Fitness First announces debt deal

Health club operator Fitness First has signed a three-month waiver agreement with its key creditors to allow a comprehensive debt restructuring.

The deal will see most of the group’s debt wiped out, with two key creditors – Oaktree and Marathon – gaining more control of the business.

In a statement, Fitness First said: “During this three-month extension period, Oaktree and Marathon have agreed to work closely with Fitness First and its management to ensure that the company has the necessary working capital to continue to operate its facilities as normal and fulfil its obligations.”

Chris Stone, CEO of Fitness First, said: “Fitness First is a strong brand that offers excellent service to its members in a number of countries, and I am looking forward to working closely with all our stakeholders to ensure that appropriate finance is in place to allow us to prosper well into the future.”

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=y6W3l

Work to begin on St Ives leisure centre

Work on a £3.2m redevelopment of the One Leisure facility in St Ives, Cambridgeshire will begin in June 2012 after the project was given final approval by the local authority.

The redevelopment will include the opening of a new Pure Health and Wellbeing-branded spa facility and a new 150-station fitness suite, as well as a five-lane bowling alley. The Pure spa will have six treatment rooms.

The centre is operated by One Leisure, the leisure division of Huntingdonshire District Council. Details: http://lei.sr?a=D2a8g

DCMS to close after Olympics?

The coalition government is considering shutting down the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), according to Labour party deputy leader Harriet Harman.

Writing in London’s Evening Standard (ES), Harman said “there are well-sourced rumours” that the government sees DCMS as surplus to requirements after the 2012 Games.

Harman’s claims came on the same day that an influential conservative think tank suggested that scrapping the department would produce ‘huge savings’ for the government.

The Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) claims that closing the DCMS could save £1.6bn if all departmental spending ceased.

Jeremy Hunt is currently culture secretary at DCMS

The free market group also suggested that the savings on expenditure would give the government scope to cut taxes elsewhere. Details: http://lei.sr?a=W1J4y (ES) Details: http://lei.sr?a=T2D2o  (IEA)
Sports drinks tax plans questioned

Consumer groups and sports nutrition manufacturers and distributors have joined forces in a new alliance to call on chancellor George Osborne to abandon his plans for the introduction of VAT on sports nutrition products.

The alliance has written to Osborne after he announced in the Budget that some sports nutrition products will be subject to 20 per cent VAT with effect from 1 October.

The UK Specialist Sports Nutrition Alliance (UKSSNA) claims the tax would penalise consumers and deal a blow to the sports nutrition industry.

In a letter to the chancellor, the UKSSNA described the decision as “bizarre” and warned that the introduction of VAT could push consumers to the grey and unregulated market.

Chris Whitehouse, campaign director for UKSSNA, said: “Introducing VAT on these sports nutrition products will hit thousands of consumers in the pocket and undermine the growth of an entire industry but will generate little additional revenue for the Treasury.

“We strongly believe that it is unreasonable to tax consumers for products designed to ensure good health and nutrition.”

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=Fua0L

Green light for Brighton stadium expansion plans

Brighton and Hove Albion Football Club’s plans to expand the 22,000-seat Amex Stadium in East Sussex have been given the green light by the local authority.

The KSS Group-designed venue’s capacity will be increased to 30,750 over two phases of work. The first stage will see 5,000 seats added in time for the 2012-13 season and a further 500 by the end of December.

A second phase of work will result in the addition of the remaining seats next year.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=X4G7W

Sport Wales unveils community strategy

Sport Wales has launched its new sector-wide Community Sports Strategy, which aims to challenge the Welsh sector into accelerating its efforts to increase participation.

The organisation said it will be “far more targeted” with its resources going forward, while it plans to invest in partners looking to deliver more opportunities for children.

Organisations seeking to introduce informal or social versions of traditional sports and clubs that are already thriving but still look to grow are also among those set to benefit from the new strategy.

The launch of the strategy was attended by Welsh sports minister Huw Lewis, who has announced a further £9m of Lottery funding will be invested over the next three years.

Sport Wales chair Professor Laura McAllister said: “The new Community Sport Strategy sets out clear priorities to enable a dramatic shift in the range and number of people involved in local sport.”

Details: http://lei.sr?a=J9k3Y
SportsDock opens in east London

SportsDock, a new £21m complex to be used by Team USA as its training base during the 2012 Games, has opened at the University of East London's (UEL) Docklands Campus.

Canterbury-based architectural firm Clague are behind the design of the new facility, which was built by Denne Construction. The project was managed by Ball Hall.

A Precor-equipped fitness centre and offering cv equipment and free weights is among the facilities, along with two indoor arenas catering for a range of sports such as basketball.

Elsewhere, the complex incorporates two outdoor 3G five-a-side football pitches and dance studios, as well as a sports café, changing facilities and a sports injury clinic.

Meanwhile, Team USA has kitted out a strength and conditioning suite at SportsDock.

A new London 2012 motto – Inspire a generation – has been announced by organisers as part of celebrations marking the 100-day countdown until the Olympic Games.

The London Organising Committee of the 2012 Games (LOCOG) has also unveiled a giant set of Olympic rings under the Heathrow flight path at Kew Gardens as part of the celebrations on 18 April.

Meanwhile, LOCOG has confirmed the Red Arrows will perform a nine-ship flypast across the UK to coincide with the opening ceremony of the Games on 27 July.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=G2L0Y

Research uncovers school sports ‘warfare’

A new study carried out the Chance to Shine campaign has uncovered the extent of the “psychological warfare” experienced by children as young as eight-years-old while playing sport at school.

