

leisureopportunities

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Sports Direct to offer £5 gym memberships

Sports Direct's gym chain – Sports Direct Fitness – has revealed more elements of its business model, with plans to offer memberships from as little as £5 a month and embed new health clubs in its retail stores.

Embracing the ethos on which Sports Direct founder Mike Ashley built his retail empire, the gym arm will sell memberships at this low rate with the aim of capturing market share and fostering rapid growth.

Sports Direct's head of sales and products, Mel Crossland, told *Leisure Opportunities*: “We’re expecting large amounts of additional spend from gym users, both because of the convenience of the on-site store for impulse buys and the fact that they’re the exact target market for Sports Direct products. The stores will be busy in their own right, so the gyms will also benefit from increased footfall. We’re following the Sports Direct model of focusing on becoming the biggest.”

The aggressive price plan for the new model



Sports Direct's first new store/gym complex launches in Aintree in December

will see 12-month gym memberships offered at £5 per month, with gym and exercise class combos available for £8 per month.

Leisure Opportunities editor Liz Terry believes Sports Direct is innovating and developing an alternative business model: “Industry insiders will clearly see that this low membership rate means Sports Direct is treating the

gym membership as an additional driver of retail sales,” she said.

“This is a new approach for a health club operator – we know from the experience of existing operators that a £9 membership can turn a profit without the retail element, so this isn’t a huge gap to bridge. It will be interesting to see how a company such as Sports Direct, with its expertise in consumer marketing, optimises profit potential by upselling customers.

“It’s certainly exciting for the industry to have new energy coming in from an allied sector and at the same time developing an intriguing new approach,” she concluded.

When it comes to marketing, the gyms will have access to Sports Direct’s mammoth database of customers from its retail empire – which includes its own brand stores and website, plus those of USC, Lillywhites, Sweatshop and many others.

Continued on back cover

Thermae Bath Spa shown to be major tourism beacon

The Thermae Bath Spa is proving to be a significant driver of tourism for the ancient city of Bath, with nearly two thirds of visitors arriving in the region simply to experience the high-profile spa’s roof-top pool and thermal waters.

A survey of visitors, carried out by South West Research Company, has revealed the spa facility attracts an average of 260,000 visitors a year – with 61 per cent of Bath’s tourists in town for the spa. It is calculated that the spa now contributes around £14.6m to the local economy each year.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=E6e6S>

MI and Star Trek set for Paramount park

New images for Paramount’s upcoming £2bn resort and theme park have been unveiled as part of the phase two consultation, showcasing a number of Paramount IPs set to feature.

The latest details reveal plans for Paramount-themed attractions that will include *The Italian Job*, *Star Trek* and *Mission Impossible*.

Developers London Resort Company Holdings (LRCH) also revealed that Paramount London will not solely feature films made by Paramount and will also seek to emphasise both classic British films and high-profile Hollywood blockbusters.

“One of the key things with Paramount was their willingness to allow British intellectual



The theme park is now set to open in Q2 of 2020

property into the site as well,” said LRCH director, Fenlon Dunphy. “We are very adamant it will have an eclectic mix of stuff. We are very clear it has to have a British identity as well.”

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=3q6v8>

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London NFL franchise 'worth £100m'

A London-based National Football League (NFL) team would be worth more than £100m a year to the UK, according to a study carried out by Deloitte.

The figure is based on a London team playing eight regular season home games at Wembley per season.

It takes into account that the operational set up of the franchise – players, staff and auxiliary personnel – would visit the UK four times a year to play two home games on each visit, rather than being permanently based in the UK.

Spectator spending would comprise around 67 per cent of the £100m, with more than 600,000 fans expected to attend the eight regular season games.

The report states: "The potential direct impact to London of hosting an NFL franchise is estimated to be £102m. Spectator spending of almost £70m would largely drive this, along with an estimated spend in the host economy by the home franchise of more than £20m."



Jacksonville Jaguars are rumoured to be a likely candidate for relocation

Commissioned by the NFL, the report also shows that the two International Series fixtures played at Wembley in 2013 contributed £32m to the London economy. It forecasts that expanding the Wembley series to four matches in future could generate a total of £58m.

The report is the latest sign that a London-based NFL franchise is closer to reality than previously believed. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=T2y5e>*

Sport England targets female participation

Sport England has launched a multi-million pound marketing campaign to get more girls and women into sport.

Delivered with a range of partner organisations, 'This Girl Can' aims to be a celebration of active women across the country and actively seeks to include girls and women of any size, ability or experience.

It follows on from a survey commissioned by Sport England which revealed that 75 per cent of women would like to exercise more – but are put off by issues ranging from body confidence to motherhood.

Due to be fully rolled out in January 2015, the campaign will aim to tackle those issues and encourage women to join local sports clubs as well as health clubs and gyms.

The campaign has a dedicated website and will feature heavily across social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Youtube. Each of the social media channels will offer tips on exercise, advice on how to get more



The campaign aims to inspire women to get more active

active and stories aimed at inspiring women into sport. Jennie Price, Sport England chief executive, launched the campaign to an audience of more than 300 leading names from sport, politics and the media at an event aimed at creating a shared vision for women's sport.

Minister for Sport, Helen Grant MP and Edward Timpson, parliamentary under secretary for children and families, were among the speakers. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=D2x8F>*

Notts Uni plans £40m complex

The University of Nottingham has announced plans to invest £40m in a new sports complex at its University Park campus.

The new complex will be part-funded by a "very significant commitment" from Nottingham alumnus and Carphone Warehouse founder David Ross, taking his support for the university beyond £10m. As a result, the facility will be called the David Ross Sports Village.

Construction of the new complex – due to start in February 2015 and completed by June 2016 – will include a comprehensive redevelopment of the existing sports centre to make way for a new building, which will be three times the previous size. The complex will include a new main sports hall, 200 station health and fitness suite, sports science facilities and office accommodation. It will also incorporate two adjoining and adaptable 10-court sports halls, each offering the flexibility to host two events



An artist's impression of the university's new £40m sports complex

or more simultaneously, or hold one large event in activities as diverse as basketball, handball, netball, indoor hockey, futsal and badminton.

There will also be a climbing wall, indoor sprint track, strength and conditioning facility, archery and fencing hall, dance studios, snooker hall and martial arts dojo. Squash courts are proposed, including a full glass court with spectator seating.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=8Z3f3>

EFDS publishes new disability guidelines

The English Federation of Disability Sport has published a new set of guidelines for sport and fitness providers.

