The public funding which elite sport quango UK Sport distributes to British Cycling is not under immediate threat – despite the assertion that the governing body’s credibility is in “tatters”.
It was described as such by Culture Media and Sport Committee chair Damian Collins following an explosive hearing into the controversial medical package flown out from British Cycling’s Manchester headquarters to Sir Bradley Wiggins at the 2011 Criterium du Dauphine.

Continued on back cover

British Cycling public funding safe – for now

The Gym Group turned around losses of £12.7m for 2015 to post a profit of £6.9m in 2016 following its move onto the stock market.
Revenue increased year-on-year by 22.6 per cent, from £60m to £73.5m, while the number of members shot up by 19.1 per cent to 448,000.
This was in part due to 15 new gyms opening in 2016, increasing The Gym Group’s total estate to 89.
As well as increased quantity, Gym Group chief executive John Treharne commented that the IPO also helped The Gym Group secure the best covenant compared to all the equivalent operators as “landlords do ascribe a superior convenance to a PLC company”. The Gym Group floated on the stock market in late-2015.

Treharne said the IPO had made it easier for the company to secure better sites, commented that the IPO also helped The Gym Group secure the best covenant compared to all the equivalent operators as “landlords do ascribe a superior convenance to a PLC company”. The Gym Group floated on the stock market in late-2015.

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As well as increased quantity, Gym Group chief executive John Treharne told Leisure Opportunities that as a result of the IPO reducing debt in the organisation’s balance sheet, the company had been able to “secure the very best sites going forward”.

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Its main low-cost rival, Pure Gym, attempted to float on the stock market last year, but abandoned the move due to “challenging conditions”.
Around 35-40 per cent of The Gym Group’s sites are in London and the South East, but Treharne caveated that the company plans to continue to spread its reach “far and wide across the UK”.
In fact, he highlighted extensive growth in university towns, with students now making up 35 per cent of the organisation’s membership base.
Treharne explained that the low-cost membership and 24/7 nature of the offer was driving this growth. While he said that opening sites within university campuses was a “possibility”, it would need to be something city centre-based to be “readily accessible to the local population.”

Details: http://lei.sr?la=e7n6A_O

2017 ticket offer to ‘inspire youth’

An offer which allows school children to watch the World Para Athletics Championships in London for £3 will inspire them to get involved in sporting participation, according to sports minister Tracey Crouch.
Around 90,000 pupils will receive discounted entry for the event at the London Stadium (formerly the Olympic Stadium) – which takes place from 14 to 23 July 2017.
Accompanying teachers, parent and adults will be granted free admission.
Crouch said: “It is an absolutely fantastic offer and a real opportunity for people to see heroes. I think it’s really important we enable people to see world-class para sport. It will go on to inspire many people to get involved in sport, whether it’s para sport or another type of sport.
“I think it’s a real opportunity for school children to see their heroes from Rio last year and engage in sport in general.”
Details: http://lei.sr?la=6wsg2_O

Triple Rio 2016 gold medallist Hannah Cockroft is expected to be competing at the Championships we enable people to see world-class para sport. It will go on to inspire many people to get involved in sport, whether it’s para sport or another type of sport.
“I think it’s a real opportunity for school children to see their heroes from Rio last year and engage in sport in general.”
Details: http://lei.sr?la=6wsg2_O
The Youth Sport Trust (YST) has laid out its vision for PE and school sport at its annual conference in Coventry.

According to chief executive Alison Oliver, physical literacy and the love of movement should be at the heart of primary school PE, with leadership skills and health and wellbeing the focus on secondary school sport.

Delivering a keynote speech at the conference, Oliver told delegates: “This would put physical education at the heart of the educational agenda for schools – ensuring young people are well enough to learn and have developed a range of personal competencies that will help them in the classroom.”

The Youth Sport Trust wants the emphasis on PE to switch from sporting prowess to the enhancement of lifelong skills. It has launched programmes such as ‘My Personal Best’ and ‘Get to the Start Line’.

The former was a 12 month pilot in 25 schools to develop a replicable approach to character development. The latter revolves around the “power of leadership”, with Young Health Ambassadors leading projects to address wellbeing in schools.

According to the Youth Sport Trust, secondary school PE is “under increased pressure”, with more schools opting to reduce or drop it entirely.

Last year, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on a Fit and Healthy Childhood – chaired by Floella Benjamin – said PE was “failing” pupils in its current form.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=F4t2r_O

Birmingham joins race for 2022

Birmingham is the second British city to throw its hat into the ring to take over hosting the Commonwealth Games in 2022 after Durban, South Africa lost the right to stage the event.

Without overtly stating a desire to host the Games, Ian Ward, the deputy leader of Birmingham City Council made a statement indicating that the city was ready to step in if needed.

“We are aware of the decision from the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) to seek a new host for the 2022 Games,” he said.

“Here in Birmingham we are already in the advanced stages of producing a detailed feasibility study on what would be needed for a truly memorable Games in the city. That is due to be completed in the coming weeks and we are in close contact with the government.”

Birmingham originally developed the feasibility study in preparation of launching a bid for the 2026 Games.

Liverpool – which rivalled Birmingham for that event – has made the government and CGF aware that the city would be happy to take on the 2022 edition. Durban was stripped of the Games on 13 March after failing to adhere to the requirements laid out by the CGF.

According to reports, a number of other nations have ruled out stepping in to host the 2022 Commonwealth Games. Details: http://lei.sr?a=n4d3A_O
‘Quick action’ needed on boards

Sports national governing bodies with low female representation on their boards should make changes immediately and not wait for vacancies to arise, according to Women in Sport.

The equality charity published its latest report, which highlighted a continual lack of powerful female voices in the sport sector, and said it was “no longer acceptable” for boards to wait to appoint qualified females, particularly if “gender levels consistently fall below or board the 30 per cent level”. Overall, the percentage of women in leadership roles in sport was at around the 30 per cent mark.

While the number of CEOs had increased over the last seven years – up to 24 per cent from 15 per cent – the percentage of women in senior leadership roles had decreased from 42 per cent in 2014 to 36 per cent.

The report highlighted a major gap at middle-management level, which is reducing the pool of female talent for senior executives and board members at a later stage.

As a result, Women in Sport’s Beyond 30 Per Cent Report has laid out a number of recommendations around proactive and transparent recruiting, flexible working solutions and confidence training for women keen to move up the ladder in sport.

Of the latter, the body urged the DCMS to invest in “formal leadership development opportunities for women”.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=H6F5a_O

New CEO for under-fire British Cycling

Julie Harrington – the woman responsible for running Wembley Stadium for the Football Association (FA) – has been appointed to head up under-fire governing body British Cycling.

The new chief executive joins the organisation during a tense period despite a stellar showing by Team GB cyclists during the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, when 15 medals were achieved.

A review of British Cycling’s “climate and culture” is close to its conclusion following allegations of bullying and sexism, while the controversy surrounding a medical parcel delivered to the doctor of Sir Bradley Wiggins during the 2011 Criterium du Dauphine continues to raise questions over its governance.

Following an explosive Culture, Media and Sport Committee hearing in which UK Anti-Doping chief executive Nicole Sapstead criticised the record keeping of the body, chair of the committee Damian Collins said its credibility was in “tatters”. Despite this, Harrington said it was “the right time to be joining one of the country’s leading governing bodies”.

“British Cycling already has a fantastic track record of using elite success to inspire millions of people to get active by getting on their bikes and is now setting its sights in new ambitions and a new way of working,” she added.

Harrington, who has 15 years’ experience in senior sports roles, will replace Ian Drake in May. She joined the FA in 2011 as managing director of St George’s Park – the body’s £100m training centre in Burton-on-Trent.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=28N8K_O

Andy Burnham: ‘Football can sooth mental health’

The NHS should prescribe sporting activities, such as football, to people with mental health conditions rather than “just hand out anti-depressants”, according to former health minister Andy Burnham.

Talking at an event in parliament recognising the work of the Mental Health Football Association – of which he is a patron – Burnham said that sport and physical activity “should have a much greater role to play in helping people regain a sense of themselves”.

Set up by Colin Dolan, the Mental Health Football Association is a non-profit organisation that uses football as part of the recovery process for mental illness.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=9W5g2_O

More than 2.2m women play rugby around the world, according to the global governing body

World Rugby plans new strategy for women

Rugby’s global governing body will fire the starting gun on a broad consultation before launching an eight-year strategy to boost the women’s game.

World Rugby will ask for feedback from players, fans, unions and regional associations, as well as commercial and broadcast partners, as it bids to further its development and sustainability.

The 2017-2025 plan for women’s rugby will aim to stimulate: increased participation; higher performance through competition; “inspirational leadership”; a profile that breaks down barriers; and a growing audience and investment avenues.

Katie Sadleir, World Rugby’s general manager for women’s rugby, said to increase participation the body had to “deliver opportunities in the playground, the podium and the boardroom”.

“It’s critical that we are innovative, bold and prepared to act on the collective needs of the game and a whole new generation of players and fans,” Sadleir added.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=C5N7X_O

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Details: http://lei.sr?a=C5N7X_O
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Budget labelled ‘missed opportunity’

Chancellor Philip Hammond’s Spring Budget was a “missed opportunity” for the government to demonstrate its commitment to tackling the nation’s physical inactivity crisis, ukactive executive director Steven Ward has said.

Hammond confirmed a shake-up of vocational and technical education in England, outlining a Post-16 Skills Plan that specifies 15 core areas of employment which the framework will deliver.

