

# LEISURE management

ISSUE 1 2009

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On beating the credit crunch

## GREENSPACE

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How Abu Dhabi is giving  
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improve every strategy

improve the bottom line



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# OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

**W**elcome to the new year edition of Leisure Management – 2009 looks likely to be a challenging one for everyone and, in this edition, we've set out to bring you positive news and case studies which examine how operators in both public and private sectors are keeping their projects and businesses on track.

Finding money for capital projects will be more of a challenge this year for most operators, as many councils work to sort out their local investments and private operators grapple with their banks and investors to find funds for growth.

The good news is that we've got ten solid years behind us as an industry, and have built up a phenomenal amount of momentum in terms of development. From an infrastructure point of view, the industry has never been in better shape, and the range of facilities on offer is now world class in most sectors of the industry. Our development pipeline is packed with new projects which will be coming on stream in the coming weeks and months, meaning we will have more on offer to tempt consumers out of their homes as we head into 2009.

**"It's inevitable that the number of new projects coming to market will slow and we'll be focusing more on sweating our assets and optimising what we have to create value through innovation"**

There will eventually be a slowdown in development, as decisions made now to hold back projects feed through the system. There will be a delay before this slowdown is felt, however, as the books are full of projects which were signed off in better times.

Although it will still be possible to fund deals – we look at equity investment successes on page 38 and windfall investments on page 44 as examples of how operators are keeping things moving – the number of new projects coming to market will slow and we'll be focusing more on sweating our assets and optimising what we have to create value.

It's easier to pull in the punters when you have a shiny new leisure building to offer them – it becomes more of a challenge once the gloss and novelty have worn off and all that remains is the quality of the experience and the warmth of the welcome.

This will throw a new emphasis on excellence in management and service – our main tools in keeping customers coming back for more. Our industry is peppered through with businesses which have stood the test of time and they share similar characteristics. They aren't always the flashiest and the shiniest (although some are). They are technically excellent, have superb marketing and management, well trained, committed staff and they look after their facilities with effective maintenance programmes.

One of the challenges we face is that the industry's recent rapid growth has left us with some newer operations which haven't cracked the basics and some which have been part of big roll outs where staff lack commitment.

We must prepare now to get out and fight for people's discretionary spending by focusing on management training, team building, sales and marketing and innovation in terms of value added offers and packages.

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

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##### buyers' guide:

For suppliers of products and services in the leisure markets, turn to p72

# World Leisure

## Amazulu World planned for South Africa

Dubai-based leisure developer Ruwaad plans to develop a multi-billion dollar themed entertainment and mixed-use destination development on the north coast of Durban in South Africa.

Amazulu World, a uniquely African destination development covering approximately 16,500 hectares of land, is being billed as the biggest and most comprehensive development of its kind on the African continent.

Amazulu World will include a number of different zones and at the centre of the development will be what Hanif Merchant, chair of Ruwaad, dubs as "Africa's first world-class internationally branded entertainment theme park". Merchant said that the attraction will be developed as a "vibrant, harmonious and integrated leisure, liv-



ing and working environment which is designed to be eco-friendly, minimise the impact on the area's natural surroundings and embrace the area's rich

cultural and historical heritage".

He added: "Amazulu World will be the single largest development to be initiated in African history."

## Armani Burj Dubai nears launch

Giorgio Armani, in partnership with Emaar Properties PJSC, is on schedule to open the inaugural hotel and spa within Emaar Properties' Burj Dubai development in late 2009.

The Armani Hotel Dubai is set to include 160 bedrooms and suites as well as a 430,566sq ft (40,000sq m) health and beauty spa.

The hotel will occupy the first 37 floors of the US\$8bn (CCCC) Burj Dubai and will also offer 144 residential apartments, designed by Giorgio Armani.

The agreement between Armani and Emaar is for at least seven luxury



Giorgio Armani designed the spa

hotels and resorts within the next 10 years. EMAAR will be fully responsible for real estate, construction and management as well as the operation of the properties. Details: [emaar.com](http://emaar.com)

## Planetarium planned for Montreal

A new scientific museum and planetarium is set to open in Montreal, Canada in 2012.

Montreal's mayor, Gérald Tremblay, recently launched an international architectural competition to find a designer for the attraction, after mining giant Rio Tinto announced that it will contribute CA\$4m as the founding sponsor for the construction of the new planetarium.

The new facility will be named the Rio Tinto Alcan Planetarium of Montreal and will be built in the city's scientific quarter.

## SHOKK links up with YMCA US

SHOKK has expanded its operations to North America by installing its first two youth-specific gyms sites in the US.

The first US club to have SHOKK equipment installed is located in a residential area in Anaheim, California.

The opening was followed by a second site at the Maury County Family YMCA in Columbia, Tennessee.

The new youth specific gyms have been equipped with both cardiovascular and resistance machines – including the new four tower WUSHU, which

aims to provide users with a cardiovascular workout in a 'fun' way.

The new openings are part of SHOKK's plans to establish several other sites across the country.

A further four sites are being planned for California plus five other facilities in Nashville, Tennessee.

To date there are over 2,686 YMCA clubs in the States and the YMCA is one of the largest non-profit community services organisations in the country. Details: [www.ymca.net](http://www.ymca.net)



SHOKK now has two sites in the US

## Saadiyat Island underway

The Tourism Development & Investment Company (TDIC) has announced that Saadiyat Beach Golf Course in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, will open in late 2009.

The 18-hole course, designed by golf champion Gary Player to be 'eco-sensitive', could be the first attraction to open as part of the 15-year, A Dhs.100bn (£15bn, US\$ 27bn) Saadiyat Island development.

Translated to mean 'Island of Happiness,' the project is one of TDIC's flagship schemes to develop UAE's economy by improving tourism.

The 2,700-hectare (6,671-acre) island, which is 500 metres off the coast of Abu Dhabi, has been designed with the help of US-based architectural firm EDAA to feature seven districts, boast-



The scheme will cost around £15bn

ing a variety of leisure, entertainment and residential developments.

[For full details about Saadiyat Island see feature on p50]

## Viceroy Anguilla to open in 2010

A spa and fitness centre is set to open in 2010 at the new Viceroy Anguilla Resort and Residences on the Caribbean island of Anguilla, in the British West Indies.

The residential development from US-based luxury hotel operator Kor Hotel Group will debut in early 2009.

The 20,000sq ft (1,858sq m) spa and fitness facility will be designed by Jean-Michel Gathy of Denniston International, with interiors by Kelly Wearstler. The spa will offer 10 treatment rooms, a relaxation deck, an aromatherapy steamroom and an Arctic



The spa will have 10 treatment rooms

ice room. Therapies will incorporate Thai, Chinese and Balinese traditions, Anguillan botanicals and West Indian medicines. In-room spa services will also be available at the resort.

## Gettysburg Museum opens

The Gettysburg Museum & Visitor Center has opened its doors to the public in Pennsylvania, US.

The new 139,000sq ft (12,900sq m) attraction is located on the Baltimore Pike in Cumberland Township, Adams County, adjacent to the famous American Civil War battlefield.

The US\$103m (£77m, £60m) museum includes 11 permanent galleries with exhibits, designed by Gallagher & Associates, showcasing the history of the battle of Gettysburg,

Exhibits include the Cyclorama Gallery, displaying the historic and recently conserved Gettysburg Cyclorama painting.

The painting – on public view for the first time after a five-year, \$15m (£11m, £8.7m) restoration project – was originally completed in the 1880s by the French painter Paul Philippoteaux and a team of assistants. The 377ft (115m)-long painting wraps around the wall of a gallery, offering visitors a panoramic view of the battlefield.

## Mixed-use development for Kuwait City

A large leisure, retail and entertainment complex is set to open in Kuwait City, Kuwait, early next year. The Kuwait 360° Mall is owned and operated by the retail group Tamdeen and will include a 15-screen multiplex cinema, an Imax theatre, three entertainment zones totaling 12,000sq m and 60,000sq m of branded retail space. At the heart of the development, which was designed by US-based architects RTKL, will be a central street, connecting all the separate areas and themed after the old-world souks. The three entertainment zones are spread across the mall's top level and include a 7,000sq m Energy Play Centre.

## Strata Partners signs Siberian deal

YugraInvestStroyProekt, the largest developer in the Khanty-Mansi autonomous area in Russia, and Strata Partners, one of Russia's largest fitness operators, have signed a partnership agreement. The US\$35m (£23m, £28m) joint project aims to build and open nine fitness clubs within new, mixed-use complexes in the major cities in Khanty-Mansi – an area of Siberia that produces more than 55 per cent of Russia's oil and that is considered to be among the country's most rapidly developing regions. All clubs will be operated by Strata Partners under its Orange Fitness and City Fitness brands, and construction is already underway in two cities.



The museum has now launched

# Commercial

## Leicester Square hotel plans approved

The Leicester Square Co-ownership Group has received approval for its plans to redevelop the south-west corner of Leicester Square in London.

The 22,604 sq ft (2,100sq m) site will include a luxury, 240-room hotel, a new two-screen Odeon cinema, four street-level restaurants and cafés, a rooftop restaurant and 33 luxury residential apartments. The site currently houses the existing Odeon West End cinema.

Designed by architects Make, the work on the site is expected to begin during summer 2009 and the project will be incorporated into existing plans to improve Leicester Square.

A spokesperson for the Leicester Square Co-ownership Group said: "This will be a major focal point for Leicester Square – bringing new life into a



The development will transform the south corner of Leicester Square

neglected corner of one the London's landmark destinations and drawing people down to the National Gallery and Trafalgar Square.

"It will be an important contribution to the wider improvements to this area and help to connect two of the capital's most popular public spaces."

## Government holds off Tote sale

The DCMS has called off the sale of the Tote indefinitely after admitting that offloading the bookmaker now would leave it out of pocket.

Sports minister Gerry Sutcliffe said the government would keep the company until it could secure a price that "reflects its true value."

"We needed to be satisfied that it was right to proceed with a sale in the light of prevailing market conditions," Sutcliffe said of the decision.

"It is not appropriate to pursue a sale in these market conditions and we have therefore decided that the Tote should



The Tote was founded in 1928

be retained in public ownership for the medium-term, and brought to the market when conditions are likely to deliver value for the tax payer and racing."



Lancaster is set to get a new casino

## Casino plans discussed by council

Lancaster City Council is to decide on whether to approve plans to build a new casino in the town.

The council's planning committee has been recommended to grant permission to proposals by developer Andrew Brakewell, to convert a vacant office block into a new mixed-use space.

If approved, the proposals would see two floors of the three-storey Riversway House site turned into the new casino, with the second floor retained as office space.

The proposed casino's management suite, catering and hospitality would be situated on the ground floor, while the gaming room would be located on the first floor.

The council is expected to make a final decision in November.

## Beer sales continue to fall

The latest figures from the Beer and Pub Association (BBPA) have revealed that beer sales have continued to fall over the last quarter.

According to the BBPA's UK Quarterly Beer Barometer, total beer sales for the past three months fell by 7.2 per cent compared with the same period last year, with pub sales down by 8.1 per cent. The figures represent the third largest quarterly fall for a decade, and follow a 4.5 per cent fall in the previous quarter between April and June.

Between July and September 2008, 161 million fewer pints were sold compared with 2007 figures, a fall of 1.8 million pints per day.

The BBPA says that as a result, the Treasury will be left facing a £1.2bn tax shortfall over the next three years.

Rob Hayward, chief executive of the BBPA, said: "The accelerating decline in overall beer sales is a clear sign of the combination of a worsening economy, worried households and weakened spending."

# Finding the right sound system can be a rollercoaster ride, so make sure you listen to the right people

Frequently, the importance of sound goes beyond the creation of atmosphere. If quality sound is crucial for your business, wouldn't you want to be sure of getting precisely the solution you require? Wouldn't you demand a sound system that takes full account of the operational environment and your mission-critical needs?

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For instance, a new parkwide audio management

system has recently been installed at Thorpe Park, providing a powerful solution for control of themed music, messaging and 'live' announcements throughout.

Combining flexibility and user-friendliness, this robust audio management system has managed to make life much easier for the operating staff at Thorpe Park, and with up to 18,000 customers passing through its gates on any given day, safety is just as important as the fun factor. Simple, graphical user controls in the control room and security suite allow staff to make pre-recorded or live announcements across the whole park or to any



individual area of the park, delivering a clear, quick message to the people who need to hear it.

The new Bose audio management system ensures that guests can enjoy their day, safe in the knowledge that any emergency will be quickly addressed.

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# Spa & Wellness

## Work begins on Buxton spa

Works for the new £32m Buxton Crescent Hotel and Thermal Spa in Derbyshire have got underway.

Geotechnical and hydrological testing are set to be carried out over the next four months to see whether the project can progress to the detail design and construction stages.

Plans for the development include a 79-bedroom, five-star spa hotel, a natural thermal mineral water spa, eight specialist shops, the transformation of the Pump Room into a cafe, and a new visitor interpretation centre.

The project is set to be one of only a handful of dedicated spa hotels to be developed in the UK in more than a century, and has been part-funded through a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant worth £12.5m.



The project received a £12.5m grant

High Peak Borough Council (HPBC) and Derbyshire County Council are leading the development and are working in partnership with Nestle.

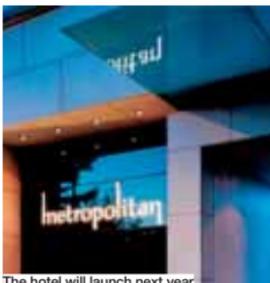
## New rooftop site for The Met

An expansive rooftop spa overlooking Hyde Park will open at The Metropolitan hotel in London, UK, by the end of 2009.

The project, which will see the addition of a whole new floor to the building, will cover two levels.

The first level will feature six treatment rooms, a glass-roofed reception, a relaxation area and a COMO Shambhala boutique. Also on this level will be a presidential suite with direct access to the spa, which can be sold as three separate bedrooms or as a single unit.

On the mezzanine floor above, there will be a Life Fitness gym and a yoga



The hotel will launch next year

studio, both with floor-to-ceiling windows offering park views. The spa is designed by architect Katherine Kng.

## Jumeirah to bring six star hotel to Glasgow

Glasgow is to get its first 'six-star' hotel when the Dubai-based Jumeirah Group opens its £125m property in 2011.

The 25-storey Jumeirah Glasgow, designed by Ian Simpson Architects, is set to become one of the UK's most luxurious hotels.

The 160-room hotel will be located in the city's International Financial Services District, with close proximity to Glasgow's high-end shopping district.

The hotel's facilities will include Jumeirah's signature Talise Wellness beauty spa, a health and fitness club, a rooftop infinity pool, rooftop cocktail lounge and several restaurants and bars.

## Extra spa rooms at myhotel

Two spa treatment rooms have been added to the myhotel Brighton property in the UK.

Located adjacent to the hotel, accessed through secret doors, the jinja treatment rooms in the Mews House have the facilities for massages, wraps and facials.

These treatments will be performed by therapist Gwenaelle Paganelli, who will oversee all well-being experiences at the hotel.

Located on the city's Jubilee Street, the 80-room property has been designed by New York-based Karim Rashid and is set to include a 200-cover restaurant, a bar and two conference rooms. Details: myhotels.com

## Scottish mansion house spa relaunches

The wellness facilities at Knock Castle Hotel and Spa in Perthshire, Scotland, have been completely overhauled and relaunches as part of an ongoing £4m (£5.03m, US\$7.1m) renovation.

The spa now boasts 12 treatment rooms in the main house as well as a large swimming pool, with views of the hotel's private gardens.

The treatments at the refurbished spa will use Phytother products.

The second stage of the revamp is due to be completed by July 2009 and

will include the addition of a rooftop terrace and restaurant.

The former 19th century former baronial mansion is owned by Scottish company The Henderson Group.

Existing facilities include tennis and squash courts, an indoor swimming pool and a sauna.

Knock Castle House and Spa is located close to the market town of Crieff and is set amongst 3.5 acres of woodlands which guests can freely roam in. Details: knockcastle.com



The property is located in woodland

# Hospitality

## London tunnels to house hotel

Hotel group Yotel has expressed "keen interest" in purchasing a system of London underground tunnels, used as air raid shelters in the Second World War, after they were put on the market for an estimated £5m.

The Kingsway Tunnels, built in 1940, are located 100ft beneath central London and were put up for sale by its current owner BT. They immediately evoked interest from Yotel for a future leisure and hotel complex.

Yotel intends to transform the mile-long network of tunnels into an underground destination featuring its trademark pod-style hotel rooms with a lounge, a bar and a nightclub. The company currently operates its hotels inside terminal buildings at Heathrow and Gatwick airports.



The system of horizontal and vertical shafts run directly beneath High Holborn and have previously been used by MI6 and to hold 8,000 people during



The tunnels are 100ft below ground and were used during the Blitz

the Blitz. It was also used to store public records and as a telephone exchange that linked the presidents of the US and the USSR during the Cold War.

## Hotel transactions fall by 69 per cent

UK hotel portfolio sales fell by 86 per cent during the first three quarters of 2008, while single hotel transactions remain firm in the current financial downturn, according to property consultants Knight Frank.

The company's latest research shows that hotel transactions as a whole are down by 69 per cent to just over £1.5bn, compared to £4.8bn for the same period in 2007. This is attributed to the steep decline in portfolio transaction, which dropped to £0.54bn (compared to £3.98bn in 2007). Although sales in the single transaction mar-



Jurys Inn changed hands this year

ket remained strong at £0.98bn, which remains in line with the level in 2007 at £0.95bn, the third quarter did see a 27 per cent decrease to £0.16bn compared to Q3 in 2007.

## Hospitality industry losing graduates

The hospitality industry is losing too many degree-level graduates and is in a "state of ignorance" when it comes to the number of students that enter the industry, said Bob Cotton, chief executive of the British Hospitality Association.

In a speech to students at the University of Surrey, Cotton voiced his disappointment at the lack of highly trained graduates making long-term commitments to the industry, and called for a strategy which "outlines the number of recruits needed every year and the qualifications they need."

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# Health & Fitness

## Budget concept launched by énergie

The énergie group has launched a new budget gym concept for the UK market.

Unveiled at the National Franchise Exhibition in Birmingham in October, the concept, called Fitless, targets the conditioned health sector that wishes to exercise with less supervision for a lower cost. It is also positioned as a business opportunity for those wishing to position themselves competitively in the current economic downturn.

Jan Spaticchia, CEO of the énergie group, said: "If ever there was a product launched at the right time it's Fitless by énergie. My team have carried out extensive research into both the US and European budget fitness club models. As a result, I am very confident that Fitless will become a very successful franchise."



Fitless will use an online membership package to limit the need for club-based administration. Members will either join online from home or via a terminal within the club. Membership will be

Fitless by énergie is the latest budget-chain to enter the UK

offered as two options: either £14.99 via annual direct debit or a £149.99 annual payment.

## YMCA unveils Welwyn GC plans

YMCA Central Herts has unveiled plans for a new £14m youth and community centre on the site of a former car park in Welwyn Garden City.

A bid for £5m funding has already been made to the government's 'MyPlace' programme, which was set up earlier this year to provide cash towards projects aimed at creating new facilities for young people.

Facilities planned for the new centre include a swimming pool, a skate park, a climbing wall, a multi-use sports hall, an outdoor all-weather sports area and youth fitness suite. A multimedia stu-



Plans for MyPlace include a swimming pool

dio and music recording studio are also outlined in the proposals.

A decision on the application for the government grant, the primary source of funding, is expected in the new year.

## Purbeck Centre's gym reopens

The gym at Purbeck Sports Centre in Wareham, Dorset, has reopened following a £700,000 revamp.

The new health and fitness club has trebled in size and two new exercise studios have been added. There is also a new children's softplay area and extensively refurbished changing facilities, exclusively for use by fitness suite customers. The club's equipment was supplied by Technogym and includes 35 gym exercise units, featuring integrated tv screens, 18 cardio-vascular stations, 11 strength stations and flexibility equipment.

## New leisure centre opens in Ballyfermot

The new E25m (\$31.2, £20m) Ballyfermot Leisure Centre in Ballyfermot, Ireland, opened to the public on 4 November.

The new centre is the fifth Leisure Centre of Excellence (LCE) developed by Dublin City Council as part of a E125m, five year investment in sports facilities within the city.

The 4,100 sq m leisure centre, designed by McGarry Ni Eanaigh Architects, features a 25m, six-lane swimming pool with a moveable floor

and a boom wall, allowing the pool to be divided into two smaller pools.

The centre also features a sauna and a steamroom, village-style changing rooms and a 40-station TechnoGym-equipped fitness suite.

Sports facilities include an aerobics studio, six five-a-side all weather football pitches and a full size sports hall.

The leisure centre will be operated on a pay-as-you-go basis as well as offering a variety of annual and monthly membership options.



The centre houses a 25m pool

# Sport

## Record number of kids doing school sport

Nine out of 10 children take part in at least two hours of organised physical activity at school each week, up from just 25 per cent in 2002.

The dramatic increases in activity levels were revealed in the government's recently published 2007-08 School Sports Survey.

According to the report, four million young people are now doing at least two hours of sport in school every week. This is largely due to improvements in school sport made possible by the £2.4bn being invested by government up until 2011, which is intended to encourage children to do at least five hours exercise a week.

The figure is well above this year's target of 85 per cent of children achieving two-hours activity at school.



The number of children taking part in competitive sport has risen

The survey also reveals a large increase in competitive sport participation – with 375,000 more pupils playing inter-school fixtures and half a million

more playing intra-school competitive games. Schools are also now able to offer a more diverse range of activities, including dance, martial arts and golf.

