

LEISURE management

ISSUE 2 2009

VOLUME 29 NUMBER 2 £7.00

Big Ambitions

Building an 'indoor city' in Kazakhstan

James Balfour
& Tony Cowen

Launching Pure Health & Fitness in eastern Europe

Spiegelworld

Ross Mollison's tented circus spectacular
is reviving a 100-year-old tradition

Phil Redmond

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SPORTING PARTNERSHIPS

A Sport England conference, Building Partnerships that Deliver, was held at the QEII conference centre in London recently, to coincide with the beginning of a four-year cycle during which Sport England will invest £480m. The money will be delivered through 46 national governing bodies, in support of specific performance aims.

Sport England wants to see a million people playing more sport by 2013, as well as a 25 per cent reduction in the number of 16- to 18-year-olds who drop out of five key sports. There's also an aim to improve talent development systems in at least 25 sports and for the first time, plans to deliver a measurable increase in people's "satisfaction with their experience of sport".

Delegates heard Andy Burnham, Secretary of State at the DCMS, explain that the £480m comes with strings attached. The government is looking for "a new deal on how money is invested" and expects those in charge to pursue this aim with a "restless energy and relentless focus, challenging the way [they] operate and setting new levels of ambition". Sport England CEO Jennie Price reinforced this, saying money going into sport is "an investment, not a donation".

The industry must fight to prevent the closure of sport and leisure facilities due to the recession. Our non-statutory status makes us more of a target than most other areas of local government

The conference was designed to drive this message home and took delegates through the process by laying out Sport England's plans, explaining how success will be measured and how funding will be allocated. Excellent examples of good practice were also presented.

The message was clear and unmissable – hit your targets and you'll continue to get funding and support, miss them and refuse help and the funding will be stopped. Misspend the money and we'll want it back. To hear sports policy delivered in such direct and confident terms is a new experience. It's amazing how Olympic ambitions can focus the mind!

Price explained that most sectors monitor customer feedback, but that sport has never done so. New research will measure participants' satisfaction with important aspects of their sporting experience. Findings will be fed back into the system to steer policy and investment decisions.

Once the big points about money had been made, the conference moved on to focus on the other important message of the day – partnerships. Both Sport England and the government want the sports industry to work hard on collaborations to harness the power of partnership and avoid duplication of effort. The theme was fully explored, with discussions on how governing bodies can work with County Sports Partnerships, local authorities and the voluntary sector to ensure sport is at the top of the agenda across the board.

Price believes participation targets can be achieved if all parts of the industry hold up, however, her greatest fear is that the recession will hit local government and force the closure of facilities, resulting in a failure to achieve the target due to lack of access. This is a very real threat the industry must lobby hard to avoid.

In spite of the challenges ahead, the mood of the event was positive, with delegates only too aware that we're in a golden age of sport as we approach the 2012 Games, with funding at an all time high and the energy and determination to make the most of this once in a lifetime opportunity.

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buyers' guide:

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World Leisure

Walt Disney to cut US theme park jobs

The Walt Disney Company has announced plans for the reorganisation of its theme parks and resorts operations in the US in response to the economic downturn, a move which is likely to result in a large number of job losses.

It follows reports last month that the company offered voluntary redundancy measures to 600 employees within its theme parks division, although the company has so far not announced the number of jobs that are to be cut as part of its streamlining programme.

The reorganisation will see Walt Disney Imagineering being restructured. Disney's resort development division will merge with the group's attractions and entertainment development arm, while a single organisation will be created to incorporate the oper-



Disney has experienced a drop in pre-bookings for 2009.

ating infrastructure of both Walt Disney World in Florida, and Disneyworld Resort in California.

Jay Rasulo, chair of Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, said: "The long-term

success of parks and resorts depends upon our ability to adapt and innovate and respond to guest preferences. These changes are essential to maintaining our leadership position."

Tera Wellness expands in China

Tera Wellness Club, one of the biggest fitness chains in China, opened its latest club at the end of last year.

Located in Pudong, close to the Lujiazui Financial area of the city of Shanghai, investment in the new 2,000sq m Lujiazui club totalled RMB10m (around £1m).

Targeting expats, white collar workers and business people living in the area, annual membership costs RMB 4,000-5,000 (£400-£500).

Facilities include a Technogym-equipped fitness suite with a free weights area, as well as group exercise



The gym targets a high-end membership

and group cycling studios. The site also offers a range of leisure facilities such as table tennis and snooker.

Dubai's F1-X theme park put on hold

Middle Eastern investment company Union Properties has put the brakes on the construction of its Formula One World theme park in Dubai.

The multimillion-pound F1-X project — under development in partnership with the Formula One Administration (FOA) team — has been suspended until 2010 owing to the current financial crisis.

FX-1 is part of a huge 38 million sq ft (3.5 million sq m) automobile theme park called MotorCity, which will also feature the Dubai Autodrome, Business Park.

New tsunami museum opens in Aceh

A new museum, designed to act as a symbolic reminder of the Asian tsunami in which more than 200,000 people were killed, has been opened by Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in Banda Aceh.

Situated on the northern tip of Sumatra, the province of Aceh was devastated by the 2004 disaster, and is considered to be the nearest land point to the epicentre of the earthquake that triggered the destructive wave. The four-storey museum's ground floor has

been modelled on a traditional raised Acehnese house, which are built on stilts, while the first floor contains an open space, that will also allow flood-water and tidal water to flow through.

Visitors to the museum, built in the shape of a ship, will enter through a narrow corridor between two high waterfalls to simulate the effect of a tsunami, while a memorial room and exhibition hall are situated underground. A prayer room and a conference room have also been created.



The museum was designed as a memorial

Melbourne theatre opens

The new Melbourne Theatre Company's (MTC) theatre for performing arts has opened on Southbank Boulevard in the city's cultural precinct, in Victoria, Australia.

Designed by Ashton Raggatt McDougall architects, the theatre includes a 500-seat venue – called the Summer Theatre – a 150-seat studio for small-scale productions, two foyer areas and a box office. A 100-seat bar and bistro, created by Chris Connell Design, will open in March.

The project is a joint venture between the University of Melbourne and the Victorian State Government, which contributed \$14.5m (£6.5m, 7.3m euro, US\$9.2m) and \$35m (£15.7m, 17.6m euro, US\$22.3m) respectively.

The new larger venues will add to



The theatre has a capacity of 500

the company's facilities collection, which already includes the 850-seat Arts Centre's Playhouse and Fairfax Studio with 350 seats.

Late 2009 opening for The Setai

Designed by Robert D Henry Architects, The Setai development's 12,000sq ft (1,114sq m) Daniela Steiner spa will be one of New York City's largest private spas in a residential building, when it opens late in 2009.

The spa's water suite will include teak-wood chaise longues and marble platforms with glass-mosaic spa pools.

There will also be a tea lounge, four wet treatment rooms with large soaking tubs and deluxe showers, and a number of dry treatment rooms with leather flooring. A single treatment room will be set aside for signature



Facilities include glass mosaic pools

Daniela Steiner facials. The spa will also incorporate a fitness centre.

Other facilities will include a furnished, rooftop sky lounge, enclosed by floor-to-ceiling windows.

1,000th club for Anytime Fitness

US franchise operator Anytime Fitness opened its 1,000th club on 30 January. Located in Wake Village, Texas, the US\$240,000, 420sq m club offers Life Fitness and Precor cardio machines and Life Fitness strength equipment. Founded in 2002, Anytime Fitness now has clubs in 46 states, plus Canada and Australia, and almost 600,000 members.

Open 24 hours a day, the clubs charge an average monthly membership of US\$35 and offer top-quality

exercise equipment – including a wide variety of cardio machines, strength training equipment and free weights – with personal trainers also available by appointment.

"In two or three years, we'll have at least 2,500 clubs open in the US and another 750 clubs open internationally," says CEO Jeff Klinger. He also predicts that, by the end of 2009, Anytime Fitness will have more than 30 clubs in Canada, plus its first clubs in Italy and India.

Sports Museum of America closed

The Sports Museum of America in New York City has closed just nine months after opening.

The US\$93m, for-profit museum, may reopen if a buyer is found. If not, its collection will be returned to its owners or redistributed.

Paid for with US\$52m of tax-exempt Liberty bonds, US\$5m of taxable Liberty bonds and US\$36m of private money, the museum opened in May 2008.

The museum only attracted around 125,000 visitors – compared to a projected one million.

The board is now seeking US\$10m to cover its debts but efforts to restructure the bond debt, have so far failed.

Embattled Hard Rock Park finds a buyer

A newly founded company, FPI MB Entertainment, has agreed to acquire the assets of the troubled Hard Rock Park in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, US.

FPI has agreed a price believed to be around US\$25m (£17.9m, €19.8m) for the park and announced that it aims to reopen the attraction in time for the 2009 season.

FPI is a joint venture between Freestyle Park International, a division of MT Development of Moscow; Roundbox Advisors; and a group of local Myrtle Beach area investors.

The US\$400m (£267.6m, €287.4m) theme park opened after seven years of planning in March 2008, but closed after just one summer.



The 1,000th Anytime club in Texas

Commercial

BISL calls for nighttime economy boost

The chief executive of Business In Sport and Leisure (BISL), Brigid Simmonds, has addressed a House of Commons seminar intended to explore the nighttime economy in 2012, saying that cooperation is the key to benefiting from hosting the Olympic Games.

Simmonds said: "London 2012 offers opportunities to generate £2bn in tourism revenue for the UK economy. I cannot envisage the introduction of blanket exemptions in terms of licensing hours, but I think well worked out bids by the industry for extended hours should be looked upon favourably by licensing authorities.

"We currently only market to 26 or so countries and yet 200 countries send teams to the Olympics. Between now and 2012 many visitors will want to



Simmonds wants to increase support for the capital's nightlife

come to an Olympic City. However, the visitor experience in Beijing was not good. In contrast we need venues to be open late so that after events such as the athletics has finished, there is somewhere for visitors to go and enjoy

this great city safely and responsibly. The West End has some of the best hotels and a wonderful nightlife. There is clear and accepted evidence that international events can bring real and tangible economic benefits."

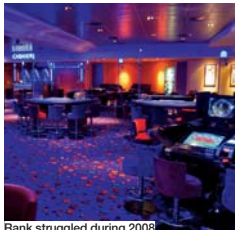
Revenues down by a fourth at Rank

Rank Group, operator of Mecca Bingo and Grosvenor Casinos, has insisted that it is well placed to weather the economic downturn despite announcing pre-tax losses of £26.1m.

Reporting its full-year results for 2008, the group announced a 23 per cent fall in revenues to £522.2m.

The company has struggled with the introduction of the smoking ban in 2007, as well as the removal of Section 21 gaming machines under the 2005 Gaming Act.

Rank Group chief executive Ian Burke, however, believes that the com-



Rank struggled during 2008

pany ended the year in a stronger position than many had anticipated, although accepts that 2009 could pose further challenges.



Andy Murray, sponsored by RBS

RBS to cut back sports sponsorship

Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) intends to halve the amount it spends on sports sponsorship by 2010 in a bid to cut costs, after reporting a loss of £24.1bn in 2008, the largest in UK corporate history.

The company has already revealed that it will part company with the Williams Formula One motor racing team when the current three-year agreement ends in 2010, while all trackside advertising for the Formula One in 2010 has been withdrawn.

In addition to the decision to pull out of Formula One, RBS is to review all other corporate sponsorship deals, including agreements with tennis player Andy Murray, equestrienne Zara Phillips and cricketer Sachin Tendulkar.

Council approves open air theatre plans

Scarborough Borough Council (SBC) has approved in principle proposals to take over responsibility for the redevelopment of the resort's open air theatre in order to ensure the scheme goes ahead despite the downturn.

The revamp of the theatre is currently included in a development agreement with Benchmark Leisure, which was appointed by the council in December 2002 to transform 55 acres (22.3 hectares) of land in the town's North Bay area into a major tourist destination.

Funding for the open air theatre scheme had been expected to come from the sale of residential units at The Sands development, but the recent decrease in property values now means that Benchmark is currently unable to meet all of the costs involved.

As a result, the council will now look secure a £3.5m loan in order to progress the scheme itself, and will also seek to appoint an operator for the venue.

It is hoped that the theatre will be ready to open in Easter 2010.

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Spa & Wellness

Chelsea Club opens spa

The Chelsea Club, a members-only health club at the Stamford Bridge football stadium in south-west London, has opened a luxury spa.

Operated by Chelsea Football Club, the new 500sq ft (46sq m) Escape Spa boasts four treatment rooms, a manicure and pedicure area, a relaxation area and an infrared sauna.

Treatments on offer at the new spa include a range of facials, massages, reflexology, reiki and body wraps, as well as waxing and nail treatments.

The treatments at the spa use Elemis and ONLY YOUR products. According to Lisa Butterworth, spa manager, the therapists at Escape Spa have been trained up by the products houses to administer the treatments, but the spa also has an ongoing training pro-



The spa has four treatment rooms

gramme for its staff. The spa is part of the Chelsea Club and aims to attract both members of the health club as well as the general public.

SpaFinder reveals top 10 trends

The top beauty trends to watch in 2009 have been revealed by SpaFinder.

The list combines beauty concepts and products from the spa world and is compiled yearly by SpaFinder Lifestyle Online Magazine.

Top of the list is multi-tasking, money-saving products, combining three or four beauty uses, such as cleansing, toning and scrubbing.

This is followed by a predicted rise in brand-name facialists, such as Kate Somerville from Los Angeles, US, who are becoming 'franchise-facialists' with treatments at spas besides their own.



Hammams – on the 'hot' list

A boom in skincare lines from facialists such as Eve Lom and Tammy Fender are also forecast. The report also predicts that hammams will be the 'hot' spa experience to have.

Spa and hotel to open within Bowood estate

A purpose-built 43 bedroom hotel and spa is to open within Wiltshire's Bowood estate.

Launching in May 2009, the Bowood hotel and golf resort's spa will have a swimming pool, a gym, rock sauna, crystal steamroom and aromatherapy showers.

A range of treatments will be available to hotel guests in their rooms.

The spa also includes a 90sq m health and fitness suite.

Bowood has been the Lansdowne family home since 1754. The estate's famous landscaping was originally designed by Capability Brown and the estate's house and gardens were first opened to the public as a heritage attraction in 1975.

New chair appointed for UK beauty association

Michael Thornhill has been appointed as the new chair of the board of the Hairdressing and Beauty Industry Association (Habia), the UK government-approved standards body for hair, beauty, nails and spa.

Thornhill's appointment was made by the Habia Board in December 2008 and he started in the new position in January 2009. He takes over from the outgoing chair Penny Turvey.

Thornhill has been a director of Habia for more than four years and is currently the chair of the Diploma Development Partnership that is developing the new Diploma in Hair and Beauty Studies.

Gentlemen's Tonic extends its brand

Urban spa brand Gentlemen's Tonic has been further extended in London with the launch of a new site within Selfridges & Co department store on Oxford Street.

The facility is the third to launch in the UK and cost £300,000 to build. Designed by David Miller Architects, the male-only spa covers a total of 2,000sq ft (185.8sq m).

Reminiscent of a gentlemen's club in design and atmosphere, Gentlemen's Tonic Selfridges is a continuation in

design of the flagship site in Mayfair. Interiors combine elements of old and new: wood, leather and marble mixed with music consoles and LCD screens.

It offers a range of facilities, including four private barber stations, three treatment rooms and an express room.

Two further London establishments are scheduled to be completed over the next year while another Gentlemen's Tonic will open in Bali in 2009. There are also plans to open a further three new sites in the US.



The new urban spa at Selfridges

Hospitality

Missoni rolls out UK hotels

Italian fashion house Missoni is rolling out a portfolio of boutique hotels, kicking off with its flagship property opening in the Scottish capital this spring.

The five-star Hotel Missoni Edinburgh opening on the Royal Mile in May will feature 129 bedrooms and seven suites, a bar and a restaurant as well as conference rooms.

The Hotel Missoni Jebel Sifah in Oman will offer 250 bedrooms and 50 apartments and villas when it opens in 2012. Additional facilities will include two restaurants, a 1,000sq m (10,750sq ft) spa, two tennis courts, a private beach, numerous swimming pools,



The Missoni in Edinburgh

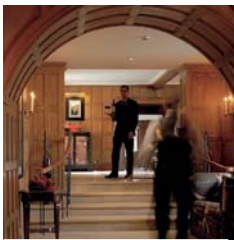
meeting rooms and a 400sq m (4,300sq ft) ballroom. Missoni aims to open 30 hotels over the next decade in partnership with The Rezidor Hotel Group.

UK hotels face toughest trading

UK chain hotels are facing the most challenging trading conditions in 17 years, according to analyst TRI Hospitality Consulting.

The firm predicts that hotels in London will experience a 10 per cent drop in RevPAR this year, followed by a further 0.5 per cent dip in 2010.

RevPAR is expected to decrease by 8 per cent elsewhere in the country in 2009 and by a further 2 per cent in 2010. This scenario is based on the UK economy contracting by 1.7 per cent this year and 0.2 per cent growth in 2010. The number of inbound visitors, which accounts for more than 50 per cent of London hotel overnight stays, is estimated to have decreased by 2.7 per cent in 2008 and is expected to drop by



Hotels could face a large drop in RevPAR

a further 0.7 per cent this year, according to tourism agency, VisitBritain.

Jonathan Langston, managing director of TRI Hospitality Consulting, said: "VisitBritain's forecast for inbound tourism in 2009 might seem modest in the light of the global downturn."

Plans submitted for London's six star hotel

US-based developer Thomas Enterprises is planning a £150m conversion of the Grade II*-listed former Port of London Authority building into London's first six-star hotel with spa.

The building, 10 Trinity Square, is part of the Tower of London World Heritage Site. Architect Woods Bagot has been commissioned to restore the building and to remove a number of 1970's 'insensitive' extensions as well as convert it into a 131-bedroom hotel. There will also be 30 apartments.

Thomas Enterprises acquired the site in September 2006 for £100m and a planning decision is due at the end of March 2009.

Hospitality workers shortchanged

At least 1.5 million workers, mainly in the hospitality industry, are still being cheated out of the national minimum wage (NMW) by rogue employers according to research conducted by the Trade Union Congress (TUC).

The report, called Enforcing the National Minimum Wage, claims that workers most likely to be affected are in London, the North West, Merseyside and the South East, and are employed in hotels, bars and restaurants.

Although £3.9m was recovered from law-breaking bosses in 2007, the TUC estimates that hundreds of thousands of workers still take home less than the law stipulates.

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Health & Fitness

Country Club Group to relaunch clubs

Privately-owned golf club operator The Country Club Group (CCG), is redeveloping its golf-only offering to incorporate health and fitness.

CCG, which has invested £16m in acquiring five golf clubs in the UK over the past five years, joined forces with former chief executive of The Club Company, Charlie Parker, following a strategic review of the entire business in 2007.

By redeveloping each site to include premium health and fitness, CCG aims to broaden the appeal of its clubs.

The first two sites to have undergone the transformation are the Cranleigh Golf & Country Club in Surrey and the Slinfold Golf & Country Club in West Sussex, at a total cost of £7m. Facilities at both clubs, which are set to open to



The Cranleigh site is among the firsts to open as a golf and fitness club

members by next July, will include a Matrix-equipped health club and gym, group exercise studios, tennis courts, an indoor swimming pool, health spa

and restaurant. A similar redevelopment at Mill Ride Golf Club in Ascot, Berkshire, has a provisional opening date of mid-2010.

Work starts on Nottingham centre

Work has begun on a new £6.44m leisure centre in Nottingham.

The new centre, to be built within the grounds of the Djanogly City Academy, will replace the existing Noel Street Leisure Centre.

Facilities will include a 25m swimming pool, a 50-station fitness studio, a sauna and a steamroom.

Nottingham City Council – which will operate the centre – and the Neighbourhood Development Company are funding the project, designed by Archial Architects. Work is being carried out by ISG Regions.



The centre will open in March 2010

The project is due to completed by March 2010, and the existing Noel Street Leisure Centre is expected to stay open until then.

Inverclyde invests £23m in leisure

Inverclyde Council has announced a £22.7m investment to boost leisure provision in the area.

The cash injection is at the heart of a budget package agreed by council members for 2009-2011.

The investment will be targeted on a range of projects including a new £10.9m multi-use leisure facility at Rankin Park; a £1.7m refurbishment of Ravenscraig Stadium; a £1.8m upgrade of Gourrock Pool; a £500,000 upgrade of Gourrock Park; a new £2.8m stadium facility for Port Glasgow Juniors and a new £2m pavilion at Parklea.

Crystal Leisure revamp complete

Crystal Leisure Centre in Stourbridge has benefited from an £800,000 investment by Dudley Council.

The facility's new health and fitness suite boasts interactive cardiovascular and resistance machines, a spin studio with Tristar bikes, punch bags and free weights.

A new reception area, modifications to provide easier access for people with disabilities and maintenance work to the centre's poolside area complete the revamp programme.

Councillor Karen Shakespeare, cabinet member for environment and culture, said: "The new facilities are absolutely fantastic and we're immensely proud of the range and quality of activities on offer here."

The redevelopment work, delivered on time and on budget, was jointly funded through a partnership between Dudley Council and the private sector health and fitness company Alliance Leisure Services. Details: www.dudley.gov.uk



The centre now has a new fitness suite

Sport

BG to invest in participation

British Gymnastics BG is ready to roll out its National Leisure Centre Participation Scheme (NLCPs) after completing a four-month pilot initiative.

The scheme is part of the UK national governing body's work to increase the quality and quantity of gymnastics provision throughout the UK.

The NLCPs's main objectives are to increase the number of British Gymnastics-approved leisure centres across the UK and the levels of participation within those leisure centres. According to a BG spokesperson, the initiative will be rolled out nationally in the build up to 2012.



The scheme will run up to 2012

Research during the pilot suggested that participation levels can increase by between 50 and 120 per cent in centres as a result of the scheme.

ODA launches 'ride or stride' plans

The Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) has announced that it will invest more than £11.5m in a scheme that will enable 385,000 spectators to walk or cycle to events at the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Two new walking and cycling trails will be established, while six others will be upgraded, to create a network of paths between Finsbury Park and Victoria Park, and from Epping Forest and the Wanstead Flats to Stratford.

Improvements to existing routes will include upgraded surfacing on both on-road and off-road routes, better signage and demarcation along shared walking and cycling routes.

Plans are also in place to create 5,000 new bike spaces in time for use at the



The ODA wants fans to walk to the venues

2012 Games, which will help to create a legacy of improvements to key walking and cycling routes between sporting hubs for future events.

The ODA's aim is for 100 per cent of spectators to get to the Games using public transport, walking or cycling.

Public health advice published

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence has published guidance on how to promote physical activity, active play and sport for young people under 18 years of age.

The recommendations are for people with a responsibility for promoting physical activity, such as policy managers, planners, teachers, parents and carers.

The advice is also aimed at individuals in the health and fitness industry who are tasked with developing future policies, schemes and training courses. The recommendations include delivery of a national campaign to promote physical activity to children.

Facility framework for North West sports

Sport England North West has published a 10-year Regional Sports Facilities Framework that maps the priorities and future investment in the region's sporting infrastructure.

Setting out the core facility development needs for sport across north west England, the framework will be used as a reference and evidence base for investors and project developers. The framework also highlights the key facility needs for a number of the most popular sports in the country.

Conducted by Strategic Leisure, the report's recommendations include the potential for the development of two Olympic-size swimming pools.

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Parks & Countryside

New wildlife habitat opens in Norfolk

A new 38-hectare (94-acre) wildlife habitat, established on farmland acquired by the Environment Agency, has been opened at the Welney Reserve in Norfolk.

The extension, dubbed Lady Fen, has been developed in partnership between the reserve's owner, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) to compensate for the loss of habitat caused by nearby flood defence work by the Environment Agency.

As part of attempts to create a new grazing habitat for wildfowl, the Lady Fen farmland has been transformed into an area of wetland through the excavation of ditches, channels and scrapes. Native grasses have been planted in the area, while a water-proof liner has been installed in order



The launch of the site aims to rejuvenate the area's wildlife.

to protect surrounding farmland. Environment Agency flood defence work on the Middle Level Barrier Bank of the Ouse Washes has involved the

installation of new concrete panels to combat recent erosion, but has also resulted in the loss of winter grazing land for wildfowl.

Notts waterways scheme underway

Work is underway on a £1.5m scheme to link the Nottingham Beeston Canal and the River Trent in a bid to improve access to Nottingham city centre.

British Waterways (BW) is leading the 24-week project at Meadow Lane Lock, which aims to provide a missing link between the existing canal towpath and Victoria Embankment, creating a green, traffic-free route for cyclists, boaters and walkers.

Improvements to the area include the installation of a wider footbridge, the creation of a public rest area, and a river viewing platform, as well as an



The project is led by British Waterways.

improved amenity building for boaters and the creation of more visitor moorings along the River Trent.

The project is being funded by BW, East Midlands Development Agency and Nottingham City Council.

National nature reserve for Wales

The Countryside Commission for Wales (CCW) has announced that Maes-y-Facrell, a 5-hectare (12.4-acre) site near Llandudno, has been designated as a national nature reserve.

Much of the site on the Great Orme on the north coast of Wales, has been fenced by the CCW in order to allow livestock to graze, which in turn will encourage some of its rich plant life to flourish.

John Osley, a CCW spokesperson, said: "Grazing is essential to maintain a short turf and a rich diversity of flowering herbs."

LDA's park plans called in by government

The London Development Agency's (LDA) plans for the £100m regeneration of Crystal Palace Park in south London have been called in by communities secretary Hazel Blears.

