

# LEISURE management

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# CINEMAS SWEAT THEIR ASSETS

Cinemas have been a great place to put your money for the last 20 years as the multiplex market has grown from scratch, boomed and created big profits for operators and investors.

And just as it seemed the product lifecycle might have been moving into a mature phase, operators have invested in new technology to introduce 3D which has refreshed the offer, enabled a hike in ticket prices and brought a new phase of growth.

Another reason for the strong growth is the sector's increasing focus on 'sweating its assets' – finding new revenue streams to boost income during off-peak times.

All businesses which sell time have yield management challenges, so activities which fill gaps in the schedule can drive profit straight to the bottom line. Cinema has been getting good at this lately.

Operators have shifted their perspective and now view cinemas as venues with seats and a screen which can be used for a wide variety of events, from conferences to live opera screenings and rock concerts.

Anything that looks better on a big screen with raked seating is fair game for an airing in the cinema and potentially in 3D.

New York's Met Opera has done a deal with a number of cinema chains, which will see the screening of live, high-definition performances in 1,500 cinemas. In addition to enjoying the opera, customers are able to see identifiable opera house interiors, to make them feel they're really present in the experience.

The Met says the deal made a net profit of £9.5m last year, as well as increas-



"There are rumours that the London 2012 Olympics may in part be broadcast in 3D. Although no announcement has been made about cinema screenings, this would be a great way to make the event more accessible"

ing attendances at its base at the Lincoln Centre in New York by 10 per cent, due to the marketing impact of the screenings.

In London, The Royal Opera House, which owns a film production and distribution company called Opus Arte, has launched into 3D with the filming of Bizet's *Carmen* and there are more projects in the pipeline.

The market for live events is growing, but popular dates are often oversubscribed. Glastonbury Festival could sell its tickets four times over, for example, and this is just to people who are able to make the journey – the true scale of demand would be far larger if the event was screened locally.

There are rumours that the London 2012 Olympic Games may in part be broadcast in 3D. Although no announcement has been made about cinema screenings, this would be a great way to make this once-in-a-lifetime event more accessible.

Cinema's diversification is truly inspiring, setting a lead that other leisure operations with off-peak time and yield management challenges could follow to boost profits.

Liz Terry, Editor [liz@leisuremedia.com](mailto:liz@leisuremedia.com)

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### Buyers' guide:

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



## Andermatt resort spa details revealed

TOM WALKER

The 426-bedroom Chedi Andermatt Hotel at the skiing resort of Andermatt in the Swiss Alps will include a 1,620sq m (17,000sq ft) luxury spa when it opens in 2013.

Facilities at the spa, designed by Zürich-based architects Hotz Architekten AG, include 10 treatment rooms; a 125sq m (1,350sq ft) relaxation zone; indoor and outdoor swimming pools; a sauna world with a number of saunas, steamrooms and plunge pools and a 290sq m (3,100sq ft) health and fitness club.



The spa boasts a total of 14 treatment rooms

## Pullman Resort and Spa opens in Lijiang

TOM WALKER

French hotel giant Accor has opened Pullman Lijiang Resort & Spa, its fourth Pullman-branded resort in China.

Accommodation comprises 75 villas and 51 deluxe rooms and a luxury spa operated by Mandara. Facilities at the spa include a total of 14 treatment rooms – each with its private shower and consisting of four luxury double suites; four couples rooms; three single treatment rooms; and two private outdoor treatment suites; and a wet treatment suite.

## China eyeing up plans for Eden Project

TOM WALKER

A new sister site for Cornwall's Eden Project could be developed in China as part of efforts to expand the concept to overseas locations.

According to the BBC, Eden Project director Tim Smit believes that work could commence on the Chinese version of the attraction within 18 months. In 2008, Smit told *Attractions Management* that discussions had started to take Eden overseas. It was also reported that Singapore is also in line for a similar attraction.

## Work starts on Nigerian resort

TOM WALKER

Construction has begun on the NGN49bn (US\$268m, £167m, £90m) Delta Leisure Resort in the Warri and Asaba Cities of Delta State, Nigeria.

The large resort will be designed as a major tourist attraction and has been touted as the 'first of its kind' in West Africa. The first phase is due to open at the end of 2013.

UK-based design and AV specialist Sarnier is working together with its African arm Sarnier PFM on the design and creation of the leisure resorts, which will cover more than 150 hectares in each city.

The main park, located in the Udu local government area of Warri, will reflect the culture of the area and is set to include a waterpark; heritage attractions; a luxury spa; two hotels and chalets; a casino; golf course; a family



The mega resort will include a number of attractions, including rides

entertainment centre; children's area; sports facilities; and retail stores.

The Oleri bridge will link the park to the main road network for ease of access. Meanwhile at Ogwashi-UKu, the Aniocha south local government area of Asaba, an animal reserve and wildlife park will be established.

## 21 Centrale Partners acquires Silhouette

TOM WALKER

France-based private equity firm 21 Centrale Partners has acquired Switzerland's largest health club operator Silhouette Fitness.

The Silhouette estate was acquired by 21 Centrale – in association with its Swiss partner company SEC Partners – and comprises 22 member clubs and two corporate clubs in Geneva, Zurich and Brussels, catering for a total of 37,000 members.

In 2008, 21 Centrale acquired Club Med Gym (CMG) from Club Méditerranée. CMG is the leading brand in the French fitness market, with 70,000 members across 22 clubs in Paris.

It also operates 32 corporate clubs and runs fitness industry training provider IMF.



The deal includes Silhouette's 22 clubs in Switzerland and Belgium

The combined portfolios of CMG and Silhouette include 44 clubs in three countries and represent a global customer base of 107,000 members. They are expected to generate aggregated revenue of €80m and consolidate their position through the opening of new clubs.

## Smithsonian amends US\$245m NMAAHC plans

TOM WALKER

The Smithsonian Institution has revised its plans for the creation of a US\$245m (£170m, £150m) National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC). The architectural amendments to the plans have been introduced

to secure the approval of the National Capital Planning Commission, after concerns about traffic disruption during the building process were aired in September 2010.

The museum will be dedicated to charting the history of the black American people.

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## Marco Pierre White nets Maypole Group sites

TOM WALKER

Award-winning chef and restaurateur Marco Pierre White has acquired all six properties in the Maypole Group portfolio from administrators.

Simon Bower and Bruce Mackay of Baker Tilly Restructuring and Recovery were called in as joint administrators of the pub hotel operator last October.

Founded in November 2003, the Maypole Group was intended to be an acquisition vehicle for UK countryside hotels with restaurants or pubs attached.



The Mandarin Oriental hotel in Hyde Park

## Blumenthal opens first London restaurant

TOM WALKER

Celebrated chef Heston Blumenthal will open his first London restaurant today (31 January) at the Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, London.

The Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group signed a deal with Blumenthal's The Fat Duck Group last year.

The two have worked with designer Adam Tihany to create the 140-cover restaurant, called Dinner by Heston Blumenthal.

## Prezzo eyes expansion after 'steady' 2010

TOM WALKER

Italian restaurant chain Prezzo has announced plans to open at least 20 new eateries in 2011 after reporting "steady trading and strong new openings" in the 53 weeks to 2 January. Compared with figures for 2009, the group reported a 15 per cent increase in revenue and a 12 per cent growth in pre-tax profit. It currently operates 160 properties across the UK.

Prezzo said that part of its growth had been fuelled from its first acquisition - 11 properties purchased from Caffè Uno Brasseries in August for £3.1m.

## New pod hotel for Birmingham

PETE HAYMAN

Bloc Hotels has launched its new hotel concept with a 73-bedroom property in the centre of Birmingham.

Bryant Priest Newman worked on the design of the four-storey Jewellery Quarter hotel, which is inspired by Japanese pod-style properties and aims to withdraw "all unnecessary space".

Boxbuild has worked in association with the hotel operator in order to produce the pod-style rooms, which feature sound insulation and noise reduction materials.

Bloc Hotels is privately-funded by Monaco-based investors. Marketing and operations director Olivier Delaunoy, says: "Our whole approach to the Bloc concept is focused on simplicity, yet with quality at its heart. Our research shows that guests don't want space



Bloc Hotels has opened a 73-room property in the heart of Birmingham

consuming, unnecessary extras in their rooms - they want high levels of comfort and premium quality finishes at a reasonable price.

"We're aiming to lead the way with the ultimate hotel experience and we want to completely change the way that people think about staying in the heart of European cities."

## Travelodge plans major London expansion

TOM WALKER

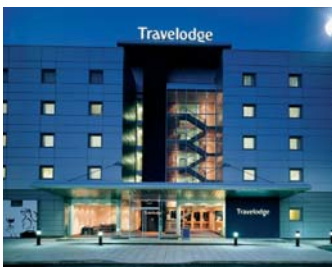
No frills hotel operator Travelodge is to invest a further £60m in expanding its portfolio in London.

The company launched its latest property today in late March - a 99-bedroom hotel in Ealing, West London.

The opening is part of the company's strategy of having 50 hotels and 7,000 rooms in London by the start of the 2012 Olympic Games. Travelodge currently has 466 hotels and 32,477 rooms across the UK, Ireland and Spain.

Travelodge chief executive

Guy Parsons said: "Nothing better demonstrates the evolution of Travelodge from our road side origins than becoming the biggest hotel brand in London."



The budget hotel group is planning a major expansion into the capital

"The five-star and boutique hotels have a role to play but a strong budget hotel market ensures we can welcome the world with high quality low priced accommodation."

## Cadogan Estate secures £15.4m hotel purchase

TOM WALKER

London's Cadogan Hotel has been returned to the Cadogan Estate after being bought from Trinity Hotel Investors for £15.4m.

The 65-room Sloane Street hotel was once the home of actress Lillie Langtry and boasts a

restaurant bearing her name. The property also offers meeting and private dining rooms.

Hugh Seaborn, chief executive of the Cadogan Estate, said: "In due course, [the hotel] will be upgraded so as to better reflect the elegance of Sloane Street."



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## Abacus completes Edgbaston installation

PETE HAYMAN

Abacus Lighting has announced that it has completed work on a £1m contract to install new floodlights at Edgbaston Cricket Ground, Birmingham.

The project forms part of a £30m overhaul of the venue, which is being carried out by Warwickshire County Cricket Club to enhance its international capabilities.

Five bespoke cantilever masts containing 320 Challenger 3 floodlights have been installed at Edgbaston, which meet England and Wales Cricket Board regulations.



ISG has been appointed to build the new facility

## Godalming Leisure Centre proposals approved

PETE HAYMAN

Plans for the construction of a new leisure facility in Godalming, Surrey, have been referred to the government after the £6m scheme was given the green light.

Waverley Borough Council approved the project at a meeting on 30 March, with the final decision now resting with community secretary Eric Pickles.

The Pozzoni-designed venue will be built by ISG and will boast a 25m swimming pool and a learner pool, as well as a 60-station fitness suite and a dance studio.

## Councillors adopt new

## Kettering facilities strategy

PETE HAYMAN

Kettering Borough Council (KBC) has formally adopted a new sports facilities strategy for 2011-21, following a meeting of its executive committee on 6 April.

More than 1,200 residents and 30 local organisations helped shape the new document in an effort to ensure that "appropriate" facilities are planned.

An "action plan" outlining facility requirements forms part of the strategy, which includes a new purpose-built venue for Kettering Olympic Gymnastics Club.

## Rugby participation on the up

PETE HAYMAN

A new study by the Centre for the International Business of Sport (CIBS) has reported that global rugby union participation is up nearly a fifth since the 2007 World Cup.

MasterCard commissioned the research, which found that participation in Africa alone had grown by 33 per cent when compared with figures four years ago.

South America and Europe (both 22 per cent up) have also reported significant increases, as well as Asia – where participation levels have increased by 18 per cent.

The research uncovered three main factors that have contributed towards the growing uptake of rugby union, including Rugby Sevens' inclusion in the Olympics from 2016.

Event hosting strategies that are linked to International Rugby Board (IRB) legacy



Rugby participation has grown in the past four years across the world

schemes and a £153m investment by the governing body in 2009-12 has also been credited.

IRB chair Bernard Lapasset said: "This report, commissioned by MasterCard, underlines that growth is not just continuing, but is accelerating and is as prominent in emerging markets as traditional rugby countries."

## Green light for Castleford Tigers stadium

PETE HAYMAN

Castleford Tigers rugby league club has been awarded detailed planning permission for a new 13,300-capacity stadium at Glasshoughton.

Wakefield Council's planning committee approved the project, which has been designed by Leeds-based Ramsden and Partners architects and aims to secure the club's Super League status.

The club has also recently signed a deal with Opus Land (North) and Palmer Capital to sell its current Wheldon Road venue for redevelopment.

Castleford Tigers chief executive Richard Wright said: "The delivery of the new stadium will act as a catalyst for further development of the Glasshoughton site."



Ramsden and Partners are behind the design of the Tigers' new stadium

"Opus Land (North) Ltd and Palmer Capital will fully fund the new stadium construction immediately once planning permission has been granted for the current site."

## British sport 'on track' for 2012 medal success

TOM WALKER

UK Sport has revealed that 20 Olympic and Paralympic sports achieved a "green" rating as preparations continue for London 2012.

The new Mission 2012 Panel said that "positive momentum" from last year has continued

into 2011, with 11 of the 27 Olympic sports securing "green" status.

A further 16 were rated "amber" and none received a "red", while half of the 18 Paralympic sports were also found to be in good health. The remaining nine were "amber".

## West London lock revamp plans approved

PETE HAYMAN

ISIS Waterside Regeneration has been given the green light to proceed with regeneration plans for Brentford Lock West, a 6.4 hectare (15.8-acre) development in west London.

The project will surround the Grand Union Canal and will include an overhaul of the public realm, including communal courtyards and a residential element.

Hounslow Council approved the proposals, which will see derelict buildings and vacant land transformed into a new waterside community centred on the canal.



WTS hopes to establish a new native woodland

## WTS completes Maryland Farm purchase

PETE HAYMAN

Woodland Trust Scotland (WTS) has completed the purchase of the 240-hectare (600-acre) Maryland Farm site as part of plans for a new woodland near Glasgow.

The organisation acquired the site following an 18-month fundraising campaign, which aims to provide an accessible area of woodland for Glasgow residents.

It is hoped the Lang Craigs project – the largest native creation site in the Central Scotland Green Network – will lead to a flourishing area of forest within 12 years.

## Pinewood confirms Peel bid

PETE HAYMAN

Buckinghamshire film studios Pinewood Shepperton has confirmed that it has been subject to a takeover approach from Peel Holdings.

Manchester-based Peel Holdings currently holds a 29.78 per cent in Pinewood Shepperton, although the Pinewood board said there was no guarantee that a bid would be forthcoming.

The announcement came days after a planning inquiry into Project Pinewood commenced, with the plans having been rejected by local councillors in 2009.

Project Pinewood will include the creation of a purpose-built working and living community for the creative industries and a number of iconic streetscapes from around the world.

The 44-hectare (109-acre) development proposals for Pinewood Studios also includes a



Streetscapes such as Venice's are proposed as part of Project Pinewood

multi-purpose community venue; indoor and outdoor sports facilities; a cinema; a theatre; and public open spaces.

Pinewood Studios group director of corporate affairs Andrew M Smith said: "Our proposals for Project Pinewood are even more relevant now than when originally tabled."

## Three shortlisted to acquire Olympic Village

PETE HAYMAN

Three private sector organisations have been shortlisted by the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) to draw up final bids for the acquisition and management of the 2012 Olympic Village in London.





The three bidders are Delancey and Qatari Diar; Hutchinson Whampoa; and the Wellcome Trust, with a final decision to be made by the ODA in the summer. More than 1,400 homes; six development plots with outline planning permission; and parks, courtyards and open space are included in the Olympic Village investment opportunity.

ODA chief executive Dennis Hone said: "The Olympic Village will deliver the best of



Three private sector bidders are in the running

city living all in one place with high-quality new homes joined by education and healthcare facilities, new parklands, public squares and open space."



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## Fitness4Less acquires new Cheltenham club

PETE HAYMAN

Low-cost health club operator Fitness4Less has confirmed the purchase of a Bannatyne site in Cheltenham as part of its "aggressive" expansion strategy.

The new Cheltenham location adds to recent openings in Cambridge Heath and Southwark, both in London; Newport, South Wales; and Nottingham.

A free weights area and a wide number of cardiovascular and resistance machines will be on offer at the Cheltenham facility, as well as two class studios and saunas.



Stalker has been FIA executive director since 2009

## David Stalker confirmed as FIA chief executive officer

TOM WALKER

David Stalker has been officially appointed the new chief executive officer of the Fitness Industry Association (FIA).

Stalker, who has held the post of FIA's executive director since December 2009, will take over the role of CEO with immediate effect and will be responsible for the implementation of its three-year strategy.

He will also take a more strategic approach to addressing the needs of the industry in line with the public health agenda to drive growth for the sector.

## 'Tough' new sunbed rules for England and Wales

PETE HAYMAN

People under the age of 18 years old have been banned from using sunbeds across England and Wales under "tough" new rules, which came into effect on 8 April.

The Sunbeds (Regulations) Act 2010 – introduced as a Private Members Bill – means sunbed business operators cannot allow young people to use such facilities.

It is hoped that the new legislation will reduce the incidence of skin cancer and protect under 18s from over-exposure to ultra-violet radiation.

## easyGym secures first sites

TOM WALKER

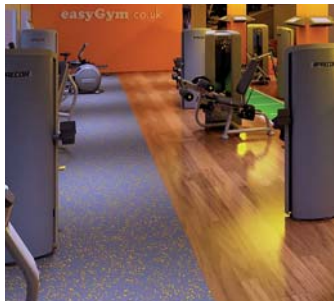
easyGym, the new budget club concept from easyJet founder Sir Stelios Haji-Ioannou, will officially open for business this summer after signing a deal with Virgin Active.

The new health club operator is to take on two locations – in Slough and Wood Green, London – and aims to open 10 clubs a year from 2012, in addition to other properties earmarked for 2011.

easyGym is the first fitness brand to be launched by the serial entrepreneur, who signed a licensing deal with private-equity backed Fore Fitness to develop the brand.

Fore Fitness will introduce memberships from £15 per month across the easyGym estate.

Paul Lorimer-Wing, joint chief executive officer of easyGym, said: "We've worked closely



easyGym is to open this summer following its deal with Virgin Active

with some of the best brains in the business to develop a proposition which we are confident will make us a leading player in the European market in the coming years."

## Essex leisure centre plans unveiled

PETE HAYMAN

Plans for a new £8.75m leisure centre and swimming pool in Witham, Essex, have been put on show by Braintree District Council (BDC).

Scott Brownrigg Architects are behind the design of the facility, which forms part of the local authority's bid to enhance local provision.

The new centre will include a six-lane, 25m swimming pool and a learner pool with moveable floor, as well as a fitness suite and two dance studios. A sauna and steamroom and two squash courts are also planned.

It is anticipated that a planning application will be submitted at the end of April, which could see work start by the end of the year. Completion is scheduled for 2013.



The new facility is poised to boast a fitness suite and two dance studios

A BDC spokesperson said: "[The council] is investing more than £8.75m into the town's new sports and leisure facility as part of its commitment to ensure residents have access to sport and leisure opportunities."

## Wootton Bassett leisure centre opens

TOM WALKER

Parts of a leisure centre in Wootton Bassett not directly damaged by fire in December have now reopened to the public.

Wiltshire Council and operator DC Leisure have revealed that the sports hall; gym; squash

courts; and dance studio are once again available for use after the three-month closure.

Stuart Wheeler, council cabinet member for leisure, sport and culture, said: "Our property team, working with DC Leisure, has done a tremendous job in reinstating access."

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## Mansfield Museum nets Guardian award

PETE HAYMAN

Mansfield Museum has held off competition from five other UK attractions to be confirmed as the winner of the Guardian Family Friendly Award 2011.

The Nottinghamshire museum has been labelled as a "surprise" winner of the award, which aims to recognise attractions that are the most welcoming to families.

