

## New TEA president outlines plans for association

The Themed Entertainment Association's (TEA) soon-to-be president wants to grow the body's burgeoning membership base further by increasing its offerings and programmes.

David Willrich, who succeeds current incumbent Steve Birket in November, was elected to his role following a unanimous decision by the TEA International board.

"You've got to think about what you do in terms of looking past your own presidency, which Steve has done admirably," Willrich told *AM2*.

"We've got the overlap period between now and IAAPA in November when we can start discussing things between us



David Willrich created the increasingly popular SATE Academy days

to make sure the transition is smooth. TEA has moved forward significantly during Steve's presidency. Inevitably,

some ideas have not come to fruition yet and are still subject to internal discussions. But these are ideas that I fully

support and I'm happy to help get them across the line."

Outlining future plans, Willrich said he wanted to expand on the organisation's highly successful SATE Academy Day programme, which he originated during his time as TEA Europe and Middle Eastern Division president.

"This year's programme has been brilliant, and the following is improving too," he said. "As the events attract more people they get better. We're getting some fantastic people coming forward at the top of their game, which improves the quality of what we're offering."

*More: [http://lei.sr?a=z8q6r\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=z8q6r_A)*

## Prague Zoo states panda ambitions with US\$33.5m scheme

With giant pandas proving big business worldwide, the Czech Republic's Prague Zoo is getting in on the act, unveiling plans for a Kc800m (US\$33.5m, €29.6m, £25.5m) development to house the sought after animals.

To be funded by the city of Prague, the new Panda Pavilion will offer a dedicated giant panda habitat, while adding space for the zoo's existing polar bears and gorillas. The pavilion will also include exotic birds and Australian wildlife exhibits, with Tasmanian devils among the planned additions.

The zoo is yet to officially acquire any pandas, which are among the most protected species in the world, with just 27 living in captivity outside of China.



Pandas could increase visitation by 500,000

The development is expected to be completed in 2021, with the Chinese government expecting to confirm a panda loan relatively soon as relations between Prague and Beijing strengthen.

The pandas – which remain the property of China – are estimated to cost Kc24m (US\$1m, €884,000, £761,000) a year for a pair, not including the extra staff required to care for the animals, with deals usually running 10 years.

Prague Zoo welcomed a record 1.3 million visitors in 2015 and the addition of pandas could increase visitor numbers by as much as half-a-million, according to government projections.

*More: [http://lei.sr?a=C6k8j\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=C6k8j_A)*

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The colourblind Neil Harbisson uses an implanted device that allows him to hear colours

## Cyborgs on MuseumNext NYC agenda

American Museum of Natural History president Ellen Futter and Cyborg Foundation co-founder Neil Harbisson are among the names scheduled to speak at this November's MuseumNext conference in New York.

Starting Monday 14 November, the two-day conference, which looks at the future of museums, returns to the US for the second time after a successful debut in Indianapolis in 2016.

Harbisson – who co-created the Cyborg Foundation to help humans become cyborgs, promote the use of cybernetics as part of the human body and to defend cyborg rights – is set to speak about his work as a contemporary artist and as a cyborg activist, while Futter will discuss how to redefine the role of museums in a time of urgent need.

*More:* [http://lei.sr?a=D5m3g\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=D5m3g_A)

## Landmark waterpark development opens doors in Iran's holy city of Qom

The holy city of Qom has established its first ever waterpark, with a new visitor attraction in Iran opening to the public after eight years of development.

Opened on the birthday of Hazrat Fatimah Masoumeh – whose holy shrine is located in Qom – the landmark attraction was inaugurated in presence of Parliament speaker and Qom representative Ali Larijani, as well as several government officials, who see the waterpark as a major development for Iran.

According to Iranian news agency *Mehr*, the project – one of the largest in the Middle East – is part of a larger entertainment complex, which was first launched in 2008 with development starting later in 2011.