Sport and physical activity was not one of the 15 areas, despite equivalent sized industries such as hairdressing, catering and hospitality being named. The reforms are based on recommendations from a 2016 report into technical education by an independent panel, chaired by Lord Sainsbury.

A total of £100m will be allocated in 2019/20 for the first technical level qualifications and this will rise to more than £500m by 2022.

During his Budget speech, Hammond said investing in education and skills would help tackle the productivity gap and that a recurring concern was whether young people were being taught relevant attributes needed.

In response to the announcement, Ward said: “The Budget represents a missed opportunity for the government to deliver clear action on its commitment to tackle Britain’s physical inactivity crisis and demonstrates that when it comes to employment issues, our sector is not getting its voice heard nor its interests served. This has to change.

“The glaring omission of sport and physical activity from the 15 career pathways under the new Post-16 Skills Plan drastically underestimates the importance of our sector to the future of UK PLC.

“By failing to provide a clear career pathway into the physical activity sector, the government risks weakening the workforce when it has never been needed more.”

Details: http://lei.sr?a=m7t5A_O

20-year deal for Everyone Active

Everyone Active has signed a 20-year deal to provide sports and leisure facilities in the East Hampshire area, which will involve £29.5m of investment in two new leisure centres and extensive redevelopment of another.

New facilities will be built in Alton and in Whitehill and Bordon, with money invested in Taro Leisure Centre in Petersfield.

The contract, which will see Everyone Active run all three centres on a day-to-day basis, will begin once the council’s current deal, with Places for People Leisure, expires on 31 March.

Work at the Taro centre will begin this year while the two new facilities will be built simultaneously in 2019. The site at Alton will include a six-lane 25m pool, a six-court sports hall, two fitness studios, squash courts and a gym.

The Whitehill and Bordon centre will feature a six-lane 25m pool, two fitness studios, a learner pool and a gym.

Work at Taro Leisure Centre will include improvements to the reception area, redevelopment of the fitness studio and refurbishment of the changing rooms.

Councillor Richard Millard, the council’s deputy leader, said: “We can look forward to two brand new top quality leisure centres and improved facilities across the district, all to be delivered within the next two years.

“And the commercial elements written into the contract will ensure that these facilities will offer fantastic sporting opportunities.”

David Love, Everyone Active’s contract manager, said: “This is a very exciting time for East Hampshire, with a wide range of new and improved leisure facilities coming to the area.”

Details: http://lei.sr?a=m75A_O

Retention Convention to focus on happy workforce

The Retention Convention will focus on the impact a happy workforce has on retaining leisure centre, gym and health club members at its event in May.

Now in its third year, Dr Paul Bedford – who founded the conference in 2015 – will be joined by Justin Tamsett, Lexie Griffiths and Keith Smith.

Tamsett, a former health club owner and now a business mentor and coach, will share seven key areas to building a winning team during his session ‘Building Retention Starts Off The Field’.

The convention will take place in Manchester on 18 May.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=m6J5n_O

Former rugby player opens London fitness studio

A former semi-professional rugby player has opened a 4,800sq ft (446sq m) training and conditioning studio in London.

UNiT, in Fulham, west London has been set up by Rob Smyth and is targeted at young professionals, holding more than 40 classes a week. With the motto “we train as one”, classes are based around up to 15 stations depending on the workout, whether it is a strength, cardiovascular or mobility session. The studio has six coaches and is targeting 500 members.

Smyth, who used to play rugby for Leinster Academy in Dublin, Ireland, stopped playing because of injury.

Smyth, who has worked in the fitness industry for over a decade, said: “Participants encourage, motivate and push their fellow members to get out of their comfort zone and complete their workout as one. We ask one thing of UNiT members; to believe in their abilities and push themselves. Our job is to motivate you beyond what you think is possible and train outside of your comfort zone.”

Details: http://lei.sr?a=5xszd_O
HEALTH & FITNESS

Report: David Lloyd prepares for £1.3bn sale

TDR Capital, the owner of the David Lloyd gyms, is gearing up to sell the chain in a £1.3bn deal following its acquisition of 16 Virgin Active clubs.

According to a report in the Daily Telegraph, a number of private equity firms are circling the mid-market brand ahead of an official auction in the summer.

DLL was bought by TDR for £750m in 2013. Its estate comprises of 83 fitness clubs in the UK and a further 12 on the continent in the Netherlands, Belgium and Spain.

That number will rise to 111 overall once the acquisition has been rubberstamped by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), although a formal investigation is due to get under way.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=k7a7g_O

Gymbox now has more than 24,000 members

London expansion offers boost to Gymbox profits

London-based gym chain Gymbox experienced a 28.2 per cent surge in profits as its expansion gathered pace in 2016.

The firm’s membership base grew to 24,000, with several signing up at its newer clubs in Old Street, Stratford and Victoria.

