



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Cotswold Leisure Strategy

Summary

February 2021



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I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- II. Cotswold District Council (CDC) is committed to helping residents to access the support they need to ensure a high level of health and wellbeing.
- III. The Council identified the requirement to develop a Leisure Strategy (supporting the Cotswold Local Plan 2011-2031) which incorporates both service interventions and built facilities, based on a cross sectional perspective and local strategic outcomes.
- IV. These outcomes were determined by using appropriate information sources and following the Sport England Strategic Outcomes Planning Model to develop a clear strategic approach to providing effective and sustainable physical activity and sport opportunities for local communities and residents in the Cotswold District.
- V. It is worth noting that this strategy work commenced before and during the COVID-19 pandemic which has had a huge impact on all aspects of UK life and economy, including the unprecedented closure of leisure centres and health clubs across the country. The next stage is after lockdown 3 when centres and clubs reopen in the new 'normal' adjusting to people's consumer confidence, change in behaviour, new habits and attitude to sport and physical activity post lockdown. We don't necessarily know yet what the effect on leisure services will be under this new 'normal', but it is clear that going forward the benefits of being physically active will need to be aligned with local priorities to show how physical activity can be a really effective means of helping the recovery.
- VI. The strategic priorities of this Leisure Strategy should be reviewed annually in context of COVID-19 implications to ensure priority themes remain relevant.
- VII. The Strategic Outcomes Planning Model is based on Sport England guidance as set out below. The guidance is structured around 4 stages:

Stage 1 – Outcomes – Developing shared local outcomes for your place;

Stage 2 – Insight – Understand your community and your place;

Stage 3 – Interventions – Identify how the outcomes can be delivered sustainably;

Stage 4 – Commitment – Secure investment and commitment to outcome delivery.



1. Stage 1 – Outcomes

Key Stakeholders Consultation

Cotswold District Council identified key stakeholders they considered important to work together with to fully develop shared local outcomes for the area, which sport and physical activity can impact. An initial stakeholder workshop took place in March 2020 with further stakeholder calls June-July 2020.

Common themes from the stakeholder consultations were:

Healthier & Greener
District

Enhance Physical
& Mental Wellbeing

Create Connected
Communities

Encourage
Active Travel

The outcomes that sport and physical activity can impact have been split across three core themes which emerged from reviewing strategies and the stakeholder consultation.





2. Stage 2 - Insight

Community Consultation

The objective of the wider public consultation was to find out **who** is currently using the community facilities, the **barriers they face** and **what facilities or improvements** should be included to **encourage residents** to be more physically active.

The findings from this community consultation along with the feedback from local sports clubs and the data available from public health collectively informed the local need for facility and service interventions relating to sport and physical activity. The consultation comprised of an online community survey and in depth focus groups.

What did the community consultation tell us?

1,066 people responded to the online survey in June-July 2020 which included questions on active travel and physical activity habits in relation to lockdown. Some interesting feedback revealed that the main barrier to participation is down to not having enough time but improved and clean facilities would encourage people to be more physically active.

Community Online Survey	
Barriers to Participation	Encouragement Factors
Not enough time (work) (39%)	Improved facilities (70%)
Not enough time (home) (9%)	Cleanliness of facilities (71%)
No convenient and accessible facilities (9%)	Ability to maintain social distancing (69%)
No motivation (9%)	Better range of facilities or equipment (67%)
Not enough time (childcare) (8%)	Better programming e.g. classes (62%)
Costs Involved (7%)	Lower costs/prices



The majority of people (51%) travelled to their main exercise location by car due to ease of use. Followed by walking (23%). Just over half (53%) of the sample stated they travelled 10 or less minutes to their main place of activity.



Dedicated cycle lanes was the number one factor (79%) that would encourage people to use their bike more, followed by having **separation from traffic** for reasons of air quality (59%)

Better footpaths (68%) would encourage people to walk more followed by **improved lighting** (48%)

The fact that 78% of respondents said they would like to do more physical activity and 98% think regular exercise is important or very important is encouraging.

Community Online Survey
Key Findings
18% did no/minimal physical activity at all in a typical 4-week period (prior to lockdown)
78% said they would like to do more physical activity (compared to national benchmark 51%)
53% would like to do more exercise to help maintain / improve their physical health
98% think regular exercise/activity was important or very important

Perceived lack of time, especially related to work commitments, is the number one reason that people state for not being more active. One of the ways this could be addressed is by building physical activity opportunities into the community's everyday routine of work, home, shopping and other daily trips.

