

BUSINESS PLAN 2019/20 QUARTER 1 REVIEW

Summary: To review progress in Quarter 1 of the financial year 2019/20.

Recommendation: That the Quarter 1 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 6th August 2019. This review identified areas of significant progress or where things have developed differently. It does 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 Board's current forecast (green) is now predicting a year end surplus of £32,670 compared to a budget of £-5,090, a variance of £37,760. This is mainly due to £50,000 of hosting costs from the Network Rail Mitigation Fund. The Board's underlying financial performance has improved though this has been helped by the cancellation of the loan for next year's Hare Trail (which is no longer going ahead as planned) giving a saving of £15,000, but also removing any financial contribution from the trail in 2020/21. The savings are offset by £26,500 of unbudgeted recruitment expenses. The remaining variances are explained in notes in APPENDIX A.
4. The Board's useable funds (earmarked reserves and general fund combined) are currently predicted to be £104,158 at year end. At the Board meeting of 25th June 2019 it had been envisaged that the level of useable funds would be at around £121,000. This would have been achieved had it not been for the subsequent unbudgeted expenditure on recruitment. There is work to do to make this up either in year or during the next business plan.
5. Project balances have been included in an additional table. The projects where the Board is choosing to invest cash from its core funding are the Sustainable Development Fund and the hedgelaying competition. This table also shows the £50,000 contribution of the Network rail Mitigation scheme to the general fund.

Operational Progress

6. Areas of significant progress or deviation from the original work programme are outlined below.

CROSS CUTTING

Working Together

- **Tranquillity** Position Statement adopted and published June 2019. It can be downloaded [here](#).
- A DEFRA policy team will be visiting the Cotswolds to see a selection of the **LEADER** projects. This will be a good opportunity to showcase the successful projects and how they contribute to the Boards outcomes and ambitions
- Progress on the maintenance of the AONB **Gateway milestones** has been slow and a new action plan is being developed in quarter 2.

CONSERVING AND ENHANCING

Landscape

- 18 courses ran within the **Rural Skills** core programme this quarter. This was 5 less than Q1 last year but there were more participants. This demonstrates an improvement in the fill rates. Recruiting an apprentice is on hold as the colleges offering countryside apprenticeships have suspended placements while a government review is completed. It is expected to conclude in November 2019.

Biodiversity

- Thanks to the weather and a hard working team the **Glorious Grasslands** project has had an outstanding first season. 40 ha of wildflower grassland has been restored across 30 receptor sites.
- Efforts to mitigate the effect of **Ash Dieback** have started. The local Partnership behind the Treescape bid has asked the Board to set up an ash dieback forum. An article in the Cotswold Lion included a fund raising appeal and request for portraits of significant ash trees has raised £580 to date. The Board supported Gloucs CPRE in a bid for £5K to fund trees, stakes and guards.

Rural Land Management

- Defra have accepted the Board's proposal for an **ELMS** test and we are currently awaiting the contract.

Development and Transport

- The Board participated as a joint 'Rule 6 Party' in public inquiry for and **appeal** relating to the proposed development of 68 dwellings in Stonesfield, which we objected to - the appeal was dismissed. CALA (the house builders) have subsequently appealed to the High Court.

UNDERSTANDING AND ENJOYING

Tourism Access and Recreation

- 7 **Caring for the Cotswolds** grants totalling £9,362 were issued in April. Limpley Stoke Parish Council (wildlife interpretation), Quenington Parish Council (public access and trail leaflet), Design for Lighting and Bath Dark Skies Initiative (report to extend dark skies initiative), Chipping Norton Theatre (restoration of foundations stones), Minchinhampton Commoners (water troughs to enhance grazing) Ascott Martyrs (information plaques) and Sustainable Woodstock (community orchard).

Health and Wellbeing

- The Board is working with new partners to develop an off road **Cotswolds Riders Route** suitable for both horse riding and off road cycling. A volunteer has test ridden 3 out of 4 sections of a route suggested by the Cotswolds Trails and Tracks Group/British Horse Society volunteers.
- New 8 mile all terrain **mobility scooter/tramper access** route around Winchcombe was opened in June. Developed by the Voluntary Wardens to mark their 50th anniversary. It can be download [here](#)
- Progress against the Board's **Communications Strategy** is the subject of a separate report for this meeting. In the future progress on what is going ahead of schedule or behind schedule in terms of communications will be reported through the regular quarterly reports

7. This quarter saw no changes in personnel in terms of Officers but there were changes to the Board:

Leavers:

Cllr Sue Hope, South Gloucestershire Council
Cllr Stephen Gray, Stratford-on Avon District Council
Cllr Mark Mackenzie-Charrington, Cotswold District Council
Cllr Martin Veal, BANES.

Starters:

Henry Kenney-Herbert from Moreton-in-Marsh, Parish appointee
Cllr Sarah Whalley-Hoggins, Stratford-on Avon District Council
Cllr Ben Stokes, South Gloucestershire Council

Supporting Paper(s):

Appendix 'A' - 2019/20 Quarter 1 Finance Report