

WHAT PRICE NEW SCHOOLS?

Private Sector To Take Control in Providing New Schools

Building Schools for the Future is a new government programme to renew secondary schools. Spending will increase to £2.2 billion by 2005/06 by a mixture of Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and direct public investment. Four of the first wave local authorities to be targeted for the new programme are in the North East - Newcastle, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

There is no doubt new and remodelled schools are badly needed and there is enormous scope to combine community, health and leisure facilities with schools.

But, the Government's Building Schools for the Future programme means a new privately run Local Education Partnership Company has to be set up

- 80% controlled by the private sector
- 10% by 'Partnerships for Schools' - a new government quango
- 10% by the local council.

It is clear this private Company could eventually rival the Local Education Authority.

More than Just About New Buildings

The Buildings Schools for the Future programme is not just about bricks and mortar. It also has a direct affect on education policy. The programme demands that the Local Education Authority must review its educational vision - in full.

Also, the Education Authority must develop a strategy for providing education that integrates a building programme with service delivery and teaching as well as with school management and community use. Building Schools for the Future is therefore designed to have an educational impact.

Council and teacher trade unions in Tyne and Wear have drawn up a Charter of demands which are essential to maximise the benefits of the Building Schools for the Future and to minimise further privatisation of Education and Council services.



CHARTER

1. Schools and the wider community need to be consulted and fully involved in the Building Schools for the Future programme.

- There should be full consultation with trade unions, parents and community organisations on Building Schools for the Future proposals, particularly the review of the authority's educational vision and the preparation of the Strategic Business Case.
- The revision of the 'educational vision' should involve trade unions, community organisations and educational organisations.
- Community needs should be given a priority and a plan for identifying, prioritising and meeting community needs for meeting facilities, adult learning facilities, sport and leisure, community events, should be prepared and consulted on before an Outline Business Case is prepared.
- A Strategic Partnership Board should be set up as a matter of urgency with a wide representation from trade unions, parents, community organisations and educational organisations and clear powers to evaluate and revise the Strategic Business Case.
- An alternative organisation to the planned privately controlled Local Education Partnership Company should be fully investigated and appraised with the alternative guaranteeing that the Council has at least a 20% controlling interest.
- There should be full transparency and disclosure of the privately controlled Local Education Partnership Companies and their related organisations.

2. Building Schools for the Future should be a school building programme only

- The role of the Local Education Partnership Companies should be confined to those schools that receive Building Schools for the Future investment.
- City Academies should be excluded from the Building Schools for the Future plans - local authorities are only obliged to have considered and evaluated the option of including a City Academy and there is no requirement to have one.
- A full local impact assessment of the Building Schools for the Future proposals should be carried out before submissions are made to the Department for Education and Skills.

3. Building Schools for the Future has to meet local needs and protect local jobs

- Each Local Authority will develop its own local criteria at each stage of the process.
- There should be no outsourcing of educational support services.
- Soft services should be excluded from PFI contracts.
- Local authority Direct Services Organisations should be allowed to bid for contracts where services are included; based on quality plans.
- Local authority architectural and technical services should be invited to design some of the Building School for the Future schools.
- Production and supply chains should be strengthened to make sure that employment in the regional construction industry and related services is maximised.

