

Update



The newsletter from the Cotswolds Conservation Board
Autumn 2008



Highlights

Farmland Birds

- The board is working in partnership with Natural England and a range of other partner organisations on a brand new farmland birds project, which will run for the next two and a half years and aim to increase dwindling farmland bird populations in the South West.

Step into the Cotswolds

- Just under £7,500 raised through the 'Step into the Cotswolds' visitor payback scheme over the past 18 months has enabled the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens to create two new waymarked walking routes with accompanying walks cards in West Oxfordshire.

Sustainable Development

- Three village halls in the Cotswolds have been awarded over £25,000 of Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) cash to enable installation of environmentally friendly features such as ground source heat pumps and rainwater harvesting systems.

Winter Courses

A range of two-day hedgelaying courses will take place at Great Rissington, Ebrington, Winchcombe and Calmsden between November and February.

The North Cotswolds Hedgelaying competition, which is organised by the board and supported by the National Hedgelaying Society will take place on Saturday 15th November at Foss Cross between Northleach and

Cirencester. Competitors will be able to enter four classes catering for a range of abilities.

For more information on all of these events, contact Mark Connelly on **01451 862006**. Information leaflets and application forms are available on request.



Update



Conserving and enhancing

Walling No Barrier!

The board continues to run a project designed to help young drystone wallers gain essential skills. Walling No Barrier, which has been running for over two years now subsidises walling students' course fees and encourages them to pair-up with experienced wallers. As part of the course, students work to gain a nationally recognised Lantra drystone walling qualification. In the summer a group of seven students were awarded their level 1 certificates and in September 12 students enrolled on a new six-month course.

Farmland Birds

The board is working in partnership with Natural England to launch the first phase of a regional conservation project, which will aim to reverse the decline in farmland bird populations in the South West. Neil Harris has joined the team to run the Cotswolds part of the two and a half year project and will be based at Northleach and the Natural England offices in Worcester. The South West Farmland Birds Initiative will eventually see co-ordinated work taking place between a range of conservation organisations in Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and North Dorset, including the RSPB and the North Wessex Downs and Cranborne Chase AONBs.

Since the mid-1970's farmland bird populations in England have declined and the main aim of the project is

to reverse that by increasing the population size and range of some important farmland bird species. Work will take place to advise farmers on the best ways to provide appropriate habitats and officers will examine existing Environmental Stewardship agreements to ensure that they help to deliver the aims of the project. Detailed information will also be gathered about farmland bird areas to aid future targeted conservation work. Project Officer for the Cotswolds Neil Harris can be contacted by e-mail:

Neil.Harris@naturallengland.org.uk

Ancient Woodland Event

An event designed to encourage the correct management of ancient woodland took place in July and 40 landowners took part. Organised as part of the Cotswolds Ancient Woodland Project in partnership with the Forestry Commission, the event included a short presentation about the project in Miserden Village Hall and a walk around an ancient woodland site, on part of the Miserden Estate.

Woodland owners were given guidance on appropriate management techniques and told about the support available for woodland management within the Cotswolds Ancient Woodland Priority Area. This is an area of the AONB where increased grant support and resources are available for the management of ancient and semi-natural woodland.

New software (GIS)

The board has been using its new Geographical Information Systems or GIS software to collate important data about the AONB. Thanks to GIS we now have more information about levels of light pollution and tranquillity within the area. For instance, we have managed to identify statistics which point towards a rise in levels of light pollution in the 1990's by using national light pollution data to identify the changes over time. We managed to isolate data, which showed that in 1993 the percentage of the AONB with the least amount of light pollution was 10.9% but that this had fallen to 6.1% by 2000.¹ We have also been able to establish the level of tranquillity within the AONB in comparison to the national picture. 5.9% of the Cotswolds AONB falls within the highest category for tranquillity (i.e. the most amount of), compared to 1.0% nationally.²



1. Light Pollution data compiled by Land Use Consultants. 2003

2. Tranquillity data compiled by the CPRE. 2006

Update



Understanding and enjoying

New website

A new website for the AONB is nearing completion. The web address www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk remains the same but the board has bought into a new 'up to date' web package, which allows the team at Northleach much more control over the day to day workings of the site. It means that we will be able to regularly provide current case studies and form new areas of the site in a cost effective manner. The site is due to go live towards the end of the year and we would welcome any comments and views from you via e-mail once you have had a chance to have a look. Please e-mail the Information and Interpretation Officer:

claire.cunningham@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

Publications

The board continues to produce a range of publications that aim to inform the public and partners about the AONB. Between July and September the board published its Annual Review, a short leaflet about the AONB and the autumn/winter edition of the Cotswold Lion Newspaper. In all 40,000 copies of the lion were circulated to Tourist Information Centres, libraries and other leisure outlets in and on the borders of the AONB. In addition, 1,500 copies of a specialists information sheet, Cotswold Grants, was mailed out to farmers and parishes in the AONB along with copies of the Cotswold Lion. The four-page supplement provides information about all of the environmental grants available within the AONB.