The 30,000sq m waterpark can accommodate 2,000 people

The 30,000sq m (323,000sq ft) waterpark can accommodate up to 2,000 people. It features a number of slides, the tallest of which is 15m (50ft). The complex also features a recreational area and garden, a restaurant and 37 private pavilions.

*More:* [http://lei.sr?a=2w9Y4\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=2w9Y4_A)

# Accidents shine spotlight on industry safety

The safety of attractions in the US has been pushed into the spotlight following a week in which rides caused the death of one child and left five others seriously injured.

Ten-year-old Caleb Thomas was killed while riding Verrückt – the world’s tallest waterslide – on 7 August when his seatbelt reportedly came loose. The following day three young girls in Tennessee were seriously injured after falling from an overturned gondola on a Ferris wheel, with the youngest, aged six, currently in critical condition with a brain injury. Then on 12 August, a three-year-old boy was hospitalised after falling from a rollercoaster at an amusement park in Pennsylvania.

The events follow on from a tough 2015, which featured the high-profile Smiler accident at Alton Towers and the firestorm at a waterpark in Taiwan which caused the deaths of 22 people and resulted in more than 400 serious burn injuries.

Speaking to *AM2* in December, IAAPA chair John McReynolds raised the issue



Three girls fell from a Ferris wheel when the gondola they were riding overturned

of safety among the attractions body’s members, stating that the industry must stand for safety at all times as a top priority. The organisation has hosted several safety institutes this year in Argentina, Canada, China,

and last week in Brazil. IAAPA’s next safety institute is scheduled for 30 August in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam, with events to follow in Japan, Spain and Guatemala before the end of 2016.

*For more, see page 11*

## Yayoi Kusama’s infinity rooms to go on five-city tour of the US in 2017

Famed Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama will be the subject of a touring exhibition, with the 87-year-old artist’s “infinity mirror” installations set to travel the US in 2017 and 2018.

Debuting on 23 February 2017 at the Smithsonian Institution’s Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, *Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirrors* will then travel to a number of notable museums across the US including the Seattle Art Museum, the Broad in Los Angeles, Toronto’s Art Gallery of Ontario and the Cleveland Museum of Art.

The exhibition uses a dark mirror-lined room coupled with a series of luminous colours, which reflect infinitely to create stunning imagery. *Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirrors* will



Mirrored walls create the illusion of an infinite space

use six variations of the concept alongside a collection of the artist’s work from her career.

The tour is expected to pull in big numbers, with Kusama’s last exhibition *Infinite Obsession* drawing more than two million visitors across South and Central America.

*More: [http://lei.sr?a=Y3A8C\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=Y3A8C_A)*



The fund will help quake-prone buildings

## Earthquake fund for NZ’s at-risk heritage buildings

New Zealand’s government is introducing a NZ\$12m (US\$9m, €8m, £7m) fund to support its earthquake-prone heritage.

Launched by arts, culture and heritage minister Maggie Barry, the Heritage Earthquake Upgrade Incentive Programme (Heritage EQUIP) will be used to strengthen a number of privately-owned heritage buildings over the course of the next four years.

“We don’t want to see valued buildings empty and deteriorating, because it isn’t economical to strengthen them,” said Barry.

*More: [http://lei.sr?a=t5j8M\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=t5j8M_A)*

# Grants address ethnic imbalance in culture sector

With recent statistics suggesting that only a fraction of people from ethnic backgrounds are employed in the culture sector, Arts Council England (ACE) has allocated £5.3m (US\$6.9m, €6.2m) to help cultural organisations boost levels of diversity within their institutions.

The funding, which aims to boost diversity across the sector, has awarded grants to forty black and minority ethnic or disability-led organisations to help them increase staff capacity, generate new revenue sources and make significantly stronger applications for other investment programmes.

According to statistics supplied by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to AM2, within the employment sector covering arts, entertainment and recreation, 93 per cent of employees are classed as white, with the remaining 7 per cent made up of minorities.