A masterplan for the scheme – drawn up by architect Latz and Partner, the LDA and Design for London – was launched in October 2007 and has been designed to guarantee that the park has a sustainable future.

Proposals include the creation of five new gateways into the park, improving

access, increasing the amount of public open spaces by more than 40 acres and the planting of 600 trees.

A tree-top walkway, an aquarium, tropical glasshouses and a tree canopy feature as part of the scheme, as well as the renovation of the concert bowl, the reconstruction of a former cricket pitch and a new pavilion.

A total of £14m has already been invested in refurbishing the National Sports Centre, situated at the heart of the park and is set to reopen in April.



The plans include 40 acres of open space

Attractions

Industry resists downturn

Figures released by the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA) have revealed that many of the top attractions in Britain saw an increase in visitor numbers in 2008, despite the economic downturn.

More than 60 per cent of ALVA's members said that they are expecting to either maintain or increase visitor numbers in 2009, as more UK tourists look to remain at home as a result of the downturn.

According to ALVA's figures, visitor numbers to Merseyside Maritime Museum and Tate Liverpool increased by nearly 70 per cent last year, compared



The British Museum saw visits increase

with 2007 levels. In London, the British Museum attracted more than 5.9 million visitors – an increase of nearly 10 per cent on 2007 figures.

Concorde visitor centre to open

A £1m Concorde Visitor Centre is to open at Manchester Airport's Aviation Viewing Park.

Work on the 68m x 38m glass, steel and PVC structure was due to be completed last July, but was delayed to December last year following the discovery of a colony of protected newts.

The now-grounded Concorde G-BOAC is the central attraction at the park, which attracts 250,000 visitors a year. The new development will also include a corporate hospitality suite, an education centre for school tours, an aviation exhibition and a restaurant.

The park is also a licensed wedding venue, so guests will be able to tie the knot onboard the plane. According to Geoff Muirhead, chief executive of the



The project was delayed by six months

Manchester Airport Group, the visitor centre is the first new building at the airport to comply with its plan of having carbon neutral operations by 2015.

The aircraft has been at Manchester airport since its final flight in 2003.

£12m visitor attraction for Ebbw Vale

Plans have been revealed for a new family history and genealogy visitor centre in Ebbw Vale, Wales.

The £12m attraction will be housed in an extension of the Grade II-listed General Offices building in Ebbw Vale.

The extension will also house the huge archives of the Gwent Record Office in a purpose-built, environmentally controlled space. These archives, which date back to the 1300s and cover more than 5km of shelf-space, will be fully searchable by visitors to the centre.

The heritage centre will include interactive exhibits, 3D technology and a large 5D cinema.

Ripon Workhouse nets HLF grant

Ripon Museum Trust has been awarded £823,500 by the Heritage Lottery Fund for the refurbishment of a museum at the city's former workhouse, one of the few visitor attractions of its kind in Britain.

The Grade II-listed building, located within the Ripon Conservation Area, will also undergo restoration work as part of the scheme, which will see the Ripon Workhouse Museum enlarged and upgraded.

Empty parts of the gatehouse will be brought back into use, while a number of items currently in storage, including a tale for children of a workhouse orphan girl, will be put on display using the extra space.

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Public Sector

£180m for Youth projects

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has announced that 41 youth projects across Britain are set to benefit from a share of £180m as part of the myplace initiative.

Funding will be made available to a range of schemes in cities, towns and rural communities across the UK in a government bid to provide young people with world-class sports, arts and education facilities.

Administered on behalf of the DCSF by the Big Lottery Fund, all myplace projects are developed in consultation with young people and the result of a partnership between local authorities and private sector companies.

Among the 41 schemes to receive a share of funding is Blackburn Youth Zone in Lancashire, which has received



A total of 41 schemes will receive grants

£5m for the development of a new sport facility, and Bradford YMCA in Yorkshire which has been awarded £5m towards a sports and arts facility.

New partnership for elite sport

Major organisations involved in supporting British elite sport, together with the organisers of the 2012 London Olympics, have joined forces as part of a new private-sector fundraising partnership.

A formal agreement has been signed by the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games, the British Olympic Association, the British Paralympic Association and UK Sport to raise additional funds for elite athletes.

The 'Team 2012' concept was launched in February by Andy



The scheme will fund elite sport

Burnham and will see a unique package of branding, access and events rights offered to sponsors in a bid to generate more cash for UK Sport's World Class Performance Programme.

Hotels Federation calls for more sector support

The Irish Hotels Federation (IHF) has warned that the failure of an Irish government recapitalisation scheme to deliver an increase in funding for the hospitality sector is putting 60,000 jobs at risk.

Figures released by Ireland's Central Bank reported a 2.9 per cent decrease in total bank debt to the industry for 2008, and the IHF has called for an increase in credit facilities in order to provide extra working capital.

Speaking at the IHF's annual conference in Killarney, County Kerry, president Matthew Ryan said: "Government efforts have had little impact on the availability of funds for the sector so far."

JESSICA to help regenerate North West

The Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) aims to establish a £46m (50m euro) Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas (JESSICA) holding fund to help regenerate the North West's urban areas.

A memorandum of understanding has been signed with the European Investment Bank and a JESSICA evaluation study of the North West will now be carried out.

The assessment will assess how funding can support the delivery of urban regeneration projects and how they can help the North West meet objectives set for the region by the European Regional Development Fund.

New plan launched to get Wales active

The Welsh Assembly Government has launched a new four-year strategy designed to increase the number of people walking and cycling as part of their daily lives.

A range of initiatives are included as part of the Walking and Cycling Action Plan, which it is hoped will contribute towards efforts to improve the nation's health and environment.

Included in the plan are measures to prioritise walking and cycling as part of public transport investment,

the introduction of national standards for cycle training, and ensuring that local authorities provide and maintain enough routes and facilities for cyclists.

Welsh deputy first minister Ieuan Wyn Jones, together with environment minister Jane Davidson, launched the new strategy at the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff. Jones said: "More walking and biking in Wales is a win-win situation on all fronts. It will ease congestion, lower emissions and address growing obesity levels.



The Assembly aims to promote cycling

Property

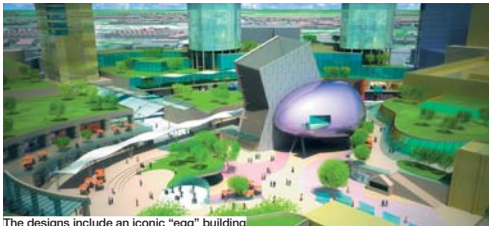
£1bn Coventry city centre plans revealed

Coventry City Council (CCC) has unveiled the masterplan that will lead a comprehensive transformation of the city centre over the next two decades.

Designs have been drawn up by international architects, The Jerde Partnership, following extensive public consultation for the scheme, which has been valued at more than £1bn.

The vision for the centre of Coventry, which will undergo its most radical overhaul since the postwar years, includes the creation of rooftop green spaces, open spaces and a waterway following the River Sherbourne through the centre of a new shopping centre.

An iconic egg-shaped building has also been included in the plans, although the design may alter at a later stage, while the event space at the



The designs include an iconic "egg" building

Coventry Arena has been reduced in size and brought down to precinct level to create a more intimate atmosphere.

Ken Taylor, CCC leader, said: "This is the biggest regeneration project in

Coventry for more than 50 years. The final design is unlikely to be an egg, but his design clearly demonstrates how important such iconic architecture would be to Coventry."

£850m Edinburgh plan approved

The City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) has approved an outline planning application for the £850m transformation of a 13-acre (5.3-hectare) site in the heart of the city.

Under plans for the new St James Quarter, the existing 1970s St James Shopping Centre and adjacent New St Andrew's House will be demolished to make way for a new retail and leisure development.

A new 150-bedroom luxury hotel, an apart-hotel, restaurants and new public spaces are included in the proposals, which have been put forward by



The £950m scheme includes a hotel

the site's owner, Henderson Global Investments (HGI), as well as a new multi-level retail 'galleria'.

It is hoped that work can get under way on the redevelopment by 2011.



The first phase includes a public square

St Georges plans submitted

Phase one plans for the £160m St Georges development in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter have been submitted to the city council by developer Chord Deeley.

The first stage of the 6.8-acre mixed-use development is the conversion of the Kettleworks, a former factory, into a residential and retail space fronting a new public square.

Over the next three to five years the scheme, designed by Wolverhampton-based Online Architects, will include the redevelopment of six additional sites within the Jewellery Quarter.

New features will include a £15m, 151-room Ramada Encore hotel and a 100-room budget hotel and 1,145sq m (12,230sq ft) of space for restaurants and bars.

Designs for Battersea change – again

The £4bn eco-dome designs for the Battersea Power Station in London are being re-considered after various consultations found the scheme to impede on world heritage views of the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey.

Real Estate Opportunities – which has a 67 per cent stake in the site's owner Treasury Holdings – appointed New York-based architect Rafael Viñoly to design the masterplan in April 2008. The design was based on a dome with a 250m-high glass tower –

reduced from its original 300m height in December – and would have been carbon-neutral.

Prior to objections from Wandsworth Borough Council, the mayor of London and English Heritage, plans for the 38-acre development also includes 8 million sq ft (743,200sq m) of residential (including hotels), office and retail space, as well as 500,000sq ft (46,400sq m) of leisure and cultural space. There was also to be a six-acre public park and an urban square.

designnews

project: panama city centre

design: watg

location: panama city, panama

Panama City Centre design unveiled

The designs for Panama City Centre in Panama City, Panama, have been unveiled by design firm WATG.

The project consists of two towers emerging from a podium structure that will feature a large spa and fitness centre with a swimming pool. The podium's facilities will also include a conference centre, a casino, food and beverage units and retail outlets. One of the towers will house a 397-room hotel, while the other will host office space.

The design will take advantage of dramatic views, with a fine dining restaurant atop the hotel tower and a rooftop nightclub with a VIP terrace lounge atop the office tower. A triangular-shaped blade will connect the roofs of both towers with a cascade of water running down its facade. A spotlight will highlight this water feature by night.



project: coral reef club spa

design: helen green designs

location: barbados

New luxury spa debuts in Barbados

A luxury 5,000sq ft resort spa has launched at the Coral Reef Club on the west coast of Barbados. Created by British designer Helen Green, the new Spa at Coral Reef Club is located within a newly-built two-story Colonial-style building. The spa offers four treatment rooms, each with its own private garden.

There is also a couples' outdoor treatment pavilion set within its own secret garden and a thermal suite with amethyst crystals. Other features include an outdoor hydro pool, a relaxation terrace and a manicure/pedicure zone.

project: water garden city

design: hok architects

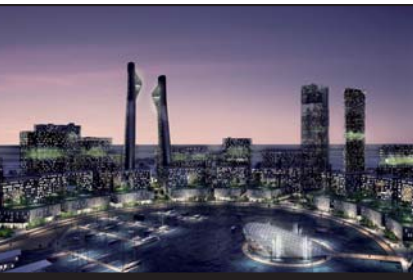
location: al manamah, bahrain

£1.2bn development for Bahrain

HOK architects have revealed the masterplan designs for the £1.2bn Water Garden City mixed-use development.

The scheme, being developed by Albilad Real Estate will include 23.7million sq ft of commercial, leisure and residential space, with four hotels, a private island spa and a beach.

Other features will include a marina, commercial, leisure and retail facilities for a community of 40,000 people, including a large entertainment centre in the middle of Bahrain Bay. HOK is working in collaboration with architects Scott Wilson.



project: MAXXI

design: zaha hadid architects

location: rome, italy

MAXXI ON TRACK FOR 2009 LAUNCH

Rome's newest art gallery, Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI Secolo (MAXXI), is set for a 2009 launch.

Zaha Hadid Architects have designed the museum to be reminiscent of an 'urban campus', a building that goes beyond interior spaces to include the entire city.

The project includes two museums – MAXXI art and MAXXI architecture – which will revolve around a full-height grand hall that connects with a reception area, cafeteria, bookshop, educational spaces, auditorium, live events halls, temporary exhibition galleries and galleries containing permanent graphics and photography collections. The design features complex shapes and overlapping dimen-

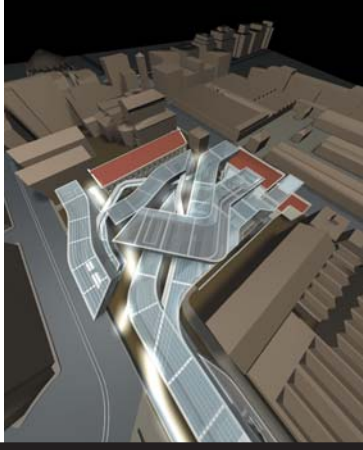


PHOTO © ZAHA HADID ARCHITECTS

project: aria resort & casino hotel

design: pelli clarke pelli architects

location: las vegas, us

Aria to launch in December

Aria Resort & Casino hotel tower, the centrepiece of the US\$9bn CityCenter mega-development on the Las Vegas Strip, remains on track for a December opening despite changes to other CityCenter components.

Designed by Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects, Aria Resort & Casino will feature 4,000 rooms and suites, a 150,000sq ft casino, fine dining and entertainment.

The changes to the 67-acre vertical CityCenter relate to the Harmon Hotel & Spa, and include postponing the opening of the hotel to late 2010 and cancelling The Harmon residential condominium component.

Other components still on track for December include the Mandarin Oriental Hotel & Residences and Veer Towers.



project: the bloomsbury street hotel

design: amrit singh/michael attenborough

location: london, uk

£25m makeover for London hotel

The newly-renamed four-star Radisson Edwardian Bloomsbury Street Hotel has undergone a £25m transformation, with new interiors designed by in-house team Amrit Singh and Michael Attenborough.

The 174-room hotel boasts a new seventh floor, and a new meeting and events suite with seven spaces, including the 300-capacity Folio room and HD technology with built-in Blu-Ray and touch screen controls.

Bloomsbury's literary past inspired the hotel's new reception area, which features whole wall of made up of pages from Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*. The property also includes the Bloomsbury Street Restaurant.

designprofile

real studios

project: the kasbah tamadot

location: atlas mountains, morocco

In October, Real Studios completed the design of six new luxury Berber tented suites at the Kasbah Tamadot, a Virgin Limited Edition retreat set in the former home of renowned antiques dealer Luciano Tempo. The brief was to create six private tented oases on a hillside to bring guests closer to the landscape without sacrificing five-star comforts.

Full-height doors and windows inserted into the suites' outer walls allow views of the Moroccan landscape. Real Studios used rich, Moroccan-influenced furnishings with a contemporary twist to create drama.

Three interior schemes were used for the fabric lining the tents – there are two pink tents, two ochre and two turquoise. Carved doors and panels, antique furniture and ceramics were sourced from local markets. Ancient craft techniques including henna-dyeing and Ajouze, a traditional form of quilting, were used on fabrics wherever possible. The bathrooms feature local white marble and mosaics, and Moroccan chandeliers and lanterns light the suite.

Each suite also has its own decked terrace, with an outdoor dining area, sun loungers, and a private plunge pool.



designproducts

From modern metalwork to a edgy wallpaper, we take a look at some of the new products on the market



LET THERE BE LIGHT

The Corin Mellor Stainless Steel Candelabrum has been launched as the newest addition to the designer's series of modern decorative metalwork for David Mellor Design.

The two metre-high structure is designed to be table or floor-standing, with 32 slim vertical bars and 380 separate handmade components overall. It rises from a solid matte black granite base engraved with 'O Lux Beatissima' ('O most blessed light') in Eric Gill's Perpetua typeface. It is available to order in a limited edition of six table-standing and six floor-standing pieces, in the clients' choice of colour.

The product was shortlisted for Best Interior Product at 100% Design.

Corin is son of designer David Mellor.

KEYWORD: DAVID MELLOR



IN THE SADDLE

New from Sommerville Scott & Company is the New Objectivity stool.

The stool, handmade in the UK to order, has a solid blocked American black walnut base shaped into a five-pronged hemisphere. The top is upholstered in premium saddle leather, handstitched and worked using traditional saddlery techniques.

The base is available in two finishes, while the upholstery is available in a choice of saddler leather or hair on hide in a variety of colours.

KEYWORD: SOMMERVILLE

PROJECT PROFILE

What do you offer?

We have experience in both exhibition and interior design, and like to think the two disciplines are very complementary. Our interiors have a strong narrative sensibility, and a sense of drama.

What other leisure projects are you currently working on?

Soft refurbishment of Kasbah Tamadot restaurant; U 534 exhibition in Liverpool; Shah Abbas exhibition at the British Museum; new exhibitions at the Old Royal Naval College; a major gallery at Massara, the children's discovery centre in Syria.

What leisure projects have you worked on recently?

The Vault at the Natural History Museum, UK; Stubbs exhibition at the Harley Gallery, UK; Alea, UK (right); Babylon, UK (right); Kasbah Tamadot, Morocco (left).

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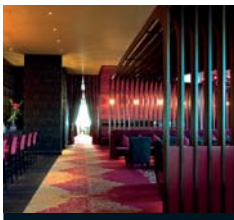
project: alea

location: glasgow, uk

Real Studios' scheme for this restaurant and casino uses Scottish art to evoke a sense of place, including a 14m-wide wooden wave sculpture referencing shipbuilding on the Clyde.

The first floor bar is decorated with mosaic tiles, while the main restaurant has a red and black scheme.

Real Studios worked with lighting-consultancy DHA and designed an innovative lamp for the gaming halls which conceals security equipment. The gaming floors have colour-coordinated gaming tables designed to a Real Studios brief by gaming supply company tcsjohnhuxley.



project: babylon

location: london, uk

In November Real Studios completed a refurbishment of the Babylon restaurant at the Virgin Limited Edition Roof Gardens in Kensington, London.

The new interior is influenced by Biba, the fashion brand which occupied the building in the 1970s. Dramatic wallpaper and a neutral colour scheme can be found throughout the venue.

The restaurant's bar has been completely refurbished, with antique furniture and a new bar with a glass front and champagne-coloured voile lamination. The bar's iconic fish tank has been moved to the washrooms, where it will act as a "dramatic view-through partition, evocative of Baz Luhrmann's iconic *Romeo & Juliet*."



WALLPAPER, URBAN-STYLE

Tres Tintas BCN has launched All City Papers, the latest in its series of innovative wallpaper collections.

The collection, influenced by contemporary urban art, has seven designs created by Inocuo Design Studio's Javi Gutiérrez, David Fernández and Txema Alguacil. The designs include the graffiti-inspired 'Mr. Ino', and 'Sara Palmer', inspired by Japanese florals.

Tres Tintas launched in 2004 in Barcelona, Spain, with the aim of revamping wallpaper design.

KEYWORD: TRES TINTAS

PRETTY IN PINK

Johanson Design has launched the Cabin armchair, created by designer Alexander Lervik.

The modern, Italian-influenced armchair has an outer plastic shell, creating a feeling of being soft on the inside and hard on the outside.

It has been designed with minimal external dimensions but generous space inside, and has been created to suit most environments, including lounges, restaurants and lobbies.

Lervik specialises in designing furniture, textile and glass.

KEYWORD: JOHANSON



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PHOTO: ©ANTHONY WELLER

The Lawn Tennis Association's National Tennis Centre opened in 2007 in Roehampton, UK

HOPKINS ARCHITECTS

Mike Taylor, director of the firm that won both the Sustainable Architect of the Year and Sport & Leisure Architect of the Year awards in 2008, talks to Andrea Jezovitz about work on the London 2012 Velodrome and the design for the award-winning National Tennis Centre

What stage are you at with the Olympic Velodrome project?

We were selected to design the Velodrome at the end of 2007 and since then we've been working very closely with the stakeholders to plan every aspect of the building and get all the approvals ready to start on site. So right now everyone is very excited to see the project taking shape on the Olympic Park. The team is currently progressing the technical details so we can issue construction information to our contractor, ISG.

What is the background to the project?

We won a two-stage design competition in summer 2007 which was intended more to find the best team to work on the project, rather than the final design. We were appointed by the ODA, and after engaging with the stakeholders we embarked on modifying our concept to suit the particular needs of the users, and coordinating it with the neighbouring projects.

What was your brief?

The brief was to design for legacy but meet the requirements of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. For 2012, this meant the covered 250m indoor track with 6,000 permanent seats, plus the BMX with 6,000 temporary seats; for the legacy, a one mile road circuit, and the off road mountain bike circuits.

What inspired the design?

The sport itself. We wanted to reflect the excitement of the track geometry in the external form of the building, so that it would actually look like a Velodrome! At the same time we wanted the same efficiency in the building that the bicycle has in its engineering. So we have a very lightweight roof that uses only 30kg of steel per square metre, much less than other velodromes of this size, and a building envelope which wraps tightly around the accommodation to minimise the area of external walling.

The project is very much about public involvement, so we have a glazed slot around the concourse where it's possible to view into the track from the park. We then wrapped the legacy road circuit around the building, so that after the Games the VeloPark will become a hub for all forms of cycling in London

Was environmental sustainability considered in the design?

Sustainability was at the centre of our thinking and we're using a number of measures to ensure it has a very high sustainable performance. These include very high levels of insulation, extensive use of roof lights to get good day-lighting onto the track, natural ventilation of the seating areas and water recycling.

How would you describe the design?

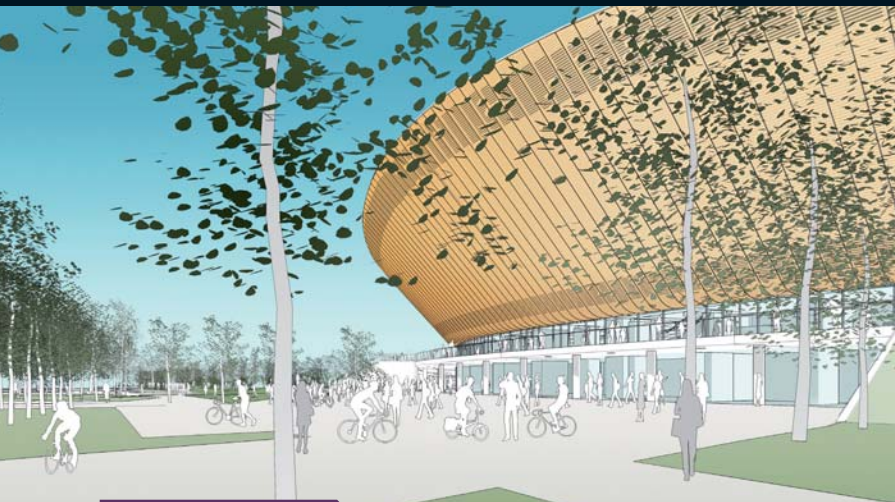
As an enormous gently curving wooden bowl floating above Olympic Park. The form is unlike any other building in London, so hopefully it will become not only a successful venue but a recognisable landmark for cycling in the UK

What was the biggest challenge of the design?

All other indoor cycle tracks only offer limited accessibility, because you can't put lifts in the track centre – they block the internal views – and the seating has to be very steep to achieve reasonable sight lines since the track itself is so steeply banked. In this design, we have overcome this by adding two accessible ramps that access the infield, and splitting the seating above and below a fully accessible public concourse that runs around the perimeter of the trackside seating. This will allow wheelchair access to all the most exciting parts of the building.

What's your favourite part of the design?

The track itself, because it is the focus of all the activity in the velodrome and is in itself a thing of great sculptural beauty. You



AWARD WINNERS

Hopkins Architects won the 2008 Building Magazine Sustainable Architect of the Year award, and the 2008 Sport & Leisure Architect of the Year award, awarded at the Building Design Architect of the Year Awards.

These came in the wake of a slew of awards for the Lawn Tennis Association's National Tennis Centre, which included the Best of the Best, National and Joint Regional awards at the British Council for Offices Awards in October.

have to see one in action from close quarters to really understand the speed of the of the bikes hurtling round.

You won the 2008 Sport & Leisure Architect of the Year award. How would you sum up your sport and leisure design philosophy?

Our philosophy in designing sport and leisure buildings is no different from that for the design of our other projects. We believe in clear and legible buildings, where the architecture is generated by the activities that go on inside. Obviously for sports buildings this varies enormously from one sport to another, and for any sport with an audience there is an interesting architectural relationship between the athletes and the spectators who have completely different experiences from the same building. We work very hard to make the design work for both groups and set up the right relationship between the crowd and the sportsmen. Understanding the sport in question and the crowd behavior that goes with it is crucial.

What was the brief for the National Tennis Centre, which won a number of awards last year?

When we started the project, the only requirements were that the centre should be an exemplary sports facility but not an ostentatious one. There was also a fixed budget.

In the beginning, the client had no fixed brief and did not even own a site! In the first two years we developed the detailed

The Velodrome project will contain a one-mile legacy road circuit wrapped around the building

brief with them. A very important prototype existed at Roland Garros in Paris, where the French had success training an emerging elite of fabulous tennis players. This centre included indoor, external courts and some residential accommodation.

What was the inspiration behind the design?

It was very simple: you should be able to see tennis from any part of the building or on the site. The game of tennis is at the heart of the project. Top players, children, administrators should all feel part of the bigger picture, and should be able to rub shoulders in the building. This needed to become the home of English tennis and a 'place' everyone could relate to.

We wanted to exploit the marvellous setting the site presented, and so the buildings are very inside / outside positive, with lots of daylight, views, etc.

You won the Sustainable Architect of the Year award last year. Do you keep sustainability in mind with each of your projects?

Our work strives to express consistent values when it comes to environmentally responsible design, whether it's a sports project or a children's hospital. For many years we've genuinely pioneered the cause of sustainable architecture and it was very gratifying that our contribution was recognised in this award. We believe that environmental issues need to be addressed in a holistic manner, and the resolution of this is inseparable from the overall architectural design.

