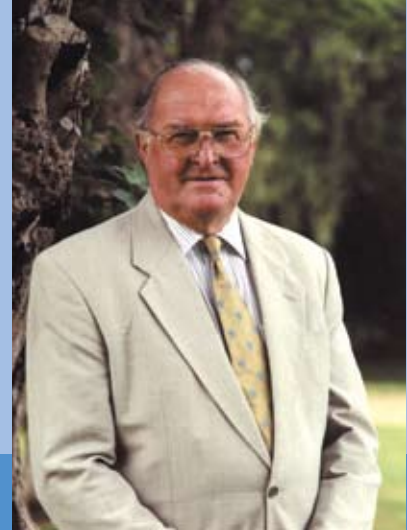


Cotswolds Conservation Board Annual Review 2009-10



Foreword

The Lord Plumb of Coleshill, DL FRAGS



As we move into a new era of coalition Government we cannot ignore the fact that there are many economic challenges to be met and tough times ahead for all of us. However, with these challenges come opportunities. I believe the Board is very well placed to grasp these new opportunities and build on its strong track record of developing creative solutions with cost effective, delegated delivery at the local level.

The impact of the global recession over the last couple of years has provided a stern lesson in the global nature of our economics, a consequence of which is that public finances are under considerable pressure and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future.

As the only organisation that looks at the bigger Cotswolds AONB picture, the Board is well placed to understand and communicate the wider environmental, social and economic benefits of both its work and the Cotswolds in general.

The evidence base for these benefits is already developing, for example the mental and physical health benefits of a high quality natural environment, which is an increasingly important consideration for the Board.

Climate change is still the dominant issue of our time and has impacted on wider thinking concerning the conservation of biodiversity.

Landscape connectivity is gaining ground as the focus has moved away from the management of isolated sites to helping our wildlife adapt to a changing climate on a landscape scale. This is natural territory for the Board which, with an area-wide remit has always looked at the landscape as a whole, and never on a site by site basis.

With failed efforts nationally to achieve the UK2010 biodiversity targets, it is now more important than ever to conserve our landscapes as a whole, from both an economical and ecological perspective.

Conserving and enhancing the special nature and character of the Cotswolds whilst helping people to enjoy the place in the face of these changes will continue to be the board's defining challenge. Since its inauguration the Board has developed an extremely successful track record of policy and practice and has a range of skills, knowledge and expertise to develop solutions tailored to meet the challenges facing the AONB in the future.

We must continue to show leadership and work with our partners and communities to ensure the Cotswolds remains a very special place to all those who live, work and visit here.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Henry Plumb."

The Lord Plumb of Coleshill, DL FRAGS
Patron

Chairman's Introduction



Jeff West

I am delighted to welcome you to my first Annual Review as the new Chairman of the Cotswolds Conservation Board.

I must first take this opportunity to thank and congratulate my predecessor, Niel Curwen, who has done such a sterling job in driving the Board forward, from its origins as the Cotswolds AONB Partnership to the strong Board we have today. It is an organisation of which I am immensely proud and honoured to serve as its Chairman.

The past year has been an extremely busy one. We have taken our work on climate change adaptation and mitigation forward with the publication of our study into the future of farming and forestry. This study has presented us with the realisation that we must act now if we are to help conserve and enhance our very special landscape in the decades to come.

I am pleased that our Annual Forum and Farming Forum gave us an excellent opportunity to discuss these important issues with nearly 150 of our colleagues and partners and we are now looking forward to progressing this work with them in the coming year.

The year has of course presented us with many challenges. Developmental pressures were again upon us with the proposed construction of a gas pipeline by National Grid through the AONB. Although of course disappointed with the final route selection despite our vehement objections, we have built a close working relationship with the National Grid team, and negotiated additional funds for local landowners and communities to help mitigate the impact of the construction and enhance the landscape where possible.

Many of our conservation projects have continued to make excellent progress. Our work on Higher Level Stewardship, including the Farmland Bird Project, is making great strides, while the rural skills programme continues to attract a great deal of interest and enthusiasm from participants.

Our plans to help support and develop sustainable tourism in the Cotswolds have moved forward and our Sustainable Development Fund has continued to support a variety of worthy and innovative projects.

Our work on the My Countryside project took a step further with the submission of the funding application and we look to work with colleagues to increase opportunities for more people to access the countryside in the future.

Once again, our voluntary wardens have contributed a record breaking number of hours, with their usual dedication and enthusiasm for the AONB and I thank them heartily for this. I would also like to thank all the officers for their ongoing hard work, as well as our many partners - local, regional, national and international - for their continued support, and I look forward to working with you all in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff West". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Jeff West
Chairman
Cotswolds Conservation Board

The Cotswolds – an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is one of the country's best known and most loved landscapes. It is an area enjoyed by millions for its peaceful countryside, honey-coloured buildings, pretty villages, breathtaking viewpoints and historical features.

Covering almost 800 square miles, the Cotswolds AONB is the largest member of the AONB family. All members of this family (along with our national parks) are internationally recognised as 'Protected Landscapes', a category of protected area which is about lived-in, working landscapes of high environmental value. Their recognition by IUCN - the International Union for Conservation of Nature - is a measure of the importance of such areas and the contribution that they make to conservation. Protected Landscapes account for about 6% of all the protected land and water globally.

Cotswolds AONB – Did you know...

- The AONB area covers 790 sq miles (2,038 sq km).
- Farmland covers 86% of the AONB.
- Over half of the country's flower-rich (Jurassic) limestone grassland is found in the Cotswolds.
- There is a network of dry-stone walls longer than the Great Wall of China.

- It is home to internationally important lowland beech and yew woodland.
- Local stone has been quarried in the Cotswolds since Neolithic times.
- The endangered species of snail, *Lauria sempronii*, is found on just one Cotswold wall.
- The Cotswold Way National Trail is one of the AONB's most popular attractions, visited by over 150,000 people every year.
- It has 10% of the country's breeding horseshoe bats.
- There is a population of 158,000 people living in the AONB.
- There are five European Special Areas of Conservation; 3 National Nature Reserves and over 80 Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
- The native Cotswolds sheep was known as the Cotswold Lion at one time providing wool for over half of England's cloth.
- There are over 3000 miles of public footpath in the AONB, including the Cotswold Way and Thames Path National Trails plus over 15 other long distance recreational paths.
- There are more than 23 million visitors each year.





International Year of Biodiversity



2010 International Year of Biodiversity

2010 has been declared the International Year of Biodiversity by the United Nations. The Cotswolds AONB along with people the world over are working to safeguard this irreplaceable natural wealth and reduce biodiversity loss.

