

Cotswolds National Park: Evaluation Framework for Recreation Criterion

The sub-factors and associated indicators should be regarded as a menu of examples (developed from past designations and subsequent consultation) from which those appropriate to the character of the landscape under consideration should be chosen, adapted or added to. There is no scoring involving accumulations of indicators and it is possible for a landscape to exhibit natural beauty or offer opportunities for open air recreation even if a number of the indicators shown in this appendix are not present.

Factor	Example sub-factor	Example indicator
<p>Access to high quality landscapes</p>	<p>Opportunities to enjoy outstanding natural beauty</p>	<p>Good access (physically and/or visually) to areas that satisfy the natural beauty criterion (see Natural Beauty criterion)</p> <p>Cotswolds AONB was designated for its natural beauty; designated in 1966 and extended in area in 1990. It is the country's largest AONB and third largest Protected Landscape, covering 790 sq miles and 2038 sq kms.</p> <p>The Cotswolds is a renowned and very popular area for walking with individuals, organised groups and specialist walking holiday companies all exploring the Cotswold landscape and villages. Apart from the popularity of the area the landscape, whilst dramatic, is not a harsh extreme landscape and lends itself to walking. Cycling, both road and off-road, is also growing in popularity. There are now many books of walks and rides in the Cotswolds plus a large range of downloadable walks from a variety of organisations, including the Cotswolds Conservation Board.</p> <p>The Cotswolds AONB has approximately 3,013 miles of public rights of way, which includes over 20 named routes.</p> <p>It provides a high density of footpaths compared to the expansive nature of the farmed landscape, a density far in excess of the equivalents for any existing National Park. The Cotswolds AONB density of public rights of way = 24 metres/ha, whilst National Parks average 13 metres/ha.</p>

There is also in excess of 13 miles of permissive path and bridleway.ⁱ

20 + named routes and trails, including:

- The Cotswold Way National Trail
- The Thames Path National Trail
- Macmillan Way/Cross Cotswold Pathway – walking route
- Sabrina Way – riding and walking route
- Monarch's Way – walking route
- Wysis Way – walking route

Walkers are Welcome Towns are evident across the Cotswolds and include:

- Winchcombe
- Charlbury
- Dursley
- Bradford on Avon
- With Corsham, Keynsham and Fairford just outside the AONB

National Trails:

- The 102 mile Cotswold Way National Trail runs along the Cotswolds Escarpment from Bath to Chipping Campden. The trail attracted 60,000 walkers at Crickley Hill, the National Trails website attracted 150,000 Cotswold Way visitors and the Cotswold Way section of the Cotswolds AONB website attracted 173,000 visitors (2017/18);
- The 184 mile Thames Path National Trail starts near Kemble in the Cotswolds.

Permissive access secured through agri-environment schemes = 110 Ha in 2012.

Access secured via HMRC agreements over Inheritance Tax = details unknown at this stage, resulting access not well published.

		<p>Open access in a largely undulating arable landscape:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 4 common land 1606 • Section 4 open country 910 • Section 15 land 1272 • Section 16 land 11 <p style="text-align: right;">3799 Ha (2% of the AONB)</p> <p>See Visiting & Exploring weblinks within Supporting Information</p>
	<p>Opportunities to enjoy relative tranquillity and relative wildness</p>	<p>Good access (physically and/or visually) to areas that offer an experience of tranquillity or wildness (see Natural Beauty criterion)</p> <p>The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) has undertaken considerable work to define and map tranquillity across England. CPRE produced “dark skies” maps in 1993 and 2000 showing the impact of light pollution across England. In 2006 CPRE published “tranquillity maps” which showed comparative levels of tranquillity for England. See links to the Board’s Position Statement on Tranquillity and Dark Skies and CPREs reports / maps within the Supporting Information.</p> <p>This research identifies that the Cotswolds form an extensive area free from excessive light pollution and noise, surrounded by the urban areas of Bath/Bristol, Gloucester/Cheltenham, Worcester/Evesham/Stratford/Banbury/Bicester/Oxford, Swindon and Trowbridge. The AONB therefore fulfils an important function for the populations of these areas as a “breathing space” where they can “get away from it all”.</p> <p>The size and extent of the network of Commons along the Cotswolds escarpment provides excellent opportunities for extensive open space recreation and a</p>

