organisations and strategic bodies with the common goals of ensuring the continued protection of our precious landscape.

Ministerial visit

The Cotswolds Conservation Board welcomed Richard Benyon, Minister for the Natural Environment in February 2011, as he made a fact-finding visit to the Cotswolds AONB to see a range of conservation projects in action.

Mr Benyon was able to see some of the key areas of the Board's work in conserving and enhancing the Cotswolds AONB, and meet some of the staff, members and voluntary wardens as part of the tour.

Following a visit to Cackleford to view the site of the National Grid Gas

"I was impressed to see the excellent work that is being carried out by the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The voluntary wardens and other staff are a great example of how local communities can both be involved in, and benefit from, the environment."

Richard Benyon, Minister for the Natural Environment.

Pipeline project, the Minister was introduced to the, 'Escape to the Cotswolds' centre, before being taken to Swell Buildings Farm near Stow-

on-the-Wold to see the Board's work with Higher Level Stewardship. The final part of the visit included Shipton-under-Wychwood Wild Garden & Woods to see a SDF project on the ground.

Annual Forum

The Board hosted its Annual Forum at the Corn Exchange, Witney on Friday 4 March. Over 60 people attended the forum entitled 'Localism and the opportunities and implications for the Cotswolds AONB.' Hosted by the Board's Patron, Lord Plumb of Coleshill, the event featured an excellent range of guest speakers including representatives from the Department for Communities and Local Government, CPRE, English Heritage and Oxfordshire Rural Communities Council.

Access Conference

Over 40 delegates attended the Board's second Cotswolds Access Conference which took place on 6 July at Cotswold District Council, Cirencester. The conference entitled Active Cotswolds featured presentations by Adam Henson, Cotswold Farm Park; Doug Hulyer, Natural England; Sheila Talbot, Walkers are Welcome and Dan James from Exmoor National Park. In the afternoon three workshops were held on Rights of Way; risk with responsibility; and cashing in on access.



Richard Benyon MP met with member of staff Stuart Leaver to hear about the Board's HLS work.



Solar panel project at Abbey Fields Community Centre.

Sustainable Development Fund

The Sustainable Development Fund is aimed at supporting projects that bring social, environmental and economic benefits to communities within the Cotswolds AONB and promote methods of achieving a more sustainable way of life.

In 2010-11 the Grants Sub-Committee awarded nearly £50,000 of funding to 15 very worthwhile local community projects, worth over £214,000 in total. The projects were wide-ranging and included a woodland coppicing scheme, local food festival, playground allotment and energy-saving equipment.

The successful projects supported by the SDF during 2010-11 were:

Applicant	Scheme	Location	Grant awarded	Total project value
West Littleton Parish Council	Conservation of tombs and memorials	West Littleton	£1,436	£51,703
Wotton under Edge Town Council	Improvement of local community wildlife site	Wotton under Edge	£3,925	£5,650
Guiting Power Playgroup	Supporting local 'grow your own' initiative	Guiting Power	£1,443	£2,100
Forestry Commission	Production of climate change educational DVDs	Westonbirt	£398	£795
Shipton under Wychwood Wild Garden & Woods	Purchase and enhancement of land for community use	Shipton under Wychwood	£10,000	£70,000
Three Village Shop Ltd	Purchase of energy saving equipment	Finstock	£3,427	£4,570
Tetbury Food & Drink Festival	Celebration of local produce	Tetbury	£1,700	£8,746
Heartwood Project	Woodland coppicing scheme	Bath	£2,098	£6,400
Stroud Valleys Project	Hedgerow surveying	Stroud	£3,220	£4,520
Chedworth Diggers	Mini orchard and bee hives	Chedworth	£935	£1,562
Blenheim Palace	Biomass feasibility study	Woodstock	£1,225	£2,450
Abbey Fields Community Centre	Solar panels installation	Winchcombe	£10,400	£32,550
Trailblaze	Ultra marathon route established	Cotswold Way National Trail	£2,500	£12,000
Richmond Fellowship	'Grow your own' community project	Bradford on Avon	£3,344	£6,344
Kemerton Conservation Trust	Enhancement of Nature Conservation Area	Kemerton	£3,431	£4,775
TOTAL			£49,482	£214,165



Case study

Tetbury Food and Drink Festival

The Tetbury Food and Drink Festival Organising Committee received SDF support of £1,700 in 2010 to help develop a five-day food festival for local food producers to raise their profile within the community. The overall aim of the project was to increase the opportunities for local people to buy local food at affordable prices and to promote healthy eating. The festival included cooking demonstrations, recipe competitions, food producer tours and special menus and events at local restaurants.

