

# **COTSWOLDS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY MANAGEMENT PLAN 2018-2023**

**Adopted 20<sup>th</sup> September 2018**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2018-2023

The Cotswolds AONB Management Plan is a statutory plan, which sets out the vision, outcomes and policies for the management of the AONB for the period 2018-2023. These are summarised in the table overleaf.

The Cotswolds Conservation Board ('the Board') is the body responsible for preparing and publishing the Management Plan. However, although the Board will play an important role in delivering the vision, outcomes and policies of the Management Plan, their successful delivery is also dependent on other stakeholders.

The Management Plan is a key mechanism for achieving the purposes of: (i) conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB; and (ii) increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the AONB's special qualities. In fulfilling these two purposes, it also seeks to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the AONB. In addition, it seeks to foster a consistent and coordinated approach across the whole of this administratively complex AONB in order to achieve these purposes more effectively.

The Board's contribution to the delivery of the Management Plan is set out in the Board's Business Plan. The contribution of other stakeholders is too extensive to detail in the Management Plan. However, the Management Plan does identify key actions for specific stakeholders. The Management Plan also identifies key indicators for each policy which will be used to gauge progress in achieving the plan's two purposes.

Perhaps the most important – and most utilised - part of the Management Plan is the policies. The policies serve five main purposes:

1. They are principles for how the Cotswolds AONB should be managed in order to:
  - a. conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB;
  - b. increase the understanding and enjoyment of the AONB's special qualities;
  - c. address issues that are having an adverse effect on the AONB;
  - d. achieve the vision and outcomes of the Management Plan;
2. They provide a framework for action by the Cotswolds Conservation Board and other stakeholders who have a role to play in the management of the AONB.
3. They represent the policies of the Board.
4. They are intended to guide, influence and be used by stakeholders in their own plans, policies, proposals, work programmes and decision making.
5. Together with other guidance produced by the Board, they are intended to facilitate a consistent approach across the whole of the Cotswolds AONB.

The Board has identified three key issues that it considers to be having an adverse effect on achieving the two purposes of the Management Plan. These key issues can be summarised as follows:

- **Key Issue 1.** Erosion of the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB and its special qualities.
- **Key Issue 2.** Lack of a consistent approach across the whole of the Cotswolds AONB.
- **Key Issue 3.** Lack of understanding of the benefits of AONB designation.

The Board has also identified four ‘ambitions’ for addressing these key issues. The Board will prioritise these ambitions in its own work programme and use them as headline indicators for the Board’s performance in delivering the 2018-2023 Management Plan. The Board encourages other stakeholders to support – and contribute to the delivery of – these four ambitions.

The four ambitions are:

- **Ambition 1.** Promotion of the Cotswolds as the Walking and Exploring Capital of England.
- **Ambition 2.** The local design and delivery of a Cotswolds package of agri-environment payments for public goods and services and rural development support.
- **Ambition 3.** Ensuring communities and businesses within and around the AONB identify and celebrate being part of a nationally recognised landscape.
- **Ambition 4.** To promote the case for the Cotswolds being designated as England’s next National Park.

These ambitions have been incorporated into the policies of the Management Plan.

#### **The Management Plan in Numbers**



<p><b>VISION:</b> By 2043, the Cotswolds AONB will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A distinctive, unique, accessible 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, dark skies, tranquillity, archaeology, historic and cultural heritage and distinctive Cotswold stone architecture.</li> <li>A thriving collaborative, pioneering, proactive place, sustained by the passions of residents, visitors and businesses alike, where communities and businesses value its special qualities.</li> </ul>													
<b>CROSS CUTTING (PURPOSES 1 AND 2)</b>			<b><u>PURPOSE 1: TO CONSERVE AND ENHANCE THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE COTSWOLDS AONB<sup>1</sup></u></b>								<b><u>PURPOSE 2: TO INCREASE THE UNDERSTANDING AND ENJOYMENT OF THE SPECIAL QUALITIES OF THE COTSWOLDS AONB</u></b>		
<b>OUTCOME 1: WORKING TOGETHER</b>	<b>OUTCOME 2: NATURAL &amp; CULTURAL CAPITAL &amp; ECOSYSTEM SERVICES</b>	<b>OUTCOME 3: CLIMATE CHANGE</b>	<b>OUTCOME 4: LANDSCAPE &amp; GEOLOGY</b>	<b>OUTCOME 5: LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS</b>	<b>OUTCOME 6: TRANQUILLITY</b>	<b>OUTCOME 7: DARK SKIES</b>	<b>OUTCOME 8: HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT &amp; CULTURAL HERITAGE</b>	<b>OUTCOME 9: BIODIVERSITY</b>	<b>OUTCOME 10: RURAL LAND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>OUTCOME 11: DEVELOPMENT &amp; TRANSPORT</b>	<b>OUTCOME 12: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM</b>	<b>OUTCOME 11: ACCESS &amp; RECREATION</b>	<b>OUTCOME 14: HEALTH &amp; WELL-BEING</b>
<b>POLICY CC1:</b> Developing a consistent, coordinated and landscape-led approach across the Cotswolds AONB	<b>POLICY CC4:</b> Natural & Cultural Capital & Ecosystem Services - Principles	<b>POLICY CC7:</b> Climate Change - Mitigation	<b>POLICY CE1:</b> Landscape	<b>POLICY CE3:</b> Local Distinctiveness	<b>POLICY CE4:</b> Tranquillity	<b>POLICY CE5:</b> Dark Skies	<b>POLICY CE6:</b> Historic Environment & Cultural Heritage	<b>POLICY CE7:</b> Biodiversity	<b>POLICY CE8:</b> Rural Land Management	<b>POLICY CE10:</b> Development & Transport - Principles	<b>POLICY UE1:</b> Sustainable Tourism	<b>POLICY UE2:</b> Access & Recreation	<b>POLICY UE3:</b> Health and Well-being
<b>POLICY CC2:</b> Compliance with Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (the 'duty of regard')	<b>POLICY CC5:</b> Soils	<b>POLICY CC8:</b> Climate Change - Adaptation	<b>POLICY CE2:</b> Geology						<b>POLICY CE9:</b> Problem Species, Pests and Diseases	<b>POLICY CE11:</b> Major Development			
<b>POLICY CC3:</b> Working together	<b>POLICY CC6:</b> Water									<b>POLICY CE12:</b> Development Priorities & Evidence of Need			
										<b>POLICY CE13:</b> Waste Management			

<sup>1</sup> In delivering purposes 1 and 2, the Board has a duty to foster the social and economic wellbeing of people living in the AONB. This duty is addressed through relevant policies under the two purposes.

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# MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

I am fortunate that England's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are part of my Ministerial responsibilities. Whether it be rolling hills, sweeping coastline or a tranquil village, spending time in an AONB can stir the heart and lift the spirit.

This is a pivotal moment for all AONBs. The Government has set its ambition in the 25 Year Environment Plan which states clearly the importance of natural beauty as part of our green future, while AONBs retain the highest status of protection for landscape through national planning policy. Leaving the EU brings with it an opportunity to develop a better system for supporting our farmers and land managers, who play such a vital role as stewards of the landscape. And the Review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty led by Julian Glover - the first of its kind for generations - will make recommendations to make sure our designated landscapes can flourish in the years ahead.

In my visits to AONBs around the country, I have been struck by the passion of many people - farmers, volunteers, and hard-working staff - for the beautiful places they live and work. In this spirit I am delighted to welcome publication of this Statutory Management Plan for the Cotswolds AONB. It is significant that this plan will be delivered in partnership by those who value the Cotswolds AONB. I would like to thank all those involved in preparation of this document, and wish you the best of success in bringing it to fruition.

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble**

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity  
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**



# CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

I am extremely proud to be Chairman of the Cotswolds Conservation Board, which is responsible for one of England's largest, best known and most loved protected landscapes – the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The high quality environment of the AONB underpins and supports jobs, businesses and a vibrant local economy. It provides wonderful opportunities for enjoying the countryside, relaxing, switching off from the everyday pressures of day to day life and improving our health and wellbeing. It inspires both young and old.

At the same time as being a nationally and internationally important landscape it is a highly desirable place to live and work and a popular destination for visitors from near and far – with all the associated development and infrastructure pressures.

We cannot afford to erode the natural and cultural qualities that make the area so special. In such circumstances we must look at the AONB as a whole and develop consistent policy and practice appropriate for the Cotswolds and apply a landscape-led approach.

This plan advocates a series of ambitions, outcomes and policies for the future management of the AONB over the immediate five years. These fit extremely well with the ambition and context provided by the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan and the timing of the Glover review of National Parks and AONBs.

The plan has been developed through consultation and then adopted by the Board. I invite the Board's numerous partners to endorse the plan, to help to achieve its ambitions and outcomes and apply its policies for the ongoing benefit of the landscape that we all recognise as being inspiring and very special.

**Liz Eyre**  
**Chairman**  
**Cotswolds Conservation Board**

# CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

## MANAGEMENT PLAN - CONTEXT

### **What is the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)?**

The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was designated in 1966, and extended in area in 1990. At 790 square miles, or 2038 square kilometres, it is the largest AONB - and the third largest protected landscape, including National Parks - in England. The AONB stretches from Bath and Wiltshire in the south, through Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire to Warwickshire and Worcestershire in the north. It cuts across 15 local authority areas.

AONBs are landscapes whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard them<sup>2</sup>. The statutory purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance their natural beauty<sup>3</sup>.

Each AONB has been designated by reason of its 'special qualities'. These include the flora, fauna, historical and cultural associations as well as landscape and scenic views. Information on the 'special qualities' of the Cotswolds AONB is provided in Chapter 2. A 'portrait' of the AONB is provided in Chapter 3.

Further information on AONB designation is provided in Appendix 1 and information on 'natural beauty' is provided in Appendix 2.

### **What is the Cotswolds Conservation Board?**

The Cotswolds Conservation Board ('the Board') was established by Parliament in 2004 and has two statutory purposes<sup>4</sup>:

1. To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB.
2. To increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Cotswolds 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. These purposes and duties are modelled on those of the National Park Authorities.

In circumstances where these purposes and duties are irreconcilable, the Board must give priority to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB<sup>5</sup>.

The Board consists of 37 members, of whom 15 are nominated by local authorities, eight by parish councils and 14 are appointed by government. The Board's work programme is administered by a

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<sup>2</sup> Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) (2015) *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Landscape Protection and Enhancement Support Scheme (England) 2015 – 17. Application to European Commission*.

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

<sup>4</sup> Section 87, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, as amended by the NERC Act 2006.

<sup>5</sup> This prioritisation of conserving and enhancing is known as the 'Sandford Principle', after Lord Sandford, who chaired the National Parks Policy Review Committee between 1971 and 1974.

small team of staff, supported by a network of Cotswold Voluntary Wardens who deliver a programme of practical projects and guided walks across the AONB

Further information about the Board can be found in Appendix 3 and on the Board's website: [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk)

### **What is the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan?**

The Cotswolds AONB Management Plan ('the Management Plan') is a statutory plan<sup>6</sup>, which sets out policies for the management of the AONB<sup>7</sup>. The Board is the body responsible for preparing and publishing the Management Plan and for reviewing it at intervals of no more than five years. This is the fourth such document prepared by the Board.

Although the Board is the body responsible for preparing and publishing the Management Plan and will play an important role in its delivery, the Board doesn't actually own or directly manage any of the land in the AONB or its setting. As such, the policies of the Management Plan are also intended to guide the work of other stakeholders in helping to deliver the Management Plan's vision and outcomes.

### **Why do we have a Cotswolds AONB Management Plan?**

The Management Plan is a key mechanism for achieving the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the AONB's special qualities. As the Management Plan is the only plan to guide the management of the AONB as a whole, one of its main roles is to foster a consistent approach across the whole of this administratively complex AONB, which puts these purposes at the heart of the plans, policies, work programmes and decisions of all relevant stakeholders.

### **Who will deliver the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan?**

This plan is ultimately about partnership working to make the vision a reality.

The Board will play an important role in delivering the vision, outcomes and policies of the Management Plan. However, their successful delivery is also dependent on other stakeholders, including local authorities and other public bodies, land owners and land managers, non-government organisations, developers, businesses and individuals.

It is a legal requirement for 'relevant authorities', including all public bodies, to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB<sup>8</sup>. This legal requirement is known as the 'duty of regard'. So, for example, local planning authorities shall have regard to this purpose when developing their Local Plans and when making decisions on planning applications. More information about the 'duty of regard' is provided in Appendix 4.

### **How will the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan be administered and resourced?**

The Board's work programme for how it will contribute to the delivery of the Management Plan is set out in the Board's separate, rolling, three-year Business Plan. The Business Plan also summarises the Board's income and expenditure. Appendix 5 provides a flowchart of the links between the

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<sup>6</sup> Section 89 (1), Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as amended by the NERC Act 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Section 89, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

<sup>8</sup> Section 85, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Management Plan and the Board's Business Plan, which shows how the vision, outcomes and policies of the Management Plan are translated into measurable actions for the Board.

The detail of how other stakeholders administer and resource their contributions to the delivery of the Management Plan is too complex to cover in this Management Plan. However, the 'Stakeholder Delivery' table in Appendix 6 provides an indication of the key measures that the Board invites specific stakeholders to undertake in order to help deliver the Management Plan and achieve a conserved and enhanced AONB that is better understood and enjoyed.

### **How will the delivery of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan be monitored?**

The Board will monitor and evaluate its contribution to the delivery of the Management Plan through the quarterly and annual review of its Business Plan. The Board will also produce a 'State of the Cotswolds AONB Report' prior to each Management Plan review, which will help to gauge progress towards achieving the Management Plan vision. The 'State of the Cotswolds AONB Report' – together with other monitoring and surveys - will also contribute to the provision of up-to-date evidence, which is a crucial part of managing the AONB.

The Board will endeavour to monitor the key actions identified in the 'Stakeholder Delivery' table in Appendix 6. It will also endeavour to monitor compliance with the 'duty of regard' (see Appendix 3).

Appendix 7 shows the key indicators that will be used to monitor the delivery of the Management Plan.

## **MANAGEMENT PLAN - PROCESS**

The review of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan for 2013-2018 began with an Annual Forum in September 2016 and the production of an Issues Report in November 2016, followed by a series of themed workshops between December 2016 and March 2017. A first draft of the Management Plan for 2018-2023 was prepared in spring 2017 and consulted on in summer 2017. A second draft was prepared in autumn / winter 2017 and consulted on in February – March 2018. A final consultation draft was prepared in spring / summer 2018 and consulted on in July – August 2018.

Alongside the preparation of the Management Plan itself, the Board also has a statutory requirement to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Management Plan. The SEA Scoping Report was published in February 2018 and consulted on alongside the second draft of the Management Plan. The SEA was undertaken – and the SEA Environmental Report produced - in June 2018. The HRA Screening Report was also produced in June 2018. The SEA and HRA reports were consulted on, alongside the final consultation draft of the Management Plan, in July – August 2018.

## **MANAGEMENT PLAN – FORMAT AND CONTENT**

The Management Plan is formatted as outlined below:

- **Chapter 1 - Introduction:** briefly explains the Cotswolds AONB, the Cotswolds Conservation Board and the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan, including what the Management Plan is, why we have a Management Plan, who will deliver it and how it will be administered, resourced and monitored.

- **Chapter 2 - Special Qualities of the Cotswolds AONB:** identifies the key attributes for which the Cotswolds AONB is considered to be important.
- **Chapter 3 - Portrait of the Cotswolds AONB:** outlines the features of the Cotswolds AONB, the state of the AONB and the pressures upon it.
- **Chapter 4 - Key Issues and Ambitions:** identifies the three key issues facing the Cotswolds AONB and the four key ambitions that the Board has identified to address these issues.
- **Chapter 5 - Vision and Outcomes:** provides an over-arching vision of what we want the Cotswolds AONB to be like in the long term, as well as a set of outcomes that apply the vision to 14 individual 'themes'.
- **Chapter 6 – Policies:** identifies 24 policies, under the 14 themed outcomes, which form the 'heart' of the Management Plan and which guide the management of the Cotswolds AONB.
- **Chapter 7 – Delivery:** outlines how the Management Plan should be delivered, both by the Cotswolds Conservation Board and by other stakeholders.

# CHAPTER 2. SPECIAL QUALITIES OF THE COTSWOLDS AONB

The ‘special qualities’ of an AONB are those aspects of the area’s natural beauty which make the area distinctive and which are valuable, especially at a national scale. They are the key attributes on which the priorities for its conservation, enhancement and management should be based. They bring out the essence of the AONB as an evocative description of the area rather than as a statistical account.

## THE SPECIAL QUALITIES OF THE COTSWOLDS AONB – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Cotswolds are a rich mosaic of historical, social, economic, cultural, geological, geomorphological<sup>9</sup> and ecological features. The special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB 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 from and to the AONB;
- the high wolds – a large open, elevated predominately arable landscape with commons, ‘big’ skies and long-distance views;
- river valleys, the majority forming the headwaters of the Thames, with high-quality water;
- distinctive dry stone walls;
- internationally important flower-rich grasslands, particularly 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 of the area, away from major sources of inappropriate noise, development, visual clutter and pollution;
- extensive dark sky areas;
- distinctive settlements, developed in the Cotswold vernacular, high architectural quality and integrity;
- an accessible landscape for quiet recreation for both rural and urban users, with numerous walking and riding routes, including the Cotswolds Way National Trail;
- significant archaeological, prehistoric and historic associations dating back 6,000 years, including Neolithic stone monuments, ancient drove roads, Iron Age forts, Roman villas, ridge and furrow fields, medieval wool churches and country estates and parks;
- a vibrant heritage of cultural associations, including 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 Olympics, cheese rolling and woolsack races.

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<sup>9</sup> Geomorphology is the physical features of an area, strongly influenced by geology.

# CHAPTER 3. PORTRAIT OF THE COTSWOLDS AONB

## LANDSCAPE AND GEOLOGY

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, including farming, resulting in a unique landscape that combines remarkable visual unity with locally distinctive landscape character. Many features of the Cotswolds evoke strong images, particularly the dramatic escarpment and expansive high wolds, network of dry stone walls, beech woods, secluded valleys, open common land and the wildflower rich grasslands.

Across the AONB there is considerable scenic diversity, with nineteen distinctive landscape character types (LCTs). These can be grouped into three principal landform features: the escarpment; the escarpment valleys and outliers; and the high wold and dip-slope.

The Cotswolds AONB is significant for its geology and geomorphology, with some features unique to the area. The AONB contains 36 Geological Conservation Review (GCR) sites and 200 Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS).

## LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS

'Local distinctiveness' is the essence of what makes a place special. It is the combination of the cultural landscape, wildlife, archaeology, history, geology, topography, traditions, buildings, materials and crafts.

Perhaps the most distinctive and quintessential feature of the Cotswolds AONB is the unity provided by its underlying geology and the visible character of this stone, which is seen in buildings, walls and other structures throughout the AONB. The distinctive vernacular architecture of the AONB, using the local building stone, which varies markedly in colour across the AONB, contributes a wonderful sense of 'coming together' between the landscape and its towns and villages.

## TRANQUILLITY

Tranquillity can be defined as a state of calm and quietude associated with peace<sup>10</sup>. It is experienced in places with mainly natural features and activities, free from disturbance from manmade ones<sup>11</sup>. It is a valuable 'natural resource', which can add considerably to people's quality of life.

The Campaign to Protect of Rural England (CPRE) has published 'tranquillity maps', which show comparative levels of tranquillity across England. In theory, only a small part of England is built on. However, CPRE's maps shows that the 'shadow of development' extends much further, with half the country being affected, or 'intruded upon', by the sight or sound of roads, aircraft, railways, urban areas, mines and power stations and power lines.

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<sup>10</sup> Landscape Institute (LI) and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) (2013) *Guideline for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*.

<sup>11</sup> Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) (2006) *Saving Tranquil Places: how to protect and promote a vital asset*.

The CPRE maps show that the Cotswolds AONB is relatively tranquil, especially in comparison to the surrounding urban areas and major cities further afield. The AONB therefore fulfils an important function as a ‘breathing space’ where people – especially those from the surrounding urban areas - can ‘get away from it all’.

## **DARK SKIES**

Darkness at night is one of the key characteristics of rural areas and it represents a major difference between what is rural and what is urban.

Satellite maps of England’s light pollution, released by CPRE in 2016, have shown that Cotswold District (which constitutes 44% of the Cotswolds AONB) is ranked 13<sup>th</sup> out of England’s 326 districts<sup>12</sup> in terms of the darkness of its night skies. These dark skies are highly valued and potentially merit Dark Sky Reserve status. The Rollright Stones, near Chipping Norton, have already been given Dark Skies Discovery Site status.

However, the CPRE maps also show that light pollution from the surrounding urban areas and the market towns of the AONB does adversely affect the dark skies of the AONB in those locations.

## **HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE**

The historic character of the Cotswolds AONB landscape reflects more than 6,000 years of human activity interacting with the area’s natural resources, fauna and flora. The built environment we see today reflects the long evolution of dispersed farmsteads, hamlets and villages to larger market towns that have developed as centres for trade over many centuries.

The AONB contains a wealth of archaeological, prehistoric and historic features, including those features listed in the ‘special qualities’ above, 452 Scheduled Monuments, over 10,000 listed buildings and numerous conservation areas and registered Historic Parks and Gardens. There are also two World Heritage Sites adjacent to the AONB - the City of Bath and Blenheim Palace.

The AONB designation recognises the importance of this historic environment and reinforces the need to protect and manage characteristic features and their interaction with the landscape. However, these irreplaceable resources are also fragile and vulnerable to insensitive change.

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 between the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century and continues today in the cultural life of the AONB. The area’s intangible heritage of traditional customs, events, crafts and produce, of cultural institutions and collections, and the creative arts all help to underpin the area's identity, its economy and the quality of life of residents and visitors alike.

## **BIODIVERSITY**

The Cotswolds 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.

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<sup>12</sup> Including unitary, London and metropolitan boroughs.



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 habitats and species of highest priority for the Cotswolds are listed in Appendix 8 of the Management Plan.

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.

## **RURAL LAND MANAGEMENT**

Farming has been the principal influence on the development of the Cotswolds landscape. By area, 86% of the AONB is farmland, of which 44% is grassland, and 10% is woodland. There are approximately 3,400 farm holdings in the Cotswolds AONB with an average size of 51.4 hectares.

Agri-environment schemes (AES) are voluntary schemes which give an annual payment to farmers and landowners to ensure they manage their land in an environmentally sensitive way. As of March 2015, 61% of the AONB (80% of the Utilisable Agricultural Area) was under AES.

Many woodlands are either under-managed or not managed at all. This is due to many factors but especially to the loss of appropriate markets for woodland products. However, between 2004 and 2011, 24% of the woodland area in the AONB had live English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) agreements.

The design and scale of environmental land management schemes (including AES and woodland grants), post-Brexit, is currently uncertain.

Within the AONB, as in other parts of the country, there is an increasing prevalence of tree pests and diseases resulting from climate change, increased global trade, travel and the importation of diseased material.

## **DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORT**

### **Economy**

The economy of the Cotswolds AONB is varied in terms of type of business, economic activity and prosperity. The main economic activities that influence the landscape of the AONB are farming and forestry, tourism, quarrying and house building. Farming and forestry will continue to play an important, albeit changing, role following the UK's plans to exit from the EU. The high quality of the natural and built environment underpins the valuable Cotswolds tourism and recreation industry.

The businesses most likely to benefit from being located in the AONB are those that are most likely to be compatible with conserving and enhancing its character and supporting public appreciation. These include tourism businesses (e.g. accommodation, food and drink serving, visitor attractions), tourism-related businesses (e.g. retail, diversified farm businesses, transport), industry reliant on resources unique to the Cotswolds (e.g. quarries supplying local stone), farm businesses supported by agri-environment schemes, countryside trades (e.g. walling) and businesses which directly benefit the environment (e.g. wildlife and heritage conservation) or benefit from the quality of the brand (e.g. creative/new media businesses).

The businesses most likely to be disadvantaged from an AONB location include those with no particular reason to be in the area, especially those offering little or no benefit to conserving and enhancing the character of the AONB and tend to detract from public appreciation. These include large industrial activities, distribution and haulage, and businesses with extensive built footprints that develop and grow rapidly.

Opportunities for growth and investment to support sustainable development within the AONB lie in the development of the tourism, land management, conservation and cultural sectors that are sympathetic to the AONB and its special qualities. In addition, lifestyle businesses, home working, small-scale rural office developments and knowledge-based businesses supported by superfast (or ultrafast) 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. Improving this infrastructure further is important for ensuring that the social and economic benefits of accessing digital technology are available across the whole of the AONB.

The AONB is generally considered to be an affluent area. However, there are pockets of economic (and social) deprivation, both within the AONB and within the surrounding urban areas. Limited public transport and lack of services in some areas contributes to rural isolation. High house prices, combined with a lack of affordable housing, means that many people who grew up – and / or work - in the AONB cannot afford to live there.

## Development

It is recognised that sustainable housing growth for settlements in the AONB is required to ensure that local housing needs, including affordable housing, are met and the vitality of villages is maintained and enhanced. However, the scale of development required to provide housing, employment and services to an expanding and ageing population - as already projected in District and Unitary Local Plans - is considerable, representing a step change from previous decades. This means that there is increasing pressure to develop land within – and in the setting of - the Cotswolds AONB.

This increasing pressure on the AONB is reflected in a 2017 report on housing in England's AONBs, which identified that, between 2012 and 2017, more housing schemes - and more housing units – were approved in the Cotswolds AONB than in any other AONB in England (62 schemes, providing 2,869 housing units)<sup>13</sup>. This scale of development is in stark contrast to the scale of development in some National Parks. For example, in April 2018, the Yorkshire Dales National Park permitted its largest housing development since 2014 – a development of just 17 housing units. Given that the AONB is surrounded by large towns and cities, all of which are expected to accommodate significant housing and employment development, these trends are only likely to become more extreme in future years.

At an England-wide level, consideration of the category of housing approved within AONBs reveals that between 2012-2017 some 12,620 private housing units were approved compared to 2,094 social housing units. Whilst there has been a step change in private housing approvals, from 1,802 units in 2014/15 to 3556 units in 2015/16, social housing approvals hit a five year low of 107 units in 2015/16.

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<sup>13</sup> Dixon, D., Sinden, N. and Crabtree, T. (2017) *An Independent Review of Housing in England's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty 2012-2017*. Commissioned by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) and the National Association of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. (Data taken from Table 4, page 26).

Adopted Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans set the quantity, type and location of housing, so they play an important role in that housing is appropriately located and that there is a sufficient level of affordable housing provision.

## Transport

The Cotswolds AONB 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 and those commuting in and out of 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 volumes 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.

Proposals for upgrading the A417 at Birdlip affect one of the most sensitive parts of the Cotswold scarp and present a challenge to ensure that, while the traffic and economic needs to upgrade are met, the design will be landscape-led and ensure that the potential benefits to the AONB clearly outweigh any harm.

Four railway lines serve the AONB, providing good access to and from all parts of the UK and facilitating sustainable travel options in the AONB. However, the visual intrusiveness of railway electrification schemes through parts of the AONB is an issue of concern.

The major international airports of Bristol, Birmingham and Heathrow, military airports of Fairford and Brize Norton and the more local Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire and Cotswolds airports have both positive and negative impacts on the AONB. For example, on the one hand, they facilitate access to and from the Cotswolds for national and international visitors and businesses but, on the other hand, they can have adverse environmental impacts such as noise pollution from aircraft flying overhead.

In terms of public transport, the AONB is traversed by a network of bus routes between its main towns and villages, as well as some tourist-focussed services. This provides the principal means of public transport provision within the AONB and is linked in to the railway network. However, negative perceptions, combined with the reduction in public transport provision, discourage its wider use. Infrequency and reducing levels of services, long journey times, poor reliability, uncoordinated connections, information and ticketing, difficulty of access to the network and low standards of comfort are issues to be addressed.

There are two air quality management areas (AQMAs) within the AONB, where nitrogen dioxide levels do not meet National Air Quality Standards because of vehicle emissions. These are:

- Horsefair and High Street, Chipping Norton
- Air Balloon junction, Birdlip

Air Quality Action Plans, which seek to reduce concentrations of nitrogen dioxide in order to meet National Air Quality Standards, have been developed for both of these AQMAs.

## **SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**

As indicated above, tourism is of major importance to the economy of the Cotswolds 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 and its attraction to visitors.

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.

## **ACCESS AND RECREATION**

The Cotswolds AONB has an extensive Public Rights of Way network, including two National Trails and at least 15 long distance paths, and extensive areas of commons and other open access land.

Much of the recreational use of the AONB is currently focussed on key 'honeypot' attractions, resulting in adverse impacts at these locations and at environmentally sensitive sites. However, there are opportunities to spread this recreation use more evenly, where appropriate and where this recreational use is carried out in a responsible manner. For example, the provision and downloading of digitally accessible information, which features recreational opportunities across the wider AONB, is likely to become increasingly important.