What other projects are you working on?

We are currently working on several cultural and leisure projects including a new 55,000-seat stadium for the 2011 One Day Cricket World Cup in Pune, India, a cultural centre in Nicosia, Cyprus, which comprises three auditoria and public spaces, and a new multipurpose performance hall in Suffolk. ●

JAMES BALFOUR & TONY COWEN

James, the son of Fitness First founder Mike Balfour, and former Fitness First operations manager Tony talk to Andrea Jezovitz about launching their new Pure Health & Fitness chain in Poland



How did you each get into the industry?

James: Fitness First was founded 16 years ago by my father, Mike Balfour, and I worked for them at various times, but I had a career as a stockbroker before becoming involved with Pure.

Tony: I used to run hotels and had my own restaurant in Stafford; I've worked in basically all areas of leisure except casinos. In 1998 I wanted to get into health and fitness because it looked like a nice way to earn a living, and joined Fitness First in sales. Four weeks later I was promoted to a general manager, and three months later to an area manager, then a regional manager, then I was one of the operations directors for the UK.

How did you get from there to running Pure Health & Fitness?

James: Tony and I knew each other from Fitness First. Tony wanted to do his own thing and spoke to my father about it. And during that time I'd just finished stockbroking and was going to take a year out to do some mountain climbing. In between my trips I had nothing to do; my dad knew I was frustrated and knew Tony wanted to do something, so he suggested we meet, and we got talking, and it went from there.

Why did you choose Poland?

James: We moved over here in August 2007 after doing a study on Eastern Europe and the opportunities there. Poland came out on top of the study due to its market size, demographics and everything that looks attractive in the booming economy. And when we came over to Warsaw we just really enjoyed it and could see for ourselves that there was an opportunity here – people wanted to exercise but there wasn't the right offering.

What clubs have you opened so far?

Tony: We opened our first club in Warsaw in July, in the Blue City shopping centre, which has been very successful. And

we've opened a second club in Krakow, which has been even more successful. And we have got lots of sites in the pipeline, so we're opening clubs now constantly.

Where will your next club be located?

Tony: Our next club opens at Golden Terraces in central Warsaw, probably the best shopping centre in central and Eastern Europe. We're really excited about it because there was a lot of competition for the site but we won, and it's going to be really beautiful, with an amazing spa, outside terrace, a huge gym, beauty and loads of really cool water features. It opens this summer, and it will be our new flagship.

What's your vision for Pure Health & Fitness?

Tony: We're trying to bring health and fitness to Central and Eastern Europe. The statistics say that 0.6 per cent of the population of Poland have gym memberships, and in the US it's 14 per cent, so we believe we've got an incredible product. We are value for money – in Poland, if you want to join a health club it is normally pretty expensive, or they charge you for visits, but our memberships are 150-200 PLN a month, so anybody with a job can join our clubs. We're funky, fun, vibrant places so we give social interaction as well, but we want to get people healthy, not necessarily thin, but healthy.

We do a thing called the members' journey – people join and we give them orientations that are a little bit different to what other health clubs do, because we concentrate on being able to fit into people's schedules, and we make sure women start doing weight bearing exercise. It's about helping people, making them welcome, and a warm safe environment.

Did you face any challenges in opening your first club?

James: The Blue City shopping centre had already signed with another company, and we were fairly forward with our plan and



The Warsaw club (far left) and Krakow location (above) are both located inside shopping centres

and they came around to it and agreed to it. Going into any new location and trying to set up in shopping centres, especially successful ones, as a start up is not easy, but we've now got credibility among the shopping centres, so much so that a lot of them are coming to us. We've got a huge pipeline of potential clubs to go for, and it's now a lot easier because of the success we've had in Warsaw and in Krakow.

Was it challenging to find staff?

Tony: Yes, it was difficult here in Warsaw at first with our first club, but then when people understood what we were actually doing, it wasn't hard at all. In Krakow with our second club, it wasn't hard because people could see our website and knew our gym was of a high standard.

We train our team almost daily, and it's about the basics: saying hello to people, smiling, saying goodbye to people, looking after people, being honest, being sincere, doing your best, making sure the club's clean and tidy. We don't like to confuse people with jargon, we don't talk about biceps, and triceps, an arm is an arm and we get our team to talk that way as well.

Was it a challenge to market a new club in Warsaw?

Tony: No, we didn't really do much marketing. We talked to people, that's how we did it. We did emails, leaflets, and then the shopping centre held a press conference and we ended up in nearly every newspaper and magazine in Warsaw for free.

Who is the club aimed at?

Tony: We've got about 58 per cent female members, and we're in a shopping centre, I think about 70 per cent of the people who come into shopping centres are female; we have a women-only gym as well. Having a health club within a shopping centre works very well. It is a community, people come here regularly, and we encourage more people to visit.

PURE HEALTH & FITNESS - THE CLUBS

Pure Health & Fitness launched its first location, in Warsaw's Blue City shopping centre, in December, followed by a location in Krakow's Galeria Kazimierz shopping centre in January.

The 1800sq m Blue City club and the 1900sq m Galeria Kazimierz club both feature state of the art Life Fitness cardiovascular equipment with integrated TV screens, multipurpose strength training systems, core training solutions and the latest Power Plate technology.

Each club also features a spinning room, women-only gym, studio classes, sauna, steam and relaxation area, luxury changing rooms, sunbeds and a cafe with free coffee, Wi-Fi and DVD rentals for members.

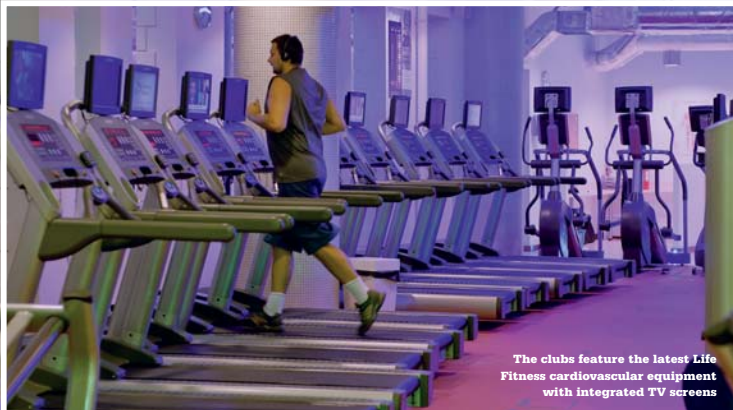
Pure's new 2200sq m flagship club, set to open at the Golden Terraces shopping centre in Warsaw in summer 2009, will feature a spa and outdoor terrace.

James: Since our arrival, footfall in the Blue City shopping centre has gone up 20 per cent.

What are your future plans?

Tony: We have a site in Prague, Czech Republic, that will open in 2010. It's difficult to comment because we actually haven't signed anything yet, however there are lots of opportunities.

James: We'll also put clubs in Hungary, Slovenia and Slovakia. There is a health and fitness industry [in this part of the world] but it's fragmented and not so developed. But there is an industry and there are people who love fitness. The whole of Eastern Europe is a potential market, and we're just trying to take the low hanging fruit at the moment. There are more difficult mar-



The clubs feature the latest Life Fitness cardiovascular equipment with integrated TV screens

We've got the best equipment in the world, and the best facilities in Poland in our two clubs. We haven't seen anything better ourselves, and we've had a look at lots of clubs. We're high end, but value for money.

kets in Eastern Europe than Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia and Slovakia, so we'll stick to the ones we think we can have the most success in now.

Is Poland feeling the economic crisis?

James: I think at the moment Poland is feeling it to a lesser extent than other countries. But it is feeling it and everyone is very nervous that it's going to get worse. It's the least affected of the Eastern European countries at this time, but there's a lag effect, and people are braced for it, so I think our timing was quite good, but timing in the future for new operators to come in will probably be a bit problematic.

Warsaw's in a transition period. It's been booming for quite some time, where you've had steady economic growth, unemployment falling from what used to be around 25 per cent in Warsaw to around six per cent. Poland's doing really well as a country and Warsaw as a city, but it's just going to take time for the infrastructure to get up to international standards.

How would you describe yourselves?

Tony: We try not to take ourselves too seriously. We try to have as much fun as possible. We work hard but it doesn't feel like work because we love what we do, probably a bit too much, like a bit of an obsession. That can become a bit of a problem with you're having a business chat at 3am all the time.

James: We're both very driven, we'll try to develop a culture in the company where you can work hard and play hard, as long as everyone gets results. Because we often sit in negotiations where people believe that if they're nasty it makes them good negotiators, we definitely try to make our staff believe that life is too short to be angry and frustrated all the time. And there's no problem at work which should ever result in tears, it's not worth it, we're just a health club, we just want to improve people's lives and have fun along the way. And that's what we're like as well, we work hard and everyday we're laughing, smiling, joking.

Who do you admire in business and why?

Tony: I obviously admire Mike Balfour, James's father, for what he's done around the world, nearly 600 health clubs improving people's lives. He's just been made an OBE, and he's done an incredible job. He's a bit of an unsung hero, and what he gets done in a day is amazing. He's 59 and he's still driven.

I've just read James Caan's book, and Duncan Bannatyne's book, he's got a health club chain. Both incredible guys. And obviously Richard Branson is an incredible guy.

James: I'm quite into my politics actually. I followed Barack Obama for three years before anyone else was following him, reading his speeches, and obviously I admire Winston Churchill massively. And I spent some time in the army as well, so I've always admired military leaders.

What does Mike Balfour think about what you're doing?

James: He's very supportive, he likes the fact we're getting on with it. He gives us advice when we ask it, but we try not to ask it too much. He likes to come over and see the clubs and what we're doing, but he supports from afar, he lives in Spain now.

What sets your brand apart?

Tony: We've got the best equipment in the world, and the best facilities in Poland in our two clubs. We haven't seen anything better ourselves and we've had a look at lots of clubs. So we are high end, but value for money.

What trends do you see taking place in the industry?

Tony: Obesity problems are starting to catch on here in Poland like everywhere else – China, Asia. There are all these labour saving devices, medicine is helping people live longer, but people know they have to exercise. And that's why we're there, and the health club industry is its going to get bigger and bigger and what we need is to find real ways of assisting people. Not gimmicks, just the truth, and the truth is you have to exercise. ●



Does your business need extra time to pay its tax bill? ”

HM Revenue & Customs has a new dedicated Business Payment Support Service.

If, in the current business climate, you're worried about being able to meet tax, National Insurance, VAT or other payments owed to HMRC, or you anticipate that payments coming due will cause you problems, you can call our Business Payment Support Line on 0845 302 1435.

It is open seven days a week from 8am until 8pm, Monday to Friday and from 8am until 4pm at the weekend.

To help us deal with your call please have the following information to hand:

- your tax reference number,
- details of the tax that you will have trouble paying,
- basic details of your business income and outgoings.

We will review your circumstances with you and wherever we can we will agree to spread your payments over a longer period.

We will not charge additional late payment surcharges on payments included in the arrangement, although interest will continue to be payable on those taxes where it applies.

The Business Payment Support Line is there so that you can tell us in advance of any problems. If we have already contacted you about an overdue payment please call the original office that contacted you to discuss payment options.

You can call our Business Payment Support Line on **0845 302 1435** and find more information at [hmrc.gov.uk](https://www.hmrc.gov.uk)



Is enough being done to reap the benefits of the weak pound?

One positive impact of Sterling's depleting value is that more people plan to holiday in the UK. Caroline Wilkinson asks whether enough is being done to capitalise on this short-term opportunity for the tourism industry, and to secure tourism's future

VisitBritain has decided to launch a three-year, £6.5m campaign to highlight UK tourism deals in a bid to exploit the weakened pound. According to the tourist board, the state of Sterling could mean up to five million more domestic holidays and increased numbers of international visitors. But is the government doing enough to prop up this £114bn industry – which supports 2.7 million jobs and 200,000 small and medium enterprises – through this recession?

Although the Prime Minister declared support for tourism at the National Tourism Summit in Liverpool, the DCMS has decided not to allocate extra funding to help VisitBritain in the run up to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Compounded by funding cuts of 18 per cent until 2012, the industry's concerns over the government's lack of understanding of tourism's revenue and job-making potential seem justified. We investigate whether UK tourism is harnessing this opportunity.

The tourism sector, like most sectors of the economy, is under considerable pressure through a shortage of finance and the squeeze on discretionary expenditure of both overseas visitors and UK residents. This is putting the jobs of the two million people in the sector at risk.

What differentiates tourism from other sectors is that the exchange rate and the forthcoming Olympics provides an opportunity to protect many of these jobs and provide a basis for future growth. With the pound nearing parity with the euro, making a holiday in the UK some 25 per cent cheaper than in 2008, taking a domestic break this year is looking to be a much cheaper prospect than previously. It is not sufficient,



KURT JANSON

Policy director
Tourism Alliance

however, to simply identify the opportunity – one must capitalise upon it.

What is required of government is a coherent strategy that reduces the immediate fiscal and regulatory pressures tourism businesses are under, as well as pump-primes international and domestic marketing to take advantage of the current exchange rate. Measures to resolve structural problems that reduce the long-term efficiency of public funding, such as the co-ordination of public tourism expenditure by the

national, regional and local tourism bodies, must also be addressed.

While tourism remains a government responsibility under the Development of Tourism Act, it's beholden upon the government to develop and implement such a strategy. At the Tourism Summit in Liverpool, the government clearly acknowledged the need for public investment in the tourism industry and asked for ideas as to how it could best support the sector. It is now time to turn this acknowledgement into action.

Although the economic downturn is giving many British businesses very real difficulties, it presents our tourist industry with some real opportunities.

The first is the current strength of the dollar and the euro against the pound. This makes the UK a much more affordable option for overseas visitors. That is why VisitBritain and VisitEngland launched its very timely £6.5m 'Value for Money' campaign at the Liverpool Tourism Summit in January. This is designed to demonstrate that Britain, at present, offers great quality and great prices to visitors to our shores.

Another opportunity is the fact that in uncertain times people tend to holiday at home rather than abroad. The exchange rate should reinforce this and



BARBARA FOLLETT

Tourism minister
Labour Government

offer our tourist industry a once in a generation chance to showcase their attractions, and to transform these one-off visitors into regulars by making sure the welcome and service they receive is so good that they want to repeat it.

After the runaway tourism success of Liverpool's year as European Capital Culture, the government has commissioned a study to see if we can replicate this in other UK cities. With VisitBritain's help, we're also looking into we can best market Britain's Decade of Sport in national and inter-

national markets. Vital to all these efforts is the government's continued investment in heritage, the arts, hospitality skills training and regeneration.

The government wants to make sure that the UK's fifth largest industry survives the downturn and thrives in the upturn. Both the Prime Minister and the Chancellor are well aware of the huge contribution tourism makes to the economy. They, like me want the once in a lifetime opportunities available to the industry maximised. I know that, if we all work together, they will be.



Gordon Brown attempted to promote British tourism in January with a hastily organised summit in Liverpool encouraging us to weather the downturn by choosing domestic rather than overseas holidays. Why it takes a recession for Brown to realise the value of UK tourism is puzzling – it is after all our fifth biggest industry, and the UK remains the world's sixth most attractive destination.

This is, however, despite the Labour Government, not because of it. Our share of international tourism has declined by 10 per cent since Labour came to power. If this was not bad enough, the infrastructure to support and promote British tourism is a con-



TOBIAS ELLWOOD

Shadow minister for culture media and sport
Conservative Party

fused, overlapping, competing and costly group of quangos; a result of four nations, nine regions, 70 counties and over 300 local authorities following often quite separate agendas.

In Parliament itself, the tourism industry has no champion promoting its interests or fighting its corner. There is no annual debate on the subject. Some tourism issues are covered by the DCMS, but in reality, the smallest department in government has little influence over some of the major

decisions affecting the industry. For example, the Home Office doubled the cost of UK visas last year without any consultation with the DCMS.

The state of our tourism industry is summed up in VisitBritain's latest report, which says: "Tourism is the hidden giant in the British economy. Without government support this industry will continue to punch below its weight." Rather than just passing comment, Brown must wake up to the significance and potential of tourism.

The strength of the euro and the dollar will make it a lot more expensive for Britons to holiday in the US and the euro zone, and far more attractive for overseas visitors to come to the UK. More importantly, many more Britons will be looking to holiday at home – especially the family market.

Customers will be seeking out quality breaks that are value for money across all sectors in 2009. Late bookings will be a strong theme, with customers adopting a 'wait and watch' approach and not planning too far ahead or booking early. The South West regional image campaign for spring/summer 2009 will be aimed at domestic visitors, and will reflect these themes by focusing on quality breaks.



MALCOLM BELL

Director
South West Tourism

All the research over the past few months indicates that British people view their holidays as a necessity, not a luxury, and so they will continue to spend on them. With all the stress of the recession there is a feeling that people need their holidays.

2009 will be a challenging year and although there are reasons to be optimistic, these are unknown waters. The challenges will be avoiding complacency, the ability to be flexible and innovative and the need to sell on value and not to discount.

If the government is to secure tourism's potential, or to even boost tourism, it must assist through additional funding to help promote Britain to the target overseas markets as well as selling England to the English.

Those who traditionally holiday abroad but can be converted to a UK break must especially be targeted. I'd also like to see more marketing, more invested in training staff in the industry and more staff retention initiatives. Loan guarantees for small and medium sized enterprises are also needed. ●

PHIL REDMOND

The TV whiz and Liverpool culture enthusiast talks to Ian Freeman about the ups and downs of leading his hometown to the most successful European Capital of Culture ever



Phil Redmond, former quantity surveyor, TV soap guru and the man who led Liverpool to European Capital of Culture [Liverpool 2008] glory last year, has, in a career spanning over 30 years, piled achievement upon accomplishment.

Leaving school with just one A-level, he soon eschewed office life and took up writing for TV, a calling that was to result in his creating some of UK television's edgiest drama programming.

But his broadcast achievements are considered by many to pale into insignificance compared to the straight-thinking and both-feet-on-the-ground approach that he brought to his role at the head of the craziness that was Liverpool 2008. "I may be a creative," he says, "but I have a great respect for finance." It was that respect, no doubt, that resulted in an income of £800m for the city from an

investment of a mere £120m, in a year judged by EU bodies to be the best Capital of Culture ever.

Phil Redmond doesn't trade in nuance. He inhabits an enormous office on an outlying campus of Liverpool's John Moores University, where he chairs its International Centre for Digital Content (ICDC). His official title, as honorary chair of media, is professor, and it says so, in big letters, on his office door.

Redmond is an authentic professional Liverpoolian, unlike those who leave the city and then profess to be devoted to it. Begged by his peers to rescue the year of culture just four months ahead of its launch, he cites his love of Liverpool as the motivation. "I was the token creative guy, but it's my city and if I hadn't done something I wouldn't have been able to live with myself. I knew what was planned but the real task was making

sure it was co-ordinated, marketed and scheduled properly."

So why was he brought in? "How can I put this diplomatically?" he laughs, uncomfortably. "...er...I can't quite find the words...but it was a council-run operation, they were trying to keep control of it. Projects like this always get to a moment where the parochial agendas have to be suspended because the thing has to be delivered. I was sitting at the end of the table but I was the only guy in the room who had the skill set to deliver."

EMBRACING CREATIVITY

From his appointment in September 2007 – his title was deputy chair responsible for creative direction, but everyone knew he was head honcho – he set out to mend, mould and manage the relationship with a worried local authority. "Councils have to be risk averse," he says, "as they're



The People's Opening (above) kicked off the year of culture in January 2008. Paul McCartney headlined one of the biggest Liverpool 2008 events, The Liverpool Sound, in June (left)





Two Viennese balls were held at St George's Hall as part of the Capital of Culture programme

charged with the stewardship of public funds. But culture and creativity has to have an entrepreneurial, risk-taking streak. Councils can create the environment and provide the funding and mechanism, but they need to put it out to professionals to make it work."

Redmond reckons councils can be encouraged to embrace creativity by simple demonstration. "I showed them what can be achieved by enthusing and encouraging people. Since leisure became an industry in its own right so many initiatives have failed because they've been given to bureaucrats and administrators. If only councils had the courage to say to a cultural practitioner 'just do what you think is best.'"

By being permitted to do what he thought was best, the young Redmond created what he, somewhat less than humbly, terms "three of the biggest TV shows in history." The BBC's school drama *Grange Hill* and quirky Channel Four soaps *Brookside* and the still-running *Hollyoaks* became benchmarks for gritty continuing drama. "I was nine when ITV took off," says Redmond, now approaching 60, "and it was TV that sparked off the creative gene within me."

Michael Grade, former boss of Channel Four, now ITV CEO, says: "The

professor, as we call him, is that rarest of rare breeds – creative and entrepreneurial. He's a nice man, tough, sometimes impossible, but always delivers."

Redmond sold his production company, Mersey TV, in 2005 for a reported £35m. "We were running a company with 500 employees and had 10,000 actors passing through our books – it was the equivalent of having 12 feature films in production at any one time." His plans to take it easy and return to writing went awry, however, when he joined the Liverpool Culture Company's board.

"The first thing I did as head of Liverpool 2008 was to take a good look at the plan for the year," he says. "We had a very unbalanced schedule, with times when there was too much going on and times with nothing. We had to fill the holes, calm everyone down and tell them it's going to be terrific."

CHALLENGES

Redmond cites getting over the meaning of European Capital of Culture as one of his main challenges. Parochial had to give way to national, as the appointed city would represent the member state.

"My challenge internally was to convince everyone that everything's going to be fine and my challenge externally was

to convince everyone that everything's going to be fine," he says wryly, "and they had to take on board that Liverpool was using this badge as a catalyst to bring about the renaissance of the city. But it was, basically, much like organising an old-fashioned Scouse wedding!"

But there was serious political work also to be undertaken. "I had to take care to separate out council and culture – you can't say to people 'we're doing this huge event and it's presented by the people who are fining you for putting a bottle in the wrong bin.'"

Convincing stakeholders that projects could be completed on time was another struggle. One key undertaking was the £146m ACC Liverpool regeneration project on the Mersey River Waterfront, funded by the European Objective One programme, the North West Regional Development Agency, English Partnerships and the local authority, which houses the 10,000-seat Echo Arena and BT Convention Centre.

The Liverpool One shopping centre, described by John Prescott as "an urban renaissance" and the refurbishment of the Bluecoat Arts Centre added to the complex construction mix. "Regenerating 25 per cent of a city in one go had never been done before," Redmond says.

LIVERPOOL'S CAPITAL OF CULTURE – THE IMPACT



- Liverpool's European Capital of Culture tenure generated an £800m boost to the regional economy
- 3.5 million first-time visitors made their way to the city in 2008 – 25 per cent of all tourists for the year – generating £176m in tourism spend
- A record one million hotel beds were sold in the city, with average occupancy rates at an all time high of 77 per cent in 2008
- The Liverpool 2008 events programme – including events such as the Opening Weekend, the Turner Prize, the Liverpool Biennial, and the appearance of a 50ft mechanical spider from La Machine – attracted 5.2 million visitors

- The programme also helped generate 15 million visits to cultural venues and events over 2008, a 30 per cent rise from the previous year, with attractions across Merseyside reporting a similar rise
- The Tate Liverpool and Merseyside Maritime Museum each attracted over one million people for the first time in 2008, a 65 per cent increase on 2007
- Market research shows 70 per cent of Liverpoolians visited a museum or gallery in 2008, compared with the UK average of 59 per cent.
- Liverpool's Tourist Information Centres have seen a 150 per cent increase in traffic

- A Condé Nast readers' pool named Liverpool as the third favourite UK city to visit.
- Liverpool City Council has committed to maintaining current funding levels for the arts over the next two years, worth £8.2m, and has appointed a new Head of Culture to lead a 25-strong team.
- Phil Redmond, Liverpool Culture Company creative director, will lead a new independent body called The Cultural Collective to ensure arts bodies across the region continue to work together.

Source: Liverpool Vision

Redmond freely admits that not everything about Liverpool 2008 was well done, though he won't go into detail about what. "A few things creaked around the edges, some things were over-ambitious, and there were a couple of things that people thought were better than they actually were!" he says.

"But what worked best was how we engaged neighbourhoods and communities. The local authority is actually ring-fencing money to continue cultural activities in 2009, because the sense of well-being they brought about meant a reduction in the amount of calls on medical services. Aches and pains go away when you feel good – it's amazing how well people feel at 5.30pm on a Friday!"

Hiccups, Redmond claims, were few. "The project may have been hard work, but it wasn't difficult." Many activities attracted media coverage world-wide, not least 'La Princesse', a 15m-high mechanical spider, built by French company La Machine. "There was a bit of a hoo-ha over it: 'they're closing our day-care centre and spending £1.5m on a spider'. I had to let them know that it's the Culture Company spending the money, not the council, and that the spider brought £35m into the city!"

On a personal level, Redmond hadn't realised the extent of lack of confidence in the city until taking on the role. "I was astonished," he says, "when I got under the skin, as to how much people's ambitions had been worn down and that they didn't believe they could be achievers."

"But I also learned it didn't take long to get the confidence back. I was being interviewed by *The Independent* – [journalist Cole Moreton] was giving me all that 'this is Liverpool, it won't work' stuff. I said to him, go back to London and tell



'La Princesse', a 15m-high mechanical spider, drew crowds

them we're not interested in what they think about us. It's our party, not yours!"

