

Annual Review 2024/25



Cotswolds
National
Landscape



Welcome from our chair

Welcome to our Annual Report for 2024/25. I'm delighted, once again, to be able to write a foreword for what has been a busy and eventful year for the Cotswolds National Landscape team.

As we see all around us, the changes brought about by a new Government, a difficult UK economy, and an uncertain world order make for an ever more challenging workload for all those who look after the very special qualities of the Cotswolds. These challenges are as much for our partners as for the CNL team, and the need for continuing collaboration is as strong now as ever.

Beneficial change can only be achieved through such working together and by agreeing the way forward. Our Management Plan for the Cotswolds National Landscape, welcomed and supported by local authorities within the CNL boundary, is the vehicle for this. But it also depends on good things happening on the ground, year after year, and this is where the CNL team plays a strong role.

Our band of growing volunteers achieved a magnificent 55,000+ hours of practical conservation in the year. Increasingly, the standard of footpaths, stiles, and gates is improving, and we are often able to bridge



a gap between a local authority short of funds and a landowner with access issues in need of resolution.

The Glorious Cotswold Grasslands programme expanded in 2024. We have harvested a record-breaking 2,900kg of seed, and many more landowners are keen to support this initiative. Increasingly, we see a developing interest in wider conservation schemes as a result, not least with many thinking about Farming in Protected Landscapes.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme has continued apace through the year. More and more projects are striking a balance between nature, climate, and food production as farmers and landowners seek to come to terms with the very different set of challenges they now face. We see farmers and landowners as key to the delivery of change across the landscape and I'm delighted how quickly we are moving towards a regenerative agricultural system. Facing up to both a climate and a nature crisis, as we truly are, requires real innovation and FiPL, funded through Defra, provides just the opportunity for this. Much more to do of course – and more money needed – but the direction of travel is right.

It's also good to see how wider collaboration has led to projects such as Big Chalk, a partnership across southern England where chalk and limestone grasslands of quality are at the heart of creating a mosaic of habitats.



Front cover image: Tea Smart

Underpinning all of the above is our continuing work on climate change, helping all those who live and work in, and visit the Cotswolds to understand the effects and mitigation needed over time, as we all strive to achieve net zero targets by 2050.

Applause also goes to our volunteers who help in so many ways as ambassadors for the Cotswolds National Landscape. Our Board, of local authority and parish council reps, together with those nominated by the Secretary of State, provide excellent guidance and support to staff whilst being diligent in their oversight of plans and finances.

We said goodbye to Andy Parsons, our talented Chief Executive, in 2024 and warmly welcomed Rebecca Waite into the role. She leads a committed, enthusiastic and energetic team who never fail to inspire. My thanks go to all of them.

