

Cotswolds Conservation Board Business Plan 2018 – 2021

1. The Cotswolds Conservation Board

Established by Parliament in 2004 the Cotswolds Conservation Board (The Board) has two statutory purposes:

- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB
- to increase understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB.

In fulfilling these purposes, the Board has a duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the AONB.

2. Summary Work Programme 2018-2021

This programme converts the outcomes, issues and policies of the AONB Management Plan¹ and its operating context² into actions for the Board, so it follows headings similar to the Management Plan.

The Management Plan contains four ambitions which are also key developmental objectives for the Board. There is one under each main area of this work programme.

The figures refer to the budget allocated to each area of work for 2018/19, including staff time and on-costs. Initials in brackets refer to the responsible committees which are listed at the end.

Conserving and Enhancing

Developmental objective: The local design and delivery of a Cotswolds package of agri-environment and rural development support post Brexit

Landscape £113,615 13%

- Shape a 25 year vision for conserving and enhancing the Cotswolds landscape by engaging communities, the academic sector and other stakeholders in a Future Landscapes Programme (C&M)
- Improve the landscape setting of Bath by supporting the 'BATHSCAPE' Landscape Partnerships bid to HLF and future delivery (C&M)
- Develop a new Landscape Partnerships proposal for the north / east part of the AONB focusing initially on the Evenlode catchment. (C&M)
- Deliver a rural skills training programme and develop associated programmes for young people including apprenticeships (E&A)

¹ See Annex 1

² See Annex 2

Rural Land Management £38,561 4%

- Develop a proposal for a post-Brexit agri-environment & rural development scheme that will enhance the Cotswolds (C&M)
- Develop a Cotswolds Choice brand for landscape friendly local produce and products linked to a new agri-environment scheme (E)

Historic Environment £23,376 3%

- Work with Historic England and the County Councils to monitor and manage Scheduled Monuments (E&A)
- Develop a new Heritage Lottery Fund proposal based on the AONB's historic environment engaging people in exploring and managing a characteristic suite of heritage assets associated with Cotswolds stone. (C&M)

Biodiversity £32,386 4%

- Develop proposals to further enhance the natural grassland network including road verges in the AONB (C&M)
- Support landscape scale conservation through the Cotswolds Ecological Networks Forum and the two Cotswolds Nature Improvement Areas (C&M)

Development and Transport – Monitoring influencing and guiding rural growth to ensure decisions positively improve the AONB's natural and built heritage.

£63,679 7%

- Influence strategic planning at all levels e.g. Sub regional, Unitary, District, and Neighbourhood plans (L&W)
- Influence significant planning and transport proposals in line with the AONB management plan and associated documents (L&W)
- Develop, understand and raise awareness of the relationship between the AONB's natural and built environments
- Maintain the AONB boundary markers and Investigate the inclusion of AONB branding on village and town place name signs (L&W)

Natural and Cultural Capital and Ecosystem Services - Identifying, valuing and communicating the natural and cultural capital of the AONB £26,160 3%

- Provide landscape advice to bodies implementing natural flood management projects to ensure that Cotswolds river catchments deliver their flood management potential in a way appropriate to the landscape character and special qualities of the AONB (C&M)
- Champion the value of the AONB through its tranquility, air quality, and in particular seek to secure dark sky status (L&W)
- Develop the overarching concept of cultural capital as applied to the Cotswolds to complement and support the Board's work on Natural Capital (C&M)

Climate Change £22,876 3%

- Support the Cotswolds community in mitigating and adapting to climate change particularly through disseminating the results of the Board's demonstration projects (L&W).

Understanding and Enjoying

Developmental Objective: The Cotswolds being nationally recognised as the Exploring and Walking Capital of England

Tourism Access and Recreation £280,675 33%

- Develop the Cotswolds Discovery Centre at Northleach as the key interpretation and information point for visitors to the AONB (E)
- Maintain the Cotswold Way to National Trail Quality Standards (E&A)
- Promote countryside access and the network of walking, riding and cycling routes (E&A)
- Make the Cotswolds the best landscape for the visitor to explore by public transport by publishing and promoting the Explore the Cotswolds by Public Transport guide and supporting the associated Cotswolds Discoverer bus/rail ticket scheme (E&A)
- Support the development and work of the Cotswolds Destination Management Organisation; Cotswolds Tourism, to deliver the principles of sustainable tourism (E&A)
- Grow Caring for the Cotswolds, the Cotswolds Visitor Giving Scheme, enabling visitors and the tourism industry to reinvest in the AONB's landscapes (E&A)
- Support outdoors learning by young people through visits and on-line curriculum based materials (E&A)
- Support conservation volunteering opportunities, particularly for the Cotswolds Voluntary Wardens and develop provision for young people (E&A)
- Promote and help deliver a guided walks and events programme and broaden participation in these programmes (E&A)

