Chester Zoo aiming to become world leader

Following the launch of Chester Zoo’s Islands development, managing director Jamie Christon has said the £40m project is only the start of the visitor attraction’s ambitious masterplan, as it aims to become a world leader in the sector.

Speaking exclusively to Leisure Opportunities Christon said the newly-opened Islands development is the beginning of a multi-year masterplan currently under development behind the scenes.

“Heart of Africa was the original name for part of Islands,” said Christon. “What we want to do if this works, which clearly it’s going to, is start to geographically theme the rest of the zoo based around our field programmes across the world.”

The zoo currently runs 10 major field programmes worldwide in an attempt to save species threatened with extinction. Each programme has a species or regional biodiversity focus and looks at the likes of Asian elephant, black rhino, jaguar and red ape conservation among other species and regions. Christon said that the zoo wants to reflect the conservation work being done across these programmes at the zoo, which the masterplan will seek to address.

“Rather than having animals in particular species enclosures, it will be in geographical zones so part of the conservation education message is people are bringing back what parts of the world animals live in and why they are critically endangered,” he said. “What we have done with Islands – addressing the issue of conservation in a world region – we want to do across the zoo.

“For example, phase two of Islands will include the Bali Starling Temple: we’ll have four or five Bali starlings in there, we just caught them on the edge of extinction and are starting to redevelop them. It’s a really important species and one we want to show-off and promote.”

On top of the zoo’s ambitious masterplan, plans are also afoot to redevelop Oakfield Temple: we’ll have four or five Bali starlings in there, we just caught them on the edge of extinction and are starting to redevelop them. It’s a really important species and one we want to show-off and promote.”

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The zoo wants to offer visitors a fully immersive experience

Film star Foucan starts freerunning academy

Film star and parkour pioneer Sébastien Foucan is teaming up with David Stalker’s new trampoline venture to launch a series of Foucan Freerunning Academies.

Foucan, one of the founders of freerunning, will oversee a series of academies offering the opportunity to experience the sport ‘Foucan-style’. A dedicated 3,000sq ft (279sq m) obstacle course will feature at every trampoline park opened by Oxygen Freejumping – the new company set up by Stalker and LA fitness founder Fred Turok.

Continued on back cover

Medi-spa set for £150m complex

Aesthetic clinic EF Medispa will develop and manage the new 645sq m (6,942sq ft) Santai Spa at the Genting Hotel in Birmingham, which will form part of a new mixed-use leisure and entertainment complex.

The seven-storey, 538,000sq ft (49,982sq m) Resorts World Birmingham – operated by Malaysia-based Genting Group – is billed as a £350m “integrated destination leisure complex.”

Resorts World Birmingham will feature the 178-bedroom, five-suite, boutique Genting Hotel; an outlet shopping centre; an 11-screen Cineworld cinema, which will include IMAX and 3D; a casino; a wide range of internationally-themed restaurants and bars; and a multi-use conferencing and banquet centre. The hotel and spa are due to open late in Q3 2015. The Santai Spa by EF Medispa, will include five medi-spa treatment rooms and four traditional rooms.

Continued on back cover

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Continued on back cover
**SPORT**

### Barriers for mental health sufferers

Not feeling ‘gym body ready’ is serving as a significant barrier to taking part in sport for people with mental health problems, according to a report.

Research released on 13 July by mental health charity Mind shows that 80 per cent of people with mental health problems who do not take part in sport are put off participating because they feel self-conscious about their bodies.

This is despite the fact that 72 per cent of the 660 mental health sufferers surveyed say they enjoy taking part in sport, or exercising.

Furthermore, 55 per cent of people told the charity they don’t feel ‘gym body ready’, saying they are not members of sports clubs, gyms or leisure centres, because they are embarrassed about their body shape or size.

Aside from body confidence issues – a subject that has been in the spotlight recently following the controversy around Protein World’s ‘beach body ready’ advertising campaign – concern over ability is also proving a significant barrier to participation for people with mental health problems.

Around 80 per cent of those with mental health problems surveyed said they don’t feel confident in their sporting ability, while 70 per cent of people told Mind that they feel their mental health makes taking part in sporting activity too difficult.

**Details:** [http://lei.sr?la=usG4T_O](http://lei.sr?la=usG4T_O)

### Could cricket feature at 2024 Olympics?

Cricket could be added to the Olympic programme in 2024 after the England and Wales Cricket Board dropped its opposition to the move, according to the MCC’s World Cricket Committee.

ECB president Giles Clarke’s opposition to the T20 version of the sport being added to the Olympic schedule had previously been seen as a roadblock to the sport’s potential inclusion at the 2024 Olympic Games. Following a recent meeting of an influential MCC thinktank including former players such as Ricky Ponting, Rahul Dravid and Sourav Ganguly however, the new ECB committee is more open to the possibility.

Clarke was replaced recently as ECB chair by Colin Graves, with the latter expressing his openness to the idea of Olympic cricket.

“We urge ICC to reconsider its position and take a decision that it believes is in the best interests of the global game,” said a statement from Graves. “This would need to be done in the next 12 months for cricket to have a chance of being included in the 2024 Olympics.”

[“[The committee believes] effort should be made to make cricket an Olympic sport and urges all governing bodies around the world to get behind such a bid”. While the ICC had been opposed to the idea, its chief executive, Dave Richardson, sits on the MCC committee.](http://lei.sr?la=N4m3Q_O)
Forest Green Rovers Football Club (FGR) has revealed ambitious plans to build a £100m, eco-friendly sports and green technology complex which would include a new 5,000-capacity stadium. The club currently plays in the National League – the fifth tier of English football – and the Eco Park project is part of a strategy to establish FGR as a Football League club.

FGR is working together with Stroud-based green energy company Ecotricity on the plans. Dale Vince, founder of Ecotricity, is also chair of FGR. Plans for the Eco Park – to be located adjacent to junction 13 of the M5 motorway in Gloucestershire – are designed to be sustainable and future proof. Should the club achieve its target of reaching the Football League, the flexible design of the stadium will allow capacity to be doubled to 10,000.

