



Jesse Boot Wildcats Arena

Background

- The Jesse Boot Wildcats Arena was built to meet both national and local needs with a £1.8 million Sport England Lottery investment together with a £250,000 contribution raised locally.
- The Arena was built to provide the Nottinghamshire basketball community with a sport specific centre as well as provide for the curriculum needs of 2000 children in three local schools. The needs of all members of this inner city multicultural community were also included in the development plan.
- There was a recognised strategic need for a centre for the local basketball community, building on the model of the very successful local Nottingham Wildcats women's basketball club.
- Nottingham Wildcats has a long tradition of producing players, coaches, referees and table officials at all levels, with over 50 going on to represent their country. The club is based in the city and had strong links with Jesse Boot School.
- The Arena is sited on the Eastern side of the city in the Dales Ward, a multicultural European Social Priority Area.
- The Arena was officially opened by the Minister for Sport, Richard Caborn, on 6th October 2001,

Arena facilities

- The actual design was produced cooperatively between Sport England, the applicants and potential contractors based on an existing facility in Barrow.
- After making a visit to Barrow, regional Sport England staff worked with the applicants and had radically improved the proposal by the time the train returned to Nottingham station!
- The Arena has two full size basketball courts, eight changing rooms, two officials rooms, a first aid/physio room, fitness suite and dance studio.
- The side-by-side basketball courts operate at full capacity every weekday evening 6pm-10pm and weekends are virtually full apart from some early morning times. A basketball court costs £17 per hour to hire, almost 50% cheaper than LEA provided facilities.
- Occupancy of the sports hall outside school hours Monday to Friday is 100%. There is limited time available on Saturday and Sunday mornings. Excluding schools use, a typical sports hall week will have a throughput of 900 users.
- The fitness suite has over 600 active members with an average of 450 users per week, 90% living within one mile and 80% new to fitness.
- Since the project opened the fitness suite has doubled in size and a large classroom has been added.
- There are an increasing number of young Asian men and women joining the fitness club. Full fitness suite membership costs £17 per month. Yoga, aerobics

and fitness classes are run in the dance studio and there is a local dance school based at the Arena offering street dance, hip-hop and cheerleading.

Business and philosophy of the Arena

- The Arena is run by a Charitable Trust. There are only two full-time members of staff, six part-time and one part-time cleaner. Volunteers make up the rest of the staffing requirement.
- One of the keys to the success of the Arena is that there is a genuine feeling of shared ownership, all users feel that this is 'their' centre and treat it accordingly - one incident of graffiti and no vandalism since opening in 2001.
- The basic philosophy of the Arena is to provide high quality low cost sport and fitness opportunities for the local community and all those associated with basketball in Nottinghamshire and surrounding areas.
- The Arena has no funding from any other source. It has an Annual Turnover of £122 000 with an Operational Profit of £7 500.

School and education links

- There are strong links between the Arena and local schools, the School Sports Coordinator for the area plus South Nottingham College.
- The Arena also serves around 2000 children in local schools and enhances the sporting opportunities open to members of the inner city multicultural community, a European Social Priority Area.
- Every city secondary school plays basketball at the Arena, the local women's leagues and the boys youth league are played as central venue leagues from the Arena. Nine national league teams from under 13's to full national league men and women train and play here.
- The Arena has very strong links with South Nottingham College. As well as the college teams using the facilities, there are two groups of young people who have found that basketball has inspired them to use it as a vehicle for employment.
- Many of these young people have had troubled lives and found it difficult to stay in school. They are now on Entry to Employment (E2E) or Foundation Modern Apprenticeships (FMA) qualifications.
- Each young person is building up a portfolio of qualifications that will eventually lead to their employment in the sport/leisure industry. The Arena provides a high quality facility for their development. Many of these young adults currently coach in the schools that they found it difficult to stay in as pupils.