

LEISURE management

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THE CREATIVE CROWD-FUNDING
DOT.COM KICKING UP A STORM IN THE US

Service with style

Latest trends in boutique hotels

SKATEBOARDING

How to plan a successful park

The Marlowe

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SHOW-STOPPING
£26M THEATRE

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on VisitBritain's £127m
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SPORTS PARTICIPATION

The UK government won the 2012 Olympic bid for London off the back of two promises – to increase sports participation and to regenerate East London.

So far, regeneration work has progressed magnificently, but increasing participation is proving a thornier challenge.

Sport England was given the job of using increased funding to prod the nation into action and its chosen strategy was to channel half of this through sports governing bodies. The big proviso was that they'd only get the money if they got the results, with the impact being monitored through the Active People survey, which is carried out by Ipsos MORI.

The latest survey reveals 'disappointing' results, showing that while participation has grown in some sports and social groups, overall, the hoped-for growth hasn't materialised.

Two groups in particular – women and teenagers – have seen a fall in participation and many governing bodies have performed poorly, with some losing funding as a result.

The fact that these two groups have also just topped the unemployment table shows that they're under pressure in many key areas and need extra support to stay engaged.

The challenge of driving funding to the grassroots of sport and seeing it make a measurable difference to participation is one that has haunted sports administrators for decades and we still don't seem to have the infrastructure in place to deliver either excellent value for money or enduring change in this area.

The weakening of the county sports partnerships – one of our best bets for increasing participation – further diminishes the likelihood of success, while the winding down of



We can take some comfort from the fact that no Olympics has led to increased participation, but we'd really aimed to do better and it's to be hoped the people in charge will continue to strive for a positive way forward

school sports – although not directly part of the current equation (Sport England is only responsible for community sports participation) must still have an impact on general awareness and enthusiasm for sport. Provision must be a continuum for all life stages if we are to keep people engaged.

You have to ask whether channelling funding through voluntary organisations and putting bureaucrats in charge of it is ever going to be the best way to drive money to the grassroots – especially if the bureaucrats must strive for provable outcomes and many voluntary sports bodies have no expertise in working this way.

We can take some comfort from the fact that no Olympics has led to increased participation, but we'd really aimed to do better and with the impetus provided by the Games, it's to be hoped the people in charge will continue to strive for a positive way forward.

The role of sport and physical activity in the health of the nation has never been more critical – if there was a drug which could bring the health benefits associated with exercise, it would definitely be the top selling product ever.

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IN THIS ISSUE...



Interview: VisitBritain's Sandle Dawe, p28



New heights: The High Line brings green space and community together in Manhattan, p32



Global trends: How is physical activity being tackled worldwide? p60



S&P Architects talk about innovation at The Pods leisure centre, p26

Leisure Management **news**

- 6 World Leisure
- 8 Hospitality
- 10 Sport
- 11 Commercial
- 12 Health and Fitness
- 14 Attractions
- 16 Public Sector
- 17 Parks
- 18 Spa

20 **hotseat** geraldine howard & ian richardson

The co-founder of Aromatherapy Associates and her business investor talk to Julie Cramer about their plans

24 **design news**

Disney's first beach resort in Hawaii and Chester Zoo's newly-styled eateries

26 **architect's focus** s&p architects

Architect Ron Wallwork explains why The Pods in Scunthorpe represents a new departure in leisure centre design

28 **interview** sandle dawe

As the UK gets set to enter the international spotlight in 2012, the chief executive of VisitBritain talks to Kath Hudson about plans for an unprecedented marketing campaign

32 **eco pioneers** high society

The NY High Line is a remarkable tale of how a disused rail line was saved and turned it into a hugely successful community space. One of the men who made it happen talks to Julie Cramer

36 **service with style**

From upmarket dining offers to budget chic, the world of boutique hotels is evolving. Cristina Balekjian presents the latest market data and emerging trends in the sector

42 **keeping in the swim**

As swimming's popularity looks set to grow with the advent of London 2012, a report looks at the current UK swimming pool stock and considers the potential for growth

46 **big ambitions** kicking up a storm

New York-based dot.com Kickstarter is the world's largest crowd-funding platform for creative projects, with over US\$2m pledged weekly. Rhianon Howells finds out more



How to plan a successful skatepark, p56



The New York-based dot.com Kickstarter is helping to turn creative dreams into reality, p46



From high end to budget: Boutique hotels are adapting, p36



The team behind the new Marlowe Theatre describe the project, p50

50 top team a modern Canterbury tale

Three key players in the development of The Marlowe - Kent's impressive new theatre venue - talk to Julie Cramer about their roles in the project

55 acr show 2012

A new exhibition for the air conditioning and refrigeration industries

56 all on board

With the right backing, skateparks can be an asset in any community, helping to reduce crime and encourage physical activity. Joseph Haines reports

60 global activity

A report on the global fitness market gives an insight into international club performances. Kristen Walsh reports

64 senior's solutions

Grahame Senior considers how leisure operators can beat the competition

66 what's hot

The latest hot drinks products

69 taking a stand against crime

CLOA's Matt Partridge talks about the role leisure and sport can play in confronting anti-social behaviour

70 sales tactics

A round-up of recent technology installations at leisure sites

72 leisure directory

74 batting for the future

Can a new urban version of cricket revive the sport, asks Tom Pinnington

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Buyers' guide:

For suppliers of products and services
in the leisure markets, turn to p104

New Le Havre stadium to open next year

A new 25,000-seat stadium, which will become the home of Le Havre Athletic Club Football Association at the entrance to the northern French city, is due to be completed next summer.

KSS Group and Paris-based Société de Conception d'Architecture et d'Urbanisme (SCAU) led the design of the EUR90m (£77.5m, US\$120.7m) Grand Stade du Havre development. Vinci Construction and Communauté de l'agglomération Havraise are delivering the new stadium, which will boast a pixelated EFTE shell.



Nick Coutts, founder of budget chain Fitness Hut

Fitness Hut opens first club in Lisbon, Portugal

Budget gym operator Fitness Hut, founded by industry veteran Nick Coutts, recently opened its first site in Lisbon.

The new club - the first of three sites planned to open before the end of January 2012 - has been equipped by Star Trac.

Equipment includes the E Series CV range, HumanSport cable-based strength equipment complemented by Inspiration Strength machines, and a dedicated Spin studio. According to Nick Coutts, Fitness Hut plans to open between six and 10 sites a year.

Castillo Grand wins US\$44m Sheraton case

New York, US-based Pryor Cashman LLP has confirmed its client, Castillo Grand, has been awarded US\$44m (£28.1m, EUR32.9m) in its legal case against Sheraton Operating Corp.

The New York State Supreme Court found Sheraton - part of Starwood Hotels and Resorts - breached a contract with the owner and developer of the former St Regis Hotels and Resorts. Castillo Grand's claim focused on a lack of "St Regis-style" in the design and construction of a new property on Fort Lauderdale's Gold Coast, which

IHRSA to secure wellness pledges

IHRSA is urging America's business leaders to become personally involved in leading the US to wellness by taking the CEO Pledge, a key component of the United States' first ever National Physical Activity Plan.

The plan is a comprehensive set of policies, programmes and initiatives aimed at increasing physical activity in all segments of the US population, with the goal of improving health, preventing disease and disability, and enhancing quality of life.

CEOs who take the pledge vow to improve employee health and wellness by creating opportunities and resources for physical activity before, during or after the workday.

"The CEO Pledge makes it clear that business leaders have an influential role to play in addressing our country's health and healthcare



Plans will offer more physical activity opportunities in the workplace

crises," says Joe Moore, president and CEO of IHRSA. "With most working adults spending roughly half their waking hours at their job on the days that they work, it is incumbent on business and industry leaders to become part of the solution. By promoting physical activity and healthy lifestyles in the workplace, CEOs help their company's bottom line."

Ninth Saudi resort for Mövenpick group

Luxury resort operator Mövenpick has launched the Beach Resort Al Khobar in eastern Saudi Arabia.

The resort is the ninth hotel to be opened by Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts in Saudi Arabia and offers 36 three-bedroom duplex villas - including two Royal Villas each with a spacious majlis - a spa and fitness centre, two restaurants, a free-form swimming pool and private beach. The resorts Retreat Wellness Center & Spa features separate treatment rooms for men and women and offers a range of beauty treatments, massages, aromatherapy and reflexology.

Facilities include a sauna, steam rooms, a fitness area with modern gym equipment and serene relaxation areas.



The resort's outdoor pool is part of a strategy to attract families

The resort will be marketed primarily as a family resort, with children-specific facilities such as a separate private pool area and a supervised Kids Club. The opening is part of Mövenpick's ambitious roll out plan which currently includes 30 properties.

Marriott International spins off new business

Marriott Vacations Worldwide (MVW) has confirmed it has commenced trading as a public "pure-play" timeshare ownership company after being spun off by Marriott International. A one-for-10 distribution of MVW shares to existing Marriott International shareholders

on 21 November marked the start of regular way trading for the newly-independent business.

The company will have exclusive rights to the Marriott and Ritz-Carlton brands and is set to capitalise on "new business opportunities".

SpaFinder report: innovation is back

Healthy foot treatments, cold and ice therapies and online gaming are among the top spa themes for 2012, according to the ninth annual trends forecast by global spa and wellness resource SpaFinder.

Charting the year ahead, the report also predicts that health coaching at spas will become more popular while there will also be consolidation between hotels' spa and gastronomic offerings and an increase in "spa, wine and dine" packages.

Among the trends for 2012 are feet treatments; cold and ice treatments; online wellness gaming; vibration therapies and spa becoming a "family affair". The Spa Trend Report is developed under the direction of SpaFinder president Susie Ellis, a founding board member of The Global Spa Summit. Ellis is credited with forecasting numerous industry "mega-trends" that have taken hold in spas around the world.



The report has been developed by Susie Ellis, president of SpaFinder

Ellis said: "After four tough years that made experimentation challenging, we're seeing the industry once again innovating."

We see two distinct themes – the industry innovating with diverse, new sensory experiences and treatments, such as cold and vibration therapies. Spas are also re-imagining and extending their connection to customers, moving beyond the sporadic visit." To read the full press release, go to: <http://lei.sr7a=Y8a6f>

Walt Disney World sports plans announced

Plans have been announced for an expansion of the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex at Walt Disney World in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, US, over the coming months.

Due for completion in early 2012, the project will include the addition of four multi-purpose

playing fields on the north side of the venue for football, soccer, lacrosse and field hockey.

The scheme will take the total number of pitches at the complex to more than 30, with digital video boards, lighting and scoreboards, and audio systems to be installed.

New study outlines benefits of massage

Massage can - and should - be used to treat a number of ailments, according to a study compiled by a joint team from RMIT University and the Australian Association of Massage Therapy (AAMT).

The report, Effectiveness of Massage Therapy, is a review of 740 Australian and international evidence-based academic research papers, published over a 30-year period between 1978 and 2008.

It concludes that health professionals - such as GPs and nurses - should be more active in including massage as part of treatment plans for illnesses ranging from back pains and anxiety to nausea and stress as well as chronic disease management.

It also highlights evidence that massage can be used to delay the onset of muscle soreness



The study encourages the medical profession to prescribe massage

(DOMS) and increasing pulmonary function. The research includes systematic reviews, randomised controlled trials, comparative studies, case-series/studies and cross-sectional studies covering a number of massage disciplines, such as acupressure, Bowen therapy, lymphatic drainage and reflexology.

Jeff Kohl appointed COO of Red Door Spas

Red Door Spas has appointed Jeff Kohl as its new chief operating officer and senior vice president. Kohl will direct all Red Door Spa operations globally, including strategic partnership development and management of the company's 31 full-service spa and salon properties and 1,500 spa associates. He'll report directly to Todd Walter, CEO of Red Door Spa Holdings.

Kohl currently serves as a director of the International Spa Association (ISPA) and is also the president of the ISPA Foundation.



The ski park is set to cost up to £190m

Indoor ski park proposed for Swedish town

Plans have been announced for the construction of a new 70,000sq m (753,474sq ft) indoor skiing attraction in Bålsta, Sweden, which will become one of the country's tallest buildings.

Designs for the new Skipark 360° complex have been drawn up by Berg Arkitektkontor, the Swedish branch of Aarhus, Denmark-based C F Møller Architects. Work on the scheme, which is set to cost around SEK1.5-2bn (£142-190m, EUR166-221m, US\$227-302m), is expected to commence in late 2013 or early 2014.

Expansion plans for Legoland Florida

Legoland Florida, the Merlin Entertainments-operated attraction which opened its doors for the first time in October in Winter Haven, US, has announced its first expansion plans.

A new Legoland Water Park is to be built as part of the project, which is due for completion by mid-2012 and will comprise a wave pool and a 1,000ft (305m) Build-A-Raft lazy river. Twin chasers will see friends ride tubes down an intertwining pair of 375ft (114m) enclosed water slides, while Splash Out involves a 60ft (18m) drop down slides into water below.

Government backs industry's 20.12 discount

Culture secretary Jeremy Hunt has backed a new 20.12 per cent discount scheme among hotels and B&Bs which aims to increase domestic tourism within the UK.

A dozen or so holiday brands - including Bourne Leisure, Superbreaks and Hoseasons - have signed up to the initiative, which is due to be launched early next year. The 20.12 per cent discount initiative will be launched next year by VisitEngland as part of a campaign to use the Games to boost domestic tourism.



Hotels outside London are recovering slower

Regional hotels impacted by slow growth

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) has raised concerns that slow economic growth in the UK will "further compound the difficulties" for regional hoteliers heading into 2012.

In a "rule of thumb" analysis undertaken by PwC, it has been suggested every percentage point fall in gross domestic product (GDP) will lead to a similar drop in occupancy rates.

However, next year's Olympic Games, Diamond Jubilee and Farnborough Air Show could offset some of the impact of slow growth for those "in the right place at the right time".

Survey: Britons continue to eat and drink out

New research carried out by Deloitte and BDRG Continental has found that UK consumers are continuing to eat and drink out, despite ongoing concerns surrounding the economy. According to the Taste of the Nation survey, the number of adults going out to eat or drink at pubs, restaurants or other venues increased by 12 per cent over the last six months.

The growth has been fuelled by the 18-to-34-year-old group and "frequent users" who go out at least twice a week, which mainly comprises males going out for a drink.

Hilton reveals job creation plan

Hilton Worldwide is planning to create more than 8,500 new jobs across Europe by 2014, with the UK named among a number of key growth markets poised to benefit most.

The operator has more than 110 properties under development across the continent and has confirmed it is looking to focus on strategic areas such as the UK, Poland, Russia, Turkey and Germany.

Forthcoming new openings scheduled for the UK include DoubleTree by Hilton Lincoln (Q4 2011) and two hotels at the Football Association's new St George's Park project in Burton-upon-Trent (Q3 2012).

Around 1,500 new opportunities will be established in the UK with 20 properties opening, with a further 1,900 jobs secured through 10 conversion projects. Elsewhere in Europe, there are more than 25 hotels to open in Russia



Hilton Worldwide named the UK as one of its strategic growth markets

over the coming three years, such as the Hilton Garden Inn Krasnodar (Q2 2012).

Hilton Worldwide's Ben Bengoumag said: "We are seeking passionate people interested in hospitality careers with a range of experiences as well as transferable skills from backgrounds outside the hospitality industry."

The Cube opens its doors in Birmingham

A new 52-bedroom Hotel Indigo and Marco Pierre White eatery spanning a 1,319sq m (14,198sq ft) have opened as part of The Cube, a £13m development located in the heart of Birmingham.

Sanguine Hospitality is behind the flagship scheme and will operate the new restaurant and hotel, with the 25-storey building designed to provide a "stunning addition" to the city skyline.

Located on the 25th floor, the 300-seat Marco Pierre White Steakhouse Bar and Grill offers panoramic views of Birmingham and an open-air terrace, as well as a private lounge. The top floor of The Cube also houses a Laurent Perrier's first UK champagne bar, with Hotel Indigo occupying the 23rd and 24th floors.



The Marco Pierre White eatery is located on the 25th floor of the venue

Sanguine Hospitality managing director Nick Taplin said: "I was astounded to discover that Birmingham did not already have a sky bar or rooftop restaurant, given the range of magnificent buildings in the city. We have definitely redressed this now."

New joint schemes for Travelodge and Waitrose

Low-cost hotel chain Travelodge has confirmed that it is currently working on three mixed-use developments across England in partnership with supermarket group Waitrose.

The new schemes are located in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire; Sidcup; and Vauxhall,

London, and represent an investment of £27m, with a further 25 other sites being explored.

Travelodge chief executive officer Guy Parsons said: "Having a Travelodge and Waitrose on site offers an attractive proposition for consumers, developers and investors."

Cadbury

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Double Decker
No. 10 Choc Singles Line
worth £15.5m*

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No. 2 In The Cadbury Dairy
Milk Countline Range*



Shortcake Snack - Covered in
Cadbury milk chocolate, it's
No. 1 in choc singles biscuit
bars*

* Source AC Nielsen - Total Coverage - MCAFFY Week ending 20.08.11

Trust invests £52m in grassroots cricket

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has revealed that the England and Wales Cricket Trust invested more than £52m in capital grassroots projects during the last financial year.

The trust, in conjunction with Sport England, directly invested more than £11.6m during the period, with more than £40m of partnership funding helping to benefit nearly 700 projects located across the country.



IMAGE: DAVID HOLMEY/LOCOMOTIVE

Two clubs challenged the OPLC's bidding process

OPLC's stadium legal costs revealed

The Olympic Park Legacy Company (OPLC) has spent £1.05m defending legal claims from two football clubs over the future of London's Olympic Stadium.

The *Telegraph* reported the cost of solicitors fees and barristers in relation to the judicial review claims by both Tottenham Hotspur and Leyton Orient football clubs was more than those from the initial bid process. The paper said the figure had been released after a Freedom of Information request, which was confirmed to *Leisure Opportunities* by a spokesperson.

MCC approves revised Lord's proposals

Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) has announced that it has decided to pursue a "stand-by-stand" redevelopment of the iconic Lord's cricket ground in London.

Earlier this year, discussions began with property group Almacantar with a view to a £400m redevelopment to include a residential element at the Nursery End of the ground. However, the MCC has now agreed to "focus on" a phased overhaul of the venue, which it said is likely to start with the rebuilding of the Tavern and Allen stands at the Pavilion End.

Participation falls in major sports

Latest participation figures from Sport England have uncovered a decrease in the number of 16- to 19-year olds who are taking part in "major sports" such as football, tennis and swimming.

Concerns have also been raised over a decline in participation among women, although there has been an overall increase in the number of adults playing sport at least once a week.

The research is based on telephone interviews with 166,000 adults aged 16 and over living in England between October 2010 and October 2011, which were carried out by TNS-BRM.

For those who were not playing sport as often as they were, nearly a third said it was due to a lack of time through work commitments or economic factors such as cost.



IMAGE: LAND TUSSELT/STOCK.COM

Football was among the sports to experience a fall in participation

Speaking to *Leisure Management*, Sport England chief executive Jennie Price said: "The results show that we need to work harder with young people, given the fall in participation."

Price also defended the approach to give NGB's control of funding to raise participation in their given sport.

Chelsea eyeing Battersea stadium move

Chelsea Football Club (CFC) is looking into the possibility of developing a new stadium at the Battersea Power Station site, which has laid derelict since the early 1980s.

It follows the recent news that CFC had failed in a bid to acquire the freehold land on which its existing Stamford Bridge venue is located from Chelsea Pitch Owners.

The Premier League club has made no decision on whether to leave its current ground, but is aiming to take advantage of the Battersea site if it is seen as a viable option.

According to reports, Almacantar chief executive Mike Hussey has been appointed as development partner, while Kohn Pedersen Fox will draw up plans for the site. A CFC



The club hasn't yet decided to leave its current Stamford Bridge ground

spokesperson said there had been talks in the past, adding that "in light of current developments we now think it prudent to look again at the feasibility and potential for the site to be developed for a football stadium."

RFU reports 'record' group revenues

The Rugby Football Union (RFU) has posted "record" group revenues of £136.3m for the year ending 30 June 2011, following an increase of £24.3m on the previous 12 months.

According to the national governing body for rugby union, the growth was "largely

driven" by the match programme in addition to increases in "most other" income streams.

Marriott Hotel Twickenham and the Virgin Active Classic Health Club, which are both sited at London's Twickenham Stadium, saw revenues grow by £2.3m to £8.7m in 2010-11.

PwC publishes gaming analysis

Asia Pacific will be the "growth machine" for the global casino and online gaming market in the next five years, according to PricewaterhouseCoopers' (PwC) latest analysis.

Casino and Online Gaming Global Outlook has predicted there will be a 9.2 per cent revenue growth for the online gaming sector across the US; Europe, Middle East and Africa; Asia Pacific; Latin America; and Canada.

The UK was identified as one of the few countries to post an increase in revenues for 2010, with gaming machines accounting for more than US\$3bn (£1.9bn, €2.2bn). PricewaterhouseCoopers' lead gaming partner David Trunkfield said: "Looking ahead, growth in the UK over the period should also be supported by the



The UK casino sector was among the few to post an increase in revenue

opening of the eight large, and eight small, new casinos permitted under the 2005 Act.

"However, with the current pressures on UK consumer spending, we forecast a decrease in casino revenue in 2011 and a modest 0.6 per cent advance in 2012."

