

Sky blue thinking

Source talks to **Pete Bradshaw**, corporate social responsibility manager at Manchester City Football Club.

Interview by Kate Fox

Q What's your role at Manchester City?

My job covers several areas that come under the umbrella of corporate social responsibility (CSR). The largest of those is developing our community work – everything from sports development to outreach work on the streets, to literacy programmes, to environmental and health projects in schools – all of which engages about half a million people a year across the Northwest.

Q How did you find yourself in this job?

I started out in local government, working in sports development and facilities management. I became a bit of an expert in facilities development, providing good quality, sustainable buildings for sports and leisure. Later on, I got involved with social engagement in sports as well – quite an unusual dual area of expertise.

I'd worked on Manchester's Olympic bids, and the Commonwealth Games bid, and was seconded full-time to the Commonwealth Games as the manager for road events. That's how I came to the City of Manchester stadium. Later I project-managed the transition from the games to the football club, which, in turn, led to my CSR role with City – a unique role in football at the time.

Q So what prompted Manchester City to put such emphasis on CSR?

We realised there had to be a strong link between providing buildings and physical infrastructure, and developing social and community infrastructure alongside them. This club has a long tradition of engaging with local people, and we wanted to build on that.

These days it's not only about football coaching in the street; we do a whole range of environmental awareness projects, for example. We plant trees and wildflower meadows with local schools, and run programmes about energy efficiency for businesses, schools and community groups. We've created gardens for honeybees, a dormouse project – we've got someone employed full-time on environmental education.

The new stadium was a catalyst for change too. It was very clear that being a responsible business in the city made good commercial sense. There's no reason why any organisation, large or small, can't think about its responsibility to the people that live and work and play

around it. Our board felt it would be improper not to think about waste management, about how we use energy, about local purchasing and employment, or about sustainable transport.

Q What's an example of how you've made the club more environmentally sound?

When we moved here in 2003, there were 46 huge waste truck movements on and off site every week. Aside from the landfill issue, the sheer number of journeys was ridiculous.

We looked at what we were throwing away, and realised that about half of it shouldn't be sent to waste, in fact we shouldn't have sourced it in the first place.

So we got everybody thinking about what we were buying, using and throwing away. We looked at what we could re-use on site, ways of reducing our waste, and sought out opportunities for recycling. Working with Greater Manchester Waste, we found that recycled newspapers were being used for local roof insulation, and that glass could be crushed and used for footpaths in Greater Manchester. Our grass cuttings go to Bolton for composting – Manchester City compost, I suppose. Within 12 months, those 40-odd trucks were down to six. We aim to reduce that year on year – it's constantly reviewed.

Q Does the football connection generate enthusiasm for the environmental message?

It certainly gives it credibility. We're not sending the stereotypical tree-hugger into school. Our captain Richard Dunne and other players have really embraced it – they'll go into schools and talk about why these things are important, the trees, the wildflower meadows and so on. It has a different impact than a grey suit from the town hall turning up. It makes it real. If we can work with communities and

schools and say, look, here's a practical example of what this is all about, people engage better. Stories about the ice caps melting – people living in Beswick or Burnage can't directly affect that, but they can affect what happens locally. We can demonstrate how that makes a real difference. We all have to do our bit, and we're concentrating on the bit that's right here.

Q Are City ahead of the game?

I think we've just taken a very clear stance on it. We're the only club with mainstream CSR in its structure, in that sense we're unique. But everybody's thinking about it. The Premier League has taken a lead now, pushing clubs to look at what they do and to work together to become more efficient. Some of our neighbours in the Northwest are doing really good stuff. I think we are doing better than others, but the real success of what we've done comes when our approach is mirrored elsewhere.

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