



# Annual Review 2022/23



## A message from our chair

It gives me great pleasure to once again introduce this year's review of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL). 2022-23 has been a period of solid growth in virtually all areas of our work, with some impressive and far-reaching results. This annual review sets these out in detail, but I particularly wish to highlight what I think are important recurring themes to our work.



Brendan McCarthy.

The first is simply to stress the importance of partnerships. Members of the Cotswolds National Landscape team, now comprising a 23-strong core team, and over 400 volunteers, have long realised that their ability to achieve things on such a scale relies on working with and through others at every level. It's particularly pleasing for the Board to see how this continues to develop to great effect. Not only are we seeing some great co-working with organisations like the Cotswold Way Association, the National Trust and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, it's also very clear that all 15 local authorities within the Cotswolds National Landscape are engaging with us in a variety of positive ways, particularly in relation to the new Management Plan consultation for the Cotswolds.

The second theme is about finances. Our core funding, which comes from central government (Defra) and our local authority partners, remains as important as ever – enabling us to operate and fulfil our aims at a base level. We will, of course, continue to demonstrate the significant value that our work delivers and to also seek much needed increases to our core funding, to lessen the impact of increasing costs on our ambitious plans. It is clear that finding new sources of income, that benefit the landscape and its communities, is ever more crucial if we are to thrive in a rapidly changing environment.

This past year we have seen some really excellent initiatives that are doing just that. I'm particularly proud of the two Defra funded programmes – Farming in Protected Landscapes and Removing Barriers (access

for all). We also have contracts in place to deliver nature recovery as part of Severn Trent Water's 'Great Big Nature Boost' and to run education and community outreach initiatives through Thames Water's 'Smarter Water Catchments' initiative. Both of these funded projects are showing real dividends at a time when the health and purity of our natural water resources are being keenly and rightly scrutinized. Our focus on the proper resourcing of our work has led to some excellent new appointments in our team, which is good to see. We have also brought the Glorious Cotswold Grasslands operation fully in-house as it's grown so significantly over the last few years. The statistics around the scale of new wildflower meadows being created across the Cotswolds landscape makes for impressive reading.

Thirdly, everything we do is as much about people as landscape. I'm so pleased to see increases in the numbers engaged with our work, whether it's school children on a field visit, walkers enjoying our many volunteer-led walks across the Cotswolds, farmers and landowners attending our farming forum, visitors enjoying our stand at the Moreton Show or local people engaging with us on a local major planning issue. Increasingly, the work of the CNL team is becoming better known and valued by those living, working, and visiting the Cotswolds.

My thanks go to all those who have helped us in the last year. Our team continues to balance an increasing workload with an ability to still see the bigger picture. The CNL volunteers, who carry out a range of practical tasks from access work to seed collection,



are regularly welcoming new members and achieving great things – while having a lot of fun. Finally, our many partners, with whom we value strong relationships, and who have confidence in our ability to deliver outcomes that really matter. I am proud to be able to work with you all, and the many others it is not possible to mention, as we continue our drive to conserve and enhance this wonderful part of the country.



**Brendan McCarthy**  
Chair, Cotswolds National Landscape Board



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## Cotswolds National Landscape