Other facilities within the sports complex include full-size training pitches, 4G six-a-side pitches, an athletics arena, multi-disciplinary sporting facilities and a sports science hub. The other half of Eco Park – located on the other side of the A419 road which divides the project into two separate sites – will comprise a green technology business park with sustainable commercial offices and light industrial units potentially capable of creating 4,000 jobs. Details: http://lei.sr?a=P5K2S_O

The Eco Park will include a flexible stadium for Forest Green Rovers.

**£100m Eco Park plans unveiled**

**Glasgow 2014 worth £740m to Scotland**

The Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games has provided the Scottish economy with a £740m boost over the past eight years.

The Post-Games Report, published by the Scottish Government, charts the impact of the Games since 2007 – the year Glasgow won the bid to host the event – and shows that the Games has also supported on average 2,100 jobs each year.

As well as the direct economic boost, the Games also helped Scotland’s labour market, particularly in Glasgow, with more than 11,000 young people benefitting from a range of national and local employability programmes. Tourism was among the sectors to benefit too, with the Glasgow 2014 Culture Programme attracting a mass audience of 2.1 million and 690,000 unique visitors. Direct spending by those visitors has been calculated as £74m.

The report also found the Games brought significant investment in regeneration, with land remediation, transport infrastructure, and Games-time sports facilities such as the Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome, Emirates Arena and Tollcross International Swimming Centre (all in Glasgow) now being used by the public.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon welcomed the report and said it was indicative of long-term benefits. “As this evaluation report also shows, Glasgow 2014 was about far more than two weeks of great sport,” she said. “The economic, cultural and regeneration benefits have been significant.” Details: http://lei.sr?a=V5F2b_O

The Games attracted an estimated 690,000 visitors to Scotland.

**Historic Sobell Leisure Centre receives facelift**

London’s historic Sobell Leisure Centre in Islington – the only leisure centre to be designed by celebrated Centre Point architect Richard Seifert – has received significant upgrades as part of a £1.2m facelift.

The project saw the refurbishment of the junior gym to include a sprint track and an expansion of the Gallery Gym to provide a boxing facility, with Technogym and Escape Fitness the main suppliers. There were also significant improvements to the sports hall so there are more opportunities for sports such as football, basketball, netball, volleyball, and gymnastics. The changing rooms have also been upgraded. Details: http://lei.sr?a=P3K2S_O

Sepp Blatter will not stand for re-election

**Fifa presidential election to be held in February**

Fifa has announced that an extraordinary congress will be held on 26 February 2016 where football’s embattled governing body will convene to elect its new president.

Sepp Blatter was re-elected as Fifa president on 29 May earlier this year, but announced his intention to stand down four days later after scandal erupted relating to investigations into corruption within the world football body.

Candidates have to be nominated by 26 October, with names including David Ginola and Diego Maradona expressing their interest in the position. Uefa president Michel Platini is among the favourites, having been asked to stand for the presidency by a number of world football chiefs. Meanwhile, there was speculation over Blatter’s future after he said he didn’t actually resign and could possibly stand in the February re-election. He was reported to have said: “I have not resigned, I put my mandate in the hands of an extraordinary congress.” Fifa later clarified that Blatter would not be standing as a candidate. Details: http://lei.sr?a=4C8x5_O
Dr William Bird becomes Slimming World advisor

Physical activity expert Dr William Bird MBE has been recruited to Slimming World’s specialist advisor panel as the weight loss company seeks to combine exercise, nutrition and behaviour change experts to promote healthier lifestyles.

Bird, who is CEO and founder of Intelligent Health and one of the UK’s leading experts on physical activity, will advise on the company’s work with health professionals and its physical activity programme. Slimming World currently provides lifestyle and weight management service to around 800,000 members across the UK and Ireland in community venues each week. Details: http://lei.sr?a=k/5F8m6_O

Major operators to provide National Fitness Day classes

Major operators such as Fitness First, Parkwood Leisure and Places for People Leisure have signed up to offer free health and fitness sessions to members and non-members alike across their sites as part of National Fitness Day.

This year’s National Fitness Day – which is the largest celebration of physical activity in the UK – takes place on 9 September. It will see thousands of people don their exercise gear and flock to gyms, health clubs, leisure centres and parks around the country to take part in free ‘Power Half Hour’ exercise events. Last year saw nearly 2,000 venues open their doors to run free exercise sessions – reaching 27 million people – and more than 800 sites have so far signed up for this year’s event.

“Those already have these major operators on board is a testament to the importance and value of National Fitness Day, because when we all come together on a single campaign we can more effectively raise our sector’s profile in the eyes of the public,” said UKactive operations director Geraldine Tuck. Details: http://lei.sr?a=k4F8m_O

JD targets ‘organic’ expansion

JD Gyms is aiming to crank up the rollout of its gym concept, with plans to open up to three more sites nationwide by the end of the year.

Having launched its inaugural site in Hull at the start of 2014, the gym division of JD Sports recently unveiled its second location in Liverpool. The eye-catching health club – within a Grade II listed three-storey property – was innovatively designed to retain the DNA of JD’s retail stores and is on course to reach its target of 5,000 members.

The next phase of growth will see the third JD Gym open in Preston this August, with aims for another two by the end of the year.

"Obviously with the scale of our brand, there's potential for rapid growth, but we're looking for more organic growth with a view to longevity," managing director Alun Peacock told Leisure Opportunities.

JD Gyms recently unveiled its second location – a Grade II listed site in Liverpool

“The gyms will obviously be different to the stores but we’re eager for them to retain the stylish ‘JD feel’ which has served the retail side so well. Similarly, we’ll be looking for locations in major urban centres.”

As has been the blueprint so far, the clubs will generally be 15,000 to 35,000sq ft sites, utilising a wide range of gym equipment from varied suppliers, with memberships costing between £15 and £20 a month. Details: http://lei.sr?a=j3j9y6_O

Ray Algar to examine mid-market at LIW

Fitness analyst Ray Algar will deliver a keynote session at Leisure Industry Week (LIW) 2015, exploring what the future holds for the ‘squeezed middle’ of the gym market.

Algar, whose attendance underlines the new LIW owners’ commitment to providing quality educational sessions, will outline his latest research in a presentation called “What is the future for clubs that operate and believe in the mid-market?”