The guidelines form a part of the *Talk To Me* report – published on 31 October – and draw from consultations with both active and inactive disabled people. In total, the report identifies 10 key principles aimed at helping providers improve their offer to disabled people and make it more appealing.

Talk To Me goes through each specific principle in detail, providing evidence of what disabled people are looking for and outlining recommendations of how to meet expectations.

According to Barry Horne, EFDS chief executive, the key findings of the report can be grouped under three main headings – drive awareness, engage the audience and offer support and reassurance. "We know that a great majority of disabled people are more likely to respond to opportunities to get active which tap into the things that matter to them most," Horne said. "These include: building



70% of disabled people would do more sport if it was more accessible

connections, family and support systems and health. Simply having fun is what most of us seek, and often disabled people are looking for opportunities which are as likely to appeal to their non-disabled friends and family."

Official figures show that less than half the number of disabled people take part in sport or physical activity for 30 minutes once a week, compared to non-disabled people. EFDS research suggests seven in 10 disabled people would do more activity if it was more accessible.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Q7b5k>



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HEALTH & FITNESS

Third Space bought by Encore

The Third Space – a premium London health club chain which reportedly counts Prince Harry and Guy Ritchie among its members – has been bought by the same group which owns the capital's mammoth Reebok Sports Club.

Private investment firm Encore Capital has acquired the two-club chain for an undisclosed fee, fuelling speculation that the group will target further upmarket clubs around London. Encore bought the chain from investment firm Graphite, which has controlled The Third Space since buying it from the health club's founder Joel Cadbury in 2007.

With sites in Soho (40,000 sq ft) and Marylebone (15,000 sq ft), The Third Space boasts 5,000 members, offering services including high altitude training chambers and nutritional advice as part of its £139 per month membership package. In addition to its famous members, rugby player James Haskell and former England football captain John Terry are said to have visited Third Space's facilities for



Prince Harry is believed to be among The Third Space's famous patrons

physiotherapy. Encore partner Shirin Gandhi said: "As part of our strategy to establish a London-centric leading luxury health club group, we are thrilled to have acquired The Third Space – a fantastic brand with clubs in highly desirable locations. This acquisition allows us to augment a growing proposition we are extremely proud of – offering our members a holistic, tailor-made approach to health and wellbeing." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=2p7V7>

Parks and leisure centre budgets 'at risk'

Council-run parks and leisure centres could be in jeopardy thanks to a £4.3bn funding 'black hole' in adult care services caused by austerity cuts and an ageing population, a new study has warned.

The latest analysis of council budgets led by the Local Government Association (LGA) – which represents more than 370 councils across England and Wales – says that overstretched councils could be forced to divert funds from other budgets to prevent a social care crisis.

In the face of an ageing population, local authorities have seen overall funding effectively drop by 40 per cent since austerity cuts began in 2010, the study estimates.

As a result, services for disabled and elderly care now face a nationwide funding shortfall of £4.3bn by 2020. Given that councils are legally obliged to maintain these services (along with refuse collection), 'discretionary' services such as parks and leisure centres are at risk of having their budgets slashed to bridge the gap.

The warnings of leisure services being under threat came just a week after Public Health England published its *Everybody Active, Every Day* framework, which noted that the "burden



The LGA warns that leisure funding could be slashed

of health and social care will destabilise public services" if current physical inactivity trends continue. With inactivity estimated to cost the UK between £10-20bn per year, it begs the question whether slashing leisure offerings could plunge the health and social care system further into the mire.

David Sparks, LGA chair, called on the government to address the issue and lighten the load on hard-pressed local authorities. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=g5a5D>



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Microsoft enters wearables market with fitness band

Just weeks after being the subject of intense speculation over its entry to the wearable tech market, Microsoft has duly proven that there's no smoke without fire by unveiling the Microsoft Band.

The wearable device boasts 10 sensors that can track a number of exercise and health metrics, including sleep quality, heart rate, calories, stress and even a person's sun exposure. As expected, the sleek wristband can be connected to all major mobile operating systems and can operate for two days on a single charge, giving the device a leg-up on devices from rivals Apple and Samsung. The band retails online for £124. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=c6P2u>



Beyoncé's passion for exercise is driving the project

Beyoncé and TopShop to launch active clothing brand

Beyoncé has teamed up with fashion magnate Sir Philip Green to form the latest venture seeking to cash in on the convergence between fashion and fitness.

The pair have formed the company Parkwood TopShop Athletic – which will produce a 'global athletic street-wear brand' – in a 50/50 joint venture.

Launching around Q3 2015, the brand will encompass clothing, footwear and accessories across dance, fitness and sports categories. The brand will be distributed through Green's TopShop stores and website, with a number of "existing and new partnerships" also to be explored.

"We've been looking at this category as fashion inspired fitness develops, and know this is right in our customers' heartland," said Green, who is CEO of Arcadia – the fashion empire which includes TopShop, BHS and Dorothy Perkins. "Creating a partnership with Beyoncé, one of the most talented people in the world, who spends many hours of her life dancing, rehearsing and training is a unique opportunity."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=g2g2k>

Power Rangers lead fitness push

The Power Rangers are following in the footsteps of Peppa Pig, as the team of superheroes are now turning their attention to fighting inactivity.

Fit For Sport has joined forces with Saban's emPOWER scheme, which sees the launch of a fun fitness guide for children to help them 'power up' with a range of 'super mega' activities and healthy eating tips.

With an array of highly athletic, fast-paced action moves, the Power Rangers have acted as role models for millions of kids since the debut of *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* in 1993.

The emPOWER scheme teaches kids and parents how to embrace the values of a Power Ranger, with a heavy emphasis placed on teamwork and confidence to maintain good health and levels of physical activity.

"Being physically and mentally fit is essential to the success of the Power Rangers in every mission they undertake and this is also what Fit For Sport stands



The emPOWER scheme teaches kids the values of healthy living

for," said Gustavo Antonioni, Saban's managing director of consumer products for Europe, the Middle East and Africa. "We are extremely proud of our partnership with Fit For Sport as its extended school and camp programmes perfectly embrace the core values of the Power Rangers and encourage children to live healthy and active lives."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=X4h7r>

Government creates wellbeing policy hub

The government has announced the launch of a new wellness-focused policy think tank to evaluate services and interventions through the prism of wellbeing.