Other shortlisted sites were the Corinium Museum, Cirencester; the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent; and Kilmartin House Museum, Argyll.



The plan is to be implemented between 2011-16

## New Lanark public consultation launches

PETE HAYMAN

Historic Scotland has launched a 13-week public consultation into its new management plan for the New Lanark World Heritage Site, South Lanarkshire.

The new document has been drafted and agreed by the historic environment agency, the New Lanark Trust and South Lanarkshire Council.

Gordon Mackie, co-ordinator of the New Lanark World Heritage Site, said the plan sets out how the site can be preserved and enhanced between 2011-2016.

## Glasgow Science Centre launches new programme

TOM WALKER

Glasgow Science Centre in Scotland is to develop a new public programme and expand its corporate events operations.

The developments form part of the centre's strategy to enhance its offer and will also coincide with the Glasgow attractions' 10th anniversary celebrations.

The centre has also added three new zones to its Science Mall exhibition area this year – the 650sq m (6,997sq ft) Be Creative zone; the Alice in Wonderland exhibit and the MindWorks zone.

## Loch Ness project gets go ahead

TOM WALKER

A landmark project that aims to improve the tourism offer at Loch Ness has been approved by The Highland Council.

Councillors approved plans for a new £2.5m visitor centre and harbour off the A82 at Brackla, which have been put forward by Jacobite Discovery and will occupy a prime site overlooking Scotland's most renowned stretch of water.

The Jacobite Discovery Project has been designed by Cameron Webster Architects and will include a visitor centre and a ticket office, as well as an "extension" of Inverness-based Jacobite Cruises.

It will also act as new headquarters for the company's cruise business, which welcomes around 150,000 customers a year. The business operates out of offices and harbours at Tomnahurich Bridge and Clansman Hotel.



The proposed visitor centre will also act as new company headquarters

Jacobite director Rod Michie said: "We've involved the public at all stages of the design process and worked hard to ensure this facility enhances the visitor experience."

There is no doubt this region can make much more of Loch Ness by offering higher quality facilities and improved service."

## Visitor attraction planned for Snowdonia

PETE HAYMAN

Plans for a visitor facility on the site of the Ogwen Warden Centre – between Bethesda and Capel Curig, North Wales – have been unveiled.

Anglesey-based architects Dewis have drawn up designs for the centre, which will sit at the "gateway" to Cwm Idwal in Snowdonia National Park.

The project is being fronted by the Cwm Idwal Partnership – including Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA), the National Trust and the Countryside Council

for Wales. Facilities will include office space for site managers and enterprises; an interpretation area and a refreshments outlet.

SNPA director of land management Emrys Williams said: "The old facilities here are not



Anglesey-based architects Dewis have designed the new visitor centre

fit for purpose and don't meet the expectations of today's visitor. Through this initiative, our intention is to create an attractive gateway to Snowdonia, which will improve people's understanding and enjoyment of Cwm Idwal."

## Turner Contemporary opens in Margate

PETE HAYMAN

Turner Contemporary, a new £17.4m gallery dedicated to the life of 19th century artist JMW Turner, has officially opened its doors to the public in Margate, Kent. Designed by David Chipperfield Architects, the attraction

was opened by artist Tracey Emin – who was brought up in Margate – musician Jools Holland and local schoolchildren on 16 April.

R Durnell and Sons has delivered the building, which incorporates 750sq m (8,072sq ft) of gallery space across two floors.

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*Mövenpick* Prize Draw, 6 Old King Street, Bath, BA1 2JW. Closing date for entries 15 May 2011

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3

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☐ Please tick here if you would like to receive more information from *Mövenpick* Ice Cream

☐ Please tick here to confirm you have read and accept the Terms and Conditions and are aged 18 or over

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1. Prize draw open to all Leisure Management readers aged 18 and over and residents in the UK (inc. CI and NI), except employees and their immediate families of Schöller Ice Cream Ltd & Mövenpick, agents or anyone associated with the administration of this promotion.  
2. Closing date for receipt of all entries is midnight on 15/05/2011.  
3. Entries limited to one per person. Bulk entries or entries sent via third parties will not be accepted.  
4. There is one J7 Scooping Station, complete with Mövenpick ice cream (P55). Freezer comes with free delivery and includes 2 years

part and 1 year labour insurance. It does not include loss of products, glass lids, baskets, or any other limited life parts, adjustments or power failure - non warranty service calls are chargeable.  
5. No responsibility can be accepted for entries that are lost, delayed or damaged in the post or fail to arrive via email due to technical or network problems.  
6. The winner will be the first entry drawn at random under independent supervision from all valid entries received by the closing date.  
7. The winner will be notified in writing, by letter or email as appropriate, within 28 days of the closing date. If the winner

cannot be contacted within 28 days of notification, the Promoter reserves the right to withdraw prize eligibility and award the prize to a reserve, drawn at the same time as the original. There is no cash alternative to the prize stated and the prize is non-transferable. The Promoter reserves the right to award an alternative prize of equal or greater value, in the event of any element becoming unavailable due to unforeseen circumstances outside their control.  
8. The winner shall agree to take responsibility for the collection, treatment, recovery and environmentally sound disposal of waste equipment and products. On disposal, the winner shall agree to inform Schöller Ice Ltd & Mövenpick

Mövenpick to ensure compliance of correct procedures.  
9. Any tax liability arising from the award of a prize will be the responsibility of the recipient.  
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11. The winner agrees to take part in any reasonable publicity required by the Promoter. The decision of the Promoter is final and binding. Correspondence will not be entered into.  
12. The winner's name and county will be available after 29/05/2011 by sending a stamped, SAE to: 6 Old King Street, Bath, BA1 2JW.  
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## Welsh heritage sites to end free admission policy

TOM WALKER

A scheme allowing Welsh residents aged under 16 or over 60 to apply for free entry to heritage attractions run by Cadw is to be ended. Welsh heritage minister Alun Ffred Jones said the initiative had "not wholly" met its aims and that policy will now be to focus on increasing the number of disabled visitors and those from "under-represented" groups. Jones said a community events programme and "learning festivals" would be expanded, along with the introduction of "Open Days".



The agency will aim to drive tourism growth

## Mayor unveils new 'super agency' for London tourism

TOM WALKER

London mayor Boris Johnson has announced the launch of London and Partners – a new "super agency" that will bring together Visit London, Think London and Study London in order to promote the capital. The new flagship agency – a non-profit public private partnership – will be responsible for encouraging leisure and business visitors to the capital, along with attracting inward investment and promoting business growth. The launch was announced in April.

## Cuts force closure of Wrexham health suites

TOM WALKER

Health suites at the Plas Madoc and Waterworld Leisure and Activity Centres in Wrexham, North Wales, are to close on 1 May as part of local authority cutbacks.

Wrexham Council has confirmed that the sauna, whirlpool and steamroom facilities will be removed, although the gyms, pools and exercise classes will continue.

Alan Watkin, chief leisure, libraries and culture officer, said: "It is with regret that the council has decided to close this small element of the facilities."

## Early start for wellbeing board

PETE HAYMAN

A new Health and Wellbeing Board is to be set up a year ahead of schedule in West Sussex after the area was selected as an 'early implementer' by the government.

West Sussex County Council has been working alongside local partners to develop the plans, with the board's formal establishment due to take place in May.

Health and Wellbeing Boards form part of the planned revamp of the NHS, which is being led by the Department of Health. Boards are set to be operational UK-wide by April 2012. A 'shadow' board will guide the delivery of local health services, before its work is reviewed ahead of its formal inception next April.

Louise Goldsmith, the leader of the county council, said: "Health and wellbeing is a



West Sussex is one of the areas to be selected as an 'early implementer'

priority for the county council, and we are at the forefront of local authorities, leading the way on public health.

"Establishing the board will allow us to move further and faster on the joint working between health, social care and public health for the benefit of residents."

## 'Big Society' boost for Stonehenge plans

TOM WALKER

Tourism minister John Penrose has revealed that proposals to improve the visitor experience at Stonehenge, Wiltshire, have now been put back on track with government support.

A package that includes private philanthropy, National Lottery cash and commercial backing is to be complemented by plans to enable English Heritage to access its funding reserves.

Penrose confirmed that English Heritage can access £2m from its historic reserves – raised from philanthropic sources. Meanwhile, around £3.5m has been allocated by roads minister Mike Penning to allow the Highways Agency to improve surrounding roads.



The announcement has put the plans back on course

John Penrose said: "The fact that we have now almost secured private funding is an example of the Big Society in action, with everyone working together to ensure a mix of funding solutions."

## No government cash for Scilly project

TOM WALKER

Plans for a new ferry link between Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly will not receive government funding towards the scheme.

The Route Partnership is leading the project and comprises Cornwall Council and the

Council for the Isles of Scilly, as well as the Duchy of Cornwall.

Around 45,000 passengers use the service each year and the partnership has already reduced the cost of the scheme by £25m, with Cornwall Council borrowing an extra £5m.

## £110m revamp for English rivers

TOM WALKER

Environment secretary Caroline Spelman has revealed that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is to invest £110m in overhauling England's rivers.

The funding is to be used to launch restoration schemes worth £600m across the country in a bid to improve the health of more than 800 lakes, streams and other waterways.

A total of £92m is planned over the next four years to be spent on removing non-native invasive weeds and animals, as well as to clean up pollution and to remove redundant dams, weirs and landings.

Cash will be shared by the Environment Agency, Natural England and organisations such as the Association of Rivers Trust in order to build on existing projects.



The funding will be used to launch restoration schemes on rivers

A further £18m is to go towards helping farmers put in place measures such as buffer strips and fences to protect water courses and to prevent agricultural pollution.

Spelman said: "With this funding, we'll help our waterways thrive by tackling problems that have been sitting in the 'too hard' basket."

## Council backs Telford country park expansion

TOM WALKER

Telford and Wrekin Council (TWC) has approved in principle plans to incorporate a wider area of green space into the boundaries of Granville County Park, Shropshire. The proposals were given the backing of cabinet

members after considering a report, which called for an extension of the park to include a current landfill site that is due to close.

Restoration plans for the site have already been approved and include the creation of a new area of green space with woodland.

## Coed Cadw Cymru launches new manifesto

TOM WALKER

Coed Cadw Cymru (The Woodland Trust) has announced the launch of its new manifesto – *Growing Wales' future* – ahead of the the National Assembly elections on 5 May.

The document calls on residents across Wales to ask their local candidates about their plans to promote the creation and protection of the country's native woodland.

Among the main plans set out in the manifesto is the adoption of a target to double the cover of native woodland in Wales over the next 50 years. The trust also calls for the creation of a National Forest Park in the South Wales Valleys and the protection of ancient woods and trees.



The manifesto aims to secure the future of native woodlands in Wales

The president of The Woodland Trust, Clive Anderson, said: "Wales will be missing a trick if it fails to make the most of the many benefits native woodland and trees have to offer."



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## Ladbrokes plans £50m investment in technology

TOM WALKER

Ladbrokes CEO Richard Glynn has revealed plans for a £50m investment in the development of the bookmaker's 'technological capabilities' over the coming year.

The group says it will 're-energise' its brand as part of efforts to put the customer at the heart of its business and the implementation of its eCommerce platform. In its results for the year ending 31 December, Ladbrokes reported a 1.3 per cent increase in net revenue and a 20.1 per cent increase in operating profit compared with 2009.



The cinema group raised prices to achieve profits

## Full-year pre-tax profits up at Cineworld

TOM WALKER

Cineworld Group has recorded a 4.8 per cent increase in revenue for the year to 30 December 2010, compared with the previous 52-week period.

EBITDA and pre-tax profits grew by 8.1 per cent and 0.3 per cent respectively during 2010, with the cinema operator capturing more than 26 per cent of the UK market share. Despite a 2.1 per cent fall in admissions, the average ticket price was up 6 per cent to £4.99.

## Work starts on Leeds

### Arena scheme

TOM WALKER

A groundbreaking ceremony has taken place in Leeds, Yorkshire, to mark the start of construction work on the new multi-million pound Leeds Arena.

BAM Construction has been appointed to deliver the Populous-designed venue, having already carried out preparatory work at the city centre's Claypit Lane site.

When complete, the new arena will be able to accommodate 13,500 spectators and is designed to ensure seats are no more than 68m (223ft) from the centre of the stage.

## Wagamama sold to Duke Street

TOM WALKER

Private equity group Duke Street acquired Japanese-style noodle restaurant chain Wagamama from Lion Capital for an undisclosed sum in March.

The deal includes all 70 restaurants in the UK; three restaurants in the US; and a franchise operation with 36 restaurants in 16 countries across Europe, the Middle East and Australasia.

Lion Capital acquired Wagamama in 2005 and has since more than doubled the number of restaurants in its portfolio.

Wagamama chief executive Steve Hill said of the deal: "We have enjoyed working with Lion over the past six years. We've achieved some great results over this period and further expanded the brand."



Lion Capital acquired Wagamama in 2005 and has doubled its portfolio

"We are all very excited about the future and look forward to working with Duke Street, which will see Wagamama through its next stage of growth."

## Newbury to launch as concert venue

TOM WALKER

Newbury Racecourse in Berkshire has announced plans to launch as a new standalone concert venue.

The first music event to be held under the Newbury LIVE brand – the racecourse's bid to generate alternative revenue streams – will be a Rod Stewart concert on 29 May.

Stephen Higgins, joint managing director of Newbury Racecourse, said: "The racecourse has the potential to seat over 20,000 visitors and will be transformed into an intimate, sit-down only event for the Rod Stewart gig."

"For future events, we will be hosting up to 60,000 in seats and standing combined. Newbury LIVE is an excellent example of



Rod Stewart will perform in the first Newbury LIVE-branded concert

how we are expanding the racecourse as a host venue and because it's only 40 minutes from London, it's perfectly placed to become of the UK's most diverse entertainment venues."

## JD Wetherspoon chair slams tax increases

TOM WALKER

JD Wetherspoon chair Tim Martin has criticised "zealous" and "unsustainable" increases in regulations and taxes affecting the industry.

According to Martin, both the current and previous governments' approach had forced

pubs to increase drinks prices; a move which has helped boost supermarket alcohol sales.

The comments came as JD Wetherspoon posted a 7.6 per cent growth in revenue for the 26 weeks ending 23 January, compared with the same period last year.



## St Pancras Renaissance opens

TOM WALKER

JW Marriott has completed a soft opening of its £150m St Pancras Renaissance Hotel in London, ahead of an official opening in May.

When fully operational, the 245-bedroom property will boast a large luxury spa and a restaurant operated by chef Marcus Wareing – named after architect Gilbert Scott who designed the building.

Facilities at the St Pancras Spa include five treatment rooms and a couple's suite; spa pool; and a relaxation area.

French product supplier Cinq Mondes has been chosen to devise the treatment menu.

The spa packages that will be on offer will be based on journeys to "far away countries", bringing together Cinq Mondes' Beauty Rituals of the World brand in order to create a sensory journey for the client.



Historic features at the St Pancras Renaissance Hotel have been restored

Treatments on offer at the spa will include the Ko Bi Do Facial, incorporating ancient Japanese massage techniques; Udvartana Ayurvedic Slimming Ritual from India; and Traditional Massage of the Orient based on Moroccan and Egyptian traditions.

See feature on p42 for more details

## Radisson Edwardian to open Guildford property

TOM WALKER

Hotel group Radisson Edwardian, which owns and operates London's iconic May Fair Hotel, is to open its newest property in the capital this summer. The 185-bedroom Radisson Edwardian Guildford is set to include a large

day spa and conferencing space, in addition to a range of dining options.

Radisson Edwardian Guildford's spa will house a swimming pool, five treatment rooms, a relaxation area, sauna, steamroom and mud spa as well as a fitness suite.

## Public spa opens at Lancashire facility

TOM WALKER

The newly expanded Inside Spa at the Pendle Wavelengths leisure centre in Nelson, Lancashire, has opened.

The £220,000 renovation was funded and completed as the result of a partnership between Pendle Leisure Trust (PLT) and Alliance Leisure.

Revamp work included the addition of four new treatment rooms, a manicure and pedicure bar in the reception area and a large relaxation area for group bookings.

Existing facilities at the spa include a sauna and heat therapy and salt inhalation rooms. The work was part of a wider £3m redevelopment of Pendle Wavelengths, which was one of the UK's first public sector spas when it opened in 2007.



The refurbishment was led by Pendle Leisure Trust and Alliance Leisure

PLT CEO Phil Storey said: "The spa is now in its fourth year and the demand is incredible. Between 2008 and 2010, we tracked a 30 per cent increase in spend within our facilities."

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# Design news

From the Turner Contemporary to Glasgow's Riverside Museum, we look at what's new

<b>Project</b>	Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc
<b>Design</b>	Luc Svetchine
<b>Location</b>	Cap d'Antibes, south of France

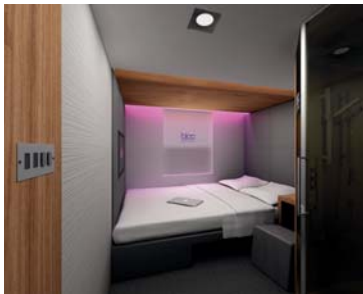
## Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc reopens

The iconic Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc in Cap d'Antibes in France has reopened after a four-year, €45m restoration project. The restoration has been carried out by the owner of the hotel, Mrs Oetker, together with architect Luc Svetchine.

The project includes the refurbishment of all rooms and public areas in the main building of the hotel, as well as the addition of two new restaurants, a bar, and a new pool and beach area. The hotel's spa facilities are set to undergo a multi-million euro redevelopment next year.



A new pool and terrace has been added to the hotel



Bloc Hotels is privately-funded by Monaco-based investors

<b>Project</b>	Bloc Hotels
<b>Design</b>	Bryant Priest Newman
<b>Location</b>	Birmingham, UK

## Japanese-style pod hotel for Birmingham

Bloc Hotels has launched its new hotel concept in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter. The first Bloc Hotel - a 73 bedroom 'boutique-budget' hotel - opened in April.

Bryant Priest Newman are the architects behind the design of the new four-storey hotel, which was inspired by Japanese pod-style properties and aims to withdraw "all unnecessary space". Boxbuild has worked in association with Bloc Hotels to produce the pod-style rooms, which feature sound insulation and noise reduction materials.



It is Glasgow's first newbuild transport museum

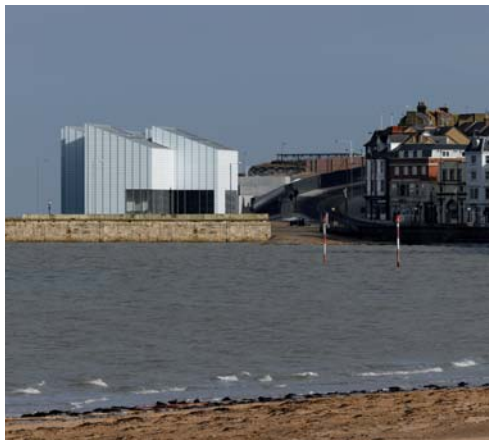
<b>Project</b>	Riverside Museum
<b>Design</b>	Zaha Hadid
<b>Location</b>	Glasgow, UK

## June opening for Glasgow Museum

Glasgow Life has announced that the new £74m Riverside Museum, which will be home to the city's transport and technology collections, is to officially open in June.

The new Zaha Hadid-designed attraction will house around 3,000 exhibits across 150 displays.

Glasgow City Council has invested nearly £51m in the development of the museum. BAM Construction started work on site in 2007, with interiors and theming company Mivan appointed to deliver the fit-out of the new attraction.



The glass-clad building looks out across Margate's sandy beach

<b>Project</b>	Turner Contemporary
<b>Design</b>	David Chipperfield Architects
<b>Location</b>	Margate, UK

### Turner Contemporary opens

Margate's Turner Contemporary, the £17.4m gallery dedicated to JMW Turner, opens this month (April).

The two storey David Chipperfield-designed gallery overlooks the sea and has been designed to maximise the quality of light in the area which inspired English artist Turner more than a century ago.