Aspers open London super casino

Aspers Group has opened the UK's first super casino at London's Westfield Stratford City. Facilities at the 65,000sq ft (6,000sq m) venue include 40 gaming tables, 150 slot machines, a 150-seat poker room and 92 electronic betting terminals as well as a restaurant and two bars. According to a spokesperson, each area of the casino has been designed to appeal to different types of customers, to cater for experienced gamers as well as recreational gamers and sports enthusiasts.

Aspers Westfield will be open 24 hours for 364 days a year – only closing from midnight to midnight on Christmas Day.

It is estimated that the casino will provide up to 440 new jobs. Aspers has also teamed up with Newham Workplace to maximise the employment opportunities for Newham



The 24-hour casino will be open 364 days a year

residents. As part of the scheme, Aspers will pay £50,000 per annum for five years to Newham Workplace to fund its work.

Aspers Casino is a major anchor at Westfield Stratford City, which also features an all-digital Vue cinema with 14 screens, a 14-lane bowling alley and 617 rooms across three hotels.

First tenants for £50m Leisuredome revealed

A number of leisure operators have been confirmed among the first tenants to sign up to the new £50m Leisuredome development in Weston-super-Mare, Somerset.

Local businessmen Mark and Clive Hamilton-Davies are behind the leisure scheme, which received the green light from the communities secretary, Eric Pickles, in September.

Newly-confirmed tenants include Tiny Tearaway, which will provide a simulated ice rink, a laser game, an activity zone and a soft play area, as well as a crèche facility.



Rank's claims were upheld by the courts

Rank wins European Court case over bingo tax

Rank Group, the UK-based bingo hall and casino operator, has won its case at the European Court of Justice (ECJ) over claims that it had overpaid bingo tax by more than £250m.

The ECJ said HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) had breached European Union rules on fiscal neutrality due to different levels of VAT that had been applied to jackpot and similar machines. Rank's bingo claims totalling £253.4m including interest had already been upheld by the VAT and Duties Tribunal and the High Court.

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BOOM! Cycle opens in Shoreditch

American model Hilary Gilbert has teamed up with British entrepreneur Robert Rowland to open a 2,500sq ft (230sq m) purpose-built indoor cycling studio in London. Located in Shoreditch, BOOM! Cycle is the first in what will be a chain of indoor cycling gyms in and around the capital - and possibly the UK.

BOOM! will offer clients the flexibility of pay-per-class pricing rather than a fixed monthly membership. The average class fee will be £12.50, with discounts given for both block and group bookings.



Facilities include a 90-station gym and 25m pool

Newcastle's Jubilee 2 centre opens to the public

The new £10m Jubilee 2 leisure complex in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, has opened to the public.

Facilities include a 25m, eight-lane swimming pool; a 12m training pool with moveable floor and aqua gym equipment; a 90-station fitness suite; and a sauna area with steamrooms and feature showers.

A 12m climbing wall; a 4m bouldering and traverse wall; and an interactive children's activity zone also form part of the Wm Saunders Partnership-designed building, built by NBC.

Nuffield reveals members' Health MOT data

Data collected from members of Nuffield Health clubs show that seven out of 10 have shown significant increases in their overall health. The figures come from the operator's Health MOT initiative, launched in 2009, which is offered to every new club member at point of joining. Follow up tests are then conducted to ascertain the progress of each member.

Managing director Laura Kerby said that a total of 36,000 people have now completed a second MOT, giving a "strong body of evidence" for the charity to analyse.

FIA names new board members

New board members have been appointed to the Fitness Industry Association (FIA) for a three-year period to 2015.

A total of 10 people have been added to the board, all of whom will attend four board meetings a year and be FIA ambassadors at FIA events and media opportunities.

The new members are: Scott Lloyd, David Lloyd Leisure; Martin Long, LA Fitness; Malcolm McPhail, Stockport Sports Trust; John Oxley, Active Nation; and David Bibby, Sports and Leisure Management.

Pete Todd, Pontefract Leisure Club; Neil Mosley, Imperial College; Dave Pugh, St Helen's Council; James Preece, British Military Fitness; and Sue Anstiss, Promote PR have also been named as new FIA board members.

FIA CEO David Stalker said: "Looking ahead, we are faced with the prospect of



David Lloyd Leisure's Scott Lloyd is one of the new FIA board members

increasing our influence on public health delivery, where we are partnering with some of the world's biggest brands and a whole host of other equally profound and far reaching initiatives, and of course the 2012 Games.

"FIA board members have the unique opportunity to make a valuable contribution to the future of our industry."

Denise Lewis opens DLL's Farnham Club

David Lloyd Leisure's (DLL) new £12m sports and health club in Farnham, Surrey, has been opened by Olympic gold medalist Denise Lewis.

Facilities at the 6,000sq m (64,583sq ft) venue include the group's largest Amida Spa, which spans more than 1,000sq m (10,764sq ft) and has six treatment rooms.

Four relaxation rooms; a nail studio; a spa plunge pool; a spray tanning salon; and steam experience rooms also form part of the spa, while an outdoor area features sauna cabins and a hydro spa pool.

A new agreement signed by DLL last month will see Aromatherapy Associates, Rodial and Alpha-H supply products for treatments and therapies at Farnham's Amida Spa.



DLL's Farnham club was opened by Olympic champion Denise Lewis

Elsewhere, a 25m swimming pool and separate children's pool; a 1,337sq m (14,391sq ft) gym with cv and resistance machines; a 470sq m (5,059sq ft) DL Kids area; and a physiotherapy and osteopathy clinic are also available.

Pendle facilities in line for investment

Members of Pendle Borough Council's executive have backed plans to invest £160,000 in a refurbishment and replacement programme for leisure facilities across the area.

Full council has been urged to approve the proposal, with additional capital expenditure

to be funded using windfall income from a successful claim for overpaid VAT.

If the investment is approved on at a meeting scheduled for 15 December, it is thought work could commence in early 2012 and will be undertaken on a phased basis.



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No Olympic rings for Edinburgh Castle

Historic Scotland has announced that plans to display the Olympic rings on the ramparts of Edinburgh Castle to mark the 2012 Games have been rejected.

A Historic Scotland spokesperson said: "Following careful consideration it is clear that the proposal would not be suitable for the successful operation of Scotland's most popular heritage attraction."

"The Scottish Government will work with LOCOG and The City of Edinburgh of Scotland to do what we can to assist with the consideration of alternatives."



Collections are displayed under six main themes

IMAGE: RICHARD BRYANT/ARCADIC.CO.UK

Ashmolean Museum launches new galleries

Oxford's Ashmolean Museum has unveiled six new galleries for its Ancient Egypt and Nubia collections after a £5m revamp.

The new facilities have been built by the Oxford-based contractor, Beard, and designed by Rick Mather Architects to present the attraction's extensive collections under six broad themes.

The themes are: Egypt at its Origins; Dynastic Egypt and Nubia; Life after Death in Ancient Egypt; the Armarna 'Revolution'; Egypt in the Age of Empires; and Egypt meets Greece and Rome.

Merlin strengthens Midway rollout team

UK-based operator Merlin Entertainment has created a new role within its Midway Operating Group in order to cater for an accelerated roll out of new attractions.

Scott Williamson, currently the global head of marketing for the Sea Life and Dungeons attractions, has been appointed marketing director of Midway Openings.

Williamson will be tasked with putting greater focus on new attractions during their opening months, before handing over responsibility to the respective regional operating and brand teams.

SNPG opens after £17.6m revamp

National Galleries Scotland has reopened the Scottish National Portrait Gallery after completing a £17.6m revamp of Edinburgh attraction.

Originally designed by Sir Robert Rowand Anderson, the attraction was one of the first purpose-built portrait galleries in the world when it opened its doors in 1889.

Work has been carried out by BAM Construction to provide new education facilities, including a multi-purpose teaching suite and a resource centre. Spaces that had been closed to the public have been opened up, while there has also been an increase in exhibition space as part of the refurbishment.

Meanwhile, displays at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery are now based around broad 'Key Areas' and the attraction has joined the new Robert Burns Birthplace Museum and



The Scottish National Portrait Gallery first opened to the public in 1889

revamped National Museum of Scotland as a major attraction to open or benefit from a completed renovation this year.

First Minister Alex Salmond said: "In a matter of one year, we have seen some of our most important treasure houses reinstated as world-leaders in their field."

Initial support for York museum scheme

York Museums Trust's (YMT) plans for a £2.4m transformation project at York Castle Museum have been awarded initial support by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The trust has submitted an application for a £1.3m grant towards its plans, which will lead to an overhaul of the upper levels of the Debtors' Prison area of the attraction.

YMT has secured £73,000 of development funding in order to help it develop a bid for the full grant, with a decision expected to be made by the HLF in January 2013.

The plans comprise a new five-year exhibition to mark the centenary of the First World War, which will "change and refresh" for each centenary between 2014 and 2018.



An exhibition to mark the centenary of the First World War is planned

If the application for a full grant is successful, renovation work is to commence immediately at the museum and will result in the upper two floors of the Debtors' side of the prison being shut for 12 months.

New-look Museum of Lancashire unveiled

The Museum of Lancashire at Preston's Quarter Sessions House has reopened following a £1.7m refurbishment and has revealed it will be offering free admission for the next 12 months.

A number of new interactive galleries have been added to the attraction, including

Lancashire Goes to War and Lancashire at Play. Disabled access was also improved.

More than £900,000 was provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund, while £800,000 was invested by Lancashire County Council. Conlon Construction was the main contractor.

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OCLE and Link4Life secure new strategic alliance

Oldham Community Leisure (OCL) and Link4Life have announced a new strategic alliance in a bid to deliver local leisure and cultural services "more economically".

The deal will see the social enterprises join forces to seek best value opportunities and identify where joint schemes can generate savings and enhance effectiveness.

Among the priority areas to be targeted are health improvement; marketing; and the procurement of central service contracts, such as cash collection, in addition to reciprocal gym membership.



The new Harborne facility is nearing completion

DC Leisure to run new Birmingham pool

DC Leisure has been chosen by Birmingham City Council (BCC) to operate and manage the city's first new public swimming pool to be built for more than 20 years.

The £12.2m Harborne Pool and Fitness Centre will remain under BCC ownership, with facilities to include a 25m main pool; a learner pool; and a 60-station adult gym.

An interactive children's fitness suite and an aerobics and dance studio are also proposed as part of the facility, which is scheduled to open on 3 January and is currently £600,000 under budget.

Dispute over Sheffield leisure investment

A Sheffield City councillor has criticised a decision by the ruling administration to reallocate some of the cash earmarked for a leisure centre revamp to other facilities.

Stocksbridge Leisure Centre had been due to benefit from £300,000 worth of improvements, but £200,000 has now been reallocated to three other venues as well.

Local councillor Jack Clarkson urged the local authority to reverse the decision and to seek funding for the other three schemes from other sources, but his motion was rejected at a meeting held last month.

NAO in 2012 Games cost warning

The National Audit Office (NAO) has warned there is a "real risk" that more public money may be needed to fund the 2012 London Games.

In its latest progress report, the NAO found that nearly the entire £9.298bn budget will be required, with little scope to cover any unforeseen costs.

The study welcomed "good progress" in almost all main areas but identified challenges relating to the provision of security and "some elements" of transport planning.

NAO head Amyas Morse said: "The programme to deliver the venues and infrastructure for the 2012 Games remains on course, so it looks as if value for money will be achieved in this area."

"But, in my view, the likelihood that the Games can still be funded within the existing £9.3bn public sector funding package is so



IMAGE: ANTHONY CHALTON/OPA

The report said nearly the entire public sector budget will be needed

finely balanced that there is a real risk more money will be needed."

The publication of the NAO's report came a day after a government report into preparations for the 2012 Games said that the event in the summer will be delivered "on time and within budget".

Deputy PM reveals £1bn Youth Contract

Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg has announced details of the government's new Youth Contract, a £1bn programme that is designed to help young people into employment.

The initiative, which will launch next April, will cover a three-year period and includes wage subsidies worth £2,275 per year for employers who recruit 18-to-24-year-olds.

It is hoped the programme will help at least 410,000 young people into employment, with a focus on getting the most "disengaged" 16- and 17-year-olds into school or college. Extra funding for apprenticeships and £50m to help people "persistently" not in education, employment or training will also be available.

Clegg said: "This is a £1bn package and



Launching in April, the initiative will target out-of-work young people

what's different about it is it gets young people in to proper, lasting jobs in the private sector. But it's a contract, a two-way street: if you sign up for the job, they'll be no signing on for the dole. You have to stick with it."

CABE to be formally dissolved next year

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) is to be dissolved next year, having been earmarked for closure in the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review. Subject to Parliamentary approval, dissolution will take place after minister John Penrose laid

a statutory instrument and explanatory memorandum at the Houses of Parliament.

CABE has already transferred design review activities to a Design Council subsidiary, with Open City Architecture taking on its joint built education scheme with English Heritage.

Olympic Park vision unveiled

Concept designs put forward by ten shortlisted teams for the creation of "two new distinctive areas" in East London have been unveiled by the Olympic Park Legacy Company (OPLC).

Five teams are in the running to design a new public space to the south of the Olympic Park, while five more have been selected to draw up proposals for a community hub to the north.

The visions are now on display at the OPLC's offices until 9 December and at New London Architecture until early January. A winning design for each area will be revealed next month.

It is hoped the South Park space will create a urban landscape similar to the South Bank and will incorporate a visitor centre, water features and play facilities.



An artist's impression of one of the proposals for the future of the park

Meanwhile, the second area to the north of the park will be sited in the green river valley and boast a visitor centre and a multi-purpose indoor space for community use

OPLC CEO Andrew Altman said: "Plans are more advanced than any previous host Olympic City."

Cyclopark development to launch in Kent

Cyclopark, a complex offering facilities for cycling, running and extreme sports, is scheduled to open its doors near Gravesend, Kent, in spring 2012. Kent County Council is behind the scheme, which will be located in 43 hectares (106 acres) of landscaped parkland and is being delivered by civil engineering firm VolkerFitzpatrick.

The new development, which will cost nearly £10m, will incorporate a 340m BMX racetrack and a skate park, as well as a 2.9km (1.8-mile) circuit track for cycling and running.



Permanent walks are proposed for the park

Exmoor receives Dark Sky Reserve status

The International Dark Sky Association (IDA) has confirmed that Exmoor National Park is the first location in Europe to be awarded International Dark Sky Reserve designation.

UK astronomer and IDA Dark Sky Places Development Committee chair Steve Owens said: "The designation will hopefully attract stargazers from all around the world to the region, and astrotourism will hopefully become another staple visitor attraction to Exmoor."

A number of local organisations and tourism providers and operators backed Exmoor in its bid to become only the world's second International Dark Sky Reserve over the last two years.



It is hoped that Exmoor's new status will attract tourists to the region

Exmoor National Park chief executive Dr Nigel Stone added: "We look forward to welcoming many more visitors in the future to enjoy the starlit skies at night."

Cairn Gorm walks consultation starts

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the Highland Council have launched a consultation to gather views plans for permanent guided walks to the summit of Cairn Gorm, Scotland. A six-week consultation commenced on 14 November following a request from Cairngorm Mountain (CML) to provide the service from the Cairngorm mountain railway top station.

The service will be marketed as Walk @ The Top and will be offered to the summit of Cairn Gorm and back to the station using the summit path and the Marquiss Well path.

Bute Park Education Centre officially opens

Cardiff Council has officially opened the new Bute Park Education Centre, which is part of a wider £5.6m restoration project currently being undertaken at the park.

The new facility will provide a new hub for all educational activities taking part in Bute Park and will enable people to gain an insight into the council's horticultural operations. A classroom, an archive room and interpretation panels form part of the building, while large windows to the rear of the centre will allow visitors to view the working part of the nursery.

Wales to have single environment agency

Environment Agency Wales; the Countryside Council for Wales; and Forestry Commission Wales are to be brought together in one single environment body for the country.

Welsh environment minister John Griffiths has agreed to the plans following nine months

of scoping work undertaken by officials and representatives from the three organisations.

It is estimated the move would result in savings of up to £158m over a 10-year period, with a consultation into the role and functions of the new single body to begin in January.

New £2m spa planned for Burnley sports venue

Crow Wood Leisure (CWL) has submitted plans for a new spa and wellness centre at its Burnley sports and leisure complex, which is expected to cost around £2m.

The new 20,000sq ft (1,858sq m) spa facility at the Crow Wood centre will spread over two floors and comprise a dedicated lounge and bar and a number of relaxation areas when complete. Barrowford-based Andrew Parker Architecture are working with CWL on the plans, while G McGuigan has been appointed as the main contractor.

An outdoor terrace with beach hut and hot tub experience, two indoor pools, including one hydrotherapy pool and an outdoor salt water lagoon are also proposed, with the spa due to open in 2013.

The project marks a "major expansion" for Crow Wood, following the launch of the Soccer Burnley facility and a £1.5m equestrian centre last year. CWL, which also owns The Woodland Spa as part of its business, expects the spa to attract customers from a radius of 35 miles (56km).



The hotel was formerly part of von Essen's estate

Eden acquires The Mount Somerset hotel

The Mount Somerset hotel in Lower Henlade near Taunton, Somerset, has become the latest to be acquired out of the administration of the von Essen group by Eden Hotel Collection.

Christie + Co completed the deal on behalf of von Essen's administrators, with the 19-room property following the Greenway Hotel and Spa near Cheltenham into the Eden portfolio.

Facilities at The Mount Somerset include a spa spanning two floors, which incorporates a fitness suite equipped by Technogym and two treatment rooms that offer [comfort zone] services.

The other level of the spa comprises a hydrotherapy pool; a sauna; a steamroom; foot spas; and experience showers, while a spa terrace overlooking the property's gardens is also among the facilities.

Spa planned for Notts College

A new 1700sq m (1,830sq ft) health spa is to be included as part of a £11m complex to be built at Vision West Notts (VWN) in Mansfield, after the plans were given the green light by the local authority.

Mansfield District Council backed the proposals, which will lead to the creation of a new home for college students involved in hair, beauty and complementary therapy courses among others.

The spa will be operated by students as part of their vocational training and will be sited next to hair and beauty salons, with facilities including three treatment rooms.

One will be a large open-plan room offering couch-based treatments, while the other two smaller rooms will offer the spa bed 'Jouvence' and Rasul mud bath treatment. Other facilities will include sauna; a steamroom; an ice



The £11m complex is the latest development to be undertaken by VWN

feature; a spa pool; a Monsoon feature shower and enclosure; heated loungers; and a foot spa in order to offer the "very best facilities".

A VWN spokesperson said: "By opening [the spa] up to the public, it will provide students with real-life vocational experience that prepares them for the world of work."

Hilton retail site to sell eforea products

Hilton Hotels and Resorts' (HHR) hiltontohome.com retail website is now offering skincare and beauty products from its global spa concept, eforea: spa at Hilton.

Peter Thomas Roth, Kerstin Florian, LI'TYA and VitaMan products, which are used across Hilton's eforea estate, went on sale to consumers through the retail website last month.

eforea: spa at Hilton was first launched in October 2010 and currently has seven locations at hotels around the world, with a further 90 new sites currently under development.

Tyra Lowman, senior director of global spa brands, luxury and full service, Hilton Worldwide, said: "The start of the holiday



The eforea: spa at Hilton concept has seven locations around the world

gift-giving season is a perfect time to share our most popular eforea products. We hope our carefully curated product collection helps shoppers bring what they love about eforea: spa at Hilton into their everyday lives."

Milestone for St Albans leisure scheme

Work on the new £24m Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre in St Albans, Hertfordshire, has reached a milestone after the large wooden beams to support the roof were installed.

Due for completion in summer 2012, facilities at the leisure centre will comprise a 500sq

m (5,382sq ft) spa area with a 60sq m (646sq ft) terrace overlooking the nearby abbey.

It will take Willmott Dixon three weeks to complete the installation of all sections of the beams in the concrete and steel frame of the S&P Architects-designed complex.

Gloucester Quays plans submitted

The Peel Group has announced it has submitted detailed plans for the development of a new leisure quarter in Gloucester, which will involve a £60m expansion of the Gloucester Quays Outlet Centre.

Gloucester City Council will now decide the fate of the Manchester-based developer's proposals for the site, which is centred on the city's historic docks area and will create The Quayside leisure and shopping destination.

Plans incorporate 11 restaurants; a 10-screen cinema with seating for 1,600 people; and new retail units. It is anticipated that construction work will begin on site early next year.

Due for completion in autumn 2013, an existing cinema at the Peel Centre retail park would then be converted into additional retail space as part of the Peel Group's proposals.



The proposed scheme is to include a 10-screen cinema and restaurants

Alison Tennant, the public relations and marketing manager for Gloucester Quays Outlet Centre, said: "We don't want people in Gloucester to feel like they have to leave the city for a good night out or to go to the cinema. The Quayside will give them fantastic facilities right on their doorstep."

York stadium proposals move forward

Plans for a community sports stadium development in York, which is set to provide a minimum capacity of 6,000 seats, have moved forward.

The City of York Council's cabinet approved the release of £200,000 from the £4m allocated towards the project for the next phase, which involves the development of proposals for the delivery and operation of the new venue.

A business case has already been produced to show that sufficient funding is in place for the stadium and county-standard athletics facilities.

