

SWOT analysis of current situation (Board and comms)

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experienced staff team with specific knowledge, expertise, and understanding • Refreshed logo and new name – Cotswolds National Landscape • New brand guidelines • Popular publications: Cotswold Lion magazine, visitor map and guide • Cotswold Lion magazine has strengthened its readership and continues to receive positive feedback • A well-established reputation • Grant funding opportunities offered by the Board for external projects – via Caring for the Cotswolds and Cotswolds Champions – and previously SDF and Cotswold LEADER (2015 – 2020) • Cotswold LEADER wrapped up in 2019 and 2020, with excellent outcomes and valuable relationships made across the AONB. It also extended our reach beyond the AONB, engaging new partners and demonstrating our interest in/ability to deliver across the social/economic agenda • Over 350 Cotswold Voluntary Wardens – 2018 was their 50th anniversary, and they complete over 45,000 hours of work across the AONB every year • Unique visitors to the Board’s websites continue to increase • Continuing popularity of self-guided walk downloads • Social media continues to grow since 2015, the Board has increased its following on Facebook, and launched an Instagram profile • Continuing relationship with Cotswold Life (monthly articles in magazine) • 2018-19 saw some excellent media coverage on BBC Radio Glos, BBC Online, BBC Points West for wardens, rural skills, accessibility, Cotswold Hare Trail, Glorious Cotswold Grasslands • 2016: AONB celebrated 50th anniversary of becoming a designated area, with successful engaging events and activities e.g. Cotswolds Living Landscape Festival and Cotswolds Inspired Art Exhibition reaching new audiences face-to-face and on social media platforms
Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No customer relationship management (CRM) solution makes joined up working across teams difficult • Low general level of understanding nationally and locally of AONB designation – what it is, what it means • AONB has low profile at some key visitor sites eg. Rollright Stones • Previous confusion over the Board and the AONB (and other sub brands such as Visitor Giving and Cotswold Choice) house style and brand being very similar - could lead to confusion • Challenging to engage with diverse audiences in surrounding urban areas • Low number of email addresses for farmers and landowners held on current database • Rural skills website not integrated into main website • Navigation of current website is difficult • Mobile version of current website needs significant improvement • Unsophisticated e-commerce, lack of staff resource, lack of budget for stock, lack of storage space all mean online shop is out of reach as an income possibility

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Image library needs revision and updating – especially in terms of copyright and image permissions • No recent audience / market surveys – so minimal quantitative audience data
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscapes Review 2019 offers several opportunities for Board to highlight the standard of work being undertaken • New name and updated logo offer opportunities to achieve better understanding of the landscape’s significance • Coronavirus brought new audiences to the countryside across the UK in 2020 • Focus on current work: celebrate and support successful Board-led /Board-involved projects • New Fundraising and Partnerships Officer role filled • Income generation – Cotswold Lion, Caring for the Cotswolds, formal funding applications • Comms officer should work side by side with all employees • Cost effective print • Ash Chalara / dieback – opportunity for audiences to understand the disease and participate in mitigating the results of it. Also helping understand ‘conserve and enhance’ • A part of the National Association for AONBs – increasing awareness nationally – joint working with National Parks • Continue to build and develop relationships with local authorities • Working better with Cotswolds Tourism • Better focus and more time on Caring for the Cotswolds for income generation to support community conservation and education projects across the AONB • The Board’s ELM test and trial workshops (posing question to farmers and land managers of how national and local priorities for the AONB – what do you need to deliver them?) could influence the design of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2024 ELM delivery in the AONB (and nationally) • Dark skies • Glorious Cotswold Grasslands
<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19. Pressure on budgets, pressure on local residents (during lockdown, handling visitors), pressure on tourism and hospitality industry. Delicate balance for AONB comms teams to encourage access to outdoor open spaces, and managing government guidance (stay home, potential for local lockdowns in future, the ‘new normal’) and the concerns of local residents – many of whom are/were at risk • Brexit • Potential funding cuts / flatlining of funding – at the same time as growing expectations for what can be achieved • Other organisations still sometimes working to different geographical boundaries e.g. ‘Gloucestershire Cotswolds’ and the ‘Oxfordshire Cotswolds’ – important to retain identity of the Cotswolds AONB and key messages in terms of protected landscape • Other environmental organisations chasing reduced funding resource, resulting in more competition • When seeking project funding, more consideration must be given to implementation and staff resource, as well as marketing and communications work for funded projects