

## fitness fife-style

When, as a lad, I listened to the football results at five o'clock on a Saturday afternoon I didn't have a clue where Fife was (or Forfar for that matter), but I often wondered whether Fife 4 – Forfar 5 would ever actually happen. A few weeks ago I took the chance to plug a gap in my geographical knowledge and find out what was happening fitness-wise in this part of Scotland.

### Lottery Funding

Armed with substantial lottery funds from The Scottish Executive, Fife Council, just north of Edinburgh, has set about upgrading the health and fitness facilities in ten leisure centres in the region. Scott Barrie, MSP for Dunfermline West, said "The project highlights the partnership approach between the Scottish Parliament and Fife Council. Part of the social inclusion agenda is providing facilities such as these in all communities which means that everyone has access to high quality equipment."

### The Vision

The team at Fife would be the first to say that its fitness facilities prior to the refurbishment epitomised the Spartan local authority stereotype and were therefore unlikely to inspire anyone but the exercise devotee to adopt a healthier lifestyle. They would probably also agree that having been awarded a sum of money to improve the situation they were not entirely sure where to begin. The good news is that Area Operational Team Leader, Ed Watson, took responsibility for driving the project and a council that had the vision to embrace new ideas supported him.

### Professionalism

Stuart Beveridge, who manages Precor's operation in Scotland, says, "The tender process left us in no doubt about the professionalism of the management team in Fife and the high standards they were likely to demand. They left absolutely no stone unturned in their desire to secure the right partner going forward. Part of the process was to request that all tendering manufacturers provided at least eight products to be tested. The equipment was evaluated with a questionnaire that was completed by fifty fitness personnel.



"Precor looked after every last detail of our refurbishment programme across all our centres," says Watson, "Now everyone is benefiting from their expertise."

### Branding

Keenly aware of the fact that the new fitness centres needed an umbrella brand to stimulate a different perception in the minds of the community, the team at Fife opted for the 'Inspirations' name and logo,



which was recommended by Precor as part of the re-branding process. That's fine and dandy, but we all know that a fancy name counts for very little if the product doesn't match the promise. I saw the new £80,000 gym at Cowdenbeath Leisure Centre. No glass and mahogany private sector tower here, this is the real world of public sector facility management and I have to say that what they have achieved in a four hundred square foot basement facility with no natural light is inspirational.

### Design

"If I showed you the colours that we have used in the gyms in isolation I expect that you would have the same reaction as everyone else i.e. no way. But they really do work," says Beveridge. Having seen the colour schemes in action, I have to tell you that we are talking primary colour city here but I agree with Stuart, they do create a dynamic, vibrant environment. "The refurbishment programme has allowed community services to review the operation of the fitness facilities. The new equipment and corporate colour scheme provided by Precor is supplemented with the 'Inspiration' brand name that will welcome people to the new facilities," says Councillor Jim Brennan.

### Balance

In order to maintain some sense of balance one wall is pure white, but on that wall they have mounted a series of Perspex-framed Precor posters that add an extra touch of class. Round this off with a comprehensive range of equipment and sensitive lighting and no wonder the people of Fife are pleased: "It's really relaxed here. Some people have changed to private clubs, but now they don't have to as all the up-to-date equipment is here," says Carmen Kirk, a new gym user.



improvise exercises to suit individual needs.

### Sales

This course consists of information, drills and role-play on telephone enquiries, the pre-tour analysis, dealing with objections, presenting the price and closing the sale.

### Interactive Instructor

Designed to improve interaction between instructors and users, this course includes segments on understanding who your members are, body

### Usage Up

The new Cowdenbeath fitness centre has certainly been busy since it opened. Management reports an 11% increase in traffic year-on-year and with memberships at £24 a month it is pretty easy to see why. "We are hoping to serve the whole community and tempt back some customers who have gone to try private clubs," says assistant manager, Jimmy Dunbar.

### Support

In addition to providing advice on design, construction and equipment layout Precor has also put together a complete training package that is designed to ensure that their clients maximise their investment. Fife Council is currently availing itself of Precor training and support as and when it is appropriate.

### Fitness Induction

The fitness support package has been designed to provide operators with professional, effective and easy-to-use induction and programming cards.

### Disabled

Precor has been working in partnership with the Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) for some time now and they have introduced a workshop that will equip instructors to: correctly assess people with disabilities, decide whether a GP referral is required and



language, approaching people you don't know, rapport building, assessing at-risk members and developing individual and team standards.

### Front of House

It takes four seconds to create a lasting impression of your facility – good or bad. This course is designed to ensure that front-desk staff maximise that four seconds.

It's very easy for magazines like Bodylife to focus on glitzy new public sector developments in fashionable

areas, but they are not representative of what is happening to local authority leisure up and down the country. In the real world tired old gyms, often located in unsuitable facilities, are having new life breathed into them by managers determined to bring them into the twenty-first century. The new fitness centres in Fife are perfect examples of how innovative operators with open minds and forward-thinking management can create inspirational community facilities often in uninspiring locations.

## An Invitation

Ed Watson and the team at Fife would like to extend an invitation to other operators from both the private and public sectors to visit them and discuss how the Inspiration project was conceived and executed. Ed can be contacted on 01592 417839 or email [ed.watson@fife.gov.uk](mailto:ed.watson@fife.gov.uk)

For further information on Precor products and services call on 0118 973 3994

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