

Debenham Leisure Centre

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Debenham Village Hall & Playing Field Trust

DEBENHAM LEISURE CENTRE (DLC) ANNUAL OPERATIONAL REPORT – MAY 2009

On the sporting front DLC offers a wide variety of sports for all ages and abilities. We continue to host several County and Inter-league matches in Football, Badminton & Bowls and are regularly congratulated on our fine facilities and level of hospitality from our visitors. DLC is the home base of Debenham and Deben Vale Badminton Clubs, Debenham Bowls Club, Debenham Karate Club, Debenham Bridge Club, Debenham Squash Club, the Kickboxing Academy, Debenham Tennis Club, Debenham Football Club, Debenham Youth Football Club, Saxtead School of Dance and Debenham Daytime Ladies Club

We also run an extensive programme of Exercise, Dance & Yoga classes for adults, along with an Art Club, Carpet Bowls Club, Scottish Country, Tap and Adult Ballet Dancing classes.

We offer regular coaching sessions for children in, Football, Tennis, Hockey, Cricket, Gymnastics, Squash, Basketball, Kick-Boxing, Trampolining, Dance, Badminton, Netball, Karate and in association with 'Polka Dots' a Drama and Performing Arts Club.

The Football Club based at the centre currently runs 2 adult teams, with the first team playing in the Eastern Counties League and the 2nd eleven playing in the Reserves Section, plus an U18 team in the Eastern Counties Youth League. The Youth Section also has 14 teams, including 3 Girls teams, providing competitive and development matches for children aged 8-18. At the time of writing the first team needs to win their last match and hope for Halstead Town to lose in order to gain promotion to the Premier division of the Eastern Counties League.

The Youth section has also had considerable success this season, with several teams winning trophies, especially the Girls under 16's who have won the League and cup, but more importantly there are over 200 children regularly training and playing in matches. Also 5 children have been selected to train with the ITFC Development Programme.

We also deliver an extensive Summer Holiday Programme with a wide range of activities from just play, to County standard coaching.

One of our junior members Ben Meade has been selected for the England under16 Basketball Squad, a remarkable feat for Ben who is actually only 13 years old.

The Fitness Studio is very popular, with several members being of the older generation along with a good number that are making use of the Referral Scheme we run in partnership with the Doctors Surgery.

The Community Centre continues to flourish and is booked most weekends for events and every weeknight for activities/clubs etc. Over the past 12 months we have had a variety of hirers, from private bookings for weddings and parties to corporate events and conferences. We are pleased to be the home of The Forge Community Church(FCC) every Sunday morning, FCC. bring over 300 visitors to the Centre each week. We have also benefited from FCC's Acts of Random Kindness Days, where their members spend the day carrying out repairs/decorating and cleaning on a voluntary basis.

The community centre lists amongst its regular users Debenham Young Farmers, the Women's Institute, Dance East, Suffolk Farm Machinery Club, Debenham Players, Eastern Angles, Bury Theatre Royal, Wingfield Arts, Suffolk Primary Care, Blood Donors, Stowmarket Lions, Mid Suffolk District and Suffolk County Councils, Third Eye Theatre Company , plus most of the local schools also enjoy this facility.

One of the major DLC events is the Country Music Festival and Caravan Rally. This, once again, was fully booked and brought in around 450 people to the village for 5 days, this not only helps the Leisure Centre financially but these visitors also support all the other businesses in the village. This year sees the 21st Country Music Festival.

Last November saw us host the 10th Bonfire & Firework Spectacular with an estimated 800 visitors to this free event, which is only made possible due to the generous donations by local companies and organisations and the voluntary efforts of a number villagers. With the increase in the cost of Fireworks we will need to find even more financial support for this years event, so please direct any possible sponsors towards the Leisure Centre Reception.

DLC enjoys an average 2600 visitors per week for Sport and Leisure and the Deben Lounge is still a favourite social meeting place for many people. January this year saw the Introduction of Zeera's Indian offering fine Indian Cuisine to eat in the Deben Lounge or takeaway, this has been a tremendous addition to our services that we offer to the local area.

As well as the Debenham Schools, Hartismere, Stowmarket and Stradbroke High Schools, Bedfield, Occold, Worlingworth, Helmingham and Wetheringsett Primary Schools have all benefited from our facilities in Sport and the Arts.

This Multi-Use-Games-Area (known affectionately as the M.U.G.A) is still managed by DLC in the evenings on behalf of the High School.

We continue to work with the minimum staffing levels that current legislation allows and so at times the DLC Staff are somewhat stretched, the continued support of the villagers and surrounding district is very much appreciated as we strive to maintain the levels of Sport and Leisure available at an affordable rate to all in Debenham.

If anyone would like to discuss any of the activities at DLC or like to offer any suggestions or advice please do not hesitate to contact me at the Leisure Centre,

Finally we are holding an Open Day on Tues 5th May 9am-9pm so why not come along for a chat and have a look at the activities and facilities on offer.

Mel Aldis
Centre Manager

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Annual Parish Report 27 April 2009. Finance

Although the centre continues to thrive with increasing numbers of users and activities on offer, like all other centres providing sporting facilities, the financial aspects of the business are still difficult.

The £24,000 arrears of electricity bill from 18 months ago, has left an indelible mark on the centre's finances and we continue to have to manage the accounts on a shoestring. Having said that the end of year accounts for period ending 28 February 2009 are healthier than was expected. Actions we have taken over the last 12 months to reduce costs have clearly taken effect and the projected loss of an expected nearly £50,000 has been reduced to £21,000. When £10,000 of that is down to depreciation the centre's finances have certainly improved, despite the difficult circumstances we all face. Indeed one good thing to come out of the recession is reduced bank interest charges that have saved the centre about £3,500 in charges and interest.

We continue to receive an annual support grant from MSDC of £25,000 which really is a lifeline to us and we are very grateful to MSDC for continuing to support us in this way. Discussions with the parish council are continuing to try and resolve some final issues around the potential donation of £15,000 towards the upkeep of the community centre side of the business. Such a donation will clearly make a huge difference to the overall financial position.

The centre installed, totally with grant funding a photovoltaic array on the sports hall roof and have been generating solar power for our own use since last September. This has helped reduce our energy costs and of course reduces our CO2 footprint at the same time.

A wind turbine is currently being investigated and a biomass heating system will have a feasibility study carried out during the year so we can further reduce costs and our CO2 footprint.

Despite the current economic downturn the overall feeling at the centre is one of optimism and looking forward to the future.

Richard Blackwell,
Secretary, DVH&PFT.