



creative  
innovation  
centre

# Business Development Services for Taunton Deane

A Project to Utilise Flook House for Community, Business & Economic Development

## Introduction

This proposal is to look at the viability and utilisation of Flook House, Taunton for community benefit through not-for-profit organisation Creative Innovation Centre CIC (CICCIC). It is designed to make use of the building and its spaces for educational, vocational, training, community and business development purposes.

## History

Directors of CICCIC have discussed its growth needs and identified services that are lacking in Taunton with economic development officers of Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC). However, it was clear that Flook House would be sold in 2-3 years when TDBC relocate at County Hall and sell Flook House as part of the sale of Deane House.

Though this presents a small problem e.g. investment in doing up some of the rooms at Flook House will be lost when Flook House is sold, it also provides the opportunity to test some of the services suggested herein. By proving services are needed and that they provide value for money will allow TDBC and CICCIC to understand fully where investment should go next.

To this end this proposal takes a step-by-step approach to offer tangible evidence over a two year period and to identify:

- Business start-up requirements and incubation
- Knowledge exchange, training and business workshop benefits and numbers
- Number of businesses assisted to gauge future needs
- If serviced offices with business support are valuable and need to be delivered via TDBC aims
- That training and courses help fulfil the needs for those who are unemployed and to increase the number of people gaining an educational qualification
- To gauge how many adopt new vocational courses for personal advancement
- To attract new businesses to Taunton through a business support centre as per this proposal

## The Proposal

CICCIC is a not-for-profit Enterprise, Community & Culture organisation and therefore does not have all the resources to fulfil the project outlined herein. But as Flook House is owned by TDBC and under the Localism Act we originally wanted to look at a Community Asset Transfer.

Community Asset Transfer involves the transfer of ownership and/or management of land or buildings from a statutory body (such as a local council) to a community based organisation or group (such as a charity or community interest company) at less than market value for local social, economic or environmental benefit. However, this would not work due to the potential sale of Flook House in the future, but there could be room for TDBC to transfer the management, but this too means that TDBC may lose out on income.

Therefore, rather than asking TDBC to transfer the asset (Flook House) to us our proposal is for them to simply let us use the space for free in return for providing business support and incubation services, with some seed corn funding to update the cosmetics of the rooms and broadband. In return we provide a range of services and business incubation. (Please note here that with TDBC's contribution, which has a monetary value, we would apply for grant funding from other bodies and use TDBC's contribution as match funding, which would satisfy funders and increase our chances of obtaining a grant).

Further discussions are required to identify the correct way forward but should no solution be found the least we can do is request discounted rent for parts of the building.

## The Service Offer

### **Business Incubation**

There are still many rooms at Flook House that are not used and this presents an opportunity to use these for new start-ups and business incubation.

Andrew Knutt, director of CICCIC use to run the business incubation services at Hot House at Somerset College and therefore understands what business support is required to support these businesses.

In association with TDBC we would offer business incubation space and include the following services:

- Regular monthly meetings on a 1-2-1 basis for all businesses
- Hold regular business workshops to assist business development
- Manage the property and ensure serviced office requirements are met for businesses who reside there
- Offer an open-door policy at any time for quick business advice
- Assist businesses
- Hold small networking events in the meeting room
- Provide business brokerage and sign posting to business resources

If TDBC donates the space for this use all revenue will be divided into the following and not set in stone and up for debate:

- CICCIC operating costs
- Paying of rates and utilities
- Contribution to pot for new developments in 2 years time

Just as CICCIC operates its not-for-profit status today any surplus profits will be used to develop more community and business related services.

In addition to the above businesses will be able to utilise other support services via CICCIC's Memorial Hall in Paul Street.

### **Business Support**

Once a business takes up incubation space at Flook House it will automatically get free business advice throughout its term by CICCIC staff. However, with our extensive knowledge of business over decades it is clear that existing businesses may also want to utilise this service and its no doubt that they may perceive this new business support centre to be similar to that of Business Link.

If this is to be the case then it does make sense to offer business advice to all businesses and will be great service for TDBC to offer when they get business enquiries. Unfortunately this service cannot be provided for free by CICCIC unless some funding is put in place to man this part of the project.

Further discussions are required to iron out this part to ensure the public know what is and isn't provided. But with our Queens Award for Enterprise Promotion in 2015 and business adviser status we are sure that some agreement could be accommodated.

