



Run down hockey pitch transformed into state of the art soccer centre

Pulse transformed a disused hockey pitch into a profit-making soccer centre in only 12 weeks.

Pulse Soccer Barrow is a shining example of how you can turn an underperforming, dilapidated facility into a self-financed new business in a matter of months.

Pulse has worked with Barrow Borough Council since 2008 when it was appointed as their leisure development partner for the next 30 years. As part of the agreement, Pulse provides Barrow Borough Council with ongoing support, advice and guidance on how to improve their leisure services and profitability.

Pulse redeveloped and refurbished The Park Leisure Centre, which is on shared grounds with Pulse Soccer Barrow, in the same year. Pulse was the principal contractor on the project, managing sales and marketing and providing equipment, member management and tracking systems. The development was so successful the facility saw a 30% increase in new members in just four weeks of opening. Having transformed the centre into

a facility that delivers on all fronts for the local community, Pulse was trusted to do the same and manage every element of the project at Pulse Soccer Barrow, including the redesign, renovation, marketing and operation of the entire facility.

The brief was to use Pulse's 34 years of experience to transform the former sand filled hockey pitches – which had been decommissioned for two years - into a self-financed, high-spec, FA accredited football village that would allow more teams and players to enjoy the facility.

Barrow Borough Council funded the £670k project, which was completed by Pulse in just 10 weeks, through prudential borrowing. The result was a state-of-the-art FA accredited 5-a-side soccer provision with 3G artificial grass surfaces, a new reception area and changing facilities. Within just 12 weeks of reopening the upgraded facility was fully booked most days of the week and trading

at an operational surplus. Key to achieving the objectives was an effective marketing campaign across both sites, clever use of space and the creation of more pitches, which allowed for greater income generation.

Key facts

The objectives given to Pulse were twofold:

- Transform the underutilised hockey pitch into a self-financed high-spec centre of excellence for football.
- Create an FA accredited football village that would allow more teams and players to enjoy the facility.

The results were unprecedented

- Trading at an operational surplus within just 12 weeks.
- 500% increase in weekly usage and fully booked all hours most days of the week.

Commercial market for small sided football rivalled by no other team sport



As Barrow Borough Council's leisure development partner, Pulse conducted extensive market research and found that football pitches would be more lucrative than hockey pitches in Barrow.

Football is the biggest sport in the world with millions of players competing each week in organised matches throughout the UK, from grassroots levels to the professional game.

When asked by The Football Association, upwards of 4.5 million people claimed to have played small-sided football in the past 12 months, suggesting the commercial market for small sided football is in a growth cycle rivalled by no other team sport activity.

In addition, figures show that there are over 80,000 affiliated 11 a-side football teams in England which indicates that the demand for well run and easily accessible football facilities such as Pulse Soccer Barrow is vast.

The transformation: clever use of space and more pitches

With over 34 years' experience in designing, building, consulting and managing facilities including Pulse Soccer & Fitness in Wednesbury, Pulse knows first-hand exactly what customers want from their local soccer provision and applied certain design features, service specifications, fittings and fixtures at Pulse Soccer Barrow that had proved hugely successful elsewhere.

In order to create a football provision that could be enjoyed by more teams and players, Pulse chose to convert the existing sand dressed all weather surface into

six five-a-side pitches and created a 60m x 40m academy coaching pitch which doubles up as two seven-a-side pitches. The different sizes and layouts appeal to a wider audience and allow for more bookings per hour.

To allow for more touches of the ball, goals, scoring attempts, one-on-one encounters and dribbling, all of the pitches are FA accredited and boast 3G artificial grass surfaces and football league quality. The surface is also designed to cater for the development of technical skills and prepare players for the traditional 11-a-side game.

To enhance the customer experience even further, the old changing pavilion was completely renovated, a new reception area created with vending facilities and brand new changing rooms and toilets added. This not only created security access onto the pitches but provided a fresher, more pleasant environment for players to prepare for training and matches. The facilities are accessible for all users and there is a party room which can accommodate up to 20 children.



Tony Callister, the Lancashire FA football development officer for Barrow, believes the new pitches marked a bright new dawn for local football. "I'm still in awe of this fantastic facility. The provision is well designed and fits in perfectly with the movement to smaller-sized pitches and teams. It's excellent for junior players and adults alike and is something our town can be proud of."

Pulse responsible for operation of soccer site and marketing for the next 15 years

Pulse has been working with Barrow Borough Council as its leisure development partner since 2008.

