

**SOUTH JOINT COMMITTEE****25 SEPTEMBER 2008****Subject: Cotswold Conservation Board Grant Settlement****Lead Officer: Colin Staves**  
**Contact on 01789 260333****Lead Member/  
Portfolio Holder: Councillor S Beese****Summary**

To consider a request from Cotswold Conservation Board for the Council to write to DEFRA and Natural England seeking a fairer grant settlement in the future for the special landscape area when compared to other protected landscapes.

**RECOMMENDED:****That the Committee**

- 1. endorses the Cotswold Conservation Board Report entitled 'Comparison of purpose and resources between Conservation Boards, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnerships and National Park Authorities'; and**
- 2. expresses its views to Natural England, DEFRA, the relevant Secretary of State, John Maples MP that the criteria for applying funding to the Cotswold Conservation Board in exercising its responsibilities for the stewardship of the AONB be made clear and transparent and that funding provision for the Cotswold Conservation Board should be made fair in comparison to other AONBs, whether constituted as Partnerships or Boards.**

**1 Background/Information**

- 1.1 The Cotswold Conservation Board has been analysing the grant offers from Natural England in recent years in order to determine how the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Board settlement compared to other AONBs and National Park Authorities.
- 1.2 The Board agreed the attached paper earlier this year, at its meeting in March.
- 1.3 The Cotswolds is the largest AONB and its grant settlement is a significant sum. However, when analysed on an area or per head of population basis the AONB is receiving far less investment when compared with other protected landscapes, i.e. within the Cotswolds the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) amounts to £39 per sq km, whereas the national average is £300 per sq km.
- 1.4 The Board has been given the additional duty of increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB,

modelled on those of the National Park Authorities, which makes the poor grant settlement comparison all the more concerning.

- 1.5 Natural England recognise the sum awarded to the Cotswolds, but fail to recognise how thinly the investment has to be spread compared to other AONBs or National Parks.
- 1.6 North Wiltshire District Council's Executive have considered the Board paper, endorsed its findings and have written to DEFRA, Natural England and their local MP asking why the grant settlements should place the Cotswolds at such a disadvantage.
- 1.7 The Cotswold Conservation Board have now asked the Council to consider writing to DEFRA and Natural England based upon the evidence provided in the attached Board paper, so that we might secure a fairer settlement for our special landscape in the future.

## **2 Options available to the Cabinet**

- 2.1 The Committee can either support the request from the Cotswold Conservation Board, or not.

## **3 Members' Comments**

- 3.1 None received.

## **4 Implications of the proposal**

- 4.1 Legal/Human Rights Implications

None.

- 4.2 ***Financial***

No direct financial implications, but poor grant settlements could mean that the Board seeks additional financial contributions from the local authorities within the AONB.

- 4.3 ***Environmental***

Inadequate resourcing will restrict the ability of the Board to achieve its objectives of preserving and enhancing the AONB as well as promoting the enjoyment and understanding of this special landscape.

- 4.4 ***Corporate Strategy***

The work of the Board is supportive of the Corporate Strategy vision of 'maintaining and enhancing the heritage and green environment' of the District.

- 4.5 ***Equality Impact Assessment***

None.

## **5 Risk Assessment**

- 5.1 There is a potential reputational risk to the Council in not supporting the request from the Conservation Board is if all the other partners to the Board endorse the findings and make representations as requested.

Pat Reid

HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES

## **COMPARISON OF THE PURPOSES OF THE COTSWOLDS CONSERVATION BOARD AND ITS ASSOCIATED RESOURCE BASE WITH OTHER ENGLISH AONB PARTNERSHIPS AND NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITIES**

**Summary:** This report compares the resources available to the Cotswolds Conservation Board in the delivery of its purposes with those available to other English AONB Partnerships and National Park Authorities.