### **The Meeting Room**

This room is essential to all our social enterprise growth needs and helps us deliver a business focused community within the building and will be used to deliver a range of educational, vocational training and business related workshops and programmes. As CICCIC is now an authorised UK Register of Learning Providers (UKRLP) we also intend to deliver Access courses that lead to qualifications and will range from Art & Design to basic IT skills and others.

If business incubation does not happen this room is the minimum we need to develop our business and enables us to offer more support in the community.

This room also needs redecoration, furniture, flooring and IT equipment. With grant aid, our own investment and support from TDBC we hope to fulfil this.

In addition to the above TDBC may book this room and use free of charge for its own meeting purposes.

### **How It Looks From The Public Perspective**

Marketing and packaging Flook House as a mini learning campus with business support and incubation requires an innovative approach and it's essential that the public hear and understand what's on offer.

Additionally, when TDBC gets new inward investment enquiries or reports on its business support objectives a place like Flook House offering these services will help support and report on these objectives.

So here are the services that will be delivered immediately from late September 2015:

1. Access course in Art & Design (certified)
2. Vocational art and drawing classes
3. Mini business workshops (max 25 people) on several business subjects e.g. marketing etc.

By the end of December 2015 all incubation spaces will be revamped (if project goes to plan and support from TDBC is agreed) and launch of business incubation and support services made in Jan 2016. Then we market the following:

1. Business incubation and serviced office space
2. Business support for new start-ups
3. Business support events related to needs analysis

As a creative industries focused organisation most will come from this sector but all sectors will be welcome and supported.

#### Management of the Building

Should TDBC agree to us managing the whole building we can provide this but do not list items here until an agreement on what we offer to the public is made in association with TDBC.

#### Future Planning

It is clear that business support for the borough is ongoing and hopefully grow as more businesses set-up in the area. But with our approach to testing the business support market over the next two years with Flook House we enable TDBC to fully understand where their investment in this area needs to go in the future.

Of course, we fully understand that the interior, layout and design of Flook House is not conducive for creating a creative business focused environment but we believe that this can be created once evidence is produced over the coming two years. Whether that be creating a new space for business support in Taunton or reusing another space once Flook House is gone; either way TDBC has an asset that could be utilised now for all the purposes herein, while at the same time supporting one of Taunton's innovative not-for-profit social enterprises.

#### Our Credentials

CICCIC has three directors each bringing a multitude of talent and knowledge that will help deliver all enterprise and education services.

##### **Andrew Knutt AIBA FRSA**

Andrew is a founding director of CICCIC, Core Business Design, Creative Developments, and chair of Somerset Innovation + Design Network and board member of Design South West and Arts Taunton. Skills in cultural programming, digital design, ebusiness, marketing, IT, media technology and expertise in business development, graphics, art, music and community programming. Educated in business studies and an Associate of the Institute of Business Consulting, member of Chartered Management Institute, recognised SFEDI Social Enterprise Mentor and Fellow of the RSA.

During his career Andrew has started and sold over 5 businesses over the past 25 years and during that time was also employed by Somerset County Council and Business Link Somerset for 3 years as technology and business adviser. To date he has advised over 600 businesses, worked closely with UKTI and other national business support organisations, and is well respected in the local business community.

Andrew also supported and ran Hot House business incubation for two years at Somerset College and has delivered over 60 business related workshops throughout his career.

### **Richard Holt BA FRSA**

Richard is also a founding director of Creative Innovation Centre CIC and Core Business Design, which supports and promotes the development of the creative sector locally. He is a Fellow of Creative Enterprise through the Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Plymouth University and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He has extensive knowledge in Arts and Design training, programme design, delivery, management, quality assurance, accreditation and 25 years management experience in business design training. Richard also holds the Queens Award 2015 for Enterprise Promotion and has worked in the arts/design for over 25 years.

Richard has advised young business start-ups and delivered business related workshops for over 20 years and a recognised SFEDI Social Enterprise Mentor.

### **Christopher Dart**

Chris is creative director of the Creative Innovation Centre CIC. He has an extensive knowledge of art and design and multimedia productions as a practitioner, in business and in further and higher education. Chris has worked as a lecturer and in management in assorted art colleges and universities in London and throughout the South of England. Expertise in all forms of art, teaching art and the practical side of art creation.

## Next Steps

Due to our business growth programme and to meet commercial deadlines related to training courses we ask if some action related to this proposal can be made before September 3rd 2015. Even if this means step one of obtaining the large meeting room at Flook House only. Then move on to other matters at a later date.

To this end we are happy to attend any meeting before that time with TDBC officers.

## Contacts

Please reply to this matter to:

Andrew Knutt  
Director  
andy@ciccic.co.uk