The venue will establish a centre of community activity and provide a new home ground for both York City Football Club and York City Knights rugby league team.



York City FC will move to the new stadium from Bootham Crescent

Following the approval, the next stage of the business plan will also allow the general public as well as key stakeholders to help shape the design and range of facilities as part of the development.

TWL delays renovation of Nottingham's Soccerdome

The Weather Lottery (TWL) has delayed a revamp of Nottingham's Soccerdome after the local authority revealed its plans for the redevelopment of a nearby sports complex.

It had been intended that an upgrade of the five-a-side football facility would be carried out

during the summer, following TWL's acquisition of the venue's owner and operator.

TWL received cost estimates in August with a view to starting work in October, but delayed the project after learning of the council's plans for the Harvey Hadden Sports Complex.

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Geraldine Howard & Ian Richardson



After spending 30 years building up the successful Aromatherapy Associates brand, Geraldine Howard's fortuitous meeting with investor Ian Richardson looks set to take the company to new heights. The pair talk to Julie Cramer about the brand's first retail outlet and how they've doubled turnover

Why did you feel the time was right to open your first retail outlet?

Geraldine: With Ian's investment it was really the right time to build and grow the company and I've always thought that a retail outlet and flagship is a good way to get your message out there. It's something I've always wanted to do but it obviously takes investment to do it.

Were you specifically targeting Knightsbridge?

Ian: It inevitably has to be opportunistic because you're subject to the vagaries of where entry units appear. Certainly Knightsbridge was at the top of our list of where we wanted to be. This unit came up and it was serendipity to a degree.

What criteria were you looking for in potential locations?

GH: It's tough to walk out onto a busy street after a treatment so it was important to have an area where people could be picked up or dropped off, and taxis available, etc. But it also had to have a high footfall, so it needed to be a central shopping area.

How did you choose the store's designer?

GH: I chose Martin Hubert because he doesn't do cookie-

cutter-type establishments. He'll listen to you and get to the heart of your company and then put that into the design. For us the heart of our business is our bath and shower oils, and they feature heavily in the design – for example our showpiece chandelier is made up from Aromatherapy Associates oil bottles. We wanted to get a quality, but also comfortable and welcoming, feel to the space.

Ian, what is your background?

IR: I was a corporate lawyer who qualified in 1983, and between 1989-2002 was a corporate partner with the law firm Eversheds. I left there to start a business with a client of mine who ran a large nursing home company called Cresta Care. We set up a business together in 2002 and made two or three acquisitions, selling to the venture capital house Cognitus in 2005. I stayed there until 2007 and since then have been an investor in businesses, particularly in the healthcare and wellbeing sectors.

Geraldine, how did you first get into aromatherapy?

GH: I started in the 70s when there were literally a handful of people practising it. I'd been studying cosmetic science and beauty therapy and had become a little disillusioned with surface make-up. I happened to meet a French



The London store has three downstairs treatment rooms and a relaxation area



The new Knightsbridge store has an unashamedly luxurious style

It's been one of the best decisions I've ever made, and enabled me to do all the things I've wanted to do with the company. Ian's expertise and support is invaluable

woman – Micheline Arcier – who was using essential oils and I found it fascinating. From there I met the doctor and essential oils expert, Jean Valnet, who was working with aromatherapy to treat the whole body – from the physical level to the psychological.

How did your career progress from there?

GH: I was working with Micheline at her private practice in Knightsbridge where she had a very prestigious clientele and was always fully booked. From there I worked with Champneys College to set up training courses and develop treatments. Eventually I set up my own business with a partner – Sue Beechey – and growth was organic from there.

How has aromatherapy changed in the UK in the past 30 years?

GH: Of course it has now entered the mainstream. When you see products such as fabric softeners with essential oils they have no therapeutic benefits. In France, aromatherapy is classed as medicinal, but in the UK it's always come under the cosmetics umbrella. So while it's known for its therapeutic benefits, it's rarely used at a therapeutic level.

How do you feel the flagship adds to the AA brand?

GH: I feel very strongly that the true core of aromatherapy

and how it works has been lost. By having our own flagship we can go back to basics and show people the real benefits. That's very difficult to do through other outlets. Our own trained therapists can very quickly identify what people need when they walk through the door, and treat them on a personal level.

I strongly believe that if your mind's in the right place, it's much easier to eat the right foods, exercise and take vitamins. It's really the starting point of your wellbeing. Many people may tend to go to a spa for that, but I do feel you can get it over the counter as well.

Also, spas struggle with retailing products and they need a massive amount of help in order to increase their sales. In opening our own store we can learn a lot more about retailing products, which in turn will help our spa customers.

What's your investment strategy for future stores?

IR: We intend to see how this one goes. Inevitably with any start-up there are things you get right and things you get wrong. We're keen to see what it does to the brand, how it assists the business and decide from there.

We're not simply looking at this from a pounds and pence viewpoint – we're not thinking, if this makes money then we'll open another 10. We have the option to roll it out in other regions, but before that there'll be a much more com-



Aromatherapy Associates' distinctive glass bottles feature strongly in the interior design



plex analysis of how well it increases the Aromatherapy Associates brand profile.

Ian, as an investor, where do you see the wellbeing industry heading?

IR: I think the science has developed to an extent that we are in a position to far better identify what's suitable for each individual to enable them to have maximum health. One size does not fit all – we have different genetic make-ups and tolerances, and science can now identify what these are for each person. That's the area that will develop going forward – and an area that interests me personally.

How did you two meet?

IR: It was a bit of a Victor Kiam moment. I'd already invested in a skincare brand for the cosmetic surgery industry, and was keen to get a product for spa and retail.

My wife returned from an Aromatherapy Associates treatment at the Sandy Lane Hotel in Barbados and said it was the best she'd ever experienced – and she's tried a lot!

So I got a friend at PriceWaterhouse Coopers to write to

Geraldine saying I was keen to discuss the company. But my first offer to her in 2008 was rejected – I was basically told to sling my hook!

GH: When we met a second time through another business venture, the timing was different and it suddenly felt 100 per cent right. At the time my business partner Sue was looking to retire. It was a gut instinct, and I also liked Ian and felt he was someone I could work with.

It's been one of the best decisions I've ever made, and enabled me to do all the things I've wanted to do with the company, and Ian's expertise and support is invaluable.

How would you describe your working relationship?

IR: Geraldine has spent a lifetime in this industry and I have great respect for people who've built things from scratch and turned them into successful businesses. It's not my job to tell Geraldine how to run things.

My job is to help create an environment in which she can be the very best she can be. Without sounding too corny about it, that's how I see my role. It's been a very successful combination – we support each other's strengths and weaknesses – and we've doubled turnover in two years.

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

IR: Geraldine is very charismatic, knows the industry inside out and is highly respected. My strengths are that I have a lawyer's mind, am reasonably well organised and can think logically and clearly, especially when there are difficult and sometimes emotional decisions to make.

GH: It's a very lonely place trying to run a business and it's great to have real support and someone you can turn to whenever there's a problem. To me, Ian is very good at looking at the overall picture and giving a rational view on it.

Something I've learned working with Sue for the past 30-plus years, and Ian for the last two – is that if you work closely with people it's fundamental that you trust them – and that's something Ian and I absolutely have. ●

AROMATHERAPY ASSOCIATES - FACTBOX

■ The new Knightsbridge store covers 150sq m (1,615sq ft) and has three treatment rooms each with private showers, a relaxation area and a retail floor.

■ Aromatherapy Associates was founded in 1985 by Geraldine Howard and Sue Beechey, and today its products and treatments are available at hotels, spas and retail outlets in over 40 countries.

■ Also in 1985, the pair helped set up the International Federation of Aromatherapists – an organisation dedicated to maintaining the highest standards across the aromatherapy industry.

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Design news

Disney's first beach resort, and newly-designed feeding offers at Chester Zoo

Project	Various
Design	ReardonSmith Architects
Location	London, UK

Architects scoop host of design awards

Hospitality specialists ReardonSmith Architects picked up four awards at the recent European Hotel Design Awards.

The Conversion and/or Extension of an Existing Hotel Building award was given for the redevelopment of the Four Seasons Hotel at Park Lane. It won Designer of the Year for The Savoy refurbishment in London, which cost £220m. The firm's concept for a subterranean hotel and spa won the Tomorrow's Hotel award, while co-founder Patrick Reardon was honoured for his outstanding contribution to design.



PHOTO: ANTHONY WELLS/ARCHIMAGE

The Four Seasons London redevelopment cost around £125m



Visitors can view zoo animals from the African-themed café

Project	Chester Zoo restaurants
Design	Keane
Location	Cheshire, UK

Restaurant revamp for Chester Zoo

Chester Zoo has opened two new restaurants, created by design and brand agency Keane, at a cost of £1.5m.

The main restaurant is now a contemporary food court, based around the story of June Mottershead, the daughter of the zoo's founder, using black and white images to depict her long association with the popular visitor attraction.

There is also a new African-themed café-bar which overlooks one of the animal paddocks. There are plans to create a new piazza so non-zoo customers can access the café.



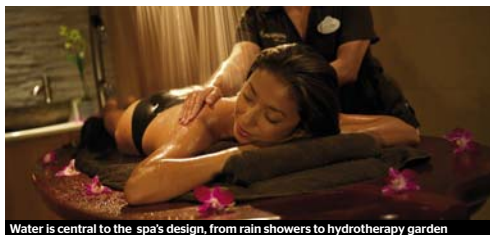
Sports surfaces and hiking trails feature around the design

Project	UP LIFT Zeppelin Hangar
Design	OPEN Architecture
Location	Maan Mountain, Auhui Province, China

Leisure use for 'green' zeppelin hangar

OPEN Architecture recently participated in a competition to design a zeppelin hangar to sit unobtrusively in the green landscape of Auhui Province, China. The design not only fits its purpose, but creates a new leisure area offering extreme vertical sports surfaces, hiking trails and viewing outposts.

A system of cuts and openings in a pre-fabricated concrete frame serve to modulate natural light, facilitate ventilation and rain water management and generate sufficient energy to create a zero maintenance green roof.



Water is central to the spa's design, from rain showers to hydrotherapy garden

Project	Aulani
Design	Walt Disney Imagineering
Location	Ko Olina, Hawaii

Hawaiian design for Disney

Disney has opened its first beach resort, which includes an 18,000sq ft (1,672sq m) spa on the lush, mountainous island of Ko Olina in Hawaii.

Walt Disney Imagineering worked closely with local Hawaiian cultural advisors during the design, and the resort now displays one of the world's largest private collections of contemporary Hawaiian art.

There are 359 rooms and 481 villas – most with sea and mountain views – a seven-acre waterplay area, two restaurants, a snorkel lagoon and access to a championship golf course and 330-slip marina.

Disney's Laniwai spa is designed to cater for families, and teenagers even get their own spa, called Painted Sky.



The wave featured during the design festival in September

Project	Timber Wave
Design	Amanda Levete Architects
Location	Victoria & Albert Museum, London

V&A exhibits latest design wave

The Cromwell Road entrance to the V&A Museum took on a new dimension during the London Design Festival with the erection of architect Amanda Levete's striking Timber Wave.

The practice used lamination techniques more usually used in furniture-making to create a swirling wood structure that stands three-storeys high. The structure is designed to reflect the multi-layered and ornamental appearance of the grand entrance, and is both three-dimensional and asymmetric in form.



The interior has been stripped back to its former glory

Project	Hermitage Road, restaurant and bar
Design	Howard Nye & Ellene Immelman (in-house)
Location	Hitchin, Hertfordshire

Fresh spring in step for Herts restaurant

Hermitage Road is a new restaurant and bar in the market town of Hitchin, Hertfordshire, transformed from a former nightclub space that was once a grand 1930s ballroom.

The original floors and stage have been preserved and the 6m high windows have been restored. The 150-cover restaurant features an open kitchen to add to the dining atmosphere, while an 8m long zinc bar offers a large selection of real ales. The site is owned by the family-run Anglian Country Inns, which has sites in Hertfordshire and Norfolk.



Timber roof cassettes improve the acoustics and look decorative (left), while The Pods' exterior is surrounded by water (right)

S&P ARCHITECTS

Architect Ron Wallwork explains why The Pods, which recently opened in Scunthorpe, is a truly innovative example of leisure centre design



How did you get involved with the North Lincolnshire Sports Academy - or the Pods, as it's more commonly known?

Designer Andrew Wright won the RIBA competition set by NLC and Yorkshire Forward in 2006. He had teamed up with Buro Happold for their structural expertise, us at S&P for our knowledge of sport and leisure buildings and Grant Associates for their landscaping skills.

However, at the planning stage Andrew Wright Associates withdrew from the project, and so we took the lead to deliver the building.

What was your brief?

North Lincolnshire Council, together with the regional development agency Yorkshire Forward, wanted an iconic building that would help to regenerate the Central Park area in Scunthorpe and open it up to visitors.

There was backing for a very progressive leisure centre design – they were certainly looking for something much better than the standard crinkly tin shed.

What was the inspiration for the design?

Andrew Wright's design consisted of a series of interconnecting domes – using similar organic construction forms to the Eden Project in Cornwall, to create a building that would form itself out of the landscape in a very natural and organic way.

It was designed to be an environmentally-friendly building that brought together both leisure and wellness concepts within the natural forms of the building.

How would you define a 21st century sports centre?

You have to create a socially-responsible building that gives the community something that they can really value and that they want to visit.

They should not be overpowering or noisy places – as many have been in the past. They should have a much more natural, tranquil feel, in line with the growing market for more esoteric pursuits such as meditation and yoga and the focus on individual wellness.

We had a very creative brief for the Pods and in many ways it's a one-off building – but at the same time it is very much the way things are going.

THE TEAM

Architect: S&P Architects

Concept Designer: Andrew Wright Associates

Construction: Bowmer and Kirkland

Structural engineering: Buro Happold

Grant Associates: Landscape Architects

Cost of complete project: £21m

Funded by North Lincolnshire Council, with contributions from Yorkshire Forward (£8M) and Sport England (£750,000)

Can you describe some of the technical innovations used?

This type of building would not have been possible 10 years ago. It's one of the first leisure buildings in the UK to be built using a free-form geodesic design, where the structure is formed from connecting glulam (glued composite timber) beams to form an irregular triangular shell grid – it's inspired by the structure and connectivity of soap bubbles.

The structure uses steel cylindrical nodes with a number of metal plates set at different angles to receive the beams, which are all of different lengths. It was possible structurally with advanced computer technology now available to calculate all the forces from the model and for that information to be readily transferable from CAD (design) to CAM (manufacture) – this allowed great freedom to explore all the exciting 3D possibilities.

We were able to create interlaced domes exceeding 50m spans, with the building area exceeding 5000sq m.



INSIDE THE PODS

The Pods opened in July 2011 after an 18-month build. Facilities include:

- Open reception area
- Six-court sports hall
- Split-level gym
- Two fitness studios and a health suite
- 25m competition pool and a learner's pool
- Café with outdoor terrace
- Crèche

What were some of the challenges of the project?

By its very nature, a sports hall is like a shoebox – so one challenge was to make the spaces work. In spite of its unusual shape, every inch of the building has been utilised.

It has been designed so that wherever you are in the main areas of the building you can see the timber roof. We wanted to keep it as open and as visual as possible. Yet at the same time the curved shapes and exposed timbers make it feel very womb-like and comforting.

We also had to address the issue of noise in such an open space – so we worked with the construction team to design special timber-slatted cassettes that fit the roof panels and improve the acoustics.

What aspects of the design most please you?

We had the issue of finding a suitable roof covering for the domes. Ourselves and specialist roof contractors developed a single-ply membrane solution that fitted over the whole of the roof structure, creating a waterproof layer – and also by developing a weldable batten, this allowed us to fit a number of different rainscreen roof coverings without having to penetrate the waterproof membrane.

The dome finishes are very varied - one is covered in green sedum, one is metal clad, two have timber shingles, the sports hall has a plastic roof and the entrance dome is glazed. So each dome has a different exterior expression. It also serves to bring the building down to a more organic human scale. Standing outside, it's impossible to tell its size – it looks much smaller than it should, given what it contains.

Have there been any surprises along the way?

All the structures have come together to create wonderful interior spaces, some of which we did not even anticipate would exist – there's a serendipitous element to all of it. The organic forms of the building create their own fun.

What are the project's eco-credentials?

We have natural ventilation through the building where possible, and insulation is twice that required by building regulations. We've also installed a biomass boiler that uses wood chips to heat the leisure centre, and there's also grey water recycling so that water from the showers is used on the sedum roof and the surrounding vegetation.

How did you approach the outdoor design?

The rejuvenation of the surrounding Central Park was led by Grant Associates from Bath.

Nature is a central part of the design and very much in keeping with the concept of wellness. The domes sit in a lagoon, and an outdoor wildlife corridor has been created with trees, wild flowers and bird boxes, which will hopefully attract different species to the area and be a place the whole community can enjoy and learn from.

Where do you find your inspiration?

I keep up with all the exciting developments around the world, and love that we can create fantasy worlds that surprise and delight. It's very different to creating civic buildings – with leisure design you think out of the box. ●

SANDIE DAWE

With the spotlight on the UK in 2012, VisitBritain's chief executive, Sandie Dawe, talks to Kath Hudson about the organisation's plans for an unprecedented £127m marketing campaign

The UK is currently enjoying the lime-light. Last year the Royal Wedding meant the eyes of the world were upon us, and this year billions of people will be tuning in for the Olympics and Paralympics, as well as the Diamond Jubilee. VisitBritain is rising to the occasion, making the most of this international activity.

It's so far so good. Visitor figures are expected to be up by 300,000 in 2011; with an 11 per cent rise in visits between March and May to 7.8 million. Although there were concerns that the riots in London, Birmingham

and Manchester might have undone a lot of the good work, Dawe says fortunately they didn't have much impact on visitor figures. "They were short lived and there was no second wave, so in the short term it was worrying, but not in the long term," says Dawe, who has been promoting British tourism since taking a job with the English Tourist Board (ETB) in 1985.

This year's sporting events present a massive opportunity, but also some challenges. VisitBritain is working hard to buck the displacement trend which sometimes happens with Olympic cities, where loyal visitors choose to avoid the crowds – and potentially increased prices – and holiday else-

where. It's also important to make sure that the coverage extends beyond London. "With the Royal Wedding, we pushed other angles, such as the great outdoors and afternoon tea and we're doing the same for the Olympics," says Dawe. "We've commissioned a series of short films about Britain, so the media have some readymade vignettes to use with their coverage and we have been taking crews around the country."

THE GREAT CAMPAIGN

In the next four years there will be an unprecedented amount of marketing activity to make the most of starring on the international stage. VisitBritain

MARIA GIOBERTI / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



Tourism magnets: The Royal Wedding in 2011 drew the eyes of the world to Britain, and London 2012 is expected to do the same



Sandie Dawe is leading the campaign to showcase what's great about Great Britain

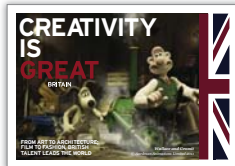
"SO WE WANT TO SHOW, THROUGH THE FILMS AND IMAGES THAT WE HAVE, THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF BRITAIN AND HOW ACCESSIBLE IT IS"

has joined forces with a number of private sector partners, including Hilton, BA and Easyjet, to run the GREAT campaign, which is worth £100m over four years. The government gave this a further boost in November, by pledging an extra £27m. The expectation is that this will bring an extra 4.6 million visitors, add £2.3bn to the economy and create 60,000 new jobs.

Under the GREAT banner, there are four strands: the outdoors, culture, shopping and heritage. With adverts in cinemas from Paris to India, on the New York subway and in Chinese magazines, it aims to give 72 per cent of the target audience many opportunities to see the campaign. Germany, Japan, Canada, Australia, Russia and Brazil are also high on the hit list.

One of the aims of the GREAT campaign is to change perceptions about Britain. For example, although it scores highly on heritage and culture – with programmes like ITV's *Downton Abbey* underlining this and boosting stately home visits – we're not seen as a naturally beautiful country. "It's just a perception thing, because Scotland is regarded as beautiful, but Britain isn't," says Dawe. "So, we want to show, through the films and images we have, the natural beauty of Britain and how accessible it is. The highlands of Scotland are only an hour's flight from London, and Wales is only a couple of hours on the train."

The other perception which VisitBritain is keen to change is that Britain is not seen as a particularly



friendly destination. "While we've got up to four billion people watching on television, we have the opportunity to change that image. We need to ensure the welcome, service and friendliness shine through," says Dawe. "It's important to get this message across to people, because it's the word of mouth which will go around the world."

GREATER PROFILE

Following its tourism strategy, produced in March, the government has set some targets for growing inbound and domestic tourism and is keen to see the tourism industry become more profitable and productive. Dawe welcomes the profile the government is giving the industry and the recognition of the fact that a cross department-



**"THE STAYCATION STARTED IN 2009 AND
HELD STEADY IN 2010, BUT SOME OPERATORS
HAVE SAID IT DROPPED OFF LAST YEAR**

tal approach is needed. For example, transport, aviation capacity and visas all impact on the industry, but the levers sit in other departments.

Following on from the government's tourism strategy, VisitBritain has now embarked on a competitive assessment across its 20 key markets, looking much more closely at what the levers and barriers are, as well as the competition. "We are only at the start of this process, and it's already throwing up more granular information than we had before," says Dawe. "We are using the process to find opportunities to grow markets and decide on what action is needed, whether that be policy, product packaging or marketing. For example, even though Heathrow is a global hub, it has less point to point aviation capacity than between China and France, or China and Germany."