Having documented the inexorable rise of low-cost gym brands over the past decade and subsequent emergence of high-end specialised boutique gyms, Algar is well-placed to examine the impact of this pincer attack on traditional mid-market clubs like Fitness First and soon-to-be-sold LA Fitness. In his session, the MD of Oxygen Consulting will explore how mid-market brands are redefining themselves to remain relevant in an evolving industry and trying to safeguard a sustainable future.

“Obviously with the scale of our brand, there’s potential for rapid growth, but we’re looking for more organic growth with a view to longevity,” managing director Alun Peacock told Leisure Opportunities.

According to Algar, the session will cover:
• Insights into how the health club industry is forking along two distinct pathways – self-service and supported propositions.
• How to understand strategic implications for club brands operating in the mid-market.
• How some of the mid-market clubs are managing to achieve growth while facing intense competition from budget gyms.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=Szk8v_O
Kids set for ‘summer of screens’

Almost three quarters of primary school teachers expect their pupils to spend the impending summer holidays in front of tablets and TVs, according to Fit For Sport.

Having produced research earlier this year which found two thirds of children are ‘insufficiently active’, the youth activity provider’s latest poll of more than 100 primary school teachers found 40 per cent believe children’s fitness levels actually decrease over the summer, as the majority of young people reject games outdoors in favour of computers and TV.

Despite the warm weather making summer arguably the easiest time of year to engage in physical activity, just 12 per cent of teachers believe that their pupils will fill most of their time playing outside with family or friends.

“All parents want their children to be fit and healthy, but often struggle to find ideas to tempt their children off their tablets and into the garden,” said Dean Horridge, founder and CEO of Fit For Sport. “The best way to encourage children away from screens is making activities fun and getting all the family involved. It’s important to find a balance between screen time and being active and the summer is the perfect time to develop healthy habits to last a lifetime.”

As a result, Fit For Sport has created a free guide and website to help inspire families to have an active summer. The site features a host of ideas and games for families to play together, as well as an Activity Challenge that helps parents to measure and track their children’s fitness and activity levels by taking part in short and simple tasks. Details: http://lei.sr?a=H/six.oldstyleq/nine.oldstyleJ_O

Oxygen Freejumping opens for business

Oxygen Freejumping, a new venture helmed by David Stalker and Fred Turok, has sprung open the door of London’s first trampoline park in West Acton.

The debut site for Oxygen Freejumping – which has been set up by ex-ukactive chair Stalker and LA fitness founder Turok, was officially opened last month by the mayor of Ealing Harbhajan Kaur Dheer, film star and freerunning legend Sébastien Foucan and Team GB gymnasts Jenna Barrett and William Cowen.

Having opened to the public on July 20, Oxygen Freejumping in Acton features 150 connected trampolines on the main floor, along with dodgeball courts, a giant airbag, ‘walk the wall trampolines’, basketball hoops and tumble tracks. There are plans to open a second site in Southampton this October, with five more sites planned for the next 12 months and a further 15 in the pipeline. Speaking at the launch party, Oxygen Freejumping CEO David Stalker said:

Just 12 per cent of teachers expect pupils to fill their time playing outside

“Oxygen Freejumping has been many months in the making and we have been overwhelmed by the support of the local community.

“We look forward to hosting your parties, teaching you to jump, helping you get fit, learning together how to free-run but most of all making sure that you have a fantastic time. I challenge all of you here to jump on a trampoline and not smile!”

Details: http://lei.sr?a=M/five.oldstyleD/six.oldstyleR_O

Drinking beetroot juice may lengthen workouts

Regular consumption of beetroot juice has positive cardiovascular effects during exercise and leads to increased endurance, a clinical study has found.

New research found healthy male subjects who drank beetroot juice for 15 days had lower blood pressure and more dilated blood vessels at rest and during exercise.

Blood vessels also dilated more easily and the heart consumed less oxygen during exercise with beetroot juice consumption.

The researchers suggest that regular consumption of beetroot means exercise can be “performed at a given workload for a longer period of time before the onset of fatigue.”

Details: http://lei.sr?a=f/four.oldstyleJ/six.oldstylea_O

Spotify launches range of curated running playlists

Spotify has sought to tackle the often-tricky task of finding a decent playlist that will help runners pick up the pace through the launch of Spotify Running.

The new streaming service is accessible to both paid and free subscribers through the Spotify app. It offers runners an array of different playlists tailored to their genre preferences and – here’s the clever bit – the pace at which they’re running to ensure the beat matches their feet.

On choosing a genre, a woman’s voice tells users to “Start running to detect tempo.” As the runner starts to move, Spotify pinpoints their pace using a smartphone’s accelerometer and gyroscope to calculate a selection of on-tempo songs.

In addition to playlists based on a user’s genre preference and listening history, there are also curated playlists from some of the world’s foremost DJs. Spotify has also announced a series of collaborations with Nike to bring music to more runners, including the integration of Spotify Running into the Nike+ workout app.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=D6提前到O

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Details: http://lei.sr?a=D6提前到O

HEALTH & FITNESS
Port Lympne targets top safari spot

Port Lympne Wild Animal and Safari Reserve in Kent, has launched a unique set of luxury treehouse lodges as the visitor attraction strives to become Europe’s number one safari short-break provider.

Designed by Ray Hole Architects with interiors by Tara Bernerd + Partners and Malcolm Charles Construction acting as main contractor, the Treehouse Hotel is comprised of 10 separate luxury lodges, designed for four people. Each is comprised of two bedrooms, a bathroom and an expansive open planned sitting room/kitchen, which leads out onto a private balcony, offering views of the expansive reserve and Kent countryside, as well as the animal paddocks sitting below the lodges.

“When we decided we were going to do treehouses we wanted to put our own spin on it,” said Bob O’Connor, managing director at Howletts & Port Lympne Wild Animal Parks, speaking at the launch. “This is the icing on the cake as far as we’re concerned. It’s our biggest, our most expensive, our most luxurious product and it takes us one step closer to our ultimate goal of becoming the leading animal short-break provider in Europe.”

