

LEISURE management

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on striking a cinema
deal with HMV

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EDINBURGH

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Europe's fittest
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CINEMA TRENDS

I was browsing in a vast book, music and coffee shop recently when it became obvious that the large CD and DVD section was deserted. On closer inspection it looked dusty, abandoned and full of old stock, an example of how new technology – in this case MP3 – can reduce the power of a booming industry in a very short period of time.

It was interesting to hear that Curzon AE and HMV have formed a partnership to revitalise just such spaces by harnessing yet another new(ish) technology – digital film projection – to create boutique cinemas in prime retail space and in town centre locations.

On page 30 we interview Philip Knatchbull, CEO of HMV Curzon, the company formed by the partners. He explains plans to create 20 or more in-store cinemas if the prototype – a 200-seat, three-screen development planned for Wimbledon and opening this autumn – is a success.

Curzon already operates nine screens at five cinemas in the London area, so knows the market well and the idea is to head in the opposite direction from the competition: "In a reversal of policy from 20 years ago," says Knatchbull, "we're taking cinemas back to the high street. We believe councils and people generally want high streets to be more socially engaging."

The combination of new technology, cross-market collaboration and flexibility in pricing is opening new doors for cinema. In addition, the blurring of boundaries between live entertainment, theatre, music, film and attractions is giving creative operators more elements to play with

The new cinemas will also offer 3D films and a café, with the intention of experimenting with pricing, opening hours and co-ordinating openings with home pay-per-view services to fully test the new business model. Content will vary, with live screenings and events to coincide with music launches, as well as more traditional movies and reruns of classics.

It seems that cinema is a hotbed of innovation at present, with a number of operators announcing new programming and ideas. Vue Cinemas is working on two new sites which will include 3D screens, while City Screen has announced a partnership with the National Theatre in London for the screening of live theatre at 18 cinemas across the UK. Also in London, the team at Somerset House will repeat its successful 10-day outdoor film festival this summer in partnership with Film4 and in Scotland, actress Tilda Swinton will be on tour with a mobile cinema which will visit remote communities so they can enjoy the pleasure of the movies.

Analysts and industry commentators tell us that cinema thrives in times of economic hardship as people seek escapism and a cost-effective treat. Couple this trend with innovative programming and partnership working and it's a potent combination which is keeping cinema operators' businesses buoyant.

The combination of new technology, cross-market collaboration and flexibility in pricing is opening new doors for cinema. In addition, the blurring of boundaries between live entertainment, theatre, music, film and attractions is giving creative operators more elements to play with and producing some very exciting new concepts.

The move back to town centres is a very welcome one at a time when the combination of web sales and the recession mean that many high streets are starting to lack vitality.



Liz Terry, editor liz@leisuremedia.com

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PHOTO: WWW.BRITAINONVIEW.COM



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World Leisure

Expanded Anchorage Museum opens

The US\$106m (£64m, 74.4m euro) expansion of the 170,000sq ft (15,793sq m) Anchorage Museum at the Rasmuson Center in Alaska has opened its doors to the public.

The revamp, designed by David Chipperfield Architects, includes a new glass-fronted façade and entrance facing downtown Anchorage. Among the features of the new building are a café, shop and two extra floors (80,000sq ft, 7,432sq m) of exhibition space.

A venue at the heart of the existing building was retained to continue providing a space for arts, music and cultural events, but there has also been the addition of a science discovery centre and a Young Learners Discovery Gallery with touchable objects and hands-on learning opportunities.



The museum was designed by David Chipperfield Architects

The museum also houses a new 530sq ft planetarium and the 100,000sq ft (9,290sq m) Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center, exhibiting 600 Native

Alaskan artifacts from the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History and National Museum of the American Indian.

Boutique spa at O on Kloof opens

An intimate new spa has opened as part of the O on Kloof hotel in Cape Town, South Africa.

The spa has one treatment room and one therapist, but treatments are also offered in the eight guest bedrooms.

Designed by local architects Anton De Kock and Graham Koch, who were also in charge of the renovation of the hotel, the brands at O'Spa have been supplied by Logica, while treatments use SpaRitual and Theravine products.

The signature treatment is an African body Butter Massage, which combines various massage techniques



The spa boasts one large treatment room

with a deeply moisturising body butter, infused with essential oils. All treatments will focus on local produce wherever possible, while other therapies include facials and massages.

Terminator Salvation coaster unveiled

Six Flags Magic Mountain in Valencia, California, has kicked-started its summer season with the launch of a new US\$10m (£6m, €6.9m) rollercoaster, called *Terminator Salvation: The Ride*.

Based on the latest addition to the Terminator film series, the coaster, designed by Great Coasters Int., is inspired by the movie's post-apocalyptic setting.

It features synchronised onboard audio, a loading station fly-through, two tunnels and fire and fog effects, as well as the 2,850ft track's five hills and six banked turns.

CNL acquires Hawaiian Waters

CNL Lifestyle Properties has acquired Hawaiian Waters Adventure Park in Kapolei, on the island of Oahu, US, from a subsidiary of the Village Roadshow.

Although now owned by the US real estate investment trust, operation of the 29-acre waterpark has been leased back to the Australian global entertainment company.

As part of the deal, Village Roadshow will continue to operate the site and will rebrand the park as Wet 'n' Wild Hawaii.

"This transaction is a homerun for both sides," said Byron Carlock, CEO of CNL. "We were looking for a vibrant operating partner with which to grow our portfolio of properties. Hawaiian Waters is exactly the kind of quality attraction we look for, where families can make lasting memories."

Graham Burke, managing director of Village Roadshow, added: "CNL is the perfect partner for us as we grow our highly successful water park business in the United States."



Rides at the park include a Tornado slide

African centre accredited

Exercise Training and Sports Academy (eta) in South Africa has signed up to become the first approved centre in the country to be accredited by health and fitness awarding body Central YMCA Qualifications (CYQ).

The agreement follows a 10-day visit by the CYQ Business Development Team to South Africa in March as part of the UK government's Passport to Export scheme.

"Because of the international profile of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, hosted in South Africa, the government is focusing on developing skills, particularly in the fitness industry," said Lori Randall, CYQ's business development manager.

As well as accrediting the South African centre, CYQ has approved a further 54 training centres in the UK,



The scheme is part of government strategy

Ireland and Italy and issued nearly 39,000 certificates in the past financial year – a 5 per cent increase year on year.

Galician club for Holmes Place

Holmes Place Iberia opened its latest club on 15 May. Located in the city of A Coruña, it's the chain's first club in the region of Galicia, north-west Spain.

Facilities at the 3,200sq m club include a fitness suite supplied by Star Trac and Life Fitness.

The pilates studio offers Peak Pilates equipment, while the group exercise studio is equipped by Aerobic & Fitness and Tecnosport. Personal training is also available.

Situated in the Dolce Vita shopping centre, facilities at the new club also include a stainless steel swim-



The health club includes a pool

ming pool, a solarium, spa pool and Turkish bath, and a restaurant. There is also free parking for members. Details: www.holmesplace.com

Wellness lifestyle concept launch

The new Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital in Michigan, US has launched with the inclusion of a complementary wellness facility called Vita.

The 8,000sq ft (743.2sq m) facility has been created primarily to serve patients, their families and the community and combines wellness and preventative care. Providing a model for affecting positive change in healthcare, Vita – which is named after the Latin word for life – contains programmes created for sustained wellness. All

integrative therapies, programmes and classes have undergone a rigorous review by a committee comprising Henry Ford physicians, scientists, nurses and other healthcare professionals, to ensure that the experience within Vita is both safe and suited to patients' needs.

Creative Spa Concepts consulted on Vita, and was responsible for shaping its individual services - including health coaches, acupuncture, TCM and beauty therapies for cancer sufferers.

Russian Fitness Group opens first luxury club

Russian Fitness Group (RFG) opened its latest World Class health club – the 19th in the chain – in St Petersburg in April.

Located on Krestovsky island, it's the operator's first luxury club. Built over three floors, the 3,800sq m club has an 800sq m gym with almost 12m-high ceilings.

Facilities include group cycling and martial arts studios, both of which have panoramic windows looking out over the embankment.

There's also a pilates studio, two group exercise and personal training studios, a kids' club, doctor's surgery, café and boutique shop.

RFG operates more than 42 fitness clubs in 11 cities of Russia.

Hersheypark opens Boardwalk expansion

Hersheypark, in Hershey, Pennsylvania, has unveiled its US\$17.6m (£11m, 12.6 euro) expansion. The project comprised the expansion of the park's Boardwalk area, which opened in 2007, and is called The Boardwalk: The SEAquel.

The work included the installation of The Shore, a 378,000-gallon wave pool and the Intercoastal Waterway, a 1,360ft lazy river.

The area also features a changing area, lockers and a restaurant, as well as 27 cabanas that can be rented out. The new attractions have replaced the former Canyon River Rapids, which were in place from 1987 until last August.



The centre focuses on wellness

Commercial

Royal opening for Epsom grandstand

A new 11,000-capacity grandstand has been officially opened at Epsom Downs Racecourse in Surrey by the Duchess of Cornwall, marking the completion of a three-year, £38m redevelopment scheme.

The Duchess Stand has been designed to accommodate both racing and non-racing events throughout the year, and includes the 1,123sq m (12,088sq ft) Oaks Hall on the ground floor, which can be used as an 800-seat conference venue.

Three first floor restaurants will also be available for conferencing and banqueting on non-race days, while the second floor includes fourteen private hospitality boxes and the Downs View Suite, capable of accommodating more than 100 people.



The Duchess was present at the opening of the new grandstand

In addition to the new grandstand, the Epsom Downs redevelopment project included the construction of a

new 120-bedroom hotel.

Nick Blöfeld, Epsom Downs MD, said: "We felt it very appropriate with hav-

Rileys to introduce darts at clubs

Troubled snooker and pool club operator, Rileys, is to introduce darts zones at its remaining clubs as part of efforts to revitalise the business.

The company will introduce darts zones at "a number" of its 130 clubs, with the first one having launched in Croydon. Rileys hopes to benefit from the rise in popularity of darts and the spate of pub closures – the traditional home of darts clubs.

In April, Rileys announced the closure of 30 properties and the loss of 200 jobs after it entered administration due to a downturn in trading. Simon Allport



World champion Phil Taylor launched the club

and Tom Jack of Ernst and Young were appointed joint administrators and a deal was struck with Valiant Sports to ensure the survival of 130 clubs, which will operate under the Rileys name.

Salford racecourse inquiry underway

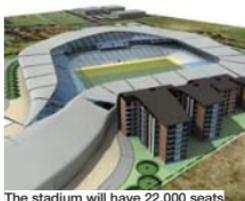
Plans for a new racecourse near Salford, Greater Manchester, have gone before a public inquiry at the request of the developer behind the scheme.

In November last year, Peel Holdings appealed to the government to intervene in the planning process after both Salford City Council (SCC) and Wigan Council failed to decide whether to approve the company's proposals for Salford Forest Park. A new international standard horse racing course, including a 6,000-seat grandstand, an eventing

course and an equestrian centre, is at the centre of Peel's plans for the 1,690-acre (684-hectare site).

Proposals also include an 18-hole golf course, an 80-bedroom hotel with a gym, a restaurant and a swimming pool, and a forest park visitor centre, as well as an eco-village, 11 miles (17.7km) of cycle trails and 20 miles (32.2km) of footpaths.

The scheme is set to be opposed by SCC, which rejected the plans due to the perceived impact on green belt land.



The stadium will have 22,000 seats

Casino for new Southend stadium

Southend United Football Club (SUFC) has announced that it is planning to include a casino as part of a new 22,000-seat stadium development at Fossetts Farm in Essex.

The £46m scheme, which was given the go-ahead by the government last September after being called in for a public inquiry, has now been altered to incorporate the proposed casino, as well as a new football academy.

According to SUFC chair Ron Martin, the proposed academy would not be viable without the inclusion of the casino, which is set to be operated by Rank Group.

SUFC's amended proposals for the stadium, which include the casino, will now have to go through the full planning process.

Spa & Wellness

Grayshott Studio Spa opens

The Grayshott Spa brand has been extended with the opening of the first Grayshott Studio Spa at Fawsley Hall in Northamptonshire.

The boutique facility features a hand-picked selection of treatments, including pre- and post-pregnancy therapies, massages, facials, wraps and scrubs. All treatments use Guinot, Aromatherapy Associates, Jane Iredale and Jessica products. The spa is situated in the newly-refurbished Coach House, in close proximity to the main hotel.

It boasts six treatment rooms, a hair and pedicure studio, thermal rooms and relaxation areas. There is also a juice bar, an indoor swimming pool and an outdoor hydro pool. A gym, equipped by Nautilus, is on site as well as a further six ensuite spa bedrooms which



The spa is situated in a Fawsley Hall

have been added for guests wishing to extend their spa experience. A private garden completes the offering. Details: fawsleyhall.com

Halcyon opens at Bishopstrow

A new spa called Halcyon has launched within Bishopstrow House, part of the von Essen hotel Collection in Wiltshire, UK.

The spa has a range of 40 treatments and four therapy rooms, including a double treatment room.

All treatments will use the Elemis range of products. Other suppliers for the spa included Carlton Couches, Stan Ledbetter for the Rasul Mud Therapy, Ariane Poole make-up, Culpepper products and Natural Magic candles.

Other facilities include a rasul mud therapy room, decorated in Turkish



Halcyon boasts four treatment rooms

Ottoman style, a relaxation suite, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, a whirlpool, a sauna and a steamroom. Kerry Chapman consulted on the spa.

Knock Castle revamp reaches second phase

Redevelopment work on the Knock Castle hotel and spa in Crieff, Perthshire, Scotland has reached the second phase.

The £1.5m revamp's second phase included the creation of a dedicated spa treatment wing, housing treatment rooms as well as a relaxation area. The leisure area, which contains the swimming pool, spa pool and steam room area, was also upgraded during the works.

Other improvements completed during the second phase included the addition of a 100-capacity conference suite.

The baronial mansion is owned by Scottish company The Henderson Group.

Students offer services free to cancer patients

A new partnership has been formed between the University of Derby in Buxton and a local hospice, to give cancer patients in the region free complementary therapies.

After completing specialist training, the university's spa managers and assessors have taught students how to deliver therapies to cancer patients and carers associated with Blythe House Hospice, in Chapel en le Frith, Derbyshire.

The treatments are offered at either the hospice or the university's Devonshire Spa facility.

The initiative is intended to help people cope with the effects of their illness and the side-effects of their treatments. Details: derby.ac.uk

Carlton Institute opens new training centres

A number of training centres are to open as part of an expansion of the UK-based skills training provider The Carlton Institute.

The company, which is under new ownership, is extending the number of training centres across the country from two to seven locations, in order to meet the rising demand.

Owner of the Carlton Institute, Suki Kalirai, said: "Demand for fast-track courses that get individuals into work quickly or build their skills is grow-

ing. Extending skills to earn more or an unexpected need to change career is key to peoples' future."

The Institute has also partnered with the Essex-based Brentwood Academy, which will provide long courses and fast-track courses in liaison with the institute. Principal and director of Brentwood Academy, Jacqui Borley, said: "We see our partnership as mutually beneficial and a move that benefits our students." Details: beauty-training.co.uk



Training is based on practical skills

Hospitality

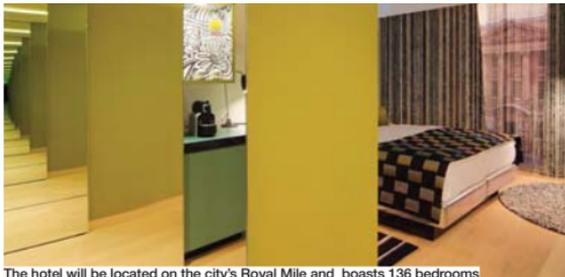
Rezidor to open Missoni-branded hotel

Rezidor Hotel Group intends to open its first Missoni-branded hotel in Edinburgh in a joint venture with the Italian fashion house.

The five-star, 136-bedroom Hotel Missoni Edinburgh will open on the Royal Mile in early June comprising a bar and a restaurant as well as conference rooms. The opening will be shortly followed by the launch of the portfolio's second property - Missoni in Kuwait City - this autumn.

Additional facilities will include a 1,000sq m (10,750sq ft) spa, two tennis courts, a private beach, numerous swimming pools, meeting rooms and a 400sq m (4,300sq ft) ballroom.

Missoni aims to open 30 hotels over the next decade - designed by Milanese architects Studio Thun - in



The hotel will be located on the city's Royal Mile and boasts 136 bedrooms

partnership with Rezidor. Initial focus will be on Europe and the Middle East, later expanding to the North and South American and Asian markets.

"Its design, combined with the best of bars and restaurants, will make this a truly unique hotel experience," said Kurt Ritter, CEO of Rezidor.

Mixed results for hotel operators

Hoteliers in London reported a 0.9 per cent increase in average room occupancy during April, compared with 2008 figures, according to a report by PKF Hotel Consultancy Services.

However, the statistics also revealed that room rate decreased by 10.6 per cent to £123.85 at hotels across the capital, which has been blamed on the extensive use of promotional offers to attract more visitors.

Meanwhile, regional hotels have reported a sharp decline in the three main performance indicators after reporting double digit decreases in



Room rates continue to fall rapidly

room rate, occupancy and yield as a result of the recession.

Hotels in Birmingham reported a 20 per cent fall in occupancy and a 15 per cent reduction in room rate.

Plans submitted for £250m hotel

A new £250m hotel is being planned for the banks of London's River Thames as part of the redevelopment of the Mermaid Conference and Event Centre on Puddle Dock in Blackfriars.

Designed by Alsop Architects on behalf of developers Heatherfield, and managed by Blackfriars Investments, the 28,000sq m, five-storey hotel comprises a conference centre, ballroom and a gym and spa facilities. The scheme, submitted to the City of London for approval, also includes bars and restaurants and a rooftop terrace.

Brits' summer savings spent on leisure

More than 40 per cent of British people admit that they spend the money saved on bills during the summer on leisure activities, according to a new report by National Savings and Investments.

The Quarterly Savings Survey revealed that 42 per cent of people believe that they save an average of £77.39 a month during the summer, a period when 48 per cent say that they spend around £110 a month on leisure activities. A further 43 per cent of the people who answered the ques-

tionnaire admitted that the warmer weather encouraged them to feel more relaxed with their spending habits, while entertaining children on school holidays and the cost of socialising also impacting upon summer spending.

The report also revealed that more than half (60 per cent) of the population are inclined to spend more on holidaying during the summer rather than the winter, and 39 per cent said that they are more likely to spend money at restaurants and bars.



Summer increases spending in leisure

Health & Fitness

Annual fitness industry survey launched

SkillsActive's sixth UK Working in Fitness Survey – one of the largest annual surveys of people working in the UK health and fitness sector – has been launched online.

Conducted by SkillsActive and the Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs), the survey has been created to give insight into how the fitness industry rewards its workforce as well as salary levels, job satisfaction and spending on training and development.

In previous research for its Sector Skills Agreement, SkillsActive estimated that an average 8,500 job openings were needed in the fitness sector each year to meet staff turnover and the creation of new positions.

Jean-Ann Marnoch, registrar of REPs, said: "It's really important that



Around 8,500 new job openings are needed every year

as many people take part as possible to get a good representation of jobs in the industry and to be able to identify issues at a local level. Last year

we found fitness professionals were positive about remaining in the industry but continued to report a need for improvements in salaries."

New leisure centre for St Davids

Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) has unveiled designs for a proposed £1.3m dual-use sports complex, which is to be established on the site of St Davids Swimming Pool in west Wales.

The pool closed on 7 June in order to make way for the new complex, which will include a four-court sports hall, a health and fitness suite with changing facilities and two further changing rooms for external use.

PCC has already invested in a new multi-use games area and the upgrade of three tennis courts at the site, while further work is due to be carried out



The centre will have a health club

to improve the exterior of the adjacent secondary school.

Pembroke-based Cottons Limited has been appointed by the council to construct the new centre.

Health club to add subterranean pool

Top Notch Health Club in Chesham will soon feature a £500,000 underground swimming pool.

General practitioners will be able to refer patients with disabilities to the new facility for fitness and rehabilitation sessions. Chiltern District Council approved the plans, submitted for the third time, by six votes to two. The previous two applications were rejected owing to concerns over Green Belt land and a lack of car parking spaces.

The swimming pool will have full disabled access and includes water-based rehabilitation facilities.

Queen's Club gym gets a refurb

Queen's Club in West Kensington, London, has undergone a refurbishment to its fitness facilities.

Established in 1886, the club was named after its first patron, Queen Victoria, and is one of the first lawn tennis and racquet clubs in the world.

The facility, owned by members from the Lawn Tennis Association, has had its gym doubled in size to 1,800sq ft (1,672sq m). The new gym, converted from former meeting rooms, has been fitted with £50,000 worth of Cybex kit,

including 15 CV stations and strength equipment from the Eagle and VR1 Dual ranges.

There is also a dedicated stretch area and two treatment rooms for massages, osteopathy and physiotherapy. The old gym has been transformed into an aerobics studio. The club also offers 45 lawn tennis courts - 12 grass, 10 indoor, eight shale and clay, four plexi and four artificial grass courts, in addition to two racket, two regular tennis and three squash courts.



The gym was fitted by Cybex

Sport

Ricky Hatton opens first fitness club

Boxer Ricky Hatton has opened a new £2m health and fitness centre in Hyde, Greater Manchester, following eight months in development.

Formerly occupied by a print works, the 1,000sq m (10,764sq ft) Hatton Health and Fitness Centre opened on 12 May and features an 85-station gym equipped by Cybex, along with two Power Plate machines.

A new floor has also been added to provide a boxing area, including two rings, bags and speed balls, as well as two studios offering a range of classes, such as spinning and conditioning.

Facilities at the centre, which had already secured more than 300 members ahead of its opening, it also includes a reception and refreshment area, a sauna and changing rooms.



Hatton plans to open further clubs if the pilot site is successful

Wellbeing treatments and therapies are also provided as part of the offering, which also includes a number of membership packages.

Depending on the success of the Hyde site, Hatton is considering the possibility of rolling out the concept and opening more sites in the future.

Brighton stadium funding secured

Brighton and Hove Albion Football Club has announced that it has secured full funding for a new £93m stadium project at Falmer, East Sussex, after Tony Bloom took over as club chair.

Bloom will fund the majority of the £93m development after replacing previous chair Dick Knight, who has stepped down after 12 years in the position to become the club's new life president. The scheme includes a 22,500-seat stadium, which has been designed by London-based KSS Architects, and will also be funded using a number of grants.



The stadium has been designed by KSS

Buckingham Group Construction has started work on the venue after amended plans were approved by the city council in February. The stadium is scheduled to open by the end of 2011.

Premier League clubs resist downturn

More than half of the 20 Premier League clubs reported an operating profit during the 2007-08 season as the league's collective revenue increased to nearly £2bn, according to new research.

Deloitte's Annual Review of Football Finance revealed that Premier League clubs' revenues had increased by 26 per cent compared with 2006-07, and are now expected to break through the £2bn barrier during the 2008-09 season. However, the research also revealed that the economic downturn is hav-

ing an impact on the amount of investors willing to inject cash into clubs as the league's net debt has increased to more than £3bn.

Two thirds of the total net debt has been attributed to the Premier League's top four clubs – Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool and Manchester United – while the cost of players' wages has also contributed.

Salary expenditure reached £1.2bn following the largest annual increase recorded by the Premier League.



The complex will feature a sports hall

£16m sports centre for Preston

A £16m sports centre will be built at The University of Central Lancashire (UCL) in Preston to provide new sporting facilities to its students and to local children during the school holidays.