Chinese visits are increasing and expected to continue increasing, but they still only represent around 120,000 out of 30 million visitors. However, it is a valuable market

TOURISM FIGURES

International visitor numbers and spending in the UK rose in September 2011, with the IPS figures showing 2.53 million arrivals with record numbers for holiday visits (970,000). Visitor spend for the month was up seven per cent on the low of September 2010, with £1.5bn coming into the UK economy from overseas. Overall spend was up four per cent from 2010, with record earnings of £13.2bn recorded across Britain by September 2011.



Innovative vacations:
'Glamping' (luxury camping)
appears to be a growing trend

because they are high spenders and it's seen as having great potential.

NOT ALL ABOUT LONDON

London is a brilliant magnet for tourists and it's what attracts many visitors for the first time. Long-haul visitors have London as one of their stops on a three-part European tour, and Europeans come for the shopping and the culture. However, Dawe acknowledges that sometimes visitors fail to appreciate there's more to the UK than London. "There isn't anything London-centric in UK tourism policy," she says. "However, its star shines very brightly and this can put other cities in the shadow. London is a fantastic world city, the only global city in Europe. It's our leading star attraction, it pulls in a lot of first time visitors and when they come back they tend to venture further afield." The Australians, Kiwis and the Dutch tend to be the most adventurous when they visit.

There are some innovative products being developed in the UK market, which will have appeal for both UK and

overseas visitors, including the 'glamping' trend (luxury camping). However, Dawe says that many visitors enjoy the aspects which we moan about, including public transport. "The standards and service have really improved in the last 20 years and this is partly because of British people travelling abroad and then expecting the same standards at home," says Dawe.

THE STAYCATION

In the last few years, largely as a result of the weak pound and the recession, Brits have holidayed more in the UK. "The staycation started in 2009 and held steady in 2010, but some operators have said it dropped off last year," says Dawe. "Many people feel more in control of their spending when they stay at home and there's a realisation that the quality has improved and it's a good place to holiday with young children.

"However, if we have a bad summer, or long cold winter, then it's natural for people to want to go and lie on a beach. But, there's a huge cliché,



Venturing further afield: Australians, New Zealanders and the Dutch are said to be the most adventurous tourists when they visit the UK

JON BRAD / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

which Brits do nothing to dispel, that the weather is terrible. We have the perfect climate for sightseeing: it's never too hot, never too cold. Winters are far less cold than Scandinavia, Russia or Canada. London is drier than Rome and warmer than Paris in the winter and the east coast gets relatively little rainfall. Given that our strengths are culture and heritage, we're much more of a shopping, sight-seeing and activity destination."

Inbound tourism is currently Britain's third largest earner of foreign exchange. In 2010, inbound and domestic tourism contributed £115bn to the economy, with 30 million overseas visitors spending £17bn. With the government wanting to "rebalance" the economy and move away from its reliance on financial services and London, then tourism could be set for a stronger focus from Whitehall.

Dawe stresses it's a great option for a career: virtually no barriers to entry and anyone who's good can progress through the ranks. It's also a great industry for entrepreneurs, she says.

VISITBRITAIN FACTS

VisitBritain is Britain's national tourism agency, responsible for marketing Britain worldwide and developing Britain's visitor economy. It's a non-departmental public body, funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

VisitBritain is currently undertaking a £100m marketing programme, £50m of which is match-funded by the industry in cash and in kind. A further £27m injection announced in November 2011 will fund a major image campaign

to inspire more visitors to travel to Britain throughout 2012 and beyond.

The organisation operates in 21 overseas markets:

- Americas: Brazil, Canada, USA.
- Europe: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland.
- Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa: Australia, China, India, Japan, UAE.

Dawe joined the industry by chance, after first working in PR and communications before moving to the ETB. "I got a job in tourism when it was really growing, so I've seen the most amazing growth, evolution and improvement of product. It leads you to a knowledge and appreciation of your own country...but not through rose-tinted glasses, because you know what the competition has to offer," she says.

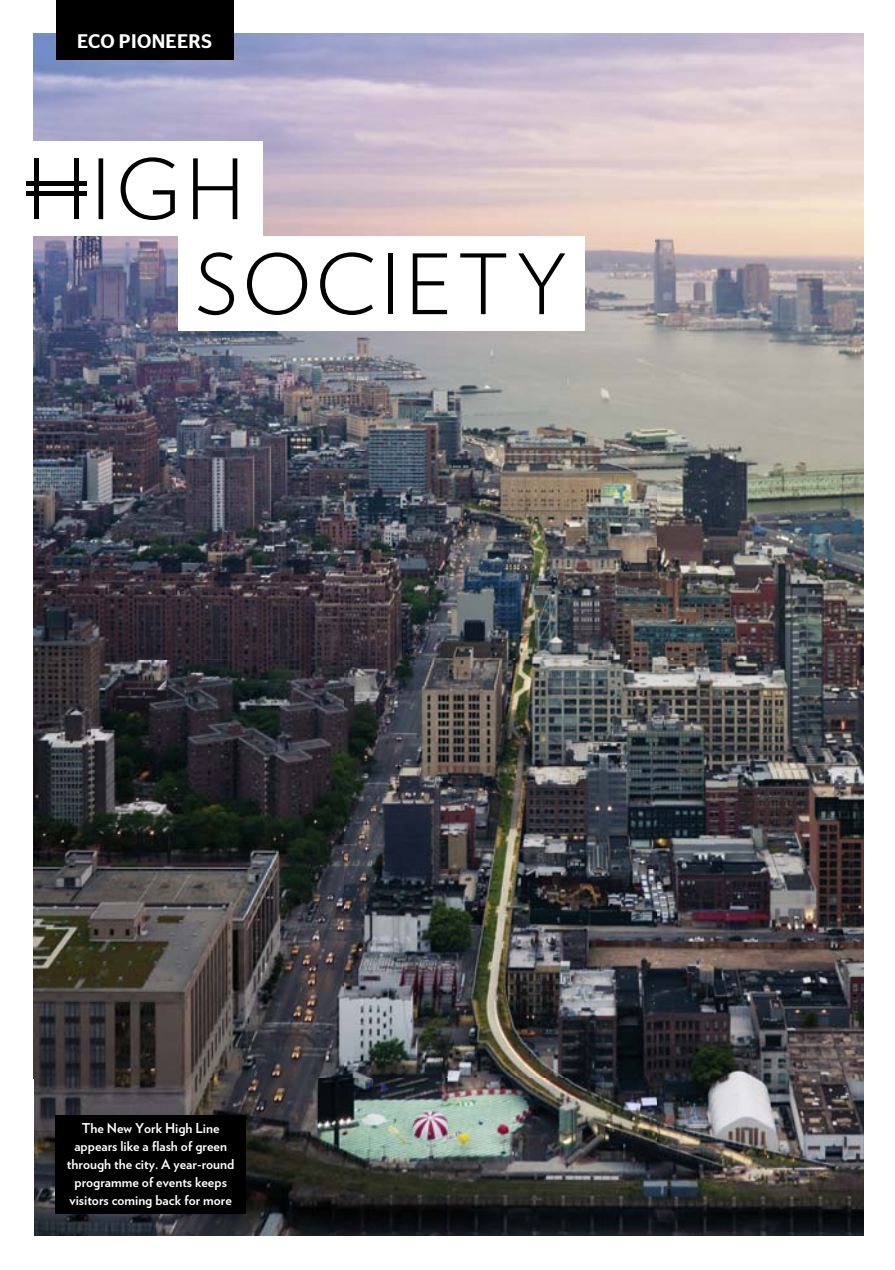
"Working at a national agency you tend to be at the heart of big national events and I find that very exciting."

Exciting times lie ahead for UK tourism: a flood of new visitors, a chance to showcase our wares to the world and growing government recognition. We just need to remember: be friendly and don't moan about the weather. ●

Kath Hudson is a freelance journalist

ECO PIONEERS

#HIGH SOCIETY



The New York High Line appears like a flash of green through the city. A year-round programme of events keeps visitors coming back for more

The High Line represents a modern epic tale of how two men battled to save a disused 1930s rail structure and turn it into an eco-friendly park and community space that winds through the high rises of New York City. Co-founder Robert Hammond tells Julie Cramer about how the grand vision became a reality



PHOTO BY JEFFREY DOMENICO COURTESY FRIENDS OF THE HIGH LINE

PHOTO: IWAN BARN



A long High Line journey: Founders (top right, left to right) Joshua David and Robert Hammond have worked tirelessly on the project

How did you first become involved with the High Line project?

After both reading a *New York Times* article about the proposed demolition of the High Line, Josh and I connected at a community board meeting in 1999, where we were the only two people in the room interested in saving the High Line. We exchanged cards and within months the Friends of the High Line was more formally created, with the goal of preserving the entire historic structure.

What was your vision for it in the early days? Has your vision changed significantly over the years?

At that first meeting, during a presentation by CSX Transportation (the rail company that owned the High Line), they breezed through all the possible uses for the High Line other than demolition; a park was one of them. That idea was very abstract at first and took shape as we spoke to more people in the community and reached out to others undertaking similar projects, and eventually became more concrete through the design competition and subsequent work with the design team.

What response did you get when you first launched an ideas competition?

We received over 750 proposals from 32 countries from a diverse audience: schoolchildren, architects, designers, and members of the public. Some of the most unusual included a mile-long pool and a twisting rollercoaster.

Why did you choose the designers/architects that you did?

The design team of James Corner Field Operations, Diller Scofidio + Renfro, and Piet Oudolf really understood how to keep the magic of the High Line with their design. I remember Ric Scofidio said in a presentation of the project: "My job as an architect is to save the High Line from architecture." It was compelling that their proposal focused on stripping away and exposing the structure instead of adding to it. Also Piet Oudolf's vision for the plantings evoked the self-seeded landscape of the High Line we'd all come to love.

What are the main project elements?

The High Line is a mile-long, soon to be mile-and-a-half-long elevated park [with the development of the High Line

at the rail yards]. The best part is that it gives you a new way of seeing and experiencing New York City. It's more than a park – it's also a cultural centre for the community that includes public programmes, school programmes, art installations, performance art, and most recently, food offerings that are as unique as the High Line itself.

Where has the main funding come from for the different stages?

The first two sections cost US\$153m (£98m). The City of New York contributed \$112.2m (£72m); the Federal government gave \$20.7m (£13.2m); the State of New York contributed \$700,000 (£448,000); and \$19.4m (£12.4m) was raised by Friends of the High Line and developers.

What does it cost to keep the High Line running?

The operating budget of the High Line is \$3m per year, and that's all paid for with private funding. Custodians, gardeners, greeters, docents, programme staffers, bathroom attendants – every employee you see on the High Line is employed by Friends of the



HIGH LINE HISTORY

The New York High Line was built in the 1930s, as part of a major public-private infrastructure project called the West Side Improvement. It lifted freight traffic 30 feet in the air, removing dangerous trains from the streets of Manhattan's largest industrial district.



1934

The High Line opens to trains. It runs from 34th Street to St. John's Park Terminal, at Spring Street.



1950s

Growth of interstate trucking leads to a drop in rail traffic, nationally and on the High Line.

1960s

The southernmost section of the High Line is demolished.

1980

The last train runs on the High Line, pulling three carloads of frozen turkeys.

- High Line. The City of New York provides for security, while the rest of the park's operations budget is supported entirely by private donations.

What contribution do you get from the public?

The park is free to the public. We raise funding to support more than 90 per cent of the operating budget of the park. The majority of the funding comes from generous grants and gifts made by individuals and foundations. We're building our membership programme, which starts at a pledge of \$40 per year, and working on developing other ways to generate revenue.

How did you set about creating an events schedule for the High Line?

Public programmes draw inspiration from our community, the design of the park, and the industrial history of the High Line. Friends of the High Line director of public programs, education & community engagement, Danya Sherman, works with arts and community organisations, public schools, and other groups to curate the schedule.

What are some of the more unusual events/offering on the High Line?

A few notable programmes from this year include Step to the High Line, a step performance by area youth; the Halloween Parade where local schoolkids created "haunted" train cars in the classroom which were then paraded down the High Line; a Social Soup Experiment, a community meal organised by High Line Food;



PHOTO: IMAN BAHN

Two-thirds of the High Line is currently open to the public, with a third phase pending

the Ladybug Release as part of "Wild Wednesdays" for kids; Play with Your Food, a hands-on programme where kids learned to prepare simple healthy snacks; and public art installations by Sarah Sze and Darren Almond.

Can you describe a few of your main community outreach programmes?

The High Line stands today because the community rallied to save it from demolition and transform it into public open space. It is important that the park continues to be a special place for New Yorkers. We have several programmes to strengthen connections with our neighbours, including a youth corps from the local housing projects, a volunteer programme, and education partnerships with nearby schools.

What about environmental projects?

The High Line is a mile-long green

roof which is designed to retain as much water as possible. This year we also started our first composting programme. We're sending our plant clippings to Fresh Kills Landfill on Staten Island to be recycled and turned into compost, and we're working with High Line food vendors to minimise waste by using compostable cups, plates, and utensils, and also compost some of their food scraps.

How did you choose your vendors?

We selected food vendors through an open, competitive process in March, and we're just wrapping up our first full season. When selecting, it was important their food and beverage offerings were unique, interesting, and made with sustainable local ingredients.

How have the public responded?

It's been overwhelming and has far



1999

Friends of the High Line is founded by Joshua David and Robert Hammond.

JANUARY - JULY 2003

An open ideas competition, 'Designing the High Line', solicits proposals for the High Line's reuse.



JUNE 2008

Final designs are released for the High Line's transformation to a public park.

JUNE 2009

Section 1 (Gansevoort Street to West 20th Street) opens to the public.

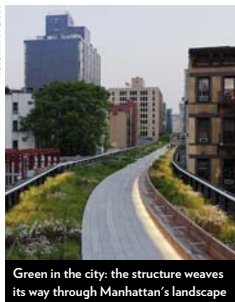


JUNE 2011

Section 2 (West 20th Street to West 30th Street) opens to the public.

Above: Images highlight the changing story of the High Line through the decades

PHOTO: IWAN BARN



Green in the city: the structure weaves its way through Manhattan's landscape

exceeded our expectations. Before the park opened, we estimated around 300,000 people would visit the park in a year. We've had about two million people a year and we're on track to have around three million this year.

How does this compare to other attractions in the city?

We're one of the most-visited parks per square foot in New York City. On a yearly basis, we're between the MoMA (2.5 million visitors) and the Statue of Liberty (5 million visitors per year).

What future plans do you have for the High Line?

Many people think the High Line is finished, but Section 3 of the rail yards represents one-third of the entire historic structure and it's currently closed to the public. We're working to bring all of the stakeholders together to begin

the design and construction process so that we can open as quickly as possible. Building an endowment for long-term maintenance and operations are also top priorities.

What have been the main challenges you've overcome to get to this point?

Since the High Line opened, the park has been celebrated worldwide and called a model for adaptive reuse projects in other cities. With all the hype, it's easy to forget that there were challenges in getting the project off the ground. It took time to get all the stakeholders invested in the project and to get the capital funding raised to complete the construction. We've been lucky to have visionaries in the political and private sectors who've helped make the High Line possible.

What's your favourite story that relates to the High Line?

The High Line runs between residential buildings, sometimes very close. Before the park was developed, some neighbours were even able to climb out of their windows onto it. Soon after the opening, one neighbour took advantage of the passing crowds to start Renegade Cabaret. On summer evenings, soon after the High Line's opening in 2009, visitors were treated to live jazz tunes that floated across from the neighbouring fire escape.

How would you sum up the success of the High Line?

I still have to pinch myself. It seems too good to be true. ●

TALES FROM THE HIGH LINE

High Line: The Inside Story of New York City's Park in the Sky was published in October 2011.

The book features more than 200 beautiful historic and contemporary photographs of the High Line, and a narrative by Joshua David and Robert Hammond.

US journalist Robert A. Caro says of the book: "This is a fundamentally uplifting story of two young men with a dream who scythed through red tape and skepticism, summoning a village to help re-imagine what a park could be in the twenty-first century. Thanks to their vision, and to the dedication, enthusiasm, and brilliance of their collaborators, a walk in the park has been transformed into an exhilarating urban experience that helps all of us to see our extraordinary city with new eyes."

And US author Edmund White comments: "There is no more miraculous and important and gratifying piece of new American urban design than the High Line. What's more, how it was conjured into existence is a compelling story, and here's that story...told lucidly and charmingly by the two extraordinary ordinary guys who pulled it off."

Details: www.thehighline.org
Twitter: @highlinenyc



Service with style

In spite of leaner times, new investors are still keen to enter the boutique hotel sector while established operators are busy expanding and developing new concepts, says market analyst Cristina Balekjian

Interest in boutique hotels, despite the economic slowdown, remains overwhelming. It's an exciting segment of the market, particularly in Europe's gateway cities. New investors are still keen to enter the market and established operators are fast expanding and developing new concepts to compete in this market, as highlighted in HVS' recent market report, *Boutique Hotels Segment: The challenge of standing out from the crowd*.

Defining exactly what a boutique hotel has become increasingly difficult, as many of their original attributes have changed over the years. The hotel industry itself has begun to use the umbrella term 'lifestyle hotels' to characterise a hotel

which is aspirational, design and experience driven, and socially engaging.

These hotels range from budget to luxurious; from two-room establishments to 800-room properties; from independent to chain-run; and can be branded or unbranded. As a general rule, however, boutique hotels are generally accepted to be small (100 rooms appears to be the invisible boundary) and are therefore better placed to react to customer needs, as their limited capacity enables them to enhance the quality of their service and customise their outlets.

While a diversifying market means it's not always easy to define a boutique hotel, what is quite clear is that demand for them has evolved and grown over the past decade. Leisure

remains a staple source of their business, particularly with the growing trend for short-breaks and city-breaks, as time has become an increasingly valuable commodity. Boutique hotels, in particular, have become the preferred choice of affluent young travellers who are seeking an experience, rather than a commodity.

The halo effect of celebrity patronage, as well as the liveliness and buzz of the public areas, allows these hotels to attract a high proportion of commercial demand and still maintain their trendy, aspirational status without becoming standard business hotels. Blakes was – and still is – the haunt of celebrities, and London hotels such as The Sanderson, St Martins Lane and those in the Firmdale collection thrive

BOUTIQUE HOTELS IN THE CAPITAL – RECENT AND ANTICIPATED OPENINGS

Hotel	Rooms	Opening	Brand affiliation
45 Park Lane Mayfair	46	Sept 11	Dorchester Collection
Belgraves, Belgravia	85	Sept 11	Thompson Hotels
Aloft London Excel	252	Nov 11	Aloft by Starwood
Dorset Square Hotel, Marylebone	37	Jan 12	Firmdale Hotels
Hotel Indigo Cannon Street, The City	38	Jan 12	Indigo (IHG)
Hotel Indigo Philip Lane, The City	43	Jan 12	Indigo (IHG)
Hotel Indigo Kensington, Kensington	51	Jan 12	Indigo (IHG)
City Road Hotel, Hackney	247	Jan 12	Soneva Properties
ME London, Holborn	173	Jan 12	ME by Melia
Bulgari Hotel, Knightsbridge	85	Mar 12	Bulgari by Ritz-Carlton
The Great Northern Hotel, Kings Cross	93	Nov 12	-
The Wellesley Manchester Square, Knightsbridge	36	Nov 12	-
Fire Station, Marylebone	33	Jan 13	Andre Balazs
8 Balderton Street, Mayfair	75	Jan 13	Corbin & King Hotels
London Edition by Marriott (ex-Berners) Central	190	Jan 13	Edition by Marriott
South Place Hotel, The City	80	Jun 13	D&D
Willow Street Hotel, Shoreditch	146	Jun 13	-
Ham Yard Hotel, Soho	92	Jun 13	Firmdale Hotels
Mondrian Hotel London, South Bank	268	TBC	Morgan Hotels Group

SOURCE: HVS Research



Many boutique establishments are starting to turn their dining offers into must-visit locations

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/STEFANOLIVARDI



HOTEL DU VIN Bistro offering branches out

CASE STUDY

While some boutique and lifestyle hotels are gaining a reputation for their high quality in-house restaurants, one well known brand has decided to develop its successful restaurant concept outside of the boutique environment.

Hotel chain Hotel Du Vin opened its second standalone dining concept in the capital – Bistro du Vin – in Soho last sum-

mer, following on from its first site in Clerkenwell. The bistro offers simple classic dishes, quality wine and a vast range of cheeses – all of which have shaped the Hotel du Vin reputation. The menu is sourced from 'food heroes' including local farmers, fisherman and butchers.

The main restaurant space has a light and airy New England feel with pale olive tongue and groove walls, taupe granite,

banquettes, oak tables and traditional signage. By contrast the Salon area is surrounded by panelled walls and bookcases to give a snug and more intimate feel.

The company has also teamed up with Eric Charriaux of Premier Cheese to create a modern delicatessen-style Cave au Fromage at the Soho site, constructed from scaffold pipes, reclaimed timber and clear glass shelving.

Boutique hotels have become the preferred choice of affluent young travellers who are seeking an experience rather than a commodity

on commercial demand, particularly related to the advertising, public relations and media sectors.

