

# leisure opportunities

March 2021 Issue 789

Your careers & recruitment partner

## Parliament debates Work Out to Help Out

The UK parliament will debate the merits of a Work Out to Help Out scheme, designed to offer subsidised access to health clubs and leisure centres across the country.

The debate – led by MP, Nick Fletcher – will take place today (22 March), at the House of Commons at 6.15pm and can be viewed on the official UK Parliament Youtube channel.

A petition calling for the initiative – started by HCM magazine editor, Liz Terry MBE – has so far attracted nearly 230,000 signatures and received widespread support from the physical activity sector. The petition also called for gyms to open first after lockdown.

Those asking the government to introduce the scheme include gym chain Pure Gym, wearable fitness brand Myzone, Barry's UK co-founder Sandy Macaskill and a plethora of independent operators, such as Mo Chaudry.

Among the most vocal supporters of the scheme has been former England rugby star James Haskell and



■ The scheme is designed to get people more active by helping them access facilities

industry campaigner and independent gym owner Nick Whitcombe.

"There are many ways how 'Work Out to Help Out' would benefit the entire country, but the one that would yield the clearest, immediate results would be the subsidising of gym memberships," Whitcombe said.

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)



**There are many ways  
Work Out to Help Out  
would benefit the country**

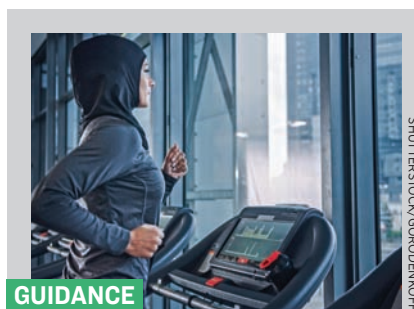
Nick Whitcombe



**Fitness industry with  
unanswered questions**

ukactive disappointed with  
lack of support in Budget

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## Budget leaves fitness industry with unanswered questions, says **Huw Edwards**

**T**he Budget announcement has left the UK's physical activity sector with "unanswered questions" and vowing to continue to fight for additional support, says Huw Edwards, CEO of ukactive.

Edwards said the lack of targeted help would put the future of some fitness facilities and businesses "under threat".

"The Budget statement falls short in confirming the necessary financial support required for the survival and recovery of our nation's gyms, pools and leisure centres," Edwards said.

"It's important to acknowledge the broad measures of support open



■ Edwards questions why VAT wasn't cut for the fitness sector

**"There remain unanswered questions on a number of crucial areas, including financial support for back-dated rent"**

to all sectors, in the shape of extended furlough support and continued business rates relief.

"We also cautiously welcome the introduction of the restart grants for gyms and other

businesses, however, we will require further details of the eligibility of all of our members to access this support and its scale.

"But the lack of further measures of support for gyms and leisure centres places their survival and recovery at great risk.

"There is no evident reason why the VAT reduction has not been extended to our sector, which has been hit equally as hard as other sectors.

"Alongside this decision, there remain unanswered questions on a number of crucial areas, including financial support for back-dated rent."

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

## 71,000 new health and fitness apps launched in 2020, estimates App Annie's **Lexi Sydow**



APP ANNIE

■ Sydow said the number of health and fitness apps created in 2020 was 13 per cent more than in 2019

**M**obile data and analytics provider App Annie has released its State Of Mobile 2021 report, in which the company estimates that more than 71,000 new health and fitness apps were launched in 2020.

App Annie reports that this figure was up 13 per cent on 2019, comprising 24,000 apps on iOS and 47,000 on Google Play.

While January usually sees the highest number of downloads for health

**"In the new normal of 2021, home will remain the epicentre of our social, working and wellness lives"**

and fitness apps, App Annie found that in 2020, unsurprisingly, it was April, not January, that had the biggest spike in downloads of health and fitness apps globally at 276 million, up 80 per cent year over year.

This clearly coincided with the point at which most countries were going into lockdown as a result of the global pandemic.

Lexi Sydow, senior market insights manager for App Annie, commented on what these findings mean for this year.

"In the new normal of 2021, home will remain the epicentre of our social, working and wellness lives – with mobile driving an acceleration of 43 per cent in 'at-home' activities."

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# ULTIMATE GROUP FITNESS SOLUTION



## Planet Fitness chief executive **Chris Rondeau** optimistic over gym sector's future outlook

People placing increased emphasis on their physical fitness, the advances made in digital fitness and the opportunities arising from a reshaped real estate landscape will help the fitness industry recover from the pandemic, according to Planet Fitness CEO Chris Rondeau.

Rondeau said that the company has already seen the green shoots of recovery during the first weeks of 2021.

"We've successfully weathered the challenges created by COVID-19 thus far," Rondeau said.

