# John Puttick Associates transforms Blackburn power station into Fusebox youth hub



John Puttick Associates has successfully completed an ambitious project to retrofit a historic Victorian power station in Blackburn, transforming it into a vibrant new facility known as Fusebox, dedicated to young people aged 16 to 25. This initiative is part of a broader regeneration effort aimed at revitalising Blackburn town centre, addressing the pressing need for enhanced youth infrastructure.

Originally constructed in 1895, the L-shaped power station, which operated during a pivotal time in the UK’s electrical history, has been given a new lease on life. The intricate design process preserved significant architectural features, such as the original steel roof trusses and exposed brickwork. The firm has highlighted the integration of modern elements alongside these historic details. Notably, the redesign includes a central entrance on Pilkington Street, leading into a striking double-height events space that retains the character of the original building while accommodating contemporary uses. A new mezzanine level, featuring co-working hubs and breakout spaces, enhances the building’s functionality for various activities, from training sessions to social gatherings.

Support from Blackburn Youth Zone and Blackburn with Darwen Council was crucial in the project’s development. The architects collaborated closely with these stakeholders to secure funding from the Department of Culture, Media & Sport’s Youth Investment Fund, amounting to approximately £3.1 million for the overall transformation of the youth zone facilities. This funding enables the centre to cater to thousands of young individuals in the area, expanding upon the existing resources offered by the youth zone—resources that include facilities for dance, sports, digital creation, and mentorship.

The complete refurbishment of the surrounding youth centre has also included substantial upgrades, such as the addition of new spaces for arts, wellness, gaming, music, and fitness. A notable feature of the redesign is an amphitheatre-style ramp and seating area that promotes inclusivity and ease of movement throughout the space. As part of an effort to enhance environmental stewardship, a green wall will be planted and maintained by the young people using the facility, further greenifying the site while instilling a sense of ownership among users.

The design and construction processes emphasised low-impact methods. By retaining as much of the original fabric as possible and upgrading the mechanical and electrical systems, the project aims to improve energy performance comprehensively. Additionally, ongoing community involvement has been a cornerstone of the design process, ensuring that the voices of local stakeholders and youth workers informed the building's eventual outcome.

Future plans for the adjoining Fuse Box building include creating an Employment Skills Hub. With an approved budget of £2.9 million, this redevelopment aims to provide extensive training facilities and social spaces, helping to equip young people with the skills necessary for the workforce of tomorrow. Elements such as a dedicated Maker Zone and areas designed for interactive engagement promise to support academic pursuits in STEAM subjects, thereby fostering a culture of innovation and creativity.

As Blackburn continues to adapt and renew its facilities to meet the demands of its youth, the completion of Fusebox stands as a testament to the power of architectural innovation and community collaboration in shaping a brighter future for the town’s young residents.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/in-pictures-john-puttick-associates-retrofit-victorian-power-station-into-youth-hub-in-blackburn/5136416.article), [[5]](https://www.blackburnyz.org/blackburn-and-darwen-youth-zone-celebrates-3m-boost-to-help-youngsters-find-their-spark/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/in-pictures-john-puttick-associates-retrofit-victorian-power-station-into-youth-hub-in-blackburn/5136416.article), [[2]](https://www.johnputtickassociates.com/project/fuse-box/), [[3]](https://youthinvestmentfund.org.uk/news-insights/3-1m-transformation-of-blackburn-youth-zone/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.blackburnyz.org/your-zone/), [[6]](https://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/news/23992092.blackburn-youth-zone-fuse-box-2-9m-upgrade-approved/), [[7]](https://www.blackburnyz.org/about-us/youth-hub/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/in-pictures-john-puttick-associates-retrofit-victorian-power-station-into-youth-hub-in-blackburn/5136416.article> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.johnputtickassociates.com/project/fuse-box/> - John Puttick Associates has been commissioned to reimagine the historic Fuse Box building in Blackburn, originally built in 1895 as a power station. The project aims to transform the building into a vibrant space for young people, featuring a new glazed entrance, double-height events space, mezzanine co-working hub, and ground-floor creative maker space. The design preserves key architectural features, including steel roof trusses and exposed brickwork, while introducing modern elements that reference the building's industrial heritage. The refurbishment also includes alterations to the adjacent youth centre, enhancing its facilities and creating a skate-friendly landscape at the front entrance.
3. <https://youthinvestmentfund.org.uk/news-insights/3-1m-transformation-of-blackburn-youth-zone/> - The £3.1 million transformation of Blackburn Youth Zone, funded by the Youth Investment Fund, has been completed, unveiling upgraded facilities and a new building ready to welcome thousands of young people in the town. The completed works were unveiled on April 23 to many of the 74 patrons of the Youth Zone – Blackburn and East Lancashire businesses in the main – which together contribute 40% of the annual running costs. Guests were welcomed by the Youth Zone’s new chief executive, Leon Crosby, who will steer the charity into a new era – leading, inspiring and educating young people as they progress through life.
4. <https://www.blackburnyz.org/your-zone/> - Blackburn & Darwen Youth Zone is a purpose-built facility offering a wide range of activities, including dance, climbing, digital creation, sport, music, media, employability, and mentoring. The Youth Zone includes a four-court sports hall with facilities for indoor tennis, badminton, football, netball, and basketball, a separate climbing wall, a fitness suite with the latest gym equipment, and an outdoor multi-use games area. Inside, there is also a kitchen and café area selling healthy food and drink, multi-purpose areas for dance, music, arts and crafts, gaming and DJ-ing, martial arts, and boxing facilities.
5. <https://www.blackburnyz.org/blackburn-and-darwen-youth-zone-celebrates-3m-boost-to-help-youngsters-find-their-spark/> - Blackburn and Darwen Youth Zone has secured £3 million of new government funding to transform the Fuse Box building into a new Employment Skills Hub. The plans for the currently undeveloped and unused building include a new training academy offering training facilities for the delivery of recognised and vocational qualifications, a Maker Zone housing dedicated science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics (STEAM) equipment with a bespoke accredited curriculum, a sector-based Youth Club providing bespoke equipment for young people to develop transferable skills in preparation for 'Jobs of the Future', and an open events space for youngsters to showcase their talents. Additionally, there will be social spaces, a new fitness suite, and areas where the youngsters can receive one-to-one support. Outside, a new hi-tech, multi-use games area will also be created, which is skate and BMX-friendly in a bid to divert youngsters away from the town centre.
6. <https://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/news/23992092.blackburn-youth-zone-fuse-box-2-9m-upgrade-approved/> - The £2.9 million redevelopment of Blackburn Youth Zone, including creating a new employment and skills hub in the unused neighbouring Fuse Box building, has been approved by councillors. The major makeover will include a remodelled main entrance with a skate-friendly approach, murals, and a green 'living wall' of plants. The Fuse Box building will be refurbished to provide further provision for the upper age range of young people, including a food station, workshop, laser cutting room, arts studio, maker space, meeting room, large events space, health and well-being room, music room including sound booth, and a gym.
7. <https://www.blackburnyz.org/about-us/youth-hub/> - The Blackburn with Darwen Youth Hub supports local young people between the ages of 16 and 24. Over the next five years, the vision is to change how a generation of young people across Blackburn with Darwen prepare for the world of work. This involves coordinating a wraparound support service for local young people that address health and wellbeing issues, pastoral support, as well as work skills development. The support package includes empowering young people, assessing all young people accessing the service to identify areas of support needed, and developing an action plan that will enable young people to overcome any barriers.