

# LEISURE management

ISSUE 2 2012

VOLUME 32 NUMBER 2

## A SPORTING LEGACY

How the 2010 FIFA World Cup changed South Africa

### PHILLIP MILLS

On changing the face  
of group exercise

+ Hot new restaurant trends

+ Inside Madonna's Moscow health club

+ How Hackney Picturehouse took shape

### Azerbaijan

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## THE FUTURE OF THE DCMS

In February, the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) staged a panel discussion on the subject 'Should we abolish the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)?' The event can be viewed on the IEA's website (<http://lei.sr?a=Z0T8w>).

It has triggered rumblings which have continued since, prompting Harriet Harmon to write in the *Evening Standard* last week that well placed sources in Whitehall are indicating the matter of abolishing the DCMS after the Olympics is under serious discussion and to call on the government to make its position clear.

I found the IEA 'discussion' hard to watch for two reasons. Firstly, the panellists' sneering contempt for the work of our industries and secondly, their shocking lack of knowledge of their economic and social value. And although it was billed as such, it wasn't a 'discussion', as no-one involved spoke for the DCMS, it was simply an attack and in my opinion, conducted without any degree of rigour.

It took decades of lobbying before the emerging leisure industries were deemed important enough politically and economically to merit their own ministry, and the creation of the Department of National Heritage (DNH) in 1992 marked a coming of age for the sector, which needed this support, coordination and legislative focus to realise its potential.

But in these times of cuts, it's necessary to keep everything under review and rather than being defensive, we must question how effectively the DCMS has been developed in its 20 year lifespan, ask whether it's everything we need it to be and consider whether it has fulfilled its role as a key partner and champion of our creative, dynamic industries.



The DCMS was assessed by speakers at the Institute for Economic Affairs as having 'second rate civil servants', 'by far the smallest budget in Whitehall' and being too marginal a department for ambitious politicians who want to build a career

It's bruising to see our ministry being mauled as it was during the IEA event – where it was assessed by speakers as having 'by far the smallest budget in Whitehall', with bumbling, 'second rate civil servants' and being too marginal a department for ambitious politicians who want to build a career.

Although the leisure industries as we know them today are only a few decades old, leisure is now the largest area of consumer expenditure, a major job and wealth generator, a driving force behind the UK's tourism industry and a contributor to the health of the nation, yet we are still failing to get this message across to government and stakeholders and we remain vulnerable as a result.

If the DCMS's responsibilities are farmed out to other ministries as part of a cost saving exercise, we will have to acknowledge that, as an industry, we failed to influence and shape the development of our dedicated ministry and failed to lobby effectively to prove the worth of our sector. Both would be bitter pills to swallow and we need to act now if we are to avoid this outcome.

Liz Terry, Editor Twitter @elizterry

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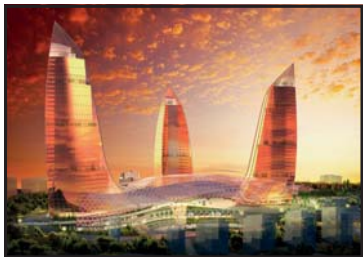
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### Buyers' guide:

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



## Private equity group Pegasus buys Six Senses

US-based private equity group Pegasus Capital Advisors has entered into a binding agreement to acquire the luxury resort and spa businesses of Six Senses Resorts & Spas for an undisclosed sum.

Under the terms of the deal, Pegasus will acquire all of the Six Senses and Evason-branded resort and spa management contracts and related intellectual property rights and operate them under a new company managed by Pegasus and its affiliates.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=ou3L1>



The ladies-only club will be spread over 1,160sq m

## Fitness First opens first club in Abu Dhabi

Fitness First Middle East has opened its first health club in Abu Dhabi – a ladies-only club in Marina Mall.

The new club is spread over 1,160sq m and offers best-in-class cardiovascular and resistance equipment, in addition to an extensive selection of free weights.

Audio and visual entertainment is available throughout the club. Included in the membership, group exercise timetables encompass all the class offerings from Les Mills, as well as Zumba.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=M9v8E>

## Second LA club for Crunch

Crunch Fitness will open its latest location in the heart of Burbank, California, US, in April – its second club in the LA area. The 2,415sq m facility will offer top of the range CV and strength equipment, a dedicated personal training area, an online fitness and nutrition programme, Kids' Crunch, a sauna and locker rooms.

Hundreds of weekly classes will be offered in the large group fitness studio and indoor cycling studio, including Anti Gravity Yoga, Pole Dancing, The Ride and LaBlast, which is taught by celebrity instructor Louis Van Amstel.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=V6ja2Q>

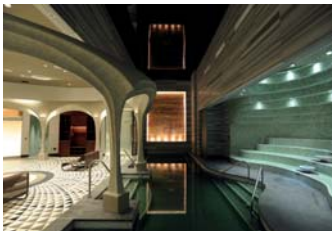
## Bask spa concept for NJ's Revel

Bask, a new spa and wellbeing concept developed by lifestyle brand Exhale, has opened at Revel, a new US\$2.4bn (£1.8bn, £1.5bn) resort destination in Atlantic City, US.

The 32,000sq ft (2,973sq m) wellness sanctuary concept has been created exclusively for Revel and is among the resort facilities currently being previewed over an eight-week period that begun on 2 April 2012.

At the core of the Bask spa will be a 3,000sq ft (279sq m) co-ed bathroom in which guests can relax, socialise and unwind in the Himalayan salt grotto and hammam.

Bask also has 32 therapy rooms, steam-rooms and a deluge shower, while the fitness centre will host Exhale's Core Fusion and yoga classes. The spa will use Exhale's five skincare lines – 302, Actifirm, Tata Harper,



The 32,000sq ft Bask spa will feature a total of 32 treatment rooms

ISClinical, and Circuit – which are used across the brand's existing spa estate.

Exhale currently operates spas and wellness centres in a number of US locations, including three in Boston and seven in New York. It also has a spa at the Gansevoort Turks + Caicos resort in the Caribbean.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=mou8m>

## Atkins designs Oman's new 'Medical City'

Atkins, the UK-based design and engineering consulting firm, has completed the masterplan for a major new world-class healthcare facility in Oman, The Medical City (TMC).

TMC is the largest private healthcare infrastructure development in the country and is fronted by Apex Medical Group, with the complex to occupy an 800,000sq m (8.6 million sq ft) site by the Arabian Sea.

Facilities will include a 375-bedroom hotel and a spa, although further specifications are yet to be confirmed. It is expected, however, that the hotel will incorporate swimming pools and a gym as part of its offer. The spa will be open to the public, in addition to its use for medical purposes, and the



Facilities at Medical City will include a 375-bedroom hotel and spa

hotel is to be positioned at the high end of the market. TMC will be centred around a hospital, while other healthcare facilities will include training and education areas for medical staff, a wellbeing centre and residential accommodation. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=eq7q2c>

## National stadium opens in Bahamas

A special ceremony has helped celebrate the official launch of the new Thomas A Robinson National Stadium at the new-look Queen Elizabeth Sports Centre in Nassau, the Bahamas. The 15,000-seat stadium has been built over a two-year period at a cost of around

US\$30m (£18.8m, €22.5m) and is a gift to the country from the Chinese government.

It is hoped the development will become the Caribbean region's foremost sports venue, while also helping to establish the Bahamas as an international sports tourism destination.

## Second site for 'wine spa' operator

Austria-based Loisium Wine & Spa Resorts is set to open its second spa hotel in Ehrenhausen, Southern Styria, Austria in June 2012.

The 105-bedroom hotel will include a Wine Spa, two wine-themed restaurants and a wine bar. The 1,400sq m (15,000sq ft) spa will have eight treatment cabins – including two couples' suites – a relaxation area, a sauna area with five saunas, heated outdoor pool with experience showers and a fitness zone with a yoga studio.

There will also be a reception and consultation area, a spa retail space and a spa bar with an open fireplace and 'living room'.

Each Loisium property will be marketed as a four-star superior wine hotel. The iconic buildings have been designed by celebrated US architect Steven Holl.



The Loisium hotel has been designed by renowned architect Steven Holl

The first Loisium hotel opened in Langenlois, Austria, and the company already has plans for a third site in Alsace, France.

The Alsace hotel, scheduled to open in 2014, will include 96 bedrooms and a 1,300sq m (14,000sq ft) spa with 10 treatment cabins and an outdoor pool. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=N4lgP>

## Cartoon Network to open branded attractions in Asia

Cartoon Network Enterprises, part of the Turner Entertainment group, is to open more branded visitor attractions across Asia Pacific.

The attractions will include family entertainment centres, themed zones and learning spaces and will feature characters from the

company's cartoon portfolio – including Ben 10 and The Powerpuff Girls.

The news comes as Cartoon Network Asia Pacific acquired rights to Chaplin and Co. – an animated series created by India-based DQ Entertainment and Method Animation.

## US\$1.3bn theme park planned for Hubei

Los Angeles, US-based Ikonik Entertainment Group has secured a deal with investment company Taichi Lake Group to design and develop a Tai Chi and Kung Fu-themed visitor attraction complex in Hubei, China.

Ikonik will provide master planning, concept creation, schematic design and construction services for the US\$1.3bn (2.4bn euro, £2bn) project, which is touted as the largest theme park ever to open in China.

The attraction, due to open in 2015, will include a Taichi Kung Fu theme park and a large theatre for live shows.

It is estimated that the agreement reached between Ikonik and Taichi Lake Group will generate several hundred jobs – as well as revenue – for numerous Los Angeles-based



The visitor attraction is due to open in 2015

subcontractors and service providers over the next three years. The agreement will feature Ikonik as the master designer and project manager for series of projects commissioned by Taichi Lake Group. These include a Kung Fu-oriented theme park at Wudang Mountain, Hubei Province, China and an amusement park in Qingzhou, China.

## 2013 launch for first Virgin-branded hotel in Chicago

Virgin Hotels is expected to open its first property by the end of 2013 in Chicago, US, after it completed the acquisition of the downtown Old Dearborn Bank Building in late 2011. The 27-storey former office complex will be converted by Virgin Hotels into a 250-bedroom hotel, which will comprise a spa spanning between 4,000 and 5,000sq ft (372 and 465sq m).

Further details about the spa are yet to be revealed, although the hotel is also set to include restaurants and other areas reflecting the Virgin brand.



The original Potter park has been a huge success

## Harry goes to Hollywood: second Potter park planned

Warner Bros Entertainment and Universal Parks and Resorts (UPR) have announced plans to develop a new Harry Potter-themed adventure park at Universal Studios Hollywood, California, US.

It follows the success of the inaugural Wizarding World of Harry Potter, which launched at the Universal Orlando Resort in June 2010 and is now set for a "significant" expansion. The two companies said the new California attraction will be a fully-immersive environment which will bring the Harry Potter stories to life.

## Oetker Collection to open Palais Namaskar

The Oetker Collection has expanded its African portfolio with the launch of the new Palais Namaskar Hotel and Spa in Marrakech, Morocco. Built to follow the principles of Feng Shui, the hotel is nestled amid 50,000sq m (538,196sq ft) of scented Balinese-inspired gardens that are complemented by waterfalls and lakes.

Facilities at the hotel include the 650sq m (6,997sq ft) Le Spa Namaskar, which includes four individual treatment cabins with outdoor terraces and two double cabins with private hammams.

## 'Record occupancy' for London hotels in 2012

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) has revealed the preliminary findings of its UK Hotels Forecast for 2012 and 2013.

In its report, PwC predicts that the London 2012 Games will make for a record year in the capital as hotels will achieve an average RevPAR growth of 2.8 per cent.

Hotels should also see a positive impact on occupancy of almost 1.2 per cent in London and 0.9 per cent outside the capital – taking total occupancy to 84 per cent in London and 72 per cent in the regions.



An artist's impression of the new Center Parcs

## Work to begin on fifth Center Parcs site

Holiday park operator Center Parcs is set to begin work on the company's fifth park in Woburn, Bedfordshire, UK after it secured funding for the project.

Blackstone, Center Parcs' owner, will invest £100m into the venture while four UK banks – RBS, Barclays, HSBC and Lloyds Banking Group – have committed to a construction loan of approximately £150m. The £250m project is set to be completed in time for the park to receive guests by May 2014. Center Parcs Woburn Forest will comprise 625 forest lodges, a 75-bedroom hotel and an Aqua Sana-branded spa.

## Independent deregulation study published

An independent report commissioned by the government has outlined recommendations for "widespread deregulation" in a number of areas across the tourism and hospitality sectors. British Hospitality Association (BHA) chair Alan Parker led a taskforce responsible for the *Smart Regulation and Economic Growth – Seizing the Tourism Opportunity* study.

Other issues covered by the research include health and safety regulations, employment law, sale of travel insurance, and a shake-up of the Licensing Act.

## Sector set for job creation

More than half (55 per cent) of leisure and hospitality businesses are planning to create new job opportunities during 2012, according to new research by Barclays.

The Barclays Job Creation Survey 2012 also found the sector was "more receptive" to taking on former public sector employees compared with other UK industries.

Barclays surveyed 670 executives from UK businesses of all sizes and across a number of different sectors on attitudes towards job creation, as well as economic confidence.

The research showed 89 per cent of leisure businesses believe government initiatives to create job opportunities have failed to achieve much to date.

Meanwhile, two-thirds of businesses believe there will also be a shortfall of private sector



A majority of hospitality companies are looking to increase staff levels

opportunities against the anticipated number of job losses in the public sector.

Barclays head of hospitality Mike Saul said: "As an industry with many SMEs, it is good to see smaller companies, in particular, more confident about creating new positions than they were last year." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=r2Sik>

## Luxury hotel to open in Trinity Square

Singapore-based developer KOP Properties has received the green light to convert the 10 Trinity Square building in central London into a new luxury development.

Work will start on transforming the Grade II\*-listed property in Q3 this year, with the Woods Bagot-designed project also involving China's Reinwood Group.

A 120-bedroom hotel, a spa, a members' club, 41 serviced residences, a restaurant

and two bars are planned as part of the development, which is expected to be completed in the last quarter of 2014.

Details of the spa are yet to be announced, although it has been confirmed that LTW Designworks will be responsible for its design. KOP Hotels and Resorts will run the hotel.



The historic Trinity Square building will be transformed into a hotel

David Collins Studio is consulting on design of the hotel's public areas, bar and members' club at the building, which first opened as the Port of London Authority's HQ in 1922.

KOP's CEO Leny Suparman said: "Our vision is for 10 Trinity Square to become a global destination." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=B4m9t>

## Laura Ashley plans to launch new boutique hotel

Laura Ashley has announced plans to open a new boutique hotel as a showcase for the UK-based fashion and homeware brand's products and design services.

In its results for the 52 weeks to 28 January, the company confirmed it had acquired a hotel

in Hertfordshire last November for £5.8m in an expansion of its marketing strategy.

Further details about the composition and facility mix of Laura Ashley's new boutique hotel are yet to be announced. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=hsu8U>



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To find out more about how music can work for your business visit [musicworksforyou.com](http://musicworksforyou.com).



[ppluk.com](http://ppluk.com)

\*MusicWorks survey of 2000 people, conducted March 2009. <sup>†</sup>If you play recorded music in your business without obtaining a PPL music licence you could incur a 50% surcharge on your PPL licensing fee.

## Cineworld to complete digital rollout

Cineworld Group is to complete its digital roll-out across the UK and Ireland by the end of the summer 2012, with more than 75 per cent of its estate currently using digital projectors.

The news comes as the group revealed it had become the number one cinema operator in 2011, with revenues and pre-tax profits increasing by 1.5 per cent and 9.9 per cent respectively. Admissions across the Cineworld estate were up 2.3 per cent when compared with 2010 to 48.3m, while box office sales grew by 2.7 per cent to £242m. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=L7X8H>



Rank Group owns and operates Mecca Bingo

## Rank ends Gala Coral casino talks

Rank Group, the owner of the Grosvenor Casinos and Mecca Bingo brands, has terminated discussions over the possible acquisition of Gala Coral Group's casino arm. Earlier this year, Rank announced it had entered into talks over the purchase of Gala Coral's 24 Gala Casinos across the UK in a deal worth around £250m.

However, Rank said that it had ended discussions "after it became clear that the proposed terms of the acquisition would not serve the best interest of Rank's shareholders". Details: <http://lei.sr?a=D4D9O>

## John Penrose outlines benefits of Tote sale

A charity and a grant scheme are to be established in order to distribute the £90m allocated to the racing industry following last year's sale of the Horserace Totalisator Board (Tote). John Penrose, minister with responsibility for horseracing, has announced plans which he said are "making good" on a pledge made with regards to proceeds from the £265m deal.

The charity – The Racing Foundation – will support good causes, while the grant scheme aims to benefit State Aid-compliant projects. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=fsuzk>

## Aspers secures MK casino deal

A new casino to be developed in Milton Keynes will be operated by Aspers after the group was announced as the successful applicant by Milton Keynes Council (MKC).

The award means that Aspers can now apply for a large casino licence, with the proposed venue to deliver a £10m investment within the existing Xscape complex.

Gaming tables and machines will form part of the casino, along with entertainment, dining and bars. MKC will receive at least £500,000 per year for the entire lifespan of the facility. The council's licensing sub-committee resolved to grant Aspers the provisional statement after the group's bid was judged to offer the "best all round package".

"It will provide not only a new, completely different, yet responsibly managed, kind of



Aspers held off competition from two other bidders for the MK site

leisure facility for Milton Keynes, but numerous associated facilities and benefits for the local community," said a council spokesperson. "This outcome has been the result of two years' work by a small team of council officers and advisers." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=w9b5x>

## OFT: Groupon 'not complying' with UK law

Daily discount voucher company Groupon has been found to be breaking UK consumer rules and has been given three months to change and improve its practices.

The Office of Fair Trading (OFT) found "widespread examples" where Groupon was seen to breach consumer protection regulations.

Announcing the findings of its investigation on 16 March, the OFT said that it has specific concerns over practices involving reference pricing, advertising, refunds, unfair terms, and the diligence of its interactions with merchants. A July deadline has now been imposed by the OFT for Groupon to changes its practices to comply with UK law.

OFT has not yet ruled out the possibility of legal action against Groupon.



The OFT made a series of recommendations to Groupon in its findings

Groupon responded to the news with a lengthy statement on the company blog, admitting the breaches and apologising to customers who had "experienced the negative side effects" of the company's growth. The statement also lists each OFT point of concern and how Groupon plans to rectify the issues. Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=a1g3D>


## Goals Soccer Centres in Canadian takeover bid

Goals Soccer Centres, the five-a-side football facility operator, has revealed that it is the subject of a takeover approach from Canada-based Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan.

In response to media speculation, the group said it had received a preliminary approach

from the pension fund but could not confirm an offer would be submitted.

The announcement comes just over a month after Goals Soccer Centres reported a "year of progress and change" in 2011. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=U2moy>



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Jason, The Roxy

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## Half of Brits unhappy with work life balance

Nearly half of adults aged 16 and over are currently unhappy with their work life balance, according to the latest findings from the Office for National Statistics' *Measuring National Wellbeing* programme.

Those that use leisure time to engage in physical activities appear to be happier than those who prefer sedentary pursuits – such as watching TV or playing video games.

The latest figures show that in 2010-11, 54.1 per cent of adults in England had participated in some type of physical activity. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=pgh7s>



S&P Architects worked on the new venue's design

## Work starts on new £31m Redcar leisure complex

Olympic swimmer Chris Cook has helped mark the official start of construction work on a new £31m leisure, business support and community facility in Redcar.

Willmott Dixon has been appointed to build the complex, which has been designed by leisure specialists S&P Architects in collaboration with Plus Three Architecture.

A fitness suite and a junior gym will be among the facilities at the venue, along with a 25m, six-lane swimming pool, a training pool, a learning pool and a sports hall.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Ro8J>

## UK move for Swedish weight-loss franchise

Xtravaganza, a franchise based on a weight-loss programme established in Sweden more than 10 years ago, is to make its first move into the UK fitness industry.

With more than 180 venues, it is one of the fastest growing Scandinavian businesses and will now be rolled out in South Wales, Gloucestershire, Hereford and Worcester.

The programme is based on four main principles to help people lose weight, including neuro-linguistic programming (NLP)-based mind training.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=G8f6k>

## High earners 'exercise more'

Research by Nuffield Health has found that, on average, higher earners work out at gyms three times more than those on lower incomes.

The group surveyed 1,600 people as part of its study, which shows those earning less than £20,000 work out for around one hour a week. Those who earn £101,000 or more exercise for three hours.

According to the findings of the report, earners between £21,000-30,000 work out for 1.5 hours; £31,000-50,000 work out for 2.1 hours; and £71,000-100,000 exercise for 2.6 hours.

However, the figures show a dip in the number of hours of exercise in a gym for individuals earning between £51,000-70,000 to 1.8 hours on average, bucking the overall trend.

Nuffield Health head of physiology Chris Jones said: "Evidence tells us that keeping fit



IMAGE: ZHUO DONG/GETTY IMAGES

Nuffield's study found those earning £101,000+ exercise for three hours

and healthy can benefit your performance at work, which may in turn impress the boss.

