

Cotswolds Area of Outstanding
Natural Beauty

Management Plan 2018-2023



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

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

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

Development and Transport

Economy

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

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

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

Opportunities for growth and investment to support sustainable development within the AONB lie in the development of the tourism, land management, conservation and cultural sectors that are sympathetic to the AONB and its special qualities. In addition, lifestyle businesses, home working, small-scale rural office developments and knowledge-based businesses supported by super-fast (or ultra-fast) broadband alongside improvements in mobile phone connectivity, all make the Cotswolds a place to do business in.

Access to online services offers opportunities for rural manufacturers and retailers to access worldwide markets. Improving this infrastructure further is important for ensuring that the social and economic benefits of accessing digital technology are available across the whole of the AONB.

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

Development

It is recognised that sustainable housing growth for settlements in the AONB is required to ensure that local housing needs, including affordable housing, are met and the vitality of villages is maintained and enhanced. However, the scale of development required to provide housing, employment and services to an expanding and ageing population – as already projected in District and

Policy CE2: Geology

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

The Cotswolds AONB is significant for its geology and geomorphology with some features unique to the area. The geology influences the landscape, soils and biodiversity and has played a significant role in the AONB's industry and heritage. Survey work has also identified the Cotswolds as significant for Tufa streams and springs. It is vital that this geological resource is protected, conserved, enhanced, promoted and better understood.

Local Distinctiveness

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

Policy CE3: Local Distinctiveness

1. Proposals that are likely to impact on the local distinctiveness of the Cotswolds AONB should have regard to, be compatible with and reinforce this local distinctiveness. This should include:
 - being compatible with the Cotswolds Conservation Board's Landscape Character Assessment, Landscape Strategy and Guidelines and Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change;
 - being designed and, where relevant, landscaped to respect local settlement patterns, building styles, scale and materials;
 - using an appropriate colour of limestone to reflect local distinctiveness.
2. Innovative designs – which are informed by local distinctiveness, character and scale – should be welcomed.
3. The development of design guidance – which is supported by a robust evidence base and which reflects relevant guidance published by the Cotswolds Conservation Board – will be encouraged.
4. Provision should be made for the quarrying of limestone, at an appropriate scale, in order to provide building materials that help maintain and enhance the local distinctiveness of the AONB. Any such mineral sites should be required to demonstrate that they do not have any significant adverse effects on the special qualities of the AONB or integrity of existing wildlife sites.

As outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, one of the special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB is the unifying character of the limestone geology – its visible presence in the landscape and its use as a building material. Development pressures could potentially erode this local distinctiveness, for example, through the use of