

# THE ROLE OF EMPLOYABILITY WITHIN ARGYLL AND BUTE AND AN UPDATE ON THE PROPOSED MID ARGYLL CONSTRUCTION TRAINING CENTRE.

## **1.0 A wee reminder.**

1.1 Argyll and Bute Employability Team has evolved within the Council since April 1999 when it was set up to deliver the Government's New Deal Environmental Task Force Option of the New Deal Programme. Each year since then, the team's delivery of employment outcome targets has been very good and we now deliver a number of employment and skills training contracts on behalf of Jobcentre Plus. These are contracts for which we have to bid on a year-to-year basis and which provide our core funding. We currently have 34 members of staff on the team.

1.2 In order to enhance the training and the length of work experience our clients can access, we also raise a considerable amount of match funds through European sources and, working in partnership with our colleagues in other council departments and outside agencies to raise funds through environmental trusts, the Big Lottery, Communities Scotland etc. These additional funds help support projects ranging from community capacity building and headstone repair, to construction and transport initiatives. The positive outcomes for local economies arising from these projects include not only the wages and increased spending power of our clients but also the income given to local companies for locally sourced materials and support services. We try hard to keep business within Argyll and Bute.

1.3 The Work of the Employability Team therefore, relates to the Community Planning Themes of 'Improving opportunities for learning, employment and skills' as well as 'Sustaining our communities, culture and environment' and contributes to a number of themes of the Council's Economic Development Strategy. Since its inception in 1999 the Employability Team has assisted over 1200 local unemployed people and contributed to Argyll and Bute community regeneration in terms of environmental enhancements (from owl centres to community centres!), support for local employers and community capacity building.

## **2.0 Employability activity in your area.**

2.1 We currently have 43 clients on our books from within the Mid Argyll, Kintyre and Islay areas. Within the last 12 months, the Employability Team have helped 32(18-24 yrs) plus 25 (25+yrs) individuals into work from this area. This equates to almost 66% of local people joining our programmes in the area that have found employment during their time with us.

2.2 We work very closely with local employers to achieve this and some of the employers we have worked with include:

### Campbeltown

Vestas Celtic, McFadyens Contractors, Argyll Property, Robertson Carriers, LGV Driver, Dalintober & Milknowe Tenants and Residents Association, Springbank Distillery, Fyne Homes, DRECO Argyll Bakeries

### Islay

Bruichladdich Distillery, Machrie Hotel, IDEA Resource Centre, Stormcats Ltd, Islay Whisky Shop, Calmac, D & A Mac Dougall, Esknish Farm.

### Mid- Argyll and Inveraray

Argyll and Bute Council, Argyll Hotel, Ritz Café, Fyne Tackle, Lochgilphead Post Office, Argyll Computers, British Waterways, AFAM Services, Inveraray Motor CO, Lochfyne Hotel

2.3 We are currently trying to work especially closely with local contractors in the Kintyre and Islay towards the provision of construction focussed work experience and industry related training for example, Health and Safety, HAUC certification, Manual Handling, Plant Operator tickets and related vocational training. This is supported through our 2005 European (HITP) funded South Kintyre and Islay Construction Capacity Building Project which aims to enhance local employment chances within the local construction sector and help towards meeting the skills needs of local contractors. Our other HITP funded project covering the area, is our 2005 Argyll and Bute (excluding Helensburgh & Lomond) Service Sector focussed project, which allows us to support clients in waged work placements relevant to the sector for up to 40 weeks.

2.4 For those clients requiring to spend more time with us before being employer ready, we have delivered and continue to implement several special projects throughout the mid Argyll and Kintyre area. These projects not only provide work experience for those of our clients who are most removed from the labour market and could not be immediately placed with employers, but also meet the demands of local communities in respect of access, heritage protection and amenity enhancements. These projects include:

- Whiteshore footpath at Tarbert
- Near completion of the '39 Steps' Ardrisag woodland footpath project in partnership with the Council's Access Team.
- Completion of the Millenium Garden in Ardrisaig for Ardrisaig Community Council
- Completion of structural works in Campbeltown's Beechgrove Community Garden.
- Continuation of the Kintyre Headstones restoration project in partnership with the Council's Operations Department.
- Completion of works to Campbeltown Credit Union building – lowered ceiling, new entrance area, painting.
- Start of works to Kilchenzie Community Area – carpark, picnic space, and playspace.
- On going works to Campbeltown Owl Centre – refurbished exhibition area and shop, fence painting and footpaths, car park area and view point.
- Imminent start to the Mid Argyll aspects of the 'Walk to School' project in partnership with the Council's Transportation Team; includes footpaths at Kilmartin and Inveraray.