"We're encouraged with our start to 2021, as we have seen net member growth and



PLANET FITNESS

■ Rondeau said the group has seen net member growth in 2021

**"We're increasingly optimistic about growth opportunities as the vaccine roll out continues and consumers return to daily activities"**

improved usage, which we believe is a testament to our messaging and marketing efforts. While we anticipate

the operating environment to remain volatile and unit growth to be modest in the near-term, we're increasingly

optimistic about our growth opportunities as the vaccine continues to rollout and consumers increasingly return to daily activities, such as bricks and mortar fitness.

"This includes capitalising on industry consolidation and more favourable real estate trends which we believe will emerge over the next several years to expand our store footprint and evolve our technological capabilities to enhance our digital engagement."

Announcing its Q4 2020 results, Planet Fitness reported a 30 per cent decrease in revenue for the three months to 31 December 2020.

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

## **Sarah Storey** part of team developing plans to create first Active Neighbourhood in Sheffield



SHUTTERSTOCK / DONNA GARDNER

■ Paralympic champion Storey is the Active Travel Commissioner for the Sheffield City Region

Multiple Paralympic champion Sarah Storey is part of a team developing plans to turn an area north of Sheffield City Centre into an Active Neighbourhood – an environment which promotes physical activity.

The proposals for the Kelham and Neepsend area include encouraging exercise, improving sustainable travel and creating safer travel routes into and around the area – especially for walking and cycling.

**"It's fantastic to see the plans for this ambitious scheme being shared"**

As Sheffield City Region's active travel commissioner, Storey plays a key role in the planning.

"It's fantastic to see the plans for this ambitious scheme being shared," she said.

"Sheffield City Council has done a brilliant job in including the first Dutch-style roundabout and developing connected

routes from the trial scheme that was introduced at Kelham Island last year.

"Connected and continuous infrastructure, with priority crossings for people walking and cycling, ensure journeys via active modes no longer have to suffer the usual delay and inconvenience, and are crucial to enabling people to leave cars behind."

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FIBO

■ Frank confirmed FIBO will take place from 4-7 November 2021

**"We plan to combine both physical and digital components to enable the entire industry to participate in the trade show"**

## Silke Frank: FIBO 2021 moves to November, normal service will resume in 2022

The world's largest fitness trade fair, FIBO, has been rescheduled to November.

The event will take place at the Koelnmesse exhibition centre in Cologne, Germany, from 4-7 November, having initially been scheduled for 24-27 June.

The theme of the FIBO show will be very much on the future of the fitness industry, with elements of the show highlighting the solutions available to a post-lockdown health and wellness industry.

These include new studio and training concepts, as well as digital and other growth opportunities.

Silke Frank, event director of FIBO, said: "Fitness is

recognised by the medical corps as an indispensable part of the overall health and wellness of the population.

"Together with our partners, we will provide concrete answers for not only fitness studios and trainers, but the entire industry can ensure its economic success in the long term after the COVID crisis has passed."

FIBO will kick off – on 3 November – with the European Health Futures Forum, the most important international congress for top decision-makers in fitness.

FIBO has confirmed to HCM, its media partner, that the 2022 event will move back to its traditional slot of 7 - 10 April 2022.

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

## leisure opps

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UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

## UCL's **Dr Daisy Fancourt**: less exercise and more TV leading to decline in mental health

**A**pproaching half of the UK population (40 per cent) are exercising less during the current lockdown than during the first in early 2020, while one in five is watching television, streaming films and gaming more.

The figures come from the ongoing *UCL COVID-19 Social Study*, conducted by University College London (UCL), which also shows that only 13 per cent of people are exercising more now than during previous lockdowns.

**"A drop in exercise is a cause for concern, as it can boost not just physical, but also mental wellbeing"**

The study's lead author, Dr Daisy Fancourt (UCL Epidemiology & Health Care) said: "It is not surprising that the current lockdown has seen fewer people exercising than the first, taking place as it does during the winter months, but this is still a cause for concern, as exercise can boost not just physical, but also mental wellbeing.

"The reduction in time spent on hobbies and volunteering can partially be explained by the increased time spent working, but also hints that the novelty of increased free time that came with the first lockdown has worn thin among much of the population, with many turning towards television and gaming to fill their time."

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

■ The study by Dr. Fancourt and her colleagues was funded by the Nuffield Foundation with additional support from Wellcome and UK Research and Innovation

## **Tanni Grey-Thompson**: lockdown hitting women's health and widening gender gap

**T**he physical and mental health of women in the UK has been put under unprecedented pressure by the pandemic, according to Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson.

The paralympic legend and chair of industry body, ukactive, said that women not only face an increased workload and less leisure time – but the closure of gyms and leisure centres means that they also have had fewer opportunities to exercise.

"The closure of fitness and leisure facilities has had a profound effect on women," she said.

"They make up 54 per cent of gym members in the UK,



UKACTIVE

■ 54 per cent of gym members are women, Grey-Thompson said

**"The closure of fitness and leisure facilities during the lockdowns has had a profound effect on women"**

with group workouts and swimming central to activity.

"A massive 76 per cent of attendees at group

classes are women, with the three most popular workouts being: indoor cycling; aerobics; and yoga.

