

Strategic Review and Implementation Plan for the **Cotswold Water Park**

Vision and Implementation Plan

Non-Technical Summary

July 2008



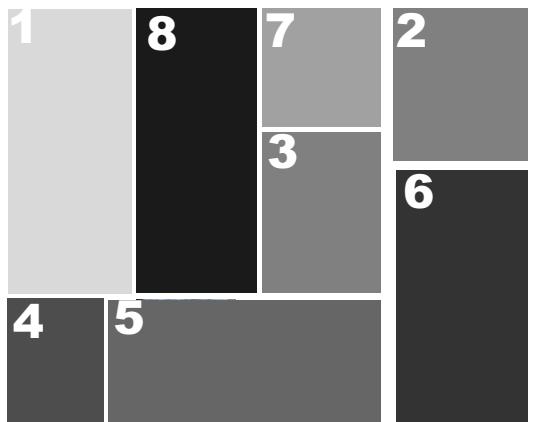
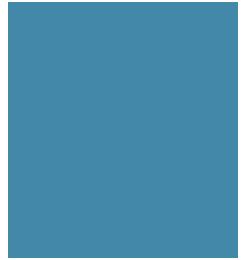


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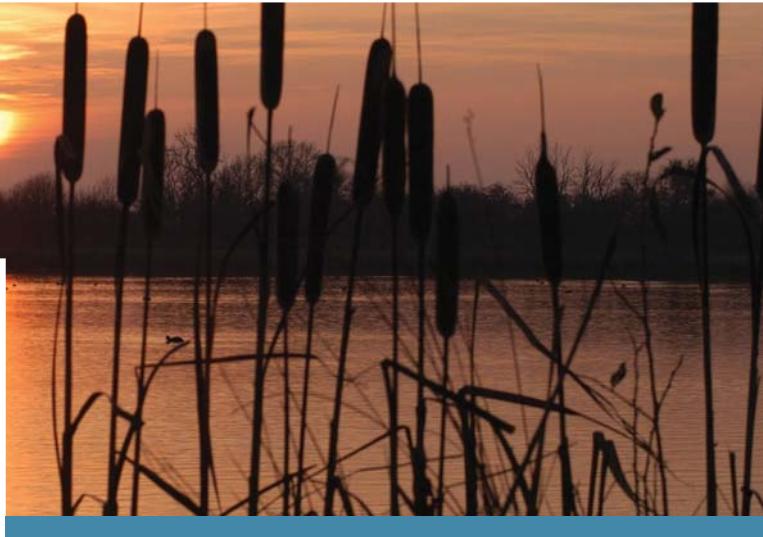
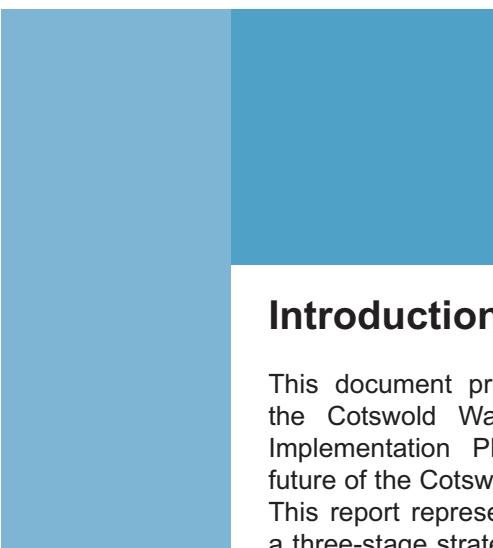
Cotswold Water Park Vision and Implementation Plan
Non-Technical Summary

Prepared by
Scott Wilson

July 2008



1. Introduction



Introduction

This document provides a summary of the Cotswold Water Park Vision and Implementation Plan that outlines the future of the Cotswold Water Park (CWP). This report represents the culmination of a three-stage strategic review of the area commissioned by the CWP Joint Committee and conducted by Scott Wilson.

The Vision and Implementation Plan (Stage III Report) was completed in Final Draft form in January 2008, with its findings presented and discussed through a public consultation exercise. This consultation process was undertaken between January and March 2008, with the findings and recommendations for amendments presented to the CWP Joint Committee in May 2008.

The Plan has subsequently been amended to reflect the key issues, concerns and further opportunities highlighted in the consultation process. This Non-Technical Summary has also been updated to reflect these changes.

The Cotswold Water Park

The CWP was established in 1967 in recognition of the growing significance of the concentration of former gravel workings within this area of the Upper Thames Valley. The workings have led to the creation of a large area of lakes with increasing values for nature conservation and potential for a variety of water sports.

From the outset, the relevant local authorities worked via a Joint Committee to combine attempts to increase the provision of public facilities with the task of understanding and managing the longer-term development opportunities of the area. Over the years, there have been a series of development strategies created for the CWP, with the consistent message being that it will become a premier site for nature conservation, sport, recreation, tourism and leisure. However, despite some notable exceptions, this aspiration has not materialised to the benefit of all those with an interest in the area.

Study Reference

Please see Map 1 in this summary for detail of the functional boundary that has been used as the geographical reference for the overall study.

It should be noted that it is not envisaged that the vision will be limited to this boundary line. In the future it is likely that mineral extraction sites will be sought beyond the functional boundary. Therefore, it is recommended that the boundary line will be redrafted. This is discussed in more detail in Section 6 of the Stage III report.



2. Study Aims and Approach



Study Aims and Approach

In 2006, the CWP Joint Committee commissioned this new strategic review in recognition of:

- the greater understanding of the national and international significance of the conservation value of the area as identified in the emerging Biodiversity Plan;
- the unfulfilled sporting role and growing tourist potential of the Cotswold Water Park; and
- the continuing lack of status or profile at the national or regional level.

The study is to provide a strategic review and implementation plan to guide the future development of the Cotswold Water Park founded on a clear, robust and evidence based framework for delivering an achievable vision.

The full programme of the investigation is comprised of three stages:

Stage I deals with the key issues affecting the CWP and provides the basis for option formulation.

Stage II examines the interrelationships between the different users and their needs and aspirations in the CWP environment.

Stage III provides the vision and strategic framework for the CWP as set out in this report.

The Stage III report is the culmination of the study and outlines a vision which is both sustainable and achievable whilst meeting the aspirations of the key stakeholders, namely:

- the local community who live and work within the CWP;
- the businesses and industry that operate within the CWP;
- the authorities and agencies responsible for the stewardship of the CWP; and
- the people who visit the CWP and utilise its resources for a variety of purposes.

This is supported by an implementation plan covering an initial five-year period, and which identifies task and role responsibilities.

A further stage of consultation has been conducted on the reports, firstly to present the findings of the reports and secondly to introduce the Vision and Implementation Plan and the rationale that supports the framework that has been established. The key findings of the consultation process were the subject of a further report, which also highlighted a series of recommendations for strengthening the Vision and Implementation Plan. All of the reports, complete with amendments, are now available to view via the Cotswold Water Park Society's website, www.waterpark.org.