The 'What Works Centre for Wellbeing' is the latest addition to the 'What Works Network', which was launched by the government last year to improve public services through evidence-based policy and practice. The new centre will soon be commissioning universities to research the impact different interventions and services have on wellbeing.

Following the publication of its Everybody Active, Every Day framework last week – which outlined recommendations for tackling the UK's physical inactivity epidemic – Public Health England (PHE) has been announced as one of the key development partners for the 'What Works Centre for Wellbeing'. The centre has initial funding of more than £3.5m over three years, with in-kind resourcing and



PHE's Kevin Fenton says the body is delighted to be a 'major player'

support from a number of founding partners.

"The shift to wellbeing is a key aspect of public health and there are clear benefits to this approach," Professor Kevin Fenton, PHE executive director of health and wellbeing. "We are keen what works for wellbeing much more effectively disseminated and adopted across the country. We are confident this will lead to better outcomes for health in communities and workplaces." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=w3X5g>



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'Best of British' key to boosting international competitiveness



UFI IBRAHIM

is chief executive officer of the British Hospitality Association

Over the past seven years at the BHA, we've seen a resurgence of seasonal produce on menus. Rhubarb in March, cherries in June, leeks in November and grouse in December. What's more, knee-deep in recession, counties and regions suffering from a lower tourism spend per head, have done their utmost to celebrate their beautifully rich local heritage through food. The 'Best of British' menu has never been so appetising. We have Staffordshire oatcakes, Melton Mowbray pork pies, Lancashire hot-pot, London jellied eels, Scottish Arbroath smoked and haggis, Northern Irish yellow-man sweets and Welsh cakes and faggots and peas. And that's just for starters.

While restaurants and chefs have always been focused on their food sourcing, manufacturers and designers are getting in on the act too. The first ever 'Buy British Day' recently took place on 3 October 2014.

The initiative, which showcased more than 200 British brands ranging from food-stuff to cars, boats and bikes to men and womenswear, jewellery, accessories and furniture, was created by founder Antony Wallis to encourage shoppers to support brands and businesses who grow, manufacture and design their products in Britain. The aim of the day was to boost consumer awareness around the subject and encourage people to spend their hard earned cash on British craftsmanship, whether it be foodstuffs, designer items or clothes.

The Buy British Day initiative was supported by a House of Commons initiative in July and has been gathering momentum in social media with the #BuyBritishDay hashtag. The next step is expansion, with organisers seeking to open in different cities and overseas to take it to the next level.

By capitalising on and evolving 'Best of British', and by working side by side, UK companies and hospitality professionals can capitalise on celebrating the UK's beautifully rich heritage of world class service, fine food, locally sourced ingredients and proud work ethic which will surely help British hospitality to stand head and shoulders above the international competition.

HOTELS

Tune Hotels outlines £200m UK expansion

Tune Group is to invest £200m into its low-cost hospitality arm Tune Hotels as part of plans to open up to 25 new properties in the UK by 2020.

The private investment group – helmed by entrepreneur and Queen's Park Rangers Football Club owner Tony Fernandes – is eager to expand its hotel operations in the UK's growing low-cost sector, which could serve as the springboard for a push into the European market.

Having launched in Malaysia in 2007, Tune Hotels recently opened its sixth UK site in Newcastle, following one in Edinburgh and four in London. The no frills business model – similar to that of low-cost airline AirAsia that Fernandes co-founded – focuses on high quality beds and showers, with UK rooms starting from £25 a night.

"Our aim is to have a further 25 hotels across the UK in the next five years representing a significant investment of over £200 million," said Tune Hotels Group CEO Mark Lankester.



The Tune Hotel Liverpool Street is one of the chain's four sites in London

"We will be targeting the major business cities across the UK such as London, Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds, as well as looking closely at key university cities where our concept has proved to be very popular."

The announcement comes just months after low-cost rival easyHotel floated on London's alternative investment market (AIM) in a bid to hasten expansion, suggesting the sector is primed for activity. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=r7T9n>*

Hotels harness web trendsetters

A new hotel booking website has been launched, offering travellers discounted rates depending on how popular they are on social media.

Under the slogan 'It pays to be you,' Hotelied asks users to create a travel profile and connect their LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter profiles, with Instagram soon to follow. Depending on the virtual popularity of the user, they are then able to access discounts of up to 50 per cent at high-end hotels

around the world which are eager to attract the business of online 'tastemakers.'

Hotelied.com currently has properties in US cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Portland and Miami – including the Metropolitan by COMO in Miami Beach – with more international locations expected shortly. Hotels signed up to the site are able to set their own discount parameters depending on the specific clientele they wish to attract, for example guests who work in specific industries such as fashion, entertainment, or business, or those who are frequent travellers.



Global social media trendsetters offer great marketing potential

The initiative is part of the growing trend for hospitality businesses to harness the power of their guests' digital footprint in exchange for discounts. Last year, Sydney's 1888 hotel was dubbed the world's 'first Instagram hotel' after it began offering a free night's stay to anyone with more than 10,000 followers on Instagram. It also ran competitions encouraging guests to essentially do the marketing department's job for it, and the hotel features a range of fun photo-themed areas such as the "selfie-space" where guests can pose for photos behind a special frame. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=E9A7J>*

Is tourism a key election issue?

Tourism's enhanced reputation as an economic driver and creator of jobs, together with its position as the lifeblood of a number of marginal constituencies, could see the sector enjoy increased recognition as political parties gear up for next year's general election.

That's the view of Tourism Alliance policy director Kurt Janson, who said the strong performance – from what is Britain's fifth largest export industry – throughout the recent recession will see the sector gain recognition.

Recent figures produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show that total employment across the UK increased by 820,000 over 2013 – of which 120,000 jobs (15 per cent) were attributable to the UK tourism industry. With 39 per cent of these new tourism jobs going to people under the age of 30, the growth of the UK tourism industry is also one of the leading factors in the 20 per cent reduction in youth unemployment that is highlighted by the statistics.

Political parties already seem to be alive to the importance of the sector to the nation's prospects, with shadow culture secretary Harriet Harman recently stating that tourism would play a 'key role' in Labour's plans for growth and jobs if it returns to power. This followed a seminar featuring high-profile panelists at the recent Conservative Party



Prime Minister David Cameron at a tourism event

Conference, which explored ways to unleash the growth potential of the industry.