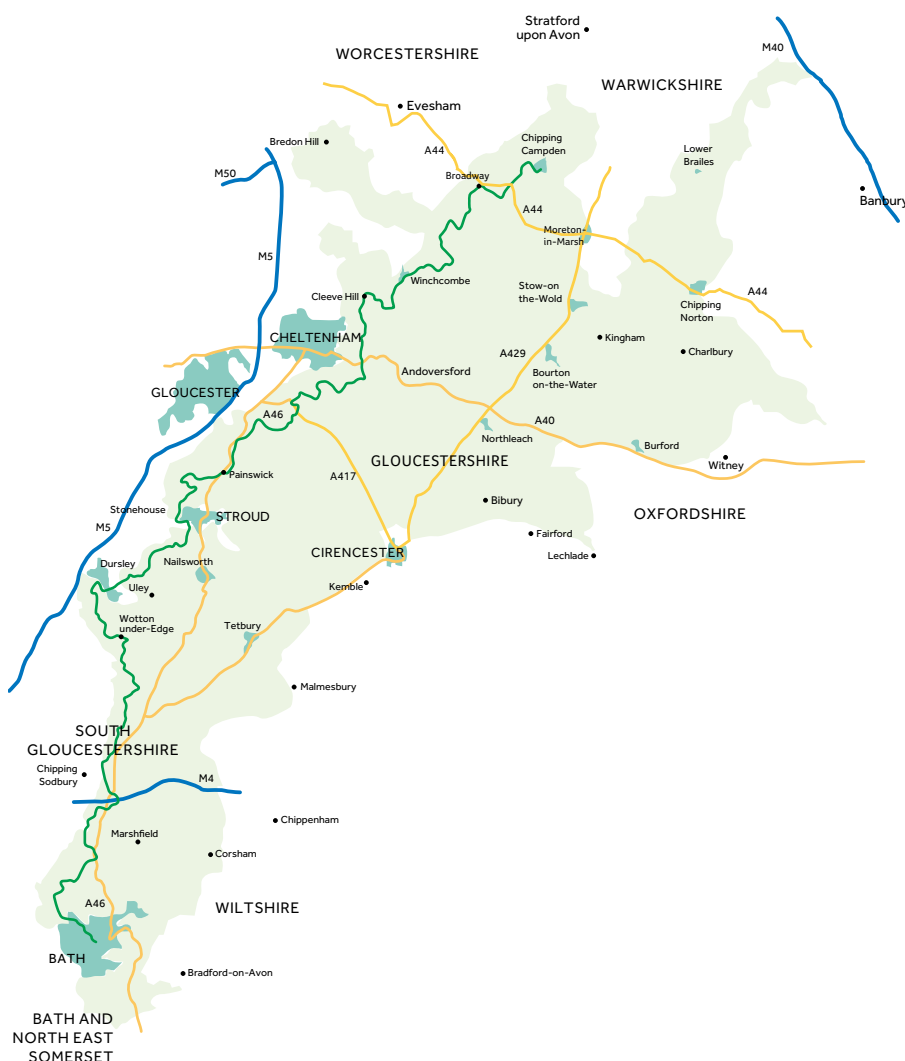
Brendan McCarthy
Chair, Cotswolds National Landscape Board

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.

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 new Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) 2025-2030 Management Plan was adopted by the Board in February 2025, following two rounds of consultation.

The Management Plan is a statutory plan, which sets out the vision, outcomes, and policies for the management of the CNL and it identifies key actions for specific stakeholders. It addresses the many issues currently facing the CNL, and we all have a role to play in its delivery.

As the protected landscape body, the CNL Board is determined to make the Management Plan's outcomes a reality. As such, we have identified the following priorities to help focus our efforts:

- Informing, encouraging, and guiding efforts to ensure that the Cotswolds plays its part in both mitigating climate change whilst also adapting to its impacts.
- Encouraging and supporting the recovery of nature across the Cotswolds - so that populations of wild species can flourish and successfully adapt to climate change by moving through the landscape.

- Broadening engagement and improving access in the CNL so that a wider range of people can access the mental, physical and emotional benefits this brings.
- Striving to ensure that all activities undertaken within the CNL and its setting conserve and enhance natural beauty and, in particular, the CNL's special qualities.

We recognise that addressing climate change whilst conserving and enhancing natural beauty will be one of our key challenges in the coming years.



Collaborative working

We were delighted to see an important Big Chalk milestone in 2024 with its first conference.

Simon Smith, our Nature Recovery Lead, has been working since 2020 with a number of colleagues from other protected landscapes and conservation bodies on Big Chalk – an ambitious programme of work which aims to restore a mosaic of habitats across an enormous stretch of calcareous landscape in southern England. The

work to date was celebrated at the Big Chalk Conference 2024. The partnership of over 150 like-minded organisations showcased how forging connections between nature recovery projects across the chalk and limestone landscapes of southern England can achieve a sustainable approach to nature recovery.



Libra Photographic

Libra Photographic



By uniting resources and expertise, the collective work covers a fifth of England, and aims to build a dynamic nature recovery network, at scale, that will be central to the UK's pledge to protect 30% of land and halt the decline of nature by 2030. The conference was the start of an exciting new chapter in the Big Chalk story.

The ambitious Big Chalk programme is run by a partnership of over 150 like-minded organisations.

Generation Green 2

Throughout the autumn and winter, the CNL team worked with our local partners to deliver Generation Green 2 – a Defra-funded project hosting young people to enjoy inspiring experiences in the great outdoors.

