

## How can our experience help others?

### Background

Mumbles Community Association (MCA) is a registered charity, specifically set up to develop the amenities in Underhill Park, in Mumbles, Swansea. It operates under the banner 'Go Underhill' [www.go-underhill.com](http://www.go-underhill.com)

Our goal is to replace the current outdated changing rooms and toilets, which were built by American soldiers in 1949/50, and add new facilities and activities which will help ensure the Park offers something for everyone in the local area, as well as for visitors.

With Swansea Council unable to allocate funds to achieve this, the local sports clubs and community members have picked up the challenge and are focused on delivering this transformation.

Through our plans, we will be safeguarding the future of the Park and creating an environment which is attractive, has a range of high standard facilities, is well used and welcoming to everyone.

Built on an historic collaboration between Mumbles Rugby Club, Mumbles Rangers Football Club, plus other local sporting teams, local traders, the local development trust and volunteers from the wider community, the project is driven by what local people want.

To enable MCA to deliver what is required, the charity has secured co-operation and practical support from Swansea Council, and direct financial support of up to £1.2m from Mumbles Community Council. MCA also made a successful application to The National Lottery Communities Fund for £489k, to fund the building of a new community hub & café and to pay for a community co-ordinator for 3 years to help this facility become established.

The project is complex and has required the negotiation of a Deed of Consent with the Somerset Trust, which manages the estates of the Duke of Beaufort, to undertake building work in Underhill Park. The Deed has been specifically granted to MCA in pursuit of its charitable objectives.

Once the initial building work has been completed, MCA will take on the management of the Park and the new facilities for 125 years.

As of spring 2021, we are almost ready to tender the building works but are still looking to raise the balance funding needed to build the all-weather pitch.

**The following pages set out what we have learnt... and are still learning.**

**We hope you find the information helpful in driving forward your own project.**



## Keys to success:

Once you have the right set up – most likely a charitable organisation to enable you to apply for grants – our experience leads us to recommend that the following are important in making a success of your plans.

**Get the right people involved:** Probably the most important aspect. What you need is:

- A strong lead person to chair the project
- Add capacity by getting more people involved – it takes a lot of work, so you need to add to those already involved in running the clubs/organisation. Make sure they are people who can help by working on things you need to do
- Within your team, you will benefit from having access to a range of different skills and knowledge, ideally in all of the following
  - local authority planning process
  - building design and delivery
  - financial management and planning
  - community engagement
  - marketing & communications
  - fundraising & grant applications
  - project management
  - business operation and business plan development
  - legal matters linked to planning, leases, consents, agreements
  - IT

## Engage and involve all those who have an interest or could benefit

- Everyone with a stake needs to be around the table and be supportive of what you are seeking to do. All current users and potential users should be included.
- Involve the community not just as individuals, but also through any existing community groups, such as local traders, local development trust.
- Document any consultations and get letters of support, as you will need both of these for grant applications.
- Engage with all political organisations which have an interest in the location
  - Both local authority and community council. Make Wales and UK national politicians which cover the area aware of the plans
- For Sports activities involve FAW/WRU early in your planning
- Make sure you are listening to what those you engage with say, not just ticking a box

## **Have a plan which is flexible, manageable, and financially sustainable**

- Build your plans based on what your engagement with users, potential users and what the wider community tell you is needed
- Create a clear view on who will benefit and in what ways. Look beyond the simple 'new facilities' to things like 'improved health through access to facilities'
- In addition to building plans, you will also need a business plan and a management plan, and ensure that the projected income will cover all operational and maintenance costs
- Ensure ALL services and site access costs are included: gas, electricity, water, fibre broadband
- Try to develop a road map which shows all the things you need to put in place to deliver your project. Put timescales on it, based on time involved for things like planning approvals, grant applications, tendering of building works, etc. And build in slippage time as things rarely go to plan!

Be aware that...

- Your initial ideas may need to change to reflect what can be funded
- Some needs will evolve over time and you should try to accommodate them
- New ideas will emerge based on the plans you put forward – people almost always want more – consider the ideas, but don't get distracted from your core purpose

## **Have strong and active communications throughout**

- Get an identity/brand as early as possible and stick with it. Think about making it bilingual from the outset as this is important if you are hoping to secure grants from Welsh public bodies
- Ensure everything you do looks professional, buying in external help if needed.
- Create and continue developing a tool kit of information and materials to help you communicate. This should include things such as:
  - Logo
  - Website
  - Social media channels
  - Email list
  - Display locations for physical materials
  - Visuals – images and video – of current situation and the finished plans; of groups and people who will benefit or are involved
  - Letters of support or supportive quotes from high profile individuals, businesses, local schools, community groups, etc.
  - Logos for any partner organisations, grant funders, business donors, etc
- Communicate regularly, through all the channels available.
- Remember to tailor messages to the audience and think about what you want them to do after reading or seeing your communication – share, like, send a message of support, donate, etc.
- Try to create a network of supporters who will help spread your news reach more widely. Make sure you let them know first when there is any important news, to build their connection with the project

### Use all the help that is out there, such as...

- Local authority people willing to advise and review grant bids
- Local voluntary services bodies can advise on things like your set up, policies, community engagement
- Track down any advice and guidance offered by grant bodies – both generic and specific for any awarding body you are applying to
- Ask for input from your network – members, work colleagues, family & friends

### Be patient and persistent

- The current scheme MCA is delivering is not the first attempt to get this done. The community has been seeking improvements to Underhill Park for almost 30 years
- One of the first meetings with Swansea Council was held over 13 years ago!
- MCA was only formed in 2015, on the back of the clubs agreeing to work together and to develop the park in a way that benefits the whole community, and this proved to be a game changer.

**To get over the line you will also need passion and the belief in yourselves that you can make it happen.**



### More information:

MCA: <https://go-underhill.com/mumbles-community-association/>

Mumbles Rangers Football Club: <https://www.mumblesrangers.co.uk/>

Mumbles Rugby Club: <https://mumbles.rfc.wales/>