"Furthermore, the most popular activity across the leisure and fitness sector is swimming, accounting for 42 per cent of all visits, with women making up 53 per cent of swimming visits – and increasing with age.

"Accordingly, the high demand for group sessions and swimming has led to a disproportionate reduction in activity for women.

"The reduction in physical activity during lockdown is, of course, driven by a number of factors – including the access to facilities and the range of activities on offer.

"But many of these factors disproportionately affect women."

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)



For email use:  
[fullname@leisuremedia.com](mailto:fullname@leisuremedia.com)



■ Stephanie Linnartz (L) and Anthony Capuano (R)

## Marriott appoints **Anthony Capuano** as CEO and **Stephanie Linnartz** as president

**M**arriott International's Board of Directors has announced Anthony Capuano has been appointed CEO and joined the company's Board of Directors, effective immediately.

Prior to the appointment, Capuano was Marriott's group president, global development, design and operations services. He's spent 26 years at the company, having worked his way up from an initial start in the Market Planning and Feasibility team.

The Board of Directors has also announced that Stephanie

Linnartz, previously group president, consumer operations, technology and emerging businesses, has been appointed president, effective immediately.

Capuano's and Linnartz's appointments follow the unexpected passing of Marriott President and CEO Arne Sorenson on 15 February, 2021.

"Tony has played a critical role in Marriott's growth over the last decade," said J W Marriott, Jr, chair of Marriott's Board.

"He'll be a terrific leader as we continue to advance our growth strategy."

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**"Tony will be a terrific leader as we continue to advance our growth strategy"**

J W Marriott, chair of Marriott's Board



Editorial director  
**Liz Terry**  
 +44 (0)1462 431385



Publisher  
**Jan Williams**  
 +44 (0)1462 471909



Publisher  
**Astrid Ros**  
 +44 (0)1462 471911



Head of news  
**Tom Walker**  
 +44 (0)1462 431385



Assistant editor  
**Megan Whitby**  
 +44 (0)1462 471906



Head of digital  
**Tim Nash**  
 +44 (0)1462 471917

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## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

# Advice published on tackling inequalities

A new guide looks to offer local level practitioners and commissioners – as well as those working in physical activity – help identify and break down barriers preventing people from taking part in exercise.

Called *Understanding and addressing inequalities in physical activity*, the document presents the findings of a review, analysis and research aimed at understanding the challenges and opportunities for increasing physical activity across inequality groups.

Published by Public Health England, the guidance identifies three major themes for practitioners to

consider, in order to help get the public more active.

These are to examine the enablers and barriers to activities, while identifying opportunities; community consultation, engagement, and partnership; and adopting a holistic approach for protected characteristics and intersectionality.

“There is a wide range of evidence-based interventions which aim to increase population based physical activity,” said Jessica Jackson, one of the guidance’s authors.

“However, evidence suggests that many of the interventions exacerbate inequalities.”

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)



SHUTTERSTOCK/GORODENKOFF

■ The guidance includes recommendations for practitioners



**The evidence suggest that many of the interventions which aim to increase physical activity actually exacerbate inequalities**

Jessica Jackson

## NEW OPENING

# Colchester's 76-acre Sports Park prepares for launch



YOUTUBE/ NHS NORTH EAST ESSEX CCG



**The facility will offer residents opportunities to get physically active**

Mark Cory

Construction work has been completed on the £29m Sports Park project in Colchester.

The new facility is due to open on 26 April 2021 – dependent on COVID-19 restrictions – and will be operated by Leisure World Colchester.

The vast, 76-acre sports and leisure facility features a fully floodlit one-mile closed-cycle track and a learn to ride facility, alongside two 3G sports pitches and seven natural grass rugby pitches.

Forming a part of Colchester's Northern Gateway development, the facility also houses a large fitness suite,



R G CARTER/NORTHERN GATEWAY

■ The facility will house a large health club

equipped by Technogym, exercise and dance studios, an interactive indoor cycling studio, meeting rooms and a café.

Mark Cory, leader of Colchester Borough Council, said: “The completion of this facility marks a huge milestone towards our vision to give all of our residents opportunities to get active.”

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)



RESEARCH

## Body fat now 'killing more people than smoking'



UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW



**The prevalence of obesity has increased in England and Scotland**

Jill Pell

Excess body fat and obesity are likely to have contributed to more deaths in England and Scotland than smoking since 2014, according to new research from the Institute of Health and Wellbeing at the University of Glasgow.

While anti-smoking campaigning has seen the percentage of deaths attributable to smoking fall from 23.1 per cent in 2003 to 19.4 per cent in 2017, deaths attributable to excess body fat and obesity have increased from 17.9 per cent to 23.1 per cent in the same time frame. The figures come from a study called Changes



SHUTTERSTOCK/LIGHTFIELD STUDIOS

■ Obesity accounts for nearly a quarter of all deaths

over 15 years in the contribution of adiposity and smoking to deaths in England and Scotland, published in the journal BMC Public Health.