These statistics appear to correlate with a report released by the Museums Association, which said that discrimination within the museums sector is negatively affecting workforce diversity, leading to people leaving the field at mid-career level.



Only 7 per cent of the arts, entertainment and recreation workforce is made up of minorities

The grants awarded by the Arts Council ranged from £100,000 (US\$130,000, €116,000) to £150,000 (US\$195,000, €174,500) with an initial

£2.1m (US\$2.7m, €2.4m) fund boosted by National Lottery funding based on the strength and volume of applications. *More: [http://lei.sr?a=F4d8v\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=F4d8v_A)*



WOA will now open on 31 August

## IMG Worlds of Adventure debut pushed back

Theme parks-goers hoping to visit IMG Worlds of Adventure in Dubai will have to wait just a little longer, after the park pushed back its planned opening of 15 August to the end of the month.

Now scheduled to open on 31 August, Worlds of Adventure debuts around 18 months behind its original 2014 date.

Worlds of Adventure is the first of three major theme park developments in the region, with Dubai Parks and Resorts scheduled to open on 31 October and Fox World coming in 2018.

*More: [http://lei.sr?a=b2f8T\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=b2f8T_A)*

## Hettema Group kicks off summer of installations at Union Station Los Angeles

Experiential design firm The Hettema Group recently introduced the first in a series of pop-up installations to Los Angeles' Union Station, with various events to run at the station through the summer.

The interactive media installation, Union Station 360°, ran from 15 July to 24 July and was the first in a series of free art events and concerts aiming to transform the transit hub into a public destination.

The experience was formed of two installations on the station's south plaza which aimed to capture the essence of the diverse aspects of Los Angeles.

"In my early career I worked on the 1984 Los



The pop-up experience filled the station's south plaza

Angeles Olympics so this is kind of going back to some of that. I love this kind of work," said Hettema Group founder and creative director, Phil Hettema, speaking to AM2. "It's fun

to create something out of nothing and try to really surprise people with a space they're familiar with, reinventing something that's already there."

*More: [http://lei.sr?a=K9Y2a\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=K9Y2a_A)*

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# Iger downplays issues as Disney records strong Q3

Despite a decline in theme park attendance, Disney has recorded strong overall earnings in its recently released Q3 results.

Overall theme park revenue for the company increased 6.6 per cent to \$4.4bn (€3.9bn, £3.4bn), with spend per visitor increasing. Operating income also rose 8 per cent to \$994m (€888.4m, £759.6m), though those numbers were partially offset by a decrease for Disney's overseas operations.

Internationally, Disney's new Shanghai opening has been very successful so far, with the company reporting 95 per cent occupancy rates and visitors staying two hours longer on average than expected. Hong Kong Disneyland also saw improved results, though operating income was lower at Disneyland Paris.

Despite some concerns that outside factors have the potential to affect Orlando's economy, Disney CEO Bob Iger said that so far overall international visitation hasn't dropped significantly, though some individual markets are being affected.

"While there's a fair amount of concern about the international tourists, the mix of



Some markets are affecting visitation though overall there hasn't been a significant drop

international tourists to our domestic parks hasn't really shifted that much," said Iger.

"We've had shifts market-to-market. Brazil's had some big issues in the last year for instance. But the mix from international versus domestic attendance is basically in

line with what we've seen. Interestingly enough, Britain has been fairly strong, which given what's gone on there, particularly the headlines and the Brexit issue, you'd expect otherwise. But business is quite strong there."

More: [http://lei.sr?a=b3f9k\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=b3f9k_A)



Night skies could be a source of revenue

## Malaysian govt eyeing astrotourism as draw

Malaysia's government is looking to the skies to draw visitors, with the Tourism and Culture Ministry (MOTAC) eyeing the astrotourism market to increase visitor numbers in the northern state of Sabah.