		<p>feeling of “wildness”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minchinhampton • Rodborough • Cleeve • Selsley • Painswick • Stonesfield <p>The extensive network of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) provides ample opportunity to experience tranquillity and wildness. The High Wold with its dramatic panoramas and big skies gives a sense of exposure and remoteness whilst the incised valleys feel distinctly secluded.</p>
<p>Natural or cultural heritage features or cultural associations</p>	<p>Presence of a range of natural or cultural heritage features or cultural associations</p>	<p>Presence of natural features which enrich the experience of the landscape or contribute to understanding of special qualities or sense of place</p> <p>The landscape of the Cotswolds, in its own right, is a well-known heritage feature appreciated and enjoyed by millions, (23 million day visits a year to the AONB).</p> <p>Key landscape features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escarpment rising to 1018 feet on Cleeve Hill and running from Bath to Chipping Campden and then to Edge Hill; • Incised/enclosed valleys around Stroud and Bath; • High Wold and broader floodplain valleys of the Evenlode, Windrush, Coln, Churn and Leach; • Outliers, particularly Bredon Hill; • Commons e.g. Minchinhampton and Cleeve. <p>The legacy of the Romans – roads and villas e. g The Fosse Way and Chedworth Roman Villa.</p>

Presence of cultural features or cultural associations which enrich the experience of the landscape or contribute to understanding of special qualities or sense of place

- William Morris the founder of the Arts & Crafts Movement lived at Kelmscott Manor;
- The Arts & Crafts Movement evolved from the Cotswolds; influencing interior and exterior design across the UK;
- The large number of high quality Wool Churches (see Simon Jenkins' book, England's Thousand Best Churches, pub 1999);
- The Wool industry – sheepwashes, wash pools, place names and the mills around Stroud and Chipping Norton;
- The birthplace of William “Strata” Smith, Father of English Geology, born in Churchill;
- Cotswold Morris, the history and culture of Morris dancers;
- Folklore;
- Associations with composers and artists: Gustav Holst to Peter Gabriel and William Morris to Damien Hurst;
- Longborough Opera, music festivals, e.g. 2000 Trees;
- Royal estates e.g. Highgrove and Gatcombe Park;
- Midland open-field farming and its legacy of ridge and furrow;
- 18th and 19th Century enclosure creating a modern, designed landscape with clear evidence of earlier medieval landscape;
- The Cotswolds AONB is much used in film and television e.g. Bridget Jones' Diary, This Country, Countryfile (Adam Henson's Farm), Dr Dolittle, Poldark and BBCs Spring/Autumn/Winter Watch.

	<p>Landmarks and other features</p>	<p>Presence of recognised or valued landmarks or other features of interest which enrich the experience of the landscape or contribute to understanding of special qualities or sense of place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadway Tower: Built 1798, one of England’s outstanding viewpoints; • Tyndale Monument: Built 1866 to commemorate William Tyndale, who translated the New Testament; • Somerset monument, Hawkesbury Upton: built 1846 to commemorate Robert Somerset, a general in the Battle of Waterloo (1815); • Cleeve Hill: or Cleeve Cloud, highest point of the Cotswold Hills at 1083 feet; • Brailes Hill: second highest point in Warwickshire; • Cam long Down: viewpoint on the Cotswolds escarpment; • Stinchcombe Hill: viewpoint along the Cotswolds escarpment; • Rollright Stones: megalithic monuments, including Kings Men stone circle, King Stone and Whispering Knights; • Belas Knap Long Barrow: Neolithic long barrow; • Uley Bury Hill Fort: Iron Age hill fort dating from 300 BC; • Solsbury Hill: site of an Iron Age hill fort; • Meon Hill: site of an Iron Age hill fort; • Hailes Abbey: 13th century Cistercian Abbey; • St Michael’s and All Angels Church Spire, Leafield: Completed 1874 and a prominent landmark in the landscape; • St John the Baptist Church Spire, Burford: A prominent Wool Church and 15th century spire addition; • St Edward’s Church tower, Stow on the Wold: A grade 1 listed building with multi arch church tower. • Taynton Quarry: supplied stone for many of the older colleges of the

