

Presentation to Bath & North East Somerset Council **Core Strategy debate March 4, 2013**

By Mark Owen, Managing Director, HorseWorld

Thank you Chair and Councillors for allowing me to speak.

I'm Mark Owen, managing director of Whitchurch-based charity HorseWorld.

You may recall I spoke at last November's Full Council meeting on our proposals to build a new visitor centre.

Before you debate the Core Strategy this evening, I want to briefly explain how critical this document could be to our survival.

You may recall we face a financial crisis resulting from plummeting donations and rapidly growing demand for our help. We've worked diligently to solve this crisis. And we can solve it...by getting *more* visitors, spending *more* money.

But our existing centre – with its assortment of old buildings - is simply too old and too small. Our plan is to build a wonderful new visitor centre designed by award-winning Bath architects.

To fund it, we need planning permission for an 'enabling' development of houses on the Green Belt fringe of Whitchurch. Part of the site already has buildings on it.

The draft Core Strategy proposes *some* development in Whitchurch's Green Belt...enough – should we get planning permission - to secure our future.

How would saving HorseWorld help the B&NES community? It would:

- Save 62 local jobs
- Protect 140 local volunteer positions
- Keep our annual £1.7million expenditure...which goes mainly to staff and local suppliers

HorseWorld – the leading UK Horse rescue, rehabilitation and rehoming charity



- Continue to attract 100,000 paying visitors
- Allow us to continue helping local colleges and schools
- Protect our essential training for Avon Fire & Rescue Service
- Safeguard our highly-acclaimed Discovery courses, which help hundreds of vulnerable local youngsters build self-esteem
- And, of course, enable us to continue rescuing, rehabilitating and rehoming abandoned, neglected and ill-treated horses...work we've done for 60 years.

We passionately believe that's too much to lose.

HorseWorld owns 180 acres of land at Whitchurch. By building homes on a small part of that land - adjacent to existing housing and set away from our main operation – we can secure our future. And – while HorseWorld continues to thrive – the rest of our land will be used for grazing horses, safeguarding it for generations to come from any potential threat of further development.

So we support the Core Strategy's proposal to allow *some* development in Whitchurch Green Belt.

Thank you very much for listening.

[375 words]