"Tourism looks likely to feature in next year's election due to increased recognition by all parties that the industry has been at the forefront of the UK's economic recovery, having generated almost a third of all additional new jobs in the UK over the past three years," said Janson.

"This is especially important because the key areas in which these jobs have been created – seaside and rural destinations – are the location of the marginal constituencies that will decide the election outcome. So look out for policies that will support rural businesses (e.g. rural broadband) and the regeneration of seaside towns when manifestos are published."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=z2j6F>

Trade website launched to market firms

National tourism agency VisitBritain has created a new version of its international travel trade website, complete with a free self-managing directory to help UK tourism businesses drum up foreign trade.

A core feature of the new site enables any UK tourism business to manage its own listing, enabling their company to become searchable and contactable to overseas trade. More than 130 suppliers had signed up to the platform at the time of launch, but its ultimate capacity is unlimited.

The new platform has already gone live on all English versions of the trade website – including the US, Canada, Australia, India, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Hong Kong, Netherlands and Scandinavia – while eight other language versions were being rolled out throughout October. These will allow UK attractions to create translated versions of their supplier listings readable in Spanish, French, German, Japanese, Brazilian Portuguese, Italian, Russian or Chinese (simplified).

Listings can be categorised based on the area of business, as well as the regions of Britain being sold and the company's location. Firms



The website aims to promote the best of British tourism

will also be able to track online traffic to their own website via the VisitBritain directory.

"Providing a free platform for all UK businesses to be featured and promoted was one of our key objectives," said Russell Knight, international travel trade manager at VisitBritain.

"We've now empowered the travel trade to manage their own presence, resulting in greater exposure of their product and itineraries, which, in turn, will bring more visitors to Britain." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=H2z8e>



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Historic Bath Spa back in business

The Grade I-listed Royal Crescent Hotel & Spa in Bath has finally relaunched following a heritage-led refurbishment of the Georgian building that can be dated back to the mid-1700s.

The privately-owned investment firm Topland Group acquired the two central buildings of the Royal Crescent – built between 1767 and 1774 – that make up the hotel and spa in 2012. Somerset-based interior design firm Jane Clayton and spa consultancy Spa Creators were appointed to carry out a complete refurbishment of the 45 bedrooms and suites and spa.

Alistair Johnson, managing director for Spa Creators, explained to *Leisure Opportunities*, the extent of the work carried out in the building's spa and gym. "We re-engineered the entire reception and welcome space into a single lounge and reception," said Johnson. "The hotel has a large private membership of roughly 500 guests, so we were tasked with enlarging the gym to support this demand. We had to reallocate some space to make this project



Spa Creators was lead consultant for the Crescent Spa redesign

work so we looked at reconfiguring the changing rooms for high-end hotel guests," Johnson continued. "The changing facilities hadn't been touched for about 15 years so they were very tired – we completely revamped them."

The spa closed in September 2013 for the duration of the refurbishment, which took five months. The spa has been operating ever since, having been relaunched specifically for members earlier this year, while the hotel refurbishment is also now complete.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=P9v9q>

AromaWorks to target skincare market

Home fragrance manufacturer and retailer AromaWorks has expanded its business by launching a brand new essential-oil skincare range that is vegan-friendly, pregnancy safe, plus gluten and dairy free.

Now operating from a purpose-built 7,000sq ft (650sq m) distribution, research, development and manufacturing centre in Berkshire, the new skincare range comprises more than 25 products for face and body, each with a range of seven to nine blended essential oils. Founded in 2009 by aromatherapist Jane Hibbert after two years of product design, the company began selling candles and home fragrance diffusers. Hibbert spoke to *Leisure Opportunities* at the launch party of AromaWorks skincare in London.

"Everyone uses a face cream," she said. "While our room fragrances are extremely popular, these products only touch the periphery of the spa market. Selling our aroma diffusion



AromaWorks was founded in 2009 by aromatherapist Jane Hibbert

products to spas has allowed us to penetrate the spa skincare market more easily. What's more, being in control of our home fragrance retail distribution makes it easy for us to sell our skincare range – even further abroad."

AromaWorks also produces white label products for two spas in England but is about to supply all Marriott-operated hotels in the UK with its branded products – moving away from white labelling. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=M3C3N>*



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Videogame museum coming to Nottingham in 2015

Plans have been announced to open the UK's first dedicated national museum dedicated to the art of videogames.

The National Videogame Arcade in Nottingham will become "a hub for videogame culture," said developers Game City.

The 20,000 item-strong collection, spanning videogame history, will be set across five floors and will cover 33,000sq ft (3,066sq m). The museum will have four galleries, which will exhibit themed quarterly exhibitions featuring new and specially-commissioned works. It will also include an entire floor dedicated to education, where students of all ages can get hands-on experience of game-making and games testing. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=U8q8b>



Kids can play the role of more than 60 professions

KidZania to launch two more sites across the UK

KidZania – the educational attraction for kids that allows them to experience simulations of real-life jobs – is planning an additional two sites in the UK to the one already planned this year for London.

The Mexico-based children's edutainment brand is set to open in early 2015 at the Westfield shopping centre in Shepherd's Bush, London, as part of a £40m investment to create a 75,000sq ft (6,967sq m) mini-city in which children will be able to play the roles of more than 60 professions – including fireman, pilot and TV presenter.

For the London opening, KidZania has signed a license agreement with Longshot Kids – a company led by entrepreneurs Ollie Vigors and Joel Cadbury – who said their eye isn't just on London.

"This is the first and in its first year we think we will have 750,000 visitors, growing to one million a year over a five-year period," said Cadbury speaking to *The Telegraph*. "The second one will be in east London. For the third opportunity in the UK, we will look between Birmingham and Manchester." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=v4R6a>

£15m Geffrye revamp plans revealed

New plans have been released for the London-based Geffrye Museum's £15m transformation, which will create new spaces for the museum's collections and library.

The plans by architecture firm Wright & Wright include a gallery, café and conference facilities, as well as a rejuvenation of the current public spaces. The plans will create around 40 per cent additional space within the 18th century Grade I listed museum's walls, by opening up and making more effective use of existing areas previously unseen by the public. Plans also call for a new pavilion, to be built in the museum's gardens for learning activities and events.

