

Outdoor Education

Future Income Generating Ideas 2019 – 2024

1. Scene Setting:

Gwent Outdoor Education Service (GOES) has existed since the early 1970's with a remit to provide outdoor education i.e. 'fully engage students and teachers in a lesson, all the while embracing the outdoors'. This is an important definition to consider as there is a distinct difference between outdoor education and the provision of outdoor activities, as provided by many private sector companies such as PGL and is clearly the USP for the service.

The Council operate and manage GOES via a Shared Service Agreement on behalf of the partner authorities i.e. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Newport City Council and Torfaen County Borough Council and currently operates across three residential centres at Hilston Park near Monmouth, Gilwern (both of which are owned by the Council) and Talybont owned by Newport CC.

The service currently provides around 20,000 visitor days annually, the vast majority being residential school groups from South East Wales. Around 90% of clients are regular, repeat users and the service also works with adult and youth groups from all over the UK. All groups are provided with bespoke programmes designed to achieve their specific desired outcome including confidence building, self-reliance, team development, enjoyment, activity skills, risk management and environmental awareness.

A review was commissioned in June 2015 as the first stage of a process to determine the future direction of GOES. Initial findings identified a long established service benefiting from subsidies derived from an agreement between partner authorities to reduce the cost of residential trips for low income families. The subsidy is therefore not a reflection that GOES is operationally inefficient therefore requiring subsidy, far from it. GOES has been generating small surpluses for a number of years, has modest reserves and a very loyal and established customer base. However, with the withdrawal of funding subsidies over recent years, the Gwent Outdoor Education Service partnership as it currently stands is no longer viable.

The service is currently offering residential accommodation for outdoor education activities from an established estate and therefore is the custodian of considerable asset base owned by Monmouthshire County Council i.e. Hilston Park and Gilwern sites. However, the initial review did not take the capital value of this asset base into account and was purely focussed as an operational review and options appraisal.

A comparative analysis of the three sites was undertaken along with an internal analysis of the current service and an external market analysis of private sector outdoor activity providers, their closest competitors. Initial findings identified a service that, although functioning adequately, has the potential for improvement. Conclusions were drawn and recommendations made regarding enhanced service delivery and operational management with a view to reducing costs; maximising income; targeting marketing activities to increase the current customer base and amending booking policies, pricing and opening periods in line with private sector models to offer flexibility, increase income and improve customer service. Suggestions have also been made regarding the growth potential for GOES and development opportunities for each site which range from consolidating

accommodation bases; investing in increased accommodation and facilities to increase income potential; and identifying private sector partners for joint leisure ventures.

As a follow on from the initial appraisal of GOES the following four priorities or focuses have been identified which are detailed below. This is the first wave of priorities and it is anticipated that further proposals for the service redesign and subsequently a potential restructure will be considered as part of the business plan that it is being developed for the proposed Alternative Delivery Model for TLCY i.e. MonLife.

Potential Income Generating Ideas

Options	Revenue Streams				
	Year 1 2019/20	Year 2 2020/21	Year 3 2021/22	Year 4 2022/23	Year 5 2023/24
Other traded activity with the public	-8,000	-10,500	-12,000	-16,000	-20,300
Creation of Camp site with camping pods at Hilston	-7,000	-26,000	-35,000	-35,000	-35,640
Activity With Schools	-4,700	-32,800	-35,000	-34,125	-34,548
Duke Of Edinburgh Award	-4,300	-6,600	-7,400	-7,500	-11,850
Hilston Lodge redevelopment	-14,000	-14,385	-14,814	-14,267	-15,111
International house redevelopment	0	-2,700	-2,700	-2,575	-2,698
Total	-38,000	-92,985	-106,914	-109,467	-120,146

The service will deliver a presentation around other markets and opportunities to develop including team ideas that came from the recent workshop such as

- Outreach work
- Weekend opportunities for community and business
- Training and team building
- Latest trends in the Outdoor Activity Market