The relationship sees Pulse manage sales and marketing at both The Park Leisure Centre and Pulse Soccer Barrow, as well as operation of the entire facility at Pulse Soccer Barrow.

Pulse has transformed the facility into a hub of activity at the heart of local community. Somewhere for people to play football, achieve their fitness goals and socialise with space for gatherings and children's parties. Pulse cross-sells different services within Pulse Soccer Barrow and The Park Leisure Centre and actively promotes activities on social media to help increase participation and ultimately revenue.

A comprehensive and creative marketing plan has been key to the success of Pulse Soccer Barrow. Pulse uses a mixture of print media, advertising, mail campaigns, leaflet drops, community events and taster sessions to raise awareness of the facility. Pulse also promotes activities and facilities through a variety of social media platforms, helping to engage customers and generate plenty of online chat locally.

As Pulse is responsible for sales and marketing at The Park Leisure Centre as well, it has been able to cross-sell different services which has resulted in increased participation levels at both facilities. Gym membership sales at The Park Leisure Centre have reached an all-time high since the soccer centre opened.

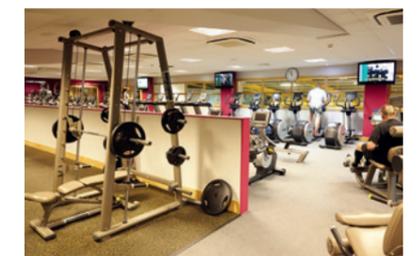


Growing customer demand prompted further investment by Pulse at The Park Leisure Centre

Due to the growing customer demand Pulse upgraded some of the fitness facilities at the adjoining The Park Leisure Centre as part of the project. The junior fitness suite was

relocated and new equipment added; the indoor cycling studio received a refreshed finish and the main gym benefited from two new Trixter XdreamV2s, a selection of free weights,

functional training kit and Pulse's latest Fusion cardiovascular equipment, which is designed and assembled to the highest quality in the UK.



Self-financed after 12 weeks and a 500% increase in weekly usage



The results

Pulse Soccer Barrow reopened in November 2013 following a £670k, 10-week development project and has since gone from strength to strength.

At peak occupancy, Pulse Soccer Barrow can now accommodate up to eight separate bookings per hour whereas the previous surface only allowed for six. While the hockey pitches were only enjoyed by a select few teams a small number of hours each day, Pulse Soccer Barrow is fully booked all hours most days of the week and has local leagues operating at the site every Sunday and Monday.

The facility is also used for events, parties and functions. Feedback shows the new equipment and facilities at The Park Leisure Centre have enhanced the overall member experience and played a very important role in retaining, as well as attracting customers. Pulse will continue to work with Barrow Borough Council as their leisure

development partner to further improve the site to incorporate the latest fitness trends and increase profitability.

The new soccer provision, along with the upgraded gym at The Park Leisure Centre, has greatly improved the quality of leisure services for the Barrow community. It's welcoming, inspiring and the top quality football facilities are matched by very few other sites in the UK.

Used by all

Figures show that approximately 1200 players of all ages, abilities and backgrounds now use the pitches at Pulse Soccer Barrow every week. This equates to a 500% increase in footfall and demonstrates how operators can successfully transform a run down all weather pitch into a moneymaking facility, even in an area with a modest population of approximately 69,000.

All local primary schools have embraced the facility by playing tournaments. Pulse is also working in close partnership with community groups and youth organisations to extend the appeal of the facility even further, providing a space for people of all ages and abilities to train, play and compete. Its first corporate league has just been set up ahead of the 2014 winter season for British Aerospace personnel and a girls only league is in the pipeline.



Keith Johnson, assistant director of community services at Barrow

Borough Council says: "Pulse has an excellent reputation for increasing community engagement and providing affordable, accessible activities. Having seen them deliver to the highest standard at The Park Leisure Centre, we were only too pleased to appoint Pulse to manage every aspect of the Pulse Soccer Barrow refurbishment and operate the facility. It's been great to see a significant increase in visitor numbers and naturally we were thrilled to see a return on our investment within just three months. Pulse Soccer Barrow is now, and will continue to be, at the heart of the sporting community in Barrow and we look excitedly to the next few years and working with Pulse to maintain this."



Warren Ormerod, Director of Soccer for Pulse says: "We are very proud of the level of service we provide and the incredible facility we have produced using our creativity and knowledge of the latest industry trends. We have a proven track record and solution to transforming dilapidated all-weather pitches into profitable enterprises. Our relationship with Barrow Borough Council stems back six years and we're looking forward to continuing to work with them as their leisure development partner to improve and update their facilities yet further."

