

# **COTSWOLDS AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN 2018-2023**

**SECOND DRAFT  
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**Proposed inserts highlighted in yellow**

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# Introduction

## THE COTSWOLDS AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN 2018 - 2023

This Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan is the statutory plan<sup>1</sup> which sets out the Cotswolds Conservation Board's (the Board) policies for the management of the AONB and for the carrying out their functions in relation to it. It should also guide national government and local authorities, as well as bodies such as Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission, where they exercise or perform functions that may affect land in the Cotswolds AONB. The Management Plan should also be taken into account in other relevant statutory plans and programmes and a wide range of other national and local initiatives. In particular, it should be recognised as a "material consideration" in adopted Core Strategies/Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans and planning decisions.<sup>2</sup>

Implementation of this Plan will be monitored and evaluated by the Board. An assessment of achievements will be provided as part of the Board's annual report.

### PROTECTED LANDSCAPES: AONBs

AONBs and National Parks were brought into being by the same legislation in 1949 and have the equivalent landscape status and level of protection. They are particularly special landscapes where the distinctive character and natural beauty are of such quality that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard them.

The statutory purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.<sup>3</sup> The Cotswolds was designated an AONB in 1966, and extended in area in 1990. At 790 sq. miles or 2038 sq. kms, it is the largest of the AONBs and third largest protected landscape in England including the National Parks.

The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 confirmed the significance of AONBs and the responsibility of all public bodies to act to sustain that. Hence, Section 85 of that Act places a statutory (legal) duty on all relevant authorities to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty when discharging any function in relation to, or affecting land within, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) designates the UK's AONBs and National Parks as Category V – Protected Landscape/Seascape – 'a protected area where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value'.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 89, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as amended by the NERC Act 2006

<sup>2</sup> Section 85, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

<sup>3</sup> Section 82, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

The societal context of designated landscapes has changed, compared with the late 1940s when the AONB concept was created in legislation<sup>4</sup>. Whilst **development pressures**, lack of high-quality public access, and quarrying remain of concern, new challenges and opportunities present themselves beyond the original purpose of designation.

Designated landscapes are now recognised as important resources to:

- underpin a rural economy that is wider than farming and forestry;
- contribute to people's health and well-being;
- enable landscape-scale biodiversity initiatives;
- provide green infrastructure, water and food;
- contribute towards understanding and addressing climate change issues; and
- provide havens of tranquillity of value to people in an ever busier society.

Fragmented administrative arrangements can hinder the delivery of these benefits. So, the AONB Management Plan, alongside duties placed on a wide range of public bodies, **is a key mechanism** by which the AONB as an area is managed as a whole.

## PLAN CONTEXT, STRUCTURE AND CONSULTATION

### The Vision

The Vision is to be delivered through the actions of the Board and other public and private bodies, informed by the relevant legislation, national policies and guidance which underpin the Board's statutory purposes and duty (see Appendix X). **This plan is ultimately about making the vision a reality.**

### The Plan

This plan contains

- **Our policies** that will guide activity
- **Guidance** to help **engagement with partner organisations, stakeholders and others**
- **Monitoring indicators** against which to measure achievement.

### Position Statements

The Board has issued a number of **Position Statements** which amplify some policies in the Plan. They contain further background information and recommended good practice. They are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. All Position statements can be viewed on the Board's website at [Cotswolds AONB : Position Statements](#)

### Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

The Board has researched and published a [Cotswold Landscape Character Assessment](#). This identifies 19 different landscape character types in the Cotswolds AONB. Using this assessment,

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<sup>4</sup> National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949

[Landscape Strategies and Guidelines](#) have been produced for each of the 19 landscape character types. This information is provided to developers, local planning authorities, land managers and other decision makers to make informed decisions about the suitability of proposed development or other changes within the Cotswold landscape.

## The Business Plan

Actions the Board itself intends to take **to help deliver this Management Plan are set out and costed** in the Board's separate three-year rolling business plan.

## Consultation

This Plan has been produced with a full and comprehensive documented programme of stakeholder involvement and consultation. It is also supported by a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), a Habitats Regulation Assessment as required by the European Habitats Directive and an Equalities Assessment.<sup>5</sup>

## Vision

Our vision for the Cotswolds AONB by 2038 is of a

Distinctive, unique living landscape treasured for its diversity which is recognised by all for its wide open views, dry stone walls, intimate valleys, flower rich grasslands, ancient woodlands and distinctive Cotswold stone architecture.

A thriving collaborative, pioneering, proactive place, sustained by the passions of residents, visitors and businesses alike where rural communities and the local economy are grounded in its special qualities.

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<sup>5</sup> All documents are available on the Board's website [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk)

## SPECIAL QUALITIES OF THE COTSWOLDS (STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE)

The Cotswolds are a rich mosaic of historical, social, economic, cultural, geological, geomorphological<sup>6</sup> and ecological features. The special qualities of the Cotswolds 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 to and from it;
- the high wolds – a large open, elevated landscape with commons, ‘big’ skies and long-distance views;
- well managed arable and livestock farms
- river valleys, the majority forming the headwaters of the Thames, with high-quality water;
- dry stone walls;
- internationally important flower-rich limestone grasslands;
- internationally important ancient broadleaved woodland, particularly along the crest of the escarpment;
- variations in the colour of the stone from one part of the AONB to another which add a vital element of local distinctiveness;
- the tranquillity<sup>7</sup> of the area;
- distinctive settlements, developed in the Cotswold vernacular, high architectural quality and integrity;
- accessible landscape for quiet recreation for both rural and urban users;
- historic associations dating back 6,000 years, and characterised by significant legacies such as those of to the medieval wool churches and
- cultural associations such as the Arts and Crafts movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, famous composers and authors and traditional events such as the Cotswolds Olympicks, cheese rolling and woolsack races

<sup>6</sup> Geomorphology is the physical features of an area, strongly influenced by geology.

<sup>7</sup> Tranquillity is very difficult to define but is essentially the absence of inappropriate noise, development, visual clutter and pollution, “a feeling of being away from it all”.

# SPATIAL PORTRAIT OF THE COTSWOLDS AONB

## Landscape

The Cotswolds is an asset of national importance, recognised by its designation as an AONB. It is an area shaped by its geology and thousands of years of human activity resulting in a unique landscape of remarkable visual unity and scenic diversity. Many features of the Cotswolds evoke strong images, particularly the dramatic escarpment and expansive high wolds, the network of dry stone walls, the beech woods, the secluded valleys, **open common land**, a distinctive local vernacular, and the wild flower rich grasslands.

Landscape is not static and changes over time. Such change is often perceived as slow or non-existent, but when a view or place is compared to its earlier self, even over a comparatively short time span, the change can be dramatic.

Since designation in 1966 much has changed in the Cotswolds. This change has been driven, **and will continue to be so**, to a large extent by technological advances in agriculture, increasing commodity prices and demand, population growth and migration, changes in employment and communications. Government policy and financial support have had an influence on all these factors. To retain the characteristics that define the Cotswolds, landscape change needs to be managed and guided.