3. Investigation Summary

Investigation Summary

Study Context

Within the original boundaries of the 40 square miles along the Gloucestershire and Wiltshire boundary live around 22,000 people, with the towns of Cirencester and Swindon to the immediate north and south.

Mineral extraction of sand and gravel is an activity that has been undertaken in the CWP for nearly half a century. The principal consequence of this activity has been the creation of a high concentration of individual lakes (147) in an area of the Upper Thames Valley that currently spans 40 square miles of countryside.

It is forecast that extraction of sand and gravel will continue at current rates for the next 20 years, and could potentially continue for a further 15 years after that at reduced levels. Therefore, this timeframe represents a window of opportunity to deliver strategically guided development that will benefit the full range of stakeholder. These include local residents, environmental organisations, local businesses and visitors.

Summary of the Key Issues

The Stages I and II reports have highlighted issues that need to be addressed through the vision and development framework. These include:

- The communities and settlements both within and in the vicinity of the CWP are an integral part of the countryside character and provide points of identity and a sense of place. Many of the core settlements, however, are not presently integral to the CWP experience in that they do not currently provide places of interest, information or potential for economic exchange with a CWP focus. In this context, the opportunity to derive direct benefits from the CWP for local economies is being missed.
- Local residents, whilst enduring the inconvenience of minerals activity and other development, perceive that they are not fully benefiting directly from the changing nature of the CWP. Common complaints include the loss of local public access to amenities and limited access to sports facilities. In addition, others suggest that tourism development has been imposed on the community without any direct benefits, and that there is a danger this could continue in the future.
- The countryside character of the CWP has changed and this change will continue into the future. The lakes are an important and significant landscape feature that has given the area a new identity as a water park; the surrounding areas, however, lack a unifying landscape character that celebrates the CWP.
- The biodiversity importance of the CWP's neutral grassland, standing open waters and floodplain grazing is recognised at a regional level, with the area the subject of a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) that details priorities for species and habitat creation and protection. The CWP BAP is actively seeking to position the area to become a premier site for nature conservation where the requirements of industry, leisure, people and wildlife are successfully integrated.
- Sports facilities are already present within the CWP, but there is a disproportionate concentration on one activity (angling), with comparatively limited provision for other sports and water sports, especially in regard to public access on a 'pay and play' basis.



- The existing leisure and recreation network of the CWP is disjointed and incomplete, with some routes servicing all types of user groups, such as walking, cycling and horse-riding, whilst others strictly serve only one user group. In addition, there is a lack of a meaningful comprehensive leisure network that links all parts of the CWP.
- Tourism development has tended to focus on self-catering and business-based serviced accommodation with a market direction aimed towards higher income visitors. This has meant that opportunities to exploit other markets are not being explored, including the more adventurous sports enthusiasts, education groups and nature enthusiasts.
- The location and provision of leisure and recreation facilities is limited, disjointed and spatially fragmented. The main asset, the Keynes Country Park, has problems in respect of access, seasonality and weather dependency.
- The location and sequential ordering of mineral extraction sites is not co-ordinated, at least in policy terms, between the two main Mineral Planning Authorities. This situation has not been conducive to effective development planning for other activities.
- The respective local planning authorities have not been consistent in relation to the use and interpretation of policies for development in the CWP, with Cotswold District Council generally being more receptive to propositions for lake development when compared to North Wiltshire District Council.
- The implications of development and the hydrology of the area is not systematically understood at present, with low river flows a known occurrence in the CWP area and flood risk a growing concern, largely due to flooding in July/August 2007 and the prospect of changing weather patterns due to climate change.
- The importance of agriculture as an activity is diminishing in the area through a combination of land sales for mineral extraction and the prevailing economic climate. However, land management through agriculture will be a key requirement to retain a high quality landscape.
- The historic heritage assets both within and in the vicinity of the CWP do not feature strongly in its profile. The CWP offers opportunities for a better understanding of its historic heritage through interpretation of archaeological findings over the last 30 years.
- The arts and cultural provision in the CWP could be strengthened, with the arts sector able to assist in creating a sense of place, providing features of interest in the environment, and encouraging community and visitors to explore the wider CWP area.

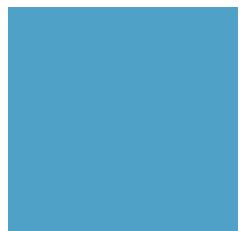
These issues, which are dealt with in greater detail in the Stage II report, need to be addressed in the development framework in order to achieve the CWP vision.

Key Considerations

Through consultation with representatives of each stakeholder group, the interrelationships between the various identified ‘drivers’ have been assessed in order to determine their influence and effect on the future development and aspirations for the CWP.

In this context, it has been possible to define:

- the core priorities for development within the CWP:
 - Countryside, the Communities and the Settlements*
 - Biodiversity*
 - Sport and Leisure*
 - Tourism*



- the supporting drivers that will have an influence on achieving aspirations:
 - *The Historic Environment*
 - *Agriculture*
 - *Arts*
- the enabling drivers that are fundamental to the successful development of the CWP:
 - *Mineral Extraction*
 - *Hydrology/Climate Change*
 - *Planning*
 - *Transport and Utilities*

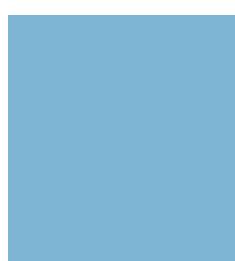
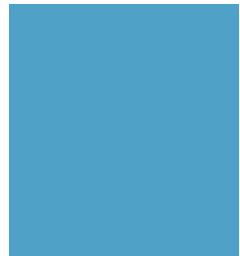
By defining specific roles for the drivers identified, it was possible to explore the potential development options to test where benefits could be gained and potential conflicts could arise.

