

SPORTS

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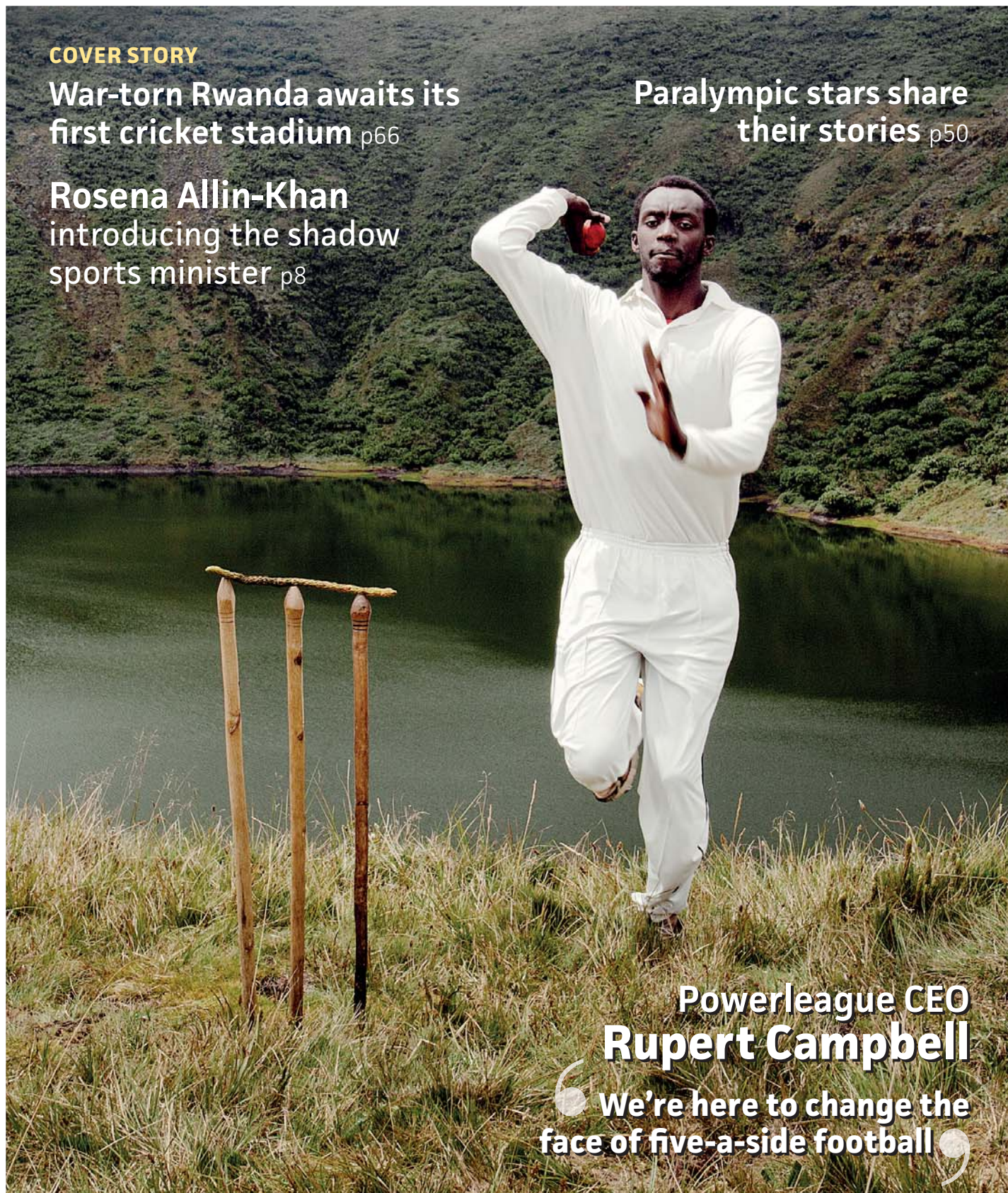
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A darker reality

The activities of paedophiles in grooming and abusing children and young people in sport is the greatest challenge we have ever faced. We must tackle it head on

We love to see sport as a wonderful part of life where we strive to do our best. Where we learn lessons in determination – fighting to win, but being gracious in defeat. Where teamwork forges friendships and creates tribes for life and good exercise habits are established.

But while this is true for the majority, a darker reality is opening before our eyes, as the awful extent of paedophile activity in sport begins to emerge.

Right-thinking people in the industry are bracing to deal compassionately and effectively with whatever horrors unfold in the coming months and years.

As I write, after just a handful of days, 14 police forces are already engaged in the investigation and around 800 people are reported to have come forward to say they were abused. The current focus is on football, but it seems inevitable this will extend to other sports and that to a degree, the entire sports sector will be touched by this horrible tragedy.

We know from Savile how long this takes: sport now faces years of challenging times, as accusations and alleged coverups are investigated and action taken.

What can be done? For those who have been harmed, justice brings some closure and must be delivered. As important, however, is the need to sweep through sport to flush out this evil and ensure it's never possible for children to be exploited and abused.

There must be no dark corners where paedophiles can hide and thrive. This goal has sustained the courage of those who've come forward, with the aim of preventing other innocents suffering as they have.



This is toxic. It will destroy parents' faith in sport's ability to protect their children and damage volunteering

It must never be possible for paedophiles to infiltrate sport, never possible for them to take advantage of children who feel they have the expectations of parents and adults on their shoulders. Never possible for them to exploit the hopes and dreams of young people.

Governance and honesty lie at the heart of this. There is evidence emerging that some adults and sports organisations have been more likely to turn a blind eye or attempt a cover-up than to 'rock the boat' when it comes to taking action against paedophiles.

So if adults and those in power cannot be relied on to protect children when they are suspicious, things must be organised to allow for this fact. Whatever it takes to make it work, we must do it, and we must do it fast.

Teams, clubs and governing bodies must review their processes and deliver on this immediately to stop it dead in its tracks, so no more harm is done.

Very sadly, history is showing us that nothing less than total elimination through control will do. ●

LIZ TERRY, EDITOR, SPORTS MANAGEMENT

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OLEZIA BILKEI / SHUTTERSTOCK



Retired footballer Fabrice Muamba (right), who suffered a cardiac arrest on the pitch during an FA Cup match in 2012 with Andrew Deaner (left), one of the men who saved his life

The importance of AEDs in sport centres

Recent years have seen automated external defibrillators (AEDs) become more accessible in public locations across the UK. Found everywhere from train stations to football stadiums, awareness of this device and its life-saving abilities is on the rise.

Currently, 30,000 people in the UK die each year due to sudden cardiac arrest (SCA), yet it is still not a government requirement to have these devices installed in public locations, sport arenas or even schools.

Numerous cardiac arrests have occurred during sporting events, most notably in 2012 where Fabrice Muamba collapsed suffering

cardiac arrest during an FA Cup match. Fabrice was saved thanks to quick access to a defibrillator which delivered a number of shocks to his heart, ultimately saving his life.

The risk of SCA is three times greater in competitive athletes, which is why quick access to a defibrillator is vital to protect the lives of those competing in sporting events.

Thanks to the clever design of these devices, just about anybody can use an AED to save a life. Simply pressing the power button or opening the lid will activate the defibrillator, initiating a sequence of visual and vocal prompts to guide the user through the entire rescue process.

With every passing minute, a victim's chances of surviving an SCA decrease by 10 per cent. CPR, along with the shock of an AED can increase chances of revival from just 6 per cent to 74 per cent if delivered within the first three to five minutes after collapse.

This is why the most important way to protect the lives of those competing in sports isn't with shin guards, gloves or a helmet but with the investment of a defibrillator – the only definitive treatment against cardiac arrest. ●

Francesca Wilson,
Defibshop creative coordinator

Sports Management people

MATT CROSSICK / PRESS ASSOCIATION



“I apply as much pressure as possible to ensure sport and physical activity is really accessible to everyone”

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan,
shadow sports minister**

When Jeremy Corbyn won the latest Labour leadership contest in September – increasing his already significant authority – he was given the opportunity to form a new shadow cabinet.

While old party stalwarts like Diane Abbott and Emily Thornberry received top roles shadowing secretaries of state in domestic and foreign affairs respectively, Corbyn plumped for several newer members of parliament to take up shadow positions.

One of Labour’s latest intake of MPs, Dr Rosena Allin-Khan was appointed shadow sports minister by new shadow culture secretary Tom Watson. The promotion illustrates quite a rise for the “working-class, half Polish/half Pakistani” Allin-Khan, who was only elected in the spring after the previous MP for Tooting, Sadiq Khan, became London mayor.

▼ Allin-Khan’s involvement with her local boxing club has shown her how sport can engage the community

Passion for sport

Despite her relative inexperience in politics, the sports brief is one Allin-Khan is relishing already, and she appears to have all the credentials to succeed.

“I’ve been a sportsperson all my life actually,” she tells *Sports Management*. “I represented my school in a number of sports, including cricket and athletics. Then when I went to uni I played football and basketball, and at medical school I played football and korfbal.”

Allin-Khan also began to develop an interest in boxing towards the end of her time at medical school as, unlike team sports, it fit in with her busy lifestyle working in a hospital. She is now the team doctor at her local boxing club in Balham, South London, where she also trains. It is here that Allin-Khan properly realised the power of sport in wider society.

“I see sport as a fantastic way to bridge equality gaps and to tackle issues such as mental health, obesity and general wellbeing,” Allin-Khan explains.

“But I think it’s really important to look at the difference between sport and physical activity because sport isn’t for everyone. I was really lucky because I was good at sport at school, but I know that PE lessons where two captains have to pick a team can be a really daunting time for any child.”

Despite being good at a number of sports, Allin-Khan wasn’t immune to feeling left out, and developed an understanding of the importance of physical activity for those who are not comfortable with or who simply do not enjoy playing competitive sport.

“I didn’t swim very much as a child and when we started swimming lessons at school I was in the bottom class. I know that it can feel very intimidating. If there’s a sport you’re not deemed to be good at, it can be quite a discriminator,” she says.





“Physical activity is a way we can engage hard-to-reach groups like over-50s and young children without feeling there’s a competitive edge to it. We need to promote physical activity at the extremes of age.”

A healthy investment

During her time working as a doctor, Allin-Khan saw first hand what a sedentary lifestyle can do to people. While she admits it’s difficult to quantify the extent to which physical activity would have prevented the ailments of her patients, she is convinced that investment in sport and physical activity strategies can lessen the burden on the NHS.

She explains: “When you see people coming into hospital who’ve had heart attacks, who have diabetes, mental health problems, problems with alcoholism – all the research shows that being fit and healthy and active improves outcomes in all of these groups.”

Social cohesion is also an issue close to Allin-Khan’s heart, and she talks fondly about some of the initiatives Balham Boxing Club has developed to ensure it is accessible to everyone in the community.

▲ **Rosena Allin-Khan was elected MP for Tooting after previous MP Sadiq Khan became the Mayor of London**

“The club has sessions for under-11s, youth groups and white collar boxing where anybody can come and train,” she says. “Rather than advertise the boxing element, they talk about the benefits of training and keeping fit. You don’t even have to get into the ring.”

“In my role I apply as much pressure as possible to ensure sport and physical activity is accessible to everyone,” she adds, explaining that she is intent on working with local authorities to demonstrate the benefits of investing in physical activity. Taking money out of physical activity, she says, is a “false economy”.

“More will need to be spent on social services for young children, as evidence shows that if we don’t invest in the early years then more money gets spent on social care later on,” she says.

“More money will be spent on older people in the NHS, and mental health is a classic example. The mental health budget is being cut and everyone is feeling the squeeze. I’ve seen first hand as a doctor just what physical activity can do for rates of depression. It can get people back in the workforce, increase their self-esteem and improve the local economy.” ●



“We wanted to give everyone the chance to be involved. The range of riders taking part and their enjoyment was very rewarding”

**Nick Truran, cycling officer,
Hertfordshire Cycling**

Cycling has been growing in popularity for several years now, but Hertfordshire Cycling has committed to introducing the sport to many more with its Tarmac Tour of Hertfordshire Series. This series of short-distance racing events took place in five different towns within the county: Bricket Wood, Letchworth, Berkhamsted, Welwyn and Hitchin. Cycling officer Nick Truran was part of the team that organised the tour, putting the focus on accessibility and participation.

“The desire was to promote cycling in all forms, to engage with residents and cycling clubs in the hope of increasing participation across the county,” he said.

“We ran shorter-distance races in small towns to give as much access to the events as possible – the thrill for cyclists and spectators of being up close and personal to the event enhanced the excitement and festival atmosphere we were trying to achieve.”

In the interests of accessibility, the events featured free practice rides and categories for children and novice riders. There were also fun challenges such as the ‘folding bike challenge’ where teams of three, dressed in business attire, had to fold and unfold their bike and each ride a lap of the course.

“Giving both young and novice cyclists the chance to ride but also accommodating the elite riders was important. We wanted to give everyone the chance to be involved. The wide range of riders taking part and the enjoyment we saw from them and their families was extremely rewarding.”

Location, location, location

2016 is the second year the tour has been run, undergoing a name change from the original ‘Tour of Hertfordshire series’ to include headline sponsor Tarmac. Each of the circuits featured lap lengths

of just 800–1,200 metres long, and incorporated characteristic elements of the host town, such as Hitchin’s cobbled streets and Berkhamsted’s castle.

The locations of the series, while providing colour and charm, also produced a fair amount of challenges for the team at Hertfordshire Cycling.

“Each round was different and presented a range of challenges that needed to be negotiated to deliver these high quality cycling events,” said Truran.

“Each event takes a great deal of planning and discussion with a host of stakeholders. We have learnt a great deal from holding these events and continue to find ways of improving them, not only for the cyclists that take part, but also for the spectators and the residents and businesses who will inevitably be affected by the events.”

The key to the success of the series, Truran explained, was close partnership with sponsors, local cycling clubs, district councils and emergency services. Each round had a different lead organiser,

▼ The events encouraged participation by all types of riders, with the inclusion of an adaptive bike session





It's vital to have local clubs helping to run the events as well as showcasing their club

with Hertfordshire Cycling taking responsibility for the overall series management.

"The organisation that an event like this requires is huge, especially when there are five rounds. It takes all the partners – and especially the round lead organisers – to work together. Every link in the chain has to be working for everyone else.

"It's vital to have local clubs helping run the events on the day as well as showcasing their club. It's also a great chance to work with a range of stallholders and other businesses that have links to cycling, helping to make the festivals cater for everyone," he explained.

While cycling is the focus of the event, there are other things to consider, said Truran.

"Creating the festival atmosphere and 'buzz' is very important. Whilst there is a huge amount of planning and preparation, the quality of the events and the feedback has been incredibly encouraging."

Truran was happy with the participation numbers for this year's event, with between 250 and 500 riders competing in each event, along with several hundred who participated in the free practice rides. There was also a significant increase in spectator numbers.

Looking ahead

After such a successful tour this year, Truran fully expects that the event will take place again in 2017.

"The feedback has been very encouraging. We are working closely with all partners towards next year.

"At every stage we have learnt new things. More communication with residents and local businesses before the events is something we are committed to. Also securing ongoing sponsorship and co-operation from a number of stakeholders is important."

Of utmost importance for Truran and the team, however, is that the enjoyment of cycling prevails.

"The tour brings the excitement of cycling to the community, offers access and the opportunity to take part. Everyone can be a cyclist – we want people to be enthusiastic about getting on a bike whether they want to compete in races, commute to school or work or take a leisurely ride at the weekend," he said.

"Creating a buzz and getting people talking about cycling is a positive outcome we have delivered through these events. This is good for cycling clubs and also a boost for local businesses with thousands of people coming along to watch the events." ●



“Nearly everyone has the potential to improve their mental health, and enhance their functioning and performance as a result.”

Daniel Eisenberg, associate professor, University of Michigan School of Public Health

A person's performance in sport is related to many factors. One important factor that can often be overlooked is mental health. Research from the University of Michigan's School of Public Health (SPH) shows that one in three college students experiences significant symptoms of depression, anxiety or other mental health conditions, yet only about 30 per cent seek help. Of student athletes, just 10 per cent seek help.

Athletes Connected, the university's multi-departmental athlete-focused mental health programme, aims to remedy this by helping athletes to understand the link between mental health and performance, and encouraging them to seek help.

Objective stats

Leading the research unit of this programme is Daniel Eisenberg, an associate professor at the SPH. Eisenberg's latest research aims to investigate how mental health symptoms, particularly depression and anxiety, relate to athletic performance.

▼ Ex-football player Will Heining shares his experience of mental illness with students



“Athletes offer the opportunity to measure performance in a more objective way than the general population. For example, swimmers and runners have race times. Every sport has an objective statistic by which to measure performance,” he said.

Eisenberg and his team worked with 43 student athletes from a range of sports. The students were surveyed weekly over 12 weeks and also did twice-daily surveys for a two week period within this time.

While the results are yet to come in, Eisenberg is enthusiastic about their potential to help athletes, coaches and sports teams to recognise the role that mental health plays in sport and in our lives.

“One of our main goals is to help coaches and managers of sports teams. They are the leaders of athletic teams, and we hope this will help convince them that mental health is aligned with their goals of high performance and success. It is fundamental to our ability to function at our best.”

Staying positive

Eisenberg warned the results must be used carefully, so as not to contribute to negative stereotypes.

“We'll emphasise a positive framing,” he assures. “We'll emphasise that mental health is a continuum that's relevant for everyone, rather than a binary concept of people with and without mental health problems. Nearly everyone has potential to improve where they are on that continuum, and potentially enhance their functioning and performance.”

