**Network Ryde Awarded a life-changing Youth Investment Fund grant to transform its services for young people on the Isle of Wight**

Network Ryde has been awarded a transformational Youth Investment Fund grant to renovate St Thomas’ Church for its youth service offer to young people across the Island. It is very welcome news for young people supported by Network Ryde who will benefit from the generous funding and means that Network Ryde will be able to support another 200 young people when the project is complete. Network Ryde’s new home will provide four times the space for Network Ryde, offering much needed room for sports activities, gaming areas, a fully working kitchen, accessible bathroom and washing facilities, confidential spaces, and quiet study areas. It will also have an outdoor garden space to encourage nature, with seating, and bike storage. The funding will also allow Network Ryde to expand their already dedicated team of Youth Workers, and to work more effectively with partner agencies, providing the opportunity for confidential meeting space, and community events.

Network Ryde is one of 43 youth services in England to benefit from the first wave of Youth Investment Fund grants, announced by the funder, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the charity Social Investment Business, who is delivering the grant programme in partnership with Key Fund, National Youth Agency and Resonance. The Youth Investment Fund is part of the Government’s National Youth Guarantee to transform and level up opportunities for young people in England. The Youth Investment Fund, of over £300 million, aims to build, renovate, or extend youth service facilities, providing a minimum of 45,000 additional positive activities for young people between 11 and 18 - in the parts of the country where new spaces and new opportunities are most needed.

The 43 Youth Investment Fund grants announced today, worth £90 million, are the first to benefit from this new funding. Over the next two years the funding pot will be rolled out to a total of 300 youth services across England. It will enable youth services like Network Ryde to transform health, wellbeing, skills, and opportunities for young people. It is a ground-breaking opportunity to prioritise the needs of young people and deliver the life-changing services they need, creating a more equal society for future generations.

The Youth Investment Fund grant of £578,000 will transform Network Ryde’s services for young people. It means work can start on site in March 2023 and the new facility should open its doors to young people by early Summer 2024.

Young people supported by Network Ryde played a key role in developing this exciting new project. Young people have been integral at every step of the process, seeing the building before purchasing it, working with the architects, and supporting with the application to the Youth Investment Fund.

**Culture Secretary Lucy Frazer said:**

“I want every young person to have the opportunity to access the kinds of life-changing activities which expand their horizons and allow them to develop vital life skills.

“The National Youth Guarantee will provide these opportunities and support young people with access to regular club activities, adventures away from home and volunteering opportunities.

“We are supporting this today with an investment to create or renovate spaces for youth clubs and activities to support opportunities for thousands of young people across the country who would otherwise miss out.”

**Nick Temple, CEO for Social Investment Business, said:**

“Every young person deserves access to high quality activities and facilities, providing the opportunities to help them thrive. The Youth Investment Fund is helping make that vision a reality, supporting organisations and projects in the areas of England that need it most.”

“It’s been amazing to see the wide range of projects applying to the Fund, and especially how young people have played a meaningful role in shaping those plans. There is a real appetite to develop inclusive, accessible and sustainable facilities that will be there for future generations – and that is reflected in the first set of grants announced today.”

“We are hugely excited as work gets underway in places across the country – work that will help transform opportunities for thousands of young people.”

**Leigh Middleton, Chief Executive, National Youth Agency, said:**

“We are delighted to see these initial projects get off the ground and excited about the many and varied projects we are now supporting through the application process. The involvement of our Young Assessors in this process is vital to ensure that bids have young people at their core and that the places and activities which will be delivered are inclusive to all. Over the next three years the Youth Investment Fund will support our ambitions to enable more young people to benefit from the life changing impact of youth work, including gaining essential life skills, preparing for employment and being empowered to have a voice in their communities and society.”

 Welcoming the Youth Investment Fund grant, **Bex Swan, Youth Work Manager at Network Ryde comments:** “We are ecstatic to announce the funding from the Youth Investment Fund for our new building. We have already started its renovation with a new roof in May and are working alongside a fantastic project team of Tim Wander and Leah Mew and the young people to make the church a wonderful new home for Network Ryde. The possibilities are endless!”

**Michael Lilley, Ryde’s Mayor said:** "Ryde Town Council believes that the future generations of Ryde need to be a priority focus and as a council we have invested in our youth service, Network Ryde, prior and post Covid19. Due to the success of Network Ryde we realised that our young people needed a larger venue so that we could respond to their needs, ambitions and vision. Young people have been at the heart of this development. We bought St. Thomas's Church in January 2021 and this incredible Youth Investment Fund award now enables Ryde to fully implement our vision of an innovative Town Centre young people inspired youth centre. This has been achieved by the hard work and dedication of a small professional team and I wish to thank them so much on behalf of the Ryde community. Ryde is becoming a beacon of opportunity and hope and belief in the talent of our young people."

The Youth Investment Fund is actively welcoming expressions of interest for youth service projects at any scale or stage of development for new/renewed facilities that will deliver positive outcomes for young people in selected eligible areas in England.  Eligible youth service projects can apply now, with applications open until the final grant committee in March 2024.  Visit [www.youthinvestmentfund.org.uk](http://www.youthinvestmentfund.org.uk)