"With a minimum cost, it is not impossible for astrotourism to increase tourist arrivals in Sabah," said MOTAC director Ag Ahmad Zaki Abu Bakar, who added that with proper planning, the Sabah could become one of the world's premier stargazing locations.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=f5V6P\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=f5V6P_A)

## 'Complicated engineering process' delays US\$580m New York Wheel development

Plans to open New York's largest Ferris wheel have been delayed, with project leader and CEO Rich Marin, saying the 630ft (192m) high attraction will now open in April 2018.

Originally scheduled for early next year before being pushed back to mid- and then late 2017, the US\$580m (€514.8m, £447.1m) wheel has been delayed thanks to a "complicated engineering process".

The project has been hit by a number of problems, including delays in construction of a parking garage and funding disputes, with some investors claiming the project was being mishandled.



The wheel is being developed by engineering firm Starneth

The wheel will be the second-largest in the world assuming the upcoming Ain Dubai wheel opens on schedule next year.

Construction on the wheel started in May 2015 with the

main three buildings now complete. Phase two includes the development of the wheel itself, which sits at the heart of a US\$790m (€701m, £609m) regeneration of Staten Island.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=B7r7P\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=B7r7P_A)

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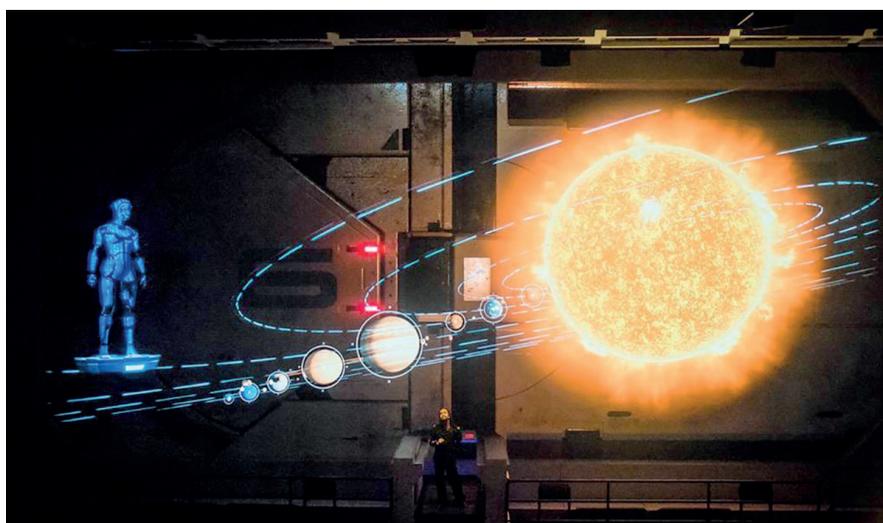
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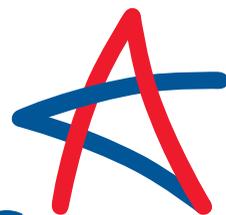
**IAAPA Attractions Expo 2016****Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Florida, US**

With more than 30,000 industry professionals expected to attend this year's IAAPA conference, including 20,000 buyers coming from more than 100 countries, the event will explore the theme of 'Every Experience Matters'. The trade show floor will cover over 550,000sq ft, with more than 1,000 companies set to exhibit their latest projects and cutting-edge innovations from 125 categories. Industry leaders, decision-makers, and trendsetters from across multiple sectors, including manufacturers and suppliers, and the owners and operators of theme and amusement parks, waterparks, FECs, zoos, aquariums, science centres, museums, resorts, and more, will be on-hand at the event.