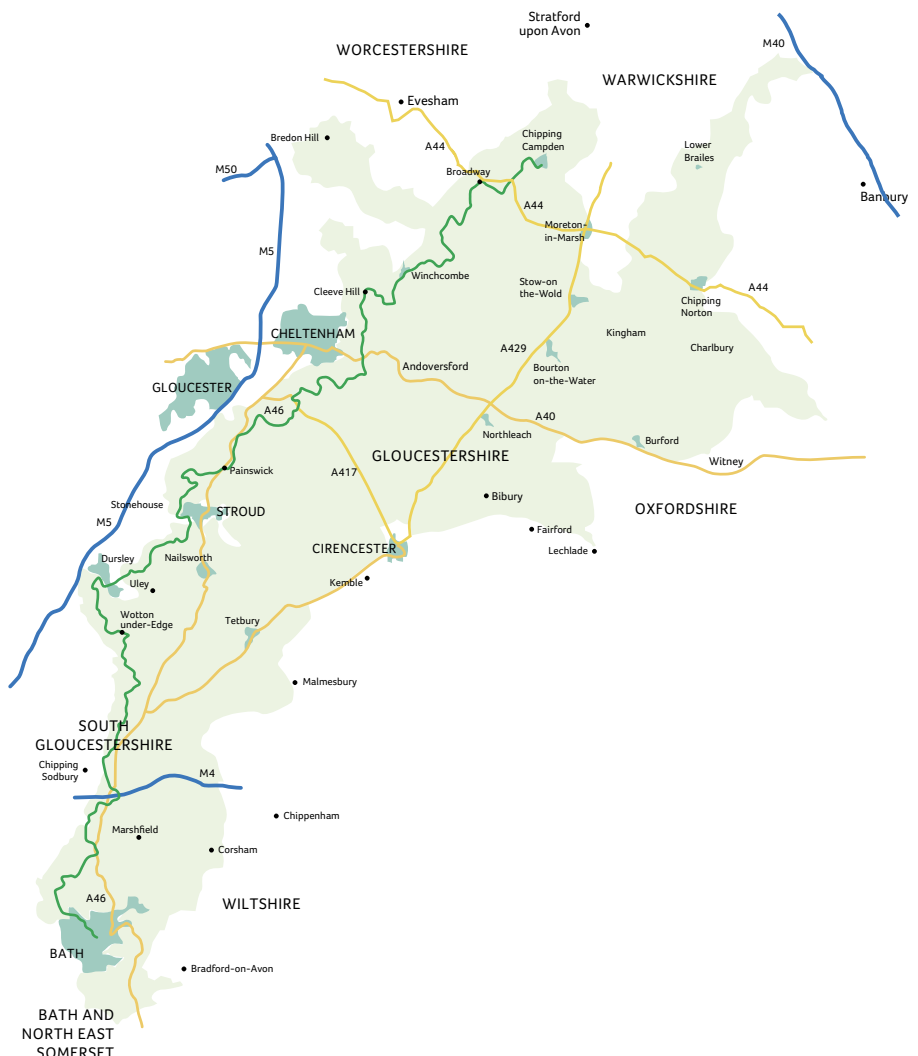
The Cotswolds National Landscape is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, in recognition of its rich, diverse and high quality landscape. Covering 2,038 sq km, it is the largest member of the family of the AONBs in England and Wales, and the third largest protected landscape in England after the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks. The Cotswolds National Landscape is looked after by a small employee team, with support from 37 Board members and over 400 Voluntary Cotswold Wardens.

### Our role

We are an independent statutory body, established by Parliament in 2004. We have two statutory purposes:

- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB;
- to increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB.

In fulfilling these roles we have a duty to seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of people living in the AONB.



## Management Plan

The Cotswolds National Landscape Board has a statutory duty to prepare a Management Plan for the Cotswolds National Landscape, and review it at intervals of no more than five years. The Board adopted the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2023-2025 in February 2023, following a review of the 2018-2023 Management Plan and extensive consultation.

This new plan runs for two years rather than the usual five: this is because we anticipate significant national and local policy developments for protected landscapes during this period, particularly with reference to climate action and nature recovery. During the two year span of the 2023-25 plan, we will further develop the evidence and data, so that we can build in meaningful targets towards net zero in our next plan.

Although the Board is the body responsible for preparing and publishing the Management Plan – and will play an important role in its delivery – its efficacy is also dependent on a wide range of stakeholders. As such, the policies of the Management Plan are also intended to guide the work of these stakeholders in helping to deliver the Management Plan's vision and outcomes.



*Margaret Reid, who was Head Warden throughout the pandemic.*

## Wardens continue to impress

Back in 2018, our Cotswolds Voluntary Wardens were given the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. Two years later, the pandemic didn't sway them off course: in fact, as interest in the outdoors grew, more wardens were recruited. After the final restrictions lifted in February 2022, they all eagerly returned to their normal activities.