"By doing regular exercise you help manage work-related pressures and help put in a better performance by better preparing your body for times of stress."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=BowoN>

## LA Fitness unveils new member pledge

LA Fitness has launched a new Member Pledge scheme as part of its strategy to improve customer service and member experience at its 79 UK sites.

The launch of the Member Pledge includes a new website outlining its policy on everything from security to flexible membership contracts and what to do if personal circumstances change.

In a statement, LA Fitness said that it recognised that the fitness industry has "not always had the best reputation for customer service", but that

it was determined to underline the work it has carried out behind the scenes in order to create a better member experience.

LA Fitness chief executive Martin Long said: "This Member Pledge sums up the progress we



Long said the pledge "sums up" the chain's progress in the last two years

have made over the past two years to improve our service standards – not just in the first few days of your membership, but throughout a member's fitness journey with us.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=t8X3s>

## Pure Gym to open new West Midlands locations

Low-cost health club chain Pure Gym has announced plans to open new locations in West Bromwich (31 May) and Walsall (19 June) as part of its UK ongoing expansion strategy.

Both of the new Midlands locations will contain 220 pieces of equipment, including the

LIVESTRONG spin bikes by Matrix; vibrating Bodycore platforms; and Power Plates.

The 22,500sq ft (2,090sq m) West Bromwich club and the 14,000sq ft (1,301sq m) Walsall facility will offer 40 fitness classes per week.


Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=P8ng9>



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## Lincoln Castle in line for £20m redevelopment

Lincoln Castle is to undergo a multi-million pound renovation after Lincolnshire County Council confirmed it had received Lottery funding towards the scheme.

The project is expected to cost £19.9m and has been awarded a £12m grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund. European Union support is also being sought in addition to the Lottery support and council funding.

A new vault to showcase Magna Carta and the Charter of the Forest is included among the plans for the redevelopment. Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=H7F5P>



Wilkinson Eyre Architects designed the museum

## Olympic rower opens new £15m SeaCity Museum

Double Olympic rowing gold medallist James Cracknell has officially launched the £15m SeaCity Museum as part of the new Cultural Quarter in Southampton.

The attraction – housed within the city's Grade II\*-listed former Magistrates' Court – has been designed by Wilkinson Eyre Architects and built by Kier Southern.

SeaCity Museum comprises two permanent galleries examining the city's status as a 'Gateway to the World' and its maritime heritage over the last 2,000 years.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Ciz6x>

## National Trust completes £9m Stowe transformation

A £9m transformation of the gateway to a 250-acre (101-hectare) landscape garden in Buckinghamshire – one of the UK's earliest attractions – has been completed.

Work has been carried out to revitalise the New Inn, the original purpose-built entrance for visitors to Stowe first built by Lord Cobham nearly 200 years ago.

The National Trust has restored it over a two-year period to create a new visitor centre, which now offers an experience of 18th century life at the site.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=J6L3X>

## £6m for Science Museum project

London's Science Museum has secured £6m from the Heritage Lottery Fund towards the creation of a new gallery exploring the history of communications technology.

The new Making Modern Communications project will see the museum exhibit "unique objects" combined with human stories in order to chart the 200-year evolution of modern communication.

The gallery will showcase prominent moments where technology helped change the world, such as the laying of the first telegraph cable across the Atlantic.

Around 1,000 objects will be put on display in the new gallery, including a 6m (20ft) tuning coil from Rugby Radio Station, which formed part of the UK's Cold War defences.

Science Museum Group director Ian Blatchford said: "The project represents a step



The new gallery will look at innovations in communications technology

change for the Science Museum and the first step in the delivery of its Master Plan.

"The award of the grant underlines the essential role of the Science Museum in helping to inspire engagement, particularly amongst young people."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=f9q4S>

## 2011 - Merlin's 'most exciting year' to date

Visitor attractions operator Merlin Entertainments invested a total of £174m in its portfolio of attractions during 2011 – a year described as the "most exciting in company history" by CEO Nick Varney. Nearly £100m of the company's total investment was spent on new developments, which included the launch of Merlin's largest ever new attraction – Legoland Florida in the US.

The year also marked the

first operations in Australia following the acquisition of the Sydney Attractions Group and the announcement of plans to take over Living and Leisure Australia.

Reporting its full-year figures for the 12 months to 25 December 2011, Merlin said the number of visitors to its attractions reached



The year included the opening of a Legoland park in Orlando, Florida

46.4m – an increase of 13.2 per cent on 2010.

Nick Varney said: "Last year was the most exciting in the history of Merlin Entertainments as we delivered a further step-change in the performance of the business, while significantly extending our international profile...We will continue to invest for growth."

## Louvre is world's most visited art museum

New research has found that the Louvre, one of the most iconic attractions in Paris, France, was the world's most visited art museum last year after it welcomed 8.9 million people.

According to a study undertaken by *The Art Newspaper*, the Louvre easily claimed the

top spot with nearly 3 million more visitors than the second most visited art attraction – New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art (6 million). The British Museum, National Gallery and Tate Modern – all in London – completed the top five.

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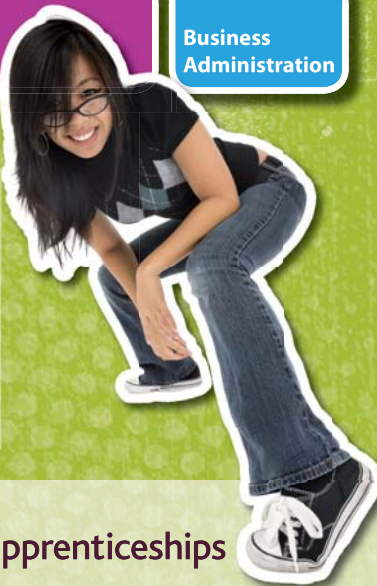
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## £15m Cheshire spa resort scheme completed

A new 81-bedroom hotel has opened at the independently-owned Mere Golf Resort and Spa near Knutsford, Cheshire, to mark the completion of a £15m redevelopment.

Mather and Co worked on three parts of the scheme, which has included the interior design of the new hotel – an extension to the resort's original golf club building.

The consultancy carried out interior design work on a 1,253 sq m (13,487 sq ft) health club and day spa, which opened early last year and includes seven treatment rooms and a hammam.

A thermal zone with sauna and steam-room, a salt room and a caldarium Roman-style hot room also feature at the spa, which uses Carita and Aromatherapy Associates products.

The health club and spa facilities are located within a former stable block and courtyard at the property, and comprise the first phase of the project. The hotel also houses an indoor pool and gym.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=S2ToM>



Serenity Spa includes an ozone cleansed pool

## Seasons Holidays acquires Seaham Hall hotel

Bristol-based Seasons Holidays has purchased Seaham Hall, a luxury hotel and spa in County Durham, out of the administration of von Essen Hotels 2 Ltd.

The 20-bedroom hotel is sited amid 37 acres (15 hectares) of woodland, and facilities include the Feng Shui-inspired Serenity Spa. Teak, granite and limestone have been used in the oriental-influenced design of the spa, which comprises 19 treatment rooms, an ozone cleansed pool and hammam.

A sanarium with crystal light therapy, a sauna with quartz crystal, a black granite steamroom, a hydrotherapy bath with 12 massage stations and an ice fountain also form part of the spa at Seaham Hall.

Barry Donaghey of Seasons Holidays, said: "We will ensure the hotel continues to be one of the top destinations at in the region." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=t8EzF>

## Land deal for Buxton Crescent

The development of the UK's "first genuine spa hotel" for more than 100 years in Derbyshire, has taken a step forward following the signing of a landmark agreement.

High Peak Borough Council and Derbyshire County Council, the land-owners, have confirmed that an "historic" deal with the Buxton Crescent Hotel and Thermal Spa Company for the scheme has been secured.

The £35m Buxton Crescent project includes a restoration of the Grade I-listed Crescent building and the Grade II-listed Natural Baths and Pump Room. It is hoped work will start on the first of two construction phases in June.

A 79-bedroom spa hotel incorporating the Natural Baths is at the centre of the plans, in addition to a 2,000sq m (21,528sq ft) natural thermal mineral water spa.



A natural thermal mineral water spa is at the centre of the £35m project

The spa will comprise a dry treatment area with six massage rooms; a manicure and pedicure area; and an exercise studio. Meanwhile, hydrotherapy wet treatment areas will incorporate four thermal mineral baths and an underwater jet massage.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=Y2X3a>

## Fletcher's Cottage spa unveiled in Scotland

A new 750sq m (8,000sq ft) luxury day spa has opened at the Archerfield Links golf course near Edinburgh.

The spa comprises seven treatment rooms – including a double treatment room and a salt brick inhalation room – as well as a large relaxation lounge with a wood burning oven and a walled garden, which has two seaweed bathing houses acting as additional treatment areas.

Other facilities at the spa, which have been designed and supplied by Nola 7, include a marine salt steam room, herbal aroma sauna, a mud cure room, an ice fountain and contrast adventure showers. The treatments on offer have been supplied by Voya, Aromatherapy Associates, Spiezia, and Margaret Dabbs.



Nola 7 has designed and supplied the new day spa at Archerfield Links

According to Kirsty Brown, marketing manager at Archerfield, the spa will be marketed for both members of the golf club as well as guests staying in the accommodation.

Brown said: "Adding to our accommodation, we've even more for non-golfers with golfing partners." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=u9n3v>

## Chewton Glen spa hotel to unveil treetop suites

Chewton Glen spa hotel in the New Forest, Hampshire, is set to open its new Tree House Suites this summer.

Located above the tree tops, 200 metres from the main hotel, the secluded suites have been designed in partnership by Terence O'Rourke

and Blue Forest with the interiors being created by designer Martin Hulbert.

Guests staying at the suites will be offered a bespoke range of in-room treatments by Chewton Glen's spa partner ila-spa. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=13f4R>

## Red tape consultation for sports and heritage

Sports, heritage and gaming industry stakeholders are to have the opportunity to "name and shame" regulations that they believe are holding back growth in a new government consultation.

A website has been established to allow stakeholders to comment on regulations, such as rules governing gambling premises, and whether they are an example of excessive red tape. Regulations identified as "unnecessary" by respondents will then have to be justified by the ministers responsible. If no justification is made, the rules will be scrapped. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=0L1F6>*



A total of £62m will be invested in three years

## ACE confirms finalised Renaissance awards

Arts Council England (ACE) has announced details of the final awards to its Renaissance major partner museums, which will see more than £62m invested over the coming three years.

Earlier this year, the organisation named the 16 successful applicants that are to receive support between 2012-13 and 2014-15 under the new-look Renaissance programme. ACE admitted the amount to be invested was slightly higher than an initial budget of around £60m but said it would finance the "ambition and range of work" in the bids. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=J8L5j>*

## Green light for Derby arena development

Derby City Council (DCC) has approved planning permission for the development of a new multi-million pound sports and entertainment arena near the city's Pride Park Stadium. The 14,500sq m (156,077sq ft) venue has been designed by FaulknerBrowns Architects and will incorporate a 250m cycling track and a 1.5km (0.9-mile) outdoor closed cycle trail.

The arena forms the first phase of the council's leisure strategy that is planned to provide significant new facilities to the city. *Details: <http://www.derby.gov.uk/>*

## MA launches second 'cuts study'

The Museums Association (MA) has announced the launch of its second survey to examine the impact of government and local authority cuts on museum services across the UK.

According to the organisation, the latest study will allow for year-on-year comparisons to be made with last year's findings, and will provide an insight into the impact of budget cuts.

In 2011, more than half of the museums that participated in the research (53 per cent) saw a reduction in funding, with 20 per cent reporting a cut of at least 25 per cent.

The research also showed "considerable uncertainty" over the future of the UK sector and 66 per cent expected a decline in the quality of service they offered as a result. MA said this year's survey will also ask museums



The study looks to assess the impact of the government's funding cuts

to look forward over the coming year to see how the industry is changing and what plans are being made to account for the cuts.

"The more museums complete the survey, the stronger the case the MA will be able to make," said MA head of policy Maurice Davies. The deadline for responses is 30 April. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Q3p5p>*

## Swindon leisure hub vision moves forward

Swindon Borough Council and Moirai Capital Investments have moved forward with plans for the development of the Wiltshire town's new £65m regional leisure hub.

Leases have now been agreed for the project, which will see Oasis Leisure Centre transferred to a private operator on 1 June before it undergoes an extensive refurbishment.

An indoor ski slope, an indoor arena and a water park will also form part of the planned new hub, with leisure specialists S&P Architects working on the design of the scheme. A collaborative agreement between SBC and Moirai Capital Investments includes long-term leases to four sites, which include Oasis Leisure Centre and



Facilities at the centre will include an indoor ski slope and water park

the former Clares site. The agreement requires a planning masterplan for the former Clares site to be lodged within two years. Detailed proposals will then be submitted for each individual stage. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Q2w3l>*

## DCMS seeks new Arts Council England chair

The DCMS is to search for a new Arts Council England (ACE) chair, following a decision not to reappoint incumbent Dame Liz Forgan.

Dame Liz became the first woman to chair the organisation after taking up the position on 1 February 2009 for a four-year term, which

is scheduled to end on 31 January 2013. The DCMS said culture secretary Jeremy Hunt decided not to reappoint Dame Liz, but has praised the contribution made to the UK arts and culture industry during her tenure. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=n3L4b>*



## Sports clubs receive hosepipe ban guidance

Sport England has made new guidance available to help sports clubs cope with the effects of a hosepipe ban now in effect in a number of areas across the country.

The agency has worked with national governing bodies to produce the advice, with water a crucial part of maintaining the quality and safe performance of surfaces.

The new guide includes how to maintain pitches and courts in a time of drought, as well as how to work with water companies to negotiate possible exemptions.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Q553H>



The track will be able to host international races

## Major new BMX facility for London's Burgess Park

Southwark Council has approved plans for the development of a "national standard" BMX track in south London's Burgess Park, which is undergoing an £8m revamp.

Proposals include a 400m (1,312ft) track with a starting hill, banked hairpin turns and a variety of jumps. It has been designed for use by people of all ages and abilities.

Due for completion in January 2013, the new facility will be capable of hosting international races and will be one of the first in London to accommodate both summer and winter national events.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=x3N8N>

## Planning safeguards revealed for playing fields

The government has included safeguards to protect sports playing fields from development in its *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) published on 27 March. Planning minister Greg Clark announced the launch of the new 50-page document, which is designed to simplify the planning process and support economic growth.

The new NPPF will only allow the development of existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land if it involves the creation of equivalent or improved facilities. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=B6B5w>

## FIA/Sport England's digital legacy

David Stalker, CEO of the Fitness Industry Association (FIA) has revealed details of a new joint venture with Sport England which aims to secure a digital legacy for the London 2012 Olympic Games.

Writing in the April issue of *Health Club Management*, Stalker said that the partnership would engage consumers to become more physically active and as a result grow membership numbers at sports and health clubs.

The strategy will be based around a new themed website – to be launched in the run up to the Games – offering consumers that have been inspired by the Olympics an easy way of accessing sport in their area. The service has been designed so that people wanting to find an activity close to where they live can do so by typing in their postcode or local region.



The scheme will look to increase participation via a new themed website

Alternatively, if someone is inspired to try a new activity, they can search for the activity itself and the website will display the locations at which they can participate.

To read the full article on the plans, written by David Stalker, see the April issue of *Health Club Management*: <http://lei.sr?a=U7Y7Q>

## One fifth of football clubs in 'ill health'

New research released by corporate recovery specialists Begbies Traynor has found that nearly one-fifth of all English Football League clubs are currently showing signs of "financial ill-health".

The research comes amid ongoing financial problems affecting Portsmouth and Port Vale football clubs, as well as the Scottish Premier League side, Glasgow Rangers.

According to the *Red Flag Alert* survey, three clubs in the power Championship; six in League One; and four in League Two are facing financial trouble.

Begbies Traynor partner Gerald Krasner said: "Football as an industry suffers from an enormous financial gap between the Premier League and the Football League.



Portsmouth's financial difficulties have been well-documented recently

"One effect of this disparity is that clubs are often tempted to overspend on players to try to gain promotion [to the Premier League], and the promised riches and prestige that come with it." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=1ok4v>

## New sports village plans for Middlesbrough

Middlesbrough Council has launched a consultation in order to gather comments on proposals for a new sports village to replace some of the town's older facilities.

The council set out its vision of a regional sports centre in preparation for major budget

cuts, with preliminary plans identifying the Prissick site for the scheme. Middlesbrough Cycle Circuit and Prissick Skate Plaza are already currently based at the site, with the new complex set to add a 400m athletics track and a health club. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=1zrow>





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## £4.5m scheme for Galloway Forest Park

A new visitor complex at Kirroghree and a major refit of Clatteringshaws are to form part of a major £4.5m investment at Scotland's Galloway Forest Park.

The proposals, which have been drawn up by Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS), form part of a wider strategy to enhance the park's visitor experience and to double tourist expenditure across the local economy by 2015. FCS is part of the Scottish Government's Environment and Forestry Directorate and is responsible for the management of the country's national forest estate. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=1957Y>



An artist's impression of the new visitor centre

## Scottish Seabird Centre plans expansion

The Scottish Seabird Centre (SSC) near Edinburgh has announced its plans to expand and enhance its visitor experience under the working project title of the National Marine Centre.

Simpson and Brown, the original architects of the SSC, have designed the proposals for the new-look building. Additional space will also help the centre develop its education work. SSC currently offers the Discovery Centre, which gives visitors the chance to view seabirds using live interactive cameras, the Environment Zone and the Migration Flyaway experience. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=d4HoY>

## Defra confirms new English wildlife havens

Environment secretary Caroline Spelman has announced that 12 new wildlife zones across England will receive a share of £7.5m to help increase participation in nature schemes. The funding will go towards encouraging local people to become involved with nature, as well as the creation of new wildlife havens and the restoration of habitats.

Projects at the Nature Improvement Areas will comprise providing heathland on brownfield sites, a new 7-hectare (17.2-acre) lagoon and a network of wildlife-friendly dewponds. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=W3y3D>

## Green spaces to help recovery

The Forestry Commission has published new guidance to outline the "positive role" that well-designed green spaces and parklands can play in the recovery of patients from illness and injury.

*Greenspace Design for Health and Wellbeing* provides advice on how the design of green spaces around hospitals and other wellness facilities can help supplement clinical care for patients.

It is expected that the new practice guide will be of interest to health practitioners, planners and policy makers within the NHS and other sectors that are involved in patient care. Forestry Commission chair Pam Warhurst said: "We've all long known that we feel better after spending time outdoors and in green spaces such as parks and woodland."



The new guidance outlines how green spaces can be used in recovery

"Now a raft of research findings in recent years have confirmed that this experience is not just a vague impression, it represents a range of very real mental and physical health benefits." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=L6M7g>

## Children 'losing connection' with nature

A report claims to have found "overwhelming" evidence of a long-term and dramatic decline in children's relationship with the outdoors.

Produced by naturalist, author and TV producer Stephen Moss, *Natural Childhood* has combined years of academic research and surveys on the subject and highlights how a generation of children is losing touch with the natural world.

The report found that fewer than 10 per cent of children play in wild places; down from 50 per cent a generation ago. Meanwhile, the 'roaming radius' for children has declined by 90 per cent in 30 years.

The study outlines the need to tackle the rise of 'Nature Deficit Disorder' and suggests that 'capturing' children before they enter the



There has been a radical reduction in the 'roaming radius' of children

teenage years is crucial – kids familiar with nature before the age of 12 years old form a lifelong passion for the environment.

The National Trust responded by initiating a two-month inquiry into how it can better reconnect children with the natural world. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=d1woY>

## Edinburgh unveils new Union Canal strategy

A new strategy has been launched by the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC), in partnership with British Waterways (Scotland), to maximise leisure uses on the historic Union Canal. The local authority is aiming to provide activities including boating, rowing and cycling for

residents and visitors along the 16km (9.9-mile) length of the 200-year-old waterway.

Plans to create a "canal culture" through recreational and community uses will be backed with the development of seven hubs along the Union Canal. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=j15w>



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John Havill, Chairman of Three Rivers Partnership comments: "To think how bad the floor looked before and how it looks now is quite remarkable. Gerflor assisted in the project management of the scheme hugely and the sports hall floor refurbishment came in on time and on budget".

John Havill also added "Our customers love it, in particular the badminton club, some even hinting this is the best sports hall they have ever played in".

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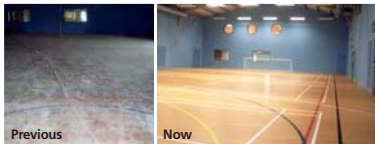
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# Design news

From a Chinese hotel to a leisure centre in Bristol, we take a look at what's new

**Project** MGM Grand

**Design** WATG

**Location** Sanya, China

## MGM opens new hotel in China

The 675-room MGM Grand has opened in Sanya, China, on the site of the old Gloria Hotel.

WATG were given a brief to renovate and expand the Gloria Hotel using contemporary design. A new eight storey tower was added, featuring a glass atrium and sculptural lobby.

The MGM Grand features a spa, five restaurants, a conference centre, ballroom and entertainment areas. Its opening is part of a strategic plan by MGM to pursue non gaming opportunities around the world.



