

Understanding and Enjoying

FORCES FOR CHANGE

Sustainable Tourism

Further consideration needs to be given to working more closely with the tourism industry in the development and application of viable and sustainable tourism principles, in order to support its economic importance and ensure the long-term well-being of the natural asset upon which most of the tourism industry is based. An important aspect of this issue is the need to development alternative means of transport for visitors to both come to the AONB and travel within it.

Visitor pressure

The Cotswolds attracts very large numbers of visitors during the year and will undoubtedly continue to do so. At particular locations (such as popular towns, attractions and viewpoints) and at particularly busy times, the sheer weight of numbers causes congestion and inconvenience for local residents and visitors. Congestion clearly impacts on the character of the AONB and undoubtedly affects the quality of the life of residents and the quality of the visitor experience.

Co-ordination of visitor information

A Destination Management Organisation has been set up for the Cotswolds and Forest of Dean to secure better liaison between different organisations.

New access rights

New public access rights to open country under the CROW Act have been mapped. The mapping of Commons is being revisited. The amount of land available for public access has been increased; this primarily covers access on foot. Guidance has been produced to encourage landowners and the general public to respect each other's rights and responsibilities and to minimise disruption and damage to the AONB. Monitoring of issues raised will take place through local access forums to identify any need for enhanced visitor management in sensitive areas and deal with missing links. The provision of further advice and guidance to the public regarding appropriate behaviour in the countryside, avoiding conflict with other users would be welcome.

Rights of way Improvement Plans and Local Transport Plans

Under the requirements of the CROW Act, planning improvements to countryside access across the whole of their area are a key responsibility for each of the seven highway authorities within Rights of Way Improvement Plans. For the benefit of the different users within the AONB these plans need to have a consistent and coordinated approach for the area as a whole, including the need to respect local distinctiveness. The AONB Access Group plays an important role in this regard. Public rights of way increasingly need to be appreciated as part of a broader network of sustainable access opportunities. Walking should continue to be promoted on routes that link to different forms of public transport. For example, improving links from public paths to provide access to nearby roads and, in particular, public transport facilities would be desirable and will no doubt form part of the Rights of Way Improvement Plans And Local Transport Plans. Opportunities and facilities for cycling and horse riding, both on and off road, should be promoted, including links to long distance routes such as those being supported by Sustrans. Bridleways also need to be considered. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act has reduced the inappropriate use of public rights of way network by motor vehicles'

Equality of access

There is a lack of information available to enable people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups to access and enjoy the Cotswold countryside. This includes people living in nearby urban communities who may not be aware of what the AONB can offer them. The work of the Protected Landscapes Diversity Forum will provide a broader picture of why any particular groups aren't choosing to visit the Cotswolds.

Canal restoration

The proposed restoration of part of the Cotswold Canal network by a British Waterways-led partnership from east of Stroud to the Sapperton Tunnel may provide opportunities for a range of new tourism and recreation activities. Such activities would need to be managed in a sensitive fashion, especially with regard to the effects on biodiversity, tranquillity and landscape character. Water supply needs to be assured without accentuating the river flow problems

Active sports

Cycling is already a key sport within the Cotswolds, attracting large numbers of cycling tourists and visitors. Over the period covered by this Management Plan increased affluence, leisure time and mobility may well lead to pressure for further active sports and also for more amenity and recreational facilities such as golf courses, holiday villages and static and touring caravan parks. These could impact significantly on landscape character in a number of ways

COTSWOLDS AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN 2008-13

Additional Information

(for example through changes in vegetation, new buildings and associated traffic, people, and noise) unless they are carefully controlled. Of concern is the increasing use of 4x4 vehicles and light aircraft for recreational purposes, with adverse effects on tranquillity.

Cotswold Way National Trail

Cotswold Way National Trail's formal launch provides significant opportunities in term of increased tourism, recreation and focus for land management within the AONB as well as the opportunity for the AONB and the Cotswold Way – both national designations to be marketed together to mutual benefit.

Active volunteering and learning

The Board's Cotswold Voluntary Wardens Service provides an opportunity for active involvement in countryside management and interpretation through a comprehensive programme of practical projects and guided walks. Other organisations within the AONB also provide volunteering opportunities linked to land management and access, and healthy living. These opportunities promote an active lifestyle for residents and visitors.