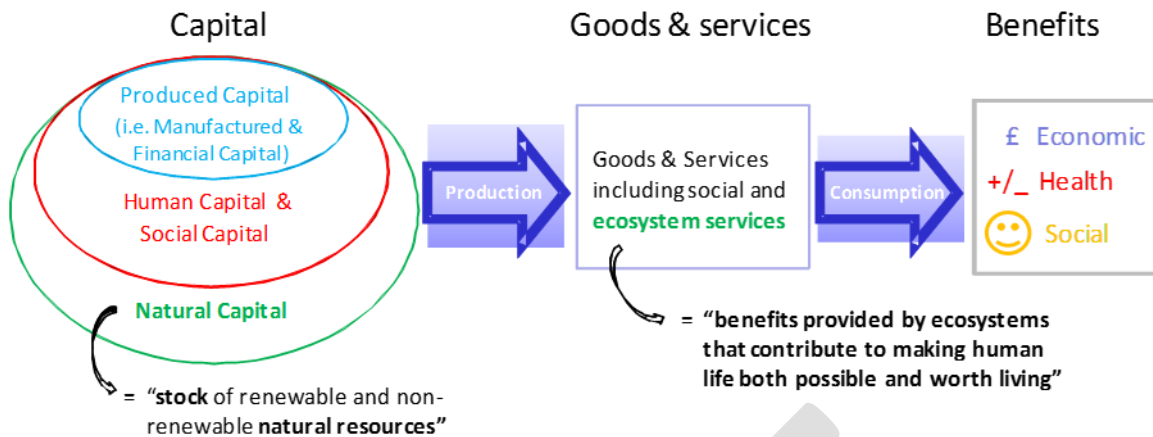
## Biodiversity

The AONB has rich and diverse habitats, which support a myriad of wildlife. This particular mix of wildlife is unique, resulting from the underlying geology and past land management practices. The Cotswolds **retains** a significant **number** of important habitats and species which are in decline elsewhere. A large number of species, many of them rare and found only on limestone or calcareous soils **continue to** survive here, **particularly wild plants, bats and insects**. The AONB contains many sites designated for their biodiversity, including five Special Areas of Conservation, three National Nature Reserves, two Nature Improvement Areas, 89 Sites of Special Scientific Interest and an extensive number of **Local Wildlife Sites**.

## Natural capital and ecosystems services

The Cotswolds AONB has a wealth of natural capital (**stock of natural assets**) that provide free goods and services often called ecosystem services that benefit wider society as a whole. Natural capital stock includes renewable and non-renewable natural resources e.g. geology, minerals, soils, water, air, plants, animals, habitats, ecosystems. Some ecosystem services are well known e.g. **food, fibre and fuel provision and cultural services that provide well-being benefits to people through recreation and appreciation of nature**. Others not so well known are **regulation of climate and purification of water**.

Fig (?) illustrates the role natural capital plays in the economy and society



Many of the policies set out in this Plan influence the management of land and natural systems in the AONB to help sustain and improve the range and quality of public benefits and ecosystem services that are provided.

## Development

The Cotswolds AONB has many settlements, sites and features of rich cultural interest. The character of buildings and settlements within the AONB exhibit subtle variations, with a strong vernacular building style. Building materials reflect local geology and traditions, contributing to the unique Cotswolds landscape character.

Planning legislation affords the highest level of protection to AONBs. Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a duty on all public bodies and statutory undertakers to 'have regard' to the 'purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.' National planning policy gives the conservation of landscape and scenic beauty in an AONB a particular enhanced status, notably in footnote 9 to paragraph 14, paragraph 109 as well as paragraphs 115 and 116 of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#).

The scale of development required to provide housing, employment and services to an expanding and ageing population will be considerable and the pressure to develop land within and around the AONB, especially where local planning authorities do not have an agreed five year housing supply, will remain significant. This is of particular concern as the AONB is surrounded by larger towns and cities, all of which are expected to accommodate significant housing and employment development in the next 20 years which could have both positive and negative impacts on the AONB.

## Transport

The Cotswolds is easily accessible via the road network including motorways and other high speed roads running through, and close to, the AONB. This provides easy access for tourists, those out-commuting from the Cotswolds to work, whilst also providing 'short cuts' between surrounding motorways which serve major cities. The roads and lanes of the Cotswolds can serve to raise awareness and foster greater appreciation of the AONB as people pass through with many offering views of the landscape, lined with verges rich in wildflowers. However, increasing traffic volume and vehicle sizes is resulting in greater air and noise pollution as well as detrimental impacts on tranquillity, roadside verges, drainage and non-motorised users travelling on foot, by bike or on horse. Four railway lines serve the AONB providing good access to and from all parts of the UK. Major international airports of Bristol, Birmingham and Heathrow, the military airports of Fairford

and Brize Norton and the more local Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire and Cotswolds airports have both positive and negative impacts on the Cotswolds.

Perceptions, combined with the actual provision of public transport discourage its wider use. Infrequency of services, long journey times, poor reliability, uncoordinated connections, information and ticketing, difficulty of access to the network, and low standards of comfort and service are issues to be addressed.

## Cultural heritage

The built environment reflects the cultural heritage and ranges from dispersed farmsteads, hamlets and villages to larger market towns that have evolved as centres for trade over thousands of years. The Cotswolds has come to be recognised as the quintessential pre-industrial English landscape. This notion was strongly expressed through the Arts and Crafts movement in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries and continues today in the cultural life of the AONB.

## Historic environment

Shaped by more than 5,000 years of human activity, the AONB contains a wealth of archaeological sites and historic buildings set within a distinctive historic landscape. This includes the World Heritage Sites at Bath and Blenheim Park which abuts the AONB boundary. Added to this are numerous Registered Parks and Gardens, Listed Buildings, ancient tracks, and historic pathways and routes. The AONB designation recognises the importance of this heritage and reinforces the need to protect and manage characteristic features. However, these resources are also fragile, vulnerable to insensitive change and irreplaceable.

## Climate change

A significant challenge is to enable landowners, communities and businesses across the AONB to mitigate the causes, and adapt to the effects, of climate change whilst still conserving and enhancing the landscape. Adaptation to climate change is a pressing challenge, notably in relation to risks relating to flooding and drought, soil erosion, invasive species/diseases and effects of temperature change on flora and fauna. Additionally, changes in crop types grown or shifts from livestock to arable farming may result in negative visual impacts on the landscape. The AONB has a role to play in mitigating climate change through encouraging options, such as Natural Flood Management, although any solutions need to be appropriate to the nationally designated landscape and its setting.

## Economy

The economy varies across the AONB, in terms of type of business, economic activity and prosperity. The local economy is focused upon a number of key sectors. The high quality of the natural and built environment underpins the valuable Cotswolds tourism and recreation industry. Farming and forestry will continue to play an important, albeit changing role with the UK's plans to exit from the EU.