LEGACY

Continuity is at Redmond's core and he's determined to keep the 2008 feel-good factor going. "Confidence on the streets is palpable, and we must maintain focus on communities working together for the good of the whole of Merseyside." He intends to keep the legacy of Liverpool 2008 alive through leading The Cultural Collective, a financially and administratively independent body part-funded by the North West Development Agency. An initial seminar for participating cultural groups was held in February to discuss how the Collective should operate.

Redmond's other projects include chairing the working group for his own concept, the British City of Culture prize. Endorsed by Government Culture Secretary Andy Burnham, the title will be up for grabs every few years, beginning in 2011 – Durham, Leeds and Birmingham are among the first cities expected to pitch – and the winner can expect events such as the Turner Prize to relocate to their city that year.

As head of ICDC, Redmond is also involved with Liverpool's 2010 Year of Innovation, a celebration of the city's writers, directors, designers and entrepreneurs. He also chairs National Museums Liverpool, the eight venue-strong organisation behind one of the lasting legacies of Capital of Culture year, the new Museum of Liverpool, now being built at the Pier Head.

Redmond once said: "Whenever there's a seismic shift across the cultural landscape, you will always find a Scouser." Now one of those shifts has propelled him into the role of definitive culture guru. When I suggest he might consider consulting here or abroad, the response is a firm 'no'. "I'm happy just to help my city," he says, "and I want to go back to writing – being a culture advocate has stimulated my own creativity."

The former Liverpool 2008 boss has views, too, on London 2012. "The Olympics are basically just a three-week sports event in a small London suburb. It's also the Queen's Diamond Jubilee year, so everything could become a bit London-centric." Media gossip that he has something planned for Liverpool in 2012 is, he claims with a grin, unfounded. Nevertheless, if I was Lord Coe, I'd keep a firm eye on, as they'd say on *Brookside*, this particular 'scallie'. ●

in•tu•i•tion•ary adj.

The ability to understand something immediately without the need of conscious reasoning through simplification, causing a complete or dramatic change.

syn: CheckFree Compete

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NOT ALL DOOM AND GLOOM

As financial pressure mounts and the UK officially enters a recession, a new Mintel report has some encouraging news for the nation's leisure industry. Amanda Lintott reports



PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/ALDO AMBROSIO

31 per cent of Brits have resolved to eat more healthily in 2009; only 28 per cent plan to spend less

In the midst of doom and gloom, latest research from Mintel finds a healthier lifestyle tops the list of Britain's new year's resolutions. Surprisingly, and encouragingly for the leisure industry, getting into shape outweighs being more financially responsible for today's consumers.

In December 2008, British consumers were asked about their planned new year's resolutions. The number one intention was to exercise more, with almost four in ten (38 per cent) planning to do so. This was followed by eating more healthily (31 per cent). Meanwhile, despite the economic downturn, only 28 per cent were planning to spend less money in the coming year.

But in a nod towards keeping an eye on the pennies, the majority of those planning to exercise more will choose a cost-free form of fitness, by walking their way to a healthier 2009.

Wallet-friendly fitness

Walking outdoors will be the most popular keep-fit option for those intending to get fit, with as many as 66 per cent planning to do just that. Meanwhile, less than half this number (30 per cent) will be burning off the calories using cardiovascular machines, and just 17 per cent will take part in general keep fit classes.

And so encouragingly, despite growing financial pressure, British consumers still recognise the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Less encouraging is the fact that price is still a big barrier for the leisure industry, and this has never been more the case than now. But what does this mean for the industry and health and fitness clubs?

The easy reaction in the current market is to assume that the cheaper the service, the more desirable it will be for the consumer. True, to an extent, but while low prices are important, it's good value that people are really looking for. As budgets are squeezed, people need to know that they are getting the most for their money, regardless of whether they are spending £10 or £100 – creating opportunities for businesses that truly understand their customers. So while it is true that Britain's consumers will be seeking cheaper fitness options, value for money will be key to any future success.

The challenge for the industry is to show people why paying for a gym or leisure activity is better than a walk in the park that is free. In terms of health and fitness clubs, operators will need to highlight the state of the art equipment as well as the support and social networks available. These businesses would do well to offer added benefits to members free of charge, such as personal training sessions, beauty treatments and food in the bar.

While consumers will be seeking cheaper fitness options, value for money will be key to any future success. The challenge is to show why paying for a gym or activity is better than a walk in the park

What consumers want

Beyond value for money, Mintel has predicted the key qualities that consumers will look out for in 2009.

As a backlash against the fast-paced modern world, people will try to take greater control of their lives and find pleasure in simple things. Over the years, people have become more demanding about how they live their lives and spend their money. Even as a recession hits, they will want to stay in control of their choices wherever they can, and will seek products and services that give them exactly what they want.

Another key issue in today's economic climate is trust. Crumbling economic markets, food scares and toy safety problems have fuelled an era of doubt and insecurity. And so in the coming year, people will seek out trusting, open relationships

wherever they can. People will want to know all about the products and services they buy, and will cling to the long-standing, nostalgic brands they know, looking for products with a real sense of familiarity.

Companies will need to conduct business in a more open, honest way. Reassuring consumers they are acting in the customer's best interest will become a primary concern. Also, as companies see shoppers sticking to already-familiar products, long-standing brands will move into new markets to exploit their position as trustworthy companies.

Continuing on from this need for reassurance, people will seek out products and services that have a simplistic quality, so that it is easy to understand. Simplicity will be crucial. As people take control of their everyday lives, they will also demand that companies communicate with them honestly and openly. From understandable ingredients to clear company practices, consumers will want complete transparency when it comes to the products and services they buy. Brands that can communicate what they really stand for and show how they can make life easier will earn consumers' trust and loyalty.

And finally, in tougher times, people want to enjoy themselves. Playful distractions such as neon make-up, fun-to-eat food or interactive shops like the Apple Store will become increasingly popular. Companies will focus on products and experiences that are light-hearted, and those offering real entertainment will have a significant competitive advantage. Manufacturers will launch products specifically designed to enhance people's moods in unique ways. From food and beauty to household cleaners, Mintel expects to see a widening range of products that soothe, energise or simply lift the spirits. ●



PHOTO: ISTOCK/PHOTO.COM/ADRIAN MOODY

Of the 38 per cent of Brits who resolved to exercise more in 2009, 66 per cent plan to walk outdoors

WHAT NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS ARE BRITS MAKING FOR 2009?

Get more exercise	38%
Go on a diet	17%
Eat more healthily	31%
Cut down drinking	11%
Quit smoking	10%
Be more green (eg recycle more)	14%
Pay off debt	20%
Spend less money	28%
Get a new job	13%
I have no plans to make any New Year's resolutions	28%
Don't know yet	7%
Total	100%

38% OF BRITS RESOLVED TO GET MORE EXERCISE IN 2009. HOW WILL THEY BE GETTING FIT?

Cardio-vascular machines	30%
Weight machines/Free weights	18%
Pilates	7%
Yoga	10%
Swimming	37%
Running outdoors	18%
Walking outdoors	66%
Cycling outdoors	22%
Team sport (eg football, rugby)	7%
Racquet sport (eg squash, tennis)	7%
Martial arts (eg kickboxing, karate)	4%
General keep fit classes (eg dance class)	17%
Cardio-vascular workout (eg spin, aerobics)	17%
Other	4%
Total	100%



BRINGING THE GYM HOME



When and why was the idea of selling a home equipment range first conceived?

Around this time last year, the products went on sale in October 2008. We'd been looking to diversify our brand into other revenue streams, as we felt it had the strength to move away from our core health club offering. If this works, we'd potentially look for further opportunities to work within the health and fitness world, creating other streams of revenue.

Why did you decide to do it through Tesco Direct?

Tesco approached us with the idea of working together within this product range. They wanted to work with an organisation like us, and thought our brand was good to go against other offerings in this range across the UK.

What health and fitness equipment did Tesco already sell?

Tesco does sell its own range, which is lower-end, almost like a value range.

Fitness First has partnered with Tesco on a new home equipment range, aimed at coach potatoes who aren't ready for the gym. Kath Hudson speaks to Fitness First's Head of Global Marketing, David Langridge, about the concept

They wanted to find a quality, mid-range brand, available at affordable prices.

What are you selling?

The products were decided between us and Tesco, because they have the experience of what does sell and we have the knowledge of what would work within the health and fitness industry and what we felt was quality in the product itself.

We're selling a Pilates toning set, gym balls, a running set (bottle, sweat-

band, radio, towel); strength sets (chest strength bar, push up bars), 6kg dumbbell sets, boxing sets (punch bags and gloves in pink and black); a yoga set (mat, block, yoga straps, information on stretching); premier exercise bike with standard resistance, pulse sensors and an LCD display screen; and cross trainer with 16 levels of resistance. The highest part of the category is the rowing machine, retailing at £256, which is similar to rowers you find in health clubs.

What's the biggest seller at the moment?

The smaller items, like gym balls, running sets, strength and yoga sets. People are going for value for money products, which don't require a lot of space to use.

Who is this targeted at?

People who are new to exercise, who want to take up a healthier lifestyle, but aren't quite ready to take the next step into a gym environment.

Currently 12 million people are health club members, which is a small propor-



tion of the population, so there are a lot of people out there who would like to take up a healthier lifestyle, but don't want to take the next step to the gym just yet.

Will the credit crunch mean more people working out at home?

We've seen, and research shows, that during a credit crunch people work out more. We've got statistical information about this. Firstly people's disposable income starts to reduce, so the over-indulging luxuries tend to go, such as eating out. People tend to look after themselves more and focus on things which make them feel better. One of those positives is gym memberships.

How will this initiative help the Fitness First brand?

We are a global brand, represented in 19 countries, and this has allowed us to test how strong our brand is away from our current core business of health and fitness clubs. We'll be in a number of stores across the UK, offering our products, so awareness of the brand will grow.

The range features smaller items such as gym balls and running, strength and yoga sets, and larger items such as exercise bikes and rowing machines

Our mission is to make the world a fitter place and we want to do it in a number of different ways, not just health and fitness clubs. And, as an end result, we hope it will bring more members.

Is there any risk of unconditioned people injuring themselves?

If there is any risk, it is very low. In each pack there are instructions on how to use the equipment, plus we also provide free 30-day online training from our personal training partners, Feel Fit. So they can log onto the Feel Fit websites and download PT instructions.

How does the guest pass work?

Each product comes with a guest pass to one of our clubs. The highest-priced products get the longest guest member-

ship and the lowest-priced get a one-day membership. We know how many people it's converting, how many are downloading passes against the number we're selling, and it's an encouraging amount.

Home workouts are a stepping stone for some people before becoming a full gym member, so offering a gym pass allows the consumer to try the next step. It's going to be fascinating. We don't believe the amount of people joining health clubs in the UK is slowing down, but this is growing the category further.

How is the partnership working so far?

It's around our expectations and we're pleased with how it's going. Because it's so new to us, time-set expectations have been difficult. But at this stage, there haven't been any downsides at all. ●

DESERT WONDER

SINCE BEING NAMED CAPITAL OF KAZAKHSTAN IN 1997, ASTANA'S SKYLINE HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED. NOW THE CITY'S MOST AMBITIOUS DEVELOPMENT YET IS SET TO LAUNCH – KHAN SHATYR, A TENTED 'INDOOR CITY' AIMED AT KEEPING OUT THE HARSH DESERT CLIMATE. IN THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF STORIES ON CITIES WITH BIG AMBITIONS, TOM WALKER INVESTIGATES

Sitting on a dry, semi-desert landscape in the middle of the world's largest land-locked country, the city of Astana has experienced a number of transformations during its relatively brief history. Since being settled by Siberian Cossacks in 1820, the city has been renamed five times and was ruled by its Cossack founders, the Russian royal empire and the Soviet Union before falling under the legislation of Kazakhstan when the country declared its independence in 1991.

Climatically too, the city is susceptible to variation and change. The people of Astana have to weather six bitterly cold winter months, when temperatures drop to -40°C for weeks, while during the summer the unforgiving dusty plains cause temperatures to rise up to 35°C.

Despite the somewhat capricious history and extreme weather, Kazakhstan president Nursultan Nazarbayev decided in 1994 that Astana would be the ideal new capital city of the nascent republic. This decision triggered the latest and most significant transformation of the city. Since officially becoming the capital in 1997, the city has undergone a construction boom which has brought skyscrapers, cultural pavilions, sports stadiums, mixed-use schemes and a range of new hotels and open spaces. Astana has become Kazakhstan's administrative, political and cultural centre; its population has more than doubled (to nearly 700,000) in just 10 years.

CENTRE PIECE

At the centre of the hundreds of construction projects currently underway around Astana lies the most ambitious of them all: the massive Khan Shatyr entertainment complex. The US\$260m

KAZAKHSTAN

Area: 2.72 million sq km. Larger than all of Western Europe and four times the size of Texas

Population: 15.3 million

Economy: The country doubled its GDP between 2000 and 2008. Tourism is a growing industry and the government aims to attract six million inbound foreign tourists during 2009 (the UK received 32m visitors in 2008).

ASTANA

- The word "Astana" literally means "capital" in Kazakh.
- The city was called Alkmola until 1994, when the government announced that it would become the new capital.
- The late Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa was appointed to design a masterplan for the new city, instigating the transformation of Astana.

project, best described as an indoor city, has been designed by UK-based architects Foster + Partners in conjunction with Linea Tusavul Architecture and Gultekin Architecture.

The huge structure is held up by a central mast at its centre, which reaches up 150m and provides the support for the large cables over which ethylene tetrafluoroethylene (ETFE, a super strong plastic) will be suspended covering an elliptical area of more than 100,000sq m. The covering material of the tent will be transparent, allowing the sunlight to penetrate the structure. This design, alongside powerful heating and cooling systems, will make sure that internal temperatures will at all times be between 18°C and 29°C inside the structure despite the harsh outside temperatures.

The design also means that, when completed later this year, the development will have the honour of becoming the world's largest tent.

According to Nigel Dancy, senior partner and project architect at Foster + Partners, the shape of the structure is a result of combining two requirements:

heritage and sustainability. "The tent concept was a response to the inhospitable climate of Astana," he says. "Our client wanted to offer a range of civic, cultural and social amenities, so we enclosed these in a climatic envelope, a world within that would welcome visitors all year round, whatever the weather.

"In winter, a key challenge is preventing ice formation on the inside of the envelope. We achieved this through temperature control and directing warm air currents up the inner fabric surface, a strategy that also prevents condensation. In summer, fritting on the outermost foil layer provides shade and inside, low-level jets direct cool air across the space, while opening vents at the apex induce stack-effect ventilation."

But keeping out the weather wasn't the only reason for the design, Dancy says. "The tented form has great resonance in Kazakh history as a traditional nomadic building form. 'Khan Shatyr' roughly translates as 'the Tent of the Khan'."

The structure will include an array of leisure and retail schemes. There will be an urban park complete with public



The Khan Shatyr tent will cover an area of over 100,000sq m, encompassing an urban park, restaurants, spas, a hotel, and a large indoor waterpark with a beach

squares and cobbled streets, restaurants, a luxury hotel, two health spas, a multiplex cinema complex and a large indoor waterpark. There will even be an indoor beach as part of the aquatic park. The owner, the Khan Shatyr Consortium (KSC), will partly fund the project with income from a residential development within the site. KSC includes representatives of the Kazakhstan government as well as Dubai-based FTG Development and the Russian real estate firm COALCO.

Dancey says that while making space for all the facilities inside Khan Shatyr was a challenge, the unique shape had its advantages. "Khan Shatyr's massive volume, comparable in scale to four football pitches, incorporates flexible entertainment spaces that can accommodate a variety of events," he says.

"A park also steps up the height of the building in undulating terraces, while a tropical waterpark weaves its way through the landscape. The swimming pool area is a lightweight arched steel structure enclosure, clad with a layer of ETFE cushions to regulate the temperature and separate the humid pool

environment from rest of the tent's volume. The landscaped terraces adjacent to the swimming pool form a viewing deck with impressive panoramic views over the city and the surrounding plains."

FUTURE OF ASTANA

Khan Shatyr is scheduled to open amid large-scale celebrations by the end of the summer. When it opens its doors, it will be the latest high-profile venue to have been completed in a city that has drawn comparisons to Dubai with its seemingly limitless list of ambitious construction projects. And the world's largest tent is by no means the last large project planned for the thriving Astana.

The 30,000-capacity Astana Stadium, designed by Tabanlıoğlu Mimarlık and HOK Sport, is due to open this summer. The venue has a sliding roof to combat the extreme weather and will be used as a multifunctional entertainment complex and for range of sports; its main role will be to provide the national football team with a stadium that fits FIFA and UEFA criteria. Elsewhere, there will also be a large-scale arts venue, designed by

Massimiliano Fuksas Architects, and Abu Dhabi Plaza, a large retail and residential scheme designed by Foster + Partners.

But while the developers operating in Astana might be used to handling the weather, they are not impervious to the global economic downturn. Kazakhstan's construction sector has been hit hard, and while the flagship projects are proceeding well on time, one can not ignore the unfinished apartment blocks littering the skylines of Astana and the country's largest city, former capital Almaty.

These half-built shells, of course, do not fit in with the government's idea of a new Kazakhstan, and it recently threatened to bankrupt and take over any project that remains unfinished. If the government is forced to do this and fund the completion of these projects, it will undoubtedly make a difference to its finances. Whether this has any implications to projects currently being planned for Astana remains unclear, although the immense natural resources should provide Kazakhstan, just as they do for the likes of Dubai, with a safe source of income for the foreseeable future. ●



John Hopkins is leading the delivery of one of the largest urban parks to be created in Europe in 150 years – London's 2012 Olympic Park. Vicky Kiernander speaks to the ODA parklands guru about his sustainable strategy for the new green space

GOING GREEN



Build once and build wisely is John Hopkins' guiding principle as he strives to create what he describes as a "new piece of city for London". As the Olympic Delivery Authority's (ODA) project sponsor for parklands and the public realm, Hopkins is responsible for delivering the London 2012 Olympic Park on time, in budget and to the satisfaction of stakeholders including The London Development Agency (LDA) and the five host boroughs of Greenwich, Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest.

The new park will be one of the largest urban parks created in Europe for 150 years. Located in the Lower Lea Valley in east London, the Olympic Park will form the centre piece of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. It has been designed by LDA Design • Hargreaves, a partnership comprising international landscape architects Hargreaves Associates, designers of Sydney's Olympic Park, and LDA Design, which has worked on innovative UK park projects including Gunpowder Park and Lea Valley, as well as with the Royal Parks Agency.

The team also includes three up-and-coming design firms: BBUK, Kinnear Landscape Architects and Sarah Price Landscapes. Their combined efforts

promise to provide a spectacular new green space for both people and wildlife.

STORY IN SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainable development and a lasting legacy of social, physical and economic regeneration were at the heart of London's bid for the Games and are central to the Olympic Park. That's where Hopkins' experience comes in. A landscape architect, urban designer and environmental planner, Hopkins has practised and lectured for more than 30 years. He's designed and implemented urban parks and spaces in London's Isle of Dogs and prepared parks and green space strategies for the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. For Olympic Park, he talks of a sustainable development strategy, a biodiversity action plan and a legacy masterplan framework, initiatives to ensure the ODA meets its pledge to host the most sustainable Games to date and leaves an impressive new green space in legacy.

Funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Greater London Authority, the LDA and the Olympic Lottery Distributor, the ODA has a total budget of around £8bn, including £2bn contingency, to deliver the venues and





infrastructure for London 2012. And 75p of every £1 it spends is dedicated to ensuring the lasting benefits for the local community and the wider public, says Hopkins. "The Olympic Park is 250 hectares in total, but the core of it – around 110 hectares – will remain in legacy, designated as Metropolitan Open Land."

So, what can we expect from this new urban park? Hopkins describes it as a park of two halves. The northern area, which sits in the 26km Lea Valley Regional Park extending from Hertfordshire to the River Thames, is highly ecological and will feature open parkland with quiet public spaces and habitats for hundreds of existing and rare species of wildlife. By contrast, the southern area will be home to more formal pleasure gardens with markets, cafés and bars providing a festival atmosphere for the Games. The south will also pay homage to the British love affair with gardening in the form of the London 2012 Gardens, which will stretch for half a mile between the Aquatics Centre and Olympic Stadium, and trace the journey of the UK's plant collectors around the world with more than 250 species of plants, trees, meadows and herbs. "Just as the Games is about bringing people together from all over the world, we are



The Olympic Park's southern section will be home to pleasure gardens with markets, cafes and bars. Plants will be brought in from around the world to create the London 2012 Gardens

bringing plants from all over the world to celebrate the British tradition of plant collection and design," says Hopkins.

The park's design has been inspired by the Victorian and post-war pleasure gardens. "The public park is a British invention. There was an explosion of them during the Victorian era and they've left us a fantastic legacy. The Olympic Park has the same purpose as those created by the Victorians: to provide green spaces for health, recreation, culture and the arts." The only difference today, he says, is the issue of sustainability. "We know we have to develop sustainably. We are taking a holistic approach, focusing on energy conservation, water quality, habitat conservation etc. The Olympic Park is a story in sustainability."

The story starts with the decontamination of the former industrial land on which the park is being developed. Badly degraded and highly polluted, there has been a huge amount of contamination

over the last 150 years from tanning works, glass works and other industries. Since all the businesses occupying the land have been relocated to other areas by the LDA, more than 200 buildings have been demolished, underground tunnels for power lines have been dug and the polluted soil washed and separated before being reused on site to prepare the ground for construction or the creation of the parklands. This process ensures that 90 per cent of the contaminated earth is reused. Matter that can't be recycled goes to registered landfills.

Alongside this work, steps are being taken to protect habitat and key species where possible. Native plant seeds have been collected to be re-planted later; control programmes have been introduced to tackle Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed; and fish, newts and reptiles have been moved to local sites for the construction phase of the project. New environments will be created for wildlife including wetlands, meadows and ponds as well as around 700 artificial habitats including bird and bat boxes, nests for sand martins and otter holts.

After years of neglect, more than three kilometres of waterways in the area will be restored, cleaned and widened. Most of them will be lined with reed beds, and



John Hopkins - Background

in the northern park, wide lawns sloping down to the river will provide visitors with areas to sit and follow the Games live on huge screens – “Think Henman Hill at Wimbledon,” says Hopkins.

GREEN TECHNIQUES

A consultant to both the public and private sector, Hopkins worked with the Royal Parks Agency from 1993 to 2007 and has directed the restoration of several historic parks, including Derby Arboretum – the world’s first park designed specifically for public use. He also sat on the Government’s Urban Green Spaces Task Force Working Group 2 on Best Practice and was a partner in LDA Design, a broadly based environmental planning, urban design and landscape architecture practice, until March 2007. But all of these roles surely pale in comparison to his current position at the ODA which he took up after seeing it advertised two years ago.

“This is a fantastic job and a once in a lifetime opportunity to effect transformation on such a huge scale,” he enthuses. What he enjoys most about the role is his colleagues. “I’m working with the best in the business, people who are attracted to this project because it is so challenging. When I look at the extraordinary progress we’ve already made, I’m amazed.”

The best in the business are employing the latest green techniques in the park to protect against climate change and flooding. Following advice from the Forestry Commission, tree and plant species suited to the predicted future climate are being introduced. In fact, Around 2,000 mature and semi-mature trees including oak, ash, willow, birch, hazel, cherry, London plane and lime, will be planted over the next three winters. “Trees will help manage flood and rain

The landscape architect, urban designer and environmental planner has worked on urban parks and spaces on the Isle of Dogs for the LDDC. He’s also been involved in the preparation of parks, green space and public realm strategies for the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, and the landscape and ecology master planning for Barking Riverside, London’s largest brownfield development site. He completed the Green Blue Heart masterplan for the Stockton-Middlesbrough Initiative, and his design, documentation and implementation of the £3.25m Warrington Town Centre scheme has won national and regional awards.

water in the park, create a cool island on hot days and protect people from strong sun and winds,” explains Hopkins.

Rain water will be captured through paving and cleaned through a network of ditches, ponds, reed beds and wet woodlands before being released into the river, and an energy centre is being built in the west of the park, which will include biomass boilers and a cooling, heat and power plant to supply hot water, heating and electricity to homes and buildings in the park. It’s expected to reduce carbon emissions by 20 per cent – 5,000 tonnes per year during the Games.

The ODA aims to get all spectators to the Games – approximately 7.7 million – by public transport, cycling or by foot. It’s investing £11.5m in creating two new walking and cycling paths and significantly improving six more. The new cycling paths will stretch from Finsbury Park to Victoria Park, where 5,000 new bike spaces will be provided for Games-time use, and from Epping Forest and the

Hopkins directed the preparation of several environmental infrastructure and green grid plans for the Thames Gateway South Essex Green Grid, which won the Landscape Institute’s Award for Landscape Planning in 2006. He’s prepared several historic park restoration plans funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, including Derby Arboretum, and was a consultant to the Royal Parks Agency.

In a pro bono capacity, Hopkins was instrumental in establishing the Manor House Gardens User Group for his local park, and in subsequently achieving a £1m Heritage Lottery-funded restoration grant, which was successfully completed in 2001.

Wanstead Flats to Stratford. Public transport links – buses, tubes, trains and even the Eurostar – are also being improved.

LASTING LEGACY

The work of Hopkins and his colleagues looks set to ensure the Olympic Parks provides a stunning backdrop for the Games. But, let’s not forget the park’s wider role in legacy, he says: “The whole point of this project and what we are trying to do is create a landscape for people and wildlife for the future. The public’s response to the project has been overwhelmingly positive – they want a wonderful, easily accessible space.”