Founded in 1914, the Geffrye Museum specialises in the history of English domestic home interiors, showing the changing style of the English domestic interior in a series of eleven period rooms from 1600 to now.

"The magic of the Geffrye Museum, so beloved to generations of Londoners, is a



The £15m overhaul will increase space at the museum by 40 per cent

product of the synergy between its setting; the historical almshouses and the wonderful display of its period rooms," said Wright & Wright's Clare Wright. "Our proposals work with and develop this, to ensure the long-term preservation of the almshouses and the museum's unique ambience, as well as adding much needed accommodation within the existing buildings, complemented by two small and subtle additions."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=d9H6w>

TV show worth £30m in PR, says Zoo MD

Chester Zoo's managing director Jamie Christon has said that the hit BBC television show, *Our Zoo*, has provided the equivalent of around £30m in free PR for the visitor attraction in the north of England.

Our Zoo tells the tale of zoo founder George Mottershead, how he decided to start the establishment and the trials and tribulations he came up against while doing so. The show's first season – which ran for six episodes airing every Sunday on the BBC in a prime time slot between September and October – garnered an average rating of 5.1 million viewers an episode.

"The response has been fantastic," said Christon speaking to *Leisure Opportunities*. "We've had about five million viewers every week and visitor numbers for the month of September were 52 per cent up on last year. A combination of a good month of weather and *Our Zoo* is what I think has made it happen.

"£30m is PR equivalent," he continued. "If we were out there buying space to promote the zoo it would have cost us £30m to get the



Our Zoo just finished up a six-episode run on BBC One

same sort of exposure with the amount of publications and outlets the zoo has appeared in."

The zoo launched a number of new offerings in conjunction with the show, including tours around George Mottershead's home, which was heavily featured in the show.

Chester Zoo is also currently halfway through construction of its £30m Islands project, set to be completed in December this year. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=q5c2H>

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Mace to deliver £150m Wycombe mixed-use hub

Wycombe District Council has appointed Mace Real Estate as lead developer for its £150m Handy Cross Hub mixed-use development.

The 17-acre site, overlooking the Chilterns, will include a state of the art sports and leisure centre, 150-bed-room hotel, offices, retail outlets and a coachway park and ride.

Mace is acting as development manager, as well as providing a range of services including project management, cost management and design services.

Phase one of the major redevelopment started in spring this year, with the AFLS+P Architects-designed sports and leisure centre due for completion towards the end of 2015. The facility will include a 12-court sports hall, eight lane 50m swimming pool, health suite, 150-station gym, four rink indoor bowls hall, two squash courts, climbing wall and a café. Mace Development director Huw



Phase one of the major redevelopment started in spring

Griffiths said: "It's always great to work on projects which we know will leave a lasting legacy and we look forward to seeing many years of planning and design translating into first class leisure, business and travel facilities for the people of Wycombe."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=n5x4W>



Work is now underway at the new Sawston site

Cambridge City FC receives green light for stadium plans

Cambridge City Football Club (CCFC) has been given the green light to begin building a 3,000-capacity community stadium in Sawston, Cambridgeshire.

The club is now free to start construction work following a final approval for the scheme from secretary of state Eric Pickles.

The plans had already been approved by South Cambridgeshire District Council in June, but the final decision had to be made by the government because the ground will be on green belt land. The stadium project will be overseen by KWA Architects and Planning Consultants.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=s9G9D>

Olympic stadium conversion costs soar

The cost of converting the London Olympic Stadium into a 54,000-capacity multi-use venue is set to rise from £154m to £190m after complications installing the new roof.

Providing the support structures for the new roof has required significantly more strengthening work to the main roof truss than initially expected. The truss was originally designed to be taken down after the Games.

As a result, the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) has allocated an extra £35.9m for the project, increasing the total cost for the conversion to £189.9m. When complete, the roof will cover 45,000sq m and will be 84m at its deepest point, the longest cantilevered roof in the world, covering every seat and improving the acoustics and spectator experience.

The work on the Populous-designed stadium is being undertaken by Balfour Beatty, which will be given the extra funding to complete the job. Balfour Beatty signed the £154m contract in January 2014. The additional costs will be funded by project contingencies and additional income generated by LLDC from its other "developments". West Ham United Football Club (WHUFC), which will be the stadium's main tenant when it moves in to the



The London Olympic Stadium will welcome West Ham United in 2016

venue in 2016, will not be asked to contribute towards the added costs.

Rod Sheard, who lead the Populous team of architects that designed the iconic stadium, told *Leisure Opportunities*: "The transformation is progressing very well and, when complete, will be a wonderful stadium. It will retain much of its recognisable charm from the London Olympics as well as its operational requirements for athletics and other field sports but also have the ability to be a fine football stadium for the West Ham supporters."

The stadium will host five matches during the Rugby World Cup 2015 as well as the 2017 IAAF World Championships and 2017 IPC World Athletics Championships.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=4s5p7>

Approval for Muse's £107m Marischal Square scheme

Long-debated plans to redevelop the site of Aberdeen City Council's former headquarters have been approved, with developer Muse's £107m scheme being given the green light after a council vote.

The Marischal Square revamp features the construction of a combination of offices, shops, restaurants and a hotel, with approval being granted this week after local councillors voted 23-18 in favour.

A funding agreement with Aviva Investors will see Aberdeen City Council lease the development from Muse and receive the rental profits for 35 years, after which time the site and development will transfer into council ownership.

The plan is being financially backed by Aviva Investors, with designs for the redevelopment being provided by Scottish architecture practice Halliday Fraser Munro.

Marischal Square will see a series of six and seven-storey blocked offerings replace the 14-storey St Nicholas House office, which was originally erected in 1968. After the decision was made, the developers stated the scheme would create a ripple effect for the community to spur further regeneration. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=F9t5M>



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The Borough is seeking proposals from suitably experienced and competent providers, which will protect sporting use at the site but offer alternative and additional provision, whilst offering a best value for money outcome for the Council, in terms of investment, revenue and services to the community.

The Borough of Poole is open to market suggestions as to the type of facility and services that can be offered on site, to help inform future direction prior to a formal procurement process. In particular, we are keen to hear how it can be managed to maximise the use of the facility at all times, how to engage and attract new users, whilst sympathetically improving the facilities.