The new complex will feature a sprung timber sports hall with more than 300 retractable bleacher seats and a viewing gallery, able to accommodate regional and national sporting events.

Activity studios, squash courts, multi-functional spaces and changing rooms will also be built, while a pre-school complete with sensory, nature and hard play areas will accommodate up to 90 children aged six months to seven years old. A planning application has been submitted to Preston City Council.

Parks & Countryside

Carisbrooke Castle unveils new garden

English Heritage has opened a new Edwardian-inspired garden within the former privy garden of Queen Victoria's daughter, Princess Beatrice, at Carisbrooke Castle near Newport, Isle of Wight.

The garden, which has been developed in partnership with garden designer and former presenter of BBC's *Gardeners' World*, Chris Beardshaw, is designed to celebrate Princess Beatrice's role as the island's governor between 1896 and 1944.

Period plants, fruit trees and a fountain have been incorporated into English Heritage's design in order to keep it as close as possible to the original layout of the garden, which was established as Princess Beatrice's private garden in 1913.



The historic garden is managed by English Heritage

Other improvements at Carisbrooke Castle include a new visitor reception and new interpretation of the site, while the garden has also been devel-

oped to complement the Victorian garden at Osbourne House near East Cowes, which is also maintained and managed by English Heritage.

Green light for Coventry park

Coventry City Council (CCC) has approved plans for a £3.8m refurbishment of the city's War Memorial Park, which first opened in 1921 to commemorate the lives of soldiers who died in the first world war.

The council is expected to contribute £240,000 capital funding to the proposed scheme, which includes the restoration of park features and the revamp of the central pavilion to provide educational, training and cultural activities. Improvements to tennis courts and three football pitches and the restoration of gardens and pools



The park first opened in 1921

are also outlined as part of the War Memorial Park project, which received £2.8m from the Heritage Lottery Fund in April.

Durham regeneration schemes get axed

Plans to restore Auckland Castle Park in County Durham have been scrapped after One North East's budget was slashed by £47m.

Although the agency will prioritise £46m to provide immediate and direct support to businesses during the recession, the £10m scheme to regenerate Bishop Auckland town centre and the Auckland Castle Park restoration project can not be supported in the short term.

The funding bid for Auckland Castle Park included the development of a new visitor centre, exhibition space and education facilities.

National Park decision put back

The New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA) has given itself more time to come up with a draft plan for the future of the park, after it was inundated with replies to a public consultation.

The approval of the authority's National Park Plan has been extended to the end of October, to allow "adequate time for the draft to be revised in the light of the many comments received". Clive Chatters, chair of NFNPA, said the authority's priority would be to look at the large

number of "constructive and critical" comments that it has received during the public consultation.

"Given our commitment to listen to the views expressed, we have taken the time to go through the thousands of consultation responses carefully," he added. "It simply would not be possible to do this and revise and rewrite the draft plan in time for July."

When completed, the National Park Plan will be used to implement the future strategy for the park.



The consultation will outline future strategy

Attractions

Great North Museum opens

The Great North Museum: Hancock in Newcastle upon Tyne has opened its doors to the public following a £26m transformation.

The natural history museum, designed by Sir Terry Farrell, is located in the former Hancock Museum, which was closed three years ago to undergo the redevelopment.

The new attraction houses 3,500 items from collections from the original Hancock Museum, Newcastle University's Museum of Antiquities and the Shetton Museum.

The University's Hutton Gallery is also part of the Great North Museum but remains in its existing building.

The museum also includes a planetarium, a bio-wall displaying the diversity of life on Earth, a life-size rep-



Museum manager Steve McLean with T-Rex

lica T-Rex skeleton, Ancient Egyptian mummies and a large scale model of Hadrian's Wall as well as examples of Greek art.

Middlesbrough Wheel delayed

Plans to establish a new 40m (131.2ft) wheel attraction in the centre of Middlesbrough, north east England, have been delayed after it was revealed that a suitable wheel is not yet available.

World Tourist Attractions (WTA) is behind the proposals for the attraction, which will be situated in the town's Centre Square and will feature 30 glass-sided observation pods capable of accommodating five people each.

Middlesbrough Council approved planning permission for the scheme on 9 April, which will see the wheel



How the wheel would look on the site

remain in place for an initial six months at no cost to the council before a decision is made on whether to renew its stay for a longer period.

Cutty Sark to open next summer

Cutty Sark, the historic tea clipper situated in Greenwich, south London, is set to reopen in summer 2010, three years after it was ravaged by fire.

A £25m restoration project was already underway to protect the historic ship from corrosion and to make it more accessible to visitors.

The fire has increased the cost of the revamp by a further £10m.

The cost of reconstruction has been partly funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, which awarded the scheme a

£11.75m grant in June 2007. Once finished, the work will protect the vessel from corrosion and will also make it more accessible to visitors.

The restoration project will see the Cutty Sark suspended 3m (3.8ft) above its current position in order to enable visitors to walk underneath the ship and view its hull design.

There will also be a glass canopy installed, meeting the ship at the waterline and covering the dry dock, creating 1,000sq m of space for events.

Lancashire's Camelot theme park reopens

Camelot theme park in Charnock Richard, Lancashire, has reopened just two months after its owner, Prime Resorts, went into administration.

The park was acquired by The Story Group and has been leased to Knights Leisure, a newly-formed group led by the former chief executive of Prime Resorts, Roy Page.

Although The Story Group is still looking to enter into negotiations with Chorley Borough Council in a bid to revive plans for a residential mixed-use development on the site, it has agreed to lease the park to Knights Leisure, enabling Camelot to operate as a theme park until 9 September 2009.

Theme parks responding resiliently to recession

The annual Attractions Attendance Report has shown that theme parks are coping well with the downturn.

The report for 2008, compiled jointly by Economic Research Associates (ERA) and the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA), shows that 10 out of the world's top 15 theme parks recorded an increase in the number of visits – when compared to 2007 figures.

According to ERA's John Robinett, however, the growth in numbers could have been bigger, but for a fall in attendances during the fourth quarter. He also revealed that large destination parks were hit harder by the late fall in visitor numbers than smaller parks.



The ship was badly damaged in the fire

Public Sector

Scottish museum summit

Scotland's 60 museum leaders convened in Stirling last month to debate how best to address the challenges facing the sector.

The conference focused on how the nation's industrial and voluntary museums can be sustained and how funding and limited resources can be better distributed between national and local museums. Leading the convention, culture minister Michael Russell said: "This summit presents a real opportunity for new thinking about how we understand museums in Scotland, how we work together, and how best we can tell the story of this country."

"While we have the Scottish Government's Recognition Scheme - which allows the 33 collections recognised as being of national significance



The conference focused on best practice

to apply to a special funding stream - there remains an obvious divide between local and national provision of museum services."

Councils to end cotton wool culture

Council leaders across the UK have announced plans to introduce zip wires, tree houses and large climbing structures in playgrounds across the country in order to put adventure back into children's playtime.

Research from the Local Government Association (LGA) has revealed that councils are including an increasing amount of adventure equipment as part of a scheme to build or refurbish more than 3,500 playgrounds through 2011, which has been funded by a £235m funding package outlined in the government's Children's Plan.



Thousands of playgrounds will be upgraded

Local authorities are also introducing holiday play schemes, including BMX biking, surfing and circus skills, as part of efforts to end what the LGA has labelled a "cotton wool culture".

Welsh bi-lingual sports plan unveiled

The Sports Council for Wales (SCW) is establishing new bilingual drop-in sports centres throughout the country to encourage young people to take part in physical activity, while supporting a plan to boost the Welsh language.

The four-year scheme being launched in collaboration with Urdd Gobaith Cymru will see almost £140,000 being invested in 32 new drop in centres, 24 new community clubs, school holiday programmes and sports festivals in Cardiff, Ceredigion, Eryri and Rhondda

Cynon Taf, with plans to spread the scheme throughout Wales by 2013.

The venture will train and employ 300 Welsh-speaking sports leaders and 60 coaches.

SCW chair Philip Carling said: "We are passionate about sport and our rich heritage and language. It makes sense that we make sport as welcoming as possible to everyone in Wales. That's why we are making sure that there are plenty of opportunities for people to take part in bilingual sports sessions."

Planning extension for leisure developers

Leisure developers are now able to retain their planning permission from Westminster City Council (WCC) for up to five years in a move to help projects that are put on hold during the economic downturn.

The council, which originally allowed developers to keep their permission valid for up to three years, introduced the extension so applicants can avoid the lengthy process of resubmission as well as the risk of their projects being scrapped due to the long-term uncertainties in the economy.

Cllr Robert Davis, WCC deputy leader, said: "Our aim is to help as many developers as possible make these plans a reality."

Sport England seeks increased participation

Sport England has called for "everyone in sport" to do more to increase participation by people with learning difficulties.

Sport England chair, Richard Lewis, made the call as he announced a funding package worth £200,000 for this year's Special Olympics.

The event, which will be held in Leicester between 25 and 31 July, is open to children and adults with a learning disability, and thousands are expected to compete.

Lewis said: "The games offer a chance for more than 2,700 athletes of all ages to realise their potential and experience the thrill of competing in a major sporting event."



The scheme will run for four years

Property

Weston pier scheme back on track

Plans for the £34m redevelopment of the Grand Pier in Weston-super-Mare are back on track after the owners of the 104-year old attraction reached an agreement with North Somerset Council (NSC).

Pier owner Kerry Michael had warned that the project was at risk of being shelved after claiming that the council had "moved the goalposts" in a dispute over legal costs and the construction of a new bus lay-by, as well as the installation of a seafront traffic light system.

However, the Grand Pier is now expected to reopen as planned in summer 2010 after a series of negotiations between NSC and Michael resulted in an agreement that has ensured the scheme remains on track.



The newly-built pier is scheduled to open in summer 2010.

Michael said: "We have worked through the issues to reach a solution which is acceptable to all. Once the key decision makers were all together, we

very quickly reached an agreement and after that it was just a matter of putting the relevant professionals together to formalise the agreement.

Birmingham designs unveiled

Birmingham City Council (BCC) has unveiled its preferred design proposals for a new £1.5m public square, which is set to be created in the centre of the city's historic Jewellery Quarter.

Plans put forward by Birmingham-based architects Capita Lovejoy have been selected by the council after local residents were invited to comment on proposals from six shortlisted companies during April and May.

At the heart of the designs for the new 'Golden Square' is a series of 'exposed seams', pointing towards the traditional material sources used in the



The plans include a 'Golden Square'.

Jewellery Quarter, which is responsible for 40 per cent of all jewellery made in the UK each year. Green spaces, seating, fountains and lighting are also incorporated in the plans.



The stadium will hold 30,000 fans.

Bristol City in talks over stadium

A new supermarket development on the site of the Ashton Gate stadium in Bristol could help to fund Bristol City Football Club's (BCFC) new 30,000-seat venue planned for the outskirts of the city.

The club has confirmed that it is in talks with supermarket giant Tesco over the proposals, which are meant to ensure the Football League Championship outfit receives the maximum value for the site in order to finance the scheme.

It comes as BCFC group chief executive, Colin Sextstone, announced that the new stadium, which will be built on a 42-acre (17-hectare) site near the Long Ashton park and ride facility, will be prepared to form part of England's World Cup bid for 2018.

Two-year planning extension for developers

Leisure developers are now able to retain their planning permission from Westminster City Council for up to five years in a move to help projects that are put on hold during the downturn.

The council, which originally allowed developers to keep their permission valid for up to three years, has introduced the extension so applicants can avoid the lengthy process of resubmission, or the risk of its project being scrapped due to the long-term uncertainty. The extension will be supplied

at the council's discretion if a reasonable case is made.

Cllr Robert Davis, Westminster City Council's deputy leader, said: "As the largest planning authority in the country we receive more applications than any other borough and our aim is to help as many developers as possible make these plans a reality."

Applicants who have already submitted an application will also be considered for an extension provided they contact their case officer.

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Name: Mary Jones Received: 07 / 18
DOB: 06 / 08 / 56 Sex: Det
County: [REDACTED] Race:
Age at time of offence: 63 Height:
Weight: 106lb Eyes: GREY Hair: HT
Native County:
Prior Occupation:
Prison record:



EVIDENCE IDENTIFICATION

Date: _____ Time: _____ Case No: _____

Test For: SUBSTANTIAL PROBE FINGERPRINTS FINGERPRINTS BY POLICE OFFICER

Signature: _____

RIGHT HAND	LEFT HAND
1. Index Finger	1. Index Finger
2. Middle Finger	2. Middle Finger
3. Ring Finger	3. Ring Finger
4. Little Finger	4. Little Finger

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Is the recession threatening the future of sports clubs in the UK?

According to a new study by Deloitte for the CCPR, up to four per cent of community sports clubs – 6,000 in total – are facing closure in the next year as a result of the economy. Pete Hayman examines what the future holds for sports clubs in the UK

CCPR, the umbrella organisation for 290 national governing bodies and representative bodies for sport and recreation, has recently published new research examining the impact of the recession is having on community sports clubs in the UK.

Almost half of all the clubs that participated in the study have admitted that the situation is likely to get worse before it gets better, with the turbulent economic climate having a significant effect on membership numbers and revenue.

As a result, clubs are already looking to cut back investment in facilities, coaching and community schemes to offset increasing costs that are being driven up by the introduction of new government regulations and soaring energy bills.

But with the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games just three years away, is enough being done to ensure that clubs can weather the economic storm and to ensure that Britain can fulfil a promise to itself to become a world leader in sports?

The data shows that sports clubs are in trouble. CCPR has been pushing the government to do more for sports clubs through its Subs for Clubs campaign and by fighting off the endless increases in regulation which increase their costs.

This survey shows that, unless we act, thousands of local sports clubs could go under. That would be a tragic shame for both their members and their local communities.

Even those which survive the recession are telling us that they are going to have to make cutbacks. These sports clubs have to make ends meet and falls in subscriptions will be met with reductions in coaching, with investment in kit and facilities and in



BRIGID SIMMONDS

Chair
CCPR

community programmes. There can be no doubt that cuts will set us back.

The government also needs sports clubs to help introduce the five hour offer for sport in schools. They simply don't have the staff or the commitment from schools without involving local sports clubs in the scheme.

What we need now is a moratorium on any new regulations, laws and charges affecting sports clubs. We are already fighting off liquor licensing fees, drainage charges from multi-

million pound water companies, a development tax and music licence fees. Sport needs all the support it can get but, from the reception we receive in some government departments, you would think we were selling cigarettes or fatty foods, rather than sport!

We know that sports clubs are likely to go to the wall as a result of the recession. But what we don't want to do is to compound that with any new regulations which could push still more of them over the edge.

Sport – along with other sectors – is facing tough economic challenges, so we all need to be vigilant. But that doesn't mean we should be unduly pessimistic. Grassroots sport is in good shape and our latest participation survey has revealed that the number of people participating regularly is increasing.

So how do we deal with the challenges that lie ahead? Firstly, we need to stand tall and stand together. We will support governing bodies in their efforts to put clubs in a position to weather the challenges. That's not going to be an easy task, but having the readiness to adapt and the determination to find the 'value offer' for your sport or your club will stand our sector in good stead for the future.



RICHARD LEWIS

Chair
Sport England

For our part, we must make sure grassroots sport derives maximum value for money from all Sport England's investments. By monitoring, and sharing, the intelligence on what's working and what's not working, we can isolate the pressure points and help sports overcome issues. We also need to be brave and nimble enough to adjust our plans if evidence shows something isn't working. Our open funding rounds provide us with some flexibility to target investment at areas which may have been affected by the

economic downturn. Encouragingly, there has already been considerable interest in the first of our larger investment rounds, which will create a range of sporting opportunities for people in rural communities.

Sport can, and will, be an important part of the solution to this recession. Sport drives employment, it keeps people fit and healthy and it helps people to develop attributes such as leadership, team-work and determination that will help them and this country to emerge stronger from a difficult period.



With London 2012 now firmly on the horizon, plus a host of other major international sporting events to look forward to during the next decade, these are exciting times for sport in the UK. The real legacy of this golden decade would be Britain building on its growing status as a world leader in sport, and I want two million more people more active, including one million through sport, by 2012. To do this, a strong community sport infrastructure is crucial.

The recession is a challenge to all sectors but the government's commitment to sport is unwavering. Across Whitehall, government departments understand its value. Our £140m free swimming programme – backed by five



GERRY SUTCLIFFE

Sports minister

Department for Culture, Media and Sport

departments – shows we are working together. And the Budget included a new initiative to create 5,000 new jobs.

An unprecedented amount of public money has gone into community sport to ensure its growth and success, and sport has received nearly £6bn since 1997. We also run a range of initiatives, including a tax relief scheme of up to 80 per cent on business rates that 5,000 clubs are currently enjoying.

Now is not the time to be talking down sport. Of course some clubs are

going through tough times but we are doing all we can to support the grass-roots. The government continues to invest heavily in community sport and strongly encourage local authorities and businesses to do the same.

Almost £500m is going to sports governing bodies from now until 2013 to increase participation. With this and further investments, we'll see that legacy come alive – Britain becoming a world leading sporting nation with community clubs at its heart.

The recent CCPR survey, in which half of sports clubs say that the recession is having a negative effect, is alarming. If the trends that the survey identifies continue, sport at a local level will face problems.

All but a handful of sports clubs are run by volunteers and funded by the members and their activities. Almost 40 per cent of clubs have already experienced a downturn in membership renewals, and with nearly 30 per cent seeing a fall in new membership enquiries, the financial outlook is bleak.

Most local councils are reviewing their budgets and, for many, this will include a review of their cultural and sports activity, including the grant funding that they give to voluntary organisation such as sports



CHRISTINE NEYNDORFF

Director

Hertfordshire County Sports Partnership

clubs. Further cuts in the already limited support that councils provide may well lead to closures. The drop in participation that a quarter of clubs have already seen will weaken their argument for continued council support.

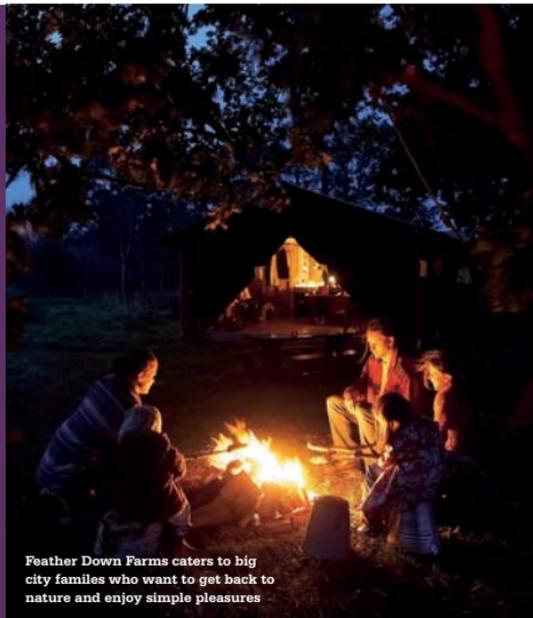
Nationally, central government funding for sport via Sport England is increasingly being directed towards the national governing bodies for sport. There is little indication that much, if any, of this funding will end up helping local clubs with basic costs. The day-to-day reality for a voluntary sports

club is a continuing struggle with soaring expenditure for facilities, energy and coaching. This is against a backdrop of increasing regulation and a heightened expectation on the part of funding agencies, local authorities and schools of the capacity of clubs to support national initiatives.

An increasing number of clubs are suggesting that talk of developing 'a world leading community sports system' is beginning to ring hollow. Our sports clubs need support – and they need it now.

LUITE MORAAL

Variously described as 'glamping' – glamorous camping – and the Boden of holidays, Feather Down Farms provides the opportunity for camping in salubrious tents on working farms. Kath Hudson speaks to Dutch-born Luite Moraal, the man behind the concept



Feather Down Farms caters to big city families who want to get back to nature and enjoy simple pleasures

How did you get into the leisure industry?

I started off in marketing and advertising at a small agency and in the early '80s I was scouted by the founder of Center Parcs, Piet Derksen. I initially worked in marketing and advertising there before becoming involved in other areas, including product development. Later, I became a corporate director and was involved in the management team taking the concept overseas. When I joined there were only four or five villages in Holland.

Where did you go from there?

At Center Parcs I learned about the leisure market in general and afterwards I spent some time working for Disney and was involved in all kinds of projects as a leisure entrepreneur before starting Feather Down Farms.

How did the idea of Feather Down Farms come about?

I was a director of a turnaround project for the Dutch National Trust, which is a big property owner with a lot of farms. The closure of farms was creating a real problem for the organisation because it was left having to maintain the landscape, so the chair asked me for ideas on how farms could diversify to keep their businesses going. My market research showed that a lot of people were looking for holiday experiences where less is more; there is also a growing need for responsibility for your actions and the desire to quit comfort and luxury in favour of a real experience. All of this triggered the idea of Feather Down Farms.

When was the first Feather Down Farm opened?

In Holland in 2004, and we started the first pilot in the UK in 2006 with Manor Farm in Hampshire. I love the UK and have always been impressed with the UK market.

How did you get farmers excited about the idea?

Because it's such a good concept! We address it on the website and we have various sources of finding farmers.

What are your near-term expansion plans?

We are expanding quite rapidly because a lot of people are telling me we should come to their country. We opened a few locations in France in 2008 and have two farms starting in the US in June and hope to add another two or three by the end of the year. Our first German farm should open at the end of June.

How would you describe the concept? Is it 'glamping'?

Partly it is, yes! In general we are trying to give a real experience. We target families in big cities, where the parents feel responsible for the education of their children and worry they have lost their connection with the earth. For example, many children are surprised when they find that milk is warm when it comes from cows because they only know it from the fridge.

Who designed the tents?

I'm afraid that would be me! All the comfort elements are there. To have a flush loo in a tent is really quite comfortable. But beyond that everything takes effort – making coffee takes three quarters of an hour. It's about experience and being different from home. I wanted the accommodation to feel like it's from a certain undefined era when life was still simple and good.

How involved can guests become with the farm?

There's always some farm life to experience, but it varies from farm to farm depending on how much the farmer wants to offer. There are usually small livestock and calves to feed, but it's not likely guests will be milking the cows. Also we have arable farms where they are not always harvesting. However, there are always some animals to interact with, such as chickens for guests to collect eggs.

Would a play area go against the concept?

A swing from an apple tree is fine, but no fully equipped playgrounds. That's what city people are trying to get away from.



Tents feature wood-fired stoves (above) and comfy beds (below left); guests can interact with farm animals (below)



THE CONCEPT

Feather Down Farm tents sleep six, with a master bedroom, bunk bedroom, canopy bed and toilet.

Spacious and atmospheric, the tents have a flushable toilet, cold running water and a coal or wood-fired stove for cooking and to provide heat. Light is provided by oil lamps and candles, there's no electricity in the tent and for a hot shower you need to go to the shower block. Farm shops sell local produce and coffee beans which can be ground on the tent grinder. Unlike the usual camping experience

when you have to bring loads of kit, the tents are fully equipped, allowing people to come on holiday with just clothes and wellies.

The aim of the experience is to slow people down, reconnect them with nature and allow simple pleasures, such as reading aloud with candlelight, preparing meals on stoves and chatting around fires. For farmers, Feather Down Farms provides a much needed extra income stream and means they can continue maintaining the landscape.

There are 21 farms across the UK, from Cornwall to Scotland and the Lake District to Suffolk. In Holland, where the company is known as Boerenbed, there are 12 farms. France has five farms under the name Un Lit au Pré. Three sites were piloted in the US in May, and more are expected to launch in 2010.