Both positive and negative effects are associated with AONB designation. The businesses most likely to benefit from being located in the AONB include tourism businesses (e.g. accommodation, food and drink serving, visitor attractions), tourism-related businesses (e.g. retail, diversified farm businesses, transport), farm businesses, countryside trades (e.g. walling) and businesses which benefit from the quality of the brand or the environment (e.g. creative/new media businesses).



The businesses most likely to be disadvantaged from an AONB location include large industrial activities, haulage, and businesses which develop and grow rapidly. The expansion of these businesses will be appropriately managed through development decisions in line with national and local (including neighbourhood) planning policies relating to the AONB.

Opportunities for growth and investment to support sustainable development within the AONB lie in the development of the tourism and land management sectors that are sympathetic to the AONB and its special qualities. In addition, lifestyle businesses, home working, rural office developments and knowledge-based businesses supported by superfast broadband alongside improvements in mobile phone connectivity, all make the Cotswolds a place to do business in.

Access to online services offers opportunities for rural manufacturers and retailers to access worldwide markets, and further improving this infrastructure will ensure that the social and economic benefits of accessing digital technology are available across the whole of the AONB.

### **Tourism, access and recreation**

Tourism is of major importance to the economy of the AONB. The Cotswolds is a well-known destination, both in this country and overseas. Its unique landscape, natural beauty and cultural heritage form the foundation of the Cotswolds tourism industry. The AONB has an extensive Public Rights of Way network, including two National Trails and at least 15 long distance paths. Its scenic, cultural and historic features are core elements of the Cotswolds experience for both the visitor, residents and businesses. Whilst visitors bring many benefits to the Cotswolds, they can also bring costs in the form of pressures on both local communities, infrastructure, services and the environment. The sustainable management of the landscape is therefore essential to the future prosperity of the tourism industry. Conserving the Cotswolds special qualities and increasing awareness and understanding of them whilst supporting local communities and generating income for the area should be the basis on which tourism is developed.

### **Health and wellbeing**

The natural environment of the AONB offers multiple recreation opportunities which can contribute to both the physical and mental well-being of people. The AONB offers a 'natural health facility' to complement our National Health Service providing leisure and prescription walks, runs and cycling opportunities and quiet relaxation. Extensive Public Rights of Way networks, including two National Trails, and a high proportion of commons, open access land and woodlands are an important element of the recreation offer in the Cotswolds. Undoubtedly the attractiveness of the landscape and tranquillity of the area are key elements for attracting people to participate in such activities.

### **Participation**

The AONB offers opportunities for residents and visitors to participate in a wide range of volunteering and local community-based activities. People who volunteer in their community usually have a personal attachment to the area and want to make it a better place for themselves and for others. The Board with other organisations has developed rural skills training courses and apprenticeship schemes through which residents and visitors can learn and develop rural skills required for the management of the special features of the AONB

There are also various volunteering opportunities throughout the AONB. The Cotswolds Voluntary Warden Service, the voluntary arm of the Board, exemplifies large scale volunteering participation in the management of the area providing opportunities in practical conservation and access tasks, a guided walk programme and educational activities. Volunteers also undertake work for the Board on a variety of specific projects and schemes. Other organisations working within the AONB that encourage community participation include the National Trust, the Woodland Trust, The Conservation Volunteers and the Wildlife Trusts.

## Cotswolds Ambitions

The Board believes we should all be ambitious in what we aspire for the Cotswolds AONB. The Board has identified 4 ‘ambitions’ to seek to deliver through plan policies during the lifetime of this plan;

### 1. The Cotswolds being nationally recognised as the Walking and Exploring Capital of England

The Cotswolds is home to two National Trails, the Cotswold Way and the Thames Path, at least 15 other long distance paths and over 3,000 miles of Public Rights of Way, which offer users access and a wide variety of experiences throughout the AONB. Good road, rail and air connections make the Cotswolds easily accessible to explore, for both visitors and residents alike and the Walkers are Welcome and Cyclists are Welcome initiatives are growing in popularity.

### 2. The local delivery of a Cotswolds package of agri-environment and rural development support post Brexit

Farming and rural land management are the principal influences on the Cotswolds AONB landscape. The UK’s exit from the EU provides an exciting opportunity to look again at agri-environment and rural development support. The development of a Cotswolds specific menu of grants and incentives which reinforces the special qualities of the Cotswolds landscape and is delivered locally will be proactively pursued.

### 3. Communities and businesses within and around the AONB identify and celebrate being part of a nationally recognised landscape.

The AONB as a locally and nationally important landscape is something to be cherished, it provides a high quality environment in which to live and work and the value of the Cotswolds brand is recognised by businesses who operate in and around the area. Helping everyone further recognise, appreciate, celebrate and promote the AONB as a special landscape will be a priority.

### 4. The exploration of the case for the Cotswolds being designated as England’s next National Park

There has been a growing debate as to whether the Cotswolds should be designated a National Park. This chimes with the Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan and planned Hobhouse style review of National Parks and AONBs. There are many similarities between the most recent Park designation i.e. the South Downs, and the Cotswolds. A Cotswolds National Park potentially offers a series of significant benefits for local communities, the environment and the economy.

The merits of a Cotswolds National Park will be examined and a formal proposal advanced as appropriate.

## Core Themes

At its heart this Management Plan has 3 core, overarching themes upon which the more detailed topic specific outcomes and policies are based.

These themes are deemed to be so fundamental to the purposes of AONB designation that they set the wider context for all policies across the whole plan. These core themes act as 'golden threads' running throughout the plan and are

Partnership

Natural Capital and ecosystem services

Climate Change

## Partnership

### Outcome

By 2023 through the consistent delivery of their statutory duties public bodies, as well as non-governmental organisations and the private sector, have played a proactive and effective role in the conservation and enhancement of the Cotswolds AONB.

### Key Issues

- i. The approach to conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the Cotswold landscape is not always delivered in a consistent manner across the entire AONB by all public bodies as required by Section 85 of the CROW Act, which places a duty on all relevant authorities to have regard to the purposes of conserving and enhancing when discharging any function in relation to or affecting land within an AONB.
- ii. Small scale incremental change over time can harm the character and special qualities of the AONB. For example, views and biodiversity can be lost due to lack of road verge management, inappropriate fencing, tree species, property gateways or lighting which leads to gradual suburbanisation.
- iii. Adopting and promoting a proactive, multi-partnership approach will enable the AONB to realise additional benefits through, for example, funding sources and increased participation across the AONB.

**Policy P1:** All public bodies should have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty, in line with the statutory duty placed on them, within their statutory and corporate plans. The Board's guidance and advice including the statutory AONB Management Plan, Position Statements, Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines are used

consistently across the Cotswolds by local authorities, Government departments, parish councils and other public bodies as required by Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act.

**Policy P2:** The Board will seek to proactively engage and work in partnership with a full range of AONB stakeholders

## Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services

### Outcome

The natural capital assets and ecosystem services of the Cotswolds AONB and their contribution to wider society, economy and human life are understood, recognised and valued by all decision makers.