An eight storey tower has been added to the existing hotel



The centre features a single storey extension

**Project** Lochgelly Centre

**Design** Wellwood Leslie Architects

**Location** Fife, Scotland

## £2.5m multi-purpose facility unveiled in Fife

A new multi-purpose arts and sports facility in Lochgelly, Scotland, has been unveiled by Fife Council and ON at Fife following the completion of a £2.5m transformation.

Lochgelly Centre incorporates a 415-seat theatre, a studio, a sports hall, art rooms and a visual arts exhibition space.

A team managed by Fife Council's Property Services undertook the project, with Wellwood Leslie Architects, David Adamson Surveyors, Grontmij, McGregor McMahon and Wilkinson and Lowe all involved.



The existing building will become an educational hub

**Project** Kimball Art Center

**Design** BIG

**Location** Utah, US

## BIG wins Kimball Art Center competition

Danish architectural practice BIG has won the competition to expand the Kimball Art Center in Park City, Utah, US.

The Kimball Art Center is a non-profit community centre for the visual arts, which is home to Sundance House during the annual Sundance Film Festival.

BIG's designs for the new centre show an 80ft building with a twisting façade, enclosing a spiral staircase leading to a large roof terrace. It also features a restaurant and a sculpture garden. Worked is due for completion in mid-2015.



<b>Project</b>	Maidstone Museum
<b>Design</b>	Hugh Broughton Architects
<b>Location</b>	Maidstone, UK

## Maidstone Museum unveils new East Wing

Maidstone Museum and Bently Art Gallery reopened following an extensive £3m refurbishment and the addition of a new East Wing by Hugh Broughton Architects.

The museum houses a collection of more than 600,000 artefacts and specimens which help tell the story of Maidstone and its people.

The new East Wing mixes contemporary design with sensitivity for the Grade II\* listed building's historic fabric – part of which dates from 1561. Key features include a new entrance facing the high street and elevations that combine frameless glazing with handcrafted copper alloy shingles, creating a contrast to the existing brick façades.



The new wing features eye-catching gold copper shingles



PHOTO © BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

Both the main pool and teaching pools have moveable floors

<b>Project</b>	Hengrove Park Leisure Centre
<b>Design</b>	LA Architects
<b>Location</b>	Bristol, UK

## Hengrove Park opens in Bristol

The £32m Hengrove Park Leisure Centre has opened as part of the regeneration of Bristol's Hengrove Park area.

The project is a consortium between Bristol City Council, Parkwood Consultancy Services, LA Architects, Kier Construction, Parkwood Leisure and Parkwood Health Care. It was funded with £35m of private finance initiative credits from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

It features a 50m swimming pool and a teaching pool, a gym, a four court sports hall, two fitness studios and a spa.



PHOTO © JERWOOD FOUNDATION

The gallery's café provides views of the sea

<b>Project</b>	Jerwood Gallery
<b>Design</b>	HAT Projects
<b>Location</b>	Hastings, UK

## £4m gallery opens in Hastings

A £4m art gallery housing the Jerwood Foundation's collection of 20th and 21st century works has opened in Hastings.

The development of the Jerwood Gallery – designed by Colchester-based HAT Projects – is part of a wider £9m regeneration of Hastings' historic Stade area.

Jerwood Gallery incorporates more than 500sq m (5,382sq ft) of exhibition space, as well as a sculpture courtyard. The building is clad in hand-glazed ceramic tiles, with large windows providing sea views.





# BEN MIDGLEY

The president of Crunch Franchise believes the low-cost model is eminently sustainable. He talks to Kate Cracknell about added value in the budget sector and the importance of supporting your franchisees

## What is your professional background?

I've worked in fitness my whole life – I grew up in the industry. As a student I worked at Gold's Gym, cleaning equipment and helping out around the club. In 1995 I won IHRSA's Salesperson of the Year award, which helped to put me on the radar.

I was then recruited by 24 Hour Fitness as a senior director of corporate sales, where I met Mark Mastrov. Nine years later I became executive vice president of Planet Fitness in the US, before taking a six-month career break. I think I went about two years without taking a day off, and my third child was going to be born. I was getting a little burnt out and decided to step away from the business.

## How did you first get involved with Crunch?

After I'd recharged my batteries, I re-engaged with Mark [Mastrov] and Jim [Rowley, CEO of Crunch] in 2009 – in my opinion they're the finest business people in the fitness industry and I was thrilled to work with them.

They'd just bought Crunch [owned by their company, New Evolution Ventures] and had decided they wanted to do a franchise venture, which I came on board to head up. We launched about a year and a half ago.

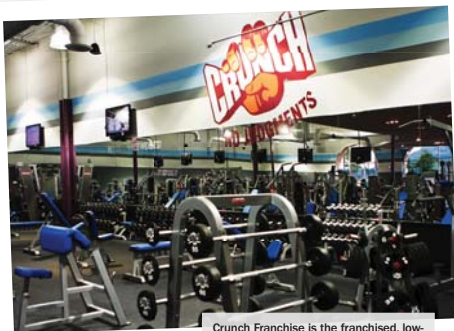
## What is the best part of your job?

I work with people I trust without question, and the work I do is very rewarding. When you franchise, it brings in all kinds of different aspects: you're not just confined within the four walls of a club.

You have to know everything about the process, from finding real estate to getting someone financed to doing budgeting and marketing. You have to know it all, because you have to teach people every day. It's fun to bring people through that process. I couldn't think of a better job.

## The Crunch clubs are high end, with a strong brand renowned for its creativity. How does the franchise offering compare?

We've taken the coolness and the fun of the Crunch brand, but we've toned down the offerings a bit because we're lower priced. We charge US\$19.95 a month, whereas the Crunch-owned clubs charge an average of US\$69 a month.



Crunch Franchise is the franchised, low-cost club division of Crunch Fitness, owned by New Evolution Ventures

Also, Crunch is a fairly edgy brand. Crunch clubs grab people's attention and get a lot of PR by putting on pole dancing classes and so on... things that are really at the cutting edge of group fitness. That gives it a strong brand presence and as a result everyone thinks that the company is much, much bigger than it is.

That edginess works in the big cities, which is fine because Crunch focuses on metropolitan areas, but we designed the franchise model so we could put it anywhere in the country [in the US]. We take the coolness of the brand and the cleverness of the advertising, but we tone it down a bit to ensure that we resonate with audiences outside of the big cities. We need to connect with a broader demographic than the standard Crunch clubs.

## What do you see as your main challenges?

The risk with the low-cost market is that consumers stop being amazed by the price and start expecting more and more for their money. We stuck our neck out a bit by adding group fitness, and it's allowed us to compete very strongly even in areas where there are other budget clubs.

It's meant it hasn't mattered that we weren't first to market. Maybe at some point someone will add even more for the money. I don't see how they could, but you never know. In the meantime, offering group fitness has allowed us to

The latest club opened in California at the start of April



"In the long run we'll look at further international expansion, but you have to go into new markets at the right time and most importantly with the right operator"

draw a lot of people to our clubs.

We help franchisees recruit and train instructors, and Crunch has designed some fantastic proprietary classes which we've been able to put into the franchise clubs too. It's been amazingly popular – we started off with a small group fitness room and soon 80 people were trying to get into that class. The challenge was getting the scheduling right.

#### Do you think the budget model is sustainable?

I think low-cost is completely sustainable. A lot of people seem to be caught up in the notion that the health and fitness industry runs in one way, but it clearly doesn't. Look at all the fringe companies popping up – the yoga studios, the CrossFit clubs... There are a hundred ways to do fitness.

Trying to launch a franchise in this particular economy, really it had to be low-cost. In any case, the low price model can be extremely lucrative. Different operators have approached it differently and have had varying degrees of success because it is a tricky model, but it's actually a very intelligent way to approach the business.

You have to have a certain amount of discipline, and of course there are limitations – you wouldn't put a low price club in a location where you're paying US\$50 a square foot for the space, for example, although given the economy now you can in any case get great real estate deals. However, I

would say that the margins in these clubs are the same or better than any other. You just have to be smart about it.

#### Crunch Franchise currently has 14 operational sites in the US and Australia with deals agreed for a further 100 units. What investment is required?

Each of our 1,580-1,670sq m (17,000-18,000sq ft) clubs requires an investment of over US\$1m. Just to get finance for that in the US nowadays, you have to be pretty financially solid. So I think for our space we've done exceptionally well. I'd always like to see us do better, but we'll get there.

#### What about international growth?

In the long run we'll look at further international expansion, but you have to go into new markets at the right time, and most importantly with the right operator. It's not about selling as fast as you can. At a young stage for a franchise, if you get the wrong operators and they do a terrible job, you're going to hurt yourself a lot more than the benefit you get from selling the additional units.

We're working on other international markets – I'm not going to talk about which ones at this point – but at the moment we're really concentrating on growth in the US. We're getting a lot more interest in the model now, and as the business matures that interest is getting more sophisticated.



"I think a franchise company has to be open to learning and allowing a bit of flexibility, letting people test things out to see if they can make improvements"

For example, someone who owns one of the largest Dunkin' Donut territories in the country has now come over and bought into our brand. That's exactly what we're looking for – people seeing us as a strong investment opportunity, even in this young stage of our development.

Part of that is of course down to the brand, but I also have to credit our team in the franchise business – there's a lot of relationship-building that goes on, creating trust with the potential franchisee and then making good on that. We've done a good job of getting people comfortable.

#### What do you most enjoy about the franchise business?

What I really love is the sort of personal relationships you end up building with the franchisee. That's really important to me. I have a very strong belief in terms of doing the right thing for the people you sell to, whether it's a health club membership or a franchise.

Most franchisees currently buy closer to five units, but we do have people who buy just one, and in a lot of cases they will invest a significant portion of their personal assets to get the business up and running. You also learn about these people through your conversations with them – about their family, their dreams... It becomes very rewarding to help them become successful in their own business.

#### How much control do you like to have?

We take the philosophy that we're 80 per cent rigid and 20 per cent flexible. A lot of franchisors say 'do it our way: that's the only way', but there are lots of great ideas out there. I think a franchise business has to be open to learning and allowing a bit of flexibility, letting people test things out to see if it can make improvements across the network.

Because the fitness industry is evolving – it's always going to evolve – and you have to be able to evolve with it. There are different ways to programme, different ways to interact, different things to do with technology, different ways of integrating with the community. We want to make sure we have open ears the whole time. If you get to the point in your career where you think you have all the answers, I believe you've already missed the broader picture.

#### Are you optimistic about the future of the fitness industry?

I think what's good about the industry is that it's always trying something new, trying to find different ways to get people involved. But it is an uphill battle to get people off the couch and taking their health seriously, and we need to be more open to changing in different ways – not just evolving our offering in our clubs to try and get more people in, but actually looking beyond our four walls. We have to go out and promote ways just to get people to do something, some sort of activity, and in the end we'll all benefit.

I believe we need to rethink the way we approach politicians too. Rather than being too prescriptive in our recommendations, we need to focus on getting them engaged in exercise. If they do that, and start to appreciate its value, I believe they'll work out a way to get it into legislation.

#### And how about future opportunities for Crunch Franchise?

Mark [Mastrov] has set a target of 300 Crunch Franchise clubs in five years, which would be great. But I'm not one to put big numbers out there. My day-to-day job is about looking after our franchisees. If we do that really well, who knows what the number could be. ●

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Fletcher Priest were given a brief to rethink and reuse as many of the existing spaces and materials as possible

## FLETCHER PRIEST

A former Methodist church and library in the heart of east London has been transformed into a contemporary 'social cinema' space. Project architect Mareike Langkitsch talks to Julie Cramer about the new Hackney Picturehouse



### How did you come to be involved in the project?

As a practice, we have more than 35 years of cinema architecture experience including the award-winning restoration of Newcastle's Tyneside Cinema, which reopened in 2008. We were approached by the City Screen Picturehouse group to design their 20th project. The nice thing about City

Screen Picturehouse is that they don't just do cinemas but offer other things as well, such as arts and event spaces and bars and restaurants. They always try to get the local community involved. It's a much more wholesome approach.

### What can you tell us about the original building in Hackney?

It is set within a conservation area, but the building itself was not listed, which obviously made things a lot easier for us when approaching the project. The site used to be a library and a Methodist church dating back to the early 20th century.

Just over a decade ago it was turned into the Hackney Ocean music venue, which was a major investment at the time, but unfortunately the venue was not very successful. It's also in the area of Hackney that was hit by the riots in August 2011. Work on the building was ongoing at the time and we saw our project on the news.

The cinema represents a major investment in the heart of Hackney at this critical time, and offers various arts-related community activities as well as a four screen cinema.

### Have you had personal experience of working on cinema projects before?

I recently ran the design of [Japanese bank] Nomura's auditorium in the Fletcher Priest-designed Watermark Place office development in the City of London. I'm also heading an audit for the Barbican Centre's cinema refurbishment – also in the City. These experiences have been



Acoustic materials in the bar area have been refurbished





The venue has four cinema screens, an events venue, a bar and a restaurant

very useful in understanding the design detail involved in a project of this kind.

#### What were the most satisfying aspects of the project for you?

The fact that we reused a lot of the existing spaces and materials was very pleasing. The building was only refurbished 10 years ago and there were a lot of things in there that were probably quite expensive at the time and which were still fully functional.

For example, we used all the acoustic panels from the old concert venue and bar, wrapping them in new acoustic fabric and putting them into new locations – that saved a lot of money and work, and was better than just throwing them away. We also revamped most of the existing bars by cladding them in a Corian covering, and retained and extended the very good quality slate flooring in the entrance areas.

#### What original architectural features have you preserved?

The old sandstone façade was very much part of the town square, so for signage we erected lightweight mesh letters in the window spaces, which gave the building a new identity, while at the same time preserving its character. Inside we liked the original concrete staircase, which added a

The Hackney Picturehouse opened in November 2011, and is the 20th venue from City Screen, which owns the Picturehouse brand. The company's other locations are:

- Clapham Picturehouse
- Gate Picturehouse, Notting Hill
- Greenwich Picturehouse
- Ritzy Picturehouse, Brixton
- Stratford Picturehouse, East London
- The Belmont Picturehouse, Aberdeen
- Little Theatre Cinema, Bath
- Duke of York's Picturehouse, Brighton
- Abbeygate Picturehouse, Bury St Edmunds
- Arts Picturehouse, Cambridge
- Cameo Picturehouse, Edinburgh
- Exeter Picturehouse
- Regal Picturehouse, Henley-on-Thames
- Picturehouse at FACT, Liverpool
- Cinema City, Norwich
- Phoenix Picturehouse, Oxford
- Harbour Lights Picturehouse, Southampton
- Stratford Picturehouse, Stratford-upon-Avon
- City Screen Picturehouse, York

rough, industrial touch – so we simply cleaned it and sand-blasted it to give it a fresh new look.

#### What were the most challenging aspects of the job?

We didn't have all the information about the original building, and although we did a survey at the start, we were still discovering things as we went along. For example, what we thought was a lightweight wall was actually structural.



Simple graphics in a limited colour palette were used

Having said that, we tried to avoid as much structural work as possible. Screens three and four were already built as studios so didn't require a lot of work, while screens one and two needed substantially re-arranging. Of course, you'd always design the cinema differently if you were able to start from scratch – it was mostly a case of taking the spaces we found and inserting a cinema into them.

## What did the project cost and how long did it take?

It cost £3.8m altogether. Work started on site in February 2011 and was completed at the end of October 2011. As far as we're aware, for the number of seats in the building, it's a relatively low-cost cinema.

## What was your approach to the cinema graphics and signage?

The existing building looked very dated inside with lots of colours that just added to the confusion. We stripped everything back and used whites and greys to create a calmer feel. We then inserted splashes of colour via the signage and super-graphics, using big numbers and a uniform font. The signs actually play a very important role in guiding people through the complicated layout of the building.

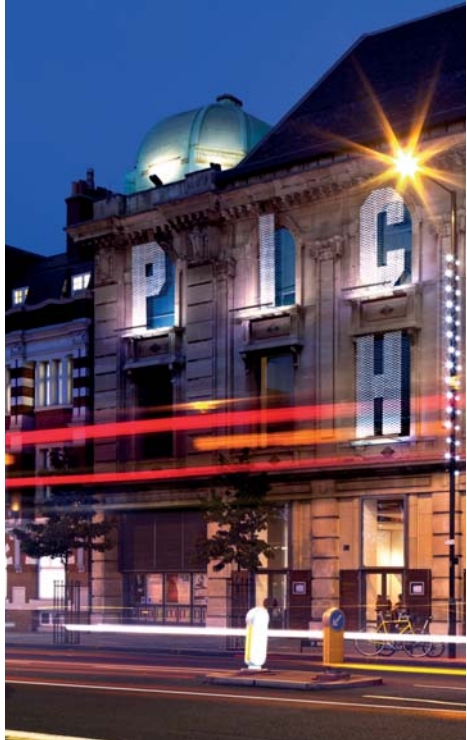
This approach is also reflected on a smaller scale as the same style was used throughout for the statutory signage, seat numbers, posters, programmes and other publications.

## How did you approach the design of the social spaces?

We located all the bars and restaurant towards the front of the three-storey building, to make use of the big beautiful openings that overlook the town square.

This means that the bars and restaurant get lots of natural light, and people on the street also get a glimpse of what is going on in the building. The restaurant on the ground floor has an excellent chef, and it's always packed. When the weather is good, the west-facing frontage can be used to extend the seating area.

Fletcher Priest revamped the building's sandstone façade by adding lightweight mesh lettering



## What else does the building house?

On the top floor we designed the Hackney Attic – City Screen wanted to create this as an events venue in its own right. The bar hosts events several times a week, ranging from DJs to live music and comedy nights.

The entire building covers 4,000sq m in total, and there were a lot of back of house areas that were not well connected to the cinema space, such as the former artists' dressing rooms. They were great spaces with balconies and lots of natural light. We have turned them into office spaces



to rent – there are a lot of artists and freelancers working in the area, and this is now a perfect location for them.

#### How eco-friendly was the project?

We recycled as much as we possibly could from the old building and have also introduced some interesting products. For example, the dark reddish kebony timber floor in the Hackney Attic events space is a soft wood that has been treated with a bio waste product to become a hard wood. It looks great, is sustainable and is very hard-wearing.

#### What have been the highlights of the Hackney Picturehouse project for you?

It's been a real highlight working so closely with the client, because you can see that they are passionate about what they do. Also the mix of cinema, arts, entertainment and culture within the building was something that I could easily relate to – it's the kind of place I like to go, rather than to a blockbuster-type cinema.

I'm also a Hackney resident so it was very exciting for me to be working on my local cinema. ●

# PHILLIP MILLS

As Les Mills UK is launched, Magali Robathan talks to the founder of BODYPUMP™ about the future of fitness, children's exercise and greening the industry

**W**hen I meet Phillip Mills, founder of Les Mills International (LMI) and creator of the phenomenally successful range of group fitness programmes including BODYPUMP™, BODYCOMBAT™ and BODYJAM™, he's nearing the end of a six-week stint in the UK.

Mills' main reason for being in the country is to help launch Les Mills UK. For the past 15 years, Fitness Professionals (FitPro) has been responsible for distributing LMI's exercise programmes in the UK, but early this year, LMI bought the distributorship business from FitPro and will now deliver the programmes directly to its UK partners via Les Mills UK.

"FitPro have been growing their own business," says Mills. "They need to focus on that and at the same time we have got to a point of critical mass where we are developing really significant innovation at a constant rate. To implement that properly into a market really needs a dedicated agency that

has all its resources focused on keeping up with the innovation."

FitPro and LMI have been working together on the handover, with the new Les Mills UK office based in FitPro's offices until May. The FitPro staff that were dedicated to the Les Mills products – around 50 of them – are being kept on by Les Mills UK, and former CEO of LMI, Jill Tattersall, is managing the transition. A new chief executive will be recruited to head up the UK company. Six 'club coaches' – senior industry consultants who will be given training by LMI – will also be recruited to support clubs using the LMI programmes.

## THE CLASSES

Les Mills International is the world's biggest provider of exercise to music programmes, with 14,000 clubs using their 10 programmes across 80 countries. The word pioneer is massively overused, but in Phillip Mills' case, it really is justified – the standardised exercise classes that he developed



played a huge part in popularising group exercise around the world.

Mills famously started his career in health and fitness as a cleaner at his parents' gym in Auckland, New Zealand. His father, Les Mills, was an Olympic athlete, representing New Zealand in shot put, discus and weightlifting, while his mother Colleen competed in the Commonwealth Games, as did Phillip and his sister Donna. Les and Colleen opened their first gym in 1968 in Auckland, which started as a sport-based facility, mainly employing athletes as staff.

In the 1970s, the family put a small group exercise studio into the gym, and following a stint spent studying in Los Angeles, Phillip Mills decided to live up their fitness classes by combining the skills of sports professionals and theatre and dance teachers, and coming up with choreography to hit music.

