

DEVELOPING AND DESIGNING A SKILLS PARTNERSHIP / ACADEMY



AN INITIATIVE BY THE LLT NATIONAL PARK COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP *Supporting communities in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park*

**Summary for the Cross Party Committee on Skills
6th December 2012**

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Background

The Community Partnership's existing construction trades' Apprenticeship/Business Partnership Project is coming to an end in 2014 and on the back of its success, we are keen to ensure that there continues to be training opportunities and support to young people who wish to train and work in and around the National Park. The Partnership is particularly keen that its future work supports the retention of young people within the rural area. The Partnership commissioned a study in June 2012 to develop proposals that would explore training needs and opportunities in the area that would in turn help mitigate against outward migration, as well as supporting key employment sectors within the National Park. Priority areas for development were identified from the outset as: Tourism, Land-Based Work and Local Food Production. This proposal is the culmination of the work we have undertaken since June 2012.

This is a skills intervention that has economic development at its heart. In driving up the demand for skills from employers and young people in and around the National Park, the project will contribute to economic growth.

Project aims

Building on this research, our proposal is to establish a new training and education initiative for the people who live and work in and around the National Park area, using existing programmes, facilities and resources in new ways and bringing together new training and education provision. In doing this, we will:

- create new opportunities for young people from National Park communities to train and work within the Park;
- support local businesses to employ and train young people from within National Park communities;
- contribute to the economic development of National Park communities by:
 - improving the training product and range within the National Park within the tourism and hospitality sector and within the land-based sectors, particularly where there are major new tourism or land based developments taking place;
 - improving customer satisfaction and business performance and raising skills and productivity in the tourism and hospitality sector and the land-based sectors, particularly through raising understanding and communication of the special qualities of the National Park for visitors and residents alike;
 - increasing retention levels in the sector by motivating employees through continuing professional development and clarified career opportunities, particularly where expectations and aspirations are low;
 - improving the attractiveness of the tourism and hospitality sector and the land-based sectors as a

career choice within the National Park, particularly through working with employers to provide more motivating opportunities.

- contribute to the health of local communities by encouraging young people to live and work within the National Park;
- put Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park on the map as the place to come for education and training in the key National Park economic sectors.

Project activities

The proposal is to support a co-ordinating function that will bridge the gap between employers, skills providers and young people. Activities will involve recruiting a manager and assistant for the initiative who will:

- Develop further and formalise the partnership of employers, skills providers (colleges and universities), public bodies and voluntary organisations;
- Produce an operating plan for the initiative;
- Work with the partners to establish a coherent programme of Rural Apprenticeships, training and education opportunities in key sectors (land-based and tourism), to be delivered by a number of training providers who would run courses in the area. Provision will be accessible to young people and employers, with co-ordination meaning that training providers come to the National Park to deliver training, or develop specific solutions to make training accessible to individuals living and working in and around the National Park. We will ensure that there is training provision available across a broad spectrum of Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) levels, from entry level vocational training through to higher education. This will also provide clear progression routes for individuals;
- Establish a trainee or apprentice sharing scheme, acting as a facilitator so that small employers can come together to employ and/or train a young person, and ensure robust employment structure;
- Produce a plan to promote the tourism and land based sectors as careers of choice – by improving information on career opportunities and raising the image of the sectors to public agencies (Jobcentre Plus, Careers Scotland), schoolchildren, jobseekers and other residents, so that they are not seen as a 'career of last resort';
- Work towards improving the long-term sustainability of jobs within the tourism and land-based sectors to establish long-term career opportunities for young people in an area that has traditionally been perceived as providing principally seasonal opportunities.
- Creating new possibilities for employability provision within the National Park, by co-ordinating opportunities with employers and working with youth services in and around the National Park. This will provide a reach into the more deprived urban communities outside the National Park boundary, creating chances for young people in those areas to develop employability skills within the National Park.

The barriers to community access to the project lie in the dispersed nature of settlements and challenges in accessing skills providers (cost of travel to college, lack of information, availability of affordable rural housing etc). In addition, skills providers experience a range of difficulties when delivering programmes in rural areas compounding the barriers to access. These are related to transport and small numbers of customers and businesses.

The project is set up precisely to tackle the barriers to education and training experienced by rural communities. The project objectives and activity is focussed entirely on increasing participation from rural communities in skills and training activities. As part of feasibility study – young people and stakeholders (employers) were consulted through web survey, telephone and one-to-one meetings and stakeholders meeting. The Community Partnership is a community membership organisation and has consulted across its membership on the proposals, hence we are confident that it has grass root support.

We have held two stakeholder meetings with support committed by Oatridge (SRUC) and SAC (SRUC), Forth Valley College, LANTRA, Skills Development Scotland, the LLTTNPA, Callander Youth Project, Stirling Council, a University, Scottish Land and Estates. The view of this group was that the project should be developed and launched, which has been further evidenced with their offers of support over a very short timescale. We have been offered match funding by UWS, Forth Valley College and the National Park Authority with indications of future support from Scottish Government, SDS, LANTRA and SRUC. A

This initiative accords with The National Park Partnership Plan 2012-2017 launched by SG in June 2012. The Partnership engages with all agencies active in the National Park. And under the Rural Development Priority: Rural Economy, the Apprenticeship Scheme is a Priority for Action. All four LAs within the NP identify highly relevant issues within their SOAs and Community Plans. There is a need to pursue economic development priorities, which is highlighted in their economic development strategies and plans, where reference is made to developing skills and employment opportunities for young people. Eg. Stirling Council's strategy commits to building "the capacity of employers to provide more apprenticeship, training and employment opportunities, in particular for young people, in ways that enhance business competitiveness and profitability." Importantly, "barriers to employment will be assembled, and supplemented through direct discussion with those currently not in employment. On this basis we will work systematically to overcome those barriers. Wherever possible, we will use innovative approaches, including new solutions to transport access issues in rural and semi-rural areas."

Similarly, a key challenge in West Dunbartonshire is to provide routes to employment for those who are some distance from the labour market.

Project Outcomes

- **Revitalising communities** : Retaining young people within rural communities is fundamental to community sustainability. In addition, improving opportunities for local businesses to take on young people, will help to maintain sustainable local business. Both are crucial elements in revitalising communities and are two project outcomes. Working with locally based community groups and businesses, the project will strengthen the links between all sections of the community.
- **Contributing to the economic development of communities in and around the National Park** : This will be achieved by improving the training product and range within the National Park; improving customer satisfaction and business performance and raising skills and productivity; increasing retention levels by motivating employees through continuing professional development and clarified career opportunities; improving the attractiveness of the tourism and hospitality and the land-based sectors as a career choice within the National Park.
- **Creating new opportunities for young people from National Park communities to train and work within the Park** : Retaining young people within rural communities will be secured through the provision of training and employment opportunities that are accessible and affordable for them.
- **Supporting local businesses to employ and train young people from within National Park communities**: Helping maintain sustainable local businesses through provision and support of local skills. Particularly those that a micro-businesses or/and with seasonal needs.

The first two years is currently the subject of an application to Forth and Lomond LEADER. The application will be determined early December. The project is a market intervention and, like most skills initiatives, will require continued support unless and until it is no longer needed.

Since the benefits of training accrue to employers, providers, individuals and the public sector, however, the public sector may decide to accept a limited ongoing investment to ensure that the benefits of a successful project continue.



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Supporting communities in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park

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