Health and Wellbeing £16,305 2%

- Encourage and promote health walks (E&A)
- Develop a programme of outdoor activities to broaden engagement, particularly from the urban communities surrounding the AONB (E&A)

Growing the Rural Economy Sustainably £96,501 11%

Developmental objective: Communities and businesses within and around the AONB identify and celebrate being part of a nationally designated landscape.

Strategic Economic Plan

- Raise the AONB's economic, business and jobs profile and take a proactive stance in the development of an economic plan for the AONB (E)
- Develop our understanding of the full range of benefits that the natural capital of the Cotswolds AONB provides to society and business. (E)
- Find new ways of resourcing sustainable development and environmental activities for the long term. (E)
- Deliver the Cotswolds LEADER programme to create jobs, invest in business and support local initiatives (E)
- Deliver the Sustainable Development Fund targeting grants at projects that support learning with a particular emphasis on young people and/or urban populations within the vicinity of the AONB. (G)

- Maintain an overview of all the grant giving programs delivered by the Board ensuring a joined up approach (G)

Cross Cutting & Corporate £148,502 17%

Developmental objective: To fully explore the case for and against the Cotswolds being designated as England's next National Park.

Management Plan

- Adopt the 2018-2023 Management Plan in June 2018 and contribute towards its delivery (E)
- Monitor Section 85 of the Countryside & Rights of Way Act compliance (E)
- Publish a refreshed State of the Cotswolds report and summary (E)

Collaboration

- Seek to support and influence the work of others through project and strategic partnerships and the promotion and publication of advice and position statements (C&M E&A L&W)
- Engage communities, partners, the academic sector and other stakeholders to seek opportunities to collaborate in advancing research in accordance with the Board's research agenda³. (E)

Communications Strategy

- Deliver the Board's communications programme, including its websites and social media in accordance with the objectives in the Board's 2017-20 Communications Strategy (E)
 - Influence targeted audiences in wider support of the aims, objectives, policies and guidance of the Board;
 - Promote, raising awareness, enjoyment and understanding of the Cotswolds special qualities and its designation as an AONB and highlight the work of the Board and its partners;
 - Deliver a strong fundraising theme throughout communication for one of England's best loved landscape brands;
 - Manage the reputation and identity of the Board/ AONB;

Governance and Financial management

- Taking an entrepreneurial and commercial approach to the Board's work and continue to diversify the Board's funding base.(E)
- Maintain financial and operational governance and reporting processes (E)
- Continue to develop the evidence base and inform discussion concerning the potential designation of the Cotswolds as England's next National Park (E)

³ See Section 4

Responsible Committees;

C&M = Conserving and Managing Sub Committee

E&A = Enjoying and Appreciating Sub Committee

E = Executive Committee

G = Grants Sub Committee

L&W = Living and Working Sub Committee

The Executive Committee is a committee of the Board. The other committees are sub committees of the Executive Committee.

All the Board's Committees monitor progress against the summary work programme and where appropriate report it to the Executive Committee and Board. They draw on their expertise to guide, support and participate in the development and delivery of the Board's operations.

3. Research Agenda 2018-21

The Board is seeking opportunities to collaborate in advancing research on the following areas over the life of this business plan;

- The economic value and importance of the natural capital of the Cotswolds AONB.
- The economic value and importance of the cultural capital of the Cotswolds AONB.
- The environmental, economic and social impacts of climate change on the Cotswolds, the attitudes of land managers towards climate change and their associated long-term planning.
- The role and value of the Cotswolds in flood management.
- The potential of end uses for road verge arisings including as an energy source.
- The scale and reasons for the continued loss of unimproved grassland.
- The positive and negative impact of small scale incremental changes on the Cotswold landscape.
- A condition assessment of the landscape of the Cotswolds.
- The values placed on the Cotswold landscape by the public.
- An assessment of the impact and economic value of the equine sector.
- An assessment of the impact and economic value of the forestry sector.
- Assessing the economic value of recreational access in the Cotswolds.
- A health and wellbeing audit of the work led and influenced by the Board.