## No Premier League for Olympic venue

John Armit, chair of the Olympic Delivery Authority, has said that the new Olympic Stadium will not be used for Premier League football after the 2012 Olympic Games.

Speaking to BBC Sport, Armit said that the 80,000-seat stadium, which will be reduced to 25,000 seats after the Games, will be used primarily for athletics as part of London's legacy commitment to the IOC.

"We have a legacy commitment to ensure the stadium is used for athletes and athletics," Armit told the BBC. "You then have to say, is it possible to



The stadium will seat 25,000 spectators

mix a Premier League club with an athletics stadium. If you wanted to use it for a Premier League football club, you would have to completely redesign it, and we have gone past that point."

## £15m sports centre proposed for Didcot

A report into the future of sports and recreation in Didcot has suggested that a new £15m multi-use leisure centre should be built in the Oxfordshire town.

The study, which was carried out by consultants, Max Associates, was commissioned by South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) to examine the future demand for sports facilities in the town.

The report recommends that the new centre should include a 25m swimming pool, a health suite, an eight-court sports hall, a 100-station fitness studio and squash courts.

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# Parks & Countryside

## £15m earmarked to restore parks

Five historic parks in England will undergo restoration thanks to a £14m grant from the Lottery-funded Parks for People programme.

The funding package has been distributed between Newcastle (£4.5m), West Bromwich (£4.4m), Plymouth (£3.3m), Worcester (£803,000) and Newark (£1.13m).

Sir Clive Booth, chair of the BIG Lottery Fund, said: "This investment will help to ensure that communities get the most of what their parks have to offer. Parks require a lot of maintenance and care and this funding will help to preserve these green spaces and the environment for the future."

The funding for Newcastle will go towards preserving Ouseburn Parks, a green corridor through the city, origi-



Ouseburn Park are among those to benefit from the funding



nally part of the private estate of Lord Armstrong, founder of the University of Newcastle. The 68-hectare park's landscape will be restored, as will historical monuments such as St Mary's Chapel.

The plans also include a new education space and visitor centre, a children's play area and a picnic site.

## Lancaster canal scheme approved

Lancaster City Council has granted planning permission for a £150m mixed-use regeneration scheme for Lancaster city centre.

The project, called Castle View, has been three years in the planning, and is led by London-based urban regeneration company Centros. The plans feature six public spaces, including a new park leading to Lancaster Canal and a public piazza linked to a pedestrian shopping street. There will also be new canal-side restaurants and cafés.

Associate director of Centros, David Lewis, said: "The 10-acre site is quite



The project will include a new waterway

unusual in that it slopes upwards from the existing city centre to a canal and includes two theatres and the city's unique Musicians' Co-operative."

## Study reveals threat to British woodland

New research from the Woodland Trust claims that an area of ancient woodland equivalent to the size of Birmingham has come under threat in the last decade.

A year-long study by the trust has revealed that a total of 26,000 hectares (64,247 acres) of UK woodland is at risk from being destroyed or degraded as a result of developments, including new housing.

Britain has already lost half of its ancient woodland since the 1930s, and the Woodland Trust's latest study claims that 800 woods are now under threat.

## £2.4m Tywi Valley project launches

A new project has been launched to celebrate the culture and heritage of the Tywi Valley in Carmarthenshire, south-west Wales.

The £2.4m Tywi Afon Yr Oesoedd (Tywi - River Through Time) Landscape Partnership Scheme aims to bring together local communities in order to create a future legacy through the conservation of the area's heritage.

Led by Carmarthenshire County Council (CCC), the project has received a £1.5m investment from the Heritage

Lottery Fund (HLF), and will involve a number of schemes, including training in stonemasonry and woodwork to maintain historic buildings.

The Rural Development Fund has also contributed £557,000 towards the programme, which will also provide advice on restoration and conservation.

CCC leader, Meryl Gravell, said: "The projects have been carefully planned to bring maximum benefits to the area and they will all help to conserve the region's rich heritage."



The project received £1.5 from the HLF

# Public Sector

## Seaside towns cash boost

More than £4.5m will be made available to 12 English seaside towns in the latest round of funding from the government's Sea Change programme.

The Sea Change initiative aims to boost visitor numbers around the coastline by reinvigorating resorts via investment in culture and heritage.

The latest round of funding includes a £1m grant for Berwick-upon-Tweed, which will help restore the iconic 18th century Dewar's Lane Granary building. Bexhill-on-Sea will also receive £1m to continue the next stage of its successful seafront improvement scheme, and a £480,800 grant for



Twelve towns will benefit

Littlehampton will help with major design-led improvements along the seafont. A further nine projects will also receive funding.

## DCMS counters Millward criticism

The DCMS has rebutted claims made by Roger Millward, CEO of the Swimming Teachers' Association (STA), that suggested the government's free swimming scheme would not benefit people who cannot already swim.

Millward accused the government of ignoring people who cannot swim when drawing up details for the £140m free swimming scheme.

"Widening access to those who cannot swim has been fundamentally missed from the initiative," he said.

"Our biggest concern is how the government has failed to consult with stakeholders involved in swimming in its widest context, including the STA."

A DCMS spokesperson, however, denied the claims. He told *Leisure*



The swimming scheme will launch in 2009

*Management:* "Swimming lessons are part of the £140m free swimming package. We consulted widely on the free swimming offer but would of course be happy to speak with Roger Millward and see how the Swimming Teachers' Association can help."

## District council scraps Dene Valley plans

Plans to build a new leisure centre in Wellesbourne, Warwickshire, have been scrapped after the local district authority withdrew its funding.

Stratford-on-Avon District Council had approved a grant of £2.5m towards the Dene Valley Leisure Centre in 2005, but decided to pull out of the project due to the uncertain economic climate.

Proposals for a new facility in Wellesbourne were originally put forward seven years ago, but Chris Williams, portfolio holder for community services at the council, said that circumstances had changed. "A lot has happened since, not least the current national and international economic crisis," he said.

## Cash from crime to fund girls' football

Funds confiscated from convicted criminals are to be used to fund a series of initiatives aimed at encouraging more girls to play, coach and volunteer for football in Scotland.

The Scottish government has awarded the Scottish Football Association a total of £297,000, which will be distributed over the next three years to support four separate projects.

The initiatives supported by the cash include forming links between schools and the 12 Scottish Women's Premier League clubs; a series of football roadshows; and the development of a national programme for girls' football and the resources to support it.

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# Attractions

## Sea Life for Alton Towers

Alton Towers Resort theme park in Staffordshire, UK, submitted a planning application for a large aquarium on the site at the end of October.

The park, which is owned and operated by Merlin Entertainments, plans to launch a Sea Life aquarium in time for the 2009 season.

The Alton Towers Resort Sea Life will be the 30th to open worldwide. The Sea Life brand is part of Merlin's midway attractions portfolio.

Russell Barnes, divisional director for the Alton Towers Resort, said: "The addition of a Sea Life aquarium will perfectly complement the fantastic range of family attractions we have here at the resort. The plans promise an attraction that will be a very special experience that all the family can



The aquarium will open in spring 2009

enjoy together. We'll be adding our own unique Alton Towers touch to Sea Life's reputation and expertise in marine conservation, education and awareness."

## Work begins on Brighton tower

The first phase of the construction of the 1360 observation tower, to be located at Brighton's West Pier in south-east England, is underway.

Steelwork fabrication of the tower is currently in progress at a factory in Maastricht, the Netherlands, where a total of 660 tonnes of steel plate is currently being rolled into a 3.9-metre wide tube, which will form the 158m-high core of the tower.

The observation tower, which has been designed by David Marks and Julia Barfield, was originally planned to open in the summer of 2008.



The tower will take visitors to 500ft

When complete, the tower will be able to transport around 100 guests at a time in an enclosed pod up to the height of 139m (500ft).

## Weston pier design chosen

Owners of the Grand Pier in Weston-super-Mare, Somerset, have announced their preferred design for the redevelopment of the 104-year-old attraction.

Bristol-based architect, Angus Meek, was selected after a design competition for the pier, which was severely damaged by a large fire in July.

Potential designs for the pier were unveiled by six architects at the start of October, before being put to public consultation. A planning application is expected to be submitted to North

Somerset Council before Christmas.

Kerry Michael, pier owner, said: "We intend for the new pier pavilion to be opened for business in time for the summer season in 2010. For that to be possible, we need to get the planning permission application to the local authority before Christmas.

"One of the attractions of the Angus Meek design was the way that it can be illuminated at dusk."

[For more details on Weston pier see story in *Design News*, p18-19]

## Welsh national gallery plans delayed

Plans to establish a new national art gallery in Wales have been put on hold by the Welsh Assembly Government until at least 2012 due to funding concerns.

An assembly government-commissioned report, examining the future of visual arts, found that it would cost £85.5m to establish a national art gallery, and a further £38.8m to create a national centre for contemporary art. Both projects would also require further on-going funding for the centres' development and running costs.

Instead, £1.7m has been made available to three regional galleries and the National Museum Cardiff, to improve access to arts in Wales.

## Horrible Histories attraction planned

A theme park based on the literary series *Horrible Histories* is in the early stages of planning for County Durham, Sunderland, the home of the series' author Terry Deary.

Craig Wilson, of County Durham Tourism Partnership, said: "We are looking at feasibility, market demand, logistics and some pretty dry financial scenarios.

"So at this point it is still very early days. There are so many variables, especially in terms of the current economic downturn, so we're just doing our groundwork."

It is the second time in five years that an attraction based on Deary's *Horrible Histories* has been proposed for the region.



Angus Meek's winning design

# Property

## Huge mixed-use scheme for Coventry

Coventry City Council has unveiled its masterplan for a comprehensive redevelopment of the city centre.

Proposals for the ambitious project, which is expected to cost around £1bn, have been drawn up following an extensive public consultation earlier this year. Designed by architects The Jerde Partnership, the vision for the revamped city centre includes the creation of green parks, open spaces, and a waterway following the River Sherbourne through the middle of a new shopping centre. A new library is also at the centre of the proposals.

Some of the city's existing post-war squares, designed by Donald Gibson, will be restored and enhanced, while views of the city's historic three spires will also be retained.



The scheme, if approved, would transform the city centre

City Council leader, Ken Taylor, said: "This isn't a copycat shopping mall. It's distinctive, quirky and very special, and it will make Coventry unique."

Work is not expected to begin on the project for at least two years, as another public consultation has been launched for the next stage of plans.

## Worcester unveils new stadium plans

Worcester City Football Club (WCFC) has unveiled its plans to move to a new stadium, which will be at the centre of a £30m mixed-use development.

Led by developer St Modwen, the project will be situated at Nunery Way on the outskirts of Worcester, and is also set to include a new health and fitness centre as well as a 65-bedroom hotel and a restaurant.

The new stadium, designed by The Miller Partnership, is to be developed in three phases, and when complete will be able to hold more than 6,000 spectators with the potential to increase capacity further to 10,000.



The stadium will hold 6,000 people

As part of the first phase of work, a new 2,000-seat covered main stand will be built, including the main entrance, player facilities and a club shop.



The famous venue will be demolished

## Astoria issued with purchase order

The Astoria Theatre, the famous music venue on Charing Cross Road in London, is soon to be demolished to make way for the capital's £16bn Crossrail scheme.

Along with 12 other nearby sites, the 2,000-capacity venue – which has played host to artists including The Rolling Stones, Madonna, U2 and Pearl Jam – was issued with a compulsory purchase order to accommodate an extension to Tottenham Court Road station.

A campaign to save the venue – which also hosted the popular G-A-Y club night – attracted more than 35,000 supporters, but former London mayor Ken Livingstone announced in March 2008 that the venue could not be saved.

## Master plan commissioned for Saltcoats

Ray Hole Architects (RHA) has won the commission to be the master planning firm for the Saltcoats Headland Entertainment and Leisure Complex in North Ayrshire, Scotland.

The site in Saltcoats is currently home to the Apollo Entertainment Complex, which overlooks the Isle of Arran. The new centre will be a joint venture between the Apollo's current owners and the Irvine Bay Urban Regeneration Company.

Ray Hole, managing director of RHA, said: "This project will combine tourism strategy, designs for sensitive and extreme environments and deliver an authentic visitor experience through a balance of architecture, content and operational efficiency."

Jim Graham, one of the directors at the Apollo, told Leisure Management that the plans could include an indoor play area, an amusement arcade, a restaurant and a 10 pin bowling alley.

# designnews

**project:** kings place

**design:** dixon jones

**location:** london, uk

## London's newest arts venue opens

The new Kings Place arts centre, designed by architects Dixon Jones, opened in King's Cross, London in October.

The development includes a 420-seat auditorium, a 200-seat flexible space for concerts and conferences, teaching rooms, rehearsal rooms, a restaurant and office space.

The building consists of a public ground-floor area on the waterfront, two lower levels featuring music and arts areas arranged around a central atrium, and seven floors of offices. The main concert hall has been designed as a box that sits on rubber springs to give it acoustic separation from the rest of the building. Oak veneer has been used extensively in the hall, which features raked stalls and an upper gallery.

Arup worked with Dixon Jones providing specialist acoustic consultancy and engineering services.



PHOTO: © KEITH BARNLEY 2008



**project:** sea life aquarium

**design:** kay elliot architects

**location:** california, us

## First North American Sea Life opens

Designed by Kay Elliott Architects, the first Sea Life Aquarium has opened in North America at the Legoland California Resort in California.

The 36,000sq ft, two storey aquarium – owned by Merlin Entertainments – features 14 themed rooms.

Key features include the Discovery Zone, where visitors watch sea creatures from viewing stations; the Shoaling Ring, offering views of schools of swimming fish; and the Ray Lagoon, where several species of rays appear to 'fly' through the water amongst Mayan temple ruins.

**project:** grand pier

**architects:** angus meek

**location:** weston-super-mare, uk

## Architect chosen for Weston Pier

Owners of the Grand Pier in Weston-super-Mare, Somerset, have announced their preferred design for the redevelopment of the 104-year old attraction.

Bristol-based architect, Angus Meek, was selected after a design competition for the pier, which was severely damaged by a large fire in July 2008.

A planning application for the rebuilding of the Grade-II listed pier is now expected to be submitted to North Somerset Council before Christmas.



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**project:** peak health club

**interiors:** zynk design

**location:** jumeirah carlton, london

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### Peak Health Club opens after revamp

The Peak Health Club, in London's Jumeirah Carlton Hotel, has reopened following a major refurbishment programme.

Zynk Design, who carried out the revamp, were given a brief to create a light, airy, contemporary space that would match the luxury of the five star Jumeirah hotel.

The gym features large, curved windows, which provide views of London's skyline and flood the space with natural light. Walnut floors, glass lacquered timbers and contemporary lighting have been used to complement the purple and turquoise Peak Health Club brand colours.

The facility houses a studio and a gym featuring Technogym cardiovascular and resistance equipment.



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**project:** just st james

**design:** peter gladwyn

**location:** piccadilly, london, uk

---

### Just St James reopens

Just St James restaurant, which originally opened in 2000, has been refurbished by owner Peter Gladwyn.

The main aim of the £500,000 refurbishment project was to raise the profile of the restaurant, which had been previously screened off behind the adjacent bar. The dining area has now been raised by 1.5m, giving it a stronger visual presence, and allowing diners to look out onto St James' Street below. A new concept lighting system has also been installed, meaning the mood of the restaurant can be altered at different times of the day.

The building was originally constructed in 1912 and housed a Lloyds Bank until the 1980s. The soaring ceilings and sweeping staircase remain from the original building.



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**project:** yang sing oriental

**design:** roberta fulford

**location:** manchester, uk

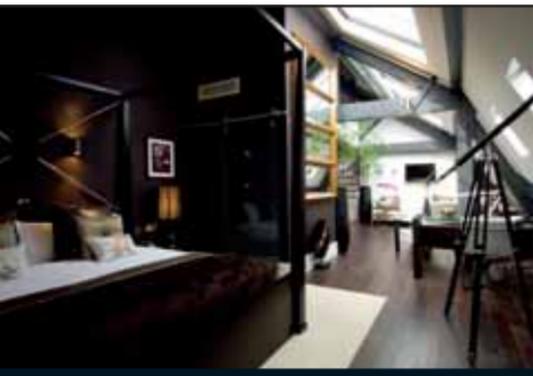
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### Oriental-style hotel for Manchester

Manchester's latest boutique hotel, the luxury Yang Sing Oriental, has opened, featuring 48 bedrooms and suites, a champagne bar, private guest lounge and a spa.

The Yang Sing is housed in a Grade II-listed former cotton warehouse, which has been transformed by interior designer Roberta Fulford. The bedrooms feature antique Ming dynasty furniture while the hotel's champagne bar, Oku, features chocolate leather, ivory chenille and green banquettes. Sutra, the private guest lounge, boasts a Ming dynasty day bed and original Ming screens sourced from Guangzhou in China, where guests can recline in style.

The hotel is the brainchild of entrepreneur Gerry Yeung.



# designprofile

## mkv design

**project:** the mykonos grand

**location:** mykonos, greece

Seven years after MKV Design completed the interiors for the then-brand new Mykonos Grand Hotel & Resort, the company completed a refurbishment of the hotel. MKV had a limited budget to overhaul the hotel's 107 guestrooms and public areas, and were given a brief to create a scheme that would last at least 10 years.

Seven new suites have been created by extending the building and combining some of the existing bedrooms. These have been decorated in three different colour schemes: blue and white; orange and white; and beige and white. The bathrooms are all fitted out in white Greek marble and blue mosaic, while each of the suites features extra luxuries, from an infinity pool to a roof terrace.

In the existing bedrooms, white drapes create a flowing canopy above the beds, the walls have been repainted, furniture re-upholstered and new curtains added.

In the pool area, 10 linen pavilions have been added for guests to relax in. After dark, sandblasted glass cubes are underlit to become glowing tables, while an 'Olympian' fire feature creates a focal point.



# designproducts

From lovely loo seats to beautiful bar stools, we take a look at some of the new products on the market



PHOTO: MARK WOOD

### FISHY BUSINESS

Launched by designers Dominic and Frances Bromley for British label Scabetti, the Shoal chandelier can be seen in a variety of leisure venues including Hotel Oceania in Saint Malo, France; Pizza Express, London; and Rick Stein's Seafood Restaurant in Padstow, Cornwall.

Shoal284 is made up of 284 unglazed, fine bone china fish, cast by hand in the Potteries in Staffordshire. Hanging at approximately 50cm diameter and 1.2m tall, each fitting includes a bone china ceiling rose and is suspended via a fully adjustable steel line suspension system. Each piece is made to order and variations to the standard Shoal284 are available on request.

KEYWORD: SCABETTI



### SWEET SEATS

Luxury toilet seat manufacturer Pressalit has supplied customised toilet seats for the recently opened Axel Hotel Guldsmeden in Copenhagen. The black seats (above) feature the hotel chain's dragonfly logo in gold, and were designed to complement the hotel's decor.

Pressalit has been manufacturing toilet seats for 50 years, and uses Duroplast biodegradable material, which it says is durable, hygienic and impervious to dirt and water.

KEYWORD: PRESSALIT

## PRACTICE PROFILE

### What do you offer?

We think spatially with the objective of unlocking revenue-generating potential, optimising the asset and creating very comfortable spaces. We work hard to be truly original and to achieve interiors that stand the test of time.

### What other leisure projects are you currently working on?

The Sheraton Grand, Edinburgh; Le Meridien, St Petersburg; Regent International, Abu Dhabi; The Radisson SAS Alcron and Lannova Hotel in Prague; and the Radisson SAS, Johannesburg.

### What leisure projects have you worked on recently?

Style Hotel, Vienna [see right]; Lagonissi Grand Resort, Athens; Regent Esplanade, Zagreb; Blue Palace Resort, Crete.

## GET IN TOUCH

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[WWW.MKVDESIGN.COM](http://WWW.MKVDESIGN.COM)



### A CUT ABOVE

Natasha Webb of design firm To Grace recently showcased her laser cut artwork at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show. The intricate designs can be used for varied applications including steel balconies, balustrade designs, decorative lit panels, architectural fencing and screens.

Inspired by patterns seen in nature, Webb's sketches are transferred to stainless and powder-coated steel and acrylic. The range includes the Japanese-inspired 'Bamboo' (above).

**KEYWORDS:** TO GRACE

### project: style hotel

### location: vienna, austria

MKV created the interiors for the Radisson SAS Style Hotel in Vienna, completing the project in 2005.

MKV began by analysing the building, its architectural inheritance and its neighbouring hotels before creating a striking, contemporary scheme for the 78-room luxury hotel.

The property, previously a bank, featured a protected central atrium and a total footprint of 43,100sq ft (4,000sq m). MKV suggested the creation of a boutique hotel with public areas radiating from the oval atrium.

The double height atrium features curved plaster panels decorated with gold leaf berries, inspired by Vienna's famous Secession Building.



### project: radisson sas alcron

### location: prague, czech republic

In another refurbishment project, MKV were asked to refresh the five star Radisson SAS Alcron Hotel in Prague, 10 years after the design company first revamped the Art Deco hotel for Radisson SAS.

The new rooms feature more eclectic and bolder designs than previously, according to MKV, and have moved away from 'baronial opulence to cosmopolitan chic'. The look is clean and contemporary, while still retaining some of the original historical features. The hotel has 206 rooms and suites, an Art Deco restaurant and a separate seafood restaurant.

### SITTING PRETTY

New from Belgian furniture designer FEEK comes the Sliced Barstool, which is featured in the Virgin Holidays Lounge in London.

Designed by Frederik Van Heereveld, the eye-catching stool comes in a choice of 12 standard colours, with the option to choose any non-standard, Pantone colour if ordering in large quantities.

