

BACKGROUND TO THE COMPANY & REASON FOR RELOCATION

Melanie Soares Fitness Limited, formerly known as The Bikini Body Bootcamp, has operated in North Lanarkshire (mostly Bellshill and Motherwell) since 2012. The company was founded by Melanie Soares following a lengthy career in fitness within North Lanarkshire Council. It is a family run business as Melanie is supported by her husband, Peter Soares. Peter also had a lengthy career in the fitness and leisure industry within the Council.

In early 2020, pre COVID, the company had great plans for growth and development into not just fitness but considering general health and wellbeing too. There were plans to develop these aspects of the business, however the notice for compulsory purchase of the current business premises of 12-14 Draffen Street, Motherwell, ML1 1NJ had come through and was threatening the future of the business. At that point, alternative premises were in negotiations however lockdown measures resulted in those premises withdrawing their availability.

Since lockdown 1, 20th March 2020, the company has been trading in line with local lockdown measures, meaning we had to reopen, then close, 4 times. We worked closely with North Lanarkshire Trading Standards and our local Councillors during our many lockdowns ensuring we operated well within guidelines to provide a safe and supportive hub for all of our clients to ensure they looked after their health and wellbeing during the pandemic. We simply pivoted and adapted our service provision to keep our company operational whenever we could.

During the lockdown which saw us closed from Christmas 2020 until 26th April 2021, we closed completely. Unlike during previous lockdowns where we supported our clients online and outdoors as much as we could. We simply had to close, we had to take a break as the numerous pivots, changes, adaptations and risk assessments were taking their toll on us as business owners but also our staff team. We took the break, but this meant we were able to reopen on 26th April 2021, more than ready with our growth and development plans back as our main focus.

We have operated fully, with little restrictions per localised Government guidelines, since April 2021, which has resulted in full business recovery. We are now back where we left off pre-COVID March 2020.

This coincides with the compulsory purchase of 12-14 Draffen Street, Motherwell, ML1 1NJ which we have now received our eviction notice for, to be vacant from this building no later than 28 February 2022.

OPERATIONAL DETAILS

We are a fully coached fitness centre. This differs from your standard gym or leisure facility in many ways.

We operate our primary 'product' as 6-week block fitness and wellbeing programs. These run 7 times per year and are paid, in advance by our members. These members attend on set days (at the moment this is Monday's, Tuesday's and Thursday's with an early morning Saturday as additional optional session). This means we know exactly who is attending our set sessions on which days. Our session times are set on the above days as 6am, 9.30am, 5pm, 6pm, 7pm and 8pm. The maximum number of members that would attend each session is 50.

At present, we encourage car sharing and walking to/from our centre. Due to this, at all session times above, we have approx. 20-25 cars in our car park. We believe this would have very little impact on the 700 car parking spaces currently available at Brandon Parade East.

From the session times above, we do not believe there to be any significant impact on the established businesses already using the car parking area. The majority of business in the area operate standard business hours of 9am-5pm therefore the vast majority of our members will come to the area before or after these core hours.

We have a staff team of 12, with only 4 being on duty at any one time. Staff are also encouraged to car share, use public transport and walk as much as possible. Therefore, there is an expectation that 3 staff will be parked in the car park at any one time.

Within our joining instructions for each 6-week block, we already include a section on parking relating to our current premises. We will update this to include clear instructions on parking etiquette and directions for navigating from the car parking area to the entrance to our facility. Whilst we would want to encourage our members to visit the local amenities whilst at our centre, we can ask that they abide by parking rules/limits of time etc.

FUTURE PLANS FOR THE COMPANY

During our post-COVID recovery, we scaled back all of our services in order to protect the financial recovery of the business. Now that we are back to pre-COVID financial status, we will look to re-introduce some 'products' such as Kids Bootcamp, Youth Gym, early morning and lunch time classes.

We plan to re-introduce these different programs gradually as the demand grows from February 2022 onwards.

