

<b>COMMITTEE:</b>	<b>CABINET</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>MONDAY 1<sup>ST</sup> JULY 2002</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>BEACHY HEAD COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF TOURISM &amp; LEISURE</b>
<b>Ward(s):</b>	Meads, Old Town and Ratton
<b>Purpose:</b>	To inform members of management action following Council meeting on 24 <sup>th</sup> April 2002
<b>Contact:</b>	Ron Cussons, Director of Tourism & Leisure  Telephone 01323 415401 or internally on extension 5401
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<b>Members note the procedures put in place for the temporary lease to Brewers Fayre and administration of the Countryside Centre</b>

<b>1.0</b>	<b><u>INTRODUCTION</u></b>
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1.1	<p>Head of Tourism Development reviewed the Countryside Centre operation in November 2000. The conclusion was that the Centre could not continue to run on the original basis owing to the lack of income. A suggestion was made for either a reduction in income target or an increased expenditure budget. Charging for admission was not viewed as feasible. Gift shop sales were affected greatly by fluctuations in weather; the annual downturn in average spend per visitor was 15%.</p>
1.2	<p>Cabinet meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2002 agreed budget cuts which included closing the Countryside Centre. Budget Council meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2002 approved recommendations made by Cabinet.</p>
1.3	<p>Council meeting on 24 April 2002 agreed motion to re-open the Countryside Centre pending consultation with organisations, groups and individuals who would have an interest in the Centre.</p>
2.0	<p><b><u>BACKGROUND</u></b></p>
2.1	<p>The Director of Tourism &amp; Leisure wrote to various organisations in March 2002 to invite expression of interest to manage or help fund the Centre. This resulted in long discussions &amp; negotiations with a major national organisation who were very keen to become involved.</p> <p>During April 2002 and through to 14 May 2002, much optimism on a successful new operator was pinned on these discussions. Unfortunately, as a result of extensive cutbacks within the organisation owing to loss of income during 2001-2002 from foot &amp; mouth crisis and 11 September repercussions, the organisation have been unable to take up responsibility of the Centre as desired immediately. There remains an opportunity for the organisation to take over in 2003.</p>

<p><b>2.2</b></p>	<p><b><u>OPTION IMPLEMENTED</u></b></p> <p>Whitbread's/Brewers Fair, operators of the Beachy Head pub, having expressed interest and concern at the Council's endeavours to find a new operator for the Centre were approached on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2002 to take over the running of the Centre as a temporary solution. This would allow time for further negotiations for hand-over in 2003 and allow opening of the centre from 1<sup>st</sup> June to end of September 2002. A licence has been drawn up to cover the period, a proportion of operating costs will be charged to Whitbread's and existing stock will be retained on a sale or return basis. This is an excellent short-term solution with no cost to the Council. Public service will be maintained with 7 day a week service 10am to 5pm.</p>
<p><b>3.0</b></p>	<p><b><u>CONSULTATIONS</u></b></p> <p>Correspondence and discussion has taken place with many Downland Groups, National Trust and Brewers Fayre.</p>
<p><b>4.0</b></p>	<p><b><u>IMPLICATIONS</u></b></p>
<p><b>4.1</b></p>	<p><b><u>HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</u></b></p> <p>Brewers Fayre have undertaken staffing responsibilities and costs.</p>

4.2	<p><b><u>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</u></b></p> <p>The centre will be opened and operated at no cost to the Council, other than professional help and guidance from the Visitor Services Manager and Officers within the Downland, Trees and Woodland section. However, the 2002/03 budget includes a target of £15,000 rental income from the centre, which will not be achieved from this proposal. This will be addressed in the report scheduled for Cabinet on 1<sup>st</sup> August on the Council's overall budget position.</p>
5.0	<p><b><u>SUMMARY</u></b></p> <p>Members are asked to support actions taken in re-opening the Countryside Centre.</p>
<p><b>RON CUSSONS</b></p> <p><b>DIRECTOR OF TOURISM &amp; LEISURE</b></p>	
<p><b>Background papers used in compiling this report were as follows:</b></p> <p><b>Correspondence to Downland Groups for support</b></p> <p><b>Cabinet meeting - 6<sup>th</sup> February 2002</b></p> <p><b>Budget Council meeting - 27<sup>th</sup> February 2002</b></p> <p><b>Council meeting - 24<sup>th</sup> April 2002</b></p> <p><b>National Trust - 21<sup>st</sup> May 2002</b></p> <p><b>To inspect or obtain copies of background papers please refer to the contact officer listed above.</b></p>	