We are holding an open afternoon for interested parties on **Thursday 4th December 2014 at 2.30pm.**

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National Occupational Standards still make a useful contribution



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Most recently it would seem there have been confusing messages promoted regarding the future of National Occupational Standards (NOS) and qualifications in the sector, they may have been elaborated through the plethora of reviews over recent years (Wolf, Richard, Ofqual).

However, while there has been an examination of NOS, together with a reappraisal of it as part of the process of creating New Apprenticeship Standards, one can say as Mark Twain did, "The reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated."

It is likely that UKCES (who are reviewing the Future of NOS) will find that there are different levels of competence description - from the high level easily digestible description provided by the New Apprenticeship Standard aimed at employers to the very detailed specification that training providers, qualification developers and assessment bodies need to do their job.

The review has shown that NOS has many different uses and audiences and actually provides the foundations upon which a significant amount is built. The Ofqual consultation has made some clear recommendations and a clear compliment for the qualifications work that Sector Skills Councils have produced and their continued effectiveness: "We recognise the value of these organisations making a contribution to the content and design of qualifications. We want to see this continuing in the future where it enables sector employers to get the qualifications they want."

I am also delighted to announce SkillsActive are working with Thomas International Sport to provide assessments that empower fitness and sporting professionals to achieve excellence through deeper understanding of behavioural and emotional traits. It's fantastic to see Thomas International branch out into the sporting sector. Bringing performance assessments into our industry it means we can help people build self-awareness and identify lasting career pathways for which they're best suited.

TRAINING

CIMSPA starts its search for new CEO

CIMSPA has begun the recruitment process for its long term CEO as the organisation pushes forward with its transformation programme.

The closing date for applications for the CEO role - based at CIMSPA HQ in Loughborough - is 14 November and the job advert notes the chief executive should be an "exceptional leader" who will be "responsible for both leading the development and execution of the organisation's long term strategy."

Recruitment for the new CEO will be led by a nominations committee chaired by CIMSPA trustee Carl Bennett. It will also include nations and regions chair Sue Briggs, trustee Julian Leybourne, and overall chair David Stalker, who was appointed to the one-year role in August. The committee will also oversee the election of a new trustee by the members - following the resignation of Ian Nicks - plus the appointment of two further trustees with expertise in financial management and marketing respectively.

"These appointments show that we are nearing the end of a successful transitional process and now need to build a long term senior team," said Stalker. "We are confident that the



Tara Dillon has impressed in her role as acting COO at CIMSPA

institute is now entering a period of growth and we must ensure we have the appropriate team in place every step of the way."

The transitional team currently in place, headed up by interim COO Tara Dillon, has been overseeing CIMSPA's transformation in line with the business plan approved by members in November 2013. This has included the launch of a partnership programme with higher education institutions and supporting employers to secure Trailblazer status for the industry's apprenticeships.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=e6s6Y>

Training awards 2014 finalists revealed

The finalists have been named for the Active Training Awards 2014, which will see the physical activity sector's top training providers honoured for their efforts in improving the workforce.

Building on the Active Leisure Awards launched by Active IQ in 2013, the Active Training Awards will celebrate exceptional performance and commitment in vocational training and development within the physical activity sector. The awards are now being run by ukactive in partnership with the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA), and are being sponsored by Active IQ.

David Stalker, CEO of ukactive and CIMSPA chair, said: "We are committed to promoting excellence in this area - it is the bedrock of physical activity provision. We look forward to celebrating with all the



Lifetime Training and DC Leisure were crowned at last year's awards

finalists at this year's Active Training Awards."

The awards will be presented on Thursday 27 November at the Crowne Plaza in Marlow. The event is expected to bring together more than 150 training providers, employers and learners. Follow the link below to view the full list of this year's finalists. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=b8h5F>

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Candidates should send a CV and supporting cover letter to: Terry Rodham, Group Health & Fitness Manager at terry@thehogarth.co.uk

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The successful candidate will play a key role in securing the future of our Sports and Leisure service, by developing and executing strategies that will drive performance and maximise participation and income.

Work has commenced on feasibility studies to inform significant investment opportunities in leisure centres and to consider delivery models for future management of these facilities. The successful candidate will play a crucial role in this programme of work as it develops over the next 2 years.

Reporting to the Head of Cultural Services this role requires a highly motivated and commercially minded individual. You will build relationships with internal and external stakeholders, as well as producing and analysing financial reports to support your strategic plans.

You will have a strong background in the sport and leisure sector, ideally in a commercial environment. Your understanding of this industry will help you to work with staff to deliver a wide range of leisure services for Warwick District Council.

To apply for the job visit www.warwickdc.gov.uk or for an informal discussion about the post please call Rose Winship on 01926 456223.

Closing date: 1 December 2014

For more details on the following jobs
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Personal Training Manager

