**Forward Thinking Developments**

**Development Prospectus: and Call for Support**

Forward Thinking Developments is a not-for-profit organisation with a single director (Geoff Bateson). From a base in Birmingham (UK) it undertakes:

1. to explore a range of thinking within a loose framework structured around ideas about learning, cities, skills, capabilities, contemporary art, sense of place, writing, research, policy implementation and other connected topics.
2. to produce a wide variety of writings that act more as stimulants to further thinking than as definitive statements on the chosen topics.
3. to make a range of articles, with broad appeal, freely available via a website; and to share thinking via seminars, networks and conferences.

Over the period 2010-2014 a range of activities and writings have been undertaken. Many of the outcomes from these have been loaded onto the [www.thewordsthething.org.uk](http://www.thewordsthething.org.uk) website, which now holds a substantial amount of what can only be described as ‘eclectic’ content. Scrolling back through the site postings you get:

* Several fiction and nonfiction pieces written in relation to the ‘Metropolis’ contemporary art exhibition at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery
* An exploration of how far Twitter can be a useful learning tool, and a 30 page summary of the learning from this exploration: ‘Thinking about Cities: An exploration of contemporary themes’
* A couple of fictional accounts resulting from walking around Birmingham as if it were New York
* A  summary of the outcomes from Birmingham’s Core Skills Development Partnership’s work on a whole-city approach to raising standards of literacy and numeracy (across all age groups)
* A fictional account of a stroll around Vancouver, based on that city’s public art
* Three articles thinking about planning and cities; change and cities; flourishing cities
* A document on the contribution of learning to flourishing neighbourhoods
* A taster of several short tales from ‘Made in Birmingham: The Tales’
* A taster of several poems from ‘Made in Birmingham: The Poems’
* A summary linked to a conference input on Work and Wellbeing
* A couple of articles on broad-based reading/writing developments
* A summary of the contribution that family learning can make to resilience of children and parents
* A history tracing back the economic/political changes that led to the establishment of a high-rise housing development on a peripheral piece of land
* An article on approaches to structural change across organisations
* An article on making all lessons learner-friendly
* A starter-piece, put as a question, on the idea of progress in contemporary art
* An exploration of the notion of Place
* A few pieces on ‘Stans’ : Countries ending in –stan; famous people called Stanley; and a trailer for a yet-to-be-written report of an imaginary tour of various –stans by various Stans

The site content is building up quite nicely and is meeting the original aims of being broad-based, interesting, responsible, thoughtful, different etc. The majority of the work has been self-initiated rather than externally-commissioned. Whilst some suggestions have been followed up, the approach has thus not been constrained to meeting specific objectives of others nor limited to one particular style of writing or presentation.

These developments have gone hand-in-hand with a number of recent seminars/ workshops/ focused conversations/ conference inputs in cities in UK and Canada; most recently:

* Building an inclusive education system
* How cities may need to think and plan differently in the near future
* Partnership approaches to opening up opportunities to people with disabilities
* System-wide approaches to improvements in education
* Approaches to reducing child poverty in large complex cities

And earlier ones (in UK, Canada, Australia), including:

* What makes a learning city?
* City-wide improvements in adult basic skills – a multiagency approach
* Approaches to writing developments
* Contributions to creating flourishing neighbourhoods
* Supporting learning developments in children 0-5

**Next steps:**

Over the next five years the intention is to continue this broad set of explorations and developments. These are not fully predetermined but will fall within the loose framework outlined earlier. The outputs from the activities will continue to be made openly available via the [www.thewordsthething.org.uk](http://www.thewordsthething.org.uk) website.

On the back of the next-step developments and next-step materials it is anticipated that at least 15 workshop/seminars will be held in cities in the UK, US and Canada; at least 15 think-pieces of writing will be on the website; and at least 5 e-networks of interested people in different cities will be sharing ideas. The target for these activities is not the experts/senior managers who regularly get exposure to professional developments but the next-generation city thinkers who may be in mid-career or who may be undertaking postgraduate learning.

To enable all this to move forward at the scale and pace planned, I am seeking to secure a minimum of £45,000 support for activity over the period to 2018. £15,000 of this will be self-funded. Given the exploratory nature of what might be done, the remaining £30,000 of this support is being sought from simple donations from those interested people/agencies who see value in the approach being taken and who are willing to support a different way of doing things.

Given the wide-ranging interest already generated by the activity to 2013, we are convinced that there are organisations or individuals out there who are willing to make that simple gesture of support. One easy way of doing this is to visit [www.thewordsthething.org.uk](http://www.thewordsthething.org.uk) and use the ‘Donate’ button to make a secure payment via PayPal. An alternate is to send a cheque made out to ‘Forward Thinking Developments’ to our office at Forward Thinking Developments, 191 Vicarage Road, Birmingham, B14 7QQ, UK. If you prefer to explore further, then email to start a conversation around what support may be possible.

Geoff Bateson

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Indicative budget for support across five years 2015-2020

(Indicative in that these represent the most likely spread of development emphases as the project unfolds over the next five years; using best-estimate figures based on actual expenditures during the project period 2010-2014)

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| **Area of exploration/development/support** | Support sought | Self-funded |
| Five years of annual returns/audits for company |  | £2500 |
| Five years hosting of website; domain name; maintaining email, e-security |  | £ 800 |
| Early network conversations (in 2015) re next steps |  | £1700 |
| Engagement with a range of relevant audiences; alignment of development activities with audience needs (2015/16) |  | £ 900 |
| Explorations of the nature of ‘contemporary’ and application of this to poetry/art/research | £1000 |  |
| Seminars, workshops, focused conversations, conference inputs on framework topics | £3000 | £1500 |
| Further work on cities, public art, sustainability and civic engagement | £2700 | £1000 |
| Exploration of business models that could work for creative/ developmental enterprises | £1000 |  |
| Work on ‘value’, ‘impact’, ‘social use’, ‘public gain’ etc | £2000 | £1500 |
| Further work on ways of learning; skills and employabilities; capabilities and capacities | £1000 |  |
| Further work to link notions of place with ideas of change and the role of creativity | £2000 | £1250 |
| Work to explore understandings of notions of evidence; ‘what works’ etc | £1000 | £1250 |
| Work with others to gain insights into policy implementation, innovation, system change. | £1000 |  |
| Further work on flourishing, well-being – for organisations and for systems | £1000 |  |
| International visits, to engage in activities integral to the project  (\*) | £4300 | £1500 |
| Stationery, printing and miscellaneous materials |  | £1100 |
| Travel, accommodation, occasional meals where away from home (\*) | £4000 |  |
| Books, magazines, exhibition entry fees, miscellaneous support materials and costs | £1500 |  |
| Flexibility costs to incorporate new developments (\*) | £4500 |  |
| **Total (2015-2020)** | **£30000** | **£15000** |

[There is additional scope for separately supporting some one-off activities (eg a potential visit to Hiroshima; or a potential visit to some Central Asian republics between 2015 and 2020) – directly, or as in kind support through provision of air flights/hotel room bookings etc.]