The stools are made from PolyEthylene plastic and chrome and start from E325. They are 400mm wide and 760mm tall.

**KEYWORD:** FEEK



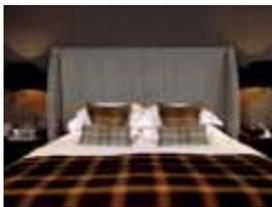
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3DReid worked closely with interior designers Greyline Design on creating a cozy, luxurious Scottish feel for Cameron House

## 3DREID

Carrying out a multimillion pound refurbishment on Cameron House hotel without disrupting guests was something of a challenge, but the end result was worth the effort, says 3DReid's Gordon Ferrier

### How did you get involved with this project?

I have worked with the client, the Alternative Hotel Group [which took over De Vere in 2006], for the last 15 years on Malmaison hotels. AHG had invited a few other architects to look at Cameron House previously, and around two years ago we were asked to do some proposals showing how we would upgrade and convert the hotel. The client liked our proposals and we took it from there.

### Why did Cameron House need to be refurbished?

The original conversion was done around 20 years ago, and it had got a bit tired and dated – I think the previous management had maybe just let it go a bit. The conversion also wasn't terribly sympathetic to the original building. It was good in its day but really needed a new look and a lift.

### What was your brief?

To begin with we were asked to look at the hotel, see what we thought and give our suggestions.

The client initially didn't want too much of a Scottish feel to the hotel; they wanted a more contemporary look instead. After trying some designs, however, they decided that people come to the Highlands expecting a bit of warmth, real fires and some Scottishness, rather than a hotel that you might find anywhere in the world.

So the brief was to get back some of the character that had been lost in the original conversion, and create a cozy, Scottish feel, but with a modern twist.

We worked very closely with interior designers Greyline Design, who did a great job on the hotel.

### What work did 3DReid do on the project?

We were the masterplanners for the whole project, which involved refurbishing the hotel itself, as well as replanning the grounds, the car parking, the landscaping and the marina



area. We also revamped the restaurant on the marina, now called The Boat House, together with Greyline Design. We came up with the idea of an East Coast American look, and Greyline did the interiors. It looks great.

We planned the redevelopment of the actual hotel section by section, including the bedrooms, the function suite, all the bars and restaurants and the public areas. The leisure suite is currently undergoing refurbishment and work is due for completion in December 2008.

### Is there anything you would like to have done that you couldn't?

There were plans for further alternations to the hotel which haven't been carried out. There was a scheme to build a covered external walkway along part of the hotel, with outdoor terraces, sofas and chairs. It is being withheld at the moment because of budgetary requirements, but it's something that may be looked at in the future.



## CAMERON HOUSE HOTEL

**Cameron House Hotel is nearing the end of a multi million pound refurbishment programme.**

The refurbishment has seen the entire hotel completely redesigned, and a new self contained extension built increasing the number of guest rooms and suites from 94 to 139. The hotel's two bars and three restaurants have all been redesigned, including the marina restaurant – now called The Boat House – which

features a New England style design.

The refurbishment was carried out by architects 3DReid and interior designers Greyline Design, and features traditional Scottish Baronial style with a contemporary twist. Tartan fabrics and wallcoverings have been used extensively, as well as dark woods, low lighting and log fires, to create an atmospheric feel.

The five star hotel is located on the banks of Loch Lomond, and features

a fine dining restaurant, two informal restaurants, two bars, a spa and a leisure club. The redevelopment of the leisure club will complete the refurbishment project, and is taking place between September and mid December 2008.

In 2007, The Carrick golf course – designed by Doug Carrick – and 4,400sq m luxury Carrick Spa were launched, which are available for use by Cameron House Hotel guests.

We also designed a new conference facility with a cinema, to be situated by the leisure suite at the back of the hotel. It's not going ahead at the moment, but we've got planning permission for it and it may happen in the future.

#### How would you describe the design?

The hotel has a very warm, cozy feel. It's luxurious, but not overly ostentatious – it's not too sparkly or 'blingy'. You walk into the reception area and it's dark and moody, and has that nice smell of real fires and a cozy, welcoming feel. The panelling is quite traditional but elements such as the lighting give it a more contemporary edge.

Greyline Design and AHG really dictated a lot of the interiors; we did the working drawings to get things built.

#### What was the biggest challenge of the design?

Working with the local authorities and the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Authority on obtaining planning per-

missions was very challenging. Planning restrictions are very severe and rightly so, because the Park Authority doesn't want anything to detract from the beauty of the area.

Operating within a working hotel was also a big challenge. People had paid quite a lot of money to stay in the hotel, and it was important to keep customers and the hotel operators happy. It took longer and added a lot to the cost, because contractors could only work at certain times of day, but that's the price you pay for operating a hotel and refurbishing at the same time. We did it section by section, and kept the hotel operating as best we could.

#### What's your favourite part of the hotel?

Seeing the change in the Great Scots Bar was really great. I don't want to decry the hotel before, but it was such a miserable space. It just didn't feel like a proper bar. The change been really dramatic; it's been opened up and is now a big relaxing space with large fireplaces and great views. ●

# WILLIAM MCNAMARA

Launching the Bluestone holiday village in Pembrokeshire has been no easy task, with years of court battles and construction problems causing headaches. Bluestone founder William McNamara tells Magali Robathan all about it



## How did you first get into the leisure industry?

I'm a Pembrokeshire man born and bred. I was brought up on a farm and assumed my life would be spent farming. I went to agricultural college, got married and took over one of my father's two farms. I anticipated the rest of my life would be spent milking cows and growing potatoes, but after about five years I got a bit restless and decided to build a theme park.

In 1987, together with my family, we opened a small theme park on the family farm. Within 10 years, Oakwood became one of Wales' biggest tourist attractions. It's a wonderful business.

## How was the idea for Bluestone born?

By the late 1990s, I was starting to get itchy feet again and wanted to try something else. I decided I wanted to build a holiday village. I spent a couple of years developing the idea and in early 2002, the rest of my family bought me out of Oakwood. I took my cheque, went back to my farmhouse where I'd raised

my family and where I'd had my first office with Oakwood and thought: 'Crumbs, I'm on my own again'.

Why did I want to build a holiday village? I had realised that running a day visitor attraction in a fairly remote county like Pembrokeshire was always going to be a challenge. I wanted to build something that was year-round, not seasonal, and something that wouldn't be too affected by the weather. I also wanted to take advantage of the location of Pembrokeshire, rather than being blighted by its peripherality.

## What was the vision for Bluestone?

I wanted to create a holiday village that was different, upmarket and very much focused on the countryside; that would be sympathetic to its environment. I wanted local Pembrokeshire people to run it and I wanted to offer Pembrokeshire products, food and culture within the village.

## What does Bluestone offer?

It's a new generation holiday village, with high quality accommodation, a fabulous indoor water park and a very large sports pavilion. The centrepiece is the traditional village, with restaurants, a spa, a wine bar, a pub and shops. It's built around an 800-year-old ruined church, which acts as the hub of the place.

The village is highly sustainable. The Blue Lagoon swimming pool complex is heated by an on-site biomass energy centre, fuelled by woodchip and energy crops grown by local farmers.

All the lodges are thermally extremely efficient; they are triple glazed throughout, with highly insulated walls, floor and ceiling, and were built using sustainable materials. We also have solar panels on 100 of our lodges.

There are lots of activities to do on site, but we also organise packages with various providers for off-site activities such as whale watching and horse riding. We provide the transport and guests can book these packages directly through us.



The holiday lodges were built using sustainable materials



A variety of on-site activities are available and visitors are encouraged to explore the national park

#### **You had a lot of problems getting planning permission. What happened?**

By the time I left Oakwood, I'd been working on Bluestone for at least five years. We'd done a lot of market research, we had a site – the other half of the dairy farm that I lived on, plus a land jigsaw of some forestry land and some other adjacent land – and we had the funding structure in place. The next big hurdle was to get through planning.

Obtaining planning permission for any development on this scale in open countryside is always going to be a significant hurdle. We were granted planning permission in 2003, but the decision was challenged by a lobbying group, who were worried that to agree to the development in the national park would set a precedent [part of the Bluestone village falls inside the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park].

The planning consent was confirmed at the High Court, and the lobbying group then challenged the decision in the Supreme Court, which meant we had to wait another six months. The Supreme Court judges unanimously agreed that the consent was correct and the lobbying group then tried to take their appeal to the House of Lords. In the end the House of Lords committee threw the case out. It was only at that point that we were able to pursue the vision for Bluestone.

We had finally won planning, which was a huge step forward, but it was also a pyrrhic victory because by then I'd lost two years' worth of work. Inflation in construction during 2005/2006 was running at 12 per cent a year, so in that time 25 per cent of my funding package had effectively evaporated.

#### **What happened next?**

We finally started construction in December 2007. The completed site was due to be handed over to us in April 2008 by the main contractor, who didn't deliver. We had a lot of construction problems – there were huge delays and a lot of things

### BLUESTONE IN BRIEF

- The £110m (€139m US\$219m) Bluestone eco-resort in Pembrokeshire, Wales, opened in July.
- Targeting the higher end of the domestic tourism market, the resort is one of the UK's only holiday villages located in a coastal location and in a national park.
- The one million sq ft resort (92,903sq m) has been built around a central village and includes leisure activities, retail and accommodation.
- The development includes a 43,055sq ft (4,000sq m) waterpark, a health and fitness centre, health spa and a sports club.
- Work is due to start on an indoor snow centre in 2010.
- The village currently has 186 lodges, 30 cottages and 17 studio apartments. Work on a further 150 lodges is due to start in early 2009.
- Environmentally-friendly features include triple glazing, high-value insulation and low energy lighting in all the lodges. 100 of the lodges have solar panels. A biomass energy centre heats the Blue Lagoon waterpark, sports centre and administrative offices.

weren't right. We eventually opened on 18 July, but it wasn't a good opening because there were still contractors everywhere, the plumbing didn't work, the sewers didn't work and the site wasn't properly finished. July and August were tough for us.

The construction is now all finished though and September and October have been very good months. We have strong bookings for this autumn and Christmas.



(Top right) Work on an indoor snow centre is due to start in 2010; (bottom right) One of the lodges



“My father gave me some advice when I started off in business. He said whatever you do make sure you can sleep at night. Never cross the line and always maintain your integrity because your honour is sacrosanct”

It's a tough time though. The macro issues of this recession are biting everywhere. Energy costs are horrendous and have just gone up by 35 per cent this summer.

#### How has the project been funded?

The project cost is around £110m, and we've spent around £60m to date. The remainder of the money will be spent on the rollout of the lodges – we have planning consent for 150 additional lodges – and we also have planning consent for a nearby indoor snow centre, with restaurants and bars overlooking the slopes. We're hoping to start work on the lodges in early 2009 and the snow centre the following year.

HBOS is our banker and we have a significant level of debt. Our main investor is US hedge fund Polygon, and the investment is managed by Mansford Plc. I am the next biggest investor. We've also had £14.5m grant aid from the Welsh Assembly. The balance is made up of land which I and others have put in, and the pre planning costs.

#### What has been the biggest challenge?

Each new challenge has been a bigger one than the last. Early on I would have said getting planning consent was the biggest challenge, but then I probably would have argued that getting funding was an even bigger challenge. The construction didn't go particularly well and the opening was extremely tough. We had quite a lot of unhappy guests during the first couple of weeks because the place simply wasn't finished.

Now I would say that the current credit crunch is probably going to be the biggest challenge of all.

#### What do you want to achieve over the next 12 months?

I want to get Bluestone's reputation firmly established as a quality, fun place to stay. I also want to roll out more accom-

modation and I want to develop the operations team and get it really working as it should be. I also want to ensure my staff are motivated and happy and secure in the role they are playing.

We opened in the high season, so were full from day one and we knew we just had to get on with it until the schools went back in September. It was only then we were able to catch our breath and start to focus on where we needed to improve.

#### What about the longer term?

We want to finish Bluestone and build the indoor snow centre. Despite being open year-round, most coastal areas are perceived as seasonal – the beauty of having the snow centre is that from September until March it will be high season for the snow. It will mean we truly have a year-round resort.

#### What's the best feedback you've had?

While we have a superb facility here, the thing that's given me the most pleasure is that almost all of our guests comment on what a smashing, helpful, efficient, cheerful group of people we have working here. That's something we set out to do, but it's happening faster than we thought it would. I'm very proud of our staff for contributing that.

#### What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?

My father, who is no longer with us, gave me some advice when I started off in business. He said whatever you do, make sure you can sleep at night; never cross the line and always maintain your integrity because your honour is sacrosanct.

That's probably the one piece of advice that I've followed resolutely. You don't need to cross the line between right and wrong; it's very black and white as far as I'm concerned. I've made a lot of progress in business because I've always maintained my integrity and that has stood me in good stead. ●



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# SIR DAVID MICHELS

After 40 years in the business, the ex-Hilton Group CEO talks to Magali Robathan about his career, his plans and how to survive a recession

**H**e's spent 40 years in the hotel industry, has received a knighthood, rescued Stakis from bankruptcy, worked through two recessions and masterminded one of the biggest hotel deals in recent years.

You might therefore expect Sir David Michels, ex-chief executive of the Hilton Group, not to be too worried when times get tough, but you wouldn't necessarily expect him to actively relish them.

"We are almost inevitably in for a period of revpar decline, after some 10 years of really very good times," he says, before adding unexpectedly: "I think it's a very privileged time to be in business right now. It's going to be very exciting, because it's going to be challenging.

The most exciting time in any business is when things are challenging."

You don't have to spend much time in the company of Michels to realise that he likes a challenge, and that opting for a quiet life is not really his style.

One such challenge came in the form of the merger of Hilton International and the Hilton Hotels Corporation in 2006, which Michels oversaw. There was a lot at stake; the deal involved more than 100,000 employees, billions of pounds and the reunification of two companies separated for more than four decades.

"I was quoted at the time as saying that it was a bit like trying to marry your cousin," says Michels. "We were selling to a company that had originally

owned the business, and selling to the Americans – God bless them – is always complicated. When you do a £3bn deal there is bound to be a perception of value that is different on both sides."

The deal saw US business Hilton Hotels Corporation (HHC) acquire Hilton International for £3.3bn. Hilton International, which started life as HHC's international arm, was sold by HHC in 1964 so that the company could concentrate on the American market.

British gambling group Ladbrokes plc bought Hilton International in 1987 and changed its name to the Hilton Group in 1999. The recent merger saw the British company revert to Ladbrokes plc and return to being a pure betting company.

**"WHEN I LEFT HILTON I WASN'T QUITE SURE WHAT I WAS GOING TO DO BUT I KNEW I HAD TO WORK FOR A LIVING. I'M NOT DRIVEN BY GREED FOR MONEY; I JUST LOVE TO WORK"**





**The merger of Hilton International and Hilton Hotels Corporation in 2006 created a \$1.7bn company with more than 2,800 hotels in 80 countries**

Michels talks of all-night meetings held in The Waldorf in New York – half way between London and HHC's offices in LA – wranglings over tax problems – “boring, but one of the biggest challenges” – and the odd personality clash. “There was a lot of emotion involved,” he says.

He's clearly proud of the final deal however, and acknowledges the hard work put in by everyone involved. “It's rare to get a deal done where everyone does well: buyer and seller are happy, the shareholders are happy,” he says. “I think at that time I employed 126,000 people, if you count Ladbrokes, and there were four redundancies. Those that were made redundant did pretty well too.”

The deal, did, however, effectively put Michels out of a job. Chris Bell, the head of Ladbrokes, took over from Michels, meaning he was in the position of going it alone for the first time in his career.

“One thing I've learned is that everything comes to an end. If you're very lucky you get to choose the end,” he says, when I ask how he felt about leaving Hilton. “I'd been chief executive for seven years and this was an opportunity to make everyone rich. I did well out of it; a lot of my people did very well out of it.”

“Do I miss [Hilton] occasionally? Yes of course, but I couldn't be unhappy. It was a good deal for everybody.”

Michels' comment that “I did well out of it,” is something of an understatement.

He walked away with several million pounds in shares. At 59, and after four decades of hard work, he could have afforded to take things a bit easier, but retiring was definitely not on his agenda.

“[When I left Hilton] I wasn't sure what I was going to do, but I knew I had to work for a living. I'm not driven by greed for money; I love work. It's never felt like work to me – not when I was a waiter and not when I was a CEO. I just love it.”

His first venture “failed miserably,” he says. He created Vector Hospitality, a real estate investment trust, with Richard Balfour-Lynn, but the vehicle failed to float after a lack of support from investors. “That wasn't a very good attempt at being an entrepreneur,” he says wryly.

Today he spends his time working as deputy chairman of M&S, senior independent director of easyJet and is on the board of Strategic Hotels & Resorts and Jumeirah Group. “I'm having a thoroughly good time,” he says.

## **A LOVE OF HOTELS**

Michels developed a love for the hospitality industry working for his father's north London restaurant as a boy, and joined Grand Metropolitan aged 18, staying with the company for 15 years. For Michels, it was always about far more than his pay cheque. “The hotel industry still has, for me at least, a wonderful aura of glamour and fun and excitement,”



he says. "Everything happens in hotels. People live, die, get married, get shot, celebrate. There's always something happening, 24 hours a day.

"Even when you don't earn any money – and believe me I didn't for an awfully long time – you still live wonderfully.

[When I joined Grand Met] I was 19 years old and earned sweet FA, but my shirts were always well pressed, I was well fed and I had somewhere to park my car."

From Grand Metropolitan, he joined Ladbroke plc in 1981, moving through the ranks to become managing director of Ladbroke Hotels in 1985, and then, following the acquisition of Hilton International by Ladbroke in 1987, he became managing director of Hilton UK in 1989. In 1991 he was headhunted by Scottish hotel group Stakis, and, motivated by a desire to learn how to deal with the City – "it's alright being a hotelier, but you have to know how to add up as well" – Michels joined the company as chief executive in 1991.

Many would hesitate at leaving one of the world's top hotel brands for a group that was in serious financial trouble, and indeed Michels was advised against the move by many people. As a keen gambler – he is famed for his love of poker – Michels is not afraid of taking chances though. "I think [taking risks] is essential," he says. "If you do nothing, you'll never get into trouble, but you'll never achieve anything. The fact is, you have to make decisions and decisions are risky."

As it turned out, the decision was a very good one. Michels' rescue of Stakis is seen as one of the highlights of his career. When he joined the company in 1991, it was on the verge of financial collapse, but eight years later it was sold to

## DAVID MICHELS' CV

**1966:** Joins Grand Metropolitan Hotels.  
**1985:** Holds various positions, rising to worldwide marketing director

**1981:** Michels joins Ladbroke plc as sales and marketing director of the hotel division

**1985:** Takes the role of managing director of Ladbroke Hotels

**1989:** Becomes Hilton UK managing director  
**1991:** Leaves Hilton UK to become chief executive of Stakis

**1999:** Becomes chief executive of Hilton International following the sale of Stakis to Ladbroke for £1.2bn

**2000:** Becomes chief executive of Ladbroke

(remained Hilton Group)

**2006:** Hilton International sold to Hilton Hotels Corporation for £3.3bn. Michels leaves Hilton

**2008:** Currently deputy chairman of M&S, senior independent director of easyJet, and on the board of Strategic Hotels and Jumeirah Group

his old employer Ladbroke for £1.2bn.

"The best decision I ever made in business was to leave the safety of Ladbroke to go and become CEO of what was technically a bankrupt company," says Michels. "It was phenomenally exciting and dangerous, but in those days I didn't know enough about a balance sheet to even know that Stakis was technically bankrupt. I could have hung on [at Ladbroke], pension secured, but instead I went up to the wilds of Glasgow and never looked back."

Following the sale of Stakis to Ladbroke – which changed its name to the Hilton Group – Michels became chief executive of Hilton International in 1999, and then chief executive of the Hilton Group from June 2000.

Last year, Michels received a knighthood for services to hospitality. Taking his wife and children to Buckingham Palace was a real high point, and Michels can't hide his pride at the award.

"It's just so flattering, it meant a lot," he says. "I was enormously proud, and

it was very, very exciting. I think anyone who receives a knighthood, deserved or not, simply has to be proud."

### HARD TIMES

While Michels says he thinks exciting times lie ahead, he does acknowledge that the current economic climate is likely to be a cause of real stress for hoteliers.

"The worst thing about this recession is that no-one knows quite what the crocodile looks like," he says. "That's scary. Things that are under the bed that you can't see are much more scary than monsters you can. This is still under the bed and people will feel happier when they know what they're going to face."

After having worked through several recessions, what is Michels' advice?

"People just have to remember to give good service and not stop selling. Both are normally not given in a recession. Sales gets poorer, service gets poorer, sales and marketing stops. You'll never save a hotel by cutting costs."

Asked how bad he thinks things are

**"DON'T PANIC TOO SOON. PEOPLE JUST HAVE TO REMEMBER TO GIVE GOOD SERVICE AND NOT STOP SELLING. BOTH ARE NORMALLY AFFECTED DURING A RECESSION. SERVICE GETS POORER AND SALES AND MARKETING STOPS. YOU WILL NEVER SAVE A HOTEL BY CUTTING COSTS"**



Michels worked for Hilton in various roles between 1989 and 2006. He became CEO of the Hilton Group in 2000



**Michels is on the board of Jumeirah. Its hotels include the Burj al Arab (this pic) and Babs al Shams (below)**

likely to get, Michels declines to answer, saying, "I have no knowledge with which to give you any kind of sensible answer," adding simply: "Not good."

"Don't panic too soon though," he adds. "A lot of hoteliers are beginning to see a decline in occupancies already, but don't panic too soon."