The lodges offer a new take on the treehouse model, sitting at the top of an escarpment, rather than in-and among the trees. All of the units sit on a precipice and have been designed to look out over the tops of the trees with each positioned as such that it offers a different view and perspective on paddocks in the area.

Details: http://lei.sr?r=U8q8k_O

Green light for £16m Concorde centre

Concorde is to be the crown jewel in a £16m aerospace museum, after the proposed attraction in Bristol was granted planning permission by the local authorities.

To be housed on the former Filton Airfield – one of the birthplaces of the British aviation industry – the Bristol Aerospace Centre by Purcell will comprise two refurbished World War One aircraft hangars, to be transformed into a heritage museum, learning suites, archives and workshops. Purcell have also designed a new Concorde hangar.

The new centre will tell the story of Bristol’s aerospace industry from 1910 to the present day and into the future, displaying several important heritage collections. It will create a permanent home where people can access Concorde 216, the last British Concorde assembled at the Filton site which led the design, testing and production of the supersonic airliner. Nottingham-based Focus Consultants are project managers, cost consultants and funding and business planning advisors.

The plans – which have been in the works since 2003 when Concorde made its final flight – were approved by South Gloucestershire Council, whose leader Matthew Riddle said the development would “become one of the most popular visitor attractions in the West, bringing many economic benefits to the region.”

Details: http://lei.sr?r=A6mqg_O

Smiler incident could cost Merlin as much as £50m

Merlin Entertainments has said the rollercoaster crash that seriously injured four people in June could affect profits by up to £50m, with the tragic incident having an adverse effect on trading at the start of an important period for the operator.

The accident on the Smiler ride at Alton Towers – which saw two people each require a leg to be partially amputated after a carriage full of people collided with an empty one – led to the temporary closure of Alton Towers for several days. The Smiler is yet to reopen.

Profits for Merlin’s theme parks division in 2015 are expected to be between £40m and £50m, compared with £87m in 2014. A £40m result would represent a £50m shortfall on the £90m figure predicted for 2015.

In addition to the closure of Alton Towers, Merlin also suspended promotions advertising its theme parks.

One positive note for Merlin is that better-than-expected trading results across the wider Merlin portfolio may yet help to offset the Smiler losses.

Details: http://lei.sr?r=J6qgB_O

ATTRACTIONS

UNESCO adds further 24 sites to World Heritage list

UNESCO has announced the annual update to its register of sites worthy of world heritage status, adding 24 new locations to its global list of more than 1,000.

Well-known visitor attractions, including France’s Champagne wine region, The Alamo and Scotland’s Forth Road Bridge are all new additions to the list, with lesser-known sites added to the list now hoping for a boost in tourism numbers. Denmark, France, Iran and Turkey had two allocations apiece, leading the way in new additions. The Forth Bridge is the sixth Scottish landmark to gain heritage status, having been used to carry trains over the Forth since 1890.

Details: http://lei.sr?r=Z4DqZ_O

Port Lympne Wild Animal and Safari Reserve has launched a unique set of luxury treehouse lodges...
The VAC2015 programme includes:

- **Insights, Foresight and Inspiration**: Review of year to date – the data and foresight for Attractions
  - State of the Nation Review
  - Project and Case Study Reviews
  - Heritage Spotlight – Making heritage work harder
  - Small Attractions – Galleries of Justice Museum
- **VisitEngland: From Strategic Framework to “Welcome” training**: Strategic and operational news and views from the VisitEngland team
  - The Tourism Industry Report
  - Contemporary and controversial issues – The VAC2015 panel discussion

@vac_conference    #vac2015
Unilever adds Murad to its growing brand portfolio

Just days after acquiring Dermalogica, Unilever announced it is buying skincare brand Murad. The company has also recently added brands Kate Somerville and REN to its personal care prestige portfolio.

Murad was founded in 1989 in Los Angeles, California, by Howard Murad MD, who developed antioxidants, anti-inflammatorys, and hydrators to address skincare concerns from acne to anti-aging.

“We’ve always looked for opportunities to reach more people with our message of inclusive health and to touch more lives with our targeted, high-performance products,” commented Dr Murad. Details: http://lei.sr?a=Z9A9j_O

Goodwood’s Waterbeach spa celebrates refurb

West Sussex, England’s Waterbeach spa, located in the Goodwood Hotel, has relaunched after an extensive refurbishment.

The spa is also now using British skincare brand Elemis for its signature facial and body treatments, which include nine facials and four massage options, as well as exfoliation and wraps.

“We reviewed what the Waterbeach was offering and chose to partner with Elemis, as the brand’s luxury British roots really fit with the ethos of the Goodwood Estate,” said Kathryn Gard, leisure operations manager at Goodwood Hotel. “It’s more of a partnership than a product choice, to support us and schedule in treatments, said Gard. The hotel is set in the 12,000-acre Goodwood Estate at the foothills of the South Downs National Park. Details: http://lei.sr?a=n8s3X_O

Wales holds Wellness Round Table

Dr Terry Stevens opened the Global Wellness Round Table, Wales, on 14 July, explaining to delegates that the event has been convened following a request from Susie Ellis, chair of the Global Wellness Institute (GWI).

At the Global Wellness Summit in Marrakech in 2014, Ellis challenged operators around the world to hold a series of GWI round table events to bring together experts from a range of disciplines to discuss wellness interventions and how those strategies could be implemented at local, national and international levels.

The event in Wales is only the sixth to be organised in the world and one of the first in Europe. Delegates from public, private and voluntary sectors across disciplines such as medicine, spa and wellness, youth work, sport and community health gathered to discuss ways in which wellness collaborations can be conceived and implemented and then monitored and used as examples of best practice.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=B4t5Y_O

Loch-side spa shows off ‘stunning views’

Scottish destination property Portavadie is opening a 1,919sq m (21,431sq ft) spa and leisure centre in the coming months that takes full advantage of its views over Loch Fyne on Scotland’s west coast.

The new facilities mark the next stage in a £10m phased development and will include a 95m (310x30ft) heated outdoor infinity pool said to be the largest in Scotland.

