

## COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY REVIEW

**Summary:** To present an update on the Communications Strategy 2017- 2020.

**Recommendation:** That the update report be noted.

**Officer Ref:** Alana Hopkins, Communications Officer, 01451 862003

### Background

1. The Board's current Communications Strategy 2017-20 has been reviewed and some small updates have been made. Executive Board members have requested a summary around what has gone well, what hasn't, what we are behind on, how we plan to catch up etc.

### What's gone well / is good?

1. Media coverage has continued to develop, and relationships with important local media (BBC Radio Glos, BBC Glos Online, BBC Points West) continue to grow. Particular interest is in stories which are positive / beneficial to the community – which fits with the general commentary about increasing access to broader audience groups. Media coverage as a result of press releases and associated PR work has included features on BBC Farming Today, BBC news online, and BBC Radio Gloucestershire.
2. Instagram page set up. Still in infancy. 246 followers.
3. Enewsletter goes out each season. Has an average open rate of around 37% open rate and around 16 – 18% click rates. These are positive metrics according to Campaign Monitor.
4. Cotswold Discoverer Pass has been reengaged – with renewed agreement between all participating partners. GWR are actively promoting the ticket.
5. Visitor Guide and Map has been reprinted twice, and the design has been updated.
6. Cotswold Lion magazine has had further design update and receives positive feedback with each issue.
7. Three videos were produced in late 2018 – their distribution is being staggered.
8. National Park discussion booklet – this was not in the original communications strategy, but has been published online to encourage debate around the concept of a Cotswolds National Park.  
A short video about the merits of becoming a National Park has also been produced – and release is pending (awaiting final report from Glover).
9. Annual Review has been produced on deadline.
10. Google analytics has been set up on new website, and a monthly review is monitoring activity. 27<sup>th</sup> May – 25<sup>th</sup> July = 43,414 website visits, 7,950 walk downloads.
11. The Wardens areas of the Website is now also complete.
12. Monthly presence in Cotswold Life – with a range of content written by Sian Ellis.
13. Revised brand guidelines completed August 2019.

### What hasn't gone well / what we're behind on / issues

1. Advertising income from Cotswold Lion magazine.  
There is still a target for this of £8,000 per year (£4,000 per issue).  
Based on the current rate card, and with the view of maintaining engaging editorial,

the projected maximum income per issue is around £4000 (= 4 x full pages before negotiated rates). The maximum we've achieved has been £2,135, which falls short of the target.

2. The absence of a CRM to use across all teams is problematic for all staff. A CRM would allow for more cross-team working, manage relationships with all contacts, Caring for the Cotswolds members, and potential members, Cotswold Lion advertisers and potential advertisers, etc.
3. Explore the Cotswolds by Public Transport booklet. This has been out of stock for a while. 12,000 copies were printed and last around 6 months. They cost £3,259 for print and production, £927 for distribution. Whilst it does positively support sustainable tourism and travel, this booklet presents a number of issues: it is costly to produce, the bus routes outdate quicker than we are able to produce the booklet, it does not compete in quantity to the 200,000 copies of Cotswold Tourism's Official Guide to the Cotswolds, and almost all the content can be found online.
4. Forums. The Farming Forum went ahead and had a good attendance of around 80 – 90 guests. The Access Forum and Annual Forum have not been possible due to staff resourcing.
5. Surveys (staff and public) These have not been possible so far, in part due to a lack of CRM, and also staff resource.
6. Buildings Design Awards These have not been possible, due to a lack of staff resource.

### **Recommendation**

**Issue 1.** The target should be set more with staff time resource, advertising space available, and rate card negotiations in mind.

**Issue 2:** Work has already started to investigate potential CRM solutions and associated costs.

**Issue 3:** A possible solution to this could be to lift the elements of the booklet which don't date out, and put them online as 'outing itinerary ideas' for download; and, to supply these pages as a 'supplement' of some kind to the Cotswold Tourism Official Guide to the Cotswolds. There would likely be a fee for doing this, but hopefully less than the production and distribution costs of producing the original booklet ourselves.

**Issue 4:** The Access Forum would be better to focus on for 2020 – in line with the observations in the Interim report from Julian Glover. Alana and Becky could work on this together.

**Issue 5:** Market data would be helpful to provide us with benchmarks. As we do not have the staff capacity or database currently to undertake meaningful surveys, could this be outsourced to a research agency or university?

**Issue 6:** There is no rationale behind these Awards in the current communications strategy. Recommend removal, and focus on other ongoing projects which require better marketing and communications support:

- Glorious Cotswold Grasslands
- Ash Tree Dieback / Ourboretum
- Cotswold LEADER
- National Park?
- Walking / Exploring / Access

**Supporting Paper(s):**

**Appendix 'A' - Communications Strategy & Outline Plan 2017-2020. August 2019 Update.**