



Valleys academy plan for former court



ITEC Joint MD Steve Doyle (left) discusses plans with Jonathan Gray, ITEC Business Support Manager, outside the former Llwynypia Courthouse.

ITEC Training is planning to turn a former magistrates court and nuclear bunker in the Rhondda into a modern academy to serve thousands of learners and job-seekers throughout the Valleys.

ITEC is poised to sign a lease on Llwynypia Magistrates Court, which closed around 18 months ago. At nearly 13,000 square feet, the building is twice the size of ITEC's main Training Academy in Crawshay Court, Cardiff.

A project team has been working on development options for the unique premises since ITEC started talks with the property company that purchased the site this autumn.

If all goes according to plan, it is likely to become ITEC's centralised service facility for the whole of Rhondda Cynon Taff, enabling an expansion in the number and type of

courses on offer, possibly delivered in partnership with other training providers. The building could accept its first students early next year.

ITEC has well-established premises in Cardiff, Newport, Cwmbran and Porth. Following the award of a £10.7 million contract by the Welsh Government earlier this year, the organisation has opened up further centres in Caerphilly, Pontypridd and Bridgend to help cope with the anticipated doubling in throughput of learners.

The 20-year-old, two-storey Llwynypia building includes rooms originally used for court hearings,

juries, lawyers and the public as well as records storage and cells for prisoners. But it is most notable for an extraordinary network of underground, lead-lined rooms, built to withstand the aftermath of a nuclear explosion.

During the Cold War, authorities in Britain wanted to make sure at least some administrators and key personnel in every county survived an attack, emerging after 14 days. The courthouse basement comes complete with a sophisticated air filtration system, blast-proof doors, self-contained water and power supplies, food storage and eating areas.

In 1992, a year after the bunker was built, the Home Office withdrew the regulations that made building them compulsory. The reorganisation of court services throughout the UK last year left the building without a role.

ITEC Joint Managing Director Steve Doyle said "When the court building was placed on the market, the more we looked at the possibilities the more appropriate it became for our expansion plans.

"Among other attractions, it has extensive, flexible accommodation suitable for running many different activities on the same site in a constructive environment. It is a very high-spec building in a good position well served by rail and bus links.

"We are currently considering various developmental options but we believe it is well-placed to become a flagship, academy-style institution enabling learners throughout RCT to acquire new skills and enhance their job prospects. It would also be a demonstration of our commitment to deliver the skills training that government programmes demand."

Best Wishes to all for 2012 !



This year ITEC was awarded its biggest-ever Welsh Government contract, we passed our Estyn inspection with flying colours, we opened centres in three new towns, we were twice visited by government Skills Ministers and increased our staff numbers substantially to cope with the extra activity in all areas.

As the main story on this page shows, we are always seeking opportunities to improve our services and ensure we continue to offer value for money. ITEC staff can justifiably take professional and personal pride in the numbers of learners they have helped in so many different ways.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish all those who work with ITEC, throughout the public and private sectors, a very happy festive season and a successful New Year. Once again we are making a donation in lieu of cards to the charity chosen by our staff this year.

Ceri Murphy, Joint Managing Director

Learners gain from pet project

ITEC learners now have the chance to gain a qualification in a new subject – animal care – thanks to a partnership with an award-winning pet store in Tonypanyd.

Up to 90 youth and adult learners a year will gain valuable work experience with Your Pets Warehouse, a social enterprise dedicated to providing training, volunteer and paid employment opportunities for local individuals who are furthest away from the labour market.

The store, in River View, is a popular and commercially successful venture supplying a large range of feedstuffs and other pet products as well as smaller animals. A registered charity, it was launched by managing director Kate Wood in 2009 and has 10

permanent staff.

As a training base, the store offers individuals the opportunity to gain NVQ Level 1 qualifications in Animal Care, Customer Service and Business Administration under a work-based learning programme carried out in conjunction with ITEC.

Charlotte Aubrey, YPW's Training Manager, said "Our trainees may include young people with additional support needs or those that left school with few or no qualifications. The training not only helps them gain qualifications but also helps them develop social skills. It has been very successful."

She added "To broaden their experience still further, we now run a stall selling pet items in Tonypanyd's Friday street market, manned by learners. We intend to replicate the complete YPW model throughout Wales."

ITEC learner Callum Walford, aged 17, a dog-owner, said "I love animals and want to know more about them



Your Pets Warehouse Training Manager Charlotte Aubrey with pet shop boys Callum Walford (left) James Berry and Josh Edwards (right).

and how to take proper care of them, hopefully finding a job working with animals later.

"The staff have been loads of help. It is awesome that I have managed to complete the work-taster programme and progress on to the Level 1 Traineeship in just one month."

The business is supported by many organisations, including Job Centre Plus, Careers Wales, Ysgol Hen Felin, RCT Day Services, Elite Supported

Employment Agency, Social Firms Wales and the local AM, Leighton Andrews.