## **HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

The natural and cultural environment of the Cotswolds AONB offers multiple opportunities to enhance the physical and mental well-being of both local people and visitors, including the provision of leisure and prescription walks, running and cycling opportunities and quiet relaxation.

Undoubtedly the attractiveness of the landscape, its history and cultural associations and tranquillity of the area are key elements for attracting people to participate in such activities. Equally, the area's history and culture, as well as its natural resources, offer opportunities for intellectual, spiritual and artistic engagement and the development and application of skills that have a wide range of benefits in terms of mental health, education and personal development.

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. Volunteering and participation in activities can also help to address issues of social isolation. The Board, with other organisations, has developed rural skills training courses and apprenticeship schemes through which residents and visitors can learn and develop the rural skills required for the management of the special features of the AONB

The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens, 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. There are also innumerable local charities and societies providing similar opportunities for active engagement.

# CHAPTER 4. KEY ISSUES AND AMBITIONS

## KEY ISSUES

The Board has identified three key issues that it considers to be having an adverse effect on achieving the two purposes of:

- conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB; and
- increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB.

These can be summarised as follows:

### **Key Issue 1. Erosion of the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB and its special qualities.**

Although much good work is being undertaken to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB, pressures from development, land management, tourism and climate change are eroding the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB.

### **Key Issue 2. Lack of a consistent approach across the whole of the Cotswolds AONB.**

Developing a consistent approach – which puts the purpose of AONB designation at its heart - across the whole of the AONB is very challenging, particularly given that the AONB extends into 15 different local authority areas and three geographical regions.

### **Key Issue 3. Lack of understanding of the benefits of AONB designation.**

Although the Cotswolds is a popular and well known tourism destination, there continues to be a lack of awareness and understanding of the AONB designation and a lack of appreciation of – and pride in - the benefits that this designation provides for people, communities and businesses, both within and beyond the AONB boundary.

## AMBITIONS

Through the process of developing this Management Plan, including taking account of consultation feedback, the Board has identified four ‘ambitions’ for addressing these key issues. The Board will prioritise these ambitions in its own work programme. It will also use the ambitions as headline indicators of its performance in helping to deliver the 2018-2023 Management Plan. The ambitions have been incorporated into the policies of the Management Plan. The Board encourages other stakeholders to support – and contribute to the delivery of – these four ambitions.

### **Ambition 1. Promotion of the Cotswolds as the Walking and Exploring Capital of England.**

The Cotswolds AONB 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 and an extensive network of open access common land, 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. Initiatives such as Walkers are Welcome and Cyclists are Welcome are growing in popularity. Although these initiatives are under-developed, they

represent a huge opportunity to enhance public enjoyment and appreciation of the AONB and its special qualities.

This ambition is explicitly reflected in paragraph 4 of Policy UE2 (Access and Recreation). In addition, Policies UE2, UE1 and UE3 all relate to the delivery of this ambition.

**Ambition 2. The local design and delivery of a Cotswolds package of agri-environment payments for public goods and services and rural development support.**

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 both agri-environment schemes 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.

This ambition is explicitly reflected in paragraph 2 of Policy CE8 (Rural Land Management). In addition, Policies CE8 (paragraphs 1 and 2), CC4 (paragraph 5), CE1 (paragraph 3), CE6 (paragraph 4) and CE7 (paragraph 3) all relate to the delivery of this ambition.

**Ambition 3. Ensuring communities and businesses within and around the AONB identify and celebrate being part of a nationally recognised landscape.**

The Cotswolds 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.

This ambition is explicitly reflected in paragraph 2 of Policy CC3 (Working in Partnership). In addition, Policies CE 8 (paragraph 1), CE10 (paragraph 1), CE11 (paragraph 1), UE1 (paragraphs 1 and 2), UE2 and UE3 all relate to the delivery of this ambition.

**Ambition 4. To promote 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 as a National Park. This chimes with the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan and review of National Parks and AONBs. There are many similarities between the most recent Park designation i.e. the South Downs, and the Cotswolds. For example, they are of a similar scale and complexity. A Cotswolds National Park potentially offers significant benefits for local communities, the environment and the economy. For example, National Park status could provide a more coordinated and consistent approach to the management of the area, which puts conserving and enhancing natural beauty at the heart of plan-making and decision-taking. The Board will be issuing a Position Statement on this issue during 2018/19.

This ambition is explicitly reflected in paragraph 2 of Policy CC1 (Developing a Consistent, Coordinated and Landscape-Led Approach across the Cotswolds AONB).

# CHAPTER 5. VISION AND OUTCOMES

## VISION

By 2043, the Cotswolds AONB will be:

- A distinctive, unique, accessible 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, dark skies, tranquillity, archaeology, historic and cultural heritage and distinctive Cotswold stone architecture.
- A thriving collaborative, pioneering, proactive place, sustained by the passions of residents, visitors and businesses alike, where communities and businesses value its special qualities.

## THEMED OUTCOMES

The Management Plan outcomes apply the vision to a number of themes, based around the Board's two purposes<sup>14</sup>. The outcomes have been derived from the vision and used to establish the policies. As such, they provide a clear link between the vision, which covers a twenty-five year timeframe (to 2043), and the policies, which should be applied and / or implemented within the five year timescale of the 2018-2013 Management Plan.

In fulfilling its two purposes, the Board has a duty to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the AONB. This duty is incorporated into Outcome 1 and Outcome 11. It is also reflected in several policies of the Management Plan, including Policies CC3, CC4, CC7, CC8, CE1(4), CE3(4), CE8 (3), CE12(1) and UE3 (see Chapter 6). However, given that this duty only applies with regards to fulfilling the Board's two primary purposes, the Management Plan does not have a separate, stand-alone section on fostering economic and social well-being.

### CROSS CUTTING OUTCOMES

There are three themes / outcomes that cut across all of the aspects of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan:

**Outcome 1 (Working Together):** The purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities will have been applied consistently across the whole of the AONB, by all stakeholders, and will be at the heart of plans, proposals, decisions and work programmes affecting the AONB. Stakeholders will also have cooperated in facilitating the economic and social well-being of AONB communities

**Outcome 2 (Natural and Cultural Capital and Ecosystem Services):** The natural and cultural capital assets of the Cotswolds AONB - and the ecosystem services which they provide – will have been conserved, enhanced and better understood.

**Outcome 3 (Climate Change):** The impacts of climate change on the Cotswolds AONB will have been mitigated and the AONB will be more resilient to these impacts.

<sup>14</sup> The two purposes are: (i) to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB; and (ii) to increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB.



## **OUTCOMES RELATING TO PRIMARY PURPOSE 1 (TO CONSERVE AND ENHANCE THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE COTSWOLDS AONB)**

Outcomes 4-9 relate to the 'special qualities' of the Cotswolds AONB:

**Outcome 4 (Landscape and Geology):** The landscape character, scenic quality and geological features of the Cotswolds AONB will have been conserved, enhanced and will be better understood.

**Outcome 5 (Local Distinctiveness):** The local distinctiveness of the Cotswolds AONB will have been conserved and enhanced and will be better understood.

**Outcome 6 (Tranquillity):** The tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB will have been conserved and enhanced, with fewer areas being affected by noise pollution and other aural and visual disturbance.

**Outcome 7 (Dark Skies):** The dark skies of the Cotswolds AONB will have been conserved and enhanced, with fewer areas being affected by light pollution.

**Outcome 8 (Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage):** The historic environment and cultural heritage of the Cotswolds AONB will have been conserved and enhanced, such that they are in good condition, and will be better understood.

**Outcome 9 (Biodiversity):** The loss of priority habitats and species in the Cotswolds AONB will have been halted and reversed and a robust and resilient ecological network will have been created across – and in the setting of – the AONB.

In seeking to ensure that Outcomes 4-9 are delivered, the Management Plan will also address the following outcomes:

**Outcome 10 (Rural Land Management):** Rural land management will have played a key role in conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB and, where appropriate, increasing the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities.

**Outcome 11 (Development and Transport):** Development and transport in the Cotswolds AONB will have played a key role in conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB and, where appropriate, increasing the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities. They will also have played a key role in facilitating the economic and social well-being of AONB communities.

## **OUTCOMES RELATING TO PRIMARY PURPOSE 2 (TO INCREASE UNDERSTANDING AND ENJOYMENT OF THE COTSWOLDS AONB'S SPECIAL QUALITIES)**

**Outcome 12 (Sustainable Tourism):** The natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB will have been recognised as the primary asset on which the tourism industry in the AONB is based. Tourism will have made a significant contribution to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB.

**Outcome 13 (Access and Recreation):** The improved provision and promotion of appropriate access and recreational opportunities will have enabled more people, from all sectors of society, to understand and enjoy the 'special qualities' of the Cotswolds AONB.

**Outcome 14 (Health and Well-being):** The Cotswolds AONB will have been recognised as an area where the landscape, tranquillity and wide variety of recreational and educational opportunities can benefit both the physical and mental health and wellbeing of those who experience it.

# CHAPTER 6. POLICIES

## INTRODUCTION

The main focus of this chapter is the 24 policies of the Management Plan, which are grouped under the 14 themed outcomes of Chapter 5 into three over-arching themes:

1. Cross Cutting
2. Conserving and Enhancing
3. Increasing Understanding and Enjoyment

The supporting text for each theme outlines the underlying issues that the policies are aiming to address.

The policies are perhaps the most important – and most utilised - part of the Management Plan. They serve five main purposes:

1. They are principles for how the Cotswolds AONB should be managed in order to:
  - a. conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB;
  - b. increase the understanding and enjoyment of the AONB's special qualities;
  - c. address issues that are having an adverse effect on the AONB;
  - d. achieve the vision and outcomes of the Management Plan.
2. They provide a framework for action by the Cotswolds Conservation Board and other stakeholders who have a role to play in the management of the AONB.
3. They represent the policies of the Board.
4. They are intended to guide, influence and be used by stakeholders in their own plans, policies, proposals, work programmes and decision making.
5. Together with other guidance produced by the Board, they are intended to facilitate a consistent approach across the whole of the Cotswolds AONB<sup>15</sup>.

It is important that the policies should be considered in their entirety, where appropriate, particularly in relation to development and rural land management. For example, when a development is being proposed in the AONB, the developer and the local authority should have regard to all of the policies, not just to Policy CE10 (Development and Transport – Principles).

The policies are consistent in the use of the verbs 'must', 'will' and 'should', as outlined below:

- **'Must'** is now used where the relevant stakeholder has a statutory requirement to implement the policy.
- **'Will'** is now used where the Board is the stakeholder with primary responsibility for applying and / or delivering the policy.
- **'Should'** is now used where a stakeholder other than the Board has primary responsibility for applying and / or delivering the policy (although the Board would still play an active role in many of these).

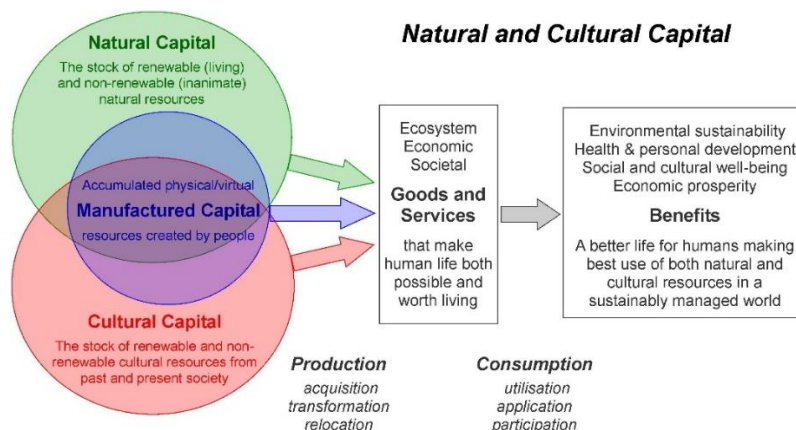
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<sup>15</sup> The Management Plan and guidance documents produced by the Cotswolds Conservation Board are the only publications that guide the management of the Cotswolds AONB as a whole. This is why the Board's guidance documents are specifically mentioned in several policies. This is not intended to undermine the importance of other plans and guidance that relate to specific parts of the AONB (i.e. individual local authorities).

## CROSS CUTTING THEMES

As indicated in Chapter 5, there are three over-arching themes that cut across all aspects of the Management Plan. They are:

- **Working Together.** This Management Plan is a place-based plan for the Cotswolds AONB, not just the Conservation Board - the Board is unable to deliver the plan by itself. The Plan helps inform the activity of a multitude of partners, stakeholders, landowners, communities and visitors in order to contribute to conserving and enhancing this nationally designated landscape and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities.
- **Natural and Cultural Capital and Ecosystem Services.** The Cotswolds AONB has a wealth of natural and cultural capital (the stock of natural and cultural heritage assets) that provide 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, 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.



- **Climate Change.** Climate change is likely to lead to increasingly warmer, drier summers, milder, wetter winters and an increase in extreme weather events. A significant challenge for the management of the Cotswolds AONB is to enable landowners, communities and businesses to mitigate the causes - and adapt to the impacts - of climate change whilst still conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB. Any solutions need to be appropriate to the nationally designated landscape and its setting.

## WORKING TOGETHER

**Outcome 1 (Working Together):** The purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities will have been applied consistently across the whole of the AONB, by all stakeholders, and will be at the heart of plans, proposals, decisions and work programmes affecting the AONB. Stakeholders will also have cooperated in facilitating the economic and social well-being of AONB communities.

**POLICY CC1: DEVELOPING A CONSISTENT, COORDINATED AND LANDSCAPE-LED APPROACH ACROSS THE COTSWOLDS AONB**

1. Stakeholders across the Cotswolds AONB should take a more consistent approach to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities, in line with the statutory Cotswolds AONB Management Plan – including the policies therein - and other guidance produced by the Cotswolds Conservation Board.
2. The case for the Cotswolds being designated as a National Park will be promoted.

The Cotswolds AONB is an administratively complex area, extending across 15 local authorities and three geographical regions. This makes it very challenging to develop and deliver a consistent approach to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB and increasing the understanding and enjoyments of its special qualities. However, the potential benefits are huge, including better coordination of planning, development, agri-environment schemes, design, tourism and recreation.

This consistent, coordinated approach would potentially be easier to attain if the Cotswolds had National Park status, as a National Park Authority would have more responsibility for the coordinated management of the whole area. As outlined in Chapter 4, one of the four ‘ambitions’ of the Management Plan is to *‘promote the case for the Cotswolds being designated as England’s next National Park’*.