Chance to Shine – together with Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) – polled 1,250 kids aged eight-to-16-years-old, plus 1,010 parents of children from the same age group.

MCC head of cricket John Stephenson said: “The results from the survey highlight an alarming trend in school sport, which needs to be pro-actively addressed.”

More than two thirds of the children (68 per cent) had witnessed verbal abuse during school matches, while 66 per cent of parents had seen “different forms” of mental intimidation.

Meanwhile, 51 per cent of children surveyed admitted they had been a victim of taunts or threats, while 55 per cent had seen physical violence – a quarter of which had seen their team mate deliberately fouled.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=p7x7X

BISL/Oliver Wyman to produce new report

Business in Sport and Leisure (BISL) has partnered with Oliver Wyman, the international consulting firm, to produce its first report mapping the size of the UK’s leisure industry.

The inaugural BISL Oliver Wyman Leisure Industry Report is designed to outline the role that sport and leisure can play in supporting the UK economy’s “rehabilitation”.

The research will also support BISL’s political and media campaign to secure a “fairer deal” for commercial operators in the sector.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=U9a2D

Hunt calls for greater disability participation

Culture secretary Jeremy Hunt has used the government’s first Disability Sport Summit to urge the sector to do more to boost participation levels among disabled people.

Hunt urged governing bodies to use the 2012 Games to integrate disability sport provision into their respective Whole Sport Plans and attract more participants.

Sport England is to invest £8m from its Places People Play scheme to help remove some of the barriers preventing disabled people from taking part in sports.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=j9r4y

London 2012 marks 100-day Olympic countdown

A new London 2012 motto – Inspire a generation – has been announced by organisers as part of celebrations marking the 100-day countdown until the Olympic Games.

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Details: http://lei.sr?a=G2L0Y

Championship clubs to adopt financial rules

The Football League will extend its Financial Fair Play rules to all three divisions from next season, following the backing of the 24 npower Championship clubs.

Clubs in League One and League Two are already subject to the regulations, which were introduced after a review by the competition to curb unchecked spending.

The regulations contain a number of sanctions for clubs that exceed “defined limits” with regards to losses and shareholder equity investment.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=H7koF
New obesity campaign launches

Healthcare professionals have come together under the Academy of Royal Medical Colleges (AoRMC) to launch a new campaign to combat increasing levels of child and adult obesity.

The UK medical profession – including surgeons, psychiatrists, paediatricians and GPs – is aiming to tackle what it described as the “single greatest public health threat”.

A three-month evidence-gathering inquiry has marked the launch of the campaign in order to gather research and experience of actions that help reduce obesity.

Among the five main areas being investigated by AoRMC will be the actions that can be taken by individuals, which comprises exercise in addition to diet and “positive parenting”.

Fiscal incentives - including minimum pricing, personal incentives and taxation - is also one of the areas that will be investigated as part of the campaign’s inquiry.

AoRMC chair Professor Sir Neil Douglas said: “This won’t be just another report that sits on the shelf and gathers dust; it will form the bedrock of our ongoing activity."

Details: [http://lei.sr?a=X5I2M](http://lei.sr?a=X5I2M)

To read the opinions of industry experts on the arrival of virtual yoga and pilates classes in the UK from more industry experts, see Health Club Management 2012 Issue 3, p43.

Details: [http://lei.sr?a=e3i6x](http://lei.sr?a=e3i6x)

The campaign aims to be a driving force in the fight against UK obesity.

Three new locations for The Gym Group

The Gym Group is set to unveil three new locations this month (May) – in Ashford, Bournemouth and Luton – in a move which will expand its UK estate to 23 fitness clubs.

Matrix will provide more than 200 pieces of resistance and cv equipment at each of the new sites, which will span between 9,000sq ft (836sq m) and 15,000sq ft (1,394sq m).

The new sites will also offer members virtual classes, with the chain already trialling 24-hour virtual pilates and yoga at four other clubs.

John Treharne, the group’s CEO, said: “Over the next few years the fitness sector will experience more segmentation. Brands will have to work harder to establish themselves in the market and attract new members.”

Details: [http://lei.sr?a=t4u2f](http://lei.sr?a=t4u2f)

To read the opinions of industry experts on the arrival of virtual yoga and pilates classes in the UK from more industry experts, see Health Club Management 2012 Issue 3, p43.

Details: [http://lei.sr?a=t7w1u](http://lei.sr?a=t7w1u)

Construction milestone for Toxteth Fire Fit scheme

Work on the construction of Toxteth’s new £5.2m combined sports centre and fire station in Liverpool has reached a milestone after the final metal beams were put into place.

Wates Construction started work on the Toxteth Fire Fit project last year and is set to include a fitness gym, a dance studio, a combat sports room and a climbing wall.

Toxteth Fire Station is relocating to the Upper Hill Street site as part of the scheme. A sports hall is also planned for the complex.

Details: [http://lei.sr?a=t4u2f](http://lei.sr?a=t4u2f)
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Helen Rogers, GM The Thames Club, Middlesex.

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**£3m revamp for Brighton’s Withdean Sports Complex**

Brighton & Hove City Council is to invest £3m in improving the health and fitness facilities at Withdean Sports Complex.

The centre, which is owned by the council and run by Freedom Leisure, is to benefit from a new 125-station gym and a larger dance and group exercise studio.