Prices vary according to season, length of stay and even the country, but at £795 for a peak week in England, the experience is comparable to paying for a holiday cottage.



Participating farms earn extra income, allowing them to maintain the landscape

GOING 'GLAMPING'

A relatively recent trend, 'glamping', or glamorous camping, appeals to those who wouldn't usually dream of setting foot inside a tent, or who have grown out of camping. 'Glampsites' offer plush tents with soft beds, running water and warmth, providing guests with an outdoor camping experience that boasts many of the comforts of a holiday cottage.

At the high end, hot tubs, massages and caterers are on offer, and holidays cost the same as an expensive hotel. Slightly cheaper are stays in tipis and yurts – spacious, sturdy tents popularised by Native Americans and Central Asian nomads respectively. Sites offering tipi or yurt accommodation generally advocate holidays with low carbon footprints, and getting

back to nature by cooking on open fires. The tents are often furnished.

Reasonably priced and one step up from camping is the camping pod. Timber-built (from locally-sourced wood, of course, because glamping is very green), with lockable patio doors and insulated with sheep's wool, pods mean you can go camping without a tent and you won't get wet.

Do people use the farm as a base to explore the area or do they spend most of their time on the farms?

Eighty per cent of our business is from short breaks, and these holidaymakers tend to stay in and around the farm. They arrive on Friday night and settle in, lighting the candles and the stove. The tent is really great to experience.

Some people do make it their main summer holiday, however. It's really a domestic product, although we are starting to see some people from the UK and Holland going to France.

What other activities are on offer besides interaction with animals and the experience of the tent?

Most farmers join Feather Down to broaden their income, so it's up to them what they offer. Some farms have an offer with smoke barrels to make stews over an open fire, as well as wood-fired oven dinners.

Do the campers interact?

Yes, without having a *Hi-de-Hi!* Atmosphere. There are no parties or bingo nights, but most farms have a kind of communal bread oven supper or lunch once a week, where guests would have a glass of wine or cider together.

How do you ensure standards are maintained?

We have regular meetings and agreed and shared minimum performance levels. We also have a sophisticated guest enquiry system and have lots of feedback from customers.

How quickly can a farm become operational from the first enquiry?

We can turn it around within weeks. It's my investment, there's no investment from farmer unless he has to make changes on site.



How many are you hoping to open?

We aim for national coverage, focussing on the popular tourist destinations. So far it's only a small scale concept. In the UK, London is the main target area and we have about 20 so far.

How many farms are there in total?

40 or 50.

What's been the biggest challenge?

Getting the finances in place!

Was that made harder by the current climate?

Of course, although I had the finances arranged before the downturn and the credit crunch isn't evident in our bookings.

What has been the highlight of your career?

Oh, for sure it's Feather Down. It's been enjoyable and rewarding, and nice to work with farmers.

What are your plans for the next 12 months?

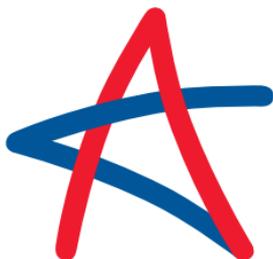
Continue as we do. We're still quite young and in the building up phase. I want to carry on making all those countries work nicely and make sure the farms offer a great experience. Then it will be extremely happy.

How about longer term?

I have no fixed idea. We'll continue to expand in Germany, the US and France, and we may add one or two more countries, but that's not an objective as such. I do have a strategy, but there's not a big business plan behind it – people approach us and that's how it mostly works.

What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?

Be daring. Believe in yourself. ●



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project: novi spa hotels & resort

design: studio ante murales

location: novi vinodolski, croatia

€35m spa opens at Croatian resort

A new €25m (US\$35.2m, £21.83m) spa and wellness concept has opened at the Novi Spa Hotels & Resort property in Novi Vinodolski, Croatia.

The spa has wall-to-ceiling windows throughout, offering views over the Adriatic Sea to the Island of Krk and includes 22 treatment rooms and six spa suites.

Designed by the architect Ante Nikša Bilic from Studio Ante Murales in Zagreb, Croatia, the concept of the spa focuses on traditional Oriental philosophies combined with a more traditionally Western, holistic approach.

Facilities include a 14 saunas, including an outdoor Finnish sauna, a laconium, three steambaths, a salt peeling bath and a Kneipp area. There is also a whirlpool with heated seawater and indoor and outdoor thalasso swimming pools.



project: the serai

design: raison d'etre / jaisal and anjali singh

location: jaisalmer, rajasthan

Rajasthan tent spa in the works

Spa development and management consultancy Raison d'Etire is to work in partnership with Sujan Luxury Hotels to create a tented spa for The Serai camp in Rajasthan.

Opening later this year, The Serai will feature 21 canvas tents for accommodation, including one with a private spa area, swimming pool and lounge. Four treatment tents will be set apart from the main camp, each with a welcome area, changing area and treatment space.

Locally-sourced stone and canvas are being used throughout the spa. A rooftop sky lounge will also be located on site.

project: emerald bay spa

design: pueblo bonito resorts

location: mazatlan, mexico

Emerald Bay Spa launches in Mexico

A 16,500sq ft (1,532sq m) free-standing spa has opened at the Pueblo Bonito Emerald Bay resort in Mazatlan, Mexico. The site is one of seven in the group's portfolio.

The Emerald Bay Spa was designed by a Pueblo Bonito Resorts team, and has features including a chromotherapy room, reflexology paths, 11 treatment rooms, and wet areas with jacuzzis and aromatherapy showers. The design was inspired by Mazatlan's early beauty and features neoclassical flourishes and warm colours.



project: jw marriott hotel and spa

design: hirsch bedner associates

location: shenzhen, china

JW Marriott Shenzhen debuts

The JW Marriott hotel and spa in Shenzhen, China has launched. Designed by hospitality consultancy Hirsch Bedner Associates (HBA), the property is located in the city's new business district of Futian and was adapted from an existing office block and features a signature Quan Spa.

The hotel's design features sleek lines and geometrical symmetries. A two-story atrium lobby is wrapped with silver-leaf metal screens and lit by 18 giant floor lanterns; the space also features a reflective pond and glass feature wall.

The new property's signature Quan spa has been designed around the concept of white water, with creative bubbles and flowing water effects.



project: the vine hotel

design: ricardo bofill/nini andrade silva

location: madeira, portugal

New €1m vinotherapy-based spa

A vinotherapy-based spa has opened at The Vine Hotel on the island of Madeira, Portugal. Located above the cobbled old quarters of the city of Funchal, The Hotel Vine has 57 hotel bedrooms as well as a large spa.

The €1m (£889,690, US\$1.25m) spa features TheraVine-branded vinotherapy treatments and products. Additional wellness facilities include a number of treatment rooms, a panoramic rooftop swimming pool and a large whirlpool.

A member of the Design Hotels network, The Vine's design aesthetic has been themed around the idea of good wine and grapes and has used a bold colour palette. Masterminded by Catalanian architect Ricardo Bofill, interiors have been created by Funchal-born designer Nini Andrade Silva.



project: andreas resort and spa

design: schletterer wellness & spa design

location: italy

Schletterer-designed spa launches

The Andreas resort and spa has opened in northern Italy within the Passeiro Valley. Schletterer Wellness & Spa Design were responsible for the design of areas including the spa and gym as well as the hotel's lobby and restaurants.

Wood and natural stone is used throughout the hotel, as well as a large amount of natural light and this is followed through into the design of the 53,819sq ft (5,000sq m) spa, which combines Alpine elements with a Mediterranean influence.

Spa facilities include a herbal bath, reflexology foot baths, whirlpools with underwater sound, a Kneipp walk, a panoramic sauna and a heated outdoor pool.

team effort

Renowned venue designer Shaun Clarkson has worked with music industry legend Vince Power for over a decade. Kath Hudson speaks to Clarkson about his career, and asks Power about the partnership



shaun clarkson

What do you enjoy about being a designer?

I really enjoy creating fantasy worlds and watching people's reactions to something I've created. It's very satisfying to see people having an amazing time in an environment you've created.

How did you learn how to design venues?

It was a big learning curve, but I learnt the operational points with my own bar, the William IV in Hoxton. That's been great in showing me how to design a venue efficiently and to understand the workings behind the bar.

What was your big break?

Working with Oliver Peyton. Through him I met Vince Power about 15 years ago, and he adopted me as his designer. Going to see him was an intimidating experience in those days. He had a headmaster's button on his office instructing you to "wait" or "go away", and he sat you in a 1950s dentists chair and was very business-like.

What's it like working with Vince?

He gives you huge amounts of freedom and completely trusts you, but if you fuck up he gives you a hard time! Generally, though, he's amazing to work with and I'm proud of what we've created together.

Where do you get your inspiration from?

Anything from a decorated pencil to the Taj Mahal! I've always got a camera with me. A lot of my influences come from foreign travel: I like foreign retro and contemporary ethnic. I shop a lot for furniture and love trawling through antique shops.

What do you have to take into consideration when designing a venue?

You have to know your market. Lighting is everything – people hate down lighters. Localised or shaded lighting is sexy, and we're selling sex. When they're out, people want to look sexy, feel sexy and have sex! Whether it's a grungey club or a gay bar it's all about that.

How do you approach the design of a venue?

In a grungey music venue you don't want to frighten people off and you don't particularly want them to remember the design. The biggest buzz is to do the glamorous stuff: nightclubs offer great scope and are very exciting.

Which venue are you most proud of?

Le Pigalle (a 1940s-inspired supper club in London's West End). It had a £2m budget and has an amazing atmosphere. It ticks all the boxes. I've seen people like Marianne Faithfull and Eartha Kitt perform there.

What are you working on at the moment?

The gay market is still buoyant: we're doing a gay diner in Soho for Gaygar, and Pendulum, a gay bar for Vince Power. I'm also working on a recession-themed bar for Vince, called LiquidNATION, with



Carrington House opened in November

blankets on the sofas and stuff! It's anti-design, he keeps sending my designs back saying it's overdesigned. We're also designing a chain of delis and the Farmers' Market at St Pancras station.

What are your personal projects in Norfolk?

We've cornered the market for cool people who want to party. Basically they are high-end fantasy houses which you can hire for the weekend.

It's a very urban crowd we cater for: 75 per cent London and 20 per cent other big cities. They come mainly for birthday parties for 30, 40, 50 or 60-year-olds, or here weekends for older brides.

Cliff Barns (opened November 2004) is the ultimate party house, Carrington House opened last November and now we're working on an American-style motel. It will be a two-storey, 20-room motel around a courtyard with a covered pool, so you can have pool parties all year round. There will be a diner and communal spaces and a big function room, which will be able to hold about 120 people for weddings.

Shaun Clarkson & Vince Power

PROJECTS

Bartok, London (1994)

A cocktail and tapas club with a theatrical atmosphere. Drapes, subdued lighting, chandeliers and maroon and red furnishings were used.

The Palace, Luton (1994)

This is Las Vegas in Luton, creating the glam fantasy world of Caesar's Palace in a new build.

Cube, London (1998)

The architecture of the building, a 1960s bank, was the inspiration. The design followed the contours and used muted colours.

Rex, London (1999)

Plush velvets, crystal chandeliers, comfortable sofas and leather armchairs create a decadent 1930s atmosphere, influenced by art nouveau.

Sugar, Cardiff (2004)

A multi-storey disco with different themes on different floors getting more hardcore the higher they go: a video basement, lounge floor and rave floor.

Odette's, London (2006)

Influenced by Californian restaurants; yellows, whites and pale greys were used to create the feeling of sunshine.

The Moose, London (2006)

A skiing lodge-themed venue, with a basement bar, club and cocktail

bar. It features cream coloured timber, cow hide seats (pictured) and Nordic murals.

The Pigalle Club, London (2006)

1940s glamour is recreated with aged wood panelling and twinkling mirrors. Diners are entertained by a houseband and waited on by staff in 1940s uniforms.

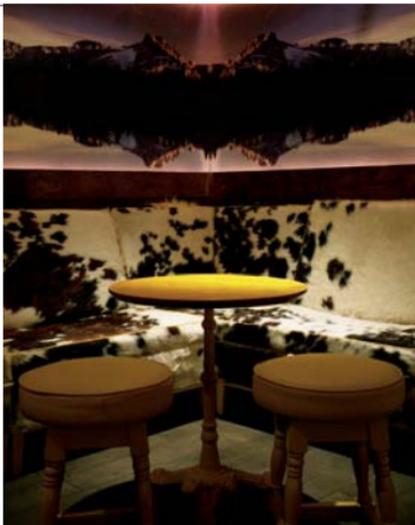
Camel Victoria, London (2008)

A twist on the gentlemen's club, with turquoise stripe wallpaper and orange Chesterfields.

Black Bull, London (2009)

A comfortable, understated members bar for people visit before the match.

By Robyn Sampson



vince power

How important is the design of a venue?

The majority of the overall design and look is paramount to the success of the venue/project.

You've been working with Shaun for around 15 years, how did you first come across him?

I met Shaun one night in a sleazy bar in Soho and we have been colleagues and friends ever since.

What did you like about his designs? What would you say is his trademark?

When it comes to design Shaun has a sense of freedom about this taste. He is very eclectic and will try anything. Shaun has the courage to go where other designers wouldn't dare.

How do you work together? Do you give him a free rein?

I do. Shaun is an artist. Sometimes when

you tamper too much with an artists' work, you spoil it. That's how I feel with Shaun. So yes, you could say he does have pretty much a free rein.

What is your favourite venue Shaun has created for you and why?

I would have to say The Pigalle Club. It took a very long time to do and it's styled as a 1940 speakeasy/supperclub.

Has he ever done anything you have insisted on changing?

No! It's actually the opposite. I've used other designers on some venues which haven't been as successful, and have drafted in Shaun to change it.

Tell me about the concept for LiquidNATION.

The bar is going to reflect the sign of the time. It's going to be a fun bar, relaxed and no pretence, stripped back with an undesigned feel and look to it, where students can come and listen to live music – the best bands – and buy non-branded cocktails, wines and beers, all at great value.





New designs for Southend Leisure & Tennis Centre (above) and Plymouth Life Centre (below)

ARCHIAL ARCHITECTS

Director Paul Weston talks to Andrea Jezovitz about his firm's designs for two major upcoming projects, the £46.5m Plymouth Life Centre and Southend Leisure & Tennis Centre's new £10m dive pool.



What was your brief for the Plymouth Life Centre?

To create a major regional facility that would be flexible to cater for the needs of the local community and drive up participation in sport and physical activity, as well as to support the needs of high-level athletes like Plymouth diver Tom Daley.

It's an extensive brief that includes a 25m by 15.5m diving pool to FINA standards with a dry dive area; a 50m 10-lane pool with two movable floors and booms; leisure water with features and two flumes; a climbing zone with climbing wall, bouldering and high level aerial experience; an eight-lane indoor bowls centre; a 12-court multi-use sports hall; a 150-station fitness gym; ancillary studios, dance/activity and squash; and a cafe/foyer that opens into the adjoining park.

What stage are you at with the project?

We're completing the tender documents for issue to the short-listed design and build contractors and are awaiting detailed planning consent. It's a tight timescale but the centre is still on track to open in late 2011.

How will the design fit into Plymouth's regeneration plans?

Part of the Council's vision for 2020 is for Plymouth to be "one of Europe's finest, most vibrant waterfront cities, where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone". The Life Centre will be located to the north of Central Park – a green 'lung' running south towards the city centre – and is crucial to its regeneration, acting as a key focal point which will attract more visitors and helping to ensure the city remains competitive and well-placed to attract further investment in the future. An area action plan and masterplan have been developed for Central Park, and the Life Centre will be the first major sign of the regeneration of the area.

What was the inspiration behind your design?

It's come from the wide range of stakeholders and Plymouth residents who are eagerly anticipating this facility. We want to make a difference in their lives and in the community, and the exciting form of the building comes from the activities inside. This is a major project for Plymouth City Council and one of the region's biggest ever investments in leisure facilities. It will become one of the country's leading centres of aquatic excellence. Our aim was to create a building which would be a focus of community pride as well as a visual gateway to the park.

What design features will help the building become a community hub?

It's a very large, striking and robust building, and will be visible from some distance away. We've accentuated the climbing zone and the diving pool so that they'll be visible from the primary approaches to the centre. These will add to the dramatic effect of the building, as will the large scale entrance portico drawing in visitors from all sides. Visitors will be able to see various facilities within the centre, and it will pull together all members of the community and users from the region – acting as a sport, leisure and social hub.

What was the biggest challenge of the design?

The biggest challenge has been designing all the accommodation into the site boundaries and ensuring that the facility will also function effectively when football matches take place at Plymouth Argyle. It's visible on all sides, so the quality of materials must be both robust and consistent.

What's your favourite part of the design?

It has to be the dive pool where Tom Daley will train to be our next gold medalist. It's the focus of the pool hall, and it's in the most prominent location on site.

The Plymouth Life Centre development is the city's largest ever investment in leisure facilities



PROJECT ONE

PLYMOUTH LIFE CENTRE

A £46.5m sport and leisure scheme to open in Plymouth's Central Park in late 2011. The development, aimed at becoming one of the country's leading centres of aquatic excellence, is the city's biggest ever investment in leisure facilities.

Aside from a 25m by 15.5m diving pool built to FINA standards with a dry dive area and a 50m 10 lane pool, the facility will include climbing facilities, an indoor bowls centre, a multi-use sports hall, a 150-station gym, dance and activity studios, and a café.

What was your brief for Southend Leisure and Tennis Centre?

The scheme consists of a dive pool with 3m, 5m, 7.5m and 10m diving boards and movable floor together with dry dive facilities. There's also an eight-lane, 25m competition pool, and changing accommodation. This major extension then links to the existing leisure centre. It's been selected as a pre-games training camp for the London 2012 Olympics.

What was the inspiration behind that design?

We've developed the design from a concept by Saville Jones which expresses the form and function of the different pool areas. The curved roof profile provides a strong landmark viewed across the adjoining athletic track.

What challenges did you face with this design?

Again, this is a very restricted site and the design has had to ensure that the existing centre can function without interruption throughout construction. We've liaised closely with our client officers from the culture division at Southend on Sea Borough

PROJECT TWO

SOUTHEND LEISURE AND TENNIS CENTRE

Archial has designed a £10m 25-metre dive centre and eight-lane swimming pool to open as part of this existing site in 2010. The diving facilities will include 3m, 5m, 7.5m and 10m diving platforms, each 3m wide to allow for synchronised diving, and the pool will feature a moveable floor and water agitation and air cushion system. The design also includes a leisure pool with water features and a dry diving area with a harness and trampolines.

The facilities have been selected as a pre-games training camp for the London 2012 Olympics.

Council and Creating Leisure, which manages the Southend Leisure and Tennis Centre on behalf of the Authority.

Do you design your projects with environmental sustainability in mind?

We undertake bespoke BREEAM assessments on all our sport and leisure projects, using such elements as biomass fuel systems, rainwater harvesting and CHP plant. BREEAM Very Good standard has now become the norm for our public sector clients, and we're exploring ways we can develop this further.

What other projects are you working on in the leisure sector?

We're busy on a wide range of sport and leisure projects. Apart from Plymouth and Southend, we have two new pools under construction at Nottingham and Barr Hill, plus a feasibility study for a major project at Perth and refurbishment projects at Hadleigh, University of Essex and Milton Keynes. These complement our recently completed schemes at Waendel Leisure Centre in Wellingborough and Riverside Pool in Norwich. ●

PHILIP KNATCHBULL



Curzon Artificial Eye – the UK's only integrated film distributor and cinema operator – has signed an exclusive deal with HMV that aims to bring cinema back to our town centres. The company's CEO talks to Rhianon Howells about his vision



Growing up in a small town in the 1970s and 80s, my local cinema was a magical place: everything from the cramped foyer to the scratchy, pull-down seats to the interval ice creams (a Strawberry Mivvy or perhaps a Cornetto) smacked of pure, unadulterated pleasure. Situated on the high street rather than in a shopping mall or an out-of-town development, it loomed large in both the fabric of the town and the consciousness of its inhabitants in a way that modern multiplexes – for all their large screens, state-of-the-art sound systems and extra leg-room – do not.

Now, following a recent deal between the niche film distributor and cinema operator, Curzon Artificial Eye (Curzon AE), and leading music/film retailer HMV, the cinema could soon become a feature of our high streets once again – without the scratchy seats and with all the advantages modern technology can offer.

In a 50-50 joint venture, the two companies plan to launch a new chain of in-store, digital cinemas with 3D capability, under the brand name HMV Curzon. The concept is set to be trialled in HMV Wimbledon from this September, with 200 seats across three screens; if successful, it could be rolled out to up to 20 HMV stores nationwide, and possibly also to Waterstone's bookshops, which are also owned by the HMV Group.

"Mainstream operators build five-, 10- or 15-screen boxes as a centre of a development," explains Philip Knatchbull, the CEO of Curzon AE, which currently operates nine screens across five cinemas in the London area. "What we're doing, in a reversal of policy from 20 years ago, is taking cinemas back to the high street by putting them in high-street stores. We believe councils, and people generally, want the high street to be a more socially engaging space and we can make that happen."

FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTABLE

When Knatchbull's speaking about the film business, a real passion shines through. His father was peer of the realm Lord Brabourne, who, under the name John Brabourne, was a successful film producer, working on classics like *Romeo and Juliet* (1968), *Murder on the Orient Express* and *A Passage to India*. Growing up in the industry, Knatchbull fell in love with it.





Curzon Artificial Eye has five cinemas, including sites in Soho (pictured above and on opposite page) and Mayfair (opposite page, bottom left).

After graduating from Kent University and the London International Film School, he set up Front Page Films, which he ran until 1994, with credits as producer on a number of features. In 1989, he also became a founder shareholder and chairman of Showcase Cinemas, opening 10 screens across London, before moving away from the industry into private equity. It was his desire to get back into the industry he loved that led to the formation of Curzon AE in 2006. "I wanted to combine my film knowledge with my financing knowledge, and I knew you could only enter this industry in one of two ways: from a position of strength, as a market leader, or as a niche player, where you could be more flexible and adaptable."

After an abortive attempt at bidding for the Odeon group (which eventually went to Guy Hands), Knatchbull started looking at opportunities within film distribution, and quickly identified Artificial Eye – a distributor of art-house and foreign-language films, with a 350-strong film library – as a leading player in an under-exploited sector. The company also owned two cinemas in London, The Chelsea Cinema and The Renoir in Camden. But knowing that the independent film sector was finding it increasingly difficult to access cinemas, Knatchbull continued to shop around for other sites too.

Founded in Mayfair in 1934, Curzon Cinemas had opened its second site in Soho in 1999. In 2006, its owner Roger Wingate signed a deal with Knatchbull to merge the company with Artificial Eye, as well as a third company, Showcase

Cinemas (unrelated to the National Amusements-run chain of the same name), which owned the Richmond Filmhouse. All five cinemas and the film distribution arm were combined

under a single umbrella: Curzon Artificial Eye, jointly owned by Wingate's Act Entertainment and Knatchbull Communications Group, a private equity house controlled by Knatchbull.

A NEW-STYLE CINEMA

Under the new umbrella, both Curzon Cinemas and Artificial Eye have remained focused on art-house and foreign-language films. While this market is currently very small and London-centric, it's underexploited, says Knatchbull, and he believes there's an even wider potential market for less niche independent films.

It's with a view to tapping into this slightly more mainstream market, without diluting its existing brands, that Curzon AE has launched a second film distribution arm – Chelsea Films – and entered into the deal with HMV. But it was the arrival of new technology that actually made the HMV partnership possible, as Knatchbull explains. "With digital technology, we identified early on an opportunity to build a new-style cinema using a modular, scaleable approach, which until now wouldn't have been possible – the idea of building a cinema in a retail store would have been unthinkable three years ago.