Turner Contemporary's programme of exhibitions will display contemporary art alongside historical pieces, with a focus on the art, thought and legacy of JMW Turner.

The seafront gallery is a central part of plans to regenerate Margate, with new bars, restaurants, cafés and galleries planned for the Kent town.



The museum originally opened in 1855

<b>Project</b>	Neues Museum
<b>Design</b>	David Chipperfield Architects
<b>Location</b>	Berlin, Germany

### Berlin Museum secures EU design prize

David Chipperfield Architects' design for the Neues Museum in Berlin won the 2011 European Union (EU) Prize for Contemporary Architecture - Mies van der Rohe Award.

The attraction reopened in 2009 for the first time in 70 years, following the completion of an extensive £212m (£187m) redevelopment project. Originally launched in 1855, the Neues Museum closed in 1939 after extensive bomb damage. David Chipperfield Architects' renovation of the museum was selected for the award from a shortlist of six.



Japanese architect Arata Isozaki is responsible for the design

<b>Project</b>	Jumeirah Himalayas Hotel Shanghai
<b>Design</b>	Arata Isozaki
<b>Location</b>	Pudong, Shanghai

### Jumeirah launches Pudong hotel

Dubai-based luxury hotel operator Jumeirah Group has completed the soft opening of its first five-star luxury hotel in China at the Himalayas Centre in Pudong, Shanghai.

The 401-bedroom Jumeirah Himalayas Hotel Shanghai features four restaurants, a Spa at Jumeirah and a 24-hour fitness centre and indoor swimming pool.

The spa will fully open when the hotel is officially launched later this year. The hotel also offers a 5,000sq m (53,000sq ft) rooftop Infinity Garden, designed for large outdoor events.

# PAY & PLAY

An idea whose genius lies in its simplicity, payasUgym allows customers to visit a range of gyms without paying membership fees. Co-founder Neil Harmsworth speaks to Kath Hudson



PayasUgym founders (l-r): Jamie Ward, Michael Blake, Neil Harmsworth

## What is the background to the company?

PayasUgym was created by me, Jamie Ward and Michael Blake. I trained in leisure management some years ago and then started working in the City. Jamie and I worked together at a couple of companies and bounced ideas around for a while until we hit on this one.

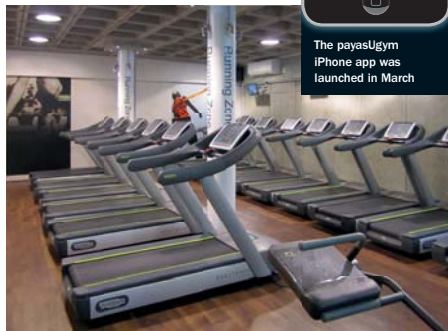
We then asked Michael, an experienced web developer, to come on-board as we knew how important it would be to carry out all of the development in house.

## How did the idea come about?

Through frustration! Jamie and I travelled a lot with work and found it challenging not to be able to get to a gym on a regular basis. We felt there had to be a more flexible way of using a gym – one that would attract more people to the market – and conversations with friends validated those views.



The payasUgym iPhone app was launched in March



We quit our jobs at the end of 2009 and spent a lot of time talking to each other and to other people, carrying out surveys and doing market assessments to work out the reasons why people weren't currently going to the gym, and what would make them go. We believe that using technology

to better effect is the answer – using online booking for example, particularly via smart phones, as well as social media networking and marketing. From there, we've really refined and enhanced the idea.

## So what's the concept?

As a payasUgym customer, you can create a free account online and top up an e-wallet with credit, just like topping up a pay-as-you-go phone. The minimum upload is £10. Users then look at the gyms on the website and buy a pass to whichever one they want to visit. They're sent a unique eight-digit voucher code, either by text or email. They then hand that over to the gym reception, where it's validated.

The pay-as-you-go concept of pre-loading an account has been there for some time; this concept brings it to the leisure industry using technology such as smart phones.

The customer is required to complete a health disclaimer as part of the purchase process to ensure they're fit and ready to use the gym, cutting down on the amount of paperwork for the gyms. Once the customers have used a gym, they can leave feedback on their experience on our website. It gives the power of information to users.

## Who is the target audience?

I think there will be a couple of groups of users: those who live and work in different places, who might already use a couple of gyms, and those who want to use gyms occa-



Operators including GLL, LivingWell and Fit4Less have signed up to the scheme

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ANDRESR

sionally to back up their outdoor training.

Other feedback we've had is that some people find it a bit frustrating always going to the same gym and seeing the same scenery and same people. PayasUgym allows them to vary their workout by location and price too. We offer everything from functional, no-frills gyms to large, luxury sites with pools, saunas and spas. This programme offers the flexibility of easily swapping from one to the other, which is very appealing for many people.

Our research has shown it will also appeal to casual gym users and people who don't go to the gym, but who tell us they would if it could be done on a more flexible basis.

#### What is the pricing structure?

Each gym has its own price, and we work with them to get that price right. It has to be attractive to the target audience of people who don't go to that gym, but who might do if it offered more flexible options, and it should still be cost-effective to be a member. That way, if people start going on a regular basis, we help maintain the membership model.

We want payasUgym to open up a whole new customer base. The thing that operators are recognising more than ever before is that there are a lot of people out there who would like to use the gym, but aren't currently doing so. This suggests that, if you can find a way of motivating them with the right kind of facilities, the right location and the right price, then people will start coming.

**"Social networking and mobile technology really hasn't been used well enough by the health and fitness industry to date. PayasUgym will change that"**

#### Why is this better than gyms just running their own pay-as-you-go programmes?

One of the big attractions of using payasUgym.com is that users can vary the type of facility they use. We already work with many gym operators that offer pay-as-you-go at multiple sites; we're able to raise their profile by communicating with a wider payasUgym audience. Social networking and mobile technology really hasn't been utilised well enough by the industry to date and payasUgym.com will change that.

#### What's the response been like so far?

Really positive. Operators are looking at different ways to get people into their gyms and are looking at what other industries have done. They all buy into this kind of consolidated pay-as-you-go platform, which uses technology, social networking and marketing. Since www.payasUgym.com went live on 22 January, we've been inundated with gyms asking how they can get their businesses on there.



Customers visit the website, choose a gym, buy an ePass and redeem their pass at their chosen gym



All the gym operators who've got involved recognise the fact that, by doing this, they could double their audience.

Indeed, our market research showed that penetration levels among potential gym-goers in the US are twice as high as penetration levels among potential gym-goers in the UK. This shows that there's still a lot of opportunity to grow the UK market. We believe that, if you can provide a wider variety of offers, more people will go to the gym.

#### Is it based on an existing business model?

There's always been a pay-as-you-go offer in the gym market, but this differs in that we've pulled it all together in one place. An online wallet is a first for the gym industry, as is the idea of giving people the opportunity to buy passes through their mobile phone when they're on the move. It takes the best of a lot of other business ideas that are out there and pulls them all together.

The iPhone app was launched in March, and was quickly followed by Android and Blackberry apps. The iPhone app is like a mini version of the payasUgym website, and allows customers to create an account, load their card and find the gyms they want to use via a map function.

#### How is payasUgym being marketed?

It's PR-led. We're working with a lot of partners to pull together interesting offers, and are working with our partner gyms to communicate the message to their catchment areas. We will mainly do online marketing, PR and social networking – for example, spotlights on gyms on Facebook and Twitter. Because we're an amalgamation of lots of different operators, we can talk to and attract a wider audience than any one single operator can.

#### Where will you be targeting outside of London and the south-east?

We're already getting a lot of gyms signing up in other parts of the country – gyms that are prepared to wait a few months. As soon as we've got London up and running, we'll

**"There's always been a pay-as-you-go offer in the gym market, but this differs in that we've pulled a lot of business ideas together. An online wallet is a first for the gym industry"**

extend to the other major cities: Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield. I think it will take us a year to find our feet in these key cities, but ultimately we do want it to be a national service, open to as many people as possible.

#### How do you make money?

We make commission on each pass that's redeemed, so far the gyms there's no cost unless they get a new customer.

#### How many gyms do you hope to have on board by the end of the year?

Our initial targets were quite modest: we wanted 150 gyms by the end of the year. We're already on course to smash that target, as we currently have 125 on board just in London and the south-east. Our customers – the general public – are also coming to us and asking us to get particular gyms on board and we're responding to that.

#### Would you take the idea abroad?

We'd love to take it beyond the UK: I think it would work well in Germany and the US. We'll stay with gyms and get that right first, and then move on to connected services like Power Plate studios, yoga and pilates classes and personal trainers.

#### What's been the best bit about this start-up?

This is the best job I've ever had. It's new and exciting and supports the goals of the customers, the gyms and the FIA, so I'm very proud to be part of it. ●

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ISS FACILITY SERVICES

# Paul Allin

As the government and the Office for National Statistics embark on a project to measure the UK's wellbeing, director of the project Paul Allin speaks to Magali Robathan about the challenges of the project and the role of leisure

**F**or a long time, the measure of a country's success has been its economic performance. Now the UK government is in the process of developing a new criteria to become one of the first countries to measure its citizens' wellbeing.

"There's an emerging feeling internationally that there's more to life than Gross Domestic Product (GDP)," says Paul Allin, the director of the project to measure national wellbeing at the Office for National Statistics (ONS). "We want to be able to look at the progress of the UK and how things are changing, not just in eco-

nomics but in terms of quality of life, the environment and the sustainability of what we do."

The £2m project to measure wellbeing in the UK was launched last November by the prime minister David Cameron and the national statistician Gill Matheson. Stage one is a national consultation, ending in April, with the public, organisations, businesses and government across the UK being asked what wellbeing means to them.

The aim of the project is to come up with an accepted set of measures for national wellbeing, which could be published on a regular basis to help assess the national mood alongside more objective measures such as economic performance, levels of unemployment and crime rates. These measures, said Cameron, speaking at the launch: "Could give us a general picture of whether life is improving" and "lead to government policy that is more focused not just on the bottom line, but on all those things that make life worthwhile".

Cameron added that: "We will continue to measure GDP as we've always done, but it is high time we admitted that, taken on its own, GDP is an incomplete way of measuring a country's progress."

## COURTING CONTROVERSY

The project is both ambitious and controversial. Ambitious, because measuring something as subjective as wellbeing is fraught with challenges, and controversial, because it's been slammed as a waste of money at a time when the government should be concentrating on reviving the economy.

Allin, however, stands by the decision to launch the project. "It's great that there's a feeling that there's more to a country's success than GDP. If this project gives us space to explore that, as is happening across Europe and the world, then that's a good thing to do," he says. "We're very conscious that we have to be very cost-effective in what we do and we're not frivolous with tax payers' money."

As for the criticism that now is the wrong time to be measuring the wellbeing of the nation, against a backdrop of job losses and widespread cuts, Allin says: "It reached a stage when there was such strong international and national interest that it made it the right time to do this."

## THE ROLE OF LEISURE

It's generally accepted that there are strong links between people's wellbeing and the way they spend their



"Leisure impacts on lives in so many ways. We want to gather as many examples showing the link between leisure and wellbeing as possible to help us with our measurements"



**The importance of having access to green space has come up frequently during the consultation**

leisure time, and the ONS is keen to get the leisure industry to play a role in the project. "We're keen to hear from people from all walks of life... we want to draw on as many different experiences, lifestyles and passions as possible," says Allin. "Leisure impacts on lives in so many ways and we want to gather as much information and examples of the links between leisure and wellbeing as possible to help us with our measurements.

"It would be great if leisure operators told us what matters to them, as an industry, as operators and suppliers and as individuals. Let us know about research that's already been done to demonstrate the value of the leisure sector. Tell us about what people value and get out of their leisure time."

The link between sport and leisure and wellbeing is actively being explored as part of the public consultation, with respondents asked how participation in sport affects



**The ONS is exploring the link between leisure and wellbeing as part of the project**

PHOTO: ©BRITAINONVIEW/ROD EDWARDS/DANIEL ROSWORTH

their mood and how important art and culture are to their wellbeing. Respondents have commented frequently that accessible and affordable sports facilities, fitness and sporting interaction matter to them, as does having the time and money to engage in arts and cultural activities.

"Leisure is widely recognised as being good for us, however there's nothing quite like hearing it first hand," says Allin. "We would encourage people to join our debate and have their say about how leisure activities affect their sense of wellbeing."

## THE BACKGROUND

The project comes on the back of growing international interest in measuring quality of life as well as more conventional measures of success.

Five years ago, French president Nicolas Sarkozy commissioned a report from a panel of leading academics, including Nobel Prize-winning economists Joseph Stiglitz and Amartya Sen, to explore new ways of measuring the health and progress of a country. The report by Stiglitz and Sen recommended that countries should find new ways of measuring happiness aside from economic growth. Canada is also at the forefront of the movement to find new ways of measuring wellbeing, while Bhutan introduced the idea of a Gross National Happiness Index.

In the UK, Paul Allin and his team

## THE INTEGRATED HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

From April, four questions aimed at monitoring subjective wellbeing will be added to the Integrated Household Study. These questions were developed with advice from a range of experts and organisations, including the National Statistician's Advisory Board on Measuring National Wellbeing. The questions are:

- Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?
- Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?

■ Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

■ Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?

Respondents are asked to reply to these questions on a scale of nought to 10. The questions will be supplemented with additional questions as part of the ONS's Opinions Survey, a smaller survey that goes out to around 1,000 adults per month.

have been researching the measurement of economic performance, quality of life, environmental impacts and sustainability for almost four years.

"We identified what we're now calling national wellbeing as an emerging requirement, that lots of people were interested in, around 2007," says Allin. "We could see it was getting a head of steam and we wanted to get ahead of that and understand what the UK's position was and what its requirements were."

Phase one of the project is a national debate, with the aim of identifying the key areas that make up wellbeing. People have been asked what matters to them via online surveys, an online debate and a series of consultations across the UK.

"The public consultation has really taken off," says Allin. "The team running the debate has been talking to people ranging from young offenders to city councillors and members of church groups. We really want to get as broad a set of views as possible and get people thinking about the kind of society they want to live in, and about how important things like leisure and family and things outside work are, as well as work itself."

One of the major challenges of the project is that not only is wellbeing extremely difficult to measure, but the meaning of the word itself is difficult to pin down. "It's not just about how happy people are, which is the popular idea of what it means," says Allin.

"There isn't one clearly understood definition; it's more about one's mental state, physical health, relationship and social position."

Although the ONS has never measured individual wellbeing in any comprehensive way, it is something that has been explored quite extensively. The really interesting question, according to Allin, concerns national wellbeing and what that really is. "Is it simply the totality of individual wellbeing, or is there more to it than that? If we can ask a representative sample of people about their own wellbeing, will that give us a statistical picture of the wellbeing of the country?"

"While some argue that national wellbeing is just the summation of individual wellbeing, others say that we need to put other things alongside the assessment of individual wellbeing in order to understand the bigger picture."



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/PHOTONOSTIC

Past research has examined the link between sport and wellbeing





Exercise and physical fitness is positively linked to wellbeing

"IS NATIONAL WELLBEING SIMPLY THE TOTALITY OF INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING OR IS THERE MORE TO IT THAN THAT?"

These people would say there are some things about the kind of society we live in – like its tolerance or diversity or its civic functions – which individuals will be aware of and reflect on, but won't necessarily take into account when answering questions about how satisfied they are with their lives."

### THE FUTURE

At the end of the consultation, Allin hopes the ONS will have "a clearer understanding of the key aspects of this thing called national wellbeing."

From April, around 200,000 people will be asked to rate their life satisfaction on a scale of 0 to 10 as part of the project. Four questions are being added to the ONS's Integrated Household Survey – the UK's biggest

household survey – to measure what people think and feel about their own wellbeing. The first annual experimental estimates, based on the replies, are planned for summer 2012.

However, people's subjective analysis of their own wellbeing is just one of the components that will make up the final statistics, says Allin. The idea is to publish information – which will comprise subjective viewpoints alongside more objective statistics – which can be used to monitor the progress of the UK in a number of ways.

"Our starting point is that we're not aiming for a single number, but maybe a dashboard of numbers," says Allin.

"When you're driving a car, you need to keep an eye on various things: how fast you're going, how much fuel

you've got left, whether any warning lights have come on.

"In terms of what progress we're making as a society, are there half a dozen or so things we might want to pull together and look at regularly to check on the state of the UK and see how it is changing?"

The longer-term aim is for international comparability, and Allin says there's strong co-operation on this. "We already have comparability for economic performance and unemployment figures so why not wellbeing? The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development is working on a project to produce a handbook for subjective wellbeing measures. Hopefully we can influence those if we think the questions work particularly well." ●

# HOPKINS ARCHITECTS

When the Olympic Velodrome opened in February on time and on budget, Sir Chris Hoy proclaimed it to be the 'best in the world'. Mike Taylor, senior partner at Hopkins Architects, tells Magali Robathan about the challenges of designing the venue



The cycling track is made of Siberian pine and took a team of 26 carpenters eight weeks to install

## How did you get involved with the Velodrome?

We were selected for the design team following a competition in 2007. We were successful because we're passionate about cycling and we had a strong team ethos and clear vision, which was to integrate architecture and engineering to create a building worthy of the aims of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. In particular we had the idea of making the inside and outside of the Velodrome very connected. Because it was going into the Olympic Park, it was important to be able to allow people in the Park to see inside the building and vice versa.

## What was your brief?

Our brief was to design a UCI Category 1, 6,000-seat velodrome for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, which would remain as a 6,000 seat venue in legacy mode but also incorporate the BMX course from the Olympics and have a one mile-long road circuit and 6.5km of mountain bike tracks.

We said very strongly that we were going to design it as a legacy venue and think of the Olympics as a housewarming party. The Games represent such a brief period in time that we thought it should be designed for the longer term and converted for the Games, rather than the other way around.

## Can you describe the Velodrome?

One of the most noticeable things about the building is the fact that the seats have been split in two. We put half of the seats around the track; around the back of those seats we've created a concourse, and around that we've put a ring of glass, which is the connection between the inside and outside. The Park comes right up to this glass wall.

We took the other half of the seats and tucked them in the upper bowl, so the building appears to float above the glass when viewed from outside.

Another key concept was that the building should emulate a bicycle in terms of its engineering efficiency. We weren't interested in mimicking how parts of a bike worked; we were interested in the notion of refined engineering design. We set out to make the building as light and efficient as we possibly could. This was important, because we were looking to design a very sustainable building, and we wanted to limit the amount of materials and enclosed volume as much as we could. The efficiency of the Velodrome was very important. We wanted the envelope of the building shrunk as tightly as possible around the spectator seating, which in turn was shrunk as tightly as possible around the track. This keeps running costs down and adds to the atmosphere.

## Where did the inspiration for the design come from?

Bicycles were used as inspiration for the building, both in terms of the efficiency of the structure and the design itself.

We wanted the outside of the building to sculpturally reflect the geometry and dynamism of the track itself – hence the timber clad upper bowl. It was important for the façade to give an idea of what the building was about.

## How important was the sustainability of the building?

The whole notion of sustainability was central to our thinking. In particular, the building has a very lightweight cable-net roof structure and is very highly insulated, which helps to stabilise the temperature and keep down running costs. We also included lots of skylights, to help to



The distinctive double-curved roof (above) was designed to reflect the geometry of the cycling track

light the building naturally. During the Olympics the track will need to be lit by bright lights in order to film the cycling events, but afterwards, the natural light coming through the roof will be enough to illuminate the track for much of the time.

The roof collects rainwater, which will be recycled, and the building is naturally ventilated. We take the air out at high level and bring it in at low level through slots in the building's façade. It's important to get the temperature up within the Velodrome, as cyclists like it to be very hot when they are competing because they go faster. It's a balance between getting it to work for the athletes and keeping the crowd comfortable, and also enabling the venue to run on a much lower budget when those high temperatures aren't needed.

#### Were you inspired by other velodromes?

We looked at a lot of them, but we decided they weren't relevant to the challenges we face here in London. In London there's a massive legacy issue, because that was central to the bid. It rains here, and it's cold, but the elite athletes like to go around the track in a very warm temperature. We needed to think about how to address these issues.