4. Budget Summary 2018-2021

INCOME BY SOURCE	2017-18*	BUSINESS PLAN YEAR			TOTAL 2018-21
		2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	
DEFRA	440,367	447,941	455,646	455,646	1,359,233
Natural England - Cotswold Way	67,294	67,294	67,294	67,294	201,882
Local Authority - Direct Grant	139,374	141,835	128,035	128,035	397,905
Parish Council Contributions	0	0	0	0	0
DEFRA LEADER	74,609	66,000	66,000	66,000	198,000
Rental Area Income	8,091	8,362	8,362	8,362	25,086
Earned Income	93,988	120,339	115,267	124,267	359,873
Sponsorship and advertising	10,450	16,500	14,000	19,000	49,500
Grants	32,701	5,000	0	0	5,000
Transfers from Earmarked Reserves	14,159	-1,000	0	0	-1,000
TOTAL INCOME	881,034	872,271	854,604	868,604	2,595,479

EXPENDITURE BY THEME**	2017-18*	BUSINESS PLAN YEAR			TOTAL 2018-21
		2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	
CONSERVING AND ENHANCING					
Landscape	106,393	113,615	111,159	111,609	336,383
Rural Land Management	37,210	38,561	39,019	39,469	117,050
Historic Environment	21,695	23,376	22,877	23,327	69,581
Biodiversity	66,686	32,386	32,722	33,172	98,280
Development & Transport	59,310	63,679	64,791	65,241	193,711
Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services	24,879	26,160	26,375	26,825	79,360
Climate Change	21,695	22,876	22,877	23,327	69,081
CONSERVING AND ENHANCING TOTAL	337,869	320,653	319,821	322,971	963,445
UNDERSTANDING & ENJOYING					
Tourism Access and Recreation	286,971	280,675	272,380	277,780	830,836
Health & Wellbeing	10,368	16,305	16,079	16,529	48,913
UNDERSTANDING & ENJOYING TOTAL	297,339	296,980	288,459	294,309	879,749
Rural Economy	85,773	96,501	94,749	94,749	285,998
Cross Cutting & Corporate Management	137,542	148,502	149,106	149,106	446,714
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	858,523	862,636	852,135	861,135	2,575,906

Board Budget Balance	22,511	9,635	2,469	7,469	19,573
Discovery Centre café balance***	-21,197	3,737	3,737	3,737	11,211
Discovery Centre wider site balance***	-9,069	-5,691	-5,691	-5,691	-17,073
Total Discovery Centre balance***	-30,266	-1,954	-1,954	-1,954	-5,862
Combined Board & DC balances	-7,755	7,681	515	5,515	13,711

General Fund remaining at year end	5,366	13,047	13,562	19,077
Earmarked reserves remaining at year end	145,490	140,117	141,117	150,117
Total Reserves remaining at year end***	150,856	153,164	154,679	169,194
Discovery Centre Running Balance	220,391	218,437	216,483	214,529
Reserves at year + funds to be recouped from Discovery Centre	371,247	371,601	371,162	383,723

* Based on revised forecast of the Q3 report

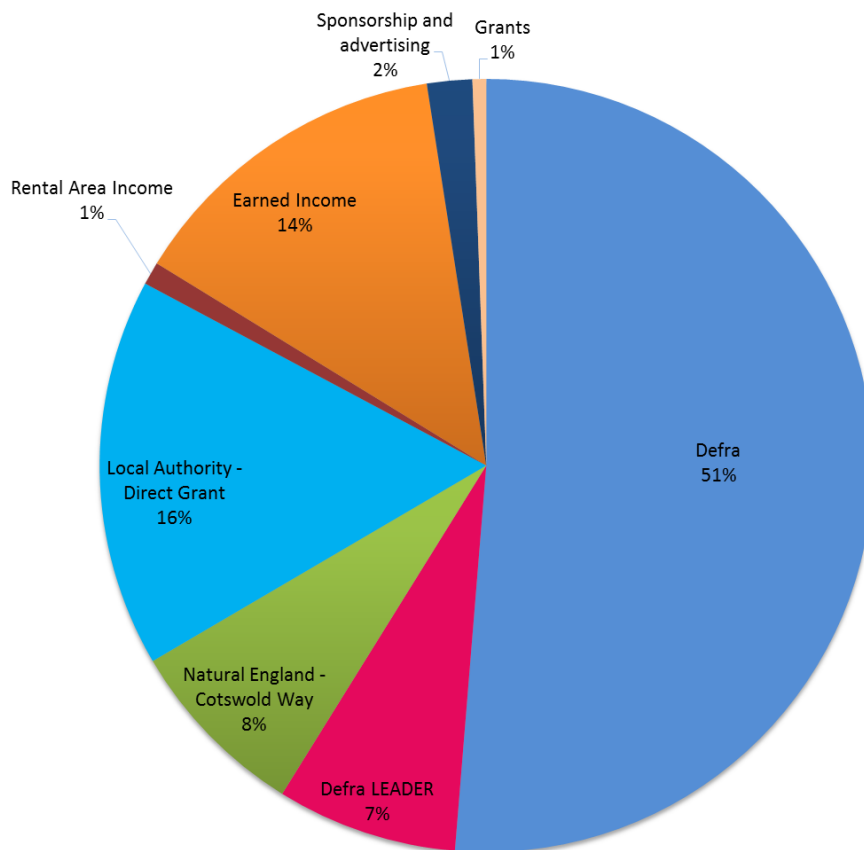
** See Summary Work Programme for details