The spa and leisure centre includes four treatment rooms, six swimming pools (including a children’s splash pool), a Scandinavian glass sauna that faces the Loch, hydro pool, steam room, Precor-equipped gym, and a 10-bed relaxation area with floor-to-ceiling views across Loch Fyne to the Isle of Arran.

“The ethos of the entire project is to capture the beauty of the Highland landscape,” said Iain Jurgensen, general manager of Portavadie.

“We want to create a picture frame for the changing seasons, the changing moods, the changing skyline, and the changing colours of the landscape. You won’t see much artwork on the walls, because the artwork is outside.”

Designed by Largs, Ayrshire-based Stewart Associates, the spa uses glass, local stone, white oak and walnut to create a natural setting that is “sympathetic to the view at all times,” said Jurgensen, and creates a feeling of “understated luxury.” Details: http://lei.sr?a=m5bZ7_O
AS ONE TEAM WE WILL FUTURE PROOF THE LEISURE INDUSTRY

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Productivity is all about working smarter, not harder

P

roductivity is back on the agenda. Chancellor George Osborne recently pledged that tackling Britain’s poor productivity is now his priority for the current parliament.

At a national level, we work longer hours than Germany and France but produce less per worker than they do. Furthermore, based on output per worker, a new People 1st report reveals our hospitality and tourism sector contributes 53 per cent less than retail and 58 cent less than manufacturing.

However, such comparisons are unhelpful. There are valid reasons why productivity is lower in hospitality. Most people want to eat dinner between 7pm and 8.30pm, for example, leaving emptier restaurants and quieter kitchens during the shoulder periods. For safety and security reasons, hotels must employ staff during the night who need to be awake and alert.

Measuring labour productivity in the tourism and hospitality industry is not difficult. It is simply the amount of sales revenue produced for every £1 spent on labour. However, research highlighted in Hospitality Digest 2014, an Institute of Hospitality publication, found some big differences. The average for labour productivity across all hospitality businesses was £3.24 in sales for each £1 spent on labour, yet the more successful, and productive, businesses were generating £18.44 – six times as much.

So what is it that more successful and highly productive businesses do and what can other employers learn from them? In short, they have better staff retention levels because they invest in training and development and provide clear career pathways.

They underpin this with a caring culture that recognises the need for work/life balance, thus generating loyalty and discretionary effort from employees at all levels.

But simply boosting the supply of skills alone will not necessarily improve productivity. This needs to be accompanied by investment in innovation, re-thinking ways in which services are designed, staff are rostered, technology is utilised and skills are deployed. Driving productivity is about working smarter, not harder.

HOTELS

Lanesborough Hotel completes major refurb

ReardonSmith has returned the Lanesborough hotel in London to its former glory following a complete renovation.

Acting as lead design consultant and architect, ReardonSmith partnered with the Alberto Pinto agency and several specialist craft companies to rejuvenate the hotel near Hyde Park Corner.

The aim of the works was to re-establish the Georgian property, which was converted into a hotel more than 20 years ago, as London’s finest hotel. As part of the project, ReardonSmith negotiated the planning and listed building consents, prepared the works plan, and co-ordinated issues relating to the interior design in line with Alberto Pinto’s vision. The company is also taking care of operations and the new service infrastructure.

In the public areas, ceilings were replaced with embellished fibrous plaster, existing stone and marble was revived, the dark mahogany was stripped back to reveal a lighter grain and layers of classical decoration were introduced. Two original staircases have also been restored.

Apsley’s restaurant inside the hotel has also been given a Georgian refit.

£500m Peninsula hotel unveiled

Hopkins Architects have designed a new £500m five-star hotel in Belgravia, central London, which is expected to open in 2021 if planning permission is granted.

The plans for the Peninsula London – which would be the first UK property for the luxury Asian hotel brand Peninsula – feature a lavish 190-bedroom hotel, with some of the rooms overlooking the gardens of Buckingham Palace. The hotel would also feature an on-site spa, bars and restaurants.

The designs from Hopkins envision the creation of a “new focal point and vibrancy to Hyde Park Corner,” with a grand pedestrian entrance on Grosvenor Place that will be accessed from a colonnade linking to an internal ‘Palazzo-style’ courtyard. The proposal also comprises BDP designs for an improved public realm in Grosvenor Place, Halkin Street and Grosvenor Crescent, with easier road crossings, wider footpaths and new trees planted along Grosvenor Crescent.

Plans have been submitted to Westminster City Council for the new hotel, which would replace the existing 1960s offices at the site. Property investor Grosvenor and Peninsula owner Hongkong and Shanghai Hotels are joint venture partners on the project, with hopes of starting construction by Q2/Q3 2017.

“This is an exciting opportunity to shape a very special corner of London,” said Grosvenor CEO Peter Vernon. “This high-quality development is sensitive to its surroundings, sustainable and will support around 2,800 jobs in the wider economy. It will enhance the West End’s reputation as one of the world’s foremost places to visit and a driving force for the UK economy.”

Details: http://lei.sr?a=h2x3A_O

Apsley’s restaurant inside the hotel has also been given a Georgian refit

The new hotel would replace the existing 1960s offices at the site.
MPs to fight for tourism VAT cut

The British Hospitality Association (BHA) has announced the establishment of a new All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) to focus on improving the visitor economy by advocating measures including a reduction of VAT on tourism.

The group, which features a number of high-profile MPs, will aim to enhance local economies through promoting measures and incentives that will increase visitor numbers and investment in all parts of Britain and Northern Ireland, with a VAT cut top of the agenda.

Tourism bosses have long been campaigning for a reduction in VAT on accommodation and attractions, to place the UK in line with the rest of Europe and encourage additional spending. The Nevin report, commissioned by the Cut Tourism VAT Campaign, found that a VAT reduction from 20 per cent to five per cent for tourism businesses would provide a £4bn (US$6.7bn, €5.8bn) boost to the UK economy, create 120,000 jobs and put the UK back on a level footing with European tourism rivals. The APPG on the Visitor Economy features MPs from a cross-section of political parties, including Plaid Cymru and the Green Party – the only two to pledge to cut tourism VAT on their 2015 General Election manifestos.