Gymbox has also opened a ninth club in Farringdon, which features a three-lane running track, an Olympic-sized boxing ring and the largest free weights area in London. As a result its gross profit grew from £12.4m in 2015 to £15.9m in 2016.

Revenues also mushroomed from £13.1m in 2015 to £16.8m over the same period.

The expansion is set to continue after the company secured a £39m funding package from the Business Growth Fund and HSBC in October 2016. Three new gyms are in the pipeline for 2017.

Marc Diaper, Gymbox chief executive, said the opening of the Farringdon club was a “huge milestone”.

“This, together with a strong performance in 2016 and further clubs in the pipeline, stands us in great stead for the year ahead,” he added.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=G6C8B_O

Planning laws ‘blocking gyms’

“Archaic” town planning laws are blocking fitness businesses from having impactful presences on English high streets, which are “drowning in betting shops and fried chicken joints”, according to the chair of ukactive.

Talking at the fitness body’s Sweat conference, Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson said the government should plot a radical overhaul of regulations to make it easier for gyms and health clubs to reach more of the population.

England’s National Planning Policy Framework currently stipulates that gyms and leisure centres can only occupy Class D2 category buildings, whereas retail shops can occupy “far more abundant” Class A1 buildings – i.e. on the high street.

“Archaic planning laws currently make it easier to open takeaways and betting shops than businesses that make a positive contribution – economically, socially and physically – to the community,” said the Paralympic legend. Calling for more flexible business rates for fitness companies, she added: “Fitness operators breathe life into towns to the community, “ said the Paralympic

Details: http://lei.sr?a=m4x5d_O

Pulse Group completes £4m project

The Pulse Group has completed the design, build and gym installation work at Go! Active at The Arc in Clowne, Derbyshire.

Pulse was appointed as Bolsover District Council’s strategic leisure development partner in 2015 and has been responsible for all aspects of the £4m extension project.

The facility now boasts a new 25m swimming pool, a children’s pool and flume, a Play Kingdom, new wet, village changing rooms, a thermal suite complete with steam room, sauna, ice fountain and snail shower, as well as a café, in the 21,108sq ft (1,961sq m) extension.

Existing fitness facilities have also been expanded, with two new group exercise studios and a cycling studio kitted out with 20 Keiser bikes. The fitness suite has been extended to a 100-station gym, with cardiovascular, strength and plate-loaded lines from Pulse Fitness.

The gym also features a bespoke functional training rig, and all equipment is fitted with Pulse’s tracking and member management software PulseMove.

“We are delighted to have opened this fantastic facility, following a successful working partnership with Bolsover District Council,” said Chris Johnson, Pulse managing director. “Go! Active is truly a leisure facility fit for the whole community and we are thrilled to see so many people walking through the doors already.”

A preview weekend saw more than 6,000 visitors pass through the doors, and membership sits at more than 3,100.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=G6b2c_O

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Details: http://lei.sr?a=G6b2c_O
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shape the business.
Landmark’s £25m hotel revamp

Belfast’s Crumlin Road Courthouse will be transformed into a £25m luxury hotel.

Signature Living Group, the hotel group, will revamp the landmark site as part of a city-wide growth strategy.

The project will be one of five new hotels the developer will bring to Northern Ireland’s capital over the next three years.

Designed by Charles Lanyon, the heritage site dates back to 1850.

It is famous for hosting the trial of the Shankill Butchers – the notorious Ulster loyalist gang that was responsible for the murder of 23 people. In 1983, 22 IRA suspects were jailed for a total of 4,000 years in the building. However, it has fallen into a “state of disrepair” in recent times.

Lawrence Kenwright, chair of Signature Living Group, said the firm’s focus will be on “sympathetically restoring the building to its former glory.”

“We see ourselves as the custodians of these important buildings and the courthouse will very much still belong to the people of Belfast,” he added.

“For us, this is an investment in the local Belfast community and, as well as committing around £25m to the restoration project, we will be investing in a series of community initiatives – including the launch of a special apprenticeship academy – in the coming months.”

Details: http://lei.sr?r=B1Yom

The courthouse has been in a state of disrepair for some time

Hotel part of Bognor Regis plan

The construction of a new hotel will be part of a major leisure-led regeneration of the British seaside town of Bognor Regis being proposed.

Members of the district council have thrown their weight behind a mixed-use scheme worth hundreds of millions of pounds.

Initial concepts developed by regeneration consultancy Urban Delivery, architect Kay Elliott and multidisciplinary practice Arup visualise an expansive linear park connecting a car park near the train station to Regis Centre. The focal point of the development, themed ‘Gardens by the Sea’, will be a 3,000sq m (32,300sq ft) Winter Garden integrated with a new theatre with a rooftop garden and performance space.

The hotel and a raised outdoor seating area will be around the new shops and restaurants that will overlook the sea. Other facilities proposed for the stretch of park include water features, public seating, cycle routes, a children’s play area, an adult gym and a boule/pétanque pitch.

