

People now ask

Where do we go from here?

Our answer?

We are here to stay in Bellingham and we intend to continue working with our partners. With them we are working towards providing a new youth gateway building.

Having previously worked with the local youth club we are fully aware of their need for a permanent new home. We want to build a new centre so that young people not only have their own safe and secure building but can also use all the indoor and outdoor facilities that we offer.

We need people to help us raise money to keep the Bellingham Community Project going but we also need people who might have time or skills to donate to help us work for the future, plan or develop the project.

If you can help or offer funding support in any way or would like further information on the Centre please contact:

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Without these funders' support this Centre would not have been possible.



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BELLINGHAM COMMUNITY PROJECT

From Vision to Reality



Introduction by the Chair of the Bellingham Community Project: Lynda Stevens:



The story of our new Centre began under my predecessor Tim Cook's Chairmanship of the project in 1999 when we realised that if we were to make the facilities on the 12-acre site we lease from the City Parochial Foundation fit for this new millennium, we had no option but to demolish

everything on the site and build something that really met the community's needs.

We are here to provide sport and leisure facilities for the local community. The first thing we did was check whether the local community wanted these facilities and if so could they afford to pay for them. We asked them; they said yes they wanted them and if prices were kept low they could afford to pay for them!

So we decided to go ahead but such facilities cost enormous amounts of money so we knew we would have to raise at least a million. In the end it actually cost £4.4m! We raised the money and we went ahead and Bellingham has what it richly deserves – a beautiful new leisure and lifestyle centre.

We could not have achieved what we have without the help of our friends and partners. The people of Bellingham individually and through the Bellingham Interagency (a group of around 40 local agencies)

have given so much help and continue to support us, and we them, in what we see as a true partnership.

The City Parochial Foundation, the London Borough of Lewisham and Sport England have been far more than our major funders; they and their staff have stayed with us throughout a process which could best be described as "the two steps forward – three steps back challenge".

We are also extremely grateful to our other funders and supporters. Without them we would not be here today and I want to record our particular and sincere thanks to Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer for their pro-bono legal work on our behalf. As a small voluntary organisation we found ourselves having to negotiate complex building and other contracts; with Freshfields' advice and guidance we signed the contracts with confidence.

We are delighted to have been able to provide the well-established and successful Ladywell Gymnastics Club with a new home and look forward to sharing a successful future with them.

Having built the Centre we are now able to provide a wide range of activities and we believe we made the right decision to work with Greenwich Leisure Limited rather than run it ourselves. We see this as a positive long-term relationship for the benefit of the local community.

I also wish to record the Board's sincere thanks to our staff team, Julian Rouse our Project Director and Anne Fludder our Project Administrator. Again we could not have achieved what we have without their commitment and dedication.



Bellingham Community Project – By Julian Rouse the Project Director



I came from a background in leisure management and Youth work based not too far from Bellingham. My job in Bellingham was to manage the old facilities on the site but it soon became clear that what we needed was something new and purpose built for local people's needs.

Once the Board had decided this I was delighted to be offered the challenge of creating a new centre for Bellingham from scratch even though I did not envisage how hard the project journey would be!

What did I learn about Bellingham?

- It may be a relatively small area but it is a big community in its own right.
- It is a community that is determined to succeed - local people have set up and run many projects and developed networks.
- "Bellingham Interagency" brings together 40 different groups and agencies who work in the area.
- Working with Sure Start is a major benefit as it links well with the local community and has a wide range of community social activities.
- It had no leisure facilities.
- It is a deprived area.
- Some people's health is poor due to lack of facilities and opportunities.



Andy Murray



Trevor Moore



Phil Howell



Carol Harrison



Lynda Stevens



Julian Rouse



Who we are

Based in Bellingham, the Bellingham Community Project Ltd is a registered charity, established by the City Parochial Foundation, a major charity. We are run by a small voluntary Board of Directors and employ two staff, Julian Rouse and Anne Fludder.

We also have a sub committee which consists of Pat Fordham, Chair, Bellingham Interagency, Margaret Dickenson, Co-ordinator for Bellingham Interagency and Representative for Lewisham Talking Newspaper for the Blind, Father Paul Butler, the vicar of St Dunstan's church in Bellingham and Chair of Bellingham Sure Start, Mary Shakespeare, Surestart Community Board member and local grandparent which have enabled us to network more effectively within the local community.

What are we here for?