But as communities grow, their needs evolve, and the park will have to adapt. “Parks are never finished – they need to be able to develop. That’s why we’re building a robust and flexible park to cater for the existing and future needs of the community. The infrastructure and planting we’re putting in now will have the park at its best in 100 years’ time.” ●

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The Advisors

We speak to four leisure consultants about how they met their latest briefs

Consultancy: **TrioPlus**

Client: **University of Ulster**

Background: In 2003, the university decided to completely reposition its sport and recreation service. It became host to the Sports Institute Northern Ireland (SINI) in 2005, and launched the University of Ulster Sports Academy in 2006 to bring together all stakeholders.

The Academy vision is "to establish University of Ulster as the leading University for Sport on the island of Ireland." Sports facilities are provided on three of the four campuses.

Brief: TrioPlus worked with head of sport, Nigel Dobson, and head of sports

studies, Marie Murphy, for five years in a series of phases. The brief included assisting the sport and recreation service to reposition itself strategically, both internally and within Northern Ireland and Ireland, as well as undertaking option appraisals across four campuses. This took into account potential markets, sports development and higher performance opportunities, as well as potential links with internal and external partners.

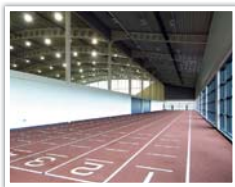
"Target" sports, innovation and risk assessment were considered, along with business planning and the development of a facility strategy with operating and capital investment plans.

TrioPlus also wrote briefs for individual development programmes and facilities, particularly the recently

opened facilities at Jordanstown, which attracted investment of £20m. They were also involved with submitting funding applications to partners, including Sport Northern Ireland, which raised almost £10m, and with instilling an action planning culture and striving to bring the university in line with the Academy vision to 2015.

Meeting the brief: In addition to desk research, detailed analysis, reports and funding applications, the key factor was talking to people within the university and improving links externally.

The university has a good reputation for sport, but it was slipping. There was a need to convince often sceptical partners of the intent to modernise what were originally state-of-the-art



The Jordanstown facilities have developed into a leading facility for high performance sport, and will act as a 2012 Olympic training venue

The Sidcup Leisure Centre opened in March 2008 and is now delivering a well-structured sports activity programme, meeting the educational objectives of schools and providing an excellent community leisure facility with an operational surplus.

Consultancy:

Parkwood Consultancy Services

Client: **London Borough of Bexley**

Brief: To deliver three new leisure centres for the London Borough of Bexley via a £30m PPP scheme.

Background: Parkwood Consultancy Services (PCS) was awarded the PPP contract and completed the design and build of the first two centres, at Crook Log and Erith, in 2005. The third centre in Sidcup could not be delivered at the

time of the original contract award due to planning and land ownership issues. During the development of the first two centres, PCS resolved these issues, achieving planning permission in late 2005. This allowed the Sidcup project to be added to the scheme in 2006.

Meeting the brief: The Sidcup site is adjacent to two schools that jointly applied for specialist sports college status prior to the construction of the centre. During the application, it was recognised that there was a deficit of school sports facilities, which would be met by the new Sidcup centre.



The new Jordanstown facilities will host events such as Interprovincial hockey, under-15 international women's soccer, and high profile rugby

facilities but had become completely outdated. This was not helped at one stage by having to close a pool at Jordanstown that was unsustainable, when a longer-term solution was identified as the only viable option.

Convincing key players within the university of the standards that needed to be achieved was an issue, and visits to view equivalent facilities in Loughborough, Sheffield, Birmingham and Dublin were important.

Other factors which shaped decisions included market patterns which were relevant to business planning, and the fact that there was a captive audience of 25,000 students from Monday to Thursday during term time – though

this reduced during holiday periods. The evolving landscape of Northern Ireland politics and administrative reform also had to be factored in.

Outcome: The university has regained its status, and all stakeholders are under one roof at the Academy. Improvements have also taken place on all campuses, including the new indoor and outdoor facilities at Jordanstown, which were officially opened by Lord Coe in November 2008, and are official training venues for London 2012.

In student sport, 2008/9 has been the most successful for 25 years. Community sports development has grown by a factor of 10 since 2005.

The new Jordanstown facilities have rapidly developed into a leading facility for higher performance sport. Individual sports are queuing up to hold training camps and stage events there, and Easter 2009 alone will see the world junior and cadet fencing championships, under-15 international women's soccer, a Youth Sports Trust training camp, Irish boxing camp, Interprovincial hockey and high profile rugby activity.

Convinced by developments, the university has recently declared Jordanstown will become a dedicated sports campus, with significant additional developments proposed over the next three to five years.

The design includes facilities to meet the needs of the school and the community, and the overall funding package included provision from both the leisure PPP and schools' PFI funding. It was a condition of the PFI funding that the new centre met school sports requirements. There was also rationalisation of the leisure estate with the disposal of the leisure site in Sidcup, which helped with affordability.

The overall site forms a sports hub that facilitates the delivery of the school sports co-ordinator programme for feeder schools in the area. During the design phase, PCS co-ordinated

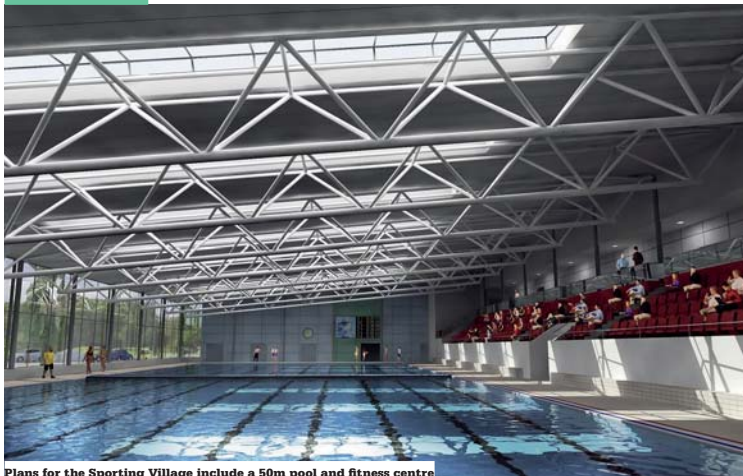
consultations with stakeholders to achieve the best mix of facilities and programming to meet the needs of the schools and the community.

PCS worked to optimise the commercial viability of the centre, while at the same time meeting educational aims and community participation targets.

Outcome: The Sidcup Leisure Centre opened in March 2008 and is delivering a well-structured sports activity programme, meeting the educational objectives of schools and providing an excellent community leisure facility with an operational surplus.



The Sidcup site is a hub for school and community sports



Plans for the Sporting Village include a 50m pool and fitness centre

Consultancy: PMP

Client: Basildon District Council and Basildon Renaissance Partnership

Brief: PMP has been working with Basildon District Council and Basildon Renaissance Partnership (BRP) since 2006 on the development of Basildon Sporting Village. The brief was to deliver new and improved sporting facilities to meet the needs of the Basildon community, including the development of a 50m pool, to deliver increased participation and a facility of regional significance.

Meeting the brief: An initial project assessment ascertained the facility mix for the Sporting Village and potential funding sources, including an impact

assessment to quantify the economic and social impacts of the proposed facility. Following a market appraisal, PMP identified that the Sporting Village should include a new regional gymnastics centre, 50m pool and fitness centre, eight-court sports hall and ancillary community facilities.

The vision was for the proposed facilities to complement existing outdoor sports facilities in Gloucester Park, a 250-acre park in the heart of the town, and provide a community-focused sports hub to act as a catalyst in increasing participation, as well as supporting wider agenda social aims, and raising Basildon's profile.

PMP is working with the council and BRP providing advice for the procurement of a Design Build Operate and Maintain (DBOM) contract for the Basildon Sporting Village, utilising the competitive dialogue process. This

has involved providing on-site project management and operational support, preparing key documentation at each stage of the procurement process, evaluating bids and leading commercial negotiation. A key focus has been supporting the council in developing a working partnership with bidders to achieve a solution providing a balance between capital costs and ongoing revenue implications, delivering value for money and improved participation.

Outcome: The initial funding and development plan and impact assessment provided the robust evidence base on which the scheme has been developed. This led to over £10m in partnership funding from the Department of Communities and Local Government and Essex County Council. The result will be a £35m multi-sport facility, a community sporting hub that will support the £1.5bn regeneration of Basildon town centre.

The Sporting Village will provide high quality facilities and activities for users from local community groups through to elite athletes. It will dramatically raise quality and choice for users and drive participation.

The procurement programme attracted both developer and operator-led consortia, and the preferred bidder will be announced in April. Following its completion by the end of 2010, the Sporting Village will be open and available for use as a training camp for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.



The £35m development will support the £1.5bn regeneration of Basildon town centre



The framework highlights the potential for the development of new facilities, including an eight-court sports hall for badminton and basketball, and two 50m swimming pools

Consultancy: **Strategic Leisure**

Client: **Sport England
North West (SENW)**

Brief: To deliver a Sport England Regional Sports Facility Framework – a detailed assessment and analysis of the priority sports facility investment needs for the north west region to inform a 10-year strategic overview.

Meeting the brief: The North West regional board of Sport England appointed Strategic Leisure to develop a regional sports facilities framework to map priorities for investment in the region's infrastructure for the next decade. The priorities reflect the need to increase participation at all levels.

The framework sets out the facility development needs for Sport England priority sports, to act as a reference point and evidence base for providers. It also highlights key facility needs and strategic objectives for the most popular sports, to plug gaps and identify development priorities.

SENW recognised the need to influence facility investment from a variety of sources, including Building Schools for the Future (BSF), the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and LIFT. The aim was also to give local authorities and their partners a strategic vision and a clear set of priorities, and to show how opportunities might be explored through health or education partnerships.

The project was delivered by Strategic Leisure in partnership with a steering group representing local authorities, leisure trusts, national governing bodies (NGBs), county sports partnerships (CSPs) and the North West Regional Development Agency.

The study involved a comprehensive review of strategic documents, and an audit of existing facilities to develop county and local authority profiles. A

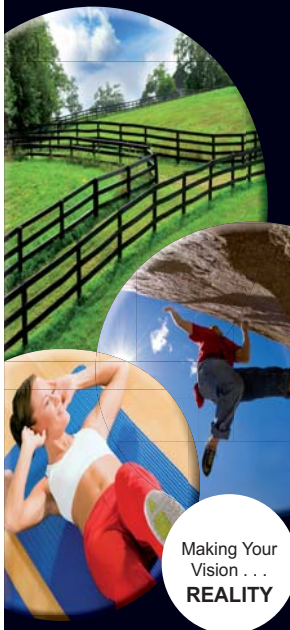
A substantial consultation programme was undertaken, involving meetings with local authority officers to review and update Active Places data, as well as county workshops with CSPs, NGBs, local authorities, the higher education sector and Sport England

substantial consultation programme was undertaken, involving meetings with local authority officers to review and update Active Places data, as well as county workshops with the six CSPs, NGBs, local authorities, the higher and further education sector, regional stakeholders, and Sport England.

The consultations identified facilities' locations and condition; maps were produced to illustrate the distribution of facility types and what this means in terms of access for individual sports.

Outcome: Based on audit, research and consultation, an evidence base was delivered to provide an accurate picture of the current level of provision, and a starting point for the planning of facility developments. This shows what's needed by facility type and location.

Among many recommendations, the framework highlights the potential for the development of two 50m swimming pools, dedicated cycling provision, including a sub-regional velodrome, and an eight-court sports hall for badminton and basketball. It also makes a case for investment in sub-regional and local developments to improve community access. The framework is available online and provides an accessible tool to support strategic planning for sports facilities development. ●



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Spiegelworld appears annually at New York City's Southport pier, with performances, bars and DJs

At the 1996 Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Australian theatre impresario Ross Mollison saw a cabaret show in The Famous Spiegeltent, one of a dozen or so surviving 'mirrored tents' once used as portable dance halls in Belgium in the early 20th century. He was captivated by the century-old venue – constructed from only wood and canvas, but lavishly decorated inside – and the way it affected its audience. "The intimacy of the venue meant the audience was as much a part of the spectacle as the show itself," he says "and I found myself watching the audience as much as the performers."

Recognising the potential of the Spiegeltent as a venue for offering boutique entertainment, Mollison hired another original Spiegeltent, the 350-seat Salon Perdu, and set about creating shows designed especially for it.

Through his marketing consultancy, Mollison had experience taking Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical *Cats* on tour of Australia in a 2000-seat purpose-built big top. But it was his work with troupes from Cirque du Soleil, Circus Oz and the Moscow State Circus that cemented his love for the circus and fuelled his passion to create a performance befitting the Spiegeltent.

intense

Ross Mollison's Spiegelworld is one of the newest takes on a century-old form of entertainment. Jennifer Todd investigates

"I was fascinated by the world of circus, which is so different from the world we live in, so I combined the idea of clowning, comedy and general outrageousness to create productions that would be even more sensational because of the uniqueness of the venue that was showing them," Mollison says.

NEW YORK LAUNCH

Although Spiegel tents were gaining popularity in Europe and Australia, they were practically unheard of in the US outside of Teatro ZinZanni, a Spiegeltent dinner show that launched in Seattle in 1998. So Mollison seized the opportunity to bring them to the largest US city, taking his Spiegeltent to New York in summer 2006, hiring a spot on Southport Pier under the Brooklyn Bridge in Manhattan and open-

ing the tent to the public with a show called *Absinthe* – a daring circus-meets-burlesque variety show featuring fantastical acrobatics. It was a huge success.

"The beauty of the tent is that the audience sits watching performers close up, like a theatre in a round, in such an intimate space. It's like seeing them perform on your dining room table," explains Mollison. "Unlike so many of the concrete structures that house the performing arts, the design of the Spiegeltent, which is no more than 20m in diameter, makes the experience warm, cosy and humanising."

In 2007, Mollison purchased the Salon Perdu from Van Rosmalen in the Netherlands and hit upon the idea of creating a village based around the Spiegeltent, which he named Spiegelworld. Alongside the tent with



Spiegelworld's performances, including the show *Absinthe*, are a mix of circus, burlesque and acrobatics



its nightly performances, he built a restaurant, bars, a private speakeasy bar, a hammock garden for people to hang out in and drink cocktails plus an outdoor dance area with resident DJs. Each individual venue is housed under canvas canopies, which, alongside the Spiegeltent, creates a European village outdoor atmosphere. Mollison says the concept sprung from wanting to stay out till late in a venue where conversation was possible without having to go to a nightclub and listen to blaring music. He denies that Spiegelworld is aimed at the older demographic, however. "Although the typical demographic of Spiegelworld in the US is the 35-year age group, it can be anything from 21 to 91 years of age," he says. "Our shows and music are very accessible so it suits all ages. Nothing gives me more pleasure than to see a 75-year-old couple hanging round after a show to dance on the end of the pier."

Mollison says it is the combination of different entertainment elements that appeals to such a wide audience. "The acts in the show are really fast paced with each one only lasting three or four minutes so there's no opportunity to get bored." Besides, the Spiegeltent comes complete with a resplendent bar, so audience members can get themselves a

THE HISTORY OF THE SPIEGELTENT

Spiegel tents were originally built in late 19th-century Belgium as mobile dance halls. The portable structures were transported from town to town and assembled in areas that did not have a formal dance hall. Meaning "mirrored tent" in Flemish, the Spiegeltent is constructed out of wood and canvas. Inside, the round structure is lavishly decorated with plush velvet, brass and brocade with stained glass mirrors, creating a warm and cosy atmosphere. On average, a Spiegeltent seats 300 people. Construction of a Spiegeltent takes approximately 12 hours and contains up to 3,000 individual pieces of wood, canvas and mirror.

Only about a dozen of the original Spiegel tents – which all have their own name – still exist today, including the Palais Romantique, La Gayola, La Gaiete, Le Moulin Rouge, The Famous Spiegeltent and Le Salon Perdu. However, a resurgence in tents as entertainment venues has meant there are now a number of manufacturers throughout the world who build new Spiegel tents, and these can be hired out for parties, concerts or festivals.



The Famous Spiegeltent is owned by Australian David Bates

Of the original Spiegel tents, most are privately owned by entrepreneurs such as Klessens & Sons in Belgium and Van Rosmalen in the Netherlands, who regularly rent them out to performance troupes and install them as the main attraction at arts festivals around the world. Another original, The Famous Spiegeltent, is owned by Australian David Bates, who has put on Spiegeltent shows in Melbourne, Sydney and at the Edinburgh Fringe.



The Spiegeltent's bar lets guests sip cocktails while watching the show



ROSS MOLLISON

Ross Mollison produced semi-professional children's shows while at university in the 1980s, writing scripts, designing costumes and composing music for the productions. In 1989, he started his own marketing consultancy in Melbourne, Australia, specialising in live entertainment, and, 10 years later, co-produced a production of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical *Cats* in a big top which toured across Australia.

In 2000, Mollison was in a Melbourne pub watching a local act called *Puppetry of the Penis*, in which two Australian guys performed seemingly impossible feats of genital origami. Seeing crowd's reaction to this groundbreaking show, Mollison approached the artists with the idea of developing their performance into a full theatrical touring show, and from 2000 to 2005 he presented the show in theatres across Australia, New Zealand, France, Spain and the US, including a long-running off-Broadway season in New York City.

In 2004, Mollison secured the North American rights to *Slava's Showshow*, created by famed Russian clown Slava Polunin. The show played for almost two years and won the Drama Desk Award for Unique Theatre Experience.

► drink at any time, adding to the casual atmosphere of the venue.

Although Spiegelworld has no overarching theme, each venue is unified by the canopies and "quirky strange things going on", created by staff members dressed flamboyantly, the décor which is flooded with mirrors and candles to create a glow and warmth, and an olde worlde carnival atmosphere, described by Mollison as "a high-end VIP experience in a quirky, theatrical setting with a travelling carnival flavour."

THE MOBILE ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS

Building on its success in New York, in 2007 Mollison toured Spiegelworld to Miami Beach, and also established an annual season in New York.

As well as showing the production *Absinthe*, new shows have been created based on a similar adult-only burlesque circus theme: *Desir, La Vie* and *Gazillionaire's Late Nite Lounge*.

Mollison admits there are challenges to operating a temporary entertainment structure. Convincing the fire department that a 100-year-old tent will meet its stringent regulations is one of them. "The tents are architecturally unbelievable," Mollison says. "They have no screws, no bolts – they literally hang together, defying gravity. Each piece of it can be carried by one man." Another challenge is finding a location where you can create a European feel and get a late night liquor license. For Mollison, that means spending a lot of time seeking compliant landlords or unusual spaces such as Southport Pier in Manhattan.

However, the advantages of running a mobile entertainment business far outnumber the disadvantages according to Mollison, who says the temporary nature of the venue means he has complete control over its identity. "It's not like putting on a performance in an established venue where Pepsi for example, has the rights to supply the drinks, or where other people's logos are every-



SPIEGELTENTS AROUND THE WORLD

The Famous Spiegeltent

Crafted in 1920 by master craftsmen Oscar Mols Dom and Louis Goor, The Famous Spiegeltent went on to host performances by singer Marlene Dietrich and other great musicians, cabaret

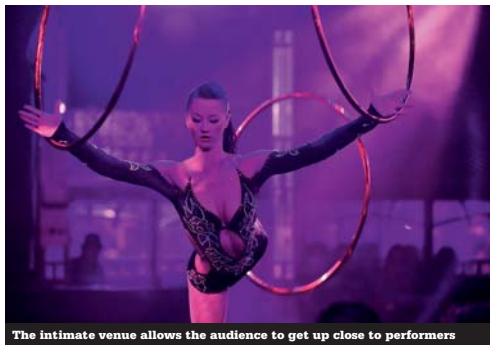


The Famous Spiegeltent

artists and circus burlesque performers. It's now owned by David Bates, an Australian musician who staged his first season of music and cabaret performances under the tent at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 1996; showcasing performances by circus burlesque troupe La Clique, The Famous Spiegeltent now appears annually in Edinburgh, Sydney and Melbourne, and has visited Brighton, Auckland and Montreal.

Teatro ZinZanni

Created by Norman Langgill, founder of not-for-profit arts and events production organisation One Reel, this dinner-cirque-comedy-cabaret event opened in a Spiegeltent in Seattle in



The intimate venue allows the audience to get up close to performers



where and you're stuck with a ticketing system that stipulates a certain ticket price." In each case Mollison has access to a greenfield site, which means he can choose which partners he works with.

Currently, most of Spiegelworld's revenue is driven by ticket sales. Sponsorship is the next big revenue generator – AU\$8m the last 12 months – followed by food and beverage, which is outsourced at present, although the plan is to do it in-house as the Spiegelworld brand grows. Mollison employs up to 200 people, including technical and stage back-up teams, hospitality personnel plus 40 cast members, who travel the world on tour with the show.

TENNIS TIE-UP

In a slight departure from its mainstream business, Mollison struck a deal with Tennis Australia to bring Spiegelworld to the Australian Open in Melbourne in January 2009. To complement the tennis action, a series of music concerts and theatrical events were presented

on stages in the Spiegelwelt within Melbourne Olympic Park, where the tennis was held. This included *Absinthe*, which was shown 10 times during the week. Guests were also able to enjoy the bars and restaurants in Spiegelworld as a ground pass ticket to the tennis also granted access to its F&B areas. For Tennis Australia, the attraction of bringing Spiegelworld to the tournament is obvious. With a larger entertainment package on offer, it benefited from increased ticket sales to a larger demographic.

For Mollison, tying up with a sporting festival opened the Spiegelworld brand up to more people and gives the business a new direction for the future. "I think there's a really good correlation between the demographic of those who go to see big sporting events and those who love to see a live arts performance," says Mollison, who believes people go to sporting occasions looking for all round entertainment as well as the sport. He sees an opportunity in creating bespoke theatre performances within

Spiegelworld, themed around other sporting occasions, such as the Formula One Grand Prix and horse racing.

For now, however, Mollison's focus is on taking his Spiegelworld brand to the mass market. His company is about to announce a tie-up with a casino operator in Las Vegas to give Spiegelworld and its kooky entertainment a permanent home. A 3,800-room brand new casino will open in 2009 on the Las Vegas strip, and Spiegelworld will be part of its entertainment offer. Meanwhile, Mollison plans to continue Spiegelworld's tour of the US and Australia, and also hopes to open it up to the European market by hiring additional Spiegelwelts. He's also interested in franchising the business, but not until the brand is better established.

UNIQUE ATMOSPHERE

Intimacy, says Mollison, is what connects all of these ideas. "People crave intimacy, which is exactly what Spiegelworld gives them – a chance to feel as though they're experiencing something just for them."

1998 before moving on to San Francisco. Today, performances are held year-round in both cities, in two original Spiegelwelts: Le Moulin Rouge and Le Palais Nostalgique.

The World Famous Pussy Parlure

Cocktails, cabaret, circus, burlesque and DJs appear in this Spiegelwelt, which tours UK music festivals such as Glastonbury and Reading, and has visited the Brighton Fringe Festival.

Palazzo

This Spiegelwelt dinner theatre event – featuring food by renowned chefs, and circus and vaudeville performers – launched in Freiburg in 1998; year-

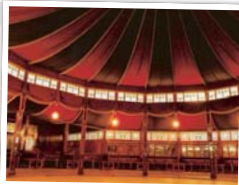
round locations have since opened in Amsterdam, Basel, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, Mannheim, Munich, Stuttgart, Vienna, Zurich, and most recently Berlin.

Madame Zingara's Theatre of Dreams

Madame Zingara was a popular 320-seat restaurant in Cape Town before it burned down in 2006; owner Richard Griffin rejigged the concept and created a Spiegelwelt "dinner theatre cirque spectacular" that has toured Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg; it completed a London run in January.

Pomp, Duck & Circumstance

Year-round Spiegelwelt dinner theatre in Stuttgart.



Le Moulin Rouge

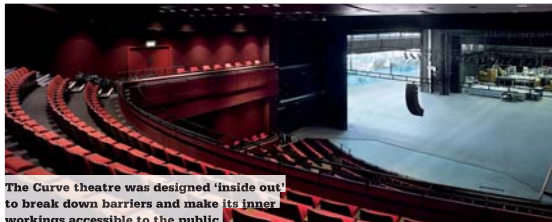
Krystal Kabaret & Dinner Show

This Spiegelwelt event offered five-star cuisine and 20 international performers – including singers, dancers, acrobats and comedians – during its limited run in Dubai in January 2008. ●

Leicester is in the middle of a £100m cultural transformation encompassing the recently-opened Curve theatre and a new cultural quarter. Kath Hudson talks to the major players behind the project.

Leicester's cultural regeneration

ROSS WILLMOTT LEADER OF LEICESTER CITY COUNCIL



The Curve theatre was designed 'inside out' to break down barriers and make its inner workings accessible to the public

When and how did the idea for Leicester's cultural regeneration come about?

It all started around 2000. A lot of it was prompted by a number of problems which we turned into opportunities. We had made three lottery bids to redevelop the Haymarket theatre and at least two for the Phoenix and all of them had failed. I felt we had two very successful venues and the Haymarket was a producing theatre, but with it being in a shopping centre, the scope was limited. The proposals to build a new performing arts theatre grew from there.

Was this based on the success of any other cities?

I'd seen what was happening in Gateshead and the Lowry on Merseyside, and also I'd been to Bilbao and seen what was possible. Leicester has a strong tradition of theatre, dance and music, and this was a passion of mine.

With the Curve theatre, it was a bold move to go for something so state-of-the-art. Was there the temptation to play it safe and go for a cheaper model?