The complex is currently operating at capacity for gym use and exercise classes and the improvements are part of the council’s plan to grow participation by nearly 70 per cent, attracting 1,000 new members. Read more: http://lei.sr?a=hlR3y

**Pure Gym to open second Wolverhampton location**

Pure Gym, the low-cost health club chain founded in 2009, is to continue its UK expansion with the opening of its second site in Wolverhampton on 24 May.

Stephen Clarke, who oversaw the launch of the first Pure Gym site in the city more than two years ago, has been appointed gym manager of the new facility.

The new Wolverhampton club joins other clubs to open in the West Midlands in the next two months, with West Bromwich and Walsall also set to host Pure Gyms. Read more: http://lei.sr?a=OyA2p

**Body Confidence Award winners announced**

The winners of the UK’s first ever Body Confidence Awards have been announced at the House of Commons in London.

A total of ten award winners were chosen across a diverse range of categories, which ranged from education and advertising to fitness and broadcasting.

Virgin Active’s ‘Oomph’ marketing campaign won the Sport, Health and Fitness Award – sponsored by Central YMCA – for its use of a range of shapes, ages, sizes and ethnic diversity in its advertising. Read more: http://lei.sr?a=lzz2w

**British Land in Virgin Active clubs sale**

British Land has sold five of the 17 Virgin Active health clubs it acquired in July 2011 for a combined £33m.

Colliers Capital has bought clubs in Gloucester and Poole, while the new owners of the Virgin Active sites in Neath, Manchester and Oxford – also institutional buyers – have declined to be named.

Following the deal British Land now holds a core portfolio of 12 premium racquet clubs. The majority of the 12 clubs left in the portfolio are located in the south east, with more than half within the M25. The disposal price of £33m represents an average net initial yield of 6.5 per cent.

Charles Maudsley, head of retail for British Land, said: “This reflects the high quality of the assets and demonstrates our ability to work successfully with banks and other sellers to unlock opportunities and create incremental value for our shareholders.” Details: http://lei.sr?a=bo18g

**IOW leisure centre relaunch pushed back**

The opening of the first new-look facilities at a leisure centre in Sandown, Isle of Wight, has been pushed back due to “significant additional works” during a £2.67m refurbishment.

Isle of Wight Council has revealed that the renovated swimming pools and expanded Tone Zone will now open on 1 October, having been originally due to be unveiled in June.

According to the local authority, the roofs above both pools needed an extensive rebuild, while a gas main had to be relocated. Read more: http://lei.sr?a=ixz3G

**DLL to open new Worcester club**

David Lloyd Leisure (DLL) is to open a new £8m sports, health and leisure facility near Worcester’s Sixways Stadium later this year – the group’s 81st site in the UK.

The 5,600sq m (60,278sq ft) development will open on 1 December and will accommodate a range of activities, including three indoor and five outdoor tennis courts.

A 900sq m (9,688sq ft) fitness suite will boast resistance and cv equipment, free weights and Power Plates, while three studios are planned - one dedicated to group cycling classes.

Elsewhere, the new DLL club will have a 25m indoor pool and a 20m outdoor pool and two physiotherapy rooms, along with a wet spa area to include a sauna and steamroom.

An “exclusive area” for adults is also being proposed by DLL, which is to accommodate a salt steamroom; a saunarium; a sauna; an ice machine; and a large spa pool.

DLL regional director Jason Andrews said: “We are very excited about providing the community with what will be a fantastic club offering excellent facilities.” Details: http://lei.sr?a=q1F4x

The new DLL venue will be located next to Worcester’s Sixways Stadium
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New spa hotel for Southampton

Planning permission has been approved for a landmark £50m waterfront scheme at Ocean Village in Southampton. MDL Marinas’ ‘super-yacht’-inspired scheme was given the backing of planning officials at Southampton City Council and includes a luxury spa hotel; a Michelin-starred restaurant; and a rooftop champagne bar.

MDL Marinas has teamed up with Harbour Hotels on the plans. The ground floor of the hotel will include a large open plan lounge, restaurant and bar which will extend out onto a terrace at the end of the existing promontory. Details of the spa are yet to be confirmed.

Harbour Hotels is owned by Surrey-based property investors Nicolas James Group and the company currently operates five hotels along the south coast of England.

PKF: UK hotels ‘bounce back’ during March

UK hotel operators “bounced back” from a challenging winter period in March, according to the latest preliminary sector figures published by PKF Hotel Consultancy Services.

London rooms yield was up 5.5 per cent and room rate grew 7.6 per cent to £131.93, compared with March 2011. However, occupancy fell by 1.9 per cent to 79.7 per cent.

In the regional market, room rate declined by 1.5 per cent but occupancy (3.1 per cent) and rooms yield (1.5 per cent) both increased.

De Vere Village to roll out room concept

De Vere Village Hotels has announced the launch of its UpperDeck room concept.

UpperDeck will provide a “superior room type”, with hotels in Swansea, Solihull and Chester St Davids among the first to offer the concept.

It is expected 20 rooms per property will be rolled out by September 2012, which represents a total of 1,000 bedrooms in a bid to improve customer experience and increase profitability.

UpperDeck rooms aim to offer a sleep experience that rivals five-star operators and a full Sky TV entertainment package.

De Vere Village Hotels CEO Robert B Cook said: “With all the benefits that already come with staying at a Village hotel, we could see a great opportunity to offer, to both corporate and leisure guests alike, a must-have upgrade that has real benefits.”