#### VELODROME FACTS

- 250m UCI (International Cycling Union) approved indoor track
- 6,000 seats and 360 degree concourse in legacy for viewing all cycling activities
- Legacy café, changing rooms, cycle workshop and storage for over 300 bikes with a legacy bike hire outlet for families to hire bikes to use the new cycling facilities
- Venue will be linked into cycle routes across London

#### CYCLING LEGACY

- After the Games, a road cycle circuit and mountain bike course will be added to the Velodrome and BMX circuit to create the Lee Valley VeloPark, combining cycling facilities across all disciplines in one cycling 'hub'
- The legacy VeloPark will be owned and operated by Lee Valley Regional Park Authority

#### The Velodrome opened on time and on budget. How was this achieved?

Everyone put a massive amount of effort into the project and there was great teamwork from everyone involved. We spent a lot of time ensuring it was all logically thought out, and that helped keep construction time down. Even though it's a very striking building, it's built out of easily-available, conventional materials like any other stadium. We thought a lot about the construction process when coming up with the design to make sure it was very practical and pragmatic.

#### What input did Sir Chris Hoy have?

He was on the jury, and helped to select the design team. We met him and other members of the elite GB team through the design process.

Hoy was very concerned about cold air coming in onto the track during competitions, so we carefully designed lobbies with heaters to stop this happening. He was very enthusiastic about our idea of putting spectator seating around the bends in the track, because the riders really appreciate cheers as they are coming round the bends. And he asked if we could make sure the toilets were very close to the track, so we took that on board. ●

# THE ART OF SOCIAL NETWORKING



Done right, social media can be a powerful tool for attracting new customers and building a loyal fan base. SDA Solutions' managing director Stuart Dyson talks through the risk and opportunities, and we look at some leisure businesses making it work

**Stuart Dyson**  
Founder and managing director  
SDA Solutions

**W**ord of mouth recommendation is often the best and cheapest way to increase customer numbers, and having people talk positively about your operation can have a huge impact on your business.

Imagine being able to generate this buzz at very little cost. This is exactly what social networking can offer.

Research from Nielsen claims that 22 per cent of all time online is spent on social networks, with Facebook alone boasting an astonishing 500 million users. To non-users, these sites may seem a light-hearted way to fritter away time, but in fact they are an increasingly powerful method of communication which can form an effective sales, marketing and retention tool for any business.

Anyone can produce content for social media sites. What's more, in theory, it costs nothing. But the key is integrating and coordinating social media with your existing activities.

Social media makes perfect sense for independent sports clubs like the Rushbrooke Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club in Cork, Ireland. Take a look at

its Facebook page and you will quickly sense from the regular updates and comments that it has established a vibrant and active community at zero cost. A Facebook page is very easy for smaller organisations to set up and maintain as it's a natural extension of a network of friends.

Larger operators have to work harder to build a community, but social media has made it easier than ever. Take a look at Facebook pages for football clubs like Arsenal, Barcelona, Manchester United and Real Madrid. They're making good use of the landing page and are clearly integrated with their websites, ecommerce and sign-up.

## THE CONSUMER HAS THE POWER

The foundation for successful social networking is based on the principles of trust, sharing and reciprocity. Get this right and your customers will become your best salespeople, creating a stronger bond for all concerned. Get it wrong, however, and your problems are played out in the full glare of the web.

This is because of a fundamental shift in power. Rather than being passive consumers, the community is actually often the most valuable part of the product. People will look at reviews and ratings from other users and base

their decisions on these comments, often without your input at all.

If you're providing poor service, a simple post on a social networking site means everyone will know about it immediately. In the early days of social media, some companies tried to bombard communities with overly commercial posts and patently self-serving content. The built-in self-regulation of social media then comes into play, as untrustworthy contributions are vigorously challenged or simply ignored.

If you disregard customers' comments, your brand reputation will be eroded. However, if you address any issues well, you have the chance not just to win over one unhappy customer, but to impress many other potential customers. People will be talking about you whether you like it or not, so you need a strategy to ensure your brand is protected.

The challenge for those new to social media is understanding that they're faced with a completely new paradigm for business communication. The best thing you can do is to create a great place for people to talk about you, and then get out of the way. You provide the room, but the party has to happen on its own.

[www.uk.linkedin.com/in/stuardyson](http://www.uk.linkedin.com/in/stuardyson)

YO! Sushi, O2 and Starbucks were some of the major brands that took part in the launch of Facebook Deals

**M**ark McCulloch, head of marketing at YO! Sushi talks us through the restaurant group's involvement in the launch of Facebook Deals.

YO! Sushi was one of the brands selected by Facebook to take part in the launch of Facebook Deals on 31 January 2011. As part of the launch, we gave away 2,200 meals to diners who checked into the Facebook Places application with their mobile phones at any of the 47 participating restaurants.

The launch of Facebook Deals was quite timely for us, as we'd recently decided to really start taking social media seriously, and had taken on a social media agency. As far as we're concerned, Facebook is the platform, and we made a decision to put a lot of focus and budget into it.

Facebook Deals came about from an off-the-cuff remark made by someone at our social media agency. We said 'what's the chance of getting in on that?' and they had fantastic links at Facebook. It can be a very difficult organisation to infiltrate.

We were the exclusive restaurant partner for the launch, and we decided to go in with a fantastic offer, which saw us giving away £60,000 worth of sushi. We went in really deep to try to create a buzz about YO! Sushi.

I was in London in the morning on the day Facebook Deals launched and Nottingham in the afternoon, and there

#### CASE STUDY ONE YO! SUSHI

were huge queues outside the doors of the participating YO! Sushi restaurants. What was especially exciting for me was the fact that schoolkids were taking up the offer in their droves. At the moment

YO! Sushi is still quite a niche food group and it's really important to engage with young people – they are the next generation of customers.

The biggest positive from the Facebook Deals launch was elevating the brand to new heights. YO! Sushi has been around for 13 years now, and it's a constant effort to keep it fresh, relevant and in the public eye. To be part of the chosen ones by Facebook – deemed as a great brand – was fantastic for us. We are already being used as an internal case study by Facebook, which is great.

It was good to see that lots of people made an effort to go down to our restaurants and from a PR standpoint it was great. We had 520 articles written about us as a result and were mentioned on Radio 1. It was a great kick off for our social media strategy.

This is only the start for us. We've looked around the industry and can't see any other brand as right for social media as YO! Sushi. I don't think anyone in the restaurant industry has

really cracked social media yet. YO! Sushi is all about innovation and cutting edge technology, so it's perfect.

For us, Facebook is the main social media platform, although we do use Twitter as well. Twitter is very different to Facebook; the users are older, a lot more cynical and very text-savvy. If you try to sell to them too overtly it just won't work. We use Twitter for news, engagement, and customer service purposes. If someone tweets, for example: 'I've been waiting in a queue in YO! Sushi for 15 minutes and I can see three empty tables' we can react to that straight away. We can explain the reasons for what's happening and maybe offer them a free meal.

We take social media really seriously. You can do all the marketing you like, but if people are complaining and you don't have the right to reply, you can't put things right. You want to be able to be part of that conversation.

Last June we dipped our toe in the water by organising a flashmob, which saw DJ Jaguar Skills do an impromptu set outside one of our restaurants. We put it out on Facebook and Twitter and 900 people turned up – this really showed us that social media works.

The most important thing when using social media is to make sure what you're saying is worth listening to. Don't just try to sell to people – engage with them and have fun.



**N**ightclub operator Luminar Leisure recently decided to use a centralised system to control its use of social media.

Luminar trades 78 nightclubs across the UK, from large brands such as Oceana and Liquid to smaller, niche venues including the Jam House in Birmingham and the Sugar Mill in Hull.

Each brand uses Twitter and Facebook to interact with followers and friends and communicate offers and events they might be interested in. While this was an effective tool for local promotion, Luminar was concerned that its approach to social media was fragmented, with individual managers' understanding of how to use the medium very varied.

With this in mind, the company decided to bring the expertise back into a centralised system that edu-

"Accounts and passwords were being managed locally and the risk here was the possibility of a disgruntled ex-employee running riot with our accounts"

cated managers, showcased best practice and managed key corporate messages in a consistent way, while still encouraging the localised interaction that was already working.

"In addition to our challenge of optimising the conversations we were having with users, we were aware of the risks we faced in this new media space," says Mark Noonan, Luminar Leisure's marketing and ecommerce director. "Accounts and passwords were being managed locally and the risk here was the possibility of a disgruntled ex-employee running riot with our accounts. This type of brand reputation risk is new to most companies, but Luminar took it seriously and backed the implementation of a

## CASE STUDY TWO

LUMINAR  
LEISURE

CrowdControlHQ centralises Luminar's use of social media, but still allows localised interaction

dashboard that would not only manage activity but monitor and protect accounts and conversations."

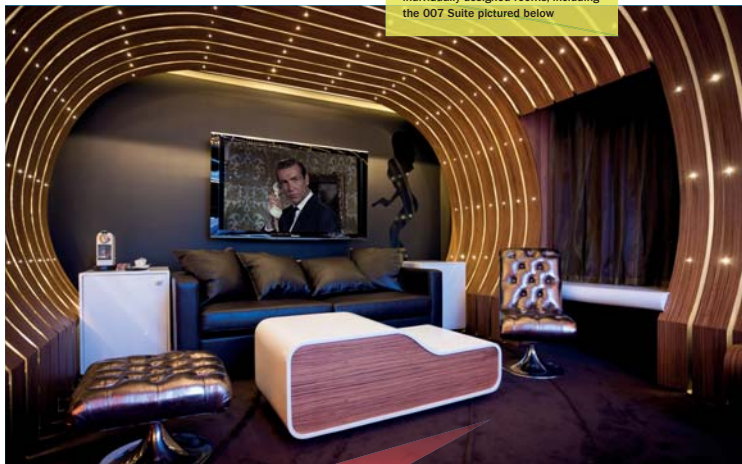
Luminar implemented CrowdControlHQ – a social media management tool – which put all the organisation's social media accounts back under the control of the group marketing team. Security is now managed centrally, with access and users attributed locally but safe in the knowledge that accounts remain the property of Luminar.

Managing brand components such as tone of voice, Luminar is now able to co-ordinate marketing and communications directly from multiple accounts. As well as allocating messages and tasks to teams managing

individual brands and venues, the tool also allows local flavour to top-down promotions such as third party sponsorship. One competition offering a chance to win tickets to a festival saw the same take up in two hours via social media as had been seen in two weeks using more traditional methods.

CrowdControlHQ also gives Luminar vital feedback in terms of analysis. "An interesting consequence is that a healthy competitive environment has been created, with Twitter-savvy account managers showcasing how it's done to other less confident users," says Noonan. "They are really learning from one another and pushing boundaries, which is how we stay ahead in this industry."

Hotel Seven Paris features 28 individually-designed rooms, including the 007 Suite pictured below



**P**R consultant Martin Soller explains how his company, World Independent Hotel Promotion (WIHP), used Facebook to drum up business for new luxury Hotel Seven Paris.

In January 2010 hotelier Philippe Vaurs presented us with his project – a luxury hotel in Paris with lots of gadgets and hi-tech facilities. We went over the sketches of the hotel and could see it was going to be something pretty special. Vaurs came to see us with one idea in mind – having a full hotel at the time of launch.

After meeting with the hotel's PR agency it was clear that getting lots of media for an unknown hotel still under construction was not going to work. The solution was clear – social media.

WIHP already had experience in this field, as we'd worked on campaigns for other independent hotels such as the four star Hotel de l'Abbaye, also in Paris, and we put together a campaign to generate interest in Hotel Seven.

The advantage of social media is that we get to talk directly to the future

#### CASE STUDY THREE

### HOTEL SEVEN PARIS

guests of the hotel. We launched the campaign on several channels – all social media-related. Facebook turned out to be the most productive channel so the efforts concentrated around that platform. Facebook worked because we could create a community of fans. We could keep them updated with the progress of the hotel as it took shape and give them the inside information on the project. We treated them as privileged potential guests and made sure that whatever we did, they knew about it first.

Our main challenge was getting more people to the Facebook page. At first the community was made up of our friends, and then friend of friends. It took a while to build it up, but because of the nature of the project and because we kept the page updated all the time, it started to work.

We spoke about the hotel on blogs and with hotel professionals. Each time we directed people to the Facebook page as a priority, then to the hotel's webpage. After seven months of work we had 7,000 followers. Being market-

ers and hoteliers, we knew there was only one thing that counted at the end of the day though – hotel bookings. So we monitored the bookings and the number of people interested enough to visit the site. These statistics were vital, but because we were working with social media, the project required patience and the ability to listen to followers. We tracked that almost 25 per cent of the people booking on the hotel's website had visited the Facebook page, and an average of one booking a day came from Facebook.

Due to the increasing number of followers of Hotel Seven, the mainstream media started getting interested. We didn't do any press releases ahead of the opening, but instead used the Facebook page as the only source of information about the hotel. Several media articles ran on the opening, which came directly from the Facebook page. Throughout, we ensured our fans were top priority for news.

The hotel's soft launch was in August 2010 – which is very low season in Paris – and it had 80 per cent occupancy. It now runs at around 90 per cent occupancy.  
[www.wiwhotel.com](http://www.wiwhotel.com)



British Military Fitness uses Facebook to answer questions from existing and potential members

**P**eter Blackman, owner of design and marketing agency Double Art, explains how Facebook is helping British Military Fitness ensure it's seen as a fun and non-intimidating brand.

British Military Fitness (BMF) was founded over 10 years ago as an alternative to gyms and leisure clubs, and is now the largest outdoor fitness company in the UK. All classes are led by serving or ex-armed forces physical training instructors, and BMF is all about creating a motivating environment and maximising team spirit in the great outdoors.

BMF now has over 20,000 members training in 105 parks across the UK. Over the last decade, BMF has grown largely through word of mouth. Members love it, and tell people about it. There is a strong social aspect to the experience – with members and instructors becoming friends and enjoying parties, social evenings and further fitness challenges together away from the classes in the parks.

Critical to success in this word of mouth acquisition is the way in which the individual advocating BMF can allay the concerns of prospective members, who are often worried about how physically challenging BMF will be, and are nervous that the instructors might be intimidating. For BMF, this is where social media is becoming a hugely important acquisition and retention channel.

#### CASE STUDY FOUR

### BRITISH MILITARY FITNESS

Over the last 12 months, working with the digital team at design and marketing agency Double Art, BMF has expanded and organised its presence on Facebook and Twitter. Where once it

had a myriad of diverse groups and park pages, it now has an official BMF Facebook Fan page with nearly 6,000 users, and a Facebook Fan page for every single one of its local parks.

At all times, the intention has been to demonstrate to potential members the fun, friendly and sociable nature of BMF, and to draw together 'central' and 'local' aspects of the BMF brand so that members feel a part of their group and of something bigger.

Local park/city pages essentially 'belong' to the local BMF park manager. This gives them ownership over their own micro community, and enables them to stay in touch and to involve and inform members about what's happening locally. Rather than attempt to get members to constantly visit the official website, BMF can stay in touch and build a local personal relationship with its members on a digital platform where the member feels comfortable and which they use on a day-to-day basis. Members are also encouraged to become a fan of

the official BMF page so that they can keep up-to-date with the regular offers and news items that the central BMF brand and PR team post on that page.

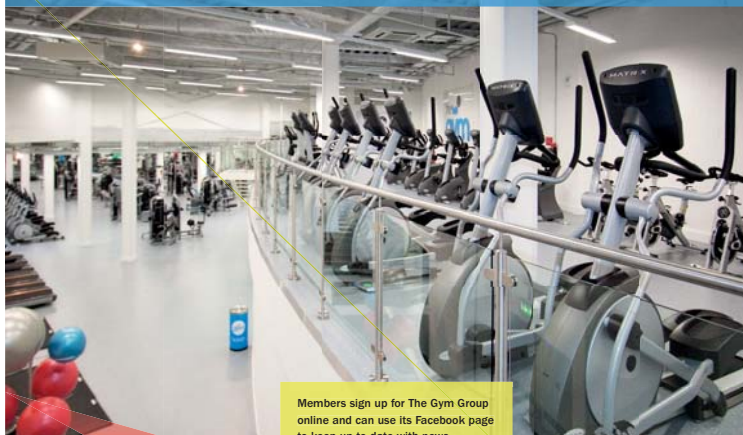
In terms of new member acquisition, the fact that fan pages get internal promotion on Facebook is very important to BMF. Facebook page updates show up on BMF fans' page feed, and page additions appear on all fans' live feeds. So awareness of BMF spreads beyond members if a friend visits their page.

The high level of interactivity on the BMF pages is down to extensive social media training of all park managers. The training deals with how to set up a local event through to suggested updates to encourage interaction between the fans. The BMF park managers also monitor the fan pages and respond to any questions that the members may have about classes, social events or training tips.

Visitors to the BMF pages can see that the brand is approachable and interactive. If a member asks a question or makes a comment, BMF responds. If a non-member asks a question then more often than not a member will answer before BMF can! As these questions are generally similar to those put by friends to members, social media can be seen to be acting as a media where 'virtual friends' can help to encourage potential members. [www.doubleart.co.uk](http://www.doubleart.co.uk)



"When designing our low cost gym facility, we knew immediately that the web was going to be at the centre of the business"



Members sign up for The Gym Group online and can use its Facebook page to keep up to date with news

**F**or low cost health and fitness operator The Gym Group, Facebook and Twitter are the biggest sources of traffic referral to its site, and are also helping the company build relationships with its customers.

The web has been central to The Gym Group since its launch in 2008. With no joining fee, The Gym Group offers a web-based joining process and account administration as well as 'build your own' exercise programmes. This level of online interaction gives customers the ability to 'co-create' products and services via the social web.

Social media – in particular Facebook and Twitter – have been essential tools for attracting new members to The Gym Group since its launch. The recently-published 2011 *European Health Club Industry Web and Social Media Report*, compiled by Ray Algar and sponsored by The Gym Group and its strategic suppliers, shows that Facebook and Twitter are currently The Gym Group's biggest direct referral sources, with 8,241

#### CASE STUDY FIVE

### THE GYM GROUP

Facebook followers. Almost 6,000 members interacted with The Gym Group's page in some way during the month of January 2011 (just before the publication of the report).

The Gym Group is now averaging between 5,500 and 7,500 hits per day on the website – 50 per cent of these hits come from existing members logging into the Members Area and visiting News sections. In January, according to the report, there were nearly 900,000 web page views on The Gym's website and 2,263 unique visitors were tracked in the same month.

As members reveal more information about their lives online and share experiences with others, this enables The Gym Group to develop a real, direct relationship with members. While this level of transparency can put companies under public scrutiny, The Gym Group says it sees it as a conduit to addressing any weaknesses and making improvements.

"When designing our low-cost gym proposition, we knew immediately

that the web was going to be at the centre of the business," says CEO of The Gym Group, John Treharne. "UK consumers are very web-savvy and have welcomed the ability to join online and administer their accounts. The emergence of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter has enabled us to begin building relationships with our members."

The digital agency behind The Gym Group's success, White Hat Media, is led by search engine optimisation and social media expert, Jeremy Spiller.

"The Gym Group is one of our favourite success stories," said Spiller. "We've been involved with building the company's online presence from the start and it's great to work with an organisation that recognises and embraces the power of social media."

"The online hubs we've developed with The Gym Group not only offer transparency and measurability, but real-time interactive communications that provide regular two way engagement. These have become vital tools to maintaining excellent customer service and driving growth – something The Gym Group is now renowned for." ● [www.whitehatmedia.com](http://www.whitehatmedia.com)

# A NEW FOREST FOR ENGLAND



## Can you sum up the aims of the Heartwood Forest project?

Heartwood Forest is the Woodland Trust's biggest acquisition in England at 850 acres and will see the planting of 600,000 trees over a 10 year period. It will become England's largest new native forest.

