

Michael Crook  
Countryside Access Development Officer  
Wiltshire Council



By email: Michael.Crook@wiltshire.gov.uk

16th May 2013

Dear Michael,

### **Wiltshire Countryside Access Improvement Plan - Key Partner Consultation**

#### **General comments.**

The CAIP fits well with the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2013 -18 and with the purposes of the Cotswolds Conservation Board. There are, however, three areas that should be included in the CAIP.

#### **Protected Landscapes**

The CAIP should have a paragraph that expands on the role of the protected landscapes and their managing bodies in relation to access and how they can help deliver the CAIP. All four have statutory management plans. The plans have policies covering access and access management and the New Forest NPA also has its own Recreation Management Strategy.

The New Forest National Park designation and therefore the Authority has the secondary purpose: To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Park by the public.

Recreation is not an objective of AONB designation ... 'but the demand for recreation should be met in so far as it is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty..' In reality the three AONB management bodies are involved with countryside access ranging from developing and promoting walks and trails, Pathwatch schemes, interactive maps, guided walks and practical improvement work.

The Cotswolds Conservation Board also has the secondary purpose: To increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB. The Board also has some powers held concurrently with local authorities relating to public rights of way but as yet has not opted to operate them.

#### **Resilience**

The UKCP09 climate change predictions under the medium emissions scenario projects warmer, drier summers and milder, wetter winters for the Cotswolds with winter rainfall increasing by 22%. Extreme weather events are also projected to become more frequent and with increasing intensity.

Conserving, enhancing, understanding and enjoying the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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One of the predicted impacts as a result of climate change is a longer tourism season with increasing visitor number with resulting traffic, litter and erosion/wear and tear of rights of way. Consequently there is the need to ensure the access network is more robust, making it resilient to the impacts of climate change including increased usage.

### **Biosecurity**

Partly linked to climate change is the increasing risk of pests and diseases, both new and existing, affecting farming and forestry. There is some concern that they could be moved around the countryside by visitors. The CAIP should include reference to biosecurity and recommend appropriate advice is included in visitor information.

### **Comments on detail**

Section 1.2, second bullet point – free, yes but at the point of use. This is stated elsewhere in the CAIP and should be stated here too.

Section 5.3, third bullet point.

On a technical point, National Park and AONB are the designations and not the bodies that are charged with their management. Partnerships would be with the New Forest National Park Authority, Cotswolds Conservation Board and the North Wessex Downs AONB and Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Partnerships.

Action Plan:

1-4 – as above, AONB is the designation not the organisation.

3-4 – The inclusion of the action to recognise local materials, structures and character is particularly welcomed. There is, however, a risk of conflict with the Specifications of Structures policy and with the desire to reduce cost leading to the minimum requirement being specified. This should be resisted to retain local materials, style etc

If you wish to clarify or discuss any of the points above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Connelly". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mark Connelly

Land Management Officer.