Professor Jill Pell, the corresponding study author, said: the prevalence of smoking has fallen in the UK.

"At the same time the prevalence of obesity has increased."

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

RESEARCH

## Low association between gyms and COVID-19 in 2020

Data shows that for every 100,000 visits to UK gyms and leisure centres during 2020, only 1.7 people went on to test positive for COVID-19.

In addition to this being an exceptionally low figure, there is no evidence that transmission took place in gyms.

Released by industry body, ukactive, the data is based on more than 75 million facility visits across the UK, from the initial reopening of gyms in July 2020 to the end of December 2020, before the third national lockdown began in England at the start of January 2021.



SHUTTERSTOCK/JACOB LUND

■ People using gyms reported very low levels of COVID



**There's no evidence that transmission occurred at the gym**

Liz Terry

The results show that while the case rate for the UK's general population rose consistently over the time period, the prevalence of the virus in people using gyms remained extremely low.

Liz Terry, editor of *Leisure Opps*, said: "It's vital to stress that even where gym users have contracted the virus, there is no evidence that transmission occurred in the gym."

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

## Freedom Leisure to run New Forest's leisure centres

New Forest District Council in the UK has chosen leisure trust Freedom Leisure to manage the region's leisure facilities.

Freedom Leisure beat two other unnamed management firms to win the contract, which will see it take over the operations of leisure centres in Lymington, New Milton, Ringwood, Applemore and Totton.

The deal was approved by the council on 25 February.

"As a not-for-profit, Freedom Leisure will reinvest all surpluses in support of shared objectives," said Councillor Mark Steele.

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

## TOURISM

# Review launched into English DMOs

The government has announced an independent review to assess the way destination management organisations (DMO) operate across England.

The review, led by Nick de Bois, chair of the VisitEngland Advisory Board, will look at how DMOs are funded and structured – and how they perform their roles.

The review will establish whether there may be “a more efficient and effective model” for supporting English tourism at the regional level.

For the review, de Bois will be supported by the DCMS.

“The review team will speak to as many English DMOs as possible, ensuring consultation with a diverse

and representative spread of these organisations,” the DCMS said in a statement.

“The review will need to make recommendations about whether DMOs might be structured or funded differently, and if so how any proposals might maximise post-COVID-19 recovery and long-term success.”

According to Ken Robinson CBE, former chair of the Tourism Alliance, “the industry is keen to engage with the review, which is very welcome and urgent”.

“It was essential and called for even before the severe impacts of Covid on domestic and international tourism,” Robinson told *Leisure Opps*.

**READ MORE [ONLINE](#)**



SHUTTERSTOCK/PAOLAVI

■ DMOs have a leading role in marketing regional tourism



**“**  
**The review was essential even before the impact of Covid**

Ken Robinson

## VISITOR ATTRACTIONS

# Merlin reveals new Croc Drop attraction at Chessington



**With the once fertile Nile laying stagnant, riders must take part in a ceremony to banish the evil spirits from Sobek, plunging into the crocodile’s soul and freeing the waters back into the Nile**

Merlin Entertainments

Merlin Entertainments has revealed details of the new Croc Drop attraction, set to open at its Chessington World of Adventures Resort theme park near London, UK this year.

Supplied by Italian ride manufacturer SBF Visa, the drop tower will form part of the park’s Forbidden Kingdom area and will have the slogan of “Brave the drop, release the curse”.

The tower will plunge riders 25m into the giant jaws of a crocodile, Sobek, the ancient Egyptian Crocodile God.

“With the once fertile Nile laying stagnant, riders must take part



MERLIN ENTERTAINMENTS

■ The drop tower has been supplied by SBF Visa

in a ceremony to banish the evil spirits from Sobek, plunging into the crocodile’s soul and freeing the waters back into the Nile,” Merlin says.

Croc Drop is set to open alongside the rest of the park when pandemic restrictions are lifted – currently set for 12 April.

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## COVID-19

# Scottish gyms could open on 26 April

Gyms and leisure centres in Scotland are set to open on 26 April, provided that the rate of coronavirus infections keeps falling across the country.

Revealing the Scottish government's roadmap out of lockdown, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said the reopening of gyms and sports facilities would be accompanied with people being allowed to exercise in small groups outdoors again.

"From 26 April we will begin to reopen the economy and society in the more substantial way that we are all so longing for," Sturgeon said.

"It is important to stress, of course, that all of this

depends on us continuing to suppress the virus."

Sturgeon made her announcement a day after Boris Johnson revealed that gyms in England would reopen on 12 April.

Elsewhere in the UK, gyms and indoor leisure facilities are currently closed in Northern Ireland, with a review on lockdown plans scheduled for 18 March.

Of the home nations, the picture on gym and leisure centre openings is the most unclear in Wales, where mixed messages from the devolved government has infuriated those working in the fitness and physical activity sector.

