

Date: 25 March 2008

Report: TURNTABLE PROJECT OUTCOME

Purpose of the report

1. To update members on the final outcome from the externally funded Turntable Project, bring the project to an end and outline next steps to facilitate improvements at Dales Countryside Museum (DCM) in line with the Authority's objectives.

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:

- **Best Value Performance Plan**

Provide accessible high quality communications and services that positively influence people's enjoyment and understanding if the special qualities of the YDNP so that

- 85% of users are satisfied with the Authority's 'Promoting Understanding' services
- The four NPC have an average effectiveness rating of 90% by 2008
- at least 50% of visitors and 70% of residents have an understanding of National Park purposes and/or the special qualities of the Yorkshire Dales by 2010.

Background

3. In May 2005, Yorkshire Culture invited individuals from a number of organizations, including the Authority, to a meeting to discuss social enterprises. A social enterprise is a business, primarily with social objectives, whose surpluses are principally re-invested in those social objectives or in the community; rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners.
4. Organisations attending the meeting were invited to bid to take part in a pilot project. The Authority put in a bid for funding to help identify ways of increasing revenue and improving facilities at DCM. The bid was successful and we were chosen to participate in the project.
5. The main 'outputs' from the Turntable Project were agreed as; increasing the skill sets of officers and the production of proposals which would form the 'business case' for further action. Following consideration of the latter the Authority would then to decide which proposals, if any, to take forward to detailed business planning.

6. Following considerable delays with the Turntable Project, we were told we would receive the final proposals, which would contain the case for enhancing retail services and providing a café facility at DCM, by the end of January 2008.

Current Position

7. In late December 2007, we received the Turntable Project draft proposals for 'Retail' and 'Improving the facilities at DCM', specifically developing a café. Two weeks later, officers sent back detailed comments and corrections on the proposals. Despite numerous telephone calls and extensive email contact we have still not received the final proposals.
8. We have made Yorkshire Culture aware of the situation and at the time of writing we are awaiting their response. *This will be tabled at the meeting if it has been received.*

Retail Services

9. In July 2007, given the delays with the Turntable Project, a member/officer working group was set up to consider the best way to take forward retail services. This group met and developed five strategic principles for retail which are now incorporated into the External Funding Strategy approved by the Authority at its meeting in November 2007.
10. The Turntable Project draft business case for retail was reported to the member/officer working group and has been considered as part of the business planning process. The draft business case provided an external viewpoint for the group to consider alongside other information.
11. A business plan for retail has now been developed and is being considered as a separate item at this meeting.

Improving the DCM site

12. Due to the nature of the Turntable Project which involves a number of inter-related aspects, and the same group of officers, the members of the retail working group have also been informally assisting with ideas for the future of DCM. This has proved extremely beneficial.
13. DCM showcases the Authority's collection, highlights its cultural heritage activities and communicates key messages. It is increasingly a venue for educational groups and outreach work, and is an attraction for visitors to the National Park. Research shows that the Authority needs to provide up-to-date facilities which meet current and potential visitor expectations in order to maintain interest and achieve targets for visitor numbers and income.
14. In order to keep DCM fresh, viable and an attraction for visitors, collections need to be interpreted to link with current issues. The vibrant programme of temporary exhibitions needs to be maintained and local history information and historic artefacts need to be accessible. Customer surveys repeatedly indicate that a café is expected at a venue such as this. Indeed a café is now commonplace in most museums, art galleries and visitor attractions. A café development would be: a means of attracting first time visitors; a space within which people would feel comfortable, and provide the potential

to communicate messages. A more vibrant site would potentially attract more people to the area and enhance the tourist offer within Upper Wensleydale.

15. Unfortunately, the lack of a detailed final business case from the Turntable Project means that we have no concrete input from external professionals in the catering industry on which to develop ideas or proposals.
16. Consequently it is suggested that the way forward would be for the member/officer working group to formally take on the remit for the DCM site and to bring a paper to the Authority with proposals for improvements to the DCM site in due course.

Conclusion

17. While the Authority did extremely well in being selected to take part in the Turntable Project and officers benefited from the development of skills during the early work with the first consultant, the second externally funded part of the project has not delivered the expected results. This has been disappointing to say the least, and has resulted in lost time.
18. The member/officer working group is delivering results and is now considered the best method to achieve the improvements the Authority needs in both retail and at DCM.

RECOMMENDATION

19. That the outcome of the Turntable Project is noted.
20. That the member/officer working group (made up of the following members - Carl Lis, William Weston, Steve Macaré and John Blackie) develop proposals for DCM and bring a paper back to the Authority for further consideration.

Annie Galloway
Head of External Affairs

4 March 2007

Background documents: