£100m modernisation for London's Science Museum

By Luke Tuchscherer

The Science Museum in south west London is to undergo a £100m modernisation.

Designed by Wilkinson Eyre Architects, the designs are intended to match a wider project for the South Kensington area. Plans include a new glass feature called The Beacon on the Exhibition Road façade, intended to "present an exciting new image of the Science Museum as a dynamic and engaging place to visit".

The museum will feature a new rooftop cosmology gallery called SkySpace and there will also be two new galleries: Making Modern Communication, dedicated to the technological transformations that have helped to reshape society since the 1830s, and Making Modern Science, which will focus on the "very essence of science" and shed light on theory, practice and ethics.

The existing Making Modern Flight and Making the Modern World galleries will be expanded and a new façade will also be built, with multiple entrances and three sets of lifts added in order to ease congestion.

Professor Chris Rapley, director of the Science Museum, said: "As the Science Museum reaches 100 years we aim to celebrate the achievement of this great institution, while maintaining our focus on the future: the future of the Science Museum, and the future of Great Britain and the world."

"When Museum of the Future becomes a reality, the Science Museum will be closer than ever to achieving its aim of being the best place in the world to enjoy science."

The project is expected to be completed in 2015.

Designs unveiled for Birmingham Aquatics Centre

£58m leisure complex to include 50m swimming pool and multi-use sports hall

By Tom Walker

Plans for the £58m Birmingham Aquatics and Leisure Centre have been revealed for public consultation.

The proposals include a 50m swimming pool and an Olympic diving facility, as well as a leisure pool with rides and a teaching pool.

A fitness suite will house exercise studios, saunas and steamrooms, while sports facilities on offer include an eight-court sports hall, four five-a-side pitches and a two-storey climbing wall. The community leisure and swimming pool complex will also provide a crèche, soft play area, café, meeting rooms and a community policing room.

Cllr Martin Mullaney, cabinet member for leisure, sports and culture, said: "It is important to stress that this is not just about providing a facility for elite performers and attracting Olympic teams prior to London 2012. We're looking to provide the people of this city with the top-class sports facilities they deserve."

Work is scheduled to begin in October 2009, for completion ahead of the 2012 Olympics.

£200m leisure scheme on hold

Plans for a £200m retail-led development in the centre of Newport, South Wales, have been shelved after the developer behind the scheme was unable to secure the necessary funding.

A four-star hotel, a multiplex cinema and a new restaurant quarter were included in Modus Corovest's proposals for the Friars Walk scheme. The plans also included 450,000sq ft (41,806sq m) of retail space.
Community clubs under threat?

A new report by Deloitte for the CCPR has revealed that 4 per cent of sports clubs – as many as 6,000 across Britain – could be forced to close during the next 12 months as a result of the recession. Pete Hayman examines the challenges currently facing sports clubs and whether the government is doing enough to help them survive.

The CCPR study revealed that clubs are already reporting significant cut backs. The level of investment has been reduced to cope with increasing costs and decreasing membership at a time when UK sport forges ahead with plans to create a lasting legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

CCPR chair Brigid Simmonds said: “Sport needs all the support it can get but from the reception we get in some government departments you would think we were selling cigarettes or fatty foods. We know that clubs are likely to go to the wall as a result of the recession. What we don’t want is to compound that with any new regulations which could push still more over the edge.”

However, the government insists that it remains fully committed to developing community sport through initiatives that aim to enable clubs to flourish, while sports minister Gerry Sueitliffe argued that continued investment is helping to shape the future of UK sport for the better.

“An unprecedented amount of public money has gone into community sport to ensure its growth and success – and as sport has a whole has received nearly £6bn since 1997,” Sueitliffe said. “We also run a range of initiatives designed to support community clubs, including a tax relief scheme of up to 80 per cent on business rates that 5,000 clubs are currently enjoying.

“We are not the time to be talking down sport. It is true that some community clubs are going through tough times but rest assured we are doing all we can to support the grassroots.”

At the heart of government efforts to support grassroots sports is Sport England, which believes that its own research into participation illustrates a more positive outlook for sport.

“Sport is facing tough economic times, but that does not mean we should be unduly pessimistic,” he said. “Grassroots sport is in relatively good shape. Our latest participation survey shows that the number of people playing sport regularly is rising.

“For our part, we must make sure grassroots sport derives maximum value for money from all of Sport England’s investments. By monitoring, and sharing, the intelligence on what’s working and what’s not working, we can isolate the pressure points and help sports overcome issues.”

But with many sports clubs operated by volunteers and funded by members, the battle to ensure long-term survival remains an ongoing one. Christine Neyndorff, Hertfordshire Sports Partnership director, argued that local authorities are already scaling back financial support for local tournaments, while funding from the government provides no guarantees.

“There is little indication that much, if any, of this funding will end up helping local clubs with basic costs,” she said. “The day-to-day reality for a voluntary sports club is a continuing struggle in the face of soaring expenditure.”

As sports clubs face a continuing battle for survival in the midst of the ongoing recession, the government will not only need to ensure that enough financial support is being provided, but that it is going to those who need it most.

While the 6,000 closures predicted by CCPR may only be a minority of the total number of clubs, it will still undermine Sueitliffe’s ambitions to establish the UK as “a world leading sporting nation with community clubs at its heart”.

New government department established

Lord Mandelson appointed to lead BIS following recent merger of BERR and DIUS

By Pete Hayman

A new government department has been created following the merger of the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS). Lord Mandelson has been confirmed as the minister in charge of the new Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), which has been established in order to develop Britain’s economy and ability to compete on a global scale.

It is also hoped that the decision to merge the two departments will place further education closer to the government’s attempts to fight off the current recession, as well as helping to lay foundations for economic recovery.

Mandelson said: “Our purpose is to help bring the country out of recession and build up our economic strengths and competitiveness – and I and my ministerial team are resolutely focused on this task. “The government needs to provide active and urgent help to business and employees. Bringing together the strengths and capabilities of the two former departments will enable us to do that more effectively, ensuring British business can compete successfully in the future world economy.”

Government unveils MoreActive4Life campaign

By Caroline Wilkinson

More than 1,200 health clubs and leisure centres have registered to be part of the MoreActive4Life campaign, a sub-brand of the government’s Change4Life initiative, which has been created to get one million people more active.

Set to launch this month, the summer consumer campaign will have been developed by the FIA for members of health clubs and leisure centres. It will involve FIA members working with the government, as well as national commercial and media partners, to provide consumers with access to a range of activities.

The government has already allocated £200,000 to kickstart the campaign, which is being promoted by specialists KT3. “Using Change4Life as a door-opener, clubs and leisure centres are partnering with major brands such as Tesco and Asda,” says David Stalker, FIA operations director.

FIA members can now position themselves as partners to help tackle our national health problem at a local level. Participating clubs and leisure centres have access to branded merchandise and promotional material.

For further details, contact: moreactive4life@fia.org.uk
MalvernSpa is acquired by directors

The directors of the UK-based spa and hospitality specialists Topaz Consulting have acquired the new MalvernSpa Hotel, Day Spa and Health Club in Great Malvern, Worcestershire. One of the directors, Andrew Hammond, said: “We believe the MalvernSpa is something very special and will attract visitors to the area at a difficult economic time.”

The £7.5m day spa will cover 20,133 sq ft (1,870 sq m) and will house 10 treatment rooms and separate pedicure and manicure areas.

Steiner strikes deal with Royal Caribbean group

An agreement between Royal Caribbean International and Steiner Leisure has been extended until 2013. The extension means Steiner will continue as the exclusive provider of spas, salons and fitness centres and related beauty, wellness, and medical spa services and products on all Royal Caribbean International vessels currently known to be coming into service. The deal also covers the new vessels Oasis of the Seas and the Allure of the Seas, entering service in 2009 and 2010 respectively.

Yorkshire Beauty Therapy partnership

The Leeds-based Yorkshire College of Beauty Therapy has agreed a contract with the Social Development Center, part of the Qatar Foundation, to set up and operate a beauty academy in Qatar, Middle East. Yorkshire College of Beauty founder and principal Christine Tilley will work with Social Development Center’ Munira bint Nasser Al Missned towards opening the academy in October 2009. Details: ycob.co.uk

Intelligent Spas publishes global report

Global Spa Summit delegates among first to find out benchmark data for sector

By Sarah Todd

Independent research company Intelligent Spas was chosen as the premier research partner for the third annual Global Spa Summit (GSS), which took place in Switzerland last month. The conference, that attracts high-end wellness professionals from around the world, received a custom report based on research collected during Intelligent Spas’s Global Spa Benchmark Program, which is currently underway in more than 60 countries.

Pete Ellis, chair of the GSS Board of Directors said: “This in-depth study by Intelligent Spas provides delegates with a first look at the most reliable, up-to-date benchmarks available in the global spa and wellness industry. “As day, hotel and medical spa owners and managers navigate through these uncertain economic times, this perspective will help them see the big picture and adjust prices and services to manage their properties successfully.”

The statistical report covered revenue, expenses, visitors and benchmark ratios. Intelligent Spas has researched the spa market for the past eight years.

Von Essen launches Halcyon at Bishopstrow House

By Sarah Todd

A new spa called Halcyon has launched within Bishopstrow House, part of the von Essen Hotel Collection in Wiltshire. The spa offers a range of 40 treatments and four therapy rooms, including a double room for couples.

All treatments will use the Elemis range of products. Other suppliers for the spa included Carlton Couches, Stan Ledbetter for the Rasul Mud Therapy, Ariane Poole make-up, Culpepper products and Natural Magic candles. Other facilities include a rasul mud therapy room, decorated in Turkish Ottoman style, a relaxation suite and an indoor and outdoor swimming pool.

The report was created to help spas adjust to the economic times

The report was created to help spas adjust to the economic times

pub group launches Pint-Sized Pampering for punters

Merchant Inns pub company has launched a new spa concept called Pint-Sized Pampering. Based around the launch of The Spa Treatment Rooms at the group’s The Lambert Arms property in the Chilterns near Oxford, the spa treatments will be offered as part of an overnight spa break at the pub.

Therapies will use the French Ella Baché professional skincare range, which has recently relaunched in the UK. An extensive range of spa treatments are offered, including an Organic Radiance Facial, a Full Body Hot Stone Massage, a Men’s Muscle Manipulator and a Radiance Eye Treatment.

Show your face at the UK’s largest leisure event. Leisure Industry Week puts you in front of all the key industry suppliers plus a host of new live demos, educational events and networking opportunities. Visit www.liw.co.uk for the full programme of events.

Face to face with the leisure industry

LEISURE INDUSTRY WEEK 22-24 Sept 2009 NEC Birmingham UK
**BRS tax to "cripple" health initiatives**

By Tom Walker

The Fitness Industry Association (FIA) warns government of the impact the tax could have on UK fitness operators from the tax and, if not, for the threshold to be increased beyond £50,000. Colin Moyynihan, British Olympic Association chair, agrees, and added: "A BRS, coupled with the expected rise in Uniform Business Rates, has the potential to inflict a significant and negative impact on public and private health and fitness facilities." Details: www.fia.org.uk

**Chesham moves up a notch**

By Helen Patanell

Top Notch Health Club in Chesham, Buckinghamshire, will soon feature a £500,000 underground swimming pool. General practitioners will be able to refer patients with disabilities to the new facility for fitness and rehabilitation sessions. Other club facilities include a gym with a free-weights zone, Chiltern District Council finally approved the plans, submitted for the third time. The previous two applications were rejected due to concerns over Green Belt land and a lack of car parking spaces.

**Green light for Roefield centre**

The new gym will be fitted with Life Fitness equipment and the Fitness Industry Association (FIA) has called for the industry to oppose the new legislation recommended “the need for high expenditure on the building structure and plant over the next few years to maintain the building to an acceptable standard.” The cabinet also proposed extending the gym and changing rooms, improving the health suite, reception and wet side changing rooms, and constructing a new fitness studio and a climbing wall.

**Mountbatten Centre opens to public**

The fitness centre has been re-launched following a £20m refurbishment project. The Mountbatten Centre’s fitness facilities have re-opened in Parkwood Leisure and the completion of a £20m refurbishment project. The Mountbatten Centre offers a 50m, eight-lane swimming pool with a moveable floor and submersible boom, allowing two 25m pools to be created.

The centre also features a 12.5m teaching pool, a 200-seat viewing area, a 150-station Technogym-equipped fitness facility, a steamroom, spa and treatment rooms, and changing rooms. The existing sports hall has benefitted from a new semi-sprung floor and improved lighting, while the athletics and cycle tracks have been resurfaced. A dance studio, function room and club rooms have also been built, along with a new entrance and reception area. Construction was carried out by building firm Kier Southern.

The centre, which has a 50m pool, will be managed by Parkwood Leisure. The project was funded by Portsmouth City Council and a £1.4m grant from Sports England. Worcestershire-based Parkwood Leisure will manage the centre and its adjacent Gymnastics Centre – which opened in February.

**Aura Trim Leisure Centre opens in County Meath**

By Kate Cracknell

The centre also features a learner pool, a health suite with steamroom and sauna, two field turf soccer pitches and a lawn bowling facility. Aura is committed to providing an affordable swimming and fitness offering with pay as you go options at the new club, which covers both the gym and classes. Aura Sport and Leisure Management operates 10 centres throughout Ireland, with more than a million visits to its sites every year.

**Cut-price gym initiative launched in Manchester**

Young people in Manchester are being given the opportunity to benefit from reduced-rate gym membership and activity sessions as part of a new pilot scheme by the city council. Manchester Leisure, which is part of Manchester City Council, is working in partnership with the Department of Health and the Fitness Industry Association (FIA) to deliver the scheme through the Fit for the Future initiative. The scheme is open to those aged 16-22 and is one of five pilots taking place in the UK and will enable participants to benefit from running schemes, aerobics and dance and five points, as are online exams and seminars.

**IN BRIEF**

- Council underwrites sport centre’s losses
  - Duffryn Community Sports Centre in Newport, South Wales, has received a cash boost from Newport Council. According to the South Wales Argus, there were fears that the centre, which has suffered losses of more than £80,000, would close. However, the council has agreed to underwrite the losses and will contribute £10,000 each year. The centre opened three years ago within the grounds of Duffryn High School, which operates the facility.

- REPs unveils changes to CPD guidelines
  - Changes have been made to how REPs’ members can earn their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points. Following a consultation, REPs members – who need to earn 24 CPD points every 24 months – can now gain up to 20 points through awarding body qualifications, industry awards and courses with mandatory assessment. Workshops endorsed by SkillActive are worth up to four points, as are online exams, seminars and trade shows.

- Trixter directors complete MBO
  - Three directors of UK-based fitness equipment supplier Trixter have completed a management buy out of the company. Chief executive Michael Rice, managing director Patrick Murray and service director John Mills have purchased the core businesses, global rights, intellectual properties, product ranges and services to all Trixter brands. The management team secured a financing package worth more than £1m to complete the deal, which includes Trixter Europe, as well as subsidiaries Trixter North America and iSport software.
New gardens open at Butterfly World

First phase of the £25m attraction includes 12 gardens shaped like a caterpillar

By Tom Walker

Phase one of the £25m Butterfly World Project near St Albans, Hertfordshire, has now opened to the public.

The Future Gardens attraction offers visitors 12 showcase gardens and one charity garden arranged in the shape of a caterpillar.

Seven permanent gardens, including the Lilliput Leaf Garden, Children’s Leaf Garden, Dry Leaf Garden and the British Butterfly Garden, are complemented by ‘antennae’ walkways and a spiral roboscis walk.

Theresa Lang, director of TJM Associates and creative director of Future Gardens, said: “Future Gardens will provide visitors with the inspiration and enthusiasm to think about how they can develop their own garden space with real imagination while at the same time keeping the environment in mind.

“We are looking forward to illustrating how the gardens will change and develop over the four summer months - a luxury that is not available at any other UK garden event.”

It is estimated that the conservation park will attract 200,000 visitors between now and October, when the 26-acre (10.5-hectare) site will close for construction of phase two.

The world’s largest butterfly dome - measuring 100m wide and 17m high – will house 10,000 tropical butterflies among Mayan ruins and is scheduled to open in 2011.

Founder Clive Farrell hopes to ultimately make it the “largest butterfly walkthrough experience in the world.”

Weston pier gets back on track

By Pete Rayman

Plans for the £34m redevelopment of the Grand Pier in Weston-super-Mare are back on track after the owners of the 104-year old attraction reached an agreement with North Somerset Council (NSC).

Pier owner Kerry Michael warned that the project was at risk of being shelved after claiming the council had moved the goalposts in a dispute over legal costs.

However, the Grand Pier is now expected to reopen as planned in summer 2010 after a series of negotiations between NSC and Michael resulted in an agreement that has ensured the scheme remains on track.

The attraction will have 12 separate gardens for visitors to explore.

The owners hope to reopen the pier in summer 2010.

Michael said: “We have worked through the issues to reach a solution which is acceptable to all.

“Once the key decision makers were all together, we very quickly reached agreement and after that it was just a matter of putting the relevant professionals together to formulate the agreement.”

In brief

 Potter attraction adds garden

The World of Beatrix Potter Attraction in Bowness-on-Windermere, Cumbria, has added a new exhibit for the summer season. The Peter Rabbit Naturally Better Garden, created by designer Richard Lucas, features the varieties of fruit, vegetables, herbs and flowers featured in books by author Beatrix Potter.

Scotland holds first museum summit

Scotland’s 60 museum leaders convened in Stirling earlier this week to debate how best to address the challenges facing the sector. The conference focused on how the nation’s industrial and voluntary museums can be sustained and how funding and limited resources can be better distributed between national and local museums.

Leading the convention, culture minister Michael Russell said: “This summit presents a real opportunity for new thinking about how we understand museums in Scotland, how we work together, and how best we can tell the story of this country and its people.”

Blackpool’s Winter Gardens loses grant

A £1m annual grant to the Winter Gardens events venue in Blackpool has been withdrawn by the council owing to the “disappointing state” of its facilities. The council award was put in place in 1986 to help attract major conferences to the town in a bid to regenerate the local area, with 2007 attracting the Conservative Party’s annual conference. However, a review of the venue in summer 2008 revealed that it was not up to scratch and the council decided to terminate its annual subsidy from this October.

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The Museums Association (MA) has launched its new Effective Collections scheme.

The initiative consists of four parts: the Main Fund, which offers £10,000 per project for museums engaged in innovative projects; the Find an Object database, which will allow museums to post adverts offering objects for loan or permanent transfer, or to register an interest in borrowing or buying objects; and finally, Culture Change, which will look at ways of changing museums’ attitudes towards the use of their collections.
**Cornish golf resort revamp completed**

Crown Golf’s £20m St Mellion redevelopment includes £2.5m golf course upgrade

*By Pete Rayman*

Crown Golf has unveiled a new 80-bedroom hotel at the St Mellion International Resort in Cornwall, following a £20m refurbishment of the venue.

Facilities at the hotel include the Aero Leisure and Spa complex, which incorporates three swimming pools, a sauna, a steamroom, a spa pool and a fitness suite equipped with cardiovascular machines and free weights.

The hotel also features two restaurants – the Bawdern Brasserie and Nicklaus Bar, as well as the Nicklaus Bar and 13 conferencing and banqueting suites, while the resort’s golfing facilities have also received an extensive refurbishment.

Both of St Mellion’s golf courses have benefited from a £2.5m investment as part of the scheme, with the Jack Nicklaus signature course having been restored to European Tour standard ahead of the English Open in 2011.

The Old Course has been renamed The Kernow Resort Course following the scheme, which has included a major bunker rebuilding programme, remodelled greens, new tees and the creation of a new cart path network.

A new four-star hotel is among the proposals for the South London cricket venue

*By Pete Rayman*

**Shinyt gets £110,000 funding boost**

The Scottish government is to invest £110,000 in the indigenous sport of Shinty. The funding, to be delivered through sportscotland, will allow the Shinty Association to continue to grow the sport at grassroots level, with plans to take the sport into more primary and secondary schools. Sports minister Shona Robison said: “This funding will help ensure that Shinty continues to grow in communities across Scotland. I am particularly encouraged to hear that more schools will be showcasing the sport.”

**FIFA backs 2012 Team GB compromise**

A team comprised entirely of English players is to represent Great Britain at the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games after the plan was given the green light by FIFA, following months of speculation and concern from Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales that a unified team could threaten a unified team.

**Premier League clubs resist economic downturn**

*By Pete Rayman*

Most Premier League clubs reported an operating profit during the 2007/08 season as the league’s collective revenue increased to nearly £2bn, according to new research.

Deloitte’s Annual Review of Football Finance revealed that clubs’ revenues had increased by 26 per cent compared with 2006-07, and are expected to break through the £2bn barrier during the 2008-09 season.

Big clubs are responsible for most of the £3bn debt

However, the research also revealed that the economic downturn is having an impact on the amount of investors wishing to inject cash into clubs as the league’s net debt has increased to more than £3bn.

Two thirds of the total net debt has been attributed to the Premier League’s top four clubs – Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool and Manchester United – while the cost of players’ wages has also contributed. Salary expenditure reached £1.2bn following the largest annual increase recorded by the Premier League.

**Green light for £35m Brit Oval plans**

A new four-star hotel is among the proposals for the South London cricket venue

*By Pete Rayman*

Surrey County Cricket Club’s (SCCC) plans for the £35m redevelopment of the Brit Oval venue in Kennington, south London, have been approved by the government following a public inquiry.

The scheme had been approved by Lambeth Council in January 2008, but was called in after the Health and Safety Executive raised concerns over a nearby gas holder.

Plans include the construction of a new stand – to replace the existing Lock, Laker and Peter May South stands – which has been designed by Populous and will increase the Brit Oval’s capacity to 25,000.

The scheme will be carried out in partnership with Arora International Hotels, which is to open a new 168-bedroom, four-star property as part of the project, while a new public piazza will be created on the site of the Surrey Tavern.

Paul Sheldon, SCCC chief executive, said: “This decision has been a long time coming, and we are very pleased with the outcome. The development is an important one both for cricket and our community.

“The continued improvement of facilities at the Brit Oval means that international cricket is guaranteed a place here for many years to come.”

**Stirling university football academy opens**

Stirling University, Scotland’s University for Sporting Excellence, has unveiled the new National Sporting Excellence Centre – Scotland’s University for Sporting Excellence, which will start scholarships at the academy this autumn, and have its first intake of students next year.

**London unveils new cycle routes**

The superhighways are designed to provide safe cycling routes

*By Pete Rayman*

The superhighways are designed to provide safe cycling routes

London mayor Boris Johnson has unveiled two proposed routes that will comprise the first Cycle Superhighways, designed to increase the number of cyclists in the capital.

The superhighways will provide a safe and continuous route between central London and the outer boroughs to encourage more Londoners to cycle to work, and is designed to reduce congestion, overcrowding and carbon emissions. The pilot routes, which are scheduled for completion by May 2010, will link South Wembley with Bank, while the second will link Barking with Tower Hill.

The mayor, together with Transport for London, is consulting with eight London borough authorities over a further 10 routes, which are due to be developed by 2012.

**CB Holding acquires West Ham United**

West Ham United Football Club’s (WHUFC) long-term future has been secured after it was acquired by CB Holding for an undisclosed sum. Doubts had been raised over the future of the Premier League club after former owner and chairman, Bjorgolfur Gudmundsson, ran into financial difficulties due to the collapse of the Icelandic banking sector. However, Gudmundsson has now left WHUFC after accepting an offer from CB Holdings, which is controlled by the government-owned bank, Straumur-Burdars.
**Bishopsgate Institute set for revamp**

The cultural and education venue can now be refurbished thanks to a £1.5m grant

By Pete Rayman

Construction work is set to get underway on the two-phase restoration of cultural venue Bishopsgate Institute in London after receiving £1.5m from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The first stage of the scheme includes the transformation of the institute’s lower ground floor to provide a refurbished studio and a new library and education space, as well as the installation of amenities, changing rooms and a lift. Phase one is expected to be completed by Spring 2010 before construction starts on the second stage in summer 2010, which will include the refurbishment of the Great Hall and the creation of a new café. It is hoped that Bishopsgate Institute, which opened in 1895 to offer a learning space for thousands of Londoners, will provide an enhanced meeting place and educational facility for the local community following the revamp. Andrew Fuller, chief executive at the institute, said: “The Institute has been at the heart of the cultural, educational and community life of Spitalfields. The grant ensures we can continue to fulfil the role more effectively in the 21st century.”

**Government funding for new £30m Leeds Arena**

By Pete Rayman

Plans for the construction of a new £30m 12,500-seat entertainment arena in the centre of Leeds, West Yorkshire, have received a funding boost from the government. Yorkshire Forward, the regional development agency, has confirmed that it will invest in Leeds City Council’s proposals, despite concerns the project may threaten plans for the 13,000-seat Sheffield Arena. Tom Riordan, chief executive of Yorkshire Forward, said: “Following extensive, independent evaluation Yorkshire Forward’s board has confirmed its decision to invest in the development of a Leeds Arena.” The Leeds Arena, to be operated by SMG Europe, is earmarked for a 5.1-acre (2.06-hectare) site on Claypit Lane and will be delivered by the council after bids by prospective developers were deemed too expensive. The proposal will now be submitted to central government for funding approval.

**Kirkcudbright Art Gallery development put on hold**

Plans to build the new £10m Kirkcudbright Art Gallery in southern Scotland may be scrapped after the council’s stage one Heritage Lottery Fund bid for £4m was rejected. The gallery was to be located at the town’s Johnston Primary School, following the school’s relocation to a new building in 2010. It was to provide temporary gallery space for a changing exhibition programme and educational and research facilities. Other funding was coming from Dumfries and Galloway Council, Lowland and Uplands Scotland Regional Development Fund and private donations and sponsorships.
HOSPITALITY

IN BRIEF

Revenue drops at Park Plaza

- Park Plaza Hotels has seen revenue drop 15 per cent in the five months to 31 May, in line with management expectations. Group revenue for the period was £25.6m, while group RevPAR was 73.3 euro (£62.4) compared to 90.2 euro (£76.7) last year. In the UK, RevPAR fell from £100.5 to £95.6 on a constant currency basis, but occupancy rates remained nearly the same at 83.1 per cent compared with the year before.

Hilton Garden opens in Norwich

- A Hilton Garden Inn is to be built in Norwich, Norfolk, thanks to a head of terms agreement between City Living Developments and the hotelier. The 125-bedroom hotel is part of the £26m 230-bedroom Crowne Plaza hotel, which was completed in 2008.

Edinburgh arts hotel project called in

- Plans to convert a former cinema have been referred to the Scottish Government by Belen Patronell. Plans to convert a former 1930s Odeon cinema in Edinburgh into a new arts hotel called 2ED have been referred to the Scottish Government. A planning application submitted by Duddingston House Properties to the City of Edinburgh Council for the conversion and part demolition of the grade B-listed art deco building was approved in October 2008 on the condition that the project be referred to Historic Scotland. However, uncertainty over the auditorium’s interior demolition as part of the designs proposed by Make Architects has resulted in the historic body referring the case to Scottish ministers.

Premier Inn reports sales slump

- By Pete Hayman

The budget chain has been hit by falling sales in the first quarter

Whitbread, one of the UK’s largest hotel and restaurant operators, has reported a sharp fall in like-for-like sales at its budget hotel chain, Premier Inn, during the 13 weeks ending 28 May 2009. The company has already slashed the cost of family rooms in a bid to reduce the slump, which has contributed to an overall decrease of 2.7 per cent in like-for-like sales across Whitbread’s operations when compared with the same period last year. However, the decrease was partially offset by the strong performance at Costa Coffee during the first quarter, which reported a like-for-like sales increase of 2.6 per cent and a total sales increase of 18.5 per cent. Like-for-like sales at Whitbread’s pub restaurants also increased by 2 per cent.

Travellodge unveils new property fund

- By Luke Tuchscherer

Travelodge, the UK budget hotel operator, has established a new joint venture with property fund manager Meghraj Properties as part of efforts to capitalise on the slump in the property market. The £100m property fund, called Tamesis Capital, is designed to enable the company to acquire distressed assets from banks and administrators, as well as other hotel operators.

Restaurant bills hit record levels

- By Luke Tuchscherer

The cost of eating out is expected to fall after hitting new highs last year, according to food sector analyst Horizons. The amount spent on a meal in a restaurant has risen by 20 per cent over the past five years, with average spending jumping from £10.09 in 2004 to £11.98 in 2008. The prices of meals in pub restaurants have increased as ingredient costs have risen. Combined with customers increasingly choosing costlier items from the menus, the average price for a pub meal is currently £13.76.

Greene King in Punch pubs deal

Greene King, the pub operator and brewing company, has acquired 11 managed properties from Punch Taverns for £30.4m. The deal, which is set to be completed on 1 July, includes seven pubs in central London and four located in Scotland.

The hotel has been designed by London-based Make Architects

Michael Russell, Scottish culture minister, said: ‘The application concerning the Odeon has attracted a lot of attention, from both those who would like to see its auditorium retained and those who believe it should be adapted for a new use. If approved, the Art Deco frontage, foyer and external shell of the auditorium would be retained in order to accommodate a café, a restaurant and a multi-purpose space incorporating a film projection area and meeting rooms for community use.

The average cost of eating out increased to nearly £12 last year

Average consumer spend to decline after 2008 highs

Restaurant bills hit record levels

- By Luke Tuchscherer

The cost of eating out is expected to fall after hitting new highs last year, according to food sector analyst Horizons. The amount spent on a meal in a restaurant has risen by 20 per cent over the past five years, with average spending jumping from £10.09 in 2004 to £11.98 in 2008. The prices of meals in pub restaurants have increased as ingredient costs have risen. Combined with customers increasingly choosing costlier items from the menus, the average price for a pub meal is currently £13.76.

European-style restaurants – those with Italian, Spanish, British and French menus – saw spend rise 19 per cent with the average price paid rising to £20.51 in 2008. Spend in Chinese and Indian restaurants rose 16 per cent, with consumers paying an average of £12.66 for an ethnic meal. However, Horizons said it is now seeing menu prices fall, which will continue until the end of the year. The analyst predicts that average bills could fall back to 2006 levels.

Taking responsibility for the tourism sector

Recent government reshuffle provides no new answers for tourism’s place in Westminster

With the recent government reshuffle, the question again arises: should the responsibility for tourism remain with DCMS or should it be transferred to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), the new name for the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, where, presumably, regulatory reform has now been thrown out of the window? Should tourism be linked with the UK’s cultural and historic heritage or, as one of the largest economic sectors, generating £19bn per annum in export earnings and employing up to 2.5 million people, should it be relocated to BIS to be seen as more of an industry than a cultural activity?

Change came there none. Tourism remains part of the culture and heritage scene, despite being far by the biggest industry in the department’s portfolio. Thus, it came as a surprise that when DCMS announced its plans to create 5,000 to 10,000 new jobs using money from the Future Jobs Fund – a £1.1bn challenge fund where organisations compete for money to create jobs for the young long-term unemployed and others with disadvantages in the workplace. Rather than being a core component of the strategy, the tourism sector hardly rated a mention.

The strategy Lifting People, Lifting Places focuses on investing in culture, media and sport as a way of helping the economy recover, but many of the initiatives highlighted are simply a rehash of existing schemes. However, what the document does highlight is the view that by investing in arts, culture and sport, there will automatically be an increase in tourism. This is a ludicrous assumption and ignores the £10bn spent by Brits and overseas tourists every year. It is this closed thinking that is behind the current plans to develop a British City of Culture competition.

The belief is that if government investment is focused on developing the cultural and sporting facilities of destinations, there will automatically be an increase in tourism numbers. This cleverly negates the need for any direct government investment in tourism marketing, which is considered to be better handled at a local level or by the private sector. So while we are debating which department should be responsible for tourism, the government seems to be debating whether there should be a responsibility at all.
New council set up to promote London

Mayor Boris Johnson appoints new team tasked with “rebranding” the capital

By Pete Hayman

Representatives from London’s promotional agencies and business groups have met with mayor Boris Johnson following the establishment of a new council designed to promote and “rebrand” the capital.

The Promote London Council has been set up in order to provide a more comprehensive approach to attracting more visitors and marketing the city ahead of the London 2012 Olympic Games.

Sebastian Coe, chair of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games; London Development Agency chair Harvey McGrath and Stuart Popham, chair of the Confederation of Business Industry, are among the representatives on the council.

Johnson, who will chair the new council, said: “In just three years time, the eyes of the world will turn to London as we host the greatest sporting event in the world and it’s appropriate that we brand ourselves accordingly. This is a huge task but one that we must start shaping immediately.

“With the Promote London Council in place, I am confident that we’re now in a stronger position to showcase the capital’s fantastic array of cultural and sporting assets.”

RSC unveils night train service

The Courtyard Theatre is currently RSC’s main venue in Stratford

By Pete Hayman

A series of special late night train services will operate between Stratford-upon-Avon and London this summer, after the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) teamed up with Chiltern Railways.

The services, which launched on 30 May, depart from Stratford-upon-Avon at 11.20pm on selected Saturdays in order to allow theatregoers from London and locations along the route to attend productions in the bard’s Warwickshire home town.

Anyone will be able to use the services, but they are specifically intended for those visiting The Courtyard Theatre, which is currently the RSC’s main venue in the town while the Royal Shakespeare Theatre undergoes a £100m revamp.

The Scottish rally event confirmed

EventScotland has revealed that the inaugural Rally of Scotland, which will form part of the Intercontinental Rally Challenge, is expected to provide a £2.6m boost to the economies of Stirling, Perth and Kinross.

The three-day event, taking place between 19 and 21 November, is expected to attract around 30,000 spectators to the region, with an additional 15,000 visitors from overseas. Scotland has secured the event for a three-year period. It is hoped that the likely influx of visitors will help to boost occupancy during a period that is traditionally quiet.
IN BRIEF

Clapham Junction plans get scrapped

Plans for the 640m redevelopment of Clapham Junction in London have been withdrawn after the joint venture behind the scheme faced opposition from the local authority. Metro Shopping Fund, which comprises Land Securities and Delancey, submitted a planning application to the London Borough of Wandsworth in September last year. The project included a two-level pedestrian street with cafés, bars and a 1-acre (0.4-hectare) rooftop garden with a restaurant and arthouse cinema.

First draft of Chard masterplan revealed

Members of Chard Community Forum have been given the chance to view the first draft of South Somerset District Council’s masterplan for the town. Improvements to leisure and sports facilities are included in the draft masterplan, which has been developed by LDA Design over the past four months following consultation with local stakeholders.

Eastbourne Pier is put up for sale

Eastbourne Pier has been put up for sale by its owner Six Piers. The 1,000ft-long, Grade II-listed Victorian pier – which first opened in 1870 – boasts two restaurants and sports facilities are included in the pier’s new business and entertainment facilities.

Plans for Project Pinewood submitted

The multi-purpose development could include sports and entertainment facilities for the creative industries at Pinewood Studios in Iver Heath, Buckinghamshire, have been submitted to South Buckinghamshire District Council.

The £200m Project Pinewood development is designed to provide filmmakers and producers with a range of streetscapes for film and television productions, including New York and Paris, without having to travel abroad. The proposals for the 44-hectare (109-acre) site also include a multi-purpose community venue, indoor and outdoor sports facilities, a cinema, a theatre and a music production area, as well as public open spaces.

Planning expiry gets extended

Leisure developers are now able to retain their planning permission from Westminster City Council for up to five years in a move to help projects that are put on hold during the economic downturn. The council, which allowed developers to keep planning permission valid for up to three years, has introduced the extension (at the discretion of the council) so applicants can avoid the lengthy process of resubmission without risk projects being scrapped.

£70m Ayr campus gets go-ahead

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Project Pinewood is one of the most forward-looking strategic initiatives in the UK. It is planned to take forward a maximum of 4 companies to submit detailed tenders. The works are proposed to take place in late 2009 and early 2010. The works required which will include drainage works and replacement of the old water line are likely to take place as an independent contract. However, renovation works will also take place to restore a listed building at the stadium adjacent to the athletics track. It may be that the successful applicant for the athletics track works will be nominated as a subcontractor to the contractor carrying out works to the listed building. The works required which will include drainage works and replacement of the old water line are likely to take place as an independent contract. However, renovation works will also take place to restore a listed building at the stadium adjacent to the athletics track. It may be that the successful applicant for the athletics track works will be nominated as a subcontractor to the contractor carrying out works to the listed building.

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War Memorial Park’s £3.8m facelift to be funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund

By Pete Hayman

Coventry City Council (CCC) has approved plans for a £3.8m refurbishment of the city’s War Memorial Park, which first opened in 1921 to commemo-
rate the lives of soldiers who died in World War One. The council is expected to contribute £240,000 capital funding to the proposed scheme, which includes the restoration of park features and the revamp of the central pavilion to provide educational, training and cultural activities.

Improvements to tennis courts and three football pitches and the restoration of gardens and pools are also outlined as part of the War Memorial Park project, which has received £2.8m from the Heritage Lottery Fund in April.

It is also hoped that the scheme will help to increase the number of volunteers involved in activities such as gardening and collecting World War One-related history, while people with special needs will receive nationally-recognised training and qualifications in horticultural skills. The rest of the funding is to be sourced from external sources, including volunteer organisations and Section 106 contributions from developers elsewhere in the city.

English Heritage unveils new Carisbrooke garden

By Pete Hayman

English Heritage has opened a new Edwardian-inspired garden within the former privy garden of Queen Victoria’s daughter, Princess Beatrice, at Carisbrooke Castle near Newport, Isle of Wight.

The garden, which has been created in partnership with garden designer and former presenter of BBC’s Gardening World, Chris Beardshaw, is designed to celebrate the Princess’ role as the island’s governor until 1944.

