

## **SCRUTINY INQUIRY REPORT ON OUTDOOR EDUCATION: RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN**

The Director of Children's services welcomes the report of the scrutiny inquiry into outdoor education centres in, or supported by, Leeds. The inquiry has been helpful in shaping approaches to commissioning such provision in Leeds, giving us a sharper focus on the benefits of visits to such centres and identifying opportunities to link this work with our wider priorities.

**Recommendation 1 : That the DCS considers extending the role of the Business Support Adviser (BSA) to include Herd Farm and possibly also Lineham Farm, and reports back to us in 3 months.**

This has been considered and a business support adviser has been allocated to Herd Farm. They will work with the centre manager and locality senior youth officer to increase efficiency and consider further marketing and income opportunities.

**Recommendation 2: That the DCS explores the scope for children's social care to make more effective use of Silverdale Holiday Camp, and reports back to us in 3 months.**

We recognise the value of the facilities at Silverdale and the potential opportunities it may offer. Officers are exploring the necessary background information to inform this opportunity and will arrange to discuss this further with Silverdale once this work has been completed.

It will be important to ensure that in making any decisions about the use of Silverdale we are sensitive to the particular needs and circumstance of the very vulnerable children we are looking to support and make decisions on a case-by-case basis.

We will report back on best use in 3 months

**Recommendation 3: That the Director of Children's Services considers future governance options for Herd Farm's long term sustainability, including the establishment of a 'Friends' organisation or exploring a Trust option and reports back to us in 3 months on any avenues to be pursued in more depth.**

An appropriate working party of officers is carrying out an options appraisal to take this issue forward. The Business Support Adviser referred to in recommendation one is supporting this process.

We will be looking to ensure that any future governance arrangements incorporate a role for young people to help shape the future delivery of the service.

Whilst our initial reaction is that a 'Friends' of Herd Farm' model may be more feasible, we will explore the different options fully to reach a view and report back as requested.

**Recommendation 4: That the DCS explores the potential to use students on a similar basis to Nell Bank in order to reduce costs and reports back to us in 3 months on a decision whether or not to proceed**

We recognise the potentially significant value of using student volunteers to support the work of outdoor education centres. Before taking this approach forward however, we believe it is necessary firstly to complete the restructuring of staff and secondly to be clear about what role students could and should play with different cohorts of children and young people. These measures are necessary to ensure that students have the correct support, supervision and training to ensure that they and the young people they are working with are safe.

We will report back as these discussions progress. We believe that a six month timescale is more realistic in terms of taking this forward effectively.

**Recommendation 5: That the DCS ensures that the links established with Nell Bank are maintained to maximise joint benefits for the centres**

We are happy to support this and are contacting Nell Bank to take discussions and appropriate partnerships forward.

**Recommendation 6: That the DCS ensures that all schools are reminded of the value of outdoor education activities for pupils and of the value for money offered by Lineham farm, Herd Farm and Silverdale.**

We are working to identify opportunities to promote the outdoor education centres to schools through existing and developing marketing opportunities. In particular we will explore using the new Leeds 'prospectus' website, which we are promoting with all schools, to highlight the centres. The DCS will be mindful of highlighting the work of the centres in his ongoing discussions with schools.

Herd Farm and Lineham Farm themselves have recently updated their websites and other promotional materials.

**Recommendation 7: That the DCS and the Trustees of Lineham Farm explore opportunities for greater co-cooperation between Herd Farm and Lineham Farm with the aim of securing the long term sustainability of both centres in the current economic climate.**

**That the DCS and Lineham Farm Trustees be asked to confirm their commitment to this recommendation and that the DCS reports back to us regularly on progress**

The DCS is happy to confirm a commitment to supporting this ongoing approach, which will build on the good progress made over a number of months. Opportunities for closer working are an ongoing focus of work and will be developed over an appropriate timescale by a working group of senior officers, working with the trustees. This is an important area of development for us and we will be happy to keep scrutiny informed of progress.