Our sole purpose is to provide sport, health, community and recreation facilities for the whole community at a price they can afford on the Bellingham playing fields.

Our commitment to keeping costs low for local people does mean that we will have to continue to raise funds in the coming years to enable us to keep Centre charges affordable and develop new initiatives.

We must be prudent and ensure that we can maintain the building fabric to protect everyone's investment.

What was wrong with the old facilities?

The facilities at the old project had many disadvantages. From having been a thriving sport/youth/social facility in the 1980s, it had declined as leisure habits changed.

The sports facilities included: 5 full-size football pitches; a sports hall; male team changing rooms and a shower block, but no female changing facilities. There was also a sports hall used only for some table tennis and short mat bowls.

There was a social club with a licensed bar, a small function room which we refurbished, a cold semi-basement meeting room but no proper kitchen or other catering facilities. We let the former groundsman's accommodation to earn income for the project.

The buildings, dating from 1932 and 1962, were shabby and in generally poor condition. The Sports Hall built in 1977 was of such a size that it was



unsuitable for most indoor sports. The football pitches were poorly drained and the access road and car park were rough ground.

When the social club closed we were pleased that we were able to attract the local youth club into using the space. This really gave something to the community. Overall though, the project facilities did very little to benefit the community as a whole.

We had to change!



Old Sports Hall

Vision to Reality



New Sports Centre during build



What is now on offer?

The new Centre is a Healthy Living Centre - a sports centre and a community venue all in one. It is also set in grounds which we will cherish and develop as a key local environmental space. Our facilities include:

- Gymnastics in a full-size hall with the prestigious Ladywell Gymnastics Club (London Gymnastics Club of the Year) and their top coaches, including London Coach of the Year
- A fitness gym with state-of-the-art equipment
- The latest in fun play for under 12 year olds including a sensory room for those with special needs
- Summer play schemes
- Outdoor football pitches and a floodlit multi-use games area which caters for netball, football and tennis
- A café
- A Sports and Community hall which can be hired out for functions
- A meeting room/crèche and much more.

Within the first 3 weeks of opening at Easter 2004, 1,500 people visited the Centre to either enquire about membership or to join. Even more came to visit the children's adventure play area!

By the beginning of September there were nearly 450 pre-paying members and 1,300 pay and play members. Over 400 young people hold Junior Bellingham membership cards.

Some 275 young people between 11 and 16 took part in the summer play and Millwall Community Challenge Schemes.

Our commitment to equality and diversity ensures that we respond to the needs of people from different cultures and individuals with a disability.

Workshops to raise awareness of environmental issues are being run by Lewisham Environmental Department.

Greenwich Leisure Limited working closely with Action for Jobs Lewisham, have filled 8 of the 14 full time jobs with local residents and a further 25 people from the community are employed as sessional workers.

We have also raised the money to recruit a Community Outreach Worker to encourage even more of the Community to use their Centre.

In the New Year the football pitches will again be in use after the installation of a new underground drainage system. They will be some of the best pitches in the south east.

What did we learn? - Working together is the key

- Make sure you provide what the community wants – they won't support you if you don't.
- Maximise your opportunities - our partnership with Ladywell Gymnastics Club meant that we were guaranteed that our centre would be on the map from day one.
- You can ride out the storms better – our partnership with Lewisham Council and their sports development team helped us with funding and expertise.
- You can learn from each other – our partnership with Sport England helped us with funding and advice on the best way to build and run sports facilities.
- You need friends – project development is tough and scary at times so you need as much support as you can get – the commercial world can be great supporters of the voluntary sector (e.g. top law firm, Freshfields gave us pro-bono legal advice and EDF, an electricity grid supplier, did their installation quickly so we avoided a large financial penalty.



Now it's over to the community:

We have built this Centre and secured the funding and management of it for the first five years but we need everyone locally to get involved in making it a long term success for Bellingham.

Of course our users are the people we are here for and we are already receiving great feed back.

We have provided high quality facilities:

- From a resident - "A new Leisure Centre? – can't be for us – its too good" Our reply – "Bellingham should have the same facilities as everywhere else"

We are helping to regenerate the area

- From the local shop – "the area is definitely going up now we have better facilities in the area"

We are boosting people's health and people will live longer in Bellingham!

- From a former loyal member of the social club after exercising on one of our new running machines: "You have to go with the flow"

We have created new jobs for local people

- From Greenwich Leisure Limited the company running the new centre for us – "We are delighted that so many of our employees live in Bellingham".

