

Alconbury Youth Club and Fusion holiday project

When Alconbury Youth Club and Fusion, a school holiday project based in Huntingdon, were threatened with closure in 2011. Urban&Civic were one of the parties that stepped in to help save them.



FUSION HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

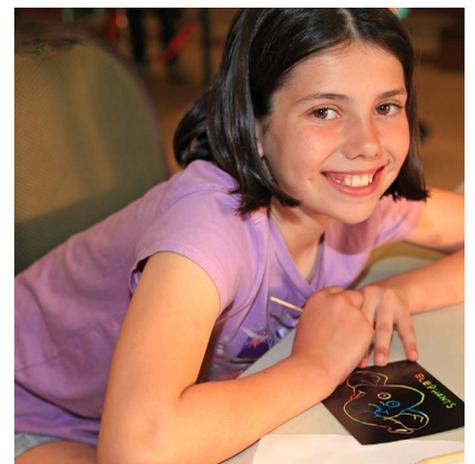
'It's been great to be involved, and we're hoping through the connection to involve some of the youth club members to help us plan facilities for young people in Alconbury Weald.'

Urban&Civic was one of a number of businesses approached in an effort to keep the youth club open when funding was cut in April 2011. Later that same year Urban&Civic enabled Fusion holiday project to remain open during the summer holidays after its core funding was axed.

Both projects provide a much needed resource for young people and, by giving support both in the short term with funding and, in the longer term through partnership working Urban&Civic hope to help make a difference to young people's lives in Huntingdonshire. Following budget cuts, Cambridgeshire County Council had withdrawn their £5,000 per annum grant to Alconbury Youth Club and were no longer able to provide funding for its three youth workers.

The club, which had opened in 2004 in response to incidents of anti-social behaviour in the village, had become a vital support for young teenagers who would otherwise have nothing to do. More than 100 young people aged between 9 and 16 regularly attended the club once a month in Alconbury Memorial Hall.

Fusion holiday project was set up a year later by Huntingdon Youth Service, on the Oxmoor Estate in Huntingdon to provide activities for vulnerable children and young people between the ages of 8 and 18 through the long summer holiday as well as during half term breaks and at Easter. It ran successfully for over five years with nearly 500 young people attending activities which included sports and crafts as well as outdoor camping and outings and visits from outside agencies. From early on police were able to confirm that there had been a significant reduction in anti-social behaviour on the Oxmoor Estate.



When the funding from the local authority and the Big Lottery came to an end in early 2011, Huntingdon Youth Service were forced to start looking elsewhere for financial support.

Consequently, during the first half of 2011 Urban&Civic were approached by County Councillors Laine Kadic and Sir Peter Brown on two separate occasions to see if they could help prevent the closure of the youth club in Alconbury and the holiday project in Huntingdon.

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Rebecca Britton, Community Liaison Officer for Urban&Civic, explains why U&C decided to make a commitment: ‘When Laine first approached us to discuss the future of Alconbury Youth Club, it was clear that there was a real determination amongst the local partners that it could not close down, and it had to get itself on a self-sustainable footing. While a considerable amount of money was involved, we knew that committing to three years funding for the Club would give it the space and time it needed to develop a business plan. It’s been great to be involved, and we’re hoping through the connection to involve some of the youth club members to help us plan facilities for young people in Alconbury Weald.’

When not long after Urban&Civic were contacted by Laine and Sir Peter they once again saw that they could not only fill a funding gap but also help make a

difference to young people’s lives on the Oxmoor Estate in Huntingdon. Rebecca said: ‘The holiday project, Fusion, had an immediate need for funding and we were able to help out in the short term. But we are keen to develop a partnership over the next three years. They are a fantastic bunch of people doing amazing things and we want to support something that is making a real difference. We see it as part of Urban&Civic’s long term partnership with the area.’

Alconbury Youth Club continues to flourish. The funding they received from local parish councils and local businesses, including Urban&Civic, has now secured its future until at least 2014. The Annual Report published in May 2012 concluded that ‘The Alconburys Youth Club is a very popular club for the young people across the villages and numbers have steadily grown. There is a real buzz

about the club for its members and behaviour is always good.’

Laine Kadic, Cambridge County Councillor, is pleased with the outcome: ‘The youth club was a much needed resource for young people and, when the county council cut the funding, we decided to step in. We asked the volunteers to draw up a three-year business plan which I could then present to local businesses. After meeting Urban&Civic and explaining to them the need to keep the club open to give the young people something to do, they agreed to help with funding. Then, once the funding was in place it was down to the volunteers to run the club. I’m pleased to say it has gone from strength to strength.’



Fusion has remained open too during school holidays. A key part of the project which has proved particularly successful is the opportunity provided for young people to develop leadership skills. Those members who are aged 14 and above can volunteer as helpers. They are known as ‘Orange shirts’ because of the orange t-shirts they were to identify them as voluntary helpers. Some of these ‘orange shirts’ have since gone on to become members of staff at Huntingdon Youth Centre.

Laine Kadic maintains that Fusion has been responsible for curbing anti-social behaviour in the Oxmoor area. ‘We see a huge decrease in anti-social behaviour when the project is running because we are giving young people something positive and constructive to do. It gives them friends and they learn new skills. A lot of them return year after year and eventually become ‘orange shirts’ and help to look after the newcomers.’