Company: Sheffield Int Venues
Location: Sheffield, UK

School Sport Activator

Company: Kingsbury Sports Partnership
Location: Erdington, Birmingham, UK

Receptionist

Company: Everyone Active
Location: Bourton-on-the-Water, UK

Communities Events Officer

Company: Nottingham City Council
Location: Based in Nottingham, UK

Team Leader

Company: Everyone Active
Location: Hertford, UK

Personal Trainer

Company: Everyone Active
Location: Various locations, UK

Recreational Assistant

Company: Parkwood Leisure
Location: Newbury, UK

Personal Trainers

Company: Pure Gym Limited
Location: Various locations, UK

Swimming Teacher

Company: Everyone Active
Location: St Albans, Hertfordshire, UK

Casual receptionists

Company: Everyone Active
Location: Basildon Sporting Village, UK

Membership Sales Advisor

Company: Everyone Active
Location: Nuneaton, UK

Ice Marshal

Company: EDF Energy London Eye
Location: London, UK

Fitness Instructor

Company: Parkwood Leisure
Location: Bexleyheath, UK

Duty Manager

Company: Parkwood Leisure
Location: Kettering, UK

Personal Trainer

Company: Énergie Group
Location: Harlow, Essex, UK

Personal Trainers

Company: The Gym Group
Location: Various locations, UK

Childrens Activities Manager

Company: The Hawthorns School
Location: Bletchingley, Surrey, UK

General Managers

Company: DW Sports Fitness
Location: Various locations, UK

Duty Manager

Company: Everyone Active
Location: Warwickshire, UK

Assistant Manager

Company: GLL
Location: West Oxfordshire, UK

Recreation Assistant

Company: GLL
Location: Cambridgeshire, UK

Swimming Instructors

Company: Parkwood Leisure
Location: Nottinghamshire, UK

Personal Trainer

Company: énergie group
Location: Various locations, UK

Lifeguard

Company: GLL
Location: Various locations, UK

Casual Cleaning Staff

Company: Everyone Active
Location: Southam Leisure Centre, UK

Sales Advisor

Company: GLL
Location: Chiltern, UK

Front of House Receptionist

Company: Everyone Active
Location: London, UK

Membership Consultant

Company: Everyone Active
Location: Basildon Sporting Village, UK

Instructor Recruitment Manager

Company: Les Mills
Location: London, UK

Front of House Receptionist

Company: Everyone Active
Location: London, UK

Football Coach

Company: The Sports Factory
Location: New Jersey, US

General Managers

Company: The Gym Group
Location: Various locations, UK

Speedflex Trainer

Company: Speedflex
Location: City of London, Bank, UK

Adaptive Sports Coach

Company: Help For Heroes
Location: Tidworth, Wiltshire, UK

Business Manager

Company: Oxford City Council
Location: Oxfordshire, UK

Catering Assistants

Company: Everyone Active
Location: Ealing, Brent & Harrow, UK

Swimming Co-ordinator

Company: Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust
Location: Selby, UK

Duty Manager

Company: Impulse Leisure
Location: Adur, West Sussex, UK

Regional Account Manager

Company: Star Trac Europe
Location: Midlands, UK

Recreation Assistants

Company: Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust
Location: Selby, UK

Deputy Sports Facilities Manager

Company: Harrow School
Location: Harrow, UK

Swimming Teachers

Company: Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust
Location: Selby, UK

Membership Consultant

Company: Everyone Active
Location: Loughton, UK

HR Administration Officer

Company: Brio Leisure
Location: Chester, UK

Receptionist (full-time)

Company: Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust
Location: Selby, UK

Duty Supervisors x3

Company: Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust
Location: Selby, UK

Swimming Teachers

Company: Everyone Active
Location: Harrow Middlesex, UK

Fitness Apprenticeship

Company: Énergie Group
Location: Finchley, N12, UK

Leisure Assistant

Company: GLL
Location: Amersham, UK

Fitness Motivator

Company: Everyone Active
Location: Carshalton, Surrey, UK

Assistant General Manager

Company: The Gym Group
Location: London Angel, UK

Dry Side Leisure Assistant

Company: GLL
Location: London, UK

Leisure Attendant

Company: Everyone Active
Location: Loughton, UK

Maintenance Engineer

Company: Everyone Active
Location: Plymouth, UK

Assistant General Manager

Company: The Gym Group
Location: London Charing Cross, UK

Team Leader

Company: Everyone Active
Location: Loughton, UK

Personal Trainers

Company: Everyone Active
Location: Various locations, UK

Food and Beverage Manager

Company: Everyone Active
Location: Basildon, UK

Assistant Manager

Company: Tone Leisure
Location: Ivybridge, Devon, UK

Assistant Manager

Company: énergie group
Location: Maidstone, UK

Lifeguards (2 posts)

Company: Ipswich Borough Council
Location: Ipswich, UK

Deputy Manager

Company: Chichester Racquets Club
Location: Chichester

Centre Manager

Company: Parkwood Leisure
Location: Portsmouth, UK

Club Promotional Staff

Company: énergie group
Location: Wallington, UK

Product Demonstrators

Company: Cyber Coach
Location: Various locations, UK

Fitness Instructor

Company: Aspire Leisure Centre
Location: Stanmore, UK

Club Promotional Staff

Company: énergie group
Location: Preston, UK

Speedflex Receptionist

Company: Speedflex
Location: West Byfleet, Surrey, UK

Recreation Assistant

Company: Kingston College
Location: Kingston, Surrey, UK

Business Development Manager

Company: Freedom Leisure Ltd
Location: East Sussex, UK

Fitness Instructor

Company: Énergie Group
Location: Chesham, UK, UK

Fitness Apprenticeship

Company: Énergie Group
Location: Chesham, UK, UK

Centre Manager

Company: Speedflex
Location: West Byfleet, Surrey, UK

Sales & Membership Manager

Company: Speedflex
Location: Newcastle, UK

Speedflex Trainer

Company: Speedflex
Location: West Byfleet, Surrey, UK

Duty Manager

Company: Parkwood Leisure
Location: North Solihull, UK

Exercise Physiologist

Company: Speedflex
Location: West Byfleet, Surrey, UK

Intensive Personal Trainer

Company: Lifetime
Location: Nationwide

Fitness Motivator - Part Time

Company: Everyone Active
Location: Tenbury Wells, UK

Fitness Consultant

Company: MH Barghash
Location: Saudi Arabia

Personal Trainers Needed

Company: Lifetime
Location: Nationwide, UK

Fitness and Sales Manager

Company: Everyone Active
Location: Worcestershire, UK

Recreation Supervisor

Company: MH Barghash
Location: Saudi Arabia

Tennis Coach/Instructor

Company: MH Barghash
Location: Saudi Arabia

Horse Riding Instructor

Company: MH Barghash
Location: Saudi Arabia

Youth Leader

Company: MH Barghash
Location: Saudi Arabia

Swimming Instructor

Company: MH Barghash
Location: Saudi Arabia

Lifeguard Instructor

Company: MH Barghash
Location: Saudi Arabia

Golf Coach

Company: MH Barghash
Location: Saudi Arabia

Business Development Officer

Company: Northampton Leisure Trust
Location: Northampton, UK

Assistant General Manager

Company: The Gym Group
Location: Hemel Hempstead, UK

Leisure Centre Manager

Company: De Montfort University
Location: Leicester, UK

Assistant Manager

Company: Everyone Active
Location: Epping, Essex, UK

General Manager

Company: The Gym Group
Location: London, UK

Development Manager

Company: East Herts Council
Location: Hertford, UK

National Accounts Manager

Company: Anytime Leisure
Location: Various locations, UK

Operations Brand Manager

Company: énergie group
Location: Nationwide, UK

Casual Swim Teacher

Company: Everyone Active
Location: Worcestershire, UK

General Manager

Company: Parkwood Leisure
Location: London, UK

Duty Manager

Company: Parkwood Leisure
Location: Bicester, UK

Gymnastics Club Coach

Company: Parkwood Leisure
Location: Southend on Sea, UK

Swim Teachers

Company: Everyone Active
Location: Warwickshire, UK

General Manager

Company: Parkwood Leisure
Location: London, UK

Fitness Instructor

Company: énergie group
Location: Harrow, UK

Duty Supervisors

Company: Northampton Leisure Trust
Location: Northampton, UK

Sports and Leisure Manager

Company: Warwick District Council
Location: Warwickshire, UK

Regional Account Manager

Company: Harlands Group
Location: Midlands and South, UK

Swimming Teachers (Level 2)