"We started to take a really focused approach to group exercise," says Mills. "We only had one studio at the time, and we focused on developing our own group exercise programming and building a teacher training system. Our classes became so popular that we were bursting out through the walls



Les Mills classes are now run in clubs across 80 countries



LMI advises clubs on what equipment to use for its classes and how much space is needed

of our studio. We built another studio, and then another, and then a fourth on the roof, and still we were full to bursting. That's when we thought, we're on to something here."

They certainly were. The classes were so popular that Les Mills began to licence them for use by other clubs, and in the mid-1990s the company employed its first international distribution agents. In 1997, Phillip Mills founded Les Mills International as a separate company from Les Mills Health Clubs (which he also heads up) in order to focus on the fast-growing licensing business. By 2001, 5,000 clubs were using the LMI programmes worldwide; this continued to grow to 10,000 by 2006. Today the figure stands at 14,000 clubs, with millions of people taking part in Les Mills-branded classes each week. They are phenomenally successful, according to Mills, because they deliver real results, and because they are very carefully created and trialled to ensure they generate maximum energy and 'buzz'. The programmes are renewed every three months from Auckland with new choreography, music and instructor training. Today, LMI has 10 standardised

**"WE DO A LOT OF HEAD-HUNTING AND RECRUIT ROCK STAR CLASS INSTRUCTORS. WE ALSO PAY REALLY WELL - UP TO \$150 PER CLASS"**

exercise programmes. Last year saw the launch of SH'BAM™ – a 45 minute, dance-inspired workout, as well as CXWORX™, an intensive 30 minute core class. Both programmes are being launched in the UK this year.

Next year, LMI will move into a new area, with the launch of its children's programming. There are four classes; one aimed at 4-6-year-olds, one for 6-8-year-olds, a boys' class for 9-14-year-olds and a girls' class for the same age range.

"There is a real need for children's exercise classes," says Mills. "The younger kids' ones are focused around dance and imaginative movement. The older boys' class incorporates elements of martial arts and pure fitness, and the girls' is based on modern hip hop."

LMI recently released its first infomercial in the US, advertising LES MILLS PUMP; an at-home workout DVD based on BODYPUMP™. The aim of

this, says Mills, is not just to drive sales of the DVD, but also to "achieve what Jane Fonda achieved in her time and drive millions of people into health clubs." The tv campaign will launch in the UK at the end of 2012 and in northern Europe early next year.

## THE CLUBS

The creation and licence of standardised fitness programmes, along with teacher training and marketing, is now the core part of the Les Mills business. The health clubs are still going strong though, and the company now has 11 clubs across New Zealand. Les Mills Christchurch City, which was rebuilt in 2011, has just reopened following its closure after last year's devastating earthquake.

Mills spends much of his time travelling the world to find out what makes a health club work, and he's clearly immensely proud of his own. "Our





**Les Mills health clubs use bright colours and blown up graphics in their exercise studios**

model is to build a big group exercise studio as the focus of our clubs, but we are also big on gyms. I make a point of having the best free weights facilities in the area I'm in," he says.

Naturally, the group exercise classes are massively popular. "We do a lot of head-hunting and we recruit rock star teachers," he says. "We also pay really well – up to \$150 per class, but it works out financially to do that. It's much better to pay \$150 for someone that attracts 100 to 200 people per class rather than paying \$20 to someone that only attracts 20 people."

The design is also important. "It's vital to create a motivating exercise environment," says Mills. "High ceilings and a lot of natural light helps. You can't always afford to build big, beautiful facilities, but you can create stimulating décor. We do a lot with blown up graphics and we really focus on our AV. Twelve years ago, we started building cardio cinema, showing music videos in the cardio areas

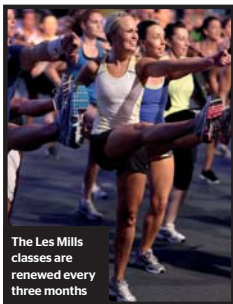
of our gyms. Lately we install up to \$1m worth of audiovisual equipment throughout the clubs.

"One of the most common mistakes club owners make is around group exercise design – 95 per cent of all facilities around the world are as wrong as they could be in terms of the

design of their group exercise studios. We build them to be like medical labs – small, brightly lit with white walls and facing a large mirror. For a new member walking in, it's a very self-conscious, sterile environment."

To illustrate his point, Mills tells a story about a club he visited with this kind of décor. "We were standing in the exercise studio and I asked the club owner, 'do you like to dance at parties?' He said, 'I'm a bit shy, so I tend to dance in the dark, in the corner of the room.' I said 'would you like to dance in here?' He looked around and said, 'I see what you mean'. Next time I went back, he'd dimmed the lights and warmed up the colours in the studio – it made a big difference."

Despite the success of the Les Mills health clubs, growing outside of Mills' native country is not part of the plan. "We won't build clubs outside of New Zealand – we have made that commitment to our agents that we won't compete with them," says Mills.



**The Les Mills classes are renewed every three months**



## ISSUES FOR THE INDUSTRY

As well as driving his own business, Mills spends a lot of time researching and talking about the wider issues for the health and fitness industry.

He sees two very different trends emerging within the industry. The first is the huge growth of budget clubs, which he says has been fuelled by the lack of innovation in traditional clubs.

"Most facilities have found that when a budget club opens next door, maybe 10 to 20 per cent of members will go over to it," says Mills. "This is very difficult for clubs, as that 10 to 20 per cent is often your profit margin."

The second, more positive, trend is the growth of what Mills calls micro gyms – niche gyms dedicated to just one type of activity. "There are dozens of these brands in the US," he says. "Operations like Omni, Flywheel, Pure Yoga, UFC Gym, Orangetheory Fitness and Soul Cycle. These will be the next big wave of gyms – it's an area that is really taking off. What's posi-

## LES MILLS CLASSES

### BODYATTACK™

Sports-inspired cardio workout for building strength and stamina. High energy interval training class combines athletic aerobic movements with strength and stabilisation exercises.

### BODYPUMP™

The original barbell class designed to strengthen the entire body. This 60-minute workout challenges all major muscle groups by using weight-room exercises including squats, presses, lifts and curls.

### BODYCOMBAT™

Energetic cardio workout inspired by martial arts. It draws from a wide array of disciplines, including karate, boxing, taekwondo, tai chi and muay thai.

### BODYBALANCE™

A yoga, tai chi and pilates workout that builds flexibility and strength. Controlled breathing, concentration and a carefully structured series of stretches, moves and poses to music create a holistic workout.

### RPM™

An indoor cycling workout in which participants ride to the rhythm of music.

### BODYJAM™

A cardio workout which combines the latest dance moves and hottest new sounds, and which puts the emphasis on having fun as much as exercising and breaking a sweat.

### BODYSTEP™

An energising step workout. Participants exercise using a height-adjustable step and simple movements on, over and around the step.

### BODYVIVE™

A low impact, whole-body, fun workout that improves fitness and core strength using body weight, VIVE™ tubes and balls for extra resistance.

### SH'BAM™

A 45-minute dance class featuring simple dance moves with chart-topping hits. A fun and sociable exercise class for all abilities.

### CXWORX™

A short, sharp workout that strengthens and tones the body. The class hones in on the torso and sling muscles that connect the upper and lower body, and improves functional strength and helps injury prevention.

tive is that these gyms charge a lot of money, and people are prepared to pay it. So at one end you've got people saying they won't pay \$50 a month for gym membership and going over to the budget gyms, and at the other end you've got people paying \$150 a month at these micro gyms. This should give us an insight into what people really value in our offering."

Sustainability is another big issue for the industry, says Mills. "There is a major relationship between health and green issues. We need to walk the walk and green our own facilities. It doesn't matter what we do, if we don't deal with global warming then our business is not going to be successful in 15 or 20 years time."

Mills has long been an advocate for green issues. As well as working to encourage the health and fitness industry to become more green, he campaigns more widely on the environment. "Outside of my business, my environmental politics is a big part of

my life," he says. "I started a group in NZ called Pure Advantage, which has the backing of a lot of NZ's biggest business leaders. The primary aim is to lobby government to adopt green economic policies that will enable NZ to prosper in a future low carbon world, and help to avert ecological disaster."

On a personal level, Mills tries to take care of his own health, as well as that of the planet. He is "pretty obsessive" about his diet, eating organic, locally-sourced food where possible. Three years ago he cut out sugar and says he has seen radical improvements in his health as a result. As well as working out, he mountain bikes – "I went out and broke two ribs and punctured a lung last year – I still go out riding every Sunday though" – skis and surfs, and he spends half of every year travelling on business.

When I ask why he drives himself so hard, Mills' answer is simple, and probably sums up his attitude to life: "You're a long time dead, mate." ●

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Advances in technology are helping operators give better customer care than ever. We take a look at how systems are playing their part

# CUSTOMER CARE

## CASE STUDY 1

### QUEENS PARK RANGERS USES CRM SYSTEM TO SPEAK TO FANS

**S**ports CRM agency Goodform was appointed by Queens Park Rangers FC in 2009, as the club was seeking to communicate more effectively with its fan base, develop its business processes and increase revenues via a new CRM strategy.

At the time, the club had disparate systems and data, no CRM system, no customer history and no single customer view. Goodform's brief was to consolidate the disparate data, create a single customer view and manage this data on an ongoing basis and use it to power targeted, personalised sales and marketing campaigns.

Goodform now hosts, on its in-house CRM system, a single customer view of 240,000 records with regular feeds from eight systems across the club. Using a CRM-led marketing approach, this data has been segmented and profiled to produce nine customer types. This information has been used



QPR fans are targeted with personalised campaigns and messages

to produce individual marketing plans for each of these types and their preferences. This approach has enabled QPR to identify its most loyal and profitable customers, as well as being able to target the right customers with

the right products and messages.

According to Goodform, spend per head increased by 326 per cent in the 2010/2011 season, with e-marketing campaigns regularly achieving open rates of more than 40 per cent.

## CASE STUDY 2

### SERCO LEISURE REDUCES CARBON FOOTPRINT WITH ENERGY MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

**S**erco Leisure, provider of facilities management services to the leisure industry and part of global outsourcing company Serco Group PLC, is reducing the carbon footprint of its 70 local authority leisure centres.

In order to monitor and help reduce energy consumption, Serco Leisure chose to use Legend's VISION Server Energy Management solution.

Using the VISION Server, integrated with the Legend Club Management CRM system, Serco Leisure has been able to draw data from multiple, dis-

parate sources into a central carbon management database and provide real-time insight into the causes of variations in energy consumption, from increased visitor numbers and extreme weather conditions to equipment failure and the successful implementation of new energy saving initiatives. Serco Leisure uses the VISION Server Energy Management solution to set benchmarks for utility consumption and tracks progress against these goals via automatic alarms. Through the intelligent application of these incident

'alerts', Serco Leisure responds immediately to potential issues instead of discovering them months later in a review of utilities bills.

Through a combination of operational focus, continuous improvement and the insight provided by VISION Server, Serco Leisure has reduced its carbon footprint by 29 per cent and is aiming at a further 5 per cent reduction in the coming year.

"We have achieved annual cost savings well in excess of £1m by monitoring, tracking and benchmarking the way in which our leisure centres function," says Keith Thomas, managing director of Serco Leisure. "This is also enabling us to be more environmentally-accountable."

**"We have achieved annual cost savings well in excess of £1m and are more environmentally-accountable"**

## CASE STUDY 3

## 3D CUSTOMER VIEW POWERS IMPROVEMENTS AT ASPIRE

**A**spire Sports & Cultural Trust provides public leisure facilities and services to more than one million customers every year. The Gloucester-based trust aims to raise service standards and boost participation, and to this end recently implemented a new leisure management system – ClarityLive for Leisure – across its three sites.

"We were looking to serve our customers better, faster and in a more personal way," says business development director Jackie Douglas. "We also needed the back office functionality to support the improvements made in the ways we develop, sell and monitor our programmes."

Aspire has gained a 'faff-free' single view of each customer. Simple screen layouts help reception staff to view and understand information instantly, and to focus on customer needs. "We see our customers in '3D' – we can quickly flick between multiple windows to see information such as

"It makes it easy to apply discounts, run daily promotions and deploy special offers"

member usage, current bookings and demographic-based data, so we can engage better with them and encourage sales," says Douglas.

The trust has been able to reduce queuing and improve the customer experience. Since installing the new system towards the end of 2011, Aspire has speeded-up front of house service and simplified point of sale transactions across everything from single entry tickets to membership and course booking requirements. Customers can make one simple payment, no matter how complex their purchase 'basket' is.

The ability to streamline complex transactions and accept multiple payment methods does more than simply improve front of house service. Aspire can make greater use of discounts and

promotions to incentivise and reward customers, and has run successful voucher programmes through companies including Groupon. "It's easy to apply discounts, run daily promotions and deploy special offers, and equally simple for our customers to redeem their vouchers," says Douglas.

Responding to public demand for online access to information and services has been another focus at Aspire, and was a core requirement when they implemented ClarityLive for Leisure. The trust has exceeded its original web bookings target, with 27 per cent of bookings already being made online.

"Having intuitive functionality all in one place means that supervisory staff can configure changes that previously would have required an IT specialist," adds Douglas.

## CASE STUDY 4

## CRM SOFTWARE HELPS INDEPENDENT GYM WIN AWARD

**I**n June 2010, independent gym owner Neil Godly started using the ClubWise customer relationship manager software to track member use – a decision he's convinced helped his gym win a top award.

The Oxygen Fit club in East Barnet won the Newcomer of the Year Award at the 2011 National Fitness Awards in November, in part, he believes, thanks to the personal service ClubWise has helped him offer members.

"Because Oxygen Fit is a small, community gym, ClubWise has enabled us to give that extra bit of customer care," says Godly.

Clubwise combines club management software, integrated Direct Debit and administration services, together with interactive sales, referral and retention services. "We liked it because it offered Direct Debit management, as well as offering us client and prospective client management. It enables us to keep track of anyone

who comes into our club," says Godly.

"When a prospective member comes into the gym, ClubWise automatically schedules a follow up phone call two days later. If they still haven't signed up, they are automatically sent an email, and a further phone call is scheduled 20 days after their visit."

As well as prospective members, the system helps track existing members, and provides staff with information about when and how often they are attending. If a member hasn't been in for a while, they will be sent an email saying 'we miss you' and the club can decide how to encourage them to use the facilities more regularly.

"ClubWise is a great management and diary tool," says Godly. "It's almost like having a couple of extra members of staff."

The club has also seen new member numbers increase by introducing ClubWise's Interactive Referral solution which enables members to refer



Neil Godly and his team at the Oxygen Fit club in East Barnet

friends to the club and receive a discount on their monthly Direct Debit.

Further ahead, Godly is thinking about expanding. "Thanks to ClubWise I know what the breakdown of our members are, which would help me to identify the right area for a new gym,"





One Leisure has installed Gladstone's kiosks across all five of its sites

#### CASE STUDY 5

#### CUSTOMERS PUT IN CHARGE WITH GLADSTONE KIOSKS

**O**ne Leisure is managed by Huntingdonshire District Council and provides sports and leisure activities for all ages and interests. Last year, more than 1.7 million people visited the five One Leisure sites located in Huntingdon, Ramsey, Sawtry, St Ives and St Neots.

In 2009, One Leisure decided to install Gladstone's kiosks across all five of its sites. It took a while for customers to feel confident using them, so initially staff were on hand to encourage visitors to use the new technology. Now, though, One Leisure reports that the kiosks are hugely popular, with more than 1,000 customers using them for around 1,500 bookings every month at the St Ives site alone.

The kiosks can be used to admit entry to the sites and to buy anything from a gym session or fitness class to a sauna or steam, as well as booking advance sessions and buying money-saving subscriptions, such as 10 classes for the price of eight.

Bookings made at the kiosks also allow access to the door at the gym, so the sites don't need so many receptionists. Previously, customers had to swipe in at reception and then again at the fitness suite. At busy times this

meant a stack of membership cards piling up in the gym, but the fast track kiosks have eliminated that now and reduced any waiting time.

One Leisure staggered the introduction of the smart software system to gradually familiarise the customers with the kiosks, online bookings and online payments. Online booking through Gladstone's Connect product was set up around three years ago. There was a soft launch of online payments in March 2011 – three months later, 60 per cent of all class transactions at Ramsey Leisure Centre were carried out and paid for online.

Looking ahead, the plan is to really push the online capabilities over the summer period, and One Leisure expects to see a further increase in the number of online transactions as kids' courses and activities are booked for the summer holidays.

The Connect online booking and payments software, in conjunction with the fast track kiosks on site, are improving efficiency, as anyone booking online now has to pay at the same time. The telephone booking system uses the same process too, so operators take a payment and process it online at the time of each call. ●

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# FUELLING GROWTH



**As one of the world's largest oil producers, Azerbaijan has both wealth and ambition. Professor Terry Stevens investigates its tourism potential, the luxury developers targeting its capital and the 2020 Olympic Bid**

PROFESSOR TERRY STEVENS, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF STEVENS & ASSOCIATES

**T**he charge into the Caucasus by international hotels brands is heavily focused on Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan on the southern shore of the Absheron Peninsula. The city is attracting the attention of Hyatt, Hilton, Fairmont, Marriott, Kempinski, Four Seasons and Starwood Hotels & Resorts – all of which are being drawn to this dynamic boomtown, where sparkling limousines and skyscrapers form the backdrop to an ancient walled city that's listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Baku, which has a population of around 2 million, has a rich history as part of a country that has straddled the territories of competing Arab, Persian, Turkish and Russian empires over the last two millennia. It gained independence in 1991 following the fall of the Soviet Union and today global interest has been stimulated by the extensive oil resources underlying the Caspian Sea, together with the phenomenon of oil oozing out of the ground creating natural oil fires on the peninsula. In 2007 and 2008, Azerbaijan was the world's largest oil producer. Modern living in the city has flourished, which gives the ancient metropolis a cosmopolitan feel with a strong business tourism market.

Tourism is rapidly becoming an important part of the economy of Azerbaijan, although accurate statistics are elusive. Estimates by

American Express suggest that in 2003-2004 the country was hosting over one million tourist arrivals, mostly from near neighbour countries. The UN World Tourism Organization is currently working with the Azerbaijan's Ministry of Culture and Tourism to rectify the lack of statistics.

## **FOCUSING ON TOURISM**

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, established in 1953, is the government agency that oversees all aspects of tourism development. Initially responsible for cultural preservation, its focus shifted over time to the development of resorts until the collapse of the Soviet Union – the Soviet

– suggested a Rapid Assessment Strategy for tourism development.

Over the past eight years, the ministry has increasingly focused on creating an environment where international investment in tourism can flourish, including the building of core infrastructure and enhancing hospitality skills and human capacity. Today, its priorities are based on shaping Azerbaijan as an elite destination for spa and wellness tourism with a complementary strand of development focusing on religious tourism. This national strategy has highlighted the Absheron Peninsula and, especially, the vibrant city of Baku as the hub of the strategy.

**The Ministry of Culture and Tourism is focused on shaping Azerbaijan into an elite destination for spa tourism**

## **INVESTMENT SURGE**

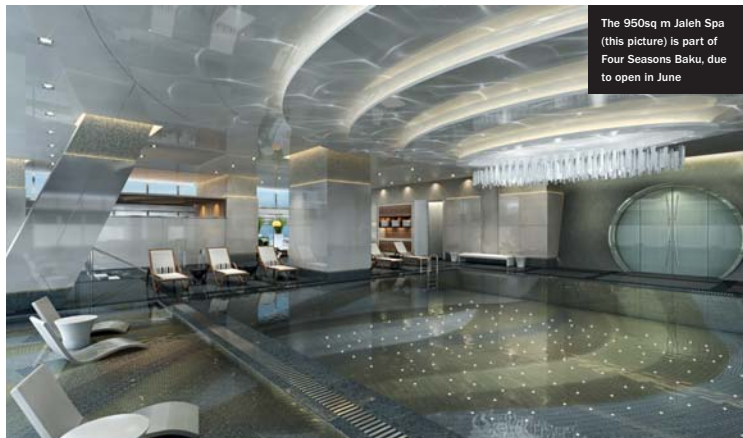
By mid-2000, there were around 100 hotels in Azerbaijan, mostly concentrated in Baku and the two other major cities of Ganja and Sheki. At the top end

these were comparable to hospitality standards expected in western destinations. In the past three to five years, however, there's been an investment surge signalled by the early appearance of brands such as Hyatt and Radisson, as well as locally owned boutique hotels such as Hotel Meridian and Diplomat.

2011 was no exception to the activity. The 159-bedroom Park Hyatt invested US\$330,000 (£187,000) on refurbishing its spa that forms part of the hotel's three-storey Club Oasis

was a key market – and the Nagorno-Karabakh civil war in the 1990s which crippled the fledgling tourism industry.

The sector began to pick up pace once more in the early 2000s, with the 2002 Mission by the UN World Tourism Organization which successfully nurtured and whetted the government's appetite for developing international leisure and business tourism. On the back of this in 2004, Azerbaijan's Citizens Development Corps (CDC) – under the auspices of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe



The 950sq m Jaleh Spa (this picture) is part of Four Seasons Baku, due to open in June



The Flame Towers development (above) will feature a 299-bedroom Fairmont Hotel with an ESPA spa (right), due to open soon.



complex. The Club Oasis's Armaiti Spa covers 310sq m (3,337sq ft). Hotel manager Kostas Batalas is clearly inspired by this development, saying that he recognises its "power to capture new markets and retain existing business."