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

Michels' aims for the next year, he says, are to add value to the various boards he's employed on, and to stay in touch with the industry. "If you're not careful you can get out of touch quite quickly," he says. As for the longer term, his plans are to "stay alive and stay employed," and he's in no rush to slow down.

"It comes to you whether you like it or not, but I'm delaying it for as long as possible," he concludes.

"I'm still driven by a massive impatience and a desire to work." ●



# space to breathe

Climate change, the skills gap, the economic downturn and a lack of funding are all major challenges for parks and green spaces, GreenSpace chief executive Paul Bramhill tells Magali Robathan

**I**t started as an informal chat between a few friends who were concerned about the state of the UK's parks, and has grown into an influential national charity.

Today, GreenSpace has a membership of more than half of the UK's local authorities and a network of almost 1,000 community groups. Its mission is to improve parks and green spaces by raising awareness, involving communities and creating skilled professionals. Achievements include comprehensively assessing the state of the UK's parks for the first time, creating the greenSTAT system to help measure people's opinions of their local parks and launching the Institute of Parks and Green Spaces.

"We're a small organisation, but we've always been able to punch above our weight," says CEO Paul Bramhill.

## SMALL BEGINNINGS

The Urban Parks Forum, which was later to become GreenSpace, was formed in 1999 as a voluntary organisation.

"A lot of issues about the decline in parks began to come to the fore at that time, and it became clear that no-one was coming forward to say: 'How bad is the situation and what do we need to do

about it?'" says Bramhill. "No one was filling the gap, which is where the Urban Parks Forum came in."

Its original focus was on the restoration and conservation of urban parks, but as its profile and membership grew, it became clear that a body was needed to represent green space as a whole, in both rural and urban areas. In 2003, in order to reflect this wider remit, the Urban Parks Forum was relaunched as GreenSpace. Two years later, in 2005, GreenSpace became a national charity.

So why is it so important to protect our green spaces? "We've got to the point where over half of the world's population lives in cities. In the UK the figure is around 90 per cent. Therefore it's vital that we make sure communities of the future have access to the natural environment," says Bramhill.

"Parks are a foil for the built environment and pressurised urban living. They have huge environmental benefits, can help adapt cities to the challenges of climate change and are important in the challenge of trying to encourage people to do more exercise. Plus they offer a quiet haven from a busy world."

The activities of GreenSpace fall into four main areas: raising aware-

ness; working with community groups; improving green space; and training and education for green space professionals.

GreenSpace works hard to raise awareness about the value and benefits of parks among the public and within local authorities and agencies of government. Research carried out by the organisation helps in this area. "We've done a whole raft of research about skills, funding and the state of parks," explains Bramhill. "That helps us to be at the cutting edge and start building up databases and national data that we can use to argue to policymakers and to demonstrate what the issues are."

The Love Parks Week campaign, which was launched in 2006, is another tool for helping to raise awareness about the role of parks in the community. "We now have around 200 organising partners joining in Love Parks Week, organising hundreds of events around the country, and a media reach of around 15 million people. It's a major achievement," says Bramhill.

A range of events from teddy bears' picnics and sports days to organised walks and music festivals attract hundreds of thousands of people to the annual event, which takes place next year from 25 July to 2 August 2009.



**Paul Bramhill**  
has been chief  
executive of  
GreenSpace  
since 2001

PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/COYCO



PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/STEVEN MIBIC





## GREENSPACE OBJECTIVES

- To promote the concept of a single parks or green space system, whose quality and diversity sustains the cultural, heritage, landscape and ecological needs, purposes and values of the communities that use them.
- To provide a network for the exchange of expertise, experience and information about the sustainable planning, design, management and improvement of parks, gardens and green spaces.
- To promote the implementation of strategies, policies and actions at national, regional and local level needed to secure and sustain the full range of benefits that parks, gardens and green spaces offer.
- To promote the greater education and involvement of local communities in the sustainable planning, design, management and improvement of their parks, gardens and green spaces.
- To promote, attract, secure and disburse funding for projects which contribute to the sustainable planning, design, management and improvement of parks, gardens and green spaces.
- To promote the sustainable planning, design, management and improvement of parks, gardens and green spaces through responses to consultations and by representation of the aims of GreenSpace.
- To identify and promote professional best practice through meetings, conferences, research, exhibitions, publications, films, training courses and networks.
- To provide a channel of communication and education to relevant organisations on issues affecting the sustainable planning, design, management and improvement of parks, gardens and green spaces.

[www.green-space.org.uk](http://www.green-space.org.uk)



On the community front, GreenSpace works with community groups, and runs a range of initiatives linking them to the work of local authorities and other non governmental organisations, as well as providing help, advice and resources.

"Community action is very much as important as professional action when it comes to getting things done," says Bramhill. "The Bristol Parks Forum, for example – an umbrella organisation for around 50 community parks groups – has managed to successfully advocate for selling off less parkland and giving more money from those sales to the parks service than was originally planned."

Next on the list is the improvement agenda. "We run regional forums, which bring managers together to share knowledge and drive the open spaces agenda more effectively to government offices, development agencies and NGOs," says Bramhill. The GreenSpace National Forum invites representatives from throughout the UK to come together to influence national issues and engage with government and its agencies.

For green space professionals, conferences and training events offer the opportunity to network and improve skills. In January 2007, GreenSpace launched the Institute of Parks and Green Spaces (IPGS), the UK's only institute dedicated solely to professionals working within the sector.

## THE BIG ISSUES

The skills gap is a major issue for the parks sector, says Bramhill. "We've got an ageing workforce, with lots of very

## **"We're looking to try to bring corporate social responsibility money into the sector. We are giving companies the opportunity to relate their CO<sub>2</sub> footprint to improving their local environment"**

good professionals now in their 50s, but not enough people coming into the sector. We need to look urgently at how to address that gap." GreenSpace is working closely with CABE Space and Lantra (the Sector Skills Council for the environmental and land-based sector) on promoting skills in order to grow the national skills strategy for urban green space. Part of this will involve promoting parks as an attractive career option and improving the numbers of good quality training and apprenticeship schemes.

Another issue for parks professionals is the role parks could play in the adaptation of cities to climate change. As the climate heats up, and our cities become more uncomfortable, the role of parks will become increasingly important.

Parks could be better adapted to store floodwater, and therefore mitigate flooding in cities, says Bramhill. They can also be used to create a cooling effect – during hot periods, the surface temperature of green spaces is significantly lower than the typical surface of the rest of the open urban environment.

Funding is another area that needs to be urgently addressed, he adds. "We're looking at innovative ways of bringing in additional funding to the green space sector." One of these projects comes in the form of the Green Space Fund, which

the organisation is currently piloting in Preston with the support of Preston City Council and KPMG.

"We're looking to try to bring Corporate Social Responsibility money into the green space sector," says Bramhill. "We are giving companies the opportunity to relate their CO<sub>2</sub> footprint to contributions to improving their local environment."

KPMG adopted this approach for a recent conference by donating to the fund, which is being used to pay for green space improvement and an energy reduction project in Preston's Moor Park.

"It's hugely ambitious, and is very much still a pilot, but if it's successful, we're hoping to roll out the scheme across the country," says Bramhill.

While things have improved for the parks sector in many ways, tough times lie ahead, he continues.

"It's going to be a very challenging time. With this economic downturn there are going to be major issues. Local authorities are going to be strapped for funding. The business sector is going to be under enormous pressure and other priorities will naturally emerge, such as employment and propping up the economy.

"It really means we've got to do more around advocacy and explaining how our green space managers are really at the heart of our society." ●

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# How will the VisitBritain staff cuts impact British tourism?

**The tourism industry has often bemoaned the lack of regard shown to it by the government, and the reduction in funding for VisitBritain has only added fuel to the fire. Luke Tuchscherer finds out the possible impact of the resulting staffing cuts**

At the end of the summer, VisitBritain announced it might have to cut staff numbers by 40 per cent at its head office, and by 25 per cent in its overseas offices, due to government funding cuts amounting to 18 per cent over the next three years.

The body is currently undergoing a strategic review, which is due to be completed by the end of 2008 and will reveal the full extent of any job losses. As the Tourism Alliance's Kurt Janson points out below, VisitBritain generates around £1bn

in additional inbound tourism revenue and £250m in additional domestic tourism expenditure for the UK economy each year. As a result, the industry has been left baffled as to why other DCMS-sponsored bodies have seen their grant-in-aid double over the previous 10 years, while the 18 per cent cut for VisitBritain was announced after 11 years of standstill funding – amounting to a decrease of over 50 per cent in real terms by 2011. We investigate its possible effect on UK tourism.

**T**here are two ways of looking at this. The first is to simply look at the figures – VisitBritain generates approximately £1bn in additional inbound tourism revenue and £250m in additional domestic tourism expenditure for the UK economy each year.

While there may well be some ability to offset the cut in funding through cost savings associated with the restructuring, the Select Committee's recent report on tourism stated that it could see no evidence that VisitBritain was being inefficiently run at the moment. Therefore the cost saving will probably not be large – and factors such as inflation will erode these savings over the three-year funding period.



## KURT JANSON

Policy director  
Tourism Alliance

However, just looking at the figures is too simplistic as the impact will be far greater. There will be other impacts associated with the cuts. First there are the opportunity costs – the biggest of these is the opportunity to achieve the potential £2.1bn tourism boost that Oxford Economics estimates could be generated by hosting the 2012 Olympics. The government risks squandering this opportunity.

There will also be the lost opportunity to fully develop new tourism

markets for the UK in fast-growing tourism source markets such as India, China and Brazil where international competition is intense.

Another impact will be the fact that lack of funding will exacerbate problems associated with the fragmentation of UK tourism. Without a national body providing marketing of the national brand, the regions will be required to 'go it alone' in overseas marketing with the inherent risk of too many competing brands diluting their impact.

**T**his government has consistently shown its lack of commitment to tourism, and the DCMS's cut in funding for VisitBritain shows how little support the industry receives, even from its sponsoring government department.

Government spending on destination marketing via VisitBritain has consistently shown an incredible return on investment – currently generating over £2.5bn in tax revenue a year – and [VisitBritain] has been deemed highly efficient by the National Audit Office in all of its recent annual reports.

This is a view confirmed by a recent House of Commons Select Committee report. However, tourism's ability to contribute to the Exchequer will be severely curtailed without sufficient



## MARY RANCE

Chief executive  
UKinbound

funding for overseas destination marketing through VisitBritain.

While supporting the need for a review of the structures of organisations, we are concerned that VisitBritain's budget cuts and subsequent restructure and redundancies have been imposed on the organisation before the publication of the British Tourism Framework Review, a report commissioned in order to make the case for tourism to government.

The potential redundancies at VisitBritain of 40 per cent of its UK staff

and 25 per cent of its overseas-based staff will have serious consequences for the organisation's ability to effectively sell the United Kingdom as a destination for overseas visitors.

At this crucial time of economic instability, with increased competition from new destinations and in the run up to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the world should be reminded of the UK's fantastic tourism offering. But with an emasculated workforce, VisitBritain will find this an increasingly difficult task.



**W**e've already seen large cuts in the number of VisitBritain staff prior to the most recent [job loss announcement]. Now we've got another set of cuts, this can do nothing but damage VisitBritain's ability to be able to deliver the £2bn Olympic legacy that we've been promised.

Even if the 2012 Olympic Games weren't taking place, we would still have an urgent need to improve our tourism industry, especially in the current economic climate.

Since it came to power, I think the government has taken little or no notice of tourism in this country. It's a very important part of the economy, employing hundreds of thousands of people,



#### **DON FOSTER**

Shadow culture, media and sport minister  
Liberal Democrats

and yet the heads of VisitBritain have had great difficulty getting ministers to even talk to them, let alone take an interest in the subject.

All the government seems to have done is preside over cuts in the one organisation that can help ensure that we maintain our position in the tourism league table and start to readdress the growing deficit, which has gone from a balanced position to a £80bn deficit since Labour came to power.

Firstly, I think we've got to see what

we can salvage from the current situation. I want us to move to a completely separate Visit England, to be put on the same footing as what Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have.

Also, the money that is spent on tourism is very difficult to pin down, especially with the growing roles of the RDAs and the different approaches that each RDA takes. I would like to see work that identifies what money is intended for tourism, and that ensures the money is ringfenced.

**T**ourism affects, and can benefit, all; it should not be a party political matter. But there are some things that only government can facilitate, either through direct expenditure or through funding channelled in other ways.

With good justification, DCMS cites the increased funding that has been allocated to tourism by the national administrations in Scotland and Wales and the RDAs in England, saying that around £340m of public funding is spent on "tourism marketing".

Detailed examination shows that only about £60m is spent on promotional campaigns throughout England, and most of this is committed to location-specific activities. Almost none of this can be 'clawed back' to somehow



#### **KEN ROBINSON**

Chair  
Visitor Attractions Forum

replace VisitBritain's lost funding to carry out its core tasks.

DCMS has also explained the cuts in the context that it has, "invested in the product," for example, by making major national museums free for everybody, which absorbs a large proportion of DCMS' available budget. But this ignores the fact that the profile of visitors hasn't changed since [free museum entry was introduced], and that visitors from overseas are amazed to find that museums are free and say they would have been prepared to pay anyway.

So why did DCMS allocate less funds to tourism, compared to its other core areas of sport, heritage and museums? When times are tough, no-one selects small businesses, training or regeneration projects for cuts in investment – they are rightly recognised as the way to rebuild economic growth.

Why is it not so with tourism? The return on VisitBritain funding and the potential from tourism dwarfs these other areas of activity.

For the sake of our national economy, we must keep questioning these cuts. ●

# ignoring the gloom

Despite the global financial crisis, leisure deals are still being done.

Matthew Goodman takes a look at three very different private equity deals



**T**he financial markets may be in a state of severe turmoil, and the global economy experiencing its worst crisis since the Great Depression but, remarkably, for the brave, there are still deals to be done.

The slowing rate of mergers and acquisitions has affected the bigger leisure deals, but at the smaller end of the spectrum, a number of notable transactions have taken place, proving that there are opportunities out there for those who have cash, who aren't reliant on leverage to generate a financial return, and who can afford to take a longer-term view.

## BUSABA EATHAI

Perhaps one of the most surprising recent deals was the sale of Busaba Eathai, the mini-chain of Thai restaurants founded by Alan Yau, who seems to have the golden touch.

Yau invented the ridiculously successful Wagamama chain, and at the start of 2008 sold his Michelin-starred Chinese restaurant Hakkasan for a fantastic price.

Back in June, Phoenix Equity Partners, a mid-market buyout firm, acquired the three-site strong Busaba business in a deal worth about £20m in total. That included £15m for the existing

operations and a further £5m to fund an expansion programme.

Buying up restaurants as we head into a much anticipated consumer downturn seems counter-intuitive but David Burns, a partner at Phoenix, thinks the deal will prove to be a sound one.

"We think it's a great concept," he says. "This is a business that started trading in 1998 and the operational performance has been very strong. It has longevity.

"We have an interesting pipeline of new sites. We think there's a fantastic opportunity over the next few years. As the economic conditions get harder, we think there will be less demand [generally] for new locations. Given Busaba is so well funded it will be in a position to open new sites."

Phoenix knows a thing or two about the sector, having done well with two previous restaurant-related investments: Tootsies, the burger and grill chain, and Gaucho, the Argentinian steakhouse operator. Indeed, Stephen Gee, who chaired the latter under Phoenix's ownership, has joined Busaba as chairman. With Yau also remaining involved, there should be enough expertise behind the scenes to make the investment hum.

## GYMBOX

Alongside restaurants, the health and fitness industry is another sector widely expected to take some knocks in the event of a prolonged economic slowdown. The popular argument has it



**Busaba Eathai is one of four restaurant brands launched by Alan Yau. Wagamama, Yauatcha and Hakkasan have also proved successful**



Gymbox recently opened a third centre in London using funding provided by Hotbed

Richard Hilton, founder of Gymbox, has done a fantastic job of attracting the more obsessive fitness people. The last thing these people would drop out of their budgets is their fitness spending

that consumers will happily forego their gym memberships as an easy way to cut back on their spending.

This argument has been eschewed by Hotbed, the private-investor network, which has recently backed the expansion of the niche combat-based fitness player Gymbox.

Hotbed is a club of high-net worth individuals who pay a subscription to get access to deals and then decide whether or not to participate in transactions as and when they occur. It has been involved with Gymbox since 2005, when it paid £1.5m for a stake in the business, which had previously been backed by industry giant Fitness First. With two sites open and trading well, Gymbox was looking to expand with a third location. Hotbed contributed loan capital totalling £500,000 out of a total funding package of £1.1m to convert an old bank vault in the City into a new gym. (The remainder of the funding was provided by management and other existing shareholders.)

Gary Robbins, one of the founders of Hotbed, thinks that Gymbox will be well placed to buck the received wisdom concerning fitness clubs in tough economic times. "Richard [Hilton, founder and boss of Gymbox] has done a fantastic job of attracting the more obsessive fitness people," he says, arguing that the business's members are less likely than the average gym-goer to surrender their subscriptions. "The last thing these people would drop out of their budgets is their fitness spending," he argues. "The business has a very quirky format."

Again, Hotbed has considerable experience of the broader leisure sector, and Robbins thinks he is well placed to assess what will and will not fly. For example, the fund made three-

and-a-half times its money backing Pret A Manger co-founder Sinclair Beecham's budget hotel in Shoreditch, east London.

#### PIC SOLVE

Fidelity Equity Partners (FEP), the private-equity arm of Fidelity, one of the world's biggest fund managers, has less experience of the leisure sector, but one of its most recent transactions saw it gain exposure to the industry.

It acquired Picsolve, a company that produces souvenir photographs at a whole host of theme parks including Alton Towers, in a £33m management buyout.

Nick Martin, a partner at FEP, says that the firm particularly looks for companies that have a capacity to grow internationally, and that use technology to hammer home their competitive advantage. "Picsolve fits the criteria perfectly," he says. "It's right in the sweet spot of what we are trying to achieve."

Picsolve traces its roots back to the 1980s, although the technology at the heart of the business was originally developed by scientists for the aerospace industry. While there are competing technologies out there – Kodak is a key rival – Fidelity thinks Picsolve has the superior product and hopes to exploit its international presence to open up new markets. In particular, the hope is to translate its market-leading position in Europe into a similar standing in North America and Asia.

Despite the troubled economy, there remain opportunities. It is just a question of identifying them. ●

Matthew Goodman is a business journalist at *The Sunday Times*

# UNDER one roof

The concept of leisure and sports hubs is being promoted by Sport England and could help drive participation and solve the problem of a lack of investment. It's good news for leisure, says CLOA's honorary secretary John Bell

PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/ELIZABETH SNOW

**A**t its most basic, the leisure hub concept is grouping more than one leisure activity in one building or complex of buildings.

The idea of a leisure centre, developed in the 1960s and 1970s, was to offer swimming, indoor sports and outdoor facilities on one site rather than the traditional standalone swimming pool or sports hall. The drivers for this weren't just consumer choice, but also economies in staff and building costs. More recently the concept of wellbeing has given rise to the co-location of leisure and health services, and Sport England has promoted leisure hubs based on public/private partnerships.

## Community Sports Hubs

Former Sport England chair Derek Mapp strongly supported the concept of community sports hubs. He proposed that the development value of land on a prime

location, plus a grant from a Regional Development Agency, could provide a legacy income stream to a mixed public/private development. A sports hub development would typically comprise of a sports village along with retail outlets and possibly housing. The legal base would be a Section 106 agreement, sometimes known as 'planning gain'.

The concept is being developed in Warrington under this banner: the Orford Park Project will provide sports, health and community facilities on a former landfill site. Facilities will include the Warrington Wolves' stadium pitch and academy, a pool, gym, grass pitches, dance studio, squash courts, library, office space and classroom space.

The difficulty of this concept is that it's

**The Downham Health and Leisure Centre (below) is managed by Leisure Connection**

heavily dependent on having a prime site with main road access to make it attractive to developers and provide enough land value to make the scheme work.

It could be argued that the principles behind the concept are not new, and creating sport and leisure facilities as part of retail, office and housing development is a common feature in towns up and down the country. Perhaps the 'added extra' of Derek Mapp's concept was the regeneration appeal to Regional Development Agencies and a legacy fund to help maintain and support the developments.

## Health and wellbeing

A different driver for leisure hubs is the health and wellbeing agenda. This idea was pioneered in Peckham in the 1930s.

A group of far-sighted doctors incorporated social facilities as part of medical and social care for the community, opening the Pioneer Health Centre in





**The Chadderton Wellbeing Centre will incorporate a pool, gym, library, dance studio and police hub**

#### CHADDERTON WELLBEING CENTRE

**T**he Chadderton Health and Wellbeing Centre in Oldham, which will bring together facilities including a 25m pool, fitness suite, library, community rooms, community police hub and dance studio, is due to open to the public in spring 2009.

The project is being led by Oldham Council and is being developed as part of the award winning LIFT (Local Improvement Finance Trust) initiative in Oldham by the company developing the LIFT scheme, Community 1st Oldham Limited. The construction of the development

is being undertaken by construction company Carillion Regional Building.

The old Chadderton swimming pool was closed in late 2006 as a result of health and safety concerns.

The Chadderton Wellbeing Centre will employ green design features including

combined heat and power systems, solar shading, rain water recycling, and water and lighting conservation measures. These are aimed at improving cost-effectiveness as well as contributing to local and national government targets for lowering carbon emissions.

Peckham in 1935 [see feature in *Health Club Management*, July 08]. It is this tradition which has seen a welcome growth in partnership schemes between Primary Care Trusts and local authorities.