Period plants, fruit trees and a fountain have been incorpo-
rated into English Heritage’s design in order to keep it as close as possible to the original layout of the garden, which was established as Princess Beatrice’s private garden in 1913.

Other recent improvements at Carisbrooke Castle have included a new visitor reception, a shop and new interpretation boards at the site.

The garden has also been developed to complement the Victorian garden at Osborne House near East Cowes, which was established and managed by English Heritage.

English Heritage commission-
sioner, Gilly Drummond, said: “Chris Beardshaw’s imaginative design interprets and celebrates an important period in the medieval castle’s history. “Princess Beatrice grew up at Osborne House, married and was buried at Whippingham Church and spent a great deal of her adult life at Carisbrooke Castle,”

Work will include the restoration of the 88-year-old public park

Improvements at the site include a new visitor centre and a shop giving visitors a chance to hear more about the Princess and buy merchandise, while interactive interpretation boards include a Pataphysical dangers of pesticides and other non-native species. At last month’s ‘Lakes for Living, Lakes for Life’ conference, the agency’s chair, Lord Smith, warned of the dangers of pesticides and fertilisers contributing to regular blue-green algal blooms in the Lake District, preventing people from going into the water.

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IN BRIEF

Newport visitor centre reopens

The National Park Visitor Centre in Newport, Wales, has officially reopened. Owned by the Penrhyn Castle National Park Authority, the facility was extended and refurbished over the winter. The revamped centre features an interactive display pertaining to a bilingual oral history project called Talking Newport/Tafod Tydruth, which gives visitors a chance to hear local people sharing their memories of Newport’s past and hopes for the future.

National Park decision put back

The New Forest National Park Authority (NFPA) has given itself more time to come up with a draft plan for the future of the park, after it was inundated with replies to a public consultation. The approval of the authority’s National Park Plan has been extended to the end of October, to allow “adequate time for the draft to be revised in the light of the many comments received”, Clive Chatters, chair of NFPA, said the authority’s priority would be to look at the large number of ‘constructive and critical’ comments that it has received during the consultation.

New measures to save iconic lakes

The Environment Agency has launched a campaign designed to help protect the UK’s most famous lakes from threats such as climate change, pollution and non-native species. At last month’s ‘Lakes for Living, Lakes for Life’ conference, the agency’s chair, Lord Smith, warned of the dangers of pesticides and fertilisers contributing to regular blue-green algal blooms in the Lake District, preventing people from going into the water.

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Mayor unveils heritage festivities

Month-long Story of London celebrations to chart the history of London

By Pete Hayman

London mayor Boris Johnson has officially launched a new month-long programme of events to celebrate the capital’s past, present and future and encourage more people to explore the city’s heritage.

The Legacy Heritage Fund is supporting the Story of London initiative as part of the National Lottery’s 15th anniversary celebrations, with more than £200,000 awarded to 23 projects across London Boroughs and an exhibition at City Hall showcasing a further 15 flagship schemes.

Events will celebrate London’s rich heritage

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New scheme to train creatively

MLA has earmarked £250,000 for apprenticeships

By Luke Tuchscherer

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) has pledged £250,000 to fund up to 50 apprenticeships in museums across England over the next two years.

The scheme, which is part of the Creative Apprenticeships programme developed by Creative & Cultural Skills, is designed to open up entry routes into museums and will provide £5,000 for each apprentice’s employment.

Roy Clarke, chief executive of the MLA, said: 'Current economic circumstances emphasise the urgent need to invest more in the cultural workforce in Britain. ‘We are excited about what these apprenticeships can bring to the industry and the start it can give people wanting to make a career in our sector.’

There are three pathways in the Creative Apprenticeship scheme that museums can focus on: community arts management, cultural and heritage venue operations and live events and production. The deadline for the first round of applications is 17 July.

Adventure travel firm reports slump in demand

PGL, Holidaybreak’s education division, also revealed losses of £3.8m, which has resulted in Holidaybreak reporting overall losses before exceptional items of more than £18m.

The company admitted that it traditionally reported a loss in the first half of the year due to seasonal effects of the camping and education business.

Shokk gets NSA accreditation

Youth activity specialist SHOKK has been awarded the North West Centre of Vocational Excellence, as part of the National Skills Academy for Sport and Active Leisure (NSA).

SHOKK will work in partnership with Trafford College and Salford University to co-ordinate and deliver free training and qualifications in youth activity, as well as career progression courses.

The employer-focused courses include one- and two-day CPD courses, NVQs, VRQs and workshops for instructors and activity leaders.

All programmes will be linked with Key Stage 2.3 and 4 of the National Curriculum, to ensure young people develop complementary skills in and out of school.

The NSA was developed by SkillsActive for an employer-led approach to training.
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Developed by Loughborough College, the University Hospitals of Leicester and the British Lung Foundation (BLF), with funding and input from Rotherham PCT, the course has been submitted for endorsement at level 4 on the Register of Exercise Professionals. It covers:

- Responses to exercise and exercise prescription
- Management of chronic respiratory disease
- Physiology and pathology of respiratory disease
- Referral pathways
- Level 3 equivalent qualification as recognised by REP’s
- Current CRB disclosure form
- 100 hours practical exercise instruction over the past year, with some experience of working with clients with COPD/respiratory disease
- Referral pathways
- Experience of working with clients with COPD/respiratory disease
- A current valid first aid certificate
- Managing breathlessness
- Referral pathways
- Current CRB disclosure form

Instructors taking up a bursary will be expected to work with local Breathe Easy support groups to set up exercise classes within the community.

The BLF bursary, funded by Air Products, is available to exercise professionals who meet the following entry requirements:

- A current valid first aid certificate
- Level 3 equivalent qualification as recognised by REP’s
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- Experience of working with clients with COPD/respiratory disease
- A minimum of 100 hours practical exercise instruction over the past year, with some experience of working with clients with COPD/respiratory disease
- A current valid first aid certificate
- Managing breathlessness
- Referral pathways
- Current CRB disclosure form

Applicants must have a relevant degree accompanied by teaching or training experience, significant industrial experience in related fields, strong ICT/IT and organisational skills. Applicants without a teaching qualification should be willing to work towards one.

BLF bursaries are now available for the September intake of this innovative distance learning course. For further details and an application pack please log on to www.lunguk.org/supporting-you/blf_active/ or contact Danielle Smreczak using the details below
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We have an exciting, innovative, Hopkins-designed, purpose-built arts and business venue opening in the heart of Bury St Edmunds in summer 2010. It will complement our Grade 1 listed Georgian assembly rooms.