The BHA has been appointed as Secretariat to the APPG and will work with MPs to devise the group’s programme during the summer, including a Hospitality and Tourism Lobby Day on 16 September 2015. Details: http://lei.rs/a=usC4a_O

PM unveils five-point tourism plan

Prime Minister David Cameron has unveiled the latest strategy to entice UK visitors beyond London and boost regional tourism in a five-point plan.

Policymakers and tourism representatives have long sought to address the fact London accounts for more than half of the UK’s inbound tourism visits. Cameron’s latest announcement comes as the Conservative government seeks to make good on its pledge to create a ‘northern powerhouse’ and rebalance the economy.

As part of the strategy, a new inter-ministerial group will be formed to co-ordinate and align action across government to ensure the right infrastructure is in place to make it easy for visitors to discover the best of Britain.

The group, headed by culture secretary John Whittingdale and including ministers from across government, will focus on key areas such as fostering greater cross-sector collaboration, reforming regulation to ensure competitiveness and boosting links with the transport sector to improve travel infrastructure outside of the capital.

"Millions of overseas tourists visit the UK every year and most take in the sights of London," said Cameron. "But Britain has so much more to offer, from the Cornish Riviera to the Scottish Highlands and everything in between… That’s why this one nation government is encouraging more visitors to discover more of our beautiful country and this five point plan sets out how we will make that happen."

Indeed, the stated objective of the strategy is to encourage more visitors to travel beyond London and into the regions. All this is despite the domestic tourism industry being over three times the size of the inbound tourism industry and employing almost four times as many people.

Of even more concern is that the new plan talks about VisitEngland’s role solely in terms of supporting product development and supporting tourism businesses through providing research insights and business support for the large numbers of SMEs that comprise the sector. In no part of the document does it mention VisitEngland undertaking marketing activities to boost domestic tourism numbers.

And therein lies the problem we face – a lack of understanding within government that domestic tourism development and promotion is far more important for businesses outside London than attempting to encourage overseas visitors to venture out beyond the capital.

It may not be as sexy as inbound tourism, but it is what drives the economies of seaside and rural destinations in the UK.
In 1759, Reverend Francis Gastrell, the owner of New Place – the house in which William Shakespeare lived and died – made himself the most unpopular man in Stratford-upon-Avon. Annoyed with the regular arrival of tourists wishing to see where England’s greatest poet passed away in 1616, he spitefully demolished the house and was subsequently exiled by the town’s horrified residents.

The eyes of the world will be on Stratford next year as the town marks the 400th anniversary of the death of its most famous son, and tourism stakeholders are hoping this is one opportunity that won’t be smashed to pieces.

For many tourism businesses in the region, a successful 2016 would lay the foundations for years of sustainable operation and secure the lifeblood of this market town.

“Tourism is such an important part of the local economy and 2016 will further help support economic growth in the area,” says Robin Tjolle, CEO of Shakespeare’s England – the tourism organisation for Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwick, Kenilworth, Royal Leamington Spa and surrounding areas.

“The Shakespeare 400th anniversary is a great opportunity for us to showcase this wonderful region and to celebrate Shakespeare’s legacy. We’re looking forward to welcoming more visitors from all over the world to join with us in the celebrations.”

Shakespeare-themes tourism is big business for the region, with the latest figures showing that, from 2012 to 2013, its value rose 15 per cent to £631m per annum. The Bard brings in an estimated 4.9 million visitors each year and over 11,000 people are employed in the Shakespeare’s England tourism industry.

Next year represents a prime opportunity for local tourism businesses to redefine the legacy of Shakespeare and secure its place as a must-see destination for years to come. As a result, the region’s top attractions are busy putting together plans for 2016 and beyond, with the Shakespeare’s England tourism organisation offering strategic direction and the strength of a collective voice.

Shakespeare’s England will celebrate his legacy with a range of exhibitions and events, including a new immersive theatrical experience at the Royal Shakespeare Company; a reimagining of Shakespeare’s final home, New Place; while Shakespeare’s old schoolroom at King Edward VI School will open for the first time to the general public.

“One of the most important goals for the anniversary celebrations next year will be to ensure that young people understand the significance of Shakespeare.”

No holds Bard

With 2016 marking the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare’s death, Jak Phillips goes on the Stratford-upon-Avon tourism trail to explore how businesses are embracing the legacy of The Bard.
we’ll be putting the spotlight on his work with world-class performances that highlight how his plays remain hugely relevant today.”

In addition to a unique RSC performance broadcast live on BBC2 and hosted by David Tennant on 23 April (the date of Shakespeare's death), the RSC will offer a number of ongoing attractions for 2016. Most notably, it will open a major new exhibition in its soon-to-be-restored Swan Wing, featuring previously unseen treasures from the RSC’s archive including costumes, set designs, props, photographs, paintings, drawings, audio and video recordings.

Aside from the attractions and cultural aspects of the anniversary celebrations, hospitality businesses are also getting in on the action. The beautiful Tudor-fronted Mercure Stratford-upon-Avon Shakespeare Hotel – seen as the go-to guesthouse for tourists on the Shakespeare tourism trail – has launched a new initiative to help guests uncover the hidden side of the Bard’s history. The hotel has teamed up with Blue Badge Tourist Guides to identify the town’s Local Secrets, with hotel staff offering insights into the most interesting, historical and entertaining attractions that visitors might not find on the typical tourist trail. The expected influx of Shakespeare fans is also likely to provide a boon for the town’s numerous tour guides. John Hogg, who has been leading tourists around the sights for over a decade on his Stratford Town Walk, believes the 400th anniversary could be the chance to reach new markets for the region’s tourism industry.

“The bulk of visitors are from the UK, but we’re increasingly getting more and more people from across the world coming on our tours,” he says outside of the house where Shakespeare is believed to have been born. “One of the biggest goals for next year will be to ensure young people understand the significance of Shakespeare. Literally every moral and emotional situation you can imagine is dealt with in his work, so I hope next year will encourage more young people to explore the life of William Shakespeare and come to his plays.”