Company: Parkwood Leisure
Location: Riverside, Exeter, UK

General Manager

Company: Momentum Excel
Location: London, Harrow, UK

Swimming Teachers (Level 1),

Company: Parkwood Leisure
Location: Riverside, Exeter, UK

Personal Trainers

Company: Hogarth Group
Location: West London, UK

Club Manager

Company: énergie group
Location: Various locations, UK

Fitness Instructor

Company: énergie group
Location: Wembley, UK

Sales Manager

Company: énergie group
Location: Wembley, UK

Duty Manager - Part Time

Company: énergie group
Location: Banbury, Oxfordshire, UK

Recreation Assistants

Company: Finesse Leisure Partnership
Location: Hatfield, UK

Swimming Instructors

Company: Finesse Leisure Partnership
Location: Hatfield, UK

Personal Trainer

Company: Exercise 4 Less
Location: Nationwide, UK

Sales and Marketing Manager

Company: Exercise 4 Less
Location: Nationwide, UK

General Manager

Company: Exercise 4 Less
Location: Nationwide, UK

Membership Consultant

Company: Exercise 4 Less
Location: Nationwide, UK

Fitness First Middle East

Company: Premier
Location: Middle East

Spa Reservationist

Company: Bedford Lodge Hotel
Location: Newmarket, UK

Spa Directors

Company: GOCO Hospitality
Location: Asia

Facial Therapist

Company: Grace Belgravia
Location: London, UK

Spa Director

Company: Sopwell House
Location: St Alban, UK

Commercial Sales Coordinator

Company: EDF Energy London Eye
Location: London, UK

Supervisor - Admission

Company: Legoland Malaysia
Location: Johor, Malaysia

Manager - E-Commerce

Company: Legoland Malaysia
Location: Johor, Malaysia

LEGOLAND Associate

Company: LEGOLAND California
Location: California, US

Event Sales Manager

Company: Madame Tussauds
Location: California, Hollywood, US

Master Model Builder

Company: Legoland Discovery Center
Location: Georgia-Atlanta, US

Front Desk Agent

Company: LEGOLAND California
Location: California-Carlsbad, US

Attraction Host

Company: Merlin
Location: Texas-Grapevine, US

Model Builder Lead

Company: Legoland Discovery Center
Location: Georgia-Atlanta, US

Operations Manager

Company: Sea Life
Location: Michigan-Auburn Hills, US

Visitor Experience Manager

Company: National Trust
Location: Richmond, Surrey, UK

Visitor Centre Assistant

Company: Natural Resources Wales
Location: Gwynedd, UK

Group Food & Beverage Manager

Company: The Continuum Group
Location: Nationwide, UK

Visitor Experience Manager

Company: National Trust
Location: Berkshire, UK

Commercial Manager

Company: Legoland Discovery Center
Location: Georgia-Atlanta, US

Sales Manager

Company: Brighton i360
Location: Brighton, UK

Marketing Manager

Company: Merlin
Location: Florida-Orlando, US

Visitor Services Manager

Company: National Trust
Location: Peterborough, UK

Entertainments Team Lead

Company: Legoland Discovery
Location: Illinois-Schaumburg, US

Food and Beverage Manager

Company: Folly Farm Adventure Park
Location: Pembrokeshire, UK

Conference Director

Company: Global Geoparks Network
Location: Torquay, UK

Island Facilities Manager

Company: St Michael's Mount
Location: Marazion, Cornwall

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'Rom' becomes first listed skatepark

The 'Rom' skatepark in Hornchurch, East London, has been given Grade II listed status by English Heritage (EH) and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Opened in 1978, the Rom, named after a nearby river, is one of the finest surviving examples of early skatepark designs in the UK. The decision to protect the park follows the publication of a new book by sports historian Simon Inglis called *Played in London*, which examines London's sporting sites of historical importance.

Designed by Adrian Rolt and skatepark specialists G-Force, the Rom covers 8,000sq m (86,111sq ft). The central 4,000sq m (43,055sq ft) is surfaced with shotcrete (pressurised concrete) and features seven different areas for skating – including 'The Pool', which was based on empty swimming pools in California where pioneers first perfected the sport and a series of interlinked bowls called the 'The Mogus'.



The Four Leaf Clover, one of the main skating attractions at the Rom

Following recent controversy over London Southbank's Undercroft – a skating haven now allowed to remain open – it appears skateboarding heritage is gaining recognition.

Roger Bowdler, designation director at EH, said: "Skateboarding is more than a sport: it has become a worldwide cult. The Rom is the finest example in England of this aspect of youth culture... it gives the idea of heritage an extra twist." *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=2u6b5>*

Sports Direct outlines new gym model

Continued from front cover

The burgeoning chain comprises 18 former LA fitness sites, with a further eight expected to be acquired shortly. The new model of Sports Direct gym and retail outlets side by side will start with the launch of an Aintree site in mid-December. This will be followed by openings in Keighley and St Helens, while four more new-builds – two in southern England, one in Wales and one in Scotland – are going through planning.

Much of the cardio and strength equipment at the new sites will be provided by Precor, while the chain is in advanced discussions with two other suppliers regarding the free weight and functional training areas.

Crossland added that despite the ultra low-cost strategy, the gym chain will avoid other traits of the sector, such as minimal staffing.

"We want our gyms to have a personal touch – we won't follow the budget model and be doing everything in pods," she said. "We want to have a rapport with our members, so for every visit, staff will be there to say 'Hi' and 'bye.'" The trio heading up the gym venture have all



Mike Ashley founded Sports Direct in 1982

arrived from senior positions at DW Fitness. In addition to Crossland, DW's former CEO Winston Higham is the head of leisure and ex head of membership Dean Hogan has become Sports Direct Fitness's head of operations.

The masterplan for the new gym model will be revealed to club general managers during a conference at the group's Shirebrook headquarters in Mansfield from 11-12 November. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=v2N4t>*

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