I was most impressed by iconic architecture and how it can become a catalyst for other things, but for 30 years we'd had a theatre you couldn't even see from the outside! However, we were out of power between 2003 and 2007, and the council was run by a Conservative/Lib Dem coa-

lition which did try to cut the costs and reduce the scale. It all became a huge drama, which is rather appropriate for a theatre. So much so, that in November 2004, the Conservatives actually brought down their coalition, because they felt the project was being compromised, and put us in power, as a minority, for six months to get it back on track. It survived as a concept because of its power.

What impact do you hope it will have on Leicester?

We have succeeded in giving our theatre producing company a world class venue. Also it's become something of an icon for the city and a demonstration of Leicester's confidence.

The council's commitment to this project helped attract a £350m shopping centre, which has put us in a slightly stronger position during the economic downturn than we would have been.

What challenges did you face?

There are still people who think it's a bit too grand! It was the biggest project the council had ever done, so many people were sceptical and questioned if the money should be spent on arts and culture, rather than being invested in council housing. But what is a city about without cultural destinations? It can't just be a collection of houses and shops; it has to have something to draw people in, to make the city work at night and make the economy flourish.

What else does the cultural regeneration involve?

The former bus depot has been redeveloped as the city business depot, comprising a collection of work units for creative businesses, exhibition space and a café. This has inspired business start-ups: De Montfort University has a number of design courses, and part of the ambition is to retain graduates.

The next big project, which will open later this year, is Digital Media Centre which is a replacement for the Phoenix in some respects. It's a multi-purpose building, with a multi-screen cinema, work units and accommodation.

Will that complete the cultural regeneration?

Yes and no. One of my ambitions was to have all these very shiny and expensive new buildings, but we also need to meet the other end of the market. A number of other buildings in the locality might lend themselves to being refurbished. We're also looking into a medium-sized music venue or an indoor arena.

How much has it cost and how was it funded?

About £100m. It was mainly public money, a large part coming from the city council, as well as The Arts Council, the regional development agency and ERDF. There have been small amounts of private sector donations, but I'd always welcome more!



Rumney's fabric theme for the redesigned streets of Leicester's cultural quarter contains a 'thread' leading to the Curve

ROBERT RUMMEY & GLYN TULLY RUMMEY DESIGN ASSOCIATES

When did Rumney get involved with Leicester's cultural regeneration?

In 2004. The council wanted to regenerate the city centre, which was suffering from a withdrawal of the traditional industries of hosiery and glove making, and create a series of different quarters to get people living there again. Also they had a stock of very attractive, but unused buildings, such as warehouses and hosiery factories. They came up with this plan to create a series of quarters and the regeneration of the retail area, making the centre of Leicester attractive and recognisable again by creating a cultural quarter called St George's.

What was Rumney Design's role?

Our role was to act as the glue and tie all the components together to create an actual quarter. The Curve theatre is the magnet of the cultural quarter and our streets were intended to take you there in an attractive way.

What was interesting about it for you?

There's a big debate in the country at the moment about town centre streets. A number of streets in London have been calmed and pedestrians take precedence over car drivers. This was an opportunity to put a lot of that into effect somewhere

PROJECT FACTS

The regeneration has cost around £100m to date, with Curve taking up around £60m of that budget:

- £36m from Leicester City Council
- £14.5m from Arts Council England
- £7.2m from East Midlands Development Agency
- £3.7m from European Regional Development Fund

Curve features two auditoria, one with 750 fixed seats and the other a versatile 350-seat space. The stunning glass façade is one continuous piece of glass and reveals the open plan foyer, with views onto the café, bars, backstage area and across the stage.

The Cultural Quarter, known as St George's, comprises a city business depot for creative businesses, as well as the digital media centre which includes a multiscreen cinema and will open later this year. The streets have been landscaped and pedestrianised, with the intention of encouraging more street art and performances.

that isn't London. The streets have been reclaimed by people, there is live art, street theatre and quite a buzz.

What is the significance of the fabric theme?

This reaches back to historic times when Leicester was about hosiery and stockings. At the same time, we had a whole series of disparate elements spread along streets and we had to find a way of tying them all together.

The thread is a line of pink granite in the ground, with small LEDs set into it, so at night you're still aware of it. At some places text is inscribed. It's quite playful, in as much as it loops around various spaces or important things like telephone kiosks. It pulls you through and is an aid to exploring: if you're on one of the streets beside it, it would lead you to the performing arts centre.

What challenges did you face?

The personnel at the council changed a lot and opinions varied. There were great debates over art policy, and some of the artistic enterprises were asked to work with were 'controversial'. We didn't always think they would produce good streetscape, and one has to guard against fashion! We tried to act as the honest broker amongst the client who was multihued and had various views.

RUTH EASTWOOD CHIEF EXECUTIVE, LEICESTER THEATRE TRUST

What is your day to day role?

The buck stops with me. With the help of my fantastic team I coordinate the whole picture, from operations to finance and artistic output.

What is your background?

I've been with the company for two and a half years. Before that I was in Poole, Dorset with Lighthouse, home to the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. That was another capital project, but a refurbishment rather than a new build. Prior to that I was with the Civic Theatre in Darlington and prior to that in Bradford.

Why did this project appeal to you?

Curve is a huge and exciting project and I genuinely think it is one of the last major new build, theatrical capital projects in the country. The boom, which started with the lottery, is changing now.

What was the brief for the Curve?

We wanted to create a modern theatre and break away from the Victorian



convention, making a theatre which is accessible to all sorts of people: adults, children and people from different cultures. The flexibility was really about being able to enjoy artistic and cultural events outside of a black box. The design is unique, we have state of the art equipment, acoustic curtains that move up

and down, and the most complete automated flying system in a British theatre.

How have the productions made use of this flexibility?

No Fit State Circus were part of *Life Off*, our first show, so we were able to make a piece which was incredibly experiential, using the foyers, the stage, and with action over people's head in the auditorium. For the Christmas show, *Simply Cinderella*, the stage was 35m deep and a three-storey building was lifted from it during the performance.

The workings of the theatre have become more transparent: if people pop in for a coffee they are likely to get a view of the scenery being painted or techni-

cians at work. They don't have to wait until 7.30 pm and come with a ticket to be part of the action.

How far are you expecting audiences to travel?

Curve was the only UK date outside of London for *In-I*, the Juliette Binoche, Akram Khan collaboration which premiered at The National. It drew people from all over the country. For other shows we'll expect audiences to be made up more of people from the region, but we're hoping to be part of the pattern of international shows. Our stage is particularly good for European-style theatre and we'd like to be part of what happens at Cardiff Millennium, the Barbican and the Edinburgh Festival.

How well has Curve met its aims so far?

So far footfall through the building has been high. We've sold out visiting shows including *In-I* and performances of both the shows made in-house so far – *Simply Cinderella* and *The Pillowman*. In this economic climate, we're very fortunate to have such fantastic interest in Curve. It's a long journey, but there are lots of indications that people are very excited about having a new theatre in their city.

TONY STAFFORD PROJECT MANAGER AT RAFAEL VIÑOLY ARCHITECTS

When did Rafael Viñoly Architects become involved with Curve?

In 2002 certain architects were invited to come along and meet Leicester City Council and Leicester Theatre Trust to discuss ideas.

What was the brief?

As Leicester has a diverse ethnic population, the aim was to break down cultural barriers, as well as physically, to bring different audiences to the theatre. A traditional, middle-class provincial theatre is not the most welcoming of places. The client wanted it to be welcoming and open and different, as well as to be able to generate income and be part of the city-wide regeneration.

Did you have previous experience of this type of project?

It's a theme Rafael has used before at a two theatres in North America. Jazz



at the Lincoln Centre in New York, where the concert is visible from the street and there are phenomenal views of Central Park and the streets from inside. Also, Kimmel Centre in Philadelphia, where the theatre is an extension of the streets.

What exactly is an inside-out theatre?

The main driver of the concept was to make everything as transparent as possible, so there are no boundaries between the theatre and the outside, and it reveals how a theatre operates. The foyer of Curve is very similar to the streetscape. The idea of the theatre is that it's flexible and changes all the time – the potential is unlimited really.

Has this concept been used before anywhere else in the UK?

It's the first time this concept has been used in the UK, but more people are talk-

ing about it now. The National Theatre has mentioned it would like to open up more in its redevelopment and make the back of house more transparent, so the public can be involved with rehearsals.

What challenges did the project throw up?

It was a very complex building. To achieve this kind of transparency, the structure had to hang from the roof and not touch the ground, as bizarre as that sounds. There's also a continuous band of glass around the outside of the theatre so there are no physical boundaries. Plus the fact that it's technically complex to build a theatre because of all of the equipment and the acoustics.

What are you most proud of?

It's great to be involved in theatre projects – they don't come up very often. I'm very proud of the whole building and the team effort to create it. It's surprising how many people were involved, and everyone played their part, from the guys laying concrete in the freezing, cold to the decorators at the end. ●

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The Double Club, a temporary restaurant, nightclub and art installation sponsored by Prada, launched in a London warehouse in November for a six-month run. Isometrix managing director Arnold Chan tells Andrea Jezovit what it was like providing dramatic lighting for the temporary venue



twice the drama

What was the brief?

To adapt artist Carsten Höller's concept to the needs of a high profile restaurant-bar-club. Carsten had pre-conceived ideas about the lighting and we helped him materialise these and make the spaces beautiful.

What did you come up with?

The design for the lighting in the courtyard bar was very specific. It had to be very soft with a warm glow, to make everyone look good. We added some texture lighting to the Portuguese mosaic, which was one of the key elements of this space. On other wall of the courtyard, we focused the light on the art murals to make these stand out. The restaurant had to look very cosy and dimly lit. So we opted for large candles on the tables, with accents on the art on the walls only.

What inspired your design?

Carsten's art – it was very powerful and we tried to create an atmosphere that complemented it without being obtrusive or invasive. That would have been the wrong approach. Also the project's high profile inspired us to create a beautiful, comfortable scheme where all the guests look good and can enjoy the music, food and drink.



What was it like designing for a temporary venue?

The lighting had to be very practical and also very economical, as the equipment would be difficult to reuse after the venue closes. Also we had to work with extremely low levels of energy available. This made the designs of each space unique, and we had to be very careful about what lamps we used and also the voltage.

Almost the entire installation is fixed onto the architectural fabric of the club. There is little architectural work to hide the fixtures, as the venue is temporary. The lighting design for the club was treated in the same manner as a pavilion or an art installation, where things have to be fixed and removed easily. After all these challenges, we think the result is extremely good!

What other projects have you been working on?

We worked on the Bungalow 8 nightclub and the Hélène Darroze at the Connaught restaurant in London, both



The lighting for the club was designed in the same manner as a pavilion or art installation so that it could be fixed and removed easily

ISOMETRIX

The London, UK-based lighting consultancy firm was founded in 1984 by managing director Arnold Chan, an architect who trained at the Architectural Association. The company aims to distinguish its work from that of more traditional lighting engineers by using a versatile architectural approach, visualising the impact of lighting in a three-dimensional space and creating effects that enhance spatial flow. For more information, visit www.isometrix.co.uk.

with architect and designer India Mahdavi. We are currently working on a number of projects with Alan Yau, creator of the Wagamama restaurant chain. We did the Sake No Hana restaurant in London for him last year, as well as the Hakkasan Istanbul restaurant in Turkey. Also last year, we finished the lighting at the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar, with architects and designer firm Wilmette.

THE DOUBLE CLUB

- The venue is a Carsten Höller art project sponsored by Fondazione Prada, with 50 per cent of profits donated to City of Joy/UNICEF
- Opened in November 2008 in a Victorian warehouse in London for a six-month run, the venue features a bar and restaurant, each divided into equally sized Western and Congolese parts, serving both Western and Congolese food and drink; a dance club also features Western and Congolese sides, with a mix of Western and Congolese music.
- Jan Kennedy, who opened the Michelin-starred Quo Vadis in 1995 and Pharmacy with Damien Hirst in 1998, is project director.

NEWS ROUND-UP

QSC AUDIO SOLUTION FOR NEW LONDON RESTAURANT CONCEPT

Swiss vegetarian restaurant concept Tibits has launched two London locations, both equipped with loudspeakers and amplification from QSC Audio.

The installation met specifications drawn up by Christian Beusch of audio consultants Tonstudio Beusch, who chose the solution based on the aesthetic appeal of the Acoustic Design series, its ease of setup and sound quality.

The installation for the two sites, at Heddon Street and Westfields shopping centre, used Acoustic Design AD-S52T and AD-S322T full-range loudspeakers, powered by a pair of QSC ISA300Ti and CX four-channel amplifiers.

Several input points were requested for the Heddon Street site – which occupies 4,740sq ft over two floors – in order to accommodate DJ activity.



The restaurants opened in autumn



Grolsch Zaal hosts live bands



The exhibit was lit theatrically

ROBE INSTALLATIONS LIGHT UP A NEW NETHERLANDS THEATRE AND THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SLOVENIA

A NEW €80M THEATRE IN ENSCHEDE, NETHERLANDS, FEATURES ROBE MOVING LIGHTS.

The new venue features spaces including Podium Twente, a large hall, and two 'pop podiums': Grolsch Zaal, for hosting bands and live events, and Studio Zaal, for conventional and experimental theatre shows.

Six ColorWash 575E ATs, 10 ColorSpot 575E ATs and eight of the compact Robe ColorSpot 250ATs were used in in Glosch Zaal, positioned on three onstage trusses and a box truss over the auditorium. Ten Robe ColorSpot and six ColorWash 250E ATs were used for Studio Zaal, and a further eight ColorSpot 575E ATs for Podium Twente, along with Avolites Pearl 2008 and Tiger desks for control. The lighting and sound rigs were chosen to provide high production value so that visiting bands do not have to bring in their own production systems.

ROBE HAS ALSO SUPPLIED LIGHTING FOR AN EXHIBITION OF COSTUMES BY ALAN HRANITELJ, SLOVENIA'S LEADING COSTUME DESIGNER, AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SLOVENIA.

Top Slovenian lighting designer Andrej Hajdinjak used carefully positioned Robe ColorSpot 1200E ATs, ColorSpot 700E ATs, ColorWash 575E AT Zooms and XT Spot 575s to light the exhibition theatrically, creating the drama of stage lighting while illuminating the exhibits.

Limited installation options were a challenge, as there were no flying facilities and a ground supported structure could not be fitted into the space, so Hajdinjak and Robe distributor MK Light Sound rigged the fixtures on windows and balconies.

Hajdinjak is a stage lighting designer who's worked on over 100 performances in theatre, dance, ballet and opera for top Slovenian cultural institutions.



Public and private lanes are available

NEW ALL STAR LANES LAUNCHES WITH PORTABLE DJ BOOTH

All Star Lanes, a UK boutique bowling concept, has launched a third location in London's east end with a number of multimedia and AV features, including a portable DJ booth – the first of its kind.

The venue features public and private bowling lanes, a cocktail bar and a 1950s-style diner, all served by an AV system designed by the Sound Division Group. The integrated system is based around Harman Pro brand premium sound reinforcement products.

The plush, leather-padded industry-spec DJ booth is able to relocate to five different plug in points within the building.

Laptop plug-in points, two large plasma screens and an 11ft electric drop-down screen from a high-powered DLP projector allow for corporate presentations.

JBL loudspeakers, Crown amplification and BSS Audio Soundweb DSP were all used in the installation. ●

brewing up business

With forecasters predicting troubles for UK pubs, the industry is getting creative and catering to cost-conscious consumers. Matthew Goodman examines the trend.



Desperate times call for desperate measures, and for Britain's pub trade, it's hard to imagine things could get much worse. Forecast upon forecast tells us that thousands of hosteleries will likely go out of business, and landlords have to be increasingly creative to make sure they can make ends meet.

Take The Pigs pub, near Holt in Norfolk, where the owners came up with the notion of allowing its customers to trade fresh home-grown produce for a pint. Meat, vegetables, fruit – anything the landlords can use in the kitchen and put on the pub's food menu – would be considered as currency instead of the more traditional forms of payment.

Similarly innovative schemes are being devised up and down Britain, all in the name of trying to survive and prove wrong those such as PricewaterhouseCoopers, the accountant, which has predicted 6,000 pubs will go the wall over the next five years.

A combination of factors – taxes and labour costs, cut-price competition from supermarkets, bad weather and the smoking ban being chief among them – have combined to cripple many drinking establishments, so the downturn in the economy could not have arrived at a worse time.

VALUE FOR MONEY

While many individual landlords are displaying amazing ingenuity, the large managed pub companies have much blunter instruments at their disposal to keep trade ticking over. Chief among them is discounting, as espoused by the likes of JD Wetherspoon, the no-frills chain. Other groups are focused on providing a decent food offering, frequently based around a value-for-money offer. This is the path taken by the likes of Mitchells & Butlers, the company behind chains including Harvester and Sizzling Pub Company, and Whitbread, whose brands include Beefeater and Table Table.

To date, these groups seem to be showing a remarkable resilience, exploiting their scale and greater purchasing power to provide cheaper prices. Wetherspoon appears to be having most success in this regard, after launching to much fanfare – and, it ought to be said, some criticism – the 99p pint.

But it isn't just the health police who are annoyed by Wetherspoon's tactics. Offering a pint of Greene King IPA for 99p has angered Greene King's tenants, who are unable to buy beer wholesale for that price, never mind retail it at that level.

Not that Wetherspoon has any regrets. "It's working well," says a spokesperson for the company, who argues that cheap prices are just one of a number of reasons behind why drinkers want to visit its pubs. "If you're running a pub that's not so



PHOTO: WWW.ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/JON LARSON

M&B's food led pubs (left) have grown sales through discounting, while no-frills chain JD Wetherspoon has been enticing customers with the 99p pint



Richard Hughes, co-owner of The Pigs pub, where customers can use home-grown produce as currency

attractive and the beer is 99p, would you choose to go there?" he asks. "There's a lot more to it."

He may have a point, but in such cost-conscious times, many customers can't afford to be choosy. Either way, there seems little doubt that both Wetherspoon and M&B are taking market share. "They see the current climate as a huge opportunity to kill the opposition," says one leisure analyst; the question is whether the aggressive pricing approach offers only a short-term solution, he says. "How sustainable is the discounting?"

Perfectly, argues M&B, which is similarly sacrificing some of its profit margin to reinvest in cheaper prices and keep growing sales. The company has become particularly adept at doing so in its food-led pubs, but it the trick is to maintain the right balance between pulling in business and doing so profitably. It's become even harder given the sheer weight of price promotion in the broader eating-out market.

Adam Fowle, M&B's managing director of restaurants, says: "The customer has become more cautious; we are having to work harder to capture their attention. There is a lot of noise about discounting out there and we have to cut through that."

He says the company is "putting its foot on the accelerator" to ensure it retains its pre-eminent position. In some cases, that means M&B brands that haven't previously discounted are now doing so selectively. Such activity has to be carefully thought through so it doesn't alienate regulars who may be concerned that such promotions are a sign of moving downmarket.

It seems to be working. In a recent research note, Greg Feehely, leisure analyst at Altium Securities, wrote: "M&B's pricing policy and value-led strategy is driving volume growth and capturing market share. We are further encouraged that even if greater discounting is needed, then M&B's sector leading EBIT [pre-tax, pre-interest profit] margin of 23 per cent provides it with greater support than its competitors."

M&B has become particularly adept at using cheaper prices to grow sales at its food-led pubs, but the trick is to maintain the right balance between pulling in business and doing so profitably

CHALLENGES FOR TENANTS

Tenanted pub groups face a different set of issues. As owners of pub properties, it's down to the retailers who rent their pubs to keep the customers coming in. The business model of the big tenanted companies, such as Punch Taverns and Enterprise Inns, is coming under intense scrutiny from the City, which has marked down the share price of both companies to an alarming degree. Analysts at Morgan Stanley recently described Punch as "uninvestable", amid concern over the group's £4.5bn of debt.

Punch and Enterprise are doing more to lend financial support to tenants. Roger Whiteside, managing director of Punch's tenanted pubs division, also said it had invited tenants to make offers for pubs they ran. An extraordinary step, it's been interpreted by some as a measure of how tough it is in the industry.

But there is some small cause for optimism. A leisure analyst at one stockbroker says that the big pub groups think that so far this year trade has been more robust than they dared anticipate, and if that can continue through the next few weeks, the theory is that they should be able to hold on for another year. The winter is, after all, the toughest part of the year, and with a good summer, things may, just may, start to stabilise. There will be many in the trade prepared to drink to that. ●

Matthew Goodman is a business journalist at The Sunday Times

With government finally realising that investment in tourism boosts economies, the sport, leisure and hospitality industries must badge as much of its activity as possible as tourism, argues Brigid Simmonds



SPORT AND TOURISM TO THE RESCUE?



On 7 January, the day before the national tourism summit in Liverpool, London's Euston station was crippled by delays following a cable failure. "No, we have no idea if any trains will run out of Euston tomorrow," a harassed Virgin Train staffer told me. But the next morning at 5:30am I was on a train on my way to the summit and the only one in first class. "Would you like breakfast now, or later?" asked the train staff at 6am. For £45 (booked in advance at www.thetrainline.com), you could not have had a better breakfast at the Ritz! Despite VisitBritain chairman Christopher Rodrigues's comments in *The Independent* that morning about the poor quality of service in the UK, I enjoyed great service, as well as a beautiful crisp morning when we arrived in Liverpool only about 15 minutes after our scheduled arrival.

Security at Liverpool's new BT Convention Centre was very tight, not surprising given a cabinet meeting was to be held as well. The tourism summit ran alongside this, hosted by tourism minister Barbara Follett, but with a visit and speech from Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Andy Burnham, secretary of state for culture, media and sport.

The Prime Minister talked about tourism being the UK's fifth biggest industry, providing four million jobs. He rather erroneously stated that 20 per cent of UK employment was in tourism, a figure that is probably double the 10 per cent often used by BISL for the sport, leisure, hospitality and tourism industry. But there was no doubt he was supportive. He spoke about the new world visitors from India, China the USSR and the importance of international sporting events, and announced that following the

success of Liverpool as the 2008 European Capital of Culture, the government was considering a British City of Culture to be introduced every four years from 2011.

BOOSTING ECONOMIES

So why this sudden interest in tourism from a prime minister who, to my knowledge, has only once held even a breakfast at Number 10 (in the time of his predecessor) to talk about the sector? And from Burnham, a secretary of state who had never uttered a word in public about the importance of tourism to the UK economy until the BISL Conference last year? The answer may lie with the secretary of state at the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR), Lord Peter Mandelson, but there is also a realisation the both major sporting events and cultural festivals like Liverpool's really do create jobs and provide investment boosts to local economies.

Much has been said about Keynesian economics and the idea of advocating public investment. There is a very strong argument related to the London 2012 Olympics that the government should take over the investment needed from the public purse and when the economy is in a better shape in perhaps 10 year's time, sell on to the private sector.

Liverpool as the European Capital of Culture has provided a very good case study [see feature on p30]. Yes, £4bn has been invested in the physical transformation of the city, but 15 million people attended a cultural event or attraction. It is believed that the Liverpool City region received a benefit of £800m in the local economy. 70 per cent of people in Liverpool visited a



Prime Minister Gordon Brown talked tourism at the summit in Liverpool (left), which was held in the city's new BT Convention Centre (above)



museum or gallery, compared with the UK average of 59 per cent), 67,000 children have been involved, every child from every Liverpool school. Twenty-five per cent of all visitors to the city last year were new, and hotel occupancy was 80 per cent, well above the national average. 1,000 volunteers took part in the '08 Welcome Programme'. The global media value was £200m. There was a 150 per cent increase in visits to Liverpool Tourism Information Centres. Seventy-nine per cent of people think Liverpool is a city on the rise – the highest percentage of any UK city. The city was also voted the third UK Favourite by Condé Nast Traveller readers, just behind Edinburgh and London!

GAINING GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

If the government believes that investing in tourism is a way out of this recession, then the sport, leisure and hospitality industries must badge as much of our activity as possible as tourism or related to the visitor economy. If this is what we have to do in order to gain government support and investment, then we'll need to act as quickly as possible.

Much of the tourism summit was spent discussing ways in which the government could help the industry. For small and medium-sized companies, more lending from banks is crucial. Decisions that used to be made at a local or regional level are now being referred to head office and appear to be taking forever. Companies are being squeezed by the call-in of loans, increased interest rates on existing loans and very grudging support. For BISL and the British Hospitality Association, the main message was no more regulation. Only put in place new regulation which is absolutely necessary and think very carefully about regulation you might take away.

The new mandatory code to be introduced in the new policing and crime bill is one good example. It's aimed at reducing binge drinking, but is likely to apply to all sorts of premises where the sale of alcohol is ancillary to their main purpose. The cost could be huge. Can we look at ways of reducing it? To help international tourism, can we persuade the Foreign and

Investments in the physical transformation of Liverpool for its rein as the 2008 European Capital of Culture totalled £4bn, but 15 million people visited a cultural attraction or event in the city and the region has received a benefit of £800m in the local economy

Commonwealth Office not to put up visa charges this year for visitors from India or China, as referred to by the Prime Minister in his speech at Liverpool? The government decided to remove capital allowances on hotel buildings and increase taxation on the industry. Might they think about reviewing these ideas?

Might the Government also consider investing in tourism, perhaps with specific funding to encourage overseas visitors to take advantage of the weakness of sterling? There is evidence that London in particular is attractive to visitors from near Europe where the Euro is much stronger than the pound.

In the mid-term, would investment in a marketing campaign for London 2012 be provided by the Treasury? From subsequent announcements from DCMS it appears not, but after all, we only market to some 26 nations at the moment and yet 200 countries send teams to the Olympics.

