

Case Study

Belvedere Community Activity Centre

Ideas factory
- Innovation

What were our objectives?

To create an innovative, community-based, multi-activity sport and recreation centre in one of the most deprived areas in Britain



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Project description

Sport England awarded the Belvedere Recreation and Youth Centre a total of £656,737 capital funding through its Active England programme. The total project cost £793,771.

The Belvedere was built in 1898 and for decades had been an historic Victorian landmark and youth club in the heart of Liverpool. The Active England funding has brought the centre back to life. The Youth Centre committee rejected the idea of demolishing the building and replacing it with a new build 'shed'. Instead they wanted to retain a link with the history and character of the neighbourhood.

The Belve has been brought bang up to date. The completed facility includes a dedicated boxing gym, multi-activity sports hall, fitness suite, saunas, community café, offices, training and social facilities. Full disabled access has been created to all areas. It's a centre for the arts as well as sport.

They have achieved their aim in establishing a Boxing Academy for Liverpool including academic education as part of the programme. It is also the home of the famous Golden Gloves Amateur Boxing Club.

Project origin

The project came as a result of locally identified needs. Its location in the heart of Liverpool's Sport Action Zone (SAZ) gave it an added measure of support and strategic importance. Local people were at the heart of its development, driving it forward. Strong partnership working has been a major factor in its success.

Theoretical underpinning

The centre used to be a youth club but over the years the building was left to deteriorate. In 2003 a community consultation was arranged to gather interest in activities at the centre and look to the future. This

consultation allowed the bodies that were looking to reform the centre to see what the community wanted and what the building could potentially offer – the best way to 'sweat the asset.' From this the project evolved to address the needs of the community and the potential of the centre.

Project aims

The aim of the project was to create an innovative, community-based, multi-activity sport and recreation centre in one of the top 10% most deprived areas in Britain. 'The Belvedere Community Activity Centre' project aims to increase participation in sport and physical activity among all sections of the community, with a special focus on improving access for those who are under-represented in physical activity participation.

As a charity, it works "to achieve the advancement of education and to provide facilities in the interest of social welfare for recreation and leisure-time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life for the inhabitants of Liverpool 8 and the neighbourhoods thereof".

The key objectives were:

- Improved access to quality facilities: The refurbished facilities have improved access, especially to those community members unwilling or unable to use mainstream sports centres, and located close to excellent transport links;
- Growing sports capacity: supporting skills development through sport, increasing opportunities to engage in activities, and increase the number of coaches, volunteers, leaders and participants;
- Increase in participation: more people engaged in sport and physical activity across the area of benefit;
- Improved levels of sporting achievement;
- Increased social inclusion: through improving and promoting access for

marginalised and under-represented groups and individuals, including women and girls, disabled people, older people, black and ethnic minority communities and young people;

- Improved community safety through focus on working with 'at risk' groups;
- Improved health and well-being, contributing towards (PSA) targets under Neighbourhood Renewal;
- Enhanced educational attainment, through delivery of a variety of courses, particularly the NVQ's of the Boxing Academy; and
- Creation of employment and economic opportunities for social business.

Project performance

The project has achieved several outcomes:

- To give new life to an endangered historic building, refurbishing it to an exceptionally high standard;
- To make the building fully compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA);
- To provide the widest possible range of sporting and recreational activities; and
- To assist and enable local people to enjoy a healthier and more active lifestyle.

They have succeeded in revitalising the building, and the refurbished facilities were recently described in a local lifestyle magazine as: "so good...that they're expected to compete with the best that the city centre has to offer" ('Live South' issue 3, Feb '07). They recognise that there is much more to be done. They want to further target the hardest to reach.

The project successfully engaged with 1,800 participants, it attracted 102 active members and used 26 volunteers within their activities.

Innovation

It is a good example of community-led regeneration. Local people continue to control the direction and management of the project. It delivers in Toxteth, Liverpool, a well-known and particularly difficult area to work in, that suffers from acute multiple deprivation and still bears the physical and psychological scars of 1981's riots. The character of the project and the building is individual. It has a unique and special 'feel' to it.

The project has gone against conventional wisdom. That is, that the best thing to do with old and decrepit buildings is to demolish and replace with faceless, mundane and characterless 'sheds'. It is a good illustration of how beautiful historic buildings, that are important geographical and social landmarks,

can be adapted to meet the needs of 21st century young people. This was a risk, given the added VAT costs associated with refurbishment versus new-build. Project managers are seeking talks with their local MP to raise the major policy issue of VAT harmonisation.

The Golden Gloves ABC is more than just a boxing club. It is the oldest boxing club in the city, and offers an academic programme alongside athlete development through the establishment of the Boxing Academy, in association with local FE provider Liverpool Community College. This is truly innovative, as it is the first in Liverpool. Boxing is a big part of the local culture, and this enhanced facility will help consolidate and develop the city's position as the boxing capital of England.