



**Cotswolds**  
National  
Landscape

Cotswolds National Landscape

# Management Plan 2023 – 2025 Summary

# A note on terminology

In June 2020 the Cotswolds National Landscape Board decided to replace the term Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) with National Landscape.

This plan uses the name Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) for the area designated as the Cotswolds AONB. At times it is abbreviated to National Landscape.

AONB is still the legal designation and is used within this plan when referring to AONBs outside of the Cotswolds and the designation nationally.

The name used for the organisation associated with the designation is the Cotswolds National Landscape Board. At times this is abbreviated to National Landscape Board or The Board.

The legal name of the organisation remains the Cotswolds Conservation Board but this name is no longer used in most circumstances.

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# Policies at a glance

| Cross cutting themes<br>(Purposes 1 and 2)<br><br>Tackling 21st century issues through progressive partnerships. |   |   | Purpose 1: To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape<br><br>Influencing and delivering for landscape, nature and climate. |   |  |  |  |  |   |  | Purpose 2: To increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape<br><br>Ensuring access, learning and wellbeing opportunities are for everyone. |   |   |
|--|---|---|--|---|--|--|--|--|---|--|--|---|---|
| Outcome 1: Climate emergency   | Outcome 2: Natural & cultural capital                                   | Outcome 3: Working together   | Outcome 4: Landscape   | Outcome 5: Local distinctiveness                  | Outcome 6: Tranquillity                  | Outcome 7: Dark skies                  | Outcome 8: Historic environment and cultural heritage                  | Outcome 9: Biodiversity and nature recovery                  | Outcome 10: Rural land management                               | Outcome 11: Development & transport  | Outcome 12: Health and wellbeing   | Outcome 13: Access & recreation                     | Outcome 14: Sustainable tourism                 |
| <a href="#">Policy CC1: Climate change – mitigation</a>  | <a href="#">Policy CC3: Natural &amp; cultural capital – principles</a> | <a href="#">Policy CC6: Developing a consistent, coordinated and landscape -led approach</a>    | <a href="#">Policy CE1: Landscape</a>  | <a href="#">Policy CE3: Local distinctiveness</a> | <a href="#">Policy CE4: Tranquillity</a> | <a href="#">Policy CE5: Dark skies</a> | <a href="#">Policy CE6: Historic environment and cultural heritage</a> | <a href="#">Policy CE7: Biodiversity and nature recovery</a> | <a href="#">Policy CE8: Rural land management</a>               | <a href="#">Policy CE10: Development &amp; transport – principles</a>      | <a href="#">Policy UE1: Health and wellbeing</a>   | <a href="#">Policy UE2: Access &amp; recreation</a> | <a href="#">Policy UE3: Sustainable tourism</a> |
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|  | <a href="#">Policy CC5: Water</a>                                       | <a href="#">Policy CC8: Working together</a>  |  |   |  |  |  |  |   | <a href="#">Policy CE12: Development priorities &amp; evidence of need</a> |  |   |   |
|  |   |   |  |   |  |  |  |  |   | <a href="#">Policy CE13: Waste management and the circular economy</a>     |  |   |   |

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# Chair's foreword

The Cotswolds National Landscape has previously produced a Management Plan every five years, with the current plan expiring in 2023. We've made the decision to undertake a limited interim review of this current plan to cover the period 2023-25, so that we can align with the timeline of the government's 25-year Environment Plan and accommodate any changes in policy resulting from the 2019 Landscapes Review.

Our plan continues to address the many issues currently facing the Cotswolds National Landscape. These include helping to mitigate and adapt to climate change, supporting the recovery of wildlife and helping nature to thrive, ensuring everyone has access to the

landscape to help improve their health and wellbeing, producing food and other products, and ensuring businesses and livelihoods are maintained. All this, whilst still maintaining the special characteristics and elements of natural beauty which make it a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Many of these demands are increasing but our understanding of their consequences is improving all the time. In our Vision for the Cotswolds, we acknowledge the need to constantly find new win-win solutions that conserve and enhance the landscape and serve the people who live, work, and visit here. Working collaboratively, in partnership with others, will be essential to help identify and

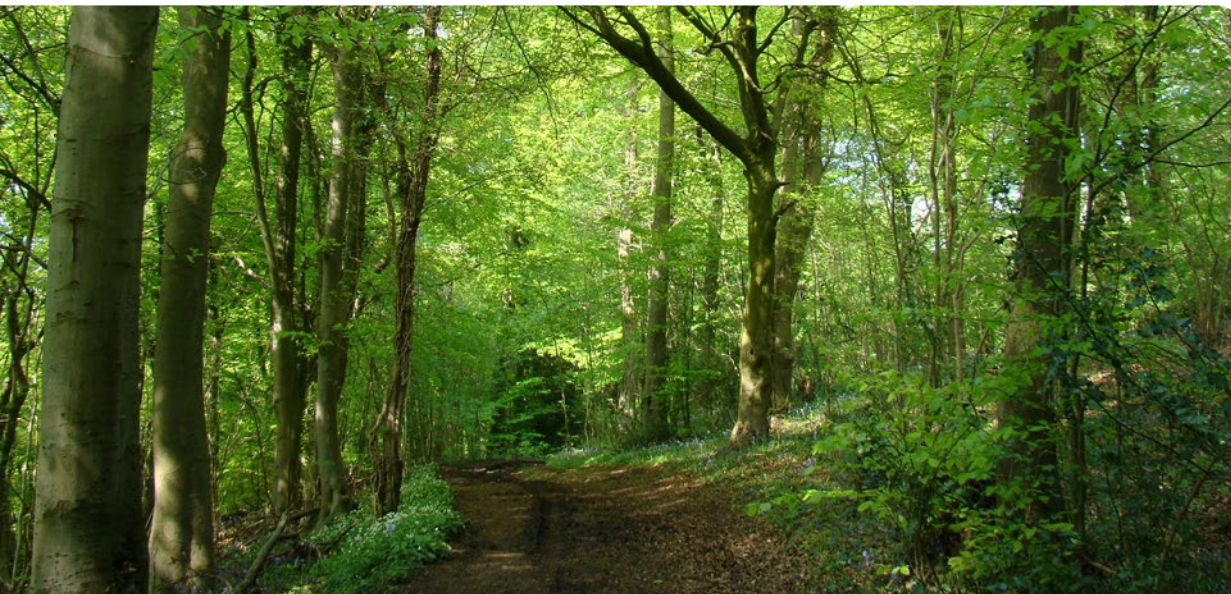


implement these solutions. During the two-year span of this interim plan we will further develop the evidence and data, particularly around climate action, so that we can build in meaningful targets towards net zero in our next plan. The new plan will inform how we work in the Cotswolds National Landscape to balance the needs of nature, people, climate – and how we transition into a future that will surely be very different from now.