December saw the opening of the 3,500sqm (37,674sq ft) European-style spa at Kempinski Hotel Badamdar Baku. The new Badamar complex is one of the largest developments in the Caucasus region and boasts an entertainment and retail centre and

seasonal aqua park, as well as the 280-bedroom Kempinski hotel. The spa features 20 treatment rooms – six of which are doubles – and a beauty centre. The product house is Elemental Herbology. A lap pool, steamroom, sauna, hammam and fitness studio are also part of the offer.

Recognising the city's potential, Kempinski has also signed a management agreement for a second site in Baku – the 221-bedroom Crescent Hotel, a glass, arch-shaped building that resembles a crescent moon.

The hotel, designed by Korean firm Heerim Architects, will form part of the Caspian Plus development which includes a further four buildings – three residential and one for office use. The Caspian Plus, due for completion in 2015, will sit on the opposite peninsula to the equally impressive Full Moon Bay development (also by Heerim) which will feature the 35-storey Hotel Full Moon built in disc shape to look like the moon, as well as two separate residential apartment blocks.

Other new arrivals in 2011 included

The Kempinski Hotel  
Badamdar Baku opened  
in December 2011



the 309-bedroom Hilton Baku with its signature 1,500sqm (16,146sq ft) eforea spa (see *Spa Business* 2011/3 p28); and the 207-bedroom Sheraton Baku Airport hotel with a Gazelli Spa and Wellness facility.

This year is set to be equally as busy. The 175-bedroom Four Seasons Hotel Baku, due to open in June, is the setting for the 950sq m (10,226sq ft) Jaleh Spa which occupies a roof-top location and provides wide views of the city and sea.

Spa manager, Canadian Shawna Morneau, stresses the importance of developing the local markets. She estimates that "65 per cent of our business will be derived from local and VIP markets taking advantage of an exclusive membership programme and our unique VIP suite facility and private balcony." Designed by UK-based architects ReardonSmith, the spa has 10 treatments rooms and will use products by Sodashi and Kirsten Florian. There are also separate male and



High levels of business travel and the  
seductive appeal of an ancient yet  
thoroughly modernised city is intoxicating

female areas, with a hammam, steam-room and whirlpools by Barr + Wray, a fitness centre and a pool that's set in a two-storey stone-clad atrium.

In May, Marriott is to make its debut with the launch of a 243-bedroom JW Marriott Absheron Baku in the heart of the city overlooking Freedom Square and the Caspian Sea. The property will incorporate a health club and spa over three floors. The Absheron Spa will cover 1,700 sq m (18,300sq ft) and include four large single treat-

ment rooms as well as a couples' suite. Products will be supplied by Anne Semonin and Charme d'Orient. There will also be a salon for hair-dressing, make-up and manicure/pedicure services; a thermal suite comprising a steamroom, rasul, and loofah room; a swimming pool and sun-deck; and a gym with Precor equipment.

Also due to open imminently is the 299-bedroom Fairmont at the Flame Towers with an ESPA spa.

## CHALLENGES AND IMPROVEMENTS

Despite the influx of international operators, Azerbaijan still faces significant challenges in developing its tourism economy including environmental concerns as a result of the oil and petrochemical industries. But there have also been some big improvements – most notably investment in Baku International Airport and Azerbaijan Airlines to provide better links to western Europe and Asia by major carriers.

## 2012 YEAR OF SPORTS

**T**he President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, announced in January that 2012 would be the Year of Sports in the country.

The initiative aims to expand the Olympic movement throughout Azerbaijan, to give a boost to Azeri athletes' preparations for the London 2012 Olympics and ensure that all young Azeris regularly take part in sport, as well as promoting a healthy lifestyle throughout the country.

Azerbaijan is bidding to host the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, with Baku one of the six shortlisted cities. The National Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan (the Milli Mejlis) voted in February 2012 to fully endorse the Baku 2020 Bid.

Konul Nurullayeva, the chief executive of Baku 2020, said recently: "Baku is one of the world's best-kept secrets. Our Olympic Bid is part of a wider process of transforming Baku into a world-class destination, with first-class



The 2012 FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup starts on 22 September 2012

business, technology and sports facilities, as well as hotels, museums and art collections, universities and all the infrastructure that comes with them.

"With the Olympic Movement, together we can reinforce and continue the positive social, economic and infrastructural changes that have already taken place in Baku and Azerbaijan over the past two

decades since independence."

The 2012 FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup is being held in Baku this autumn. As part of the Year of Sports, the president said that the country's Ministry of Youth and Sport has been asked to develop an action plan, to include the development of additional sports complexes around the country.

More than 35,000 people now work in tourism in the country, and degree programmes in tourism management have been established at Baku State University, Azerbaijan State Economic University and various vocational colleges and institutes. In addition, the Association of Tourism of Azerbaijan has agreed to cooperate with the American Hotel and Lodging Institute to develop the country's skill base.

Marketing remains a developing art, especially in terms of the positioning and branding of the country, although it's expected that the international hotel and spa operators will make a significant contribution to improving awareness in this area.

As a traditional crossroads between Europe and Asia, and meeting place of cultures, the country's heritage has major international appeal, as does its environmental wealth and diversity – it straddles 11 of the earth's climatic zones creating extraordinary biodiversity and natural resources. Rural and eco-tourism have become interesting themes for recent development, with some projects being supported by international donor aid programmes.

The arrival of globally recognised hotel brands and an international-

standard spa and wellness product is certainly proving to be a successful repositioning strategy as a high-class destination. It is an approach that has captured consumer and media interest, yet there remains much more to be done to consolidate and create a rounded tourism offer.

### A POSITIVE OUTLOOK

Nonetheless, Euromonitor International's Azerbaijan Report 2011, unveiled at the UK's World Travel Market in November, has a positive outlook on the country's tourism sector that's driven by the revenues from the oil industry and sits comfortably with the diversification of one of the world's fastest growing economies. According to the report, the glut of international luxury resorts in Baku appears to be modelled on Dubai with "extravagant, futuristic, luxury hotel resorts including the Hotel Full Moon, Crescent Moon [Kempinski] and Flame Towers [Fairmont] with its ESPA Life spa."

The most extravagant project, according to the report, is the concept planned for Nargin Island, a former communist-era prison. It has been reported online that the 1sq km island, 14km off Baku's coast,

is set to host a luxury resort encompassing 300 villas and a number of hotels, and will include seven glass and metal structures modelled on Azerbaijan's northern mountain range. Finance for the development, known as Zira Zero Island, is slated to come from the AvroCityHolding Group with the Denmark architectural firm Bjarke Ingels Group leading its design.

High levels of business travel and the seductive appeal of an ancient yet thoroughly modernised city is an intoxicating cocktail in which to grow an innovative spa product. Although the high yielding business and leisure travel constitutes a relatively small proportion of the one million or so international arrivals, there are people for whom an interesting, quality, spa and wellness experience is much sought after.

Recent reports from Azerbaijan suggest that the country has extraordinary ambitions to grow international arrivals to a staggering 20 million in 30 years. This will be a challenge, but at a time when the UN World Tourism Organization is predicting global international tourism arrivals will grow from 1 billion in 2011 to 1.8 billion by 2030, who's to argue against Azerbaijan securing a portion of this growth? ●



# MIXED FLAVOURS

Julie Cramer takes a look at some innovative dining concepts that are attracting attention in Europe and the US



■ Disappearing Dining Club venues have included a mini department store, a converted railway arch and an art gallery

## Disappearing Dining Club

Like grand spaces, raw spaces, old spaces, new spaces, up high in the air spaces, or deep underground spaces," claims the website of the 'secret' eating concept called the Disappearing Dining Club. Tapping into the growing popularity for innovative 'pop-up' concepts which appear in unexpected places, thrill and entertain their customers and then disappear again, DDC is the culinary equivalent of another London-based entertainment concept called Secret Cinema (see Leisure Management 2011, Issue 3).

The company throws dinner and dance parties in venues such as empty warehouses, isolated rooftops and secret gardens throughout the year, as well as hosting private events, wedding parties, and art and music shows. It also maintains a semi-permanent dining space which changes periodically (a new venue is due to open in east London in the next few months).

The DDC's monthly Dinner Dance offering is targeted at groups of friends who want a unique and quality dining experience while also having

the opportunity to meet and mingle with new people. At a cost of around £50 per head guests get a welcome glass of bubbly and canapés, followed by a four course meal.

A Scandinavian-inspired event recently featured a menu of Ballotine

"It really builds the anticipation if people have to go through an old shop or down an alley to find us"

of Gravd Lax with Smoked Cod's Roe & Guinness Bread, Roast Beef Rib, Baltic Hot Pot & Edwin's Mustard Relish, followed by Lingonberry Pannacotta. Another event was held in a four-storey department store in London's East End, where guests ate a different dinner course on each floor, while enjoying a range of music and entertainment.

The company also offers a selection of private dining rooms where it can cater for a minimum of eight and a maximum of 250 guests. These

random spaces are converted into restaurants for the night, and could be anything from basements and lofts around London to converted take-away restaurants, clothes shops and laundrettes.

DDC is the brainchild of Stuart Langley, who has a background in bars, restaurants, private members' clubs, events and festivals. He says: "We held our first dinner party in October 2010 and I invited 30 friends. For our second event, those 30 friends brought 30 of their friends, and for our third event, we didn't know any of our guests."

Since then, he says, the business has gone from strength to strength. Working with business partner and Danish chef, Fred Bolin, Langley now runs two regular monthly events, and two to three private dining experiences per week.

"We're constantly searching for unusual venues," says Langley. "It really builds the anticipation if people have to go through an old shop or down a long alley to find us. Our business is all about the food and the spaces, and what happens when people come together to share the experience."



■ Umamicatessen features the PIGG restaurant, Umami Burger, a deli, a doughnut menu, a coffee bar and a separate liquor bar

## Umamicatessen

Opened at the start of March in Los Angeles, Umamicatessen features a range of eating concepts under one roof, inspired by international street bazaars and the classic American delicatessen. Developed by the Umami Restaurant Group, which operates the Umami Burger chain, the new venue takes the style of a 170-seat table-service dining area, with a bar and five kitchens run by different chefs from around the US.

"Part of the fun of the restaurant business is the opportunity to collaborate with other chefs," says Adam Fleischman, founder and CEO, Umami Restaurant Group. "Umamicatessen is a playground for chefs and those who love to eat. Our variety of menus will always be filled with fresh interpretations of comfort foods."

The new site at the Orpheum in LA features the unusual PIGG concept – a collaboration with Chris Cosentino, a chef whose restaurant concepts in San Francisco are known for transforming offal into haute cuisine. PIGG at Umamicatessen is a tribute to all things pork around the world, exploring different manifestations of pork



■ The Umami Restaurant Group also runs the Umami Burger chain

from different cultures and regions, such as hams, charcuterie, terrines and salumi. Cosentino says: "Adam [Fleischman] is one of the most forward-thinking hospitality entrepreneurs in the industry. We look forward to establishing Umamicatessen as a must-visit culinary destination for LA locals and visitors alike."

The expanded Umami Burger site at Umamicatessen, like its five other locations, is conceived as a "fine-dining fast food" experience, offering

house-ground meat, locally-sourced produce, homemade ingredients and chef-inspired burgers.

Like Heston Blumenthal in the UK, Fleischman – who is a self-taught chef and a food and wine entrepreneur – has pioneered the pleasures of umami (known as the fifth taste). Umami is a Japanese word describing the pleasant and savoury taste imparted by glutamate, a type of amino acid found naturally in kombu (a type of seaweed).

## Eataly

Billed as the largest artisanal Italian food and wine marketplace in the world, Eataly is a concept that allows diners to eat their way around Italy – without leaving New York City. Opened in August 2010, Eataly NYC is a collaboration between Joe Bastianich, Mario Batali and Lidia Bastianich of B&B Hospitality, and Oscar Farinetti, the founder of Eataly, which first opened in Turin, Italy in 2007.

The popular New York outpost has grown to be a magnet for Italophiles and food lovers everywhere. Covering a vast 42,500sq ft, Eataly is located in the Flatiron district in a former historic toy factory, and houses seven full-service restaurants, a café, wine shop, bakery and patisserie, as well as a culinary education centre. The marketplace also offers a vast variety of cured meats, cheeses, fruits and vegetables, fresh meats and fish, handmade pastas, desserts, baked goods, coffees and teas, as well as a selection of homeware and books. In the summer of 2011, the owners also opened a rooftop craft brewery and restaurant – La Birreria – which spans 4,500sq ft and offers site-brewed beers and al fresco dining.

Artisanal products which represent the finest in “quality, sustainability, affordability and responsibility” are core to the Eataly brand. The seven



■ Eataly is structured around specialised sales areas, including cheese and cured meats

Produce which represents “quality, sustainability and responsibility” is core to the Eataly brand

Eataly restaurants include Le Verduce (vegetarian), Il Manzo (meat), Il Pesce (fish), La Pasta (pasta), La Pizze (pizza), I Salumi e I Formaggi (salumi and cheese), and Il Crudo (raw bar).

The company goes to great lengths to ensure the highest quality sourcing. Food specialists have travelled to Montana to source Eataly’s Razza Piemontese (cattle breed), to Kansas for the finest Angus, to Iowa to

select the highest quality pigs and to Michigan for succulent lamb.

Italian gelato and pastries are made fresh daily by Luca Montersino, Eataly’s pastry chef, while visitors to Eataly’s Il Laboratorio della Mozzarella can watch as mozzarella is handmade by specialists trained in Puglia.

Three leading brewmasters from the US and Italy have worked with Eataly’s owners to create three brews exclusive to the more recently opened La Birreria. Copper-clad brewing tanks are set 30 feet from where diners sit under the New York skyline and, in a break from Eataly’s tradition, hearty German and Austrian style food is served. The three exclusive brews are cask-conditioned, unpasteurised and unfiltered and comprise a peppercorn wheat beer, thyme pale ale and mild chestnut ale.

B&B Hospitality has also made education a core focus with the on-site cookery school – La Scuola – offering a wide variety of classes led by Eataly chefs and visiting chefs, winemakers, brewmasters, artisan food producers and authors. Classes offered at La Scuola are said to go beyond cooking to focus on the “nutritional, sociological and scientific” aspects of food.”



■ Rooftop restaurant La Birreria offers beer and German and Austrian-style food



■ Customers choose what they want from the 'food boat' and then pay for their food by weight

## Tibits

Despite the vast array of restaurants in the UK capital, the choice for vegetarian dining is still limited.

One distinctive brand that has been slowly making its mark in central London is the Swiss-owned Tibits vegetarian restaurant in Heddon Street, which opened in October 2008. Co-owner Reto Frei says that it has taken time to build up the business, but there is now a strong following among health-conscious diners, and the company is currently looking for a second suitable London location.

The origins of the Tibits story goes back over a century, to 1898, when Bavarian Ambrosius Hiltl had to give up his job as a tailor due to ill health and decided to open a vegetarian restaurant. Seen as both an eccentric and a pioneer, Hiltl had cured himself of his ill health with his meat-free diet and was on a mission to convince others. Four generations later, Hiltl in Zurich is being run by his great grandson Rolf Hiltl and is now Europe's oldest vegetarian restaurant.

Far from being stuck in its past traditions, the restaurant has continued

to reinvent itself and offers a modern, interactive space with cool design and a busy social calendar. The site in Zurich now offers a cookery school, lounge bar, nightclub and healthy takeaway.

Reto Frei and his two brothers Christian and Daniel entered the picture in 1998 when they won a prestigious business competition in

"We are not driven by shareholders, we're driven by quality. We want to grow sustainably"

Switzerland with their concept for a stylish vegetarian restaurant serving delicious, freshly prepared vegetarian food from early morning to late evening. The award caught the attention of Rolf Hiltl and his wife Marielle and not long after a partnership was formed between the five to develop a new vegetarian concept for the 21st century. The result was Tibits, with the first site opening in Zurich in 2000 followed by another three sites in

Switzerland and a first international site in central London (a second site briefly opened at Westfield in West London but then closed).

Frei says that while the brand did not fit in the shopping centre environment, the Heddon Street restaurant has gradually built up a regular following, from office workers to theatre-goers to a celebrity clientele including Bianca Jagger and Stella McCartney.

The restaurant features a large food boat, where diners select what they want and pay by weight. "It makes the food choice very accessible and uncomplicated," says Frei.

Although not brought up as vegetarians, Frei and his two brothers have all chosen a vegetarian path for ethical reasons and are passionate about taking the brand forward.

Frei says: "We are not driven by shareholders, we're driven by quality. We want to grow sustainably."

"The brand is now attracting a lot of attention from countries as diverse as France and Germany, Brazil and Austria, but for the moment our focus is on a second site in London, possibly around Covent Garden." ●

# SPORTING CHANCE

**Despite the doubters, the 2010 FIFA World Cup was a massive success for South Africa. Almost two years on, Professor Terry Stevens looks at the World Cup legacy and finds out how the country is capitalising on its success**

**B**efore 2010, South Africa already had a good track record in hosting major sporting events, including the 1995 Rugby World Cup and the African Cup of Nations in 1996. The successful hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup really strengthened its reputation as a global destination for sporting events though, and added momentum to the development of tourism, especially sports tourism, across the country.

The first World Cup to be held in Africa was widely seen as a huge success, and ambitions and aspirations are now high. Will South Africa bid to host the 2020 or 2024 Olympics? Will the country be the first on the African continent to attract Formula 1? And what of the legacy? How will the country build on the success of the event and use it to boost tourism and attract further major sporting events?

## Using sport to boost tourism

The new Tourism Strategy for South Africa for 2012-2020 predicts double digit annual growth, more than doubling the value of tourism from R190bn (£15.8bn) today to some R500bn (£41.5bn) in eight years time. At the heart of this strategy resides the continued use of bidding for, and hosting, major sporting events.

Since the early 1990s, South Africa has used its sporting credentials to attract major sporting events as a strategy for developing tourism.

The 1995 Rugby World Cup was followed by the hosting of the African Cup of Nations a year later. 2004, the year South Africa won the right to host the 2010 FIFA World Cup, was the year Cape Town had hoped to be the host city for the Olympics. Providing the temporary 'home' for the Indian Premier League (IPL) during the domestic crisis in the Indian Sub-Continent was a particularly interesting and innovative move.

The 2010 FIFA World Cup and the IPL cricket highlighted the ability of sport to capture new tourism markets. The appeal of soccer to consumers in Brazil, Russia, India, and China was clear from the analysis of the 32bn television audiences for the World Cup, whilst the IPL finals perfectly targeted the Indian and – to a lesser extent – the Australasian markets.

The country is now re-organising its sports federations to maximise the potential to bid for a whole raft of international events. Professor Paul Singh, chief director of Client Services at Sport and Recreation South Africa – the national government department responsible for sport in South Africa – is overseeing the closer collaboration



The vuvuzela became the soundtrack to the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa

between sport and tourism within a national framework for growing sports tourism in a proactive and sustainable way for the next 20 years.

## The effects of the World Cup

The incentive to take this bold, focused approach is fuelled by the measured success of the 2010 FIFA World Cup; an event that changed the country in many ways. After the World Cup, South African tourism minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk said: "2010 was never about just hosting a tournament but about building a legacy for our country and our continent. We, as South Africans, believed, and the world came to believe with us."





**"Africa proved to the world that we can deliver excellence on time and in budget. Western Cape did its bit for sustaining the vision of what we can be as a country"**

The boost to tourism was clearly evident. The World Cup attracted 310,000 international tourists, who spent a total of R3.64bn (£300m) in the country. Tourists visiting South Africa specifically for the event stayed longer (an average of 10.3 days) and spent more than other tourists. The average spend per person during their stay was R11,800 (£987) with 30 per cent of this being spent on shopping, 20 per cent on accommodation, 19 per cent on food and drink, 16 per cent on leisure and 11 per cent on transportation.

The origins of the international tourists visiting South Africa dur-

ing the World Cup closely reflected the geography of the 32 participating teams; there was, however, a significant representation of tourists from near neighbour African countries. Over one third of all international tourists were from African countries (especially Mozambique, Swaziland and Botswana) whilst 24 per cent were from European countries, notably England (24,000), Netherlands

(9,000) and Germany (8,500) with 13 per cent from Central/South America and 12 per cent from North America.

Research by national tourism organisation South African Tourism has shown that the majority of the 310,000 international tourists whose primary reason for visiting was the World Cup had very positive experiences. Almost 70 per cent thought that South Africa was a great host

country, and over a half of those who had attended previous World Cups said that South Africa was a better host than the other host nations they had visited. Ninety per cent of international tourists visiting the country for the World Cup said that they planned to return to South Africa.

The 2010 World Cup took place in nine cities with Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town being the most popular with international tourists. For Durban and Cape Town, already major centres of leisure tourism, the event has further bolstered their market awareness, stimulated investment in major infrastructure projects and encouraged the development of new tourism products including hotels, restaurants, entertainment facilities and stadia.