For 2022/23, they contributed an astonishing 48,970 hours of their time. From parish wardens who survey, maintain and waymark footpaths and routes (including the Cotswold Way National Trail), through to larger scale work parties carrying out wide-ranging landscape and access improvements including the installation of gates and bridges, scrub clearance, hedge laying and tree planting, to repairing dry stone walls. Wardens also give talks and attend shows to promote the area and their work, they volunteer with our conservation and education teams, and they lead guided walks and devise self-guided routes – they rarely rest on their laurels!

Last year, the wardens led 3,154 people on 282 guided walks, all over the Cotswolds. They re-introduced weekend and evening walks for those unable to join in during the week, they led long distance walks, and they devised some much shorter routes too. They worked on over 170 gates, installed 520 steps on various slippery or steep slopes, and worked on 174 waymarkers or finger posts.







Russell Sach

*Fire crew help Avon district with tree planting.*

After a successful three years in post as Head Warden (extended due to the pandemic), Margaret Reid handed the reins over to Mike Cripps. Margaret has had a fantastic run as Head Warden, achieving a great deal in her term. Margaret successfully led the wardens through the pandemic, developed a wonderful (and ongoing) relationship with the women from the Friendship Café in Gloucester, worked hard to review and improve many warden systems and processes including online training and the warden constitution, and encouraged more women to join up. Margaret remains a warden and will continue much of her work, including regular walks with the Friendship Café.

Mike has been a warden for ten years, and most recently has been Deputy Head Warden alongside Margaret, and so knows the ropes. He is now supported by Sarah West as his deputy.

Each of the five warden ‘districts’ has a District Chair, and we welcomed five new chairs in one go in March 2023. So: much change, but what also remains consistent is the outstanding effort all the wardens put into the work they do – for all of us.

**Key numbers 2022/23:**

- 48,970 hours of work
- 282 guided walks
- 1,193 miles of path patrolled
- 2,228 trees planted



*Top: Our new Head Warden, Mike Cripps.*

*Below: Our new Deputy Head Warden, Sarah West.*



## Farming in Protected Landscapes – a continuing success

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, being delivered locally by the Cotswolds National Landscape team, supported 39 projects and allocated almost £1 million pounds in grant funding in its first year of 2021/22. In its second year 2022/23, it has approved another 42 projects, with grants totalling £1.1 million. By the end of March 2023, 81 projects benefited from grant awards totalling £2.1 million. This programme continues to represent significant investment in the Cotswolds and its farming communities, and applicants continue to impress with their creativity and enthusiasm to embrace the programme themes.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme is a part of Defra's Agricultural Transition Plan and has been developed by Defra with the support of AONBs and National Park staff from across England.

Through the programme, farmers and land managers are supported to carry out projects that support nature recovery, mitigate the impacts of climate change, provide opportunities for people to discover, enjoy and understand the landscape and cultural heritage, or support nature-friendly, sustainable farm businesses.

Several projects supported by FiPL are assisting farms on their journey to Regenerative Agriculture. Examples include grazing infrastructure, specialist machinery, pastured chickens, and carbon auditing.

The programme supported the planting and gapping-up of over 2km of hedgerow, the planting of 104 specimen trees, and funded training in agroforestry.

A strong theme has been the restoration of priority habitats, particularly wildflower-rich grassland and traditional orchards, either



*Lower Hampen Farm received FiPL funding for Homegrown at Hampen – a Community Supported Agriculture scheme, supplying fruit and veg to local customers.*



Squashed Robot Films

directly by supporting practical restoration work or by funding survey work to identify optimum sites to restore. Projects approved during the year will restore or create 32ha of wildflower-rich grassland, improve the management of 838ha through equipment and infrastructure, and survey 500ha. A total of 1,060 fruit trees were planted as part of restoring or creating traditional orchards.

FiPL enabled a thermal imagery drone deer survey covering 25,000ha which will be used to inform future deer management.