Sian Williams, ITEC Stakeholder Engagement Officer, said "Many trainees finish the 13 or 26-week course in YPW with accredited qualifications and also increased confidence in themselves and their ability to interact better with others, which we hope they will use to find sustained paid employment."

Rachel lends an ear

ITEC learners who have challenging family or home circumstances or emotional problems can now take advantage of a free, confidential counselling service.

Recognising that there are many human issues which can hinder an individual's chances of personal development, ITEC has appointed an experienced, trained counsellor to offer support.

Rachel Roberts joins the organisation from a Bridgend comprehensive school where she was a pupil support officer. Rachel has a university post-graduate diploma in cognitive behavioural therapy, an effective approach used worldwide to help people with their problems by changing the way they think about things. She has also completed a three-year college course on advanced counselling skills.

Rachel said "We are very conscious of the issues that can face learners. This service aims to help them work through their difficulties, understand themselves better and find ways of managing their situation. It is voluntary and completely confidential."

Leaflets explaining the service are



available at ITEC centres. They list 18 of the most common problems and set out how the appointments process works. Learners can self-refer or go through their tutors, who will also continue to provide support as appropriate.

Rachel said "Counselling aims to help learners feel more in control of their lives, able to make decisions and put them into action. It's a listening ear in a safe environment."

Goldie boys boost ITEC's Kids effort

Once again, ITEC staff and learners around the region threw themselves into fund-raising for Children in Need, but for the Bridgend Centre, the day turned into something really special!

Rhys and Eggsy from top band Goldie Lookin Chain turned up at ITEC's Wyndham Street offices along with a team from BBC Radio Wales, after adult learner Sarah Trapp, who organised the activities, let them know what was happening.

Sarah, supported by her tutor Irene Hill, a veteran of many fund-raising events, did herself and her colleagues proud when she and Irene were interviewed live on the Roy Noble radio show.

Said Sarah "Goldie have a huge following, especially in Wales and when the BBC said they would like to call in, everyone was really excited. They were here for almost an hour and it was great fun."

Irene said "Sarah worked very hard leading up to CiN day, including securing sponsorship from the Music Box, Riverside Tavern and Tesco. She was very good on radio and I think she learned a lot from the event as well as helping others."

Pictured: On Air – Sarah (in hat) and Irene are interviewed by GLC stars Eggsy (back left) and Rhys (front right) with the BBC crew.



Following their dreams...

ITEC students are giving a big helping hand to a national charity – and learning all about business administration and decorating projects in return!

Follow Your Dreams raises funds and awareness to support youngsters with learning disabilities, helping them to explore and develop their potential through music, art, sport and drama.

The charity is growing in size and popularity and its small staff were having to be jack-of-all-trades, doing everything from routine office duties to planning and implementing fund-raising campaigns and appeals.

A phone call from ITEC Stakeholder Engagement Officer Sian Williams has led to four learners moving in to the charity's headquarters in Talbot Green, near Cardiff and taking over a number of reception and back office tasks, allowing staff more time for front-line duties.



Practical learning – Practical learning – FYD chief executive Sue Sugarman with two of the ITEC students, Christian Thomas (left) and Karl Collings.

That's not all; when ITEC learned that the charity's rooms needed refurbishment, a task force of construction students from ITEC's Porth Centre was set up under the supervision of tutor Phil Williams and descended on the offices to decorate and put up shelves etc.

FYD Chief Executive Sue Sugarman said "We were delighted when ITEC offered to lend a hand and it is working out really well; the learners

are good workers, most reliable and willing and they contribute to our fund-raising ideas as well as shouldering some of the workload. We are more than ready to take on a few more!"

The first group of learners comprised Sharon Comins, Christian Thomas, Dawn Harris Abdul and Karl Collings, who are all working towards their NVQs in business administration.

Christian said "This is a good way to see how things are run in an office – and in a charity. There are lots of different disciplines and it is in a real environment. It's great experience."

Sian Williams said "This is a win-win arrangement for everyone. We like to get our learners into a real work situation and the charity is benefiting from the extra pairs of hands."

Dave is saddled with charity effort

Stakeholder Engagement Officer Dave May won't forget the day he called into JobCentrePlus in Porth to raise awareness of ITEC services.

Deciding that Dave, a full-back for Abercwmboi RFC, looked fit, the JCP staff immediately signed him up for their fund-raising bike ride to from Porth to Cardiff on a static bicycle in their offices.

Dave duly pedalled away for half an hour – covering the equivalent of 14.8 miles – raising £52 towards the total for MacMillan Cancer Nurses. Said Dave "I don't think they expected me to last that long! I

completed slightly more than the actual distance so I think they decided to aim for somewhere farther away!" More fundraising fun success - see back page.



Deb's name in lights

It's always good to receive feedback from those we work with – particularly when someone has been so impressed with ITEC's service that they take the trouble to put it in writing. From time to time we highlight examples.



Christalla Redmond is Advisory Services Manager at JobCentrePlus in Charles Street, Cardiff. In an email to ITEC Operations Manager Amanda Williams, she said:

"I would like to take this opportunity to give you some feedback on one of your staff, Deb Moseley.