**Brendan McCarthy**

*Chair, Cotswolds National Landscape Board*  
February 2023

Image credit: Mark Connelly



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# Introduction

Image credit: Nicole Daw

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# Introduction

This is a summary version of the 2023 – 2025 Management Plan. Discussion, evidence and references can be found in the [full version](#).

This version is intended to be an easy to read, at a glance version of the plan. The full version should be checked and used for any formal purposes.

## What is the Cotswolds National Landscape?

The Cotswolds National Landscape was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1966, and extended in area in 1990. Although AONB is still the legal name of the designation it was rebranded as a National Landscape for most purposes in June 2020. At 790 square miles, or 2038 square kilometres, it is the largest AONB – and the third largest protected landscape, including National Parks – in England. The National Landscape stretches from Bath and Wiltshire in the south, through Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire to Warwickshire and Worcestershire in the north. It cuts across 15 local authority areas.

AONBs are landscapes whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard them. The statutory purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance their natural beauty.

Each AONB has been designated by reason of its 'special qualities'. These include the flora, fauna, historical and cultural associations as well as landscape and scenic views.



Image credit: Squashed Robot Films

## What is the Cotswolds National Landscape Board?

The Cotswolds National Landscape Board ('the Board') was established by Parliament in 2004 as the Cotswolds Conservation Board and has two statutory purposes:

1. To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape.
2. To increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

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In fulfilling these roles, the Board has a duty to seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of people living in the National Landscape.

In circumstances where these purposes and duties are irreconcilable, the Board must give priority to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape.

The Board consists of 37 members, of whom 15 are nominated by local authorities, eight by parish councils and 14 are appointed by government. The Board's work programme is delivered by a small team of employees, supported by volunteers including the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens who deliver a programme of practical projects and guided walks across the National Landscape.

Image credit: Squashed Robot Films



Further information about the Board can be found on the Board's website: [www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk](http://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk)

### What is the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan?

The Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan ('the Management Plan') is a statutory plan, which sets out policies for the management of the National Landscape. The National Landscape Board is the body responsible for preparing and publishing the Management Plan and for reviewing it at intervals of no more than five years. This is the fifth such document prepared by the Board.

Although the Board is the body responsible for preparing and publishing the Management Plan and will play an important role in its delivery, the Board doesn't actually own or directly manage any of the land in the National Landscape or its setting. As such, the policies of the Management Plan are also intended to guide the work of other stakeholders in delivering the Management Plan's vision and outcomes.

### Why do we have a Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan?

The Management Plan is a key mechanism for achieving the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the National

Landscape's special qualities. The Management Plan is the only plan to guide the management of the National Landscape as a whole.

### Who will deliver the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan?

This plan is ultimately about partnership working to make the vision a reality.

The National Landscape Board will play an important role in delivering the vision and outcomes of the Management Plan. However, its successful delivery is also dependent on other stakeholders, including local authorities and other public bodies, land owners and land managers, non-government organisations, developers, businesses and individuals. Many of these stakeholders already make a significant contribution to delivering the vision and outcomes of the Management Plan. This is a plan for the place and all the bodies and individuals engaged in it.

It is a legal requirement for 'relevant authorities', including all public bodies, to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape. This legal requirement is known as the 'duty of regard'. So, for example, local planning authorities shall have regard to this purpose when developing their Local Plans and when making decisions on planning applications.

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*The duty of regard is intended to ensure that the purpose for which an AONB has been designated (i.e. to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB) is recognised as an essential consideration in any decisions or activities that impact on the AONB, with the expectation that adverse impacts will be avoided or mitigated where possible.*

### How will the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan be delivered?

How the Board will contribute to the delivery of the Management Plan itself, as well as encourage and support other stakeholders is set out in a three yearly Business Plan Framework which in turn is delivered through an annual work programme.

Every individual and organisation with an interest in the National Landscape can help make this plan's vision and outcomes a reality by contributing to its delivery.



Image credit: Squashed Robot Films

### How will the delivery of the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan be monitored?

The Board will monitor and evaluate its contribution to the delivery of the Management Plan through the quarterly and annual review of its work programme. The 'State of the Cotswolds Report' – together with other local and national monitoring and surveys – will contribute to the provision of evidence, which is a crucial part of managing the National Landscape.

*Every individual and organisation with an interest in the National Landscape can help make this plan's vision and outcomes a reality.*

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# Vision

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# Vision

## A Cotswolds vision: a National Landscape for everyone

### A time of opportunity

The Cotswolds is good for us; we feel better when we are here and engaged with the natural beauty of the landscape around us. In recent years we have been reminded of the intrinsic relationship between ourselves and the natural world – and the condition it is in. We believe the Cotswolds National Landscape offers opportunities for optimism, regeneration, wellbeing, and inclusion.

### Challenges lie ahead

We are in the midst of a global climate emergency and an ecological crisis. Our awareness of ongoing social and economic inequalities is heightened. In the Cotswolds, these concerns are as real for us too, and we face significant challenges: climate change; threats to wildlife and habitat; changes to the farming landscape and agriculture; finding ways to deliver opportunities for younger people and provide for an ageing population; and achieving access to, and involvement in, the countryside for everyone – in ways which help benefit the countryside and encourage a diverse range of people to appreciate and care for the Cotswolds.