Now that tourism seems to be much more important to the government in 2009 than it was in 2008, it is up to us in both the public and private sectors to take advantage of this interest, and to help the government help us by putting up sensible and practical suggestions for support they could give us. With almost all sectors of the industry struggling with a reduction in discretionary spending, and regulations and taxes denting our profitability still further, we need all the help we can get. It is, however, very good to see the Prime Minister and secretary of state so supportive of the tourism industry, and long may it continue.

Brigid Simmonds is chief executive of Business In Sport and Leisure (BISL) which represents the interests of private sector companies in the sport and leisure industry. Its working groups cover liquor licensing; gambling; planning and property; tourism; and sport. For more details contact 020 8780 2377 www.bisl.org

Collaboration between county sports partnerships and local authorities will be crucial in making Sport England's new strategy work, says CLOA honorary secretary John Bell



SPORT FOR SPORT'S SAKE

Just before Christmas 2008, Sport England announced the allocation of £409 million to national governing bodies of sport (NGBs). Allocations to the Football Foundation, coaching and "better governance" brought the total towards half a billion pounds.

These allocations were based on new Whole Sport Plans drawn up by the NGBs and submitted to Sport England last autumn. This new approach was described by industry commentator Mike Collins as, "a U-turn of substantial proportions" in his article in *Sports Management*, 2008, issue 3. He went on to identify some of the key issues that emanate from Sport England's new strategy. They included:

- Will the Department of Health pick up the healthy activity baton?
- Will local authorities embrace their 'handmaiden' role and sustain their investment in sport?
- Will the sports network be able to respond to these new demands?
- Will sports clubs be able to meet these high expectations? And will new participants join sports clubs in significant numbers?

This column will attempt to set out how this radical new approach can be made to work, but first let us examine who got the biggest awards from the NGBs [table 2], and compare those awards with the participation rates from Sport England's Active People Survey [table 1]. A look at the numbers shows there's no direct correlation between participation rates or size of the sport and the grant awarded.

It could and will be argued that the award was based on the quality of the Whole Sport Plan and the key outcomes that are to be delivered in terms of improvements to facilities, new par-

ticipants and increased performance up to national level. It's interesting to note, however, that the highest awards have gone to some of the most powerful and influential governing bodies, demonstrating the successes of their lobbying for this change.

WHAT ABOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

Local authorities spend very substantial amounts supporting sport. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport website reports that 50 per cent of the provision of sport is by local authorities through leisure centres, swimming pools, playing fields, parks, athletics tracks and dual-use schools. Under the previous Sport England strategy, lottery funds were awarded to councils to improve existing sports facilities or build new ones. The legacy of this scheme is evident all over the country in new or refurbished sports facilities.

But there was a problem: the investment in these new facilities did not seem to result in a corresponding increase in participation. Sport England's return on this investment was considered by their former chair, Derek Mapp to be far too low (less than two per cent increase in participation). However this analysis ignored the stark realities faced by sport in this country: an overall decline in numbers in many sports (swimming for example), and if the lottery money had not been invested many facilities would have closed or their popularity declined, resulting in a fall in participation. This writer believes that fall would have been dramatic in many areas of the country where the public were and are heavily dependent on local authority sports provision. The lottery-funded investment in local authority sports provision ended some time ago and new forms of investment described in my previous column on leisure hubs (*Leisure Management*, 2009, issue 1) are now the norm.

TABLE ONE

WHAT ARE THE MOST POPULAR SPORTS?

The top six activities in numbers and percentages as measured by the Active People Survey 2007/2008 were:

Walking (moderate intensity 30+ minutes)	9 million	22%
Swimming	5.5 million	13.4%
Gym	4.4 million	10.7%
Cycling (moderate intensity 30+ minutes)	3.5 million	8.5%
Football	3.1 million	7.6%
Athletics	2.5 million	6.0%

Rounding out the top 10 were golf, tennis, badminton and aerobics.

PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/MICHEL DE NIS



Walking was the top activity in the 2007/2008 Active People Survey

Cycling was the fourth most popular activity according to the 2007/2008 Active People Survey. Cricket didn't even make the survey's top 10, but its governing body topped the awards list.

TABLE TWO WHO RECEIVED THE LARGEST AWARDS?	
Top six governing bodies	Amount £ in millions (over a four-year period)
Cricket	37.7
Rugby Union	30.7
Rugby League	29.4
Tennis	26.8
Football	25.6
Cycling	24.2
Rounding out the top 10 were swimming £20.8m, badminton £20.8m, athletics £20.4m, netball £17.3m.	

JOINING UP THE JIGSAW

The questions Collins highlighted concerning Sport England's new strategy included whether the Department of Health will take over responsibility for physical activity for health reasons. Recent initiatives by the Department of Health would seem to indicate that they have "picked up the baton". The Change 4 Life campaign has begun in an attempt to use social marketing to persuade families to eat more healthily and exercise.

It is too early to say whether this campaign will make a difference; some commentators (for example, Alice Miles in the *Times*) have said that the public will ignore the advice. On 11 February, the Department of Health launched another major strategy, 'Be Active, Be Healthy,' aimed at getting couch potatoes active, and measures will include £4 million for the 49 County Sport Partnerships "to help bring together councils, Primary Care Trusts and other grassroots providers to coordinate and deliver physical activities alongside sports." Many councils have forged strong relationships with their primary care trust, creating new programmes for sport and physical activity. (In the new East Cheshire Unitary authority, the director of public health and director of health and wellbeing [responsible for



PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/DANIEL COOPER

culture and sport] are expected to work together).

Collins also questioned the ability of the sports system to respond to the new NGB investment, and wondered how local government will be tied in. The pace of Sport England's new strategy has meant sports governing bodies have had little time to consult widely with their own clubs, let alone local government and county sports partnerships. It is expected that the implementation of the new Whole Sport Plans will see collaboration with local authorities through the county sports partnerships who will be tasked with co-ordinating activity in their regions. Indeed this will be essential given the much-reduced role of Sport England's nine regional offices and the abolition of regional sports boards.

The county sports partnership role of strategic co-ordination and advocacy is really crucial to the success of the new approach. The potential for disparate action locally between Sport England, SportsCoachUK, Youth Sport Trust and the NGBs is frightening in many ways. Most of the county sports partnerships have links to all these players, and given the recognition, there is a good chance to join up sport locally and regionally. Watch this space! ●

When it comes to keeping your head above water in the current economic maelstrom, remember there's no big 'bolt from the blue' solution – it's the little things you already know that will make the difference. Do them right and your business will continue to prosper

How to avoid the knee jerk, the quick fix and blind panic

Share your business aims with your team to keep up morale and ensure customers get the best service

'Brown – from boom to bust.' That's the headline in today's paper as our business community loses confidence in our dear leader. Just weeks ago he was "the saviour of the world" and now he's everybody's kicking boy. Not surprising, really, as the government reaction to the current sequence of crises has been to pull rabbit after rabbit out of the hat without really pausing to reflect or check whether anybody is looking for a rabbit.

It was ever thus (and I've no doubt that it will be the same with the much-lauded Obama before long). Anybody who's been on this earth and in business for any length of time knows that facile, immediate solutions simply don't work. Real life is just not that easy.

Crisis, what crisis?

The fact is that life will continue. Some people with a lot of money have lost a lot (but still have some left). Some very unfortunate people will lose their jobs and even their homes. However, the majority of people (with not so much money to start with) are worried about losing a little but they will keep most of it. The majority of things in life will carry on. Weddings, funerals, christenings, anniversaries, birthdays and the need for business people to meet will all continue. They'll have to do it somewhere and the trick is to make sure enough of them do it with your business.

There's no 'quick fix' easy answer; just the same old hard-learned way. "If you



can't have the one you want, love the one you're with," as the song goes. If you've been in business long enough to build up a regular basis of clients, guests or members, then you already have the core of a continuing business. Maintaining relationships, understanding their needs and communicating clearly with offers that are relevant, will work as well now as it ever did. People won't stop eating, people won't stop getting fat – and then wanting to get fit – people won't stop meeting. What they will do is adjust to the climate, avoid conspicuous, wasteful consumption and concentrate their resources in those areas that give them value. The customers who already know you – and like what you offer – are

the right ones to focus your energies on.

The tourism gurus confidently predict a great year for budget hotels, value family restaurants and takeaways and attractions. I predict a sound year for those businesses that take care of their customers' needs and let them know that they're willing to share the pain.

Study the past and plan the future

The way forward in such challenging times is not so much to think big but rather to think small. Micro-management can be very effective. Look at the patterns of the past and analyse where your business has come from – month by month and week by week. Use your database to target the individuals and segments most likely to be available at each particular season of the year – using not only simple (inexpensive) mailings and targeted house-to-house distributions to the right postcode areas but also telephone calls to the right individual (you have to know them personally for this to work). Emails people who already know you can also work very well with short, highly-targeted personal messages. Micro-marketing – it takes time but not much money.

Avoid the knee jerk

Whenever something's not going right, the current popular wisdom (as featured in a host of television programmes) is to look to some supposed "expert" to give you a quick fix answer. However, the

SENIOR'S SEVEN – SEVEN RULES TO AVOID PANIC AND FOCUS ON WHAT WORKS

- 1 Analyse your business period by period, identifying opportunities for incremental business.
- 2 Promote added-value offers.
- 3 Share your plans with your team, encourage them to take respon-

- sibility, and incentivise the team to develop extra business.
- 4 Build loyalty programmes.
- 5 Keep customers informed, and demonstrate your understanding of the difficult climate.

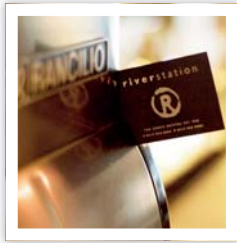
- 6 Maintain or improve standards of service delivery right across your business.
- 7 Be personally visible and involved with your customers and staff. Show them that you care.

GETTING IT RIGHT IN HARD TIMES - THE RIVER STATION

The River Station on Bristol's waterfront has been in business some time. It has a good reputation but, like everyone, it faces a competitive environment.

A January Sunday found me exploring the heritage waterfront in Bristol and I was interested to note that the majority of the outlets were closed for the season. Not so the River Station.

They welcomed six of us for Sunday lunch and even actively promoted their 'kids eat free' menu (an unusual feature for what is undoubtedly one of Bristol's classier establishments). The service was impeccable and the quality of the food – local fish – was first rate. Even the wine list, with some edgy and exemplary finds, was excellent value.



The River Station in Bristol scored highly during the mystery shopper visit

As one of our number was just two years old, a certain amount of distraction was required before the relaxed meal was over and this was accommodated with great good humour by concerned members of staff. They also noticed that we didn't eat one of our courses – some salmon which was not particularly well cooked but not sufficiently badly to be complained about. As we'd already paid the bill, they insisted on compensating us with a very fine bottle of wine. They then took our contact details for future reference.

The River Station was not resting

on its laurels and is clearly committed to training and good practice among its bright and cheery brigade. For that class of cooking, Sunday lunch was sensational value. We shall return.

It is perhaps symbolic that on a visit to Bristol last year, we ate at Fishworks. We complained about the disastrously 'salt-baked' John Dory, but received no compensation nor any particular interest. Fishworks Group has now gone into administration. I doubt the same fate will befall the River Station. 'The customer is always right' – and certainly worth listening to!

Resolve to avoid panic. Communicate calmly with your core customers and identify and target new prospects for whom your offering is appropriate

real likelihood is that there is no quick fix answer and you will only damage your business by making sudden changes and thus discomfiting your existing business base. The best expert on what makes your business work is you.

Two big things are likely to happen in the coming months. The first is that people will travel less – particularly for leisure, and will look for satisfaction and enjoyment closer to home. The second is that people will instinctively look for value. Not so much because they can't afford things but because they choose not to 'over-spend'. It's interesting to note that far from clamouring for more loans, the majority of people in the UK are trying to reduce their indebtedness. Common sense wins through despite meaningless government initiatives.

Both these trends give you the opportunity to communicate the benefits of

your business offering to people in the local area who may not have used you in the past and to communicate good value offers in catering, accommodation and activities. Offering added value at the moment is a very strong way to ensure business comes through your door

Build up team morale

If you, as the owner of the business, feel worried and concerned, then you can be absolutely sure that your staff are equally, if not even more, nervous. This is an excellent time to share your business objectives with your team and to encourage all of them to do that little bit extra to change every call into a booking and every visit into a satisfactory experience. This 'partnership' can work wonders. Your activities in promotion and business development will gain extra visitors. Their activities in delivering the experience will

make sure that the new visitors are satisfied and motivated to come back.

It's important you have the right promotional routine systems in place to capture the identities of new visitors and encourage them to return. This is a very good climate for loyalty promotions of all kinds.

Keep positive. The lesson of all recessions is that while business falters for a time, it tends to gradually recover as people get used to the new realities and find affordable ways to carry on living, working and celebrating all the important occasions in their lives.

So resolve to avoid panic. Communicate calmly with your core customers and identify and target new prospects for whom your offering is appropriate and affordable. Emphasise the positive value of your offer. Plan and follow best practice and your business will stay in business.



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SET YOUR SIGHTS

Creative License

We asked four CRM providers to tell us about the most creative way a client has ever used their system, and how it turned out

SDA SOLUTIONS

SUSAN DYSON, MANAGING DIRECTOR

Who's the client?

Helio Fitness, Blackpool, UK, an independent, privately-owned 7,000sq ft health club with around 900 members.

What did the client set out to achieve that was different?

Helio Fitness set out to transform their business by implementing a new and simple low-cost charging model for their memberships. Everyone pays the same rate of £14.95, with the joining process completed on the Helio website. Members then receive a Technogym key and book an induction on how to use the equipment. Extra services including personal training can also be purchased for those who want more in-depth tuition. The software tools support this new busi-

ness model and ensure processes are as quick and efficient as possible, preferably without staff involvement.

Describe the application.

Helio Fitness is the first UK operator to sign up for LeisurePoint.NET, SDA's hosted leisure management software delivered as a service. The software is located on SDA servers in a secure data centre and accessed with a web browser.

For a low monthly service fee, Helio has access to the LeisurePoint membership and admissions module (including front desk check-in and POS) and the LeisurePoint Bookings module.

In addition to the core LeisurePoint service, Helio have also signed up to two extra services. In the first, the Technogym Wellness System Connector, keys are interfaced with LeisurePoint for access control and attendance tracking, and then important member data (such as name, address, membership number,

membership status and photograph) is sent to the Technogym Wellness system. The system will also send any address and membership status changes.

The second extra service, the Snap DD connector, links LeisurePoint with Harlands Snap DD for outsourced direct debit collections. The member can join online, sync the data with LeisurePoint, and then these details are synced with the Technogym system.

What results did the client get?

The end result is a completely integrated system which does away with the need for software installed on the premises. SDA looks after all the hardware, software and support remotely for a low monthly fee, which is much cheaper and more efficient for all concerned.

The next stage is to implement LeisurePoint WebAccess for online member access to view personal information and to make bookings. Part of WebAccess is the Live Class Timetable, which allows the timetable on their website to be updated in real time, without the need for web designers or technical people. If a member views the live timetable, they can see how many spaces are available and make a booking.

What could other operators learn from this client's example?

Proprietor Neil Henshaw has said: "The biggest lesson learned relates to the benefits gained from making our business model simpler and more efficient. It was a gamble to reduce our prices, but because we can do more with less it's actually worked out much better. Also, because LeisurePoint is a hosted system, we don't have to worry about servers, installations and upgrades – we just use the system and stick to what we're good at – everybody wins."

The system allows new members to join Helio Fitness online and book a Technogym induction. The next stage will see the addition of an online live class timetable, allowing members to book classes online

PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/VALENTIN ARCHIS



Three months after kiosks were installed, there were 1,600 regular 'fast track' users for activities such as group exercise and general swimming

GLADSTONE HEALTH & LEISURE

LEON HOUSEMAN, MARKETING EXECUTIVE

Who's the client?

GLL manages over 65 leisure centres in partnership with 12 London boroughs, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, Reading Borough Council, Bellingham Community Project, the London Playing Fields Foundation, and the London Development Agency. As an employee-owned Social Enterprise, GLL invests any surpluses into improving services.

How did the client innovate in the way they used the CRM?

By using Gladstone's Kiosk2 solution, GLL hoped to create a fast track entry system for pre-paid members, while leaving reception staff free to improve the customer experience. Although a queue-busting ability was important, it wasn't the only consideration.

Business systems Manager Stephen Winfield wanted the new kiosks to provide the attendance data which they weren't getting from the turnstiles.

Describe the application.

A 12-week pilot project at the Waterfront Leisure Centre in Woolwich during October 2007 was one of the first for Gladstone's then-new Kiosk system. Gladstone worked closely with GLL when designing the processes and user interface, including personalised page design.

The new kiosks are powerful and flexible, with Gladstone software, card readers for identification, and receipt and wrist band printers. Equipped with a user-friendly touchscreen, transactions generally take around 11 seconds, and allow group classes starting within the



The club now has a fast-track entry system, as well as increased management information

next two hours to be booked. As both are connected to the Plus2 system, kiosks and turnstiles now work in tandem.

For prepaid members, GLL's 'fast track admission system' allows simple collection of pre-booked activity tickets. For example, fitness centre users collect a time-printed wristband with a barcode for the turnstiles. Paper tickets are printed for other activities, which also gives a useful visible security check. The realtime interface with the central Plus2 system allows analysis of daily attendance figures, and for staffing allocation improved.

What results did the client get?

GLL has now cut reception desk queuing, freed staff to deal with queries, and has increased the management information.

By the end of the first week, 300 users had tried the kiosks; three months later, there were 1,600 regular 'fast track' users for group exercise, fitness centre, general swimming, squash, and badminton. Now, there are 13 leisure centres equipped with pairs of kiosks, with three kiosks at the Swiss Cottage Leisure Centre covering 3,000 weekly visits.

What could other operators learn from this client's example?

Users are switching in large numbers to managing their own entry, and the easy-to-use kiosks are backed by Gladstone's Connect2 web booking facility, creating a smooth progression from booking online to attending chosen activities.

When any new kiosk needs installing, Gladstone provides the kiosk software, hardware and a support contract. The units are installed by GLL in a few hours, including in-house training.

Who's the client?

LA Fitness.

How did this client innovate in the way they used the CRM system?

LA Fitness used Legend to create a sophisticated, personalised communication campaign, the result of which was a tailored renewal offer compelling a member in the final months of the contractual term to renew at a rate personalised to correspond with the risk profile of the member. LA Fitness also used proactive interventions to remedy the risk status.

Describe the application.

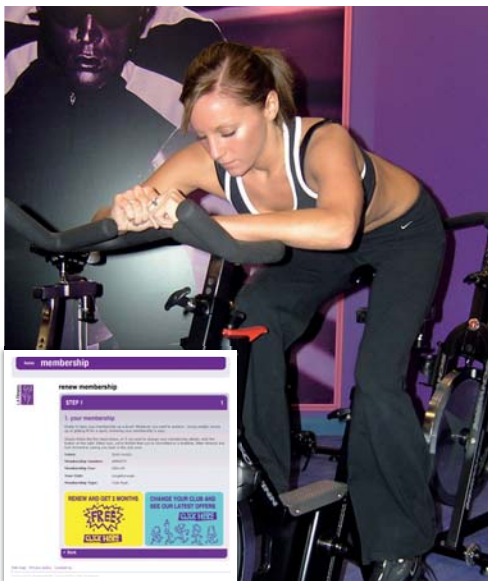
Via Legend, LA Fitness implemented a sophisticated algorithm to identify at-risk members and segment the database based on these values. Using the information stored in Legend, with particular attention to behavioural data, members were engaged in personalised communication. In the lead up to the expiry of the member's initial contract term, the risk segmentation score came into the campaign in setting a tailored renewal price for each member. Members were sent tailored invitations by email to take advantage of a preferential rate to renew for a new contract period.

What did the client set out to achieve that was different?

LA Fitness identified an opportunity to increase the average duration of a membership in a new and creative way – personalised renewal offers to drive a new contract term at the end of the initial one year term.

What results did the client get?

Although the results are confidential, taking into account a highly competitive market, the results can be declared as positive. Being highly measure-

**LA Fitness's personalised renewal offers were aimed at getting at-risk members to renew their contracts**

ble in Legend, constant analysis of the results in the system has facilitated rapid improvements and swift analysis of fine-tuning as different variations of the campaign have been experimented with.

What could other operators learn from this client's example?

Good operators tighten performance in areas affecting retention. An obvious action is to renew annual members in new contract terms. The creativity and implementation has to come from the operator; a good system ensures good data, which drives intelligent decisions.

FITREWARDS & INCENTIVE SELECTIONS

MARIA PARRELLA-TURCO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Who's the client?

Planet Fitness.

How did this client innovate in the way they used the CRM system?

Our application was used to develop a company branded rewards programme to increase revenue, referrals and retention. Unlike our standard fitRewards clients, where they may include all members in the rewards program, this client used the application to leverage higher dues membership participation, increasing revenue directly indirectly.

Describe the application.

The campaign was designed to include only those Planet Fitness members who preferred to participate in a black card membership for a small monthly fee. Existing members were asked if they would prefer to upgrade to black card. New members were approached at the point of sale.

What did the client set out to achieve that was different?

The client wanted to increase the percentage of members participating in a

black card membership, as well as to foster better retention, and to enhance the Planet Fitness brand.

What results did they get?

The results were an average increase of 10 per cent in black card members, and an enhanced brand image.

What could other operators learn from this client's example?

Designing a reward program and offering it as an upgrade membership option can add to membership revenue.●

SAFE EATS

Staging summer events can be especially tricky for businesses not used to catering for large groups. Food safety consultant Lisa Ackerley offers her top summer catering safety tips

A health club and spa held a summer party for its members. The catering was carried out by gym and spa staff – none of whom had catering experience or food handling training. Each staff member prepared a dish at home and brought it into the venue on the day of the party. Sixteen people out of the 60 who attended became ill, with symptoms of vomiting, stomach pains and nausea.

Food poisoning was confirmed as *Bacillus cereus*, likely caused by a rice dish. This bacteria is associated with starchy foods and allowed to grow when foods are subjected to inadequate post-cooking temperature control during cooling and storage.



PHOTOS: ISTOCK.COM/ROBERT CHURCHILL/CARLOS ALVAREZ

TOP TIPS FOR PREVENTING CONTAMINATION AND MULTIPLICATION

- Check food deliveries, making sure foods are in date and have been delivered at the correct temperature, whether fresh or frozen; ensure the foods are used by their sell-by dates.
- Store raw meat and poultry away from other foods at the bottom of the refrigerator
- Cover foods
- Wash fruit and vegetables thoroughly and consider using a salad wash such as Fit Wash.
- Thaw foods in the refrigerator and put raw meat, fish and poultry in deep dishes to stop blood getting onto other foods
- Use clean, preferably disposable cloths
- Have good pest control procedures in place
- Store foods off the floor and away from walls
- Always sanitise work surfaces and utensils between raw and cooked food
- Ensure good personal hygiene – particularly hand washing – and always after handling raw food, and before handling ready to eat foods.
- Cook and reheat foods to above 75°C (82°C in Scotland) to reduce bacteria to safe levels
- Keep hot foods hot above 63°C, and cold foods cold below 5°C
- Minimize the time that foods are at room temperature (in the danger zone)
- Date label foods made in-house, for example with colour-coded day labels, and use within three days
- Cool foods quickly, preferably within 90 minutes and then store below 5°C

Producing safe food doesn't happen by accident – it requires food handlers to have a knowledge and understanding of how food poisoning occurs; methods of prevention and the controls needed in the process of catering that will ensure food safety. Everyone working in the food industry has a legal and moral obligation to produce safe food, and all food handlers need some knowledge of food safety, even if they're just producing food on an occasional basis. Criminal and civil action can be taken where standards fall, or food poisoning occurs. Such actions are not limited to restaurants or caterers, but any business preparing food for the public, no matter how infrequent or occasional the function.

The Food Standards Agency estimates the cost to the economy of food poisoning is upwards of £1.5bn a year. There are over 50,000 reported cases per year and this is thought to be the tip of the iceberg with many cases going unreported. Cases double in frequency during the summer months.

Classic examples of food poisoning caused by those who are inexperienced and untrained involve the summer BBQ, the buffet lunch and generally catering for large numbers of people.

Where did the health club and spa described above go wrong? It was discovered upon investigation that many of the dishes served at its event, including the rice, had been prepared the day



PHOTOS: ISTOCK.COM/ALAN POCIO



PHOTOS: ISTOCK.COM/WEBPHOTOGRAPHER

before the party. The staff member who provided the rice dish described how she had left the rice to cool for several hours in a warm kitchen after cooking, before preparing it further. Due to the size of the bowl it was to be placed in, there was no room in her refrigerator and so the rice dish was left in the garage overnight.

The food had also been placed in a function room at 3 pm, while the party did not start until 5 pm, and it remained on display until the party ended at 9 pm.

In the health club's case, the food poisoning victims were paid undisclosed sums from the insurers. Having to compensate victims isn't the only possible consequence if you don't ensure good standards of food hygiene, however; a visit from the local environmental health officer (EHO) is likely! Food safety legislation gives local authorities the power to serve notices on businesses who fail to comply – they can seize foods, require improvements and close businesses.

Failure to comply with the legislation is a criminal offence, with fines of up to £20,000 for some offences, such as selling unfit food, and possibly a custodial sentence. In the crown court, fines are unlimited. The courts may also prohibit a person from operating a food business.

