

First Steps



First Steps

Aim

To develop a model for first step community activities for supporters' trusts by using four trusts as pilots with the support of a specialised agency, the Federation of Stadium Communities (FSC). The project will increase understanding of the process of trusts consulting with communities, the capacity of supporters' trusts to deliver community activities and produce a range of suitable community projects for trusts to manage. The aim is to initiate the first steps for supporters' trusts to become community orientated and to develop models that can be replicated across the supporters' trust movement.

Objectives

- Assess the capacity /resources /skills of the participating trusts

The four pilot Trusts were:

Bradford, Burnley, Swinton and Notts County. A skills audit of committee members was carried out with each Trust (Appendix 1) The results indicated that whilst members had significant skills and experience of communicating, presenting, negotiating and promoting, few if any had understanding or experience of health promotion and community development

The audit also revealed that the bulk of the work of each Trust was undertaken by a very small group of people – in some cases by just one or two members .There was a desire to involve more members and therefore to identify activities they would wish to engage in.

- Build the capacity of trusts to understand local needs

The audits revealed that in all the Trusts there were some individuals who through their paid work had experience and understanding of local needs. The issue was that they did not have the time to undertake specific community consultation to inform the potential community work of their Trust. The task therefore became one of identifying a means by which community consultation could be incorporated into a community activity. However the initial events have certainly increased the trust's understanding about local needs and issues.

- Build the capacity of trusts to identify and develop appropriate community initiatives

Discussions with each Trust began to focus on activities that could therefore engage with and use the skills of more members. FSC suggested that the reminiscence project they were developing

called 'Stadium Legends' might be very appropriate. Trust members could be invited to share their memories and stories about the club with local school children and in the process begin to build a wider understanding of living in the stadium neighbourhood today

- Ensure necessary partners are working together.

The FSC's Healthy Stadia Partnership Working Tool was used to facilitate the necessary partnerships. These typically included:

- The Community department of the club
- The Club
- Extended school co-ordinator
- Local libraries and museums
- Local schools
- Former players
- Playing for Success Centres.

In all case the Trusts had little or no experience of working with some or all of these agencies before.

- Increase understanding about the types of community activities supporters' trusts can deliver that provide benefit to their communities

The following case studies illustrate how this was achieved

Case studies

Bradford Supporters' Trust First Steps Project

Aim

To explore and celebrate, the diverse cultural nature of the neighbourhoods surrounding Bradford City FC.

Objectives

- To use the themes of football and sport to engage with the diverse communities around Bradford FC
- To help to build a partnership through the project, between the club, Positive Lifestyle Centre, Bantoms Museum ,local organisations and the Supporters Trust
- To enable the Positive Lifestyle Centre to further develop it's role in extra curricular education and of all partners as agents of social inclusion.
- To support the regeneration of Manningham and the Manningham Master Plan which recognises the potential role of the club in that regeneration

Activities

- An initial workshop event for Supporters Trust members, local school, club, former players and local residents to begin to

explore what might be shared through oral history, capturing and celebrating stories about the club and it's local area.

- The event evaluated by the Federation of Stadium Communities (FSC) and used as a springboard to further work building on themes identified.

Evaluation Initial Event at Bradford 27 Nov 2008

Feedback from younger people

Total number taking part - 14 year 10, GCSE History students from Challenge College

- **Enjoyment of event** 100% enjoyed it
- **Best Parts of the event**
 - Meeting older people 50%
 - Visiting the Football club 100%
 - Sharing knowledge of the local area 64%
 - Meeting new people 28%
 - Working together 21%
 - Getting out of school 57%
- **Interested in a longer term project?**
 - Yes 100% interested
- **Activities of interest**
 - Making a DVD 57%
 - Creating a website 42%
 - Sharing views about the local community 21%
 - Working together to improve the local community 42%
- **Comments**
 - 'I learnt a lot of stuff'
 - 'Please offer refreshments'
 - 'Everything was great. Thank you to everyone that was involved'
 - 'Tour people were very good'
 - 'I found the tour guides very informative'

Feedback from partners

- **Did it meet the aims of the project?**

A 'first step' has been made to meet the aim of exploring and celebrating, the diverse cultural nature of the neighbourhoods surrounding Bradford City FC.