This message is of huge importance to athletes, and Eisenberg hopes his research will contribute to an increased awareness of mental health in sports.

“I'd like to see mental health be a part of the everyday culture in sports, just like physical health is. It should be openly discussed and appreciated.” ●



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GOVERNANCE

‘A Code for Sports Governance’ published

New document lays out deal-breaking requirements for NGBs in receipt of public money

National governing bodies that receive more than £1m (US\$1.2m, €1.1m) of public money over a set cycle – such as the Football Association (FA) and Rugby Football Union (RFU) – will lose their funding if they fail to adequately diversify their boards.

UK Sport and Sport England’s new document, A Code for Sports Governance, has set the requirement that all organisations in this bracket must aim towards appointing a minimum of 30 per cent of each gender on their respective boards.

NGBs should “demonstrate publicly their commitment to achieve gender parity and greater diversity on their boards”. A number of bodies may struggle to achieve that target based on current figures: Of the FA’s 12 board

members, one is female (8 per cent); the RFU has two women in 12 members (16 per cent); the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has 15 per cent female representation with two in 13; while British Cycling has the same number as the FA.

Of the major sports in Britain, the tennis governing body – the LTA – comes closest with three in 11 (27 per cent).

Targets over ethnic diversity are slightly less clear. While governing bodies are expected to “demonstrate a strong and public commitment to progressing towards a greater diversity on boards”, there is no benchmark aim.

Diversity is not limited to black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) or disabled candidates either, with both sports quangos looking at sexual orientation and socioeconomic circumstances.

“In order to drive greater diversity, funded organisations need to consider their practices in both board recruitment and capacity building,” the

code states, highlighting Women in Sport’s Checklist for Change strategy as a useful guide.

Elsewhere, 25 per cent of each organisation’s board should be independent non-executive directors, according to the new requirements, while term limits will be placed firmly under the microscope.

A director on a board can serve a maximum of four terms of two years, two terms of four years or three terms of three years.

Crouch said Britain’s domestic sports bodies should “uphold the very highest standards of governance” and “lead the world in this area”.

“We want to ensure they operate efficiently and successfully while being transparent and representative of society,” she added. “We have been clear that we will expect them to adhere to the new code if they are to receive public funding in the future.”

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=r6o8m>



▲ Crouch said British NGBs should “lead the world” in good governance

“We have been clear that we will expect NGBs to adhere to the new code if they are to receive public funding in the future”



▲ Australia won the last Rugby League World Cup, which was hosted in England

England to host the 2021 Rugby League WC

Winning bid backed by government's commitment to invest £10m in infrastructure for the sport across the country

England will host the Rugby League World Cup in 2021 after being selected ahead of a joint bid from the US and Canada.

Making the announcement this morning, the Rugby League International Federation (RLIF) said the wide support for the sport in England – both at grassroots and government level – had ensured the bid's success in the final assessments earlier this month.

The UK government has already committed £15m (US\$18.2m, €16.7m) to support the staging of the event and up to £10m (US\$12.2m, €11.1m) for rugby league's infrastructure in order to grow the game across the country.

The tournament will be the biggest edition since 2000, with 16 teams and 31 matches. While the exact venues have yet to be confirmed, the plans show that games will involve a mixture of 12 rugby league and other sporting

venues – such as Manchester's Old Trafford and Wembley.

The event will include men's, women's and wheelchair rugby league.

Minister for sport Tracey Crouch said: "The government is investing

"The tournament will be a fantastic festival of rugby, enjoyed by one million spectators, bringing economic benefits to host towns and cities."

up to £15m to put on a world class show and a further £10m into the game's infrastructure as part of our Northern Powerhouse agenda – and to help rugby league grow outside its traditional home.

"The tournament will be a fantastic festival of rugby, enjoyed by a million spectators, and bringing economic benefits to host towns and cities."

Brian Barwick, chair of the Rugby Football League, said the event will provide a huge boost for the sport.

"The news that England has won the right to host the Rugby League World Cup in 2021 is transformative for our sport," Barwick said.

"Our commitment to grow the game internationally, attract more spectators than ever before and put on the biggest and best event in the sports history has clearly been recognised by the RLIF"

The strength of the joint bid from the US and Canada was noted by the RLIF, which will look to award the 2025 World Cup to the two countries.

In a statement, RLIF said: "The USA/ Canada bid scored impressively in many areas, including but not limited to, the support of the RLIF strategy to extend the global reach of Rugby League as well as in marketing, commercial support and innovation."

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=7w2E4>

EVENT HOSTING

Britain to host three Taekwondo championships

Three flagship Taekwondo competitions will be staged in England over the next three years following a successful bid from GB Taekwondo.

The package of events, which will be held ahead of the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, includes the hosting of two World Taekwondo Grand Prix Series in 2017 and 2018, in London's Copper Box Arena and Manchester's Regional Arena respectively.

Manchester will also host the 2019 World Taekwondo Championships after seeing off competition from Houston, Texas, USA. It will be staged in the Manchester Arena.

"Securing these events provides Taekwondo with a chance to drive real growth"



OWEN HUMPHREYS / PA WIRE / PA IMAGES

▲ GB's Jade Jones celebrating her gold medal win at the Rio Olympics

London's hosting of the 2017 Grand Prix is the first time an international Taekwondo event has been held in the capital since the 2012 Olympic Games.

As part of the bidding process, GB Taekwondo made the commitment to invest in a four-year community Taekwondo programme to increase the profile of the sport in London and Manchester.

"Securing these events for the UK provides Taekwondo with a massive

boost and a chance to drive real growth in the sport over the coming years, not just in London and Manchester, but right across the country," said Steve Flynn, director of Taekwondo GB.

UK Sport chief operating officer Simon Morton confirmed that the staging of the events would be backed by National Lottery funding distributed by the elite sports quango.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=a6u9m>

Edgbaston gears up for first day/night Test in England

Edgbaston in Birmingham has been selected by cricket's governing body to host the first ever day/night Test Match in England.

The match against the West Indies – which will be the 50th Test Match to occur at the ground – will take place from 17-21 August 2017, and is being billed as an opportunity to attract "different fans and families to Test cricket", with matches played between 2pm and 9pm.

"It's a great opportunity to attract more fans to the game and see how staging Test cricket



▲ Warwickshire CCC chief executive Neil Snowball

in the afternoon and evening fits with working patterns and modern lifestyles, while maintaining the deep tradition

of Test match cricket," said the chief executive of the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) Tom Harrison.

Neil Snowball, chief executive of Warwickshire County Cricket Club, said he was "thrilled" that Edgbaston had been chosen as the first venue to host the new format.

"Edgbaston staged the UK's first day/night domestic match in 1997 and has a great history of hosting and selling out some of the biggest fixture in the game," he added. "In turn, the Edgbaston atmosphere and experience has become iconic, with England having a fantastic record of victories here."

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=3Z4T5>

Physical Education needs 'radical reform'

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on a Fit and Healthy Childhood accuses PE teachers and system of failing children

A group of politicians has criticised "failing" PE teachers and published a wide-ranging report with radical recommendations designed to improve physical education for school children.

According to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on a Fit and Healthy Childhood, PE "commands a fear factor for too many children and teachers alike" – with practitioners partly to blame.

"As professionals, it must be admitted that Physical Educators themselves are in part to blame for the situation in which we find ourselves," the report states. "Leaders of the discipline have remained largely silent for a generation and the subject has lost its way in terms of curriculum development; thereby failing to keep true to the core purpose for Physical Education."



▲ Co-chair of the group, Baroness Floella Benjamin



▲ The report calls for a PE taskforce to gather best practice evidence and case studies

"As professionals, it must be admitted that Physical Educators themselves are in part to blame for the situation we find ourselves in"

The 51-page report calls for an overhauled system of education for PE teachers, including the restructuring of post-graduate certificates for PE teachers and increased time on initial teacher training programmes.

The Department for Education is also being encouraged to carry out a review of the content of PE qualifications, "maintaining parity between practical and theoretical".

A PE taskforce, which gathers best practice evidence and case studies before developing a completely new PE Curriculum, should be created by the government. The taskforce would

be expected to produce a standardised framework for schools, allowing them to "improve their PE offer" in a uniform and consistent way.

The government is also being encouraged to fund research to compare practice of PE across the UK to aid the standardisation process, and implement a policy which will see an increase in the number of specialist PE teachers within state primary schools.

Methods of measuring impact should additionally be altered, said the APPG, which recommends the "review, revision and update" of Ofsted requirements for the delivery of PE from early years through to secondary schools, with physical literacy models of assessment.

Co-chair of the group, Baroness Floella Benjamin, said the recommendations encourage a combination of physical activity and knowledge of nutrition to help counter the childhood obesity epidemic.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=A4H1e>

FUNDING

UK Sport will get Tokyo 2020 funding boost

Prime Minister Theresa May has pledged that the government will honour the financial commitment made by the previous cabinet to fund elite sport ahead of the 2020 Olympics.

Last November, then chancellor George Osborne increased UK Sport's exchequer funding pot to £148m (US\$181.3m, €164.6m) to prepare for the Games in Tokyo in four years' time.

During a speech delivered during an event organised to celebrate

"In four years' time, I want another great parade after success in Tokyo"

CRAIG BROUGH / PA WIRE / PA IMAGES



▲ Theresa May (far right) said the funding increase was a "bold statement" about success

the achievements of Great Britain's Olympic team in Rio this summer – where the team broke previous medal haul records with a total of 67, with Paralympics GB also winning 147 medals – May confirmed that would remain the case.

She said: "Last year the government announced a 29 per cent increase in

funding for elite sport. It was a bold statement about our determination to invest in your success.

"And that financial commitment will continue under this new government. In four years' time, I want to see another great parade like today's after another great summer of success in Tokyo 2020."

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=z3j1H>

Sport England publishes *Towards an Active Nation* funding timeline

Sports organisations and governing bodies will be able to apply for grants through Sport England's new funding programmes from December 2016.

The grassroots quango has made public its first timeline since the publication of its *Towards an Active Nation* strategy in May.

Providers aiming to take a slice of Sport England's £7.5m (US\$9.1m, €12.2m) facilities pot – called the Community Asset Fund – will be able to bid from January 2017 following a December 2016 launch. Money will be available for the development of single and multi-sport community facilities.

Awards of between £5,000 and £150,000 will be made for these projects, with the first batch of awards announced in April 2017.

In January, Sport England will publish its wider facilities investment guide to supply

BUDIMIR JEVTCIC / SHUTTERSTOCK



▲ The first focus will be on boosting inactivity levels among the elderly

information on the types of projects it wants to support. A bulk of the organisation's funding over the next four years (25 per cent) will go towards tackling inactivity, with the first £10m (US\$8.3m, €11.1m) inactivity fund launching in December 2016.

The first phase of the inactivity fund will be focused on getting the over-55s active, with 42 per cent of this age group likely to be inactive compared to 29 per cent of the population as a whole.

Organisations bidding for money from this pot can expect awards of £250,000-£500,000. Expressions of interest need to be submitted by 13 February 2017, with the first awards announced in June next year. In the coming months, Sport England will be publishing guides on how to bid for money from forthcoming pots of investment.

Bodies that are interested in "supporting sport's core market" will find out the requirements in December 2016, while those wanting to work with children and young people outside of school hours will be briefed next February.



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FACILITIES

Scaled-down stadium plan for Casement Park

New designs for the controversial Casement Park development in Belfast have been unveiled after opposition from local residents halted original plans.

Ulster Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) has put forward designs for a reduced size arena to quell concerns raised by locals about their lives being impacted on matchdays.

The body has also put forward a “sustainable transport strategy”, which includes coach travel and park-and-ride

“The design demonstrates Ulster GAA’s willingness to engage and evolve”



▲ The scaled-down project is now 34,500-capacity, with 8,500 reserved for standing

options, to reduce congestion in the wider community.

According to the Ulster GAA, stage one of the community consultation process received 91 per cent support.

Tom Daly, chair of the Casement Park Project Board, said the changes demonstrated Ulster GAA’s “willingness to engage, listen and evolve plans”.

The Populous-designed stadium will now have a capacity of 34,500, down from the 38,000 that was originally proposed, with 8,500 allocated as a standing terrace. The local residents association – Mooreland and Owenvarragh Residents Association – had previously called for a 25,000-capacity limit.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=5c3d9>

AndArchitects founder unveils ‘flexible’ Luton Town FC stadium plans

The architect behind Luton Town FC’s proposed new stadium has lifted the lid on its plans, with the emphasis on flexibility.

Manuel Nogueira, the founder of AndArchitects, told delegates at the Major Events International Summit last month that the 17,500-capacity stadium would be built with the capability of adding temporary tiers, and an extensive space for the public.

During non-matchdays, local people will be encouraged to use the outside piazza, and a balcony which gives a view of the pitch from the exterior.

“The piazza will have cafes and restaurants. On non-matchdays people can go up to them, and use the balcony to view the pitch with the floodlights lit at 10 per cent,” said Nogueira. “That pitch is part of the urban fabric on non-matchdays.”



▲ Nogueira said there would be a possibility of adding temporary seats

He revealed that his firm is working with Luton Town to explore ideas, some with a technology focus, about what can be implemented within the outside concourse. The space, he added, would allow other temporary buildings to exist.

The stadium is being earmarked for a central part of Luton next to a church which happens to be the only Grade One listed building in the town.

However, the plan is one of two developments which are in for planning permission. The club has acquired the Newlands Park area of the region, in which it is hoping to build offices, retail outlets and a cinema, which will pay for the development of the new stadium.

“We’re putting the club right in the middle of town so it can be completely integrated,” Nogueira added. “This project is vital for the regeneration of Luton.”

Nogueira said that the club will find out if its plans to create the development are successful early next year.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=g2l6p>



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GRASSROOTS

World Cup 2015 revenue filters to community rugby

Record revenues for the Rugby Football Union (RFU) contributed to a 5 per cent increase in the organisation's investment in the grassroots game.

The national governing body spent £34.1m (US\$41.5m, €37.8m) on rugby development over 2015/16, up £1.6m (US\$1.9m, €1.8m) from the previous year.

Money went towards the RFU's All Schools programme – which is working towards implementing rugby programmes in 750 state schools by 2019 – and its Young Rugby Ambassadors project, which aims to get young people involved in rugby.

“The World Cup legacy will continue to benefit our community clubs”



▲ The RFU generated record revenues despite England's poor showing on the pitch

Female rugby and touch rugby also received more money than previously.

The extra funding was made possible by the record £407.1m (US\$495.5m, €450.7m) revenues the RFU made during a year in which England hosted the Rugby World Cup.

Around £55.7m (US\$67.8m, €61.7m) was also ploughed into the professional game.

Ian Ritchie, RFU CEO, said that 2015/16 was a “truly exceptional year”.

“Despite the huge disappointment of England's early exit from our home Rugby World Cup, by running the widely acclaimed ‘most successful Rugby World Cup ever’ we have delivered significant investment into rugby both at home and globally,” he added. “The legacy will continue to benefit our community clubs and the sport at every level.”

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=K5p30>

FA Cup deal can be ‘transformational’ for grassroots

A recent deal struck between the Football Association (FA) and overseas broadcasters for the FA Cup rights could have a “transformational impact” on the grassroots game, according to chief executive Martin Glenn.

Glenn said the six-season agreement was “hugely significant”, and pledged that the increased finance would go towards grassroots infrastructure despite declining to disclose the financial details.

He added: “The FA will be able to invest even more than we currently do in pitches, facilities

ADAM DAVY / EMPICS SPORT



and participation programmes to make football available for all.”

The deal for the television rights covers Western Europe,

the Middle East and North Africa. Last year the Football Association pledged to put £260m (US\$317.8m, €292m)

into grassroots football over the next four years, with an additional initial £50m (US\$61.1m, €56.1m) committed to the launch of its Parklife artificial grass hubs across English cities.

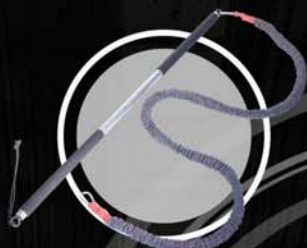
However, Glenn's comments suggest that resources for grassroots football will increase over that time period.

“It's not overstating it to say that it could have a transformational impact on what we are able to achieve across the country,” he added.

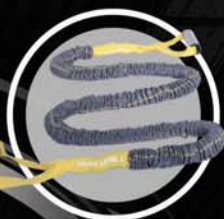
Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=U0F6F>

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DEVELOPMENT

China's US\$100m rugby revolution

Alibaba gets on board to invest in the development of one million players and 30,000 coaches by 2020

E-commerce giant Alibaba has earmarked US\$100m (£81.9m, €91.6m) for the development of rugby in China over the next 10 years.

The organisation's sports arm – Alisports – has partnered with World Rugby to establish a 'Team China' initiative, which aims to attract and retain one million players in the world's most populous nation.

Cash will go towards the development of a large-scale mass participation programme, which will be run in 10,000 universities and schools in 20 provinces. The development programme also aims to train and recruit 30,000 coaches and 15,000 match officials by 2020.



▲ The fund will go towards the development of a professional female league

"We are confident we can build a strong and sustainable platform to ensure China becomes a major force"

The elite game in China will be effectively built from scratch with the creation of its first professional men's and women's 15s leagues and national sevens programmes.

China is currently 68th in the World Rugby rankings, behind Chinese Taipei, Andorra (population 79,000) and Luxembourg (543,000).