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)



SHUTTERSTOCK/H022

■ Gyms in Scotland are set to follow English ones out of lockdown



SHUTTERSTOCK/LUDOVIC FARINE



**We'll begin to reopen the economy in a more substantial way**

Nicola Sturgeon

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

# £10m fund will open school sports facilities after hours



HM GOVERNMENT



**This targeted investment will build on existing funding**

Gavin Williamson

The government has pledged to invest more than £10m to open school sports and swimming facilities in England to the public in the evenings, at weekends and during holidays.

The funding, to be distributed through Sport England, has been designed to ensure children have access to activity, even in areas with limited public facilities.

"This targeted investment in selected schools will build on existing funding to help schools open their facilities outside school hours, and encourage pupils to be more physically active,"



SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ESB PROFESSIONAL

■ School will open their facilities to the public

said the UK government's education secretary, Gavin Williamson.

The investment is part of the government's £1bn School Rebuilding Programme, which will result in the construction of 50 new energy-efficient school buildings across the country.

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

**REDEVELOPMENT**

## Coventry's former IKEA site to become cultural centre



**The project would result in a major landmark in Coventry**

Darren Henley

Coventry, the UK City of Culture in 2021, wants to seize a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create an arts hub to establish the city as an international destination for culture.

Coventry City Council (CCC) has revealed multi-million pound plans to transform the IKEA building in the city into a visitor attraction showcasing some of the UK's greatest works of art.

The new national Collections Centre would be created through a partnership between CCC, Arts Council England's Arts Council Collection, Culture Coventry Trust and Coventry



COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL

■ The IKEA building is located in the city centre

University, in collaboration with the Coventry City of Culture Trust.

The plans would see CCC buy and convert the building to create a multi-purpose collections and cultural facility, contributing to a lasting physical, economic and cultural legacy from Coventry's tenure as City of Culture.

Darren Henley, CEO of Arts Council England said: "The project would result in a major landmark collection centre in Coventry."

**READ MORE ONLINE**

**TOURISM SECTOR**

## Tourism sector 'decimated' by pandemic

The UK's travel, tourism and visitor attractions markets have been "decimated" by COVID-19 – and remain under immense pressure.

Analysis published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reveals how the effect of the pandemic was immediate and has proven long-lasting.

Monthly air passenger arrivals to the UK fell from 6,804,900 in February 2020 to just 112,300 in April 2020 – a fall of 98.3 per cent within a month.

Even when venues and accommodation providers were allowed to reopen during the summer months, many struggled to reach profitable levels of business.

Greater London saw the largest fall in room occupancy of any English region, from 2019 to 2020, with just 20 per cent of rooms occupied in July 2020 – compared to 90 per cent in the same month in 2019.

Commenting on the figures, David Trunkfield, hospitality and leisure leader at PwC said: "The travel and tourism market has been decimated and remains under immense pressure.

"There remains uncertainty over the timing of any recovery, given the need for restrictions to be lifted and the virus to be contained so that people feel comfortable to travel."

**READ MORE ONLINE**



SHUTTERSTOCK/YAU MING LOW

■ As inbound tourism faltered, attractions were hit badly



PWC



**There remains uncertainty over the timing of any recovery**

David Trunkfield



A man with a beard and numerous tattoos on his arms and neck is shown from the chest up, wearing a light grey tank top. He is raising his right arm with his hand open, palm facing forward. His arm is covered in various tattoos, including a large rose, a skull, a key, and a banner that reads "REAL LIFE". Other people's arms are visible in the background, also raised, suggesting a group activity or class. The setting appears to be a bright, modern studio with large windows in the background.

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## SPAS

### Floating eco-wellness spa planned for Ashwicken Lake



**People have always been attracted to water for relaxation**

Richard Coutts

Baca Architects has submitted a scheme to transform an unused quarry lake and surrounding land into a unique eco-wellness resort centred on waterside living and water-based recreation.

The 80-hectare Ashwicken Lake site is situated in Norfolk and combines woodlands and wetlands with a one km square lake at its centre. A £35m investment by developer Norfolk Farm Leisure would see the site reimagined as a destination for staycations and day trips.

At its heart, the resort will feature the UK's first floating clubhouse complete



BACA ARCHITECTS

■ The resort will be an immersive natural retreat

with a luxury spa and swimming pool, encircled by 132 contemporary lodges – each with a mooring.

Richard Coutts, principal of Baca Architects, said: "People have always been attracted to water for relaxation, exercise and rejuvenation."

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

## DIGITAL FITNESS

### CIMSPA exerts control over online exercise delivery

CIMSPA has issued a new policy to help ensure fitness and physical activity training is delivered safely online.

*Delivering sport and physical activity online* has been designed to support individual and independent practitioners across the UK and covers live-streamed, pre-recorded, private and open sessions.