We need an experienced, enthusiastic and visionary director to manage both venues. You will need an entrepreneurial spirit – with the heart to make our new venue a centre of artistic excellence and the head to bring in the bottom-line business for two years after opening.

Want to know more? Download an application pack from our website: www.stamfordhill.gov.uk/venue, email recruitment@stedgb.gov.uk or phone our 24hr job line on 01284 797030. Please quote the relevant post number. Closing date 5 July 2009. Interviews and assessment centre: 21 and 22 July 2009. Ref: C000273.
The Sandpiper Club, situated within the superb setting of Lancaster House Hotel, is part of English Lakes Hotels Limited.

The Club, completely re-furbished as part of a £3.2 m re-development, includes a 50 foot swimming Pool, Steam Rooms, Spa, Sun Loungers, Outdoor Hot Spa, Beauty Salon, Sun Shower and fully equipped Fitness Studio.

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Responsibilities will include:
- Overseeing our valued members
- Developing, training & mentoring all Leisure Personnel
- Maintaining & developing the range of service & facilities currently offered.

The successful applicant is likely to have had experience at supervisory/management level, not necessarily within the Leisure Industry.

A good salary is offered for this challenging role together with suitable holidays, excellent accommodation and facilities, and a very friendly working atmosphere.

The College is committed to safeguarding young people and members of staff. It is essential that applicants are suitable for this type of role.

Closing date: Tuesday 30th June 2009.

For information about the Hackney Community College, please contact Mr. T. R. J. Berry, Leisure Director, English Lakes Hotels Ltd., Bilton House, 38-40 London Road, Esher, KT10 9RJ. Phone: 020 8398 0291. Email: 020 8398 0291.

www.esher.ac.uk/information/Pages/Jobs.aspx or Tel: 020 8398 0291.

Application packs can be obtained from the College website at www.hackney.ac.uk or by contacting the College on 020 7613 9245 for an application pack, or apply online at www.hackney.ac.uk. For information about the post please contact: Tim Berry, Leisure Director, English Lakes Hotels Ltd, Bilton House, 38-40 London Road, Esher, KT10 9RJ. Tel: 020 8398 0291. Email: 020 8398 0291.

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We are looking for experienced individuals with drive, passion, determination and a genuine desire to make a true difference to our sport. Post holders will need to be expected to have a good working knowledge of sports development, good communication, influencing, leadership and problem solving skills, together with the ability to form strong partnerships in order to deliver project delivery.

The closing date for applications is Friday 3rd July 2009. Assessment Centres (1 day) will be held on 29th & 30th July, 5th & 6th August at the National Badminton Centre in Milton Keynes.

For informal discussions regarding these positions please contact: Vicky Foster-Lloyd, Network Manager 07825 094730 / vickyfoster@badmintonengland.co.uk or telephone 01908 260400 for an application pack.

If you want to be part of the best sports development team in the country we want to hear from you. Please logon to our website www.badmintonengland.co.uk or email enquiries@badmintonengland.co.uk or telephone 01908 260400 for an application pack.

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You’ll need previous experience of working in a leisure centre and be able to work flexible shifts. As well as being an effective team member, you’ll show initiative and have experience in giving great customer service.

If you think you can make a positive contribution, contact us today on 020 7613 9245 for an application pack, or apply online at www.hackney.ac.uk. For information about the post please contact: Tim Berry, Leisure Director, English Lakes Hotels Ltd, Bilton House, 38-40 London Road, Esher, KT10 9RJ. Tel: 020 8398 0291. Email: 020 8398 0291.

Closing date: Tuesday 30th June 2009.

The College is committed to safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults. Our workforce is reflective of the community and we welcome applications from everyone.

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are you up for the challenge?

At Newport we’ve embraced the Going for Gold scheme which rewards residents for being more active. The following exciting opportunity has arisen to ensure the continued success of this project. Social Welfare

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Closing date: 3rd July 2009

Visit www.newport.gov.uk/recruit or call 01633 656655 for an application pack quoting the reference.

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For more details regarding Power Plate International please visit www.powerplate.com

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Due to its ongoing success and expansion, Power Plate International is looking to add to its established UK Commercial Sales Team with a Regional Commercial Sales Manager for the North Thames region.

The successful candidate will have a Sports Science degree and have previously gained experience in commercial sales of capital equipment within the leisure industry.

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CLOSING DATE: END J ULY 09
Leisure operators in line for £500m HMRC refund

Gaming companies could be entitled to tax windfall following High Court’s landmark decision in favour of Rank

By Pete Hayman

Deloitte has revealed that the leisure industry could be in line for a £500m windfall after the High Court upheld Rank Group’s claims that the bingo hall and casino operator is entitled to a VAT refund.

Rank Group is set to receive £62m after it successfully argued that HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) breached EU rules on fiscal neutrality in relation to the amount of VAT paid on both interval bingo and gaming machines.

According to Deloitte, tax adviser to Rank Group, other leisure operators could now be entitled to receive similar repayments in light of the judgement, which supports a similar ruling made by VAT and Duties Tribunal in May 2008.

Tony McClenaghan, senior indirect tax partner at Deloitte, said: “It remains to be seen whether HMRC will appeal the decision, however the decision of both the VAT Tribunal and High Court are unequivocal and we would expect the Court of Appeal to share this view.”

The High Court has backed Rank Group’s claims for a VAT refund

MLA unveils plans for new London regional team

By Pete Hayman

A new regional team for London is to be established by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) in April 2010 to complete a nationwide overhaul of its services.

The plans have been approved by the Mayor of London, who currently holds statutory responsibility for culture in the capital, as well as trustees of MLA London who has resulted in the establishment of three other area teams for the North, West and East regions.

Andrew Motion, MLA chair, said: “The MLA’s transformation was designed to deliver a single light-footed national organisation operating effectively in every English region to help local government drive the development and improvement of museums, libraries and archives.”

London boasts many museums

By Pete Hayman

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Leisure operators in line for £500m HMRC refund

Nature reserve for Cambridge

East Chesterton in Cambridge is to benefit from a new nature reserve.

The conservation area will feature a meandering stream, a reedbed and seasonally wet areas to provide suitable habitats for a range of wildlife, while a 5m (16.4ft) high tower designed as public art will provide nesting opportunities for swifts.

CONTACTS BOOK

Arts & Business +44 (0)20 7378 8143
www.asnb.org.uk
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