**POLICY CC2: COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 85 OF THE COUNTRYSIDE AND RIGHTS OF WAY ACT (THE ‘DUTY OF REGARD’)**

1. Relevant authorities, including public bodies, must comply with Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (the ‘duty of regard’) and should have regard to the supporting guidance published by Defra and Natural England.
2. Public bodies should document - and report on - how they have complied with the ‘duty of regard’<sup>16</sup>.
3. Compliance with the ‘duty of regard’ will be monitored effectively<sup>17</sup>.

The legal requirement for public bodies to have regard to the purpose of AONB designation (‘the duty of regard’) provides an important mechanism for conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB. However, compliance with the ‘duty of regard’ has not always been delivered in a consistent manner across the entire AONB by all public bodies. Further information on the ‘duty of regard’ is provided in Appendix 4.

<sup>16</sup> Appendix 4, which is based on the ‘duty of regard’ guidance published by Defra and Natural England, provides an indication of the type of information that should be documented and reported.

<sup>17</sup> Monitoring requirements will be developed in partnership between the Board and relevant stakeholders. In Appendix 6, the Board has identified demonstrating, documenting, and reporting on compliance with the ‘duty of regard’ as a priority action for ‘relevant authorities’. As indicated in Appendix 7, monitoring of planning decisions will be a priority.

### **POLICY CC3: WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP**

1. Stakeholders should work in partnership to support the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities will be actively encouraged. Stakeholders should also cooperate in fostering the economic and social well-being of AONB communities.
2. Communities and businesses within and around the Cotswolds AONB should be encouraged to value and celebrate being part of a nationally recognised landscape and to contribute to the purpose of AONB designation.

A proactive, multi-partnership approach is needed to enable the AONB to realise additional benefits through, for example, funding sources and increased participation across the AONB. This approach is also needed to help local communities and businesses recognise and celebrate the benefits of being part of a designated landscape, as outlined in Chapter 4, in relation to Ambition 3.

Though there is generally a significant level of appreciation for the Cotswolds landscape amongst communities and businesses in and around the AONB, awareness and understanding of its status as a protected landscape and the implications of this is lacking. This reduces awareness of the need for protection and enhancement of the sense of place, its and distinctive features and special qualities.

## **NATURAL AND CULTURAL CAPITAL AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES**

**Outcome 2 (Natural and Cultural Capital and Ecosystem Services):** The natural and cultural capital assets of the Cotswolds AONB - and the services which they provide – will have been conserved, enhanced and better understood.

### **POLICY CC4: NATURAL AND CULTURAL CAPITAL AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES - PRINCIPLES**

1. The natural and cultural capital of the Cotswolds AONB and the services that they provide – should be fully assessed and evaluated.
2. The use of natural and cultural capital accounting should be encouraged in order to fully understand the implications of investment, development and management decisions.
3. The financial and non-financial benefits of natural and cultural capital and ecosystem services should be promoted.
4. Proposals affecting the Cotswolds AONB should have regard to – and seek to conserve and enhance – the natural and cultural capital of the AONB and the ecosystem services that they provide.
5. Natural and cultural capital and ecosystem services should be key components of future agri-environment, land management and rural development support mechanisms in the Cotswolds AONB.

The Cotswolds AONB has a wealth of natural capital assets, including the underlying geology, farmland, woodlands, an aquifer and a system of streams and rivers, clean air and a wealth of biodiversity. Its cultural heritage assets are equally rich, including the cultural-historical landscape, individual heritage assets, historic settlements and vibrant cultural activity. These assets - and the services that they provide - are of local, national 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.

#### **POLICY CC5: SOILS<sup>18</sup>**

1. Soil degradation should be halted and reversed by managing soils in a way that: (i) increases organic content, water retention and carbon sequestration; and (ii) minimises erosion, water pollution and compaction.
2. Soil management should be a key component of future agri-environment, land management and rural development support mechanisms in the Cotswolds AONB.

Across the AONB there are many different soils, which are subject to degradation from a variety of factors. Loss of soil organic matter results in soils being more prone to drought and less resilient, and requiring higher levels of input to support yields. This, in turn, leads to compaction of soils and the leaching of nitrate and pesticides to groundwater.

With a predicted 22% decrease in summer rainfall by 2080, the free draining Cotswold soils will become more prone to drought. Extreme weather events and a predicted 22% overall increase in winter rainfall could lead to flooding and poaching of soils<sup>19</sup>. These combined impacts would lead to soil damage, erosion and nutrient loss. Soil management practices will, therefore, become even more important.

#### **POLICY CC6: WATER<sup>20</sup>**

1. Water resources should be carefully managed and conserved to: improve water quality; ensure adequate aquifer recharge; ensure adequate river flows; and contribute to natural flood management systems, including sustainable drainage.

The Cotswolds is home to a large aquifer which supplies water to homes and businesses both inside and outside the AONB. Groundwater sources also need to be carefully managed to ensure the water is safe to use and that abstraction does not impact negatively on river flows.

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. However, some stretches of Cotswold rivers are already prone to low flows, resulting in damage to riverine habitat, concentration of pollutants and less water for abstraction. Over abstraction can have a detrimental impact on these factors. Summers are predicted to become drier, which would exacerbate this problem even further.

The water in the AONB is mainly fed by flow from deep in the limestone aquifers. The Environment Agency has been establishing projects within the AONB to improve the ecological condition of the rivers. Catchment Management Plans (CMP) provide the actions needed to achieve good ecological condition. Water Framework Directive data for 2016 indicates that 35% of the monitored river lengths in the AONB are in good ecological condition. Since 2013 there has been a decrease in the

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<sup>18</sup> Soils are addressed under Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services, rather than meriting their own section, because they are not key features of the special qualities of the AONB.

<sup>19</sup> Cotswolds Conservation Board (2012) *Climate Change Strategy for the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty*.

<sup>20</sup> Water is addressed under Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services, rather than meriting its own section, because it is not a key feature of the special qualities of the AONB.

length of river in poor ecological condition. There are some concerns with phosphate and sediment levels in some watercourses and groundwater supplies.

The Cotswolds AONB is not, at present, an area prone to flooding. However, in extreme rainfall events, such as that of July 2007, some towns and villages have been affected by flooding from rivers or as a result of limited drainage. Climate change is likely to increase the risk of flooding and the frequency of such extreme rainfall events.

The rivers that originate in the AONB flow downstream through larger towns and villages outside of the AONB which are more prone to flooding. As such, land management in the rivers valleys of the AONB can play a key role in helping to reduce flood risk downstream. Natural flood management works with natural processes to 'slow the flow' of flood waters. This helps to reduce the maximum water height of a flood (the 'flood peak') and / or delay the arrival of the flood peak downstream, increasing the time available to prepare for floods. Sustainable drainage systems are an important component of natural flood management.

With the anticipated drier summers and wetter winters, there is likely to be an increased demand for rainwater harvesting and storage.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

**Outcome 3 (Climate Change):** The impacts of climate change on the Cotswolds AONB will have been mitigated and the AONB will be more resilient to these impacts.

### POLICY CC7: CLIMATE CHANGE - MITIGATION

1. Greenhouse gas emissions should be reduced through a range of measures, including:

- improving energy efficiency, including building energy-efficient new building and retrofitting existing buildings;
- improving energy conservation<sup>21</sup>;
- using small-scale forms of renewable energy that are compatible with the purpose of AONB designation;
- reducing car use by: encouraging - and facilitating – the use of walking, cycling and public transport; encouraging home -based working (including the provision of high speed broadband); locating new development close to public transport hubs; ensuring the provision of affordable housing to reduce the need to commute into the Cotswolds for work;
- providing a network of charging points across the AONB for electric cars;
- purchasing locally produced food products and services.

2. Climate change mitigation should be a key consideration in all new development, infrastructure and transport provision.

3. Climate change mitigation should be a key component of land management practices and future agri-environment, land management and rural development support mechanisms in the AONB.

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<sup>21</sup> Energy conservation relates to people changing their behaviour to reduce the amount of energy consumed, whereas energy efficiency relates to how efficient a material is at retaining energy.



## **POLICY CC8: CLIMATE CHANGE - ADAPTATION**

1. The risks posed by the consequences of climate change should be reduced through a range of adaptation measures, including those identified in relevant policies of this Management Plan<sup>22</sup>.
2. Climate change mitigation should be a key consideration in all new development, infrastructure and transport provision<sup>23</sup>.
3. Climate change adaptation should be a key component of land management practices and future agri-environment, land management and rural development support mechanisms in the AONB.
4. Further research into the predicted impacts of climate change on the Cotswolds AONB should be undertaken. This research should be used to advise and inform sustained behavioural change to adapt to climate change and conserve and enhance the AONB.

Based on the medium greenhouse gas emissions scenario published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPPC), the Cotswolds are likely to experience increasingly warmer, drier summers; milder, wetter winters; and an increase in extreme weather events. The impact on the Cotswolds AONB is likely to be considerable, leading to changes in the landscape, biodiversity, historic environment, natural resources, land management and tourism. Although there is potential to reduce the extent of climate change through mitigation measures, significant impacts are now inevitable as a result of past greenhouse gas emissions. Moreover, further increases in greenhouse gasses are unavoidable, even under the most optimistic of scenarios.

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 help to reduce the risks and impacts of climate change.

Measures to mitigate the impacts of climate change include the provision of renewable energy, for example, through solar farms and wind turbines, and energy conservation. There is also untapped potential to make more use of biomass, using woodland and crop residue, for energy production within the AONB. Any such renewable energy schemes need to be carefully sited and managed to avoid any adverse impacts on the natural beauty of the AONB.

Mitigation measures involving reducing the use of motorised vehicles and promoting the use of electric cars should have the additional benefit of improving air quality, by reducing emissions of nitrogen dioxide and other pollutants. This is particularly important for the AONBs two Air Quality Management Zones at Chipping Norton and the Air Balloon junction on the A417.

It will be important to ensure that any mitigation and adaptation measures do not adversely affect the purpose of AONB designation (i.e. conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB).

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<sup>22</sup> Relevant policies (with the most relevant shown in **bold**) include: CC1, para 1; **CC5, para 2; CC6, para 1; CE6, para 1; CE7, para1; CE8; CE9, para 3; CE10, paras 1 & 3; CE11, para 2; and UE1.**

<sup>23</sup> Additional measures not explicitly addressed in the Management Plan include protecting transport infrastructure from extreme weather events and ensuring that all new and retrofit development recognises the need to compensate for hotter summers and extreme weather events.

The Board published a 'Climate Change Strategy for the Cotswolds AONB' in 2012<sup>24</sup>. Most of the measures proposed in the strategy to mitigate and adapt to the impacts climate change – and much of the supporting information – has been incorporated into the Management Plan to some degree. The strategy remains a 'live' document.

## CONSERVING AND ENHANCING

### LANDSCAPE AND GEOLOGY

**Outcome 4 (Landscape):** The landscape character, scenic quality and geological features of the Cotswolds AONB will have been conserved, enhanced and better understood.

#### **POLICY CE1: LANDSCAPE**

1. Proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the Cotswolds AONB, should have regard to, be compatible with and reinforce the landscape character of the location, as described by the Cotswolds Conservation Board's Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines.
2. Proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the Cotswolds AONB, should have regard to the scenic quality of the location and its setting and ensure that views - including those into and out of the AONB – and visual amenity are conserved and enhanced.
3. Landscape character should be a key component of future agri-environment, land management and rural development support mechanisms in the Cotswolds AONB.
4. Rural skills training and the utilisation of those skills - such as dry stone walling, traditional woodland management and hedgelaying - will be promoted, to ensure the long-term retention, creation and management of the key features of the Cotswolds AONB landscape.

Landscape 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 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 and changes in employment and communications, all of which can be 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. This change needs to be managed and guided to ensure the Cotswolds retains its landscape character and special qualities.

The surroundings and setting of the AONB are important to its landscape and scenic beauty. For example, views out of the AONB and into it from surrounding areas are a significant consideration for development and land management.

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<sup>24</sup> <http://wardens.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/userfiles/file/climate-change/climate-change-strategy-adopted-june-2012.pdf>

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. It could also lead to legislative changes in environmental protection and management impacting on the conservation and enhancement of the AONB and its special qualities.

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

#### **POLICY CE2: GEOLOGY**

1. The geological features of the Cotswolds AONB should be conserved and enhanced through effective management.
2. Opportunities should be sought to promote awareness and understanding of the geological features of the Cotswolds AONB.
3. Proposals that are likely to impact on the geological features of the Cotswolds AONB should have regard to these features and seek to conserve and enhance them.
4. Exploration and research into the geology of the Cotswolds AONB should be continued in order to improve understanding of the landscape, and of the geological resource and its importance to inform the conservation and management of geological and geomorphological sites.

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. Survey work has also identified the Cotswolds as significant for Tufa streams and springs. It is vital that this geological resource is protected, conserved, enhanced, promoted and better understood.

### **LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS**

**Outcome 5 (Local Distinctiveness):** The local distinctiveness of the Cotswolds AONB will have been conserved and enhanced and will be better understood.

### **POLICY CE3: LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS**

1. Proposals that are likely to impact on the local distinctiveness of the Cotswolds AONB should have regard to, be compatible with and reinforce this local distinctiveness. This should include:

- being compatible with the Cotswolds Conservation Board's Landscape Character Assessment, Landscape Strategy and Guidelines and Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change;
- being designed and, where relevant, landscaped to respect local settlement patterns, building styles, scale and materials;
- using an appropriate colour of limestone to reflect local distinctiveness.

2. Innovative designs - which are informed by local distinctiveness, character and scale - should be welcomed.

3. The development of design guidance – which is supported by a robust evidence base and which reflects relevant guidance published by the Cotswolds Conservation Board - will be encouraged.

4. Provision should be made for the quarrying of limestone, at an appropriate scale, in order to provide building materials that help maintain and enhance the local distinctiveness of the AONB. Any such mineral sites should be required to demonstrate that they do not have any significant adverse effects on the special qualities of the AONB or integrity of existing wildlife sites.

As outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, one of the special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB is the unifying character of the limestone geology – its visible presence in the landscape and its use as a building material. Development pressures could potentially erode this local distinctiveness, for example, through the use of inappropriate building materials and inappropriate design. The publication and promotion of design guidance that reflects local distinctiveness is an essential tool for addressing this issue. It will also be important to maintain an adequate supply of locally sourced, appropriately coloured limestone.

