

Transforming Outdoor Adventure: An Architect's Vision

Creating a sense of wonder

Mark is planning to turn the centre into “a building as exciting as the activities that take place at The Caldecotte Xperience”. He says: “We want to create a sense of wonder with light, airy and generous spaces - and quality detailing that ensures sustainability for the future.”

Mark's vision for the main building will give visitors a 'sense of arrival'. “A wood facade will make a statement – like a feature screen. It will provide a sense of drama as well as leading people easily and clearly to the wider, spectacular entrance.”

The inside of the main building will be made totally accessible by removing internal walls. The open interior will create all-year-round activity spaces enabling young people to benefit from TCX whatever the weather.

You'd be forgiven for thinking the most important part of an outdoor adventure centre is its outdoor activities. While this is true, just as important are its buildings, especially since we are influenced by our surroundings.

Providing exciting and inspiring experiences for young people is what Action4Youth is all about. At The Caldecotte Xperience (TCX), our adventure centre in Milton Keynes, we run an array of outdoor activities from abseiling to zorbing. But there's only so much inspiring we can do with a dated and tired outdoor centre. If you've not already heard by now, ours - The Caldecotte Xperience (TCX) - is long overdue a revamp.

Buildings that reflect positive experiences

A4Y has plans to modernise TCX and turn it into a sustainable space that's accessible to all young people - regardless of ability. With the help of architect Mark Doohan, we want to transform the centre into something spectacular - a place that better reflects the experiences had there.

Mark Doohan is the Managing Director of Benchmark Architects in Milton Keynes and shares our vision. With three sons of his own - Jonah (18), Taylor (17) and Jasper (11), who've all visited TCX on school trips and with the Ampthill Baptist Youth Group - he has a special insight into the redevelopment.

He explains: "My children's experience of coming to TCX and having an exciting time were just not expressed by the building. They were inspired and had a real adventure, but when I came to pick them up, I couldn't work out easily where to go, it was neither a welcoming nor easy entrance to the building. It was hard to even find the front door."

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Office spaces will be as accessible and inclusive too and sustainability is at the core of the redevelopment. Mark and Ismael Zaman, the architectural assistant working alongside him on the project, are exploring sustainable heating, insulation and cooling solutions as well as materials.

Plans for the redevelopment have excited us at Action4Youth. The key question is, have they also excited Mark's sons? "The kids have seen the plans", he says, "they reminded them that when they arrived to do the activities, they felt "wow" but not when they arrived at the building! The plans now make them feel wow!"

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All that remains now is to raise £1.4m to bring the plans to reality. To support the centre's redevelopment campaign visit www.action4youth.org