Many leisure facility users are keen to return when lockdown eases, older age groups and women are the most concerned about the safety implications of revisiting leisure centres, and these should be addressed in an empathetic and targeted way.

What did the focus groups tell us?

The focus groups took place between December 2020 - January 2021 and provided more in depth consultation from Tetbury residents, Fairford residents, young people and families.

Similarly to the online survey not enough time was cited as a barrier to being physically active as well as lack of nearby facilities. Encouragement factors included improved facilities, better

access to open spaces e.g. footpaths and cheaper activities suitable particularly for elderly and young people.

Focus Group Findings	
Barriers to Participation	Encouragement Factors
Not enough time	Improved facilities
Lack of facilities nearby / facility closure	Better and more local facilities / activities
Seasonal factors (dark evenings making it difficult to walk/cycle outdoors, lack of lighting)	Changes and improvements to local paths, roads and open spaces
Cost	Lower costs
Limited opportunities in area to be active particularly elderly / young people	Better programming for elderly and for younger age group e.g. children who are not interested in traditional sport

Both Tetbury and Fairford focus groups were very engaged and interested in providing comments and feedback on leisure provision in their respective areas. There is scope and contacts in place to keep this rapport and engagement going forward.

"Outdoor independent activity needs to be promoted – lots of good footpaths in the

"I would prefer to use a more modern and accessible

"I think start-ups and volunteers should be encouraged, and where possible provide premises where volunteer activity can flourish, given some encouragement and initial

"Make it cheaper and more welcoming for all abilities"

What are the deductions and considerations from Stage 2?

Health

Cotswold district has good health indicators overall with higher life expectancy and low levels of deprivation. However, still **16.2% of Cotswold adults and 45.2% of children are not meeting the national guidelines for physical activity** and **23% of adults and 14.4% of year 6 children are obese**. Being physically active will benefit those who have excess weight and signposting with partners to encourage healthy eating would also be beneficial.

Catchment Area

A 20-minute drive time catchment area from the three main leisure centres **does not cover** the whole Cotswold area but **does cover** the whole district when all leisure provision including community spaces is assessed. This emphasises the importance of the community spaces in overall leisure provision for the district.

Future Opportunities

Focus further on the over 65-year olds, as this population has the largest predicted increase in age groups with 70-74 years the most prevalent age group in Cotswolds by 2040. It is also important to provide the right leisure activities and provision across all age groups to ensure a younger demographic remains or is attracted to work and live in the area.

Focus on the people within the **'Rural Reality'** and **'Vintage Value'** mosaic groups, as these people will benefit most from increased levels of sport and physical activity and were shown to be under-represented in using leisure centres.

With **'Rural Reality'** there is potential to provide activity within the community or at community centres.

For **'Vintage Values'** consider specific programmes for this group to improve their representation. Vintage Values mainly live in towns, option of walk to park, gardening activities, tai chi, yoga, 60+ swimming, older people networks etc.

As shown in the consultation work common themes to encourage people to be more physically active are;

- better programming for all ages and fitness abilities;
- staff to be welcoming and receptive to all ages, referrals and fitness abilities;
- cleanliness of facilities;
- lower costs / prices; and,
- accessible, well maintained and signposted footpaths and cycle routes

Following the insight gathered in this section combined with the outcomes identified from the stakeholder workshops these have been expanded in the tables below which set out where Cotswold is now and the future direction of travel.

Healthier District

Outcome

- Promote mental and physical health equally by increasing participation in sport and physical activity for all
- Support the 'we can move' campaign aiming to get more people enjoying an active life and where it's normal and easy to be active
- Aim to help 30,000 people become active, to make physical activity the norm across Gloucestershire
- Promote healthy lifestyles and self-care across all ages
- Reduce health inequalities

Where we are now

- 16.2% of adults are inactive
- 73.6% active
- 10.3% fairly active (SE Active Lives Survey)
- 17.9% children less active
- 54.8% children active everyday
- 24.2% children are fairly active
- 23% of adults are obese in Cotswold compared to England 24.1%
- Life expectancy is 2.7 years lower for men and -0.1 years higher for women in the most deprived areas of Cotswold than in least deprived
- In Year 6, 14.4% (118) of children are classified as obese, better than the average for England
- Less than three quarters (69.2%) of children in Gloucestershire have achieved a good level of development by the end of reception. This is worse than the national average.
- Less than half (48.9%) of children who receive free school meals achieve this standard locally.
- 16% of people in Cotswold have a limiting long-term illness
- Estimated diabetes diagnosis rate is worse (67.4%) than (England 78%)
- Estimated dementia diagnosis rate is worse (58.5%) than (England 68.7%)
- The national mental wellbeing survey measures people's outlook on life satisfaction, feeling worthwhile, happy and anxious. For Gloucestershire, approximately one in five people have high self-reported anxiety scores

Where do we want to be?