The Cotswolds AONB stands out for its wealth of natural capital stock and assets, including:

- The underlying geology that generated this landscape, the Jurassic limestone aquifer, the Cotswolds stone, the lime-rich (calcareous) soils, and the plant life that thrives upon it
- Farmland; arable land for producing crops and grassland for grazing livestock
- Woodlands; iconic beech woodlands, ancient woodlands, rich in biodiversity, and other woodland which provides timber products as well as ecosystem services
- A principle aquifer which provides a high level of water storage, and supports water supply and river base flow on a strategic scale
- A system of streams and rivers, including the origin of the River Thames, which contribute to natural flood management
- Clean air and an equable climate
- A wealth of biodiversity, including important species of birds, bats, butterflies and other fauna and flora
- A cultural-historic landscape that tells the story of thousands of years of man interacting with its natural environment
- A beautiful and accessible place for recreation, relaxation, learning and inspiration

### Key issues

- i. The natural capital and ecosystems services of the Cotswolds AONB are of local and national importance, and for some services international importance. However they are not fully understood or valued, consequently there is a need to better understand and promote the social, economic and human benefits provided.
- ii. Many of the human beneficiaries of the AONB's natural capital and its associated benefits live outside the AONB.

**Policy NECS 1:** Developers, the public sector and major infrastructure providers should ensure that the AONBs natural capital and ecosystem services are protected and improved when formulating proposals

**Policy NCES 2:** The natural capital assets of the Cotswolds AONB and the ecosystem services they provide should be used to demonstrate the market and nonmarket benefits that are being delivered to the wider population

**Policy NCES 3:** To encourage the consideration and use of natural capital accounting to allocate values to key natural assets and services to fully understand the implications of investment and management decisions and provide a means of capturing changes over time.

## Climate Change

### Outcome

The Cotswolds AONB is managed to ensure it adapts to the impacts of climate change, whilst seeking to retain its special qualities which conserve and enhance the natural beauty.

### Key Issues

- i. The UK is a signatory to the UN Paris Climate Agreement of 2015, which came into force in November 2016. Its central aims are to keep the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels; and to limit the increase to 1.5°C, since this would significantly reduce risks and the impacts of climate change
- ii. Based on the medium greenhouse gas emissions scenario, the Cotswolds are likely to experience increasingly warmer, drier summers; milder, wetter winters; and an increase in extreme weather events

**Policy CC1:** The mitigation and adaptation measures contained in the Cotswolds Climate Change Strategy are implemented to develop resilience to the impact of climate change

## Conserving and Enhancing

It is the Cotswolds Conservation Board's duty to have regard to its two statutory purposes. The first, and pre-eminent statutory purpose is to '**Conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB**'

This requires the delivery of policies under the following themes

Landscape  
Biodiversity  
Climate Change

Rural Land Management  
Natural Capital and **Eco System Services**  
Development and Transport  
Historic Environment

# Landscape

## Outcome

By 2023 the landscape has been managed to conserve and enhance the unique combination of key characteristics and special qualities which define the Cotswolds AONB.

### Key issue

- i. Landscape is not static and constantly changes over time. Since AONB designation in 1966 much has changed in the Cotswolds driven to a large extent by technological advances in agriculture, agri-environment schemes and woodland grants, changes in the shooting and equestrian sectors, fluctuations in commodity prices, population growth and migration, changes in employment and communications often influenced by Government policy and financial support. Continued change is inevitable and will have an impact on the landscape and the appearance of the Cotswolds in the future and needs to be managed and guided to ensure the Cotswolds retains its landscape character and special qualities.
- ii. Development and landscape management, some of which are not regulated by planning legislation or other controls, can be inappropriate, out of scale and harm landscape character.

**Policy LP1:** Proposals that will impact on, or create change in landscape, **must have** regard of the statutory AONB Management Plan, Landscape Strategy and Guidelines, Position Statements and other guidance issued by the Board **in addition to local and national planning policy to ensure that they:**

- 1) are compatible with the distinctive character of the location as described by the Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines.
- 2) are consistent with the above in design, materials and scale
- 3) have regard to impact on views, tranquillity and dark skies and landscapes
- 4) conserve and enhance landscape, biodiversity, water quality and protect the historic environment and
- 5) have regard to public enjoyment and experience of the AONB

### Key issue

- iii. Major infrastructure and development projects such as roads or energy developments **are likely to** have a detrimental impact on the landscape

**Policy LP2:** Major infrastructure and development projects should be genuinely landscape led, not landscape mitigated schemes. They should be designed to

- 1) meet the character of the AONB's landscape
- 2) minimise harm and identify opportunities for wider mitigation and benefits
- 3) conserve **and enhance** natural capital **and ecosystem services**

## 4) conserve and enhance the AONB and its setting

**Key Issue**

- iv. The surroundings and setting of the AONB are important to its landscape and scenic beauty. Views out of the AONB and into it from surrounding areas are a significant consideration

**Policy LP3:** Development proposals that affect the setting, including views into and out of the AONB, should be carefully assessed in line with Policy LP1 and local and national planning policy to ensure that they do not harm the AONB, and should conserve and enhance the natural beauty and landscape character of the AONB

**Key Issue**

- v. The Cotswolds AONB is significant for its geology and geomorphology with some features unique to the area. The geology influences the landscape, soils and biodiversity and has played a significant role in the AONB's industry and heritage. The AONB contains 36 Geological Conservation Review (GCR) sites and 200 Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS). Survey work has also identified the Cotswolds as significant for Tufa streams and springs.

**Policy LP4:** The Board will support the continued exploration and research into the geology of the Cotswolds to improve the understanding of the landscape and of the geological resource, its importance and to inform the conservation and management of geological and geomorphological sites

**Key issue**

- vi. The UK's exit from the EU is likely to result in fundamental changes to agricultural policy and support mechanisms for farming, forestry and other land management sectors which could impact the conservation and enhancement of the landscape and special qualities of the AONB
- vii. The UK's exit from the EU could also lead to legislative changes in environmental protection and management impacting on the conservation and enhancement of the AONB and its special qualities.

**Policy LP5:** The purposes of AONB designation are fully accounted for and supported by future Government policy and support mechanisms after leaving the EU

**Key Issue**

- viii. The loss of traditional skills is a significant issue for the future management of the landscape and the special qualities of the AONB.

**Policy LP6:** To ensure the long term management of the key features of the AONB landscape traditional skills training and the utilisation of those skills such as dry stone walling, traditional woodland management and hedgelaying will be promoted

**Key issue**

- ix. Pressures on global resources as a result of climate change are leading to the intensification of agriculture, which could have a negative impact on the natural beauty of the Cotswolds

**Policy LP7:** Research into the predicted impacts of climate change on the AONB landscape and local communities is encouraged and used to advise and inform sustained behavioural change **to conserve and enhance the AONB**

## Rural Land Management

**Outcome**

By 2023, effective land management is conserving and enhancing the landscape character and special qualities of the AONB. Rural land managers are successfully adapting to national policy changes and implementing sustainable land management practices which reinforce the distinctive landscapes and natural capital assets of the Cotswolds.