Two historic stone bridges have been restored with support from FiPL and a traditional stone haybarn restored for use as a base for rural skills. Ten projects improve accessibility and opportunities to learn about and enjoy the Cotswold landscape and 55 educational farm visits have been funded.

The full list of projects supported during years 1 and 2 of FiPL is on the CNL website in the Farming section.



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*Funding in the Cotswolds has supported agroforestry schemes, access work engaging more people with farming, research into soil health and carbon baselining, market gardens, and habitat management.*

### Key project numbers 2022/23:

|   |
|---|
| Programme now extended until March 2025 |
| 42 projects funded during 2022/23       |
| £874,828 in allocated grants            |
| Total projects value £1.8 million       |

### Key project numbers Year 1 and 2:

|                                   |
|-----------------------------------|
| 81 projects funded                |
| £2.1 million allocated in grants  |
| Total projects value £3.3 million |

Main contacts/more info:  
**[farming@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk](mailto:farming@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk)**





Anna Field

*Burnt tip orchid.*

## Glorious Cotswold Grasslands

Glorious Cotswold Grasslands started as an exciting and ambitious three year project funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to create the largest network of wildflower-rich Jurassic limestone grassland in the country. The original aim was to create or restore around 100 hectares of wildflower grasslands – the team smashed that target and to date have worked on 300+ hectares. Thanks to a partnership with Severn Trent Water as part of their Great Big Nature Boost, combined with several other funding sources, the programme now has a permanent footing. As a result, 2022/23 has been another busy year.

*The biggest news for the team came in the form of a new partnership with National Highways and the National Trust to deliver a large area of wildflower grassland restoration over the next three years, using Designated Funds to support a Biodiversity Net Gain programme.*

Young wildflower enthusiasts took part in an art competition in the 2021 summer holiday, and so we sprang into 2022 with a beautiful exhibition of their work at Nature in Art near Gloucester. The launch day of the exhibition included a fantastic workshop with renowned animator, Jim Parkyn.

*Jim Parkyn delivering the workshop for the art competition winners.*



Russell Sach



Summer 2022 saw an astonishing two tonnes of wildflower seed harvested from donor sites across the Cotswolds. This meant the team was able to go on to seed an impressive 120 hectares of recipient sites, ranging from less than an acre to over 12 hectares.

The team often receives enquiries from individuals wanting small amounts of seed to sow in their garden or tubs and so to facilitate this, they have partnered with Daylesford Organic Farm to sell small quantities of seed for this purpose – great to see entrepreneurial spirit in action!

Anna Field



The biggest news for the team this year came in the form of a new partnership with National Highways and the National Trust to deliver a large area of wildflower grassland restoration over the next three years, using Designated Funds to support a Biodiversity Net Gain programme. This will provide a significant expansion of current operations and has allowed us to bring in another team member to help deliver the work. It has also allowed us to invest in a second seed harvester, meaning we can cover much more ground in future summers. The new project is in addition to the ongoing relationships with Severn Trent Water and Thames Water to fund restoration work in the Severn Trent and Evenlode catchment areas respectively – overall, the programme is a powerful demonstration of partnership working.

*Volunteers continue to make a fantastic contribution to our Glorious Cotswold Grasslands work.*



### Key programme numbers 2022/23:

122 hectares: area where restoration has been initiated

25: number of donor sites (across 45 individual fields)

>100: number of recipient sites

69: highest number of species recorded at one site

12.25ha hectares: largest single participating site in 2022-23

2,040kg: wildflower seed harvested in 2022

### Key programme numbers overall:

364+ hectares: area where restoration has been initiated

Over sixty donor sites on cyclical harvesting schedule

Over 350 recipient sites

80: the highest number of species recorded at one site

362: plant species recorded in all surveys over 5 years

18 hectares: largest site participating in project

6,400kg: total wildflower seed harvested over project



## Everyone's Evenlode making waves

Working with the Evenlode Catchment Partnership, the Everyone's Evenlode team has had a very successful year working in the community and with schools to inspire people and engage them with the relevance of the river and its catchment.