"Deb attended my weekly communication meeting to update the advisers on what was available under the new Steps to Employment opportunities. It was an excellent overview with Deb

giving a very positive, enthusiastic delivery of the services ITEC can provide."

Christalla added "Deb offered to attend Charles Street on a regular basis to take claimant referrals. This she hoped would support advisers and build better working relationships and understanding as to ITECs commitment to moving claimants into work. I feel I should pass on advisers' comments to me about Deb's level of commitment and support."

Amanda Williams said "Well done Deb.

We are always pleased to receive such comments about our staff, especially as a good working relationship between ITEC and JCP is vital to the whole process of helping people find work."

A blushing Deb said "I am naturally enthusiastic about my job because I see what a difference the service can make to the lives of individuals. But I'm just one of a team – there are plenty more in ITEC whose approach is the same."

Rugby star bats for charity

At first glance it looks like Wales scrum half Mike Phillips might have been developing an interest in cricket - just in case the rugby World Cup didn't work out!

Prior to leaving for New Zealand, the star was simply lending a sporting hand to highlight the fund-raising efforts of the Lady Taverers - an offshoot of the famous Lord's Taverers cricket-based charity – and ITEC.

ITEC staff, together with match-funding from the company, collected £4,000 for the Lady Taverers during the year through a variety of activities

and Mike was happy to be on hand for the cheque presentation at ITEC's Training Academy in Crawshay Court, Cardiff.

The Lady Taverers help finance equipment for disadvantaged children, such as mini buses, sensory equipment, specialist playgrounds, hoists for getting in and out of swimming pools or onto horses, as well as assisting with the purchase of bags and equipment for needy grassroots cricket clubs.

Jo Prosser said "We are extremely grateful to ITEC for their contribution. A glance at the Lady Taverers website will show where the money goes and we are also lucky to have the support of leading personalities in many different sports."



That's quite a catch- ITEC managing director Steve Doyle (front left) presents a cheque to Jo Prosser and Jane John (right) of the Lady Taverers, with Mike Phillips and ITEC learners

• Forget cryogenic chamber conditioning in Poland and other fancy training – it is now clear that one of the biggest boosts to the performance of two of the stars of Wales' World Cup team was...the ITEC effect! Mike Phillips ended up being hailed as one of the tournament's stars,

while captain Sam Warburton (before referee Alain Rolland intervened!) won critical praise with storming displays. It so happens that Sam presented Awards to ITEC learners on a previous occasion (pictured left) – thus adding extra interest in his career for learners and their parents!



Porth brickies building a reputation

Construction learners at ITEC's Porth Centre are becoming such dab hands at bricklaying that consideration is being given to setting up a semi-permanent display of their handiwork.

Once the learners have mastered the art of building a brick wall, with all its variations, they are moving on to more complex structures such as arches and twisted pillars.

Construction is one of the most

popular courses offered by ITEC. Instruction includes areas such as plastering and woodwork – skills which can not only give learners a chance of permanent work but which can also save them money in future when it comes to DIY.

Construction tutor Phil Williams said "Bricklaying is aesthetic and satisfying and many learners are surprised to find how much pride they get out of creating a structure. Once they see what

you can do with bricks and a bit of imagination, they want to have a go."

Learner Dan Stapleton, who created a twisted pillar, said "It does give you a sense of achievement and it is good experience. The construction trade may be a bit quiet in the recession at the moment, but I hope it will pick up again."

The Centre uses a special mix of cement which is suitable for temporary bricklaying but which



Construction Tutor Phil Williams with 'brickies' (from top left) Dan Stapleton, Sam Rogers and Liam Lewis with Connor Mansfield and Ryan Moon.

allows the structures to be dismantled regularly for repeated practice. The Centre is looking into the possibility of creating a small exhibition area to inspire new learners.

Leading the way in training

ITEC has again demonstrated its ability to design and deliver bespoke training packages, whether it is teaching young people essential skills or introducing them to modern management and team-leading techniques.

Last year education authorities decided to offer school pupils a taste of the skills and demands associated with running a team – one of the key workplace disciplines.

As part of a pilot initiated by the National Training Federation for Wales, 52 pupils aged 15 to 18

studied for the Institute for Leadership and Management's Level 2 Award in Team Leading. Four training providers, including ITEC, designed their own programmes and delivered them free.

The initiative produced such good results that this year ITEC has been awarded contracts by both Cardiff

and Monmouth education authorities to run further ILM courses. Pupils attend training sessions for two hours a week over an 18-week period.

The ITEC team responsible for this year's programme comprises Traineeships Contracts Manager Paul Napier, Apprenticeships Contracts Manager Ed Thompson and Delivery

Manager Rachel Phillips.

Said Paul "We were pleased to be asked to continue the programme. Given the time available, we looked at what would best convey the principles, the art and the science of leadership. It's a different challenge for many pupils but the feedback has been excellent."



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