## **TRANQUILLITY**

**Outcome 6 (Tranquillity):** The tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB will have been conserved and enhanced, with fewer areas being affected by noise pollution and other aural and visual disturbance.

### **POLICY CE4: TRANQUILLITY**

1. Proposals that are likely to impact on the tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB should have regard to this tranquillity, by seeking to (i) avoid and (ii) minimise noise pollution and other aural and visual disturbance.

2. Measures should be taken to enhance the tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB by (i) removing and (ii) reducing existing sources of noise pollution and other aural and visual disturbance.

Research undertaken by CPRE has identified a growing loss of tranquil areas in England, down from 75% of England in the 1960s to around 50% in 2007. Although the Cotswolds AONB has a relatively high level of tranquillity, the AONB is being increasingly affected by unwanted, man-made noise and by activity arising from developments. For example, the 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, further reducing levels of tranquillity.

Tranquillity relates to issues of visual impact and light pollution as well as noise and other disturbance. However, given that Policy CE1 addresses visual impacts and Policy CE5 addresses light pollution, Policy CE4 has an emphasis on noise. This incorporates issues such as significant increases in traffic in the towns, villages and smaller settlements of the AONB, including increased traffic arising from developments outside of the AONB.

## **DARK SKIES**

**Outcome 7 (Dark Skies):** The dark skies of the Cotswolds AONB will have been conserved and enhanced, with fewer areas being affected by light pollution.

### **POLICY CE5: DARK SKIES**

1. Proposals that are likely to impact on the dark skies of the Cotswolds AONB should have regard to these dark skies, by seeking to (i) avoid and (ii) minimise light pollution.
2. Measures should be taken to increase the area of dark skies in the Cotswolds AONB by (i) removing and (ii) reducing existing sources of light pollution.
3. Consideration will be given to seeking a formal dark sky designation for those parts of the Cotswolds AONB that are least affected by light pollution.

'Light pollution' of the night sky is an intrusion into the countryside at night, which can have harmful effects on the health of people and wildlife. Although the Cotswolds AONB has relatively dark skies at night, compared to other parts of England (being ranked 13<sup>th</sup> in terms of the darkest skies in England), light pollution from the surrounding urban areas and the market towns of the AONB does adversely affect the dark skies of the AONB in those locations. With ever increasing levels of new housing in the AONB, light pollution is likely to get worse unless action is taken to address this issue.

## **HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE**

**Outcome 8 (Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage):** The historic environment and cultural heritage of the Cotswolds AONB will have been conserved and enhanced, such that they are in good condition and better understood.

## **POLICY CE6: HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE**

1. The historic environment and cultural heritage of the Cotswolds AONB, both designated and undesignated<sup>25</sup>, should be conserved and enhanced through effective management.
2. Designated historic environment sites, such as Scheduled Monuments and listed buildings, should be protected, in line with national policy and guidance.
3. Proposals that are likely to impact on the historic and cultural heritage of the Cotswolds AONB should have regard to these features and seek to conserve and enhance them. This should include respecting historical features, buildings, sites, layout and context, including the relationship between the existing feature or settlement and the landscape.
4. Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage should be a key component of future agri-environment, land management and rural development support mechanisms in the Cotswolds AONB.
5. Opportunities should be sought to promote the awareness, understanding and use of Historic Environment Records, Conservation Area Appraisals, Historic Landscape Characterisation and Heritage Strategies and Action Plans. These should be used to influence decisions regarding the management of the AONB's historic environment and cultural heritage.

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.

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>26</sup>. Historic Environment Records (HER) of non-designated assets of local significance and Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) produced by local authorities to help raise awareness and understanding need to be better promoted and used by all stakeholders.

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, registered Historic Parks and Gardens, barns, dew ponds 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.

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. 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.

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<sup>25</sup> 'Undesignated' covers the full spectrum of undesignated assets related to the historic environment and cultural heritage, for example, ranging from archaeological sites to sites associated with the Arts and Crafts movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>26</sup> More information on Historic Landscape Characterisation at <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/methods/characterisation-2/>

Climate change is likely to increase the extremes of wetting and drying, leading to accelerated decay of stonework and an increased risk of subsidence. Increased flooding and erosion may cause damage to buildings and to archaeological sites. Policy CE6 should help to reduce the potential impacts of climate change on the historic environment. Additional measures relating to climate change are provided in Policies CC7 and CC8.

## BIODIVERSITY

**Outcome 9 (Biodiversity):** The loss of priority habitats and species in the Cotswolds AONB will have been halted and reversed and a robust and resilient ecological network will have been created across – and in the setting of – the AONB.

### POLICY CE7: BIODIVERSITY

1. Biodiversity in the Cotswolds AONB should be conserved and enhanced by establishing a coherent and resilient ecological network across the Cotswolds AONB and in its setting, focussing on the priority species and habitats listed in Appendix 8. This should be achieved by implementing the following principles<sup>27</sup>:

- **BETTER:** Existing wildlife sites<sup>28</sup> should be protected, in line with national policy and guidance, and be brought into good condition through effective and appropriate management.
- **BIGGER:** The size of existing wildlife sites should be increased.
- **MORE:** More wildlife sites should be created.
- **JOINED:** Connectivity between wildlife sites should be improved by creating new wildlife corridors and ‘stepping stone’ sites and the provision of green infrastructure. The pressure on wildlife should be reduced by improving the wider environment, including the provision of less intensively managed ‘buffer zones’ around wildlife sites.

2. Proposals that are likely to impact on the biodiversity of the Cotswolds AONB should provide a significant net-gain in biodiversity, particularly with regard to the species and habitats listed in Appendix 8.

3. Biodiversity – in particular, the priority species and habitats listed in Appendix 8 - should be a key component of future agri-environment, land management and rural development support mechanisms in the Cotswolds AONB.

Despite investment for many years in conserving and enhancing biodiversity, habitats and species have continued to decline, notably on ancient, semi-natural habitats.

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 tuberculosis. Woodland management has also declined as imported wood products have become cheaper.

<sup>27</sup> These principles are adapted from the ‘Lawton Report’ (Lawton, J.H., et al (2010) *Making Space for Nature: a review of England’s wildlife sites and ecological network*. Report to Defra).

<sup>28</sup> ‘Wildlife sites’ include the hierarchy of nature conservation designations, nature reserves and other priority habitat.

The reduction in size and fragmentation of habitats has led to populations of species becoming more vulnerable to population decline or extinction. Climate change is likely to result in changes to the areas that are climatically suited to host particular species. The fragmentation of habitats will make it more difficult for species to move to these new climatically suitable areas. Climate change is also likely to change the timing of seasonal events, leading to a loss of synchrony between species and the resources that they depend on, notably for food and production. Changes in farming and forestry practices could also affect some species. Policy CE7 should help to provide an environment that enables species and habitats to better adapt to climate change. Additional measures relating to climate change are provided in Policies CE7 and CE8.

Lack of continuity of funding and resources, bureaucracy, diseases in specific species and the sheer scale of the task at hand are some of the additional factors leading to continued declines in biodiversity. Development and recreational pressures have also played a role in this decline.

In the wider landscape, the conservation and enhancement of habitats and species is largely reliant on payments from agri-environment schemes. However, the UK's exit from the EU could see fundamental changes to these support mechanisms and to the legislative requirements relating to biodiversity. These changes pose significant risks to the future conservation and enhancement of biodiversity but they also provide significant opportunities.

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework provide some positive biodiversity-related measures which should help to address declines in biodiversity. These measures include delivering net-gains in biodiversity, increasing the level of protection afforded to irreplaceable habitat such as ancient woodland, creating more green infrastructure and identifying, mapping, conserving and enhancing ecological networks.

Although Policy CE7 focusses on the AONB and its setting, consideration will also need to be given to ecological networks in the wider environment, for example, river corridor ecological networks where the rivers start in the AONB but extend well beyond its boundaries.

## **RURAL LAND MANAGEMENT**

**Outcome 10 (Rural Land Management):** Rural land management will have played a key role in conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB and, where appropriate, increasing the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities.



## **POLICY CE8: RURAL LAND MANAGEMENT**

1. Rural land management in the Cotswolds AONB and in the setting of the AONB should have regard to – and help deliver - the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the AONB's special qualities.
2. Rural land management in the Cotswolds AONB and in the setting of the AONB should have regard to – and, ideally, help to deliver – the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan. It should also be compatible with guidance produced by the Cotswolds Conservation Board, including the:
  - (i) Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines;
  - (ii) Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment;
  - (iii) Cotswolds AONB Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change;
  - (iv) Cotswolds Conservation Board Position Statements.
3. Future agri-environment, land management and rural development support mechanisms in the Cotswolds AONB should be designed specifically for the AONB. These mechanisms should:
  - (i) address paragraphs 1 and 2, above;
  - (ii) be managed locally to ensure effective local delivery;
  - (iii) deliver public goods and services.

The two main aspects of rural land management are farming and woodland management.

Changes in farming practices, linked to changes in farming policy and the economy of particular crops and livestock, can potentially lead to changes in the landscape of the Cotswolds AONB and affect its natural beauty and special qualities, including farmland biodiversity. Changing farming economics, demographics, practices and rural business diversification result in the division of farms and create clusters of land uses which have a detrimental impact upon the landscape such as horse paddocks and 'gentrification'.

Many woodlands are either under-managed or not managed at all. This is due to many factors but especially to the loss of appropriate markets for woodland products. Woodland planting does not always consider its impacts on the landscape setting and, in particular, its effects on the open views that people enjoy from viewpoints, roads and Public Rights of Way. For example, 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. Issues relating to landscape character are addressed under Policy CE1 (Landscape). Also, the creation of new woodland can cause problems if it is not appropriately managed, such as shading out important flora when the vegetation cover becomes too dense.

As with the issue of biodiversity, outlined above, farming, woodland management and other rural land management practices that make a positive contribution to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB are largely reliant on payments from agri-environment schemes. However, the UK's exit from the EU could see fundamental changes to these support mechanisms and to the legislative requirements relating to biodiversity. These changes pose significant risks to the future conservation and enhancement of biodiversity but they also provide significant opportunities. For example, the opportunity now exists to design a package of measures specifically for the Cotswolds AONB as new policy emerges after leaving the EU.

Climate change is likely to result in an increase in crop and grass yields, but with a greater variability in quantity and quality, including crop failure. New management methods and new varieties are

likely to be adopted in response to warmer, drier conditions. The area of energy crops and novel crops is likely to increase. The overall area of grassland is not expected to change significantly, but management may become more extensive. With regards to forestry, increased timber and biomass production can be expected, but with a reduction in quality. Some species, such as oak, are expected to fare better than others such as beech. Land management practices, together with future agri-environment, land management and rural development support mechanisms, will need to encompass and deliver climate change mitigation and adaptation measures appropriate to the AONB. Relevant measures to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, in relation to rural land management, are provided elsewhere in this Management Plan, notably in policies CC7 and CC8.

#### **POLICY CE9: PROBLEM SPECIES<sup>29</sup>, PESTS AND DISEASES**

1. The population of grey squirrel and deer in the Cotswolds AONB should continue to be controlled and managed. This should be undertaken and coordinated at a landscape scale.
2. National guidance - and guidance produced by the Board - on Ash Dieback should be followed to ensure any measures implemented will conserve and enhance the qualities of the landscape.
3. National and local guidance - including guidance from Government Agencies and the Non Native Species Secretariat - on invasive non-native species, pests and diseases should be followed and appropriate biosecurity measures promoted.

Increasing deer and grey squirrel populations and lack of co-ordinated management is having an adverse impact on the landscape of the Cotswolds AONB and on the quality of woodland, woodland biodiversity and timber.

There is an increasing prevalence of tree pests and diseases resulting from climate change, increased global trade, travel and the importation of diseased material. In particular, Ash Dieback will have an increasing impact on woodland and trees in the landscape during the life of the Management Plan.

There are a number on invasive non-native species present in the AONB 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 AONB and having a harmful impact on landscape, biodiversity and the economy.

## **DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORT**

**Outcome 11 (Development and Transport):** Development and transport in the Cotswolds AONB will have played a key role in conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB and, where appropriate, increasing the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities. They will also have played a key role in facilitating the economic and social well-being of AONB communities.

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<sup>29</sup> These species are not addressed in the Biodiversity section as they are not species that we are that we are aiming to conserve and enhance (see Annex 8).

## **POLICY CE10. DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORT - PRINCIPLES**

1. Development and transport in the Cotswolds AONB and in the setting of the AONB should have regard to – and help to deliver – the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the AONB’s special qualities. They should also contribute to the economic and social well-being of AONB communities.

2. Proposals relating to development and transport in the Cotswolds AONB and in the setting of the AONB should comply with national planning policy and guidance. They should also have regard to – and help to deliver – the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan and be compatible with guidance produced by the Cotswolds Conservation Board, including the:

- (i) Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines;
- (ii) Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment;
- (iii) Cotswolds AONB Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change;
- (iv) Cotswolds Conservation Board Position Statements.

3. The purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the AONB’s special qualities should be identified as priorities in Local Plans<sup>30</sup>, Neighbourhood Plans, Local Transport Plans and other relevant plans and strategies. These plans and strategies should explicitly identify the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan as a material consideration.

Planning legislation and policy is supposed to afford the highest level of protection to AONBs and to provide AONBs with the same level of protection as National Parks. However, the scale of development outlined in Chapter 3 (Portrait of the Cotswolds AONB) demonstrates that, in reality, this level of protection isn’t being provided for the Cotswolds AONB. Although some level of development may be required to meet local (AONB) housing needs and to ensure that the vitality of AONB settlements is maintained and enhanced, development should not be at such scale that it erodes the special qualities of the AONB. This would undermine the reason for the Cotswolds being designated as an AONB in the first place.

Increasing traffic volume and vehicle sizes on the AONB’s roads can lead to congestion, noise and air pollution, damage to roadside verges (with consequent drainage and soil erosion issues), reduced safety for non-motorised road users and traffic ‘rat-running’ along minor roads and through villages. Measures to address these issues should be integral considerations in new developments and can include lowering speed limits, the provision of suitably designed speed reduction schemes, the provision of off-road routes for non-motorised users and the provision of appropriate signage.

Reducing the use of motorised vehicles and increasing the proportion of electric vehicles (and associated infrastructure) are important components of measures to mitigate the impacts of climate change (see Policy CC7). These measures, combined with the use of cleaner fuels, are also key measures to help reduce nitrogen dioxide levels in the two Air Quality Management Areas in the AONB at Chipping Norton and the Air Balloon junction on the A417.