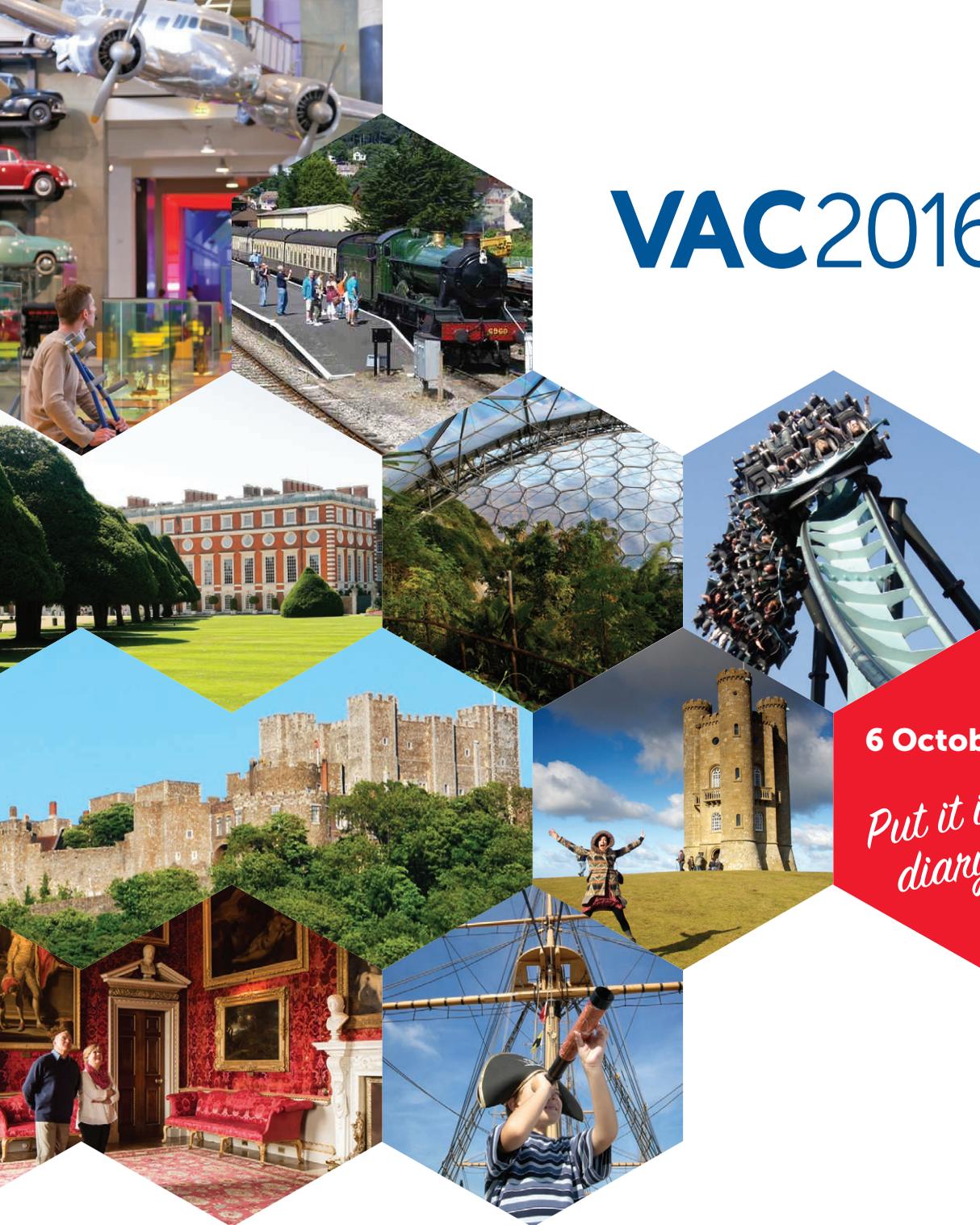
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# Evolving safety standards

Dennis Spiegel is president of International Theme Park Services



Safety has been pushed to the forefront of the attractions agenda after a series of accidents, including the death of a boy on the world's tallest waterslide

**A** series of recent accidents within days of each other has brought the inevitable “spotlight of the media” to the doorstep of our leisure industry.