Were the objectives met?

The objective of 'using the themes of football and sport to engage with the diverse communities around Bradford FC', has been met and will support the long- term objective of 'helping to build a partnership through the project, between the club, Positive Lifestyle Centre, Bantoms Past Museum ,local organisations and the Supporters Trust'. The development of the initiative has in fact brought together groups that although had worked together in the past, had only done so in a reactive way. There was no clear common strategy. This project also introduced new partners – extended schools and individual schools, who are now keen to work together with the Trust and other partners, in the future.

The objective 'to enable the Positive Lifestyle Centre to further develop it's role in extra curricular education and of all partners as agents of social inclusion' has been taken on board by the newly forming community partnership which will also support the final objective of ' supporting the regeneration of Manningham and the Manningham Master Plan which recognises the potential role of the club in that regeneration'

What worked well.

- The 'taster' event was a 'success' in that it was enjoyed by all the students, who would all like to be involved in a further longer term project. This feedback will be significant supporting evidence for the oral history project seen as the 'next step'
- The stadium tour was a highlight

What could be improved.

- Increasing the participation by members of the Supporters Trust would add value to the experience of the students and further help to bring 'history to life', but this has resource implications. Although 6 members of the Trust were nominally involved in the initiative, in reality the work was done by just 2 people who put in over 50 hours between them. Attempts to engage members through calls in Trust newsletters for people to come forward were unsuccessful. It was concluded that greater success would come through individual invitation to people known to have good stories and memories to share. Now that the taster had proved successful it might be easier to get others to participate but targeting of individuals would involve considerably more time and effort.
- Planning and preparation with the school. Involvement with the school from an early stage would clarify needs and expectations and allow appropriate material to be made available such as

memorabilia to handle and structured questions with recorded answers.

- Refreshments for all participants would have made the event more relaxed and welcoming

Benefits to the supporters' trust and next steps

- A positive step towards further partnership working. The next step is to work in partnership with all those involved to put together an oral history project that will be submitted to Heritage Lottery
- **It became apparent that many organisations associated with Bradford City FC shared similar community objectives and also had resource issues. The project has successfully brought these groups together. A strong partnership has been developed by working on a partnership bid for a heritage project based on the evaluation of the initial 'First Steps' event**

'Burnley Legends' Burnley Supporters' Trust: Burnley Legends

Aim

To develop the skills and experience of members in planning and delivering community activities.

Objectives

- To use the event to encourage the participation of Trust members, identifying and encouraging their talents.
- To lead to a programme of activities involving Trust members Burnley in the Community, the club, local schools and local agencies
- To build relationships between partners and the local communities.
- To better understand how to successfully engage with community groups.
- To support local school pupils in their social history curriculum work.

Activities

A reminiscence event for 40 year 6 pupils at Turf Moor including:

- A welcome by the clubs's CEO
- A presentation on the history of the club
- Viewing of club artefacts
- Interviews with former players from the 50s and 60's
- Presentation by the club manager
- Stadium tour
- Free tickets for the next home game

Evaluation of Event at Burnley 17 Oct 2008

Feedback from younger people

Total number taking part - 40 year 6 students from St Mary's

29 forms returned

- **Enjoyment of event** 96% enjoyed it
1 child did not like the focus on football bit still liked looking at the history and taking part in the interviews
- **Best Parts of the event**
 - Meeting and learning about people From a different generation 44%
 - Visiting the Football club 65%
 - Ground tour 75%
 - Meeting former players 65%
 - Meeting current players 68%
 - Meeting supporters 51%
 - Getting out of school 55%
 - Looking at the photos 34%
 - Looking at the newspapers 41%
 - Looking at the artefacts 51%
 - Qu. And Ans session 41%
- **Interested in taking part in a similar project?**
 - Yes 96%
- **Activities would like to do?**
 - 'Meet former players'
 - 'Look at old football and artefacts'
 - 'Play football with the new players'
 - 'Ask players from now questions'
 - 'Go to locker room'