*** Does not take account of future investment in terms of either disruption or subsequent improved performance

**** Must remain above £150,000 to comply with reserves policy

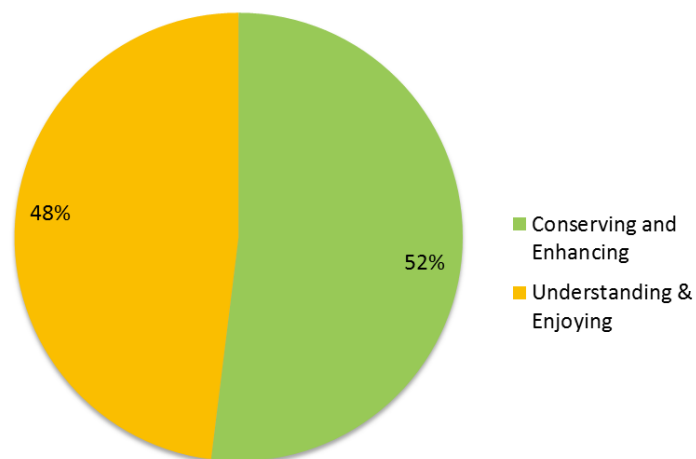
5. Budget Analysis 2018-2019

Budgeted Income 2018/19

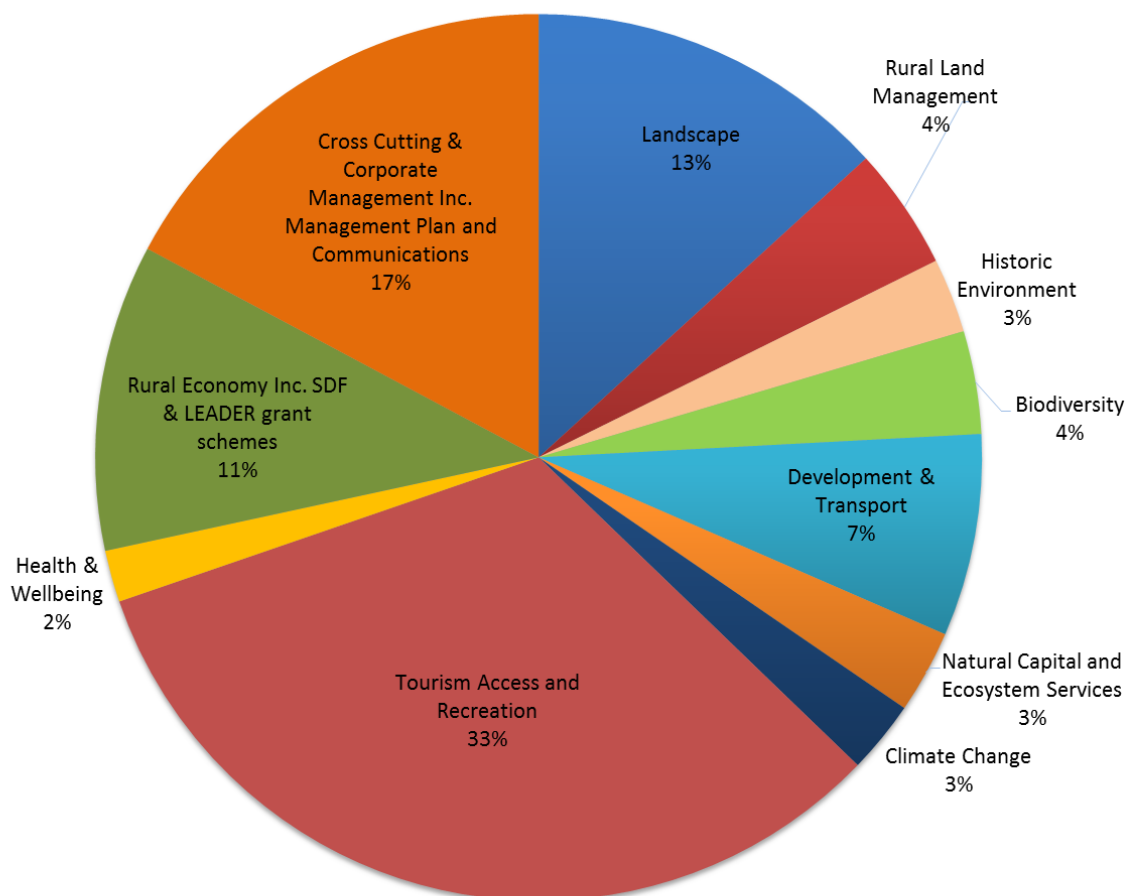


Earned income includes: rural skills course income, sales, advertising, donations including the Caring for the Cotswolds visitor giving scheme, and professional services/consultancy income

Budgeted Expenditure by Statutory Purpose 2018/19



Budgeted Expenditure 2018/19 by Management Plan Headings



Expenditure not included within the Budget

The expenditure figures in the above pie charts only include the activities and projects the Board expects to fund. It does not include activity that will be delivered if planned bids are successful or the value of spend incurred by others with funding secured by the Board e.g. LEADER funds were secured and individual grants determined by a partnership led by the Board, but the grants are paid by the Rural Payments Agency. In 2016/17 the Board secured an overall investment of £2.1 million in the AONB.

Nor do the figures include the non-monetary value of the Board's work, for example the voluntary wardens delivered over 48,000 hours of their time in 2016/17 equating to over £300,000 in financial terms.

In 2016/17 the Board turned every £1 invested by an individual local authority into £250 of investment in the AONB.

Annex 1. Cotswolds AONB and the Cotswolds Conservation Board

Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

The Cotswolds AONB was designated in 1966 to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area and in 2016 it celebrated its 50th anniversary. It is the largest of 38 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England and Wales, covering 790 sq miles (2038 sq kms). Of all the protected landscapes in England, only the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks are larger. The Cotswold Way National Trail runs along the western edge of the AONB.

