

## Case Study: Mytown Sports Association

### **Introduction**

The Mytown Sports Association case study is fictitious but is based on a real example. It chronicles some of the highs and lows that Mytown had gone through to arrive at a position where they are independent and sustainable as a social enterprise.

This ranges from the early days when volunteer interest led to the formation of a sports association, to a variety of set backs and how they overcame them with perseverance and working in partnership.

Many of Mytown's experiences are reflected in the **Sports Kitbag** website ([www.sportskitbag.net](http://www.sportskitbag.net)). The location of these is marked accordingly through out this case study on the bottom right of each paragraph and in **bold**.

### **Background**

*Key words & concepts: governance, participation, stakeholders, social capital and legal structures*

#### *Volunteering*

A local parent was involved in managing several football teams on a voluntary basis but often struggled to find suitable pitches and changing facilities. He was approached by a local miners' welfare organisation to come and use their underused pitches free-of-charge and to look after the site.

#### *Ownership*

The site is owned by the national miners' welfare organisation but was largely under used. The site also has a cricket pitch and pavilion – with a license to sell alcohol – including several football and hockey pitches.

After several years, a meeting was held to bring together the various sports on the site and a sports association – Mytown – was formed. The first objective was to look at getting funding for a new artificial pitch.

Under the local miners' welfare, the sports association gained charitable trust status and had a 100 hundred-year lease for the site. They have five trustees – two of which were former miners – and a range of business skills. These included accountancy, building services and human resources. Each trustee had a personal connection with Mytown Sports.

### **Kitbag Location: Getting Started>Choosing the Right Structure**

## **Getting Started**

### *Running a business*

What the trustees wanted was to create 'community feeling' – this was based on what their members told them. Their vision was to create facilities and activities that would accommodate families and children and to provide a sporting focal point for the community. So they set about developing the facilities to accommodate this.

### **Kitbag Location: Your Community>Social Capital**

The existing bar in the cricket pavilion did not make any profit – people would help themselves and not record it and the catering facilities were non-existent. The trustees needed to turn this situation around to generate a profit, which they could reinvest back into the association.

Money was raised to fit-out a new kitchen and a franchise sold to a private company to run it. Mytown was able to generate income from the selling of the franchise, a percentage of takings and increased income from the bar, as people would often have drinks with their meals.

### **Kitbag Location: Trading**

#### *A loan for an extension*

Mytown wanted to upgrade an existing building but found it difficult to secure a loan from a 'mainstream' bank – they had no credit history and were not able to secure the loan against any assets.

They overcame this obstacle by getting a loan of £40,000 from a local charitable trust with very favourable loan conditions – interest was fixed at 1% above base rate.

### **Kitbag Location: Finance>Loan Finance>EMCLF**

## **Setback**

Mytown wanted to develop an artificial pitch on the site and set about trying to raise the funds for this. Mytown approached the governing body for the sport concerned, but it would not support the bid for a new artificial pitch without input from the council.

However, the council felt that there were enough of these facilities in the area – the nearest city being the closest – but it was felt by Mytown that this was not accessible for the members of this former coal mining community. Furthermore, the council also stated that it did not have sufficient funds to put into and maintain the facility.

A comment from a trustee that best described Mytown's situation was,

“It was always like a circle – you keep going round trying to close it”

The frustration for those concerned was that nobody seemed to want to commit either time or funding. They would go around in circles having the same conversation with different people in different departments.

They finally decided to abandon this route and thought about other ways they could acquire a new artificial pitch.

*A stroke of luck...*

Mytown were gifted a flood damaged artificial turf pitch (ATP) that was due to be replaced in whole – all they had to do was to pay for transportation. Other costs included the laying of the pitch and providing floodlighting.

Because of having successfully repaid £20,000 of the original £40,000 loan, Mytown was able to borrow another £12,000 to pay for the transportation drying, laying and floodlighting for the ATP.

### **Another Setback**

*Key words & concepts: volunteering & sustainability*

*The juggernaut effect*

Mytown also looked at a bid to a major funder to develop their facilities. An advisor supported them but nothing seemed to materialise. They were assured that they would also qualify for a range of funding as well, none of which actually materialised.

It also seemed that the scale of what they were told they could have was overwhelming – they felt that they could lose control. The trustees also felt that this was not really in keeping with the wishes of their members and furthermore, was a massive undertaking and possibly too big for the area.

After several setbacks, they decided to take control of the development of the sports association themselves. Mytown Sports started small and slowly added new elements to the site – effectively breaking down their ambitions into smaller 'bite size chunks'.

*Delivering on promises*

After several setbacks, the mood of the members reflected that of the members – frustration. Furthermore, there was increasing disquiet among the members that the trustees could not deliver.

A worker was taken on to run the day-to-day activities of Mytown as all the trustees were volunteers and had full time jobs. They were able to pay for the worker through a combination of grants and from the income raised from their trading activities.

## **Moving On**

The next stage of the development was to look at upgrading the existing changing facilities – these amounted to not much more than steel shipping containers with benches in them. The worker was able to do a lot of the day-to-day preparation for this and to liaise with and meet partners/prospective funders during the day, when most of the trustees were at work.

