

**Date: 27 May 2008**

**Report: DALES COUNTRYSIDE MUSEUM UPDATE**

**Purpose of the report**

1. To update members on progress from the member officer working group looking at improvements at the Dales Countryside Museum (DCM) site.

**Strategic Planning Framework**

2. The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework:

**Corporate Plan objectives**

Provide accessible, high-quality National Park Centre and museum services that positively influence people's enjoyment and understanding of the special qualities of the Yorkshire Dales National Park so that the four National Park Centres have an average effectiveness rating of at least 70% each year.

Use publications, events and other opportunities to encourage businesses, residents and visitors to buy and source local food and products that support national park purposes (EE9).

**Background**

3. A member officer working group has been looking at ways in which to improve facilities at DCM in order to achieve these Corporate Plan objectives.

**Current Position**

4. To meet our objectives it is important to ensure DCM remains competitive as a museum attraction and to fulfil visitor expectations. It is also necessary to maintain, and hopefully expand, the number and range of visitors who we have an opportunity to interact with and promote understanding to.

5. Based on a range of visitor surveys and research, the group believes that a café may be a significant factor in achieving this. There are now very few museums which do not have cafés and visitors repeatedly request café facilities at the DCM site.

6. To complement the Hay Time festival exhibition running at DCM this summer, the group is investigating the possibility of setting up a low key facility to sell "hay time picnics". Local products would be sourced to make up the picnics which customers could eat on or off site. It is envisaged that this facility would be a low-key mainly outdoor arrangement to 'test the market' with minimal outlay.

7. There would be opportunities to publicise the local nature of the picnic and make the links between food and the landscape around us. This is especially appropriate given this is the year of Food and Farming and the theme for National Parks week (28 July – 3 August) this year is 'Your Countryside on a Plate'. It also links into 'Bringing in the Drinkins' events taking place in Swaledale and Wharfedale in July which are to celebrate traditional food on a harvest theme.

8. Data gathered would be used to inform the member officer working group when bringing further recommendations to the Authority.

9. Planning approval is required for this initiative and in order to progress it, officers have made an appropriate application which will be considered by the Planning Committee in due course. Due to the timings involved, the Chief Executive has authorised this action under delegated authority.

## **Conclusion**

10. The member officer working group will continue to progress this area of work and provide updates as necessary.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

11. That members note the report.

**Annie Galloway**  
**Head of External Affairs**

7 May 2008

Background documents:  
none