

NORTH LANARKSHIRE
COUNCIL
REPORT

To: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE		Subject: THE MARI GROUP - BEST PRACTICE PROJECT PRESENTATION
From: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT		
Date: 19 November 1996	Ref: MMcC/EH REP 109	

Mari (Scotland) Limited is a Training Organisation incorporating Astra Training Services (Scotland) Limited based at Bellshill Industrial Estate North, Bellshill. The company is involved in a range of training for unemployed people throughout Lanarkshire and are part of the Mari Group with offices throughout the United Kingdom. The Group recently gave a presentation to the Convener of Economic Development, the Director of Planning & Development and the Economic Development Manager on their new training initiative, Best Practice Project, which aims at creating a U.K. wide network of training excellence for the next millennium.

The best practice model proposed by the Mari Group aims to establish a U.K. wide network of best practice training facilities which are able to offer the highest level of training provision to the widest range of people. Located in deprived urban areas and with the full support of the relevant local Economic Development network the centres will seek to ensure that training opportunities are provided which can lead to quality, sustainable employment resulting in increased prosperity for the individuals, their employers, the areas in which they live and, ultimately, the wider economy. The summary of the main points of this new concept is outlined below:-

- The Best Practice project will deliver technology training based on NVQs/SVQs.
- Training areas will cover both the service and manufacturing sectors.
- A strong emphasis will be placed on the development of Core Skills.
- The project will promote and encourage lifelong learning.
- Strong links will be developed with employers, especially SMEs with under 25 employees.
- The project will also encourage non-vocational learning - "Learning for Leisure".
- The project will target young people and the adult unemployed.
- New technology solutions will be used to provide enhanced, flexible training delivery.
- Full initial assessment will be carried out for all candidates.
- All training provided will be based on a Personal Training & Development Plan.
- The project will embrace fully the opportunities provided by the Information Society.
- A Cyber Cafe will be the focal point for employer/participant interaction.
- Maximum assistance into work will be provided by Hi-tech Jobs Forum.
- A culture of quality will be generated, fostering strong values and personal qualities.

- Partnership is key to the success of the project at both local and national levels.

A copy of the full proposal is available to members by contacting the Economic Development Unit.

The Best Practice network will extend across the United Kingdom. The location of the centres will be decided primarily by the degree of local need and the extent to which local partnership can be fostered. Mari is eager to set up a Best Practice centre in North Lanarkshire to address the needs of local people and to maximise the opportunities presented by the change in the economy. The group is interested in setting up a facility in the area which will incorporate a cyber cafe at its hub. This will be the focus for providing an informational link between participants and employers as well as a leisure and learning facility for the local community. All participants in the project will be given free access to the internet. This will provide access to resources from which many people currently find themselves excluded. In addition, multi-media kiosks will be developed to offer easy to use, interactive guidance and assessment resources.

The cornerstone to each facility will be training related to the information society. Each centre will provide specific training and skills which are relevant to their own economy in addition to more general technology skills related to industry and commerce.

The Mari Group has been involved in discussion with the Council on the information communication technology network project which is currently being developed by the Council and partners. They believe that they have relevant experience in this area, having set up similar projects and community information technology centres in several areas throughout the United Kingdom. The Convener of Economic Development Committee has received an invitation attached at Appendix 1 of this report inviting a delegation from North Lanarkshire Council to visit the organisation's I.T. vocational training sites in Belfast which are addressing similar issues to those likely to be encountered by the information communication technology network in North Lanarkshire.

It is clear from the Mari proposal that the type of centre envisaged could play a role in a longer term development of the information communications technology network within North Lanarkshire. However, in the short term it is proposed to continue an open dialogue with a number of training providers who can contribute to the development of the project, including the Mari Group. Discussions are ongoing with Mari (Scotland) Ltd on possible collaborative projects.

It is proposed that the invitation to visit the information technology centres in Northern Ireland ought to be accepted by the Committee so that officers and members can experience this project at first hand to assess the relevance in a North Lanarkshire context

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the contents of this reports and approve acceptance of the invitation to the Convener to visit the Mari centres in Northern Ireland.



Stanley C Cook
Director of Planning and Development

For further information contact Gordon Smith, Head of Economic Development & Property



**MARI
GROUP
LIMITED**

MARI House,
Old Town Hall,
Gateshead,
Tyne & Wear,
NE8 1HE.

Telephone:
(0191) 402 0191

Fax
(0191) 402 1103

20th November 1996

Our ref: RWC/MB

Cllr Harry Curran
Convenor of Economic Development
North Lanarkshire Council
Civic Centre
Motherwell
ML1 1TW

Dear Cllr Curran

Further to recent discussions with Bob Cooper, Chairman/Chief Executive of The MARI Group, I am writing to formally invite you and members of the Council to visit MARI in Northern Ireland in the New Year.

As you know MARI operates training centres in the field of Information Communication Technology throughout the UK and we would be delighted if you could visit us in Northern Ireland where we have some of our newest centres which are the result of effective collaboration between MARI and the local authorities.

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future and agreeing a date for your visit.

Yours sincerely

Melanie Bewick

Melanie Bewick
PA to the Chairman/Chief Executive

Registered Office:
MARI House,
Old Town Hall,
Gateshead,
Tyne & Wear,
NE8 1HE.
Registered in
England and
Wales
(No: 2312188)

