

## COTSWOLDS in 2040 – scenarios

### 1. LIBERALISATION

Population grows, with loss of [10%] of land to development, mass housing development mainly around existing larger settlements but with some sprawl up main arteries of communication, whilst smaller settlements and isolated dwellings become the exclusive preserve of the present or absent wealthy, with some new builds even here.

Land use- beef and sheep grazing disappear, as uneconomic without subsidy. Dairy moves 100% indoors, so a reduced total area of farmed land is under a mix of wheat, barley, rape and maize with some intensive, mown ryegrass or rye and clover mixes, for silage and energy generation. Hedge and wall maintenance becomes much less economically necessary or affordable, so their condition becomes very poor. Also, the area down to horticultural crops, esp in north and south-east, increases substantially (+300%) and is managed by new small-scale robotics agri-tech machines, negating need for a lot of seasonal labour. Large packing sheds become a landscape feature, here. Some land moves into vines, also spawning new sheds etc. for the wine-making process.

Virtually all current permanent pasture – esp that on slopes or in smaller parcels – either becomes scrubbed up, turning slowly to inaccessible woodland, or moves into leisure usage for horse pastures/gallops or smallholders / farm parks / camping areas/ motocross, etc. Many smaller farms move into this function. Options for commercial forestry need assessing.

Road/transport networks – after the dualling of the missing link, some further widening anticipated on A40, A46 and Fosse Way (?) but rising fuel prices mean trains also heavily used, leading to upgrades of Kemble and Moreton-honeybourne lines with high speed trains – increased noise and landscape impact around stations. Virtually all public buses across the Cotswolds cease to run. Some wealthier villages organise and self-fund their own minibus services to main towns, mainly for leisure use. Each day, urban-dwelling workforce travels out into villages/open areas to undertake service jobs in farming and leisure and domestic support, including care, but few of these people can any longer afford to live where they work.

Larger farms invest in reservoirs for irrigation water, and in energy generation from wastes (dairy / poultry farms) or crops or solar panels (arable farms). Likely minimal competitive advantage for wind power, here (?) Most adopt precision farming techniques and technology.

There is no public money for heritage protection so features only get maintained where commercially fundable via tourism and leisure income – i.e. larger stately homes, leisure parks, NGO activities.

The local agri-food economy is limited by costs and competition from large retail for labour and skills, so declines. The micro-abbatoirs (e.g. Long Compton) close. Larger farms supply larger processors and retailers out of the immediate area. Some artisanal production survives associated with tourism / smallholding and high-end niche outlets, for unusual products like goats cheese and rare breed meats, also exotic veg and fruits – citrus, grapes etc.

## 2. LOCALISM

Money (public, with some matching private) and planning are tailored to enable local empowerment and decision-making. This leads to a divergence of futures for Cotswolds micro-regions.

In the high-value central belt, NIMBYism is the strongest influence and prevents new development of anything but high-end market, isolated clusters of housing. On the less wealthy and less famously picturesque / more left-leaning fringes – Moreton, Stroud, etc. – there is continuing suburban estate-style development around market towns and some cluster development of social housing and higher-end stuff in smaller settlements. Communities decide to support public transport in these areas, and to fund local economic development of various kinds, to provide employment opportunities for younger families and returning graduates. Incubator units appear in many towns and on some farm sites, which require some servicing and some support via innovative alternative technology solutions. Community-owned and run shops, pubs and other multi-service outlets receive a stimulus in these areas, too.

Farming is offered slightly more opportunities for different future directions, as a result of this divergence of local economies and tactics. Those who don't want to enlarge or sell up take the diversified business option in order to cross-subsidise valued local farming traditions – e.g. sheep, pasture-fed beef and dairy – with profits from non-agricultural enterprises on the farm, including added value, rental of former farm buildings, and tourism products. In some spaces – e.g. the Stroud belt – organic horticulture and polyculture thrive as a result of local favourable planning decisions and public support coupled with community purchase arrangements, for 'new settlers' to small farms. Elsewhere, agro-forestry may attract some in the central belt where the large estate traditions remain, and some of this will be coupled to continuing or intensifying game rearing and management, including processing and sales, as part of a kind of high-end diversification approach for private estates (e.g. see Clinton Devon – could be a model for Sherbourne, Guiting and others). These estates could also invest in reservoirs against drought, and be encouraged to set-aside flood prevention areas where land is hard to work and it makes sense topographically. All these diversifications increase labour demand and value, within the farm-based business economy.