		<p>University of Oxford, Windsor Castle and Old St Paul’s Cathedral;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edge Hill: site of the first major battle of the English Civil War, October 1642; • North Leigh Roman Villa near Witney: a 'courtyard villa', complete mosaic tile floor dating to the 3rd century; • Chedworth Roman Villa near Northleach: some of the country’s most impressive in-situ Roman mosaics.
<p>Good recreation provision</p>	<p>High quantity of appropriate recreation provision</p>	<p>Presence of extensive network of rights of way or extent of open access land over much of the area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cotswolds: increasingly recognised as the Walking & Exploring Capital of England; • Length of Rights of Way: appx. 3,000 miles; • Length of permissive rights of way: appx. 13 miles; • Area of Open access: appx. 3,800 Ha; • Area of permissive access: appx. 110 Ha (agri-env schemes); • Other permissive access, secured through Inheritance Tax Exemption Agreements, Woodland Grant schemes etc; • General condition of network: recognised as generally high, largely due to the work of the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens; • Other land e.g. wildlife trust reserves, National Trust estate and Cirencester Park; • Cotswold Way and Thames Path National Trails and over 20 other named long distance walking and riding routes. <p>Extensive Public Rights of Way network enabling people to explore much of the Cotswolds, supported by access land and land owned by National Trust, wildlife trusts, Woodland Trust and public bodies (e.g. Cam , Dursley and Uley Parish Councils – joint woodland committee)</p>

Diversity of good quality provision for quiet enjoyment

Opportunities to enjoy a range of high quality landscape experiences

Conservation Board's Rural skills programme: average of 70 courses a year, attracting 480 participants. Courses include: dry stone walling, hedgelaying, blacksmithing, thatching, scything and stone carving, (see links within Supporting Information).

A series of private sector experience and enjoyment companies e.g.:

- Cotswolds Electric Bike Tours,
- Bainton Bike Hire,
- Go Cotswolds bus tours.

Conservation Board's Guided Walks Programme (see links within Supporting Information), operated by the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens: average of 300 guided walks a year, ranging from 1 to 12 miles, experienced by over 4,400 participants a year. Other guided walks programmes offered by the National Trust, Wildlife Trusts and the Ramblers.

National Trust properties, (predominantly countryside properties):

- Prior Park, Bath and Bath Skyline
- Dyrham Park
- Sherborne Estate and Lodge Park
- Ebworth Estate
- Chastleton House
- Dover's Hill
- Snowhill
- Chedworth
- Hidcote Manor Gardens
- Newark Park
- Horton Court
- Woodchester Park

Wildlife Trust properties include:

- Crickley Hill Country Park
- Barrow Wake viewpoint and picnic site
- Daneway Banks
- Greystones
- Coopers Hill
- Coaley Peak
- Kilkenny
- Snows Farm
- Swifts Hill
- Foxholes
- Brownes Folly
- Radway Meadows

English Heritage properties:

- Hailes Abbey (owned by National Trust managed by English Heritage)
- North Leigh Roman Villa
- Great Witcome Roman Villa
- Minster Lovell Hall

Parks, Gardens and Arboreta:

- Painswick Rococo Gardens
- Batsford Arboretum
- Westonbirt Arboretum
- Kiftsgate Gardens

Other sites:

- Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site
- City of Bath World Heritage Site
- Stanway House and Gardens
- Woodchester Mansion

- Chavenage House
- Cirencester Park
- Sezincote

See Supporting Information: Cotswolds AONB Visitor Map & Guide.