"But with digital cinemas, you don't need a projection box, you don't need a box office... you just need a digital projector and a high-quality sound system and screen and seats. We

Vue to open new 3D sites

The Vue cinema group, which already boasts 641 screens across 66 sites in the UK, has announced plans to open around 10 more sites over the next two to three years, including two state-of-the-art, all-digital cinemas with extensive 3D capability.

The first site will be located in the Westfield shopping centre in Shepherd's Bush, west London. The cinema will have 3,000 seats across 14 digital screens, at least seven of which will have 3D capability.

In addition, three of the screens will offer leather seats, and be served by a separate box office and VIP foyer and bar, with valet parking also on offer. While Vue has been offering 'premier screens' for some years, the Westfield site "takes the concept to a whole new level," says Vue CEO Tim Richards, who confirms that the company is having a "dramatically good year" despite the economic downturn.

The site is scheduled to open in December. A second, similar development is also planned for Stratford, to open in 2011.



Vue CEO Tim Richards

According to Richards, digital 3D film is one of the most exciting recent developments in the sector. "It's a perfect immersive experience," he says. "Every major producer and director in Hollywood has a 3D project right now, from Steven Spielberg and Peter Jackson who have teamed up to do three Tintin movies to James Cameron,

who'll be releasing what could be the biggest movie of all time – Avatar – in December."

3D has numerous other applications, says Richards. In April, in a European first, Vue successfully tested the first live 3D satellite transmission of a live music event, when it beamed an hour-long concert by pop band Keane to its Vue West End cinema. "It was an important milestone, as it successfully demonstrated that the technology's there to do concerts, sporting events, comedy and opera, all in 3D."

Another area with huge potential is gaming, Richards adds. "We've been trialling that for around two years, and we're trying to get the software companies to start creating specific games for the big screen – and again that could be in 3D. The problem right now is that the technology limits it to a small number of characters, but games companies say it's possible to have up to 100 recognisable characters on screen at once, and that's the goal – 100 people chasing and shooting each other and blowing each other up!"

already knew a lot about HMV because our distribution company sells a vast number of DVDs through their stores; we knew they were developing their stores with their 'Next Generation' rollout, and we knew they'd likely want to diversify given the potential problems with the CD and DVD market [due to competition from downloads] over the next few years. So we approached them with the idea, and they rapidly understood and embraced it."

The pilot site is set to open later this year on the under-utilised second floor of HMV's Wimbledon store. Wimbledon, says Knatchbull, ticked all the right boxes in terms of both the space and the demographic profile, which reflects that of existing Curzon customers. The site will initially offer a similar programme to that of other Curzon cinemas with a view to diversifying later on. "It may take time to get the major distributors, such as the Hollywood studios, on side," explains Knatchbull, "but I think once we prove the concept we can move more into the mainstream, which will facilitate the rollout across the country."

In line with other Curzon Cinemas, HMV Curzon will also include a small café and a foyer area that will be integrated into the store; tickets will be bought online or from HMV tills. "We're trying to create a space where people can sit down and join in and talk about whatever's going on, rather than just being a widget that goes in, pays £10, gets popcorn and disappears. We want to engage more with our audience."

One obvious difference between traditional Curzon Cinemas and the new sites will be the opening hours, says Knatchbull. "Cinemas typically don't open until one or two pm, and most of

their business is after six o'clock, whereas the stores open at nine or 10 in the morning. So that, along with the digital technology, gives us the opportunity to try different things, such as education or live music or gaming competitions. And we can also do simultaneous live broadcasts across multiple screens.

"For instance, if Will Smith was releasing a new film or album, we could do a simultaneous live link with him to help push his CDs or DVDs. So it's a good marketing tool as well."

To accommodate the much wider variation in opening hours and programming, the company also plans to experiment with active pricing, although Knatchbull says it's too early to say what the different tiers might be.

HOME AND AWAY

As the only company in the UK both to distribute films and operate cinemas, Curzon AE has a distinct competitive advantage, says Knatchbull. "Having a fully integrated company, with everything from cinemas at one end to downloads at the other, puts us in a unique position, because it allows us to take chances in an ever-changing marketplace."

An example of this experimentation is a partnership with television broadcaster BSkyB, whereby Artificial Eye films are released simultaneously on the pay-per-view Sky Box Office, and at Curzon Cinemas, with the same price (£10) charged for a cinema ticket or to view the film at home. Rather than seeing home cinema – be it pay-per-view, DVD or downloads – as a threat to cinema-going, Knatchbull sees the potential, with

Theatre broadcasts for City Screen

I think one of the key trends for the future will be that exhibitors increasingly concentrate on areas that differentiate them from their competitors

Independent film exhibitor City Screen, which has 46 screens across 18 sites in the UK, has become the first cinema operator to broadcast live theatre on the big screen.

In an exclusive tie-up with the National Theatre on 25 June, the company beamed a production of Racine's *Phèdre*, starring Helen Mirren, from the theatre on London's South Bank, via satellite transmission, to all 18 of its sites, as well as to other cinemas it's working in partnership with. The event is the first in a planned series of four, with a second play broadcast set for later this year and two more scheduled for 2010.

"I hope this will be the start of a long-term partnership that will make theatre more accessible to those who

can't or don't have the inclination to come to London," says managing director Lyn Goleby.

The National Theatre tie-up builds on City Screen's existing partnerships with the Metropolitan Opera in New York, which sees up to 10 performances a year transmitted live to cinemas in the UK, as well as the Royal Opera House in London.

"I think one of the key trends for the future will be that exhibitors increasingly concentrate areas that differentiate them from their competitors," says Goleby, adding that City Screen's daytime programming is another of its key differentiators. "We offer autism-friendly screenings, and have education officers in several cinemas who work with schools



City Screen managing director Lyn Goleby

and young people locally."

With admissions "hugely up" across the group, Goleby confirms expansion is on the cards, with five projects at various planning stages. The group has also invested just under £500,000 in refurbishing its Ritzy Picturehouse in Brixton, with a luxury screen, an area for live comedy and music and a new bar/restaurant.

proper management, for the two to feed off each other.

"We're trying to pioneer the idea of home cinema and public cinema as being complementary," he says. "I passionately believe that people will always want to leave their home to go to the cinema, and the evidence so far suggests that [the BSKYB partnership] is increasing cinema admissions, because of the awareness of the films created by Sky's huge marketing platform. We as a small distributor cannot compete with the Hollywood studios for marketing, and Sky has 1.5 million customers, so that's a fantastic opportunity for independent cinema.

"Then again, the reason we're able to do this is that we're a small, fully integrated cinema owner and distributor, so we can take these risks whereas some people really can't."

In general, Knatchbull believes trying to fight increasing consumer demand for controlling how and when they view films is like swimming against the tide – but he doesn't necessarily see this as a bad thing. "At the moment, there are four months between a film being released in a cinema and it being available on DVD, and there's huge pressure from customers to reduce that window – and, with piracy on our backs, I think we'll reach a point in the future when most new films will be simultaneously available across all platforms, from cinemas to DVDs to downloads. But I don't see that as the death of cinema at all.

"I don't think there's anything wrong with watching a film on my mobile phone on the train for one price, and then in the evening paying another price to go out with my girlfriend to see a film on a huge screen with a great sound system for that

shared emotional experience. I don't think the two are mutually exclusive and I think it's perfectly believable that people will want both experiences at different times."

Knatchbull does not expect the recession to negatively affect business at all. "The film business generally and cinemas specifically are very recession-resistant, and in fact cinema admissions have gone up in previous recessions. So for us it's actually an opportunity, because on one hand we have a strong business, and on the other hand, commercial property prices are under enormous pressure, which makes our current growth strategy even more likely to be worthwhile."

The only possible impact, he says, may result from the fact that funding to make films has temporarily dried up, which could have a knock-on effect on admissions further down the line if the quality of the products deteriorate as a result.

COMING SOON

If the Wimbledon site is meeting targets after three months, the plan is to open another pilot outside London, possibly Manchester or Glasgow, as a prelude to a national rollout. In addition, Curzon AE has identified a number of sites outside London for standalone Curzon Cinemas that will be entirely digital and with 3D capability, and is also looking to purchase an additional film catalogue and further build its online presence – but for now Knatchbull is focused on making HMV Curzon a success. If the strategy pays off, a new-style cinema could be coming soon to a high street near you. ●

consumer caution

As the country responds to vastly changed economic conditions, latest research from Mintel reveals an interesting and enlightening picture of how consumers are reacting – and more importantly, adjusting their behaviour. The recently published 'British Lifestyles', Mintel's flagship research report, has revealed how fear of the recession is driving consumer behaviour more than an actual change in circumstances. The research reveals more than two in five adults now claim to have been personally impacted by the recession. Moreover, another 39 per cent know someone who has been affected. Clearly, the effects of the current downturn are already widespread.

SCALING BACK

Contrary to the belief that lack of spending is the full result of lack of funds, the research finds around a third of adults (30 per cent) in Britain admitting they have cut back on spending mainly through fear

A new Mintel report shows that it's recession fears, not lack of funds, that currently has consumers curbing their spending. Sian Brenchley reports



of what may happen to their personal financial situation. What's more, while less than half of adults (43 per cent) claim to have been personally affected by the recession, as many as three quarters (71 per cent) of consumers have cut down on spending as a result of the economic situation. Only 13 per cent said they didn't know anyone who'd been affected.

Although most consumers are worried about their own personal situation, more are worried about the state of the economy as a whole. Around seventy per cent of consumers in Britain are concerned about the state of the economy, compared with 59 per cent who are concerned about their own personal financial situation. Interestingly, even fewer (37

per cent) are worried about their job or employment prospects. However, it's important to remember that many consumers are cutting back not because they have to, but because it's seen as the right thing to do. Nobody wants to be seen as being too flash in a troubled economy. Many consumers are unsure when recovery will come, and without this confidence, they're unlikely to start making long-term plans again.

The British Lifestyles research also indicates fears over Britain's troubled economy are eclipsing major personal concerns such as health and crime. When asked about key concerns, the economy ranked as the nation's number one issue, at 71 per cent. Meanwhile, other personal concerns such as crime and health are causing considerably less worry. Indeed, today less than half of the nation is worried about crime (46 per cent) and the state of their health (43 per cent), compared to a year ago when they ranked as the top consumer concerns.

BIG TICKET ITEMS

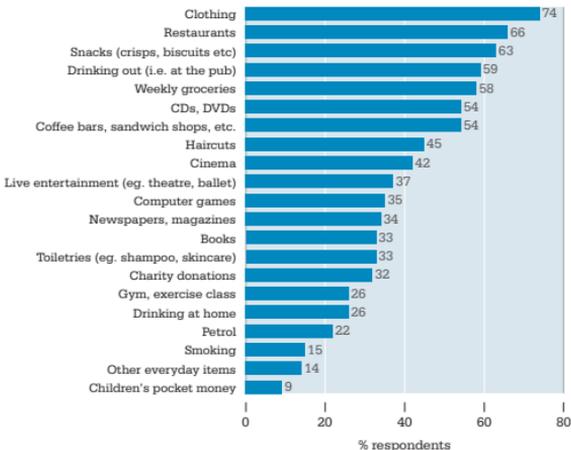
It seems big ticket items will bear the brunt of these attitudes. Over a third (35 per cent) of us admit that the recession has prevented us from booking a main holiday in the next six months. The same number say that the recession has prevented them from putting more money into savings. When asked which items consumers would cut back on in the recession, as many as three-quarters (74 per cent) of Britons said they would cut back spend on clothing and two-thirds (66 per cent) would spend less on restaurants. However, just a quarter (26 per cent) said they would cut back on spending on drinking at home.

The research also reveals how consumers in Britain are shunning drinking at the pub, with 59 per cent saying they are cutting back in this area, instead choosing to splash out large sums of money

FIGURE 1

THE ITEMS ADULTS ARE CUTTING BACK ON IN THE RECESSION, FEB 2009

Base: 1,440 adults aged 16+ who have cut their expenditure in the recession



59 per cent of British consumers say they're avoiding the pub, instead preferring to spend large sums of money on drinking at home

on alcohol. Today, the average British household spends £30 per week on alcohol, amounting to as much as a bottle of wine per night per household.

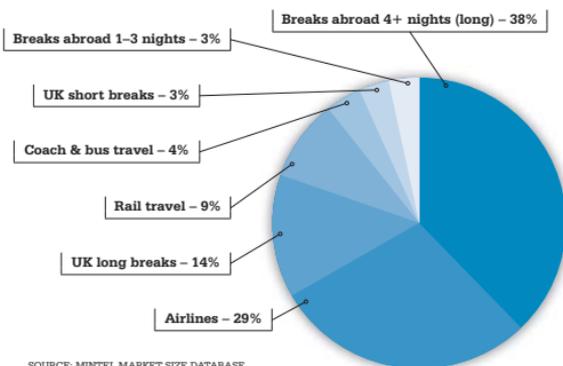
In 2008, consumers in the UK spent £28.8bn on entertainment – spending has grown 48 per cent in last decade and has been relatively slow in the past couple of years. However, it seems evenings out are the first to suffer when it comes to cut backs – spending on nights out declined eight per cent in 2008 and has grown by only 12 per cent in the last decade. The eating out market in the UK was valued at £31.1bn in 2008 and the average UK consumer spends £10 per week on eating outside of the home. Spending has risen 55 per cent, faster than in-home food expenditure. Indeed, in 2008, for every £1 spent on food, 50p was channelled through restaurant and takeaway establishments. Although this is unchanged on 2007, it compares with 44p in the pound in 1998. Mintel research shows that while the economic climate is forcing consumers to cut back on eating out, the fast food market is unlikely to suffer.

TRENDS IN TRAVEL

The holiday market as a whole also looks set to be impacted. British Lifestyles reveals that the next 12 months may see the traditional mid-market family holiday struggle. Thirty-five per cent of consumers report that the current economic climate has prevented them from booking a main holiday, despite the fact that such a break has increasingly become seen as a right rather than a privilege throughout the recent era of cheap, easily accessible overseas travel. In 2008, consumers spent just under £60bn on holidays and travel, representing an average household spend of £2,259 per year. Our love of new horizons has seen spending increase 61 per cent over the past decade, as Brits increasingly focused on what they did, rather than what they owned.

FIGURE 2

HOLIDAY & TRAVEL SALES VALUE, BY SUB-SECTOR, 2008



SOURCE: MINTEL MARKET SIZE DATABASE

And while the travel bug has prompted a major expansion of overseas holidays at the expense of UK ones, this trend could be reversed as the economic climate encourages Brits to seek experiences closer to home or cut back on additional weekends away. As Brits look for domestic holiday options, holiday centres in UK are enjoying a revival – this type of holiday accounts for an increasing proportion of UK domestic holiday business, and currently stands at 16 per cent. The holiday centre market in the UK is estimated to have been worth £1.3bn with 6.4 million visitors in 2008.

In addition, the recession hasn't spelled disaster for all areas of overseas holiday spend. All-inclusive holidays have bucked the overall trend, with the fact that costs are included in one prepaid price proving popular as consumers look to control costs. Mintel estimates all-inclusive products account for 20 to 25 per cent of all

package holidays sold in the UK. Overall however, packages have been decreasing in popularity – in 2001, 54 per cent of holiday spending was on inclusive packages, falling to 45 per cent by 2008.

Bearing all this in mind, the impact for businesses is considerable. With a significant three in ten adults cutting back on their spending mainly through fear of how the recession might affect them, the challenge for manufacturers and retailers is to overcome this fear and make consumers feel safe about spending again. Even if someone hasn't been personally affected by the recession, knowing others who have been can shake a person's confidence. In these difficult times, it's evident consumers are changing their spending behaviour and adapting, whether or not it's necessary. It seems as a nation we're thinking ahead, and for those who haven't been personally affected by the recession, preparation is key. ●



STAYING STRONG

Amid economic uncertainty, businesses across the sector are turning to innovative solutions to keep customers and remain resilient. Pete Hayman reports



The BuyStirlingAlbion campaign (top left) is making a bold move to save Stirling Albion Football Club; Whitbread (above) is creating 1,000 new jobs

Establishing new, profitable business models which take account of changing income streams has prompted a number of creative and effective initiatives, as operators work to ensure their businesses come through the recession in good shape.

VALUE FOR MONEY

For some, this has been achieved through a series of price reductions. Football clubs have been quick to appreciate the long-term benefits of rewarding their most loyal customers with discounted rates on season tickets to maintain a healthy level of retention.

Bolton Wanderers Football Club cut the price of a child's season ticket by 64 per cent ahead of the 2008-09 season – one of a number of price reductions that led to a 3.2 per cent increase in sales. For the 2009-10 season, the club has just announced that due to the success of the children's reductions, adult prices will be decreased by 11 per cent. Chair Phil Gartside says attendances have gone up by 7.5 per cent as a direct result of this change in pricing – the biggest increase in the Premier League.

It's a strategy that's not exclusive to Bolton Wanderers, as Paul Rawnsley,

director in Deloitte's Sports Business Group, explains: "In the current economic climate, supporters are looking for value for money above all else from their season tickets. Offering deeply discounted tickets for children is becoming more common and this can help fill empty seats, nurture future fans of the club and provides assistance to families who buy more than one season ticket."

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has introduced a raft of money-saving schemes designed to get more people attending domestic and international cricket fixtures this summer under the 'Great Exhibition' marketing umbrella. Free entry for young people and two-for-one deals have been implemented for Friends Provident Trophy fixtures, while the ECB has teamed up with *The Sun* newspaper to offer significantly reduced ticket prices for Twenty20 Cup fixtures.

Meanwhile, Esporta, one of the UK's leading health and racquet club operators, has taken a novel approach, with a campaign which appeals to those hit hardest by the downturn. Fresh Start, a new discounted membership package for people who've been made redundant launched in April 2009.

Esporta chief executive Glenn Timms is

keen to point out that those who've lost a job are not the only ones the company is looking to target: "Fresh Start is one of a host of value initiatives Esporta has recently introduced in response to the economic climate," he says.

As Woking Borough Council has proven, lowering gym charges can have dramatic results. It reduced monthly fees for 2008-09 from £49 – a level which generated 650 members and £194k of membership income – to £35. The change increased membership to 2,000 and generated £325k of income – a 68 per cent increase, according to the *The Leisure Database's Leisure Pricing Report*.

NEW APPROACH

It's the potential growth which can be driven by discounting that's seen budget hotel operators such as Travelodge slash prices to as low as £9 per night per room in recent months, as predictions suggest an increasing number of people holidaying at home in 2009. But while a price war rages among the budget chains, other hospitality companies are revising their strategies to attract new customers.

Parmentley Hall Country Lodges at the Whitfield Estate in Northumberland made lodges available to let for short breaks in



Esporta has unveiled a discount membership package for people who have been made redundant, along with other initiatives to help customers fight the recession

addition to its standard purchase option. This made the properties more accessible to potential clients, while at the same time generating income for the company during a time of slow property sales.

Elsewhere, holiday village operator Pierre et Vacances hopes favourable mortgage interest rates will encourage Brits to consider leaseback property investments abroad this summer and is marketing a range of options.

TOURISM INITIATIVE

With predicted increases in the number of UK residents holidaying at home and the number of overseas visitors to Britain, London mayor Boris Johnson and the London Development Agency (LDA) have taken a different approach to making sure the capital benefits this summer. The 'Only in London' marketing campaign aims to emphasise the unique nature of the city's attractions to overseas tourists, and if successful, could net up to £60m for London's economy.

LDA chair Harvey McGrath says: "We're providing additional funding for VisitLondon as part of the mayor's Economic Recovery Action Plan, and attracting additional visitors to London is a highly cost-effective way of providing a

vital boost to London's economy."

The LDA's plan to invest money to make money is shared by Whitbread, operator of Premier Inn and Beefeater restaurants. At a time when some are cutting back, Whitbread has unveiled a new employer-led apprentice scheme, coupled with the creation of 1,000 jobs through the opening of 12 hotels, four restaurants and over 100 Costa Coffee shops this year.

Not all companies are experiencing growth, however, and the long-term implications of redundancies can have a negative effect according to David Readman of Employment Practice and Law: "Before implementing redundancy procedures, consider alternatives seriously," he says, "Flexible working arrangements, for example, enable employers to retain valuable, experienced staff. However understandable, employers should not undertake redundancy for any other reason than the necessity of losing unsustainable jobs."

"Turning the Corner", a new scheme from Barclays Commercial Bank, is based on the belief that having full awareness of the relevant HR issues and investing in the right training for staff will pay dividends in the long run. David Marks, the bank's managing director for

England and Wales, says the bank appreciates the concerns businesses have, and reiterates Readman's assertion that the necessary guidance is there.

RADICAL OPTIONS

In some cases, the only option left is the most radical, as Stirling Albion Football Club has recently found.

Faced with growing concerns over the future of the Scottish League Division Two club, an audacious bid to acquire the business in its entirety has been launched by the Stirling Albion Supporters' Trust.

The trust is aiming to recruit an additional 20,000 members, each paying a £40 fee, to raise enough capital to buy out the current chair, Peter McKenzie.

Paul Goodwin of the BuyStirlingAlbion campaign appreciates it's a bold move to take, but says that the options are rapidly running out. "We have to be very clear that if this campaign doesn't come off, there's a very serious danger we may cease to exist as a League club."

However radical the campaign may be, it current as a potent example that in the current climate, risk-taking is more accepted and that courage, innovation and determination are crucial. ●

A FITTER CITY

EDINBURGH IS AIMING TO BECOME THE MOST PHYSICALLY ACTIVE CITY IN EUROPE BY 2020. JULIE CRAMER REPORTS IN THE SECOND OF OUR SERIES ON CITIES WITH BIG AMBITIONS

Edinburgh is a city of natural beauty, sporting and cultural heritage, a thriving annual arts festival and new year celebrations which draw crowds from around the world. So it's perhaps not surprising that when a council steering group came to pen a strategy looking at the future of sport and leisure in the Scottish capital, it wanted to create something on an ambitious scale. In 2003, that document – *A Capital Commitment to Sport* – laid out the council's aims for Edinburgh to become the most physically active city in Europe by 2020.

They were lofty ambitions, but also ambitions generated by a true health crisis, not just in Edinburgh, but Scotland as a whole. Statistics from the government as it published its White Paper for Health a decade ago would not have made easy reading for health and leisure professionals.

Life expectancy at birth in Scotland was less than in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Scotland's death rate from cancer was the highest in Western Europe, with colon and breast can-



The Edinburgh Nocturne

cer showing some of the fastest-growing rates. Its death rate from coronary heart disease was the second-highest in Europe, with 12,500 premature deaths per year.

For public health departments and the leisure sector alike, the first challenge was to get the message across to the public that increasing levels of physical activity could significantly reduce these mortality rates and positively improve health. The second, a rather uphill challenge, was to translate words into action, and actually get people to participate.