- Achieving permanent behaviour changes through increasing opportunities for residents to build physical activity into their everyday lives
- Facilitating the enhancement of referrals into physical activity and fitness based programmes
- Increasing emphasis and resources into targeted outreach services for those with long term health conditions

Connected Community

Outcome

- Encourage well-connected, resilient and active communities to help improve social isolation and anti-social behaviour
- Improved and equal access to quality services
- Create more healthy, sustainable, mixed communities
- Improve digital inclusion
- Enable local people to build and nurture strong social networks and vibrant communities
- Ensure that the physical activity offer has a place-based approach and is right for each local community
- Reduce the life expectancy discrepancy for the most deprived Cotswold wards

Where we are now

- Risk of loneliness (65+ years) in parts of the Cotswolds are among the highest in the country. There is a clear link between loneliness and poor mental and physical health
- The Community Wellbeing Survey carried out in July 2017 reported '38% of all respondents feel lonely at times, and loneliness is highest in those with a mental health issue, a long term illness and/or a learning disability. Those with a car as their main form of transport considered themselves less lonely'.

Where do we want to be?

- Using an asset-based community development approach which is increasing participation in physical activity through the development of accessible and suitable opportunities in the community by the community
- Maximising opportunities with local groups and stakeholders, developing new sustainable local community programmes encouraging people to adopt and maintain a healthy lifestyle, particularly in rural isolated communities
- Identifying resources and support in local communities developing local solutions which address barriers to physical activity
- Working in partnership with the Council's leisure contractor raising customer satisfaction, maximising accessibility and ensuring delivery of a positive customer experience
- Utilising the power of physical activity which is improving community cohesion and tackling local issues
- 'Crowdfund Cotswold' is leveraging investment from residents and businesses delivering sustainable local projects aiming to reduce inactivity

Outcome

- Enable residents to live healthy lives through Active Places and Active Travel
- Encourage Active Travel through cycling and walking
- Encourage Active Travel to help increase physical activity and reduce carbon footprint
- Housing and the built environment to enable our residents to live healthy lives
- Support health and well-being projects that are focused on outdoor recreation and activities

Where we are now

- 13% of households have no car in Cotswold (26% across England)
- 17 of the District's wards are ranked in the bottom 25% for public transport in Gloucestershire
- 34% of the District's wards have poor access thresholds to fitness facilities and GPs, if traveling by bus or foot
- Cotswold Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) issues and priorities included shortfalls for both rugby union and 3G pitches for football use.
- There are 32 registered historic parks and gardens in Cotswold District;
- There are established park runs in Cirencester, Tetbury and at Fire Station College Moreton in Marsh
- Cotswold District is in an area of ANOB with wide access to national walk and cycle ways
- In the online public consultation respondents used the following transport to visit leisure centres:
 - 51% small / medium car
 - 23% walking
 - 14% large car
 - 8% cycling
 - 1% public transport
- 46% stated that they would definitely like to cycle/run/walk to their location if it was easier

Where do we want to be?

- Working in partnership with local groups and stakeholders providing, improving and promoting sustainable transport options, including walking and cycling
- Facilitating partnership work promoting the benefits of active travel encouraging people to engage in active travel (to leisure centres, work, volunteering, villages and town centres)
- Protecting access to open spaces



3. Stage 3 – Interventions

Facility and Service Intervention Recommendations

Following the Sport England strategic outcomes planning guidance; information, comments and evidence from stakeholders' workshops, public consultation, local insight and the Indoor Built Facility Strategy has been analysed to inform relevant facility and service interventions.

The interventions align with the new **Sport England 'Uniting the Movement' Strategy 2021-2031** and three of the strategies 'five big issue' themes; Connecting with Health & Wellbeing, Connecting Communities and Active Environments.

The following facility and service interventions are recommended for future leisure provision aimed at increasing physical activity to meet wider strategic outcomes across Cotswold District. This will help enable the Council to focus activity and resources in the areas of greatest need.