### What can we do, and how should we do it?

To address these issues and begin to make improvements, we need to challenge ourselves. We must avoid complacency, and not adhere doggedly to past beliefs – this will hold us back, and limit how much positive change we can introduce. Instead, we need to embrace new ways of thinking in order to find win-win solutions which both conserve and enhance natural beauty, and serve the people who are here. We will work hard, and in partnership – to find outcomes which offer the most positive benefits and the least negative impact. We will need to demonstrate collaboration and leadership. We will need to be energetic and proactive. We will need to be bold, brave, and confident. Above all, we will need to acknowledge that we can't do it all alone – we want to work with other organisations and individuals to achieve results which benefit all of us, and nature.

### The future should be bright

The treasured landscapes which make the Cotswolds nationally and internationally important are diverse in character, as are the people who live, work, and visit here. There is no 'one size fits all' for the future – but we have a greater opportunity than ever before to pull together as communities across the Cotswolds, and to work with each other to harness our dedication and expertise to forge the future of the Cotswolds. This place, the Cotswolds National Landscape, is for everyone, from all walks of life. In sharing it and looking after it, we will continue to create a place that is vibrant, unique, welcoming, and truly special – for people and for nature. We will work towards ensuring that the Cotswolds stays a working landscape, where agriculture thrives and supply chains are secure. Our communities should be connected and diverse, but self-sustaining. Visitors should feel welcome to enjoy being here, confident about access, and motivated to give something back to help look after the landscape. This should be a place where the landscape, nature, and people work in harmony with each other.

The Cotswolds will be a place that will inspire generations of people to look after it – now and in the years ahead.

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# Summary

The Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan is a statutory plan, which sets out the vision, outcomes and policies for the management of the Cotswolds National Landscape for the period 2023-2025.

The vision sets the overall context for the plan and was adopted in 2022 following consultation with stakeholders. The vision was drawn up in the light of three interlinked key issues:

## 1. The climate emergency

Mitigating and adapting to climate change whilst conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape.

## 2. Nature's decline and the ecological crisis

Enabling wildlife to recover, flourish and adapt to climate change through a robust nature recovery network which additionally provides us with clean air and water and healthy soils.



Image credit: Anna Field

## 3. Health and societal changes

Ensuring that livelihoods are maintained and that everyone within and around the National Landscape can realise the health and wellbeing benefits of accessing its natural beauty.

The plan goes on to define the special qualities of the National Landscape. These are the aspects of the area's natural beauty which make it distinctive and which are considered valuable, especially at a national scale. It is the impact of these key issues, amongst others, on the special qualities that has informed the development of the plan's outcomes and policies.



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## The special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape – statement of significance

The Cotswolds is a rich mosaic of historical, social, economic, cultural, geological, geomorphological and ecological features. The special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape are:

- The unifying character of the limestone geology – its visible presence in the landscape and use as a building material;
- The Cotswold escarpment, including views from and to the National Landscape;
- The high wolds – a large open, elevated predominately arable landscape with commons, 'big' skies and long-distance views;
- River valleys, the majority forming the headwaters of the Thames, with high-quality water;
- Distinctive dry stone walls;
- Flower-rich grasslands particularly limestone grasslands;
- Ancient broadleaved woodland particularly along the crest of the escarpment.
- Variations in the colour of the stone from one part of the National Landscape to another which add a vital element of local distinctiveness;
- The tranquillity of the area, away from major sources of inappropriate noise, development, visual clutter and pollution;
- Extensive dark sky areas;
- Distinctive settlements, developed in the Cotswold vernacular with high architectural quality and integrity;

- An accessible landscape for quiet recreation for both rural and urban users, with numerous walking and riding routes, including the Cotswold Way National Trail;
- Significant archaeological, prehistoric and historic associations dating back 6,000 years, including Neolithic stone monuments, ancient drove roads, Iron Age forts, Roman villas, ridge and furrow fields, medieval wool churches and country estates and parks;
- A vibrant heritage of cultural associations, including the Arts and Crafts movement of the 19th and 20th centuries, famous composers and authors and traditional events such as the Cotswolds Olimpicks, cheese rolling and woosack races.



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The outcomes express the desired state of the National Landscape. They are arranged under three over-arching headings which reflect the National Landscape’s purpose of designation (to conserve and enhance natural beauty) and the National Landscape Board’s additional purpose (to increase understanding and enjoyment). These headings are illustrated further with three broad aims:

1. Cross Cutting Themes; **Tackling 21st century issues through progressive partnerships.**
2. Conserving and Enhancing Natural Beauty; **Influencing and delivering for landscape, nature and climate.**
3. Increasing Understanding and Enjoyment; **Ensuring access, learning and wellbeing opportunities are for everyone.**

When viewed together the outcomes paint a powerful picture of what the Cotswolds would be like if this plan’s vision became a reality:

**Outcome 1 – Climate action:** The National Landscape is a place that is mitigating and adapting to climate change, and has a clearly defined pathway towards net zero emissions.

**Outcome 2 – Natural and cultural capital:**

The natural and cultural capital assets of the National Landscape - and the services which they provide – are better understood, conserved and enhanced.

**Outcome 3 – Working together:** Through collaborative partnerships and a shared understanding, the purposes of the National Landscape and its Board are applied consistently across the whole area.

**Outcome 4 – Landscape:** The evolving landscape and much-loved character of the Cotswolds is better understood and at the heart of all we do and the decisions we make.

**Outcome 5 – Local distinctiveness:** In a world of constant and rapid change, the local distinctiveness of the National Landscape is valued, conserved and enhanced.

**Outcome 6 – Tranquillity:** Noise pollution and visual disturbance are minimised to maintain tranquillity across the National Landscape.

**Outcome 7 – Dark skies:** Fewer areas of the National Landscape are affected by light pollution.



Image credit: Nicole Daw

**Outcome 8 – Historic environment and cultural heritage:**

The historic environment and cultural heritage of the National Landscape is better understood, conserved and enhanced.