This type of leisure hub creates a synergy between health and social care and leisure services which has been shown to benefit local communities. Leisure services in this context can include a wide range of facilities, including libraries, arts centres, galleries and sports facilities.

Examples of this type of hub include the Downham Health and Leisure Centre, which opened in March 2007 offering facilities including a swimming pool, fit-

ness suite, activity studios, badminton court and GP and dentist surgeries; and the Grove Wellbeing Centre in Belfast, which opened in May 2008 featuring a GP surgery, library, 25m pool, fitness suite, soft play area, sports hall, sauna and steamroom and a café.

Other wellbeing hubs in development include the Chadderton Health and Wellbeing Centre in Oldham, which is due to open in spring 2009 offering a pool, dance studio, library, gym, meeting rooms, café and a community police hub (see box out, above, for more details).

It is interesting to reflect on the drivers for this growth in health and wellbeing

centres, given that 70 years has elapsed since the Pioneer Health Centre opened in Peckham. One of the drivers is the argument developed by Derek Wanless in his 2002 report *Securing Our Future Health: Taking a Long Term View*, when he emphasised the need to focus on prevention rather than cure. Since then, there have been almost weekly articles in the press on the obesity epidemic in Britain. So a wellbeing centre which can offer a comprehensive health and wellbeing package from diagnosis, self-help books and exercise facilities might help to stem the tide of increasing ill health, much of which is preventable. Another

## THE GROVE WELLBEING CENTRE, BELFAST

Opened in May 2008, the Grove Wellbeing Centre is described as a one-stop shop for leisure, health and library facilities. The £22m centre in north Belfast features a leisure complex with a 25m pool and separate children's pool, fitness suite, soft play area and a multipurpose sports hall. A tenpin bowling alley is due to open in December 2008. The pools are currently closed due to the summer floods, and are expected to reopen in December.

The centre also features a library and health facilities including eight GPs, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and a treatment room for outreach hospital services, antenatal services and a sports injury clinic.

The centre was built jointly by Belfast City Council, Belfast Education and Library Board and the health service.

Katrina Morgan-Talbot, acting leisure services manager, says there are huge advantages to having so many services in one place. "We often had GP referrals at our previous site, but the patient would never bother to make an appointment at the gym. At the Grove Wellbeing Centre, a GP can actually call the gym and make the appointment for the patient in the same way they might book them in to see a consultant.

"Similarly, a patient is able to visit the library and read more about a particular medical condition, or research on the internet."



driver is the sheer convenience of having all these services and facilities in one place which means fewer journeys and greater take-up by the public.

### Building Schools for the Future

There is a quiet revolution in education; the rebuilding or refurbishment of all the country's secondary schools. This also represents a great opportunity to create 'leisure hubs' as part of Building Schools for the Future (BSF).

With imaginative design, the libraries, arts and sports facilities in these new schools could be used by the whole community outside of the school day. Again, it could be argued that this is nothing new and the dual-use concept created after-school use of school sports facilities decades ago. However, the dual-use centres were often far from ideal. Access to facilities was often through narrow entrances and corridors and changing and showering facilities left a lot to be desired.

BSF offers a huge opportunity to create leisure hubs if the government and local authorities are bold enough to take it. The investment is going to happen; new sports halls, dance studios and libraries are going to be built. The danger is that a bureaucratic insistence on model designs and strict cost guidelines will hamstring the future managers of these new multi-million pound centres: inadequate foyers and changing rooms,

### HRH the Princess Royal officially opened the Grove Wellbeing Centre (above) in September 2008

for example, might reproduce the problems of dual-use in the past.

### Implications of leisure hubs

So, what should leisure managers make of leisure hubs? Do they represent a problem or an opportunity? The answer is a bit of both, depending on how good the planning and project management of these schemes turns out to be.

The interest of Primary Care Trusts in creating new partnerships with local leisure providers is clearly a great opportunity; it can provide capital finance and joint service planning for the whole person. But leisure managers need to be included in the planning of projects from the outset; there are often conflicting requirements to be resolved. The health service has a tradition of regimentation and security that is different from leisure services. However, both sets of managers have something to learn from each other. Both services want to provide a bright, welcoming building for the public and put people at their ease. Leisure professionals have the knowledge and experience of how to do this. The public want to feel safe and secure, and at its best, the health service does this.

The problems encountered in managing dual-use centres because schools

in the past weren't suited to public use can be overcome in the BSF programme if the requirement of sport, for example, is properly taken into account. Clever designs like the squash court with moveable walls advocated by England Squash can provide flexible spaces which can be used for a number of sports. Sport England has created liaison officers in the regions to try and ensure that the BSF programme fulfils its potential.

### A personal view

I have briefly described the three variants of the leisure hub model. All offer a solution to the problem of investment in new leisure facilities – investment that's sorely needed in many areas. However, these are not a universal panacea.

All leisure hub concepts have the drawback of being just that; hubs with no spokes. There will continue to be a need to support really local provision, often provided by community halls and sports clubs – some in schools within walking distance. Where health and wellbeing centres score is that they group local facilities together so that they become more sustainable as well as convenient and accessible. In my view, health and wellbeing centres are the 'best-buy' in the leisure hub market at the moment. ●

[See our series on health and wellbeing centres in *Health Club Management* [www.healthclubmanagement.co.uk](http://www.healthclubmanagement.co.uk)]



# high flyers



When a conglomerate of five councils sold Leeds Bradford International Airport for £145.5m in 2007, they promised that part of the windfall would be used to finance major leisure projects. Almost two years on, Caroline Wilkinson finds out how the projects are shaping up

**C**ouncils are realising that it's better to retain and attract people to their region, than to encourage them to go abroad to spend their time – and money.

This epiphany dawned on Devon County Council, in January 2007, and as a result it sold Exeter Airport and planned an activities complex with a velodrome and BMX track. Hot on its heels, a conglomerate of councils came to the same conclusion and sold Leeds-Bradford International Airport (Lbia) in May 2007.

The West Yorkshire councils had realised the region could still reap the benefits from the airport, without stumping up the cost of expanding it. So after 77 years as a public company, Lbia was sold to private equity firm Bridgepoint Capital for £145.5m – an excess of 30 times its gross earnings (£4.85m), and also became the subject of a £70m capital expenditure plan, based on the councils' masterplan for the airport.

The sale also meant the councils were able to finance several big leisure projects that had become stagnant in their planning pipeline, such as the Leeds Arena, Odsal Sports Village and a number of community leisure provisions.

Leeds City and the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council received the largest cut (40 per cent each), as they had owned the airport since its inception in the 1930s. The rest of the money was split equally between three borough councils: Wakefield Metropolitan District, Kirklees and Calderdale, which took shares in the airport when it became a limited company in 1987.

## GRAND IMPROVEMENTS

When the deal was first announced, Leeds City Council pledged its £51.5m windfall to citywide investment schemes with the view to ensuring that the money provided a lasting legacy that would benefit the people of Leeds.

The largest of these schemes is the proposed £50m arena. Although the project is in the early planning stages, the venue is expected to hold up to 12,500 people and will be designed to cope with international music events.

The arena is expected to bring significant benefits to Leeds, contributing an estimated £28m annually to the local economy, due to increased visitors.

SMG Europe, which also runs Manchester's MEN Arena, has been

selected as the preferred operator and is helping the council finalise the venue's specifications as well as locating a site and a preferred developer.

The council has also invested £18m into the extensive and ongoing restoration of the Grade II-listed Grand Theatre and the City Varieties Music Hall – two cultural jewels which over the years have fallen into disrepair.

The theatre, considered one of the city's civic landmarks, was closed in the 1970s and has been undergoing a £31.5m restoration since 2005. The main aims of this project are to restore the theatre to its former glory and provide a permanent home for the northern national opera company Opera North.

The project, called Transformation, is in its second and final phase and is due to be completed in November. This phase continues with the theatre refurbishment, but also sees The Howard Assembly Room, next to the Grand Theatre, converted into a new 350-seat performance space by contractor Laing O'Rourke.

Dominic Gray, director of projects at Opera North, says: "The [conversion of] the assembly room mean we can start programming other types of music."

(Right) The Howard Assembly Room Leeds is being converted into a performance space: (Below) A new city centre eight-lane pool is also being planned for Leeds



Not only will the venue provide an unusual space for social and corporate events but will also be used to nurture young performers and to host the work of new artists and music events.

Plans for the £9.2m renovation of City Varieties were submitted by the council's in-house architectural design team Strategic Design Alliance in March 2008, with the idea of preserving one of the last remaining music halls outside London.

Councillor Andrew Carter, the council's executive member for development and regeneration, says: "With the work being carried out at the Grand Theatre, the newly opened Leeds City Museum, improvements to Leeds Art Gallery [completed in 2007] and progress on the arena, we are providing the city with the broadest based entertainment and cultural set of facilities to rival anywhere outside of London."

As well as leisure and cultural improvements, the council has set aside £1.5m for a new 25m, eight-lane city centre swimming pool as part of a £9.7m sports centre at the University of Leeds.

The facility, designed by S&P architects, is approved by the council and will feature a 200-station gym, squash courts,

a health suite and a café. Construction is expected to begin at the start of 2009.

The £1.5m will be assigned on the condition that the university allows the public access to the pool, which is considered likely but hasn't been finalised. If it does become dual-use, it will provide the city centre with its first public swimming facilities since the Leeds International Pool was closed in October 2007.

"Although the council has put aside £1.5m as a contribution for this facility, the decision on whether to invest hasn't been taken by our executive board," explains Andy Carter, a council spokesperson. "It may be discussed at January's executive board meeting."

Other non-leisure investments included £19m towards the city's £250m school rebuilding programme, a contribution to the £60m highway refurbishment scheme and a £13m investment in the regeneration of district centres and parks.

## BRADFORD

Bradford Council, which also received 40 per cent of the sale of the airport, decided improvements should begin at the ground up and fed £3m into grassroots community projects.

The council allocated £100,000 to each of its 30 wards to be spent on projects that required at least £10,000 to either improve facilities or to secure match funding from other sources. Proposals must be submitted to ward councillors and then nominated to Leeds City Council by March 2009.

So far 40 proposals have been made, and at least half have been approved. These include environmental improvements, new parks, outdoor play equipment, sports pitches, pavilions and recreational facilities for young people.

According to Phil Barker, assistant director for leisure at Bradford Council, £5m has been earmarked for larger leisure projects, and will either be invested in the proposed Odsal Sports Village or a new city centre swimming pool. A decision is expected by mid-November as to which will be funded.

Both leisure projects were identified in the council's latest assessment of sport and recreation facilities in June 2008, carried out by Strategic Leisure.

The £36m Odsal Sports Village, to be developed on land around the existing Odsal Stadium, is currently under consideration by the council and a detailed

**SMG has been selected as preferred operator for Leeds Arena. The company operates eight facilities**

business plan is being created to assess its viability as a centre of sporting excellence. Bradford Bulls Rugby League Club is leading the project, with support from Bradford College, the University of Bradford, Yorkshire Forward, the Primary Care Trust and Sport England.

If taken forward, the sports village complex could include a 3,500-seat indoor arena, hospitality facilities and extensive fitness provisions.

Alternatively, if the eight-lane, 25m swimming pool gets the go-ahead, it's expected to cost approximately £15m and will be a possible scheme for government capital funding as part of its free swimming programme.

Barker says: "This money means the difference between projects going ahead or not, and helps us plan for the future. Without that £5m Odsal Sports Village may not go ahead as quickly."

Tony Reeves, chief executive of the council, adds: "This windfall will go a long way to secure and pump prime money for the regeneration of the district, improving schools and education programmes and transport.

"If all goes to plan these projects will be real leverage to stimulate a lot more investment in the district – perhaps between £3.5bn and £4.5bn."

## BOROUGH COUNCILS

The three borough councils invested each of their £8.5m directly into their Capital Central Budget and, in the case of Wakefield and Kirklees, are yet to allocate it to specific projects.

Calderdale Council, on the other hand, has earmarked £6m for an extensive



The sale of the airport was seen as an important sign of the region's growing economic prosperity, securing enduring regeneration, cultural and educational projects

£10.5m leisure facility overhaul including new 25m, six-lane swimming pools for the towns Sowerby Bridge and Brighouse, to be built by 2010.

The additional £4.5m, which will come from prudential funding, means that the facilities will also feature learner pools, fitness suites and refreshment areas.

According to councillor Amanda Bryne, portfolio holder for community services: "A maximum of £10.5m has been earmarked for the overall leisure project, and it will also fund the relocation of tennis courts at Wellholme Park, in Brighouse, and a feasibility study into the refurbishment of the Halifax Pool."

The new Brighouse pool will be built on the site of the existing tennis courts. The council has had long-standing

plans to build a new swimming pool in Brighouse after the existing 100-year old facility was closed indefinitely in June 2008, after repair costs for the pool were reported to be in excess of £1m.

Originally, plans for the replacement Brighouse pool were included in a retail-led, mixed-use scheme. However, after 10-years in the making, the plans collapsed in January 2008 when a government-appointed inspector refused to grant a compulsory purchase order for the land. The reasons, detailed in the audit report following a public inquiry, are yet to be revealed.

It was at a recent public consultation that the need for a replacement baths in Sowerby Bridge was identified, with the existing one having been deemed unfit for the 21st century.

Both swimming pool projects are in the early design stages, under the guidance of Herfordshire-based architects Saunders Boston. And construction is expected to begin spring/summer 2009.

The sale of Leeds Bradford International Airport will have lasting benefits for the region, both in the expansion of the airport and the legacy it leaves in the way of regional developments.

This sale was seen by the councils as a major step forward in the airport's development and an important sign of the region's growing economic prosperity, securing some of the region's most enduring regeneration, cultural and educational projects. ●

## WHERE THE MONEY IS GOING

The £51.1m given to Leeds council will be invested up to the end of 2011-12 and will be worth £86m (accumulated interest) by the end of that period. Funds allocated so far include money towards a £250m school rebuilding programme (£19m), the refurbishment of Grand Theatre and the City Varieties (£18m), the city centre pool (£1.5m) and the regeneration of towns (£13m). The arena will receive £20m and there will be a contribution to highway improvement.

Bradford divided £3m between its 30 wards to fund community projects. The rest was divided between sports (£5m), a skills building programme (£15m), the city's regeneration (£15m) and improvements to transport (£10m). The remaining money was left in the Capital Budget.

Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield Council shared 20 per cent, which is yet to be allocated to any projects other than Calderdale Council's leisure facility improvement scheme.

# the cleaning show



**I**t takes place every two years, and offers visitors the chance to find products and information to ensure their venues are clean and sparkling, and cleaning companies a chance to sell and promote their products and services.

The Cleaning Show 2009 takes place from 10–12 March at the NEC, Birmingham, and is supported by all member associations of The British Cleaning Council and *Cleaning & Maintenance* magazine.

Attracting interest from those involved in healthcare, industry, leisure, entertainment, office and commercial premise management, retail and government, organisers say The Cleaning Show 2009 is expected to be the biggest yet as plans are announced to attract key decision maker and companies involved in the UK's £1.5 billion cleaning industry.

Facilities managers, hospital managers and procurement directors will have the opportunity to find advice on all aspects of the cleaning business, whether they come from a large corporation or a small business. Window cleaners can network and build their business and even pit their skills against the world's fastest window cleaner – Guinness Book of Records holder Terry Burrows.

## THE ISSUES

The Cleaning Show tackles a whole range of issues relating to cleaning and maintenance, and provides advice to visitors. It promises to help facilities managers lower costs and improve standards, as well as learning how to efficiently clean their facilities using cost-effective

The Biennial Cleaning Show is back in 2009, featuring advice, products, awards and networking opportunities. We take a look at what to expect

### show details

**Dates:**  
10–12 March 2009

**Times:**  
10 & 11 March: 10am–5pm  
12 March: 10am–4pm

**Details:**  
[www.cleaningshow.co.uk](http://www.cleaningshow.co.uk)

**Location:**  
NEC, Birmingham



methods. The show will also offer advice on how to appoint contract cleaners and monitor their performance.

Sessions will also offer advice for local authority managers on how to tackle problems such as pests, graffiti and chewing gum to improve their cities and towns.

Other issues discussed will include relevant legislation, tackling MRSA infection and environmentally friendly cleaning products.

## INNOVATION AWARDS

The Cleaning Show 2009 will feature the third Innovation Awards, which aims to honour the latest innovations and advances in the business, chosen by a panel of experts across a wide range of industries.

Award winners from the last show include, See Brilliance (Best Chemical Innovation), Totally Different (Washroom Products Innovation), Waste Recycle Company (Other Machines Award), Unger UK (Hand Tools Award), along with Industrial Cleaning Equipment and Premier FCM (Best Floor Cleaning Machine – joint award). ●

For more details about exhibiting at the show contact Martin Scott: +44 (0)1895 45 44 38.

Now the dust has settled, the world has had time to reflect on the Beijing Olympics. London can learn a lot from Beijing ahead of the 2012 Olympics, but there are some areas the UK can improve on, argues Brigid Simmonds



## LESSONS FROM BEIJING



**F**or the British sporting community, for leisure businesses working in Beijing and of course for China, 2008 was a hugely important year. The Beijing 2008 Olympic Games were a chance for China to show the world it is open for business, and a chance for the London 2012 Olympic Games' organisers to pick up some tips. So what can Beijing teach London, and what does London need to improve on?

I first visited Beijing 25 years ago. At that point, China was a closed country. I was living in Hong Kong, at that stage still a British colony, and the only way to visit China was as a guest of the British Embassy in Beijing. I knew a nurse who was working there and so was able to gain a visa and spent 48 hours travelling from Hong Kong to Beijing by train, a journey which really highlighted the sheer enormity of the country.

In 1982 there were thousands of bicycles in Beijing, but almost no cars. I did all the things visitors to the city should do: I visited the Great Wall of China, went to the Summer Palace, passed silently in front of Chairman Mao still embalmed in his mausoleum in Tiananmen Square, walked round the Emperor's Palace and visited Beijing's Underground City.

In 1982, it was very unusual to see any Europeans in Beijing and there was no doubt that China was a closed country. Twenty five years on and the clear objective for China during the Beijing Olympics was to show that it is ready to welcome the world. The bicycles are still there, but the roads are now filled with thousands of cars too. There wasn't a dog in sight during the Games, the streets were immaculately clean and Beijing was filled with up to one million volunteers helping Olympic visi-

tors on their way. China wanted people to visit and it wanted to play its part on the world stage.

### ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

Much has been written about the Olympic facilities in Beijing. China spent an estimated £20bn on staging the Games and it showed – the Olympic Park was out of this world. I wouldn't be uncritical of the layout though, or the way it worked. While London can't compete with Beijing in terms of size, or in terms of the grandeur of its Olympic facilities, improvements can certainly be made in terms of connectivity, food, retail and security.

In my opinion, the Olympic Park was just too big. Walking in 31°C heat from one end of the park to the other could take two hours; as a result, not many people did. The most irritating issue was the fact that the security was set up so that, although you might be able to see the venue you wanted to visit next, you had to go outside the park, walk or take a bus and then come back into the park via a different entrance.

At one point I travelled from the rowing lake, where I was lucky enough to watch Tim Brabant win his kayaking gold medal, to the hockey stadium. I got a taxi, which could only take me part of the way, and then had to take a further two buses, meaning I missed the first half of Australia versus the UK.

For the 2012 Olympics, London must look for a system which allows people to enter the Olympic Park once and then move from one venue to the next. A shuttle bus between venues is worth consideration – there must be a way of doing this without compromising security too much.



PHOTOS: LEO MASON/ACTION PLUS

**Team GB triumphed in the Beijing Olympics, setting high expectations for the London 2012 Olympics. All eyes are now on the 2012 organisers**



PHOTO: DALIJI KITAMURA/AFLOACTION FILMS

Security was extremely tight throughout the city. In the subway around Tiananmen Square, for example, you had to put your handbag through an airline-type camera system. There wasn't much flexibility: you could only carry liquids in containers under 100ml and if you tried to go into the park with water it was taken from you. One volunteer asked me to drink some of my water and then allowed me to have it back; surely a sensible way forward. The rest of the time your drinks were taken away and you had to buy more inside the venue. For commercial reasons, sometimes all you were offered was Coke. I drank more Coke in Beijing than I had in the five years previously!

Food was very limited within the park. I don't like popcorn at the best of times, but that was all that was available apart from crisps, a breaded cake or a form of hot dog. You are just beginning to see signs of obesity in Beijing, but they obviously don't yet have the problems with it that we do in the UK. However, that's no excuse for such poor food.

Good food would have kept visitors at the venues and would have created the atmosphere after events which was rather lacking. Most people went home once the events had finished – I can only assume to eat. This is something we must improve on during the London 2012 Olympics and I'm sure we will.

'Ambush marketing' is a term we've all heard in connection with the Olympics. In Beijing the government exercised total control. I've never seen so many adverts for Visa, McDonalds and Coke. This will create a real challenge for London. We just don't have that level of control over advertising and I can foresee lots of court cases over what's permitted and what's not.

The transport for Olympic visitors to Beijing was a nightmare. You could travel on the subway, which was air conditioned, but always very full. You needed to have a good sense of direction – which I don't – as the signs were all in Chinese. It took about an hour to reach the venues and then there was a long security queue to face at the other end. The alternative was getting a taxi, which was very cheap, but the taxi drivers drove like maniacs and although there were seatbelts you couldn't fasten them in the back. This is certainly an area for improvement in London.

**The Beijing Organising Committee for the Games (BOCOG) spent three years carefully recruiting and vetting volunteers for the Games. Up to one million 'social volunteers' were posted around Beijing**

The merchandise was poor. T-shirts were really the only good product and shops were poorly located and too small. I am sure we will improve on this in London. My only concern about cleanliness was in the toilets, where Chinese standards are not as high as those in the UK. There were no sanitary bins and they weren't cleaned as often as they should be – a hugely important area in terms of customer satisfaction.