The effect of the celebrity and media crowd is enormously important for the ability of boutique hotels to achieve higher than average room rates – drawing on customers' aspirations to see and be seen with the 'in crowd'.

As such, the success of a boutique hotel depends on its ability to be able to target appropriate customer segments, address their needs, market the brand through the correct channels, and consistently deliver on the expectation created through those marketing efforts.

THE 'BOUTIQUE BUZZ'

Boutique hotels benefit from key profitability advantages – the 'boutique experience', their restaurants and bars, and ability to create the feel of a private club.

The entrance of international chains into the boutique hotel market have added competition to the already well-established independent boutique hotel operators. The whole boutique experience is therefore becoming an increasingly important factor in order for hotels to be able to differentiate themselves in the market.

Larger chains entering this market have been adapting to this sector by

offering similar products and facilities offered by the independent boutique hotels. Some chains have achieved this by creating joint ventures with renowned fashion houses and high-end designer brands such as Bulgari, Missoni and Armani.

Although the uniqueness of a property and its facilities, in addition to the exclusivity and individuality of the hotel, are key combinations, quality and personalised service continue to be significant factors in creating the distinctive overall experience expected of a boutique hotel.

The 'buzz' that the hotel is able to create and maintain over a sustainable ►

STARWOOD offers 'affordable' design-led hotel brand to wider market

CASE STUDY

The first Aloft Hotel in the UK opened at London's Excel in November 2011. Starwood Hotels & Resorts describe the brand as a destination venue aimed at "shaking up the staid and traditional mid-market hotel sector by delivering urban-influenced design and an energetic guest experience at an affordable price point".

With prices starting at £120 per room per night, Aloft London Excel features 252 loft-like guest rooms, a buzzing bar area, a grab-and-go food pantry and industrial design elements throughout.

Features and guest facilities include: Spacious rooms designed by Rockwell Group featuring Aloft's signature ceilings of nearly three metres high, oversized windows and platform beds; large walk-in showers with rainfall showerheads and



The bar area at Aloft London Excel is designed to be a bright and buzzing social space

complimentary Bliss Spa products; 42" LCD TVs and plug 'n play docking stations; and free wireless internet across the whole hotel, including all guest rooms.

There is also a re:mix lounge, the wxyz bar, a touch-n-go kiosk for easy check-in, the re:fuel by Aloft 24-hour food and beverage area, the re:charge 24/7 fitness centre, and five high tech meeting rooms.

One quirky addition is the Animals R Fun service - a pet-friendly programme where animals stay with an Aloft-branded bed, bowl and complimentary treats and toys.

Aloft London Excel is the second Aloft site in Europe after Aloft Brussels Schuman opened in September 2010. The brand currently has over 50 sites spanning the US, China, Canada, India, Belgium and the UAE.

Over the past 10 years boutique hotels have evolved their F&B offering to match the level of creativity and design in their guest rooms and public areas

► period of time is invaluable for a hotel of this type to be able to succeed and compete in the market. This buzz can be further enhanced by the facilities provided; hence the reason boutique hotels have started to diversify their food and beverage outlets to create a unique guest experience.

INSPIRATIONAL F&B

Over the past 10 years, boutique hotels have evolved their food and beverage offering to match the level of creativity and design in their guest rooms and public areas. The involvement of restaurateurs in the 'hotel restaurant' has transformed the notion of what a hotel's dining room and lobby bar could (and should) be, that is, eventually becoming essential to the profitability of the properties, even when the restaurants are outsourced.

The high revenue potential that could be driven through the formation of destination restaurants and bar out-

lets, as well as priceless publicity, has been noticed by boutique hotel operators - it's not uncommon for food and beverage revenue to account for 40-50 per cent of total sales. Aside from increasing revenues, these outlets often act as strong marketing tools, elevating the hotel's public image, and in some instances guests are booking rooms to ensure they can get into the restaurant or the bar. The value of the 'see and be seen' factor, the 'velvet rope effect' and other tools for creating aspirational experiences should not be underestimated.

We expect further partnerships to evolve between chefs and boutique hotels to create truly stand-alone offerings, drawing in outside demand not only within independent operators but also within the branded chains. As a result, hoteliers have fundamentally had to rethink their approach to food and beverage to compete with the creativity of independent restaurateurs.

At the core of this thinking is often the concept of a 'restaurant in a hotel' as opposed to a 'hotel restaurant' - allowing the restaurant more liberty to establish its own concept and identity. It is therefore vital that hoteliers view their hotel restaurant as an amenity designed to attract an external following, just like any other high street restaurant, with an additional provision to cater to the needs of hotel guests, rather than - as is so often the case - the other way round.

INTIMATE AMBIENCE

The notion of exclusivity and privacy is most prevalent in private members' clubs, where often even access to the waiting list to become a member is a complex process requiring referrals from an existing member as well as patience and persistence. But once on the inside, a whole world is opened up, and private members' clubs turn into a self-contained social sphere. ►



The citizenM hotel in Glasgow features a striking red lobby and showpiece furniture



Quirky design: citizenM's colourful and recognisable style is now being rolled out for two new London sites, as well as two New York addresses

CITIZEN M Dutch boutique chic on a budget

CASE STUDY

Dutch hotel group citizenM opened its first international property in Glasgow in late 2010, adding to its two sites in Amsterdam (opened 2008-9). Up until 2012 the group is expanding with four new budget boutique hotels and more than 1100 rooms in London and New York.

The 198-room site in Glasgow city centre is housed in an eight-storey building, and guests enter through an illuminated, double-height glazed red lobby leading to the first floor via a striking red spiral staircase. Upstairs, there is a long bar and relaxed

lounge area that also attracts non-hotel guests, as well as canteenM, the 24/7 kiosk-style cafeteria where guests can get their own high-quality snacks, like sushi, barista made coffee and hot breakfasts.

Design-led furnishings come from such names as Hella Jongerius, Verner Panton, Jasper Morrison as well as Vitra, citizenM's exclusive interior design partner.

CitizenM's prefab rooms feature king-size beds, wall-to-wall windows, Philips mood pads (an all-in-one device that controls everything from free on-demand movies to wake-up calls) and power rain show-

ers. Materials such as Corian®, glass and steel are combined with dark Zebrano wood flooring, plisse shaded lamps and red Vitra furniture. Room rates in Glasgow start at just £49 per night.

CitizenM Glasgow is the first step in a major campaign to expand the brand to new urban destinations. New sites are due to open at London's South Bank (late 2011) and Tower Hill in time for the 2012 Olympics. Two new sites are also confirmed in New York – on Times Square and the hip Bowery on the fringe between Soho and the Lower East Side.



The new Smoak Bar and Grill at Malmaison Manchester is an all-day dining and bar experience for guests and external customers alike

The trend of redesigning economy accommodation is definitely emerging as the next big thing in the boutique hotel sector

► Boutique hotels have always sought to replicate this to a certain degree with private 'hotel guests only' areas, such as bars, rooftop terraces, libraries and lounge rooms. The competition to create the most exclusive and interesting 'guest-only' space is fierce with hotels vying for the PR and cachet associated with the concept of a club. And the converse is also true, with private members' clubs attempting to venture into hotel space.

We consider that one of the next trends for boutique hotels will be to take frequent guest programmes one step further, creating their own 'clubs' and exporting their unique 'brand' to a group of loyal, appreciative followers, and in doing so further reinforce the feeling of exclusivity guests enjoy when staying overnight. This could take the form of a private space within the hotel, or a club 'network', similar to a loyalty club, which would give the member access to various privileges.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Design at a discount. Budget boutique. Whatever it's called, the trend of

redesigning economy accommodation is definitely emerging as the next big thing in the boutique sector. Starwood has already started with a scaled down version of W when it opened the first Aloft property in Montreal in 2008 and most recently in Europe, the Aloft Brussels. New York-based Thompson Hotels is creating its own budget brand, while Dutch hotel company, CitizenM, currently has three properties and an ambitious expansion plan throughout Europe, focusing on cities such as London, Milan and Paris.

The concept of a 'no frills' boutique experience is quickly catching on, spurred by the resilience of the budget hotel sector in cities all over Europe. Development costs are lower, construction time considerably less, and potential sites can be even more awkward as rooms are intended to be tiny. The focus is then on creating living spaces in the lobby which encourage social interaction. The F&B offering is limited to vending machines.

As the boutique hotel sector evolves and establishes itself firmly in the hotel investment landscape, more

attention will be focused on understanding these hotels.

Unfortunately by pulling the pieces apart to understand the mystery of the boutique and lifestyle hotel product – much like attempting to define what is not intended to be defined – we also run the risk of missing the essence of their success. What's clear is that boutique hotels are now a distinct layer within the geological landscape of hotel types, with their own formations and trends, and an exciting one to watch evolve. ●

Cristina Balekjian is an associate at HVS in London

HVS is a leading international consulting and services organisation focused on the hotel, restaurant, shared ownership, gaming, and leisure industries. The consultancy has appraised hotels and projects in all major markets in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. For a copy of the *Boutique Hotels Segment* report please contact +44 (0)207 878 7700





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Staying in the swim



As swimming's popularity looks set to grow with the advent London 2012, a report looks at the current UK swimming pool stock and considers the possibilities for growth. David Minton reports

The 2011 State of the UK Swimming Industry Report was compiled by The Leisure Database company, covering a period of 12 months up to 31 March 2011. The report also includes details of age of stock, facilities at UK pools and recent refurbishments. The Leisure Database Company are independent market analysts who have been monitoring the performance of the leisure sector for over 20 years.

For more details visit call 020 7395 6177 or visit www.theleisuredatabase.com

As the Olympic Games approach and the need for investment legacies close in, the recent 2011 State of the UK Swimming Industry report has highlighted what has already been achieved in terms of swimming facilities and provision around the country. The report sets out to inform national and local government as well as operators and suppliers on the current state of and changes to the industry's swimming pool stock. It reveals swimming to be one of the

country's most accessible sports, with 84 per cent of people in the UK living within two miles of their nearest swimming pool, either public or private.

Pool type and location

So where are these pools located? The report shows that a total of 4,674 swimming pools are operated across the 3,311 UK public and private sites that offer swimming facilities. The UK stock is predominantly operated in the public sector with 2,769 pool facilities at public sports centres and 1,905 pool facilities at private health clubs.

SWIMMING TOGETHER

A ground-breaking partnership between Community Swimming Limited (CSL) and private health club operator LA Fitness means that non-club members can now access private swimming facilities. The new venture aims to get one million more people swimming, and is part of the commitment to the Public Health Responsibility Deal to create a more health-conscious Britain.

Programmes available include adult and children's swimming lessons, which follow the British Gas ASALearn to Swim Framework, taught by ASA teachers. Also on offer are a full range of different aquatic activities, including British Gas Swimfit sessions, Aquafit, Aqua Circuits, and Aqua Zumba.

CSL is a charitable trust that works with operators to develop their facilities for community use. Swimming pools in 78 LA fitness centres nationwide are now open to the public.



Swimmer Mark Foster and singer Alesha Dixon helped launch the new public/private initiative

Martin Long, CEO of LA Fitness said: "As one of the largest pool providers in the UK we wanted to utilise our pools in a more effective way and broaden the appeal of swimming and

other pool activities to the communities we work with. CSL bring their specialist knowledge to programme the pools in a way that will encourage more people to use them."



"The report reveals swimming to be one of the country's most accessible sports - 84 per cent of people live within two miles of their nearest pool"

In the 12 months to 31 March 2011 the increase in pool facilities on offer through public sector sports centres offsets the marginal decline in the number of swimming pool facilities at private health clubs.

Regional variations are apparent too. Northern Ireland and the North East have the lowest provision of pools and the South East has the highest provision. In the public sector, Scotland shares the highest regional provision with the South East.

What type of pools are there in the national stock? The report reveals the make-up of the stock to be mainly indoor main pools (58.8 per cent), over one quarter are teaching pools, just seven per cent are leisure pools and seven per cent are outdoor pools.

In the private health club sector the majority of pools are found at multi-site operator clubs, given the development and operational costs of pools. However we are witnessing a decreasing number of pools opening in the private health club sector, as club openings in that sector move

towards low cost operations which don't have pool facilities.

In the public sector there has been an increase in centres with new pool openings. In the 12 months to 31 March 2011 there were 27 new pool openings at public sports centres, and 10 at private health clubs. The top five trusts and leisure management contractors operate 20 per cent of the UK public pool market.

Pricing and technology

Pricing is part of the consumer's choice of swimming over other activities. In the public sector, swimming prices vary across the regions. The average cost of a pay-and-play adult swim among public sector pools ranges from £2.76 in Northern Ireland (18 per cent below UK average) to £3.89 in London (15 per cent above



Splashpath is a free mobile phone application that allows users to get live information on swimming timetables and events

UK average). The top five trusts notably charge higher than the average adult pay-and-play fee for swims at their centres.

New technology will play an important role in encouraging further swimming participation. Splashpath, the free

mobile application, encourages more people to swim more often with readily available, live pool and timetable information. Already there are over 26,000 swimmers and over 100 operators using Splashpath to promote their pools, all of which are location-aware. Splashpath is seen as an industry solution to increase swimming participation. On recent evidence this appears to be true. Splashpath has

"We know that swimming remains a massive participation sport...but we still need to grow the market"

seen over 600 people per week sign up for swimming information.

Andy Reed, chair of the Sport & Recreation Alliance and independent board member of the ASA, believes that it's important for the industry to continue building on its strong foundations. Commenting on the report findings, he says: "We know that swimming remains a massive participation sport and activity, but we still need to grow the market and the numbers participating regularly.

"Reports suggest that latent demand for swimming remains high so this kind of information can help us all plan to meet this growth.

"It's good to see that the pool stock remains relatively stable, but we will want to continually monitor this situation as public sector reductions in funding could have a significant impact in the future." ●

David Minton is director of The Leisure Database Company



SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

The Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS UK) has launched a new lifesaving programme called Survive & Save. Delivered by leisure centres and lifesaving clubs across the country, the new programme is designed to bridge the gap and progress potential lifesavers from the Rookie Lifeguard course through to becoming a fully qualified lifeguard at the age of 16. Participants are given the opportunity to develop personal survival and rescue skills, while improving general fitness through the sports element of the course.

Lifesaving is a worldwide sport and the England squad recently competed in South Africa. Survive & Save allows people to train in lifesaving, with the potential to join the squad at the Commonwealth Lifesaving Championships.

The programme consists of different award strands - Medallion, Beach, Stillwater, and Sport, and Bronze, Silver, and Gold awards are achieved as candidates progress. The variety is designed to broaden the experiences of lifesavers and offer fun ways of learning. Details: <http://www.rlss.org.uk/>

SWIMMING IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Basildon Sporting Village is a new £38m state-of-the-art sport and leisure complex offering, among many other things, Olympic-class swimming facilities. Opened in April 2011, the site has been chosen by the Japanese national swimming squad as a training venue for 2012.

Operator Sports and Leisure Management (SLM) has won the ASA award for the 'Facility Operator of the Year' two years running - in recognition of the work it does to increase participation in swimming in UK pools.

There are 77,000 people, from five-months upwards, being taught each week at over 50 leisure centres by

SLM's Everyone Active's ASA-qualified instructors - and Basildon Sporting Village is a flagship site.

The swimming programme at Basildon offers annual, instead of termly, class timetables, which means that teachers can watch their pupils develop while they get the security of year-round employment. Rookie lifeguarding, synchronised swimming and water polo lessons are also available.

Another innovation from Everyone Active swimming is the provision of colour-coded swimming caps to denote swimmers' ability levels, providing a progressive reward incentive as well as improving safety in the pool.



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KICKING UP A STORM

New York-based dot.com Kickstarter is the world's largest crowd-funding platform for creative projects, with over \$2m pledged weekly to projects ranging from films, restaurants and museums to a pool in the Hudson River. Rhianon Howells reports

He may have painted the Sistine Chapel, but throughout his life as a jobbing artist Michelangelo was forced to rely on the patronage of wealthy benefactors such as the Medici family to fund his work. If he'd been alive today, it's possible he would have turned to Kickstarter instead.

The Medicis may seem to have little to do with a New York-based company that uses the internet to connect creative projects with potential backers. But it can be argued that crowd-funding ventures – jargon for dot.coms that help people raise money from donors – are a direct ancestor of those great Renaissance patrons.

"We view [what we do as being] at the intersection of commerce and arts patronage," says Kickstarter's communications director Justin Kazmark. "There's this long past; Kickstarter was not really a new idea. What's made it successful has been a fair amount of good fortune, the generosity of the people that back the projects and the creativity of the people that launch them."

Set up in 2009, Kickstarter is a website dedicated to raising money for creative projects by mobilising thousands of ordinary people. It's a simple concept. Project creators use the site to pitch their ideas to the public over

a fixed time period of one to 60 days. They set a funding goal, explaining what the money will be used for, and if people like the idea, they can pledge anything from a few dollars to many thousands. Kickstarter's project creators also benefit from the opportunity to build a fan-base before the initiative is even off the ground. "Project creators come on initially to articulate an idea and get enough funding to bring that idea to life," says Kazmark. "What they leave with is a community of support."

This is not the first time potential audiences have been tapped to fund creativity; Kazmark argues that Beethoven was a pioneer of this

food to theatre and technology – and the company gets 200-300 new proposals a day. In the last year, Kickstarter's staff has doubled, from 15 to 30 people, to meet demand.

CREATIVE PURPOSE

The idea for Kickstarter was born in 2002. At that time, New Yorker Perry Chen was working in New Orleans and looking forward to the city's annual Jazz Fest – so much so he thought it would be great to throw a concert during the festival. Chen, whose CV includes stints as an audio engineer, musician, writer,

art gallery co-founder and day trader, was no stranger to either the arts or business. But unable to raise the funds to fly the artist he wanted from Europe, he was faced with fronting the money himself then trying

to recoup it through ticket sales later on. In the end, he decided the whole venture was just too much of a risk.

"After the dust settled, he started thinking that there must be a way to get the audience involved with bringing [creative projects like this] to life," says Kazmark, who has been with the company since its early days.

In 2005, Chen moved back to New York, and shared his idea with Yancey Strickler, a music journalist,

To date, more than \$100m has been pledged through the site and around 14,000 projects have been funded

approach when he pre-sold concert tickets to pay for new compositions. Even in the 21st century, Kickstarter isn't the only company to apply the principle using the internet – the music and film industries have been at it for some time – however it is the largest creative funding platform in the world and to date, more than \$100m has been pledged through the website. Around 14,000 projects have been funded across 13 categories – from dance and



Kickstarter founders
(from left to right):
Charles Adler, Perry Chen
and Yancey Strickler

Splash House

THE CREATORS: Design Workshop is an innovative studio that provides pro bono work to nonprofit organisations while giving graduate architecture students valuable work experience.

THE CONCEPT: The Highbridge Pool and Recreation Center in Washington Heights, New York, offers children a place to play and learn. However, every summer, local children were being denied this facility when the recreation centre was turned into a temporary locker room site for the neighbouring



Highbridge Park Swimming Pool. The aim of this project was to build a new pavilion for the park swimming pool so the recreation centre could be kept open for the children all year round. They asked for \$15,000 on Kickstarter to buy building materials.

THE RESULTS: The project raised \$16,493 with 232 backers.

Construction is now 75 per cent complete and the pavilion is due to open in time for the 2012 summer season.

TARA MROWKA, DESIGN WORKSHOP SAYS: "We had very generous donations from within our own networks of friends and family, but we were most surprised from the support we received from the community."

232

BACKERS

\$16,493

PLEDGED OF \$15,000 GOAL

SUCCESSFUL

► and Charles Adler, a web designer. Together, they worked out how the concept would work online, and on 28 April 2009 they launched Kickstarter.

One of the things that can make Kickstarter a more attractive option than more traditional forms of funding is that it's not about investment, because ownership of the project stays with the creators. Crucially, Kickstarter also has an all-or-nothing policy, meaning money only changes hands if the funding goal is met. "This makes sure that backers are supporting projects that are fully funded," says Kazmark. "And creators are also protected, because they're only on the hook to deliver if they have the cash to do so."

The company takes a five per cent

cut, but this is if and only if, a project is successfully funded.

To raise money on Kickstarter, projects must meet certain guidelines, some of which are dictated by the company's partner, Amazon Payments

Around 45 per cent of all projects featured on Kickstarter currently meet or exceed their funding goal

(which charges 3-5 per cent for credit-card processing). This means that, for now, the project creator must be a US resident aged at least 18, with a US social security number or employer identification number, a US bank account and a US address. In addition, the project must have a clearly defined

beginning and end (you can't fundraise for general expenses) and it must have a creative purpose. But within these limits, anything goes, and 60 per cent of proposals make it onto the site.

Around 45 per cent of all projects on Kickstarter currently meet or exceed their funding goal – once a goal is met, pledges can continue until the deadline. On average, successful projects achieve 125 per cent of their funding goal, and some blow the goal out of the water. One of Kickstarter's biggest success stories is +Pool (see above) an ambitious plan to build a floating swimming pool in the Hudson River. The \$25,000 goal was met in six days, later exceeding \$40,000 – and attracting press coverage you can't put a price on.

Swoon's Musical Architecture for New Orleans

THE CREATORS: This project was launched by the New Orleans Airlift, a multi-disciplinary arts organisation founded in 2007 by artist and curator Delaney Martin and musician and DJ Jay Pennington. The Airlift aims to create and facilitate innovative artistic opportunities for New Orleans-based artists, locally and around the globe.