## When was the idea for the creation of Heartwood Forest born?

The Trust announced the acquisition of the site back in July 2008. We were looking for a so-called 'flagship site' which highlighted the potential of woodland creation, and we really wanted to find somewhere reasonably close to London. The idea was that it would be easy for a large proportion of the population to travel to, and would act as a showcase site to highlight the potential of woodland creation to businesses and corporate partners. The forest will become the centrepiece of the Woodland Trust's work, providing widely accessible green space, links with local schools and colleges and long-term tree planting opportunities.

## What's special about its location?

Heartwood Forest is adjacent to a local nature reserve in the middle of

The Woodland Trust's Heartwood Forest project is seeing the creation of a new native forest in Hertfordshire. Site manager Louise Neicho tells us how the project will transform the area, and about the innovative partnership with Disney Store

the Hertfordshire countryside, and is only 25 miles from the heart of London. A quarter of a million people live within 10km of the site and there are 1,500 schools within 25 km of it. The site itself is also highly varied, containing large open spaces of former pasture, as well as more than 40 acres of ancient woodland and 17km of hedgerows.

## Why is it important to create more woodland in the UK?

The UK only has 12 per cent woodland cover, which is around a quarter of the European average (44 per cent). Furthermore in terms of native woodland cover – the important stuff – we only have 4 per cent, and only 2 per cent ancient woodland cover, which is our equivalent of the rainforest.

Trees and woods are important for

a wide variety of reasons, from providing habitats and shelter for a range of wildlife – 36 individual species of birds have been recorded on the Heartwood Forest site alone – to alleviating the effects of climate change and absorbing carbon. Plus there are all the obvious health benefits that walking in woodland provides.

## What's happened since the Woodland Trust acquired the site?

Since acquiring the site in 2008 the Trust has embarked on a programme of work, planting trees with volunteers – more than 175,000 to date – opening up previously inaccessible areas of land, installing interpretation boards and kissing gates and working hard with the local population to get them involved. The first tree planting took place at the end of 2009, with many





more being held since. Thousands of people have now taken part in tree planting activities. The site has also seen two Guinness World Records attempted; the first for the most number of trees planted in one hour by 100 people and the second for the most people participating in a 'welly wanging' competition. We're also in the process of scoping out a purpose-built car park on site too, as there isn't one at the moment.

**You originally said you needed to raise £8.5m for the project. How is the fundraising effort going?**

The Trust has already shown a strong commitment to this project, and we purchased the Heartwood Forest site using core funds and reserves. We're now working hard to replenish these reserves over time and meet the total project cost. We're also seeking to deliver the ambitious people engagement aspects of this project, so our target now stands at £10m.

We're confident that we'll meet the majority of the funding required to deliver this project and make Heartwood Forest a really special place. We've already raised more than 80 per cent of our target.



Local pupils regularly get involved

**How did the partnership with Disney Store come about?**

The Woodland Trust and Disney Store had been working together on a small scale for some time before Disney Store decided to help create Heartwood Forest.

The company was looking for a charity to support during its Earth Day celebrations – which see activities taking place in Disney Stores throughout April – and saw that creating a new wood with the Woodland Trust would

Locals are encouraged to take part in tree planting events at the site (top left and above). As part of a partnership with the Woodland Trust, Disney Store is sponsoring a 50 acre wood and staff have helped plant trees on site (bottom left)

be a great way to highlight its commitment to environmental issues to its staff and customers.

In 2009, Disney Store agreed to create a 50 acre wood within Heartwood Forest which will be named The Magical Wood. The company has committed to raising £500,000 to pay for the creation of the wood; this is mostly being raised through the sale of commemorative reusable bags each April. For each bag sold, £1 is donated to the Woodland Trust.

Disney Store and the Woodland Trust have organised for Disney Store staff to plant thousands of trees in the wood, to make sure staff are really involved with this project.

**How important are partnerships such as this one?**

They are vital to creating Heartwood Forest. A project on this scale can't be funded from donations from Trust

## Events at Heartwood Forest

■ **Tree planting events:** Heartwood Forest hosts regular tree planting events, including weekly 'work parties' which see local volunteers meet one day per week to carry out tree planting activities on site.

■ **Heartwood Forest Bluebell Event:** On Sunday 8 May 2011, the public are invited to learn more about Heartwood Forest while admiring the bluebells along a self-guided trail. There will also be children's activities along the way.

■ **Discover Summer Butterflies at Heartwood:** On Sunday 31 July 2011 at 10am, the team at Heartwood will lead a walk through newly-planted



Events at Heartwood include a bluebell walk (above) and summer festival

areas of the forest to see vivid displays of summer butterflies. Target species include Skippers, Marbled White, Blues and Browns. Handy tips will be provided by experts to help the public learn how to identify individual species of butterfly.

■ **Heartwood Summer Festival:** Saturday 27 August 2011, 11am-3pm. An outdoor family event to celebrate trees and woodland through art. The day will include a chance to try willow weaving, sketching and photography workshops and a teddy bears' picnic.

members and local people alone, so corporate support is very important. The cost of the land makes up the largest part of the cost for the project, and therefore makes up the bulk of the fundraising need.

Disney Store is the only company to fund the creation of a new wood at Heartwood Forest, but companies including IKEA and Veolia have funded the creation of several thousand acres of new woodland here.

### You are running a summer festival. What will this offer?

The Heartwood Summer Festival has been running for the past two years; the idea behind this and the other events we run at the site is to engage the local population in the work we're doing at Heartwood Forest.

We want people in the nearby village of Sandridge and across Hertfordshire to feel proud of the wood and to play an active role in shaping it, as hopefully it's going to play a large part in their lives for decades to come.

The Summer Festival celebrates everything that's great about trees and woods. A range of activities take place at the festival, from orienteering to willow weaving. We've had several hundred people attend both years.



'Welly wanging' at Heartwood Forest

### What other activities are taking place at Heartwood Forest?

As I mentioned before, we've held two individual world record attempts on site, we've planted an orchard, and held tree planting days for locals, for several corporate partners and for hundreds of schoolchildren.

Numerous other activities have taken place – from photography workshops to astronomy courses and bluebell walks – as the site lends itself well to a whole range of varied activities [see box above for more details].

### What are the plans for the next 12 months at Heartwood?

The first aim is to meet our tree-planting goal for the year, which is 120,000 trees in the ground by the end of spring, taking the overall total to 210,000. We are also running a bluebell walk and of course the Heartwood Summer Festival in August, as well as the other activities I've mentioned. We are also hoping to put an all-ability route in place in on site to improve access and the visitor experience for everyone.

### What are your longer term plans for Heartwood Forest?

We want Heartwood Forest to be a flagship site for people to visit in England. Our target is to attract 100,000 visitors a year. We hope that by creating woodlands such as this one we'll continue to inspire people and educate them about the importance of planting native trees and protecting our existing woods. ●



# Sustainabilitylive! 2011

The UK's leading event for the environment, water, land, energy and sustainable business sectors takes place 24 – 26 May at the NEC in Birmingham. We look at what to expect

**A**tracting more than 400 exhibitors, Sustainabilitylive! is made up of five shows across the water, energy, land, environment and sustainability sectors.

The event is free and provides a platform for companies and other organisations to share sustainable, cutting-edge technologies and industry innovations. Alongside the exhibition is a three-day conference and seminar programme where key business leaders and practitioners will be able to explore current industry issues, best practice and pioneering applications.

## 1 International Water and Effluent Exhibition (IWEX)

Visitors to IWEX can meet representatives from companies such as Schneider Electric, Technology Ltd, Utilitex Services Ltd, WEG Electric Motors, and SEBA KMT UK.

The seminar programme at this year's event will cover key issues including the latest legislation, SUDS and flood management, FOG (fat oil and grease) solutions, waste water management and smart metering.

## 2 Environmental Technology Exhibition (ET)

The ET show will bring together around 60 companies specialising in areas including air pollution control, transport carbon reduction and commercial waste minimisation.

In a packed programme of seminars over three days, speaker topics include commercial and industrial waste management, waste procurement, recycling and licensing standards, waste to energy, CAD, environmental legislation, air pollution, managing firewater spillage and green transport.

## THE DETAILS

**When:** 24 – 26 May 2011

**Where:** NEC, Birmingham

**Details:** +44 (0)20 8651 7120

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

## 3 National Energy Management Exhibition (NEMEX)

With carbon reduction high on the agenda of governments across the world, businesses are under increasing pressure to review and reduce their energy usage. This year, NEMEX will feature some of the biggest names in the energy sector including British Gas Business, Powerstar, Business Stream, powerPerfec-tor, Monodraught Ltd, and Siemens Metering Services.

The seminar programme will address a wide range of issues including government policy, skills and training, carbon reduction strategies and energy standards. Delegates can also attend sessions on grants and financing, procurement and energy supply, energy efficiency services and changes required for implementing energy efficiency measures.

## 4 Brownfield Expo (BEX)

The premier national event for remediation and contaminated land solutions, BEX is the UK's only exhibition for brownfield regeneration. The expo provides a forum for specifiers and providers of contaminated land solutions and will give visitors access to industry stalwarts.



The show will feature innovations in the world of sustainable product design

A range of seminar speakers will address regeneration legislation, liability and risk assessment, environmental forensics and new remediation technologies, spill control and asbestos clean-up as well as soil stabilisation, ground gas and invasive species management.

**5 Exploring corporate sustainability at Sustainable Business – The Event**  
Sustainable Business – The Event is a platform for businesses to embrace effective corporate sustainable strategies and brings into focus key sustainability drivers.

The conference programme will explore topics such as the government's plans for a low-carbon economy and retrofitting and future-proofing the built environment. ●

# LONDON CALLING

Following the reopening of The Savoy in 2010, this year sees a number of major hotel openings for London, as the capital gears up for the Royal Wedding and the 2012 Olympic Games. Here we take a look at some of the biggest launches

## FOUR SEASONS HOTEL LONDON AT PARK LANE

**T**he Four Seasons Hotel London at Park Lane opened at the end of January after a two year renovation project carried out by ReardonSmith Architects and interior designer Pierre Yves-Rochon. The 11 storey hotel features 192 guestrooms – including 45 suites – a new rooftop spa and an Italian restaurant and bar.

The restaurant, which was previously on the first floor, has been moved to the ground floor and now has its own entrance from the street. Now called Amaranto, it features a restaurant, bar and a lounge. Diners can eat in either the main dining room, a glass conservatory, a private room, or an alfresco dining space in the walled garden.

The hotel's ground floor features dark French marble, wood and rich red upholstery, and the space has been opened up so that guests can see through to the new restaurant, the newly landscaped garden and the remodelled triple height atrium. The grand staircase leads up to a mezzanine viewing gallery and features an Art Deco-style balustrade and red velvet panelled walls.

On 1 March, the hotel unveiled its sleek new rooftop spa, simply called the Spa at Four Seasons Hotel London. The hotel's spa and gym were previously in the basement and have been moved to a new extension on the 10th floor. Designed by architect Eric Parry, the spa features nine glass-walled treatment rooms and individual relaxation pods for use by spa guests after their treatments as well as a relaxation lounge with a real fire and 360 degree views of Hyde Park and London's cityscape, a



The revamped Four Seasons Hotel London features opulent interiors

café and a fitness centre with views of Big Ben and the London Eye. The men and women's changing rooms each feature a skylit vitality pool, and steamrooms and saunas.

The spa features ESPA, The Organic Pharmacy and Omorovicza products and a range of treatments including the Hyde Park Awakening, an 80

minute treatment designed by The Organic Pharmacy consisting of an aromatherapy foot soak, full body exfoliation, rain shower and a back, neck and shoulder massage.

The design of the spa was apparently inspired by Hyde Park, and features lots of dark oak and stone as well as a relaxing water sculpture.

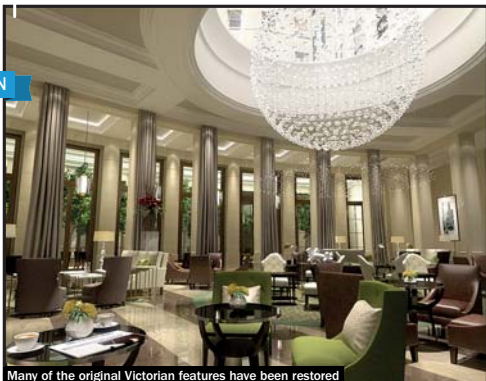
PHOTO: FOUR SEASONS PICTURES

## CORINTHIA HOTEL LONDON

The five star Corinthia Hotel London is set to open at the end of April, despite worries it would face sanctions as it is backed by Libyan investment. The Libyan Arab Foreign Investment Company (Lafico) owns around a third of Corinthia Hotel London. Lafico is subject to sanctions by the EU and the US, meaning the hotel's managers had to seek assurances from the Treasury that the opening could still go ahead.

Set off Trafalgar Square in an imposing Victorian building, the Corinthia features 294 rooms, two restaurants, a concept bar and a flagship ESPA Life spa. Its 43 suites include seven signature suites located inside historic turrets and spread over two storeys, each inspired by a great figure in British history. Its main restaurant, The Northall, offers 'artisanal British produce', and it also features the Bassoon cocktail bar and the Massimo Restaurant and Oyster Bar.

The grand Victorian interiors have been restored, with the public areas featuring ornate chandeliers, real fireplaces, marble floors and wrought iron chandeliers. The historic Victorian ballroom and adjacent Court Room have



been extensively refurbished, while the guestrooms have been designed in a more contemporary style.

The interior design is being led by GA Design International – also responsible for the design of the ESPA Life at Corinthia spa – and David Collins Studio is responsible for the interiors of the Bassoon cocktail bar and the Massimo Restaurant and Oyster Bar.

The 2,500sq m ESPA Life at Corinthia is spread over four floors, and will feature a spa lounge, an ESPA Life gym, 15 treatment pods, a sleep pod, a private spa suite and a thermal

floor featuring a 9m pool, a vitality pool and a range of heat experiences. ESPA Life is a new wellness concept from ESPA, which will unite a collaboration of holistic health professionals, influential specialists and spa therapists. The facility will offer spa treatments using ESPA products and revolutionary lifestyle programmes focusing on detox, sleep, weight loss, pregnancy and general vitality. Complementary and alternative medicine and targeted fitness and rehabilitation services have been designed for ESPA Life at Corinthia to help optimise health.

## ST PANCRAS RENAISSANCE HOTEL LONDON



The original hotel opened in 1873

Opened in mid March, the 245-bedroom St Pancras Renaissance Hotel is the final piece of the St Pancras regeneration project, and has been one of 2011's most hotly anticipated hotel launches.

The former Midland Grand Hotel – which originally opened in 1873 – has been painstakingly restored at a cost of £150m by the Manhattan Loft Corporation and London & Continental Railways. Its reopening sees it function as a hotel for the first time since 1935, when the Midland Grand closed.

Designed and built by Sir George Gilbert Scott, the redbrick Victorian Gothic building was saved from demolition in the 1960s by a protest led by the poet Sir John Betjeman.

The five star St Pancras Renaissance Hotel London features 38 Victorian hotel suites in the old section of the hotel, with the remaining rooms located in a new 120,000sq ft extension. It also features The Gilbert Scott Restaurant, run by Marcus Wareing and with interiors by David Collins, The Booking Office Bar & Restaurant – housed in the original ticket office – a 500 capacity event hall, a private club and a barber's shop.

The St Pancras Spa is due to open in May, with six treatment rooms and a pool. It will feature products from Parisien spa brand Cinq Mondes.

The renovated hotel features 50 ft-high windows, restored gold leaf ceilings, ornate wall murals and the famous grand staircase, which has featured in *Batman Returns* and the Spice Girls' *Wannabe* pop video.



## W LONDON - LEICESTER SQUARE

The UK's first W Hotel opened to the public in London on 14 February, following a post-BATAs celebrity party the night before. The 10 storey W London – Leicester Square features 192 rooms and is clad in translucent glass that changes colour according to the time of day and the 'ambience of the area'.

The hotel also features a five treatment-room AWAY@Spa, a W Lounge Bar serving cocktails and food, a Wyld Bar (apparently inspired by the Met Bar in its heyday) and a SWEAT fitness club with Technogym equipment and rooftop views of London.

In keeping with the contemporary, design-led nature of Starwood Hotels'-owned W Hotels, the design of W London – Leicester Square aims to be a bit different. Conceived by Amsterdam-based design team Concrete, the guest rooms were apparently inspired by the idea that guests



Jason Bruges designed the colour-changing glass facade

want a more 'studio-style open space', with the standard (or Wonderful) rooms featuring bathrooms designed into the overall space, rather than separate bathrooms and bedrooms. Other unusual design touches include dimly-lit hallways and lifts furnished in black – to create a nightclubby feel – silver

pod-style check in desks and a lobby featuring hundreds of glitter balls.

W Hotels' spin off 'budget-boutique' brand Aloft Hotels is also set to open in London ahead of the Olympics. The 252-room Aloft London ExCel is due to open in ExCel London in the Docklands at the end of 2011.

## LONDON SYON PARK

A little further out, London Syon Park, a Waldorf Astoria Hotel, sits on the edge of the 200 acre Syon House estate, just a few minutes from Kew Gardens.

Opened on 8 March, it offers a country hotel experience but is just a 20 minute train ride from Waterloo. The five star hotel features 137 rooms and suites, a restaurant serving British cuisine, a children's restaurant, a terrace serving afternoon tea and a martini bar.

It also features a rooftop lounge, a Kallima spa, the Grand Syon Ballroom – which will be used for events ranging from fashion shows to weddings – and a butterfly house in the lobby.

Kallima, The Spa at London Syon Park features 11 treatment rooms, including a double VIP suite, a personal hydrotherapy suite and a Vichy suite, a relaxation space called the snug, a nail spa, a swimming pool, a whirlpool spa and a sauna and steam-room, along with a fully-equipped gym and team of personal trainers.



London Syon Park is seven miles from central London

Kallima has partnered up with luxury spa brands Anne Semonin, Terraké, Voya and Leighton Denny, who have designed The Kallima Couture Collection, a range of treatments exclusive to Syon Park.

Cosmetic surgeon Alex Karidis has opened his first non-surgical treatment rooms within Kallima, offering a range of tailor-made treatments that complement the Kallima concept. These include anti-ageing treatments for the

face such as botox, dermal fillers and HydraFacial, as well as tightening and sculpting body treatments.

Guests book the amount of time they want to spend with Kallima's therapists – who are multi-trained – rather than choosing specific treatments. Therapists then decide on the most appropriate treatments, together with guests, after an individual needs analysis. Guests pay the same hourly rate no matter which treatments they receive.



**T**he historic Langham Hotel London launched a new Chuan Spa at the end of February, incorporating traditional Chinese medicine into its treatments and design.

It features six private treatment rooms – including a Couple's Spa Suite – a pre- and post-treatment relaxation area, a vitality pool, upgraded changing facilities and herbal steam rooms and saunas. Lifestyle facilities include a fully-equipped fitness centre with Technogym cardio and resistance equipment and free weights as well as a 16m swimming pool.

## THE LANGHAM HOTEL LONDON LAUNCHES NEW SPA

Thalgo and Chuan Spa-branded products are used in the treatments. The Chuan Spa products have been created exclusively for the brand by a Chinese healthcare expert. Signature treatments include the Chuan Tao of Detox, incorporating a body wrap, neck, back and shoulder massage and a Thalgo

### The Langham Hotel London features Europe's first Chuan Spa

**Oxygen Facial.** A fully qualified traditional Chinese medicine practitioner is also available for private consultations and therapies including acupuncture, cupping and moxibustion.

The Langham was launched in 1865 and was billed as Europe's first purpose built Grand Hotel. In 2009, The Langham completed a five year, £80m programme of restoration that saw the refurbishment of its 380 guest rooms, 15 function rooms and public areas.

## PLANNED FOR 2012 OR LATER

### The Shangri-La Hotel

Late 2012 will see the opening of the 202-room Shangri-La Hotel in The Shard.

The five star hotel will take up 18 floors of the 70-storey, Renzo Piano-designed Shard building on the South Bank of the Thames between the Tower of London and St Paul's Cathedral.