THE BASICS

Food poisoning, which can range from mild symptoms to severe illness resulting in paralysis or death, happens when

In the summer, events are often held outdoors, catering for larger numbers of guests than usual, and may include barbecues and buffets – with further food safety risks attached

someone eats food or drink contaminated with harmful bacteria or their toxins. The elderly, very young, immunocompromised persons and pregnant women are particularly vulnerable; bacteria can multiply rapidly, and just one drop of blood from meat infected with *E.coli* O157 can cause food poisoning.

The main sources of harmful bacteria are raw meat, poultry and fish, as well as animals and people. It's hard to tell if food and drink are contaminated because they may look, taste and smell fine. It is probably best practice to assume that all raw meats and poultry could be contaminated and take the necessary action to control the hazards.

For food poisoning to happen, a sequence of events known as the food poisoning chain has to occur. We can only break the chain at two points – preventing contamination and preventing multiplication. [See *Top tips for preventing contamination and multiplication* on page 70.]

BARBECUES AND OUTDOOR CATERING

In the summer, events are often held outdoors, catering for larger numbers of guests than usual, and may include barbecues and buffets – with further food safety risks attached. If you run a food business, you're obliged to have a food safety management system in place, and this would need to be adapted to take into account new operations such as outdoor catering. The purpose of this is to consider the hazards and work out how to put effective controls in place.

Our clients with pubs, hotels, holiday villages and restaurants all identify the increase of risk as typical controls used in the kitchen need to be adapted for the outdoors. Indeed, some of our clients are involved extensively with outdoor catering events (weddings, christenings, even pop concerts and horse racing), so I can share advice that has helped them to be safe and successful. [See *Top tips for summer catering* on page 72.] ▶

► FOOD ALLERGIES

Food allergies are on the increase, and it's important that staff are aware of allergens, and that menus explain any hidden allergens in food. People with food allergies can react to tiny traces of the allergen, and anaphylactic shock can occur, which can be fatal.

In one case, the bride at a wedding was allergic to peanuts. Caterers were advised of her allergy in writing, but at the wedding feast, she suffered a severe anaphylactic shock and died. Traces of peanuts were found in foods served. The family are currently taking civil action against the caterers.

Ensure foods with allergens are stored separately, and beware of cross contamination, such as using the same spoons for different dips or the same knife to cut different cakes. Heat from the barbecue may kill food poisoning bacteria, but it won't destroy allergens. Dishes such as chicken satay will contain nuts and could contaminate the barbecue. ●

Lisa Ackerley is managing director of Hygiene Audit Systems



PHOTOS: ISTOCK.COM/ROBERT GURCHILL, JUAN CARLOS

TOP TIPS FOR SUMMER CATERING

- Purchase good quality food from reputable suppliers – don't be tempted to cut corners
- If it will be dark, rig up lighting by the cooking area so that you can see that food is cooked properly
- Make sure you have enough work space – bring some tables outside
- Only remove food from the refrigerator when it's needed. Don't have large amounts of food at room temperature.
- Cold foods on a buffet may only legally be left out of refrigeration for up to four hours
- Keep foods covered to deter flies
- Preparing foods too far in advance will allow bacteria to grow
- Ensure there's enough refrigerated storage to cope with the size of the event. You can make use of ice boxes (keeping raw and ready to eat foods separate) for small events, but for large events you should hire refrigerated storage units.
- Always ensure any meats cooked on the barbecue are piping hot in the centre, not just brown on the out-

- side. Use a probe sanitised with a wipe or antibacterial cleanser with paper towel to check that the core temperature has reached 75 °C.
- If you're feeding large groups of people, take a tip from some of our clients and consider cooking food thoroughly in the kitchen first and then finish it off on the barbecue for an authentic flavour.
- Use separate utensils for raw and cooked meats and salad items
- After using barbecue utensils for handling raw meat, put the part that has touched the raw meat onto the heat – this will kill bacteria so you won't cross contaminate cooked foods
- Try not to handle raw meat with your hands – use utensils just for this purpose
- Use antibacterial wipes to reduce contamination risks. If you plan to hold outdoor events regularly, it would pay to invest in a portable wash hand basin – your EHO will expect it.
- Don't forget to have a bin handy



PHOTOS: ISTOCK.COM/LINDA STEVART

Preparing foods too far in advance can give bacteria like Salmonella time to grow

WHEN FOOD PREPARATION GOES WRONG

CASE STUDY ONE • Contrary to the in-house policy, a chef at a beach café purchased non-lion brand eggs and made tiramisu for a special birthday party for the local surf club instructor; the dish was made up without cooking the eggs. The caterer kept the dessert refrigerated all afternoon and then put it on display from 6.30pm till 10 pm. A Salmonella outbreak occurred, with 12 of the 50 guests becoming ill. The EHOs could not find fault with standards in the kitchen, or with the policy. Although the food had been displayed out of refrigeration, it was within the four-hour tolerance allowed in the law. However, it was a very hot evening, and Salmonella present in the food would have been able to multiply in this time; in a later

analysis, the tiramisu was found to have the same strain of Salmonella enteritidis as that found in the victims.

The EHOs considered prosecution but eventually decided to give a formal caution to the chef, as they deemed that the company had a robust due diligence defence and had not previously offended. The chef had disobeyed the policy despite having been trained by the company in policy and procedures.

CASE STUDY TWO • A large hotel served a banquet to 360 guests. 240 were ill with Salmonella. No foods were found to contain the organism. The local authority investigation reached no conclusions and decided not to take action; however the victims banded together to take civil

action. This would require proof on balance of probabilities that the food caused the illness (more than 50 per cent chance).

I was called in as an expert to determine whether they had a case. On investigation, I found that the chicken dish had been partially cooked and probably stored under poor temperature control. It was then re-heated, but probably not enough to kill the salmonella that had proliferated while the dishes were being held prior to service. By analysing what was eaten by the victims, I concluded that the chicken was indeed the likely source of the outbreak and that the victims may have a chance of winning a civil claim. The insurers decided not to take the risk of a court case and settled with the victims out of court. ●

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tasty trends

Martin Nash takes a look at the ice cream market and rounds up the innovations set to tantalise taste buds this summer



FEWER, BIGGER, BETTER

KEYWORD: MARS

Anticipating further strong growth in ice cream sales this year, Mars is looking to build upon its successful 2008 strategy – which saw its impulse range grow by more than 10 per cent – by promoting its core range of best sellers.

With plans for a £1m ice cream-specific marketing campaign that includes a new national advertising campaign, the company will be implementing a strategy of 'fewer, bigger, better', taking the view that having a strong range of best sellers is important to maximising retail performance.

This year, Mars will focus on its Mars, Snickers, Galaxy, Maltesers and Bounty brands, building on its expertise in reinventing popular confectionary brands as quality ice cream, with both Mars and Snickers benefiting

from their own summer national advertising campaigns as the company's leading 'hero' brands.

Developments will see the appearance of a new Galaxy pack design and the introduction of a new Galaxy Caramel Craving multi-pack of five, whilst – in a recession busting move – the Mars, Snickers and Maltesers six pack multi-packs will carry a 'just £2' price flash.

Starburst smoothies will be available as the company's refreshment option, offering the two fruity Berry Blast and Exotic Fruits flavours.

In addition to the ice cream-specific campaign, ice cream sales at Mars are also expected to benefit from the 'halo' effect generated by a marketing spend of up to £42m on the company's confectionery portfolio.



INDULGENT OFFERINGS

KEYWORD: HAAGEN-DAZS

Häagen-Dazs, one of General Mills UK's brands, offers an alternative ice cream solution for the leisure sector in that it is designed to appeal to more sophisticated, adult consumers who are seeking an indulgent treat.

The company that believes the brand's mini tub offer is ideal for the leisure and hospitality sector, each 100ml tub coming with its own spoon which means that it can be enjoyed in a wide range of different environments. The product is available in eight flavours, of which Häagen-Dazs research reveals Vanilla, Belgian Chocolate, Cookies & Cream and Strawberry Cheesecake to be the best sellers.

The latest innovation from Häagen-Dazs is its Ice Cream Smoothies, fruit blends combining refreshing fruit sorbets with creamy fruit ice creams. The two flavours, Raspberry & Summer Berries and Mango & Apricot, are both presented in packaging with a striking contemporary design.



2009 will see Häagen-Dazs being supported through a £5m marketing campaign, with high profile activity including national TV and consumer press advertising, plus a bespoke marketing programme for the leisure sector.

The brand will also benefit from its association with prestigious events such as the Wimbledon Tennis

Championships, where it is the official ice cream supplier.

With sales reportedly increasing by 12 per cent annually, luxury ice cream sales are growing twice as fast as total ice cream sales. Häagen-Dazs, which research shows to be one of the major growth drivers within luxury ice cream, is growing at 16.2 per cent yearly.

POWERED BY

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For more information, or to contact any of these companies, log on to www.leisure-kit.net and type the company name under 'keyword search'

ADVENTURES IN ICE CREAM

KEYWORD: FREDERICKS

Fredericks Dairies is set to mark 2009 with the unveiling of a new brand identity – which includes the strap line 'adventures in ice cream' – plus the launch of several innovative new products: Del Monte Superfruits Smoothie, Cadbury Creme Egg Tub, Cadbury Dairy Milk Fruit & Nut Stick and Cadbury Dreamy White.



The Del Monte Superfruits Smoothie is a blend of blueberries, pomegranate and cranberries, virtually fat-free and said to contain only 86 calories per stick but with the highest percentage of real fruit on the branded market. It joins the existing Mango and Raspberry variants.



The Del Monte Superfruits Smoothie is virtually fat-free, containing only 86 calories per stick but with the highest percentage of real fruit on the branded market.

The new Cadbury Creme Egg Tub has been created to appeal directly to the confectionery brands' already dedicated fan base, who reportedly eat more than 2 million Cadbury Creme Eggs in the January to Easter period. A limited edition – February to April – premium product, the tub contains soft vanilla flavoured ice cream studded with pieces of Cadbury Dairy Milk chocolate and swirled with creme egg 'gooey sauce'.

Following a successful introduction last season into the take-home market, Cadbury Dairy Milk Fruit & Nut Stick is now to be launched into the impulse sector. The new offer comprises smooth vanilla flavoured ice cream, with a Cadbury Dairy Milk chocolate coat containing almonds and raisins.

Cadbury Dreamy White joins the Cadbury 'Mega-Value' range, which



already includes the Cadbury Dairy Milk and Bournville Deeply Dark 110ml ice cream variants.

In June, Fredericks will be unveiling a new national PR campaign to 'Raise a Million Smiles' with Cadbury and Del Monte ice creams.

CHANGING THE SHAPE OF ICE CREAM

KEYWORDS: MINI MELTS

New to the UK, the Mini Melts ice cream concept has taken a familiar desert and effectively redesigned it. The product is shaped like miniature balls of ice cream and – having originally launched in 1997 with factories in South Korea and the Philippines, and now produced by 10 factories across the world serving more than 20 countries – is in the process of being introduced throughout Great Britain and Europe. The company aims to achieve this via a programme of placing vending machines and Mini Melts retail equipment within prestigious, targeted and

strong customer footfall locations.

The manufacturing process is different as well. Mini Melts is made using cryogenics, a method using liquid nitrogen – both totally inert and tasteless – which the company says 'locks in' the flavour by instantly freezing the product to below -187C/-304F. The product comes in two versions – a low fat option and



one with a butter-fat content of between 10 and 14 per cent.

In addition to being eaten on their own, they can be used as part of an ice cream float, with a soft drink such as cola or lemonade, or combined with desserts. The higher fat option requires special storage freezers, while the low fat version can be kept in ordinary freezers. A variety of flavours from vanilla, chocolate and strawberry to mango, blueberry and bubblegum are available. The company also points out that a major benefit of manufacturing in the local market is that it can easily develop flavours to fit that market – green tea for the Far East, for instance. ●

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COMPACT CAFFEINE

Caffe Society has unveiled a range of compact coffee bars and coffee machine stands specifically designed to enable leisure venues to boost revenue.

The stands come complete with a fresh bean to cup coffee machine and mini-fridge, and hold all hot

drink-related equipment and ingredients such as cups, lids, milk, sugar sticks and biscuits.

Menus and adverts can also be displayed on the stands and a range of ready-made designs are available.



leisure-kit keywords: **caffe society**

STRIDING INTO GLOUCESTERSHIRE WITH THE M5

Keiser's M5 Strider has made its debut into British health clubs with a trial installation at the Esporta Health and Racquets Club in Gloucestershire.

With elliptical training predicted to become the UK's next big fitness craze, the M5 Strider – originally launched at LIW last September – is said to be portable (due to wheels on the front of the base) and easy to use.

It is also claimed to be ideal for use in both group exercise classes and on the gym floor, due to what is described as its 'super smooth resistance'.

Additionally, the machine is intended to improve and increase participant performance while also offering what is claimed to be a high level of muscle and joint protection.

The machine is designed to activate a wide range of muscle groups, giving users an intense workout in less time and with lower perceived exertion. The



user, meanwhile, is able to have complete control throughout the workout and has the choice to adjust both the pace and resistance in order to meet their personal exercise needs.

leisure-kit keyword: **keiser**

BASES RELEASE BLUE GUIDE TO SEATING

The British Association of Seating Equipment Suppliers (BASES) has announced the release of its publication, *Recommendations for the specification and use of telescopic and other spectator seating*.

The Blue Guide, as it is known in the seating industry, provides authoritative recommendations concerning the layout and specification of specialist telescopic and other spectator products. The document advises architects, local authorities, and leisure operators on good practice for layout and structural recommendations covering portable, telescopic and retractable seating arrangements.

leisure-kit keyword: **bases**



For more information, or to contact any of these companies, log on to www.leisure-kit.net and type the company name under 'keyword search'



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DED'S ROYAL SERVICE

London's Queen's Club has chosen DED to supply Posiflex KS6615 touchscreen terminals for one of its most prestigious tournaments, the AEGON (formerly the Stella Artois) tennis championships.

The terminals will be used in the security department to enable guards to view footage from the club's CCTV cameras. The Posiflex terminals can be used as a desktop PC, allowing the Queen's Club to run their bespoke software on the tills with the KS6615's 1.5 GHz processor, claimed to provide a performance similar to that of a 2.4 or 2.6 GHz Celeron.

The terminals are also being brought in at the shops and restaurants at the racquet club, as well as being used to handle court bookings, accounts, memberships and point of sale in various areas across the 43-court site.

leisure-kit keyword: ded



PSP GOES 3D

AV solutions company PSP has introduced the 3D-Holocube.

Claimed to be ideal for point of sale applications within the retail market, product launches and live events and exhibitions, the 3D-Holocube is a fully integrated, mini 3D holographic system that creates 3D video holograms.

The 'pod' within which the 3D hologram is viewed is manufactured from either aluminium or synthetic materials. It comes in black or white as standard, but can be specially commissioned in a variety of colours. The pod measures 52cm-cubed and can be wall-mounted, while also coming with an optional display stand.

3D-Holocube has a USB interface, which is used for uploading content, plus a built-in 40GB hard drive.

leisure-kit keyword: psp



MINING FOR GEMS

Ohio-based Sandy Creek Mining is the builder and supplier of mining equipment and products used in panning operations at tourist attractions.

Already established across the US, the company is now expanding into international areas such as the UK and Australia. Aimed primarily at children, the sluices are said to be ideal for sites looking to increase secondary spend opportunities. Customers purchase a bag of mining rough, which contains a selection of up to 20 different gemstones including ruby, topaz and emerald.

Part of the mining rough is then placed in a screen bottom box before being dipped in the sluice to reveal the gems as the soil is washed away. Users are then able to take the gemstones home.

The equipment allows 16 people to use the product simultaneously, although for those looking to cater for more customers, extended versions with a 32 person capacity are also available.

leisure-kit keywords: sandy creek



MEADOWBANK ARENA PLAYS RIGHT

Currently the largest of its kind in Europe, the new state of the art Meadowbank Sport Arena has seen the installation of over 9,000sq m of Playrite's multi-sport system Match-Winner with Match Pad shockpad surface.

Situated in the heart of Magherafelt, Northern Ireland, the arena is said to provide the widest range of premium indoor and outdoor facilities for sports, other activities and events. Installed in partnership with local sports surfaces supplier Laydex, the total surface measures 137m by 70m on which a host of sporting activities can take place simultaneously. In a single session, a full size hockey/football pitch, plus four mini-pitches (all badminton court sized) can be used.

leisure-kit keyword: playrite

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For more information, or to contact any of these companies, log on to www.leisure-kit.net and type the company name under 'keyword search'



FEELING LANGUAGE

Bristol based transcription company A2i has continued its mission to get more restaurants, pubs and hotels to offer Braille and large print menus to their customers by attending Hospitality 2009.

A2i's recent research showed that less than 10 per cent of UK restaurants provide their menus in Braille or large print. Under the theme 'touch it, feel it, taste it', the company showcased its Braille and large print menus and tactile signage that they believe should feature in every food and drink outlet in the UK as a way to make them accessible under the UK's Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

One company that has taken advantage of A2i's services is the restaurant chain Frankie & Benny's. At Hospitality 2009, A2i unveiled the first Braille chocolate in the UK, and gave away a giant Braille chocolate egg as a prize.

leisure-kit keyword: a2i



TAKE A SEAT

Warings Furniture has recently introduced its Molly chair along with its matching trolley, designed for use in busy bars and restaurants.

The Molly chair is made from polypropylene and chromed steel and is available in a range of 18 colours. The chair is suitable for indoor use with a wipeable surface for easy and quick cleaning. The trolley allows the chairs to be stacked compactly and is claimed to make the job of moving chairs easy and efficient. The Norfolk-based company supplies over 200 products to the hotel and restaurant markets including chairs, tables and outdoor furniture in a variety of styles.

leisure-kit keywords: warings



HANDLESS SANITISING

From hygiene company Germstar comes its touchless hand sanitiser, said to be ideal for customers in health clubs and leisure centres as well as for staff in restaurants and hotels.

Available in three varieties – Germstar Original, Citrus and Noro – it is described as having a water-like consistency with the solution absorbing into the skin's pores, nullifying the need to use taps and hand dryers.

By being touchless, the risk of cross contamination is said to be eliminated with the sanitiser containing Isopropyl alcohol, which is claimed to kill as much as 99.9 per cent of all germs that it comes into contact with.

Available in both stand and wall-fitted versions, the design uses four 'D' type batteries, which is claimed to last up to 50,000 uses, with each 1-litre refill lasting approximately 1400 uses.

leisure-kit keywords: germstar



TAKING CARE OF TURF

DJ Turfcare launched three new products at the 2009 BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition in Harrogate, North Yorkshire.

The first was the Turfsaver (pictured), a machine from the US that de-thatches and overseeds (or fertilises) in one compact unit, said to be ideal for contractors, greenkeepers and groundspeople. The second, the Elephant's Trunk, is designed to cut hedges and bushes on golf courses and estate grounds. The third product was Recovery, a granulated fertiliser from Belgian company Viano, said to restore damaged turf that has suffered stress through drought or waterlogging.

leisure-kit keywords: dj turfcare



DUDSON'S MODUS SET

Hotelware manufacturer Dudson has launched the Modus range, suitable for use in both hotels and restaurants.

The collection consists of eight pieces with two serving trays, four serving dishes, a taster dish and a shot glass. The trays are said to be ideal for applications including receptions and event catering, buffets, table and bar service.

In a bid to stop dishes slipping, the serving trays have indents, into which the trays slot to hold them in place. Available in six and 12-slot designs, they can accommodate a combination of dishes to suit a server's needs. They are also claimed to help reduce food wastage and provide improved portion control.

The Modus range can be heated up to 80°C and cooled down to -20°C, allowing the trays and dishes to be used for a wide variety of foods.

leisure-kit keyword: dudson

MAKING LIGHT WORK

Italian football side ACF Fiorentina has seen the installation of a new Lighthouse P12-ER LED screen at the club's Artemio Franchi Stadium to provide added information for the club's supporters and visiting fans.

Measuring 9.6m by 7.2m, the 12mm visual resolution P12-ER screen is being used as a scoreboard during and to show advertisements board matches at the home of the Italian Serie A and UEFA Champions League club.

Its 5000 nits of brightness (a computer monitor typically has between 50-300 nits of brightness for example) can cope with direct sunlight and its wide viewing angle is intended to allow as many fans to view it as possible. The scoreboard also provides an additional revenue stream for the club.



leisure-kit keyword: lighthouse



SHOWER GOES DIGITAL

UK power shower manufacturers Aqualisa have unveiled their range of digital showers and baths. Aimed at hotel designers and specifiers, there are three main collections: Quartz Digital, HiQu Digital and ilux Digital, a design and functionality-led product aimed at the luxury and boutique market.

All Aqualisa digital products features one-touch control with a simple, push button start/stop control and an LED display integrated onto the shower or bath control to indicate water temperature readiness. Displays flash whilst water is warming up and then turn to steady, once the water has reached the user's pre-set temperature.

One further option that is available is the choice to have an 'eco setting'. This reduces flow to around eight litres per minute and is said to be ideal for those who want to be as 'green' as possible.

leisure-kit keyword: aqualisa



INFRARED THERAPY FROM MEGMED

Infrared therapy specialist MagMed has introduced a new addition to its IR therapy range with their Ergo Balance Infrared Therapy Cabin. Designed for use by anyone from elite athletes to the over 50s, MagMed's Infrared range now carries enhanced functionality with a new touch-screen digital control panel along with a built-in MP3 player. There are also automatic audio instructions for usage when customers start their session, removing the need for individual instruction by staff members. Extra optional protective coverings for seats, floors, heater tops and exteriors in order to enhance their durability in heavy use areas are also available.

leisure-kit keyword: magmed

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Leisure Management is published four times a year by The Leisure Media Company Limited, Pentall House, Pentall Lane, Hitchin, Herts SG5 1DQ, UK and is distributed in the USA by 3877 75 Aberdeen Road, Emeryville, PA 17118-0437. Periodicals postage paid at Manchester, PA POSTMASTER: Send US address changes to Leisure Management, c/o PO Box 417, Emeryville, PA 17118-0437 USA

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Andrew Bain

Active Stirling's chief officer tells Andrea Jezovitz about lessons he's learned and why his role at the sport and leisure management company – advisors on the £27m Stirling Sports Village development – is a career highlight

“ I came in at the start, so I've seen the company grow to where we are ”

What has been the highlight of your career and why?

It's got to be my current job. Active Stirling is a reasonably new company – I came in right at the start, so I was the chief officer to see the company grow through to where we are now three years later, just about to launch the new £27.3m Sports Village development.

The company was established through a transfer of employees from Stirling Council, so there were lots of change issues with people coming into a new environment, and challenges setting up the company itself, and the legal framework and charitable status. But it was a very smooth transition, and a lot of that was down to all our hard work on communication. The services we delivered weren't disrupted, and staff maintained motivation and enthusiasm for their jobs.

What has been your career low?

One of my first roles [as a leisure club manager for a hotel chain], staying in one job for too long and getting into a bit of a comfort zone where the job became not that challenging. You end up going through the motions, you're not challenging yourself, you're not pushing yourself. You're still doing a good job but you're not necessarily getting as much enjoyment out of it or as many rewards out of it as you do when you're constantly pushing yourself to develop and do more. So I think that was a lesson well learned, which has allowed me throughout the rest of my career to make sure I'm always refocusing on certain short term, medium term and long term targets, whether personally or corporately for the company I'm working with.

“ I learned about the power of sport in terms of making a difference ”

What career experience has taught you a lesson?

In one of my last roles, I was with Glasgow city council, leading the facilities side for the 2005 Special Olympics.

In that role, I learned about the power of sport in terms of making a difference in people's lives. When you see these athletes from such a wide variety of backgrounds fit in, and just the sheer joy they have out of competing, it sends a huge message about how much benefit and joy sport and physical activity can give people, which for me has acted as

a huge motivator for making sure Active Stirling can pass that feeling and those messages on to everybody. It shouldn't matter whether you're an elite athlete or a first-timer, or whether you have a disability or you're a fully able-bodied person. Everybody can get something out of sport and physical activity.

Coming into the new job at Active Stirling within six months of the Special Olympics and starting on the vision for the Sports Village, I was reminded to ensure the new facilities would be properly accessible for a wide range of users.

STIRLING SPORTS VILLAGE

The 27-acre development, the largest in the Stirling area for 30 years, will see its latest phase complete in April with the launch of The Peak.

The new £21m building, to be managed by Active Stirling, will include a nine court sports hall, 25m swimming pool, gym, climbing wall, ice rink and restaurant. The facility sits alongside existing outdoor facilities including football pitches and a water-based hockey pitch.

The Sports Village also includes a stadium and conference centre, home of Stirling Albion football club.

What's your vision for The Peak?

The key driver for us is it's a fantastic facility which can care for everybody, and it's about making it a community hub and a sporting hub. The vision is to have cradle to grave provision on one site, hence the Sports Village as well. We've got fantastic outdoor pitches and some of the local clubs have facilities on site; there's one local high school within walking distance as well so we can combine club development, school sports development and community access in one area.

What impact will the Sports Village have on the region?

Some of the new facilities have been badly missed for a long time, and are replacing current facilities that are getting old; there's a huge demand for these facilities. We've also been successful as a training camp site under the London 2012 Olympics, so we're working with Sport Scotland on attracting some countries to use us pre-2012. We're working with the Commonwealth Games team as well, looking to provide a training camp for that event.●

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09-10 JUN 2009
The FIA FLAME Conference

Reebok Stadium, Bolton, UK
This brand new interactive health and fitness conference will encompass motivational discussions and seminars alongside the FIA Industry Summit and the FLAME Awards ceremony. Delegates will be encouraged to "step up to the mark" and deliver what is being asked of the industry.

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