Rugby participation is experiencing "record growth", according to the sport's world governing body, due to the inclusion of rugby sevens in the 2016 Olympic Games, and the news

◀ World Rugby CEO Brett Gosper said the move will grow the game globally

that the 2019 Rugby World Cup will take place in Japan.

Alisports will attempt to capitalise on the game's growing popularity in the continent by carrying rugby content on its television and digital platforms.

Brett Gosper, chief executive of World Rugby, said the partnership was part of the organisation's "mission to grow the global rugby family", adding that China was "central to the mission".

"Driven by a common vision, ambitious but attainable goals and an unprecedented investment programme, we are confident that we can build a strong and sustainable platform from which to ensure that China is in the best possible position to become a major force on the international stage," he added.

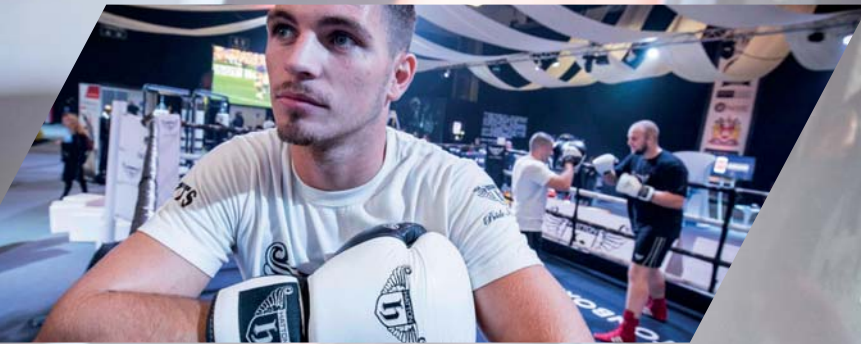
Alisports is also heavily involved in China's ambition to create a footballing superpower, linking up with architecture firm Populous to develop an ambitious infrastructure and facilities plan.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=O1y3s>



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FACILITIES

Bernabeu plan given green light by the council

Spanish football giant Real Madrid has agreed a deal with the local council to redevelop its Santiago Bernabeu stadium, and the surrounding area.

The La Liga club's president Florentino Perez made the announcement alongside mayor of Madrid Manuela Carmena, delegate of sustainable urban development Jose Manuel Calvo and council president of Madrid's Chamartin district Mauricio Valiente.

Last December, Calvo's department blocked the €440m (£398.4m, US\$486.8m) development proposal in "the interests of the public".

"We will convert the stadium into an avant-garde architectural icon"



▲ Perez said the stadium would improve the economy of the overall area

The council's concerns appear to have been quelled, and Perez pledged to Real Madrid fans they will have the "best stadium" while the club's neighbours will enjoy a "more sustainable remodelled environment".

"With this agreement we will start a process of modernisation and transformation that will convert the stadium into an avant-garde architectural icon," he added.

"The stadium will act as an economic and touristic invigorator and will contribute to strengthening the image of our city. This plan will also improve the whole area around of the stadium."

German architects GMP Architekten and Spanish partner Ribas & Ribas are behind the project. Plans for the remodelled arena include the installation of a retractable roof.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=Q6w2b>

NFL explores suitability of Vegas as a franchise city

Roger Goodell, the commissioner of the National Football League (NFL), has revealed that the organisation has been conducting a feasibility study to explore the suitability of Las Vegas as the home for a franchise.

The National Football League has been looking at factors such as potential fan base and stadium economics, and will report back to its committee with findings in December.

"There's still a great deal of information that we need to gather with respect to the circumstances we see in Las



▲ NFL commissioner Roger Goodell

Vegas, the opportunities and also the challenges," he added.

The Oakland Raiders franchise is preparing to move after failing

with its bid to relocate to Los Angeles earlier this year.

Manica Architects are working with the franchise on the Las

Vegas project. Oakland Raiders owner Mark Davis said he was serious about the bid to move and was not using Las Vegas as a bargaining chip.

He said: "When I met with Governor Sandoval for the very first time, he looked me in the eye and said, 'are you using us for leverage to get a better deal somewhere else?' I told him I've never done that with a city and that if they come up with what we're talking about, that we would be moving or doing our best to come to Las Vegas."

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=X4C9i>

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New skills for new-look sector

Frontline sports staff may need better training in soft skills, but should this come at the cost of critical thinking?

As the new sports strategies fall into place, many in the sector will be concentrating on funding flows. Equally important, however, are the 'people strategies' for workforce, coaching and volunteering. After all, we are fundamentally a people business.

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) *Sporting Future* strategy clearly outlined its priority, saying: "we want the sport sector to be at the forefront of changing the way frontline staff interact with customers, focusing more on soft skills to build a welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone, regardless of background or ability."

This means all frontline providers, including those in our leisure sector and coaches and volunteers in our National Governing Bodies (NGB). It also includes the new physical activity activators and community development teams who are the new frontline in the fight against inactivity. The skills required in these roles will be very different to those employed in 'competitive' sport environments. As one

local team sports development manager told me – her job is now 60 per cent social work. Are we ready for this changed emphasis in our sector?

THE RIGHT SKILLS

Research from a recent sector skills report showed that employers don't feel people are getting the right skills for the workplace through their education and degrees. The report revealed that 82 per cent of employers believe that soft skills represent the greatest skills gap in individuals across the sector.

In Leicestershire, at the Local Enterprise Partnership where I sit as a private sector board member, we've just launched the *Economic Growth Plan for Sport and Physical Activity*. We have – of course – identified the development of key skills as a high priority. But we've also identified entrepreneurship as a feature of the brightest in our sector.

Do we want university graduates who are simply ready for the workplace? Or are we more ambitious and do we want them set up to be capable of independent thinking and ready to challenge our norms?



Andy Reed

DISRUPTIVE THINKERS

We need the right balance between a graduate who is able to walk into the modern workplace with all the soft skills employers have identified and a clone who simply fits into our current culture and doesn't challenge it.

I like disruptive thinkers. They keep our sector thriving. Education should be about creating critical thinkers who advocate change through their entrepreneurial spirit. I have tried to embed this in the MBA in international sports management and the MSc at the Institute for Sport Business at Loughborough University. I believe leadership and innovation are key skills that can be better developed.

Since there are up to 600,000 of us in the sector, we must develop a sector skills plan to attract the brightest and best to what is an exciting sector to work in – despite all the frustrations we feel. We feel them more because we are passionate about what we do. I hope we never lose that as we 'professionalise' the sector and create a brighter future for our workforce. ●

Andy Reed is a former MP for Loughborough and the founder of Sports Think Tank. sportsthinktank.com



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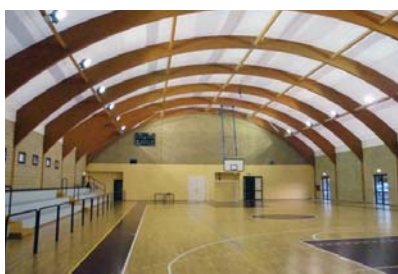
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Getting women on board

It's widely acknowledged that we need greater gender diversity on boards – but how can we achieve this?

Gender diversity on boards has been a hot topic within the sports sector for some time. National Governing Bodies have been working towards a target of at least 25 per cent female representation by 2017 and many have made good progress, but the new UK Sports Governance Code has now increased this target to 30 per cent.

I think (and definitely hope) the case for board diversity has been won in relation to (but not limited to), gender diversity. I believe most people would agree that having a wide range of perspectives will enrich the quality of the discussion, the relative experience around the board table, the potential to check and challenge perceived wisdom and – ultimately – that it will improve decision making.

From a gender perspective, it seems wrong to think that the perspective, views and opinions of 51 per cent of the population shouldn't be equally represented, particularly in a sector that needs to compete for customer attention.

ACTIVE RECRUITMENT

However, making the case theoretically and implementing it are two different things, and the latter certainly should not be considered either easy or achieved.



Emma Boggis

We won't get more women on boards by simply including something on the job description that says we welcome or particularly encourage applications from women – we must look for them and make them aware of the opportunities that exist in sport and how they can contribute.

It's also important that organisations establish a recruitment process based on skills. Whether you've elected or appointed directors, a skills audit allows you to identify which skills you need and which ones are already represented.

You can then specifically target the gaps and go looking in the right places for the people you need. This might lead you to consider advertising to the wider sector

and/or to different industries. The broader the search, the more diverse a selection of candidates you'll encourage to apply.

DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT

Ultimately, the end goal for any organisation is diversity of 'thought', as this leads to better and fresher thinking and avoids group agreement. As a female board member, I don't want to be always offering the female perspective – usually I'm drawing on my work experience and wider understanding of the sector – but sometimes I'm sure my view will be different from those of my colleagues because I am a woman.

Let's be clear though – it's variety that we want. A board that is 100 per cent female (or white or able bodied) would not be the right outcome either.

The new UK Sports Governance Code will be more prescriptive than the sector has been accustomed to across all aspects of diversity, but I look forward to working with our members to understand and implement the new requirements and make sure that the sector continues to stay fit for the future. ●

Emma Boggis is the CEO of the Sport & Recreation Alliance and a non-executive director of the British Paralympic Association.

LEWIS WHYLD / PRESS ASSOCIATION



The FA's Heather Rabbatts (far left) at a Downing Street summit

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Physical education overhaul

Physical education must start at birth and become a lifelong commitment

The publication of the sixth report on physical education by the All Party Parliamentary Group on a Fit and Healthy Childhood (APPGFHC) a few months after the Rio Olympics and Paralympics is timely.

Team GB is an outstanding sporting force, but the nation is in the grip of an obesity crisis that starts at birth, becomes entrenched during school and triggers diseases such as type two diabetes and cardiovascular disease in adulthood.



Helen Clark

THE NEGLECTED SUBJECT

How can this state of affairs co-exist with Olympic glory? We examined the state of physical education in schools, early years settings and the community. A sugary drinks tax is one anti-obesity weapon. But physical education must join good nutrition, play and sport to create a healthy and productive society.

We all had our own personal horror stories about school PE: 'skill drill' lessons, humiliating body shaming and the fact that disabled children and those who disliked team games often skipped lessons and ended up pursuing sedentary lifestyles as adults.

The school physical education curriculum has remained largely

unchanged since the 1940s and nobody at government level has collated or cascaded examples of excellence that the school community could learn from.

Also, PE is a 'foundation' rather than a 'core' National Curriculum subject and is often out-sourced to 'coaches' without teaching qualifications. Lessons are allocated little time and cancelled in favour of more pressing concerns.

TIME FOR CHANGE

In response to these concerns, the APPGFHC has identified its top priorities for a 21st century PE experience that works. These are:

- A National PE Task Force to overhaul the PE curriculum.
- Personalised PE teaching – pupils striving for personal, rather than collective, goals.
- For PE to have core status in the National Curriculum.
- For PE to be taught by specialists and for PE content to be increased in teacher training and ongoing professional development.
- A PE syllabus that is properly inclusive for disabled children.
- For PE advice and training to begin from birth, with a strong presence in early years settings.

MAKING A START

Physical education must lead the drive for a 'whole child' approach to physical activity in the cause of health and wellbeing. We don't have all the answers, but for too long nobody has asked the questions. The APPGFHC's report does that. We honour our elite athletes. But the rest of us should ensure we stay healthy too. ●

Helen Clark is an associate director for Royal Public Affairs, a public affairs consultancy that advises on a range of policy matters.



Clark says PE should be personalised, with pupils striving for individual goals

Can council-funded sport survive austerity?

The sports sector is being asked to help resolve the obesity crisis, while at the same time facing austerity cuts. How can services be defended? We ask our experts

An investigation by the BBC last year revealed the sports and leisure budgets of English councils were reduced by £42m between 2010 and 2015 as part of government austerity cuts. In some areas, cuts have been so severe that funding has been axed almost entirely.

This trimming isn't tied to any particular geographic area. A report by *The Guardian* revealed that of the authorities most

severely affected, two are on opposite sides of the country. Rossendale in Lancashire experienced a 92.2 per cent cut to its sport and recreation budget, while the borough of Haringey in north London was forced to make savings of 98.2 per cent.

Despite this, local authorities remain – as a group – among the heaviest investors in sport. But for how long? According to the Local Government Authority, councils

could face a further £3.3bn overall funding reduction in the 2016-17 financial year and sport, which is not a statutory service, is expected to carry its fair share of these cuts.

Can publicly-funded sport and recreation survive this next round of austerity cuts? Are there any ways in which local authorities can ease the pressure on budgets? We asked a group of experts to give us their views on the best way forward for these vital services.

Mark Allman

Chair, Chief Cultural & Leisure Officers Association (CLOA)

The challenge presented by huge reductions in funding from central government, coupled with the pressures of increasing demand in essential services has never been greater and there is no letup in sight.

The local authority sport and leisure sector has responded in a typically resilient manner, finding creative means of generating more income, while often seeking to reduce costs through more efficient operations or various forms of outsourcing or partnering.

Often we have seen savings of more than 40 per cent made, with strong outcomes still being delivered. However, there is a perfect storm approaching, with physical activity being increasingly recognised as an area that should feature much more strongly in central and local government policy. Yet at the same time, the cuts in budgets and the drain in experienced older staff from those local authorities is creating a potential vacuum of leadership when it's needed the most.

Sports grounds and swimming pools will always be a focus of local authorities, but

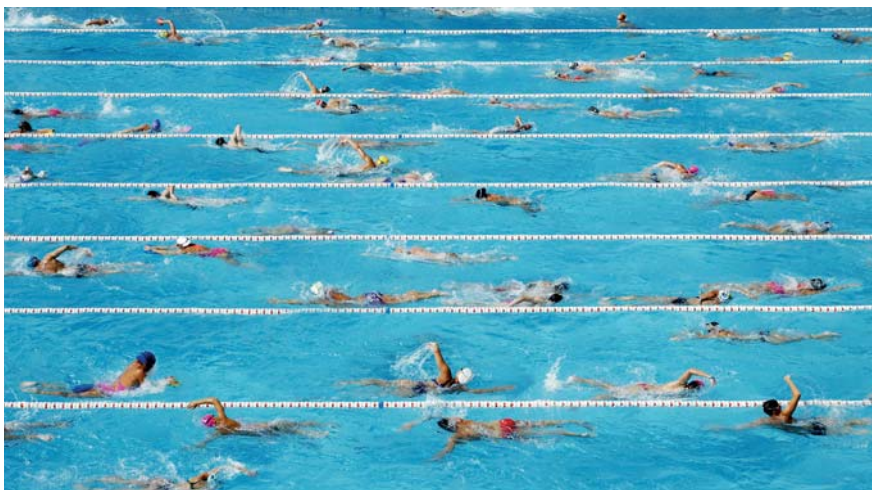


reaping the cumulative rewards of addressing vital areas such as health inequality, workforce health, educational attainment, social inclusion and economic development.

their continued funding remains in the balance. Future sustainability can be better secured by placing physical activity at the heart of policy and

But in order to do that, we need to be encouraging policy makers, commissioners and businesses to invest in the long-term. This means that all of us in the sports sector must work collaboratively to demonstrate that we are playing our part in delivering the key outcomes for people in our locality.

If we get this right, we'll ensure stability and growth for sport and recreation. Working in isolation will only lead to failure and the sad, slow demise of what is one of the best value investments around.



MANISPORT / SHUTTERSTOCK

The sustainability of swimming pools can be better secured by a focus on activity



Successful strategies for navigating austerity cuts include flexible pricing, partnership working and income diversification

Dr Dan Parnell

Senior lecturer, Manchester Metropolitan University

Local authority sport and leisure services continue to be at the sharp end of funding cuts and it has never been more important to consider how organisations navigate these constrained fiscal times.

Local government is in a phase transition and operating within a period of super-austerity. Recently we explored the management strategies of non-profit sport facilities in this era of austerity.

The headline findings highlighted two major challenges – reduced local authority services (ie, funding for maintenance, repairs or parks teams) and increased site operating costs. The management strategies adopted by facility managers to successfully



navigate austerity included flexible pricing strategies, strong partnership working and income diversification.

In summarising the protective management strategies utilised by organisations and facility managers to navigate austerity, three characteristics should be viewed as favourable. These are: diversifying income streams; a link-up with a larger, established community organisation to

share management functions and access to participants; and being well-networked, with links across other similar local and regional organisations and community stakeholders.

Ultimately, participation in sport is based on the user experience. The challenges associated with austerity cuts are reducing the quality of these experiences. To strategically move forward, more platforms are required to allow large-, medium- and small-sized organisations and facilities to network, share, inform and support and to assist in the development of collective strategic capabilities.

More platforms are required to enable organisations and facility managers to develop collective strategic capabilities





BH LIVE

Bournemouth Borough Council partnered with BH Live to manage its sports and leisure facilities, saving £11.5m over 11 years

Tony Williams

Chief executive, Bournemouth Borough Council

In 2010, we at Bournemouth Borough Council outsourced the management of our leisure centres and venues to the social enterprise, BH Live. This was an excellent fit given our shared values and ambitions.

Partnering with BH Live has enabled us to maintain and improve the quality of the entertainment, sport and leisure facilities for the benefit of local residents and visitors.



BH Live has worked with the council to protect public services, improve facilities, get more people taking part in physical activity and cultural events

and boost the local economy by bringing more business events into the region.

Participation in physical activity has increased, the quality of facilities and

diversity of services has improved, the cultural programme has grown and the council has saved £4.5m, with a further £7m to be saved over the next five years.

BH Live has also attracted footfall into the town through business tourism and sustains approximately 4,500 local jobs.

The social enterprise and partnership model can create a win-win situation for local authorities by enabling them to achieve their social ambitions, despite extremely challenging constraints on their budgets.