Thanks for the additional SDF support, the event was considered an overall success attracting 46 stall holders and 2,500 visitors; this represented an increase of 53% and 67% respectively over the previous year's festival. The majority of events were well-attended and some were completely sold out. The feedback from producers was very positive with many already reserving their stalls for 2011.

Farming Forum

The Board's 10th annual Cotswold Farming Forum took place in March at the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester and attracted over 50 farmers and landowners to hear about the latest issues and developments affecting farming in the AONB. The following presentations were made at the Forum:

- CAP reform –the outlook beyond 2013. Andrew Clark, NFU
- Managing Cotswold Soils. Dr John Conway, Royal Agricultural College
- The Cotswold Farmland Bird Project. James Phillips, Natural England

Cotswold Voluntary Wardens Annual Conference 2010

The wardens' Annual Conference took place on Friday 8 October at Chedworth Village Hall with over 90 wardens attending. The theme of the conference was mammals of the Cotswolds and included talks on deer by Norman Healy of the Deer Initiative and water voles by John Field from Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. Site visits to Sherborne Water Meadows, Stowell Park Estate and around Chedworth took place in the afternoon.

Wider networks

The Board has regularly represented the Cotswolds AONB locally, nationally and internationally by participating in and contributing to a number of events and conferences to share skills and develop networks with other protected landscapes.

Last year, staff, wardens and members participated in the following key events:

- National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Conference: 'Landscape and Nature for All', in Kent Downs AONB, 12-15 July.
- Association of National Park Authorities (ANPA) conference: 'Living Lochs' in Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park, 20-23 September.
- Europarc Federation Conference: 'Living Together, Biodiversity and Human Activities' in Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise National Park, Italy 29 September - 3 October.
- Volunteer Exchange visit to Pollino National Park, Italy as part of the Europarc Grundtvig Project in July.

Friends of the Cotswolds

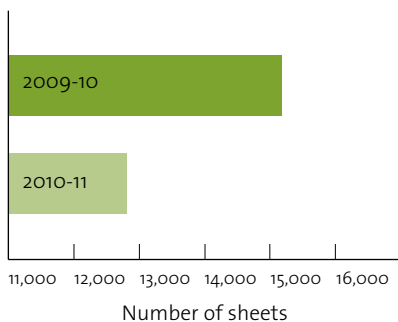
During 2010-11, the Friends of the Cotswolds helped fund a range of environmental projects in the Cotswolds, including the purchase of nesting boxes for kingfishers and tawny owls, work to support the Naunton Dovecote and the renovation of the Clapper bridge at Signet. This renovation work was made possible through the support from the Voluntary Wardens, Oxfordshire County Council and Huntsman's Quarries.



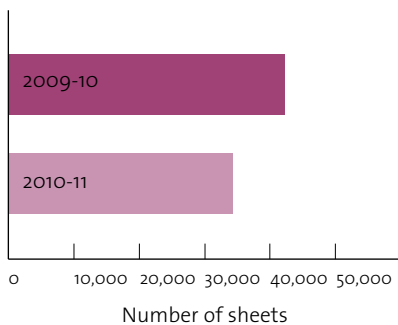
Leading by example

As champions of sustainability, we are increasingly aware of the need to set a good example and look at ways of reducing our own carbon footprint. We try to recycle and re-use as much as possible as well as limit our number of car journeys and use public transport where we can. The following charts show how we are doing.

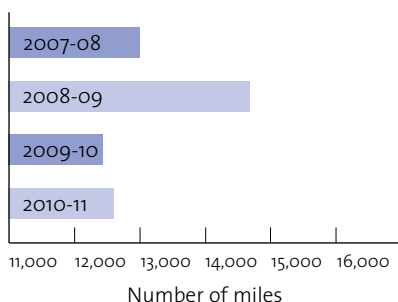
Quantity of paper recycled



Quantity of paper ordered



Total claimed mileage undertaken



Looking ahead to 2012-13

We look forward to building on the success of this year and will seek to continue our work for the benefit all who live, work and visit the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

In particular we will aim to:

