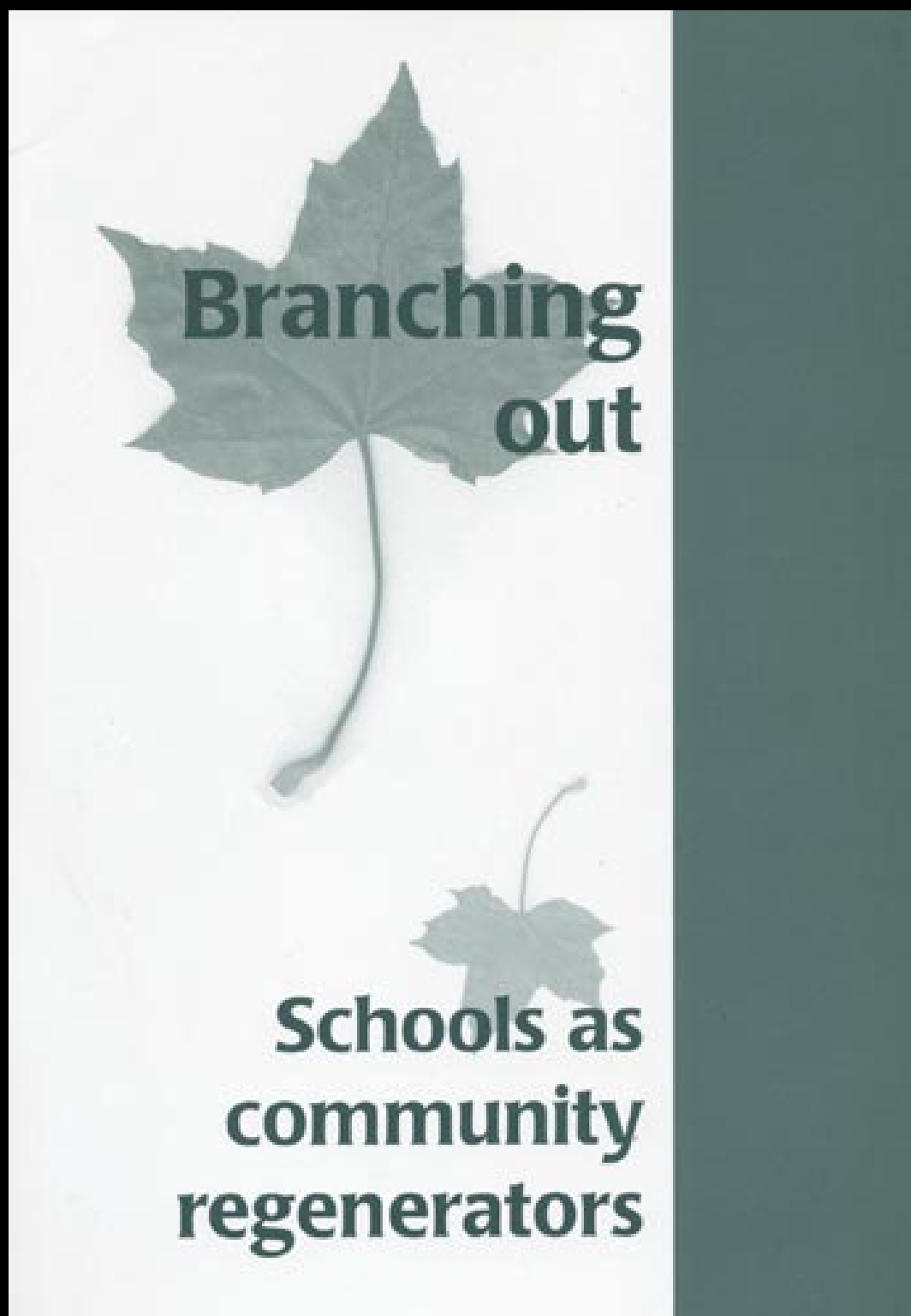


**Branching out
Schools as community regenerators**

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The end of the beginning...



When projects come to an end, normally for the lack of funding, people often say that 'all good things must come to an end' – usually somewhat wistfully and often begging the question 'why?' The difference between most projects and 'Schools as Community Regenerators' is that the latter was never intended to come to an end. It was well recognised that regeneration is a long process – and one which, like the painting of the Forth Bridge – has to begin again as soon as the task is completed.

Someone once said that 'Enterprise is like dancing with a tiger. It takes a little bravery to start, but once you are in motion, it is terribly tricky to stop.' Since regeneration is a process which requires enterprising people, our project leaders understand this particular dilemma all too well.

They now know that they have embarked on a lasting venture. But, being enterprising, they knew this from the start. If this process has its own in-built anxiety factors – which it does – it is also true that it has an equally in-built impetus. Each success, welcome as it is, is seen as another step along the way, not an end in itself. It is well known that the most powerful characteristic of enterprising people is persistence. All of our schools, and their project leaders in particular, have this quality in abundance – as well as many others. It is nevertheless true though, that these qualities might not be sufficient and many other lessons have been learnt along the way.

Here are just a few of them:

- Without partners you are lost.
- If the idea is good enough, it will attract funding – eventually.
- Funding attracts funding. Become skilled in the art of leverage – using $\pounds x$ to match $\pounds y$ from somewhere else and, if possible, $\pounds x + \pounds y$ to match $\pounds z$.
- Check out the funder's agenda and see where it matches your own – then offer them a deal.
- Collect the evidence – you need it to prove success – and so bring in more support.
- Begin dissemination from the beginning – don't hide your light under a bushel.
- Try to seek political support – locally and nationally.
- Look towards mainstreaming your funding from the start.
- Since you are working in the community, involve local people in every way, at every step.
- Share the credit for success.

Our schools have mostly followed this learnt experience, so it is no coincidence that they can all see their way now to sustaining their efforts, with funding coming from an amazing range and variety of sources. Their initial funding of $\pounds 9,000$ per school – about $\pounds 75,000$ in all – has been turned into well over $\pounds 1$ million. They will go from strength to strength.

As for CEDC's part, we will keep in touch and help the schools to encourage others. Perhaps we will move on to a related and even more exciting phase. For, after all, we are not at the end, only the end of the beginning.



Schools as
community
regenerators