James Lewis

Councillor, executive board member with responsibility for sport, Leeds

Leeds City Council remains the biggest provider of sport and leisure in the city, however the current budget challenges for local government are huge.

Now more than ever, income from and investment in facilities that address key public policy agendas, such as physical activity and health is extremely important.

To address these challenges we've refocused our work in sport and leisure. We're being creative in tackling physical inactivity and using sport and activity as a cost-effective way of addressing health inequalities, boosting



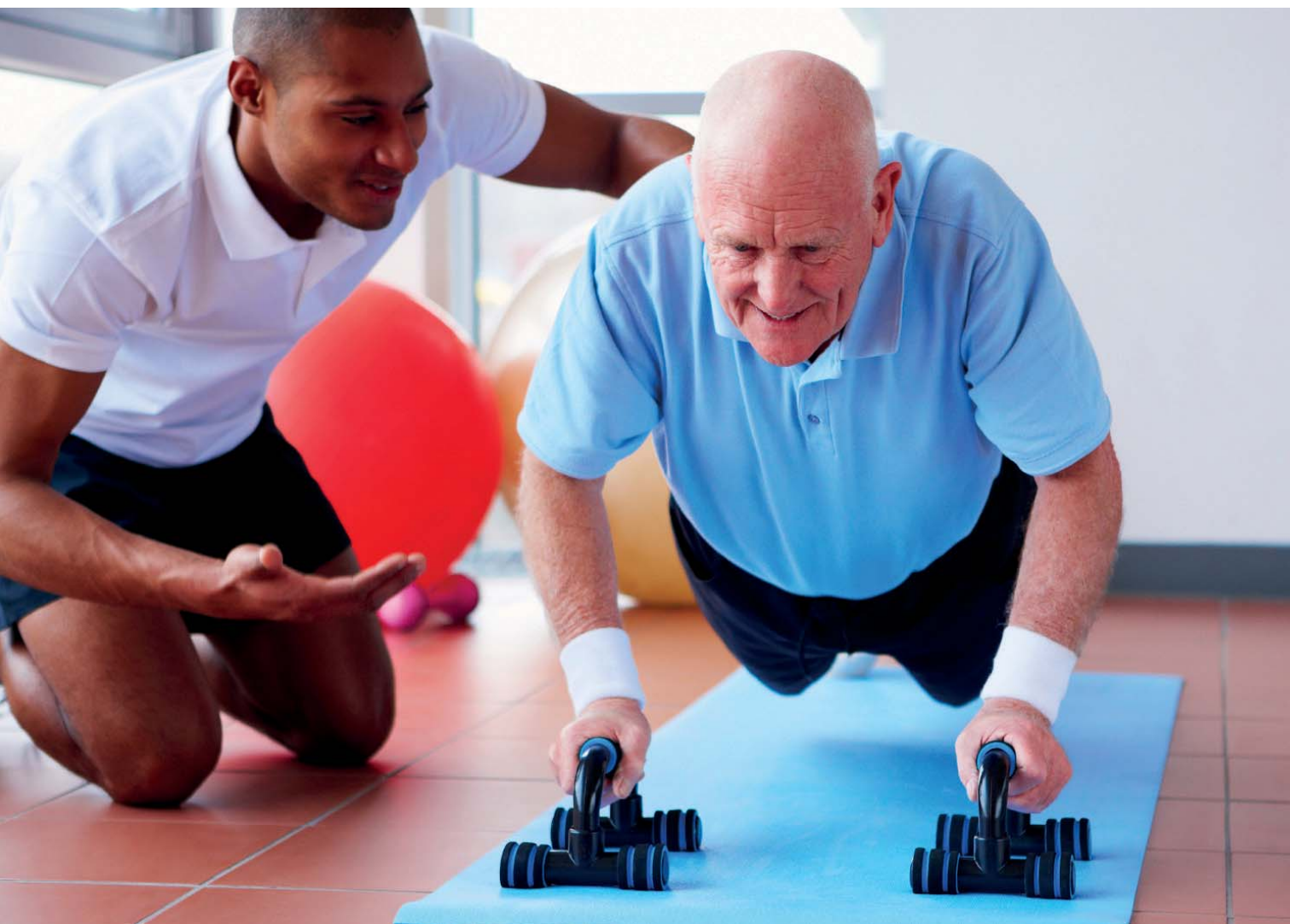
educational success and stimulating economic growth and development in the city. We know that for this strategy to succeed we must position sport and

physical activity at the heart of council policy-making and engage with senior leaders to ensure they're advocates of this change.

We're fortunate in Leeds that many of our leaders understand this, and ongoing work is looking at a wider approach to addressing physical inactivity, rather than it being led by the leisure and sport services alone. Increasing sport and physical activity can present so many positive outcomes, but it's a job for the whole city to work towards together and if we can achieve this it will go a long way to sustaining and growing the sport and physical activity offer.

We must position sport and physical activity at the heart of council policy-making and engage with senior leaders





Everyone Active's outsourcing services are being used by councils to deliver a wide range of services from sport to libraries

Duncan Jefford
Regional director, Everyone Active

Local authorities can save by outsourcing their sport and recreation services, as management companies are able to deliver these services cheaper than in-house. This applies across all areas of sport, leisure and fitness including GP referral schemes, sports development and parks.

At Everyone Active, we achieve savings through economies of scale – for example the purchasing of fitness or sports equipment. Bespoke marketing can also increase revenues through increased participation.

Management specialists are also able to offer innovative digital solutions including the provision of a dedicated app,

Councils can utilise under-used space to deliver a whole host of sporting and non-sporting events



Borough of Havering. By outsourcing the council's Physical Activity Referral Scheme (PARs) as well as all of its sports and leisure facilities, the local authority will save £1m.

online interactive planners and linking with popular fitness trackers.

We were recently awarded a 20-year leisure contract with the London

Another way in which local authorities can find savings is to look at adding new services into the available space. We worked with Sutton Council and Ealing Council on an integrated model which incorporates libraries into the leisure space.

Councils can also utilise under-used space to deliver a whole host of different sporting and non-sporting events, including fashion shows, weddings, conferences and private parties, etc. This creates savings from the management fee payment. ●

Moving the goalposts

Powerleague CEO Rupert Campbell wants to change the five-a-side business to focus on customer service and innovation. He discussed his ambitious targets with Matthew Campelli

“don’t say this lightly,” Powerleague chief executive Rupert Campbell says just a few minutes into our meeting, “we’re here to change the face of five-a-side football.”

According to Campbell, the five-a-side sector has an image problem caused by a lack of imagination around customer service. And it’s this he’s intent on changing.

We meet at Powerleague’s Barnet hub, the first venue to be revamped as part of the company’s £1m refurbishment plan. The rebrand is clearly visible. At the front of the car park looms a giant totem pole with a fierce panther-like creature on the crest. The main building has been turned striking red.

The crest and colour scheme will not be universal across the Powerleague sites; instead, each club will have its own badge of local significance and matching

colours. Campbell explains that the panther-like creature is the ‘Beast of Barnet’ – a big cat that became urban legend in the area after ‘sightings’ in the late-1990s.

The unique crest was the brainchild of Powerleague’s brand director, Casper Nelson, who Campbell hired shortly after taking the reins 15 months ago.

“When they first told me about the concept of having 50 different brands I was quite concerned,” Campbell admits. “I’m a traditionalist; I come from a corporate environment and understand that you have one brand and that’s how it works.”

But the idea of creating a club and community feel at each of the sites was too compelling for Campbell to dismiss, particularly in light of insight work the firm had undertaken which revealed that 92 per cent of Powerleague players live within eight miles of the club where they play.

▲ The Barnet club is made up of numerous pitches, named after famous players





"The guys started to look at the different local areas and how they could create the crests. It's the players' football badge. We want them to kiss the badge, and want every local community to be wedded to the badge."

Explaining the bright red colour scheme, Campbell turns on his heels towards a large Tesco supermarket that the hub overlooks. "You see how that Tesco dominates the landscape from up here? We want people who are in that Tesco car park to think that this Powerleague dominates the landscape from down there."

Campbell quickly leads the way to the pitch zone, where each pitch has been allocated the name of a famous footballer. As we stand between the Cristiano Ronaldo and Franz Beckenbauer pitches, the CEO explains that the recognisable names help players locate their pitch. He also points to a map and a visible clock, which means matches rarely go over their allotted times.

The addition of a central clock, says Campbell, was referenced as one of the most important things for player satisfaction. Little touches like that, he adds, will differentiate Powerleague from its competitors.

"This is just like any other industry, although in this industry we're blessed with football," he says. "But if you're a company that uses playing surface as its only unique selling point you will lose every time, because there's somebody that will do it cheaper."

"We're trying deliver an experience which is enjoyable for families, kids and women. This is a proper service industry, and not just a commodity you can throw away."

CUSTOMER SERVICE

As a former Adidas executive Campbell knows all about the importance of brand recognition and customer service, and undertook a "huge amount of insight" when he joined Powerleague in order to shape the organisation's customer service decisions.

Changing rooms have been completely remodelled to foster an atmosphere of camaraderie, food is served and music is played in the bar area to accommodate families. Air freshener is pumped into the facility so that it doesn't always smell like "sweaty men".

And the changes appear to be paying off. Campbell says that since the revamp, the Barnet centre has experienced a "30 per cent upswing in income", with "record growth in customer feedback".

The impressive numbers don't stop there. To improve the customer experience further, Powerleague has relaunched a more interactive website that allows customers to check league positions, book pitches and organise functions such as children's birthday parties. Since the website's launch, Powerleague's sales have surged by 156 per cent, and a new app is due to be rolled out.

Sustaining a high sales volume and high level of customer retention will be the next challenge for the company. While five-a-side football complexes were once a male domain, Powerleague's new business model aims to attract a much wider section of society.

▲ Chief executive Rupert Campbell aims to change the face of the five-a-side industry

▼ The new Powerleague Barnet crest was designed by brand agency Music of Manchester



FOOTBALL

Campbell says the organisation is working hard to attract more women to the centres, with an initiative called 'She Scores', which allows female players to take part in matches for free during off-peak times.

Powerleague has also started offering Soccercise classes – a Football Association-developed aerobic routine based around football skills. Children are being catered for as well, which gives the hubs an even greater family and community feel, says Campbell.

"We do summer camps, we do half term camps, we do Christmas camps. We looked at how we delivered these camps and what we charged, and to me it wasn't where it should be. So we did a lot of work, we did research and asked parents and we came up with this," he says.

Powerleague's F2 Ultimate Skills Soccer Camp teaches children a range of football skills based on the football freestyle ability of Billy Wingrove and Jeremy Lynch, the presenters of London Live show F2.

"We turned a bland kids camp into a camp where you learn different skills on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday," Campbell explains. "We've created that out of nothing and it's just gone insane."

INNOVATION

The programme is "just another example of innovation". The firm is experimenting with a piece of wearable technology that can be placed on the ankle to log how far players run and provide other match statistics. Pitch-side cameras have also been installed at some centres. The cameras are connected to a red button, which allow goals and gaffes to be shared on social media.

These cameras are sponsored by Gillette, demonstrating Powerleague's increasing commercial creativity under Campbell's stewardship. Campbell has already signed a deal with his former employer, Adidas, to launch pop-up stores in centres across the country.

This is just like any other industry – although in this industry we're blessed with football

▼ All 50 Powerleague clubs have their own branding and crest that is relevant to their community



But he stresses that it all comes back to customer service, and points to innovations that he has implemented within Powerleague's workforce. According to internal insight work, the biggest bugbear for employees was the uniform, which consisted of suits and ties. The formal attire has been shown the door, with staff now wearing smart Adidas tracksuits.

To crystallise his point about the importance of customer service, Campbell reveals that he took every single colleague from the business – from boardroom to bar staff – on a two-day training retreat under Powerleague's Service Rebooted strategy.

"We taught everyone how to meet and greet customers and interact with them," he says. "If you go to most centres at peak time you see a receptionist sat



at a desk. To move away from that, we gave our people iPads – now they go out and greet our customers.”

Powerleague so far has a customer service score of 53 per cent. Campbell hopes this will rise to 85 per cent once the refurbishment rollout is completed in 2017.

FUTURE AMBITIONS

Rebranding existing sites is only half the battle. Earlier this year, the company revealed plans for 13 new hubs in London, which fits with its new strategy to build in urban environments rather than on the edge of towns.

“We can do car parks or roof tops,” says Campbell. “One, two or ten pitch models. It’s a very flexible approach.”

Next year, Powerleague will begin to advertise its domestic work using a large social media campaign,

▲ **Powerleague is getting creative with branding and sponsorships**



but Campbell is looking further afield to ensure growth continues. Two sites in Holland – Amsterdam and Utrecht – have been established in the last few years. He explains that the perfect storm of finding a growing five-a-side football culture and “getting a good deal” made Holland the perfect place to expand, but his team is looking for other opportunities on the continent and beyond.

“Watch this space, we might have something to report very soon,” he says with a touch of mischief.

But for now, Campbell’s excitement around Powerleague’s domestic opportunities is palpable.

He concludes: “I thought one of your first questions would be ‘why did you leave Adidas?’, but I think I’ve explained that. There’s a lot of opportunity for everyone that works in our business to change an industry.” ●

Cyclopark steps its online offering up a gear with Legend

Kent-based operator of world-class cycling facilities teams up with Legend Leisure Services to transform its online customer journey, resulting in a dramatic increase in visitors, page visits and online bookings since July 2016

In early 2016, recognising the increasing popularity of cycling as a great British sport and wanting to capitalise on the busiest period in its calendar year – a summer holiday which coincided with the 2016 Olympic Games – Cyclopark decided to undertake some work to revitalise its online customer journey.

Cyclopark offers a diverse range of cycling tracks and cycling-based fitness programmes, from a world-class BMX track, road track and mountain bike trails, to a skate park, cycling, and other fitness classes.

However, its website at the time poorly demonstrated the extent of the offering. Customers had difficulty finding information and booking activities online. In addition, Cyclopark wanted to increase return visitors and transform repeat visitors into long-term members through more defined customer marketing.

THE CHALLENGE

Lenette Howard, marketing manager, Cyclopark, comments: “As our main customer facing presence, we knew that our website could work far more effectively for us. We wanted to be able to give visitors a true feel

for the depth and breadth of our offering, and make the online customer journey slick and easy – from finding information, asking for help, to booking and making payments online. In addition, we wanted to have a single system that brought everything customer-focused under one umbrella.”

As an existing user of Legend Club Management Systems, the move to Legend as its website developer was a logical one. “Legend has great industry knowledge,” Howard says. “They understand how our customers behave and know what they need from a website. Plus they offered us the ability to fully integrate bookings, membership and our website for a seamless customer experience.”

THE SOLUTION

The first phase of the project was to identify key objectives and model the various customer journeys. Legend developed a fully device-responsive website optimised to include best practice guidelines. These included live timetables and membership options; a chat function for those visitors seeking additional, immediate support; the option to subscribe to a newsletter

Legend’s engagement has been second to none, the solution they have developed looks and feels fresh



that integrated with Cyclopark’s Mailchimp marketing automation tool; and a fully bookable online system.

In addition, employing data driven strategies using the wealth of customer relationship management (CRM) data, online sources and behavioural insights, Legend implemented a range of customer journeys, aimed at increasing customer retention and cross- and up-sell opportunities.

Different communication channels such as email and text messaging were also considered to boost engagement. Not only are the journeys automated as much as possible, saving time, but they can also be adapted to respond to customer engagement.

Capturing prospect data from the website also allows opportunities for retargeting customers with





abandoned baskets to ensure that no customer goes unnoticed.

“Legend’s engagement has been second to none,” Howard says. “The solution they have developed looks and feels fresh. The website offers everything we – and more importantly our customers – wanted, and we are now making the best use of the data we have for everyone’s benefit. Moreover, with timescales to get the new website live looming, we trusted that Legend had our best interests at heart – and the support they have offered us throughout this project has proven that to be the case.”

CONCLUSION

Cyclopark’s new website and customer journeys went live in July 2016. Since then, website traffic has increased substantially.

Users are up 28% compared to the same time last year, sessions are up 33% and page views are up 57%. Online bookings have increased by 40%, demonstrating that customers can now much more easily view live activity timetables and book online.

“Although it’s too early to measure the impact on customer retention and average usage, automated data driven customer journeys, using email, text and the website, all support our overall customer strategies – improving service, improving retention and increasing usage. And it’s largely due to Legend that we have been able to achieve this,” Howard concludes.

Ingrid Hay, director for Legend Leisure Services, adds: “In order to truly engage prospects and customers, a website needs to tell a story from first view. Moreover,

customer journeys need to be seamlessly woven together so that each touchpoint and message is relevant and consistent. We are very pleased to have been able to work in such close collaboration with Cyclopark to deliver these solutions, and are delighted with the business benefits already being achieved.”



If you would like to learn more about Legend and how these ideas could work for your health club or leisure centre, contact us for a chat.

Ingrid.Hay@legendware.co.uk
or **01904 529560**.

Making a splash

The Water Babies franchise has grown in size and scope, opening its first dedicated swimming centre this year in China. Steph Eaves speaks to the team about the business of teaching babies to swim.

In Britain, 45 per cent of children between the ages of seven and 11 are unable to swim 25 metres unaided, according to the Amateur Swimming Association's (ASA) 2014 School Swimming Census. Meanwhile, drowning has been identified by the Royal Lifesaving Society as the third highest cause of accidental death in children.