The vision, which has arisen from a detailed feasibility study, has swayed Arun District Council.

“This study encapsulates the bold and innovative thinking we feel is needed to unlock the full potential of Bognor Regis,” said the council’s director of place, Karl Roberts. “These sites have been waiting too long for the redevelopment proposed and the time is now right to make it happen.”

Details: http://lei.sr?r=O0E5f

A park could lead to a theatre with an outdoor performance space

High quality training is the key to business success

PETER DUCKER is chief executive of the Institute of Hospitality

In the latest Sunday Times list of the Top 100 Best Companies to work for, Oakmann Inns, a chain of 16 pubs is ranked fourth and The New World Trading Company, another pub group, comes in 10th place.

It cannot be a coincidence that in both cases staff specifically highlighted their satisfaction with the training programmes run by these companies as a key factor in their overall happiness at work.

How do you know your business’s in-house training or the training it receives from a third party is up to scratch? One of the vital services that the Institute of Hospitality provides is the endorsement of training programmes provided in-house or by external training providers.

Leisure operators looking for well-trained reception staff will be interested in graduates from the Reception Academy, whose training has recently been endorsed by the Institute. The Reception Academy, based in London, offers short practical courses, during which students learn to use reservations software programmes.

Most of its students are already in work: baristas, hairdressers, shop assistants, employees working in the fast casual dining sector – jobs with not much room to move up. Hotels are seen as a somewhat highly-regarded job. These people can afford the training and want a different life. They want to make a career for themselves. They’ve worked in customer service and are looking for the next opportunity to progress.

For the hotels, it’s great to know that somebody took the time and used their own money to get trained. They clearly have a different dedication to the job at hand, than someone who hasn’t invested anything.

All Reception Academy classrooms also include the reception desk where the students learn to practice on industry software systems.

Endorsement by the Institute of Hospitality is no empty box-ticking exercise. It is conducted by a completely independent panel of academics and industry experts, providing a valuable report and developmental feedback for the training provider.
SPA & WELLNESS

Boutique suites for rural retreat

Luxury spa retreat Moddershall Oaks, located in the Staffordshire countryside, has launched its new boutique spa suites. Featuring upgraded beds, underfloor heating and private deck areas, each room has been designed to maximise guest comfort in a modern and luxurious environment, while giving a ‘home-spa’ feel.

Highlights include a four poster bed in the Master Suite, a freestanding bath in the Deluxe Suite, and an Accessible Suite, which has been designed for those with limited mobility and wheelchair access. All rooms include underfloor heating, rainfall showers, access to a shared outdoor hot tub, Elemis toiletries and GHD hair appliances.

“We wanted to extend the relaxing and luxurious experience of our spa into the bedrooms where guests can continue to feel serene and pampered from day to night,” said Penny Holland, director. “The boutique feel of the rooms comes complete with a soft lounge area which has been designed to make guests feel at home while reaping the benefits of all of the services we have to offer. Comfort is key to us and we want to create a boutique experience where each guest is personally taken care of.”

Spa facilities at Moddershall Oaks include an outdoor spa courtyard and relaxation lounge, spa deli, gym, tennis court, heated vitality pool and kelo sauna.

The indoor spa area includes a swimming pool, steam room, hydrotherapy pool, heated tiled loungers, experience shower, reflexology footbaths and The Snug beauty treatment suite.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=e9c5D_O

Spa opens in old Bristol bank vaults

The Venice-inspired Lloyds Bank building in Bristol is one of two former banks that have been merged together to form the newly-opened Bristol Harbour Hotel & Spa.

The hotel’s underground spa features seven treatment rooms, a sauna, a steam room, areas of rest and relaxation and a fully equipped urban gym. Set in the former vaults of the 16th Century building – which was inspired by Sansovino’s Library in the Italian city – careful restoration has resulted in a striking space with many original features retained, including listed vault doors.

The urban retreat features an indoor pool with low-level lighting

The urban retreat features an indoor pool with low-level lighting

The urban retreat features an indoor pool with low-level lighting

The urban retreat features an indoor pool with low-level lighting

Ocean Spa Ritual, holistic and advanced facials, specialised massage treatments and holistic alternative therapies.

The spa menu also includes men’s and pregnancy treatments, nail treatments, make-up services and a selection of spa breaks and days.

Situated a short walk from Harbourside and with 42 city view bedrooms, Bristol Harbour Hotel & Spa is part of hotel group Harbour Hotels, which has 13 properties in the UK.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=m3y7N_O
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Zoo loses its license over deaths

A troubled zoo in Cumbria, where around 500 animals died in its care in less than four years, has been refused a new licence to run it following a unanimous decision by the local council.

South Lakes Safari Zoo in Dalton had 486 animals die under its care between 2013 and 2016 – a death rate of roughly 12 per cent during the period.

