



CONSTITUTIONAL AGREEMENT

1. Introduction

This document is a constitutional agreement between the Cotswolds Conservation Board (hereinafter the Board) and the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Voluntary Warden Service (hereinafter the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens). It is not a contract of employment.

2. Aims and objectives of the Conservation Board

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB.
- To increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB, ensuring these are compatible with its conservation and enhancement.

The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens are an integral part of the activities of the Board. They are the voluntary arm of the Board and they give their time freely to support these aims.

3. Cotswold Voluntary Warden areas of activity

- a. Support appropriate projects that help to fulfil the aims of the Conservation Board. This will include working in partnership with local authorities, National Trail officers, landowners and farmers, and other organisations and voluntary bodies.
- b. Provide regular work parties to conserve and enhance the landscape, maintain and restore heritage and wildlife sites and vernacular features, improve access to the countryside.
- c. Interpret the Cotswolds to the local community, visitors and surrounding population through a programme of guided walks for a range of abilities and interests, talks, and attendance at shows.
- d. Liase with the local community and other organisations to improve access, and landscape conservation and enhancement.

4. The Board will offer the following support to the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens.

- a. Staff to support, co-ordinate and guide the activity.
- b. A contribution to mileage, committee and other reasonable out of pocket expenses.
- c. Provision of tools and appropriate safety equipment and clothing.
- d. Public liability cover for all members and limited personal accident insurance. This insurance cover is valid only when carrying out activities agreed with the Board.
- e. Confidentiality of personal and business information.
- f. Training to enable volunteers to carry out their work confidently and to a high standard, meeting current health and safety requirements.
- g. Acknowledgement and promotion of the work of the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens.
- h. Administration of the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens, including any associated budgets.
- i. Current information and developments on the work of the Board including its Business and Management Plans.

Equal opportunities – The Board is an equal opportunities organisation and is committed to policies, procedures and practices that do not discriminate unfairly or unlawfully on grounds of race or ethnic origin, disability, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, past offences, religion, political beliefs or age.

5. To support the aims of the Board, the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens will

- a. Adhere to health and safety legislation and Board policies and statutory guidelines
- b. Represent and act as ambassadors of the Conservation Board whilst carrying out volunteer work
- c. Attend appropriate training
- d. Use all reasonable endeavours to ensure safe custody and use of equipment provided to the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens.
- e. Agree to work to this Constitution, the Board Business Plan and the AONB Management Plan
- f. Support appropriate projects initiated by the Conservation Board
- g. Record and provide information on the work of the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens each financial year
- h. Respect confidentiality of personal and business information
- i. Organise the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens on a District structure with appropriate committees
- j. Keep up to date with any information and support provided by the Board.

6. Organisation of the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens

The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens will be organised in six Districts within the boundaries of the Cotswolds AONB (excepting the Cotswold Way in parts), for the convenience of operation, and to reflect local needs: -

- East District Parts of Oxfordshire and Warwickshire.
- North District North Gloucestershire and parts of Warwickshire and Worcestershire.
- Central District Part of Gloucestershire between the North Cotswolds and the Stroud Valleys.
- South District Part of Gloucestershire south of Stroud, parts of South Gloucestershire and North Wiltshire.
- Avon Valley West Wiltshire, Bath and North East Somerset and part of South Gloucestershire and North Wiltshire.
- Cotswold Way The entire length of the Cotswold Way national Trail between Bath and Chipping Campden, running along the western edge of the AONB

7. Membership

Membership shall be open to any person over the age of 18 with an interest in the Cotswolds who wishes to join, subject to the following:

- a. Applicants will be expected to commit on average at least eight hours per month, and to report on their work each quarter. Applicants shall complete a probationary period under the supervision of experienced Cotswold Voluntary Wardens, and receive instruction and training. All Cotswold Voluntary Wardens will attend periodic refresher workshops.
- b. It is important that Cotswold Voluntary Wardens attend District meetings, and they must keep in touch with their colleagues, the work of the Board and general activity across the AONB.
- c. Health and Safety legislation applies. Where safety equipment is required it must be correctly worn or used.
- d. A Cotswold Voluntary Warden may resign at any time. Written confirmation should be given to the relevant district committee, and dedicated material should be returned. In exceptional circumstances they may be asked by the Committee to resign if their

conduct is considered detrimental to the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens or the Board. Absence of reports, in the form agreed or failure to attend training may also result in cancellation of membership.

- e. Each District may award honorary warden status to those who have given long and valuable service but are unable to continue with Cotswold Voluntary Warden activities. Honorary Cotswold Voluntary Wardens are encouraged to maintain an interest in the organisation and to attend meetings, but do not have voting rights.

8. Operating Year

The operating year shall be from 1st April to 31st March. The District Annual General Meeting where officers and co-ordinators are elected shall be held in March.

9. District Committees

Each District will elect a committee of officers and co-ordinators, comprising of at least a Chairperson, Secretary, and Membership Officer, with members having appropriate roles for the area: eg. works, walks, publicity, parish warden. Districts may combine posts or create posts as required:

- a. The Chairperson shall maintain an interest in activity throughout the District, arrange and chair meetings and other events, and represent the District.
- b. The Secretary shall take and produce minutes of meetings, book venues, arrange agenda and collate reports.
- c. The Membership Officer shall act as mentor for new Wardens. This Officer will also monitor training and welfare, and maintain a register of active and honorary members in the District. The register shall be reviewed at least annually, and at other times when required.
- d. A Guided Walks Co-ordinator shall arrange the District's contribution to an AONB wide programme of walks and events with members and other districts, and collate walk leader's reports and risk assessments for future planning and publicity.
- e. A Parish Warden Co-ordinator shall prepare and organise parish contact work, check that materials are made available, and help with liaison with local councils, communities and other groups.
- f. A Working Party Co-ordinator shall, together with Board staff, arrange a programme of project activities, supervise the work, tools and equipment, and attend to health and safety; ensuring that the senior Warden present at or leading an activity carries out a risk assessment and verifies that all Wardens have the safety equipment necessary for that event.
- g. A Publicity Officer shall work with Board staff to promote the aims and work of the Board to Cotswold Voluntary Wardens and the public through talks; shows and other appropriate means, and shall monitor media coverage.
- h. The District Committee shall report to the District each quarter, except that the Cotswold Way Voluntary Wardens will meet with their Committee twice yearly.
- i. Election of officers and co-ordinators shall be by simple majority vote. Nominations will be made to the secretary before or at the District quarterly meeting.
- j. No limit shall be set on the term of service on the committee, except that a Warden may not serve as District Chairperson for longer than three consecutive years.
- k. The quorum for committee meetings shall be one half of the District officers and co-ordinators.

10. Head and Deputy Head Cotswold Voluntary Warden

The Head Warden or Deputy Head Warden shall represent the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens at any meetings and discussions with the Conservation Board and staff. They will promote the Service and its objectives to others, and sustain and develop unity within the Wardens organisation. They shall encourage working with other groups and organisations in the promotion, conservation, enhancement and enjoyment of the Cotswolds AONB.

- a. They shall arrange and chair joint meetings between District representatives and Board staff as appropriate, at least twice each year. The agenda shall be agreed between them, the District Chairpersons, and Board staff. They will also arrange inter-District discussions to develop the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens and maintain a sense of unity.
- b. One of them at least shall attempt to attend all District quarterly, or six monthly in the case of the Cotswold Way Wardens meetings, to be aware of Cotswold Voluntary Wardens concerns and to keep them informed. They shall maintain contact with Board staff.
- c. They shall be elected annually, to serve not more than three consecutive years. At each Annual General District Meeting, Cotswold Voluntary Wardens may nominate two experienced members who have served on a District Committee, and the Head Warden and Deputy Head Warden will be elected from the nominees by the District Chairs. The Head Warden and the Deputy Head Warden shall come from different Districts; rotation between the Districts is desirable. No District Chairperson may also serve concurrently as Head Warden or Deputy Head Warden.
- d. They will arrange collection of data and promotional material to ensure that they can publicise the contribution of the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens towards the objectives of the Board.
- e. Other experienced Cotswold Voluntary Wardens may, by agreement, be co-opted to help with specialist topic or study groups.

11. Meeting and events

- a. Each District will hold a pre-arranged meeting every quarter, or twice yearly for Cotswold Way Wardens. These meetings will inform Cotswold Voluntary Wardens of events, work programmes, projects, training and other relevant developments. This will provide opportunities for exchange of information and experience, and for social contacts. A Cotswold Way representative may report on the route to the quarterly meeting.
- b. Other meetings or events shall be arranged for co-ordination of work, training or social purposes.
- c. At least fourteen days notice of committee and quarterly meetings must be provided through District circulars. Notice of other meetings and events may be given by other means but shall also be at least fourteen days in advance.
- d. At least one third of the registered District members must be present at a quarterly meeting or AGM to permit any proposal to be put to the vote.
- e. All decisions may be by simple majority voting (The Chairperson will have the casting vote).

12. Financial

- a. No subscriptions are applied.
- b. A nominated District officer shall be appointed to administer a petty cash float and return the book for auditing at the end of each financial year.
- c. Donations are collected for the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens Countryside Fund. The fund is used for specific purposes conforming to the objectives of the Board. All

expenditure from the fund shall be by discussion and agreement between the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens and Board staff.

- d. Collections for social events, clothing and other appropriate activity shall be accounted for. These must be reported annually to the District and the Board.
- e. Any gift in kind, such as tools or materials, must be recorded by the District concerned.

13. The agreement

- a. This constitutional agreement replaces and supersedes the previous constitution of 1999 and the addendum 1 of 2001 specifically relating to the Cotswold Way Voluntary Wardens.
- b. Adoption of this constitutional agreement will require a quorum of at least half of each Cotswold Voluntary Warden District either through the Annual General Meeting, quarterly meeting or other special meeting. District approval of the constitutional agreement shall require the assent of two thirds of wardens attending or represented. This constitutional agreement shall be accepted after the assent of all Districts and the Board.
- c. The signatures of two Board officers, District chairs, two committee members from each District, the Head and Deputy Head Voluntary Wardens will ratify this document.
- d. Any amendments to the constitutional agreement may be proposed by a resolution presented by a District Committee at least twenty eight days before a District Annual General Meeting, or by a proposal from one quarter of the wardens in the District, at least twenty eight days before a district quarterly meeting that it shall become a special general meeting where a proposal to amend the constitution is presented. Quorum and voting should be as above in points b and c. Any District or Board proposals to amend the constitutional agreement, once voted, shall be presented to other Districts and the Board for discussion and voting as above in points b and c. If a majority of Districts and the Board approve the proposed amendment it shall be adopted.
- e. From time to time Appendices to this document will be issued. These will cover operational matters that need periodic review, for example, health and safety requirements. Any appendices shall be agreed at District meetings by simple majority vote and ratified by the signature of one Board officer, the District Chairpersons and Head and Deputy Head Voluntary Warden.
- f. The Head and Deputy Head Voluntary Wardens and District Chairpersons are empowered to organise orderly settlement of constitutional matters on behalf of the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens.

14. Dissolution of the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens

Dissolution of the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens will require agreement by at least two thirds of all wardens, voting at District Annual General Meetings or special general meetings called for this purpose, with twenty eight days notice.

July 2005