A further consideration that has been identified as a potential constraint to achieving certain aspirations of the CWP is:

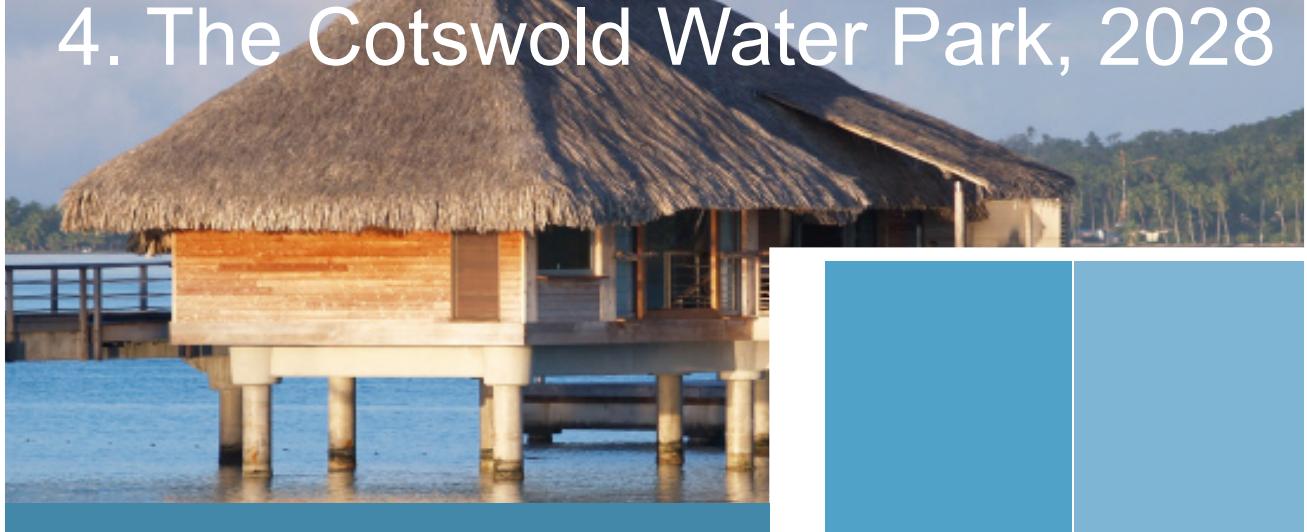
- *Aerodrome safeguarding*

In this respect, Aerodrome Safeguarding has been dealt with as a separate consideration.

The key issues and requirements of each of the priorities and drivers have been assessed in order to establish a holistic and integrated approach to the development framework. As such, the development framework will not only aim to address certain areas of concern but to seek development options that deliver mutual benefits for each of the priorities and drivers. This forms the primary basis for the Vision.



4. The Cotswold Water Park, 2028



The 20 Year Vision

The growing drive for healthier lifestyles, a more sustainable environment and a less energy consuming economy may well be achievable through the potential of the Cotswold Water Park.

What started out as an endeavour to create an attractive and natural setting for a variety of watersports could become a fully integrated rural development programme, addressing issues that range from agricultural diversification to tourism development, from the creation of local produce and biomass fuels to the provision of innovative forms of green transport; from the balanced development of local towns and villages to the restoration of major heritage features such as the Cotswold Canal; and the establishment of a major green wildlife and landscape corridor of national and even international significance.

These and other aspirations for the CWP are encapsulated in the following vision that describes the potential character of CWP in 2028.

It is 2028 and the Cotswold Water Park is an area that has a reputation as an environment of great scenic, natural and sporting value. This reputation is recognised at a regional, national and even international level, and is embraced by the residential and business community as being one of the main reasons that people want to live and work in the area.

The more traditional settlement, pasture and arable farmland settings are still present, but they have each prospered through their association with the CWP and this unique countryside area. The historic and countryside environment is evident at every turn, with towns such as Fairford, Cricklade and Lechlade providing a characterful backdrop for thriving economies that have a mix of markets, local shops, specialist shops, bars and restaurants. On sale is a range of locally distinctive products, with organic and environmentally sound meat products and reed-based products just some of the area's specialities.

As well as being produce of high quality, there is a local and ethical advantage to purchasing these goods. Forged through a desire to lead the way in sustainable practices, all the businesses within and around the CWP are active supporters of nature conservation. Two of the main mechanisms for this support are through the contribution of local produce sales towards the efforts of habitat creation and management, and the adoption by local businesses and developers of good practice guidance in landscape design and management.

The co-operative nature between the private sector and nature conservation organisations has now led to one of the most important inland areas for biodiversity in England. This fact is made even more remarkable when it is considered that 20 million people live within a two-hour drivetime of the area. Working in partnership, conservation groups, businesses, communities and other stakeholders have managed to overcome a range of issues to ensure the CWP presents habitats for once endangered wildlife species such as the bittern, otter, and even osprey, but all at levels that do not present increased risk to aerodrome safeguarding. One of the biggest advantages of the CWP is that it has been established through a whole landscape, with species encouraged to migrate around the CWP via strategically identified rivers and canal corridors.

Equally impressive is that these biodiversity ambitions have been achieved in association with development, especially the continuing extraction of minerals, the creation of new leisure amenities, and the realisation of long held sporting aspirations. In particular, the restored Thames and Severn Canal and North Wilts Canal are now hubs of different types of leisure activity, with a number of marinas providing ideal focal points with each consisting of moorings, pubs/restaurants, and retail outlets as well as providing an attractive setting for small-scale office/business units.

Water has always been a significant feature of the CWP thanks to the creation of over 200 lakes, a legacy of the area's importance as a source for sand and gravel. Through innovation this water can now be enjoyed by a variety of different user groups:

- for family groups, there are a series of small and medium-sized attractions such as lakeside beaches and aqua-adventure areas that contain water fountains, plunge pools, shooting water, and sub-aqua adventure to entertain and educate children and adults alike;
- for the active leisure seeker, water skiing, rowing, sailing, wake boarding, wake surfing, jet skiing and scuba-diving can all be undertaken in the CWP, with tuition available for beginners through to expert;

- for the walker, cyclist and horse rider, the varied and interconnecting multi-leisure routes take in a variety of lakes and waterways allowing them to enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the countryside and to see first hand the varied wildlife and heritage features that can be discovered in the area;

- for the sports enthusiast, the CWP provides opportunities to participate in competitions, hone skills, and improve techniques, particularly in angling, rowing, and triathlon through the nationally important water sports and angling centres;

- for corporations and education establishments, there are a range of one day, multiple day and residential courses that can be taken to assist team building, outdoor education and life long learning respectively; and

- for a bit of friendly rivalry, community sports days and events are regularly hosted with the annual dragon boat race one of the highlights of the annual events calendar.

In addition to the water-based activities, the CWP has a major farm-based attraction; a series of dedicated centres for wildlife watching and education; an arts and crafts centre as the centre piece of other innovative arts pieces to be explored within the wider countryside; and 'gateway' centres providing refreshments and information on the types of things to do and see in the area. It is this combination of amenities and facilities that has seen the CWP emerge as an important destination for countryside recreation in the South West.



Access to the area by non-car traffic is encouraged, with visitors able to arrive by train at stations in Kemble and Swindon, whilst the renovated Swindon and Cricklade Steam Railway provides one of the more attractive means of travelling to the CWP. Similarly, more sustainable movement to and around the CWP is available via the interconnected leisure network, supported by bike hire facilities at the main access points so that people can spend a day or longer travelling through the network of quiet lanes or dedicated leisure paths. This network is directly connected to National Cycle Network routes 45 and 58, the Cricklade-Swindon Steam Railway and the water taxi system along the canal to promote non-car access to the CWP from Swindon and Cirencester.

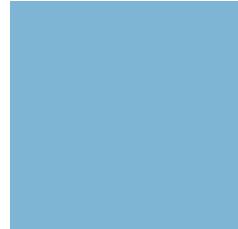
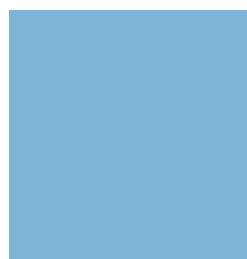
For those arriving by car, the emphasis is placed on reducing additional car movements as people explore the area. For those on day visits to the area, the use of selected and strategically positioned car parks will be encouraged, which themselves are directly linked to electric vehicles or bicycle hire, or people can jump onto a water taxi using the canal system to explore the area. Likewise, the range of other transport options available in the area has enabled the offer of 'one day', 'two day' or 'week long' passes, with the latter being well used by staying visitors. This pass is also linked to other offers such as entrance to the variety of fun-oriented attractions, sports facilities, and adventure experiences; having a drink and a meal serving locally sourced produce; and purchasing goods and gifts from local businesses.

To accommodate overnight stays, there is a variety of farmhouse B&Bs, self-catering and eco-friendly camping and caravan site accommodation to choose from. Associated with the important ecological nature of the CWP, the latest eco-lodges are also available that offer the opportunity to see the outstanding range of habitats and wildlife that the area has to offer, but close-up. Continuing the environmental theme, other accommodation operators in the CWP are holders of environmental accreditation designed to reflect their efforts in wildlife conservation, establishing environmentally sustainable business practices, and encouraging sympathetic behaviour amongst their patrons.

Local residents are certainly not forgotten. Through a dedicated resident card, residents are actively encouraged to take full advantage of the leisure, recreational and sports facilities, and also the important nature reserves that can be found along the corridors of the River Thames and Thames and Severn Canals. Further special incentives are offered to those who are members of the volunteering scheme for the CWP, which has proved to be highly popular in terms of engaging with residents, local business and schools within and around the CWP area.

Underlying all of this is the principle of sustainability, with the area now being highlighted as a beacon for demonstrating self-sufficiency in relation to supporting the community and environment through local initiatives. This is exemplified by the cultivation of appropriate biomass crops that is of a scale and nature suitable to the biodiversity aspirations, and the construction of industry-leading sustainable buildings utilising techniques pioneered by the original Gateway Centre.

In this context, significant progress has been made since 2008. The enthusiasm, energies and abilities of all stakeholders have been used to extract mutual benefits from the development, change and opportunity that mineral extraction in particular has created. Overall, the CWP has been transformed into an area of distinctive and sustainable countryside of high environmental value that delivers tangible benefits for local residents and people working and visiting the area.



5. ACHIEVING THE VISION



Achieving the Vision

Guiding Statement

The guiding principle that should be used for achieving the vision for the Cotswold Water Park is as follows:

The Vision will be achieved by harnessing the resources and economic activity in the Cotswold Water Park to create a distinctive and sustainable countryside of high environmental value for the benefit of local residents and people working in and visiting the area.



The Aims

Guided by the statement, the principal aims for the future of the CWP are as follows:

- The CWP to become a distinctive countryside environment in which to live and work, engendering a sense of community spirit, pride, well-being, vitality and prosperity across the whole of the CWP area.
- The CWP to become a premier site for nature conservation, achieving regionally, nationally and internationally important biodiversity targets through a landscape-scale programme in which stakeholders can create, nurture, and protect rare and endangered indigenous habitats and species.
- The CWP to offer a range of sports, leisure and recreation facilities of local, regional and national significance that promote public access to and enjoyment of the countryside for local residents and visitors.
- The CWP to present a quality visitor destination that draws on the unique character of the lakes, the settlements, the sports, the history and the natural environment to deliver a wide range of experiences.
- The CWP to become a truly sustainable place that is pioneering in its approach to development that incorporates measures to significantly reduce the environmental footprint of all types of activity.

The Objectives

In order to deliver the vision, it is important to establish a series of objectives relating to the core priorities, the supporting drivers and the enabling drivers. These objectives provide the basis from which the implementation plan will be formed. Please see Maps 1 to 5 for a graphic representation of the vision and development framework.

Core Priorities

The Countryside, Communities and Settlements Objectives:

- Establish a defined Landscape Strategy for the CWP in order to facilitate more appropriate landscape design to changes in the past, present and future.
- Through constructive stakeholder involvement, identify development and land use change that is designed to complement and enhance the landscape, countryside and settlement character of the CWP, and which will engender improved well-being, vitality and prosperity for the area as a whole.
- Establish actual links between the countryside and settlements of the CWP using strong landscape features; the establishment of key settlements as CWP centres of activity; securing the provision of open public spaces close to settlements; and the development of an integrated leisure infrastructure network.
- Encourage stronger ties between the CWP as a defined place and the residents that live there by promoting resident participation in the full range of activities that can be undertaken; adopting a consistent branding strategy to be incorporated into the marketing, information and promotion; and establishing a programme of cultural events.

Biodiversity:

- Via the CWP BAP, deliver a landscape-scale conservation approach that traverses the whole of the CWP area, utilising the inherent neutral grasslands, the reedbeds and the floodplain grazing marsh to ensure that the CWP becomes a premier site for conservation in the UK.

• Integrate the CWP BAP objectives and principles into the planning framework of the respective local authorities. This will eventually be translated into more specific policy statements in the proposed Area Action Plan for the CWP (see Planning section).

• Ensure that biodiversity targets and aspirations are integrated within all types of development and activities in the CWP (including agriculture, sports, leisure, recreation, tourism, mineral extraction and even settlements) as a means of delivering the BAP aspirations.

• Establish appropriate initiatives that will support the delivery of biodiversity creation and management in the long term, including visitor amenities, local community partnerships and business partnerships.

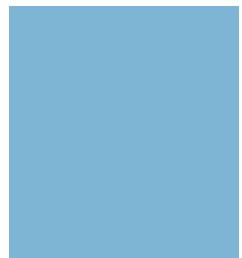
• Secure signature nature sites and reserves with public access associated with appropriate organisations (RSPB, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, Natural England and the CWPS) that will promote and authenticate the wildlife credentials of the CWP.

• Explore innovative projects that seek to capitalise on environmental conservation for mutual benefit (e.g. eco-lodges).

• Strengthen the role of the Nature Conservation Forum (NCF) in promoting the development of the area for biodiversity.

Sports, Leisure and Recreation:

• Establish a series of water sports facilities that collectively present the CWP as a significant destination that could be of regional, if not national, importance for sports such as rowing, sailing, triathlon, canoeing/kayaking and water skiing.