Tony Callister, chair of the council’s licensing committee, said the decision was made because it was not satisfied that conservation matters referred to in the Zoo Licensing Act would be implemented.

The zoo, which is home to more than 1,500 animals has had its inhabitants die for a number of reasons, including emaciation, hypothermia and electrocution.

According to a report on conditions at the attraction, zoo inspectors found "significant problems caused by overcrowding, poor hygiene, poor nutrition, lack of suitable animal husbandry and a lack of any sort of developed veterinary care", adding that Barrow Council should consider prosecuting zoo founder David Gill under the Animal Welfare Act for allowing animals to suffer.

The zoo has experienced a number of problems in recent times. On 17 December 2015, the council raised several concerns about the zoo, issuing an order to prove within 28 days that walkways were safe. The zoo responded in a statement, with management saying they felt "harassed" to the point that they were unable to continue under such conditions.

Details: http://lei.sr?la=N9a3x_O

Revenues and profit up at Merlin

Merlin Entertainments has revealed its end of year results, with £1.43bn in revenue capping off a strong year for the operator despite having to navigate some choppy waters.

The operator recorded growth of 11.7 per cent year-on-year, up from 2015’s figures of £1.28bn, which were heavily affected by the fallout of the Smiler crash at Alton Towers. Profits were also up by 3.6 per cent from 2015’s £291m to 2016’s £302m.

Merlin CEO Nick Varney noted difficult market conditions for Merlin’s visitor attractions in Florida as well as a “number of headwinds” in 2016, including pre-opening costs related to Legoland developments in Japan and Korea and a £5m fine incurred in relation to the Smiler accident. Merlin also noted improved visitation for Alton Towers and strong performances from its other parks.

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“Despite a number of headwinds in 2016, including a difficult market for visitor attractions in Florida, we are pleased with the progress made in the US, generating revenue of £404m from our North American attractions up from £36m in 2015,” said Varney.

“We opened our 100th Midway attraction, a new Legoland Discovery Centre in Michigan, and visitors to Madame Tussauds in New York will have enjoyed seeing their favourite Ghostbusters characters and sets from the film up close and personal."

Details: http://lei.sr?la=G5c7g_O

Theme for Ecsite revealed as ‘Life Everywhere’

The European Network of Science Centers and Museums (Ecsite) has revealed the programme for the 28th edition of its annual conference, to be held in Porto, Portugal in June.

This year’s conference takes the theme of “Life Everywhere” with the message being a celebration of the sheer diversity of life formed over millions of years on earth.

Co-organised by Ecsite and local hosts the Natural History and Science Museum of the University of Porto and the Ciência Viva network, more than 1,100 professionals from 50 countries are expected to attend the event – the industry-leading conference on science and public engagement.

Details: http://lei.sr?la=m5h9N_O

Media museum rebrands with new focus on science

The National Media Museum in Bradford, UK, is changing its name as part of a major revamp to demonstrate a new focus on science. The newly-named National Science and Media Museum (NSMM) will now focus on the science behind the still and moving image.

The museum suffered a blow last year, when it was announced its collection of 400,000 images by the Royal Photographic Society (RPS) would be moving to London’s V&A museum. To compensate, the museum will debut a new £1.8m interactive gallery at the end of March, while also confirming plans to host British astronaut Tim Peake’s spacecraft later this year.

The new Wonderlab gallery will encourage existing ones to come more often and open a whole new chapter for the museum,” said Jo Quinton-Tulloch, museum director.

Details: http://lei.sr?la=X6c4y_O

Zoo inspectors found 'significant problems' at South Lakes Safari Zoo

The museum is set to rebrand and become the National Science and Media Museum

Merlin CEO Nick Varney noted difficult market conditions for Merlin's Florida attractions as well as challenging 'headwinds'

Media museum rebrands with new focus on science
TOURISM

Eleven vie for UK City of Culture

Eleven cities have registered bids to be considered for UK City of Culture 2021, with the prospective candidates hoping to become the third such choice after Hull and Derry-Londonderry.

Bestowed every four years, the title is designed to use culture as a catalyst for economic and social regeneration and increase levels of arts and creativity locally and across the country.

Coventry, Hereford, Paisley, Perth, Portsmouth, St David’s and the Hundred of Dewisland, Stoke-on-Trent, Sunderland, Swansea, Warrington and Wells have all formally entered the competition, with each city aiming to demonstrate why their programme is underpinned by heritage and how it will build on existing investment by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), which has also pledged £3m to the winning city. Since winning the title of City of Culture in 2013, Hull has had investment worth around £1bn and it is estimated that the city’s economy will have a boost of £60m in 2017.

“UK City of Culture is a fantastic opportunity for towns and cities to celebrate their creativity and use culture as a catalyst for economic growth,” said culture minister Matt Hancock.