Details: http://leisrta=6esg7

The research highlights the benefits that would be brought about by a reduction in VAT for the industry. Experience in other countries shows that major changes in VAT pass through to customers in their entirety. It’s clear the industry plans to plough savings back into their business with lower prices, more training and higher wages.

Reducing the VAT rate will improve the UK’s competitiveness. This country is only one of four out of the 27 EU member states which does not impose a lower rate of VAT on hospitality services. This makes the UK uncompetitive with the rest of Europe. We are effectively fighting our European competition with one hand tied behind our back.

The findings emphasise our belief that a reduction in VAT will boost customer demand, leading to the creation of more and more jobs. BHA’s research indicates that 78,000 jobs will be created following a reduction in VAT to 5 per cent on hotel accommodation, attractions and for meals away from home.

The launch of new VAT pages on the BHA website – www.bha.org.uk - gives the whole industry a continuous update on the campaign, as well as providing a comprehensive series of questions and answers which explain the background to the campaign and its aims and objectives. A new campaign is also being launched on Facebook.

The high level of VAT for visitor accommodation and attractions is again rising to the top of the agenda. A survey of more than 200 British Hospitality Association (BHA) members shows an overwhelming majority support the campaign to reduce VAT to 5 per cent on hotel accommodation, attractions and for meals away from home.

MDL is planning to build a “luxury waterfront hotel and spa” in the city

De Vere Village Hotels to roll out room concept

Each property will offer 20 UpperDeck rooms as part of the UK roll out

Detailed: http://leisrta=6esg7

HOTELS

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Cutting VAT is a win-win situation for UK

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The findings emphasise our belief that a reduction in VAT will boost customer demand, leading to the creation of more and more jobs. BHA’s research indicates that 78,000 jobs will be created following a reduction in VAT to 5 per cent. And, of course, this will lead to greater revenues to the Treasury through higher tax returns.

This is surely a win-win situation – more visitors, a growing industry, more jobs and greater tax revenues to the Treasury. We will continue to press home these arguments to government but we also need members of the industry to persuade their local MP and councillors to understand the merits of the case. The argument is powerful. Let’s get the message across so the whole industry – and the UK economy – can benefit.
Scottish tourism numbers soar

New research from the Moffat Centre at Glasgow Caledonian University has found that visits to Scotland’s main tourist attractions grew by 4 million in 2011, compared with 2010.

Edinburgh’s relaunched National Museum of Scotland (NMS) and the new Riverside Museum in Glasgow helped to boost the figures, according to the latest Moffat Centre Visitor Attraction Monitor.

A total of 47 million trips were made to Scottish sites last year, with attractions with free entry welcoming twice as many visitors as those with an entry charge.

NMS was the top ranking Scottish attraction with nearly 1.5 million visitors, as identified by the Moffat Centre for Travel and Tourism Business Development Survey.

Glasgow’s Riverside Museum welcomed more than 1 million visitors since opening in June 2011, while Edinburgh’s St Giles Cathedral posted a 20 per cent growth to 851,000 visits.

Professor John Lennon of the Moffat Centre for Travel and Tourism Business Development said the Scottish tourism industry had continued to grow throughout 2011.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=l7l9X

New online visitor access tool for English restaurants

VisitEngland has announced the launch of a new online tool to assist restaurants and cafés cater for visitors with access requirements.

The Access Statement Online resource has been developed by the national tourist board in collaboration with the British Hospitality Association and the Restaurant Association to provide detailed information.

Businesses will be able to provide a statement outlining facilities and specific services they offer, which will be available to visitors.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=W2D3Z

Milestone for London’s cable car scheme

The construction of a new cable car link spanning the River Thames in London has reached a milestone with the installation of the 1.1km (0.7-mile) steel cable by Mace.

Work is also complete on erecting the three main towers that form part of the Emirates Air Line and will allow 34 cabins to cross the river at a height of 90m (295ft).

The multi-million pound, Wilkinson Eyre Architects-designed cable car scheme is to provide a new link between Greenwich and the Royal Docks, with passenger service due to commence this summer.

Mace is providing design and build services on the scheme, along with its specialist facilities management firm, Macro.

“The next step will be to commence the testing of the whole system,” said Mace project director Matt Randall.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=b0b3J
Edinburgh Zoo names new chief executive officer

Professor Chris West, the current chief executive officer of the Royal Zoological Society of South Australia, has been appointed to the same role at Edinburgh Zoo.

The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland – owner of Edinburgh Zoo – said that Professor West will take up his new position later this year after six years in Australia.

Professor West will replace incumbent Edinburgh Zoo CEO Hugh Roberts, who was appointed to the role in an interim capacity in April 2011 and is now retiring. Details: http://lei.sr?a=P5R9U

New heritage centre for south Liverpool

PLB, the Malton-based consultancy, has completed work on a heritage centre at The Florence Institute in Toxteth, Liverpool, as part of a £6.4m regeneration project.

The group worked on the interpretative design and installation of the new Heritage Resource Centre, which will look at the history of the Victorian leisure facility.

It complements other facilities created at the Grade II-listed Florence Institute created as part of the scheme, including a 269-seat auditorium and a gym. Details: http://lei.sr?a=k5m0B

London’s Wellington Arch due to reopen on 9 May

English Heritage has announced Wellington Arch at Hyde Park Corner, London, will become the capital’s “latest exhibition space” when it reopens on 9 May.

A “fast-changing” programme of exhibitions will be hosted at The Quadriga Gallery, which will examine the history of England and of the landmark itself.