With a packed programme of events for 2016 and strategy planning – overseen by Shakespeare’s England – already well underway, Stratford-upon-Avon is well-placed to capitalise on this golden opportunity. And although the crowds seem certain to flock to the town next year, thankfully for Stratfordians, Reverend Francis Gastrell won’t be there to spoil the party.
Shoreditch facelift moves forward

Proposals to regenerate wasteland in the heart of London's Shoreditch area through a modern mixed-use scheme are being carried forward by developers Hammerson and Ballymore, aided by a phalanx of top designers.

The Bishopsgate Goodsyard development would see the creation of a modern mixed-use complex comprising 1,356 new homes, offices, 200,000sq ft (18,580sq m) of commercial space, a 2.4 acre public park, plus a number of other leisure and community spaces.

The developers have put together a stellar cast of designers to realise their ambitions. Farrells are masterplanning the project, while there are also contributions from PLP Architecture, FaulknerBrowns, Chris Dyson Architects, Buckley Gray Yeoman and landscape architects Spacehub. The designs seek to meld modern influences with the site’s historical aspects, such as the Braithwaite arches, to restore the wider area through additions such as London’s first fully elevated park. As is often the case with projects in areas of cultural significance, the scheme has so far attracted a fair amount of opposition from groups such as campaign group ‘More Light, More Power’, the Spitalfields Society and the Victorian Society.

One of the main criticisms is that the towering residential blocks will block light and appear out of step with surroundings, while there are also fears that big business could ‘smother’ the area’s independent character.

A Goodsyard spokesperson said they have engaged with 1,500 stakeholders to address these concerns through of consultations and revised plans. Details: http://lei.sr/a=U454j_O

Whitworth on Stirling Prize shortlist

MUMA’s “highly-original” extension and refurbishment of Manchester’s Whitworth art gallery has made the shortlist of six for this year’s Stirling Prize.

It was described by organisers the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) as “a project for all seasons, where art, nature and architecture combine” that “could be the eulogy for a building which is neither high-key nor overtly fashionable”.

The Whitworth reopened on 14 February following London-based MUMA’s £15m renovation, which doubled the public space and extended the exhibition floor, while incorporating educational areas and a storage centre.

The gallery won this year’s £100,000 Art Fund prize for Museum of the Year on 1 July. It joins a University of Greenwich building located in a UNESCO World Heritage Site, two housing projects, a school, and a cancer centre on RIBA’s shortlist.

The architects involved in these projects are Allford Hall Monaghan Morris, Niall McLaughlin, Reiach and Hall, Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners and Heneghan Peng.

Recognising the UK’s best new building, the Stirling Prize is now in its 20th year, with Haworth Tompkins’ Liverpool Everyman Theatre picking up the award in 2014.

The 2015 winner of the coveted award will be announced in London on 15 October. Details: http://lei.sr/a=w2Q8f_O

Cotlandswick Leisure Centre open for business

The new £4.6m Cotlandswick Leisure Centre in London Colney, Hertfordshire has officially opened to the public, following a 10-month construction project.

Councillor Gill Clark – the deputy mayor of St Albans City and District – cut the ribbon on Cotlandswick Leisure Centre earlier this summer to kick off a community open day.

Operated by iLife on behalf of the council, the new centre was constructed by Wilmott Dixon, working to designs from Pozzoni Architects. It features nine 3G football pitches, a 42-station gym with equipment from Life Fitness, TRX and foam rolling from Trigger Point. There is also a group exercise studio, a sports hall and a children’s soft play area.

“It was fantastic to see all the different facilities that the centre offers being used by the local community,” said Cotlandswick general manager Martin Holland. Details: http://lei.sr/a=15N6S_O

Manchester continues to modernise leisure centres

Hough End Leisure Centre in Manchester is now open, as Manchester City Council continues to modernise its leisure provision.

Hough End Leisure Centre is part of a major programme of investment in leisure facilities being undertaken by Manchester City Council that, when complete, will have created three new leisure centres. Hough End is the second of these centres, joining the East Manchester Leisure Centre, which opened late last year and the new Arcadia Centre in Levenshulme – where work is well underway. Hough End replaces the old Withington and Chorlton facilities. The new GLL-operated centre is home to a 25m (82ft) six-lane swimming pool and a separate learner pool, both of which saw FT Leisure serve as principal sub-contractor responsible for the water treatment and filtration systems. Details: http://lei.sr/a=K4C6y_O
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Tennis star launches ‘Uber for PTs’

Tennis star Ana Ivanovic has partnered with a team of investors and entrepreneurs to launch what has been described as ‘Uber for personal trainers’.

The world No.7 – who bowed out of Wimbledon last month with an early defeat – is a co-owner of trainers4me.com, a new digital platform which provides exercise enthusiasts with immediate access to thousands of trainers across the globe. Like taxi-ordering app Uber, trainers4me.com aims to “revolutionise the consumer experience” in the physical activity sector.

The development marks the latest example of technologies being applied to the fitness industry, having enjoyed success in other sectors. Recently, Les Mills announce the launch of its new ‘On-Demand’ streaming service, which Leisure Opportunities dubbed “Spotify for fitness classes,” while booking platform upmysport has also sought to provide a portal connecting consumers with exercise professionals.

Ivanovic has teamed up with internet entrepreneur Marko Filej and former Wall Street professional Alexander Tamarkin to bring the trainers4me.com concept to market. It will aim to help consumers connect to personal trainers and sports coaches, anywhere in the world, with Filej outlining ambitions to become “the next Airbnb in the world of sports.”

“The aim of trainers4me.com is to build a worldwide community of sports lovers by delivering the easiest and most cost-effective way of finding a top-class personal trainer or instructor anywhere in the world,” said Ivanovic. “We provide instructors in almost every sport imaginable from golf to kite surfing.” Details: http://lei.slr=a=G8V7h_O

Budget cuts ‘pose risk’ to initiatives

Government cuts to further education budgets are putting key initiatives tackling obesity and physical inactivity at risk, potentially triggering an even bigger health crisis, a new piece of research has warned.

The research, commissioned by fitness qualifications provider YMCA Awards, came as chancellor George Osborne delivered the first budget by a Conservative government in almost 20 years last month. Osborne hopes to make £30bn in savings as part of his deficit-reduction strategy, with many sectors facing uncertainty. The YMCA Awards research forecasts a shortfall in trained fitness instructors and coaches if current rates at which FE Colleges are cutting places and closing departments continue.