The aim was to enable a wider audience to access our protected landscapes resulting in more engagement with our natural world. Feeling connected with nature leads to an increased desire to preserve and enhance the natural world, as well as benefitting our mental wellbeing and social engagement.

We facilitated 148 children to go on days out, 260 children to visit a farm, and 151 children to go on a residential in the Cotswolds. We



Sameera Veshima



Nicole Daw

worked in partnership to deliver this work locally with Jamie's Farm, Friendship Café, The Farm Project, Bath City Farm, Into Nature and Cleeve Common Trust. We delivered residential and day experiences which immersed young people in nature. Residential opportunities allowed inner-city teenagers to experience a different way of life, on working farms. Younger children experienced the joy of farm visits and day trips where they connected with nature and had "the best day ever."

Generation Green 2 ran until the end of March 2025, and was intended to help address major inequalities in access to nature by cultivating a wider interest in green spaces among the next generation, fostering wellbeing benefits among participants and opening protected places to a wider demographic.

Climate Action

CNL recruited a Climate Action Lead and Climate Action Coordinator in the spring and autumn of 2024 to build on the carbon footprint and pathway to net zero produced by SWC and 3Keel.

A major project on woodland opportunity mapping was completed in March 2025 with work underway to create an engagement strategy. Alongside this, progress has been made on a wider land use strategy, incorporating soil mapping and quantifying the climate impact of land management changes and low carbon farming. The team has also been working towards a climate adaptation plan for the landscape, a risk assessment was completed in March 2025 which is currently under review. Additionally, the team has worked in partnership with Cotswolds Plus LVEP to produce two sustainability guides

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to advise businesses on how to reduce the environmental impact of their businesses. Internally, the climate team has been carrying out a carbon footprint of the CNL team's own operations. This will identify opportunities to reduce CNL's emissions, whilst also acting as a wider engagement piece on how other organisations can reduce their carbon footprint. Plans for next year include progressing a Carbon Literacy course specific to the CNL, this will be used to deliver Carbon Literacy training for the CNL team.

Farming in Protected Landscapes – fourth year summary

Since the launch of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme in July 2021, over £4.5 million has been allocated to 167 projects across the Cotswolds.

These projects exemplify the programme's commitment to supporting sustainable and diverse farming practices; benefitting the environment, addressing climate challenges, promoting nature recovery, and engaging all within our communities.

The farming community's enthusiastic participation has been inspiring, with hundreds of enquiries from a range of farm types, sizes, and locations across the Cotswolds. This engagement has not only fostered innovative ideas but also strengthened the relationship between the Cotswolds National Landscape team and our local farmers.

One clear example of both innovation and relationship-building has been the FiPL



CNL's FiPL engagement team

supported Regenerative Agriculture Accelerator Programme (RAAP).

The RAAP launched in April 2024 and has already gone from strength to strength. Its membership spans arable, livestock, and dairy farmers, as well as agronomists, consultants, and advisors, all at different stages of their journey with regenerative agriculture in and around the Cotswolds. The group dynamic has been great



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from the outset, with plenty of conversation, curiosity, and camaraderie. The RAAP members have enjoyed a programme of tours, farm visits, presentations, a visit to Groundswell Festival, a mobile soil laboratory visit, and an inaugural Regenerative Agriculture Conference in the Cotswolds – an event we hope will be repeated.

One key insight has been around just how much regenerative agriculture is about applying rules and principles into specific contexts to inform land use and management decisions; it's not necessarily about avoiding or adopting specific standards or practices. Setting objectives, careful planning, monitoring outcomes, and being adaptive all come first.

The extension of the FiPL programme until March 2026 should see this investment and good work continue across the Cotswolds.

The RAAP membership spans arable, livestock, and dairy farmers, as well as agronomists, consultants, and advisors, all at different stages of their journey with regenerative agriculture in and around the Cotswolds.

