

The Crossroads Lifelong Learning Partnership.

Forging ahead – Rural Community Education for the
21st Century.

Summary of proposals for development of a lifelong
learning facility at Crossroads, including an after school
club, youth and adult educational provision.

Contents

1. Introduction
2. The After School Club
3. Youth Education
4. Adult Classes

Introduction

This initiative is part of a more widespread attempt to regenerate and further the development of the Crossroads Rural Community.

A Development Trust has been set up which is coordinating the community initiatives which are being undertaken. These include the educational projects as well as the setting up of a farm shop selling local food and produce. The overall remit of all the community development projects that are being planned is Lifelong learning.

The educational model we are working with is known as Place based education – education based on the geographical situation, better utilisation of local culture and history, increasing local democratic participation through the promotion of active citizenship and awareness of local economic factors, how they affect the community and how best can a locally driven education best meet these future issues.

The main focus is to increase community involvement in education; identify and address key community issues through our education process; build effective bridges between other communities.

We want to better understand how to increase our visibility and therefore our viability; become increasingly sustainable; promote our way of life and improve access to and within the countryside.

The After School Club

The original Crossroads school had a very well developed After School Club, which was a major part of developing a very strong school/community culture of involvement in our local education. Therefore, it seems rational to begin re-establishing any educational initiatives by starting from this previous position of strength.

It will be run as a Social Enterprise and will employ a part time administrator and community based tutors. It will be driven by local demand, with the remit that classes remain in keeping with the educational ethos of the Crossroads Lifelong Learning Partnership – that we are learning how best to live well and sustainably in the countryside.

Market Research

In the past, our community surveys have consistently shown clearly that there is strong support for local, rural primary education and interest and enthusiasm for youth and adult community based learning.

Local market research has also confirmed that there are considerable opportunities for private tutoring services for literacy and numeracy; sports clubs and the local council provide a wide range of sport and leisure activities. However, there is a gap in the market for practical, applied learning opportunities, in a rural setting, with a view to increasing sustainable living in rural areas.

To this end we have been piloting various classes with the Ayrshire Home Education network and we have trialed these over the past year, building up a bank of community tutors who are willing to take their teaching to the next level and further develop their skills.

Our unique selling points

Giving our children access to practical, applied skills, which may often come easier to them and promotion of their natural enthusiasm for “*making and doing*” allows children to engage positively and actively in their own educational process. Confidence increases and allows them to make more links between learning at “School” and at “Home,” which helps to hard wire new information and skills and make connections to further information that they acquire.

Making strong links with technology amidst this learning also empowers them to develop design aspects, acknowledge historical and cultural developments related to their newly acquired skills, explore innovation and developments globally and may eventually open up avenues to promote and market wares and services.

Developing our classes around the Curriculum for Excellence will again provide continuity and familiarity between school, community and home.

Grants we've been awarded

We were awarded a knowledge skills exchange grant by DTA Scotland to allow 2 of our group to visit Sawston, the first Henry Morris Village College in Cambridgeshire and Impington V.C. designed in the Bauhaus style, and both developed to reflect the healthy balance that can exist between community, school and lifelong learning. We learned more about this visionary and pioneering approach to rural community education, which has now been operating and developing for 80 years and we would like to continue to develop links with the Village Colleges, learn from their experiences and in part emulate their success.

Recently we were awarded a Social Enterprise set up grant will allow us to develop our tutor training, build a website and cover insurance costs and security checks. Having acquired this 1st level grant from Firstport we will benefit from their expertise and support and will then be in a good position to apply for the 2nd level award, which will support us in the early part of our operation, until we become economically viable and sustainable, in our own right.

Community Tutors

We have engaged with the Ayrshire College on developing our Community Tutoring Service which will offer those within our community or with an affinity for it, an opportunity to formalise information that may have become instinctive to them, learn how to construct a lesson plan and deliver it, become familiar with constructive methods of engaging and maintaining the attention of the class and implementing assessment procedures.

Already we have found that even informally, this process can offer people opportunities to explore potential areas in which they might want to do further training; take a hobby or interest to a new level; provide a platform to utilise under developed previous qualifications; through disability issues explore how they can convert applied skills into teaching material and capably deliver it.

