

## **Historic Environment**

### **Special features**

Many special aspects of the historic environment are found throughout the Cotswolds AONB, including high-quality archaeological sites and other landscape features, for example:

- Prehistoric sites such as Neolithic long barrows – Hetty Pegler’s Tump, Nymphsfield and Belas Knap and Lugbury
- Iron Age hill forts, such as Painswick Beacon, Crickley Hill and Old Sodbury Camps
- Roman sites, especially villas and roads (with major towns just outside the AONB)
- Saxon origins in the grouping of farmsteads and many place names
- Mediaeval sites, such as planned towns and deserted villages and churches
- Mediaeval ‘wool’ churches.
- Commons on the edge of the escarpment, such as Minchinhampton and Cleeve Common, which have not been affected by modern agricultural practices
- Stone circles, such as the Rollright Stones henges, and other Neolithic sites such as the henge at Conderton
- Classic geological sites
- The form of settlements integrated with their landscape settings
- Distinctive unconverted barns, particularly with their characteristic roofscapes
- Field systems, hedges and old pollard trees, roads, trackways, and droving routes
- Extensive traditional dry stone walls and features such as sheep washes, stone stiles and dew ponds
- Many listed buildings of traditional stone in the streets of Cotswold market towns and villages. And in the open countryside
- Historic parks and gardens

## **FORCES FOR CHANGE**

### **Recording and access to information**

Historic Environment Records (HERs) are key sources, which need adequate resources. Limited resources have led to a cessation of the Monuments Protection Programme by English Heritage. This has delayed designation and statutory protection of new monuments and their settings.

Awareness of sources of information on archaeological resources is limited. There is a need to promote better awareness of HERs as a key source (while acknowledging that these often record some types of heritage better than

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others, so other sources should also be used). Understanding needs to be raised, particularly amongst landowners and managers. This should assist in tackling a current lack of pro-active management and loss of the resource. Better recording of heritage resources is required using modern technology, including LIDAR surveys. This would assist in avoiding damage to hidden archaeological sites and features.

Local authorities are encouraged to produce local lists of non designated buildings and sites of local interest.

### **Land use management**

Arable farming on shallow Cotswold soils is a key issue because repeated ploughing, particularly deep ploughing by powerful machinery, can seriously affect large numbers of archaeological sites. Increased reliance on contractors without intimate knowledge of the fields they are ploughing can accentuate such problems.

Development of scrub results from lack of grazing. This can mean that archaeological sites become harder to recognise when overgrown and are prone to severe damage if trees or shrubs become established. Overgrazing, on the other hand, can result in erosion.

Loss of ridge and furrow and permanent pasture to ploughing are undesirable impacts of continued changes and diversification in agriculture. Organic farming is a desirable practice but this should not be at the expense of ploughing up areas of permanent grassland because of their inherent fertility. Burrowing animals such as badgers and rabbits are also an increasing problem in causing damage to underground remains. Their activities also lead to difficulties in interpreting strata and higher costs in preserving sites. Badgers in particular need careful monitoring.

The recreational use of sites and excessive visitor pressure can lead to erosion. Irresponsible use of metal detectors is a significant issue and is causing widespread damage.

New woodland planting and forestry operations can damage the historic environment; archaeological sites in particular need careful assessment. Promotion of short rotation coppice and other energy crops such as *Miscanthus* could add to these difficulties. The current area threshold for Environmental Impact Assessment of new tree planting proposals is too high. All significant sites need to be properly assessed prior to planting.

Opportunities should be taken to raise the awareness of farmers, such as through the guidance published by English Heritage, the AONB Partnership and Gloucestershire Archaeology Service<sup>1</sup>. New agri-environment schemes should also offer greater opportunities to improve the management of historic sites. There may be opportunities to relate information and guidance to the recently defined Landscape Character Areas

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<sup>1</sup> ARCHAEOLOGY & FARMING A guide to the care and management of archaeological sites.

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#### **Development**

Careful planning and design is required to ensure that development pressure does not adversely affect the traditional character of villages and other settlements throughout the AONB. Otherwise it can result in housing and industrial developments that can be inappropriate to the scale and layout of existing towns and villages. The increasing demand for rural living shows no signs of ceasing.

The settings and character of settlements can be compromised by development on their edges. Infilling of open areas can also significantly affect the appearance of towns and villages and the relationship between them and their landscape settings. Such sites are often subject to pressure to redevelop at densities that are inappropriate to the character of traditional villages. The Planning Theme of this Management Plan refers to planning powers that can be used to control such impacts.

There is a serious threat to surviving, unconverted traditional farm buildings. Government guidance requires that employment is considered before other uses but the greatest demand is for residential occupation. This can result in unsympathetic conversions, including badly designed extensions that are out of keeping with their surroundings. Collectively such development can dilute the traditional Cotswold character. English Heritage is undertaking a farmstead character assessment process.

The design of new agricultural buildings is also an important issue for the AONB. Unsightly and poorly positioned structures can be seen throughout the area, conflicting with the 'unique sense of harmony' that is so characteristic of the Cotswolds countryside. Inappropriate materials and features such as the use of reconstituted stone, non-vernacular architectural features, modern street layouts and design treatments can have a 'suburbanising' effect upon the landscape.

Established features which give towns and villages their distinctive character, such as existing trees and hedgerows, need to be respected and accommodated by new development. Landscape planting of conifers and ornamental shrubs often replaces cottage gardens. Small elements of historic and cultural significance, such as stone stiles, should be conserved. Production of Design Guidance, Village Design Statements and Parish Plans can assist in achieving sensitive development.

Planning permissions and activities which are not classed as development, or are permitted development, need to be subject to appropriate assessment of their archaeological and historical implications. Otherwise they can severely damage the archaeological sites, historic towns and landscapes that are crucial to the character of the area.

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The introduction of renewable energy micro generation technologies could have adverse impact on the historic environment unless care is taken with siting and design.

Local planning authorities are reporting an increasing reluctance by some owners of historic buildings to use natural materials when undertaking repairs or restoration, usually on grounds of cost.

### **Climate change impacts<sup>2</sup>**

The potential impacts of climate change on the historic environment include drying out of organic remains, impact on masonry, erosion, and introduction of energy conservation measures into historic buildings

Increased torrential rain may require improved drainage and guttering of historic buildings and paved or impervious areas whereas drought may require special management to ensure survival of specimen trees, grassed areas and gardens.

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<sup>2</sup> See Climate Change Theme for more detail and response