It will include a lobby lounge and bar, a gourmet lounge, a café and a themed bar situated on level 52 with views to the River Thames and the City of London.

The hotel's fitness and recreation facilities will include an indoor swimming pool and whirlpool, and a fully-equipped fitness centre, both offering panoramic views of the London skyline.

### London Edition

In November 2010, Marriott International announced that it had acquired the historic Berners Hotel in London's Fitzrovia and planned to redevelop it into an Edition hotel. The funky Edition brand was conceived by Ian Schrager in partnership with Marriott International, with the first opening in Hawaii late last year.

"It's a perfect property for an Edition hotel in London," said Arne Sorenson, Marriott International's president and COO. "With its great location and beautiful façade, the building is a perfect canvass for creating a true work of art."

Renovation of the former Berners Hotel is set to take up to 24 months.

### The Bulgari Hotel

Bulgari Hotels and Resorts signed an agreement in February for The Bulgari Hotel in Knightsbridge, due to open in spring 2012. It's the third hotel for Bulgari Hotels and Resorts, following the launch of the Bulgari Hotel in Milan in 2004 and the Bulgari Resort in Bali in 2006.

The hotel is being designed by Antonio Citterio and Patricia Viel & Partners, with Squire and Partners as the local architect for the project. It will feature 85 rooms, a restaurant and bar, a 2,000sq m spa and fitness centre with a 25m pool, a ballroom and a private cinema. Silver will be used as the central theme for the design, according to Bulgari. ●



# CAPITAL GAINS

**L**ondon hoteliers may have peered into the abyss in 2009 but 2010 was an exceptionally good year for them as they shrugged off the recession. Robust average room rate (ARR) growth of 9 per cent took average rates to just over £126 and saw revenue per available room (RevPAR) rise 11.4 per cent to almost £104. This helped make London the top performing hotel market in Europe.

Against such a high base, comparables will be tougher this year and PwC expects to see more moderate rate growth. We forecast an ARR gain of 6.1 per cent during 2011, taking average rates to £134.

London hotel occupancies have been creeping up since early 2000, reaching 82 per cent in 2010. Indeed Q2 and Q3 2010 broke past records for those quarters, averaging almost 88 per cent in Q3. Occupancies should continue to nudge up gently to average nearly 84 per cent this year; a 2.2 per cent gain over 2010, taking occupancy rates back to levels last seen in the mid to late 1990s and 7 percentage points above the 30 year long term average of 76.8 per cent. This will allow hoteliers to grow rates further. In terms of translating these trends into revenue per available room (RevPAR), healthy occupancy and ARR gains

London is set for an increase of more than 10 per cent in hotel

stock between 2010 and 2012 as the capital prepares for the

Olympics, but is there enough long term demand? Liz Hall talks

us through PricewaterhouseCoopers' research on the London market

mean we don't anticipate London seeing a pre-Olympic dip this year; quite the opposite in fact. More business travellers paying more for their rooms should help a gain of 8.3 per cent on top of 2010's 11.4 per cent gain, taking RevPAR to £112.50. However this performance could be held back by above average increases in supply.

It's not to say that business isn't challenging or that lead times aren't short. Competition is fierce and new luxury supply is likely to challenge London's existing hotels. Across the country, operators face pressures from owners keen to raise rates and from corporate negotiators keen to control them. The Royal Wedding may be the icing on the cake for some, but could prove lucrative only for those hotels close to the route. On the other hand there are no shortage of dark clouds threatening to spoil the fun; economic uncertainty here and in our key markets, faltering consumer confidence and a supply spike could slow ARR growth towards the end of 2011.

## AN OLYMPIC BONANZA

So, what's PwC's forecast for the Olympic year? Unsurprisingly we expect that 2012 should be a good year for London but it may not match the expectations of some. Yes, Q3 could make many hoteliers' dreams come true with the Farnborough Airshow and the Olympics in the same quarter. We anticipate London going in to 2012 with some levelling off but by and large trading very strongly. Outside of the crucial Q3 period, we remain concerned that reduced demand and above average room supply additions will take their toll on London trading.

## LONDON HOTEL STOCK RISE

In the run-up to the Olympics, a large amount of additional supply will open in London. If all this supply is realised it represents an increase of around 10.6 per cent in rooms between 2010 and 2012. To understand the effect of this supply on room occupancy and rates, we used data from Visit London's *London Hotel Development*



London is seeing large amounts of new hotel supply ahead of the Olympics

PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/@MELDANUS

Monitor publication to ascertain the number of new hotel rooms likely to be opened in 2011 and 2012. We included all hotels that were labelled as under construction, and assumed 75 per cent of those planned to open in the next two years (but not currently under construction) will be built and opened within that time period.

The econometric model already accounts for normal supply increases over time, with around 2,200 rooms built in a normal year. We adjusted the growth in supply numbers to be equivalent to our econometric model by taking into account the historic growth in number of rooms in the STR Global data on which our model is based. We also accounted for the fact that STR Global covers only around 70 per cent of the London hotels market. These adjustments meant our estimates of excess supply were 1,500 rooms in 2011 and in 3,400 rooms in 2012.

#### **WILL THE NEW LUXURY HOTELS HARM EXISTING OPERATORS?**

Luxury hoteliers have taken the view that if they have a good business case for building or refurbishing in London they may as well invest and showcase that new investment to the world during the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The capital is seeing several new brands and operators joining the current luxury and upper upscale hotel scene [see feature on p42]. These include the US boutique group Thompson Hotels (The Belgraves), the W London Leicester Square

(Starwood), the restored Gothic St Pancras Renaissance (Marriott), The London Edition (Ian Schrager and Marriott's new luxury lifestyle brand), ME by Meliá (Sol Meliá), the Corinthia Hotel London and Shangri-La at the Shard. For some, development means a second or – in the case of Four Seasons – a third hotel in London.

It's a whole new generation of luxury hotels too. Many combine style and service, and differentiation through

“Younger hotel guests continue to drive a more informal contemporary luxury product. London's traditional ‘grand dames’ such as The Savoy are fighting back as well, with no intention of becoming museum pieces”

top-end technology, beds, spas, celebrity chefs and service. Notably all offer facilities a step-up from what people experience at home. Younger guests continue to drive a more informal contemporary luxury product, with some crossover to lifestyle and boutique hotels. London's traditional ‘grand dames’ such as The Savoy are fighting back as well, and refurbishing and

renovating for new battles with no intention of becoming museum pieces.

Will this trend exert a halo effect for London's luxury hotels or a trading threat to existing operators? The rules of supply and demand suggest that absorbing the new rooms may not be such an issue during the Olympics or in central London locations. It's more likely to prove a headache in the immediate pre- and post-Olympic period. The supply is likely to reposition the London market and it may be even more difficult for hotels located further out of the central tourist core and business districts. Some of the hotel operators we spoke to during our research didn't expect to see a significantly negative impact on revenues as a result of the new supply opening, although others admitted that such a large increase in rooms would clearly impact trading. Several believed that the re-opening of iconic hotels such as The Savoy and Four Seasons along with new names on the scene could provide a positive halo effect, ensuring London continues to compete with top end hotels in other major global cities.

#### **ENOUGH ROOMS TO GO ROUND?**

The key UK hotel development trend in recent years has been the rapid development of the branded budgets and there should be rooms of all standards to accommodate Olympic visitors. In addition, a particularly interesting and more glamorous niche trend has been the investment in product quality in London's luxury and upscale hotels. ●

# SKI POWER

Who says factories have to be ugly? Magali Robathan finds out more about a green waste to energy plant planned for Denmark which doubles as a ski slope and visitor centre and blows coloured smoke rings

**W**hile waste to energy plants have become an accepted fuel source across Denmark, the hulking factories themselves are often a blot on the landscape.

The 3.5bn DKK (£413m) Amager Bakke waste to energy plant planned for Copenhagen promises to be different. Providing much of the energy for the city, it will double as a ski slope for locals and will feature a visitor centre, surrounding parklands, a chimney blowing smoke rings and a green façade planted with foliage.

The project is the brainchild of Danish architectural firm BIG, which won the competition to design a new waste to energy plant in January. BIG, founded by architect Bjarke Ingels, is known for its innovative projects, with completed commissions including the Copenhagen Harbour Bath, which transformed part of the city's rundown

harbourfront into an iconic outdoor swimming pool, with a lifeguard station designed to look like a lighthouse and a diving platform resembling the prow of a boat. BIG beat off competition from shortlisted offices including Wilkinson Eyre Architects, Dominique Perrault Architecture, 3XN and Lundgaard & Tranberg Architects.

The plant, which is due to open in 2016, will replace the nearby 40-year-old Amagerforbrænding factory. It will integrate new technologies in waste treatment, providing heat and energy for much of Copenhagen.

Waste to energy plants, which burn rubbish that would otherwise be sent to landfill to generate electricity, are now used to provide the majority of the heat and power for the city.

## THE BIG IDEA

"When you build factories near to a city centre, it's usual to spend money on trying to make them look attractive,"

says David Zahle, BIG partner and the project leader for Amager Bakke. "In this case, instead of just focusing on cladding the factory in a nice façade, we decided to see if we could activate the available budget to give something back to the people of Copenhagen. Instead of spending on gift-wrapping, we wanted to spend on the gift."

The gift is, of course, the ski slope. When coming up with a design for the new power plant, Zahle and his team were keen to create something of value for locals. The ski slope idea came from the necessary size of the facility, which at 100m-high will be one of the tallest buildings in Copenhagen. "In Denmark, we have a very cold climate which provides us with snow, but we have no mountains. There is nowhere to ski, so we thought why not use this tall building to create a ski slope?" says Zahle.

"The project was already ecologically and economically sustainable,



The factory will feature a 500m-long ski-slope and will offer visitors views of the city





because it gets rid of waste and creates a by-product that people need, but we also wanted it to be socially sustainable," he continues. "We wanted to create something that wasn't just aesthetically pleasing, but that had a use, and that could become a destination for people to travel to."

The project is an example of what BIG has labelled hedonistic sustainability. "Hedonistic sustainability is a revolt against the way that sustainability is often perceived; the idea that it has to hurt to do good and the focus on what you have to give up to attain sustainability," explains Zahle. "The focus of our approach is to look at

how we can reinvent the way society and buildings are created. Instead of changing people's behaviour we change the city so that the will of the people becomes sustainable."

### THE PROJECT BREAKDOWN

The 95,000sq m waste to energy plant features a lift that travels up its smokestack to an observation platform at the top of the building, offering views over Copenhagen. The lift allows visitors to look right into the plant's incinerator, giving them an insight into how the factory works. A separate 1,500sq m visitor centre will further explain the mechanisms of the plant,

and will focus on other sustainable technologies and the role of humans in creating sustainable cities.

The plant's roof is transformed into a 31,000sq m (500m-long) ski-slope, offering runs of different degrees of difficulty. Visitors will ski on a recycled synthetic granular surface – probably either Snowflex or Neveplast – "upending the convention of the energy-intensive indoor ski resort".

The building's façade is created from a series of planters, filled with earth and plants, which are stacked like bricks. As well as the energy plant, the building will also house administrative offices. These planters, explains

The surrounding parkland will be sculpted into a series of hills meant to look like mogul pistes



"Sometimes, when coming up with a design, you just go with the simplest solution to whatever the problem is. Sometimes – as in this case – you reach out with a design that goes far beyond that"

Zahle, provide sustainable insulation for the building, absorbing heat during the day and releasing it at night. In summer, the plants will grow and act as a sunscreen for the building, and when the water evaporates from them this will create a further cooling effect.

The roof of the building will act as a rain collector, with rainwater being used to water the plants and also delaying the rainwater running into the city's sewerage system.

The surrounding area will be sculpted by Man Made Land and Topotek 1 to create sloped parklands, which will be designed to give the impression of mogul pistes on a ski resort. The plan is that the park can be used by residents of Copenhagen for informal sports activities.

A further innovative idea sees the building's smokestack modified so that it can puff smoke rings 30m in diameter whenever a ton of CO2 is released. "We wanted to extend the playfulness of the building, and also to help make CO2 emissions measurable

and understandable," says Zahle.

"An important part of trying to change people's behaviours is making them understand what the problem is. CO2 is something that we all talk about, but it's such an abstract concept that it's difficult to really understand. With these smoke rings, people can see just how long it takes to emit a ton of CO2."

The smoke ring idea is the brainchild of art studio realities:united. The rings will be formed by the condensation of water in the flue gases as they slowly rise and cool. BIG also hopes to use lasers to light up the smoke rings and turn them into a "communicable tool for the factory and visitor centre".

The site is on an industrial area, lying around 3km from the centre of Copenhagen. "It's a transition zone, lying on the verge of where Copenhagen's housing stops and the factories begin," says Zahle. The area is currently being actively repurposed

for leisure activities, and features various sporting destinations offering cable-skiing, go-carting, sailing and rock climbing. "Extreme sports are conquering part of the land here, and we want to help turn the area into a real destination that people actively want to travel to."

Now BIG has won the competition to design the Amager Bakke plant, the hard work begins.

"When you submit a project in a competition it's as much about having a great client as having a great idea," says Zahle. "Sometimes, when entering a design, you just go with the simplest solution to whatever the problem is. Sometimes – as in this case – you reach out with a design that goes far beyond that. You know you're going a bit further than what's expected and you have to hope to find a client that dares to go beyond the average limitations of normality. We were very lucky to find such a client."

IN THE UK:

## Innovative green leisure power ideas



Redditch Borough Council to heat leisure centre using energy from crematorium

**R**edditch Borough Council (RBC) is proceeding with plans to reuse energy from the town's crematorium to heat the revamped Abbey Stadium Leisure Centre. Members of the full council approved the proposal on 7 February, and work is due to start in the summer on diverting waste heat into the complex.

It is the first project of its kind in the UK and will see 100 per cent of the energy generated from the flue gas cleaning process transferred to the leisure centre.

The scheme forms part of RBC's commitment to decrease carbon dioxide emissions by around 4 per cent a year, saving £14,560 in annual energy costs.

RBC leader Carole Gandy said of the plans: "The cremation process is a sensitive matter and we wanted to be sure our proposals had widespread support.

"Throughout we have been careful to explain how the technology would work, that it is tried and trusted, and that the practice is quite common in parts of Europe and especially in Sweden."

### Crealy to become UK's first solar powered theme park?

**P**lans were revealed in January for a solar panel installation at the Crealy Great Adventure Park in Devon, UK, which would establish the 100-acre attraction as the UK's first to run its rides with solar power.

The brainchild of Crealy MD Rod Pearson and solar energy company, Low Carbon Solar, the installation would provide enough energy to meet around 90 per cent of the park's needs during the peak summer months, powering everything from catering facilities to the park's roller-coaster. Surplus power would be fed into the National Grid.

A planning application was submitted at the start of March for the solar panels, however



the plans are now uncertain, following an announcement that the government is set to restrict the subsidies paid to new solar power plants.

The plan involves the installation of around 200,000sq ft (18,580sq m) of solar photovoltaic panels (PV) on the roof of the park's main buildings and installing PV-covered carports in the main car park.

Crealy Great Adventure Park uses bio-diesel for vehicles used on site, water from a borehole and favours local suppliers for its catering and retail outlets.

### CREALY GREAT ADVENTURE PARK ALREADY

### USES BIO-DIESEL FOR ITS VEHICLES, WATER FROM

### A BOREHOLE AND FAVOURS LOCAL SUPPLIERS

### Food waste to power Stroud Leisure Centre?

**S**troud District Council (SDC) has announced that it is looking into the possibility of using food waste to power Stratford Park Leisure Centre, Gloucestershire.

Proposals are being drawn up for a new anaerobic digester facility to convert household and commercial food waste into energy.

One of the potential locations for the installation is at the rear of the leisure complex, which has an annual electricity demand worth more than £35,000. SDC said the anaerobic digester could pro-

duce double the amount of energy currently used by the centre and generate nearly £300,000 each year.

Libby Bird, the council's cabinet member for climate change, said of the plans: "An anaerobic digester converts food waste into electricity and heat. We believe that having such a facility next door to a site with high energy requirements is one of the most efficient ways to benefit from this type of technology. It will allow us to reduce the electricity and heating costs for the leisure centre and the museum; and at the same time reduce the amount of waste which goes to landfill, which would consequently reduce associated landfill charges and greenhouse gas emissions." ●

# A HELPING HAND

From putting together a 2018 Commonwealth Games bid to preparing Abu Dhabi for the first premier league rugby game outside the UK, three leisure consultants tell us about their most interesting recent projects



## PROLEISURE

PREPARING THE PITCH FOR THE LONDON WASPS V HARLEQUINS RUGBY, ABU DHABI

On the 30 January 2011, the Emirates Palace Hotel and the Emirate of Abu Dhabi played host to the LV Cup match between the London Wasps and the Harlequins. This was the first time a Premier League Rugby game had been played outside of the UK.

Proleisure was asked to help by using its expertise and its Pro Pitch System to ensure that the football pitch that had been built in the grounds of the Emirates Palace in 2009 for the FIFA Club World Cup Tournament could be converted to host rugby. Part of Proleisure's brief involved ensuring that the converted pitch met all the Premier League and International Rugby Board Standards.

The Pro Pitch System was used to objectively measure the quality of the pitch during its development and prior to the match. Pro Pitch is a unique tool that quality-assures a pitch to established standards in three categories – playing standards, construction and herbage. There are 21 tests across the three categories that produce a star rating for the pitch. Proleisure's aim was to achieve the top rating of

The pitch was originally built for the FIFA Club World Cup UAE 2009 (right)



five stars for the Emirates Palace Hotel pitch.

Proleisure's role included the purchasing, exporting and installing of equipment; setting the dimensions of the pitch and marking it out to meet standards of play and media; and ensuring the floodlights met HDTV requirements. Proleisure was also responsible for ensuring that the player welfare areas were fit for purpose and included suitable changing rooms, medical areas, drug testing areas and match official rooms, and that staff were accommodated appropriately within the grandstand.

The team on the ground had 25 days to transform the football pitch in the gardens of the Emirates Palace Hotel. Local partners were sourced, and with guidance from the Premier League, the London Wasps and Fast Trak as well as input from stakehold-

ers, the pitch was transformed within the time frame. To add to the complexity of the project, all the stakeholders were in different parts of the world.

The stakeholders met face to face for the first time three days before the match, however in the month leading up to it there was constant communication between them.

The pitch received a five star rating and 5,000 fans watched the match.

Proleisure's leisure portfolio continues to grow. Having worked with a number of clients to accelerate membership sales in 2010, the consultancy started work on several new projects in January. One particularly successful project saw an increase in sales of 40 per cent year on year at a large single site operated by a leisure trust.



## PMPLEGACY

### HAMBANTOTA 2018 COMMONWEALTH GAMES BID

**G**lobal sporting events consultancy pmplegacy was appointed as lead advisor to the Hambantota 2018 Organising Committee (OC) in December 2010. Throughout 2011, pmplegacy's role is to assist the Sri Lankan city in its bid to win the right to host the 2018 Games, on behalf of the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF).

The other city bidding for the right to host the Commonwealth Games in 2018 is Gold Coast Australia.

Sri Lanka sees sport and major events as an important economic and social driver after years of internal conflict and the effects of the tsunami.

Hambantota is a rapidly expanding city near the south coast that will develop major new infrastructure including a new port and airport – both currently under construction – a Sports City with a wide range of new competition and non-competition venues and amenities and a tourism, business and entertainment hub with hotels, commerce and nightlife.

The 2018 bid is seen as a strong catalyst to help initiate and accelerate these developments and this

Colombo Cricket Ground (above); The Sri Lankan cricket team (right)

progress. Well known for its passion for cricket, Sri Lanka is now committed to raising participation in a wide range of sports and this bid has a pivotal role to play as part of a national strategy for sports development.

pmplegacy's role as advisor sees the firm leading a multi-disciplinary team with extensive event bidding expertise and working with the OC and the bid executive. The work will include the development of the Hambantota 2018 brand and bid emblem and the preparation of the Bid Book (Candidature File), comprising 15 themes ranging from Games Vision and Concept to Finance and Security. The role also involves dealing with international level public relations, through to the final presentation and selection of the host city in St Kitts & Nevis on 11 November, and



acting as strategic advisors to the OC – guiding them on everything from policy and strategy to communications, and ensuring that long-term and sustainable legacy benefits are at the very heart of the bid.