THE CONCEPT: The aim is to create a unique musical house in the salvaged remains of a Creole cottage. Globally renowned, Brooklyn-based artist Swoon has designed a permanent, interactive sculpture known as 'the Dithyrambalina', a house with instruments built into the walls and floorboards, enabling it to be 'played' by both visitors and musicians. However, before the house could be built, the instruments needed to be created and tested. To this end, the group decided to launch a temporary installation in the city called The Music



357
BACKERS
\$23,977
PLEDGED OF \$12,000 GOAL

SUCCESSFUL

Box, which would hold prototypes of instruments for the final house. It was this project that they launched on Kickstarter with a goal of \$12,000.

THE RESULTS: By deadline, the project had raised \$23,977 through 357 backers. The Music Box opened in New Orleans in autumn 2011, and the aim is to now build the Dithyrambalina.

DELANEY MARTIN SAYS:

"Kickstarter was less constrained than a traditional grant that has activity periods, final reports and complicated finances... and no-one could have predicted that Kickstarter would also become an important PR tool."

+Pool

THE CREATORS: +Pool (pronounced plus-pool) is the brainchild of three NYC-based designers: Dong-Ping Wong of Family design studio, Archie Lee Coates and Jeffrey Franklin of PlayLab.

THE CONCEPT: After a very hot summer in 2010, the trio dreamed up the idea of building a floating, cross-shaped pool in the Hudson River that would actually use filtered river water. Leading engineering firm Arup offered their services, and in June 2011 the founders launched the project on Kickstarter in hopes of raising \$25,000 to test the filtration system.

THE RESULTS: The project reached its funding goal in six days, eventually going on to raise \$41,647 in pledges from 1,203 backers. The money has already paid for the first round of filtration testing, with the remainder going towards round two. If things continue to progress, +Pool is set to make it into the water by summer 2013.

Escaping the city heat:
An innovative filtration
system will allow +Pool
to use water from the
Hudson River



DONG-PING WONG: "The pool has been so dependent on public interest that it made sense to start with a public campaign like Kickstarter... but it's still a bit of a surprise to see that people are not only interested, but interested enough to put money towards a project still in the works."

1,203
BACKERS
\$41,647
PLEDGED OF \$25,000 GOAL

SUCCESSFUL

But projects don't have to be as audacious as +Pool to do well on Kickstarter. Another community pool project that exceeded its funding goal this year was the modest Splash House (see case study). Other successful projects range from What Happens When, a temporary NYC restaurant installation combining food, music, art and design, to Colonie, a neighbourhood restaurant in Brooklyn; and from Swoon's Musical Architecture for New Orleans, a plan for a high-concept house that functions like a musical instrument, to the Videogame History Museum in Silicon Valley.

WINNING FORMULA

So what makes a project succeed? "Number one, they've clearly identified what it is they're trying to do," says Kazmark. "Number two is getting the word out. Once a project is launched, it's up to you to share it with your friends, family, fans... there's a misconception that if you launch a

Kickstarter project, you'll get money from the internet. That's not true – you have to do quite a bit of work."

Other factors in a project's success are typically a good video and appealing rewards. Although backers aren't investors, this isn't a money-for-nothing formula. "Yes, they're pledging money, but they're getting something in return," says Kazmark. "There's always a value exchange." Typically, rewards are linked to the creative work, and increase in desirability with the size of the pledge.

Once a deadline has passed, it's archived on the site, the money is collected and successful creators get on with bringing the project to life. The company is clear it's not responsible for ensuring creators fulfil their promise, however, so much support comes from the creators' family, friends and community that they have a strong incentive not to let anyone down – so to date this hasn't been a problem.

Kazmark says Kickstarter is so intrinsically reliant on word of mouth

that the company doesn't do much marketing beyond the occasional event and some press interviews. It does, however, have strategic partnerships with over 70 creative organisations – ranging from YouTube to Robert Redford's Sundance Institute – all of which have 'curated pages' on the site showcasing projects they support.

GLOBAL ROLLOUT

Since its modest start, the company has captured the imagination of the public, with \$2m now being pledged on the site each week. Surely the next step is a global rollout? "Certainly that's a priority," admits Kazmark, although he won't be drawn on when, or in which regions, this might happen. But if Kickstarter crosses the Atlantic and has the same impact, the way Europe looks at funding creativity may never be the same again. ●

Rhianon Howells is contributing editor of *Spa Business* magazine

A MODERN CANTERBURY TALE

Taking less than five years from design to completion, the £26m Marlowe Theatre is testament to the council's drive to create an enriched cultural future for Canterbury and the surrounding Kent region. Three key players in the development talk to Julie Cramer about their roles in the project

Amid a sea of quaint rooftops, and bordering Canterbury Cathedral's UNESCO World Heritage site, there's now a gleaming new spire rising from the historic Kent city. At a pinnacle of 70ft (21m), the fly tower which tops the new Marlowe Theatre forms a striking beacon in a traditional landscape.

The real vision for Canterbury was actually sparked 10 years earlier, when Canterbury City Council entered a bid to become the 2008 European Capital of Culture. That bid was unsuccessful, but the seeds were sown to keep the momentum going, and create a more enriched cultural future for Canterbury.

The old Marlowe theatre was already a well established regional arts facility, which presented around 380 performances and sold around 270,000 tickets annually. However as a 1930s cinema-turned-theatre conversion in the 1980s, the venue was inadequate to house new theatre audiences and attract the kind of large scale productions that could be seen in London's West End. The building was said to be crumbling and not fit-for-purpose, and the council decided it would be better to in a new building, rather than spend millions to patch up the old one.

So rising like a phoenix on the site of the old Marlowe, the new facility is now a striking example of modern theatre architecture, situated at the end of an historic Canterbury lane, bordering the River Stour where the traditional tourist punts pass lazily by.

It has been funded via a public/private partnership, with Canterbury City Council investing the bulk of £17.5m, with support from Kent County Council and SEEDA. Alongside this, there was



It is estimated the venue will contribute £22.6m pa to the local economy and 300 jobs

a fundraising campaign by The New Marlowe Theatre Development Trust, which was backed by numerous trusts, foundations, local businesses and individuals, raising another £4.5m.

London-based firm Keith Williams Architects started work on the project in March 2007. Planning permission was granted in August 2008, and construction of the 4,850sq m (52,204sq ft) site began in May 2009.

The exterior of the building has a series of majestic 8m-high colonnades in white Dolomite stone which frame and shelter a multi-level glazed foyer. The new flytower is 9m taller than its predecessor, and matches the height of the knave of Canterbury Cathedral that sits clearly in its line of vision.

Inside there are airy public spaces, bars on three levels, a riverside restaurant, a 1,200 seat auditorium and a smaller, more intimate 150-300 seat

performance space designed to attract new, experimental talent to the venue.

The piece de resistance is, of course, the main auditorium. Seating has been increased from 950 to 1,200, meaning that the venue can now attract larger-scale productions.

The new season, launched at the theatre's opening on 4 October, includes a British premiere of a new production by performance company Cirque Eloize, a new musical version of Top Hat, and a series of orchestral concerts by the Philharmonia.

The new Marlowe is now part of a new cultural triumvirate for Kent – which has seen the establishment of the Folkestone Creative Foundation to bring arts regeneration to the economically-challenged East Kent coast, and more recently the Turner Contemporary which opened in Margate in May 2011 with a similar cultural mission. ●



The auditorium features striking orange-red leather seats and dark walnut surfaces

I wanted to make a building of surprises – the main auditorium takes most people aback when they visit it for the first time

What was your role?

As architect you're the person who paints a picture of the future, the vision, but you are also the coordinator of that vision through the technical design and construction stage to reality. The Marlowe was very complex, and my architectural team worked for nearly five years with a large team of engineers including Buro Happold and Max Fordham, acoustics experts, theatre consultant Charcoal Blue and the contractor ISG Jackson to make the project a reality.

How have you integrated the theatre into its surroundings?

In essence I've designed The Marlowe to ascend in layers. The 1,200 seat auditorium and flytower are necessarily large structures – the flytower is the second tallest in the city centre after Bell Harry – the cathedral's central tower. The historic buildings nearest the Marlowe are generally of two/three storeys plus roof, so I created the colonnade at approximately the same scale as the historic street architecture to mediate between those buildings. The flytower is shaped to a pinnacle facing the cathedral, acknowledging the latter's predominance.



Keith Williams
Founder & director
Keith Williams
Architects

What are the eco-credentials?

Theatres are high energy use buildings – nevertheless The Marlowe has achieved a BREEAM 'Very Good' rating.

Where possible, we've used passive means to control the building environment. For example, the colonnade shields the lower foyer from high-angle sun to prevent overheating, allowing it to be completely naturally ventilated.

For the auditorium, which requires artificial ventilation, a displacement system has been used. This means that a higher supply air temperature can be used (about 18 deg C) which means no mechanical cooling is required for many evening performances, when the external ambient temperature is less than 18 deg C.

Are there any notable 'firsts'?

The stretched stainless steel mesh covering the flytower is a first for this type of application. It catches the col-

ours and moods of the weather as its surface changes from flat grey to shimmering gold depending on cloud cover. At night it becomes a gauze which carries projected light to create a new beacon in the city.

What in your view is the theatre's main tour de force?

I find it hard to disseminate the components, as for me the building a complete thing.

For many people, it will be the main auditorium with its swooping curved balconies, fiery orange-red seats, walnut surfaces and excellent acoustics.

How about your working relationship with the council?

It's axiomatic in architectural circles that the best projects result from a really demanding, focused client working closely with a gifted architect. All projects have their highs and lows but this one had very few of the latter. The council and theatre were excellent clients, very supportive of my vision and giving sufficient airtime to address the complex issues, before making clear decisions. For the Marlowe to be open less than five years from our appointment is testament to that drive. ● ▶



The foyer (left) rises through three levels, while the colonnade (above) frames the theatre

I've been living and breathing it [the project] for over eight years, having been involved in everything from the earliest feasibility study to the gala opening

► How did the plan to rebuild the Marlowe come about?

Ten years ago we bid to be European Capital of Culture. We had high hopes and ambitions that went beyond what a city the size of Canterbury might normally aspire to, but we didn't really expect to win. Our mantra was 'the prize is in the process', and as part of the bid we developed a 10-year strategy for culture-led regeneration. One of the cornerstones was a new Marlowe.

How did you choose your architect?

We invited outline ideas, shortlisted five architects, interviewed them and then held a public meeting to give people the opportunity to vote for their favourite. Keith Williams's design was by far the most striking and definitely the council's favourite, but we weren't sure how it would go down with a wider group of people, as Canterbury's architecture is largely historic. Thankfully Keith's theatre was runaway favourite.

What was your role before joining Canterbury Council?

I was head of Film, Media and Literature at the Arts Council (then called Northern Arts), where I helped establish the Northern Film and Television Archive. Being part of the management team at a time when Newcastle/Gateshead were investing millions into cultural projects to revitalise



Janice McGuinness
Head of Culture
& Enterprises
Canterbury City Council

ise the quayside made me realise the power of a well-supported culture-led regeneration. I began to understand the key role that local councils need to play and wanted to be part of that. So I moved to Canterbury...

What has been your role in the Marlowe project?

I'm the lead officer so I've been involved in every aspect of it. Along with a number of people, I've been living and breathing it for over eight years, having been involved in everything from the earliest feasibility stages to the gala opening.

How have you worked with the various teams involved?

I chaired an internal team, called 'the Core team'. This drew together officers from across the council including the theatre, project management, property, legal, development, communications and fundraising. I was also part of the 'Principle' team on the construction project – this comprised architect, contractor, project manager and the council, and I went to regular, more detailed project meetings on site

with the design/building team. This ensured information flowed well between all the parties involved.

What have been your main challenges?

The sheer amount of work involved in leading two capital projects of this scale while still heading up the Culture & Enterprise Service. Thank goodness I have two brilliant deputies!

What has been the Trust's role and how have you worked as a team?

The trust was established to raise around £4m to fill the funding gap and help build the theatre. The campaign board worked tirelessly and with real passion, as did the professional fundraising team that supported them. They were involved in early discussions about the development, choice of architect etc, and my team supported their fundraising work. It was – and will continue to be – a great partnership.

What's next in terms of new cultural offerings in Canterbury?

The next big capital project is the £13m refurbishment and extension of the Beane Art Museum and Library around the corner from the Marlowe. It's been running on a parallel track to the theatre, but turned out to be a rich archaeological site, which delayed the build and then we had problems with death watch beetle in its listed façade. It's due to open summer 2012. ●



The new theatre now has the capacity to stage more ambitious, large-scale productions

This was an opportunity to create an unashamedly modern 21st Century building - a chance for this generation to leave its mark on the city

What has been your role during the new build?

I was part of the council's Core Team from the outset, helping with plans, working through problems, assisting the city architects with the original brief. By the time we came to tender, there was a feeling among lots of people that this was a great opportunity to create an utterly unashamedly modern 21st century building – a chance for this generation to leave its mark on the city.

What were your hopes for the new theatre?

We have to remember that it's owned by the community. We want to create a programme that offers enough variety so everyone wants to visit at least once a year. We did a brief analysis a few weeks ago and found 40 per cent of the people who had booked at that point were people that we didn't know – they were not on our original database of 65,0000, which is promising.



Mark Everett
Director
Marlowe Theatre

What are the challenges of running a much larger venue?

It enables us to be more ambitious with our productions in a way that we couldn't be before – but at the same time it's terrifying. If things go wrong, then the scale of the financial implications is much greater. The old Marlowe turned over £5m a year, while the new theatre should double that. We have a lot more permanent staff and are running our own catering for the first time. The Marlowe family has become much bigger. I'm a hands-on manager, but I'm learning to delegate!

What has the feedback been like?

We are still in the honeymoon period,

and realise that some people will be visiting purely because they want to see the new building. But overall the feedback has been hugely positive. I'm a great believer in talking to people, and if someone takes the time to send an email I will always reply. It's important for people to understand why we do what we do, and why we might choose to stage one production over another. There is always a reason for the choice, be it cultural, financial, etc.

What about future plans?

We have some great signings already – such as the Northern Ballet and Glyndebourne. I also have about half a dozen major touring organisations on my hit list. We also want to build up our Friends list, as these people offer great continuity of support. A month after opening we broke our old membership record, going from 10,500 to 11,000. If we can hit 12,000 then we'll be doing fantastically well. ●

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Air Conditioning and Refrigeration (ACR) Show

A new national exhibition to showcase the latest air conditioning and refrigeration technology takes place in Birmingham in March



WHEN: 13-15 March 2012

WHERE: NEC, Birmingham

www.acrshow.co.uk

The Air Conditioning and Refrigeration (ACR) Show, is a new national showcase for innovation, enabling visitors to see the latest products and technology coming on-stream across the commercial and industrial air conditioning and refrigeration sector.

The event, which takes place in Hall 19 at the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) in Birmingham on 13-15 March 2012, will also offer free access to leading industry experts over three days of seminars.

The show, the only national event of its kind, has been launched with the backing of key organisations and companies. It will have a dedicated arena for heat pump technology, where visitors can see the latest contenders in low-cost renewable energy.

CUTTING EMISSIONS

Air conditioning and refrigeration equipment accounts for around 20 per cent of total UK energy consumption. With energy costs rocketing, cutting running costs is a key issue for end users. This will be reflected in the high profile seminar programme, with practical

presentations showing how the trade can help users reduce running costs and cut carbon emissions.

Other core themes will be: the impact of F-Gas legislation on the trade and equipment users; how to respond to the imminent phase-out of R22 refrigerant – still one of the most common refrigerants in use; and the latest developments in alternative cooling systems that don't depend on global-warming HFCs.

More than 100 companies are expected to exhibit, with companies that include: Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Panasonic, Toshiba, Thermofrost Cryo, tool supplier Javac UK, refrigeration company Hubbard, fan manufacturer Ziehl-Abegg, equipment specialist GEA Searle, ITE, Ritchie Engineering, Advanced Engineering, Refco, Pump House, Johnson Matthey, Charles Austen Pumps and SWEP International.

PROFESSIONAL BACKING

The show is backed by a number of leading industry organisations, including the Institute of Refrigeration (IOR), the Heating and

Ventilating Contractors' Association (HVCA), Federation of Environmental Trade Associations (FETA), British Refrigeration Association (BRA), Heat Pump Association (HPA) and also HEVAC Association.

Miriam Rodway, secretary of the IOR, said: "The Institute is pleased to be supporting the new ACR Show in 2012. The exhibition is a great opportunity for networking, and will bring together members of the IOR, service engineers section and our new Air Conditioning and Heat Pump Institute at a highly focused industry event."

Jan Thorpe, event director, said: "The response of the industry to the launch has been fantastic. It's confirmed our belief that the air conditioning and refrigeration industry deserves its own show and that people will support it.

"There are major challenges and opportunities facing the sector in terms of technology, legislation and the environment. The timing, being held in March 2012, provides an excellent national focus to bring the industry and its customers together." Details: www.acrshow.co.uk ●

ALL ON BOARD

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF WHEELSCOPE

If they're backed by councils, local youths and community groups, skateparks can be a force for good in any town or city, helping to reduce crime, improve social inclusion, and boost physical activity. Joseph Haines reports

BMX, skateboarding and roller-blading have grown up. Wheeled sports are no longer the faddish, niche activities of the 80s and 90s, having blossomed into fully recognised sports, supporting multi-million pound industries in the UK alone.

Skateboarding was the first of the modern wheeled sports, setting precedents for what and where to ride. The early skaters in California took surf-style moves to hills, drainage ditches and empty pools. This terrain inspired the first generation of skateparks – giant concrete playgrounds that took the best aspects of all the places skaters liked to ride and combined them together into a concrete fantasy landscape. Skateparks were a place to learn the sport and stay out of trouble.

From an industry perspective, it seems as if every small town, every borough, has a group of young people working to get a skatepark. The more developed of these groups are almost always supported by their local councillor, local police force, and local community groups. Many local authorities now view skateparks as core public amenities, similar to football pitches, tennis courts and pools.





Fun for all: A skatepark in Teignmouth, Devon, which was designed and built by specialist firm Wheelscape

The vast majority of outdoor skateparks are free-to-use and publicly-owned. While some commercially-run indoor skateparks exist, most indoor sites are run as community-interest companies.

Most projects to build a skatepark have multiple funding-streams. Money might come from local and/or regional-level councils (often section 106 derived funds are used), the National Lottery, Sport England, and fundraising ventures by the user-group and other local advocates. Some user-groups have raised tens of thousands of pounds through a series of small-scale events such as fun runs, music nights, and so on. In some cases, brownfield sites are rented from local authorities at peppercorn rates. But more commonly, a peripheral or underused central site is leased from a local authority.

RIGHT MATERIALS

The materials and techniques used to build skateparks have progressed dramatically in the UK in the last decade.

Skateparks built from wood, a standard material ten years ago, are now viewed as degrading too quickly, often taking only months to significantly

worsen, offering less 'pop' (the extent that the board rebounds), and giving less flexibility in terms of design than concrete. Wood does retain a place, however, being suitable for temporary, event-specific parks, or for permanent indoor parks. Metal parks should be seen as noisy, unreassuringly cheap, and can be prone to rapid and dangerous degradation.

Concrete parks fall into two categories: modular and sprayed, with the latter now being the high-end industry standard. Each element of a modular park is built using moulds, meaning inevitable, wheel-catching 'seams'.

Sprayed parks are built by laying foundations of wood and wire-mesh onto which concrete is sprayed. Designers have the freedom to build irregularly-shaped parks of elegant, undulating curves and humps, with the entire structure made from one piece

of concrete. These parks have fewer 'seams' and designs can be closely tailored to particular geographies.

Minor variations in the gradation of ramps hugely affect their 'ride'. Whilst the very best skatepark-users – semi-professionals and upwards – might prefer unusual angling or sharp changes in surface or gradation, the vast majority of skateparks users will always prefer predictability and regularity; achieving these require specialist knowledge, skills and equipment.

Designing and building high-quality skateparks is a highly specialised venture. Only three companies working in the UK are currently capable of building top-flight skateparks. Leaving the design of a skatepark to non-users and the build to non-specialists is like asking non-golfers to design an 18-hole course, and contracting a wheat farmer to turf it.

THE MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES USED TO BUILD SKATEPARKS HAVE PROGRESSED DRAMATICALLY IN THE UK IN THE LAST DECADE

SKATEPARKS SHOULD BE VIEWED AS PUBLIC HEALTH RESOURCES - WHERE YOUNG PEOPLE GO TO HONE DEXTERITY, STRENGTH AND FITNESS TOGETHER

► POSITIONING

Site selection is a major determinant of the success of the park for authorities, the end-users, and the wider community. The most common anxiety for non-users is noise. While studies have shown that concrete skateparks are not as noisy as many fear, only a slight disturbance to local residents can dramatically alter how the park and its users are perceived.

Sufficient spacing from local residences and businesses, possibly with the proper use of noise mitigation measures, ensure that wider communities appreciate, rather than resent, the space and its users. Indeed, sensitivity to the wishes of diverse groups helps render skateparks as a public utility. As Jean Griffet, an expert of youth cultures and urban spaces, said of the famous Marseille skatepark: "Participants and their parents, passers-by and the simply curious represent the different users of the site. The scenery and the resulting atmosphere conjure a particular flavour of the place: a place where one can relax, stimulate or be stimulated."

