

Thu 25/05/2023 10:01

Dear Colleagues,


Financial Update

We don't need the release of the of latest inflation figures to confirm that rising costs remain a concern for all of us both at home and at work. So, this is a good opportunity to bring all of you up to date with the financial situation of the charity. Firstly, it's important to emphasise that our overall position remains strong. This is in part due to a strong performance last year and the decision to pay off the government Covid loan early.

It is the immediate situation with our current in-year surplus that is more challenging. Food and fuel costs in particular have increased dramatically. We also made a decision to increase wages to help recruit and retain staff, but this has increased our cost base.

The cost of living 'crisis' is impacting our customers too. Despite huge efforts, it has been really hard to secure new business. At the same time our rebooking rate has dropped from its usual very high percentage as our customers are forced to tighten their belts. Trading conditions are therefore tough and we are assuming will remain so well into 2024.

As you would expect, lots of work has been done to re-forecast the budget and close the gap between our expenditure and income to deliver the required surplus. We plan to plug that gap by continuing to manage budgets carefully across the whole organisation, pausing the recruitment of some unfilled posts, cutting back on some spends and reducing non-essential travel. We will at the same time continue to explore all options to maximise income but we certainly don't want to start cutting corners on those things that directly impact on a positive customer experience. The aim is to re-balance our expenditure and costs without being reliant on one off property sales or bequests, however generous.

When we set out the  [10 year plan](#) last year, we emphasised that we will not be able to do everything we wanted to at once and that the constraints on the charity would mean that we would have to move forward using a variety of stepping stones, constantly reviewing progress along the way and adapting as we go. The first goal in the ten year plan is to have a ***'resilient and robust financial operating model that will enable the generation of cash reserves sufficient to sustain regular investment...'*** It is from this first goal that everything else flows. We expect the next couple of years to remain tough on the trading front, but to reiterate, our overall position remains strong. Thank you for all your continued hard work during these challenging times.


In the Media

Education Today ran a [two-page feature](#) on the 80th anniversary and an interview with Education Manager Scott Wycherley. Education Business also [re-ran a feature](#) on making field trips affordable. The Chelsea Flower Show's focus on wildlife friendly gardens has given Philip the opportunity to talk about our fold out charts on Radio Shropshire which we expect to go out today or tomorrow.

Subsidised Courses for 18- 25 year olds

Thanks to funding from the National Lottery, we are able to offer [subsidies on over 100 Field Studies Council courses](#). There's £25 off online courses and £50 off in person courses across the UK, but it's first come, first served so do tip off anyone you know who may benefit.

Carbon Data Presentation

Sustainability Manager Sam Thurston has been touring centres to engage staff with our carbon management plans and yesterday hosted a zoom. In case you've missed it or wanted to refresh your memory as to how and what we measure, Sam has uploaded his presentation onto the staff intranet. It's in the  [Energy and Carbon Management folder](#).

Mark