

## 2015-16 OCR AWARD FOR INNOVATION IN FE

### EXETER COLLEGE

### THE HAVEN BANKS OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE: A PIONEERING INNOVATION IN PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

#### The Planning: Purpose and Process

- The college provides courses to over 5,000 16-18 year olds and over 2,500 adults, as well as being a major apprenticeship and part-time learning programme provider and is a significant part of the community. As a result, the college came together with the local council to save a £5.6m investment project which, had it been scrapped, would have meant the loss of a much needed new training centre for the outdoor education sector and wider community.
- The college-council partnership was based on complementary organisational requirements fitting together to create a solid and robust business case: the council invested the money to build the centre and the college managed it in its entirety for the whole community.
- The aims of the project were to:
  - create a viable business case for a world class outdoor education centre for the county and South West
  - increase youth, adult and targeted minority participation in outdoor and adventurous activities in the county and city
  - develop new provision and increase participation in outdoor education in the county and city
  - create skills training for new and current industry professionals
  - increase the number of apprentices in outdoor education
  - establish a higher education offer in outdoor education in the heart of the city
  - align and contribute to the regeneration plan for the historic quayside
  - create a facility that would be regarded as a centre of excellence for services to disabled people.

#### Planning into Practice

- At the heart of the partnership was the service level agreement between the college and the and the county council, established to ensure the quality of both parties' offer and provision is never compromised and continues to thrive.
- Strong leadership and management is demonstrated in the strategic planning process, financial planning, programme delivery and scrutiny of targets achieved and consequent impact measures.
- The leadership and management function of the college has been wholly supportive of all aspects of the project from inception through to delivery and subsequent management of the centre. The governance and monitoring board (GMB) was a particularly important part of this.
- The centre provided exemplary facilities, built and adapted to meet the needs of all users, irrespective of ability or disability. Moreover, the culture of the service is fully inclusive and absolute best practice for enabling all users to experience and achieve.

#### Continuing Development

- The Centre's staff and management team were all Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE) transferred across to the college and now work on the college's terms and conditions.
- The educational provision is subject to all the college's internal quality assurance systems and has significantly added to the college achieving an outstanding grade in its full Ofsted inspection in 2014.
- An agreed set of key performance indicators (KPIs) is reviewed systematically by the Haven Banks Management Team and then reported quarterly to the GMB. The GMB stakeholders scrutinise the financial viability, participation targets and overall quality and impact of the partnership.
- The centre now hosts the county sports partnership and the plan is to create a centre of excellence for outdoor education training.

- The college has several plans in the pipeline for the centre in 2016/17, including becoming an accredited Duke of Edinburgh provider, and tendering for the provision of the 2017 Ten Tors training programme following successful provision of training to the Maynard School.

### Outcomes/benefits to date

- The centre reinvested the award money back into outdoor education and training programmes for local schools. The £5,000 award provided a series of grants to develop new, progressive courses or programmes delivered through Haven Banks Outdoor Education Centre.
- The Quay and Canal Trust matched the award received and so total investment in the courses was actually £10,000.
- Strong partnerships enriched the curriculum and learner experience, giving individuals the opportunity to work on national projects and with professional water sports bodies. Students believe that the facilities used encourage them to take responsibility for their learning, develop communication, team and leadership skills. Their learning experience gave them confidence to seek employment managing challenging Outdoor Adventurous Activities (OAA).
- In a 2014/15 student perception questionnaire, 100% of those surveyed agreed that the teaching and learning on the course was good or outstanding, 98% agreed that practical sessions were well-equipped and 100% agreed that the equipment used for the course is good.
- The impact of the centre on full-time learning in the outdoor education sector has grown from no students in 2010/11 to over 100 in 2014/15.
- Partnerships with local and regional employers have led to an increase in apprentices, rising from none in 2011/12 to 14 in 2015/16.
- Use of the centre by community groups (non-educational) and recreational groups has increased from 40 in January 2013 to 320 in 2015. This is above the KPI in the service agreement and reflects the benefit to the local community of the partnership.
- 100% of staff observation grades were 'good' or above, with 25% being 'outstanding'.
- Following the success of this project, the college has used this approach to establish two other local community partnership projects. The first involves running the local sports facility for the council and the second working with councillors, Exeter University and other to deliver a collaborative solution to run the city theatre. The college, therefore, remains a positive force in the local community and students keep benefitting from viable business relationships.

### Relevance and Replication

- This project is an exemplar of how, in a time of austerity across the sector, a college can initiate innovative partnerships to provide exemplary facilities and meet the educational, development and recreational needs of a large number of community groups.
- Student, staff and partnership feedback confirmed the effectiveness of the project in providing exemplary facilities and changing lives, while other more recent initiatives have demonstrated how this model can be replicated effectively in other community projects.
- It would be difficult to overestimate the significance of the strategies employed in the submission project to deliver cost neutral exemplary facilities across the sector.

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