Summer Shows

The board and the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens attended over 15 country shows this summer and took time out to engage with the public and tell them about the AONB. The board took its mobile exhibition trailer to the two-day Cotswold Show in Cirencester in July and the three-day Stoneleigh Country Festival in August. The board had planned to attend the Moreton Show at the start of September but the show was cancelled due to bad weather. We would like to thank everybody who volunteered to help at this year's shows, whether they be board members, officers or voluntary wardens.

People and communities

The Cotswolds Green Tourism Project

A scheme run in partnership with West Oxfordshire District Council.

New walking routes

Just under £7,500 raised through the 'Step into the Cotswolds' visitor payback scheme over the past 18 months has gone towards creating two new waymarked walking routes with accompanying walks cards in West Oxfordshire. The Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment put £6,000 towards the

total figure and the rest of the money was raised by green tourism businesses participating in the Step into the Cotswolds scheme. Visitors at hotels, B&B's and other tourism venues were encouraged to make a contribution to conservation work in the area during their stay.

The board's Cotswold Voluntary Wardens were instrumental in putting the new walking routes in place and did everything from installing 13 kissing gates to clearing over 600 metres of path.

Celebrating green success

A special event was held in Burford in July to celebrate the fact that 14 tourism businesses have been awarded Green Tourism Businesses Scheme accreditations, ranging from Bronze to Gold as a direct result of the Cotswolds Green Tourism Project. The board subsidised environmental audits carried out by Green Business UK, and businesses were then given advice on ways in which they could become more environmentally friendly. Accreditations were awarded once the businesses had the opportunity to put suggested measures in place.

Update



SDF

Between July and September three village halls in the Cotswolds were awarded over £25,000 of Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) cash to enable them to install environmentally friendly features. The new village hall at Toddington is currently being built and has already received a substantial SDF grant but this new grant will mean that light tubes can be installed. An SDF grant of over £6,500 for Rendcomb Village Hall will go towards the cost of installing a ground source heat pump using energy saving radiators and roof void insulation. Gretton Village Hall's grant of just under £14,000 will go towards the development of a rainwater storage and recycling system as part of a major refurbishment.

Cotswold Voluntary Wardens

The board's Cotswold Voluntary Wardens completed a large access project in the summer where they rebuilt a series of steps and installed 26m of handrail at Windmill Hill in

Warwickshire. In addition to this and the efforts that they put into work for the Cotswolds Green Tourism Project, (as mentioned on page 3), the wardens carried out a substantial amount of tree, woodland and limestone grassland maintenance work at Wigwell Local Nature Reserve near Charlbury.

Parish Council elections

Parish Councillors in the north Cotswolds have been invited to elect a new parish council board member for the area following the resignation of Peter Abbot from Sibford Gower.

Reduction in number of board members

The number of Cotswolds Conservation Board members is set to drop from 40

to 37 by April of next year. This is due to the fact that the board is made up of: Secretary of State, parish council and local authority nominees. There are currently 17 local authorities within the AONB but from April 2009 Wiltshire becomes a unitary authority and North Wiltshire and West Wiltshire District Councils will cease to exist. This means that the three local authority members that the board currently has for Wiltshire will drop to one and there will then be 15 Local Authority board members rather than 17. A Secretary of State board member position will also have to go to ensure that representation of the three categories of board members remains fair.

Timetable for parish council board member election process

Stage 1 • Notice of Vacancy was issued • Tuesday 7th October 2008

Stage 2 • Nominations received by • 5pm, Tuesday 18th November 2008

Stage 3 • Statement of Persons nominated • Tuesday 25th November 2008

Stage 4 • Issue of Ballot Papers • Tuesday 2nd December 2008

Stage 5 • Ballot Papers to be returned by • 5pm, Friday 23rd January 2009

All responses to consultations can be viewed on the board's website at www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk
(Sub - Committee news can now be found on the website)

Director
Martin Lane

Office Manager
Margaret Fletcher

Administrative Officer
Claire Rossiter

Land Management Officer
Mark Connelly

Volunteer Co-ordinator
Rebecca Jones

Planning Officer
Malcolm Watt

Information & Interpretation Officer
Claire Cunningham

Project Development/Business Planning Officer
John Mills

Sustainable Development Fund Officer
Anne Powell

Green Tourism Officer
Sue Perry

Farmland Birds Officer
Neil Harris

Cotswold Way National Trail Officer
James Blockley

Assistant Cotswold Way National Trail Officer
Don Field

Supported by over 340 voluntary wardens

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[CotsAONB/10.08/pdf](#)

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