Meanwhile, visitors will also be able to access the balconies on top of Wellington Arch and experience views overlooking the Royal Parks and Horse Guards Parade. Details: http://lei.sr?a=X6EoG

Tate Modern to open Oil Tanks

The first phase of Tate Modern’s £215m redevelopment project – the opening of the former power station’s Oil Tanks – is to be completed in time for the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad.

The circular tanks span 30m (98ft) across and 7m (23ft) high and will open on 18 July, providing a space for showing “art in the live form”.

In addition to the industrial chambers, neighbouring galleries will provide new spaces for the attraction to display its collection of artworks. The tanks also house learning areas.

Phase two of the development, which will provide more floors of galleries and increase Tate Modern’s exhibition space by 70 per cent, is not due for completion until at least 2016.

Designed by architects Herzog and de Meuron, the redevelopment includes the creation of a spectacular new building adjoining Tate Modern to the south.

According to Tate Trustees, the completion of the first phase of the building was made possible by donations which so far have raised more than three quarters of the total costs. Details: http://lei.sr?a=4S7T7

Thinktank to launch new Science Garden

Thinktank has announced that a new outdoor interactive exploration space – the Thinktank Science Garden – will open at the Birmingham science attraction on 2 June.

It is the first scheme of its kind in the UK and one of only a few in the world, with the garden to comprise 42 zones and exhibits – such as a human-sized hamster wheel.

An 8m (26ft)-tall clanging Terminus machine and an ‘elasticated squirter’ – a water piston that uses elastic potential energy – will also be among the experiences in the new space.

Thinktank Science Garden will open seven days a week and entry is included in the cost of a ticket to the attraction, which already boasts more than 200 hands-on exhibits.

Janine Eason, director of learning and operations, said: “After three years in the making, we are looking forward to welcoming visitors of all ages to our Science Garden.” Details: http://lei.sr?a=B1w9i

£537k funding boost for Hadrian’s Wall project

SITA Trust, the not-for-profit funding organisation, has awarded £537,000 towards a project designed to “properly conserve” the central section of Hadrian’s Wall.

Hadrian’s Wall Heritage is leading the conservation scheme at the World Heritage Site, with some of the parts to receive work currently listed on the Heritage At Risk register.

The funding will also be used to enhance access at other locations along Hadrian’s Wall, as well as improvements to interpretation. Details: http://lei.sr?a=xojaY
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Belfast's MAC officially opens

Belfast’s £18m Metropolitan Arts Centre (MAC) has been welcomed as “another symbol of progress” by the Northern Ireland Executive, following the venue’s official opening.

Carál Ní Chuilín, minister for culture, arts and leisure, was among the figures in attendance at the launch of the new Hall McKnight-designed complex on 19 April.

Located in the Cathedral Quarter, the MAC incorporates two black box theatre spaces seating 120 and 350 spectators respectively, as well as three art galleries and a dance studio.

A rehearsal space and education rooms also form part of the new development, in addition to office areas for resident art organisations and an artist-in-residence studio.

Ní Chuilín said: “The MAC is an impressive venue and a focal point for the arts in the Cathedral Quarter which stands proud among the north’s cultural offering.”

Ní Chuilín’s predecessor at the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and current social development minister Nelson McCausland also welcomed the opening of the MAC.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=z4W1h

UK and China launch new ‘cultural dialogue’

Culture secretary Jeremy Hunt has met with Chinese state councillor Liu Yandong at the Victoria and Albert Museum in a “cultural dialogue” between the two countries.

Exchanges are scheduled to take place on an annual basis in order to develop closer links in areas where the UK is a world leader, such as culture and the creative industries.

According to the government, the UK is the only country aside from the US to participate in high level talks with China on the issues.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=z1t5C

Council approves West End theatre plans

Plans for the development of the “first new West End theatre in more than a decade” have been approved by Westminster City Council as part of the Crossrail scheme.

The venue will occupy the former Astoria site as part of the transformation of the Tottenham Court Road area, with retail, residential and office space also proposed.

Crossrail submitted its plans with Derwent London, which cover two schemes above each ticket hall of the integrated Crossrail and London Underground station.

Derwent London has already entered into an agreement with Nimax to operate the 350-seat theatre, which is part of plans for two of four development sites designed by AHMM.

HawkinsBrown have also worked on designs for part of the Tottenham Court Road vision, which is expected to cost around £1bn.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=T4w7r

Turner gallery worth £13.8m to Kent economy

A new report has found that Turner Contemporary in Margate, a £17.4m gallery dedicated to artist JMW Turner, has generated £13.8m for the Kent economy.

The research was published to mark a year since the attraction’s launch on 16 April 2011 and also showed that nearly 500,000 people had visited following its opening.

David Chipperfield Architects designed the gallery, which was built by R Durnell and Sons and houses 750sq m (8,072sq ft) of gallery space across two floors.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=H0y2k

£12.6m Executive boost for City of Culture 2013

The Northern Ireland Executive has agreed to contribute up to £12.6m of additional funding for Derry/Londonderry City of Culture 2013 over the next two years.

Northern Ireland culture minister Carál Ni Chuilín said the announcement underlined the Executive’s ongoing support to ensure the success of the City of Culture.

Ní Chuilín said: “Derry is a vibrant cultural city, which is growing in confidence and asserting itself as a destination for visitors from near and far.”