From its White Paper, the Scottish Government went on in 2000 to form the Physical Activity Task Force dedicated to managing national health objectives – initially headed by former



The Heineken Cup Final



The Moon Walk, Edinburgh

EDINBURGH'S CAPITAL COMMITMENT TO SPORT

Edinburgh's *Capital Commitment to Sport* came up with a number of recommendations for the city going forward, including:

- Increase participation by people from under-represented sections of the community with the appointment of development officers
- Involve young people in the planning of provision
- Review access costs for young people
- Strengthen the place and value of PE, school and community sport
- In target sports, establish and provide sustained support for clear sports development pathways
- Create better programmes of activity for girls
- Develop family-friendly policies with the particular objective of increasing participation
- Maximise opportunities for resource-based access for walking, cycling and running in Edinburgh and nearby
- Create a Sports Forum to build links with the voluntary sports sector
- Employ a full-time marketing team for sport and physical recreation
- Establish an action plan to attract more major sporting events to the city



Edinburgh's Rat Race (above) is one of the active events taking place this year

international rugby player John Beattie. In 2003, the Scottish Executive produced a physical activity strategy entitled *Let's make Scotland more active*. That same year, Edinburgh's city council produced its own first attempt at "joined-up thinking" across the leisure sector. There may still be 11 years to its 2020 target, but how has the council fared so far in translating its 30-page document into concrete action?

The council's head of sport and physical activity, Stephanie-Anne Harris, admits that the 2020 ambition "was a bit of blue-sky thinking". "We wanted a strategy that everybody – the public, sports clubs, the voluntary and health sectors – could buy into," she says. While a lot of work has already been done at the grass roots level in schools and leisure centres, 2009 seems to be the year that projects long in the pipeline are now being launched – and results are starting to become measurable.

REBRANDING

One successful project has been to rebrand the city's annual sports calendar, changing the name from FutureSport to Activity, and more than doubling the number of events this year to 82. Sports development officer Kathy Reynolds, who worked on the project, says there was a conscious decision to move away from the idea of "just sport". "We wanted to promote the idea of physical activity and put on events that everybody, no matter what their fitness level, could get involved in."

This year's calendar, running from April 2009 to February 2010 naturally includes the big international crowd-pullers, such as the Heineken Cup Final at Murrayfield – but each month is also packed with events that invite participation. May saw the Edinburgh Nocturne, a night-fitness event for cyclists of all levels, and the MoonWalk Edinburgh – a charity walking event open to everyone, also held overnight, took place in June.

Activity, which receives a dedicated budget of £117,000, is also the sponsor of Edinburgh's first-ever Festival of Sport, running from 18-28 June with 70 different events covering 30 sports. Again, the focus is on encouraging diversity and participation – such as free golf lessons, tai chi workshops, 'come and

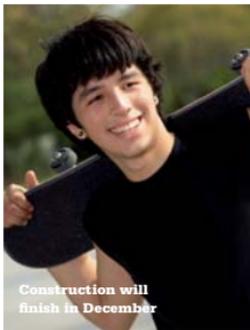
SAUGHTON PARK SKATEPARK

One of the main challenges identified in Edinburgh council's strategy document was to tackle the worrying levels of inactivity among young people. Another challenge was to reduce crime and vandalism through the promotion of positive lifestyles.

A development which will contribute to these aims is the new £750,000 skatepark at Saughton Park, which will be the biggest skatepark in Scotland. Construction on the 2,100sq m facility starts this summer and is due to be completed in December.

The park, designed with help from local skater and BMX-er Dave Sowerby, will be free to access, and will offer beginner areas, intermediate ramps and more challenging features for competition-standard users. The design includes timed flood-lighting, toilets and a cafe.

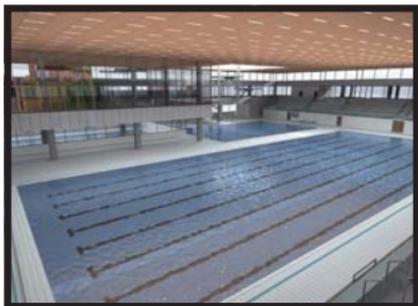
Senior community development officer at the council, John Travers, says: "There's huge anticipation from the skating community about the opening of this site. It will attract many youngsters who wouldn't normally be interested in traditional sports."



Construction will finish in December

The development has had a chequered history, with two other sites in Edinburgh being rejected by planners over the past 10 years. Now that the site has finally almost arrived, Travers is excited about its future.

"I met someone involved with a skatepark in Dumbarton, and the community has seen crime drop 33 per cent. On weekend evenings, local youths have to apply for a ticket at the local police to enter the park. It's been a great success."



try petanque' and a Brazilian jiu jitsu open day. The inaugural event is supported by ClubSportEdinburgh, an independent body which is the collective voice of sports clubs in the city – and an organisation which has also rebranded itself in the past couple of years.

The city's ageing Royal Commonwealth Pool will receive a £37m redesign (above).

FINDING FACILITIES

Edinburgh does not lack open spaces to host such kind of events, but when the council steering group evaluated sports facility provision back in 2003, it came up with a mixed picture.

Swimming pool provision was found to be "excellent" and in areas such as the port of Leith there was even thought to be an oversupply. However, many of these older facilities were in a rundown state, and a capital investment budget was ringfenced for facility renewal. Projects range from straightforward leisure centre refurbishments to grander projects. Harris says work will start in August on the ageing Royal Commonwealth pool, which is a national facility for Scotland. The £37m redevelopment – to include a 50m pool and new diving facility that will be used for the Glasgow Commonwealth Games in 2014 – will produce a sparkling new facility in two years time.

A £5m, 18-month refurbishment is also underway at the Glenogle Swim Centre in Stockbridge, part of a wider council strategy to preserve all the city's historic Victorian baths. The



SUPPORTING SCOTLAND'S AIMS

The Physical Activity and Health Alliance (paha.org.uk) is an online community website bringing together those involved in the promotion of physical activity in Scotland, whether from the health, leisure, voluntary or private

sector. Members can access key national strategy documents and current research related to physical activity, and are encouraged to contribute and share information with each other through the online forum.

revamped Victorian pool will reopen in spring 2010.

When the council examined sportshalls provision in the city, the picture was not so rosy. It estimated that only 34 per cent of demand was being satisfied by existing non-school-based provision. A way to boost this, it decided, would be to open up larger public school halls to the public – which could then satisfy an estimated 77 per cent of demand. Harris says work in this area is "ongoing", and through public/private partnership schemes many school halls are being upgraded and opened up – thus improving reach in the city's more under-resourced areas.

A somewhat controversial project is the city's Meadowbank Stadium – a large-scale multi-purpose sports complex built when Edinburgh first hosted the Commonwealth Games in 1970. There were plans formed in 2006 to demolish Meadowbank, sell off the land and use the funds to build a

SCOTLAND'S HEALTH

The Scottish Health Survey 2003 looked at 8,148 adults and 3,324 children, and found the following:

- The proportions of men and women aged 16-74 who were meeting physical activity requirements (30 minutes of activity on most days) increased from 41 per cent in 1998 to 44 per cent in 2003 in men, and from 30 per cent in 1998 to 33 per cent in 2003 in women. Increases in physical activity participation were especially marked for men and women aged 55-74.
- 65 per cent of men and 60 per cent of women were either overweight (BMI 25-30) or obese (BMI 30-plus). The proportion of adults who were either overweight or obese increased significantly

between 1995 and 2003, from 56 per cent to 64 per cent in men, and from 47 per cent to 57 per cent in women. The proportion of people who were morbidly obese more than doubled in this time.

- 39 per cent of men and 35 per cent of women spent an average of four or more hours sitting at a screen per weekday (this increased at weekends).
- 74 per cent of boys and 63 per cent of girls aged 2-15 had a high physical activity level (at least 60 minutes, seven days a week). 12 per cent of boys and 18 per cent of girls had medium levels (30-59 minutes, seven days a week), while 13 per cent of boys and 19 per cent of girls had a low activity level

(0-30 minutes, on seven days a week). School activities were not included. Activity levels declined with age among girls aged 8-10, but not among boys.

- The most common activities reported by children were: walking (boys 92 per cent, girls 94 per cent); active play (boys 91 per cent, girls 88 per cent); and sports and exercise (73 per cent boys, 68 per cent girls).
- 32 per cent of boys and 24 per cent of girls aged 13-15 spent on average four or more hours a day sitting at a screen (TV, computer or video game). There was an increase in the prevalence of obesity in boys between 1998-2003 (from 29 per cent to 35 per cent), but no change for girls (30 per cent).



The Primary School Sport Challenge

smaller facility in the east of the city. However, this has been met by widespread opposition from local campaign groups. According to Harris, the project is currently on hold due to the economic climate".

GROWTH IN VISITS

Working on delivering much of the physical activity agenda is Edinburgh Leisure – a not-for-profit company which receives £9m a year (towards a total leisure spend of over £24m) to run the council's 31 leisure venues. The company's Allison Brodie says leisure visits are showing steady growth. In 2002/3, there were 3.6 million annual visits to leisure centres in Edinburgh, which has a population of over 450,000. That figure is currently 4.1m, and the 2008/09 revenue of £16.2m from leisure visits represents a six per cent increase on the previous year.

The company now operates many targeted schemes aimed at bringing specific populations in touch with a healthier lifestyle. One, Edinburgh's Young Sports Ambassadors, a first for Scotland, has seen 11 young sporting ambassadors picked from Edinburgh schools to give young people a voice and develop new sport and activity programmes for youth. Edinburgh Leisure also operates the BAA Youth Games, which has grown year on year over the past decade; this year's event saw 1,600 participants from schools across the city.

For older residents unable to access services, Edinburgh Leisure brings activities to care and nursing homes. For mothers diagnosed with post-natal depression, a scheme delivered alongside health partners gives them access to discounted leisure facilities and fully-funded creche places.

GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS

Going forward, Harris says the council is looking to do more work with the Lothian NHS Trust. This work is really about

SCOTLAND'S TARGETS

The Scottish Government's targets to increase physical activity are: to achieve 50 per cent of all adults aged over 16, and 80 per cent of children aged 16 and

under, to meet the minimum recommended levels by 2022. To meet this goal, it will need to see average increases of one per cent a year across the population

"health message blitzing" (posters, leaflets in GP surgeries, bus shelter adverts, etc), particularly in poorer pockets of the city such as Craigavon, Craigmillar and Muirhouse, where problems may be masked by Edinburgh's generally perceived affluence. The most basic message – as reflected in the UK's Change 4 Life campaign (just being piloted in Scotland) – advises 30 minutes of activity per day for adults and 60 minutes for children.

At the time of the government's White Paper, there were three times as many inactive Scots as those who were smokers. "The dangers of physical inactivity is the most important message to convey in public health," says Harris. "People know smoking can kill, but they don't necessarily link inactivity to a greater risk of heart disease, colon cancer or mental health problems."

By 2020, the council will not have a definitive way to 'measure' its results – the process is considered more important than end results. Harris says one encouraging marker this year has been the city's 10K race. More than 10,000 runners registered for the event, which took place on 3 May – up from 6,000 to 7,000 participants last year.

For a more detailed health picture, the council is monitoring its achievements in line with the government's Scottish Health Survey, an in-depth look at the health of the nation in private households. Surveys took place in 1995, 1998 and 2003. The most recent study, started in 2008, will be carried out over three years, with the first results to be published this summer.

As for Edinburgh becoming Europe's most active city, again, there will be no concrete markers – only, it's hoped, a growth in reputation. "We think of Amsterdam as a healthy city because everybody cycles, and we want Edinburgh to gain this kind of reputation," says Harris. For most in the city – leisure providers and leisure users alike – it will be the taking part that counts. ●



TACKLING TOURISM

THE BRITISH TOURISM FRAMEWORK REVIEW HAS DETERMINED HOW VISITBRITAIN CAN BEST WORK TO DELIVER THE FULL POTENTIAL OF THE VISITOR ECONOMY. CHRISTOPHER RODRIGUES, VISIT BRITAIN CHAIRMAN AND CHAIRMAN OF THE REVIEW, DISCUSSES THE RESULTS

Over the last six months, VisitBritain has been working with the industry to implement the recommendations of the British Tourism Framework Review. Commissioned by the secretary of state for the DCMS, this review examined the entire infrastructure surrounding the visitor economy to ensure that spending is directed as efficiently as possible. It's already led to a restructuring of VisitBritain to focus on policy, platforms and our overseas network, and to a separate VisitEngland with its own CEO.

In parallel, a Deloitte and Oxford Economics study commissioned by VisitBritain and the Tourism Alliance revealed the scale of our industry's contribution to the economy. The review took devolution as a given; its solutions are robust and will survive any future reorganisation at the regional or national level.

It soon became clear that we needed, once and for all, to move the visitor economy from being an industry that people only notice when times are bad – the foot and mouth syndrome,

(Below) A new tourism body, VisitEngland, will promote the likes of the Peak District, the British Museum and London's Albert Bridge to visitors

if you will – into its rightful position as one of Britain's leading industries. An industry with a very high employment coefficient; an industry with significant multiplier benefits to the rest of the economy and to the quality of life we live in Britain; and, critically, an industry that – to paraphrase a well known commercial – "reaches parts of the economy other industries cannot reach".

RISKS REVEALED

The Deloitte research revealed that the total economic contribution of the visitor economy to Britain is £114bn, or 8.2 per cent of total GDP, and employs 2.6 million people. In the longer term it predicts that the sector's economic impact could grow to £188bn by 2018, and that the 2012 Olympics in particular should provide a significant boost to tourism and travel revenues. However, it details a number of risks to the sector that would prevent it delivering that target. As well as the turbulent economic climate, Deloitte highlights a number of market failures and policy barriers that "could prevent the visitor economy from optimising its potential". These include a lack of information about what's on offer for visitors, skill shortages, transport difficulties and overcrowding. The report also details areas

PHOTO: BRITAINONVIEW VISIT PEARS & DERYSHERE/ DANIEL BOSWORTH



PHOTOS: VISITBRITAIN/AGNES BRITAINONVIEW

VisitBritain's new strategy will attempt to reach visitors through a focus on national and regional brands as well as the Britain brand



PHOTO: WWW.BRITAINONVIEW.COM

where government policy could risk the visitor economy's success, such as transport infrastructure investment, the high cost of taxes and visas to enter the UK, and climate change legislation.

Thanks to the research, there can be no doubt the visitor economy is a key part of the UK economy. But devolution, industry fragmentation, the free rider effect and the need to operate over a time frame at a level not reached by the typical SME means government's role is critical. We can't leave it to the industry and devolved authorities alone if we're to reach our full potential.

At a superficial level it's clear that simple destination marketing is no longer enough. We have to market experiences. Or to put it another way, we have to recognise that few people go to an RDA for a holiday even if that's the way the government chooses to hand out money. More importantly, the review team concluded that without greater collaboration and coordination, our thriving past might be followed by a less certain future. And so the review looked at what we have to do to improve our prospects.

VISITBRITAIN'S ROLE

Since the latest Comprehensive Spending Review fixed the money available, this meant looking at ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of VisitBritain's relationship with the industry and with other public sector bodies. It revealed a wide-spread view that VisitBritain's role should evolve to reflect the realpolitik of devolution and the maturing attitudes, capabilities and expectations of its strategic partners. And while people agreed that activities should be undertaken using the Britain brand in some markets – particularly emerging ones – it was clear that in territories nearer to and more familiar with Britain, it was time to recognise our portfolio of national and regional

AT A SUPERFICIAL LEVEL, IT'S CLEAR THAT SIMPLE DESTINATION MARKETING IS NO LONGER ENOUGH. WE HAVE TO MARKET EXPERIENCES

brands and to use whichever was best fit for purpose. Despite some media claims, this doesn't mean abandoning the Britain brand entirely. There will still be some valuable promotional partnerships – particularly around the Olympics – that may only be available if everyone works together under a single brand.

For VisitBritain, it means a strategy that will inspire the world to explore Britain, delivering an invaluable global overseas network to champion the national brands – Britain, England, London, Scotland, and Wales. It will enable us to remain the authority on maximising the value of the visitor economy, for coordinating the voice of British tourism policy, and for providing transaction and technology platforms that extend the reach of industry to the consumer. The review also identified a critical need for VisitBritain's sponsoring ministry, DCMS, to recognise that many of the priorities for the industry are not in the hands of its ministers. Historically tourism has all too often been an afterthought. It needs to be on the checklist of every relevant minister and it is our job to work with DCMS to ensure that is the case. One of the most important roles for the minister and secretary of state is to ensure that tourism is taken into account in decisions made across government departments.

The review has also led to the establishment of VisitEngland as a standalone, strategic leadership body, which for the first



PHOTO: WWW.ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/DAVID JOYNER

time truly represents English tourism's public and private sector stakeholders. In the minds of the England stakeholders its role is to work in partnership with the RDAs, local authorities and the private sector to create an English national tourism strategy, optimise marketing investment and develop the visitor experience. The aim is to create a body capable of driving economic growth and excellence in English tourism. The

Partners for England Forum – which brings together the nation's public and private sectors – continues to provide the primary platform for stakeholder engagement with VisitEngland.

Partnerships with British Airways and Air Asia have proved successful, helping to put 'bums on seats' on flights to Britain

industry in line with a national tourism strategy. Banks would provide the funds, and government would provide guaranteed repayment of loans and support for an interest cap on them.

• **Easier, cheaper visa processes**

The industry believes we must trial a Schengen Plus scheme immediately in China, India, Russia, Thailand and the UAE. For £20, when these visitors are planning trips to Schengen countries, they might no longer be dissuaded from visiting us simply because a UK visa is too expensive. We urge easing the process to allow for tourist visa applications in local languages, rather than English alone, and a greater number of processing centres, as well as investment in immigration staff to provide a speedier and more friendly welcome for visitors.

KEY PRIORITIES

Following the publication of the review and after the industry was recognised by the prime minister at the National Tourism Summit in January, government invited the industry to submit five priorities where government could demonstrate support:

• **Improved government recognition of tourism**

Work here has already gathered pace with the first meetings of the cross-Whitehall co-ordination group and the Tourism Advisory Council to help ensure tourism is considered in policy-making decisions across all departments. Government should ensure tourism measures are included in the way local authority performance is reported and rewarded, or they should be given a duty to have a positive strategy for tourism in their areas.

• **Support for jobs and business development of the industry**

To continue to excel as a leading visitor destination, Britain needs to make business operators aware of the benefits of striving for even better standards across the board. Government can help by providing incentives for SMEs to retain and train – and not just recruit – staff. The Learning & Skills Council and People 1st should work with local authorities to ensure this training is delivered. In particular, councils and local chambers of commerce should identify local businesses in the transport, retail, hospitality and leisure sectors that can best be engaged in the skills improvement agenda.

Industry has long considered the benefits of creating a Tourism Development Bank. Tourism is a business of 200,000 SMEs and many are having difficulties securing loans to invest in their businesses. A Tourism Development Bank – a joint venture between the public sector and the private sector (the banks) – would focus on supporting investment finance into the

• **Additional funding to enable VisitBritain to match commercial sector investment**

Around the world, carriers, accommodation providers and tour operators are prepared to invest in marketing activity, if only VisitBritain puts its money where its mouth is and matches those funds. We have already seen significant success across our Asia-Pacific markets through partnerships with British Airways and Air Asia, which have put 'bums on seats' on flights to Britain. Investment now would also help us take advantage of exchange rates currently in our favour and while the industry is offering great deals to attract consumers.

• **A review of business taxation**

Government could achieve much by ensuring the recently announced Small Firms Enterprise Guarantee Scheme applies to tourism businesses, as well as giving tourism businesses a VAT holiday. It was also a missed opportunity for a government that didn't make use of the budget to reduce or repeal air passenger duty, which is due to rise later this year, adding another layer to Britain's competitive disadvantage. Bringing forward capital investment, such as high speed rail links to Scotland and road and rail transport infrastructure in the West Country, would benefit the whole industry as the UK comes out of recession.

After a year of discussion in producing the framework review, we're already making progress on a year of action. The review highlights why the industry, the public sector and government need to work closely together to deliver the visitor economy's full potential. As Britain invests to escape a recession, our work can ensure that, with investment, tourism can help lead the way. *The Economic Case for the Visitor Economy* by Deloitte and *Oxford Economics*, and full and summary versions of the *British Tourism Framework Review*, are available at tourismreview.co.uk ●



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SET YOUR SIGHTS

This year's budget offered a few positive announcements, but also measures that can sting businesses, not to mention little help for sport, leisure, hospitality and tourism, says Brigid Simmonds



A LOOK AT THE BUDGET



With public borrowing at £175bn, 12 per cent of GDP, and public sector net debt forecast to rise to 79 per cent of GDP over the next five years, there would seem little left to help the sport, leisure, hospitality and tourism business based on April's budget. But it's worth looking at what help is available and how the industry's doing.

To many raised eyebrows, the chancellor forecast GDP growth of 1.25 per cent for 2010, and 3.5 per cent from 2011. This led him to promise to protect investment in key public services, notably education and health. But he also promised further efficiencies across Whitehall. As a result, DCMS will contribute £20m in savings as part of an additional £5bn in 2010-2011. Watch this space for cuts from DCMS – how will sport be affected? (Not from front line services yet, it's understood.) Calls for more funding for tourism are likely to fall on deaf ears.

For all businesses paying business rates, the chancellor announced the option of spreading payments for this year's business rates over three years. There is, however, a real sting in the tail for all ratepayers – the new rating revaluation kicks in from 2010, based on trading as at 1 April 2008, when economic conditions were much more favourable than they are now. Gerald Eve has looked at the effect on a whole series of leisure sectors including pubs, hotels, restaurants, nightclubs and cinema. In almost all of these sectors, trading conditions were much better in 2008, and therefore the 2010 revaluation will be higher.

The chancellor's offer to defer this year's rates into later years could see businesses running into real trouble come 2010, when they have to pay higher rates under the next revaluation and back payments for this year. In addition, supplementary business rates for all businesses will be introduced next year by individual local authorities, which have the ability to add 2p in the pound. Local authorities and businesses outside London need to discuss what the additional rates will pay for, but inside the M25 most of these rates are earmarked for the Crossrail project, so there's no chance that they'll be deferred.

The chancellor also announced that CIL – the Community Infrastructure Levy – will be deferred until April 2010. (We're still awaiting the final details on how the scheme will work). But this again allows local authorities to tax new and existing developments requiring planning permission. The tax is discretionary from local authorities, but there's no doubt that many will introduce it. Many businesses had asked the government to make changes to Empty Property Rate Relief – which is leading to empty buildings being pulled down as the only alternative to paying this tax – but no changes were made in the budget. So for those who own property, the outlook is rather depressing.

POSITIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS

On a more positive level, the chancellor announced that the government will extend the enhanced 'loss relief', which allows companies to offset profits in previous years against any current losses, for another year. The chancellor also announced a government top-up of trade credit insurance. This will help companies finding it difficult to persuade other companies to give them credit while they wait to be paid, by providing additional government-backed insurance against this risk. In the past few months, companies who specialise in credit insurance of this type have been withdrawing it from some businesses in the leisure sector on a rather ad hoc basis; this relief is particularly welcome.

There will also be an increase in capital allowances for new investment to 40 per cent for one year, until 6 April 2010. While this relief is useful for capital projects currently underway, it's unlikely many

The chancellor removed double taxation on bingo participation fees, but raised bingo duty





Despite alcohol duty rising, it seems attitudes towards the ailing pub industry have softened, Simmonds says

projects will be able to take advantage unless they're very well-advanced. Finally the chancellor announced that the reduced rate of VAT, down from 17.5 per cent to 15 per cent, will end on 31 December 2009 – somewhat of a nightmare timing for pubs, bars and restaurants open late that night!

ALCOHOL AND GAMBLING

As expected, alcohol duty rose two per cent on 23 April in line with the escalator introduced last year. It's interesting that this puts the rate of inflation at nonexistent, as the escalator worked on two percentage points above inflation. Despite this, it seems clear that the 'Axe the Tax' campaign by the pub and brewing industry has certainly been listened to and there is a softening of attitudes towards an industry with 40 pubs closing a week.