Pre-COVID our kids and youth programs generated approx. 15 attendees at each, which we operated on Wednesday and Friday's at 4pm and 5pm respectively. These are attended by primary school aged children (Kids bootcamp) and secondary school aged children (Youth Gym). Parents/guardians are encouraged to

bring the kids to the centre and either wait in the waiting area or return to collect their child an hour later. This is booked on a 6-week block basis so again, we know who is coming to each session and numbers are closely monitored.

Early morning and lunch time classes have operated periodically throughout our non-lock down periods since March 2020. We advertise these on our social media platforms and members are encouraged to pre-book sessions on our booking software meaning we always know who is attending and can limit capacity to ensure that we never have overcrowding etc. We would encourage local businesses to make use of our classes for staff in a health promotion effort. We are currently considering offering a discounted rate for local businesses who allow their staff to attend on lunch breaks.

HOW THIS INTEGRATES WELL WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

We are always looking to work within the community and integrate with other leisure, fitness and wellbeing businesses to raise the profile of each individual in North Lanarkshire properly taking care of themselves.

We are currently engaged in a timetable with Active Schools in North Lanarkshire attending 7 high schools per week with our Health and Wellbeing program. We attend these schools to deliver our program as we collaborate closely with each school with a targeted group of children who are non-engaging in exercise activities or have been highlighted as facing additional environmental challenges either within the educational system or at home.

We have been heavily involved in this work for 2-3 months however have always supported local schools over the years. The aim of the workshop is to create that spark of enthusiasm that currently lacks, or belief in that self-conscious mind that health, fitness and wellbeing should always be one of life's priorities. When environmental factors lack opportunities and when social circles lack encouragement, we want to create that self-motivation that empowers our young people to make the best possible health, fitness and wellbeing choices that they carry into adulthood.

As stated above, we will be offering discounted rates on our individual fitness classes to local business in the Brandon Parade locale. Our classes are primarily attended by members who already attend our 6-week program, however, given our new location, we feel that office workers in particular would benefit from the break away from their desk jobs to make best use of their lunch breaks by attending our classes. We would look to offer a discounted rate per drop-in session.

LOITERING

As with our current premises, we actively encourage members to leave the area promptly to avoid gathering/loitering per COVID safety regulations. We will ensure our main entrance and exit are free from members gathering by introducing an indoor waiting area avoiding any street level congestion.

We would hope though that whilst visiting our centre, our members will make use of other businesses within the Parade enhancing their footfall therefore contributing to their economic growth.

NOISE POLLUTION

During our discussion with Planning Officer, Stuart McCallum we discussed possible obstacles to us obtaining this change of use certificate from the Council. Stuart kindly advised that we pro-actively seek advice from the Protective Services team as to whether the site we wish to move into would require a noise pollution assessment or not, as being the only issue he could highlight from our operations.

We contacted Environmental Services on 5th November 2021 and discussed our move with Noise Pollution Officer Alastair Cruikshank. I discussed our operating practices with Mr Cruikshank and his only advice was to open discussions with the owner of the ground floor (Wetherspoons public house) as he felt noise transfer between floors may be an issue for them. Mr Cruikshank confirmed he would not visit the property to complete the assessment as suggested as a possible pro-active measure by the Planning Officer.

Wetherspoons public house operates on the ground floor and we plan to operate on floors 1 and, eventually, 2 of the premises; as previously stated, we would encourage all members (approx. 300 per week) to make use of the Wetherspoons whilst in the area. We enclose an email from the landlords who confirm that they have no issue with the building being used as a fitness facility. We will, in due course, make contact with the management of the Wetherspoons to introduce ourselves and look at staff discounts/incentives for both businesses.

We are installing a sound system that we can set decibel limits on; we are also enhancing the floor with a solid base and industry specific rubber matting which absorbs impact and noise.

Our set session times mean there is not a constant stream of noise throughout our operating hours. There will be large periods of the day with no noise whatsoever.

We are also in close proximity to a public house who generate a higher-than-normal level of noise. We do not anticipate exceeding this.

SuDS – SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS

We were asked whether our plans included provision for the above during the change of use application. Our plans do not, due to the building being fully established for many years and us not owning the building. We believe that the installation of SuDS would fall outwith our responsibility. If this is not the case, please let us know asap and we would welcome any advice/support/guidance you could provide.

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