Details: http://lei.sr?a=h5Y5R

Baltic launches new ‘cultural hub’ in Newcastle

Gateshead’s iconic Baltic Centre Contemporary Art has unveiled a new arts “hub” – Baltic 39 – within a former printing warehouse in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

The institution will co-ordinate the public gallery programme at Baltic 39, which was funded by Newcastle City Council in partnership with Arts Council England.

Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art will run the new venue alongside Northumbria University, which is using the facility to provide a new home for its fine art students.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=F4q9p

The gallery recently marked its first anniversary

The £18m facility is “another symbol of progress” for Northern Ireland

Details: http://lei.sr?a=449p
Sheraton reopens Scottish hotel

Sheraton Hotels and Resorts has continued its USD6bn (£3.7bn) international revitalisation with the reopening of the Sheraton Grand Hotel and Spa in Edinburgh.

The hotel – located in the centre of the Scottish capital – has benefited from a multi-million dollar revamp, which has included the creation of a new restaurant and bar.

Facilities at the hotel also include the six-storey One Spa, which is described as one of the most advanced city spas in Europe and covers 35,000sq ft (3,252sq m) of floorspace.

One Spa offers a range of treatments, including a menu of ayurvedic-inspired services that have been devised by spa therapist Jamie Chalmers – Rasayana at One.

The spa includes a rooftop hydropool and a thermal suite containing a hammam; an aroma grotto; a rock sauna; a bio sauna; a laconium; a tepidarium; and lifestyle showers.

Elsewhere within One Spa is a 19m infinity-edge swimming pool on the top floor of the building and Cleopatra Baths – individual hydrobaths offering underwater massages.

Details: [http://lei.sr?a=Q5A6H](http://lei.sr?a=Q5A6H)

Chapter Hotels to open Exeter property

Chapter Hotels, the UK-based operator launched in 2010, has announced plans to open its second property within a 19th century former Exeter hospital building on 25 June.

The 59-bedroom Magdalen Chapter is to occupy the city's West England Eye Hospital following a sympathetic restoration which has been led by Bath-based architects Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios.

Facilities will include The Spa, which will boast four treatment rooms offering massages and mini-treatments from locally-based skincare brand REN.

A fitness area and an ‘inside-out pool’ will also be among facilities at the hotel, which will join the group’s first property – The Montpellier Chapter Hotel in Cheltenham.

A spokesperson said: “Original Victorian features have been maintained throughout the building and striking new extensions have been added to create bright public spaces.”

Details: [http://lei.sr?a=Y4i3Q](http://lei.sr?a=Y4i3Q)

Comfort Zone signs first UK concept spa in London

Adamina Spa of Kensington in London has signed an agreement to become the UK’s first Comfort Zone concept spa.

The deal between the spa and the Italian product house will see Adamina Spa use Comfort Zone’s Aromasoul Mediterranean line, which aims to provide a renewed physical energy inspired by the Mediterranean seas.

Located in the affluent West London, Adamina Spa incudes a number of treatment rooms, steamrooms and a relaxation area.

Details: [http://lei.sr?a=V8b1d](http://lei.sr?a=V8b1d)
Contracts have been exchanged between Legal and General Property; Odeon; and Premier Inn for a multi-million pound leisure scheme in Trowbridge.

St Stephens Place Leisure Park will transform a brownfield site in the heart of the Wiltshire town and includes a seven-screen cinema and an 80-bedroom budget hotel. Restaurants and cafés also feature as part of the scheme, which is revamping a site formerly occupied by Tesco. The scheme is due for completion in autumn 2013.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=C1D2E

A six-screen cinema with full digital and 3D capabilities is among the facilities to be created as part of a £90m redevelopment of a former livestock market in Hereford.

In addition to the 1,100-capacity cinema, Stanhope's Old Market scheme will also include a number of restaurants and cafés, a public square and retail accommodation.

Herefordshire Council has now given the scheme its final approval. Leader John Jarvis said it represents a “great deal for the city and a great deal for the county”.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=H5p2E

Cinema operator Cineworld has confirmed it will open a 10-screen, 1,600-capacity digitised multiplex at the mixed-use Gloucester Quays in Gloucester.

The £60m development is being led by Peel Group and was given the green light last month by Gloucester City Council. Work is due to be completed by 2013. Cineworld currently operates from a six-screen cinema at The Peel Centre – located opposite Gloucester Quays, which has also been earmarked for refurbishment.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=d3n3B

Renowned musical theatre impresario and composer Lord Andrew Lloyd Webber has announced he has sold central London’s Palace Theatre to Nimax Theatres for an undisclosed sum.

Lord Lloyd Webber said the sale would help repay debt and strengthen the balance sheet of his West End theatre ownership vehicle Really Useful Group (RUG).

Proceeds from the sale will, according to Lord Lloyd Webber, help in planning the future of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane and in continuing a refurbishment of the London Palladium.

Nica Burns and Max Weitzenhoffer are the duo behind Nimax Theatres and purchased four venues from RUG in 2005 – the Lyric, the Garrick, the Apollo and the Duchess theatres.

The group added the Vaudeville Theatre to its portfolio from RUG in 2008, before completing a deal to acquire the Palace Theatre.

Lord Lloyd Webber said: “I want to see a secure theatrical future for the Palace as I do the other historic theatres that I own through Really Useful Theatres.”

Details: http://lei.sr?a=X9b2W

Plans have been submitted for a £6.4m redevelopment of a Grade II-listed former lead shot mill in Chester, which will contain leisure and retail facilities along with residential units.