**Key issue**

- i. The UK's exit from the EU could see fundamental changes to the UK's support mechanisms for farming, forestry and other land management sectors thereby affecting management practices.
- ii. The current agri-environment and rural development programmes are England-wide and even with targeting for the Cotswolds do not always support what is needed to conserve and enhance the landscape, its special qualities and the economy of the AONB. The opportunity exists to design a package of measures specifically for the Cotswolds AONB as new policy emerges after leaving the EU

**Policy RLMP 1:** Future agri-environment, land management and rural development support mechanisms are designed specifically for the Cotswolds AONB, informed by the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan and supporting guidance and advice. **The resulting scheme(s) are managed locally to ensure effective local delivery.**

**Key issue**

- iii. The natural capital of the Cotswolds AONB **continues to** provide important environmental, economic and social assets for the nation **which include** 'goods and services' such as supply of water, food production, **timber**, biodiversity and a landscape enjoyed and appreciated by residents and visitors.

**Policy RLMP2:** **Regulations and incentives that impact on land management practices should conserve, enhance and support natural capital and ecosystem services.**

**Key Issue**



- iv. Loss of soil organic matter resulting in soils being more prone to drought and less resilient, and requiring higher levels of input to support yields.

**Policy RLMP3:** Good soil management is promoted and supported through influencing and working collaboratively with land managers to identify new solutions and practice which contribute to conserving and enhancing the AONB

#### Key issue

- v. Changing farming economics, demographics, practices and rural business diversification result in division of farms and create clusters of land uses which have a detrimental impact upon the landscape such as horse paddocks and 'gentrification'.

**Policy RLMP4:** Changes in rural land use and management should take account of landscape character and the special qualities of the AONB and comply with Policy LP1

#### Key issue

- vi. Many woodlands are either under-managed or not managed at all. Creating new woodland can add to this problem if not maintained.
- vii. Woodland planting does not always consider landscape setting and impact and, in particular, of its effects on traditional open views people enjoy across the Cotswolds from viewpoints, roads and Public Rights of Way.
- viii. The planting of 'Privacy belts' around property is having a detrimental impact on landscape character and views, particularly from roads, and often comprise species inappropriate to the Cotswolds

**Policy RLMP5:** Proposals for woodland creation, management and tree planting, including for flood management, should be compatible with the distinctive character of the location and be in accordance with the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines and Board guidance.

#### Key Issue

- ix. Increasing deer and grey squirrel populations and lack of co-ordinated management is impacting on the landscape of the Cotswolds and on the quality of woodland, woodland biodiversity and timber.

**Policy RLMP6:** The need for control of grey squirrel and management of deer is supported, particularly when undertaken and co-ordinated at a landscape scale.

#### Key Issue

- x. Ash is a predominant and important species of tree in the Cotswolds and Ash Dieback will have an increasing impact on woodland and trees in the landscape during the life of this management plan

**Policy RLMP7:** National guidance on Ash Dieback should be implemented locally and further guidance produced by the Board followed to ensure any measures implemented will conserve and enhance the qualities of the landscape.

#### Key issue

- xi. There are a number on invasive non-native species present in the Cotswolds that are having a harmful impact, particularly on biodiversity. These include Himalayan balsam and New Zealand Pygmy Weed in rivers and ponds, and Holm oak and cotoneaster on species rich grassland. Driven by climate change and globalisation, there is an increasing risk of further plant and animal pests and disease becoming established in the Cotswolds AONB and having a harmful impact on landscape, biodiversity and the economy.

**Policy RLMP8:** National and local guidance on invasive non-native species, pests and diseases from Government Agencies and the Non Native Species Secretariat is followed and appropriate biosecurity measures are promoted.

## Historic Environment

### Outcome

By 2023, the historic and cultural aspects of the Cotswold landscape is better understood, presented, recorded, managed, protected and improved.

#### Key issue

- i. The historic environment is a finite resource and is continuing to decline and be lost due to development, changes in land management and a lack of understanding and management particularly with regard to the wider historic landscape and the less visible and undesignated sites which have no protection.
- ii. The need to understand and promote the connectivity of historic sites and their settings as part of the wider landscape character is vital in order to effectively conserve and manage the historic environment and Historic Landscape Character<sup>8</sup>.

**Policy HE1:** The historic environment and cultural heritage, both designated and undesignated, should be managed, recorded and communicated effectively in order to ensure these assets are conserved and protected.

#### Key Issue

- iii. Historic Environment Records (HER) of non-designated assets of local significance produced by local authorities help raise awareness and understanding need to be better promoted and used by all stakeholders

**Policy HE2:** Working in partnership with local authorities, the Board and other stakeholders will seek opportunities to promote the awareness, understanding and use of HER's in order to influence decisions regarding the management of the AONBs historic and cultural environment

<sup>8</sup> More information on Historic Landscape Characterisation at <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/methods/characterisation-2/>

**Key Issue**

- iv. Land management, farming practices, wildlife conservation and public access all impact upon the historic environment. Current agri-environment schemes have contributed to the management and conservation of historic features such as archaeological remains, **historic parklands**, barns, dewponds and walls in the wider landscape. The UK's exit from the EU is likely to see fundamental changes to the UK's support mechanisms for encouraging investment in the AONB which conserves and manages the historic environment.

**Policy HE3:** Future agri-environment support for the historic environment is based upon a Cotswolds specific package of investment options informed by the Board's and partner organisation's advice and guidance.

**Key Issue**

- v. New developments, by virtue of their scale and design, surrounding the historic cores of settlements can cause separation of historic cores from the wider landscape and have a detrimental effect on their distinctive character
- vi. The conversion or extension of historic buildings **and farmsteads**, the introduction of domestic clutter, lighting and landscaping resulting from development can harm the historic character of buildings **and their setting**, and their relationship to the **wider** landscape

**Policy HE4:** New development, conversions and extensions should respect historical **sites and** features, layout and context, including the relationship between the existing **feature or** settlement and the landscape. The Board will encourage the development of design guidance by its partners which is supported by a robust evidence base and which refers to relevant plans, assessments, strategies and guidelines issued by the Board.

## BIODIVERSITY

**Outcome**

By 2023 the Cotswolds AONB is a place where loss of habitats and species has been halted. Habitats have been enhanced and created forming a, robust and resilient ecological network across the AONB with links into surrounding areas. Important and characteristic species populations have stabilised and some are beginning to increase in number and range.

**Key issue**

- i. Whilst there have been some successes, despite investment for many years in conserving and enhancing biodiversity, habitats and species have continued to decline, notably on **ancient** semi-natural habitats. In some instances **recently** created habitats such as species rich grassland **are** faring better than the **ancient** semi-natural grasslands. Lack of continuity of funding and resources, scale of the task, changes in farming economics, issues of disease and bureaucracy are some of the factors leading to continued decline.