They approached the Football Foundation who appointed a Liaison Funding Officer to develop a bid to fund a new changing block with showers and accessible to all. The funding officer wanted them to realise their aims and things started to come together after 18months.

With input from a consultancy, Mytown was also successful in gaining some funding from Sport England and the Coalfields Regeneration Trust (CRT). This also involved the production of a business plan.

## **Kitbag Location: Business Advice>Sources of Support**

### *Sharing the vision*

For Mytown a factor in raising the necessary funding was to encourage prospective partners and funders onto the site to share their vision. Drawings and plans are also a good way of creating an image in somebody's mind who cannot visit the site – these can sometimes be provided on a free basis by architects and planners who ask only to be considered in the tendering process. This work is sometimes referred to as *pro bono*.

The Football Foundation increased the amount offered once they saw the collective vision of the Sports Association to replace the second hand ATP.

These plans, illustrations and pictures were used to good effect when an application was made to the Social Enterprise Development Fund (SEDF) that SEEM manage. This was for match funding to put in the 'pot' along with the Football Foundation, Sport England and the CRT.

## The Future

*Key words & concepts: asset transfer, income diversification, multi-sports environment, diversity, equity, social inclusion, measuring impact & wellbeing*

Mytown Sports Association decided to begin on delivering the promise to focus on families. By providing a family friendly environment, they could attract those members of *their* community that are less likely to participate in sport – women, mothers and young girls.

### **Kitbag Location: Delivering Diversity>Equality Standard**

The main activities were provided on Saturdays and Sundays with 2000 children regularly taking part. Activities included sports and coaching to children who would not normally participate in sport, the establishment of ‘junior leagues’ and activities for those as young 8 years. Specific activities include rounders, cricket, football, hockey, trampolining and a dance club.

The site is very busy Monday to Friday evenings and the whole of the weekend. Furthermore, families tend to access the facilities Friday evenings – for the main family meal – and the whole of the weekend.

#### *Expansion*

Mytown now have the option of taking on some more land owned by the local Miners’ Welfare. The options would be to develop the land and associated building for community use, as a Development Trust, or to sell the site. The profit from the sale would be split between Mytown, to enable it to continue working towards its social aims and objectives and the overarching miners’ welfare organisation.

### **Kitbag Location: Developing Assets**

Another opportunity would be to discuss plans in more depth with the local trust to build a community centre on the site. This could benefit both sets of members with flexible meeting rooms, health care provision (doctor’s surgery/dentist) office space and an indoor bowls facility.

As they are now expanding, Mytown are looking to take on more staff to ensure that the facilities are open 7 days a week offering breakfast and lunch clubs, afternoon dances, a crèche/nursery and facilities for walkers who visit the landscaped pit head and former coal mine.

They are also working more closely with a local pupil referral unit and looking at developing close links with local schools and a specialist sports college

### *Beyond outputs and outcomes*

Mytown were also aware that, apart from the usual outputs and outcomes required for the monitoring/reporting to their funders, they provided wider benefits to their members, customers and wider community. They wanted to measure these and looked at the variety of tools available such as Social Return on Investment (SROI), DTA Health Check and social accounting and audit.

Using these types of social reporting tools, Mytown could help to identify areas of weakness and tackle them, demonstrate the benefits of their activities to stakeholders (proving and improving) and strengthen their organisational and business practices.

## **Kitbag Location: Social Impact**

### **In Summary**

From the involvement and activities of several volunteers, Mytown Sports Association has grown into a vibrant and valuable resource for a former coal mining community. It has worked in partnership with the local community, partners and a variety of stakeholders to develop and manage a variety of sports and community facilities.

It has a long lease to manage the site and, after several setbacks and let downs, has moved on in a step-by-step manner to develop their facilities. This culminated in the raising of several hundred thousand pounds to build new changing rooms and showers.

Their next steps are to look at a more focussed approach to working with certain members of their community. This includes the increased participation of women, mothers and young girls as well as the disabled in sport and physical activity.

They are also seeking to work more closely with the police, health services and local schools in order to open up their facilities during the day. This would involve such activities as breakfast and lunch clubs in the pavilion, as well as opening up the playing fields and providing refreshments, parking and toilet facilities for walkers. Furthermore, they were also able to demonstrate the impact of their activities on such things as wellbeing and the local economic development.

Mytown felt that there were several things that needed to be in place to ensure success and sustainability. These are (in no particular order):

- Active partnerships – including local authority, police, funders, schools
- Active involvement from members
- Skilled trustees

- Start-up 'pump priming' funding – often as grants but moving to increasing trading income
- A 'market' for your goods and services – sport and physical activity is what you provide but there are other things that could generate income e.g. renting of rooms/facilities
- A business plan – this will set out the business case and enable the social enterprise to move from grant dependency to becoming more independent and sustainable

Above all Mytown also felt that perseverance, timing and a little luck went a long way to enabling them to arrive to where they are today. Combining this with the right support at the right time was invaluable in ensuring that Mytown continued growing and developing in order to carry on providing a mixed range of sports, physical activity and social benefits to their community

For more information on the development of sports and physical activity based social enterprise and the **Sports Kitbag** website contact:

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### Sports Kitbag

This is an online resource for the development of emerging and existing sports social enterprise. You can access the website via this link: [www.sportskitbag.net](http://www.sportskitbag.net)