AONBs are home to some of the UK's most exquisite and unusual wildlife species. It is this rich biodiversity that makes them special.

Further information on this year-long celebration can be found at www.biodiversityislife.net.

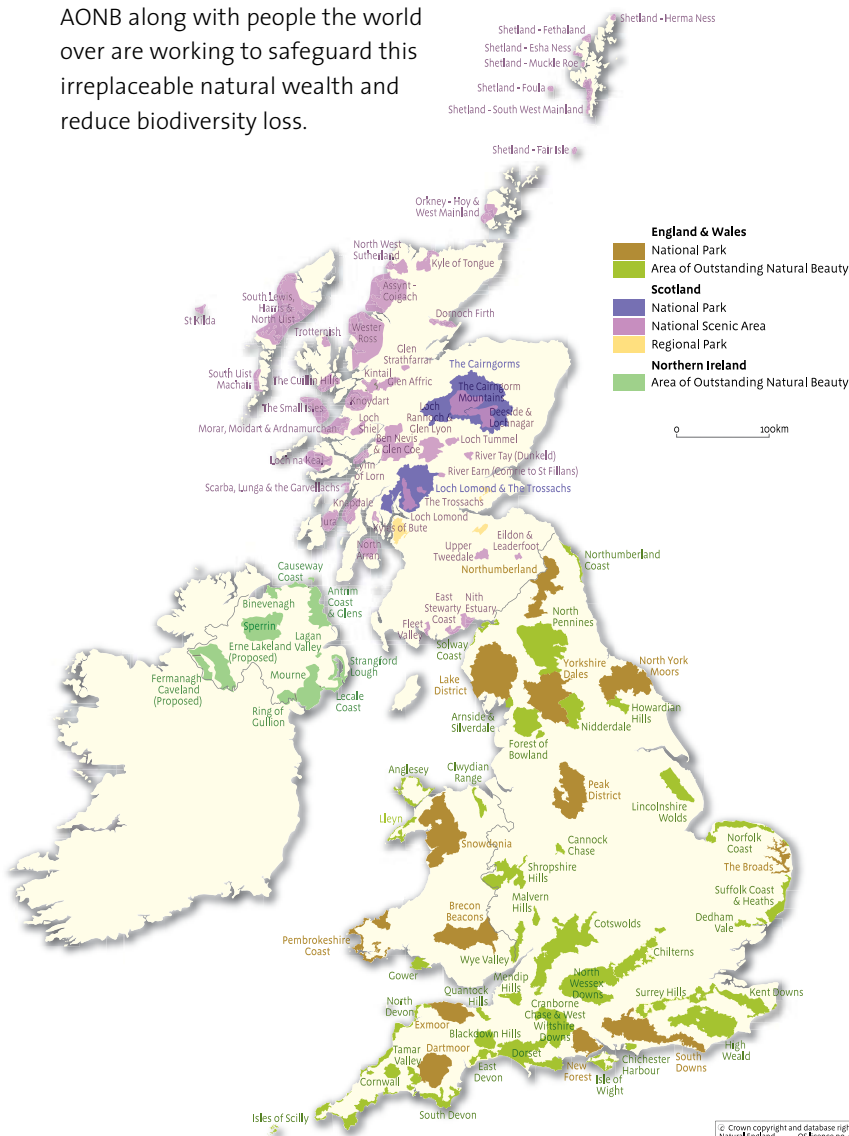
Cotswolds Conservation Board

The purpose of the Cotswolds Conservation Board is to conserve and enhance the Cotswolds AONB, and to increase understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area. In fulfilling these roles, the Board seeks to foster the social and economic well-being of its local communities.

Established in 2005, the Board is an independent statutory organisation made up of 37 members appointed by local authorities, parish councils and Government. It has a team of 16 staff based in the town of Northleach, and is supported by some 350 voluntary wardens, many of whom dedicate thousands of hours each year to conservation and promotional work throughout the AONB.

The Board works closely with all those who have the interests of the AONB at heart and plays a key role in looking strategically at the AONB as a whole and the issues it faces and opportunities it provides. It is funded by Natural England and through contributions from local authorities. It also levers in additional match funding through grant schemes, the voluntary wardens service and other projects. In 2009-10, the Board was able to generate an additional £448 for the AONB for every £1 contribution by local authorities.

The Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2008-13 sets out the Board's policies and actions to achieve its key aims and objectives.



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Highlights of 2009-10

The Board made a significant number of achievements during 2009-10. Here are some of the highlights from this year:

- The Future of Farming and Forestry in the Cotswolds AONB study was published.
- Over 152 people attended rural skills courses including new courses in green woodworking and thatching.
- The Board negotiated a £300,000 fund from National Grid towards the mitigation of the impact on the landscape and communities affected by the construction of a gas pipeline from Wormington to Sapperton.
- The Cotswold Farmland Bird Project continued to go from strength to strength. It has generated £3million in first year land revenue spend since its inception in October 2008.
- The Cotswold Way Circular Walks project was launched with a series of 12 short walks designed to break down the perceived barriers that prevent a wider range of people accessing the AONB.
- Cotswold Way Hall of Fame was launched to recognize the achievements of walkers completing the full 102 miles.
- Successful Annual Forum held on 26 February attracting over 80 delegates with key speakers from Defra, Natural England, Forestry Commission and NFU.
- The Board submitted its 'My Countryside' funding application to the Access to Nature scheme.
- The Board officially registered as a candidate for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.
- The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens contributed a record 43,652 hours of voluntary work and activities for the AONB.
- Forty eight competitors took part in the Dry-stone Walling and North Cotswolds Hedgelaying Competitions.
- Environmental Guidelines for highway works in the Cotswolds AONB were adopted by the Board and the majority of highway authorities.
- Two new position statements were adopted by the Board:
 - Tranquillity and Dark Skies.
 - The Keeping of Horses and Ponies.
- The Board gained statutory consultee status for National Planning Statements and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Proposals.
- A part-time project officer was appointed for the Cotswolds Ancient Woodland Project.
- Eight projects were awarded grants from the Sustainable Development Fund.
- A new contract was agreed with Natural England to deliver successful Higher Level Stewardship applications.
- A new information leaflet about managing deer in the AONB was published in partnership with The Deer Initiative.
- The Board was able to generate an additional £448 for the AONB for every £1 contribution by local authorities.

What did we achieve in 2009-10?

Forces for change

The Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2008-13 highlights three interlinked, overarching external ‘forces for change’ which will impact significantly on the AONB:

- Climate change and our response to it.
- The effects of globalisation on agricultural land use.
- Pressures from development, changing lifestyles and transportation.