The total investment in stadia by the South African government and the provincial governments totalled R8.4bn (£700m), over half of the R17.4bn (£1.4bn) total investment necessary to host the World Cup. Five new stadia were constructed for the event (at Cape Town, eThekweni, Nelson Mandela Bay, Mbombela and Pokowane) while five existing stadia were upgraded (two in Johannesburg, at Tshwane, Rustenburg and at Mangaung).

In the words of Helen Zille, premier of the Western Cape province whose government invested more than R13bn (£1.1bn) in making Cape Town one of the host cities and constructed the new Green Point Stadium: "Africa proved to the world that we can deliver excellence, on time and in budget. Our province did its bit for nation-building and sustaining the vision of what we can be as a country."

Cape Town attracted over 500,000 spectators to the 25 matches at Green Point, 580,000 people undertook the iconic 'Fans' Walk' and 560,000 took part in the various fans fests. The city saw 19,000 volunteers



The World Cup attracted 310,000 international visitors. They spent £300m in the country

recruited and trained for the World Cup, with 1,600 media encamped in the city. There was unprecedented levels of cooperation across all aspects of city life and governance.

#### The legacies behind the headlines

In July 2011, the Western Cape provincial government hosted the Sports & Events Tourism Exchange Conference in Cape Town with the main theme being an examination of the legacy and the lessons learned from the 2010 FIFA World Cup. The aim of the conference was to look at ways of building on the success of the event in order to attract more global sporting events and grow international sports tourism. The aim was also to ensure that the tangible and intangible benefits of the World Cup were understood and critically evaluated.

For some at the conference, the jury was still out on whether the World Cup was truly a success for South Africa. FIFA estimates that the event generated more than \$4.2bn (£2.65bn) in revenues yet the host country reaped just \$520m (£328m); internal reports



Members of the public in Johannesburg take part in the 'diski dance' – the official dance for the 2010 FIFA World Cup

suggest that middle classes (both white and black) did well from the event yet poorer communities gained little. In addition, the event was city-focused; urban South Africa – specifically downtown commercial areas – did well, while the suburbs and rural areas secured little real uplift. Also, while global sponsors and corporate activity took place around the event, much of the real benefits for these organisations was gained outside Africa.

For the majority of speakers, however, there was an overriding sense of collective positive achievements.

Marketeers, for example, spoke of the changing perceptions and relationships between tourists and the destinations they visited. World Cup tourists and the media become emotionally connected to the country and the host cities. Initial fears associated with fragile security and safety issues

**"Perhaps we should reflect on how much can be achieved when skilled and dedicated teams of people are prepared to overcome all obstacles to achieve a goal"**



were disabused. The media focused on the sense of place, the conviviality, and the passion of South Africans. Plaudits and praise flowed. The press reported on the seamless cooperation and genuine hospitality of the host nation.

Sports development and community specialists referred to the success 'beyond the stadia' especially seen in strategies using the World Cup to invest in rural and township sports facilities. These included the creation of new soccer pitches through the Dreamfields programme, the development of grassroots soccer, the establishment of 20 Football for Hope Centres in highly disadvantaged areas and the innovative 'whisper balls' created especially for deaf footballers.

Health specialists referenced the improved health facilities and skills of medical teams. Safety and security services were also improved and

effective policing and traffic management systems introduced.

Others celebrated the creation of more than 2,000 new jobs in road construction alone, the improvements made to the Cape Town International Airport by Airports Company South Africa, enhanced city design and public art and stimulation of new business start-ups and entrepreneurial activity.

Stories and successes abound (for more details read *Capeability* by the Western Cape provincial government – an excellent account of the Western Cape's experience of the 2010 FIFA World Cup). Equally, there will always be dissenting voices. Entering this competitive environment, successfully delivering on promises made and managing the legacies are always going to be challenging for any host nation.

South Africa did deliver. The world changed its perspective on the country.

International tourist arrivals continue to grow. New global events will be attracted to this tip of Africa – Cape Town has already secured the right to be the World Capital of Design in 2014.

Lets leave the last word to Dr Laurine Platzky, editor of *Capeability* and the Western Cape deputy director general of Provincial Strategic Management. "Arguments that the billions spent on the World Cup could and should have been better spent on schools, houses and clinics are valid," says Platzky. "But without the focus of a mega event, would the money have been used to educate our children, feed the hungry or restructure our city? Perhaps it would be more profitable to reflect on how much can be achieved when skilled and dedicated teams of people, driven by intense political will, are prepared to overcome all obstacles to achieve a goal." ●

# sense of achievement

When a mother decided to address the need for a sensory play centre for disabled children in Liverpool, she didn't let her lack of business experience stop her. Magali Robathan finds out how Jake's Sensory World took shape

**W**hen Jake's Sensory World opened in Netherton, Liverpool, at the end of February 2012, it marked the culmination of several years fundraising, and a lucky collision of Sefton Council's aims and one mother's desire to open a centre for her 11-year-old son and other disabled children to use.

The centre, which cost £480,000 to create, has a sensory room featuring bubble tubes, UV lighting, a water bed, fibre optics and projectors and a large ball pool. It also has a soft play room with interactive tunnels, interactive tactile walls, hopscotch floor panels and musical steps.

All areas of the play facility are accessible via a ceiling track hoist, and it has two disabled toilets/changing rooms with hydraulic changing beds and ceiling hoists.

Jake's Sensory World is part of the

new Netherton Activity Centre (NAC), which opened in January 2012. NAC features a range of leisure facilities under one roof, including a sports hall, a library, grass and synthetic pitches, a dance studio, health referral suites, an IT suite and a crèche.

## BIRTH OF AN IDEA

The idea for Jake's Sensory World was born five years ago. Mothers Jo Hall and Ruth Garrett met when their respective children, Jake and Kady, were babies. It gradually became apparent that Jake was developing at a different pace, and when he was a year old, it was confirmed that he had a rare neurotransmitter disease. This left him with complex needs, and meant that it was very difficult to find leisure activities to suit the whole family – he has an older sister, Lois.

"The idea for Jake's Sensory World

came about because there is hardly any provision for play in the area suitable for disabled children," says Jo Hall. The family often travelled to a sensory play centre in Preston, called Space, but it meant a long journey and only part of the facility was accessible by a ceiling track hoist, making the rest out of bounds for Jake and other children like him. "We wished there was somewhere in the area that was fully accessible for Jake, that his family and friends could enjoy too," says Hall.

Hall and Garrett formed a steering group to look into setting up a sensory play centre in the Sefton Park area of Liverpool. The pair applied for funding from various bodies, and got start up funding of £5,000 from both the Merseyside Disability Federation and voluntary sector infrastructure organisation Merseyside Expanding Horizons. They then carried out extensive market research, which identified a real need for a new play facility for disabled children in the area.

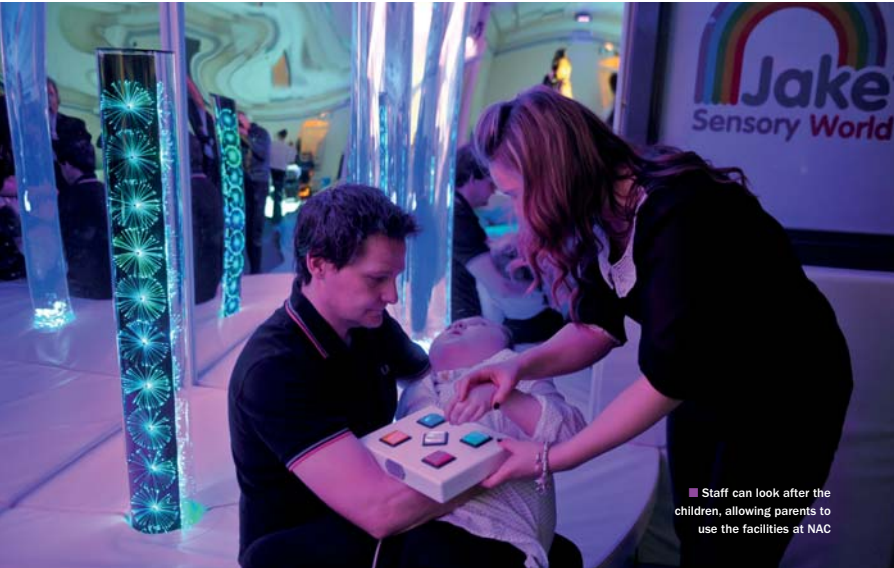
The charity, Jake's Sensory World, was set up four years ago, and applied for the necessary £500,000 in funding from Children in Need, Big Lottery, the Baily Thomas Foundation and the Cloth Workers' Foundation. Although they got through to the last round in several of their applications, and the Baily Thomas Foundation pledged £30,000, Hall and Garrett didn't manage to secure the funding they needed.

At this point, Hall admits that she began to doubt whether the facility would ever open. Hall and Garrett had a "last ditch attempt, writing to every MP and councillor that had anything to do with Sefton." In early 2009, Peter Dowd, deputy leader of Sefton Council and cabinet minister for Children's Services, said he was interested in the idea and wanted to meet them.



Jake with Jo Hall and Ruth Garrett (left); Children enjoying the fibre optic curtains (right)





■ Staff can look after the children, allowing parents to use the facilities at NAC

## VISITING JAKE'S SENSORY WORLD

Jake's Sensory World is open to children with disabilities and their friends and siblings. All ages and abilities are welcome. Parents and carers can visit with their child as part of a play and play session, or they can book the whole facility for private use or for birthday parties.

Prices range from £4.00 for a 90 minute session for under-5s to £5.00 for 12+, with one carer per child going free. The whole centre

can be hired for £60 for 90 minutes for Sefton residents, or £80 for non Sefton residents.

Jake's Sensory World is part of the new Netherton Activity Centre, which opened in January 2012. As well as the sensory centre, it includes a sports hall, a dance/activity studio, an Active Sefton fitness suite, a crèche, meeting rooms, an IT suite, a library, health referral suites, two synthetic turf pitches and grass pitches.

"Peter Dowd said he loved the idea and that he'd been getting feedback from the parent consultation days the council had been holding that this type of facility was urgently needed," says Hall. "He asked whether we'd be happy to work in partnership with Sefton Council, and how we'd feel about opening as part of the new Netherton Activity Centre, instead of as a standalone centre. As far as we were concerned, that was even better, as it meant it would be an inclusive facility, and families and siblings could use the other facilities on offer at NAC.

"We were happy to hand over the work we'd done up to that point. The council was very impressed, and asked us to come on board and be part of the planning team."

Sefton Council managed to secure capital funding from the government's Aiming High for Disabled Children pro-

gramme, and space was allocated within NAC for the sensory play facility.

### THE DESIGN

For the past year, the team has been working constantly on the design of the centre and an independent project manager, Lesley Knight, was brought on board to help with this.

From the start Hall and Garrett were adamant that the centre should offer something new in terms of sensory soft play provision.

"Most disabled children have access to a sensory room and soft play room through their schools or nurseries, but these can be quite repetitive," says Hall. "We wanted to create something fully interactive, while still incorporating the old favourites that all the children love, such as the bubble tubes. We added a Fiesta Tube, which is a waterless version of the bub-

ble tube, using colour-changing fibre optics. We also decided to include an interactive wall, so that large images can be projected onto it. This acts as a multi-sensory theatre, and means that we can customise the room."

An Omni-Vista projection system was used, with a Solar 250 projector. Other features of the centre include a Jellyfish Fountain, with dozens of sparkling, colour-changing fibre optics; bubble columns; interactive Ladder Lights, with different coloured 'rungs' and masks; a waterbed; aroma diffusers and oils; fibre optic curtains; and a ball pool with colour changing floor.

Seeing the centre open, says Hall, was amazing. "It was a dream that became a reality. Our children have always had to fit in and make do. To finally have somewhere that is fully inclusive and tailor made to suit their needs is the best feeling ever." ●





# STUDYING HEALTH

Improving men's health and tackling childhood obesity are high on the agenda at Leeds Metropolitan University's newly-launched Health and Wellbeing Institute. Julie Cramer speaks to Institute director Richard Hogston

## Why did Leeds Metropolitan University decide to launch the Health and Wellbeing Institute?

One of our key strengths is that our research is rooted in finding solutions that will have a real impact on communities and businesses. Creating the Health and Wellbeing Institute has brought together a range of related disciplines and made it easier for us all to work together and to generate and apply our research to even higher levels of excellence.

We formally launched the Institute in November 2011, with the backing of Professor Mike Kelly, director at the National Institute for health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) and Dame Carol Black, the first national director for Health and Work. Both of those endorsements were very positive in what we're trying to achieve.

## What are your target research areas?

The Institute has six distinct yet related research themes: healthy communities; health promotion; men's health; men, gender and wellbeing; nutrition and childhood obesity; and pain science and management. Each theme is led by a professor.

## What is the Institute's focus?

Leeds Metropolitan University's research foundations and strengths are rooted in the practical implications of research – ie 'the doing' – and the impact that research has on communities, which will be nurtured through our work here at the Institute.

We've always ensured our research focus is outward-facing into the community, as opposed to us being a group of unknown academics who are never seen outside the university.

## What kind of projects do you undertake?

One local project involved a health campaign with Leeds Rhinos rugby club and the Department of Health at Headingley Stadium. Health MOTs and obesity checks were offered to thousands of fans on match days during the rugby season. This is a key way our research into health – and particularly men's health in this instance – can make a difference in the community.

We've also been involved with a similar project for several years promoting men's health at Premier League football clubs (see p56), and have published some findings related to that.

Other projects we're involved in include research in collaboration with Natural England on the health benefits of befriending schemes for the elderly. We also have a long history of research in the areas of prison health, nutrition and childhood obesity.

We are much more focused on community-based work rather than on laboratory work and clinical trials.

## How many projects is the Institute involved in at any one time?

We would normally have around 20 research projects going on at a time, both at a local and a national level. We recently secured a big bid to look at the effects and cost effectiveness of peer-based interventions to foster and improve offender health in UK prisons, for example.

A major study, *The State of Men's Health in Europe*, was completed last summer, bringing together the official epidemiological data from across Europe. It was led by Leeds Met's Professor Alan White and funded by the European Union and it attracted a significant amount of coverage.

But we don't just look at national projects – closer to home we're work-



The Institute reaches out to men through sports clubs



Professor Alan White



The Institute carries out research into the health of individuals and communities

## We've really got to find more ways to reach men and women in their workplace and in places where they spend their leisure time and socialise

ing with the Hamara Healthy Living Centre in Leeds, which caters for black and ethnic minority communities, and Wakefield Council on a project which looks at area working, and a project in Bradford looking at the links between breastfeeding and obesity.

### How are you funded?

Most of the funding comes from grants that we bid for. Some of our work is funded by the university – but of course higher education is changing and an inevitable reduction in undergraduate students as a result of government policy changes will mean that income to support teaching is going to reduce.

It's a competitive environment out there, but we've worked hard to forge links with government offices and healthcare bodies locally and nationally and will continue to do so.

Also, the fact that our work is so visible within the community makes us more attractive to potential funding communities and partners.

### What is your day-to-day role at the Institute?

My role as director is to ensure that the Institute grows, and that it grows in relation to funding – funding is very important to our survival.

Another key task is external networking with partners locally, nationally and internationally. I also act as a director of research for the whole of the faculty – the Institute is just one part of the university's health research work, which involves around 250 staff.

### What is your background?

I am still a registered nurse, and have worked in Accident and Emergency and gastro-surgery. From there I went into nurse teaching in the late 1990s for two years before being headhunted by the Department of Health as nursing officer for education and training in Leeds. From there I became dean of faculty in social care at Hull University before returning to Leeds to become dean of faculty of health at Leeds Met and now the director of our Institute.

### What do you see as the main health and wellbeing challenges in the UK?

Clearly we have the epidemics, like obesity and coronary heart disease, which are not getting any better. There is a big gender element in relation to death rates, and many of those deaths are preventable, but so much more needs to be done.

Men's health is pretty bad. We know that in Leeds, only live an average of

13 years longer if you live in Weatherby [a relatively affluent area] as opposed to Harehills [a more deprived area].

Another big killer is mental health, which is still a taboo. The number of suicides is on the increase, but if someone has been to see their GP they are less likely to kill themselves.

Also, as a result of our work with men's health and the Premier League we're considering exploring how stress and depression is managed within sport – something that the recent death of Wales manager Gary Speed has highlighted.

### What do you see as the way forward?

There's a big challenge around how we're going to tackle the public health agenda. So many interventions can be undertaken at a local and national level, but I'm not sure the resources are there at the moment.

Take GP surgeries, which are traditionally open in the day from Monday to Friday, meaning that people have to take time off work to visit them.

We've really got to find more ways to reach men and women in the workplace and also places where they spend their leisure time and socialise, and start to deliver health and wellness services in a different way.

# TARGETING MEN'S HEALTH THROUGH SPORT

## PREMIER LEAGUE HEALTH



PHOTO ©SHUTTERSTOCK/RIIMAGES

**A** collaboration between Leeds Metropolitan University's Centre for Men's Health and the Carnegie Research Institute, Premier League Health is a national programme of men's health delivered through 16 Premier League football clubs. The three-year programme

is funded by the Football Pools and aims to improve the health of men aged 18-35 years through a range of activities delivered within a football context. Jim McKenna, Professor of Physical Activity and Health at Leeds Metropolitan University, answers some questions about the project:

### What does the Premier League Health programme consist of?

Activities are led by staff trained in health enhancement who are employed by the clubs. Activities include awareness-raising events on match days for supporters, programmes of weekly activities and sustained outreach work with groups of local men. One element of the programme at Newcastle United involves linking with men from the South Asian community in Newcastle's west end, in particular men employed in the fast food takeaway and taxi industries. Knowing that this group of men has a heightened risk of cardiovascular disease, health trainers run a local programme of badminton supported with health advice delivered in local community venues. To fit in with the work routines of these men, sessions are run between midnight and 2am.

### What is so good about delivering health activities through football clubs?

Initial findings show that Premier League Health (PLH) provides an informal and supportive environment to engage men, including those not meeting health guidelines and not likely to visit their GP. Our research found that fewer than 20 per cent of men reported taking part in sufficient physical activity to benefit health, while over a quarter smoked and almost half exceeded recommended limits for alcohol consumption. Fewer than 10 per cent visited their GP regularly, so taking part in PLH provided par-

ticipants with a means of receiving support with lifestyle issues. However the impact of the programme tends to be much broader than improvements in areas such as weight and blood pressure. The programmes run by clubs such as Manchester United aim to help unemployed men get back into work, for example.

### Is it only supporters of the football clubs involved who take part?

No, a quarter of the men were not fans of the club where they attended the interventions. This emphasises the broader reach of football in connecting with men on health issues.

### What are the strongest features of the programme?

Our research found that tailoring activities to the needs of men is important. The oldest participant is 75 and attends the programme at Fulham. For this gentleman, playing football was not appropriate, so the staff prepared a programme of physical activity that was more suitable for him.

All of the clubs are able to offer examples of men who have engaged the programme and flourished. An important ingredient is the ability of health trainers and staff delivering the programme to listen, plan and cater for men with diverse needs. Staff are not only helping men with poor health, but also those impacted by unemployment, family breakdown and substance use. Programmes are delivered in collaboration with local

**A final report into the Premier League Health programme will be published by the end of 2012**

partners, including PCTs, who provide opportunities for onward referral to specialist health services. The programme provided an opportunity for some men to confirm their health status and validate going to see their GP before it was too late.

### What are the wider implications for the leisure industry?

Sporting and leisure contexts provide an alternative channel to reach men with health interventions. Sports clubs, spectator sports and venues such as comedy clubs offer an informal setting. Interventions can be accessed in social groups; this helps remove some of the perceived risk associated with engagement.

Given that social support is an important element of changing health behaviours, leisure settings provide an arena where interventions may be developed. Activities delivered in a community environment at times which are more convenient may be more appealing to some men than traditional healthcare environments. ●

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# from madonna and russia with love....

**T**he recipe for Hard Candy Fitness Moscow: take one world famous superstar and combine with a global health, wellness and fitness company, in conjunction with the woman who's widely reputed to have brought fitness to Russia. The result: a unique health club that's firmly becoming a Red Square attraction in its own right.

Opened in December 2011, Hard Candy Fitness Moscow is the second collaboration between Madonna, her manager Guy Oseary and US-based New Evolution Ventures (NeV); the first Hard Candy Fitness club opened in Mexico City in November 2010.

For their first Russian venture, the Hard Candy Fitness team has chosen to work with Russian fitness pioneer Irina Razumova, founder of the Russian chain Planet Fitness and the woman who led the opening of the very first fitness centre in the USSR in St Petersburg in 1989. Razumova is general director of the new Hard Candy Fitness site, charged with overseeing operations at the club.

So, why Russia for the second Hard Candy Fitness opening? "Madonna has had a strong affiliation with Russia ever since she took her *Sticky*

## DONNA GREGORY REVIEWS THE NEWEST HARD CANDY FITNESS CLUB, RECENTLY OPENED IN MOSCOW, RUSSIA

and Sweet tour to the country, and asked the NeV team early on to focus their attention on finding locations for Hard Candy Fitness in Russia," says NeV chair Mark Mastrov.