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<sup>30</sup> This reflects paragraph 20 of the NPPF, which states that ‘strategic policies should make sufficient provision for ... conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes’ and paragraph 172, which states that ‘great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in ... Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues’.

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 road schemes and excessive lighting can have a detrimental impact. Impacts on landscape character are addressed in Policy CE1 (Landscape).

Some proposals and developments that may affect the AONB are not regulated by planning legislation or other controls. Such proposals and developments should still follow relevant guidance in order to ensure that they are not inappropriate, out of scale or harmful.

#### **POLICY CE11. MAJOR DEVELOPMENT**

1. Proposals for major development in the Cotswolds AONB and in the setting of the AONB, including site allocations in Local Plans, must comply with national planning policy and guidance and should have regard to – and be compatible with - the guidance on major development provided in Appendix 9 of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan.
2. Any major development proposed in the Cotswolds AONB, including major infrastructure projects, should be 'landscape-led', whereby it demonstrably contributes to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB and, where appropriate, to the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities<sup>31</sup>. This should include fully respecting and integrating the special qualities of the AONB into the planning, design, implementation and management of the development, from the very beginning of the development's inception.
3. The A417 'missing link' scheme should be an exemplar of the 'landscape-led' approach outlined in this policy<sup>32</sup>.

Due to their scale, major infrastructure and development projects, such as roads or energy developments, are likely to have a more significant impact on the natural beauty of the AONB than smaller-scale developments. As such, there is an even stronger need for these projects to be exemplars for how they have regard to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the AONB. For example, railway electrification schemes in the AONB should put measures in place to minimise their visual impact.

Proposals for upgrading the A417 at the Air Balloon junction, Birdlip, Gloucestershire, affect one of the most sensitive parts of the Cotswold escarpment. This scheme presents a challenge to ensure that, while the traffic and economic needs to upgrade are met, the design will be landscape-led and ensure that the potential benefits to the AONB clearly outweigh any harm. Any upgrade of the Air Balloon junction should also help to deliver the objectives of the Air Quality Action Plan for this Air Quality Management Area, by reducing nitrogen dioxide levels at the junction.

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<sup>31</sup> This 'landscape-led' approach reflects the approach being taken, or developed, in other protected landscapes, such as the South Downs National Park. It has also been adopted as an objective of Highways Agency-led steering group for the A417 'missing link' scheme.

<sup>32</sup> The A417 missing link is given a specific mention because it is the most significant infrastructure project that is likely to take place in the Cotswolds AONB during the timescale of this Management Plan (2018-2023) and, as such, should be singled out as needing to be an exemplar 'landscape-led' scheme.

## **POLICY CE12: DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES AND EVIDENCE OF NEED**

1. Development in the Cotswolds AONB should be based on robust evidence of local need arising from within the AONB<sup>33</sup>. Priority should be given to the provision of affordable housing, maintaining and enhancing local community amenities and services, and improving access to these amenities and services<sup>34</sup>.
2. The extent to which the Cotswolds AONB is required to accommodate objectively assessed housing needs arising from outside the AONB should be limited<sup>35</sup>. Where, as a result of this constraint, objectively assessed needs cannot be met wholly within a particular plan area, local planning authorities should work together to identify if these needs could be met elsewhere, outside of the AONB<sup>36</sup>.
3. Local planning authorities should provide annual statistics on the rate of development in their sections of the Cotswolds AONB and its setting<sup>37</sup>.

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.

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.

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. It also exacerbates issues of rural isolation. The introduction and use 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. Public transport provision and reducing dependencies on car travel are addressed under Policy CC7 (Climate Change – Mitigation).

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<sup>33</sup> The main exception to this policy would be where sites have already been allocated in an adopted Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan. The lack of evidence of need arising from within the Cotswolds AONB was a key factor in proposed housing allocations within the AONB in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan being rejected by the planning inspector (The Planning Inspectorate (2018) *Report on the Examination of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031*). As such, local planning authorities should still have regard to Policy CE12(1) when reviewing their Local Plans.

<sup>34</sup> This prioritisation reflects the guidance in *‘English National Parks and the Broads: Government Vision and Circular 2010’*. Given that AONBs have the same planning status as National Parks, the guidance and principles of Circular 2010 should apply equally to the Cotswolds AONB.

<sup>35</sup> This reflects the requirements of the NPPF, paragraphs 11 and 172. For example, paragraph 11 and footnote 6 of the NPPF make it clear that the requirement for Local Plans to meet objectively assessed needs does not apply in AONBs (i.e. *‘strategic policies should ... provide for objectively assessed needs ... unless ... the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan are* (Footnote 6: *‘The policies referred to are those in this Framework ... relating to ... an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’*)).

<sup>36</sup> This reflects policy 26 of the NPPF, which states that *‘joint working should help to determine ... whether development needs that cannot be met wholly within a particular plan area could be met elsewhere’*).

<sup>37</sup> The annual statistics will be agreed in partnership between the Board and the local planning authorities.

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 CE13. WASTE MANAGEMENT**

1. The waste hierarchy, shown below, should be promoted:

- Reduce.
- Reuse.
- Recycle.

2. Proposals for new landfill sites and strategic waste facilities should not normally be permitted in the AONB. Any waste management facilities that are permitted in the AONB should be sited and managed in such a way that adverse environmental impacts are minimised, in line with relevant permitting regimes.

Communities and businesses within the Cotswolds produce a significant amount of waste which needs to be disposed of in an appropriate and safe manner. In future, efforts must concentrate on minimising waste and dealing with it in close proximity to where it is produced. The reduction of waste should be promoted by supporting policies and plans which result in re-use, reduction and recycling of waste materials.

The significant number of urban areas close to the AONB has the potential to create pressure to import waste into the AONB, particularly to former quarry locations. This can generate additional lorry traffic within the AONB, with associated negative impacts on communities, the rural road network and roadside verges. There are also implications for the groundwater resource due to the permeable nature of limestone.

# INCREASING UNDERSTANDING AND ENJOYMENT

## SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

**Outcome 12 (Sustainable Tourism):** The natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB will have been recognised as the primary asset on which the tourism industry in the AONB is based. Tourism will have made a significant contribution to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB.

### **POLICY UE1: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**

1. Visitors, residents, local businesses and communities should be provided with opportunities to directly contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB, such as rural skills courses.
2. The 'Caring for the Cotswolds' visitor giving scheme will raise awareness of the AONB and generate funds from visitors to directly conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB and increase the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities. Tourism businesses and the Cotswolds Destination Management Organisation will be encouraged to increase membership of the scheme.
3. Visitors should be provided with a range of type and priced accommodation options that are compatible with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB.
4. The provision of integrated travel initiatives, such as the Cotswold Discoverer ticket, which facilitate a car-free visitor experience, should be increased and promoted.

The natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB is the foundation on which the tourism industry in the Cotswolds is based. This natural beauty is an asset which needs to be managed and maintained. The tourism sector should, therefore, contribute to the conservation and enhancement of this natural beauty. New tourism products that increase the sustainable tourism offer should be encouraged. Further research and evidence is needed to better understand the impacts and patterns of tourism in the AONB to ensure it remains sustainable. Updated visitor and tourism survey data would help to underpin Policies UE1 and UE2.

Though there is generally a significant level of appreciation for the Cotswolds landscape amongst visitors, awareness and understanding of its status as a protected landscape and the implications of this are lacking. This reduces awareness of the need for protection and enhancement of the sense of place and its distinctive features and special qualities.

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. Provision of such accommodation should be compatible with the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty.

The limited provision of public transport - and limited integration of this provision - restricts the scope for visitors (and residents) without a car to explore the Cotswolds resulting in a heavy reliance on car usage. Transport providers should be supported to increase and promote integrated travel initiatives in order to encourage a car-free visitor experience.

Most of the local authorities across the AONB, together with the Board, have joined together to form Cotswolds Tourism, the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) for the Cotswolds.

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. The issues of developing a more consistent and coordinated approach across the whole of the AONB is addressed in Policy CC1.

## ACCESS AND RECREATION

**Outcome 13 (Access and Recreation):** The improved provision and promotion of appropriate access and recreational opportunities will have enabled more people, from all sectors of society, to understand and enjoy the ‘special qualities’ of the Cotswolds AONB.

### POLICY UE2: ACCESS AND RECREATION

1. A safe, pleasant, accessible, clearly waymarked and well connected Public Rights of Way network should be maintained, enhanced and promoted across the Cotswolds AONB.
2. Common land and other land that is open to public access<sup>38</sup> should be maintained, enhanced and promoted across the Cotswolds AONB. Where appropriate, more land should be made available for public access.
3. Sustainable funding for National Trails, including the Cotswold Way and Thames Path, should be secured.
4. The Cotswolds AONB should be promoted as the Walking and Exploring Capital of England.
5. Visitors, residents and local communities should be provided with opportunities to increase their understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB. Communities from the surrounding urban areas, particularly those from deprived wards and those who do not traditionally visit the AONB, should be a priority for engagement.
6. The provision of appropriate publications and online and downloadable resources, volunteering and educational opportunities, and events and activities should be improved, to increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB.
7. The provision of access and recreational opportunities should not have an adverse impact on the Cotswolds AONB. Where recreational pressure is having an adverse impact on the special qualities of the AONB or on the integrity of existing wildlife sites, steps should be taken to mitigate these impacts.

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. Suitable and appropriate access to this network and to other open access land should be maintained, including for the non-motorised user.

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

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<sup>38</sup> This includes access land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and where public access is permitted on land managed by landowners, non-government organisations and charities such as the National Trust, the Wildlife Trusts and the Woodland Trust.



The recreational assets of the AONB - and the access opportunities that they provide - represent a huge opportunity to enhance public enjoyment and appreciation of the AONB and its special qualities. This is the basis of 'Ambition 1' (and Policy UE2(4)) of the Management Plan, to promote the Cotswolds AONB as the walking and exploring capital of England, as outlined in Chapter 3.

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

The provision of publications (particularly downloadable resources), 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.

The recreational use of the AONB should not be allowed to adversely affect the AONB's special qualities. For example, measures will need to be put in place to minimise and mitigate recreational pressure arising from new developments both inside and outside the AONB, especially where these developments are located close to sensitive receptors, such as designated nature conservation sites.

## HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

**Outcome 14 (Health and Well-being):** The Cotswolds AONB will have been recognised as an area where the landscape, tranquillity and a wide variety of recreational and educational opportunities can benefit both the physical and mental health and wellbeing of those who experience it.

### POLICY UE3: HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

1. Opportunities for improving health and well-being in the Cotswolds AONB should be created, improved and promoted, including, where appropriate, the provision of: walking, cycling and riding routes, including easy access routes for the disabled; opportunities to access and interact with nature; and volunteering and personal development opportunities.
2. All resident children and young people should be provided with environmental education opportunities to experience the Cotswolds AONB through direct contact with the natural environment.
3. The health sector should make greater use of the benefits that the AONB provides for the health and well-being of residents and visitors, for example, by prescribing exercise in the Cotswolds AONB countryside.

A lack of physical activity can lead to a variety of chronic diseases and conditions such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease which, combined with an ageing population, is leading to a public health crisis. A lack of access to scenic, wildlife-rich greenspace and other open spaces can also adversely affect mental health. Many people, particularly children and young people, do not readily have opportunities to learn about the environment or to develop an understanding and appreciation of the Cotswolds countryside.

There is a need to implement and develop a variety of approaches to address these issues, including the provision of outdoor activities and experiences. There is also a need to promote the link between physical and mental health and enjoying and understanding the special qualities of

the AONB. This should include encouraging partnership working between health professionals and other stakeholders to implement measures such as 'green' prescriptions (for example, prescribing walks in the Cotswolds AONB). Where appropriate, links should be developed between these health and wellbeing aspirations and the enhancement of ecological networks and the provision of green infrastructure.

# CHAPTER 7. DELIVERY

## COTSWOLDS CONSERVATION BOARD DELIVERY

The Board will play an important role in delivering the vision, outcomes and policies of the Management Plan. The Board's work programme for how it will contribute to the delivery of the Management Plan is set out in the Board's separate, rolling, three-year Business Plan. The Business Plan also summarises the Board's income and expenditure. Appendix 5 provides a flowchart of the links between the Management Plan and the Board's Business Plan, which shows how the vision, outcomes and policies of the Management Plan are translated into measurable actions for the Board.

The Board will monitor and evaluate its contribution to the delivery of the Management Plan through the quarterly and annual review of its Business Plan. The Board will also produce a 'State of the Cotswolds AONB Report' prior to each Management Plan review, which will help to gauge progress towards achieving the Management Plan vision. The 'State of the Cotswolds AONB Report' – together with other monitoring and surveys - will also contribute to the provision of up-to-date evidence, which is a crucial part of managing the AONB.

Appendix 7 shows the key indicators that will be used to monitor the delivery of the Management Plan.

## STAKEHOLDER DELIVERY

Although the Board is the body responsible for preparing and publishing the Management Plan and will play an important role in its delivery, the Board doesn't actually own or directly manage any of the land in the AONB or its setting. As such, the policies of the Management Plan are also intended to guide the work of other stakeholders in helping to deliver the Management Plan's vision and outcomes.

The detail of how other stakeholders administer and resource their contributions to the delivery of the Management Plan is too complex to cover in this Management Plan, particularly given that the AONB cuts across 15 local authority areas. However, the 'Stakeholder Delivery' table in Appendix 6 outlines the key actions that the Board invites specific stakeholders to undertake in order to help deliver the Management Plan, conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB and increase the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities. The actions and policies listed in the table are not intended to be exhaustive.

In essence, stakeholders are asked to:

- have regard to the Management Plan, including its vision, outcomes and, perhaps most importantly, its policies;
- incorporate the Management Plan's vision, outcomes and policies into their own plans, policies, proposals, work programmes and decisions, where appropriate.

The Board will endeavour to monitor the key actions identified in the 'Stakeholder Delivery' table in Appendix 6. It will also endeavour to monitor compliance with the 'duty of regard' (see Appendix 3).

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1. AONB DESIGNATION

The Cotswolds AONB was designated in 1966 and extended in area in 1990. At 790 square miles, or 2038 square kilometres, it is the largest AONB and the third largest protected landscape in England.

AONBs are landscapes whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard them<sup>39</sup>. They have the same landscape status as National Parks.

The statutory purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance their natural beauty<sup>40</sup>. AONBs are designated in law following a prescribed process which includes an objective appraisal of landscape quality, statutory assessments by the national conservation agencies and wide consultation with stakeholders including local landowners, residents and businesses<sup>41</sup>.