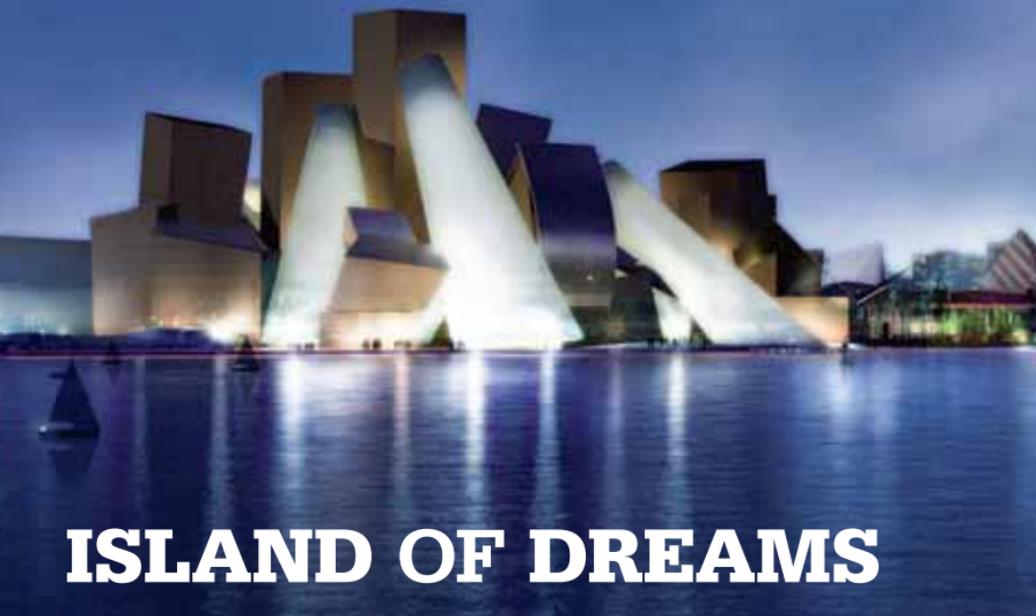
There were Olympic volunteers everywhere, but it seemed that those who spoke English were all acting as interpreters for the Olympic VIPs! I think for London, it will be a question of 'less is more' when it comes to volunteers. We probably need around 100,000 volunteers, but they need more training and need to be more knowledgeable about the Olympic venues, about transport and about tourist attractions in London and beyond.

**A SUCCESSFUL GAMES**

All in all, attending the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games was a fantastic experience. The facilities were all amazing and the closing ceremony was breathtaking. There's no doubt that the Beijing Games will be remembered for years to come and of course the British performance topped all expectations. I also have no doubt that we'll put on a wonderful Games in London.

The London Olympics will be different from the Beijing Olympics, but we do need to learn from Beijing. As well as listening to experts in sport and business, I hope that reports from tourists like me will be taken seriously and acted upon. ●

*Brigid Simmonds is chief executive of Business In Sport and Leisure (BISL) which represents the interests of private sector companies in the sport and leisure industry. For more details contact: +44 (0)20 8780 2377 [www.bisl.org](http://www.bisl.org)*



# ISLAND OF DREAMS

Creating a world class cultural offering from scratch is no mean feat, but on Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi, planners have secured outposts of the Louvre and the Guggenheim, as well as the world's top architects, to do just that. Magali Robathan finds out the latest



MARITIME MUSEUM

**W**hile its neighbour, Dubai, has attracted massive interest for its larger than life leisure developments, Abu Dhabi has been quietly growing its tourism offer. The capital of the United Arab Emirates is one of the world's largest oil producers, but like Dubai has concentrated in recent years on diversifying its economy through tourism.

The Abu Dhabi government aims to increase tourism to the emirate from 1.8 million annual visitors in 2007 to 3.3 million visitors by 2013 – an ambitious target, but more measured than Dubai's frenzied tourism growth. This more modest growth is deliberate, according to the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority (ADTA):

"While this [target] is somewhat conservative when compared to other destinations, it is in keeping with our desire to adopt a considered approach to ensure a high calibre of visitor and the safeguarding of our natural assets and culture for the benefit of future generations," says His Highness Sheikh Sultan Bin Tahnoon Al Nahyan, chairman of the ADTA.

A night shot showing how Saadiyat's Cultural District could look, with Tadao Ando's Maritime Museum in the foreground



At the heart of Abu Dhabi's tourism plans lies the development of Saadiyat Island, an upscale resort and community off the coast of the city, and a major part of Abu Dhabi's plans to position itself as the cultural hub of the Middle East.

The 27sq km Saadiyat Island – which means Island of Happiness in Arabic – is 500m off the coast of Abu Dhabi and will be accessed via two, 10-lane motorways. It is being created as both a residential community and a tourist destination featuring 29 hotels, two championship golf courses, three marinas and a range of museums and cultural centres.

The island will comprise seven districts, and it's the 'cultural district' that has really attracted attention. Planners have secured some of the world's top cultural institutions and architects: it will feature the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, designed by Frank Gehry; a performing arts centre designed by Zaha Hadid; a new national museum created by Lord Foster; a maritime museum designed by Tadao Ando; and the first outpost of the Louvre, designed by Jean Nouvel.

## THE BACKGROUND

The vision for Saadiyat Island was conceived in 2004 by the ADTA. In 2006, the Tourism Development and Investment Company (TDIC) was established by the ADTA, with a remit to work with the public and private sectors to develop projects to grow tourism in Abu Dhabi.

Saadiyat Island will be developed in three phases, and total completion is scheduled for 2018, with the first attraction – the Saadiyat Beach Golf Course, designed by golf champion Gary Player – due to open in autumn 2009.

The natural beauty of the island is a key part of its appeal, and Saadiyat masterplanners EDAW have promised to ensure the design is environmentally sustainable, with plans to restore lost mangroves and beachfront ecosystems, mandate energy-efficient urban densities and introduce mass-transport systems.

## THE CULTURAL DISTRICT

It is hoped that Saadiyat Island will become Abu Dhabi's cultural centre, and no expense is being spared in creating a

range of world class cultural attractions for the island development.

In July 2006, Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince, Sheik Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, signed a multi-million pound deal with the Guggenheim Foundation to create the Guggenheim's largest outpost, in a major coup for the emirate. The 30,000sq m Guggenheim Abu Dhabi museum is being designed by Frank Gehry and will feature permanent collections, a centre for art and technology, a children's art education facility, galleries for touring exhibitions, a conservation laboratory and a library and research centre. The museum will build up its own collection of contemporary art and will also showcase works from the Guggenheim's global collections.

According to Gehry, it was important to adapt the building – which is due to be completed by around 2012 – to its desert environment, rather than simply replicating the design of the existing Guggenheim museums.

"I want to play off the blue water and the colour of the sand and sky and sun...



MARITIME MUSEUM



LOUVRE ABU DHABI

It's got to be something that will make sense here," said Gehry. "If you import something and plop it down, it's not going to work."

Gehry's design sees four stories of galleries laid around a central courtyard in three 'rings'. The first ring – closest to the courtyard – will feature classical contemporary galleries, while the third, outer ring, will house larger galleries, and will be, according to Gehry: "built more like raw industrial space with exposed light-

ing and systems. They [the galleries] will be less 'finished'."

While the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi deal was relatively straightforward, the deal to create the Louvre Abu Dhabi attracted huge controversy. An agreement signed in 2007 between French culture minister Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres, and the president of the ADTA, Sheik Sultan bin Tahnoon al-Nahyan attracted fury in certain quarters with more than 4,700 people in France signing a petition enti-

led: 'Our Museums Are Not For Sale'.

Critics accused the French government of selling France's cultural heritage in return for huge profits. The profits involved are certainly huge – the French government will receive E400m for the use of the Louvre's name, with a further E575m being paid for management advice, art loans and special exhibitions.

The 24,000sq m Louvre Abu Dhabi will exhibit works on loan from the Louvre and its partner group of museums, and will also build up its own collections of artworks over the next decade. It is expected to open in 2012.

The museum is being designed by French architect Jean Nouvel, who won the 2008 Pritzker Prize for architecture. The concept is of a 'museum city' – a cluster of buildings housed under a canopy, which will filter the sunlight and create delicate shadows beneath.

Elsewhere in the cultural district, a Performing Arts Centre is planned, which will house a concert hall, music hall, opera house, drama theatre and a flexible theatre. The 62m-high building is being designed by Zaha Hadid.

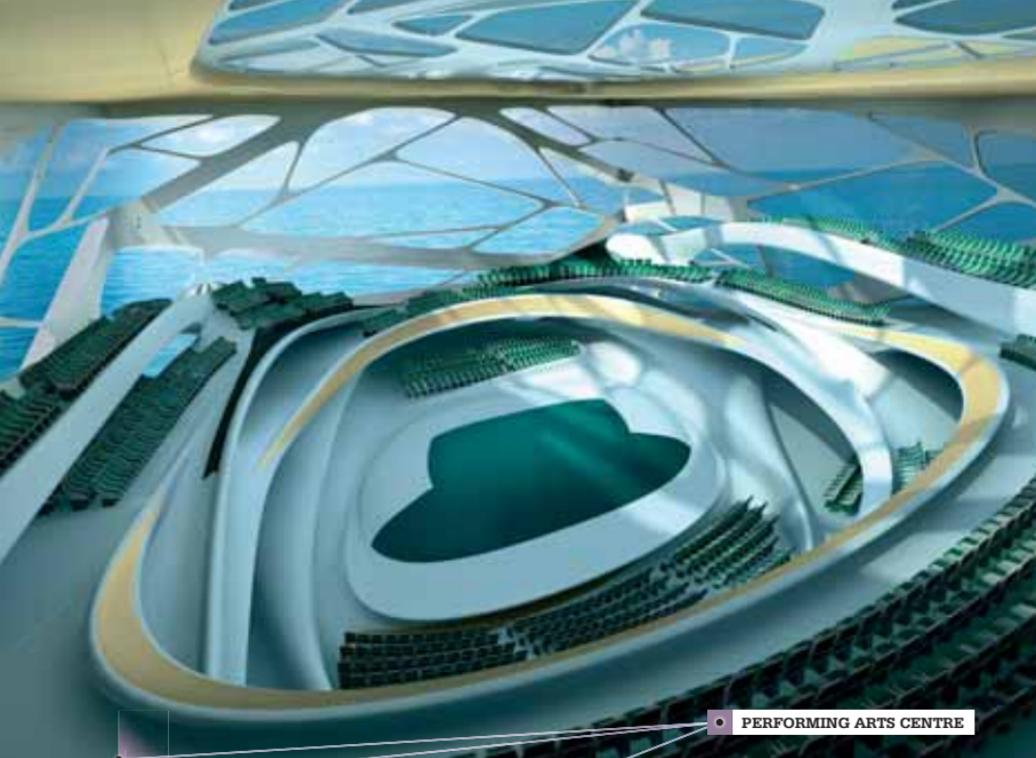
"The concert hall is above the lower four theatres, allowing daylight into its interior and dramatic views of the sea

## ABU DHABI: OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

**Other major leisure developments taking shape in Abu Dhabi include ALDAR Properties' Yas Island tourist destination resort.** The 2,500 hectare island will feature a Ferrari theme park and racetrack, a water park, a Warner Bros theme park, golf courses and a range of hotels and restaurants. The attractions are due to open in phases from 2009.

The Al Ain Zoo and Aquarium Public Institution (AZAPI) is being redeveloped into a 2,000-acre wildlife park and resort with a residential community, as part of a major refurbishment project. Once complete, the attraction will be known as the Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort, and will feature a safari park, African-themed resort, a waterpark, residential community and a hotel and spa. It's being developed as a result of a partnership between the Abu Dhabi government and The Zoological Society of San Diego.

In March 2008, Sorouh Real Estate signed a deal with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios Inc (MGM) to develop a destination in the region based on MGM's library of films.



PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE



and city skyline from the huge window behind the stage. Local lobbies for each theatre are orientated towards the sea to give visitors a constant visual contact with their surroundings," says Hadid.

The Maritime Museum, designed by Tadao Ando, will celebrate the Arabian Gulf's maritime history, while The Sheikh Zayed National Museum, designed by Foster + Partners, will explore the history and traditions of Abu Dhabi and the legacy of the emirate's late ruler His Highness Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al

Nahyan, who was also the first President of the United Arab Emirates.

The Cultural District will also feature a Biennale Park and 19 international pavilions, arranged along a 1.5km-long canal, which will host a range of art and cultural events and activities.

#### THE REST OF THE ISLAND

As well as the Cultural District, the masterplan for Saadiyat Island sets out the vision for a further six districts. These include a Marina District, with a 1,000

berth marina, residential accommodation and boutique hotels; Saadiyat Beach, a beachfront area featuring nine five-star resorts and the Gary Player Golf Course; and the Wetlands, which will feature a further golf course as well as a range of eco tourism activities and 'environmentally sensitive' residential villas.

The ambition, vision and the money to make Saadiyat Island into a major tourist destination are certainly there. Only time will tell whether visitors help to put the island on the cultural world map. ●

# chris hines

Founder of Surfers against Sewage, ex sustainability director at the Eden Project, and recently awarded an MBE for services to the environment, Chris Hines knows a thing or two about green issues. Kath Hudson meets him to find out more



It's largely thanks to Chris Hines and his campaigning organisation, Surfers Against Sewage (SAS), that you can now swim at beaches around the UK without all kinds of unpleasantness drifting past your face. The founder of SAS spent 10 years with the organisation, before turning his attention to reducing waste at the Eden Project. He left the Eden Project in 2007, and now spends his time raising awareness of green issues and helping a range of organisations reduce their environmental impact. Along the way he has been called as special advisor to the minister for the environment and was awarded an MBE for services to the environment in the Queen's Birthday Honours list 2008.

We meet at his local, the Blue Bar, a café/bar overlooking the stunning Porthowan Beach in Cornwall. The sun dances off the waves, the sky is clear and the sand pristine. Drinking in the view, we agree it's an amazing place to live and Hines says it's this, not career ambitions, that have shaped his destiny.

"When I left Surfers Against Sewage [in 2000] I was shortlisted for chief executive of Greenpeace, but it was based in Islington in London and even at the interview I was planning my escape back to the coast. I couldn't do it," he says.

Hines formed SAS in 2002: he and three of his friends were fed up with not being able to see their feet when surfing and resolved to do something about



**Chris Hines (right) on an early campaigning mission to London on behalf of Surfers against Sewage**

it. Lots of others felt the same; the village hall where the first SAS meeting was held was packed out, with everyone readily paying the £2 membership fee.

"We were naive enough to think we could pay for our own sewage treatment works – we didn't know at that stage that they cost millions!" says Hines. "As soon as we stuck our heads over the parapet, things very rapidly gathered momentum. We started the SAS Ball, sold some t-shirts, and got some money in the pot."

## A POSITIVE SOLUTION

To start with Hines did everything: packed, t-shirts, updated the membership database and did all the political lobbying, but the organisation soon went from strength to strength. "I think what set SAS apart was that we weren't just whingers, we found a solution [to

the problem of sewage] that was cheaper than building long sea outfall," he says.

This solution was primary and secondary treatment with ultra violet light disinfection of sewage.

"Jersey was the first place we found it – they had been looking at building a long sea outfall, but also had secondary UV treatment, so their outfall pipe was 50 times cleaner than the standard the government had applied to our beaches [in the UK]," says Hines.

"I was giving evidence to the House of Lords select committee and I'd written about the Jersey outfall pipe. During the question time they asked me about it and I said I'd feel 50 times safer sticking my head up Jersey's outfall pipe than swimming in UK waters!"

The Jersey authorities heard about this comment and Hines received a phone call inviting him to duck dive their outfall pipe. He did it for the cameras. "It looked, tasted and smelt a lot cleaner than the beaches we were using," he says.

In 1997, the new Labour government called on him as a special advisor. Hines had met environment minister, Michael Meacher, at a press call and corrected him on some facts about sewage.

As a result, a few months later Hines was invited to a closed meeting with Meacher, the Water Research Institute, three senior members of the Environment Agency and three senior members of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). "I had free rein to



## RUNNING A GREENER BUSINESS

**Chris Hines' tips to leisure operators on how to run your business more sustainably**

- 1** Go for the big hits: don't worry about what your sugar sachets are made out of when you are throwing away heaps of cardboard food packaging
- 2** Look at your supply chain. As soon as a delivery van comes there's a waste issue. Can you streamline it?
- 3** Buy products made from materials which can be recycled or composted
- 4** Reduce, reuse, recycle and reinvest
- 5** Make the decision! If you are 70 per cent sure of the decision and the remaining 30 per cent won't kill anyone, then make the decision!
- 6** Look at your triple bottom line: weigh up the financial, environmental and social factors
- 7** Hire Chris to do a 'PANTS' workshop. Details: [chris@hines62.wanadoo.co.uk](mailto:chris@hines62.wanadoo.co.uk) [www.chrishines.org](http://www.chrishines.org)

**Chris Hines worked for the Eden Project for six years (above) after leaving Surfers against Sewage**



ask any questions on behalf of Meacher," says Hines. "Within five minutes a guy from DEFRA said you can't build a UV works for a place the size of Brighton. I said Swansea's works have just been turned on – you're talking the same scale of project. He had to say fair comment."

Partly as a result of that meeting, when the water industry set its next spending cycle, for 2000 to 2005, £5.5bn was earmarked for UV treatment of sewage with the outcome that 14 out of 20 households in coastal areas received the tertiary level of treatment. As a result of combined sewage treatment, SAS helped stop 400 million gallons of sewage being pumped into the sea every day between 2000 and 2005.

Proud of what he'd achieved at SAS, Hines left in 2000. "There were no more big challenges," he says. "Part of my role was to make sure I was out of a job as soon as possible."

In 2001, the Eden Project asked Hines to look at their waste, which led to him devising the Waste Neutral concept and then becoming sustainability director.

"Waste neutral is about adding 'reinvest' to the reduce, reuse, recycle hierarchy," he says. "At the front was purchasing – we looked at buying in all recycled products, but also thought about where they were going to end up."

The waste neutral concept meant Eden reduced what was sent to landfill by 66 per cent, through a combination of buying cannily and making sure waste was made out of materials that could be either recycled or composted. One of the biggest impacts of the project was made by changing the disposable crockery system originally used in the main café

**"By changing from disposable to reusable crockery at the Eden Project we reduced landfill waste by nine tonnes, created new jobs, saved £189,000 over five years and gave people a nicer cup of tea"**

area. "By changing to reusable crockery we reduced landfill waste by nine tonnes, reduced the carbon footprint from the manufacture and transportation of disposables, created two jobs and gave people a nicer cup of tea. We saved £189,000 over five years, people drank more tea because it tasted better and, by serving pasties on a plate, it meant people were more inclined to buy salad. We sold more salad and gave people a better diet. It was a win, win, win situation."

Hines left Eden in 2007 because, like with the SAS, he felt his work was done with all the major challenges having been addressed. As a free agent, he now makes his living by public speaking, advising independently on environmental matters, and as ever is on the lookout for the next big challenge.

## THE BLUE GYM

This might come in the form of the Blue Gym. To be based on the blueprint of the Green Gym – which encourages people to get fit through community gardening projects – the Blue Gym will run a range of coastal activities. Hines is working on the project with Dr William Bird, who devised the Green Gym [see interview in Leisure Management, Sep/Oct 2007], and the Peninsula Medical School (a partnership between the Universities of Exeter and Plymouth and the NHS in

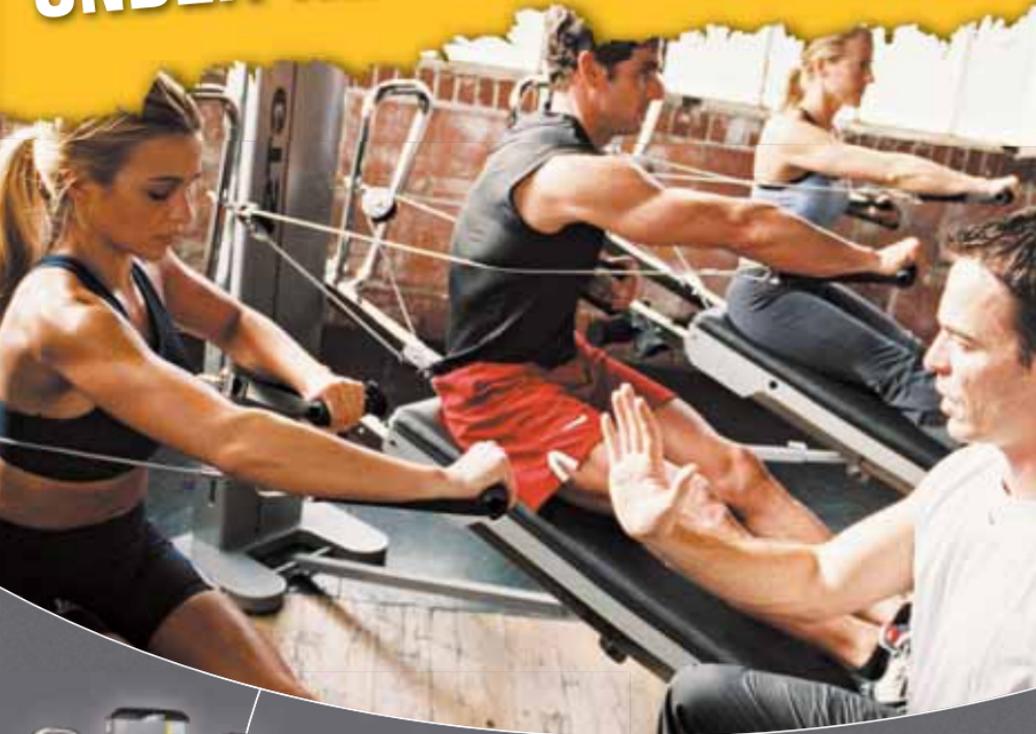
Devon and Cornwall). At the moment it's in the very early stages, with public consultation about to take place. "It's about recognising that the coast is a hugely beneficial resource and that lots of people don't know how to use it," says Hines.

