

## **Cotswolds Conservation Board Business Plan 2018 – 2021**

### **1. The Cotswolds Conservation Board**

Established by Parliament in 2004 the Cotswolds Conservation 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. Developmental Objectives**

The Board's developmental priorities reflect the issues outcomes and policies in the AONB Management Plan<sup>1</sup>, and its operating context<sup>2</sup>. The Management Plan contains three ambitions for the Cotswolds AONB which are also the Board's headline developmental priorities.

- The Cotswolds being nationally recognised as the Exploring and Walking Capital of England
- The local delivery of a Cotswolds package of agri-environment and rural development support post Brexit
- Communities and businesses within and around the AONB identify and celebrate being part of a nationally recognised landscape.

**Conserving and Enhancing:** Protecting, investing in and enhancing the natural capital, and heritage of the Cotswolds.

- Continue developing a 25 year vision for the Cotswolds landscape, taking account of major drivers such as climate change and different relationships with the European Union, and identifying measures that help achieve that vision, addressing in particular the need for climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Influencing and guiding rural growth to ensure decisions positively improve the AONB's natural and built heritage.
- Delivering projects that invest in and enhance our natural capital;

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<sup>1</sup> See Annex 1

<sup>2</sup> See Annex 2

**Understanding and Enjoying:** Demonstrating and facilitating the public benefit of the natural capital, and heritage of the Cotswolds

- Promoting and delivering access.
- Develop, understand and raise awareness of the relationship between the AONB's natural and built environments
- Identifying, valuing and communicating the natural capital of the AONB
- Delivering a series of projects that help individuals realise the public benefits arising from our natural capital and make the very best use of the Cotswolds as a Natural Health Service
- Promoting a sustainable tourism approach in the AONB and making the Cotswolds the best landscape for the visitor to explore by public transport.

**Growing the Rural Economy Sustainably:** Celebrating, investing in and supporting the economic value of the Cotswolds whilst protecting its natural capital, and heritage

- Raising the AONB's economic profile and developing an economic plan for the AONB.
- Develop our understanding of the full range of benefits that the natural capital of the Cotswolds AONB provides to society and business.
- Taking an entrepreneurial and commercial approach to the Board's work and continue to diversify the Board's funding base.
- Finding new ways of resourcing sustainable development and environmental activities for the long term.

**Communications:** Delivering the objectives in the Board's 2017-20 Communications Strategy;

- 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;

### **3. Summary Work Programme 2018-2021**

This programme converts the policies of the AONB Management Plan into actions so it follows the same headings as the Management Plan. It has also been developed in the light of the above developmental objectives. Initials in brackets refer to the responsible committees which are listed at the end.

#### **Conserving and Enhancing**

##### **Landscape**

- 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 (C&M)
- Develop a new Landscape Partnerships proposal for the north / east part of the AONB (C&M) 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)

##### **Rural Land Management**

- Develop proposals for a post-Brexit agri-environment scheme that will achieve the best outcomes for the Cotswolds (C&M)
- Build the business value of land management by developing a Cotswolds Choice brand for landscape friendly local produce and products linked to a new agri-environment scheme (E)
- Encourage land management practices that protect the geological and archaeological heritage of the AONB (C&M)
- Raise awareness of sustainable land management through engaging with the farming and land managing community (C&M)

##### **Historic Environment**

- Work with Historic England to monitor and manage Scheduled Ancient Monuments (E&A)
- Develop a new Heritage Lottery Fund proposal based on the AONB's historic heritage. Initially investigate a project engaging people in a characteristic suite of archaeological sites. (C&M)

##### **Biodiversity**

- Find ways 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

- Influence strategic planning at all levels e.g. neighbourhood plans (L&W)
- Influence significant planning and transport proposals in line with the AONB management plan and associated documents (L&W)
- Investigate the inclusion of AONB branding on place name signs (L&W)
- Deliver the Cotswolds LEADER programme to create jobs, invest in business and support local initiatives (E)
- Deliver the Sustainable Development Fund to invest in local initiatives that support of the Board's purposes (G)
- Maintain an overview of all the grant giving programs delivered by the Board ensuring a joined up approach (G)

## Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services

- 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 and air quality, and in particular its dark skies (L&W)

## Understanding and Enjoying

### Tourism Access and Recreation

- 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)
- Publish and promote the Explore the Cotswolds by Public Transport guide and support the associated Cotswolds Discoverer bus/rail ticket scheme (E&A)
- Support the development of the Cotswolds Destination Management Organisation 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 younger people (E&A)
- Deliver a guided walks and events programme and broaden participation in these programmes (E&A)

### Health and Wellbeing

- Encourage and help evaluate prescription walks from GP surgeries (E&A)
- Develop a programme to broaden engagement, particularly from the urban communities surrounding the AONB (E&A)

## **Growing the Rural Economy Sustainably**

Strategic Economic Plan (to be developed encompassing the below)

- 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)
- As practicable support the social and economic viability of villages in the AONB (E)

## **Cross Cutting & Corporate Management**

- Monitor Section 85 of the Countryside & Rights of Way Act compliance (E)
- Publish a refreshed State of the Cotswolds report (E)
- Publish the 2018-2023 Management Plan in April 2018 and contribute towards its delivery (E)
- Seek to influence the work of others. (E) In particular, through strategic partnerships (including Local Nature Partnerships) and the publication of position statements (All)
- Deliver the Board's communications programme, including its websites and social media in accordance with the Board's 2017-20 Communications Strategy (E)
- Continue to strengthen our engagement with land owners and managers (E)
- Engage communities, partners, the academic sector and other stakeholders where additional development work is required and seek opportunities to collaborate in advancing research in accordance with the Board's research agenda<sup>3</sup>. (E)
- Diversify the Board's funding base (E)
- Maintain financial and operational governance and reporting processes (E)
- Continue considering proposals for the Cotswolds to become a National Park (E)

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 through which they receive delegated authority as outlined in the Board's constitution.

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

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<sup>3</sup> See Section 4

#### **4. 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 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 road verge arisings 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.

## 5. 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	139,473	132,635	132,635	132,635	397,905
Parish Council Contributions	0	0	0	0	0
DEFRA LEADER	67,500	66,000	66,000	66,000	198,000
Rental Area Income	8,681	8,362	8,362	8,362	25,086
Earned Income	107,525	119,411	115,284	115,284	349,979
Sponsorship and advertising	16,044	23,500	26,000	26,000	75,500
Grants	59,823	5,000	0	0	5,000
Transfers from Earmarked Reserves	13,920	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>920,627</b>	<b>870,143</b>	<b>871,221</b>	<b>871,221</b>	<b>2,612,585</b>

EXPENDITURE BY THEME	2017-18*	BUSINESS PLAN YEAR			TOTAL 2018-21
		2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	
<b>CONSERVING AND ENHANCING</b>					
Landscape	117,558	116,209	113,554	113,554	343,318
Rural Land Management	33,233	33,941	34,347	34,347	102,634
Historic Environment	17,653	17,513	16,846	16,846	51,205
Biodiversity	83,215	27,094	27,370	27,370	81,834
Development & Transport	164,080	162,838	162,210	162,210	487,258
Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services	24,398	25,567	25,777	25,777	77,122
Climate Change	23,748	24,969	24,997	24,997	74,962
<b>CONSERVING AND ENHANCING TOTAL</b>	<b>463,885</b>	<b>408,130</b>	<b>405,102</b>	<b>405,102</b>	<b>1,218,333</b>
<b>UNDERSTANDING &amp; ENJOYING</b>					
Tourism Access and Recreation	287,716	283,853	274,800	274,800	833,453
Health & Wellbeing	16,090	16,719	16,500	16,500	49,720
<b>UNDERSTANDING &amp; ENJOYING TOTAL</b>	<b>303,806</b>	<b>300,573</b>	<b>291,300</b>	<b>291,300</b>	<b>883,173</b>
Corporate Management	148,523	155,392	156,105	156,105	467,602
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>916,214</b>	<b>864,095</b>	<b>852,507</b>	<b>852,507</b>	<b>2,569,109</b>