RISKS AND BENEFITS

In the Journal of Emergency Medicine (Vol 23, Issue 3, Oct 2002), Worth W. Everett writes that a "damaging prejudice is the notion that skateboarding is an unsafe sport. When compared to other recreational activities, skateboarding has a small percentage of reported injuries per participant (.49 per cent) than other activities, including soccer (.93 per cent) and basketball (1.49 per cent). Wheeled sports aren't danger-free, but they've been shown to be at least as safe as other popular sports."

The places where these sports are practised should be seen as public health resources rather than a risk. They're places of energy and exertion, where young people go to hone dexterity, strength and fitness together (even though they may not see it like this).

The benefits of popular skateparks not only health-based. Gary Cairns, a

police community support officer working in Dawlish said in an interview with the park manufacturer Wheelscape that "we (the police) haven't had yet one call from a Dawlish resident complaining about skateboarding since the opening of the park. This means the workload over any given weekend has been cut by 30 per cent".

Skatepark advocates also report that their local parks enhance public and private revenues. Brian Stephens, trustee of Wheeled Sports for Hereford, the community group behind the skatepark there, says: "The skatepark is bringing in economic benefits to Hereford. It's increasing the footfall in the city as parents come to Hereford to shop because they can drop off their youngsters in the park. Users are coming to Hereford from all over, including London, Brighton, Newport and staying over in local accommodation."

IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION

Clearly, however, all these potential benefits rely on a park being popular with users themselves.

At least initially, it is difficult for many non-skatepark-using stakeholders to grasp just how varied tastes in skatepark design are, or to see what differentiates a top-flight park from a third-rate space. Why one park might be more popular than another is not always obvious to non-users.

There are myriad styles of concrete park: bowls, plaza-style street, ramp (transition) only parks. Some user groups will want a transition-only park that, once built, is expanded due to popularity; in other areas, it's possible



Parks may be used by BMX bikers, skateboarders and roller-bladers - creating a meeting space for youths

that the same skatepark might go all but unused.

If skatepark users value their local park - if they feel that it's the park they worked for; that it's their park - they can be expected to maintain it by sweeping away rocks and other debris, to stop graffiti appearing on the ramps, and generally ensure that the park is used as intended: as a space for developing within a sport, and to provide a place of spectacle and excitement. A number of academic studies have attested to skateparks as being places that users learn.

However, unwanted skateparks go underused, and often quickly degenerate. This is not necessarily, or even usually, through vandalism. Even well positioned, designed and built



CASE STUDY

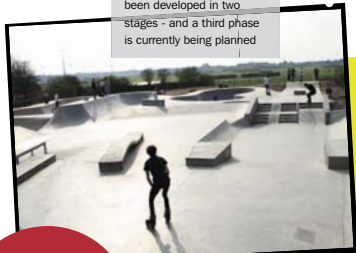
Wheeled Sports 4 Hereford (WS4H) was formed when 50 young people arrived at a weekly council meeting and gave a number of arguments for a skatepark in Hereford. Councillors were so impressed with the group that they agreed to set up a committee to plan for the skatepark, which eventually turned into the WS4H charity.

Within a few weeks, over 300 young people had contacted WS4H, whether to simply give support, or to get involved with the design process. Several people wrote to local papers, and soon the effort to get a skatepark began to get the support of an array of organisations. The local police, for example, were then receiving on average of a complaint every two days about skateboarding, and so were keen for skateboards to get a place of their own.

Herefordshire City Council agreed to lease some land for 25 years for a 'peppercorn' fee. They also agreed to put £50,000 towards the building of the park.

WS4H then contacted Wheelscape, a major skatepark design house and manufacturer. Their designers went and met the users, talked about what they wanted, and began to work on plans for the park together. WS4H decided to build the park in three stages: stage one would be a plaza style, stage two would add a transition sec-

Hereford skatepark has been developed in two stages - and third phase is currently being planned



CHARITY DRIVES HEREFORD SKATEPARK

tion, and stage three will see the existing park ringed with a new street section.

Through collaboration, a design for stage one emerged and, eight weeks after construction began, Wheelscape had completed it.

After the success of the first stage, a number of organisations agreed to give financial support to the park.

The Big Lottery Play Fund donated £50,000; Crest Homes paid £55,000 through section 106 agreements; the Youth Opportunities fund donated another £55,000; the local police force gave £10,000. The park is now sponsored by six local businesses.

Stage two was again designed collaboratively, and built over January and February 2010. Stage three (being planned) will be the final addition.

The example of Hereford, which was first conceived in 2004, shows that getting a skatepark takes time, requires effort, but also that such a project, in the end, will be more than worth it.

skateparks get muddy, filled with stones, waterlogged; only if the users value the place – if it is what they want – are they going to spend time maintaining their park.

All this means is that only by collaborating with users will local councils and builders produce a park that will be well used and properly looked after. The idea that young stakeholders are not only worth consulting, but valuable as long-term collaborators in skatepark projects is becoming more common, even typical, in the UK. However, Claire Freeman and Tamara Riordan, two academics working on skatepark studies in New Zealand have claimed that authorities there have some way to go; young-people still "tend to be planned for, rather than planned with".

INTERNATIONAL CONVERSATION

That is not to say the UK leads in every respect. Australia is a world-leader in the quality of very large outdoor, free-to-use, unsupervised skateparks. Newly-built US parks tend to charge an entrance fee and are supervised in some way, though the country leads the way in terms of number and scale of skateparks.

In terms of radical design, Scandinavian countries blaze trails, with a key innovation being to incorporate street-style skateparks – shin-high ledges, rails, and 'manual pads' – into public green spaces (this is far less dangerous than you might suspect).

Skatepark users have been looking across continents for inspiration for decades; the internet has meant that

designs, funding strategies, or tips on how to deal with authorities are almost instantly shared. Planning authorities from across the world should learn from this, and share knowledge on methods to develop successful skatepark projects. Arguably, there is a need for internet-based information hubs to share knowledge across councils, regions, countries and continents.

The more dynamically that local and central government, social enterprises, and business respond to the desires of this group of largely young sports enthusiasts, the sooner can the many benefits that come from skateparks be realised by the users, as well as the wider community. ●

Joseph Haines is a freelance journalist



A recent report on the global fitness market provides a valuable snapshot of international club performances and some successful government wellbeing initiatives. Kristen Walsh reports



GLOBAL ACTIVITY

The 2011 IHRSA *International Report: Size & Scope of Key Health Club Markets* presents data and analysis on

leading and emerging European and Asia-Pacific markets. The publication, sponsored by Life Fitness, includes a macro-economic overview of sports, fitness and leisure, club models and trends, and country market reports.

Asian markets

The report found about 14 million members use 18,000 clubs in the Asia-Pacific region, where revenues were an estimated US\$1bn in 2010. While growth was uneven, leading operators held a strong market share, some even setting sights for further regional expansion, building on prior successes and market knowledge.

Once regarded as an untapped market, this region is now home to a number of successful club companies, including Konami Sports & Life in Japan, Shenzhen Catic Wellness in China and Fernwood Women's Health Clubs in Australia. International

club operators such as Fitness First, Anytime Fitness, and Curves have expanded successfully into Asia-Pacific markets such as Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, and India among others.

The Japanese fitness market generated US\$5.1bn in 2010 from an estimated 3,500 clubs. According to *Club Business Japan*, after three years of slowed growth or slight decline, the 2010 first quarter showed an upturn.

China's 2,400 fitness clubs now serve over three million members. With a market penetration rate of just 0.35 per cent, there is potential for growth. Elsewhere the region, more than 2.5 million Australians belonged to 2,800 health clubs, for a total of US\$2bn in revenue last year. Australian clubs enjoy a market penetration rate of 11.7 per cent - well above average in the region - despite the recent closure of two large chains (Beach House and Zest Health).

Europe and North America

In Europe, the health club industry holds a solid position, with 44.4 million card-carrying members and

industry revenues totalling €23bn in 2010. While the UK experienced a slight decline in the number of clubs and membership, its market size stayed roughly the same last year at €4.4bn. Budget clubs and circuit-training chains have fuelled industry growth for the German market, which generated €3.4bn in revenue at 5,900 clubs, serving seven million members. The Spanish market is second in size only to the UK, generating €4.4bn in revenue from eight million members. In addition, Italy's 7,500 facilities serve 5.2 million, resulting in €2.8bn.

In North America, the Canadian market held steady, generating US\$2.2bn from an estimated 5.5 million members. Latin American markets posted solid performances, with nearly 5.5 million people exercising at 18,000 clubs in Brazil, contributing to a market size of US\$2.2bn. The industry in Argentina served more than a million members in 5,200 facilities.

Long thought to set the pace for all markets, the US industry increased revenue by 4 per cent to US\$20.3bn in 2010. The number of clubs remained

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM - OLY / JAN HEDICHOWIA, EMERSON KOROSNY / LUMINOUSLIFE / STEVE ROSSSET



Competition: distinguishing factors of leading club companies

Successful global health club businesses tend to have a unique combination of distinctive characteristics. Here are some examples highlighted in IHRSA's report

■ SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

It is imperative to understand that the fitness club business is a leisure and entertainment business. Health clubs strive to become the "third place", the place after home and work where consumers spend their time. When competing for this distinction, clubs must understand that consumers want to be entertained via TVs and other media, and by personal trainers and group exercise instructors. They are also looking for a social network to connect with while they work out.

■ QUALITY SERVICE

Clubs are part of the service and hospitality industry, which does not sell a product, but an experience. Clubs rely on consumers' discretionary spending, and so the services the clubs provide must convince members that this spending is essential. Some members spend

an average of 60-90 minutes at the club and the site's success depends on the friendliness, warmth, energy, helpfulness, and efficiency of staff, all of which encourages members to use the fitness club regularly.

■ PRIME LOCATIONS

The health club industry is part of the retail sector and thus depends greatly on the walk-in sale, as well as the age-old rule: location, location, location. Clear visibility, accessibility and appearance are extremely important to club success. However, there have been some changes

that are affecting this strategy. These include the subsidising of memberships by corporations and health insurers. With more corporations offering health club memberships, some ideal locations for a health club may be in a less visible location, such as an office building that is convenient to employees.

Convenience is, of course, of vital importance to membership retention. Opening clubs near to where members work or live removes an important barrier to working out. Location strategies include placement within shopping malls and/or residential buildings and hotels.

ABOUT IHRSA: The International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association (www.ihrsa.org) is the health club industry's only global trade association, representing more than 10,000 health and fitness facilities and more than 570 suppliers in more than 70 countries



Health goals: Governments need to get people more active

Since 2009, 8 August is now the statutory 'Fitness for All Day' in China aimed at encouraging Chinese citizens to participate in sporting activities

relatively steady at 29,890, while membership grew to 50.2 million individuals. Also 7.6 million consumers used clubs as non-members.

Wellness initiatives

Governments in a number of developed and developing countries have recently made recommendations and implemented policies to improve public health and wellbeing. In 2011, the World Health Organization (WHO) was conducting a review of the benefits of providing "exercise on prescription". Additionally, the European Commission launched a review of VAT regulations, to include health clubs and services.

The Fitness Industry Association (FIA) works closely with the UK government, and has launched four national wellbeing initiatives: Commit to Get Fit, Get Active UK, Adopt a School, and Active at Work.

During the preparation for the Beijing Olympic Games, China launched the "Fitness for All" and the "Be Part of the Olympics" event nationwide. In August 2009, China promoted the Regulations Governing Fitness for All to safeguard a citizen's right to fitness and to advance the Fitness for

All movement. In China, 8 August is now the statutory 'Fitness for All Day', aimed at encouraging people to participate in sporting activities.

There are over 850,000 stadiums and gymnasiums, 176 national and provincial sport associations, 23 provincial Sport for All service centres, 210,000 sport and fitness service stations and 3,092 teenage sport clubs across China. In addition, the authorities have implemented the National Physique Monitoring System, Physical Exercise Benchmark System, and Sport For All Coaching System.

The Australian government's Department of Health and Aging created the National Physical Activity Guidelines, which outline minimum levels of physical activity required to gain a health benefit and ways to incorporate incidental activity into daily life.

After successfully lobbying for the inclusion of youth fitness member-

ships under the recently introduced Children's Fitness Tax Credit, the Fitness Industry Council of Canada is currently campaigning for the expansion of the programme to include all active Canadians. The Adult Fitness Tax Credit would enable the government to offer a credit for eligible sport and physical activity fees up to US\$500.

There are two bills pending in the US Congress that would directly benefit the industry. IHRSA's Workforce Health Improvement Program (WHIP) Act would allow for balanced tax treatments for the cost of fitness centre memberships as an employee benefit. The Personal Health Investment Today (PHIT) Act would allow expenditures for exercise and physical activity – such as health club memberships – to be payable with pre-tax dollars. ●

Kristen Walsh is IHRSA Associate Publisher. Contact kwash@ihrsa.org

OBTAIN THE FULL REPORT: The 2011 IHRSA International Report: Size & Scope of Key Health Club Markets (cost US\$995.00 IHRSA members/US\$1,495.00 non-members) and The 2011 IHRSA International Report: Size & Scope of Key Health Club Markets - Club Operator Edition (cost US\$49.95 IHRSA members/US\$99.95 non-members) can both be purchased by logging on to ihrsa.org/industry-research or by contacting store@ihrsa.org

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In these difficult times, when every business is competing for its share of a reduced and competitive market, it's important to be first choice for customers, says Grahame Senior

How to excel in hard times

Standing out from the crowd

On one day last week, I counted the number of unsolicited emails I received from hospital-ity operations. There were 11 in a single day. While each one had something to offer – indeed, some were very clever and attractive – it was a particularly busy day and I simply deleted the lot.

One of the difficulties of e-communication and e-newsletters is that all the onus for opening them up and making them work is placed on the recipient. I wouldn't mind betting that 99 per cent of such promotional missives are simply never opened and fully read. The fact that it doesn't cost much to do e-communications doesn't mean you're not wasting your time and money. You might be better off seeking a different route.

If you want to stand out from the competition and everybody seems to be concentrating on emailing, maybe you should go back to the old-fashioned way. Personal letters that are properly addressed in my experience work best of all.

Even simple postcards which arrive with impact, or attractive mini-brochures, have much more effect on the recipient. They do actually get seen and in many cases read.

Do your homework

Of course, the key to all communications is getting the detail right. Making sure you know who you are addressing, what their previous relationship with you has actually been and getting their name and address correct is critical to being well received. Time spent building up your database is never wasted. Mailings with incorrect addresses, salutations or other details always become junk.

It's also important to remember that if you are going to email people, the only emails that actually get read are ones that come from individuals who are known to the recipient. It's a good idea to build up an email-database of your key customers, but make sure that you address them correctly and that they know exactly who you are. Unless it's personalised it simply won't work. Once again, time spent getting the detail right and building both your mailing and emailing databases based on a real study of booking data is well invested. It should be a priority task for someone in your organisation, and not just something that is done at the last minute.



As with all of these administrative detail jobs, it's a good idea if you can separate responsibility for ensuring that this is done correctly away from those who are prone to the distractions of guest relations and service provision. A calm and unhurried approach

works wonders for accuracy.

How to be a bit more special

Having got your communication routes sorted out, the next priority is to make sure you are saying and offering the right things. Any established business will have a character and style that is known to its regular users. It's important to make your promotions and offers consistent with that style and ensure that you're offering the right things to people who will appreciate it. In the current climate, it's clear that guests are likely to indulge their leisure appetites somewhat less frequently – and when they do, they're looking for something pretty good.

For this reason, I strongly believe that the thing we need to avoid is offering less for less – ie cutting the price but giving less value. In challenge-

SENIOR'S SIMPLE RULES

- 1 Know exactly who you are addressing. Get all the database details right and thoroughly checked.
- 2 Invest in accuracy. Ensure that the people who are dealing with the data are not distracted by day-to-day services priorities.
- 3 Offer more for more. It's not about discounts, but added value.

- 4 Be true to your roots. Keep your brand character and style clear and consistent (after all, that's why they came to you in the first place).
- 5 Dare to be different. From time to time, offer something a little bit surprising – refresh the relationship.
- 6 Keep up to date – on site and online. Make sure that your website

is absolutely bang up to date with your latest offers and activities – they will check you out.

- 7 Focus on your key business needs. Time your promotional periods at the time when trading history indicates you need extra business. Start far enough ahead to give yourself time to fill in the gaps.



Hidden gem: Tucked away in a basement in London's West End, Le Beaujolais has stood the test of time

Keeping the Franco-Anglo relationship special

Le Beaujolais is a dining club in a small basement just off Cambridge Circus in London's West End. I have been a member for more than 40 years and throughout that time, despite a couple of changes of ownership and direction, it has remained absolutely consistent in what it offers its guests.

It's a members-only operation, founded on the simple principle that there is an appetite for provincial French

cooking as is still found today in La France Profonde. It is a world away from nouvelle cuisine or the pyrotechnics of Pierre Gagnaire. What it consistently offers is a sense of arriving back in a precious corner of the France of our youth and being warmly welcomed, cosseted and pampered and indulged with good wines and comfort food. Yet it communicates with its guests extremely simply, and over 40 years has outlasted all its competitors.

ing times, people want their special occasions to be truly special and I believe that 'more for more' is a better way to go. People don't mind spending a little bit more if they're getting a lot more value for it.

Really building up the service provision, adding little extras to the meal format or the bedroom provision can all make a big difference to the guest reaction. While the provision of inter-course appetisers has been taken a little bit far by some fancier restaurants, there's no doubt that interesting canapés with aperitifs and petits fours served with coffee all give the guest a real sense of being pampered.

Another important way of making your operation special to the potential guest is to try and refer to their established preferences. A particular room, a particular preferred meal style, a particular treatment in the spa are all things that can be offered if your data records are accurate. Accurate data as to what people choose and buy can make a huge difference to the incisiveness of your promotional offers.

Your objective is to do everything necessary to make them choose you above your competitors

Dare to be different

Given that you have established a clear style and brand character with your guests, there are times when you can aim for something refreshing. By offering a particular event (maybe a cultural weekend, lecture, games night) you can add a surprise factor to expectations. In my experience, people like doing interesting things and in the right environment, are happy to get involved in a 'house party' format.

Presenting a particular set of potential guests with a specific invitation to join in an event can be quite tempting. There are very few people who don't relish being treated as individually important to your establishment.

It's not just one thing, it's everything. The key to standing out is to make sure every aspect of your com-

munication, presentation, service offer and, above all, service delivery is consistent with your brand character and the promise you give to your guests. If you get the details about them right, remember their individual preferences and communicate specifically relevant offers, they will get the idea that, as far as you're concerned, they are VIPs.

Your objective is to do everything necessary to make them choose you above your competitors. Showing you value their individual custom and are willing to go out of your way to serve them gets you a long way down that road. The mantra of your communication to every potential guest should be that what matters is not 'the way we like to do it here' but 'the way you want it done'. In these times, as in all others, the customer is always right. ●

WHAT'S HOT

WE TAKE A LOOK AT SOME OF THE LATEST HOT DRINK PRODUCTS AND MACHINE TECHNOLOGY SUITABLE FOR USE AT LEISURE SITES

VENDING QUALITY ➡

For operators who need to deliver quality hot drinks quickly to large numbers of customers daily, Kenco's Vending Bags for use in vending machines are an ideal solution. Choose from a range of Kenco vending coffees (Smooth, Rich, Decaffeinated, Cappuccino Topping and Suchard Hot Chocolate). Simply tip into your machine, add hot water, milk/whitener and sugar, as required, for high quality hot drinks. Also available is Kenco Cappuccino whitener for frothy coffees.

Kenco's Vending Bags are ideal for use in medium and large throughput sites with each 300g bag making up to approximately 214 cups (1.4g per cup). Kenco's vending solutions are available for tabletop and freestanding, and offer the flexibility to serve drinks in anything from paper cups to coffee pots.

Kenco has been working with the Rainforest Alliance since 2005 and 100 per cent of the beans sourced for its vending range contain coffee beans from Rainforest Alliance Certified™ farms. Details: 0870 600 6556



CAFÉ CULTURE ➡

Lavazza recognises that more and more, UK consumers want to enjoy quality coffee beyond restaurants and cafes. Espresso machines are becoming a mainstream item in many British kitchens and consumers now expect high quality coffee whether they are in the office or in public places such as hotels or leisure centres.

The company believes a recognised quality brand on a vending machine will attract consumers as they know they are guaranteed a premium coffee and are willing to pay more for that quality.

Lavazza has a selection of solutions to match the volume of traffic with the most suitable coffee system, the Lavazza BLUE coffee machine, consistently delivering a perfect espresso and authentic Italian coffee experience. Details: 0800 599 9200



NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS ➡

Following on from the launch of its festive Christmas Blend (Latin American beans roasted on the dark side of medium for a chocolatey richness, mixed with the floral character of aromatic Ethiopian beans), Taylors of Harrogate is expecting to see strong sales of its 'healthier option' going into the New Year and beyond.

For the coffee company's popular Decaffe blend, pure water is used to remove all the caffeine but none of the taste, resulting in a sweet blend of Latin American coffees with a smooth, full-bodied flavour that can be enjoyed all year round.