“I am delighted to see so many bids from across the country, showing how many areas recognise the important role culture can play in the development and regeneration of communities.

“This helps boost tourism and raises the profile of arts and culture. The exciting funding commitment from the Heritage Lottery Fund today is yet another incentive for towns to secure this prestigious title.”

Details: http://lei.sr?a=H5U8H

London overnight stays increase

Tourist accommodation in London recorded more than 56 million overnight stays in 2016 – more than any other city in Europe.

Research published by European Cities Marketing (ECM) revealed that around 41 million of those stays came from international tourists, helping London grow the overall figure to 7 per cent year-on-year.

The French capital Paris recorded the second most number of overnight stays. It was followed by Berlin (Germany), Rome (Italy), Barcelona, Madrid (both Spain), Prague (Czech Republic), Vienna (Austria), Munich (Germany) and Amsterdam (Holland).

In terms of overnight stays made by international tourists, London’s figure grew by 1.3 per cent compared with 2015.

Paris experienced a dip in international stays (-12.9 per cent), possibly in relation to the well-publicised terrorist attack occurring in the city in November 2015.

Rajesh Agrawal, deputy mayor of London for business, said the figures were “sensational” and demonstrated London’s “enduring appeal”.

“With our world-class sport, culture, art, history and architecture, it is not surprising that visitors continue to flock to the capital, proving that London is open to people from all four corners of the world,” he added.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=i6G7S
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**PROPERTY**

**Reiach and Hall pick up award**

Reiach and Hall, the architects behind Scotland’s £33m Oriam sports centre, have been awarded the top prize at this year’s Architect of the Year Awards.

The studio – whose work also includes the £12m National Centre Inverclyde and Aberdeen Sports Village – received the top Schueco Gold Award for a portfolio of recent work that “shows both creativity and flexibility”.

Their 2016 work on the Oriam sports centre for Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh included a striking curving roof, inspired by the trajectory of one of Brazilian footballer Roberto Carlos’ famous free kicks.

“Reiach and Hall are a deserving winner,” said Thomas Lane, editor of publisher BD, which organised the awards.

“Their broad range of work includes the Oriam at Herriot Watt, a simple sports centre with a roof elevated to an art form.

“Reiach and Hall’s confident handling of this diverse range of work is exemplary.”

**Brexit increases Spurs stadium cost**

The early consequences of Britain voting to leave the European Union has increased the cost of Tottenham Hotspur’s new stadium, according to the club’s director.

In an email to a supporter published online, Donna Cullen said that Brexit had seen the final cost rocket to £800m – more than the cost of building the new Wembley Stadium.

When the plans were first revealed, the 61,000-capacity stadium was expected to cost around £400m.

Cullen said: “Brexit has added 20 per cent onto the cost of goods.

She added: “Revised basement works also added to the cost. We are constantly managing costs and will continue to do so throughout the process along with funding plans to ensure the viability of the scheme.”

The Populous-designed stadium, which will host regular National Football League (NFL) games as well as Premier League football, will be completed in time for the 2018-19 season.

**MIPIM 2017 cast spotlight on real estate projects**

Architects, designers, investors, developers and politicians from across the world descended on Cannes earlier this month for MIPIM – the world’s largest property market.

More than 20,000 attendees visited the four-day exhibition, conference and networking event, which ran from 14 to 17 March on the French Riviera.

Major international real estate projects – from residential to commercial, hotel, tourism and logistical – were showcased by representatives from 23 nations.

These included the refurbishment of historic monuments in Kyoto into a new Park Hyatt hotel, the creation of a scientific and technology park on the 2015 Expo site in Milan, and a new “cultural garden suburb” on Liverpool’s International Festival Garden site by the River Mersey.

**Mayor of London approves Chelsea stadium plans**

Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London, has given Chelsea FC the green light to build a new £500m stadium on the site of Stamford Bridge.

Khan said he was satisfied with the 60,000-capacity stadium’s “high-quality and spectacular design”, which was approved by Hammersmith and Fulham Council in January.

As part of its submission, the Premier League club has committed to investing £12m in community activities, such as employment and training skills, as well as £3.75m towards “affordable” housing.

“Having taken a balanced view of the application,” said Khan, “I am satisfied this is a high-quality and spectacular design which will significantly increase capacity within the existing site, as well as ensuring fans can have easy access from nearby transport connections.

“I’m confident this new stadium will be a jewel in London’s sporting crown and will attract visitors from around the world.”

Details: http://lei.sr?a=B5Z7E_O

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Quotes are invited from professional consultancy providers to advise Barrow Borough Council on outsourcing the management of two leisure facilities currently run by the borough.

The services required will be across three key areas:

- Advice on structuring the invitation to tender and related documentation
- Advice on the market potential for the two facilities
- The development of an evaluation framework for bids

The appointed consultant will be required to demonstrate Local Authority leisure experience, specifically in market appraisal, developing invitation to tender documentation and evaluation.

