

Executive November 14th 2007

Local people doing local jobs using local money: a proposal to establish a National Skills Academy for Construction (NSAfC) for Project Taunton

Report of Strategic Director – Joy Wishlade

(This matter is the responsibility of Cllr Horsley.)

Executive Summary

As a progression of the ongoing work with ConstructionSkills, representatives from Taunton Deane Borough Council, Taunton East Development Trust, LSC, Business Link and Project Taunton unanimously agreed that a **National Skills Academy for Construction: Taunton** should be recommended to the Steering Group and ultimately to Taunton Deane Executive.

1. Introduction

NSAfC are planned for all 9 English regions; in the south west Academies are also being proposed or established in Swindon and in the county of Cornwall.

The 3 key outcomes are: 1) an on-site training facility, 2) a dedicated project coordinator, employed by the lead contractor and 3) a comprehensive training and development plan. In addition, there is enormous kudos and positive PR associated with National Skills Academies which include the following attributes:

- **Becoming a Centre of Excellence for work based learning**, creating a new benchmark in supporting the delivery of high quality learning and development for the full range of skills engaged in construction
- **Being driven by employers** who would engage in the development of training and development plans for each project, develop initiatives to meet training and development needs and provide financial and/or in-kind support to address skills issues

- **Providing strong community links** and provide training and learning opportunities for local people to engage effectively in construction as a career; from school, college or unemployed
- **Providing a more flexible approach to training** and learning provision which could be provided via a range of facilities such as: on-site training, using mobile training vehicles and local school, college and HE/FE provision
- **The ability to capture the lessons learned** on each project as each project proceeds, such as logistics techniques, modern methods of construction and other leading construction techniques such that the partnership can share these lessons with the Academy network

2. The Proposal

In practical terms the selected developer (in the first instance for Firepool) will:

1. Work with the NSAfC South West partnership (ConstructionSkills, SWRDA, LSC, JC+, FE/HE, Industry) to develop the town centre regeneration as a Skills Academy project in accordance with the principles and attributes above. Much of the delivery of the training will be from local providers such as SCAT.
2. Select a major contractor to facilitate and lead a NSAfC hub and develop and execute a training and development plan through a project coordinator, the post of which will be funded by ConstructionSkills
3. Work with the NSAfC SW partnership to develop a high level skills plan that details the training and development needs of Taunton
4. Ensure all local funding (inc LSC and SWRDA) supports the aims and objectives of a Taunton Skills Academy for Construction
5. Ensure local residents, especially those in North and East Taunton, are given employment priority and training in accordance with the Training & Skills policy in the Town Centre Area Action Plan
6. Ensure use of local companies for both procurement and the building supply chain (including TDBC's own supply chain) is maximised

In the short term:

- Roger Stone (Constructive Somerset), Mark Leeman (TDBC) and Robbie Lowes are working together to ensure the training and skills policy within

the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan and the above proposal are aligned.

- Job Centre Plus and Connexions will be invited to join the steering group
- A Skills for Occupiers steering group will convene
- A draft of the employment and training section for the Firepool developer agreement will be agreed with Ashfords

3. Policy Context

The policy context for this work is reflected in the Town Centre Area Action Plan which was agreed by the Executive in July 2007 and is currently out for public consultation. An outline of the relevant sections are attached at Appendix 1.

4. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications for the Council

5. Recommendation

That the Executive gives its support to the establishment of a National Skills Academy for Construction in Taunton.

APPENDIX 1

The Town Centre Area Action Plan has an important role to play in helping to deliver on a range of local employment priorities. These include:

- Providing a broader range of jobs, and particularly jobs within creative industries and the knowledge sector so helping to improve local pay
- Provision of training and generally helping to improve the range of local skills
- Helping deprived communities with access to employment and training

Improving skills for those in work and reducing worklessness is a priority within the Somerset Local Area Agreement (LAA). The LAA identifies deprived communities as being a particular area of focus for action. At the local level, the Taunton Deane Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) prioritises the need to address low wage levels and low skills levels.

These priorities are consistent with the draft Taunton Deane Economic Development Strategy (EDS). Both the SCS and EDS note that particular focus should be given to North Taunton and Taunton East, both of which demonstrate levels of multiple deprivation within the top 25% in England. This deprivation is exacerbated by the low wage / low skills character of local economy.

The priorities within the SCS are to be addressed by specific actions. These actions seek to:

- Maximise the potential to create high wage, high skills jobs (within the private sector and especially creative industries / environmental technologies based industries)
- Ensuring joined up working between public, private and voluntary sectors to maximise the benefits for local people of major projects and developments (e.g. Project Taunton); and
- Bring about a greater proportion of local people employed within the construction phase of major projects in the Borough receiving work-based skills training.