Each AONB has been designated by reason of its 'special qualities'. These include the flora, fauna, historical and cultural associations as well as landscape and scenic views, as outlined in Chapter 2 of the Management Plan.

AONBs exist within a legal framework which has been progressively strengthened since the first AONBs came into existence after the Second World War. The primary, or enabling, legislation for the designation of AONBs was the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 subsumed and strengthened the AONB provisions of the 1949 Act. It confirmed the purpose and significance of AONBs, clarified the procedure for their designation, and created a firm legislative basis for their designation, protection and management. The Act also provided for the establishment of Conservation Boards to manage AONBs -see Appendix 3.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are part of a family of protected areas recognised and classified by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) throughout the world. IUCN recognises AONBs and National Parks in England and Wales as Category V Protected Landscapes – a protected area managed mainly for landscape protection and recreation.

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<sup>39</sup> Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) (2015) *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Landscape Protection and Enhancement Support Scheme (England) 2015 – 17. Application to European Commission*.

<sup>40</sup> Section 82, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

<sup>41</sup> National Association of AONBs (2018) *AONB Management Plan Revision. Specimen text: policy and legal framework*.

## APPENDIX 2. NATURAL BEAUTY

The concept of natural beauty is one of the cornerstones of legislation to protect landscapes in the UK. It has been the basis for the designation of AONBs and National Parks since the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act.

Natural beauty goes well beyond scenic or aesthetic value. It encompasses everything that makes an area distinctive: geology, climate, soil, plants, animals, communities, archaeology, buildings, the people who live in it, past and present, and the perceptions of those who visit it<sup>42</sup>. It is widely accepted that natural beauty is, in part, due to human intervention, such as agriculture<sup>43</sup>.

Natural England has developed a list of natural beauty criteria<sup>44</sup> to be used when assessing landscapes for designation as AONBs or National Parks, as outlined in the table below. It is Natural England's view that the practical application of the natural beauty criteria is identical for National Park and AONB designations, despite there being differences in the degree to which the criterion is clarified in the legislation<sup>45</sup>. So, for example, the extent to which wildlife and cultural heritage are factored into natural beauty assessments by Natural England is the same for both AONBs and National Parks. It is also the Government's formal position that the natural beauty required of an AONB and a National Park are the same<sup>46</sup>.

**Table of factors related to natural beauty<sup>47</sup>**

<b>Landscape quality</b> This is a measure of the physical state or condition of the landscape.
<b>Scenic quality</b> The extent to which the landscape appeals to the senses (primarily, but not only, the visual senses).
<b>Relative wildness</b> The degree to which relatively wild character can be perceived in the landscape makes a particular contribution to sense of place.
<b>Relative tranquillity</b> The degree to which relative tranquillity can be perceived in the landscape.
<b>Natural heritage features</b> The influence of natural heritage on the perception of the natural beauty of the area. Natural heritage includes flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features.
<b>Cultural heritage</b> The influence of cultural heritage on the perception of natural beauty of the area and the degree to which associations with particular people, artists, writers or events in history contribute to such perception.

The list is not intended to be exhaustive and other factors may be relevant in some circumstances. Not all factors will be relevant in every case.

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<sup>42</sup> Countryside Agency (2001) *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans. A guide*. Countryside Agency Publications. West Yorkshire.

<sup>43</sup> Natural England (2011) *Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England*.

<sup>44</sup> See Footnote 36.

<sup>45</sup> See Footnote 36.

<sup>46</sup> See Lords Hansard 20 Mar 2006 (Col 51) and Commons Hansard 13 June 2000 (Col 556W).

<sup>47</sup> Table extracted from the Natural England guidance – see footnote 43.

## APPENDIX 3. COTSWOLDS CONSERVATION BOARD

The Cotswolds Conservation Board ('the Board') was established by Parliamentary Order<sup>48</sup> in 2004 and has two statutory purposes<sup>49</sup>:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB.
- To increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB.

In fulfilling these purposes, the Board has a duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the AONB<sup>50</sup>.

These purposes and duties are modelled on those of the National Park Authorities. In circumstances where the two purposes are irreconcilable, the Board must give priority to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB<sup>51</sup>.

The Board consists of 37 members, of whom 15 are nominated by local authorities, eight by parish councils and 14 are appointed by government. The Board's work programme is administered by a small team of staff, supported by a network of Cotswold Voluntary Wardens who deliver a programme of practical projects and guided walks across the AONB. It is one of only two Conservation Boards in England, the other being the Chilterns Conservation Board.

The Board has a statutory responsibility, under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000, to draft and publish the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan and to review it at least every five years. The Board's work programme for how it will contribute to the delivery of the Management Plan is set out in the Board's separate, rolling, three-year Business Plan.

The Board has a series of functions or powers that it shares with the Local Authorities, as specified in the Board's Establishment Order.

As the only organisation with responsibilities for the Cotswolds AONB as a whole, the Board produces a variety of publications and guidance. This is to facilitate a consistent and coordinated approach across the whole of the AONB, which puts the purpose of AONB designation at the heart of plans, proposals, decisions and work programmes affecting the AONB.

Board publications that are of particular relevance to the Management Plan – and which are referred to in some of the Management Plan policies - are outlined below:

- **Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)** <sup>52</sup>: The LCA provides an assessment of the character, distinctiveness and qualities of the Cotswolds AONB. It also identifies and describes the AONB's component landscape character types (LCTs). It identifies 19 different LCTs in the Cotswolds AONB.

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<sup>48</sup> The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Establishment of Conservation Board) Order 2004

<sup>49</sup> Section 87, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, as amended by the NERC Act 2006.

<sup>50</sup> Section 87 of the CROW Act specifies that, '*a conservation board ... shall for that purpose [i.e. fostering social and economic well-being] co-operate with local authorities and public bodies whose functions include the promotion of economic or social development within the area of outstanding natural beauty*'.

<sup>51</sup> This prioritisation of conserving and enhancing is known as the 'Sandford Principle', after Lord Sandford, who chaired the National Parks Policy Review Committee between 1971 and 1974.

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/our-landscape/landscape-character-assessment/>

- **Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines<sup>53</sup>**: The Landscape Strategy and Guidelines provides an overview of the forces for change that are influencing the landscape of the Cotswolds AONB and outlines a series of landscape and land management strategies to help guide change in a positive and sustainable way. It is intended to help developers, local planning authorities, land managers and other decision makers to make informed decisions about the suitability of proposed development - or other changes - within each of the LCTs.
- **Positions Statements<sup>54</sup>**: The Board issues a number of Position Statements, which ‘amplify’ specific policies in, or add new policies to, the Management Plan. They contain further background information and recommended good practice. They are reviewed and updated on a regular basis.
- **Cotswolds AONB Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change<sup>55</sup>**: This document aims to assist a wide range of stakeholders to broaden their understanding of what makes the Cotswolds AONB special and different from other parts of the country.

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<sup>53</sup> <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/our-landscape/landscape-strategy-guidelines/>

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/our-landscape/position-statements-2/>

<sup>55</sup> Cotswolds Conservation Board (2003) *Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change*. Produced by Latham Architects for the Cotswolds AONB Partnership.

## APPENDIX 4. THE ‘DUTY OF REGARD’

Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 states that:

- *In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.*

This duty is known as the ‘duty of regard’ (or the ‘duty to have regard’). It is the equivalent of Section 96 of the Environment Act 1995, which provides for a duty of regard in National Parks.

In this context, ‘relevant authority’ includes any:

- Minister of the Crown;
- public body;
- statutory undertaker;
- person holding public office.

Guidance on the duty of regard, published by Defra in 2005, provides an indicative - but not exhaustive - list of relevant authorities<sup>56</sup>.

The duty of regard is intended to ensure that the purpose for which an AONB has been designated (i.e. to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB) is recognised as an essential consideration in any decisions or activities that impact on the AONB, with the expectation that adverse impacts will be avoided or mitigated where possible<sup>57</sup>. Relevant authorities will also be expected to have regard to this purpose where activities outside the boundaries of an AONB may have an impact within the AONB<sup>58</sup>.

The use of the word ‘duty’ in the legislation means that having regard to AONB purposes is something all ‘relevant authorities’ must do: it is not discretionary. This point is reinforced by use of the word ‘shall’ rather than, for example, ‘may’<sup>59</sup>.

Relevant authorities are expected to be able to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the duty of regard. Where their decisions may affect AONBs, they should be able to clearly show how they have considered the purpose of AONB designation in their decision making. The Defra guidance, together with guidance published by Natural England<sup>60</sup>, considers it to be good practice for the relevant authority to:

- **consider the duty of regard at several points** in any decision-making process or activities, including during initial thinking, at more detailed planning stages, and at implementation;
- **provide written evidence** that they have had regard and considered whether it is, or is not, relevant;
- **undertake and make publicly available an assessment** of any policy, plan, programme or project which is likely to affect land within these areas;

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<sup>56</sup> Defra (2005) *Duties on relevant authorities to have regard to the purposes of National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads*. Defra Publications. London

<sup>57</sup> Natural England (2010) *England’s statutory designated landscapes: a practical guide to your duty of regard*.

<sup>58</sup> See Footnote 48.

<sup>59</sup> See Footnote 48.

<sup>60</sup> See Footnote 48.



- ensure that decisions affecting these areas are **properly considered and recorded** in high level policy documents and public statements;
- **set out the actions they have taken to comply** and any examples of good practice;
- **make reference to the duty of regard** in their annual reports and/or other appropriate monitoring documents.

Being able to demonstrate compliance in these ways may help relevant authorities if challenged on their compliance with the duty of regard, for instance at any public inquiry.

In line with this best practice, the Cotswolds Conservation Board makes the following recommendation. Where the Board has made a formal representation that relates to the function of a relevant authority (for example, where the Board has made a representation on a Local Plan, planning application or proposed activity), the Board recommends that the relevant authority should provide a written, publicly available statement of how the Board's representation has been taken into account, when requested to do so by the Board. Where the relevant authority's decisions or activities are not in line with the recommendations of the Board, the statement should include an explanation of the reasons for this variance. The Board will work in partnership with relevant authorities to develop agreed protocols for this process. Although relevant authorities are not obliged to follow the recommendations that the Board makes in its representations, the extent to which they do so provides a useful indicator of their regard to the purpose of AONB designation.

In line with the Defra and Natural England guidance on the duty of regard, the Board will:

- monitor compliance with the duty of regard, particularly any breaches of compliance with this duty;
- include a brief assessment of compliance with the duty of regard in its Annual Report, including, where appropriate, highlighting positive examples of good practice;
- refer any issues of non-compliance that can't be resolved through discussion to Natural England<sup>61</sup>. Natural England may, where the circumstances warrant it, undertake additional investigation. Natural England will provide an annual summary report on significant cases to the relevant Minister.

On a related point, it is worth noting that Section 84 of the CROW Act states that:

- *A local planning authority whose area consists of or includes the whole or any part of an area of outstanding natural beauty has power ... to take all such action as appears to them expedient for the accomplishment of the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty or so much of it as is included in their area.*

This adds further weight to the requirement for local planning authorities to comply with the duty of regard.

There are many opportunities for relevant authorities and other organisations to take a proactive approach to supporting the purpose of AONB designation and management of the AONB. As stated in the Defra guidance, the duty of regard provides an '*opportunity for all relevant authorities to show their commitment to conserving and enhancing our finest landscapes, to which end clear public expressions of this commitment would be helpful to all*'.

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<sup>61</sup> Where possible, the Board would seek to resolve any issues of non-compliance with the relevant authority before reaching this stage.

## APPENDIX 5. MANAGEMENT PLAN – BUSINESS PLAN FLOWCHART

Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023	Cotswolds Conservation Board Business Planning 2019-22	Detailed Operational Planning	Reporting
Three <b>Key Issues</b> and four <b>Ambitions</b> to address them.			<b>State of the Cotswolds Report</b> Long term data including the Management Plan's monitoring indicators. Published publicly every 2-3 years
<b>Vision and Outcomes</b> describing the desirable character and condition of the AONB			
<b>Policies</b> to guide decisions and actions in order to realise the outcomes and vision.	<b>Communications Strategy 2017-20</b> (separate document with targets included in the Work Programme)		
	<b>Summary Work Programme</b> What the Board will do to achieve the Management Plan's outcomes – a concise description of actions summarised under the Management Plan's outcomes over 3 years	<b>Detailed Work Programme</b> Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic and Timed targets and milestones for the Board's actions over 3 years	<b>Work Programme Reporting</b> Progress reviewed quarterly against the first year's SMART targets and milestones. Highlights and variances reported to the Executive Committee.
	<b>Summary Budget</b> Income and expenditure over 3 years. Expenditure summarised under the Management Plan's outcomes	<b>Detailed Budget</b> Income and expenditure over 3 years for all budget codes	<b>Budget Reporting</b> First year's performance for income and expenditure with variances over £1,000 reported quarterly to the Executive Committee.

## APPENDIX 6. STAKEHOLDER DELIVERY – PRIORITY ACTIONS

As indicated in Chapter 1, this table provides an indication of the key measures that the Board invites specific stakeholders to undertake in order to help deliver the Management Plan and achieve a conserved and enhanced AONB that is better understood and enjoyed.

Stakeholder	Key measure (i.e. 'if you do nothing else to support the implementation of the Management Plan, please do this')	Most relevant policies
All stakeholders	Have regard to the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan and other Cotswolds Conservation Board guidance. This should include helping to deliver the vision, outcomes and policies of the AONB Management Plan by: (i) addressing them – and, where appropriate, adopting them - in relevant plans, policies, proposals, work programmes, decisions and actions; and (ii) recognising them as priorities for investment.	CC1, CE1, CE3, CE8, CE10
All 'relevant authorities' <sup>62</sup>	Demonstrate, document and report on compliance with the 'duty of regard'.	CC2
Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)	Ensure that the Government's review of protected landscapes, launched in 2018, enhances the level of protection afforded to AONBs and champions their value to the nation.	CC1, CE10
	Following the Government's review of protected landscapes, publish new guidance on protected landscapes <sup>63</sup> , reinforcing the role and purpose of our protected landscape family.	CC1, CE1, CE8, CE10
	Review the Government's guidance on 'the duty of regard' to make the duty more robust.	CC2
	Establish post-Brexit environmental land management and rural development support mechanisms specifically for the Cotswolds AONB.	CE8
	Following the conclusion of the Glover Review, support any recommendation for the Cotswolds to be considered a National Park.	CC1
Ministry of Housing Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG)	Publish new guidance, to accompany the new National Planning Policy Framework (published in 2018), which clarifies and explains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the meaning of 'highest status of protection';</li> <li>that development in AONBs should be limited;</li> <li>what the development priorities should be for AONBs (i.e. affordable housing and improvement of services);</li> <li>what constitutes 'exceptional circumstances' and 'in the public interest', in the context of major development.</li> </ul>	CC1, CE10, CE11, CE12
Natural England	Endorse the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan.	
	Support the establishment and delivery of post-Brexit environmental land management and rural development support mechanisms specifically for the Cotswolds AONB.	CE8

<sup>62</sup> As defined in Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, which is explained in Appendix 4. Includes all public bodies and statutory undertakers.