- ii. In the wider landscape, the conservation and enhancement of species and habitats has largely been reliant on payments from agri-environment schemes in recent years
- iii. The reduction in size and fragmentation of habitats has led to populations of species becoming more vulnerable to population decline or extinction as they are unable to adapt to climate change by moving to new niches within sites or suitable new climate spaces via robust and linked ecological networks
- iv. The need to arrest the decline of good quality sites including Local Wildlife Sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest which form the key elements of robust ecological networks

**Policy BP1:** Work with partner organisations to achieve a net gain in biodiversity through bringing designated sites and other priority habitats into good condition and creating a network of linked and robust ecological networks across and adjacent to the AONB

#### Key issue

- v. The UK's exit from the EU could see fundamental changes to the UK's support mechanisms to land managers for encouraging investment in the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity.
- vi. The UK's exit from the EU could see changes to the UK legislative requirements for biodiversity conservation, protection and enhancement
- vii. The implications of Defra's 25 year Plan for the Environment for maintaining and enhancing the natural environment by making global environmental ambitions relevant to local situations
- viii. The UK's exit from the EU and any subsequent uncertainty could undo the successes and achievements of agri-environment schemes made over more than 20 years.
- ix. Many of the AONB's most important habitats rely on traditional practices that are no longer economically viable. Extensive grazing of species-rich grasslands has reduced due to a downturn in the livestock industry and diseases such as TB. Woodland management has also declined as imports of wood products has become cheaper. As a result these activities require support in different ways.

**Policy BP2:** The future support for environment and biodiversity enhancement programmes in the Cotswolds is based upon a local Cotswolds package of investment options informed by the Board's and partner organisation's published guidance and advice.

#### Key Issue

- x. Increasing pressure on land use both in terms of the development of land and the recreational pressures as consequence of development

**Policy BP3:** All Local Plan documents, Neighbourhood Planning, and planning decision-making processes should identify opportunities to achieve a biodiversity net gain from development, the gains in biodiversity are valuable locally, and make important contributions towards regional and national priorities for nature conservation. Opportunities could include any of the following

- Include, protect or enhance green infrastructure
- Connectivity of sites and species
- Biodiversity offsetting
- Future management of and access to individual sites or the wider countryside for public enjoyment and understanding

- Use of CIL funding

## DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORT

### Outcome

By 2023 the special qualities of the AONB and its setting have been conserved and enhanced through robust national and local plans and guidance and their implementation, which recognise and reinforce the special qualities of this nationally significant landscape, its communities and economy.

### Key issues

- The need for sensitive management of the size, scale and design of development and other land use pressures within the AONB and its setting in order to achieve economic and community viability without compromising the special qualities and landscape character of the Cotswolds.
- Noise and activity arising from developments in or near the countryside, together with lighting, can have an adverse impact on tranquil and dark sky areas.
- An increase in home working and small businesses leading to the demand for flexible space, fast connectivity and local services
- Increasing demand for air transport is leading to expansion of controlled air space over the AONB. Additionally, the use of drones, both commercially and privately, is likely to increase. These activities could reduce tranquillity as a result of increased visual intrusion and noise.

**Policy DTP1:** All Local Plan documents, Neighbourhood Planning, and planning decision-making processes should have regard to

- the statutory AONB Management Plan
- Position Statements
- Cotswold Landscape Assessment and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

issued by the Board, as well as the following criteria in determining the acceptability of proposed development in the Cotswolds AONB.

Development should:

- Consider and be compatible with the distinctive character of the location as described by the relevant landscape character assessment and landscape strategy and guidelines;
- Incorporate designs and landscaping consistent with the landscape character assessment and landscape strategy and guidelines
- Be designed to respect local settlement patterns, conserve the historic environment, building styles, scale and materials;
- Incorporate appropriate sustainability elements and designs including
  - green infrastructure at local and strategic levels
  - innovative designs which are informed by local character and scale
- Consider the need to protect ancient and other semi-natural woodland as part of development proposals
- Have regard to the impact on tranquillity, including dark skies;
- Enhance local community amenities, services and access to them

- h) Conserve and enhance the landscape and biodiversity of the AONB and its setting
- i) Be landscape led and identify opportunities for wider mitigation and benefits to deliver, conserve and enhance the AONB and its setting
- j) Be in accordance with a more sustainable pattern of development including reducing dependency on car travel.
- k) Seek opportunities to use CIL and biodiversity offsetting mechanisms beyond immediate development sites to conserve and enhance the AONB more widely

#### Key Issue

- v. The AONB is not covered by a complete suite of up to date, adopted local plans which demonstrate the necessary requirement for a 5 year housing supply. This has led to greater numbers of speculative housing developments which either individually or incrementally could have detrimental landscape impacts and increase pressure on transport and services within the AONB.

**Policy DTP2:** The Board will work with local planning authorities in developing their local plans and with local communities through the Neighbourhood Planning process to identify sites appropriate for development which reinforce and respond to the special qualities of the AONB

#### Key Issue

- vi. The importance of providing a mixture of well designed, mixed tenure and affordable housing is recognised as vital to ensure that communities can survive and prosper. The Board is particularly concerned that those who care for the landscape of the AONB and other key workers have an opportunity to live within it. Consideration will also need to be given to the specific housing needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

**Policy DTP3:** Housing development should prioritise the provision of identified local need affordable and/or mixed tenure housing. Sites for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople should be carefully located and follow the criteria set out in DTP1.

#### Key Issues

- vii. The AONB contains a number of long-established through-routes. Appropriate traffic management, including lower speed limits, signage and minor engineering works are required to manage congestion, poor air quality, damage to roadside verges with consequent drainage and soil erosion issues and traffic 'rat-running' to and from these routes along minor roads and through villages.
- viii. As the popularity of walking, cycling and horse riding increases the safety of non-motorised users needs to be considered. Provision of off road routes and suitably designed speed reduction schemes may be appropriate in some circumstances

**Policy DTP4:** The special qualities of the AONB should be fully respected and integrated into the planning, design, provision and management of all transport infrastructure.

#### Key Issue

- ix. The distinctive character of minor roads reflect and contribute to the character of the wider AONB landscape and they are an important means for people to experience the AONB. Insensitive, over-engineered and excessive lighting changes to these roads can have a detrimental impact.

**Policy DTP5:** The design and management of the rural road network should reinforce the local character and distinctiveness of the AONB.

**Key Issue**

- x. The percentage of households in the Cotswolds AONB having no car is 3%, and many people do not have access to a car during the day. This means they are heavily dependent on the frequency and quality of public and/or community transport to access local services
- xi. The introduction and utilisation of technology to help address transport issues and offer increased alternatives such as car sharing and call-up public transport systems could provide viable options for residents and visitors alike

**Policy DTP6:** The provision of infrastructure for facilitating walking, cycling and use of public transport, as a viable alternative to private car use is an integral consideration in any development proposal.

**Key Issues**

- xii. Rural isolation and access to services due to a lack of public transport
- xiii. Neighbourhood Planning provides local people with the opportunity to actively engage in the development of their community and address issues such as the loss of local facilities and services.

**Policy DTP7:** The provision of local services and access to those services is identified, maintained and where necessary enhanced through partnership working, local and neighbourhood planning and local transport plan processes.