On a mission to change these statistics is the team behind Water Babies, the swimming programme that gives babies and toddlers the skills they need to survive in and develop a positive relationship with the water.

The company, which started in 2002, has grown into the world's largest baby swim school, with a network

of franchisees across the UK, Ireland, The Netherlands, China, New Zealand, Canada and soon Germany. The model has proven so successful that the team opened its first dedicated swimming centre in Xi'an, China this year, and plans to roll out more facilities in the UK and other countries in the coming years.

Water Babies co-founder Paul Thompson is proud of how the business has grown during the last 14 years.

"We've experienced phenomenal growth," he says. "From a standing start in 2002 we now teach 50,000 babies and toddlers a week through a network of 66 franchise outlets operating in seven countries."

"We worked hard to develop a swimming programme based around child development milestones that was fun, progressive and inclusive to all. Quality is at the heart of our programme from the way we train our teachers to the detail that goes into every single class."

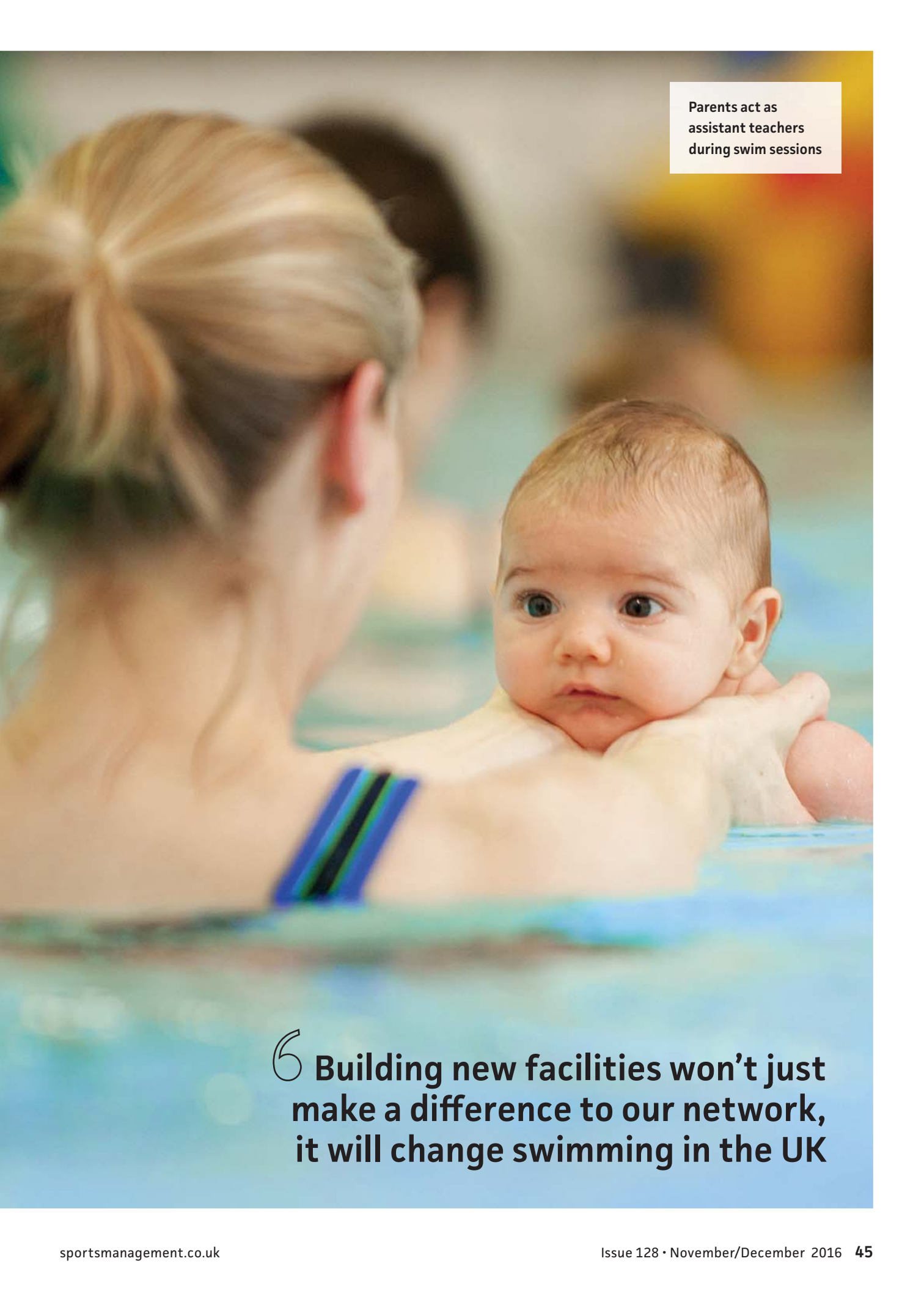
SAFETY FIRST

The idea for Water Babies was conceived in 2000, when Thompson took his young daughter, Imani, to swimming classes and felt that the experience could be enhanced and made more accessible. He created a programme that allows infants to progressively learn water skills in line with their physical, mental and emotional development.

"The aim is initially to teach water confidence and then ultimately independent swimming, which Water Babies can do in their second year," he explains. "There are a plethora of sophisticated skills that we teach across our programme but a key plank of our course is that we work with the parents and carers. They are in the water with their little ones acting as assistant teachers. We call this

◀ **Paul Thompson co-founded Water Babies in 2002. The company teaches 50,000 children a week**





Parents act as
assistant teachers
during swim sessions

“ Building new facilities won’t just make a difference to our network, it will change swimming in the UK

SWIMMING

'teaching you to teach your baby to swim' – it creates an amazing bond and builds confidence in them both."

For some parents, the thought of putting their brand new baby in a pool might be daunting, but Paul is quick to point out that, far from being dangerous, teaching your child to swim might just end up saving their life.

"A major reason people get into difficulty when they fall into water is the shock. A key skill we practice is bringing babies into the water on their side, so that this sensation no longer feels strange or takes them by surprise, meaning that in an emergency situation they are more likely to be able to use the skills they have learned to keep themselves safe. As they get older we progress into moving to a place of safety and climbing out. We have numerous stories from families whose little ones have saved themselves in this way."

LIFELONG BENEFITS

Lessons have been designed to include songs and games, often ones that babies and parents will be familiar with. Babies can start swimming from as young as one day old, but usually begin around six weeks. While babies have natural reflexes for a short time after birth that prevent water from entering their lungs, the programme trains them to control their breathing before the reflex is stimulated, ensuring they learn lifelong skills.

As well as the very obvious safety benefits, Paul explains that there are many other important reasons to begin swimming lessons at such a young age.



◀ **Water Babies** has 66 franchises internationally and now plans to build dedicated swim centres across the UK and beyond, with the first one opening in China



What it takes to be a Water Babies teacher

Paul Thompson believes Water Babies teachers are “the best trained in the world”. The team has worked with the ASA to develop a new Level 3 teacher qualification, which is the only nationally-recognised diploma in baby swimming. It takes 340 hours of training (longer than it takes to get a private pilot licence) which is broken into three main parts:

Theory

Pool-based skills training

Teaching real classes under assessment

Part of the training involves learning to read babies’ and toddlers’ reactions in minute detail, including recognising the different crying tones. Once qualified, Water Babies teachers undergo continual assessment and professional development.

JEZ DIXON / WATERBABIES

“We recently completed a research study with Manchester University which shows that babies’ cognitive and physical development is accelerated through our programme,” he says. “Other work that we’ve done shows that Water Babies maintain physical activity as a core part of their lives at a significantly higher percentage than the national average. This is particularly important in the modern fight against obesity and diabetes.”

To provide children with the greatest benefits, Paul and the team are constantly updating the programme to utilise the most up-to-date methods of delivery.

“We continually work to make our programme as inclusive as possible,” he says. “For example, we’ve

recently started using sign language in our classes, both to cater for carers and babies with hearing impairments and also to help little ones communicate sooner, by using gross motor skills.”

In its 14 years of operation, the business has grown to become an international success, being named 2016 Franchisor of the Year by the British Franchise Association. The offer now includes underwater baby photography and an aquatic pre- and post-natal program called WaterBumps. The team has also decided the time is right to move into the creation of dedicated swimming centres, with the first – in China – proving popular.

“We felt it was time to create dedicated environments for what we do,” says Paul. “Nationally we have more

▲ After gaining confidence, babies swim independently in their second year



© JON WATTS / WATERBABIES

clients on waiting lists – over 60,000 – than we do in classes. This move will enable us to offer our classes to more people. The doors of our Xi'an centre opened in June and already we're already approaching 300 clients."

Managing director of Water Babies Steve Franks believes the new facilities venture will have a huge impact on the state of swimming in the UK.

"There's a decreasing stock of swimming pool facilities in the UK and we're aiming to reverse that trend," he said. "We're working with internationally-renowned architects and also with retail psychologists to deliver a premium aquatic experience for our customers.

"Building new facilities will not only make a massive difference to our network of franchise businesses which are dependent on hiring pools, but it will also change swimming in the UK. We're as alarmed as anyone that only half of primary school-aged children can swim 25 metres unaided and that obesity levels are rising," he says.

▲ **Water Babies' plan to build its own pools could transform the UK's swimming sector**

"By building new pools and putting baby and toddler swimming centres on the high street, we can enable more children in their early years to learn life-saving skills in a fun environment and put them on a pathway towards regular physical activity."

PEOPLE AND PASSION

The plans don't end there for Water Babies. Paul and the team have big goals for the business and they intend to see them through to reality. Their strategic plan includes centres being rolled out across the UK and internationally and – in the future – the creation of an academy, a new HQ and a training centre.

Paul credits Water Babies' enormous success to two things – people and passion.

"We are a very people-focused company – we have created an environment where everyone knows they can succeed and contribute. Everyone genuinely believes in what we do and cares about it. Which leads us to passion – it is literally everywhere in the company, we are all incredibly passionate about what we do and this seeps all the way down to our little ones in the pool."

At the heart of the Water Babies programme is the ethos of "teaching you to teach your baby to swim," says Paul. "We strongly believe that every child should be able to swim because it is such an important life skill, as well as a lot of fun." ●

◀ **Water Babies was awarded 2016 Franchisor of the Year by the British Franchise Association**





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Paralympic stars

ParalympicsGB performed magnificently in Rio: bringing home 147 medals, they beat the impressive London haul of 120. Kath Hudson speaks to three of the breakthrough stars of UK Sport's talent campaign

The standard of the GB Paralympic team in Rio was so high that here in the UK we started to expect at least a few gold medals each evening. World records toppled, 'old' favourites lived up to their reputations and there were some exciting break-out stars too, many of whom had been inspired by watching London 2012.

Since the London Games, UK Sport has increased its funding by 45 per cent, investing a record £73m of National Lottery and Exchequer income in Rio 2016.

"This is success by design and would not have been possible without the consistency of National Lottery Good Cause funding," says Liz Nicholl, CEO of UK Sport.

▲ **Will Bayley celebrates his gold medal win in the table tennis final at Rio**

"This has allowed us to strategically invest in all sports and athletes with credible medal winning potential. Our increased investment over this Rio cycle has been targeted in a way that has made a significant difference."

Hopefully one of the knock-on effects of the Games will be to inspire more people with disabilities to look for sporting opportunities and more sports providers to widen their accessibility. Only a tiny percentage of people with disabilities are destined for elite sport, let alone to be Paralympic medallists, but everyone has the potential to enjoy sport at a recreational level. With this in mind, providers need to make sure they are properly equipped to welcome everyone into their clubs.



1. KADEENA COX

As an up-and-coming athlete from Leeds, Cox suffered a stroke in May 2014, and a few months later was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Refocusing her efforts on para sport, she came to Rio as world champion and world record holder in two sports: the T37 100m sprint and C4 500m time trial in track cycling. At Rio she became the first GB athlete in 32 years to medal in two sports at the same Games, with gold in the T38 400m, silver in the T35-38 4 x 100m relay, bronze in the T38 100m and gold in the C4 500m track cycling time trial. She was chosen to carry the flag in the closing ceremony.

“I’ve still not quite come down to earth – I keep being stopped by people who know me, which I find so weird. I knew I had the ability to get the medals, it was just whether I could do it all back to back.

I got into para sport at the end of 2014, after my MS diagnosis. Initially I struggled to deal with dropping down a level, but I just carried on competing and enjoying it.

After my diagnosis I spent a lot of time on a Wattbike, because my balance was so bad. Someone noticed I had good power outputs and pointed me towards cycling talent pathways. Sprinting and cycling use muscles in different ways, but doing them both works well for me. The endurance from cycling helps the athletics and the stability from athletics helps the cycling.

The talent programme works well – I wouldn’t have got into cycling unless I had been spotted. However, as para sport is growing it’s getting very competitive to get on to a programme. I think there are a lot of good people out there who haven’t been found yet and that UK Sport should try and get out to more areas. I would particularly like cycling to become more diverse; I’m the only one from an ethnic minority on the team. ”

“I would like to see cycling become more diverse; I’m the only one from an ethnic minority on the team”



▲ Kadeena Cox was chosen as flag bearer for the closing ceremony

Paralympic stats

Great Britain and Northern Ireland became the first host nation to better their home Games medal tally

- ParalympicsGB won 64 gold, 39 silver and 44 bronze medals
- ParalympicsGB won 12 per cent of the medals awarded
- Golds were won in 11 sports and medals in 15 sports
- 49 Paralympic records and 27 world records were broken
- Dame Sarah Storey became the most successful British Paralympian ever, with 14 golds
- Andy Lewis became the first ParalympicsGB athlete to win a medal in paratriathlon, with gold in the PT2 class
- ParalympicsGB became the first nation to win medals in all four of the rowing classes
- With 11 medals, the equestrian team remains unbeaten since the sport was introduced at Atlanta in 1996

2. DAVE HENSON

Dave's high risk role of royal engineer search advisor in the British Army led to an accident in Afghanistan in February 2011, where he stood on an improvised explosive device resulting in the loss of both of his legs. Thanks to a top rehabilitation programme he was walking again after 14 weeks, and 10 months after his accident he received his running legs. Henson captained the Invictus Games in 2014, after which he set his sights on Rio, where he claimed bronze in the 200m ambulant IT2 sprints.

“Sport has allowed me to redefine myself as a person: I'm an athlete, not a wounded soldier. Running with blades is a massive buzz and the closest I will ever get to flying. In hard times sport is really good at signposting your life – if you have a race planned then you plan your training, your food, your targets and before long you find that you're planning your life again.

Being a military amputee, I had a lot of support to become an athlete and the charity Help for Heroes gave me my running blades. Sport was integral to my rehabilitation – it was the fun part of each day.



▲ **Dave Henson says running on his blades is “the closest I’ll ever get to flying”**

I set my sights on the Paralympics after the Invictus Games in 2014. Self funded and with no coach, I started going to classified competitions to get exposure. I was spotted at an International Paralympic Committee race in June 2015 and British Athletics invited me to the Anniversary Games at the Olympic stadium.

I met the criteria and was chosen for the World Championships, where I was put on the Podium Potential Programme. This gave me more support, especially medical. I knew how to train, but not how to rest and recover properly, which is important.

There are a whole spectrum of disabilities, so it's difficult for leisure centres to be fully accessible, but a can-do mindset and disability awareness training would help, so staff are confident and qualified to work with people with disabilities. Each facility should have someone with more specialist knowledge who can signpost for expert help. Improved facilities and equipment would also help. Race wheelchairs are expensive, but it would be great for each council to have a couple with generic frames for people to have a go. ”

3. KARE ADENEGAN

Suffering from cerebral palsy, Kare had been excluded from sports for most of her life. Inspired by London 2012, she joined Coventry Godiva athletics club and quickly graduated to elite level. In Rio she won silver in the T34 100m and bronze in the T33/4 400m and T34 800m. Still only 15, she is currently studying for her GCSEs.

“I was inspired by the London 2012 Paralympics and wanted to try a sport. At that point I didn't know which sports were available, but we found out there was a wheelchair racing academy five minutes from where I live and my parents called the coach, who had only just got back from the London Games.

Wheelchair racing is a technical sport but I picked up the technique quickly. To start with I just wanted to enjoy it, but by 2014 I began to take it more seriously and went to the Junior World Championships. I got a world class time, so then I tried for the World Championships.

British Athletics spotted me and put me onto its Futures Programme, with the potential of medalling in Tokyo. This really helps with financial support to get to competitions. Now I'm on the World Class Potential Programme, which covers training costs, transport, physio and psychological support. My next aim is to medal at the 2017 World Championships – a home event.

It's important for all athletics clubs to be open and welcoming to people with disabilities – allowing them to participate and making sure they have accessible gym equipment and ramps to the track.”



▲ Kare Adenegan won a silver and two bronze in wheelchair racing

► Kare Adenegan and teammate Hannah Cockcroft share a proud moment





BIONIC GAMES



Cyathlon is the brainchild of robotics professor Robert Riener



Shortly after the world had been treated to an amazing Paralympics in Rio, another remarkable event involving disabled athletes took place in Switzerland. Tom Walker speaks to Robert Riener, the creator of Cyathlon

Last month, 65 teams from across the world – armed with robotic exoskeletons, electronic prostheses, powered wheelchairs and other assistive technology – arrived in Zurich, Switzerland, to take part in the world's first Cyathlon. Organised by the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich), the event was dubbed the first “bionic Olympics”.

The competition saw severely disabled “pilots” compete in different races using the latest in robotics and prosthesis innovation. In total, competitors took part in six different disciplines, ranging from a powered exoskeleton race to a brain computer interface (BCI) race, in which

pilots used brain signals to control avatars in a specially developed computer game.

