**The Cotswolds Conservation Board’s consideration of the case for the Cotswolds being designated a National Park**

The discussions and debate have steadily grown since autumn 2016.

* September 2016:
	+ Conservation Board’s Annual Forum receives presentations from Merrick Denton-Thompson, President of Landscape Institute and Dieter Helm, Chairman of Natural Capital Committee. Both presentations raise the issues of designating new National Parks and questions of why the Cotswolds is not a National Park.
* November:
	+ The Board’s Executive Committee began to explore the merits of a National Park.
* January 2017:
	+ A privately-led Parliamentary Petition calls for the Cotswolds AONB to be upgraded to a National Park and led to a marked increase in the number of people discussing the prospect of a new National Park.
	+ Natural Capital Committee’s 4th State of Natural Capital Report recommends consideration be given to the creation of new National Parks.
* May:
	+ The Parliamentary petition was brought to a premature conclusion when the June 2017 election was called and all such petitions guillotined.
* June:
	+ Further discussion and draft proposal document discussed by Board’s Executive Committee.
	+ Correspondence with Secretary of State and Minister at Defra advocating consideration of the Cotswolds as a National Park.
* July:
	+ Consultation on the draft Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018- 2023 includes the policy to seek to engage with all stakeholders to assess the desire for National Park status.
* August:
	+ CPRE Gloucestershire Policy Committee invites Director to discuss National Park idea, with neighbouring county branches of CPRE invited to join discussion.
* October:
	+ The full Board received a briefing on the potential for a Cotswolds National Park.
	+ Chairman, Vice Chairman and Director briefed and discussed National Park concept with Andrew Sells, Chairman of Natural England.
* November:
	+ Lord Gardiner, Minister at Defra visits Board and discussion includes presentation of potential for a new National Park.
	+ David Drew MP for Stroud issued a video on twitter and facebook inviting comment on the idea for a Cotswolds National Park, with positive support received on twitter and facebook accounts.
	+ Local and regional BBC television (Oxford Today, Midlands Today and Points West) and radio provided positive coverage.
* December:
	+ Council for National Parks (CNP) Chair and CEO support the investigation of the proposal for a National Park.
	+ Chairman and Director held a briefing and discussion with Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP.
* January 2018:
	+ Chairman and Director accompanied Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP on a visit to the South Downs National Park for a discussion focussed on the delivery of planning services.
	+ Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP issued a press release in support of the consideration of whether the Cotswolds should be designated a National Park on 8 January.
	+ Government launched its 25 Year Environment Plan on 11 January, which signalled a Hobhouse style Review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the consideration of extensions to and the creation of new designated areas.
	+ Strong media interest in Park idea from local and regional tv and radio.
	+ Chairman and Director met with senior members and staff at Wychavon District Council and Worcestershire County Council.
* February:
	+ Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP hosted a briefing for local MPs in Westminster on 6 February.
	+ David Drew raised the potential for a National Park with DCLG and Defra via a written Parliamentary Question on 7 February.
	+ Briefing requested by Mark Tufnell, future CLA President and former Conservation Board member, given growing levels of awareness of the debate.
	+ Consultation on the draft Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018- 2023 includes the ambition “to fully explore the case for and against the Cotswolds being designated as England’s next National Park.”
* March:
	+ The CPRE county branches considered a Gloucestershire branch paper in early March and agreed to support a Cotswolds National Park proposal.
	+ A Friends groups in the eastern part of the AONB have signalled interest in funding / co funding a new National Park website
	+ The Conservation Board agrees to:
		- Make a formal approach to Natural England (NE) requesting that they consider designating the Cotswolds a National Park, with the Board having to make a formal request in order for NE to register and consider the merits of the Cotswolds;
		- Published a discussion document to advance the discussion and consideration of the case for the Cotswolds to be designated a National Park.
* April
	+ Meeting with Crispin Truman, CEO of CPRE, who recognises the qualities of the Cotswolds and the potential for new National Parks to be announced in 2019, the 70th anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949, the enabling legislation for the designation of Parks and AONBs.
	+ Briefing provided to Cirencester Business Club, chaired by Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP.
	+ Cotswold Life issues a National Park article for their Summer Special in April/May.
	+ The Board made a formal approach to Natural England’s (NE) Chairman requesting that NE considers designating the Cotswolds a National Park.
	+ The Board released a discussion document on the potential for a Cotswolds National Park in order to help advance discussion and consideration of the idea in April and a shorter resume document in July.
* In May:
	+ Government announced that Julian Glover would chair the National Parks and AONB Review.
	+ The National Review’s remit is detailed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-landscapes-national-parks-and-aonbs-2018-review/terms-of-reference>
* In June:
	+ Officers undertook a briefing for National Trust managers on the emerging case for or against a Cotswolds National Park.
	+ Members of the Advisory Panel working with Julian Glover were announced.
* In July:
	+ The Board’s Chairman and Director met with Andrew Sells, Natural England’s (NE) Chairman and Henry Robinson, NE Board Member to discuss the National Park idea.
	+ The Board’s officers and Chairman undertook a briefing of the pros and cons of Park status for NFU and CLA members at the RAU.
	+ The National Trust hosted and the Chair of the Gloucestershire branch of CPRE and the Board’s Vice Chair jointly chaired a meeting of the local and national charity and non governmental sector organisations with an interest in conservation and access to discuss the potential for a National Park.
* In August:
	+ The Board was invited by NE to submit initial Natural Beauty and Recreation criterion tables outlining the natural beauty and recreation credentials and scope of a Cotswolds National Park. This submission was made in early August. NE have confirmed that they have received criterion tables for two other areas interested in potential National Park designation i.e. Dorset / East Devon and South Devon and anticipate receiving tables for the Chilterns.
	+ The Board hosted a visit from two members of the Review Advisory Panel; Dame Fiona Reynolds and Jim Dixon, along with a member of the secretariat review team. The visit had three elements: an introduction to the Cotswolds AONB, the remit and work of the Conservation Board and discussion of the idea for a Cotswolds National Park.
* In September
	+ Various requests for briefings and presentations have being received from interested groups and societies e.g Oxon CPRE, Campden Society.
	+ Meetings are being arranged with Local Authority partners across the Autumn.
	+ The Executive Committee adopted a new Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018 – 2023, which includes the ambition “to promote the case for the Cotswolds being designated as England’s next National Park”.
* In October
	+ The national Glover Review is due to call for evidence from October and report in September 2019.

October 2018