- Build on 'Escape to the Cotswolds' centre through the development of a funding application to HLF to significantly enhance and improve the building and its offer.
- Develop stage 1 of a pilot project for Magnificent Meadows.
- Continue to deliver the Cotswolds Ancient Woodland Project and Farmland Bird Project.
- Launch a new website for enjoying the Cotswolds, including information on walking, cycling and events.
- Continue supporting imaginative local community projects through the Sustainable Development Fund.
- Secure the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism and work closely with the tourism sector to deliver the Cotswolds AONB Sustainable Tourism Strategy.
- Produce a guidance leaflet for the keeping of horses in the AONB.
- Continue to develop, enhance and promote the range of rural skills courses on offer.
- Organise a series of consultative workshops for the new AONB Management Plan 2014-19 and then publish the full draft plan for consultation.
- Seek opportunities to reduce costs, increase efficiency and identify potential income streams eg through sponsorship and bidding for external contracts for the delivery of services in the AONB.
- Continue 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.
- To continue to help our wildlife adapt to climate change through the creation of a thriving ecological network with our Cotswolds partners.

Summary financial statement

1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011

	2009/10 £	2010/11 £
Expenditure	1,003,382	925,807
Project Delivery	859,275	789,280
Corporate Management and Administration	145,699	143,671
Interest Receivable	(1,592)	(7,144)
Income	(1,061,910)	(1,403,995)
Natural England	(790,185)	(747,548)
Local Authorities	(178,158)	(176,487)
National Grid	0	(400,000)
Other	(93,567)	(79,960)
Deficit/(Surplus) for Year	(58,528)	(478,188)
Deficit/(Surplus) for the Year after Movement on Reserves	(32,316)	(4,492)

Balance Sheet

Fixed Assets	0	0
Current Assets	429,944	752,873
	<hr/> 429,944	<hr/> 752,873
Less: Current Liabilities	(177,329)	(175,070)
Net Current Assets	252,615	577,803
Long Term Pension Fund Asset /(Liabilities)	(547,000)	66,000
Total Net Assets	(294,385)	643,803
Financed by		
General Fund Balance	114,433	118,925
Other Reserves	138,182	458,878
Pension Reserve	(547,000)	66,000
	<hr/> (294,385)	<hr/> 643,803

Note: The actuarial valuation of the pension fund at the year end resulted in a movement from a liability of £547,000 to an asset of £66,000. This is reflected in the movement in the total reserves on the balance sheet.



Who's Who: Cotswolds Conservation Board 2010-11

Patron

The Lord Plumb of Coleshill DL FRAGS

Chairman

Jeff West

Vice Chairman

Liz Eyre

STAFF

Director Martin Lane

Planning Officer Malcolm Watt

Land Management Officer
Mark Connelly

**Business Planning & Project
Development Officer**
Simon Smith

Information & Interpretation Officer
Nicola Greaves

Office Manager Margaret Fletcher

Cotswold Way National Trail Officer
James Blockley

**Cotswold Way Assistant National
Trail Officer** Don Field

Volunteer Coordinator Becky Jones

Administrative Officer Claire Parker

Rural Skills and Grants Officer
David Molloy

HLS Graduate Placement

Stuart Leaver

Student Placement Nick Jones

Technical Accountant John Hunt

ADVISERS

Finance Officer Reg Talbot

Monitoring Officer Nigel Adams

Committee Clerk Stephen Holley

The Board also houses the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

CEO Howard Davies

**Communications & Development
Manager** Jill Smith

SUPPORTED BY OVER

300 COTSWOLD VOLUNTARY WARDENS:

Head Warden David Colbourne

Deputy Head Warden
Simon Mallatratt

BOARD MEMBERS

Revd Canon Michael Banks

Ken Betteridge*

Libby Bird

Hazel Bleaken

Dr Ann Boon

Jo Burgon*

Rebecca Charley

Andrew Clark

Niel Curwen*

Matthew Darby

Peter Doyle

John Evetts

Liz Eyre*

Stephen Gray

Adrian Hardman

Timothy Hill

Elizabeth Hodges*

Nick Holliday*

Sue Hope*

Verena Hunt*

Richard Lloyd*

Will Manley

John Matthews

Susie Moore*

Adrian Phillips

Simon Randall

George Reynolds

Chris Saint

Don Seale

Christine Shine

Lloyd Surgenor*

David Thorpe

Carole Topples*

Martin Veal

Robert Vines

Judith Webb

Jeff West*

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Please note: staff and Board members are shown for the period April 2010 to March 2011.

*Members of the Board's Executive Committee.