The team has run a full programme of school field trips exploring the Evenlode catchment for pupils from Key Stage 1 all the way through to Key Stage 5. Students are encouraged to be as hands-on as possible – pond dipping, completing aquatic surveys, learning about tracks and signs, learning about environmental issues and water quality, and even occasionally donning waders to get into the river.

On the community side of this project an equally busy year of events saw 1,411 people come along and join in with various sessions centred around the Evenlode. From the Eco Youth Conference, to guided walks, to Oxford IF Science Fair and Moreton Show, to National Meadows Day, Charlbury River Festival and more. These events are

very popular with families and present an excellent opportunity to promote the work of the Evenlode Catchment Partnership to the whole community.

Cotswolds National Landscape is part of the Evenlode Catchment Partnership (ECP), which brings together partners and communities to look after their river environment. The project is helping to build community skills, understanding and find solutions to the problems that affect water quality, and develop new relationships with landowners. This will help the ECP achieve its long term goal of bringing the Evenlode back to good ecological condition. The project is being funded by Thames Water, as part of their 'smarter water catchment initiative'.

*Cotswolds National Landscape is part of the Evenlode Catchment Partnership (ECP), which brings together partners and communities to look after their river environment.*



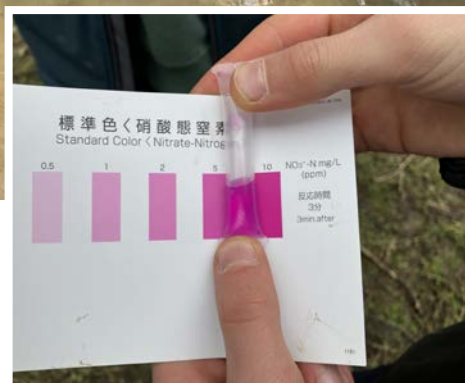
Tea Smart Photography

*The Everyone's evenlode team has engaged hundreds of young people with the river in their community.*





*Young people are encouraged to don waders and work in the river water to understand about river health.*



### Key project numbers 2022/23:

Delivered 34 sessions on the river enabling 1,001 children (5 - 15 yrs old) to experience outdoor education

Worked with 67 young people (16 - 25 yrs old) on river-based projects

From 8 primary schools and 8 secondary schools

Engaged with 1,411 people in the community (at 22 events)

Main contacts/more info:

[evenlode@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk](mailto:evenlode@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk)



## Inspiring young people

In 2022-23, we continued to offer funded outdoor educational sessions for young people in the Cotswolds. The focus for offering high quality and meaningful provision for participants has remained a constant.

Most sessions are attended by ten young people or fewer, and these cohorts are encouraged to attend every session in the programme. This consistency allows them to get to know one another, but also to develop their skills and confidence. Students and young people are nominated for the sessions by their respective schools and support organisations based on the expectation that they in particular will benefit from the sessions.

Outdoor education, which introduces young people to learning outside a traditional academic classroom setting, allows them to discover or develop practical problem-solving skills, and improved concentration, self-belief, confidence, and communication.

For those participants attending from charity partners, the emphasis is slightly different. Often, these young people have already left full time education, but may not be in employment or further training. Many are experiencing mental health issues, bereavement, or difficulties at home. The outdoor sessions for these youngsters allow them opportunities to focus on an activity just for themselves. The sessions are group-based, but with an emphasis on tasks, rather than socialising – alleviating the pressure many of those taking part can often feel. The intention is to offer these young people a chance to develop personal confidence, and to provide something else to focus on other than their current circumstances or challenges.

### Key numbers 2022/23:

16 outdoor learning sessions with a total of 218 young people engaged with, from 5 different schools\*

6 outdoor learning sessions with a total of 40 young people delivered with charity partners  
Engaged with 175 people in the community (at 2 events)

\*(some young people attended more than one session)



## Access for All

Late in 2022, we were awarded £234,000 to support improvements to access under the Defra 'Removing Barriers' programme. Defra awarded each of England's National Parks and AONBs an uplift in its core grant in order to make our protected landscapes more accessible to people of all ages and abilities, and from all backgrounds.