These issues will affect the special qualities of the AONB. A significant amount of work was undertaken by the Board to address these issues.

Future of Farming and Forestry

In 2009, the Board published a new report entitled ‘*The Future of Farming & Forestry in the Cotswolds AONB*’ which was prepared by Cumulus Consultants Ltd, in association with Land Use Consultants and the Royal Agricultural College, on behalf of the Board, to investigate what climate change and globalisation mean for the AONB.

The study focused on the impacts of these forces on farming and forestry which between them account for 96% of land area of the AONB and support many special features of the landscape. The study identified a number of best case, worse case and most likely scenarios for change in farming and forestry activities in the AONB over the next 20 years, and set out a number of specific recommendations to help conserve the landscape and businesses for



now and future generations.

The recommendations include the need for: ongoing research and monitoring; changing priorities to be reflected in new policies and strategies; development of new skills and training; diversification of businesses and business support; effective soil and water management; emissions control; landscape change management measures; and a closer working relationship between businesses and local communities.

Annual Forum

Over 80 people attended the Board’s Annual Forum, which was held on 26 February 2010 at Toddington Village Hall. The event provided an excellent opportunity for the Board to highlight the findings of the Future of Farming and Forestry report and discuss with its partner organisations how the AONB can help mitigate and adapt to climate change in the future.

The main speakers at the forum were from Defra, Natural England, the Forestry Commission and the National Farmers’ Union.

In addition to the key speakers were three interesting case studies that illustrated how farmers and landowners have been using renewable energy to adapt to climate change. These were National Star College and Elkstone Manor near Cheltenham, and Lowbrook Farm in Dorset.

“It’s important that we start to develop a vision for areas like the Cotswolds, and start to ask the question: ‘what are our objectives – what are we adapting for?’ It’s good to see the Cotswolds Conservation Board leading the way in starting to explore this question.”

Jim Smyllie, Executive Director, Regional Delivery, Natural England, speaking at the Annual Forum

Farming Forum

The Board’s Farming Forum on 10 March at the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, attracted 65 farmers and landowners from across the AONB to learn more about climate change and globalization, and the likely impact on farming and forestry in the Cotswolds over the next 20 years.

The event focused on the findings of The Future of Farming and Forestry in the Cotswolds report, and included discussions and presentations by Paul Silcock of Cumulus Consultants and Dr John Conway of the Royal Agricultural College.

Helping wildlife adapt to climate change

One of the ways that wildlife adapts to climate change is to move in a northerly direction to a new “climate space”. This makes the creation of wildlife corridors critically important, particularly if they run on a north south axis. In 2009-10, the Board promoted the idea of a strategic wildlife corridor, running for around 80 miles between Bath and Mickleton along the western edge of the Cotswolds. The proposed priority area was based on the limestone grasslands and ancient woodlands of the Cotswolds escarpment.

The response to the idea has been very positive and enthusiastic with both the Gloucestershire and Avon Biodiversity Partnerships suggesting parts of the corridor as priority areas.

In 2010/11 the Board will build on this groundswell of enthusiasm by bringing together a partnership, developing a project and attempting to secure funding for it.



Marbled white butterfly

Conserving & enhancing the natural beauty

Hedgelaying competition November 2009



Promoting rural skills

Dry-stone walling and hedgelaying courses

During 2009-10, the Board continued to promote and celebrate traditional techniques that have been used for hundreds of years, while raising awareness of the need for conserving the AONB's natural boundaries. A comprehensive programme featuring 10 weekend dry-stone walling courses and three hedgelaying courses attracted 125 participants in total.

Courses were held in Tetbury, Lansdown near Bath, Broadway, Long Compton, Chedworth, Rissington and Andoversford.

"John Bendle the trainer was very good, very helpful and very enthusiastic. Highly recommended." **G Dymott**

Green woodworking courses

In addition to dry-stone walling and hedgelaying, three new weekend courses in woodland rural crafts were held at Sherborne by the Board in October 2009.

Thatching taster weekend



Green woodworking courses help to raise awareness of the importance of effective woodland management through coppicing and encourage people to look more closely at woodlands to identify the products that can be derived from them. The three beginners' courses attracted 17 participants who were taught the principles of coppicing and the basic skills of cleaving, trimming, shaving and turning on a pole-lathe, as well as learning the safe use of many tools such as the billhook, bow saw and cleaving axe.

Thatching taster weekends

For the first time, the Board held two brand new taster weekends in 2009 for the traditional craft of thatching as part of the Board's annual programme of rural skills courses.

The weekends, which took place in Northleach, were attended by ten participants who were taught the different types and styles of thatching as well as how to source materials and use thatching tools. Led by Ben Thomas, a Member of the National Society of Master Thatchers, the participants were shown the principles of thatching and were able to have a go themselves.

"Thanks for the weekend, enjoyed it immensely and learnt a lot - certainly enough to give me the confidence to tackle the roof of my roundhouse when the time comes." **P. Gilbert**

Celebrating rural skills

In addition to the programme of courses, two annual competitions were held in dry-stone walling and

hedgelaying to help develop, improve and celebrate these time-honoured skills.

Twenty one dry-stone wallers and 27 hedgelayers from across the country took part in the Cotswolds AONB Open Dry-stone Walling and North Cotswolds Hedgelaying Competitions held in autumn 2009. This year also marked the 10th anniversary of the annual hedgelaying competition.

The events attracted a great deal of interest by spectators as well as participants, and judges commented on the very high standard of skill demonstrated in all classes.

New rural skills post

The functions of promoting and supporting rural skills and grants were combined into one new post, leading to better co-ordination of activity in these areas.

Skills in the Landscape

The Board submitted a new bid in March, Skills in the Landscape, to the Heritage Lottery Fund, for funding through the Skills for the Future scheme. This scheme offered a one-off opportunity to bid for funds to set up training bursaries aimed at supporting a greater diversity of people in undertaking training and work experience in heritage skills.

The scheme was a very competitive one and, although unsuccessful with the application, the Board will be seeking other opportunities to further support this work.



Corn Bunting

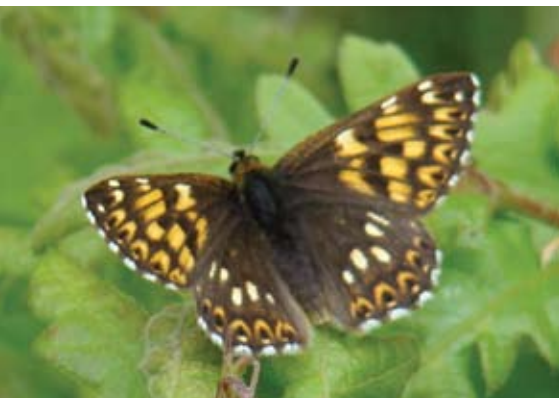
Higher Level Stewardship in the Cotswolds

Building upon its promotional work in 2008-9, developing an advisory service for landowners, in August 2009 the Board began promoting Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) within the AONB and drawing up applications to the scheme together with farmers.