- Deliver signature developments that have a significant market fit with other sports, especially for golf, angling and diving.
- Building upon the success of Keynes Country Park, promote the development of associated leisure and recreation facilities that could act as flagship projects and activities. This could conceivably include a farm-based attraction and an aqua-adventure centre.
- Fully integrate other potential projects into the CWP area for the delivery of leisure and recreation amenities, particularly in relation to the regeneration proposals for the canals and the Cricklade-Swindon Railway.
- Develop a comprehensive and integrated network of leisure and recreation routes, designed to deliver a quality experience for all types of users, including walkers and hikers, dog walkers, cyclists, horse riders, runners and general sightseers; the network is to connect all parts of the CWP area and is to be fully integrated in respect of management and transport with all other components of the CWP to meet sustainability objectives.
- Ensure that there is equity of access to sports, leisure and recreational amenities provided across the CWP.

Tourism:

- Draw upon the existing character of the CWP and developments in the other core priorities to define the tourism offer of the CWP as a destination that can attract overnight visitors in its own right, with the primary visitor markets being sourced from the wide range of activities under consideration.
- Tailor the tourism development to meet visitor demand resulting from the full range of activities under consideration and to encourage longer lengths of stay by broadening the range of activities in the CWP (e.g. General Sightseeing; Families; Wildlife Tourism; Sports Tourism; Arts and Cultural Tourism as identified in the Stage III report).
- Establish other gateways across the CWP at strategically defined points to complement the existing Gateway Centre.

- In consultation with community stakeholders in particular, seek to incorporate appropriate settlements (i.e. the main market towns and larger villages) as key visitor hubs within the CWP in order to make visitors feel welcome and encouraging them to utilise local facilities such as pubs, shops and accommodation.

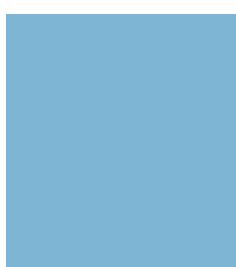
Supporting Drivers

Agriculture:

- To supplement and support the agricultural sector by encouraging suitable non-crop diversification of agricultural holdings into activities that support the core priorities for development, particularly nature conservation, tourism and leisure.
- Encourage crop diversification into green energy crops, though this must be secured in areas that will not compromise biodiversity objectives.
- Support the Wildlife Trust's and other stakeholders in utilising livestock grazing as a natural mechanism for habitat management, particularly within the floodplain grazing zone.
- Establish, through the production of local produce, a range of 'CWP' branded food products as a means of securing additional funding for projects within the CWP. The sales of this produce should directly and overtly be used to fund environmental conservation projects.

Historic Environment:

- Ensure the sustainable management of the historic environment, and that both the requirement to improve access to and interpretation of the heritage assets and features are fully integrated into the development considerations and policy framework.
- Encourage innovative techniques designed to better incorporate and interpret both the existing fabric and future discoveries of the historic environment of the CWP for the benefit of residents and visitors.
- Continue to showcase historic artefacts found within the CWP through existing facilities such as the Gateway Centre,



but with a view to potentially establishing a dedicated heritage visitor centre in the future as the number of artefacts grow to make up a more significant and coherent collection.

Arts:

- Incorporate the arts and cultural sectors into the development of the CWP with a view to bringing the countryside to life, raising its profile, and encouraging greater visitation and exploration of the area.*
- Use innovative arts features that encourage greater enjoyment and appreciation of the CWP's core priority areas, including biodiversity and sports.*
- Develop a CWP specific cultural programme to cover local, sub-regional, national and international events and festivals.*

Enabling Drivers

The Minerals Process:

- Ensure that considerations for the core priorities (countryside character, communities, settlements; biodiversity; sports, leisure, recreation; and tourism) of the CWP vision are fully integrated into the mineral planning process.*
- Encourage future mineral extraction sites to become strategically integrated into the wider development objectives of the CWP as well as minerals requirements.*
- Develop a good practice guide for the restoration and after use of worked-out sites in order to inform developers and planning authorities as to the most appropriate restoration strategies that should be adopted and appropriate development opportunities that exist.*

Hydrology:

- Continually reinforce the role of hydrology as both an enabler and potential constraint on future development in the CWP.*

- Integrate the evidence provided by the Strategic Flood Risk Assessments being conducted for the MPAs as to the effect and influence that mineral extraction has on flood risk within the CWP.*

- Investigate with stakeholders the problems of low river flows during dry periods and identify methods of alleviation in order to ensure continued compliance with the EU Environment Liability Directive 2004 and the UK Water Framework Directive.*
- Seek to protect and enhance the river corridors throughout the CWP for leisure, recreation, and biodiversity.*

Climate Change:

- Investigate the nature of the impacts of climate change on the CWP and the effects that these changes may have in the future.*
- In association with the sustainability initiatives, ensure that the development of the CWP minimises the emissions footprint of those who live, work and visit the area.*

Planning Policy:

- Create a single planning framework across the CWP in the form of an Area Action Plan that reflects a systematic, co-ordinated and collective approach to development control that is to be adopted by the respective local planning authorities.*
- Prior to the AAP being adopted, and in the interest of moving forward, secure a common commitment to the thrust of the Vision and Implementation Plan in the current LDF policy development as the strategic direction and context for the CWP.*



Potential Constraint

Transport and Utilities:

- *In association with the MPAs, encourage sustainable transportation of minerals out of the CWP in order to limit the impact of HGV traffic on the local road network.*
- *Identify and devise road improvement schemes that reduce the adverse impact of HGV traffic, whilst also retaining the character of the road network for the longer term benefits of the area.*
- *Establish a Local Transport Plan for the CWP in order to better integrate public transport connections to the CWP and around the CWP. This should incorporate other potential initiatives that could be used by leisure visitors.*
- *As part of the Transport Plan, devise a Green Infrastructure Network (GIN) that complements and integrates the values of the core components of the Vision (namely providing sustainable links throughout the CWP, encouraging local access to the countryside, and providing access to leisure routes between key assets) and reduces car borne movements on local roads.*
- *Ensure sufficient consideration is given to the additional pressures that could be placed on the utilities infrastructure through development (especially tourism development), including requirements to upgrade and improve the infrastructure as required.*
- *In the interests of sustainability and to match the wider ethos of the CWP, encourage the construction of development that surpasses sustainability policy guidelines in relation to design and resource utilisation.*

Aerodrome Safeguarding:

- *Through careful consideration of proposals, ensure that development of the CWP will not increase birdstrike risk to air traffic or otherwise compromise air traffic safety.*
- *Continue to liaise with the relevant stakeholders (MoD Defence Estates Unit, Kemble Airfield, RSPB, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, MPAs, LAs) over the risks to aerodrome safeguarding posed by potential development through the existing Birdstrike Technical Working Party.*

Sustainability

The principles that have been applied in relation to the overall vision, aims and objectives for the CWP have sought to balance the various interests and potential conflicts of the various stakeholders in order to deliver a sustainable approach to future development. In this context, the sustainability objectives can be defined as follows:

- *For the sustainability of the CWP to be acknowledged and measured in relation to the community, the economy and the environment.*
- *Through the community and countryside objectives, ensure that residents specify the CWP as the place in which they live.*
- *Through leisure, sports and tourism priorities, make sure the economy of the CWP supports a variety of small and medium sized enterprises and farm diversification opportunities that are appropriate in terms of nature and scale to the wider CWP objectives.*
- *Ensure that the future development of the CWP has tangible benefits for the environment through appropriate conservation of the historic and natural environment; improved landscape design; achieving biodiversity objectives; and delivering structures that not only match but surpass sustainability requirements.*

6. Development Considerations



Development Considerations

Mutual Benefits Matrix

An accepted consequence of the Plan is that if the identified aims and aspirations are to be realised, further development within the CWP will be required.

