



WATERWORKS PADDLE SPORTS PROGRAMME

Introduction

This is a proposal for a partnership between Belfast Activity Centre's "Youth Build" programme and Belfast City Council's Parks and Leisure Department.

Belfast Activity Centre (BAC) has successfully developed the once derelict Barnett's Stable yard into an urban outdoor education centre. It has delivered Ireland's first man made cave as part of the Belfast Adventure Learning Park (ALP) and more recently opened the Shaw's Bridge Boat House. BAC has a wide range of programmes facilitating over 20,000 participants a year.

BAC's "Youth Build" is currently funded by DSD as part of a six year programme across North Belfast. It aims to engage and empower young people and community youth leaders. BAC uses the medium of outdoor activity as a vehicle for social and personal development. The programme has a twin track approach, working with young people to provide unique experiences which enhance their personal development and also training local leaders in order to leave a youth work legacy in the area. The programme is entering its fourth year and has been extremely successful in its first target area, Greater Shankill.

As the Project expands into North Belfast we hope to be able to maximise local resources. The Waterworks in North Belfast provides a fantastic opportunity to engage in paddle sports in the heart of the local community. BAC proposes to offer training in paddle sports skills and leadership. This includes kayaking, open canoeing, kayak polo, slalom and sprint kayak.

The lower pond has been deemed safe, suitable and accessible. Importantly it does not conflict with the anglers in the upper pond. We now need BCC permission to operate at this site.

Proposed Pilot Programme

The Youth Build programme will fully fund the first stage of this development in the form of a pilot scheme. Youth Build has access to BAC's fleet of boats, transport, trailers and personal safety gear. BAC's staff are fully qualified to National Governing Body standards. BAC achieved the Sports Council/NIO Adventure Mark recognition. Standard operating procedures and risk assessments will be adhered to and BAC activities are covered by our own insurance. There will be no requirement for any powered craft to be on the water as safety is covered by the instructional staff on site.

Youth Build will recruit 12 youth leaders (2 groups of six) from the local community. These participants will come from directly around the waterworks area and secondly then the Greater North Belfast Area. The plan would be to train these twelve leaders to the level one paddle sports coach standard. This will include basic skills training to the 2 Star standard and Foundation Safety Rescue Training and HSE First Aid Certificate. This training will take place on the Waterworks site on two sessions for two hours (six leaders per session) each week from October 2012 to March 2013.

If successful in March 2013 all twelve newly qualified coaches will start delivering sessions under the stewardship of the BAC/Youth Build staff. These staff will introduce groups from their own areas to a new opportunity of Paddle Sports.

BAC would support and be willing to provide advice on the potential multi use changing facilities for the site.

Initial Interest from Projects

Initial interest in the pilot project has been gauged from the following groups from which the initial instructors would be recruited.

- North Area Project (BELB)
- New Lodge Ashon Centre
- Ardyone Youth. club
- Cliftonville.
- Lower Old Park.
- West Lands.
- Tigers Bays
- Skankill Area Project.(BELB)
- BCSDN.

Conclusion

BAC is requesting the Belfast City Councils support with this exciting project by simply granting approval for the pilot project and considering future joint initiatives to help further regeneration around this stunning natural asset.

We look forward to your response to this exciting partnership opportunity.

Stephen Dickson CEO Belfast Activity Centre.