**Author:** Martin Lane, Director

### **Recommendations:**

- (a) That the report be noted;**
- (b) That the information be utilised when discussing the Board's resource base with counterparts in Natural England, Defra, Local Authorities and other partner organisations;**
- (c) That Local Authority partner organisations be requested to endorse this report, and to correspond with Defra and Natural England highlighting the degree to which the Cotswolds AONB and Board are under-resourced compared to other protected landscapes in England.**

### **Background**

1. The proper resourcing of the Conservation Board's work has been discussed at a variety of meetings in 2007/08. The poor grant settlement for 2007/08 from Natural England led to a series of correspondence with local MPs, Natural England and the Secretary of State.

### **Comparison of Purposes and Resources**

- 2. Comparative figures are not always available, particularly for the family of AONBs, and more detailed data collection and analysis could be undertaken. For example further analysis could be undertaken of resource inputs compared to achievements, although comparable data across the protected landscape family as a whole is not currently available. However, this initial exercise is extremely useful in serving to illustrate some key findings.
- 3. Whilst the Conservation Board and National Park Authorities have extremely similar purposes there is a considerable difference in the resources available with which to deliver these purposes;
- 4. Whilst the Cotswolds AONB is an extensive area and the Conservation Board has a large grant settlement from Natural England compared with other AONBs, when the resources are analysed the AONB and Board has access to far less resources per square kilometre or per head of population compared to other AONBs;

### **A designated landscape**

- 5. In terms of protected landscapes the Cotswolds AONB is;

- the second largest protected landscape in England, second to the Lake District National Park.
- the largest AONB, with the most constituent local authority partners
- has the largest resident population of any protected landscape
- has in excess of 20 million day visitors a year, more than any other AONB and comparable to visitor numbers in the Lake District and Peak District National Parks, (**Annexes 1 and 2**).

### **The Board's purposes, duty and obligations**

6. The Board's purposes are modelled on those of the National Park Authorities, (**Annex 3**). Consequently the Board has two purposes; to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB and increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB. In addition, and again like National Park Authorities, when pursuing its purposes the Board has a duty to seek to foster the social and economic well being of the AONBs local communities.

7. As an independent corporate body established through Parliament the Board is required by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and its Establishment Order to provide for a series of measures eg audit requirements, as for local authorities, national park authorities and other similar organisations, (**Annex 4**). These obligations are far more comprehensive than those which applied to the former AONB Partnership.

8. Other AONB partnerships, joint committees or joint advisory committees do not have the second purpose or duty and are not obliged to comply with the same legislation as a stand alone Conservation Board.

### **Resources**

9. Staff resources: In 2007/08 the Board had 12 full time equivalent staff, including the Caring for the Cotswolds team supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Initially this staffing level looks broadly comparable with other AONBs, but when analysed against the geographic areas of the various AONBs the Cotswolds has far less staff resources per square kilometre than other AONBs (**Annex 5**).

10. Staff resources have to cover at least twice as much territory as for many other AONBs and 17 times as much territory when compared to National Parks.

11. Core grant: A similar picture emerges when Natural England's core grant is analysed per square kilometre of AONB or per head of resident population. The Cotswolds AONB has to make its grant settlement spread much further than other AONBs and considerably further than the settlement awarded to National Park Authorities.

12. The core grant for the Cotswolds has to spread two to three times as far as for many other AONBs and ten times as far as that for the Lake District National Park.

13. Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) Grant: The SDF grant is awarded as a standard sum per AONB or National Park. In 2006/07 this sum was £ 80,000 per AONB and £ 200,000 per National Park.

14. Given the extent of the Cotswolds this standard sum approach means that the money has to go a lot further per square kilometre than other AONBs and National Parks. The average amount of SDF per square kilometre of AONB or National Park is in the region of £ 300, whereas in the Cotswolds this amounts to only £ 39.