### MADONNA'S INFLUENCE

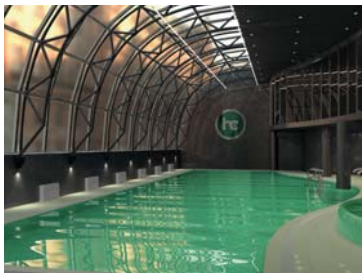
The 3,500 sq m (37,670sq ft) four-floor club is housed in an old mansion house in the historical centre of Moscow, near Red Square, and combines the grandeur of old downtown architecture with contemporary design and interiors. Thomas Sandell, principal architect for the project and co-founder of Swedish design company Sandellsandberg, admitted that his main challenge was marrying the traditional interior with the contemporary design.

But as Mastrov explains, Madonna also had input into the creation of the club from the very beginning. "From design to branding to programming and layout, Madonna has been involved in the process, reflecting her point of view on what the ideal exercise, dance and workout environment should look like," he says.

Once members have been greeted at the stylish reception area, complete with eight TV screens featuring a selection of Madonna videos, they have the option of popping in to the Hard Candy juice bar on the same floor. Awash with colour thanks to the chair coverings – with their swirling patterns of pinks, yellows and oranges – it instantly makes you think of all things sweet. The bar menu, developed by popular Moscow restaurateur Alexander Orlov, includes healthy meals, fruit and herbal teas and fruit cocktails.

Still on the first floor, we come to the women's changing rooms – decorated in shades of peach with mosaic tiles – which include a vanity area, showers and women's sauna, as well as access to the pool.

The pool area is a mix of industrial chic – metal and the colour grey feature heavily here – and cutting-edge design: part of the roof area is glass, which continues down the outside wall, supported by a lattice-style metal framework. You almost feel as if you



The men's changing rooms (left) and the club swimming pool (right), which features a 'chic industrial' design





In vogue: Madonna's stamp is everywhere, from interior design to classes



The juice bar is designed in bright 'candy' colours

are outside, yet protected from the elements. The use of emerald green brings warmth to the space, and the floor-to-ceiling glass-fronted pool balcony is a stylish touch. After a swim you can try out the steamroom, which is located in the pool area.

Madonna is waiting to greet you on the second floor. Well, not literally of course, but her presence is certainly

felt with two corridors dominated by very different images – one featuring a series of Andy Warhol-inspired pictures of the pop icon, with the other featuring a more traditional black and white shot.

The second floor is home to a traditional Russian sauna – known as a banya – as well as the men's changing rooms, a STOTT PILATES studio and a group exercise room.

## HARD CANDY FITNESS MOSCOW: THE STATS

### LOCATION

Hard Candy Fitness Moscow, B. Kislavskiy per 9, Moscow, Russia 125009

### ANNUAL FEES

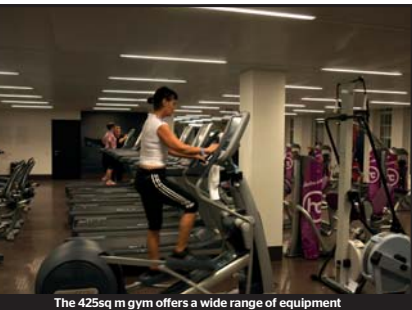
Adult annual membership – 12 years and over: 160,000 Rbils (£3,362)  
Corporate membership is available for groups of five or more: 120,000 Rbils (£2,521)

Children's membership is available from the age of six – 12: 36,000 Rbils (£755), but each session must be supported by a personal trainer at an additional cost

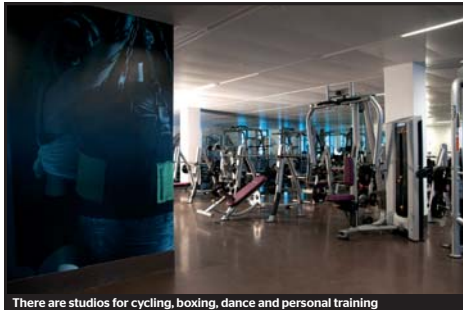
Crèche for kids aged three to five: 60,000 Rbils (£1,258)

## FITNESS PROGRAMMING

The concept behind Hard Candy Fitness comes from a belief that Harder is Better™, and the clubs are designed as places to work out hard – but also to relax in luxury, with full-service amenities. They are also unique in their focus on personal fitness through proprietary group training programmes. The clubs, programmes and vision are inspired by



The 425sq m gym offers a wide range of equipment



There are studios for cycling, boxing, dance and personal training

Madonna, and are brought to members by hand-picked Hard Candy Fitness trainers and staff.

You get the full flavour of Hard Candy's approach to fitness when you check out its exercise programming. Clearly the 'Harder is Better' mantra underpins the group fitness classes. With names such as Addicted to Sweat and Jaw Breaker, these cardio and toning classes are not for the faint-hearted. Not only has Madonna influenced the movements, but much of it is inspired by the same choreography and toning exercises used in her own fitness regime.

And as you would expect, the

soundtrack for these classes isn't exactly run of the mill, as Brent Leffel, NeV president, explains: "The music and sound is phenomenal. Hard Candy Fitness is leveraging Madonna's experience at the cutting edge of music, partnering with top DJs to create the right atmosphere to motivate members and provide them with an inspiring experience that produces excellent results."

Meanwhile, Hard Candy Fitness Moscow, along with Planet Fitness, recently became the first clubs in Russia to launch LaBlast, a partner-free dance fitness programme created by Louis Van Amstel, who is a pro-

fessional dancer and choreographer appearing on the American reality television series *Dancing with the Stars*.

### FITNESS FOCUS

Heading up to the third floor, the hard work begins again in the 425sq m (4,575sq ft), well-equipped gym. With more than 100 pieces of strength kit from Precor and Hoist, as well as cardio equipment from Precor, Oartec, Marpo Kinetics, Versaclimber and Concept2, this gym caters for every type of user.

Derek Burke, Precor sales director, says: "From our experience in supplying both New Mexico and Moscow, we know how innovative Hard Candy Fitness is as a brand – this new club's offering is just as impressive as the inaugural centre in Mexico. From its serious commitment to getting results for its members to its unique classes featuring movements designed by Madonna herself, Hard Candy Fitness Moscow isn't just another fitness centre; it's a whole different experience."

"The Hard Candy Fitness brand encompasses all facets of training, from cardio to weight training, and from functional fitness techniques to group fitness programming. Hard Candy Fitness welcomes all fitness levels and provides members with the most innovative and unique training equipment and programming available," adds Leffel.

As part of the club's ethos of all-round fitness training, there are separate studios for cycling, dance, boxing and personal training, all situated on the fourth floor. There's also a mind-body studio – equipped for

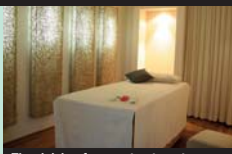
## FROM WORKING OUT TO CHILLING OUT

### THE GYM LOWDOWN:

- 100 pieces of strength kit from Hoist and Precor
- 41 pieces of CV equipment including Precor AMTs, recumbent and upright bikes, treadmills and EFX elliptical cross-trainers
- Versaclimbers
- VMX Multi-Mode Rope Climbers from Marpo Kinetics
- Oartec Slider rowing machines
- Concept2 ski machines
- TRX Suspension Trainers

### THE SPA LOWDOWN:

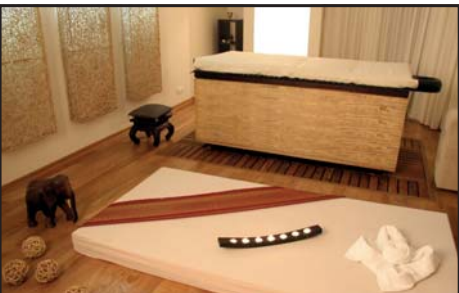
- Four treatment rooms
- Relaxation lounge with a selection of herbal teas
- Hard Candy Spa boutique selling a wide range of cosmetics and beauty accessories



The club has four spa treatment rooms

### SPA TREATMENTS:

- Ayurvedic treatments: Ayurvedic lifestyle consultation including pulse diagnosis, Abhyanga warm oil massage, Marma points massage, Shirodhara anti-stress warm oil treatment, Udvartanam herbal powder slimming massage
- Shiatsu and yoga massage
- Chinese acupressure
- Tibetan acupuncture and massage
- Manicure, pedicure, foot massage



The spa offers a range of Ayurvedic treatments



Thomas Sandell was principal architect on the project

## "HARD CANDY FITNESS WOULDN'T BE A SUCCESS WITHOUT MADONNA'S CONTINUED PASSION AND COMMITMENT TO THE BRAND"

members to practise bar work, body sculpting and the latest trends in yoga.

To help support members through this intensive training, the club offers a 'Fitness Concierge Service', which includes a personal fitness programme supervisor for every member.

This supervisor will devise an individualised programme for members that includes a workout plan as well as nutritional advice. The emphasis is on continued support, with supervisors reviewing clients every three months. There is also a club doctor, who members can visit for a health assessment and for diet advice.

### STRIKING A BALANCE

However, although Hard Candy Fitness Moscow firmly believes in working hard, it also provides members with the chance to relax and enjoy a bit of pampering. The club's Orient Express spa offers a full range of treatments including Ayurvedic massage. Members even get their own spa counsellor, who can provide personalised recommendations and advice.

With such a good balance on offer between high quality workouts and relaxation, Hard Candy Fitness Moscow is already proving popular. "Hard Candy Fitness Moscow brings a very personal approach to every customer's wishes," says Razumova. "In my opinion, what people generally lack is attention. There may be clubs with interesting design and good equip-

ment, but only with us do members receive very personal attention, which is so important to help them fulfil their personal fitness goals, achieve mental balance and relaxation.

"Our staff are trained to present the highest level of professionalism when it comes to fitness training, but also to make members fall in love with the club and long for their next visit."

### THE FUTURE

Later this year, Russia will get its second Hard Candy Fitness – in St Petersburg – and, as with Moscow, Razumova will be at the helm. Mastrov and Razumova have a long-standing working relationship and friendship. Mastrov says: "As one of the founders of the modern Russian fitness movement, Razumova is one of the best fitness operators in the world."

Going forward, the strategy of locating Hard Candy Fitness clubs in upmarket residential areas will continue. Natalia Kryuchkova, head of marketing for Hard Candy Fitness Russia, explains the rationale. "We look for strong demographics with high household income in cities where people will be able to afford a slightly higher price point," she says. "The intention is to create a business with high-end clubs in the best corners of the best cities in the world."

The world certainly seems to be Hard Candy Fitness' oyster where new openings are concerned, with the

team currently exploring Italy, the UK, Canada, France, Australia, Argentina and Brazil as possible locations. The team has a two-model approach: building new clubs from the ground up; or converting existing locations in conjunction with talented operators, investing alongside them to rebrand an existing facility.

"The Hard Candy Fitness model will evolve with our first five to 10 locations. While there will be brand consistencies, certain components such as design, services and amenities may change based on the particular location of the club and the culture of that country or region. However, each Hard Candy Fitness will have a structure to ensure a fresh, energising experience no matter where it's located," explains Mastrov.

He continues: "When it comes to launching a brand with one of the most renowned celebrities, you couldn't ask for a better partner than Madonna. Whether it's her hands-on involvement or undeniable star power, Hard Candy Fitness wouldn't be as successful without her continued passion and commitment to the brand."

With Hard Candy Fitness possibly coming to a city near you in the future – if you're looking for a fitness club where you can work out hard, experience unique classes inspired by one of the world's most famous entertainers and relax in luxury – then Hard Candy Fitness certainly won't disappoint. ●

# CREDIT WHERE CREDIT'S DUE

Over the next few editions we'll be looking at energy-related issues from utility procurement to renewable products. This issue, The Energy Desk's managing director Ian Edwards takes a look at the best way of getting credit to pay for energy use

**T**he global financial downturn affected all aspects of business and consumer life, including the energy sector. This has been particularly noticeable in relation to the issue of energy procurement.

Even an organisation with a high credit rating will wince at the prospect of a utility company's credit check. If you haven't undergone one of these credit checks yourself, you may ask why. For most the answer will undoubtedly be the same – the depth and detail of the credit check is incomparable to any other, and a poor credit rating can pose a host of challenges when it comes to purchasing energy.

Methods of energy procurement have changed significantly over the past few years. An organisation was once able to pay for the energy it used in arrears, but must now calculate projected energy consumption, sign contracts for anything from

two- to five-year terms and pay hefty deposits of three to six months to the utility company up front.

## POTENTIAL PROBLEMS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Your credit rating determines the terms of your energy contract, including the tariff, deposit value and contract timeframe. If you're a new company, without historical accounts, you will have little or no credit rating. If you have a high credit limit of £1m but your credit score from Experian falls below 51, your potential supplier will probe into your accounts, and this has become a common problem within the leisure and retail industry. Having a low credit rating will undoubtedly result in your business being tied into a contract on a higher tariff.

With the UK sport and leisure industry spending an estimated £700m every year on energy use, this can present huge challenges with the



The sport and leisure industry spends £700m per year on energy (Carbon Trust)

management of cashflow.

But providing energy is not without risk to the supplier. Utility companies will buy your energy up front and your credit rating is the only factor that can indicate the risk you pose to them. For example, a £500k spend on a three year contract adds up to a £1.5m energy spend that the supplier will have to purchase up front. If you have a low credit rating, you will – in the eyes of the supplier – be at risk of defaulting. Without a guarantee of payments, utility companies will risk taking on the financial burden should you not use or pay for the energy they have invested in on your behalf.

What's more, if you are unable to enter a contract with a utility company, you won't benefit from lower contract rates and your tariff could rocket to three or four times higher than the contract tariff.

Consultants and purchasing consortiums are, of course, in a position to speak to your utility provider on your behalf to negotiate the terms of

## Sustainabilitylive! • 22-24 May 2012 • NEC Birmingham, UK

At the heart of the Sustainabilitylive! event is a three day conference, which will examine the corporate sustainability agenda in detail. Key topics to be discussed include water efficiency, sustainability reporting, resource scarcity, supply chain management, employee engagement and the CRC efficiency scheme.

Speakers include Peter Madden, CEO of Forum for the Future; Dax Lovegrove, head of Business &

Industry, WWF; Katie Chapman, head of sustainability and reporting, Virgin Media; Eric Lounsbury, strategy manager, Carbon Trust; and Peter Bragg, general manager of Environment and Energy at Eurostar.

The Environment Energy Awards, which celebrate excellence and innovation from businesses and technology providers in the market, will take place on 22 May.

Details: [www.sustainabilitylive.com](http://www.sustainabilitylive.com)



## CASE STUDY COVENTRY SPORTS TRUST

In 2010, Coventry Sports Trust, which manages Coventry Sports and Leisure Centre, appointed Pureworld Technology Ltd (technology partner to The Energy Desk) to commission an energy reduction strategy to help achieve its target of saving 12 per cent of the complex's electricity, gas and water consumption.

With over 900,000 visits per year, Coventry Sports and Leisure Centre consumed an estimated 3,127,069 kWh in 2010, equating to 1,679 tonnes of CO2 emissions.

Built in 1966, Coventry Sports and Leisure Complex comprises two complexes: one wet-side including an Olympic size pool, leisure and teaching pools, two gyms, two exercise studios, a health suite and a crèche; and a dry-side complex with a 10-court hall, a bowls hall, squash courts and changing rooms.

Pureworld Technology completed an initial site survey of plant equipment to establish inefficiencies across the

facility. Following analysis of the building's consumption data, an energy reduction proposal was produced to outline the scope of works.

Devising a bespoke solution, the team carried out the scope of works, decommissioning equipment that was identified as inefficient and retrofitting upgrading technology where efficiency could be enhanced.

Integral to any energy reduction plan is the installation of the appropriate metering, which allows monitoring of consumption. An automatic meter reading system was introduced to provide accurate data.

The scope of works included the installation of a new building management system, optimising the facilities' boilers and air handling units. Variable speed drives were also installed onto the site's motors to control frequency and control electrical supply to its air conditioning systems.

Economical high frequency lighting was installed in the main sports hall, including dimmable settings and sophisticated absence detection tech-



**The energy reduction strategy is predicted to result in annual savings of £83,160**

nology to ensure the lighting is on only when the facilities are in use.

A variety of water conservation measures were also implemented including Save-a-Flush bags in WC cisterns, estimated to save 4,000 litres of water annually. Upgraded water management controls including aerated showers and the installation of a water meter to monitor consumption helped further reduce water use.

As a result of these changes, the centre benefited from electricity saving of 15.29 per cent, gas saving of 11.3 per cent and water savings of 15.5 per cent, equating to a predicted annual saving of £83,160.



CASE STUDY  
COTSWOLD LEISURE CENTRE

Cotswold District Council in Gloucestershire is committed to reducing its carbon footprint. The council's carbon management plan, which aims to reduce carbon emissions by 25 per cent before 2015, forms part of its Cleaner and Greener campaign, an initiative geared towards reducing the council's overall environmental impact. In line with this campaign, the council identified the Cotswold Leisure Centre as a facility where several sustainability targets could be met through a reduction in its electricity consumption.

Recognising that voltage optimisation – an electrical energy saving technique in which a device is installed in series with the mains

electricity supply to provide an optimum supply voltage for the site's equipment – can help lower carbon emissions and reduce energy costs, the council asked EMSc (UK) Ltd to complete a site survey to assess whether voltage optimisation could help it realise savings at the centre.

"On the whole, the National Grid supplies a higher voltage than is generally required," says EMSc (UK) Ltd managing director Dr Alex Mardapittas. "Although the nominal voltage in the UK is 230V, the average delivered is actually 242V. This 'over-voltage' means that energy consumption is not only higher, but as a result, the lifespan of equipment is shortened."

Voltage optimisation has also been shown to improve power quality by balancing phase voltages and filtering harmonics as well as transients from the electricity supply, leading to reduced maintenance costs as less



A Powerstar voltage optimisation unit helped reduce CO2 emissions

demand is placed on equipment.

EMSc (UK) Ltd determined that the centre could realise substantial savings by implementing voltage optimisation technology and a 286kVA Powerstar unit was installed.

The Powerstar installation helped reduce the leisure centre's direct electricity consumption – an overall energy saving of 8 per cent was achieved – whilst CO2 emissions were reduced by 54 tonnes. The council also achieved an annual saving of £7,800 on electricity costs.

## A number of financial products are currently being developed by suppliers and financial houses to bridge the gap when it comes to paying your energy deposit

- ▶ your contract and mitigate the risk to all parties. For example, a consultancy can tender out to suppliers and filter each one to find, not only the best prices, but also to determine any obstacles that you may face when it comes to accommodating the deposit requests of the utility companies.

### ADDRESSING THE CREDIT CRISIS

A number of financial products are currently being developed by suppliers and financial houses to bridge the gap when it comes to paying your energy deposit. Currently proving popular in the US is the utilisation of unsecured loans through merchant banks and if this solution is rolled out in the UK, it will provide finance to the trader to pay the deposit for the energy contracts.

Utility deposit bonds are also currently available for larger deposits of between £50,000 and £1m, though these often require extensive security checks, including an insurance policy and a bank guarantee. The advantage of this option is that the customer will benefit from a cheaper financial tariff on the back of the guarantee provided to the utility company.

Though the health of your credit rating is critical to your energy procurement, there are ways and means of ensuring that payment for utilities won't break the bank. Timing is everything. If you purchase your energy at the right time, you can tie yourself into a more economical contract.

Poor credit coupled with UK government pressure to reduce usage and carbon emissions is leaving companies with a difficult dilemma. With the deposits taking up so much of a company's credit limit, little budget is left to purchase energy saving technol-

ogy to meet UK government targets. In some cases companies have no budget at all to invest in consumption reduction equipment and systems. But there is a solution.

### TAKE CONTROL

Companies should not be embarrassed to discuss this with their utility provider. It is important to take an open book attitude with suppliers to ensure that a bank of evidence is available to support your accounts and to explain any anomalies.

The are emerging ways for organisations to seek funding for energy management and technology, enabling them to recoup savings to put towards further energy-efficient measures. The ever changing market is certainly one to watch. ●

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#### CASE STUDY KENDAL GOLF CLUB

**M**anchester-based energy management company NCS recently completed a major energy refit of the Kendal Golf Club in Cumbria.

NCS was selected to partner the golf club and help them reduce their energy use by 15 per cent within two years. As part of the project, NCS provided advice on all aspects of the golf club's energy management, including the use of lighting and heating, as well as reducing ongoing maintenance costs.

Kendal Golf Club is now achieving a reduction in consumption of 21 per cent on electricity and 41 per cent on gas, providing a return on investment in 18 months.

NCS helped Kendal Golf Club to

obtain funding via the Carbon Trust to implement the energy reduction project, which saw the installation of energy-efficient heating controls, as well as presence and light level controls. Inefficient lighting was also replaced with the latest design and technologies – with all parts approved for ECA tax rebate, providing additional savings for the golf club.

"We initially aimed to reduce energy spend by 15 per cent, giving a return on investment within two years. However, we have completely exceeded this target and the golf club will see a return on investment within just 18 months," said NCS managing director Chris Norburn. "The club was able to operate as usual during the implementation of new systems and the installation was carried out with the minimum of disruption."