Key project numbers 2024/25

- 44 projects approved for funding
- £1.7 million in total grants claimed
- £4.3 million total projects value

Key project numbers years 1 - 4

- 177 projects funded
- £4.5 million in allocated grants
- £8 million total projects value

Glorious Cotswold Grasslands

2024/25 saw the Glorious Cotswold Grasslands (GCG) team run its most successful seed harvesting season to date, bringing in a record-breaking 2,900 kg of seed.

For the first time since the launch of the programme, the team operated two seed harvesters simultaneously throughout the whole season. This allowed them to cover much more ground with harvesting. Although more complex, and requiring more equipment, coordination, and volunteer work, it achieved great results.

Following the successful summer season, the weather then turned. From late September through to the end of October, persistent downpours made ground preparation in the peak sowing period extremely challenging. Despite this, the team managed to sow 71ha of recipient sites, with only a few waterlogged floodplain meadow sites deferred until 2025 due to the ground conditions. They also started the year with a spring sowing of 11ha using seed collected from 2023 – bringing the full annual total to 82ha.

None of this could be achieved without the sustained efforts of the GCG programme volunteers on harvest and sowing days, and the generosity of the donor site owners. The GCG programme is coordinated by three hard-working and dedicated CNL team members, but its success is also thanks to a much larger network of volunteers and landowners.

An array of funders has also supported this work. Severn Trent funded the sowing of over 24ha, with the Thames Water Smarter Water Catchment programme funding a further 10ha. A third water company will be supporting the programme from 2025, as a new 5-year funding partnership was agreed with Wessex Water.

The grasslands work continues throughout the year. Following the seed sowing period, the team moved straight into running a busy programme of 20 winter work parties, controlling scrub and managing grassland on some of the most ecologically valuable sites in the Cotswolds.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme supported GCG work throughout the year by funding both over 19ha of seed sowing, and the winter work parties.

Key programme numbers 2024/25


- 82 hectares: area where restoration has been initiated
- 30: number of donor sites
- 52: number of recipient sites
- 55: highest number of species recorded at one site
- 13 hectares: largest single site participating in 2024/25
- 2,900kg: wildflower seed harvested

Key programme numbers overall

- 462 hectares: area where restoration has been initiated
- 142: number of donor sites (on a cyclical harvesting schedule)
- 297: number of recipient sites
- 125: highest number of species recorded at one site
- 400+: number of plant species recorded in all surveys over 6 years
- 35 hectares: largest participating site
- 10,081kg: total wildflower seed collected over program



Tea Smart



2024/25 saw a record-breaking seed harvesting season, resulting in nearly 3 tonnes of collected seed.

Everyone's Evenlode – approaching conclusion

The Everyone's Evenlode team continued offering inspiring river experiences to people of all ages and from all walks of life in 2024/25.

The Voices of the River podcast has proven very popular through the year, and has attracted a number of well-respected guest speakers. Outreach work to under-represented groups has continued, and has attracted repeated participation with activities arranged for people from Refugee Resource, as well as Black 2 Nature and the Friendship Cafe.

Participation in the Outdoor Learning Network has gone from strength to strength, including a special event in January to hear about a range of access experiences from a variety of speakers. In December, the team accompanied a group of children from Rushmore Primary School in Hackney to deliver a 'message in a bottle' to Emma Hardy MP Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Water and Flooding) in London. The group delivered hundreds of handwritten postcards, conveying deep concern for river health and water quality in England's rivers.

A photography competition launched in winter 2024 encouraged entrants to consider rivers and waterways. The competition was very popular and really demonstrated a community fondness of, and devotion to, rivers in the catchment area.



Winning photography competition entries (L-R Jonah Powell, Graham Hill, Nellie Beddoe)



Youngsters delivering the 'message in a bottle' to Emma Hardy MP.

As the Everyone's Evenlode strand of this project work draws to a close in summer 2025, the team were part of a wonderful celebration event in March 2025. The event showcased the very best elements and outcomes from across the entire project, with the presentations made by the citizen scientist school children being especially memorable.