How we have developed so far

So far our classes have developed partly to meet the needs of local home educators and partly to gain an understanding of the process of building up a curriculum. We hope to continue with this form including also the needs of children coming from school to the after school classes.

We have run classes in Literacy and Numeracy, French, Philosophy, Orienteering, Cycle Maintenance. We've also had introductory courses on Basic Mechanics and Anatomy and done project work on the Vikings and the Greeks.

We have also been involved in educational visits to the Burns Museum in Alloway, Vikingar in Largs and the Science Museum in Glasgow, and have gone fishing trips to the Cessnock and Irvine rivers. Been entertained at the Ayr Pantomime, had a Burns Supper and everyone who wanted to took part in the Home Ed Christmas Show.

There are several more classes we would like to develop soon including Basic building / joinery skills, felt making and wool craft, basic financial and life management skills, exploring local and family histories, animal husbandry, local river ecology and water management as well as developing further some of those we have already initiated.

We are on the lookout for community members who would be interested in tutoring and we will be able to offer support and advice so that we can develop a safe and enjoyable environment for children and staff to teach and learn.

Youth Education

A further phase of our lifelong education development will come from the extension of classes for school aged children to youth and adult classes. Again we hope to meet local needs and demands and as soon as our first classroom

is completed we can begin to trial subjects and access popularity and demand. Survey results from 2 community surveys have all highlighted strong community support for adult education, so we have gauged, to some degree, that there is an appetite for this initiative amongst the Crossroads Community.

Given that at secondary education level science and technology, the expressive arts and home economics are often in strong competition with literacy and numeracy for precedence, we feel that there is good opportunity to allow more development of these skills, again strong linkage to IT will also engage literacy and numeracy, research and development skills and greater engagement in students educational process.

We would hope that the Development Trust will be able to help students to develop their art, craft, science, technical and home economic portfolios. Provide more opportunities to apply IT, business, marketing and accountancy skills.

Again engagement with the Ayrshire College will allow our students to begin their education in this more informal, local environment, with the potential that they would then more easily move on to further depth and qualifications at local colleges or go further afield.

The Crossroads Young Farmers Club is a major community strength and has been for many years. The recent revitalization in community spirit from the 75th Anniversary concert and associated events, provides an opportunity to continue to develop our inherent skills in the expressive arts, rural skills and community enterprise and engagement. It is our hope that we can further support this rejuvenation and maintain its momentum, further improving our chances to survive and thrive through the next 75 years and beyond.

We welcome anyone in the community or associated with us in any way to come forwards if they would like to teach or learn in this informal environment with their ideas, expertise or expectations.

Adult Classes

The Development Trust Association can help to provide a platform for economic, social and cultural initiatives to develop and the adult learning

setting will be an active resource that the community can use to support its growth as these become apparent.

Gardening has always scored consistently highly in community surveys so opportunities to develop more skills in this area would seem to be a priority. It may be possible to link with the food hub for those who want to develop this interest into a marketing / business opportunity as they are currently developing a bank of local suppliers for the farm shop.

The first of our adult lecture series begins on Nov 26th with Prof. Tom Devine speaking on "The Highland and Lowland Clearances."

The next stages and the year ahead

We have continuing to trial classes one day a week with the local home educators since August '13, following our first classes throughout 2012. By mid-winter '13 we hope to be able to extend this to begin piloting the actual after school classes we would be offering when we are fully open for business. By Easter 2014, our building work should be complete and we will be open and ready to offer a wide range of after school educational classes at affordable prices.

We still have much work to do regarding setting up our organisational structure, meeting regulatory standards, provide security checks, good staff training and implement assessments.

To this end we are currently applying for Lottery grants which will pay for local community focus groups to assess community need, support and capacity; employ educational consultants and educational researchers to gain more local support through wider discussion of current educational issues and begin the processes needed to set up a school and start to formulate a research protocol which will be useful to assess this developing educational model.

What we are now planning longer term is a 120 pupil, 3-18 yoa school, which will further link with our lifelong education initiatives. It will be community led, run as a social enterprise and governed by a Board of Trustees. We are

pursuing this as a matter of course as we continue to build local, national and international support.