**Outcome 9 – Biodiversity and nature recovery:**

There is concerted unified action for a widespread recovery of nature – conserving, restoring and enhancing a connected mosaic of distinctly Cotswolds habitats and species.

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#### **Outcome 10 – Rural land management:**

Land management conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the National Landscape whilst balancing the competing pressures of recovering nature, tackling climate change, food production, supporting livelihoods and public access.

#### **Outcome 11 – Development and transport:**

Development and transport schemes positively contribute to the purposes of protected landscape designation and also play a key role in facilitating the economic and social wellbeing of local and rural communities.

**Outcome 12 – Health and wellbeing:** The National Landscape plays a full part in improving the nation's health, benefitting the mental and physical wellbeing of those who experience it.

**Outcome 13 – Access and recreation:** The Cotswolds is recognised as a welcoming place, where barriers to access are being removed and everyone feels connected to the landscape.

**Outcome 14 – Sustainable tourism:** Businesses and visitors have a shared commitment to contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the National Landscape.

The policies outline in detail how these outcomes can be achieved and are perhaps the most important – and most utilised – part of the plan. They serve five main purposes:

1. They are principles for how the Cotswolds National Landscape should be managed in order to:
  - a. conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape;
  - b. increase the understanding and enjoyment of the National Landscape's special qualities;
  - c. foster the social and economic wellbeing of local communities;

d. address issues that are having an adverse effect on the National Landscape;

e. achieve the vision and outcomes of the Management Plan.

2. They provide a framework for action by all stakeholders with a role to play in the management of the National Landscape including the National Landscape Board.



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3. They represent the policies of the Board.
4. They are intended to guide, influence and be used by stakeholders in their own plans, policies, proposals, work programmes and decision making.
5. Together with other guidance produced by the Board, they are intended to facilitate a consistent and co-ordinated approach across the whole of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

One of the areas which the Management Plan policies relate to is in the policy-making and decision-making of local planning authorities (LPAs). For example, it is hoped that LPAs will have regard to the Management Plan policies when reviewing and developing their own policies, including those within their development plans. The Management Plan policies are aspirational and as such, they might go further than current policies in individual development plans. It is intended that these aspirational policies will aid in helping to develop and evidence new local plan policies.

The Management Plan should be a material consideration in planning decisions. However, it is recognised that planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the LPA's development plan (unless material considerations indicate otherwise).

Although the National Landscape Board will play an important role in delivering the vision, outcomes and policies of the Management Plan this is a plan for the place not the body., Successful delivery is also dependent on all individuals and organisations with an interest in the Cotswolds.



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# Policies

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# Cross cutting themes

Tackling 21st century issues through progressive partnerships

## The climate emergency

### Policy CC1: Climate change – mitigation

CC1.1. Greenhouse gas emissions should be minimised through a range of measures, including:

- Reducing energy demand in existing and new buildings and infrastructure:
  - Improving energy efficiency, for example, by retrofitting existing buildings. Where traditional buildings including listed buildings are retrofitted, this must be undertaken by historic building specialists and in a manner that is compatible with the purpose of National Landscape (AONB) designation;
  - Reducing embodied carbon through secondary and recycled material use within all construction unless demonstrably unachievable on technical and practical grounds;
  - Utilising passive measures, for example the orientation of buildings and the provision of high levels of insulation;
  - Sustainable construction methods and management plans to reduce and manage construction waste should be implemented;
  - Incentivising voluntary sustainability standards, for example BREEAM, Building with Nature, and One Planet Living principles.

- Reducing energy demand through transport and travel:
  - Reducing car use for example, through increasing green and active travel including public transport and increasing shared mobility through car sharing schemes;
  - Reducing the need to travel for example by encouraging home working and affordable housing provision close to sources of employment, services and facilities;
  - Improving the sustainability of travel through for example; public transport hub promotion/integration and information, and prioritising the provision of walking, cycling and public transport use, including adequate cycle parking
  - Providing sufficient infrastructure for the charging of electric vehicles, scooters and bikes;
  - Promoting messages aimed at minimising air travel by Cotswolds residents.
- Generating energy from low carbon sources in a manner consistent with the purpose of National Landscape (AONB) designation:
  - All developments, should have a net zero operational carbon balance and 100% energy provided by low carbon sources. Alternatives to fossil fuel energy sources should be used.

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### Policy CC1: Climate change – mitigation (continued)

- Purchasing locally produced food products and services and encouraging small-scale vegetable growing in gardens and allotments.

CC1.2. Climate change mitigation including the sequestration of carbon should be a key component of land management practices and Environmental Land Management, and rural development support mechanisms in the National Landscape.

CC1.3. Climate action should be undertaken in a way compatible with the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

### Policy CC2: Climate change – adaptation

CC2.1. The risks posed by the consequences of climate change should be reduced through a range of adaptation measures, including those identified in relevant policies of this Management Plan.

CC2.2. Climate change adaptation should be a significant driver in all new development, infrastructure and transport provision.

CC2.3. Climate change adaptation should be a key component of land management practices and Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms, in the National Landscape.

CC2.4. Further research into the predicted impacts of climate change on the Cotswolds National Landscape should be undertaken. This research should be used to advise and inform sustained behavioural change to adapt to climate change and conserve and enhance the National Landscape and its special qualities.

## Natural and cultural capital

### Policy CC3: Natural and cultural capital – principles

CC3.1. The natural and cultural capital of the Cotswolds National Landscape, and the services they provide, should continue to be assessed and evaluated.

CC3.2. The use of natural and cultural capital accounting should be encouraged in order to fully understand the implications of investment, development and management decisions.

CC3.3. The financial and non-financial benefits of natural and cultural capital and the services they provide should be promoted.

CC3.4. Proposals affecting the Cotswolds National Landscape should have regard to – and seek to conserve and enhance – the natural and cultural capital of the National Landscape and the services they provide.

CC3.5. Natural and cultural capital and the services they provide should be key components of Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms in the Cotswolds National Landscape.



