

BUSINESS PLAN 2017/18 QUARTER 2 REVIEW

Summary: To review progress in Quarters 1 & 2 of the financial year 2017/18.

Recommendation: That the Quarter 2 Review be noted.

Officer Ref: Simon Smith, Project Development and Business Planning Officer

Background

Process

1. The management team undertook a review of progress against the work programme on 10th October 2017. This review identified areas of significant progress or where things have developed differently. It did not focus on areas of work which are performing as originally expected in the business plan.
2. This report does not attempt to celebrate the role or work of the Board. That task is achieved through updates, the annual review, press releases and digital media.

Financial Outcome

3. The current forecast (green) is now predicting a surplus of £413 compared to a budgeted deficit of £8,930 in the budget (beige), a variance (blue) of £9,343, just 1.02% of expenditure. Lines in the budget summary (**Appendix A**) which have variances of over £1,000 are explained in the notes under the budget table.
4. The balance for the Discovery Centre has now been split to show separate balances for the café and the wider site. They show the café breaking even which is less than predicted in the budget and the wider site on budget with a deficit of £9,320.
5. Funds held in the Board's reserves are predicted to be £154,708. This is compliant with the Board's reserves policy. If funds invested in and to be recouped from the Discovery Centre are included this figure rises to £354,114. £19,304 more than budgeted. The improvement in reserves is helped by an improvement in the general fund and ear marked reserves brought forward from 2015/16.

Operational Progress

6. Areas of significant progress or deviation from the original work programme are outlined below. Delivery against the majority of actions is on schedule though variance from the planned work programme has been greater than usual. This is in part to realise a number of emerging opportunities, staff changes and the Project Development and Business Planning Officer being absent for an extended period.

Landscape

- The Cotswolds @50 project has held 6 events and an online survey. An archive has been established with 150 photos selected and digitised. Two scenarios have been written by the University of Gloucestershire for visualising with one more to come. These visualisations will form the basis of a final round of workshops.
- The BATHSCAPE project is working through its development stage towards a round 2 bid submission in late May 2018. The Board successfully tendered for work valued at £13,500 to deliver the planning of a circular trail with radial routes, to be completed by the end of October.

Rural Land Management

- Board proposal on a post Brexit agri-environment scheme has been developed through a farmer's focus group and internal dialogue and was sent to Lord Gardener at Defra on 19th September.

Biodiversity

- The Magnificent Meadows Project has now finished. An infographic and detailed paper were presented to the September meeting of the Executive Committee. Plantlife are drafting the final project report.
- Bids have been developed for the Esmee Fairburn Foundation, Medlock Trust, Thames Water and Nineveh Trust to progress and develop the Board's grassland work and to seek match funding for a significant financial offer from a private donor.
- An outline proposal for work on road verges (Flowers on the Edge) was developed and Plantlife submitted an EOI to the Dreamfund which was not approved.

Development and Transport

- Following a Board response to the West Oxon Local Plan review an AONB policy is now included within the plan.
- The Board's response to proposals for the A417 included inputting into the Steering Group, value management workshops, and an opportunities mapping workshop which led to Highways England (HE) commissioning a landscape study. A scheme vision, design principles, objectives and sub objectives have been agreed with HE, their consultants and other Steering Group members. HE are due to commence consultation on route options in Q3.

Awareness and Understanding

- Visitor numbers at the Cotswolds Discovery Centre for May June and July were lower than 2016 though some events were very successful. 38 people attended the first camping over event and gave very positive feedback. The sheep and wool day saw 639 visitors. Unfortunately the takings for that week including those for the event were stolen in a burglary, a loss of just under £4,000.
- A new EOI for themed play equipment at the Discovery Centre was submitted to the Cotswolds LEADER Local Action Group who added a requirement for match funding which under the rules cannot come from a public body. The

Friends of the Cotswolds decided not to provide the match funding so the application had to be withdrawn. The bid for interpretation to the HLF Our Heritage fund was unsuccessful. The Friends have submitted a successful EOI to the Growth Tourism programme for the Discovery Centre.

- A new partnership has formed with the Wychwood Project and Burford School to deliver targeted rural skills training for young people.

Exploring and Enjoying

- In late May a successful EOI for £90,000 was submitted to the Growth Fund's Tourism strand for a series of Cotswolds Gateway sites. 10 interpretative boards with associated walking and cycling routes are being worked up and fully costed for the full bid to be submitted by the end of November.
- A GWR Customer Improvement Fund bid for bus tours was resubmitted following guidance from a submission in 2016.
- The rural skills programme has delivered 39 courses training 274 people in 10 skills. The annual targets are 52 courses training 520 people in 12 skills so the programme is on target.
- The hedgelaying competition has been arranged for November 18th at Fyfield Farm.

Tourism

- The Cotswolds Visitor Giving scheme has been rebranded as Caring for the Cotswolds with new promotional materials and was relaunched at the Cotswolds Farm Park in late May.

Strategic Economic Plan

- The Cotswolds LEADER programme has supported 4 projects with £126,000. The scheme's ranking in comparison with the other 6 in the West Midlands area is favorable. Joint third for expressions of interest, second for full applications, third for number of grants paid and first for grant size.
- The LEADER programme was originally contracted to run to 2021. Spending now has to be allocated by March 2019 and spent by December 2019. This will require a reprofiling of the scheme and its budget which will be completed for the Q3 report going to the Executive Committee in February.

Cross Cutting Activity

- The production of the 2018-23 Management Plan is on schedule. A series of workshops have been held and a first consultation draft has gone to Statutory Environmental bodies, Historic England and the local authorities.
- Position statements on the management of wild deer and the keeping of horses and ponies have been reviewed and a new position statement on tree provenance and species was adopted by the Board in June.
- 2 updates were sent to target key partners using Campaign Monitor enabling us to analyse their use.
- A film celebrating the Saving our Magnificent Meadows Project has been produced.
- The production schedule for the Lion has moved from April - Sept & Oct - March to Jan - June & July - Dec with a view to increasing revenue. The June to December issue raised £5,750 against an annual target of £10,000.

- The idea of a Cotswolds National Park was developed in discussion with the Executive Committee, raised at MP briefings and raised in correspondence with the Defra Secretary of State and Minister. There was also an independent on-line government petition.
- We have received a compliance statement for the Board's 2016 - 2017 accounts rating them as satisfactory.
- The new website has been delayed partly due to the developer being ill and partly due to the scale of the task and work priorities. It is now launching in November.

7. This quarter has also seen a change in personnel

Officers

Leavers

David Molloy	Rural Skills and Grants Officer	April
Raphael Koenig	Finance and Administration Officer	April
Robert Barber	Community and Research Apprentice	July

Starters

Edward Bonn	Rural Skills and Grants Officer	April
Anna Clarke	Finance and Administration officer	July

Board Members

Leavers

Q1 Jo Burgon, Will Manley & Chris Saint
Q2 Ken Atack

Starters

Q2 Jo Barker, Tony Illot, Dan Szor & Simon King

How we will promote and make audiences aware of this item

8. This report is produced for the Executive Committee as part of the Board's governance arrangements. Much of this material will be turned into a quarterly e-newsletter and accompanying film. These in turn will be promoted through traditional and digital media.

Supporting Papers:

Appendix 'A' - 2015/16 Finance Report Quarter 2