"This is a challenging and stimulating project. The bid aims to inspire other emerging and developing Commonwealth countries and aims to enhance the CGF brand," says Cathy Livock, director of consulting for pmplegacy. "pmplegacy's job is to maximise the appeal of the bid to the Commonwealth to the 71 voting members of the Commonwealth Games Associations and to highlight the many sporting, social, economic and environmental opportunities that it creates. The bid also aims to demonstrate that 'big is not always best'."





The Watersports Centre plans include a standing wave feature as well as diverse watersports facilities



## RQA LEISURE MANAGEMENT CONSULTANCY

### BOGNOR REGIS WATERSPORTS CENTRE FEASIBILITY STUDY

The University of Chichester has joined with Arun District Council (ADC) and Butlins Skyline Ltd to lead a wide-ranging feasibility study for a 21st century multi-activity watersports centre – part of the innovative town centre regeneration proposals for Bognor Regis in West Sussex. Assisting the project team are RQA Leisure Management Consultancy and Baqus Construction Consultancy, providing business planning and technical design advice respectively.

The partners (public, private, education, tourism and national governing bodies) are seeking to integrate the community, tourist and specialist sports interests with innovative building design and the creation of a rock groyne 'seascape' to produce accessible water for all abilities. Facilities for sailing, windsurfing, kite surfing, kayaking and jet skis, as well as a new standing wave teaching and recreational feature, will be part of the mix. A purpose-built sand arena for beach volleyball, beach soccer, beach rugby and children's playzones has also proven popular during the consultation phase. Completing the mix will be a year-round quality restaurant overlooking promenade and watersports activities, as well as a wet café for watersports participants, teaching rooms and outlets for hire and purchase of equipment.

The Feasibility Study was led by ADC, University of Chichester and Butlins

RQA Ltd has helped in advising the steering group and project team, undertaking stakeholder consultations, benchmarking and developing realistic business plans. Combining landmark design, £4.5m (approx) capital cost and long-term sustainability, the Bognor Regis Watersports Centre is attracting substantial interest from funding agencies and the commercial sector. This project will deliver all the key objectives of Olympic Legacy for community engagement, increased participation and enhancing sport performance. The Feasibility Study and its recommendations are being considered by Arun District Council.

The University of Chichester's Vice-Chancellor, Clive Behagg, has spoken out in support of the study and its recommendations. "[It] would add teaching, learning and immense recreational value to the student experience at our campuses in Chichester and Bognor Regis," says Behagg. Jeremy Pardey, managing director of Butlins in Bognor Regis, has also publicly welcomed the commercial and community regeneration opportunities that could be afforded by this development. All of the partners are committed to sup-



porting this and other aspects of town centre regeneration.

"This collaborative consultancy has successfully combined the highest level of research, resources and project management at the university and the commercial and construction expertise of RQA and Baqus, with the extensive experience and knowledge of Arun DC's technical team," says RQA managing director David Lord.

Other projects currently being undertaken by RQA include proposals to expand the already very successful Community Hub at Tooting and Mitcham Football Stadium, to include new synthetic turf pitches and a dedicated gymnastics training centre and sports hall. A project is also underway to roll out this innovative community facilities and delivery model at other suitable venues. ●

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# GREEN DREAM



As the Eden Project Café opens in St Austell, Kath Hudson meets the team and finds out that it's just part of the dream for a brighter future for the Cornish town

**I**t feels like the start of spring in the Eden Project Café: the glass doors (double-glazed, naturally) are being flung open, the sun is pouring in and it feels warm. Let's hope this is symbolic of a fresh start for its hometown, St Austell.

I'm meeting Eden's sustainability manager, Caron Thompson, and architect, Tom Drury, who is responsible for the design of the £360,000, 100-cover café, so today I have a dictaphone and notebook. Last week, I was here with my children, making 'self portraits' with clothes pegs, pipe-cleaners, material and sequins, while

my daughter wore a ladybird outfit from the dressing-up box. So far, I have bought tasty homemade bread, locally-grown fresh parsnips, had a takeaway salad box for lunch, earned a free coffee on my loyalty card and swapped a book. Here today, there are two elderly ladies dragging shopping trolleys, mothers and toddlers, a couple of people with laptops taking advantage of the free Wi-Fi, some business people having a meeting and the mayor of St Austell having coffee. The aim was to create a community café and Eden appears to have pulled it off.

The Eden Project Café is the first

spin off venture for the Eden Project, which is located in a disused clay pit a couple of miles outside of St Austell. The town of St Austell is mostly bypassed by the million annual visitors to the attraction and is frequently disparaged by its neighbours and residents. Over the past couple of decades, as the once thriving china clay industry has dwindled, the town has become increasingly dejected.

Although it has a gorgeous bay nearby and an historic port, the town centre itself has become dreary, with high numbers of empty shops. While other Cornish towns have established positive identities, St Austell has somehow failed to do so. Symbolic of its demise is the Cornwall Coliseum, at Carlyon Bay: in its heyday it hosted bands like The Who and The Smiths. Now it's a derelict eyesore.

## A BRIGHTER FUTURE

But, happily, it's no longer all doom and gloom for the town, as some major initiatives are underway to kick-start its regeneration. Commercial Estates Group is currently working on



While the Eden Project attracts millions of visitors, the majority bypass nearby St Austell



Customers can bring fruit and vegetables they've grown to sell to the café at a daily wholesale price

**"ST AUSTELL NEEDS SOMETHING DIFFERENT.  
WE HOPE IT WILL BE A DEMONSTRATION  
TOWN FOR GREEN CORNWALL"**

plans to bring Carlyon Bay back to its former glory, with beachfront restaurants and holiday accommodation.

The Department for Communities and Local Government has given Cornwall Council £9.5m to experiment with green ideas. The Eden Project Café is part of this experiment and the team was awarded £160,000 to put towards the café and to run Eden-style activities around the town. Next year St Austell will bid for city status, based on its green credentials, and plans have also been submitted for six eco communities in disused clay pits around the town. Last year a £75m shopping development was launched, White River Place, which has won a national award for most sustainable retail development. Unfortunately, this has led to St Austell feeling like a town of two halves, especially as some of the shops

migrated from the old town to the new, but the Eden Project is planning to integrate the two halves with events and activities. Funding is in place to re-pave the old town and the historic Market Place is to get a revamp, with the idea of an arts complex mooted.

"The street animation will involve all the things Eden does: community artists, storytelling and den building," says Caron Thompson. "Sitting between Plymouth and Truro, St Austell needs something different and it needs that Eden branding to make it quirky and interesting. We hope it'll be a demonstration town for green Cornwall, to show that you can run a commercial venture in a sustainable way."

#### ECO FEATURES

With glass doors on three sides offering views of Pentewan Valley, the café

is bright and airy. Nods to the Eden brand are evident: bees and flowers stencilled on the glass and big pink and orange leaves, cut out of plywood, suspended from the ceiling. Features include a huge bookshelf, recycled from a church pew, where people are encouraged to swap books, and a circular fire in the middle of the restaurant.

"From a design point of view, we've got a fabulous plot with aspects on three sides, so I wanted to take advantage of that and use the light and natural ventilation as much as possible," says Drury. "While none of the eco features are unique, what is unique is the way they are put together and the transparency we will show about how they work."

There is no air conditioning; the ventilation, supplied by Passavent, is completely natural, with the vents



**"DURING THE BUILD WE TRIED TO THROW AWAY AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE. THE HOLES CUT OUT OF THE ROOF FOR VENTILATION ARE USED FOR THE HEARTH"**

Children are welcomed with activities, toys and a dressing up box

open according to the direction of the wind and the temperature inside. The kitchen is electric only, and the coffee machine is the most environmentally-friendly on the market, working out the busiest periods and adjusting the boiler accordingly. Both solar thermal and photovoltaic heating are used to generate electricity, and there is an air source heat pump. Harvested rainwater is used to flush the toilets.

"During the build we tried to chuck away as little as we could," says Drury. "The holes cut out of the roof for ventilation are used for the hearth of the fire, for example, and the offcuts from the leaves on the ceiling were also painted and used."

Devon fire specialists, Rung Heating, supplied the café's flue, which is highly specialised. Eden worked with local companies Bardon and Goonvean

to create the floor, which is made from polished concrete containing recycled aggregate. The seating is a mish mash of wooden chairs set around tables made by a local joinery workshop, which only uses locally-sourced materials. All the chairs, and the small children's benches, were bought on eBay and "re-loved."

#### THE CONCEPT

With community at the heart of the concept, the brief of the café is to be more than just a place for eating and drinking. With this in mind the team are looking for involvement from locals. People are encouraged to bring their homegrown produce to sell to the café, to be used in the café's dishes or sold on to other customers.

The team is fizzing with ideas. Drury would like to see fish sellers being

a regular feature, as well as outside cooking in pizza ovens during the summer, and potentially bike hire, since St Austell links up with various cycle trails. There are plans, further down the line, to open the kitchens up for other entrepreneurs and for the local college to run a restaurant night. There is a DJ booth, which locals will be encouraged to try their hand at, and local bands will be able to perform. At the moment the café opens late on Wednesdays – which is student night – Fridays and Saturdays.

"It's a work in progress and it's not going to stop," says manager, Dan Bull. "We want to take on board ideas from the local community and reflect them in its operation."

As is expected of an eco café, the food is organic, locally-sourced and seasonal. Bull knows where everything





## EDEN PROJECT CAFÉ IN BRIEF

### THE CAFÉ OFFERS:

- Seasonal, local food
- Free Wi-Fi
- A produce swap enabling customers to sell their fruit and veg to the café at the daily wholesale price
- A book swap
- Late night opening, with entertainment ranging from live music to theatre
- Exhibition space for arts
- Meeting space for local community groups
- Shop area selling Eden products, from seeds to fresh produce
- Eden seasonal activities, such as den building in the summer



The café runs a book swap scheme, where customers can exchange books and leave reviews

comes from down to the last mushroom. The menu comprises mainly breakfasts, paninis, a salad bar, snacks and a great range of cakes. One dish which exceeded expectations was the fishfinger sandwich. Served on a wooden platter, this consisted of six goujons, fresh bread, home-made tartare sauce and mushy peas. It was all delicious, fresh and at £3.95 incredibly reasonable – affordability is another key feature.

So what are the operators hoping the café will bring to the town? "Football, mainly," says Thompson, "but hopefully this, combined with The Beach [Commercial Estates Group's plans] and the eco towns will help to uplift and regenerate St Austell."

Let's hope so. Already the café has persuaded me into St Austell for shopping that I might otherwise have

chosen to do in nearby Truro. Although early days, the Eden Project Café appears to have been embraced by locals, who feel like their town might be starting to get back on its feet.

### THE ECO TOWN

A planning application was submitted in March for the first phase of a long term £1bn project to create six eco communities on former industrial land around St Austell, owned by Imerys Minerals, which runs the china clay operations. The company behind it, Eco-Bos, is a joint venture between the Swiss-based Orascom Development Holidays and Imerys.

The first town will include 2,000 homes built to high green specifications, some local shops, community facilities and office space. Over 10 hectares will be given over to allot-

ments and space may even be made available for livestock. Since the development is not allowed to detract from what is available in St Austell, leisure doesn't feature too highly in the plans. However, what the scheme does intend to offer is outdoor recreation space for exercise and play: there will be 232 hectares (573 acres) of open space and recreation area, including four outdoor sports pitches, and a 25km network of walkways, cycle trails and bridleways, which will connect the town to St Austell town centre and Eden. The idea of adding extreme sports facilities is also being considered.

At a later date there are plans to turn Par Docks into a buzzing marina, with associated cafés and restaurants. The idea of a cable car connecting this to the town and the eco village is currently being evaluated. ●

# HAPPY CUSTOMERS

The ClarityLive booking system allows LVRPA freedom to tie the design in with the LVWWC website

**Nurturing customer relationships is vital for any business, and it's equally important to measure the customer experience. We take a look at some systems helping leisure companies stay ahead of the game**

## Aquaterra Leisure goes it alone with new CRM system

**THE SYSTEM:** Prospector  
**THE COMPANY:** Aquaterra Leisure

**A**quaterra Leisure's purpose-built CRM system Prospector was launched in August 2010, designed to counter the difficulties of using off-the-shelf generic CRM systems that were never a great fit.

Charitable trust Aquaterra Leisure, which manages 15 public sector leisure facilities in London and Bath and North East Somerset, had previously had considerable success with another system built in-house, the Connect system. The Connect system had radically improved membership retention, and Aquaterra Leisure was keen to further improve its CRM.

Central to Prospector's creation were a few key components of a process called agile development, meaning that the system has been developed iteratively, is simple to use and that end users are fully involved in the planning, development and testing stages. Designing the system in conjunction with its end users had three major advantages: it ensured that it was naturally simple to use, that almost no user training was required and buy-in was guaranteed.

The aim was to create a system that not only helped membership advisors sell memberships, but also enabled users to see patterns in purchasing and membership cancellation. Prospector also needed to work well with Aquaterra's overall IT strategy of a single customer view.

The Prospector CRM system was designed to be perfect for leisure providers. Not only can it track each stage of the customer journey (including non-member customers), but it also informs Aquaterra Leisure about how its customers reach its facilities and the behaviours they exhibit while using them.

Prospector tracks sales processes, transactions, membership payments, gym floor interactions, swimming lessons, cancellations, addresses and usage. With this information, Aquaterra creates reports for membership sales, the sales funnel, tours, hot leads and prospects, calls made and membership failure rates. Reports can be drilled down to sites, teams, salespeople and then the customer, avoiding users having to leave the report and log into a CRM system.

Duplication is prevented because the reporting system cross checks with Aquaterra's till and membership system, so the user can be assured that all data is current and accurate.

## Online booking facilities make a splash at watersports venue

**THE SYSTEM:** Clarity Commerce Solutions' ClarityLive  
**THE COMPANY:** Lee Valley Regional Park Authority





**L**ee Valley White Water Centre in Hertfordshire has implemented Clarity Commerce Solutions' ClarityLive online bookings software to ensure that the customer booking experience is as smooth and professional as possible.

Positioned on London's doorstep, Lee Valley White Water Centre is the venue for the canoe slalom during the 2012 Olympic Games, and also provides recreational white water rafting and canoeing. Having created such a cutting edge facility, the Lee Valley White Water Centre team were determined to make every stage of the customer journey enjoyable and consistent with their brand image.

When the team decided to implement the ClarityLive online booking solution, customer convenience, business efficiency and system security were key requirements.

ClarityLive software gives users complete freedom when it comes to web page design. This allows the centre to

customise its online bookings service within the wider website look and feel.

"We are very proud of the look, feel and functionality of the ClarityLive online booking system. It complements the centre perfectly," says Bill Moran, senior operational manager at Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA). "Fifty one per cent of our bookings to date have come through online sales." Having such a high level of online bookings has an added benefit of resulting in shorter queues at the front desk, adds Moran.

In order to ensure the system optimised customer convenience, the LVRPA management team looked at other operators' online bookings processes before designing their own. "Don't be confined to your own specific industry - there are plenty of clever, transferable ideas already out there," advises Moran. Software part.

"Don't be confined to your own specific industry - there are plenty of clever, transferable ideas already out there."

**Bill Moran, senior operational manager, Lee Valley Regional Park Authority**

ner Clarity's multi-sector experience proved invaluable in this regard.

"Our ClarityLive solution has best-of-breed features built-in from our work in the leisure, hospitality, retail and entertainment sectors," says Clarity's Kevin Anson. Security is always a key operator concern, and ClarityLive provides multiple security layers using Microsoft Windows Server/Internet Information Server technology.

Clarity's multi-sector experience was crucial to the wider ClarityLive leisure management system installed for LVRPA, spanning diverse attractions.



## From CRM to CEM - measuring the customer experience

**THE SYSTEM:** Empathica's GoRecommend  
**THE COMPANY:** Giraffe

**R**estaurant group Giraffe has employed a customer experience measurement (CEM) programme from Empathica, a leading CEM agency within the hospitality, retail and financial services sectors. The programme will enable the restaurant chain to gain feedback from hundreds of customers each month across its 40 restaurants.

"We've always been focused on providing great customer service but we hope this programme will enable us to continue to improve our customers' dining experience further," says Giraffe co-founder Andrew Jacobs. "We chose to work with Empathica to get a true picture of our customers' expectations.

We see this as a huge improvement over the limited 'single snapshot' view we had previously gathered from mystery shoppers. Empathica will be gathering real feedback from hundreds of our customers each month, which we'll be able to access online daily to enable us to make improvements driven by customers' feedback."

As part of the programme with Empathica, Giraffe will not only solicit feedback from its customers, but will prompt them to share their experiences in social media, using Empathica's GoRecommend application which enables customers to recommend the restaurant chain to their friends via Facebook, Twitter or email. "A great deal of our marketing is done online so the GoRecommend

"We see this as a huge improvement on the limited single snapshot view we had previously gathered from mystery shoppers."

Andrew Jacobs, co-founder, Giraffe

application will support our strategy and we expect it to drive even greater viral advocacy," says Jacobs.

"Giraffe's decision to choose Empathica demonstrates our market leadership position in the UK," says Steve Raheer, business development director at Empathica. "Giraffe understands that obtaining feedback from customers is a much more powerful way to engage their staff and improve customer advocacy, both in their restaurants and via social media." ●

Appointment Book



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# PEPPA PIG WORLD

Fans of the hit children's tv show Peppa Pig will be in their element in a new attraction dedicated to the cartoon. Richard Mancey, managing director of Paultons Park, which operates Peppa Pig World, describes the offer

## What is Peppa Pig World?

Opened on 9 April, this magical world is a must for any fan of the popular tv show. It offers rides, buildings and animations from the programme, a huge themed indoor play area and two cafés.

Covering three acres, it sits within the 65-acre family theme park Paultons Park in Hampshire, UK.

## Please describe the park's content

There are seven Peppa Pig-themed rides: Miss Rabbit's Helicopter Flight; Peppa's Big Balloon Ride; Daddy Pig's Car Ride; Grandpa Pig's Little Train Ride; George's Dinosaur Adventure; Grandpa Pig's Boat Trip; and Windy Castle. There's also a water splash park called Muddy Puddles [jumping in them is Peppa Pig's favourite activity], an outdoor play area – Mr Potato's Playground – and Paulton's first indoor play area – George's Space Ship Play Zone – housed on a 900sq

m (9,700sq ft) grass-roofed building. All the rides are heavily themed to closely mirror what viewers see in the tv series. Five of the rides were manufactured by Metallbau Emmeln and two were produced by Zierer.

## Where did the inspiration come from for Peppa Pig World?

Paultons was one of the first parks to stage a Peppa Pig Meet and Greet, which we held four years ago. This proved popular with our guests and we've seen this popularity gradually increase to where it is today. We were also very impressed with the whole ethos of the tv series.

We established a relationship with Entertainment One (the licence holders of Peppa Pig) over several years while running Peppa Pig character weekends and agreed the exclusive licence to the Peppa Pig theme park concept. The park is solely funded by Paultons.

## How did you choose the content?

We wanted rides and attractions that would complement those we already had at Paultons. We also wanted to include elements that could easily be themed so that they were integral to the whole of Peppa Pig World.

There were many other factors that were part of the decision-making process as to what rides and attractions were to be included, such as throughputs, longevity and engineering factors.

## Can you describe the design?

It's a totally immersive experience for families with children aged one to six. As well as the rides and attractions, there are numerous themed buildings and animated attractions which will add to the magic of Peppa Pig World. Much time and effort has been spent on the landscaping and planting – a Paultons speciality – which will add to the experience for children and adults

## ABOUT THE COSTUMES

Peppa Pig and her brother George both make appearances at the park in costumes created by Rainbow Productions. Simon Foulkes, sales and marketing director, describes the outfits that the performers wear.

