
**ALTERNATIVE PROVISION PILOT PROGRAMME – RELEASE OF CAPITAL
FUNDING**

**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Chris McEwan,
Children & Young People Portfolio**

Responsible Director – Murray Rose, Director of Children’s Services

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek Member approval to:
 - (a) support the Ruskin Mill Educational Trust in developing the Alternative Provision Pilot Programme; and
 - (b) release the capital funds in relation to this programme.

Summary

2. The Ruskin Mill Educational Trust, supported by Darlington Borough Council, has been successful in securing capital and revenue funding from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). Due to the nature of the funding only Voluntary Sector organisations were able to bid for this capital. However, Darlington Borough Council will act as the host authority for receipt of the grant on behalf of the Ruskin Mill Educational Trust. This report seeks approval to release the capital funding to enable the scheme to go ahead.
3. Through projects at the Ecocentre in Croft on Tees and Bishop’s House on Coniscliffe Road, Darlington, the Alternative Provision Pilot Programme will provide complementary, innovative and transformational ways to meet the additional needs of up to 100 young people in Darlington aged 14-16 years who are at risk of missing out on education, training or employment opportunities in the future.
4. Ruskin Mill Educational Trust will be the lead partner for this scheme, undertaking all the procurement, commissioning and development. Darlington Borough Council will be a minority partner in the development of the scheme, working closely with Ruskin Mill Educational Trust to ensure the scheme, once operational, runs successfully, providing a wider range of educational opportunities to the children of Darlington.

5. The partnership work with Ruskin Mill Educational Trust contributes to the Council's strategy to review existing provision and to implement efficiency measures wherever possible. The partnership with Ruskin Mill has the potential to reduce the number of young people who have to leave the Borough for specialist provision and may, over time, also provide increased local opportunities for young adults who require more specialist placements and who currently may have no local provision.

Recommendations

6. Members are asked to:-
 - (a) Support the Ruskin Mill Educational Trust in developing the Alternative Provision Pilot Programme; and
 - (b) Agree to formally release the capital funding of £1.750m to undertake the agreed works.
 - (c) Request that a Memorandum of Agreement be developed between Ruskin Mill Educational Trust and Darlington Borough Council.

Reasons

7. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
 - (a) This programme will support the delivery of alternative education opportunities for a large number of 14-16 year olds in Darlington who may otherwise be at risk of missing out on education, training or employment opportunities in the future; and
 - (b) Release of this funding will enable spend to be achieved within financial deadlines.
 - (c) A memorandum of agreement will protect the Council's interest while also allowing maximum flexibility to the voluntary organisation.

**Murray Rose,
Director of Children's Services**

Background Papers

No Background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Rachel Jones: Extension 2026

S17 Crime and Disorder	The programme will support 14-16 year olds in Darlington who may otherwise be at risk of missing out on education, training or employment.
Health and Well Being	The work of the programme will enhance knowledge and understanding of healthy lifestyles, healthy eating and will promote Health and Well being to the wider community.
Sustainability	The Ecocentre at Croft on Tees will be designed to the highest sustainability standards and will be a true 'eco' building. The facilities will be constructed with an extremely low carbon footprint, which uses and re-uses energy and environmental resources.
Diversity	The facilities will add to the diversity of buildings and technology available in Darlington. The alternative curriculum will enhance the opportunities available to 14-16 year olds in the Borough.
Wards Affected	This report will affect all schools in the Borough.
Groups Affected	Pupils aged 14-16, parents and local residents
Budget and Policy Framework	The budget for the scheme is contained within the £1,750,000 allocated from the DCSF. No financial commitment is required from the Local Authority.
Key Decision	This is a key decision in relation to the amount of funding Members are asked to approve the release of in order to move the projects forward, and also because it affects all schools in the Borough.
Urgent Decision	An urgent decision is required to ensure the funding is spent in line with financial deadlines.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The programme is consistent with Aspiring Darlington: providing high quality facilities that support modern approaches to education in schools and for lifelong learning.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