Healthier District

Within the new Corporate Strategy 2020-2024 the 'Health and Wellbeing' priority aims to **'Promote healthy lifestyles, fun and self-care for all ages.'** Access to good quality leisure provision and opportunities to be physically active plays a part in this aim to help reduce health inequalities and encourage people to lead a healthy lifestyle.

Healthier District

Where do we want to be?

- Achieving permanent behaviour changes through increasing opportunities for residents to build physical activity into their everyday lives
- Facilitating the enhancement of referrals into physical activity and fitness based programmes
- Increasing emphasis and resources into targeted outreach services for those with long term health conditions

Facility Interventions

- Provide equipment for all ages: Cotswold has an ageing population which is under-represented in leisure centres - offer toning tables and assisted gym equipment also suitable for post op recovery
- Ensure places for physical activity are clean and inviting
- Facilities to consider social distancing measures if required
- Provide good disability access
- CDC to work with funding and delivery partners, to identify short and medium to longer term investment opportunities for the refurbishment of Cotswold Leisure Cirencester Sports Hall
- Protect all indoor sports facilities within the new local plan

Service Interventions

- Staff training: ensure staff provide an inclusive, encouraging experience for everyone e.g. GP referrals, all ages and fitness levels. Recognise when people with more challenging health needs may require extra support or new and different ways to take part.
- Programming: provide suitable activities for all e.g. gentle exercise classes for older residents, women only sessions and activities for young people not keen on traditional sport
- Make it fun: encourage providers of physical activity to promote fun and enjoyment, helping people build it into their everyday lives
- Be flexible in messaging: different people may need different advice about adapting their activity e.g. people living with long term health conditions

Healthier District

Where do we want to be?

Facility Interventions

- CDC and partners to plan now for the refurbishment of its existing swimming pool facilities at all three key Council owned sites
- Cotswolds Leisure Centre, Cirencester swimming pool will be close to its comfort factor by 2030. A feasibility study should be undertaken to identify if moveable floors can be installed to assist in the provision of an improved varied programme that could meet future increased usage
- Retain existing levels of community accessible and affordable fitness suite provision
- CDC should consider entering into discussions with Cotswold Gymnastics Club with a view to assisting the club in finding its own premises

Service Interventions

- Put even stronger spotlight on safeguarding, so children and young people feel and are safe when being active, and parents are confident it's a safe choice with the welfare of their children paramount
- Improving physical literacy, so residents have a great experience which builds their understanding and knowledge of how to be active, their confidence and competence, but above all their enjoyment
- Embrace technology and the digital world so being active is easier, more attractive and more relevant to the digitally savvy, while being mindful of potential negatives

Connected Communities

A priority in the Corporate Strategy is to **'encourage resilient, well-connected and active communities that take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing goals.'**

The pandemic has highlighted the value of voluntary and community connections, and the trust they have with people within their community - often the most vulnerable and inactive. Continuing to invest in asset-based/place-based community development working together with local clubs, networks and volunteers will help provide physical activity opportunities for local residents and a sense of community.

Connected Community

Where do we want to be?

- Using an asset-based community development approach which is increasing participation in physical activity through the development of accessible and suitable opportunities in the community by the community
- Maximising opportunities with local groups and stakeholders, developing new sustainable local community programmes encouraging people to adopt and maintain a healthy lifestyle, particularly in rurally isolated communities
- Identifying resources and support in local communities developing local solutions which address barriers to physical activity

Facility Interventions

- Ensure community space facilities providing sport and physical activity are protected and maintained to continue with activities they provide
- Identified need for informal community space / centres to provide sports and physical activity, particularly in the rural areas of the District
- CDC to work in partnership with schools where sports facilities are provided for community or club use. There is a requirement for formal community use agreements to be in place at existing sites or future school development sites
- Consider consultation with England Indoor Bowls Association and local bowls clubs on provision of increased indoor bowls rink provision at Fairford Bowls Club

Service Interventions

- Connect people with physical activity: ensure physical activity opportunities are available and promoted for all ages
- Connect with a new generation of community leaders and volunteers to help communities become and stay active
- Support local organisations to think of ways they can use physical activity to address local challenges
- Use local messaging as most effective when delivered by 'people like me' and locally trusted organisations
- Outreach work: leisure providers to consider bigger role in the community to provide support, deliver activities and help develop local initiatives

Connected Community

Where do we want to be?