Let me say that our industry is world renowned for its continually evolving safety programmes. We never sleep when it comes to safety. It is on our minds throughout the global industry 24 hours a day. I also want to say that when we do have an accident, it receives the publicity that an airline crash receives. Why? Because people come to leisure facilities to have fun, relax, unwind and escape from reality for a while. So, it is for these reasons that, when something does happen, it is front page news.

Those of us who have spent our lives in this great leisure industry agree that we will never stop striving for “zero incidents.” A stubbed

**“We will never stop striving for ‘zero incidents.’ A stubbed toe is, quite frankly, one too many incidents.”**

toe is, quite frankly, one too many incidents.

Through the years, our rides and attractions have advanced in rider experience. Higher, faster, longer are a few of the characteristics which we now oversee on a daily basis. There’s no question that more intense guest experiences require more intense inspections. It is incumbent on the industry to implement the necessary and appropriate safety programmes to accompany the continuously heightened experiences.

Actuarially and numerically, a theme park is one of the safest places to be on this planet.

Billions of rides and attractions experiences are taken by the millions of people who visit each year. The number of incidents and fatalities are miniscule based on these numbers. But again, from our industry’s viewpoint, one accident is one too many.

At the Asian Expo in Shanghai, Jim Seay, president of Premier Rides and chair of Amusement Rides and Devices for global safety standards group ASTM International, gave a presentation on industry safety. He spoke about how our industry has assisted the ASTM F2783-14 standard practice for design, manufacture, operation, maintenance and inspection of amusement rides and devices around the world, and how significant that contribution has been. He also discussed how a lot of today’s safety knowledge emanates from air and space technological efforts. Our safety endeavors truly are world class and continue to advance daily.

We will never stop striving to achieve total safety for our industry, for our employees, or for our guests. We well know if we are lackadaisical for even a moment about safety, we are errant and we will not let that ever happen if humanly possible. For if we did, we would put ourselves out of business.



In one incident, a three-year-old fell from a wooden roller coaster in Pennsylvania



Track tubes bent by Maurer's XBEND machine

**Maurer unveils new coaster track bending technology**

Structural engineer and ride maker Maurer has launched XBEND, enabling high-precision computerised manufacture of coaster track tubes.

The computer-controlled machine can be programmed to create complex bends in large tube diameters with the highest degrees of accuracy. This increases the safety, feel and quality of the ride.

"XBEND is an important component for us on the path towards integrated rollercoaster manufacturing, where we have linked up various modules with each other," said CEO Jörg Beutler, who added that the XBEND delivers levels of precision that were not possible by hand, creating "continuous curvature progression."



Children enjoy Dreamhunters – The Adventures Of Early Man

**LCI modern multimedia tells story of ancient man**

LCI Productions has announced its involvement in a multimedia walkthrough that constitutes a completely new element for visitors to Cheddar Gorge in the UK.

The digital experience at Cheddar Gorge – an ancient limestone gorge in Somerset, and site where the 9,000-year old 'Cheddar Man' skeleton was discovered – uses cutting-

edge projection and audio-visual technology to narrate the story of the caves and the humans who used them.

The 100-metre walkthrough show, Dreamhunters – The Adventures Of Early Man, takes place in the eight chambers of the attraction's smaller Cox's Cave, using 16 Casio projectors to create a wraparound video experience.



The Movie Base XS gives riders a flight experience

**Huss introduces a smaller version of its flying theatre**

Huss Park Attractions has created the Movie Base XS, a compact version of its Movie Base Classic ride.

It is a flying theatre-style immersive attraction, where guests sit in stacked rows and view a show on a big screen.

Other sensory experiences integrated into the ride include a 'flight' experience, with lifting and tilting seats, and 4D

effects, including water, wind and scent.

The next generation Movie Base concept boasts an improved seat design and though the ride is smaller than the original, Huss says it offers 20 per cent more capacity.