Land use patterns may therefore not change drastically although they would become more diverse than now, over time, incorporating more variety of crops including the vines and more tender fruit options as well as larger-scale caprine-based enterprises (goats just require people who are keen to understand the market potential of their varied products). More variety in land uses implies a continuing need/reason to maintain field boundaries but the extent to which this alone supports walls and hedgerows depends upon a combination of local planning and local public subsidy – likely to be quite strong in many places.

These patterns imply a much more varied and viable local agri-economy, with a wide offer for local and tourist consumers alike. We could see pressure for public funding to reinstate some of the former economic infrastructure which helps to support such trends – e.g. new micro-abbatoirs, cutting and packing plants, etc. – though this depends upon a ready supply of appropriately skilled and interested labour (likely to be more from outside the UK than within it, unless educational trends change significantly). Planning conflicts are likely to continue, in some places intensified by a lack of local consensus about the desirability of some of these developments.

Less easy to predict will be the influence of energy generation on the landscape. If communities are empowered and helped to do this, local microhydro, CHP and other options are possible. The large

estates could invest in woodfuel plants and processes – this could in time offer a market outlet to smaller landholders as well, if prices continue to rise sufficiently – and continue to retain some solar panels where land is less productive. The Stroud-Berkeley renewables nexus could lead to a greater landscape impact of renewables here – currently ecotricity is keen on biogas from mown meadows, which could mean incentives to retain and possibly even expand grassland areas near to the location of a new digester (M5 junction or Berkeley are both contenders).

Heritage protection is likely to remain a key consideration for many areas, due to its link to tourism and local economy, as well as the conservationist tendencies of the central Cotswolds belt.

Another uncertainty for this scenario will be transport infrastructure – I would anticipate we should expect less new development than under scenario 1, but this could be premature. A greater level of general economic activity across the area might require investment in local roads, as well as continuing support for public transport.

### 3. NATIONAL PARK with strong resourcing for nature

A new government in the early 2020s accepts the cause to make the AONB a new National Park, in a general climate of more state ownership and intervention in providing things that society calls for. This leads to national park designation by 2028, followed by a decade of highly protective planning control and enhanced resources for nature management and wildlife regeneration, coupled with some support for ‘sensitive’ tourism management and development, not least to generate the funding for a significant share of management works.

New development within the boundary is dramatically reduced to small areas in and around larger existing settlements. Investment in PROW and landscape management attracts growing numbers of recreational visitors from the expanding towns and cities surrounding the AONB. Property prices rise to central London levels and many larger properties are owned by non-residents and real estate investors. The economy shifts and downscales to a more clearly service-orientation focused upon leisure management and lifestyle support for wealthy residents.

Farmers whose businesses are robust and have survived the decline of subsidies see new opportunities from the protected area tourism, but lose some flexibility to adapt due to stronger regulation of land-use change and ‘nuisance’ through planning. Many medium-sized farms sell up or leave commercial farming so their land is either taken on by neighbours, contracted out to large operators or moves into almost complete wildlife/nature management options supported by a new tailor-made agri-environment approach co-designed by the Park and local stakeholders, including farmers and environmental NGOs. Extensive livestock grazing survives on much permanent pasture due to this scheme, fuelling some local quality meat processing and sales. There is some diversification, but only where planning policies allow – packing sheds and wineries might be clustered just outside the boundaries of the area. A similar story might apply to solar parks and biodigesters for renewable energy, although local woodfuel-based generators could be more readily accepted especially on the larger, mixed estates.

The resident population would fall significantly, but the working population would include a significant share of people travelling in from outside daily, to provide services to residents and visitors. The likely abundance of care homes will increase, as could other forms of land-based therapies targeting affluent local residents.

There would be very little major investment in roads or similar infrastructure, as major routes would be developed outwith the area boundaries in preference to inside the Park. The general level of road and rail usage would stabilise or decline slightly as the younger and lower-income share of residents falls.