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### Policy CC4: Soils

- CC4.1. Soil degradation should be halted and reversed by managing soils in a way that: (i) increases organic content, water retention and carbon sequestration; and (ii) minimises erosion, water pollution and compaction.
- CC4.2 Soil management should remain a key component of Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms in the Cotswolds National Landscape.

### Policy CC5: Water

- CC5.1. Water resources should be carefully managed and conserved to: improve water quality; ensure adequate aquifer recharge; ensure adequate river flows; and contribute to natural flood management systems.
- CC5.2. Development (new and existing sites) should assess and minimise flood risk and implement sustainable drainage schemes, adopt high water efficiency standards in line with RIBA 2030 Climate Challenge targets, and water conservation measures, for example rainwater harvesting and/or water recycling and grey water systems.
- CC5.3. Sewerage pollution from storm overflows should be minimised and be at least within legal and regulatory requirements.

## Working together

### Policy CC6: Developing a consistent, coordinated and landscape-led approach

- CC6.1. Stakeholders across the Cotswolds National Landscape should take a consistent and co-ordinated approach to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape, including its special qualities and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities.



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### Policy CC7: Compliance with section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act

CC7.1. Relevant authorities, including public bodies, must comply with Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (the 'duty of regard') and should have regard to the supporting guidance published by Defra and Natural England.

### Policy CC8: Working in partnership

CC8.1. Stakeholders should work in partnership to support the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities. Stakeholders should also cooperate in fostering the economic and social wellbeing of communities in and around the National Landscape.

CC8.2. Communities and businesses within and around the Cotswolds National Landscape should be encouraged to value and celebrate being part of a nationally recognised landscape and to contribute to the purpose of National Landscape (AONB) designation.

CC8.3. All relevant stakeholders should work together to ensure the successful implementation of the Landscapes Review proposals that Government identified as priority in its response to the review.



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# Conserving and enhancing

Influencing and delivering for landscape, nature and climate.

## Landscape

### Policy CE1: Landscape

- CE1.1. Proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the Cotswolds National Landscape, should have regard to, be compatible with, and reinforce the landscape character of the location, as described by the Cotswolds Conservation Board's Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines. There should be a presumption against the loss of key characteristics identified in the landscape character assessment.
- CE1.2. Proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the Cotswolds National Landscape, should have regard to the scenic quality of the location and its setting and ensure that views – including those into and out of the National landscape – and visual amenity are conserved and enhanced.
- CE1.3. Conserving and enhancing landscape character should be a key objective of Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms in the Cotswolds National Landscape.
- CE1.4. Rural skills training and the utilisation of those skills – such as dry stone walling, stone-masonry, traditional woodland management and hedgelaying – will be supported to ensure the long-term retention, creation and management of the key features of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

### Policy CE2: Geology

- CE2.1. Proposals that are likely to impact on the geological features of the Cotswolds National Landscape should have regard to these features and seek to conserve and enhance them.
- CE2.2. The geological features of the Cotswolds National Landscape should be conserved and enhanced through effective management.
- CE2.3. Opportunities should be sought to promote awareness and understanding of the geological features of the Cotswolds National Landscape.
- CE2.4. Exploration and research into the geology of the Cotswolds National Landscape should be continued in order to improve understanding of the landscape, and of the geological resource and its importance to inform the conservation and management of geological and geomorphological sites.

Image credit: Mark Connelly



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## Local distinctiveness

### Policy CE3: Local distinctiveness

- CE3.1. Proposals that are likely to impact on the local distinctiveness of the Cotswolds National Landscape should have regard to, be compatible with and reinforce this local distinctiveness. This should include:
- being compatible with the Cotswolds Conservation Board's Landscape Character Assessment, Landscape Strategy and Guidelines and Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change;
  - being designed and, where relevant, landscaped to respect local settlement patterns, building styles, scale and materials and in accordance with design guidance prepared by local planning authorities;
  - using an appropriate colour of limestone to reflect local distinctiveness.
- CE3.2. Innovative designs, compatible with the conservation of natural beauty – which are informed by local distinctiveness, character and scale – should be welcomed.
- CE3.3. The development of design guidance – which is supported by a robust evidence base and which reflects relevant guidance published by the Cotswolds National Landscape Board – will be encouraged.

CE3.4. Provision should be made for the quarrying of limestone, at an appropriate scale, in order to provide building materials that help maintain and enhance the local distinctiveness of the National Landscape. Any production of aggregate and agricultural lime should be secondary and necessary for local and necessary operational purposes. Any such mineral sites should be required to demonstrate that they do not have any significant adverse effects on the natural beauty of the National Landscape including its special qualities or the integrity of existing wildlife sites.

## Tranquillity

### Policy CE4: Tranquillity

- CE4.1. Proposals that are likely to impact on the tranquillity of the Cotswolds National Landscape should have regard to this tranquillity, by seeking to avoid and where avoiding is not possible, minimise noise pollution and other aural and visual disturbance.
- CE4.2. Measures should be taken to remove and where removal is not possible minimise existing sources of noise pollution and other aural and visual disturbance in order to enhance the tranquillity of the Cotswolds National Landscape.
- CE4.3. Proposals that are likely to impact on the tranquillity of the CNL should have regard to – and be compatible with – the National Landscapes Board's [Tranquillity Position Statement](#).

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## Dark skies

### Policy CE5: Dark skies

- CE5.1. Proposals that are likely to impact on the dark skies of the Cotswolds National Landscape should have regard to these dark skies, by seeking to avoid and where avoiding is not possible, minimise light pollution.
- CE5.2. Proposals that are likely to impact on the dark skies of the CNL should have regard to recognised standards and guidance, in particular, that published by the [Institution of Lighting Professionals](#) and the [Commission for Dark Skies](#).
- CE5.3. Measures should be taken to increase the area of dark skies in the Cotswolds National Landscape by removing, and where removal is not possible, minimising existing sources of light pollution.
- CE5.4. Consideration will be given to seeking a formal dark sky designation for those parts of the Cotswolds National Landscape that are least affected by light pollution.