The additional funding was awarded as part of Defra's three-year Spending Review settlement, and following this first allocation, we will be receiving further funding for the 2024/25 financial year. It's immensely rewarding to be able to work in partnership

with so many organisations across such a wide geographical area – all working together to use the funding to improve access across the Cotswolds National Landscape.

The funds were welcomed by partner organisations and have supported a wide range of projects including:

- Installation of accessible gates and picnic benches at Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, National Trust, and County Council countryside sites.
- Support for volunteers through the provision of two vehicles and tools to support ongoing practical access improvements.
- Surfacing to improve access for mobility scooters.
- Research into the provision of 'quiet corners' at Cotswold train stations.
- Improvements to the outdoor learning space at Jamie's Farm near Bath.
- The implementation of inclusive assistive technology on our own website and an accessibility audit to help us continue to make improvements for online users.



*Top: New vehicles will help our wardens continue to improve access across the Cotswolds.*

*Left: The outdoor learning space at Jamie's Farm near Bath.*

*Right: Accessible picnic benches installed at Coaley Peak by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.*

### Key project numbers 2022/23:

21 projects, covering multiple sites from Wiltshire to Worcestershire

15 partner organisations delivering work, including charities, volunteers, landowners, and councils

77 gates installed to improve access

24 benches for families and those with mobility challenges

7 disabled parking sites: created or improved



Russell Sach

*Trails and Access Officer, Nicole Daw, with Angela Farr and Jemma Bartholomew – who have both helped devise routes as part of Bathscape.*

## Bathscape for everyone

The Bathscape Partnership first met back in 2013, a group of like-minded organisations with a shared ambition to address threats faced by the beautiful natural landscape surrounding Bath, and to better recognise its value to the health and wellbeing of all the communities in the city.

The hope was for Bath to be recognised as one of the most complete landscape cities in the world, where the people in the city were more connected with the beautiful rural landscape around them.

Cotswolds National Landscape has been responsible for delivering the Bathscape Access Project, which has included:

- Assessing, waymarking and making physical improvements to the Circuit of Bath route as well as creating walking guides for the route.
- Devising 18 self-guided walking routes, in consultation with a diverse range of user groups.
- Engaging and training volunteers who will maintain the key routes in the future.
- Leading guided walks for a diverse range of audiences.

This has involved consultation and collaborative working with many local disability and support groups, and healthcare professionals to create a diverse collection of routes for people with a range of health conditions and requirements.

Our participation in Bathscape was due to conclude in August 2023; however, based on the quality of our work to date we were awarded a second contract to create 10 short films to promote walking in the Bathscape. These will be completed by the end of the financial year 2023/24.

### Key project numbers 2022/23:

10 community groups collaborated with so far

30 guided walks led 2022/23

17 volunteers trained as rangers to help maintain the Circuit of Bath route in the future



## Celebrating our team

We welcomed three new team members in 2022/23.



**Jennifer Lanham** joined our Everyone's Evenlode team to pick up the reins from Ruth Rudwick as Community Outreach Officer. Jennifer continues to develop relationships with local youth and community groups, delivering practical experiences to connect people with their local stretch of the Evenlode river. Jennifer has a degree in Biological Aspects of Conservation from the University of Wisconsin, USA and has spent the last 16 years in educational and environmental community engagement.



**Lorna Baggett** joined the Glorious Cotswold Grasslands team as Biodiversity Net Gain Programme Officer. Lorna joins us from Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, where she was Land Management Officer (East). She works closely with Harvey and Anna, and is taking the lead on the new Biodiversity Net Gain project – in partnership with the National Trust and funded by National Highways.



**Magda Glanowska** is our new Head of Finance. Magda is an experienced Chartered Accountant, with experience working for KPMG and senior roles in the private sector. She has a passion for the work we do and is looking forward to helping us as we move forward and continue to grow.