They will also need to be able to demonstrate an understanding of the local needs of the Council.

To obtain a copy of the specification, please e-mail:

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**TRAINING**

**Loughborough ‘best sporting uni’**

Loughborough University has been named as the world’s best sporting university.

The East Midlands-based institution finished joint-first with the University of Sydney, Australia in the QS World University Rankings by Subject table, which has been compiled each year since 2004. Rankings are based on the number of academic staff that declare a speciality in the subject and the number of employers who seek to hire graduates specialising in the discipline.

It also takes into account research output and impact undertaken by the university over a five-year period.

Professor Mark Lewis, Dean of Loughborough’s School of Sport, Exercise and Health, said the accolade was a “testament to the high-quality research we undertake and the high calibre of graduates we produce.”

“Loughborough has an outstanding reputation as a producer of elite sportspeople – but this year’s inaugural ranking demonstrates that prospective sporting students will receive education as noteworthy for its theoretical focus as for its practical,” added QS head of research Ben Sowter.

The other UK universities which made it into the top 30 of the best sporting universities were University of Birmingham, The University of Edinburgh, University of Bath, University of Exeter and University College London (UCL).

Details: [http://lei sr? a=P8p6T_O](http://lei sr? a=P8p6T_O)

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**Boxology recognised by CIMSPA**

Boxology, the boxing-based training programme, has been recognised by Active IQ’s Professional Recognition scheme and workforce body Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA).

Developed by ex-professional boxer turned personal trainer Cathy Brown, the course is designed to help instructors teach key boxing skills, such as footwork and combinations, correctly.

The course was launched with boxing expert Greg Williams, and is specifically aimed at personal trainers and martial arts instructors.

As part of the programme, participants will learn how to hold pads for clients to reduce the risk of injury and instruct exercises to preserve joints.

The history, anatomy, physiology and coaching skills are covered in an online handbook developed by Brown and Williams.

Participants must pass an exam based on the handbook before attending London health club Third Space for a two-day practical course.

Brown said it was important to achieve recognition from both bodies to “give our brand strength and confidence that our training is quality assured.”

Details: [http://lei sr? a=q2M5d_O](http://lei sr? a=q2M5d_O)
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Marketing Executive (Digital)
EMD UK is looking for a dynamic digital marketing professional to drive our social media marketing campaigns. The ideal candidate must have experience of running social media streams in a work setting with a focus on customer engagement and sales.

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Liverpool eyes £50m training ground

Liverpool Football Club has revealed plans for an ambitious £50m bid to revamp its training ground in a project that would improve the local grassroots provision.

The Premier League football club is working with Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (KMBC) to bring to fruition the construction of a combined training centre, the redevelopment of existing academy facilities and designs to bring the main pitch indoors.

As part of the plan, the council is working on proposals to bring new football pitches and sports facilities to the surrounding area to support amateur football matches. Dog walking and cycling paths, new lighting and improved security have also been factored into the plan. KSS Architects are behind the plans.

To facilitate the plans, Liverpool FC will have to purchase the land adjacent to the academy site. In addition, the club will seek to redevelop its existing Melwood training ground into 160 “family homes”.

A consultation on the plans was commenced on 8 March 2017. KSS Design Group are behind the design of the proposed development.

“Our proposed plans to bring the first team and young players together in one location is a really exciting proposition. The scheme includes facilities which will be used to support the development of our players and provides all-weather training options,” said LFC chief operating officer Andy Hughes.

“We are working to make substantial improvements for the local community. These include new and improved football pitches and sports facilities to support grassroots and amateur football teams, and developments to the surrounding areas for local residents.”

Details: http://lei.sr?a=n8G3x_O

British Cycling credibility ‘in tatters’

Continued from front cover

During the hearing, UK Anti-Doping (UKAD) chief executive Nicole Sapstead revealed that there were no records found about the package – which was claimed to be the legal supplement Fluimucil – during a five-month investigation. In fact, the only records said to be kept were in the laptop of British Cycling and Team Sky doctor Richard Freeman, although the device was “stolen” when the medic was in Greece.

Sapstead said that UKAD was “not able to confirm or refute that it [the package] contained Fluimucil” despite the organisation devoting 1,000 man hours to the investigation.

“The credibility of Team Sky and British Cycling is in tatters – they are in a terrible position,” said Collins following the hearing.

At a press conference on 3 March, UK Sport chief executive Liz Nicholl said the revelations were “shocking” and that the reputation of British Cycling had “taken a big hit”.

Nicholl said the recent events were ‘shocking’ and that British Cycling’s reputation had ‘taken a hit’

She also placed a question mark against the £26m of public and National Lottery funding the organisation will receive for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic cycle, but only if it fails to hit conditions laid out in a separate review set to be published next month.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=c9P7M_O