The service offered by the Board included the preparation of Farm Environment Plans (FEPs), advice on suitable HLS options, preparation of all maps and forms, and submission to Natural England. At the end of March 2010, a total of 6 applications covering a combined area of over 2,000 hectares had been submitted to Natural England on behalf of farmers in the AONB, equating to a combined potential value of over £800,000 over ten years. All farms were restricted to Gloucestershire and identified by Natural England as being of high priority for inclusion in HLS as they had been previously hard to reach applicants.

Benefits of the schemes submitted during 2009-10 include the provision of habitat for arable birds as part of the Cotswold Farmland Bird Project, restoration of species-rich grassland, habitat creation for rare arable

Duke of Burgundy



plants, management of important archaeological features, creation of traditional orchards, and the restoration of hedges and dry-stone walls.

The HLS work carried out has had the additional benefit of helping to raise awareness of the Board's activities among the farming community.

Following the success of the HLS project to date, the Board will be recruiting a new HLS project officer, with funding from Natural England, to continue this work into 2010-11 and expand the service to West Oxfordshire and hopefully to other parts of the AONB in the future.

Farmland Bird Project

The Cotswold Farmland Bird Project, which was launched in 2008 with Natural England and the RSPB, continued to go from strength to strength during 2009-10.

The Cotswolds, with its nationally important population of farmland birds, is one of four projects in the wider South West Farmland Bird initiative. During the year, 59 farms were visited, covering 15,900 hectares, resulting in 54 Farm Environment Plans being approved. A total of 27 Higher Level Stewardship applications by farms were received and processed through to 'live' agreements.

The first year land revenue spend of all the agreements created by the Cotswold Farmland Bird Project from its inception in October 2008 is £3million.

These agreements are producing great results, both for farmland birds and for a whole range of other objectives. On one of the demonstration farms in the Cotswolds, five pairs of corn bunting successfully bred for the first time last year in the in-field habitats provided through Environmental Stewardship.

Promoting Higher Level Stewardship

To promote the benefits of HLS, five thousand copies of a new leaflet aimed at farmers were produced and distributed in partnership with Natural England.

The leaflet was designed to be a clear and straightforward way of raising awareness of the type of grant funding that is available to farmers within the AONB.

The HLS grant scheme can bring environmental benefits to the area, as well as be financially rewarding to businesses. The leaflet explained the opportunities to farmers and how farms might qualify for funding.



Keeping of horses guidance

A position statement on the keeping of horses and ponies was adopted and published by the Board in December 2009. The statement is aimed at raising awareness of both positive and negative impacts of keeping horses in the Cotswolds and promotes best practice in horse husbandry. It is also aimed at providing guidance for planning authorities to help ensure that a consistent approach is taken across the AONB.

Deer management information published

The Board together with The Deer Initiative published a new information leaflet about managing wild deer in the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The new publication, which supports the Board's position statement on the management of deer, provides information about the needs and benefits of the effective management of a sustainable population of wild deer in the Cotswolds. It recognises that deer are part of the countryside and the chance of seeing these mammals is one of the many pleasures of living and visiting the Cotswolds AONB. However it also highlights the issues and impacts caused by high densities of deer in some areas.

Ancient Woodland Management Project

The Cotswolds Ancient Woodland Project (CAWP), which aims to support and promote appropriate management of ancient woodland in the AONB, continued to make good progress during 2009-10.

A part-time project officer was appointed to build on previous development work and focus on clarifying the area of woodland within the CAWP. It was found that there are 12,152ha of woodland of which 6,600ha are ancient woodland. 2,500ha are not covered by an agreement and up to 20ha have been lost to development since the 1980s. Ownership for 1500ha of woodland has been identified and the owners contacted to encourage take-up of the project.



Ancient woodland

Voluntary Wardens continue to conserve and enhance the Cotswolds

In 2009-10, the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens, the Board's voluntary arm, continued to make a significant contribution to the activities of the Board and its primary purpose of conserving and enhancing the AONB.

A total of 43,652 hours, valued at over £280,000 worth of staff time, was recorded by almost 300 volunteers - an increase of nearly 5% on the previous year's hours. Almost 70% of these volunteer hours were focused on conservation and enhancement activities.

Key achievements included:

- Over 130,000m² of unimproved limestone grassland was cleared.
- Forty six gates and 120 kissing gates were installed.
- Over 845m of wall was either renovated or rebuilt.
- Over 1,100m of hedgerows were laid.
- 108,931m² of woodland sites were coppiced
- 185m of streams and ditches were cleared
- 4,249 path miles patrolled
- 470 trees and 2,400 hedge plants were planted to help establish new wooded areas and hedges.
- 97 stiles installed
- 26,789m of paths and bridleways were cleared

“Just a quick note to say thanks for the excellent work the wardens carried out at Westonbirt. The new fence looks great – not only will it provide safer access to Silk Wood, it will also make visitor orientation far easier.”

B Oliver, Westonbirt Arboretum



Tree O'Clock Planting

The Voluntary Wardens rose to the challenge and planted 111 trees in an hour as part of the BBC's Tree O'Clock challenge to establish a new world record.

As part of National Tree Week, BBC Breathing Spaces encouraged a wide range of organisations and individuals to plant as many trees as possible between 11.00am and 12.00 noon on Saturday 5th December in multiple locations. The aim was to beat the existing record of 653,143 trees planted in one hour.

Although the record wasn't broken, our Wardens contributed to the estimated half a million trees that were planted across the country, leaving lasting benefits for wildlife, people and the environment.



Understanding & enjoying the Cotswolds



Publications

- Fifteen thousand copies of the **Explore the Cotswolds by Public Transport** guide were produced along with 32,000 copies of timetables for the Cotswold Way National Trail, North, Central and South Districts. These 10th anniversary editions of this very popular publication provide a range of information on the Cotswolds including attractions, walking routes and cycle rides, and encourage the user to leave the car behind and discover the AONB by bus and train instead.