The Movie Base XS is available from Huss as a full turnkey solution, including the AV and show control system.



The attraction has been introduced to boost repeat attendance

**Qatar's Aqua Park installs Murphy's Waves surf machine**

Qatar's Aqua Park has unveiled its latest experience, the Stingray surf machine - a first for the Middle Eastern country.

The Stingray is a surfing and skim-boarding half-pipe ride by UK-based Murphy's Waves, with specially designed boards that allow riders to stand and carve into the side walls.

"For the first time ever in Qatar, it's possible to ride up

curved sidewalls at 90 degrees to the direction of the water flow," said Mohamed Firdaus, Aqua Park Qatar general manager.

The attraction has been introduced to encourage repeat visitation and increase variety at the Doha waterpark – which features a wave pool, a lazy river, a WhiteWater West Boomerango and a children's pirate-themed area.

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Dianne Eade, Newquay Zoo  
Head of Finance, Human Resources and Administration

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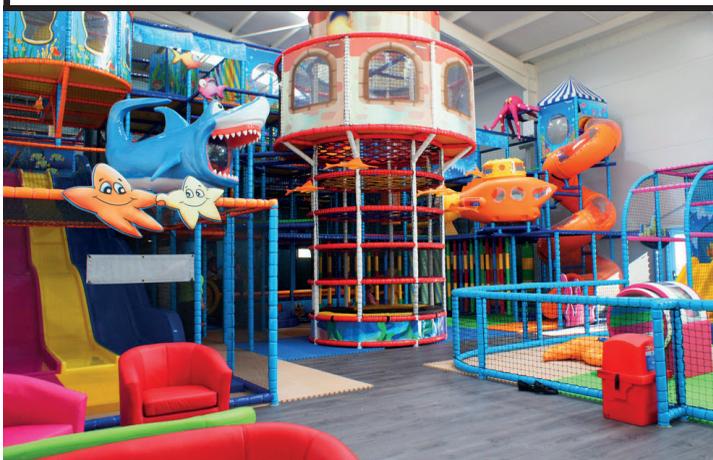
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# Universal Orlando reveals new VR experience for Halloween Horror Nights

Universal Orlando is for the first time introducing a virtual reality component to its Halloween Horror Nights event, with a new interactive experience combining VR and real-life actors.

The VR experience, known as “The Repository”, will blend custom technology with immersive real-life storytelling in a manner similar to that of Derren Brown’s new “modern day ghost train” at Thorpe Park.

“This is one of the most electrifying Halloween Horror Nights’ projects I’ve ever worked on – primarily because it is the culmination of eight years of experimental



The experience combines VR and immersive locations

storytelling, drawing on feedback from our visitors to learn what thrills and chills them the most,” said Universal Orlando’s senior director of Art and Design, TJ Mannarino.

Universal has teamed with Washington-based VRStudios to create the haunting experience, which will only be available for a limited time.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=y5U7y\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=y5U7y_A)

# BP sponsorship doesn’t break ethics guidelines but raises important issues

Oil giant BP’s sponsorship of cultural attractions in the UK has not breached the Museum Association’s (MA) code of ethics – although it has raised significant questions around sponsorship arrangements in general, said the body.

The MA’s judgement refers to a report published by lobby group Art Not Oil, which alleged BP had a “corrupting influence” over the institutions it sponsors.

“The Art Not Oil report raised important questions about how museums should conduct their sponsorship arrangements, and the Ethics Committee has responded to these issues in full,” said Sharon Heal, Museums Association director.



BP’s sponsorship of museums has been questioned

“The committee has also recognised there cannot be a one-size-fits all solution to the issue of oil sponsorship.”

In response to the report, Art Not Oil expressed its gratitude for the

investigation, but said it was disappointed the MA didn’t take a “stronger line”, adding that “no interaction between BP and an institution takes place in an ethical vacuum.”

More: [http://lei.sr?a=w4U6Q\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=w4U6Q_A)

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