**Supporting Papers:**

**Annex 1 – English AONB Resources 2007/08**

**Annex 2 - English National Park Authority Resources 2007/08**

**Annex 3 - Comparison of Conservation Board Purposes with those of National Park Authorities.**

**Annex 4 – Additional Requirements of an Independent Conservation Board**

**Annex 5- Comparison of the Staff Resources available to AONB Partnerships, National Park Authorities and the Cotswolds Conservation Board.**

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**ENGLISH AONB RESOURCES**  
**2007/08**

	Area (sq km)	Staff (FTE) @ 07/08	Resident Population	Day Visitors (million)	No. Constituent LA's
Arnside and Silverdale AONB	75	4	10000	250000	4
Blackdown Hills AONB	370	4	13500	220000	6
Cannock Chase AONB	68	3	8788	1600000	5
Chichester Harbour AONB	74	6	8351		4
Chilterns Conservation Board	833	11	70000		15
Clwydian Range AONB	157	8			2
Cornwall AONB	958	5	84957	2778100	7
Cranborne Chase AONB	983	8	30000	8895600	11
Dedham Vale AONB	90	6	15161		7
Dorset AONB	1129	10	92000		4
East Devon AONB	268	5	22000	2517400	2
East Hampshire AONB	383	5	32500		3
Forest of Bowland AONB	802	7	16000	1191000	7
Gower AONB	188	2	10000	1595500	1
High Weald AONB	1460	15	121000		15
Howardian Hills AONB	204	3	5800		5
Isle of Anglesey AONB	221	7	20000	2000000	1
Isle of Wight AONB	189	4	132731		1
Isles of Scilly AONB	16	2	2000	115000	1
Kent Downs AONB	878	9	66000	22360000	12
Lincolnshire Wolds AONB	558	6	12915	1000000	3
Lleyn Peninsula AONB	161	2			
Malvern Hills AONB	105	4	12200	1250000	5
Mendip Hills AONB	198	6	6000		4
Nidderdale AONB	603	6	15000	334000	2
Norfolk Coast AONB	451	4	18242		4
North Devon AONB	171	5	12000	2029300	3
North Pennines AONB	1983	19	12000		9
North Wessex Downs AONB	1730	7	93700		11
Northumberland Coast AONB	135	3	10000	2336880	3
Quantock Hills AONB	99	8	2853	250000	4
Shropshire Hills AONB	804	9	18000		5
Solway Coast AONB	115	4	8736		3
South Devon AONB	337	5	34000		4
Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB	403	7	15161	210000	8
Surrey Hills AONB	419	6	96000	15000000	6
Sussex Downs AONB	983	12	133341		12
Tamar Valley AONB	195	12	27000	679280	7
Wye Valley AONB	326	5			4
<b>Cotswolds Conservation Board</b>	<b>2038</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>140000</b>	<b>20000000+</b>	<b>17</b>

ENGLISH NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY RESOURCES 2007/08

	Area (sq km)	Staff (FTE) 2007/08	Resident Population	Day Visitors (million)	No. Authority Members	Defra Grant 07/08 inc. SDF	No. Constituent LAs
The Broads	303	135	5721	5.4	21	£4,126,763	8
Dartmoor	953	110	29100	4	22	£4,321,078	4
Exmoor	691	91	10600	1.4	22	£3,593,600	4
Lake District	2292	184	42200	22	22	£6,407,000	5
New Forest	570	63	34400	Not Available	22	£3,514,000	5
Northumberland	1049	81	2200	1.5	22	£2,955,700	4
North York Moors	1435	134	25000	9.5	22	£4,979,300	5
Peak District	1437	251	38000	22	22	£7,723,294	12
Yorkshire Dales	1774	124	19654	9	22	£4,951,000	5
<b>Cotswolds Conservation Board</b>	<b>2038</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>140000</b>	<b>20+</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>£646,000*</b>	<b>17</b>

\*Natural England grant

Defra grants excludes planning fees raised and invested in the operation of planning functions and services



**Comparison of Conservation Board Purposes with those of National Park Authorities**

**National Park Purposes:**

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the park.
- To promote opportunities for understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities.

