

Ref Code	Organisation Name
2023-05-YO07	Fulham Reach Boat Club
Visit Date	Visited By
12 th July 2023	Victoria Southwell

Overall aim of the funding

To support the physical and mental health of young offenders, and provide pathways to community integration, training and employment through a structured rowing and wellbeing programme within Feltham YOI and at the boat club for those post release.

Background to Organisation and governance

Fulham Reach Boat Club (FRBC) is a registered charity that was established in 2014 but agreed as part of planning approvals for the Fulham Reach housing complex in Hammersmith in 2011. The developers were required to provide funding for a project that would benefit the existing community as part of its Section 106 agreement with the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham and a community rowing club was established within the development. FRBC is run by a CEO and employs 8 permanent staff and 21 sessional coaches.

The Trustee board is made up of 8 people who bring a range of skills and knowledge to the organisation including business strategy, finance, governance, event management and operations, education, the prison service, and fundraising. Most of the board are also keen rowers and involved in competitive rowing to some degree. Two of the Trustees are nominated from St George PLC, Developer of the Fulham Reach scheme. Trustees meet four times a year and also sit on sub-committees that include Finance and Business Development.

FRBC has a strategic plan that runs from 2022-2024 and is titled "Extend our Reach". It builds on a previous plan that set nine targets to be achieved between 2016 and 2021. The plan identifies what was achieved, what was achieved that was off plan and what wasn't achieved and why. This then provides the building blocks for the current plan which groups targets into three core areas; Better delivery; A second site; and An expanded pontoon. Within each of these areas sit a number of objectives to help deliver these. This is a detailed document that is reviewed at Trustee meetings. A key part of the new CEO's role is to develop this strategy to support future growth and sustainability.

Leadership and expertise

At the assessment I met with Steve O'Connor (outgoing CEO) Adam Freeman-Pask (incoming CEO), Isobel Walsh (Prisons Manager) and Rachael Henshilwood (Trustee).

Steve set up FRBC and was involved in the original inception of the idea. He has grown the club significantly and been instrumental in developing many of the projects that now run. He was previously a professional rower. Adam joined FRBC a few weeks before our assessment and was still in his handover phase with Steve. Adam has a background in consulting and sport for development, having worked for Sport England.

Imogen runs the Boats not Bars programme and has a background in development work. She was a member of the GB Rowing Team from 2011-2016 and then worked

using her coaching skills to achieve social and physical wellbeing objectives. Rachael has been a Trustee for nearly four years and has a background in fundraising. She was a junior rowing champion and is an experienced Trustee who provides direction around strategic development. This role merges her two big interests in life.

Aims and Activities

FRBC's vision is Rowing for All. They aim to give access to rowing to a cross-section of their community, especially those who are most in need because of financial hardship or social circumstances and help them realise their full potential both on and off the water. FRBC run four key projects to achieve this vision;

- Boats not Bars – helping to reduce the reoffending rate of serving prisoners through access to indoor and outdoor rowing clubs,
- State School Rowing – giving every pupil in FRBC's participating schools the opportunity to learn to row and compete whilst teaching about the true meaning of teamwork, focus and confidence;
- Membership of FRBC – delivering access to the river for the local community through a fun, friendly and flexible club environment; and
- Free Water Sport Weeks – providing free to attend courses during the summer and Easter breaks for those children most in need.

Over 1,100 children and young people participate in programmes run by FRBC annually and in 2022, 90 participants took part in 70 Boats not Bars sessions in three prisons.

Safeguarding

FRBC has a clear Safeguarding policy that is informed by British rowing's Safeguarding Policy as they are an affiliated rowing club. The policy is clear and set out in an accessible way. The policy lists the named Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy as well as the Trustee DSL.

Staff receive training as part of their induction and then ongoing refresher training. A record of this training is kept by the DSL. A separate process is undertaken for the prison work that FRBC undertake that is linked to the Safeguarding policies of the prisons being visited.

There is good awareness of external referral routes and the close work that FRBC does with schools also ensures concerns are linked into their safeguarding practices.