Whether the project will involve surf lessons, beach clear-ups or cliff path maintenance is open to debate at the moment. However, education is likely to be an important aspect of the project, teaching people how to value the coastline. It might also involve campaigning for the construction of surf reefs combined with sea defences.

Hines was awarded an MBE this year, for services to the environment: "That was great, I was stoked. Someone said to me the other day that it wasn't just given to me to sit back [and do nothing], so I have to make sure that I keep on doing things [for the environment]."

Hines is so upbeat and positive that when I ask him if he's optimistic about the future of the planet, I'm hoping he will be reassuring. Instead, he sighs deeply: "I like to try to be optimistic," he says. "What the SAS showed me was that you can change things, but you've got to go hard and I question whether people are going hard enough. When the water industry did the clean up they went hard and we need that same level of action to deal with other issues." ●

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# a sense of drama

Kevin Murphy, development director for Event Communications, explains how to use AV to tell a story, and we take a look at some projects which have used sound and light to dramatic effect



## What is your career background?

I joined the Natural History Museum in London in 1997 as an engineer and went on to become the head of special effects, developing display and interactive exhibits for the museum. I joined Electrosonic in 1987, as a product manager for the developing 'tapeless audio' market.

Electrosonic allowed me to get involved in hundreds of projects, and my real passion was for the leisure sector.

While at Electrosonic, one of my main clients was exhibition design group Event Communications. An opportunity arose to join Event and I decided to take it up. My new role as development director is almost ideal, allowing me to influence, advise and affect so many things and still work with designers to try and achieve the crazy things they dream up.

## Why are you so interested in AV?

I am actually interested very broadly in technology, with AV as a small subset in a huge range of possibilities. An AV specialist has to cover audio, image, interactive, multimedia, digital signage, lighting, show and room control and more, so to help me understand what I do best, I coined the term technical interpretation many years back.

Technical Interpretation is about working with creative people as well as business clients, and trying to make sure their ideas can be realised – both practically and on budget. I like to analyse what the client wants to do and then help to create the finished product.

AV within leisure interests me as I get to do things other people pay good money to see, and have fun doing so.

## How has the AV sector changed since you started your career?

When I started at the Natural History Museum, the main tool for images was the slide projector. We used so many projectors, and one of the very first jobs you had to learn was how to strip and clean a Kodak Carousel projector. Twenty or 30 years ago maintenance was a huge issue, with heavy reliance on mechanical components in projectors. For moving images, we had to use film loop projectors, which were a nightmare to run.

The industry then moved through laserdisc to video servers. High definition and projectors have become so much more reliable that I would say the increased reliability and versatility are the main changes I've seen during my career.

It's so much easier to use technology in museums and attractions now than it was 30 years ago. The down side of this is the fact that it has dumbed down the industry, and I believe that inappropriate use of technology has resulted in some very mediocre experiences for visitors. I look for creatives who have a story to tell, then layer in the technology to make it happen. Too many projects start with the technology, then try to find the story and content. This spells disaster!

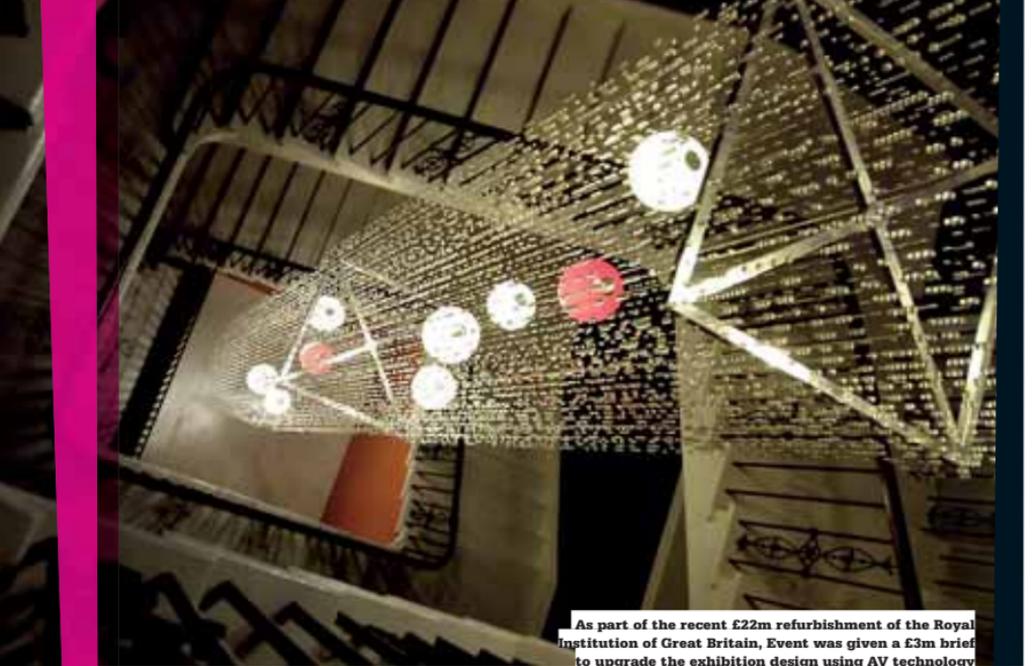
## What are the biggest developments emerging within AV?

Many have already happened, and designers need to catch up with technology to incorporate the many techniques available in their designs. The main trend is better quality images with high resolution and high definition now becoming widespread in museums. That can, however, create some issues of its own.

There's no point using high definition in a museum if the source material is old and



Murphy worked on the Big Picture experience at the Imperial War Museum North in Manchester



**As part of the recent £22m refurbishment of the Royal Institution of Great Britain, Event was given a £3m brief to upgrade the exhibition design using AV technology**

lower resolution. You see some pretty awful shows that switch between modern and archive footage.

A reduction in the cost of equipment is the other trend. The purchase cost of flat panel displays and projectors in particular continues to drop, enabling more technology to be used for the same budget. What needs to happen now is for the cost of projectors with longer life lamps and large LED sources to drop, which will happen eventually.

#### **What are the biggest challenges currently facing the AV sector?**

The leisure side of the AV business is quite flat in the UK, but is booming in the Middle East, with heavy competition and margin reductions. Margin will probably remain the biggest challenge to the AV sector as companies need to make a reasonable profit, carry out good work that lasts and stay in business.

#### **What projects have you been involved with that used AV technology in an innovative way?**

Unfortunately, the really exciting work is in the development pipeline at the moment, and I can't talk about it yet. We are working on an amazing project in the UK which will push the boundaries in the 'luxury' sector, but won't open till 2010. We're currently working on designs that won't be seen for four years, so there is a challenge in how we look ahead and

apply technology in the concept designs.

One project that still highlights AV innovation to me, even though it's six years old, is the Imperial War Museum North in Manchester, which I worked on while at Electrosonic.

The museum had very little in the way of collections but had a large area to cover, both physically and intellectually. With a landmark Daniel Libeskind-designed building, the budget for the fit-out wasn't huge, so the real innovation was in the challenge of taking simple technology, applying it over a large space and achieving success.

#### **What made it so innovative?**

The Big Picture is a complete AV experience, showing some of the Imperial War Museum North's photographic collection and telling some of the stories of war. What makes the experience unique is that it is run on nearly 70 slide projectors. We initially had severe doubts that the exhibit would work – the only way to find out was to build a full scale replica of some of the 15m-high screens in a warehouse in east London, and play around.

The designers, Daniel Libeskind and Electrosonic played with different angles, dimensions and screens for a number of days, and then went on to design an extraordinary series of screen layouts that were eventually laid out throughout the main museum gallery. The building had floors and walls that curved, and

there were virtually no parallel surfaces for the projection and projector positions.

Many visitors sit and watch the shows in tears – the stories are emotive and powerful, and with the complete space filled with images and sound, you can't help but feel involved.

The technology is old, but simple and cheap. The museum allowed for the maintenance and the lamp changes, which is a feat in itself. With a small collection, the show is the museum itself, and it remains a major example of how appropriate technology can make something special happen. It's hard to imagine a replacement in the near future, as using video projection, which is cheaper and more versatile, wouldn't directly replace the images available from 35mm slides.

#### **Which AV project do you wish you'd worked on?**

Visions of Japan, which was a temporary show at the V&A back in 1991. The exhibition had a large walk-around show space at the end of the exhibition, and used a montage of images from slide and video projectors, combined with sound areas and clever lighting, to create a vision of Japan. People would sit in the space and just soak it in, and I took great delight in taking clients there even though I had no involvement.

Luckily though, I've had some involvement in so many other projects, most of my wishes have come true.



## Sound and light upgrade at Whisky Mist bar

The Zeta Bar at the Park Lane Hilton – already outfitted with JBL loudspeakers by the Sound Division Group (SDG) four years ago – has now transformed into Whisky Mist at Zeta. This has given SDG the opportunity to add a further generation of Harman Professional sound reinforcement products to the existing infrastructure as part of a package of integrated sound and LED lighting. SDG has updated the sound and lighting system, while at the same time servicing and upgrading some of the existing audio system.

The main dancefloor system has been built around six flown JBL Control 29 AVs and a ground-stacked AL6125 2x 15 sub, powered by Crown amplification. Further Control 29AVs can be seen in the bar area, retrofitted into the existing sound system, with further Crown amps providing the power.



## Europe's first all-digital multiplex uses Martin Audio

Vue Entertainment chose Martin Audio to provide cinema sound systems for its Princes Quay Hull cinema, Europe's first new-build, all-digital multiplex cinema.

Vue invested £5m in developing the multiplex and equipping it with state-of-the-art digital projection and processed surround sound.

Throughout the cinema's 10 screening rooms, Martin Audio's purpose-developed Screen 5 or Screen 4 systems have been fitted, accompanied by Screen Sub 1As and Effect 5 surround speakers.

Designed for 'behind the screen' placement, Martin Audio's narrow-profile, three-way, THX-approved loudspeakers have been purpose-built for cinema environments.

These are accompanied behind the screen by the Screen Sub 1A, while large area-tapered twin ports ensure minimum turbulence.

Elsewhere at Vue Hull, the installation of a 10-Terabyte computer server allows over 100 movies to be stored at any one time, allowing a wide choice of content.

## Special effects at Alea Leeds

In our last sound and light feature we looked at the sound system at London Clubs International's (LCI's) Alea Glasgow, and this issue it's the turn of the lighting system at Alea Leeds, which opened in September.

Built across four floors on a 65,000sq ft site, Alea Leeds houses six bars, two restaurants, an events space, two gaming floors, a self-contained gaming suite, a private cinema and full conference facilities.

Bradford-based TMC Ltd were brought in to design the visuals at Alea Leeds. TMC combined nine dynamic dnp Alpha portrait

screens, arcing high around the first floor balcony, and a striking Ayrton Dream Panel flaming pixel wall from Lighting Effects Distribution, curving around the top of the bar.

The displays currently show specially-shot content and ambient graphics. In the future they will offer a game in which punters can bet on which of the nine screens a CGI dragon will come to rest.

TMC chose Christie DLP and LCD projection for the first and second floors and the private cinema.

In The Bird restaurant on the first floor two projectors fire a shadow puppet display onto the wall.

## Taking technology to a new level at Matter

**L**aunched in September 2008, the 2,600 capacity club and live music venue Matter is the latest offering within The O2 complex in Greenwich, London.

The heavily soundproofed building is the brainchild of Keith Reilly and Cameron Leslie, owners of London nightclub Fabric. Their brief to Most Technical's Dave Parry was simply to take the use of entertainment technology to a new level.

This was done by a bespoke integration of sound, lighting and video, with the mainstay of the sound system being a Martin Audio W8L Longbow line array, which incorporates Timax Outboard Processing. This allows the sound to be mapped in three dimensions and be manipulated around the entire space by the operators. Another core element of the system is Dgenerate's new BodyKinetic interactive dance floor system with 75,000W of sound pumped through the floor, which is underfitted with eight strobes.

Meanwhile, advanced architectural mapping techniques have been

employed using Pixel Addicts' media server to create an ever-changing canvas in sync with the sound. This includes 12 high output video projectors on moving mirrors.

The system has been configured so that all the lighting, sound and video are controlled from an Avolites Diamond 4 desk (with MIDI signals triggered from the Timax) – something that has never been done before.



## Robe used for Ecuadorian light show

**R**obe ColorSpot 1200E AT moving lights have been specified and installed for a new water fountain show at the famous La Alameda Park in the Ecuadorian capital, Quito. The park was originally built in 1596, and recently re-opened following a complete renovation.

Robe's Ecuadorian distributor Prisma worked with several companies to supply the technology needed for the new-look park, which has now been revamped with a new waterscreen and a lightshow created by lighting designer Alberto Borja.

The screen is 12m-wide and 6m-high. Three 20 minute multimedia shows run every Friday and Saturday nights between 7pm and 9pm, and the waterscreen is also used for special events.

A central control room is located in the middle of the fountains with control for all the technical elements which include water pumps and valves, moving lights, strobes, laser, video projections and fog machines.

Two lighting rooms are concealed behind the fountains below the general water level of the lake, with a window at water level allowing the light beams

to punch through and hit the water jets. Five of the Robe ColorSpot 1200E ATs are located in each room.

The 10 Robe fixtures are central to the show – they provide gobo projections, dramatic colouration and movement effects. A Hog IPC console controls the lights, which were programmed by Javier Sanguano and are

triggered from the audio track.

La Alameda is also revered locally as the site of South America's oldest observatory – the Observatorio Astronómico. It's a hugely popular weekend destination for everyone from athletes to families and tourists. The new waterscreen and lightshow is now drawing in additional visitors. ●



# the event show



Last year's speakers included sports minister Gerry Sutcliffe, O2 chief executive Philip Beard and London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG) chief executive Paul Deighton, while Alexander O'Neal and The Drifters performed live at the show. This year's speakers and live acts haven't yet been finalised, but the organisers of The Event Show promise an equally impressive line up for 2009.

Taking place on 21 and 22 January 2009 at Olympia in London, The Event Show features suppliers offering new technologies, innovations and advice for the events industry. It also features a programme of talks, seminars and workshops; showcases new and established acts on the LIVE Stage; and allows visitors to network and meet industry names.

## LOOKING FOR INSPIRATION

According to the show's organisers, repeat bookings for the 2009 show are up 15 per cent, with those involved in the management and marketing of leisure attractions, public parks and sporting venues looking for new and innovative ways to increase revenue.

"Many football stadium, sports arena and theme park managers are aware that by using their venues on non-match days for concerts, exhibitions, festivals and corporate events, they can have a huge impact on turnover and also broaden the appeal of their venues by attracting new audiences," says Michelle Taylon, event manager, The Event Show.

"The show is packed with exhibitors who can provide leisure managers and sports market-

Featuring hundreds of suppliers, plus talks by big name festival and event organisers as well as live performances, The Event Show promises to be a lively two days

## show details

### Dates:

21 & 22 January 2009

### Times:

21 January: 10am-5.30pm

22 January: 10am-5pm

### Details:

[www.eventshow.co.uk](http://www.eventshow.co.uk)

### Location:

Olympia, London

**THE  
EVENT  
SHOW**  
21 - 22 JAN 2009  
OLYMPIA LONDON

ing professionals with inspirational ideas and products that have never been seen before."

For venue managers who are new to the live concert and festival market, there will be entertainment consultants and agents on hand at the exhibition who can provide everything from named artistes to full production including sound, lighting and staging.

With some football clubs hiring out their pitches for team building events, The Event Show also provides a platform for companies such as Team Extreme to promote its coaching workshops and range of experiences, from extreme sports displays to freestyle footballers and basketball players. Five-a-side football centre operator Goals Soccer Centres will also be exhibiting at The Event Show, along with many other operators.

Security experts, audio-visual and lighting specialists, mobile communications and ticketing companies will all showcase the latest technology and expertise in their industries.

The Access Sessions, meanwhile, allow visitors to get 'up close and personal' with some of the world's leading festival and public event organisers. As part of these presentations, the experts offer advice on how brands can influence customer decisions to attend events. ●



Sport Industry  
Research Centre



# SPORT AND LEISURE STATISTICS

## FORECASTS FOR THE SPORT AND LEISURE INDUSTRIES

The Sport Industry Research Centre publishes two annual reports, Leisure Forecasts and Sport Market Forecasts. These reports provide valuable insight into future market trends.

Both publications are essential references for industry practitioners, consultants and researchers.

### Leisure Forecasts

This publication identifies the way in which economic trends, new technologies and new consumer priorities will shape the leisure industry over the next five years. It is divided into two sectors, leisure in the home and leisure away from home, providing analysis for 24 distinct leisure markets.

### Sport Market Forecasts

This publication is produced in conjunction with Sport England. It provides detailed economic information on consumer spending for the entire sports market. It is divided into sport goods and sport services, providing economic analysis for 10 sport markets.

Our forecasts are a valuable resource for data related to

- travel and tourism industry
- exploring the leisure industry
- hospitality in leisure and recreation
- visitor attractions
- eating and drinking
- local entertainment
- computer games
- home entertainment
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SPORT  
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# growing pains

Tighter planning laws, a shortage of new sites and changing trends have seen a slowdown in the growth of mixed use leisure and retail parks, finds a new report by Mintel. Amanda Lintott reports

**T**he market for multi-leisure developments has seen slow growth in recent years compared to the halcyon days of the mid-to late 1990s, when many of the largest developments around today were opened.

Whether as a result of waning consumer appetite, a shortage of available sites, a lack of funding or a combination of all three, the rate of expansion of the multi-leisure sector has slowed significantly in the past five years.

Defined as a major property development on a single site geared principally towards leisure activities, multi-leisure developments may contain a range of leisure options, together with a mixture of retail and catering outlets.

Today, there are around 1,200 leisure park schemes in the UK, with around four out of five being retail-orientated. Combining retail with leisure maximises the flexibility in terms of what visitors can choose to do and drives footfall for both

sectors. Developers ensure that their sites generate high footfall during the day and night and throughout the week.

## A SHORTAGE OF SITES

Tighter planning regulations have led to a shortage of suitable sites for multi-leisure developments, with the result that the rate of openings of those dedicated solely to leisure has slowed to a trickle – typically between two and four sites a year in recent years. Additionally, the tighter credit market has meant that it has become harder for developers to secure funds for new schemes and borrowing is more expensive.

During the past decade, there has been a fundamental shift in the type of multi-leisure development being built in the UK, reflecting the introduction of recent policy changes. The vast majority of new sites opened have been leisure schemes under one roof, highlighting the need to be more compact and build on multiple levels compared to larger out-of-town or edge-of-town plots – or in some cases the need to build a development within the shell of an existing building.

Although developers have experimented with alternative anchors for multi-leisure schemes, and with grouping food and drink outlets with other leisure venues such as bowling or health and



PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/RIQSHVINTAGE

### Attitudes towards multi-leisure developments, April 2008

Base: 2,021 adults aged 16+	%
They're a good place to take the family	41
I like the idea of having a choice of entertainment/food and drink all in one place	31
There are too many groups of young people hanging around	22
I prefer to go out on my high street/local town centre	21
They're safer than town centres at night-time	21
The quality of food/drink on offer in these locations tends to be poor	16
The types of venues are 'soulless'/have no character	12
On a night out I don't like to stay in one type of venue all night	12
I prefer to visit more upmarket leisure venues	9
I'd be more likely to go to one if there weren't so many 'chain' venues	7
The idea of lots of leisure venues in an out-of-town park is outdated/passé	3
None of these	13
Don't know	2

SOURCE: GfK NOP/Mintel





PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/ZEEFY



Type of retail or leisure park scheme in the UK, 2003-08				
Type of scheme	2003 number	2006 number	2008 number	% change 2003-08
Retail parks (including mixed retail/leisure parks and 'shopping' parks)	842	917	952	+13.1
Leisure schemes	120	123	127	+5.8
Leisure parks	99	101	104	+5.1
Shopping and leisure centres	14	24	25	+78.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,075</b>	<b>1,165</b>	<b>1,208</b>	<b>+12.4</b>

NB: In addition to Savills' definition of retail/leisure parks, Mintel has also excluded a further 271 developments described as 'retail warehousing', which are solely comprised of warehouses.

SOURCE: Savills Commercial Limited/Tevor Wood Associates/Mintel

fitness clubs, cinemas remain the backbone of the industry.

Cinema is a mature and established industry that virtually guarantees a set level of footfall for any new development. Indeed, history has shown it to be virtually immune to the impacts of economic recession, with the cinema representing a form of escapism when times are hard. Given the current economic climate, this will be particularly important for the multi-leisure sector.

While cinemas remain the preferred choice as an anchor for developments, operators have also shown themselves prepared to look at other alternative or joint anchor facilities, the most obvious example being X-Leisure with its Xscape developments incorporating SNO!zone indoor skiing. While cinemas guarantee footfall, there are other alternatives that can be considered in order to achieve the same effect and developers are increasingly prepared to look at them.

In the light of the current turmoil in the financial markets, developers are going to find it much harder to raise the funds necessary to plan and build their sites. Funding also won't be available at such favourable rates. The pace of development of new multi-leisure sites is certain to slow during the next five years.