**And finally**, in December 2022, we celebrated John Mills (our Planning and Landscape Lead) being accepted as a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI). This means he is now a Chartered Landscape Professional (as well as a Chartered Town Planner). As the Landscape Institute's aim is to protect, conserve and enhance the natural and built environment for the public benefit, this is not only a great personal achievement for John, but also aligns perfectly with what we do as an organisation.

John has been Chartered Town Planner/Chartered Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) since 2017. He applied for chartered membership of the Landscape Institute through a pilot scheme for their new 'Expert Route' to membership. For his application, he had to demonstrate that he has achieved the required level of competence for 28 competencies (12 professional competencies, 11 core competencies and 5 additional competencies). He submitted this information in a hefty 6,000 word report, which also included relevant case studies. Congratulations to John for adding another string to his bow!



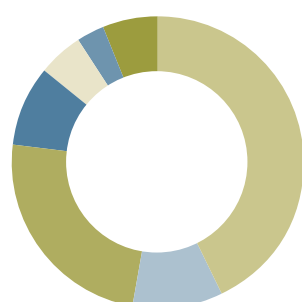
# Financial Statement

Unaudited Summary Financial Statement

Income and Expenditure Account

For the year ending 31 March 2023

|   | 2021/22<br>£       | 2022/23<br>£       |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Expenditure</b>                      | <b>2,086,120</b>   | <b>2,485,984</b>   |
| Project Delivery                        | 1,962,187          | 2,340,886          |
| Corporate Management and Administration | 123,933            | 145,098            |
| <b>Income</b>                           | <b>(2,021,827)</b> | <b>(2,504,627)</b> |
| DEFRA Grant                             | (498,017)          | (529,743)          |
| DEFRA – FIPL                            | (655,775)          | (994,589)          |
| DEFRA – Removing Barriers               |                    | (234,993)          |
| Natural England                         | (138,929)          | (106,669)          |
| Local Authorities & Parish Councils     | (135,964)          | (137,538)          |
| Rural Payments Agency                   | (7,667)            | (4,468)            |
| National Grid LEI                       | (218,608)          | (59,292)           |
| Thames Water                            | (60,000)           | (112,878)          |
| Severn Trent                            |                    | (60,000)           |
| Kingfisher Trail                        | (78,827)           | 0                  |
| National Highways – BNG                 |                    | (49,793)           |
| Highways England                        |                    | (25,900)           |
| Other                                   | (228,041)          | (188,764)          |
| <b>Deficit (Surplus)</b>                | <b>64,293</b>      | <b>(18,642)</b>    |
| <b>Balance Sheet</b>                    |                    | <b>31.03.23</b>    |
| <i>As at 31st March 2023</i>            |                    | <b>£</b>           |
| Net Assets:                             |                    | <b>£</b>           |
| Fixed Assets & Investments              | 0                  | 0                  |
| Current Assets                          | 1,266,159          | 1,346,125          |
| Current Liabilities                     | (624,069)          | (685,393)          |
| Net Current Assets                      | 642,090            | 660,732            |
| <b>Total Net Assets</b>                 | <b>642,090</b>     | <b>660,732</b>     |
| Financed by:                            |                    |                    |
| Restricted Funds                        | 489,885            | 433,210            |
| Earmarked Reserves                      | 79,080             | 151,166            |
| General Fund                            | 73,125             | 76,357             |
| <b>Total Reserves</b>                   | <b>642,090</b>     | <b>660,732</b>     |



## Gross Expenditure %

|                                     |     |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Conservation of Natural Environment | 43% |
| Conservation of Cultural Heritage   | 10% |
| Recreation Management & Transport   | 24% |
| Promoting Understanding             | 9%  |
| Cotswold Voluntary Wardens          | 5%  |
| Forward Planning                    | 3%  |
| Corporate Management                | 6%  |





**Cotswolds National Landscape**


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The Cotswolds National Landscape is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), managed and looked after by the Cotswolds Conservation Board.

 CotswoldsAONB

 CotswoldsAONB

 aonbcotswolds

 cotswoldsaonb

\* formerly Twitter