2.5 We are also supporting the World of Work project in Campbeltown School, in an effort to provide S3 pupils with work taster sessions, very basic training and a wider understanding of the opportunities available to them in the construction industry.

2.6 As for future projects within the area, we are awaiting the outcome of a bid to the WHELK fund in respect of funds that will help us to implement community environmental projects on Islay where we have also been asked to lead on a further bid to support a Community Admin. Skills Development project. Other exciting and innovative projects under discussion with various partners include:

- Blarbuie woodlands and market garden development.
- Mid Argyll Wheels to Work pilot.
- Kilmory paths project

2.7 Finally, we are about to interview for a Social Economy Development Worker whose role it will be to advise us on existing and new opportunities for our clients within not for profit social firms and the voluntary sector. Finally, we are in the very initial stages of working with a number of partners to run a pilot 'Wheels to Work' project in Mid Argyll.

### 3.0 Construction Excellence

#### 3.1 Opportunity knocks!

3.1.1 Forthcoming Public Sector investment in Argyll and Bute, for both new build and maintenance works, provides huge opportunities for business and growth within the local construction sector. However, the backdrop of current skills shortages and an ageing workforce highlights the need to work closely with local businesses to ensure they have the capacity and confidence to make the best of these opportunities.

#### 3.2. Local solutions for local issues.

3.2.1 The Employability Team are one of the partners involved in the Construction excellence Initiative. This Initiative began in June 2003 arising from the Community Planning process. The team comprises Fyne Homes Ltd, Argyll and Bute Council, Argyll and Islands Enterprise, CITB Construction Skills, Careers Scotland and an independent construction consultant. The team was set up to look at the issues for the sector arising from the anticipated large increase in construction work throughout the area.

3.2.2 In August 2003 we carried out a mini audit of 100 local contractors, followed by a series of roadshows though September/October 2003 with a follow up in January 2004. Findings included the need for training local contractors in Health and Safety awareness, IT skills and Partnership working in order to be able to make the most of future opportunities. In addition, it was identified that the lack of a locally based training centre was a major obstacle to increasing the number of new apprenticeships within the area; this was restricting the growth potential of existing and new businesses. At present construction training in Argyll is carried out in the Central Belt at colleges such as Clydebank and Reid Kerr. Apprentices have to attend on a block release basis which takes them away both from their employer and their community for long periods at a time This doesn't seem to affect the number of young people wanting to take up apprenticeships, but it is a major concern with employers who might recruit them for the following reasons:

- The amount of time away from the employer during block release
- Travel costs and time

- Limited relationship and contact with the college

3.2.3 This year, Construction Excellence have run well received training courses for local contractors on Health and Safety, IT and Partnership working at venues throughout Argyll and Bute. Plans have also been prepared and costed for a locally based Construction Training Centre to be located in mid Argyll the main objectives of which are:

- Increase the number of local apprenticeships by 26 in the first year.
- Increase the number of local employers offering apprenticeships.
- Make it easier for apprentices to undertake their training without having to leave their communities for long periods of time.
- Enable school children to undertake sector related work taster sessions.
- Create additional income generation activity such as courses for adults and evening classes.
- Construction Excellence will draw on the knowledge and expertise of North Highland College who already have local construction training centre in operation, to establish robust systems and procedures for operation at an early stage.

3.2.4 In July 2004, Argyll and Bute Council were approached with regard to possibly leasing or donating a land site for the college but this approach was turned down with no further offers made from, or approaches made to the council at the time.

3.2.5 A suitable site has since been identified on the AIE business park at Kilmory and in February of this year Fyne Homes Ltd submitted a Stage 1 application to Future Builders Scotland (large pot of Scottish Executive funds aimed at investment in the social economy, entrepreneurship and skills), for the acquisition of the land and the development of a mid Argyll Construction Training Centre.

3.2.6 Fyne Homes will own the site, Argyll College will lease the site and be the key delivery and management partner with input from the industry via CITB Construction Skills. Clients will be the local construction industry, school leavers, referrals from the Employability Team and Jobcentre Plus. The local industry is very supportive of the project with 84% of those who responded indicating that they would be willing to use the facility, most of those who indicate otherwise being based in the south ie. Arran, Rothesay and Helensburgh.

3.2.7 Cost estimates for the land acquisition and resource development amount to just over £900,000. At present the named contributors to the costs are:

- Argyll College
- Argyll and the Islands Enterprise
- Fyne Homes Ltd.

#### **4.0 Building our own**

4.1 The proposal for a mid Argyll based Construction Training Centre is innovative for the area and if implemented would provide a resource that could assist Argyll and Bute's young people and local businesses alike to engage with and develop from the many forthcoming opportunities within the construction sector.

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