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Robin Dark, Creative Space

Landscaping enterprise branches out thanks to **Business Link**

An entrepreneur whose community landscaping work has transformed run down parts of Bradford is expanding his venture to other parts of the region with help from Business Link Yorkshire.

Robin Dark’s innovative social enterprise Creative Spaces encourages people to get involved in improving the environment they live in. Using his team’s landscaping and design expertise neighbourhoods such as Manningham, Bierley and Ravenscliffe have been transformed and local people working with him have been able to gain NVQs and vital work experience.

“We’ve taken people who have had no formal academic qualifications and given them skills that have made it easier for them to find employment,” says Robin.

Mentoring and one-to-one support from Business Link’s

social enterprise advisers have helped Robin at every stage of the development of Creative Spaces.

“I know what my strengths are and I know when I need expert input. Business Link is a great first port of call and they never judged my ideas, no matter how unusual they were.

“If they don’t know the answer to a query they’ll find out and they always respond quickly, which is important in business.”

Robin has ambitious plans for the future of Creative Spaces and is taking on new projects in Leeds, Wakefield and even further afield in Grimsby. He wants to work with housing trusts to devise garden plans that will allow new tenants not only to choose the colour of their walls but to have a say in the way the outside of their home looks too.

Could you benefit from Business Link’s free, independent and impartial advice? Contact us now to find to what we can do for your business.

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“All too often beautiful new housing goes in with just a picket fence and a section of turf outside. If people were encouraged to think about the type of garden they wanted, whether it was low maintenance or something with more potential, they would be more likely to take an interest in it.”

Environmental features are at the forefront of all Robin’s projects and he has another vision that would see businesses with similar objectives working under one roof.

“If we shared office and warehouse space with a blacksmith and other related occupations for instance we could use their products in some of our garden designs. Businesses whose services and ideas overlap can bring huge benefits to each other if they’re based in one location working closely together.”

NB: A social enterprise is a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are reinvested for that purpose rather than being driven by the need to deliver profit to shareholders or owners. (DTI, Social Enterprise Strategy 2002)

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