For gambling, there were definitely changes. The chancellor decided on a long campaign to remove the 'double taxation' on bingo participation fees, but more than made up for this positive decision by raising bingo duty from 15 per cent to 22 per cent and including GPT (gross profits tax) on interval bingo. For Amusement Machine License Duty (AML) on gaming machines, the increase across the board was nine per cent, which is way above inflation. Of even more concern was the announcement that there is to be a consultation on replacing AML with GPT. The industry fought off a Treasury attempt to bring in GPT in 2003. If AML is removed, one of the major problems is that AML comes with VAT. If VAT is not paid, neither can you reclaim it or offset it against other business expenses. The industry waits with interest to see what the consultation might say and what rate is being considered.

“ It's perhaps not unexpected that in the current economic climate, and with Treasury coffers rather bare, the sport, leisure, hospitality and tourism industry didn't receive much help ”

LITTLE HELP FOR BISL MEMBERS

It's perhaps not unexpected that in the current economic climate, and with Treasury coffers rather bare, the sport, leisure, hospitality and tourism industry didn't receive much help. On the other hand, this government does see encouraging tourism and the visitor economy as a way out of recession. There's no doubt the industry is hurting. Debt was once so popular with larger companies but is now a noose around their necks. Declines in asset values for property-based businesses is not helping, but most BISL members are still generating cash, and as ever, cash is king. Their businesses are perfectly sound and it's hoped many will emerge more strongly in time.

BISL, like many other organizations, has been calling for a moratorium on legislation and regulations that cost industry money. Delaying CIL will help, but there's still more to do in this area. The government is trying to do less, a trait bound to continue as we move towards an inevitable general election, which must take place by June 2010.

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. For more details contact 020 8780 2377 www.bisl.org ●

companies with cash

Deals across the leisure sector have been slowing dramatically, but a few companies have the cash to take advantage of bargains. Matthew Goodman reports



When regional brewer JW Lees announced the acquisition of ten pubs from one of the giants of the sector, Punch Taverns, a few weeks ago, the news was reported excitedly in some places as the company's biggest single deal for over a century. Accurate this may be, and the package of pubs acquired from debt-burdened Punch will no doubt prove a great fit with JW Lees' existing estate. It's perhaps, though, a sign of the times that such relatively modest acquisitions are being reported with a dash of hyperbole.

The mergers and acquisitions boom of the last decade has imploded to an alarming degree. The leisure sector had been a particular favourite with private-equity investors, but with their sources of finance drying up, forcing them out of the market, deals have slowed dramatically. Add to that the caution of trade players, who are understandably opting to batten down the hatches rather than go on spending sprees to snap up troubled rivals, and it's no surprise deal volumes are almost non-existent.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBS

A common mantra among dealmakers and advisers in the City is that the current environment means a whole crop of opportunities, if only one could find the money to finance them. With

valuations at or nearing bottom, anyone with cash should be able to bag a few bargains – as JW Lees and some of the other regional brewing and pub concerns have been doing, acquiring sites from Punch they'd never have been able to buy before. This idea has not been lost on Greene King, one of the country's biggest regional brewing and pub concerns. It recently raised £207.5m in a share offering, becoming the first pub group to turn to the markets to secure fresh capital this year. Part of the proceeds of the rights issue will be to pay down part of its debt pile, but the company has also said a chunk of the new money will be earmarked for acquisitions.

Rooney Anand, Greene King's chief executive, said: "In the current environment, we're seeing an increase in high quality pubs being put up for sale and our strong financial position should enable us to take advantage of these opportunities."

The rights issue was generally well-received by the market, as the company is perceived as one of the better-run businesses in the sector, and fund managers seem happy to back it to acquire pubs that may be struggling and need reviving. How many other pub groups may join Greene King in either raising money or simply scouring the market for acquisitions remains to be seen – many are over-borrowed or may struggle to raise fresh capital.

THE RESTAURANT SCENE

Compared to the pub industry, the restaurant sector has been faring relatively well. Although there have been significant num-



Greene King (above) and The Restaurant Group (right) both have cash for acquisitions





Clapham House Group, which owns Gourmet Burger Kitchen (above), hopes to take advantage of bargains

bers of closures, restaurants have not been hit by the smoking ban, and clever use of price promotions has helped sustain the larger chains. Consequently, there are those around who hope to take advantage of the present climate. Clapham House Group, for example, which owns brands including Gourmet Burger Kitchen and The Real Greek, has indicated that it hopes to capitalise on the weakness in the property market to snap up high quality sites that it might not otherwise have been able or willing to secure. Having renegotiated its banking arrangements, which now run until 2012, the company has a £21.7m facility in place. At its interim results a few months ago, Clapham House said it was positioned "well" to "take advantage of a rapidly softening UK property market as well as likely casualties in the independent restaurant sector". It's also reportedly in talks to sell its Tootsies chain, which would raise further funds.

Clapham House's larger rival, The Restaurant Group, owner of chains such as Frankie & Benny's, also has cash available for acquisitions. It too is more likely to use its resources for single site deals. It recently acquired the freeholds of two sites it was leasing from Punch Taverns. TRG's chief executive Andrew Page said: "The current climate in the pub market will yield some potentially lucrative opportunities to grow our Pub Restaurant business in the future and to date we have purchased a couple of freeholds from Punch."

He suggested that patience is a virtue in this market and that holding back for the time being may be sensible. "We've decided to 'keep our powder dry' in the expectation that over the next couple of years we'll have the opportunity to use our resources to greater effect. Longer-term, we believe this business has the potential to grow significantly."

Aside from pubs and restaurants, an obvious area where companies are likely to pursue deals is in online gaming, where the leading operators intend to try and consolidate the market

Analysts suggest that such caution could pay off. Greg Feehely, leisure analyst at Altium Securities, a stockbroker, says: "When is the best time to buy if prices are still falling? Shouldn't you be waiting until the end of this year or early next year?"

OTHER AREAS

Aside from the pub and restaurant industry, the most obvious area where companies have cash and are likely to pursue deals is in online gaming, where the leading operators, such as PartyGaming and 888 Holdings, have both publicly stated their intention to try to consolidate the market. At the time of writing, both are known to be keen, for example, on acquiring Cashcade, the owner of the popular Foxyingo.com web site. "The industry will see significant consolidation," predicts Nick Batram, leisure analyst at KBC Peel Hunt, a broker.

The big two tour operators, Thomas Cook and Tui, are also well placed to take advantage of the recession by acquiring smaller rivals. They have a habit of making bolt-on deals – Cook snapped up Med Hotels earlier in the year – and this is only likely to continue. The recession has forced many travel-related companies out of business, and the industry's giants look well placed to have their pick of the stragglers. ●
Matthew Goodman is a business journalist at The Sunday Times

hotels gone green

Though airplanes, trucks and gas-guzzling SUVs are easy targets for environmentalists, buildings are actually the single biggest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. And hotels – operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week – are among the worst offenders. Vehicles are being replaced every year with more fuel-efficient models. But hotels are designed to last for 50 to 100 years.

While hotel buildings contribute heavily to the problem, the good news is that architects and designers, along with hospitality consultants, can have a major influence on improving the situation and reversing global warming.

TEAMING UP TO CREATE GREEN GUIDELINES

Horwath HTL, the world's largest hotel industry consultancy (with 50 offices in 30 countries) has some influence with its hospitality clients. They wanted to use that influence for good by including – in every feasibility study that they produce – recommendations for developing and operating hotels sustainably.

Robert Hecker, Horwath's managing director, approached WATG to assist in authoring a set of guidelines for green hotel development, because of the design firm's experience creating environmentally-sensitive hotels and resorts.

Together with WATG, Horwath created a *Sustainable Hotel Development* chapter that is now a part of the reports that they produce in the course of advising developers, lenders and investors on a way forward with their hospitality plans.

A THIRD PARTNER

In the early 1990s, as founding members of the International Hotels Environment Initiative (IHEI), in association with Prince Charles, WATG's architects helped to raise consciousness about how responsible hotel design and construction could become the foundation of a sustainable hospitality industry.

IHEI later became the International Tourism Partnership (ITP), associated with the International Business Leaders

Horwath HTL and WATG have drafted a set of sustainable hotel development guidelines aimed at encouraging the industry to go green. WATG's Howard J Wolff talks about the initiative

Forum – “a non-competitive platform for the sharing of ideas and the adoption of strategies to benefit the industry as a whole.” Under the stewardship and leadership of its executive director Lyndall De Marco, WATG helped the ITP create an array of tools and publications for hotel owners and developers. One of those initiatives – the creation of a booklet entitled *Going Green* – is also included in Horwath's feasibility reports.

THE IMPETUS BEHIND THE INITIATIVE

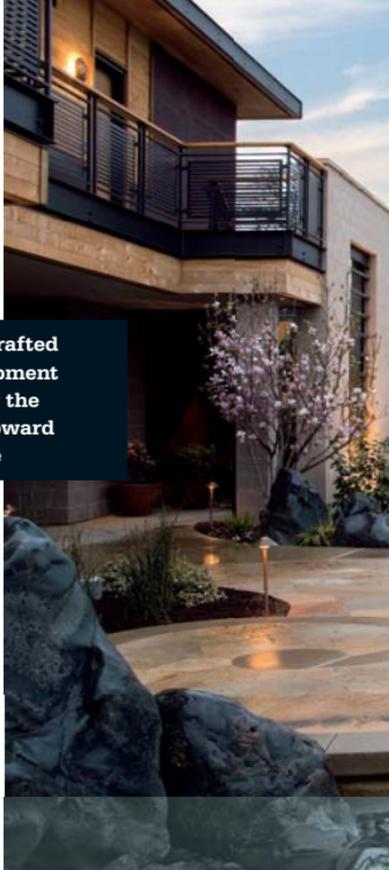
Significant energy savings can be achieved – at little or no additional cost – through strategies such as proper siting, smart design, careful selection of building materials and incorporating natural heating, cooling and ventilation. Planning, designing and constructing hotels that use less energy not only saves money but ultimately saves the planet.

The biggest impediment to sustainable design has been the owners' belief they'll have to pay a premium. Recent research by the US Green Building Council reveals the green premium has been shrinking and is now close to zero. Furthermore, the more people insist on sustainable design, the lower the costs will be, as manufacturers rush to offer more – and more affordable – environmentally friendly materials and products.

GOING GREEN IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS

In the very broadest sense, green isn't only good for the planet, it's good for people and for profits. It's a win-win-win.

Anecdotal, there's evidence to suggest that green hotels have healthier employees who feel proud of where they work. That translates to increased morale, lower turnover and higher productivity. It's also noticed and appreciated by guests,



who, in turn, are more likely to want to return for a positive experience.

The bottom-line benefits are also becoming more obvious. Green hotels are sought after by meeting planners and leisure travellers alike, which increases the properties' occupancy and room rates and gives them a competitive edge – even in challenging economies. Not only are they saving energy, green hotels that are less costly to operate have greater value in the marketplace.

As Prince Charles said 15 years ago: “Sustainable development doesn't have to be at odds with a reasonable return on investment.” In fact, WATG designers would argue, it can enhance one's return on investment. As Lyndall De Marco puts it: “Sustainability and profitability can walk hand in hand.”

THE GUIDELINES

The *Sustainable Hotel Development* guidelines are intended to increase awareness and interest of stakeholders for



The recently opened Bardessono luxury lodge in California has been designed to achieve LEED Platinum certification

PHOTO COURTESY OF SARAH DYESS

undertaking development that respects the environment. The guidelines provide implementable recommendations that encourage developers to create and operate a sustainable hotel.

Topics include site evaluation, architectural and interior design strategies, energy reduction, water conservation, waste management, procurement and guest participation. Also included is a list of resources, publications and organisations to help steer hotel owners, operators and developers in a more environmentally-conscious direction.

PRACTICING WHAT WE PREACH

The principles of responsive and responsible design are fundamental to the success of WATG's projects. Wherever we work around the world, we encourage our clients to pursue sustainability.

As their operating costs go down and their property values go up, WATG clients realise considerable return on their green

building investments and achieve competitive prominence for their properties, even in a tough economy.

One case in point is the recently opened Bardessono – an environmentally friendly, 62-room boutique luxury lodge in the heart of California's Napa Valley. Designed to achieve LEED Platinum certification, features include 72 geothermal wells to heat and cool guestrooms and provide hot water, as well as 940 solar panels on the building's flat roofs, which produce 200 kW of power. Sustainable building materials and organic landscape management practices include rammed-earth sculptural walls and 100-year-old olive trees. Automatically-adjusting exterior Venetian blinds control the sun and heat. They're part of an energy management system that turns off everything electric in the rooms when a guest leaves.

Bardessono connects with the environment through the use of local, recycled materials and the integration of outdoor spaces into the design. The guest experi-

ence is enhanced through such features as organic gardens, private courtyards and outdoor showers, in-room massages, and the availability of bicycles and electric vehicles.

According to owner and developer Phil Sherburne: "The decision to design and build such an environmentally advanced hotel has helped to insulate us in the current economic climate."

THE WAY FORWARD

'Do not disturb' – we think of these words in their broadest sense, as a reminder that the sanctity of a place and its people should be preserved in the larger context of the built environment, just as it is in the microcosm of a single hotel room. Fundamental to our mission as architects, planners and designers is a commitment to leave a place and its people better off by virtue of our work. Creating sustainable hotel guidelines allows others to do so as well.

Wolff is senior vice president of WATG ●

YOUNG AT HEART

SHOKK énergie's new Blackpool site is the partnership's first standalone health club for children, and part of a growing trend towards kids-only facilities. Caroline Wilkinson visits

Schools, sports clubs and other youth-focused organisations, even the police – they're scrambling over each other to use the new facilities at SHOKK Blackpool.

Whether it's through linking with schools to help achieve the government's directive of five hours' exercise a week, opening up to the local PCT and care homes, or working with the police to help get disenfranchised youths off the streets, the club is generating high levels of interest in the community.

The new club is one of a number of standalone facilities for children opened across the health club industry recently. It's also the first standalone facility developed under the joint franchise venture between youth fitness specialist SHOKK and The énergie Group – a partnership launched in October 2007 – and will be used as a benchmark for future developments. SHOKK énergie plans to open five new standalone sites by April 2010, including sites in China, Norway and Scotland.

BREAKING BARRIERS

The franchisees, ex-professional footballer Mickey Mellon and his wife Jane,

Schools, sports clubs and other youth-focused organisations have shown interest in the facility

were eager to create a facility that got Blackpool kids more active, off the streets and away from their games consoles. But, according to Jane, convincing the kids wasn't the main challenge – the parents were the barrier. Trying to get the message across that the club is a lifestyle-based multi-activity centre, albeit with a gym – not a place where kids just pump weights – has been a struggle. "When you first hear about a kids' gym, most respond with 'what's that?'" says Kieran Murphy, marketing director at SHOKK. "It's not an easy concept to understand until you touch and feel it, so instructors have to take the kit out and do demos. That way parents and schools can see what young people get from it, as opposed to telling them or giving them a flyer. You have to bring it to life."

Essentially SHOKK and énergie were building a business from scratch, with no natural foothold, standalone template or SHOKK brand awareness in the local area.

The most effective way of getting kids into the facility was by offering free demo sessions during the soft launch, which had been spearheaded by a





three-week pre-sale campaign of demos and community information sessions.

Murphy, however, considers creating from scratch an advantage. "From a marketing point of view, everything we do is completely about SHOKK, so for young people it's a place they can own as opposed to when it's within an existing club and it's mixed with adult facilities."

STANDALONE CHALLENGES

Most members can only use the gym after 3.30pm, when school ends, so it was important to maximise daytime usage with schools, as well as making it accessible for kids out of school. Having scoured Preston and Blackpool for commercial units, SHOKK and the franchisees chose a 446sq m (4,800sq ft) space on an industrial estate, away from central Blackpool. Despite not being on a main thoroughfare, the club is ideally situated near two major supermarkets, schools and a large residential area, so kids can make their own way there.

With walls covered in graffiti, vibrantly coloured SHOKK kit, Dance Mats, a Target Wall, 'no-adult' signs and large neon-coloured, hand-shaped seats, it's clear who the club has been built for. But the fitness element has been integrated into a youth club environment, so it also acts as a drop-in centre for young people to socialise and learn about positive lifestyles.

Although kids aren't encouraged to do more than one hour of exercise per session, they're free to socialise in the 'chill out' area after exercising, allowing parents more flexibility in pick-up times. The area is decked out with games such as pool tables, encouraging secondary spend. An adult coffee area generates additional revenue, while an unused therapy room and plans for a new mezzanine floor offer further expansion opportunities.

In addition to 23 stations of SHOKK-branded kit – including X-certain products such as SHOKK MOTIVATRIX, Wireless Dance System, IGNITION CV and FLT resistance equipment – the club has a 4.65sq m (50sq ft) exercise studio to host a wide selection of 30-minute to one-hour alternative fitness classes. Sessions include breakdancing, cheerleading, kombu, ju-jitsu, footicise, balance boarding and circuits, at the end of which the kids complete a PMR (progressive muscular relaxation) session to learn how to relax their body and mind.

The club, for five- to 18-year-olds, also offers evening ses-



The club features 23 stations of SHOKK-branded kit, as well as an exercise studio

sions for over-14s with dance music and strobe lighting, and there are special classes for five- to seven-year-olds.

For a £25 month-by-month contract (minimum three months), each member completes a six-session Tactics induction over three weeks covering themes from nutrition to mental health – to orientate them before they begin any set programme.

Young people are great at referrals, so the club offers a 'buddy hour' for a friend to use the facility for free. Non-members can access the classes for £3.50; once kids use the club, Jane says the conversion rate is high. An 80 per cent retention rate is also being achieved.

With a target of 500 members in the first year and 300 members to break even, Mickey hopes the focus on group memberships will continue. "I prefer the big daytime contracts from the PCT and schools, rather than individual members, as they keep your income coming in and reduces the demand after school – which means we know more of our kids at night,



The Zone at Brixton Recreation Centre features a fitness zone with equipment from SHOKK

creating a family feel and maintaining a higher level of personal service."

Blackpool SHOKK has six school contracts which, in any one session, could fill the club with 90 kids – just short of its 95-person capacity. It also has links with local youth sports clubs, offering corporate discounts to players who don't want full access to the classes but want sports-specific programmes; this is where the demand for personal training is expected to grow. The club similarly offers special rates of £18 a month for young people in low-income families, tax credits and sibling discounts, so no one who wants to get fit is excluded.

KEEP IT FRESH

Although some of the club's 240 members are obese, a lot of the children are simply getting away with not doing PE at school; it's more of a fitness problem, says Mickey. "Most kids can't lift 1kg above their heads or run on a treadmill for more than 90 seconds."

When working to get kids active, you have to "keep it fresh and keep it moving", advises Murphy. Mickey agrees: "For this generation of kids, fitness isn't a main goal – entertainment is – and a youth gym has to strike this balance." Blackpool SHOKK does this in a number of ways, from rotating the equipment each month to delivering member feedback and fitness tests every eight weeks, as well as through a range of incentives and competitions that add that key element of engaging youth: variety.

"We have some young people who will never win a running competition, but who are great on the interactive equipment. One girl in particular can beat anyone hands-down on the Dance Mats and it's a huge confidence boost for her to win something physical against a guy that runs for Lancashire," says Jane. "The kids will do anything if you make it competitive, whether it's competing on the Dance Mats or running on a treadmill in teams or relays," adds Mickey.

Incentives include awards and a points-based system designed to encourage participation and control behaviour. Kids are expected to misbehave, but to minimise anti-social behaviour, there's a 'three strikes' policy whereby youth can lose their membership. Points, normally saved up and exchanged for smoothies and SHOKK-branded sportswear, can also be taken away.

The club has three REPs-accredited instructors: a full-time



GYMS FOR KIDS

SHOKK Blackpool is part of a growing trend towards standalone gyms kids can call their own. Other recently-opened sites include:

T2, Northampton (pictured above)

– An independent, 3,983sq ft club catering for seven- to 16-year-olds. The club features equipment from ZigZag, Trixter bikes and a boxing circuit, while classes include mountain biking, dance mat disco, dodge ball, hip hop, and FitPro's Team Combat and Aero Jam.

The Zone, Huddersfield – A

1,808sq ft health and fitness venue part of a 46,500sq ft complex affiliated to Huddersfield Football Club and the Huddersfield Giants rugby team. Run by the Sporting Pride Community Trust, the club features a SHOKK-equipped gym zone and SHOKK dance mats, a learning zone, a sports zone with two of the largest third-generation indoor

pitches in Yorkshire, and a kids zone with a large soft play area.

The Zone, Brixton – A 10,010sq ft centre for 5 to 15-year-olds, built on an entire floor of Brixton Recreation Centre as part of Lambeth Council's £2.85m refurbishment of its 1980s facility. Managed by Greenwich Leisure, it features an energy zone designed by Vector with interactive games, a fitness zone with equipment from SHOKK, and an enclosed area for interactive and dance mat classes from ZigZag.

NG Kids, Swindon – Opened by Next Generation Clubs at its £12m Swindon site, this 7,965sq ft facility for kids and their families has its own separate entrance. The offering includes a multi-sports hall, activity rooms with ZigZag dance mats and an eight-station Nintendo Wii, an ITC Learning Zone, a multi-age sports frame and outdoor activity area, a café and a crèche.

duty manager, a class instructor, and a part-time freelance trainer who teaches street dance and breakdancing. All have completed SHOKK's core training and development workshops, teaching them how to manage young people in a gym setting, communication styles, child protection, and health and safety. "Instructors can make or break a club," insists Murphy.

Murphy feels the SHOKK standalone model is a winning formula. "It's the balance of all the different aspects: training, enthusiasm and brand," he explains. "You could have all the equipment in a room you want, but it's not going to make a facility successful. You need to create an area with a balance between health and fitness and fun, and then train and enthuse your staff."

"Over the years there's been the attitude that standalone kids' gyms don't work – and many attempts to establish facilities have gone belly up. The standalone side of the company has been bubbling for some time, and now vital support is also available from the local community, from education and from local government in terms of campaigns like Change4Life. 18 months ago, a private organisation [doing this type of venture] really didn't get any support, but now Jane has been able to establish direct links with a sport co-ordinator from the Youth Sports Trust. I think this has been a real barrier to setting up a private standalone as opposed to within a club." ●



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From energy efficiency to funky design, the latest air conditioning and ventilation systems offer a range of innovations. We round up some of the latest

Clean COOL

VENT-AXIA VENTILATION FOR DONCASTER SPORTS PAVILION ▶

LEISURE-KIT KEYWORD: VENT-AXIA

The new £750,000 Town Field sports pavilion in Doncaster features a Vent-Axia low energy heat recovery ventilation solution.

The system, installed by Waveform Services, features six Vent-Axia PAC315 ducted in-line fans serving the facility's main changing areas. These units are 30 per cent shorter than conventional in-line fans and include an inclined inlet and bellmouth entry, claimed to direct incoming air to the impeller with minimal turbulence for better air management, reduced noise and higher ventilation efficiency and performance.

Vent-Axia's HR300 and HR200 units provide ventilation to the other changing areas. The HR300 is a standalone



heat exchange unit said to be capable of transferring 70 per cent of outgoing heat to incoming air at a 300m³/hr airflow. The HR200W Kisa self-contained heat recovery unit with two mixed flow fans and a high performance polymeric heat exchange cube is designed to provide temperature-based efficiency of up to 75 per cent and an airflow rate of 200m³/hr.



LG MAKES AIR CONDITIONING ARTY

LEISURE-KIT KEYWORD: LG

LG Electronics has launched an air treatment unit featuring a front panel that can be adapted to hold any image, from a painting to a marketing message.