Opportunities to enjoy a range of different provision for quiet recreation activity

- Sustrans national cycle network;
- Cotswold Line Cycle Route;
- Private sector bike hire e.g. Bainton Bikes;
- Private sector bike tours e.g. Cotswold Electric Bike Tours;
- Private sector escorted tours e.g. GoCotswolds;
- Gliding e.g. Aston Down;
- Paragliding e.g. Coaley Peak;
- Claude Duval and Sabrina Way horse riding routes;
- Hell of the North Cotswolds (HONC) challenge cycling event;
- Open Gardens Scheme (Yellow Book), with a particularly high concentration of open gardens in the Cotswolds;
- Wide variety of published walks and rides in books, magazines, online and via apps (e.g. View Ranger);
- Short walks, picnics, viewpoints, visitor attractions, wildlife reserves, access land, Public Rights of Way, National Trust Properties.

Accessibility to centres of population

Transport links to centres of population

The Cotswolds is on the doorstep of Bristol, Bath, Gloucester, Cheltenham, Stratford upon Avon, Warwick, West Midlands conurbation, Banbury, Oxford and Swindon.

		<p>The centre of the Cotswolds is 54 miles from the centre of Birmingham and 48 miles from the centre of Bristol – and would be their nearest National Park.</p> <p>Good road access provided by M4, M5, M40, M42, A417/419, A429 and A44.</p> <p>Good rail access provided by 4 railway lines crossing the AONB, connecting with main centres of population, (see below).</p> <p>Small airfields at Staverton and Kemble.</p> <p>Availability of sustainable transport options providing links to centres of population</p> <p>Explore the Cotswolds by Public Transport Guide (see links within Supporting Information) encourages and supports access to and across the Cotswolds by public transport.</p> <p>Good rail access provided by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Cotswold Line (main line): London Paddington – Oxford – Worcester;○ Main line services: Birmingham – Cheltenham – Bristol;○ Main line services: London Paddington – Swindon – Kemble – Cheltenham / Gloucester;○ Main line services: Birmingham – Banbury – Oxford. <p>Cotswolds Discoverer Day Ticket (see links within Supporting Information): an integrated bus and rail day ticket, a partnership between Great Western Railways and the local bus operators e.g Pulhams Coaches, to offer a single day ticket option for exploring the Cotswolds by public transport.</p> <p>The Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway also operates between Cheltenham Racecourse and Broadway.</p>
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<p>Potential for enhancement</p>	<p>Potential for appropriate enhancement of enjoyment and understanding</p>	<p>Possible plans to improve provision for access to or quiet enjoyment of the landscape so as to provide opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the area's special qualities, by new provision or improved management of existing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting the Cotswolds as England's Walking & Exploring Capital; • Cotswolds Gateways project: creating 10 information points in market towns and villages and associated circular walks and cycle routes; • Cotswold Way Cycle Route: a cycling and riding alternative to the National Trail; • Improved provision of information and interpretation – on site, on-line, downloadable walks and rides; • Visitor management – e.g. recognising 'honey pot' sites and key routes and using these to manage and guide visitors and their impacts; • Promoting the "walkers are welcome", "cyclists are welcome" and "riders are welcome" concept and associated network; • Promoting greater awareness, marketing and co-ordination of the wealth of key named access routes across the Cotswolds; • Enhanced management of National Trails; • Development and expansion of the Cotswolds Discoverer bus and rail ticket; • Expansion of Caring for the Cotswolds scheme: whereby visitors make a contribution to a central fund via an addition to their overnight accommodation or meal, the fund then supports local access improvements and conservation projects across the Cotswolds, (see links within Supporting Information).
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Supporting Information:

[Visiting & Exploring the Cotswolds AONB](#)

[The Cotswolds Visitor Map & Guide](#)

[Explore the Cotswolds by Public Transport Guide](#)

[Cotswolds Discoverer Ticket](#)

[Position Statement: Tranquillity and Dark Skies](#)

[CPRE Tranquillity Mapping](#)

[CPRE Dark Skies Mapping](#)

[Caring for the Cotswolds](#)

[Cotswolds Rural Skills](#)

[Cotswolds AONB Guided Walks](#)

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ⁱ Natural England data 2010