Guidance to practitioners covers areas such as:

- Being qualified to deliver the activity
- Insurance
- Risk assessment and participant disclaimers
- Ensuring safety of



SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ADAM PASTUKH

■ The policy is designed to aid safety of online training



LINKEDIN/DANIELLE PEEL



**There is the potential for harm if best practice isn't followed**

Danielle Peel

participants and practitioners

- Safeguarding
- Music licensing

Danielle Peel, head of development for CIMSPA, said: "Online delivery has been a growing trend for several years, and has been accelerated by COVID-19 restrictions. It can be a great solution for practitioners and customers alike, but there is the potential for harm if best practice isn't followed."

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

### EuropeActive and ukactive sign MoU for collaboration

EuropeActive and ukactive have signed a partnership agreement which will see the industry bodies work closer together following the UK's exit from the EU.

A new Memorandum of Understanding between the organisations outlines a joint mission of improving physical activity levels through the support and development of the sector.

Among the goals of the MoU is to ensure the organisations are equipped with the insight, knowledge and standards to meet the needs of the population "now and in the future".

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

## VISITOR ATTRACTIONS

## Plans revealed for Marble Arch attraction

A new visitor attraction at London's Marble Arch is set to anchor ambitious plans to reimagine the city's famous Oxford Street shopping district.

The planned Marble Arch Hill visitor attraction, designed by architects MVRDV, is part of plans to attract people back to Oxford Street following the coronavirus pandemic.

Subject to securing planning approval, the 25m-tall attraction will offer visitors views over the surrounding areas.

The design comprises a "hollowed-out mountain", based on a scaffolding structure and will look to redefine the connection

between Oxford Street and Hyde Park.

MVRDV's proposal for the installation takes inspiration from the history of the site. Marble Arch once marked the corner of Hyde Park, but in the 1960s new roads were added that turned the arch into a traffic island.

The design introduces a park-like landscape of grass and trees, and 'lifts' the recreated corner of Hyde Park to create the 25-metre-tall viewpoint.

"This project is a wonderful opportunity to give an impulse to a highly recognisable location in London," said MVRDV founding partner Winy Maas.

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)



■ The 25m-tall attraction will offer views over Hyde Park



**The project gives an impulse to a highly recognisable location**

Winy Maas

## ZOOS

## Indoor zoo, Plantasia, secures BIAZA membership

**Attaining BIAZA membership has been a goal for over half a decade – and when Parkwood took over, there was an objective to make Plantasia the best visitor attraction and zoo it could be**

Michael Colwill

Plantasia, a rainforest zoo in Swansea has been awarded provisional membership of the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA).

The visitor attraction, which is owned by Swansea Council and managed by leisure operator Parkwood, has more than 40 different species of animal.

Parkwood took over the management of the attraction in 2019, as part of plans to diversify its facility portfolio.

Plantasia first opened in 1990 but was closed in 2015 due to council cutbacks. The council agreed to



■ Parkwood took over managing the zoo in 2019

invest £1.1m in the zoo and appointed Parkwood to operate it in 2019.

"Attaining BIAZA membership has been a goal for over half a decade, and when Parkwood became the new operator, there was an objective to make it the best visitor attraction and zoo it could be," said Michael Colwill, Plantasia's zoo manager.

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)



## STADIUMS

### World's first entirely wooden stadium approved for use by



DALE VINCE/TWITTER



**Fab news today – and another small, but big step**

Dale Vince

Plans by Forest Green Rovers Football Club (FGRFC) to play its games at the world's first entirely wooden stadium have been approved by the English Football League (EFL).

Getting approval to host games at the proposed stadium clears another planning hurdle for the project, which would see a 5,000-seat venue built near the UK town of Eastington.

Plans for the stadium were first unveiled in 2015 and it is expected that the venue will open in 2022.

Designed by Zaha Hadid Architects (ZHA), the stadium will be built



ZAHA HADID ARCHITECTS/FOREST GREEN ROVERS FC

■ The stadium will be built entirely out of timber

entirely out of sustainably sourced timber, will generate renewable energy on-site and will include the creation of a nature reserve.

"Fab news today and another small but big step, as the EFL have approved the move to the new home," said Dale Vince, the owner of FGRFC and Ecotricity – the company driving the project.

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

## PUBLIC LEISURE

### 3d Leisure mobilises staff to deliver PE sessions

3d Leisure has put the current lockdown to good use, by stepping in to help schools with their PE provision.

As its fitness instructors, aren't able to work at 3d Leisure-managed facilities, the operator has mobilised them to help keep kids physically active, by delivering virtual group exercise classes in schools.

Paul Ramsay, 3d Leisure MD, told *Leisure Ops*: "The importance of exercise for children can't be underestimated and it's been widely reported how children's activity



3D LEISURE

■ 3d leisure delivering a PE session at a school



3D LEISURE



**With instructors unable to work on-site, we offer services to schools**

Paul Ramsay

levels have dropped off during the various lockdowns we've endured over the last 12 months.

"With a team of instructors currently unable to work on-site, we've used the opportunity to offer our services to local schools and provide free group exercise sessions for their kids.

"If you know a school that would benefit from the sessions, drop us a message."