The Art Cool units, aimed at the designer appliance market, come with an infrared remote control that allows guests to control air circulation, fan operation, room temperature, sleep mode, operation mode and single-event, and 24-hour timer function. When used at hotels, the system is claimed to ensure no loss of performance in rooms in heating mode when one guest switches to cooling.

All models are fitted with an air purifier to combat airborne bacteria and particles, claimed to remove dust, house mites and pollen to help prevent allergies.

An Art Cool Mirror is also available, featuring a wall-mounted mirror in either mirror finish or in a choice of pastel shades.

COOLER FITNESS THANKS TO WALTER MEIER ▼

LEISURE-KIT KEYWORD: WALTER

Walter Meier (Climate UK) has recently completed installation of a Hitachi VRF air conditioning system at the University of Sheffield's S10health fitness centre.

As well as meeting increased cooling demands, the new system is expected to achieve energy savings of around 15 per cent compared to the previous system.

S10health is a state-of-the-art fitness centre with 150 pieces of equipment over two floors. Increasing use of electrical equipment in recent years, combined with the growing popularity of the centre and a consequent rise in occupancy, meant that the existing VRF system was no longer able to meet cooling demands,



while noise levels were also proving to be a nuisance to users.

The new two-pipe Set Free system provides up to 80kW of cooling, controlled to match heat loads. A recuperator was also added to the air handling system so that extract air can be used to pre-cool incoming air.

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'



▲ DIMPLEX AIR CURTAINS FOR STAVELEY LEISURE CENTRE

LEISURE-KIT **KEYWORD:** DIMPLEX

Staveley, Derbyshire's Healthy Living Centre has installed Dimplex ARC architectural air curtains as part of its energy saving measures.

The Dimplex ARC architectural air curtains are claimed to limit heat losses through the doors of the leisure centre, while contributing to the building's design aesthetics.

The air curtains feature automatic heat and fan speed control dependent on footfall through the door and

adjustable thermostatic operation.

They also feature links to integrate the units within a BMS/BEMS building energy management system, a feature which is said to provide close control over running costs.

The curtains are available in a choice of painted, brushed or polished stainless steel finishes, and when wider entrances are required multiple units can be linked together as a continuous system, operated from a single control point.

▼ COSAF BRINGS BREEZAIR TO GOLD'S ▼

LEISURE-KIT **KEYWORD:** COSAF

CoSaf Environments recently completed an installation of the Breezair evaporative cooling system at the new Gold's Gym in Camberley.

The system is said to be providing the 1,500sq m club with 80 per cent savings on running costs, as the only power-consuming components required are a fan and small water pump.

Four Breezair Icon coolers have been installed, removing stale air through extractor fans and distributing cool air via a low velocity FabricDuct. An Industrial Wall Controller (IWC) allows the gym to control cooling.

The system is housed in plastic casing said to withstand all weather conditions. Components include a world-patented water distribution system delivering continuous, balanced water coverage to all heat exchanger pads to ensure cooling efficiency and minimal maintenance problems.



► CALOR UNVEIL NEW LPG ENERGY SYSTEM ►

LEISURE-KIT **KEYWORD:** CALOR

An energy-efficient LPG driven gas heat pump from Sanyo has been launched for sports clubs and leisure centres requiring heating and cooling.

Available through LPG supplier Calor and distributor Oceanair, the system provides heating and cooling for non mains gas area commercial applications with a limited electricity supply.

With LPG emitting 19 per cent less CO2 per kWh than heating oil, the product is said to also offer significant benefits for rurally based properties such as hotels and golf clubs. In addition, the product can also be used in inner-city areas, in applications where there is a lack of three-phase power and inadequacies in the mains gas supply.

The heat pump is a variable refrigerant flow air conditioning system and can be run on LPG or

natural gas. It comprises an internal combustion engine which drives a refrigeration compressor to produce heating and/or cooling; it's claimed to be the only three pipe VRF air conditioning system available in Europe that can run on LPG. Three pipes allow simultaneous heating and cooling, and there is also a two-pipe option for heating or cooling.

The gas heat pump delivers environmentally-friendly heat, and 'free' hot water if required, while providing energy efficient air conditioning and reducing electrical demand. The product is said to be more than 100 per cent efficient, achieving 140 per cent efficiency in heating and 160 per cent efficiency in cooling, leading to potential savings of around 40 per cent.

There is also an optional 4kW generator which provides 'free' electricity by maximising the efficient running of the product.



With finances tight for local government, the improvement agenda for cultural services launched last year as *A Passion for Excellence* is now more relevant than ever, CLOA honorary secretary John Bell argues



A PASSION FOR SURVIVAL

When *A Passion for Excellence* was launched in March 2008, the foreword by Andy Burnham, secretary of state for culture, media and sport, and Chris White, chair of the local government association culture, tourism and sport board, discussed three key developments: the value of culture and sport in the wider economy; the greater emphasis on expertise and good judgement when looking to improve standards and raise performance; and the need to be open minded about who's best placed to deliver services, and to trust people in the community to know what services they want and need.

Since then, we've seen the biggest downturn in the UK economy for years, and the question is how local services are going to cope with the effects. These effects are already being felt by the culture and leisure sector – leisure centres and health clubs are facing falling income levels, and the whole publicly-provided leisure sector could face massive financial cuts over the next two years. In these circumstances, it is reasonable to ask what relevance the improvement agenda has.

KEY MESSAGES

To answer this question we need to re-examine the messages in *A Passion for Excellence*. One of the key ideas discussed in the strategy is that local cultural services need to challenge themselves through self-assessment and peer-led review, and through providing evidence of impact on key outcomes such as

stronger communities and the health and well being of children, young people and adults.

Regional Culture and Sport Improvement and Efficiency Networks are being developed to encourage and facilitate that challenge. These networks are providing resources to enable local cultural services to challenge themselves. Resources include:

- Training on how to use the culture and sport improvement toolkit (www.idea.gov.uk) and the facilitation of 'clusters' of authorities for peer-led challenge. Lancashire and Cumbria have embarked on a powerful programme of self-assessment and peer challenge using the toolkit.
- The facilitation of sub-regional improvement networks where all authorities and cultural partners (Sport England, the Museum, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) and the Arts Council) are examining how to collaborate around shared issues and shared agendas.
- The facilitation of connections with Regional and Sub-Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships (RIEPs). These partnerships are sponsored by the government and include all local services. Culture and sport are beginning to benefit from the RIEPs – £100,000 has been obtained from the West Midlands RIEP for the Culture and Sport Improvement Network. The West Midlands network has agreed three priorities: research and intelligence – the issue of data; leadership development – improving advocacy; and delivering more for less.

Resources are also available at sub-regional level. Merseyside Improvement and Efficiency Partnership has already invited bids for improvement and efficiency projects to run from 2009-2011. One of the key questions on the Merseyside application form asks what savings are anticipated from the project.

HOW TO COPE

What then, are the benefits of embracing the Improvement and Efficiency agenda going forward? First, we need to be realistic about the likely scale and impact of reductions in local authority budgets for culture and sport. In many parts of the country the message is bleak and leisure managers are facing severe budget reductions. How to cope is the question. Coping will, in my view, be easier if there's a strong sub-regional cultural improvement and efficiency network in place.



Leisure centres and fitness clubs are facing falling income levels

There are a number of good case studies on how sport and physical activity can impact health, but less acknowledged is the value of culture and sport to youth service and adult social care, Bell argues

The network could help by:

- Improving advocacy for culture and sport in the sub-region
- Sharing good practice in contributing to corporate agendas
- Developing self-assessment and internal challenge to current provision
- Examining how collaboration could provide efficiencies

Let us look at these in more detail:

ADVOCACY

We need to find new ways of advocating the benefits of cultural services to communities. Advocacy is even better if someone else does it on your behalf! This implies finding new champions in positions of influence, and that means proving the worth of cultural services to those potential champions.

CONTRIBUTING TO THE WIDER CORPORATE AGENDA

There are a number of good case studies on how sport and physical activity can impact health, both mental and physical. A number of leisure managers obtained funding from primary care trusts to provide healthy living programmes; that contribution is now fully acknowledged. But perhaps less common is the acknowledgement of the value of culture and sport to youth service or adult social care, and the commissioning of cultural services to deliver outcomes for those services.

SELF ASSESSMENT AND PEER CHALLENGE

To survive and prosper in the new economic climate, cultural services have got to prove they are 'match fit'. Badges such as Charter Mark, Quest and Green Flag will not be enough. Evidence of a robust challenge system will help to demonstrate that cultural services have undergone a systematic evaluation and have an improvement and efficiency plan. Working through the culture and sport improvement toolkit as described earlier should deliver these vital improvements and efficiencies.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP

Culture and sport have a strong tradition of working in partnership with a variety of internal and external agencies. Partnerships such as County Sports Partnerships have provided additional services and access to funding from Sport England. And Local Authority Strategic Partnership bodies such as Crime and Disorder Partnerships and Children and Young People's Trusts can provide funding for projects and cultural services that deliver their outcomes. But perhaps the next phase of collaboration will be between councils to jointly provide a service such as archives or museums, achieving economies. Or to look to external partners such as County Sports Partnerships to deliver sports development for a sub-region. Even more radical alternatives will need to be examined if culture and sport are to survive in the future. ●

WRAP

Paul Mathers, WRAP programme manager for agriculture, landscape and regeneration, talks about his organisation's quest to promote compost use for sports turf and green spaces, diverting waste from landfills in the process

What is WRAP?

Wrap (Waste & Resources Action Programme) is a not-for-profit organisation established in 2000 and funded by the administrations of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We're about assisting the government in meeting the landfill diversion targets. It's our job to find markets and outlets for waste that goes to landfill – all the waste streams, like construction, plastics and bottles. The team I work for is organics, so that's green waste, compost, food waste collected from households. We identify waste streams and try and help the markets develop so we can find an outlet for them and divert them from landfill.

What work do you do in the sport and leisure field?

It's mainly two aspects: sport surfaces and sports grass, and if it's a building development we assist in restoring brownfield land.

We do lots of work in manufacturing growing mediums. So if someone wants soil for turf or public open spaces, we provide them with specifications and knowledge for using locally-sourced compost, mixing it with onsite materials and soils, to manufacture the growing medium instead of importing topsoil. We're trying to cut carbon emissions by not importing this.

And when it's a development, such as a leisure centre or a restoration of a public open space, we don't want people sending perfectly good surplus soils and excavation materials to

landfill. We encourage them to keep these materials and combine them with compost to manufacture the growing medium.

We also realise that landscape architects and groundsmen need a specification. So we do demonstration trials and research into all the products so we can provide specifications.

What products do you research and promote?

Two forms of compost. The first, source-segregated green waste, is waste that's collected by local authorities from individual's houses and gardens. It's taken to processing sites and goes through a certified process. We've provided the industry with a standard for this, BSI PAS100. It's a recognised standard for producing what we call quality compost.

So we're encouraging local authorities to collect the waste and rather than putting it to landfill to process it into quality compost and provide it to the industry to manufacture the soil.

There's another form of diversion that we're just embarking on now, and that's food waste, collected by local authorities from individuals' kitchens. We're encouraging the use of in-vessel composting, IVC for short, and anaerobic digestion or AD – particular processing streams whereby you can process food waste into, again, a compost or a digestate. It's processed to a different standard, BSI PAS110 which is just about to be published. And again it's a quality compost that you can mix with other materials to produce a growing medium.

What impact have you had on the sport and leisure industry so far?

Figures from a market survey of the UK composting industry for 2006-2007 show an increase in the use of compost in the sports turf sector. In 2006-2007 65,000 tonnes was used, compared with 22,000 tonnes in 2005-2006.

CASE STUDY

Monifieth Golf Links

A 12-month trial sponsored by WRAP, the first of its kind in the UK, investigated the benefits of compost use on a coastal golf course.

Run by waste management training and consultancy provider Wamcal Ltd between September 2006 and September 2007, the trial involved the application of 40 tonnes of locally-sourced BSI PAS 100 compost as a top dressing for tees and as a divot mix.

In the trial, turf treated with compost was greener and less patchy, and retained moisture better than turf treated with the conventional top-dressing, fensoil. The compost also led to a fairly neutral soil PH being maintained across the course.

At £14 per tonne delivered, the compost cost a third of fensoil dressing. With two 29 tonne loads of fensoil required at the course per year, annual savings would be around £1,620.



Turf was treated with compost during the trial at Monifieth

The compost took longer to be incorporated into the soil than the fensoil and made for temporarily muddy turf, but it was observed that this could be corrected by screening the compost to a finer grade, mixing it with sand and aerating the soil before spreading.

"We were encouraged by the performance of the compost, which offers

an environmentally friendly and technically sound alternative to conventional products," said Scott Rennie, course manager at Monifieth. "We were also pleased with its overall performance on the tees and on the practice target green where consistency of growth and depth of colour noticeably increased in time for the Open Championship."



As part of its work with the leisure sector, WRAP also supports Coca-Cola Enterprises' Recycle Zone programme, which has provided bins to Thorpe Park, Legoland Windsor and Chessington World of Adventures to make recycling easy for visitors. Recycle Zones at other visitor attractions are in the pipeline, according to WRAP packaging programme manager Claire Shrewsbury



What's the most successful sport and leisure project you've been involved with recently?

Monifieth Golf Links in Scotland, where they used green waste on their fairways and greens. We've heard from the green-keeper that he's used less fertiliser, he's got good growth, and there's an element of disease suppression as well.

So there are benefits for operators as opposed to just for the environment?

Yes, it's a good, environmentally-sustainable material, and all the guys in the sports turf and restoration industry are looking for a sustainable solution, but there are some cost benefits as well, so it's a win-win situation.

We would have a hard job if we were saying it's a sustainable material but actually it's going to cost you a little bit more. But if you display, as we did at Monifieth golf course, that you can save on digestates and fertilisers, these guys know they're going to be saving quite a bit of money, especially in this age where the price of oil-based fertilisers is still really high.

How receptive has the sector been to your initiative?

We've found that generally these guys are open. But what they have to do is prove it on the ground. So it's our job to commu-

What we've found now is that we need to get out there more and communicate this message, and that's probably the phase we're going into next. Awareness is relatively low, but that's not because people are reluctant to use these practices

nicate these benefits to the guys that use it, and then help them demonstrate it. We fund demonstration trials where we may work with one organisation but invite other organisations to look at the results and then publish the results within the trade.

Are these green practices catching on in the sector?

It's starting to be used more widely. It was WRAP's job to get the results from these trials so that we can actually show them the benefit, and what we've found now is that we need to get out there more and communicate this message, and that's probably the phase we're going into next. Awareness is relatively low at the moment, but that's not because people are reluctant to use these practices.

What should operators do if they're interested in working with you?

In the first instance look at our website, www.wrap.org.uk – watch the website, as we hold workshops and training events. ●

What's the X-factor between Roger Federer now and Roger Federer last year? What kept Tony Blair walking on water Question Time after Question Time? The answer is the same: chutzpah, aka confidence and self-belief.

How to keep a grip and remain confident

Customers don't just want cheap in the current climate – they want professionalism, good value and a good time

Confidence is one of those unusual characteristics, rather like courage, which is very hard to manufacture but almost impossible to be effective without. In these challenging times, it's hard for an operation to remain confident and avoid the temptation to cut costs and quality in a vain attempt to gain customer satisfaction.

Paradoxically, there's plenty of evidence that what customers really want is to visit enterprises with a strong sense of their own value – and the professionalism to stay at the top of their game. "Never let them see your fear" is as important in the hospitality business today as it was when those early heroes of the British Empire strode boldly into a ring of savages intent on cooking them for supper.

Confident self-belief is what makes a good chef great; it's what turns an ordinary evening into a special occasion. You can feel it in the air when you walk into a place, and you'll never find it in any establishment run by Basil Fawlty.

It's too often forgotten that actually, most people go out to a restaurant, hotel or leisure facility to have a good time. Having a good time means they need to believe what they're getting is good value and well-presented, and that the operators and staff actually care about them.



A successful partnership in this regard – happy customers, capable caring staff – is what creates an enjoyable occasion. The operation needs to deliver and the client needs to feel valued. A good website, like the good visit itself, engenders this sense of confidence and self-worth.

In the current harsh climate, it's easy to think that what customers want is cheap and cheerful, rather than good quality and good value. Ask any hard-pressed consumer and they'll tell you that what

they want is something that's worth the money and worth the effort. A good host doesn't undersell his operation and try and make the ordinary seem worthwhile simply by offering it more cheaply.

Hard times mean hard choices

In the current climate, it's really a question of survive and thrive or curl up and die.

If you try to cut corners, reduce the offering, reduce the quality, save on staff, neglect your best customers, you will simply not get through.

If you embrace the need to do that little bit more, cherish your customers, let them know you care, give a little bit of extra added value wherever you can and, above all, keep up the quality, you will find that this difficult climate is survivable.

Every bit of business is worth having. Everyone who comes through your door needs to become a repeat customer.

Some of the best businesses have come out of recession stronger than they went in simply by putting customers first and not compromising on quality. A confident approach to selling what you are proud to offer at full value – and making sure the value is there for the customer – will get you noticed and appreciated more today than in the good years.

SENIOR'S SEVEN – SEVEN STEPS TO CONFIDENCE

1 Do what you know you do well – offer hospitality and the menu that you're good at delivering.

2 Dare to be different. Whether it's local ingredients locally-sourced or a special style of cooking, have a unique selling proposition and stick to it.

3 Have an enthusiastic and motivated team. Make sure your staff are happy with what they're offering and fully understand its appeal.

4 Greet your customers personally and ensure they feel personally valued.

5 Don't hide or ignore errors.

Nothing's ever perfect every time. If something doesn't work, if an ingredient isn't good enough, if the right wine hasn't been delivered – own up, apologise and offer to put it right.

6 Don't worry about the recession.

It won't go away but it won't kill you. If customers have entered your

establishment, they're there to spend money and enjoy themselves. Do what you do well.

7 Don't cut corners. Add value. Little touches that show you're trying your best work well. Distinctive canapés, good fresh bread, a complimentary digestif all help the customer relax and spend more. Scrimping and saving and charging for every little extra does the opposite.

A MASTERCLASS IN SIMPLE, CLEAR CONFIDENCE – THE YEW TREE AT HIGHCLERE

I've never been a particularly big fan of Marco Pierre White but he has experience, knowledge and a track record to envy. I'd never actually heard of the Yew Tree in the 'Hampshire Highlands' until the other day when I stumbled across it by entirely accident, wet and tired after a long walk in some rather poor spring weather. We didn't seek it out because of Mr White – it could have been run by anyone for all I knew – but we stopped in the car park, changed our soggy boots and entered what looked like a well run gastro pub.

From the first greeting: "Of course we've got a table, which one would you like?" to the last double espresso, everything was customer-focused. The menu was clearly written, the ingredients exactly as stated, the wine list stunningly good and the food faultless.

It was all offered without the slightest bit of pretension or fuss, as if offering simplicity and quality at this level was an everyday occurrence. Clearly it is for them – would that it were so everywhere.



The whole establishment was clearly professionally-managed, very busy and deserving of every positive epithet in this article. Whoever Marco has managing it deserves a pat on the back.

The Yew Tree offered a clearly written menu, a stunningly good wine list and faultless food

In the current climate, it's really a question of survive and thrive or curl up and die. If you try to cut corners, you will simply not get through.

Putting my money where my mouth is

Over the past few years, I've offered a fair amount of advice in these columns. All of it comes from hard-earned experience in hospitality and marketing.

But am I all mouth and no trousers? I have just taken a deep breath, embraced my own advice that a recession can be a good time to invest and taken ownership of a very well-established small hotel and excellent restaurant in deepest Wiltshire, Howard's House Hotel. I've been staying there for many years on fishing and shooting trips, and it's become something of a home from home for family events and celebrations.

With nine rooms, a brilliant walled garden and a superb chef, it's perfect for exclusive use occasions. Central Wiltshire is not immune from the economic realities facing the whole country, but it does have a discerning market of people who will continue to expect the best.

With Noële Thompson and Nick Wentworth in place, we have an excellent team, and I'll be putting to the test the advice I've so freely dispensed in these pages. I will let you know how it goes.

HOWARD'S HOUSE HOTEL – A WORK IN PROGRESS

I've stayed at Howard's House for the past sixteen years and very much enjoyed my time there.

It's a beautiful old building – a little bit of heaven on earth, really. Like all beautiful old buildings, it needs money spent on it, and my task will be to retain its charm while slightly improving its comfort. I'm blessed in these endeavours with a marvellous general manager and a great chef. They also have an in-depth team in every department of the operation.

My job will be to spend a little money and hopefully apply as much of my accumulated hospitality marketing wisdom as I can muster in a way that makes sense in the current climate. Our strategy will be to do everything to help the hotel fulfil its potential while retaining the commitment of its long-term and very loyal customer base. ●

Howard's House, a lovely property that deserves a helping of TLC



PHOTO: WWW.ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/STEPHEN WALLS



Getting Wine Right

Wine has the potential to increase sales and profit in every area of your business, but investment in wine education and preservation is vital, according to Clare Young, managing director of wine training and consultancy company Vintellec. She speaks to Vicky Kierlander

PHOTO: WWW.ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/WEBPHOTOGRAPHIER



PHOTO: WWW.ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/CARLOS ALVARIZ

Clare Young is gradually growing allergic to wine. It's an affliction that most of us would sympathise with, but is all the more unfortunate for Young given her occupation as a wine consultant. And not just any wine consultant. During her 18-year tenure at Cockburn & Campbell Limited, the subsidiary wine company of Young & Co.'s Brewery, Young drastically improved wine sales throughout the estate so that the company outperformed the market year on year. She now shares her knowledge with businesses ranging from independent pubs and bars to hotels and restaurant chains with her wine training and consultancy company, Vintellec. She'll also be delivering the wine education programme at the Licensed Business Show at LIW.

"It's not just about offering a good selection of wine, it's about attracting wine drinkers into an establishment and providing a great experience to increase sales and profit," says Young.

Wine's an accepted part of the UK leisure culture today, but that wasn't the case when Young joined the historic brewers in 1987. "I used to hate pubs because you couldn't get a decent glass of wine. In those days wine was served



Under Clare Young's direction, Young & Co.'s improved their bottom line by offering wine by the glass and becoming the first pub company to install a serious wine preservation system

from an optic cabinet or was available on draught," she shudders.

Young was determined it would be different on her watch. "I was on a mission to change the way things were done and so as fast as they were putting in wine on tap, I was taking it out."

After winning over the board, Young made wine stations and displays part of each pub refurbishment and set to work convincing publicans of the need to introduce wine by the glass. And under her direction, Young's was the first pub company to install a serious wine preservation system. The result of all was a surge in wine sales throughout the estate.

EDUCATE STAFF FOR GREATER REWARDS

With these credentials it's easy to see why Young's skills are in demand, but do operators still need to be educated about wine today when it's rare to find a pub, bar or hotel that doesn't offer a wine selection? Apparently so, and particularly in these troubling times, says Young.

"Now is the time of survival of the fittest where owners and operators have to get everything right, and that includes wine."

Often considered a difficult product, wine can get neglected, but operators

do this at their peril, she warns. "Wine presents a massive opportunity to increase your customer base by attracting wine-drinkers who also bring their food-eating friends, which all helps to increase sales and profit. Operators are missing a trick if they don't make wine work for them."

It's for this reason that Young is a strong advocate of wine education and runs BIAB and WSET accredited courses as well as bespoke courses for both management and general staff.