### BUCKING THE TREND

According to Mintel's recent research, the main objections to multi-leisure developments centre around perceptions that the quality of food and drink is poor and that the venues in such developments lack 'soul' or character. This is particularly a deterrent for more affluent consumers with children.

In such a tough climate venues just can't afford to alienate large groups of potential customers, yet this is exactly what they are doing with the quality of the food and drink they traditionally offer. With numbers of C2 consumers

(traditionally the meat and drink of the multi-leisure development) set to contract slightly during the next five years, outlets will need to consider how they can more effectively target the affluent ABC1 consumers who are currently deterred by what they perceive as poor quality food and drink and a lack of soul and character within these developments.

Recent research by Mintel suggests that managers and developers of multi-leisure sites should give very careful consideration to the types of outlet they choose when units come up for rent. If at all possible, they should look to individual, quality, eating out brands, as opposed to mass-market ones. Examples of suitable brands include Carluccio's, one of the D&D Restaurants' brands, Loch Fyne or Brasserie Blanc.

These outlets could work with other venues such as cinemas on joint promotions, offering a meal and film deal with premium seats at the cinema. ●

In these dark economic days it seems that everything is doom and gloom. However, history tells us many businesses survive and prosper in hard times. Some of the techniques for doing so are common sense – others are hard-earned lessons

## How to Avoid Getting Crunched

### How to survive the credit crunch and steer your business successfully into clear blue waters

**P**erhaps the greatest 'privilege' of my own business career was that after a fairly successful period in a large PLC, I decided to strike out on my own – with impeccable timing. Thus it was that I managed to set up my business in the middle of the worst recession in living memory in 1980.

We got through that into the heady days of the late 1980s, which were an absolute boom time. I then had the fun of steering the business through the problems of the horrendous crash of the early 1990s when 45 per cent of all businesses in my sector – marketing – ceased trading. Both experiences taught me a lot of hard lessons for hard times.

The prospects facing the leisure sector today can seem daunting but there are some well proven techniques to avoid the dangers and ensure you steer your way through into clear blue waters.

#### Get a health check

A starting point for a gruelling challenge is a fitness check. Sit down with your partners and go through the realities of your business. Which parts of it make a healthy surplus of income over cost and which are indulgences that don't deliver the goods? Analyse your historical records and look at the business areas that you can rely on and that are 'recession proof'. Some market sectors are much less susceptible to financial pressures than others. It's important to make



sure that the current sources of your business are going to be able to carry on delivering that business – otherwise you need to find new sources.

Having done this objective analysis of the whole business, look at ways in which you can cut out waste without threatening quality or service delivery. Those aspects of revenue which can be delivered from the core business overheads are likely to be the most profitable. Those which require additional overheads without certainty of revenue are less sure. Weddings, funerals and christenings will continue, so will sales meetings, annual general meetings and people travelling

to visit friends and relations. Things that suffer in a recession are those things which aren't deemed essential: team building, blue-sky meetings, inter-colleague lunches on expenses. These are things which are likely to reduce. People will still travel to see their loved ones and people will still take leisure breaks.

As the country faces a difficult economic period, leisure expenditure will be examined ruthlessly by individuals. The objective will be not to cut it out, but to get more bang for their buck.

#### Know your business

Having given yourself a health check, talk to your colleagues and key staff about the importance of having a clear plan. Do budgets and forecasts realistically and look for growth only in those areas where you are positively offering a better value product to the market. If bank finance is important to your business, then make sure you get across to your bank that you have a clear and realistic grip on the business you're operating and are in control of your own destiny. An early conversation with the bank based on sound financial control and self-discipline about costs on your side will give them confidence that you are looking to be supported, not rescued.

In hard times, banks like to do business with people who are tough on themselves. One good approach is to get across to the banks that as the owner/

#### SENIOR'S SEVEN – TIPS FOR BEATING THE CREDIT CRUNCH

- 1 Be realistic with your budgets and forecasts.
- 2 Cut out wasteful overheads but invest in the core of the business.
- 3 Think ahead financially and ask the bank for support well

- 4 ahead of when it's needed.
- 4 Communicate with your customers confidently and generously – offer them value-added services.
- 5 Communicate with your staff and calm their fears.

- 6 Make sure your service delivery is cheerful not fearful – give the business an air of confidence and good will.
- 7 Don't get depressed. Like winning the Lottery, the worst almost never happens, provided you plan for it.

I first knew Richard Fannon when he operated the highly rated Lainston House in Winchester for Exclusive Hotels. Before that, he worked in St Lucia and the Carlton Tower. Several years ago, he took the plunge and bought his own hotel, Stower Grange in Norfolk. Like all new entrants, his initial approach was to bring what he thought was right to the business. He soon learned that what really mattered was giving the customer base what they wanted: good value, no nonsense, top quality food, good bedrooms and great facilities for meetings and events.

Rather than spending money on expanding the number of bedrooms, he has wisely invested in improving the current stock. He has also upgraded all the meeting facilities and services. His approach to the current challenge has been to revisit the whole budgeting process and prioritise the local market, particularly for meetings and events. He is currently planning a strong com-



**Stower Grange has 11 bedrooms, a restaurant, private dining room and conference facilities**

munications programme. He aims at three key areas where he sees business remaining strong and even growing: meetings and events, local dining and

better value business stays.

As a result, he's put together a plan to communicate using his previous guest database and a customised list he's built from local reference sources. Positive action that won't break the bank but will build the business. He'll be there when the fat lady sings.

## “One lesson of all recessions is that more businesses fail just when the market has turned a corner than during the hard times themselves”

shareholder in the business, you are willing to tie your own income to the results of the business, i.e. you are willing to take some of the pain personally.

### Know your market

All leisure businesses have three main assets: firstly the product or service itself – what it offers; secondly the brand, style or unique character of the business – that which you're known for; thirdly the customer base – the people who like using you and can be persuaded to continue to do so. Having analysed the business, you need to focus on the third asset: the market you're dealing with. Which parts of it are likely to be badly affected by the current climate (and remember, fear of loss/redundancy is just as powerful as the actual event)? Which of your business sectors is pretty well recession proof and likely to carry on?

Having analysed your business categories and made a check-list of the winners and the losers, you need to look at what action you can take to optimise your position. The basis of survival and growth in these times is serving your customers better. Make sure they know that you know that better value is needed and you are willing to do your bit.

### Communicate with your market

Having done all the hard work and navel-gazing so that you have a well founded, waste-free budget and forecast to operate on, the key skill is good communication with your customers and staff. Many people make the mistake of stopping communicating in hard times just to save some short-term money. That doesn't work. In a climate in which most individuals have worries and preoccupations to some degree or other, they need more communication, not less.

This is a good time for using your database to tell your existing customers exactly how you're planning to deliver that extra value for them. It is also a good time to send out postcard reminders to previous guests and enquirers inviting them back and offering them some added-value benefits. It is a very good time for PR. With so many doom and gloom stories, a business that has new ideas and new promotions to offer will often get coverage – a ray of sunshine amidst all the gloom. Turning the received wisdom on its head, in bad times good news is actually more popular. The media likes to print what its readers want to read.

Communicating with your team is equally important. Very few employees have the self-confidence to be entirely unworried in such an economic storm. If you share your positive plans and determination to get through and grow with your team, you will give them confidence, a greater sense of purpose and an understanding that if they join in the effort they will share the rewards.

It's a very good time for well judged incentive schemes and, most of all, it's a time for realistic appraisals of those key individuals who make the difference to your business. Oddly enough, in hard times people tend to take their responsibilities more seriously and think about their 'rights' rather less.

### It's not over till it's over

One hard lesson of all recessions is that more businesses fail just when the market has turned the corner than during the hard times themselves. That means you have to hold hard to resources and keep on communicating and controlling costs for longer than you might wish.

It is a harsh reality that when you are at your weakest you have to act strong. It's a hard world out there and only the fittest will survive and thrive. ●

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If you're a supplier, sign up for your free listing now on [www.leisure-kit.net](http://www.leisure-kit.net)



### SPEND THE DAY IN BED

Designed by Spaniard Patricia Urquiola, Ketta's Maia range of outdoor furniture has seen the addition of a double deckchair. Featuring a braided covering and an optional canopy, it rotates through 360° and – as with all the items in the Maia collection – is manufactured in aluminium.

Available in either chestnut or white, a selection of both signature fabrics and fabrics and porotex is offered for the cushions.

leisure-kit keyword: kettal

### ORDERING FOOD AT THE TOUCH OF A BUTTON

Interior architectural designers Blacksheep have installed an interactive system into the newly opened Inamo restaurant in Soho, London. The system allows diners to order food and drinks interactively, change the ambience and look of their individual table, play various games and even look up local information and services such as booking a taxi all from the comfort of their seat. This is done via a series of 'cocoon' – also designed by Blacksheep – which house the projectors, computers and frames and sit above each table. The projectors come in three sizes and are suited to light 2-cover, 4-cover and 6-cover tables.

There is a 'white spot' on the table at each seat that displays how the diner's food will appear as they choose what to order, as well as giving details on the cost and a description of the dish. Ordering is said to be fool-proof and



intuitive with customers using a touch panel to select what they would like, although serving staff are also available should they be needed.

leisure-kit keyword: blacksheep



### CATCHING THE CRAZY WAY

Just arrived in the UK, and distributed by Flicx is the new 'A' frame design Crazy Catch. Crazy Catch is a reaction trainer rebound net with a difference. A 'sane side' provides the player with a typical predictable ball rebound, an 'insane side' produces an unpredictable ball return similar to the sort of swirling dipping swerving catches players often have to take whilst playing ball games. Invented by Andrew Sinclair, son of ex-New Zealand cricketer Ian Sinclair, Crazy Catch is currently being used by Grant Compton, fitness coach with the South African cricket team, focusing on the team's hand-eye coordination.

leisure-kit keywords: crazy catch



## BALANCEMASTER'S IFI

The Mark II BalanceMaster lower limb exerciser has been awarded level two accreditation by Inclusive Fitness Equipment (IFI). The stage two accreditation is part of the IFI's Equipment Research and Development Programme, which involves consultation with disabled people, fitness equipment suppliers and a range of other health and fitness professionals. The scheme aims to ensure disabled customers' needs are fully met by the equipment in question, and IFI Stage Two Equipment Standards were brought in to replace Stage One in September 2007. The machine has been upgraded with improvements that include embossed control buttons to assist partially sighted users, plus additions such as high-visibility step markers.

leisure-kit keyword: **balancemaster**



## TWININGS' OPTIONS

Options are launching a new range of coffees aimed at those who want a hot low-calorie drink. Made from real coffee with just over 60 calories per cup, Options Café Coffee comes in three different flavours: 'Dreamy Cappuccino', 'Luscious Latte' and 'Melting Mocha'. Unsweetened and with no Hydrogenated Vegetable Oils, the coffees require only hot water for what is described as a deliciously frothy and creamy, low calorie café coffee. Available in single serve 14g sachets in packs of 26, the range is said to be ideal for self-service occasions out of home, including staff catering sites, leisure, conferencing and hotels. The coffees complement Options' existing hot chocolate range, available in flavours including Belgian Chocolate and 'Mint Madness'.

leisure-kit keyword: **twining**



## ZIGZAG CLIMB THE WALL

ZigZag's new Sportwall was launched at this year's Leisure Industry Week. The Sportwall Performance-PT is said to be the next generation in high performance individual and team training for both fitness and sports. As with ZigZag's original Sportwall, points are scored against the clock by zapping the lights on the panels. Players must also simultaneously keep track of a ball, targets, sounds, scores and a time clock, earning extra points for accuracy, skill, speed, cardiovascular stamina and team co-operation.

The Performance-PT version is further geared for specific sport training, including tennis, baseball, football, basketball, hockey, volleyball and lacrosse. The new Sportwall works across three panels, offering 21 targets, two scoreboards and a time clock. It has 42 remote control-driven single and two player games, as well as a speed game option, and can work as either a single or two station group-training machine.

leisure-kit keyword: **zigzag**



## THE OPTION TO MAKE YOUR OWN MUSIC

From OptiMusic comes the real-time multi-media control system, designed for use anywhere from theme parks to nightclubs. By breaking a beam of colored light, or using any type of sensor, users can interact with the environment around them. This could be creating music in real-time to dance to, playing interactive games, creating environments that respond to different choices made, or triggering information videos or graphics. The system comes ready with interactive content, but can also be a 'blank canvas' offering in-house updates of content at ease. OptiMusic have had contracts awarded to them from the likes of Parc Futuroscope, Madame Tussauds, USA, and the Maritime Museum, Liverpool.

leisure-kit keyword: **optimusic**

leisure-kit.net

For more information, or to contact any of these companies, log on to [www.leisure-kit.net](http://www.leisure-kit.net) and type the company name under 'keyword search'



### FEELING THE 4D EFFECTS

UK-based 4D effects theatre and simulation company Simworx has announced the sale of a 4D effects theatre to Drayton Manor Theme Park. Due to open at the beginning of the 2009 season, the new, 152-seat theatre will be housed in an existing building which Drayton Manor will adapt for the purpose. Simworx will provide a Christie high definition projection system to present the 3D imagery, along with special effects lighting and the company's Dimensions 4D effects seats.

In addition to the familiar seat movements, numerous special effects will be incorporated into the attraction to help create the experience. These include using water sprays, air blasts, leg ticklers, various aromas, low smoke and bubbles. Drayton Manor is intending to have the capacity to allow over 600 people an hour through the theatre.

leisure-kit keyword: simworx



### HARNESSING HEALTH

Zephyr Technology Ltd has announced the release of its BioHarness Team System. The system means that coaches and trainers can now monitor the physiology of up to 64 of their athletes in the field, in real-time, during training and in games. Enabling coaches to test and monitor fitness and fatigue in their athletes via anaerobic thresholds, the system is able to provide real-time wireless feedback and can help with the setting and monitoring of training and recovery programs.

The extra visibility made possible by measuring multiple vital signs over and above simple heart rate is giving coaches a tool to help them avoid over training or under training their athletes, and even in the prevention of critical player welfare issues such as heat stroke.

leisure-kit keyword: zephyr



### ICY TIMES FOR THE UK

Having swept the Far East and more recently the USA, shave ice products are now available in the UK under the brand name Hawaiian Ice. Shave ice is produced by a specialised machine – being sold under exclusive licence from Shave Ice Ltd in the UK – which shaves ice cubes into the consistency of snow. This is then collected in a 'flower cup' and flavoured with a variety of syrups to make a refreshing and colourful product which is eaten with a straw-spoon.

Making Hawaiian Ice involves putting ice cubes into the machine, waiting about 10 seconds for the shaving to take place and then introducing the flavours straight from the bottle. Hawaiian Ice will be competing with traditional ice creams, iced lollies and slush drinks and Shave Ice Ltd is initially aiming at mobile traders, full time or seasonal caterers and managers of leisure venues.

leisure-kit keywords: shave ice



### SAVING WATER AND MONEY WITH ENVIROFLOW

Enviroflow Solutions has unveiled a new anti-bacterial, water-saving shower head. Designed to protect against bacteria and viruses, the Ag+ shower head is also claimed to cut water and energy bills by up to 50 per cent without impacting performance. The Ag+ works by using fragments of silver within the plastic to repel any form of bacteria from forming on the surface of the shower head. Water is also emptied from the shower head via a small hole used for the aeration process, rather than being retained in the head to become stagnant. Simply screwing into an existing shower fixture, the Ag+ is easy to install and maintain.

leisure-kit keyword: enviroflow



## KEEP AN EYE ON SPORT

Mitsubishi Electric, official HD-TV and outdoor video display provider of the PGA Tour has supplied 11 additional Diamond Vision LED high-definition scoreboards for PGA Tour events in the USA. The custom-built Mitsubishi Electric scoreboards made their debut at The Players Championship in May 2007, providing a mixture of animations, personal player profiles including images, graphics and action shots, all linked to the Tour's ShotLink real-time scoring system.

Closer to home, Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club's new Diamond Vision screen made its international debut at Trent Bridge (pictured) for the third Test Match between England and New Zealand. The screen forms a central feature of the new £8.2m Bridgford Road development and is reported to be a first for a cricket ground in the UK.

leisure-kit keyword: mitsubishi



## SUMMIT DOUBLE UP

Summit Steel used its new Double SmarTmast 3 structures for the first time as one of three large video screen supports for the London leg of the 2008 Red Bull Air Race.

The new structure is designed to hang two screens at 90 degrees to one another in a V shape. The Double SmarTmast 3 can go up to 10 metres in height and is suitable for screen sizes of up to 30sq m. With an extended base and increased ballast, the SmarTmast 3 can house a screen up to 52sq m.

The structure is claimed to be able to withstand winds up to 50mph, and experienced a strong breeze gusting up to 35mph the day before the race. In addition to the double SmarTmast 3, the company also erected two of its standard single SmarTmast 3 screen towers.

leisure-kit keywords: summit steel



## BE TAUT WITH A G BARR

Barr Soft Drinks has relaunched the TAUT sports drink brand. TAUT is available in three isotonic flavours – Goji and Pomegranate, Orange and Mandarin, and Cranberry and Blackberry – and is said to be the only natural sports drink in the UK.

TAUT is formulated with only natural ingredients and contains no preservatives, artificial sweeteners, flavours, colours or stabilisers / emulsifiers, with the three isotonic variants containing no salts. According to Barr, 20,000,000 of the UK's population are active in sports and exercise, but only half of these regularly drink sports drinks because they either don't like the taste.

In addition, a fourth variant, TAUT Endurance, comes in Salted Lemon flavour. It is formulated with a higher level of salts than other sports drinks and is designed for those who take on higher intensity sporting activities.

leisure-kit keywords: a g barr



## JUMPING IN WITH BOTH HANDS

UK distributor Green Planet Solutions has just unveiled the newly improved Veltia hand dryer. Said to be 80 per cent more energy efficient than traditional models, it uses a high-speed air micro stream to draw in cold air to dry both sides of the hands in 10 to 15 seconds. In addition, an anti-bacterial protection technology called

Microban is now built into every Veltia unit to fight off bacteria, mould and mildew that cause stains, odour and deterioration. The Veltia – which measures 617cm high, 300cm wide and 195cm deep – is available in nine standard colours, while orders of 10 and over can be colour matched to a colour of choice.

leisure-kit keyword: veltia

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# Benjamin Barber

The US political theorist tells Magali Robathan why his work helping empower citizens to regenerate Peterborough is a career highlight and why acting as special adviser to Bill Clinton taught him a few lessons

## “ Once they realised they shared aspirations a lot became possible ”

### What has been the highlight of your career?

One of the highlights has been getting involved with Perception Peterborough, which is a very interesting project.

Peterborough is a town with a lot of assets, but it was like a powerful aeroplane that was sitting on the ground and no-one had turned on the engine.

There were developers, artists and cultural people, good people on the council [interested in regenerating the town], but they weren't connected to one another.

Through earlier regeneration projects and the Perception Peterborough project they became aware of one another and the fact they shared an ambition and a sense of the possibilities for the town. Once they realised the resources available to them and that they shared aspirations, a lot became possible.

### Why is this a highlight?

It's a lesson in how we empower ourselves when we work together.

I have worked with President Clinton, Colonel Gaddafi and the German Social Democratic party, but real democracy works bottom up, not top down. When you work with leaders you're not really working with democracy. When you work with citizens, community organisations and local municipal governments you feel as if you're really going to where democracy begins. The truth is we find our individual power in the social and community relationships we form when we work together with others.

Peterborough is a good example of a place which, on the way to community self empowerment, is improving the lives of individuals and making a claim for the town and its economic viability.

## “ It was a reminder that democracy is not about who's right or wrong ”

### What career experience has taught you a lesson?

When I agreed to be an informal adviser to President Clinton [looking at long term strategic issues for the Democratic Party], I had the notion that I might make some fundamental difference.

Of course the truth is that advisers don't do that. In the end presidents and prime ministers do what they want based on their ideology, on their immediate cabinet, the party and so on. In a democracy it's the people who go out and get the votes who make the decisions.

### What did you learn from it?

It was a reminder to me that democracy is not about expert advice or about who's right or wrong, it's about accountability and responsibility to citizens, who have the ultimate power.

Democracy is about empowering the people who get elected, and while they will, if they are prudent, try to seek out good advice, in the end it's their responsibility to make decisions, and they will suffer the electoral consequences if they make the wrong decisions. It was a lesson in democratic modesty.

### PERCEPTION PETERBOROUGH

Perception Peterborough is a regeneration project which is being facilitated by partners including Peterborough City Council, Arts Council England and the Museums Libraries and Archives Council.

In a recent four-day workshop event, international creative practitioners, cultural leaders, academics and key strategists joined stakeholders to envision the creative potential of Peterborough's growth over the next 15 to 20 years.

The key themes considered to be important to Peterborough's regeneration included the improvement of public spaces, travel, housing and the environment. Part of the vision for the town involves positioning Peterborough as an 'eco capital'.

### Why did you get involved with Perception Peterborough?

I'm an associate of Haring Woods Associates, who are acting as consultants to the project, and they asked me if I wanted to be involved.

As an intellectual and scholar who cares deeply about democratic theory and citizenship, it seemed a great venue in which to examine those issues and see if my faith in the possibilities of community action and cooperation actually works.

I'm particularly attracted to the way in which community building, social capital and people cooperating can empower individuals, groups and towns.

### What are the aims of Perception Peterborough?

The simple aim is to make it clear that Peterborough is a city with a lively and important future that can play a role in shaping the region and can be a great place to live. ●

# Diary Dates

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**The Sustainability Awards**

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**Venue Innovation Day 2008**

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