Both the SCS and the EDS identify a need to work with Project Taunton to develop a Local Work & Skills Project to ensure that work opportunities and training is provided to local residents and particularly those from North Taunton and Taunton East.

Taunton Skills Academy for Construction

Taunton Deane Borough Council's Project Taunton Steering Group and Project Taunton (along with support from other key partners) have approved the establishment of a "Taunton Skills Academy for Construction". This would be one of a select number of academies under the National Skills Academy for Construction (NSAfc) initiative. It would be developed in association with the NSAfc partnership consisting of ConstructionSkills, SWRDA, LSC, JC+, FE/HE and Industry. Key attributes of such academies are:

- **Becoming a Centre of Excellence for work based learning**, creating a new benchmark in supporting the delivery of high quality learning and development for the full range of skills engaged in construction
- **Being driven by employers** who would engage in the development of training and development plans for each project, develop initiatives to meet training and development needs and provide financial and/or in-kind support to address skills issues
- **Providing strong community links** and provide training and learning opportunities for local people to engage effectively in construction as a career; from school, college, unemployed, disadvantaged areas and the non traditional construction workforce such as women and ethnic minorities
- **Providing a more flexible approach to training** and learning provision which could be provided via a range of facilities such as: on-site training, using mobile training vehicles and local school, college and higher education provision
- **The ability to capture the lessons learned** on each project as each project proceeds, such as logistics techniques, modern and sustainable methods of construction and other leading construction techniques such that the partnership can share these lessons with the Academy network.

In practical terms, developers and relevant partners* will work to achieve the following:

- Develop the town centre regeneration programme as a Skills Academy project in accordance with the principles and attribute outlined above.
- Work with a lead contractor to facilitate and lead a NSAfC hub (including on-site town centre training facilities) and execute a training and development plan through a project coordinator, the post of which will be funded by ConstructionSkills
- Work with the NSAfC partnership to develop a high level skills plan that details the training and development needs of Taunton
- Ensure that all local funding supports the aims and objectives of a Taunton Skills Academy for Construction
- Ensure the use of local companies for both procurement and the building supply chain is maximized
- Ensure that local residents, especially those in disadvantaged communities, are given employment priority and training
- Involve the Genesis Project (SCAT) to share best practice in sustainable construction methods

* Relevant partners will be the NSAfC partnership and the Taunton Construction Skills Steering Group comprising representation from the Local Skills Council, Business Link, Job Centre+, Connexions, Project Taunton, TDBC, SCAT (including Genesis Project), Taunton East Development Trust & North Taunton Partnership

Policy TS1 - Training and Skills

The Borough Council and its partner organisations will work with developers and contractors to secure job sustainability in construction industries by improving local skills. The following will be undertaken:

- a. Developers and partners will work together to ensure that an optimum proportion of construction related jobs are sourced from within the local area; and**
- b. Developers and partners will be required to invest in relevant training schemes for construction and/or allied trades skills and learning that provides for individual local workers to achieve industry accreditation and employment.**

Policy TS1 is applicable to all allocated sites within the TCAAP. Its delivery will be secured through a Section 106 agreement that shall require the developer and partners to prepare and agree the content of the following prior to commencement on site:

1. A NSAfC (south west partnership) led high level skills plan and an associated Training and Development Plan

2. A commitment to appoint the optimum proportion of subcontractors and workforce from amongst the construction industry within the local area. The local area is defined as: in the first instance from within Taunton Deane; in the second instance from within Somerset; and in the third instance within a 40 mile radius of Taunton. The developer will use best endeavours to ensure that this proportion is in excess of 50% of the labour used during the course of the construction period.

3. Work with local partners to develop plans and provide investment to enable local people (residents of Taunton Deane) to train in skills that will enable them to enter the construction industry. A particular focus will be residents of North Taunton and Taunton East and the non-traditional workforce such as women, ethnic minorities and the socially disadvantaged.

4. The Training and Development Plan (see 1. above) will identify the targeted skills and seek to achieve certificated progress for all local workers (those sourced from 2. and 3. above)

Construction related training will be provided on site, and provide opportunities to develop skills from basic through to advanced. Delivering training and skills to residents of North Taunton and Taunton East needs to be considered alongside the need to improve access between these areas and the town centre (refer to Chapter x).

It will be a central feature of this policy that local Community Development organisations should be both a potential deliverer of "base level" work readiness training where this appropriate, as well as the provider of services to developers to attract and recruit a potential workforce pool for consideration by site developers.