"We've created two sets of manufactured costume versions of the licensed properties, Peppa Pig and George. The show is so popular that the biggest challenge was to capture the essence of the characters and translate how they're perceived in their two dimensional world into larger-than-life three dimensional costume characters.

The skin (costume) performers at Paultons received training from our qualified team of staff. They're taught how best to portray the characters accurately in order to engage with



Cool vests with gel packs make the Pig costumes more comfortable to wear

the audience. We also give training in the crucial health and safety aspects of performing as a costume character.

The costumes cover the performer's bodies and heads so we take their welfare very seriously.

We manufacture light-weight costumes, fit head-fans and supply cool vests with gel packs. These sit next to the performer's body when they're wearing the costume, making it cooler and more comfortable to wear. We developed this technology when creating the official mascots for the Athens Olympics in 2004 and it's subsequently been used at theme parks and sporting events around the world."



alike. The initial masterplan was designed by RMA Themed Attractions working closely with our directors and operations management.

#### Will adults enjoy themselves too?

This is fundamentally important to us. All the rides, play areas and attractions have been designed so adults can accompany their children on them.

#### How does Peppa Pig World complement the rest of the park?

Paultons is very focused on providing families with children below the age of 14 with a full day's entertainment. We have rides and attractions already at the Park suitable for this age group, but Peppa Pig World provides the park with its own area dedicated for children below the age of six. With all the other rides and attractions, plus wonderful gardens, birds and animals, there are many other things for a family to enjoy. For older siblings and parents, there are thrill rides such as the Cobra, Edge and Sky Swinger.

#### Where will visitors come from?

We're hoping that with the introduction of Peppa Pig World, guests will

(Above) visitors can meet Peppa Pig and her brother George before taking a ride on Grandpa Pig's Boat Trip (right)

travel from further afield than our traditional catchment area, as it's the only one of its kind that will be developed in the UK. We know that Peppa Pig's popularity in overseas markets is steadily growing, so we hope to see attendance from these audiences increasing over time.

#### How much did the park cost?

Peppa Pig World cost £6m (€6.8m, \$9.6m) in total. It's the largest single project undertaken by the park in its 27-year history. A ticket to Paultons Park includes entry to Peppa Pig World.

#### What is the F&B and retail offer?

Within Peppa Pig World there's a café in the indoor play area called Daddy Pig's Big Tummy Café plus Miss Rabbit's Ice Cream Parlour. There are also a number of photographic outlets – studio, green screen and ride photo – as well as a 2,500sq ft (232 sq m) dedicated Peppa Pig toy shop.



#### How did you work with the creators?

We've spent an incredible amount of time and resource ensuring that Peppa Pig World reflects the series as closely as possible. We've worked with Entertainment One and the creators of Peppa Pig World – Ashley, Baker, Davis – throughout this whole project.

#### What are your future plans?

We're always adding attractions, and updating and improving the park's infrastructure. This will continue. ●



# DANCE MOVES

**Andrew Holt,**  
Chief executive,  
Parkwood Leisure

## Why did you decide to actively pursue the dance market?

As part of the Parkwood Leisure strategic review last year, dancing in the UK was identified as a growth market. The dance market has grown steadily over the last five years and we believe it has the potential to develop further.

In the UK, 4.8 million people currently participate in community-based dance activities, while the numbers of children taking a GCSE in dance has increased by 170 per cent over the last five years. The only current trade show for the dance market – MOVE IT – has increased visitor numbers by 58 per cent over the last three years. Faced with this evidence, the Parkwood board made a commitment to create a national dance brand in all Parkwood Leisure centres.

In October 2010 a strategic team identified a clear strategy to launch a dance brand within Parkwood Leisure.

Following a decision to focus on the dance market, Parkwood Leisure bought the Sway Dance brand last year and is currently rolling it out across the UK



Andrew Holt

## What happened next?

Firstly a comprehensive review was carried out to assess the current dance provision within Parkwood Leisure. All general managers were asked to complete a questionnaire on the topic, in order to identify current participation in dance classes across Parkwood's leisure centres, to assess the diversity of the classes available and the management arrangements for those classes.

The results identified that the majority of dance classes were being delivered by external dance teachers or dance schools. This made us

wonder whether we could increase participation across our centres by doing it ourselves.

After significant discussion it was agreed that purchasing an existing established dance brand was the most attractive option for Parkwood Leisure.

This had the added advantage of allowing existing systems and programmes to be transferred effectively across all of our centres.

There was also an agreement that dance is a specialism and obtaining the appropriate brand skills from day one would be crucial in creating a national dance brand.



Dancers take part in a show at the end of each term



## ABOUT THE LAUNCH



Parkwood Leisure announced the launch of the Sway Dance brand in October 2010. Initially Sway Dance will offer three core dance disciplines: street dance, ballet and ballroom (sequence), which will support local bespoke additions, such as belly dance, cheerleading, salsa, jazz, jive, contemporary and freestyle. Dancers will be able to work towards nationally recognised dance qualifications.

At the launch, Parkwood Leisure CEO Andrew Holt said: "Parkwood Leisure will use Sway Dance as an extension of our sports development strategy. These classes will increase the utilisation of our centres, while promoting individual health in support of the government's Healthy Living Agenda. Parkwood Leisure believes that dance will appeal to members of the community who might not otherwise use traditional sports and leisure facilities."

### How did Parkwood come to work with Ida Freeman?

It became very apparent to us that the best strategy would be to find a dance partner. To help gain a better knowledge of the dance market we started to meet relevant movers and shakers. As part of these informal discussions we met up with professional dance instructor and performer Ida Freeman, who owns a dance school in Worcestershire called Sway Dance.

It soon became clear that there was a real opportunity for both our brands to work in partnership. The rest, as they say, is history.

### Why Sway Dance?

We chose Sway Dance for lots of different reasons, but ultimately because both Parkwood Leisure and Ida Freeman shared very similar values. We certainly respected the Sway Dance brand and the innovation that Ida had applied to make the brand a success within Worcestershire over the previous five years.

We felt that the building blocks of the brand were innovative and that it

fitted well with the type of dance brand that we wanted to create.

### What have been the biggest challenges of launching the Sway Dance programme?

After agreeing the partnership with Sway Dance in October 2010, we committed ourselves to launching the brand in all Parkwood Leisure centres from January 2011. To deliver this objective we needed to train all of our instructors across all of our centres in Sway Dance choreography. Almost 150 instructors were trained as part of this programme. We also needed to create interest and demand for the Sway Dance product, and to make this happen we trained all our front line staff in the brand. It's been hard work and challenging, but we're loving it and are now seeing some success, which is extremely satisfying.

### What are your plans for the brand over the next 12 months?

We want to ensure that we cement the values of Sway Dance throughout Parkwood Leisure at all levels in our

organisation. We're proud of the journey we've been on so far with Ida and are looking forward to developing our partnership even further.

In the lead up to the launch of Sway Dance we spent a considerable amount of time identifying instructors that we felt represented the brand. We want to support these instructors over the next year and help develop the brand through them. They will be pivotal to our success.

Of course we plan to grow the brand. However the next stage is about continuing to develop the building blocks of the brand that will ensure our foundations are strong.

### What are your longer term plans for Sway Dance?

We want to create an innovative dance brand that allows all age groups, genders and backgrounds the pleasure of dance. We intend to highlight the profile of the Sway Dance brand throughout the UK. And we want to create a dance brand that truly engages and excites both our teachers and the people who participate in the classes.

Ida Freeman trained at the Stella Mann Performing Arts School

## Ida Freeman, Founder, Sway Dance

### What is your background?

The Sway brand was set up by myself, and has been operating in Worcestershire since 2005. I was born in Sweden and trained at the Stella Mann Performing Arts School in London. After graduating, I worked as a professional dancer on a wide range of shows including *Stars In Your Eyes*, *West Side Story* and *A Chorus Line*. I was also involved in a tv series called *Blam!* which was screened on Sky One. I have a wealth of experience in the dance industry and am a highly trained dancer. I love dance and hope to share that passion with others.

### Dance seems to have seen a surge in popularity recently. Why do you think this is?

There has definitely been an increase in the popularity of dance in recent years, and it has become much more fashionable. There are a number of factors influencing this trend, but the most significant is probably the increase in media coverage for dance.

Boys have become more interested in dance, in large part thanks to street dance and hip hop crews such as Diversity and Flawless.

### How was Sway Dance born?

The Sway Dance brand was founded in 2005. When I moved to Worcestershire, I recognised quite quickly that there was a gap in the market for the provision of dance in the local area. I contacted local primary and secondary schools with the aim of setting up my own dance school. I started with one class in the local parish hall, with six students taking part. This soon increased to four classes, and we now have more than 125 students taking part in dance classes each week.

"Sway Dance gives people from all age groups and backgrounds a chance to perform across different genres of dance. I wanted to create an experience that balanced learning with fun"

### What does Sway Dance offer?

Sway Dance gives people from all age groups and backgrounds a chance to perform across different genres of dance. At the end of term everyone takes part in a dance show in the theatre. I wanted to create an experience that balanced learning with fun.

Sway Dance offers all the physical benefits of dancing while improving confidence. While it can be hard work, the most notable benefit is the amount of fun participants have at each class.

I felt it was important that participants loved attending classes and felt truly inspired. I'm proud that many of the dancers who started with me right at the beginning are still attending Sway Dance classes today, and I've spent a lot of time ensuring partici-

pants feel truly part of the brand. If you attend a Sway Dance class you'll notice that the majority of dancers wear the brand merchandise. Ultimately I love dance and I want others to as well.

### Who does it attract? Who has been taking part in the classes so far?

Sway Dance is aimed at everyone. It has no specific target market. The brand was built on the idea of helping local people enjoy the benefits of dance.

### Why did you decide to link up with Parkwood Leisure?

Last autumn I engaged in informal discussions about developing dance within Parkwood Leisure. Both Parkwood Leisure and I realised there could be mutual benefit to Sway Dance becoming the dance brand across all Parkwood Leisure centres.

I had spent five years developing Sway Dance into a recognised brand within Worcestershire. With the building blocks in place, I had a real ambition to grow the brand. I really felt that the ingredients of the brand were unique and that Sway Dance had the potential to become a successful national dance brand. ●



Ida Freeman





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Whatever you think of the government's actions, all kinds of factors make it certain that another tough year lies ahead. There are ways to make the best of it, says Grahame Senior

# Hard times ahead?

## How to Manage the Downturn

**T**he conventional wisdom is that, whilst many businesses manage okay in the first half of a recession, it's the last little bit that takes no prisoners. We have had two years of pretty grim times economically. However you forecast it, 2011 seems set fair to be even tougher. But there is hope for the steadfast!

Business travel budgets are likely to be set lower. The public sector, in terms of both its own budgets for activities and the financial stability of its employees, is going to be severely constrained. Individuals are going to be increasingly concerned about the twin threat of rising inflation and increasing interest rates – particularly the effect on mortgages. All of this means that discretionary spending, corporate spending and consumer confidence are all under threat.

Whether your business is hospitality or leisure, it's hard to categorise yourself as 'essential expenditure'. The outlook seems gloomy. Experience tells that for those who hold their nerve and plan ahead it's a survivable situation.

### Planning is the key

It would be a brave business that forecast a significant sales uplift for the coming year. A more prudent approach is to look at a level revenue target – even a lower total sales scenario.

The obvious corollary is that, if sales are going to be level or lower, overheads have got to be contained or even pruned. I doubt there's a single reader who doesn't feel that they've done quite a bit of pruning already in the past few years and that there is little left to cut.

However, the fact that we are so long into a climate of financial constraint means that attitudes across many supplier businesses have changed significantly, becoming more realistic. Headline prices may be up, but many suppliers are very willing indeed to trim their costings in order to achieve security of payment and a continuing relationship. A good starting point is



to review the total overhead budget line by line at the beginning of a new year and look at those costs which can be contained or managed better. The whole area of communications is a very important aspect of this and using electronic rather than physical means you can cut costs quite significantly.

### Control your cash

Most businesses in our sector tend not to have a flat year in terms of month-by-month income. If you are a business which starts its financial year on 1 April, there's every likelihood that the worst three months of the year, in terms of sales, will be the last three winter months. It's very important to plan your budgeting and your cash control so that the period up to the end of December (or even into mid-January) is seen as a time to build up cash reserves to ensure that there's sufficient in the bank to get through the lean days of winter. This philosophy of managing cash also applies to managing costs. If you ensure that your planning minimises outgoings in that difficult last three months, it will make a very big difference.

**"We're all in it together and the opportunity to offer real value and a proper relationship with customers who have already proved loyal has never been stronger"**

## HOW TO KEEP YOUR TEAM CONFIDENT AND ENERGISED

- 1 Review the past year's results together and brainstorm the lessons to be learned.
- 2 Treat every member of the team as valuable, and allow them to speak their mind and find their place.
- 3 Wherever possible, share the benefits of success and the consequences of failure. A transparent bonus structure as part of the reward package can create real motivation in these tough times.
- 4 Ask your team and your customers for feedback. Listen to it and react to it positively, not defensively.
- 5 Encourage bright ideas and suggestions and try new things and new event ideas.
- 6 Take the time to talk to each individual about their own career and agree a clear plan for them.
- 7 Share the facts and figures about your business progress and incentivise all helpful initiatives.

I'm writing this article in 'Valentines' week'. One striking indicator of the desperation in the air is the fact that I have had seven different round robin emails from corporate hotel companies this weekend making Valentines' offers. What a waste of time and money. What self-respecting romantic is going to react to an offer made two days before the event!

It's planning that matters. One small business that has been operating for years is a good example of how planning ahead and getting the offer and the pricing right – and keeping the delivery spot-on – works well. Clos du Marquis at the Leckford Hutt near Stockbridge in Hampshire is a good example of a business that knows its market and adjusts its offers to the prevailing climate. I called in on a cold January morning en route to Wiltshire and got the last table available for lunch. It was packed – it even had some double covers of people lunching long into the afternoon. As usual the chef/patron called at every table with a sensitive and relevant enquiry or observation. They cook with real skill, deliver full value and treat all their customers as family. I recommend you try it. If you like Gascon cooking, good value and some great South West wines, there's nowhere quite so in tune with the times.



**Clos du Marquis near Stockbridge in Hampshire: "A good example of a business that knows its market and adjusts its offer to the prevailing climate"**



### Don't expect the bank to bail you out

It would be hard to think of a sector that has had worse press in the last couple of years than the banks. Despite that, they're still a necessary part of our business support system and their culture needs to be taken into account. Their current mantra is to build up their own cash reserves and cut their costs down and they are doing this in part by charging maximum rates to those who need help the most.

The way to get the best out of these ravaging beasts is to prove useful. Be absolutely clear about your forecast and your need for borrowing early on and ensure you've negotiated any overdraft levels well before you need them. Having set out the scenario, stick to the plan and never approach a bank when you're in distress. If you control your business and keep to the cash forecast, you will serve their business need, which is to have reliable relationships with their debtor portfolio.

### Now for the nice bit

The prospects of a year of very tight cost control, getting a real grip on sales and planning and ensuring you never go a penny over your cash requirements

all mean tough times ahead. You have to stick to the plan and deliver week after week, month after month.

Of course, the nice part of a situation like the one we're currently in is that we are all in it. The fact is this grim economic weather affects us all equally and we're all in the same boat – suppliers, customers, staff and partners. By the time we've come this far we're all a little bit like veterans in a long campaign. We know it's tough, we're not looking for it to get suddenly easier and we're willing to make sacrifices to get the job done.

The great thing about small businesses like most of the ones in our sector is that it's easy to manage them as teams. The more we share information, the more we engender a climate where every individual takes responsibility for doing their bit.

In parallel with reviewing the budget, it's important to review the operating plan and particularly job responsibilities. It's usually possible to allocate responsibilities more efficiently, keeping costs down and improving margins.

In the area of communications, the way in which electronic systems have developed over the past few years has been quite extraordinary. Two very

important factors are made much easier and more cost-effective because of this. The first is collecting, managing and cultivating data about our customers. The second is communicating with those customers differentially, individually and proactively. I strongly recommend that you go through a process of allocating responsibility to the right team member to review and upgrade the customer database and structure it in a segmented way. In parallel with that review your annual communications plan for relating to those customers and plan it in a way which will generate extra revenue.

We're all in it together – customers too – and the opportunity to offer real value and a proper relationship with individuals who have already proved loyal has never been stronger.

Make your key customers part of your team and share with them the awareness of hard times. Offer them more and they'll give you more.

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# CHRIS MARRIOTT

As more councils outsource the management of their leisure facilities, it's vital that they choose the most appropriate procurement route, says Capita Symonds' Chris Marriott



**T**he message that local authorities can make big savings by outsourcing the management of their leisure facilities has been received loud and clear.

Activity in the leisure outsourcing market has increased markedly since my article in *Leisure Management* last year; so much so that it seems appropriate to continue with the theme.

The proportion of leisure facilities operated directly by local authorities looks set to rapidly reduce from around 60 per cent to perhaps 40 per cent over the next couple of years. Councils managing in-house will be in the minority.

## ATTRACTING INTEREST

Over the next six months there will be a feast of opportunities presented to the contractor market. The question for a local authority is how best to present their portfolio.

How they do this is fairly straightforward. Leisure contractors will base their decision on whether to bid for a particular contract on a number of criteria. Geographical location and the size of portfolio are two factors that a council can't do much about. What councils do have control over, however, is the amount of preparation they do before going out to market. If contractor bidders are suspicious that very little thinking has been done before launching the process – a 'let's see what the market comes back with' approach – then councils may find themselves with limited interest in their portfolio.

A client with a clear idea of what they want is more attractive because the risk of delays and additional bidding costs are considered so much lower.

The other factor councils have control over is how they procure their operator.

Local authorities are highly risk-averse. They don't want to risk making a bad decision, particularly by choosing the wrong contractor partner to deliver their service. It's this risk aversion that has contributed to the ever-increasing pace of the juggernaut that is competitive dialogue, which appears to have become the default mode of travel for local authority officers in getting to their procurement destination. The reason it's become so popular is that it pro-

**"Local authorities are highly risk averse. It's this risk aversion that's contributed to the pace of the juggernaut that is competitive dialogue."**

vides plenty of opportunity for councils to discuss, debate, and challenge prospective partners.

The problem with competitive dialogue is that it can be expensive and time-consuming. The recent *Review of Competitive Dialogue* by HM Treasury (November 2010) recommended how to improve the public procurement process generally. Given the imperative for councils to achieve better value for money and shorten delivery times, the review refers to the 2008 guidance advising that competitive dialogue should only be used where a project is "particularly complex".

There are a few examples either currently in the market or about to be launched that are patently not complex but still insist on using the competitive dialogue route. Indeed it's even being used by those local authorities who

are merely re-tendering an existing leisure management contract for which they have a clear idea of what outcomes they want to achieve.

## TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE

So what? Why should local authorities care? Well, given that there are going to be unprecedented numbers of opportunities in the market over the next few years, bidders may consider those councils using the shorter

restricted procedure or negotiated procedures to be more attractive bets. Councils preferring competitive dialogue for seemingly no good reason risk attracting less interest and jeopardising their chances of achieving best value for money.

The message is therefore that using competitive dialogue shouldn't necessarily be considered the low-risk procurement option.

One final point: we're seeing a number of council briefs issued to leisure procurement consultants where time is of the essence in securing an operator. Councils are under pressure to deliver savings early. However, this hasn't deterred some from expressing a clear preference for competitive dialogue, a process which doesn't lend itself to a shorter timeframe.

There are likely to be some very attractive leisure portfolios coming onto the market soon. Through outsourcing its leisure service and making a long term contractual commitment, a council can secure two key objectives: significant annual cost savings and the sustainability of its leisure facilities. Local authorities should ensure they help maximise the potential of achieving these two objectives through their choice of an appropriate – and attractive – procurement route. ●

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