As well as a fierce competition – pitting some of the world's leading universities and research institutions against each other – the aim of Cyathlon was to highlight how people with physical disabilities can be helped by tech aids in their everyday activities and what the future of assistive technology could look like.

FEEL THE TECH

Unlike the Paralympics, where athletes are prohibited from using any powered aids, Cyathlon puts the technology at the centre of the competition.



Competitors took part in six separate disciplines using assistive technology



The event is the brainchild of Robert Riener, a professor of rehabilitation robotics at ETH Zurich and the Spinal Cord Injury Center of the Balgrist University Hospital. With a background in mechanical engineering – mixed with a patient-facing role in medicine – he’s been involved in both the development of the technologies and the finding of applications for them in patients’ lives.

Riener says the motivation for organising an event which would highlight the role of technology the lives of disabled people came to him after reading a newspaper article on a revolutionary piece of bionic equipment.

“I first had the idea in 2012, when I saw a guy run up the 103 floors of the Willis

“I first had the idea in 2012, when I saw a guy run up the 103 floors of the Willis tower in Chicago using a prosthetic leg he controlled with his brain”

tower in Chicago using a prosthetic leg he controlled with his brain,” Riener says. “Through my own work, I knew people with conventional knee prostheses have difficulties even walking up stairs, so what this new tech was able to do was amazing.

“That prosthetic was a prototype and the runner did the climb as part of a charity race but it became a big media event and it received a lot of coverage across the world.

Organiser: Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich)

Event location: Swiss Arena, Kloten

Competing teams: Majority of teams were research labs from universities, around 25 per cent of teams represented technology companies.

SPECIAL POPULATIONS

"At the time I was growing frustrated at the deficiencies in the prosthetics technology we could offer patients with missing limbs, so reading an article about a guy running up stairs – showcasing something which could revolutionise assistive device industry and perhaps people's lives – gave me an idea to set up a competition which would do the same and could encourage even more innovation."

CONSULTING MISSION

Due to his role as an active academic at ETH Zurich, Riener was able to rely on a large research network and bounce his ideas for a competition off academics and experts in the technology fields he was planning to include in Cybathlon – such as prosthetics, wheelchair design and brain signal studies.

"I formed small experts groups in the six disciplines I planned to include," he says. "The overall reaction to the concept was overwhelmingly positive from the beginning."

"Having the network of experts helped me to fine tune the concept – to make sure

Functional electrical stimulation bike race

Pilot: People with complete paraplegia

Race: Pilots pedal by artificially stimulating the motor nerves to initiate muscle contraction.

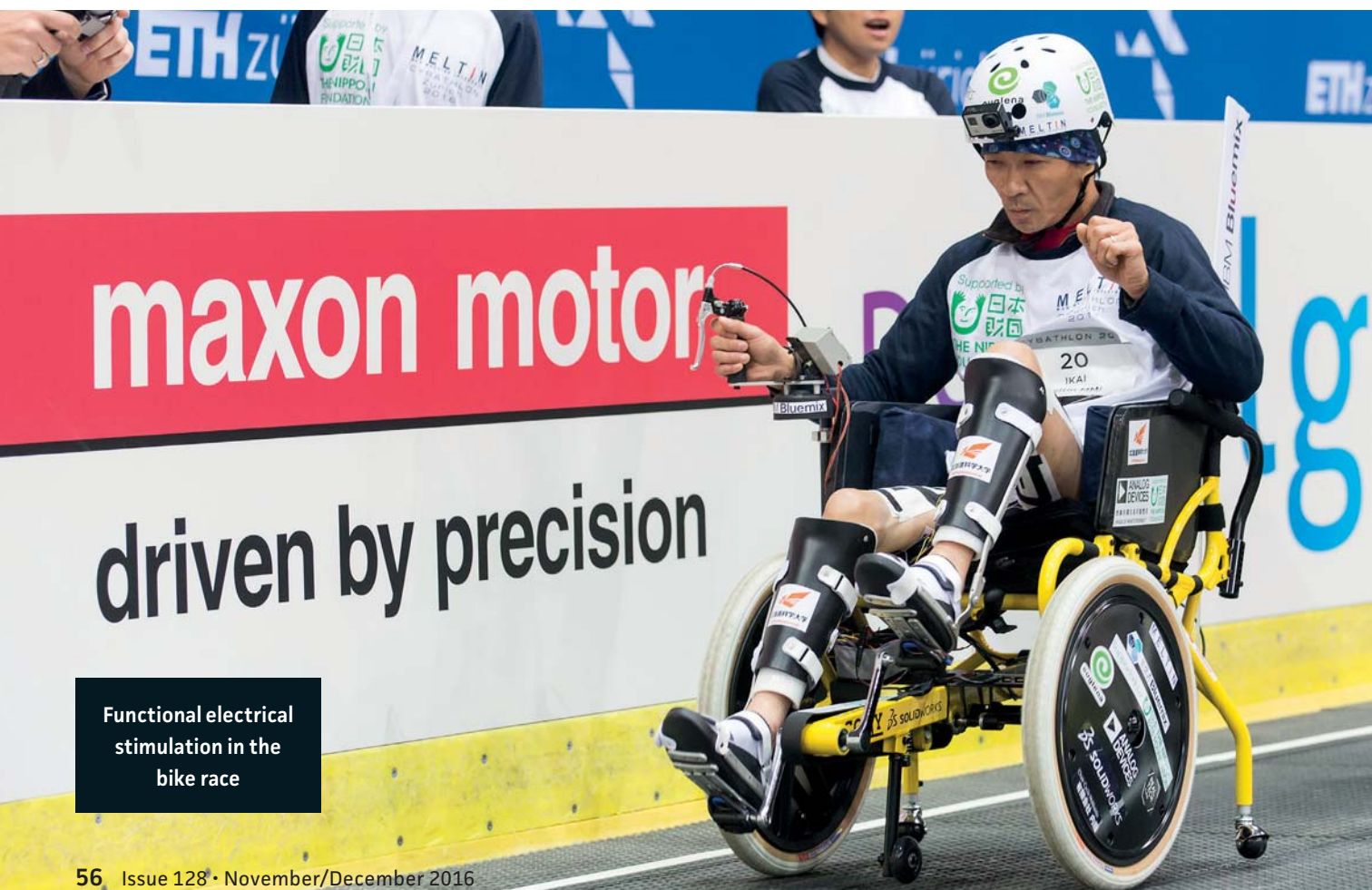
Technology: Functional electrical stimulation (FES) allows paralysed muscles to move again. By placing electrodes on the skin or implanting them, currents are applied to the muscles, making them contract. A person whose nerves from the brain to the leg muscles are disconnected due to a spinal cord injury (SCI) can use an intelligent control device to initiate a movement – such as stepping on a bike pedal.

we included the right disciplines and kept the tasks relevant but competitive."

Riener also consulted those he hoped would benefit the most from the competition – people with disabilities. "When planning the tasks and competition formats, we spoke to disability groups and following their feedback we decided that we wanted to make the Cybathlon races relevant to daily life activities – such as cutting bread, opening a jam jar or carrying a box upstairs," he says.

"While we wanted an event with a competitive edge – and one which showed what technology was capable of – we wanted the 'races' to relate to issues which disabled people struggle with every day."

Riener smiles and adds that a decision was also made to allow a certain form of 'cheating'. "We learned from consultations with people with prostheses that they have to learn 'tricks' to get around issues they face in everyday life," he reveals. "The most simple one would be using their healthy arm – or another body part – for a task with



Functional electrical stimulation in the bike race

Organisers set challenges based on everyday tasks

Powered arm prosthesis race

Pilot: People with one or both arms amputated at or above the elbow

Race: Using powered arm prostheses, pilots complete a number of everyday tasks, such as cutting bread and opening cans.

Technology: The latest arm prostheses are able to transfer the intended motion automatically from the user to the prosthesis – and can even transmit a sense of touch when handling objects.

their prosthetic arm. As we wanted to make Cybathlon as relevant as we could, we decided to allow any 'tricks' people had come up with."

RACE DAY

The two-day competition attracted 65 teams to Zurich and the entrants were a mixture of commercial tech companies, universities and other research-based institutions. Held at the Swiss Arena – the home of the EHC Kloten ice hockey team – the event was sold out and attracted more than 4,000 paying spectators. It was broadcast live in its entirety on a number of German-speaking TV channels.

While some of the technology used by teams at Cybathlon is currently commercially available, the vast majority of the equipment used in the races was making its debut in public. According to Riener, some of the tech on show at Cybathlon has the potential to become pioneering in its field.

He mentions a team from the Chalmers University of Technology (CUT) in Sweden, which used a prosthetic device implanted into the bone of the pilot, with 12 channels of muscle electrodes fixed into the stump of the upper arm. The electrodes allow the device to detect motion intention and

Brain-computer interface (BCI) race

Pilot: People with complete or severe loss of motor function (ie paralysis) at the neck level due to a spinal cord injury, stroke, neurological disease, or another trauma.

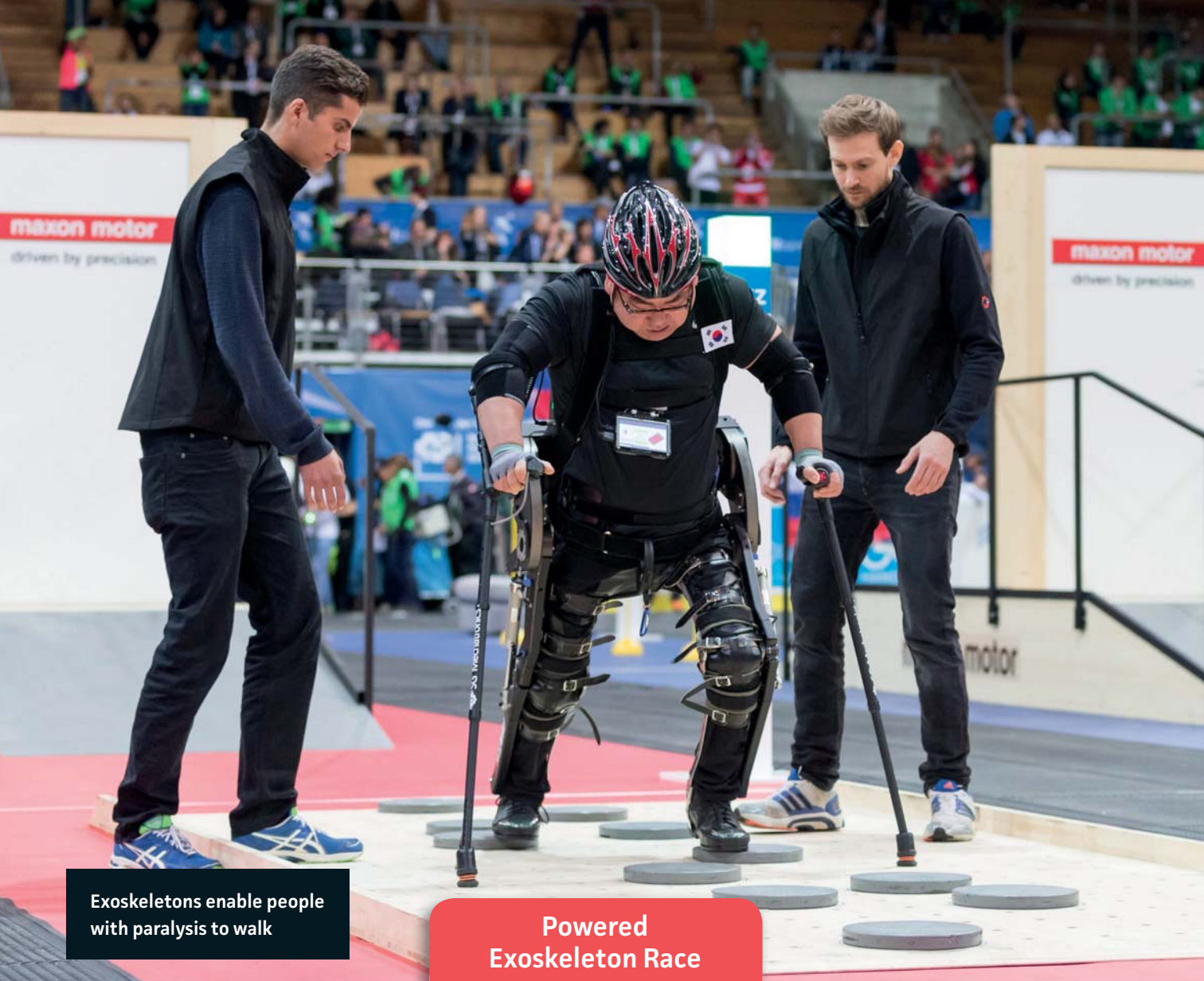
Race: Pilots use brain signals to control avatars in a specially developed computer game.

Technology: The latest brain-

computer interfaces can, quite literally, read your mind. Electroencephalography (EEG) is used to detect brain signals, which are then translated into actions. There are plans to develop this technology further so that in future it will allow people with quadriplegia to control different kinds of devices such as computers, robotic arms, and wheelchairs.

Brain signals are translated into actions using EEG





Exoskeletons enable people with paralysis to walk

Powered Exoskeleton Race

transfer these to the robotic hand, from where it can be controlled by the pilot.

"It's a novel kind of motion intention detection, which still needs to be improved, but it has great potential," he says. "Furthermore, the osseointegration into the bone provides a better connection and guidance of the artificial limb, and it prevents the usual problems of socket-stump connection – such as pain, sweating, movement and loosening."

Developing new technologies such as the one showcased by CUT is not cheap and the level of investment made by the teams in taking part in Cybathlon has been impressive. Imperial College London, for example, sent five teams to Zurich, along with three scientists and more than 20 members of staff who had helped train the pilots over the past two years.

Pilot: People with complete paraplegia

Race: Using an exoskeleton, pilots negotiate an obstacle course consisting of typical everyday tasks such as climbing stairs or sitting down on a chair.

Technology: Exoskeletons are wearable, motorised supports (orthoses) which allow, for example, people with paraplegia to walk again. The use of these devices is still rare; they are currently mainly used for physiotherapy in hospitals. Exoskeletons increase the patients' mobility, which consequently improves their overall health.

“Seeing people overcome their difficulties with technology was incredible. People who have been wheelchair bound for years can now stand up and walk thanks to exoskeletons”

Imperial wasn't the only one to invest heavily either – Riener says many of the universities spent more than £250,000 on developing their technology and taking part.

ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENTS

A seven strong team from the University of Essex took part in the BCI Race.

Led by PhD student Ana Matran-Fernande and piloted by David Rose – paralysed from



▲ Amputees used active prosthetics which are powered by motors

the shoulders down in a diving accident 29 years ago – the BrainStormers team was set up exclusively for Cybathlon. “We have a brain/computer interface group at the university and it’s not the first time members of the lab have participated in a project together,” says Matran-Fernandez. “Having said that, we’ve never been involved with something as big as this before.”

She adds that the motivation to take part came from Cybathlon’s ultimate aim – to showcase and encourage new technologies which could help disabled people in their everyday lives. “I read about Cybathlon on Twitter and suggested our BCI group should take part in the competition,” she says.

“I believe in the objectives of Cybathlon: to raise awareness of BCI and other technologies in the general public – but also among those who need them,” she said.

BrainStormers finished third in the BCI race, bringing home one of the coveted medals. While Matran-Fernandez was delighted by the “on-the-field” success, the true satisfaction, she says, came from

witnessing the transformative effect technology can have on people’s lives.

“Seeing them overcome their difficulties with technology was incredible. People who’ve been wheelchair-bound for years can now stand up and walk thanks to exoskeletons. I hope researchers and manufacturers realise what is needed and start making assistive technologies that are useful and affordable.

NEXT STEPS

Riener says the success of Cybathlon’s means that the first edition will not be the last. There are already talks underway to repeat the event “in around four years’ time”. Plans are also underway to have regional or national Cybathlons before that.

“We’ve already had enquiries from Imperial College London and other institutions in Dubai and Japan about them hosting their own Cybathlons,” Riener says. “The decision over how exactly where and when we will host future Cybathlons will be made later this year, but I can say for certain that we

Powered Leg Prosthesis Race

Pilot: People with above-knee amputations, including through-knee amputations.

Race: Pilots had to solve six tasks, ranging from climbing stairs to walking on an incline.

Technology: A new generation of prostheses – some of which are powered by motors and described as “active” – are set to replace heavy and cumbersome “passive” ones and can be controlled accurately thanks to innovative technologies.

will have another, large-scale event similar to the one we just had in the next four years.

“For the next we are aiming for more teams, more pilots, more disciplines, more audience and we’re looking to extend it from a weekend to a week-long event. But whatever the format will be, it is crucial that we keep the core idea of Cybathlon intact – to promote the development of assistive products and to reduce the barriers between people with disabilities, product developers and the general public.” ●

Better sports facilities deliver better results

Investment in sport across the UK since the London 2012 Olympics helped Team GB achieve the best results ever at Rio 2016. Imagine what Britain's athletes could accomplish at Tokyo 2020 if that investment continues.

Previously, investment in high-performance sport was minimal, and elite athletes received little financial support to help them achieve their goals. But National Lottery Funding has changed that, and access to grants and support through the programmes it runs have played a huge part both in helping the UK's athletes improve and in the success Team GB achieved at Rio 2016. Throughout the last four years, the government and UK Sport have invested £274m.

Here at O'Brien's we have witnessed what having better sports facilities means for communities, schools and universities, with the many sports pitch projects we have delivered across the UK.

