



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**21 May 2008**

### **JOINT TICKETING SCHEME FOR EASTGATE RENEWABLE ENERGY VILLAGE TO BOOST TOURISM ACROSS WEARDALE**

The project team behind Eastgate Renewable Energy Village is looking into a 'joint ticketing' scheme to link the proposed new development with Weardale's existing tourist attractions.

The scheme would boost both visitor numbers and income for the region's tourism industry and has the backing of Tom Mercer, and co-op member of the Harehope Quarry Project.

Based in a redundant limestone quarry on the edge of the village of Frosterley, Harehope Quarry offers facilities for environmental education, field studies, rural skills training, community development, and community arts projects, and presents a unique setting for study, relaxing, meetings, volunteering opportunities and community events.

It would be just one of the existing attractions that it is hoped would be included in the joint ticketing scheme, and Tom believes that increasing the resources available to local attractions would quickly provide a range of tangible benefits.

Tom Mercer says: "We run a full programme of community events every year and hosted visits from more than 30 schools in 2007. But, like many of the other attractions in the area, if we had additional resources in terms of marketing and personnel, we would be able to do much more and reach out to more people.

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“A joint ticketing scheme like this might lead to greater promotional budgets, offer a central information point for education, and help structure days in the Dale which cover a variety of locations. And all of these ideas would be sure to enhance the numbers of people that visit both individual attractions and across the wider Weardale area.”

The proposed Eastgate Renewable Energy Village will provide much-needed business accommodation in the area, creating sustainable jobs for local people, but will also attract new visitors into the Dale through features including a geo-thermally heated public hot springs spa and extensive mountain bike trails. Other planned attractions include a hotel, education facilities, rare breeds visitor centre and a range of leisure activities.

Bob Hope, Director of Environment and Regeneration at Wear Valley District Council says: “We want to use Eastgate Renewable Energy Village as a catalyst for economic development across Weardale, which includes facilitating tangible benefits for all parts of our tourism sector.

“Creating formal links between Eastgate and Weardale’s existing range of high-quality tourist attractions will help to demonstrate the wider offering that the Dale has for tourists. This will encourage visitors to spend longer with us and increase the income that local people derive from their visits.

“We are already in discussions with a number of Weardale’s tourist attractions about how a joint ticketing initiative might work, and are encouraged by the positive response and innovative ideas generated so far.”

An outline planning application for the proposed Eastgate Renewable Energy Village in Weardale has now been submitted to Wear Valley District Council and is on display in Crook Civic Centre, Durham Dales Centre and Wolsingham Library.

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In addition, information boards and posters showing plans contained in the application will be visible at a number of locations throughout the Dale and at the Weardale Hub in Stanhope, and the plans are also available to view online at [www.weardale-works.co.uk](http://www.weardale-works.co.uk)

Unique in this country, Eastgate will be the only Renewable Energy Village to feature all five forms of land-based renewable energy available in the UK – hydro, solar, wind, biomass and geothermal. It will generate sufficient ‘clean’ electricity to offset the energy consumption of the whole of Weardale.

It will create an estimated 150 jobs from business investment, a further 200 jobs in the visitor and hospitality sector. A wealth of other opportunities are anticipated in the surrounding area as a result of the new economic activity at Eastgate.

The Renewable Energy Village will encompass a mix of homes, office and workshop accommodation, a hotel and a public geothermally heated spa – only the second in the UK. The entire site, including the actual Renewable Energy Village, Riverside Meadows, The Slopes (hillside) and The Tops (quarry areas) will cover a vast area, greater than 800 football pitches, and incorporate visitor attractions and fish-farming.

For a range of information on the project, go to [www.weardale-works.com](http://www.weardale-works.com), call 01388 761571 or email [regeneration@wearvalley.gov.uk](mailto:regeneration@wearvalley.gov.uk).

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### **About Eastgate Renewable Energy Village:**

Eastgate Renewable Energy Village is a regeneration project on the site of the former Lafarge Blue Circle cement works for the benefit of people of Weardale. It will maximise the potential of the site to provide an eco-friendly living, working and learning environment and visitor attraction.

It will demonstrate best practice in sustainability by utilising all five forms of land-based renewable energy available in the UK, which are wind, solar, hydro, biomass and geothermal – a unique concept in this country.

The project will enhance the lives and prosperity of the existing population of the Dale by creating sustainable jobs, homes and recreational facilities for local people within a development that is at the forefront of eco-friendly living. It will also provide opportunities for links with other businesses and leisure facilities in the Dale.

The new eco-village will provide one of only two public hot springs in the UK utilising geothermal hot water, and a centre for education for residents and visitors to learn about renewable energy, sustainable living, life in the Dale and the surrounding North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The outline planning application was submitted in late March 2008, with planning permission hoped for later this year.

### **About Weardale Task Force:**

Weardale Task Force is the body responsible for overseeing the formulation of a master plan for the proposed Renewable Energy Village and is made up of members from One NorthEast, Wear Valley District Council, Durham County Council and Lafarge Cement UK.

Local residents are requested to contact the Task Force with any queries or concerns on:

(01388) 761571

[economic.regeneration@wearvalley.co.uk](mailto:economic.regeneration@wearvalley.co.uk)