Neptune Developments is working with Chester and District Housing Trust on the scheme, with proposals drawn up by international architectural firm, Broadway Malyan.

The project, which is due for completion in mid-2013. A small visitor centre is also planned in order to explain the site's history.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=h8T7Y
Colchester

**High ropes adventure facility - High Woods Country Park**

**EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST** are being invited from suitably experienced leisure providers in creating a new adventure facility at High Woods Country Park that is considerate to its natural surroundings whilst providing an opportunity for an exciting new attraction within the woodland section of the country park.

High Woods Country Park is the largest area of public space in Colchester extending to 150ha in the north of Colchester. The Country Park is within easy reach of the population of Colchester which is a high growth area with a rapidly expanding population beyond its current level of 180,000 and the site is very accessible with new road junctions creating excellent links to the A12. The park currently attracts around 200,000 visitors per annum.

The country park is free at the point of use with a popular visitor centre including public toilets and attracts a broad spectrum of users, especially high use by families, schools and youth groups. As well as offering the land, the Council would encourage the partner to take advantage of the existing country park facilities e.g. car park, toilets and visitor centre. Where or if facilities do not meet the standards required by the partner, the Council would be open to considering business proposals for improvements.

Potential partners should express their interest to Matt Howe, Senior Procurement Consultant, Braintree District Council, via email to matthew.howe@braintree.gov.uk quoting reference number Col12/ Life Opp’s/ BP0002.

The closing date for expressing interest is 30th May 2012.

You will be required to complete a Pre-qualification questionnaire detailing your experience, which must be submitted by 8th June 2012.

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PTI: More people choosing fitness careers

A new study carried out by training provider Premier Training International (PTI) has found that more people are opting to pursue a career within the fitness industry.

The sector has a total market value of £3.81bn, according to the 2011 FIA State of the UK Fitness Industry study, and is increasingly seen to provide a “more dynamic” career path.

PTI polled nearly 700 of its recent graduates, with 78 per cent entering the industry as the result of a career change. More than 85 per cent expect to follow their new career for at least six years, while more than 60 per cent now operate a personal training business.

PTI sales and marketing director Victoria Branch said: “The recent survey figures are fantastic and really encouraging in showing that it is PT graduates who are really shaping the future of the health and fitness industry.”

Details: http://lei.sr?a=N2A3z

CYQ/Youth Sport Trust join forces

Central YMCA Qualifications (CYQ) has formed a strategic partnership with Youth Sport Trust as part of efforts to offer support to young people who have chosen a career in the active leisure sector.

The partnership has identified its goal as developing and providing information, advice and guidance for young people working in the industry and will also look to expand CYQ’s current work with schools across the UK.

CYQ and the Youth Sport Trust have teamed up partly in response to the “severe cuts” faced by careers guidance services in schools and community settings which include the proposed closure of Connexions and the Next Steps service.

According to trade union UNISON there are shortages and increasing job vacancies. The sector has a total market value of £3.81bn, according to the 2011 FIA State of the UK Fitness Industry study, and is increasingly seen to provide a “more dynamic” career path.

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Active IQ unveils two new qualifications

Active IQ has announced the launch of two new active leisure qualifications, which are now available for delivery from training providers accredited by the awarding organisation.

The courses are the Level 1 NVQ award in Sport and Active Leisure (QCF) and the Level 2 NVQ Certificate in Sales (QCF), which expand Active IQ’s range of qualifications on offer.

Active IQ’s Suzy Gunn said: “It is about giving learners the opportunity to develop the skills they need to forge successful careers.”

Details: http://lei.sr?a=b7q4r
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- Active IQ L2 Certificate in Fitness Instructing (Gym/ETM) – 1 evening per week over 17 weeks
- Active IQ Certificate in Adapting Fitness Instruction for Gym Adolescents
- ECDL
- First Aid

Study Full Time on one of the following Courses:

- Foundation Degree in Applied Sport & Exercise
- Foundation Degree in Public & Community Services
- Foundation Degree in Business
- Foundation Degree in IT

Currently Working in the Industry?
You may also be eligible to access free training via our L2 & L3 Apprenticeships in Sport & Active Leisure (Fitness Instructing, Operational Services, Business and Administration and Retail)

For further information or to reserve your place on one of the above courses please contact Peter Morrison
Head of School of Sport, Business, Public Services and IT (0191) 3754437

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Service Manager Recreation & Culture Grade Hay 6, £44,403 - £51,423 (Salary subject to review)

You will manage our Sports & Leisure, Arts and Libraries offer, providing high quality, customer focused services to residents and visitors to the borough.

Service Manager Wellbeing Grade Hay 6, £44,403 - £51,423 (Salary subject to review)

This is a strategic post that will work closely with the Service Manager Recreation & Culture, and other senior managers, in creating the strategic vision and framework for supporting children and young people, their families, carers and older people to determine how they use the Council services in the future.

Application forms and further details are available from the Transactional HR, Payroll and Pensions, PO Box 158, Bootle, L30 3WA, or visit our website at www.sefton.gov.uk. Completed forms must be returned by the date shown to recruitment@sefton.gov.uk. A 24 hour recruitment hotline is in operation on 0845 140 1040.

Closing date: 30th May 2012

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The candidate

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- Receiving and monitoring appeals and disputes from institutions.
- Planning and implementation of ULU’s development programme.
- Deliver a marketing and communications strategy focusing on the close relationships with member institutions.