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

### TSG and Clearent merge to form new Xplor platform

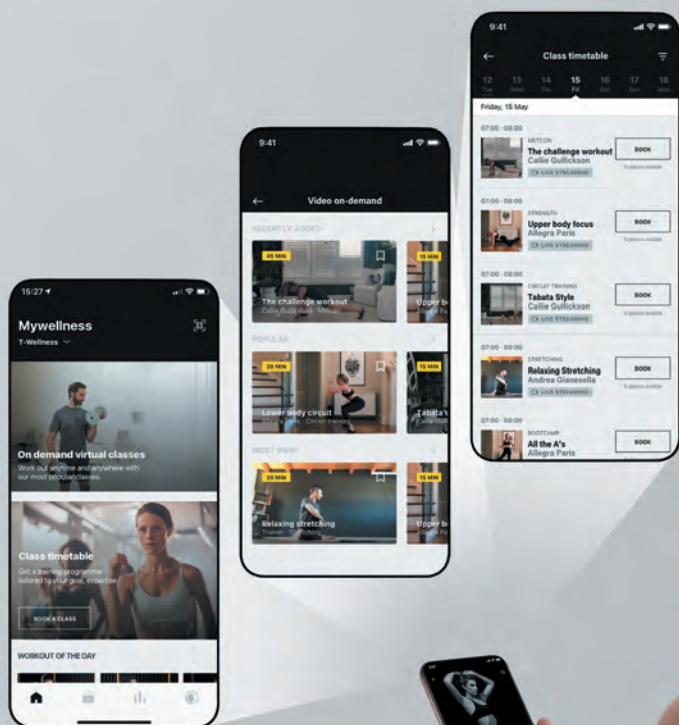
The merger of two tech firms will result in the creation of a business software company serving the wider fitness and boutique wellness industries.

Integrated payment solutions provider Clearent and Transaction Services Group (TSG), a provider of business management software and integrated payments specialising in the fitness industry, have joined forces to create a new company, Xplor Technologies.

Xplor will integrate software, payments, and commerce-enabling solutions with a cloud-based processing platform.

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

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# The Budget 2021

Government's targeted help for leisure industry includes  
£700m earmarked for sports and culture



Chancellor Rishi Sunak has unveiled an additional £700m funding boost for sports and culture, as part of plans to help the UK economy recover from the effects of the pandemic.

Announcing his Budget on 3 March, setting out the government's tax and spending plans for the year ahead, Sunak said sport will receive £300m worth of extra funding, with the likes of cricket, tennis and horse racing among those to benefit.

There will also be £25m worth of new funding to support grassroots football – which the government says will be enough to build "around 700 new pitches" across the UK. Football fans are also likely to welcome a promise to officially back a joint UK and Ireland bid to host the 2030 FIFA World Cup.

For arts and culture, an extra £300m will be added to the government's £1.57bn Culture Recovery Fund.

Museums and cultural bodies in England will receive £90m to keep going until they can open their doors.

A further £18.8m has been earmarked for community cultural projects, while another £77m allocated for similar initiatives in the devolved nations.

Meanwhile, elsewhere within the leisure sector, the hospitality and

The OBR forecasts that our economy will grow this year by 4 per cent, then 7.3 per cent in 2022





■ Chancellor Rishi Sunak said the economy would recover to pre-pandemic levels by mid-2022

SHUTTERSTOCK/CUBANKITE

## “ Sport will receive £300m worth of extra funding, with the likes of cricket, tennis and horse racing among those to benefit ”

tourism industries will continue to benefit from a reduced rate for VAT – at 5 per cent – for the next six months (up until 30 September).

After that, an interim rate of 12.5 per cent will come into force, running until April 2022, when the normal rate of VAT of 20 per cent will return.

Other measures introduced by the Chancellor, designed to support UK businesses, include:

- An extension to the Job Retention Scheme (or furlough) until the end of September 2021.
- Extension of the business rates holiday until the end of June 2020.
- Support for the self-employed (those who have sole trader status) will also be continued until September 2021.
- A new loan service will also be introduced, with businesses of any size being able to apply for loans

between £25,000 and £10m until the end of 2020. The government will guarantee these by 80 per cent.

■ Incentive payments for firms hiring apprentices will be doubled to £3,000. There will also be a £126m fund to help companies offer trainee shifts to apprentices.

Sunak said that, according to the latest figures from the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), the UK economy will return to pre-COVID levels by the middle of 2022 – six months sooner than initial estimates.

“The OBR forecasts that our economy will grow this year by 4 per cent, then by 7.3 per cent in 2022, by 1.7 per cent in 2023, 1.6 per cent in 2024 and 1.7 per cent in 2025,” he said.

