

## Greenloaning Project

### Option Appraisal

#### Summary

Mindstretchers Ltd wish to explore possibilities for the lease of Greenloaning Primary School for the provision of an early years' service for 2 to 5 year olds. The site would be fully registered and managed alongside our existing Nature Kindergarten at Auchlone (on the Abercairney estate). The site would be run through our not-for-profit sister company Living Classrooms (a Community Interest Company).

Mindful of the delicate stage of discussions on the long term use of the site we are aware of the confidential nature of any discussions. In addition we presume no longer term discussions are currently possible. We are however open to meaningful discussions at the outset of partnership with the local Primary School and with local community groups as to the shape and style of any shared presence on the site.

We are seeking as a first step a dialogue with Perth and Kinross Council Education authority. This paper is intended as a basis for discussion on various options. Extended discussions may include SQA Training Centre and Model Classroom project.

#### Project Aims:

- To consolidate our reputation in Nature Kindergarten with a model second site compatible with Auchlone.
- To negotiate a mutually beneficial service with P&K Council and the local community.
- To meet customer demand for our service at a central location.

#### Project Objectives

- To apply best use of our experience and quality of provision.
- To build upon our philosophy and approach at a second, larger, more conventional site.
- To build a local community partnership provision with nursery as a focus.

#### Project Scope

- It is our understanding that Greenloaning Primary School is "mothballed" for a period of 3 years pending community consultation. Any attempts to use such a site would require community considerations such as interest from the local Ardoch Development Trust. A "stand still" period of 3 years will end around 2019 at which point a further decision will be required.
- The site is generously apportioned with extensive outside areas, separate boys, girls and staff toilets and amenities, manager office, 3 large working rooms, full fire safety facilities and limited food preparation area. The site is in very good condition and has a heating plant which is assumed to be fully operational.

- The site based upon a simple layout plan has the capacity for around 40 children as an early years setting.
- The development of a second site is compatible with the experience of current management and staff at Auchlone most especially in the initial set up phase and 1<sup>st</sup> year of operation.
- It is expected that the site will not achieve its full potential immediately and a “phased” uptake will be required in the first year of operation. This introduces the concept of a partial or phased use of the site.

### **Timescales**

The main task areas are set out below and provisional timescales remain to be guided heavily by Perth and Kinross Council and any existing community interest. All dates are provisional at this stage pending discussions with P&K.

- Completion of initial scoping document and option appraisal for discussion June 2017. (complete)
- Detailed consultation with P&K Education authority July 2017.
- Community consultation August 2017.
- Leasing terms and conditions September 2017.
- Completion of financial evaluation process September 2017.
- Council approval Autumn 2017.
- Phase 1 take up at around 50% occupancy in year 1.
- Site opening January 2018.
- Phase 2 full occupancy January 2019

### **Options**

The site at Greenloaning is well located and of sufficient size to offer a range of solutions to many potential aspirations. The generosity of the outside area too offers further possibilities for education and early year’s services. The following 4 broad options provide a platform for initial discussions though alternative proposals are welcome.

1. **Option 1:** limited partial use of the site for a small introductory number of children at least in the first year. Developing and building the service over time.
2. **Option2:** Full use of the site for a 40 child nursery targeting ultimately 85% occupancy.
3. **Option 3:** Shared use of the site with a community group and/or Council education or training service and a fixed maximum number of children.
4. **Option 4:** Formal partnership with P&K Council Education Service for joint working with Braco Primary school incorporating a Nursery and “Transitions” service.

### **Mindstretchers Ltd**

Mindstretchers Ltd was established in 1997 and is the central player in our organisational family. It has a pivotal role in maintaining an effective service delivery, development and training base including the following functions;

- An international training provider based in Perthshire.
- We own and run award winning Auchlone Nature Kindergarten,
- Providing early years and primary age products globally,
- Employing central support staff and one field operative in sales,
- Providing research capability for Claire Warden courses and publications,
- Organising study tours and conferences locally and globally.
- Mindstretchers has a strong UK presence and track record and growing social media presence.