The successful candidate will exhibit first rate negotiation skills, determination and an understanding of the needs of student sportswomen and men. Previous experience of running a league competition and using league software is desirable. You must have excellent communication, administration and organisational skills. A flexible approach to working hours is also essential.

For information and to apply please visit www.ulu.co.uk and complete an application pack as instructed. Any queries can be directed to 020 7664 2011. Deadline for applications is 12pm, Tuesday 15th May 2012.

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Please send your CV and photograph to team@activeconnection.co.uk or call 00 44 208 878 3180 for more details

Vacancies listed are for female only sites in Saudi Arabia. So, for religious and cultural reasons we can only accept applications from female candidates.

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General and Commercial Manager, the Lake District Visitor Centre at Brockhole

Grade E £34,033 - £39,269 F/T 37 hours

Responsible for the strategic management of the historic building and grounds at Brockhole you will deliver increased visitor numbers, improved usage and visitor experiences, raise levels of income and improve the site's profitability particularly in the shop, café and through events. You will need experience of managing a large multi-purpose historic site with diversely skilled teams to achieve increased commerciality and profitability. Interviews 29 May 2012 at Brockhole.

Team Leader Information Services

Grade G £24,752 – £29,512 F/T 37 hours

Various locations

Based at Murley Moss, Kendal but expected to work in four different locations each week

Responsible for maximising commercial opportunities and ensuring the delivery of high quality information service provision at four information centres across the Lake District National Park. You will need to demonstrate successful retail management experience, great people management skills alongside a good understanding of visitor information needs. A key focus will be to engage visitors through the use of technology. Interviews 24 May 2012 at Murley Moss.

Project Manager Information Services

Grade I £18,326 – £21,421 (pro – rata) F/T 37 hours

Murley Moss, Kendal

We are looking to make our Information Services sustainable and fit for purpose for the future and as the Project Manager you will be responsible for delivering the Information Services Transformation Project. You will need to be experienced in project management, spotting commercial opportunities and pitfalls, motivating colleagues and partners to want to do the tasks you need doing, on time, on budget and to the highest possible standard, managing budgets and producing processes that are flawless and have experience and understanding of visitor information needs and the technology needed to meet them. Interviews 23 May 2012 at Murley Moss.

For an informal discussion about the position please contact Adam Thomas, Brockhole Development Programme Director, on 015394 40260 or adam.thomas@lakedistrict.gov.uk

We are committed to equality of opportunity and welcome applicants from all sectors of society. If you are an applicant with disabilities who meets the essential requirements of the job, we will interview you.

For further details and an application form, visit our web site at www.lakedistrict.gov.uk, email us at hq@lakedistrict.gov.uk or write to Human Resources, Lake District National Park Authority, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal LA9 7RL

We are unable to accept CVs. Closing date for all applications is midday Wednesday 16 May 2012.

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OmniTicket Network - the market leader in the field of computerised admissions ticketing, access control and ticket distribution systems for visitor attractions - is seeking a Client Support/Training Specialist to operate from its UK base in Staffordshire.

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Staffing specialist LeisureForce is to hold a number of free seminars aimed at UK-based female fitness and sports professionals looking to work in Saudi Arabia and the wider Middle Eastern (ME) region.

The half-day seminars will provide cultural advice on how to work and live successfully in the region. According to Simon Windsor, founder of LeisureForce’s parent group UltraForce, the demand for qualified female fitness professionals is increasing rapidly across the region.

“The Middle Eastern region has become increasingly interested in health, fitness and sports activities,” he said. “Women especially have become increasingly more involved.”

Each leisure facility in these traditionally Muslim countries, however, needs to provide separate areas for men and women.

Windsor added: “Due to the high demand for female staff in such a short time there is a shortage of employees – and the owners of the sports clubs and complexes look to import the talent. The UK is a popular resource for this.”

Each seminar will offer advice on adjusting to the cultural differences of life in the Middle East, as well as guest speakers offering insights into their own careers working in the region. Details: http://lei.sr?r=a=E3T2x

£2m renovation for Genting’s Liverpool casino

Genting, one of the UK’s largest casino and gaming operators, has announced plans for an extensive refurbishment of its Queen Square club in Liverpool this summer.

More than £2m is being invested in the project, which will include the creation of a new 360-degree Cai bar to be located on a mezzanine floor above the main gaming area.

Existing gaming facilities will be expanded and updated, while a complete redesign of the internal layout is also proposed. Details: http://lei.sr?r=a=Y1R9L

Akkerson to lead Plymouth scheme

Members of Plymouth City Council’s (PCC) cabinet have approved Akkeron Leisure as the preferred bidder for a proposed £83m redevelopment of the city’s Plymouth Pavilions site. It is anticipated the scheme will deliver a remodelled arena through Akkeron’s wholly-owned Five Directions Limited subsidiary, as well as residential and retail elements.

Plans include a refurbishment of the existing arena and a new entrance foyer, as well as more backstage spaces; increased capacity; and upgraded lighting and acoustics.

An international-standard ice rink is also proposed as part of the project, which will be located next to Plymouth Argyle Football Club and will complement the new Life Centre. The future operation of the Pavilions Arena will be managed by PCC in partnership with the Theatre Royal (Plymouth).

A remodelled facility is at the heart of the proposals

Akkerson Group chair James Brent said: “The new facilities will provide sporting and leisure facilities which are the envy of other cities in Europe and put Plymouth on the map as a destination for leisure in the south west.” Details: http://lei.sr?r=a=Y5f4f