Finances

Unaudited Financial Statements for the year ending 31st August 2022 show income of £793,495 against expenditure of £854,227 resulting in a deficit of £60,732. Net current assets amount to £1,725,548 and a reserve figure of £1,851,947 of which £558,947 is unrestricted. FRBC's reserves policy is to hold unrestricted reserves equivalent to the next six month forecast operating expenses and asset replacement reserves equivalent to the depreciation reserves in the accounts of the charity. Both of these are currently being met. FRBC is entitled to exception from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Budgets and funding predictions for the two-year period of the grant show a steady increase in planned expenditure rising by £150,000 in 23/24 and a further increase of £100,000 in 24/25. This is linked to acquiring an additional site and increased pontoon space which will enable an increase in beneficiaries and activities and is part of a planned growth plan. Reserves will be used to cover any fundraising gaps for the current financial year and investment in the fundraising capabilities within FRBC and the arrival of a new CEO make this viable. Main funding comes from schools, public

tuition, memberships and events and grants. Trusts and Foundations currently providing grants include National Lottery and John Lyons Charity.

Good financial systems are in place. Day to day management is undertaken by the Finance Manager, supported by the CEO and the Treasurer (who has a strong commercial finance background). The Finance Committee meet regularly to review cash flow and management accounts which are then shared with the full board.

Current Situation and need

Evidence shows that being active can make a difference to a prisoner's wellbeing, attitudes, and outlook. Research commissioned by the Ministry of Justice state that "participation (in sport) can not only improve health and behaviour but can directly contribute to efforts to reduce reoffending", and that "physical and mental health needs are recognised as key areas to be addressed in attempts to reduce reoffending". Indeed, a London Sport study found that "engagement in physical activity and sport was estimated to prevent 3,164 criminal instances among London males aged 10-24 years". The need to increase training and qualifications in prisons to help reduce reoffending is widely recognised. However, with many prisoners having disrupted schooling and 50% of 15–17-year-olds having numeracy and literacy levels of a 7–11-year-old (Taylor Review 2016), many are unwilling to step back into the classroom. They lack confidence and self-belief.

The Boats not Bars project works in partnership with the NHS Wellness Team at HMYOI Feltham who state that "recent evidence has indicated that the number of young people coming into custody with mental health needs has grown significantly over the last few years". Young people coming into the youth estate have typically experienced a high number of adverse childhood experiences in their families of origin (abuse, neglect, domestic violence) and/or their local communities (experiencing or witnessing serious violence). In response HMYOI Feltham have adopted a 'whole prison' approach to supporting the mental health needs of each young person. They aim to create a safe, mental health-informed environment where access to sports is part of this support network and pathway to stopping the cycle of reoffending.

Boats not Bars offers young offenders an important step in helping to change their mindset by providing structure and focus as well as increasing opportunities for offenders to be more active. It recognises the individuals' needs and potential and builds on the opportunity to teach young offenders' self-discipline, teamwork, and leadership – crucial skills for a life free of criminal behaviour. Rowing could be considered as unconventional in a prison setting and often seen as inaccessible to many in the wider community, therefore it tackles participants self-identity and sense of place in society, at its very roots.

The programme begins in prisons offering rowing activities led and delivered by an experienced and qualified coach and Double World Champion and supported by an additional FRBC qualified coach. Participants are helped to set and work towards personal goals, such as attendance targets, aiming for specific training times or distances, or developing coaching skills.

Courses run for eight weeks, and incorporate:

- 1 coaching session per week with the FRBC coach
- 1 training session per week to follow their personal training programme with the gym staff or FRBC Coach
- if gym access allows 1 additional session to be completed in participants own time and without coach encouragement

- weekly opportunities for discussion with the Wellbeing team and guided worksheets with wellbeing practitioners to enable participants to make links between physical activity and their mood.

8 young offenders can participate in each session and a total of 40 will benefit annually. Wherever possible participants will have the opportunity to volunteer at later courses and mentor the new intake, enabling them to develop their coaching skills, share their experiences and motivate and inspire others.

Boats Not Bars will also help offenders to resettle successfully into the community. Those released on temporary license (ROTL) or ex-offenders will be offered:

- A water based 10-week rowing course enabling skills learnt in prison to be transferred on to the river
- Opening membership of FRBC
- Those who show aptitude and commitment will be offered a pathway to taking the British Rowing Session Coach qualification
- Potential employment placements at FRBC such as boat maintenance or coaching
- Signposting to other local charities and organisations offering relevant support
- Signposting to other employment opportunities through linked partners.

FRBC are requesting a grant to enable them the continue delivering the Boats not Bars project in HMYOI Feltham and provide support and opportunities for young people who have participated in the programme once they are released.