LICENSED BUSINESS SHOW AT LIW

Clare Young will be hosting and delivering the wine education programme at the Licensed Business Show at LIW this September. Free to attend, the presentations will target owners, buyers and managers from pubs, bars and clubs as well as other licensed leisure venues, and will focus on introducing a sales and training culture into your business. Delegates will discover how wine can help them increase both sales and profit in every area of their business, not just wine. They will learn how to implement a wine-by-the-glass programme and how to train their staff to develop their understanding of wine, increase their confidence and ultimately, increase sales.

Other aspects of the presentations will include marketing strategies to attract more wine drinkers and ways to work with wine suppliers to boost profit. For more information on the opportunities available as part of Vintellect's wine programme at LIW, contact Chris Brown on 020 7955 3968 or email chris.brown@ubm.com.

Conducted on site or online, the courses teach everything from the history of wine and the various wine classifications to wine tasting, serving and food matching as well as marketing and merchandising.

She says the benefits of investing in wine education will be felt across the business and by both staff and customers alike. Giving staff a greater understanding of wine gives them the confidence to recommend better quality wines to customers, so when someone asks for a house wine they can make

TOP TIPS

1. Educate your staff about wine
2. Get advice on your wine list
3. Negotiate with suppliers for the best deals
4. Offer a good selection of wine by the glass
5. Invest in a quality wine preservation system

other suggestions from the menu. By engaging with customers in this way, staff make clients feel special and deliver an entirely different experience.

Introducing this culture into a business also helps sales, as testified by Chris Lewis, Bill Licensee of the Year 2008. As managing partner of Staffordshire-based hospitality group The Lewis Partnership, Lewis received the award for his work at The Swan Hotel, which he re-opened in 2002 following a modernisation of the historic former coaching inn. Vintellect's Max Your Wine Sales training gave his staff greater confidence to up-sell wines leading to an eight per cent increase in wine sales on a like for like basis. The company is also now selling more quality wines with higher profit margins.

His experience comes as no surprise to Young, who says most people like to receive a recommendation from staff and when they get one are prepared to spend up to 25 per cent more on a glass or bottle of wine. "If house wines represent 80 per cent of sales, you can reverse this by training staff to make recommendations and up-sell," she says.

As well as benefiting the bottom line, educating staff can increase their motivation, helping to boost retention levels. Some operators also say the interactive nature of the online courses helps to improve the language skills of their foreign-born employees.

REVAMP YOUR MENU

The industry has come a long way since Young joined the family-owned brewers, but publicans as well as restaurant, bar and hotel operators still have much to learn about wine and its potential.

For example, although operators offer a wide selection of wine today, many would benefit from changes to their wine menu. And a few tweaks from an expert is all it takes, says Young: "We were able to increase sales by 20 per cent after altering the layout and presentation of a client's wine list and we didn't even change their wine selection."

Operators must also ensure they get the most from their suppliers, working them harder, negotiating on price and shopping around for the best deals. And those who have invested in a wine preservation system should use it properly to ensure that every glass of wine is sold in optimum condition, which is one of Young's particular bugbears. "I'm terrified of ordering wine by the glass, because they're just not properly looked after."

Wine starts to oxidize the second the bottle is opened, but it's hard to get staff to use the vacuum systems when customers are lining 10-deep at the bar, so they often wait until they end of night to do it. By that time it's often too late and the quality of the wine has already started to deteriorate, which affects the next customer who buys a glass. But would the

average customer really notice the difference? "If you're lucky they might just think that particular wine was a poor choice, but if you're unlucky they might think your wine serves out of condition or just poor quality wine and they won't come back."

The fact is, if operators invest wisely in wine preservation systems, they can dramatically increase their margins by selling better quality wine by the glass, says Young. She recently advised a well-known restaurant chain to encourage waiting staff to tell customers that they were now offering prosecco by the glass. In one venue where this was introduced as a standard working practice, sales went from two to 33 bottles a week.

Many operators are afraid to sell expensive wines by the glass, but this is a wasted opportunity, says Young. "Most people won't buy a £40 bottle of wine unless they are sure they are going to like it. If they're able to try a glass first, they're more likely to buy the bottle."

Young estimates that a small operation selling 1,000 cases of wine a year can add at least £12,000 to its bottom line by investing £500 to £1,000 in wine education and a preservation system.

"Wine plays an important role in our dining and going out experience, but often gets neglected. And you don't have to spend a lot to get a quick return, which in today's environment is good news for everyone." ●

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SPA WITH RARE TEA

The Rare Tea Company is expanding into the wellness market with a number of new entries into spas.

The ingredients from the teas can be incorporated into bathing rituals, as well as being used in refreshments. Currently popular types include the Jasmine Silver Tip Tea, scented with fresh jasmine flowers, and the Flowering Silver Tip Tea.

A selection from the company's range will soon appear at the spa in Blythwood Square hotel in Glasgow, Scotland.

leisure-kit keywords: rare tea

TECHNOGYM LAUNCHES EXCITE VARIO AND VISIO

A number of new products were launched by Technogym at the FIBO trade show held in Germany.

Technogym's first new product was Excite VARIO (pictured), a cross-trainer that follows the user's stride and automatically adapts to the desired movement – from the classical vertical step to a simple walk or a long stride – with no adjustment of the controls. The natural movement of the legs is combined with arms movement to offer a balanced and effective workout.

Also launched was VISIO, a user-friendly, digital 15-17" interface for CV equipment. It offers programme options and a variety of entertainment features, including seamless integration with the iPod and iPhone.

It also offers operators a tool to communicate with members, understand their expectations and improve the club business model.



Also launched were a new range of PURE Strength benches and the Studio Bike, an indoor evolution of the Italian professional road bikes, with an aluminium frame and non-slip handles.

leisure-kit keywords: technogym



BESPOKE FURNITURE FROM PARMAR & PARMAR

Parmar & Parmar is in the process of further extending its bespoke range of interior and exterior furniture and adornments for commercial environments.

The UK-based company supplies exclusively designed pieces, such as inlaid glass tables (pictured) and hand-painted silk pictures; undertakes individual projects and stocks an array of reclaimed Indian furniture and artefacts, all personally chosen for their beauty, uniqueness and heritage.

The company works alongside international architectural, interior and landscape designers, the hospitality and spa industry and private clients.

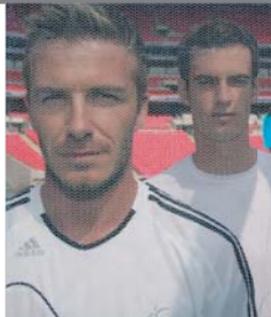
leisure-kit keywords: parmar and parmar

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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HARROD AT WEMBLEY

David Beckham and Andy Murray recently took centre stage at Wembley Stadium to promote the ongoing battle against malaria.

The two stars pitted their tennis and football skills against each other in a unique sporting spectacle to promote the launch of Malaria No More UK, a not-for-profit organisation committed to ending suffering and death caused by malaria, which is a preventable disease.

The football and tennis nets were replaced with special nets manufactured from blue mosquito netting to highlight the fact that one of the most simple and effective ways of preventing the spread of malaria is through the provision of mosquito nets. The special nets were provided by sports equipment manufacturer Harrod UK.

leisure-kit keywords: harrod uk



FLEX WITH PROACTIVE

The latest launch from supplier ProActive is the FlexOring.

Inspired by the famous Magic Circle of the Pilates method, the FlexOring can be used for stretching and light resistance training or for a more difficult muscle-strengthening workout that increases resistance in total safety.

With 10 handles, the FlexOring offers a lightweight alternative to resistance equipment as well as a wide variety of exercises, helping to boost the major muscle groups including abdominals, arms, the back, pectoral, glutes and quads.

Established in 1992, ProActive Health has supplied commercial-quality products for group fitness, personal training, rehabilitation and therapy to the UK health and fitness industry for more than 16 years.

leisure-kit keywords: proactive



VENDING FOR AFRICA

Twenty rural African communities now have a constant supply of clean, disease-free water for the first time, thanks to a Liverpool City Council vending initiative.

A year ago, the council agreed a contract with vending operator Autobar to supply bottles of Thirsty Planet water to machines in its 15 leisure centres.

From every bottle sold, a donation of 5p goes to the charity Pump Aid, which helps impoverished people gain access to clean water and adequate sanitation. Thirsty Planet accounts for 40 per cent of vending sales in Liverpool leisure centres.

Pump Aid's water pump, nicknamed the Elephant pump, can supply 250 people with 40 litres of clean water a day and costs just £250 for materials.

The council has now reached gold status, awarded to organisations which have funded 10 or more pumps.

Thirsty Planet was launched in March 2007 and has raised more than £940,000 for Pump Aid.

leisure-kit keywords: autobar



RVR SYSTEM TO PROTECT SS GREAT BRITAIN

A CCTV system has been installed to watch over the SS Great Britain, situated at the Bristol dry dock to protect the ship from fire and vandalism.

Comprising seven dome cameras and passive infrared (PIR) detectors, the system also is monitored by Remote Video Response (RVR) at the company's control centre in Gloucester. The detectors can pick up any activity such as an attempt to climb aboard out-of-hours, which would set off an alarm while also transmitting images of the incident to the control centre.

The SS Great Britain was designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel and attracts between 150,000-170,000 visitors annually. RVR is part of UTC Fire & Security.

leisure-kit keywords: utc fire and security

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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'



PERSONAL PROTECTION

Personal protective equipment company ASEO has launched a new range of knife- and slash-resistant clothing.

The new product is manufactured from a material called Spectra, which is claimed to be pound for pound 15 times stronger than steel and 40 per cent stronger than Kevlar.

One of the items, the slash-resistant T-shirts, can be worn under a uniform or as part of a uniform with a company logo printed on the front. Unlike products containing Kevlar, the new garments can be worn directly onto the skin and have an extremely high strength to weight ratio, ensuring the garment is comfortable, with a high level of breathability.

ASEO currently supplies stab proof vests to the NHS, various councils and other public organisations.

leisure-kit keywords: aseo



TWO SPA LIFTS DEBUT

Two disability lifts specifically created to be used in above-ground spas, swimming pools and hot tubs have been launched by aquatic lift developer Aqua Creek Products.

The manual Super EZ Lift, a modified version of the EZ Lift, is operated by a hydraulic ram and has a lifting capacity of 400lb (181kg).

Meanwhile, the Super Power EZ Lift is a modified version of the Power EZ Lift and is designed to clear walls up to 10 inches thick. The Super Power EZ lift also has a 400lb lifting capacity and boasts a battery-assisted 'lift and lower' function, allowing for a smooth transition into and out of the water.

Both lifts are made of epoxy powder-coated stainless steel, and have a lifting capacity of 28.5 stones.

leisure-kit keywords: suntrap



NEW BALL FROM MOLTEN

Football manufacturer Molten has launched its latest football, the FIFA-approved VG-5000AW.

The football has been designed specifically for use in wet weather and has been manufactured using Molten-patented ACENTEC technology.

Instead of using the traditional hand-stitching technique, ACENTEC's cross-fusion bonding technique eliminates traditional stitching and stitch holes. This results in a ball that does not absorb water in wet weather conditions, enabling it to maintain a constant weight and shape throughout the game.

The absence of hand-stitched seams also produces a football with a smooth and even surface, preventing mud from adhering to the ball and creating a ball that can be controlled as easily in wet weather as in dry weather.

Manufactured in high-gloss, orange polyurethane skin with foam backing, the ball is available in size 5.

leisure-kit keywords: molten



REEBOK PARTNERS WITH CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

Reebok has launched a new group exercise experience in conjunction with the world-famous Cirque du Soleil entertainment company.

Touted as "a cure for your workout blues", the name of the class – Jukari Fit to Fly – comes from a world dialect meaning 'to play'. Using a specially-designed piece of equipment called the FlySet, which looks rather like a trapeze, the hour-long workout gives the sensation of flying while strengthening and lengthening the body through cardio, strength, balance and core training.

A trained instructor guides a class of up to 12 people through the workout moves, each using their own FlySet which is suspended from the studio ceiling.

leisure-kit keywords: reebok uk



WRAPPING UP 100 YEARS

Vehicle wrapping firm Totally Dynamic has completed the wrapping of a special double-decker bus that will promote the celebration of a 100 years of The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland.

The bus will tour round 100 schools, from the Borders to Shetland to spread the Society's centenary message of conservation, education and research.

The wrap on the exterior mirrors the rainforest theme that is found inside the bus and includes pictures of animals taken from Edinburgh Zoo and the Highland Wildlife Park in Kingussie in the Scottish Highlands, which is also owned by the Society.

Totally Dynamic also recently took delivery of a new printer with green credentials in order to increase its environmental standards as a company.

leisure-kit keywords: totally dynamic



SYNTHETIC HELP

Charterhouse has extended its range of equipment to help with the maintenance of artificial surfaces.

The Verti-Brush and Verti-Broom level and redistribute infill as well as sweeping the turf, while the Verti-Top (pictured) lifts the top layer of infill and filters it before returning the clean sand or rubber to the pitch and brushing in.

Although it is important to select the right synthetic surface, it is arguably even more crucial to maintain the surface throughout its lifespan as neglected synthetic pitches can lead to a shorter life for an expensive facility and injuries to players.

The company recommends brushing the surface around twice a week, with the infill being recycled, brushed and filtered approximately four to six times per annum.

leisure-kit keywords: charterhouse



JUMPING INTO FITNESS

German company TOGU has unveiled its latest product, the TOGU Jumper.

Distributed throughout the UK by HaB International, the Jumper is designed to provide a workout for the legs, torso, shoulders and arms.

The product uses Dynair technology, which is designed to take vibrations or oscillations from the user's activity and rebound them back to the user in a similar way to vibration training machines.

Suitable for group training within gyms and health clubs, the Jumper is said to be ideal for burning fat and as well as providing a cardiovascular workout. The Jumper also offers the non-slip surface offers a firm hold even when wet.

TOGU also offers the Jumper Mini for use by children.

Supplier HaB International – which incorporates Bodycare and Galiam Pro – offers a wide range of quality branded health related fitness, sports performance and wellness products.

leisure-kit keywords: hab international



WIND TURBINE ADDED TO RSPB CENTRE

A small-scale wind turbine has been installed at the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' (RSPB) Rainham Marshes centre in Purfleet, Essex.

Supplied by Proven Energy, the 15kW wind turbine has been put in place in a bid to reduce the site's carbon footprint. The turbine is to work in conjunction with the site's existing solar technology, and it is hoped that the two technologies will provide enough energy to power the entire 5m/s centre.

Alex Murley, small systems manager for the British Wind Energy Association said: "Proven Energy form part of a growing UK small scale wind industry which leads the world in low carbon product design."

leisure-kit keywords: proven energy

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Visiting exotic locales to test swimming pools and waterslides for their fun factor may not sound like work, but it's part of Tommy Lynch's job with First Choice Holidays, as Andrea Jezovit hears

Making a Splash

What's your job description?

Officially my title is lifestyle product development manager for families, and I work within the First Choice Innovation team. Our research shows that 92 per cent of kids asked spent every day on their holiday in the pool and that the most important thing is having a really cool pool. Since then I've been responsible for traveling the world to test some of the best pools and slides to see if they can be incorporated into our new 'Splash' programme, which is a collection of resorts with the most impressive water facilities for kids and their families.

I've just come back from a whistle stop tour of PortAventura on the Costa Dorada, and the First Choice Holiday Villages in Cyprus and the Algarve. Last year I was lucky enough to travel over 27,000 miles visiting potential 'Splash' resorts in the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Egypt, Turkey and Spain.

What does the 'pool tester' part of your job involve?

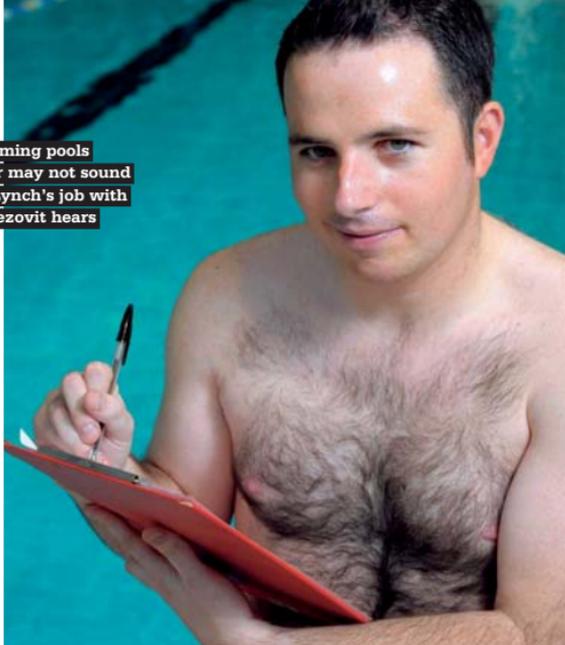
Our resort teams short-list the best pools in each destination and then I'll arrange a visit to properly test them. I look for three main criteria: the Splash Resorts have to be innovative, fun and have something for everyone. They should feature slides like a Master Blaster water coaster and Champagne Bowls, and include wave pools and lazy rivers - splash parks are a big crowd pleaser. Finally they need to have space, and lots of slides to ensure the waiting time for people queuing is as short as possible.

What does a typical day of pool testing consist of?

Before I arrive, we'll look through the specifications and give each hotel a proposed 'Splash' rating. It's then down to me to make sure the score is an accurate reflection by going down the flumes and testing their fun factor. We work with third party suppliers and dedicated consultants on any new build splash resorts to ensure that of those hotels, only those with the highest 'Splash' rating make the cut.

What's the best pool you've tested and why?

The best pool by far is the Aqua Fantasy in Turkey. It has its own



Profile

I started with First Choice many years ago when I finished my university degree in tourism and leisure while working part-time at a local travel agency. I became a holiday rep and loved it so much I did this for three years in four different destinations. After a variety of roles including a resort team manager in the Costa del Sol, I decided to move back to the UK and joined the team as a product executive. I eventually worked my way up to Lifestyle product development manager, and finally took on the Splash resort concept and my pool testing responsibilities.

water park which ticks all the right boxes with a giant wave pool, splash park, pirate ship as well as petrifying slides and an adventure river - there's something here for the whole family.

Are there any unusual elements to your job that people would be surprised to hear?

I'm head of the Cool Pool Board of directors, which is something that's impressed my family! The Cool Pool board includes seven children we found in a nationwide search in April who will be consulted on any new build Splash Resorts.

Pool testing sounds like a dream job, is it really?

I won't lie, it's a lot of fun. But in all seriousness, I enjoy making a difference to people's holidays. My aim is for the kids' first reaction to be 'wow!' when they see the resorts.

What's the most difficult part of the job?

More often than not I have to do my visits in the colder months when we have fewer customers in resorts, so the slide testing can really get my teeth chattering. I also find it difficult to break the bad news to resorts that haven't quite made the grade. Also, the desk part of my job is hard to come back to after one of my pool testing trips. As I'm out of the office a lot, I always come back to a mountain of paper work.

How do people react when you tell them your job is testing pools?

Generally they don't believe me. When I finally convince them it's true they think I've been a bit jammy landing this role. I'm sure there would be no shortage of applicants if I ever left. ●

Diary Dates

24 JUN 2009

BHA Annual Luncheon

Grosvenor House Hotel, London
An afternoon of food, awards, entertainment, and a lively guest speaker – London mayor Boris Johnson. Members of the BHA are also invited to attend this year's Annual General Meeting, which will take place, as usual, at 11.45 am at Grosvenor House.

Contact Marsha Phillips

Tel +44 (0)207 404 7744

Fax +44 (0)20 7404 7799

Email marsha.phillips@bha.org.uk

Web www.bha.org.uk

25 JUN 2009

Paris HOTelSPA 2009

RITZ Hotel, Paris, France

This full-day working session is set up around the theme of developing and refocusing hotel and spa projects. This theme will be discussed in speeches, round tables and a luncheon discussion, with the aim of facilitating learning, experience sharing and networking among top hotel executives, spa managers, owners and investors.

Contact Vlad Kovanic

Tel +33 143 21 0569

Fax +33 143 21 0460

Email vlad.kovanic@millenium-organization.com

Web www.parishotspa.com

25-26 JUN 2009

The Tourism Society Annual Conference

The Royal York Hotel

This event includes a conference with talks from leading UK tourism figures, a champagne reception and a dinner, as well as study tour of the Clarence Dock development and Royal Armouries Museum, with lunch to follow.

Contact Flo Powell

Tel +44 (0)208 6614636

Fax +44 (0)208 6614901

Email flo@tourismsociety.org

Web www.tourismsociety.org

02-03 JUL 2009

Inspiring a More Active Society

Chesford Grange Hotel, Warwickshire
The second National ISPAL Conference will focus on the new, innovative ways members of society are being inspired, to ensure we all become a more fit,

active and healthy nation. As part of this year's extended programme of activities, ISPAL will hold a gala awards dinner with two new and exciting awards up for grabs: The ISPAL Innovation Award and the The ISPAL Leadership Award.

Contact Joanna Rota

Tel +44 (0)118 929 8355

Fax +44 (0)118 929 8001

Email joanna.rota@ispal.org.uk

Web www.ispal.org.uk

29-30 JUL 2009

SPLASH! New Zealand Pool & Spa Trade Show

Hilton Auckland, New Zealand
Event for the pool, spa and outdoor industry aimed at pool builders, retailers, manufacturers, contractors, architects, landscapers and service technicians.

Contact Melanie Robertson

Tel +61 2 9660 2113

Fax +61 2 9660 9786

Email melanie@intermedia.com.au

Web www.splashnzexpo.co.nz

04 AUG 2009

FIA Golf Day

Staverton Park

This year's Golf Day event will take place at one of the Midlands' premier golf and country clubs, Staverton Park. The venue offers the perfect place to relax and catch up with industry friends, with networking opportunities for golfers and non-golfers alike.

Contact Katie Start

Tel +44 (0)1753 740074

Fax +44 (0)1753 740075

Email katie@promotepr.com

Web www.promotepr.com

08-09 AUG 2009

Sydney International Spa & Beauty Expo

Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre, Australia
Australia's largest trade event for the spa and beauty industries, providing the opportunity to source and experience the latest products, treatments, ideas and equipment.

Contact Tracey Sherwood-Jones

Tel +61 2 9422 2535

Fax +61 2 9993 8357

Email enquiries@internationalbeautyexpo.com.au

www.internationalbeautyexpo.com.au

12-16 AUG 2009

IDEA World Fitness Convention

Anaheim Convention Center, US
A selection of educational programming for fitness and wellness professionals. Innovative session ideas, seminars and a trade exhibition hall will be on offer along with opportunities for international networking.

Tel +1 800 999 4332 ext 7

Email idea.events.reply@ideafit.com

www.ideafit.com

18-20 AUG 2009

National Fitness Trade Show

Grand Sierra Resort

For the fifth consecutive year, this event joins with IHRSA's Club Business Entrepreneur Conference and the American Council on Exercise Fitness Symposium. The show will bring together a diverse group of independent health club operators and certified fitness professionals.

Tel +1 541 830 0400

www.nationalfitnesstradeshow.com

20-22 AUG 2009

International Sports Science & Sports Medicine Conference

University of Northumbria
The programme will bring together national and international experts, alongside those who work in the world of elite sport, to look at issues in the build up to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and beyond.

Contact David Roberts

Tel +44 (0)7703 134 219

Email david@roberts-partners.co.uk

www.issmc.com

27-28 AUG 2009

ARV Industry Conference (AquaRec)

Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre, Australia
The conference will explore the impact of the economic and environmental climates on the aquatic and recreation industry, providing delegates with practical advice through panels and workshops.

Contact Sharon Brasher

Tel (03) 8843 2000

Fax (03) 9890 5099

Email sbrasher@aquarecvc.org.au

www.aquarecvc.org.au



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