

Press Release – Students of Bradfield School, 29th September 2009

The Dam Flask Project

The students of Bradfield School in the north of Sheffield are leading a unique school project following an education workshop with the City of Sheffield Rowing Club.

Children were asked to design a new eco friendly, sustainable facility for rowers. The school's close proximity to Dam Flask Reservoir allowed the children to measure and research the existing site, which formed the basis for their ideas.

This morning, with the support of Sheffield Hillsborough MP Angela Smith and Local Councillor Peter Price, the children hosted a 'Launch Day' to present their designs to officials from Sheffield City Council, South Yorkshire Sport, Yorkshire Water and Sheffield Hallam University.

Angela Smith introduced the children who gave a speech to outline their ambitious task:

"In May this year, we heard that our local rowing club really wanted to have a new boathouse, as their own is really quite unfit for the number of new members they want to attract.

There's only one toilet for a large number of people and no electricity on site. The generator they have to use is so noisy; they have to shout if they want to speak to each other. How anti-social!! The changing rooms are very basic, and the space for the rowers to train on the rowing machines is shared by the sink cupboard they call 'the kitchen'.

Not only that, the space available to store boats is very limited – that's why some are stacked up outside. The main problem is that if they can't buy any more boats because they have nowhere to put them, they can hardly invite lots of people to come and have go!

We did a bit of research and found that 3 clubs share the Dam Flask centre – the University of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University and the City of Sheffield Rowing Club. All three are successful, with lots of wins this year.

So – with the help of some nice professional people, we invited some of the members to come to our school so that we could help them to come up with some ideas. We held workshops where we were able to interview them and find out lots of information about the type of building the clubs would need and what facilities such a building would offer.

The rowers want a proper gym and changing rooms, a proper kitchen and area where they can chill out after a hard training session. They want somewhere where they can stand and watch their team mates when they're rowing on the dam. Most of all, they want somewhere big enough to store their boats, both now, and in the future, when the club has grown.

We took notes of all their ideas, but we want to make sure that the building is the most environmentally sustainable building we can possibly construct.

We want to use renewable energy to provide the power it will use, and the materials we use to build and furnish it have to be brought in from within 25 miles of Sheffield if possible. After all, if we use sustainable, legal timber which had been imported from the other side of the world, it's hardly environmentally friendly, is it?! Think of the carbon footprint to get it here!! We have to ensure we purchase our materials responsibly. This means we must also chose responsible suppliers who really care about green issues!

It's so important to make sure the building fits in well with its surroundings. It's really lovely here at Dam Flask – lots of people come walking here, particularly since our friends at Yorkshire Water put a path all around the dam. So we don't want to build anything that sticks out like a sore thumb. There's no reason why it can't be modern and practical though! Our friends at Bradfield Parish Council and Peak Park Planning Department are helping us to make sure that we do things in the right way.

Not only that, we wanted to improve the woodland area around the boathouses. There are some lovely mature trees, and after our landscapers visited site with Sheffield Wildlife Trust, we realised there's a lot of wildlife in there too! So we thought it would be a great idea to put in some bird and bat boxes, a pond and some pathways, and other features which would encourage some more wildlife to move in. We would repair the stone walls around the site, and make it tidy and safe by removing broken branches and dead wood.

We also designed a room within the boathouse which could be used by children from different schools and the general public to learn about the habitat we had created.

One of the other great things about managing this project for our clients at the rowing clubs is that we have found out what real professionals do. There are so many jobs involved in construction, and we have become managers, architects, surveyors and landscapers. We've used all the proper equipment and pulled together all our plans and designs. We hope to see our ideas become a reality through the eyes of all the professionals involved, from planning to site engineering to project management.

Our next step is to let our community and our city know what we are doing. We're proud to be involved in such a great sporting challenge, and give the public an opportunity to see that rowing isn't just for elite sportsmen – anyone can do it and to prove that, we're inviting you today to have a go! We're doing it, so don't be frightened – it's really good fun!

We know that this boathouse is the first of its kind to involve young people like ourselves in its design and construction. We hope you will support us, and follow our progress. We want this to be a project that is 'made in Sheffield', by businesses – large and small.

Soon we will have a shopping list which will detail all the construction skills and environmentally friendly building materials we will need to put this together. Any company who cares about our planet will be invited to take a look at our list and see if they can help us and become 'friends of the Dam Flask project'.

To all those who have given their time to come here today, we thank you very much. We also extend those thanks to all those who were unable to come, but who offered their support, including Lord Sebastian Coe, Sir Steve Redgrave, Gerry Sutcliffe MP and Richard Caborn MP."

The students, along with professionals from Class Of Your Own Limited who deliver educational workshops in schools, will now progress their exciting design with planners from the Peak District National Park. Sheffield born director, Alison Watson, said "My colleague, Dan Gibson, and I, developed our workshops to inspire children to consider a future in the construction industry by introducing them to 'real life' professionals. We are amazed by the imagination and creativity which the students of Bradfield School have brought to this project. The Dam Flask Rowing Centre will evolve with the children all the way to give them an unforgettable learning experience, and certainly something they can be really proud of. "

Donald McDougall, Chairman of City of Sheffield Rowing Club, was thoroughly impressed by the students. "I thought, 'getting 12 year olds to design a rowing club? That will never work!' And yet these guys have come up with some brilliant ideas – it's just so good to see their enthusiasm. I hope their enthusiasm will help us get this project completed successfully and hope to see 30 new rowers coming down here in 2 or 3 years time getting ready to go to the Olympics....we're not a London centric organisation – the Olympics belong to *Britain*, and we're looking at the next Olympians here today".

The Launch Day ended appropriately with Dam Flask Rowers taking guests, including some of the students, out onto the dam in an 8 man rowing boat, with City Of Sheffield Club member and World Class Rower, Vicky McDougall as coxswain.

Anyone who would like to help the project or find out more can visit www.damflaskproject.co.uk or telephone Alison Watson on 07903 704599.