Each Taylors of Harrogate is a unique mix of specially sourced beans, slow-roasted and ground straight into the bag to capture the freshest flavour. Details: +44 (0)1423 814000



GREEN SEAL FOR REDBUSH ➔

Tetley Redbush sourced from Rainforest Alliance Certified farms is now available in the UK for hotels, cafes, restaurants and wholesalers.

This marks a major milestone for Tetley's certification programme with the Rainforest Alliance and a first for the global tea sector. Tetley Redbush packs with the RA's Certified seal and 100 per cent certified content are also being launched in other Tetley markets.

All Tetley branded black, green and red tea, including flavoured and decaffeinated varieties are part of its certification programme, which is due to be completed by 2016. To promote its collaboration with the Rainforest Alliance, Tetley has developed a social media initiative on Facebook called Farmers First Hand.

The initiative enables consumers to communicate directly with the tea producing communities who are working towards gaining the Rainforest Alliance



Certified status for their farms. Details: +44 (0)20 8338 4000

HOT CHOC TO GO ➔

Cadbury Hot Chocolate is to join the Kenco FreshSeal2Go family, adding another big name brand to the range.



It joined brands including Kenco and PG Tips at the end of November 2011, just in time for the winter season, when a hot drink on the go becomes an increasingly attractive option for consumers. Susan Nash, trade communications manager at Kraft Foods UK, said: "Kenco FreshSeal2Go is the perfect option for on-the-go hot drinks, with a fantastic selection of brands that consumers love and trust."

"We think Cadbury Hot Chocolate will be a real asset to the range." Details: +44 (0)121 451 4444

COFFEE DUO FOR UK ➔

Scanomat UK has arrived in the UK market with two major launches in the company's Venezia range of hot beverage machines.

The machines brew any type of coffee from espresso through to latte and cappuccino, in addition to hot chocolate and hot water for tea.

Firstly there's the launch of the Scanomat Venezia Bean to Cup hybrid coffee machine (Scanomat B2Ci), which offers fresh ground coffee, backed up with a soluble option.

The coffee machine has a modular brew unit that can be removed in seconds for cleaning and maintenance. Operators can choose either one or two grinders and up to four soluble canisters.

It produces six cups in 20 seconds, five cups of instant coffee and one ground coffee. Water is drawn from the built-in 5-ltr water tank and heated on demand.

The brewer can be adjusted to any cup size and automatically regulates the quantity of product required.



The second newcomer is the Scanomat Venezia Instant coffee machine with its option of a fresh milk system that can be installed under or over the counter.

It provides high volume freshly brewed drinks in either a cup, mug or flask, uses less energy heating water and can be programmed to revert to standby when not in use. Details: +44 (0)800 032 7581

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A new document outlines the part leisure and sports providers can play in helping to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, says Matt Partridge



Taking a stand against crime

It has long been recognised that culture and sport have an important role to play in preventing young people becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB). In response to this, the National Culture Forum (NCF) and the Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association (CLOA) have produced a new policy document entitled *The Role of Culture and Sport in Reducing Crime and Anti Social Behaviour*.

The document has been designed to help providers of culture and sport services better understand community safety and crime reduction agendas – and it is hoped it will provide a mandate for shared action in the future.

It identifies some ways that leisure providers can contribute to reducing the actuality and fear of crime by engaging with the right partnerships, and provides guidance on better evidencing the contribution the sector can make to local priority outcomes.

A number of real case studies show the impact that a range of interventions have had on diverting those most at risk of offending through culture and sports-based activities.

With the cost of placing one young person in custody for a year at around £45,000, councils and their partners will need to renew the focus on innovative ways of providing services to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

Government policy now links prevention and enforcement as key outcomes in delivering change and it's within the preventative agenda that sport and culture can play an important role in providing better community safety outcomes, perhaps most specifically in the area of anti-social behaviour.

Preventative activities are often referred to as diversionary activities and operate at three levels:



It costs around £45,000 to place a young person in custody for 12 months

Government policy now links prevention and enforcement as key outcomes in delivering change, and it's within the preventative agenda that sport and culture can play a role

- To offer preventative activities in areas of high crime/high deprivation.
- To offer preventative activities for those young people who are known to be at specific risk.
- To offer diversionary activities to young people who are currently in the system to prevent them re-offending or developing a criminal career.

Focused work with young people on the cusp of offending or involved in low level crime can significantly reduce enforcement costs. For example, government agencies within England and Wales spent an estimated £3bn dealing with ASB in 2004.

The Police and Crime Commissioners will be responsible for the commissioning of community safety activity; this is a fundamental change and will mean that Community Safety Partnerships will have to seek funding from them

unless the local council is willing to replace the funding previously supplied through the Community Safety Fund.

Participation in the Community Safety Partnership is a way for culture and sport providers to highlight the valuable role they can play in both the support and prevention agendas.

So what should providers of culture and sport do next?

- Read the document and seek to understand the context that community safety and crime reduction providers are operating in.
- Share this document and discuss priority local actions with colleagues and delivery partners, such as county sports partnerships, regularly funded organisations and other stakeholders.
- Investigate the issues that your local Community Safety Partnerships are addressing and identify how your services can contribute.
- Engage with your Community Safety Partnerships by demonstrating what you can do for them locally.
- Offer to deliver services that help prevent crime and anti-social behaviour taking place. Consider forming a broader consortium of providers to strengthen your proposal.
- Develop an outcomes framework for Safer Communities. This will help you measure and evidence the difference your service makes to local priorities. It will also help you make the case for continued investment of public money.
- Share successful examples via CLOA and other best practice networks.

As part of your ongoing leadership development, maintain your knowledge and further your understanding of this important area of policy. ●

Matt Partridge is an executive board member of CLOA. Details: cloa.org.uk

SALES TACTICS



Twycross Zoo in the Midlands has seen an upturn in Gift Aid collections

High speed data capture from Open Frontiers

Open Frontiers has launched a new electronic point-of-sale (EPOS) till system called TimePOS, offering a high speed real-time data capture tool to gather data for membership sales and Gift Aid collections.

The system was installed at Twycross Zoo in the Midlands, and Aspinall Foundation's two animal parks - Howletts and Port Lympne in Kent - earlier in the year.

The tool allows addresses, names, and customer photography to be captured at the till while the visitor is paying for admission or activities. The company says that complex transactions can be completed in a shorter time than most simple, anonymous admissions - aided by speed card processing through Commidea Ocius Sentinel.

The process works by allowing real-time address search based on simple postcode look-up, then allowing selection of names at that address (from Equifax data), and if relevant taking the user onto a photo step where a digital snap of the visitor can be captured for a membership profile. When used for Gift Aid, the taxpayer's name and

address details can be captured quickly and stored for electronic submission to HMRC.

If used for membership sales, the operator scans a pre-printed membership card, and then associates the name, address and digitally captured photograph back to a stored member profile. Profiles and transactions are then saved back to the cloud database, allowing other users to access the same data in real-time.

Open Frontiers says the system makes for quicker admission, less queuing and fewer disgruntled customers, who may be more likely to opt-in for Gift Aid, memberships or marketing permissions. There is no longer any need for 'queue walkers' with clipboards, nor the need to manually key visitor data at a later stage, and gate staff levels can be reduced, it says.

Open Frontiers says both zoo charities have seen a greater uptake in Gift Aid donations. Cash sale admissions can be achieved in under 20 seconds and under 30 seconds when incorporating Gift Aid. A family buying individual memberships, with name, address and photo capture, paying on credit card, can be processed in under two minutes.

Details: www.openfrontiers.co.uk

Flexible billing from OmniTicket Network

Omniticket Network has introduced its new Installment Billing module which gives ticket purchasers the flexibility to pay for their tickets, annual passes and memberships over a series of pre-set, automated payments. The system lets operators offer an alternative payment option for customers who might otherwise not be able to afford a single, lump-sum payment amount.

Hyland Hills Park & Recreation District in Federal Heights, Colorado has recently taken the system. Its Water World waterpark introduced an online "FlexPay" option for the 'Big Kahuna Splash Pass', allowing guests to pay for passes in two separate payments equal to the purchase price.

Customer feedback system from Empathica

Empathica's Customer Experience Management (CEM) programmes allow operators to measure, manage and improve customer experiences, and a recent customer is the UK's nationwide pizza chain, Zizzi.

The system offers a number of ways for inviting customers to give feedback on their experiences. One of the most popular, and cost-effective, options is a till receipt issued at the end of their visit, inviting them to complete an online customer satisfaction survey.

EPOS system allowing, the invitation can be printed on the front of the receipt as it is printed at the point of purchase, pre-printed on the back, or on an additional sheet. It is issued either to every customer or with a frequency determined by the level of transactions at a given location and desired response rates.

Effective POS data capture and flexible payment software are some of the ways leisure operators can improve transactions and gain more insight into their customers



"We feel this new feature will drive pass sales and offer another innovative way for our guests to purchase from us," said Water World manager, Bob Owens.

The Installment Billing system easily integrates with OmniTicket Network's current ticketing system, which is installed at many international parks and attractions.

Operators can set the number of payments required to best meet their season and revenue objectives (from a minimum of two payments up to 12 monthly payments for the year). They can decide if payments will be charged on a fixed day of the month, or any number of days from the guest's original purchase date, as well determine the amount of the initial payment plus all subsequent payments. Initial payments can either be taken as a percentage of the total purchase price,



For customers feeling the pinch, passes can be paid for in installments

or else can be taken as a flat fee.

As consumers are less likely to spend money on big-ticket purchases in the current climate, offering flexible

payment options is one way to attract new customers and retain existing ones, says OmniTicket.

Details: www.omniticket.com



Zizzi receipts invite customers to a survey - in return, prizes can be won

Empathica has a funded sweepstake offering customers the chance to win £1,000 and iPods in daily draws. In addition, customised incentive programmes like instant win bounce-backs can be developed, offering discounts from brands. This is a way of thanking customers for their time and ensures that good levels of feedback are achieved.

The customer enters a unique code (found on the receipt in order to prevent fraud) on the survey website, and is asked to complete a series of questions relating to their visit.

These include rating the quality of food and drink consumed, the service standards, atmosphere, and any other factor known to affect customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Open-ended questions give customers the opportunity to comment on members of staff or make other comments or suggestions. Because data is available in near real-time, companies can control and monitor developing problems, as well as congratulate staff for their efforts.

Empathica says the advantage of receipt invites is that the unique EPOS generated code can contain information related to the time, date and location of the transaction, meaning that satisfaction levels can be combined with sales data to gain shopper insights that help to build a deeper understanding of their customer base.

Helen Higgins, head of marketing at Zizzi, says: "Our survey invitations are generated as part of the bill so customers can take it with them and give feedback when back home, or even before leaving Zizzi using their smartphones. The insights have enabled us to make improvements based on what matters to our customers."

Details: www.empathica.com ●

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293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000, 1001, 1002, 1003, 1004, 1005, 1006, 1007, 1008, 1009, 1010, 1011, 1012, 1013, 1014, 1015, 1016, 1017, 1018, 1019, 1020, 1021, 1022, 1023, 1024, 1025, 1026, 1027, 1028, 1029, 1030, 1031, 1032, 1033, 1034, 1035, 1036, 1037, 1038, 1039, 1040, 1041, 1042, 1043, 1044, 1045, 1046, 1047, 1048, 1049, 1050, 1051, 1052, 1053, 1054, 1055, 1056, 1057, 1058, 1059, 1060, 1061, 1062, 1063, 1064, 1065, 1066, 1067, 1068, 1069, 1070, 1071, 1072, 1073, 1074, 1075, 1076, 1077, 1078, 1079, 1080, 1081, 1082, 1083, 1084, 1085, 1086, 1087, 1088, 1089, 1090, 1091, 1092, 1093, 1094, 1095, 1096, 1097, 1098, 1099, 1100, 1101, 1102, 1103, 1104, 1105, 1106, 1107, 1108, 1109, 1110, 1111, 1112, 1113, 1114, 1115, 1116, 1117, 1118, 1119, 1120, 1121, 1122, 1123, 1124, 1125, 1126, 1127, 1128, 1129, 1130, 1131, 1132, 1133, 1134, 1135, 1136, 1137, 1138, 1139, 1140, 1141, 1142, 1143, 1144, 1145, 1146, 1147, 1148, 1149, 1150, 1151, 1152, 1153, 1154, 1155, 1156, 1157, 1158, 1159, 1160, 1161, 1162, 1163, 1164, 1165, 1166, 1167, 1168, 1169, 1170, 1171, 1172, 1173, 1174, 1175, 1176, 1177, 1178, 1179, 1180, 1181, 1182, 1183, 1184, 1185, 1186, 1187, 1188, 1189, 1190, 1191, 1192, 1193, 1194, 1195, 1196, 1197, 1198, 1199, 1200, 1201, 1202, 1203, 1204, 1205, 1206, 1207, 1208, 1209, 1210, 1211, 1212, 1213, 1214, 1215, 1216, 1217, 1218, 1219, 1220, 1221, 1222, 1223, 1224, 1225, 1226, 1227, 1228, 1229, 1230, 1231, 1232, 1233, 1234, 1235, 1236, 1237, 1238, 1239, 1240, 1241, 1242, 1243, 1244, 1245, 1246, 1247, 1248, 1249, 1250, 1251, 1252, 1253, 1254, 1255, 1256, 1257, 1258, 1259, 1260, 1261, 1262, 1263, 1264, 1265, 1266, 1267, 1268, 1269, 1270, 1271, 1272, 1273, 1274, 1275, 1276, 1277, 1278, 1279, 1280, 1281, 1282, 1283, 1284, 1285, 1286, 1287, 1288, 1289, 1290, 1291, 1292, 1293, 1294, 1295, 1296, 1297, 1298, 1299, 1300, 1301, 1302, 1303, 1304, 1305, 1306, 1307, 1308, 1309, 1310, 1311, 1312, 1313, 1314, 1315, 1316, 1317, 1318, 1319, 1320, 1321, 1322, 1323, 1324, 1325, 1326, 1327, 1328, 1329, 1330, 1331, 1332, 1333, 1334, 1335, 1336, 1337, 1338, 1339, 1340, 1341, 1342, 1343, 1344, 1345, 1346, 1347, 1348, 1349, 1350, 1351, 1352, 1353, 1354, 1355, 1356, 1357, 1358, 1359, 1360, 1361, 1362, 1363, 1364, 1365, 1366, 1367, 1368, 1369, 1370, 1371, 1372, 1373, 1374, 1375, 1376, 1377, 1378, 1379, 1380, 1381, 1382, 1383, 1384, 1385, 1386, 1387, 1388, 1389, 1390, 1391, 1392, 1393, 1394, 1395, 1396, 1397, 1398, 1399, 1400, 1401, 1402, 1403, 1404, 1405, 1406, 1407, 1408, 1409, 1410, 1411, 1412, 1413, 1414, 1415, 1416, 1417, 1418, 1419, 1420, 1421, 1422, 1423, 1424, 1425, 1426, 1427, 1428, 1429, 1430, 1431, 1432, 1433, 1434, 1435, 1436, 1437, 1438, 1439, 1440, 1441, 1442, 1443, 1444, 1445, 1446, 1447, 1448, 1449, 1450, 1451, 1452, 1453, 1454, 1455, 1456, 1457, 1458, 1459, 1460, 1461, 1462, 1463, 1464, 1465, 1466, 1467, 1468, 1469, 1470, 1471, 1472, 1473, 1474, 1475, 1476, 1477, 1478, 1479, 1480, 1481, 1482, 1483, 1484, 1485, 1486, 1487, 1488, 1489, 1490, 1491, 1492, 1493, 1494, 1495, 1496, 1497, 1498, 1499, 1500, 1501, 1502, 1503, 1504, 1505, 1506, 1507, 1508, 1509, 1510, 1511, 1512, 1513, 1514, 1515, 1516, 1517, 1518, 1519, 1520, 1521, 1522, 1523, 1524, 1525, 1526, 1527, 1528, 1529, 1530, 1531, 1532, 1533, 1534, 1535, 1536, 1537, 1538, 1539, 1540, 1541, 1542, 1543, 1544, 1545, 1546, 1547, 1548, 1549, 1550, 1551, 1552, 1553, 1554, 1555, 1556, 1557, 1558, 1559, 1560, 1561, 1562, 1563, 1564, 1565, 1566, 1567, 1568, 1569, 1570, 1571, 1572, 1573, 1574, 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1741, 1742, 1743, 1744, 1745, 1746, 1747, 1748, 1749, 1750, 1751, 1752, 1753, 1754, 1755, 1756, 1757, 1758, 1759, 1760, 1761, 1762, 1763, 1764, 1765, 1766, 1767, 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772, 1773, 1774, 1775, 1776, 1777, 1778, 1779, 1780, 1781, 1782, 1783, 1784, 1785, 1786, 1787, 1788, 1789, 1790, 1791, 1792, 1793, 1794, 1795, 1796, 1797, 1798, 1799, 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803, 1804, 1805, 1806, 1807, 1808, 1809, 1810, 1811, 1812, 1813, 1814, 1815, 1816, 1817, 1818, 1819, 1820, 1821, 1822, 1823, 1824, 1825, 1826, 1827, 1828, 1829, 1830, 1831, 1832, 1833, 1834, 1835, 1836, 1837, 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842, 1843, 1844, 1845, 1846, 1847, 1848, 1849, 1850, 1851, 1852, 1853, 1854, 1855, 1856, 1857, 1858, 1859, 1860, 1861, 1862, 1863, 1864, 1865, 1866, 1867, 1868, 1869, 1870, 1871, 1872, 1873, 1874, 1875, 1876, 1877, 1878, 1879, 1880, 1881, 1882, 1883, 1884, 1885, 1886, 1887, 1888, 1889, 1890, 1891, 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, 1897, 1898, 1899, 1900, 1901, 1902, 1903, 1904, 1905, 1906, 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Batting for the future

Cage Cricket is a new, fast-paced urban game aimed at halting declining participation in the sport and engaging more young people. Tom Pinnington explains

What do you do when grassroots participation in a sport starts to decline? According to Sport England's Active People survey participation in cricket is decreasing quickly, with weekly levels falling by more than 15 per cent in just over two years. Of most concern for the sport is the fact that 16-19 year-olds account for most of this decline. The sport is in danger of withering at the roots with a decreasing pool of young players available to feed into the adult game.

Recently, Capita Symonds has been supporting an enterprising group of sports enthusiasts, backed by Sir Ian Botham, who have devised a solution. Cage Cricket is a new, exciting, fast paced, urban form of cricket, which embraces the core values of street sport. On top of that, it addresses the main barriers to cricket participation – namely space, time, money and perception. Cage Cricket has the potential to become the tool for outreach and development organisations working in the areas of sport, youth, education, health and social inclusion. It has been designed to develop core life and social skills as well as cricketing competence, and has been piloted successfully in schools, young offenders' institutions and on inner city estates.

Adapt – any sport must adapt to social trends to retain and attract the young age group and, thus, secure its future. Cage Cricket does this by removing the principal barriers to taking part and changes the perception of the sport. It's played in sports facilities (sports halls and multiple use games areas, or MUGAs), and can be delivered free of charge. Each game

lasts under an hour. Six individuals pit themselves against each other in the cage. There's no need to organise two teams, you just need six players.

Innovate – If you don't have ready access to a cricket pitch, kit and coaching, you use what you have. There are estimated to be more than 10,000 MUGAs in the UK and countless more sports halls and tennis courts. It takes just five minutes to convert any of these spaces into a cage, using a portable bag of kit. As participation increases, MUGAs can

Cage Cricket is a new, exciting, urban form of cricket which embraces the values of street sport. It also addresses the main barriers to cricket participation – namely space, time and money

be customised to provide a permanent hub for Cage Cricket at a fraction of the cost of building a new MUGA.

Overcome – Cage Cricket is specifically designed to overcome a range of social issues and challenges including: increasing participation in sport and physical activity, improving health & wellbeing, improving educational attainment, addressing social inclusion and community development, increasing opportunities for young people and addressing youth offending.

While the game draws its inspiration from and involves many of the skills of cricket, it is NOT cricket as we know it. It is played by six individuals. Each player takes one of six zones in the cage per over. Points are scored by

the batter hitting the numbered target zones on the walls of the cage (without being caught), the bowler getting the batter out, and fielders catching the ball either directly or off the wall. Crucially, every player gets equal time in each of the six positions (batting, bowling, fielding and officiating).

Cage Cricket has parallels with other street variants of mainstream sports, such as BMX, skateboarding, free-running and five-a-side football.

In addition to the game, there's an interactive website which will be used as a virtual hub for players and organisers of Cage Cricket. Social networking will form a key part of the organisation of games and engagement with the playing community. Ownership of the game will be in the hands of the playing community.

Cage Cricket has many high profile supporters and influential trustees who are promoting the benefits it can bring to the sport and wider social agenda and Botham says: "I've come across many cricket initiatives in my time as a player and a commentator. Cage Cricket is simply one of the best I've ever seen".

Since the launch of Cage Cricket in June 2011, delivery partnerships have been established with a range of organisations and pilots sessions have been delivered in urban MUGAs, special schools and young offender institutions. Cage Cricket is moving ahead to the next stage of its roll-out. You can find out more about the opportunities Cage Cricket can offer, by visiting www.cagecricket.com ●

Tom Pinnington is associate director at Capita Symonds. Contact tom.pinnington@capita.co.uk

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