Expected Changes in Year 1

Social Impact Area 1

Individual Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved motivation • Improved managing emotions • Improved self-discipline
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Social Impact Area 2

Health and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved mental wellbeing • Positive health behaviour • Increased physical activity
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Social Impact Area 3

Social and Community Cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased social capital and trust • Reduced anti-social behaviour • Improved cultural awareness of participants
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Request and Budget

FRBC is requesting **£60,788** over 2 years for the salary costs of a part time Community Bridge Mentor (0.4 FTE) and associated costs and boats nor bars project costs.

£29,594 in year 1 - £16,080 (salaries), £3,120 (Project Management), £2,500 (overheads), £2,400 (work experience), £1,994 (community-based activities), £1,750 (travel), £750 (training), £600 (recruitment) and £400 (materials).

£31,194 in year 2 - £17,088 (salaries), £3,432 (Project Management), £2,750 (overheads), £2,640 (work experience), £2,094 (community-based activities), £1,925 (travel), £825 (training) and £440 (materials).

Conclusion

Fulham Reach Boat Club is a really interesting organisation that pushes the boundaries about what a rowing club is like. It has incredible facilities, is fabulously located and has a genuine commitment to working across the communities that it was set up to target. The work that they have done in prisons to date has had limitations

(due to working on the prison estate) but has clearly shown real potential for engaging with young offenders and helping them to move forward in their lives. The key link in the prisons they work in to the psychology services ensures that the support is integrated into a wider approach to well-being and improved mental health – a vital factor in helping a young person successfully navigate both their time in custody and their release.

I was really impressed with the team that I met at FRBC. They are all firstly rowers, many of whom have enjoyed considerable professional success, but there was also a deep empathy and understanding for the social issues that the participants they work with experience. These two groups are often worlds apart but I was convinced that this unusual pairing of life experiences and usually elite activities complemented each other well. I met a club member who had heard about the project before he was released from prison and had come to the club and spoke powerfully about the difference that had made to his successful rehabilitation. I was also shown testimonies from men and women who had participated in the Boats not Bars programme at the four prisons FRBC currently work in and again was struck by how impactful the programme had clearly been.

Rowing has the ability to cut across genders and abilities. It mixes mindfulness with physical exertion and FRBC feel that part of the reason why it has been so well received by all groups within the prison estate is due to it being a non-contact activity. This combination of factors makes it accessible for people who have experienced trauma and want to avoid contact sports or for those who struggle to manage their anger and can find themselves reacting negatively in other team-based situations where emotions can be heightened.

When I met with FRBC I was impressed with the work they described within prisons and didn't struggle to see the benefit of this kind of programme. I did feel though that there were a couple of issues with the proposal, and this framed a detailed discussion. Firstly, there is a difficulty in understanding any kind of impact if the intervention is time limited and only takes place within the prison. Quite how you can track a young person on release and measure any reoffending is hard to understand. We discussed how FRBC could work more closely with the Wellbeing Team at the prisons and ask them to provide data to support a positive interaction with the project. We also discussed FRBC contacting Prison Radio Association, an organisation we currently fund, to help them think through how you can capture outcomes about beneficiaries that you don't keep a direct link to. PRA have been funded by Triangle Trust to look at this very issue with an external agency and so have significant current expertise to share.

The other area that I felt didn't entirely stack up was the offer in the community from the club. I could see that coming to the club could be extremely beneficial to a young person and that there were huge opportunities for staff to be able to provide support, however the application had not factored in any staff time to facilitate this nor the barriers a young person might face in engaging under their own steam. There was a reliance on the fact that a young person would naturally gravitate to the club and that the good will of club members would ensure that the young person was welcomed. The FRBC team did recognise that there was a gap here and that by formalising and expanding the community element of the project they could do a huge amount more. With that in mind it was agreed that FRBC would submit a revised project proposal that would incorporate a community element that would be delivered from within the club setting. This would enable the proposed employment of a part time worker who would provide through the gate support to young people within the prison estate and work with local probation teams to ensure suitable referrals into the project. They

would also be able to ensure a smooth welcome into the club and club activities and provide ongoing support and links to other projects and support networks.

This now makes the proposed project far more robust and comprehensive. It has the potential to really maximise the assets and USP of the boat club and ensure that young people who attend the club are provided with the kind of high-quality support they need. Whilst this represents an increase in the total amount of the grant being requested it is still a reasonable request and it will be extremely interesting to see how the work in the community develops. FRBC are keen to develop this work further as part of their core offer and this expanded project will give them an opportunity to really see the value their project offers and build on this for the future.

This is a strong and interesting project, therefore, a grant of £60,788 over two years is recommended for the revised project proposal.

Recommended Priority Rating		
Risk = Low	Difference to organisation = High	Priority = High