- Utilising the power of physical activity which is improving community cohesion and tackling local issues
- Working in partnership with the Council's leisure contractor raising customer satisfaction, maximising accessibility and ensuring delivery of a positive customer experience
- 'Crowdfund Cotswold' is leveraging investment from residents and businesses delivering sustainable local projects aiming to reduce inactivity

Facility Interventions

- Consider existing community facilities that could be upgraded or improved through developer contributions for new housing
- Fairford has community space but consultation identified the need for a community gym fitness facility to replace the one at Farmor's school.
- Tetbury Community focus group identified similar issues with the need for more community space and or improved partnership to open up planned community space for physical activity use. Tetbury rugby clubhouse has offered potential space
- Retain the existing levels of community accessible (including pay and play) sports hall, swimming pool and fitness provision in the District

Service Interventions

- Provide activity within the community at community centres or spaces for the 'Rural Reality' group
- Investing in the people and capacity of community organisations such as clubs and charities, who know their area and its needs best

Active Environment

The environment around us is one of the most important factors in enabling people to be active in their everyday life. The places we live, work and visit often act as a daily barrier to people taking part in physical activity and sport, whether that be due to safety, accessibility, awareness or the practicalities of using spaces in the built and natural environment.

During the pandemic, many people in the district have been using local open spaces and parks to keep active. These green spaces are important to the collective recovery from Covid-19 and to create active environments where physical activity and active travel is an easy choice.

Active Environment

Where do we want to be?

- Working in partnership with local groups and stakeholders providing, improving and promoting sustainable transport options, including walking and cycling
- Facilitating partnership work promoting the benefits of active travel encouraging people to engage in active travel (to leisure centres, work, volunteering, villages and town centres)
- Protecting access to open spaces

Facility Interventions

- Provide better connected footpaths and cycle routes that are clearly sign-posted and promote these routes
- Increase number of easily accessible footpaths for walkers, pushchair and wheelchair users
- Ensure well lit and maintained footpaths and cycle lanes
- Provide dedicated cycle lanes
- Offer secure bike parking and electric charge points at leisure centres
- Introduce measures that encourage safe cycling, scooting and walking in parks and gardens. This could be widening paths or segregation from pedestrians

Service Interventions

- Provide outdoor organised walks starting from the leisure centres / community halls
- Think creatively about the messaging, graphics and instructions in parks and open spaces, make them physically active friendly (such as hide and seek, frisbee)
- Encourage local community groups to take ownership of their green spaces, footpaths and cycle routes to keep them litter free, welcoming and attract resources for improved/new assets and activities

Active Environment

Where do we want to be?



Facility Interventions

- Create and protect quality and safe places and spaces for children to play and enjoy being active outdoors
- Where appropriate, CDC and its partners seek to secure developer contributions from strategic developments that could contribute towards additional safe walking, running and cycling routes, and where possible to open up other informal, multipurpose places and spaces where people can be active
- CDC should develop a detailed approach to securing developer contributions to support the emerging local plan e.g. through a Planning Obligations SPD

Service Interventions

- Help create more choice and better access to inclusive opportunities to get active in the community



4. Stage 4 - Commitment

Management Options Appraisal

A further piece of work to inform management options at the end of the existing contract term will be undertaken in 2021. This management options appraisal will explore various types of delivery model, contract scope, and contract term etc. for Cotswold District Council's leisure facilities.

The purpose of the management options appraisal is to help to determine what the most suitable management option is to achieve financial sustainability in the short to medium term, and consequently what form of leisure contract should be established when the current leisure contract expires.

Delivery Models

A review of the existing leisure contract will take place in 2021

A working group is to be established May – June 2021

Management Options Appraisal work is to be carried out July – September 2021

Various types of delivery model will be explored for Cotswold District Council's leisure facilities including, but not limited to;

- Continue with the existing Contractor through Contract variation/extension;
- Change the operation to in-house service provision;
- Re-tender the operation to appoint another, or the same contractor under different contract terms;
- Operate through a self-supported local trust; and,
- Modify the contract scope to support more than one of the various options available

The leisure contract review will include future facility requirements such as the potential refurbishment of Cotswold Leisure, Cirencester.

The commitment section is to be completed following executive sign off and budgets to proceed are agreed.

Disclaimer

Although the information in this report has been prepared in good faith, with the best intentions, on the basis of professional research and information made available to us at the time of the study, it is not possible to guarantee the financial estimates or forecasts contained within this report.

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