**Conservation Board Purposes:**

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.
- To increase the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the area of outstanding natural beauty.

**Additional Requirements of an independent Conservation Board  
Finance and Corporate Governance:**

- To be subject to a full External Audit, including value for money opinion and governance reports
- To be subject to a full Internal Audit
- To produce an annual Statement of Accounts and Statement on Internal Control (to be replaced by Statement on Corporate Governance from 2007/08 accounts. Statement of Accounts includes proscribed information requirements including accounting policies, notes and explanatory foreword.
- To have a separate Finance Officer in accordance with S151 of LGA 1972
- To operate in accordance with Accounts and Audit Regulations
- To comply with CIPFA Statement of Recommended Practice in financial matters
- To implement Risk Management, including maintaining a Risk Register
- To manage a Corporate Governance Action Plan
- To have a Code of Corporate Governance
- To operate a Constitution for the Board (inc. defined structure and committees, scheme of delegation, procedure rules, codes and protocols)
- To operate a Members' Allowance Scheme (reviewed annually)
- To maintain a Register of Members' and Officers Interests and Register of Gifts and Hospitality.
- To record and report Related Party Transactions
- Operate separate financial systems, including separate bank accounts
- Operate separate payroll system
- Maintain pension fund and policies and comply with regulation and legislation.

**Operation of the Board:**

- To operate a Board of 40 Board members
- To operate a more independent and extensive committee structure: 4 Board meetings, 8 Executive Committee Meeting and 20 sub committee meetings a year (and working groups)
- To support the appointments process for Secretary of State appointees
- To administer the appointment of 8 Parish Council Board Members, the nominations process and any associated elections
- To have an Independent Standards Committee (inc recruitment of 3 independent members)
- To hold all Board and committee meetings in public, with access by press and members of public.
- To advise all parish councils, DEFRA, Natural England and all Local Authority partners of Board meetings
- To maintain a website with up to date papers and information about Board, Executive and sub committee meetings
- Maintain insurance cover for an independent organisation inc public liability, employers liability, libel and slander, trustee guarantee, fidelity guarantee, motor, property (if holding assets) and contents cover.
- Maintain a stand alone GIS system
- Maintain separate OS licences
- Maintain external service level agreements or contracts to provide: IT, personnel, legal, democratic services, accountancy and payroll services
- Maintain IT Policy and security arrangements. Manage connections and IT kit.
- Maintain physical security arrangements on property.

**Comparison of the Staff Resources available to AONB Partnerships, National Park Authorities and the Cotswolds Conservation Board**

**Staff per Square kilometre of Protected Landscape (2007/08)**

	Sq km	FTE*	
<b>Cotswolds Conservation Board</b>	<b>2038</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>= 170 sq km per head</b>
Chilterns Conservation Board	833	11	= 76 sq km per head
Tamar Valley AONB	195	12	= 16 sq km per head
High Weald AONB	1460	15	= 97 sq km per head

	Sq km	FTE	
The Broads	303	135	= 3 sq km per head
Dartmoor National Park	953	110	= 8 sq km per head
Exmoor National Park	691	91	= 8 sq km per head
Lake District National Park	2292	184	= 11 sq km per head
Yorkshire Dales National Park	1774	124	= 13 sq km per head

**Staff per Authority Member (2007/08)**

	No. Members	FTE	
<b>Cotswolds Conservation Board</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>= 3.3 members per head</b>
Chilterns Conservation Board	29	11	= 2.6 members per head

	No. Members	FTE	
The Broads	21	135	= 0.2 members per head
Dartmoor National Park	22	110	= 0.2 members per head
Exmoor National Park	22	91	= 0.2 members per head
Lake District National Park	22	184	= 0.1 members per head
Yorkshire Dales National Park	22	124	= 0.2 members per head

