

FORTY FIVE YEARS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY



This year marks the 45th anniversary of the Cotswolds' designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In 1966, the Cotswolds became the 23rd such area to be designated, the Gower Peninsula being the first in 1956. Today there are 46 AONBs across England, Wales and Northern Ireland as well as 15 national parks; in fact around a quarter of all the land in the UK and Ireland is officially protected.

Such designations are of national importance and value. But what does the AONB mean locally? The Cotswold Lion asked a few local people about their views on the importance and meaning of the AONB to them.



David Glenn, Managing Director, Huntsmans Quarries: Quarrying is an activity that many would regard as incompatible with an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The reality is that the special character of the Cotswolds is down to its geology - from its wildlife to its agriculture and even the taste of local beer.

We are proud to make our living from the geology. By producing walling and building stone and slate since the early 1800s, we like to think that we have done our bit to maintain the unique honey-colour of the built environment that is probably the region's most unique feature.

We have also, of course, provided rural employment for several generations. Today, there are 50 of us and our product range has extended to include aggregates (both primary and

The 45th anniversary of the AONB is a landmark that all of us who love the Cotswolds should celebrate. We are delighted to support the Cotswolds Conservation Board in its vital work in protecting and seeking to enhance the region.



Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP - Member of Parliament for The Cotswolds: The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding

Natural Beauty is a truly exceptional place and remains as important and relevant today as it was when it was first enacted 45 years ago.

In my opinion, however, the Cotswolds now face potential changes as big as anything since World War 2.

The planning system is undergoing radical change towards greater localism and it is yet to be seen whether this will lead to a demand for more or less housing development.

centres, community bus services and the like are to survive and prosper.

For centuries the Cotswolds has been a living landscape built on thriving communities. The people of the Cotswolds have always been inventive and entrepreneurial and that is why the Cotswolds AONB is as special a place as it is.



Tony Richardson (RSPB Regional Director): The Cotswolds encompass what has long been recognised

as one of the most iconic of English landscapes. Its formal recognition and protection has supported the AONB's wildlife and natural habitats now for 45 years. However there are a great many pressures on the Cotswolds and the RSPB believes the relevance and work of the AONB is as important now as ever.

The RSPB works to protect birds and wildlife through resolving the problems that threaten their habitats and our

wider environment. This includes declines in once common birds, a lack of or inappropriate woodland management and damage to habitats through development or climate change. We work across the Cotswolds offering advice to farmers, local authorities and other land managers.

For example we have been working closely with the Cotswolds Conservation Board and Natural England on the Cotswolds Farmland Bird Project. Part of the South West Farmland Bird Initiative the project and local farmers have delivered 1800ha of farmland bird habitats, and contributed over £2 million to the local economy, through Natural England's Environmental Stewardship.

The project focuses on providing the nesting habitats, summer food (especially insects) and winter seeds that are the critical ingredients for a healthy farmland bird community. This work is benefiting species such as lapwing, grey partridge, turtle dove, yellow wagtail, tree sparrow and corn bunting, as well as other species such as the brown hare and rare arable plants like shepherd's needle and corn marigold.



Chris Burton, Proprietor, The Chestnuts/Culls Cottage: I became aware of the Cotswolds as a distinctive

and scenically beautiful region when I studied Jurassic fossils for my Masters degree in the early 1980s. A number of field trips and recreational visits made me realise that it was an area rich not only in fossils, but that the underlying rocks influenced the sculpting of the magnificent undulating landscape and provided the stone for the honey coloured buildings and dry stone walls that typify the area. I moved from my native Hertfordshire to live there as soon



as I could. Twenty five years later I operate two luxury, eco-friendly holiday cottages in the villages of Shilton and Southrop and the region's beauty, at every time of year, continues to captivate me.

As a region, The Cotswolds is well positioned to attract visitors, but then so are many others and we need every endorsement available to help win visitors. I use the AONB logo on our websites; I feel that it guarantees our claims about the beauty of the region, particularly to international visitors who may not be familiar with our area and its truly outstanding natural beauty.

recycled), concrete and agricultural lime. Some 90 per cent of our products are consumed within 20 miles of our quarry at Naunton.

As an essentially local, family-run company, we care passionately about the Cotswolds. While minimising our impacts, we also recognise that we can contribute positively in ways other than through our products. We practice active conservation, managing habitats to encourage endangered species, and opening the geological Site of Special Scientific Interest (created by quarrying) to the public and the site as a whole to schools.

During the last 13 years virtually no development has taken place in the Cotswold villages and that has resulted in a threat to the village schools, pubs, shops and other amenities and local services being closed.

The price of houses in the Cotswolds is now almost out of reach of most first time buyers, which is leading to an ageing population as the young have to move out.

The Coalition Government's agenda for localism and the Big Society will require many more people to become involved as volunteers if libraries, community



Map and Compass Course

Learn the skills needed to find your way across the Cotswolds. Sunday April 10th and Sunday 15th May. For further details and to book a place on the course, contact Rebecca Jones on 01451 862008 or email: Rebecca.jones@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

Cotswolds Conservation Board

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The Cotswolds Conservation Board looks after the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

The Board works:

- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB
- to increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB

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