“This follows the largest, most comprehensive and sustained economic shocks this country has ever faced –the coronavirus pandemic.” ●



SHUTTERSTOCK/ SUNSHINE SEEDS

■ There was further help in the Budget for some self-employed personal trainers and fitness instructors



This study will uncover how personal, psychological and situational factors can impact a soldier while training

Kristen Holmes, VP of Performance  
Science at WHOOP



## Armed with wearables

A brigade of US Army soldiers will be fitted with wearable fitness tech in order to assess the level of stress the endure



■ The wearables are normally used by performance and elite athletes

US Army paratroopers will be fitted with data-collecting wearables for six months, as part of a project to measure stress levels and examine the resiliency of soldiers.

Up to 1,000 paratroopers of the so-called “Spartan Brigade” – the nickname for the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division based in Alaska – will wear technology provided by human performance and fitness company WHOOP.

Using physiological data from the WHOOP wearables, the project looks to uncover insights that will create a blueprint for how soldiers train, fight, and manage stress in the most extreme military conditions.

The WHOOP Strap 3.0 hardware will measure daily strain, recovery





SHUTTERSTOCK/GETMILITARYPHOTOS

■ The project will provide insight into how soldiers can be better equipped to manage stress

## “ The data collected will include heart rate variability, resting heart rate, cardiovascular strain and respiratory rate ”

rates, sleep quality, and more as part of a six-month study in collaboration with the University of Queensland.

The health monitor is built to withstand the rigours of military use with a waterproof, unobtrusive design plus five-day battery life with on-the-go charging.

The research project will analyse personalised data, such as heart rate variability, resting heart rate, cardiovascular strain, and respiratory rate, which will be used to create a biometric baseline for the Spartan Brigade grounded in overall resilience, stress, and sleep quality.

Unlike blind studies, the participating paratroopers will have immediate access to their own data, as well as techniques to maximize recovery, and can make decisions using this feedback to optimise their personal performance.



WHOOP

■ The Whoop Strap 3.0 is able to gather a number of key training data

It is hoped that the project will provide more insight about individual physiology and the impacts of training in an extreme environment, so that soldiers will be better equipped to manage stress and ultimately, have higher readiness.

All leaders from the squad level, NCOs and above, will have access to their paratroopers' data, so they can adjust training and operational plans to maximise the health and readiness of their teams.

Kristen Holmes, VP of Performance Science at WHOOP and principle investigator on the study, said: “Previous research has typically focused on investigating stress in laboratory settings using standardised stress tasks.

“We are carrying this study out in the field to better understand how personal, psychological and situational factors can impact a soldier while training.” ●





Sustainability can be embedded in spa businesses for their long term progress and success

Lucy Brialey, co-founder,  
Sustainable Spa Association



## Sustainability at spas

A new report from the Sustainable Spa Association has shown how 33 per cent of spa businesses contribute to UN's 17 SDGs



SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/INGA IWANOVA

■ The study explored how spa businesses contribute to sustainability through measures such as water protocols

According to a recent survey conducted by The Sustainable Spa Association (SSA), just 33 per cent of spa businesses contribute towards the United Nations' 17 SDG Development Goals (SDGs).

The SDGs are included in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, agreed by 193 states, which provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.

The results follow the SSA's first survey in 2020 which received responses from 203 participants in 44 countries.

Questions explored a number of ways in which spa businesses have been contributing to sustainability, including people, policies, energy, water and waste protocols.



SHUTTERSTOCK/WK003MIKE

■ Results showed the biggest obstacle preventing sustainable practices in spas is difficulty finding suppliers with sustainable values (26 per cent)

## “ Sustainability is predominately about environment credentials, but also strengthens business credibility and transparency ”

Respondents were asked about the current level of understanding of environmental sustainability, attitudes towards and the important places on sustainable business practice, current levels of implementation, key drivers and obstacles.

Results showed that the biggest obstacle that prevents sustainable practices in spas is difficulty finding suppliers with sustainable values (26 per cent).

The next most popular answers were not sure where to start (16 per cent), lack of education for spa teams (14 per cent), too much conflicting information (nine per cent), difficulty engaging teams (five per cent), lack of time (five per cent) and it's too big a task (5 per cent).

“Sustainability can be embedded in spa businesses for their long term progress and success,” commented

### AN ACTION PLAN

Based on the findings, the SSA has drawn up an action plan on how to best shape its direction for 2021. It has identified a number of areas in which it will work:

- Accessible membership and education
- Recognised and trusted accreditation for spas
- Diplomas in spa sustainability for teams and management
- UN's 17 SDGs becoming naturally applied to spas
- Water, waste and energy management
- Emphasising the importance and an awareness of humanity, health and environment.

SSA co-founder Lucy Brialey. “Yes, sustainability is predominately about environment credentials but also strengthens business credibility and transparency. It's a healthy message that can be communicated to investors, spa professionals and guests in a way that shows commitment and quality assurance.”

Encouragingly, 84 per cent of respondents adopt energy-efficient practices, 75 per cent use energy from renewable sources, 76 have a water-saving and reduction strategy and 59 per cent have plastic reduction goals.

The survey response has helped the organisation identify key drivers to make sustainability an integral part of more spa business' culture, including a specific focus on how to measure and improve sustainable practice and providing accessible team education. ●

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