<b>Board Budget Balance</b>	<b>4,413</b>	<b>6,048</b>	<b>18,714</b>	<b>18,714</b>	<b>43,476</b>
Discovery Centre café balance	39	5,398	9,506	12,458	27,362
Discovery Centre wider site balance	-9,320	-5,568	-4,980	-4,500	-15,048
<b>Total Discovery Centre balance</b>	<b>-9,281</b>	<b>-170</b>	<b>4,526</b>	<b>7,958</b>	<b>12,314</b>
<b>Combined Board &amp; DC balances</b>	<b>-4,868</b>	<b>5,878</b>	<b>23,240</b>	<b>26,672</b>	<b>55,790</b>

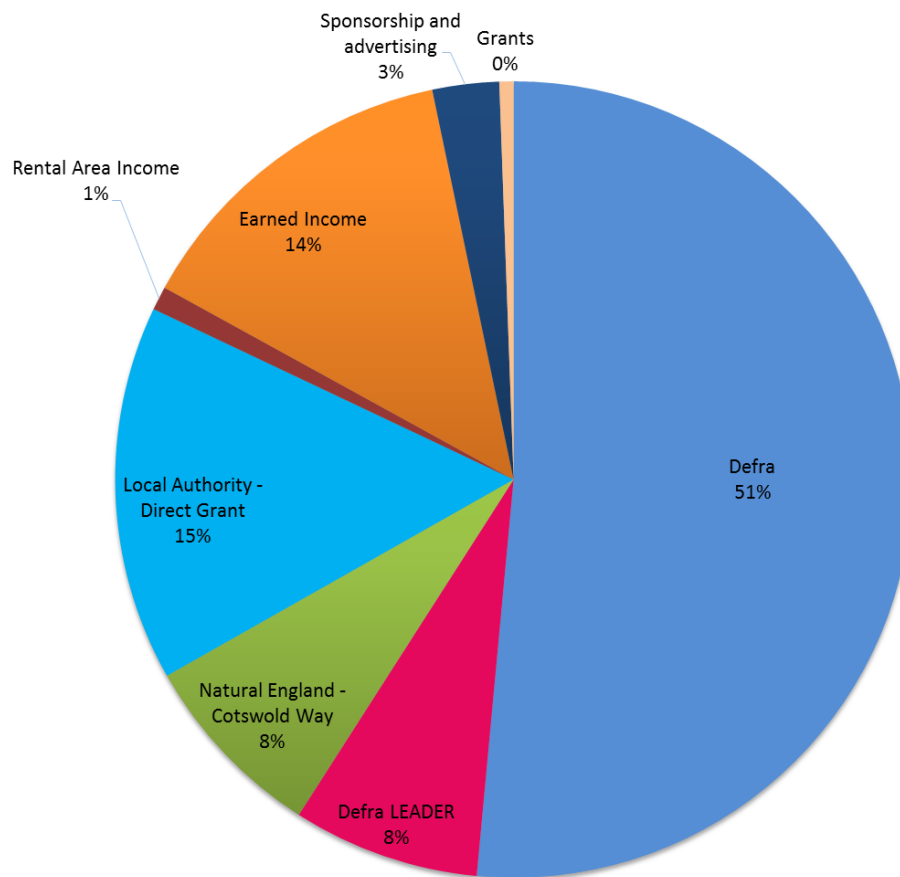
<b>General Fund remaining at year end</b>	<b>8,253</b>	<b>14,131</b>	<b>37,371</b>	<b>64,043</b>
Earmarked reserves remaining at year end	150,455	144,082	145,082	154,082
<b>Total Reserves remaining at year end**</b>	<b>158,708</b>	<b>158,213</b>	<b>182,453</b>	<b>218,125</b>
Discovery Centre Running Balance	-199,406	-199,576	-195,050	-187,092
<b>Reserves at year + funds to be recouped from Discovery Centre</b>	<b>358,114</b>	<b>357,789</b>	<b>377,503</b>	<b>405,217</b>