A premise that should be continually reinforced is that the location, scale and nature any development needs to be carefully considered in the context of:

- the countryside character of the CWP;
- the potential implications for local communities, particularly in terms of increased traffic, noise pollution and littering for example;
- the capacity of the landscape and settlements in terms of attracting new visitors to the area;
- the potential impacts to the hydrology of the area (i.e. flood risk, low river flows problems, and leaching issues); and
- aerodrome safeguarding (i.e. the cumulative effect of development on the risk of birdstrike).

Above all, the development needs to demonstrate that it is sustainable and can deliver certain mutual benefits. This latter premise also needs to be entrenched within the planning policy framework for the CWP.

In this respect, the Vision and Implementation Plan includes a mutual benefits matrix to assist in the considerations process (see the full report for more details). It should be noted that it is not envisaged that every type of development will have a direct output or benefit for each of the core priorities. However, the aim should be to ensure that each area is considered.

Development Assessment

If the overall aims and aspirations of the Vision for the CWP are to be achieved, it will be important that the development controls and planning policies adopted for the CWP reflect the principle objectives.

To assist in this process, the Vision and Implementation Plan also identifies some of the broad criteria that any development proposal should be clearly define, namely:

- Strategic Rationale - The strategic context of any proposal or project should be assessed in relation to the priorities and supporting drivers identified in this report, namely countryside character, community and settlements; biodiversity; sport, leisure and recreation; and tourism.
- Market Rationale - If appropriate to sport, leisure, recreation and tourism, a definitive rationale should be provided to denote how the proposal will match the target market prospects (i.e. matched against the target markets as identified in the Tourism Objectives section of this report).

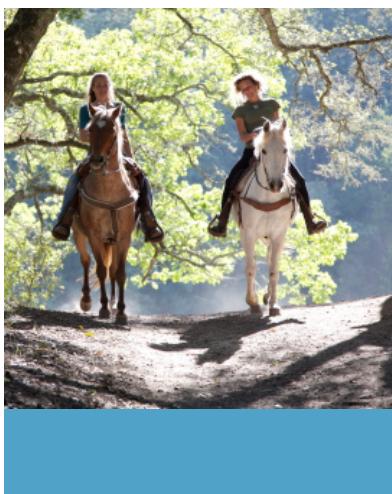
- Design and style - New buildings must be of a high standard of design. Adopting their own style is to be encouraged at waterside locations, and not necessarily in the Cotswold idiom.
- Context - Creation of a new landscape character is an essential element in the future success of the CWP and part of this is ensuring that new development is of an appropriate and compatible nature.
- Sustainability - Any new development or land use within the CWP will be expected to contribute to its overall sustainability, environmental, social and economic.

Illustrations

The purpose of the following series of maps and images is to provide an illustration of the potential of the CWP and to represent what it could look like in 2028.

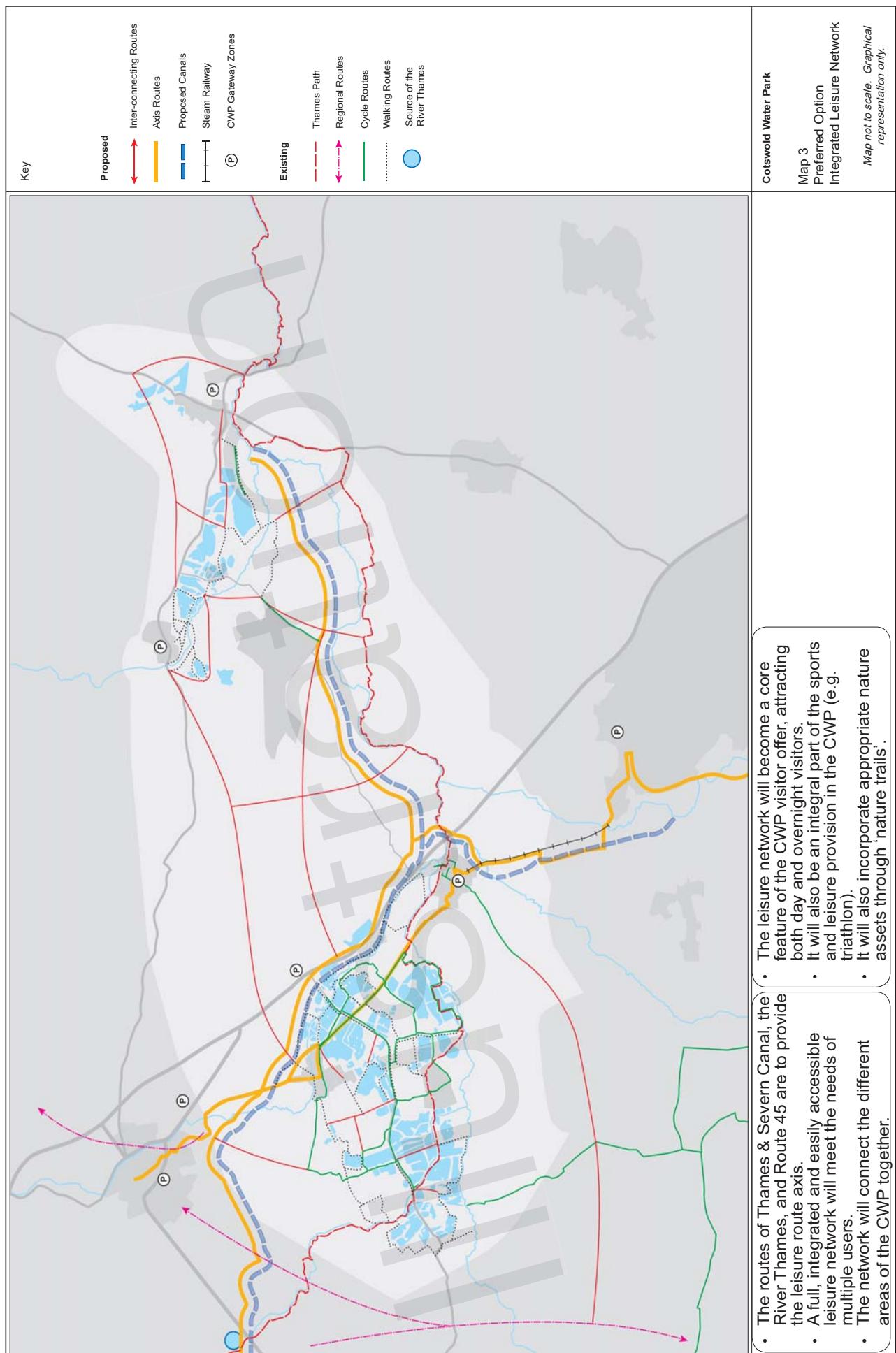
The maps in particular are designed to provide an interpretation of the key objectives associated with the Vision and Implementation Plan. They have been included to assist all stakeholders to understand the inherent benefits and assets within the CWP, and how they could be enhanced and linked together.