"NCS has played a key role in enabling us to reduce our energy con-



The club has exceeded its targets

sumption and, as a consequence, reduce costs," said Ian Clancy, club manager, Kendal Golf Club. "Our club has a long standing history, providing golfing facilities for over 100 years, and we're proud to boast the latest in energy efficient technology."

NCS will continue to work with Kendal Golf Club throughout 2012 to ensure the energy reduction currently being realised is maintained.

#### CASE STUDY STANNINGLEY SPORTS & AMATEUR RUGBY LEAGUE CLUB

**W**hen the management at Stanningley Sports & Amateur Rugby League Club in Leeds decided they wanted to free up some funds to invest in a new irrigation system, finding spare capital was a problem. Club administrator, Jon Norfolk, soon realised that cutting the club's energy bills was a simple way of saving money and becoming more energy efficient.

The £1.5m club has substantial energy overheads, and Norfolk knew that he needed to find a way of reducing energy use without compromising on functionality.

In order to understand where the club is using energy, Norfolk has just started using British Gas's Business Energy Insight, an online service which shows businesses how, when and where they are using electricity. With the help of smart meters, which



The club uses smart meters together with Business Energy Insight

accurately monitor how much energy is being used, businesses can put an end to estimated bills by only paying for the electricity they use.

The service provides an online dashboard, which displays energy consumption in pounds and pence, putting businesses in control of their costs. It also provides support from account executives trained to help customers implement energy saving measures.

Floodlights are one of the club's biggest energy outputs. As the club is

home ground for 19 teams of all ages, the floodlights can be on for 15 hours a week during winter.

"There are a number of changes Norfolk can implement today if he wants to start reducing Stanningley's consumption," says Dr Angela Needle, head of Energy Consultancy at British Gas. "Simply switching off car parking lights when they aren't needed could save a substantial amount. Vending machines also consume a surprising amount when left switched on overnight."

"One of the main ways Norfolk could cut costs is by installing energy efficient lights. Compact fluorescents or LED lamps use up to 80 per cent less energy than tungsten GLS lamps. In addition, when used indoors they don't need to be replaced as often, and, because these lights generate less heat, they put less strain on air conditioning systems. Also, to make sure his showers are as efficient as possible, Norfolk should check that stored hot water temperature is kept at 60°C, which is the optimum."

The growth of the low cost gym sector is giving the health and fitness market a boost, finds Sheffield Hallam University's *Leisure Forecast* report. Themis Kokolakis explains the findings

# LOW COST FITNESS

**A** supply-induced expansion is the basis for a significant improvement in the fortunes of health and fitness operators despite the uncertain economic environment in the UK and Europe.

In 2012, the health and fitness market is expected to reach £2,265m (US\$3,596m, £2,707m) in value, representing an increase of 2 per cent in real terms. This is mainly measured by the number of members or participants. During the period 2011 to 2015, the market, despite its maturity, is expected to grow by almost 12 per cent in real terms.

## MEMBERSHIP EXPANSION

In terms of membership, the market is dominated by David Lloyd (450,000 members), Virgin Active and Fitness First. However, it is still open to acquisitions and consolidation – especially amid the current economic climate.

The economic decline, primarily in Europe and secondarily in the UK, has had a triple effect on the economics of health and fitness operators.

Firstly, low-cost operators have had an ideal opportunity for expansion; secondly, the big chains, with plans to expand abroad, have had to reconsider the risk against the expected benefit; and thirdly, the UK market, despite its

maturity, has presented an opportunity for expansion by US chains.

## LOW-COST BOOST

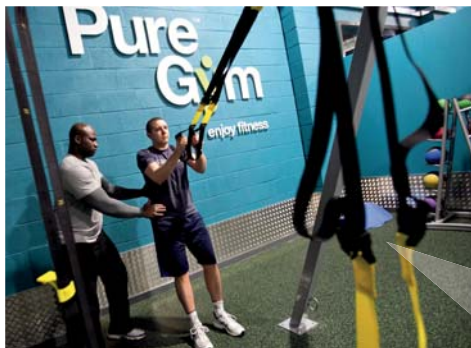
The sector pushing forward most aggressively is the low-cost 24-hour opening gym. Examples include The Gym Group and Pure Gym – low-cost operators which offer the use of facilities without a monthly contract and are open 24 hours a day.

Last year Pure Gym raised funds (£10m, US\$16m, £11.7m) to enable it to expand across the UK. It plans to open 20 new locations by the end of 2012, taking its portfolio to 45 clubs, while The Gym Group, with 20 clubs, is also fully funded to open 20 new sites a year for the next four years.

Budget gyms are faster and cheaper to build, which is the main reason for the interest shown by US chains. Plus, only three per cent of existing health clubs are in the low-cost category, so the potential is immense, not only for taking market share, but also for attracting new participants in the market. Indeed the initial reports are very encouraging in this regard.

Another significant development was the opening of the first easyGym clubs in Slough and Wood Green last year. The easyGym company has a policy of offering pay-as-you-go monthly fees without requiring a long-term contract. Its business plan is to open 10 clubs per year, although roll-out activity seems to have slowed.

*Leisure Forecasts predicts that the health and fitness market will grow by 12 per cent between 2011 and 2015*



A combination of market globalisation and adverse economic circumstances has turned the market towards cheaper, more flexible neighbourhood provision

Pure Gym offers 24 hour gym membership with no contract from £10.99 a month



The Gym Group, which already has 20 clubs, has funding to open 20 new clubs a year for the next four years

The economic uncertainty in Europe has reversed plans to expand by one of the most important UK operators – Fitness First, which is currently restructuring its debt and considering cutting staffing levels. The company announced last September that it had abandoned plans for a flotation on the Singapore stock exchange. Globally, Fitness First has 550 clubs; a quarter of which are located in Southeast Asia, Australia and Hong Kong.

#### FLEXIBLE FUTURE

A combination of globalisation and adverse economic circumstances has turned the market towards cheaper, more flexible neighbourhood provision.

Monthly rolling contracts are likely to become far more mainstream. Indeed, the involvement of US fitness clubs expanding in the UK is likely to have an effect akin to that of the 24-hour supermarkets.

Focusing on areas with a lack of health and fitness provision will bring about a significant rise in the number of first-time gym users. As a study published by YouGov Sixth Sense titled *Gyms and Health Clubs* emphasised, location is the most pressing issue affecting consumers in their choice of gyms. If this can be addressed by current neighbourhood-based programmes, the rewards could be significant. ●

US operators have been attracted by the possibilities for growth in the low-cost sector. For example, Anytime Fitness is planning to open 50 clubs in the UK and Ireland by the end of 2012. The company operates small neighbourhood clubs on a low-cost basis and offers 24-hour access to its facilities. Its business plan has identified small cities without any health and fitness facilities. So far four clubs have opened in the UK; two in Bristol and one each in Hemel Hempstead and London's King's Cross.

Finally, in the spirit of the much more flexible neighbourhood service provision outlined above, a new service called PayasUGym launched in 2011, utilising smartphone tech-

nology to locate gyms within an expanding network of clubs, where consumers can book and pay per visit without membership requirements.

The service was launched in London and is now operational in Manchester, with further plans underway to expand across the UK during 2012 and onwards from there.

Similarly Tone Leisure – a not for profit social enterprise – is rolling out Shapemaster's Feel Good Factory concept across its existing clubs in the UK, following a successful pilot period. The concept targets overweight and limited mobility customers. Leisure trust BH Live also opened a Feel Good Factory at Pelhams Park Leisure Centre, Bournemouth in March.

# Creating that sporting habit

The new Youth and Community Sport Strategy aims to increase the number of people doing regular sport, but does it go far enough, asks Mark Allman



**J**anuary is always a favourite time for government announcements, so there was little surprise that, after a lengthy consultation process, the new five-year Youth and Community Sport Strategy was launched in the first weeks of 2012.

The Sport England and culture secretary, Jeremy Hunt, has done much to try and ensure that investment into sport (£1bn over five years) continues in times of severe austerity. This is especially evident in the financial support for the School Games, funding from health and education, and the fact that he secured an extra 20 per cent of funding for sport from the Lottery.

Over the period of the strategy, £450m will go into NGB Whole Sport Plans, £150m into School Games, £250m into facilities and £250m into local investment. At first glance, one could be misled into thinking that this is simply a strategy for young people and sport. It is not, but it does underline an expectation that funding is targeted at this group if long-term habits are to be affected.

So what are the key aspects of the strategy? Sport England has indicated that the strategy should:

- See more people taking on and keeping a sporting habit for life.
- Create more sporting opportunities for young people.

- Nurture and develop talent.
- Provide the right facilities in the right places.
- Support local authorities and unlock local funding.
- Ensure real opportunities for communities.

By focusing on these points, Sport England hopes to see a year-on-year increase in the numbers of people who play sport once a week for at least 30 minutes (1x30). In particular, Sport England wants to see increases in the number of young people aged 14 to 25 playing weekly sport, as well as a reduction in the numbers of people dropping out of regular sports participation. The focus on 1x30 presents a clear opportunity to focus efforts on getting the inactive active and potentially opens the door to more productive discussions with health commissioners.

As part of its strategy preparation, Sport England carried out a consultation which highlighted areas the organisation needs to do better in. These included the need for:

- A greater recognition that NGB investment should be more conditional on results.
- A clear acknowledgement of the role County Sports Partnerships play in co-ordinating community sport at the sub-regional level, as well as a recognition of the need for greater consistency from them.

The Youth and Community Sports Strategy will see more than £1bn of National Lottery and Exchequer funding invested in sport

- Access to school sports facilities.
- Better connectivity of work across stakeholders at the local level, connecting NGBs at the local level and building strong local clubs.
- A local funding pot.
- A clearer understanding of the changing landscape locally.

The strategy has made clear commitments to try and tackle all of these issues. The detail is being fleshed out, but significantly CLOA, local authorities and operators are being better engaged in the process.

An estimated £1.4bn was spent on sport and leisure services across local authorities in 2010/11, well in excess of the £1bn invested over the life of the new Youth Sport Strategy. The challenge for the sports sector at a time when year-on-year local funding is likely to be squeezed is to work as one – public, private, volunteer and third sector – to maximise the funding available and join it all up on the ground.





Local authorities are perfectly placed to help shape services within localities but there remain a number of key challenges to be addressed.

Sport for sport's sake will often have little resonance locally. Talking the language of health, and understanding how to access public health and clinical commissioning group funding is essential. We need to be getting slices of cake rather than feeding from crumbs.

However, there is a question mark over whether local authorities will be able to maintain their current investment in sport and leisure services without sufficient incentive to do so.

Therefore, in terms of sports development, being able to show how local working helps to connect to, and draw down, national funding streams in local areas is very helpful. There cannot be a one size fits all approach. The relative priority of leisure services locally will often be different. The extent of reform at all levels also means that many of

We need to learn very quickly and roll out what works best. We also need to get better at marketing our services, using insight to understand what motivates people to take part in sport

the local stakeholders and their staff are trying to deal with a pace of change that is unprecedented, with a diminishing skill base and resources to do it.

In this context it makes the leadership role of local authorities all the more challenging, yet we must make significant forward progress if we are to grow and not merely survive.

NGBs need help in trying to translate and apply national plans locally. We need to all learn very quickly and roll out what we know works best and get better at marketing our services, using insight to understand what motivates people to take part in sport.

We are at a crossroads. The eyes of the world will be on London in August and there will be lots of questions asked about legacy. Will the same focus be placed on sport in 2013? Success will be borne out of a collective effort to work together, understand the changing world around us, prove our value and deliver results. On the basis of very recent discussions between Sport England, NGBs, local authorities, operators and county sports partnerships, there is cause to be optimistic. ●

*Mark Allman is a CLOA executive and head of sport at Leeds City Council*

Finding ways to operate more quickly and efficiently frees up time to focus on what really matters – customer satisfaction, says Grahame Senior

# How to make time

## Concentrate on solutions

**H**ands up if in this challenging climate you have too much to do and not enough time... Step forward if you find yourself not knowing what to do next and how to get it all done. This recessionary period offers all of us in business some pretty fearsome challenges.

The Sunday supplements keep telling us we are the "time-poor" generation in our personal lives – we are certainly time-challenged when it comes to operating our businesses. However, there is some hope and help if you approach it in the right way.

### Experience and necessity are both great teachers

I have been operating in independent business for more than 40 years and this is my fourth recession. Along the way, I have learned quite a few things about working effectively with the market to make the most of difficult times. I've also picked up some ways of maintaining and motivating the team during periods when they're faced with heavier workloads and tighter rewards. Some of these have been shared in recent columns but one thing I have not yet covered is what I have learned about self-management, time-management and working more efficiently.

### Time is money

Many of us face difficult choices in terms of marshalling our human resources and some of the luxuries of in-depth support on administrative and management processes have had to go. Many people running leisure businesses are having to do more personally, ensuring their teams are focused on the front line of guest relations and guest satisfaction.

Everybody is looking for value. That means that even if our bookings are good, our yield is under pressure. In many areas, particularly energy, utilities and public sector, operational charges such as rates and refuse collection costs keep rising. Many of us have been through the process of carefully assessing and rationalising our human resources and have done our best to shave some of the cost without damaging the quality of our guest services. It all leads in one direction – more to do and less time to do it.

### Making more time

One of the plus factors of these recessionary times is that people are more realistic about what is possible and



practical. Generally speaking, team members tend to be more flexible and highly motivated to be helpful and cooperative in changes in working practices.

One of the prime strategies for making more time is to get the whole team together and review the work-

ing practices – in particular, who does what. Send everybody a questionnaire about their working routine. Once you have all the results together, you can identify clearly where there is duplication of responsibility and waste. Cutting out duplication on processes can simplify things and, as well as making the business more efficient, it makes the working day more straightforward. You will often get some really valuable inputs from the team on this. They see what you don't.

Another strategy that can be very effective is to revisit the operating manual and bring it up to date. You are likely to find things in there which simply aren't done as written, either because they don't work that way or because things have changed. Removing redundant activities and sharpening the whole thing up helps focus on what is actually important in the current state of the business.

### Just do it once

This probably applies more to your own routine as a manager/proprietor than anything else but I have found it a very good discipline. I think we are all familiar with bad habits of equivocation. We look at documents or opportunities, consider options, get halfway towards a solution and then put the file down, getting involved in something else. Instead of tackling the problem, resolv-

## TOO LITTLE TIME? TRY THESE SENIOR'S SOLUTIONS

- 1 Cut down on meetings – increase on-the-job discussion.
- 2 Cut down paper communication – focus on e-communication.
- 3 Just do it once. Don't pick it up, put it down and wait for another day. Deal with it now.
- 4 Simplify business operational systems and ensure as much time as possible is focused on guest service and satisfaction.
- 5 Keep smiling at people and make time to say thank you to your employees. Have some downtime with the team.



The Bildeston Crown in Suffolk: "A very professional operation"

### Flexible, focused and friendly

Delivering real guest satisfaction during a difficult season - The Bildeston Crown, Suffolk

I haven't always been the greatest fan of The Bildeston Crown. On occasions it has seemed a little bit 'fashionable' – although fundamentally good. A recent visit in appalling weather answered any lingering doubts. It was a last minute booking for two. The rate offered was terrific value. We were shown to exactly the fireside table required for our meeting and precisely the spot in the dining room

we wanted to continue our discussion over dinner.

It was quiet (the village was suffering from a power cut) but the service couldn't have been more attentive and the quality of cooking was as good as ever.

Particularly memorable was breakfast; everything was presented exactly as asked for and with complete attention to detail. It is a very professional operation and we appreciated the relaxed, friendly and attentive way in which they dealt with two 'old crusties' in the deep mid-winter. It is a mark of a well run establishment to deliver top-notch service when things are quiet.

ing the opportunity and taking the action all in one go, we tend to pick it up, put it down and pick it up again.

If you resolve to 'do it once and do it the first time' it's amazing how much time you free up. It may sound like 'shrink-speak' but I recommend you give it a try. It works for me.

### Management by walking about

Remember business meetings – once the main driver of many hotel businesses? A combination of terrorism problems, airline difficulties, improved electronic communication and cost pressures have more or less removed them entirely from our calendar. It hasn't damaged business. Business executives still travel to deal with research, sales and relationship matters but the 'talking shop' meetings business has significantly reduced.

In your own business it may be that issues once resolved by meetings can actually be resolved by direct conversation. Talking to people on the job, walking through and getting involved in the processes as the action happens can be much quicker and more efficient.

If everything stops for meetings,

**Focus on the market,  
forget the problems  
and you will solve  
the problems**

everything stops. If the communication and decision making that took place in meetings is handled 'on the hoof', it can be more practical and efficient.

This ethic works in just the same way when it comes to the communication that follows meetings or decisions. Keep it simple and keep it practical – fewer words – clearer message.

### Communicate effectively

Use e-communication in a way that works. E-communication etiquette is much simpler and more direct than that of print. It's also a great deal quicker. Communicating with the team through text and email can mean messages are read instantly and acted on. To get the message across, make sure everybody understands what's going on and takes action; it is the best way

to work. It also provides instant recording of information and communication in real time without any extra effort.

Reorganising your communication structures so that you don't waste time distributing paper, engaging in redundant meetings or filing and recording means that everybody knows what's going on more quickly.

### What's it all about?

Quite simply, it's about cutting the amount of time taken up by back office and internal procedures and freeing up more time to focus on what really matters – guest satisfaction. Recessionary times create a climate of fear. It is very easy for a business to fall into the trap of focusing on its own concerns and affairs.

By concentrating on the problems we move further away from the solutions. There is a market out there, it wants to enjoy its leisure experiences at good value and with good human contact. Focus on the market, forget the problems and you will solve the problems. The more time leisure businesses spend looking after their customers, the more they will prosper. ●

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# There will never be a better time



Building new leisure facilities may seem like a luxury in these austere times, but Tom Pinnington and Chris Marriott argue that it can actually be more cost-effective than refurbishing ageing sites



It's been over a year since the outcome of the comprehensive spending review was announced. The budget cuts have been taking effect throughout the public sector, including leisure services. In the meantime many local authority leisure facilities built during the early to mid-1970s are starting to come apart at the seams. There are currently some real opportunities for councils to secure savings, while also improving the quality and range of leisure facilities for their communities.

## Rationalisation

Leisure facilities of around 30 to 40 years old tend to be clustered in regions; evidence of local authorities' unwillingness or inability to sort out their portfolios. These were built to suit different leisure needs and customer expectations. Many of them have been extended over time in a piecemeal fashion as and when odd funding became available. Facilities of this vintage are costly to manage and operate and are completely incapable of optimising revenue. The question is whether to merely refurbish them or to do the job properly and replace them.

Refurbishment of buildings of this age rarely provides anything other than a short-term solution and simply delays the inevitable. However, if councils consider their wider portfolio, there are often opportunities to rationalise provision, providing potential to reduce revenue deficits, increase income and unlock funding based on the potential revenue savings. The rationalisation of facilities doesn't need to stop with leisure. Increasingly, other services are being co-located within leisure buildings.

## More commercial facility mix

The choice of facility mix for any new facility is important. There will be elements of any facility that are 'a given', to meet community needs (pools being a good example), but there are others that can be added, removed or reduced to maximise the potential to generate positive revenue. A cold assessment of the financial sustainability of a sports centre will typically dictate that pool water should be minimised, as should sports hall space, while health and fitness suites, studios and five-a-side

up to community use outside school hours, the schools could generate a valuable source of income and local authorities could be relieved of the burden of providing facilities that are underutilised for much of the day.

## Low borrowing rates

Borrowing rates are currently at historically low levels. For those that can unlock the revenue, new buildings have never been so affordable. Prudential borrowing can be secured over a long-term at a fixed rate. While it's anyone's guess how long rates can remain this low, you can be pretty sure they are only likely to rise in the future. Why not secure cheap finance now and benefit from it for years to come.

## Competitive tenders for building facilities

The building contractor market remains very competitive. Competition is intense for many projects and the beneficiaries of this in recent years have been councils procuring new facilities. There are plenty of examples of good quality leisure facilities built at very competitive prices. This is set to continue for at least the next couple of years.

There are further opportunities to improve the bottom line for councils through outsourcing the management of facilities. With the quality of specialist operators and a very competitive market it is a matter of time before almost all of the community leisure stock in the UK is managed externally.

For many councils there's never been a better time to review their facilities and management arrangements. ●

*Tom Pinnington and Chris Marriott are directors at The Sports Consultancy*

Borrowing rates are currently at historically low levels. For those that can unlock the revenue there for the taking, new buildings have never been so affordable

football pitches all provide a far better return on investment.

## Unlocking existing facilities

Pressure on local authorities to provide large and expensive indoor spaces as part of a new facility can be eased by establishing partnerships with other providers of community sports facilities. It's great that many new schools now have good sports facilities, but few share these spaces with their communities. Many are the legacy of poorly written PFI contracts and an unwillingness on the part of operators to provide anything outside the narrow scope of the original contract. This has resulted in under-utilised sporting assets. If these facilities are opened

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