- Two editions of the **Cotswold Lion** newspaper were published and distributed to 110,000 people via visitor information centres, libraries, attractions, shows and other outlets. A four page Grants Supplement was also printed with the Spring/Summer edition and 1,500 copies distributed to farmers, landowners, organizations and local communities to raise awareness of the range of grant funds available to make environmental improvements.
- The quarterly **Update newsletter** was increased in frequency to a bi-monthly electronic newsletter, providing more timely news from the Board for its partners. It is distributed to a growing email database of nearly 500.

Voluntary wardens and staff at the Cotswold Show

Publicity

The Board and the AONB have appeared in numerous national, regional and local press articles, worth over £280,000 of advertising value equivalent (AVE) editorial coverage. Over 30 press releases were issued during 2009-10 and a 2-day press trip organized for a journalist from Geographical magazine. The Board continued to provide information for the monthly Country Notebook feature in Cotswold Life magazine, plus articles were submitted and published in the National Association for AONBs and Europarc Federation publications.

Country Shows & talks

Staff and voluntary wardens took the AONB promotional trailer to four country shows during 2009 - the Cotswold Show, Festival of the Tree, Moreton Show and Wychwood Forest Fair.

Voluntary Wardens attended a further 37 shows throughout the AONB and gave 25 talks about the AONB to a variety of groups and organizations.



Cotswolds AONB online

The AONB website received 52,329 unique visitors and 79,766 total visits during 2009-10, while the Cotswold Way website received 50,518 unique visitors, 78,879 visits.

To help reach out to a wider audience, a profile page has been set up on the social networking and microblogging site twitter.com which has attracted over 300 followers.

New locations for Quantum Sheep



The popular educational and interactive video game featuring time-travelling hero Quantum Sheep was located in two new places - Corinium Museum, Cirencester and Cotswold Farm Park.

'Quantum Sheep and the Wonderful Wolds', developed by the Cotswolds Conservation Board as part of the Board's Caring for the Cotswolds project, is designed to introduce the concept of landscape change over time to 7-11 year olds.

Supporting sustainable tourism in the Cotswolds AONB

European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas

In 2009, the Board officially registered the Cotswolds AONB as a candidate area for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.

The Charter is awarded by the Europarc Federation to AONBs and National Parks which are following the right approach in developing and managing sustainable tourism, ie delivering tourism that takes account of the needs of nature and the landscape, and which contributes to the economic development of the region. The Charter approach ensures that organizations, local people and businesses are working together to protect the area, while at the same time increasing opportunities for visitors to discover and enjoy its special qualities.

Many businesses in the Cotswolds have already demonstrated their commitment to the environment by participating in the Green Tourism Business Scheme. The Board has good experience of working with local authorities and tourism businesses on sustainable initiatives through the Cotswolds Green

Tourism Project. Building on this experience and, as part of the Charter process, the Board established a sustainable tourism working group to help develop and deliver a 5 year sustainable tourism strategy and action plan for the AONB.

Sustainable tourism in our finest landscapes

Eight tourism businesses from the Cotswolds along with West Oxfordshire District Council tourism officers and Board staff attended a workshop in January 2010 to learn more about a new project aimed at increasing the profile of the South East's Protected Landscapes as visitor destinations through sustainable tourism development.

The project, co-ordinated by the South East Protected Landscapes (SEPL) Group, aims to work with rural enterprises to create and market a number of tourism packages or experiences which are strongly rooted in the special qualities of each of the 9 protected landscapes in the South East.

This was the first of a two phase project which is hoping to secure funding from Defra's Rural Development Programme, and which, if successful, will start in summer 2010.

New Visitor Centre for the AONB

The Board agreed in 2009 to develop a new visitor interpretation centre at the Board's Northleach office. The large, glazed North Gallery area, adjoining the Grade II listed Old Prison building, will provide an opportunity to tell the story of the Cotswolds AONB and promote the work of the Board.

Starting with the history of the landscape and the people of the Cotswolds, through to present day conservation and recreational activities, the new centre will be a useful resource and an interesting attraction for people visiting or living in the Cotswolds. The new centre is planned to open during summer 2010.

Artists impression of the new Visitor Centre





My Countryside – Access to Nature

On 22nd January 2010 the Board submitted its 'My Countryside' bid to Natural England for lottery funding through the Access to Nature Scheme. The 'My Countryside' programme is about helping people overcome the barriers that prevent them from enjoying the natural world. It is made up of three strands which focus on people with disabilities, and people and schools in areas of deprivation.

If successful, the project will last for 3 years and employ two officers. Its total value will be £684,915.

The development of the bid has been beneficial to the Board in terms of audience development and 'reaching out' to deprived communities adjacent to the AONB. A great deal of good will has been developed. If the bid is not successful it will be important to work out alternative means of carrying at least some of the work forward. The outcome is expected in July 2010.

Walking in the Cotswolds

Guided walks programme

The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens researched, prepared and led 277 walks of varying types and lengths, across all parts of the AONB throughout 2009-10. A total of 3,546 people, both local residents and visitors to the area, participated on the walks.



Pupils benefit from wardens educational project

The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens worked with a number of schools throughout the AONB during 2009 to help pupils understand more about their local area and why the Cotswolds is a special place.

Over 300 children from eight primary schools and one secondary school – Cranham, Chipping Campden, Blockley, Ilmington, Bibury, Birdlip, Greatfield Park, Wychwood and Colerne – took part in the pilot project which included a range of outdoor-based activities, such as map reading, fossil hunting, tree and lichen identification, mud sculptures, farm visits and guided walks.

The scheme was helped by partner organizations including the Gloucestershire Geology Trust, Gloucestershire County Council, National Trust and the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group. The aim of the scheme was to give pupils the opportunity to explore the countryside on their doorstep and understand why the Cotswolds



AONB is a special place. All schools taking part in the project believed that it was extremely worthwhile and provided an excellent learning experience. Further educational projects are being planned to follow on from this initial success.

"Thank you from Birdlip School. Would like them to attend again in the future; hope the wardens enjoyed it as much as the children."

'Step into the Cotswolds' new walking routes completed

Thanks to the work of the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens, two new circular and stile-free walking routes were completed during 2009-10 as part of the Step into the Cotswolds project.

With money raised through the Visitor Payback Scheme, new gates were installed along the 2 mile Ramsden and Finstock walks in West

Oxfordshire. The walks were made available online as downloadable routes and as hard copy route cards through tourist information centres in West Oxfordshire.

Step into the Cotswolds is part of the Cotswolds Green Tourism Project, a scheme which was run by the Board in conjunction with West Oxfordshire District Council and with funding from the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment.

Cotswold Way National Trail



Cotswold Way circular walks

A brand new set of circular walking routes, created and developed with the help of the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens to encourage more people to discover and enjoy the Cotswold Way National Trail, was launched in 2009.