Image credit: Russell Discombe



## Historic environment and cultural heritage

### Policy CE6: Historic environment and cultural heritage

- CE6.1. Proposals that are likely to impact on the historic environment and cultural heritage of the Cotswolds National Landscape should have regard to heritage assets and their setting, and seek opportunities to conserve and enhance them. This should include respecting the historical elements of landscape character including features such as; buildings, sites, layout and context, including the relationship between the existing feature or settlement and the landscape.
- CE6.2. Heritage and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessments should be used when considering any change to a heritage asset and to influence decisions regarding the management of the historic environment and cultural heritage assets.
- CE6.3. The historic environment and cultural heritage of the Cotswolds National Landscape, both designated and non-designated, should be conserved and enhanced through effective management.
- CE6.4. Designated historic environment sites, such as scheduled monuments and listed buildings, and non-designated heritage assets of equivalent significance, should be protected, in line with national policy and guidance.
- CE6.5. Historic environment and cultural heritage should be a key component of Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms in the Cotswolds National Landscape.



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## Policy CE6: Historic environment and cultural heritage (continued)

CE6.6. Opportunities should be sought to promote the awareness, understanding and use of Historic Environment Records, Conservation Area Appraisals, Historic Landscape Characterisation and Heritage Strategies and Action Plans. These should be used to influence decisions regarding the management of the National Landscape's historic environment and cultural heritage.

CE6.7. The cultural heritage of the Cotswolds should be better understood and celebrated in arts, cultural, and social activities across the National Landscape.

Image credit: Mark Connelly



## Biodiversity and nature recovery

### Policy CE7: Biodiversity and nature recovery

CE7.1. Biodiversity (including the abundance of wildlife) in the Cotswolds National Landscape should be conserved and enhanced by establishing a coherent and resilient nature recovery network across the Cotswolds National Landscape and in its setting. This should be achieved in accordance with the outcomes, priorities, targets and measures within the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan and focus on the priority species and habitats listed in Appendix 7 of the full plan.

CE7.2. Policy and strategic documents that are likely to impact on the biodiversity of the National Landscape should have regard to the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan. This would include, but is not limited to, the following:

- i. Local Plans.
- ii. Neighbourhood Development Plans.
- iii. Green Infrastructure Strategies.
- iv. Tree and Woodland Strategies.
- v. Ecological Emergency and Climate Change Strategies.
- vi. Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

CE7.3. Proposals that are likely to impact on the biodiversity of the National Landscape should have regard to – and be consistent with – the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan. This would include, but is not limited to, the following delivery mechanisms:

- i. Environmental Land Management and other grant schemes and rural development support mechanisms;
- ii. Biodiversity Net Gain;
- iii. Payment for Ecosystem Services including but not limited to carbon sequestration and storage, flood management, water supply and water quality improvements.

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## Policy CE7: Biodiversity and nature recovery (continued)

CE7.4. A mitigation hierarchy should be applied to development proposals whereby adverse impacts on biodiversity are: (i) avoided; (ii) mitigated; and (iii) compensated for. Development proposals should provide a net gain in biodiversity of at least 20% particularly with regard to the species and habitats listed in [Appendix 7](#) of the full plan.

CE7.5. Damage or loss of irreplaceable habitat should be avoided. Irreplaceable habitat includes but is not limited to:

- I. Ancient and veteran trees
- II. Ancient woodland (continually wooded since 1600);
- III. Ancient unimproved grassland (surviving since 1945);
- IV. Ancient hedgerows (present since before the Enclosure Acts, passed mainly between 1720 and 1840).

CE7.6. Measures to conserve and restore biodiversity including the outcomes, priorities, targets and measures within the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan should be delivered in a way that is compatible with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

Image credit: Ann Berkeley



## Rural land management

### Policy CE8: Rural land management

CE8.1. Rural land management in the Cotswolds National Landscape and in the setting of the National Landscape should have regard to – and help deliver – the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape including its special qualities. It should also help increase the understanding and enjoyment of the National Landscape’s special qualities.

CE8.2. Rural land management in the Cotswolds National Landscape and in the setting of the National Landscape should have regard to – and, ideally, help to deliver – the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan. It should also be compatible with guidance produced by the Cotswolds Conservation Board, including the:

- i. Cotswolds National Landscape – Landscape Strategy and Guidelines
- ii. Cotswolds National Landscape – Landscape Character Assessment
- iii. Cotswolds National Landscape Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change
- iv. Cotswolds National Landscape Board Position Statements
- v. Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan
- vi. Cotswolds National Landscape Climate Change Strategy

CE8.3. Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms in the Cotswolds National Landscape should be designed specifically for the National Landscape. These mechanisms should:

- i. address paragraphs 1 and 2, above
- ii. be managed locally to ensure effective local delivery
- iii. deliver public goods and services

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### Policy CE9: Problem species, pests and diseases

- CE9.1. The population of grey squirrel and deer in the Cotswolds National Landscape should continue to be controlled and managed. This should be undertaken and coordinated at a landscape scale.
- CE9.2. National guidance – and guidance produced by the Board – on Ash Dieback should be followed to ensure any measures implemented will conserve and enhance the qualities of the landscape.
- CE9.3. National and local guidance – including guidance from Government Agencies and the Non-Native Species Secretariat – on invasive non-native species, pests and diseases should be followed and appropriate biosecurity measures promoted.



Image credit: Mark Connelly

## Development and transport

### Policy CE10: Development and transport – principles

- CE10.1. Development and transport proposals in the CNL and its setting should have regard to – and help to deliver – the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL. In doing so, they should have regard to – and be compatible with the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan and guidance produced by the Cotswolds National landscape Board, including the:
- (i) Cotswolds National Landscape – Landscape Strategy and Guidelines
  - (ii) Cotswolds National Landscape – Landscape Character Assessment
  - (iii) Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan
  - (iv) Cotswolds National landscape Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change
  - (v) Cotswolds National Landscape Board’s Position Statements
- CE10.2. Development and transport proposals in the CNL should have regard to – and help deliver – the purpose of increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the CNL’s special qualities. They should also contribute to the economic and social wellbeing of CNL communities, in a way that is compatible with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL.
- CE10.3. Development and transport proposals in the Cotswolds National Landscape and its setting should comply with relevant national planning policy and guidance, particularly with regards to those paragraphs of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that explicitly relate to AONBs.