\* Based on revised forecast of the Q2 report - October 2017

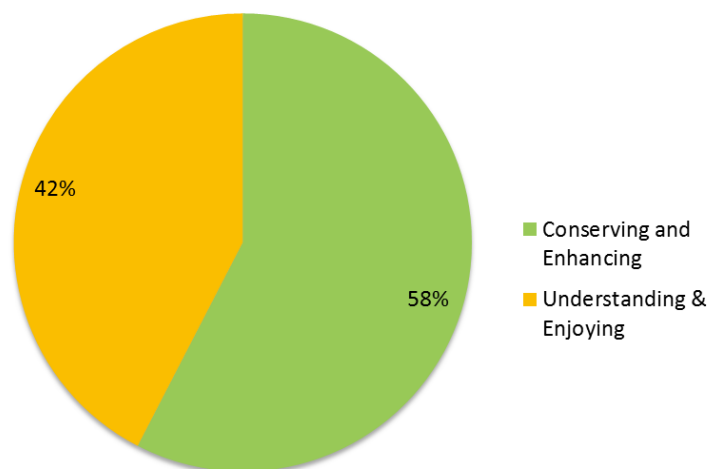
\*\* Must remain above £150,000 to comply with reserves policy

## 6. Budget Analysis 2018-2019

### Budgeted Income 2018/19

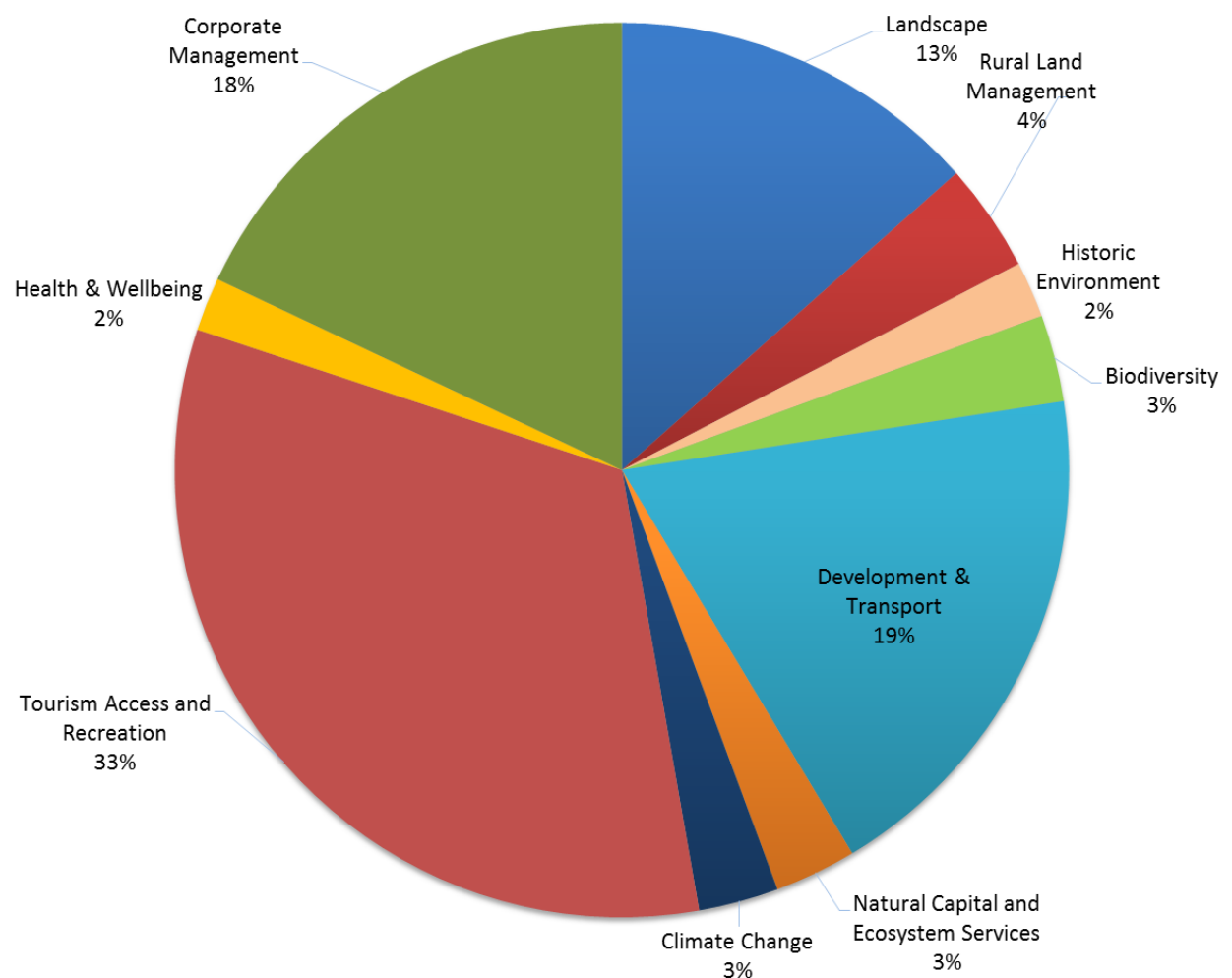


### Budgeted Expenditure by Statutory Purpose 2018/19





## 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 RPA. 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 50<sup>th</sup> 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 160,000 people. It includes parts of 15 local authority areas and 283 town and parish councils.

### **Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023**

The Board formally adopted a statutory Cotswolds AONB Management Plan in March 2018. It 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.

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 and strategies such as the Cotswolds Climate Change Strategy. 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 CROW 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
<b>Vision and Outcomes</b> describing the desirable character and condition of the AONB	<b>Communications Strategy 2017-20</b> (separate document with targets included in the Work Programme)		
<b>Issues</b> effecting the AONB and <b>Policies</b> to guide decisions and actions in order to address these issues.	<b>Developmental Objectives</b> Concise description of what the Board intends to achieve		
	<b>Summary Work Programme</b> What we will do – a concise description of the Board's actions summarised under the Management Plan's headings	<b>Detailed Work Programme</b> Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic and Timed targets and milestones for the Board's actions over 3 years	<b>Work Programme Reporting</b> Progress reviewed quarterly against the first year's SMART targets and milestones. Highlights and variances reported to the Executive Committee.
	<b>Summary Budget</b> Income and expenditure over 3 years. Expenditure summarised under the Management Plan's headings	<b>Detailed Budget</b> Income and expenditure over 3 years for all budget codes	<b>Budget Reporting</b> First year's income and expenditure broken down into quarters and performance with Variances over £1,000 reported 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. Target the Board's grants such as the Sustainable Development Fund to other organisations focusing on the achievement of the Board's programmes.
5. 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.
6. Sustain a core public sector grant and seek greater delegation with associated income from the Defra family (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.
7. 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.
8. 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).
9. Raise greater awareness of the fact that the Cotswolds AONB landscape is of the same quality and importance to that of the National Parks.
10. Advocate for a new national Protected Landscapes lottery good cause and a single Protected Landscape Association

In doing so our geography will be the Cotswolds AONB, but we will remain alive to the fact that the Board's structures could enable it to extend its geography and support the management of other special landscapes. Our purposes and remit will be that of a Conservation Board and we will be stronger advocates of the Conservation Board management and governance structure option.

## **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.*<sup>4</sup>

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 two 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 25 Year Environment Plan due for publication in January 2018.

### **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.

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<sup>4</sup> Definition from the UK Natural Capital Committee