A rich historical, cultural, and ecological mosaic, the Cotswolds is one of the country's best known and most loved landscapes. The AONB is of equal landscape importance and value to that of a National Park. The area attracts an estimated 23 million visitors a year and is home to 150,000 people. It includes parts of 15 local authority areas and 283 town and parish councils and three regions.

Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023

The Board formally adopted a statutory Cotswolds AONB Management Plan in March 2013 which ran until the end of March 2018. A new Management Plan running to the end of March 2023 is currently in production and is scheduled for adoption by the Board in June 2018.

The new Management Plan provides a vision and outcomes describing the desired state of the AONB. It also identifies the issues affecting the AONB and sets out the policies for addressing them. Although still in draft form the new Management Plan is in a well-developed stage and this Business Plan is aligned with it as far as practicable.

The Management Plan is informed by and underpinned with evidence from the Cotswolds Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines. Policy within the Management Plan is expanded on through the publication of Position Statements. Its evidence base is further developed through the publication of reports such as the Farming, Forestry and Equestrian Sector report in 2015. Monitoring change across the AONB under the themes within the Management Plan is reported via a State of the Cotswolds report.

Engaging with the objectives and policies of the AONB Management Plan will help public bodies demonstrate compliance with their duty under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights Of Way Act 2000 to “have regard to” the purposes of the designation of the AONB when carrying out their functions.