SOME OF THE PROJECTS WE'VE DELIVERED INCLUDE:

A synthetic "Mondo" 6 lane 400m IAAF and UK Athletics track with associated field facilities and a full-size FIFA-compliant pitch on the infield at The Eastwood Academy and they're thrilled with it, saying: "We were very impressed with O'Brien Contractors from start to finish. They assisted us with ideas in our design phase and were not only timely in their completion, but the quality of the work was outstanding. We have had many people visit our facility and have been continually informed that our track is of a superior quality to that of major international stadiums."

We partnered with Notts Sports, a

leading specialist in the design, advice and supply of artificial turf for multi-sports and playgrounds, for the installation of a 6,052m² 3G FIFA 1 star compliant surface at Warden Park Academy. Jonathan Beck, buildings and facilities manager, said: "I just wanted to drop you a line to say what a pleasure it has been to work and collaborate with your 3G site team at the academy for the duration of the build over the summer. They are a great bunch of people, exceptionally hard-working and a real credit to you and your company."

FINDING A TRUSTED PARTNER

In order to maximise your budget and deliver high-quality sports facilities, you need to engage with a specialist whose team of experts has a proven track record in designing and building



O'Brien delivers synthetic and natural turf pitches for rugby, football and hockey

An investment in quality sports facilities helps athletes achieve better results



sports projects to a diverse range of exacting client specifications.

O'Brien Sports delivers natural sports pitches used for rugby, football and cricket. It also supplies synthetic and multi-use games area pitches, with surfaces suitable for just about every sport and user – from professional sports teams to schools and communities.

OUR SERVICES

O'Brien Sports offers a full range of sports pitch services, including:

- Full design and build construction projects
- Synthetic and multi-use games area (MUGA) pitches
- Pitch renovations
- Natural sports pitches
- Total solutions for sports pitches
- Infrastructure, including access roads and car parks



An example of an O'Brien synthetic turf football pitch



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Artificial future

The RFU is spending £50m on 100 artificial pitches to create a legacy after hosting the 2015 Rugby World Cup. Matthew Campelli talks to development director Steve Grainger

Last month, the Rugby Football Union (RFU) published its 2015/16 annual report, with the document painting a picture of an organisation that is surprisingly healthy from a financial point of view – particularly for a sports governing body.

While England was dumped out of last year's Rugby World Cup during the early stages, hosting the competition contributed to record revenues for the RFU.

The NGB banked £407.1m over the year, almost doubling last year's revenue. Of that total, £228.1m can be directly attributed to hosting the World Cup.

As a result of the bulging coffers and the imperative to create a legacy after the tournament, the grassroots of

the game is due to benefit. The RFU increased its rugby development fund by 5 per cent to £34.1m, and has just started the rollout on its ambitious £50m artificial grass pitch programme for clubs and community sites.

WORLD CUP LEGACY

Steve Grainger, the RFU's director of rugby development, is overseeing the project – the largest-ever infrastructure programme for the grassroots game.

While there will always be some debate over the playability of artificial grass over natural turf, Grainger is in no doubt that the installation of the former at several sites around the country is the only way to accommodate

▼ **Grainger aims to double the number of female rugby players**





Steve Grainger believes the installation of artificial pitches is the only way to accommodate increased participation

“We’re determined to grow the game, but we need to think differently about where we play the game”

the RFU’s goals for increased participation and counter the “Great British weather”, which is predicted to become wetter in the upcoming years.

“We were looking to do something fairly major on the back of staging the Rugby World Cup, and we did a lot of lead-up work and attempts to grow participation,” he tells *Sports Management*. “We wanted to put down some foundations now for what we hope will be an extended development period over the next four years.

“Winters will be warmer and wetter, and after assessing natural turf pitches across the country we found we’re struggling to cope with current participation levels. We’re determined to grow the game, but we need to think differently about where we play the game.”

The £50m pot will go towards two types of pitch: 60 club pitches that the RFU will fund completely, and 40

community pitches to be jointly funded by the RFU and a partner, either a local authority or other governing body.

Construction on the first three club pitches has begun in Preston, Aylesbury and Weston-super-Mare, and Grainger reveals that the RFU has now identified locations for the second round of club sites.

“We have an idea of where we think demand is, based on population, and also things like the volume of local schools that are either playing rugby now or that we are targeting to get involved in the next few years. The bigger the volume in schools, the greater the demand to play outside of schools in the surrounding clubs.

“There’s no point going into an area where there is no rugby culture and no history. But the perfect site for us would be an area where there is a new level of interest in rugby and quite a lot of latent demand.”

INVESTMENT CRITERIA

However, not just any club is able to throw its hat into the ring. Clubs will have to own their piece of land – or at least have a very long lease – so the RFU can “take a sub-lease and capitalise the investment”. They also need to have “ancillary facilities”, such as a reasonably-sized car park and basic clubhouse and changing facilities.



COMMUNITY REACH

The community pitch scheme – dubbed the rugby share model by the RFU – will work slightly differently, and is not in such an advanced stage as the club pitch initiative.

Grainger says the RFU will search for places where exposure to rugby “hasn’t been huge”, but where the game still holds enough interest to attract local people to get involved and join their local club.

Finding the right partner is also crucial, as the RFU will only lay down a third of the investment, with the rest coming from other organisations.

Local authorities, higher education institutes, professional clubs and other governing bodies are expected to take an interest in the scheme – although for its investment the RFU expects at least a third of all playing time to be devoted to rugby.

▲ The RFU has researched the weather in different parts of the country

The RFU is in the process of developing an agreement with the Football Association to partner on the latter’s Parklife artificial grass pitch hub project, which will see a number of facilities built in inner city areas to stimulate football participation. The pair are working on a project in Liverpool, which will see a purpose-built rugby pitch grouped together with football surfaces to capitalise on the high volume of people it is expected to attract.

Grainger is keen to stress, however, that local authorities, who are having their budgets cut would potentially have the most to gain from partnering.

“I think the partnership is probably very attractive to local authorities,” he suggests. “Those who perhaps can’t afford the cost of a pitch, but may be looking at putting a third of the cost in themselves, and finding other local organisations to contribute the final third.”

Attracting different demographics is an important factor in the RFU’s strategy, and the body is expecting to gain an extra 16,000 participants as a result of the increased playing opportunities the new artificial pitches will bring. Of that impressive figure, Grainger is confident that a significant number will come from ethnic minority or deprived backgrounds, and that a significant number will be female.

“This is a long-term aim to see a greater spread of rugby being played on both natural turf and artificial pitches”



Increasing the number of playing rugby is of paramount importance to the grassroots chief, who is aiming to double the current number of 26,000 regular female participants over the next couple of years.

“We have a number of target groups,” says Grainger. “We have a significant number of women and girls playing in certain areas of the country, but we also hope to retain a lot more players in the 16-24 year-old bracket. That age group is critical for us to engage with.”

Retaining players and limiting drop-out rates is seen by many as the most challenging element of managing participation, and Grainger is convinced that the nature of artificial grass pitches – which can be played on with greater frequency than grass pitches – will allow players to take part at different times of the week that suit them, rather than being limited to weekend matches.

GREAT BRITISH WEATHER

Weather also has a bearing, and Grainger is quick to point out that research done by the RFU is not limited to population demographics, but also focuses on the weather conditions of different parts of the country.

“If you look at the statistics coming out of the Met Office it’s probably no surprise that the west of

▲ The RFU expects its new pitches to attract 16,000 new players

the country is receiving significantly more rainfall. This can be seen from the rugby heartlands of Devon and Cornwall all the way to the north-west.

“One thing we tend to get in the north is a greater percentage of one-pitch clubs, whereas down south you tend to get more two-, three- and four-pitch clubs. If we want to grow in the north and grow around a club with only one pitch, then opportunities surrounding this are going to be much more limited.”

The first round of artificial pitches located in Preston, Aylesbury and Weston-super-Mare are scheduled to open for the end of November/early-December, and Grainger is confident that the increase in artificial surfaces, and their perceived benefits, will be accepted and taken on board by the wider rugby community.

“If this investment proves successful we’ll do more,” he explains. “This is a long-term aim to see a greater spread of rugby played on both natural turf and artificial pitches.”

“In the future, when clubs start to think about resurfacing or expanding and enhancing their pitches and facilities, they’ll think of artificial turf or some of the hybrids coming onto the market. It’s part of the transformation programme which is inevitably going to happen over the next couple of decades.” ●

BREAKING BOUNDARIES

In 1994 genocide ripped Rwanda apart. Two decades on cricket is being used to heal the still-raw wounds. Matthew Campelli and Kim Megson report



Women's cricket is big in Rwanda. Of the 15,000- 20,000 regular players in the country, 5,000 are women

“The inspiration for the project came from my father who loved Rwanda and saw how cricket was being used to build communities” Alby Shale

Just over 20 years ago, around one million Rwandans were killed over a 100-day period during one of the worst instances of genocide in history. The nation's Tutsi ethnic group was almost totally wiped out, with 70 per cent murdered by the Hutu government between April and July 1994.

On top of the mass killing, around two million Rwandans were displaced, and the nation has been trying to recover ever since.

To heal the divisions, people from the world of cricket have stepped in and the sport now forms the basis of one of the most inspiring sport development projects in the world.

FATHER AND SON

Former British Army officer and businessman Christopher Shale, who worked on social action projects in the African nation for several years, saw first hand the power of cricket in reconciling the different ethnic groups, and decided a purpose-built facility would develop the sport and create a positive atmosphere.

Backed by his friend, the former prime minister, David Cameron, Shale began

working under the banner of the Rwanda Cricket Stadium Foundation (RCSF) on an idea for the facility, which would include an educational hub, as well as a much-needed centre for free HIV testing.

After Shale's untimely death in 2011 his son Alby picked up the mantle, and now the project is close to completion.

“The inspiration for the project came from my father who loved Rwanda and saw how cricket was being used to build communities,” says Alby. “He went out to Rwanda because he was asked by David Cameron to set up a project with international development, and Rwanda was chosen as it was an area screaming out for some assistance.”

Ahead of a December fundraising event – in which Cameron will be present alongside England legends and RCSF patrons Michael

Vaughan, David Gower and Clare Connor – Alby explains that over the past four years close to £1m has been raised, with £250,000 now needed to complete the scheme.

He reveals that construction is well underway and due to be finished early next year. If all goes to plan, an opening ceremony will be held next October (2017).



Alby Shale, third from left, helps break ground on the stadium his father envisaged before his death in 2011

The pride of Rwanda



The new stadium has been designed with sustainability and community in mind, providing a home for cricket and a range of other sports

Despite the burgeoning interest in cricket, facilities are lacking in the country, and so the Rwanda Cricket Stadium Foundation (RCSF) was founded to establish a dedicated home for the sport on a 4.5 hectare plot on the outskirts of the capital, Kigali.

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

Architecture studio Light Earth Designs will design the stadium, which will be made with local materials and sustainable building practices.

“The project is innovative from the point of view of both sport and

architecture,” Light Earth Design founding partner Michael Ramage explains. “It is very important for the development of the sport in the country, and will allow for fixtures that will generate a lot of interest both within Rwanda and around the world.

“It will be built by Rwandans for Rwandans. It will be something the entire country can take pride in.

“The inspiration comes largely from two places: the green rolling hills of Rwanda and the trace of a bouncing cricket ball. That has influenced the shape of the stadium’s three vaults

and the pavilion as they come down a slope between two cricket pitches.”

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

The stadium’s main vaults will be constructed using recycled ceramic tiling and compressed earth blocks.

Many workers will be hired and will learn transferrable building skills.

The facility will contain dressing rooms, a press viewing area, a bar and restaurant and a clubhouse offering free HIV testing for the local community. Spectator seating will extend outside, with green terraces built into the banks on either side of the building, overlooking the two international-standard pitches.

A second phase of development will see a multi-purpose facility added – bringing dormitory accommodation, a swimming pool, gymnasium and six tennis courts to the site.

The facility will be run on a not-for-profit basis, operating a ‘sport for all’ policy to encourage Rwandans of all ages, genders and backgrounds to participate in and enjoy cricket. A training, coaching and support structure will also be introduced by the foundation and the government.

Computer-generated graphics show the planned design of the new stadium



While the stadium will act as a home for the elite level game in Rwanda, Alby stresses the facility's importance to the wider community. Cricket is the fastest-growing sport in Rwanda, but other recreational activities will take place in an adjacent multi-use venue, which will include tennis courts, a swimming pool and a gym.

"Yes, we are creating an elite facility that checks the necessary International Cricket Council (ICC) boxes for hosting international matches, however it was designed to be a free access facility," he says.

"People outside of the cricket fraternity can benefit, and we have forged a partnership with the Surf Survivors Fund, which supports the survivors of genocide, through community projects and reconciliation through sport."

Working with charity Cricket Without Boundaries, RCSF will work with 35,000 urban refugees from the Rwandan capital of Kigali to teach them cricket and promote

“The Rwandan women’s team is a lot more competitive than the men’s team on the international stage”

HIV awareness. They'll also invite cricketers and coaches down to the refugee camps to promote the sport as a medium through which to solve social issues.

RWANDAN WOMEN EXCEL

Although cricket is traditionally viewed as a male game, Alby reveals that the foundation is trying to get as many Rwandan women and girls involved as possible, with current figures already looking encouraging.

Of the 15,000-20,000 regular cricket players in the country, 5,000 are female, and Alby says that the Rwandan women's team is a "lot more competitive than the men's team on the international stage".

Alby adds that the "amazing journey" will be captured on a documentary broadcast by Sky TV next February, and he hopes that the interest will highlight the disparity of resources across the cricketing world.

"Cricket in England is in good hands, but as a global infrastructure I think it leaves a lot to be desired," he says. "You've got England, Australia and India who control the game and a lot of the time the minnows of the sport get forgotten. Our patrons are passionate about trying to help out a country that has a lot of enthusiasm for sport, but just doesn't have enough representation on the world stage to get funding and infrastructure." ●



The fundraising has used staged imagery to highlight the players' current lack of facilities suitable for playing cricket

Soccerex: the report

The first public appearance of FIFA's new secretary general built the intrigue at this year's event, as Manchester welcomed the football world for a few short days. Matthew Campelli reports

The Manchester Central Convention Complex was home to the Soccerex event



Manchester felt like the centre of the football universe when the Soccerex Global Convention rolled into town. Some of the industry's biggest names were in attendance, projecting a positive vision for the sport.

However, on the second day, a *Daily Telegraph* sting revealed that then England manager Sam Allardyce had been caught discussing ways to get around Football Association (FA) rules, with undercover journalists posing as businessmen. Several hours later he had been sacked.

The shocking turn of events threatened to overshadow the conference somewhat, although the timing of the FA's swift decision to remove Allardyce ironically coincided with a wide-ranging panel session about the importance of good governance in football.

FIFA'S NEW LEADER

Governance, of course, has been a focus in football over the last 18 months, since the FIFA corruption scandal, which still looms over the beleaguered organisation, despite extensive personnel changes at the top.

In something of a coup for Soccerex, FIFA's new secretary general, Fatma Samoura, opened the conference with her first speech since her appointment earlier this year. She delivered an address packed with assurances of good governance, and the abolition of the 'old boys club' culture which ultimately brought the body close to the abyss just over 18 months ago.

While there was palpable goodwill towards Samoura – who spent 21 years working for the United Nations –

the general feeling was one of cautious optimism, tinged by scepticism when it emerged that FIFA was going to disband its anti-racism taskforce hours before her talk.

Samoura, to her credit, stood her ground when questioned about the decision, explaining that the taskforce had "fulfilled its mandate" of discovering the problems with racism in football. FIFA is now in a position to tackle those issues, she added. Time will tell.

A substantial section of Samoura's speech was devoted to the development of grassroots football – an area that has been neglected due to bad "cultural and institutional behaviours", and a focus on the lucrative elite game.

A focus on the development of women's football was also a key part of her address, and FIFA has since crystalised the ambition by unveiling a plan to impose mandatory funding



New FIFA secretary general Fatma Samoura opened the conference





6 Football for social cohesion and equality was a much discussed topic at the conference 9

for the growth of women's grassroots football for its member associations. FIFA wants 60m women to be involved in football by the year 2026.

SOCIAL COHESION

Samoura returned to the stage later in the day to present the first FIFA Diversity Awards, alongside former Netherlands international Clarence Seedorf and ex-Aston Villa midfielder Thomas Hitzlsperger, who came out as gay shortly after retiring from professional football.

The inaugural award was won by Slum Soccer, the Indian NGO which uses football to improve the lives of marginalised groups in Indian society.

Football for social cohesion and equality was a much-discussed topic at the conference, and the impression was that the organisers rightly wanted to demonstrate the healing effects of football, to stem the avalanche of negative press the sport has experienced in the recent past. A number of companies that operate in this space were represented, including Football for Peace, Football Beyond Borders and Street Child United.

The latter brought along its patron, the former Arsenal and Brazil midfielder Gilberto Silva, to tell delegates

about its mission to bring attention to the lives of children who live on the streets, with no identity, no means of getting an identity and, as a result, no future. The organisation creates campaigns based around large international sporting events, like the FIFA World Cup, to increase awareness and attention around the plight of street children worldwide.

Street Child's co-founder John Wroe revealed that the organisation was launching a Street Child World Cup, to be held in Moscow in 2018 in order to coincide with the FIFA World Cup. It will be the third event of its kind after previous editions were held in Brazil and South Africa.

