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Zoe Marston, Cottingley Cornerstone Centre

Prince backs Cornerstone of the community

With help and advice from Business Link Yorkshire, a new, purpose built community centre on the outskirts of Bradford is now on course to be a national model for similar urban regeneration projects.

Cottingley Cornerstone Centre, a £4.5 million project, was set up by local people to provide an innovative complex of community facilities and homes. Fundraising initiatives and donations from charitable trusts supported the building project and rental income from organisations based within the centre is helping the social enterprise to develop and grow.

When building work was in progress project manager Zoe Marston worked with local Business Link adviser Linda Widdop to draw up an action plan based on the vision both she and the board of trustees had for the centre.

“We wanted Cottingley Cornerstone to be a thriving centre, used by the whole community, from young children through to the elderly. We had ambitious schemes to generate income and Business Link acted like a sounding board for our ideas. It was so helpful to have this feedback, to see if we were on the right lines.”

“Business adviser Linda Widdop quickly identified that people within and beyond the immediate community could use the centre. And we qualified for support through the Start-up Investment Fund to pay for specialist help with our literature and marketing materials to promote the centre and attract more permanent tenants,” said Zoe.

The Cottingley Cornerstone Centre leases a surgery building to the local Primary Care Trust and office space to Bradford Council. Daisy’s Café, an onsite bistro service, offers a training kitchen for people with learning difficulties and mental health issues.

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Facilities for children, a range of residential housing and a community hall, suitable for private hire are also part of the complex.

In the long term, through Business Link's mentoring scheme, Zoe will receive guidance from a business person who has experience of setting up and running a successful social enterprise and who understands the challenges involved.

The Cottingley Cornerstone Centre was officially opened by HRH The Prince of Wales in November 2008. The Prince has taken a keen interest in the development of the centre, committing support for the building from his charity, the Foundation for the Built Environment.

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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