

NEWS FROM



West Middlesbrough Neighbourhood Trust

Boro captain helps open £3.2m community centre

MIDDLESBROUGH FC skipper Matthew Bates joined Mayor Ray Mallon, BBC Tees pundit Ali Brownlee and community leaders at the opening of a flagship community centre in Middlesbrough.

Members of the surrounding communities also took an opportunity to get a first good look behind the doors of the impressive glass-fronted £3.2m Acklam Green Centre.

The centre, in Acklam Road, has been built for regeneration charity, West Middlesbrough Neighbourhood Trust (WMNT).

The bold three-storey building includes a 200-seat auditorium, meeting rooms and conference facilities, youth centre, café, space for community activities and functions, offices and changing facilities for adjacent sports pitches.

The centre was formally opened on Friday [25] by Sharon Stuttard, chair of WMNT's board of trustees.

Matthew Bates, who hails from Stockton, presented a signed football and team shirt to lucky ten-year-old Whinney Banks School pupil Harry Smith. Harry earned his place as guest of honour at the event after winning his school's contest to design a poster for the event.

His colourful winning design now hangs in the centre foyer.

The presentation was a big surprise to Harry, who lives in Priory Road, and gave him a day to remember – as well as something to brag about to his envious classmates back at school.

The mayor addressed the invited audience during the ceremony, praising the charity for its work with young people, its efforts to help people find work and improve neighbourhoods.

“You have done so much, and your signature is all over this community,” he said, before applauding those assembled “on behalf of all of the people of Middlesbrough.”

Boro-born Ali Brownlee, who was master of ceremonies, spoke with affection of the local community and nearby Whinney Banks School, at which he started back in 1965.

“It’s great to see the regeneration of West Middlesbrough and the results of all the hard work that has been put in by residents, the council, the trust and other partners,” he said.

The stunning Acklam Green Centre is a key part of the multi-million pound regeneration of the Acklam Green/Whinney Banks area, which has included new housing for sale and rent.

The centre is fully accessible, with level access and lifts to all parts of the building.

Attractive landscaping around the centre and the sports pitches has completed the bold new development, which features a distinctive glazed atrium.

Sharon Stuttard, WMNT chair, said: “The Charity is delighted that the long-awaited centre has now been completed. We hope that not only the local community of West Middlesbrough – but also the wider Middlesbrough community and beyond – will be able to use the centre’s excellent business and community facilities.”

WMNT managing director Sandra Phillips added: “The development of the Acklam Green Centre has been a long term goal for the trust as part of the regeneration of West Middlesbrough, in partnership with Middlesbrough Council.

“It has created four new permanent jobs and a number of casual posts which have been filled by local people. We look forward to further jobs being created once the remaining two office areas are leased: sourcing employment and volunteering opportunities for local people remains a priority for the trust.”

Features of the new building and its adjacent sports pitches include:

- * a large auditorium with electrically-powered retractable theatre-style seating, full audio-visual facilities and a sound and lighting control booth.

A wedding licence has been applied for

- * three meeting rooms

- * three extensive office suites. One will be occupied by Middlesbrough Council's Integrated Youth Service team, two are available to rent

- * a café, with fully-equipped kitchen, takes up some of the lovely light and airy foyer area which is at the building's heart

- * changing, shower and locker facilities for users of the games pitches outside

- * environmentally-friendly underfloor heating with heat recovery system, solar panels on the roof, high levels of insulation and water saving taps

Outside:

- * a full-sized all-weather football pitch (this can be used as three five-a-side pitches)

- * a multi-use games area (MUGA) all-weather pitch

- * 42 car park spaces and provision for disabled drivers and cycle racks.

*** To book facilities at Acklam Green Centre, or to find out more, contact centre coordinator Donna Smith on 01642 811121 or donna.smith@wmnt.co.uk.**

About West Middlesbrough Neighbourhood Trust

WMNT is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. For a decade it was the driving force behind the £52m Government-funded New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme designed to regenerate neighbourhoods in West Middlesbrough.

Since March 2010 and the end of NDC funding, the trust has been building on its vision to make West Middlesbrough a place where people are proud to live, work and raise their families, building on the improvements of the preceding ten years.

Its immediate priorities are to:

- * work with Bellway Homes and Yuill Homes to ensure completion of the NDC-funded flagship housing developments at Acklam Green and St Cuthbert's Mews
- * establish new sources of income, principally through its new trading arm, Ngage
- * commission and deliver services
- * develop its assets and property portfolio to generate income

NOTES TO EDITORS

* Please find attached jpg images from the opening event showing, from left:

- WMNTAcklamGreenCentre1: Acklam Green Centre coordinator Donna Smith, Whinney Banks School pupil Harry Smith, WMNT managing director Sandra Phillips, Mayor Ray Mallon and MFC captain Matthew Bates.
- WMNTAcklamGreenCentre2: MFC captain Matthew Bates and WMNT chair Sharon Stuttard.
- WMNTAcklamGreenCentre3: MFC captain Matthew Bates and Whinney Banks School pupil Harry Smith, in front of Harry's winning poster in the Acklam Green Centre Foyer.
- WMNTAcklamGreenCentre4: Middlesbrough Mayor Ray Mallon addresses the audience at the opening of the Acklam Green Centre.

More images are available on request.

* Please direct media inquiries to Gareth Dant on 01609 760059, 07929 869269 or garethdant@maximediapr.co.uk.

* WMNT is based close to the new community centre, at 99 Acklam Road.

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