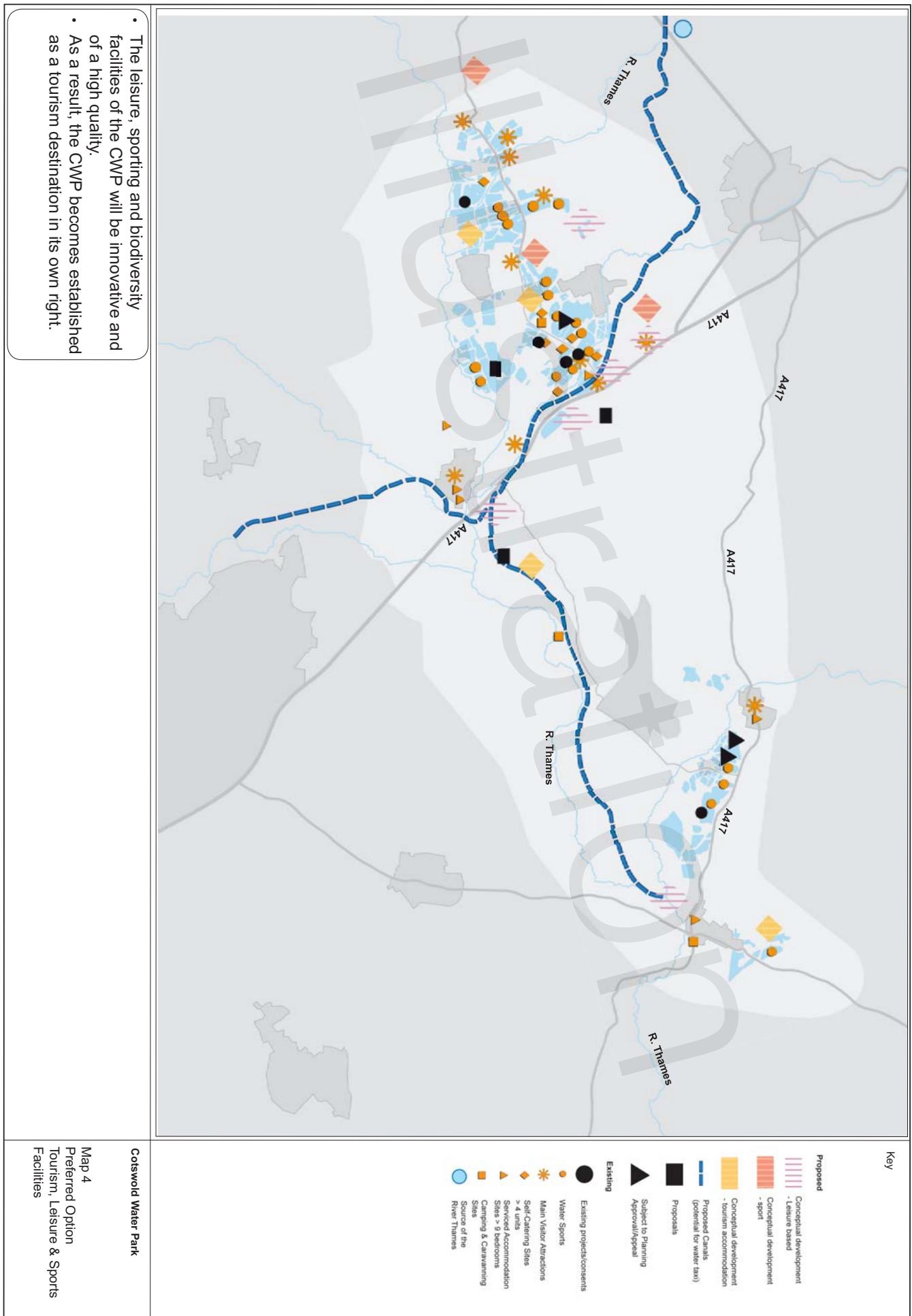
Neither the maps nor the images should be treated prescriptive plans in terms of the spatial determination of the development or nature of the projects or proposals coming forward. Rather, they are to act as a guide only based upon the investigations undertaken.