The series of 12 short walks were featured monthly in Cotswold Life magazine as 'A year along the Cotswold Way' and made available to download from the Cotswold Way website. The walks have become the most popular aspect of the website and have also been emulated by local and national partners.



"I would just like to say a very 'big thank you' to one of your wardens who kindly gave us a map with the circular walk around Uley. We had a lovely walk with spectacular views, the children enjoyed all the wildlife and cannot wait to return." **Via email**

Cotswold Way Hall of Fame

A new online Hall of Fame was launched in 2009 to recognize walkers who complete the 102 mile Cotswold Way. The Hall of Fame is featured on the Cotswold Way website and includes a list of all those who complete the walk, along with walkers' own experiences and photos.

End-to-enders completing the trail receive a badge of achievement, and prospective walkers have access to a continuously growing list of 'customer reviews' from real people, while the trail office has a useful tool for gauging usage and satisfaction

New Cotswold Way brochure

A new 20-page, colour brochure for the Cotswold Way National Trail was produced in 2009 and included with over 15,000 copies of Cotswold Life magazine. An additional 5,000 copies were printed and distributed to tourist information centres. The brochure highlighted the many features, attractions and places of interest along the Cotswold Way.

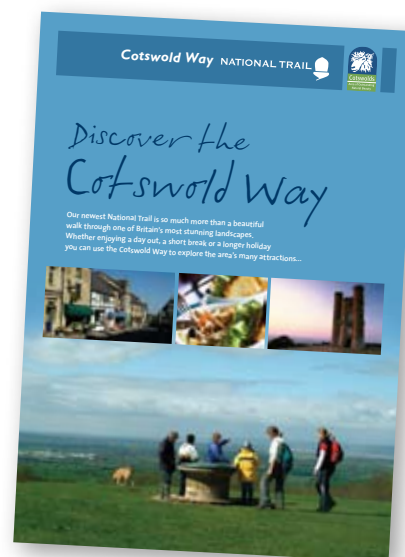
Cotswold Way Discovery Project

A new project was initiated to help teachers and children learn more about the nature, activities, history and landscape along the Cotswold Way National Trail.

The web-based, interactive resource follows two distinct styles. One which is aimed at teachers and consists of formal curriculum-linked lesson plans, while the other is aimed at children and parents and provides a series of informal, self-guided activities. The new resource was finalised in March and will be launched in June 2010.

Infrastructure and maintenance

New waymark posts were erected by voluntary wardens over Selsley Common, following extensive consultation. This has resulted in a more clearly marked route to benefit walkers. Working with rights of way officers and the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens, the 102 miles of Cotswold Way were maintained to the tough quality standards as set by Natural England. Relying on feedback from wardens and the public, a rolling programme of maintenance ensured the trail was safe, enjoyable and easy to follow for all walkers.



Strategic Management & Planning

The Board works in partnership at a higher strategic level to influence, advise and persuade on matters that affect the Cotswolds AONB. It monitors change within the AONB and frequently responds to consultations from a range of organizations.

National Grid Wormington to Sapperton Gas Pipeline

In 2009 National Grid received consent from the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change to construct a new, 44km natural gas pipeline between Wormington, near Broadway, Worcestershire to Sapperton, near Cirencester, Gloucestershire, affecting 41kms of the AONB.

Whilst the Board was disappointed with the decision, having objected to the route and challenged the route selection assessment, it was pleased that its objections had led to a more robust assessment of alternative routes. Following the department's decision, the Board embarked on a close working relationship with National Grid to ensure that the environmental qualities of the Cotswolds would be safeguarded and where possible enhanced, during the construction of the pipeline.



To help National Grid staff better understand and appreciate some of the unique features of the Cotswolds, members of the project team undertook a two day dry-stone walling course run by the Board.

In addition to helping secure a general community fund of £100,000 for projects in the vicinity of the pipeline, the Board worked with National Grid to develop a dry-stone walling grants scheme initially worth £300,000 to restore and enhance walls within a wider pipeline corridor.

It also negotiated a grants scheme of around £86,000 targeted at a series of Board projects. Construction work on the pipeline began in March 2010 and is expected to be completed by October 2010, although reinstatement of the land may continue after this time.





Planning policy and guidance

During 2009-10, the Board gained statutory consultee status for National Planning Statements and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Proposals. During the year, the Board formally commented on 76 planning and transport applications and policies, plus nine on major land management policies, all of which had a significant potential impact on the AONB. These included the following:

- Draft Energy National Planning Statements.
- Environmental Guidelines for highway works in the Cotswolds AONB were adopted by the Board and most highway authorities, including the Highways Agency. The Board has responded to consultations on highway works, including bridge repair and sign installation on the M4.
- Environmental impact of a potential new nuclear power station at Oldbury, South Gloucestershire.
- Local Development Framework Core Strategy document consultations issued by Stratford-on-Avon, Stroud, Wychavon, West Oxfordshire and Cherwell District Councils, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Borough Councils and Bath and North East Somerset Council.
- Planning Policy Statement on the Historic Environment. The Board's comments were reflected in the final PPS 5.
- Responses were made to Local Transport Plan 3 consultations by the six highway authorities.
- Responses were made to significant planning applications for renewable energy projects, housing development, a motorway service area on the M5, and overhead wires.
- A database of renewable energy projects submitted for planning approval in the AONB was maintained.
- Highways Biodiversity Plan for Gloucestershire.
- Responses to the consultations on the Draft River Basin Management Plan Severn River Basin District and the Draft River Basin Management Plan Thames River Basin District.
- The Integrated Economic Strategy for Gloucestershire 2009-15: Protected Landscapes Draft Policy for Consultation.
- Natural England's Protected Landscape Draft Position.

“Thanks in helping to get land reinstated.” **C Beezley (Bath University planning issue)**

The Board's planning officer also provided evidence at a planning inquiry into proposed housing and employment proposals at Upper Rissington airfield, Cotswold District. Although planning permission was granted in this case, the Board is considering the implications of this decision, particularly with respect to

other isolated, former military sites in the AONB.

In addition to being formally consulted on major planning applications, the Board prepares a wide variety of advisory documents which clarify its position on key issues affecting the AONB and play an important role in the strategic framework in which local planning departments and developers work.

Last year, an abridged version of the Board's position statement on The Management of Roadside Verges was developed specifically for use by parish councils and other groups managing rural roadside verges in and around villages in the AONB. The Board also approved a new position statement: Tranquillity and Dark Skies.

Full details of all position statements and responses to major planning applications and policies can be found on the Cotswolds Conservation Board pages of our website: www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk.