**Staff per Constituent Local Authority (2007/08)**

	No. LAs	FTE	
<b>Cotswolds Conservation Board</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>= 1.4 per head</b>
Chilterns Conservation Board	15	11	= 1.4 per head

	No. LAs	FTE	
The Broads	8	135	= 0.06 per head
Dartmoor National Park	4	110	= 0.04 per head
Exmoor National Park	4	91	= 0.04 per head
Lake District National Park	5	184	= 0.03 per head
Yorkshire Dales National Park	5	124	= 0.04 per head

**Core Grant per Square kilometre of Protected Landscape (2006/07)**

	Sq km	£ Core Grant excl. SDF	
<b>Cotswolds Conservation Board</b>	<b>2038</b>	<b>£566,000</b>	<b>£277.00 per sq km</b>
Chilterns Conservation Board	833	£524,000	£629.00 per sq km
Tamar Valley AONB	195	£163,000	£835.00 per sq km
Mendip Hills AONB	198	£153,000	£772.00 per sq km
Chichester Harbour AONB	74	£161,000	£2175.00 per sq km
Sussex Downs AONB	983	£775,000	£788.00 per sq km

	Sq km	£ Core Grant excl. SDF	
The Broads	303	£3,926,763	£12,959.00 per sq km
Dartmoor National Park	953	£4,121,078	£4,324.00 per sq km
Exmoor National Park	691	£3,393,600	£4,911.00 per sq km
Lake District National Park	2292	£6,207,000	£2,708.00 per sq km
Yorkshire Dales National Park	1774	£4,751,000	£2,678.00 per sq km

**Core Grant per head of Resident Population (2006/07)**

	Population	£ Core Grant excl. SDF	
<b>Cotswolds Conservation Board</b>	<b>140000</b>	<b>£566,000</b>	<b>£4.00 per head</b>
Chilterns Conservation Board	70000	£524,000	£7.00 per head
Tamar Valley AONB	27000	£163,000	£6.00 per head
Mendip Hills AONB	6000	£153,000	£26.00 per head
Chichester Harbour AONB	8351	£161,000	£19.00 per head
Sussex Downs AONB	133341	£775,000	£6.00 per head

The Broads	5721	£3,926,763	£686.00 per head
Dartmoor National Park	29100	£4,121,078	£142.00 per head
Exmoor National Park	10600	£3,393,600	£320.00 per head
Lake District National Park	42200	£6,207,000	£147.00 per head
Yorkshire Dales National Park	19654	£4,751,000	£242.00 per head

**Comparison of SDF allocations (2006/07)**

	Sq km	SDF Allocation	
Malvern Hills AONB	105	£80,000	£761 per sq km
Mendip Hills AONB	198	£80,000	£404 per sq km
South Devon AONB	337	£80,000	£237 per sq km
Cornwall AONB	958	£80,000	£83 per sq km
East Devon AONB	268	£80,000	£298 per sq km
Quantock Hills AONB	99	£80,000	£889 per sq km
Cannock Chase AONB	68	£80,000	£1176 per sq km
Isle of Scilly AONB	16	£80,000	£5000 per sq km
<b>Total Sq km of all AONBs above</b>	<b>2049</b>	<b>£640,000</b>	<b>£312 per sq km</b>
<b>Cotswolds Conservation Board</b>	<b>2038</b>	<b>£80,000</b>	<b>£39 per sq km</b>
Chilterns Conservation Board	833	£80,000	£96 per sq km

	<b>Sq km</b>	<b>SDF Allocation</b>	
Dartmoor National Park	953	£200,000	£209 per sq km
Exmoor National Park	691	£200,000	£289 per sq km
The Broads	303	£200,000	£660 per sq km
<b>Total Sq km of all National Parks above</b>	<b>1947</b>	<b>£600,000</b>	<b>£308 per sq km</b>

FTE = Full time equivalent

\*CCB staff as at start of 07/08 i.e. includes project staff linked to Caring for the Cotswold