### **Living Classrooms**

Living Classrooms is a Community Interest Company aimed at ensuring a community connection and social context to the work we do. Founder and driver in the International Association of Nature Pedagogy with a strong track record in Forest School. Designed to complement the above company structure in function, established in 2010 it will be the home by September 2017 for our existing and future Nursery and Nature Kindergarten provision. It;

- Is designed as a social enterprise,
- Is not-for-profit,
- Has community purpose enshrined in its objectives,
- Has the necessary "asset lock" and "dividend caps" in place to defend its purpose,
- Is regulated,
- Is designed to re-invest any surplus after costs,
- Is designed to attract potential grant funding or philanthropic investment.

Living Classrooms enjoys access to all of Mindstretchers Ltd courses and publications and further benefits from the products and support.

#### **Our vision:**

Leading inspirational learning inside, outside and beyond.

#### **Our mission:**

To deliver expert knowledge, skills, services and products around the world to improve the learning experiences for children.

#### **Our values:**

Enthusiastic, knowledgeable, customer-focused, quality-focused, acting with integrity, innovative and inspirational.

#### **Nature Kindergarten values used to underpin the approach we have:**

- Small numbers of children in home styled spaces,
- Mixed age group sessions,
- Community hub,
- Open ended resources in visually simple spaces,

- Risk-full learning,
- Eco friendly and sustainable living,
- Physicality,
- Consideration of inner and outer health,
- Children as motivated thinkers,
- Children as capable and competent,
- Trust in their self-preservation,
- Respect for children – their views, differences and levels of ability.

### Service Model

Claire Warden set up Auchlone Nature Kindergarten in 2008 for children aged between two and six years old. We spend about 90% of our day outdoors in all weathers. The three spaces of inside the nursery cottage, outside in the garden or outdoor kitchen, as well as the beyond in the wild wood, are designed to develop skills and confidence from within a natural setting. Nature provides a range of purposeful contexts that the children can really become involved in. The planting and harvesting of vegetables, the creation of habitat piles to increase biodiversity in the area and the use of natural streams to explore the properties of water all give children tangible ways of working with and in nature to increase their connection to it. Children are able to explore nature in depth in nature time so some investigations might take a year or more.

Auchlone Nature Kindergarten has earned a valued place in the Crieff community since its opening. It provides a warm, nurturing, family ethos based on mutual respect. We offer a highly consultative environment where children are involved in the planning process and experiences on offer are relevant and led by children's interests. The children's voices and the process of learning are recorded in Talking and Thinking Floorbooks, a method developed by Claire Warden. These books are developed with the children; they share their ideas and contribute their understanding at their own level. They document group learning experiences and consultations and value each child as an individual recording their progress and understanding throughout.

### Greenloaning

Our experience as a current provider will prepare us well for delivery at a site like Greenloaning, both as a partner provider of Perth and Kinross Council and with positive relations with the Care Inspectorate.

Though substantially different in some ways from our current setting in both scale and surrounding environment, it offers the opportunity to adapt a similarly excellent service in more conventional surroundings. However, our core values as relate to respect for children's voices and connection to community will remain central.

23% of our current attendees are 2 years                      1:5 Staff Ratio

77% of our current attendees are 3 or 4                      1:8 Staff Ratio

The service proposal therefor will assume a similar provision at Greenloaning.

At 85% attendance there will be around 34 children at any time. At 50% attendance if a year 1 "phased" use of the site is preferred would be 20 children initially. Ultimately the provision of a Nursery at Greenloaning will create around 7 new jobs for early year's practitioners.

#### **Early learning and Childcare Funding:**

Since August 2014 the Scottish Government has funded up to 600 hours per year of free childcare to all 3 and 4 year olds (16 hours per week) and to some eligible 2 year olds. This funding is allocated through local authorities and Auchlone Nature Kindergarten, as a Partner Provider of Perth & Kinross Council, is eligible to receive this funding.

The funding is designed to provide parents with choice and it can be used flexibly, either directly to a provider for qualifying hours, alongside additional unfunded hours, or split across different providers.

Partner Provider Funding is a key consideration for making a project such as this operational and effective. It is assumed as an existing partner at this time that, if Greenloaning were deemed acceptable as a project that we can continue as Partner Providers for Early Learning and Childcare Funding.