“Many thanks for letting me know and even more thanks for deciding to intervene. It means a lot to us.” **J Dear**



Roadside verge near Miserden

People & communities

To ensure the successful implementation of its purposes and duties, the Conservation Board works in partnership with a wide range of organisations.

The Board is represented on a number of these organisations as outlined:

- National Association for AONBs (NAAONB).
- Cotswolds and Forest of Dean Tourism (Destination Management Organisation).
- South West and South East Protected Landscape Forums (SWPLF and SEPLF).
- Europarc Federation and the Europarc Atlantic Isles Section of the Federation.
- Cotswolds Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).
- National Trails Staff Forum.

Board members are also well represented in many other organisations, including the South West Regional Development Agency, National Farmers' Union, National Trust and the Forestry Commission. In addition, the Board has been involved in a variety of partnership projects including the development of a feasibility study for the future use of Broadway Quarry. Last year, staff and Board members attended the following key events, strengthening links with partners across the UK and Europe:

- National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Conference, in Northern Ireland.
- Association of National Park Authorities (ANPA) conference in Snowdonia.

- Europarc Federation Conference in Sweden.
- Europarc Volunteer Co-ordinators' Workshops (Grundtvig Project) in Italy.

Friends of the Cotswolds

The Friends of the Cotswolds is a charity of eight directors, including one Conservation Board member, who work to raise funds towards conserving, enhancing and increasing understanding of the AONB and its surrounding areas. A new website for the Friends was launched last year to encourage donations and raise awareness of their work.

www.friendsofthecotswolds.org.

Norwegian visit

A group of 38 Norwegians from the Telemark Canal area visited the Cotswolds AONB in October to find out more about the work of the Board including strategic planning, local distinctiveness and tourism.

The visit included a trip to Cotswold Farm Park to find out more about how they have diversified into tourism, plus a presentation by the Board's Planning Officer about the AONB and the Board's work.

"Thank you very much for giving the Telemark Group such a good experience of the Cotswold landscape ... The group expressed the outcome



of this tour had been even more than expected and they were inspired to start working closer together, to be able to found their own regional park." Morgen Clemetsen

The Board was very encouraged to read the response by David Cameron MP to Ashley Thomas, Chairman of the National Association for AONBs, which was printed in the Spring 2010 edition of the NAAONB's publication, Outstanding. His letter not only confirmed his support for AONBs and AONB Boards, but also made reference to him being a 'fan' of the Cotswolds AONB in which his constituency and home is situated.

Forum for partners

Two forum for partner events were held during 2009. Twenty six people attended the forum held on 15 July at the Moreton Area Centre. A visit was included in the morning to see one of the demonstration farms with the Cotswold Farmland Bird Project.

The second Forum for Partners was held on 10 November at the Great Oak Hall, Westonbirt. The 26 guests attending heard from staff members of the Board on a range of presentations, plus Miranda Winram, Project Director at Westonbirt gave a presentation on the Forestry Commission's ambitious plans to develop visitor facilities at the National Arboretum.

Cotswold Voluntary Wardens Conference

The Voluntary Wardens annual conference was held on 9 October and attended by over 90 wardens, Board staff and members. The theme of the conference was farming past, present and future, and featured talks on the history of farming in the Cotswolds by the Board's Land Management Officer, the work of the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group and the Future of Farming and Forestry in the Cotswolds, by Cumulus Consultants. The conference was organised around these topics with the aim of increasing the knowledge of wardens to help them in their volunteer work and activities.



A farmland visit was part of the forum for partners in July

Managing special landscapes in Canada, Australia and New Zealand

The Board's Director secured a Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowship in 2009 to enable him to look at the governance arrangements for the management of protected landscapes in Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Visits to Canada in summer 2009 and Australia and New Zealand from mid January 2010 focused on the comparison of the governance arrangements in place for the oldest and newest of the protected landscapes.

The three countries offer the UK interesting lessons including the value of a strong national family of special landscapes with an associated common identity as well as the economic and community opportunities based on the landscape's natural assets.

The Trust awards approximately 100 Fellowships each year, and opens for applications in March with the deadline for submissions in October. Further details can be found on the Trust's website www.wcmt.org.uk



Sustainable Development Fund



Thirteen full applications to the Sustainable Development Fund were considered by the Grants Sub-Committee during 2009-10. Of these applications, eight were successful in securing £32,000 in total grant funding for projects worth over £200,000.

Application project areas were wide-ranging and included dry-stone walling, sustainable transport, nature conservation, climate change education and a grow-your-own community scheme. Three of the successful projects are highlighted below.

SDF Case Studies 2009-10

Project Name:

'Forests for the future' project – Westonbirt Arboretum (Forestry Commission)

Total project cost: £14,859

SDF Grant awarded: £7,373

Description: 'Forests for the Future' was a programme run by The Westonbirt Arboretum (Forestry Commission) aimed to educate people on issues such as sustainable forestry, trees and climate change.

This was achieved through the development and use of an informative DVD, aptly named 'The World is Hot Enough', along with the design and production of banners and educational activities which were showcased at the Arboretum's science based marquee 'Laboratree', during the Festival of the Tree event in August 2009. The SDF grant, received by the Arboretum, helped to fund the purchase of these educational resources and to deliver a climate change and woodland

management educational programme which will be delivered to the 240 schools per year that visit the Arboretum. The 'World is Hot Enough' can be viewed at www.forestry.gov.uk.

Project Name:

Green Energy Project – National Trust, Eboworth

Total project cost: £78,000

SDF Grant awarded: £4,668

Description: In 2009 the Board awarded a SDF grant of £4,668 to the National Trust's Eboworth Centre to go towards the installation of a new biomass and solar thermal heating system. The biomass boiler, fuelled by logs harvested from the Trust's estate, will provide heating and hot water for five properties at the centre and will drastically reduce the centre's carbon emissions. An interpretation board has also been installed on the site to inform people about the energy saving systems in operation at Eboworth.

Project Name:

Evesham Beekeepers Association

Total project cost: £2,292

SDF Grant awarded: £1,492

Description: In 2009, the Evesham Beekeepers Association was awarded a SDF grant of £1,492 to go towards the purchase of 6 new beehives, based at Pershore College, Worcestershire.

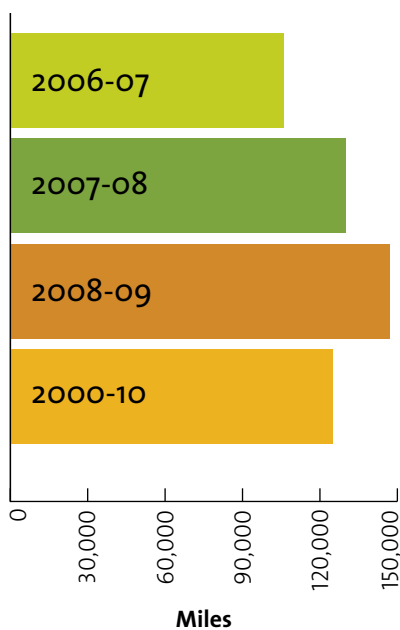
The aim of the project was to provide a suitable site to train new and existing beekeepers in the best practice techniques of beekeeping management.

The grant provided by the Sustainable Development Fund, along with the contribution of the Evesham Beekeeping association members, who spent 5 days clearing the site and erecting the hives, have helped to make this project a great success!!

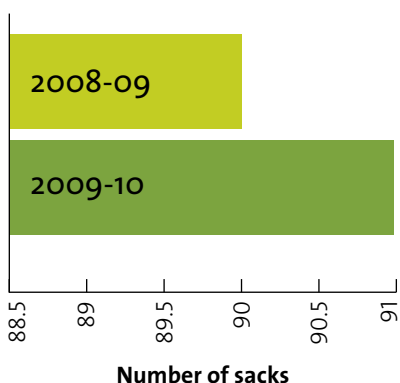
Leading by example

As champions of sustainability, the Board is increasingly aware of the need to set a good example to others and look at ways of reducing its own carbon footprint. Recycling and using public transport wherever possible are just some of the ways in which the Board is achieving this, and the following charts show how the organisation is doing.

Mileage undertaken by staff, members and wardens of the Board



Quantity of paper recycled by staff



Looking ahead to 2010-11

The following are some of the projects and activities that the Board will be undertaking during 2010-11

- Farming & Forestry study – applying the lessons learned and developing a climate change action plan.
- Rural skills – enhancing the range of courses delivered.
- Promoting the new dry-stone walling grants scheme with National Grid.
- Interpretive visitor centre – providing a focus for the Board and helping more people to understand, explore and enjoy the AONB.
- European Charter for Sustainable Tourism – further developing the Board’s application.
- The development of a three-year framework to guide the management and promotion of the National Trail after March 2011.
- Begin the review of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2008-13.
- The Cotswolds scarp corridor – helping our wildlife adapt to climate change.
- Access conference – 6 July 2010.
- Developing the Board’s work with HLS.
- Annual Forum – February 2011.
- Celebrate International Year of Forests 2011.

Summary financial statement

1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010

	2008-09 £	2009-10 £
Expenditure	1,047,798	1,003,382
Project delivery	925,021	859,275
Corporate management and administration	131,492	145,699
Interest receivable	(8,715)	(1,592)
Income	(1,134,793)	(1,061,910)
Natural England	(856,311)	(790,185)
Local authorities	(175,564)	(178,158)
Other	(102,918)	(93,567)
Deficit/(surplus) for year	(86,995)	(58,528)
Deficit/(surplus) for the year after movement on reserves	(65,463)	(32,316)

Balance sheet

Fixed assets	0	0
Current assets	422,861	429,944
	422,861	429,944
Less: current liabilities	(226,774)	(177,329)
Net current assets	196,087	252,615
Long term pension fund assets/(liabilities)	(69,000)	(547,000)
Total net assets	127,087	(294,385)
Financed by		
General fund balance	82,117	114,433
Other reserves	113,970	138,182
Pension reserve	(69,000)	(547,000)
	127,087	(294,385)

Notes

The pension fund liability and negative pension fund reserve are a result of the actuary's annual valuation of the fund under Financial Reporting Standard 17. Such valuations are notoriously volatile, relying as they do on a number of financial and mortality assumptions and an assessment of the assets and liabilities of the funds in current markets.

Please refer to www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk for our full Statement of Accounts and auditor's opinion.



Who's Who: Cotswolds Conservation Board 2009-10

Patron

The Lord Plumb of Coleshill DL FRAGS

Chairman

Niel Curwen (to Dec 2009)

Jeff West (from Dec 2009 to present)

Vice Chairman

Jeff West (to Dec 2009)

Liz Eyre (from Dec 2009 to present)

STAFF

Director Martin Lane

Planning Officer Malcolm Watt

Land Management Officer

Mark Connelly

Business Planning & Project

Development Officer

John Mills (to Aug 2009)

Simon Smith (from Sep 2009)

Information & Interpretation Officer

Nicola Greaves (from May 2009)

Office Manager Margaret Fletcher

Cotswold Way National Trail Officer

James Blockley

Cotswold Way Assistant National

Trail Officer Don Field

Volunteer Coordinator Becky Jones

Administrative Officer Claire Parker

Student Placement Tom Pocklington

Cotswolds Conservation Board

Fosse Way

Northleach

Gloucestershire GL54 3JH

Tel: 01451 862000

Fax: 01451 862001

Email: info@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

Website: www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

Technical Accountant John Hunt

Rural Skills and Grants Officer

David Molloy (from Feb 2010)

SDF Project Officer

Anne Powell (to Dec 2009)

Dry-stone Wall Project Officer

Jonathan Gahan (to Dec 2009)

HLS Graduate Placement

Andrew Morris

ADVISERS

Finance Officer Reg Talbot

Monitoring Officer Nigel Adams

Committee Clerk Stephen Holley

**The Board also houses the
National Association for Areas
of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

CEO Howard Davies

Communications & Development

Manager Jill Smith

**SUPPORTED BY OVER
300 COTSWOLD VOLUNTARY
WARDENS:**

Head Warden David Colbourne

Deputy Head Warden

Simon Mallatratt



BOARD MEMBERS

Revd Canon Michael Banks

Ken Betteridge*

Libby Bird

Hazel Bleaken

Dr Ann Boon

Jo Burgon*

Rebecca Charley

Andrew Clark

Niel Curwen*

Matthew Darby

Peter Doyle

John Evetts

Liz Eyre*

Stephen Gray

Adrian Hardman

Timothy Hill

Elizabeth Hodges

Nick Holliday*

Sue Hope*

Verena Hunt*

Richard Lloyd*

Will Manley

John Matthews

Susie Moore*

Adrian Phillips

Tony Phillips**

Simon Randall

George Reynolds

Chris Saint

Don Seale

Christine Shine

Janatha Stout***

Lloyd Surgenor*

Carole Topple*

Martin Veal

Robert Vines

Judith Webb

Jeff West*

Please note: staff and Board members are shown for the period April 2009 to March 2010.

*Members of the Board's Executive Committee.

**Tony Phillips sadly passed away on 23 June 2009.

***Janatha Stout resigned in December 2009