



Removing Barriers, Finding Answers

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Press Release

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Planned closure of Thrift Farm would be ‘catastrophic failure’, says disability charity

Leading independent disability charity, BuDS, has said it is saddened and dismayed by Bucks County Council’s plan to close Thrift Farm, which provides work experience and training opportunities for nearly 70 learning-disabled adults and young people. The charity has called on the Council to postpone the decision to close the 52-acre site near Milton Keynes, saying that many positive opportunities to develop the service and diversify its funding have not even been explored by the council.

The charity, which includes learning-disabled people, carers and disability professionals among its volunteers, has submitted a report to the Council pointing out the many options to develop Thrift Farm and find new ways to fund it. These include joint working with Milton Keynes Council, who want the Farm to stay open, collaborative working with other organisations offering similar services, and the sale of some land to create an endowment fund. The charity has also pointed out that, far from being an ‘outdated’ service as claimed by BCC, ‘Green Care’ schemes like Thrift Farm are opening all over the country, including several here in Bucks like Lindengate and Missenden Walled Garden.

Ann Hedges, who leads BuDS’ learning disability and autism project, said:

“We feel this planned closure is premature and deeply unambitious. BuDS feels it would be a terrible disservice to learning-disabled people and their families to close this vital and valued service before all options for its future have been explored. An abrupt closure would be a catastrophic failure of service-provision”.

BuDS Chair of Trustees, Andrew Clark, added:

“We recognise that BCC has to make savings and that Thrift Farm has to change and evolve. But BCC is not even giving Thrift Farm a chance to move forward. The Farm could very easily offer modern, tailored services which move disabled people towards independence. BuDS feels very strongly that the council needs to be more ambitious and forward-thinking”.

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Find the full BuDS response at <https://buds.org.uk/thrift-farm/>

Notes

BuDS is Buckinghamshire's only independent pan-disability charity. Run by disabled people, it works to improve the lives of all disabled people by fixing the big problems that they encounter, such as bad accessibility, poor services, wrong attitudes or inadequate help. It has 18 active projects across Buckinghamshire, all run by over 50 volunteers, including Fair4All and BucksWorkability.