Key project numbers 2024/25:

Education

- Delivered 39 sessions on the river enabling 925 children (5 - 15 yrs old) to experience outdoor education
- Worked with 45 young people (16 - 25 yrs old) on river-based projects
- From 20 schools and universities inside and outside the catchment
- Benefitted from 248 volunteer hours

Community Outreach

- Engaged with 2,531 people in the community at 57 different events, including:
 - 5 guided walks
 - 14 community visits
 - 8 fairs, festivals and shows
 - 29 knowledge exchange events
 - 1 large river community event
- Benefitted from 181 volunteer hours



Removing Barriers

'Access for All: Removing Barriers' has been a three-year programme (2022-2025) created by the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (Defra) to improve physical and digital infrastructure, making Protected Landscapes more accessible for people of all ages and abilities and from all socio-economic backgrounds.

During the programme, we have allocated £552,228 of capital funding to 49 projects. Each project helps to remove barriers that residents and visitors encounter when accessing and enjoying the Cotswolds. The goal was to fund physical and digital infrastructure improvements which would help welcome more people to the countryside, at the same time as serving local communities and the grant recipients.

The physical and mental health benefits of being in nature cannot be underestimated. While there are many barriers to accessing nature throughout the UK, and this is no different in the Cotswolds, we are always actively working to improve access to nature throughout our National Landscape.

Over 2024/25, £254,391 of funding was allocated across 25 projects including a boardwalk along a key connective route alongside a river between Lower and Upper Slaughter, access audits to identify work needed to expand access at Woodland Trust-owned Lineover and Barber Woods, an electric wheelchair and ramp for visitors to Beckford's Tower, the marking of an off



road mobility route with associated audio guides in a variety of languages for visually impaired visitors using the route at Cleeve Hill, a handrail for a popular local walk along the escarpment in Radway, the purchase of an off road mobility scooter at Eastleach Downs Organic Farm for visitors, and picnic benches at a variety of National Trust sites that can enable those using a wheelchair to enjoy a picnic with their families.

Key numbers 2023/24:

- £254,391 of funding allocated
- 25 projects supported



Planning

Our Planning Lead, John Mills, successfully secured approval for a project to underground approximately 1km of high voltage cables at National Trust's Tinkley Gate site, near Woodchester Park, south of Stroud.

The undergrounding will remove pole-mounted cables in an area of the Cotswolds well-loved for its natural beauty.

The main benefit of the project will be to improve the visual amenity of the site for the tens of thousands of people who visit the site each year. In particular, it will enhance views looking north from the site, across Woodchester Valley, towards Minchinhampton and Rodborough

Commons. There will also be some benefits for wildlife, for example, not having to cut back hedgerows as severely or as often.

The total value of the contingency costings is approximately £125,000. These costs will be covered by National Grid. National Grid will undertake most of the work apart from digging the trenches for the cables, which will be undertaken by National Trust's contractors. The project is planned to be undertaken in autumn 2025.

The CNL planning team welcomes suggestions for further schemes where the undergrounding of high voltage cables would enhance the natural beauty of the CNL.



Cotswold Voluntary Wardens

Our Cotswold Voluntary Wardens continue to impress. Having set a record for themselves last year with the number of hours they worked, they've smashed it this year by contributing an astonishing 55,352 hours of work in 2024/25.

In financial terms, at UK minimum wage rate, their work equates to over £670,000 a year – and so our gratitude to them is deep rooted and ongoing. What they do for the Cotswolds is absolutely vital. This year, each of our warden districts has excelled in different areas, which has been wonderful to witness. In North District, leading guided walks has been a real focus; in East District, the clear theme was education – helping young people and communities engage with the Cotswolds landscape; in Central District, wardens upskilled with lots of training



and worked hard to plant hedgerows and install fencing. In South District, conservation work has been important – with an outstanding effort in scrub clearance and working in grassland restoration; and in Avon Valley District – which has the highest number of volunteer wardens – they have pooled their resources and contributed work across all areas of warden work.