**Key Issue**

- xiv. Whilst there is still the opportunity to reduce the more extreme impacts of climate change through mitigation measures, significant impacts will occur because past greenhouse gas emissions have already raised carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere and will continue to do so.

**Policy DTP 8:** Seek to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through improving energy efficiency, using appropriate forms of renewable energy, reducing car use, making better use of public transport and, where appropriate, purchasing locally produced food and services.

**Key Issue**

- xv. The need to raise awareness of the benefits of better managed woodlands' contribution to small-medium scale local biomass for the end-user and the supply chain businesses.

**Policy DTP 8:** Small scale renewable energy technology and energy conservation measures compatible with the AONB landscape, including the conservation of traditional buildings, are encouraged

**Policy DTP 9:** Research to identify, better understand and improve the thermal efficiency of traditional Cotswold buildings, in order to reduce their carbon emissions and adapt them to a changing climate will be encouraged.

## NATURAL CAPITAL AND ECO SYSTEMS SERVICES

### Outcome

The natural capital assets of the Cotswolds AONB and their contribution to wider society as ecosystem services are understood, recognised and valued by all decision makers.

Natural capital can be defined as the elements of nature that directly or indirectly produce value to people, including ecosystems, species, freshwater, land minerals, the air and oceans, as well as natural processes and functions. The Cotswolds AONB is rich in many of these elements. In turn, that natural capital can be understood as delivering ecosystems services contributing to human well-being. These include:

- Provisioning services – products such as: food (crops, meat and dairy products, fish and honey); water; fibre (timber and wool); and fuel (woodfuel)
- Regulating services – benefits such as: water purification; climate regulation; noise and air pollution reduction and flood hazard reduction
- Cultural services - non-material benefits, for example: through cultural heritage; recreation or aesthetic experience
- Supporting services – such as biodiversity, soil function and natural flood management

### Key issue: soils

- i. Across the designated AONB there are many different soils, subject to degradation from a variety of factors. This leads to reduced yields, compaction and the leaching of nitrate and pesticides to groundwater

**Policy NCES1:** Soils should be managed to minimise erosion and water pollution and to maximise resilience to drought

### Key issue: water

- ii. The Cotswolds is home to a large aquifer which supplies homes and businesses both inside and outside the AONB. Over abstraction can impact both positively and negatively on river flows. Groundwater sources also need to be carefully managed to ensure the water is safe to drink.
- iii. The rivers in the AONB are important for water supply, recreation and biodiversity. They provide a range of habitats which are reliant on particular water flow and levels. Over abstraction can have a detrimental impact on these factors.
- iv. Climate change is likely to increase the risk of flash flooding and soil erosion

**Policy NCES2:** Water resources should be carefully managed to improve their quality and conserved to ensure aquifer recharge, adequate river flows and to contribute to natural flood management; trees planted for natural flood management should meet landscape policy objectives

### Key issue: local air pollution

- v. Emissions from road traffic can have an impact on local air quality, especially where major roads run through towns or at junctions that suffer from congestion



**Policy NCES3:** The use of diverse and innovative local road improvement projects which seek to reduce congestion and meet other policy outcomes in respect of design, materials and potential biodiversity gains are encouraged.

**Key issue: renewable energy developments**

- vi. Renewable energy opportunities can make a contribution to climate change goals, locally, for example through solar farms, wind turbines and innovative crops, but these can impact adversely on the landscape

**Policy NCES4:** Infrastructure for renewable energy generation should be of a type and scale for appropriate for their siting and designed to respect the relevant elements of the Board's Landscape Character Assessment and Guidelines and other guidance

## Climate Change

### Outcome

The Cotswolds AONB is managed to ensure it adapts to the impacts of climate change, whilst seeking to retain its special qualities which conserve and enhance the natural beauty.

### Key Issue

- i. Whilst there is still the opportunity to reduce the more extreme effects of climate change through mitigation measures, significant impacts will occur because past greenhouse gas emissions have already raised carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere and will continue to do so.

**Policy CC1:** To reduce greenhouse gas emissions through improving energy efficiency, using appropriate forms of renewable energy, reducing car use, making better use of public transport and purchasing locally produced food and services.

**Policy CC2:** Small scale renewable energy technology compatible with the AONB landscape and protection of the historic environment is encouraged and promoted where they have been informed by relevant guidance documents from the Board

**Policy CC 3:** Energy conservation measures compatible with the AONB landscape and the conservation of traditional buildings are encouraged and promoted where they have been informed by relevant guidance documents from the Board

**Policy CC 4:** New development should seek to be energy and water efficient

**Policy CC 5:** Research to identify, better understand and improve the thermal efficiency of traditional Cotswold buildings and building materials, in order to reduce their carbon emissions and adapt them to a changing climate is encouraged

# Understanding and Enjoying

The Cotswolds Conservation Boards statutory purpose is to

**‘Increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB.**

In order to do this the following themes are aligned to this purpose

Tourism	Health
Access	Well-being
Recreation	

## Tourism, access and recreation

### Outcome

By 2023 the Cotswolds AONB will strengthen its role as a world class international visitor destination, be recognised and valued for its special qualities and considered as the ‘walking and exploring capital of England’ whilst offering the opportunity to be active and enjoy the wider landscape **to both local people and visitors alike.**

### Key Issue

- i. Limited, integrated public transport restricts the scope for residents and visitors without a car to explore the Cotswolds resulting in a heavy reliance on car usage

**Policy TAR1:** Transport providers will be supported to increase and promote integrated travel initiatives in order to encourage a car free visitor experience

### Key Issue

- ii. Limited availability of low cost accommodation including camping can exclude families and those on low incomes from staying in the area, reducing the diversity of visitors

**Policy TAR2:** Encourage a range of **type and priced** accommodation options for visitors provided it is consistent with conserving an enhancing the landscape

### Key issue

- iii. Some local authorities across the AONB have joined together to form the Cotswolds Destination Management Organisation (DMO). However, further collaboration is needed to ensure the entire AONB is covered by a proactive and joined-up DMO which works proactively with neighbouring DMOs.
- iv. Further collaborative research with stakeholders and partners is needed to better understand the impacts and patterns of tourism in the AONB to ensure it remains sustainable.
- v. The need to proactively encourage new tourism products **that increases** the sustainable tourism offer
- vi. Limited understanding of the Cotswolds being an AONB by visitors and businesses **that reduces awareness of the need for protection and enhancement** of sense of place and distinctive features.

**Policy TAR3:** Engagement with tourism businesses and the DMO to encourage **increased** membership of **the visitor giving scheme** ‘Caring for the Cotswolds’, to raise awareness of the AONB and to generate funds from visitors to directly conserve the Cotswolds landscape.

**Key Issue**

- vii. Though there is generally a **significant level** of appreciation for the Cotswolds landscape by the population in and around the AONB, awareness and understanding of its status as a protected landscape and the implications of this is lacking

**Policy TAR4:** To ensure the provision of publications, volunteering, educational opportunities, events and activities continue to be reinforced to raise awareness by all those who experience and want to care for the AONB.