Comments:

'I really liked it because you got to learn about the past and present'
'It was fantastic'
'I had good fun'
'It was a great day, I would love to go back'
'Thank you for inviting us. I really enjoyed it and I would like to take part in one of them activities again!'

Feedback from partners

- It developed partnership working with agencies the Trust had not worked with in the past, most notably local schools and the Library Service
- It forged positive connections with the club
- It identified the connections that needed to be made to develop community projects.
- It has given the Trust a desire to do further work building on this experience to meet the needs of local communities

'Benefits to the supporters' trust and **Next steps**'

- The trust grew in confidence throughout the project to the point where they effectively took the lead for delivering the project.
- It has raised their profile in the community
- It Improved their relationship with the club.
- It made them enthusiastic to do more work in their community including the Identification of funding for the development of a programme of community activities :
 - An annual Stadium Legends event to be offered to local schools. This to build on the format of the initial event with links to schools followed up through Extended schools and school clusters.
 - To develop resources to support Stadium Legends events – i.e. display boards on various themes – eg. players of the decades, diets, training and kit.
 - Oral history archive – memories of former players and local older people as a social history of the club and it's role in the community. This collection to be captured and shared in various ways including DVD and book format, working with all generations and communities to contribute.

Swinton Lions Supporters' Trust: Lions Tales

Aims

- To engage younger and older people in capturing and celebrating the rich history of Swinton Lions and it's neighbourhood
- To identify the skills of the Trust's volunteers and to build their capacity by involvement in the project

Objectives

- To use stories of the club's past and present to engage younger and older people in learning
- To help young people of Pendlebury to consider themselves as Swintonians and to identify with the town itself

- To increase awareness of Swinton Lions and rebuild local support

Activities

An initial 'taster' event was to be held at Swinton Library in January but this did not take place because key people moved from the supporters' trust and the contact at Salford Museum went on maternity leave. A new contact has now been made with Business Education Partnership who are very keen to support the project and an event with both primary and secondary school children will be held with their help in the summer. This will involve former players and supporters' trust members. The project will use the resources already collected by the Trust – including Michell and Kenyon archive film and club memorabilia. The interviews will be recorded and the compilation made available via partner networks.

The event will be evaluated by FSC and used as the basis for future partnership work.

Partners

- Swinton Lions Supporter Trust
- FSC
- Supporters Direct
- Swinton Local History Library
- Swinton Library
- Business Education partnership

Notts County Supporters' Trust

The work with Notts County supporters' trust was disappointing as no project was developed or delivered. The initial area of interest for the trust was to develop a partnership with a local school, possibly using a storyteller. However, the group was overly reliant on one individual with insufficient support provided. The initial consultation with the school was promising but once the main volunteer at the trust left, the project ground to a halt.

The 'first Steps' project was partly a research project to assess the capacity of supporters' trusts to deliver community activity and to identify barriers to their development. Time and resources was the key reason why the work with Notts County did not deliver anything. The lesson learnt is a strong working group needs to sign up before and commit sufficient time to the work.

Key Learning Points from the Pilots

1. The importance of understanding local needs and the context of local community targets.

2. The need to identify the 'right' partners to work with as soon as possible
3. The need to be clear on the responsibilities of each partner
4. The importance of evaluation in order to inform and support further work
5. If a strong core working group is established confidence grows as the project develops. As a result successful projects can be delivered.
6. If a supporters' trust cannot recruit enough volunteers then the potential is limited. In this situation they need to engage appropriate partners to deliver on their behalf.
7. Supporters' trust resources are not limitless and this needs to be reflected in the projects that are developed.