8. Ruskin Mill Educational Trust is one of the Country's leading independent specialist education providers, working with learners with learning difficulties and disabled students (LLDD) through an experimental craft and land work curriculum linked to commerce and enterprise.
9. The Trust is expanding its provision by forming a new partnership with Darlington Borough Council. Ruskin Mill Educational Trust (Clervaux College) will provide complementary, innovative and transformational ways to meet the additional needs of up to 100 young people in Darlington aged 14-16 years who are at risk of missing out on education, training or employment opportunities in the future.
10. The project will comprise of a cluster of small scale social enterprises, combining business skills and work experience. At its core is a curriculum based on organic farming and fishing, ethical food production and retailing, including a bakery, dairy, smokery and public café, workshops for food processing and the production of artisan craftwork. This model has proved highly successful for students with learning disabilities or difficulties aged 16-25 years. All students will receive a rigorous baseline assessment, personalised programme and support in transition planning. Academic skills and skills for life will be embedded in this vocational curriculum which augments the current curriculum presented in mainstream and special educational settings. There will be emphasis on the engagement in accredited courses, which can lead to valued qualifications.
11. The Ruskin Mill Educational Trust has secured a grant from the DCSF for £2,200,000 over 3 years. The allocations are as follows:

Capital Funding				Revenue Funding			
2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	Total	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	Total
600,000	665,000	485,000	1,750,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	450,000

12. Ruskin Mill Educational Trust submitted the application following detailed discussions with officers in Children's Services. Due to the nature of the funding only Voluntary Sector organisations were able to bid for this capital. However, Darlington Borough Council will act as the host authority for receipt of the grant on behalf of the Ruskin Mill Educational Trust. Any overspends or other capital issues will be the full responsibility of the Trust.
13. The terms of grant received from the DCSF outline the conditions of funding but do not provide a definition of responsibility levels within the partnership. This report recommends that the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Corporate Services request the development of a Memorandum of Understanding in order to protect the Council's interest while also allowing maximum flexibility to the voluntary organisation.

14. The £1,750,000 capital funding will augment and upgrade the existing facilities of two sites at a rural Ecocentre in Croft on Tees and a historic building in central Darlington - the Bishop's House on Coniscliffe Road. This will include workshop, bakery, café and retail outlet. It will also be used to purchase an additional 70 acres of land, IT and services infrastructure and contribution to specialist equipment (farming, food production etc). The revenue funding will be used to contribute towards the running costs and to staffing including teaching, administration, support and specialist experience in farming, food production, craft skills and retail.
15. The symbiotic relationship between the rural and urban sites is fundamental to the learning experience and understanding of the world. These facilities for learning and practicing new skills are based in a real world setting. Value is added to primary produce – growing, processing and preserving locally produced food using organic and traditional methods, following through to retail and café. The project also addresses the current global concerns about environmental awareness, biodiversity, food miles and sustainability.
16. The Trust has direct experience of a close link between food and behaviour. The social activity of preparing food and sitting around a table to eat together is intrinsic to developing healthy human relationships. This holistic approach to education works well when it includes a strong community engagement.
17. Partnership working with Darlington Borough Council's Children's Services will enable the project to be integrated into schools, families and communities to support and facilitate the development of young people. Plans cover education, life long learning, communication, health, behaviour, recreational programmes, vocational programmes, emotional well-being and citizenship.
18. Ruskin Mill Educational Trust will be the main partner for this scheme, with all the procurement, commissioning and development undertaken by them. Darlington Borough Council will be a minority partner in the development of the scheme, but will work closely with Ruskin Mill Educational Trust to ensure the scheme, once operational, is a success, ultimately providing a wider range of educational opportunities to the children of Darlington.

Outcome of Consultation

19. The project has been discussed with a range of consultees and advisory groups including Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, Headteachers in Darlington, the Special Educational Need Co-Ordinators (SENCO) Information group and Darlington's Pupil Placement Panel. All groups are fully supportive of the proposals.