



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Local producers and village shopkeepers finding solutions**

THE first of two events to support rural shopkeepers in Cumbria has resulted in local producers working together with retailers to find ways to help village shops.

Representatives of rural shops and producers from as far apart as Nenthead and Seascale attended the Selling in Cumbria event at High Head Sculpture Valley, Ivegill to meet local producers, keen to supply village shops. Four speakers also provided business advice on displaying and merchandising, finance, challenges of sourcing and selling local produce and promoting their businesses.

Organised by Voluntary Action Cumbria, on behalf of the Rural Retail Advisory Partnership for Cumbria and funded by DEFRA under the Rural Social and Community Programme, a second Selling in Cumbria event is planned for Sunday, March 16 in Kendal.

VAC's Community Enterprise Officer, Lorraine Rockminster said: "The events are an opportunity for rural shopkeepers to come together, talk to local producers who are keen to supply village shops and jointly work to find solutions to issues that they all share. The first session highlights issues such as the delivery of stock to isolated areas, promoting local produce and making their businesses profitable.

"Following the first event, the owners of Lakes Speciality Foods, based in Staveley and dairy foods producers Mawsons of Bailey Ground, are discussing producing breakfast pack of locally produced food which they are talking with village shop owners about distributing throughout the county.

"This is an example of producers and retailers coming together to find a solution to the issue of distribution in a rural area."

Director of Lakes Speciality Foods, Paul Hevey said: "Coming to the Selling In Cumbria event has been a great opportunity to meet the retailers in the north of the County, and we are looking forward to attending at the Kendal event.

"The breakfast pack idea is ideal for locals and the self-catering holiday market. We deliver our specialist, award winning pork products throughout Cumbria and believe together with

local shop keepers can provide local, quality produce throughout the county. Our aim is to set up a website for online ordering. People who come to Cumbria on holiday, who taste the local produce, which they buy from the local shop, will be able to order from them once they return home.”

The information and networking sessions were designed for the owners of village shops following in an in depth survey last year, highlighting what business help they needed.

More than 250 retailers were recorded and face-to-face interviews involved almost 70 independent rural shops as part of the survey, which VAC commissioned a team from Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency to carry out on behalf of the Rural Retail Advisory Partnership. The work has been funded by the DEFRA Social and Community Programme. The findings reveal that village shop owners want to develop their skills in marketing, display advertising and finance.

As well as the two free events, there will be targeted one-to-one support for up to 30 individual businesses, provided by South Lakes Development Trust and funded by Cumbria County Council.

As part of each event there is an opportunity to win PR support for your business.

The second event will be held on Sunday, March 16 and will include a free lunch, at The Lane Farm Resource Centre, Westmorland Showground, Crooklands, on Sunday, March 16. The speakers will be Chief Executive of South Lakes Development Trust, Bill Smith on display and merchandising, Bill Knowles, director and member of Social Enterprise and Co-operative Development Ltd, on finance, Charlotte Foster, Community Retail Advice from Village Retail Services Association, on the challenges of sourcing and selling local produce, and Karen Morley-Chesworth from Big Story Media Training Ltd on promoting your business.

Booking for the free event is essential for both producers and retailers, contact Lorraine at VAC on 01768 869517.

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**Photo:**

VAC Team Manager David Kendal, speakers Bill Knowles, director and member of Social Enterprise and Co-operative Development Ltd and Bill Smith, Chief Executive of South Lakes Development Trust and (front) VAC's Community Enterprise Officer Lorraine Rockminster

**Further press information available from:**

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