Identified Outcomes

- Increased understanding about the types of community activities supporters' trusts can deliver to provide benefit to their communities.
 - The project has certainly helped in this area. It is difficult for a supporters' trust to sustain a regular long term community programme. Certainly initially. There is now an understanding that they should begin with 'softer' one off activities and grow from there.
- Raised profile of the positive role of supporters' trusts in local communities.
 - Where the taster projects have been delivered the profile of the supporters' trust has been raised and it has helped with their credibility and reputation. For example the Burnley supporters' trust is being contacted by other local schools about being involved in their stadium legend project.
- Increased capacity of supporters' trusts to develop community activities, as the projects develop the trusts should take a more prominent role on the consultation.
 - Without a doubt this has occurred at both Bradford and Burnley. Both took more of a lead as the project developed and are confident of continuing to work in this area.
- Increased recognition and valuing of skills of supporters' trusts volunteer members by the football clubs participating in the project.
 - Again with both Bradford and Burnley the relationship with the club has been improved and the club now views the trust as a potential partner.
- Attraction of new volunteers to supporters' trusts.
 - Again both Bradford and Burnley have attracted more active volunteers. Members that were maybe not interested in being a board member are more willing to volunteer to help with community activities.
- Greater understanding of the benefits of a co-operative relationship between the club, its supporters and the stadium community.

- This is harder to gauge in the short term but should become more apparent as these supporters' trusts involvement with their communities continues in the future. However the seeds of co-operation have been sown with greater understanding between all parties.

Recommendations

1. Supporters Direct to continue to play a major role in sharing best practice across the supporters' trust movement, identifying suitable projects that can be replicated. This is now happening, for example, Supporters Directs wiki site has "how to" guides on suitable community projects. Other supporters' trusts can also add their own projects to the site for other trusts to learn from.
2. To develop an on-going 'First Steps' programme in partnership with The Federation of Stadium Communities. The evidence from the pilot project indicates initial specialist support can be very helpful in developing community activities with supporters' trusts. The support can help with understanding local needs, developing capacity and acting as a catalyst to encourage the initial development work.
3. Before embarking on 'community programmes, supporters' trusts should conduct a skills audit of their membership and also gauge their willingness and availability to volunteer.
4. Before any projects are begun the supporters' trust should establish a working group to provide enough resources to both develop and deliver any community focused project. This reduces the risk of failing to deliver a project and also failing to deliver to an acceptable quality.
5. Trust boards should conduct skills/volunteer audits of their membership to identify appropriate skills and members that are willing to volunteer

Federation of Stadium Communities: Project Summary

The project has successfully met all the objectives for the three Trusts that have been able to commit to it. From an FSC perspective the project has confirmed a real need for 'first step hand holding' for enthusiastic but inexperienced volunteers with little 'spare' time, to enable them to develop the partnerships required for sustainable community work.

Having made the links, a key outcome of the project has been that further long-term partnership working is now being developed.

The reminiscence approach chosen by all Trusts proved to be a very positive means of initially engaging partners that opened up opportunities for future collaboration on a range of other themes. Each Trust has become a member of FSC and FSC will continue to support them with advice and sharing of good practice.

Supporters Direct: Project Summary

Overall the project has been considered a success, despite the ongoing delays to one project and the dropping out of one supporters' trust. The project had two main objectives: to identify suitable projects and to learn about the available resources and capacity of supporters' trusts. Both have been achieved.

Two suitable projects have been delivered with toolkits available to other supporters' trusts. Also valuable learning has been achieved about the resources of trusts and also more importantly how to increase these resources and/or how to develop projects that are deliverable by a supporters' trust with limited resources.

Both Bradford and Burnley supporters' trust now have the confidence, skills and understanding about how to expand their community work into their various communities.

SD hope to continue to support and share best practice with the supporters' trust to encourage them to meet their community objectives as per their constitution and offer tangible community benefit.

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