The Board's Business Planning

This Business Plan provides a concise and costed description of what the Board intends to do to support the delivery of the AONB Management Plan. It is supported by a detailed work programme and budget. This plan's place within the Board's hierarchy of documents is illustrated below

Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023	Cotswolds Conservation Board Business Planning 2018-21	Detailed Operational Planning	Reporting
Vision and Outcomes describing the desirable character and condition of the AONB			State of the Cotswolds Report Long term data based on the Management Plan's monitoring indicators. Published publically every 2-3 years
Issues effecting the AONB and Policies to guide decisions and actions in order to address these issues.	Communications Strategy 2017-20 (separate document with targets included in the Work Programme) Developmental Objectives Concise description of what the Board intends to achieve		
	Summary Work Programme What we will do – a concise description of the Board's actions summarised under the Management Plan's headings	Detailed Work Programme Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic and Timed targets and milestones for the Board's actions over 3 years	Work Programme Reporting Progress reviewed quarterly against the first year's SMART targets and milestones. Highlights and variances reported to the Executive Committee.
	Summary Budget Income and expenditure over 3 years. Expenditure summarised under the Management Plan's headings	Detailed Budget Income and expenditure over 3 years for all budget codes	Budget Reporting First year's performance for income and expenditure with variances over £1,000 reported quarterly to the Executive Committee.

The Board's Way of Working

In delivering our objectives the Board will;

1. Maintain a Board comprising of members offering a strong mix of private/commercial, public and NGO/voluntary sector skills supported by a well-respected and knowledgeable staff resource
2. Maintain the existing mix of advocacy, policy development, management plan publication, consultation responses and project delivery.
3. Develop a focus on innovation and new approaches to delivery and pass established projects and programmes to other deliverers where appropriate.
4. Work with the Friends of the Cotswolds to secure additional resources for the AONB; grants, sponsorships or philanthropic contributions to programmes of work and new initiatives.
5. Sustain a core public sector grant and seek greater delegation with associated income from the Defra group (Defra, Natural England, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Rural Payments Agency); e.g. project and programme delivery and responses to planning consultations, making better use of the Board's policy and evidence base.
6. Deliver improved services e.g. public rights of way management in return for payments, working with the voluntary wardens to deliver a more cost effective and higher quality service whilst being seen to save the highway authorities money.
7. Take a strong commercial and income earning approach and deliver commercial consultancy services across the AONB. Develop a well-respected and acknowledged landscape, environmental, ecological, access, heritage and a specialised planning set of expertise (including a planning advisory service, advising at pre application and post consent stages).
8. Raise greater awareness of the fact that the Cotswolds AONB landscape is of the same quality and importance to that of the National Parks.
9. Advocate for a new single Protected Landscape Association

In doing so our geography will be the Cotswolds AONB and our purposes and remit will be that of a Conservation Board.

Annex 2. Operating Context

Policy Context

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and other government departments highlight the benefits to be derived from the natural world and the role of protected landscapes in delivering these benefits.

This concept is often summarised as ‘natural capital’. *Natural capital is our ‘stock’ of waters, land, air, species, minerals and oceans. This stock underpins our economy by producing value for people, both directly and indirectly. Goods provided by natural capital include clean air and water, food, energy, wildlife, recreation and protection from hazards.*⁴

‘Cultural Capital’ is the human counterpart of Natural Capital, embracing the imprint of past and present human interactions with the natural world on landscape and the evolution of society: it thus includes tangible and intangible heritage, as well as cultural activity.⁵ 2018 is the European Year of Cultural Capital.

There is strong local evidence that the high quality of the environment underpins the local economy. An assessment of the economic value of the Cotswolds AONB published by the Board in 2013 estimated that the businesses critically dependent upon the high quality environment and landscape contributed £337 million a year to the local economy (Gross Value Added) and 9,720 jobs.

The Board’s policy context will continue to develop rapidly throughout the life of this business plan. The result of the referendum to leave the European Union, the need for new homes and the policy response to the impacts of climate change as well as the mitigation goals determined through the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference, will all need continued consideration.

There is a plethora of policies and publications that the Board should arguably take note of but at this time three are particularly significant.

Defra’s 8 Point Plan for National Parks which has now been endorsed by the new Defra Secretary of State and Minister.

The Government’s “A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment”, published in January 2018.

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) report on housing in England’s AONB’s published in November 2017.

⁴ Definition from the UK Natural Capital Committee

⁵ Manifesto for cultural Heritage in 2010.

Financial Context

Defra have confirmed the financial settlement up until 2019/20, which provides for 1.7% inflation each year and is reflected in the budget section of this business plan.

This is clearly welcome although it comes with an expectation that new streams of revenue will be developed. The Board's ways of working to deliver its purposes will continue to evolve in the light a challenging financial context.