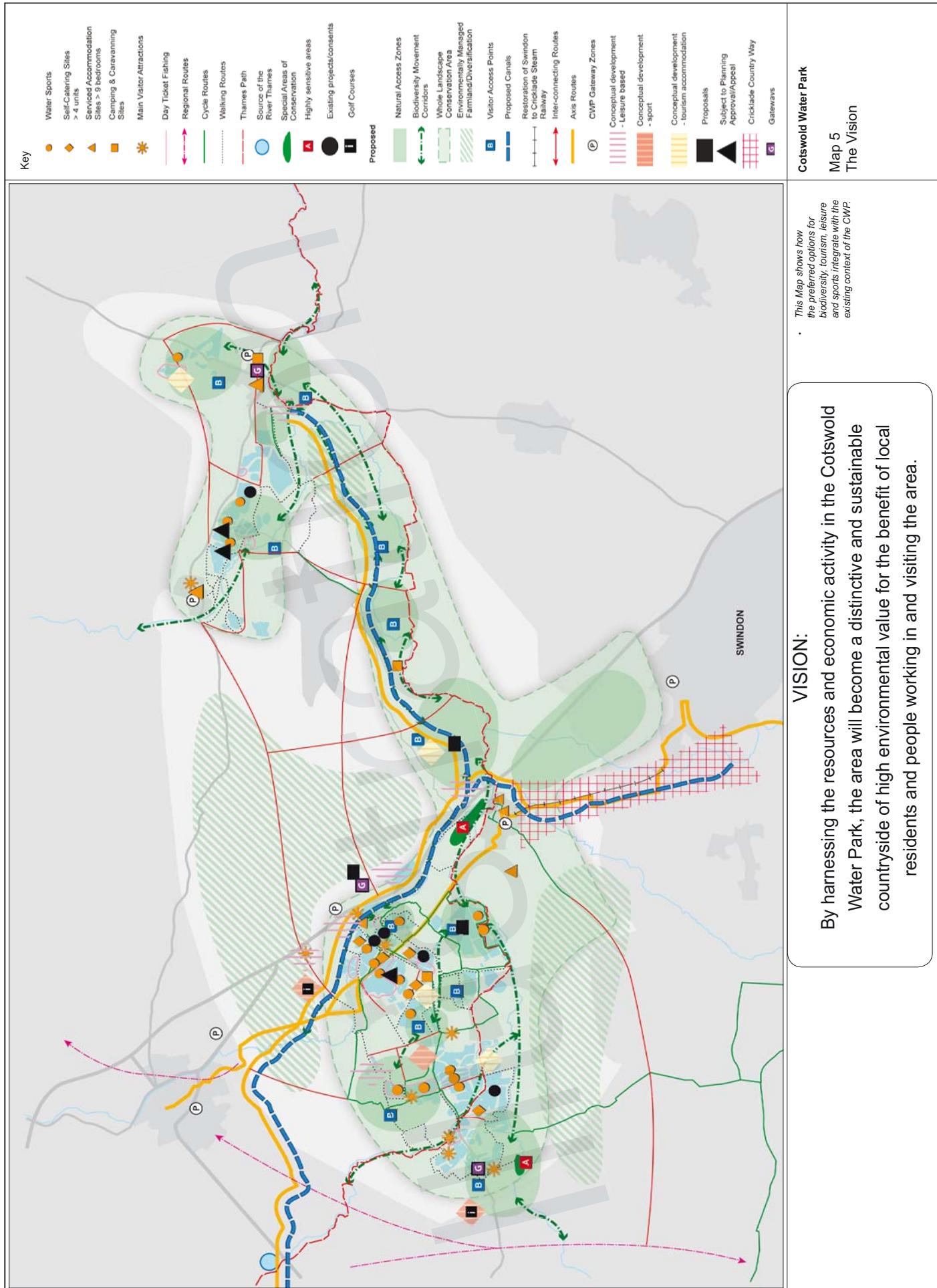


<p>Key</p>	<p>Cotswold Water Park Map 1 Base Map <i>Map not to scale. Graphical representation only.</i></p>
<p>Current Status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CWP has experienced over 40 years of mineral activity. The interplay between mineral extraction and hydrology has led to lake creation. 147 lakes created. <p>Overriding Development Considerations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mineral extraction is set to continue for a minimum of 20 years. There is potential to create further water bodies. <p>Opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is scope within the CWP to deliver greater benefit for locals and visitors from the existing and future minerals activity. 	<p>Opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is scope within the CWP to deliver greater benefit for locals and visitors from the existing and future minerals activity.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CWP BAP targets to become a realistic proposition through a multitude of reserves. Reserves are to be linked via nature corridors to encourage the natural movement of species around the area. 	<p>Key</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special Areas of Natural Access Zones Biodiversity Movement Corridors Whole Landscape Conservation Area Environmentally Managed Farmland Highly sensitive areas Visitor Access Points Proposed Canals Source of the River Thames
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The core nature reserves are to be visitor orientated. A potential flagship tourism feature could be intertwined with biodiversity (e.g. eco-lodges). Visitor behaviour is to be managed through information and special protection for most sensitive sites. 	<p>Cotswold Water Park Map 2 Preferred Option Biodiversity Corridor</p> <p><i>Map not to scale. Graphical representation only.</i></p>









An integrated leisure network suitable for walking, cycling, horse riding and even commuting will be designed that links communities, the countryside, sports facilities and leisure amenities.



The CWP will fulfil its potential as a regionally and nationally important area for nature conservation, being home to vulnerable and endangered species native to the UK.



New standards in eco-tourism associated with the nature conservation will be set within the CWP, with nature lodges integrated with reedbeds and grazing marsh to provide a unique experience for wildlife enthusiasts and novices alike.

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Bottom: © iStockphoto.com/chax



Water sports will be open and accessible to local residents, visitors and athletes for leisure, training and competition.



Sports will be integrated within the CWP that are innovative, incorporating unique features and aspects of the CWP to provide a distinctive experience, e.g. an island green as part of a golf course.

Top Left: © iStockphoto/leeznow
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The CWP will include innovative leisure development featuring aqua-adventure attractions such as water fountains, shooting water, plunge pools and a sub-aqua adventure zone.



The CWP will have a sustainable transport network utilising proposed canal developments to support a water taxi system and the extension of the Cricklade-Swindon Steam Railway to encourage sustainable entry to the CWP for walking, cycling and general sightseeing.



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7. Management and Governance



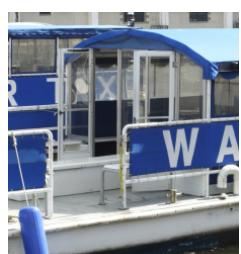
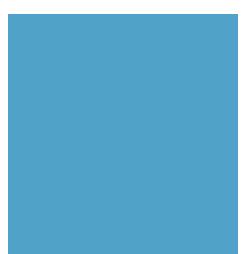
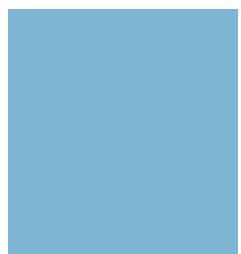
Management & Governance

In order to ensure the effective implementation of this vision it is important to address the management and governance issues that have been identified as barriers to the successful co-ordination of previous strategies. In this context, it will be important to ensure the following:

- *the transition of this strategy document into an Area Action Plan covering the entire CWP, so that it becomes embedded in the Local Area Development Framework as a statutory planning tool;*
- *the strengthening of the resources available to the CWP Implementation Plan through inclusion of individual initiatives within the existing and emerging programmes of local, regional and national agencies, such as South West Tourism, Sport England South West, Natural England, the Environment Agency and the relevant environmental NGOs;*
- *liaise closely with the newly created Destination Management Organisations for Gloucestershire and Wiltshire on the preparation of a single Destination Management Plan for the tourism aspects of the CWP;*
- *increasing the profile of the CWP at the local and regional level, by working with all the businesses in the area and the existing structure of a Joint Committee providing local political guidance and a renewed CWP Society providing management resources;*
- *adjust the CWP boundary to reflect the extent and the range of the area that is being influenced by mineral extraction, to encapsulate the communities, and to reflect the aims and aspirations as identified of the key stakeholders; and*
- *to deliver what is needed to increase economic activity, quality of life and the quality of the environment.*

The purpose of the vision and the implementation plan is to guide the activities of the different stakeholders involved in the CWP. The key principle of deriving mutual benefit is also designed to engineer collaborative working and partnership amongst these stakeholders.

From this perspective, it is important to acknowledge that the Vision and Implementation Plan represents the beginning of the process to delivering a Cotswold Water Park that has a distinctive and sustainable countryside of high environmental value. The progress and achievements that are made need to be monitored and reviewed to ensure that future opportunities can also be exploited.



Photograph Acknowledgements

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