INTERNATIONAL FEEL

Manchester's Convention Centre was awash with exhibitors throughout the three days, and the general themes emerging were fan engagement, technology and analytics, although the diversity of firms showing off their products and services demonstrated the numerous corners of society that football touches.

Bespoke tailors, cuddly toy makers and even a wine company established by Spain and Barcelona legend Andres Iniesta were in attendance, drumming up business.

▲ **Fatma Samoura (third from left) presents the first FIFA Diversity Award to Indian charity Slum Soccer**

Exhibitors came from far and wide; Spain's top professional association football division La Liga was set up with an interactive pod, while Italy's Serie A was represented as well. A delegation from China was in attendance, which gave a presentation on the growing importance of football in the nation, as well as detailing the numerous opportunities that exist there for businesses involved in football infrastructure and development.

The international feel of the convention was emphasised by the presence of the Department of International Trade – formerly UK Trade and Investment – which still has its £1tn export target by 2020 intact despite Britain's decision to leave the European Union.

To hit the ambitious target, the departmental body will be hopeful that British companies can successfully capitalise on the thirst of countries such as China, India and Qatar to develop the football infrastructure they need to achieve their desired outcomes.

Stadium architects featured prominently at the event, including Idom – the Spanish architects of Athletic Bilbao's new San Mames Stadium – and Hamilton Sports Design – which redesigned Northern Ireland's The National Football Stadium at Windsor Park.

Soccerex also provided Atletico Madrid the chance to show off its plans for a new stadium. Javier Martinez, the club's managing director of global business development, gave a virtual tour of the 66,000-capacity stadium, which is due to be open in time for the 2017/18 season. The venue, designed by Spanish firm Cruz y Ortiz Arquitectos, will have a fanzone, museum and videomapping facade, said Martinez.

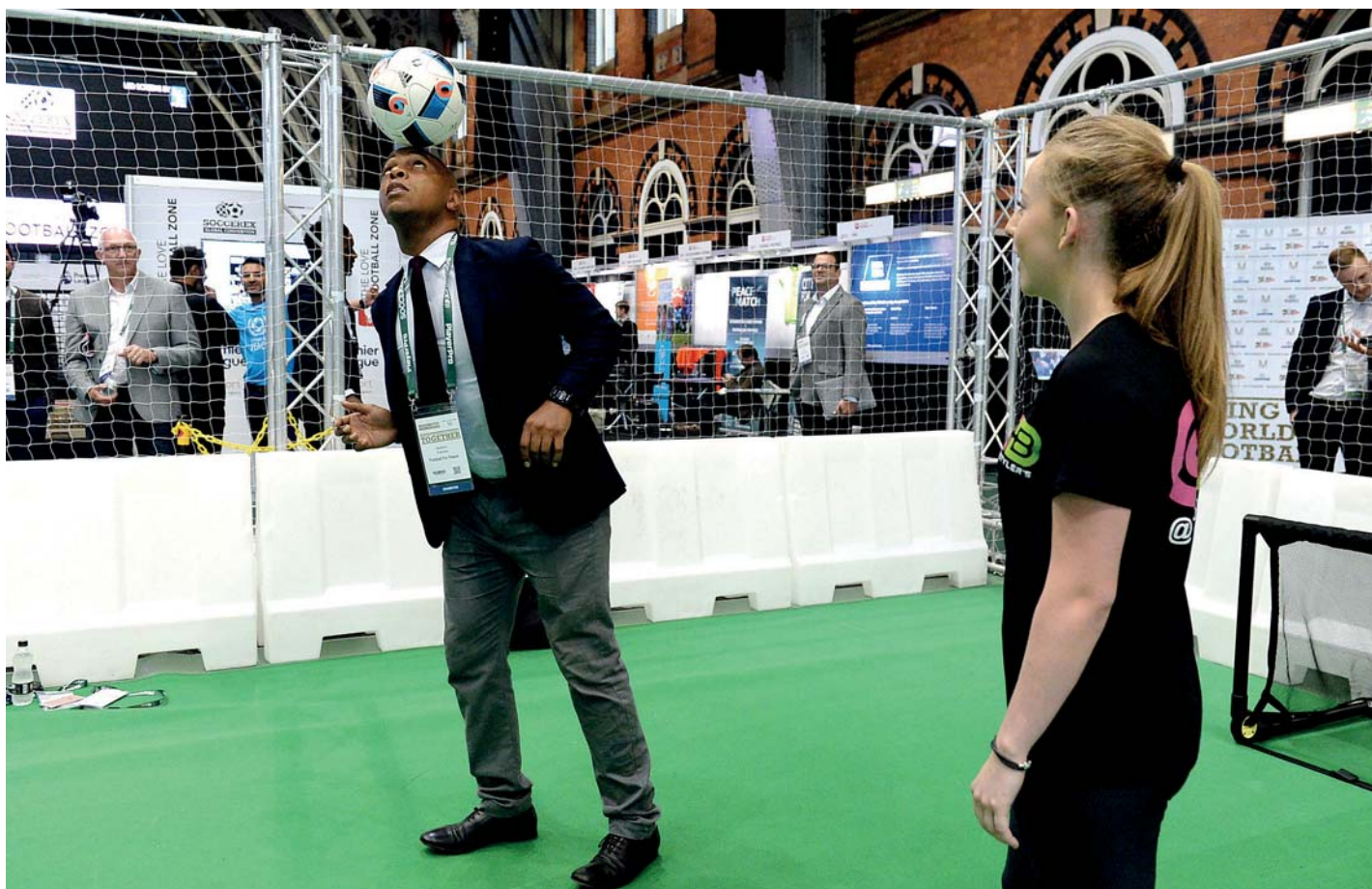
MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

Despite all the talk of corruption, the vast amounts of money that make the sport so ripe for unscrupulous behaviour also served to demonstrate its health.

While the England manager was being brought down for his perceived greed, the Soccerex Convention presented the ways in which money was benefitting the game, such as improved infrastructure, social inclusion schemes and small business prosperity.

The atmosphere at the event was one of opportunity – of football turning a corner following a turbulent period. And while many in attendance will remain cynical, the organisers of Soccerex will surely be pleased with the image that football projected inside the convention centre, in spite of what was happening outside it. ●

▼ **The exhibition hall was full of football-related products, services and innovation**



Game changers

Take a look at the technology and innovation currently making waves across the world of sport

Moving outside the box

The ATP World Tour Finals have been held at London's O2 arena every year since 2009, but when venue operator AEG added an F&B unit in a space traditionally used for the annual tournament's temporary infrastructure, a new plan was needed for this year's event.

"We had to work around a reduced footprint," says Adam Hogg, ATP's event director. The answer was, quite literally, to go outside the box. "The solution was to build a lot of the infrastructure outside."

Together with AEG and long-term partner Arena Group, ATP decided on a three-storey, 13m high building with 4,400sq m of space.

The new I-Novation construction comprises two separate buildings. One houses a players' lounge and

► **Grahame Muir,**
Arena Group CEO



▲ The two temporary structures are separated by a practice court

restaurant, while the other incorporates a hospitality space.

According to Grahame Muir, CEO of Arena Group UK, this new construction could change the way temporary structures are deployed at major sporting events.

"We've designed and delivered

something quite special," Muir said.

"It fills a niche in the market, where clients require a tall structure, higher roof loadings and increased thermal and acoustic properties. It delivers a permanent feel and does not resemble a traditional frame structure."

● www.barclaysatpworldtourfinals.com

Money for walking

US-based activity tracker supplier Misfit has teamed up with digital crypto-currency provider Bitwalking to make it possible for people to earn money while getting physically active.

The partnership, announced on 26 October, will bring currency mining to wearable devices by allowing Misfit users to generate 'walking



dollars' (W\$) directly from their devices.

This digital currency can then be spent at the Bitwalking Store and third party partners or can be traded with other users.

Misfit is the first wearable technology brand to become Bitwalking-certified.

"Your steps convert into currency; a step is worth the same value no matter who

◀ **Users can earn digital currency by walking**

► **Sport engagement at an amateur level will rapidly change over the coming years**

or where you are," said Nissan Bahar, CEO of Bitwalking.

Preston Moxcey, general manager of Misfit, added: "Incentives work – and they can help people stay motivated to be active. Bitwalking amplifies the impact Misfit can have through innovations in mobile currency."

● www.bitwalking.com



▲ Each system is designed to fit the athlete's body

A good night's sleep

Ensuring professional athletes rest and recover properly has been taken to a new level by a partnership between National Basketball Association (NBA) team Dallas Mavericks and US-based "performance bedding" specialist Bedgear.

Bedgear has worked with all Mavericks players and members of coaching staff to provide personalised performance sleep systems with specially-designed bedding and pillows to fit each athlete's sleep position and body frame.

This is a first for a basketball team – whose members are traditionally

taller than average. Each system has been researched in order to find an ideal fabric for a player's needs, along with the best size, thickness, fluffiness and firmness.

Mark Cuban, owner of the Dallas Mavericks, said: "We're always looking for innovators that will help enhance the Mavs' performance – whether it's physical, mental or some combination of both."

"Sleep is such an important part of an athlete's life, especially when we travel and have back-to-back games, and I'm excited to see how the guys react to the products and programme."

● www.bedgear.com

Professional tracking for grassroots players

A Netherlands-based tech startup aims to make professional-level performance data accessible for all amateur football players by combining a wearable tracker with a mobile app.

DashTag is based on players wearing a small sensor, which measures real-time biomechanical and positional data such as speed, mileage, time, acceleration, energy level and position. The DashTag mobile app then connects with the sensor, recovers the data and displays it in an easy-to-understand format.

Players can analyse, compare and share their performance indicators and scores with fellow players, coaches and



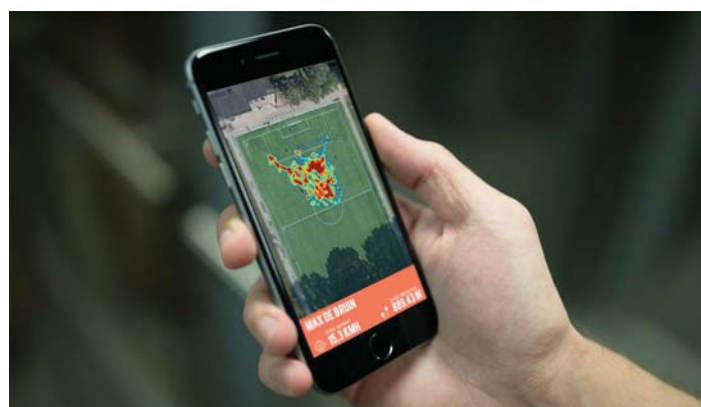
▲ Epcó Berger, DashTag CEO

friends via social media – in the same way that professional players are able to.

"Sport engagement will rapidly change – technology will connect the sport stats and relevant info of each individual player at every level," said DashTag CEO and founder Epcó Berger. "With DashTag we want to play a leading role."

DashTag recently secured seed investment of €250,000 following a successful campaign on

● www.getdashtag.com



The DashTag app allows players to share scores and performance indicators with teammates and coaches



⚡ **Sport engagement at an amateur level will rapidly change over the coming years**

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- Are focussed and have the ability to demonstrate the highest levels of swimming teaching
- Hold a current ASA level 2 teaching qualification (Qualified for adults and children) and are up to date on current and modern teaching techniques
- Work well as a team and as an individual.

* Everyone Active is an equal opportunities employer and an Investors in People organisation, who are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. All applicants will be required to undertake checks and references prior to appointment.

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ACTIVE

Feel better for it



Head of Leisure and Operational Services

LOCATION Lichfield, Staffordshire, UK **SALARY** Up to £60,000

One council, one team, a million and one opportunities...

We are changing the way we operate and are striving to become 'one council and one team' and for the right candidate there are a million and one opportunities to make a positive difference to the way we work and the communities we serve.

Our management restructure has been designed to empower our new Heads of Service to drive forward their wider portfolios of responsibility and our 'one council' approach.

This role will make a significant contribution to achieving our vision, providing opportunities for our residents to improve their health and ensuring Lichfield District excels as a clean, green and welcoming place to live and work.

In this role you will be accountable for the effective and efficient delivery of a significant range of our front line services, with a combined budget of £7.7m and over 110 fte staff. Your focus will be upon maximising commercial opportunities for generating income and reducing costs, including the implementation of the outsourcing of the council's leisure centres, with this role being envisaged as leading any retained client side function.

Your key service delivery challenges will include:

- Achieving the objectives set out in the Physical Activity and Sports Strategy;
- Ensuring positive partnership working with other bodies and key stakeholders to deliver comprehensive arts, sports and leisure programmes;
- Review the operation of the council's parks and open spaces, and its streetscene activities, to achieve efficiencies whilst ensuring a clean, green and welcoming environment;
- Ensuring compliance with statutory and legislative requirements relating to vehicle/fleet management and service delivery;
- Ensuring joined up working across the whole team and with partners and neighbouring authorities where appropriate, to maximise efficiencies, and;
- Managing the relationship with the Lichfield Garrick Theatre ensuring it plays a continuing role within the cultural scene and contributes to the local economy.

You will have substantial experience of leading on the provision of leisure and cultural services, with a track record of developing and implementing strategies that have reduced

costs but delivered positive outcomes for customers. Your high level of commercial acumen will be backed up with a proven track record of generating income whilst reducing costs in an innovative manner.

You will be able to demonstrate excellent leadership and change management skills and experience, with the ability to motivate and inspire teams through significant service reviews, ideally including the consideration and/or implementation of alternative service delivery mechanisms.

For an informal discussion, contact:
Colin Williams at West Midlands
Employers on 07785 727 306

Closing date: 19 Dec 2016

Lichfield
district council

APPLY NOW

<http://lei.sr?a=t7q6v>

Engagement Manager (multiple posts)**Location:** London or homeworking, UK**Salary:** £37-47k dependent on experience***Closing date:** 02 January 2017

The Football Foundation is the country's largest sports charity. It funds the improvement of public sports facilities across the country – especially grassroots football facilities – with investment provided by the Premier League, The FA and the Government, via Sport England. The Foundation is responsible for the delivery of over £60m of funding each year, in support of a new 'National Football Facilities Strategy', including the exciting Parklife Football Hubs programme. To ensure that the best projects are identified and developed, we're now seeking a team of 'Engagement Managers' to sit with the Grant Management team.

As an Engagement Manager, you will be working within a designated region, and in close liaison with our experienced teams of Technical Project Managers and Grant Managers. You will be making sure that the right projects are identified against 'Local Plans for Football', which will have the greatest impact in the areas that really need them. You'll then work with the key



project stakeholders to develop the proposal to the point of submission of an application.

This role will require you to use your advanced sports development knowledge, coupled with your astute business planning and negotiation skills, to ensure that projects not only meet the new strategy, but also give the best return on the investment.

Two of the available positions will be funded by the Premier League. These roles will be primarily focussed upon Professional Club Community Foundations/Trusts, and ensuring that a responsive support and advisory service is provided to those seeking to improve existing or develop new facilities to support their development programmes.

This is an exciting opportunity within the Football Foundation to be able to guide and shape facility projects within grassroots football. The successful applicants will be used to managing complex, multi-stakeholder projects working both independently as well as part of a team. They must also be willing to go the extra mile in driving plans forwards to ensure project success. In return, you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that you've made a difference in the national game.

Successful applicants will be assigned a role with regional coverage, so homeworking will be a key element, unless London based.

The closing date for applications 2nd January 2017. Interviews will be held on 10th and 11th January 2017.

* Appointments are generally at the stated minimum but will depend on qualifications and experience specific to the role requirements.

Apply now: <http://lei.sr?a=Z9D9P>

Senior Watersports & Beach Supervisor**Location:** Jeddah, Saudi Arabia**Salary:** IRO UK £3,500/month TAX FREE**Free accomm, annual flight, transport, 30- days vacation, medical care & all visa costs****Taxation - No local taxes****Start date - ASAP but 4-6 weeks acceptable****VISA Required but completed by LEISUREFORCE for you in London**

A senior level trained RYA Windsurfing Instructor / Supervisor with some experience of Marina operations to at least a supervisory level. Overall, a relevant career total of minimum of 8-10 years work experience. Other popular watersports coaching skills are welcomed such as sailing, windsurfing etc.

Candidates with Beach / Open Water RLSS Lifesaving status will be given priority shortlisting. The appointment will require some "hands-on" duties of Watersports

Instruction & plenty of checking, monitoring & staff training onsite with junior staff if deemed necessary. So in summary, a very pro-active role.



Any additional European language skills are welcomed to communicate well with the international community altho' everyone speaks English. Overall, your customer care skills will need to be of the highest standards to satisfy a very demanding community.

Join many other candidates from LEISUREFORCE placed there several years ago including your General Manager. At least 2- top class work references will be required at shortlisted stage.

This Recreation program is operated for the dedicated access & use of a state of the art international University with a population of over 7,500- residents from all over the world including 1,900+ children. So the Recreation & sports program is probably the best in the entire country in diversity & highest operational standards.

Facilities include a 5,000- seated stadium with natural grass playing area, 5- grass + 3- Astroturf multi-sports outdoor field areas, 70- playground sites, Climbing Wall, 18- hole Golf course, Marina & private Beach, 2- full Leisure Centres, Rackets Club & a Library.

The University borders the shores of the Red Sea & so if your personal interests include SCUBA & sailing, then you will have a great time on your day off.

*** ALL SUITABLE CANDIDATES SHORTLISTED WILL BE REQUIRED TO COMPLETE A SKYPE-CALL INTERVIEW OR DIRECT MEETING IF IN THE UK.**

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