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Images this page and next: courtesy of the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens



Key numbers 2024/25:

- 55,352 hours of work
- 354 guided walks, attended by 4,306 people
- 10,883 miles of path patrolled and surveyed
- 1,017 trees planted
- 115 fallen trees cleared from across paths

Celebrating our team



Andy Parsons



Rebecca Waite

Late 2024 saw Andy Parsons depart after five very successful years as Chief Executive – and he has moved to a new role leading the team at the Heart of England Forest. He has been succeeded by Rebecca Waite, who took up the role of CNL Chief Executive in December 2024.

In 2024/25, we were also joined by Maria Carter who joined the FiPL team to assist with communications around the programme;

Fred Constantine Smith and Alice Whitehead, who form our Climate Action team; Helen Komor, who is our new Outdoor Learning Officer; and Tom Harcourt and Cerian Brogan, who both joined the Glorious Cotswold Grasslands team.

Mike Cripps concluded his term as Head Warden for the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens, and passed the reins to Sarah West. Mike enjoyed a very busy and successful tenure as Head Warden, and will continue to contribute time, effort, and skills within the Cotswold Voluntary Warden cohort. Doug Calkin is our new Deputy Head Warden.

As a team, we said goodbye to Lorna Baggett, who relocated to a neighbouring national landscape and took up a role closer to her new home; and Nina Stubbington, who spent an fantastic two years with us during which she contributed a great deal and grew in skills, confidence, and experience. We thank Andy, Lorna, and Nina all for their hard work, devotion, and contributions during their time with us.



Maria Carter



Fred Constantine Smith



Alice Whitehead



Helen Komor



Tom Harcourt



Cerian Brogan



Mike Cripps



Sarah West



Doug Calkin

Financial Statement

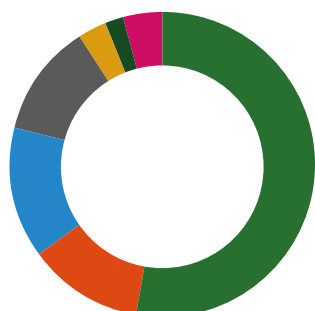
Income and Expenditure Account
For the year ending 31 March 2025

	2023/24 £	2024/25 £
Expenditure	3,089,008	4,154,349
Project Delivery	2,876,857	2,876,857
Corporate Management and Administration	212,151	156,329
Income	(3,673,043)	(4,226,325)
DEFRA Grant	(529,743)	(529,743)
DEFRA – FIPL	(1,366,236)	(2,143,548)
DEFRA – Removing Barriers	(51,343)	(254,391)
DEFRA – Capital/Revenue Uplift		(381,916)
Natural England	(102,687)	(76,919)
Local Authorities & Parish Councils	(139,266)	(145,071)
National Grid LEI	(496,747)	0
Thames Water	(129,564)	(183,969)
Severn Trent	(60,000)	(46,630)
National Highways – Biodiversity	(643,943)	(114,578)
Highways England	(7,480)	(99,504)
Groundwork UK	(26,987)	0
British Mountaineering Council		(41,000)
National Landscapes Association – Gen Green		(69,720)
Ernest Cook Trust (OLO)		(20,000)
Other	(119,047)	(119,335)
Deficit (Surplus)	(584,035)	(71,976)

Balance Sheet

As at 31st March 2025

	31.03.24 £	31.03.25 £
Net Assets:		
Fixed Assets & Investments	0	0
Current Assets	2,275,875	2,646,092
Current Liabilities	(1,031,088)	(1,329,329)
Net Current Assets	1,244,787	1,316,763
Total Net Assets	1,244,787	1,316,763
Financed by:		
Restricted Funds	1,007,816	960,162
Earmarked Reserves	157,650	277,900
General Fund	79,321	78,701
Total Reserves	1,244,787	1,316,763



Gross Expenditure %

Conservation of Natural Environment	55%
Conservation of Cultural Heritage	12%
Recreation Management & Transport	14%
Promoting Understanding	12%
Cotswold Voluntary Wardens	3%
Forward Planning	2%
Corporate Management	4%



Image: courtesy of the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens

Cotswolds National Landscape

The Threshing Barn
Marsden Manor Farm
Rendcomb
Cirencester
GL7 7EU
07841 663607

info@cotswolds-nl.org.uk
cotswolds-nl.org.uk