**Key Issue**

- viii. The AONB is afforded the same level of protection as a National Park. Due to its size and complex administrative structure it is increasingly challenging to deliver its statutory purposes in the current funding structure. More financial resources would be available if the AONB achieved National Park status.

**Policy TAR5:** Over the course of this Management Plan the Board will seek to engage with all stakeholders to assess the **value and appropriateness of seeking** National Park **designation**

**Key Issue**

- ix. Lack of **long term commitment of** funding from Natural England for National Trails make long term planning, promotion maintenance and partnership working difficult

**Policy TAR6:** Continue to ensure a co-ordinated approach to finding a sustainable funding solution for National Trails

**Key Issue**

- x. For some **people, due to financial, accessibility or cultural reasons it is not a consideration to explore and enjoy the AONB.** Some people are unaware there is a Public Rights of Way network to explore on foot, by bike or on horseback
- xi. The current provision of guided walks programmes and volunteering needs to **adapt, expand and respond in order to appeal to** a wider demographic.

**Policy TAR7:** To increase engagement with the larger urban areas in and around the AONB to encourage their participation, understanding and enjoyment of the AONB through an expanded visitor experience offer ensuring

- All the transport providers are signed up to promoting and selling the Cotswold Discover ticket
- There is a complete network of Parish Wardens who monitor the condition of the Public Rights of Way network
- Public Rights of Way are in passable condition and waymarked through **further engagement and** cooperation with the Highway Authorities, landowners and volunteer activity
- Information on walking, cycling and riding routes for all abilities are easily available on-line and to download
- Collaborative promotion including Visitor Information Centres

**Key Issue**

- xii. The extensive Public Rights of Way network is one of the main ways for visitors and residents to enjoy the AONB and is therefore important to the area's economy. Public Rights of Way access needs for non-motorised users **must** be addressed to ensure suitable access is maintained.

**Policy TAR 8:** To ensure a safe, pleasant, clearly waymarked and better connected PROW network available to all providing a positive, high quality experience is maintained **throughout** the AONB

## Health and Wellbeing

### Outcome

By 2023 the AONB is recognised by residents, visitors and the key decision makers including the health sector, as an area where the landscape, tranquillity and wide variety of recreational opportunities can benefit both the physical and mental health and well-being of those who experience it.

### Key issues

- i. A lack of physical activity which can lead to a variety of chronic diseases and conditions such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease combined with an ageing population is leading to a public health crisis
- ii. Increase in mental health illness together with a greater awareness of mental health issues and social isolation and the need for a variety of approaches, including outdoor activity and experiences, to tackle them

**Policy HAW1:** To ensure opportunities are provided to improve residents' and visitors' health and wellbeing through the creation, improvement and promotion of outdoor recreation including new and existing walking, cycling, riding routes, nature appreciation opportunities, educational engagement and the variety of volunteering opportunities available

### Key Issue

- iii. The need to promote the link between using the countryside as a place to increase fitness and wellbeing
- iv. Benefits of social prescribing not widely recognised at a policy making level – locally or nationally

**Policy HAW2:** To encourage partnership working between health professionals, including commissioners and other providers, to use and develop what the Cotswolds offers to residents and visitors to benefit their health and wellbeing.

## APPENDIX 1

### The Cotswolds Conservation Board

The Cotswolds Conservation Board was established by Parliament in 2004 and has two statutory purposes:<sup>9</sup>

- 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 has a duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of people living in the AONB.

<sup>9</sup> Section 87, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as amended by the NERC Act 2006.

## APPENDIX 2

### Monitoring Indicators

#### Introduction

The following is the list of Monitoring Indicators against which the effectiveness of the collective effort of those managing the AONB will be assessed.

They form part of the suite of indicators which the Board publishes in a State of the Cotswolds report to monitor change over time.

#### Conserving and Enhancing

##### Landscape

- Indicator 1: Changes to landscape character identified through fixed point photography

##### Rural Land Management

- Indicator 2: Change in % of land managed under agri-environment schemes
- Indicator 3: Changes in farmland type
- Indicator 4: Changes in farm numbers and sizes
- Indicator 5: Changes in stock numbers
- Indicator 6: Change in the % of the AONB which is woodland
- Indicator 7: Change in % of woodland under active management
- Indicator 8: Change in % woodland under EWGS (England Woodland Grant Scheme)/CS (Countryside Stewardship)
- Indicator 9: % Ancient Woodland sites covered by an England Woodland Grant Scheme or Countryside Stewardship agreement.

##### Natural Resources and Services

- Indicator 10: Increase in renewable energy capacity permitted/constructed
- Indicator 11: Increase in area of soil under management measures
- Indicator 12: Change in % of water bodies achieving 'good' ecological status

##### Historic Environment

- Indicator 13: Change in area of land under agri-environment schemes for the management and protection of archaeological features
- Indicator 14: Change in the number of sites identified as Heritage at Risk
- Indicator 15: Change in number of Listed Buildings within the AONB

##### Biodiversity

- Indicator 16: Change in SSSI condition

- Indicator 17: Change in % of area of priority habitats managed under agri-environment schemes
- Indicator 18: Change in % of Local Nature Sites in positive management

### **Development and Transport**

- Indicator 19: Number of affordable homes constructed per year
- Indicator 20: Household tenure within the AONB
- Indicator 21: Change in the number of new dwellings built in the AONB
- Indicator 22: Change in % car ownership within the AONB
- Indicator 23: Change in mode of travel to work
- Indicator 24: Change in number of adopted Local Plans, Mineral Plans, and Waste Local Plans with reference to AONB management plan in policy or supporting text
- Indicator 25: Availability and scope of design guidance
- Indicator 26: Change in number of Parish Plans, Neighbourhood Plans or Village Design Schemes (statements)
- Indicator 27: Change in the area of land within the AONB developed or redeveloped
- Indicator 28: Change in % of AONB recorded as “most tranquil”
- Indicator 29: Change in % of AONB least affected by light pollution
- Indicator 30: Change in available broadband

### **Understanding and Enjoying**

#### **Awareness and Understanding**

- Indicator 31: Change in respondents “highly valuing” the Cotswold landscape in residents & visitor surveys; Change in satisfaction ratings in surveys of residents and visitors (Listed under Exploring and enjoying in the Management Plan)

#### **Exploring and Enjoying**

- Indicator 32: Number and length of downloadable routes on the Board’s website
- Indicator 33: Change in area of open space brought about by agri-environment schemes

#### **Health and Wellbeing**

- Indicator 34: Total population and demographic structure of the AONB
- Indicator 35: Change in % of people using outdoor places for exercise or health reasons

#### **Participation**

- Indicator 36: Change in numbers attending guided walks programme
- Indicator 37: Change in numbers attending rural skills courses
- Indicator 38: Change in Cotswold Voluntary Wardens numbers and hours

#### **Tourism**

- Indicator 39: Change in number of businesses and income generated through the Caring for the Cotswolds visitor giving scheme

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