

Committee: FINANCE AND RESOURCES

Date: 8 February 2008

Report: YORKSHIRE DALES APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME

### Purpose of the report

1. To provide feedback to Members on the progress made with the £10k additional funding allocated to the Yorkshire Dales Apprenticeship Scheme from the Opportunities Fund.

### Strategic Planning Framework

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

- **National Park Management Plan objectives**

EE5. Support local training in countryside skills, traditional construction, environmental conservation and sustainable land management and the development, by 2011, of a local centre providing such training opportunities.

- **Best Value Performance Plan objectives**

Provide three placement opportunities within the Ranger Service and work with the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust to secure funding to continue and expand the Dales apprenticeship Scheme.

### Background

3. The Dales Apprenticeship Scheme (DAS) was developed by the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (YDMT) in conjunction with Craven College, Tyro Training and the Learning & Skills Council and other interested parties including the Authority, to offer opportunities for training and work-experience placements; it is linked to the Government's Modern Apprenticeships scheme.

4. Between 2003 and 2007 the Authority provided seven placement opportunities for young people aged between 16 and 24, five of which are in current countryside-related employment. Five other placements have been provided by other partners, these being English Nature, The National Trust, The Bolton Abbey Estate, The Field Studies Council and NYCC/Nidderdale AONB (shared).

5. In the past, Apprentices have been offered a work experience placement, working alongside skilled practitioners, of up to 18 months, (running in conjunction with formal classroom opportunities). This has allowed candidates to put training into practice, and gain valuable knowledge, experience and more importantly life skills, all whilst also undertaking an NVQ Level II in Landscape and Ecosystems (administered by Tyro Training and Craven College). Specifically, placements have been provided within the Area Ranger teams, with each individual assigned an Area Ranger as mentor; individuals receive a training allowance equating to the minimum wage whilst participating in the scheme.

6. In early 2006, YDMT submitted a request to the European Social Fund (ESF) for grant-funding for a new round of the scheme, to support a further five placements. Confirmation of funding was received late, in October 2006. This caused a significant delay in commencing the scheme, which originally had an intended launch date of July 2006, a start date which allowed for the maximum 18 month placement opportunity to be completed by December 2007, when the proposed ESF funding was scheduled to end.

7. Whilst funding was secured for an 18 month period for each of the five placements, no carry over of funding was permitted beyond December 2007. Due to difficulties experienced in recruitment we were only able to start two placements in December 2006, with the remaining three placements starting in April 2007.

8. The agreement to allocate £10k from the Opportunities Fund has enabled the scheme to continue into 2008, so making up for some of the time lost in relation to delays in funding, particularly in terms of allowing participants to gain more experience and to finish their National Vocational Qualifications.

9. Unfortunately one of the Apprentices left the scheme at the end of December after 12 months. However, with this one placement finishing and with the allocation of the additional funding this has enabled us to extend the remaining three placements. One of the remaining Apprentices has had their term extended to the end of March making, a 15 month placement, and the remaining two Apprentices will stay on until the end of May making, to give two 12 month placements. Two participants are currently based with the Authority Ranger Services at Stainforth and Hawes, and the third placement with the National Trust at Malham Tarn; all are on course to gain their NVQ, which is one of the main objectives of the Apprenticeship.

## **Conclusion**

10. Whilst experiencing funding delays, the scheme has once again been a significant success. However, funding is becoming more difficult to attract and with proposed changes in the Government's approach to Apprenticeships the current scheme is facing a potentially difficult stage. Officers from the Authority are continuing to work with the YDMT, whose trustees are keen to continue with training opportunities such as Apprenticeships. Officers are also exploring what other opportunities the Authority could provide in the future.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

11. That Members note the report.

**Alan Hulme**  
**Ranger Services Manager**

22 January 2008