Data compiled by EMSI for YMCA Awards shows there will be a need for 6,867 newly qualified professionals by 2019, with demand predicted to maintain a steady rate of increase into the 2020s and beyond. However, following a fresh wave of budget cuts, YMCA Awards notes that courses designed to provide qualified fitness and leisure professionals are being disproportionately affected.

George Osborne is overseeing £30bn of spending cuts

“Examining the impact of budget cuts, it is clear that departments related to the leisure sector and related skills such as fitness training and coaching are seen as a soft target when it comes to administrators wielding the axe,” said Rob May, director of YMCA Awards. “This is a major concern given the importance to our nation of tackling the epidemic of inactivity that is affecting our health and wellbeing as well as having a knock-on effect on the costs of healthcare.” Details: http://lei.slr=a=Gjzzz_O
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Company: Move GB
Location: Bath, UK
Fitness Instructor
Company: St Marys School CALNE
Location: Calne, Wiltshire, UK
Regional Activity
Scout, Scotland
Company: Move GB
Location: Scotland
Sports Administrator/ Duty Officer
Company: The Royal Parks
Location: Regents Park, London, UK
Fitness Instructor
Company: énergie group
Location: Southbury, Leighton Buzzard, UK
Trainee Duty Manager - Fitness & Operations
Company: Parkwood Leisure
Location: Keyworth, UK
Personal Trainers
Company: The Gym Group
Location: Glasgow South, UK
Personal Trainers
Company: The Gym Group
Location: London Ealing, UK
Personal Trainer
Company: énergie group
Location: Long Eaton, UK
Personal Trainers
Company: The Gym Group
Location: London Barking, UK
Full / Part time Lifeguard
Company: Everyone Active
Location: Cirencester, UK
Fitness Apprentice
Company: GLL
Location: Harlow, Essex, UK
Customer Relations/ Sales Manager
Company: Fusion Lifestyle
Location: London, England
Technical Support Assistant
Company: The STA
Location: Walsall, West Midlands, UK
Swimming Teachers
Company: Everyone Active
Location: Sutton, UK
Member Services Advisor - Part Time 17.5hr
Company: Pure Gym Limited
Location: Leeds, UK
Fitness Motivator and Personal Trainer
Company: Everyone Active
Location: St Albans, UK
Member Services Advisor - Part Time 25hr
Company: Pure Gym Limited
Location: Leeds, UK
Member Services Advisor - Full Time 40hr
Company: Pure Gym Limited
Location: Leeds, UK
Personal Trainers Wanted
Company: Soho Gyms
Location: London, UK
Sports Coach Level 2 (Senior Climbing Instructor)
Company: Oxford Brookes University
Location: Oxford, UK
Personal Trainer
Company: Pure Gym Limited
Location: PureGym Wrexham, UK
Recreation Assistant
Company: Legacy Leisure
Location: Newbury, UK
Aquazone Swimming Instructors
Company: Parkwood Leisure
Location: Rushcliffe, UK
Part Time / Casual Recreation Assistant
Company: Everyone Active
Location: Staines, UK
Personal Training Tutors
Company: The Training Room
Location: Bristol/Reading and Hatfield, UK
Supervisor
Company: St Marys School CALNE
Location: Calne, Wiltshire, UK
Promo Staff
Company: Pure Gym Limited
Location: Wrexham, UK
Senior Fitness Motivator
Company: Everyone Active
Location: Stratford Upon Avon - Warwickshire, UK
Customer Service / Sales Advisor (Dual Role)
Company: GLL
Location: Cheltenham, UK
Swim Teachers
Company: Everyone Active
Location: Nuneham, Oxford
General Manager - Leisure Centre
Company: Fusion Lifestyle
Location: Middlesex, England
Personal Trainer
Company: énergie group
Location: Leighton Buzzard, UK

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Foucan to lead freerunning clubs

Continued from front cover
The first Foucan Freerunning Academy was launched at Oxygen Freejumping in Acton, West London – which opened to the public on July 20 – and the French freerunner believes this will herald the start of what he calls a “fantastic journey”.

“I am very excited to be collaborating with Oxygen Freejumping to create a new experience of freerunning,” said Foucan, who famously showcased his high-octane skills in the breathtaking opening sequence to the James Bond film Casino Royale.

“What I am passionate about is developing an environment where people can play with freedom, because for me, activity is vitality.”

Oxygen Freejumping in Acton will feature 150 connected trampolines on the main floor, along with dodgeball courts, a giant airbag, “walk the wall trampolines”, basketball hoops and tumble tracks. Regular sessions offered will include Family Bounce, Teen Takeovers, Little o’s for toddlers, fitness sessions on the park and in a dedicated rebounding studio, plus a professional trampolining academy for aspiring gymnasts and holiday camps.

“We’re looking forward to introducing a new means of moving so adults and children will be able to enjoy the very best in bouncing, jumping and freerunning,” said Oxygen Freejumping founder David Stalker.

“Sébastien will be an integral part of the design team across all of our sites, ensuring we have the very best freerunning facilities alongside all of our other activities.”

Details: http://lei.sr?a=v/two.oldstyleC/four.oldstylez_O

Spa for £150m Resorts World complex

Continued from front cover
In addition to nine treatment rooms, the Santai Spa at the Genting Hotel in Birmingham will feature a gym, swimming pool, mani/pedi area, eight-station hairdressing facility and juice bar.

The spa’s treatment menu incorporates traditional facial and body treatments, advanced aesthetic skin and body treatments, and hair and nail offerings, while EF Medispa is also developing a line of signature treatments for the spa.

“We are providing a turnkey package that integrates our unique medi-spa concept into a traditional spa environment,” said Esther Fieldgrass, founder of EF Medispa.

“We have seen an evolving trend as regular visitors to spas are now seeking more results-driven therapies to complement their hotel stays. I believe we’ve designed the ideal blend of treatments to suit the diverse range of visitors to this amazing venue.” Spa Creators consulted on the project and provided interior design, Cheshire Wellness supplied wet zone facilities, while spa equipment is by Ellisons.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=v2C4z_O