

COTSWOLDS CONSERVATION BOARD POSITION STATEMENT



Transport

INTRODUCTION

1. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are designated by the Government for the purpose of ensuring that the special qualities of the finest landscapes in England and Wales are conserved and enhanced.
2. The Cotswolds Conservation Board is the body set up by Parliament to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB and increase the awareness and understanding of the special qualities of the AONB.
3. The natural beauty¹ of the Cotswolds AONB is under considerable pressure. The AONB Management Plan examines the nature of this pressure in detail. The main issues relating to transport and traffic are briefly summarised in this statement. The Transport Policy set out in the Management Plan is appended to this Statement.
4. The local authorities with highways and public transport responsibilities and the Highways Agency, are working to deal with these issues in the AONB in a constructive way consistent with the purposes of AONB designation. Transport strategies and policies and Local Transport Plans have been formulated by these bodies and are being implemented to include this objective.

¹ "Landscape means more than just 'the view'. It is both the physical and cultural (i.e. its use and management) characteristics of the land itself and the way in which we perceive those characteristics. It is this mix of characteristics and perceptions that make up and contribute to landscape character and give a "sense of place"" DfT Transport Analysis Guidance – The Landscape Sub Objective Dec 2004

ROADS AND TRAFFIC

5. Rapid change in the rural economy of the AONB and its communities are major challenges to the social and economic life of the area. The population has continued to increase sharply, mostly due to in-migration, particularly of retired people.
6. Of the residents of working age, a majority travel out of the AONB to work on a daily basis, or work away from the area during the week. Car ownership within the Cotswolds AONB is high compared to the national average. In 2011 88% of households owned at least one car, compared to 77% nationally. Traffic volumes continue to increase, particularly on major rural routes (up by 2% in 2007/8) and 3% on minor rural roads
7. Ease of accessibility by car to the Cotswolds has also increased. Three motorways - the M40, the M5 and the M4 - form a triangle around much of the AONB. Much of the A417 trunk road is now a dual carriageway through the AONB, and the new M5 junction 11a has changed the users of the A417 from mainly local traffic to predominantly through-traffic. There are three other important through routes - the A40, the Fosse Way (A429) and the A46.
8. These changes have resulted in a number of consequences that have an adverse effect on the Cotswold's economy, including:
 - An increase in long-distance travel through the AONB
 - An increase in out-commuting from the AONB,
 - Increased noise and visual disturbance close to these major routes causing loss of tranquility and adverse landscape impacts, and
 - Peak-hour congestion, which reduces journey time reliability and increases pollution and thereby adversely effects air quality, tranquility and quiet enjoyment of the AONB.
9. Road improvement schemes intended to deal with these issues, such as local bypasses and traffic calming schemes, can affect the landscape in a significant way. The upgrading or maintenance of minor roads to improve traffic flows can lead to suburbanisation of the countryside and compounds traffic-associated adverse impacts on the AONB.

The Board will pursue and support positive management measures which will conserve and enhance, and prevent further harm, to the natural beauty of the AONB. These measures would deal with increasing traffic, including reducing rat-running along minor roads and through villages between the major routes.

HEAVY GOODS VEHICLES

10. The use of minor roads in particular by lorries and other large vehicles can cause an adverse impact upon the landscape and quality of life for residents and visitors. The use of satellite navigation (satnav) devices has exacerbated this problem. Operators are urged to use satnav systems designed for goods vehicles, not cars. Highway authorities have attempted to introduce lorry routing schemes, including weight, height and length restrictions and recommended route maps. The success of these and the degree of coordination across the AONB as a whole deserves examination.

The Board will pursue and support Lorry Management schemes.

ROAD SIGNAGE

11. Road signage is nationally specified primarily to meet requirements of road safety and legibility for drivers travelling at speed. Such signage can have significant visual impacts on the landscape. Highway authorities do have discretion within the regulations to use minimal signage in sensitive areas such as AONBs where compatible with highway safety.

The Board will pursue and support road signage rationalisation and removal.

TRAFFIC CALMING

12. Many Cotswolds hamlets and villages do not have pavements or walkways. The construction of suburban pavements would be harmful to their character and “virtual pavements” may be helpful to pedestrians in these circumstances..
13. Walkers, cyclists and horse-riders are discouraged from enjoying the use of rural roads and lanes due to the increase in amount and speed of traffic. In the interests of safety and the traditional use of these rural roads, traffic calming measures need to reflect both the character of the area and the needs of traditional users. The introduction of specific Quiet Lanes will not generally be pursued, because the aspiration is that all small roads and lanes in the AONB should be suitable for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

The Board will pursue and support sensitive traffic calming (“shared space”) schemes in villages and off road cycling and horse riding routes.

BUSES

14. Although some funds have been made available through Rural Bus Challenge and Rural Bus Partnerships to support rural bus services, challenging problems remain. These include the frequency of services, their reliability, connections between different modes of transport, users' access to the network and standards of comfort and service on buses. As much as the reality, public perceptions of these issues strongly influence the willingness of people to use buses. With low population densities in most parts of the AONB and the need for a volume of passengers (critical mass) to achieve viability it can be difficult to maintain rural bus services. Those without cars and with low disposable incomes are particularly adversely affected by this situation.

15. The Board publishes information on bus and train routes throughout the Cotswolds AONB in the form of "Explore the Cotswolds by public transport" leaflets. It has also commissioned studies on how integration of services can be improved. Changes in free bus pass provision may provide a new market for visitors to the Cotswolds AONB to use buses.

The Board will continue to encourage greater bus use by the provision of information coordinated across the AONB.

TRAINS

There are four key railway lines which serve the Cotswolds AONB area.

16. In the northern part of the AONB the Cotswold line runs between Oxford and Worcester. The line serves a number of stations within the AONB itself. These include Moreton-in-Marsh, Kingham and Charlbury. This is a popular line for north Cotswolds residents who work in London. The Board welcomes the redoubling of this line to increase services.

17. The Swindon to Gloucester/Cheltenham line serves the central part of the area from stations located just outside the AONB boundary at Kemble, Stroud and Stonehouse. The Board welcomes the commencement of the redoubling of this line.

18. The AONB can be accessed from Yate and Cam & Dursley on the Birmingham to Bristol line. A new station at Charfield on this line is being considered. Access can also be achieved from stations between Bath and Bradford-on-Avon.

The Board will support bus- rail integration.

APPENDIX A

The following objective for Transport is set out in the AONB Management Plan 2013-18

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

The AONB Management Plan 2013-18 includes the following policy

DTP3: *The special qualities of the AONB are fully respected in the planning, design, provision and management of all types of transport² and associated infrastructure to address road safety and congestion issues.*

NOTES

This position Statement forms one of a series which sets out the Board's approach to issues affecting the Cotswolds AONB. They are used to amplify Board policy and responses to consultations.

The Cotswolds Conservation Board has the statutory duty to pursue the following two purposes:

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

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

The Board is comprised of members appointed by the local authorities, elected parish council representatives and individuals appointed by the Secretary of State. The Board, formed in December 2004, is the only organisation that looks after the AONB as a whole.

² Transport includes walking, cycling and horse riding as well as road and rail transport.

The Cotswolds AONB was designated in 1966 and extended in area in 1990. It is one of 38 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty across England and Wales. It is the largest AONB, covering 790 sq.miles (2038 sq.km). It is a landscape of equal importance to National Parks such as Snowdonia and the Lake District.

For further information contact:

Planning Officer, Cotswolds Conservation Board
Email: planning@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk Tel: 01451 862000

Statement Adopted: December 2007

Revised November 2013