<sup>63</sup> For example, an updated version of 'English National Parks and the Broads. UK Government Vision and Circular 2010' (Defra, 2010), but which would also address AONBs.

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Key measure (i.e. ‘if you do nothing else to support the implementation of the Management Plan, please do this’)</b>	<b>Most relevant policies</b>
	Provide funding for National Trails through three-year rolling funding streams, and provide cohesive national co-ordination for the long term.	UE2
	Support measures to ensure that Natura 2000 sites, National Nature Reserves and SSSIs are brought into good condition.	CE7
	Support the case for the Cotswolds being designated as a National Park.	CC1
<b>Forestry Commission</b>	Endorse the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan.	
	Support the establishment and delivery of post-Brexit environmental land management and rural development support mechanisms specifically for the Cotswolds AONB.	CE8, CE7
	Support the case for the Cotswolds being designated as a National Park.	CC1
<b>Environment Agency</b>	Endorse the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan.	All
	Support the delivery of the Cotswold River Valleys Nature Improvement Area, for example, through appropriate policies and actions in River Basin and Catchment Management Plans.	CE7
	Lead on the delivery of actions to implement the Water Framework Directive.	CC6
	Support the case for the Cotswolds being designated as a National Park.	CC1
<b>Historic England</b>	Endorse the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan.	CE6
	Facilitate greater access to the Cotswolds AONB Historic Landscape Character Assessment and Historic Environment Records.	CE6
	Work with other stakeholders to enhance the interpretation of core properties and scheduled ancient monuments.	CE6
	Support measures to ensure that scheduled ancient monuments are brought into good condition.	CE6
<b>Health and Wellbeing Boards</b>	Work with stakeholders to commission health walks and conservation activity as an adjunct or alternative to normal prescription treatment.	UE3
	Invest in programmes to help deprived communities, within the Cotswolds AONB and surrounding areas, overcome barriers preventing them from realising the mental and physical health benefits of enjoying the AONB.	UE2
<b>Local Enterprise Partnerships</b>	Support the development of a Cotswolds Rural Skills Academy.	CE1
	Support rural development.	CE8, CE10, CE1, UE1
<b>Local Authorities</b>	Endorse the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan.	
	Recognise the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan as a material consideration in Local Plans and in planning decisions.	CE10
	Include a policy specifically about the Cotswolds AONB in Local Plans, which specifies how the purpose of AONB designation will be achieved in the Local Plan area.	CE10

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Key measure (i.e. ‘if you do nothing else to support the implementation of the Management Plan, please do this’)</b>	<b>Most relevant policies</b>
	Prioritise the provision of affordable housing to meet identified local needs arising from within the AONB.	CE12
	Maintain and enhance public access, roads, public transport and countryside management, in line with the policies of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan.	UE2, CE10, UE1, CE1, CE6, CE7, CE8
<b>Town and Parish Councils and Parish Meetings</b>	Use the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines to inform Neighbourhood Plans, Parish Plans and Village Design Statements and when considering planning applications.	CC1, CC2, CE10, CE12
	Celebrate and promote the fact that the town or parish lies within the Cotswolds AONB by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• utilising AONB boundary markers;</li> <li>• incorporating ‘within the Cotswolds AONB’ text in village or town entry signs;</li> <li>• providing information about the Cotswolds AONB on information panels and displays in the town or parish.</li> </ul>	UE2
<b>Conservation organisations</b>	Help to halt and reverse declines in priority habitats and species.	CE7
	Help to establish and manage coherent and resilient ecological networks across the AONB landscape.	CE7
<b>Historic environment and cultural heritage organisations</b>	Support the conservation, enhancement, promotion and monitoring of the historical environment and cultural heritage of the Cotswolds AONB.	CE6
<b>Farmers, landowners, land managers and related organisations</b>	Use the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan and guidance published by the Cotswolds Conservation Board, including the Landscape Strategy and Guidelines, to inform investment, development, and land management decisions and actions.	All
	Support the establishment and delivery of post-Brexit environmental land management and rural development support mechanisms specifically for the Cotswolds AONB.	CE8
<b>Tourism organisations and tourism providers</b>	Support the development of the Caring for the Cotswolds visitor giving scheme.	UE1
	Support a coordinated approach to tourism across the whole of the Cotswolds, including the implementation of the Cotswolds Destination Management Plan (published in 2014).	CC1, UE1, UE2
<b>Geology Trusts</b>	Support the conservation and enhancement of geological and geomorphological features in the Cotswolds AONB.	CE2
	Support the increased understanding and awareness of geological and geomorphological features in the Cotswolds AONB.	CE2
<b>Developers and infrastructure providers</b>	Avoid adverse impacts on the Cotswolds AONB resulting from development and infrastructure provision. Mitigate unavoidable impacts and, as a last resort, compensate for impacts that cannot be mitigated on site, for example, by enhancing visual amenity.	CE1, CE10

Stakeholder	Key measure (i.e. 'if you do nothing else to support the implementation of the Management Plan, please do this')	Most relevant policies
(including utilities, rail and highways)	Ensure that any major infrastructure projects that are permitted in the Cotswolds AONB are 'landscape-led' <sup>64</sup> .	CE11

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<sup>64</sup> See Policy CE11, paragraph 2, for more details on what 'landscape-led' means in this context.

# APPENDIX 7. MONITORING INDICATORS

## THE FOUR AMBITIONS

As indicated in Chapter 4 (Key Issues and Ambitions), Board will use the ambitions identified in that chapter as headline indicators of its performance in helping to deliver the 2018-2023 Management Plan. For this reason, indicators for each of these ambitions are shown below. These ‘ambition’ indicators will also be used as indicators for relevant policies.

### **Ambition 1. Promotion of the Cotswolds as the Walking and Exploring Capital of England.**

- Indicator 1: Downloads of walking and exploring resources from the Cotswolds Conservation Board website.
- Indicator 2: Recognition of and use, by other organisations, of the Walking & Exploring Capital term and concept

### **Ambition 2. The local design and delivery of a Cotswolds package of agri-environment payments for public goods and services and rural development support.**

- Indicator 3: Establishment of a Cotswolds-specific package of environmental land management and rural support payments.

### **Ambition 3. Ensuring communities and businesses within and around the AONB identify and celebrate being part of a nationally recognised landscape.**

- Indicator 4: % of respondents ‘highly valuing’ the Cotswold AONB in residents & visitor surveys.

### **Ambition 4. To promote the case for the Cotswolds being designated as England’s next National Park.**

- Indicator 5: Government support for a Cotswolds National Park.

## MANAGEMENT PLAN OUTCOMES AND POLICIES

### CROSS CUTTING

#### **Working Together (Outcome 1)**

Policy CC1 (see Indicator 4)

Policy CC2

- Indicator 6: % of planning decisions that demonstrably have regard to the purpose of AONB designation.
- Indicator 7: % of planning decisions that are made in line with CCB recommendations.

Policy CC3 (see Indicator 4)

## **Natural and Cultural Capital and Ecosystem Services (Outcome 2)**

### **Policy CC4**

- Indicator 8: Extent to which the natural and cultural capital of the Cotswolds AONB has been assessed and evaluated.

### **Policy CC5**

- Indicator 9: Area of land under agri-environment schemes for soil management.

### **Policy CC6**

- Indicator 10: % of water bodies achieving 'good' ecological status.

## **Climate Change (Outcome 3)**

### **Policy CC7**

- Indicator 11: Number of renewable energy schemes permitted in the Cotswolds AONB.

### **Policy CC8**

- Indicator 12: Research into the predicted impacts of climate change on the Cotswolds AONB.

## **CONSERVING AND ENHANCING**

## **Landscape (Outcome 4)**

### **Policy CE1**

- Indicator 13: Changes to landscape character identified through fixed point photography.

### **Policy CE2:**

- Indicator 14: Condition of designated geological sites.

## **Local Distinctiveness (Outcome 5)**

### **Policy CE3**

- Indicator 15: Publication of development design guidance.

## **Tranquillity (Outcome 6)**

### **Policy CE4**

- Indicator 16: % of AONB recorded as 'most tranquil'.

## **Dark Skies (Outcome 7)**

### **Policy CE5**

- Indicator 17: % of AONB affected by light pollution.

## **Historic Environment (Outcome 8)**

### **Policy CE6**

- Indicator 18: Area of land under agri-environment schemes for the management and protection of archaeological features.



- Indicator 19: Number of sites identified as Heritage at Risk.

### **Biodiversity (Outcome 9)**

#### Policy CE7

- Indicator 20: SSSI condition.
- Indicator 21: % of area of priority habitats managed under agri-environment schemes.

### **Rural Land Management (Outcome 10)**

#### Policy CE8 (see also Indicator 2)

- Indicator 22: % of land (including woodland) managed under agri-environment schemes.

#### Policy CE9

- Indicator 23: Extent of tree pests and diseases.

### **Development and Transport (Outcome 11)**

#### Policy CE10:

- Indicator 24: Number of adopted Local Plans with policy-level reference to the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan.

#### Policy CE11:

- Indicator 25: Number of major developments permitted by local planning authorities.

#### Policy CE12:

- Indicator 26: Number of new housing units permitted.

#### Policy CE13

- Indicator 27: Number of landfill and strategic waste management sites permitted.

## **UNDERSTANDING AND ENJOYMENT**

### **Sustainable Tourism (Outcome 12)**

#### Policy UE1:

- Indicator 28: Number of businesses that are signed up to the Caring for the Cotswolds visitor giving scheme.
- Indicator 29: Income generated through the Caring for the Cotswolds visitor giving scheme.

### **Access and Recreation (Outcome 13)**

#### Policy UE2 (see also Indicator 1):

- Indicator 30: Number of improvements made to the Public Rights of Way network by the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens.

### **Health and Well-being (Outcome 14)**

#### Policy UE3:

- Indicator 31: Number of educational projects run by the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens.

## APPENDIX 8. PRIORITY HABITATS AND SPECIES

This list of priority habitats and species for the Cotswolds AONB is adapted from Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, which lists the habitats and species that are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The habitats and species listed below are considered to be: (i) characteristic of the Cotswolds; and / or (ii) those for which the Cotswolds AONB is considered to a stronghold of those particular habitats or species. There are other priority habitats and species within the AONB, which merit an appropriate level of protection, but which do not meet the two criteria outlined above. Habitats with an asterisk (\*) are not on the NERC Act list but have been identified, by the Board and relevant stakeholders, as priorities for the Cotswolds AONB.

### HABITATS

Lowland mixed deciduous woodland  
Lowland beech and yew woodland  
Wood pasture, parkland and veteran trees  
Lowland calcareous grasslands  
Flushes, streams and rivers  
Arable field margins important for birds and plant species  
Hedgerows  
Common box woodland  
Areas important for bats ('batscapes')\*  
H7720 petrifying springs with tufa formation (Crataneurion)\*

### SPECIES

Farmland birds, such as skylark, lapwing and corn bunting  
Pearl-bordered fritillary  
Arable plants  
Juniper  
Cotswold pennycress  
Bats  
Dormouse  
Water vole  
Brown hare  
Limestone grassland butterflies  
Marsh fritillary  
Violet click beetle  
White clawed crayfish  
Native brown trout  
Bath asparagus\*  
Common box\*  
Rockrose pot beetle  
Rugged oil beetle  
Ancient woodland ground flora, such as helleborines and angular Solomon seal.

## APPENDIX 9. MAJOR DEVELOPMENT

Footnote 55 of the NPPF clarifies that:

- *‘For the purposes of paragraphs 172 [relating to protected landscapes, including AONBs] and 173 [relating to Heritage Coasts], whether a development is ‘major development’ is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined’.*

As such, it is not possible or appropriate to apply a blanket definition for what should be treated as major development in the Cotswolds AONB. Nevertheless, there are some key factors that help to define if a development is major, as outlined below.

The purpose for which the Cotswolds AONB has been designated is to conserve and enhance its natural beauty. Therefore, the judgement as to whether or not a development is major development depends, to a large degree, on whether or not the development could have a significant adverse impact on the natural beauty of the AONB. As outlined in Appendix 2, natural beauty incorporates a number of criteria, including landscape quality, scenic quality, tranquillity, natural heritage and cultural heritage. Within the context of the Cotswolds AONB, those aspects of the AONB’s natural beauty which make the area distinctive and which are particularly valuable – the AONB’s ‘special qualities’ - are listed in Chapter 2.

On this basis, a development should be considered ‘major’ if, by reason of its nature, scale and / or setting, it could have a significant adverse impact on any of the above criteria, including the AONB’s ‘special qualities’. As well as potential impacts within the AONB, consideration should also be given to impacts on these criteria within the setting of the AONB, particularly in the context of visual impact (i.e. views into and out of the AONB) and impacts on tranquillity.

As outlined in paragraph 172 of the NPPF, applications for such development should include an assessment of:

- a. *‘the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy’;*

The Board would expect any such development proposal be accompanied by a statement of need in the context of national considerations and, ideally, in the context of needs arising from within the AONB. The impacts of permitting or refusing the development should be clearly identified, including the social, economic and environmental impacts, with specific reference to the impacts upon the natural beauty, special qualities of the AONB, and the economic and social needs (including housing needs) of the local communities affected. Such a statement should be based upon objective assessment and clear evidence.

- b. *‘the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way’;*

The Board would encourage any such development proposal to be accompanied by a report setting out a sequential approach to site selection. This should evidence the extent to which alternative sites have been assessed before the selection of sites within the AONB, and clearly identify why sites outside of the designated area could not be developed. The report should also identify and evidence why the need for the development could not be met in some other way. The report should include relevant evidence of the cost of developing outside of the AONB.

*c. 'any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated'.*

The Board would expect any such development proposal to be accompanied by a report identifying any detrimental effects upon the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities. Such a report should relate directly to the special qualities of the AONB as a whole as well as those specific to the development site.

Any mitigation identified to moderate these impacts should be:

- clearly detailed, in line with the duty to conserve and enhance the AONB,
- be compatible with the objectives of the AONB Management Plan, and
- be capable of realisation through robust planning conditions or obligation.