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## Policy CE10: Development and transport – principles (continued)

- CE10.4. The purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the National Landscape’s special qualities should be identified as strategic priorities in Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans, Local Transport Plans and other relevant plans and strategies. These plans and strategies should explicitly identify the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan as a material consideration.
- CE10.5. The cumulative impacts of development proposals on the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape should be fully assessed.
- CE10.6. A landscape-led approach should be applied to development and transport proposals in the CNL and its setting, proportionate to the type and scale of development being proposed, whereby proposals:
- a) address the natural beauty of the CNL as primary consideration at all stages of the development process (including design), from initial conception through to implementation
  - b) address all of the factors that contribute to the natural beauty of the area
  - c) address access to natural beauty including the character of the public rights of way network and its role within wider green infrastructure

- d) reflect and enhance the character of the local area
- e) avoid adverse effects where possible and, if adverse effects can't be avoided, minimise them and
- f) deliver substantially more beneficial effects than adverse effects for the natural beauty of the CNL.

This landscape-led approach is particularly important for major development.



Image credit: Jennifer Lanham

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## Policy CE11: Major development

- CE11.1. In line with national planning policy, permission should be refused for major development within the CNL, in the context of paragraph 177 of the NPPF, other than in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest.
- CE11.2. Relevant stakeholders should fully assess relevant site allocations and development proposals to see if they constitute major development. In considering or deciding whether a proposed development constitutes major development, relevant stakeholders should have regard to the major development checklist in Appendix 5 of the Board's Landscape-led Development Position Statement.
- CE11.3. Local authorities and other relevant stakeholders should explicitly state whether they consider relevant allocations and development proposals to be major development.
- CE11.4. The mandatory major development 'tests' specified in paragraph 177 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) should be rigorously applied and documented for all allocations and development proposals that are deemed to be major development.
- CE11.5. When relevant stakeholders are considering or applying the major development 'tests' specified in paragraph 177 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), it should be recognised that:
- 'exceptional need' does not necessarily equate to 'exceptional circumstances';

- no permission should be given for major development save to the extent the development was needed in the public interest, met a need that could not be addressed elsewhere or in some other way and met that need in a way that to the extent possible, moderated detrimental effect on the environment, landscape and recreational opportunities.

CE11. 6. When making decisions on major development proposals, local authorities (and/or other relevant decision makers) should not simply weigh all material considerations in a balance, but should refuse an application unless they meet the exceptional circumstances and public interest criteria.



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## Policy CE12: Development priorities and evidence of need

CE12.1. Housing delivery in the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) should be focused on meeting affordable housing requirements, particularly housing that is affordable in perpetuity such as social rented housing.

CE12.2. When local planning authorities are reviewing their Local Plans, they should give consideration to setting policies for affordable housing provision in the CNL that require:

- at least 50% affordable housing in market housing developments
- 100% affordable housing on Rural Exception Sites, with a lower percentage only being permitted in exceptional circumstances and the absolute minimum being 75%
- on-site affordable housing provision for housing developments of five units or fewer

CE12.3. Priority should be given to maintaining and enhancing local community amenities and services and improving access to these amenities and services. Priority should also be given to supporting local employment opportunities.

CE12.4. It should be recognised that:

- a) The housing need figure derived from the Government's 'standard method' for calculating housing need is an unconstrained assessment of housing need and does not present a target for housing provision.

- b) The decision on how many homes should be planned for (i.e., the 'housing requirement' figure in Local Plans) should only be made after consideration of the constraints that the local authority faces, including the AONB designation, and consideration of the land that is actually available for development. As such, when these constraints are factored in, the 'housing requirement' could potentially be smaller than the standard method's 'housing need' figure.

- c) The application of national planning policies relating to AONBs may mean that it is not possible to meet objectively assessed needs (OAN) in full in local authority areas that overlap with the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL).

- d) The CNL is unlikely to be a suitable area for accommodating unmet needs from adjoining, non-designated areas. In the context of the CNL, this includes unmet needs relating to adjacent urban areas and unmet needs arising in local authority areas that do not overlap with the CNL.

- e) Meeting housing need is never a reason to cause unacceptable harm to the CNL.

- f) The scale and extent of development in the CNL should be limited.

CE12.5. Consideration should be given to whether the constraints relating to the AONB designation merit 'exceptional circumstances' which may justify using an alternative approach to the standard method for assessing housing need.



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### Policy CE12: Development priorities and evidence of need (continued)

CE12.6. When the allocation of sites is being considered in the Local Plan process, regard should be given to the evidence of need specific to: (i) the settlement/parish where the allocation is being proposed; and (ii) the CNL 'sub-area' within which the allocation is being proposed.

CE12.7. Within the CNL, windfall housing proposals on undeveloped land adjoining, or outside of, built up area boundaries (or equivalent) should only be supported where there is robust evidence of a specific local housing need such as needs identified through a neighbourhood plan or affordable housing needs specific to a particular settlement.

CE12.8. Where choice-based lettings systems, such as Homeseeker Plus, are used as part of the evidence base for affordable housing need:

- the 'local connection' component of the choice-based lettings system should be applied consistently; and
- data from the choice-based lettings systems should not be used explicitly as a measure of affordable housing need unless the data has been verified and there is a clear local connection to – and preference for – the settlement in question.

CE12.9. When local authorities are reviewing their Local Plans, they should give consideration to setting policies that ensure that new market housing is used as a principal residence rather than as a second home or holiday home.

### Policy CE13: Waste management and the circular economy

CE13.1. Waste management should align with the following hierarchy, as set out in the Government's Waste Management Plan 2021:

- a. Prevention
- b. Prepare for reuse
- c. Recycling
- d. Other recovery
- e. Disposal

CE13.2. Measures that help to deliver a circular, or closed-loop, economy, in which waste generation is avoided, should be encouraged.

CE13.3. Proposals for new landfill sites and strategic waste facilities should not normally be permitted in the Cotswolds National Landscape, especially where they involve importing significant amounts of waste into the National Landscape (for example, waste generated in neighbouring urban areas).

CE13.4. Any waste management facilities that are permitted in the National Landscape should: (i) be sited in such a way that adverse environmental impacts are minimised, in line with relevant permitting regimes; and (ii) be primarily to receive waste that arises within the National Landscape (within close proximity to the proposed facility).

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### Policy CE13: Waste management and the circular economy (continued)

CE13.5. The management or use of waste by way of depositing it to land as an inert 'recovery' operation, land raising and bunding or for further restoration of previous landfill operations, should only be allowed: (i) in very limited circumstances within environmental limits; (ii) where it can demonstrate a significant net-benefit for the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the National Landscape; and (iii) where it complies with the policies of the relevant Waste Local Plan and relevant environmental regulations.



Image credit: Simon Smith

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# Increasing understanding and enjoyment

Ensuring access, learning and wellbeing opportunities are for everyone.

## Health and wellbeing

### Policy UE1: Health and wellbeing

- UE1.1. Opportunities for improving health and wellbeing in the Cotswolds National Landscape should be created, improved and promoted, including, where appropriate, the provision of: green spaces or water within easy reach of communities; walking, cycling and riding routes, including routes for disabled people; opportunities to access and interact with nature; and volunteering and personal development opportunities.
- UE1.2. Children and young people resident within and around the National Landscape should be provided with environmental education opportunities to experience the Cotswolds National Landscape through direct contact with the natural environment.
- UE1.3. The health sector should make greater use of the benefits that the National Landscape provides for the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors, for example, by prescribing exercise in the Cotswolds National Landscape countryside.

## Access and recreation

### Policy UE2: Access and recreation

- UE2.1. A safe, pleasant, accessible, clearly waymarked and well-connected Public Rights of Way network should be maintained, enhanced and promoted across the Cotswolds National Landscape.
- UE2.2. Improvements to rights of way must be undertaken in a way that minimises any adverse effects on the natural beauty of the National Landscape and on its special qualities. Innovative ways of providing named routes without introducing additional signage should be explored.
- UE2.3. Open Access Land and other land including Country Parks, that is open to public access should be maintained, enhanced and promoted across the Cotswolds National Landscape. Where appropriate, more land should be made available for public access.
- UE2.4. Sustainable funding for National Trails, including the Cotswold Way and Thames Path, should be secured.
- UE2.5. Visitors, residents and local communities should be provided with opportunities to increase their understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

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## Policy UE2: Access and recreation (continued)

- UE2.6. A priority for engagement in the National Landscape should be individuals who are not currently enjoying or engaged with the benefits of the landscape. Particularly those from within the National Landscape and from the surrounding urban areas, especially those from areas of high deprivation and those that are not traditional visitors to the Cotswolds.
- UE2.7. Easily accessible online, downloadable and onsite resources for walking, cycling, horse riding, volunteering and educational activities should be provided in the National Landscape to help promote access to the area and understanding and appreciation of its special qualities.
- UE2.8. Visitor facilities and routes that are accessible to those of all abilities should be provided.
- UE2.9. Guided walks and activities for those who are not confident walking in the countryside should be provided to increase confidence and share knowledge of the National Landscape and its special qualities.
- UE2.10. Arts and cultural experiences should be provided to encourage people to deepen their emotional connection to the landscape and support the engagement of new and existing audiences.
- UE2.11. The Countryside Code should be promoted to educate visitors and communities to act appropriately in the countryside and to improve understanding between visitors and those living and working in the area.

- UE2.12. The provision of new, and level of use of existing, access and recreational opportunities should not have a significant adverse impact on the Cotswolds National Landscape. Where recreational use is having or is likely to have, an adverse impact on the special qualities of the National Landscape or on the integrity of existing wildlife sites, steps should be taken to evaluate, prevent or mitigate these impacts. Such steps can include enhanced maintenance and wayfinding, onsite engagement, legal restrictions, and the provision and promotion of access and recreational opportunities in new alternative suitable locations.
- UE2.13. Where irreconcilable conflicts exist between conservation and public enjoyment in the Cotswolds National Landscape, then conservation interest should take priority.



Image credit: Russell Sach

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## Sustainable tourism

### Policy UE3: Sustainable tourism

- UE3.1. Tourism within the Cotswolds National Landscape is delivered and managed in a way that minimises adverse effects on the natural beauty of the National Landscape and the emission of greenhouse gases.
- UE3.2. Visitors, residents, local businesses and communities should be provided with opportunities to directly contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape and improve access to the area through local individual, community and employee volunteering opportunities.
- UE3.3. The 'Caring for the Cotswolds' visitor giving scheme will raise awareness of the National Landscape and generate funds from visitors to directly help look after it by supporting projects which conserve habitats and species, look after heritage and landscape, improve access, and help provide education resources encouraging people to understand the landscape and nature better.
- UE3.4. Visitors should be provided with a variety of accommodation options over a range of prices. The siting and design of visitor accommodation should be compatible with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape including its special qualities.
- UE3.5. Air travel arising from the Cotswolds as a destination should be minimised.
- UE3.6. Existing sustainable and integrated transport initiatives should be supported and new initiatives developed to help facilitate the car free visitor experience.



Image credit: Squashed Robot Films

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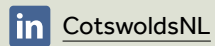
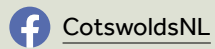
# Cotswolds National Landscape

This Management Plan was adopted by the  
Cotswolds National Landscape Board February 2023

## **Cotswolds National Landscape**

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The Cotswolds National Landscape is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB),  
managed and looked after by the Cotswolds Conservation Board.